



Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2019

4-6 Cress Street
Toowoomba Qld 4350

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

Dear Friends,

Last Thursday, participants at Friends night chanted the *Sunyata* or Emptiness mantra (see Thought for the Month) *Om Svabhavasuddha Sarvadharmasvabhavasuddho Ham* – “Om, all things are pure by nature. I too am pure by nature”. From a Buddhist perspective, the nature of existence is quite mysterious. Things are not what they seem. At one level things seem to exist solidly and separately from one another – this is how we see the world – Buddhism does not deny this. Without this empirical perception of the world we would not be able to interact with it and manipulate it to our ends. This way of seeing the world gave us a huge evolutionary advantage.

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

Later it became known as the teaching of emptiness (*Sunyata*). Because everything is a process over time, and is interconnected with everything else in space, it is empty of an independent self-nature. It does not exist in a self-subsistent way. This was, in his day (and still is), a radical teaching because it states that there is no irreducible element to our being, no eternal soul. These views coincide quite well with what the ‘new sciences’ of quantum physics and ecology have revealed about the world.

It is said that the Enlightened mind can see the world both ways at the same time. But we unenlightened beings cannot and so it becomes a source of suffering for us. There is a mismatch between the seeming permanence and solidity of the empirical world we perceive, and long for, and the ephemeral nature of the reality. The message of Buddhism is very subtle. We are not an ‘independently existing self’, separate from everything else, but we are also not ‘not a self’. [Roger]

FEBRUARY 2019 CALENDAR

* *Friend Nights are from 7 to 9pm*

Thu 7 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Introduction to Bodhisattvas - Vajrasattva [V]
Thu 14 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; PARINIRVANA DAY [K]
Thu 21 st	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Mind in Harmony – 3 Big Ideas [R]
Thu 28 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	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 the first half of 2019 will include getting to know the Bodhisattvas; the psychology of Buddhist ethics, using Subhuti’s book *Mind in Harmony*; and an exploration of discourses drawn from the *Anguttara Nikaya*.

**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.*

*** Please note that we are aiming to start shrine room activities no later than 7.10pm.*

NEW ROUND OF EIGHT WEEK EVENING COURSES STARTING:

The next round of courses is proposed to start with *Introduction to Traditional Buddhist Meditation and Mindfulness* on Monday 18th February 7-9pm and *Introducing Buddhism* on Tuesday 19th February 7-9pm. Please contact Roger to enrol on 45649636 or 0410608791 or via email or facebook.

'SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP'

March 15-17, led by Sudrishti.

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

Sudrishti is a senior Triratna Buddhist Order member, who has recently moved to Brisbane from Sydney. She says the retreat theme will be based around one or two suttas and will be very practical.

Bookings are now open for this weekend retreat at Kelly House, Highfields. **To make a booking or for more information: contact Christine McConnell on 0417 627 544 or at healthfactormedia@bigpond.com**

OTHER RETREATS PLANNED FOR 2019: [themes to be announced]

*August 2-4, led by Siladasa;

*November 8-10, led by Nagasuri.

OVERDUE AND MISSING LIBRARY BOOKS:

The Centre's librarian is putting out a call for these missing or overdue books:

'Wildmind: A Step-by-Step Guide to Meditation', Bodhipaksa FWBO Bod

'A Guide to the Buddhist Path', Sangharakshita FWBO San7

'Guidlines for Being a Good Person', Pureland Translation Team BUD CH Pur

'Everyday Enlightenment - how to be a spiritual warrior at the kitchen sink' Pema Chodron BUGEN Cho1

'The Dhammapada-Pali Text & Translation with stories in brief & notes' Narada Thera SCR Nar1

'The Essence of Happiness' Dalai Lama TIB DL3

'The Essence of Tibetan Happiness' Lama Thubten TIB Thu

'Mano Chanting Book' Ven Khantipalo BUD GEN Kha1

'The Life of the Buddha' P.M. Herbert BUD GEN Her1

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

*"Pure and empty are all events.
Pure and empty am I.
All is pure and empty,
Like infinite blue sky."*

Sunyata Verse





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NEWSLETTER MARCH 2019

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Dear Friends,

One reason this Newsletter is late this month is because there is a fair bit of ill health around in our community at the moment. What did the Buddha have to say about ill health? Well, in so many words, he said because we are born into a physical body we will inevitably suffer pain and ill health, and there is nothing we can do about it, but bear it with equanimity. We are in conditioned existence and so when certain conditions are present we experience pain, ill health and suffering ... and there is nothing we can do about it ... well there is, we can bear it with equanimity.

Actually there is a lot in this simple teaching, which he elaborated in a discourse in the *Samyukta-agama* and the *Samyutta-nikaya* in the Pali Canon¹. He used the simile of being shot by one or two arrows. We don't just experience the physical pain when we are ill (the first arrow) but we react to it psychologically (the second arrow) with strong aversion or craving for it not to be, or for physical pleasure to distract us like scratching an infected wound, whereby the itch briefly disappears but the wound gets even more infected. Our reactions can be manifold including fear, worry and anxiety, restlessness, tension, depression, confusion, doubt and so on. These secondary reactions we can do something about. We can apply antidotes as, for example, in dealing mindfully with the five hindrances.

The discourses also imply that the meditative approach to disease is not meant to replace proper medical care, but rather to supplement it. The idea is not that one should just endure any pain without doing anything about it at all. One properly takes care of the conditions producing the pain of the first arrow using whatever reasonable and appropriate medical means are at one's disposal, and alongside that one trains the mind to avoid the second arrow. [Roger]

1 SN36.6 at SN IV 207, 22

MARCH 2019 CALENDAR

* *Friend Nights are from 7 to 9pm*

Thu 7th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; **Sutta form the Anguttare Nikaya** [Katie]

Thu 14th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation and Open; preparation for Sudrishti Retreat [R]

Fri 15th – Sun 17th Retreat "Spiritual Friendship" led by Sudrishti

Thu 21st FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; **The Bodhisattvas – Avalokiteshvara** [K]

Thu 28th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; **Sevenfold Puja** [K]

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*** Please note that we are aiming to start shrine room activities no later than 7.10pm.*

NEW ROUND OF EIGHT WEEK EVENING COURSES STARTING:

The next round of *Introduction to Traditional Buddhist Meditation and Mindfulness* and *Introducing Buddhism* courses have been postponed to start on March 11th for the former and March 12th for the latter. Please contact Roger for more information or to enrol on 45649636 or 0410608791 or via email or facebook.

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'Mano Chanting Book' Ven Khantipalo BUD GEN Kha1

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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

".. to a foolish unlearned worldling through bodily contact feelings arise that are increasingly painful, even leading to the ending of life. [The worldling] is worried and complains by crying and wailing, with the mind giving rise to two feelings, bodily feeling and mental feeling.

It is just like a person whose body has been afflicted by two arrows and extremely painful feelings arise."

[SA 470]



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NEWSLETTER APRIL 2019

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Dear Friends,

There having been a period of ill health for a number of Sangha members in recent months, thoughts have turned to what the Buddha has taught about sickness, both about experiencing sickness and also about caring for someone who is sick. In the Pali Canon¹, there is an account of the Buddha and Ananda coming across a monk who is suffering from dysentery, who is in a state of neglect and who has been abandoned by his fellow monks, because he is 'of no use to the bhikkhus'. After the Buddha and Ananda have cleaned the monk and made him comfortable on a bed, the Buddha summons the monks and gives a teaching on sickness. He points out the responsibilities of the Sangha, where there are no others to care for a sick monk.

