



# Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

## **NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2015**

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

Dear Friends,

At the beginning of a new year, it is natural to take a fresh look at our lives. This may mean reviewing the direction we have been taking and asking ourselves how happy, meaningful and focussed we have been. Do we have a sense that, right now, within our ordinary lives, our spiritual life *is* alive and well? Or is there a sense of resistance, isolation or dullness? If any of the latter, what will help us change that?

Questions about Buddhist practice, which are sometimes raised at our Centre, are about worship, bowing and Buddhist ritual/puja. While comfortable with meditation and Dharma study, people may be cautious about engaging in devotional practices. The words of pujas may seem high-falutin to the Western mind. But worship, i.e. the expression of gratitude, rejoicing, and respect, is fundamental to Buddhism.<sup>1</sup> On an ordinary level, when we come upon a view, say, of a beautiful mountain peak, we 'admire its beauty, look up to it, enjoy it and delight in it'<sup>2</sup>. This emotion corresponds to worship. Our emotions tend towards the need for active expression - we may want to be like the mountain, with its qualities of beauty, imperturbability and so on. 'When Buddhists bow down and make offerings...to the image of a Buddha...they are honouring the Buddha as an Enlightened being, not worshipping him as a god.'<sup>3</sup> They are refining their emotional energies and rendering their minds 'receptive to spiritual influences'<sup>4</sup>. They are becoming more like the mountain, a little more like the Buddha.

What is your experience right now? Is there any sense of dis-ease, dullness, isolation or resistance? It may be time to experience a sense of connection and meaning that can arise through engaging in devotional practice. On February 12<sup>th</sup> we shall honour the Buddha's final passing with meditation, reflection and puja – perhaps you will be there? [Virajaja]

1. Sangharakshita, 1994, *Who is the Buddha?* p.70, Windhorse Publications, Birmingham
2. Sangharakshita, 2000, *Ritual and Devotion in Buddhism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, p.67, Windhorse Publications, Birmingham
3. *ibid.* 1.
4. Sangharakshita, 2001, *A Survey of Buddhism*, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, p.450, Windhorse Publications, Birmingham

### **FEBRUARY 2015 CALENDAR**

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

- Thu 5<sup>th</sup>     **FRIENDS NIGHT:** 'What Is Buddhism?'  
– an evening of meditation, video and discussion [see details below] [V]
- Wed 11<sup>th</sup>     **Introducing Buddhist Meditation:** 7-week course begins, 10am-12pm [V]
- Thu 12<sup>th</sup>     **FRIENDS NIGHT:** *Parinirvana Day*  
- an evening of meditation, reflection and ritual dedicated to the Buddha's final passing [V]
- Mon 16<sup>th</sup>     **Buddhist Meditation and Mindfulness:** 8-week course begins, 7pm-9pm [R]
- Tue 17<sup>th</sup>     **Introducing Buddhism:** 8-week course begins, 7pm-9pm [R]
- Thu 19<sup>th</sup>     **FRIENDS NIGHT:** 'What is a Buddhist?'  
- an evening of meditation and discussion [see details below] [K]
- Thu 25<sup>th</sup>     **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation and Sevenfold Puja [R]
- and ...     **BEGINNERS RETREAT:** Fri 27<sup>th</sup> Feb - Sun 1<sup>st</sup> March [see details below]

## ***FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM [Thursdays 7-9pm]:***

Friends Nights 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 with other like-minded people. Thursday nights are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor. 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. When planning the Dharma component for the next few months, 'getting back to basics' seemed the best approach for meeting the needs of newcomers and regulars alike. These will be presented in a variety of ways including video. So ...

**February:** we begin with *What is Buddhism?* and *What is a Buddhist?*

**March:** will focus on *the big human issues in modern society* – the environment and the uncertainties of life.

**April:** we look at the *False Refuges* we can so easily turn to, and then begin a deeper exploration of the True Refuges. ... something for everyone.

## ***COURSES STARTING:***

7-week daytime course: ***Introduction to Meditation*** starts Wednesday, Feb. 11, 10am-12pm

[Enrolment: Contact Viryaja on 4634 4303 or [yp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org](mailto:yp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org), by 5pm on Sun. Feb 8]

8-week evening courses: ***Buddhist Meditation and Mindfulness*** starts Monday, Feb. 16, 7pm-9pm

***Introducing Buddhism*** starts Tuesday, Feb. 17, 7pm-9pm

[Enrolment: Contact Roger on 4564 9636 or 0410 608 791 or [rlb@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org](mailto:rlb@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org) ]

## ***BEGINNERS RETREAT: Fri 27<sup>th</sup> Feb - Sun 1<sup>st</sup> March***

This retreat, led by Roger and Viryaja, will be a combination of meditation and Buddhist teachings and will be a great opportunity to strengthen the practice you have begun or are about to begin, through 'treating it to a retreat'. A minimum number of participants are needed to enable this retreat to go ahead, so if you are interested in attending, please **contact Roger on 45649636 or 0410608791, or Viryaja on 46344303, no later than this coming weekend, Sunday, 8<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

Cost: \$150 fully employed; \$130 part-time employed; \$100 concessional

## ***OTHER WEEKEND RETREATS IN 2015:***

July 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> – led by Dharmamati, a senior Triratna Buddhist Order member; topic to be announced.

October 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> – led by Siladasa, a Triratna Buddhist Order member from Melbourne; topic to be announced.

## ***OUR CENTRE:***

Much has been happening, and is in the pipeline concerning the management of our Centre – negotiations with the Toowoomba Regional Council about a new long lease, a new look for our old website, cleaning, flooring, repair and paint projects. The AGM is due on March 14<sup>th</sup> More details and calls for help next month!

## ***THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:***

*Just as the earth and other elements  
Are serviceable in many ways  
To the infinite number of beings  
Inhabiting limitless space;  
So may I become  
That which maintains all beings  
Situated throughout space,  
So long as all have not attained  
To peace.*

*From the Sevenfold Puja*





# Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

## **NEWSLETTER MARCH 2015**

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Dear Friends,

Sangharakshita has made a Koan-like statement in his book *Vision and Transformation* that has become very well known: "For most of us the central problem of the spiritual life is to find emotional equivalents for our intellectual understanding." In the West we tend to be over-developed intellectually and under-developed emotionally. We are often alienated from our emotions and in many ways our busy lifestyle encourages this. You cannot progress very far on the spiritual path on the strength of intellect alone because it represents only a tiny fraction of our whole psyche, the tip of the iceberg; the bulk of it beneath the waves consists of emotions and instincts. Our emotions are what move us. We have a colloquial saying in English that so and so did not succeed "because their heart wasn't in it", which sums the situation up neatly.

So how do we go about reconnecting with our emotions and harnessing them to our spiritual aspirations? One very important and effective method is to perform devotional practices known as *puja*. To engage our emotions we need a different language to that of the intellect (thinking) – we need the language of symbolism that communicates with the unconscious. So the puja is full of symbolism – the Buddha rupa, colourful cloths, candles, flowers, incense, bowls of water, mantras (sound symbols) and inspiring poetic verses. It is also performed in a meditative, ritual-like fashion involving things like chanting verses and mantras in call and response and unison, bowing, making offerings of candles and incense (and other things). All of this engages us emotionally and I find them very uplifting often almost floating out of the shrine room afterwards.

