



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, July 2nd 2017

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From three participants



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Who Pays The Ferryman?

Befriending Death

by Jonathan Page

The human experience is haunted by mortality. It is important to encourage deep discussion of the reality of our own individual death from an early age. The potential psycho-spiritual and behavioural benefits of this discussion are immense.

The incomparable Inga Clendinnen describes her friendship with Death (2007): "Now I know how I want Death to come for me, strolling in the slanting rain of light through eucalyptus leaves, a strip of bark in my fingers, the gurgle of hidden mag-

pies all around. I will say to Death, 'A moment, friend.' And then: 'I'm ready now.'" Thus death is as natural a part of the landscape as a magpie.

Emily Dickenson also relates to death casually. "Because I could not stop for Death, He kindly stopped for me. The carriage held but ourselves and immortality. We slowly drove, He knew no haste, and I had put away My labour and my leisure too, For His civility".

In the contemporary world, particularly in the "West" there remains a reluctance to fully embrace and deeply experience the inevitability of our own individual death and the consequent material non-existence. Indeed there remains a taboo in discussing this matter until the grim reaper taps on the window pane or at least turns into the driveway. We are then encouraged to begin open and honest family discussions, ideal-

ly mentioning the word "death", and to consider advanced care directives, limiting futile and often inhumane medical interventions, and to actually believe we are going to die very soon. We may experience a great fear of death (thanatophobia). We should express our love to those we love, audibly forgive those who have offended us, seek forgiveness from those whom we have offended, and consider some meaningful legacy. There may be time to mindfully review our own life. But maybe not.

The transition from life to death is not primarily a medical matter, at least not where medicine is technological and non-engaged, but a timeless, profound personal and relational phenomenon, an existential reality, a termination of delusions of physical immortality and an experience of interconnectedness with all of life.

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As John Donne wrote (1624): “No man is an island, Entire of itself, Every man is a piece of the continent....: Any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, And therefore never (ask) for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee”.

There may be a great need for support and guidance during this period, as there has been throughout history, in all cultures. Hence the considerable importance of the psychopomp, the death doula and palliative care, but in far greater numbers than available at present. There is talk of a “good death” and “dying with dignity”, both laudable and generally well defined, but not always considered and understood in depth by the dying person and family. We should also consider a “good life” and “living with dignity”, and perhaps contemplate our mortality earlier in life, remembering the Socratic dictum: “An unexamined life is not worth living”, or at least may represent a diminished life, with less autonomy, wonder, freedom and capacity for love.

Not surprisingly children are very interested in “death” if presented in an age-appropriate fashion. In past times they were frequently exposed to the death of others, often family, and often siblings, without evidence of necessarily adverse consequences. It is usually the fears and sensitivities of adults that limit the teaching of “death” to the young, as with the teaching of sex and love. A doctor William Ventres has proposed a “Pedagogy of Dying” whereby adult patients, young and old, well and unwell, are given some anticipatory guidance towards aging, infirmity and death. He avoids glib platitudes such as “Dying – It’s a living thing” proposed by others. Umberto Eco, Leonardo da Vinci and the Buddha have all recommended regular meditation on our own death from early

(adult) life, to enable a deeply experienced understanding of and preparation for our death, and also, importantly, to enhance the full enjoyment of our finite life.

In the Zen tradition the Evening Gatha entreaties us: “Let me respectfully remind you, Life and death are of supreme importance. Time swiftly passes by and opportunity is lost. Each of us should strive to awaken. Awaken. Take heed. This night your days are diminished by one. Do not squander your life”.

The powerful myth of the rivers Styx and Acheron dividing the realms of the Living and the Dead and crossed by ferry, still resonates deeply. As a clinical thanatologist I spend much time on the near shore, the Terra Stygiana, a crowded zone, but not one without some happiness and laughter. The accommodation is always comfortable and indeed I met my good friend Charon, the ferry-master, at the three-star Stygian Inn many years ago.

Transport from the distant lands of vitality is reliable: no one is ever late for their ferry trip across the River Styx! Each must pay one Obol to Charon, placed on their tongue, and in return receives smooth passage and much compassion. This currency is said to come from a limitless “black” budget, which is unknown to even the most assiduous Treasurer.