The Buddha then goes on to list five qualities of a sick person, who is hard to look after. These are that the sick person: does what is unsuitable; does not know what is suitable to do; does not take medicine; does not tell of the sickness to anyone, who would be concerned for his welfare; and is unable to endure painful bodily feelings. When the sick person has the opposite qualities, he is easy to look after. But the Buddha doesn't stop there. He goes on to list the five qualities, which make a prospective 'sick-nurse' unfit to look after the sick. A person, who is unfit to nurse the sick: is not clever at preparing medicine; doesn't know what is, or is not, suitable; looks after the person for mercenary rather than kindly reasons; is squeamish in removing excrement, vomit, etc.; and is not clever at encouraging the sick with timely talk on the Dharma. When a person has the five opposite qualities, he is fit to look after the sick.

This teaching can be very helpful to reflect upon, for the times when we suffer sickness in any form, or when we would like to respond skilfully to someone else's suffering. As a 'patient', for instance, do we want not to bother anyone? Do we withdraw and leave friends wondering? How skilfully do we respond to another's sickness? For example, do we have our pet, cure-all remedies, which we are sure are just what are needed to solve the problem? Do we rush in to 'fix it', when simply listening may be enough? All food for thought - and a source for much gratitude, wherever skilfulness in these matters is encountered! [Viriyaja]

1. From the *Vinaya Pitika*, in Bhikkhu Nanamoli, 1992, *Life of the Buddha*, pp177/9, BPS Pariyatti Editions, Seattle.

APRIL 2019 CALENDAR

* *Friend Nights are from 7 to 9pm*

Thu 4th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; 'Mind in Harmony' – 3 Big Ideas [R]

Thu 11th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **The Bodhisattvas - Manjushri** [R]

Thu 18th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; 'Mind in Harmony' – Goodwill and Hatred [V]

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

Sun 28th **WORKING BEE from 9am – 12.30pm**
(see below for details)



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REPORT: Spiritual Friendship Retreat 15th-17th March 2019

The 'Spiritual Friendship' retreat was led by Sudrishti, who recently moved to Brisbane from Sydney. She was supported by Viraja and Hridayaja. The retreat began on the Friday afternoon with a bang (literally) as a substantial storm lit up the sky and quenched the blackened sunburnt earth with rivers of water. The mist which rose from the hot earth, enveloping us in its watery embrace for the two days, provided a setting conducive to sharing the Dharma, deep insights, poetry, reflections and prose, about all aspects of spiritual friendship.

I learnt that the rewards of a spiritual friendship (*kalyana mitrata*) are profound but the path to achieving and maintaining one can be challenging, especially when facing our unhelpful views. I left inspired and with the intention to develop such spiritual friendship within the *sangha*.

A *kalyana mitra* is a good friend, a person endowed with beautiful spiritual qualities. *Kalyana mitrata* "needs no Sunday best or proud attire, no large statements or grand gestures; when it is true it is as simple as your face in a mirror - unadorned, smiling back at you" [Maitreyabandhu in 'Thicker Than Blood'] (Katie Warren)

OTHER RETREATS PLANNED FOR 2019: [themes to be announced]

*August 2-4, led by Siladasa;

*November 8-10, led by Nagasuri.

WORKING BEE: Sunday April 28th from 9am to 12.30pm

Volunteers are being sought for a Working Bee at the Centre, for a general clean-up, both inside and out on Sunday 28th April from 9am to 12.30pm. Please bring tall ladders, cleaning gear and general gardening tools. Anyone with a ute or similar, to go to the tip, is also welcome. In order for the organiser to have an idea of who will be able to help, please contact Karen by text on 0427 681 863.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:



There is no fire like greed and no ill-fortune like hatred. There is no sorrow like this bodily existence there is no happiness like Nirvana.

Hunger is the greatest ill, and this body the greatest source of sorrow; when one knows this, Nirvana becomes the highest happiness.

Health is the greatest of blessings, contentment the best riches, trust is the best of relationships; Nirvana is the highest happiness.

Dhammapada verses 202- 204



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NEWSLETTER MAY 2019

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Dear Friends,

In the '*Bodhicaryavatara*', the 8th century monk, Shantideva, gives a teaching, which provides a guide for the path to Enlightenment, a guide to the Bodhisattva's way of life. On Friends Nights currently we are looking more deeply into the qualities of those Bodhisattvas, who we may encounter, when we chant the mantras at the end of the Sevenfold Puja. What is a Bodhisattva? A Bodhisattva is a 'being of awakening', whose whole life and energy are dedicated to the attainment of Enlightenment, 'not for his or her sake alone, but so that he or she may lead all living beings whatsoever to the same state'.¹ For many of us, this lofty ideal may be very daunting, totally overwhelming and viewed as way beyond anything we could possibly attain in this or any life. However, the ideal can be enormously inspiring, wherever we find ourselves on the spiritual path. Imagine how wonderful it would be if we could not only begin to face situations, but ultimately to be able to face every situation, every moment in life, with spontaneous, creative and skilful responses – with equanimity and without a trace of the afflictions of craving or aversion. Imagine the ripples of benefit and good such actions would create. The cultivation of goodwill is an important first step towards this ideal.

What do we mean by 'goodwill' in a Buddhist context? It can be said that goodwill, when thought of as an ordinary disposition or mood of friendliness and helpfulness, is 'but the bottom rung of a golden ladder' ascending to those qualities embodied by a Bodhisattva, by the Buddha himself.² On the first rung of the ladder we cannot harm other living beings because we identify with them, identify with their seeking pleasure and avoiding pain just as we do. This is the negative ethical phase of the ladder. The next rung of the ladder is the positive ethical phase. This is where we not only refrain from harming others but actively wish them well and contribute to their wellbeing, probably only to the extent to which we are prepared to be inconvenienced. On the third rung of the ladder, our sense of our own identity as being separate from others is dissolved into a greater identification with life itself. At the top of the ladder of goodwill we have transcended all self-attachment and are even willing to give up our own life for others. We are then in the realm of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, 'the living embodiments of love or *maitri*'³ (*metta*). If we practise the ethical precepts; if we cultivate loving kindness, compassion, joy in the good fortune of others, and equanimity, we shall then be ascending the golden ladder of goodwill and setting up the conditions for Awakening. [Virajaja]

1. Sangharakshita, 1999, 'The Bodhisattva Ideal', pp8/9, Windhorse Publications, Birmingham.

2. Subhuti, 2015, 'Mind In Harmony', pp138/9, Windhorse Publications, Cambridge.

3. *ibid*, p140

MAY 2019 CALENDAR

* *Friend Nights are from 7 to 9pm*

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Thu 2 nd | <u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u> | Meditation; a discourse from the <i>Anguttara Nikaya</i> [J] |
| Thu 9 th | <u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u> | Meditation; a topic from <i>Mind in Harmony</i> [R] |
| Thu 16 th | <u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u> | BUDDHA (Shakyamuni) DAY celebration [V]
Buddha Day is the most important day in the Buddhist calendar |
| Thu 23 rd | <u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u> | Meditation; from <i>Mind in Harmony</i> [K] |
| Thu 30 th | <u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u> | Meditation; Threefold Puja [R] |

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MITRA MUSINGS:

This is a 'from the heart' account of what inspires me as a Mitra, at the present moment. As a Mitra living outside the spiritual community, personal communication is littered with difficulties like competitiveness and sometimes aggression. There is so much beauty and wonder in the world but there is also so much anger and hatred. I need strength, courage, understanding, and love to give kindness to others. To be a spiritual activist is a full time job but being human I lapse outside these boundaries often.