On Friends Nights we occasionally do a shorter puja known as the Threefold Puja and a longer one known as the Sevenfold Puja (usually the last Thursday of the month). Come and try a puja one night when we are doing the practice and see how you find it. It can be another exciting practice to add to your tool kit of spiritual development. [Roger]

1. See Sangharakshita, 1995, *Vision and Transformation*, Birmingham: Windhorse, p. 36.

### **MARCH 2015 CALENDAR**

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

- Thu 5<sup>th</sup> **FRIENDS NIGHT:** *Buddhism in Modern Society – the big human issues*  
– an evening of meditation and 'round-the-table' discussion [see also below] [V]
- Thu 12<sup>th</sup> **FRIENDS NIGHT:** *Buddhism and the Environment*  
- an evening of meditation and discussion [see also below] [R]
- Thu 19<sup>th</sup> **FRIENDS NIGHT:** *The Uncertainties of Life* [R]  
- an evening of meditation and discussion [see also below]
- Thu 26<sup>th</sup> **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation and *Sevenfold Puja* [V or K]
- and ... **BEGINNERS RETREAT:** Fri 27<sup>th</sup> March - Sun 29<sup>th</sup> March [see details below]

### ***FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM [Thursdays 7-9pm]:***

Friends Nights 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 with other like-minded people. Thursday nights are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor. 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. When planning the Dharma component for the first few months of 2015, 'getting back to basics' seemed the best approach for meeting the needs of newcomers and regulars alike. These will be presented in a variety of ways including video. In February we looked at what Buddhism and Buddhists are. So ...

**This month, March**, we shall focus on *the big human issues in modern society* – the environment and the uncertainties of life.

**In April:** we look at the *False Refuges* we can so easily turn to, and then begin a deeper exploration of the True Refuges.

... something for everyone.

### ***The BEGINNERS RETREAT has been re-scheduled and now will be on Fri March 27th - Sun March 29th***

This residential retreat, led by Roger and Viryaja, will be a combination of meditation and Buddhist teachings and will be a great opportunity to strengthen the practice you have begun or are about to begin, through 'treating it to a retreat'. Not essential, but it would be helpful if you are familiar with the main meditation practices we use. A minimum number of participants are needed to enable this retreat to go ahead, so if you are interested in attending, please **contact Roger on 45649636 or 0410608791, or Viryaja on 46344303, no later than this coming weekend, Sunday, 8<sup>th</sup> March.**

Cost: \$150 fully employed; \$130 part-time employed; \$100 concessional

### ***OTHER WEEKEND RETREATS IN 2015:***

July 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> – led by Dharmamati, a senior Triratna Buddhist Order member on *Creativity and the Spiritual Life*.  
October 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> – led by Siladasa, a Triratna Buddhist Order member from Melbourne; topic to be announced.

### ***THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:***

***I rejoice with delight  
In the good done by all beings,  
Through which they obtain rest  
With the end of suffering.  
May those who have suffered be happy!***

(From the *Sevenfold Puja*)





# Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

## **NEWSLETTER APRIL 2015**

4-6 Cress Street  
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<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/toowoomba>

Dear Friends,

Buddhism is definitely against blind belief, and that aspect appeals to Western practitioners. We like the emphasis the Buddha put on inquiry, questioning, and testing out the teachings before accepting them. However, what is less well understood in the Western community of Buddhists is that there is an important role for faith in Buddhism as well. But the word does not have quite the same meaning as, for example, faith in the theistic religions. In fact the word used in Buddhism, *śraddha*, is usually translated as "confidence-trust". Once we have tested the teachings out and found that they work then we trust them, we have confidence in them, we "have faith in them".

Trusting someone or something can have powerful emotional elements to it like relief, security, relaxation, respect, even reverence. We have been at pains in recent editorials to point out how important engaging the emotions is, if we are to succeed in the spiritual life. Faith or *śraddha* can be a powerful aid in this sense. We experience these emotions in other aspects of our lives quite commonly; for example, a student on a Buddhist course many years ago, when we were discussing this issue, told me he had no problem with reverence, after all he said "I revere David Campese" (the rugby union player). People literally worship, for example, the football teams they follow, or their children. Why can't we bring it into our spiritual life as well?

We need balance in our Dharma practice and yet, all too often in the West we are overly intellectual in our approach. Sometimes Western Buddhists complain quite validly that, in traditional Asian Buddhist societies, it often seems all about rituals, chanting religious scriptures, bowing and the like, but no one knows what the words mean. There is no inquiry or critical discussion, in fact that is just 'simply not done'. In contrast in the West we get stuck in intellectual study, reading books and our own individualistic interpretations of what Buddhism is. It is not grounded in manifesting Buddhism in a lived community sense. Often we may have a good intellectual understanding but are still angry and opinionated. The emotional side is missing.

Actually both approaches are out of balance. The Buddha had wisdom AND compassion – emotion and intelligence were balanced. In fact the old English word "intelligence" is supposed to imply both knowledge and emotional maturity. To help redress the imbalance in our culture of the overly-developed intellect and under-developed emotions the Triratna Buddhist Order considers that devotional practices like puja are vitally important. They can help light up the emotions of inspiration, reverence and even worship (remember Campese), to help emotionally engage us in our practice, which all too often tends to 'dry up' on occasions. As an order member friend once said to me many years ago "it's like rocket fuel Roge!"

We perform simple practices at the centre like the Opening Reverence, with which we start most Friends Nights, short pujas like the Threefold puja, right through to the "full Monty", the Sevenfold puja, usually done once a month. Come along and try one out one night – bring some balance into your spiritual life. [Roger]

### **APRIL 2015 CALENDAR**

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| Thu 2nd  | <b><u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u></b> <i>The False Refuges</i><br>- an evening of meditation and discussion [see also below] [K] |
| Thu 9th  | <b><u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u></b> Meditation and <i>Threefold Puja</i> [R]   |
| Thu 16th | <b><u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u></b> <i>The True Refuges</i><br>- an evening of meditation and discussion [see also below] [K]  |
| Thu 16th | <b><u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u></b> <i>Ethics</i><br>- an evening of meditation and discussion [see also below] [R]            |
| Thu 30th | <b>FRIENDS NIGHT:</b> Meditation and <i>Sevenfold Puja</i> [V]  |

## ***FRIENDS NIGHT STUDY***

Friends Nights 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 with other like-minded people. Thursday nights are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor. 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. When planning the Dharma component for the first few months of 2015, 'getting back to basics' seemed the best approach for meeting the needs of newcomers and regulars alike. These are presented in a variety of ways including video. In March we looked at Buddhism and the Environment and Uncertainty in Contemporary Life.

**This month, April:** we look at the *False Refuges* we can so easily turn to, and then begin a deeper exploration of the True Refuges ... something for everyone.

## ***THE BEGINNERS RETREAT:***

Was finally held (after rescheduling) last weekend (Fri March27th - Sun March29th) with eight people attending. It went very well - we went through the basic meditation practises of Mindfulness of Breathing, Metta Bhavana and Walking Meditation, and did some study on Basic Buddhism focussing on the Four Noble Truths. The atmosphere was great with people interacting on the basis of spiritual friendship and discussion was robust, clarifying and invigorating.

