



AMITABHA RAINBOW CLUB

Quarterly Newsletter (2011-2)

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ARC's Motto: "Do not be far-sighted; Do not be short-sighted"

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Amitabha Rainbow Club

Amitufo,

The Amitabha Rainbow Club (ARC) newsletter is subsidiary and under the umbrella of the Amitabha Buddhist Retreat Centre. The ARC was created by a small group of the associate members of the ABRC, who are committed to promote the basic teachings of the Pure Land tradition in the newsletter. And a vast collection of the Pure Land teachings can be found in the Amitabha Buddhist Retreat Centre: www.abrc.org.au.

Besides the print-out copies of our first issue of ARC newsletter that were printed and handed out to those without a computer, we also have forwarded online to over 5 dozen associate members and friends of ABRC.

We sincerely hope that the readers in turn, would also forward and pass round the ARC newsletter (whether online or otherwise) to their friends and contacts in the same wish to spread goodwill and good reading. Just like a ray of sunshine in the continuous circle of light, peace and joy that never ends, may we, in our little sincere attempt of giving, reach out to touch one another and in support of each other.

For anyone interested to listen to the lectures of the Amitabha Sutra given by Venerable Wu ling, our spiritual advisor of Amitabha Buddhist Retreat Centre, they can currently be found online at:
<http://buddhistsocietylekhart.squarespace.com/sutra-lectures/>.

We would advise that the lectures be save onto the computer or copy onto the CDs for future reading and re-reading, since they will only remain online until Venerable Wuling begins her next round of lectures.

Amitufo to all, ARC co-ordinator

Editors Welcome

Winter is just round the corner and it is a privilege to present this newsletter under the guidance of Amitabha Rainbow Club. I have been learning about Buddhism, since I was seven years of age, and which is mainly the Theravada teaching. I loved the teachings of Sakyamuni Buddha's in the Dhammapada.

Throughout the journey into Buddhism, that of the Theravada and encountering the Pure land Buddhism's tradition recently, I would like to share with our readers some personal moments and thoughts:

- If you know the enemy and know yourself you need not fear the results of a hundred battles... '(As quoted from the Art of War; Sun Tzu 549-496 BC).

Every life sentient being have the potential to attain the Buddha hood; however due to the universal law of reincarnation as the result of our karma, our true state of mind has been blinded by the desire, lust, arrogance, ignorance and anger. Therefore, to break free from bondage we need to find our original mind which will help us to be calm and wise and able to understand our surroundings and environment as we reconnect to our true nature within, that of pure mind and pure heart.

As we understand more deeply into the law of cause and effect, of birth, sickness, old age and death we will realize that everything in this world is impermanent, and that we could not take anything with us.

When we leave this world as we die we could only take our karma that we had accumulated in this lifetime with us.

- "In learning, we need to apply what we learn. In living, we need to keep learning and be open to the truth..."

(As quoted from How I behaved Today; Venerable Wuling).

I started learning about Amitabha Buddha's teaching in late 2006 and it became clear that this method of breaking free from Reincarnation in one lifetime and work diligently towards attaining Buddhahood appeals to me. The Buddha nature recitation, which is the chanting the name of Amitabha Buddha, has made such an huge impact in my life that I am determined to diligently study and sincerely practice the teachings of Buddha Amitabha.

The daily practice of Chanting and listening to Amitabha Sutra from my Mp3 player on my way from home to work had changed the old way of thinking. I feel I have become calmer and working towards equanimity as I learnt to accept incidents and situations, including the death of my father in 2006 and followed by the loss of my dearest mother in 2010.

I am aware that everything is impermanent that one day all living being must face death in this Samsara world and no matter how hard we may try to stop or to prevent the cycle, all will come to an end, though there were times when it was not easy to accept when separated from our loved ones (parents, siblings and friends).

- 'Letting It Go and the Joy of Letting It Go....' (How to change your destiny; Venerable Master Chin Kung).

