



One Heart- One Mind

*The Newsletter of the Association
of Engaged Buddhists*

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Meditation & Dhamma Teaching

7.30pm every Monday night.

- Join with others in sitting practice.

7.30pm every Wed night.

- Meditation evenings include a Dhamma talk followed by around half an hour of guided sitting practice. Beginners or more experienced meditators are equally welcome.
- There is no charge for the teachings although donations are welcome as this is Sangha Lodge's only means of support.

Dana Days

Dana Days are held on the first Sunday of each month. Attendees bring food to offer to the Sangha and to share with each other. This is a great way to show respect for the Sangha and enjoy a delicious meal with others in the lay community.

Please note that we must start promptly at 10:30am in order for the Sangha to finish eating by noon. The next Dana Day will be Sunday 4th July 2015

Association News

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Vejjasala*

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A Week of Dhamma Practice

On May 10th this year we began our first 7 Day Retreat at Vejjasala. The guiding light for our practice was to be the Satipatthana Sutta. People had asked many times at the conclusion of shorter retreats if it might be possible to undertake a longer period of practice.

Frankly I was deeply impressed by those who attended this longer retreat. The meditators showed great determination, self discipline and courage in the way they approached their practice. Noble Silence was beautifully observed throughout our time together leading all deeper and deeper into their own citta (heart/mind) and seat of practice. Our group was very mixed in terms of their previous experience ranging from those who had lots of experience of retreats to those who had undertaken almost none previously.

Meals were generously produced by Jan and Chris McCarthy keeping the body well and contented. The weather in way reflected our experiences in retreat.

This was a retreat which was a blessing for those attending and for the teacher who was so inspired by them. I hope we will undertake many more and perhaps even longer periods of practice together at Vejjasala.

With gratitude and metta,

Bhante Tejadhammo

My Week of Dhamma Practice: A Personal Account

Monday

Bhante expounded on Noble Silence last night – inner as well as outer. I like the idea, in theory, but during the meditation immediately following his talk, I found myself in a fantasy of riding a bucking white horse which was trying

to unseat me. Before it succeeded, I came to.

Then, in bed, unsleeping (we retired at 9.15) I developed a sore throat. And I haven't brought my Vitamin C. Perhaps Jan and Chris will need to go into town during the week and could get me some? But probably too late. If I get a cold, I will give it to everyone, and Bhante will probably get bronchitis, then pneumonia. So I'll have to go home at once. But my house is occupied for the week, oh! I sleep, and awake with backache this time. How come? I sleep again, but not before realizing (with my mind of course) that my mind is playing tricks, telling me its actually not all that keen on a week of enforced inactivity and silence, with no books, no computer/iPad, no music, no Sudoku. Then I laugh, rather crossly, at my mind – but in my mind of course. Then I think... well, at least I'll have something to report to Bhante.

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Is that what it was all about? If so, can this really be the, or even a, path to Awakening?

Later : We have been given poems, Cavafy's "Ithaca" and some gatas by early women Buddhists. I have read these before. The women are a problem for me, a cultural problem. The poems are similar to each other – sometimes very similar – which gives them a ritual feel. 'I suffered, then I found the teaching, and now all is well, suffering is extinguished'. They're like a Buddhist form of 'Amazing Grace'. It is amazing, all right, but it doesn't get to me like Wordsworth or Eliot.

Ithaca is another matter. 'It's the journey not the arrival.' Fine, I get it, I agree with it. I both feel and know it's right. But it doesn't strike me afresh. In fact sends me off on a tangent, remembering that "The Journey Not the Arrival Matters" is the title of one of Leonard Woolf's many volumes of memoirs. At this point, 7p.m, I'm feeling discontent. So many hours of meditation, not enough teaching. This may be as it should be but I'm finding it uncomfortable, and not just physically.

Tuesday

We're still stuck in the body, but I'm feeling better about it – 'the sky-like nature of mind' etc. means the clouds have shifted a bit. But some profound utterance of Buddhaghosa is bothering me: 'There is suffering, but there is no sufferer.' I suppose he's talking about anatta, the illusion of self, but it's an odd way of putting it. Will try to bring it up in discussion tonight.

