

**Amitabha Buddhist Retreat Centre
Newsletter
Australia**



Summer Edition 2015 - 4

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 with lots of changes and activities though is already coming to the close. And what a great year it has been, especially for Charles so far: with health on the mend, and Charles had celebrated his centenary birthday bash with family and good friends with style and much aplomb. He had finally received his congratulatory letter from the Queen much to his delight. Some of you'd have noticed how disappointed he was at his centennial luncheon celebration when it did not come.

Charles also received an invite from Qld Premier for Christmas lunch at the Parliament House that was organised yearly for all Qld centenarians and their carers; and so we, amongst the other 26 centenarians and their carers (out of 35 Qld centenarians) attended the event on 17th Nov. It was indeed a scrumptious three course menu and such lovely vegetarian dishes I had.

We have recently created a group facebook page, namely the AMITABHA RAINBOW CONNECTION for anyone interested to peruse the open page created by Lilliana Love and myself. It is a small collection of sharing some gems on Buddhist teachings and other wholesome teaching on spirituality. Hopefully, it may help to motivate us to generate a calmer and gentle lifestyle.

Amitabha is Sanskrit word for "Infinite Light, Infinite Life" and it is the name of Buddha Amitabha; and it is also our innate Buddha nature within which is Amitabha. As for the Rainbow, its White Light shines out its glorious spectrum of multi-colours to bring joy to delight all.

"Man is the architect of his destiny" is the proverbial saying; and in the words of Buddha: "As we think, so we become." Since thoughts have energy, and emotions have energy; then we need to be careful of what vibrational energies we are expressing.

Peace and inner contentment bring us inner joy or happiness whilst disturbing emotions which are dis – ease of our mind block our positive flow to live harmoniously. Thus, surrounding ourselves with good, kind and wholesome thoughts and striving not to allow disturbing emotions be expressed out in physical and verbal actions, are actually planting the right seeds.

And so, it is with such understanding that Amitabha Rainbow Connection came into being, to encourage everyone in however small way it is, to connect one and all irrespectively of race, colour or creed; thus, helping to unfold and share our basic spirituality in the name of peace and calm, within and without. The group site address is:

www.facebook.com/groups/509137439256006

Christmas is round the corner and I take this opportunity to wish all a wonderful festive season and holiday with family members and friends. The very best of good tidings, joy and happiness and also a good reminder to make New Year resolution/s to help aspire to perform even better in 2016.

MERRY CHRISTMAS & VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR 2016.

Amitoufo, Jusme Celine

AMITABHA RAINBOW CONNECTION

Amitabha means: 'Infinite and Awakening'
Mostly, it's the name of Buddha Amitabha
Infinte Light, Infinite Life; and All Knowing
That is Perfection & Wisdom, near and far
Amitabha is also our innate nature within
Be one with our Buddha nature is the link
Having inner qualities to heal and soothe
Achieving our aspiration in all that is good

Raining days or not, we'd seek to gather
A ray of sunshine in between all weather
In our gentle attempts reaching out to all
Necessitate good sharing within the call
Both in helping and caring with optimism
Offering our loving kindness and altruism
Without traces of egotism and favouritism

Connect with one and all towards the light
Of the underlying tenet that is compassion
Nurture to support with all within our sight
Nothing is important as severing delusion
Erasing karma by offering a helping hand
Cause and effect law which Cosmos man
The basic requisite of happiness is giving
Insightful understanding of daily practicing
Over the rainbow is a pot of gold to behold
Nevertheless, the treasure of virtues unfold

NATURE

Nature's beauty is everywhere, unsuppressed
And showing God's handiwork at its very best
The simple joys bring delight and also cleanses
Utilise nature's harmony to heal & mend fences
Reflect, recharge and bathe in its beautiful light
Energise us with positivity to stay calm and bright



Dharma Talk: Everything We Do Matters.

Taken from the book: Everything We do Matters (Part 8)

TRANSFORMING GREED AND ANGER

The Destructive Emotions of Greed and Anger As human beings, we are subject to many negative habits, the most serious and detrimental of which are greed and anger. These stem from our emotional attachments to the concept of having an individual and permanent self, and to our lack of understanding about our true place in the universe and our relationships with all those who inhabit the universe with us.

Greed, or craving, arises from the mistaken idea that we can obtain and hold on to possessions, to ideas, and even to other people. Craving arises from selfishness, from the misconception that our bodies are who we are. But if we try to pinpoint where “I” actually exists in our bodies, we cannot do so. “I” cannot be found in the heart, in the head, or anywhere else in the body.

