



Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2018

4-6 Cress Street
Toowoomba Qld 4350

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

Dear Friends,

I guess like a lot of people I have been thinking about New Year's resolutions over the last few weeks. Whilst I was doing this, the well-known expression from the poem *Desiderata* (which means something needed or wanted) by Max Ehrmann kept coming to mind - "Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself."

⁽¹⁾ However, to paraphrase Sangharakshita ⁽²⁾, unfortunately the word *discipline* has negative connotations for many people.

Most of us don't like submitting our unique individuality to someone else's notion of what is good for us. Although it is healthy to resist pressure imposed by others it is also true to say that those of us who can remain positive, inspired, and spontaneous while following our own natural inclinations without the need for any discipline, whether imposed by others or by ourselves, are very rare indeed. Most of us, if we allow ourselves to do what we please, do nothing very constructive, and end up feeling dull, listless, and uninspired. How true!

In a sense it's about energy. If our energies are unintegrated they work against one another. Getting them working in harmony and rousing them, requires some degree of discipline, of imposed order. There is a paradox here – inspiration and spontaneity are produced by discipline and regularity of practice.

Hopefully, eventually, there is a gradual build-up of energy which gains momentum until finally we can break free of all our habits. Then the need for conscious regular practice drops away. When our energies are integrated without the need for discipline to bring them together, when our energies are always immediately available to us – then we can be simply spontaneous. Guess what one of my resolutions is? [Roger]

1. Max Ehrmann, 1927, *Desiderata*, Copyright 1952
2. Sangharakshita 1998, *KNOW YOUR MIND. The Psychological Dimension of Ethics in Buddhism*. Birmingham: Windhorse Publications, p. 29.

FEBRUARY 2018 CALENDAR

Thu 1 st	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>LIVING ETHICALLY</i> : Ch 6 Mental States [R]
Thu 8 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>LIVING ETHICALLY</i> : Ch 6 Mental States [K]
Thu 15 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>PARINIRVANA DAY</i> [V]
Thu 22 nd	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>LIVING ETHICALLY</i> : Ch 6 Mental States [R]

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*:

This study program for February and March will see us completing the in-depth look at Ethics, how we might live more ethically, using Sangharakshita's book '*Living Ethically*'. The study program for the following months is still to be decided – more information in the March newsletter. **Meanwhile, if you there are any particular aspects of the Dharma, which you would like us to look at on Friends Nights, please let us know as soon as possible. You are also welcome to offer a presentation on any aspect of the Dharma, of particular interest to you.** Gary and Peter have done this in previous years. ***Parinirvana Day***, the occasion of the Buddha's physical death, will also be commemorated this month with meditation, readings and puja.

FRIENDS NIGHTS, on Thursdays, 7-9pm, are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor. There is **no charge for these events, but a donation is very much appreciated, since we rely heavily on people's generosity to keep the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre operating.*

Friends Nights are an opportunity for people to come together to meditate, engage in Buddhist practices, learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma, but most importantly to engage in these activities 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.

20 YEARS OF THE TOOWOOMBA BUDDHIST CENTRE:

Last Thursday we celebrated the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre's 'birthday', which was round about this time 20 years ago – in 1998. It was a well-attended, heart-warming evening with both 'original' and subsequent sangha members telling their stories of beginnings, first encounters, spiritual journeys to the moment and expressions of appreciation. There was a sense of energy and enthusiasm to continue, to step into the next 20 years. Sadhu!



NEW ROUND OF EIGHT WEEK COURSES STARTING:

Registrations are now open for upcoming evening courses: *Traditional Buddhist Meditation and Mindfulness* starting on Monday 19th February (7-9pm) and *Introducing Buddhism* on Tuesday 20th February (7-9pm), details on website. **Contact Roger 45649636 or 0410608791.**

RETREATS COMING UP IN 2018:

The following dates are confirmed for 3 weekend retreats to be held at Kelly House, James Byrne Centre:

- 1. April 27th to 29th – *Mandala of the Five Buddhas* led by Viryaja and Hridayaja.** Bookings are now open for this retreat. Cost \$210 full, \$190 part time, \$170 concessional. Limited to 16 people. More information in the March newsletter. Contact Viryaja on 0404299573 or vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org to make a booking.
- 2. July 20th to 22nd – The Vimalakirti Nidesha** led by Nagasuri from Sydney.
- 3. Nov. 16th to 18th –** led by Siladasa from Melbourne; theme to be announced.

BOOKS FOR SALE:

If you are interested in learning more about the Dharma or the Buddhist path, there are books for sale at the Centre. Titles include 'What is the Dharma?', 'A Guide to the Buddhist Path', 'The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path' and 'Principles of Buddhism'. We can order other Buddhist books for you if you let Viryaja know what you want.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

"When the bhikkhu, thus complete in the Moralities, perceives no fear from any direction, that is, with regard to restraint in morality. It is just as an established Ruler, having settled with his enemies, perceives no fear from any direction with regard to enemies. The bhikkhu, complete in this noble group of Moralities, experiences within himself an unmixed ease. Thus, Maharaja, is the bhikkhu complete in the Moralities."

[Long Discourse of the Buddha, tr. A. A. G. Bennet, Chetana Ltd., Bombay. P.67.]





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER MARCH 2018

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Dear Friends,

The Buddha said of his teaching, the Dharma, that it was to be tried and tested for oneself and not just to be relied upon because he had taught it. But he did not just leave it at that, or at the one teaching of the Noble Eightfold Path. Throughout his life he gave many other teachings on how to live a spiritual life and a way to Awakening. One such teaching is that of the 'five spiritual faculties'. Practising the 'five spiritual faculties should amount, in the end, to a spontaneous and enthusiastic engagement with life, and the work of life, in the fullest and deepest possible sense.'¹

The five spiritual faculties are: faith, wisdom, energy (*virya*), one-pointedness of mind (*samadhi*) and mindfulness. Faith and wisdom can be seen as a pair, balancing each other's extremes. For example, the extreme of faith and devotion may be superstition or fanaticism, while the extreme of wisdom can be a cold intellectual rigour excluding any emotional component. However faith and wisdom must work together in harmony if spiritual progress is to be made. Similarly, *virya*, or 'energy in pursuit of the good', can become restless energy given to distraction, while *samadhi* taken to the extreme may lead to inertness or passivity. Again, *virya* and *samadhi* need to be in harmony for a spiritual life to be well-lived. Mindfulness or awareness, the fifth spiritual factor, does not need to be balanced but is the balancing agent for the other factors. Mindfulness and balance are pivotal to leading a Buddhist spiritual life.