However being friendly can help someone a great deal and the fact that someone is being heard can be healing in itself. We are often caught up in our chaos in our ordinary lives and this can be confronting in our pursuit on the spiritual path but at the same time it gives us the opportunity for spiritual growth.

We all want to be heard and listened to. If I have a gentleness and truthfulness in my speech, it helps both others and me to suffer less. I need to pay attention to my thoughts and feelings and pause in my speech, especially when having a difficult conversation. I need to refocus and be disciplined. If I am feeling irritable with someone I try and soften my body first and then my mind; pausing helps me do this. (Dale Philpott)

RETREATS PLANNED FOR 2019: [themes to be announced]

*August 2-4, led by Siladasa; *November 8-10, led by Nagasuri.

INDO-TIBET BUDDHIST CULTURAL INSTITUTE (ITBCI) STUDENT SPONSORSHIP APPEAL:

The ITBCI School in Kalimpong, India, was founded in 1954 by the Venerable Dharpo Rinpoche (1917-1990), in response to the needs of refugees fleeing from Tibet. He gave the school the motto 'Cherish the Doctrine, Live United, Radiate Love'. Dharpo Rinpoche was a friend and teacher of Sangharakshita, who lived, taught and wrote in Kalimpong for fourteen years. Many of the students at the school are from poor refugee and migrant families. They are taught the full Indian school curriculum as well as Tibetan language and culture, which include music, costume making and dance. **For more information visit: www.itbci.org**

Since 2011 the Sydney Buddhist Centre (SBC) has been collecting donations annually for the school, and is currently fundraising for student sponsorship. Last year the SBC raised around \$7,000, which enabled 12 poor children to attend the school, providing full board and tuition. This year it is hoped that it might be possible to raise enough to support a few more. \$600 will support a child for a full year at the school, but of course any size donation is most welcome. If you are interested in donating, it would be helpful if donations can be made by mid-May. Many thanks for whatever you may be able to contribute. **Payment details follow:**

Name: Triratna Buddhist Community (Sydney) Inc.

BSB: 633-000; a/c no: 5877988; Ref: ITBCI School

*Please email gillfin@tpg.com.au to let Gill Hewitt know, so that she can keep track.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

5. At night in darkness thick with clouds a lightning flash gives a moment of brightness. So, sometime, by the power of the Buddha, the mind of the world might for a moment turn to acts of merit.

6. This being so, the power of good is always weak, while the power of evil is vast and terrible. What other good could conquer that, were there not the perfect Awakening Mind? *Bodhicaryavatara Ch1 vs 5/6, by Shantideva*





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NEWSLETTER JUNE 2019

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Dear Friends,

In one of the devotional practices we do at the centre, the Threefold Puja, we say the words, "What the Buddha attained we too can attain". What did the Buddha attain? He attained a state of Enlightenment or Liberation.

The Buddha investigated the nature of himself¹. He looked for the self as a being, existing independently from everything else in a self-sufficient way; that we habitually feel. When he did so with the great degree of concentration that occurs in the meditative *dhyana* states, he found it did not exist, he saw through it, the self disappeared! When the sense of self dissolved he was liberated. The liberation from the sense of self being a separated self did not mean that he became non-existent. Hence his famous saying that the self, neither exists nor does not, not exist.

He now began to perceive himself as part of the world, as one relational element in the world, not more important, not in conflict with the world, but capable of harmony with the world, harmony with other beings as well as with inanimate elements. This was a discovery of something that went beyond just simple oneness and just simple difference, but a kind of complex relative difference within an ultimate oneness. The Enlightened mind can see the world both ways at once – multiplicity in unity and unity in multiplicity. Because things are impermanent how can a 'thing' be said to exist or not to exist? This discovery gave the Buddha the supreme bliss, and that is why we see the wonderful smile on his face. The happy Buddha comes from that realisation, overcoming the state of being in competition or conflict with the universe.

When we perceive ourselves as a fixed separate being we are in conflict with the universe. When we are in conflict with the universe, we lose. It is only by investigating our habitual perception, analysing it, and experiencing its falsity that we can get out of this situation. The Buddha assured us that we can do this. Over the centuries many millions of Buddhists have also tried this methodology and assured us that it worked, that they had thereby achieved one degree or another of freedom from suffering. Once we realise other beings are in some way inseparable from ourselves, once the fear accompanying clinging to the notion of a separate self is overcome, we can liberate our true feelings of compassion, love and friendliness for other beings. [Roger]

1. The material in this editorial is based on paraphrasing sections of a radio talk by Robert Thurman.

JUNE 2019 CALENDAR

* *Friend Nights are from 7 to 9pm*

- | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Thu 5 th | <u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u> | Meditation; on 'Clarity' from Ch.10 in <i>Mind in Harmony</i> [K] |
| Thu 12 th | <u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u> | Meditation; <i>The Bodhisattvas – Vajrapani</i> [R] |
| Thu 19 th | <u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u> | Meditation; a discourse from the <i>Anguttara Nikaya</i> [V] |
| Thu 26 th | <u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u> | Meditation; <i>SEVENFOLD PUJA</i> [R] |

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MITRA MUSINGS:

When my Buddhist journey began some 8 years ago I was introduced to the concept of the "monkey mind" and how it could play havoc within the act of meditation. Taking deep breaths, settling into our cushions or chair and being aware of our intention can be de-railed by our mind going off on its own little jaunt. It can be like the Japanese snow monkeys in the hot springs, calm and serene, being aware of the surroundings but only observing the world around them or like a baboon in full flight with teeth bared and screeching, wanting our full attention or even a mix of both. Our minds are wondrous things bringing imagination to our daily practice, reminding us of our spiritual journey and how we wish to proceed and bringing a sense of purpose to our meditation. The "monkey mind" can be tamed somewhat but we can never say "Not my circus, not my monkeys" and when we reflect on this we can begin to take ownership of what is happening within us during our meditation practice. Having a calm acknowledgement of "Yes, I'm all over the place today", and simply observing how this is occurring, can be a revelation in itself and perhaps a small way to keep our monkeys content. [Jill]

RETREATS PLANNED FOR 2019:

The next weekend retreat is coming up soon - August 2-4, led by Siladasa.

We don't have a topic yet but Siladasa can be relied upon to lead a retreat which is engaging, inspiring and has something for everyone. Organisational details around venue, cost etc. will be as usual for our retreats. More details and how to make a booking will be sent out later in the month.