Every body is simply a combination of different parts: two arms, two legs, many different organs including the brain and the heart—but none of them is “I.” Not yet understanding this, we not only do everything we can to protect this body, but we also go to lengths to protect our possessions as well. We even believe in the need to defend our ideas, feeling threatened whenever someone disagrees with us.

The reality is that this body will only exist for a short time and that our possessions will be ours for an even briefer time, for we will take nothing with us at the end of this life. We know this reality all too well, but we still try to hold on dearly to whatever we have.

If you feel that this does not apply to you, please think of one of your most treasured possessions. Now, imagine giving away that treasured possession. How would you feel? If you are like most people, you will find it is very discomfoting to think of no longer having such a valued possession.

This is a form of craving, as we desire to keep the things that we have and also acquire additional or new possessions. We convince ourselves that such possessions, even in the form of people and ideas, can make us happy. But after we have acquired something new or obtained more of something we already have, we so often find ourselves wishing for another new object or perhaps for much more of what we just obtained. This is, unfortunately, human nature. Even young children demonstrate this as they do whatever is necessary, for example, to convince the adult with them to buy a new toy. Later, often in a matter of hours, the child loses interest and wants another new plaything.

We do the same thing; our toys are just larger and more expensive. But the principle is the same: Old or young, we are rarely satisfied and are, instead, often disappointed and, thus, often unhappy. We will never find lasting and genuine happiness through possessions but will, instead, remain forever discontented. Not yet realizing this, we still feel that it is perfectly natural to want more and to accumulate more. We are even envious of others and maybe secretly hope to impress others with what we have.

This fault-ridden idea of “more is good” is buoyed up by an advertising industry constantly telling us that by purchasing what they are selling, we will find the answer to our prayers: happiness, love, youth, security—the list is endless.

Feeling that we do not have enough happiness, love, youth, and security, we buy into their enticing pitches in the belief that their product or service will alleviate our nagging sense of discontent. Clinging to the idea that the source of happiness lies outside ourselves, we become attached to things, places, and even ideas. We ignore the reality that nothing remains with us forever: possessions are lost or become unimportant, people leave us or we leave them, places are left behind, ideas change. Such attachments are why we are still living lives of unhappiness: because we cling to things, to ideas, to life. We desire—we want—all of these.

In our desire to possess, we even wish to possess other people. We want others to respect us and to love us. We want others to only think of us, to always come back to us, to forever be with us. This is a form of craving and a major attachment, which is due largely to not yet realizing that we are all impermanent: We all change from second to second. None of us remains the same. No one can forever hold on to what we now have.

Our lives are brief. Time seems to tick by so slowly when we are miserable. But when we are happy, that moment in our lives feels very short. Albert Einstein, while trying to explain the theory of relativity, put it into simple words that most of us can understand: If we put our hand on a hot stove for a few seconds, it will feel like eternity. But if you are a man sitting next to an attractive woman, ten minutes can feel like seconds. Everything is relative.

But even as brief as our lives are, nothing will remain with us forever. The person with us now will not always be with us. This is so painful for us because we become attached, in this case, to

people whom we do not want to lose. When they are gone, we will miss them as we continue to think of them and the pleasant times we had together. But, for good or for bad, we cannot keep any person with us.

As Buddhists, we believe that we have been reborn innumerable times. In many of those lifetimes, we have cared deeply for others. In future lifetimes, this will happen again as our attachments pull us back into those relationships lifetime after lifetime.

These attachments may be for places, for things, for ideas or people, and this time around they may spread over an entire lifetime, perhaps our current one. Or they may come rushing together in our final moments, overwhelming us.

When we are dying, we can be lead into many directions by our thoughts. These final thoughts are so crucial because they lead us to our next lifetime. I have, on different occasions, spoken with nurses, family members, and friends who were with people who were dying. One such person told me of what had happened to a friend of hers.

A few years ago, another nun and I were speaking weekly to a small group of friends. The first time we met with them, we learned of a friend of theirs who was very ill. Her time was spent between hospital and home. When she was in the hospital, the friends would talk to her about practicing Buddhism and trying to be a better person, but she would explain that she did not have the energy right then and would practice when she returned home. When they visited her at home after she left the hospital and again discussed Buddhism and urged her to be a kinder,

more forgiving and honest person, she would say that she was healthier now and would get around to such things later.

As we continued to meet with the group, we learned that in the past when the friends would go out shopping, the one who was now sick would invariably say that she had forgotten her money and would then ask to borrow some from the others. It was also a habit of hers to forget to repay what she had borrowed. The friends were understandably upset about this but they also knew that their friend still needed support and encouragement to accept and benefit from Buddha's teachings.