## ***OTHER WEEKEND RETREATS IN 2015:***

\*NOW July 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> – led by Dharmamati, a senior Triratna Buddhist Order member, on *Creativity and the Spiritual Life*. \*This retreat was previously advertised for earlier in July.

October 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> – led by Siladasa, a Triratna Buddhist Order member from Melbourne; topic to be announced.

## ***WOMENS MEDITATION:***

There will be no Tuesday sessions on April 7, 14 and 21, while Viryaja is away. Hope to see many of you who have participated before, when we resume on April 28<sup>th</sup> at 10am.

## ***HELP NEEDED AT THE CENTRE:***

There are some one-off jobs around the Centre, which we would be very grateful for any help with. These include: fixing up wire on the trellis to support the jasmine growing there; putting up curtain tracks on windows, alcove and doorway and re-painting the deck. If you have the time and interest, please let us know – materials will be supplied.

## ***THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:***

***By faith, the flood is crossed,***

***By diligence, the sea;***

***By vigour, ill is passed;***

***By wisdom, cleansed is he.***

*Samyutta Nikaya, Milindapanha, 34-36*





# Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

## **NEWSLETTER MAY 2015**

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Dear Friends,

A common experience, when sitting down to meditate, is that our minds have a tendency to quickly become caught up in thoughts, to be lost in thought and far removed from the intended focus of attention, such as the breath. Our minds become an entanglement, a proliferation of 'ideas, fantasies, plans, strategies and so on'.<sup>1</sup> It is as though we have the mind of a monkey, leaping from tree to tree, grabbing and discarding the fruits there. This mental proliferation, *papanca*, is a form of discursive thinking. It distracts us and blocks our access to a deeper, more beautiful experience of life, where we can be free from craving and aversion. Its effect is one of fragmentation rather than integration. As described on a recent retreat, it is as though we sit on our meditation cushions and 'end up in the Phillipines'.<sup>2</sup>

So how can we let go of such compulsive thinking - our story-telling - and more directly experience our lives? We can develop a sense of relaxed awareness, engage our hearts through devotional activities, poetry and music. We can celebrate the moments when we return to awareness. We can look beneath the *prapanca* to see what is driving it; we can reflect upon what truly motivates us, what we truly value.<sup>3</sup> Friends Night activities this month will include some of these approaches to working with 'monkey mind'. [Virajja]

1. Ratnaguna, 2010, *The Art of Reflection*, p.31, Windhorse Publications, Cambridge
2. *Monkey Mind*, led by Vessantara & Vijayamala, Vijayaloka Retreat Centre, Sydney, April 2015
3. *ibid.*

### **MAY 2015 CALENDAR**

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

<b>Thu 7th</b>	<b><u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u></b> <i>BUDDHA DAY</i> - – an evening of meditation and puja [see also below] [V]
<b>Thu 14th</b>	<b><u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u></b> Meditation and a 1st look at 'Monkey Mind' [see also below] [V]
<b>Thu 21st</b>	<b><u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u></b> Meditation and a 2nd look at 'Monkey Mind' [see also below] [V]
<b>Thu 28th</b>	<b><u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u></b> Meditation and another look at 'Monkey Mind' [see also below] [V]

### ***FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM\****

The Friends Night program this month begins with a **celebration of the Buddha's Enlightenment** under the Bodhi Tree more than 2,500 years ago. This important festival is held each year on or near to the full moon in May.

A theme for the Dharma teachings component of Friends Nights, for 2015, is 'getting back to basics'. In February, we looked at Buddhism in general terms: what Buddhism is and what it means to be a Buddhist. March focussed on the big human issues of contemporary life and in April we began to look at the *Ethical aspect of the Threefold Path* – at the False Refuges and the True Refuges.

The rest of the month, we'll focus on the ***Meditation aspect of the Threefold Path***. We'll explore our 'monkey minds', where our meditation experience is often one of uncontrolled 'thinking, thinking, thinking'. Led meditations will be included. Why not come along and learn more about working with your 'monkey mind'?

Coming in June: the third aspect of the Threefold Path – Insight.

\* Friends Nights 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 with other like-minded people. Thursday nights are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor. 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.

### ***WEEKEND RETREATS IN 2015:***

The next weekend retreat will be from July 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> – on *Creativity and the Spiritual Life*, led by Dharmamati, a senior Triratna Buddhist Order member. More information in the June newsletter but if you would like to reserve a place now, please contact us on [tbc@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org](mailto:tbc@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org)

The last weekend retreat for the year will be on October 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> – led by Siladasa, a Triratna Buddhist Order member from Melbourne; topic to be announced.

### ***NEW! SATURDAY MORNING PROGRAM:***

A Saturday morning program of meditation and sharing the Dharma, is proposed to begin on Saturday, June 20<sup>th</sup> 10.30 to 12.00. It will be run for a 5-week trial period; cost by donation. More information in the June Newsletter.

### ***WOMENS MEDITATION – 10am to 12, Tuesdays:***

Sessions resumed on April 28<sup>th</sup>. Please contact Viryaja on [vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org](mailto:vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org) or text 0404299573, if you are interested in participating. More information is attached to this newsletter.

### ***HELP NEEDED AT THE CENTRE:***

As reported last month, there are some one-off jobs around the Centre, help with which we would be very grateful for. These include: fixing up wire on the trellis to support the jasmine growing there; putting up curtain tracks on windows, alcove and doorway and re-painting the deck. Two people will be meeting **at the Centre on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May, at 10.30am**, to clear out the store room and to measure for curtain tracks etc. – **extra help** would be gratefully accepted. **If you have the time and interest for any of these, please let us know – materials will be supplied.**

### ***THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:***

Whenever clouds gather, the nature of sky is not corrupted, and when they disperse, it is not ameliorated. The sky does not become less or more vast. It does not change.

It is the same with the nature of mind: it is not spoiled by the arrival of thoughts; nor improved by their disappearance. The nature of mind is emptiness; its expression is clarity.

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche



## WOMEN'S TUESDAY MEDITATION 2015

- Sessions are on Tuesdays, 10am to 12 noon at the TBC, 4-6 Cress Street.
- Participation is by prior arrangement with Viryaja at: [vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org](mailto:vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org)
- There is no fee for the sessions, but a donation of whatever you can afford is much appreciated - around \$5 may be a guide.
- Sessions are of 2 types with slightly different aims, alternating week about. They are informal and start with a short tea break, during which participants are encouraged to maintain their awareness and purpose in coming to meditate. All participants are welcome to both types of session.
- The approach in these meditation sessions is from a Buddhist perspective, although participants do not have to be Buddhists to benefit from meditation.
- Participants are asked to maintain **confidentiality** by not discussing personal details of others or the contribution of individuals outside the session.
- Since sometimes participants come with health conditions which may include allergies, it is helpful if participants avoid the use of perfumes or other perfumed body products - just in case!

### Aims of Both Meditation Sessions [i.e. Week 1 and Week 2]

- Provide a quiet space and atmosphere, in which women can come together to meditate and develop their capacity for self-healing.
- To facilitate beneficial flow-on effects by concluding each session with a short just sitting meditation.
- Sessions are not intended for teaching Meditation, as such, however, people will be helped with posture and general guidance wherever needed.

