



## Issue #1, Volume #4. Summer 2009

Mudita is designed to keep you in touch with Melbourne Buddhist Centre events and the activities of our Sangha. Welcome to this summer edition of our newsletter; we look forward to your feedback on the variety of contributions.

### What's On

Consider joining the Work Retreat on 25th and 26th January. Come along for one or both days to help prepare the Centre for the year and share time with sangha friends.

The first Introduction to Meditation course for the year, led by Saddhaviyaya, begins on 12th February; the first Aspects of Buddhism course, led by Jivita, begins on 10th February. Why don't you consider refreshing your understanding and join one of these popular courses?

Parinirvana Day, honouring the life of the Buddha, will be celebrated on 14th February.

The first residential retreats are over the Labour Day weekend, 6th to 9th March.

Remember to check [our website](#) for all up-to-date event information.

### Sudaya Appeal

#### Update from Jivita



The Sudaya appeal went out in a Mudita Special Edition in November. Within minutes of it hitting cyberspace I had three pledges emailed to me. Since then the funds and the pledges have been arriving steadily. So a BIG thankyou to everyone who gave and pledged, and to those who are already signed up from the last appeal.

We have not yet reached our target of \$24,000, so if anyone is still thinking of donating to the Sudaya appeal by Monthly Standing Donation or by a 'one off' payment, do please contact me (Jivita) at [timhehir@iprimus.com.au](mailto:timhehir@iprimus.com.au) and I will be glad to respond.

### A new Mitra for the Melbourne Buddhist Centre

#### A retreat report from November 2008

The Sangha Retreat was held in November at Millgrove, our most successful retreat venue. Many thanks to Maitripala who took on the organising and leading of this popular event. Maitripala also conducted the ceremony during which Pam Cornthwaite became a mitra. This joyful event was attended by both friends and family. The festive atmosphere continued into a shared lunch attended by retreatants and visitors together.



### From the New Year's Eve Day Retreat

#### Reflections on going forth by Sanjiva

During the recent New Years Eve day retreat I presented a talk on 'going forth', using my life story and changing lifestyles as an example. One of the questions asked was: 'how do you know when to make decisions that may have a big impact on your life, especially dharmically orientated decisions?'

I quoted my good friend Manjuvajra's advice about how to handle the highs and lows of Going for Refuge. He said 'at the HIGH choose the next path of commitment that is reasonably attainable but hard enough to keep the edge, especially when you fall back to the LOW — This tension then allows you to drop those unskilful or unnecessary things that cause that tension'.

The HIGH here is the time when your mind is settled, clear and focused. Usually for me these times are when on retreat, especially after some time on a solitary retreat. Choosing the next path of commitment is making a decision to actively engage in a new or deeper level of dharmic activity, like more meditation or taking up extra dharma study. The tension then is to sustain this increased activity, consistently.

Make sure the undertaking is a realistic and reasonable one, enough to stretch you but not break you. So when times get tough again, with some extra effort, you can still carry out your commitment. With practice, the unnecessary or unskilful things that stand in your way will gradually begin to drop or fall away.

As we start to deepen our practice by applying a more dharmically orientated approach to our lives, we can make real progress because, as Sangharakshita says: 'in the spiritual life what is needed is not negation but transformation, not evasion but progression'.

What was your dharmically orientated resolution for the New Year?

## Calling All Singers

### A request from Wendy Meddings

Many people love to sing but believe they can't sing well, or they are simply a bit shy. Well, this is the time to put those egos aside and come along and have a go.

A group of us are starting an *a capella* choir based at the Melbourne Buddhist Centre. We hope to put together a really varied repertoire, knock it into shape and then start sharing our talents. This could mean some fundraising for the Centre, and some performances at places such as nursing homes, community centres, prisons, anywhere people are isolated from the world and perhaps from the joy of music.



So forget the 'can't do' attitude, this is a great way to put our practice into action, give back something to the community and have good fun at the same time.

Where: Melbourne Buddhist Centre

When: Thursday 22nd January 1.00-3.00 pm. Enquiries: please email [wendy.meddings@aapt.net.au](mailto:wendy.meddings@aapt.net.au)

## A New Venture in Spreading the Dharma

### Buddhfield in Australia? by Geoff Warren

In 2008 some serious dialogue began about the possibility of beginning a Buddhfield in Australia. The UK FWBO Buddhfield model began small and then evolved later. For more information about Buddhfield UK, go to [www.buddhfield.com](http://www.buddhfield.com) ([Buddhfield](#)) From our small dialogues there has evolved some new information.