This phrase has helped me to realize the most important learning in the essence of the Pure Land teaching. I have to let go of my past including previous learning of all teachings and to have an mind clean and empty just like a piece of blank paper. To truly learn and accept I need to train my mind by letting go the past encumbrances so it could be free to accept, to grow and to learn. This process is just like a full jar that needed to be emptied first before it could be filled with new ideas and thinking.

I enjoy the study of the Pure Land teachings and I find the "Liao Fan's Four Lessons: Changing Destiny by Venerable Master Chin Kung" most impressive. It is a much recommended book to study and learn to help us achieve peace and equanimity and also it is a guide to help us change our destiny.

Amitufo, Imelda



*The secret of health for both mind and body is
not to mourn for the past,
not to worry about the future, or
not to anticipate troubles,
but to live the present moment wisely and earnestly.*

Buddha ~

*Buddha Sakyamuni compared sentient beings
chasing after the fleeting pleasures of this world to
a child licking honey off a sharp knife.*

*There is no way they can avoid hurting themselves
and ultimately others as well.*

*Taken from the book: Thus Have I Heard
Buddhist Parables and Stories)*

Four Immeasurable Minds: Loving-kindness

One of the practices of bodhisattvas, beings who seek awakening for themselves and all beings, is the Four Immeasurable Minds.

The first mind is that of *loving-kindness*, which is offering happiness to others. The second is the mind of *compassion*, which is the intention and wished to relieve the suffering of others. Third is *joy*, which is felt when beings experience happiness. And fourth is *equanimity*, being neither averse to nor attached to anything. We should understand that we cannot cause others to transcend suffering or to feel happiness or joy, but we can still have the wish that all beings will be able to accomplish such freedom and joyfulness.

Loving-kindness is the practice of selflessness, where we constantly seek to benefit others and to help others to find happiness. When we wish to hurt another, we are experiencing anger. Waiting for an opportunity to inflict harm on that person, we are experiencing animosity. When animosity continues for a long time it becomes hostility. When we act upon these thoughts through speech or actions, the hostility becomes cruelty. To counter these destructive emotions, we need loving-kindness.

To offer happiness to others, we need to know what they want, and for this we need to listen and understand. If someone tells us that they do not need or want something but we insist on giving it to them, we are only offering frustration and irritation, not happiness. If they wish for nothing, then giving them nothing is the offering of happiness. We should try to give others what they wish for as long as it is not harmful, even if what they like is something we do not. Our personal desires or opinions simply usually do not reflect what other people want.

So often in our wish to make others happy, we project what we like onto them. Our intentions may be good, but without wisdom the best of intentions can backfire, exasperating others and disappointing ourselves.

To offer happiness, we need to set aside the thinking that others wish for what we wish and, instead, provide other people with what they truly wish for.

Four Immeasurable Minds: Compassion

The second mind is compassion, which is the wish and intention to alleviate the suffering of others. It counters sorrow and anxiety. It is the unconditional care and concern for all living beings, the ability to realize that all beings experience distress, not just us or those we care for. All too often we find ourselves trying to ease the pain of those we love and care for, but completely disregarding the pain of other people whom we do not care for or even dislike. Ideally, our compassion should be felt equally to all.

This practice can be very powerful. Many of us have someone in our lives who seems determined to cause us problems. But if we take the time to look carefully, we might well see that this person, in turn, has someone in their lives who causes constant difficulties. By beginning to understand this person's situation, we can begin to feel some compassion for his or her constant distress.

In this and other situations, we can try to have compassion by understanding how the other person is feeling. It is not necessary to have experienced exactly what they are going through, or to become immersed in the situation with them.

We will accomplish nothing if we empathize so completely that we are unable to effectively help them. Instead, we need to remain clear in our thinking and reactions.

If someone is drowning, jumping in not knowing how to swim will not help. What we need to do is to save her from drowning. To do this, it is not necessary to experience the same situation as the one she is experiencing. We need to calmly find a way to fix the situation, using our own experience and wisdom to guide us.

Four Immeasurable Minds: Joy

The third mind is that of joy, which is wanting all beings to be free from unhappiness and being sincerely happy, without any trace of jealousy, when they accomplish this. Joy counters sadness. It is the state of great contentment and ease.