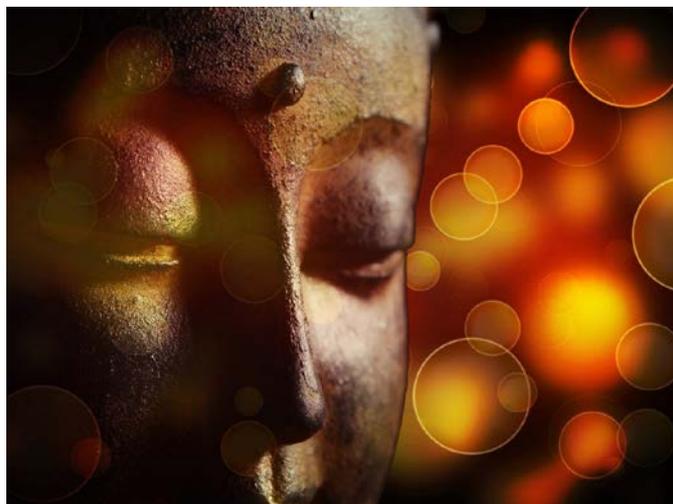
How about putting these dates in your diary now?

And later in the year: November 8-10, led by Nagasuri.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

*"To study Buddhism is to study the self
To study the self is to forget the self
To forget the self is to become one with others."*

[Dogen]





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER JULY 2019

4-6 Cress Street
Toowoomba Qld 4350

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

Dear Friends,

'Words are powerful. They can move us to acts of great love or great cruelty.'¹ Today, in our technologically interconnected world, we can use a mobile phone to relieve the suffering of someone the other side of the world, or we can use social media to vilify those with whom we disagree. In just a few words, we can either help or harm. Unfortunately, in our urge to say something in any given situation, we may be unaware of whether we are being helpful or doing harm. How can we guard against doing harm with our speech?

The Buddha taught that right speech requires us to abstain from 'lying, slander, abuse and gossip'². Speech, whether spoken or written - or even thought about - should not only be truthful but also affectionate in manner, useful for the situation and be such that it promotes harmony and friendship. Communication needs to be timely.

Ideally, we would be able to communicate and respond quite spontaneously to all situations, in just such a skilful way. For many of us, much of the time, this will not be the case. However, we can begin to train ourselves to become more ethical and thus more skilful in our speech. When we anticipate a difficult conversation or meeting, we could 'rehearse' the situation. We could imagine the issues and people involved and then reflect upon and note down, how we could respond with as much truthfulness, kindness, helpfulness and friendliness as we can muster. But we are often likely to be taken unawares; times when we find ourselves reacting unskilfully. Having 'strategies' for such moments can help, although naturally our unaware state at the time may mean we only later remember our ideal response. If we find ourselves feeling overwhelmed, we may need to quietly leave the situation or use a stock response such as 'I will have to get back to you on that'. We may see that simply keeping silent is what is needed at that particular moment. Whatever our experiences, we can reflect upon our own way of communicating. By asking ourselves whether we tend to exaggerate, if we give our full attention to listening, tend to speak over others or indulge in gossip etc., we really can train ourselves to communicate more skilfully. [Viriyaja]

1. Ratnaghosa, 'A Word of Magic', Transcribed talks by Ratnaghosa, talk 5; <http://ratnaghosa.fwbo.net>
2. Bhikkhu Nanamoli, 1972 and 1992, 'The Life of the Buddha', p238, Buddhist Publication Society, Seattle

JULY 2019 CALENDAR

* *Friend Nights are from 7 to 9pm*

Thu 4 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; 'The bliss of effort' from <i>Mind in Harmony</i> [V]
Thu 11 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>The Bodhisattvas – Tara</i> [Maree&Kaja]
Thu 18 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>DHARMA DAY</i> celebration [K]
Thu 25 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; from the <i>Anguttara Nikaya</i> [R]

FRIENDS NIGHTS* - Thursdays, 7-9pm we aim to start shrine room activities no later than 7.10pm.**

Friends Nights are open to everyone. 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. 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 2019 includes getting to know the Bodhisattvas; the psychology of Buddhist ethics, and an exploration of discourses drawn from the *Anguttara Nikaya*. **Dharma Day**, this month, is a celebration of the Buddha's first teaching after his Enlightenment.

***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 Centre operating.**

FAITH AND DESIRE' - a retreat led by Siladasa,

Friday August 2nd to Sunday August 4th 2019

at Kelly House, James Byrne Centre, Highfields.

Siladasa, a senior Triratna Buddhist Order Member from Melbourne, will join us to explore *Shraddha* or faith and its relationship to *Chanda*, or desire. At first glance these seem to be opposing states of mind, but the Buddha's teaching is much concerned with the transformation of desire for sensory experience to desire for the Dharma. This transformation can be both cause for the arising of faith and a result of deepening faith. We shall look to some of the ancient teachings on this subject and engage practices that lead us to *Shraddha* and *Dharma Chanda*.

Retreatants are invited to bring along anything that has moved them to a deeper *Shraddha* or greater desire for the *Dharma*, whether it be a teaching, a poem, a story, a piece of art or music or some life experience, to share.

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

The retreat is limited to 20 participants, so make your reservation soon!

To make a booking or for more information, please contact Maree on 0432 552 305 or mareeiones59@hotmail.com

OTHER RETREATS IN 2019: November 8th-10th: a weekend retreat led by Nagasuri, from Sydney.

MITRA MUSINGS:

When I got up from meditation this morning I decided to try to maintain awareness until after I had prepared and consumed my breakfast and to be aware of the arising of any distractions. Getting breakfast is an established routine but I went about the preparation more consciously this time. Having everything ready, I took my food to the veranda and sat down. I commenced eating taking more notice than usual of the texture and taste of the porridge, but I became aware that I was fiddling with the porridge in the bowl at the same time. Then I noticed I was loading up my spoon for the next mouthful before I had finished eating what was in my mouth - which then slid unnoticed down my throat as my attention was taken by the new mouthful.

At some point I caught myself gazing out the window to watch the visiting birds and realised that I had ceased noticing what and how I was eating or sitting. Next came toast and coffee: more aware now, eating slowly and enjoying the toast but then I catch myself taking the first sip of coffee before I have finished swallowing the last piece of toast - which I didn't taste. I drink the rest of my coffee mindfully. This simple exercise showed me how easily awareness/mindfulness can be lost and that cultivation and maintenance of awareness requires constant effort. [Jan]

NEW ROUND OF EIGHT WEEK COURSES STARTING:

Registrations are now open for upcoming eight-week evening courses: *Introducing Buddhism* proposed to start on Monday 22nd July (7-9pm), and *Traditional Buddhist Meditation and Mindfulness* on Tuesday 23rd July (7-9pm); details on website. **Contact Roger on 45649636 or 0410608791.**

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

*He is not versed in Dhamma
who merely speaks much.
He who hears but a little
(of the Teaching)
but sees the Truth and observes
it well in deed, he is truly called
'one versed in the Dhamma'.*

From the *Dhammapalani Gatha*





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NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2019

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Dear Friends,

The Buddha spoke of the mind as having a potentiality for clarity, which is deeper than ignorance. Because if ignorance was fundamental it could not be removed. Clarity is intrinsic to the mind whereas ignorance is merely inborn. The Buddha said in the Pali Canon – “This mind is luminous, but it is afflicted with adventitious afflictions.”

I find this a deeply reassuring idea; it has us starting out with a positive quality not a negative, such as, being fundamentally bad. However, we have to work at removing the ignorance so the clarity is revealed. We could not, of course, consciously undertake this task if we did not already possess some clarity. None of us is completely devoid of clarity. Equally, no one (except a Buddha) is entirely free of ignorance. A traditional analogy suggests the mind is like a mirror that is obscured by a thick coat of dirt. If we can but clean the mirror, it will accurately reflect the world without distortion.