Saw, with Bhante, a pair of delightful little birds, strong black-&-white marking with a radiant scarlet breast on the male, more muted on the female, whose breast was pink. Both had a stylish elegance.

Could have consumed more soup tonight; the food is so delicious, it leads to greed...

Wednesday

Happily moving away from body (tho' still staying firmly in it, of course) and

into vedana, translated as feelings but perhaps better considered as sensation. Pleasant, Unpleasant or Neutral. We went outside to do walking practice while paying attention to this, and it struck me that there's another alternative here; inextricably intertwined Pleasant and Unpleasant together. The wind on my skin was refreshing, bracing (Pleasant) but the chill on my cheeks and nose was Unpleasant. Simultaneous, not one sensation turning into the other but the exact same thing – the wind – creating a double sensation. As does, say, a big dipper (are they still called that?) at a fairground. To ride on one (I speak from distant memory) is to experience both terror (Unpleasant) and excited delight (Pleasant).

I did bring up the 'suffering but no sufferer' issue in discussion last night. As I expected, it's that confusion (in my mind, not the Buddha's) between conditioned and ultimate reality. What a lot of difficulty this causes! I understand it intellectually, but it's like a trap I fall into over and over again. Similar problems with karma and rebirth. Hey ho.

My room mate is a wonderfully quiet sleeper. I hope I am too, but fear I may moan a bit, especially when I'm restless. Despite spending so many hours in bed without benefit of a novel to ease me onto sleep, I am sleeping surprisingly well, in fact as well or better than at home.

The bathroom situation is OK, just, with 15 people...three are in kutis and the 'cottage' has no shower, so there are some crowded moments. It's a little uncomfortable having men and women using the same toilets. We all do it at home, of course, but that's sharing with people we know intimately. When Vejjasala eventually gets permission for some more building, we should give this priority.

We had hail this afternoon. It started to rain while I was out walking after lunch, so I scurried back and missed the pelting by a whisker. Beautiful to see, though it would have been rather Unpleasant to be caught in. Someone, Bhante or Dave, has made a snowman, well a snowbust, on the deck. It was very funny and charming, but sadly it can't be men-

tioned due to Noble Silence. Don't know if others have seen it.

I was the designated bell-ringer for afternoon meditation. This made me quite nervous. How absurd, I thought, while noting Pleasant and Unpleasant sensations in my body. If Bhante should fail to appear at 5.45, what shall I do? I suppose I'll have to ring the bell again after, say, an hour, and then run off to see if he's OK. Not doing too well on the one-pointed concentration front. Luckily, he arrived. I should have had more faith.

Thursday

Not thinking. That's a kind of recommendation in the wonderful booklet of short, simple poems we were given on arrival. They all sound like Thich Nhat Hanh to me. But that 'deep silence' of not thinking? I can see that calming thought is useful and beneficial. I suppose not thinking at all for short periods might be good. But I certainly don't want to stop thinking altogether. 'Thinking' is, of course, one of those words that covers whole worlds. Like 'feeling', it is so easy to get wrong end of stick with it. It's always the words that are the problem but we can't manage without them. It was 4 degrees Centigrade this morning, according to the barometer here. Lily has swept away the snowman remnants which survived the freezing night. Impermanence!

Later: In our retreat chat I complained of my own apparent lack of progress along the Path after about 15 years of practice. Bhante was, of course, gently encouraging, and then mentioned, almost casually, that sometimes we can stand in our own way, firmly though unconsciously impeding our own progress. Why? For fear of taking the next step, whatever it might be. Ding! I've had that thought myself and managed to forget it. So. Oh dear. I think I see it. Now what to do about it? I fear relinquishment is involved. That shouldn't be too hard at my age – many worldly pleasures are sadly behind me, like it or not – and yet I cling all the more fiercely to those that remain. A troubling, undismissable insight.

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Later still: The pretty little birds are Scarlet Robins, according to that indispensable nature bible, *Wildlife of Australia*. Apparently common, but I'd never seen one before. Lots of Superb blue wrens about too, the male apparently hosting a harem of females (and in a Buddhist Centre, oh dear! Large black cockatoos flocking about, gently-toned compared to their raucous sulphur-crested cousins. Saw a small kangaroo briefly in the woods, but the grumpy wombat was in hiding today. Wonder if I dare steal a couple of apples for those poor scruffy little ponies up the road? I suppose it would be better just to ask.

