



Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2020

4-6 Cress Street
Toowoomba Qld 4350

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

Dear Friends,

When we are in the process of learning mindfulness we are often aware only after the event that we have acted unskillfully. Then gradually we learn to be aware as we act unskillfully; and finally, to be aware before we act unskillfully. This overlaps with what is known in Buddhism as the Four Exertions or Four Right Efforts. They represent the sixth stage of the Eightfold Path leading to Enlightenment. The first of these is to *prevent* unskillful states of mind that have not yet arisen, and the second is to eradicate unskillful states of mind that have already arisen.

Once you have developed a measure of mindfulness you can often sense unskillful states of mind as they begin to come up or develop. It may start with a particular train of thought and you can anticipate that, as this object (thought) of the mental sense enters your mind, it is going to lead to negative, painful emotions. With mindfulness used in this anticipatory way you can cut it off and prevent it developing into a fully blown emotional storm.

Of course, often it is too late for this, and then we have to move onto the second exertion and *eradicate* the negative state that has already arisen. There are many ways to do this. First you have to acknowledge that you are in a negative, useless (unskillful) mental state. Just being aware of it already starts to change the situation - this is the power of mindfulness. Then you can apply antidotes like considering the consequences of staying caught up in it, cultivating the opposite quality, observing it in a detached way, or simply suppressing it.

Often just making a little effort like this can dispel, or help you let go of, the unskillful state surprisingly quickly. But you have to exert yourself, which is why they are called efforts or exertions. We are not brought up to do this in the west, instead we tend to neurotically obsess over our negative mental states and analyse them, which usually gets us nowhere and often makes the situation worse. The Buddhist approach is more matter-of-fact and down-to-earth, but it does take practice (and perhaps even training); after a while the process becomes relatively easy to do and helps us lighten up about ourselves.

The other two exertions are to *develop* skilful states of mind that have not arisen and to *maintain* them. The best way to do this is considered to be through the regular practice of meditation. At this time of year people often make resolutions for the New Year and we suggest that the formula of the Four Exertions or Right Efforts can be used as a framework for this. What unskillful things do you want to Prevent and Eradicate and what skilful things do you want to Develop and Maintain? [Roger]

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

Thu 6 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Dharma Bytes [Maree]
Thu 13 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	PARINIRVANA DAY Sevenfold Puja [Karen]
Thu 20 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Conversation Café [Jan/Kaja]
Thu 27 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; Dharma Bytes [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. 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.**

NEW COURSES STARTING:

The next round of eight week evening courses is proposed to start with *Traditional Buddhist Meditation and Mindfulness* on Monday night the 17th February 2020 (7-9pm). The next eight-week *Introducing Buddhism* course will start on Tuesday night the 18th February 2020 (7-9pm). For more information contact Roger on 4564 9636 or Mob: 0410608791 or email rlb@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org or contact through Facebook.

'RAISING' THE ROOF Curry and DVD Night:

Planned for November 22nd 2019, the fund-raiser was postponed to sometime early in 2020. A new date is yet to be set.

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; theme to be confirmed.

*November 20th to 22nd or later in November: led by Nagasuri from Sydney; theme to be confirmed.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

We have to undertake a sort of mental stock-taking of our own skilful and unskilful mental states – our own 'vices' and 'virtues'. Though no moral absolutes are involved here, we have at least to understand our own minds, or our own mental states and mental qualities, very seriously and honestly before we can even think of applying the Four Exertions. Otherwise we shall not know how to proceed, and no real improvement – no real development – will be possible.

[Sangharakshita, 1987, The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path, pp. 120-121.]

'SAILING THE WORLDLY WINDS'

a retreat led by Kamalamayi

Friday 13th – 15th March 2020
at Kelly House, James Byrne Centre, Highfields.

Buffeted about by the winds of life? The Buddha described the Worldly Winds as the changing conditions of life that can trigger our craving or aversion, if we let them. The worldly winds consist of four pairs of opposites: Gain and Loss, Fame and Infamy, Praise and Blame, and Pleasure and Pain. This topic always provokes an interesting discussion.

Kamalamayi is an Order Member from Sydney who has a very warm and down to earth approach.

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

To make a booking or for more information, please contact Maree on 0432 552 305 or



Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER MARCH 2020

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Dear Friends,

Buddhism is practical but it works. As it works you develop more confidence in the teachings. Here are some of the benefits that can come from practising meditation.

You may experience a happy, confident feeling of 'being yourself'. A freeing up of energy leading to a general sense of more calm and clarity and feeling inwardly refreshed. You may gradually develop a different attitude toward yourself. You'll be able to approach life in a more open-hearted, creative way.

Other people will notice that you are changing and will enjoy your company more because you will be more communicative and friendly. You may feel unaccountably happy and peaceful – ecstatic sensations and bliss may sometimes arise.

You feel happier outside meditation; life seems to carry on more smoothly, more under our control. Your thoughts and ideas become clearer and your outlook more expansive and creative. Dreams may become more vivid and colourful.

You may notice that some sort of change, something indefinable is happening. You may start to see your life differently and want to make some fundamental changes; breaking through some of your psychological limitations.

[Roger]

MARCH 2020 CALENDAR - *Friends Nights are from 7 to 9pm*

Thu 5th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; Threefold **Puja** [Jan/Maree]

Thu 12th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; Short Talk by Hridayaja

Fri 13th – Sun 15th **Sailing the Worldly Winds Retreat led by Kamalamayi**

Thu 19th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; Study [Maree]

Thu 26th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; Study [Roger]

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 MUSING

I had been concentrating on ways and means of developing metta which doesn't involve scrunching up my eyes, hunching shoulders, focusing on my heart chakra and at the same time trying to build the fire of love into a roaring furnace and then projecting it onto the image of specific people- some with whom I have very little relationship. Added to that is the expectation that I will be able to accomplish it effectively and all will be right with the world, otherwise it is just another failure to be added to the growing list. Too hard!

