The audience for the Friday night talks at Dhammaloka has grown within the past few months. At last count, there were more than three thousand people listening to the Dhamma Talks on Friday nights!

The Dhammaloka centre has always been packed with people on Friday nights for the meditation and subsequent Dhamma talk. However, with the introduction of live broadcast over the Internet, the numbers have grown drastically. More than three thousand people are logging in every Friday night from 8:00pm (Australian Western Standard Time +8 GMT) to listen and participate in the Dhamma talks.

We have viewers from many parts of the world, with the top 20 countries coming from North America, Europe, Asia including South East Asia, Middle East and Australasia. Besides listening to the talk, the viewers can post questions for the speaker and interact with other viewers in real-time. To do this, they need to register and log into live stream service on the Dhammaloka website (www.dhammaloka.org.au/dhammaloka-live.html). The speaker will try to answer as many questions as possible as time permits.

BSWA is no stranger to using the Internet for spreading the Buddha’s Teachings. The Friday Night Dhamma Talks have been uploaded on YouTube for people to listen to within a few days after the talk. A whole series of Dhamma talks have been converted to podcasts for audio downloads from the Dhammaloka website.

Last year, the Singapore Buddhist Fellowship donated funds for the purpose of building BSWA’s Internet infrastructure for disseminating the Dhamma to people around the world. With these new funds, the BSWA committee unanimously decided to undertake two projects - the live broadcast of Friday night talks and development of a mobile smart phone application.

Bo Schafers and Siok Gan undertook this challenge and they have done a remarkable job. Within a few short months, they worked tirelessly to source expertise, purchase the required infrastructure, develop the applications and test them out before rolling it out to the public.

A new section named Dhammaloka Live has been added to the Dhammaloka website. Live broadcasts of Friday Night Dhamma Talks (8pm AWST), Saturday Advanced Meditation (3pm AWST) and Sunday Sutta Classes (3pm AWST 2 and 4th Sundays) are streamed over the Internet.

Currently, the technology is limited to desktop browsers that support flash, i.e. Internet Explorer, Firefox or Chrome. A workaround can be used on some android devices that support flash using a non-mobile browser like Dolphin HD for viewing the live talks. Due to broadband limitations at this time, the live broadcasts do not work on the iPad, iPhone and other mobile devices.

To complement the live broadcasts, BSWA has developed a smart phone application for people to view the latest news about the centre, watch archived Dhamma talks and listen to Dhamma/Sutta podcasts.

We noticed that some people like to personalise their phones with interesting screen patterns and backgrounds. The Dhammaloka mobile app has a feature to display Buddhist quotes on the mobile phone screen. So the next time you look at your phone, you can find words of wisdom on your phone screen.

The mobile phone application is currently available on the Android marketplace. Those with Android phones can visit the Android marketplace and search for ‘Dhammaloka’. Install the Dhammaloka application and you can start using it.

An iPhone version has been developed and is awaiting approval from the Apple App Store. Please visit the Dhammaloka website for updates regarding the release of the mobile app for iPhone.

BSWA would like to hear feedback on your experience in using the mobile application and live broadcast services. Please let us know if you would like any new features to be included in future releases.

You can contact us with your comments and suggestions at publicity@bswa.org or webmaster@bswa.org.
Born in the Year of the Fire Dragon, I got to welcome in the Year of the Water Dragon at the Dhammaloka Centre on Friday the 3rd of February 2012. The Chinese New Year is always a spectacular event and this sense of festivity was not missed at the temple. People of Chinese decent threw out sweets to an unsuspecting crowd and most tried to catch them as if they were attempting some athletic feat.

This year is said to be the luckiest in the Chinese zodiac and for this reason many people were at Dhammaloka that night. The Dragon personality is said to be a symbol of good fortune and intense power. The Oriental Dragon is revered and respected, unlike the Western point of view where they were creatures that needed to be put to death for existing.

This powerful year was introduced by Dhammaloka’s most charismatic monk, Ajahn Brahm, with his usual array of witiness and life stories that teach us all to live better lives, hopefully achieving enlightenment along the way. We were doubly blessed as the hall was lined with monks who were in Perth for the International Conference on “Buddhism and Australia”. I do not think they expected such a spectacular event.