One day, when the woman was in the hospital again, one of the friends visited her. As she was lying there, she began to tell her visitor about a time when she had loaned another person some money and jewelry. As she was bitterly and angrily complaining that this person had failed to return the jewelry, the woman suddenly died. The friend who had been with her, told us that the woman's face was contorted with anger when she died. And within thirty minutes, her face turned a very dark gray.

What we are feeling in our final moments will lead us to our next lifetime. If we are calm as we are dying, that calmness will lead us to our next lifetime. If we are very angry, then anger will lead us into the next lifetime. We may not be able to prove where this woman was reborn, but her appearance right after she died was dire indeed. She died this way because of anger and craving.

She was not thinking of the kindness of the friend who had come to visit her, or of the thoughtfulness of all the other friends who regularly visited her every time she entered the hospital—all those who wanted to help her become a better person. She was

not thinking of any of that. Nor was she thinking of the nurses and doctors who were trying to help her and to ease her pain. She was thinking of her missing jewelry and she was indulging in her anger. As Buddhists, we are taught that anger will lead one to be reborn in the hell realms and that greed will lead one to be reborn in the hungry ghost realm.

The hungry ghost realm is a realm where beings have insatiable desires. They are constantly hungry and thirsty. Their stomachs are immense, but their throats are tiny and, so, they are unable to satisfy their hunger and thirst, unable to quench their desires. Notwithstanding whether one believes that the hell and hungry ghost realms are in other dimensions or whether they exist now in this world, we are led to them because of our anger and craving. Our greed and craving tie us to unhappiness and lead us to so much harmful behavior. Because of craving, we become angry as others take or have something we want.

Greed can also be there in the act of giving should we continue to think about the object we have given away, because our mind still clings to it. Greed is one of our most severe problems, but there is a way to counteract our greed. It is the first of the six perfections that Bodhisattvas, who are awakened beings, practice.

Everything we do matters by: ~ 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

When Celine asked me to write something for the Centre's newsletter, I was wondering about the words that would come to me when I read something written by one of my favourite authors Mark Nepo.

Very often my lived experience in my personal life and also in my work life seem to be understood and expressed by the words of Mark Nepo, so being pressed for time I give you his words that express a life worth living.

“If peace comes from seeing the whole, then misery stems from a loss of perspective.

We begin so aware and grateful. The sun somehow hangs there in the sky. The little bird sings.

The miracle of life just happens. Then we stub our toe, and in that moment of pain, the whole world is reduced to our poor little toe. Now, for a day or two, it is difficult to walk. With every step, we are reminded of our poor little toe.

Our vigilance becomes: Which defines our day—the pinch we feel in walking on a bruised toe, or the miracle still happening?

It is the giving over to smallness that opens us to misery. In truth, we begin taking nothing for granted, grateful that we have enough to eat, that we are well enough to eat.

But somehow, through the living of our days, our focus narrows like a camera that shutters down, cropping out the horizon, and one day we're miffed at a diner because the eggs are runny or the hash isn't seasoned just the way we like.

When we narrow our focus, the problem seems everything. We forget when we were lonely, dreaming of a partner. We forget first beholding the beauty of another. We forget the comfort of first being seen and held and heard. When our view shuts down, we're up in the night annoyed by the way our lover pulls the covers or leaves the dishes in the sink without soaking them first.

In actuality, misery is a moment of suffering allowed to become everything. So, when feeling miserable, we must look wider than what hurts. When feeling a splinter, we must, while trying to remove it, remember there is a body that is not splinter, and a spirit that is not splinter, and a world that is not splinter.”

— Mark Nepo, *The Book of Awakening: Having the Life You Want by Being Present to the Life You Have*

~ Graham Turnbull ~



Winds of Change

Parable 0159:

LET ALL ANGER FLOW LIKE WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE

“The Buddha taught that there are three types of person, depending on their karmic afflictions of anger and frustrations.

First are those whose level of frustration is particularly high, making life miserable for themselves and others. Their minds can be compared to words etched on stone.

The second mind-set, with a lower level of frustration, can be compared to words written on soil.

The third type is like words written on water. Persons in this last group generally hold few grudges and do not look to settle accounts. Their anger and frustration are dissipated as rapidly as the river that flows under a bridge.

Let us try to emulate this third group and let our resentment, frustration and anger flow away. The world would be a happier, safer place, with fewer personal confrontations, fewer ethnic conflicts, fewer wars.”

