



Summer Newsletter

For the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

December - February 2005

A season of giving

"Light is an invitation to happiness, and that happiness when it's done right, is a kind of holiness, palpable and redemptive."

From 'Poppies' by Mary Oliver

Summer is our lived experience of light - a loosening up, our down-time: holidays, socializing, delicious foods, presents and the outdoors. Well nourished, eased from the sense of lack, enjoyment naturally arises. To help us wake up to this lived experience, as well as providing concepts (such as the metaphor of 'Enlightenment'), the Buddhist tradition offers us Ratnasambhava.

Ratnasambhava (the 'Jewel Born' or 'Jewel Producing One'), the Buddha of the Southern quadrant, is golden yellow in complexion. In his left palm he holds the wish-fulfilling jewel and his right palm is turned outwards. He is expressive of the Summer-like qualities of the

Enlightened mind - generosity that naturally acts from abundance, the warmth of a friend's company, appreciation, enjoyment and playfulness.

Wishing to bring the best of Summer into our lives, the Sydney Buddhist Centre offers affordable fees for our courses & retreats and we invite 'dana' (or generosity) for attendance at our ongoing activities. Although we provide limited support to some of those concerned with administration, leaders of our events and the many people who keep our activities running do so on a voluntary basis. We aim to operate on the basis of "mutual generosity"; give what you can and take what you need to give more.

The light dazzles as we retract from this challenge. Unclenching our fist to give is the principle act to transform our self pre-occupation; our



Ratnasambhava

pride that separates us from one another. We all need training with this. How freeing it would be to give by instinct.

Viraja

'May I be an imperishable treasure for needy beings. May I stand in their presence in order to do what is beneficial in every way ... I would be for all creatures a magic jewel, an inexhaustible jar, a powerful spell, a universal remedy, a wishing-tree, and a cow of plenty.'

From the Bodhicaryavatara

A focus on ritual in February

Bringing consciousness to our habits (our 'rituals') and exploring the training of ritual practice in Buddhism will be the theme of activities in February.

To assist us with this Lokabandhu, visiting from the UK, will give a public talk about Buddhist rituals as 'sacred play'. He will also lead a retreat with a strong emphasis on ritual.

Lokabandhu has been involved with the Buddhafield collective for over 10 years. Most recently he has led 'yatras', or walking retreats, along some of the ancient pathways of Britain, visiting many sacred places and performing ceremonies there. (see www.buddhafield.com)

Join us in February to engage our emotions and imagination through ritual.

Meditation sessions in late December

Saturday 24th Dec

- ☸ 9:00-10:00 (experienced)
- ☸ 10:30-11:30 (intro)

Sunday 25th Dec

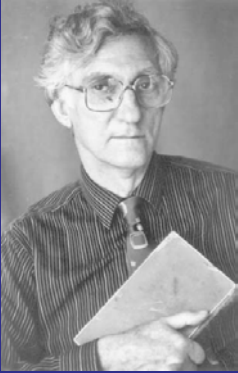
- ☸ 9:00-10:00

Wednesday 28th Dec

- ☸ 7:00-8:00pm

Sydney Buddhist Centre
24 Enmore Road Newtown

Phone: (02) 9519 0440
E-mail: info@sydneybuddhistcentre.org.au
Web: www.sydneybuddhistcentre.org.au



Sangharakshita
 Founder of the
 Western Buddhist
 Order

“Through ritual expression, not only do we externalize and make conscious our deep spiritual feelings; we also strengthen and intensify them.”

Ritual and Devotion in Buddhism

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The elements of Buddhist ritual

Buddhism is a path of transformation. This means that it is not enough to understand it intellectually. Following the Buddhist path means that we must engage the emotions and the imagination. To have that emotional engagement means having devotion or faith, and ritual is a way of directly engaging the emotions.