After the meditation and talk, the monks stayed in the hall while the rest of us went outside where we were sung a Chinese serenade and dancers did wonderful displays to welcome in the New Year. Soon after that, the Lion Dance Troupe from the Chow Kwoon Yarn Yee Tong Kung Fu Academy arrived. The time we were waiting for had come and the crowd gathered back in the hall.

The Lion Dance is a traditional Chinese custom. According to Chinese folklore, a monk was said to have had a prophetic dream where there were many sorrows and evils plaguing his land. The monk meditated and prayed to seek revelation about these evils and how they could be prevented. It was revealed that a lion would protect the land and help eradicate these evils. The lion, never before seen by the Chinese people, was perceived as the King of all beasts. The monk combined all the lucky talismans and magical animals that came to mind and henceforth made the lion.

Basic Lion Dance movements are said to originate from Chinese martial arts, hence the reason it was performed by the Chow Kwoon Yarn Yee Tong Kung Fu Academy. While some of us might have seen a Lion Dance before, the performance at Dhammaloka should not be missed. After all, where else can we get to see a Lion Dance upclose and get a chance to pet, not one but three lions. The crowd got into the mood and ‘fed’ the lions red envelopes full of money. As the red envelopes came, the lions ate them like sharks in frenzy.

The Lions then offered the red envelopes to Ajahn Brahm and the Sangha. The monks blessed the offering and we were shown displays of martial arts feats by the dancers out of costume, which added an interesting element to the evening. Once the martial arts display ended, the lions danced their way out of the Dhammaloka Hall to the sound of deep drums.

After the dance, we were given light refreshments outside and the occasion turned out to be quite a social event with people wishing each other a Happy New Year irrespective of age, race or ethnicity. The thousand year lion dance tradition brought a smile to everyone’s face, young and old, and hence the protectors of the land saw the Dragon enter with prosperity.

If you have never seen the Chinese lion dance before, you should come next year to welcome in year of the snake, and it seems a little serendipitous that I, the writer of this article, am born in the year of the dragon. May you all have a truly prosperous new year and may loving-kindness fill your heart with joy.

The Buddhist Society of Western Australia would like to thank the Chow Kwoon Yarn Yee Tong Kung Fu Academy for performing the Lion Dance and for their generous donation that will be used to further Dhamma related activities for the Buddhist community of Western Australia. BSWA would like to thank the many volunteers that brought food and put up the decorations as well as the talented singer and dancers that night. Your contributions made the night a success.
In Memory of Mrs Hazel Betts

by Jaipal Singh

Although she might not have known it, Mrs Hazel Betts has been a great source of wisdom to many of us through the stories and lessons from her life told to us by her son, Ajahn Brahmavamso Mahathera (Ajahn Brahm).

Mrs Betts had a good attitude to life, always living in the present and taking life as it comes. Although she suffered from dementia in her later years, she was always happy. This was most probably due to her good karma and innate wisdom, which she has passed on to her family, and indirectly to us through Ajahn Brahm’s talks.

Ajahn Brahm tells us to always live in the present, not to worry about the future because it has not happened yet or cling to the past as it has gone. He learnt this when as a child his mother told him that she was taking him to the dentist. He worried so much about going to the dentist and tried very hard to get out of going, but when the day came he found that the appointment was cancelled. All that worrying for nothing.

Likewise, Ajahn Brahm told us that his mother would store memorabilia on a mantelpiece. He said that when he once gave a toy wombat, his mother tried to put it on an already overcrowded mantelpiece and some other pieces fell off. Likewise, we need to let go of the past and make room on our mantelpiece to live in the present.

The difference between grief and non-grief is in how you perceive the situation. If you focus on the loss, you grieve. If instead you focus on how the departed person has enriched your life, you feel a sense of gratitude.

While many of us did not know her personally, many of us remember these stories given by Ajahn Brahm and through them, we remember the wisdom and kindness of Mrs Hazel Betts, who peacefully passed away on 16 February 2012 at the age of 83.

Contemplation on No Coming, No Going

This body is not me.
I am not limited by this body.

