

# Around this mandala...

The newsletter of the Triratna Buddhist Centre in Bristol



When someone asks "how's your practice going?" do you think about meditation? In fact everything we do, say and think shapes who we are becoming. Our Buddhist practice includes all we do to help us to clarify our

values and intentions and become more wholehearted and integrated around them, and all the ways we learn to abandon whatever attitudes, habits and patterns are unhelpful to our growth and thereby open to the energy and delight of something more than our fixed limited sense of ourselves.

Meditation is just one way of working with our minds. The ethical precepts give us a framework for working with our bodies, speech and heart-mind. The context of the Sangha and the Centre helps us start to trust and open and to know ourselves better, and can offer glimpses of what is possible when we practise together. Spiritual friendship is a path of inspiration, challenge and many opportunities for positive change.

Dwelling on the Dharma is crucial to exploring where our deep seated attitudes hold us back, giving us the chance to let in new ways of thinking, feeling and being which are more in line with reality. Look out for our new Dharma theme and reading week a really good opportunity for us to explore together the Buddha's teaching on conditionality.

Generosity is the fundamental Buddhist practice necessary as a foundation for meditation and study. It is a way of loosening our self-centredness and ideas of what 'I' need to hang onto, whilst opening to closer connection with others. It develops trust in ourselves and in karma when we experience the freedom and delight of giving. When we give within the Sangha, that also helps strengthen the Sangha by building our connections with each other. Sharing in the Sangha develops our confidence in the flow of give and take, and helps us towards a simpler life. We could all feel abundant if we were willing to ask for and offer help when needed it can be such a delight to share and help each other we could do that just for the love of it. We could be sharing lifts, kitchen equipment, DVDs, housework, childcare, skills.... and more. Do post your requests and offers on the notice-board; look out for an online version soon. Asking for help can also be a practice you might need to let go of an idea of yourself as separate and let in your connections with others.

Next time you consider "how's my practice going?" you could think about how kind you've been or how truthful, or whether your friendships are deepening, or how your understanding of the Dharma has changed, or what you've given lately or even what you've asked for!

Jvalamalini

## BUDDHA DAY

Being a relative newcomer to the Buddhist Centre I am experiencing many 'firsts'. The first time I entered the doors of the centre and felt a sense of 'coming home' and being in the right place. The first time I sat and meditated with a group of other meditators; the first time I witnessed a Mitra ceremony; the first course I signed up to.

I was lucky enough to have another 'first' experience by joining many others at the centre to celebrate Buddha Day, the day the Buddha gained Enlightenment. The shrine was suitably decorated with gold material; it shone brightly with yellow candles and was adorned with yellow flowers.

The day was led by Jvalamalini starting with The Mindfulness of Breathing. The second meditation was much more active with us being given the question of 'What do I want from this world?'

Lunch was a bring and share event. As a new vegetarian it's a great way to be able to try new food! It was heart-warming to be joined in the shrine room during the Puja by some parents with their young children. It was a joy to watch the children sit and be part of the ceremony. Other children and their parents joined in activities organised by Tracy.

Part of the afternoon was spent listening to talks given by several members - Mark, Sarah, Martin, Achalavira, Sarah and Khemajoti. A theme of fearlessness and courage emerged.

Another first was to experience walking and chanting at the same time. Feeling sounds vibrate through my body was very powerful, a different experience to singing.

As I write this a book is delivered for me "When Things Fall Apart" by Pema Chodron. The first



sentence I read is that there is a 'great need for maitri (loving kindness towards oneself), and developing from that the awakening of a fearlessly compassionate attitude towards our own pain and that of others'. That sums up what this day is all about.

Alyson Hurst

"Real conversations with others and shared rejoicing gently nourished me".

Martin Rimmer

"It was particularly lovely to hear folk speak who haven't 'stood up' in a Sangha context before as well as old friends too, of course!"

Satyalila

Six super talks, and a very moving puja - I loved every moment.

Daman

"Lovely to see so many friends and meet new people."

Dharmavajri

"The energy of so many people really made the day come to life".

Lewis Creaven

## SANGHA RETREAT AT ANYBODY'S BARN



This year's Sangha Retreat was bursting at the seams with a total of twenty of us squashed into Anybody's Barn! On the theme of 'Reverencing the Buddha, Revering the Dharma' led by Janaka and Satyalila. There was a great atmosphere which very much encapsulated what Sangha is about: practising together and deepening our friendships - stillness, kindness and definitely some fun!

Silajala



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'We need to  
hold  
ourselves  
open to the  
truth as the  
flower holds  
itself open to  
the sun'  
Sangharakshita





## GETTING TO KNOW SILAJALA

I've lived in Bristol since 1992 on and off, mostly on. I was ordained in 2001 and my name means 'he who is ablaze with ethical behaviour'

### Where do you live and who with?

Technically I'm homeless but currently live alone in a friend's flat in Horfield.

