



Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2017

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

Dear Friends,

In February each year we commemorate the Buddha's final passing, his *Parinirvana*, his physical death at 80 years, over 2,500 years ago. With the exception, perhaps, of some shelter at rest houses, particularly during the monsoon season, the Buddha lived most of his life outdoors. He walked the roads of India for 45 years, teaching the Dharma to people from all walks of life, from beggars to kings. One can imagine the toll this would have taken upon his body, the sickness and pain he must have endured. Late in his life, he spoke of his body as being like an old cart held together by straps, and that he only knew [bodily] comfort, when he withdrew his attention from outward signs, by the cessation of certain feelings and 'signless concentration of the mind'¹. What can we learn from the Buddha's example and teachings?

As conditioned beings, we are subject to sickness old age and death. We are impermanent and insubstantial. We are in a process of 'dying' and rebirth all the time, with new conditions constantly coming in to play. When we really see the truth of this – just a flow of experience not identified as relating to a self, as being 'I/me/mine' - there is a spiritual death, a letting go. This brings a 'state of great freedom and relaxation because there's no holding onto anything'² – not to body, views, or a sense of a fixed self, in control, at the centre of the universe. To help us to let go of this self-identification, we can practise 'unhooking'. For example, we may have a thought, "I am afraid of a painful death". We first 'unhook' from 'a painful death', the object, and then are left with "I am afraid". Then letting go of the sense of 'I/me/mine', the subject, there's just "This feeling of fear". Lastly we let go of any labels about the feeling, in this case 'fear', and 'do our best to experience the pure feeling in our body'³. A warning: when first attempting this practice, it may be best to bring to mind a less challenging situation than fear of a painful death. One could try annoyance with someone, starting with "I am feeling annoyed with them". [Viryaja]

1. *Mahaparinibbhana Sutta, Sutta 16, Digha Nikaya* 2. *Vessantara: in a retreat at Adhithana, 2016.* 3. *ibid.*

FEBRUARY 2017 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 2 nd	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; 'Encounters with Enlightenment' [K]
Thu 9 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; 'Encounters with Enlightenment' [R]
Thu 16 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	PARINIRVANA DAY [see above; actual date is 15 th] [V]
Thu 23 rd	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; 'Encounters with Enlightenment' [R]
Tue 28 th	Women's Dharma Study/Meditation:	Maitripala will be joining the regular sessions

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*

*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.

*This month, we shall celebrate **Parinirvana Day**, the Buddha's final passing, with reflection, readings and devotion. Dharma study/discussion will focus on 'Encounters with Enlightenment' - stories from the Buddha's life – by Saddhaloka. The program for the following 3 months will include:

March: Maitripala [*Buddhas in My Pocket* pilgrimage] is visiting; the *Udana* – Inspired Utterances of the Buddha

April: '50 Years of Triratna' celebration; Peter Barden on 'Suffering' [*dukkha*]

May: Buddha Day; the Heart Sutra

'THE TRUE INDIVIDUAL'

A weekend retreat led by MAITRIPALA, from March 3rd to 5th, 2017

"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.

The retreat is now fully booked but if you are interested and would like to be on a waiting list, please contact Viryaja at vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org or ph. 46344303 or text 0404299573.

Venue: Le Grezze, Highfields. **Cost:** \$150 full; \$130 part time; \$100 concessional.

MAITRIPALA'S VISIT from Feb. 27th, including a 'Metta Makeover' Day in Brisbane March 11th:

While in Toowoomba and in addition to offering the weekend retreat, as above, Maitripala will be joining two women's Dharma study and meditation sessions on Feb 28th and March 7th, and a Friends Night on March 2nd. If anyone would like some individual time with her, please let us know. If you are familiar with the *metta bhavana* practice, you may be interested in the **Metta Makeover Day**, 10am to 4pm at the Bardon Counselling Centre, Brisbane. This will be a day of reflection, discussion and practice, a day to boost our confidence in our *metta* practice. It may be possible to share transport from Toowoomba. More information in the March Newsletter.

NEW COURSES IN 2017

* **8-week, evening courses**, (7-9pm): '*Traditional Buddhist Meditation and Mindfulness*' starts on Monday 20th Feb. '*Introducing Buddhism*' starts on Tuesday 21st Feb. Contact Roger on 4564 9636, if interested.

* **4-week daytime course**, (Saturdays 10am-12): '*Let's Meditate*' starts Feb. 4th. Cost: \$80 full; \$60 concession. Contact Viryaja at vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org or ph. 4634 4303, if interested.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH: [from the *Sutta Nipata*]

"Look upon the world as empty. This is the way to overcome death. Cease thinking of yourself as an entity that really exists. If you look on the world in this way, you will never be seen by the king of death."





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NEWSLETTER MARCH 2017

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Dear Friends,

Buddhism has become well known in the West, even fashionable. But as Westerners we often find it difficult to put it into practice. One fundamental reason for this is because it requires us taking responsibility for ourselves – our mental states and the behaviour that follows from them. We simply are not brought up to do this effectively in our culture.