Following recent discussions held with Sangha members on retreat regarding Buddhfield in Australia, I have further information to share with those interested in establishing and being involved with Buddhfield Australia. I have researched the possibility of creating an Australian Buddhfield and linking it in to the Down To Earth Confest (DTE). I am a shareholding member of DTE and I attend their meetings. I also do volunteer work at the Confest site.

The general idea is to establish a Buddhfield Village within the DTE Confest festivals and take it from there. Activities would mirror those of the UK Buddhfield and would be a base to grow and learn from. This would be an ideal and inexpensive way for Buddhfield to begin in Australia.

Maybe an Australian Buddhfield Committee or similar, could be formed by interested WBO and FWBO members, and all information shared through existing Sangha and other Buddhist newsletters. With this in mind, I approached DTE merely for research purposes and here is what happened. At the last Directors Meeting for December 2008, I put to the committee the following question: How would they feel about the WBO/FWBO attending Confest and establishing a village called Buddhfield? Before asking the question I explained what FWBO was. I explained what Buddhfield was in the UK. This is their answer: 'The FWBO as Buddhfield attending Confest would be highly desirous and most welcome.'

Later I was approached by a woman who runs an area of Confest known as The Tranquillity area. She told me that this area is a strict no alcohol and drug area and is set-aside for people to experience meditations and other peaceful activities. She is more than happy to sponsor Buddhfield's first appearance. She invited Buddhfield to set up in her area. She felt that on what I had explained, that Buddhfield would be perfect and could enjoy doing meditation practices and also workshops and anything else it wanted to do such as sharing information on Buddhism and the Dharma in any format. I gave her my email address and assured her that I would keep her informed of Buddhfield's progress. The area runs a 'Bliss kitchen'. This encourages communal cooking and sharing of vegetarian meals and food to all.

I now wish to share this information and hand over to, ideally, an WBO/FWBO Australian Buddhfield committee or the like. Such a body could be established perhaps at the Melbourne Buddhist Centre? This would help to bring many Sangha members on board to ensure that Buddhfield in Australia takes off and gains its own momentum. I would be available to share information about Confest, and also to be a part of the new Australia Buddhfield organising group. Maybe this process can begin early in this new year, 2009? Any Sangha members who are interested could contact the Melbourne Buddhist Centre and leave their email addresses or email me directly; my email address is [ommanipadmehum@optusnet.com.au](mailto:ommanipadmehum@optusnet.com.au)

With Metta, Geoff Warren (Mitra, Dandenong Ranges Buddhist Community)

## An invitation from Padmasiddhi

*"LEAVE ALL EXPECTATIONS AT THE DOOR. PUT DOWN THE MYRIAD THOUGHTS AND TAKE UP THE PRACTICE"*

In August, Jivita and I began leading a monthly meditation practice day for Order members and Mitras. This addition to the Centre's program came out of a desire to provide the space (within our busy lives) to help us improve and deepen our practice of meditation. Observation and discussion with Sangha members has highlighted the fact that some of us really struggle to maintain a regular meditation practice, and our modern lifestyles can also make it more difficult to take part in retreats. So it is hoped that by providing such days we have created an 'oasis' within the heart of the city, to which you can bring your practice, whatever state it is in, and share a day together working on improving it.

It is worth reminding ourselves that the goal of Buddhism is to attain enlightenment — a state where we see and experience the true nature of reality and in so doing liberate ourselves from suffering. Such a goal can sometimes seem very lofty and difficult to attain.

But Buddhism provides us with the methods and means by which we can follow this path, and practising with others can help support our efforts. As an Order member or Mitra, committed to practising within the context of the WBO/FWBO, we have been introduced to a number of traditional meditation practices, which form part of our overall system of practice. Meditation is spoken of as being a direct method of working on the mind ... *'Meditation is the subjective or direct way of raising the level of consciousness. In meditation we raise the level of consciousness by working directly on the mind itself'...* (Sangharakshita in Subhuti's *A New Voice in the Buddhist Tradition*, published by Windhorse Publications, 1994).

