

To be wise and kind:
***a Buddhist community engagement
with Victorian state primary schools***

A thesis submitted in total fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
by

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Doctor of Philosophy Declaration

I, Sue Erica Smith, declare that the PhD thesis entitled *To be wise and kind: a Buddhist community engagement with Victorian state primary schools* is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes.

This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Signature

Date

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Abstract

This is a case study of the development of the Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools program in state primary schools. It is located alongside the theoretical and policy frameworks of Australian state schooling and a growing but disparate international movement that is applying meditative techniques and principles with roots in the Buddha-Dharma in secular and pluralist education. The meta-ethics of wisdom and compassion, it is argued, are the foundation for spiritual education, personal development and positively engaged citizenship in the Dharma. These are also and congruent with the intrinsic aims of education.

This action research study uses first-person narratives and hermeneutic discussions to describe how teachers have developed and implemented a program that has relied upon meditations and values-laden Jataka stories as the principle teaching strategies.

First-person report data from student participants' use of a Happiness Scale provide rich insights into children's experiences of meditation, and how they learnt to be aware their minds, the importance of values, and how they might live in the world with wisdom and kindness. Student data gives strong indications that the meditations and stories as they have been applied developed students' focus their attention, metacognitive thinking and empathy, which have contributed to student resilience.

Attached as Appendix 10 and Appendix 11 are two DVDs: one '*Discovering Buddha: Lessons for Primary School*' (curriculum document) and '*Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools* (film).

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Introduction

This thesis is a case study of the development and implementation of the Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program (BEVSP). The action research spans four years, from the program's beginning in state primary schools and progressively through the collaborative development of a flexible Years 3-6 curriculum '*Discovering Buddha: Lessons for Primary School*' (Smith, SE & Seah 2008) (see Appendix 10).

By employing narrative strategies and hermeneutic discourse I describe some of the perspectives, issues and challenges associated with provision of religious instruction classes by the Buddhist Council of Victoria. I explore some of the pedagogical challenges that Buddhist teachers faced delivering a spiritual and ethical program in a secular context, and how the primary school students might have experienced the meditations, stories and other activities that the program comprised.

The development of a program and curriculum that was inclusive of, and potentially meaningful to, the culturally diverse groups of participating Buddhist teachers and students, and the significant proportion of children from non-Buddhist families who also attended, was a more complex task than members of the program had initially envisioned.

Volunteer teachers joined the program with aspirations to draw upon the Dharma, Gautama's teachings and legacies, to benefit children's lives, for Dharma practice encourages this kind of altruism. The program was founded on member understanding that the Buddha-Dharma can be applicable to any person, regardless of creed or culture. In traditional terms however, this type of education of children has been conducted in home and monastic environments, and school-based learning was largely new territory, although prominent Buddhist scholars such as Batchelor (1989), Thurman (1999), and the Dalai Lama have been calling for secular engagement with education for some years.

In Chapter 1 I locate the program within Buddhist education theory and practice, for which there are few examples and scarce research, and within a growing trend

internationally to apply aspects of Buddhism to education, psychology and other related disciplines. In this context I begin an exploration of Buddhism seeking to define itself more broadly than exclusively as a religion. I examine the tenets of the Dharma that would necessarily characterise a Buddhist education in Chapter 2 and in the next chapter I further locate the study alongside Australian state and national education frameworks and imperatives.

The National Values Framework and the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) were concurrently introduced at the time of this study. For me there were strong resonances between these value-rich frameworks and the focus of the planned Buddhist education program. The National Values Framework was acknowledgement that teaching values was a legitimate and intrinsic concern in pluralist education, and the nationwide federally funded programs that sought best-practice methodologies indicated that our perspectives and methods could offer new perspectives and current experiences to these discourses. Similarly, the revised Victorian Essential Learning Standards introduced interdisciplinary themes that are actively pursued in this Buddhist program; interconnectedness, reflection and metacognitive thinking. The methodologies utilised in the Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program appeared to offer new and under-explored approaches in these areas and ones that, from my perspective, pertain directly to the nature of education, student well-being and citizenship.

This study touches on some big issues in education and young people's development, such as how life can be made more meaningful. I am present and often influential in all aspects of this study. I am immersed in the program as both co-ordinator and researcher. My employment by the Buddhist Council of Victoria's Education Committee was an outcome of my personal journey into Buddhism and some forays into Buddhist education as much as a career in equity-based and culturally inclusive education programs. As co-ordinator I had a pivotal role to maintain the agreed direction of the program as an authentic and non-sectarian representation of the Dharma, and one that promoted teaching methods that would engage primary school students.

This phenomenological study of a program and some of its participants is also a study of my own quest to make meaning. As I strive to understand and articulate how, where and why this program might be relevant to primary students I am conscious of many elements of my Australian heritage that have shaped me. I am a white country woman of decent, middle-class, Anglican stock, and privileged into a generation of peace, relative prosperity and free access to all levels of education. These conditions provided me with the liberty to explore concepts such as respect and responsibility, freedom, fair go, wisdom and compassion in my personal and professional pursuits. In this study my choice of references may seem eclectic to some. In part they reflect inquiry that led me to the Dharma, and are used as reference points to help me articulate my experience, to integrate these with my heritage, and possibly to find a place where these perspectives might excite and enrich existing educational discourses and practices.

This immersed position within the research necessarily influenced my methodology. The co-ordination role was my first responsibility and Dharma naturally influenced my ethical decision-making. The primacy of benefiting teachers' professional development and the students' learning determined that data gathering either supported these intentions or was subordinate.

I also sought methods that could jointly respond to the democratic, inclusive and individually empowering principles of Buddhist practice and what I consider a parallel ethos in Australian government schools. I have chosen to study two school sites that were representative of the program's reach. The Buddhist teachers and students were invited into the research as democratic participants and research inquirers according to methodology that reflected the shared ethical imperatives; to support teacher and student agency, and provide means through which various perspectives could be shared openly amongst the teaching cohort. Contextualising interviews and comments were invited from school teaching staff, principals and parents.

In Chapter 4 I detail the methodology used to accommodate the diversity and complexity of ideas as we traversed the terrain between varied emphases in our teachers' interpretations of the Dharma and what could be sound educational

practices. I employed hermeneutics to navigate my way through these multiple discourses to bring myself and the research cohort, closer to mutually understood meanings and more skilful teaching practices.

This approach generated narratives. Each of the action research cycles of teaching, learning, reflection and curriculum development provided for many lively conversations and thoughtful reflections. My narrative contains many stories; case writing for Buddhist teachers, narratives from students, observations and reflections from school teachers and parents, and stories that I have written for the children's classes. In this way I have attempted to impart a transparent and reliable account of the program.

As a researcher the multiple positions have provided me with direct understanding and experience to craft this phenomenological study and to interpret the data with depth and sensitivity to nuance that a more removed stance could not have acquired. This insider role has informed my commentary of teacher activities and curriculum development, such as my discussion about story selection in Chapter 5. I also sought indicators of the program's effectiveness from the students themselves. No matter how worthy the curriculum might seem to its teachers, it would be less worthy if students had not perceived some benefits. I used happiness as an indicator. Happiness is a global term, readily understood by children, that incorporates a range of cognitive and affective perceptions. Their subjective ratings on a Happiness Scale have provided unique first-person insights into children's experiences of meditation.

Current research into happiness and well-being is discussed in relation to Buddhist understanding of the nature of mind and the relevance of meditation in Chapter 6. Meditation research in clinical and education contexts, and some studies that have revealed remarkable mental propensities in proficient Buddhist meditators, indicate how our strategic teaching of meditation could become an effective addition to existing teaching and learning strategies. In the next chapter meditation classes from this program are described and children's narratives offer some insights into their experiences and what might be achieved. Children were taught meditations intended to develop calm, mindful attention and kindness. Data from this exploratory study indicates that students' experiences were consistent with these aims, as well as a range

of other experiences, and that they consistently recorded happier states for having meditated.

In the Buddhist paradigm personal happiness is not an end in itself, and neither is meditation. Meditation practice is introduced as an efficient method to nurture inner development that will support lives lived more skillfully. It is a misconception to deem Buddhist meditation and practices as disconnected from, and uncaring of, life as it is lived. The Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program ran as once weekly half-hour lessons that precluded our involvement in the general curriculum and beyond, although we were hoping to provide learning experiences that would support the development of respectful relationships and responsible social engagement. Apart from a Good Deeds/ Counting Kindness research project learning was confined to our classrooms.

However, the classes did provide a unique opportunity to study a cycle of weekly lessons that taught values explicitly through stories, thinking processes, and structured meditations that integrated kindness. The Jataka stories that you will find in this thesis are often humorous and sometimes shocking. They are characterised by events and consequences that illustrate the tenets of Dharma discussed in Chapter 2. Through dramatisations and discussions children were encouraged to explore the nature of wisdom and the value of kindness. In Chapter 9 I include a play and a commentary to a sequence of lessons that I wrote about the Wheel of Life that engaged children to imaginatively explore this possibility and route for moral reasoning. This module was pursuant of my ongoing exploration of the Dharma's ontology.

Throughout the study there are tensions that arise from my immersed position that I negotiate and seek to resolve: being part of a demographic that forms the second largest religion in Australia but is seldom heard in public and educational discourses, being part of a religion that defines its purpose more broadly, being an educator in a system where meditation is yet to enter the experiential learning and holistic paradigms such as those taught in my academy, and what I perceive to be a system of education that is hesitant to incorporate emotional and spiritual aspects of the learner in teaching programs. I am also exploring how the perspectives on freedom, peace, equality and so on that my Buddhist engagement has provided might fit with

the educational institutions and the society from which I am a product. To this an exploration of language traverses the study as I move to find words to adequately reflect participants' lived experiences alongside Pali and Sanskrit doctrinal terms.

There is tension too between my construct of an authoritative academic identity with my acknowledgement that I am operating in a field where my understanding of Buddhism is imperfect. This study ranges over many issues - education is a multidisciplinary and relational pursuit - and I have difficulty anticipating my reading audience. I can imagine some might be more familiar with some sections than others.

Participating teachers and students have been invited into this study to construct meaning collectively and offer validity to my observations and claims. Similarly I am inviting you the reader to join this process as you engage with this generative piece of work. This is a not a replicable study but one that poses new connections and possibilities from specificities of a case.

“These connections, which will necessarily be incomplete, tentative, and unverifiable, are not in themselves transferable as applications; they are transferable, however, as invitations to readers to think differently about altogether different contexts. Inquiry may be most useful by simply offering new ways of thinking and interpreting” (Talbert 2004, p. 92).

From her overview of the genealogy of qualitative research Talbert finds power in these methods to simultaneously open new ways of thinking and multiple conversations. Readers can appropriate and use what they will from the narratives, maintain commonsense and participate in thinking through the complexities of studies of this kind – and actively engage in the validation process.

As you appraise the narratives in this thesis, like participants in the study you may be reflecting, noting points of convergence and divergence with your particular understandings, and formulating further questions. The cycles of teaching and learning described, using meditations and stories, may open new possibilities to integrate wisdom and kindness into education.

Buddhism holds a unique position amongst the world's religious and intellectual thought due to non-theistic and humanist rationale and intentions. This thesis

articulates this position as a holistic pedagogy where the development of wisdom and kindness are the foundations for personal development and spiritual education. These meta-ethics rightfully apply to both religious and secular educators and others, such as Miller (2006), are framing educational discourse in these terms. This work provides a further meeting point for these dialogues and development of teaching strategies to promote student well-being.

Chapter 1

Locating a phenomenological journey

Buddhists in Australia

The educational aspirations of Buddhists in our society are largely unarticulated, but given the growth in Australia's Buddhist population it can be inferred that these are becoming cause for considered attention. The 2006 Australian Census on Population and Housing reported that Australia's declared Buddhist population had more than doubled since the 1996 census. Some 2.1% of Australia's population is now Buddhist, and Buddhism holds the second largest religious population in Australia behind Christianity, with which the majority of the population identifies (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006).

Census data goes on to reveal that in Victoria, where this study is based, the 3.9% population of Buddhists is significantly above national figures (VMC 2007). In some metropolitan Melbourne municipalities there is an even higher concentration, such as the Melbourne Local Government Area (LGA) with 7.5% Buddhists, Maribyrnong LGA with 10.2%, Brimbank LGA 10.5% and Greater Dandenong LGA 14.9% Buddhists (VMC 2007). It is in this context that Buddhist people have come to request Buddhist programs in schools and have reached a stage where Buddhist people can, under the auspices of the Buddhist Council of Victoria, collaborate across the various member cultures and traditions to deliver such a program.

There has been a steady pattern of growth of the Buddhist community to reach this point. This growth is explained in part by Spuler (2000) who draws attention to the rapid expansion of migrant/ethnic Buddhism as a consequence of migration after abolition of the White Australia Policy. Since then there has been an influx of new settlers from Asia and the Indian sub-continent. Also, particularly from the 1970's onwards, there has been significant increase in numbers of Australian-born citizens who have adopted the Buddhist path (Croucher 1989).

Rather than assuming an identifiable religious profile, Buddhist people have for the most part integrated into the community. In this capacity they have been socially engaged in many community activities. They contribute to the education of children

and adults, work with economically disadvantaged people - those in prisons, addicts, disaster relief - and in community based volunteering. There are also Buddhists involved in social justice activities and work on behalf of human rights and the rights of non-human sentient beings, both from within their cultural groups and as participants in the wider community (Sherwood 2003, p. 4).

However, given the predominance of Buddhist people and their willingness to engage in community life, it appears somewhat anomalous compared to the other major religions in Australia (Christian, Jewish and latterly Muslim) that there is as yet no representative position on education articulated by Buddhist people, and the establishment of Buddhist schools is nascent. The Buddhist Council of New South Wales has the longest standing religious instruction program running in Australia, which in the last couple of years has experienced unprecedented growth. In Queensland too, Buddhist Education Services for Schools Inc. has responded to community requests to offer a coordinated Buddhist program to schools, in their case focusing primarily on secondary schools. The opening of the Daylesford Dharma School in 2009, the movement to open a Buddhist school in northern New South Wales and the implementation of the Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program and curriculum development here are reflective of an impetus growing in Buddhist communities to develop education.

The slow development of Buddhist education can be attributed to various factors. Buddhism considers itself a non-proselytizing religion: "*Ehipassiko*," said the Buddha, "Come and see." Buddhist centres offer teachings, generally free or at operational costs and have been reluctant to advertise their services. Also, the experiences of immigrant peoples establishing homes, families, careers, cultural networks and Buddhist centres has left Buddhist education for a stage. For Australian nationals who have adopted the Buddhist path (such as me) the trajectory towards Buddhist education has also taken time to mature. Initial steps have been to join with immigrant peoples in the establishment of cultural networks and Buddhist centres, and embark upon personal study and practice of the Dharma (the Buddha's teachings).

There is also uneasiness amongst some Buddhist practitioners about identifying their practice of Buddhism as religious. Socially and politically Buddhism holds the place

of a religion and shares features of other religions in terms of offering practices to help understand connections between life, death and beyond, and ethical living. However, the promotion of freedom of thought and preclusion of self-surrender that hallmark the Buddhist path (Narada, Thera 1982, 1993) has prompted practitioners in the fields of psychology (Dockett 2003; Hayes 2003; Ragsdale 2003), philosophy (Harris 2006; Mohanty 1992; Pickering 1995; Thom 2005) and feminist discourse (Klein 1995) to seek an expanded, more informed and inclusive understanding of the Dharma beyond a solely religious label.

These types of applications are encouraging for Buddhist educators, and I will draw upon these authors and other expanded applications of Dharma in my ensuing discussions as I attempt to tease out applicability of the Dharma to education.

A further point that helps contextualise some of the complexity of this quest is highlighted by Vasi who observed that the willingness of Buddhist people to contribute to society comes from the Buddhist notion of interconnectedness of all beings and the empowerment of individuals and their activities through the notion of skilful action (Vasi 2006, p. 10).

Sherwood makes a similar observation,

“a distinctively Buddhist praxis arising from the Buddhist values of compassion, the linking of inner and outer transformation, and the dissolving of the artificial boundaries between I and you, between human and non human” (Sherwood 2003, p. 95).

It is this deeply interconnected view of life that Buddhist practitioners strive to fully realise, that poses particular challenges to Buddhist educators, particularly those engaged in education outside of Buddhist centres and those engaged with children. It is a theme that is explored throughout this thesis as these notions can inform how wisdom is perceived.

The Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program

The Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program (BEVSP) is an initiative of the Buddhist Council of Victoria (BCV), the umbrella organization for the majority of bona fide Buddhist organisations in Victoria. The BCV was formed in 1995 to bring together the three major Buddhist traditions, Theravada, Mahayana, and its subset Vajrayana, in collaborative dialogue and projects, and to be a body to represent Buddhist interests publicly. Annual membership continues to fluctuate at or around forty organisations. These include many cultural groups: Australian, British, Cambodian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Lao, Malaysian, Singaporean, Sri Lankan, Taiwanese, Thai, Tibetan, and Vietnamese and other expatriate individuals.

While many organisations and temples run children's classes these function within the cultural, linguistic and Buddhist traditions of the particular temple. The opportunity to respond to parental requests to offer Buddhist religious instruction for their children attending Victorian state primary schools, and the rounds of consultations and discernments that ensued, demonstrated a traditionally Buddhist hermeneutic approach in how the organisation responded to its mandate. This approach has continued throughout the development and implementation of the program and has informed the methodology for this thesis.

Prior to the program beginning in schools in 2004, the community embarked upon two years of extensive consultations with ordained and lay representatives from all of the cultural and linguistic groups and traditions mentioned above to frame a curriculum that was inclusive of each Buddhist tradition and that was considered appropriate for primary school students.

This process generated rich dialogues, deep listening and reflection whereby each party had to move beyond the texts, rituals and languages of their particular practices to reconsider the intention of the Dharma and articulate their common ground. The seemingly straightforward curriculum that emerged, the life story of the Buddha, the Four Noble Truths, Jataka tales and meditation, belied the complexity of these initial consultations. The implementation and refinement of this curriculum comprise the field study in this thesis.

The Theravada, the oldest school of Buddhism, holds significant doctrinal authority, for all subsequent permutations and interpretations in other traditions and the many cultures stem from this canonical reference point. However, the development of Buddhism over the two and a half millennia in many societies (predominantly through Asia and the Indian sub-continent) has borne scholarly clarifications and new texts. Various practices have been added and endemic rites have been absorbed into some rituals, but authentic lineages have nevertheless continued. These trends are characteristic of Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions. Thus, superficially, Buddhist practices are apparent in many different forms. The tenor of the Mahayana is articulated in more humanist terms than, superficially at least, in the Theravada. Acceptance of diversity is an outcome that has followed from the Buddha's example of teaching; to respect people for whomever and wherever they are and offer teachings that will enable them to live more considered and happier lives. That is, to become wiser and more compassionate.

Formal Buddhist practice invariably involves veneration such as prostration and making offerings to images of the Buddha, the ordained monks and nuns and esteemed Dharma teachers. Buddhist texts are treated with the utmost respect and not placed where they might be soiled or trampled, because these images, texts and people are the means through which the Dharma is taught, and thereby the means through which practitioners learn to realise their potential. These practices are undertaken for the practitioners' mental development and not for the benefit of Buddha, image, teacher or text.

For a formal approach to be practised sincerely or authentically it would require a sophistication of understanding that could not be assumed or legitimately imposed upon children in school settings without students first understanding their purpose. It could not be assumed that children enrolling in the classes would be from only one Buddhist culture or tradition, or that they would be from Buddhist families. The religious-style approach was not efficacious and did not best serve the intention of the Dharma. The excerpt, seen below, from the mission statement that I received when I joined the program in 2004 as co-ordinator expressed educational aspirations that aligned with those held by the state educational system (points 1 and 2), would

present the Dharma in a non-sectarian way (point 3) and would utilise contemporary teaching methods with which the children would be familiar (point 4):

1. Buddhist Education classes aim to contribute to the spiritual development of every child who attends the classes, while respecting and complementing the on-going education program provided by schools.
2. The emphasis of Buddhist education classes would be on tolerance, co-operation and non-violence, aiming to develop within the students the knowledge, skills and values required to be part of a harmonious and peaceful community.
3. Everything taught in Buddhist education classes is based on the teachings of the Buddha, without adhering to any one particular tradition or cultural practice.
4. In keeping with contemporary educational approaches, lessons would be built around co-operative and active learning, respecting and drawing on the children's own experiences.

(excerpt from the *Mission Statement for the Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program*, April 2004).

Religious Instruction at the margin

Much thought and effort was behind the inauguration of the program and the consensus was that a contemporary educational approach best suited both the intention of the Dharma and the aptitudes and needs of the potential students. A further point in the *Mission Statement* articulated a broader aim:

“In offering these classes, the Buddhist community seeks to make a contribution to the moral and spiritual education in the Australian community.”

While I have seen no indication from within the Buddhist community to challenge the avowed secular ethos of state schooling, some particular aspirations for education within Buddhist communities, however, do not appear to be reflected in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's (DEECD) statutes and learning standards. Nor is there a formal avenue for active dialogue and participation between the DEECD and its learning standards, and religious communities.

Concurrent with the implementation of this program DEECD had undertaken an overhaul of the Prep to Year 10 educational framework. Within the new framework, the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS), there is no overt interface with religious programs or practitioners. Provision is made for “general religious education” that can be incorporated into domains such as the Arts or English to

educate about “the major forms of religious thought and expression characteristic of Australian society and other societies in the world (Education and Training Reform Act 2006, 2.2.10.4). This type of learning is an option for teachers.

Provision for “special religious instruction” was maintained, being “instruction provided by churches and other religious groups and based on distinctive religious tenets and beliefs” (Education and Training Reform Act 2006, 2.2.11.5).

In that religious teachers are volunteers who are “accredited representatives of churches or other religious groups and who are approved by the Minister for the purpose” (Education and Training Reform Act 2006, 2.2.11.2a) and are not required to be professional teachers their role as instructors can be justified.

However, the term “special religious instruction” seems to hearken back to the 1958 Education Act and reads awkwardly in a twenty-first century educational context. This program, despite its educational aspirations, is distinctly on the margin.

Having maintained the status quo as established in the 1958 Education Act in the revised legislation, the Department resisted pressures for the abolition of religious instruction and thereby avoided the possibility of religious and community backlash. The door remained open for inter-religious understanding in ‘general religious education’, albeit without any explicit place in curricula, while the departmental statutes and structures maintained distance between religious groups and a role, or expectation to participate, in educational processes.

Professor Des Cahill is Chair of the Australian chapter of World Conference for Religions for Peace (now publicly Religions for Peace), the body that mediates teacher accreditation between the Department and Minister the special religions. The ecumenical Christian education group ACCESS Ministries, the Catholic Education Office and the United Jewish Education Board, negotiate directly. In 2007 he made the following observations,

“Prior to the 2006 Act there was a consultation process where parent meetings listed the teaching of religion as the second highest issue raised, so there was little public discussion. If R.I. were not included then there may have been a further perception that state schools were not teaching values and that this would further the trend towards private education” (Cahill 2007).

The prevailing political climate had brought values to the fore in education. There was spirited public debate surrounding 'Australian values' and public schools were mandated by the Commonwealth Government to pursue values education (DEST 2003, 2004, 2006) and implement federally funded values programs. There was also a significant drift of students into private (religious) schools that certainly helped to secure the inclusion of religious classes.

In contemporary Australian society, and especially Victorian society, primary school students are exposed to rich religious diversity. Students see and mix with people from many religious backgrounds in their daily lives. Post 9/11 and with wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and acts of terrorism they are also witness to wars being waged between religious groups, and human rights abuses being inflicted on religious bases. Religious groups are also invariably some of the most visible bodies to provide aid and advocacy for disadvantaged people locally and internationally. With just over 70% of Australia's population declaring religious affiliation (ABS 2006), such memberships must also certainly contribute to the cohesion and well-being of the society. The messages children receive about religion are incredibly varied, and surely confusing. Given the diversity and the evident range of activity identified with religion it appears imperative for education communities to help children find informed understanding of various religious perspectives.

The Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program is situated in this educational context. Staffed by volunteer teachers we deliver special religious instruction to school communities that have requested our services, approved our participation and where we have an available teacher. Students enroll only with their parent's approval. The program is funded by community donations and occasional grant monies. This is a marginal program, but the ideals to contribute to children's individual spiritual growth and a more harmonious and tolerant society is held earnestly by Victoria's Buddhist community. With the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) taking a more active interest in special religious instruction, and for the first time seeking review of curricula as of December 2009, the door is nevertheless open for a program such as this to be implemented more widely.

A global review of Buddhist education

The lack of Buddhist schools seems remarkable given an estimated world Buddhist population of between 200-500 million people, the generally agreed number at around 350 million, being some 6% of the population and the fourth largest religion in the world (Adherents.com 2007).

“Strangely enough, however, when we try to review Buddhism, we come to know that it has developed few distinctive ideas about the nature of childhood and child spirituality. Education has rather been a matter of everyday living to be dealt with in a practical way” (Nakagawa 2006, p. 33).

Buddhist education of lay children has traditionally been a family and community concern.

“The impetus to teach children to be aware of what they think, say and do and act with kindness has been an assumed and informal component of Buddhist parenting and teaching....children absorbed Buddhist teachings by learning from their parents modeling, by developing relationships with village temple monastics, and through moral lessons in scriptures and stories” (Loundon, Kim & Liow 2006, p. 338).”

The authors above and Nakagawa also note that a full system of Buddhist education has traditionally taken place in monasteries, where children from the ages of seven and above could be accepted to become young monastics upon parental request to be “raised and trained by mentors acting like parents” (Nakagawa 2006, p. 34).

Needless to say, this historically prevailing institutional model in Buddhist societies is not compatible with our contemporary educational needs. In seeking methods that may inform my current program located in western mainstream schooling, it is not practicable to find or review the types of schooling that have developed in and around monastic traditions in various Asian countries, despite their commitment to scholarship, debate, intellectual rigour and open-mindedness, such as that shown in the Tibetan monastic traditions and examined thoroughly by Dreyfus (2003).

For similar reasons I have not pursued wide inquiry into schooling across Asia. In Sri Lanka traditional Buddhist schools have been subsumed into the state education system since independence, and those remaining, such as Ananda and Nalanda Colleges, seem to operate according to a ‘Protestant’ model (Gombrich 1988), and formed as a nationalist reaction (Bond 1992; Dharmadasa 1993) that has closely emulated their British colonial legacy and thereby does not appear abreast of current

experiential approaches to learning. Schools may provide specific Dharma classes, but their mode of instruction nevertheless has remained an adjunct to the prevailing curriculum and teaching methodologies.

The movement of Buddhism into contemporary western education is gaining momentum, but overall is still at early theoretical stages. Ikeda was an early proponent who saw Buddhism as a socially engaged activity that could provide much needed moral guidance and strategies for personal development (Joffee 2006), and Tich Nhat Hahn, as a younger man, foresaw:

“The education that is needed for the present time is one that can wish away from the innocent minds of the young generation all the dogmatic knowledge that has been forced upon them with the pursuit of turning them into mere tools of various ideologies and parties. Such a system of education will not only liberate us from the prison of dogma but will also teach us understanding, love and trust. These qualities...are the prescription needed for the revival of our society that has been paralysed by suspicion, intrigue, hatred and frustration" (Hanh 1967, p. 57)

This Venerable has taken a much less strident tone as he has matured. His vision, commitment and skill in teaching children has been to include children in his organisation's activities and to write wonderful books that provide practical and insightful material for children (Hanh 2001, 2002). The synergy between Buddhism and the existential positioning of modern pluralist education has been argued by Kobayashi (1971). Wilson, who had assumed that schools operate primarily on a disciplinary model, constructed a dialogue between cognitive theories and Buddhism and concluded that incorporating meditation into schools would be sound practice and good for both teachers and students (Wilson 2003). Gombrich discusses a tension between doctrinal authority and the promotion of individual agency that we have experienced in this program. We are drawing upon doctrine here, but seeking the promotion of freedom. Gombrich, citing the '*Kalama Sutta*' concludes that the Buddha was not inviting the Kalama people to make their own truths, but rather inviting them to make the truth their own (Gombrich 1996, p. 14). This tension we share with many values educators, who on the one hand need to be prescriptive of the values they choose to teach, yet seek that their students make the values their own to live by. The 'what' and 'how' of values education is a direct challenge to the wisdom of educators engaged in this field.

An essay by Stephen Batchelor takes this overall direction of Buddhist education further, by deeming that one of Buddhism's most significant contributions to education could be a better understanding of how we learn and in which "concentration, mindfulness, enquiry and effort describe the underlying dynamics which support the cultivation of wisdom" (Batchelor 1989, p. 19). Again, meditation is an integral feature, and, he surmises, would bring the joy of discovering potentials of the mind to fact-based learning. Like other Buddhist commentators he concludes that this is potentially a learning process that does not rely on a person overtly, or covertly, becoming Buddhist.

There is today a worldwide proliferation of Buddhist universities, such as the International Buddhist University in Osaka, the Dharma Realm University in Taiwan, Nalanda University in the U.S., the Buddhist University in Myanmar, and many more departments of Buddhist studies, but research links with schools are to date still tentative.

Without insider knowledge and translators I have not been able to ascertain the extent of Buddhist education in Asian countries. However, work by Buddhist researchers pertain to this study, such as happiness and well-being (Otake et al. 2006) in Japan, and teacher values (Leu 1999) in Taiwan. It appears that in Thailand Buddhist values are moving into the mainstream of primary and secondary schooling (Narkwong 2008), but to pursue how this is impacting, and how Thai experiences might inform Australian practice would again be a diversion. There is a rich field for dialogue between Buddhist educators worldwide but as this is not the major focus of this thesis, the overview here is brief.

The most prevalent form of Buddhist education for children today in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Taiwan and Korea is a Christian Sunday school model (Loundon, Kim & Liow 2006). The intentions of these Sunday Schools wholeheartedly embrace the Dharma. For example, these authors quote from a children's workbook in Sri Lanka:

"the primary goal of Sunday schools is to educate children to be better and happier human beings by developing, in an integrated way, their perceptual, cognitive, emotional, and intuitive capacities so that they may reach their ultimate human potential" (Loundon, Kim & Liow 2006, p. 341).

In their overview these authors recognise that the programs promote mental training, mindfulness, perception, concentration and memory and the ethical values of kindness, honesty and non-violence because they lead to greater happiness – all aspirations of the Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program – but often with a tendency towards didactic methodologies that are a less comfortable fit in our context.

While Loundon, Kim and Liow consider that the Sunday school model is important in its capacity to provide Buddhist children with a peer community, and presented in a (Sunday School) model of education that is familiar to Asian students. However, they conclude that Western applications of the Dharma with children that are including meditation as an essential part of spirituality is a better approach that brings children closer to dharma, ‘the way life is’ (Loundon, Kim & Liow 2006, p. 350). Meditation is an essential component of our classes and the thick descriptions of children’s experiences of meditation in Chapter 6 adds support to these authors’ contention.

Our group receives educational publications from various international groups affiliated with our member organisations that follow the Sunday School model from Malaysia (Sumangalo 1958), from the Corporate Body of Buddha Education Foundation in Taiwan, and some from Sri Lanka and elsewhere. These are distributed free of charge, in keeping with Buddhist ethos. It would have been expedient to utilise any of these as the curriculum model for our schools. A resource from the U.K. suited our style and intent (Clear Vision Trust 1994) but the cost of multiple copies of their print and video resource was prohibitive. It has since become available in digital format. We have borrowed from this resource in the ‘*Discovering Buddha*’ curriculum, but have expanded the range of topics and activities to include meditation, values, plays, games and craft activities, and revision and extension modules. It was felt that none quite fitted our particular Australian cultural context or promoted the experiential, discovery-style learning that both we and the state educational system favoured.

Dharma schools internationally

With the spread of Buddhism throughout the western world, particularly in the latter half of the twentieth century and onwards, there has been growing impetus for

western Buddhists to engage with education and create schools. While weekend children's groups, holiday and family activities are prolific, schools are far, far fewer.

The longest running would be the Hongwanji Mission School (established 1949) in Hawaii that survived from Japanese expatriate roots and burgeoned to open a secondary campus, the Pacific Buddhist Academy in 2003 from support from the western Buddhist population. The Purple Lotus Buddhist School in California appears to operate along more traditional Chinese lines with separate classes for girls and boys and a strong code of moral purity.

In the U.K. there is a Dharma School in Brighton, with declared Buddhist affiliation. In North America there is the Shambala School in Nova Scotia, Tara Redwood School in California, and in India the Maitreya Project Universal Education School and the Alice Project Schools that are based on Buddhist principles and are promoted as non-denominational. This latter group of schools is reflective of the movement to interpret the Dharma as a non-religious, but spiritual, educational paradigm. By so doing their aim is to broaden their inclusivity and hence widen the scope for potential benefits for children. They are characterised by a holistic education philosophy that I will discuss in the next chapter, and pedagogy that is distinguished by an emphasis upon meditation and development of a 'good heart.'

The interface between the Buddha-Dharma and education is a field where educational practices are disparate, where there is an acknowledged paucity of research globally (Garrison Institute Report Contemplation and Education 2005; Gross 2006; Loundon, Kim & Liow 2006; Nakagawa 2006). Theory matched with rich descriptions of teachers' and students' experiences in this phenomenological study may offer further precision to a research field that is still at a stage of defining itself.

Where I expected to find references to Buddhism in values education, character development and spiritual educational discourse they are to date lacking or misunderstood. For example, in an exploration of the place of spirituality in public education Yob effectively dismisses any practical input from Buddhism by erroneously reducing the Dharma to mysticism, asceticism and "where the ultimate is

conceived as nothingness in Buddhist thought” (Yob 1994, pp. 3-4). This research will contribute towards clarifying Buddhist perspectives and filling this vacuum.

Research in related disciplines

However, the apparent silence by Buddhist educators and researchers per se does not reflect the contributions being made by them outside of a Buddhist rubric. The schools cited above are such examples, but more significant is the burgeoning movement to incorporate aspects of the Dharma, particularly meditation and social and emotional learning grounded in compassion, into mainstream education practices.

From breakthrough research into the treatment of anxiety disorders through mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) by a research team led by Kabat-Zinn (1992), he has continued to promote the wide applicability and effectiveness of this meditative technique (Kabat-Zinn, J. 1996, 2005, 2007). As a technique that was introduced in clinical psychology MBSR has been applied and researched in many clinical settings. In a comprehensive review of research using MBSR (Ivanovski & Malhi 2007) the authors concluded that preliminary findings from mindfulness-based treatment outcome studies indicated effectiveness in the treatment of depression, anxiety, psychosis, and borderline personality disorder and suicidal/self-harm behaviour. A study with aggressive conduct disorder adolescents (Singh et al. 2007) also found MBSR to be an effective intervention.

With promising results, these awareness exercises (bearing similarity to *vipassana*, *shamatha* and *anapanasati* meditations in the Dharma) are finding an accepted place, freed of religious connotations, in psychology and as general well-being strategies.

Mindfulness practices have gained added interest and legitimacy through works by B. Allan Wallace on mindfulness meditation (2006) and the science of the mind (Wallace & Hodel 2008). In rigorous scholarship Wallace has challenged the cogency of objective and scientific methodologies as arbiters of valid social inquiry to argue the legitimate place of first-person, subjective and spiritual experiences (Wallace 2000, 2003) and has further paved the way for humanist and scientific modalities to inform and support each other.

This dialogic approach has led to significant breakthroughs in brain research that have added weight to the efficacy of meditative practices from charting neural changes and capacities through meditation (Carter et al. 2005; Davidson 2002, 2004; Davidson et al. 2003; Lutz et al. 2004). Although these types of research to date have not been extended to children, these findings have given educators further confidence to adapt mindfulness practices for children.

Mindfulness/ meditative/ contemplative/ and reflective practices - the lexicon itself is emerging - are increasingly becoming part of the orthodoxy of mainstream public schooling in the U.K. and in America where Buddhists and people from other spiritual traditions are adapting and incorporating contemplative techniques. Some programs that are inspired by the Dharma that operate in American public schools are at the New School in Seattle that promotes mindfulness through scheduled periods of silence as part of the school day, the Children's Compassion Mind-Training Program that incorporates the study of compassionate and ethical behaviour through self-assessment of daily thought, speech and action, and a discrete 'Boyz 2 Buddhas' program for adolescent males that teaches mindfulness to modulate reactive behaviours.

However, these types of programs are mostly operating in relative isolation, and terminologies, practices and research methodologies are yet to become coherent as pedagogy.

'A Survey of Programs Using Contemplative Techniques in K-12 Educational Settings: A Mapping Report'(2005) from the Garrison Institute has made a significant contribution towards finding mutually understood definitions and has paved the way for an emergent pedagogy. The study, which mapped pluralist applications of contemplative practices in schools defined two closely related, but separate methodological domains:

- programs that prioritised Mindfulness and Attention Training, and
- programs that prioritised Emotional Balance and Wellbeing.

The report identified both these priorities as areas for much needed research. The education program studied in this thesis utilises both of these priorities in the

meditative exercises taught to children and in the commitment to pedagogy characterised by emotional balance and wellbeing. From a Buddhist point of view both of these approaches is to be practised, neither simply one nor the other and these priorities are further served by facilitating links to ethical behaviour from the meditative experiences. My explanations of the BSVEP may contribute to the development of secular contemplative pedagogy.

In America today research into the effects of contemplative practices are attracting philanthropic support. Academic institutes have been expressly formed to engage in multi-disciplinary dialogues and to create research projects into mindful and emotional well-being strategies that are appropriate for children. We can expect the research will affirm the positive outcomes from this work with children that the wealth of first-person accounts attest.

Some projects that have close connection to the Dharma and that will bear research results over the next few years will come from the InnerKids Foundation that utilises a number of elements similar to those in MBSR and has drawn upon Dharma wisdom to develop a teaching and learning program based on the development of attention, balance, and compassion, 'the new ABCs'. Also the Association for Mindfulness in Education, the Hawn Foundation, Mindful Awareness Research Centre (MARC), and Mindsight Institute are engaging in research into the effects of contemplation with children.

The Garrison Report noted that these education programs also shared outcomes in common with mainstream education. In the short-term, outcomes included emotional balance and pro-social behaviors, improving the school's social climate, and enhanced students' learning and academic performance. Longer-term outcomes were the development of noble qualities such as peacefulness, internal calm, compassion, empathy, forgiveness, patience, generosity and love. These are over-riding aims of a Buddhist-inspired approach to education, and are pursued through the curriculum that was developed and taught during this study.

A shift from Buddhism

From the education programs reviewed above we can see an emerging trend where Dharma principles and practices are used in education but are distinct from Buddhist religious practice. This is reflective of movement within Buddhist communities to reach out to the wider community and make available perspectives that could potentially ease suffering and promote greater happiness.

The world's most famous Buddhist monk, spiritual head of the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism and Nobel Laureate, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has shown world leadership by efforts to broaden access to his perspectives and practices that can promote peace, happiness and understanding among individuals, religious and non-religious alike. His distancing of the Dharma from purely religious discourse is evidenced in numerous books with popular appeal: *'The Art of Happiness'* (Cutler & Dalai Lama 1998), *'Ethics for the New Millenium'* (Dalai Lama 1999)', additions to the ubiquitous 'little books' and the (authorised) bumper sticker, *'My only religion is kindness.'*

Amongst western Dharma students there has been a widely circulated article in the international journal *'Shambala Sun'*. Here Sam Harris argues that Buddhism's philosophy, insight, and practices would benefit more people if they were not presented as a religion. In a quite visceral essay he challenges his audience by quoting from a Zen koan, 'Kill the Buddha':

"The wisdom of the Buddha is currently trapped within the religion of Buddhism. Even in the West, where scientists and Buddhist contemplatives now collaborate in studying the effects of meditation on the brain, Buddhism remains an utterly parochial concern. While it may be true enough to say (as many Buddhist practitioners allege) that "Buddhism is not a religion," most Buddhists worldwide practice it as such, in many of the naive, petitionary, and superstitious ways in which all religions are practiced. Needless to say, all non-Buddhists believe Buddhism to be a religion - and, what is more, they are quite certain that it is the wrong religion.

To talk about "Buddhism," therefore, inevitably imparts a false sense of the Buddha's teaching to others. So insofar as we maintain a discourse as "Buddhists," we ensure that the wisdom of the Buddha will do little to inform the development of civilization in the twenty-first century.

Worse still, the continued identification of Buddhists with Buddhism lends tacit support

to the religious differences in our world. At this point in history, this is both morally and intellectually indefensible - especially among affluent, well-educated Westerners who bear the greatest responsibility for the spread of ideas” (Harris 2006, pp. 73-4).

Harris excited much debate. He contended that Buddhism is not strictly a religion, but nevertheless cast as one and that itself perpetuates ‘bad practice’ if treated as one. His polemic challenges a community of people committed to the ethic of non-harm to critically discern any tacit support of violence or cruelty. In Chapter 4 discussions such as these are shown to be commonplace amid Dharma people. These illustrate humanist aspirations and hermeneutic discussions that are typical in the Buddhist tradition.

One of my first Buddhist teachers, Lama Thubten Yeshe, another of the Tibetan refugee teachers who has been instrumental in bringing understanding of the Dharma to the western world, before his death in 1984, issued a challenge to his students to contribute to pluralist education. He envisioned a ‘universal education’ that was practical and that could be applied in any culture but drew upon Dharma wisdom. The Maitreya School, Alice Project and Tara Redwood Schools and the Foundation for Wisdom and Compassion have developed out of Lama Yeshe’s petition. This Foundation is currently commissioning the writing of a knowledge base and teacher training and curriculum resources. They call the pedagogy that this cohort is working to develop Essential Education.

In one communication Lama Yeshe elaborated:

“In Buddhism we have very deep scientific, psychological and philosophical explanations and I am never doubtful that all people need these. But the point is if it is not presented in the right language it doesn’t work. By presenting it in the right way one can understand the essence of all the ancient religions without belonging to any religion”
(LY, Santa Cruz, June 1983).

This challenge has led his students on a journey of discernment for more than twenty years, therein asking questions: “Is it Buddhism by stealth?” “What is the extent of the Dharma as the basis for such a vision?” As a student of the lineage of these Tibetan teachers I have joined this pursuit and thereby favour a humanist trajectory.

Essential Education

Tara Redwood School articulates the following goals: to foster the qualities of loving kindness, compassion, and universal responsibility; to cultivate respectful behavior toward all living beings; to present a balanced integrated program of learning activities and experiences that addresses the physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual domains of the person; to transmit the universal elements of wisdom from different cultures and traditions through an understanding of both the material (external) and spiritual (internal) aspects of reality; and to develop ethical behavior based on an understanding of the interrelatedness of all phenomena.

This latter point is expanded to include understanding of the nature and functioning of the mind and its projections and the nature and source of emotions and how to work with them (<http://www.tararedwoodschool.org/>).

The goals of the Indian Essential Education schools are very similar, and there is a readily identifiable confluence of aims and methods with the other Dharma-inspired programs that were reviewed above.

Embedded in the above goals are the tenets of interdependence, cause and effect relationships, the subjective nature of perceptions, and the ever changing nature of phenomena that includes thoughts and feelings. These principles have informed the development and implementation of the Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program studied here, for they are the foundation from which Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, based his philosophy and teaching. At the same time they are both mundane and profound. While they can be put simply for children, their understanding by teachers has far greater implications because these can shape their expectations of student potential, and influence their teaching practices. To do this requires commitment from the teacher to develop their own wisdom and apply this to their teaching practices.

Chapter 2

Dharma: the way it is

The preceding discussion has charted movement within some Buddhist communities towards greater social engagement, and concurrently some movement away from Buddhism being defined exclusively as a religion. There has been movement to interpret the Buddha's teachings in language and with methods that appear to enhance well-being in existing educational or psychological practices in mainstreamed and plural settings. In my study of a Buddhist Council of Victoria initiative it has been an imperative to maintain overt integrity with the Dharma in these designated Buddhist classes. However, in keeping with the pervading spirit of social engagement members of the program have striven to modify traditional practices and find language to explain concepts in ways relevant to the lives of children in pluralist state schools. It has sought a Buddhist and pluralist engagement.

Because the education program could not adhere to any single Buddhist tradition or cultural expression the development of the BEVSP has challenged the participating teachers to look deeper into their individual practices to seek commonalities and define a program in accordance with overarching principles of the Dharma.

Although as yet not commonly understood in Australian culture, Dharma is a central concept in Indian society, and has been part of the vernacular for thousands of years. It is a Sanskrit word (*dharmā*: Pali) literally meaning 'that which upholds or supports' referring to the order which makes the cosmos and the harmonious complexity of the natural world possible (Murthy 1966). In non-capitalised form it refers to all phenomena with their characteristics, qualities and functions and 'all things and states conditioned or unconditioned' (Rahula 1978, p. 143). It refers to nature and the nature of things as they exist in the workings of the world independent of particular doctrines or dogmas (Buddhadasa 1988, p. 162).

The 'holding' and 'supporting' aspects also connote a moral imperative, and in the beliefs and practices of Hindu, Sikh, Jain and Buddhist peoples dharma is linked to

virtuous conduct. It describes proper conduct of human life working in accordance with the laws of nature that is, in these religions, a causal and interrelated world.

Dharma is also entering the English lexicon, as have other Indic words that I am compelled to explore in this study; karma (what goes around comes around), samsara (a perfume), nirvana (a heavy metal band and/or bliss), yoga (now accepted as a form of exercise), mantra (anything said repetitively) and dharma, in the novel '*Dharma Bums*' and the television show '*Dharma and Greg*'. A common lexicon between Buddhist communities in English speaking countries is yet to be agreed upon. 'Dharma' as opposed to 'dhamma' distinguishes Mahayana from Theravada traditions. In this study I have chosen to use the lexicon with which I am most familiar according to my particular cultural position and experience.

Gautama's intent

Within Buddhism dharma has two particular meanings. Firstly there is a body of teaching materials and methods that facilitate less ignorant and more skilful living and can lead to enlightenment, discovered from Gautama's experience. Secondly the dharma is the natural phenomena that govern the cosmos. With the approach here, to interpret the Dharma for application in pluralist education, I have found it useful to revisit Gautama's example to help clarify teaching aims and objectives.

In Gautama's day, dharma was already in parlance as an all embracing term that linked human activity with the way the world exists. Gautama's teaching challenged the people of his time to consider anew how they might live according to the dharma. He taught the Dharma as truths that stand irrespective of ideologies and predilections. With him it was taught as a vehicle for awakening self-knowledge and liberation for any man or woman regardless of their economic or social status. Religious hierarchies, petitioned votive rites, superstitions, animal sacrifices and self-mortification were refuted and exchanged for individual responsibility and effort towards cultivating an awakening mind (Sarada 1998). These challenges to the mores of the time illustrate that had he intended exclusivity, obedience and prestige as a cult leader the tenor of the teachings would not have been humanist and inclusive.

Prince Siddhartha Gautama became a Buddha. 'Buddha' is a descriptive term that comes from the Sanskrit root *Budh* meaning 'to awake', and the Pali *Buddho* 'to understand' (Narada, T. 1988, p. 21), meaning a fully awakened and realised human being. I have repeatedly looked to Gautama's methods of teaching as well as what he taught to inform the pedagogical perspectives that are explored throughout this thesis.

Firstly, he showed commitment to sharing his knowledge in ways accessible to the people of his time. Rather than opt for scholarly brahmanical Sanskrit, the language of the elite, he taught in an egalitarian Prakrit language. Although it is most likely that he would have been adept in Sanskrit, having been highly educated while living as a prince, and then later learning from a plethora of religious teachers extant in his time, he chose to teach in language most readily understood by the citizenry. His understanding was that the truths he had realised were, if applied mindfully over time, accessible to anybody. To maintain accessibility he taught in the vernacular Maghadi. This language too became modified as he challenged pervading concepts and sought words to impart revised and nuanced meanings. A new ordering of the Prakrit evolved into Pali (Winternitz 1981, p. 40), a specifically Buddhist language in which the teachings were first recorded and are preserved. It is clear that his intention was to teach with broad applicability.

Secondly, Gautama's teachings and legacies (denoted capitalised as Dharma) are a vast canon that illustrate his commitment to teaching according to the receptivity and ability of his students, such as the Jataka stories included in our children's curriculum, and lengthy, subtle discourses for others. From the example set by Gautama, the Buddhist scholars, academics and teachers who are seeking new applications of Dharma are working in accordance with the example set by the tradition's founding teacher.

In part, this original example has allowed the diversity and fluidity of Buddhism as it has embraced the emergence of three traditions, numerous schools of thought, across many cultures, and has been practiced continuously for more than two and a half thousand years. Nevertheless there remains agreement on the fundamentals of practice amongst followers.

Formal Buddhist practice

Practised as a religion, followers the world over take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha: the teacher as an example of fully realised human potential, the teachings, and the spiritual guides and friends who are most notably monks, nuns and those who have developed stable insight of wisdom. This Refuge is also contingent upon an openness to explore veracity of the Four Noble Truths, and ethical living encapsulated in the Eightfold Path.

Within the three-fold refuges of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in formal Buddhist practice, the Dharma has a discrete status: it is considered to be a truthful description of how sentient beings exist in the world, how interactions can be made more skilful and how to become enlightened. Gautama, having become an awakened Buddha taught this Dharma as truth that stands irrespective of whether or not an individual subscribes to his particular teachings, or even if the teachings were not there. The Dharma is not an invention of the Buddha, or any of the previous Buddhas, but only a discovery. This is why he does not have authority over the Dharma.

Certainly wisdom, ethical conduct and contemplation are not the sole preserve of Buddhists, but rather, more universal features that can be found in spiritual, cultural and educational traditions. The degrees to which, and the ways in which these are expressed certainly vary according to various dispositions and heritages. However, with the focus upon wisdom, ethics and kindness that Dharma spirituality embraces, and positioned in religious and humanist discourse, there is potential to forward inclusive dialogues whereby these perspectives may find renewed and enhanced relevance in educational discourse and practice.

Over the past century in particular, as knowledge from across the world has become increasingly accessible and shared, it is perhaps no surprise that elements of the Dharma are currently being explored and utilised outside formal or traditional Buddhist practices, especially in the fields of psychology, and as we are discovering, education.