We are not taught to act as a moral agent from within our own minds but, rather, to obey the dictates of some external supreme being or authority. In effect we hand the responsibility for our lives over to this external agent. We are also not provided with the tools or training to take responsibility for our own lives.

In Buddhism it is quite different – the tools and the training are provided. First of all there is training in ethics. Using ethical principles and criterion it is possible to recognise whether your mental states and behaviour are skilful or unskilful, conducive to happiness or unhappiness. To do this effectively you have to be able to observe your own mind and so you are taught meditation and mindfulness.

Even though as humans we have self-awareness, we aren't most of the time all that self-aware, we tend to be in a chronic state of distraction. We have to learn to regain the ability to direct our attention and we learn this with practices like the mindfulness of breathing, which we started in the Meditation course at the centre this week.

With these tools you can observe and therefore manage what is going on in your mind. We learn how to use mindfulness to transform unskilful states into more skilful ones. Because we have this self-awareness, according to the Buddha, there is nothing a man or a woman cannot make of themselves. But to do this we need to train our self-awareness and we have to take responsibility for ourselves. This is hard work, but what's wrong with hard work? Many people find it easier to just believe in some sort of religious dogma derived from some a "so-called" external authority. [Roger]

MARCH 2017 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Fri 3rd - Sun 5th WEEKEND RETREAT 'THE TRUE INDIVIDUAL' - led by Maitripala

Thu 2nd FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; Discussion [*Buddhas in My Pocket* pilgrimage] Maitripala

Thu 9th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; Study - Extract from the *Udana* [K]

Thu 16th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; Study - Extract from the *Udana* [R]

Thu 23rd FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; Study - Extract from the *Udana* [K]

Thu 30th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; Study - Extract from the *Udana* [V]

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*

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*This month, Dharma study/discussion will focus on the *Udana* – Inspired Utterances of the Buddha. The program for the following 2 months will include:

April: '50 Years of Triratna' celebration; Peter Barden on 'Suffering' [*duhkha*]

May: Buddha Day; the Heart Sutra

FACEBOOK:

We launched our Facebook page this month and would like to thank all the people who have liked it from the Newsletter group and other places. It's been a good start.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

"We need to take heart in the Buddha's message that all the obstacles we experience - whatever they may be – really can be overcome, and that we - whoever we may be - really are capable of overcoming them. Confidence that we can change ourselves, at least by degrees, is the foundation of the whole spiritual life ... there is no limit - absolutely none, according to the Buddha - to what a man or a woman can make of themselves."

(Kamalashila, 1994, *Meditation: the Buddhist Way of Tranquillity and Insight*, Glasgow: Windhorse Publications, p. 9).





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER APRIL 2017

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Dear Friends,

The first of a set of reflections, coming from the Tibetan Buddhism tradition [the Preliminary Practices or Four Reminders], is a reflection on the preciousness and rarity of human life. The preciousness of our human birth lies in our freedom from being born in other realms or states of being, where we would not have the capacity or opportunity to lead a spiritual life. Here, today, we are living in a time and place where the Dharma is accessible to be freely practised. However, there are many people, whose conditions and circumstances prevent their encountering or being able to practise the Dharma. (On a personal note, if Urygen Sangharakshita had not established the Triratna Buddhist Community in April 1967 - then called the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order - this Dharma farer's encounter with the Dharma may have been limited to, and have ended with, a TV program on Thailand in the 1980s). There is much to be grateful for.

The Buddha began it over 2,500 years ago. Following his Enlightenment, he turned to the Dharma to revere and express his gratitude. We too can be grateful that the Buddha decided to teach, that whole lineages of teaching the Dharma came into existence and that Buddhism eventually found its way into Western society. We can be grateful for Sangharakshita's contribution to our being able to easily access the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, through his many writings and the formation of the Triratna Buddhist Community fifty years ago. We can express our gratitude for the people and conditions, which have brought the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre into existence and for the conditions which enable a continuation and a deepening of our spiritual lives. All are welcome to help us celebrate *50 Years of Triratna* on this coming Friends Night, April 6th. [Viriyaja]

APRIL 2017 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 6 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>celebrating 50 Years of Triratna</i> [V]
Sat 8 th		Annual General Meeting of the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre Inc. at 11am
Thu 13 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>celebrating 50 Years of Triratna</i> Part 2 [V]
Thu 20 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT</u>	Meditation; 'Pot Luck' topic for reflection and discussion [R]
Thu 27 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>Sevenfold Puja</i> [K]

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*[amended]

So far this year in the study program, we have looked at 'Encounters With Enlightenment', stories from the Pali Canon and at teachings from the 'inspired utterances of the Buddha', the *Udāna*. This month's Friends Night program commences with a celebration of the 50th birthday of the Triratna Buddhist Community,

which began, as the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, on April 6th, 1967. It has been necessary to postpone Peter's sessions till June and so we'll continue with the 50th birthday of Triratna on April 13th. Then, Roger will lead a 'pot luck' topic session the following week and the month ends with a Sevenfold Puja.

The program for **May** will include Buddha Day, the most important day in the Buddhist calendar, and an exploration of the Heart Sutra. The program for later months is still being planned.

