

# Peace and practice

Chris MacLachlan

Chris is currently resident manager and a teacher at BMIMC. Together with Tara, he has been closely involved with the establishment of the Centre. He has practised satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā meditation for many years, in Burma, Nepal and Australia, with Sayādaw U Paṇḍita and other senior sayādaws.

The Buddhist practice of meditation is the practice of mind development. The ultimate goal of this mind development, or purification of mind, is total peace, what the Buddha called *Nibbāna*.

There are three types of peace:

1. conventional peace (*sammuti santi*)
2. momentary peace (*tadaṅga santi*)
3. total peace (*accanta santi*)

Conventional peace we strive for in our daily lives without any practice; there can be inner peace and outer peace, but can there be sustaining outer peace if there is no true inner peace? If we do not have inner peace how can outer peace manifest? It can't.

If our minds are in turmoil, if we are stressed, angry, depressed, sad, lustful or frustrated, there is no space for peace. Peace cannot co-exist with these negative or unwholesome mind-states.

If we are lacking in peace we can recognise this through the experience of our feelings, thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations and actions. We can often recognise another's anger or non-peaceful mind-states by their looks, words and actions, by their body language.

In our everyday lives we spend a lot of time and energy trying to get peace. Mostly we attempt this by conventional means and aspire to conventional peace. Often we think if we have things, or orchestrate situations to be as we would like them to be, then everything will be OK. "If I have what I want I'll be happy. I'll be at peace—the new car, the perfect partner, the holiday house, the holiday, the plasma TV. Then I'll be satisfied."

This pursuing of desires is driven by discontent and what we find is that it doesn't work. It doesn't create contentment. (The consumerist system we live in depends upon and thrives on discontent). The commentaries put one cause for arousing equanimity, which is a very peaceful mind-state, as having a balanced attitude toward things, property. This is because the more we accumulate the more we want and the more we

Peace and practice .....	1
From the manager .....	4
Retreat highlights .....	5
Spring appeal .....	7
Course schedule .....	Insert

*The monk looks for peace within himself, and not in any other place. For when a person is inwardly quiet, there is nowhere a self can be found; where, then, could a non-self be found?*

*There are no waves in the depths of the sea; it is still, unbroken. It is the same with the monk. He is still, without any quiver of desire, without a remnant on which to build pride and desire.*

Sutta Nipata 919-20



become attached to what we have. And the more we are attached the more we suffer—this is the Buddha's Second Noble Truth.

Of course this doesn't mean we can't have and enjoy objects that make our lives comfortable and pleasant. But a balanced mind, free of attachment toward these possessions, is what will free us up.

The Second Noble Truth makes it clear: our craving and attachment is the direct cause of our suffering. The Third Noble Truth states that the end of craving is the end of suffering. Ajaan Cha made the point well:

*If you let go a little, you will get a little peace,  
If you let go a lot, you will get a lot of peace,  
If you let go completely, you will have complete peace.*

This sounds very appealing—even getting a little peace and contributing that to a world sorely in need of more peace. As Sayādaw U Paṇḍitā says, “We meditate to contribute to peace in the world.”

Walking the Buddha's Middle Path, putting this mind development, as outlined in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, into practice we can develop momentary peace that gradually accumulates, changing our lives at the deepest level and making a very real contribution to peace in the world.

Followed through to its conclusion, the Buddha taught, it is possible to reach the goal of total peace, Nibbāna. At the beginning and end of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the Buddha said:

*Monks, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of dukkha and discontent, for acquiring the true method, for the realization of Nibbāna, namely, the four satipaṭṭhānas.*

The gross suffering that we witness in the broader outer world as well as the unsatisfactoriness we experience at times in our subjective inner and outer worlds can be the springboard to practise developing a peaceful mind, and make a difference – to the inner and the outer, to the self and the other.

The three trainings that the Buddha taught in his first discourse and contained in the Noble Eightfold Path are Ethics, Mind Development and Wisdom. We establish an ethical framework in our lives that develops and grows. It becomes more and more refined the more we practise it and work on it.