Charon is a kind and ardent fellow with a vast and detailed memory of the 80 billion souls that have crossed over since ancient times. He remembers each one with a smile. He is becoming increasingly busy. There are surges of passengers with the many ongoing wars, destitution and pestilence. He is greatly troubled with the 10 million children under 5 years of age, mostly unaccompanied, who cross over on his ferry each year.

He is also troubled with the numbers of decedents who seem bewildered

and even surprised with their new permanent circumstances. Many report nagging regrets and unfinished business. Many fail to leave a legacy and now fear they will be forgotten in the Terra Viviana (land of the living). Many feel they had wisdom to pass on but lost the opportunity. Many report excessive medical intervention with no chance of success (as confirmed by their current decedent status). Unfortunately many doctors do over-treat moribund patients because of dissociation, poor communication and their own thanatophobia, the latter preventing a full and open discussion with their patients about impending death and related matters. Ideally this conversation would be conducted well before the final event.

Dr Elizabeth Kübler-Ross tells us: “Watching a peaceful death of a human being reminds us of a falling star; one of a million lights in a vast sky that flares up for a brief moment only to disappear into the endless night forever”.

Dr Jonathan Page has been a Medical Oncologist in Sydney for 33 years. His meditation practice goes back to 1984 and he is one of the guiding teachers with Sydney Insight Meditators. He has been a regular guest teacher at Sangha Lodge. 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. Meditation can open the door to clear understanding and vast possibility.

The above piece was first published on John Menadue’s blog *Pearls & Irritations*

SUNDAY
30 JULY
10AM
 to **3PM**

Don't miss out on this year's ...

ROSELEA
COMMUNITY
CENTRE

INTERNATIONAL FOOD FAIR – 2017 –



Feast your way
 through South East Asia
 with laksas from Malaysia to
 Indonesia's satay skewers,
 all whilst enjoying the community
 atmosphere filled with live music.

Don't forget to grab yourself a
 bargain too at one of our
 bric-a-brac stalls!

We'll see you there!

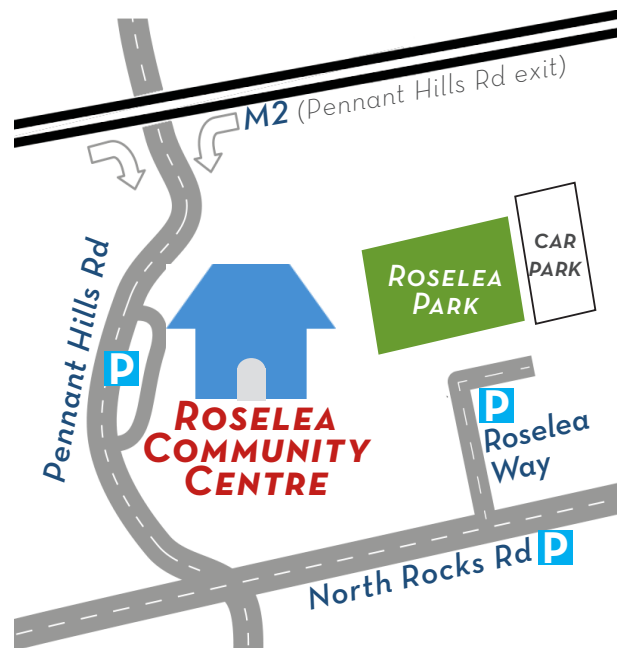


Organised by and all proceeds to support

Sangha Lodge

20 Victoria St, Lewisham | www.engagedbuddhists.org.au

GETTING TO
 645-671 Pennant Hills Rd, Carlingford



CAR PARK | Entrance via Roselea Way
STREET PARKING | On Roselea Way,
 North Rocks Rd, and at the
 front of the Centre,
 (driveway off Pennant Hills Rd)



Association News

K K Lim

Bhante's Health

Bhante Tejadhammo's health has improved! Over the past months, he had to indefinitely postpone scheduled knee surgery, developed rheumatoid arthritis and had a bout of pneumonia. The medication that he was prescribed added to the debilitating afflictions that caused a lot of discomfort.

As a result, he took time off from his teaching to address the issues of tiredness and lowered immunity. Although he had a fall in early May that left him with a dislocated shoulder, the period of rest has helped to improve his health. He hopes to resume teaching at the end of June and will attend at the July Dana day.

The AEB community and supporters responded with great generosity to an appeal for funds to specifically help cover needed expenses. The committee is indeed grateful.