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

URGENT NEED FOR RETREAT VENUES

Regrettably, as of May 31st, St. Ursula's College will no longer own Le Grezze, because of a change in Diocesan policy, and therefore can no longer rent it to us for retreats. At this stage we have retreats planned for July 14-16 and November 24-26, 2017. **If anyone knows of any suitable venues for weekend residential retreats in the region could you please let us know a.s.a.p.** To date we have run these with a maximum of 13 people.

A CALL FOR HELP WITH KEEPING THE CENTRE CLEAN AND ATTRACTIVE TO VISIT!

There are some maintenance and improvement projects going on at the moment, such as windows repair and reconditioning of security screens and awnings. However, **regular help is needed with general cleaning**, such as vacuuming, washing floors, in the kitchen, dusting, sweeping the deck and cleaning the toilet area. Some of these jobs need to be done weekly but others could be done less frequently. And if you have a bent for gardening, you may like to 'develop' the plantings already there. **If you are in a position to help with any of these, please let us [Roger, Karen or Viryaja] know.**

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

**To be reverent and humble,
content and grateful,
to hear the Dharma at the right time,
this is a blessing supreme.**

From the *Mangala Sutta*, trans. Gunaratana Mahathera





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER MAY 2017

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Dear Friends,

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

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

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

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

MAY 2017 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

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

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*:

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

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

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"PRESENT WELFARE, FUTURE WELFARE"

Fri. July 7th to Sun. July 9th

A weekend retreat led by DHARMALATA.

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

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

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

KEEPING THE CENTRE CLEAN AND ATTRACTIVE TO VISIT:

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

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

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

[Dogen]





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NEWSLETTER JUNE 2017

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Dear Friends,

The Buddha's teaching of the second dart or arrow, will be familiar to many of you. Natural pain is the inevitable effect of having a human body and living a human life – the wounding of first arrow. When we experience such natural pain, some kind of loss, we have a tendency to add further 'suffering' – the wounding of the second arrow. We resist the experience, tense up, imagine all kinds of scenarios about the pain – 'Why me?', 'Who is to blame for my loved one's death?' and so on.

'Suffering is the physical and mental tension created over and above the [natural] pain, the bit we have added on by creating further tension'¹. When we can accept the reality of human life, of its impermanence – the reality of growing old, getting sick and dying; that we are but a process dependent on conditions – we can begin to live our lives more fully, with calmness and kindness. There are many meditation and reflection practices concerned with accepting the reality of our conditioned existence. However, it can be helpful to be clear about what 'acceptance' is not, and what it is or what it may involve. Acceptance does not mean 'giving in or resigning ourselves in a despairing sense' nor 'forcibly resisting our pain or blindly accepting it'². Acceptance involves finding 'a middle way between facing and avoiding our difficulties'³. It involves: mindfully turning towards the pain; awareness of one's aversion; an attitude of curiosity; tolerance of the pain; and allowing a loving dimension into consciousness.⁴ Bringing a sense of kindness to one's experience, whatever the nature of the 'first arrow', will allow a friendliness towards the painful experience and diminish, or even eradicate, the effects of a 'second' arrow. [Viriyaja]

1. Dr Paramabandhu Groves, Dr Jed Shamel, 2017, 'Mindful Emotion', p.39, Windhorse Publications, Cambridge

2. ibid p.40

3. Ibid

4. Ibid pp.41,42

JUNE 2017 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 1 st	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; 'Everyone has a story' [V]
Thu 8 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>Threefold Puja</i> [K]
Thu 15 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Peter Barden- 'Suffering in the context of everyday life' 1. [R]
Thu 22 nd	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Peter Barden- 'Suffering in the context of everyday life' 2. [R]
Thu 29 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; 'The Four Reminders' [V]

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*:

So far this year in the study program, we have looked at 'Encounters With Enlightenment', stories from the Pali Canon and at teachings from the 'inspired utterances of the Buddha', the *Udāna*. We have celebrated 50 years of Triratna, **Buddha Day** and explored the *Heart Sutra*, through commentaries from 3 different Buddhist traditions.

This month the focus is on *dukkha* or pain, suffering, unsatisfactoriness. Thanks to Peter Barden, who will be presenting 2 sessions on 'Suffering in the context of everyday life'.

The program for later months is still to be planned.

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

STOP PRESS!

A retreat from July 7th to 9th – 'Present Welfare, Future Welfare' led by Dharmalata:

N.B. Please refer to the retreat notice at the end of this newsletter.

There are a total of 20 places available for this retreat, 16 of which can be utilised as single sleeping spaces, when a maximum of 16 people attend. 12 places have been booked so far; both single en suite rooms are taken. Please contact Viryaja soon if you would like to reserve a place.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

"All formations are transient; all formations are subject to suffering; all things are without a self. Therefore, whatever there be of form, of feeling, perception, mental formations, or consciousness, whether past, present or future, one's own or external, gross or subtle, lofty or low, far or near, one should understand according to reality and true wisdom: "This does not belong to me; this am I not; this is not my Self"

Adapted from the
ANGUTTARA NIKAYA and SAMYUTTA NIKAYA
translated by Nyanatiloka



PRESENT WELFARE, FUTURE WELFARE

A weekend retreat led by

DHARMALATA

from **Fri. July 7th to Sun. July 9th 2017**

at the **James Byrne Centre, Highfields**

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

The Toowoomba Buddhist Centre is pleased that a new, nearby venue will be used for this July retreat, to be led by **Dharmalata, a Triratna Order Member from Sydney**. Kelly House at the James Byrne Centre, is a new building with a room configuration, which will allow more people to have a room to themselves. (and 2 more people, if paying a little extra, can have a single room with en suite).

