

**Amitabha Buddhist Retreat Centre
Newsletter
Australia**



Winter Edition 2015 - 2

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

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Editor's Page

Dear Readers,

2015 is a fast pacing year and already there is only six months left before the New Year dawn again. The past six months have been very good to us as Charles is holding well without having to be under the strict mini-scope of surveillance as before, which gives me a bit more time in other things, which is a blessing.

We had our recent retreat in May last weekend and it turned out to be a very uplifting retreat even though it was actually a last minute decisions in changing the date; also to having a simple ceremony of bathing the Buddha (after we decided to wash the statues before the retreat). Patricia prepared the rose-water Friday night before the retreat, and the next morning we gathered at the centre at 8.30 AM for the washing, and then we recited a simple 'bathing the Buddha' ceremonial ritual; and it was followed later by the renewal of the five precepts.

There were five retreat participants booked in to join Charles, Patricia and I for May retreat and the three who turned up were Graham, Liege and Jeff and May was unable to attend unfortunately as she sent us a text the night before. Those who attended all enjoyed this special retreat. As a result, Patricia and I have decided to continue with this yearly bathing the Buddha ceremony. We will be making the month of May as our main annual retreat instead of September in the past; but if we have the latter as the secondary, then there are two main bi-yearly annual retreats (Fall and Spring), which is just: Perfecto.

Charles' 100th Birthday is creeping up very fast and so far we have a list of five to six dozen guests. My eldest sister Tina and her youngest son and wife will be coming with Tina's sister –in-law and I am looking forward to having them here. The day after Charles centenary birthday bash we will be going to Sunshine Coast for a few days to continue the celebrations before our overseas guests fly back to Singapore. So the September retreat has been scheduled a week earlier and it is the third weekend in September instead.

This year the *Australian Institute of Professional Photography* (AIPP) are creating a compelling pictorial record of returned servicemen and women for the national archives, and wants to photograph every veteran of the Second World War. Professional photographers across the country, accredited by the AIPP, are **donating their time and talent** to create this visual legacy to honour veterans and commemorate 100 years of the ANZAC tradition.

Charles is now an Australian veteran having taken his citizenship sixteen months ago, and the professional photographer from Toowoomba will be coming over in a few weeks time to photo-shoot Charles and other veterans at the RSL Kingaroy. That should be fun watching, since Charles always considers himself as a camouflage civilian. I am in the process of getting his war medals mounted for the occasion; and it would be nice to have a professional photo of Charles.

We wish our readers the Very Best in all their undertakings.

Amitoufo, Jusme Celine



Dharma Talk: Everything We Do Matters.

Taken from the book: Everything We do Matters (Part 6)

APPRECIATION

In the sutras, we often hear of gratitude. The practice of gratitude is very important in Buddhism. But so often, we forget about feeling grateful. When things go our way and we receive what we desire, we congratulate ourselves and all too easily slip into arrogance. We forget about all those who have helped us get to where we are, allowing us to enjoy what we have. When we do not receive what we desire, we blame others! We forget that what we receive in life is due to our own causes and conditions, our own merits or lack of merits.

But arrogance and blaming others are both afflictions and, thus, are obstacles to our progress on the path to awakening. If instead, we are grateful for all the help we have received from others, in our happiness, we will in turn want to share what we have with others. When Buddhists share, they dedicate their merits—the goodness they create every day—to four benefactors. These four are the Three Jewels, our parents, our teachers, and all beings.

We mention these four in our Dedication of Merit, which begins “May the merits and virtues accrued from this work adorn the Buddha’s Pure Land, [and] repay the Four Kindnesses above.” The Three Jewels are the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. They are called jewels because they are of immeasurable value.

All Buddhas strive to teach us universal truths that will enable us to awaken—to uncover the true nature within each of us and escape suffering and attain happiness. Their determination to help us as well as their patience in teaching us is infinite. While our love for others is transitory, the Buddhas’ love for all beings is endless.

Our love is conditional and discriminatory, but the Buddhas’ love is unconditional and held equally for all beings. Buddhas help us by teaching us the principles of reality, principles such as causality; the impermanence of all conditioned phenomena; the nonexistence of a permanent, independent self; and the interconnectedness of everything that exists.

In other words, they teach us the universal, eternal laws of the cosmos—the Dharma. When we truly comprehend these teachings, we will then be able to eliminate our mistaken views and, instead, have right views and correct understanding. When we do not have such understanding, we will continue to wander aimlessly throughout countless lifetimes, immersed in our ignorance and delusion.

