



AMITABHA RAINBOW CLUB

Quarterly Newsletter (2011-4)

Email Address: celinerichardson@gmail.com

Phone Number: 07-41710421

Address: PO Box 216 NANANGO QLD 4615

ARC's Motto: "Do not be Farsighted; Do not be Shortsighted"

ARC Co-Ordinator: Celine Richardson

Contents

1) Amitabha Rainbow Club	1
2) Editor's Welcome	2
3) Anecdotes of Buddhism: Ven Wuling	3
4) Not Different from One Another: Master Lok To	5
5) Some Moments Shared	6
6) The Wind of Changes: The Four Wives	7
7) Pure Land Buddhism – Ven Master Chin Kung	9
8) Readers' Comments	11
9) Thought for the Day	12

Amitabha Rainbow Club

Amitufo,

In my article written in the last issue I may have confused readers with limited explanation of the Pure Land versus Karma. So here I will like to add that due to Amitabha's 48 compassionate vows, Pure Land practitioners are able to transcend the cycle of birth and death by being reborn in the Pure Land (taking their remaining karma with them) and become a Buddha in one lifetime. The requisites for this are faith, vow, and practice.

I wish to thank Wendy for bringing this up, helping me to better serve with an article by Venerable Master Chin Kung:

(<http://www.amtbweb.org/purelandbuddhism.HTML>), which is copied and pasted in this quarterly issue. And for those interested to read more about the Pure land teachings please go to Venerable Wuling's blog: www.abuddhistperspective.org and to the archives on the "Commentaries on The Infinite Sutra" given by Venerable Master Chin Kung.

On a personal note, Charles and I will be putting the property on the market end of this year and hopefully we can have a successful sale for us to relocate to the Sunshine Coast. We hope to continue with the centre even though we will have to downsize our activities to suit our pace and accord with whatever conditions arise in the future.

Our last retreat for the year is scheduled for the second weekend in November, and it would indeed be a good opportunity (especially for newcomers to visit) to attend this retreat as Venerable Wuling will be running this special retreat before she returns to the US. For those interested and able to attend please go to either web sites below to download the application form to send to us as soon as possible as placing are limited and will be more on 'first in best dressed' code. The dates are: 11th - 13th November. Thank you.

www.abrc.org.au

www.abuddhistperspective.org

We wish all our readers: "Amitufo"

ARC coordinator (07-41710421 Mobile: 0439 070 782)



Editors Welcome

Welcome to the final edition for 2011. As I started writing this editorial section, I have come to realise how fortunate I am to have this rare opportunity to be part of the editorial team.

To be honest, I was very reluctant to join at the start when Celine first invited me, mainly because I am a very quiet and reserved kind of person. So thank you Celine for your persistence.

It was back in November 2008 when I first visited the Amitabha Buddhist Retreat Centre, mainly to fulfil my curiosity about Buddhism. My interests and understanding for Pure Land Buddhism grew rapidly as I read the books that Celine kindly gave to me. Under Venerable Wu Ling's guidance, I started to practice Pure Land Buddhism.

My belief in Buddhism, in particular Amitabha Buddha and his Pure Land grew stronger each day, so I returned to the centre on my next visit to take the Three Refuges.

After taking the Three Refuge, I get this strange but wonderful realisation that, without searching, I somehow felt that I have found my way home.

Now, I know that there is only one important thing for me to do in this lifetime and that is to practice Pure Land Buddhism. I just hope that I can continue to practice with diligence in order to have the best chance to go to Pure Land.

I feel that this ARC newsletter is a unique opportunity to introduce the basic Pure Land teachings. To date we now have a hundred and five associate members and friends of the centre who are currently receiving our quarterly issue on-line. And also we have just over four dozen recipients receiving a copy of the newsletter by postal delivery.

And if anyone knows of others who may wish to be on our list to receive ARC newsletter either online or through postal delivery, do let us know.

At the same time, should anyone on our list who do not wish to receive our newsletter any more in the future, please let us know and we will accord with your wish. Sincere thanks.

I sincerely wish that all sentient beings have the opportunity to encounter and embrace Pure Land Buddhism as I did.

