

Amitabha Buddhist Retreat Centre
Newsletter:
Australia



Autumn Edition 2012

ABRC's Motto: "Do not be Far-sighted; Do not be Short-sighted"

160 Greenwood Creek Road,
(P.O. Box 216) Nanango, Qld, 4615
celinerichardson@gmail.com
www.abrc.org.au

(07) 4171 0421 / 0439 070 782

ABN: 64 335 416 792

Table of Contents

From the Editor-in-Chief _____	3
From the Editor _____	6
Buddhist Teachings _____	8
Winds of Change _____	13
Sayings of Venerable Wuling _____	15
Personal Anecdotes _____	16
Readers' Comments _____	22
Messages and Announcements _____	24

From the Editor-in-chief

Amitufo: Friends and Associate Members of the ABRC.

As we enter the new year of 2012 with the first issue for the year, we would like to inform our readers that the name of Amitabha Rainbow Club Newsletter has now been changed to the Amitabha Buddhist Retreat Centre Newsletter.

This is more appropriate since the editorial staff members are all part of the online sangha of the ABRC. Readers can rest assured that the ABRC newsletters will continue to provide good reading material, which will help all to have a better understanding of Pure Land Buddhism and its practice.

Our recent weekend retreat, which was run by Venerable Wuling, was very uplifting and successful. Also, at the end of the retreat, one of the retreat participants officially took the Three Refuges to become a Buddhist. The retreat was inspiring and was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone who attended the retreat (those from Sydney and Brisbane, and also the local members). I thank all those who attended the weekend retreat and also those who came for the multicultural luncheon.

I would like to take this opportunity to explain the meaning of our motto and where it came from. In this Buddhist story, King Brahmadata invaded the kingdom of King Dighiti and had the king and his queen both beheaded.

‘Just before his death, King Dighiti’s last words were to his son, Prince Dighavu, to advise him not to seek revenge for his parents’ death with these words, “Do not be farsighted. Do not be near sighted. For vengeance is not settled through vengeance. Vengeance is settled through non-vengeance.”

And although Prince Dighavu had the golden opportunity one day to kill King Brahmadata, his father's words reminded him to not seek revenge and thus Prince Dighavu was able to put away his sword.

When King Brahmadata asked what those words meant, Prince Dighava explained his father's last words: "Do not be farsighted" meant that one should not hold on to a wish of retaliation for a long time. "Do not be near sighted" meant one should not readily break one's friendship with another.

"For vengeance is not settled through vengeance, vengeance is settled through non-vengeance" enabled Dighavu to realise that if he sought revenge for the death of his parents by killing the king, the king supporters would retaliate by killing him. Then Dighavu's supporters would in turn kill the king's supporters. That is why vengeance never ends through vengeance. In sparing each other's lives, both the king and the prince ended vengeance by letting go of it.

Dighavu's father had first told Dighavu "Do not be farsighted," which meant not to hold on to the wish for vengeance, and then warned Dighavu not to hold on to resentment, not to readily destroy a friendship, and not to seek revenge. Thus this story (which is taken from Venerable Wuling's book *Everything We Do Matters*) helps us to practice a life of restraint and dignity.

If we do not harbour bad thoughts towards others who have wronged us, our minds will be unaffected and we will remain calm and peaceful, with awareness imbued with goodwill and free of hostility. But if we give in to anger—like most of us usually do—our mind will be shaken and moved from its naturally clear, tranquil state. And in holding on to our wish for vengeance, we harbour evil words as well as a mind of hatred and bitterness. This mind will have no room for empathy or goodwill.'

With these pertinent words as our motto, we can be mindful and learn to practice with restraint and dignity. And in this way, we can practice to develop a mind of awareness ‘that is imbued with goodwill – abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will. And with patience and compassion we will be content and at great ease and peace.

Celine

(This Buddhist story is taken from Venerable Wuling’s Dharma Talk ‘Everything We Do Matters’)



*To recite the Buddha’s name is to recite the mind. Thus, Pure Land is Zen, Zen is Pure Land — Great Master Yin Guan: 13th Patriarch
Pureland School*

From the Editor

Welcome to the Autumn Edition, and the first for 2012, of the Amitabha Buddhist Retreat Centre Newsletter.