[Viryaja offers a formal daytime 7-week Meditation course from time to time. Formal 8-week courses in Meditation and Buddhism, are available via Roger Bastick - usually held on Mondays and Tuesdays, 7 - 9pm. [rlb@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org](mailto:rlb@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org) ]

### Aims of Week 1 Meditation Session

- Provide an opportunity for experienced meditators and women wishing to develop a regular meditation practice, to meditate together, with a minimum of intervention or leading by the facilitator.
- Provide some time for sharing one's meditation experience with others, if wished.

### Aims of Week 2 Meditation Session [alternating with Week 1]

Provide an opportunity for women to:

- meditate together with the focus on led meditations;
- share their meditation experience with others, if wished;
- reflect upon and discuss issues and topics arising from their life experience, their meditation and/or previous sessions.

***“The object of meditation is to transform oneself, not to have good meditations.”***

(Sangharakshita, *Peace is a Fire*, p.110)



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Dear Friends,

How is your meditation practice going? Do you have one? Or maybe it has become something that you know is 'good' for you, that you would really like to do; yet, faced with the other demands in your daily life, it has slipped to low priority or has become something of a chore, with little meaning. Looking at meditation in a different way can turn around this uninspiring situation.<sup>1</sup> We can ask, 'What gets me up in the morning?' – the answer is possibly not 'to sit and meditate', but may well be 'to just be able to meet the demanding responsibilities and calls of contemporary existence'! Would it be a different answer if you were on holiday?

We can think of meditation as a leisure activity rather than an activity where we have to 'work'. We can then relax, not as a preparation for doing something else but as a way of going deeper in our spiritual life, a way of getting back to the fundamentals of life. In meditation, we can give ourselves time to appreciate the gift of a body and breath, learn to be kind, rekindle a sense of wonder and get in touch with what is important to us.<sup>2</sup> Taking the pressure off ourselves to 'do something' about our mental states can be very liberating. Without that pressure, we can relax, just being no-one with nothing to do. We can bring curiosity and playfulness to the arising and passing of thoughts, emotions and physical sensations. Seeing the ephemeral nature of our moment-by-moment experience, we can sit more loosely with our sense-of-self, our self-referencing. We can begin to let go of the urge to make judgements, let go of our tendencies to craving and aversion. We can become still. [Viriyaja]

1. Monkey Mind, led by Vessantara & Vijayamala, Vijayaloka Retreat Centre, Sydney, April 2015.
2. *ibid*, Vessantara

### JUNE 2015 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 4 <sup>th</sup>	<b><u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u></b> Meditation and the <i>Klesa</i> families [V] [see also below]
Thu 11 <sup>th</sup>	<b><u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u></b> Meditation and <i>Threefold Puja</i> [K]
Thu 18 <sup>th</sup>	<b><u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u></b> Meditation and a look at <i>Insight</i> [R]
Thu 25 <sup>th</sup>	<b><u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u></b> Meditation and another look at <i>Insight</i> [V]

### ***FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM\****

A theme for the Dharma teachings component of Friends Nights, for 2015, is 'getting back to basics'. So far, we have looked at Buddhism in general terms, at the big human issues of contemporary life and in April we looked at the ethical aspects of the Threefold Path – the True and False Refuges. In May we explored our 'monkey minds' in meditation. Now in June we shall look more deeply into our meditation experience – at the *klesas* or unwholesome qualities of mind, which hold us back - and so turn to the third aspect of the Threefold Path – Insight.

\* **FRIENDS NIGHTS** 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 with other like-minded people. Thursday nights are **open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor**. 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.

## WEEKEND RETREATS IN 2015:



# Creativity and the Spiritual Life

A Retreat led by Dharmamati

Fri 24<sup>th</sup> to Sun 26<sup>th</sup> July 2015

at Le Grezze, Highfields

Cost: \$150 full; \$130 part time; \$100 conc.

**Dharmachari Dharmamati** is a senior Triratna Buddhist Order member from Melbourne.

For more information, or if you would like to reserve a place [limited numbers], please contact us by email on [tbc@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org](mailto:tbc@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org) or Viryaja on ph. 07 46344303.

- - -

The last weekend retreat for the year will be on October 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> – led by Siladasa, a Triratna Buddhist Order member, also from Melbourne; topic to be announced.

### **POSTPONED – Saturday morning program, ‘Meditation & Dharma-bits’:**

A Saturday morning program of meditation and sharing the Dharma, had been proposed to begin for a trial period, on Saturday mornings from June 20<sup>th</sup>. Regretfully, the start of this program will have to be postponed till later in the year, possibly August/September. We’ll keep you posted.

### **FOUND [or rather, it has re-surfaced]:**

Brown-coloured, fleecy, **woman’s zip up jacket**, which was left at the Centre, we think about 2 years ago, but which was re-discovered, when we cleaned out a cupboard recently. It may have been left by someone attending an evening course. Do you think this may be yours? If so, please contact Viryaja on 07 46344303.

### **THOUGHT OF THE MONTH:**

*‘For one who clings, motion exists;  
But for one who clings not, there is no motion.  
Where no motion is, there is stillness.  
Where stillness is, there is no craving.  
Where no craving is,  
There is neither coming nor going.  
Where neither coming nor going is,  
There is neither arising nor passing away.  
Where neither arising nor passing away is,  
There is neither this world, nor a world beyond,  
Nor a state between.  
This verily is the end of suffering.’*

Udana 8. I.





# Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

## NEWSLETTER JULY 2015

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

Dear Friends,

Mindfulness is not just all about living in the present, although this is one of its dimensions. Another of the meanings of mindfulness in Buddhism, *sampajanna-sati*, can be translated as "sense of purpose". Once in a while it is a good idea to reflect on where your life is going. Is it following the 'yang will' of you forcing it in a certain direction, or is it unfolding according to the deeper, 'yin will'? This is the thread of meaning in your life that is often only revealed by looking back and reflecting on where your life has come from.

This is good place to start reflection. To help this one can do what Vajragupta<sup>1</sup> calls a 'life-story exercise' looking at, for example, events that somehow symbolize a time in your life, themes or patterns that you can see in your life, questions that have consciously or unconsciously been trying to work themselves out, or aspects of yourself wanting to express themselves. What are the important or 'sacred questions' for you – the meaning of life; what happens when we die; relationships; self-esteem; state of the wider world; a psychic or meditative experience when you were younger that still seems significant and causes you to wonder about your life; a sense of beauty and potential?

Sometimes such questions evolve gradually. To start with you may get just a faint sense or intuition of what it is that matters most to you. Most of us desire to live more fully, more from the depths of ourselves, instead of living as shadows of ourselves, existing at a fraction of our potential. To discover this deeper purpose and monitor whether you are still connected to it is also one of the dimensions of mindfulness.

It is a good idea to start by rejoicing in one's merits. Listing all the talents and skills you have and then see what you can build onto these already existing qualities, in terms of what you wish to develop. Often when we think of a quality we wish to develop, we become aware of the lack of it in our experience, and this can feel discouraging. Also the desired quality is only a future possibility, while the lack of it is experienced as a reality in the present. You feel more confident when you experience a quality you already have. [R]

1. Vajragupta, 2007, *Buddhism: tools for living your life*, Cambridge: Windhorse Publications, p.8

### JULY 2015 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 2<sup>nd</sup> FRIENDS NIGHT: **DHARMA DAY** celebration [V]

Thu 9<sup>th</sup> FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation and another look at *Insight* [V]

Thu 16<sup>th</sup> FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation and Metta [K]

Thu 23<sup>rd</sup> FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation evening [R]

Fri 24<sup>th</sup> to Sun 26<sup>th</sup> - 'Creativity and the Spiritual Life' retreat, led by Dharmamati

Thu 30<sup>th</sup> FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; re-visiting 'Creativity' retreat [K]

### **FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM\***

A theme for the Dharma teachings component of Friends Nights, for 2015, is 'getting back to basics'. So far, we have looked at Buddhism in general terms; at the ethical aspects of the Threefold Path; we have explored our 'monkey minds' in meditation and we looked more deeply into our experience of the *klesas* or unwholesome qualities of mind. Then we turned to the third aspect of the Threefold Path – Insight.