Amitufo

Tien

ANECDOTES OF BUDDHISM: On Afflictions

Afflictions are conditions or causes of pain and suffering that affect. Common afflictions are thoughts of gain or loss, of controlling others, criticism, worries, regrets, resentments, etc. Afflictions feel perfectly normal to us because we have had them for innumerable lifetimes.

Our major afflictions are greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance, and doubt. Afflictions arise because of our selfishness.

As Pure Land practitioners, we chant “Amitufo” to restrain afflictions so we can eradicate our unwholesome karmic consequences, give rise to merits and virtues, and uncover our innate wisdom.

~ Ven Wuling ~

Thoughts

We are what we think.

All that we are
arises with our thoughts.

With our thoughts,
we make the world.



Giving Up Our Addictions

We often hear in Buddhism that Buddhas and bodhisattvas will help us. Hearing that, many look around at the suffering of uncountable people and ask where are the Buddhas and bodhisattvas? With all the problems we are facing, we certainly need help. So why aren't they helping us?

To some degree they are, we just don't know it. But that's only to some degree.

Why aren't they helping more?

Anyone who has tried to help an alcoholic or drug addict will sadly admit that if the alcoholic or addict does not want help, there is little that can be done to help them. Before the person can be helped, they have to be willing to give up their addiction to alcohol or drugs.

It's the same with the rest of us.

We need to let go of our addictions.

What addictions could we possibly have?

Greed for starters. We are addicted to the conveniences we consider it is our right to enjoy. We are addicted to doing what we want when we want. Addicted to consuming more than we need, to indulging our senses, and, generally, to putting our own interests before those of others.

Anger. We are addicted to thinking we know what is right and that those who disagree with us are wrong, and need to be corrected. We are addicted to expressing how we feel without first thinking how it will affect others. Addicted to failing to practice self-restraint, to not caring enough about others, and, generally, to being so wrapped up in our own emotions that we ignore those of others.

Ignorance. We are addicted to our own complacency and laziness. We are addicted to seeing the suffering of others, silently thanking whoever or whatever that it wasn't us, and continuing with business as usual. Addicted to thinking we can escape the consequences of what we do, to not feeling the suffering of others as acutely as we do our own.

So many addictions. Addictions we don't want to give up.

It is not that Buddhas and bodhisattvas do not want to help. It is that we have not yet done what is necessary for them to be able to do so.

Rushing Headlong to Discrimination

We perceive through our five senses (Five Consciousnesses): eyes, ears, nose, mouth, body. So we see, hear, smell, taste, and touch.

We process what we have sensed through our mind (Sixth Consciousness). So we perceive. Tree. Man. Cat. Book.

Our problems arise with the next step. We judge and discriminate (the seventh or Mana Consciousness). This is good; that is bad. This is right; that is wrong. This is beautiful; that is ugly. And so it becomes easy to think "This is a good-looking person. That is an unattractive person. I like the first but not the second."

Finally, everything from the first seven consciousnesses is stored in the eighth consciousness, our Alaya Consciousness.

The minds of ordinary people rush headlong from the sixth consciousness of perception to the seventh, which is discrimination. Ordinary beings judge and sentence, and are not even aware that this is constantly occurring.

The minds of awakened beings settle into tranquility as they clearly see the tree, the man, the cat, the book. But there is no judging. No discrimination. They have no wandering thoughts or attachments as their eyes, ears, nose, mouth, body, and mind encounter the external environment.

There is no good or bad, only beings in need of help so that they too can awaken and dwell in tranquility and peace.

Benefits of Practicing the Six Paramitas

With giving, we eliminate greed

With morality, we let go of afflictions

With patience, we dissolve hatred

With enthusiastic effort, we overcome laziness

With concentration, we calm pointless thoughts

With wisdom, we leave delusion behind.

~ Ven Wuling ~



Not Different from One Another

The sutras teach that ordinary people, sages and saints are all equal. There is no difference [in their intrinsic nature]. Only the defilement or purity of mind is different. For this reason, it is said that “Mind, Buddhas and sentient beings are no different from one another.” A Pure Mind is Buddha, a defiled mind is sentient being. Buddhas and sentient beings differ only in the extinction or non-extinction of defilements of the mind.