All forms of Buddhism have as their origin the teachings of the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, who lived around 2600 years ago in ancient India (now Nepal). Buddhism spread throughout the East, was modified to suit different peoples and cultures, and eventually Pure Land Buddhism became the dominant form of practice in most Asian countries. Today it is practiced by millions of people throughout Asia, including Japan, China, Tibet, Vietnam, Korea and Taiwan.

Now, Pure Land Buddhism is gradually reaching us in the West. The Pure Land Learning College was established in Toowoomba in 2001 by Venerable Master Chin Kung, which gives you an idea of how 'new' Pure Land Buddhism is in Australia.

But this is just the beginning. It is our fervent desire at ABRC to help connect a Western audience with the Pure Land Tradition and, together, to make it our own.

Buddhist scholar Peter Della Santina says in his book *The Tree of Enlightenment*, "...in the near future, I have no doubt that we will see the emergence of English Buddhism, French Buddhism, Italian Buddhism, American Buddhism, and the like. All this is possible because Buddhism is not culture-bound." That is our goal.

Amitufo

Editor: *Belinda Burman*

Buddhist Teachings

From Venerable Master Chin Kung:

Living in a Grateful World:

Be grateful to those who have hurt or harmed you, for they have reinforced your determination.

Be grateful to those who have deceived you, for they have deepened your sight.

Be grateful to those who have hit you, for they have reduced your karmic obstacles.

Be grateful to those who have abandoned you, for they have taught you to be independent.

Be grateful to those who have made you stumble, for they have strengthened your ability.

Be grateful to those who have denounced you, for they have increased your wisdom and concentration.

Be grateful to those who have made you Firm and Resolute and helped in your Achievement.

Taken from www.abrc.org.au

Pure Land Practice:

If we are to progress on the path, we need to be focused in both our study and practice. Our most important goal as Pure Land Buddhists should be to attain liberation from the cycle of rebirth, for only when we have accomplished this can we truly help others.

The Five Guidelines:

The Five Guidelines form the foundation and are the way we progress in our practice. They are first, the Three Conditions; second, the Six Harmonies; third, the Threefold Learning; fourth, the Six Paramitas; and fifth, the Ten Great Vows. We begin our practice with the first guideline of the Three Conditions and gradually progress from there.

Three Conditions:

The first of the Five Guidelines is the Three Conditions, which were related by the Buddha in the Visualisation Sutra. He explained that the Three Conditions were the true causes of pure karma for all Buddhas of the past, present, and future.

In the Amitabha Sutra, the Buddha further explained that to be reborn in the Western Pure Land, we have to be “good men and good women.” The standard for this is the Three Conditions; thus, they are a crucial part of our practice, an integral component of rebirth in the Pure Land.

To achieve this rebirth, we need belief, vows, and practice – leading a moral life and chanting Amitufo mindfully.

The First Condition:

- Be filial and care and provide for parents
- Be respectful to and serve teachers
- Be compassionate and do not kill
- Cultivate the Ten Virtuous Deeds

The Second Condition:

- Take the Three Refuges
- Abide by all precepts
- Behave in a dignified and appropriate manner

The Third Condition:

- Generate the Bodhi mind
- Believe deeply in the law of cause and effect
- Recite and uphold the Mahayana sutras
- Encourage others to advance on the path of enlightenment

Six Harmonies:

The second of the Five Guidelines, the Six Harmonies, tell us how to get along in groups, especially in a sangha, which is a group of four or more people who practice together. As the Six Harmonies are the basic rules for group cultivation, a sangha, whether lay or monastic, needs to strive to follow them. The Six harmonies are:

- Harmony in having the same viewpoints
- Harmony in observing the same precepts
- Harmony in living together
- Harmony in speaking without conflict
- Harmony in experiencing Dharma bliss
- Harmony in sharing benefits

First is harmony in having the same viewpoints, which means establishing consensus in a group. The group members must hold the same opinions of the principles and methods that they are studying and practicing to form the basis for harmonious group cultivation. If we want our society to be stable, the prerequisite is that everyone can get along with one another. Only harmony can gradually draw together and eventually minimise the differences in our opinions, ideas, and ways of life. Then equality can be achieved, and finally, happiness.