By cleaning the mirror we aren't adding anything to it, or improving its intrinsic quality: we just allow it to display the quality that it had all along, hidden under the dirt. In this metaphor the dirt corresponds to the afflictions, especially ignorance. The activity of cleaning the mirror represents Dharma practice.

In many ways, the spiritual path – Ethics, Meditation and Insight - is one of developing increasing clarity. Having become clear that actions have consequences that affect our mental states for better or for worse we practice ethics. This sets up the right conditions for meditation which helps us clarify what is actually going on in our mind and helps us develop more skilful mental states. The higher states of consciousness that result help us develop penetrating insight into the nature of reality, or 'transcendental wisdom'. It is the latter that cleans away the dirt on the mirror of the mind, allowing reality to become visible. [Roger]

AUGUST 2019 CALENDAR

* *Friend Nights are from 7 to 9pm*

Thu 1st **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **Conversation Café** [Kaja]

Fri 2nd to Sun 4th **'FAITH AND DESIRE'** – a retreat led by Siladasa [see details below]

Thu 8th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; from the '**Anguttara Nikaya**' [Jan/Maree]

Thu 15th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; and a **Going for Refuge Puja** [Viryaja]

Thu 22nd **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; from '**Mind in Harmony**' [Karen]

Thu 29th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **The Bodhisattvas – Kshitigarbha** [Viryaja]

FRIENDS NIGHTS* - **Thursdays, 7-9pm** we aim to start shrine room activities no later than 7.10pm.**

Friends Nights are open to everyone. 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. 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 2019 includes getting to know the Bodhisattvas; the psychology of Buddhist ethics, and an exploration of discourses drawn from the *Anguttara Nikaya*. The Puja this month will focus on Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels – the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

**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 Centre operating.*

**Places are still available for the retreat this coming weekend!
Please contact Maree a.s.a.p. if you would like to participate [see details below]**

FAITH AND DESIRE' - a retreat led by Siladasa,

**Friday August 2nd to Sunday August 4th 2019
at Kelly House, James Byrne Centre, Highfields.**

Siladasa, a senior Triratna Buddhist Order Member from Melbourne, will join us to explore *Shraddha* or faith and its relationship to *Chanda*, or desire. At first glance these seem to be opposing states of mind, but the Buddha's teaching is much concerned with the transformation of desire for sensory experience to desire for the Dharma. This transformation can be both cause for the arising of faith and a result of deepening faith. We shall look to some of the ancient teachings on this subject and engage practices that lead us to *Shraddha* and *Dharma Chanda*.

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

The retreat is limited to 20 participants, so make your reservation soon!

*To make a booking or for more information, please contact Maree on 0432 552 305 or
mareejones59@hotmail.com*

OTHER RETREATS IN 2019: November 8th-10th: a weekend retreat led by Nagasuri, from Sydney.

MITRA MUSINGS:

Three Sadhus to all the Toowoomba Mitras!!! They have, in the absence of Viryaja and Roger, been so engaged with ensuring that Centre programs continued as normal, that there has been little opportunity for their own musing. Perhaps someone will be musing in time for the September Newsletter.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

47 The defilements do not dwell in objects, nor in the collection of the senses, nor in the space in between. There is nowhere else for them to dwell, and yet they churn up the entire universe. This is but illusion! So, heart, free yourself from fear, devote yourself to striving for wisdom. Why, quite needlessly, do you torment yourself in hells?

48 Making a firm resolve in this way, I shall strive to follow the training as it has been taught. How can someone who could be cured by medicine get well if he does not follow the doctor's advice?





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2019

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Dear Friends,

As you may know, on some Friends Nights this year, we have been learning about bodhisattvas. So far we have been getting to know something about the better known bodhisattvas, such as Avalokiteshvara and Tara. Last week we encountered a bodhisattva, who is less well-known, at least in the West. Kshitigarbha is a bodhisattva primarily revered in East Asian Buddhism and is usually depicted as a Buddhist monk. He is known for his vow to not achieve Buddhahood until all hells are emptied. He vowed to eradicate the hell realms single-handed if need be, even if it would take an eternity to achieve. He would go out of his way to encounter all beings; those who are wretched, afflicted, insane; all those suffering all manner of physical and mental torment.

The reference to hell realms may come as a surprise to some, who may think these are exclusive to the teachings of other religions. However, in the Pali Canon, there are many instances of the Buddha referring to the 'lower destinies' for evil-doing beings as a result of their actions. But Buddhism has no conception of *eternal* states of perdition. Being clear-sighted and based on experience, Buddhism acknowledges that through ignorance living beings do sometimes create hells for themselves. The six worlds of the gods, titans, hungry ghosts, hells, animals and humans, in which beings may find themselves, can be seen both as actual realms of existence and also as representing states of mind. If we look around our mundane world, we can see all of these realms playing out somewhere, right now. In our own minds we may experience several or all of them in a single day!

This brings us to Kshitigarbha's declaration: "If I do not go to hell to help them, who else will go!" What implications could this have for our own spiritual path, here, at this moment? First we need to establish a strong sense of metta towards ourselves. Then, questions we may ask ourselves could include: Do I sink into horrified anxiety when I survey the troubled world? Does clinging, fear or aversion prevent my acting skilfully? Which of the worldly winds – gain/loss, fame/infamy, pleasure/pain, praise/blame – may be holding me back? What do I need to give up, to enable me to act more like a bodhisattva, and meet hellish states with greater compassion and wisdom? [Viryaja]

SEPTEMBER 2019 CALENDAR

* *Friend Nights are from 7 to 9pm*

Thu 5 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; from the ' <i>Anguttara Nikaya</i> ' [Karen]
Thu 12 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>Threefold Puja</i> [Jan]
Thu 19 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; from ' <i>Mind in Harmony</i> ' [Viryaja]
Thu 26 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>The Bodhisattvas – Prajnaparamita</i> [Viryaja]

FRIENDS NIGHTS - Thursdays, 7-9pm

Friends Nights are open to everyone. 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. 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 2019 includes getting to know the Bodhisattvas; the psychology of Buddhist ethics, and an exploration of discourses drawn from the *Anguttara Nikaya*. ***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 Centre operating.**

TWO PEOPLE REFLECT ON THE RETREAT - 'FAITH & DESIRE', led by Siladasa, 2-4 Aug:

✳ I am a member of the new Brisbane Sangha and this was my second retreat, my first in Toowoomba. When discussing the topic of DESIRE, Siladasa referred to the *Wheel of Life* and the *8 Worldly Winds*; the importance of being aware of sense stimuli and mindfully slowing down our thinking, to replace unhelpful, habitual and conditioned responses with more skilful ones. We considered what we do with our life energies and how we keep them "firing". For me, it is regular reading, meditation and puja that develops my FAITH in the Three Jewels. It gives me the confidence and skill to practise and then, as my life becomes more purposeful and rewarding, I am further energized. Siladasa recalled DharDO Rinpoche's threefold admonition: "Cherish the doctrine, radiate love, live united". Learning and living within the warmth and generosity of the retreat participants reflected this. It was joyous, affirming and inspiring, and has taken my commitment to living the Dharma to a deeper level. With gratitude and appreciation, *Kay Brodie (Mackay)*.