The mind is inherently clean and pure, but it is obstructed by greed, hatred, stupidity, arrogance, the five desires and many kinds of delusions. Therefore, those with such minds are called sentient beings. If defilements are discarded and the mind becomes pure, that is Buddhahood. It is not necessary to depend on others.

However, all sentient beings bear heavy karma and stubborn afflictions from time immemorial, and these are very difficult to purify. To do so requires cultivation, such as [serene, reflective] meditation, working on a hua-t’ou [koan] or Buddha Recitation.

So you see, there are many expedient ways to practice, but all are medicines to treat the diseases of the mind.

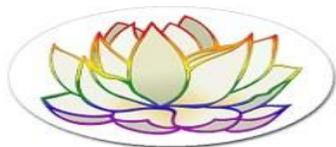
For example, a mirror, intrinsically bright, cannot reflect anything if it is covered with dust.

To restore its brightness, a cleaning agent (remedy) is required. Yet the cleanser itself is also dust, though it can rid other things of dust. Once the mirror is bright, there is no further need for the cleanser. This is like gold in its ore, covered with the dirt and dust of sand and stone. After it is smelted and pure gold appears, there is no need to smelt it again.

It is difficult to rid oneself of the defiled mind characteristic of sentient beings. However, it can be done through diligent practice. When this is accomplished, the bright and undefiled mind appears. It is in this sense that all sentient beings are said to be inherently Buddhas.

~ *Master Han-Shan's Dream Roamings*,

Trans. By Master Lok To



Some Moments Shared:

I encounter Buddhism later in life. I was raised as a Catholic, and after I left school looked into other religions, and was also interested in esoteric teachings and natural medicine. I learned many methods but was not completely satisfied with the result. It always seemed that as I grasped for truth it was just out of reach.

I liked the principles of Buddhism, specially the idea of no killing, and I wished to follow a road of peace that led to a peaceful conclusion. I was fortunate to encounter Master Chin Kung and Venerable Wuling who were the right teachers for me, and so I was on the path to Pure Land Buddhism. I knew nothing about the teachings when I started, but understood the principles. I found that the teachings were explained clearly, specially the one about cause and effect.

I had read in the bible that we reap what we sow, but its importance was never explained fully. I began to realise that the problem is always with the self. We are accountable for all the things we do and I understood that I needed to be responsible for myself and my actions rather than blaming others. This was a hard lesson to learn, and so from there I realised the need to correct my faults as this was necessary to the pursuit of peace and enlightenment.

I have been a Buddhist for 10 years now, and I still have many faults to overcome in order to achieve the unconditional love of the heart and mind that Buddha himself attained, but I feel the pursuit is worth it. The work has not always been easy, but the teachings tell us that patience and diligence is necessary to achieve, and I find this to be very true.

The very essence of the Pure Land Practice is chanting the Buddha's name. It is easy to do, and as I came to realise that chanting the Buddha's name is the cause, and enlightenment is the effect. It has helped me to be calm and peaceful. It takes time to bring about the good effects, so diligence has been important for me. In the past I have been very impatient, and it has taken me time to build up the patience necessary to stay on the path; but it is achievable, and I encourage those who choose the Pure Land way to keep going and never give up, as the rewards are great not only for ourselves but for others.

There is more to tell, and perhaps if I am invited, I will come again to tell you more of what I have learned and the blessings I have received. Perhaps I will meet you on the middle path of balance and strength that comes from the Buddha.

Amitufo for now from Patricia.



The Wind of Changes

A Buddhist Parable: A Man and His Four Wives

Once there was a man who had four wives. The Indian had become very ill and was about to die. At the end of his life, he felt very lonely and so asked the first wife to accompany him to the other world.

'My dear wife,' he said, 'I love you day and night. I took care of you throughout my whole life. Now I am about to die, 'will you please go with me wherever I go after my death?'

He expected her to answer yes. But she answered, 'My dear husband, I know you always loved me. And you are going to die. Now it is time to separate from you. Goodbye, my dear.'

He called his second wife to his sickbed and begged her to follow him in death. He said, 'My dear second wife, you know how I loved you. Sometimes I was afraid you might leave me, but I held on to you strongly. My dear, please come with me.'

The second wife expressed herself rather coldly. 'Dear husband, your first wife refused to accompany you after your death. How can I follow you? You loved me only for your own selfish sake.'