Then I started listening to “Who Hates the Metta Bhavana?” by Jnanavaca on Free Buddhist Audio (fba). I began to see that bringing a person’s image to mind and taking time to just sit with the feelings that arise takes away all those expectations that had become the barrier around my practice. It took a while when I discovered that positive emotion can arise, more or less spontaneously, from doing this and it totally reframed my experience of sitting with metta. Jnanavaca encourages his audience to turn towards their reaction to the person’s image, sitting with whatever comes without judgement. (This is just the first stage so cultivation of metta is not the objective yet.) Through doing this practice I have found a gentleness and nurturing of myself that feels fresh and “clean” in some way. I look forward to connecting more with my lived experience and to people around me just by noticing my reaction to them. I no longer fear the metta bhavana and can’t wait to finish the series on fba. Good luck to others who have difficulty with the metta bhavana, I hope you find your own way in. It is worth the search. [Karen]

RETREATS IN 2020:

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

There are still places available on this retreat. If you are interested in attending contact Maree at mareejones59@hotmail.com or 0432552305

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

*November 20th to 22nd: led by Nagasuri from Sydney; theme to be confirmed.

THANKS FOR MAINTANENCE WORK

The management Committee would like to formally thank Bruno for the maintenance work that he has done at the centre so willingly.

CHINESE NEW YEAR STALL:

TBC Inc. manned a stall at the Chinese New Year celebrations held at the Goods Shed on Sunday 2nd February. The venue was set with lanterns, stage and food vans and stalls and was a great site to hold the event. Other stall holders ranged from Chinese lucky toys, to bonsai, to massage and other therapies. The morning was busy and we fielded quite a few enquiries, the stall being manned by Maree, Roger and Karen. We had 7 serious enquiries plus many general enquiries.



THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

“It is better to establish a real, living contact with our negative emotions (which means acknowledging them and experiencing them but not indulging them) than to remain in an alienated state and not experience our emotions at all.”

[Sangharakshita, 1998, A Stream of Stars, Birmingham: Windhorse Publications, p.45]



Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER APRIL 2020

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Dear Friends,

You might be interested to hear that the *Cakkavattisihananda Sutta* of the Pali Canon, spells out a link between the three poisons (the basic unskillful mental states of the individual human mind) and environmental consequences. *When humanity is demoralized through greed, famine is the natural outcome; when moral degeneration is due to ignorance, epidemic is the inevitable result; when hatred is the demoralizing force, widespread violence is the inevitable outcome.* When they spread beyond the confines of the human mind they manifest as real, observable poisons effecting the global environment. These tendencies, according to the Sutra, contribute to an unsustainable situation and the end result is devastation and a shortening of the life span of the population.

The sutra continues ... *If and when humanity realizes that the large-scale devastation has taken place as a result of its moral decline, a change of heart takes place ... As morality is renewed, conditions improve through a long period of cause and effect ...* This quote fits in with the overall cyclic view of Buddhism toward all natural phenomena. It states that when people wake up to the fact that their actions are impacting negatively on their quality of life, there is a change of heart.

In difficult times we can use the Four Brahma Viharas as a survival kit. Loving-kindness (*metta*) is considered the root emotion but it can manifest in three main ways. When it encounters suffering it becomes compassion (*karuna*), when encountering happiness it becomes sympathetic joy (*mudita*) and when encountering difficulties it becomes equanimity (*upekkha*). It is important we keep up a reservoir of metta for ourselves and others and that we don't go beyond the limits of our own reservoir. It can act as a buffer between us and the coarseness of the world.

Upekkha arises when we reflect on the fact that everything arises in dependence upon conditions and that we can never be in control. We see things more objectively when we realise the *conditionedness* of every situation and event and this can help reduce stress. The overwhelming situation is ungraspable, like a mirage, like a dream. The 'me' that is feeling overwhelmed is unfindable. Ultimately, there is nothing to worry about. Obviously, we can use this in an unhelpful way, to repress uncomfortable feelings, but it can also help by giving a sense of perspective, and allowing us not to take even the most serious events too seriously. [Roger]

APRIL 2020 CALENDAR

In line with the recent announcement from the Australian Government we will temporarily be ceasing activities at the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre until further notice.

During this difficult time keeping up a meditation practice and studying the Dharma can be very supportive in managing the unusual circumstance we are finding ourselves in. We also encourage you to keep in touch with Sangha friends by whatever means you can.

There are lots of online resources to help you stay connected with the Dharma.

So what would the Buddha do?

The outbreak of COVID-19 is a graphic reminder of the interconnectedness of all life. It is also an opportunity to put the Buddha's teachings into practice, by responding with kindness, clarity & calm. Please join us in extending metta to all beings, including yourself.

RETREAT REPORT

On the weekend of the 13-15 March, eleven of us joined together for retreat at Highfields. We were lucky to just get the retreat in before the social distancing rules came into effect. It was a lovely harmonious calm and flowing retreat. The theme was the Eight Worldly Winds. Gain and Loss, Pain and Pleasure, Fame and Disgrace, Praise and Blame. Kamalamayi led them in a very practical way which helped us to get in touch with how these winds blow about in our daily lives. We explored them through brainstorming, group discussions and art exercises. We looked at how the winds blow in both directions, not just the ones we find un-pleasant. We found that all these winds are inconstant, impermanent, and subject to change. And reflecting on this can help develop equanimity when we are in the midst of a whirlpool. A timely reminder in our current situation.

A big thank you to Kamalamayi for her down to earth and friendly approach. [Maree]

DANA FOR THE CENTRE

As you may know, the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre is now closed for public meetings because of the Coronavirus. As a result of this closure we will not be receiving our usual dana bowl donations. Our Centre pays its rent, utilities, insurance and other expenses mostly through the cash donations received through the dana bowl as well as a few regular standing donations by some local Sangha members. However, most of our running costs will be the same even though the centre is not being used.

We rely on the generosity of folk who use the Centre. Generosity is a virtue that is highly regarded in Buddhism. If you feel you are able to contribute to keep the Centre going it would be much appreciated. Even a small amount like a couple of dollars a week would make a big difference to us.

Toowoomba Buddhist Centre does have some reserves in the bank so the situation is not critical as yet.

TO DONATE:

Account Name: Toowoomba Buddhist Centre Inc.

BSB: 034-142

Account No: 141437

Reference: Dana [your name] [or anonymous if you prefer]

We hope everyone is staying safe and well, and coping in these strange unfamiliar circumstances.