We improve our understanding and practice the teachings with the support of the Sangha, the community of those who practice the teachings. With the help of good friends on the path, we strive to attain purity of mind and to live lives of harmony. The pure mind is the mind that has no wandering thoughts and discriminations. It has no worries, no attachments, no thoughts of like or dislike. To live lives of harmony is to be gentle and caring in our thoughts and behavior.

We express our gratitude to the Three Jewels by endeavoring to practice as the Buddhas have taught us. How? By being content with the circumstances we find ourselves in.

By listening to what the other person is saying, instead of being pre-occupied with our own self-interest. By empathizing with the pain and disappointment in the lives of those we encounter.

Ultimately, we express our gratitude by awakening to correct views and understanding, attaining purity of mind, and living in harmony with all beings. In this way, we will begin to repay our immense debt to the Three Jewels for all their patience and help.

Second, we should be grateful to our parents. Many of us are or have been fortunate enough to have loving parents who tried their very best for us. Others, unfortunately, have or had parents who were less than ideal or even abusive. As Buddhists, we believe that we are drawn to our parents because of karmic connections. After death and before our next birth, we are plunged into darkness and raw emotions. In that overwhelming confusion, we are pulled to our parents as if they were a tiny beacon of light piercing that darkness.

There are four reasons, karmic links, that we are drawn to and born to our parents. When the link is stronger, people will become close family members, parents and children. When the link is weaker the people will become more distant relatives or friends.

The first reason is to repay kindness. In past life-times, they had a good and happy relationship. Coming now to repay kindness, the children are very filial. They are well behaved when young and loving when grown, and affectionately tend to the parents' needs and wishes.

The second reason is to exact revenge. The children are karmic debtors from past lifetimes. Often, when grown, they will cause the families ruin.

The third reason is to collect a debt. The child may cause the parent endless worry and pain by being disobedient or demanding. They may fall ill frequently or have an ongoing medical condition and need much attention and care from the parent. The degree of the debt collected depends on how much the parents owe the children.

The fourth reason is to repay a debt. The children owed the parents in past lifetimes. When the debt is great, the children will look after their parents very attentively. If the debt is small, the children will take care of their parents just enough to ensure that the parents lack nothing. But there is no respect for the parents—the children only take care of the parents' physical needs.

Regardless of the reason we are born to our parents and regardless of their treatment of us, we still owe our parents an immense debt of gratitude. Even if our parents did nothing else for us, and most parents do not fall into this category, at the very least they provided us with the physical opportunity to be born. For nine months, our mothers carried and nurtured us until we reached the time of birth. They then underwent many hours of pain to bring us safely into this world.

For many of us, our parents looked after us for years, sacrificing their personal comfort so we might have better lives than theirs. But if our parents did not care for and nurture us, and if all they did was to give us our body and thus our life, we still cannot repay our debt of gratitude to them. Without them, we would not be here today striving to learn how to be more compassionate, altruistic beings. So whatever the reasons we were born to our parents, whatever the circumstances we grew up in, however we feel about our parents, our debt to them is immeasurable.

Once we feel appreciation for our current parents, we next need to broaden our minds and hearts. In the Brahma Net Sutra, the Buddha said we should always bear in mind that “all male beings have been my father; all female beings have been my mother.”

Gradually, our appreciation should be felt for all beings throughout all time and space. If our parents of this lifetime are no longer alive, we can still try to repay our debt to them by caring for all others as our parents by wanting them to be happy and loving them as if they were our own parents.

Appreciate all others for the opportunities they provide for you to grow. Help all beings to feel cherished and safe in your presence. Say thank you at every opportunity. If we are deeply appreciative of our present parents for this opportunity to learn and grow, and deeply appreciative of every one of our past parents, we will be able to feel gratitude towards all beings.

Third, we should be grateful to our teachers, those who have gone before us on the path to awakening. Until we reach a higher level of awakening, we will continue to act out of ignorance and delusion, mistaking right for wrong and wrong for right. If we are fortunate enough to have a good teacher, he or she will be able to guide us along the path. A good teacher will understand who we are and what we are capable of. This will enable our teachers to guide us wisely.

Like the Buddhas, they will not give up on us when we fail to do all that we should. But to find our good teacher, we need the right conditions. If the conditions have not yet matured, we could drive past the street every day where the teacher was and not know he or she was there. On the other hand, when the conditions are right, we will naturally meet our teacher.

It is said, “When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.” In other words, when conditions are right, it will happen. One day when I was to give a lecture at a library in Lawrence, Kansas, a man who was returning some books saw the poster for my talk. Amazed, he went up to one of the organizers and said that he had wanted to take the three refuges but did not know any monastics.