All too often, we wish to control others. We become irritated when they fail to behave as we wish. If others then praise them for their behavior, we become even more frustrated. But we should learn to feel happy for them. If the person is genuinely happy in what they have chosen to do and their actions have not harmed anyone, then, yes, we ought to feel joy for them.

Four Immeasurable Minds: Equanimity

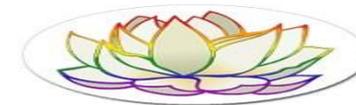
The fourth mind is equanimity, which is letting go. It counters attachment and aversion. It is to stop clinging and to no longer judge or discriminate. It does not mean that we do not love. It means that we love equally and impartially, like a mother who loves all her children. Loving every one of her children, a mother's love for one child is not lessened. Loving all her children with equanimity does not mean

she is indifferent to what her children feel or do. She simply loves them all unconditionally and without expectations.

Equanimity in love is non-possessive. It is like the sun shining on all beings equally. The sun does not differentiate, deciding to shine more on this person and less on that person. Neither does the sun cling to those it shines on. It shines on all it sees with warmth and brightness—equally.

When we can view everyone with equanimity, we will understand that people are who they are. If we expect them to conform to our ideals, we will doom ourselves to disappointment. It would be much better to just accept people as they are, without any of our pre-conceived views and personal judgments. Our only wish should be for them to be free from suffering, and to be happy and filled with joy.

~ Venerable Wuling



"HARMONY" IS THE BASIS FOR GOOD FORTUNE, WISDOM AND HAPPINESS THE SIX PRINCIPLES OF HARMONY:

1. *Sharing the same viewpoints or goals*
2. *Abiding by the same precepts,*
3. *Living and practicing together harmoniously,*
4. *Speaking without conflict and no arguments,*
5. *Experiencing the Dharma Bliss (inner peace and happiness).*
6. *Sharing benefits harmoniously.*

Letting Go of Anger

We often hear that anger left unchecked will continue to grow regardless of time. With each new lifetime in which we meet, we will intuitively "recognize" each other. We have all experienced this when we have met someone we just didn't like, or may even feel hatred for. This is an enmity that has been allowed to grow over past encounters. We know that if it not stopped somehow, it will continue to get worse with every future encounter.

So how do we stop it from getting worse?

We "let go." We let go of the wish to argue. We let go of the desire to prove we are right. We let go of the judging, condescending, anger, and hatred. If this person wants to argue, we let them and do not argue back. If the person wants to prove how right he or she is and how wrong we are, we let go of the desire to prove otherwise. And yes, ultimately, if the person wants to kill us, we let them and we let go hatred and retaliatory thoughts.

How on earth can we do this?

Start with the small things first. The ultimate example above is for high level practitioners. Most of us aren't anywhere near there yet.

So we start with something manageable. For example, the person at work or somewhere we frequent often who always manages to upset us.

The next time the possibility of an argument arises don't argue. (And remember that most of the things we argue about are not really that important.) Don't get pulled in by force of habit.

Let go of negative thoughts about the person. Keep telling yourself this is a karmic relationship. The person has come to collect a karmic debt you owe.

Your goal is to repay it and not enable it to increase. Increasing it is what has prolonged it over time. For example, we became angry with the person and yelled at her in a past lifetime. But we overdid it. We didn't know we had because we can't see the past. In our overdoing, we added to the karmic debt we owe them. Think of it as the principle and we just added some interest to it. Now, when we can understand what is happening, we need to whittle down those karmic debts and hopefully completely repay them.

How?

By not arguing. As they give us a hard time and we do not fight back, we are repaying our debt. By arguing we would make things worse. But with our not fighting back, the other person will gradually feel a sense of satisfaction that they are winning the argument with us. This will in time reduce their wish for further retaliation. If we are sincere enough in this process, we may even touch them with our attempt to not make things worse than they are. This holds the possibility of their letting go of their own anger sooner.

How do we not argue?

With patience. We are patient in the face of adversity. We understand the person arguing with us is providing us with an opportunity to perfect our patience—a practice of bodhisattvas.