With much metta and appreciation from the

Toowoomba Buddhist Centre Management Team

MITRA MUSING

Well here we all are in this most interesting of times. The Worldly Winds are roaring around us and we sometimes feel that we are not exactly on firm ground anymore and our "normal" is taking a bit of a battering. I have found myself actively trying to not engage in the plethora of news stories and advice that is constantly being given to us but of course it still seeps through when I least expect it. And there it is, how do I guard the doors of my senses and still be present without being swamped by the feelings of being anxious and confused especially now that I am self isolating? I find it easier when practising the Metta Bhavana to send metta out to others rather than into myself, something that others have also struggled with on their Buddhist journey. So I've decided to use this experience as a positive one, to really explore the giving of self metta and I'm looking forward to any discovery that awaits. To live our Dharma life is an on-going process and is a day by day learning experience but by being gentle with ourselves, giving ourselves the space to reflect and "just sit" and giving the heart felt metta that we give so readily to others we are taking another step forward on our journey. [Jill]

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

"Just bare phenomena roll on,

Dependent on conditions all."

[Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhi Magga*, XIX.]



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NEWSLETTER MAY 2020

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Dear Friends,

Sometimes in past Buddhist classes we have done an exercise to help promote confidence in our ability to develop. Participants were asked to identify some quality that they would like to develop – they could keep the content of it private and it didn't have to be some big spiritual quality, although it was fine if it was. The first step in the exercise is to notice how you are feeling as you think of this quality you'd like to develop, so that you can compare this feeling with how you feel in the next couple of stages. People usually report having some degree of anxiety and even feeling inadequate.

Step two is then to think of a quality that you have already developed, at least to some extent, and notice how you are feeling as you think of this quality. Notice how this feeling is different from that in the first step. People report feeling more relaxed as they do this step. Now in step three, bring the quality you have already developed to mind again, and notice how you are feeling, and now think in terms of adding the quality that you wish to develop (from step one) to this quality you have already developed. How is your present feeling different from that of step one when you were first thinking of this quality you wished to develop? People report feeling more confident. Often when we think of a quality we wish to develop, we become aware of the lack of it in our experience, and this can feel discouraging. Also the desired quality is only a future possibility, while the lack of it is experienced as a reality in the present.

You feel more confident when you experience a quality you already have. But beware of complacency. If you keep in mind what you already have you feel more confident about developing something new. So it is important to be aware of unwittingly undermining yourself or others whilst thinking or speaking of 'ideals' and 'development'. It is easier to develop from a place of abundance. [Roger]

MAY 2020 CALENDAR

We hope everyone is going OK during the lockdown. In line with the Governments requirements we have temporarily ceased activities at the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre until further notice.

During this difficult time keeping up a meditation practice and studying the Dharma can be very supportive in managing the unusual circumstance we are finding ourselves in. We also encourage you to keep in touch with Sangha friends by whatever means you can.

There are lots of online resources to help you stay connected with the Dharma.

So what would the Buddha do?

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Toowoomba Buddhist Centre Management Team

UPDATE ON PLANNED JULY 30 TO AUGUST 3 RETREAT

Siladasa has suggested that we may be able to hold the retreat on-line if the current restrictions on group gatherings are still in place by July.

So save the date (July 30th to August 3rd) and watch this space for further updates.

A POEM

MAITREYA by Sanghakshita

Lost in these yellowing Autumn woods, I see
A Buddha seated under every tree;
And each white peak, and each dark violet hill,
Seems a giant Buddha meditating still.
So poised this earth, so quiet its sky above,
They seem like Maitreya deep in thoughts of love.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

"Four basic propositions: (1) Man can change. (2) He can change himself. (3) He can help others to change. (4) Together they can change the world. [Sangharakshita, A Stream of Stars. Reflections and Aphorisms. Birmingham: Windhorse Publications, 1998, p. 18.]





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER JUNE 2020

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Dear Friends,

It is increasingly being recognised these days that the mind is capable of functioning in two major ways - conceptual (thinking) and perceptual (non-thinking) modes. In the modern mindfulness movement they are sometimes referred to as the *doing mode* and the *being mode*. This fact has long been recognised in Buddhism. Often these two modes interfere with each other, and it is difficult to use them in a balanced way – it takes training. Our conceptual mind with all its wonderful abilities to reason, analyse, remember and imagine can obviously be used very creatively. However, these same abilities can also be used in destructive fashion to cause and prolong our personal suffering.

Take anxiety, for example, and consider the role that thinking plays in it as we bring to mind and think about, again and again, some event in the future. Our attitudes can cause us a lot of stress as we think we won't be able to cope with the situation, or we dread it. Consider the role our imaginations play in fuelling the fear by creating scenes (that don't exist) of our not handling the situation. Even memory may play a role by calling to mind and replaying past failures. Of course this is all in the mind, and in a sense this mind is out of control.

Buddhism teaches us to identify this type of mental activity as a hindrance, so-called because it 'hinders' us from getting into a peaceful, concentrated state of mind. We classify it as one of five traditional hindrances, in this case, 'restlessness and anxiety'. Just by learning to classify it as an unhelpful, indeed unskillful state of mind, already begins to help us, for example, to 'lighten up' about the situation. Then we apply traditional antidotes to remove or transform the hindrance.

We consider the consequences of staying in it; we might use the old Buddhist saying "what is the point of worrying about something you can do nothing about, and what is the point of worrying about something you can do something about?" Or we cultivate the opposite quality by, for example, concentrating on calming our breath. Or we give it space by observing it with a sky-like mind till it dissipates. Or, if it is weak, we simply suppress it. With practice we learn to soothe, shake off or let go of this troublesome mental activity whenever it bothers us. Then the mind can be free to solve the problem instead of drowning in redundant, self-defeating worry. [Roger]

JUNE 2020 CALENDAR

RE-OPENING THE CENTRE

As most of you will be aware the government restrictions on gatherings are easing in Qld. The Centre's Management Team is currently looking at when we will re-start activities at the centre, and what preparations we will need to put in place to comply with social distancing and hygiene regulations. We won't be ready to open for several weeks, but watch this space for further updates.

RETREAT PLANNED FOR 30TH JULY TO 3RD AUGUST 2020

Siladasa from Melbourne is booked to lead a retreat at James Byrne Centre at Highfields on the above dates. He is unsure if he will be able to fly into Queensland by that date but is still very committed to leading it for us. The retreat is a four-day retreat as several people wanted to have a longer retreat experience.

We have several options available to us. We can hold the retreat at Highfields as planned with Siladasa if our borders are open.

If our borders are closed;

we could still hold the retreat but lead it ourselves or ask one of the local (SE QLD) order members to lead it for/with us.

OR

we could hold the retreat at home online, with Siladasa in Melbourne via Zoom.