COST: \$190 full; \$170 part employed; \$140 concessional

Payment may be made by cash, cheque or electronic transfer to:

Name: Toowoomba Buddhist Centre Inc.

Account No: 141437

BSB: 034142

Institution: Westpac Banking Corporation

**For more information or to book a place on the retreat,
please contact Viryaja:**

vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org

or **ph. 0746 344 303**

or **mob. 0404 299 573** [txt only]



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Dear Friends,

On Friends Night the other week the study topic was the four reminders – 1) the rarity and preciousness of human life, 2) death and impermanence, 3) *karma* – actions have consequences and, 4) the unsatisfactoriness of conditioned existence. During the study one member remarked along the lines of “these are so obviously true why do we have to keep reminding ourselves of them?” We need to keep reminding ourselves of these facts because we don’t see the world this way. We are deeply deluded. So deep in fact that it is in our genes.

When we evolved the ability for abstract thought it gave us human beings an enormous evolutionary advantage. We left the protection of the trees and the forest millions of years ago and started wandering the plains of Africa where we were vulnerable to the beasts of prey. We didn’t have claws or fangs, were not fast and ferocious, however, the ability of abstract thinking that could divide and combine things in the mind (for example, a stick and a stone) led to the creation of spears and other technologies that gave us a huge advantage over other species.

Early on when abstract thinking was a tool that enabled us to overcome the hazards of the environment and we were not completely identified with it (and could still feel part of the environment) we could avoid the repercussions of living in a fixed, abstracted thought-based world. Later we became identified with thought and it formed the basis of our identity.

In this fixed, thought-based world we see things as separate from us and from each other, and inherently solid and static. This way of seeing things has been useful for us in a myriad of ways, and has enabled us to manipulate the world. But, as modern science demonstrates and Buddhism has long stated, it is not how things really are, it is not reality; it is indeed a kind of virtual reality. The impermanence and interconnectedness that is reality, and the unsatisfactoriness that comes from these, is not obvious to us. And so we remain deeply deluded – that’s why we need the reminders and insight practices – to help us wake up from our delusion. [Roger]

JULY 2017 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 6th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Celebrate Dharma Day [V]

Fri 7th - Sun 9th Weekend Retreat “Present Welfare, Future Welfare” (led by Dharmalata)

Thu 13th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; Ch. 1 Friendship [V]

Thu 20th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; Ch.1 Friendship [K]

Thu 27th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; Ch. 1 Friendship [R]

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*:

So far this year in the study program, we have looked at *'Encounters With Enlightenment'*, stories from the Pali Canon and at teachings from the 'inspired utterances of the Buddha', the *Udāna*, and suffering in the context of everyday life'. We have celebrated 50 years of Triratna, **Buddha Day** and explored the *Heart Sutra*, through commentaries from 3 different Buddhist traditions.

This month the focus is on *Friendship* drawing on Sangharakshita's book *'Living Ethically'*. The program for later months will continue to use this reference and will cover chapters on generosity, sexual relations, skilful speech and the ethics of views.

***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.

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THE LIBRARY – and search for a lost book:

After about 2 years of receiving little attention, the Centre's library is beginning to regain its former order, under the careful hands of Jan. In the sorting out process, it was discovered that a popular book, which is thought to have been returned, now cannot be found anywhere. So would everyone, who has borrowed any books this year please look at home and see if you have *'Living as a River'* by Bodhipaksa tucked away. You may like to know that there are a number of magazines such as *Tricycle*, *Buddhadharma* etc., which are not catalogued and may be taken away 'for keeps' if you like – usually in a pile on the table. There is also a pile of 'handouts' which are spares from Friends Night study sessions – please help yourself to them; we'll get them marked as such.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

Cherish your body, it is yours this one time only.

It is won with difficulty and is easy to lose.

All worldly things are brief like lightning in the sky.

This life you must know as the tiny splash of a raindrop;

a thing of beauty that disappears even as it comes into being.

Tsongkhapa





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2017

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Dear Friends,

For many of us, returning to our ordinary everyday lives and responsibilities can be quite jarring after being on retreat, when we were giving special time for our spiritual lives. It can set us wondering how best we can bring these two aspects of life together. It can feel quite daunting. The distractions, infinite information and confusion of modern life can feel like a prison, something to be escaped from only by avoidance of our social responsibilities, even by total withdrawal.