Lying in his deathbed, he called his third wife and asked her to follow him.

The third wife replied, with tears in her eyes, 'My dear, I pity you and I feel sad for myself. Therefore I shall accompany you to the graveyard. This is my last duty to you.' The third wife thus also refused to follow him to death.

Now he recalled that there was another wife, his fourth wife, for whom he didn't care very much. He had treated her like a slave and had always showed much displeasure with her. He now thought that if he asked her to follow him to death, she certainly would say no.

'My dear husband,' she said; 'I will go with you. Whatever happens, I am determined to be with you forever. I cannot be separated from you.'

This is the story of 'A man and His Four Wives.'

Gautama Buddha concluded the story as follows:

'Every man and woman has four wives or husbands.

What do these 'wives' signify?

The First Wife:

The first 'wife' is our body. We love our body day and night. In the morning we wash our face, put on clothing and shoes. We give food to our body. We take care of our body like the first wife in this story. But unfortunately, at the end of our life, the body, the first 'wife' cannot follow us to the next world. As it is stated in a commentary: 'When the last breath leaves our body the healthy colour of the face is transformed and we lose the appearance of radiant life. Our loved ones may gather around and lament, but to no avail.' When such an event occurs, the body is sent into an open field and cremated, leaving only the white ashes.' This is the destination of our body.

The Second Wife:

What is the meaning of the second wife? The second 'wife' stands for our fortune, our material things, money, property, fame, position, and job that we worked hard to attain. We are attached to these material possessions. We are afraid to lose these material things and wish to possess much more.

There is no limit. At the end of our life these things cannot follow us to death. Whatever fortune we have piled up, we must leave it. We came into this world with empty hands. During our life in this world, we have the illusion that we have obtained a fortune. At death, our hands are empty. We can't hold our fortune after our death, just as the second wife told her husband: 'You hold me with your ego-centred selfishness. Now it is time to say goodbye.'

The Third Wife:

What is meant by the third wife? Everyone has a third 'wife.' This is the relationship of our parents, sister and brother, all relatives, friends, and society. They will go as far as the graveyard, with tears in their eyes. They are sympathetic and saddened ...

Thus, we cannot depend on our physical body, our fortune, and our society. We are born alone and we die alone. No one will accompany us after our death.

The Fourth Wife:

Sakyamuni Buddha mentioned the fourth wife, who would accompany her husband after his death. What does that mean?

The fourth 'wife' is our mind (or Alaya consciousness).

When we deeply observe and recognize that our minds are filled with anger, greed, and dissatisfaction, we are having a good look at our lives. The anger, greed, and dissatisfaction are karma, the law of causation. *We cannot be separated from our own karma.*

As the fourth wife told her dying husband, 'I will follow you wherever you go.'

Parable 54: KARMA (THE FOUR WIVES)

~ THUS HAVE I HEARD ~ Buddhist Parables and Stories.

PURE LAND BUDDHISM

The Pure Land school of Mahayana Buddhism is widely practiced in Asia. Though still in its formative years in the West, its roots extend all the way to ancient India.



We generally think in terms of only one Buddha: Sakyamuni, who lived over 2500 years ago. But, since any sentient being can awaken and innumerable numbers have, there are innumerable Buddhas. Sakyamuni Buddha, after his enlightenment, explained that he saw not only his past lifetimes but also how the future would unfold.

Sakyamuni saw people in our time having more afflictions, worries, and wandering thoughts. Our deep-seated bad habits having become even more entrenched over thousands of lifetimes would make liberating ourselves solely by our own efforts almost impossible. He knew that to end one's problems and attain lasting happiness many people would need the help of another Buddha: Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light and Infinite Life. Almost all of the teachings by Sakyamuni were the result of his being asked a question. In a departure from the norm, and when the time was right, Sakyamuni initiated the teaching that introduced Amitabha and his pure land. This spontaneous teaching by Sakyamuni is what makes this teaching so special.