Buddhist rituals usually consist of three main elements: recitation, chanting and the making of offerings. The verses recited are usually associated with the principal tenets and ideals of Buddhism; and they give expression to the spiritual aspiration which makes someone a Buddhist. Buddhists usually chant in either Pali or Sanskrit (two ancient Indian languages) and chanting is a way of forging an heart connection with Buddhist ideals. Sometimes Buddhists chant mantras, Sanskrit phrases which are believed to be the verbal expressions of Enlightenment. Offerings usually consist of flowers, symbolising both beauty and impermanence; candles, symbolising the radiance of Enlightenment; and incense which pervades the air in the same way that the truth as experienced by the Buddha pervades the universe.

Source <http://www.fwbo.org/>

Find out more at Sangha Nights in February

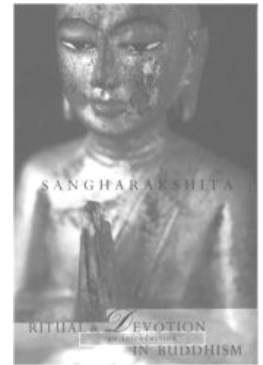
Recommended reading

Ritual and Devotion in Buddhism: An Introduction

By Sangharakshita

For many people in the West, devotional practice is a confronting aspect of Buddhism. Skilfully steering us through the difficulties we may encounter, Sangharakshita shows that ritual and devotion have a crucial role to play in our spiritual lives, because they speak the language of the heart.

Leading us through the Sevenfold Puja, a poetic sequence of devotional moods, he gives us a feeling for the depth of spiritual practice to be contacted through recitation, making offerings and chanting mantras.



Pujas (devotional practices) over Summer

- Wed 21st Dec (Mitra ceremony)
- Wed 25th Jan
- Sat 18th Feb (Parinirvana Day)
- Wed 22nd Feb

‘An ever widening circle...’

On Wednesday 21st December, Linda Kirkpatrick (pictured) will participate in a straight-forward ceremony to become a ‘Mitra’ (literally a ‘friend’) during the course of the Seven-Fold Puja (devotional practice).

Linda first encountered the Sydney Buddhist Centre when she attended an introductory course run by Shubhavyuha about three years ago. Since then she has developed a strong meditation practice and been a regular friendly presence on Wednesday Sangha Nights.

For Linda this is a significant public declaration that she is (or identifies herself as) a Buddhist, is making efforts to practise the Five Precepts and wishes to continue her spiritual life within the context of the FWBO.

The evening will begin with a short meditation starting at 7:10 followed by the Puja. Come and join us for this celebration.



Linda Kirkpatrick

What is Parinirvana Day?

"Please, Ananda, prepare for me a couch between the twin sala trees, with the head to the north. I am weary, Ananda, and want to lie down."

Thus begins the last few days of the Buddha's life as recounted in the Mahaparinibbana sutta from the Pali canon.

This moving sutta emphasizes the selfless unconditional love the Buddha had for his disciples. Despite a debilitating illness, the Buddha prolonged his own life to offer final words of encouragement to as many people as possible.

On Parinirvana Day (Parinibbana in Pali) Buddhists

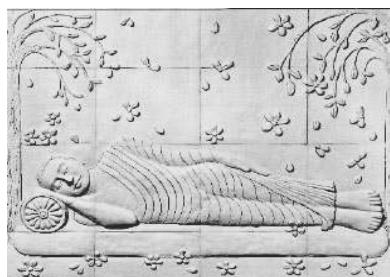
reflect not only on the inevitability of death but on the precious opportunity we have to practise the Dharma. We are encouraged to renew our spiritual efforts in light of our own eventual dissolution.

In addition, it is a time to reflect on significant people who have died. By placing pictures of departed family, friends and teachers on the Parinirvana shrine during the puja, we publicly acknowledge the precious gifts they have offered not only to us but to the whole world. At this time we celebrate the achievements and efforts of all those who have brought

'beauty, peace and courage to the world.'

The SBC is marking this time with two events. Please join us on Wednesday 15th Feb for a talk on the Parinirvana but more significantly for a puja to remember the Buddha's passing on Saturday 18th of February.

Steven Caldwell



"With firm resolve, guard your own mind! Whoso untiringly pursues the Dhamma and the Discipline Shall go beyond the round of births and make an end of suffering."