In this regard, for the Dharma to be relevant and accessible to contemporary educators, it is necessary to explore where and how it might sit alongside prevailing educational philosophies, psychologies and praxis. With these intentions a dialogic

methodology emerges where multiple points of view, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, can engage to consider how students' human potentialities might be enhanced through their education experiences.

This program has spent much time seeking to review and clarify the rich complexities of methods, tests and intentions that the Dharma offers. This experience suggests therefore, that while it can sometimes be appropriate to take and adapt elements for beneficial ends, disparate and undocumented applications seriously risk the loss of the overall integrity of the Dharma as a path to achieve human excellence, 'awakened mind' as a potential pinnacle for education, could be lost through disparate and undocumented applications. While adaptations can be highly effective, there may be much more that can be discovered through open engagement with this resource and the exploration pursued in this study makes a contribution to this initial stage of discussions.

The Four Noble Truths

The tenets of education in the Dharma schools outlined in the preceding chapter, namely, cause and effect relationships, the ever changing and interdependent nature of all physical and mental phenomena, and the subjective nature of perceptions, are reflective of the wisdom of the Four Noble Truths that define Buddhist philosophy and practice. In Buddhist discourse they are deemed 'noble' because they are fully apprehended by highly-realised (hence noble) people, while living life pursuant to these principles for those with lesser understanding nevertheless leads to more 'noble' conduct.

This was the Buddha's first teaching, the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* (Skt; sutra), commonly translated as the Wheel of Dharma. Buddhist ethicist Peter Harvey gives a condensed explanation of this sutra:

“(i) the process of body and mind and the experience of life are *dukkha* (Pali; Skt *duhka*): unsatisfactory, frustrating and productive of suffering, whether in a gross or subtle form;

(2) this situation is caused by 'craving' (Pali *tanha*; Skt *tr̥sna*), demanding desires which lay one open to frustration and disappointment, and keep one within the round of rebirths, with its attendant ageing, sickness and death;

(3) this situation can be transcended by destroying craving, and associated causes such as attachment, hatred and delusion, in the experience of *Nirvana*. Once this is

attained during life, a person will no longer be reborn, but will pass into final *Nirvana* at death, beyond space, time and *dukkha*;
(4) the way to attain this goal is the 'middle way' consisting of the Noble Eightfold Path” (Harvey 2000, pp. 31-2).

Even put simply these tenets are dense with meanings, for they encapsulate the entire Buddhist canon. However the English language is inadequate to fully describe the ignorance that pervades desire in *tanha* and the unsatisfactoriness of conditioned phenomena caused by ignorance, *dukkha*. Overcoming ignorance is overcoming dissatisfaction, and there are ways to do this. In a later publication, Harvey clarifies how engagement with these principles leads to individual exploration:

“The four realities taught by the Buddha are not as such things to "believe" but to be open to, see and contemplate, and respond to appropriately: by fully understanding *dukkha*/pain, abandoning that which originates it, personally experiencing its cessation, and cultivating the path that leads to this” (Harvey 2007).

Avowedly Buddhist or Dharma approaches to education, such as in this study, cannot be divorced from this seminal teaching. As such, this study is an exploration of how teachers in the program have attempted to incorporate their acknowledgement of these principles into their teaching and curriculum development: that life inevitably holds dissatisfaction and disappointment, exploration of how such dissatisfactions arise, to posit the possibility that these are not inevitable and, that the guide to ethical living in the fourth tenet, comes as a pragmatic response to the preceding three ontological positions.

Note here that Gautama did not offer any teaching about how the physical world began. He considered speculation of this kind an unhelpful diversion from engagement with the world in present and practical ways. Nevertheless, consequent to his awakened mind, he offered detailed analytical expositions of causality and interdependence that can be explored, contemplated and tested as grounds for confidence in ethical living. The relationship between causes, effects and interdependence, and motivations that impel these is called Karma.

These are sophisticated phenomena that can only be fully apprehended by practitioners whose study is used to support deep contemplative insight at the highest levels possible. For those with lesser understanding, me and the overwhelming majority, absolute proof of the veracity of Karma is not possible. Finding truth in of

these relationships is established through analytical investigation and mindfulness of motivations and actions. Developing further mindful attention and inquiry to one's experiential being brings confidence and confidence in its veracity is developed. In this regard, even when Buddhism is cast as a religion, faith is never requisite.

Rather the contrary as Dhammananda (1988) has unequivocally explained:

“Faith in the Buddhist perspective derives through proper understanding and realisation of truth and not through fear of the divine or a need to satisfy the emotions. Real faith appears in the mind when it reaches the unshakable state. Blind faith or fanatical religious beliefs have no place in Buddha's Teaching” (Dhammananda 1988, p. 213).

The distinction between confidence and faith is ordinarily exercised in many ways; an undergraduate's faith that the university will provide the knowledge and skills needed to become an engineer, the plane will make it to Brisbane, and so on. Although the concept of karma is yet to be readily understood in the present education and social discourse, there is potential for intersection given the commonality of observance of cause and effect and interdependent relationships. Through such explorations there is the possibility for another route for ethical reasoning that is not faith dependent. Throughout this thesis I continually revisit this intersection to test if, how and where the interpretations of the Dharma by me and members of the BEVSP might sit within education discourse. While the import of this tenet has not featured significantly in the content of material taught to the children in this study, such understanding has been pertinent to the teachers' decision making because in the Dharma, contemplation of causality ie. karma, is a foundation for developing wisdom.

Karma

Buddhist discourse offers detailed and precise explanations of karma. Rahula (1978) gives us a succinct and distinctive definition:

“...the Pali word *kamma* or the Sanskrit word *karma* (from the root *kr* to do) literally means ‘action’, ‘doing’. But the Buddhist theory of karma has a specific meaning: it means only ‘volitional action’, not all action. Nor does it mean the result of karma as many people wrongly and loosely use it. In Buddhist terminology karma never means its effect; its effect is known as the ‘fruit’ or the result’ of karma (*kamma-phala* or *kamma-vipaka*)” (Rahula 1978, p. 32).

This distinction moves the discourse towards individual agency and responsibility by offering an explanation of how mind interacts in the physical world of actions and reactions. Because intentions and motivations behind thoughts, words and deeds are decisive in determining the results, awareness of motivations creates acumen for choice and self-determination.

Therefore, “the law of karma is not regarded as rigid and mechanical, but rather a flexible, fluid and dynamic. Nevertheless there are relatively stable repeated patterns that arise from this collection of impersonal, ever-changing and conditioned events or processes, that form what we regard as a person’s ‘character’” (Harvey 2000, p. 24).

For explanation of the refined logic that supports the apprehension of karma as a natural phenomenon, or natural law, in the English language there are a number of reliable treatises written with the experiential authority of well-practiced monastics. Again I refer to Narada (1988) and Rahula (1978) who provide seminal introductory texts. For comprehensive analysis Emeritus Professor Geshe Sopa’s (2005) volume on Karma in the Mahayana tradition, and Piyadassi’s (<http://www.metta.lk/>) scholarship in the Theravada are thorough contemporary references.

To fully apprehend the veracity of karma depends on the cultivation of *Bhavanamaya Panna*, the deep insight knowledge developed through meditation, but for any person who recognises dissatisfaction in themselves and seeks peace and happiness, openness to karma is heuristic.

That life can be unsatisfactory and holds the desire to be happy can be readily comprehended. These conditions are pervasive. Happiness does not remain a constant lived experience for anybody; this is a human condition. In the schools in this study, in the Victorian Essential Learning Standards and the programs reported in the National Values initiative I have not found any instance where this condition has helped frame the pedagogy. Even with significant inroads being made through incorporation of Social and Emotional Learning strategies and resilience programs into mainstream schooling, there nevertheless appears reluctance to acknowledge this norm. Generally, pervading methodologies favour case-specific reactive approaches, and from a Buddhist viewpoint are thereby limited. What appear to be missing are technologies to assist students to think about internal and external changeability in

their lives, their happiness and their choices at a daily and personalised level. In Chapters 6 and 7 I discuss how these principles were applied in our classrooms.

The marks of existence

The principles discussed above, and all other subjects revealed by Gautama are predicated upon three marks of existence in a conditioned phenomenal world:

“They are seen as in a state of constant change, whether of a subtle or more obvious kind. Consequently, they are seen as impermanent (Pali *anicca*; Skt. *anitya*), so as to be unstable and not fully satisfactory (Pali *dukkha*, Skt. *dukha*), and to be all ‘not-Self’ (Pali *anatta*, Skt. *anatma*): not a permanent, self-secure I or Self” (Harvey 2000, pp. 32-3).

Things exist only in dependence upon the causes and conditions that have preceded any given moment. There is no creative entity and no endpoint of final annihilation or damnation, but a stream of successive events. The focus is on living in the world as we experience it. These points are relevant to Buddhist teachers because they frame how wisdom can be understood and might be taught. They also have potential relevance to the wider education community because, if their concern is to educate for living in the ‘real world’ these can become places for deeper understanding, exploration and inclusion.

However, the most radical tenet is the postulation of *anatma*. This observation challenges the reflexive assumption that identity has an intrinsic core or Soul (Skt. *atman*), and in turn refutes extremes of nihilism (for each moment impels another) and eternalism (because there will always be change). When Gautama taught this he moved the pervading Indic understanding of cause-effect relationship, karma and rebirth, toward individual empowerment rather than fatalism or eternalism.

For detailed exposition and synthesis of Buddhist and non-Buddhist systems of reasoning and refutation ‘*Maps of the Profound*’ (Hopkins 2003) is invaluable. In this comprehensive tome, Hopkins guides the reader through centuries of Buddhist scholarship that covers all possible permutations of philosophic perception and that leaves *anatma* a compelling position. While debate surrounding the ultimate truth of existence, whether it is *anamta*, *atma*, God, godhead, gods, great spirits or beginningless time can inform teachers’ philosophies, it requires skill, clarity and

prudence to transpose these into learning activities that support open inquiry education, as opposed to instruction or indoctrination, in plural settings.

Anatma, which can only be fully realised, or refuted, through systematic reasoning and contemplation, leads directly towards deeper wisdom. On this point we can see clearly that there are distinctions between an ultimate understanding, what a teacher's understanding may be, and what might be suitable for children. Wisdom in the Dharma is cultivated through mindful attention to actions and consequences, and this has attempted to be done in the program, but this deeper stratum of what wisdom can be requires cognitive maturity that primary children may not possess. Furthermore, to initiate contemplation of non-inherent self upon persons whose concepts of self are still forming or in any way might be vulnerable, could be considered harmful and therefore unethical in terms of Buddhist doctrine. But not knowing, too, could be harmful. Selection of what is to be taught requires wisdom. With these points in mind, teachers in the program have pursued the cultivation of wisdom with their students and various strategies are described in this thesis. In Chapter 9 I describe how an extension module on The Wheel of Life was developed and introduced to children.

The phenomenon of karma was never emphasised in the classes in this program, but students have been presented with the possibility through stories. Again this is an example of where the teacher's wisdom and personal understanding of the world can be markedly different from what is given to children. However, from an educator's perspective, the existential reasoning that supports karma can be worth pursuing because with it, as explained above, there is a non-theistic rationale for individual responsibility where eternalism and nihilism is refuted. For secular education, and with many students showing these extremes in their behaviors, further engagement with this other perspective may hold potential benefits.

Observance of causality and interdependence are not solely the preserve of Buddhists. Despite Buddhism's rejection of absolute monism, Chatterjee for one, claims that the law of flux (and which is where karma is found in western philosophic discourse) is a pluralistic theory (Chatterjee 1988, p. v). Support for his claim that flux/ karma is an inclusive, rather than divisive, philosophic position is found in the Indian context, where they have resided the longest. Hindu (both monistic and pantheistic schools),

Jain and Sikh religions acknowledge cyclic existence, *samsara* (Skt.) and rebirth. As a symbol of cultural unity, skilful conduct and human altruism, and one that is inclusive of both ontological and teleological reasoning, a wheel takes central place on the Indian flag.

While here in pluralist Australia these concepts may appear more radical, there exist points of connection for further dialogue. Understanding karma requires analysis that is linked to human activity and in this capacity can become a bridging principle across philosophies, religions and cultures - observation of karma and effects of actions is not peculiar to Buddhism.

For example, in Christianity the principle of 'reaping what you sow' (Matthew 13: 3) is reinforced throughout the Bible. Definite effects of ignorant, hateful and desire-filled actions, as well as positive actions, are enumerated in Job 4:8, Galatians 6:7, Proverbs 18:24, Acts 5:3, and the centrality of individual choice in Deuteronomy 30: 19-20. Observance of interdependent and cause-effect relationships are features of Indigenous Australian, and indigenous spirituality generally.

On a conventional day to day level this is a humanist principle that has the capacity to unite people in religious and secular dialogues in pursuance of ethical conduct, and as such is worthy ground for educators to explore in various ways. While at deeper philosophical levels there is inevitably divergence between various cultural and religious traditions, pertinent discussion can be framed in this ontological ground. While I outline a Buddhist perspective, I primarily pursue a humanist trajectory as viable and appropriate for my plural and secular engagement.

My exploration is driven by Buddhist principles and practices as they have pertained to teachers and students involved in the BEVSP. It does not further my aims to engage in philosophic debate between various orthodoxies. However, because the ontology of the Dharma does not reside with the existence of a creator god, nor with fatalist results to be passively endured, my exploration will favour engagement with humanist and existential discourse, rather than religious.

The Dharma offers methods for harmonising the interface between inner self-knowledge and living and working in and with an outer world, albeit with increasing

skill and awareness. It combines metaphysical and philosophical positions with a holistic psychology to become what may be seen as a practical humanist blueprint. In the interplay of a continually changing and inter-related outer world, with a continually changing and inter-related inner world of individuals, which are all equally subject to these same forces, the humanistic position may be justified. Although mind and matter are by no means the same, through this route highly similar laws appear to govern their operations and could be points for inclusive dialogues.

Dependent Origination: a metaphysical position

Inevitably such a paradigm needs to incorporate philosophy with psychology to inform effective educational practice. The philosophical principles discussed above are linked in the Dharma to how the mind works by the schema of Dependent Origination. This is also variously translated as interdependent origination, conditioned arising and the twelve dependent links of origination. These are taught to provide an intellectual scaffold from which to understand how mind and matter interact, and by which to develop happier and more peaceful dispositions in individuals. In this way it is useful to understand the causes that can be explained from a metaphysical position as dependent co-arising, karma:

“...happiness and misery do not arise without a cause, nor do they arise from causes that are discordant or contrary with the result. If suffering could arise without a cause, it would arise all the time; there would be no need for particular conditions to enable it to appear. It would just come or not come on a totally arbitrary basis”
(Sopa 2005, p. 21).

It is because of the propulsion of karma that no conditioned phenomena hold a permanent and intrinsic nature, and therefore it is a fundamental misapprehension to deem them to be so. This is ignorance that from the Dharma perspective explains a repeated series of events that causes dissatisfaction and suffering over lifetimes. This is explained in a nutshell by Harvey:

“Conditioned Arising spells out a specific sequence of twelve conditioned and conditioning states that explains the ongoing flow of personality and rebirths: (1) spiritual ignorance or misperception underlays the (2) intentions and concerns of unenlightened people - karma - so that these direct (3) consciousness into noticing certain things and into being reborn in a certain way. Thus (4) the sentient body is sustained in life or develops in the womb at the start of a new life. This supports the (5) senses, the basis of (6) sensory stimulation and thus (7) feeling. Thus (8) craving

for and against pleasant and unpleasant feelings arises, hence (9) grasping and (10) further involvement in the stream of existence. This leads on to (11) rebirth in either a new situation or a new life, which leads on to (12) ageing and then death of these: *dukkha*” (Harvey 2000, pp. 32-3).

Note too, that points five, six, seven, eight and nine describe the psychology of existence without continuing unsatisfactoriness. The impetus to continually seek satisfaction impels consciousness towards other stimuli and bodies. It is an explanation of the underlying psychology, or meta condition, of sentient existence.

The Dalai Lama writes for a general audience in *‘The Meaning of Life’*. While this view is often drawn pictorially as the Wheel of Life, His Holiness explains with great clarity how the twelve links cited above create cycles of dissatisfaction and, importantly, how all beings are connected and generally share the same sorts of predicaments. Again from the perspective of a highly trained practitioner, his wisdom has discerned what happens internally and in the external world is connected, and it is possible to both observe and predict potential effects. From this reasoning compassion is justified and is the only plausible response:

“The condition of life is not that we have only one life confined by this time, confined by this space. We have met many times; we have been through many different relationships. Value is not put just on temporary experience. Through meditation on dependent-arising, we generate an understanding of our own place in cyclic existence. Once we have understood our own place, we can extend that understanding to others and thereby come to feel deep compassion” (Gyatso 2000, p. 27).

Taken as a practical guide for realising human excellence, irrespective of a person’s age or status, the requirement is to cultivate ethical and moral conduct, calm concentration and wisdom (respectively *sila*, *samadhi* and *panna* in Pali). Based on the above outlined metaphysical position, ethical and moral conduct becomes an expression of kindness.

“According to Buddhism for a man to be perfect there are two qualities that he should develop equally: compassion (*karuna*) on one side, and wisdom (*panna*) on the other. Here compassion represents love, charity, kindness, tolerance and such noble qualities on the emotional side, or qualities of the heart, while wisdom would stand for the intellectual side or the qualities of the mind. If one develops only the emotional neglecting the intellectual, one may become a good-hearted fool; while to develop only the intellectual side neglecting the emotional may turn one into a hard-hearted intellect without feeling for others. Therefore, to be perfect one has to develop both equally. That is the aim of the Buddhist way of life: in it wisdom and compassion are inseparably linked together...” (Rahula 1978, p. 46).

This worldview aims for holistic development of an individual through intellectual and emotional balance. Meditation provides a crucial role in the intellectual development and the cultivation of wisdom, and subsequent mindful awareness refined in the process can facilitate control and choice for ethical conduct. This is taught to allay propensity for harm and other negative repercussions that by default lead to more peaceful and happier experiences for both the individual practitioner and others. In this schema wisdom and compassion become meta-ethical values from which various other values and morals are subsumed. Branching from these overarching values come more specific values (*paramitas*: Skt. & Pali) to be practiced and perfected. These are generosity, moral conduct, renunciation, wisdom, effort, patience, honesty, perseverance, loving-kindness and equanimity.

These necessarily become part of a characteristically Buddhist education. Buddhist scholar Piyadassi Thera concludes his essay ‘The Law of Cause and Effect’ by asserting that an educated person has qualities of wisdom based upon observation of causality and inter-dependence, and compassion (<http://www.metta.lk/english/cause-effect.htm>). Certainly these distinguish the Dharma education programs that have been looked at and that are pursued in the BEVSP. Approaches by the teachers involved in the BEVSP and the ensuing development of the ‘*Discovering Buddha*’ curriculum have sought to promote students’ development of wisdom, kindness and compassion as they engage with meditations and stories in their classes. The teaching of ethics by way of cultivation of virtues and prescribed morals has been a particularly rich ground for debate surrounding best-practice and curriculum development for teachers in the program. Their experiences will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Dharma and logos

The ontological reasoning that underlies concepts of karma and interdependence discussed above has also been present and influential in secular western discourse for as long as Gautama’s wisdom has been a source of guidance.

Although exact dates are hazy there is conventional agreement that Heraclitus, the acknowledged initiator of the human sciences, was a contemporary of Gautama. Heraclitus (b.544 - d.483 BCE) lived and taught in Ephesus, now modern day Turkey,

while Gautama (b.550 - d.480 BCE) lived in the provinces of India (Grun 1991). Although the intellectual and spiritual traditions of the regions took very different trajectories, Heraclitus attempted to impart his insight into the relationship between the workings of the natural world, the cosmos, and human agency within it, as did Gautama. His word was 'logos'. Surviving fragments reveal a close affinity between Logos and Dharma.

“Having harkened not to me but the Word (Logos) it is wise to agree that all things are one” (DK B50) indicates that his understanding of the world and how it works is not based on his, or anybody else’s predilections. “This world-order, the same of all, no god nor man did create, but it ever was and is and will be: ever-living fire, kindling in measures and being quenched in measures” (DK B30) shares the beginningless perspective of the Dharma and alludes to the cyclic nature of the phenomenal world, *samsara*. Similarly, “The way up and the way down is one and the same” (DK B60). There is order, but an ongoing order based on impermanence, and causal inter-relationships. “On those who enter the same rivers, ever different waters flow” (DK B12), depicts reality as changing, in flux like the waters, and yet it maintains a unified coherence like a river. This link continues into the realm of living beings: “It is the same thing in us that is quick and dead, awake and asleep, young and old; the former are shifted and become the latter, and the latter in turn are shifted and become the former” (DK B88).

Like Gautama he saw the denial of pervasive flux, which to me seems akin to karma, as fundamental ignorance: “The many do not take heed of such things as those they meet with, nor do they recognize them when they are taught, though they think they do” (DK B17). Heraclitus also suggests awakening of mind: “All the things we see when awake are death, even as all we see in slumber are sleep” (DK B21). In this aphorism he also leads his students towards linking ignorance of the way the world is working with unhappiness that is fuelled by unabated desires: “It is a weariness to labor for the same masters and be ruled by them” (DK B84). With this perspective comes a humanist rationale for moral conduct: “It is not better for men to get all they wish to get” (DK B110). “They would not have known the name of justice if these things were not” (DK B23). Buddhist sensibility reads this as the law of karma.

Paradoxical and metaphorical statements are teaching devices that Heraclitus, Socrates and Gautama have famously exploited. Rather than focus upon seeming self-contradictions it is more prudent to acknowledge these men were primarily teachers engaging in hermeneutic discourse to bring forth awakening minds in their students i.e. education, rather than teaching as dogma.

My interpretation of Heraclitus through a Buddhist lens would not find agreement among many scholars from the time of Aristotle onwards. The concept of Logos was interpreted by Aristotle and Plato to pertain to supreme rationality i.e. logic, different from and superior to the holistic and embodied Neo-Platonic view. Logos as The Word was claimed as a monist position in St John's Gospel and later was pivotal in the teleological reasoning of Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century. Supremacy of reason split from feelings and emotions has its roots back here. With this the assumption of an intrinsic doer has been largely unchallenged, but is rejected in Buddhism. If however, the supreme faculty of mind to observe itself, and thereby direct intentions is acknowledged, as Buddhist practice suggests, mind remains holistic in that it can interpret and direct both cognitive and affective modalities. Compartmentalised and prioritised mental functions leave potential for incomplete or erroneous understanding.

Heraclitus' legacy of fragmented aphorisms has left him open to multiple interpretations and happily there are other scholars and educators in the lineage of modern humanists, where my perspective finds correlates. Both Heidegger and Nietzsche looked back to Heraclitus to find enough richness in his abstruse fragments to develop their human-centred ontological discourses. His influence goes far and wide. In National Values Framework literature we find 'a man's character is his fate', fragment DK B119 from Heraclitus, borrowed by George Elliot.

In this chapter I have outlined the principles that characterise Buddhism and thereby inform Buddhist approaches to education. I examined Gautama's example that promoted inclusive practices and personal responsibility. I gave a brief introduction to the metaphysical positions from which the various practices address. Namely cycles of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, perpetual change and interdependence. Because of these dynamics ethical considerations come to the fore as an integral means to address

the very human problem of dissatisfaction. Cause-effect relationships, karma, can be a radical proposition to some, but it is a theme that is present in many discourses, such as my religious examples, and those from branches of philosophy. As I have explained these tenets have an ontological basis that places the Dharma some way between religious discourses and those with secular and humanist intent. Where I see common themes emerging in the National Values Framework and the Victorian Essential Learning Standards, I feel emboldened to consider that these discourses might be enriched by this type of expanded analysis.

Chapter 3

An interface with Australian education

Values in Australian schooling

Given the imperative within the Dharma to cultivate good character (i.e. virtues, values, morals) I was particularly interested in the implementation of the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools that coincided with the period of this study.

I was already inspired by ‘*The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century*’ that set a holistic agenda that included the personal, ethical and spiritual dimensions in education (MCEETYA 1999) that are explored in this study.

Back in 2003, robust public debate around ‘Australian values’ was spearheaded by the Prime Minister’s remark that government schools were ‘values neutral’, and the federal government made a commitment to a National Framework for Values Education that was devised and pursued in schools nationally. From the outset the challenge to educators was to extend and refine pedagogy. The initial terms of reference from the Ministerial Council on Education Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) stated:

- that education is as much about building character as it is about equipping students with specific skills;
- that values-based education can strengthen students’ self-esteem, optimism and commitment to personal fulfillment, and help students exercise ethical judgment and social responsibility; and
- that parents expect schools to help students understand and develop personal and social responsibilities (DEST 2003, p. 10).

Values education was understood to be holistic, ‘about building character,’ and was multi-faceted, incorporating ‘self-esteem, optimism and commitment to personal fulfillment.’ Knowledge of self was added to the more commonly understood concept of ‘social responsibility.’ Ethics was included. The overt focus for teaching and learning was expanded, and with it a rubric of values to be taught. Nine Values for Australian Schooling scoped the initial work in schools: Care and Compassion, Doing

Your Best, Fair Go, Freedom, Honesty and Trustworthiness, Integrity, Respect, Responsibility, and Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion (DEST, 2005).

These values were presented as starting points from which education communities could explore their particular approaches. These values were devised from an online survey that included 20 schools from which 129 parents, 431 students and 135 staff responded. By the authors' admission, "The survey therefore represents a limited but instructive snapshot of school community opinions"(DEST 2003, p. 215). While there was overwhelming support for values education from both parents and teachers, and this has been borne out in public discourse and in individual school experiences, the survey results cannot be construed to be defining of community attitudes towards the particular values that ought to be prioritised.

It is curious to note that Happiness was rated fourth by students, sixth by staff and eighth by parents, but did not make the Framework. Love was rated sixth by students, twelfth by parents, and sixteenth by teachers. We cannot be sure if it was assumed to be a component of compassion. Other values that gained significant responses but were not pursued are, Peace which was rated seventh by students, eleventh by staff and tenth by parents, and Wisdom that rated in the middle range by all respondents, was nevertheless placed higher by students than their parents (DEST 2003, p. 220). While none of the values cited in the framework are contrary to the Buddhist schema pursued by the BEVSP, the importance and nuance of happiness, love, peace, wisdom and compassion, was not reflected in the national directives. However in 2008 and 2009 the Australian government sponsored positive psychologist Martin Seligman to give Happiness workshops to educators. This is indicative of a movement within values education to link discourse and practices of well-being and personal awareness. With discourse framed in this way Buddhist-inspired approaches to education could find broader applicability.

Yet the values initiative created a shift in public education. School communities were openly exploring values, and the sensibilities of the community delivering the religious instruction program found synergy with this shift. Teaching values became overt, and in the twenty schools that I was regularly visiting in my professional life there was vibrancy (and funding) to pursue values education across school

communities. Respect and Responsibility were taken up in all of the schools I visited, and much of the initial work in the schools I observed was around clarification of meanings for teachers, parents and students alike. A key recommendation that came from the Values Education Good Practice Schools Project Stage 1 Final Report: ‘Reaching agreement about the values that guide the school, and the language in which they are described is a precursor to successfully embedding these values in the policies and practices of the school (DEST 2006, p. 2) was reflective of our own experiences in the BEVSP. Building a lexicon of values and their meanings was a particular challenge for this values-based Buddhist program as we moved from original Pali and Sanskrit terms, with teachers from fourteen ethnicities, to create meaningful learning experiences for primary children.

Amid the public discourse and invitations to schools to participate in federally funded values programs, I observed tensions between my Buddhist interpretations of values and how these values might be understood in public discourse. Compassion, central and profound in the Dharma was a key value in the National Values Framework and also became part of public and political agendas as part of ‘Australian values.’ When the then Prime Minister sent troops overseas to fight with ‘compassion’ my Buddhist sensibilities found this oxymoronic. Political historian Professor Klaus Neumann’s critiques of Australia’s human rights and refugee records drew public attention to my private concerns that there were multiple and contested meanings in the discourse (Neumann 2007). He drew upon instances of Australia’s treatment of refugees that equated ‘compassion’ with pity, or preserved for those most needy. His view, similar to mine, saw compassion as an embedded value that translated into a demonstrable commitment to justice and a sense of responsibility. Values discourse was open to politicisation and consensual understanding could not be assumed.

Within schools there was contest over the values deemed most important (three schools I visited had replaced Happiness with Respect in their Mission Statements), what particular values really mean (like Compassion), and, especially where educators are concerned, a quest to translate values into pedagogy and learning outcomes. I wondered if Doing your Best aligned with Effort and Perseverance. Honesty was there, but I was unclear if Respect and Responsibility held similar import to a Buddhist interpretation based upon analysis of human potentiality and agency,

interconnection and causality. The altruism that I associated with Freedom, in the Values Framework was more aligned with democratic responsibilities. Fair Go and Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion seemed to me wanting for empathy and kindness. I met Year 2 students who could tell me that Integrity meant doing what you said you would do, and here with other educators in Australia, I wondered what pedagogies might support students to know what was ethical and moral and give them confidence to grow according to these.

I was particularly interested in the academic discourse that alerted the teaching profession towards the inner and personal dimensions of values education. Values education aims to develop in students “the kind of communicative capacities, interpretative skills and powers of negotiation that are at the heart of a social conscience, and, moreover, the reflective and self-reflective growth that is the foundation of a personal morality” (Lovat, 2005). Lovat has also kept to the fore the relevance of spiritual dimensions to this type of learning that Hill has considered an intrinsic dimension (Hill, B.V. 2004; Hill, B. V, Crawford & Rossiter 2006), and that this program has explored.

The role of self-reflection and self-knowledge (Lovat & Toomey 2007) became part of academic values education discourse, with the enriching role of reflection at West Kidlington Primary School in the UK showcased by Hawkes at various Values Education fora:

“The school found that quiet reflection, often using simple visualization techniques, allows children and adults to contemplate and get to know themselves better. Time is given for class and school reflection (silent times for thinking). Silence is considered an important element of the school’s reflective practice and is encouraged during assembly and lesson times. The perceived outcome is that pupils gain self-awareness and a sense of responsibility for their own lives and happiness. Also, staff are encouraged to take a few minutes, at regular intervals, to be still and silent in order to allow the ‘traffic’ of the mind to settle (Hawkes 2007, p. 121).”

Although Hawkes shied away from calling the exercises ‘meditation’ for fear of alienating the public or being perceived as aligning their practice with a religion, this approach was being heard by mainstream teachers, and aligning with the growing trend around the world to incorporate reflective techniques into pedagogies. In this study I have the latitude to openly explore meditation from within the established yoga tradition of the Dharma and with applications in primary schools. I will tease out

in Chapter 6 some of the intentions and techniques, with the hope of being able to offer further clarity to the discourse surrounding ‘quiet reflection’, ‘self-knowledge’ and possibly wisdom. In Chapter 7 children’s responses to meditation join this discussion.

However, reflective practices did not appear to be widely taken up by schools that formally participated in the programs sponsored to forward the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools. In an overview of the project at the 2008 Values Education Forum Bereznicki observed that the project schools adopted a variety of approaches to values education that reflected the diversity of schools in the Australian context. Necessarily varied approaches included: Student Action Teams/Values Action Teams; Philosophy in the classroom; Socratic Circles; Peer support; Sustainability projects; Community events; Integrating values education into units of work; Service learning; and Story, drama, film, art, sculpture, and theatre.

Although key insights cited as emerging from the Stage 2 final cluster reports were overwhelmingly positive: Values education is ‘transformative’, with students and teachers reporting better relationships, calmer, more focused classrooms and in some cases better student performance. Attention to the processes whereby students learn about their inner lives did not appear to be part of deliberate strategies. Perhaps they were assumed in further insights that Bereznicki reported: that Values education is about the teacher and student - engaging them in a collaborative learning arrangement that embraces both content, process and evaluation of the outcomes in that there is power in a common values language, and that values education is an ongoing process that includes a whole child, and is about developing teachers’ and students’ strengths (DEEWR 2008, p. 17).

The forum accepted that the role of language to provide a ground for common understanding was essential as was a positive relationship between teacher and student (Lovat and Toomey’s thesis) while whole child development (which would include emotional, social and spiritual aspects with cognitive) was yet to be openly embraced in the practices.

Seligman, who was a keynote speaker at this conference, has shed light on approaches that develop these facets of the whole person through his work in positive psychology (Peterson & Seligman 2004a; Seligman 2002), work that is framed by cultivation of personal agency and the value of happiness. Geelong Grammar School has invested significant funds to implement a comprehensive well-being program based on positive psychology and over the next few years the effectiveness of the program on student well-being will be researched. The approach has much in common with the Dharma and I will discuss this further in Chapter 6.

A couple of exemplar projects from the national values project shared particular features with our Buddhist program. ‘Storyfest’ by the WestPEERS group used fables and folk tales as vehicles for values education, and employed creative thought and empathy, although they did not include designated periods of reflection into their methodology.

‘Storythreads,’ (Tooth 2007) at the Pullenvale Environmental Education Centre in Queensland utilised both stories and periods of reflection as part of a holistic values education. Their emphasis was to ‘Speak and Act with respect toward Self, Others and Place.’ The pedagogical underpinnings of the ethics of care, sustainability and human interdependence with all other living things (McKnight 2005) and Nel Noddings’ sustained case for the same (Noddings 1993a; Noddings 1993b; 2002, 2003) accorded with my own philosophic explorations. The experiential, emotional, imaginative and attentive/ reflective components of the program, combined with critical analysis that the BEVSP also pursued gave me confidence that our strategies reflected what was being considered in Australian schools to be sound practice.

Since the change of federal government in November 2007, recurrent funding for values education programs has been drastically reduced and it appears that some impetus to pursue values education has been lost. At individual school and community levels positive cultural changes had taken place and the legitimate place of values education as an integral facet of education has been affirmed. Student well-being, character development and the making of good citizens will be ongoing. There is still much room for many more voices, conversations and research.

Victorian Essential Learning Standards

During the course of this study the Victorian government phased in a new curriculum framework; the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS). The place of values education in the Prep - Year 10 standards was not overt but spread across various learning domains with directives for pedagogical approaches. The tenets of education in the Dharma schools outlined in the Chapter 1, namely, cause and effect relationships, the ever changing and interdependent nature of all physical and mental phenomena, and the subjective nature of perceptions, are reflective of the wisdom incorporated in the first and second of the Four Noble Truths, and subsequently pertain to this study. These are principles that find immediate parallels in the levels of Victorian learning where my adjunct program is situated. Throughout my inquiry I have sought to determine the degree to which the Victorian Essential Learning Standards are similar to the principles assumed in the Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program (BEVSP).

Cause and effect relationships are introduced in the foundational learning at Level 2 (Years 1-2) as part of Interpersonal Development where “students learn to recognise that their actions have consequences for both themselves and others in social contexts,” and in Building Social Relationships where “students identify and accept that there are consequences for their actions” (VCAA 2008 p. 18). Examination of causes and effects also go on to permeate teaching and learning in other disciplines such as Humanities and English at other levels.

Change is examined at Level 3 (ending in Year 4) in Health and Physical Education. Alongside physical changes, mental change is introduced. “Students begin to explore how their emotions are affected by the way they view themselves, identifying factors (including the influence of peers and family) that affect, positively or negatively, their sense of identity and self-worth” (VCAA 2008 p. 13). Also, in Interpersonal Development at Level 3 students are encouraged to link how their values can affect their feelings and behavior. Learning about subjective mental perceptions and processes are found here in the state system, and as key tenets of the Dharma schools’ education. This tenet has also been crucial in informing the development of the Buddhist program studied here, and will be revisited throughout the fieldwork discussion.

Interconnection, intrinsic to a Dharma approach to education, is also part of learning at Level 4 (Years 5 and 6). Learning to develop positive relationships, teamwork and conflict resolution as part of Interpersonal Development are requisite because of “our highly interconnected and interdependent world”(VCAA 2008 p. 9). Again, this theme permeates the curriculum wherein, for example, students are required in Level 4 Geography to “develop their knowledge of the interrelationship between human and physical features”(VCAA 2008 p. 52).

These tenets are readily identifiable in everyday life and as such are a sound basis from which to allow students to explore the way they interact in the world, how they can develop agency and empathy in their interpersonal relationships, and learn to know their own minds better. Although they are clearly intrinsic to teaching and learning in Interpersonal Development, it is not clear if the VELs intends to cap learning of these principles at any particular stage. As practice the Dharma is specifically concerned with personal and interpersonal development and it appears there is synergy here in the Victorian education standards. As we have seen already, causality and interdependence, and physical and mental change have special importance as they form the metaphysical basis for Buddha’s teachings.

The most consistent contribution that the Buddhist classes can make to students’ learning is in the strand of Interdisciplinary Learning. Here, in the Communication domain the language of values and personhood are routinely developed. However, in the domain of Thinking Processes the Buddhist classes are distinctive because the ways in which meditations are taught employ cognitive and affective thinking processes, and give special attention to metacognitive thinking. In Chapter 7 we will see how the strategies related to inquiry and processing information and overcoming problems come together with the Year 5-6 (Level 4 in VELs) students’ responses to their reflective experiences in meditation.

From this overview of the relevant VELs there appears to be various places where lessons from the BEVSP curriculum might enrich wider student learning.

Development of wisdom and the educated person

Over the years of the national Values Education initiative the considerable time required for discussing and clarifying values demonstrated that consensual understanding could be elusive and that values could be directed towards various ends, as in my compassion example. The pedagogies are still emerging, made more complex because values education pertains to lifelong learning and must concede that applications will be individual and situation specific. These create an uneasy tension with pervading assessment trends that seek demonstrable learning outcomes. Given the current context, to define these may well be premature. If, for example, the success of these programs was to be measured by decreases in school disobedience and improved grades, such results could equally come from heavily authoritarian practices that favour training and conformity over qualities that would accord with lifelong learning, such as contextual awareness, self-control and concern for others.

From a Buddhist perspective discussed above an intrinsic aim of education is to enable people to live happily and with active concern for others throughout their lives. Actualising these aims is predicated upon mindful awareness. This facility greatly assists self-control, ability to make choices that coupled with kindness determines positive outlooks on life. I have looked for these in my fieldwork with students and they will be discussed in the latter part of this thesis. This study comes at an early stage in the research field, and to keep integrity with Dharma intentions, requires articulation. The inward looking pursuit of meditation is a tool to effect more aware and skilful engagement in the world. My study prioritises these intentions before an isolated study of meditation effects that could easily overlook such grounded socially engaged purpose. At this early stage in meditation research too, we sought indications of enhanced calm and mindful awareness, but most of all I wanted to understand what students experienced rather than focus on particular outcomes that were affirmed or negated.

However, this marginal program has not been in a position to embrace the wider academic and social spheres where children interact but rather the program has aimed to equip students with strategies to become more effective in these areas. As such my discussion places considerable emphasis on pedagogy and, in agreement with Lovat

and Toomey (2007), the essential role of the teacher as an ethical role model and companion guide.

At a stage where learning outcomes have not been clearly articulated by, or for, the teaching profession the importance of these overarching aims of education being ‘as much about building character’ and helping students ‘exercise ethical judgment and social responsibility’ as cited in the Values Education directives may recede in importance if skills-based learning and measurable outcomes models dominate educational priorities. From a Buddhist perspective this would not be wise.

In the work of R.S. Peters we can find agreement between Buddhist aspirations and public education. In his self-confessed rushed publication Peters (1970) foreshadowed a shift in education towards instructional training models and exhorted education communities not to lose sight of important functions of education. For Peters, education is much more than skills acquisition. It is about doing something worthwhile and for human betterment, which necessarily includes an ethical imperative:

“Educational practices are those in which people try to pass on what is worthwhile as well as those in which they actually succeed in doing so. Success might be marked by general virtues such as a sense of relevance, precision, and the power to concentrate and by more specific virtues such as courage, sensitivity to others, and a sense of style” (Peters 1970, p. 26).

The notion of an educated person is developed by Peters in a later publication where he creates further distance between what education can and should be, and instruction and indoctrination. By enabling students to transform knowledge by understanding the reasons for things, rather than simply react, Peters links education to understanding connections and consequences, the inclusion of multiple perspectives and subsequent moral reasoning:

“Any moral judgement, for instance, presupposes beliefs about people’s behaviour and many moral judgements involve assessments of the consequences of behaviour. An educated person, therefore, will not rely on crude, unsophisticated interpretations of the behaviour of others when making moral judgements; he will not neglect generalizations from social sciences, in so far as they exist, about the probable consequences of types of behavior” (Peters 1973, p. 240).

With this approach people are better because of education. Warnick (2007) has argued exception from a single case of an educated immigrant who, because of his education became alienated from his family. The case serves to illustrate ambiguities and particular sensitivities that operate within diverse groups of people, yet Warnick nevertheless sides with Peters in that the capacities to understand situations and choose appropriate and ethical actions, hence human betterment, are distinctive traits of an educated person.

By design Peters avoids abstruse philosophic reasoning to invite discussion and collaboration between different branches of the social sciences, particularly psychology and education. The broad aims of education that produce free thinking, creative, moral people is for him too a community concern that openly values respect for children and is modeled in teacher-student dynamics. The Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program was formed from these aspirations and insights as held within the Buddhist community.

Peters' work synthesised much of the educational thinking that preceded him. Most noticeably he developed Dewey's (1916) democratisation of education and the seeds he planted for experiential child-centred learning. In VELS we can see how child-centred learning and, through the work of Kolb (1984), discovery and experiential learning, has become part of the orthodoxy. The imperative for democratic educational theory and practices has in the past decade gained urgency in the face of growing violence, poverty and intolerances in the world and in Australian society. Pearl and Knight write passionately that powerlessness of leaders and citizens can be redressed by education that empowers students to critically engage with all issues:

“Part of the powerlessness stems from an inability to think deeply about anything, part from an inability to conceptualize the inter-connectedness of problems, and part from a lack of visions of a world capable of solving problems. Part of the difficulty is organizational - implementing actions that are contagious (i.e., encouraging active and meaningful mass citizen participation in the achievement of a desired goal). The needed conceptualization, appropriate organization, and contagious action are addressed in a democratic education. In fact, democratic education is designed to treat all the issues that current education fails to address or worsens” (Pearl & Knight 1999, p. 20).

The National Values Framework has in part been a response to these concerns and the interdisciplinary strand Thinking Processes in the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) is another.

The approach to education that has been adopted in the Buddhist education program studied here aims to support the democratic, humanist, inclusive and student-empowering approaches that characterise Australian state schools. However, Pearl and Knight, and these state and national directives are nevertheless biased towards outward-looking social engagement. For the development in students of these reflective pursuits of deep thinking, appreciating inter-connections, and visioning that can be both cognitive and affective, there appears to also be an imperative that these be given time and structure. The techniques used in this program could further these aims.

If we take up the mantle to teach children values, particularly ‘respect and responsibility’ or to be ‘wise and kind’ the pedagogy cannot avoid cultivation of concern for others. We have seen that from the Buddhist perspective this is a central tenet that challenges conventional notions of self. We find similarity in the social sciences through the work of Martin Buber (1958). His philosophy continues to enrich dialogue and practice within psychology, education and other social sciences. Although for most readers he really is abstruse to read, the ‘I and Thou’ ethical perspective challenges the human sciences to create imperatives to act that require the ability to perceive ‘thou’ as ‘like me’ i.e. connected. Actions consistent with this perspective are therefore kind and compassionate because these maintain consistency with what ‘I’ want and ‘thou’ wants. The ‘I’ and ‘you’ perspective thus defines a separation and otherness and with this lack of connection the moral imperatives from the ‘thou’ perspective can be waived. Nor with this self-other dichotomy, that denies connections, is there much incentive to consider the other as ‘thou’. Buddhist experience tells us that this perspective takes time and strategies to develop. Meditation can play an instrumental role. Iris Murdoch, who has been a sustained voice for morality and goodness throughout her academic and creative pursuits, concluded towards the end of her career that to teach meditation in schools would help foster these values (Murdoch 1992, p. 337).

Noddings, as mentioned earlier, has also been a longstanding advocate for the ethics of kindness, care and compassion to be legitimate and necessary aspects of education. Like Peters she too has railed against economically driven, skills-based learning, and that providing instructor proof, and research limited to this method also limits the scope of intelligence and the potential for education to take seriously the potential for concern for self, others and consequence. This she has argued is ‘skewed self-understanding’ (Noddings 1993a).

Wisdom *per se* is embedded in education discourse by scholars such as the authors above, but in latter years is resurfacing as a discrete and vital topic amongst educators. In part this is in response to growing disquiet amongst educators that there is an over-reliance on knowledge (Maxwell 2007) and ‘paratechnical’ language (Sockett 1987) on the one hand, and imperatives for teachers’ own understanding and their abilities to educate that arise from values and moral education discourses (Hart 2001, 2004; Smith, H & others 1997; van Manen 1994) on the other.

Positive Psychology has deemed wisdom, being the coordination of knowledge and experience, as a key character strength that promotes well-being (Peterson & Seligman 2004a; Seligman 2002). These authors’ research found that wisdom is not age-dependent, and brought into question the popular notion that wisdom largely increases with age, as forwarded by Erikson. He placed wisdom at the pinnacle of his eight-stage theory of psychosocial development that accrues over a lifetime (Erikson 1968, pp. 140-1). While there remains agreement with Erikson that wisdom can ideally develop over time, new confidence has been found to actively pursue wisdom as a goal that can, and should, be cultivated through education and life-long learning.

Clearly a Buddhist perspective aligns with this view, but is at variance with Peterson and Seligman who treat character strengths and virtues as logically independent and who encourage a cavalier, ‘more is better’ approach to their development. Wisdom, never isolated from compassion in a Buddhist approach, resonates more closely with educators such as Almond (2007), Barton (1999) and Kekes (1995) and the philosophic thought from Noddings, Midgley (1981; 1989a; 1989b) and Gilligan (1989) who define wisdom to include expressions of care, empathy and subsequent moral conduct.

The place of wisdom in western discourse inevitably leads to the ancient Greeks. In a collection of essays edited by Lehrer (1996) the educational applicability of the wisdom teachings from Socrates, Plato and Aristotle are discussed. For Aristotle virtues are interdependent, and happiness (eudemonia) requires all the virtues, and that more of a virtue is not always better than less - a position that accords with a Buddhist perspective. Schwartz and Sharpe (2006) have argued that Aristotlean 'practical wisdom' has an executive function that uses discretion to temper the exercise of other values and virtues. They cite as an example that your best friend is heading off to a wedding in a dress that you had not seen. You personally think it is unflattering but she asks, "How do I look in this?" A measured practical wisdom response, they argue, would trump bald honesty. Their argument stands in contradistinction to Peterson and Seligman. Wisdom that embraces discernment and concern for others, from this study's perspective, more fully captures the nature of wisdom and being wise.

From the ancient Greeks and Gautama we find methods of inquiry and reflection that are applied at the ordinary, mundane level and that can be developed into profound wisdom insights. Placed alongside each other there can be seen confluence and divergence between ancient Greek and Buddhist insights that can potentially enrich inclusive dialogues and emerging pedagogies.

Like other values and virtues wisdom is never left as an abstract ideal, but comes with assumptions that it will be nurtured and practised. The Dharma teaches that the means to develop this, and alleviate suffering, is through ethical conduct and the development of concentration through meditation:

"Without taming the mind and restraining its habit to chase after desirable sense objects, you will not be able to meditate or attain concentration. Wisdom depends on concentration, and in order to see reality just as it is... In order to realize that kind of wisdom, you must have the control and peace of concentration" (Sopa 2005, p. 393).

In practice the import of care and compassion, and the pursuit of wisdom in education appear to have lost vigour over recent decades. The program that is researched here has grown from collective wisdom within a Buddhist community that students

attending public education bodies could benefit from teaching that fosters care and compassion: this is a wise pursuit, and wisdom is never separate from compassion.

In this chapter I have sought to find where the Dharma principles outlined in the previous chapter might find some synergy in public education discourses. The National Values Framework initiatives broached themes that I am exploring; inner-development, the role of reflection, and even the importance of stories. The VELS has emphasised actions and consequences, change and interconnectedness. While I find common terms and aspirations, applications of these principles appear to be tentative in school's practices. Now it seems that values education has been re-instated as a legitimate pursuit in education it is timely to consider what might be expected from education. The links between values, inner-development, reflection, and mindfulness of causes and consequences are explicated extensively in Dharma treatises. The fieldwork discussions that are to follow will show some possible applications of these tenets with children in state primary schools.

Chapter 4

Many voices: Hermeneutics and Narratives

In the preceding section I sought to locate the Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program within the context of Australian state schooling and alongside a growing but disparate international movement that is seeking applications of the Dharma, particularly meditation, in secular and pluralist education.

Despite standing as a major world religion with increasing populations of Buddhists in the western world, pedagogy overtly informed by the Dharma has not been articulated. The various borrowings from Buddhism, and this Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program in itself, are indicative of practitioner interest in this application to education and can potentially add some needed and effective strategies to existing educational practices. The diversity of Buddhist cultures, languages and traditions, and a Dharma population that is uncomfortable identifying with a 'religion', all help to explain the absence of Buddhist perspectives appearing in the literature. The program studied here provides a rare opportunity to work with a vibrant community program to address some of the complexities and challenges in bringing secular education together with the Buddha-Dharma.

Earlier I have referred to the ontological positions that explain causes and remedies of pervasive suffering. These truths include phenomenal existence marked by change and impermanence (Pali *anicca*; Skt. *anitya*) that renders not-fully-satisfactory experiences through this general phenomenal instability (Pali *dukkha*, Skt. *dukha*). This pervasive instability operates as an interconnected web of causes, conditions and effects that are propelled by intention (Pali *kamma*; Skt. *karma*). Activities that are motivated by the perception that these unstable phenomena are fixed is considered to be a fundamental ignorance. Yet it is because of the not permanently fixed qualities of phenomena (Pali *anatta*, Skt. *anatma*) that change and even liberation (Pali *nibbana*; Skt *nirvana*) is possible. These demonstrate ontological reasoning that distinguishes Buddhism from theistic religions and characterises what might be termed Buddhist education. From the tenets explained here there appears to be some direct relevance to the human sciences and contemporary education. The practical outcomes from this reasoning are ethical and reflective practices that cultivate wisdom and compassion.

