



Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2016

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

Dear Friends,

Reflection is an important aspect of the spiritual life. It is not something we do once or twice but something we need to do regularly, to keep ourselves inspired. This time of the year is a good time to do it as we often use the New Year to sift through our priorities and establish new directions. It involves the part of mindfulness practice known as *sati-sampajjana* in Pali, usually translated as "clear comprehension" or "sense of purpose". Looking back over our lives we often notice a thread of meaning there; we need to ask ourselves if we are still being true to it in our present life, and where it will be taking us in the future.

One way of doing this is to draw up a personal mandala – a mandala of our life – an image, or symbol of the level of harmony and integration of the different aspects our being. We sit down with a large piece of paper and reflect on your life as it is at present. Look at all the different elements in it: work, relationships, family, friends, interests and hobbies, spiritual aspirations and so on. Then we try and decide, being as honest as we can, which is most important to us. Whatever that is we write it down in the centre of the paper. Then we take all the different things we have thought of, and put them on the paper, writing or drawing symbols for them. We place each one in a position which reflects its significance for us. The more important things take a central position and the more peripheral go nearer the edges. We try and arrange the different elements so as to bring out their relationship to one another.

The next stage to consider is how satisfied we are with the mandala. Do we want some things to move closer to the centre – to give them more time and importance in our lives? Is the mandala balanced, or does it need rearranging, or to have balancing elements added? Is what we have put at the centre the best thing for us to centre our life around? After considering these questions (perhaps talking them over with a friend) we can then draw a new mandala, the mandala of the next stage in our life, a mandala which comes closer to our ideal. [Roger]

FEBRUARY 2016 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

- Thu 4th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **The Five Spiritual Faculties – Introduction** [R]
- Thu 11th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **The Five Spiritual Faculties – Faith/Sraddha** [V]
- Thu 18th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** **PARINIRVANA DAY** [actually on 15th] - **Sevenfold Puja** [R]
- Thu 25th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **The Five Spiritual Faculties – Wisdom/Prajna** [K]

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*

In our exploration of the Dharma teachings in 2015, a lot of ground was covered. In 2016, we shall look at some key teachings, especially as they may be expressed in our day-to-day lives. Interspersed in the program will be opportunities to make contact with the wisdom of the Pali Canon suttas. In February and continuing into March, the Dharma focus will be on the Five Spiritual Faculties – faith, wisdom, energy, meditation, mindfulness. **Parinirvana Day**, an important Buddhist festival day recalling the Buddha's physical death, will take place on Feb. 18th. The program for the first half of the year is as follows:

March: Five Spiritual Faculties; a Pali Canon sutta

April: Conditionality

May: Conditionality; two Pali Canon suttas

June: Living With Kindness - *Metta*

* **FRIENDS NIGHTS, on Thursdays, 7-9pm, are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor.** They are an opportunity for people to come together to meditate, engage in Buddhist practices, learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma, but most importantly to engage in these activities, in friendship with other like-minded people. The evening's program always includes meditation and a social aspect; each month one or two devotional practices take place and other evenings have a Dharma study/activity component. There is no charge but a donation is very much appreciated.

'LET'S MEDITATE' – a brief introduction to Buddhist meditation on Saturday mornings:

During February, a short 4-week course will be led by Viryaja on Saturday mornings – Feb. 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th - from 10 to 12 noon. Cost: \$80 full, \$60 concession. Limited to 10 participants. Contact Viryaja on 07 46344303 or [text only] 0404299573, or email vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org to reserve a place.

NEW ROUND OF EVENING COURSES STARTING:

The next round of eight-week evening courses is proposed to start with *Introducing Buddhism* on Monday night February 15th (7-9pm) and *Buddhist Meditation and Mindfulness* on Tuesday night, February 16th (7-9pm).

PROGRAM OR RETREATS:

A program of retreats is being planned for the year and details will be announced in due course. They will probably be held in April/May, July and September/October.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

"The most important thing is remembering the most important thing."

[Zen Master Suzuki Roshi]





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER MARCH 2016

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

Dear Friends,

For many people, the day to day 'busyness' of life can be all-consuming. Sincere intentions to slow down, meditate or create some spaciousness among the daily demands of modern life, often fall by the wayside. It is easy to forget that what we concentrate upon is what we become - that our 'doings' create our 'beings'. So what can we do if we find ourselves whirling through life, skimming the surface of experience, feeling disconnected and uninspired? We can turn to what is beautiful. It is possible to appreciate the beautiful in a shopping mall, even experience moments of solitude there. But a more effective way may be by quite simply engaging with nature in some way – walking, gardening, looking, watching a moonrise or a sunset. Or by creating a beautiful living space or by involving oneself in the arts – listening to music, looking at paintings, reading and reflecting on poetry.

Poetry, both classical and modern, is frequently used as a focus for reflection on alternate weeks of the women's meditation sessions. During these reflections, we have experienced for ourselves that poetry, like other arts, "can lift us and lead our imaginations beyond what we know"¹. In sharing our experience of a poem with others, we can often discover connections with others, with life, of which we were unaware. We can tap into a deeper way of being and understanding. [Viriyaja]

1. Introduction by Dhivan to: Sangharakshita, 2010, *'The Religion of Art'* 3rd Edition, p.xxiii, Windhorse Publications, Cambridge

MARCH 2016 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

- Thu 3rd **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **The Five Spiritual Faculties – Energy/Virya** [V]
- Sat 5th at 11am: **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of Toowoomba Buddhist Centre Inc.**
- Thu 10th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **The Five Spiritual Faculties – Meditation/Samadhi** [R]
- Thu 17th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **The Five Spiritual Faculties – Mindfulness/Smrti** [R]
- Thu 24th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation and a **Threefold Puja** [K]
- Thu 31st **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation and a **Sutta from the PALI CANON** [V]

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*

In our exploration of the Dharma in 2016, we are looking at some key teachings, especially as they may be expressed in our day-to-day lives. Interspersed in the program will be opportunities to make contact with the wisdom of the Pali Canon suttas. This month, the Dharma focus will be on the remaining of the Five Spiritual Faculties not yet studied - Energy, Meditation and Mindfulness. On March 31st, the sutta from the Pali Canon will help us look at our priorities in life. The program for the following 3 months is as follows:

April: Conditionality

May: Conditionality; two Pali Canon suttas

June: Living With Kindness - *Metta*

* **FRIENDS NIGHTS, on Thursdays, 7-9pm, are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor.** They are an opportunity for people to come together to meditate, engage in Buddhist practices, learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma, but most importantly to engage in these activities, in friendship with other like-minded people. The evening's program always includes meditation and a social aspect; each month one or two devotional practices take place and other evenings have a Dharma study/activity component. There is no charge but a donation is very much appreciated.

