



One Heart- One Mind

*The Newsletter of the Association
of Engaged Buddhists*

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Meditation & Dhamma Teaching

7.30pm every Monday night.

- Join with others in sitting practice.

7.30pm every Wed night.

- Meditation evenings include a Dhamma talk followed by around half an hour of guided sitting practice. Beginners or more experienced meditators are equally welcome.
- There is no charge for the teachings although donations are welcome as this is Sangha Lodge's only means of support.

Dana Days

Dana Days are held on the first Sunday of each month. Attendees bring food to offer to the Sangha and to share with each other. This is a great way to show respect for the Sangha and enjoy a delicious meal with others in the lay community.

Please note that we must start promptly at 10:30am in order for the Sangha to finish eating by noon. The next Dana Day will be Sunday, March 4, 2018

Association News

New Committee

Bhante's Health

Food Drive

Page 4

Film Review

Walk With Me

Page 3



Finding the Dhamma in our Everyday Lives

Dear Friends welcome to the first edition of our little newsletter for 2018 the Year of the Dog.

Custom dictates that we make various resolutions at the commencement of the New Year while experience tells us that very often these resolutions have been forgotten, neglected, and abandoned fairly quickly into the new year. We frequently feel disappointed and frustrated with ourselves and abandon any hope of real change. This is the way of the world. Should we then give up the whole idea of resolutions? Should we just accept that we cannot really do anything about our condition or indeed the condition of the world around us? Where would such a position lead us to, less or more dukkha?

The Buddha clearly and urgently encourages us to do otherwise. With his dying breath the Buddha encourages us to strive on with care, to keep moving forward seeking real liberation of heart and mind for ourselves and all suffering sentient beings. But how are we to do this?

The Buddha exhorts us to "always keep the goal before you". This is an encouragement to re-mind ourselves of what it is that we wish to arrive at despite the immediate dukkha we and others may be experiencing. Should we forget the real goal of Buddhist samsana or way of living/being then we will find ourselves floundering or sinking in the ocean of samsara. The Buddha tells us that when we find ourselves drifting in the sea of suffering we should re-collect or re-member (ANUSSATI) in order to bring ourselves back to the path. Traditionally in the suttas there are a number of recollections

which are recommended. These are, Recollection of the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Arya Sangha (Noble Community), of Sila (Moral /ethical conduct), of Dana or generosity of heart/mind.

This is not a dry list of topics to be re-called or learned by rote like maths tables but rather they are doorways for reflection. They are invitations to find these things within the world in which we live, in our families, friends and other human beings. We need to look mindfully to see the Buddha, Dhamma and Arya Sangha in the world around us. We must try to find Dana and Sila in action in ourselves and others. Where we find these things are absent then we are encouraged to establish them, to make them present, to bring them into being through our effort, perseverance and patience.

Continued on Page 2...

...Continued from Page 1

Opening our eyes and hearts to the world around us we look for these objects of re-collection or signs of all that is good, wholesome and beneficial everywhere. We must not restrict ourselves to only what appear to be “religious” or “holy” things, persons or events. Rather we look for signs of hope wherever they are to be found and take encouragement from them and foster their further growth for the well being and happiness of all.

Positive signs exist all around us if we have eyes to see, despite the serious suffering which also surrounds us. The rapid rise of interest in meditation practice gives reason for hope and optimism.

Even sometimes if we think it is not formally a “Buddhist” practise it is nonetheless surely a good thing. There is an old saying, “Better to light a candle than to curse the dark”. Dukkha after all is not an exclusively “Buddhist” experience. The Buddha spoke about Suffering and the ending of Suffering not “Buddhism”.

Here is a simple example of this.

The University of Massachusetts Medical School announced last week (December 14th 2017) that the department is now home to “what is believed to be the first-of-its-kind academic division focused on the study of mindfulness.”

The creation of a stand-alone Division of Mindfulness embedded within a Department of Medicine highlights how far the field has progressed and matured, and will create the infrastructure and support for researchers dedicated to furthering our neuroscientific knowledge of how the mind works, and for what medical conditions mindfulness is efficacious.

Surely this is a good thing, a movement in a good direction which may

encourage and assist in the overcoming of dukkha.