These values particularly pertain to robust education that actively aspires to equip students for self-knowledge, lifelong learning and engaged citizenship.

Buddhism considers that the cultivation of wisdom and compassion is a spiritual pursuit and offers a vast canon of texts and practices that facilitate development for any individual, from the most basic levels of understanding through graduated and higher trainings towards fully awakened mind. From the preceding discussion, the presence of wisdom and compassion and related values has a place in current educational discourse but Buddhist perspectives attribute particular meanings and directions to the existing rubric.

The process of articulating a stance and producing a curriculum necessitated much debate, discernment and many trials to select materials and practices that might be suitable to engage primary school students.

My case development of this process within the Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program (BEVSP) has two distinct strands. The first is that which pertains to teachers and community stakeholders involved and their shaping and delivery of the program, and the second to students who have actively engaged in ongoing personal program evaluation.

The role of educators as teachers of wisdom was particularly challenging. While none would claim to hold the levels of wisdom and insight sign-posted in higher Buddhist learning and still on the learning journey themselves, these teachers nevertheless had to negotiate how best to educate for the development of wisdom and compassion in children. There were no readily identifiable learning outcomes, other than our collective experiences as practitioners, and so the focus of discussion within the program favoured the development of curriculum resources and sharing what various members found to be effective teaching methods. My reflexive and academic commentary has aimed to synthesise these elements to provide a practice-based forum from which a pedagogy could emerge. The feedback gleaned from the students has provided insights into the effectiveness of the given approaches. In keeping with the ethos of the Dharma, I have sought indications that students have maintained personal agency, by way of showing willingness to appreciate and critically challenge the ethical lessons and reflective practices from their lessons. Beyond that, I looked for

broad indications as to whether or not students found their lessons personally meaningful, in that they might have remembered lessons and applied them elsewhere in their lives.

My position within the study is multilayered. I have co-ordinated the Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program since its inception and was the principal writer of the emergent '*Discovering Buddha*' curriculum. I have liaised with schools, supported teachers with methods and materials, delivered teacher training and contributed to the newsletter. I am also a story-teller, Buddhist practitioner, a parent and a qualified educator and these capacities have also shaped my contributions to the program. My role as researcher of the program has provided the volunteer Buddhist teachers with perspectives from Victorian and national education authorities and insights from international research that contributed to collective confidence to shape lessons that meet students' current learning needs and capacities.

With such a prominent and instrumental role in the shaping and delivery of the program, I have attempted to tread a middle path that has required strategic leadership and practices that have been informed by the cultural diversity and particular values, experiences and insights of the participant teachers. The structure of the program has supported inclusion and transparency. I have reported monthly to a B.C.V. Education Committee, and more frequently to the Program's Convener who has shared an active role in operations. Teachers have also met together biannually and in localised hubs that produced meeting minutes (see example in Appendix 8). These minutes have all been endorsed by the B.C.V. authorities and have also provided transparency to the member organisations and teachers in the program. These sorts of communications have also shaped my narratives and bring transparency and authenticity to the research data. My analyses contained in this study have been member-checked by the relevant participants in the program's organisational structure.

As a researcher intimately involved in the formation and delivery of the Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program (BEVSP), it has been especially significant for me to use research practices that reflect Buddhist ethics and practice. In both capacities, as researcher and program co-ordinator, I have been engaged in layers of meaning-making and understanding that have invariably required me to find a

relatively objective position amid highly subjective areas of inquiry. For example, I have engaged with meaning in texts in my retelling of Jataka stories and I have negotiated adaptations of traditional meditation practices with teachers so that they might be more readily understood by children. I have also needed to understand variously the cultural and historical perspectives and experiences of the Buddhist teachers, and similarly understand the perceptions and experiences of the primary school students.

Hermeneutics is an established dialectical activity to bring forth meaning in both Buddhism and the human sciences and for me has provided a framework whereby I could navigate my way through the complexities in this study.

Hermeneutics as a Buddhist tradition

In this study it would be all too easy to cite that children learned the name of Prince Siddhartha's horse, the place of his Enlightenment, that he taught kindness, honesty, self-discipline and so on, and I could also cite from my data that children who had attended classes for more than two years could comfortably sit in meditation for more than ten minutes. I could tabulate the children's test results and correlate the length of time sitting with enhanced ability to self-reflect, but that would be what I may have wanted to see, and would not bring me any closer to understanding whether the participating children had been supported to know themselves better by becoming more aware of their thoughts, words and deeds and become more confident to behave according to values such as kindness and respect that they had been taught.

It would be equally easy to refer to the texts and practices as the end-point authority. Students could be taught that it is right not to tell lies, for example, because it is part of the Eightfold Path, that integrity is important because that is what is stated in a seminal Buddhist text such as the '*Dhammapada*', and that it is wrong to kill because the Buddha is quoted as saying so. In this way the program could still be presented as an alternative model of Values Education.

In these approaches students are cast into a passive learning role where learning is more akin to indoctrination than the development of inquiring, creative and socially connected qualities that would more accurately define best practices in Australian, democratic education systems. Moreover, these approaches would not honor the intent

of the Dharma. Throughout the recorded teachings of the Buddha, practitioners are exhorted to take personal responsibility for their happiness and liberation without depending on any supernatural or external agency. “You yourselves should make the effort; the Tathagatas are only teachers” (Dhammananda 1988, pp. 502, V276). Critical reflection that moves between texts, such as those below, and lived experience is integral to the Buddhist learning processes: “It is proper for you, Kalamas, to doubt, to be uncertain; uncertainty has arisen in you about what is doubtful...” (*Anguttara Nikaya, Tika Nipata, Mahavagga, Sutta No. 65V4*).

Individual responsibility was certainly an aim of Gautama’s teaching:

“Come, Kalamas. Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing; nor upon tradition; nor upon rumor; nor upon what is in a scripture; nor upon surmise; nor upon an axiom; nor upon specious reasoning; nor upon a bias towards a notion that has been pondered over; nor upon another's seeming ability; ... Kalamas, when you yourselves know: 'These things are good; these things are not blamable; these things are praised by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to benefit and happiness,' enter on and abide in them” (*Anguttara Nikaya, Tika Nipata, Mahavagga, Sutta No. 65V10*).

In the ‘*Mahaparinibbanna Sutta*’, the final teaching before his passing, the Buddha tells his faithful attendant Ananda, “The Doctrine and the Discipline, Ananda, which I have taught and enjoined upon you is to be your teacher when I am gone.”

These quotations are widely cited amongst Dharma practitioners including teachers in this study. They show that the Buddha considered himself foremost a teacher, and in the Kalama Sutta above, the advice points to methodology that promotes critical inquiry and individual responsibility. Although many scriptures and treatises have been written about Buddhism over the millennia to clarify and codify the teachings, “Nevertheless it seems certain that without enlightenment, there must be hermeneutics – which, ...provides the soteric function of serving as a technique for divesting oneself of illusion, a radical hermeneutics of suspicion” (Lopez 1988, p. 9).

The teachings become the teacher, but this is not straight forward when the legacy from forty-five years of prolific teaching is a vast canon, and when it is widely acknowledged that the Buddha, as an incredibly skilled teacher, would teach appropriately according to each student’s openness and means of understanding. The

Dharma is said to apply equally to the entire spectrum of human capabilities, from the most ignorant and deluded through to the fully enlightened. It is both humanist and profound and I will argue that it is also eminently practical and educational. However, it does hold many ambiguities that need to be negotiated.

Etienne Lamotte's scholarship helps clarify these complexities. He focuses on *upaya*, meaning the Buddha's intent, as the primary hermeneutic principle, that guides practice and embodied understanding for all levels of capability. Quoting from the '*Catuhpratisaranasutra*', he cites four refuges, i.e. guides, for textual interpretation: "(1) the dharma is the refuge and not the person; (2) the spirit is the refuge and not the letter; (3) the sutra of precise meaning is the refuge and not the sutra of provisional meaning; (4) (direct) knowledge is the refuge and not (discursive) consciousness" (Lamotte 1988, p. 12). The aim, he clarifies, is not to condemn sound methods of interpretation but to ensure that human authority is subordinate to the intention of the Dharma, that the words and texts, i.e. the letter, is subordinate to this spirit and that the provisional texts are evaluated in the light of those that offer precise meaning. Finally, at a point where the interpretation of the Buddhist canon can be very challenging for scholars, he explains that discursive consciousness must be subordinate to direct insight knowledge and wisdom. Other sutras offer further clarifications that move authentic Dharma teaching and learning away from indoctrination and towards what can more accurately be considered education.

Apart from guidance for interpretation of the Dharma, Gautama makes particular distinctions between different classes of knowledge to help navigate students towards their gaining of knowledge, knowing truth and attainment of wisdom. Knowledge is of three kinds: "*Sutamaya Panna* (i) knowledge acquired orally (ii) *Cintamaya Panna* - knowledge acquired by thought. The practical scientific knowledge of the West is the direct outcome of this kind of knowledge. (iii) *Bhavanamaya Panna* - superior kind of knowledge acquired by meditation that one realises intuitive truths which are beyond logical reasoning" (Dhammananda 1988, p. 472). Further to this the '*Canki Sutta*' explains that there are five conventional ways of knowing; faith, preference, hearsay-learning, arguing upon evidence, and through contemplation. These types of knowing are sequentially more reliable, but realisation of what is considered in the doctrine to be to be an ultimate form of truth that apprehends reality void of the lens of

attachment, aversion and ignorance can be a precarious matter, particularly without guidance from a teacher void of attachment, aversion and ignorance (Nanamoli Thera 1981).

Nevertheless this sutra (Pali: sutta) provides guidance for those short of fully awakened minds to determine how self-knowing can be discerned and taught. Again this sutra emphasises the imperative to pursue contemplation. By giving effort to these practices more insights of wisdom and compassion can be experienced, that in turn provide confidence to pursue this type of learning (Thanissaro Bhikkhu 1999).

These perspectives are useful because they can guide teachers of Dharma, and possibly values education teachers more generally, to consider attitudes that might facilitate successful teaching, and bring humility and mindful reflection to their teaching practices. They can be signposts from which educational discourse can avoid indiscriminate acceptance of pluralities and refine inclusive educational methodology for the pursuance of wisdom and ethical conduct. Accordingly, the latter two ways of knowing, evidence-based inquiry and contemplation, have shaped teacher discussions and curriculum development pursued in this phenomenological study.

It is these emphases on direct knowledge and direct personal experience that again move the Dharma forward from pure philosophy through the experiential matrices of hermeneutic inquiry towards pedagogy. It is through this open and shared commitment to praxis that misconceptions of self-contradictory faith or religiosity, activities that deny the declared spirit of the Dharma, can be averted.

Hermeneutics has a vibrant role in all of the Dharma traditions that have grown from the original discourses in India some 2,550 years ago. Lopez (1988) draws together a selection of essays that examine the hermeneutic principles and practices in Indian, Tibetan, Chinese, Japanese and Korean Buddhist traditions in '*Buddhist Hermeneutics*'. The focus of the collection is textual exegeses that, as the contributing scholars are aware, is undertaken to inform praxis. While methods range from historical analysis, pictorial analysis and various forms of cultural synthesis, together they combine to reinforce the crucial role of hermeneutics in the spread of the

Dharma, the longevity of the Dharma and the self-empowering role of the Dharma in the lives of its students.

The most relevant points to guide my methodology and application of the Dharma in curriculum development and learning experiences with teachers and primary students, that I take from Buddhist scholarship in hermeneutics, are firstly the intention, and secondly two principles of interpretation - “transmitted doctrine (*agama*) that *comes down to us* and realisation (*adhigama*) that *comes through us*” (Kapstein 1988, p. 165). This becomes an interwoven dynamic between subject content or doctrine, and lived experience. Validation that the lessons have been learned resides in the direct wisdom and insights of the teacher to recognise from first-hand experience the challenges, foibles and potentials of students engaging in this type of wisdom-based learning.

The wisdom of the Buddha’s pedagogy, it appears, has led his students into what has become post-structural hermeneutics, as seen in Figure 1 below. This provides an inclusive and flexible blueprint to inform research methodology, and also an approach to teaching and learning that is particularly suited to Values Education, and Personal Development and Interpersonal Learning in the VELs.

Hermeneutics – articulating human sciences

The hermeneutic approach is also appropriate for the interpretation of data in this educational case study. Hermeneutics seeks understanding through a dialogue with the multiple perspectives and various routes of analysis according to the purpose at hand e.g. textual, linguistic, cultural, social, political, and individual. This approach offers scope to move from individual and collective experiences, textual interpretation, textual development and engagement with the broader discourse such as with Values Education and VELs.

While intrinsic to all of the human sciences that require openness to multiple interpretations, hermeneutics is not a doctrine of methods according to Gadamer, “but rather a basic insight into what thinking and knowing mean for human beings in their practical life,” with the ethical imperative that “distinctive capacity is required in human beings in order for them to make the right use of human knowledge”

(Gadamer 2003, p. 5). It demands openness, empathy, and tolerance. These qualities are deemed critical by Lovat and Toomey for quality teachers engaged as values educators. Determination to understand what it is to be human and to apply knowledge with openness and empathy could be equally relevant to personal and interpersonal learning within the Victorian Essential Learning Standards.

For many philosophers, such as Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer, Nietzsche, Habermas and Rorty, they have used as their starting point an acceptance of what is, rather than starting with a question to be answered. From a route that Heidegger (Heidegger 1962, p. 30) traced back through antiquity to Heraclitus, the act of looking deeply into 'what is' to make meaning, moved from textual exegesis, such as practiced by Husserl to text-analogs and human beings. After Heidegger, hermeneutics expanded to include positions that have acknowledged human beings living, acting and interacting in a real world, and came acknowledgement within social inquiry that human beings are not purely rational, critical thinkers but their being is also sensate, feeling, emotional and embodied. The liberty to approach phenomena from a vantage point of empathy and openness distances phenomenology from the purely rational exercises that philosophy requires. Empathetic engagement also distinguishes phenomenology from ethnography. Hermeneutic discourse seeks perspicacity gained from the process to inform applied understanding of selves that are more than purely rational beings.

The philosophies and methodologies that surround hermeneutics are discussed and clarified for the purpose of praxis (Bernstein 1985; Demeterio III 2001; Gadamer 1993). Both philosophy and hermeneutics stand in solidarity together for the human sciences, propounding reason, real world experience and application. Philosophy relies on analysis and reason while hermeneutics serves to transpose philosophies into an understanding of lived experiences. In this study - where pedagogical approaches are developed from philosophic positions and lived experiences, and imparted with a new set of experiences lived by student and teacher participants - a hermeneutic framework diverts shared understanding from acceptance of pluralities to allow more specific and richer meanings to emerge.

Lovat and Toomey appreciate the point. Their thesis, that Values Education and Quality Teaching are but two sides of the same coin, moves towards praxis from the

hermeneutic ground. In their case they cite the hermeneutics expressed by Jurgen Habermas. Lovat writes:

“Beyond the importance of empirical-analytic knowing (the knowing and understanding of facts and figures), Habermas spoke, when it was entirely unfashionable, of the more challenging and authentic learning of what he described as the historical-hermeneutic or ‘communicative knowledge’ (the knowing and understanding that results from engagement and interrelationship with others) and of ‘critical knowing’ or ‘self-reflectivity’ (the knowing and understanding that comes from critiques of all one’s sources of knowledge and ultimately from critique of one’s own self” (Lovat & Toomey 2007, p. 6).

This approach guides educators towards adding reflection to the rigour of inclusive discourse, and at the same time helps those who are pursuing the development of good character (such as defined in the National Values Framework) in their students to be wary of the pitfalls of untimely or inauthentic empiricism, religiosity or dogmatism.

For education about self-knowledge and life to be successful requires that the values taught endure in lived understanding and activity. Gallagher, following Gadamer’s perspective in *‘Hermeneutics and Education’* gives a thorough analysis of how education is best served by temporally situated dialectical exploration of existential meaning, rather than epistemologically or empirically based approaches. Therefore learning outcomes need to be assessed contextually and holistically. Neat outcomes such as a correct answer to a maths problem cannot be expected.

Rather,

“knowledge is a movement between ignorance and absolute insight ... That which seems strange always is a little familiar; things are never perceived in isolation but rather within a context...We can learn about the unknown only by recognizing it as something that fits into or challenges what is already known” (Gallagher 1992, p. 195).

Behavioural objectives, programmed instruction, and instrumental policies and learning activities aimed at producing measurable outcomes all testify to the modernist obsession with objectification and reduction (Gallagher 1992, pp. 172-3), a point where holistic approaches to the human sciences make their departure to follow the hermeneutic trajectory.

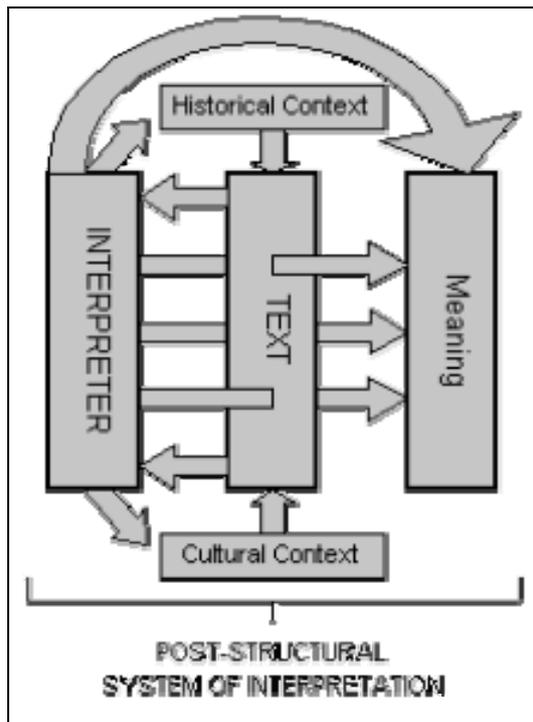


Fig. 1. Post-structural hermeneutic system of interpretation (Demeterio III 2001, p.7)

A model for interpretation that best suits the requirements of this study is found in the eclectic post-structural system of interpretation that has assumed previous hermeneutic systems into a reflective and responsive mode of inquiry. I am seeking meaning from ancient texts in modern applications, and meaning from interviews with teachers and students, and student drawings. “Above all, poststructuralist hermeneutics does not only explore the parameters of textuality, but also the institutional, social, and political structures that define the relationship between truth/meaning and power” (Demeterio III 2001, p. 9). I focus more closely on texts and cultural, historical and social meanings in this study because I want to understand the experiences of students and their teachers. While institutional and political influences inevitably impact upon lived experiences, influences from these dimensions would be better served if addressed in a later study.

I have drawn on several participatory action research models, Demeterio III (2001), see Figure 1 above, Crotty (1998) and Reason & Bradbury (2001), in framing how the BEVSP can interpret its internal activities and engage with the wider educational profession. For example, when I engage with the ancient Jataka stories, I, as interpreter, consider their historical and cultural contexts that I can glean from the

time they were first taught and from the time that they were first translated, to seek authentic and yet contemporary meaning. In my discussions with Buddhist teachers the interview is the text, and again I am impelled to consider their responses in the context of their cultural and historical journeys.

Hearing the voices: a case study with narratives

In this case study I address the processes that teachers in the program went through to develop the curriculum: personal beliefs, challenges, tensions, and find out how the students experienced their Buddhist classes. I cannot find meanings from the program without taking account of individuals' experiences, nor would it be right to omit them, for this is a collegial, community program and my voice is but one of many. If I am to find that our interpretations of Dharma and pedagogy are efficacious, and if I am to discover indications of how the classes have touched the lives of the students, I need the participants' stories. The cognitive, affective, reflective, lived and embodied narratives of the participants - teachers in the program, students, teachers in the schools, parents - are essential. It is a phenomenological study.

This is a study of a new program that demonstrates applications of Dharma that have not been researched before. This field is not at a stage where one could specifically track students' well-being and ethical decision making over time. From the role that meditation has in the Dharma, it would not be appropriate to limit the study to meditation alone, or to singular applications of meditation. Rather, through development of a case, a story of the program's development, I can embrace the complexities that a holistic approach to education inevitably entails.

Inevitably I am selecting the stories to be told. I am pursuing a construction that will bring together my secular and spiritual experiences and I would like to invite further discussion and analysis with a wider audience, both Buddhists and non-Buddhists. To this end, a measure of my success would be, as van Manen (1990) directs, that my phenomenological research/writing will be reliable if these meanings become recognisable to the reading audience.

It is through the narratives of the participants that the experiences and complexities can be revealed and where the post-structural hermeneutic can guide the interpretation

of meanings. In the classical application of hermeneutics, teachers involved in the development and delivery of Buddhist classes are engaged in a process of interpretation of Buddhist texts and practices to discern intended meaning, and exegesis of what might be taught, as well as effective teaching methods. This activity plays at the edges of Husserl's conception of meaning-giving transcendental subject (Dreyfus, HL 1987) with conscious, rational engagement with text and practice, but becomes more deeply immersed in the Heideggerian hermeneutic strand as concomitant discussions and reflections surrounding this curriculum development draw forth embodied and culturally situated narratives (Heidegger 1962, p. 263).

While the core teachings of the Buddha are shared amongst the group of teachers, the texts and practices vary with cultural perspectives and Buddhist traditions, and these have challenged the group to discern and articulate their perceptions of essential meaning and intention. These different perspectives especially came to the fore as teachers in the program determined to teach morality, and it became very useful for me as co-ordinator of the program to apply hermeneutic analysis to sift through doctrinal, cultural and historical perspectives held by teachers, to hold open discussions and collectively determine applications that would engage their students. These various perspectives are discussed in Chapter 8.

In classroom dynamics the meaning-making boundaries become osmotic. Praxis moves from rational focus to embodied engagement with relational interactions to effect some kind of change. The lessons too, aim to facilitate meaning-making for each individual student. Phenomenology accommodates these dynamics and narratives honour individual experience. Max van Manen (1990; 1994) has shown on numerous occasions that narrative as a research tool can empower the research subjects, and narrative (as story) is a highly effective medium for teaching virtues and values. His empathetic and reflective narratives, with purposes aligned to his studies, supported and informed this methodology.

In keeping with what may be understood as an ideologically driven study based on the perceived universality of the tenets of Buddhism, and also in keeping with this ideology that seeks to nurture individual empowerment through cultivation of wisdom and compassion, it has been essential for me, as co-ordinator of the program to

employ research methods that firstly reflect this ethos as well as provide valid, credible data from which I can attempt to answer my research questions.

Narrative, both as pedagogy and research methodology, has provided such a vehicle. Narratives, “the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful” (Polkinghorne 1988, p. 503) have provided means, as stories, for children to engage with moral lessons. They have become a way through which teachers could share their experiences and provided a vehicle for me to analyse children’s experiences. These strategies have not disrupted the weekly half-hour lessons for research purposes, nor have they over-burdened volunteer teachers with additional research questions. They have used adults’ and children’s natural dispositions to make stories from their experiences. Used as stories in the curriculum these narratives provide an accepted educational medium for teaching about life and values to primary students.

Gathering the stories: Research methods

Action research

The Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program began in 2004. I was appointed to co-ordinate the program, train volunteer teachers, liaise with schools and place teachers. From there, we in the program began an action research cycle of curriculum development based on shared classroom experiences and the emerging priorities. We were unsure of what to expect. Buddhist classes were being offered in Victorian state schools for the first time, and while some of our members had been involved in teaching children meditation and other aspects of Buddhism in their respective Dharma centres, we were excited and curious to know how children in state schools would respond.

By making this shift into the public school domain, teachers too had to move from their existing practices. The props of cultural tradition, peers and family, first language (for some) and doctrine from their spiritual traditions were to be put aside and the Dharma interpreted according to the children’s needs and receptivity. The volunteers were Dharma practitioners of five or more years standing and came with letters of recommendation from their local Buddhist teachers. The majority had not been professional teachers. The two-day teacher induction program introduced this educative orientation and some compatible teaching strategies.

In 2005 I began my doctoral studies. The program then operated in six schools. I selected two sites that represented the diversity of our school populations. These were an inner-city state school with only a few children from Buddhist backgrounds and a western suburbs school with classes comprised of children who were predominantly from Buddhist families.

After having my research proposal accepted by the university I provided a sample story and research questions that I would ask children for approval by the university's ethics committee and the state education authority. I recognized that meditation and children's responses to stories with themes of loss and grave consequence could be deeply personal and confronting. It would be anathema to the program to cause distress. After gaining ethics approval I sent formal invitations on university letterhead outlining my proposal and inviting research participation from the cohort with whom the children interact: Buddhist teachers, school principals and teaching staff who oversee the religious instruction (R.I.) classes, and to the parents of students requesting their own and their children's involvement. Non-participants in the research were assured that their involvement in the program would not be compromised in any way.

School principals and teaching staff had an important contextualising role and agreed to participate. A semi-structured interview with them was conducted at the beginning of the research at each site. Parents too, had a similar role although only four parents from the inner-city school gave their personal agreement. These parents received anecdotes and updates from the program, offered brief but affirming feedback and one parent was available for an in-depth interview. With only one exception at each school, parents gave permission for their children to become part of the research.

The predominant group that engaged in the research was the Buddhist teachers who kindly agreed to formally enter my project and became 'active inquirers in cycles of action research' (Reid 2004). Circulated inputs from these seventeen volunteer teachers who taught in the program over the four year research cycle have informed the development of this case and the open sharing and discussions between the program's members, that included me, culminated in the production of the

'Discovering Buddha' curriculum. These processes and artifacts have triangulated my data for indications of reliability and credibility. Excerpts from the curriculum appear as Appendix 1.

Needless to say the input from these teachers has been significant. While there has been a shared aim to contribute to emancipatory knowledge (in the sense that 'Awakening mind' in Dharma is synonymous with liberation), this study does not aim for participants in the study to move to politically empowered positions, as is generally perceived in 'emancipatory research.' However, I emulated Patti Lather's stance that "involves the researched in a democratized process of inquiry characterized by negotiation, reciprocity, empowerment - research as praxis" (Lather 1986, p. 257). In accord with the ethical position that equally honoured Buddhist intentions and sound research practices I wanted the volunteers' participation in both the program and research to enrich their understanding of Dharma, and empower them to become more confident and creative teachers. I had to remain sensitive to the restraints of volunteered time and commitment, and their engagement as research inquirers, being able to contribute or not as they chose, was more suitable than full participation as co-researchers as Lather might suggest.

Students were also invited to the role of research inquirers for they were to test for themselves whether or not they considered their learning from the classes was beneficial to their lives. It was a self-evaluation role that was in keeping with the self-empowering scrutiny that applications of Dharma encouraged. Students' names have been changed in this study to respect their anonymity.

Case-writing

Development of a means to share ideas, information and feedback with a cohort of volunteer teachers spread across the metropolitan area and into regional Victoria was a challenge. I adapted the case-writing methodology demonstrated by Shulman (1992) and Shulman and Mesa-Bains (1993). Writing and circulating stories about significant incidents and practices allowed Buddhist teachers' voices to be heard or not heard as they chose, and for ideas to be shared and acted upon. Rather than requesting written comments on these micro-cases, as the above authors suggested, I needed to adopt a more flexible stance. For some teachers English was not their first language and they

were not comfortable offering publicly written comments. Others were reluctant to publicly criticise a colleague/person due to their spiritual sensibilities. Therefore, I explained, teacher responses to cases and issues did not need to be written but would be gathered from personal communications with me, via telephone, email and in-person conversations. I adopted a clearing-house role where colleagues preferred to keep their responses confidential.

More public discussions of issues occurred in teachers' meetings. This approach was demonstrated at the first of the two teachers' meetings held in 2006. These biannual meetings, reported with minutes accepted by the groups, were also cause for face-to-face discussions about issues that circulated cases had already raised, and needs-based platforms from which the suitability of various teaching materials and teaching methods could be presented for peer trial and review. This case-writing approach became a forum for drawing issues and particular challenges for the group's attention, reflection and suggestions. In this way outcomes from the case-writing provided a vehicle for action research where teachers were given opportunities to both "own and drive" (Kincheloe 2003) the direction of the delivery of Buddhist classes, and the subsequent research. The "shared ownership of research projects, community-based analysis of social problems, and an orientation toward community action" highlighted by Kemmis and McTaggart (Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln 2003, p.568) became evident as teachers tried various strategies and discussed curriculum priorities. Ongoing review by the writer/s through circulation of each case triangulated our data. Data from Buddhist teachers were also gathered from an end-of-year survey in 2005, an extensive mid-year survey in 2006, personal communications and the biannual newsletters produced by the B.C.V. Education Committee.

Student participation

This program explores the "the kind of communicative capacities, interpretative skills and powers of negotiation that are at the heart of a social conscience, and, moreover, the reflective and self-reflective growth that is the foundation of a personal morality" (Lovat 2005 p. 121) and spirituality (Hill, B.V. 2004) that these leaders in values education in Australia deem integral. To determine if these goals shared by the Buddhist program were being met, I sought responses from students. Although I was mindful not to coach students or create an expectation that positive comments were

what I was seeking, I considered it fair for students to assume to some degree that, because of my involvement in the program, I would prefer to receive positive feedback. Buddhist and classroom teacher observations and comments, and my own classroom observations have all been used to construct my narratives.

I chose to gather data from students in Year 5-6 classes because these students were more likely to be able to critically engage with the abstract concepts that they would be presented with, and to verbalise their responses better than younger students. I analysed the students' workbooks for potential themes that might emerge from their written and graphic entries. Students at each school participated in semi-structured interviews at the end of 2006 conducted by myself. In 2005 and 2006 students across the program completed a written end-of-year evaluation (Appendix 3) in class with their Buddhist teacher. Comparison of site data with student evaluations from other schools also gave indications that my data were reliable. In 2006, consistent with the action research model, I devised a Happiness Scale for students to gauge their responses to meditation. The Happiness Scale invited the students to become research inquirers. Through their recordings of pre- and post- meditation experiences, they observed and recorded their personal experiences from which they could gauge any perceived changes. This strategy was used intensively over two years and I will explain the application of this method in detail in the Chapters 5 and 6. Students similarly engaged as research inquirers in the Good Deeds/ Counting Kindness project, discussed in Chapter 9.

It became practical to work more intensively with the students and teachers at the inner-city school because unlike the western suburban school, there were no staff changes (volunteers and classroom teachers) and classes ran continuously. Also in 2007 I worked on a DVD commissioned by the B.C.V. to promote the program to Buddhist communities that involved the inner-city students. The DVD can be viewed at <http://www.bcvic.org.au/education/news.htm>. It shows Year 5-6 students from the inner-city school meditating, performing a play and commenting on the program. This material, alongside visual footage from another school, help extend and clarify the data I collected.

Classroom teacher validation

Interviews and written feedback from the school teachers required to be present in the religious instruction classes built further validity into the data gathering process. They were asked several times each year to comment on the suitability of the stories, and their perceptions of student engagement with the various meditations and stories. The Assistant Principals and two teachers from each site also offered unsolicited constructive feedback.

I cannot possibly know how these students will live their lives, or the extent to which these classes have been effective in shaping their lives. The responsive and inclusive research methodology has embedded the shared and recognisable voices of the participants - their stories, anecdotes and comments - to be explored. In interpreting the data I have sought indications that students engaged in journeys of self-awareness, a basis for wisdom, and about their capacity for kindness. This exploration provides insight into development of self-knowledge specifically, and values pedagogy more generally.

Chapter 5

Tales from the classrooms

By the end of the first year of the Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program, half-hour Buddhist Religious Instruction classes were being conducted in four metropolitan schools to some ninety students. I had begun work as co-ordinator but had not commenced research. Two schools joined in the first semester and the inner-city and the western suburban schools focused upon in this study both began their classes in the second semester. Student and teacher feedback gathered from the four schools at the year's end gave early indications of issues that have shaped the program's development and action research cycles. From a student evaluation survey (Appendix 3) administered by teachers in their classes came indications that children across primary year levels found personal benefit in what they were learning:

"I learn Buddhism because I want to understand more about people who are different from me. Thank you for teaching us Buddhism and I want to learn it again next year."
Rachelle - Yr.5

"Buddhism is great because you learn about why people do the things they do."
Hayley - Yr.5

"I learnt how to meditate. It's good!" - Jacinta – Prep.

"I enjoy doing Buddhism. I learnt a lot about the teaching & I'd love to do it next year." Nick– Yr.2

"It's a great way to get relaxed. If I can't get to sleep at night I do meditation and I go to sleep straight away. It's really good!" Vanessa – Yr.5

"It's good. I feel peaceful and happy." Brayden – Yr.2

"The meditation is very relaxing and allows the children to focus. It has a calming effect on everyone." - school teacher

Excerpts from Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Newsletter No. 3. Buddhist Council of Vic. Inc., December, 2004.

However, the volunteer teachers' reports alerted us to some of the complexities and challenges of our task. At the western suburbs school, classes were held during the last period on Thursday afternoons in a large multi-purpose room alongside students who were not attending religious instruction. Students were tired and restless. There were many distractions in meditation. Added to this, most of the students in the two

classes offered were from Vietnamese Buddhist families, and knew something about Buddhism and meditation. The boys were keen to develop yogic skills and cross-legged would walk on their knees and jump up in bids to levitate! These were not passive students and their teacher, oft times exasperated, raised an early concern that the initial curriculum with lessons about the life of Buddha lacked the variety and contemporary relevance to engage these students. It was evident too, that R.I. classes can be an onerous challenge for volunteer teachers.

In contrast all the inner-city primary school students, but two in two classes of twenty were from non-Buddhist families. Classes were scheduled for the first lesson on Tuesday mornings. Students were fresh, they did not share their classroom, and our teacher, Helen, who had practiced in the state system as an Art and ESL teacher brought visuals and language development to her classes. The room, time of day and the teacher's experience appeared to be factors that helped these classes run more smoothly than at the other school.

The next year the program began in earnest, with the teachers working with our two main strategies: meditation and story. This year we, as a group, also began to trial plays, a Good Deeds Book where students recorded acts of kindness, and use of a Happiness Scale where children recorded meditation responses and were directed towards empathetic responses to stories. The primary focus during this year was on meditation - posture, routine, experience of quietude discussed in the next chapter - and the use of tales including Buddha's story. The exposition below discusses the process of selecting particular stories and issues surrounding interpretation of translations of ancient Jataka stories. Alongside these challenges we recognised that we were broaching issues that were potentially confronting to children, such as suffering and loss, and sensitivities surrounding these continue throughout the discussions of stories.

A great life and an epic story

The life story of Prince Siddhartha Gautama introduces the Buddhist path and demonstrates the great potential of an individual to become wise, kind and attain a fully awakened mind. This life predates the Common Era marked by the birth of Christ by approximately 500 years. These two immensely influential world teachers

lived and taught compassion and ethical living, and their life stories in apposition show the spectrum of ways that these goals have been achieved.

The story of the Buddha that comes through the ages is of a boy born amid miraculous circumstances to a royal family. His mother died after childbirth. He was cosseted and lived a life of luxury. Nevertheless he was kind, strong, brave and intelligent. Through these attributes he won a beautiful bride in a marriage contest. His happiness nevertheless waned after he was finally allowed to leave the palaces (a prophecy at birth compelled his father to keep him secluded from the world lest his son become an ascetic and not a great ruler). After witnessing the effects of old age, sickness, death, contentment eluded him. The sight of an ascetic holy man prompted him to seek alternatives. After the birth of his son Rahula he secretly left the palace and his family. He became a yogi for six years and subjected himself to extreme austerities. No closer to finding peace and its causes, and very near death, he took nourishment so that he could sustain his meditations, and his life. Through this he found a middle-way approach that resulted in his full awakening i.e. Buddhahood. For the next forty-five years he taught prolifically to people of all stations the truths that he had realised and how they might realise these themselves. At the age of eighty he passed away. His final edict: 'Be a lamp upon yourself,' squarely placed liberation as an individual responsibility.

Classes in the six schools during this year gave special emphasis to two episodes from the life story; The Wounded Swan (Appendix 1 p. 2.8-2.9) and then The Four Sights (Appendix 1 p.2.25-2.28). At the inner-city school the students performed these as plays. In the west the teacher used circle-time discussions, focusing on animals and small creatures to explore the themes with students. Other schools crafted swans from paper and other craft materials.

The dramatisation of The Wounded Swan involved students in a discussion that linked justice to compassion. Prince Siddhartha who finds a swan shot by an arrow bids to nurse it to health. His cousin Devadatta (a continual adversary throughout his life) shot the bird and claims his quarry. The boys argue. The king, thinking it fit for young princes to debate rules of law invites the boys to the ministerial chamber where they present their cases. The ministers weigh the pros and cons but do not decide until

a sage appears and determines that, “Life is the most precious thing for a living being, so the person who tries to save life, rather than take life, deserves to have the swan.”

The play and discussions fitted seamlessly with students’ learning, with emphasis given to classroom discussion and exploring themes of justice and ‘Fair go’ that are prized in Australian society and reflected in the National Values Framework. Kindness and wisdom were inextricably linked, particularly when students were asked to consider the swan’s perspective. Students saw clearly that the swan wanted to live.

The Four Sights had a less comfortable fit. Siddhartha, curious to see his dominion beyond the walls of his palaces (he was given one for each season) ventured out. Despite the king’s orders that the kingdom be beautified and the aged and infirm therefore kept indoors, the prince inevitably saw the decrepitude of old-age, the suffering of sickness and the shocking pallor of death. The prince was horrified and sank into gloomy listlessness when his trusted charioteer and confidant explained that this is the fate for all. On a fourth outing the prince saw a wandering holy man, still common in India today and myriad during that era. The ascetic showed a peaceful demeanour and explained that he could not bear the burden of suffering in the world and was seeking release. Siddhartha found a strategy to pursue liberation from suffering.

Although as a religious instruction program attached to the state school system but not accountable to it, we had *carte blanche* to teach whatever we chose, I was uneasy about whether this content would distress students. I raised my concerns with the volunteers. Two Sri Lankan teachers and another from Malaysia explained that suffering is much more visible in Asian than it is in Australian society. The aged, sick and dying routinely remain in extended family homes. Consequently children from these types of families grow to witness and accept these inevitabilities. I was not clear the extent to which inevitable suffering, such as those illustrated in the Four Sights, is addressed in schools. We knew that Buddhist stories can be graphic, and the program’s teachers have always been sensitive to introducing tales of life and consequence in ways that will empower rather than distress students. The emphases on calmness and kindness in meditations also served to provide a pedagogical balance to the stories and a self-empowering complement.

Student involvement: strategies and some effects

Helen, the inner-city teacher devised The Four Sights as a play. She provided props; colourful cloths that became turbans, costumes, backdrops and a shroud. The prince and his charioteer had hobby horses to ride out on. Children moved into characters, were kinesthetically engaged and in this way became familiar enough with the lessons through repetition to develop a performance. The active, creative group work of plays was fun for the students, and amongst more confident teachers became a feature of the program. The pictures below show the kind of sensitivity that Helen brought to her classes. Figure 2 shows her preparing students for the third sight, and Figure 3 shows students' solemn engagement in the play. Figure 4 shows a charioteer who knows more than a prince.



Fig. 2 Play: The Four Sights - Students preparing for the Third Sight



Fig. 3 Play: The Four Sights - the third sight, Death



Fig. 4 Play: The Four Sights - Channa the charioteer tells Siddhartha the fate of all

We did not, and could not expect all teachers to present the content of our curriculum in the same ways but began to see indications that the various approaches were nevertheless touching the lives of students. The western suburbs teacher, newly appointed that year, rang me to share an anecdote. While this teacher was walking to class, a student came over in the playground to say her grandmother had passed away. The teacher said that the girl must feel sad, and that her own grandmother had died when she was a similar age. We were both struck that this student had wanted to share her personal sadness with a teacher she met for just a half an hour each week. Rapport and trust had been cultivated in her circle-time discussions. This gave an immediate indication of the efficacy of caring teachers willing to engage with ‘life’s big questions’ that Lovat and Toomey (2007) had deemed to be an essential component of their double helix model of values education. It also provided a small indication that stories can shape a personal narrative.

This gave me reason to reflect that our course provided students with a legitimate forum to explore and help contextualise sadness. A kind and attentive teacher also played a part. I shared this anecdote with the teachers. From our personal experiences we knew that inner reflections have the potential to bring to the fore otherwise hidden thoughts and feelings, but recognised that we were neither school staff nor counselors. We agreed that the teacher’s acknowledgement and empathy seemed appropriate and determined that beyond this, if any student appeared particularly troubled the matter would be referred, in confidence, to the classroom teacher or Assistant Principal.

Early lessons also introduced the Buddha to primary students. The Buddhist hermeneutic that places primacy on the *intention* of the teachings, rather than letter or orthodoxy shaped the lessons. An approach typical of a children’s Dharma group at a centre might be to instruct that Buddhist iconography be revered in prayers, offerings and supplications, but here outside of Buddhist institutions, communities, and culturally-informed practices, the intention was better served by taking a ‘pre-religious’ approach. While we aspired to have the children respect the Buddha and his teachings, we considered our task better served by providing opportunity for children to learn and explore the meaning and symbols for themselves. They learnt that ‘Buddha’ means to be ‘Awake’ to their true selves, and in this context students physically examined statues and learnt about the symbolism that each part of the icons

represented, and that these were symbolic of their own potential. This is illustrative of the program not opting for a religious education approach but rather a spiritual education that pursues meaning, purpose and connectedness (Oldenski & Carlson 2002). In this way children could understand why Buddhist people show reverence to the images, and could find a potentially positive and meaningful symbol for themselves.

Similarly, the visits to classes at each school by a monk or nun were greatly enjoyed by the children and gave them a basis from which to form respect. They were fascinated by the ways the Sangha live and asked many questions about their lives, dress, eating habits and Buddhism, and these too became an annual feature of the classes.

End of year written evaluations administered by the Buddhist teachers to the children (Appendix 3) affirmed our strategies. Students expressed their appreciation of meditation and asked to know more about Buddha's life e.g. Did he go back to his wife and child? The Year 5-6 students, with whom my study is especially focused, also gave some thoughtful responses that indicated that they were opening to new levels of meaning: "I have a better understanding of life," and more specifically, "to get rid of jealousy and hate is hard but not getting rid of it is harder." Students had learnt of ways to make their lives more purposeful: "The way to live in harmony with others," "Ways to make the earth a better place," "How to know your own mind" and "It teaches calmness and if I'm worried it helps me. When I feel weak it can help me. If pressured before doing something it helps."

With these responses came connections between inner and outer worlds: "It makes you more enlightened and a better, calmer, peaceful, kind person. It also makes life happier for you and the people around you. It makes you feel good because you feel like you understand everything, or a lot," and "It makes the earth a better place and helps everyone feel better." These responses are imbued with kindness and wisdom and suggest this education is spiritual and potentially transformative. Further evidence of transformative, spiritual education was received when the inner-city classroom teacher passed on this story written by a Year 6 boy from the Buddhist class. In the transcript below I have corrected some spelling for easier reading.

Lost and Found: Story of a contemporary Buddha

Shattered like a priceless Ming vase that once was treasured, yet now is tainted with dark thoughts. Heartless thoughts.

Now smashed on icy ground, the cold icy ground desolate ground.

My unwanted, clammy hands clutch the steering wheel.

A feeling of emptiness, aloneness, unwantedness creeps over me.

I feel lost in a dark pool of emotion.

I was once accompanied, warmed, cherished, loved by another being. Yet now I am abandoned.

I arise from the car seat slamming the door behind me, leaving the part of my soul that I still had, and deserting my consciousness and any other meaningful part of my body behind.

The street is filled with people moving quickly, all of them loved, cherished, all of them promoted, all of them wanted, all of them needed, all of them useful.

I walk towards a bar.

Inside it is deserted, abandoned.

Cigar smoke clouds the room, building a screen between you and whoever else might be in here.

Scotch, Wine and Beers line the bar table.

A faded leather couch lies in the corner.

I collect as much liquor as I can carry and drape my rotting carcass over the stained couch bending my head and closing my eyes.

I connect both thumbs and subconsciously fall into a deep trance.

I wake up, an amazing sense of revitalization sweeps over me.

Glancing at the door I notice a dim light.

I walk over and it becomes apparent that it is day.

All my dark thoughts have dissolved into a positive white energy.

I view everyone in the world in a different way.

I feel as if I have achieved enlightenment.

I walk to the car and retrieve my soul.

I am now complete, a sense of usefulness arises.

An extreme will to teach all in life what is important falls over me.

I am changed.

Year 6 student, inner-city 2005

Monkeys and metaphors: textual interpretation

Stories worked well as a teaching strategy and although the Buddha's story could have been taught for a whole year, even longer, students needed variety to maintain

their interest. As a group we were acutely aware that the Dharma addresses big issues; living with awareness of how things are, consequences, the pervasiveness of suffering, and individual capacity to navigate amid these realities towards contentment and happiness. Given the students' enthusiasm, stories and meditations seemed to be an effective combination. To keep the interest we needed variety in the curriculum and one of my roles was to guide that development. The directive to the program from the initial scoping dialogues within the B.C.V. was to teach the Four Noble Truths and the Jataka stories. How the former was to be taught became a pivotal challenge, as I will go on to explore, while the Jatakas, a cycle of folkloric tales subscribed to the births prior to Gautama's awakening provided rich material to engage children in the principles of the path, without requiring adherence to the practices of the religion.

I was appointed to co-ordinate the program because of my experience as an educator and a Masters degree that utilised my interpretations of Jataka stories in primary and secondary schools, as well as a subsequent contribution to a primary school Asian studies resource (Glascodine 1996). I revisited this work. Jataka texts available to us did not fit neatly with our program. The beautifully illustrated series from Dharma Publishing we considered best suited to students Year 3 and below, while other compendiums (Khan & Le Mair 1985; Khoroché 1989; Sen & et.al. 1993) were expensive for a program run on donations and, without identification of the morals contained within them, were more difficult for volunteer teachers to use readily. There have been other overseas publications of Jatakas that were not available in Australia while this program was being developed: reprints of two 1920's publications with lovely silhouette illustrations (Babbitt, E. C. 2006; Babbitt, E. C. 2008), an illustrated anthology (McGinnis 2004), and a new scholarly translation of selected stories (Shaw 2006) that supports my own interpretations. A compendium that was distributed free of charge (Piyatissa & Anderson 1995) that highlighted the moral lessons at the end of each story was useful but still this collection did not target all of the virtues and values that we considered most strategic for the brief half hour available each week. We wanted to develop a curriculum that was responsive to the teachers' and students' perceived needs, and not tailored to the themes in available texts. With this came a process of prioritising the values to be taught, materials development, and incorporation of flexible approaches to delivery.

The Jatakas hold a unique place in world literature. They are one of the world's oldest collections of written stories (recorded in Pali from the fifth century BCE up the third century CE) and also one of the largest (547 in all), and they have continued to be told up to this day in the living traditions of Buddhist cultures throughout the world. Though not specifically intended for to children, they have been, and are, a primary vehicle to introduce children to the Dharma at festivals and in the temples. They have also become part of the folk literary canon of various Asian cultures. They can be bought in comic book form at newsstands in India. Here too in Melbourne, Sri Lankan Buddhist communities construct bright 'pandols' (dioramas) of Jatakas for their Wesak celebrations that honour Buddha's birth, awakening and passing.

A unique feature of this cycle of stories is that they hold a common character, the Bodhisatta (Pali, *Bodhisattva*: Skt.) who through hundreds of lifetimes, adventures and misadventures, realises his goal of full awakening. They fit within the genre of folktales, and tell of noble quests, magical beings, animals, the triumph of virtues and the consequences of folly.

The story below is used here to explain the processes I undertook to prepare the stories. It was selected to illustrate the value of patience, a value that is taught to be necessary for awakening mind. I have kept the Pali title for each story, for reference by Pali and Sanskrit scholars, for comparisons by those with deeper literary expertise than mine, for those from other cultural backgrounds, and for children, too, to be aware of the source.

The Buffalo and the Monkey

Mahisa-Jataka

A long time ago in ancient India the Great Being, who later became the Buddha, was born a buffalo.

He was a fine buffalo. He was large and strong and had two long, sharp horns. He roamed around the Himalayas as he pleased and led a very comfortable life.

That was, except for when he had his lunch.

The buffalo liked to have his lunch under a very lovely mango tree on top of a peak with a beautiful view.

In the tree lived a monkey who was a real pest.

Each day when the buffalo was eating his lunch the monkey would swing down from the tree to annoy the buffalo. The monkey would slide down his horns, swing from his tail and poo on his back!

Each day the buffalo would beg the monkey to stop his carrying on, but of course the monkey refused. He was having the best of fun.

The buffalo would plead with the monkey, "Please my friend, stop this nonsense. No good will come of it."

A little bird that lived in the mango tree saw the monkey carrying on day after day and didn't know how the buffalo could stand it. She asked the buffalo:

Why do you patiently endure this pest?

Why don't you crush him, and allow yourself rest?

"If I get cross with the monkey I will end up even more bothered than I am now," explained the buffalo, "That isn't rest."

"Besides, my guess is that this monkey will behave with other animals the way he does with me. I will put up with his nonsense and maybe save him from coming to harm, and save me from doing some harmful deed that I will live to regret later."

Then the buffalo continued in verse:

If he treats others as he treats me

I fear they will destroy him, but from giving harm I am free.

A few days later the buffalo chose to eat lunch under another tree and a savage buffalo came to eat lunch under the mango tree.

Down swung the monkey from the tree and slid up and down the horns, swung in circles from the buffalo's tail and pooped on his back.

The buffalo shook the monkey off his back and trampled him under his hoofs.

The original written stories begin with a prologue where monks are discussing an incident, the Buddha explains the causes of such by telling a story of times past, and the story concludes with a coda that identifies the characters in the story in their present situation. For brevity I have generally excluded these. However, unlike other contemporary Jataka story-tellers with a child audience, I have retained, but modified the verses. Gathas, verses, are characteristic of this ancient Indian form of literature (Winternitz 1983, p. 113) and their inclusion keeps integrity with the tradition. A transcript of the translation of Mahisa-Jataka (Cowell 1990, pp. 262-3Book 3) appears as Appendix 4.