I am life without boundaries.
I have never been born, and I have never died.

Look at the ocean and the sky filled with stars, manifestations from my wondrous true mind.

Since before time, I have been free.
Birth and death are only doors through which we pass, sacred thresholds on our journey.

Birth and death are a game of hide- and seek.
So laugh with me, hold my hand, let us say good-bye, say good-bye, to meet again soon.

We meet today.
We will meet again tomorrow.

We will meet at the source every moment.
We meet each other in all forms of life.

- By Thich Nhat Hanh

Artwork courtesy of Ron Battersby
The KM ("Kalyana Mitta", which means "Spiritual Friend") group means something different to each member. To me, the KM group means noise and disruption, as I am the Librarian, and the group always meets in the library on a Saturday to talk about anything and everything. What it means to the other members depends on their role within the KM group and their degree of attachment to it.

The friends we find in the KM group offer us a rare opportunity to discuss issues we face in our lives with people who have a common interest in Dhamma. Though we all bring different backgrounds and different personalities to the group, we are united by our common interest in Dhamma. Without such a group, spiritual progress would be difficult, if not impossible.

Sometimes we go and play beach volleyball, or go indoor rock climbing, or go swimming at the beach or near a dam – i.e. worldly stuff. Other activities that we have done over the past couple of years include (but are not limited to): Bowling, ice-skating, bush walking, eating a lot of pizza, feeding homeless people, boat trips, more pizza (if you like pizza, it is worth joining for that alone), watching ordinations of Bhikkhus (monks) and Bhikkhunis (nuns), helping out at the monasteries and at Jhana Grove, organizing and participating in retreats.

We also receive regular talks from the monastic community with sometimes 30 or 40 people attending (such as when Venerable Sister Sudhamma, an American Bhikkhuni, gave a beautiful talk about the importance of "caganusati", which is the reflection on one's good deeds) and sometimes we have as few as 4 or 5 people attending (which is great because the talk can be much more relevant to those particular individuals). Either way, everybody wins.

One recent milestone for the KM group was completing our first ever (of what we hope will be on-going) fundraising walks; raising some much needed funds for the Nun’s sala building project. We all still feel inspired by the sense of fellowship that we felt before, during and after the walk from Nollamara to Gidgegannup (40km) achieved in one day. There is nothing like an epic journey to bring people together.

Naturally, we wish to out-do ourselves this year by walking from Serpentine to Gidgegannup via the rolling hills of the Bibbulmun track; it should be a challenging, yet scenic, walk. Though we haven’t crunched the numbers yet, we estimate the total journey should take about 4 days over approximately 100 kilometres. That is 2 and a half times further than last year’s walk, which left some of the more softer-footed walkers limping across the finish line. Only the toughest of the tough will make it this time.

But enough about walking, we also have other plans for 2012, such as:

· More talks from monastics (both monks and nuns).
· More physically active stuff, like volleyball and rock climbing.
· More fun stuff, like movie nights.
· We also plan to show a doco about Dhammasara, to fundraise for the new Sala building project.
· More giving back to the community.

If, after reading this, you are still interested, please come along to one of our events which you can find out about on facebook (username “Kalyana Mitta") or read on the notice board at Dhammaloka. The best way to find out what the KM group is all about is to come along and see for yourself.

Everyone is welcome.
A 40 acre piece of land at 2 Deldillia Follows, Serpentine has been purchased by BSWA on 9 February 2012 for $820,000.

This property is the beautiful forested hillside that can be seen from Jhana Grove looking West. It has semi flat areas taking advantage of the views East back up the valley and West to the coast. There is access to this land from Jhana Grove as well as from Firns Road (off Scrivener Road).

The property has high voltage power and a transformer on site. It also has a good source of water as two major water courses pass through the property.

This property was purchased by Eddy Fernando, acting on behalf of BSWA, together with Ajahn Brahm, Dennis Sheppard and Wenghong Lam. He got a very fair price for it and BSWA would like to thank him for settling the sale of this property.