Bhante Pandit's Visit

Bhante Pandit arrived in Sydney on 5 April to a very warm welcome! In his usual active style, he sat in on the teaching that same night despite travelling most of the previous day and night from Bangkok through Kuala Lumpur.

During his stay, he led meditation on Monday nights, teachings using fairy tales at the Buddhist Library on Tuesdays, regular teachings at Sangha Lodge on Wednesdays, teachings at other centres such as Metta Centre on Thursdays every week as well as

two retreats at Vejjasala. These fully-attended retreats of up to 7 days in April and over a weekend in May were well received by the attendees. In addition, he also led the May Dana day combined with Wesak on 7 May and will be at the June Dana on 4 June.

A wonderful lunch followed by film show and discussion led by him was held on 27 May at Lentil as Anything restaurant in Newtown.

Bhante Pandit will be returning to Bangkok after spending two months sharing his teaching with the community. We wish him a wonderful trip back and look forward to seeing him again when he can travel to Sydney.

Sadhu sadhu sadhu!

Venerable Ban Ruo

Sangha Lodge was very fortunate to have Venerable Ban Ruo present at Dana day on 5 March in the absence of Bhante Tejadhammo. As the Abbot of Prajna Monastery, he has a busy schedule and was extremely generous to attend on that day. We are extremely appreciative of Venerable Ban Ruo's continuing help to the AEB including ministering to our members' needs during Bhante's period away from Sangha Lodge

Guest Teachers on Wednesdays

Teachers who came to teach at Sangha Lodge during the period included Michael Dash, Sue Toohey and K K Lim before Bhante Pandit as-

sumed the Wednesday nights' teaching over the past two months. A range of topics were covered giving attendees opportunity to explore various aspects of Buddhism.

Annual Food Fair 2017

The AEB annual International Food Fair will be held on Sunday 30 July at the Roselea Community Centre in North Rocks. This event has always been the primary occasion for the community and supporters to gather in the spirit of dana and enjoy each others' wonderful cooking. It is also the major fund-raiser for our association to fund its activities including rental and outgoings.

Please make sure you mark your calendar to come to the food fair to sample the wide variety of food and support the providers. If you are able to, kindly consider being a helper, prepare food or donate needed ingredients. You can check with Alex Lee or any of the committee members.

Monday Night Meditation

You may not be aware that we have meditation evenings on Mondays at 7.30pm. The evening starts with some chanting followed by 45 minutes of silent sitting.

It is a wonderful way to enhance your practice. No booking needed. Those interested please turn up by commencement time or phone 02-80217944.

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Association News (cont.)

KK Lim

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Wesak Food for Refugees Programme

As part of our Wesak month programme, we initiated a Food for Refugees drive organised by John Wagner and Alex Lee. Contributions of food and toiletries from members and supporters have been fantastic, with the collection to date meeting expectations. The items will be delivered to the Refugee Service Centre in Newtown at the beginning of June. We carried out a successful food for the needy program by collecting and donating needed food and toiletries to the Refugee Service Centre in Newtown.

Volunteering Opportunities

In keeping with one of its mission, the Association can facilitate various programmes for members and supporters to volunteer for:

- Helping out at Sangha Lodge or Vejjasala for maintenance, cleaning, administration and other support duties
- Teaching English to student and adult refugees/migrants
- Visiting elderly people to help with daily chores or keep company
- Teaching Buddhism or ethics to children in primary schools

Anyone interested can seek further details by writing to office@engagedbuddhists.org.au

Association Membership

If you would like to become a member of the Association

and thus receive this newsletter (if you don't already!) please complete the registration form online at

<http://www.engagedbuddhists.org.au/about-us/membership-form/>

Membership is due for renewal each September and costs \$50/year.

Getting The News!

Do you know that the best way to keep updated on what the AEB does is to:

- Put your name on our email list
- Check the website regularly
- Follow us on Facebook

KK Lim

May 2017

Australian Catholic University Students Visit Sangha Lodge.

On 22 May a group of students from the NSW School of Arts, at the Australian Catholic University visited Sangha Lodge with their course leader, Associate Professor Lachlan Warner.

The students come from the Bachelor of Arts, Visual Art and Art Teaching courses. They are all studying a unit called Art and Spirit which looks at the visual traditions of major religions.