So how might we use these factors as a guide on our spiritual path? In getting to know ourselves we may discover, for example, that we are spending much of our time 'out there', albeit engaged in worthy activities, but to the marked neglect, or even exclusion, of our internal spiritual life, i.e. to the neglect of meditation, the balancing factor for *virya*. We can ask ourselves what our tendencies are – are we drawn more towards devotional practices or studying the Dharma? Would we prefer to be involved in 'activities' rather than meditating or reflection? Are we drifting towards any extremes and, if so, what do we need to cultivate the balancing factor? [Viriyaja]

1. 'What is the Dharma?', Sangharakshita, 1998, p.144, Windhorse Publications, Birmingham

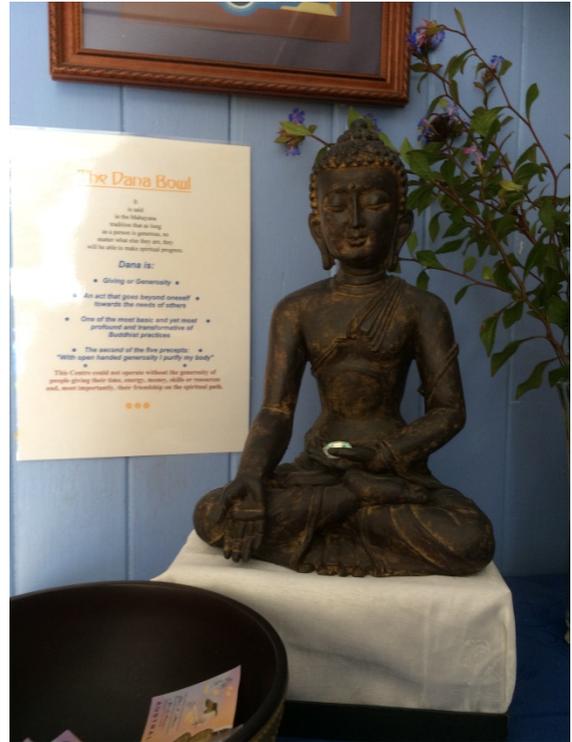
MARCH 2018 CALENDAR

Thu 1st	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>LIVING ETHICALLY</i> : Ch 6 Mental States [V]
Thu 8th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>LIVING ETHICALLY</i> : Ch 7 Results of Actions [R]
Thu 15th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation and Threefold Puja [V]
Thu 22nd	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>LIVING ETHICALLY</i> : Ch 7 Results of Actions [K]
Thu 29th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>LIVING ETHICALLY</i> : Ch 7 Results of Actions [V]

FRIENDS NIGHTS* - Thursdays, 7-9pm:

Friends Nights are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor. They are an opportunity for people to come together to meditate, engage in Buddhist practices such as pujas and to learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma. Most importantly they are an opportunity to engage in these activities in friendship with other like-minded people. The evening's program always includes meditation and a social aspect. Each month usually includes devotional practices with a Dharma study/activity component on other evenings. **The study program for March** will bring completion of the in-depth look at Ethics, using Sangharakshita's book '*Living Ethically*'. The study program for the rest of the year will focus on other books by Sangharakshita: '*Who is the Buddha?*' and '*The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path*'.

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



Ratnasambhava's gesture (mudra) of giving

RETREAT: APRIL 27th to 29th

This retreat, '*Mandala of the Five Buddhas*', will be led by Viryaja and Hridayaja. It will be held at Kelly House, James Byrne Centre. Cost \$210 full, \$190 part time, \$170 concessional. Limited to 16 people. Bookings are now open for this retreat, with the list already nearly full. **To make a reservation, or for more information, please contact Viryaja on 0404299573 or vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org**

OTHER RETREATS IN 2018:

July 20th to 22nd – *The Vimalakirti Nidesha* led by Nagasuri from Sydney.

Nov. 16th to 18th – led by Siladasa from Melbourne; theme to be announced.

Annual General Meeting:

Mitras and Triratna Buddhist Order members are eligible to become Members of the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre Inc. The AGM for Members will be on Saturday March 17th at 11am.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

"It is proper to reconsider whether or not one should carry out any rash undertaking, or anything not thoroughly thought through, even if one has already promised to do it."

The Bodhicharyavatara, Ch4, v2, Santideva





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NEWSLETTER APRIL 2018

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Dear Friends,

It is that time of the year again, Easter, and as usual at this time of the year I sense a feeling of *spirituality* in the air. No doubt this comes from the fact that it is a principal Christian festival celebrating the death and resurrection of Christ, which in our culture we are all familiar with. However, for me it is also something to do with the weather that occurs at this change of season (autumn). Of course in the Northern hemisphere it used to be commemorated in Europe as the pagan Spring festival celebrating decay, death and re-birth, fertility and fecundity, before it was replaced with the Christian version. To this day in China it is still celebrated simply as the Spring festival. In the Buddha's time, his father King Suddhodana (which means "he who grows pure rice"), being symbolically the most important figure in the land, was the first to plough the fields during the Spring festival.

These themes of spiritual death and re-birth are still very relevant to contemporary Buddhists and worth reflecting on at this time of the year. According to the Buddha Dharma there is no fixed self even within the deepest recesses of our mind. There are only the fleeting processes of consciousness as impermanent as everything else in this world. Out of these ever-changing processes we try and construct a permanent sense of self and strongly identify with and cling to it. Deep down, however, although we may not acknowledge it consciously, we know that this permanent self does not really exist, if not only because all our attempts to secure it fail. We spend most of our time, as a friend of mine once put it, "running from the void". The void or emptiness (*sunyata*) doesn't mean a vacuum it just means an absence of any fixed, solid entity. Sometimes it is translated as "transparency", which I find more useful.

In point of fact every moment of our lives represents a transition to a new form of life, because in every moment something becomes past and dies, while something new appears or is born (see thought for the month). This is *patisandhi* - rebirth. Because of this fundamental emptiness there exists a sort of infinite potentiality within us. So instead of reacting by running from the void it might be better to embrace it or surrender to it through the awareness and mindfulness cultivated in meditation, and realise that we can make of ourselves whatever we want. [Roger]

APRIL 2018 CALENDAR

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|---|------------------------------|---|
| Thu 5 th | <u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u> | Meditation;
Celebrating 50 years of the Triratna Buddhist Order [V] |
| Thu 12 th | <u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u> | Meditation; Mantras [R] |
| Thu 19 th | <u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u> | Meditation; <i>Tiratana Vandana</i> [R] |
| Thu 26 th | <u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u> | Meditation; Chanting practice of mantras etc. [V & H] |
| Fri 27 th – Sun 29 th <i>Mandala of the Five Buddhas</i> retreat [see below for details] | | |

***FRIENDS NIGHTS** - Thursdays, 7-9pm:**

The program for April includes a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Triratna Buddhist Order [then the Western Buddhist Order], a look at **mantras** and a closer look at the ***Tiratana Vandana*** – Salutation to the Three Jewels. The study program for the rest of the year will focus on learning more about the Buddha and his teaching of the Eightfold Path, using two books by Sangharakshita.

Friends Nights are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor. They are an opportunity for people to come together to meditate, engage in Buddhist practices such as pujas and to learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma. Most importantly they are an opportunity to engage in these activities in friendship with other like-minded people. The evening's program always includes meditation and a social aspect. Each month usually includes devotional practices with a Dharma study/activity component on other evenings.