The original:

*“Why do you patiently endure each freak
This mischievous and selfish ape may wreak?”*

*“Crush him underfoot, transfix him with your horn!
Stop him or even children will show scorn.”*

became:

*Why do you patiently endure this pest?
Why don't you crush him, and allow yourself rest?*

The verses above were between a tree sprite and the buffalo in the original. It was because of my personal sensibilities that I changed the sprite to a little bird. I wanted to contain student interest and not provide cause for tangential discussions about sprites and fairies. The nineteenth century language was invariably old fashioned (e.g. “voided excrement”) and convoluted. Also, I would be uncomfortable with what often appeared to me to be similarly outdated moral interpretations such as the shame from the scorn of children shown above. There was also a gleeful suggestion of comeuppance:

“If, Tree-sprite, I cannot endure this monkey’s ill-treatment without abusing his birth, lineage, and powers, how can my wish ever come to fulfilment? But the monkey will do the same to any other, thinking him to be like me. And if he does it to any fierce Buffalos, they will destroy him indeed. When some other has killed him, I shall be delivered both from pain and from blood-guiltiness.”

That said, the Jatakas invariably end with a grisly denouement. The original translation was more graphic than I dared:

“The Buffalo shook him off upon the ground, and drove his horn into the Monkey’s heart, and trampled him to mincemeat under his hoofs.”

This is the textual hermeneutic process I engaged with each story. I arrived at an interpretation by looking to the historical position of the origins of the story and my attempt to discern the translator’s cultural perspective, and reflecting these back upon my own various literary, historical, educational and spiritual perspectives. The passage above that troubled me became the passage below that reflects my personal understanding of a noble application of patience:

“If I get cross with the monkey I will end up even more bothered than I am now,” explained the buffalo, “That isn’t rest.”

“Besides, my guess is that this monkey will behave with other animals the way he does with me. I will put up with his nonsense and maybe save him from coming to harm, and save me from doing some harmful deed that I will live to regret later.”

I was unsure of the extent to which the stories needed to be sanitised, so unlike most other renditions for children I chose to keep the gravity of the consequences akin to the originals. Again we teachers in the program were confronting issues of life, death and consequences of actions through the stories, and seeking ways to teach them effectively.

I taught this story at both schools. There are many Jataka stories with monkeys, with whom children can readily relate. A monkey mind is also a popular metaphor in the Dharma for the ways in which our minds habitually jump from thought to thought, like a monkey jumps from tree to tree. Children related easily to this and a poo joke added enjoyment. This story was not however adapted into a play. The enjoyment that children received from collectively reciting the verses was visible. They laughed, and assumed the characters when reciting the verses. By repetition of verse they could possibly remember the moral lesson. These too became a valuable springboard for class discussions: Do you become more hot and bothered if you get angry? Was the buffalo correct in deciding it is better to be free of giving harm?

As the student evaluations cited earlier in this chapter indicated, these children had felt that they had undertaken some valuable learning. They wanted to know more about the Buddha’s life and other “inspiring stories”, they wanted to know more about Buddhism such as the practices of monks and nuns and reincarnation and they wanted to know more about meditation. The Year 6s graduated and the next year the BEVSP teachers began a new cycle using tales about monkeys, metaphors and meditations.

In this chapter my narrative constructs key experiences from the first year of the program in schools. Meditations offered children methods that they reported opened them to new possibilities for self-regulation and well-being and their enthusiastic responses indicated that these values-laden stories were stimulating their creative and moral imaginations. If values and morals are to be taught explicitly, such as seen here, there is an imperative to provide resources for the learning and this is what we were

endeavouring to do in the ongoing development of the *'Discovering Buddha: Lessons for Primary School'* curriculum.

Chapter 6

Meditation, mind and motivation

While the previous chapter described the use of stories within the program, the current chapter presents the theoretical base for meditation, which was the second major plank of the curriculum.

Meditation

The most distinctive feature of the Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program (BEVSP) is the inclusion of meditation in each of the lessons. Although each teacher in the program had personal meditation experience, and some like myself had taught meditation to children prior to joining the program, the shift from our particular traditions and culturally influenced Dharma centres into mainstream schooling opened us to considering more carefully the complexity of our task. We had to find a mean where meditations from the Dharma were selected and taught in ways that children would find meaningful.

Accounts from practitioners who had taught meditation in schools, starting as relaxation (Crook 1988) and developing routine practices with diverse groups of children (Crook 1988; Erriker & Erricker 2001; Fontana & Slack 2002; Hawkes 2003; Rozman 2002), told of sustained positive experiences for teachers and students. Hawkes in particular linked the reflective practices to values education. These practitioners variously detail the benefit of routine, attention to posture, provision of an aesthetic environment where possible, and wrote of their first-hand experiences of children's development of calmness, concentration and kindness. While our experiences, aims and aspirations were similar, and an outside observer may have seen our children doing much the same activity, our perspectives from of a rich meditative tradition told us that there were a wide variety of meditations with specific purposes that also held great potentials for understanding and developing the mind.

Meditation is used broadly and synonymously with reflection and contemplation in English speaking cultures. These reflective practices are increasingly becoming part

of teaching practices as evidenced by the importance of reflection in the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (discussed in Chapter 3), the reflective practices part of best-practice exemplars in the National Values initiative (Bereznicki et al. 2008, p. 71) and individual classroom teachers worldwide incorporating types of ‘reflections’ into their programs. We can also see already a variety of approaches falling within the rubric of reflection. Therefore it is timely to examine some of the complexities in this new and constantly developing area of learning.

A useful taxonomy of meditations is given in a paper ‘*Presenting the Case for Meditation in Primary and Secondary Schools*’ (Levete 1995): following the breath, connecting to body, walking meditation, meditating on sound or word/ mantra meditation, visualisation and observing the mind. Perhaps with the exception of mantra which continues to hold overtly religious connotations, these can all be employed in pluralist classrooms.

We use these techniques in our classes, with the overt aim of facilitating development of kindness and wisdom. Mantra was not used during the period of study here, although it is part of Mahayana Buddhist practices. *Om mani padme hum*, a mantra of compassion and wisdom in the Mahayana tradition has latterly been included in the emergent ‘*Discovering Buddha*’ curriculum. Reluctance during the early stages of the program reflected our over-riding desire to offer classes that are meaningful to children from both Buddhist and non-Buddhist families and that accord with the current learning strategies of our participating students. However, the Transcendental Meditation (TM) literature indicates that their particular mantra technique greatly improves well-being and socially engaged values in children (‘Maharishi School’; Dixon et al. 2005; Jones 2003; Nidich et al. 1983) and could well be a fruitful field for later research.

In Chapter 1 I cited just some of the plethora of programs that use meditative techniques with children in culturally inclusive educational contexts worldwide, and which vouch positive effects, but there is very little peer-reviewed research. Rather, most research leads have been taken from psychology. Mindfulness meditative practices have led this field. Following positive results from an array of small studies with adults, mindfulness meditative techniques have been shown to be effective

inclusions into therapies to treat children with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorders (Harrison, Manocha & Rubia 2004; Jensen & Kenny 2004; Zylowska et al. 2007), stress (Wall 2005), anxiety (Semple, Reid & Miller 2005), aggression (Singh et al. 2007) and to improve attention (Peck et al. 2005; Rani & Rao 2000).

The most robust research into the effects of meditation has been in clinical contexts, such as Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT). Effective results have been found in the treatment of depression, anxiety, psychosis, borderline personality disorder and suicidal/self-harm behavior, and in reducing substance use and recidivism rates in incarcerated populations (Ivanovski & Malhi 2007). Mindfulness has also found global popular appeal primarily through the work of MBSR's founder Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994; 1996; 2005; Kabat-Zinn, M & Kabat-Zinn 1997). While research findings add to the method's credibility and scope, implementation amongst ordinary people seeking to improve the quality of their lives shows where broader applicability is being found. Movement to extend these practices into education has therefore been a logical step.

Positive evidence of the effects of their incorporation into holistic learning programs has come from Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), a holistic approach to learning that has grown from Daniel Goleman's (1997) treatise on emotional intelligence. SEL programs are characterised by a focus upon the competencies of Self-awareness (recognition of emotions and strengths in self and others), Social awareness (including empathy, respect and perspective taking), Responsible decision making (that includes reflection, and personal and ethical responsibility), Self-management (such as impulse control, stress management, persistence, goal setting, and motivation) and Relationship skills (primarily active cooperation)(Zins & Elias 2006, p. 3). A diligent review and evaluation of SEL programs (K-8) has concluded that the participating students have exhibited the above competencies well above control populations (Payton et al. 2008). These programs are increasingly using contemplative techniques as part of their methodology, for example those put forward by Lantieri (2008).

Mindfulness education is a progressive movement in education that has growing influence because it is both secular and seen to be effective. The Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) that drives the SEL programs

shares their findings with, and is influenced by, mindfulness education networks - Mindfulness Awareness Practices (MAPS) for Educators and Mindfulness in Education Network (MiEN). For example, two of the CASEL programs, the Mindfulness in Education Primary Curriculum (Schonert-Reichl & Parry), and the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)(Greenberg 2002, 2003, 2004) researchers name build mindfulness methodology into the SEL programs.

What is not explicit in mindfulness education is the connections and influence of the Dharma on the methodology. The approaches and student results from the Mindfulness in Education Primary Curriculum bear many similarities with the program studied here. The leaders in this field also appear to be in close dialogue with advanced Dharma practitioners. Goleman has collaborated with the Dalai Lama to understand destructive emotions better (Goleman 2003), key collaborators in MiEN are exploring the nexus between Buddhism, emotions and well-being (Ekman, P. et al. 2005) and, using a synonymous term, “Mindsight”, Siegel is entering the education discourse with work derived from Buddhist insights such as reflection linked to well being (Siegel 2007), parenting (Siegel & Hartzell 2004) and examination of attachment for healing trauma (Solomon & Siegel 2003). The influence of the Dharma appears to be embedded in the practices in these and many other practitioners in this field.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) takes a view of mind to include both emotions and intellect that, until recently, was a distinctly Buddhist understanding. Mindfulness, the capacity for the mind to be aware of its activity and various methods to cultivate this awareness has obvious Buddhist roots, as I will explore. Similarly InnerKids’ Attention, Balance and Compassion (the new ABC’s) shows approaches that seem to be the same as our program. To interpret and share practices in ways that people, including children, can understand and benefit from, without being specifically religious, are in accordance with the intention of the Dharma.

The examples cited above are all experiential programs that are most suitably understood in contexts that include teachers’ having personal experience in meditation, understanding various purposes of meditation, and their methods of teaching. From my Antipodean position I can only surmise how these various

international programs might operate. Stories have become a significant part of the Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program and I wonder what other learning activities might be used to support the reflective practices elsewhere. I share the sensitivity of researchers and educators to respect the secular nature of state schooling, and therefore neither to be seen to, nor to intend to, shape impressionable minds towards a particular doctrine.

However, I also wonder if Mindfulness is becoming code for many types of meditation. I have noticed a progressive development in the discourse from mindfulness of body, breathing, thoughts, and thoughts likened bubbles, to include compassion. I wonder if mindfulness of change and consequence are being included. Dan Siegel's most recent papers (Garrison Institute 2008; Siegel 2009) extend the discourse to the nature of the mind and the interdependent nature of the mind, body/brain and relationships with others and the environment, and, hold that these are crucial to social and emotional learning. These are the very issues that have been informing the development of this Buddhist education program. It is frustrating for me at this time that the Dharma is cast primarily and assuredly as a religion, and bears the accompanying pigeon-holing, when informed practitioners and scholars understand that it is more a guide for mental development with wide applicability and benefit to the individual and others.

Meditative/ reflective/contemplative practices are increasingly becoming more widespread and it is timely now to include open examination of the epistemological roots of meditative practices. These can provide reference and guidance for what and how practices might be used and what might be achieved from them. Without such perspectives incorporated into the discourse this field but could easily expand willy-nilly, or alternatively stagnate. Mindfulness of breathing, calm and quietude could still be beneficial to students but it would be more difficult for this type of learning to be integrated and to develop without signposts from a tradition such as the Dharma with over 2,550 years of experience in the art. Without this kind of analysis further potential could be lost to education.

Mind

There are some forty meditations (Gunaratana 2002, p. 4) included in the Theravada as objects for mindful attention, and more added into the Mahayana. These meditations fall broadly into two main categories: those that develop mental concentration (*samatha* or *samadhi*: Pali) and *vipassana* (Pali, *vipasyana*: Skt.) that is insight into the nature of things that includes awareness, observation, vigilant attention, mindfulness. The latter can lead to the complete liberation of the mind. Mental concentration comes from the yoga traditions pre-dating Buddhism and is incorporated in Dharma practices. Regarding mindfulness meditations Rahula is unequivocal: “This is essentially Buddhist ‘meditation’, Buddhist mental culture” (Rahula 1978, p. 69). Gunaratana explains the practice in *‘Mindfulness in Plain English’*:

“Vipassana is the oldest of Buddhist meditation practices. The method comes directly from the Satipatthana Sutta, a discourse attributed to Buddha himself. Vipassana is a direct and gradual cultivation of mindfulness or awareness. It proceeds piece by piece over a period of years. The student's attention is carefully directed to an intense examination of certain aspects of his own existence. The meditator is trained to notice more and more of his own flowing life experience. Vipassana is a gentle technique. But it also is very, very thorough. It is an ancient and codified system of sensitivity training, a set of exercises dedicated to becoming more and more receptive to your own life experience. It is attentive listening, total seeing and careful testing. We learn to smell acutely, to touch fully and really pay attention to what we feel. We learn to listen to our own thoughts without being caught up in them”(Gunaratana 2002, p. 21).

Ultimately the fruition of these practices becomes a flow of pure experience and knowing where conventional conceptual boundaries of ‘I’, ‘we’ or ‘self’ are relaxed and expanded to include ‘other’ as ‘thou’. This kind of present attention is shown in the tradition to systematically weaken attachment, aversion and ignorance that defend the ‘I’ as an immutable construct.

For the practice to move beyond learning to pay attention, though this is highly important in itself, it is difficult to envisage how a thorough and systematic program for mental development utilising meditation might take place because it would be unable to foresee where it may lead without referring to the experiential tradition. Note too, that the practice of mindful attention aims to bring present awareness to all aspects of living and the formal sitting sessions aim to cultivate this facility with ever-

enhanced precision. Capacities for the mind to be aware of its thoughts and feelings, and to choose and regulate these, are universal human traits, and this kind of development remains akin to education and is not religious.

As we can see, meditation is a precise art in the Dharma. The Pali etymology of meditation, *bhavana*, meaning “producing, increasing, developing, being devoted to, realizing, attaining earnest consideration, meditation” (Childers 2005, p. 85) indicates active, directive and developmental intentions. These are not heterogeneous pursuits for there are many varieties and purposes of meditation. They can be focus-oriented, analytical, affective, devotional or simply present. They can be directed to hindrances such as anger, laziness and worry, or be directed towards cultivating altruistic attitudes such as universal love, compassion, empathetic rejoicing and equanimity. The thrust for all is mental development directed from the bases of concentration and mindful awareness. Embedded in all the various permutations are the pursuit of wisdom and the development of loving kindness towards self and others. Dharma addresses the general predicaments in human nature and provides the existential structure or ontology from which to review self, develop calm, and challenge or even uproot deeply entrenched habits (Hayes 2003, p. 165). Although studies in therapeutic settings have shown that meditative techniques can facilitate healing, they should never be viewed as an alternative to various types of healing (Klein 1995, p. 130), but with emphasis on personal and social well-being they certainly offer preventative strategies. As such, potentially richer fields for contribution from the Dharma could be personal and social well-being, as suggested by social psychologists (Dockett 2003; Hayes 2003; Ragsdale 2003; Young-Eisendrath 2003), and, as I am and possibly others are exploring, education.

Some current research into meditation

In recent years the effects of concentration and kindness meditations have been the subject of neuroscientific inquiry with Buddhist monks. These studies demonstrated that different types of meditation not only activate different areas of the brain but develop neural capacities. A landmark study using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) found that in a group of long-practised and proficient meditators, meditation on compassion produced robust gamma wave activity in the left prefrontal cortex, the main site where brain correlates with eudemonic well-being (Lutz et al.

2004). With these highly trained meditators, even the resting state of the brain highly attuned to compassion meditation was more active in the left prefrontal cortex than it was in the control population. The study also recorded that the control group, given time and asked to develop a pervasive feeling of compassion, also indicated increased activity in the left prefrontal cortex. So some meditation on compassion resulted in increased activity in areas of the brain that indicate well-being for inexperienced meditators, and was over and above the activity ever recorded by the scientists in the adepts. A later publication by the main research participant in this study has explained how happiness can be learned through secular applications of Buddhist-inspired practices (Ricard 2006).

For the adepts, the baseline resting activity in this site of the brain was again much more activated than those in the control group whose resting state reverted to their regular, lower, rate. This baseline activity remained robust according to hours practised rather than age or other variables. The implications from the study are that compassion and concern for others can be learned and this learning can be greatly facilitated by meditation practice on compassion. The study also demonstrated that meditation on compassion can affect the well-being of the practitioner and promotes personal happiness.

A less celebrated study by researchers from the University of Queensland applied tests on perceptual rivalries to study the neural mechanisms underlying conscious attention. They found that the ability of Tibetan Buddhist monks (again highly skilled meditators) to control the flow of items being attended to was far beyond the abilities of their control pool (Carter et al. 2005). These meditators could concentrate with amazing proficiency.

The research found that one-point (concentration) meditation greatly facilitated these adepts' abilities to focus and to shift the focus of attention. These are attributes that would be invaluable for gauging how and when one might act, and for perceiving the effects of actions, and of course for giving focused attention to learning and study tasks. Compassion meditation did not have this effect. It produced affective kindness towards self and others.

These data illustrate that proficiency in Buddhist meditations can produce profound changes in brain functioning and it seems, the capacity to live with sustained awareness and kindness. The different meditations, though complementary in purpose, utilise and develop different mental dexterities. Not all meditations are the same, nor do they have the same effects on neural activity and consequently do not necessarily have the same potentialities or results. Keeping sight of what might be achieved when proficiency is developed also alerts educators to ‘keep the bar high’ in terms of what can be attained through learning via this tradition-based route.

Neuroscience is thus making significant contributions to the ways in which meditation is understood and what this means for children. The examples above have shown effects upon the brain from Buddhist practices. A confluence of brain studies, mental development theories and first-person accounts are defining a new field of inquiry, called contemplative neuroscience by Wallace (2007) or neurophenomenology (Thompson 2006; Varela, Thomson & Rosch 1993; Varela 1996) that recognises two-way affective relationships where mind can affect brain and brain can affect mind.

Other research is exploring the plasticity of the brain and how it can alter its circuitry and be affected by repetitive tasks. A study by Pascual-Leone (2001) for example showed that musicians’ brains were changed by repetitive practice. Of further interest is that a group that visualised the finger movements of a piece could play as well as those who had physically practised. A combination of the two was the optimum. This research showed that mind training directly influenced the motor behaviour, and, though by no means proven yet, the implication is that a mind habituated to visualising kindness and compassion will have a greater likelihood of behaving that way. Presumably the opposite could also be true. A mind habitually visualising violence would have greater a propensity to act that way as well.

A study that used EEG to monitor brain activity in meditators using an awareness meditation from a Hindu yoga tradition found they were less likely to be reactive, and remained detached when they viewed “emotionally negative” and “emotionally neutral” video clips (Aftanas & Golosheykin 2005). The possibility of using meditation to support impulse control in students is compelling.

Brain research has also been able to monitor effects of stress and how this inhibits, and can even entirely stop, learning (Christianson 1992; Introini-Collison, Miyazaki & McGaugh 1991). Therefore, activities that facilitate calm and happiness will also facilitate better learning. Emotions will always play a part in the circuitry of learning and memory. Teachers need to provide stimulating activities and a joyful, caring environment for effective learning (Willis 2008).

Some cautions about meditation

Evidence from a range of sources point to the remarkable potential for meditation but educators also need be aware of some potential pitfalls. Children do not have the physical, social and emotional maturity of adults and as yet no clear model of the developmental appropriateness of meditations with children has emerged (Hart 2003, 2004). As Buddhist teachers who were aware of many types and purposes of meditation we discussed our selections and shared feedback from our experiences in the classrooms. We did not select meditations upon the dissatisfactory nature of the body, death, the non-substantial self or taking on the suffering of another, for example. While these can challenge adult habits and attachments they could so easily be disturbing for children.

We have seen here that clinical psychology, psychiatry studies and neuroscientific results, alongside educational practices, overwhelmingly report positive effects but there may be adverse effects in certain circumstances if practised improperly or too intensely. As early as 1973 Buddhist meditation master, Chogyam Trungpa warned of too strident practice leading to an over-inflated sense of self that compounded delusion (Trungpa 1973). Meditation can release strong emotional reactions (Kutz I, Borysenko JZ & H. 1985) and release unconscious material, and result in disorientation (Perez-De-Albeniz & Holmes 2000) that may initiate ‘spiritual emergencies’(Lukoff, Lu & Turner 1998). Tibetan Buddhist meditators have the term ‘lung’ that describes mental agitation from trying too hard.

Generally though, meditations are being practised safely in a variety of ways, but, as with any form of learning, teacher proficiency can guide the learning process and help guard against over-zealous activity.

Meditations used in the Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools Program

There are many different meditations to cultivate various developmental outcomes practised in Buddhism. There is much more to meditation than simple quietude and relaxation, although these in themselves can be desirable outcomes. Our Buddhist program has provided a unique opportunity in an Australian context to consider some effects of a designated weekly half-hour values program that utilises reflection to teach about values and promote self-knowledge.

In the four years this program has been operational participating teachers have used a variety of meditation techniques. Our selections were not informed by international practices, but rather by our own needs and experiences. We began with, and have maintained, awareness of breath meditations and imaginative heart-focused meditations on loving-kindness that concur with the methodological domains cited in the Garrison Institute Mapping Report. Clear mind and moment-to-moment awareness meditations are also included. We found that as students became more familiar with meditation they could engage more readily. We pay attention to the sitting posture, for this is part of our tradition, but we have also devised relaxation exercises to be used to bridge shifts in focus from outer to inner awareness. We have shied away from guided imagery, although children may enjoy the approach (Wynne et al. 2006) because it potentially limits student agency and does not address the work of concentrating the mind and opening the heart that our tradition encourages. We did experiment with imaginative meditations taken from the Maitreya School curriculum (Jeffrey 2005). We found these to be a bit ‘busy’ for our children whom we see for half an hour each week. In a context where meditation is part of the daily routine variety and further creativity could be welcomed by students, but those with limited experience were often easily confused by marked differences to their routine.

While we strived to adapt techniques to engage children, and bid to align our teaching with current practices, it has also been important for us in a Buddhist Council of

Victoria program to authentically represent the Dharma. Some representative meditations are included in Appendix 1 pp.6.15, 6.21, 6.27.

The use of meditation in the current (BEVSP) program

The case below, that I wrote from my observations of Helen's Year 5-6 class at the inner-city school and circulated to the teachers in the program, is an illustration of how the strategies to know the mind developed.

Shaking the bottle

Helen begins her class by drawing a Happiness scale on the board. There are three positions, an unhappy face, a neutral face and a happy face. The children draw the scale in their books and note their position.

The children are preparing for meditation. They are a bit restless.

"Jump up, feet apart!" she calls, "Stretch up, arms straight, straight elbows, stretch to the ceiling. Bob down and bounce like a frog - one, two three."

"Now we are ready to sit." Her voice is calm. "Legs crossed. Backs straight. To get the mind strong we first have to get the body as strong and still as possible, sitting like a mountain."

The children know this routine and a child asks to shake the bottle. Helen carries a bottle of muddy water with her to class. When shaken the water is cloudy and turbulent. As the water settles it becomes clear.

"This is like our minds," says the teacher, "When our minds are filled with many thoughts, darting here, there and all over the place it's like this muddy water. As it settles it becomes clear. Water is naturally clear. So are your minds."

Led by the teacher, the children begin a breathing exercise, watching their breath draw in and out. The atmosphere in the room is quiet and concentrated for seven minutes. After being asked to draw their attention back into the room the children are asked to again place themselves on the Happiness Scale. For the majority of children they moved up on the scale. They see that the happiness they experienced is from their own mind and not a product of some object or experience from outside themselves.

Case circulated to BCV teachers via email March 2006

The metaphor of turbulent muddy water to describe the mind is one often used in oral Dharma teachings. Helen's statement that the mind's essential quality is naturally clear draws upon the metaphysical positions introduced in Chapter 2. While habituated activity may be driven by ignorance, attachments and aversions (the

muddy turbulent water), these are neither fixed nor permanent. Like other phenomena, they exist only in dependence upon other causes and conditions, not in and of themselves. Therefore the nature of mind is mutable and transformable. These ‘muddy’ kinds of activities are therefore predicated by a more essential sub-stratum of mind that is clear, like the water.

This prop using a bottle of muddy water also shows how a teacher’s wisdom and skill can take complex, even profound concepts, and can guide students towards finding veracity themselves. This explanation of mind was the most prescriptive that Helen would be with her students throughout the four years of my study, although we will see that the students had ample opportunity to explore and test this concept. The bottle of muddy water together with the physical exercises brought concrete and kinesthetic experience into the preparation for the formal meditation. The case above also describes the children’s practice of *anapanasati*, mindfulness of breathing. It is a technique used to develop concentration (awareness of breath), calm (a natural rhythm of breathing), and aided here by the Happiness scale, to give the opportunity to reflect upon the subjective experience of happiness as dependent on mental activity and not some external object or stimulus. Teachers used this technique and there were many bottles of muddy water made by children and shaken by children in various classes this year.

Teachers, however, were less convinced about the worth of the Happiness Scale. Not only did it add an activity to their valuable half-hour teaching time, there was ambivalence about whether the pursuit of happiness ought to be elevated as a primary Buddhist value. Happiness/ peace of mind/ contentment become inevitable by-products of earnest practice rather than a goal in themselves, and there was concern that children might get a skewed message that meditation should produce happiness or that this was a prime purpose. There was also some innuendo that my promotion of the Happiness Scale mainly served my research data gathering agenda, whereby I was possibly steering the program away from an authentic representation of the Dharma. It stimulated many discussions and again the hermeneutic processes of discerning what best suited children engaged teachers with their texts, traditions and new culturally situated perspectives.

Values, meditation and happiness

The meditative practice is a critical element for both values clarification and sustained happiness according to Buddhist principles.

Happiness has become commodified in popular culture and teacher reticence was understandable. Schumaker coined a society of ‘happichondriacs’, “pigs in the happiness trough,” but nevertheless concluded that the highest forms of happiness have always been expressed and experienced as love and virtuous conduct in relationship with others (Schumaker 2006, pp. 30-1). Positive Psychology research also provided good cause to develop virtuous actions as means to promote happiness and well-being. Although most of these studies have been done with adults and youth, and work with children is at an early stage, Peterson and Seligman’s (2004a) list of six virtues and twenty-four character strengths has provided a framework and strategies for educators to pursue. The correlation between the dispositions that Positive Psychology has found to promote happiness and the Buddhist *paramitas*, the principle virtues to be developed to counteract ignorance and attain full awakening, has given empirical affirmation to our exploration of Buddhist pedagogy and experience as means to promote happiness and well-being.

Buddhist teachers often found themselves in schools where values from Australia’s National Values Framework were prominently displayed and integrated into school policies and practices. I circulated a discussion paper to teachers via email ‘Happiness: the path of Wisdom and Compassion or Buddhist Lite?’ (Appendix 4) in June 2006 that discussed these frameworks. The groupings in the table below illustrate some of the complexities of shared and mutually understood meaning-making. While the language may be identical, how it is interpreted can differ. There are obvious places of intersection that provided points for our group’s reflection and from which further conversations among a wider range of educational stakeholders could proceed.

Table 1: Values: Dharma, National Values Framework and Positive Psychology

Dharma virtues - for Awakening mind	Wisdom	Compassion Loving kindness	Equanimity/ Renunciation	Generosity	Morality	Effort/ Perseverance/ Patience	Honesty	Concentration
National Values Framework - for engaged citizenship	Freedom	Care/ compassion	Respect Fair go Tolerance and Inclusion		Integrity	Do your best Responsibility Understanding	Honesty	
Positive psychology - for happiness	Wisdom knowledge transcendence open-mindedness caution curiosity perspective	Love kindness	Humanity Justice Fairness	Generosity Gratitude	Self-control Temperance	Perseverance Loyalty Duty Courage Leadership Humility Bravery Optimism Zest	Honesty	

Values and virtues are never stand-alone qualities. In practice they may be better represented in Venn diagrams that incorporate intersections of support and influence. Say for example, if there is genuine respect, care and compassion cannot be absent. I wonder if I have drawn too long a bow grouping democratic Freedom with the freedom that I understand comes with Wisdom. Similarly, Patience has a discrete status in the doctrine, but to me becomes understood better when grouped with Perseverance in this context. The table shows a nexus between three schemas of values. The emphasis of purpose in each may be initially divergent - engaged citizenship in schools, personal happiness in well-being psychology and a vehicle for self-realisation according to Dharma - but we are talking about the same human values. Honest conduct is just that, and it would be silly to label an act of kindness as ‘Buddhist kindness’. For values to be meaningful too they must be lived, and thereby inevitably impact both on the self and others, and general happiness and well-being is an agreed outcome. We can confidently expect that a person who respects his/herself, laws, other people, and who applies effort, is honest and caring will be reasonably happy.

Distinctive in the table above is Concentration as a sole entry. Concentration would not ordinarily be defined as a value or virtue in our culture, and the English translation from *samatha* and *vipassana* belies the richness of what a concentrated mind cultivated in meditation can become. Calm, reconciliation, peace, deep insight and joy

are subsumed in this term. The status of concentration, as developed in meditation, reflects the pragmatic role that meditation plays in personal development in the Dharma. It supplements and supports the development of the other qualities by cultivating mental stability and mindful awareness.

The Happiness Scale: a meditation-effect measurement tool for children

The link to the Happiness Scale remained contentious. Sustained responses, I reasoned, would depend upon children being familiar with the facility of mind to observe itself - to see the play of thoughts and feelings, and that if there were an activity that reinforced this process the children would more readily get to know how their minds work and begin to see the usefulness of this generally undifferentiated facility.

As a research tool it would record their first-person experiences. I was skeptical that interview and questionnaire data would give a fully accurate picture, for I could foresee that in interview students may say what they thought I would like to hear and a questionnaire would rely upon language with which I could not assume the children were familiar. I was impressed by Cummins and Lau (2004) who had worked extensively on measuring community well-being and had produced a Personal Well-being Index for School Children (PWI-SC). They grappled with semantic distinctions and eventually interchanged 'happiness' for 'well-being' for their measurements with children:

“The response scale uses happiness, rather than satisfaction. While it is recognized that these two terms are not equivalent, they yield very similar data (Cummins, Eckersley, Pallant, Misajon & Davern, 2001a; Cummins, et al., 2001b; Lau, Cummins & McPherson, 2004) (Cummins & Lau 2004, p. 5).”

Although I was not seeking a psychometric test, but rather a tool that would record purely subjective experience at a given point in time, the language of happiness and their Likert scale approach paralleled my agenda.

The Happiness Scale that I devised utilised self-interest to embrace concern for others and children's predisposition to use 'happiness' as a descriptor for their general well being. It was a suitably understood term from which children could assess their experiences as research inquirers. The Likert scale approach also had resonance because a subjective three-point reflection that observes the pervasive activity of mind

that seeks happiness by wanting more of, or less of a stimulus, or being indifferent to wanting more or less of same is part of Buddhist pedagogy. Initiation of children to evaluation of their responses to meditation via the Happiness Scale could pave the way for this more sophisticated scrutiny of their mental processes in the future. We were not at this stage about to teach these more refined Dharma perceptions. We did not want children to be pressured to achieve a perceived optimal standard, but rather learn to observe their minds, and so a prescriptive, ordinal scale would have been inappropriate. We wanted the children to engage in their own assessments and maintain their agency.

My motivation for using the happiness scale

Initial discussions with teachers around the use of the Happiness Scale revealed levels of ambivalence with some comments made suggesting the approach may trivialise Buddhist sensibilities. I reiterated aspects of my earlier discussion about karma in Chapter 2 where I noted that the intention behind thoughts, words and actions is considered to significantly impel the results. A motivation that is shared in all Buddhist traditions that encapsulates Dharma aspirations is:

The Four Immeasurables

*I wish that all beings have happiness and its causes,
May we never have suffering and its causes,
May we constantly dwell in joy transcending sorrow,
May we dwell in equal love for both near and far.*

There is recognition that at a most fundamental level all beings seek happiness.

When this rationale was shared with the B.C.V. teachers and the scale trialed there was wider acceptance of its appropriateness. The Year 5-6 class at the inner-city school used the scale regularly and their experiences are discussed in detail in the next chapter. As we in the B.C.V. Education Program sought to engage with student learning in Victorian state primary schools we again offered approaches to teaching and learning materials that were new to current practice, but stood to potentially enrich current pedagogy.

Apart from the dilemmas around use of the Happiness Scale this chapter has provided an overview of many related current issues in meditation, and more broadly, mindfulness in current educational research and practice. The use of the Happiness Scale represented one of several approaches taken in the ongoing curriculum

development reported in this thesis which sought to facilitate the self-knowledge and agency amongst participating students.

Chapter 7

Children's experiences of meditation

An exercise in awareness

Meditation is part of the yoga tradition that, from its Sanskrit meaning, yokes together mind and body. It is a combined physical exercise and mental exercise. Formal teaching thus began with attention to posture. Typically a student is seated cross-legged and the spine is to be straight, eyes slightly opened or closed, head resting naturally and hands either resting right upon left with thumbs touching or on the knees. This provides a stable position where spine and organs can rest naturally and the circulatory and nervous systems can flow with minimised obstruction.

Helen used the diagram below, Figure 5, as a primer, with the caption “Strong like a mountain, calm in my heart.’ That was introduced as a Cloze exercise to build their vocabulary and familiarity with the concepts.

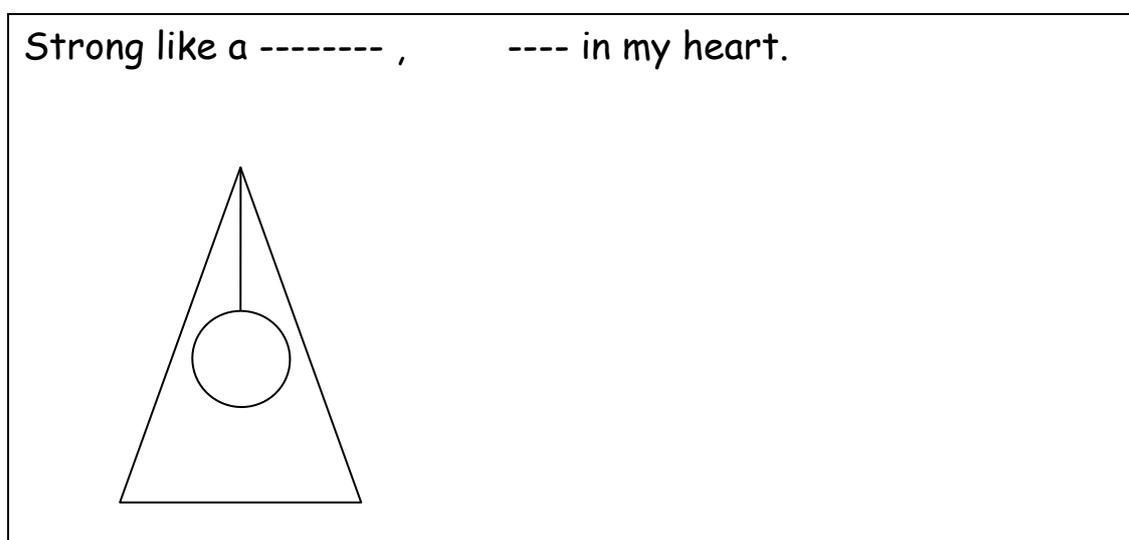


Fig 5. “Strong like a mountain, calm in my heart”

The body is never negated but, in a meditation exercise, allowed to rest so that the mind's attention can develop a maintained focus on the meditation topic. The physical position is used to support a strengthening and suppleness of body and mind. Awareness of the mind, mindfulness or mindful attention, as it is variously called, is cultivated through mental and physical discipline. Through these applied efforts we

were looking for evidence that students observe their mind's changeability, and develop their mental control that could lead them to better self-knowledge. Within the Dharma meditation is performed with the motivation to benefit oneself and to benefit others. Therefore it was important that the meditations were performed with kindness towards self and did not become an act of somewhat violent mastery on the one hand, or laxity and torpor on the other.

Meditation is a consummate introspective activity. However, without conscious awareness of what the mind is thinking and feeling it is reasonable to assume that it is more difficult to develop control over cognitive and affective functions, foresee alternatives and consequences, and act in ways that are respectful and of benefit to others.

The Happiness Scale

Students in my study drew a Happiness Scale (Figure 6) before each meditation session and placed themselves both before and after the session, and had the opportunity to make post-session comments. This pedagogical tool brought a kinesthetic and visual element to the metacognitive task of reflecting about their meditative experiences. The aim was to facilitate the initial meditative skill of observing the mind. It was a tool to help children observe thoughts and feelings, and the changeable nature of thoughts and feelings. The implementation of a scale removed dependence upon facility of language to articulate thoughts and feelings, and thereby included all children in the exercise. It also acted as a springboard for children to identify and name thoughts and feelings if they wanted to. Students became researchers of their own happiness. If however they were disinclined to contribute to a class debrief, their privacy was preserved.

Secondary to its use as an aid to student learning, the scale was also used as a self-report evaluation and research instrument to help determine whether the teacher's aims for teaching the meditations were being met, and to glean an overall impression of the children's experiences of meditation.

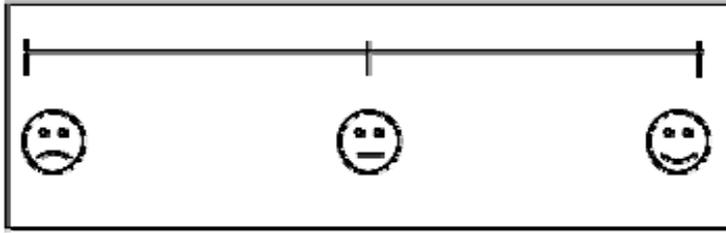


Fig.6 The Happiness Scale

Administering the Happiness Scale

In 2006 the Happiness Scale was introduced to the Year 5-6 class at the inner-city primary school. Over a 16 week period from May to November students drew a scale in their books. The children were free to draw the scale whichever way they chose. They marked three happiness points: positive, negative and in between. The date was recorded. They were asked to place themselves on the scale and write a comment. Not every child completed that task on every occasion, but most did.

The students then participated in the meditation and afterwards marked themselves on the scale. They could again write a comment. Sometimes the teacher would invite verbal comments after the meditation, but not always. The children were at liberty to record whatever they wanted. This post-meditation personal reflection would take about five minutes.

Students were encouraged to make their scale and entries a private concern, as the primary aim was for them to gain facility observing their minds. They were making their own subjective assessments of their personal happiness - attitudes, thoughts, feelings and perceptions - on that day, in that class at that time.

The observing classroom teacher saw the benefits of the approach, “The reflections on the Happiness Scale are powerful, and treated seriously.” She also noticed perceptual shifts and some implications from these, “They are becoming far better at tuning out distractions; greater self-discipline. Students always approach these sessions with such a positive mind-set. Self-reflection is a large element, and has huge implications across all aspects of life. The free flowing of ideas is totally engaging!!”

Use of the Happiness Scale became routine for the class over the period and it appeared that the exercise made meditation sessions more purposeful for the students.

This approach to meditation sessions continued in 2007. Student agency drawing their scales allowed students to rate their base-line happiness where they chose. Some students would place feeling good midway on the scale, some lower, others at consistently high levels.

The book entries below are indicative of the personalised entries typical of any of the sessions and the spectrum of comments recorded. These entries also offered insight into how comfortable students had felt to engage honestly with their perceptions, and had not felt the need to mark themselves higher after meditation, because that may have been the effect desired by their teacher or experienced by their peers. Each student's book was individual. These indicate their personal attention and commitment to their subjective state that they recorded with the knowledge that their personal assessments would not be used to rank comparative achievements.

Figure 7 shows how this girl made the entries personal. Her scale was drawn as a girl with pigtails, although on some days her drawings were more elaborate than others. Each of her entries gave similar positive results, yet each week her language was slightly different, "heaps better," "more rested," and when exclamation marks and motifs such as the sun are included as part of the narrative text, her sense of delight and gratitude is shown to be fresh and sincere (as opposed to being mechanical and obligatory).

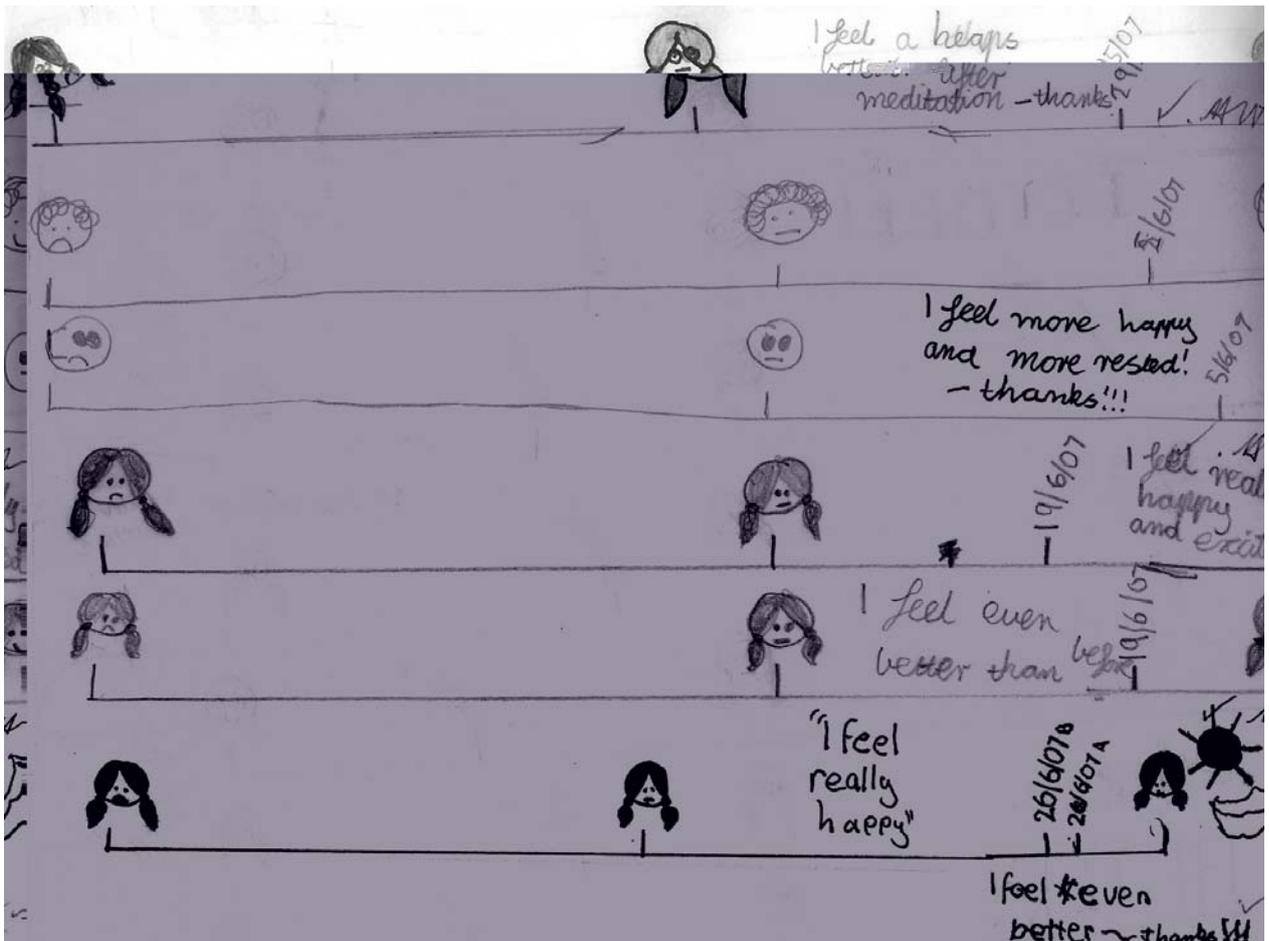


Fig. 7 Student workbook responses to meditation

In the workbook excerpt, Figure 8, the entries were less elaborate than the one above, but again drawn with quirky personalised styles that show thoughtful and honest responses. The scale does not read in the same order each week. The scale drawn on 24/7 suggested that the student may not have had particularly high expectations of personal happiness that day judging by the rather equivocal symbol of happiness on the left. The next week's scale was drawn in routine fashion, but the comment was honest and asterisked for emphasis, "*Yawn*." Over the four week period shown above, two entries showed a positive shift, two negative, but it is through consideration of the ways in which the entries are drawn that evidence of the student's honest application to the task is revealed. Note too, that there are comments written by the teacher who maintained a guiding role.

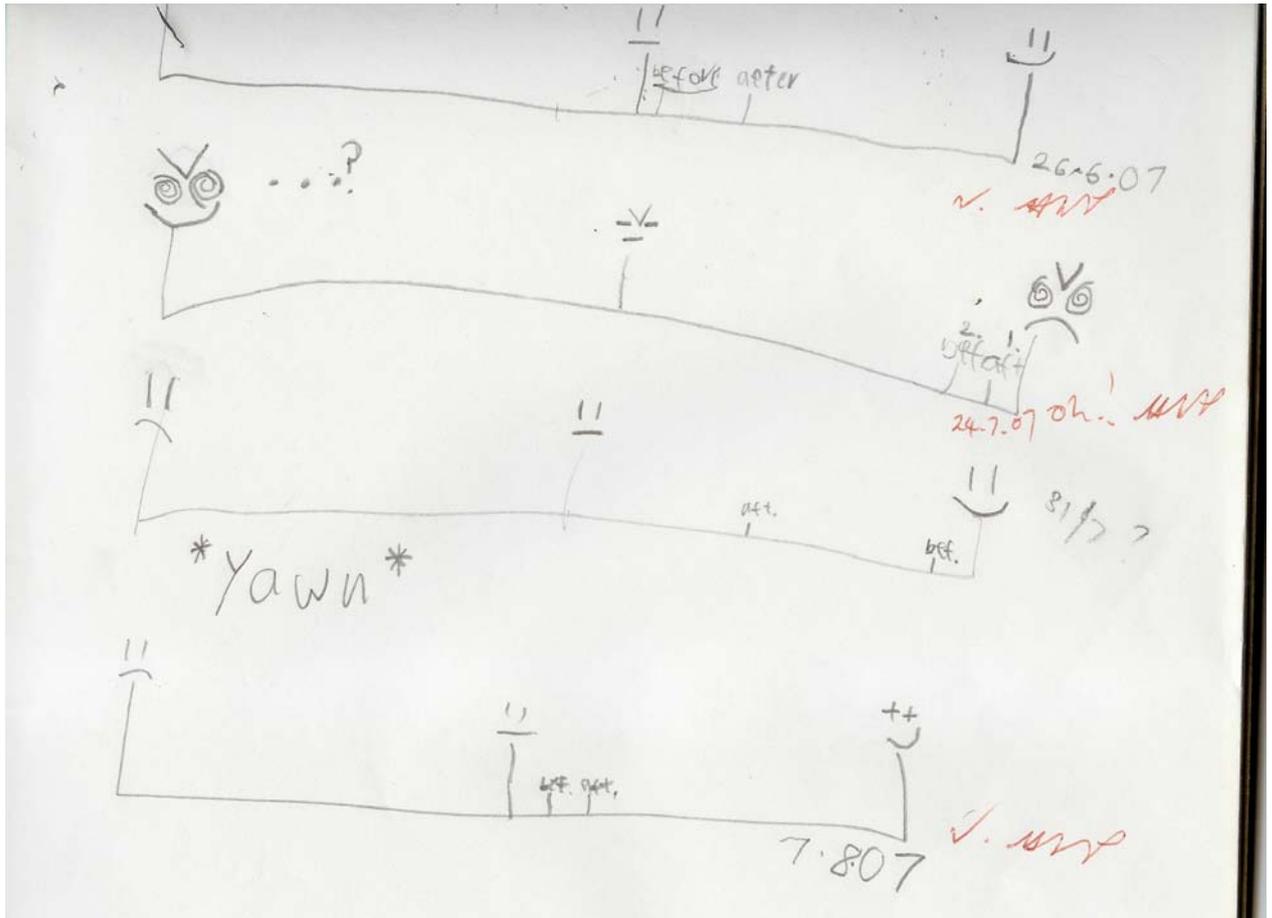


Fig.8 Student workbook responses to meditation

Making meaning from the Happiness Scale entries

The Happiness Scale entries, graphic adornments and student comments are the narratives from which their experiences have been analysed.

From the data collected from the twenty-two students in the 2006 class at this school the perceptual happiness of the students post-meditation appeared very positive. Their combined recorded experiences totalled 154 book entries, 149 of which were fully completed scale entries. Of these, 96% of entries recorded zero or some positive movement on the scale that indicated that the students had personally felt either much the same or happier having meditated.

When I gathered their books I approximated their entries numerically on a scale of 1-10 to manage the data. I also recorded each student's comments and the teacher's verbatim. Initially I was looking to see if the children felt happier after meditation.

Sometimes children would not place themselves higher on the scale after meditation, but would comment that they felt more calm, clear or relaxed. These I took to be positive outcomes from the meditation, and for this reason I have bracketed zero movement on the scale with positive responses. I used this same method the following year.

In 2007 there was a full Year 5-6 class of 22 students, ten from Year 6 and 12 from Grade 5. Apart from two new students, they had all been in Buddhist classes before. Eight of the Year 6s had been with Helen the year before and were used to the Happiness Scale routine. Six students were veterans, having started Buddhist classes at their inception in the school in Term 4 2004. There were also five Year 5s who were in their third year of Buddhist classes, having started in 2005 when they were in Year 3. Half of the students in this class had been in Buddhist classes for the past three years.