With patience, our mind remains calm and we are not disturbed. As we repay our debt to them through patience, we elevate our level of practice. So as difficult as it may seem, we should be grateful to this person for helping us improve.

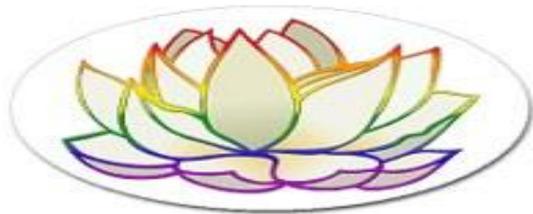
How high can this practice go?

In the Buddha's last lifetime, before he was born in our world 2600 years ago, he was brutally and unjustifiably murdered. But he perfected his patience and never felt anger or and even the merest negative thought.

Indeed, as the Buddha was dying, he vowed that the man who ordered his death would be his, the Buddha's, first student after enlightenment. And in thus perfecting his patience, the bodhisattva destined himself to become a Buddha in his next lifetime.

So the next times you feel anger begin to arise, check it and resume your practice of patience. Let go of the anger and come just one tiny step closer to living the perfection of a Buddha.

Venerable Wuling



Sharing Life's Experiences - by Nicole

I have previously introduced myself to the readers as one of the Editors of this newsletter and am happy to be able to share my story as to how I ended up on the Buddhist pathway.

I grew up in a fairly normal family living a normal life; my experience with religion was narrow and limited. After leaving school I spent many years living a crazy life filled with many distractions. Eventually I headed off overseas and opened my eyes to new experiences and lifestyles. On my way back to Australia I travelled through Thailand and it was there that I learnt of Buddhism.

At the young age of 23 I became a wife and a mother. After a number of years living the conventional life my husband and I were divorced and my easy going life came to a screaming halt. As a result, the pressures and including interference from well intended people soon turned an amicable break up into 6 years of anxiety, depression, anger, hostility, sadness and legal court battles: just generally a very miserable time for all.

Instead of dealing with the issues at hand I ran from them and was again married with another child less than a year after my first divorce. I had known this man (husband number 2) and his family for many years and believed that I would be able to have a happy family again and therefore be happy finally.

The abuse, emotional and verbal, began after the birth of my second child. Struggling to deal with an angry ex-husband and his new equally aggressive wife, a child caught in a custody battle, a new baby and an increasingly abusive husband I eventually found myself in a place I never suspected – a domestic violence shelter.

At this point I began to search for answers and after reading book after book regarding happiness and self-help I stumbled across a series of talks regarding Buddhism through the Chenrezig Institute on the Sunshine Coast. On the first day I was overcome with joy and a feeling of 'coming home'. However something seemed to be a bit off and I did not continue learning about Buddhism after those classes finished.

During this time I decided to sell my house and give my husband one last chance – move away to a new place with the hope that we could start again.

We settled on Nanango which I was not entirely happy with, and therefore had demanded a house with a number of ridiculous requirements – my perfect house.

As we drove up the driveway of the first house I saw my home – my perfect house. And to top it all off one of my neighbours was the Amitabha Buddhist Centre! Unfortunately there were issues with the real estate agent and a week later negotiations ceased. However things seemed to fall into place and the house was listed with another agent within a week and our offer was then accepted. At the same time my house, which had been on the market for 6 months and had received no interest so far, was bought by the buyer without even viewing the house within days of us buying the house at Nanango. I seemed compelled to be in this particular house in Nanango.

We settled in but a few months later I was a single mum again, this time dealing with 2 kids, 2 ex-husbands, twice the grief, a house in the country that was falling apart and more land than I knew what to do with. Things went from bad to worse to horrendous. More abuse, more custody orders, more court battles, children unsettled and unsure. I cried just about everyday and thought I was losing my mind. Again rather than deal with any of it I threw myself into anything I could think of and seemed to be doing ok. By the end of 2009 I was going to court to face custody order breaches brought about by ex husband number 1 and going to a different court to obtain a domestic violence order against my second ex husband.