Second is harmony in observing the same precepts. When we live and practice together, we need to have rules, or else there will be disorder. The rules should include the fundamental precepts set by the Buddha, which vary depending on whether it is a lay or a monastic sangha. The fundamental precepts are the five precepts for a lay sangha, and the monk or nun precepts for a monastic sangha. In addition to the Buddhist precepts, laws and local custom are also to be observed.

Third is harmony in living together as a group. The purpose of establishing a cultivation centre is to help every participant in group practice make achievements. Living together in a group, practitioners can support each other in their practice.

Fourth is harmony in speaking without conflict. All the group members who live together should not dispute in order to truly concentrate their efforts on cultivation. When people are together, negative karma from speech is the easiest to incur. One who talks too much easily gets into trouble. Sometimes misunderstandings arise because the listener takes to heart a careless remark of the speaker. Thus, a careless speaker unknowingly incurs many enmities, which give rise to future retaliation. This why ancient sages advised us: "Talk less; chant the Buddha's name more." The less we speak, the better it is, for we will have less trouble. It is best that we speak only when necessary.

Fifth is harmony in experiencing the Dharma bliss. This is what we call “experiencing joy in the Dharma.” When we learn and practice a Dharma Door, the basic achievement that we should attain is happiness. If we feel unhappy in our practice, then we have encountered a serious problem, which does not lie in the Buddha’s teachings but in the way we practice. We may either have done something that goes against the principles of the teachings or have applied the principles in the wrong way. Otherwise, the results should be evident – ending delusions and attaining enlightenment, and ending suffering and attaining happiness.

With each passing day, we should have fewer afflictions while enjoying greater happiness and freedom. This is the evidence of success in our practice. If we are not achieving this, we need to examine carefully and seriously, find our mistakes, root causes, and then eliminate them. We can then truly benefit from our practice.

Sixth is harmony in sharing benefits. This harmony means everyone living in a cultivation centre shares the material goods equally.

The keeping of all these six rules ensures that harmony will prevail.



From Buddhism: The Awakening of Compassion and Wisdom

by Venerable Master Chin Kung.

Winds of Change

Buddhist Tales:

A Man Named Bad

(Self-Acceptance)

Once upon a time there was a world famous teacher in Takkasila, in north-western India. He had 500 high class students who learned sacred teachings from him.

It just so happened that one of these high class students had been named 'Bad' by his parents. One day he thought, "When I am told, 'Come Bad', 'Go Bad', 'Do this Bad'. it is not nice for me or others. It even sounds disgraceful and unlucky."

So he went to the teacher and asked him to give him a more pleasant name, one that would bring good fortune rather than bad. The teacher said, "Go; my son, go wherever you like and find a more fortunate name. When you return, I will officially give you your new name."

The young man named Bad left the city, and travelled from village to village until he came to a big city. A man had just died and Bad asked what his name was. People said, "His name was Alive." "Alive also died?" asked Bad. The people answered, "Whether his name be Alive or whether it be Dead, in either case he must die. A name is merely a word used to recognise a person. Only a fool would not know this!" After hearing this, Bad no longer felt badly about his own name - but he didn't feel good about it either.

As he continued on his way into the city, a debt-slave girl was being beaten by her masters in the street. He asked, "Why is she being beaten?" He was told, "Because she is a slave until she pays a loan debt to her masters. She has come home from working, with no wages to pay as interest on her debt." "And what is her name?" he asked. "Her name is Rich," they said. "By her name she is Rich. But she has no money even to pay interest?" asked Bad. They said, "Whether her name be Rich or whether it be Poor, in either case she has no money. A name is merely a word used to recognise a person. Only a fool would not know this!" After hearing this, Bad became even less interested in changing his name.

After leaving the city, along the roadside he met a man who had lost his way. He asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Tour Guide." "You mean to say that even a Tour Guide has gotten lost?" asked Bad. Then the man said, "Whether my name be Tour Guide or whether it be Tourist, in either case I have lost my way. A name is merely a word used to recognise a person. Only a fool would not know this!"

Now completely satisfied with his own name, Bad returned to his teacher.