Naturally as disciples of the Buddha we would wish to see other aspects of Dhamma made available to all who suffer but if we look we shall see that these are also there in many and various forms.

You may think that the establishment of such a unit in a University Medical School is of little interest but the possibilities for ending dukkha and finding the heart of the Buddha through such an exploration should not be discounted.

In a dialogue between various researches and teachers in which the Dalai Lama was also involved the following exchange took place.

Alan Wallace: Attention training has broad applications. It would be helpful in the fields of education, mental health, and athletics as well as increasing individual creativity and problem-solving skills. And attention practice is crucial for cultivating the profound virtues of the heart and mind—loving-kindness, compassion, bodhicitta [awakened mind], and the realization of emptiness.

If, when anger or another afflictive emotion arises, you can say to yourself, “Never mind the object of my anger and the context - Isn’t this interesting?”. If you can investigate your own emotional state instead of merely reacting, you can also cultivate greater emotional balance and mental health.

Jon Kabat-Zinn: That kind of mind training allows you not to take things personally but instead to cultivate equanimity.

Daniel Goleman: All the techniques we’ve been discussing, Buddhists have known about and have been practicing for thousands of years. What’s interesting is that now scientists at places like Princeton are doing research on methods such as shamatha, asking questions like,

“Does it refine attention? Does it make attention more flexible?” The aim is to see if there’s something in the wealth of methods offered by Buddhism that would be useful for the general population, Buddhist or not.

Buddhist practices, such as loving-kindness meditation, incorporate the cultivation of positive mind states. Does this emphasis differ significantly from that of Western psychology?

Richard Davidson: From the Buddhist view, optimal mental health or well-being is not simply—as Western medicine defines it—the absence of disease or anxiety. It involves the active cultivation of certain kinds of positive mental states...

Rather than criticise such efforts because they are not in a formal sense “Buddhist” we should seek to explore and encourage those aspects which lead to, “cultivating the profound virtues of the heart and mind—loving-kindness, compassion, bodhicitta [awakened mind], and the realization of emptiness.”

The Buddha teaches that we can hear or find Dhamma expounded by many different people from small children through to our aged elders if we know how to listen and if we open the eyes of Dhamma.

Maybe this would be a good resolution for the year of the dog; to open my eyes and ears, to listen and to be watchful, to keep always the goal before me. “This is the middle way realized by the Tathagata that—producing vision, producing knowledge—leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Nibbana.” - SN 56. 11

Wishing you a very Happy and Blessed New year,

with metta, Bhante Tejadhammo



Walk with Me – An Invitation from Plum Village

Film Review by Mei Khing Ong

Ever wondered what day-to-day mindfulness practice is like at the well-known Plum Village, the famous meditation centre which is home to the monastic community founded by Zen Master, Thich Nhat Hanh in Dordogne, France? Well, *Walk With Me*, a documentary released in Spring 2017, aims to give an “insider’s portrayal” of what life is like in the centre.

It tells the stories of the monastics and lay community in Plum Village, and (much to the delight of Thich Nhat Hanh fans), gives sufficient screen time featuring the Zen Master, or “Thay”, as he is commonly addressed by his students, and his way of teaching.

The documentary opens with Thay leading a large number of his monastic and lay community in a mindful walk through a nearby forest. One could not help but be awed by the peace and serenity of the surroundings of the forest, and feel the togetherness of the community, thoroughly immersed in that peace and serenity and in each others company.

The 94-minute documentary portrays different events happening in the community, and even features ‘an American tour’ by Thay and some of his monastics. The events

are also poetically interspersed with a narration of the Zen teachings Thay is famous for.

One scene that was particular interesting was a visit by the monastics to a prison centre. There were dialogues between the monastics and the prison inmates, and it was quite amusing to hear of some inmates having the notion that their life in prison was more ‘liberating’ than that of a monastic! It was also interesting to see how one of Thay’s students described the Zen Master as being similar to the character Yoda (much to the delight of Star Wars fans :-)).

Another scene that gave a glimpse of Thay’s profound wisdom, was when he had a question from a young girl whose pet dog had recently died. The girl was keen to know what had happened to her pet after its death, and how to get over the sadness of the loss. Thay gave an answer that was as thought-provoking as it was comforting. He likened the scenario to the notion of how water transforms in form from a cloud in the sky, to rain, and to drinking water we use for tea, and how that cloud would then be represented in the tea we drink.