One day I ran into Celine and Charles, the owners of the Amitabha Rainbow Club, and had mentioned how my children had trouble sleeping. Celine gave me a Buddhist chanting machine for the children and on the first night I played it my son slept the entire night for the first time in a year! I however could not stand the chanting and was literally in pain whenever I heard it. Once again, instead of understanding what the pain meant and dealing with it I distracted myself with external pleasure which ultimately failed me as it always does.

I began 2010 feeling literally depressed and miserable. I had no more energy left to fight and was just slowly detached from everyone and everything. In July everything changed...In the space of three months 3 of the most toxic people in my life were suddenly gone. Unfortunately this did not bring the peace I had so desperately craved into my life. While I hated the drama it served a purpose, that of a distraction from dealing with myself, my own pain. The drama was gone but then all the years of pain finally caught up with me and I had nowhere to hide

I honestly lost track of time whilst feeling sorry for myself, wallowing in pain and grief. A few weeks later I found myself seeking refuge in the Buddhist centre. My life appeared to be in ruins but in reality it was an opportunity to find a new path, that of Buddhism. I attended meditation and began reading about Pure Land Buddhism. This time the feeling of 'coming home' stayed with me. It has been a slow process, sometimes 2 steps forward, and one step back.

I continued to have issues with the chanting, and found other ways to connect with Amitabha Buddha. Six months later I am now able to see that the issues and problems I have had in my life were due to my thoughts and behaviour. The more I learn and better understand the universal law of karma (that we each are responsible for our own actions and reactions) the better equipped I am, working towards letting go of my attachments, the pain and grief, and gradually of the past.

Now both Amitabha Buddha and the Buddhist chants are integral part of my life. As I practice and recite the Buddha's name daily, I feel myself being more positive and more open to accepting whatever comes my way. Even when bad things do happen, I don't see them as negative as I used to, and my anger is getting less (and less each passing day). And the more I learn and understand the Pure Land teachings and of the underlying reason of cause and effect behind it all, the more I am able to let go of past issues that had bind me. I feel more balanced, patient and more accepting of life.

I sincerely hope that others may also have the good fortune to find this Buddhist path as I did and be awakened from delusion, pain and emotionalism.

Amitufo to all.- Nicci

My name is Gladys

This is about the "Rainbow Centre" in Nanango, and why I became involved with it based on my personal life experiences. Before this spiritual centre became the Amitabha Buddhist Retreat Centre ten years ago, it was known as the Rainbow Connection Healing and Awareness Centre.

Joining the centre approximately fourteen years ago had given me a new appreciation of myself, everything and everyone in my world. I learned to completely relax and meditate to a point of great bliss.

When overwhelmed by a situation or crisis, I practice this skill and then calmly deal with the situation.

How I wish I'd known these skills earlier in my life.

My name is Gladys, and I was born in a poorer suburb of inner Sydney during the start of the Second World War. Times were very tough growing up, but everyone shared with everything they had. Neighbours and everyone then were in the same situation and nobody saw anyone go without.

Celebrations were very special times because everyone shared everything. They were good memories and they taught me a lot. From my childhood, I learnt how important sharing of everything is and that there is more good in the world than bad.

My husband Jack and I both worked in the farming industry and eventually had our own strawberry and small crops farm. We didn't make a lot of money but we were happy. Assistant in nursing was my next job in a nursing home and I later became the activities coordinator for 10 years until I gave it up to care for my mum who had bowel cancer. The doctors had given her 9 months but she lived for another 9 years.

We moved to Nanango for a change in pace and to be near my brother. When my mum passed away, I was completely lost. She was so appreciative of everything we did for her and she was so easy to care for. Our time together was beautiful. I felt a part of me had

died with her, and I didn't know who I was anymore. There had not been anytime in my life to be me.

Then Sharon, my youngest daughter got breast cancer (she actually dealt better with it than me). The chemotherapy knocked her about but her outlook and spirit were good and she stayed positive.

I needed help to be more supportive of her. That's when Jack, Sharon and I joined the Rainbow Centre. Celine, Charles and the friendly group welcome us.