The world famous teacher of Takkasila asked him, "How are you, my son? Have you found a good name?" He answered, "Sir, those named Alive and Dead both die, Rich and Poor may be penniless, Tour Guide and Tourist can get lost. Now I know that a name is merely a word used to recognise a person. The name does not make things happen, only deeds do. So I'm satisfied with my name. There's no point in changing it."

The teacher summarised the lesson his pupil had learned this way - "By seeing Alive as dead, Rich as poor, Tour Guide as lost, Bad has accepted himself."

The moral is: A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.

Buddhist Tales – Jataka Stories – volume 2 www.buddhanet.com



*The pure mind has no discrimination or attachments — Venerable Master Chin
Kung*



*Unless we learn to be masters of our minds,
we will continue to be slaves of our emotions.
— Venerable Wuling*

More sayings of Venerable Wuling:

“We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts, we make the world.”

“We are pulled by our cravings, so we remain prisoners of our own attachments and aversions.”

“Due to our ignorance and delusion, we believe in ideas that are wrong and reject those that are correct and beneficial.”

“In separateness lies the world’s great unhappiness. In unity lies the world’s true strength.”

“Greed is one of our most severe problems. To counteract our craving we can practice generosity.”

“Happiness is a mental state. Whether or not something makes us happy depends on what we tell ourselves.”

“Our lives today are the result of what we thought, said, and did in the past. What we think, say, and do today will, likewise, shape our future.”

“I created my life. Only I can change it. You created your life. Only you can change it. Others created their own lives. Only they can change those lives.”

“The pure mind is the mind without wandering thoughts and discriminations. It has no worries, attachments, craving, or aversions.”

“Although we have the same true nature as the Buddhas, we fail to experience the wonders of this true nature.”

~ Venerable Wuling ~ www.abuddhistperspective.org

Personal Anecdotes

My Story:

I have considered myself a spiritual searcher all my life, meandering from Christian faiths as far apart as Catholicism and spiritualism, and even explored, at the insistence of a friend, the Bahá'í faith, but none "fitted" what I felt or believed was the right path. About 15 years ago my younger sister moved to Eudlo, and became involved in the activities at the Tibetan Buddhist centre at Chenrezig, and visiting there with her and her daughter, I felt as though I had come home.

The principles of Buddhism involving doing no harm, treating the whole earth with respect, the reverence given to all living beings, appealed to my sense of justice, kindness, compassion.

Unfortunately, being of a transient family work-wise, I found no place where I could actually join a community and study and learn more of the Buddhist faith and practices. I bought books, read all I could, and attended and listened to talks when I could find them being given, wherever we were. In the mean time, I tried to live my life according to the tenets Buddhism as I understood them.

In 2007 I joined the newly established Probus Club in Nanango, and there I met Celine and Charles, and heard for the first time that they ran a Buddhist Retreat Centre in that town. Shortly after, I met Venerable Wuling, a Pure Land Buddhist Nun, when she came to address a meeting. I was deeply affected by her peace, her compassion and her serenity; she was the embodiment of all I had been seeking.

Shortly after, I joined others at my first retreat at the Amitabha Buddhist Retreat Centre, where I learnt for the first time some of the practices, and some of the basics of this life style. The peace of the centre, and the open friendliness and acceptance of all was refreshing and inspiring.

I found walking meditation particularly difficult, as I have leg and back problems, including an artificial knee, but persisted trying to move my mind to a more meditative state to transcend this. I was also embarrassed at my inability to prostrate myself in respect of the Buddha, but realise this is my focusing on my own self and not letting go of the attachment of pride and need for my own success.

I attended several retreats during 2007/2008, until increasing back problems and associated problems with driving to the centre, made attendance very difficult; so now I continue to practice, less often than I could or should if I were able to be closely involved in a sangha, but working towards the road that that brings me to peace, love and understanding and ultimate enlightenment.

I will always be grateful to Venerable, Celine, Charles and others I met at the Amitabha Buddhist Retreat Centre for adding to my understanding and feeling of contentment. I realise I still have a long way to go, and I do not, somehow, expect to find this enlightenment in this lifetime, but can look forward to returning to learn more, help more, love more.

