

**Amitabha Buddhist Retreat Centre
Newsletter
Australia**



Winter Edition 2016 - 2

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

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Editor's Page

Amitufo all,

Our most recent retreat was such a wonderful retreat that those who attended were uplifted, including moi 😊 It was quite an eye opener; just show that if and when hearts are willing and sincere to work on themselves, whether they be newcomers or seasoned practitioners to Pure Land meditation, much can be achieved, and that awakening be it small or big is possible.

It brings us the realisation that the spiritual path of unfoldment need the necessary steps where a seeker of truth must be open and honest with himself or herself and not just sit on the fence (especially in retreats) and to only enjoy to the peaceful surrounding that any tranquil retreat centre offers. In order for us to evolve spiritually we would need to involve sincerely: and the extent of our involvement brings us the exact ratio as in 20% input brings 20% output and vice versa the same with 100%.

This time round, the members were seriously encouraged to contemplate on why they are at the Buddhist centre; their hopes and aspirations as to what they wish to change and to achieve as a result to their attendance that weekend. Based on their sharing experiences at the end of the retreat, they experience peace and calm and also, having a better picture and understanding as to their necessary steps in order to create and achieve a more harmonious environment for themselves. What helped this group was the connection or strong affinity they have with each other, and everyone, especially the newcomers were at such ease that they were able to open up spontaneously without effort and able to share with such honesty that 'letting go' and healing energies were at play then and there.

This year can be quite a turbulent year for many, being the year of a 9; and so, it is may be helpful to realise that as we are coming to a close of the past nine years cycle and before we can truly move forward to a brand new cycle of freshness and new beginnings of 2017, we need to face up to our old issues that have been and are still holding us back for so long., as this year is more geared towards "Letting Go" and tie up loose ends; to change our old mind set and improve on our outlook towards humanity as 9 is also the number of a humanitarian.

When we do that, we can then step into the threshold of 2017 to start a brand new cycle of energies and experiences in a more positive mind set to think and move more freely forward in life. If we can accept and accord with the vibrational energies of this year: to truly 'Let Go and Let Live'; to harbour no more ill-feelings or negativity and do our very best to improve our situation, we will be more freer in mind, body and spirit, to tackle the next cycle of life with optimism, purpose and joy.

I have personally been working almost the past two decades on trying to have my destiny changed where I can overcome that strong uncontrollable bad habit of anger and resentment that I nursed all my childhood and adult life, and only now do I am feel I am getting somewhere where most time I am in control and mastering my emotions, and having acquire some patience and equanimity have been my saving grace. And yes, I feel I have changed my destiny as I am not that strong nasty person that I used to be.

When we were attending a free computer class organised for seniors over 65 recently, we met Marc Bright who runs the

joyologynow (www.facebook.com/marc.bright) with his “joy workshops”, Robert Munden who’s a professional photographer and also Graeme Baxter (<http://www.suncare.org.au>) who is the community Engagement manager of Suncare Community Service. It was such a good affinity all round and they are looking into ways to try to help Charles in getting biography of his book entitling ‘The Camouflaged Civilian’ off the ground.

For anyone who is interested to attend and is in the vicinity of Atherton Tableland on 11th June, please see details below, courtesy of Chris of T.S. of Atherton Tablelands.

Amitufo, Celine

THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Sat 11th June 2016 in Atherton

Meeting Room, rear of Community Services Tablelands,
38 Mabel St, Atherton

1.00 pm: Shared lunch: some vegetarian finger food to share.

2.00 pm: Pure Land Buddhist meditation - a short explanation and introduction by Celine Richardson

3.00 pm: Panel introduction and audience contribution: **"Places or sites of unusual energy"**.

Cost: Donation only. General public welcome

ENQUIRES: Chris 4091 5156 or Max 4097 7893

Dharma Talk: Everything We Do Matters.

EVERYTHING WE DO MATTERS (Part 10)

Lives of Happiness and Freedom

Buddhist teachings can be subsumed into three phrases:
Avoid all that is bad; Embrace all that is good,
Purify the mind.

To live lives of happiness and freedom, we need to “eradicate all that is bad.” We need to curtail— and eventually eliminate —our craving, desires, and attachments because they lead the way to so many of our negative emotions and bad habits. We will experience lifetimes upon lifetimes of unhappiness if we allow them to make us cling to possessions, people, etc.

As we work to “embrace all that is good,” a good place to start is the eradication of our greed through giving and generosity. We will feel the happiness from giving something to another. Gradually, we will find ourselves thinking less of the elation we feel after having done something for another. Eventually, we will just find ourselves offering spontaneously and no longer even thinking about what we have done. We will find, instead, that we naturally maintain a quiet and serene state of happiness.