This property would provide a buffer for Jhana Grove and could be used as an hermitage for overflow from Bodhinyana. It will play an important role in providing new and expanded services to both the monastics and lay practitioners of the Dhamma.
Ajahn’s Travels

Since the last Enlightened Times, Ajahn Brahm has made a few trips to teach the Dhamma worldwide. In late November/early December, he travelled through East Malaysia giving talks in several cities. On his way back, he stopped in Singapore for a talk and a few days later attended the 7th Global Conference on Buddhism in Jakarta.

Back again in Malaysia later in December, he lead a retreat at the Mahindarama Temple in Penang. Ajahn stayed put through January then headed off to tour Hong Kong. This included a 6 day retreat, a public talk, a “Dialogue between two masters”, a one day retreat and “A Night to Remember” - a fund raiser for Dhammasara Nun’s Monastery. At an auction his cushion of 20 years went for about AUD $30,000!

Comings and Goings

The monastery has been remarkably stable, with almost a full house and few monks arriving or leaving. In January, Anagarika Danny became Samanera Sallekha. Samanera Upasama spent a few weeks in Taiwan between December and February. Bhante Sangharata had his visa and was able to return from Singapore after a long wait.

Ajahn Appicato and Bhante Jhanarato went on pilgrimage to Sri Lanka with Ajahn Nissarano, Ajahn Vayama and Venerable Seri and a small number of lay folk. The trip lasted about two weeks in late January to early February. Afterwards, Ajahn Appicato went on by himself to Chiang Rai for another 18 days.

Venerable Mahesi has left Bodhinyana to spend time with Bhante Jaganatho in Victoria and has no fixed plans for returning to Bodhinyana. Finally we have a new community member. Samanera Sasanadhaja, a German man ordained as a novice in Burma, has come to stay.

Buildings and Maintenence

Work at the monastery is slow and steady. Bodhinyana has reached the "sweet spot" where our building work is minimal and the existing buildings require little maintenance.

We have poured two more concrete ceilings and done some minor renovations on the kutis. The work continues to clear the forest of fuel, particularly around the huts. Ajahn Cittapalo has been using the polesaw to create vertical firebreaks. Venerable Sangharata has been doing some woodworking for the library.

Our garden, having been greatly affected by the dry winter of 2010 is being rejuvenated with much planting and mulching. On a particularly windy day, we lost two clotheslines when a tree branch fell, and replacements were made at the monastery workshop. Venerable Abhayaratana is living in the retreat kuti now and is helping with some renovations.

Jhana Grove Meditation Retreat Centre

Jhana Grove has had a successful 9 day retreat in January with Ajahn Brahm, a weekend retreat using the recorded videos and a sutta retreat from March 2-4th with Ajahn Brahmali.

As Jhana Grove is utilised for more and more retreats, we would like to thank Christina Yew for volunteering her time. Her help and contribution is greatly appreciated.

In terms of building and maintenance, the water treatment system is almost set and hopefully will neutralise the problem of high acidity. The roof walkway from the teacher's cottage to cottage 1 is still under construction.

The gardens are undergoing continual maintenance. We have been fortunate. There has been some fires and storm damage to the area, but no serious damage to Jhana Grove.

The First Bhikkhuni Ordination

The first Bhikkhuni Ordination at Dhammasara Monastery took place on Thursday, 1st March 2012 at 8 am. The two nuns – Venerable Pasada from Santi Forest Monastery, New South Wales and Venerable Munissara from Nirodaram Meditation Centre, Thailand - were ordained by the Bhikkhuni Sangha. Their preceptor was Venerable Tathaaloka Bhikkhuni Theri, from USA.

In attendance were Ayya Sudhamma and Ven Sujato from Santi Forest Monastery.

In the late afternoon at 7.15pm, the two Bhikkhunis presented themselves to the Bhikkhu Sangha at Bodhinyana Monks Monastery, Serpentine for a brief Sangha Kamma (Ceremony) to confirm the ordination.

The first Bhikkhuni ordination at Dhammasara Monastery will be covered extensively in our next issue.
Dhammasara (Nuns) Monastery

Community

Anagarika Nadene Ng’s Occupational Trainee Nomination has been approved. Her visa was subject to condition 8503 - No Further Stay. Therefore, she had to leave Australia in February and lodged her 442 visa application in Malaysia.