We are already then contributing to peace as we endeavour to be more loving, kind, generous, compassionate, sharing and respectful. From this ethical foundation we are well prepared to embark on the journey of mind development and wisdom. This is where real peace is established.

Through the practice of effort, mindfulness and concentration we are able to see directly the unsatisfactory mind-states as they arise. We can also see their cause for arising and begin to get some insight into the process that blocks our access to peace.

The Buddha's way of mindfulness means to be content with the experience of the moment, just to be present with it. One thing that then happens is that equanimity begins to develop. There is just this and now there is just this and now this.

When we don't struggle against something, but accept it as the reality of the moment, and then with equanimity accept its passing away, it becomes a moment of grace, a moment of peace.

There can be an easy, refined movement of the mind toward the object of observation as it arises and then non-identification, non-clinging, as it passes away. So the mind is softening, becoming more equanimous and more peaceful.

At the same time the mind is becoming sharper and more insightful. At every moment of Right Mindfulness the other factors of the Path are present, and momentary peace is achieved. And the accumulation of momentary peace will result eventually in total peace.

So how does this happen? What is it about mindfulness that purifies the mind and creates peace?

When we are meditating we are observing what is happening in each successive moment. As some object of observation arises we must be right there on the spot to be aware of the nature of the object as it arises and keep our attention on it for its duration until it passes away. Then we are right there mindful and clearly comprehending the next arising object and by maintaining this process as continuously as possible, concentration develops.

Attentively watching the phenomenon at the moment it arises, its intrinsic nature will be penetrated and understood. We see the characteristics of impermanence and unsatisfactoriness, and the cause/effect relationship.

Unskillful mind-states will gradually be overcome through this process of understanding, and the momentary peace experienced will accumulate.

*Just as a deep lake is clear and still, even so, on hearing the teachings and realizing them, the wise become exceedingly peaceful.*

Dhammapada 82



Unwholesome mind-states (*kilesas*) cannot co-exist with wholesome mind-states. Because we are not allowing any unwholesome mind-states to arise the mind is kept bright, clean and luminous.

A useful way to understand how mindfulness purifies the mind and develops peace is to consider what happens in the body and mind.

As an example let us say we are sitting practising our meditation. A dog barks. The sound impinges on our ear drums. Hearing occurs. We find it disturbing, unpleasant, and get into a whole internal dialogue about the dog, the noise, the dog's owner who allows the dog to bark during the night, how this has disturbed our practice – many mind-states of anger and aversion. Definitely not peaceful!

Now let's consider how the diligent meditator deals with the same situation. The sound of the bark contacts the ear drums and there is a following unpleasant feeling. At either the contact point or the arising of feeling we can be fully present for it, mindful and concentrated on it. If these qualities are developed enough we will not get caught up in all the reaction. We will nip it in the bud, so to speak. We let go. It will pass away, and we will be there in the next moment for the next object that arises.

So, we had the same experience in both instances. The difference is that in the first example we generated stress, anger, aversion etc and in the second we cut off the identification, craving and aversion. The result was a peaceful mind—this is momentary peace. We can do this with any phenomenon that presents itself to us at any of our five sense doors and our mind.

Just watch what happens when you see something, touch something, smell, taste, hear or think something. Depending upon whether it generates a pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feeling there will be a reaction to the feeling that is fuelled by desire or aversion, or in the case of neutral feeling, ignorance. These are the three root causes of all of our problems and if we can skillfully avoid them we will avoid suffering and bring real peace into our lives.

Let's look now at another form of meditation that encourages and develops peace. This is a concentration practice as distinct from insight practice or *vipassanā*, but one that nevertheless is highly compatible. *Mettā* meditation is loving-kindness practice which can be very beneficial for creating peace in one's heart/mind and in the outer world.