LIFE WITH FULL ATTENTION- a practical course in Mindfulness:

This is an 8-week course, which will be led by Viryaja on Saturday mornings, beginning on April 16th - there may be a one-week break in late May. You do not need to be a Buddhist or have any meditation experience to benefit from this practical training in mindfulness in daily life. Mindfulness is often confused with meditation but 'mindfulness is a quality that enhances all experience, whether mundane or extraordinary'. The course will be limited to 6 participants. **More information about the course is attached below. If you are interested, please confirm your reservation with Viryaja by March 31st.**

A RETREAT - 'HINDRANCES AND ANTIDOTES' APRIL 22nd - 24th:

The program of retreats for the year begins with a **weekend residential retreat – 'Hindrances and Antidotes'**. The material to be presented has relevance for mindfully managing one's everyday mental states. This retreat, led by Roger and Karen, is suitable for beginning meditators, who have some familiarity with the meditation practices taught at the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre and who may not have participated in a retreat before. The retreat will be held at Le Grezze, near Highfields; cost - \$150 full, \$130 part time, \$100 concessional; vegetarian food; limited numbers. **For more information and to make a reservation, contact Roger on rlb@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org or ph. 0410608791 or 45649636.**

Other retreats planned for 2016:

July 29th to 31st led by Dharmalata and Kamalamayi, Triratna Order members from Sydney;

Sep 30th to Oct 3rd, a long weekend retreat led by Siladasa, a senior Triratna Order member from Melbourne.

NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION [NVC] WORKSHOP:

Attached to this newsletter is information about a Nonviolent Communication workshop to be held in Toowoomba in April. Cate Crombie, the facilitator of the workshop, has many years of experience in interpersonal communication and last year was fortunate to work with 13 of the nuns at Chenrezig – and will return this year at their invitation. Cate has also been asked by Nicole Kranz, training manager at Chenrezig, to offer workshops in the program there.

WOMEN'S MEDITATION:

The Tuesday morning women's meditation sessions are now entering their 9th year of operation and in recent months there has been an increase in the number of enquiries and participants. If you would like more information about these sessions, please contact Viryaja at vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org or ph. 46344303 or [text only] 0404299573. **Please note there will be no session on Tuesday March 22nd.**

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

...

and the way trees are so prodigious of leaves
and the leaves so innocent of strategy ...

and the way that the in-breath and the out-breath
are the same shapes as childhood and old age

and the way sometimes for a moment we get it
and it redeems all the wrong roads we've taken...

From 'Wabi-sabi', a poem by Stephen Parr [Ananda]



Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

LIFE WITH FULL ATTENTION

A PRACTICAL 8-WEEK COURSE IN MINDFULNESS

Commencing on

[with a possible 1-week break in May]

Saturday, April 16th 2016

from

10am to 12 noon

Cost : \$180 full, \$150 concessional

[Cost includes the text book and a Journal]

***Limited to 6 participants**

This course, led by Viryaja, has been designed by Maitreyabandhu, an experienced teacher of meditation and a member of the Triratna Buddhist Order; he is based at the London Buddhist Centre. The course has been offered in other Buddhist Centres around the world, including the Sydney Buddhist Centre. Mindfulness is often confused with meditation but 'mindfulness is a quality that enhances all experience, whether mundane or extraordinary. It is an ancient Buddhist wisdom that has been practised for centuries.' The course 'shows how, by applying mindfulness to modern times, we can steal back the lost moments of life'.

**To make a reservation, please contact Viryaja
on 46344303, [text only] 0404299573 or
vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org**



Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER APRIL 2016

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

Dear Friends,

I always find myself experiencing spiritual feelings around Easter. It is something to do with the weather – clear blue skies, bright sunlight and a hint of autumn and winter in the air. But it is also something to do with my Catholic upbringing – memories of candles and incense – a holy time of the year. Of course in the northern hemisphere it is the opposite season - the advent of spring.

Originally a pagan festival celebrating fertility, birth and death, and then later the Christian celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ, and the Eastern Orthodox celebration of the Mysteries, it is indeed a holy time of the year for the Christian church. Sangharakshita has pointed out that, as Western Buddhists we have been brought up in a Christian culture, and it is important to come to terms with this cultural conditioning rather than deny it, as some Western Buddhists do. We are better off assimilating those aspects of Christianity that help us in symbolic fashion engage with our Buddhist practice. Notions of spiritual death and rebirth, which Easter reverberates with, are very relevant to Buddhism.

Recently we completed our study of the Five Spiritual Faculties (Faith/Wisdom, Energy/Tranquillity and Mindfulness) on Friends Night and discovered that the Buddhist spiritual life is the balanced life at the highest possible level. If we're not trying to be balanced then we're not really practising Buddhism. We go out of balance and then bring ourselves back into balance, continuously. The spiritual life is about dying to the old self (ego-identity) and bringing a new one into existence all the time.

If our spiritual journey is preoccupied with gaining security it will only lead to disappointment and pain. The important thing is the journey, not having a goal. Beginning that journey without hope of getting ground under our feet is important. That groundlessness is the mystery of Buddhism. [Roger]

APRIL 2016 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 7th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; **Conditionality – Introduction: Principles & Scope [K]**

Thu 14th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; **The Reactive and Creative Mind [R]**

Thu 21st FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; **Conditionality as Middle Way [V]**

Fri 22nd – Sun 24th WEEKEND RETREAT: **The Five Hindrances & their Antidotes [R &K]**

Thu 28th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation and a **Sevenfold Puja [V]**

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*

In our exploration of the Dharma in 2016, we are looking at some key teachings, especially as they may be expressed in our day-to-day lives. Interspersed in the program will be opportunities to make contact with the wisdom of the Pali Canon suttas. This month, the focus of study will be on Conditionality the fundamental underlying principle of the Dharma.

The program for the following 2 months is as follows:

May: Conditionality; two Pali Canon suttas

June: Living With Kindness - *Metta*

* **FRIENDS NIGHTS, on Thursdays, 7-9pm, are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor.** They are an opportunity for people to come together to meditate, engage in Buddhist practices, learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma, but most importantly to engage in these activities, in friendship with other like-minded people. The evening's program always includes meditation and a social aspect; each month one or two devotional practices take place and other evenings have a Dharma study/activity component. There is no charge but a donation is very much appreciated.

LIFE WITH FULL ATTENTION- a practical course in Mindfulness:

This 8-week course, led by Viryaja on Saturday mornings, begins April 16th - You do not need to be a Buddhist or have any meditation experience to benefit from this practical training in mindfulness in daily life. Mindfulness is often confused with meditation but 'mindfulness is a quality that enhances all experience, whether mundane or extraordinary'. The course is fully booked but there is always a possibility of someone dropping out. **If you are interested, please contact Viryaja by April 9th**

A RETREAT - 'HINDRANCES AND ANTIDOTES' APRIL 22nd - 24th:

The program of retreats for the year begins with a **weekend residential retreat – 'Hindrances and Antidotes'**. The material to be presented has relevance for mindfully managing one's everyday mental states. This retreat, led by Roger and Karen, is suitable for beginning meditators, who have some familiarity with the meditation practices taught at the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre and who may not have participated in a retreat before. The retreat will be held at Le Grezze, near Highfields; cost - \$150 full, \$130 part time, \$100 concessional; vegetarian food; limited numbers. **For more information and to make a reservation, contact Roger on rlb@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org or ph. 0410608791 or 45649636.**

Other retreats planned for 2016:

July 29th to 31st led by Dharmalata and Kamalamayi, Triratna Order members from Sydney;

Sep 30th to Oct 3rd, a long weekend retreat led by Siladasa, a senior Triratna Order member from Melbourne.

NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION [NVC] WORKSHOP 16th/17th April:

Attached to this newsletter is information about a Nonviolent Communication workshop to be held in Toowoomba in April. Cate Crombie, the facilitator of the workshop, has many years of experience in interpersonal communication and last year was fortunate to work with 13 of the nuns at Chenrezig – and will return this year at their invitation. Cate has also been asked by Nicole Kranz, training manager at Chenrezig, to offer workshops in the program there.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

Come, come whoever you are!