As we let go of attachments, at some point we will no longer become upset but will remain calm and content when we encounter things not working out as we hope. This ideal response will happen infrequently at first, but gradually we will react this way more often. Conversely when things do go the way we want, we will again remain calm and content instead of proud or desirous in wanting the pleasantness to continue.

The more we let go of selfishness and attachments, the more we will remain calm and content regardless of the circumstance. In this way, we will be learning how to “purify the mind.” Many of us will find that we can gradually manage not becoming upset at bad occurrences. But not wanting the good times to continue can be more difficult because it seems harmless. What is wrong with wanting tomorrow to be as good as today? While this thinking does not harm others, it can inadvertently harm us for we are attaching or clinging to good times. This is still a form of greed.

What we are aiming at is to remain calm and content—to be unattached—at all times. Yes, this is extremely difficult at first and may well seem impossible. But with enthusiasm and effort, very gradually, we will find that whether things do not go our way or on those unusual times when they do, we will remain calm and content either way. So often it seems that other people want to do something differently from the way we want to do it. When others want to go one way and we want to go another, this is the very time that we need to be not attached to our way of doing things. If their preference is not morally wrong but just another way of doing something, try to go along with it.

Becoming upset and making everyone uncomfortable will not help anyone. Try and remember two contrasting occasions, one that had you fuming and another in which you were extremely happy. Which feels better? Do not give in to the old negative habits: Find a more reasonable way of reacting. A cost-free, painless, and instantaneous way of reacting is to smile. Even if there is no one around, we can smile. Initially when we try to do this, we will feel somewhat embarrassed should somebody walk into the room and find us sitting there just smiling to ourselves. They may look somewhat concerned at first, but as we sit there, smiling, they will very quickly feel like smiling too. So smile and be happy; others will feel it.

Feeling the happiness of others is far superior to picking up on other people’s greed and selfishness. We do not feel comfortable with people who seem to radiate such negative feelings. Alternatively, when we are with others who are generous and always thinking of others, we feel happy just being near them.

As we practice generosity and start to eradicate our greed, others will notice. They may not say anything, but they will notice. And they will see that in sincere giving, both the one who gives and the one who receives benefit. This is how we can teach others without saying a word but by setting examples. If someone tells us to give but they themselves do not give, we will not value what they say. On the other hand, if we see somebody who seems to not have much, but constantly gives things away—for example, somebody who only has a little bit of food, but who says, “Here, have this”—this is the person to learn from.

Greed is very ugly. It leads to many negative emotions. It leads us to endless lives of unhappiness because we try to selfishly protect ourselves, our possessions, our ideas, and our knowledge; and because we think our possessions, ideas, and knowledge are real and will make us happy. But our ideas, possessions, craving, desires, and attachments will not bring happiness.

Generosity will bring happiness. More than likely, we are not yet able to practice the level of generosity that we wish. But we can still begin where we are: We can teach others. Surely, each of us can smile at somebody else. Many of us have things that we can give to others, skills that can be used to benefit others, or time that can be used to help others. In doing so, we will feel happy and we will begin to feel free. We will even begin to feel lighter because our attachments will start to drop away from us.

But if we do not eliminate or at least reduce our greed, craving, and attachments, we will fall prey to an emotion that most of us have come to dread—anger.

The Seeds of Anger

Anger arises when greed is unrestrained; when we do not get what we want, because others reject our ideas or obtain what we had wanted for ourselves; or when what we have is taken from us, or those we love are lost to us. The ways that craving, desire, and attachments can overwhelm us and, then, lead us to anger are endless. The pain generated, as a consequence, is infinite. Anger is one of our greatest problems. It arises before we even realize what is happening. Somebody says something and, in a flash, we are angry. It is too late to try to control the anger: It has already ignited. When this happens we can try to think about why we have become angry, where this anger really came from. It did not start with this incident, nor did it start yesterday, last week, or last year.

As Buddhists, we believe that it started many, many lifetimes ago. In the past, one of us said something to the other. We did not mean to hurt the other one's feelings; we just did not pay attention to what we were about to say. So we spoke carelessly and did not realize that something in what we had said hurt the other person. But deep within the one we had upset, the incident was registered in that part of all of us that courses through each lifetime. When we next met, maybe in our next lifetime or maybe after a hundred lifetimes, that other person unconsciously remembered the pain of what had happened. This time, he said something to us and this time there was just a hint of resentment. After that, the incident again withdrew into both of our subconsciousnesses. We continue to pass the anger back and forth each time we encounter one another. Each time, our mutual anger becomes stronger.