By repeating certain heartfelt phrases of loving-kindness toward oneself and other beings the heart/mind becomes gentle and spacious, moving away from anger and toward peace, away from heat toward coolness. This is the ultimate cool because it's egoless.

There's nothing there to heat up.

*Mettā* can overcome the anger, fear, frustration and judging mind-states that proliferate when we come in contact with something that is most unpleasant, or in some cases even only mildly unpleasant. Instead of being lost in our anger we deliberately generate wholesome mind-states of loving-kindness. The

Buddha said,

*Hatred can never cease by hatred  
Hatred can only cease by love  
This is the Eternal Law.*

Loving-kindness (*mettā*) is one of the Four Divine Abodes (*Brahmavihāra*). The other three are compassion (*karuṇā*), altruistic or sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*).

Each of these four mind-states can be intentionally developed and directed toward oneself and others. In doing so the mind becomes pervaded with the particular quality (loving-kindness, compassion etc) as it becomes more spacious, developed, unbounded and free from self-reference and enmity. As well as intentionally developing these states they also develop naturally through *vipassanā* practice.

In more traditional settings, as in Burma, *mettā* is also one of the four guardian meditations often recommended prior to practising *vipassanā*. These four guardian meditations are:

*Buddhanussati*— the recollection of one or more of the nine main qualities of the Buddha – 'holy, fully enlightened, perfect in knowledge and conduct, a welfarer, world-knower, the incomparable leader of men to be tamed, teacher of gods and mankind, the awakened and exalted one'. This generates faith, energy and joy, and overcomes fear and assists endurance of painful sensations.

*Mettā bhāvanā*—practised by radiating loving-kindness to oneself or another or all beings. This generates amity, friendship, and overcomes ill-will, anger and dissatisfaction.

*Asubha*—contemplation of loathsomeness of the body by reviewing the 32 parts of the body or one or several of them. This overcomes attachment to one's own or others' bodies, pleasurable thoughts, visions and feelings.

*concluded on page 6*

*This is peace, this is the excellent, namely the calm of all the impulses, the casting out of all basis, the extinction of craving, dispassion, stopping, Nirvana.*  
Anguttara Nikaya v.322

# From the manager

Chris MacLachlan  
Manager

Hello to all the BMIMC Sangha—all of you who have practised at the Medlow Bath Centre and those of you who have given your generous support in many ways to keep the Centre running and helped it to grow.

We have been operating now for several retreats with the new accommodation and larger dining-room providing a more suitable environment for yogis and staff. Even though we are well into Spring the weather occasionally turns very cold and the central heating in the new accommodation has been greatly appreciated. Many thanks to all those who generously gave to the appeal to get the rooms heated. It is a noble endeavour to provide good support for people to practise the Buddha Dhamma.

Between Michael's October long-weekend retreat and Steven and Lynne's 9-day retreat we had three weeks of wet weather. As much as the garden responded to the rain the painting of Sāsana House, scheduled for the Dhamma Service weekend, was looking doubtful.



Then, on the Saturday, with many willing volunteers up for the weekend, miraculously the sun came out.

We managed to get a lot of the outside of the house painted (one coat at least) on Saturday and when the rain came back on Sunday we moved under the cover of the verandahs to paint there. It was a terrific effort by all, including

those who chose to garden, Spring clean and cook over the weekend. Having time to catch up with each other over meals and opportunities to sit together, and listen to a Dhamma talk together gave us all a real sense of being part of a larger sangha than the one we operate in from day to day - a big thank-you to all. May you be well, happy and peaceful.

During Sayādaw U Lakkhaṇa's November retreat it has been encouraging to have so many Burmese devotees come along and offer lunch dana and pay their respects to Sayādaw. The day becomes a feast of Burmese food for yogis and staff and an opportunity to catch up with old friends. At BMIMC we are all very grateful and happy to see the involvement

of the Burmese community in the Centre – as supporters and, of course, as meditators. My first duty of the day was to ring the “wake-up” bell at 4.30 and most of the yogis were already up and practising long before I struck the first gong.