After the talk, at his request, I served as the witness in his ceremony of taking the refuges. He was very moved and deeply grateful. His conditions to formally follow the Buddhist path had matured. He had never expected to walk into that library and find a Buddhist nun! In the same manner, when our conditions are right, we will meet our teacher.

If we have not yet found our teacher, we need to plant the causes to do so. Helping and caring for others, studying and practicing our chosen Buddhist method, and having the wish to benefit all beings will all help to plant good seeds, which will mature into good conditions. We will instinctively know when we have found our teacher. This realization will occur in our prajna wisdom, our intuitive wisdom that is already deep within us.

If we are fortunate enough to find our teacher, we will be able to learn quickly from him or her. We will have confidence in and happily follow what he or she teaches. If we are not yet fortunate enough to have found our teacher, we can use the sutras—the teachings of the Buddhas—as our teacher.

We respectfully call Sakyamuni Buddha our “original teacher.” “Original” means that within our current age, Sakyamuni Buddha is our historical Buddha. He is by no means the first and only Buddha, as there have been infinite Buddhas before him and there will be infinite Buddhas in the future.

The teachings in the sutras flowed from the true nature of Shakyamuni Buddha. This true nature is the same true nature of all Buddhas, of all beings. Such teachings are timeless.

By practicing what we have been taught, we show gratitude to our teachers. What do we practice? We need to let go of greed and craving: we only need enough money to be safe and healthy, and to meet our responsibilities. Let go of anger and frustration: we do not have to react out of our negative habits by shouting at our children or the person who is not doing what we wish. Let go of ignorance and delusion: remember that the person next to you wants only what you want—to be happy and free of worry.

Fourth, we should have appreciation for and be grateful to all beings. Everyone and everything is interconnected. Nothing exists on its own. When we were young, our family supported us and our friends looked after us. As we grew up, we went to schools built by the communities we lived in. Then as now, our country protected us through the armed forces and emergency services personnel. Living in a country with the freedom to choose our faith tradition—our standard for ethical living—we are able to not just merely survive but to grow spiritually and emotionally.

This book that you are reading or the recording that you are listening to came about through the hard work of many people. Many of these people were in turn supported by other people, perhaps financially, perhaps emotionally, who were in turn supported by the efforts of countless others. This interconnectivity goes on and on. Understanding that we do not live solely on our own, that no man is an island, we will begin to develop a sense of gratitude to all the infinite beings who help us to live better, more meaningful lives.

But what of those who have harmed us? Do we need to be grateful to them too? Ideally, we should also be grateful to those who have harmed us, not just those we like and who care for us.

Remember, we reap what we sow. Our lives today are the results of our past karmas of thoughts, words, and actions. There is no one else to blame when we experience unpleasant circumstances. Those who have harmed us are simply bringing us the consequences of our past karmas.

We can do as we have always done: complain and become angry. Or we can choose to understand what is happening and accept that we have a karmic debt to repay. Gradually, we will even be able to feel grateful to those who harm us. Those who harm us provide us with an opportunity to repay a debt that we had incurred.

Taken from the book: Everything we do matters.

~ Venerable Wuling ~



Sayings of Venerable Wuling

Reflect. Regret. Reform.
This is true cultivation.

In any conflict,
both losers and winners lose.

Even the smallest act from a sincere heart
can bring great goodness.

We practice not just to end suffering but,
ultimately, to find true joy.

Coming into this life, we brought nothing with us
but our own karma.
Leaving, we will take nothing with us
but our karma.

We practice not just to end suffering but,
ultimately, to find true joy.

Thoughts repeated become actions.
Actions repeated become habits.
Habits repeated become character.

I resolve not to kill.
Instead, I will respect and have compassion for all beings.

I resolve not to steal.
Instead, before taking or using anything
I will ask permission of the owner.

I resolve not to engage in sexual misconduct
or in any sensory indulgence.
Instead, I will develop the mind of self-restraint and purity.

I resolve not to use false speech.
Instead, I will speak the truth in a wise way
and at the right time.

I resolve not to use harsh speech.
Instead, I will speak words
that benefit others and foster peace.

I resolve not to use divisive speech.
Instead, I will speak words
that foster harmony and understanding.

I resolve not to use enticing speech.
Instead, I will speak sincerely and truthfully.

I resolve to refrain from greed.
Instead, I will open my heart and practice giving.

I resolve to refrain from anger.
Instead, I will develop patience
and the compassion to see the suffering of others.

I resolve to refrain from ignorance.
Instead, I will discipline myself and calm my mind
so that I can act from wisdom.