Parable 094:

MIND (FALSE THOUGHTS)

Once, in China, there was a monk seated in meditation. Because he was cold and hungry, the thought of food arose in his mind. He suddenly saw a woman presenting him with an offering of food. The woman knelt, put food in his bowl, and respectfully asked him to eat immediately, before the food grew cold and lost all taste.

The monk, being hungry wanted to eat at once but remembering that it was not yet noon (the prescribed mealtime for monks and nuns), he patiently told her to put the bowl aside for the time being. The woman left, appearing angry and upset.

Some time later, at noon, he uncovered the bowl to discover that it was full of worms, crawling all around. He then understood that his false thought of food had attracted the demonic apparitions.

Thanks to his power of concentration, however limited, he avoided the precept against killing.”

(Master Tam)

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



Readers' Enquiries or Comments

NAME=Ng Hui Wen

EMAIL=

COMMENT=Hi, I am from Singapore and would like to attend one of your weekend retreat.

I would appreciate if you could advice me on how to travel to your retreat centre.

Furthermore, could I stay over night after the unday 6pm retreat and take a flight back to Singapore the next day?

Thanks

Regards

Ng Hui Wen(Ms)

2015-08-29

Hi Celine,

So sorry for the late reply. I just found out that I had missed your reply that was buried within one of my email folders.

I think by now it is a bit late for me to make arrangement to fly over to Australia since taking leave is also one of my considerations.

with metta

Hui Wen

2015-11-11

Hello:

My name is Jakki and I will be spending some time weekly out in Nanango and was wondering if there are still teachings on Sundays? I have been a practicing Buddhist for many years and enjoy learning about different traditions and practices.

Thanks.

Much kindness,

Jakki

2015-10-23

NAME=Michael fisher

EMAIL=

COMMENT=Hi could you please send me some information regarding upcoming retreats.

I would be interested in a weekly retreat

Thankyou.



Messages and Announcements

Charles had such a wonderful 100th Birthday on 25th September and he take this opportunity to thank all those who attended to make it such wonderful day of memories and also those who were unable to attend but send their good wishes. Thank you.

Below is the dates of our next two retreats in 2016.

23rd – 24th **January 2016** and 19th - 20th **March 2016**

Weekly Sunday meditative sessions are now just over two hours which is starts at 9 AM sharp and just over 11 AM.

9.00 AM – 9.25 AM:	Sutra Recitation
9.25 AM – 9.45 AM:	Nien-Fo (Walking Meditation)
9.45 AM – 10.00 AM:	Sitting Meditation
10.00 AM – 10.15 AM:	Free Form Concentrated Meditation
10.15 AM – 11.00 AM:	Chinese Session (without Amituojing)



Joy is Giving;

Peace is Forgiving;

Wisdom is According;

And Love is Accepting



November Retreat 2015-11-24

November Retreat was attending by half a dozen participants. Being the last one for the year, the retreat participants decided to choose this time of the year to make their personal vow or aspiration to follow the Pure Land pathway with diligence and practice.

Following on is the affirmation of vow made in our last retreat by those who had become Buddhists and also, the aspiration made by the retreat participants who have officially become Buddhists.

In the 'Mind Seal of the Buddha' written by Grand Master Ou-I, the book stresses the importance of "Faith; Vows and Practice" – so taking proactive step to including voluntary vow/s (and any New Year resolution/s) aspiring further the spiritual path is ideal.

Our sincere Vow

I, Vow to uphold the Pure Land teachings and to diligently practice that my thoughts, words & actions will arise from compassion and wisdom; free of ego & attachments.

I vow to spend the rest of this life and future lifetimes to propagate the Pure Land teachings and that those who have affinity will know the Western Pure Land and its teachings through me as a good student and teacher; and that they will seek rebirth into the Pure Land to one day achieving that rebirth, forever leaving suffering behind and attain lasting happiness.

This is my sincere vow that we may all be enlightened with the absolute truth with our non-retrogressive Bodhisattvas as companions. Namo Amitabha.

Our sincere Wish

I, Wish to uphold the Pure Land teachings and to diligently practice that my thoughts, words & actions will arise from compassion and wisdom; free of ego & attachments.

I wish to spend the rest of this life and future lifetimes to propagate the Pure Land teachings and that those who have affinity will know the Western Pure Land and its teachings through me as a good student and teacher; and that they will seek rebirth into the Pure Land to one day achieving that rebirth, forever leaving suffering behind and attain lasting happiness.

This is my sincere wish that we may all be enlightened with the absolute truth with our non-retrogressive Bodhisattvas as companions. Namo Amitabha.



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