Wanderer, worshipper, lover of leaving.

It doesn't matter.

Ours is not a caravan of despair.

Come, come even if you have broken your
vows a thousand times.

Come, come yet again, come!

Rumi



**LIFE WITH FULL
FILE ATTENTION**

A PRACTICAL 8-WEEK COURSE IN MINDFULNESS

Commencing on

[with a possible 1-week break in May]

Saturday, April 16th 2016

from

10am to 12 noon

Cost : \$180 full, \$150 concessional

[Cost includes the text book and a Journal]

***Limited to 6 participants**

This course, led by Viryaja, has been designed by Maitreyabandhu, an experienced teacher of meditation and a member of the Triratna Buddhist Order; he is based at the London Buddhist Centre. The course has been offered in other Buddhist Centres around the world, including the Sydney Buddhist Centre. Mindfulness is often confused with meditation but 'mindfulness is a quality that enhances all experience, whether mundane or extraordinary. It is an ancient Buddhist wisdom that has been practised for centuries.' The course 'shows how, by applying mindfulness to modern times, we can steal back the lost moments of life'.

*** NB the course is currently fully booked but there is always
the possibility of someone dropping out.**

**If you are interested, please contact Viryaja
on 46344303, [text only] 0404299573 or
vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org**



Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER MAY 2016

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

Dear Friends,

“The Buddha’s Enlightenment is the central event in Buddhism and we mark this event on Buddha Day (sometimes called *Wesak*), the most important festival in our calendar. Many of the Buddha’s disciples also attained Enlightenment and in the centuries that have followed there have been many other Enlightened masters. They too are recalled at Buddha Day with reading of accounts of their lives or from works they wrote themselves. But Enlightenment is also an ideal to which all Buddhists aspire. So Buddha Day is a chance to reflect on what it might mean for individual Buddhists.”¹

In the humdrum of our everyday lives, our ever becoming Enlightened in this life, or any other life, can seem very far away indeed. Yet, drawing upon events in the Buddha’s life, as he progressed towards Enlightenment, we can see the relevance to our own development.² We get a glimpse of our existential predicament from the Buddha’s experience of the Four Sights – old age, sickness, death and a holy man. Although we may not physically leave home and ‘go forth’ into the homeless life, we can more and more let go of our identification with the group, which has such a strong ‘gravitational pull’ to the mundane. The Buddha’s exchange of princely clothes for those of a beggar encourages us to ‘look for the reality behind our masks’ of our psychological identity and spiritual individuality. Before going forth, the Buddha had led a privileged and indulgent life; later, during his quest, he subjected himself to severe austerities. Neither of these extremes was conducive to Enlightenment. From his renouncement of austerities, we can learn that sheer force of will does not work – integration and harnessing the unconscious are what is needed. Sometimes, when you embark upon a spiritual path, you may find that others among your family, friends or other group relationships become angry or withdraw from the relationship. You may have to be prepared to ‘go it alone’. You also need to be prepared to accept help with gratitude, from wherever you can get it.³ This may be found through the development of spiritual friendship, the context of Sangha. [Viriyaja]

1. www.thebuddhistcentre.com
2. *Who is the Buddha?*, Sangharakshita, 1995, Windhorse Publications, Birmingham
3. *ibid* p.47

MAY 2016 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

- Thu 5th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **CONDITIONALITY** – *Emptiness and Interdependence* [R]
- Thu 12th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **PALI CANON:** *Culagosinga Sutta* [K]
- Thu 19th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** **BUDDHA DAY:** Meditation and Sevenfold Puja [V]
- Thu 26th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **PALI CANON:** *Kosambiya Sutta* [R]

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*

In our exploration of the Dharma in 2016, we are looking at some key teachings, especially as they may be expressed in our day-to-day lives. Interspersed in the program will be opportunities to make contact with the wisdom of the Pali Canon suttas. This month, we shall first complete the study on Conditionality, the fundamental underlying principle of the Dharma and then look at two more of these suttas. **Buddha Day**, when we celebrate the Buddha’s Enlightenment, will be on May 19th, although the actual full moon day is two days later on the 21st.

The program for **June** will focus on *Metta* and ‘Living With Kindness’.

* FRIENDS NIGHTS, on Thursdays, 7-9pm, are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor. They are an opportunity for people to come together to meditate, engage in Buddhist practices, learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma, but most importantly to engage in these activities, in friendship with other like-minded people. The evening's program always includes meditation and a social aspect; each month one or two devotional practices take place and other evenings have a Dharma study/activity component. There is no charge but a donation is very much appreciated.

APRIL RETREAT - 'Hindrances and Antidotes':

The retreat last month, which was led by Roger Bastick and Karen Gaul, was successful on many fronts. It was not only well-attended but the group jelled well and participation was high. There were friendships started and a group of 3 have decided to take the teachings into everyday life by gathering a couple of times a week to meditate together. Sadhu! The simplicity of the cottages and the surroundings helped the participants to step out of their working lives and give the weekend over to the Dharma. However, it wasn't only the participants who were buzzing at the end- I carried the energy for a couple of days after and had much to reflect upon. Thank you to Roger who skilfully led the discussions, and the retreatants who gave of themselves so freely. Karen

RETREATS TO COME IN 2016:

July 29th to 30th: led by Dharmalata and Kamalamayi, Triratna Buddhist Order members from Sydney.

September 30th to October 3rd: a long weekend retreat led by Siladasa, a senior Triratna Buddhist Order member from Melbourne.

LIFE WITH FULL ATTENTION- a practical course in Mindfulness:

This 8-week course, led by Viryaja on Saturday mornings, is now in its 4th week. It was not possible to include all the people who wanted to participate and so the course may be offered again in October/November, depending upon interest at the time.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

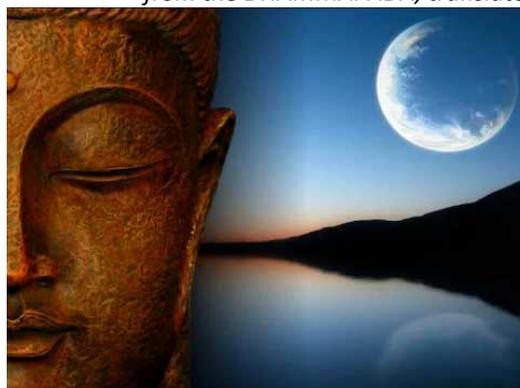
*However young,
The seeker who sets out upon the way
Shines bright over the world.*

*But day and night
The person who is awake
Shines in the radiance of the spirit.*

*Meditate.
Live purely.
Be quiet.
Do your work with mastery.*

*Like the moon,
Come out from behind the clouds!
Shine.*

from the DHAMMAPADA, translated by Thomas Byrom





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER JUNE 2016

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

Dear Friends,

We have spent quite a bit of time this month on investigating the nature of emptiness. From a Buddhist perspective, the nature of existence is quite mysterious. Things are not what they seem. At one level things seem to exist solidly and separately from one another – this is how we see the world – Buddhism does not deny this. Without this empirical perception of the world we would not be able to interact with it and manipulate it to our ends so successfully. This way of seeing the world gave us a huge evolutionary advantage.