That year the recorded pre and post meditation experiences ran for the course of the year, from March to November. The students' combined entries for the year totalled 373. Of these 308 or 82.6% recorded 0-+ post meditation session experience. The table below illustrates that students, both collectively and individually, were consistently reporting positive meditation experiences.

The students' Happiness Scale recordings were personal, subjective assessments of their perceptions before and after each particular meditation. They pertain only to each student's subjective awareness at a particular point in time. While many of the scale entries have given indications of students' general well-being, it was not applied to indicate such a purpose. It was a tool primarily to cultivate awareness. That the recordings show consistent positive perceptual shifts is affirming of the valuable effects of meditation and indicate a promising role for meditation in well-being strategies.

Table 2: Happiness Scale Aggregates Year 5-6 2007

	Total completed recordings	No. positive or same	% of 0-+ entries
Esme	16	16	100
Rosie	17	17	100
Shyla	14	14	100
Tara	20	20	100
Bess	19	19	100
Ronny	15	15	100
Laila	12	12	100
Terry	18	17	94.4
Patrice	18	17	94.4
Stella	14	13	92.8
Tina	13	12	92.3
Cory	21	19	90.5
Luke	17	14	82.3
Rita	22	18	81.8
Wayne	20	16	80
Cale	16	12	75
Mary	19	14	73.7
Harry	19	14	73.6
Tee	21	14	66.6
Larry	15	9	60
Jenna	14	7	50
Kane	11	3	27.3

However, the scale readings alone do not reveal the complexity of the cognitive and affective perceptual shifts that were experienced and revealed in their workbook entries. When the scale entries are interpreted in combination with these, it can be seen that even negative scale recordings have indicated active engagement in the processes of cultivating awareness, sustaining effort, and learning about some of the vagaries of ongoing meditative practices. From a Buddhist practitioner point of view these are necessary learning outcomes.

Awareness and Perceptual shifts

The table entries above indicate overwhelmingly positive responses by the children to their meditations. Entries show that their perceptions shifted, i.e. they felt happier. Importantly, their perceived happiness did not come from an external stimulus but from within themselves. For these shifts to occur, the children needed to apply themselves to the meditations with active and conscious endeavour. The transcribed excerpt from Cory's book below shows typical boyish concerns and excitements, his earnest engagement with meditation practice, and his discoveries about himself along the way.

Cory's meditation journey

Key: B: Before meditation A: After meditation T: Teacher's comment Note: my added interpretation

6/3 I felt a lot happier than before meditation.

20/3 B: I feel quite well so the meditation can't really do much A: I feel very, very happy and very sleepy and peaceful.

27/3 B: I feel pretty good and I think the meditation will either work very well or not much T: That's right! A: I feel a lot better now.

17/4 B: I feel OK but not that happy. A: I got distracted.

1/5 B: I feel very good A: I feel pretty much the same and was thinking about humanity. T: Excellent.

8/5 B: I feel really good, nearly off the chart. A: I feel extremely good and I was very comfortable but my mind strays and starts thinking of other things. T: That's right! Well done. It takes practice.

15/5 B: I feel OK pretty good (Note: 'Not very' was crossed out) A: I feel a lot better and this time I held my mind from straying long. T:V. Good!

22/5 B: I am feeling very good A: I am feeling a bit better but not much. I concentrated a lot longer in meditation

9/6 B: I feel pretty good now A: I am feeling a lot better but my mind strayed, except I felt a sort of warmth going around me. T: Wonderful!

19/6B: I feel very good at the moment. A: I feel really good and I think I need a longer scale!

26/6 B: I feel very good it's the parent teacher interview tomorrow and it's the 2nd last day of school this term. A: I feel a bit better after meditation, I didn't get very distracted at all this time. T: Excellent.

24/7 B: I feel quite good but meditation should help A: I feel very good. It hurts when I start meditating but after that I am comfortable. T: No pain please.

31/7 B: I feel good. A: I feel very good and I thought the meditation was very good.

7/8 B: I feel very good A: The meditation was very good and I concentrated very well. T: Good work in meditation.

14/8 B: Meditation will make me go off the chart again. A: I feel very good but couldn't dust everything out. T: That's exactly right! V.Cool! It's difficult to clear the mind. The first step is to realise that you have difficulty clearing it. Well done!

28/8 B: I'm feeling good. A: I'm feeling good and the meditation is good too but we are never going to get a chance to do anything. (Note: He wanted to get on with doing a play.)

18/10 B: I am feeling very good because it was my birthday yesterday. A: I do not find that the walking meditation worked as well. And I had Kane kicking me and pushing me.
23/10 B: I'm good. A: I found that this meditation with the white light was very good. When I found it, it began getting brighter until it glowed inside me. T: Great feeling.
30/10 A: I like the white light a lot but it hurts to do the full lotus in jeans. T: Yes it does!
13/11 B: I think some meditation should be good. A: It felt a bit too long but when I settled my mind I felt my kindness getting bigger and bigger, it was even bigger than me.

Cory noted various experiences. He dealt with distractions and some bodily discomforts. He noted differences in various types of meditation, and he determined to persevere with the activities to concentrate his mind, and discovered that the process was not easy. He did, however, discover that through practice he could replicate these experiences. With these he also appeared to have discovered a new source of calm and greater insight into his capacity for kindness. His recordings show that these efforts and insights increased his general feelings of happiness. Clarification, guidance and encouragement from his teacher also helped him on his way. Other children in the class faced the same challenges and recorded similar experiences.

Physical awareness

The physical exercise of sitting can be a challenge for meditators of all ages. Twelve children made a comment at some time about their bodies. Along with Cory's tight jeans there were incidents of pins and needles, colds, aches and pains and a debilitating case of hay fever. Over the year there were twenty-eight entries of this type, and in fourteen of these the children said that they actually felt better for having meditated. For five of these children this physical relief occurred on two or more occasions.

Patrice had a cold but afterwards "I don't feel bad any more," and when she broke her arm, "My arm goes unnoticed while I am meditating." Ronny also found relief, "I had a cold but now I feel better," and a few months later recorded "Feeling sick," and after, "Great." Mid-winter Luke wrote weakly, "half sick got tonsillitis on Monday," and afterwards, "Feel better." There was no indication in their books that they expected any relief as an outcome from their meditations, nor had such outcomes been initiated or expected by the teacher. The children did not indicate that they had been

cured, but they recorded that their focus had changed. Attention to their meditation had moved their attention from their discomfort, and by so doing they felt better.

Sometimes children tried too hard to keep their position, or became hyper-aware of every itch. Discreet guidance from the teacher via workbook comments, such as those seen above, helped to keep Cory and some of the other students from straining too hard, 'keeping the strings of the lute not too tight and not too loose' as Gautama's analogy for the middle way prescribed.

Other physical effects that children recorded were potentially more serious, such as feelings of nausea and dizziness. Quietness and calmness can initially be an unfamiliar experience for a new practitioner, and as with other learned exercises, tutelage from an experienced teacher could allay harmful effects.

Children noticed too that some meditations were easier for them than others. Eleven children, half the class, commented on the different types of meditation at some stage in the year. Helen received requests from two students via their workbooks to introduce silent meditation. When introduced some found it wonderful, others preferred the guided format. Walking meditation also initiated some controversy, such as Cory's diplomatic chastisement above, while another affirmed, "I really liked the walking meditation." That different techniques, though still aimed at developing awareness, concentration and kindness, would be better suited to some and not others, was an important lesson in accommodation of personal predilections and individual differences that the teacher pointed out to the class.

This class had the opportunity to visit a nearby Dharma centre and to meditate in their hall, called a gompa in the Tibetan tradition. Following the enthusiastic feedback over the previous two years, the annual excursion was again a highlight. Eight students expressed their appreciation, and one his disappointment for having missed it for the second year in a row. The children picked up on the calm, clear meditation environment of the centre and appreciated the comfort of the cushions provided when sitting. A monk, nun or senior student invited questions and discussion and then lead a meditation. Tara, like others in the group, recorded that she "particularly liked the

meditation,” that day. “I found the meditation more easy because the gompa felt like it was full of positive energy,” observed Jenna.

The teachers from the school, accompanying parents and the children themselves each year were surprised at how much easier it was to meditate in a conducive environment. The combined class of Year 3-6 children this year sat in silent meditation for twenty minutes and returned to school with bright and buoyant spirits.

Provision of a space conducive to meditation can be a challenge in a busy school or crowded classroom, and even for a half-hour lesson. This class was fortunate to have been shifted to a new library mid-year that provided an uncluttered space for children to meditate. A suitable space is a significant factor that can support the children’s practice of meditation but one that remains a challenge to create for schools that have participated in this program to provide, and the teachers involved to create.

Making a shift from physical to mental awareness

Meditation is primarily a mental exercise where the physical aspects of the exercise serve to ‘park’ the body so that the mental exercises of awareness, concentration, analysis, imagination, compassion, kindness and equanimity might be pursued. Given the variety of purposes that we pursued, some teaching of vocabulary was required to support these explorations and assist children to articulate and validate their experiences.

Language development was a deliberate teaching strategy that Helen maintained with the children and key words from the lessons, such as the example in Figure 5, also became part of the craft activities and plays that will be discussed in the coming chapters. Indeed we wanted the children to develop their thinking and feeling vocabularies to identify their experiences better. As such the private implementation of the Happiness Scale was a deliberate teaching strategy, and had Helen or I coached responses the children would have been denied learning the lesson that we had aimed to teach. The variety of language that the children used, such as Cory trying “to dust everything out”, is indicative of the variety of entries in their meditation reflections and the rich variety of their experiences.

Mental awareness

Feeling calm, relaxed...and tired

Children who had participated in this program since its inception in Term 4 2004, from Years 3-6 had consistently reported in their evaluations that they felt relaxed after meditation. To this bodily observation they often added an affective element such as feeling calm and peaceful. These words were commonly used in class debriefs and these effects were cultivated by their teachers' calm and measured tones of voice through the guided meditations.

However, in the 2006 part of the study with the Year 5-6 class at this inner-metropolitan state school, children also recorded tiredness. Eighteen from the class of twenty-two mentioned tiredness prior to meditation, while only ten students recorded feeling either calm or relaxed. There were a total of seventy-three entries for tiredness as opposed to thirty-two for calm and relaxed. However, all of the students who recorded tiredness also recorded that they had an experience of feeling less tired, "more awake", "refreshed" and "ready to start the day," after meditation (71% of tiredness entries).

Was tiredness a semantic equivalent to calm, peaceful, or relaxed for children?

Was it because this class was the first lesson after morning assembly, or were the comments a reflection of their lifestyles and pressures?

There were a few confessions about staying up late, and some sessions can be less engaging than others, but generally the children indicated that the sessions were not a time for sleep and that they had worked to apply themselves. Meditation is after all a physical and mental exercise, and like any exercise has the potential for tiredness. The teacher recognised this and was able to communicate her understanding of the process and offer encouragement.

Belinda's efforts were evident. "Before med I felt a bit tired, then after I felt even more tired but also felt calm and like I achieved something more than just meditating. I also felt more refreshed." Another day wasn't so good. "Before med I was happy and felt like it was going to be a really good day. After med I felt really tired and felt I

had really heavy eyelids. (T: Meditation will make you aware of the truth of how you feel....Meditation is hard work when you try. Good.)”

I was very interested to see if this trend continued in the following year and the types of awareness experiences the children would describe.

In 2007, fourteen students recorded tiredness in a total of thirty-four entries. In ten of these entries students said they were more tired after meditation. Three students did not experience relief from their tiredness although their comments revealed being sick and getting distracted. Sometimes Rita felt more sleepy after meditation, “B: just fine but a bit tired A: really tired!” and sometimes she experienced an effect from doing the work, “B: tired and sleepy A: more sleepy but concentrated more!” More commonly, some twenty-four entries and again 71%, revealed that the students felt more awake and energised from the activity, which can be assumed contributed to their enhanced feelings of happiness and well-being. These results also indicated to the teacher, as an experienced meditation practitioner herself that the exercises had been done correctly.

Enhanced happiness and well-being would also have come from the inner experiences of being calm and relaxed. Fourteen children consistently recorded feeling calm and relaxed, terms that Tee, like the others, used interchangeably. She wrote, “B: I’m really cold, happy though. A: I feel warmer now and during the meditation I felt still, calm and relaxed. It felt good.”

More often Rita was not tired. She recorded going from “happy and restless,” to “happy and calm” and later, “B: I feel normal/fine. A: I feel calm once again.” By second semester she clarified her repetitions in parenthesis, “(I always feel calm after meditation).”

Rosie gave quite analytical post-meditation comments. “I don’t think that I felt that much happier but I felt a lot calmer,” “After meditation I felt a bit calmer and less worried.” She appeared to be utilising the calm that she could readily access through meditation, “Every time I meditate I feel calmer, this time was no exception,” on occasion to cope with stress, “ B: I’m kind of nervous about Maths Olympiad A: I felt

less tense and more relaxed.” She was also discerning nuanced qualities in her experiences, “I felt slightly more tired but definitely very calm,” “I felt more relaxed yet alert,” and “I was more calm and peaceful but still bright.”

Teaching techniques for relaxation could well provide balance to achievement orientated education for the students in this study appreciated the opportunity to relax in the weekly sessions. Relaxation could have a valid place in a curriculum, but in terms of the aims of our meditations relaxation was not the main goal, but rather, a readily identifiable point for beginning self-awareness.

When body and mind are integrated to feel calm and peaceful, and given validation through formal instruction, it can be seen from the children’s comments that they became aware of many sensations and cognitions that they described under the rubric of Happiness.

The students’ recorded shifts in their perceptions of happiness were overwhelmingly positive, for that class that year 82.6% of entries. In the class of twenty-two, seven students recorded positive change in 100% of entries, with another five recording personal positive change after more than 90% of sessions. That is, more than half the class charted over the year recorded that they felt consistently happier and more positive for having meditated.

Similar data that indicated consistent positive shifts in student’s perceptions of their happiness may well be generated from relaxation exercises alone, I do not know. We were more interested in discerning whether the children were learning skills that would bring them closer to self-knowledge and ways to enable them to live happier and more positive lives.

The enthusiasm and delight that most students brought to the entries was clearly evident. Their graphic entries with coloured pens, drawings and even a code for “I feel energy surging through my veins” showed this. Tara used punctuation, “B: I feel happy A: I feel a little bit better!!!” and “B: I feel great. I am happy!!! A: I feel tired but very happy!!!!!!!!!!!!!!” Rita used capitals, “B: Dad woke me up early A: I feel... really HAPPY!” as did Patrice, “B: I feel fantastic! A: I feel a bit better so I feel

GREAT!” Bess was pleasantly surprised, “B: Nothing much has happened to make me happy or sad. A: I’m really pleased with my meditation Yay!”, and when Larry, who seldom wrote comments, entered, “It was fun,” we may assume that there was some satisfaction. Through the meditations children were changing their perceptions.

Mental clarity

There is brightness about the examples cited above. In addition to feeling calm and more awake and refreshed eight children noticed and recorded mental clarity. They had observed the settling of the muddy water in the shaken bottle that was introduced as an analogy for their mind’s nature, and described earlier in this paper, and the children experienced this clarity with a sense of surprise and wonder. Ronny had glimpses, “B: tired, drowsy A: the same but inlightened (sic) in a way,” and on a bad day, “B: not good grumpy, tired and I don’t like Tuesday A: but I feel much better I feel inlightened (sic) by meditation.” Jenna was, “a bit more clear.” Rosie noticed that apart from consistently feeling more calm after meditation she noticed on several occasions that she felt more alert. “I’m not sure if that’s good or not,” she queried, and to which her teacher validated, “Very good.”

Mental focus

The biggest challenge in meditation is to focus the mind, whether on the play of mental activity, the topic of meditation or the activity of body, speech and mind outside of the meditation sessions. Living with this type of mindful awareness remains the challenge of meditators of all abilities.

We saw from Cory’s Meditation Journey that he had made a concerted effort to concentrate on the meditation processes and we shared his enhanced perception of well being and happiness. We saw too that it wasn’t an easy task, but he persevered. He linked his ability to concentrate with his resultant happiness, “I feel a lot better and this time I held my mind from straying long,”

“The meditation was very good and I concentrated very well,” and he learnt to persevere when he “couldn’t dust everything out.”

Half of the number of students in the class recorded focus or concentration as a skill that they were working to develop, and they indicated that the mindfully relaxed approach given in the meditations contributed to increased happiness. Rita one time

recorded a positive shift in happiness from her effort with comment “more sleepy, but concentrated more!”

Wayne made consistent links with focus and happiness throughout the year. His approach was quite analytical. At the beginning of the year he recorded, “I wasn’t focused at the start but then I got focused” and over the following months typically recorded, “I felt really good through meditation because I was focused.” He was aware when he wasn’t as applied, “I wasn’t that focused in med. But I’m still happy,” but even on important days showed himself that he could do it, “B: I feel the best because it’s MY B’DAY!!!! A: I feel great but calm because I was focused in med.”

Although Bess did not use focus/concentration words her entries nevertheless indicated that her mind was concentrated, and that she felt happier for it. She was a student with 100% positive responses. On a handful of occasions she commented that she “didn’t think about stuff as much.” “B: Nothing’s made me really sad and I am happy about that! It’s still earlyish today, no big events. A: A bit more peaceful. Less bad stuff to think about. After meditation there’s less bad stuff to think about. Just isn’t there.” It appears too that she applied herself to the meditations (because she wasn’t thinking about other things) and linked this to a positive affective shift, “B: just OK. A: not concentrating on stuff I may not need to.” Relaxed focus also worked for her, “B: OK – a bit better than OK. A: Relaxed. Can’t be bothered to think about bad stuff.” Even Luke, whose entries showed a bit of a struggle, and that he wasn’t always particularly happy, quietly noted after meditation one day, “more concentrated I liked the silent med.”

Dealing with distractions

Apart from mind’s general predilection to jump attention from one thing to another, in a busy school there are often students and activities that can distract attention away from the meditation exercises, and where mental ‘strengthening’ through practice and effort comes to the fore. There were a few grumbles about kids making creaky noises and throwing bits of paper etc. (which will happen from time to time in a class of primary students) but the teacher used these instances to encourage the children to continue to apply themselves.

The first step of awareness had been absorbed by the students for they were aware of not concentrating. Harry spent most of the year reporting on a computer game that appeared to be taking over most of his waking hours. He was open to meditation but he had plenty of things going on that made life satisfying and he was prepared to be honest, “B:I was very happy and feeling good A: During meditation I don’t think I concentrated hard enough to improve.” Other children noticed that without concentration meditation was not going to do much for them. Laila was candid, “I had too much on my mind to meditate,” as was Terry, “B: I was very happy and feeling good but during meditation I don’t think I concentrated hard enough to improve. T: OK.”

Stresses and worries

Inevitably there will be stresses, worries and events to make a person nervous and, although meditation is not the time to ruminate over them, our adult experiences in meditation had given our Buddhist teachers strategies for letting go of troubles and putting issues into perspective. The children’s comments also confirmed this possibility.

We saw earlier that Rosie had been nervous about the Maths Olympiad and felt less tense after meditation. The combination of relaxed breathing and focus seemed to dissipate her anxiety. Patrice also experienced a change, “B: I was very confused yesterday. (Note: confused/ troubled?) A: I feel a bit better.” Other children recorded feeling better about missing a parent who was away and other sad incidents, though these comments were incidental to the impetus of the half-hour weekly lessons. These were encouraging indications all the same, and coupled with the large and consistent proportion of children reporting feeling calm and relaxed, and happier, we can surmise that they were feeling less stressed and worried.

Unhappy children

A designated time of quietude and inner focus does, as Helen had reminded children on occasion, bring internal issues to conscious awareness, and this effect can range from curious to challenging for any meditator. Children’s written entries that they added to their Happiness Scales formed succinct diaries that revealed many thoughts and feelings, as we have already seen. The students in this particular class seemed to be very happy people. There were, however, two children whose entries told unhappy stories.

By referring back to the table of Happiness Scale Aggregates at the beginning of this chapter we see Kane at the lowest end of the spectrum with 27.3% 0-+ shifts in perceived happiness. He was the one that other students complained about and he was the one who was the most challenging student for the Buddhist teacher and the Year 3-4 class the year before. His book became increasingly messy over the year. He began the year by marking a negative shift on his scale and finished the year with, “Not good.” Helen provided gentle encouragement throughout the year, occasional pointed advice, “Giggling doesn’t work,” and, always ready to offer positive reinforcement thanked him for any efforts made. It appears that we could do little to help Kane lift his moods or improve his behaviour in the brief time available, but given the compelling results from clinical research, cited in Chapter 6, such a child may well benefit from more regular practice and/or a specifically targeted program.

My numerically quantified aggregations of the students’ perceived shifts in their subjective happiness do not alone, however, give a full and accurate picture of the students’ overall happiness. In the middle band there is Jenna at 50%, yet she had been with the Buddhist classes since their beginning in 2004 and had remained an interested and participatory student in the class. Her mother, whom I interviewed, had verified that Jenna enjoyed and valued the classes, was a bright and active young girl and apart from staying up too late reading (which offers some explanation for tiredness), did not have major problems.

Another middle band student, Tee, whose aggregate was 66.6% over the year, was another bright, engaged student who had also been with the classes since their inception. Her workbook comments showed that at times she might have been trying too hard to benchmark achievements and perhaps became too aware, noticing every external noise and itch. Entries about other aspects of her life were few, but she did record that meditation had helped her feel better about an illness and her mother being away.

Helen knew from the year before that Larry often appeared sad and distracted. He always seemed to have much on his mind and his classroom teacher had confided that he had troubles at home. Nevertheless, he persevered with his Buddhist classes, and

although there were not many dated entries in his book (his was the *Yawn* in the workbook pages seen earlier) his 82.3% 0+ shifts post-meditation may not indicate his overall happiness/well being for his general lived experience. However, it seems that he found benefit from the meditations. In April he wrote, “It was fun,” and in October, “Good meditation.”

A Year 6 student new to the school and Buddhist classes revealed much unhappiness in her diarised entries, and the transcript below shows depths to her unhappiness that are not revealed in her 73.7% 0+ aggregate. The figure does indicate that Mary found positive benefits from meditation. It also demonstrates the crucial role a teacher can play in supporting a student to move towards better self-knowledge and find perspectives and techniques to deal with life.

Mary’s meditation journey

Key: B: Before meditation, A: After meditation, T: Teacher’s comment

6/3 B: “That’s me. I haven’t felt happy for a while A: Still. T: It will take patience, kindness, for you, for yourself.

13/3 T: Progress!

20/3 B: I feel full of regret! Again I don’t know why. A: I am happy because I have accomplished something, I don’t know what though. T: (feeling happy) Very cool. Well done. You did that!

27/3 B: I am happy but something is weighing me down A: I feel RELAXED I think meditation helps calm my mind a whole lot. T: Yes.

17/4 minus 1 recorded on scale B and A: ‘cause that’s why. I feel like being like that. T: Oh! We’ll have to work on that.

15/5 B: If that can count as sleepy and tired, that is me A: I am still tired.

29/5 B: Mad and I have a bit of a head cold A: My legs fell asleep! Augh! T: It’s going to happen – move them if necessary.

5/6 B: I am particularly annoyed for 2 reasons. A: Less angry, probably because my birthday is next week.

19/6 B: I feel particularly buoyant today. I am not taking anything for granted and I will try to make the best out of life. A: I did some odd posture and now my back aches! But on the good

side we have more time. I didn't like the cameraman filming us. I am happyish but cold hands took it away. T: only if you let cold hands do that. Shake them instead and be happy.

26/6 B: My friend is going away for a long time. I feel sad. A: I feel calm. I feel dazed actually.

17/7 B: My sister's alarm woke me up at 6.30 am! A: The rain was very calming. But could we do silent meditation? It seems to help.

31/7 B: I have a bad feeling towards the world. A: I feel tired and pessimistic. T: Meditation will reveal how we feel inside. It will change also.

7/8 B: I feel happy and buoyant A: I feel very sore. No more exercise next time.

14/8 B: I am very tired. A: I feel happier.

28/8 B: I feel very tired and grumpy A: At the temple, the thing that stuck in my mind was that the Buddha could pick his backbone from his stomach. It was great meditating in silence.

Also great with hands on knees and eyes closed. T: Thankyou for the dedication last week.

9/10 B: two entries for B: 1. One half of my mind is happy about going to the Lego excursion
2. I am mad and tired in the other half of my mind.

16/10 B: I am angry and tired. A: Just a bit better

23/10 B: I wanted to go on Somers Camp but I didn't get to, so I'm upset. A: I feel exactly the same, maybe even a bit worse.

30/10 B: I feel alright. I brought my Good Deed Book. A: I suddenly felt kind of nauseous. I felt a lot worse. T: Oh! Next time-breathe deeply into your tummy and push it out gently X3.

In Mary's journey we find an intelligent and thoughtful girl who was willing to articulate her thoughts and who was also very familiar with feeling down. All sorts of things were cause to grumble, an early alarm, cold hands and so on, but what marked her entries from the other students' was the deep unhappiness that she expressed. Her first experiences of meditation and her perceived positive effects were for her a pleasant surprise.

Helen, was naturally quite alarmed by some of the entries and she rang me several times to discuss how they could best be handled. As co-ordinator of the program I was aware of a number of instances where children had shared sadness, such as a death or difficult events, with their Buddhist teacher. These were always surprising to a teacher who came to class for only a half an hour per week, but in classes that cultivate loving-kindness, and acknowledge changes and difficulties in life through stories (to be discussed in the next chapters), perhaps it should be less so. As meditators

ourselves we knew, and as Helen had pointed out on occasion to students, that meditation can reveal the internal dialogue.

Helen observed the program's protocols; she raised her concern with Mary's classroom teacher, made discreet comments in the workbook, but did not use the Buddhist classes for 'counselling' or talking about personal problems. Nor did she take the child away from regular class time to debrief. Mary's teacher was present each class, assigned in keeping with the departmental statute, and remained interested and often impressed by Mary's progress in Buddhist classes throughout the year.

This was a pragmatic response, for volunteer teachers cannot initiate further supports for students, and do not have licence to enter the school in any capacity other than to deliver Buddhist classes. However, Helen and I remained mindful of Mary's apparent vulnerability and took delight in her positive shifts. It was also an encouraging sign that Mary found the classes beneficial, and that she persevered, to the extent that she was one of the few students in the class who completed the Good Deeds/ Counting Kindness Book exercise that will be discussed in Chapter 9.

Emotional regulation

That children overwhelmingly felt calmer and happier after meditation has indicated some degree of emotional regulation. Sometimes children, like Mary, recorded specific changes in their emotions. From Mary's meditation journey she found that it was possible to feel less angry, mad or grumpy for having meditated, although this was not always her experience. Rita noticed one day that before meditation she was, "HYPER feel like talking," but afterwards noted a more measured response, "No better but not hyper." The focus developed in meditation is in itself a form of self-control that in turn deflects attention from emotions. So when Bess, for example said that she "Didn't think about stuff as much," and, "After meditation there's less bad stuff to think about. Just isn't there," a degree of emotional regulation is evident. Patrice noted before meditation one day, "I was very confubled yesterday." Whether this was confused or troubled, I am not sure, but afterwards she "felt better." On a day when Esme felt "average" she could "think of things that I am happier about" having meditated.

To be able to regulate emotions is an ability that can be assisted and learned through meditation, and the children's experiences from having learned the practices and purposely recording these has given them all some direct experience that it is possible. That this effect will not happen on every instance has also given them insights into how their mind's work, like in Harry's observation "I was alright but didn't concentrate enough to improve," or Mary's struggles, on occasion feeling worse but sometimes finding that afflictive emotions do not have to take hold.

Impacts beyond the classroom

The study here is confined to classroom experiences and did not have the scope to track these students into other areas of their lives. However, their workbook entries revealed that these students had full and busy lives and that meditation helped them to manage their various challenges and commitments. The discussion so far has examined the children's perceived effects of meditation sessions on their physical well-being, how meditations have allayed some stresses and worries and given them skills that have developed their capacities to focus their minds and find an inner source of calm. These experiences have been sources of happiness that have been generated from within them, and they became aware that their applications and efforts had been instrumental to achieve these effects. The children were encouraged to adopt kindly attitudes towards themselves and find balance between effort and perseverance, and relaxation. Through adoption of these approaches they learned a little more about the complexity of their minds and that, unlike many other areas of their education where lessons are learnt and answers rendered either correct or incorrect, this learning was always going to be incremental, relative and personal.

Through their participation in regular meditation sessions that taught the positions and dispositions required in this meditative tradition, the children discovered that they could replicate these positive experiences, and in various ways recorded the beneficial effects these have had on their lives.

Esme was one of the school's high achievers. She had been with the program for over three years and her entries this year and the year before told of quite a dizzying list of involvement in school camps, leadership initiatives, a foreign exchange program,

music recitals at assemblies, inter-school cross country training and performance, coping with two years of braces on her teeth, and academic excellence. The calm that she consistently found through learning meditation was, it appeared, a welcome and perhaps much needed addition to her life. She was able to articulate feeling ‘bouncy’, excited and tired, and she was generally very happy. “B: I am feeling pretty happy and excited about going to Hong Kong. A: My head is pretty overloaded but I am calmer,” “B: My braces are hurting a lot and it hurts to talk and eat A: I felt much better when meditating and much calmer. I like walking meditation,” and, “B: I feel pretty tired because this morning I went for a run, apart from that I’m good. A: I’m still tired but I am much more relaxed.”

The classroom teacher had noticed positive effects from meditation with the children. In the preceding year she was particularly impressed with the changes she observed in one of her most difficult students. She wrote:

“Over the course of the year thus far, he has progressed from presenting a quite resistant, show-off attitude, to one of being greatly involved. I firmly believe that these sessions – especially the meditation segments, have been instrumental in helping Paul achieve a much better sense of self-esteem and well-being. He now engages in a very positive and good humoured manner. It’s a delight to watch the growth of this young man. He may not write that much, but watching him attending to the discussion session certainly indicates a sense of involvement!”

New insights and funny feelings

Children were acutely aware that this type of learning was very different from what they generally experienced at school. In a DVD (see Appendix 11) made to show the operation of the program to Victoria’s Buddhist communities (<http://www.bcvic.org.au/education/news.htm>). Stella pointed out this difference, “In Buddhist classes you are trying to relax and get a clear mind, whereas in school you are trying to cram more things into it, so it’s quite different.”

With the differences have come new insights and perceptions that Year 5-6 children in particular made in each year of the study. After the first full year Year 5-6’s made some very affirming evaluation comments:

“It teaches calmness and if I’m worried it helps me. When I feel weak it can help me. If pressured before doing something it helps.”

“It helps me to be calm and peaceful. I have a better understanding of life.”

“It teaches you about meditation and Enlightenment and it takes you to whole new peaceful world.”

“It makes you more enlightened and a better, calmer, peaceful, kind person. It also makes life happier for you and the people around you. It makes you feel good because you feel like you understand everything or a lot.”

“It teaches you to strengthen and focus your mind, and it helps to become a much wiser person. It can also help achieve Enlightenment, or help you find the end to all suffering. It’s fun, relaxing and stress-free! :) It’s great! Keep it up!”

“It has really opened my mind to a better, brighter world.”

Also in the second full year of the program the Year 5-6 children at this school showed that they had new insights into themselves and how they could relate to others. That year, one student who had been very reticent in class, but had persevered nevertheless, concluded the year by saying, “It is a new thing. It cleared my mind. It sorts you out. I never knew that my mind could do this. It is like when you are three and you discover chocolate. You never knew that it was possible before.”

The children in this third year of my study again reiterated experiences and themes of insight, wisdom, clarity and openness that students in earlier years had reported.

Bess could, “See stuff in a different light,” and we have shared Cory’s benign feelings of warmth and light glowing inside him. We have noted Ronny feeling, “The same but inlightened (sic) in a way.” Luke, who was not disposed to write often, had devised a symbol for “I can feel energy running through my veins,” that he used intermittently. Rosie was, “more calm and peaceful but still bright.”

Patrice, who had a wonderful aptitude to write new words that captured the flavour of her experience, found that after meditation one day, “I feel great. I kept thinking I was in a big blue bubble, now I feel all tinglelly!” Tee found that, “During the exercise I felt like I could reach the rafter on top of me.” There can be new and unusual experiences that children may experience. Sometimes children in this class have asked their teacher for clarification, and at other times the teacher affirmed or contextualised the experiences. Given the range of experiences shown by each student in the class this aspect of the teacher’s role became more significant than we had anticipated.

Overview of children's experiences of meditation

Meditation is initially a physical exercise. The physical challenges of limbering the body and aiming towards formal sitting posture are part of the preparation. We have observed that Year 3 and 4 children often have the flexibility to attain the posture readily, and with practice and encouragement they were building a physical foundation from which they could best participate in exercises with relaxed and focused attention. Certainly the most immediate effect experienced from these exercises that students recorded was relaxation. These were welcome and enjoyable experiences but the participating children learned that this was a starting point for meditative activities rather than an end-point. Meditation in these classes was for development of awareness, concentration and kind heartedness.

The physical space where meditation sessions were conducted was also influential. Students recorded their appreciation for the spacious library and the beautiful, peaceful gompa because these were more conducive environments than their regular classrooms. The comfortable cushions helped the children sit with ease for a longer period, which for them facilitated richer inner experiences.

Meditation is certainly a reflective exercise and indeed a self-reflective exercise but the applications and the varied experiences of the children described above, show that much more happened, and should happen, if reflective activities are broadened to include meditation. We saw that Harry was more than happy, week after week to reflect upon his successes in his computer game, but he knew full well that he was not applying himself to meditation. Children noted at times that they were thinking about other things happening in their lives, being reflective, but learnt that this was not meditation. Although reflecting on past actions and allowing time for review can be highly worthwhile activities, and the children in this study did not appear to have had much time for this anyway, potential to conflate the two was not the type of reflection that we were teaching. From a meditative tradition this would be a mistake because the rich potential of more refined purposive reflective activities would be denied.

In this program reflection as meditation became a learned and practised activity. The children learned to become aware of their thoughts and feelings, to focus their minds better, concentrate, and experience enhanced capacity to feel loving kindness. These

outcomes that the children have described did not occur through happenstance, but with the discreet and artful guidance from a teacher who herself was experienced in the meditation learning journey. Throughout the two years of self-report data from meditation experiences children consistently and overwhelmingly rated themselves happier for having meditated. The indications of self-regulation, feeling calm and energised, coping with physical difficulties and worries, and finding greater clarity of mind support their classroom teacher's appraisal that meditation was contributing to enhanced self-esteem and well-being in various ways for all these children. These experiences could build their resilience.

Reflection and Thinking Processes in Australian Schools

In both Values Education and Civics and Citizenship discourse the roles of reflection, empathy, and spirituality are cited as necessary components of learning that aims to equip students for living meaningful lives in society. Reflection and self-knowledge are integral to best practice quality teaching and for students' integration of values (Lovat & Toomey 2007) and in emerging Civics and Citizenship pedagogies, too, the aspects of beliefs, values and self-knowledge are inextricably at the core (Mellor 2008). The ability to reflect upon thoughts, words and deeds, is a logical precursor to being able to see consequences and make choices required for a good life and to be a good citizen. With the challenge to educators to include 'reflection', 'connectedness' and 'developing personhood' that Mellor, Lovat and Toomey exhort into their pedagogies, these applications of meditation demonstrate pedagogical precision that is as yet not otherwise evident in Australian state schools.

Meditation has direct relevance to the interdisciplinary strand Thinking Processes in the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS). The applications of meditation described above pertain to all three domains of this strand: Reasoning, processing and inquiry, Creativity, and Reflection, evaluation and metacognition, but it is to the latter domain that the most significant contribution is evident. In this domain the link between cognitive, affective and metacognitive knowledge, skills and behaviors because meditation trains attention towards present awareness that is vital in order to recognize what has past and determine future activity.

In VELS there is an explicit focus on thinking and the teaching of thinking skills, critical types of thinking are defined and the conditions necessary to develop these skills are described. Especially in regard to metacognition,

“This can only happen if the school and classroom culture values and promotes thinking and if students are provided with sufficient time to think, reflect, and engage in sustained discussion, deliberation and inquiry. Students need challenging tasks which stimulate, encourage and support skilful and effective thinking”(VCAA 2008).

Here we can see a direct interface with VELS Thinking Processes, particularly its Reflective strand at Levels 3 and 4 where these participants are situated. At Level 3:

“Students develop language to describe specific thinking processes and, with support, use thinking tools to assist them to complete a given task. They continue to reflect regularly on their thinking, learning to describe their thinking processes verbally,” and

“At Level 4 students use a broad range of thinking processes and tools, and reflect on and evaluate their effectiveness. They articulate their thinking processes. They document changes in their ideas and beliefs over time (VCAA 2008).” Incorporation of the Happiness Scale as part of the meditation activity provided a new way for students to reflect upon their thinking processes, articulate them and evaluate their effectiveness.

What is crucial and distinctive about these children’s documentations is that they show they were taught to cultivate awareness of their thinking processes through observation of thoughts, feelings, sensations and these propensities to change. Agency over these propensities appeared to be supported by their giving particular attention to the present moment. Dexterity to apply present moment awareness is especially pertinent in metacognitive thinking that requires present awareness to assess past and future situations, make linkages and determine actions. The calm focus of present awareness that the children have described, we may surmise, could also indicate that they are better equipped to plan, choose or create their cognitive and affective responses.

However, while the VELS acknowledges that thinking skills can be defined in a variety of ways and that there are various taxonomies and models for teaching thinking (VCAA 2008) it does not offer teachers systematic methodologies and programs to approach these aims, especially for the inclusion of reflective, affective

and metacognitive thinking. The structure of the VELs clearly leaves the door open to educational research developments in this domain and the Thinking Processes demonstrated by the children through meditation show significant potential for further exploration.

Chapter 8

Stories of lives: morality, meaning-making and more monkeys

4Ms in BRE

“I don’t care if the children don’t know the name of Siddhartha’s horse!” Bernie announced via telephone one evening, “Meditation is *the* most important activity we offer,” he had decided.

“It’s the most useful. Meditation, Mindfulness and Morality,” he went on.

3 M’s: *sila, samadhi and panna* in the Theravada.

“What about Compassion?” I asked adding my Mahayana perspective.

“Hmmm....Make it 4 Ms; Meditation, Mindfulness, Morality and Metta!”

Excerpt from case circulated to teachers 14/3/07 (Appendix 6)

Bernie is a teacher of Buddhism and his polemic in the case above speaks of an ongoing tension that teachers in the program were experiencing; prioritising which topics from the vast canon were more important to teach in the short time available, and considering the types of learning activities to support the learning. The case I circulated included a review of meditation that has been discussed in the preceding two chapters. Each volunteer teacher was refining their meditation teaching, and everyone was including *metta*, loving kindness into their meditation sessions. As per my brief as co-ordinator, I was encouraging teachers to continue to use stories as a bridge for children to move between the interiority of meditation experience towards learning how they might act ethically in the world.

However, the importance of stories became contentious. Some teachers were leaving the follow-up from the stories at comprehension exercises, and this style of learning, such as knowing the name of Siddhartha’s horse was unimportant for Bernie. This case encouraged teachers to go deeper, and draw out the meanings and messages within the stories with their students.

Bernie was also saying to me that, after meditation and mindfulness, morality was the most important topics in a Buddhist education program. This teacher was a student in

the Theravada tradition where *sila*, *samadhi* and *panna*, mindful awareness, meditation and morality are the cornerstones of practice. I am a student in the Mahayana tradition where initial emphasis is on wisdom and compassion and to my sensibilities this seemed a rather dour approach, especially for children. I clarified the role of compassion in the Theravada with one of the program's spiritual advisors: kindness and compassion are assumed and subsumed by morality and mindfulness, and the development of kindness through meditations, analysis and activities is actively pursued. Morality taught as acts of kindness to self and others is distinctive of Dharma inspired approaches to teaching.

The traditional way to teach morals in Dharma centres is to take precepts - vows to avoid killing, lying, stealing, sexual misconduct and intoxication. Having completed the Life of Buddha story some teachers believed this was the next thing: "We have such a short time available, we have to give children the most important lessons for them to live by." Typically, what follows in the religious tradition is teaching of the Four Noble Truths, Refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and the path that includes the five lay precepts. We had books that provided lessons for these topics, simply written with illustrations, and free of charge thanks to sponsorship. The style and content of these resources was familiar and comfortable for some volunteer teachers, but I and some other teachers, and members of our Education Committee were uncomfortable with the didactic style: "Do not do bad", "Do Good", "Keep your mind clean" (Yin & Hudson 2000). This text, in its aim to be simple for children, also had inaccuracies that we did not want to perpetuate, such as that monks study and implying that nuns do not. Although having a text to follow could give security to a volunteer, unreflective and inexperienced teachers would not modify the lessons. In this second cycle of the program we were still developing our curriculum, and the conversations between teachers and the responses from students were shaping its development.

I provided Jataka stories. I chose the story below because it complemented meditations that drew upon the pure and fundamental nature of the mind, and because monkey stories are fun. The deeper message was that the children appreciate better what they have and what they can do. We do teach that all forms of life seek their own well-being and strive to avoid suffering, as each of us does, and therefore deserve

equal respect. As humans though, we have the greatest potential for self-determinism. I hoped that these understandings would scaffold moral teaching, so that students would arrive at seeing the benefits from moral behavior, and their abilities to act accordingly, rather than be given them as rules that should be followed.

A Lesson From A Monkey - Kutidusaka-Jataka

A long time ago in ancient India the great being, who later became the Buddha, was born as a beautiful bird. The bird lived in a tree high in the Himalayas where he built a sturdy nest to remain dry throughout the monsoon season.

One year when the rains fell day after day without stopping the bird saw a monkey sitting all forlorn under the tree.

The monkey was cold and wet and miserable. He felt very sorry for himself.

The beautiful bird asked the monkey:

*Monkey, in hands and feet and face
You are so like the human form
Why don't you build a house to live
Where you can shelter from the storm?*

Through chattering teeth the monkey replied:

*In feet and hands and face, O bird
Close to humans I am allied
But humans are given wisdom
That to me has been denied.*

All the same, the bird thought that the monkey could do better and replied:

*Monkey you could build a hut from leaves
If only you would apply your mind
If you would use just what you have
Greater happiness you would find.*

The monkey was too busy feeling sorry for himself to consider building a hut and he didn't appreciate the bird sitting dry in his nest offering advice. Rather, he got really cross, and smashed up the beautiful bird's nest.

The beautiful bird flew away and promptly built a new nest.

As the rains continued to fall and the bird sheltered in the nest he thought about the monkey. He thought about how the monkey could have used his time, his skills and his resources better.

He also thought about what the monkey had said and realised how fortunate the humans are. Humans have bodies and minds that can create homes and other things they need, and they can develop their minds so that they can do many wonderful things to keep themselves happy.

That rainy season the beautiful bird wished that he could be a human.

This story was performed as a play at both of the schools where this study is focused, with much enjoyment . As a play the verses are rehearsed many times and as the classes work with the story there are rich discussions: Why did the beautiful bird want to be a human? What can you do that makes your life special? Why was the monkey unhappy? Have you seen people act like the monkey? What can you do to make your life happier?

Not all teachers took my lead. As a religious instruction program, a marginal add-on in state schooling, there were no guidelines for what we taught and how we taught. We could teach Buddhism in whatever ways we saw fit, and the sequential model of refuge, path and precepts was familiar to most Buddhist practitioners, and many of our teachers came to the program with the expectation that this sequence would be taught. Teachers questioned the validity of the student inquiry approaches to teaching morality primarily through stories that the Education Committee had endorsed. This gave rise to many conversations between our teachers as we, as a group, sought to determine what morals and virtues would be taught, and the preferred methods to do so.

These conversations gave me cause to consider how influential the learned experiences and the values a teacher holds can be. A study of a Buddhist teacher whose kindness was appreciated by her students, showed that her emphasis on focus, discipline and obedience were as significantly influenced by her Confucian upbringing as by her Buddhist beliefs, although to this the teacher was largely unaware (Leu 1999). From a values education study in an Australian classroom the authors observed that the teacher has a role of significant power. In their case the teacher was creative, flexible and sensitive to her students but the authors concluded that “debates in the broader field of values education become matters of serious theoretical and practical complexity as they are played out in the life of the classroom” (Anders, Moni & Gitsaki 2008, p. 11). Our program shares this field.

While there is little direction in pre-service teacher education and the teaching profession generally as to how to approach teaching values and morals, our teachers can be seen to share similar philosophies. Both the professionals and the volunteers are generally honourable, well-intentioned people who do their best to impart positive

values to their students, but without materials and methodologies their teaching is likely to be more significantly shaped by their personal understanding and enculturated positions of which they may, or may not, be aware.

We had an abundance of stories from which to teach values and morals in the Buddhist canon. These are the Jatakas, tales of values in action and with consequence. Stories also provided a ready vehicle for maintaining the calm, inclusive learning environments that we wished to cultivate, and stimulation and enjoyment for the students. As pedagogy, they fit with the natural disposition within humans to create stories of their experiences. “Narrative is the necessary form for the expression of human temporality. Human beings understand the construction of an idea of the present, past and future through their use of narrative” (McQuillan 2000, p. 324). Narratives, as stories, have been mediums of moral instruction and for imagining what we might be throughout all stages of history, in all cultures and for all ages. We have capitalised on these propensities with the use of Jatakas in this study.

As stories that are heard, read, enacted and discussed, the Jatakas employed in our classes became a medium for providing children with language through which values could be understood. In the story above we can see how the meaning of Wisdom is contextualised; *“If only you would apply your mind/ If you would use just what you have/ Greater happiness you would find.”*

Language and stories

In the class discussions that followed, the story is linked to the children’s lives where they can articulate their experiences. These linkages through language are significant to discover the possibilities of being and becoming (van Manen 1990). Through many years of interviewing and listening to children, Coles has concluded that stories are imperative for shaping children’s moral and spiritual development: “A reflecting and self-reflecting mind at some point gives way to a ‘performing self’” (Coles 1997, p. 7). Again, neuroscientific research is beginning to give further weight to the crucial role that language plays in character development. Verbal deficits are consistently linked to behavioural problems (Lynam & Henry 2001; Moffitt, T. E 1990; Moffitt, T. E. & Lynam 1994), and consequently research is moving towards ways in which language

can help to label emotions accurately, retrieve memories and assist children to choose appropriate behaviours independently.

The PATHS Curriculum has incorporated knowledge of brain processes into the program by employing the concepts of vertical control and horizontal communication. The overview below shows the dynamics between the prefrontal cortex and the limbic system:

“Vertical control refers to higher-order cognitive processes that take place in the prefrontal cortex exerting control over lower-level limbic impulses. In adults, emotional information is rapidly perceived in the emotion centers of the brain (i.e. the limbic system). This information is then sent via ascending neurons to the frontal cortex for higher-order processing and interpretation. Finally, this information is sent back to the limbic system to alter emotional signals. However, in young children, the neural connections between the frontal cortex and limbic system are not completely developed. Therefore, children often react impulsively to challenging social situations without facilitation from higher-order processing skills”(Riggs et al. 2006, p. 94).

This is where language can have a mediating role. The authors continue:

“Horizontal communication refers to the process of communication between the two hemispheres of the human cortex via the corpus callosum. The left and right hemispheres specialize in processing different types of information (de Hann et al., 1998). The left hemisphere is responsible for processing receptive and expressive language and expressive positive affect. The right hemisphere specializes in processing both comfortable and uncomfortable receptive affect and uncomfortable expressive affect (Bryden & Ley, 1983). Therefore, in order to verbally label emotional experiences and become consciously aware of them, information must be transmitted from the right hemisphere of the brain to the left. However, the left and right hemispheres can only communicate with one another via the corpus callosum” (Riggs et al. 2006, p. 95).

This information transferal mechanism, the corpus callosum, although under-developed in children, is tremendously important in the early and developing stages of the ability to process literal language (Brown et al. 2005). Given what is currently being learned about the plasticity of the brain and how it can be strategically taught to function, the PATHS methodology appears sound.

While the above authors’ study of one specific program did not indicate any significant change in teacher-reported student behavior through verbal fluency, it showed that language as part of the teaching methodology helped students with their internalised behavior. The authors speculated that perhaps these articulate children were better at

talking back and verbally ridiculing peers. Nevertheless, the study illustrates the significance of language in pro-social behaviors and points to the influence and potential for verbal processing to be incorporated into programs that seek to help students become aware of their emotions and control their behaviour. At this stage of research there is yet no consensus as to when the period of rapid neural development in the frontal areas ends.

However, the researchers here further recommend that implementation of these kinds of curricula during early and middle childhood may be more beneficial in promoting optimal neurocognitive functioning and positive behavioural development than programs offered during adolescence or adulthood (Riggs et al. 2006, p. 99). It is reasonable to hypothesise that a range of literal, emotional and metaphoric language stratagems will place children in better positions to understand themselves and others, and to engage in pro-social behaviour. I cannot tell of the kinds of language experiences and class discussions the participant population engaged in outside our classes, but stories that give language to describe and elicit emotions, values, consequences, new possibilities, and that link to students' own experiences, must surely maintain a significant role in the pedagogy.

The stories and meditations in this program also have metaphoric content. Children know that the animals in the Jatakas, particularly the monkeys, can be very much like themselves. Another brain study has found that novel metaphors and figurative language evoke pervasive neural activity where both hemispheres work in unison, creating a complex and dynamic pattern for language comprehension (Goldstein, Arzouan & Faust 2008, pp. 205-23), more complex brainwork than literal reasoning excites. Therefore, even in their developing brains, the children's comprehension of metaphor would indicate that unified and extended brain activity is occurring.