We begin **July** with a celebration of the day, when the Buddha started to teach, **Dharma Day**, and then we shall continue looking at Insight and how it has an important relationship with metta.

\* **FRIENDS NIGHTS** 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 with other like-minded people. Thursday nights are **open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor**. 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.

## **WEEKEND RETREATS IN 2015:**

# **Creativity and the Spiritual Life**



A Retreat led by Dharmamati  
**Fri 24<sup>th</sup> to Sun 26<sup>th</sup> July 2015**  
at Le Grezze, Highfields  
Cost: \$150 full; \$130 part time; \$100 conc.

*Mindful awareness (see Thought for the Month) helps develop the creative aspect of our lives. In this retreat, practical exercises will be introduced that can help integrate our inner and outer lives, giving a richer experience of the world.*

*Dharmachari Dharmamati is a senior Triratna Buddhist Order member from Melbourne. Ordained in 1979, Dharmamati was one of the founding members of the Triratna community in Australia. He is an experienced meditation teacher, has a Masters in Jungian psychology and is a practising Artist.*

\*For more information, or to reserve a place or be on a waiting list [at time of printing, there is only 1 place left]: please contact us by email on [bbc@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org](mailto:bbc@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org) or Viryaja on ph. 07 46344303.

- - -

The last weekend retreat for the year will be on October 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> – led by Siladasa, a Triratna Buddhist Order member, also from Melbourne; topic to be announced.

## **EIGHT WEEK COURSES**

The next round of eight week courses are planned to start with *Introducing Buddhism* on Monday night 13<sup>th</sup> July (7-9pm) and *Traditional Buddhist Meditation and Mindfulness* on Tuesday night 14<sup>th</sup> July (7-9pm).

## **DAYTIME MEDITATION COURSE - Wednesday mornings:**

A 7-week daytime Introduction to Meditation course, led by Viryaja, is planned to begin on Wednesday, August 19<sup>th</sup>, from 10am to 12 noon. This course is based on one offered at the Sydney Buddhist Centre and comes with weekly workbooks. For more information or to reserve a place, please contact Viryaja on [vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org](mailto:vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org) or 07 46344303 or text 0404299573

## **THOUGHT OF THE MONTH:**

*In the seen, only the seen,  
in the heard, only the heard,  
in the sensed, only the sensed,  
in the cognized, only the cognized.*

*The Buddha*





# Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

## **NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2015**

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

Dear Friends,

What is mind? Sangharakshita<sup>1</sup> has described mind as being twofold: on the one hand the mind of transcendental Awareness and on the other, the mind of ordinary everyday consciousness – the relative mind. Though not a traditional formulation of relative mind, he says that the relative mind can be considered as being of two kinds – reactive and creative. Considering our minds in this way can be very helpful as we attempt to bring greater awareness to the flow of sensations, thoughts, emotions and interactions with our world.

The reactive mind is the ordinary mind, which most of us use most of the time. We re-act automatically and repetitively to the bombardment of stimuli via our senses. We try to hold onto pleasant experiences and push away unpleasant experiences. Unaware, as if we are asleep, we trundle on, tied to the rounds of the wheel of life.

It is when we become aware of our lack of awareness that our spiritual life begins. This awareness brings greater freedom. It allows us to creatively respond to life, choose a different approach, diminish and eventually eliminate our grasping and aversive tendencies. We become more spontaneous, optimistic and energetic. The creative, emotionally positive state of mind finds expression, not only through 'works of art' but in productive personal relations – positivity 'rubs off' on others, encourages them. So the creative aspect of our relative mind contributes to 'the sum total of positive emotion' in the world. It contributes to 'higher states of being and consciousness'. The creative mind slows down the wheel of life and eventually frees us from it. It sets us on the spiral Path, the way to the Awake, to Enlightenment. [Virajja]

1. Urgyen Sangharakshita, 'Mind – Reactive and Creative', Lecture 31, [www.freebuddhistaudio.com](http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com)

### **AUGUST 2015 CALENDAR**

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 6 <sup>th</sup>	<b><u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u></b> Meditation; <i>The Four Mind-Turning Reflections</i> – an introduction [R]
Thu 13 <sup>th</sup>	<b><u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u></b> Meditation; 1 <sup>st</sup> Reflection -The Preciousness and Rarity of Human Life [V]
Thu 20 <sup>th</sup>	<b><u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u></b> Meditation; 2 <sup>nd</sup> Reflection – The Transitoriness of Life & Certainty of Death [K]
Thu 27 <sup>th</sup>	<b><u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u></b> A Celebration for Sangharakshita's 90 <sup>th</sup> Birthday [V]

### ***FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM\****

The theme for the Dharma teachings component of Friends Nights for the earlier part of 2015 was 'getting back to basics'. We looked at: Buddhism in general terms; explored our 'monkey minds' in meditation and our experience of the *klesas* [unwholesome qualities of mind]. We also explored the Ethical and Insight aspects of the Threefold Path and the importance of *Metta*.

In **August**, we begin an exploration of *The Four Mind-Turning Reflections*, which aim to help us focus on the opportunities we have for spiritual practice and lead us to investigating the 'false refuges'. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, we shall celebrate the founder of the Triratna Buddhist Order and Community, Urgyen Sangharakshita, whose 90<sup>th</sup> birthday occurs on August 26<sup>th</sup>.

The program for the rest of the year will include:

**September:** Continuing with *The Four Mind-Turning Reflections*; beginning *The Eight Worldly Winds*.

**October:** Continuing with *The Eight Worldly Winds*.

**November and December:** an *Engaging With Life* series – more information in November!

\* **FRIENDS NIGHTS** 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 with other like-minded people. Thursday nights are **open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor**. 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.

### ***RETREAT REPORT: Creativity and the Spiritual Life***

The retreat led by Dharmamati, a senior Triratna order member and artist, was very enjoyable. As well as the normal meditation practices, we did special exercises designed to use meditation and mindfulness - on the one hand to open up our senses and experience the external world more fully; this was a lead-in to our representing it in the form of drawings and writing. On the other hand, we used meditation and mindfulness to also deepen our experience of our inner world, making the unconscious more conscious. Again various exercises using drawing and writing were used to help dialogue with the unconscious and make what was going on there more concrete. The importance of having an ethical dimension to this process was also stressed, as we may encounter unskilful tendencies and aspects of ourselves in the unconscious. Whilst important to invite these in and to acknowledge their presence, we don't necessarily want them to act themselves out. However, to deny them is dangerous, so we invite them in so we can transform them into more skilful states of mind. [Roger]

### ***WEEKEND RETREATS IN 2015:***

The last weekend retreat for the year will be from Friday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> to Sunday October 4<sup>th</sup>. It will be led by **Siladasa**, a Triratna Buddhist Order member from Melbourne, who has led retreats for us over many years. The topic will be announced soon and a booking list opened – we'll send you a notice. The retreat conditions will be similar to previous retreats: held at Le Grezze, Highfields; cost \$150 full, \$130 part employment, \$100 concessional; vegetarian food.