Transformation of the Tree Kind

Louise Egerton

At Vejjasala, the retreat centre of the Association of Engaged Buddhists at Wingello in the Southern Highlands, the 5-hectare ex-pine forest is undergoing a magnificent transformation. Where once was a dark place of little diversity, logging has opened up the dense carpets of acidic pine needles to the sky. The initial reaction to the site is one of dismay. The words 'devastation' or 'destruction' might spring to mind but look closer.

Remnants of eucalypt woodland border the logged site on almost all sides. All around these edges many native species are responding to the access to sunlight and rain and the warmth of the earth. Here and there eucalypt seeds that may have remained under the thick canopy of pine trees for years are stirring. A few adult spindly gum trees remain in the centre of the site. Gangly and unprepossessing maybe but look around the edges of these groups of trees and again you will see wonderful regeneration of native plants.

Of course, weeds too are delighted by the new conditions and there are many pine 'wildings' popping up. Most of these are still small and when the wet weather softens the ground, they are easy to remove with a firm tug. Every opportunity should be seized to remove this 'wildings' as they threaten the full recovery of the site to a diverse na-

tive woodland. There are also a few blackberry and thistle plants and plenty of fleabane in the warmer months. These, too, may smother small native herbs and shrubs as they attempt a come-back.

To help manage the recovery of this land to its former glory the AEB has joined up with Landcare. Landcare is a voluntary property registration scheme for landowners who wish to manage areas for biodiversity and wildlife habitat. It provides site assessment, advice on how best to manage the area and support and encouragement with suggested management strategies and actions.

In February this year, Karen Guymer, the regional coordinator for this program, came onto site at Vejjasala and was delighted by the regeneration she witnessed. It's early days but she was optimistic

that a full recovery to native bush was realistic, provided the spread of weeds could be controlled. So, if you've visiting, you might like to toddle out and pull up a few pine wildings to help the recovery process.



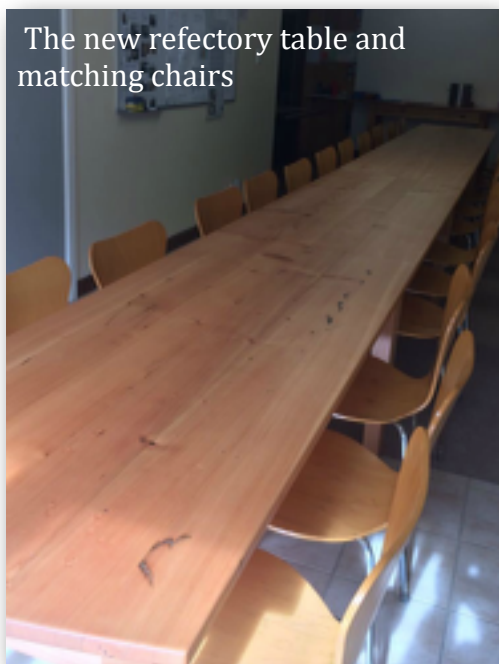


A New Refectory Table at Vejjasala

Below are photos of the beautiful new dining table that has been installed at Vejjasala. Hand-made by one of our members, Stephen Harper, the table is made of solid, recycled wood and easily separates into four separate tables if it needs to be moved. It replaces the folding plastic and metal tables, which although functional were not beautiful. They will be kept for special occasions when we need to serve a meal outdoors to large numbers of people as we have done on several occasions such as Vesak celebrations at Vejjasala.

Another of our members, Alex Lee has sourced 24 matching dining chairs that he has just transported to Vejjasala to replace the motley collection of different dining chairs

The new refectory table and matching chairs



and folding chairs which are currently in use.

Next time you eat a meal at Vejjasala, please enjoy the beauty and craftsmanship of this lovely table and remember our generous and skilful members, Stephen and Alex.



Participants eating at the new table during the last retreat with the old chairs still in place.

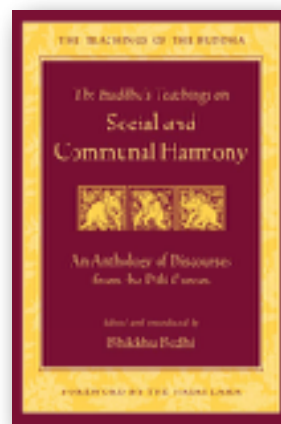
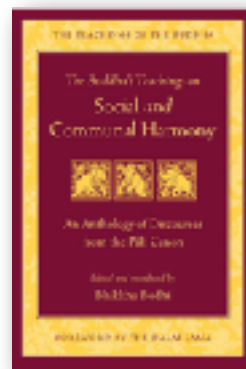
Book Review: The Buddha's Teachings on Social and Communal Harmony

An Anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon – selected and translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi with a foreword by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Bhante Tejadhammo recommends this new volume in which the acclaimed scholar-monk, Bhikkhu Bodhi, has collected and translated the Buddha's teachings on conflict resolution, interpersonal and social

problem-solving, and the forging of harmonious relationships. The selections, all drawn from the Pāli Canon, the earliest record of the Buddha's discourses, are organized into ten thematic chapters. The chapters deal with such topics as the quelling of anger, good friendship, intentional communities, the settlement of disputes, and the establishing of an equitable society. Each chapter begins with a concise and informative introduction by the translator that guides us toward a deeper understanding of the texts that follow.

In times of social conflict, intolerance, and war, the Buddha's approach to creating and sustaining peace takes on a new and urgent significance. Even readers unacquainted with Buddhism will appreciate these ancient teachings, always clear, practical, undogmatic, and so contemporary in flavour. The Buddha's Teachings on Social and Communal Harmony will prove to be essential reading for anyone seeking to bring peace into their communities and into the wider world.





Reflections on the Easter Retreat at Vejjasala

Caroline Lurie

Twenty fortunate people gathered at Vejjasala over the Easter weekend to meditate on Emptiness, guided by Pandit Bikkhu*, a British monk ordained in Thailand and now teaching at Mahaculalongkorn University in Bangkok in a number of fields. Except that until the end of May, he is teaching us in Sydney, both at Sangha Lodge each Wednesday and in a number of other places around town.

We arrived at Vejjasala on Thursday afternoon, and for the next four days we practiced a combination of walking and sitting meditation, alternating with Qi Gong and dhamma talks. The Qi Gong, brought to us on video courtesy of current technology, was very popular, relieving the inevitable pain and stiffness brought on by long periods of sitting. The teacher, Marisa, gracefully led us through the flowing movements of the practice and we all felt it was highly beneficial.

Bhante Pandit's teaching concentrated on the 5 kandas: we were invited to contemplate the ultimate emptiness of form, feeling, perception, mind formations and consciousness. Many of us find this a difficult teaching, but nonetheless rewarding to grapple with. During the last 3

days of the retreat, Bhante Pandit explained to us the particular form of Indian logic which pervades much of the Buddha's teaching, and also outlined how the Buddha's words have come down to us through writing and speaking, moving from one country / society / language to another and then sometimes re-translated back again. Despite this, the broad outlines of the doctrine remain clear and universal.

The Noble Silence threatened to crumble by Easter Monday, and when many of the original participants returned to Sydney, leaving just four of us behind with Bhante Pandit, and it more or less evaporated and our retreat became less formal. We kept to the routines already set up however – sitting, walking, listening to dhamma and practicing Qi Gong – but in the evenings we were entertained by some of Bhante Pandit's excellent documentaries. We watched a couple of highly controversial 'spiritual' leaders, Chögham Trungpa from Tibet and Bhagwan Rajneesh from India. Both men were instrumental in bringing some form of Buddhism to America, and clearly had charismatic qualities, but the precise mix of genuine spiritualism and simple charlatanism is elusive. Both men, though long dead, still have loyal followers and their books live on after them.

Our resident wombat, openly living under the house) provided pleasant entertainment. He is unafraid of humans, tho' maintains an air of

mild irritation at the invasion of his domain. We were extraordinarily lucky with warm, sunny weather and the wonderful peacefulness of Vejjasala worked its usual magic, rendering it difficult to leave.

*Bhante Pandit runs a website which can be accessed at <http://www.littlebang.org>.

Wen Ley Ho

I have just come back from a retreat held by Sangha Lodge - thanks to Lean and Sue who have encouraged me to join.

After the retreat I noticed there was a change in myself, I have become more focused and when the mind is still, no more any strange thoughts will creep in, including hatred and hostility. Therefore, meditation helps strengthen our minds to see things through and those unwholesome thoughts including hatred and hostility will not be able to manifest, because a calm mind is a peaceful mind.

Another thing I noticed is that I am not so clinging to food any more, normally I ate lots of junk food in the office because of being too stressed, but now I am not interested in eating snacks. It's really a very strange transformation.