Stories and moral imagination

Stories add a more expansive and creative route to understand good behaviors to the more rational discursive methods of analysis. For Coles, "moral reasoning is not to be equated with moral conduct" (Coles 1997, p. 181), and he has based this view on what children have told him. Students who have learned moral reasoning have nevertheless witnessed people behaving amorally. He favors a more imaginative approach. Another

study, this time with over one hundred young workers navigating the moral dilemmas they faced in new careers, told that they knew what they *should* do, but would not always take the ethical route (Fischman et al. 2004). They had acquired language and reasoning to identify the ethical situation, but not the conviction to place the ethical imperative above the pragmatic, short-term solution. The study emphasised that positive role models were invaluable to support the ethical and professional development of the young workers, but there nevertheless appear to have been deficiencies in their education for they were not confident enough to apply their rational moral reasoning to their real life situations.

Some uneasy tensions remain in this field of education for this program and elsewhere. There is a need to teach explicitly what the values and morals are, for children to know that they exist, and are right. Yet, for the teaching to be effective, current research is ever pointing towards methods that will engage students to think, feel, and reflect upon the values. They need to be linked to students' own experiences and they need to be remembered and accessed throughout their life-long learning journeys.

The phenomenological, hermeneutic approach that was adopted gave me latitude to hear teachers' priorities and student interests to guide the curriculum development as we sought to address these issues. With designated weekly half-hour lessons, this program gave a unique opportunity to study how values could be explicitly taught. We have seen in the previous two chapters that meditation appears to be particularly effective in providing a technology for students to bring awareness to their activities, and a means to reflect upon them too. Without these capacities developed in some form it is hard to imagine how a student could be expected to act ethically in situation-specific circumstances, because consideration and choice are invariably required above impulsive reactions.

In our program it also became clear that values and morals are necessarily intertwined. Values may be qualities that can be developed and practised, while morals require avoidance and restraint. Good conduct requires both development and restraint. It would be deficient, say, to practice tolerance or patience but remain a thief. In the National Values Framework the distinctions, though intertwined, are less clear. Honesty can be a value or moral but is not contentious. Integrity that gets close to the heart of

good character is potentially problematic. Integrity, on the poster circulated to schools, is defined as “the principles of moral and ethical conduct.” This is potentially a very wide terrain for teachers to negotiate. It can include, as is in our case, avoiding killing any living creature, but could stretch to homophobia from other perspectives. Similarly, both these interpretations could be justified as Respect.

Placing these qualities within the rubric of wisdom and kindness was useful for our teachers. It gave focus to our teaching. These meta-ethics have potential in the wider educational community as well, because as we have seen, there are many values and morals that might be taught. For educators to decide which values and morals to teach requires wisdom. It also requires wisdom to discern how these might be taught. Reinforcing kindness as a meta-value for teachers has merit too, because it softens the teacher’s relationship with their students and encourages consideration for their needs. With these dynamics at play we sought to find middle ground for teachers and students with stories.

In the first year of the study, the children were told the Jataka story about a talkative tortoise (Appendix 1 pp. 3.25-6) and another that through verse with an easy rhythm told that love for all creatures (Appendix 1 pp. 2.13) can be a form of safety. Teachers had no qualms telling these. In the second year of the study I rewrote ‘*Mahilamukha-Jataka*’ as a story to show that the company we keep can influence. Friendships and peer-group pressures are big issues for children. I took licence here and created a female elephant protagonist and changed the translation from Damsel-face to Peachy-Face. Maybe because Jatakas were originally written by men and primarily for a monastic audience, they are generally androcentric and sometimes quite disparaging towards women. I wanted gender balance. Besides, wisdom, ethical and spiritual developments are ungendered pursuits. This was one of the most memorable stories delivered in the feedback from the girls at the western suburbs school.

In stories about animals it was easier to avoid gendering the characters. Again, the animal characters excited an imaginative dimension to moral reasoning and distanced the lesson from didactic learning.

That first year I also circulated the story below. Another imaginative feature in this story is the introduction. Although we had not taught about karma and rebirth explicitly, the introduction here mirrors the classical form of the Jatakas. Teachers gave brief explanations to this style of beginning, but overall children were free to consider this possibility, or not dwell on it, as they chose.

I shaped the accompanying teacher's lesson guide with the value topic Fidelity (being a true, faithful friend/ partner) in a bid to respond to the fourth precept in language that would be relevant to children. The verse in this story describes qualities of friendship in a very straightforward way. I wanted to respect some of our teachers' inclinations to tell their students the correct way to behave, but also to broaden students' perceptions of friendship to be able to exercise their wisdom to choose good friends. Each stanza of the verse alerts the reader to recognisable attitudes and, because the language was more sophisticated than in other stories, the teachers had to spend time unpacking and discussing each stanza over several lessons. Anti-bullying policies were visible in both schools and students were familiar with these, but this story goes further by describing the duplicitous nature of bad friends.

A Bush Turkey and a False Friend Falcon

Kukkuta-Jataka

The ancient story tells of a time when the Wise and Compassionate One on the way to Enlightenment took birth as a bush turkey.

He grew up to be the head of his flock.

A falcon lived in the area and would circle the skies and swoop to catch a turkey from the flock to eat whenever he could.

Finally, only the leader of the flock remained. This turkey would take great care to hide in the bushes when he ate so as to not to leave himself exposed to the sky where the falcon could move to catch him.

The falcon grew frustrated at not being able to catch the bush turkey the regular way, so he tried to trick him.

The falcon perched on a branch of a tree and called to the turkey,

“Dear bush turkey, why do you fear me? I want to be friends with you. Over the hill there is food for both of us. Why don't we go there and feed together?”

“No way,” replied the bush turkey, “You and I can never be friends, so go away!”

“Come on now,” coaxed the falcon, “I have changed. I am sick of eating bush turkeys. I promise you that I will be a good friend to you.”

“I don’t believe you. Now go away!” answered the bush turkey, “You have eaten all my friends so you can never be a friend of mine.”

Then the bush turkey thought about friendship and spoke aloud in verse for all the animals of the forest to hear:

*Do not trust those whose words are lies, or those who only know
Self-interest, or those who put on an ‘I-am better-than-you’ show.*

*Some are jealous and full of greed
They will speak kind words, but don’t follow through in deed.*

*Do not put your trust in man or woman of fickle mind
Like those who make plans and promises, but to break them they are inclined.*

*The bullies who talk tough and frighten all others
These should never be close like sisters or brothers.*

*Some speak smooth words not from the heart, and try to please
With showy acts of friendship – don’t put your trust in these.*

*If one is jealous when you do well and wants what you have got
They will do you harm then leave – such a friend is not.*

*Those who recognise the meaning of events
Choose good friends and avoid unhappy incidents.*

All the animals clapped and cheered when they heard this verse and the falcon flew away, because nobody wanted to be his friend.

In the second year the theme of friendship took a lighter note. The story below was performed as a play in both schools, with much hilarity.

The Monkeys Water the Trees - Aramodusaka-Jataka

A long time ago in ancient India, near the city of Benares there was a king who had a beautiful garden which was tended meticulously by a group of dedicated gardeners. In this garden lived a band of monkeys, and very pleasant and comfortable lives they had too.

One day there was a public holiday in Benares, with much partying and festivities all over town. The gardeners desperately wanted to join in the fun. They just had to devise a way to leave the garden without the trees dying for lack of water.

After much thought the head gardener had an idea. He approached the leader of the monkeys and asked him a favour.

“Mr Major Monkey, my good man,” announced the gardener, knowing that the monkey leader liked to be considered important, “Would you and your band please do us a service today and water the young trees, so that we gardeners can go to the festival?”

Mr Major Monkey felt honoured. He puffed out his chest and said, “Certainly, you can rely on us one hundred percent.”

Relieved, and excited about the prospect of a day out, the gardeners gave each of the monkeys a watering can and headed off.

The monkeys began to water, but Mr Major Monkey wanted to be sure to do the job properly. “Mind you don’t go wasting water now,” he called.

Then he had a brainwave.

“Listen monkeys,” he announced, “Pull up each of the trees and water them according to the size of the roots. Give a small amount of water to the trees with short roots, and more water to the trees with long roots.” The monkeys dutifully obeyed.

A wise man was passing by on the road to Benares and saw all the monkeys pulling up the trees and watering them according to the size of the roots.

“Why on earth are you doing this?” he asked.

“It is what our leader told us to do,” came their simple reply.

The wise man shook his head sadly, and reflected that even with a desire to do good works, the ignorant and foolish only end up doing harm. Then he addressed the monkeys in verse:

*Knowledge and effort will bring success
Effort and no knowledge is foolishness
Mr Major Monkey can’t you see
Your apes have killed the garden trees.*

All of the monkeys were deeply ashamed, and they knew that they could now no longer live in the garden. The band of monkeys followed the wise man, and Mr Major Monkey was left alone, feeling like a very minor monkey indeed.

Student engagement was high, even to the point of students lobbying their teachers to be Mr Major Monkey the week ahead. The comic-book slapstick style of many of the short Jatakas makes it easy to grasp the monkeys’ ridiculous behaviour. A more serious note is struck in the verse: *Knowledge and effort will bring success/ Effort and no knowledge is foolishness*. This moved class discussion through the need for effort and knowledge, values that the schools had been mandated to pursue, to discussion about the need to apply good judgement and wisdom. The lesson plan that accompanies this story in the final curriculum also brings in discussion about environmental care.

Real or fantastic

One of the stories loved most by the children in this study was *'The Drummer'*. Some teachers, right from the beginning of the program, had requested materials that had contemporary contexts and I rewrote this Jataka as a modern version. The transcript of the original is attached as Appendix 7. Excerpts of the children from the inner-city school performing this play can be viewed on the attached DVD Appendix 11.

The Drummer – a play

Bherivada – Jataka

Cast: Narrator 1, Boy, Narrator 2, Father, Mother, Thugs (two or more), Narrator 3

Scene 1: At the family's home

Narr 1: There was once a man who was a drummer in a band. He had a son and the young man was also into the drums. He would listen to his dad practicing with his band, and then the young man would go to his room and copy what he had heard.

(Father and band play on one part of the stage, the young man listens to them and then goes to play his drums on another part of the stage)

Narr. 1: Eventually he became quite good - much to the relief of his mother.

(Mother stands outside room and sighs)

Narr.1: One day during the holidays the boy's father suggested that the boy come and do a gig with the band.

(Centre stage the father speaks to the boy, they shake hands.)

Boy: Awesome! Trust me dad, I will back you all the way.

Narr.1: So he practiced long and hard in his room - much to the discomfort of his mother.

(Boy plays his drums, mother stands outside room and sighs.)

Scene 2: At the Gig.

Narr. 2: On the eve of a long weekend it was time for the gig. The men came onto the stage rocking hard. The young man kept driving the back-beat. (The band plays on centre stage.)

Narr.2: The crowd loved them. It was the best night of the young man's life. He didn't want it to end.

(The band members put their instruments away and move off stage. The father hands the young man his money. The family members get into their car.)

Narr. 2: After the show had ended he drummed all the way home in the car.

(Young man drums in the back while his mother and father sit in the front. The father is driving.)

Father: (Tired) Give it a rest son.

Boy: (Rock Star) I'm being creative. Besides, I'm a musician now, you can't tell me what to do.

Narr. 2: At home he kept it up louder than ever.

Scene 3: At the Family's Home

(Family gets out of car and goes inside the house. Boy goes to his drum kit and plays).

Boy:(Rock Star) I'm hot! I'm cool! I'm lean! I'm mean! I'm si-i-i-ck!

Mother: (Crying) Oh! Settle down son, for goodness sake! It's late. People in the street will think that we are having a party.

Narr. 3: Then a carload of people drove past. They saw lights on and heard loud music coming from the house, and the front door was still open. People tumbled from the car and stormed into the house.

(Thugs -fighting amongst themselves- get into the car and drive to the house, screech to a halt.

They get out, and go into the house looking around for the party).

Narr. 3: Seeing the boy drumming, and his parents getting ready for bed, they were very angry. One rough fellow grabbed the boy and held him against the wall.

Thug: (Holding the boy against the wall. Demanding.)

So you're the one making all the racket, where's the party?

Boy: (Trying to be brave)

Oh there's no party. I played a gig tonight and I even got paid.

Thug: Did you now, you little shrimp. Then give us your money!

Narr. 3: Feeling in no position to argue, the hard earned dollars were handed over. The ruffians then left the house, but not before punching a hole in the wall on the way out. It all happened very quickly.

(Boy hands over money purse. Thug punches hole in the wall. They leave the house.

The mother is shaking. The father puts his arm around his wife and shakes his head.)

Father: *Don't go too far, excess shun*

Drumming lost what drumming won.

Narr. 3: The young man slunk off to bed.

(Boy, sad faced, shoulders slumped, goes to his room. Thinking. He lies down on his bed).

Narr. 3: He didn't get much sleep that night. As he lay in bed he thought about his father's advice, and how he would be a much happier person if he took heed when to stop. He learned his lesson.

But he didn't tell his parents.

The film shows children absorbed in the drama; drumming, pushing and posturing. Through play rehearsals the message was told many times: *Don't go too far, excess shun/ Drumming lost what drumming won.* However, with the realism in this story

much of the imaginative elements in the other stories I felt were lost and I wondered if the students attended more to the action than the message. Nevertheless, this story about the middle way, had a poignant irony at the inner-city school. Harry, who had regularly updated his teacher on his video game progress in his meditation journal, was sporting a repetitive strain injury from the game and was out of team sports for several months.

Negotiating teacher and student values

Teachers who volunteered to teach in this program came with many different intentions. The spectrum ranged from wanting to teach values as moral rules and wanting to teach a modern relevant curriculum, to the point of questioning the need for Buddhist resources at all. Through our group and smaller hub meetings each year, phone calls and emails to me and between teachers, and the cases that I circulated for discussion, sufficient openness, mutual respect and trust was developed between these otherwise strangers to openly share their aims, priorities and teaching methods. Respect for parents and teachers were recurrent themes that many of these teachers raised as being important.

Although I had been circulating cases about various teacher conversations with the schools, and national values perspectives where Respect and Responsibility invariably featured, I was surprised by my reaction to some of the teachers' intentions. I had not at that point considered that Respect and Responsibility in the Values Framework would, or should, be linked to respect for parents and teachers or should include gratitude. I knew that I balked at teaching rules, and respect was to be earned and responsibility understood. Two of our volunteer teachers who had previously worked professionally as teachers openly acknowledged that respect for teachers and parents was integral in their Chinese Confucian Buddhist heritage. Like all teachers in our program, they were recommended by their dharma centres, and trained with the B.C.V. Education Program. Their position and mine were legitimate. I could see from my reaction that I was strongly influenced by my post-modern enculturation: "The ethical paradox of the postmodern condition is that it restores to agents the fullness of moral choice and responsibility while simultaneously depriving them of the comfort of the universal guidance that modern self-confidence once promised (Bauman 1993,

p. xxii). Helen on the other hand, a trained secondary art teacher and also a qualified play-group leader, believed that learning should come primarily from children's declared interests. This of course was closer to my own position, but explicit articulation of the universal ethical principles, and teacher guidance was potentially lacking.

While these approaches to teaching might typically be found in any school, my role in this program brought them into sharp focus. I had the responsibility to represent the state's Buddhist umbrella body that held a clear expectation that we would teach Buddhist content. With a program dependent upon a community of volunteers their ongoing involvement had to be maintained. For that to occur I needed to respect their diversity of teaching styles and experiences, and allow scope for them to draw upon these as they developed lessons and relationships with their students. My own liberal, democratic, egalitarian, self-empowering, post-modern stance on education and my own childhood memories of stultifyingly boring religious instruction classes by well-intentioned volunteers had convinced me that these classes needed to engage children, stimulate them and offer strategies and perspectives that they would value.

There is wisdom in teaching respect, responsibility and other values and morals, but the means by which these are taught can be more or less kind to students' receptivity.

I wrote my interpretation of *'The Deer Who Thought He Knew It All'* in response to these various intentions. It is a powerful story about respect and responsibility, but the story moves the reader forward to consider different points of view, and with that to use empathy and possibly find compassion.

The Deer Who Thought He Knew It All - Kharadya-Jataka

A long time ago in ancient India lived a family of deer. The Great Being, on the path of wisdom and compassion was born a deer.

One day his sister came to him. She was very troubled about her son. He was lazy, disinterested and hated being told what to do.

In desperation the mother deer went to her brother and said, "Brother of mine, can you please teach my son? I am at my wit's end for he is disobedient and will not take advice from me. If he keeps on going like this, I fear for his safety."

The great deer of course agreed, and asked that the nephew come to him the following morning.

Morning came, but the young deer did not.

The great deer made an appointment for the following day, this time later in the morning, but the young deer did not show. Nor did he appear for his lessons the next day or even the day after that.

The great deer was concerned. He scouted the forest to see what the young deer was up to. There he saw him cavorting with his friends, racing blindly around the forest scaring animals and destroying trees by smashing them with his antlers. The young bucks were having a great time, showing no heed for anyone but themselves.

In a final attempt to bring his nephew to his lesson the great deer called out, "Young deer, come here, spend time with me. Let me teach you what you need to know."

"Uncle, thanks but no thanks," the young buck replied, "I am fast and I am strong and I'll be right," and with that he bashed his antlers against a tree and hurtled off into the forest at full pelt.

The great deer shook his head sadly, for he knew that these deer did not realise how they were putting their lives at risk. Every young deer must learn some basic lessons.

Deer must learn to smell the air so as to sense what creatures are around, watch the forest floor for anything unusual, for there might be a trap; and deer must remain mindful of their herd, for their safety lies with the group.

The following day the sister ran to the great deer in a terrible state.

"My son! My son has been caught in a trap!" she wailed, and then turning to the great deer angrily, "I trusted you to teach him!"

"I have failed my son and you have failed your nephew and now he lies dying in a hunters trap!" she sobbed.

"Dear sister do not blame yourself," soothed the great deer, "I cannot blame myself either. We can only offer advice and instruction, but it is up to the student to learn. A parent cannot force a son or daughter to learn. A teacher cannot make a pupil learn. Learning is up to the son, the daughter or the pupil, and each will bear the fruits of their own actions."

The two sad deer stood on the hill and watched the hunter finish off the young deer and leave the forest with a sack full of meat.

The story above was taught to the Year 5-6 classes in both schools. These students were used to applying the Happiness scale pre- and post- meditation and here the students were asked to apply the scale to the characters in the story. Students at both schools gave essentially the same answers. When the Happiness Scale was applied to the young deer answers were predictably straight forward; very happy at the beginning and unhappy at the end.

“Did the deer’s actions affect his happiness?”

“Yes”.

The happiness of the mother and the great deer were more ambiguous.

“She was never really happy at all in the story, but she might have felt a bit better at the end.”

“The great deer was neither particularly sad nor happy throughout the story.”

“Overall, was the great deer happier than the young deer and the mother?”

“Probably.”

“Why?”

“He had a different attitude.”

Again the scale elicited narrative, but this time the students were tracking how different behaviours and attitudes affected happiness. They were considering the mother’s point of view, they felt her sadness, and could see that she found some comfort from the great deer’s counsel. The children showed a grasp of the idea that the happiness of the great deer was based on wisdom, and that was quite different to the happiness of the young buck. Using the Happiness Scale with the story became a means for the children to cultivate empathy, and think about and feel some qualities of compassion.

Life and consequence

In keeping with her style, Helen’s Year 5-6 class presented this story as a play for an end of year celebration. I was keen to hear any comments about the somewhat grizzly denouement of the story, a characteristic of Jatakas in their original form that is shared by much of folk tale, myth and fable literature generally. Prior to teaching this story to children, I had trialled it with adult audiences at a narrative forum at my university and at a conference on Indian philosophy and religion. Adult audiences generally greeted the story’s end with stunned silence. I already had one teacher in our program that refused to teach Jatakas because, “Children already have too much violence in their lives. Buddhism is about developing love and peace.”

Each year I checked with the classroom teachers sitting in on the program, and teachers consistently marked a high level of student engagement with the stories. Early in our second year I asked the two inner-city teachers to comment on the place

of stories in teaching values in the school, and the extent to which change, loss and disappointment are addressed in the curriculum. The Year 3-4 teacher wrote:

“Story telling has great significance in the teaching and learning of values starting with traditional tales in the early years, fables, legends and folklore later. There are countless examples in children’s literature that teachers use to initiate thinking on ‘values’ which is a high profile area in schools today...Social skills programs e.g. Heart Masters, You Can Do It etc. go some way to address loss and disappointment and through reading stories related to these life issues children have exposure to them as well as talking through ‘real life’ experiences that students may have. Global happenings (tsunami, loss of environment, meaning of Anzac day etc.) are addressed at the appropriate age level. Schools reflect the wider community and therefore must help children to cope.” – Kevin, 20/4/06

The place of folk tale and fable in the curriculum, a values-driven curriculum, was predictably secure, but the role of loss and disappointment seemed more tenuous.

The Year 5-6 teacher affirmed that what we were teaching accorded with the students’ learning but wrote:

“This school has ‘values’ programs such as ‘You Can Do It’, which incorporates the foundations of resilience, confidence, self-esteem, persistence and handling difficult situations. There is no specific part of our curriculum specifically devoted to loss.” – Pat 20/4/06

We were not at odds with the curriculum but seemed rather to be adding to an under-developed area. This was reflected in these teachers’ comments on the children’s responses later in the year.

“The children are learning the reason for the stories, our actions/ results of our actions, building up a strong ethical base...Children’s comments/ responses during ‘conversations’ are often insightful and reflect a growing understanding of the Buddhist practice. Fables are part of our 3-4 English curriculum so we can include some of the stories in our teaching.” – Kevin 29/8/06

On the same day Pat wrote:

“Depth of questioning and discussion is amazing. Clearly it’s indicative of just how well these students are tuning in to the deeper aspects of the story, and the analogies that can be made...Students always approach these sessions with such a positive mind-set. Role play is greatly enjoyed by all. Self-reflection is a large element, and has huge implications across all aspects of life. The free flowing of ideas is totally engaging!! – Pat 29/8/06

We know today’s children are required to navigate a world where they are exposed to terrible world events and brutality in their own communities. I cannot see how sanitising or rewriting folk and fairy tales to be more simply moral instruction

empowers children to make sense of the world and make sensible life choices. In a Marxist critique of fairy tale telling in the West, Zipes has observed that although children are encouraged to make sense of their lives through this broad literary genre the classical models have been too often dumbed down into commodities to be consumed. He cites Disney, but,

“Resistance to these models does not have to take the form of ‘politically correct’ books, as I have tried to demonstrate in the anthology *The Outspoken Princess and the Gentle Knight* (1994), but rather occurs in the tales that excite their imaginations and encourage them to explore their environments and to learn to make moral and ethical choices through involvement in challenging narratives” (Zipes 1997, pp. 10-1).

Having arrived at assurance from classroom teachers and literary critique that these stories were unlikely to harm the children, and recognising that the animal characters maintain a fantasy element as opposed to stark realism, I was interested to gauge parents’ responses. At the conclusion of the play I acknowledged the gruesome end, saying that this was from the original text, written in the uncompromising style of Aesop or Grimm and asked the parents if they had comments here. There were none. The Year 3-4s and parents were asked about the point of the story. A Year 4 student related the message that it is up to the student to take responsibility for his or her learning, and that parents and teachers can only point the way. This was evidence of language at work, where students would have affective perceptions and use their cognised perceptions to explain the meaning of the story.

I taught this story and led a meditation with a Year 5-6 class at the western suburbs school. The class, with the story, received public exposure in a newspaper article that featured alternative approaches to values education in the *Sunday Age* 7/9/06 without repercussion.

Stories known to Buddhist children

Apart from the Life of Buddha story, these Jatakas were unknown to the Buddhist children at the western suburbs school. Many had been told stories from their Vietnamese culture and were especially happy to hear new ones, and in English. We had a school in Melbourne’s northern suburbs with a class comprised exclusively of Sri Lankan Buddhist children. They attended Sinhalese language Buddhist classes at their temple where they learned stories and where Jatakas were celebrated in

dioramas, ‘pandols’, during Vesak. Two stories most familiar were the ‘*Vessantara Jataka*’ where the wise one gives away his wife and children as a supreme act of generosity (and, yes they are returned!) and ‘*Angulimala*’, a story about a serial killer.

These are big stories with layers of messages and meanings but they were both stories that I had been reluctant to select because I thought that they could be easily misconstrued in our culture. The ‘*Vessantara Jataka*’ is an epic, too long for half-hour primary classes. It is though a truly elegant example of this form of Indian literature that is available translated into English with commentary by Cone and Gombrich (1977). ‘*Angulimala*’ is famous throughout Buddhist cultures and Asian countries. The story demonstrates the Four Noble Truths: unsatisfactoriness and suffering, their causes, that liberation is possible, and the path to achieve this. I had taught this story to children in my earlier work with a companion Jataka, ‘*Prince Five Weapons*’ (Appendix 1 pp. 3.33-3.35). The cannibal ogre in this story has created the causes to become Angulimala. However, no matter how many terrible deeds one can do, there is always the possibility for change, and so it is a story of hope.

‘*Angulimala*’ was included in the final curriculum. This is not strictly a Jataka, a birth story. It comes from the Buddha’s time. I used a translation from the Mahayana, via Mongolian language (Frye 1981), a comic from a bookstall in India (Baudh 2002) and discussed the content with some of our teachers who have this story as part of their oral traditions. I nevertheless bring my contemporary encultured sensibilities to the story.

Angulimala

This is the story of Angulimala, a serial killer who became a saint.

Long, long ago a king called Prasenajit ruled over the northern Indian kingdom of Kosala, from the capital Sravasti. One night when he was fast asleep the room was suddenly lit by flashes of light. He woke with a fright. All the weapons in the palace were shining brightly.

“Whatever is happening here tonight,” he thought, “How is this happening? This is really creepy.”

The next moment it was dark again, and the king went back to a troubled sleep. The next morning the king’s guards ran to him and told him that all the weapons in the palace blazed with light during the night.

At that same time during the night, in the house of the royal priest named Garga, a beautiful son was born. But the priest was worried, because he also noticed the weapons blaze at the time of the birth. He consulted the court astrologer who charted the planets, then shook his head sadly and told Garga that the boy was destined to be a public nuisance, of the most despicable kind.

Sad and troubled, Garga approached the king. "Oh king," he said, "I cannot raise a son who is destined to wreak havoc in society. The scriptures say that one life may be sacrificed to save a hundred. Therefore king, please allow me to kill this child."

"I cannot allow the killing of an innocent baby," the king said firmly, "I believe that there is goodness in every living creature. Let the boy have a good education, and under your guidance Garga, I am sure he will grow up to be a decent citizen."

Garga was grateful, and he and his wife brought up the boy with kindness and understanding. The boy studied hard and when he was fourteen asked his parents if he could go to the best school in the country. His parents were pleased, and thought that by this time there must have been a mistake in the prophecy.

The boy was an excellent student, respectful of his teachers and a hard worker. His teachers were full of praise and held him as a fine example to the other students. This made some of his classmates jealous.

Some wanted to bring him down and they started to spread rumours.

One day, within earshot of the teachers, a group talked untruths about how the boy was bragging about how much he knew and that he no longer needed his teachers because he already knew all they could teach.

One teacher in particular was furious. "I will not be shown to be a fool by this young upstart," he thought, "This student will have to go."

Soon afterwards the teacher saw his wife talking with the young student. The teacher crept up to them without them noticing.

"Stand up when you see me!" he roared, "Show some respect!"

"Sir, I am sorry," stammered the lad as he rose to his feet, "I did not hear you approach Sir."

"I haven't taught you to become an arrogant brat. Respect and humility should be the outcome of knowledge," thundered the teacher, "I can't teach you any more. There's no place for you here. You can leave!"

No matter how hard the lad protested no one supported him. His fellow students were very pleased.

To stop any likelihood of return to the school the teacher added, "Bring me a necklace of one thousand fingers and I will consider teaching you again."

Confused and dismayed he returned home and tried to explain to his parents what had happened. His parents were in no mood to listen to a son who had just been expelled from the best school in the country. They would hear none of his story. As word spread around the town no one was prepared to give the lad a job either.

“This is so unfair! Why have I been treated like this? I haven’t done anything,” he thought time and time again. He was rejected at school, at home and in the town. There was no one to listen to him or be his friend. He had to leave.

On the road out of town a robber sprang from the bushes.

“Give me what you have got! Now! Or pay with your life!” roared the robber.

“Forget it!” cried the lad and landed the first punch, “You’ll get what I have got alright.”

The robber was kicked, and bitten, and pummelled with punches until he begged for mercy. The lad saw the fear in the robber’s eyes and felt strong again, but let him go.

The lad sat brooding in the forest. The hurt, disappointment and loneliness from the past had been transformed into anger and vows of vengeance: no one was going to do wrong by him again and people were going to pay for the wrongs he had suffered. Besides, his teacher had told him that this is what he should do. This was surely the right thing to do.

That evening several bullock carts carrying loads of goods were on the road. The lad jumped out on the path and threatened them with his knife. The merchants outnumbered him and chose to fight there and then.

Fuelled by blind rage the lad fought hard, and slaughtered them. Then, remembering the wicked teacher’s instructions, cut off their fingers and strung them around his neck

Angulimala (meaning ‘finger necklace’) the most feared robber and serial killer ever known in all of India was born.

Angulimala ranged the highways robbing and murdering without mercy, and each time adding a victim’s finger to his necklace. The people of Kosala were terrified and begged their king to stop the madness. The king sent his army to track him down.

When Angulimala saw the army approaching he was very pleased.

“More little ‘angulis’ for my necklace!” he cried, and hurled boulders into the path to lay ambush.

Sadly, this ended in another massacre and the king had no choice but to close the highway.

He had nine hundred and ninety-nine fingers on his necklace with only one more to add before he could return to his teacher. But with the road closed Angulimala started to despair. The fingers on the necklace began to rot and smell; no victims, no new fingers, nothing to do.

Then one day he saw a monk walking along the road.

“Stop right there!” demanded Angulimala as he ran after the monk.

Curiously, the monk appeared to be walking at a leisurely pace, but no matter how fast Angulimala ran, the monk remained one step ahead of him.

“Oh stop moving monk!” Angulimala cried, exhausted.

“Moving? I am not moving. I am at rest. It is you who is constantly moving because you lack peace of mind,” came the sure reply.

“Whatever you say! Nice try! Give me your little finger,” Angulimala demanded.

“By all means, if it brings you peace of mind,” the monk replied, unfazed and kindly.

Angulimala was moved. He looked at the monk and saw kindness and concern in his face. The monk radiated peace and understanding. This was the Buddha.

Angulimala was touched to the core of his being. It had been a long time since he had been greeted with loving kindness. Overcome with emotion he fell at the feet of the Buddha and cried. He cried for all the crazy cruelties he had performed. He cried for his loneliness and he cried because he felt worthless.

In the Buddha he saw a different way of being, and he wanted to be like him. Here was someone who was worth following. He begged the Buddha to accept him as his student. The Buddha agreed and Angulimala joined the community of monks. Householders and the monks and nuns themselves were amazed and horrified, and criticised the Buddha for accepting the ruthless murderer.

Angulimala spent many long hours alone in meditation and gradually gained confidence to care for the sick, the needy and the animals in the forest.

It was not easy. Angulimala’s reputation lived on. Wherever he went he was spotted and people would remember how he had cruelly taken their loved ones from them. They would hurl abuse, spit at him and throw rotten food and rocks. Angulimala felt that there was little hope for him, but he could not go back to his old ways.

The Buddha kindly encouraged him to persevere with acts of kindness and not be swayed by other people’s criticisms. He could see the goodness within Angulimala and knew that peace was possible.

One day Angulimala and the Buddha were out walking in the forest. They heard the pained cries of a woman giving birth.

“Oh h-help me! Somebody please help me,” she wailed, and begged the monks to help her, for she was very near death.

“Go to this poor woman and help her,” the Buddha advised.

“What good could a scoundrel like me do? She would not want me near her,” Angulimala replied with a breaking heart.

With the Buddha’s reassurance Angulimala attended to the woman and spoke soothingly, “I have acted out of ignorance and have caused harm. Now I am wiser. If I speak the truth you will be well.”

By the power of the truth of his words and the kindness of his deeds the child was safely delivered and the mother survived. With joy in their hearts Angulimala and the Buddha walked into the town. In the town Angulimala was recognised. “There’s that monster parading as a monk!” cried one person.

“He’s here to take us!” cried another. “Let’s get him!” cried another.

The townspeople became a frenzied mob that clubbed and beat Angulimala to within an inch of his life.

This time Angulimala did not fight back. He understood that the people were acting out of misunderstandings, fear and hatred as he had done as a younger man. Angulimala crawled from the town, bruised and bleeding with the taunts of the townspeople ringing in his ears. On the edge of the forest Angulimala died – in peace.

I was surprised that one of our teachers, primary trained and a mother, was not comfortable with using this story. For her, or rather according to her assessment of the needs of the children in her class, it was too violent. That was fine, because it was important for our program that teachers felt comfortable with their course content, and choice was encouraged. However, in the film that can be accessed via the B.C.V. website cited earlier in this chapter, she teaches a story about Kisa Gotami; a woman who comes to the Buddha mourning her dead baby. He asks her to find a home where no one has died, and of course she learns that this is impossible. Through active comprehension and sequencing exercises the film shows how she sensitively elicits from the children the realisation that death happens to everyone, and that it eased Kisa Gotami's pain to know this inevitability.

It had not occurred to me to tackle this story either. The teachers in the program who were not from Anglo-European cultures were much more comfortable dealing with loss, change, sickness and death than I was. As they explained, in Asian countries in particular, these things are visible in homes and in the streets, not hidden in institutions and isolated abodes. My discussion here might indicate a weight to these issues that was not evident in the run of weekly classes. Pat's comments, and her surprise and interest in what we were doing showed that this area was lacking in a school that had a very robust values curriculum. These are some of life's big issues that Lovat and Toomey had recommended be tackled. Stories such as these fulfil a valuable position between the hard realism of the news and the panacean commercial productions that children are exposed to. They provide a place for thought, imagination, possible escape and also a place to learn.

As we can already see, the Jatakas are a rich repository of stories about life and, numbering over five hundred, they fairly comprehensively address most predicaments. They always address the folly of ignorance, but they also express the perfection of values. The following story was given to the inner-city children in the final year of this study (we had no teacher for the western suburbs school that year). It

is often told as a folk story in Buddhist cultures. It was included in the '*Discovering Buddha*' curriculum as an example of what compassion can mean. While compassion is emphasised, wisdom is present.

The Banyan Deer - Nigrodhamiga- Jataka

A long, long time ago in ancient India, the Buddha on his way to becoming enlightened was born a deer. He was a big, beautiful deer with a golden brown velvety coat, large antlers that shone like silver and shiny hoofs that looked like patent leather.

He was a mighty creature and ruled a herd of five hundred deer in the banyan forest. He was known as Banyan Deer.

On the edge of the forest there was another herd of five hundred and their leader, just as magnificent as Banyan, went by the name of Branch Deer.

The deer forest was owned by the king of Benares (today the city is called Varanasi). He loved to eat meat. He ate it three times a day. He also loved to hunt and would go out hunting in his forests daily. He loved to hunt with a great throng of people and commanded the people of Benares to go hunting with him. This meant that they could not get on with their work and businesses and they wanted the king to stop. So they sowed a field of juicy grass and provided water for the deer to drink. Then the townspeople went into the forest and herded all the deer to the grassland and promptly told the king.

The king went to inspect the herds. He saw the two large beautiful deer with the golden velvety coats and decided that he would not eat them. Besides, the others looked quite delicious.

Each day the king would go to the grassland and shoot a deer. Sometimes his cook would go if the king was busy. Sometimes the kill was swift, but other times deer would be wounded and left to die slowly. This made Banyan very sad.

Banyan Deer called a meeting with Branch Deer and suggested a solution, "Our herds are being killed in great numbers. We deer cannot avoid this, but let us at least try to stop them from being unnecessarily wounded. How about we agree that each day a deer is presented for the kill? One day a deer from your herd, the next day a deer from mine. Let us have a place of execution with a chopping block. The deer can lay their head on the block and at least this way can avoid being wounded."

Branch agreed, and the king and the cook were happy with the arrangement.

One day it was the turn of a lovely doe nearly ready to give birth. She did not want her baby to have to die too. She went to Branch and begged that another take her turn until after she had had the fawn. Branch was not prepared to bend the rules.

Feeling desperate she begged Banyan to change her turn. Banyan felt great pity for her distress.

"Go your own way, it is not your turn now," he soothed.

What the doe did not know was that the next day the great Banyan himself went and laid his head on the block. When the cook arrived for the morning kill he was amazed at the sight, and ran to fetch the king. The king and all his followers were also amazed to see the great deer with his head on the block.

“What on earth are you doing here my friend?” asked the king, “I have granted you immunity.”

“Oh king,” Banyan stated simply, “there was a doe near to giving birth who begged not to have to come this day. I cannot let one go only to make another pay, so I have come instead.”

The king, the cook and the followers stood in stunned silence.

Eventually the king spoke, “Banyan golden king of the deer, even among people and royalty I have never witnessed so much kindness and compassion. I will spare your life and that of the doe.”

“Although two are spared what will the rest of the herds do, oh king?” replied Banyan.

“Their lives will be spared as well,” granted the king.

“And for all the other four-footed creatures, oh king?”

“Their lives too, I spare.”

“And what about the birds who fly in the air and the fishes and creatures who live in water, oh king?” asked Banyan.

“Their lives must also be spared,” decided the king, for he had realised that all the creatures did not want to suffer. They too wanted to live.

Banyan led his herd back to live in the forest. The king, the cook and his followers planted crops and fruit and vegetables on the grassland.

The doe gave birth to a lovely fawn who grew up safely staying close to the Banyan Deer.

Chapter 9

Living in the world with meaning and spirit

Alongside my initiatives there was much work being done by teachers in the program that challenged and changed my thinking. Minutes taken from a teacher's meeting in June 2007 (Appendix 8) capture how the action research was working organically, how teachers were participating as active research inquirers, and how the sharing of ideas and methods allowed us all to be challenged and changed. I took my own notes as I had been asked to give a detailed report to the Convenor and the Education Committee (Appendix 9). The day included an overview of the VELs, and a creative approach to classroom management where Serena showed how the students in her class were growing a beautiful bodhi tree by receiving leaves for the tree for their good behaviours. Teachers also worked in groups to review curriculum modules being developed. Their creative inputs and feedback from trialled lessons were later incorporated into the final document.

The first and most burning issue for the day was how best to teach morality. We had invited a nun, Aya, ordained in the Theravada tradition, to lead the morning meditation and to adopt a moderating role in our discussions. One teacher, a highly experienced educator and Sinhalese interpreter opened by stating categorically that students need to be taught rules, "Children have rules at school, and they need rules for life."

Aya, recommended that we teach from a positive vantage point, such as morality/precepts being taught as positives, such as the benefits of caring and non-harm, rather than as prohibitive rules. "Children need to learn rules, such as school rules, but need to explore the effects and results for themselves." As an ordained person her advice was greeted with special respect in our group because as a nun she was ordained with a special code of ethics and was accorded with more insight practice than anyone present would care to claim. She tactfully moved the group from potentially polarised positions. In the *'Discovering Buddha'* precepts was included in an introductory section 'What Buddhists Believe', alongside the many stories that illustrated values and morals.

Aya also reminded us that karma is the underpinning of Buddhist morality and should be an essential part of the Buddhist curriculum. This point was taken up in later discussion and we explored the type of language we could use to explain this foreign term. Cause and effect is readily understood in the physical world and could be used. Aya, suggested we use ‘choice’ and ‘consequence’. We continued to build on the work that had been accomplished and this meeting set the course for the remainder of the year. In this positive vein we emphasised good deeds.

Kindness and values

Gautama would have considered that his life’s work had amounted to nought if his teachings did not empower people to live with better awareness and more skilfully and kindly in the world. His meditations and discourses were for this purpose. As such, exploring the benefits of kindness through mindful attention is a long-standing practice in Buddhist traditions, and there are a number of secular movements led by Buddhist people that have promoted this: the Australian Peace in Action Contest (Venerable Thitadhammo 2007), the Deliberate Acts of Kindness Project through the Loving Kindness Peaceful Youth (LKPY) movement (www.lkpy). Independent from these our Good Deeds/ Counting Kindness Book began as an initiative from one of our teachers back in 2004. Children were given a book in which to record the good deeds that they had done. In the following year another teacher worked with her Year 3-4 class to record kind deeds, such as giving mum a drink.

We were constrained by running a weekly half-hour class, and any project that required activities out of school hours and that needed work to be brought back the next week was not easily remembered by students. Nevertheless, we wanted to reinforce in students the importance of applying their learning in Buddhist classes to their own lives. I circulated the case about happiness and the counting kindness intervention (Otake et al. 2006) to stimulate this commitment. Teachers wanted to continue to encourage children to apply their knowledge from Buddhist classes to perform good deeds. I also wanted to move the children from their inclination to equate good deeds with obedience to more empathetic positions through acts of kindness based on perceived needs in the other. Empathetic understanding provides agency and inclination to act beyond knowing what should be done. The Buddhist

understanding of the human condition, ordinarily motivated by desire for comfort and happiness, informed my reasoning that children would be less likely to embrace virtuous, ethical and kind activities, particularly in the long term, unless they perceived some personal rewards or benefits. This values-based field of learning cannot ordinarily provide rewards such as marks, prizes and other sensory rewards. Positive reinforcement can come as thanks and praise, but cannot be assumed. Confidence and commitment was more likely to come in the happiness that comes from positive mental attitudes.

We have seen that children in this study have developed focus and calm through meditation, and some insights into how their minds work. Better abilities to relax and focus their minds are beneficial in themselves, but through doing the exercises a more complex mode of thinking is also being developed. Present awareness and practising the mind observing itself develops metacognitive thinking. This mode of thinking employs assessment of past, present and future. The present is a product of preceding events, and future courses of action can only be determined through the present situation. It is useful for planning when to do homework - recalling that the task needs to be done, collecting resources, allocating time and actually completing the assignment, and handing it in on time.

This mode of thinking gains special significance for education that seeks to equip students to behave in the world as ethical and moral people. With dexterity to apprehend the present situation better opportunity to assess past and similar situations arises and ability to determine appropriate recourse amid immediate and competing contingencies, i.e. exercise practical wisdom. Present awareness was reinforced by the use of the Happiness Scale. This approach to metacognitive thinking also included the affective strategy of bringing love and kindness to the meditations. From the combined cognitive and affective approach we have seen indications of equanimity and empathy, such as Wayne's comment, "We all have the same mind."

The stories took a more imaginative route to explore specific values. Each story related the causes of each predicament, the action taken and the consequences. Children could predict what might happen next in the story, devise alternative action and foresee likely results. Again this was metacognitive thinking. In the 'The Deer

Who Thought He Knew It All’, the Happiness Scale was used for the students to exercise empathy. It was already a familiar tool, and provided familiar language and a physical framework for students to think and feel how the characters felt.

The meditations, stories and the Happiness Scale were also leading the students to examine qualities of happiness. They were discovering that hedonic happiness dependent upon positive affect was not a defining feature of their well-being but also involved eudaimonic happiness from qualities such as high levels of autonomy, ability to accomplish tasks, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Ryff 1989). We could expect these qualities to be outcomes from values education. Studies of the left pre-frontal cortex have shown that acts of kindness and compassion stimulate happiness and wellbeing (Urry et al. 2004), of the eudaimonic kind, and it was therefore reasonable to promote a research project with students to examine acts of kindness in the light of their perceived happiness. Over several years we developed the Good Deeds/ Counting Kindness Book and the Happiness Scale was eventually included in this exercise.

Good deeds/ Counting kindness

This time I made books using the Happiness Scale. Students were to record in the book an act of kindness each day and give themselves a before and after mark on the scale. Further to this, they had to guess the recipient’s happiness with a marking on a second scale. Anticipating the reaction of the other was a strategy to promote empathy. This second page of the daily recordings is shown below.

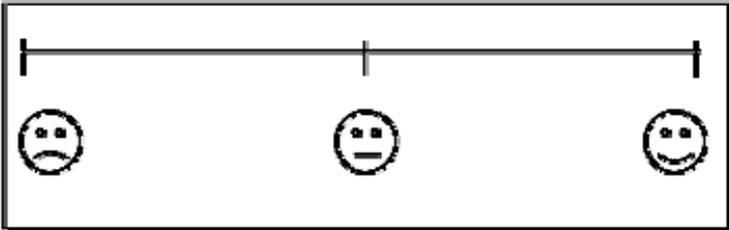
I	think	the	Happiness	of	the	other	(person/animal?)	was:
								
Comments/observations:.....								

Fig. 9: Good Deeds/ Counting Kindness Book, B.C.V.E.P., 2007, p.2

Ekman (2003) has shown that emotions in another are widely recognisable and that emotional recognition can also be strategically learned. Given that the brain circuitry that involves affect and cognition is intertwined (Ekman, P. et al. 2005) and feeling and emotional elements are ever present, it made sense to bring affective awareness into the learning.

I trialled this at the end of Term 4 2006 with Kevin's Year 3-4 class, and I talked to the students when I collected the books the following week. Kevin had promoted the project throughout the week and was positive, "It made us more aware of what we are doing." Analysis of twenty student booklets indicated that students needed to be schooled in the difference between being good and being kind. Recorded good deeds invariably ranged from winning at cricket to doing as told. The move to consider the other nevertheless showed shifts. To "I did my guitar practice," was added, "Mum was happy." Students who recorded their acts of kindness also made some astute observations of these affected others: "I took my dog for a walk," with the dog marked much happier on the scale than himself, "I comforted my friend," and "I was happier than her, but I think she felt better." Generally their books showed that they felt happier in themselves for counting their acts of kindness, and this too came out in the classroom discussion.

Student research project

"if you try to ... develop more kindness and compassion for others, ultimately you yourself will benefit more than you would otherwise. So sometimes I say that the wise selfish person should practice this way. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness"- the Dalai Lama (Piburn 1990, p. 58)

In 2007 the Year 5-6 classes in both schools undertook the Good Deeds/ Counting Kindness initiative. Helen was at the inner-city school and I was teaching for several weeks as a replacement teacher in the west. It was introduced as a research project. The student booklets had the above quote from the Dalai Lama printed on the front page and students were challenged to see if they thought it was true. We knew from the year before that the idea of what constitutes a good deed needed to be built up by the teacher, and introductory classes involved elicitation of possible kind deeds and

the more challenging task of anticipation of effects. We explained that we cannot know for sure what another is thinking or feeling, but we could guess. The classes discussed the types of indicators, such as smiles and body language. We acknowledged that there might be no visible rewards that led into their personal research into the effects of kindness, but despite this, the challenge was to look at effects upon ourselves.

Kindness to animals was most commonly recorded, with dogs especially providing positive feedback! There were acts of generosity, sharing money, lunches and computers. There were considerate actions, such as emptying the dishwasher without being asked. "I think Mum was happier because it was one less job for her to do," and "I sprayed water on the sides of the rabbit hutch because it was a hot day." It seemed not all kind deeds were appreciated either. After feeding the rabbit, "The rabbit bit me." "I helped set up for my brother's party," but "I don't think he noticed, he's only three. I think mum appreciated it."

The children's entries in both schools did reveal how generally helpful they are. These Year 5-6 students recorded making meals, doing the ironing, making their beds, helping younger brothers and sisters and looking after their pets, and that they liked to be good and wanted to be good. They also marked themselves happier on the scale for doing these things. This activity would be potentially more fruitful if it were conducted intensively with daily teacher support. Even the most well-intentioned children can forget to bring back books the following week. Nevertheless, the exercise provided thoughtful classroom discussions and positive outcomes for the students. This provides sound cause to consider how valuable it might be to allow students to notice and reflect upon the minutiae of kindness. Esme summed up the general feeling, "We do lots of kind things but we just don't notice them."

The dispositions of the children, wanting to be kind, helpful and do the right thing gave me cause to review my perspectives. This program necessarily taught values explicitly. Dharma teaches values explicitly to adults in the *paramitas*. Consensus was reached that they be taught positively. Children's responses to the counting kindness project demonstrated their dispositions towards acceptance of rules. This was consistent with Piaget's concrete operational levels, and these children showed

appreciation for explicit and directive teaching of values and morals, in Year 3-4 classes and younger especially. I could see a place for this style of teaching, and that one needed not necessarily exclude the other. We aspired to encourage children to move to higher order levels of moral reasoning, the altruistic post-conventional level if possible, but not through a predominantly reasoned and justice oriented route that Kohlberg described (Kohlberg 1971, 1987). Our approach to values education was aligned with Noddings (1993a; 2002), Gilligan (1989), and the company of theorists that include the importance of relationship, care, individual needs and contexts, in conventional and post-conventional stages of development.

I have been especially interested in the Year 5-6 students who were most likely to be at new and expanding stages of learning. Theories and standards for the stages of children's intellectual or moral development where meditation and the forms of metacognitive thinking used with children in this study are yet to emerge. Therefore the evaluations, comments and interviews that I have sought from students throughout the study have provided the greatest insights into their thoughts, reasoning, questions and personal assessments, and have given authenticity to the observations of students by me and their teachers. Students have expressed gratitude, wonder and inquiry beyond the classroom and have given special affirmation that our methods and materials were educative.

Craig came back

The picture below was taken at the western suburbs school in 2006. It was part of a feature article on innovative practices in values education in Melbourne's Sunday Age. It is the Year 5-6 class that these students had been attending for two years. I am leading the meditation. The picture tells many stories. Pictured are students from Vietnamese, Chinese, Mongolian and Anglo backgrounds and unseen are a Lao and an Indonesian student. Buddhist classes were a common point for shared identity. Moreover they were a source of personal value and cultural esteem, as we can see from Tran sitting centre with correct posture. He was also keen to test and apply what he had learnt. These classes concluded with a dedication '*May I be well, may I be happy. May all others be well, may they be happy*' and Tran confided to me one day, "I said this to myself when my mum was angry. It did work!" This was the closest

these particular classes came to rituals, and students appeared to enjoy the motivations and dedications in the class routine. For Tran he saw their purpose in his life beyond Buddhist class.