But this is not what the Buddha would have advised a Householder. Increasingly the world's population is becoming one of city-dwellers. Often many of us, in a very determined way, will include 'doses' of seclusion time to counter the complexities of our society. Kamalashila¹ suggests that we may be missing the point here. We allow ourselves to be distracted. However, with awareness of that, we can guard our senses. We can 'appreciate our amazing good fortune', in living at a time when there is infinite potential to meet with others and to exchange ideas. From a perspective of appreciation of our life circumstances, of our environment and world, we can cultivate 'the spiritual growth and health of all beings'. [Viriyaja]

1. 'My Buddhism in the City', a talk by Kamalashila, www.freebuddhistaudio.com

AUGUST 2017 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 3 rd	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>Living Ethically</i> - Ch. 2 Generosity [R]
Thu 10 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>Living Ethically</i> - Ch. 2 Generosity [K]
Thu 17 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Threefold Puja [R]
Thu 25 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>Living Ethically</i> - Ch. 2 Generosity [K]
Thu 31 st	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>Living Ethically</i> - Ch. 2 Generosity [V]

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*:

So far this year in the study program, we have looked at stories from the Pali Canon, teachings from the *Udāna*, and 'suffering in the context of everyday life'. We have celebrated 50 years of Triratna, **Buddha Day** and explored the *Heart Sutra*. Last month we looked at how we might live more ethically, using Sangharakshita's book '*Living Ethically*' - the Introduction and the first chapter on *Friendship*. In August we focus on *Generosity*. In later months we'll continue to use this text covering chapters on *sexual relations*, *skillful speech* and *the ethics of views*. N.B. There are a couple of copies of the text for sale at the Centre.

***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.

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BOOKS FOR SALE:

In anticipation of the Friends Night study program for the rest of the year, and the Women's Dharma study group soon to delve into 'What is the Dharma?', there are a number of books for sale at the Centre. At the moment: 'Living Ethically', 'Living Wisely', 'Living with Awareness' and 'What is the Dharma?', all by Sangharakshita; and soon to come – 'Living With Kindness'. These books take one deeper into the Dharma; they offer guidance in bringing one's everyday life and one's spiritual life into greater harmony.

A BOOK FOUND AT A CAFÉ:

Unfortunately not 'Living as a River' by Bodhipaksa – please keep looking for this missing library book! But a call from the Park House Café let us know that a Toowoomba Buddhist Centre library book had been left there by someone. The book – *Mystics the Soul's Journey Into Truth* – was wrongly assumed to have a connection to a dear sangha member who died earlier this year. While the wrong assumption led to other heart-warming connections, we are still at a loss who left the book at the café. Can you 'enlighten' us?

RETREAT REPORT:

The recent weekend retreat: 'Present Welfare, Future Welfare', led by Dharmalata, was a wonderful boost of positive energy for the Toowoomba sangha. Harmony within the group was quickly formed after the Friday evening introductions were made. Everyone appeared to gently de-stress after their week's activity leading up to the weekend. Meditation and a shared love of the Dharma brought the group into a calm and unified position before the lights went out and the open fire was prepared for the next day. From Saturday's beautiful sunrise, friendships continued to evolve over the whole weekend. With equal voice, all could be at ease in the tranquil spaces, each with their own personal story and acute awareness of the difficulties associated with being human. With Dharmalata's guidance and inspiration, group discussions ensued, building knowledge and providing direction on our journeys through life. It was a joy to be part of and a weekend to be cherished by all. [Simon]

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

Living in forests far away from other people is not true seclusion. True seclusion is to be free from the power of likes and dislikes. It is also to be free from the mental attitude that one must be special because one is treading the path. Those who remove themselves to far forests often feel superior to others. They think that because they are solitary they are being guided in a special way and that those who live an ordinary life can never have that experience. But that is conceit and is no help to others. The true recluse is one who is available to others, helping them with affectionate speech and personal example.

Prajnaparamita





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2017

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Dear Friends,

Buddhism has become well known in the West, even fashionable. But as Westerners we often find it difficult to put it into practice. Very few who do courses on the teachings seem to follow through and establish an effective practice.

One fundamental reason for this seems to be that Buddhism is about taking responsibility for ourselves – our mental states and the behaviour that follows from them. We simply are not brought up to do this effectively in our culture. Many say it is easier to hand responsibility over to an external agent, like God, as in the conventional religions.

In a discussion on this subject in a recent Introductory Buddhist course, it also emerged that there is a deal of fear associated with taking responsibility for ourselves. We are afraid to take responsibility, not only because it is unfamiliar, but also because of the fear of failure and the guilt associated with that. We lack self confidence in this regard and are very prone to guilt and self-loathing. A lot of this is to do with our Western cultural conditioning.

Buddhism teaches us how to overcome low self-confidence and self-loathing with practices like the cultivation of loving kindness, which starts with the self. It also helps dismantle a lot of irrational guilt and fear and fixed views of the self. This in itself is already taking responsibility for the self – for what goes on in our own minds. The cultivation of mindfulness is fundamental in this regard.

