



BLUE MOUNTAINS INSIGHT MEDITATION CENTRE
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SATIPAṬṬHĀNA DHARMA GATHERING, 2015

The fourth annual Satipaṭṭhāna Dhamma Gathering was held in November 2015 and we again thank Patrick Kearney for leading this important event in the BMIMC calendar. Patrick indicated he would be open to participating in two gatherings next year.

Sutta study was combined with review of the Centre's direction and its position in teaching and the spread of the Australian Buddha Dhamma. There was a strong sense of generosity and mutual support as well as gratitude for all that has been developed and achieved. There was both lucidity of expression and the liveliness in group discussion.

Sutta study focussed on early texts on samatha & vipassana to develop a rounded sense of the Buddha's twin projects of cultivating the heart (*citta bhavana*) and developing wisdom (*pañña bhavana*).

The group revisited the debate about secular mindfulness, exploring how the *sati* of the Buddha became the 'mindfulness' of mindfulness-based-interventions (MBIs). It considered how the secular practice might be enriched by the *satipaṭṭhāna* framework

As in previous years, the SDG was an opportunity to review BMIMC's direction, as a Centre grounded in a Buddhist heritage yet relevant to the contemporary world. We considered the possibility of introducing people to Buddha Dhamma through more courses, for example, to a series of related weekend teachings and offering ways to deepen practice through 'off-the-cushion' activities such as sutta study and discussion forums.

A key issue discussed is how our objectives 'to provide facilities for the study and practice of the teachings of the Buddha' can be given broader realisation and acknowledge that the Buddha Dhamma involves cultivating generosity (*dāna*), restraint (*sīla*) and meditation (*bhavana*).

Lesley Lebkowicz led an important discussion of *dāna* suggesting that it needs to be cultivated as an integral part of the practice - and also, how prospective yogis are inducted into the Centre's philosophy. Many felt that *dāna* (or at least material financial *dāna*) as a practice is not fully appreciated and requires education for people to really understand the vital role it plays in supporting key teachers.

The 14 participants included 4 teachers, 2 committee members, 4 staff, 2 volunteers and 2 long term yogis. Future gatherings should keep this size but offer it on a *dāna* basis and invite a more diverse group to include volunteers. This would also recognise the importance of both meditation practitioners and *dāna* practitioners in the life of the centre.

The developing importance of the SDG in the life of the BMIMC will be reflected in dedicated pages on the website. Please visit bmimc.org.au/about-bmimc/satipatthana-dhamma.html

Acknowledgement: This article was based on *Reflections on Satipaṭṭhāna Dhamma November 9-14* by Graham Wheeler.