But is it the reality of the situation? The Buddha discovered through his Enlightenment experience that at another level everything arises in dependence upon conditions; they arise, exist for as long as the necessary conditions allow them to exist, and then cease. So actually everything is impermanent and insubstantial and conditional. This he called *pratitya samutpada* – the Law of Conditionality or Dependent Arising.

Later it became known as the teaching of emptiness (*sunyata*). Because everything is a process over time, and is interconnected with everything else in space, it is empty of its own self-nature. It does not exist in a self-subsistent way. This was in his day (and still is) a radical teaching because it states that there is no irreducible element to our being, no eternal soul.

It is said that the Enlightened mind can see the world both ways at the same time. But we unenlightened beings cannot and so it becomes a source of suffering for us. There is a mismatch between the seeming permanence and solidity of the empirical world that we perceive, and that we long for, and the ephemeral nature of the reality.

The message of Buddhism is very subtle. We are not an independently existing self, separate from everything else, but we are also not not a self. [Roger]

JUNE 2016 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 2nd **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **LIVING WITH KINDNESS – The Meaning of Metta** [K]

Thu 9th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **LIVING WITH KINDNESS – The Way of Metta** [V]

Thu 16th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** **Threefold Puja** [R]

Thu 23th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **LIVING WITH KINDNESS – Cultivating Metta** [K]

Thu 30th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **LIVING WITH KINDNESS – Ethical Foundations of Metta** [R]

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*

In our exploration of the Dharma in 2016, we are looking at some key teachings, especially as they may be expressed in our day-to-day lives. Interspersed in the program will be opportunities to make contact with the wisdom of the Pali Canon suttas. This month, we shall be looking at Metta and Living with Kindness. The program for the rest of the year will be announced in the July Newsletter.

* **FRIENDS NIGHTS, on Thursdays, 7-9pm, are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor.** They are an opportunity for people to come together to meditate, engage in Buddhist practices, learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma, but most importantly to engage in these activities, in friendship with other like-minded people. The evening's program always includes meditation and a social aspect; each month one or two devotional practices take place and other evenings have a Dharma study/activity component. There is no charge but a donation is very much appreciated.

NEW COURSES STARTING

The next round of eight week courses is proposed to start with *Traditional Buddhist Meditation and Mindfulness* on Monday June 6th (7-9pm) and *Introducing Buddhism* on Tuesday June 7th (7-9pm).

RETREATS TO COME IN 2016:

When: July 29th to July 30th

What: a weekend retreat led by **Dharmalata** and **Kamalamayi**,
Triratna Buddhist Order members from Sydney

Where: at Le Grezze, Highfields.

The theme, still to be confirmed, is likely to be the four **Brahma Viharas**
(*metta*/loving kindness; *karuna*/compassion; *mudita*/sympathetic joy; *upekkha*/equanimity).

Cost: Full - \$150; Part employed - \$130; Concession - \$100

Vegetarian food; limited numbers.

For more information, or to make a booking, contact Viryaja on

vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org or phone 07 46344303 or [text only] 0404299573.

LATER IN THE YEAR: September 30th to October 3rd - a long weekend retreat led by Siladasa, a senior Triratna Buddhist Order member from Melbourne.

LIFE WITH FULL ATTENTION- a practical course in Mindfulness:

The current 8-week course, led by Viryaja on Saturday mornings, may be offered again in October/November, depending upon interest at the time.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

Pure and empty are all events

Pure and empty am I

All is pure and empty

Like infinite blue sky.





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER JULY 2016

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

Dear Friends,

Recently at the Centre there was a discussion about family relationships. Despite all our good intentions to resolve a difficulty, to 'fix' it so that everyone is happy, often a family member will seem to be perverse in their response to such well-meaning efforts. They may respond quite differently to how we had hoped or expected them to do, i.e. 'for their own good'! We discover that we cannot control others' happiness. Why is this so?

The Buddha taught that there are a number of ways in which we view the world the wrong way up. There are four of these topsy turvy views, or *viparyayas*. We 'take what is actually impermanent for permanent'; what is actually insubstantial as substantial; the ugly as beautiful and 'we take what is actually unsatisfactory, what cannot give us real lasting deep satisfaction, for being satisfactory or containing the possibility of complete pleasure'.¹ We err in our belief that we are permanent, separate, unchanging beings, who are able to control the world around us, able to 'fix' things. But we are more like eddies in a river – a constant flow of ever-changing conditions, albeit in familiar patterns of experience. Like us, all others, all phenomena, arise and cease in dependence on conditions.

Does this mean then, that we are helpless to be of help? What can we do in this whirlpool-like state we call our lives? We need to drop any idea of being able to 'fix' our lives or the lives of others. We need to do what we can to alleviate suffering and to contribute to, and rejoice in, the happiness of others, while not having expectations about the outcome of our efforts; expectations, themselves, can bring disappointment and create more suffering. We cannot ultimately control the happiness of others. We can, however, be a force for the good. We can do this by becoming more integrated and developing positive emotion. In the light of the teachings of conditionality, of no fixed, substantial, unchanging self, we can, with awareness, engage in wise, ethical actions of body, speech and mind. [Virya]

1. *Subhuti: Going for Refuge*, ed. Dharmachari Sarvasiddhi, 1991

JULY 2016 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 7th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **EMPTINESS 1. – a presentation by Gary** *[see below]* [V]

Thu 14th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **EMPTINESS 2. – a presentation by Gary** *[see below]* [K]

Thu 21st **FRIENDS NIGHT:** **DHARMA DAY with Sevenfold Puja** [V]

Thu 28th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; introducing **Dharmalata** and **Kalamayji**;
open discussion [V]

Fri 29-Sun 31 **THE BRAHMA VIHARAS** - a weekend retreat at Le Grezze *[more information below]*

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*

In our exploration of the Dharma in 2016, we have been looking at some key teachings, especially as they may be expressed in our day-to-day lives. Interspersed in the program we have made contact with the wisdom of the Pali Canon suttas. This month, it is a delight to have Gary Crunkhorn contributing to the study program. As all phenomena arise in dependence upon conditions, they can be described as neither existent nor non-existent, and therefore as being empty of self-nature. In a series of presentations, Gary will explore this 'emptiness'.

The study program for the rest of the year is:

August: continue 'Emptiness'; *Encounters with Enlightenment* – based on a book by Saddhaloka

September and October: *Ritual and Devotion in Buddhism* – based on a book by Sangharakshita

November: *What is the Sangha?* - also based on a book by Sangharakshita

December: *Udana* – readings from the 'Inspired Utterances of the Buddha' [Pali Canon]

* **FRIENDS NIGHTS, on Thursdays, 7-9pm, are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor.** They are an opportunity for people to come together to meditate, engage in Buddhist practices, learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma, but most importantly to engage in these activities, in friendship with other like-minded people. The evening's program always includes meditation and a social aspect; each month one or two devotional practices take place and other evenings have a Dharma study/activity component. There is no charge but a donation is very much appreciated.

SUPPORTING THE CENTRE:

In the last year or so, a number of people have been very generous with their time and skills, in maintaining and enhancing the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre. This year there are plans to repair and renovate the shrine room windows and perhaps, if funds allow, begin the process of cladding the building. The Centre is able to operate on a day-to-day basis with funds generated by courses, retreats and donations. There is no charge for regular, non-course events such as Friends Night and meditation sessions. Please consider making a donation through the *Dana* [giving] bowl, each time you visit for these events, to help us continue the maintenance and enhancement program.