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MANDALA OF THE FIVE BUDDHAS RETREAT: APRIL 27th to 29th

This retreat will be led by Viryaja and Hridayaja, both local Triratna Buddhist Order members. It will be held at Kelly House, James Byrne Centre. Cost \$210 full, \$190 part time, \$170 concessional. While the retreat is limited to 16 people and is virtually fully booked, people on the Waiting List stand a good chance of being offered a place. So if you are interested:
please contact Viryaja on 0404299573 or vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org

OTHER RETREATS IN 2018:

July 20th to 22nd – *The Vimalakirti Nidesha* led by Nagasuri from Sydney.

Nov. 16th to 18th – led by Siladasa from Melbourne; theme to be announced.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

Strictly speaking, the duration of the life of a living being is exceedingly brief, lasting only while a thought lasts. Just as a chariot-wheel in rolling rolls only at one point of the wheel and in resting rests only at one point; exactly in the same way, the life of a living being lasts only for the period of one thought. As soon as that thought has ceased the being is said to have ceased. As it has been said:

***“The being of a past moment of thought has lived, but does not live, nor will it live.
The being of a future moment of thought will live, but has not lived, nor does it live.
The being of a present moment of thought does live, but has not lived, nor will it live.”***

[Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhi-Magga*, VIII, transl. by H. C. Warren]





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NEWSLETTER MAY 2018

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Dear Friends,

'Among the hordes of animals that roam the wild, ... the lion is universally recognized to be their chief. ... The expression of the lion's supremacy is its roar — a roar which reduces to silence the cries, howls, bellows, shrieks, barks and growls of lesser creatures. When the lion steps forth from his den and sounds his roar, all the other animals stop and listen'. In the teachings, the Buddha is represented as lion-like and his proclamation of the Dharma as 'bold and thunderous, ... a veritable lion's roar'.¹

In our busy day to day lives, it can be easy to forget to 'stop and listen' to the wisdom of the Buddha, to his lion's roar. It is easy to become overwhelmed and forget to engage with what inspires us and gives us energy. Ritual and devotional practices are a very effective way to help us become more inspired. Recently, being on retreat and stopping our usual busyness for a while, entering the *Mandala of the Five Buddhas* was a powerful means for listening more fully with body, speech and mind. After the Buddha's death, people contacted the Buddha through meditation and the Five Buddhas, also known as *Jinas* or Conquerors, came about. Four of the Buddhas: *Akshobhya*, *Ratnasambhava*, *Amitabha* and *Amoghasiddhi* are different aspects of Enlightenment, while *Vairochana* is the total Enlightenment experience. Each Buddha has associated colours, wisdoms, emblems and other symbols. *Akshobhya's* realm in the east offers us tranquility and a mirror-like wisdom – seeing things clearly, as they really are. *Ratnasambhava* in the south encourages us to be generous, appreciate beauty and be free from making comparisons. In the west, *Amitabha's* gift is that of discriminating wisdom. Here the 'discriminating' refers to the uniqueness and differences of all phenomena. We all come into being, emerging differently, as the result of a unique set of conditions. In the north, *Amoghasiddhi's* wisdom is all-accomplishing. It encourages fearlessness and spontaneous, energetic, compassionate action. With *Vairochana*, at the centre of the mandala, we are in the sphere of Reality – expansive, self-transcending, total integration.

'A mandala is a harmonious arrangement around a central point, a symbol of the harmony and integration of the different levels and aspects of our being.'² The mandala of the Five Buddhas is an ideal mandala, which we can visualize, meditate upon and ritually engage with, to help 'unfold the full potential of our consciousness'.³
[Virajya]

1. Nanamoli, Introduction to *'The Shorter Discourses on the Lion's Roar'*, www.accesstoinsight.org

2. Vessantara, 'Meeting the Buddhas', 2003, p60, Windhorse Publications, Birmingham

3. *ibid.* p63

MAY 2018 CALENDAR

* *Friend Nights are from 7 to 9pm*

Thu 3 rd	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; 'WHO IS THE BUDDHA?' Ch.1 Evolution of a Buddha [K]
Thu 10 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Ch.2 The Way to Enlightenment [R]
Thu 17 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Ch.3 Hidden Teachings of Buddha's Early Life [V]
Thu 24 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Ch.4 The Heroic Ideal in Buddhism [R]
Thu 31 st	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Celebrating BUDDHA DAY with meditation and puja [V]

FRIENDS NIGHTS* - Thursdays, 7-9pm:

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This month there will be a celebration of the most important festival in the Buddhist calendar – **BUDDHA DAY**, the Buddha's Enlightenment at the full moon of May. Fittingly, the study program for May will be the start of getting to know the Buddha more fully, using Sangharakshita's book 'Who is the Buddha?'

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OTHER RETREATS IN 2018:

July 20th to 22nd – *The Vimalakirti Nidesha* led by Nagasuri from Sydney.

Nov. 16th to 18th – led by Siladasa from Melbourne; theme to be announced.

(A longer) THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

"Sariputta, the Tathagata has these ten Tathagata's powers, possessing which he claims the herd-leader's place, roars his lion's roar in the assemblies, and sets rolling the Wheel of Brahma [the Wheel of the Dharma]. What are the ten?"

"Here, the Tathagata understands as it actually is:

1...the possible as possible and the impossible as impossible...

2...the results of actions undertaken, past, future and present, with possibilities and with causes...

3... the ways leading to all destinations.

4...the world with its many and different elements.

5... how beings have different inclinations

6...the disposition of the faculties of other beings, other persons

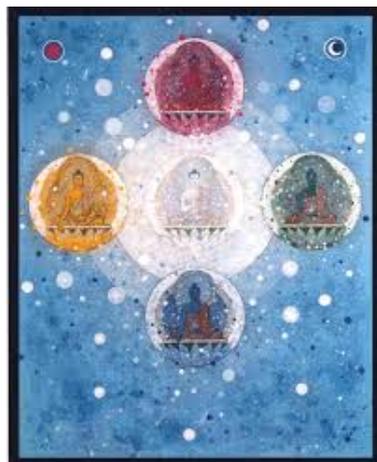
7...the defilement, the cleansing and the emergence in regard to the jhanas, liberations, concentrations and attainments.

8...the Tathagata recollects his manifold past lives, ... many aeons of world-contraction and expansion

9...with the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, the Tathagata sees beings passing away and reappearing, inferior and superior, fair and ugly, ...

10...Again, by realizing it for himself with direct knowledge, the Tathagata here and now enters upon and abides in the deliverance of mind and deliverance by wisdom that are taintless with the destruction of the taints. That too is a Tathagata's power that a Tathagata has, by virtue of which he claims the herd-leader's place, roars his lion's roar in the assemblies, and sets rolling the Wheel of Brahma."