Each time, as we act on that anger, our feelings intensified. Eventually, verbally lashing out at the other will not be enough: One of us will strike the other. But still it does not end. Meeting again, we will get into a fight. Meeting yet again, fighting will not be enough as our need to seek retaliation—to hurt the other—will have intensified into an intense fury. Our desire for revenge will lead us to an inevitability: One of us will kill the other. But even this is not the end, for personal anger and desire for retaliation is not confined to individuals. Individual anger leads to territorial, ethnic, and religious conflicts.

Conflicts lead to war, war to annihilation. All of this anger, pain, and suffering came about because of one unnoticed thought, one careless word. We did not mean to hurt the other person; we just were not paying attention to what we were saying—this is how anger and hatred begin. So the next time anger is being passed back and forth, as we become more embroiled in it, remember that we are not innocent victims in the latest spate of rage. We both have participated in this exchange, one which has gone on for longer than we can imagine; the other person is not the only one at fault.

With this realization comes the thought that we can either continue fueling the anger or one of us can choose to stop what is happening by consciously letting go of the anger. When we become angry, nothing positive is accomplished, nothing is resolved, nothing at all. If we respond in anger, that anger will grow more tenacious, more frightening. But responding with logic while the other person is angry may not help to diffuse the anger either.

Logic is, very often, the last thing an angry person wishes to hear. We have been there ourselves. Just try and remember the last time you were angry. How would you have reacted if the other person told you to calm down? It is very rare that a person

can say to us “Please, do not be angry” with any real effect, especially when we are practically fuming. So where is this anger that is so difficult to restrain stemming from? The anger is coming from within us, not from the other person. We are making ourselves angry by allowing the other person to “push our buttons” and to infuriate us—we are doing it to ourselves. Being cognizant of this, we can choose, instead, to let go of the anger. Maybe we can choose not to say anything else right away. Maybe we can count to ten or take deep breaths. Maybe, instead of replying angrily to them, we can simply say “Amitufofo” Maybe we can say nothing, or if nothing else seems to work, we can quietly withdraw.

Usually, in this way, the other person’s anger will die down more quickly because we are not responding to them. Later on, we can try talking to them. We could ask what we did to upset them and possibly apologize for having done so. Often, all the other person needs to hear is “I’m sorry”; this may be enough to control, reduce, or diffuse the anger on their part. Anger makes us miserable, guilty, and upset, as we cannot sleep or concentrate. More than likely, the other person feels equally unhappy, upset, and unsettled.

Out of compassion for the other person, we should do what we can to try and reduce this anger, to try to resolve what is going on between us. If we cannot do so, if we cannot find a way to eradicate—to stop—what is happening, we might try to avoid the person for a while or avoid the circumstance that seems to trigger the hostility. Also, we can think about what happened in this instance—what we did that contributed to the other person as well as ourselves becoming angry—and, then, we can resolve how to act more judiciously in the future

“Everything We do Matters” ~ By Venerable Wuling ~

Sayings of Venerable Wuling

“Do not be distracted by events that do not concern you.”

“Genuine patience is not reacting with feelings or thoughts when circumstances — good or bad — are encountered.”

“Do not be upset when mistakes need to be fixed. Our corrections are often improvements.”

“What others do is their choice. Do not let them disturb your pure mind.”

“When grief arises, understanding causality helps us move beyond the heart-rending “Why?” to begin adjusting to a new reality.”

“Obstacles in our lives were not created by others. We created them.”

“Accepting that life will continue without us is letting go.”

“Vexations arise not from events themselves, but from what we tell ourselves about those events.”

“The power of our minds is immeasurable, leading us to liberation in the Pure Land or imprisonment in samsara.”

“Since nothing in samsara is real, what is there to attach to?”

“Life is fragile, conditions ever-changing. Attach to nothing, cultivate good fortune.”

“View everything as temporary, knowing both good and bad will end.”

<https://www.facebook.com/Venerable-Wuling-293114410855>



Personal Anecdotes

My childhood from the outside world appear to be one of neglect. I was rarely bathed or wore clean clothes until the age of 11. That’s when I realised and took ownership over my hygiene. Our family nickname at school was Nash trash as Nash was my maiden name. Under all this was a dark secret that lies behind closed doors. I was sexually abused by my extended family members starting from the age of five till about 9 when I started fighting back and avoiding vulnerable situations. I felt very unsafe in the world, always on alert of the next attack, from someone, anyone.