In the picture Stewart is sitting straight up the back. At interview at the end of that year he told me, “I like meditation most of the time - relaxing. I don’t go to temple but we have a shrine in our house. Classes are great - stories, meditation, relax.” Jean pictured in part front right told me how meditation had helped her become more aware of her actions, “It makes you more concentrated, know what you are doing. It does help. If you stole something you’d be aware - a bit guilty - then you’d want to fix it.” She also appreciated the value of kindness, “And respect animals. Even though ants and flies are pests, you still have to respect them. I just love animals. I don’t like seeing them get hurt. Buddhist classes have strengthened this.”

A very bright boy, Aiden was dozing outside of the frame. He was always enthusiastic to come to class but invariably on the Thursday afternoon was scatty or very lethargic. I interviewed him the following year where he contextualised his torpor . His parents both worked at a restaurant in the far south of the city. They would leave home at 6.00 am and return home at 9.00 pm. when the family had their meal and would watch television together. Aiden would seldom be in bed before 11.30 p.m. for this was the only family time. He especially appreciated relaxation time.

Then there was Craig. He’s the student in the picture, Figure 10, with the wondering, wandering look. He left the class the next term. The following year he came back. He



told me that he had kept on thinking about things he learned in our classes and the meditations and stories helped him to make sense of the world.

Although students at this school experienced up to six different teachers their feedback each year remained overall extremely positive. Students noticed a variety of teaching styles,

Fig10: Photo by Craig Sillitoe, Sunday Age 7/9/06

and responded best to the teacher who spent quite a lot of time talking with them.

Kindness and attention by teachers appeared to be significant factors in the success of the program. However, these students reported that they had learned things of value even when the teachers changed and had less creative and more didactic styles. The meditations, stories and activities i.e. the curriculum, was carrying their interest.

The program was meeting the expectations of the participating schools. Principals at both the sites in the study promptly reconfigured timetables to allow us to recommence classes.

In the west the program was featured in the school's marketing. At these schools the Principals and Assistant Principals and other staff would invariably sit in on classes and be impressed with the new approaches that they could see enhanced their existing values programs. As a volunteer organisation we could never meet the demand for classes by school administrators and students themselves. The children's descriptions of their experiences have shown capacities for mindful awareness, empathy, metaphoric and metacognitive thinking that has surprised and impressed the teachers observing and participating in the study. I was keen to learn how parents perceived the program.

A parent's perspective

Caroline was one of only six parents who agreed to offer feedback from the inner-city, and none of the parents from the west who were invited to participate in the study accepted. Lack of availability for engagement in my research could be attributed to parents' very busy lives (and another form to sign and another thing to do) or perhaps the minor and marginal place that Religious Instruction classes currently hold in the education system.

She and her two daughters and their pooch lived in a neighbouring suburb and would cycle together to and from school. Caroline would go on to work nearby. Her elder daughter Jenna, in Year 6 in 2007, had been attending Buddhist classes since they

began at the school in her final Term in Year 3, 2004. Her mother knew that she loved them.

Caroline had arranged to work 0.7 EFT to have a bit more time for her children, and I was invited to her home to record an interview. In a wide-ranging and candid conversation Caroline shared her thoughts on the interface between spirituality and education, and most importantly, how these related to Jenna.

‘A breath of fresh air’ – a parent’s story

“In Grade 1 Jenna wanted to do the generic RE. Perhaps she had thought that she was missing out because the other kids were doing it. It turned out disappointing. They used the old Sunday School model that didn’t help the kids explore spirituality and offer a broader context for comparative religion.”

Jenna was allowed the process of discovery and her rejection.

In Year 3 when Buddhist classes were initially offered to students not engaged in any other program Jenna asked to enrol.

“She always had questions. She had asked me about reincarnation and I told her that it was something she would have to explore for herself and make up her own mind. Jenna doesn’t need to say ‘I’m Buddhist.’ Spirituality isn’t dependent on religions, it is a very personal thing. Religion is a choice people make.”

Her mother described Jenna as ‘driven.’ Always an independent child, at 14 months she wouldn’t let her mother put on her socks, although it could take a half an hour to do it. “When she could do it, she wouldn’t wear socks, she needed a new challenge. She has always tried to push the boundaries. For Jenna, the discovery of the calm clear water has helped her to relaunch herself into the world.”

Jenna had clearly been encouraged to become confident in her ability to make up her own mind. “She has some big questions – she needs to learn about herself and what others believe. Meditation immediately appealed. It drew her in. I believe that now she is thinking more about other questions.”

While Caroline was clearly impressed by the Buddhist classes, she nevertheless held an uneasy tension between the place of ‘religion’ in state education and sought to explain her perceived existing gaps and needs.

“I personally don’t think religion is something to be taught in school. If it’s there I am a strong supporter of having choices.” Here the Buddhist program offered a fresh alternative.

“What I would like to see at school is some comparative religion to give children some sort of compass where they can understand more deeply why we have this history and beliefs. It is good life knowledge and people will be less ignorant of others’ beliefs. We need to educate children to include a broader aim and talk about some of the big questions.

Comparative religion could go into history. The curriculum is crowded but students need a chance to talk about the big questions, and I am not sure if this is happening currently. When Jenna was in kindergarten she asked, 'Why does that girl's mum wear that thing on her head?' Mutual respect needs to be taught."

That said, she clearly appreciated an inclusive, non-proselytising approach to spiritual education.

"I felt with Buddhism it wasn't pushing to become a Buddhist. Pushing is not education, more indoctrination. In the Buddhist program children are encouraged to explore, such as why some may, or may not, eat meat. Explore what makes us happy, children need this. The focus is on children, what they are discovering about themselves rather than teach them this is what you have to do to be a Buddhist."

Caroline was happily surprised by a visit to her daughter's class.

"For me the Buddhist classes were a breath of fresh air. Getting kids to discover things for themselves, like, what makes you happy? What about chocolate? What happens when you have too much chocolate? Very insightful. For me these are the things that will help them through the difficult teenage years. To me they are life skills."

The classes fitted with her personal philosophy of education and approach to spirituality. But were there any indications that the Buddhist classes had helped her daughter's personal life?

"I've seen her use it when she plays competitive tennis. Like most strong-willed children she can easily get out of control. She can get angry with herself very fast, start whacking balls and throw the match. I suggested to her to try thinking about how she could calm herself down. 'Like when we meditate,' Jenna recalled. I have watched her over the past year calm herself, breathe, slow down, regroup. Because she has the experience, she knows what it feels like.

"It's interesting seeing her with her friends. Jenna is very much gung-ho, enthused, motivated and can't stop herself, her friends pull her back. So being able to do that for herself is such a great skill."

We talked about how Jenna is of an age when she is starting to use public transport independently. She and her mother are able to talk about possible scenarios before catching the tram. Caroline explained that knowing that Jenna has experience of meditation gives her confidence to allow her daughter to go out independently.

"She has some resources to deal calmly with situations, just knowing that she has a 'secret weapon'. Using breathing meditation, you can go anywhere. Meditation is crucial, and the discussions. Doing the Happiness Scale is fantastic, taking a moment to connect with self and how you feel inside. To choose to look at what you have got and appreciate what you have got.

"The stories are good. That all people get sick and so on is important to know. Parents often try to protect children but children need to learn that people don't lead perfect lives. That's unrealistic. For me it is about empowering my children to make choices. Children are often disempowered in the society. Jenna had issue with her music teacher, and I asked her to see if it was entirely the teacher's fault, did her actions such as talking contribute? 'Yes.' You can change what you say and how you act, and if you stay calm you can change situations. How empowering is that!"

Caroline clearly perceived benefits of meditation practice by her daughter. She linked these to enhanced agency and self-empowerment for Jenna, in sport, moving independently in society, and her ability to take responsibility in conflicts, because of the awareness of feelings and emotional regulation that meditation sessions were schooling. This time a parent observed indications of resiliency from her daughter's engagement in the program.

Caroline was also sensitive to her daughter's need to explore big questions, about life and life choices, and considered that this program filled a gap in the mainstream curriculum. Her comments also broached the under-explored place of spirituality in state government education. Our approach to spirituality was that taken from the Buddha's path; the development of wisdom and compassion was spiritual development.

This of course is just one parent's appraisal. From an interview with the school's Assistant Principal I understand that Caroline was representative of the inner-city school's pervading demographic, but I cannot determine the extent to which her views would be shared by other parents of children who participate in the program. Longer term research and further inclusion of parental perceptions would develop a more substantive picture. For me, one parent's perception that the program had contributed so constructively to her daughter's development was nevertheless affirming of the program's intentions and implementation.

Two wings of awakened mind

Each year the Buddha mind, meaning awakened mind, informed the lessons. In earlier stages students examined images and learnt of their symbolic meanings. We shook bottles of muddy water symbolic of mind's pure nature. 'A Lesson From a Monkey' story that also emphasised their wonderful potential was taught in 2007 to Year 5-6 students at both schools along with a Buddha-bird mobile. I talked with Helen about making a bird to teach the metaphor of free and awakened mind that flies with the two wings of compassion and wisdom practice. Helen also knew this metaphor and her skills as a creative arts teacher gave my idea shape. Students drew and cut their birds from coloured cardboard and hung them by plastic thread. Each section of the bird was labelled; the body was 'Awakened Mind' and on one wing they wrote

‘Compassion’ and the other ‘Wisdom’. Helen was taking both classes at this stage and she spent time talking with the students, and using language exercises to explore the meanings. The exercise excited the children’s imaginations. Wisdom was presented as understanding the way things are. “I didn’t know you could think of wisdom as understanding all things, if you understand your friend you can do things that are right for her,” realised a usually quiet Lao student from the western suburbs class. She had linked wisdom with kindness.

We placed great effort on emphasising the positive, but had not at that time broached the causes of unsatisfactory and unhappy existences; why they might keep on occurring, why bad things happen to good people. These types of ‘big’ questions that we know children ponder can be the most difficult and delicate to bring to classrooms. We had mentioned cause-effect and interdependent relationship, Serena was developing modules on change and impermanence with her students, and the Jatakas were positing rebirth - tenets I presented in the early chapters of this thesis.

Each year I surveyed or interviewed exiting Year 5-6 students. I wanted to know what they considered they had learned and what they valued from their learning, and what they would like to know more about. The curriculum was developed from student interests as well as teacher interests. From 2005 a student asked, “How people find out who is a reincarnation?” Each year from the schools in this study and other schools in the program there were always students who wanted to know more about karma and rebirth. Members of the BEVSP were reluctant to teach these concepts. Other topics like friendship seemed more pertinent, time was short, and these distinctive Dharma concepts required reflection to build confidence in their possible veracity. We had rejected learning activities that required adherence to beliefs, and we wanted to build a program based on inclusion rather than difference.

A comment by Hue, from a Vietnamese Buddhist family in the west, struck a chord with me, “All your friends might be Christian and you are the only Buddhist. You have to respect their way of life.” Hue in Year 6 had learned the assimilation practices that I, members of the education program and members of the wider Buddhist community had adopted. I for one have attended several inter-faith forums and have remained silent as other speakers have confidently assumed that we are all essentially

of the one faith. My exercise of practical wisdom opted for maintaining harmonious relationships with the group rather than pursuing a more nuanced discourse. Hue practised the ethics of respect and tolerance, did not draw attention to difference, and could not assume that her peers would know about her family's spirituality. Given the silence from Buddhist people in public discourse, Hue's views seem to be representative of Buddhists in our society. Not subscribing to a teleological paradigm is something that Buddhist people do not readily want to draw attention to, when their over-riding aspirations are to promote wisdom, compassion and peace in themselves and society. The Buddhist Education in Victorian School Program had developed with inclusiveness and relevance to children in mind, but teachers were also being requested to teach about some distinctive Dharma perspectives that continued to challenge their own wisdom.

Towards the end of that school year, when Year 5-6 students at both schools were tired and scatty I brought in pictures of the Wheel of Life, a Buddhist explanation of how the world works, to see if this would stimulate their imaginations and challenge them intellectually. They were fascinated and had many, many questions. They wanted to take the pictures home. They wanted to learn more.

The Wheel of Life

Mid 2007 I interviewed a class of Buddhist students all from Sri Lankan families in Melbourne's north. This homogenous group provided me with an opportunity to gauge what they had learned about karma and rebirth and if they thought it was important, without exposing their differences before other students in plural classes. They knew about karma but had not been taught formally; it was embedded in their upbringing, in a way similar to the way in which gravity is accepted in our culture. For teachers from Buddhist cultures in our program too, it was a natural given. A student said matter-of-factly, "What goes around comes around," and another, again aware of her place of difference said "It helps for the future ... and can be common to Catholics," For another it was an accepted norm, couched in justice, "Marks like an AIMS test," referring to the state's normative testing. Rebirth gave more varied responses that nevertheless showed pondering of the possibilities: "When you die it is like another life," and, "I sometimes think that when you die you don't do anything."

“My little sister talks about her heart attack when she died.”

This was an interesting comment, but not astounding or remarkable to these children. We talked about thoughts and feelings that we had when we were little, but had forgotten later on. I also thought of Coles deep listening to children to hear their expressions of their spirituality (Coles 1990). I recalled documented cases of various people’s remembered previous lives (Fisher 1984) and saw a certain beauty in families and cultures that allow children’s perceptions to be heard and respected. As to whether other students would benefit from learning about these things these students concluded that it could be helpful, although some could be frightened, but overall, “Yes,” “It could amaze them.” Although these are sensitive topics here was a new and other way to consider intentions and results of actions alongside linear theistic routes, and social responsibility orientations.

From advice given by Sangha involved in the program, together with the comments I had gleaned from participating students I gained sufficient confidence to initiate lessons about karma and interdependence. The challenge was to not revert to dogmatic teaching, but maintain students’ agency as research inquirers that we had cultivated particularly during the meditations and Good Deeds/ Counting Kindness sections of the program.

Gautama taught karma, rebirth and dependent arising to lay people and the way that it has been represented ever since was diagrammatically in the Wheel of Life. Details of these largely intellectual metaphysical and psychological relationships reside in the canon within the *Abhidharma*. In traditional Buddhist cultures the scrutiny of scholarship and commitment to seek deep understanding of these topics was the preserve of dedicated monks and nuns. However, in examination of the impact of this new and first generation of Buddhist people as identifiable populations in western societies (of which this study is a part) some of the earliest teachers, notably Tibetans Lama Yeshe and Chogyam Trungpa (1975) recognised aptitude within western students to pursue this kind of intellectual scholarship alongside their reflective practices. Subsequently, when I presented my initiative to teachers and the Education Committee, it stimulated people to embark on further scholarship themselves. Some teachers’ traditions had not emphasised these teachings, none of us claimed to have deeply realised understanding of these tenets and we all had to check our

understanding through further study and contemplation as we worked to discern the suitability and applicability for students.

This topic, more than any other in this study, required that teachers in the program embarked upon hermeneutic engagement with texts, traditions, intentions of the Dharma and meaning-making. Our knowledge had been acquired orally and through rational thought, but at best individuals would have had only glimpses of direct realisation beyond logical thought that was the higher form of knowing that I broached in Chapter 4. As such, our understanding of karma and dependent origination was not directly realised but accepted with growing confidence through reflection and mindful attention. As I explained in Chapter 2, this confidence that uses the ‘truth’ or ‘law’ of karma as a lodestar for the moral compass has a heuristic function rather than being an article of faith. To communicate this possibility to students in a culture where this perspective is largely unexamined was an educational challenge for our teachers.

The end of year classes were the ideal times to trial a module. I discussed the possibility with the Committee members and devised a module with Helen’s thoughtful and creative input. In the last weeks of Term 4, students at both sites in the study and a central Victorian primary school were shown pictures of the wheel and invited to make comments. The module was presented as possibilities to consider and students were told that some people might take it literally, but mostly it described different attitudes, experiences and states of mind. The ‘scary guy’ holding the wheel is symbolic, a Lord of Impermanence. They were then given A3 sized pictures of the Wheel of Life, seen below in Figure 11. Attachment, aversion and ignorance at the hub that propelled the wheel were the rooster, snake and pig respectively. Students discussed behaviours of these animals and delighted in providing corresponding actions. They drew the animals in the centre. These became cause to consider the second circle and actions that might precipitate moving on the light path or the dark path. Time allowed for classes at both schools to complete only the first two inner circles and to partially complete the six symbolic places in the third circle where they pasted in pictures representative of the different places.

The Wheel of Life was an item of high interest recorded in the 2007 end-of year evaluations. The classroom teacher at the western suburbs school, who had participated fully in the meditations and activities volunteered an evaluation that echoed students' responses in both schools:

- 1) What aspects of Buddhist classes have you enjoyed?

The structure of the sessions – I'm amazed that so much is packed in, in such a short time. Short activities also help to engage the students. The good deed tree

- 2) Interesting things I have learnt are...

Wheel of life – students all seem to have enjoyed this
Personally, I enjoyed all these sessions! Thank you ☺

- 3) Ways that Buddhist classes help me are

Nice to be reminded about peace and kindness – good for students to learn some tools (meditation) reinforced with our school agreements too!

Michelle – classroom teacher 6/12/07

The following year the unavailability of volunteer teachers meant that we were unable to provide a teacher for the Year 5-6 class in the west and classes didn't start until mid-year in the inner-city. My co-ordination role therefore focused on teacher training and curriculum development. As sections developed (Introduction to Buddhism, Life of Buddha, The Jataka Tales and the Paramitas, Change and Impermanence, and Meditation) a gap became clear. We were yet to include karma and interdependence from the Buddhist perspective. I refined and extended the initial module with keen scrutiny and input from B.C.V. membership and teachers.

I favoured the explanations of dependent arising and the Wheel of Life from the respected internet site www.buddhanet.net/ because the Dharma is presented in styles and language that is easily understood by contemporary audiences. The site itself demonstrates the Buddhist hermeneutic tradition where texts can be revised, to preserve meaning and communicate to the audiences at hand; a process distinct from popularising or catering for contemporary tastes. Initial translations on this topic, from Pali, Sanskrit and Tibetan, have all come with florid language that may have communicated to animistic cultures or had been translated by people who saw 'hell-fire and damnation' in the imagery but these no longer accurately reflected the intention in today's culture. Teachers in this program took special care, through

hermeneutic discussions, to arrive at language that reflected the intentions and not frighten or confuse children. ‘Worlds’ or ‘Realms’ became ‘Six Symbolic Places’, ‘God Realms’ became the ‘Land of Luxury’, ‘Burning Hells’ and Freezing *naraks* (Skt.) became places of ‘Relentless Heat and Cold’, *pretas* (Skt.) or Hungry Ghosts became places of ‘Relentless Hunger’. *Yama*, the ‘Lord of Death’ became the ‘Lord of Impermanence’ (after the Buddha.net interpretation).

In 2008 I revised and extended the module for the ‘*Discovering Buddha*’ curriculum.

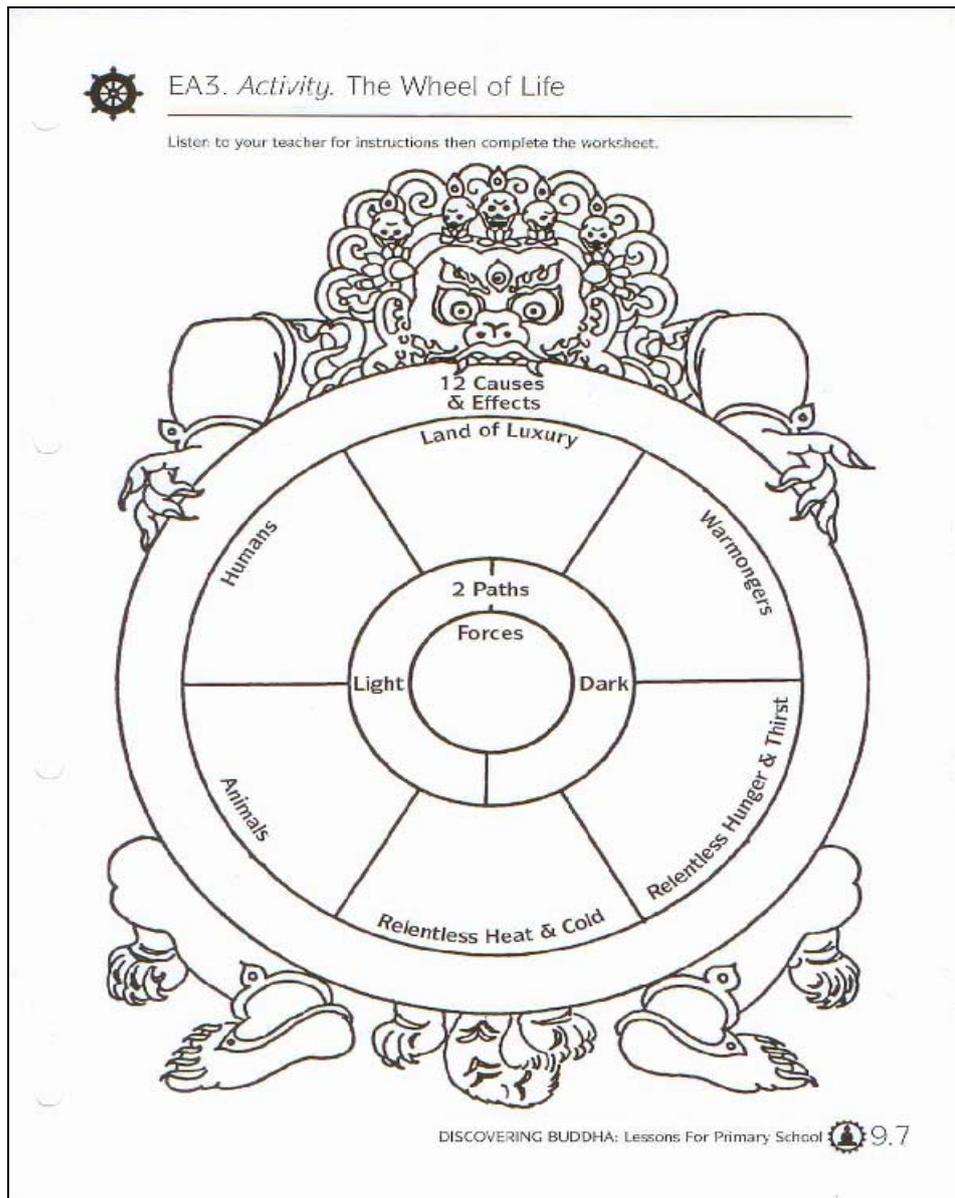


Fig. 11 Wheel of Life Activity Sheet

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES FOR UPPER PRIMARY:

EA2: The Wheel of Life: Cycles of Change

Lesson Plan		Years	Lessons
		5-6	1-2
1. Theme:	The Wheel of Life		
2. Topic:	Introduction to The Wheel of Life		
3. Values:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge/Wisdom • Loving-kindness/Compassion 		
4. Aims:	Students will develop an understanding of how their mental attitudes shape their thoughts, words and deeds.		
5. Outcomes:	<p>Students will understand that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Wheel of Life contains all of Buddha's teachings (and is therefore worthy of respect). • The Wheel of Life is an explanation of the causes of suffering. • The Wheel of Life shows how, with practice and mindfulness, this suffering can be avoided. • Living mindfully can lead to full and lasting happiness. 		
6. Preparation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •  Provide an enlarged, colour version of the Wheel of Life as a focal point for class discussion (can be accessed from: http://www.buddhanet.net/wheel2.htm) • If you provide multiple copies for students to examine, collect them at the end of the lesson. These graphics could be easily misunderstood without proper explanation. 		
7. Activity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •  Present pictures of the Wheel of Life and allow the children time to look at the images. • Ask students what they see. Lead the discussion by referring to the explanation provided at the beginning of this module. 		

Fig. 12 Wheel of Life Introduction Lesson Plan

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES FOR UPPER PRIMARY:

EA7. The Wheel of Life: Six Symbolic Places

Lesson Plan	   	Years	Lessons
		5-6	1-6

1. Theme: The Wheel of Life
2. Topic: The Six Symbolic Places
3. Values:
 - Change/Impermanence
 - Loving-kindness/Compassion
 - Knowledge/Wisdom

Teacher's Note

These lessons are optional. You may select parts of this module and use only the hub of the wheel, the Light Path and the Dark Path and the play. If your students are very interested you may choose to explore the different places. This lesson plan is a basis for other lessons on the different places.

4. **Aims:**
 - To encourage children to appreciate how life circumstances change
 - To explore the causes of changed circumstances
 - To consider how favourable circumstances might be achieved
5. **Outcomes:**
 - Students will identify the different 'Places' (sometimes called worlds) from their own observations
 - Students will predict the types of actions that might lead to different places or experiences.
6. **Preparation:**
 - Copies of Wheel of Life and worksheet EA3. *Activity. The Wheel of Life p9.7* for all students
 - White/black board and markers/chalk
 - Cut out pictures of famous people (pop stars, politicians, cartoon characters etc) for a collage
 - Scissors, glue
7. **Lesson 1**

Activity:

 -  Explain that there are many ways to interpret this picture, and it is very hard to know for sure which way is correct.
 - Some people believe these places to be real, some people think the places are where their thoughts, words and actions might lead them. Some other people view the different places exist as temporary states of mind. It makes us think about where our thoughts and actions could possibly lead us.
 - Start with the *Warmongers* in the top right section.
 -  Why are they always fighting? What satisfaction do they get from fighting? Can this satisfaction last? Why not?

Fig.13 Wheel of Life Six Symbolic Places Lesson Plan - 1

- Ask students if they can think of any person they know who might be living like this? eg. bullies, gangsters, people who are waging war
- Ask students to imagine the sorts of extreme Rooster, Snake or Pig-like activities that could lead to these experiences.
- In the space on the wheel, draw this world, or stick on a picture.

8. Lessons 2-6: In the following lessons consider the other 'places' in the same way.

Below are some discussion questions to get started:

Animals:

-  Do most animals in the world live in family homes? Can your pet go for a walk and get dinner whenever they feel like it? The pet is dependent on the family's kindness. Discuss what life might really be like for other animals eg. kangaroos in drought or koalas in bushfires
- Ask students if they can think of any person they know who might be living in this type of 'place' eg. slaves, child labourers, lazy people who do not take advantage of education
- Ask students to imagine the sorts of extreme Rooster, Snake or Pig-like activities that could lead to these experiences.
- In the space on the wheel, draw this place, or stick on a picture.

Relentless Heat and Cold:

-  Have you ever experienced being terribly hot, or cold? eg. badly sunburned, playing winter sport, bad weather when camping, sick with a fever. Notice how the time seems to be much longer. You might have been feverish overnight, but the night seemed very, very long.
- Ask students to imagine the sorts of extreme Rooster, Snake or Pig-like activities that could lead to these experiences.

Relentless Hunger and Thirst:

-  Have you ever felt that the food and drink that you have is not satisfying? Can we think of people who live in this way? eg. people starving from famine, beggars, homeless people who watch other people having lovely food and drink but cannot have any themselves
- Ask students to imagine the sorts of extreme Rooster, Snake or Pig-like activities that could lead to these experiences.

Land of Luxury:

-  Living in the world of sense delights, they are beautiful and have everything. They do not think that their lives will change. Can we think of people who live like them? eg. famous people like actors or sports people
- Ask students to imagine the sorts of extreme Rooster, Snake or Pig-like activities that could lead to these experiences.

Humans:

-  What makes humans so special? How can we live differently to the other realms?
- What kinds of thoughts, words and actions might lead to having such wonderful opportunities?
- What is so wonderful about being you?

9.12  DISCOVERING BUDDHA: Lessons For Primary School

Fig. 14 Wheel of Life Six Symbolic Places Lesson Plan - 2

Teachers were instructed to collect activity sheets so as to allay the chances of them being found and interpreted by people, especially children, without our careful contextualisation. The introduction to the module is shown above in Figure 11.

The sample lesson in Figures 13 and 1 above shows how the curriculum was developed to guide teachers. They had freedom to engage in a learning journey with their students and choose lessons according to their students' abilities and interests. The lesson below also shows how the imagery was used to invite children to imaginatively engage with the material, link the places back to their prior learning about the intentions that drive the wheel and facilitate them to compassionately and empathetically consider these varied and changeable circumstances, and act wisely.

For their final classes the Year 5-6 students in the inner-city performed the play below that I wrote. It is a synopsis of the Buddhist path: the Four Noble Truths (unsatisfactoriness, its causes, liberation from the causes, and the moral and compassionate path). Children acted out an overview of all that they had learned. It shows the Twelve Links of Dependent Arising that explains the reasoning that underpins karma; intentions that propel cause-effect relationships and marked by impermanence.

The Wheel of Life: a play for many people

Cast: Rooster, snake, pig, Buddha, and students numbered off to be animals, warmongers, those living in luxury, burning and freezing sufferers, humans - or the group can recite together.

The group forms a circle with the rooster, snake and pig in the middle.

Rooster: (*strutting*) "Gim mee, gim me, gim mee! More! More! More!"

Snake: (*slithering*) No! No! No! Get lost!

Pig: (*snuffling*) Dunno. Don't care! Dunno. Don't care!

Group moves around in a circle while the rooster, snake and pig are chanting their lines.

Group: Around we go, around we go, around we go, around we go....

Buddha: (*from outside the circle*): But wait, we have a choice! You can choose the light path or the dark path.

Group: What's the light path?

Buddha: It's the way out. Avoiding harm to any living creature, telling the truth, not taking what isn't given to you, being a kind and loyal friend and not clouding your mind with drink and drugs protects you from harm. That is the Light Path.

Group (*moving in a circle, the creatures in the middle are hunched up and silent*): Around we go, around we go, not giving harm, telling the truth, being a good friend, not clouding our minds with drink and drugs keeps us on the happy path. Around we go, around we go.

Group stops.

Group: What is the dark path?

Buddha: The Dark Path is when we let the rooster rule what we think and say and do.

Rooster: Gimmee, gimmee, gimmee! More! More! More!

Buddha: The Dark Path is when we let the snake rule what we think and say and do.

Snake: No! No! No! Get lost!

Buddha: The Dark Path is when we let the pig rule what we think and say and do.

Pig: Dunno. Don't care! Dunno. Don't care!

Group: (*Moving around in a circle. This time the rooster, snake and pig are leaping about in the centre*): Around we go. Around we go.

Group stops.

Group: Where does this lead us Buddha?

Buddha: So many places, and in each you will find ageing and death. But none of them last. Then there will be another birth, in another place, with much the same old story.

Group: What sorts of places Buddha?

Buddha: Animals

Two students act like dogs wanting their dinner or to go for a walk.

Rooster, snake and pig say their lines.

Buddha: Very, very hot and terribly, terribly cold places.

One student acts like s/he is dying of thirst. Another student is freezing cold and can barely move but for shivering.

Rooster, snake and pig say their lines.

Buddha: Poor creatures with relentless hunger and thirst.

One student is a beggar looking enviously at the others.

Rooster, snake and pig say their lines.

Buddha: Some have everything and they think it will last forever. Sadly, it won't.

Student mimes living in the lap of luxury (eg. sunglasses, cameras, admires self in a mirror)

Rooster, snake and pig say their lines.

Buddha: Warmongers want what someone else has got. They think they have to fight to get what they want and they think they have to fight to keep what they have got.

Two students mime fighting over an article (of clothing).

Rooster, snake and pig say their lines.

Group: Where does that leave us Buddha?

Buddha: We Humans are the most fortunate of all, because we can make a choice between the Dark Path....

Rooster, snake and pig say their lines.

Buddha: and the Light Path....

Group (*moving in a circle, the creatures in the middle are hunched up and silent*): Around we go, around we go, giving kindness, not giving harm, telling the truth, only accepting what is given, being a good friend, keeping a clear mind clear keeps us on the happy path. Around we go, around we go.

Group stops.

Buddha: This is the happy path.

Group: But Buddha, why do you say that his leads on to other lives?

Buddha: I know, not everyone will agree with me, but I see it like this. If you have a rooster mind, a snake mind and a pig mind you are like a blind man who cannot see what results from his thoughts and words and deeds. But the habits of greed, hatred and ignorance do have their results. I call it a monkey mind that springs from one thing to another, and when one body wears out, it looks for another.

Group: Around we go, around we go.

Buddha: Or you can look at it this way. You have body and mind, like two people in a boat. You have five senses and thinking. With them, if you don't pay attention to what you do, you will want things very badly, want things more and more, you will want to hold onto everything you have, but what happens when you pick fruit and leave it on the dish for weeks?

Group: The fruit goes bad, we cannot keep it.... But we would still like to have another piece....

Buddha: And then what might happen?

Group: We start again. Around we go, around we go. A new fruit, but if we try to keep it, the fruit goes bad. A new birth, and ageing, and death.....We all are in the same boat.

Buddha: This is why I say to you. Be smart, think about what you do and the effects they have on others. Remember that what you do effects you too. Be kind and do no harm. This is what I know. It is the Happy Path.

Group (*moving in a circle, the creatures in the middle are hunched up and silent*): Away we go, away we go, not giving harm, telling the truth, being a good friend, accepting things freely given, keeping a clear mind keeps us on the happy path. Away we go, away we go!

'Discovering Buddha: Lessons for Primary School, 2008, pp.9.13-9.16

Parting comments

After the play there was a class party to celebrate the end of year. Aside from the throng I took the opportunity to ask Pat the classroom teacher for any final observations or benefits she could see from children attending Buddhist classes. She affirmed what we had seen so often. “Children keep coming back each year. They select, and they have other attractive things to do.” Attendance in religious instruction classes would be one of the few areas of primary education where children have a degree of autonomy to make curriculum choices, and most parents would be hard pressed to insist that their Year 5-6 students attend.

Pat also told me that Cory the previous year had a difficult time with his peers. His meditation journey that was discussed in Chapter 7 supports her assessment that the meditation definitely helped him negotiate those. In 2008 she also found him taking time out to meditate in the sun at the school camp. I had just observed Cory being absolutely chuffed to be cast as the Buddha in the play. It seemed that the classes had contributed to his optimism and resilience.

In the school that day Helen and I noticed a display board in the foyer. A poem by Bess, ‘A Hope for the Future’ held place of honour, Figure 14 below. Her real name has been erased from the artefact. It too shows awareness and optimism. Bess was also part of the four-year cohort who had accumulated approximately sixty hours of Buddhist class time. Her school attendance was regular and her post-meditation self-report records on her Happiness scales showed positive shifts in her subjective happiness 100% of the time. She had participated in all of the stories and activities described in this thesis. Therefore I think it is fair to claim that the classes had contributed in some part to the awareness, personal agency, consideration of change and interdependence and optimism that is shown in her poem below.

Bess and Cory were two of the eight exiting students that had been in the classes for four years and participated in all the meditations, stories and activities discussed in this thesis. Amid the party I spoke to this group. All of these children said they continued to meditate, some “Once a week, but could do more.” Stella and Shyla said

that they meditate two or three times a week, Tara had started meditation classes at school but found teaching considerably more difficult and Cale, “Meditates sometimes, but it’s good to know its there.”

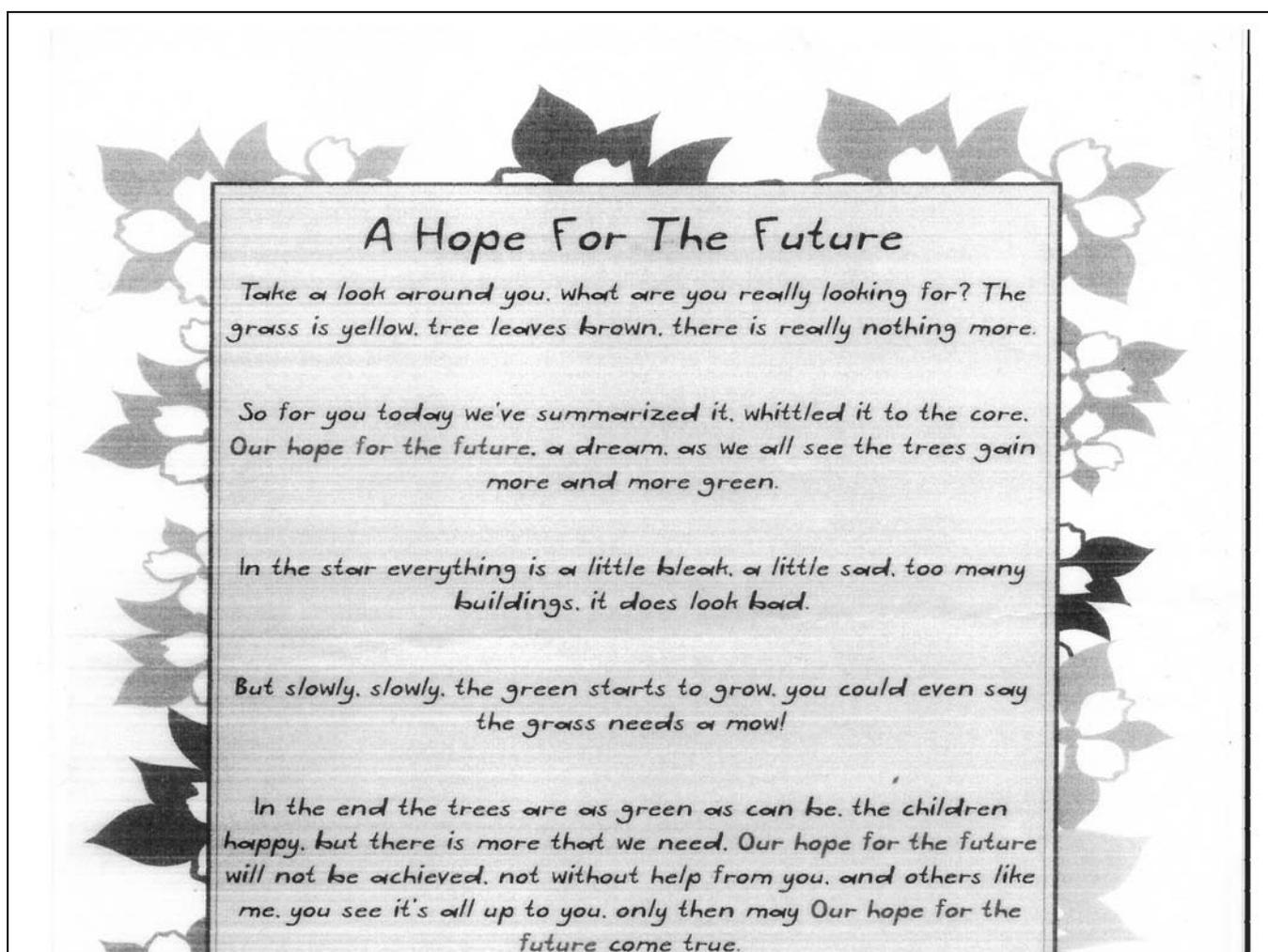


Fig. 14: A poem of interconnectedness and hope

None of us in the Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools program came with any expectations of what we could achieve with students, but rather an over-riding desire to offer experiences that would enable the children to lead happier and more peaceful lives. We used the Dharma as our guide for the ways in which we negotiated our teacher discussions, for the meditative techniques we taught and the stories we told. The strategies we used - stories and reflections - are as old as time. They continue as means to impart wisdom and kindness. As shown they may be inclusive of all students. They have strong potential to be used in many educational contexts as the

discussions with values education and the various points of interface with the Victorian Essential Learning Standards have suggested.

The means to know one's mind, to become aware, relax, awake, manage thoughts and feelings, determine skilful action and be happier have been evidenced by the children in this study and provide insight into what might be achieved.

The precision that we brought to these strategies through teachers experienced in the meditation methods, and contextualised in part with pertinent, lively stories, discussions, plays and craft was noted consistently by students as new and distinctive in their current education. Preparedness of the teacher, an engaging curriculum and a designated half-hour timeslot has been integral to the positive student effects shown in this study.

The students in this final class were really happy to see Helen again. In the context of their continuing efforts to meditate, or awareness that they did not, their warm greetings held a sense of gratitude towards a teacher who had given them something they valued.

In my embedded role in the program as co-ordinator I was a familiar face in the classroom and had a relaxed rapport with the students. My research role though had sharpened my perceptions that found narrative in comments, drawings, silences and body language alongside semi-structured interviews and evaluation forms. These brought me closer to an authentic interpretation of children's experiences than had I maintained a more removed stance. A brief conversation I observed amid the party was every bit as meaningful as the relatively more formal feedback I had received from students.

Helen, ever mindful of a teachable moment, congratulated Terry, who had played the rooster.

"You did a good job with your lines Terry."

"That's because we practise every day!" came Terry's wry and spontaneous reply.

This playful exchange between a returning teacher and a pupil was a meeting of fellow travellers on a path of wisdom and kindness. Helen had shown a way. Terry

showed a fundamental understanding of the human condition of forever wanting something, but his tone held self-compassion. He laughed at the folly, not damned by his recognition of habituated predilections.

From this study I cannot tell whether the students who were in class for four years, like Terry, had deeper or more long-lasting experiences than students who attended for one, two or three years. Like other students in this study Terry had acquired strategies and had experiences that honed his awareness, and had given him confidence to know his innate goodness and to develop personal agency. He learnt that he could cultivate inner happiness. The initial stages of calm and relaxation were a source of happiness. There may well be stories that he will remember from time to time that will steer him towards wise decision making.

If Terry and the other children in this study are to maintain the happiness, optimism, and agency, and continue to value kindness in their getting of wisdom that they have shown through participation in this program they will be placed in good stead to cope with disappointments and make positive life choices. To do this though they will need to be nurtured by educational experiences that continue to value and support their ethical development and reinforce the importance of kindness. Longer-term impacts and the role of these methods in student well-being is a rich field for research.

The materials and methods discussed in this study show where they could be incorporated to develop existing pedagogies in values education and the Victorian Essential Learning Standards, especially Thinking Processes, and these too provide further research fields. For the positive outcomes shown from this study to move beyond a marginal community sponsored religious instruction program to be explored and tested in broader educational contexts will require many more conversations and projects. Moreover, if the potential benefits to individuals and society are to be realised it will also require sustained recognition from researchers, educators, policy makers, and communities that the exploration of best practices - that promote concern for others, connectedness, wisdom and kindness - are held within the core business of education.

Conclusion

In the case study here of this community generated program I have discussed various domains for inquiry that pertain to a specifically Buddhist inspired approach to education. Each chapter has opened new possibilities for research.

This phenomenological exploration is placed alongside broader pedagogical discussions that ran concurrently with the study surrounding values education, student well-being, and socially engaged citizenship. These branches of education are predicated upon self awareness and concern for others. The variety of empathetic teaching and learning strategies derived from a Buddhist theoretical framework are shown to be readily transferable to secular education and show strong indications that they are effective. Discussion from this epistemology offers further precision and widens the scope of the field.

The discourse here has followed a hermeneutic discussion. The method was familiar to the Buddhist teacher cohort and an appropriate means through which contemporary educational discussions can be conducted. The teachers' negotiations surrounding the choosing of values to teach, and appropriate methods, also provides some clarification of issues and some guidance for educators in other spheres who might be grappling with which values to prioritise in their teaching. The ontology of the Dharma that has been explained here places wisdom and compassion (kindness) as meta-ethical principles within which other values, virtues, morals and ethical positions are subsumed. Discussions framed by these ethics, and allowing discernment amid multiple perspectives, provide a framework for inclusive dialogues to be pursued in and between secular and religious forums.

This study shows how these meta-ethics have informed the development of a flexible Years 3-6 curriculum, *'Discovering Buddha: Lessons for Primary School'* (Appendix 10). This curriculum assumes a holistic stance that combines cognitive and affective strategies that are essential for values-based learning, self-knowledge and personal (including spiritual) development. Education communities wanting to empower their students to live and act, according to values must inevitably make curricula decisions that incorporate cognitive and affective functions. The approaches to learning that have been explored here also sit comfortably alongside Social and Emotional

Learning (SEL) and Positive Psychology theories and practices that are also being pursued within many education communities. These demonstrate borrowings from, and relationships to the Buddha-Dharma, and again, engagement with this epistemology broadens the potential for these fields to develop.

Values education has been reinvigorated as a legitimate educational pursuit in Australia but federally funded programs are all but exhausted. Dialogues and programs need to continue. As can be readily seen from the materials that have been trialed and now presented here, they do not impose a belief system, but guide students towards understanding why values are *valued*. Curriculum such as this is relevant and valuable, and the combination of stories and contemplation shown in the study, hold tremendous potential for other cultural perspectives to be engaged in this type of learning.

A key plank in the Buddhist Education in Primary Schools Program has been meditation. The discussion has shown that Dharma perspectives add precise and detailed explanations to a new field of reflective practices in education that are being pursued both here in Australia and internationally. Reference to this established tradition offers timely clarification of purpose/s and what can be achieved as this field defines itself.

First-person reports from students in this study not only offer valuable insights into a variety of children's experiences in meditation, but they also illustrate the importance of having teachers who have established their own familiarity with the chosen practices and are available as a gently guiding presence for their students. The study illustrates the imperative for teachers to be trained in the practices.

The data revealed that students have developed self-awareness – vital for considered decision making – calmness, and kindness towards themselves and others. School teachers and parents also saw these types of resilience factors in the students. I do not claim that the case is proven, but the case is compelling and warrants further research.

The meditation used most consistently in classes was to develop mindful concentration. This is emphasised in Dharma practices because this thinking is a necessary precursor for metacognitive functions that mediate between past, present and future, or between inner and outer experiences. The integrated strategies of story and meditation bring concentration and metacognitive thinking to values-laden scenarios in stories. Students were asked to think critically and creatively, interpret symbols and exercise empathy. This combination of learning utilises all of the interdisciplinary thinking strategies that permeate all levels of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards. The curriculum developed and explained in this study adds to the resources available, and offers compelling evidence for designated learning of this kind.

I did not set out to test propositions or find specific outcomes, but rather to open a discussion using narratives constructed from the lived experiences of participants in the program. Rather than a report or evaluation of the whole program this constructed narrative has sought to tease out some complexities and give commentary to negotiations within the program. This way we discovered indications of what might be possible. I do not speak for other individuals or communities, but these themes and the methods described have relevance far beyond the communities described here.

Education is not the same as a training model. I have argued that aspects of well-being, social responsibility and life-long learning, that embody wisdom and kindness, distinguish education from instrumental forms of learning. Indeed these are present in current values education and the VELs, although they do not readily reveal indicators and learning outcomes. At the current stage I consider it sufficient for educational bodies to maintain their responsibility to offer learning of this kind. Success will nevertheless be indicated by happier and more engaged students.

Today there is an imperative to pursue these kinds of studies in a community concerned with bullying, youth suicide, depression and street violence. There are clearly elements missing in the ways in which young people construct and conduct themselves and education must take further responsibility and explore new pathways to address these evident well-being deficiencies. Love, kindness and compassion must be lived, modeled and reinforced in every teaching and learning encounter.

My narrative has pursued inquiry into karma and observation of causes, conditions, possible effects and interconnections. These are shown in VELs as principles to be pursued throughout students' academic journeys that do not require links to learning outcomes. Further emphasis on the principles of interdependence, causality, and inevitable changes and loss need to be more fully understood and incorporated into learning activities. Dharma explanations provide another route for secular moral reasoning that is reliant upon individual responsibility and, for wisdom and kindness to be rightly developed.

At a time when many young people are exhibiting nihilist and eternalist motivated behaviours the explanations of karma and interdependence presented here are highly pertinent. We have seen how they have been presented as possibilities that have required students to think creatively about what they do and what might happen.

From a Dharma perspective the pursuit of wisdom and kindness becomes a spiritual activity. Making links between inner experiences and worldly activity furthers the ground for spiritual development. This kind of spiritual activity will happen in an individual, and as we have seen even children, whether or not it is a targeted aim of education. This function linking inner and outer is part of the human condition, similar to language facility can be developed to varying degrees. It is this very facility within human beings that religions owe their existence, and that they seek to nourish and educate. Therefore, there is untapped propensity within our existing educational structures and practices for this type of learning.

This study has presented a method of discourse and shown how a community of educators can negotiate this kind of teaching and learning. I have raised considerations for curriculum selection and appropriate teaching methods, and have produced a flexible and effective Years 3-6 curriculum whose credibility has been demonstrated over the course of this study. The teaching strategies, meditations and stories, framed by wisdom and kindness, strongly indicate that they enhance students' abilities to maintain well-being and be socially engaged. This type of learning is not dependent upon scholastic excellence. Every body has propensity to become wise and kind. These are democratic pursuits, and are accessible to all educators and those concerned with well-being in young people.