This retreat could be shortened to a weekend (Friday night to Sunday afternoon) if there is more call for that. Please let us know if you are interested in attending the retreat so we can choose which option may be best suited for participants. Email Maree on mareejones59@hotmail.com or call/text her on 0432 552 305

DANA FOR THE CENTRE

Thank you to all those who have generously given dana to the Centre so we can keep paying our operating costs during this non-contact time. If you haven't donated yet but would like to offer a donation, the bank details are below.

NAME: TOOWOOMBA BUDDHIST CENTRE

ACCT: 141437

BSB: 034 142

REF: [your name]

MITRA MUSING

We all know that Black Lives Matter, that all lives do matter. In the midst of the clamour in the US we know that George Floyd's brutal death has been the catalyst to light a fuse that has been burning slowly. For those of us attuned to notice the injustices metered out to our first nation's people we know that the fuse burns here, just as brightly as it does in the US. What can we do about it? How can we make a difference? This thought has often overwhelmed me, after all, *if I am not part of the solution then I must be part of the problem as there is no neutrality** and I do not want to be part of the problem.

So how to be part of the solution? The only thing I know to do now as someone who wants to absorb the wisdom of the Buddha Dharma is to sit in the space of not knowing what to do and to take every opportunity to listen and learn from the many first nations people who share their wisdom. And, most importantly, to reflect and enquire into the injustices and assumptions that are alive and well in my own mind.

Change comes slowly and each little bit does have an effect. I can (we can) make a (little) difference. [Anna]

Do not underestimate good (thinking) 'It will not approach me'.

'A water pot becomes full by the (constant) falling drops of water.

(Similarly) the spiritually mature person little by little fills themselves with good.'

[*Dhammapada the Way of Truth* translated by Sangharakshita.]

*Eldridge Cleaver

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

"Why be unhappy about something

if it can be remedied?

And what is the use of being unhappy about something

if it cannot be remedied?"

[Shantideva, 1981, *Bodhisattvacharyavatara: A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of life*, Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, Ch. 6, vs 10, p. 64]



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Dear Friends,

The Triratna Buddhist Community has a strong tradition of emphasising the crucial importance of the spiritual community, or Sangha. Experience shows that we need the Sangha to practice effectively. The people we mix with have a profound effect on us. We need the support and encouragement of like-minded people. We need advice and inspiration from people who are somewhat further along the path. And we need a social context of trust, honesty, and friendship if we are to open up and develop the emotional warmth that is an essential part of spiritual development. This crucial importance of the Sangha has always been recognised in Buddhism, and in these individualistic times it is more important than ever¹.

Sangharakshita says in his book *What Is the Sangha?* (Chapter 20, A Buddhist View of World Problems), “... And we may be anxious on our own account, if the problem seems likely to affect us directly at some point....The problem is too big, too involved, for us to do anything about it. So we try to forget about it and get on with our own personal lives, and deal with our own personal problems. We are very sorry that others suffer, but at least we can try to enjoy our own lives.” This is where the sangha comes in. Sangha can be an antidote to this introverted thinking, as being connected to others who are on the same path to Enlightenment feels more like a fellowship, more a part of a community, thus, less like being alone. People need to know there are other like-minded people around who can understand the difficulties of being on the path, and also just extending the hand of friendship when isolation becomes too much. This present time is one in which the true meaning of sangha can be realized. So you are encouraged to contact members of the sangha until we can enjoy the comfort of physical proximity. At the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre we have taken care to prepare the space for the time when we return to face-to-face study and activities. [Karen and Roger]

1. Triratna Training course for Mitras Year One

JULY 2020 CALENDAR

RE-OPENING THE CENTRE

As restrictions are easing in Queensland we plan to recommence centre activities at the beginning of August. The number of people that can attend the Centre is capped to comply with social distancing regulations. We will probably have a booking system whereby you can contact us prior to the Thursday evening and book a place, rather than turning up on the night to find that the centre's capacity is full, and risk not being able to attend the evening's activities. There will be more details about this in the next newsletter.

RETREAT PLANNED FOR 31st JULY TO 2nd AUGUST 2020

Due to the Coronavirus restrictions Siladasa (who was due to lead our July-August retreat this year) will not be able to fly here from Melbourne. Siladasa is very eager to lead this retreat online via the Zoom platform. We will not be charging the usual retreat fees, but a donation to the TBC would be much appreciated. A suggested donation could be \$50, but you can donate as much or as little as you like. Below are some details from Siladasa about the retreat.

Our retreat Friday 31 July to Sunday 2 August will explore "The Balance of the Five Spiritual Faculties" The Buddha encouraged the development of the faculties of Faith, Wisdom, Meditation, Energy and Mindfulness and stressed the importance of balancing them; Faith with Wisdom, Meditation with Energy, as imbalance will not lead to liberation. Mindfulness needs no balance, as one cannot have too much of it! Siladasa will speak to this teaching, providing material for reflection and for direct application to our Dharma life. The altruistic dimension of these faculties will also be examined. Although an 'on-line retreat' there will be opportunity to discuss, inquire and exchange thoughts both with the whole gallery and in breakout groups.

Retreat Schedule:

Friday 7am: Welcome, Introduction and Dedication followed by meditation to 9am.

(Sat/Sun, *Tiratnavandana* followed by meditation; the text will be provided for you to follow)

10-30 to 1230 Presentation, Q & A, groups, incl. break.

4pm to 5-30 Meditation, exercise & groups incl. break

7-30 to 9pm Evening event including puja.

A detailed programme will be provided to participants at the start.

How to prepare for an on-line retreat.

- A retreat is as much a state of mind as a time and place. We can put ourselves in retreat mode by intention and with enthusiasm!
- We can do this with the help of the following: Dedicate the three days to the retreat and avoid scheduling other activities.
- Enlist the co-operation of anyone else in the house so you will not be overly involved in other things.
- Select a quiet private space for your zoom, make it aesthetic and attractive, preferably with a shrine, flowers and so on.
- Switch off the phone and email as you would at a retreat centre.
- Use the time in between our activities to reflect on the material, read more on the subject, make notes, imagine! You may want to meditate more! Or walk/sit in a peaceful place like your garden or a nearby park (taking care not to leave your dedicated space too much).
- You may wish to speak with fellow retreatants at some time.
- Finally, given that this retreat will not provide any income for the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre, we shall be very grateful for any donations to help cover the ongoing expenses during the pandemic. Thank you!

If you would like to book for this retreat please contact Maree on 0432552305 or mareejones59@hotmail.com or Karen on kmgaul@bigpond.com

THANK YOU

Thank you to Jill and Alan for doing such a great job of cleaning the outside of building.