In April, Analeya from Taiwan will be joining the community as an anagarika. Dulani, who spent the Rains here, will also be ordained as an anagarika soon after. We are truly delighted that these talented ‘young ones’ are taking up the monastic path.

Soon we will be a community of 9 residents as well as the many visiting Sangha and lay guests. With the large number of enquiries coming in, the accommodation building project is now a high priority (see below).

Activities

Venerables Nirodha and Hasapanna joined Venerable Ajahn Brahm in Hong Kong in February for teachings and a fund raising event “The Best of Ajahn Brahm”. Over HK$1 million was raised (approx AUD $120,000) and there is more coming in. Sadhu to this exceptional generosity!

The co-abbots were truly touched by the warmth and hospitality of the Bhavana Meditation Centre group, in Ven. Nirodha’s words “It felt like one big family”. A great thank you to the Buddhistdoor Centre, particularly Ven. Dhammapala, for making our stay so comfortable. We came back with many things to be given for free distribution.

Ven. Hasapanna gave two talks while in Hong Kong, including her inaugural talk in Cantonese. We had many a good Dhamma discussion with the women there and also enjoyed meeting other Bhikkhunis.

Ven. Hasapanna along with Anagarika Lin were in Malaysia in December for three weeks visiting family. They also made a short trip to Nirodharam Bhikkhuni Arama in Thailand. Ven. Hasapanna gave several talks in both countries.

The Bodhi Tree Sapling in quarantine at Murdoch University has been released and is now in the verandah of our Vihara. A formal ceremony to plant the Bodhi Tree Sapling into the ground will be announced (probably in November).

The co-abbots have been taking turns teaching at Dhammaloka once a month as well as attending funerals. In particular, we will remember Millie Wong who passed away suddenly on February 14th for her generosity to all, regardless of class or creed, human or animal. She has supported Dhammasara from the very beginning, and pss (the monastery cat) would not be well and happy today if not for Millie’s generosity. We will also remember Ron Storey for his many generosities, particularly books for our library. Our condolences to both families.

On the 6th of January, a fire started at the end of Reen Rd but was superbly controlled by the fire brigade. We put our evacuation plan into action but fortunately nothing more came of it!

Three Sangha members attended Ven. Dhammajiva’s retreat in December and two more attended Ajahn Brahm’s retreat in January.

Coming and Going

Our preceptor, Ayya Tathaaloka Bhikkhuni and Ven. Sobhana Bhikkhuni, both from USA, arrived in February for two weeks. We have been fortunate to receive their teachings and share their many years of experience with us. Samaneri Pasada from Santi, NSW, and Sameneri Nissara from Nirodharam Bhikkhuni Arama, Thailand, are with us once again for some months. Ven. Sudhamma Bhikkhuni will be with us for a few days.

We have had a number of senior Sangha members visit Dhammasara while on their teaching tours in Perth. Ven. Dhammajiva from Sri Lanka, and Ven. Nissarano, along with his teacher Ven. Vimalanayana, also from Sri Lanka visited in December and January respectively. Two senior Vietnamese bhikkhus along with a bhikkhuni visited us in November. Finally, a group of monastics including a very senior bhikkhuni, Ven. Dr. Bhikkhuni Jampa Tsedroen, from Germany and academics headed by Ajahn Sujato made a flying visit following the International Conference on “Buddhism and Australia” in February at Murdoch University (which we also attended).

Building and Maintenance

We have installed two compost toilets (ingeniously housed in a modified water tank) to service the group of kutis in the valley and also at the campsite. They were council-approved. A simple portable garage was erected to protect the minibus.

To stabilise Stupa 2, sandpads and a geofabric blanket turned out to be the cheapest and most suitable option. Thank you John Field for doing all this.

Eric is in the process of building a huge covered meditation platform for stupa 2. With the help of his Sri Lankan friends it was safely moved to its location. Analeya, Nadene and Sr. Upekha were the painters!

Sala Complex Project

Thanks to a great deal of generosity we are now in a position, financially, to begin the underground building work for the sala complex (electricity, water and sewerage) and also begin building the accommodation pods. Plans are being finalised and we are awaiting quotations and council approval shortly.