As a child I never did tell anyone about the sexual abuse. I think I just accepted by this point that males treated females in this manner. It was our lot in life, our worth in the world, as sex toys for males. Why did men feel like they had a right to violate me? My hatred toward men grew deep in my heart. My walls went flying up, shutting myself in for protection. This trend of sexual abuse continued into my high school years and beyond, I felt hopeless. I attempted suicide during that time but thanks to my cousin I am still here today.

This set the ground work for the false life scripts that would play out in my life: trust, concept of love, fear of men, rejecting my sexuality, self worth, accepting anything fearing what payment would be required, hiding in shame, guilt and self loathing. I oppressed my true self, that little girl with the blonde piggy tail and vibrant smile. I reflect back on a photo of myself at age 5. There is no light in my eyes, no smile and a kind vacant expression on my face; I had left the building.

Emotionally I was unable to process and accept what was happening to me and shut down. I accepted being a victim because I thought that was all I was worth. These false scripts were being confirmed continually by family, peer and society. This set me up for a life of abuse. It seemed most men in my life only wanted me for their own sexual gratification. This left me feeling like a piece of meat and that I was worth no better treatment. They must be right I thought and pushed my true self down.

No surprise that the relationships in my life confirmed these false belief systems. Even though they made me feel bad it was all I thought I deserved, all I was worth. I choose relationships and work environments that reaffirmed how I felt about myself, how I deserved to be treated. The way you feel about yourself is the type of treatment you will accept from others. I placed myself around people and in situations that fit these false self beliefs I have about myself.

About 6 years ago I became depressed to the point that getting out of bed was difficult. At the time I was unaware of the journey of healing that lay before me. Something had to change and I reached out for help. I went to counselling and took anti depressive medication. The more I discovered about the abuse I was allowing in my life, the more I felt like my world was crumbling down around me. I ended the 15 year relationship with my then husband and started to find out who I really am way deep inside. The church I had been attending turned their back on me because I left my husband. Needless to say feeling alone and isolated I looked within.

I have discovered a lot about myself over the last several years. I have done meditation, journaling, crystals, chakra work, deep breathing, affirmations, aromatherapy, yoga, etc. but something was still missing. I had learned to love myself, worked on forgiveness and gratitude but something was still holding me back as my physical body was not healing. What was I hiding from? I firmly believe we hold our unresolved emotions in our bodies through aches, pain, illness and disease.

A few months ago my Friend Violet mentioned Amitabha Buddhist Retreat Centre that has weekend retreats. I felt drawn to this place, like something was calling me to explore Buddhism. I have never really thought much about Buddhism before. I believed in the concepts of karma, reincarnation, compassion, love for all beings but after being burnt by the Baptist church I had steered clear of organised spiritual groups.

My first visit to the centre was only one night and I could feel something shifted inside of me. All the knowledge and concepts of Buddhism seemed so natural, like second nature. I made a real connection. I started to practice chanting and reading the books provided by the Amitabha Buddhist Retreat Centre. It felt like I had always been chanting, it was so natural. Even my teenage son connected with the chanting and turned up the volume!

I was scheduled to attend the next full weekend retreat. My intuition was telling me to go but my mind was trying to make excuses not to attend even as I was packing and ready to walk out the door. Deep down I knew something was ready to let go, to move forward. I just had to open my heart and spirit to let it happen.

The weekend was full of light bulb moments full of insight and wisdom. I believed in karma and reincarnation but had never applied these concepts to my emotional healing journey. I opened my heart to forgiveness from past lifetimes to this lifetime and I did not need to know what I had done to collect the negative karma. With this wisdom my spirit and energy field around me expanded. I felt like I was flowing, that the energy was passing through me like a light breeze. I was light, weightless & my heart felt full of love and open to all in light.

I have found the missing link and able to continue my journey through the teachings at the Amitabha Buddhist Retreat Centre thanks to Celine's guidance. My journey is not unique. Our experiences, fears, self worth, hate, love are all universal and are part of the human conditions.

I share this personal story with the sincere wish and hope it can help those who may have similar experience like me and not give up or give in to dejection and despair. Listen to your intuition and have the courage to stand up and fight back so that you could move past those fears as I did. I hope my sharing this story will help guide you to the path that is right for you. We all deserved love, respect and self worth, and a good life that is with compassion, acceptance, forgiveness and abundance.

Trish M

Queensland

2016-05-25

Winds of Change

PARABLE 088" MAHASTHAMA BODHISATTVA

Surangama Sutra:

"Mahasthama, a son of the (Buddhas and) the head of a group of fifty-two Bodhisattvas, rose from his seat, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: 'I still remember that, in the remotest of eons countless as the sands in the Ganges, there was a Buddha called Amitabha who was succeeded by eleven other Tathagatas in that kalpa.