(From The Greater Discourse on the Lion's Roar, MN No.12, trans. Nanamoli)





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NEWSLETTER JUNE 2018

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Dear Friends,

Last Thursday night we celebrated, with a Sevenfold Puja, the principal Buddhist festival of the year Wesak, the full moon night in the month of May when Prince Siddhartha became enlightened and thus became the Buddha. In one of the readings during the puja the incident of the rose-apple tree was recounted. The prince had been practising severe austerities trying to become enlightened by sheer force of will, but it wasn't working (as is often the case when the conscious mind alone is trying to force the rest of the psyche to cooperate) so he bravely abandoned the practices.

Remarkably he went in an entirely different direction, one in which he established joy as the basis for enlightenment. He reflected thus: "Might there be another way to Enlightenment? I thought of a time when my Sakyan father was working and I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree: quite secluded from sensual desires, secluded from unwholesome things, I had entered upon and abode in the first meditation, which is accompanied by thinking and exploring, with happiness and pleasure born of seclusion. Then following up that memory, there came the recognition that this was the way to Enlightenment."

What happened next was very interesting. He noticed there was something scary about this pleasure that appeared out of nowhere. "Why am I afraid of such pleasure?" He was quick to identify the source of his fear "It is pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual desires and unwholesome things." Both self-indulgence and self-denial are oriented around sensory pleasures. He recognised the focus was wrong. By not grasping after pleasant experiences, but by not pushing them away either, the Buddha-to-be was able to reorient himself. The spontaneous being-in-the-moment of his childhood experience, whilst not in itself the same as enlightenment, was the key to its attainment.

The lesson is that discomfort with innate joy is understandable. Its recovery challenges basic assumptions about the origins of happiness. We are conditioned to assume that sensual gratification from somewhere outside of ourselves, or its absence, are the defining elements of happiness. The Buddha found otherwise and that is a part of what is revolutionary about his approach.¹ [Roger]

1. Epstein, M., 2008, *GOING ON BEING. Life at the Crossroads of Buddhism and Psychotherapy*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, pp. 67-71.

JUNE 2018 CALENDAR

* *Friend Nights are from 7 to 9pm*

Thu 7 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Ch.4 The Heroic Ideal in Buddhism [V]
Thu 14 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Ch.5 From Hero-Worship to Worshipping the Buddha [V]
Thu 21 st	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Ch.6 The Word of the Buddha [K]
Thu 28 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Ch.7 Karma and Rebirth [V]

FRIENDS NIGHTS* - Thursdays, 7-9pm:

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The study program for June will be a continuation of getting to know the Buddha more fully, using Sangharakshita's book 'Who is the Buddha?' The Friends Night program for the rest of the year will include celebrations of Buddhist festivals, topics of interest by Sangha members and study as follows:

July: Completion of 'Who is the Buddha?'

Aug. to Dec.: 'The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path' (perfect vision, emotion, speech, action, livelihood, effort, awareness, *samadhi*)

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

A RETREAT - THE VIMALAKIRTI NIRDESA, 20th to 22nd July, 2018

Led by NAGASURI, from Sydney and Viryaja

at Kelly House, James Byrne Centre, Highfields.

Cost: \$210 Full; \$190 Part time; \$170 Concessional.

Food is vegetarian. **Limited** to 16 participants.

FOR MORE DETAILS SEE ATTACHED POSTER BELOW

To make a booking or for more information, please contact:

Viryaja on 0404 299 573 or at vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org.

OTHER RETREATS IN 2018:

Nov. 16th to 18th – led by Siladasa from Melbourne; theme to be announced.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

79 One who has imbibed the Truth lives happily with well-seeing mind. The spiritually mature person delights in the Truth made known by the Noble.

80 Irrigators draw off waters; fletchers straighten arrows; carpenters shape wood; the spiritually mature discipline themselves.

81 As a solid rock cannot be shaken by the wind, so the spiritually mature person is unmoved by praise or blame.

Dhammapada, verses 79-81



The Vimalakirti Nirdesa

a weekend retreat led by Nagasuri and Viryaja

Friday 20 July to Sunday 22 July, 2018

Cost: Full \$210; Part-employed \$190; Concession \$170



Nagasuri is a Triratna Buddhist Order member from Sydney. She was ordained in 2000 and retired from academic teaching, before she was 50, to devote her life and being to the Three Jewels – the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. Her strongest inspiration and guide to practice is exploring the Dharma both by herself and even more with others. Her name can be interpreted as meaning – ‘she who aspires to be a heroine of wisdom’.

This weekend residential retreat will be a precious opportunity to dive into the beauty, mystery and wonder of the Vimalakirti Nirdesa, a Mahayana teaching of cosmic dimensions, profound Dharma, much humour, even a gender change and, most importantly, of relevance to our lives and practice right now. Do join us for this Dharmic adventure.

Venue: Kelly House at the James Byrne Centre, Highfields.

Food: Vegetarian. **Limited numbers:** 16 participants.

For more information, or to make a booking, please contact

Viryaja at vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org

or ph. 0404299573



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NEWSLETTER JULY 2018

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<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/toowoomba>

Dear Friends,

On Friends Night last week, we looked more deeply at the teachings about karma and rebirth. This was in the context of developing a greater understanding of who the Buddha is, and how his Enlightenment can help us in our own daily lives and practice. In the first watch of the night of his Enlightenment, the Buddha recollected all his past lives. In the second watch he saw how beings pass away and reappear according to their actions. He then realised the conditional nature of suffering, its origin and cessation, and the way to the cessation of suffering. He realised the law of dependent arising, of conditionality.¹

Karma is *willed* action of body, speech and mind. It is a principle of moral agency, i.e. intended actions are either skilful or unskilful. It was understood in early Buddhism that karmas may have consequences in this life, in the next life, in some future life, or may become exhausted before taking effect.² Karmas are classified in a number of ways, one being according to the priority of taking effect - of how they affect the nature of one's rebirth. Weighty karma affects one's whole character; death-proximate karma is a mental image appearing at the time of death and reflecting one's life preoccupations; habitual karma is those repeated actions in one's life; and residual karma is any willed action not included under the other three headings.³

In the *Majjhima Nikaya* the Buddha is clear about the death-proximate effects of one who lives a life of faith and skilfulness⁴. Mahanama expresses his concern to the Buddha about how it might be if he were to die in a distracted state in which he has lost his mindful contemplation of the Three Jewels. However, the Buddha reassures him. He tells him not to fear. He says that those who have faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and who practise the virtues will be alright. He asks Mahanama in which direction a leaning tree will fall if cut down. Mahanama replies that it will fall in the direction in which it is leaning. The Buddha says, "So too, Mahanama, a noble listener who possesses these four things slants, slopes, and leans toward nirvana." This, then, can be a great encouragement for our own spiritual journey. Our fear of death and the effects in any future life, can be allayed by practising actions of body speech and mind, which are virtuous and arising from our faith in, our going for refuge to, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. [Virya]

1. 'The Life of the Buddha' by Bhikkhu Nanamoli

2. 'Karma and Rebirth' by Nagapriya

3. 'Who is the Buddha?' by Sangharakshita

4. 'Mahanama Sutta: to Mahanama', trans. Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 2005

JULY 2018 CALENDAR

* *Friend Nights are from 7 to 9pm*

Thu 5th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; Ch.8, The 'Death' of the Buddha [K]

Thu 12th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; Ch.9, Who is the Buddha? [R]

Thu 19th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; Welcome Nagasuri [V]

Fri 20th to Sun 22nd **A RETREAT: The Vimalakirti Nirveda** led by Nagasuri and Viryaja

Thu 26th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** **DHARMA DAY:** meditation and puja [R]

FRIENDS NIGHTS* - Thursdays, 7-9pm:

Friends Nights are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor. They are an opportunity for people to come together to meditate, engage in Buddhist practices such as pujas

and to learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma. Most importantly, they are an opportunity to engage in these activities in friendship with other like-minded people. The evening's program always includes meditation and a social aspect. Each month usually includes devotional practices with a Dharma study/activity component on other evenings.