~ [Venerable Wuling](#) ~

Personal Anecdotes

Sharing an extraordinary Experience: on Patricia's personal Experience to share with those interested to read.

My dear friend and spiritual sister, Patricia has lost her partner, Ivan Little on 16th April 2015 around 11 PM and very peacefully whilst sitting on the chair. Ivan had been ill for many years had lungs and heart conditions (and had a pacemaker for over 2 decades). That day their good family friend from Hervey Bay has just arrived to visit both Patricia and Ivan for a few days, and the trio had a wonderful day together.

That very night Ivan went to bed just after 11 PM but a few mins later, he got up to the lounge to take a few oxygen puffs from the small oxygen tank. Patricia rushed over to the kitchen to get his medication and glass of water but by the time she got back to Ivan, he has already passed away. And after Dr. Morgan who came at 12 PM to check on him, and whilst Gaile was in bed in the guest bedroom, Patricia stayed up alone the whole night quietly chanting. Everything was meant to be, without fuss and accordingly.

14 years ago when Patricia and I first our spiritual path in Pure Land Buddhism together, we were very new to the teachings but we both felt strongly that it was the right path for us and we became Buddhists at the same time. We have the good fortune to have a good teacher Venerable Wuling, who taught us what the Pure Land teachings entails and how to go about it in sincere cultivation as our path to life.

In essence, it is sincerely working towards letting go of the past and to concentrate on the present with Buddha Name Recitation to cultivate a pure mind and pure heart. It is to embrace all that is good, avoid that is bad and to purify the mind.

Amitabha is a Sanskrit word: "Infinite Light" and "Infinite Life". In our daily cultivating of Buddha Name Recitation (Chanting; Affirmation) we are sincerely affirming the name of Buddha Amitabha, connecting and relying upon Buddha Amitabha of the Western Pure Land and at the same time, we are also reconnecting and relying on our innate Buddha nature within us, which is also Amitabha.

The Pure Land of Buddha Amitabha is a pure and perfect state that is free of suffering and is complete with perfect adornments and virtues and in seeking rebirth into the Western Pure Land we break free from coming back to reincarnate blindly.

One of the teachings that Venerable taught us is that if we sincerely strive to become good Pure Land practitioners, we will be able to improve our quality of living to change for the better and to enjoy a simple and contented life.

In our diligent practice, we will feel the inner peace and inward calm, and to the point of single-mindedness of experiencing the Dharma joy and the spiritual virtues; and it is possible to be in the Pure Land right there, right now even in this Samsara existence.

In living a life of purity; that is, to embrace all that is good, to avoid all that is bad and purify the mind, and with diligent practice to cultivate sincerely, we benefit and change for the better. And only do we benefit, but our loved ones (whether they are Buddhists or not) will have the opportunity to benefit as well from our daily sincere cultivation.

In the past few years we have heard stories about Buddhist practitioners or their love ones having a good and peaceful passing. Ivan Little is another exceptional case to where our loved ones benefit from our sincere practice. He was not a Buddhist at all and has no religion but he lived his entire life closely observing the simple etiquettes of life and he was one with nature; and so he was a Buddhist at heart. If we have snakes in the house Ivan was always the one we would call upon, where he would catch it and release it back to nature.

Ivan's peaceful death that very night, of having retired to bed and then to get up a few minutes later to passing away quietly and immediately in his lounge chair within those few minutes is unbelievable good fortune. Passing over whilst sitting up is considered by the Chinese the highest and ultimate way to go.

As we share our personal experiences, Both Patricia and I are overwhelmed with deep joy of having encountered the Pure Land Buddhism fourteen years ago, which we believe is our good fortune. And to have the first hand experiences of that truth of the teachings, now coming to light through personal experiences makes us even more focus and motivated.

To know is one thing; to believe is another, though by far greater than just belief or knowledge. But to actually live through and experiencing such good teachings as our truth and wisdom and no longer just belief or knowledge, is unbelievable and no doubt, the most enlightening experience to enrich our lives.

Patricia and I are most grateful to all those whom we have encountered and who had made such impact into our lives: humbly grateful for the Pure Land teachings of Buddha Amitabha and to Venerable Wuling who helped brought about the Amitabha Buddhist Retreat Centre.

If Venerable has not come into our lives, our very centre would not have existed, and we would have been still mired in our ignorance and delusion. Yes, it is indeed our good fortune to be on this path, and to have the opportunity to change our destiny for the better. What lies before us now is the final goal to sincerely cultivating to achieving with 100% efforts.