DANA FOR THE CENTRE

Thank you to all those who have generously given dana to the Centre so we can keep paying our operating costs during this non-contact time. If you haven't donated yet but would like to offer a donation, the bank details are below.

NAME: TOOWOOMBA BUDDHIST CENTRE

ACCT: 141437

BSB: 034 142

REF: [your name]

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

"The growth of the monks is to be expected, not their decline, monks, so long as they assemble frequently and in large numbers; meet and disperse peacefully and attend to the affairs of the Sangha in concord..."

[From the *Maha-parinibbana Sutta*.]



Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2020

4-6 Cress Street

Toowoomba Qld 4350

www.toowoombabuddhistcentre.org

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/toowoomba>

Dear Friends,

There are many sides to human nature. They are represented in Buddhism by the Five Spiritual Faculties, namely, faith, wisdom, mindfulness, concentration and energy. For psychological and spiritual development these elements have to be kept in balance and they must reach a state of dominance in the mind for Awakening to occur.

They consist of two paired opposites – energy and concentration (meditation), faith (conviction) and wisdom – and an overall governing factor – mindfulness. A traditional analogy is to a carriage drawn by two pairs of horses. The carriage is mindfulness and plays the role of literally integrating the other faculties.

Faith (conviction) and wisdom, which represent our emotional and intellectual sides, have to be balanced. For example, to make any progress we have to have emotional engagement as well as intellectual aspirations.

Concentration (meditation) and energy, representing our introvert and extrovert sides, have to be balanced. For example we need energy for effort but also meditation and tranquillity to collect our scattered energies. Mindfulness or awareness, as the equilibrating faculty, balances them all.

To succeed in your spiritual journey it is best to approach it with the whole of one's being. It is better not to just try and feel and not understand, or just try to understand and not feel. It is not enough to look within and never look without, or always look without, never pausing to look within. There is a time and place for all these things.

The more these aspects of ourselves are balanced, integrated and harmonised the more successful we will be in our spiritual journey. To achieve the goal of Buddhism, Enlightenment, the whole of oneself must be involved.

[Roger]

RETREAT REPORT. THE FIVE SPIRITUAL FACULTIES.

A zoom retreat was a new experience for me and, quite frankly, I wasn't sure how it would add to my spiritual growth without the "cuppa" conversations and silent walks. But while it was different, there was no less sharing and deepening of relationships than would have happened in a face-to-face retreat at the James Byrne Centre.

Siladasa, in his deep and thorough understanding of the dharma, presented the Five Spiritual Faculties (Meditation, Wisdom, Faith, Energy and Mindfulness) by first exploring their meaning and attributes, then pairing them (Faith and Energy/ Meditation and Wisdom) with mindfulness underpinning them all. The study was then guided into the application of these faculties in our everyday life and how we experience them.

Meditation was an important vehicle for developing these, and we were led skillfully by Siladasa so that our experience was profound. There was such confidence in the group that it fostered deep sharing and opening.

Our group of 11 was gathered from Toowoomba, Brisbane and Mackay, as well as Siladasa in Melbourne.

Siladasa has been a constant in the history of the TBC and we owe him a great debt for mentoring, facilitating retreats, and giving so freely of his time, dharma knowledge and support. All who attended have expressed how much his presentations have given them, so we thank him once again. [Karen]

MITRA MUSING

"The Spiritual Warrior"

I remember hearing this term more than ten years ago in one of many books I was reading at the time, by Pema Chodron. It has stuck with me ever since. On a similar note I often hear Bhante Sangharakshita speak of the spiritual life as a "Heroic One".

The past 18 months have been a big challenge for me with work bullies and some health issues preventing my normal mobility and physical activities which I enjoy. I often call upon Buddha Akshobhya in times like this and remember his mirror like wisdom - seeing things as they really are. Reminding myself there is no place to go other than the present moment with the present people, this human body and my mental states. It is all up to me how I choose to speak, behave and react/respond. So really there is no one to blame Everything is practice.

So this reminds me of "Perfect Vision" ... having a vision, an idea of how and who I want to be in the world. Kind, generous, compassionate patient...TO EVERYONE, not just people I like and get along with. Putting ego aside more and more and more and seeing the freedom in that.

And boy does it require "Perfect Effort" steadfast determination, vigilance and commitment to keep momentum and move forward. Over and over and over again. Dissolving ill will, trying to maintain a positive state of mind each day as I face life's joys and challenges.

Vital things that nurture me and how I support myself are: spending lots of time in nature: sea, sky, clouds, trees, flowers, wind, earth. Keeping in touch with spiritual friends. Listening to Dharma talks, Making time for FUN ... playing sport, bike riding, sailing, walking, listening to crazy music and dancing in my living room. Being creative with paints and my garden. Giving away YOU MATTER cards ... Making time to STOP and REST and REFLECT...

So that's me in a nut shell. My path of the spiritual warrior has not been an easy one but it certainly has been a beneficial one and has brought me great joy and peace. My gratitude for the three jewels grows stronger and stronger. Joy and Metta [Jan Hew]

INVITATION TO A GET-TOGETHER

Because we haven't had an opportunity to meet together for many months, (and space is limited at the Buddhist Centre), we are planning a casual **picnic in the Botanical gardens**. **The invitation is extended to everyone** whether you have attended the Centre activities before or are interested in attending in the future. Come along and meet other like-minded people, ask questions about centre activities and share some lunch in the beautiful surrounds of the Botanical gardens.

When: **Sunday 30th August 2020 11.30am – 2pm**

Where: **Campbell Street entrance of the Botanical Gardens**, on the grassy area to the right of the new Greenhouse memorial building and the old cannon. (Wet weather venue, meet at the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre)

Bring a plate of lunch to share.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

Not by hatred are hatreds ever pacified (here in the world).

They are pacified by love.

This is the eternal law.

Dharmmapada, translation by Sangharakshita



Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2020

4-6 Cress Street
Toowoomba Qld 4350

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

Dear Friends,

According to Buddhism there are three ways knowledge can be acquired – 1) listening, 2) reflecting and 3) meditating. Listening to a good teacher explain the Dharma is ideal but this stage could also involve reading a good book on the topic or any type of study. This stage is about absorbing information and actively listening making sure we don't misinterpret the teaching.