The accommodation pods were modified to save costs. The two cottages now have a single roof with a breezeway in-between. There are a total of 12 bedrooms, common toilets, showers, laundry and disability facility accessed to some rooms.

We are fortunate to have generous and kind help coming from all quarters. In particular, John Field, who has built Buddhist monasteries in the past in NSW, is our project manager and he brings with him many good contacts and conveniently lives nearby.

Phillip Harvey, another tradesperson who has been of great assistance and generosity, has donated his published poetry for fundraising toward the two stupa projects, these are available at Dhammasara.

The stupas are likely to be completed in May/June. Please check Dhammasara website often for updates.
Introducing the new BSWA Committee Members for 2012. Each role is a voluntary position to enable the Buddhist Society to function well and efficiently and to serve the Buddhist and wider communities. Throughout the year there will be calls for extra volunteers to assist with ongoing activities as well as special events and functions. If you would like to contribute your time or skills, please contact the relevant General Committee Member or Non-Committee Support Volunteer with your details. If you are unsure of whom to contact, please direct your enquiries to the Assistant Secretary.

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Ajahn Brahmavamso
Abbot of Bodhinyana Monastery

Venerable Nirodha
Co-Abess of Dhammasara Monastery

Venerable Hasapanna
Co-Abess of Dhammasara Monastery

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2012 and Beyond

Introducing the Incoming President

On behalf of the new committee, I’d like to thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve the Buddhist Society in 2012, and share with you some important aims for this year.

Firstly I must give thanks to Dennis Sheppard, an able and dynamic President for the past three years, plus all of the committee members who have done so much in the past years to make our job that much easier in 2012.

As your new President, if you don’t know me already, I am Philip Ragan. I’ve been a member of the Buddhist Society for seven years now, and the teachings of the Buddha, as brought to us by Ajahn Brahm and all of our spiritual leaders, has changed my life, dramatically, for the better, although for the first few years I made a very stubborn student!

In 2005, I had the privilege of going to India on the pilgrimage with Ajahn Brahm and our party. It was both easy and difficult, in the best Buddhist tradition! I probably annoyed Ajahn Brahm greatly on that tour (if a monk can be annoyed, that is), yet it was at the Rains Retreat that I had my first deep experience of meditation and it was like, wow, so this is what it is like! Sitting under the famous Bodhi Tree to meditate was an experience none of us will forget.

In 2005/06, I also served as Treasurer. I was under the impression that I was volunteering to help the Buddhist Society, whereas later I realised that it was the opposite – the Buddhist Society was volunteering to help me!

Now being older and wiser (why do we say that? We never get younger and wiser), I look forward to working with our spiritual leaders, and our loved members of our community, to increase the joy that we experience in our shared love of the Buddha.

Our committee comprises ten people, but there are another dozen assistants with them, plus our employees, caretakers and probably over a hundred people who volunteer to do all of the various roles that make our society function.

We are all needed and valued, and from year to year, we all move around and take turns in the various roles. The depth of past experience among our volunteers is amazing and as a raw recruit to the President role, you can be sure I’ll be bending many an ear to benefit from everyone’s experience!

Everyone on the committee has a specific role, such as looking after the accounts, handling communications, IT, and so on, all vitally important. But the presidential role is different. The role encompasses having a broad picture of everything that is going on, while considering how to manage, and hopefully improve, our society through the next year.

The major building project of the year will be the new sala at Dhammasara Nuns Monastery, and the fundraising to enable us to go ahead with it. Other works include the office extension at Dhammaloka, works at Jhana Grove and various smaller jobs.

Since being offered the opportunity to take over the reins from Dennis Sheppard, I have realised that a lot goes on in our Society that I’ve not previously been aware of, so I’ve been making a point of attending all that I can, talking to members and absorbing ideas about what we can do to improve our shared life together.

The community of monks.

In this article, rather than discuss roles or jobs, I want to think about, and get to know, our members. While we are one Society, we are comprised of a number of groups of people, and needs, and it is helpful to think about our various communities, of which there are a surprisingly large number:

· Our spiritual leaders and their teachings, which is what we are here for.
· The community of monks.
· The community of nuns.
· Our relationship in the region, especially with societies and monasteries in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand.