✳ Although I had been looking forward to the retreat for weeks, when the day came to go to Toowoomba I didn't really want to go. I missed my wife and daughter almost immediately and when I left Wynnum I got snarled up in the Brisbane Friday traffic. But (in keeping with the theme of the retreat) I had faith that once I got to the James Byrne Centre and met with the Toowoomba sangha, I would feel I had come to the right place. And indeed I had. Siladasa brought his wealth of experience from Melbourne and guided us through the twin themes of Faith and Desire. Even though it is 'just' a weekend retreat I found it a powerful experience and Siladasa brought a huge amount of content to us in a really accessible way. Morning meditations and pujas are always deeply affecting parts of retreats for me and this time was no exception. I was particularly inspired by people's experiences of faith and their very personal stories and experiences. I'm still thinking about them now - weeks after the retreat ended.

So thank you to Siladasa and all the people at the retreat. Everyone was very, very welcoming and many good chats were had over meals, in front of the fire, or just stood in front of the sink doing the washing up. I feel very privileged to be part of the retreat and I really do now feel a part of the Toowoomba sangha. See you all again in November!!! *Tim Brown (Brisbane)*

MITRA MUSINGS:

My share of my parents' ashes arrived in the post a few days ago. My dad died one year ago, my mum ten years ago. It caused me once again to reflect on impermanence. I had watched the sickness, old age and death thing play out. My mum had dementia, my dad lived to the age of 96; and then they died, as we do. But I'm very aware that I don't live every day in the knowledge that my life is limited and I too will change into ashes one day. So far I have been going through life feeling like death is a long way off, maybe that will change as old age gradually sets in. I have reflected on impermanence in my Buddhist practice, but the sense of my own mortality mostly eludes me, at least on a deeper level.

I remember when I was living in a women's community in England. A Mitra there had recently received her five year all clear from breast cancer. She noticed she started to lose an enthusiasm and zest for life, which she had had in the previous years. She thought it was because when she was under the threat of death, she lived more fully with that knowledge. She felt more alive. She was aware of the preciousness of her life, and those around her. I feel blessed to know of the Dharma. To have a map of how things really are, and all the teachings and practices that help me to see the True nature of things, as much as I can. To let go of my attachment to self, to other people and things. To be reminded regularly that we are all impermanent and insubstantial. I am subject to sickness, old age and death. I too shall pass. And so will you. *[Maree]*

MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK - SPRING CLEAN FOR TOOWOOMBA BUDDHIST CENTRE

Sunday 6th October 2019. 9am to approximately 12 pm

Garden clearing and making new beds; general refresh inside; wash down externals of building.

TOOLS NEEDED: garden equipment, tall ladders, gurney, rags, utes.

We need as many as possible to beautify the centre for an important ceremony on 19/10.

Even if you can only come for an hour or so it would help, so please put this date in your calendar.

RETREATS IN 2020:

*March 13th to 15th: Kamalamayi, from Sydney will lead a retreat; theme to be announced.

*A weekend or longer in July: led by Siladasa from Melbourne; date and theme to be confirmed.

*November 6th to 8th: led by Nagasuri from Sydney; date and theme to be confirmed.

* And there may be a 'home-grown' weekend retreat in either May or September.

Celebrating the Precious Sangha Jewel on Retreat

led by Nagasuri and Viryaja

FRIDAY NOV. 8TH TO SUNDAY NOV. 10TH 2019

at Kelly House, James Byrne Centre, Highfields.

Over the weekend we will explore the Four *Samgrahavastus* (generosity, loving speech, beneficial activity and exemplification), the means of unifying/harmonizing the Sangha or any community. We will do this by focussing particularly on loving speech. Nothing is more important and more beneficial than harmony in the community and nothing more inevitable than misunderstandings, disagreements and consequent disharmony. Being Sangha together over this weekend, studying the teachings of the Buddha, rejoicing in merit, using encouraging generous words and through exemplification we will experience how beautiful and beneficial loving speech is and become more familiar with ways of practising it.

*"Speech brings together head and heart,
intellect and emotion, body and mind and, of course self and other."*

(Sangharakshita, 'Living Ethically')

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

The retreat is limited to 20 participants; to make a booking or for more information:

Contact Maree on 0432 552 305 or mareejones59@hotmail.com

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH - The Buddha describes his former lives:

While wandering on
I went to hell;
 went again and again
to the world of the hungry shades;
 stayed countless times, long
in the pain of the animal womb;
 enjoyed
the human state;
went to heaven
 from time to time;
settled in the elements of form,
the elements of formlessness,
neither-perception, perception-less.

Ways of taking birth
are now known:
 devoid of essence,
 unstable,
 conditioned,
 always driven along.

Knowing them
as born from myself,
mindful
I went right to peace.

Gotama, Thag 3.14

Translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu



Shrine for a Kshitigarbha Puja



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Dear Friends,

How do you cope with living in this world; in what appears to be a world of escalating global climate disasters, wars and other conflicts? Are you able to generally engage with such events in a positive and creative way? Or maybe you have a tendency to become paralysed by anxiety, not knowing what to do; or resigned, even indifferent to them? The Buddha said that, *'all is burning'* and followed with, *'What is the all that is burning?'* He was referring to the six sense bases of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. They are burning with birth, aging and death, and with all the sorrow, pain and despair, which come with life. Today, we can easily see how the 'burning' of greed, hatred and delusion is played out in our world. But the Buddha goes on to say that when an instructed noble disciple experiences revulsion (estrangement or non-attachment) to these sense bases, he is liberated, understands that birth, aging and death have been overcome, the holy life lived and *'what had to be done has been done'*¹

However, what does that mean for most of us, here and now? We may already be struggling to emotionally engage with our spiritual practice, particularly meditation. If so, we can do a number of things, including paying attention to the aesthetics of our immediate environment, adjusting our lifestyle for less stimulation and more simplicity, and by developing friendships with those who share our Dharma life.² With global issues, we can engage more positively by: developing a good grounding in ethics; working with our emotions, and our illusion of separateness. We can find an ease with uncertainty and join with others to change the world. We need to be able to act without attachment to the outcome; to do our best without knowing what the consequences will be.³ It is not enough to be civil or tolerant towards those we view as political opponents, (or agents of disaster, war and conflict). Though deeply challenging, we need to learn to love our enemies.⁴ A line from the *Ratnaguna-Samcaya-Gatha Sutra* may help with this: *'Call forth as much as you can of love, of respect and of faith!'*⁷ [Viryaja]

1. *Adittapariyaya Sutta* - The Fire Sermon SN 35.28

2. *Mind in Harmony*, Subhuti, 2015, Windhorse Publications

3. *Lions Roar* newsletter 24/9/19

4. Bodhipaksa, *Wildmind* October 2019 Community Newsletter

OCTOBER 2019 CALENDAR - Friends Nights are from 7 to 9pm

Thu 3rd **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **Conversation Café** [Jan/Kaja]

Sunday 6th - ***Spring Clean - 9am to approx. 12pm*** [details below]



Thu 10th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **PADMASAMBHAVA DAY** [Maree]

Thu 17th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; from ***The Anguttara Nikaya*** [Roger]

Saturday 19th - ***Sangha Day and Mitra Ceremony - 10am to 2pm*** [details below]

Thu 24th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; ***The Bodhisattvas – Amitabha*** [Karen]

Thu 31st **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; from ***'Mind in Harmony'*** [Viryaja]

Retreat coming: **NOVEMBER 8th -10th** - ***'Celebrating the Precious Sangha Jewel'*** [details below]

FRIENDS NIGHTS - Thursdays, 7-9pm

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SPRING CLEAN - Sunday October 6th 9am to approximately 12 pm

To do: garden clearing and making new beds; generally refresh inside; wash down externals of building.