Gradually we learn that taking responsibility for oneself is not something to be afraid of, but actually something that produces a lot of freedom - freedom from self-inflicted suffering. The Buddha said that just as the ocean has but one taste, that of salt, so his teachings have but one taste, that of freedom. [Roger]

SEPTEMBER 2017 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 7 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>Living Ethically</i> - Ch. 3 Sexual Relations [K]
Thu 14 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>Living Ethically</i> - Ch. 3 Sexual Relations [V]
Thu 21 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>Living Ethically</i> - Ch. 3 Sexual Relations [K]
Thu 28 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	<i>Padmasambhava Day</i> - puja [V]

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*:

In the first half of this year the study program has included stories from the Pali Canon, teachings from the *Udāna*, 'suffering in the context of everyday life', and the *Heart Sutra*. In July we began an in-depth look at how we might live more ethically, using Sangharakshita's book '*Living Ethically*'. So far we focussed on *Friendship* and *Generosity*. In September we turn our attention to *Sexual Relations*.

N.B. There is a copy of the text for sale at the Centre.

This year we have also celebrated the Buddha's *Parinirvana*, 50 years of the Triratna Buddhist Community, Buddha Day and Dharma Day. This month we shall celebrate **Padmasambhava Day**. Padmasambhava was the Bodhisattva who took the Dharma to Tibet.

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RETREAT – NOVEMBER 24th to 26th:

ENCOUNTERING THE BUDDHA – a weekend retreat led by Siladasa from Melbourne, in which we shall be looking at ways we can meet the Buddha, or the transcendental, whether through parable, Dharma, symbols, ritual, or inspiration from the noble qualities and so on. The retreat will be held at the James Byrne Centre and the cost will be a slight increase on the earlier retreat to cover the costs of single accommodation for all participants: \$200 fully employed; \$180 part employment; \$160 concessional. **To make a reservation or further enquiry, please contact Viryaja on 0404299573 or vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org**

TUESDAYS – Women's Meditation and Dharma Study:

The regular women's meditation sessions, from 10am to 12 noon, continue. Before these sessions – 8.30 to 9.45 – a new round of Dharma study has begun. We are studying Sangharakshita's book 'What is the Dharma?' It's not too late if you are interested in joining the study group and you can join the women's meditation any time – **please contact Viryaja on 0404299573 or vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org**.

COMING EVENTS:

On Saturday, November 4th we shall be celebrating our final Buddhist festival of the year - **Sangha Day**. This will be a very special celebration, since along with meditation and puja it will include a Mitra ceremony. So put this in your diary [it will probably be from about 10am to 2pm, including lunch] and there will be more information in the October Newsletter.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

16. *Freedom from despair, the array of capacities including dedication and control, regarding oneself and others as equal, and the exchange of self and others*

17. *Should be practised, and not defeatism from thinking 'How could I possibly achieve Buddhahood?' For the Tathagata, Speaker of the Truth, spoke this truth:*

18. *'Even those who were gnats, mosquitoes, wasps, or worms, have reached the highest Awakening, hard to reach, through the strength of their own exertion.'*

From the The Perfection of Vigour in the 'Bodhicaryavatara' by Shantideva





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NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2017

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Dear Friends,

In Buddhism, 'guilt' and 'remorse' are not considered to be the same thing. There is no room for guilt in a Buddhist life. Guilt is classified as an unskilful mental state¹. Remorse is a skilful mental state. How is this so?

We have all probably experienced the uncomfortable feeling of disquiet. When we set high standards for our behaviour, when we feel remorse for what we have done wrong and a need to do something about rectifying the situation, we are experiencing 'ethical disquiet', a wholesome state of mind. But feeling guilty, as such, may be one of two other forms of disquiet, which are unwholesome states of mind. Firstly, false disquiet has some moral dimension and is a feeling of guilt about actions, which really have no moral significance. False disquiet has its roots in social conditioning, being approved of, fear of punishment and the withdrawal of somebody's love. One may feel one is doing the 'right' thing in conforming, by being of 'good' behaviour, but the price to pay for this lack of maturity, of individual conscience, may be one of neurosis and insecurity, even acts of rebellion. Secondly, functional disquiet has no moral dimension at all and is a necessary protective mechanism, e.g. when we have a nagging feeling that we have left our house unlocked. However, when we are too prone to functional disquiet, it can become debilitating, it can become habitual anxiety.² We can fall into a state of chronic guilt for what we think of as our being incompetent, not good enough and so on.

So what can we do to alleviate our disquiet and any guilty feelings? We can analyse our feelings of disquiet in terms of whether they are ethical, false (irrational guilt) or functional. We may then need a long process of getting to know 'ourselves much better through meditation and honest communication with trusted spiritual friends'³. [Viryaja]

1. Subhadramati, 2013, 'Not About Being Good', p.106, Windhorse Publications, Cambridge

2. Subhuti, 2015, 'Mind in Harmony', pp.98/9, Windhorse Publications, Cambridge

3. ibid p.100

OCTOBER 2017 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 5th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Skilful Speech: Introduction/ Truthful Speech [V]
Thu 12th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Skilful Speech: Affectionate Speech [R]
Thu 19th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Skilful Speech: Helpful Speech [K]
Thu 26th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Skilful Speech: Harmonious Speech [R]

Saturday, NOVEMBER 4th
SANGHA DAY including a MITRA CEREMONY
10am to approx. 2pm
All welcome; please bring vegetarian lunch to share

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*:

So far this year the study program has included stories from the Pali Canon, teachings from the *Udāna*, 'suffering in the context of everyday life', and the *Heart Sutra*. In July we began an in-depth look at how we might live more ethically, using Sangharakshita's book '*Living Ethically*' and other writings. We have looked at *Friendship, Generosity* and *Sexual Relations*. In October we turn our attention to *Skilful Speech*.