· Our Australian community, including our many members hailing from Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and elsewhere.
· Our Thai community that meets Saturday and Sunday mornings.
· The Armadale group.
· Jhana Grove and our meditation retreats.
· Young people attending, with a desire to learn how Buddhism can help their lives.
· New people who roll up for the very first time.
· Families and children.

Making us feel part of a wonderful community

In talking to our lay community, three ideas come up frequently:

1. Improve the social interaction between our members.

It’s too easy to come along Friday night, quietly meditate, listen to the talk, and go home without speaking to anyone! Let’s make the effort to get to know each other. Perhaps we will arrange some activities compatible with our way of life, such as bushwalks, picnics or simple events that give us the opportunity to socialise, or enjoy an activity with likeminded people. After all the Buddha said that spiritual friends are the whole of the spiritual life. So the next time you are here, smile at the person next to you and introduce yourself after the talk.

2. New people coming along need a helping hand to understand meditation and to feel welcome.

True, we have introductory meditation classes, but the phrase that keeps getting repeated is “stepping stones”. What other events, courses, activities could we put together as stepping stones, taking people from the outside world, giving some additional guidance and
The Buddhist Tale of the Monkey

by Fiona Nichols

Letters to the Editor

Many would be familiar with the popular TV programme of the 70s and 80s known as “Monkey”. This was my first real exposure to Buddhism as a child as it aired on the ABC every weekday. You have only to ask what is the story behind it?

It was based on one of the Great novels of Chinese literature known as “Journey to the West”, whereby a Buddhist monk was given a task by Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara to travel to India on a pilgrimage to obtain the sacred suttas and bring them back to mainland China. The four main protagonists of the story were Sun Wukong, Tan Sanzang who was the white dragon horse, Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing.

This classic was written in the Ming dynasty (16th Century) by Wu Cheng’en and in English speaking countries is simply known as “Monkey”. The novel is a fictionalised version of the legendary pilgrimage to India by the Buddhist monk Xuanzang and the story is loosely based on historical texts.

“Journey to the West” has its roots in Chinese folk religion and mythology and has cultured the value system of the Chinese people today. The protectors have their roots in Taoist immortals and the tale of the monk in Buddhist bodhisattvas. The tale serves as an allegory for one’s journey to enlightenment.

In the TV series, Monkey is punished by Buddha for having run amok and is finally rescued by the monk Tripitaka (loosely based on Xuanzang). We all know that Tripitaka (or three baskets) is the collection of Buddhist scriptures but according to this show was the name of the monk. When Monkey was released, he initially refuses to help Tripitaka in his quest to gain the suttas from India.

Henceforth, Tripitaka placed a gold band on Monkey’s head to make him obey his commands whenever he chants. This is an allegory for controlling our “Monkey Mind”. They are joined by a Water Spirit by the name of Sandy and Pig God which is interested in food and ladies by the name of Pigsy.

Pigsy often gets the four of them into trouble with Monkey having to rescue them. Monkey is the hero of the story, Pigsy the mischief-maker and Sandy the philosopher. Tripitaka follows the Buddhist principles of non violence to solve problems, often proclaiming to Monkey: “No violence, Monkey!”

This TV show is very entertaining and never takes itself seriously but does espouse Buddhist values the whole way through. If you have had a long week at work, it would be good to sit down and watch this TV series. It is light enough for children and adults will appreciate the humour. I once heard Ajahn Brahm say: “Buddhism is about enjoying yourself!” and has often proclaimed himself as the comic monk. I think that if Ajahn Brahm had seen this show, he would be in stitches.

3. Think of the space that exists, somewhere between counselling, psychology, and Buddhism, and what we could create that adds to the many great services we already have.

Earlier this year we had a visit from the Venerable Amanaratho, at Nanga Bushcamp, who gave us a taste of what can be offered in this space. His visit to us must have been timely, given what we’d like to do, and we are hopeful that he will choose to rejoin us later in the year to assist in this sort of program.

