

# Buddha Sāsana

Newsletter of Blue Mountains Insight Meditation Centre

## A SECOND SATIPAṬṬHĀNA DHARMA GATHERING

A second dhamma gathering led by Patrick Kearney was held in November 2013. Unlike the first SDG of 2012, this second event was intended for BMIMC lay teachers and committee members and was concerned with the Centre's teaching of *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā*. The event followed on from the suggestion of the first SDG for BMIMC to consider its role in developing 'a pathway to dharma teaching'.

The event which was held over five days and nights, combined meditation retreat, sutta study group and structured discussion with a focus on issues in teaching. The first day was silent practice, followed by four days of meetings—the mornings led by Patrick and based on a prepared readings, and the afternoons when another person led a more 'free-form' discussion (Danny Taylor, Jill Shepherd and Graham Wheeler with Tara leading a final evaluation). Each session was three hours, broken up by shorter and longer breaks, including a two hour lunch break, and later an opportunity for evening practice.

The first morning session examined the meaning and relevance of 'the Mahāsi tradition' to the Centre's teaching, a reference that is writ large in the Centre's charter. This was further discussed in the afternoon in a session led by Danny Taylor. For more about this, see the following story.

The second day focussed on meditator difficulties as they are encountered in the so-called '*dukkha ñāṇas*'. Again, Patrick led with a paper reviewing the Buddha's teaching of *dukkha* and its relation to progress through the insight knowledges that is given such emphasis in the Mahāsi tradition. Jill Shepherd led the discussion of meditators' experiences of the *dukkha ñāṇas* and how they may be helped with difficulties that inevitably arise.

The third day began with some intensive examination of the Malunkyatutta Sutta, one that often figured in the Mahāsi Sayadaw's teaching and one that represents his distinctive approach. Patrick led with his reading of the sutta and contrasted this with the discourse given by Mahāsi, which runs to many pages (the recommended edition is edited by Bikkhu Pesala, trans by U Htin Fatt, 2013). The afternoon discussion led by Graham Wheeler discussed the role and direction of the BMIMC. If we are clear that *satipaṭṭhāna* is our focus, how do we locate BMIMC within the Mahāsi tradition and its Burmese origins and also in relation to contemporary Western Buddhism and the emergence of secular mindfulness training.

On the last morning, Tara led a review and evaluation of the experience. Those attending valued the intensity of the event, its balance of sutta study in the morning and less structured afternoon discussions. This was a unique opportunity to consider deeply dhamma teaching philosophy and practice and BMIMC's role in teaching *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā*.

—The Editor

