International Urban Retreat

*22-29 September 2018*

“Turning Arrows Into Flowers”

The proposal for this international practice week is to make this a **world-wide** practice week,including all Centres and Triratna Practice Groups wherever they are – the theme was inspired by Subhuti’s teaching on the 2017 order retreat at Bodhgaya.

**The image** to sum up and symbolize the theme of this urban retreat:

the Buddha on the cusp of his Enlightenment, at the point when Mara attacks him with all he’s got …… but the Buddha does not react with anger, hatred, defensiveness but instead with sits in complete peace and openness: the arrows, abuse & weapons hurled at him drift down around him as soft and harmless flower petals.

**In essence, the message to be communicated is**: **this is what we need to do all the time**. The constant practice is

1) no blame, or defence, or reactivity, complaining,

2) turning towards whatever the challenge is with openness, interest and kind awareness

3) developing the attitude when faced with challenges “*great – here’s is an opportunity for practice*!”

The dharmic teaching underpinning this: The Seven Mind Training verses as laid out by Atisha; ‘*taking adversity onto the path*’

Since this theme for the International Practice Week was suggested and agreed in 2017, the Eight Verses for Training the Mind have of course been popping up everywhere! Including as study material for the International COUncil Meeting in February and the European Chairs Meeting in July. So I’m sure some of this study material available on the buddhistcentre online can be useful as well.

Other Practices to include - the metta bhavana, readings from Santideva’s bodhicharyavatara, Sevenfold Puja, ways to allow the bodhicitta to arise.

**Resources and support:**

**Image for your poster:**

Aloka has made available an image of his black & white line drawing of Mara attacking the Buddha – available for download on the buddhistcentre page “Turning arrows into flowers’

**Short Talks**: Yashobodhi is recording 7 short talks especially for this occasion; there will be a short (8 mins) intro to the mind training verses and then 7 talks about 20 minutes long on each of the verses. Dharmachakra need to edit them slightly and they will be available on the tbco page – I am not quite sure of the date, but imagine early September? TBC.

**Banner with images for the shrine:**

Sanghadhara from Clearvision has kindly agreed to make a collage/banner poster out of the images of ‘dharma doors’ sent in from Centres and Triratna Groups from around the world. This should be available at the end of August and is planned to come in a format of 8 x A4 posters that can be printed out by Centres and stuck together to form a long rectangular banner that can be placed against the shrine.

**Guide ‘How to Run an Urban Retreat’** - with suggestions for first and last day retreat, etc – available on the tbco space

**Metta Wave**: on first day retreat, time: in the afternoon before the puja to ritually dedicate this week: during this metta wave you may wish to bring to mind all the different Triratna Centres around the world - you can find a list on the buddhistcentre online; and of course don’t forget the many Triratna Groups!

**Puja:** you can also bring in an element of internationality in the puja – perhaps with having the positive precepts in different languages

Preparation for the event:

For the leaders of the week you may wish to prepare for the content – there are links to two series of talks on the Seven Point Mind Training on the tbco page:

One by Yashobodhi, and one by Dhammadinna; series of talks available on freebuddhist audio.

There are also of course the links to the short talks given at the International Council; earlier this year on the Eight verses on the buddhist centre online.

You may wish to explore for yourself the different ways of practicing ‘turning weapons into flowers’; i.e. **developing the mind of bodhicitta in our everyday experience**. Some points to consider –

There is mara without (noise, people, late buses, …) and there is mara within (anger, upset, rumination, blame ...) and in general, as we all know, life just does not go as we want it to go, in both small and large ways … these are all part of Mara’s attack, and our task is to turn it into flowers!

We need to recognize what is happening and have to transform it. Unless we can do this, we cannot have spiritual depth. The practice of transforming difficulties into flowers is essential, is turning them into opportunities for compassion.

This practice is included in the **7 Points of** **Mind Training** as laid out by Atisha – this is the dharmic theme for the week: Whatever difficulties arise, take them onto the path, they are opportunities for practice. Difficulties are in essence ***things not going as you want*** – what this does is confront us with our attachment to how we want things to be, confront us with our ego-clinging, confront us with the fact that we don’t think of the other, but of us.

**So, the main point of this practice**: seeing difficulties that arise as opportunities to turn arrows into flowers.

Santideva – “*the power of evil is very great, ordinary goodness is not enough; only the bodhicitta can overcome it.*”

How to allow the bodhicitta **to arise …. bodhicitta practice** *could* be included ... and also the **sevenfold puja** – it is not just a ceremony but a dharma practice: when you try to get the spirit of what you are saying you get uplifted to the bodhisattva’s mind. Each of the seven stages is a practice in its own right, which helps develop a particular attitude. And according to Santideva these 7 moods are the basis from which the bodhicitta arises.