Amitufo
Judy



Some moments shared:

You may have experienced times when you do something, hoping it will turn out well, only to be disappointed. I have also experienced these times and so it was a great joy for me to follow the teachings of the Buddha through the guidance of Venerable Master Chin Kung and find that all the teachings are true and correct and that there is no disappointment when we learn to accord with conditions and let go of our preconceived ideas and viewpoints.. Without any expectation we are more contented and peaceful within ourselves and our surroundings.

I have a small insight into the wisdom of the Buddha now, and it is a new experience for me, as I did not understand wisdom when I first started to learn the teachings. The teachings of the Buddha are not the same as worldly teachings. Worldly teaching is to study extensively. The teachings of the Pure Land Masters is to study only one Sutra and one commentary for five years and then branch out to more extensive study.

I have studied the Amitabha sutra and Master Ou-yi's commentary on it, called 'Mind Seal of the Buddha'. I still stay with these after ten years along with the DVD talks of Venerable Master Chin Kung given by Venerable Wuling. These, along with chanting the Buddha's name, are the basis of my practice and I am most happy with it.

There are many methods, and we all choose the one that is right for us. For me, this is the right path, and I now understand what it means in the Sutras, that to understand one Sutra is to understand all the Sutras.

My journey on the path of Buddhism is filled with wonderful surprises like this, and as we make the changes we can all experience the truth that indeed everything arises from the mind.

In the Chinese language, the characters for mind and heart are the same, and linking true unconditional love, which is the goal. The journey is to let go of all that is blocking our true mind and heart; and the teachings show us the way to do that, so that it can become the most interesting and fulfilling learning and practice.

Till another time, enjoy your journey.

Amitufo from Patricia



Taking Refuge:

I have previously written in the ABRC newsletter regarding my long and at times difficult path towards Buddhism. After much searching, I finally embraced the Pure Land teachings towards the end of 2010 when I began to attend meditation at the Amitabha Buddhist Retreat Centre. While I felt I had finally found what I had been looking for, I didn't realise the impact that these teachings would have on my life.

Over the next year I attended a few meditation sessions, read a few books and attempted to be a good Buddhist practitioner in applying the Buddhist teachings into my life. In reality I was saying I was a Buddhist but not truly practising the teachings.

Early in 2011 Celine and I discussed taking refuge in the Three Jewels. So, with some arrogance, I told her how much I would like to do this and how I believed this would make me a 'true' Buddhist.

So the time was set that I would take my vows in November 2011 when Venerable Wuling would be running that retreat.

Meanwhile, in the months that followed I tried hard to learn to accord with conditions and to let go of difficult conditions as I prepared myself for the day when I would take the refuges to become a Buddhist.

In November 2011, I attended the special weekend retreat where I would be taking my vows on Sunday straight after morning meditation. The whole weekend retreat was

perfect; from the uplifting dharma talks given by Venerable to the group sangha chanting and the meditation; I was overwhelmed with joy.

As we gathered in the hall for the refuge ceremony; Venerable 'walked me through' the ceremony. At this point I began getting pretty nervous and mentioned to Venerable that I may cry during the ceremony which, she assured me, was quite normal. As the ceremony began so did the tears.

It is difficult to find the right words to explain the impact that the ceremony had on me. I was overcome by so many emotions but mostly the sheer relief; to finally feel the connection that I have been searching for and realising that I was returning to my true nature by taking the official steps to become a Buddhist.

At the end of the ceremony I was embraced by each of the sangha members who attended the retreat and were there to witness me taking my vows, all of whom were as emotional as I was. It was, and is, and will always be, one of the most beautiful experiences I've ever had in my life.

Since taking the refuges I have embraced much more learning and am humbled by how little I know.

I feel I am more patient and have become stronger in my Buddhist beliefs and values since taking the vows.

I look forward to learning each and every day and strive to live more in the present and to accord with conditions.

I've noticed a change in how I interact with those around me, particularly my close friends and my children who, whilst not Buddhists themselves, are being raised to be compassionate and to be more aware.

There are times when I slip back to my old habits.

When I find I am returning to old (bad) habits or when I am faced with difficulties in my life I use these opportunities to cultivate mindfulness and try to understand the lesson which lies behind each of these opportunities.