Amitufo , Jusme Celine

(With Patricia's acknowledgement and permission)





Winds of Change

Parable 021:

CAUSE AND EFFECT (Illegitimate Child)

Once, it is said, Buddha was falsely accused of fathering a certain woman's child. When the deceit was discovered, the Buddha's followers wanted to beat the culprit to death.

The Buddha calmly stopped them, saying: "Oh, Bhikkus, in a previous lifetime when I was a king, I was once in a grove together with my courtiers. At the sight of an ascetic, the ladies of the party surrounded him, turning their back to me.

Jealous and angry, I exclaimed: How do you know that this ascetic is not a fake? How do you know that he does not spend his nights revelling with women? It is because of that slanderous remark that I have now had to endure that woman's deceit. Oh, monks, release her and let her go in peace."

In the Buddhist world view, nothing happens without cause. To transcend suffering, we must stop causing further suffering. Acting otherwise is no different than trying to escape one's shadow by running in the blazing sun!.

Parable 081:

KARMA IS MIND-MADE

A practitioner should have a clear understanding of the causes and conditions of calamities and fortunate events. These occur as a result of bad or good karma – and karma has its source in the mind.

Reciting or explaining sutras has the power to change a wicked mind into a pure mind, deluded mind into an enlightened mind.

Thus, to recite or explain sutras is to create good karma, enabling sentient beings, alive or dead, to escape or mitigate the impact of negative karma.

Since a Bodhisattva's mission is to rescue sentient beings and guide them to enlightenment, he should recite and explain Mahayana sutras on all occasions and particularly during the ceremonies for the dead.

~ **THUS HAVE I HEARD** ~ Buddhist Parables & Stories



Readers' Enquiries or Comments

Dear Celine,

Sorry it took me a while to write you back. I have taken some pictures of the Spring blooms in my yard. I wonder if you can use them for anyway? They will be coming in separate emails....

I have booked my flight to attend the retreat in Chicago at the end of May. I very much look forward to it and to meeting and listening to the Venerable in person.

Hope all is well with you and family!
Amitufo, Catherine 23rd April 2015

Hello,

We are students at the Ladies College in Guernsey, Channel Islands and recently in our Religious Studies lessons we have been learning about Buddhism. We have just finished the topic and now we have to do a project based around the question "Can Buddhists overcome suffering?"

We would be very appreciative of any insight of the matter at hand. Hope to hear from you soon.
Many thanks, Georgia Petralia and Maxime King April 29th

Thank you so much for taking the time to reply to us, we really appreciate the quick response! This was a lot of help to us (:

Many thanks, Georgia and Maxime

MEMORIES

Memories of good feelings are a blessing

Energising us with love when reminiscing

Memories help to keep us warm and alive

Of cosy feelings of long ago but still thrive

Reflections into memory lane are uplifting

In uniting past & present that's comforting

Every bit of treasures stored as memories

So poignantly cherished through centuries

FOOTPRINTS

Footprints that I'm choosing to leave behind

Of ecological & carbon may they all be small

Of conservative usage, being no longer blind

To let go of selfish greed and to standing tall

Protect our descendants' birth-right at all cost

Reining in overindulgences that all is not lost

In being sustainable to help our environment

Nature & mother earth bounce back to mend

The Law of karma is reaping what we've sow

So leave gentle footprints and start right now



MAY RETREAT 2015



TAKEN AT 12.00 PM JUST BEFORE OUR LUNCH BREAK

Madeleine Star wanted to join in for the May Retreat as she often does during our Sunday two hourly of meditation; but we advise her to join us only for the photography during the lunch break when her mum come down to take some photo shoots. And so she did, proudly holding her new plastic flowers. ☺

Messages and Announcements



Charles will be celebrating his 100th Birthday on 25th September and so the September retreat which was scheduled for the last weekend in September is now brought forward to the third weekend instead. Please see below.

Our next two bi-monthly retreats are now scheduled for:

11th – 12th **July** and 19th - 20th **September** 2015

Weekly Sunday meditative sessions are now just over two hours which is from 9 AM to 11 AM, and below is latest schedule.

9.00 AM – 9.20 AM:	Sutra Recitation
9.20 AM – 9.40 AM:	Nien-Fo (Walking Meditation)
9.40 AM – 10.00 AM:	Sitting Meditation
10.00 AM – 10.40 AM:	Chinese Session without Amituojing
10.40 AM – 11.00 AM:	Free Form Meditative Reflection
11.00 AM – 11.05 AM:	Closing ('Going Home' Handbook)
11.10 AM – 12.00 PM:	BRUNCH

Amitufo, jusme



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