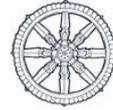


Manchester Buddhist Conference 2007



Organised by: Manchester University Buddhist Society (MUBS)

Fo Guang Shan Temple, 540 Stretford Road,
Old Trafford, Manchester M16 9AF

16 June 2007

9:00 am-5:00 pm

Vision and aims

1. To bring together the Buddhist community in Greater Manchester, and foster dialogue and understanding between followers of different Buddhist traditions
2. The theme of the 2007 conference has been decided as "Buddhism in the 21st century". We will seek to hold discussions on this theme and explore how Buddhism can cope with the challenges in this era.
3. To serve as an annual meeting point for Buddhists, complementing the presently held NBO (Network of Buddhist Organisations) meetings, and discuss common issues facing Buddhists in Greater Manchester.
4. To publicise the events of different Buddhist centres, encouraging members to attend events (such as festivals) at other centres and invite other Buddhists to visit their own centres.

Location of Rooms in Fo Guang Shan temple

- Male and female toilets: located both on each floor
 - Tea Room: in the library, on Ground Floor
 - Dining Hall (for lay people): in the basement
 - Dining Hall (for the venerables): large kitchen, in the basement
 - Main Shrine Room: 1st floor. Ascend steps from near the foyer
 - Guan Yin Shrine Room: 1st floor. In front of main shrine room
 - Function Hall: on the ground floor. Take the first right at the entrance
 - 2 Classrooms: in the basement
 - If you are unsure where any room is, please ask any of the volunteers wearing badges.
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Schedule

- 9:00 - 9:30** Reception (in temple foyer). Participants indicate choice of discussion topics on White Board. Chaired by Cathleen.
- 9:30 -10:00** Welcome speech, in the main shrine room, by Ven Piyatissa and Ven Miao Heng. Chaired by Irene. Voting for top 6 discussion topics of choice.
- 10:00 -10:30** **Parallel meditation sessions:**
Mindfulness of Breathing meditation (Manchester Buddhist Centre, FWBO). Main shrine room. Chaired by Irene.
Dhammakaya meditation (Phra Seri Sirisampanna from Wat Chareon Bhavana). Guan Yin Shrine Room. Chaired by Cathleen.
- 10:30 -11:00** **Parallel meditation sessions:**
Vipassana meditation (Mahasi tradition, Saraniya Dhamma meditation centre, main shrine room). Chaired by Irene.
Lamrim meditation (Vairochana centre, NKT). Guan Yin Shrine Room. Chaired by Cathleen.
- 11:00 -12:30** **Lunch.** *Venerables lunch venue: kitchen room in basement. Lay people lunch venue: Dining Hall in basement. Chaired by Dennis and Santa. Rooms allocated to 6 discussion topics.*
- 12:20 -13:10** **Keynote speech by Dr. Valerie Roebuck titled "Buddhism in the 21st Century".** Main shrine room. Chaired by Irene.
- 13:10 -13:40** **Speech by Chris Ward (Forest Sangha, Amaravati monastery) titled "Buddhist Community".** Main shrine room. Chaired by Irene.
- 13:40-14:35** **Discussion sessions by all participants (on the 6 topics chosen earlier) in 6 different rooms:** main shrine room, Guan Yin Shrine Room on 1st floor, dining Hall in basement, 2 classrooms in basement, function hall on ground floor. Chaired by Irene, Joy, Dennis, Oxana, Ven Piyatissa, Ven Chueh Ru.
- 14:35 -14:50** **Tea Break in the Library on Ground floor**
- 14:50 -15:20** **Parallel meditation sessions:**
Chan meditation (Venerable Cheuh Ru from Fo Guang Shan temple). Main shrine room. Chaired by Irene.
Zazen meditation (IZAUK, Manchester Zen Dojo). Guan Yin Shrine Room. Chaired by Oxana.
- 15:20 -15:50** **Parallel meditation sessions:**
Anapanasati meditation (Wat Sri Ratanam). Main shrine room. Chaired by Irene.
Samatha meditation (Manchester centre for Buddhist meditation, Samatha Trust). Guan Yin Shrine Room. Chaired by Sarat Chandra.
- 15:50 -16:30** **Question answer session by Panel of monastics / order members.** Main Shrine room, chaired by Ven Piyatissa
- 16:30 -16:50** **Closing ceremony. Deciding of future venue. Chanting of blessings by venerables.** Chaired by Irene. Main Shrine room.
- 16:50** **Conference closes**
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Meditation abstracts