'THE BRAHMA VIHARAS' RETREAT - Fri July 29th to Sun July 31st:

"The four Brahma Viharas represent the most beautiful and hopeful aspects of our human nature. They are mindfulness practices that protect the mind from falling into habitual patterns of reactivity. Also referred to as mind liberating practices, they awaken powerful healing energies that brighten and lift the mind to increasing levels of clarity. As a result, the boundless states of loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity manifest as forces of purification transforming the turbulent heart into a refuge of calm, focussed awareness."

This weekend retreat led by Dharmalata and Kamalamayi, Triratna Buddhist Order members from Sydney, and assisted by Viryaja, will be held at Le Grezze, Highfields. Cost: Full - \$150; Part employed - \$130; Concession - \$100. Vegetarian food. Limited numbers. **NB This retreat is now fully booked**, however if you are interested and would like to be on a waiting list, or for more information, please contact Viryaja on vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org or phone 07 46344303 or [text only] 0404299573. If you are missing out on this retreat, perhaps you would be interested in another one later in the year: **September 30th to October 3rd** - a long weekend retreat led by Siladasa, a senior Triratna Buddhist Order member from Melbourne. More information in the August Newsletter.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH: [From the *Vipallasa Sutta*, trans. Andrew Olendzki, Access to Insight 2005]

"These four, O Monks, are distortions of perception, distortions of thought, distortions of view...

...
*Sensing no change in the changing,
Sensing pleasure in suffering
Assuming "self" where there's no self,
Sensing the un-lovely as lovely —
Gone astray with wrong views, beings
Mis-perceive with distorted minds.*

*Bound in the bondage of Mara,
Those people are far from safety.
They're beings that go on flowing:
Going again from death to birth.*

*But when in the world of darkness
Buddhas arise to make things bright,
They present this profound teaching
Which brings suffering to an end.*

*When those with wisdom have heard this,
They recuperate their right mind ... "*





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2016

4-6 Cress Street

Toowoomba Qld 4350

www.toowoombabuddhistcentre.org

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/toowoomba>

Dear Friends,

Ultimately Buddhism is a practical path. As you know, the word Buddha means "Awakened One". The Buddha stressed again and again throughout his life that the Eightfold Path – 1) Complete Vision, 2) Complete Emotion, 3) Complete Action, 4) Complete Speech, 5) Complete Livelihood, 6) Complete Effort, 7) Complete Mindfulness and 8) Complete Meditation - was the path to awakening. The Path is often compressed into the Threefold Path – Ethics (3, 4, 5), Meditation (6, 7, 8) and Insight (1, 2).

So the path of Buddhism is all about waking up. The implication is that normally in life we are in a sort of sleep. We live in a sort of stupor. We need to wake up to the significance of life, to be looking for some sort of meaning in it. "The unexamined life is not worth living" (Socrates). The path cannot start without some sort of vision. Do you have a vision?

Then we need to wake up to ourselves in the sense of taking moral responsibility for our actions, not leaving it in the hands of external events or agents. Our actions can harm others and ourselves, or help them. This involves realising that our actions have consequences and, therefore, how important it is that we are accountable for our own mental states – our motives and intentions. This is the first phase of the Threefold Path. Have you woken up to the importance of living an ethical life?

The second phase of this path provides us with the tools to wake up – meditation and mindfulness. It does this by raising our level of self-awareness and the ability to direct our attention. We learn to recognize when our mental states and intentions are skilful and unskilful, and the importance of changing them from one to the other. It also teaches us how to manage and transform them. We can't do this unless we have self-awareness. Are you using your self-awareness, practising meditation and mindfulness?

Finally there is waking up in the sense of developing insight, which involves "seeing things as they are". Insight depends on clarifying the mind through meditation and occurs when we wake up to the true nature of reality and let go of our deluded and neurotic views. We see through the delusion of our separate self and to see how this delusion drives our neurotic craving for security, our self-centred grasping. Insight, which is the final waking up, is a deeply intuitive realisation of how things really are and it finally frees us from our deluded view and the associated craving. Have you awakened to aspects of reality? [Roger]

AUGUST 2016 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 4th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; **EMPTINESS 3. – a presentation by Gary** *[see below]* [R]

Thu 11th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; **EMPTINESS 4. – a presentation by Gary** *[see below]* [K]

Thu 18th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; **ENCOUNTERS WITH ENLIGHTENMENT** – stories from the Buddha's life [R]

Thu 25th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; **Sevenfold Puja** [V]

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*

In our exploration of the Dharma in 2016, we have been looking at some key teachings, especially as they may be expressed in our day-to-day lives. Interspersed in the program we have made contact with the wisdom of the Pali Canon suttas. This month, Gary will continue his contribution on the topic of Emptiness. Then a look at stories from the Buddha's life, with a Sevenfold Puja at the end of the month.

The study program for the rest of the year is:

September and October: *Ritual and Devotion in Buddhism* – based on a book by Sangharakshita

November: *What is the Sangha?* - also based on a book by Sangharakshita

December: *Udana* – readings from the '*Inspired Utterances of the Buddha*' [Pali Canon]

* **FRIENDS NIGHTS, on Thursdays, 7-9pm, are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor.** They are an opportunity for people to come together to meditate, engage in Buddhist practices, learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma, but most importantly to engage in these activities, in friendship with other like-minded people. The evening's program always includes meditation and a social aspect; each month one or two devotional practices take place and other evenings have a Dharma study/activity component. There is no charge but a donation is very much appreciated.

REPORT ON 'THE BRAHMA VIHARAS' RETREAT - Fri July 29th to Sun July 31st:

This was my first retreat with the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre and it was awesome. It was the best retreat I have been on - wonderful teachings, helpful exercises and meditation practice with warm friendly people in a lovely location. The food was amazing too! I now have a better understanding and enthusiasm for the Brahma Viharas. Big thanks to everyone. [Pam]

FUTURE RETREATS:

The next retreat is a long weekend one from **Friday September 30th to Monday 3rd October, led by Siladasa, topic to be announced.** This retreat is now fully booked, however, there is a waiting list and experience shows from the July retreat that most people on the waiting list may eventually have a place on the retreat. **So, if you are interested, please contact Roger on rlb@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org or 041060879, or Viryaja on vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org or [text only] 0404299573.**

NEW ROUND OF COURSES STARTING

The next round of *Traditional Buddhist meditation and Mindfulness* and *Introducing Buddhism* eight-week evening courses will start in the last week of August on the Monday and Tuesday nights respectively .

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

“In the same way I saw an ancient path, an ancient road, travelled by the Completely Self-awakened ones of former times. And what is this ancient path ... ? Just this noble eightfold path ... I followed that path. Following it, I came to direct knowledge of aging & death, direct knowledge of the origination of aging & death, direct knowledge of the cessation of aging & death, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of aging & death... I have revealed it to monks, nuns, male lay followers & female lay followers, so that this holy life has become powerful, rich, detailed, well-populated, wide-spread, proclaimed among celestial & human beings.”[Samyutta Nikaya, XII, 65.]