Friday

We are doing a writing exercise. I seem to have described the view from this deck. Not very original or poetic, but it was what came into my head. The atmosphere here is so special. It settles over you, quiet and nurturing. There's lots happening, especially with the bird life, but there is no bustle.

Saw the wombat again today, or maybe a different one. I wasn't expecting it...well, we weren't expecting each other... so we both froze. We were quite close, so I moved very slowly away. So did he. Then he started to bumble, then trot, and finally run away, as if I were a dangerous tiger.

Bhante has tasked me with ringing the end of meditation bell again this afternoon. Does he feel these responsibilities will move me an inch along the spiritual path? I hope so – and that he's right. Alternatively, I may have just happened to be the one his eye fell upon.

Saturday

That almost translucent evening light again. Please let the sky be clear tonight, my last chance to see the amazing roof of stars which puts everything into perspective. (Note the 'spec' in perspective!) Why is it comforting to know that a speck is all we are.

Dhamma, in terms of the Satipatthana Sutta, translated as 'actual experience'. That makes sense: body, feeling (sensation + other feelings), mind (thought),

experience. How impossible is translation, let alone from an ancient Eastern language into a modern Western one. It's amazing we can understand anything! How fortunate (Buddhists never say 'lucky', perhaps too close to gambling and chance) we are to have Bhante to help us with the subtleties. Without them, the game is lost. I have completely seduced the two ragged Dartmoor ponies with carrots and apples. Now they trot up to me eagerly, their early suspicion quite banished. But it all finishes tomorrow. I hope I haven't done them a disservice by showing them a glimpse of the high life and then disappearing. Have I merely brought dukkha into their lives? And wickedly so, for my own pleasure in witnessing their enjoyment of the treat.

Later: Oh dear! While trying to mindfully wave out the candle flame at the end of afternoon meditation, I waved too vigorously, scattering hot candle wax over the carpet, not to mention my trackie dax. They don't matter, but the carpet does. Repairable, I hope, but I'm disappointed in my carelessness on this last full day of retreat. We're not quite

finished, but I fear that once I get back to the world...the emails the phone messages, the this and that to be done, I'll cease this record. So I'd like to sum up, but can I?

Standing in my own way, as I now realise I am, it's unsurprising that I haven't made a lot of progress. The teaching has been terrific, a really helpful elucidation of this very comprehensive sutta. It's always hard to know, at the time, exactly what's happening in the heart/mind. There have been moment of excitement (this is probably wrong) and rather more moments of frustration or boredom. Many moment of calm, and quiet joy. But what I do feel is slightly greater clarity. I can see my mind's tricks; they don't fool me as much as they used to. I sort of know, a bit, where I go wrong. I even know, sort of, what to do about it, at least in part. Remains to be seen if I now follow my own advice to myself. I'm a bit doubtful, know what a backslider I am, but the map is there. It's up to me.

Caroline Lurie

Association News

Sue Toohey

Working Bee at Sangha Lodge on Queen's Birthday Holiday

Alex Lee organised a small working bee at Sangha Lodge on Monday 8th June to reorganise the office/dining room. The file cupboards and two desks have been replaced with more space efficient furniture (donated by Alex & Lean) which should make more space for Dana Day. Plans are afoot to repaint the office and the stairwell but considerable preparation will be needed as the walls in the stairwell have sustained water damage from the leaking roof that we hope is now fixed. On the next working day it is also planned to install a handrail for the back steps.

Volunteers Needed for 2015 Food Fair

Alex Lee and Saw Gaik Chong have begun contacting our regular stall holders as preparations get underway for this year's Food Fair to be held at Roselea Community Centre, Carlingford on Sunday 26th July. So far we have 3 new stalls for this year. We are looking for people who can help with the set-up and the clean up at the end of the day, people who can help throughout the day, clearing tables and selling raffle tickets and people who can donate ingredients and help with food preparation. We will need cooked chicken and both boiled eggs & fresh eggs. If you think you might be able to help with any of these please drop us an email at: office@engagedbuddhists.org.au

Thai Lunch Fund Raiser

Lean Lee has organised a fund raising lunch at the Pan Asia restaurant *In Asia* (Concord Rd, North Strathfield) on Sunday, 27 September. The restaurant is known for its innovative food from all over South East Asia and boasts a Thai chef. Both omnivore and vegan menus will be available (at separate tables).