We are currently going through some staff changes at BMIMC. Committee member Robyn Howell joined us early in November for a short spell on staff until she sits the December retreat before returning home. Her fabulous cakes and desserts, and her company, will be missed. John McIntyre, also from the committee, continues to come most Fridays and takes on the office duties while working on projects like the newsletter—many thanks, John.

Donald stayed on since returning last May but has now decided to leave after securing a local work contract. His intentions remain to build his house nearby in Medlow Bath. We wish Donald success in his future ventures and thank him most sincerely for his energetic input here, particularly in the garden.

In December Tara is going to practise in Nepal at Panditarama, Lumbini for a few months and I will be joined on staff by Beth Steff and Darren Procter. Beth has been meditating and serving here for quite a while now and feels ready to commit herself to a period of Dhamma service. Darren follows his brother, Steven, who many will remember as manager (with Linda) for three years from 1997 to 2000. Darren is a very committed practitioner who ordained and practised in Burma for over two years recently.

Darren and Beth bring a lot of enthusiasm and a variety of skills that I'm sure will contribute most positively to the running and nurturing of the Centre. We extend to them both a very warm welcome and look forward to them joining our Dhamma family. I'm sure all the yogis who come here to practise will be looked after well by them.

By the time the next newsletter comes out I too will be off to practise overseas for an extended period (in Burma at Sayādaw U Paṇḍitā's forest centre). I take this opportunity to say how much I have enjoyed and appreciated the opportunity to serve at BMIMC. My rewards are seeing so many yogis coming and reaping the benefits of the Dhamma, seeing the Centre grow and knowing that I benefit from playing a small part in that.

# Retreat highlights

*Tara MacLachlan  
Management Committee member*

As always at BMIMC one of the challenges for the committee is to offer a balanced and interesting schedule of retreats to appeal to the many different people who come here and practise meditation.

As the focus of the centre is practice in the tradition of the late venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw our teachers all provide teachings within this tradition. However, each teacher brings their own particular flavour and understanding of our tradition to a retreat. This maintains a connection to the Buddha's teachings through the very direct and profound Mahāsī practice yet allows for yogis' personal preference in their 'flavour' choice.

Since the early days we have always invited senior Mahāsī meditation monks from Myanmar. They are a great inspiration for many yogis and offer an unsurpassable knowledge and experience of the practice. The first teacher in this tradition to come to Australia on our invitation was Sayādaw U Paṇḍitā. We also have hosted Sayādaw U Kundala, Sayādaw U Janaka, Sayādaw U Lakkhaṇa, Sayādaw U Dhammapiya, Sayādaw U Pannadipa and Sayādaw U Paññāthami, whom we sponsored as our resident teacher for several years.

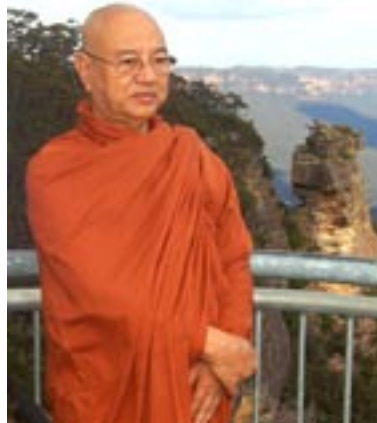
While I am sitting here in the office, Sayādaw U Lakkhaṇa (top right) is giving interviews in the room next door. Sayādaw has been here a number of times, his first teaching visit being in 1986 in the pre-BMIMC era. This year is the first time we have run a retreat solely for Burmese speaking yogis—though we've had many Burmese practising at BMIMC and been fortunate to have had the support of the Burmese community over the years.

It's a special opportunity for the meditators who are practising with family and friends, having their Dhamma talks given without the interruption of a translation and enjoying a full Burmese menu (although many 'Western' yogis are more than happy to partake of the delicious Burmese food). Sayādaw will teach a second retreat in December with a translator. This format was suggested by Sayādaw last year

and has proved to be very successful. So we have already confirmed the dates for a similar program in 2006, with two ten day retreats in November.