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2016

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

Dear Friends,

The Buddha said life is an illusion; we live our lives as if in a dream. By this he meant, not that we don't exist but, that we each imagine ourselves to be a permanent, unchanging 'self', separate from 'other'. In effect we are asleep, unaware of the Reality of how things really are. We are therefore not Awake in Buddhist terms. However, we do have ordinary everyday consciousness, a normal waking state, which we may take for granted. We may also take our normal sleeping state for granted and, so too, our dreams¹.

The value of the dream state is recognised in two ways in Buddhism: firstly, we experience a state of consciousness other than in a waking state; secondly, we experience some dreams as quite different, on a higher level of consciousness². The American Indians call this unusually significant kind of dream a 'Big Dream'. For Buddhists, it might be termed 'an archetypal dream'. Such dreams are full of 'energy and richness'. If attended to, they can bring a greater interaction between our waking and sleeping states; they can become a source of inspiration in our spiritual practice³. They are full of symbols, which may be transformative, and which can be further explored. So how may we tap into this rich source of inspiration?

Some may say they are not aware of dreaming or that they do not remember their dreams very well. However, you can 'write down your dreams, and try to make them part of your waking consciousness'⁴. Even to remember your dreams, having pen and paper handy, helps you remember. Spiritually fruitful dreams may be evoked by preparing yourself for going to sleep by reading Dharma, chanting mantras, meditation, reflection or puja, rather than late night TV or completing a fascinating crossword. Inspiration may come from exploring dreams further, through drawing, dialogue, poetry and other creative means. And, putting a suitable image on your computer desktop can be a powerful reminder of any flashes of insight you may have experienced. A word of warning - try not to over-interpret your dreams, wanting to get an 'insight' or a 'result'. A relaxed approach really helps. May your sleeping and dreaming states help you to Awaken! [Viryaja]

1. Ugyen Sangharakshita, 2009, *The Essential Sangharakshita*, pp328/9, Wisdom Publications
2. *ibid.*
3. Sangharakshita, 1980, *The Rechungpa's Journey to Weu Seminar*, p5
4. *ibid.*

SEPTEMBER 2016 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 1st FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; **EMPTINESS 5.** – a presentation by Gary *[see below]* [V]

Thu 8th FRIENDS NIGHT: Celebrating **PADMASAMBHAVA DAY** – Threefold Puja [R]

Thu 15th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; **RITUAL & DEVOTION - Introduction** *[see below]* [V]

Thu 22nd FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; **RITUAL & DEVOTION - Worship and Offerings** [K]

Thu 29th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; **RITUAL & DEVOTION – Salutation and Going For Refuge** [V]

Fri 30th – Mon Oct 3rd: a 3-day RETREAT led by Siladasa *[see below for details]*

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*

In our exploration of the Dharma in 2016, we have been looking at some key teachings, especially as they may be expressed in our day-to-day lives. We have also made contact with the wisdom of the Pali Canon suttas. Last month, due to ill health, we were not able to offer the program as had been advertised. This month, Gary will conclude his series of thought-provoking presentations on the topic of Emptiness, we celebrate Padmasambhava Day and - to help with our emotional engagement with the spiritual life - we begin a series on *Ritual and Devotion in Buddhism*, based on a book by Sangharakshita. The study program for the rest of the year is:

October: continue with *Ritual and Devotion in Buddhism*

November: *What is the Sangha?* - based on a book by Sangharakshita

December: *Udana* – readings from the *'Inspired Utterances of the Buddha'* [Pali Canon]

* **FRIENDS NIGHTS, on Thursdays, 7-9pm, are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor.** They are an opportunity for people to come together to meditate, engage in Buddhist practices, learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma, but most importantly to engage in these activities, in friendship with other like-minded people. The evening's program always includes meditation and a social aspect; each month one or two devotional practices take place and other evenings have a Dharma study/activity component. There is no charge but a donation is very much appreciated.

"WHERE PRAJNA [wisdom] MEETS SRADDHA [faith]"

a 3-day retreat led by **SILADASA** at Le Grezze, Highfields

September 30th to October 3rd 2016

Cost: \$170 full; \$150 part-time; \$120 concessional

"Faith and wisdom are two of the five spiritual faculties that the Buddha exhorted his followers to cultivate in the quest for Awakening. In this long weekend retreat, Siladasa will explore how these faculties eventually become one experience, and examine the methods that contribute to the arising of faith, (or confidence-trust) and wisdom. He will draw upon the Buddha's indications from canonical sources as well as the thoughts of Triratna founder, Sangharakshita. In addition to participating in the discussion of the material, attendees will be led through relevant meditation and simple devotional practices"

The last retreat for the year, over a long weekend, is led by Siladasa, a senior Triratna Buddhist Order member from Melbourne. This retreat is almost fully booked. **If you are interested in attending, want to be put on a waiting list, or require more details, please contact Karen on karen.gaul@bigpond.com or 0427681863, or Viryaja on vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org or [text only, please] 0404299573.**

NEW ROUND OF COURSES STARTING

The next eight-week *Introducing Buddhism* course is proposed to start Monday night September 5th (7-9pm) and the next eight-week *Traditional Buddhist Meditation and Mindfulness* on Tuesday night September 6th (7-9pm).

LIFE WITH FULL ATTENTION [a practical course in mindfulness]:

This 8-week course, on Saturday mornings, starts October 8th. See below for more details.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

*Thus shall ye think of all this fleeting world:
A star at dawn, a bubble in a stream,
A flash of lightning in a summer cloud,
A flickering lamp, a phantom, and a dream.*

From the *Diamond Sutra*



**LIFE WITH FULL
FILE ATTENTION**

A PRACTICAL 8-WEEK COURSE IN MINDFULNESS

Commencing on
Saturday, October 8th 2016
from
9.45am to 12.15pm
Cost: \$180 full, \$150 concessional
[Cost includes the text book and a Journal]
***Limited to 8 participants**

This course, led by Viryaja, has been designed by Maitreyabandhu, an experienced teacher of meditation and a member of the Triratna Buddhist Order; he is based at the London Buddhist Centre. The course has been offered in other Buddhist Centres around the world, including the Sydney Buddhist Centre. Mindfulness is often confused with meditation but 'mindfulness is a quality that enhances all experience, whether mundane or extraordinary. It is an ancient Buddhist wisdom that has been practised for centuries.' The course 'shows how, by applying mindfulness to modern times, we can steal back the lost moments of life'.

**To make a reservation, please contact Viryaja
on 46344303, 0404299573 [text only] or
vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org**



Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2016

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

Dear Friends,

Lately, in the meditation classes I teach at the centre, I've been thinking of them as a process of helping people *adjust* their consciousness. I mean 'adjust' in the sense of bringing back into balance, as when we may need a spinal adjustment if it goes out of alignment. For example, our minds are out of balance when we are unable to focus or concentrate on the matter at hand because we are in a chronic state of distraction. Also we are out of balance when we are overusing the *doing* mind rather than living in the *being* mind as well. The ironical thing is that most of the time when this is happening we are not aware of it, even though we have self-awareness!

So the first thing we learn is how to regain the ability to direct our attention. The mindfulness of breathing is very good for this. We concentrate on the breath, we get distracted, and then we notice this and bring our minds back to the breath. The moment we do this is the moment of mindfulness - we *recollect* our awareness. The whole practice, through repetition, gradually builds the skill of mindfulness and a steadying of the mind.