In this teaching, Sakyamuni recounted how the bodhisattva Dharmakara, after witnessing the suffering of sentient beings, spent five eons studying all the Buddha lands. Dharmakara then made forty-eight vows, the fulfillment of which would create the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. He declared that he would not attain Buddhahood unless his vows for a perfect pure land, where all beings would advance along the Buddhist path and never again fall back into suffering, were accomplished. Once these vows were accomplished, Dharmakara Bodhisattva became Amitabha Buddha. He is now speaking the Dharma in his pure land and helping all who are truly sincere in their vows to be reborn there.

With help from Amitabha, we do not have to rely solely on ourselves to attain enlightenment as we would with other methods. In Pure Land Buddhism, we rely on the compassionate Buddhas and bodhisattvas to help us. Thus, reliance on self and on another are combined as we request by way of our mindful chanting that Amitabha Buddha, through the strength of his vows, help us to be reborn in the Pure Land as we breathe our last breath in our present body.

Amitabha also vowed that once we attain this rebirth, we will always progress in our practice and learning. We will be able to continue our practice in the Pure Land, or, when we choose, return to this and other worlds to help others, without being affected by unfavorable environments or our former bad habits. If we wish, we will be able to do this even before we attain supreme enlightenment.

Due to Amitabha Buddha's merits and virtues, and the goodness of all the beings there, the Pure Land has innumerable wonders and advantages, all of which arise from the great vows, deeds, and purity of all the beings there. Through his vows, Amitabha helps all beings create the causes to plant the roots of goodness. With his deeds, he creates the conditions for beings to accumulate merits. With his purity, he has created a perfect land—one that is free from pollution, anger, and intolerance. It is a land of peace and serenity. It is a world of equality, joy, and beauty. In comparison, our world is one of delusion and suffering, filled with worry and anxiety.

For countless people, Pure Land practice is the most suitable for several reasons. First, it is relatively easy to practice in almost any environment: alone, with other practitioners, or even amid the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

Second, there are no difficult entry-level criteria. Even if one's abilities and knowledge are modest, with belief, vows, and practice, we will be reborn in the Pure Land. Belief means that we need to believe in the Buddhas and their teachings, and in causality. We need to believe in ourselves and that we have the same true nature as a Buddha. We need to believe that by living a moral life and being mindful of Amitabha Buddha we will be born into the Western Pure Land and become a Buddha in one lifetime.

And third, due to the vows of Amitabha, achievement through this method can be attained more quickly and more easily than with other practices. We can understand this better through an analogy. We come to a river that we wish to cross. We can swim across but our baggage is very heavy and the water is treacherously deep.

Alternatively, we can get on a boat that will quickly and safely take us and our baggage to the other shore.

Symbolically, the "other shore" is the achievement of enlightenment. The baggage we carry is our deep-seated bad habits and negative karmas accumulated over uncountable lifetimes, and the boat is Amitabha Buddha's compassionate will. The ticket to board the boat is belief, the sincere vow to be reborn in the Pure Land, and practice, which includes leading a moral life and mindfully chanting "Amitufo."

<http://www.amtbweb.org/purelandbuddhism.html>

"Be like a lion that trembles not at sounds.

Be like the wind that does not cling to the meshes of a net.

Be like a lotus that is not contaminated

by the mud from which it springs up.

Wander alone like a rhinoceros."

~The Buddha~

Readers' Comments

Thank you Celine, and all contributors to this quarter's newsletter. It is truly inspiring.

I really look forward to reading it each time; you do great with it

Amitufofo
Judy

Thankyou Celine for the news letter.

Celine there is something I have to say, I have wanted to mention it before but never knew how. It is a reason I have not been to the centre for a while. I cannot fully devote my time to Buddhism as I also cherish The Native Indian way. It is funny because I swap & change. I have been following the Indians for the past couple of months, but at the same time I recite Amitufofo during the day. The past couple of weeks I have been reading about Buddhism again, yet I have borrowed an Indian based story to read. Both beliefs are so close to my heart & I could never choose one over the other. They are both so different yet familiar in ways. Is there anything you have to say on this? I would be interested.

Amitufofo
Tracy

Dear Tracy,

I am glad you enjoy our newsletter. I don't think there should be a problem to be interested in both the Buddhism and the Native Indian way at the same time whilst we are still seeking different pathways to find the right one for us. It is only when we find the right one and wish to follow sincerely is when we would need to specialize, and that would then be to choose out of the two in order 'to become' or one with it.