### ***DAYTIME MEDITATION COURSE - Wednesday mornings from August 19<sup>th</sup> 10am-12:***

A 6-week [optional 7<sup>th</sup> week] daytime *Introduction to Meditation* course, led by Viryaja, will commence on Wednesday, August 19<sup>th</sup>, from 10am to 12 noon. This course is based on one offered at the Sydney Buddhist Centre and comes with weekly workbooks. For more information or to reserve a place, please contact Viryaja on [vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org](mailto:vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org) or 07 46344303 or text 0404299573

### ***THOUGHT OF THE MONTH:***

The  
MIND  
that perceives  
limitation  
is the limitation

Gautama Buddha





# Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

## **NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2015**

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

Dear Friends,

It is not possible to progress very far along the spiritual path unless it involves the practice of ethics. In Buddhism ethics is considered to be a necessary condition for effective meditation, and the clarity of mind in effective meditation is the necessary condition for the gaining of insight. It is insight in turn that eventually frees us completely from our predispositions that cause suffering.

The ability to see clearly is directly affected by the ethical tone of the mind. If the mind is regarding the object of awareness with attachment or craving for gratification, its capacity for clarity is diminished. The same is true if ill will or aversion is present. Likewise if the mind is sluggish and dull, or agitated by restlessness it is incapable of tranquil alertness. Doubt and misgivings will also interfere with the effectiveness of concentration. In fact these five mental states are traditionally known as the five hindrances because they hinder the ability of the mind to concentrate.

If our mind is full of craving and attachment to addictions, or full of angry thoughts, it is all stirred up, our energies are scattered, and it is not possible to achieve clarity of mind. An age old allegory for the meditative mind is pure, still water. If the mind is full of craving it is like water full of coloured dyes; if it is angry it is like boiling water; if restless and anxious it's like choppy water; if dull and sleepy it is like swampy water; and, if full of indecision and doubt, it is like turbid water. The energies need to be unified and harmonised to achieve the higher states of consciousness in meditation.

From a Buddhist point of view, it is natural to be ethical. It is one of the things that distinguish us from the other animals; we can make choices and act as a moral agent. Furthermore, if you practice ethics you should feel happier - defined as an absence of inner conflict, contented and at ease with yourself. The happier you are the better you can concentrate. The more your energies are unified the higher the state of consciousness and clarity that emerges. Sangharakshita has described ethical practice as like going back to the spiritual kindergarten. [Roger]

### **SEPTEMBER 2015 CALENDAR**

*(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)*

- |     |                  |                              |  |
|-----|------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Thu | 3 <sup>rd</sup>  | <b><u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u></b> | Meditation; <i>3<sup>rd</sup> Mind-Turning Reflection –Karma and the Consequences of Our Actions</i> [K] |
| Thu | 10 <sup>th</sup> | <b><u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u></b> | Meditation; <i>4<sup>th</sup> Mind-Turning Reflection –The Defects and Dangers of Samsara</i> [R]        |
| Thu | 17 <sup>th</sup> | <b><u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u></b> | Meditation; <i>The Eight Worldly Winds: Introduction</i> [V]   |
| Thu | 24 <sup>th</sup> | <b><u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u></b> | <b>Padmasambhava Day</b> (actually on 22 <sup>nd</sup> ) [R]   |

### ***FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM\****

The theme for the Dharma teachings component of Friends Nights for the earlier part of 2015 was 'getting back to basics'. We have looked at Buddhism in general terms; our 'monkey minds' in meditation and our experience of the *klesas* [unwholesome qualities of mind]; the Ethical and Insight aspects of the Threefold Path and the importance of *Metta*. In August we began to look at the Four Mind-turning Reflections. In **September** we continue with *The Four Mind-Turning Reflections*, and begin *The Eight Worldly Winds*. **Padmasambhava** was instrumental in establishing Buddhism in Tibet in the eighth century and is regarded as the founder of the Nyingmapa School of Tibetan Buddhism. We shall celebrate the 'Lotus-Born Guru' on the 24<sup>th</sup>. The program for the rest of the year will include:

**October:** Continuing with *The Eight Worldly Winds*.

**November and December:** an *Engaging With Life* series – more information in November!

\* **FRIENDS NIGHTS** 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 with other like-minded people. Thursday nights are **open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor**. 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.

## ***"Deepening the River"***

***A Retreat led by SILADASA  
from Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> to Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2015***

*Remaining inspired to practice the Dharma is the principal challenge in the spiritual life. This weekend retreat will explore ways to intensify our practice of the Dharma, by looking at key elements that keep us inspired. We shall address the art of reflection, review our meditation practice (both collectively and individually with interview) and visit again the centrality of kalyana mitrata - "the beautiful association" - in the Dharma life. We shall examine particularly the conditions needed that engage us more effectively with The Three Jewels.*

**The retreat will:** be held at Le Grezze, Highfields; cost \$150 full, \$130 part employment, \$100 concessional; vegetarian food. Limited to total 13 participants. **To make a booking or for more information, contact:** Viryaja on [vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org](mailto:vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org) or phone 07 46344303 or text 0404299573

### **COMING EVENTS IN NOVEMBER:**

There are two events proposed for November, which we hope you will be involved in. The first on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> is a call for volunteers for a Spring Clean-up, similar to last year, although likely to be less arduous this year! The second, on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup>, is a one-day 'intensive' for learning meditation or renewing one's meditation practice – suitable for people who may live at some distance to the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre or are otherwise unable to attend courses, meditation sessions and Friends Nights during the week.

### **THOUGHT OF THE MONTH:**

“Acting to please others rather than as one should, is to sell the priceless Doctrine.

Let these three expressions:

*I do not have,*

*I do not understand,*

*I do not know,*

be repeated over and over again.

That is the heart of my advice. Murmur, clamour, quarrel coming, certainty, courage, confidence lacking, do not say that it is right or wrong until you know for sure.”

(Padmasambhava from Canto 39)





## Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

# NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2015

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

Dear Friends,

We 'know' that things change and that one day the changes will bring us to our death; but we do not usually live our lives with awareness of this reality. It can be difficult to imagine not existing as we are now. We may think of life as a river flowing to the ocean – that all we need to do, to cope with our personal difficulties and the pain and suffering in the world, is to 'go with the flow'. We may think of ourselves as some kind of entity bobbing along on, or being thrown around by, the swirling river of life, rather than, in reality, as part of the process, part of the constant flow of events, coming into existence and passing away. The result is *"we treat this ever-changing river, inexorably, powerfully flowing towards the falls, as if it were merely a floor on which to arrange the furniture of our life. The world changes, but we stay the same – or so it feels."*<sup>1</sup> *"...we think of change not as a process but as a series of snapshots: this, then this, then this – whereas what we have is continual changingness. There are no 'things' only 'change'."*<sup>2</sup> Ignoring the reality of impermanence, we try to 'fix' our lives and are often unprepared or at least discomfited, when the 'furniture' is re-arranged, sometimes dramatically so.