Tools needed: garden equipment, tall ladders, gurney, rags, utes.

☸ **We need as many people as possible to beautify the centre for Sangha Day and Mitra Ceremony on Oct. 19th** and even if you can only come for an hour or so it would help. **N.B. - it's this weekend!**

SANGHA DAY with MITRA CEREMONY – Saturday October 19th 10am-2pm

There will be a special Sangha Day celebration on Sat. October 19th, from 10am to 2pm, with Anna Goldsmith becoming a Mitra within the Triratna Buddhist Community. There will be an introduction, meditation and a Sevenfold Puja followed by lunch. All friends and family are welcome, so please mark the date in your diaries and bring along lunch to share. **For more information please contact Viryaja on 0404299573.**

MITRA MUSINGS:

Asked to write some of my musings for this newsletter, the first words that came into my mind were, 'What is reality?' I looked up 'reality' in the dictionary and the result: 'actuality', 'bedrock', 'historicity', 'positiveness', 'realities', 'speciality', 'thatness' and 'truth'. Wikipedia states that reality is the totality of the universe, known and unknown. Turning to the Noble Eight Fold Path, I found: reality is through awareness of things as they really are, awareness of oneself, awareness of people and awareness of Reality. Furthermore, unless our awareness is practised, we will slip back into our old habitual habits which in turn become our 'now reality'. Reflecting on all I had looked up, I realised that I was very focused in living my 'now reality', and gaining a lot of insight into my mental state during the process. I got up and walked away for a while and once again reflected on my reality as a full-time carer. It is fraught with momentary challenges, bumps in the road and my ability to deal with my reality is challenging, rewarding, frustrating and mentally trying. Since becoming a Mitra, I constantly hear in my head: 'What would the Buddha do?' It then hit me that there is no 'I' in Buddhism. Another lesson learnt. I realised that when the mind is in the right mental state of being, one is in a state of homeostasis – equilibrium. Reality is a moment by moment occurrence and, depending on one's state of being, follows with a reaction or action. When looking at what was written, I wondered why it is not so easy to achieve. What is your reality? [Lesley Henry]

RETREATS IN 2020:

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*A weekend or longer in July: led by Siladasa from Melbourne; date and theme to be confirmed.

*November 6th to 8th: led by Nagasuri from Sydney; date and theme to be confirmed.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

*Live in joy,
In love,
Even among those who hate.*

*Live in joy,
In health,
Even among the afflicted.*

*Live in joy,
In peace,
Even among the troubled.*

*Live in joy,
Without possessions,
Like the shining ones.*

*The winner sows hatred
Because the loser suffers.
Let go of winning and losing
And find joy.*



*Celebrating the Precious
Sangha Jewel
on Retreat*

led by Nagasuri and Viryaja

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 8TH TO SUNDAY NOVEMBER 10TH 2019

at Kelly House, James Byrne Centre, Highfields.

Over the weekend we will explore the Four *Samgrahavastus* (generosity, loving speech, beneficial activity and exemplification), the means of unifying/harmonizing the Sangha or any community. We will do this by focussing particularly on loving speech. Nothing is more important and more beneficial than harmony in the community and nothing more inevitable than misunderstandings, disagreements and consequent disharmony. Being Sangha together over this weekend, studying the teachings of the Buddha, rejoicing in merit, using encouraging generous words and through exemplification we will experience how beautiful and beneficial loving speech is and become more familiar with ways of practising it.

***“Speech brings together head and heart,
intellect and emotion, body and mind and, of course self and other.”***

(Sangharakshita, ‘Living Ethically’)

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

The retreat is limited to 20 participants; to make a booking or for more information:

Contact Maree on 0432 552 305 or mareejones59@hotmail.com



Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2019

4-6 Cress Street
Toowoomba Qld 4350

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

Dear Friends,

Practising Buddhists commit to living an ethical lifestyle. But being human beings, like everyone else on occasions they act unskillfully, maybe breaking one or more of the ethical precepts. Actually this is inevitable until one is enlightened.

The power of our conditioning is such that every time we stop making effort we tend to get pulled back by it. A lot of our conditioning is to do with inertia, it doesn't like change and often, when we try and change for the better, it acts by deliberately sabotaging our efforts. So if we aren't making effort to be skilful continuously then we are usually going backwards under the gravitational pull of our conditioning.

Thus inevitably on occasions we act unskillfully. What do we do when this happens? Well we acknowledge that we have acted unskillfully, feel a rational sense of shame and realise that the action will have consequences and try to put things right.

But what we don't do is beat ourselves up, wallow in irrational guilt and self-condemnation. From a Buddhist point of view, it is considered just as conceited to think of ourselves as the worst person in the world as it is to think of ourselves as the best. It will reinforce your ego and fixed view of yourself. The Buddha said don't think of yourself as better than others, or worse than others, in fact don't compare yourself to others at all.

We go out of balance and then need to bring ourselves back into balance. And this is going to happen continuously throughout life. It is not helpful to think of yourself as a failure. Failure is not important because it is going to happen every time we stop making effort for the reasons mentioned earlier – the gravitational pull of our conditioning. So making effort is the important thing, not failure.

The idea is to get back to making skilful effort as soon as possible. This is difficult if you feel self-hated and guilt. So it is important to get out of those feelings as soon as possible. This can be helped by making an offering to a shrine or confession to a spiritual friend, whatever gets you feeling positive again. [Roger]

NOVEMBER 2019 CALENDAR - Friends Nights are from 7 to 9pm

Thu 7th FRIENDS NIGHT: Just Meditation [Roger]

RETREAT: Nov. 8 to 10 - 'Celebrating the Precious Sangha Jewel' [details below]

Thu 14th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; **SANGHA DAY PUJA** [Viryaja]

Thu 21st FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; from '*Mind in Harmony*' [Jan/Maree]

FRIDAY 22nd 'RAISING THE ROOF' - Curry and DVD Night at 54 Hogg St [details below]

Thu 28th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; from *The Anguttara Nikaya* [Karen]

FRIENDS NIGHTS - Thursdays, 7-9pm

Friends Nights are open to everyone. 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 Dharma. 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. ****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 Centre operating.***

MITRA MUSINGS:

How wonderful it would be if all religious faiths had the confidence to say to their followers - this is what has worked for me but don't take my word for it - go out and try it for yourself and see if it works. This last little while I have been reading and listening to several Buddhist texts and there is so much practical help there that I can try for myself. I offer two examples.

I was feeling very trapped and anxious about a situation in my life and I was stewing about it. Wanting to help myself, I thought of the injunction that true happiness and growth comes from reaching out and connecting with others, and so I set about doing simple things for others. I wrapped a gift, ironed my husband's clothes and went down into the garden to water and commune with the plants. I tried to keep my mind on what I was doing. My emotional distress was still bodily sensation but I did not attach a story to it and it lessened.