Overall, Max Pugh and Marc James Francis (as co-directors) gave an excellent account of life as part of the Plum Village community, and how they uphold the practise of mindfulness in everything that encompasses their daily lives.

However, one could not help but

feel at the end, that the screen-play could have had a better flow. It did leave the feeling that the entire documentary was a compilation of different events, rather than a continuously-flowing storyline from start to finish.

Also, as Thich Nhat Hanh is well-known for being a strong advocate of mindfulness in daily life, one could not help but feel that more emphasis could have been focused on how mindfulness could be applied in day-to-day activities in a ‘real-life’ setting, and not just in the environment of a meditation centre. Although, it is worth mentioning that there are some such scenes in the kitchen, related to food preparation, and (of course), to the ever-important notion of mindful-eating.

Nevertheless, “*Walk With Me*” did achieve its aim of giving a realistic and insider’s account of the lives and mindfulness practice of the people who have made Plum Village what it is today. No doubt, many viewers will leave the cinema with a deep feeling of peace and serenity, and fueled with a keen hope to be able to visit the famed centre one day.

“Walk With Me” is playing at selective cinemas across Australia, until 1-March.

Book your tickets online: <https://au.demand.film/walk-with-me/>

Watch the trailer: <http://walkwithme-film.com/>





New Committee

At the 2017 AGM, a new Committee was elected. A few of the members from the previous Committee stepped down – KK Lim, Lean Lee, David Wilson and Hong Chai Tan. We thank them for their contributions and efforts and hope they will continue to be just as actively involved.

The new Committee members are: Molly Lim (President), Sue Toohey (VP), Mei Khing Ong (Treasurer), David O’Rose (Secretary), Patricia McLoughlin (Guest teachers Coordinator), Lily Koo and Gus Reale.

Bhante’s Health

Bhante Tejadhammo has now returned to teaching on Wednesday nights and Dana Day. In fact he has been teaching for the past few months in 2017.

He is now preparing for his knee surgery, scheduled for Feb 20 after which he will need rest.

Let us give Bhante the time and peace that he really needs for a smooth and speedy recovery and jointly pray for his successful surgery.

Food Drive

Beginning in November till December, the Association organised a Food Drive, similar to our 2 previous efforts, collecting food and basic requirements for asylum seekers. These baskets of items were delivered to their centre in Newtown. It

all started with the initiative by John Wagner who is assisted by Alex Lee.

Sadhu, Sadhu, Sadhu guys.

Look out for the next food collection in May this year.

Vejjasala

Last year we lost our friend David Denton and his partner Pip who returned to Adelaide for family reasons. Both of them had been looking after Vejjasala and doing wonderful work there maintaining the building and property and cooking for our retreats. Thank you David and Pip. Vejjasala misses you.

Alex and his friends continue to look after the grounds with a maintenance weekend planned for the Australia Day Long Weekend. Thank you Alex and friends and keep an eye on your weekly email for notice of the next working weekend.

There were some fantastic retreats at Vejjasala in 2017 – a Yoga retreat with Sue Toohey, 2 retreats with Bhante Pandit and the end of year retreat led by Bhante Tejadhammo and Graham White.

Thank you to the teachers for their generosity, giving us their time and expertise.

Retreats could not have taken place without the food caterers. Thank you to Chris and Jan who catered for Bhante’s retreat and to Lean and friends who were there for Sue’s retreat and for Bhante Pandit.

Guest Teachers on Wednesdays

Thanks to the great efforts of Patricia, our Guest Teacher Coordinator, we continue to have a fantastic range of guest teachers. From August till end of the year, these teachers visited and taught at Sangha Lodge: Jill Shepherd, Jane Crancher, Ani Pema, Ven Akaliko, Giles Barton and Frank Patay.

Bhante Tejadhammo continues to be our Resident teacher and taught most of the Wednesday evenings.

The Association is blessed to have the support of so many good dharma teachers to share their experiences with the community.

Sadhu sadhu sadhu!

Monday Night Meditation

You may not be aware that we have meditation evenings on Mondays at 7.30pm. The evening starts with some chanting followed by 45 minutes of silent sitting.

