



Leeds Buddhist Centre

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Newsletter

Important Announcement – Ratnasambhava Kula

Last year, after the talk given by Dorothy and Lucy on “Disability Equality and the Bodhisattva Ideal” it was suggested that Leeds Buddhist Centre set up a small group to look at the issues around equality and diversity at the Centre. Following discussions in the Council, the inaugural meeting of this group will be held on Monday 10th July at 7pm, venue to be confirmed.

So far, the group members are Dorothy, Lucy and Uddyotani. We would like another 3 or 4 mitras to join us in this exciting project. All you need is a strong desire to remove barriers so that all people have an opportunity to participate in the life and work of Leeds Buddhist Centre, whether through attending classes or becoming involved in the Sangha. These barriers may be attitudinal, physical or institutional. Of course, for group members, involvement in the group would become part of our practice. Initially, we expect the group to meet once a month and that there will also be some follow up work between meetings.

We have named the group the “Ratnasambhava Kula”. Kula means group. We wanted to link the work with an archetype whose qualities represented true equality, which we think is fundamental to our Buddhist practice. So Ratnasambhava fits the bill very well. Here is a quote from a talk given by Ratnaghosa on the “5 wisdoms”:

“Ratnasambhava’s Wisdom is the Wisdom of Equality or Sameness (Samatajnana). This is the Wisdom that sees the same Reality in all beings and has the same attitude to all, the same love and Compassion for all. This serves to remind us that Wisdom and Compassion are not really to be distinguished at this level.” *Continued on Back Page...*

Following from Oli Mansell's discussion last month about his experience of the Leeds University Group as a student, and how it led him to come to the Swarthmore classes, this month Jacqueline Beattie writes about her experience of helping out at the same Group.

Helping with the University Group

Why I do it

Helping with the University Group originally appealed to me because when the regulars' night changed from a Wednesday to a Thursday I thought I would be unable to go as I had work planned for Thursday evenings. I have a certain flexibility work-wise and I wanted to do something with Samanartha. I wanted to give something too.

It was challenging to enter a group without a fixed role to hide behind! This brought out my shyness, especially at the beginning of term. The first year I found it particularly difficult not knowing anyone at the beginning of term. But I found, and still find that there is a real turn-around by the time we have done a weekend retreat together and I get a real sense of people.

But along with this it also challenges me because I'm partly there to offer Samanartha feedback but can be close to snoozing during meditation!!

There is a different quality to the University Group classes to those held at the Swarthmore – most people who go are in their teens or early twenties. This is not a group I'd normally have much contact with and it certainly challenges my prejudices (e.g. all students eat jam sandwiches on sliced white bread).

It also lively and people have lots of questions which gives it a freshness and makes it feel alive. There is a real enthusiasm and a sense of play – for example touching a person's back as they breathe. I learn from it all.

I also enjoy spending time with Samanartha. He plays a lot and brings out the experimental side of me. Along with this playfulness though, I

get to lead sits when Samanartha is away. This is a new experience for me and is always one of the few times on an afternoon sit that I don't feel sleepy! But I am nervous about being asked questions, after all, what do I know?

Retreats

I am always nervous beforehand, will I sleep? Times on retreat are much looser which is a challenge to me as I am a person who likes everything to be on time! What I find special is that there is a real sense of people coming together and working together. It is inspiring, seeing others really throwing themselves into the retreat, doing something different and taking on challenges (reading out a poem they have written or making offerings).

There is a definite sense of "before" retreat and "after" retreat. I get to know people better when we are on retreat, see their characters, qualities and strengths.

The most recent retreat in the Lakes was the most difficult for me. We had very little sleep on the first night, it was very cold and very basic with only cold running water, very basic cooking facilities and chemical toilets. It made Blubberhouses seem like the height of luxury! I felt obsessed about sleep and I think my reporting in at the end of the retreat that is what I talked about whilst it seemed that most of the others had something "spiritual" to say!