The study program for July will see the completion of studying '*Who is the Buddha?*' by Sangharakshita.

Nagasuri, a Triratna Buddhist Order member, will be visiting from Sydney to lead the retreat on the *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa* and will be attending Friends Night on the evening before the retreat. Nagasuri was ordained in 2000 and retired from academic teaching, before she was 50, to devote her life and being to the Three Jewels – the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. Her strongest inspiration and guide to practice is exploring the Dharma both by herself and even more with others. Her name can be interpreted as meaning – 'she who aspires to be a heroine of wisdom'.

DHARMA DAY will be celebrated at the end of the month (see below).

The program for the rest of the year will include celebrations of Buddhist festivals, devotional practice and topics of interest by Sangha members. '*The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path*' (perfect vision, emotion, speech, action, livelihood, effort, awareness, *samadhi*), will be the focus of study from August to December.

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

DHARMA DAY:

Dharma Day is one of the main Buddhist festivals. It is a celebration of the Buddha's first turning of the Wheel of the Dharma; the beginning of the communication of the Buddha's enlightened vision of the path to freedom.

A RETREAT - THE VIMALAKIRTI NIRDESA - 20th to 22nd July, 2018:

Led by **Nagasuri** and **Viryaja**, at Kelly House, James Byrne Centre, Highfields. **Cost:** \$210 Full; \$190 Part time; \$170 Concessional. This retreat is fully booked but there is a waiting list. **For more information, contact Viryaja** on 0404 299 573 or at vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org.

OTHER RETREATS IN 2018:

Nov. 16th to 18th – led by Dharmamati from Coffs Harbour; theme to be announced.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

"Suppose a man were to throw a jar of ghee or a jar of oil into a deep lake of water, where it would break. There the shards & jar-fragments would go down, while the ghee or oil would rise upward and separate out. In the same way, if one's mind has long been nurtured with conviction, nurtured with virtue, nurtured with learning, nurtured with relinquishment, nurtured with discernment, then when the body... is eaten by crows, vultures, hawks, dogs, hyenas, or all sorts of creatures, nevertheless the mind... rises upward and separates out.

Mahanama Sutta 1, Majjhima Nikaya





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2018

4-6 Cress Street
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www.toowoombabuddhistcentre.org
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Dear Friends,

Last Thursday we celebrated Dharma Day, the festival that marks the first turning of the Wheel of the Dharma by the Buddha 2,500 years ago. We reflected on the nature of the Dharma using a passage from the *Tiratana Vandana* (Salutation to the Three Jewels) in the Pali Canon (see below - Thought for the Month)¹.

First of all it is described as *svakkhato* meaning “well-taught”, or “well-communicated”. Out of compassion for other human beings the Buddha communicated the teaching to help us grow and develop. He made his teachings available to people in their own language and adapted and expressed them in ways suited to our human needs.

Next it is described as *sanditthiko*, which translates as “immediately apparent”. According to some religions you will taste the fruits of your spiritual practice only after death, in heaven. But according to Buddhism you will see the results of your Dharma practice in this lifetime.

Next it is described as *akaliko*, “perennial”, “not connected with time” – it still has the same ability to change people’s lives today as when first taught 2,500 years ago.

Then the Dharma is *ehipassiko*, which literally means “come and see”; it is ‘of the nature of a personal invitation’. You are invited to try it out, experiment; it is not taken on the basis of blind faith, or believed in because some great guru taught it to you.

Next it is described as *opaneyiko*, meaning “leading forward”, or “progressive”. It leads the individual human being to higher and higher levels of human development.

Finally it is described as *paccatam veditabbo vinnuhi ti* – “to be understood individually, by the wise”. This means the teachings have to be experienced by each person for themselves. You can’t practice the Dharma at second hand. You have to do it yourself: it’s *your* life.

With the Sevenfold Puja we expressed gratitude for the Buddha bringing the Dharma into the world. [Roger]

1. Sangarakshita (1998) *What is the Dharma?* Birmingham: Windhorse Publications, pp. 8-11.

AUGUST 2018 CALENDAR

* *Friend Nights are from 7 to 9pm*

The Buddha’s Noble Eightfold Path

Thu 2 nd	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Perfect Vision Ch.1 [V]
Thu 9 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; ‘More on the Noble Eightfold Path’ [Gary]
Thu 16 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Themes from Mitrata seminar - Perfect Vision [R]
Thu 23 rd	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Perfect Emotion [K]
Sun 26 th	OUTDOOR WORKING BEE - 9am to 12 noon	
Thu 30 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Themes from Mitrata seminar - Perfect Emotion [R]

FRIENDS NIGHTS* - Thursdays, 7-9pm:

Friends Nights are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor. They are an opportunity for people to come together to meditate, engage in Buddhist practices such as pujas and to learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma. Most importantly, they are an opportunity to engage in these activities in friendship with other like-minded people. The evening's program always includes meditation and a social aspect. Each month usually includes devotional practices with a Dharma study/activity component on other evenings.

The focus of study from August to December will be *'The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path'* (Perfect Vision, Emotion, Speech, Action, Livelihood, Effort, Awareness, *Samadhi*). **The program for the rest of the year** will also include celebrations of Buddhist festivals, devotional practice and topics of interest by Sangha members.

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

NEW ROUND OF COURSES STARTING:

The next round of eight week courses is proposed to start with *Introducing Buddhism* on Monday night, August 6th 7-9pm and *Traditional Buddhist Meditation and Mindfulness* on Tuesday night August 7th 7-9pm. Contact Roger, if interested.

PARKING AT THE CENTRE:

A parking problem at the Centre is one of the best kinds of problems to deal with, since it means there are increased attendances at Friends Nights and other events! However, with the imminent establishment of a low hedge between the mail box and our neighbour's fence on the east side, there is a need to look at how we park. We haven't yet worked out an ideal plan for parking but are asking people to be mindful of the following: 1] to use the sealed drive access to the grassed area and not enter or park on the proposed hedge-line; 2] to park close to other vehicles in lines where possible and as less likely to box in others; 3] leave a clear access from the bottom of the ramp to the toilet; 4] also use the sealed carpark to the west, which is very well lit at night.