Venerable Wuling has often mentioned that to delve deeper into any practice we would need to choose 'only one method and one goal', so that we can concentrate to practice diligently without being caught in a T-junction or crossroad at some point. And too many pathways could be confusing and would find us being 'jacks of all trades and master of none'. I guess it boils down to what you intend to learn and to achieve in the end?!. For us Pure Land practitioners, it is the goal of breaking free from delusion, and for Enlightenment.

Generally speaking, one can still practice the Buddhist teachings even though one is not a Buddhist since the essence of Buddhism is to 'Avoid all that is bad, to do all that is good, and to purify one's mind'. As you are well aware and are doing, reciting and chanting the name of Buddha Amitabha ('Amitufofo') is paying respect to and making connection with Buddha Amitabha (outer power) and our own Buddha nature (inner power); but it is so much more: to help us to build the good fortune and to ultimately, break free from reincarnation. The Buddha name recitation is a perfect meditative concentration, a form of meditation that will help us reach a state of constant mindfulness. And to do that, we truly need to specialize and practice one method, one goal.

Below are two excerpts taken from www.abuddhistperspective.org

"It is a way of calming the mind by focusing it on one thing. The primary aim of this form of meditation is to achieve a mental state of "one-mind undisturbed," a state in which the mind focuses solely on its meditative subject. We chant "Amitufofo" to focus our thoughts on a perfectly awakened being who has perfect wisdom and compassion.

In such chanting, listening intently, and concentrating, I am simply focusing my thoughts on the virtues. In the same way, people who are not Buddhists can chant a Buddha's name to develop the qualities that lead to awakening.

In Pure Land practice we chant 'Amitoufo' the name of a Buddha to focus our thoughts on him, to become one with him. Whatever we are focusing on, we are. By focusing on the name of a Buddha, in this case on the name of the 'Buddha of Infinite Light and Infinite Life', I am focusing on perfect peace, compassion, unconditional love, and all the other perfect virtues of a Buddha (perfect them in myself by having them in my mind). We practice to awaken to the truth ..." by Venerable Wuling

"One should first achieve Constant Mindfulness of Amitabha Buddha. When one achieves this, one is able to control one's wandering thoughts, afflictions, and residual habits, so that they will not arise even though they are not yet eradicated. One will not give rise to afflictions or anger in adverse conditions nor will one be attached to favorable conditions.

When one achieves One Mind Undisturbed at the phenomenal level, one has complete control of one's afflictions and residual habits without intentional effort. When one achieves One Mind Undisturbed at the level of noumenon, all the afflictions and residual habits are turned into Bodhi and are truly eradicated. The state of One Mind Undisturbed at the level of noumenon is the same as that of enlightening the mind and seeing one's true nature in the Zen school. In this state, one has eliminated a part of ignorance and thereby attained a part of Dharma-body."

I hope this explanation give some satisfaction to your query. If not please let us know and we will bring your query to more appropriate authorities.

Amitoufo

Celine

Editor-in-chief

Thought for the Day:

When you know for yourselves that certain things
are unwholesome and bad:
tending to harm yourself or others,
reject them.

And when you know for yourselves that certain things
are wholesome and good:
conducive to the spiritual welfare of yourself
as well as others,
accept and follow them.

~ The Buddha ~





Editorial:

We welcome any questions or queries regarding the Buddhist teachings and invite readers to write to us or simply to share advice or stories to support other readers.

The editors will endeavour to see that all questions/queries be responded to in due time.

Thank you.

The Editorial Staff

Disclaimer: All articles in the ARC newsletter are carefully edited and compiled by our editorial staff with the utmost care. The ARC takes no responsibility for errors, comments or opinions sent in by contributors. Opinions or comments expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect the views of the ARC or ABRC. Thank You.

Basic Teaching of Buddhism

The essence of Buddhism is

To avoid all that is bad

To embrace all that is good



Editor of this Summer Issue: Tien Quach

Other Editorial Staff:

Autumn – Nicole O'Brien

Winter – Imelda Liu

Spring – Belinda Burman

WEB LINKS:

www.abrc.org.au

www.abuddhistperspective.org

www.howwillibehavetoday.org