Tickets are \$60 a head and are available from Lean Lee at Sangha Lodge. Please think about getting together at table of friends as we really hope to sell out the restaurant.

Retreats at Vejjasala

Bhante's week long retreat on the Satipattana Sutta was very successful. Around 15 retreatants spent the week exploring the implication of the sutta for their own practice and enjoying the crisp winter days, the open fires and Jan and Chris's beautiful vegetarian food. Hopefully the success of this retreat means that we will be able to hold more such long retreats in future.

On the other hand we did not get quite enough people to hold the retreat 'The Healing Power of Words' with Beatriz Copello that was scheduled in May.

At our last Committee meeting we decided to bring forward the closing date for retreat registration to two weeks before the starting date. Cancellations in the two weeks immediately before the retreat will not be refundable.

I will be away until early July visiting Turkey & Russia but will be back for the Food Fair.

With much metta to everyone

Sue Toohey

Visiting Teacher

July

Our visiting teacher on July 15th will be John Barclay.

John is a lay teacher in the tradition of Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh. He leads the Wednesday evening Lotus Buds group, which is associated with a number of lay Thich Nhat Hanh sanghas in the wider Sydney region and with the "Entering the Stream" Monastery in

Beaufort, Victoria. He is also an enthusiastic volunteer Special Religious Education teacher in Sydney primary schools. John began practicing with Lotus Buds in 1995. He received the Lamp Transmission from Thich Nhat Hanh in 2004. He is married and has four children.



August

On Wed August 5 we will be pleased to welcome Jonathan Page as our visiting teacher.

Jonathan is a medical oncologist whose meditation practice goes back to 1984. He has found meditation to be of great personal benefit, particularly in navigating the major challenges of life, notably aging and mortality, the souring of relationships and the ravages of burnout. In understanding and largely overcoming burnout it has been possible to treat cancer patients with greater compassion, attending to the vital psycho-spiritual domain, whilst retaining some degree of resilience. Jonathan believes that meditation can open the door to clear understanding and vast possibility.



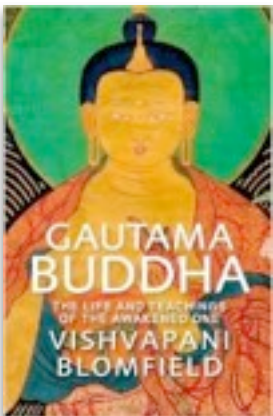
A Reader Recommends

In this issue, one of our members, Micheal Harding recommends a book that he has found helpful. To give us a feel for the book, he has written this review.

Gautama Buddha - The Life and Teachings of the Awakened One by Vishvapani Blomfield, Quercus, London, 2011 - 388pp.

Vishvapani Blomfield, a longtime follower of the Dhamma, has written a wide ranging, meticulously researched and referenced biography, generally free from the hagiography that has afflicted the many books that attempt to tell the story of The Buddha.

Blomfield begins his epic tale with a scene from the discourses, the powerful Bahiya Sutta, in which the holy man Bahiya seeks out the Buddha only to be killed shortly after awakening. He describes the world in which the Buddha and his early disciples lived with vivid imagery drawn from recent archeological research and Buddhist historical scholarship. His writing places you squarely in Iron Age India as he convincingly conveys the sights and sounds of the time. Blomfield presents the information in a realistic and, sometimes, somewhat skeptical way, unafraid to label some of the events in the suttas as apocryphal or perhaps inserted long after the fact. He concedes that what has been attributed to The Buddha, or Gautama as he refers to him, may not have been said by the man himself.



None of this diminishes from the incredible power of the suttas. Blomfield traces the life of the Buddha from his early years as the son of a Shakyani aristocrat.

He describes the world that the Buddha may have grown up in and the religious and cultural beliefs of ancient India that shaped him and gave him something to reject. He moves through his leaving home, his struggles with asceticism and determination to master his own mind, his eventual enlightenment and the establishment of a sangha. Using analysis of the suttas and historical research and scholarship, Blomfield tries to separate fact from legend and attempts to give the reader a "plausible account" of events contained in the discourses. The book goes on to consider his later years, his adaption of the teachings to suit his audience, his eventual death and finally his impact on ancient Indian civilization and his legacy in the modern world.