On the course, through exercises, we also explore the fact that the mind is capable of functioning in an alternative mode to that of critical thinking. The latter does not exhaust the mind's potentialities. Nature has also bequeathed us the ability for non-thinking, non-conceptual awareness. This is awareness itself, an intimate part of the mind, but one we hardly ever occupy or visit. From this dimension we can be aware of ourselves thinking. Thinking is not all there is to conscious experience. The *being* mode is an entirely different *way of knowing* from the thinking or *doing* mode. Not better, just different.

To lead a more balanced life we need to spend time in the *being* mode. Spending sixteen hours a day, with only an eight hour break for sleep, day in and day out, in the *doing*/thinking mind is not healthy. What is healthy is exploring and developing the *being* mind that quietly attends without ongoing commentary. We can use this awareness through all our senses; we can have intuitions about things and feelings. Our daily living can be more joyful and fulfilling, becoming an indirect way of raising our consciousness. Also learning to occupy awareness itself can free us from identifying with the contents of awareness, our thoughts and emotions. This gives us a freedom to choose how we respond to them. When this happens consider your mind adjusted [Roger].

OCTOBER 2016 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

- Thu 6st **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **RITUAL & DEVOTION – Confession of Faults** [see below] [K or R]
- Thu 13th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **RITUAL & DEVOTION - Rejoicing in Merit** [see below] [R or K]
- Thu 20th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **RITUAL & DEVOTION –
Entreaty and Supplication/Heart Sutra** [see below] [V]
- Thu 27nd **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **SEVENFOLD PUJA** [K or R]

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*

In our exploration of the Dharma in 2016, we have been looking at some key teachings, especially as they may be expressed in our day-to-day lives. We have also made contact with the wisdom of the Pali Canon suttas. More recently, we have been focussing on ritual and devotion in Buddhism, based on a book by Sangharakshita. We are continuing with this focus in October. The study program for the rest of the year:

November: *What is the Sangha?* - based on a book by Sangharakshita

December: *Udana* – readings from the *'Inspired Utterances of the Buddha'* [Pali Canon]

* **FRIENDS NIGHTs, on Thursdays, 7-9pm, are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor.** They are an opportunity for people to come together to meditate, engage in Buddhist practices, learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma, but most importantly to engage in these activities, in friendship with other like-minded people. The evening's program always includes meditation and a social aspect; each month one or two devotional practices take place and other evenings have a Dharma study/activity component. There is no charge but a donation is very much appreciated

"WHERE PRAJNA [wisdom] MEETS SRADDHA [faith]" RETREAT REPORT:

What a fantastic weekend, where Prajna (wisdom) certainly did meet Sraddha (faith), thanks to the skilful guidance of the reverent Siladasa. The atmosphere generated at the retreat was such that I felt an inner peace; I felt uplifted. We learnt that we cannot have faith without the wisdom of knowledge and you cannot have wisdom without having the faith to begin with. To quote from the retreat: "Faith is the emotional recognition in the wisdom and it is self-augmenting". To top the weekend off, I drove home with a full rainbow in front of me; wow, how lucky we are to be alive! [Rebekah]

MAINTENANCE, REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS:

Exciting things are happening [or, hopefully, will happen before the end of the year] with the Centre building. Negotiations are going on to have the outside walls cladded with insulated vinyl, since painting and/or replacement of the weatherboards is not a viable option. As well as looking attractive, the cladding will help keep the building warm in winter and cool in summer. However, some work on the foundations may need to be done beforehand. Also, we are very grateful to Nev Jones, who is in the process of repairing windows. We'll keep you posted on progress with these projects – and there may be an appeal for volunteers to help with clean-up around and under the building!

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

"They call him Buddha, Enlightened, Awake, dissolving darkness, with total vision, and knowing the world to its ends, he has gone beyond all the states of being and becoming. He has no inner poison-drives: he is the total elimination of suffering. This man, brahmin Bavari, is the man I follow.

It is like a bird that leaves the bushes of the scrubland and flies to the fruit trees of the forest. I too have left the bleary half-light of opinions; like a swan I have reached a great lake."

From: Pingiya's Praises of the Way to the Beyond, Sutta Nipata





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2016

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

Dear Friends,

While the terms '*Buddha*' – the Enlightened One, and '*Dharma*' – the Buddha's teaching, are relatively well-known in the West, '*Sangha*' – the Spiritual Community, is much less so. In the context of being one of the Three Jewels of Buddhism, *Sangha* here refers to the *ārya-sangha*, the community of noble or holy ones, who have knowledge of the ultimate reality of things. The *Sangha*, in this way, is an ideal to be honoured and aspired to by the *Mahā-sangha*, i.e. by all those who, with whatever degree of sincerity, go for Refuge to the Three Jewels.

In the Pali Canon, one of the Buddha's teachings, about spiritual community, is specifically referred to by Hatthaka, a householder. This teaching is known as the Four Means of Unification or the *Samgrahavastus*. Whatever the size and nature of our spiritual community, whatever the pattern of our relationships, the teaching has as much relevance for us today as it did for Hatthaka, more than 2,500 years ago. The Four Means of Unification are: generosity; kindly speech; beneficial activity; and exemplification or empathy. Our planet and the beings inhabiting it, are much afflicted; our practising the *samgrahavastus* is much needed. We can each do this by being more generous, kind and friendly. We are giving when we engage in activities, which benefit others and by which, we ourselves also become happier and feel uplifted. We can encourage others. As unenlightened beings, we can trust that practising these means of unifying and of connecting with others, by practising the Dharma, there will be beneficial effects, not only for those in our immediate environment, but, often unknowingly, upon the world at large. [Viriyaja]

Reference: Sangharakshita, 2000, *What is the Sangha?*, Windhorse Publications, Birmingham

NOVEMBER 2016 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 3rd **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **RITUAL & DEVOTION** – Transference of Merit and Self-surrender, concluding mantras [see below] [R]

Thu 10th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **WHAT IS THE SANGHA?** – Introduction, Group and Spiritual Community [see below] [V]

Thu 17th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **SANGHA DAY celebration** [V]

Thu 24th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **WHAT IS THE SANGHA?** – The True Individual [see below] [K]

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*

Exploring the Dharma in 2016, we have looked at some key teachings, especially as expressed in our day-to-day lives. We have made contact with the wisdom of the Pali Canon suttas, and more recently have been focussing on ritual and devotion in Buddhism. We shall complete that topic this month before beginning *What is the Sangha?* - based on a book by Sangharakshita. This is timely since we shall be celebrating

Sangha Day with meditation and puja on Nov. 17th. The study program for the rest of the year includes completion of *What is the Sangha?* and readings from the 'Udana', [*Inspired Utterances of the Buddha*].

* **FRIENDS NIGHTS, on Thursdays, 7-9pm, are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor.** They are an opportunity for people to come together to meditate, engage in Buddhist practices, learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma, but most importantly to engage in these activities, in friendship with other like-minded people. The evening's program always includes meditation and a social aspect; each month one or two devotional practices take place and other evenings have a Dharma study/activity component. There is no charge but a donation is very much appreciated.

OUTREACH – to a Defence Force Mental Health Day:

It was a pleasure to be able to contribute to the Oakey Army Aviation Training Centre's Mental Health Day program last week. Viryaja and Karen Gaul offered half-hour sessions on meditation to three large groups of Defence Force personnel, as part of the 'rotating' activity program, which also included sessions on yoga and tai chi. We were grateful for being invited to stay on for talks given on post-traumatic stress disorder, where we learned much from one person's personal experience and in hearing about the Mates4Mates support program. Discussions continued over lunch with other activity leaders and the event's organiser.