*Mahaparinibbana sutta
(Digha Nikaya 16)*

What's ahead in the 2006 program?

We have a full program of courses and retreats coming up in 2006, including two new week-long retreats at Vijayaloka and two six week Deepen Your Meditation seminars (the first one starting in late Feb with Chittaprabha and Khemadhamma).

I am excited about these meditation seminars in particular, which we are

holding to help people with an established meditation practice go deeper, because they include a special weekend meditation retreat at Vijayaloka (our retreat centre in Minto Heights, along the Georges river surrounded by bush). Most people find that their meditation practice goes deeper on retreat, and this is what we want to help you

explore.

Best to check our website to keep up with the full program, but we are also happy to add your address to our email circulation list. Just email us at the centre with this request, and then you'll receive the latest announcements about retreats and new courses in 2006.

Ratna



*Vijayaloka Retreat Centre
at Minto Heights*

Develop a healthy mind and body at the SBC

The Sydney Buddhist Centre offers ways to integrate spiritual practice as well as physical wellbeing through our Qi Gong, Yoga and Shiatsu sessions.

Qi Gong is a practice of flowing movements which develop balance, strength, awareness of body-mind connection, and our Chi (Qi or life energy). Jenny Cornish runs classes in five week

blocks and also runs weekend retreats exploring Qi Gong, energy work and meditation. Contact Jenny on 0403916778 for more details.

Paula Bruckard teaches Yoga to generate physical health, emotional and mental wellbeing and expanded spiritual awareness through integrating body-mind and breath. Paula's approach to Yoga values balance and

harmony. Contact Paula on 0411983723 for more information.

Incorporating Shiatsu and a variety of energetic bodywork techniques, Belinda Watson uses her 14 years of experience to provide individualised treatments. Contact Belinda on 0425222599 for appointments.



Students learning the Wild Goose form on a recent Qi Gong retreat led by Jenny Cornish

January Programme

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<p>In January there are retreats for members of the Western Buddhist Order and for men and women who have asked to be ordained. Our broader course offerings resume again in late January and early February. Please check our website for more details about our courses and retreats. www.sydneymbuddhistcentre.org.au</p>					☾ 31	1
				6	☾ 7	8
9	10	11 Sangha Night: Intro to meditation 7 - 9:30	12	13	☾ 14	15
16	17	18 Sangha Night: Intro to meditation 7 - 9:30	19	20	☾ 21	22
23 Yoga classes recommence ▲	24 Alexander Technique 4 wk course 7 - 9pm	25 Sangha Night: What is Puja? ☾ ★	26	27	☾ 28	29

February Programme

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
30 ▲	31	1 Sangha Night: What is ritual? ☾ □	2 ○ □	3	☾ 4	5 Learn to Meditate one day workshop 10-4pm
6 Learn to Meditate morning course 4wks Mon+Thur 7-8am ▲	7 Intro to Buddhism course 7 wks 7 - 9:30	8 Sangha Night: Talk by Lokabandhu ☾ □	9 Qi Gong recommences 5:45-6:45 ○ □		☾ 11	12 Ritual retreat with Lokabandhu (Begins Friday evening)
13 ▲	14	15 Sangha Night: The Buddha's Parinirvana ☾ □	16 ○ □	17	☾ 18 Parinirvana Day 9-2 ★	19
20 ▲	21 Deepen your Meditation seminars 6 wks 7 - 9:30 ▲	22 Sangha Night: Offerings ☾ □ ★	23 ○ □	24	☾ 25 Learn to meditate—Intro retreat	26 Buddha Mind study retreat
27 ▲	28	1 ☾ □	2	3	☾ 4	
Buddha Mind study retreat continues until 4th March						

☾ Saturday meditation sessions
9-10 (experienced)
10:30–11:30 (Beginners drop-in)

▲ Men's study night 7-9:30

○ Women's mitra study night



★ Puja (devotional practice)



☾ Older Women's meditation group
9:30–11:30am



□ Morning meditation 7-8am