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COMING EVENTS:

On Saturday, November 4th we shall be celebrating our final Buddhist festival of the year - **Sangha Day**, the day of the spiritual community. This will be a very special celebration, since along with meditation and puja it will include a Mitra ceremony. A Mitra is someone who considers themselves a Buddhist, tries to practise the five precepts and who feels that the Triratna Buddhist Community is the main context in which to deepen their Buddhist practice. So put this in your diary. It will from 10am to about 2pm, including lunch – please bring a vegetarian lunch to share. All welcome.

'ENCOUNTERING THE BUDDHA' - a RETREAT from NOVEMBER 24th to 26th:

– a weekend retreat led by **Siladasa** from Melbourne, in which we shall be looking at ways we can meet the Buddha, or the transcendental, whether through parable, Dharma, symbols, ritual, or inspiration from the noble qualities and so on. The retreat will be held at the James Byrne Centre and the cost will be a slight increase on the earlier retreat in July, to cover the costs of single accommodation in twin rooms. \$200 fully employed; \$180 part employment; \$160 concessional. We have quite a few bookings already but there are still some places available.

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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

*We are what we think.
All that we are arises with our thoughts.
With our thoughts we make the world.
Speak or act with an impure mind
And trouble will follow you
As the wheel follows the ox that draws the
cart.*

*We are what we think.
All that we are arises with our thoughts.
With our thoughts we make the world.
Speak or act with a pure mind
And happiness will follow you
As your shadow, unshakable.
How can a troubled mind
Understand the way?*

*Your worst enemy cannot harm you
As much as your own thoughts, unguarded.*

*But once mastered,
No one can help you as much,
Not even your father or your mother*

from the *Dhammapada*,
translated by Thomas Byrom





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NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2017

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Dear Friends,

We have just finished a month of Friends Nights studying the speech precepts. People involved said they found it very interesting and helpful. In the West the traditional division of our nature is mind and body or body, soul and spirit. In Buddhism it is body, speech and mind – the ability to communicate is given an equal place with our physical being and our inner experience. When we bow and touch our forehead, throat, and chest in succession - body, speech and mind - we are offering the whole of ourselves.

Speech connects the head and the heart, intellect and emotion, the conscious and unconscious. Its significance is reflected in the fact that it is the third stage of the Eightfold Path after Perfect Vision and Perfect Emotion. Being mindful of speech is a good way to monitor what is going on in our hearts. Often there is a difference between what we espouse at a conscious level and what we operate from at the unconscious level. We discovered that this makes speech a “tricky” area indeed that can become quite complicated.

Much communication between people is pseudo-communication – communication between mutual projections and leads to many misunderstandings. Because of our lack of integration we are often unaware of what we are feeling at the unconscious level and we may be projecting these unconscious feelings on to people around us. For example, we may say someone “is a difficult person” but actually we are feeling guilty because of how we have treated them. Carefully monitored, mindful speech can therefore help make this unconscious material conscious and thus aid the process of integration.

The speech precepts are not just about being truthful – one’s speech should also be kindly, helpful and promoting harmony and not harsh, unhelpful and divisive – four progressive levels of human communication. First there is the level of simple truthfulness and abstention from false speech. Next there is the level of kindly or affectionate speech and abstention from harsh or aggressive speech. Then there is speech that is useful and speech that promotes harmony. So, as we discovered, there is a lot involved in speaking ethically. [Roger]

NOVEMBER 2017 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 2 nd	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	SANGHA DAY Meditation & Refection [V]
Sat 4 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	SANGHA DAY including a MITRA CEREMONY
Thu 9 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Ch. 5 Ethics of Views [K]
Thu 16 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Ch. 5 Ethics of Views [R]
Thu 23 rd	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Ch. 5 Ethics of Views [K]
Fri 24 th – Sun 26 th	‘Encountering the Buddha’ – a retreat led by Siladasa	
Thu 30 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Ch. 5 Ethics of Views [V]

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*:

So far this year the study program has included stories from the Pali Canon, teachings from the *Udāna*, 'suffering in the context of everyday life', and the *Heart Sutra*. In July we began an in-depth look at how we might live more ethically, using Sangharakshita's book '*Living Ethically*' and other writings. We have looked at *Friendship, Generosity, Sexual Relations, and Skilful Speech*. In November we turn our attention to the *Ethics of Views*

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SANGHA DAY and MITRA CEREMONY – Saturday 4th November:

On Saturday, November 4th we shall be celebrating our final Buddhist festival of the year - **Sangha Day**, the day of the spiritual community. This will be a very special celebration, since along with meditation and puja it will include a Mitra ceremony. A Mitra is someone who considers themselves a Buddhist, tries to practise the five precepts and who feels that the Triratna Buddhist Community is the main context in which to deepen their Buddhist practice. So put this in your diary. It will from 10am to about 2pm, including lunch – please bring a vegetarian lunch to share. All welcome.