Before taking my vows I believed I was a good Buddhist simply because I went to a couple of meditations and told people I was a Buddhist. That you somehow just 'became' a Buddhist. Since taking refuge I understand that these simple steps do not make you a Buddhist, so much more is required. It is how you live every day, everything you say, do, think and feel. It is only through the practice of mindfulness, patience and diligence that truly allows me to be a good Buddhist practitioner.

Amitufo

Nicci



*No one can escape death and unhappiness.
If people expect only happiness in life,
they will be disappointed.*

— *The Buddha*

Readers' Comments

I've been listening to the Chant CD whilst doing my course. I had to go to the toilet just now, and then I became aware that I was chanting in my head...WOW...Awesome!

Amitufo

Isabella

Dear Celine, thank you for your reply and your encouraging words. I really absorbed your words and putting into practice your recommendations. I would like to ask you about the nianju beads you sent: are they made from the bodhi tree? Also, you sent some stones attached to a brown cord: what are they used for? And if it is possible, would you have a statue of Buddha Amitabha so that I could concentrate on the image when I am chanting? Amitufo to you and your husband. I'd like to wish you a Happy Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year.

Mick Simpson

Hi Celine.

Hope all went well with your retreat and now you might find some time to rest.

THANK YOU FOR THE BOOKS AND CD I LOOOVVVE THEM. The little blue carry around Buddha Chanter Box (I have no idea what you actually call it, lol) is perfect for when I'm out and about and need some lifting. I find the Chanting so soothing compared to others that I have listened to and I love the sound of the bell. I'm listening to that one as I'm typing to you and really enjoying it.

And I LOVE the Love bookmark with all the different languages for Love. My mum is German, my dad was Italian so it was nice to see them on the bookmark. The Chinese symbol for Love is beautiful to look at as well as the Japanese. I've never ever seen Tibetan writing before so that was interesting to see.

I will read each book in the evenings when I'm in bed as that is the only time I have for reading so looking forward to starting to read one tonight. Which one do you think I should start with or should I just go what I resonate with?

Hope you are enjoying your day.

Amitufofo

Isabella



*Since everything is a reflection of our mind,
everything can be changed by our mind*

— The Buddha

Messages and Announcements

The Amitabha Buddhist Retreat Centre is very pleased to inform all that we have twelve participants signed up for the March retreat, 9th – 11th. Therefore, the March retreat is now closed as there is no more vacancies for accommodations at the Jacaranda retreat house. The next retreat will be the third weekend in May, Friday 18th – Sunday 20th, which is now open for application forms to be sent in. For those interested in attending the May retreat, please download the application form from the ABRC website and send by post, fax or email.

Amitufo

Celine

Charles and I thank all who turned up on the 30th January for the working bee at the centre. Thank you Patricia, May (and welcome back, May) and Bill, and especially our newcomers John and Cynthia, who came over with their ride-on-mower. The centre lawn and gardens certainly look attractive and inviting after this recent garden makeover.

We had our second working bee on 8th February and our newcomers, Liege and her husband Jack, turned up and worked non-stop from 8am to 3pm together with May, Bill and Charles. We are so grateful for all the help, and with workers like you all working tirelessly, we are bound to have the centre on par to what it used to be some few years ago. Thank you most sincerely.

Celine

...A picture of our very happy participants in the final retreat of 2011, when we had the pleasure and good fortune of a visit from Venerable Wuling, who had flown in from the United States...



(— Venerable Wuling seated in front—)
Fourth from the left is Nicci, who took Refuge
in November 2011

*Remember the kindness of others;
repay the debt with gratitude*

- Venerable Master Chin Kung

And some fond memories...

...A picture of our very happy participants at the end of the first retreat of 2011



...Sunday meditation group...



The True Benefits of Learning

If we acquire knowledge

**but do not sincerely apply what we have learned,
we will have only increased our conceit.**

What then will we become?



If we are sincere in what we are doing

**but not acquiring knowledge,
we will only be stubbornly following our viewpoints.**

We will never see the truth.

~ Venerable Wuling ~

January 14, 2010



Editorial Staff:

Belinda Burman

Nicole O'Brien

Imelda Liu

Tien Quach

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www.abrc.org.au

www.abuddhistperspective.org

www.howwillibehavetoday.org