OUTDOOR WORKING BEE - SUNDAY 26TH AUGUST:

As part of the ongoing improvement and maintenance program, there will be a Working Bee at the Centre on Sunday 26th August from 9am - 12 mid-day. Work to be done includes: washing walls and deck; pruning trees and jasmine on trellis; driveway fill; digging holes for hedge and along trellis; cleaning up the back area. **Are there any volunteers? Please bring along tools and a ute or trailer if you have them.**

RETREATS:

There is one more retreat for 2018 – November 16 – 18, led by Dharmamati. There are already a number of people who have expressed interest in attending this retreat. However, because of some of the complexity surrounding confirmed bookings and waiting lists, the Booking List for this retreat will be open from its announcement in the October newsletter. You are welcome to express an interest beforehand – this is helpful for long term planning - but it will be necessary to make a reservation as soon as the Booking List is open.

Retreats for 2019: March 15-17, leader to be confirmed; August 2-4, led by Siladasa; November 8-10 – date to be confirmed, led by Nagasuri.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

***“Svakkhato bhagavata Dhammo
sanditthiko akaliko ehipassiko
opanayiko paccatam
veditabbo vinnuhi ti”***

*“Well communicated is the Teaching of the
Richly Endowed One,
Immediately Apparent, Perennial, of the Nature
of a Personal Invitation, Progressive,
to be understood individually, by the wise.”*

[Tiratana Vandana, Anguttara-Nikaya ii. 54-57.]





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2018

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Dear Friends,

A definition of the word 'evil' is that it is anything morally bad or wrong and causing harm, pain or disaster. Sometimes, people have a strong adverse reaction, when they first come across the word in Buddhism, linking it with the idea of a personified 'Devil'. Is it possible for there to be people, who are totally evil, personifying 'Evil' itself? Or, are all people basically 'good'?

The Law of Karma explains: all phenomena, material events and states of mind, are a process dependent upon the presence of conditions, which in turn condition the succeeding process. Actions of body, speech and mind have consequences. As unenlightened human beings we are all capable, to some degree or other, of actions which are based on greed, hatred and delusion – 'evil' actions in Buddhist terms. Similarly, we are all capable of actions based upon generosity, kindness and clarity. People are not wholly evil – unskilful - nor wholly good – skilful. We are a changing mixture of both and it is usually difficult to say what the proportion of good and evil is.¹

A Buddha is free of all conditionings. Upon Enlightenment, Siddhartha became Buddha, the personification of Unconditioned Mind.² However, prior to Enlightenment, he was still subject, albeit very subtly, to the negative forces of unskilful states of mind, represented as the attacks of Mara. Mara can be said to be the personification of conditioned mind, of all evil actions based on greed, hatred and delusion. The yet-to-become Buddha, in recognising the nature of Mara's attacks was able to transform them into harmless flowers.

So where does this leave us? In our spiritual practices and in all aspects of our lives, we can cultivate awareness of our conditionality. We can gain clarity about our unskilful actions of body, speech and mind. We can pause. And then, rather than falling into our habitual reaction, we allow a creative response, which is conducive to more kindly and generous ways of being. [Viriyaja]

1. Sangharakshita, 1983 - *Dhammapada Ch 9 – The Section of Evil*, (Seminar), www.freebuddhistaudio.com
2. Sangharakshita, 1995, 'Who is the Buddha?', p.157, Windhorse Publications, Birmingham

SEPTEMBER 2018 CALENDAR

* *Friend Nights are from 7 to 9pm*

- Thu 6th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **Perfect Speech** Ch.3 [V]
- Thu 13th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; Themes from Mitrata seminar - Perfect Speech [V]
- Sun 16th → **Mitras' Study Meeting – 1.30pm to 3pm**
- Thu 20th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Celebrating **PADMASAMBHAVA DAY** [R]
- Sat 22nd → **International Practice Week: 8.45 to 10.15am & morning tea [see below] [V]**
- Thu 27th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **Perfect Action** [R]
- Sat 29th → **International Practice Week: 8.45 to 10.15am & morning tea [see below] [V]**

FRIENDS NIGHTS* - Thursdays, 7-9pm:

Friends Nights are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor. They are an opportunity for people to come together to meditate, engage in Buddhist practices such as pujas and to learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma. Most importantly, they are an opportunity to

engage in these activities in friendship with other like-minded people. The evening's program always includes meditation and a social aspect. Each month usually includes devotional practices with a Dharma study/activity component on other evenings. This month we shall celebrate **Padmasambhava Day** – Padmasambhava introduced the Tantra into Tibet. The focus of **study till December** is *'The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path'* (Perfect Vision, Emotion, Speech, Action, Livelihood, Effort, Awareness, *Samadhi*).

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

INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE WEEK – 'Turning Arrows Into flowers':

International Practice Week will take place 22nd to 29th September. The world-wide practice week includes all Triratna Centres and Practice Groups, wherever they are. The theme of 'Turning Arrows into Flowers' is taken from the Buddha's example, when, on the cusp of Enlightenment, he responds to Mara's attacks with peace and openness. **We shall be celebrating International Practice Week at the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre with:**

***Two Saturday morning practice sessions, on September 22nd and 29th
from 8.45am to 10.15am, led by Viryaja***

Please join us for readings and meditation, followed by morning tea.

OUTDOOR WORKING BEE:

As part of the ongoing improvement and maintenance program, there was a Working Bee at the Centre on Sunday 26th August. An enthusiastic and energetic group of volunteers has really made a huge difference with road access repair, washing walls/deck, major tree pruning, planting a hedge and other plants, and cleaning up the back area. Unfortunately we forgot to take photographs of all the activity! The work has necessitated:

TEMPORARY PARKING arrangements: Please use the grassed areas outside the flagged/roped area or the sealed carpark to the west, which is very well lit at night.

TAI CHI CLASSES:

Roger will be taking in beginners over the next week or so for his Authentic Yang Style T'ai Chi Ch'uan School (see www.taichitoowoomba.com.au). If interested, please contact him on 45649636 or 0410608791.

RETREAT - NOVEMBER 16TH TO 18TH :

This retreat, *'Elemental Archetypes'* will be led by Dharmamati, a Triratna Order member from Coffs Harbour. Dharmamati was ordained in 1979 and was one of the founding members of the Triratna Community in Australia. More details next month. The Booking List for this retreat will be open from its announcement in the October newsletter. You are welcome to express an interest beforehand, but it will be necessary to make a reservation as soon as the Booking List is open.

Retreats for 2019: March 15-17, led by Sudrishti; August 2-4, led by Siladasa; November 8-10, led by Nagasuri.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

'Seeing the body as froth, (and) thoroughly comprehending its mirage-nature, let one proceed unseen by the King of Death, having broken the flower-tipped arrows of Mara'

Dhammapada - verse 46





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2018

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Dear Friends,

Recently, a world-wide practice week had the theme of 'Turning Arrows into Flowers'. The week included all Triratna Buddhist Centres and practice groups wherever they are in the world. The theme comes from an incident traditionally known as the 'Victory over Mara'. The incident occurs when, on the cusp of Enlightenment, the Buddha responds to Mara's arrows, to his attacks of anger, aversion, dislike and so on, with peace and openness. The arrows are transformed into flowers.