No matter how long ago we had our introduction to meditation, progress requires consistent effort, sustained over time, for it to bear fruit and prepare our minds to see/experience reality. The first verse of the Heart Sutra reminds us of the important relationship between meditation and 'seeing' reality:

- The Bodhisattva of Compassion
- When he meditated deeply
- Saw the emptiness of all five Skandhas
- And conquered the bonds that caused him suffering

The practice day has been planned to offer a full day's retreat. It's an ideal opportunity to turn off the mobile, tell family and friends that you're out of contact between 10am and 6pm (barring emergencies of course), and give yourself over to just doing the program — one breath, one mental event at a time. Personally I love how the program flows from sitting to walking to sitting to walking and chanting to sitting, on into a shared lunch, then back into another cycle of practice that concludes with a seven fold puja. The entire day is conducted in silence, which adds support to our efforts to meditate and allows us to be with others in an alternative way to our daily lives. So if you are a Mitra or Order Member and would like to give your practice a boost, please consider coming along and join us, on the first Sunday of each month throughout 2009.

Yours in the Dharma, Padmasiddhi

## And another thing...

by Jivita

### A leap of Faith or a Slide into Sraddha

We westerners are very clever, there is no doubt about it — look at satellites for instance, and spreadable butter. We are so well educated and informed that we can venture opinions about just about anything (remind me to give you my thoughts on the Peruvian wool trade next time you bump into me at the centre).

So with that in mind, what we need is a religion or spiritual quest to match our intellect and understanding. 'It is a good job Buddhism is so rational,' many people say, with a sigh of relief, after coming to the centre for a while or reading a few books on the subject. It can be understood with the brain cells, it can be spun around in the space between your ears and still come out making sense — Buddhism's great like that.

But are we missing something here? Is too much rationality a trap for the unsuspecting dharma farer? Sangharakshita has said there are two mistakes we make when we go down the path marked 'Reason' with a blindfold on.

Mistake #1 is that we think that emotions are essentially irrational

Mistake #2 is that we think faith (sraddha) is the same thing as belief

Let us look at these for a moment. We may experience irrational emotions (i.e. not based on understanding) but emotion itself is not irrational. At its best, an emotion like faith (sraddha) is the emotional counterpart to reason. Your intellectual understanding is mirrored by an emotional response of faith and devotion. Ideally there should be no separation between the two.

This leads to the question of faith (sraddha) itself, not as a belief; that is, not in the sense of accepting something as true because someone in authority told you to. Sraddha arises when your heart opens up like a flower because your brain has realised something profound — suddenly the two organs are in communication with one another and this is when real progress begins.

How do we develop some faith and build some emotional equivalents to our intellectual understandings? Shantideva, the great 9th century Buddhist teacher had the answer: participate in a Puja.

So come along to a Puja on a Wednesday regulars night and try it out. I'll see you there.

## Poem

### Dantika and the elephant or Why I'd gone into the woods

Coming out from my day's abiding  
on Vulture Peak Mountain,  
I saw on the bank of a river  
an elephant  
emerged from its plunge.

A man holding a hook requested:  
"Give me your foot."  
The elephant extended its foot.  
The man  
got up on the elephant.

Seeing what was untrained now tamed  
brought under human control,  
with that I centered my mind

## News from the Publications Team

Here's a preview of the design of the new MBC logo. It will take some time for this



to appear on our publicity material and online. The results of much careful teamwork behind the scenes are now coming to fruition. Indeed the website will have a fresh new look soon, with much improved navigation and a clickable calendar. The next newsletter will have a new look also.

why I'd gone to the woods  
in the first place.



From Therigatha (ninth book of the Khuddaka Nikaya), Verses of the  
Elder Nuns Chapter III, Verse 3 (sourced from  
<http://www.vipassana.com/canon/khuddaka/therigatha/index.php>,  
accessed 27 December 2008)

Send any news items or images you can offer to [news@melbournebuddhistcentre.org](mailto:news@melbournebuddhistcentre.org) for inclusion in the next newsletter.

Don't forget to [visit our website](#).

© Copyright 2009 Melbourne Buddhist Centre, 1 Pitt St, Brunswick, VIC 3056.

Please forward this newsletter to friends and family. All rights reserved worldwide. Reprint only with permission from copyright holder(s). All trademarks are property of their respective owners. All contents provided as is.

Newsletters, including previous editions, may be accessed online at: <http://www.melbournebuddhistcentre.org/index/Read-our-newsletters>

To contact us with feedback, questions or praise, [email us](#).

This is an opt-in newsletter available by subscription only. We neither use nor endorse the use of spam. Thank you!