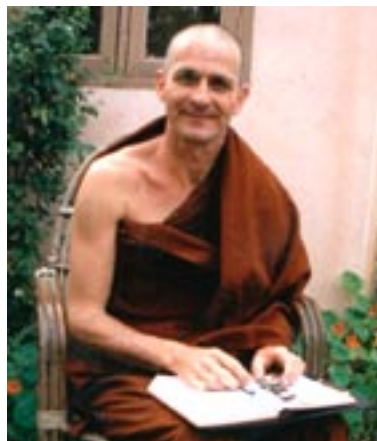
Sayādaw U Paññāthami continues to come to the centre in the midst of a busy international teaching program. He will be teaching two retreats next year. He has excellent English and his long residence here has given him a great understanding of the idiosyncrasies of the Aussie yogi.

We also have been working on the organization of a longer retreat with the abbot of Panditarama, Lumbini in Nepal, Sayādaw U Vivekananda (left centre).



There was an article about Sayādaw and the centre in our Autumn/Winter 2003 newsletter. After some negotiations we have confirmed a 40 day retreat in 2007. This is a special opportunity that is being made available to the serving committee members and lay teachers to deepen their practice. We will also have a few spare places available and will be keeping a short list of interested yogis, with preference given to full time positions.

Next year we are happy to welcome back Venerable Sujiva, a Malaysian monk who has previously taught at BMIMC. He will be here for a 9 day retreat in July. This means the month self-retreat has been moved forward to June. The Venerable Pannyavaro has been a long time regular teacher here and is kindly taking time from his duties up north at Bodhi Tree Forest Retreat to come in December next year.



We are also very fortunate to have the Venerable Ariya Ñāṇi at the centre for two retreats, the 4 day Easter retreat followed a few days later by a 9 day retreat. Combining these back to back retreats also creates a more extended retreat possibility, and we hope to negotiate a similar format with her in the future. Ven. Ariya Ñāṇi's commitment to the robes as a Western nun and her Dhamma practice and knowledge is very inspiring, perhaps most particularly for Western women yogis.



We also continue to invite a number of lay teachers. Most notable this year was the retreat with Steven Smith and Lynne Bousfield (above). Steven is a very experienced teacher with many years of practice as a monk and lay person. The retreat was very popular and attended by several experienced yogis who had practised in the past

# Dhamma service at BMIMC



Thanks to all the supporters who came to the Dhamma Service weekend, October 14 - 16 to clean and paint Sāsana House. Thanks also to our marvellous cooks and kitchen assistants who continually support the practice of yogis with their delicious and nutritious meals. *Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!*



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## ***Peace and practice***

*Maranānussati*—contemplation on death. It causes diligence and helps with the perception of impermanence. It also overcomes the fear of death while instilling a sense of urgency (to practise) – *saṃvega*.

The Burmese Sayādaws recommend two minutes be spent on each of the four guardian meditations before practising *vipassanā*. These are very useful when there are powerful kilesas that could make the yogi give up early on their *vipassanā* practice. They contribute to mind-states of faith, joy and happiness in preparation for the more arduous task of *vipassanā*.

The Buddha taught that it is possible to achieve total peace, *Nibbāna*, in this very life, and that the first realization of this completely uproots sceptical doubt, wrong views, attachment to rites and rituals and breaks the cycle of endless rebirths, *saṃsāra*. The yogi is then left with only seven more rebirths and these do not occur in any of the lower realms.

Unwholesome mind-states (those rooted in attachment, aversion and delusion) are also greatly weakened. Adherence to the five precepts of right living is firmly established and the practitioner is irreversibly set on the path to total peace.

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## ***Retreat highlights***

with Steven and formed friendships with him over the years. It was also an inspiration for the newer yogis. It was a great pleasure to see Steven here again and to have Lynne teaching in this longer retreat format.