Blomfield's biography is a discriminating, sensible and sober work that is aimed mostly at Buddhist readers who are familiar with the traditional story of the Buddha. It is easy to read, well written and informative. It is not without a few minor issues though and the author's use of Sanskrit and then Pali for the same terms and sometimes even on the same page is a bit mystifying. However, overall the book is good for general readers, though scholars may find factual errors, I don't know. All in all though, this book is a worthy and satisfying attempt to retell the well known story of the Buddha, a man who was at once ordinary and extraordinary.

Micheal Harding

Love the Healer

As there are oppressors
there are others who care,
those whom with warmth in their eyes,
understand the pain,
those who with a murmur
pronounce words of hope.
Loving people
who undo the damage
done by others.
Dedicated humans
who restore faith,
and the will to live.
Devoted beings
who replenish
the essence of the wounded,

paving the roads
with cobbles of optimism.
Restorers of sanity!
Menders of the soul!
Beatriz Copello

Dhamma Blossoms

Our extract from the Dhammapada for this issue has been offered by Alex Lee, our Food Fair Coordinator. Alex says this these verses appeal to him very much and thought the photo suits them well.

*Just as birds leave no tracks in the air,
there are those whose minds do not cling to
what they receive,
their focus is the signless state of liberation
that to others is indiscernible.*

*Just like birds who leave no tracks in the air,
there are those whose minds are freed of
greed and hate,
unconcerned about food or shelter
their focus is the signless state of liberation.*

*Like birds in the sky that leave no tracks,
they move unhindered on their way.*

Dhammapada
verses 92-93



Donations

You may or may not realise that Sangha Lodge is solely funded from your donations. Following the teaching of the Buddha, we do not charge for teachings or meditation evenings, preferring instead to rely on our members' generosity. Unfortunately, this often means a shortfall when it comes to meeting our weekly expenses from the donation box on a Wednesday night. It would be much easier for the Centre to function if we were able to rely on regular donations from more members and guests of the centre.

One easy way to arrange for funds to be regularly transferred is via Internet Banking. Most Banks now offer a 'pay anyone' service whereby you are able to set up a regular monthly transfer to any nominated account. If you would like to set up this kind of regular donation to Sangha Lodge you will need the following account information - Bank: St George BSB#: 112 879 Account#: 131328823 Account Name: Association of Engaged Buddhists. If you would like to make a tax deductible donation to the Building Fund please make your direct transfer to the following account: Bank: St George BSB: 112-879 Account Number: 430589986 Account Name: Association of Engaged Buddhists.

In order that we can budget our funds effectively and where appropriate supply you with a receipt for tax purposes we would appreciate it if you would email office@engagedbuddhists.org.au with the details of your regular transfer or tax deductible donation. Your Dana (generosity) is greatly appreciated by the many people who come to the centre or are served by it in the wider community (hospitals, hospices and private visits by the Sangha). Please help, even a small monthly donation can make a big difference to Sangha Lodge.

Association Membership

If you would like to become a member of the Association and thus receive this newsletter (if you don't already!), please fill in a membership form and leave it with a Committee member. You can pick one up from Sangha Lodge the next time you visit, or ring our office and get one posted to you. Membership is due for renewal each September and costs \$50/year.

For Those in Need

Please keep our brothers and sisters who are ill or struggling with some other distress in your thoughts during the day. This short prayer for freedom from suffering may help you be mindful of their needs.

Prayer for Freedom from Suffering

May all beings everywhere plagued with sufferings of body and mind quickly be freed from their illnesses.

May those frightened cease to be afraid, and may those bound be free.

May the powerless find power, and may people think of befriending one another.

May those who find themselves in trackless, fearful wilderness--the children, the aged, the unprotected--be guarded by beneficent celestials, and may they swiftly attain Buddhahood

If you know of someone who would like to be remembered by our community, let Bhante know and we can mention them in future issues of the Newsletter. Even when there are no particular friends to remember, we ask you to send thoughts of good will in general to those who are experiencing hardship or pain.