In Subhadramati's book, '*Not About Being Good*', there are many reflections. One of these is to think of a person who you find difficult and spend time putting yourself in their place and, what was so helpful, asking yourself - Why are they doing this? What are they wanting? I tried this out with one person who I have not enjoyed interacting with for some time and it worked. I think I understood what they were trying to achieve and then I asked myself what can I do to fill the need they seem to have. Not only did this completely change the way I viewed this person and how I interacted with them but it also allowed me to feel real compassion for them and of course, I felt better as a result of this. [Anna Goldsmith]

'RAISING' THE ROOF Curry and DVD Night – Friday Nov 22nd from 6pm:

'The Roof' has been high on the Centre's list of Maintenance & Improvement projects for a number of years. The roof, guttering and insulation are a costly project (up to \$10,000) and less costly projects have taken priority, e.g. air conditioning. Not needing to *actually* raise the roof, we are now starting to fund-raise to make 'The Roof' project come to fruition. We have received 2 significant donations to get us going and other donations will be very welcome. However, more immediately, there will be a: ***Curry and DVD Night at 54, Hogg Street, Rockville, from 6pm. Cost by donation - around \$20 suggested. Limited numbers and bookings essential. For details and to make a booking: Contact Viryaja, by 5pm Monday, Nov. 18th on 0404299573 or vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org***

RETREAT - Celebrating the Precious Sangha Jewel, Fri. Nov 8th to Sun 10th 2019:

Led by Nagasuri and Viryaja at two locations - at Kelly House, James Byrne Centre, and at the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre. This retreat will bring Sangha together over this weekend, to study the teachings of the Buddha, rejoice in merit, use encouraging generous words and through exemplification, to experience how beautiful and beneficial loving speech is and become more familiar with ways of practising it. The retreat is limited to 20 participants. **Cost: \$210 full; \$190 partly employed; \$170 concessional.** To make a booking or for more information: **Contact Maree on 0432 552 305 or mareejones59@hotmail.com**

RETREATS IN 2020:

*March 13th to 15th: Kamalamayi, from Sydney will lead a retreat – 'Sailing the Worldly Winds'.

*A 4-night retreat July 30th to August 3rd - led by Siladasa from Melbourne; date and theme to be confirmed.

*November 6th to 8th or later in November: led by Nagasuri from Sydney; date and theme to be confirmed.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

'What is vigour?

The endeavour to do what is skilful.

What is its antithesis called?

Sloth, clinging to what is vile,

despondency, and self-contempt.'

Bodhicaryavatara', Ch7, v2, Santideva



Anna became a Mitra on Oct. 19th



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NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2019

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Dear Friends,

The Buddha's words, highlighted in the October newsletter, were that 'the world is burning', i.e. burning with suffering through the senses - greed, hatred and delusion; suffering from birth, aging and death. Now, with drought and high temperatures continuing and an early bushfire season already wreaking immense suffering, it is tempting to further the 'world is burning' teaching with a parable from the *White Lotus Sutra* – the Parable of the Burning House. However, perhaps another parable from the same source is more suited to this time of year, to the festive season and to the immediate burning conditions.

Parables are short, allegorical stories; earthly stories with spiritual meaning. They can communicate the unfamiliar in familiar terms. For example, spiritual development can be likened to a journey or a tiny seed which can grow into a mighty tree with each type of tree or plant growing differently, according to its own nature. In a series of talks with the theme of *Responding to the Burning World*, Satyalila draws on the parable of the Rain Cloud.¹ The Rain Cloud produces the rain of the Dharma, which falls on all equally, without discrimination. We are all different. And we need all our energies to be present, so that our awakening hearts can respond creatively to the suffering in the world. Soaked by the Dharma, we have the potential to sprout in ways which will help us to have powerful positive effects. But how are we to make the most of this growth potential without becoming overwhelmed? Vessantara has suggested 20 ways in which we can deal with overwhelm.² Some of these suggestions directly relate to our growth potential. For example: we can look for conditions which will nourish and support us; make sure we stay well-grounded; work within our sphere of influence and have spiritual friends – a single tree cannot give shade over the hills beyond where it grows but a forest has an altogether different spread. We can develop equanimity, which, as we are faced with a vast network of conditions, can 'help us to recognise the limits of our power to help others, and prevent us becoming over-responsible and over-reaching'.²

May the roots of your practice prevent you from toppling; may your growth be clear and unhindered; may it be fruitful with metta for yourself and for others. [Viryaja]

1. <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/tags/parable-rain-cloud>
2. www.vessantara.net/home/talks-and-writing/talks-and-articles/20-suggestions-for-dealing-with-overwhelm

DECEMBER 2019 CALENDAR - Friends Nights are from 7 to 9pm

Thu 5th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **Conversation Café** [Karen/Kaja]

Tue 10th **Women's Dharma Study and Meditation**
[Last sessions for 2019: 8.30am to 10; 10am to 12 noon]

Thu 12th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **SEVENFOLD PUJA** [Roger]
[Last session for 2019]

JANUARY 2020 CALENDAR - Friends Nights are from 7 to 9pm

Tue 21st **Women's Dharma Study and Meditation**
[First sessions for 2020: 8.30am to 10; 10am to 12 noon]

Thu 23rd **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation, Reflection and Puja [Viryaja]
[First session for 2020]

Thu 30th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation and Puja [t.b.a.]

FRIENDS NIGHTS - Thursdays, 7-9pm

Friends Nights are open to everyone. 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 Dharma. 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 program for the first half of 2020 will be announced 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 to keep the Centre operating.**

MITRA MUSINGS:

Oh the tension is all wrong! I know that if I keep going it will only emphasise the problems I am having, even though I have woven a good 70cm. I know - I will tweak it to save time and energy. Well that didn't work. Looks like my only plan of action is to undo the weaving and re-tension the warp and basically, start again. Hey, what can I see? The back of the cloth is just the right balance of colours and texture that I was trying to achieve. It is truly beautiful. (I am reminded to see the beauty in the unbeautiful.)

So, as I undo every row (or 'pick' - for those who know the terminology), I am not sad or angry because I am aware of the possibilities that I can achieve as I have a second go. I need to be resolved and open at the same time, engaged and in flow, persistent and easy with myself.

Hey, I just thought, perhaps I could apply this to my meditation practice! [Karen Gaul]

'RAISING' THE ROOF Curry and DVD Night:

Planned for November 22nd, the fund-raiser was postponed to sometime early in 2020.

RETREATS IN 2020:

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*A 4-night retreat July 30th to August 3rd - led by Siladasa from Melbourne; date and theme to be confirmed.

*November 6th to 8th or later in November: led by Nagasuri from Sydney; date and theme to be confirmed.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

From the one water which
Issued from that cloud,
Plants, trees, thickets, forests,
According to need receive moisture.
All the various trees,
Lofty, medium, low
Each according to its size,
Grows and develops
Roots, stalks, branches, leaves,
Blossoms and fruits in their brilliant colours;
Wherever the one rain reaches,
All become fresh and glossy.
According as their bodies, forms
And natures are great or small,
So the enriching (rain),
Though it is one and the same,
Makes each of them flourish.

From the *White Lotus Sutra*, trans. Soothill