Lynne was on the committee for many years and is a dedicated Mahāsī practitioner and teacher. We are planning two retreats in October 2006 with Steven and Lynne and hope to continue with at least one ongoing yearly retreat with them.

Patrick Kearney, another past resident teacher, continues to lead the January month retreat and has already agreed to come again in 2007. Patrick is a very popular teacher and shares his scholarly knowledge of the Buddha's teachings and many years of meditation practice. The weekends will continue to be led by some of the experienced meditators on the committee as well as by Michael Dash and Lesley Fowler, two long term Mahāsī meditators.

There are some other new teacher possibilities in the wings. As teachers become well known and popular we have to organize our retreats well in advance to make sure we can enlist their Dhamma service. We continue to pursue a program with the best teachers available.

# Heating Sāsana House

John McIntyre  
Management Committee member

This Spring we have sent supporters a letter appealing for donations to the Building Fund in advance of the newsletter. We followed the same practice in May this year for the Vesak appeal.

The goal of the Vesak appeal was to raise funds to properly heat the new student accommodation so it can be used comfortably year-round.



The response was, as we have come to expect, very heartening. In the period 1 May to 3 October overall, donations to the Building Fund were \$15,535. This included numerous donations following retreats specifically in appreciation of the heating!

These donations and a generous short-term loan meant that we were able to move quickly to complete the installation of a gas-fired system. The cost of boilers, radiators, fittings and installation was approximately \$13,000. The system is similar to the one in the meditation hall and heats both buildings from a common boiler – yogis now have a warm hall and cozy sleeping quarters in the colder months.



So it is now true to say that the accommodation buildings are fully in use – painted, carpeted, furnished and heated. However, we are still paying for this completed work. We have the short term loan of \$12,000, which is due next year, and a number of longer term loans, which we are hoping to begin servicing soon— although, our total loan debt was

recently reduced with one of our long term loans generously donated back to the centre.

Now that students' rooms are heated, we would like to think about heating Sasana House for the comfort of teachers and staff. It is estimated that this will cost about \$12,000 for the same kind of gas-fired central boiler and radiators. Your donation to this year's Spring Building Appeal will help make this possible, and will also contribute to the ongoing loan repayments that we will need to make in the coming year.

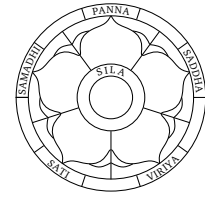


Although, our total loan debt was recently reduced with one of our long term loans generously donated back to the centre.

If you haven't yet replied to our Spring appeal letter, it is easy now to complete the form at right and mail it back to us.

As usual, all donations to the Building Fund are tax deductible and a special receipt will be issued. If you wish to discuss a donation, please contact the manager on 02 4788 1024. *Thank you.*

Right: Sayādaw U Lakkhaṇa visits the Australian Buddhist Vihara at Leura



## Spring Building Appeal 2005

I would like to donate -

- \$20
- \$50
- \$100
- \$200
- \$500
- \$.....

to the BMIMC Building Fund.

*All donations to the Building Fund are tax deductible. A special receipt will be issued.*

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Signature .....

Please post to:

25 Rutland Road  
Medlow Bath NSW 2780

*Thank you.*



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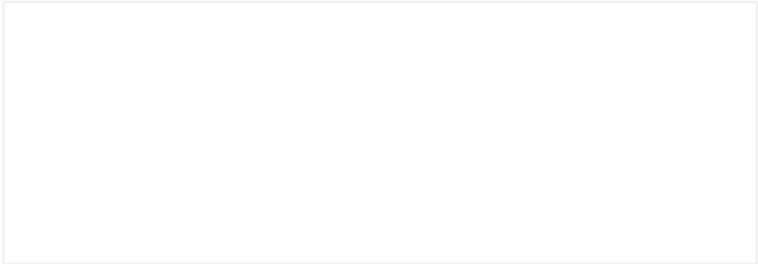
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