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The Monk, Bhante Pandit told a story about vampire. The characteristic of a vampire is when he sucks your blood, you yourself will become a vampire as well. However, there is a condition - if you don't open the door to welcome him, he won't be able to enter into your house. The vampire represents unwholesome thoughts, if you allow yourself to open to the unwholesome thoughts, you will become a vampire. It is the same with wholesome thoughts - we have to always welcome wholesome thoughts to improve ourselves. A very impressive story.

Jocelyn Harper:

The original 4 day retreat with a full complement of people was enjoyable. I have always found Vejjasala a good way to meet new people, even considering the very limited communication due to the observance of Noble Silence. After the second day, the mood settled and I found I appreciated the quietness of not talking, and a developing 'quieting the mind' away from my normal mind chatter and narratives!

The Dhamma talks were helpful, confusing/invigorating and therefore thought-provoking! The introduction of Qi Gong as a second form of moving mediation was a welcome addition for me. My experience of its integration into the daily program allowed me to settle more easily into each sitting meditation, creating a physical contrast to both the sitting and walking meditations, and there-

fore produced a deepening and calming effect.

I have always found Vejjasala a wonderful location, my walking meditations were a delight in the bush: a delight in walking reflectively, being very much in the moment, quietly observing the details of the ground as I was placing my feet, observing the animals, the ants, the birds, the wombats, as well as the plant-life, the extraordinary mosses, orchids, grasses and prolific fungi. Much as I tried to remain a neutral observer, being in the bush always resonates with me, and heightens my sense of well-being as well as feeling gratitude and of being connected. Because I was to be involved in some of the cooking for the longer retreat, I spent some time with Mae Ang and Sue Lee [our cooks for the first 4 days of the retreat] observing their cooking. This renewed my respect for the time, thoughtfulness and effort given by Mae and Sue to support the retreatants in producing abundant and inviting food for 20 or so people.

When the majority of retreatants departed on Day 4, the retreat became both more open and less structured, but also understandably quieter. Because food preparation, cooking and clean up became a shared responsibility [co-ordinated by Patricia] I found myself enjoying other meditative practices - herb foraging, cooking meditation, cleaning and composting! It was indeed these days that gave me some hint of a quieter monastic life, as I settled into a rhythmic routine outside of my

normal work, roles, tasks and responsibilities. Our contemplative practices continued to settle, and my awareness grew and my mind became quieter. The contrast of this quietness became more apparent after arriving home, back to the "juggling plates" of life, and its busyness! However, some of Vejjasala's effects have stayed with me, as the 'peace within' amongst the activity.

And lastly Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, a teacher from the Karma Kagyu and Nyingma lineages of Tibetan Buddhism has some advice for people thinking about going on a retreat:

Sometimes a retreat is a wonderful experience, and sometimes the mind is wild, full of thoughts and emotions. Don't concern yourself about whether your experience is peaceful or not. Just try what I call "zero meditation." Zero meditating means you just try to meditate, not caring if you have an experience of meditation or not. That effort of trying will bring you authentic meditation in the future. So don't stay with the meditation experience; just stay with the wish to meditate. That's how you will find balance—try your best, but don't hold too tightly to the results. If you experience some joyful or clear non-conceptual state, don't think "I achieved enlightenment" or "This experience will last forever." That is the mind of grasping and attachment. It's okay to feel good about your meditation experience, to have gratitude for it. But don't attach to it. Today you had a wonderful meditation experience; who knows how tomorrow will go?

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

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Quotable quotes and stories from Chaung Tsu

Chaung Tsu, also known as Zhuang Zhou, was an influential Chinese philosopher who lived around the 4th century BC

This story is told about Chaung Tzu:

Chaung Tzu was fishing with his bamboo pole in Pu river. The Prince of Chu sent two vice-chancellors with a formal document: "We hereby appoint you Prime Minister."

Chaung Tzu held up his bamboo pole; still watching Pu river, he said: "I am told there is a sacred tortoise, offered and canonized three thousand years ago, venerated by the Prince, wrapped in silk, in a precious shrine, on an altar in the temple.

"What do you think: Is it better to give up one's life and leave a sacred shell as an object of cult in a cloud of incense three thousand years, or better to live as a plain turtle, dragging its tail in the mud?"
"For the turtle," said the vice-chancellor, "better to live and drag its tail in the mud."

"Go home," said Chaung Tzu, "and leave me to drag my tail in the mud."