What can we learn from this incident? How can we train our own minds to be less reactive, to be more creative, i.e. to be able to turn those 'arrows' that assail us into 'flowers'? There are traditional mind-training practices (*lojong*) available to us. First, we need to have a good ground of practice: ethics, meditation for integration and positive emotion, puja and reflection. We can use the four Mind-turning reflections to reflect upon this precious human opportunity, death and impermanence, karma and rebirth, and the dangers and defects of *samsara* - the world of suffering we live in. Then, through other practices, we can come to see the insubstantial nature of mind and become more compassionate with the realisation of our being not a separate entity. We see that 'Looking inside I am nothing; looking outside I am everything'¹.

There are 5 forces, by which we can train our lives to move towards wisdom and compassion:

1. *Determination* – setting a direction for one's practice and letting go of habits and fearfulness;
2. *Familiarisation* through mindfulness and repetition;
3. *Virtuous seeds* – wholesome activity, skilful mind states, dedicating our activity to all beings;
4. *Repudiation* (of negative mind states), i.e. saying 'no' to them, seeing the fruitlessness of these states; trying to abandon self-cherishing thoughts, and reminding oneself, "It's not only what I want";
5. *Aspiration or dedication* – using our imagination in wishing others and ourselves to be well. When practising the *metta bhavana* and wishing or imagining good things to happen, we are actually changing our brains in a positive way.²

It is possible that we too, like the Buddha, will be able to say we have broken Mara's squadrons with understanding. We too, can transform arrows into flowers. [Viryaja]

1. Yashobodhi, Talk 1, International Practice Week 2018, <https://vimeo.com/album/5410254>

2. *ibid.* Talk 6

OCTOBER 2018 CALENDAR

* *Friend Nights are from 7 to 9pm*

Thu 4 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; themes from Mitrata seminar on Perfect Action [K]
Thu 11 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Perfect Livelihood Ch. 5 [Peter]
Thu 18 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; themes from Mitrata seminar on Perfect Livelihood [R]
Thu 25 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation and Threefold Puja; Perfect Effort Ch. 6 [V]

FRIENDS NIGHTS* - Thursdays, 7-9pm:

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component on other evenings. The focus of **study till December** is 'The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path' (Perfect Vision, Emotion, Speech, Action, Livelihood, Effort, Awareness, *Samadhi*).

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

TEMPORARY PARKING:

The grassed area in front of the Centre is beginning to recover with the topsoil application and watering. But it needs more time and some more rain before it is ready for parking on again. Please continue to use the grassed areas outside the flagged/roped area or the sealed carpark to the west, which is very well lit at night.

ELEMENTAL ARCHETYPES'

a retreat led by Dharmamati

Fri 16th to Sun November 18th, 2018

at Kelly House, James Byrne Centre, Highfields.

Cost: \$210 full; \$190 partly employed; \$170 concessional

Dharmamati is a Triratna Order member from Coffs Harbour, who was ordained in 197. He was one of the founding members of the Triratna Community in Australia.

Dharmamati is also an artist and has previously led two retreats in Toowoomba.

THE BOOKING LIST FOR THIS RETREAT IS NOW OPEN.

To make a booking or for more information, please contact:

Christine McConnell: 0417 627 544 or healthfactormedia@bigpond.com

RETREATS PLANNED FOR 2019: [themes to be announced]

March 15-17, led by Sudrishti; August 2-4, led by Siladasa; November 8-10, led by Nagasuri.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

*In my every action, I will watch my mind,
And the moment destructive emotions arise,
I will confront them strongly and avert them,
Since they will hurt both me and others.*

Atisha, v.3, Eight Verses for Training the Mind,





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2018

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Dear Friends,

It is with great sadness that we must inform you of the death of Urygen Sangharakshita, founder of the Triratna Buddhist Order and Community. He passed away on 30th October 2018 at approximately 10am GMT in Hereford Hospital, UK.

The Toowoomba Buddhist Centre will be hosting a 2 hour vigil on Wednesday, 31st October, from 3pm. The program for November 1st, the first Friends Night of this month, will be starting at 7pm, and will be dedicated to Bhante Sangharakshita with chanting, meditation, readings and Puja.

Dear Friends,

On Friends Night at the moment we are studying the Eightfold Path. Such a path or journey can only start with the desire to want to change how we are. For this reason The Eightfold Path starts with a Vision; without that the rest of the Path, known as The Path of Transformation, is not possible. Usually the Vision involves some sort of insight into the nature of reality, often that it is unsatisfactory and involves suffering, and the desire to find a way out of this situation. Often we become 'sick of being sick', sick of being a self-destructive self and desire growth and the possibility of becoming a more healthy, happy human being.

Progress is inevitably gradual and requires persistent effort. As the Buddha said "... a pot becomes full by constant drops of water, so little by little do humans fill themselves with good." We put so much effort into being unskilful it is hard to re-direct it into skilful effort. Indeed, it is worth reminding ourselves that if we put a fraction of the effort we put into unskilful activities into skilful ones we would probably all be Enlightened overnight!

All the clichés apply: 'Rome wasn't built in a day' and 'you can't stop an express train with just one application of the brakes'. Gradually we become more mindful and as a result less impulsive and less reactive. At first we are only aware of having acted unskilfully after the event, gradually we become aware as we act unskilfully and, eventually, before we act so that we can prevent it. Gradually we withdraw our neurotic projections onto external objects and thus experience less craving and more contentment. We orientate ourselves more toward satisfying our objective needs for growth instead of satisfying our more subjective likes and dislikes.

Such progress is dependent upon keeping up a regular practice of Ethics and Meditation. We need to make *sustained* effort and if we don't keep it up we do slip back and collapse. If the latter happens (as it inevitably will) the practising Buddhist does not wallow in irrational guilt but realizes that such failures are simply the result of not keeping the right conditions in place and that it is just a matter of re-establishing these conditions as soon as possible and getting on with the practice.

Keeping up a regular practice is itself a sign of progress. More and more we turn our attention to, and organise our lifestyle around, inspiring ideals particularly Going For Refuge to The Three Jewels. As we become more and more integrated we experience more energy, joy and happiness. We feel more composed, confident and guilt-free, in a word we feel 'free'. The Buddha taught that just as the ocean has but one taste, that of salt, so too the Dharma has but one taste, that of freedom. There is a point one can reach in this lifetime, which it is impossible to slip back from. The Law of Conditionality has reached a momentum that it is impossible to reverse. It is a point of no return referred to as Stream Entry. [Roger]

FRIENDS NIGHTS* - Thursdays, 7-9pm:

Friends Nights are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor. They are an opportunity for people to come together to meditate, engage in Buddhist practices such as pujas and to learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma. Most importantly, they are an opportunity to engage in these activities in friendship with other like-minded people. The evening's program always includes meditation and a social aspect. Each month usually includes devotional practices with a Dharma study/activity

component on other evenings. The focus of **study till December** is *'The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path'* (Perfect Vision, Emotion, Speech, Action, Livelihood, Effort, Awareness, *Samadhi*).