So how can we come to live our lives more fully, be more in touch with impermanence, the reality of change? Maitreyabandhu<sup>3</sup> suggests there are three things we can do. Firstly, we can train ourselves to become mindful, developing a mind which can stay with direct experience long enough to truly see and feel the change as it actually happens. Secondly, we need to cultivate receptivity to change, to uncertainty, rather than irritably analysing and labelling that which cannot be 'fixed'. One way of cultivating receptivity is to have periods of doing nothing. Thirdly, we can *"try to notice how much we expect things not to change"*<sup>3</sup>. We may not exactly expect that pristine new car to last for ever, but at least for a longish time..... - how painful can be our experience when this expectation is not met! If we are feeling down, it may feel as though we shall never, ever be happy again. Noticing when we are surprised by change and noticing our response to the change – pleased or upset by it – will help us understand change, help us remember our human situation. In becoming more aware of change and our expectations, in becoming receptive to change without grasping or aversion, we become more integrated, happier, healthier and better prepared for our life journey and conclusion. [Viriyaja]

1. Maitreyabandhu, 2015, *The Journey and the Guide*, p.36, Windhorse Publications, Cambridge

2. ibid p.37

3. ibid

### OCTOBER 2015 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 1<sup>st</sup> FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; *The Eight Worldly Winds: Pleasure and Pain* [V]

Fri 2<sup>nd</sup> to Sun 4<sup>th</sup> *"Deepening the River"* – a retreat led by Siladasa

Thu 8<sup>th</sup> FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; *The Eight Worldly Winds: Loss and Gain* [K]

Thu 15<sup>th</sup> FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; *The Eight Worldly Winds: Praise and Blame* [R]

Thu 22<sup>nd</sup> FRIENDS NIGHT: *The Eight Worldly Winds: Fame and Infamy* [V]

Thu 29<sup>th</sup> FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; Sevenfold Puja [K]

## **FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM\***

The theme for the Dharma teachings component of Friends Nights for the earlier part of 2015 was 'getting back to basics'. We have looked at Buddhism generally; the unwholesome qualities of 'monkey minds'; ethical and insight aspects of the Threefold Path and the importance of *metta*. We have focussed on the Four Mind-turning Reflections and have begun to turn our attention to the teaching of *The Eight Worldly Winds*. In **October** we shall consider how the different pairs of worldly winds blow us around.

The program for the rest of the year, i.e. for **November and December**, will be an '*Engaging With Life*' series – more information in November!

\* **FRIENDS NIGHTS** 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 with other like-minded people. Thursday nights are **open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor**. 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.

### ***"Deepening the River" - Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> to Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> Oct, 2015***

*This weekend residential retreat will explore ways to intensify our Dharma practice, by looking at key elements that keep us inspired. We shall address the art of reflection, our meditation practice, the importance of 'kalyana mitrata' (spiritual friendship) in the Dharma life, and examine the conditions we need to engage more effectively with The Three Jewels.*

***It may not be too late to join this retreat, so if you are interested please contact immediately.***

***Viryaja on [vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org](mailto:vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org) or phone 07 46344303***

***The retreat will be held at Le Grezze, Highfields; will cost \$150 full, \$130 part employment, \$100 concessional; food will be vegetarian.***

## **COMING EVENTS IN NOVEMBER:**

There are two events proposed for November, which we hope you will be involved in:

**The first on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup>** is a call for volunteers for a **Spring Clean-up** - similar to last year, although likely to be less arduous this time! Anyone available to help us put up curtain tracks and hang curtains? Or do a bit of gardening?

**The second on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup>** is a one-day 'intensive' for learning meditation or renewing one's meditation practice – suitable for people who may live at some distance to the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre or are otherwise unable to attend courses, meditation sessions and Friends Nights during the week.

## **THOUGHT OF THE MONTH:**

*“Monks, these eight worldly conditions spin after the world and the world spins after these eight worldly conditions. Which eight?*

*Gain, loss, status, disgrace, censure, praise, pleasure and pain.*

*These are the eight worldly conditions that spin after the world, and the world spins after these eight worldly conditions.....”*

(from Lokavipatti Sutta, trans. Thanissaro Bhikkhu)





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

# NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2015

4-6 Cress Street

Toowoomba Qld 4350

[www.toowoombabuddhistcentre.org](http://www.toowoombabuddhistcentre.org)

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/toowoomba>

Dear Friends,

On the Furthering Buddhism course we recently looked at the Wheel of Life. Literally “looked at” because it represents one of the earliest uses of the visual arts to portray the Buddha’s teaching, and what an arresting vision it is. It consists of a huge wheel spinning around within the jaws of *Yama*, the Lord of Death, depicting the cycling of beings around and around in conditioned existence - *Samsara*. The largest part of the Wheel shows six realms through which beings cycle on the basis of their karma and rebirth. The realms are our present human state, the animal realm (wilful stupidity), a hungry ghost realm (intense craving), the realm of the Titans (competitive and envious), the tormented hell realm (hatred) and the divine God realm (blissful happiness). These are considered to be objectively existing states of being into which we can be reborn and live till the karma that put us there runs out. We know that many such places exist unfortunately even in our visible world.

The six realms can also be considered mental states occurring in a particular human life situation. Sometimes we cycle through them in a day. The Wheel is considered a mirror that the Lord of Death is holding up for us to look into. At the centre of the Wheel is a section with beings rising up and falling downwards, implying that we can evolve or regress. We are faced with such a choice every moment of the day and to choose effectively we need to know where we are now. Looking into the six realms can help us identify where we are. Most of the time we are locked into our minds going through these realms without actually knowing what is going on. It takes courage to really see them clearly, to know and fully experience them. Instead we tend to be cut off from them - repressing, avoiding, projecting them - or in other ways we are estranged from these aspects of ourselves.

Whilst modern Western psychologies tend to be concerned with returning a missing piece of this jig saw puzzle, fundamental to the Buddhist notion of the six realms is the idea of reclaiming *all* aspects of the self. The causes of our suffering are also the means of our release; in this way Nirvana is in Samsara and Samsara is in Nirvana. [Roger]

## **NOVEMBER 2015 CALENDAR**

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 5<sup>th</sup> **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; *Engaging with Life* series: mindfulness [R]

Thu 12<sup>th</sup> **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; *Engaging with Life* series: self-metta [K]

Sat 14<sup>th</sup> - **WORKING BEE:** 8am to 12 noon – can you help?



Thu 19<sup>th</sup> **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; *Engaging with Life* series: inspiration [V]

Thu 26<sup>th</sup> **FRIENDS NIGHT:** *SANGHA DAY* – Meditation and Sevenfold Puja [V]

Sat 28<sup>th</sup> **A TASTE OF MEDITATION:** 10am to 3pm [see below for details]

## ***FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM\****

The theme for the Dharma teachings for 2015 was first 'getting back to basics': looking at Buddhism generally; our 'monkey minds'; and then the ethical and insight aspects of the Threefold Path and the importance of *metta*. We then went more deeply with the Four Mind-turning Reflections and the teaching of *The Eight Worldly Winds*. The program for the rest of the year will include an '*Engaging With Life*' series. Drawing upon teachings, quotations, poetry and so on, we shall look at some of the ways in which we can focus on the needs of our day-to-day practice.

\* **FRIENDS NIGHTS** 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 with other like-minded people. Thursday nights are **open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor**. 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.