My own hazy memories of being a student are of going down the pub or finding other ways of not engaging with the present moment. Because that was my experience, part of me expected it to be like that for all students.

It has been great to see people in the university group meditating and exploring alive and mindful ways to engage as well as continuing to go to the pub and clubs etc. It feels to me that choices are opened up for a potentially richer way of enjoying life.

Jacqueline Beattie

Samanartha's Report to the Sangha

We had a very successful Wesak celebration starting with very well attended Mitra ceremonies in the large hall at the Swarthmore Centre.

John, Dorothy, Lorraine and Lucy were able to invite friends and family along to the event. This was followed by a short dramatic retelling of the Buddha's enlightenment, characters and percussion provided by various Sangha members' children.

It was good to have an event where family and friends from outside the Sangha could take part. There was a lot of work involved, with the use of the hall and with the scale of the event (about 50 people attended).

We had a puja in the evening at Heddon Place with about 20 people present, using both rooms! Uddyotani wrote out to the Sangha, in particular asking the mitras to help with the event, and it was nice to get some response, - particular thanks to Sarah B, Dave B, Matthew, Margaret, Yvonne, Rosemary, and anyone else who helped on the day.

Uddyotani also attended the joint Wesak with other Leeds Buddhist groups at the Quaker meeting house. She did a reading and short meditation and a few people from our Sangha also attended. It would be nice to include more people next year but we would need to know people were interested.

Another important development has been the revitalising of Heddon Place as a Centre for our practice. Different groups of us have been involved in redecorating what is now the library, moving and setting up the office, cleaning, gardening and making it a pleasant place to meet and practice.

One might ask why we would do this as we may well be selling the property fairly soon? Well, we are still going to be using the place for at least the next six months and Uddyotani and I along with others need somewhere pleasant to be working from.

Secondly it is what we have as a Centre at the moment and we need to acknowledge and appreciate this. Thirdly it is important to start culti-

vating a feeling of ownership so that when we do move, more and more of us will feel engaged in looking after our new Centre. Looking after our Centre in a very pragmatic and hands on way is an important communal practice for us so come along to work days and get involved in whatever way you can.

As most of you will know we applied for a Communities Faith and development grant earlier this year and have been successful in our application being given £4,299. This is to be used for updating and upgrading our office equipment and funding "capacity" building. We are also employing Uddyotani full time now and some of the grant will go towards her wages.

Having two of us working full time will have a good effect on the situation here and helped by the grant we are already starting to work towards more effectively publicising our events to the present Sangha, improving our general publicity and developing outreach and access to encourage a wider participation from the Leeds community.

Uddyotani has already made a visit to a group run by Mind, a visit from University students and an enquiry from an "older active persons" group based in Burley.

Uddyotani and I have also been working on developing other policies required by the grant such as equal opportunities policy etc and as we are getting much better reprographic facilities I am also putting together a booklet that can be handed out at the beginner and follow up courses.

On a personal note having fellow Order member to work alongside is just fantastic. Working with Uddyotani has a hugely positive effect on me and I am experiencing a whole new level of engagement with the "project" here as a result of it.

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“The Wisdom of Equality does not relate to people on the basis of any limited identity. It does not relate to people on the basis of nationality, ethnic background, skin colour, sexual preference, gender, size, shape, looks, likes or dislikes. The Wisdom of Equality relates on the basis of common humanity and even more primarily, on the basis of the common Reality of all – the common impermanence and insubstantiality and the common potential for spiritual Insight.”

If you feel that you can make a commitment to working in this group, please contact Uddyotani at Heddon Place. Thankyou.

Dorothy Mallon

Did you know the Newsletter is on the web so you need never miss an issue!

LeedsBuddhistCentre.org

and follow the links to the Newsletter

Diary

Tuesday 11th July - **Full Moon Puja** Heddon Place

Thursday 20th July - Final **Friends' Night** Swarthmore Centre

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