Reflecting means taking the material away and making it your own through thinking about it till you clearly understand it. This stage is about deepening our understanding of ideas that we have already heard. Deliberate reflection is important and it is a good idea to put aside time for it. To some extent reflection is a faculty that wants to be exercised and it is a natural way of deepening your understanding of what it means to be human.

So there is a place for intellectual study in Buddhism. Buddhism is not completely against intellectual understanding, as some people think. But understanding must go further than being merely intellectual. This is where the third stage comes in. Reflection yields its own crop of ideas which can seed further reflection.

In the third stage you take these seeds and sit with them in meditation. You use the non-thinking awareness available in meditation to penetrate into the ideas and to intuitively realise their truths. They go into your heart and change you. This is the way to wisdom. [Roger]

SEPTEMBER 2020 CALENDAR

* *Friend Nights are from 7 to 9pm*

Thu 10th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Centre Re-opens: Dedication Ceremony: Meditation [R]

Thu 17th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; The Eightfold Path [R, M & K]

Thu 24th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; The Eightfold Path [R, M & K]

RE-OPENING THE CENTRE

The regular Thursday night Friends night will re-commence at the Buddhist Centre on 10th September at 7pm. We will have a dedication ceremony to ritually mark our coming back together after such a long time away.

There will be a limit on how many people can attend the centre because of the social distancing regulations.

Because of the current restrictions our limit is 10 people in all, so that's 7 people plus the team leaders. Because of this we will introduce a **booking system**. If you **wish to attend on the night** please contact Karen on **0427681863** to reserve you place.

We will also be asking people to sanitise their hands on entry and record their contact details in the contact tracing register and to observe social distancing during the course of the evening. We look forward to gathering again in person and re-connecting with old friends and new alike.

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 in September** will be the 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.*

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

MITRA MUSING

In our study group we are reading the Art of Reflection by Ratnaguna and this week we were exploring impermanence and what it means to us. I found it brought up mixed emotions for me as my reasoning mind, the mind that accepts that all things must and do end and my emotional mind, the one that clings and craves the things that are lost to us, were both seeking my attention. Attachment to loved ones and things and the memories that they give rise to seems to be like a sort of life line anchoring us in our sense of "self". That part of us that we see as fixed and rigid but what is in reality is an ebb and flow of conditioning and consciousness, a fluid interaction happening without us realising it and the more I become aware of the reality of things I am finding that I have a different perspective, a more rounded "whole" feeling. There is of course the realisation that just as these things are impermanent so are the forces of the worldly winds, that the buffeting will diminish and we will still be here but perhaps a little more grounded and accepting. Our journey is our own and I think each and every step we take is an opportunity to learn and reflect. These uncertain times are an opportunity for us to actually "be" in the impermanence of things and to really understand what that word means.[Jill]

NAGASURI'S RETREAT 20th-22nd NOVEMBER

For this Zoom retreat in November Nagasuri will be leading us in study of the Meghiya Sutta from the Pali Cannon. The Buddha offers Meghiya a teaching on the Five Things that lead to the Heart's Release (Enlightenment). The reason why this teaching is crucial to Meghiya forms the story/context around the teaching and is itself interesting and poignant, and the teaching is as relevant to us today as it was to Meghiya more than 2500 years ago. More information on the retreat and its structure will be in the October and November newsletters.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

"Find the truth, then live by it" from Peace is a Fire, by Sangharakshita.



TBC Picnic last Sunday at Queens Park



Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2020

4-6 Cress Street
Toowoomba Qld 4350

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

Dear Friends,

On Friends Nights recently we have been studying the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path. He repeatedly taught throughout his life that this was the path leading to the cessation of suffering. Sometimes it is described as the Path of Vision and the Path of Transformation. In other words, it has to start with some sort of vision – something you are looking for – some need to understand the meaning of life, to answer your questions. The rest of the Path represents the areas in your life that need to be transformed to realize freedom.

The eight phases are vision, emotion, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness and meditation. All these limbs of the path inter-relate and augment each other; they are not a series of steps you must implement one after another. Actually you can be working on all these areas at the same time, or maybe emphasizing one more before another. For example, before you can transform your emotional life (the 2nd phase) you may need to work on your speech, your livelihood and meditation (the 3rd, 5th and 8th phases). The path is an organic one and the eight dimensions of it are usually referred to as limbs.

Broadly the eightfold path is divided into a Threefold Path – Ethics (3, 4, and 5), Meditation (6, 7 and 8) and Wisdom (1 and 2). Ethics sets up the right conditions to meditate successfully, meditation sets up the right conditions (clear-mindedness) to gain insight into reality. The skills of mindfulness developed in meditation help you behave ethically as does insight. They all overlap and inter-relate. The modifications they help bring into your lifestyle help transform it from a reactive one (based on craving, aversion and confusion) to a creative one, from going around in circles to climbing up a spiral path. [Roger]

OCTOBER 2020 CALENDAR

* *Friend Nights are from 7 to 9pm*

- | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Thu 1 st | <u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u> | Meditation; The Eightfold Path Perfect Action [K] |
| Thu 8 th | <u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u> | Meditation; Sevenfold Puja [M] |
| Thu 15 th | <u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u> | Meditation; The Eightfold Path Perfect Livelihood [R] |
| Thu 22 nd | <u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u> | Meditation; Dharma Life article [R] |
| Thu 29 th | <u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u> | Meditation; The Eightfold Path Perfect Livelihood [K] |

RE-OPENING THE CENTRE

We are back at the centre for the weekly Thursday night Friends night. We meditate together and then do some study.

If you wish to attend on the night please contact Karen on **0427681863** by text or phone. There are plenty of spots so come and join us. Open to everyone. We have covid safe measures in place.

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 cuppa and chat followed by some study. Each month usually includes devotional practices with a Dharma study/activity component on other evenings. **Study in October** will continue with the 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.*

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

NAGASURI'S RETREAT 20th-22nd NOVEMBER 2020:

As Nagasuri resides in Sydney, for this retreat we will be doing it via Zoom as there is too much uncertainty about the borders being open. Nagasuri will be leading us in study of the Meghiya Sutta from the Pali Cannon. The Buddha offers Meghiya a teaching on the Five Things that lead to the Heart's Release (Enlightenment). The reason why this teaching is crucial to Meghiya forms the story/context around the teaching and is itself interesting and poignant, and the teaching is as relevant to us today as it was to Meghiya more than 2500 years ago.

We have had some very positive feedback about how surprisingly effective Zoom retreats can be. (Next year we hope to be back at James Byrne Centre for some face-to-face retreats.)