Zazen meditation (conducted by a teacher from Manchester Zen Dojo in Openshaw, member of International Zen Association UK under Taisen Deshimaru)

You can see their meditation instructions at their website <http://www.izauk.org/zen.asp>

Dhammakaya meditation (led by Phra Seri Sirisampanna from Wat Chareon Bhavana, Salford)

You can see their meditation (Getting read to meditate) instructions here:

http://www.dhammadaya.or.th/meditation/meditation_ready.php

Lets meditate: <http://www.dhammadaya.or.th/meditation/meditation.php>

Samatha meditation (led by Roger Barnes, a teacher at Manchester centre for Buddhist meditation, in Chorlton)

Sometimes it seems that our experience of daily life is one of haste, anxiety and confusion. Moments of calm and clarity are rare, and a sense of direction hard to find. We feel dissatisfied, yet we are uncertain how to change. We know there is deeper meaning, but are not sure how to access it.

The word Samatha means calm. Samatha meditation is a gentle and effective way of training the mind to develop calm, inner strength and clarity. With the stiling of the mind comes deeper understanding - as the depths of the pool become clear when the water is free from disturbance. Greater awareness brings greater freedom, and the ability to make the most of ourselves and our lives.

Samatha meditation has its roots in ancient Buddhist teachings. The development of calm leading to the practice of insight is a central tradition of Buddhist meditation and was the form of practice followed by the Buddha himself.

This school of practice follows a simple method based on developing attention to the breath. It is suitable for all types of people, but this does not mean that everyone will find it easy. Our complex minds find simplicity extremely difficult! The benefits arise through perseverance, with a short daily period of practice and longer periods of intensive practice from time to time. Meditation is a practical matter and yields benefits which are to be experienced in everyday life.

The Mindfulness of Breathing: A samata (calming) practice as taught at the Manchester Buddhist Centre (FWBO) - written by Munisha, Manchester Buddhist Centre

We start by establishing mindfulness of the body, sounds, thoughts and emotions, before moving on to develop awareness of the experience of breathing. We do this in four stages:

1. Breathe in and out and silently count "1". Breathe in and out and count 2, and so on up to 10. If we get to 10 or lose count, or our attention wanders, we calmly start again at "1".
 2. In this stage we count 1 just as we start to breathe in. As before, we go on up to 10. If we get to 10 or lose count, or our attention wanders, we calmly start again at "1".
 3. We drop the counting and become more generally aware of the whole process of breathing: air coming in, air going out, the rise and fall of the body.
 4. We note where we first feel the air as we breathe in. We softly focus attention on the sensation of the breath passing in and out over this spot, noticing the minute changes of sensation. We also invite a more general awareness of sitting here, breathing with the whole body.
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Lamrim Meditation, by Kelsang Chodor, Vairochana Centre (New Kadampa Tradition)

Lamrim, or stages of the path to enlightenment, is a series of twenty-one meditations taught by the Indian Buddhist Master Venerable Atisha (AD 982-1054). By taking these meditations as our daily meditation practice we can gain experience of all the stages of the path to enlightenment from relying upon a Spiritual Guide to meditation on emptiness, the ultimate nature of phenomena. We all have the 'seeds' of spiritual realisations within our mental continuum and Lamrim Meditation serves to ripen these seeds so that we can realise our highest potential Buddhahood. By practising Lamrim we can improve our relationships, develop mental peace, and solve all our daily problems.

Lamrim meditation is divided into three 'scopes' or levels in order to fulfil the wishes of everyone. For those who wish to attain the temporary happiness of humans (and gods) the 'initial scope' meditations include impermanence, our precious human life, refuge & karma. For those who wish to attain individual liberation the 'intermediate scope' meditations include developing renunciation and practising the three higher trainings. For those who wish to attain Buddhahood the 'great scope' meditations include meditations on love, compassion & Bodhichitta.

The Lamrim instructions are clear and easy to follow and can be integrated into our daily life. In this way we can use our everyday experiences to strengthen our experience of all the stages of the path to enlightenment.

Each Lamrim meditation has two parts Analytical (or contemplation) Meditation, and Placement Meditation. In Analytical Meditation we use certain lines of reasoning and positive thinking to generate, or awaken, a particular positive state of mind such as love or compassion. When this state of mind arises we dispense with further analysis and use Placement Meditation to focus & concentrate our mind single pointedly on its object. If the experience is lost through distraction the practitioner returns to Analytical Meditation to 'reawaken' the experience before further Placement Meditation. By training in this way eventually our distracting thoughts subside, our concentration improves, and our mind mixes completely with its Lamrim object. When we realise a Lamrim object, such as love or compassion, it becomes spontaneous for us and all our actions are in accordance with our understanding.