We could visualise a whole host of courses, events, lectures, activities, all coordinated in a program to steer new people from start to meditation, making it fun and enjoyable along the way.

The year ahead will be a big one for volunteers and events that will bring us all together and make our Society a welcoming one for new members, and if you feel inspired to volunteer to help, in any way, small or large, we’d love to hear from you. If you have a useful contribution to offer, or further ideas, let us know!

In addition to the ideas outlined above, if you have ideas or thoughts you’d like to share, please talk to me, or you can also contact me at president@bswa.org and at 0438 991 262.

With metta Phil Ragan

counselling on life’s problems (which is often why they’ve turned up in the first place), introducing and expanding on concepts such as “me”, “the mind”, “living in the present moment”, “clearing the mobile mind”, “how and why it works”, through to “basic meditation”, “advanced meditation” and what we expect to achieve through meditation.

Communication

It is easy to think of Dhammaloka as simply a base for the Friday night talk, but in reality a dozen events happen every weekend. This raises communication as an issue, and we’ll be building on the great work of Bo, Michael, Christina and the last committee, to make it easy to answer that question “who is speaking on Friday night?” plus enticing you to join in a whole program of events over each weekend.

So we’ll work to ensure our web site calendar is always up to date, and if you are on Facebook you can “like” our “Buddhist Society of Western Australia” page to get regular updates and reminders, then you don’t even have to ask!
Upcoming Activities

Dhammaloka
- Chanting, Guided Meditation and Dhamma Talk - Every Friday, 7pm-9pm.
- Beginner’s Meditation Class - Every Saturday, classes starts 1st Sat of the Month, 3pm-4:15pm.
- On-going Meditation Class - Every Saturday, 3pm-4:15pm.
- Sutta Study Group - 2nd & 4th Sunday of the Month, 3pm - 4:15pm.
- Dhamma School for Children - Every Sunday, 9:15am - 10:15am.
- Living Buddhism Group – 2nd & 4th Friday of the Month, 5:30pm - 7pm.
- Sangha Dana - Every Weekend, 10am.

Armadale Meditation Group
Meditation Class - every Tuesdays, 7pm - 8:30pm

Dhammaloka Library Opening Hours
FRIDAY: 6.00 - 7.30pm (closes, then reopens) 9.00 - 10.00pm
SATURDAY: 2.00 - 3.00pm (closes then reopens) 4.15 - 5.00pm

Meditation Retreats at Jhana Grove Retreat Centre
Nine Day Retreats • 5th - 14th April (Ajahn Brahm), 16th - 25th November
Weekend Retreats • 1st - 3rd June

Vesak Day Festivities at Dhammaloka
Vesak Day Festivities will be held at Dhammaloka on 6 May 2012 (Sunday), starting from 9am until late evening. This will be followed by a Vesak Silent Meditation Day on 7 May 2012 (Monday).

Songkran Festival
The Thai New Year or Songkran Festival will be held at the Constance Nanson Reserve, adjacent to Dhammaloka on Sunday, 15 April 2012 between 11am-3pm. This event will be jointly held with the Thai-Australian Association of WA. Visitors are kindly asked to park at designated parking areas so as not to inconvenience the neighbours.

Support the Buddhist Society of WA and enjoy huge savings on food and fun activities!
The Entertainment™ Book is a local restaurant and activity guide that provides valuable 25% to 50% off and 2-for-1 offers from many of the finest restaurants in Australia. It also has discounts on activities including movies, shopping, fun parks, theatre, accommodation and so much more! To find out more, go to http://www.entertainmentbook.com.au

Books are $65 each and all funds raised will go towards our wonderful Buddhist Society, helping monks, nuns and lay people walk this beautiful path of happiness. The savings from the deals easily pays for the cost of book many times over. Books will be available in May and are valid for one year.
To order, please go to the following link: https://www.entertainmentbook.com.au/orderbooks/872g03

Remember to choose the correct edition depending on where you live. Eg. Perth, Sydney, Melbourne etc. Books can be picked up in person from Dhammaloka Centre in Nollamara, or posted out by registered or regular post.

For any enquiries, please contact Joanne on 0431 849 483