Bookings are open and can be sent to Maree on 0432552305 or mareejones59@hotmail.com.

MITRA MUSING:

Getting back to the Centre and actually being in the building with familiar faces and new, is one of the joys after COVID lockup (I mean lockdown!). The flowers, the incense, the sound of the bowl vibrating with the strike and familiar voices as they lead the meditation and the friendship of the sangha – oh joy! Oh joy!

The need for sangha has never been more felt as now, as restrictions are lifted and we resume interacting with our communities. But how do we want this to look? Are we going to change ways we connect with our friends, the people we don't necessarily know, and the people who caused us discomfort previously? If we decide to have a different approach it really will be taking our meditation off the cushion and being mindful in our lives. What an opportunity! Sadhu everyone. [Karen].

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

"The Pali word is anga, which means 'limb', indicating a process of organic growth rather than a movement from one place to another. There is no distinction between the traveller and the Path. The traveller is the Path."

[Mitrata 29,1980,*The Four Noble Truths*, p.21].





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2020

4-6 Cress Street
Toowoomba Qld 4350

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

Dear Friends,

Meditation is not something you 'learn' and then can 'do', like riding a bicycle or driving a car. It is an ongoing exploration. It involves discovering new approaches and finding ways to keep motivated!

Also, meditation does not simply improve on a day-to-day or even month-to-month basis. Sometimes it seems hard or non-productive, and other times it goes well. The main thing is to stick at it and find the supports you need to do so. It is having a deep, cumulative effect that you don't always notice.

In order to make progress it is important to develop fruitful attitudes towards the meditation practice. Fruitful attitudes are realistic, flexible, effective and progressive. Unfruitful attitudes are unrealistic, over-idealised, unsustainable and rigid.

'Pressing on regardless' is an unfruitful attitude, as is meditating only when you feel like it. Looking for peak experiences is an unfruitful attitude as is the idea that meditation should always be pleasurable. But there is no such thing as a bad meditation as long as we are mindful of whatever is going on.

To make progress in meditation we need to develop the healthy self-discipline of a regular meditation practice. This means building meditation into your daily or weekly routine. If possible find a regular time to meditate. Be realistic about how much time you can give to meditation and learning to use a timer/clock to time each stage.

Setting up a practice can take time. Part of a healthy self-discipline is not making too big a deal of it if you miss a day but trying through trial and error to build up a positive attitude of regular practice. [Roger]

NOVEMBER 2020 CALENDAR

** Friend Nights are from 7 to 9pm*

Thu 5th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; **Three Growth Models** [R]

Thu 12th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; cup of tea [K]

Thu 19th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; **The Eightfold Path** Perfect Livelihood [R]

Thu 26th 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 includes meditation and a cuppa and chat followed by some study. Each month usually includes devotional practices with a Dharma study/activity component on other evenings. **Study in October** will continue with the Eightfold Path.

There are plenty of spots to attend Friends nights so come and join us as we continue study with 'The Noble 8 fold Path', and also a night where Roger will lead us in study of 'The Three Models' (or Myths). These Models are ways of engaging with Buddhist Practice, namely Self-development, Self-discovery and Self-surrender. During November we will also be introducing a nights where we will be having a meditation followed by a chat and cuppa. This is an opportunity to be led through a meditation practice with still some time to get home a little earlier if that is helpful for you. (It is also helpful if you could let Karen know you are coming by texting her on 0427 681 863)

**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 aim to start shrine room activities no later than 7.10pm.*

NAGASURI'S RETREAT 20th-22nd NOVEMBER 2020:

There are still places on this Zoom retreat. The retreat program will have a similar format to residential retreats running from Friday night to Sunday lunchtime. If you would like to join us contact Maree on mareejones59@hotmail.com.

SANGHA DAY SUNDAY 13th DECEMBER 2020

At the end of last year unforeseen circumstances necessitated Viryaja to step back from Centre activities. We didn't get a chance to express our gratitude to her, so during Sangha Day celebrations there will be an opportunity to show our appreciation to her for all the efforts she put into the Centre over many years. At this time we would also like to rejoice in Roger's merits as without him the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre would not have come into existence. Many years ago, when Roger arrived in Toowoomba, he decided it was important for him to practise with other Buddhists. So, he started Buddhist classes. We have much gratitude that he had that realization. Without it, we wouldn't be here practicing at the centre as we are today. On Sangha Day we invite you to rejoice in Roger and Viryaja's positive qualities.

Subhuti wrote in his book 'A New Voice in the Buddhist Tradition'

'Sangharakshita believes that personal relationships are necessary to spiritual development. Most (people) will need the stimulation and encouragement, support, and example of friends on the path. Without that friendship they will easily lose inspiration and become discouraged.'

Sangha Day Celebrations will be held at the Buddhist Centre on Sunday the 13th December at 10.15 for a 10.30am start until 3pm (you can attend for all or part of the day). Please bring a plate of vegetarian food to share for lunch. (We will be observing social distancing regulations on the day). This will be the last Centre activity for 2020.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

"The primary meaning of kalyana in kalyana mitrata (spiritual friendship) is 'beautiful'. In spiritual friendship we take delight in the spiritual beauty of our dear friend."

[Sangharakshita, 1998, A Stream of Stars. P. 95]





Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2020

4-6 Cress Street

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Dear Friends,

A popular teaching quite distinctive to the Triratna teachings (originating from its founder Sangharakshita) is that of the *reactive mind* versus the *creative mind*. The idea is that as soon as one of the senses is stimulated we tend to 'react'. It may be one of the five physical senses – we see something or someone, we hear a noise or someone's voice, we smell an odour, taste a flavour, or feel a tactile sensation (pressure, heat, itching) and we react. Or it can be the mental sense; in Buddhism the mind is also considered a sense, so we also tend to react to thoughts, images, fantasies, emotions, and the like. The sensations are pleasant, unpleasant or neutral (neither pleasant nor unpleasant or you can't make up your mind (confusion)). Reactions by definition are **fast, habitual, mechanical and unconscious (largely unaware)**. For example, we talk of someone 'pushing our buttons' – they say something and before we know it we fly into a rage.

So we tend to react to the sensations with emotions like anger/aversion and desire/craving or confusion/anxiety – these are the three fundamental, unskilful mental states according to Buddhism. They are unskilful because whilst you are caught up in them they make you unhappy and others unhappy. Basically they tend to move us toward the stimuli (wanting to repeat it) or away from it (wanting to avoid it).