Learning to meditate with Celine changed my whole outlook on life. I have learnt that every step in our path of life is a lesson leading to where we are today. All the pieces of the puzzle of my life were fitting together and I was feeling comfortable with my life. I also learnt that even disappointment and bad experiences hold an important lesson in life. We just have to look for it and the lesson learnt will help us cope better next time.

I will always be grateful to Celine and Charles for their kindness, teachings, healing and introducing me to meditation. It restored my soul and gave me back my strength.

It is a wonderful feeling to believe in your heart that you have reached your goal in life. Mine was to be a carer and I believe I have done it to the best of my ability.

I have no regrets, and feel truly blessed and rewarded. Jack and I have been married 52 years and intend to spend the rest of our lives together with Sharon, caring for each other.

Glad, Nanango Qld.



The Wind of Changes

Prayer for Peace



Time has no beginning;
it has no end.

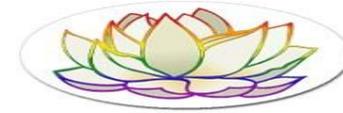
Throughout immeasurable eons,
violence and conflict have abounded,
and body and spirit deeply wounded.
May the time for healing begin now.

Immersed in anger,
polluted by selfishness.
As though ensnared,
humanity has been beset by ignorance.
But wisdom and compassion lie buried within.
May serenity and insight arise now.

We are not separate:
we are one.
Seeming differences are inconsequential
for our hearts are the same.
Respect and harmony are waiting to awaken.

May universal peace begin now.

Ven Wuling



Readers Comments

- ❖ Hi Celine: 'Thanks for the newsletter - very interesting'. From: Liz...(31st March 2011)

- ❖ Hello Celine,...From: Tracy Ann France
(31stMarch2011)
'I just wanted to say hi since it has been a couple of weeks since the March retreat. I really had a nice time, and the lunch was yummy, thank you. Pure land teaching is guiding me through a lot in life. I chant "Amitufo" often & I have been listening to Venerable when I can. In the car is where I can listen in peace. I look forward to coming to next Meditation, although I just cannot say when. I have to share with you that I love the way no one needs to speak during the Buddhist practice and retreat. To me this is so beautiful because I feel the pressure of speaking in everyday life. I wish we could all just be one & not be judged by what we know or don't.
Amitufo'.

- ❖ Hello Nicole, I just received the Amitabha Rainbow club newsletter and wanted to thank you for including me in your listing. It was truly inspirational to hear of other peoples experience in how they found Buddhism. I think we all have similar experiences or degrees of suffering, and through it all, in the midst of struggle, we think we are alone on the

path, till we hear of such wonderfully courageous people – truly uplifting.
Thank you again and send my love to Celine.

Regards, Matt Wilkins.

- ❖ Dear Nicole, Thank you very much for your presentation... All “religions” come from the same origin, and should all be the religion of love expressing the Supreme Being who lives in all of us.. The purpose of life is to transcend the concept of good and bad, and see love in all situation, love in all beings as expression of the Buddha nature useless or wicked. We attract what our soul need to grow..
- ❖ There is no good and bad karma, only karma the Law of the Infinite Spirit.. we not separate from our Buddha nature; we are only witnessing its play!
Love from Dominick

Editorial:

We welcome any questions or queries, and invite readers to write to us or simply to share comments or stories with other readers. If any, the editors will endeavour to see that all questions/queries be responded to in due time.

Thank you.

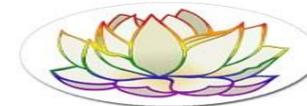
The Editorial Staff

Disclaimer: All articles in the ARC newsletter are carefully 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. Thank you.

Basic Buddhist Teaching

The essence of Buddhism:

To avoid all that is bad
To embrace all that is good
And to purify one's mind



Editor of the Winter Issue: **Imelda Liu**

Spring – Belinda Burman

Summer – Tien Quach

Autumn – Nicole O'Brien

WEB LINKS:

www.abrc.org.au

www.abuddhistperspective.org

www.howwillbehavetoday.org