### And work?

One day a week for the Centre + odd jobs for friends, e.g. gardening.

### What is your involvement with the Centre & Sangha

My 'day a week' is aimed at helping men in the Sangha, intending to create more situations whereby we can come together more regularly and hopefully even begin some kind of right livelihood business. Also attending classes, events, as much as I can, and I'm on the team for the new Wednesday meditation class. Meeting up with folk quite a bit too.

### What is your favourite Dharma text?

Probably 'Living with Kindness' (Bhante) or 'Tales of Freedom' (Vessantara).

### What do you usually have in your pockets?

A handkerchief, keys and rubber bands!

### Which living person do you most admire?

Bhante

### What would you say was the most significant day of your life?

My public ordination.

### Porridge? Soaked Muesli? Or toast?

Certainly not soaked muesli! Definitely toast, and occasionally porridge, so long as I can have golden syrup with it.

### What was the most significant record/music of your teens?

Pre-teens I was into bands like the Stranglers, Blondie and other new wave/punk stuff. In my mid teens I liked slightly gothic type stuff, but also indie bands like The Smiths, then later it was 60's stuff like Hendrix, The Doors and The Velvet Underground. Mainly what I've always liked is the energy behind the music anything which pushes the boundaries and questions life, I guess. I like more mellow stuff too, so long as it's got depth and a sense of 'soul'. I also really like disco and funk!

### What's your favourite image of enlightenment?

I like a lot of Aloka's stuff so it would probably be either his Shakyamuni in our shrine room, or one of his Green Taras.

### What do you most regret?

When I was a boy I was once particularly cruel to an animal and that still stays with me with sadness. Though I was only a child I still feel regret for the harm I did.

### What things in life that you value most?

Kindness, honesty, empathy, forgiveness

### What got you through the doors of the Buddhist Centre in the first place?

I had been wanting to learn to meditate for a couple of years, because I'd been to see a spiritual medium and she said I was going to be a healer. I asked her 'how do I become a healer?' and she said that I should learn to meditate. So I set out to learn meditation and ended up Silajala!

## HEART OF DEVOTION COURSE

For the happiness of all beings; for the benefit of all beings; with body, speech, and mind... For eight weeks we've been exploring ritual and devotion in Buddhism as expressed through body, speech and mind. This has been an experiential course where we've been able to explore and experiment with different approaches to devotion and to connect with our deepest loves.

Devotion through Body involved exploring bowing and prostrations (doing cartwheels was also encouraged!) as well as shrine building. You may have noticed the shrine we built together that was under the painting of Green Tara. We all brought an object and an offering to place on the shrine something that represented what we most deeply revered.

Devotion through Speech included singing the mantras of the eight Buddhas and Bodhisattvas at the end of the 7 fold puja. We also learnt their 'mudras' (the shapes they make with their hands and bodies) and tried to do them ourselves reflecting on their significance (for example Pranjaparamita's mudra is of 'turning the wheel of the Dharma'). We also explored the seven-fold puja and the meaning of the words we say.

With devotion through Mind we explored the different 'moods' in each section of the seven-fold puja. What is the significance to each of us of the Worship section for



example? And how can we express the 'mood' of that section in a different way?

All in all it was a rich course which helped us all reconnect or deepen our connections with what matters most to us. A big Thank-you to Karunavapi for leading the course. "it was heartfelt and allowed us all to explore our own responses to the opportunity to honor and worship" (Thanks Tim!)

"To bow to the fact of our life's sorrows and betrayals is to accept them; and from this deep gesture we discover that all life is workable. As we learn to bow, we discover that the heart holds more freedom and compassion than we could imagine." — Jack Kornfield

Beth Jones

## CLASS 4J AVALON SPECIAL SCHOOL VISITS THE BRISTOL BUDDHIST CENTRE



Dear Karunavapi

Thank you for letting us come to the Buddhist centre on the 5th of March.

We had a good time with you.

I liked standing next to the red fire Buddha picture the best.

From Jordan Mason

## INTRODUCTORY RETREAT AT ANYBODY'S BARN

I have been meditating regularly for just over a year and have never been on a retreat, so I decided to go after listening to an excellent talk at the centre. I found the whole experience really inspiring, it was way more social than I was expecting and I really enjoyed the balance between organised workshops, meditation and free time. The location is awesome, walk 5 minutes in any direction and you're right in the middle of a beautiful scene, either through orchards, bluebell woods or looking out across the Worcestershire countryside with the Great Malvern hills perfectly inset.

Jae Task