In this meditation session Kelsang Chodor will be guiding an example Lamrim meditation.

Insight meditation (Vipassana) in the Mahasi tradition, led by a teacher from Saraniya Dhamma meditation centre, Salford

Satipatthana Vipassana Bhavana, or Insight Meditation, is not a religion; anybody can practice this even if you are from another religion without compromising their faith. Practice consistently, it develops mindfulness and insight. People can experience many positive results of this practice such as relaxation, self control, calmness, contentment, compassion, loving-kindness, happiness, insight and inner peace.

The following meditation instruction was taught by the Late Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw (U Sobhana Mahathera, 1904-82), a Burmese meditation master. He played an eminent role as the Questioner (*Pucchaka*) at the historic 6th Buddhist Council in Yagon on the 17th May 1954, to celebrate the Buddha Jayanti. Under his guidance, numerous numbers of monks and lay people received this meditation training in centres across Myanmar and abroad.

The Mahasi method of Insight Meditation follows the practice of mindfulness, Satipatthana, in accordance with the teaching of the Buddha. This method focuses the mind on the arising and disappearing of the physical and mental phenomena so that one understands the true nature of his or her own mind and body.

The method involves:

1. Sitting meditation
2. Walking meditation and
3. Mindfulness of the general activities

Every time we see, hear, smell, taste, touch, think and visualize we should simply make a note of it. But in the beginning of our practice, we cannot make a note of everyone of these happenings. We should start by noting the happenings which are more conspicuous and easily perceivable.

For example in Sitting Meditation with every act of breathing the abdomen rises and falls. Try to follow the rising movement of the abdomen from the beginning to the end and same for the falling movement. The physical act of the abdominal movement and the mental awareness of every step of such movement should coincide. The mindfulness of movement amounts to knowing the element of motion (**Vayo dhatu**) in its true reality. According to the *Sattipathana sutta*, this is the **contemplation of body or Kayanupassana** in Pali.

While trying to focus on this abdominal movement, one's mind may wander. If such other thoughts and reflections arise, just simply make note of it (This is known as the **contemplation of mind or Cittanupassana**) then continue focusing the abdominal movements.

If sensations of pain, ache, heat and stiffness arise, just simply make note of it (This is known as **contemplation of feelings or Vedananupassana**). After noting these physical sensations two or three times, go back to the rising and falling movements of the abdomen.

If you start to visualize things in your mind, just simply make note of it two or three times (This is known as the **contemplation of mind-objects or Dhammanupassana**) then resume concentrating the abdominal movement. Continue on this course of focusing one's mind simply on the rising and falling of the abdomen.

Because we fail to note and understand the true nature of these physical actions and acts of consciousness, we tend to identify with a person or an individual. We tend to think that it is 'I' who is seeing, thinking, feeling, or perceiving. Actually, no such person exists. These are simply continuing and successive physical actions and acts of consciousness of a living being.

Through meditation concentration and knowledge will improve. This will lead to one's ability to distinguishing between Mind and Matter, Cause and Effect, Arising and Disappearing, Impermanency, Suffering and Egolessness. Finally Nibbana is realized through knowledge of Path and Fruition.

Many thanks for your participation and we hope to see you again next year!

Notes

Notes

The participants to the conference shall include (but not limited to) monks and lay members of the following Buddhist centres in Greater Manchester.

Saraniya Dhamma Meditation Centre • Manchester Buddhist Centre
Ketumati Buddhist Vihara • Wat Chareon Bhavana
The Manchester Centre for Buddhist Meditation • Vairochana Centre
Wat Sri Ratanam • Rochdale Zen Retreat
Manchester Zen Dojo • Kagyu Ling Buddhist Centre
Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Temple • Chorlton Kwanumenen Centre
Diamond Way Manchester • Hadfield Buddhist sitting group • Rigpa Manchester

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Venerable Miao Heng (Fo Guang Shan temple)
Irene Chan (Fo Guang Shan temple)
Dr. Oxana Poberejnaia (MUBS)
Dr. Dennis Khong (MUBS)
Cathleen Liu (MUBS)
Joy Bose (MUBS)

We have been helped in our efforts by a number of other people, who helped with planning, advice and logistical help, among other things. Our thanks to them all.