## ***WORKING BEE/SPRING CLEAN-UP – Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> 8am to 12 noon:***

We hope you will be involved in this **call for volunteers for a Spring Clean-up on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup>**. We expect the clean-up to be less arduous than last year but there are some specific tasks we hope to complete. Some may be completed earlier but please let us know [or just come along] if you are available to help us with any of these:

- \*cleaning windows/frames inside & some walls outside;
- \*kitchen cupboards and library area;
- \*vacuuming;
- \*Or do some gardening: trimming, put up some trellis wire for the jasmine, planting, watering and fertilising
- \*putting up curtain tracks and hanging curtains;
- \*toilet and storage area;
- \*dusting;

## ***A TASTE OF MEDITATION – Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> 10am to 12 noon:***

There will be a one-day 'intensive' for learning meditation or renewing one's meditation practice, led by Viryaja and Roger, on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup>. This day will be suitable for people who may live at some distance to the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre or are otherwise unable to attend courses, meditation sessions and Friends Nights during the week. Please see the attached flier below for details.

## ***THOUGHT OF THE MONTH:***

*"One can either continue to revolve passively on the Wheel or one can follow the Path, climb the ladder, become the plant, become the blossoms. Our fate is in our own hands."*

[Sangharakshita, 1995, *A Guide to the Buddhist Path*, Birmingham: Windhorse Publications, p. 80.]



Would you like a calmer mind and a more loving heart?

Viryaja and Roger will lead...

# ***A TASTE OF MEDITATION***

**Saturday, November 28<sup>th</sup>**

**10am to 3pm**

**Toowoomba Buddhist Centre,**

**4 - 6 Cress St, Toowoomba**

Meditation practices have been used by contemplatives for thousands of years. However, it is not necessary to have any particular religious affiliation, or previous experience, to benefit from meditation, which can help bring about greater tranquillity, increased confidence, positivity, health and happiness. In this introduction you will learn about finding a comfortable meditation posture, learn a Body Scan and experience the Mindfulness of Breathing and the Development of Loving Kindness meditation practices.

**Dharmacharini Viryaja** is a member of the Triratna Buddhist Order and Community, a modern, worldwide movement in Buddhism.

**Roger Bastick** has taught meditation and Buddhism at the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre for many years. He has had a long association with the Triratna Buddhist Community.

**Cost: \$30**

[But we'd really like you to be able to attend – so if cost is a factor, please contact us]

**Morning Tea will be provided. Please bring along a vegetarian lunch to share. Limit of 12 participants - bookings are essential.**

*To make a booking and for further details, please contact:*

*Viryaja on [vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org](mailto:vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org)*

*or phone 07 4634 4303; or [text only please] 0404 299 573*



## Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

# NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2015

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

Dear Friends,

Two questions asked at the Centre very recently: "Why bring only vegetarian food to share?" and "What do you [as a Buddhist] eat at Christmas?" These questions could be re-framed more generally as: "Why are Buddhists vegetarian; are they all vegetarian?" and "How does a vegetarian Buddhist manage to participate in events at Christmas-time in an omnivorous society, where family members and friends may be neither Buddhist nor vegetarian?"

The Buddha taught that all beings 'tremble before danger' and 'fear death'. Therefore, a person considering this 'does not kill or cause to kill'. Behind the simplicity of this teaching, 'lies a deep and radically transforming vision of existence'<sup>1</sup>. If we aspire to live a Buddhist life, whereby we become increasingly free from craving and aversion, and increasingly experience ourselves as not separate from, but interconnected with, all life, we shall do our best to meet the ethical Precepts. The first Precept is particularly important: '*I undertake to abstain from taking life*' or, in positive terms, '*With deeds of loving kindness, I purify my body*'. This is *metta*, without which compassion is impossible. Unfortunately, there is no space in this brief editorial, to explore either why some Buddhists may not be vegetarian, or what are the benefits of being vegetarian, or the greater harmlessness of being vegan. The Buddha, himself, very likely could not be vegetarian all the time, since he relied on others for food given to him at his daily alms round. We may perhaps assume that over time people became aware of the Buddha's teachings and perhaps became vegetarians themselves, despite meat-eating being common in India in the Buddha's day<sup>2</sup>. However, we live in very different times and circumstances. In our Western society, most of us have access to a formerly unimaginable abundance and variety of food. There is no reason why we should not be more ethical in our choice of food, thus avoiding unnecessary suffering and killing, and helping us to become more compassionate.

Here are some suggestions in answer to the second question: Let your family and friends know you are vegetarian and why. If you are entertained by others, who do not know you are vegetarian, accept any non-vegetarian food with gratitude, just as the Buddha would do. If you are doing the entertaining or 'taking a plate', prepare food which will also appeal to non-vegetarians. In my experience, there can be quite a demand for a particular mushroom nut roast<sup>3</sup>, served alongside the traditional meats, especially if it's also baked in pastry. [Viryaja]

1. Bodhipaksa, 2009, *Vegetarianism, A Buddhist View*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. p38, Windhorse Publications Ltd, Cambridge  
2. *ibid.* p79      3. Contact Viryaja on [vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org](mailto:vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org) if you would like this recipe.

***Good wishes for a happy and healthy festive season!***

### **DECEMBER 2015 CALENDAR**

*(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)*

- Thu 3<sup>rd</sup> **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation;  
*Engaging with Life* series: Colour and creativity with  
the Mandala of the Five Dhyanic Buddhas [V]
- Thu 10<sup>th</sup> **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation;  
*Engaging with Life* series: [to be announced ] [K]
- Thu 17<sup>th</sup> **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation and *Sevenfold Puja* [R]

### **JANUARY 2016 CALENDAR**

- Tue 19<sup>th</sup> **Women's Meditation** recommences – 10am to 12 noon [V]
- Thu 21<sup>st</sup> **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation [R]
- Thu 28<sup>th</sup> **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation and *Sevenfold Puja* [V]

## ***FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM\****

In 2015 a lot of ground has been covered in our exploration of the Dharma teachings. We 'got back to basics' by looking at Buddhism generally, at our 'monkey minds' and then the ethical and insight aspects of the Threefold Path and the importance of *metta*. We considered the *Four Mind-turning Reflections* and the teaching of *The Eight Worldly Winds*. In November we began an 'Engaging With Life' series, drawing upon the teachings to help us focus on the needs of our day-to-day practice. This series continues into December and the final evening for 2015 will be meditation and a Sevenfold Puja. Friends Nights will resume in 2016 on January 21<sup>st</sup>.

\* **FRIENDS NIGHTS, on Thursdays, 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.

## ***A 'TASTE OF MEDITATION' DAY:***

Ten people attended the day on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> November. About half of the participants live at some distance to the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre and are unable to attend events during the week. While nothing is yet firmly planned for next year, it is likely there will be other similar Saturday morning or day events. More information in late January.

## ***REJOICING IN MERIT – '... with delight in the good done ...'***

... by all those who not only worked so hard at the WORKING BEE/SPRING CLEAN-UP but also at other times and in a continuing way, to make the Centre and surrounds, attractive and better maintained. Sadhu !!!

Next year, as funds allow, we hope to continue the renovations and improvements. If you haven't visited the Centre recently, why not come and check out the atmosphere?

## ***A THOUGHT FOR THE SEASON:***