It is a wonderful way to enhance your practice. No booking needed. Those interested please turn up by commencement time or phone 02-80217944.

The Monday night meditation will continue for the first quarter of the year. There are plans to bring in some changes to the format. Stay tuned.

Continued on Page 5...

Association News - Molly Lim

...Continued from Page 4

Volunteering Opportunities

In keeping with its mission, the Association can facilitate various programmes for members and supporters to volunteer for:

- Helping out at Sangha Lodge or Vejjasala for maintenance, cleaning, administration and other support duties
- Teaching English to student and adult refugees/migrants
- Visiting elderly people to help with daily chores or keep company

- Teaching Buddhism or ethics to children in primary schools

Anyone interested can seek further details by writing to office@engagedbuddhists.org.au

Engaged projects appeal

As part of our Association's philosophy and aims, we continue to look for projects that will involve us in more engaged activities with the community. If you know of any such projects, get in touch with us. We love to work with other groups rather than re-invent the wheel.

Drop us a line on our email: office@engagedbuddhists.org.au

Getting The News!

Do you know that the best way to keep updated on what the AEB does is to:

- put your name on our email list
- check the website regularly
- follow us on Facebook and Meet-up.

Molly Lim

January 2018

AEB Annual Picnic Sunday, 11 March



Venue

- Egret Pavilion, Sydney Olympic Park, Homebush <https://goo.gl/maps/svnJhCVkBTB2>

Date

- Sunday, 11 March 2018

Time

- 10am to 2pm

Our annual picnic will be on Sunday, 11 March 2018, from 10am to 2pm. The picnic is our gesture of appreciation to all involved in the Food Fair and to all our friends. There will be a BBQ, with satay and food provided. It will be at the Egret Pavilion, Sydney Olympic Park, Homebush.

For Your Diary

Yoga Weekend with Sue Toohey

- Vejjasala, Friday evening 20 April – Sunday afternoon 22 April. Registration opening soon.

History, Herstory, Our Common Story

- Mitra Buddhist Conference, March 3-4, 2018, Bryan Brown Theatre, Bankstown,

History is made up of stories of individuals, communities and events that shape the future and bind all of humanity together. The 2018 Mitra Conference brings together an impressive cast of speakers to explore and celebrate the stories of the past and the stories of today that make up our common story. Speakers include Ven. Ani Rinchen Khandro, Ven. Ayya Tathaloka, Ven. Thubten Gyatso, Ven. Ajahn Sujato, Ven. Bom Hyon Sunim, Ven. Ayya Yeshe, and more....Special video address by Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi. See <http://www.mitraconference.com> for tickets

Association Membership

You will find the Membership Application and Renewal Form on our website. Go to engagedbuddhists.org.au and look under 'About Us' – click on Join AEB.

If you are joining the Association for the first time, we welcome you to join as a Friend of the Association.

Friend of the Association

As a Friend of the Association of Engaged Buddhists, you will receive our newsletter every quarter by post or email, receive our weekly email, receive a discount on the cost of retreats at Vejjasala and have all the same rights as other members of the Association do, but you cannot vote at the Association's general meetings, nor be on the committee of the Association. After being a Friend of the Association for a year, if you renew your annual subscription you will automatically become a full member of the Association.

Member of the Association

As a Member of the Association of Engaged Buddhists, you are entitled to:

- Elect members of the organising committee;
- Vote on any significant matters affecting the Association at the Annual General Meeting;
- Stand for election to the organising committee;
- Receive a discount on the cost of retreats at Vejjasala
- Receive the newsletter every quarter and the weekly email.

Subscription

The annual subscription fee is \$60.00 (for both Friends and Members)

Payment can be made by cheque to:

Association of Engaged Buddhists

and mailed to:

Association of Engaged Buddhists
20 Victoria Street, Lewisham 2049.

Or a direct deposit to the bank account:

Account name: Association of Engaged Buddhists

Bank: St George

BSB: 112-879

Account No. 131 328 823

Please include some shorthand text identifying yourself and the payment reason in the online banking transaction comments field, such as: 'JSmith Membership'.

Also, email office@engagedbuddhists.org.au to advise us when the transfer has been made, or note in comments field in the form below if already done.

We hope you are keen to join or renew because we really appreciate your involvement and support.

Thank you.