The last one was called the "Buddha Whose Light Surpassed that of the Sun and Moon"; he taught me how to realize the state of Samadhi by thinking exclusively of Amitabha Buddha. By way of illustration, *if a man concentrates his mind on someone else while the latter always forget him, both may meet and see, but without recognizing, each other.*

However, if both are keen on thinking of each other, their keenness will grow from one incarnation to another until they become inseparable like a body and its shadow. The Tathagatas in the Ten Directions have compassion for all living beings and always think of them, like a mother who never ceases thinking of her son.

If the son runs away, her thoughts of him will not help. But if he also thinks of her with the same keenness, they will not be separated in spite of the passing of transmigrations.

If a living being remembers and thinks of the Buddha, he is bound to behold Him in his present or future incarnation. He will not be far from the Buddha and thus without the aid of any other expedient, his mind will be opened. *He is like a man whose body, perfumed by incense, gives out fragrance*; hence his name 'One Glorified by (Buddha's) Fragrance and Light.

From my fundamental cause-ground and with all my thoughts concentrated on the Buddha, I achieve the patient endurance of the uncreate (Tolerance of Non-Birth.) This is why I help all living beings of this world to control their thoughts *by repeating the Buddha's name so that they can reach the Pure Land.*

As Buddha now asks about the best means of perfection, I hold that nothing can surpass the perfect control of the six senses with continuous pure thoughts (i.e. Buddha Recitation) in order to realize Samadhi.”

C.Luk/Suran: 134-135

Thus Have I Heard: Buddhist Parables

Readers' Enquiries or Comments

Hello

Could you please tell me the dates of upcoming retreats?
Thank you.
Catherine M. 2016-03-24

Dear sir,

i am interested on the retreat program stated in the website. And wish to check with the in-charge on the retreat schedule for this year. Please advise on the date, duration, cost and accommodation issue.

Thanks.
Your sincerely,
Ringo Tan (Singaporean) 2016-04-30

Hi Celine,

Here is my application for the 21 & 22 May 2016. We will be arriving at approx. 4pm on Friday afternoon and departing at 10am on Monday Morning. I am really looking forward to seeing you and Charles again.

Amitufo,

Violet x

Attention: Celine Richardson

Please find attached 3 Retreat Registration Forms for: Jean R....., Kirstie S..... and Alla B.....

I will also post them, as for some reason, the forms went astray on the first attempt to send them.

Kindest Regards
Jean 2016-05-10

Hi Celine (and Charles)

Thank you very much for your hospitality and generosity given to Alla and myself this weekend. We have benefitted so much from your wisdom, and hope with application, will help us live more productive and fulfilling lives both personally and universally.

We look forward to returning some time in the future to continue to build on to what we have learned.

Warmest regards, Jean R. 2016-05-23

Amitufo,Thank you for being part of my life and for sharing your values and beliefs with me. I love you, Celine. Amitufo.

Alla

P/S. I did not check my phone before leaving. Therefore, we did not take the (energised) water with us. It is a sign that we come back!!!

Messages and Announcements

2016 WEEKEND RETREATS:

02nd – 09th JULY 2016 - SEVEN DAYS RETREAT

17th – 18th SEPTEMBER – WEEKEND RETREAT

Weekly Sunday meditative sessions are over two hours which starts at 9 AM sharp and finishes just after 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 – 10.30 AM:	Parables Reading
10.30 AM – 11.15 AM:	Chinese Session (without Amituojing)



ABRC will be running its first **seven days** of retreat and this 7 days retreat have change and will now start from Saturday **2nd JULY**, starting each morning at **9 AM to 3 PM**. Please be advised that all Sunday meditation sessions and all retreats are run by Donation (DANA) only.



AMITABHA RAINBOW CONNECTION

Amitabha Rainbow Connection was created on 31st October 2015, which is an open site for seekers of truth wishing to learn about the Pure Land Buddhist teachings and spirituality.

As most of us know that there are indeed many pathways that help to unfold our spiritual awareness and awakening; but we need to understand that in order to evolve further, we would need to get involve. So sitting on the fence is no longer an option if we wish to move forward. With the sharing of good material of spirituality, whether with one or all and those from different background and diversity, we will mature further with our interacting and sharing to promote better understanding, peace, harmony and tolerance.

It is with this understanding that Amitabha Rainbow Connection strives to encourage caring interacting of friendship and goodwill with good, positive and wholesome postings on its facebook timeline with all those who have the affinity to connect in light.

Namo Amitabha. jusme.



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Web Links:

www.abrc.org.au

<http://abrc-newspress.org>

www.abuddhistperspective.org

www.howwillbehavetoday.org

<http://www.purelandcollege.org.au>

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

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