These three have been elaborated into the **Five Hindrances** – they're called 'hindrances' because they prevent you from becoming concentrated or absorbed in meditation. They are 1) craving for sense pleasure (including the mental sense), 2) ill will (anger), 3) restlessness & anxiety, 4) sloth & torpor and, 5) indecision & doubt. They are an elaboration of the three basic unskilful mental states – the first two are the same, the last three are an elaboration of confusion/delusion. Traditionally it is taught that if you are doing sitting meditation and you are really struggling to become concentrated because you are continually getting distracted, you stop trying to get concentrated and instead turn to identifying which of the hindrances it is that is distracting you. You then apply the following **antidotes** – first you must recognise that you're caught up in a hindrance, then 1) you consider the consequences of staying in it, 2) you cultivate the opposite (eg., if angry cultivate loving-kindness, if anxious cultivate calm), 3) just observe it with a 'sky-like' mind (detach from it), 4) suppress it (not repress it). You apply them in that order; if one doesn't work you go onto the next one. Later you can be more flexible.

Once you become practised at recognising the five hindrances and applying the antidotes in sitting meditation you carry it over into everyday life and use the formula or process as a way of managing your everyday emotions and mental states. Of course to be able to do this you need mindfulness. The mindfulness creates a space in which you can inhibit the reactive mind and instead bring into existence a skilful response. This is what we call the 'Creative' Mind. To create means to bring something new in existence – so it is not old, habitual and unaware it involves newness and awareness. It is more **responsive, conscious and deliberate**. So applying the antidotes to an unskilful mental state is an example of using the creative mind. Often they work very quickly in neutralising and transforming the unskilful mental state. However, we are not very used to doing this and it requires practice - mindfulness is not something we develop overnight. [Roger]

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

Thu 3rd **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; cup of tea [Karen]

Thu 10th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **Threefold Puja** [Roger]
[Last session for 2020]

Sun 13th **SANGHA DAY**

JANUARY 2021 CALENDAR - Friends Nights are from 7 to 9pm

Thu 21st **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **Dedication Ceremony** [Roger]
[First session for 2021]

Thu 28th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** **Eightfold Path** [Karen & 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 includes meditation and a cuppa and chat followed by some study. Each month usually includes devotional practices with a Dharma study/activity component on other evenings. **Study in January** will continue with the Eightfold Path.

There are plenty of spots to attend Friends nights so come and join us as we continue study with 'The Noble 8 fold Path'. During December and January we will also be introducing a nights where we will be having a meditation followed by a chat and cuppa. This is an opportunity to be led through a meditation practice with still some time to get home a little earlier if that is helpful for you. (It is also helpful if you could let Karen know you are coming by texting her on 0427 681 863)

**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 aim to start shrine room activities no later than 7.10pm.*

RETREAT REPORT

Twelve people participated in Nagasuri's Zoom retreat earlier this month. It still surprises me how a Zoom retreat can be so beneficial and also have a feeling of spaciousness. We studied the Meghiya Sutta: where Meghiya being the Buddha's attendant on this particular day, after doing his rounds for alms food and seeing a beautiful mango grove, then approaches the Buddha and asks him if he can go to this enticing grove and meditate. The Buddha asks Meghiya to wait until someone else arrives before he leaves the Buddha alone. Meghiya after asking a second and third time to be given leave to meditate in the grove, the Buddha replies 'Do now, Meghiya, what you think it is time to do'. Meghiya surprisingly, on reaching the grove and sitting down to meditate, finds his mind is overwhelmed by many bad and unwholesome thoughts: sensual thoughts, malevolent thoughts and

cruel thoughts. After meditating Meghiya then returns and approaches the Buddha and confesses his experience. The Buddha gives Meghiya a teaching and replies that 'When the hearts release (or minds awareness) is as yet immature, Meghiya, five things lead to maturity'. These five things are: good friends, good comrades and good companions based on common values, ethics and aspirations (spiritual friendship), observing the precepts (ethics), talk about opening the mind to 'the way things really are' (Dharma talk and study), abandoning unwholesome mental states and acquiring wholesome mental states (The Four Right Efforts and mindfulness), and lastly, understanding of impermanence as the way to end suffering. We explored these five things that 'lead to the hearts release' in small groups, with questions for discussion and reflection about how we experience these five elements in our everyday lives. It was a very enjoyable and nourishing retreat. With many thanks to Nagasuri for facilitating it. [Maree]

SANGHA DAY SUNDAY 13th DECEMBER 2020

At the end of last year unforeseen circumstances necessitated Viryaja to step back from Centre activities. We didn't get a chance to express our gratitude to her, so during Sangha Day celebrations there will be an opportunity to show our appreciation to her for all the efforts she put into the Centre over many years. At this time we would also like to rejoice in Roger's merits as without him the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre would not have come into existence. Many years ago, when Roger arrived in Toowoomba, he decided it was important for him to practise with other Buddhists. So, he started Buddhist classes. We have much gratitude that he had that realization. Without it, we wouldn't be here practicing at the centre as we are today. On Sangha Day we invite you to rejoice in Roger and Viryaja's positive qualities.

Subhuti wrote in his book 'A New Voice in the Buddhist Tradition' 'Sangharakshita believes that personal relationships are necessary to spiritual development. Most (people) will need the stimulation and encouragement, support, and example of friends on the path. Without that friendship they will easily lose inspiration and become discouraged.'

Sangha Day Celebrations will be held at the Buddhist Centre on Sunday the 13th December at 10.15 for a 10.30am start until 3pm (you can attend for all or part of the day). Please bring a plate of vegetarian food to share for lunch at 1pm. 'Lunch will be at 1pm if you can't make the whole day but would like to join us for lunch.' (We will be observing social distancing regulations on the day). This will be the last Centre activity for 2020.

HEADS UP FOR A WORKING BEE

Now we are back at the Centre, there is a need for a spring clean and tidy up. It is proposed that this happen on Sunday **31st January 2021**, just after activities resume. **PLEASE** put this date in your calendar, even if you are not a regular attendee we will be grateful for your help.

MEN- your help is needed desperately so if you can spare even an hour it will be much appreciated, as will anyone with a ute or truck.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

"The creative mind is above all the aware mind. Being aware ... the creative mind is also intensely and radiantly alive."[Sangharakshita, 2001, *Buddha Mind*, Windhorse: Birmingham, p.45-6.]