MAINTENANCE, REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS:

The negotiations for cladding the outside walls of the building are complete and we are expecting the work to be done later on this month. It will probably take about a week and will only affect the Centre's programs during weekdays. So the Tuesday women's Dharma study and meditation are likely to be the only events to be cancelled that week. Viryaja will let participants know when the actual date is confirmed.

BUDDHAS IN MY POCKET: www.buddhasinmypocket.com

Maitripala is a Triratna Buddhist Order member currently engaged in a year-long pilgrimage [see her website for more information]. In March, 2017, she will spend about a week in Toowoomba before the conclusion of the pilgrimage in April. As part of her Toowoomba activities, she will offer a **weekend retreat from March 3rd to 5th, 2017**. More information about this in the December Newsletter, but meanwhile, if you are interested in attending this retreat – there is a lot of interest already - please contact Viryaja on ph. 46344303 or text 0404299573 or email at vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

The Buddha asked Hatthaka how he kept his many friends and followers united. To which, Hatthaka replied:

'My teacher, it is by the four means of unification which you taught me that we keep united. When I know that I can make a connection with someone through generosity, then I use generosity. When I know that I can make a connection with someone through kind speech, then I use kind speech. When I know that I can make a connection with someone through beneficial activity, then I use beneficial activity. When I know that I can make a connection with someone through exemplification or empathy, then I use exemplification or empathy.'

Hatthaka Sutta: The Gradual Sayings of the Pali Canon – Nos. 23 and 24 in the Eights, collated.





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2016

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

Dear Friends,

As Christmas approaches with its decorations, beautiful lights, great presents, for Buddhists in Western countries, the inevitable question arises, “Do you celebrate Christmas?” The question always brings a smile to my face as I answer “of course!” But how can a non-Christian celebrate Christmas? Like most Western Buddhists, I wasn’t born into a Buddhist household. My family was of the Christian/Catholic background, so we always had a Christmas tree, and knew of the story of the birth of Jesus Christ. The smells of freshly cut pine trees, alluring multi-coloured lights, decorations, and those presents, were just icing on the cake. As Buddhists, we can celebrate Christmas in a non-Christian way. Buddhists do not practice the same rituals as Christians during Christmas time, but we do believe in celebrating the spirit of Christmas.

Like Christians, Buddhists believe that love, kindness and peace are all things to celebrate. Many Buddhists like to think of Jesus Christ as a “Bodhisattva”. A Bodhisattva is one that forgoes their own benefit to help others and has compassion, kindness and love for all beings. The selflessness and compassion Saint Nicholas brought to children is something that is very much a part of Buddhism - the selfless act of charity and caring without expecting anything in return. For many Western Buddhists the aim of their practice is to become a Bodhisattva, which is an expression of the *bodhichitta* (the desire to attain enlightenment for the sake of others). Maybe this is a good time of the year to renew this aspiration.

Like many Christian festivals (such as Easter) Christmas Day (December 25th) was originally a very popular pagan winter solstice celebration (the 25th was the ‘return of the sun’). Most people are not aware that things such as the ‘Christmas Tree’, was actually a pagan tradition during the winter solstice, which no Christian wanted to adopt at first (in-fact it was banned by the Church). It was only popularised in recent times by Queen Victoria.

What are some things we as Buddhists can do during Christmas? 1) Give a thoughtful gift. We are very mindful of what gifts we give to others, and want them to be meaningful and not harmful. For example, we would not give a gun (even a toy one) to a child as a present on a day that we want to express peace for all mankind. 2) Help someone in need. 3) Plant seeds of kindness. 4) Help an animal. 5) Do the *metta bhavana* practice¹. From the TBC we wish everyone a Happy Christmas and hope to see you in the New Year. [Roger]

[1. For more detail on this see <http://www.alanpeto.com/buddhism/buddhist-christmas/>]

DECEMBER 2016 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 1st **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **WHAT IS THE SANGHA?– Being a Buddhist Parent** [see below] [R]

Thu 8th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **WHAT IS THE SANGHA? – The Meaning of Friendship** [K]

Thu 15th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **SEVENFOLD PUJA** [R]

JANUARY 2017 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Tues 17th **Women’s Meditation** recommences 10am [and Dharma study at 8.30am] [V]

Thu 19th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation for the New Year [V]

Thu 26th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Threefold Puja and New Year Resolutions [K]

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*

Exploring the Dharma in 2016, we have looked at some key teachings, especially as expressed in our day-to-day lives. We have made contact with the wisdom of the Pali Canon suttas, have been focussing on ritual and devotion in Buddhism, and more recently *What is the Sangha?* - based on a book by Sangharakshita. The study program for the rest of the year will conclude our look at *What is the Sangha?*

* **FRIENDS NIGHTS, on Thursdays, 7-9pm, are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor.** They are an opportunity for people to come together to meditate, engage in Buddhist practices, learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma, but most importantly to engage in these activities, in friendship with other like-minded people. The evening's program always includes meditation and a social aspect; each month one or two devotional practices take place and other evenings have a Dharma study/activity component. There is no charge but a donation is very much appreciated.

A WEEKEND RETREAT FROM MARCH 3RD TO 5TH, 2017 – 'The True Individual'

"In order to understand what the Sangha really means, we must first understand what it means to be an individual and one aspect of Sangharakshita's definition of the individual is someone who is prepared to grow and change; someone who is willing to let go of any fixed idea of themselves. A true individual, in Sangharakshita's view, is someone who commits themselves wholeheartedly to the process of individual development"

In this retreat we will look at some of the qualities involved in becoming a True Individual and reflect on which qualities we would like to develop further. **Maitripala** is a Triratna Buddhist Order member currently engaged in a year-long pilgrimage [see her website - www.buddhasinmypocket.com for more information]. In March, 2017, she will spend about a week in Toowoomba before the conclusion of the pilgrimage in April. As part of her Toowoomba activities, she will offer this weekend retreat. If you are interested in attending this retreat – there is a lot of interest already - please contact Viryaja at vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org or ph. 46344303 or text 0404299573. The venue is still to be confirmed. Unless otherwise notified, the cost will be \$150 full; \$130 part time; \$100 concessional.

NEW COURSES IN 2017

*The next round of eight week *Introducing Buddhism* and *Traditional Buddhist Meditation and Mindfulness* evening courses will be starting in February 2017 on a Monday and Tuesday nights (7-9pm).

*A 4-week *Let's Meditate* course on Saturday mornings, 10 to 12, throughout February, starting Feb. 4th. Please contact Viryaja at vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org or ph. 46344303 or text 0404299573 if you are interested in participating. Cost: \$80 full; \$60 concession.

MAINTENANCE, REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS:

A cause for celebration! The cladding work was completed on November 18th, beginning the transformation of the Centre. More work to organise next year. Many thanks to all those who, in any way, have contributed to bringing this about. Sadhu!

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

*Beings are numberless; I vow to liberate them.
Delusions are inexhaustible; I vow to end them.
Dharma gates are boundless; I vow to enter them.
The Buddha Way is obtainable; I vow to obtain it.*

[*Bodhisattva Vow*]