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Please contact Viryaja on 0404299573 or vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

When he hears something at one place he does not proclaim it elsewhere to bring about a quarrel between the parties; what he has heard here he does not report there to bring about a quarrel between the parties.

[Cunda Kammaraputta Sutta: To Cunda the Silversmith AN 10.176]



MISSING LIBRARY BOOKS – do you have one of these?

Many thanks to Jan Rutherford, for her work in completing a stocktake of the Centre's library books recently. There are a number of **books missing**, which may have been missing for quite some time. Here they are:

'The Dhammapada – Pali Text and Translation with stories and brief notes' by Narada Thera

'Everyday Enlightenment – How to be a Spiritual Warrior at the Kitchen Sink' by Pema Chodron

'Buddha's Brain' by Rick Hanson

'Make Your Mind an Ocean' by Lama Yeshe

'Nothing Special Living Zen' by Charlotte Joko Beck

'Empty Cloud: the Teachings of Xu Yun' by Katsuki Sekida

'An Introduction to Zen Buddhism' by Kazuaki Tanahashi & Tensho D. Schneider

'Essential Zen' by Alan W. Watts

'Who is the Buddha?' by Sangharakshita

'A Guide to the Buddhist Path' by Sangharakshita

Please look on your bookshelves [or even in unusual places!] to see if any of them are hiding there.

SANGHA DAY and MITRA CEREMONY – Saturday 4th November:

Congratulations to Peter Barden, who became a Mitra within the Triratna Buddhist Community in the good company of family and friends. Around two dozen people joined in the celebration with meditation, a puja incorporating the Mitra ceremony, rejoicing in merits and having lunch together. The children heartily joined in the proceedings too, enjoying colouring in and stories from the Buddha's life. Sadhu to all!



'ENCOUNTERING THE BUDDHA' - a retreat report from Jan Hew:

I recently attended the "Encountering the Buddha" weekend retreat led by Siladasa a visiting Triratna Buddhist Order member from Melbourne. It has become an annual tradition to the delight of many Sangha members at the TBC and wider Triratna community. As I live in Brisbane the opportunity to attend a weekend retreat in Toowoomba and reconnect with the three jewels, is a highlight on my annual retreat calendar.

'When meeting the Buddha, the heart opens.' This is the first line I have written in my notebook. I certainly found this to be true over the weekend. After much illness in 2016 I was feeling disconnected in many ways, so this was very timely for me personally. So much can be said about encountering the Buddha and Siladasa, in his usual wise whimsical style, led us through our own bit of awakening. We considered many qualities of the Buddha - his compassion, kindness, patience and skills in meeting others where they are. We considered his connection to nature; how he led by example, and how he went out of his comfort zone to seek the truth.

Do I wish this for myself? If so, how can I become more receptive to Buddha's influence? How do I find inspiration for my own practice in everyday life? Perhaps I can meet the Buddha through symbols and ritual: bowing to the shrine, my meditation posture, the simple act of lighting a candle.... "to him who is the light, we offer light". Perhaps through the chanting of mantras, a walk in nature, creating a shrine in my garden or home; by reading out loud poetry or the precepts. Some of us connected with the earth touching *mudra* of Shakyamuni and Akshobya, others the fearless *mudra* of Amoghasiddhi. There were many inspiring pithy phrases such as: 'Whatever helps arouse our faith and trust in the Dharma - USE IT!' or 'Never underestimate the power of your kindness', to take with me in my practice.

As the weekend progressed and my heart opened ever more widely, the faith in my practice deepened along with an increasing confidence and clarity. I am wholeheartedly grateful for the Three Jewels, who continue to inspire and guide me in my life. Many Thanks to Siladasa and to all who participated in our "Encountering the Buddha" retreat. I felt totally safe and held within the Sangha jewel. Much love and metta [Jan Hew]

COMING UP IN 2018:

20 years of the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre: In January 1998, Roger initiated a first gathering of like-minded people in (then) Janet's house, which quickly became a sangha, meeting regularly in various people's houses and other venues. While nothing is yet planned to formally celebrate our 20th birthday, there will be a small celebration through meditation and reflection on our first Friends Night for 2018 – January 18th. May many of us gather then!

Retreats: The Toowoomba Buddhist Centre normally holds 3 weekend retreats a year. No dates or topics are confirmed yet for 2018 but we are planning to hold them in March, July and November.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

**Truly auspicious and a festive time,
A happy morning and a joyful rising,
A precious moment and a blissful hour
Will come for those who offer alms
To the ones who lead the holy life.**

**On such a day, right acts in words and deeds,
Right thoughts and noble aspirations,
Bring gain to those who practise them;
Happy are those who reap such gain,
For they have grown in the Buddha's Teaching.
May you and all your relatives
Be happy and enjoy good health.**

Anguttara Nikaya (III, 150)



On 'Encountering the Buddha' retreat, November 25th 2017