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

NOVEMBER 2018 CALENDAR

* *Friend Nights are from 7 to 9pm*

Thu 1st **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Puja for Ugyen Sangharakshita, 26/8/1925 – 30/10/2018 [V]

Thu 8th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; Perfect Effort Ch. 6 [V]

Thu 15th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; Welcome Dharmamati and themes from Mitrata seminar on Perfect Effort [R]

Fri 16th to Sun November 18th: ***Elemental Archetypes Retreat led by Dharmamati***

Thu 22nd **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation and Threefold Puja [K]

Thu 29th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; Perfect Awareness Ch. 7 [R]

PARKING AT THE CENTRE:

The grassed area in front of the Centre has recovered sufficiently for the resumption of parking there.

ELEMENTAL ARCHETYPES' - Fri 16th to Sun November 18th, 2018

A retreat led by Dharmamati at Kelly House, James Byrne Centre, Highfields. Dharmamati is a Triratna Order member from Coffs Harbour, who was ordained in 1979. He was one of the founding members of the Triratna Community in Australia. Dharmamati is also an artist and has previously led two retreats in Toowoomba.

Cost: \$210 full; \$190 partly employed; \$170 concessional

THE BOOKING LIST FOR THIS RETREAT IS STILL OPEN. To make a booking or for more information, please contact: Christine McConnell: 0417 627 544 or healthfactormedia@bigpond.com

RETREATS PLANNED FOR 2019: [themes to be announced]

March 15-17, led by Sudrishti; August 2-4, led by Siladasa; November 8-10, led by Nagasuri.

SANGHA DAY with MITRA CEREMONIES – Saturday December 1st, 10am-2pm

There will be a special Sangha Day celebration on Sat. December 1st from 10am to 2pm, with 3 women becoming Mitras within the Triratna Buddhist Community. There will be introductions, meditation and a Sevenfold Puja followed by lunch. All friends and family welcome, so please mark the date in your diaries. More information later in the month or contact Viryaja on 0404299573.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

“By sustained effort, earnestness, discipline, and self-control, let the wise man make for himself an island, which no flood overwhelms.”

Dhammapada (Transl. Narada), Ch.2, 25.





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2018

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Dear Friends,

A small book has recently been published, which is about quotes attributed to the Buddha - those quotes which are so often seen in popular press and social media, and which are actually fake¹. The earliest written records we have of the Buddha's words and teachings, are in the Pali Canon, dating from several centuries after the Buddha's death. Before the written records, there was an oral tradition of communicating the Dharma, relying on memory and repetition. It is highly likely that there would have been some distortion of the teachings, not only in their oral transmission, but also in the process of their being written down and in the subsequent translations of those scriptures. How can we, today, really know what the 'word of the Buddha' is? Most of us do not have a sufficiently wide experience for ourselves, to draw upon the fundamental ideas and practices underlying the different schools of Buddhism, and thus we need to rely on others. Sangharakshita, the founder of the Triratna Buddhist Community and Order, has provided a guide to what can be reliably regarded as Dharma.

For many people, this time of year, the festive season, will be a time for families and friends to come together to eat, drink and be merry - perhaps with an element of over-indulgence. It is also a time when the predicaments of homeless and disadvantaged people can come into sharp relief against our own good fortune. We may ask ourselves, "How can I, in trying to lead a 'good' life, cope with such expectations, excesses and needs? What can I do?" Very fortunately, an opportunity once arose to be able to ask Sangharakshita these very questions. His answer? "Don't compromise on the essentials". The 'essentials' were here understood as being a reference to the Five (or Ten) Precepts. Practising deeds of loving kindness; open-handed generosity; stillness, simplicity and contentment; truthful, kindly, useful and harmonious speech; and maintaining clarity of mind, to whatever degree one could muster, was the answer. Not always easy to do! This festive season, may we be able to muster as much as we can, of actions of body, speech and mind for the happiness and benefit of all beings. [Viryaja]

1. Bodhipaksa, 2018, 'I Can't Believe It's Not Buddha', Parallax Press, Berkeley, California

DECEMBER 2018 CALENDAR

* *Friend Nights are from 7 to 9pm*

Saturday 1ST SANGHA DAY AND MITRA CEREMONY (see below for details)

Thu 6th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; **Perfect Samadhi Ch. 8** [V&R]

Thu 13th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; Sevenfold Puja [V]

JANUARY 2019 CALENDAR

Tue 22nd Women's Dharma Study [8.30am] and Meditation [10am] recommence [V]

Thu 24th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; Sevenfold Puja [R]

FRIENDS NIGHTS* - Thursdays, 7-9pm:

Friends Nights are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor. They are an opportunity for people to come together to meditate, engage in Buddhist practices such as pujas and to learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma. Most importantly, they are an opportunity to

engage in these activities in friendship with other like-minded people. The evening's program always includes meditation and a social aspect. Each month usually includes devotional practices with a Dharma study/activity component on other evenings. The **focus of study** for much of the year has been *'The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path'* (Perfect Vision, Emotion, Speech, Action, Livelihood, Effort, Awareness, *Samadhi*). We conclude the topic this month. The proposed study program for 2019 will be available in the February Newsletter.

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

'ELEMENTAL ARCHETYPES' RETREAT - Fri 16th to Sun November 18th, 2018

Dharmamati in his usual entertaining fashion led us through an exploration of the six elements (earth, water, fire, air, space and consciousness), both inside us and outside us. Through study workshops and meditation we learnt that the elements are "not me, not mine ... " and that we are just a temporary amalgamation of them on loan as it were. We aimed to gain more insight and compassion through the practises. One highlight of the retreat was a performing puja complete with instruments – drums, cymbals, horns and a variety of others – singing and dancing. Everyone enjoyed it immensely. [Roger]

RETREATS PLANNED FOR 2019: [themes to be announced]

March 15-17, led by Sudrishti; August 2-4, led by Siladasa; November 8-10, led by Nagasuri.

SANGHA DAY with MITRA CEREMONY – Saturday December 1st

There will be a special Sangha Day celebration on Sat. December 1st from 10am to 2pm, with 3 women - Jill, Katie and Lesley - becoming Mitras within the Triratna Buddhist Community. There will be introductions, meditation and a Sevenfold Puja followed by 'bring-a-plate' lunch. All friends and family welcome.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

***The wise prescribe giving,
Harmlessness, self-control and taming,
Service to one's parents
And to those who live the holy life.
These are the kinds of deeds
To which the wise person resorts.
The noble one, possessed of vision,
Passes to an auspicious world.***

Anguttara Nikaya, III, 45