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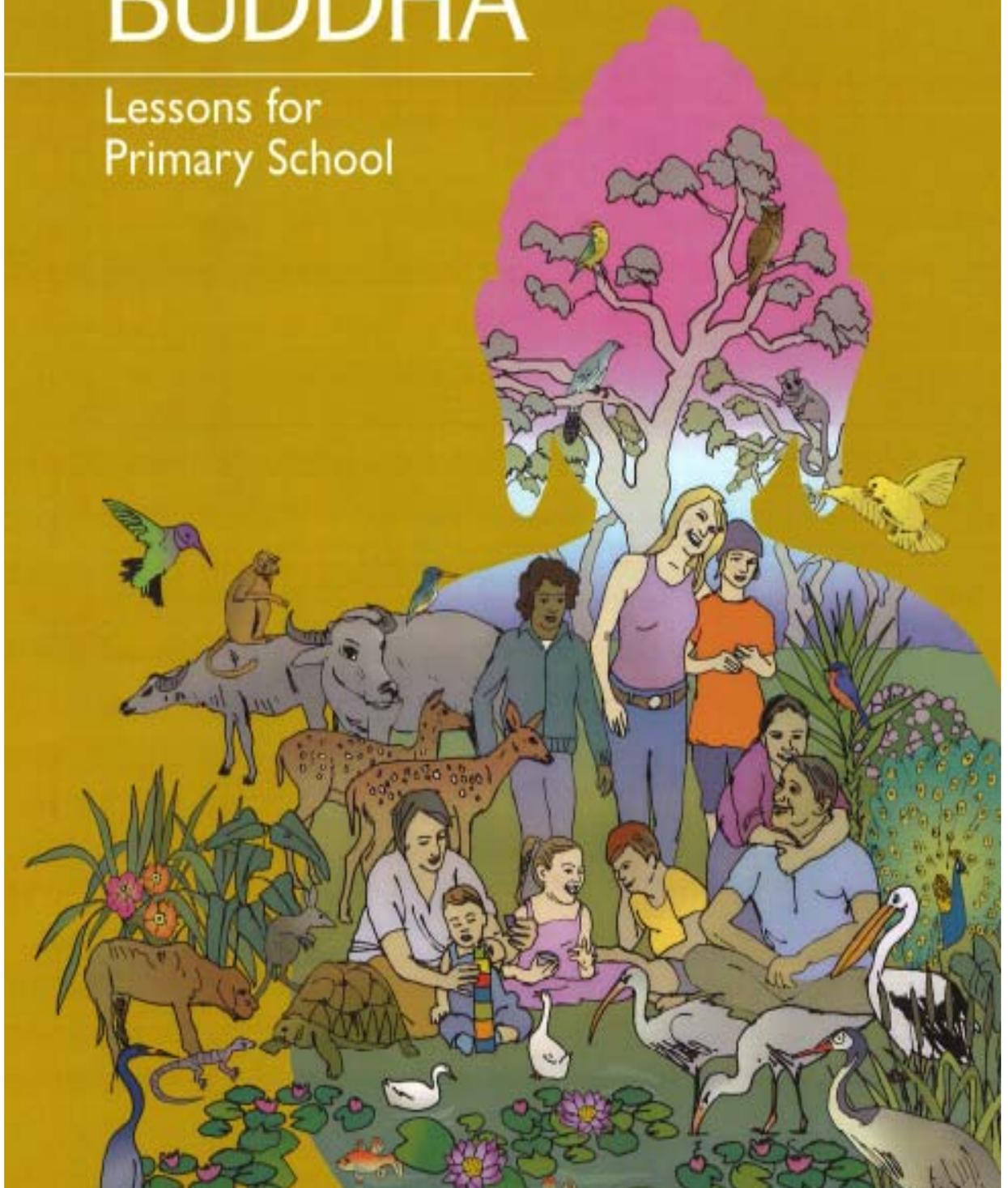
APPENDIX 1

'Life of Buddha: Lessons for Primary School'

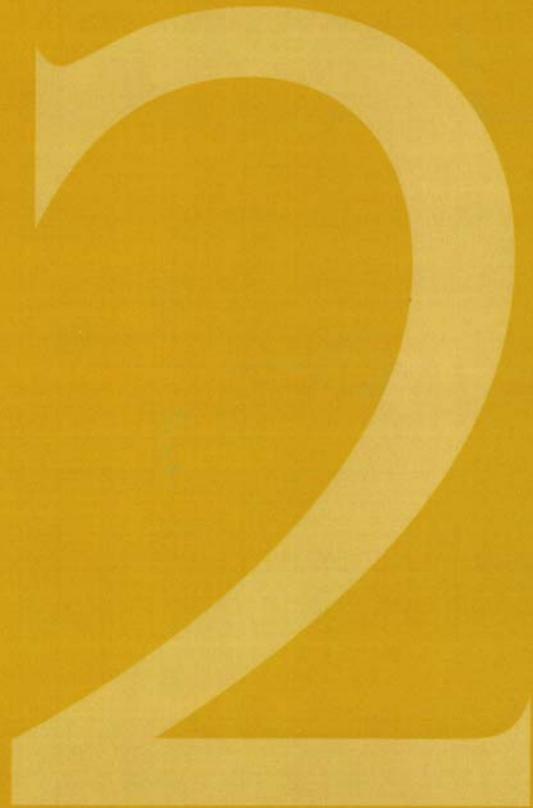
selected excerpts

DISCOVERING BUDDHA

Lessons for
Primary School



Life of the Buddha



DISCOVERING
BUDDHA

Lessons for
Primary School



LB3. Jataka Tale: Love to all Creatures *Khanda – Vatta – Jataka*

A long time ago in ancient India there was a group of meditators who lived on the banks of the Ganges River high in the Himalayas.

Although these meditators enjoyed blissful happiness from meditation, it was wild country inhabited by many poisonous snakes, and unhappily many of the hermits died of snakebite. Others became quite frightened.

The leader of the group, the most wise and compassionate one, considered the best form of defence. After much thought he made an announcement,

“Dear friends,” he began, “No one can tell what troubles and misfortunes might come our way and we cannot destroy every creature that threatens us. Killing one will not make sure that there won’t be another. Our best defence is to keep loving kindness in our hearts.”

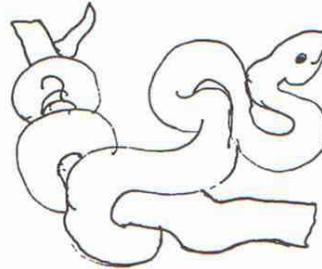
And he asked that each of them learn this verse and understand its meaning:

*Creatures all beneath the sun
Two feet, four feet, more or none,
How I love you every one.*

*Creatures all, two feet or four,
You with none and you with more
Do not hurt me, I implore!*

*All you creatures that have birth,
Who breathe and move upon the earth
I live happily with you all,
No harm from me will you befall.*

*Now, I am guarded safe and fenced around,
Let all creatures leave me to my ground.
All honour to the Blessed Ones I pay
And to the wise and good who have passed away.*



Over time the meditators found that wild animals and poisonous snakes were not so scared of them because the animals sensed that they would not be harmed.



The meditators also found that their group became happier and more harmonious.

Although the group had no material possessions they learned that loving kindness is the most welcome gift.



LB2. Activity D. The Wounded Swan – A Play

Characters: Narrator or Chorus, Prince Siddhartha, Prince Devadatta, King Rajah Suddhodana, Wise Person 1, Wise Person 2, Old Man.

- Narrator:** The swans are happily flying in the sky.
- Narrator:** Enter Prince Siddhartha who is walking in the garden. He looks up in the sky to see the swans.
- Siddhartha:** The swans are migrating south again. How beautiful they look.
- Narrator:** Enter Prince Devadatta, cousin of Prince Siddhartha.
- Devadatta:** I'm so excited today! This is my first bird hunt. I finally get to put all the archery lessons to good use.
- Ah, there are some swans flying over there.
- He shoots an arrow and hits a swan. The swan falls to the ground near Prince Siddhartha.*
- Siddhartha:** Oh dear! What happened to you? Are you badly hurt? Let me pull this arrow out from you. *(He nurses the swan).*
- (Devadatta comes running in, searching for the swan. Prince Siddhartha quickly blocks the swan from view)*
- Devadatta:** Hello Siddhartha. Did you see my swan? My prize for my good archery? You should come and join me next time, it was good fun.
- Wait a minute!
- What's that on your hands?
- Blood?
- Where's my swan?
- Siddhartha:** No, you can't have it. You will kill it to keep it. It is wounded now and I want to nurse it and let it go. It deserves to be free and happy.
- Devadatta:** No, give it back. I shot it and it is my prize.
- Siddhartha:** No, I won't do that.
- They continue to argue*
- Siddhartha:** OK. If you won't let me keep it then we should go and ask the King what he thinks we should do. He is wise and fair and will give us good advice.
- Narrator:** They decide to go to the court where King Suddhodana is having a meeting with all his wise men over state matters.

Suddhodana: Hello my son and nephew. What brings you here? We are having serious discussions here, you know.

Siddhartha+Devadatta: Yes, Rajah.

Suddhodana: Why are the two of you upset? And what is this swan and arrow about?

Devadatta: Rajah, I went out bird hunting this morning and was good enough to hunt down this swan but Siddhartha refuses to give it back to me.

Siddhartha: Father, I found the swan hurt and in pain. I am not going to return it to Devadatta. He will kill it and keep it as a prize. I don't want the swan to die.

Siddhartha+Devadatta: Can you decide who deserves to have the swan?

Suddhodana: Well. One is my son and the other is my nephew, I want to be fair. Now, my wise people, what do you say?

Wise Person 1: I think the person who first saw the swan should lay claim to it. Since Prince Devadatta first saw it and he managed to shoot it down, he should have it.

Wise Person 2: No, I disagree. Finders keepers. The person who finds it should keep it. Since it was Prince Siddhartha who found it, he should keep it.

Narrator: The argument went on for a while and the Rajah found it hard to decide. Then a very old man walked into the court. No one had seen him before but he looked so wise that everyone became quiet and let him speak.

Old Man: I have heard everything you said. Life is the most precious thing for a living being so the person who tries to save life, rather than take life, deserves to have the swan.
Prince Siddhartha has a kind heart and is trying to preserve the life of the bird. Good on you, child.

Siddhartha: Thank you, wise one.

Old Man: Prince Devadatta, you are a good marksman but you have to learn to treat other living things with compassion and kindness.

Devadatta: Yes, wise one.

Narrator: The matter was solved. The wise man went away and was never to be seen again.
Thank you very much.
Performers form a line. Hold hands and bow.

The End



LB9. Activity B. The Four Sights – a play

Characters: Prince Siddhartha, Channa, Narrator, Young person, King, Wandering man, old person, sick person, dead person, townspeople

Scene 1: An Unexpected Sight

Narrator: The King was pleased Siddhartha wanted to leave his palaces and see the city he would some day rule. He wanted to be certain the Prince would not see anything on his trip that might disturb his mind. So the day before, he sent a message to all the people.

(Loudly)"By order of the King! Tomorrow the royal prince Siddhartha will visit the capital city of Kapilavastu. Decorate your houses and streets and let everything be colourful in his honour. Let those who are sick or old stay indoors tomorrow."

Siddhartha and Channa, his charioteer, go out into Kapilavastu riding their horses.

Young Person: How tall and good-looking he is! How bright his eyes and noble his face. We are indeed fortunate that someday he will be our king.

Narrator: The people laughed and cheered and joyously threw flower petals at their beloved prince. *(Throw flowers over Siddhartha and Channa)*

Siddhartha: *(to Channa)* This is indeed a golden, beautiful and wonderful city!

Narrator: But as the Prince and his charioteer were riding by, they saw what no one else could see, a bent, sad-looking person among the joyous crowd. The Prince had never seen anything like this before.

Siddhartha: *(pointing)* Channa who is that person over there? Why is he stooping over and not smiling like the others? Why is his face pale and wrinkled? Why is he so different from the others?

Channa: Why Sir, that is just an old man.

Siddhartha: Old? Was this man always 'old,' or did it happen to him recently?

Channa: Neither, Oh Prince. Many years ago that wrinkled man was as young and strong as all the others you see here today. Slowly he lost his strength. His body became bent, the colour faded from his cheeks, he lost most of his teeth, and now he appears the way he does.

Siddhartha: Poor man. Is he the only one suffering from old age or are there others?

Channa: Surely you know, Oh Prince, that everyone must experience old age. You, me, your wife Yasodhara and son Rahula, everyone at the palace – we are all growing older every moment. Someday most of us will look like that man.

Narrator: These words so shocked the gentle Prince that for a long time he remained speechless. He looked like a person who had just been frightened by a sudden flash of lightning.



Siddhartha: Oh, Channa, I have seen something today that I never expected to see. This vision of old age frightens me. Turn back to the palace, I wish to see no more. *(They turn around and go back.)*

Narrator: The Prince entered the palace and hurried up to his room, greeting no one. He stayed alone in his room for a long time. Everyone tried hard to cheer him up, but nothing helped. He sat by himself thinking about old age...old age...old age.

Scene 2: The Second Sight

Narrator: The king heard about Siddhartha's unhappy mood, and thinking he needed more variety in his life, arranged a second trip for him into the city. The streets were decorated as before, and the people were again happy to see their Prince.

Prince Siddhartha and Channa ride out into the city again.

Then a sick person appeared in the crowd of laughing people.

Siddhartha: Look Channa, who is that woman who coughs so violently, who shakes her body and cries so pitifully?

Channa: That is a sick person, Oh Prince.

Siddhartha: Why is she sick?

Channa: People become sick for many reasons, Sire. Perhaps she ate some bad food or became too cold. Now she has a fever.

Siddhartha: Do happy people like those in the crowd ever become sick?

Channa: Oh yes. A person might be healthy one day and sick the next. No one is safe from illness.

Narrator: The Prince was again deeply shocked.

Siddhartha: *(Shaking his head)* I cannot understand how people can be so carefree and happy knowing that they might get sick at any time. Please, let us turn back, I have seen more than enough for one day.

They turn around their horses and ride back to the palace.

Narrator: When Siddhartha returned to the palace he was even more unhappy than before. Nothing anyone did could make him smile, and he did not want to speak to anyone. The King became very worried and confused.



Scene 3: The Third Sight – The Final Shock

Narrator: Siddhartha and Channa rode out of the city for the third time. The King had made the city even more beautiful than before. For the third time a vision appeared that only the Prince and Channa could see. This time they saw a group of sad people gathered around a body covered by a white sheet, and lying on the ground.

Siddhartha: Channa, why is that man lying so still? Is he asleep? And why are all those people crying?

Channa: He is a dead person, Sire.

Siddhartha: What do you mean by 'dead'? Please explain so I can understand?

Narrator: Channa explained to the Prince the truths his father had tried to hide from him all these years.

Channa: That person was once alive, as you and I are now. He was born, grew into a child, then he became a young person. He experienced the many pleasures and pains of life, and grew older. He began to feel weaker and weaker and was confined to his bed. He grew worse and eventually his breath left his body. Now he is dead.

Siddhartha: Tell me Channa, is it unusual for people to die like this?

Channa: No, my Prince, not at all. It is true that some people never get the chance to grow old, and there are some people who rarely get sick. But everyone without exception must one day die.

Narrator: These words, spoken so innocently by Channa, shocked Prince Siddhartha deeply.

Siddhartha: Do you mean that one day my wife, my child, my friends and myself will all be dead? How blind the world is that it can sing and dance while death waits. Channa, let us turn around, I wish to return to the palace to think.

Scene 4: The Fourth Sight – A Vision of Peace

Narrator: The Prince sank deeper and deeper into gloom. He seemed to lose interest in everything. He hardly ate anything anymore and began to look pale and unhealthy. The King and everyone were very upset that these changes had come over their beloved Prince.

One day Siddhartha went to see his father.

Siddhartha: Father, lately my mind has been very troubled. I feel restless and would like your permission to leave the palace once again. Perhaps a change of scenery will do me good.

King: I would do anything to make you happy again. Of course you have my permission to leave the palace.



- Narrator:** This time Siddhartha rode out of the palace by himself. He searched for some beautiful countryside. Finally, he dismounted at the edge of some farmland where a man and his ox were ploughing the ground in the sun.
- Siddhartha sits down under a tree and looks out on the farmland.*
- Siddhartha:** It is so beautiful here.
- Narrator:** As Siddhartha relaxed and he looked closer at the scene, he began to notice things he had not seen before. He saw that the blade of the plough cut the bodies of hundreds of insects in the ground, that the birds were not playing, but swooping down to eat them. Bigger hawks circled hungrily above the smaller birds. He noticed that the ox laboured heavily and the farmer worked very hard.
- Siddhartha:** Such a circle of misery. The farmer and his ox, the birds and the insects. They work all day trying to be happy and comfortable to have enough to eat, but they are constantly killing and hurting each other. *(He meditates.)*
- Narrator:** The Prince's heart was filled with compassion for all these suffering creatures. He hated to see them so unhappy. Under the tree he meditated deeply on what he had seen. He looked into the nature of suffering. His mind became more and more concentrated and calm. He experienced a quietness unlike anything he had known before.
- When the Prince had finished his compassionate meditation he opened his eyes. Standing before him was a man dressed like a beggar. His eyes were calm and bright and he had a look of great peace on his face.
- Siddhartha:** Please tell me, who are you?
- Wandering Man:** I am someone who has become frightened by the sufferings of the world. I have grown tired of the changing pleasures of this world and now wander about alone. I have given up my home and now live and sleep in caves, or in the forest. My only interest is in finding the highest and most perfect happiness.
- Narrator:** The man disappeared as if by magic. The Prince was astonished and overjoyed.
- Siddhartha:** *(Happily)* At last, I have found the true purpose of my life. I too shall give up my home and begin my search for true happiness and the end of all suffering.
- The Prince gets on his horse and rides back to the palace.*
- The end.**
- (Adapted by Helen Ponder)*

JATAKA TALES AND THE PARAMITAS:

JP1. Introduction to Teaching the Paramitas (virtue and skilful action) through the Jataka Tales

In Buddhist language, virtues are called **Paramitas** or perfections. Skilful action and morals arise from the practice of these virtues, and lead to precepts where Buddhist practitioners take vows to avoid harmful conduct. The Paramitas are positive virtues that are practised to guarantee happier trouble-free living and support the development of the enlightened mind. We have chosen to demonstrate the Ten Paramitas through the Jataka Tales: each tale often containing more than one Paramita as well as a model of skilful behaviour.

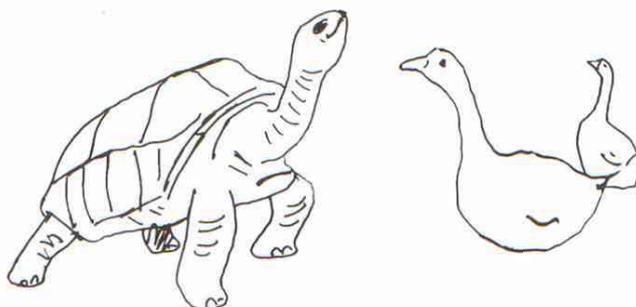
Here they are explained simply for children:

- **Loving kindness** (Pali: *metta*) can also be compassion. All positive and moral conduct is a form of kindness to self and others.
- **Giving or generosity** (Pali: *dana*) does not always mean material aid. Giving can be in the form of good conduct, such as care and patience, and wishing benefit to others.
- **Equal love or joy with others** is also related to equanimity, being even tempered and learning to love all creatures as dearly as oneself.
- **Renunciation** or finding the **Middle Way** by not going to extremes and not holding tightly to fixed ideas, objects and people.
- **Patience** is about remaining calm and good tempered in annoying and difficult situations. It is a form of being kind to oneself and to others.
- **Effort** is maintaining energy to learn and do things well, but with kindly and mindful application according to the Middle Way.
- **Wisdom** is apparent in all the Buddha's teachings. It is about understanding the way things are and the way the world works. It is based on interconnectedness and cause and effect relationships. Children are forming their senses of self and identity and it is not wise to introduce them to the concepts of 'non-self'.
- **Honesty** requires courage to seek truth, uphold what is true and to value truth and honesty in personal conduct, with others and society.
- **Perseverance** is the will to keep going and not to give up.
- **Right action** is moral conduct by avoiding harmful actions. It can also be viewed as forms of kindness to oneself because harmful results from actions are also avoided. For lay Buddhists the first rule, or precept, is to *avoid killing*, and then to *avoid lying and stealing*. The fourth precept is interpreted for children here as *being a loyal and faithful friend*, and *avoiding intoxicants* can also be linked to avoiding extreme behaviours and the Middle Way.

JATAKA TALES AND THE PARAMITAS: THE MIDDLE WAY

JP11. The Talkative Tortoise

Lesson Plan	Years	Lesson
	3-6	1
1. Theme:	Paramita of Renunciation and the Middle Way	
2. Topic:	Renunciation/the Middle Way	
3. Lesson:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children enjoy taking turns to read this story aloud. Check their understanding of the story and any new vocabulary.List on the board the effects from too much talking that the children have experienced. These might apply to excesses of any kind. Follow this lesson with the <i>JP3. Wisdom Game p3.6</i> or a play created from the story. See Welcome section: <i>Making Learning Fun: Strategies for Teaching Buddhist Religious Education pXI</i>	



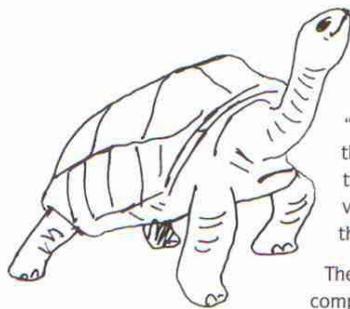


Paramita of Renunciation/The Middle Way: JP11. The Talkative Tortoise *Kacchapa – Jataka*

A very long time ago in ancient India lived a wise man, who was an advisor to a king. The king was a most talkative king. In fact he never shut up. He prattled on, day in day out and no one could get a word in edgewise. Apart from being very tedious company, the king's advisor knew that too much talk was not a good thing.

Being wise, the advisor knew that he had to pick the right time to let the king know. So he waited....

In a pond nearby lived a tortoise; not quite your ordinary tortoise, but a tortoise who liked to talk, and talk, and talk. The other creatures in the pond tolerated this tortoise, but by and large they found him quite a bore, and were often quick to leave his company. So the tortoise was always on the ready to strike up a conversation with someone new.



It happened one day that two wild geese were searching for food at the pond and the tortoise spied them.

"Hello, hello! I haven't seen you two in these parts before," said the tortoise amiably, "Mind you a couple of years ago I saw two other geese, not you of course, and last week we were visited by a very nice partridge family, and of course there's the ducks! Don't get me started on the ducks! Well anyway..."

The geese actually found the tortoise quite entertaining company and the three became good friends.

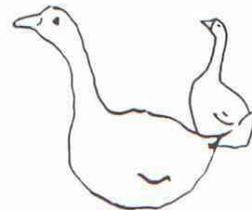
As summer approached it was time for the geese to return to their home, a lake in the Himalaya. The geese thought that it would be rather fun to take the tortoise with them, because life for them could get very quiet, high in the Himalaya.

They approached the tortoise.

"Tortoise old friend, we have a lovely home in the Himalaya, in a lake on Mount Cittakutu! Would you like to come to live with us there?"

"I am humbled. I'm honoured! I am gob-smacked. I am delighted. I am so pleased by the generosity of your offer," said the tortoise by way of introduction to an acceptance speech, "And, after deliberation and contemplation, having considered your kind invitation – you who are my most esteemed of friends – feel that I have surely outgrown my current abode...." And in this way the tortoise continued for another ten minutes.

Then it dawned on him that he could neither fly nor swim to the high mountains.





Paramita of Effort and Perseverance: JP13. Prince Five Weapons *Pancavudha – Jataka*

This story was told by the Buddha about a monk who had become very lazy.

“Is it true that you are a loafer?” asked the Buddha. “Yes, Sir,” came the reply.

“In days long ago,” said the Buddha, “the wise and good won a throne by their constant efforts and perseverance in the hour of need,” and he told this story from the past.

A long time ago in ancient India the future Buddha was born as a son to a king and queen.

On the day he was to be named the parents gave food and gifts to eight hundred wise and learned folk, and asked what the child’s destiny would be. They foretold a glorious life where the child would become a great king, and famous throughout the world for his mastery of five weapons. And so, because of the prophecy, the parents named their son Prince Five Weapons.

When the prince turned sixteen he was sent to study with a world famous teacher at the best school in India. He learnt his lessons well, and when it was time for him to leave his teacher gave him a present, a set of five weapons.

On his way back home he came to a forest haunted by an ogre named Hairy Grip. At the entrance to the forest, some men met the prince and tried to stop him saying, “Do not go into the forest, it is the haunt of Hairy Grip the ogre, and he kills everyone he meets!”

But bold as a lion, the self reliant prince pressed on until, in the heart of the forest, he came upon the ogre.

The monster appeared as tall as a palm-tree, with a great, over-sized head and huge bulging eyes, two tusks like turnips and the beak of a hawk. His belly was blotched with ugly purple spots and the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet were bluish black!

“Go away, or I will eat you!” cried the monster.

“Ogre,” the Prince replied fearlessly, “I knew what I was doing by entering the forest. I am Prince Five Weapons and I can defend myself. I warn you now not to come near me. I will slay you where you stand with a poisoned arrow.”

Defiantly he fitted his bow with an arrow dipped in the deadliest poison and shot it at the ogre.

It stuck to the monster’s shaggy coat, nowhere near piercing his skin. Then he shot another arrow, and another. He shot fifty poisoned arrows, all of which merely stuck into the ogre’s shaggy coat.

Then the ogre shook off the arrows and came at the Prince. The Prince was not going to give in, and with a shout drew his sword and struck out at the ogre. But like the arrows, his sword merely stuck fast in the shaggy hair. Next the Prince hurled his spear, and that also stuck fast in the ogre’s hairy hide.



Not giving up, Prince Five Weapons struck the ogre with his club, but that only lodged itself in the dense thicket of hair under his armpit.

Still, Prince Five Weapons was in no mood to give up.

“Ogre, you obviously haven’t heard of me before. I’m Prince Five Weapons! When I ventured into this forest, I put my trust in my bow and other weapons. Now I put my trust in myself! I will strike you a blow that will crush you into the dust!”

The ogre did not move.

The Prince landed a massive blow with his right fist, and his right fist stuck on the hair. Then he landed a powerful left hook, which planted his fist firmly stuck in the ogre’s hair. He followed swiftly with a roundhouse kick with the right foot, and a sharp jab with his left foot, leaving Prince Five Weapons attached to the ogre’s hairy hide by all four limbs.

The Prince fully understood now why the ogre’s name was Hairy Grip. Still Prince Five Weapons was no quitter.

Summoning his strength once again Prince Five Weapons shouted, “I will crush you into dust!” and head-butted the ogre.

Now his head, too, was firmly stuck to the most aptly named Hairy Grip, yet defeat was not in Prince Five Weapons’ vocabulary.

As the Prince dangled from this person, the monster got to thinking, “This is a very lion among men, a real hero. Though he is caught in the clutches of an ogre like me, he does not tremble. Never, since I first took up slaying travellers upon this road, have I seen a man to equal him. How come he is not frightened?”

Not daring to eat the Prince just then he asked, “How is it, young man, that you have no fear?”

“Why should I?” the Prince replied with calm confidence, “I have a sword inside my body which you will never digest if you eat me. It will chop your innards to mincemeat, and my death will involve yours too. Therefore I have no fear.”

By this the Prince meant the Sword of Wisdom which shone within him.

This made the ogre think, “This man is talking the truth and nothing but the truth. I could not digest a morsel even the size of a pea of this young hero. I’ll let him go,” and so, in fear of his life, Hairy Grip carefully dislodged the Prince, limb by limb, from his hairy grip.

“I will not eat you. Go home to your family, your friends and your country. Make them happy. Don’t worry about me. I will think of something else to do....I suppose...”

“Yes, ogre, I will go,” answered the Prince, “but I want you to know that it was your deeds in the past that caused you to become a murderous, flesh-eating ogre, and if you continue like this, you will go from horror to horror.”



“I am giving you something to think about,” the Prince continued, “Know that to destroy life will create for you a living hell and you will become one of the most wretched creatures. Even if you lived as a human, then these cruel actions will cut short the days of your life.”

By this blunt explanation of the consequences of virtuous and non-virtuous actions the monster did not want to create any more unhappiness for him or others.

Prince Five Weapons made him a guardian fairy of the forest, and proceeded home, letting it be known that the forest was now safe to enter.

At the end of the story the Buddha recited a verse:

*When no attachment hampers heart or mind
When rightness is practised, peace you find
By doing this you gain the victory
And all limitations utterly destroy.*

The Buddha then explained the connection and identified the birth by saying, “Angulimala was the ogre of those days, and I myself Prince Five Weapons.”



Meditation



DISCOVERING
BUDDHA

Lessons for
Primary School



ME7. Observing Our Breath

Sit quietly. Relax. Close your eyes. Turn your palms upwards. Put your left palm on top of your right palm, with your fingers close together and the tips of your thumbs touching. Place your palms upwards on your lap.

Relax your feet, your legs and your body, your arms and your hands. Relax your head, your face and your eyes.

Your whole body is relaxed.

And now think of your breathing. Feel the air going in and the air going out. Feel the touch of the air going through the airway, in and out, in and out, in and out.

Feel the coolness of the air going in and the warmth of the air going out.

Still, you are aware of all the sounds around you. There may be the birds singing, the leaves rustling, the water flowing, a car passing or someone calling.

And you are still breathing slowly in and out, in and out, in and out.

You may feel itchy spots on your feet or on your back, on your arms or on your scalp. Think about the itchy spots. Look at the spots with your inner eyes. They may go away.

You are still breathing slowly in and out, in and out, in and out. Feel the coolness of the air going in and the warmth of the air going out.

You may feel some discomfort in some part of your body. Think about it and look at it with your inner eyes. It may go away.

You are still breathing slowly, feeling the air going in and going out, slowly touching the airway, cool air going in and warm air going out.

Now, bring your awareness back to the classroom – to the cushion or chair you are sitting on, the classmates around you, the classroom you are sitting in.

And now we are going to slowly open our eyes.





ME10. Loving Kindness Meditation

This is an example of a simple practice:

Sit or lie down comfortably and close the eyes.

Now turn your attention to yourself and say in your mind: "May I be well, may I be happy".

Then recall in your mind someone very dear to you and say in your mind: "May (s)he be well, may (s)he be happy".

Then recall in your mind your friends and also wish them in your mind: "May they be well, may they be happy".

Next turn your attention to the whole world, to all people around you and say in your mind: "May all people be well, may all people be happy".

Finish by saying, "Peace, Peace, Peace".



MEDITATION: LOVING KINDNESS



ME13. Everyone is a Potential Friend

Think about a friend you have. Was this person always your friend? Was there a time when this person was a stranger? Was there a time perhaps when you didn't like this person? Maybe they did something that you didn't like? What makes you like or dislike someone? What is the difference between a friend and a stranger? If all these labels we give people, these different relationships we have with people can change, why do we differentiate between them? If we were to treat everyone as a potential friend then how would our life feel different?

How great it would be if all beings had happiness.

I will help them to have happiness.

How great it would be if all beings did not have sadness, sickness or suffering.

I will help them not to have sadness, sickness or suffering.

If all beings lived like this what a wonderful world it would be.

I will help to change the world by helping when I can help and being kind and loving at all times.

Craft Activities



DISCOVERING
BUDDHA

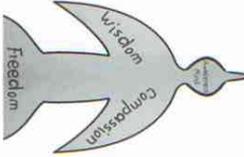
Lessons for
Primary School



CA4. Activity. Making a Buddha Bird

Name _____

Date _____

<p>1 Fold paper in half.</p>	
<p>2 Draw the beak, head, wings, body and tail.</p>	
<p>3 Cut out.</p>	
<p>4 Label: <i>Body</i> = Awakened Mind <i>Wing</i> = Wisdom. <i>Other wing</i> = Compassion <i>Tail</i> = Freedom</p>	
<p>5 Decorate and hang by knotting fishing line from the top and bottom of the bird.</p>	

APPENDIX 2

Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools - Student Evaluation

School:

Grade:

Buddhist teacher:

4) What have you enjoyed in Buddhist classes this year?

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...
.....
...
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.....
...

5) The Buddha taught...

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.....

6) Interesting things I have learnt are...

.....
.....
.....
.....

7) I want to know more about...

.....
.....

8) Ways that Buddhist classes help me are

APPENDIX 3

BUDDHIST R.E. TEACHER FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION

Name :

School:

1. What excites you and gives you joy in the Buddhist R.E. Program?
2. What are the challenges and/or difficulties of teaching Buddhist R.E.?
3. What can the BCV Committee/ co-ordinator do to enable you to continue or improve your teaching of Buddhist RE?
4. Can you suggest ways in which the hubs can serve you better?

Curriculum

5. How useful do you find the present curriculum?
6. What suggestions can you make to improve the curriculum?

Website

7. What further features or additions would you like to see to the website?
www.bcvic.org.au

Training & Professional Development

8. What are some areas you would like to see included in a further training program (ie. After basic training?)
9. Do you have any further suggestion about new directions and/or improvements to the Buddhist RE Program?

APPENDIX 4

The Buffalo and the Monkey – original transcript

No 278 Mahisa-Jataka

“Why do you patiently,” etc. This story the Master told at Jetavana, about a certain impertinent monkey. At Savatthi, we are told, was a tame monkey in a certain family; and it ran into the elephant’s stable, and perching on the back of the virtuous elephant, voided excrement, and began to walk up and down. The elephant, being both virtuous and patient, did nothing. But one day in the elephant’s place stood a wicked young one. The monkey thought it was the same, and climbed on its back. The elephant seized him in his trunk, and dashing him to the ground, trod him to pieces. This became known in the meeting of the Brotherhood; and one day they all began to talk about it. “Brother, have you heard how the impertinent monkey mistook a bad elephant for a good one, and climbed on his back, and how he lost his life for it?” In came the master, and asked, “Bretheren, what are you talking of as you sit here?” and when they told him, This is not the first time,” said he, “that this impertinent monkey behaved so; he did the same before: and he told them an old-world tale.

Once on a time, when Brahmadata was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born in the Himalayan region as a Buffalo. He grew up strong and big and ranged the hills and mountains, peaks and caves, tortuous woods a many.

Once, as he went, he saw a pleasant tree, and took his food, standing under it. Then an impertinent monkey came down out of the tree, and getting on his back, voided excrement; then he took hold of one of the Buffalo’s horns, and swung down from it by his tail, disporting himself. The Bodhisatta, being full of patience, kindness and mercy took no notice at all of his misconduct. This the monkey did again and again. But one day, the spirit that belonged to that tree, standing upon the tree-trunk, asked him, saying, “My lord Buffalo, why do you put up with the rudeness of this bad Monkey? Put a stop to him!” and enlarging upon this theme he repeated the first two verses as follows:

*“Why do you patiently endure each freak
This mischievous and selfish ape may wreak?”*

*“Crush him underfoot, transfix him with your horn!
Stop him or even children will show scorn.”*

The Bodhisatta, on hearing this, replied, “If, Tree-sprite, I cannot endure this monkey’s ill-treatment without abusing his birth, lineage, and powers, how can my wish ever come to fulfilment? But the monkey will do the same to any other, thinking him to be like me. And if he does it to any fierce Buffalos, they will destroy him indeed. When some other has killed him, I shall be delivered both from pain and from blood-guiltiness.” And saying this he repeated the third verse:

Violence

*“If he treats others as he now treats me,
They will destroy him; then I shall be free.”*

A few days later, the Bodhisatta went elsewhere, and another buffalo, a savage beast, went and stood in his place. The wicked Monkey, thinking it to be the old one, climbed upon his back and did as before. The Buffalo shook him off upon the ground, and drove his horn into the Monkey’s heart, and trampled him to mincemeat under his hoofs.

When the Master had ended this teaching, he declared the truths, and identified the Birth: “At that time the bad buffalo was he who now is the bad elephant, the bad monkey was the same, but the virtuous noble Buffalo was I myself.”

The Jataka Book 111 pp. 262-3(Cowell 1990)

APPENDIX 5

Happiness: the path of Wisdom and Compassion or Buddhism Lite?

One of the most exciting movements in the last decade has been the emergence of Positive Psychology, taking psychology out of clinical situations with people with 'problems' into ordinary people's lives to see how they can become happier.

Peterson and Seligman (2004a) developed a list of twenty-four strengths organized under six virtues: wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity and love, justice, temperance, transcendence, and character strengths: curiosity, open-mindedness, perspective, kindness and generosity, loyalty, duty, fairness, leadership, self-control, caution, humility, bravery, perseverance, honesty, gratitude, optimism, zest. Their work is showing that people who build on their character strengths and virtues actually become happier! Just as the Buddha predicted. Certainly Compassion and Wisdom and the Eightfold Path are included here.

Most of these studies have been done with youth and adults, while not so much has been done with children. Of course with children a simpler approach is necessary. Another study that interviewed parents (Park & Peterson 2006) suggests that for children the character strengths of love, zest and hope, and for children over ten, gratitude, were the qualities most readily associated with children's happiness.

Kindness and gratitude promote happiness, loving-kindness remains our mission. A recent study in Japan (Otake et al. 2006) suggests that kindness and gratitude can also promote hopeful, joyful living. These researchers studied the effects of counting acts of kindness for a week on the personal happiness. Their results showed that a) happy people scored higher on their motivation to perform, and their recognition and enactment of kind behaviours. b) Happy people have more happy memories in daily life in terms of both quantity and quality. c) Subjective happiness was increased simply by counting one's own acts of kindness for one week. d) Happy people became more kind and grateful through the counting of kindness intervention.

You have probably come across articles on happiness in the media. Yes, it's the new big thing! In an article in New Internationalist magazine psychologist John F. Schumaker suggests that we are becoming a society of 'happichondriacs.' We live amid life coaching, joyology, laughing groups etc. A happy and meaningful existence depends on the ability to feel emotions other than happiness, as well as ones that compete with happiness. In the article he quotes Albert Einstein, "Happiness never appeared to me as an absolute aim. I am even inclined to compare such moral aims to the ambitions of a pig. The ideals that have lighted my way are Kindness, Beauty and Truth." Schumaker author of *In Search of Happiness: Understanding and endangered state of mind* asks if as a society we become pigs in the happiness trough, but goes on to say that the highest forms of happiness have always been expressed and experienced as love
(Schumaker 2006)

So, besides the consumerist, narcissistic take on happiness, it still has real currency

particularly when we are teaching children.

Many people who study children, such as the team from Deakin University who devised the Personal Well-being Index for School Children (PWI-SC) saw the need to simplify their wording and grappled with semantic distinctions to eventually interchange 'happiness' for 'well-being' (Cummins & Lau 2004, p. 5).

These authors concluded that children draw little distinction between well-being, values, morals, virtues, 'being good' and happiness.

So 'happiness' is a good word to use with children, although as Dharma students ourselves we have sight of the ultimate happiness, nirvana. We also know that realization comes through mindful action based on loving-kindness and wisdom. circulated to teachers June 2006

APPENDIX 6

4Ms in BRE case circulated to 14/3/07 teachers

“I don’t care if the children don’t know the name of Siddhartha’s horse!” Bernie told me over the phone one night. He went on to say that he felt that meditation was the most important and useful activity that we offer in our Buddhist R E classes, many of us feel the same.

In later conversations Bernie talked about teaching the 3 M’s: Meditation, Mindfulness and Morality.

“What about Compassion?”

“Make it 4 M’s; Meditation, Mindfulness, Morality and Metta!”

Meditation and mindfulness are at the core of what we can offer the students, and in the Dhamma, the foundations from which morality and loving-kindness are developed.

How do we do this? How can we do it better?

From my travels last year with you, and in your classrooms, I have put together a summary of approaches to meditation that have been working well in our program.

1. Preparing students for meditation
2. Which meditations do we teach?
3. Making meditations accessible to children
4. Reasons for using the Happiness scale
5. Let the students record their experiences of meditation
6. The role of the teacher at the end of the meditation session

1. Preparing students for meditation

- regular routine (usually at the beginning of the class)
- a regular greeting, motivational prayer and dedication
- some stretching or relaxation yoga-type exercises if they are particularly ‘bouncy’ or lethargic.
- pay attention to correct posture
- if space permits seating on the floor in a circle is best for harnessing group energy and attention
- create a meditation space eg. sit in a circle on the floor, place squares of coloured cloth for students to sit on, use a bell or flower etc to focus attention
- use props eg. a shaken bottle of muddy water, a flower, stones, a Buddha image as an object of attention

We know there are many types of meditation, having different purposes and using different mental skills.

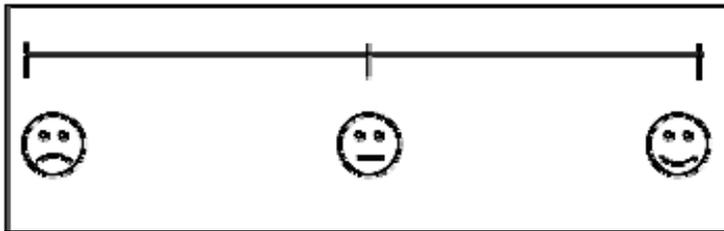
2. Which meditations do we teach?

- Following the breath – developing concentration
- Connecting to the body – appreciating who we are
- Walking meditation – mindfulness with movement
- Visualisation – loving kindness
- Meditation observing the mind – acceptance of the present moment
- Observing change – it is everywhere
- Observing interconnectedness – and the implications

We will be compiling our best meditations, so please share with us the one's that work best for you.

3. Making meditations accessible to children

In 2006 some classes used the Happiness Scale and it seemed to work well.



4. Reasons for using the Happiness scale

- helps children develop skill of observing their own minds
- helps children to observe thoughts and feelings
- helps children to observe changing nature of thoughts and feelings
- does not depend on children using language
- helps children to articulate thoughts and feelings
- creates a record whereby children can observe that their happiness can be determined by their own minds
- helps children see the benefits of meditation – without perceiving benefits for themselves they will have little motivation to pursue meditation
- protects children's privacy if they choose not to share feedback in class debrief discussion

An observing classroom teacher made this comment:

The reflections on the 'Happiness Scale' are powerful, and treated seriously. They are becoming far better at tuning out distractions; greater self-discipline. Students always approach these sessions with such a positive mind-set. Self-reflection is a large element, and has huge implications across all aspects of life. The free flowing of ideas is totally engaging!! (Grade 5-6 teacher 29/8/06).

There are other ways to develop awareness. All the more need for us to share our experiences.

5. Let the students record their experiences of meditation

These can be fun. It is also a way of getting to know the students better and tuning into their needs. From the comments I have seen, I am thinking this is quite an important aspect of the meditation process.

Here are some comments from a Grade 5-6. Before meditation: “Excited, got lots of exciting activities happening today, bouncy and awake. After meditation: “Meditation helped me calm down. I stopped worrying about things I did not want to do this week. My mind calmed and settled.” (6/6)

“I feel so much clearer!!!” (6/6)

“Before meditation I was tired and I am still tired but I feel a lot refreshed, like I am ready to start the day. I feel happy and I don’t know why☺” (25/7)

“I feel very calm and happy but I feel like I wanna go to SLEEP!! But I feel as if I’ve just woken up in the morning too, so meditation makes me feel like I’ve started the day all over again! (13/10)

Before meditation: “ very, very tired”. After meditation: “After I’m not as tired and now I’m feeling well.” (17/10)

Before meditation: “Pretty happy overall because of various reasons.” After meditation: “ The best meditation yet, it felt like 10 hours sleep.” (23/10)

“It’s a new thing. It cleared my mind. It sorts you out. I never knew that my mind could do this. It’s like when you are three and you discover chocolate. You never knew it was possible before.” (12/06)

Younger students might like to draw.

6. The role of the teacher at the end of the meditation session

The post-meditation debrief is really valuable. Students can share their experiences. With that comes the opportunity to develop language about thoughts and feelings eg. calm, tired, agitated, peaceful etc. Time doesn’t allow for everyone’s comments, and others will prefer not to say anything. By going back to the Happiness scale all students are included and the awareness training is reinforced.

Some teachers choose to write brief comments of guidance or encouragement in the children’s books every few weeks. From the comments that I have seen I think it is quite an important part of the meditation process.

“Before meditation I felt like it was going to be a really good day. After meditation I felt really tired, then after I felt even more tired and felt I had really heavy eyelids.”
Teacher : “Meditation will make you aware of the truth of how you feel...Meditation is hard work when you try.”

Before meditation: “I was tired but after I was feeling a lot better because it served as sleep.”

Teacher: “Meditation is not sleep. Needs a focused mind.”

Sometimes there’s encouragement: “Wow”, “Cool”, “Nice work”.

A lot of things happen in meditation. Reflection is a key element of the Victorian curriculum and we seem to have a lot to offer. With our care, love and patience some wonderful things are happening in our classrooms. The childrens’ comments attest to that!

APPENDIX 7

The Drummer (transcript) No. 59 Bherivada-Jataka

The Jataka Book 1 (Cowell 1990, p. 146)

“Go not too far”—This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana, about a certain self-willed Brother. Asked by the Master whether the report was true that he was self-willed, the Brother said it was true. “This is not the first time, Brother,” said the Master, “that you have shewn yourself self-willed; you were just the same in bygone times as well.” And so saying, he told this story of the past.

Once on a time when Brahmadata was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta came to life as a drummer, and dwelt in a village. Hearing that there was to be a festival at Benares, and hoping to make money by playing his drum to the crowds of holiday-makers, he made his way to the city, with his son. And there he played, and made a great deal of money. On his way home with his earnings he had to pass through a forest which was infested by robbers; and as the boy kept beating away at the drum without ever stopping, the Bodhisatta tried to stop him by saying, “Don’t behave like that, beat only now and again, - as if some great lord were passing by.”

But in defiance of his father’s bidding, the boy thought the best way to frighten the robbers away was to keep steadily on beating away at the drum.

At the first notes of the drum, away scampered the robbers, thinking some great lord was passing by. But hearing the noise keep on, they saw their mistake and came back to find out who it really was. Finding only two persons, they beat and robbed them. “Alas!” cried the Bodhisatta, “by your ceaseless drumming you have lost all our hard-earned takings!” And, so saying, he repeated this stanza:-

Go not too far, but learn excess to shun;

For over-drumming lost what drumming won.

His lesson ended, the Master shewed the connexion and identified the Birth by saying, “This self-willed Brother was the son of those days, and I myself the father.”

APPENDIX 8

B.E.V.S.P.
Teachers' Professional Development (minutes)
22 June 2007
BSV

1. **Attendees:** Sue, Bernie, Ray, Dee, Serena, Helen, Shirani, Mala, Devika, Shirani, Laila, Carey, Sirini

2. **Apologies:** Judith McDonald, Andrea, Shamana, Judith

3. Motivation and Meditation

Aya Sucinta presented a motivational talk and mediation on Metta Sutta (Loving Kindness).

Discussion on morality.

4. **Offering of Dana** to Aya Sucinta.

5. **Working with Children Application:** Another police check that all workers with children need to obtain. Applications could be obtained from Australia Post.

6. **“Stages of Learning”** Department of Education paper

Sue presented overheads showing standards and frameworks which included Physical, personal, and social learning leading to how Buddhist religious instructions fits in the framework of the Victorian Education system. The following were some points from the Framework:

Level one covered:

- a) working in a team (small groups)
- b) interpersonal learning
- c) personal learning
- d) managing conflict

Level Two: learning focus

- a) maintenance of friendship
- b) positive social relationship

Level Three.

- a) physical
- b) personal learning: resilience, disposition, preparing students to life long learning

c) Social learning i.e. Empathy, compassion, generosity etc.

Level Four

- reflective activities
- positive attitudes
- social stories

Sue offered to send documents reflecting levels:

1. critical enquiry
2. imagination
3. reflection

Meaningful

In addition, respectful of culture.

Teachers could access more information from V.E.L.S. (Victorian Essential Learning Standards)

7. Making a Bodhi Tree (Serena presented information about classroom activities and benefits to students and teachers).

- Encouragement and guide to support students to show good deeds,
- Building on useful behaviours. Students develop and define good deed and behaviour.
- Growth of good deeds reflecting on the growth of the Bodhi Tree

The group discussed issues in relation to class management. Teachers share information.

8. The new curriculum – group work

Sue already sent class plans for Loving Kindness (3 lessons), Virtues, Acts of Kindness.

We broke into three groups to discuss and report on

- a) what is the Buddha/ the Buddha's mind
- b) impermanence
- c) loving-kindness

Each group reported their discussions, comments, changes.

The first group suggested that to explore the following:

- Buddha's image, what does it mean?
 - A symbol of best qualities and states i.e. seeing, being, listening etc.
- The Buddha was a real person, perfect person, who was reborn to become enlightened which we all can achieve if we follow the Dharma.

The second group discussed change/impermanence. They suggested that the teacher could start with him/herself, then to ask students about their experience of impermanence reflecting emotional, spiritual, famous sports people; giving examples of cooking, discussion on life and dealing with death.

- “Samsara Dog” book was suggested by one of the teachers, which explains what is an act of kindness.
- For teachers to set a measurable goal before the beginning of the term.
- To develop a “good deeds week”. To discuss what is the act of kindness?”
- To encourage students to bring back Bodhi Leaf.
- Discussions to include: appreciation, recognition, something new/something different, noticing what other children are doing.
- Encourage students to think about what kindness is? Give examples of good deeds that they can do
- To discuss empathy, generosity, bullying and friendships.

Group 3 Loving-kindness

-define what loving kindness means,
 Levels of loving kindness,
 Assist students to provide definition in their own levels,
 Give examples how to practice loving-kindness and how by practicing loving kindness we can reduce our own suffering and create change,
 For lessons to be inclusive.

August, 2007

APPENDIX 9

BCV Education Committee Report

June 22, 07

Aya Sucinta began the day by leading a meditation. After meditation her talk developed into a discussion session.

Aya spoke of the qualities of Joy, Virtue, Confidence, Solitude and Charity that combine to build strong and happy people, and recommended that we look to developing these qualities in our education program.

Aya also reminded us that karma is the underpinning of Buddhist morality and should be an essential part of the Buddhist curriculum. This point was taken up in later discussion and we explored the type of language we could use to explain this foreign term.

Cause and effect is readily understood in the physical world and could be used. Aya, suggested 'choice' and consequence.

The tenor of Aya's talk was to teach from a positive vantage point, such as morality/precepts being taught as positives, such as the benefits of caring and non-harm, rather than as prohibitive rules.

"Children need to learn rules, such as school rules, but need to explore the effects and results for themselves."

The group offered dana to Aya. We participated in the prayers and chanting of the Metta Sutta prior to our meal. The morning of our Professional Development day was like a meditation practise day. The perfect balance for Buddhists!

Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS)

While Buddhist Special Religious Instruction, as the Department of Education calls it, does not have a formal place within VELS the Buddhist program has the potential to make valuable contributions to several domains. Within Interpersonal Development and Personal Learning at Level 3 (Grade 3-4) and Level 4 (Grade 5-6) the skills of empathy, reflection and tolerant, non-bullying (kind?) behaviours are emphasised. In the Interdisciplinary Learning aspect of the curriculum Critical thinking, Creativity and Reflection are emphasised at all levels of learning.

Positive reinforcement is one of the best ways to learn. A Bodhi tree whose leaves are given to children for their good/ preferred behaviours was demonstrated by Serena. At Mt View Primary a lively and scattered class is being turned around with this tangible and beautiful reward system.

Working With Children Checks

These are replacing the Police Checks and must be lodged before December 2007. Forms are picked up from the Post Office, and also lodged there with interview. A passport photo is required, but as volunteers there is no charge for the check. At this time there is a large backlog and registrations are slow.

- Materials were scanned in to be printed for discussion at meeting
- 4 Modules of 10 weeks of lessons each were finalized for comments

- Teachers were divided into 3 groups. Each group was emailed 1 or 2 modules to study and comment on
Change and Impermanence – How we have changed – physical, emotional, spiritual, sports people, flowers etc.

Sue Smith June 22, 2007