It was a joyous and momentous occasion, when on November 25, 2012, a sapling taken from the ancient Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi tree of Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka was planted in Australian soil at Dhammasara Nuns Monastery before a huge gathering of almost thirty monks and nuns and nearly two thousand well-wishing laypeople.

The tender sapling was implanted in the beautiful circular enclosure specially built to house it. If one looks up, one could see it surrounded by towering Eucalyptus trees – so quintessentially Australian – in what seemed like a gentle and welcoming embrace.

The scene was rich in symbolism, heralding the establishment of Buddhism, and particularly the Bhikkhuni Sangha, in Australia. Since the Buddha's lifetime, the Bodhi tree has traditionally been used to represent the Buddha and his enlightenment, which he attained while sitting under the Bodhi tree in Bodhgaya.

In 236 BCE, the southern branch of that original Bodhi tree was taken by the enlightened Bhikkhuni Sanghamitta Theri to Anuradhapura when she traveled to Sri Lanka to establish the Bhikkhuni Sangha there, from where it subsequently spread to the rest of the world.

Now a sapling from that historical tree has been planted in a monastery of modern-day Bhikkhunis whose ordination lineage traces back to Sanghamitta, and indeed back to the Buddha himself.

Last year, Dhammasara had been selected from hundreds of applicants worldwide to receive the sapling sprouted from the very rare seeds produced by the ancient tree in recognition of Dhammasara's contributions to furthering the Buddhadasana and the Bhikkhuni Sangha in Australia, particularly in establishing and maintaining an independent forest monastery.
for Theravada Buddhist nuns, which is rare to find anywhere in the world.

In November 2011, the co-abbots of Dhammasara Monastery, Venerable Nirodha Bhikkhuni and Venerable Hasapanna Bhikkhuni, together with Samaneri Karunika and Ber Sun traveled to Sri Lanka to bring the sapling safely back to Australia. At Anuradhapura, they were graciously received by Venerable Dr. Pallegama Sirinivasa Atamasthanadhipathi Nayaka Maha Thero, a very senior monk in Sri Lanka who serves as guardian of the country's 8 holy Buddhist sites, including the Bodhi tree at Anuradhapura.

A year later, it was a great honor to have the opportunity to welcome the Venerable Nayaka Mahathero to Dhammasara, along with Venerable Kallanchiye Rathanasiri Maha Thero and Venerable Kirinde Nyanadharshana and a delegation of lay supporters who had kindly come all the way from Sri Lanka to participate in the planting ceremony.

What they experienced at Dhammasara on November 25 may not have been the most representative of daily life at this normally quiet forest monastery! In addition to the monks from Sri Lanka, the great assembly of Sangha present included Ajahn Brahm and a large contingent of monks from Bodhinyana Monastery, Venerable Beruwala Sri Sobitha Nayaka Mahathero from the Sri Lankan Vihara in Kenwick, monks from the Cambodian temple, Samaneri Visuddha from Armadale, and of course the entire Dhammasara nuns' community.

Laypeople were also out in force, both young and old, including a great many long-standing supporters of Dhammasara. Around a thousand joined in for the grand procession from the Nun's Cottage to the Bodhi tree enclosure located near the site of Stupa 2.

The colorful parade reflected well the multicultural nature of the Buddhist community in Perth. Headed up by traditional Sri Lankan drummers and little boys in costume as Sri Lankan kings, it also included Thai ladies dressed in traditional costume as devas, multi-ethnic representatives of the Buddhist community holding traditional Sri Lankan ceremonial banners, including one specially designed by one of the Dhammasara nuns, and even an elephant (really two very patient ladies inside a remarkably realistic elephant costume)!

Despite the very large number of people, the parade proceeded in a peaceful and harmonious fashion, punctuated by the joyous cries of “Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!” which came especially enthusiastically from the little ones. Who said going to a monastery was boring!

After the procession had reached the Bodhi tree enclosure site, the sapling was ceremonially planted by the Venerable Nayaka Mahathero and Ajahn Brahm, and then watered by all the Dhammasara nuns. The monks and nuns then did some paritta chanting, especially rousing given the large number of sangha present. Speeches were also given by the senior monks and nuns.

Overall everything went quite smoothly, a testament to the hard work and goodwill of a great many people. While the event itself lasted only a few hours, it had actually involved many months of planning and preparation, which had given people a wonderful opportunity to come together for a wholesome cause and meet like-minded people. Many lay volunteers (some not even Buddhist!) had given very generously of their time, effort, and resources, working many late nights and weekends.

All the costs of the event had been entirely funded by private donors from the multi-ethnic Buddhist community, including generous donations of fresh flowers, drinking water, and sweets for the many children who came for the big day. Young ones had even come to the monastery prior to the event to clean up the site and pitch in with other preparations.

A special thank you is also due to the team that managed the parking of over 400 cars – a challenging task to say the least. The growing but still relatively small monastic community at Dhammasara had also pulled together and worked hard to put on the large-scale event.

Amidst all the fanfare of the ceremony, in his talk Ajahn Brahm offered a gentle reminder of the deeper meaning it contained. He said, one should not only do the “easy worship” of offering flowers, candles, and incense to the Buddha. The most profound way to pay respect to the Buddha is by remembering and practicing his teachings. Ajahn especially encouraged laypeople to keep the five precepts, and for all to develop the Noble Eightfold Path of Sila-Samadhi-Panna (good actions, concentration and wisdom).

“Building a monastery is one thing, but the next stage in Dhammasara's development is to build enlightened nuns,” he continued. That's no small order, Ajahn, but who knows? Perhaps one day when the Bodhi sapling at Dhammasara has grown into a beautiful tree, a nun sitting under it will become enlightened…if not before!
Sunday, Nov 4 2012, was a overcast day with periodic rain falling on the hills at Serpentine, Western Australia. However, the rain did not deter more than a thousand people who visited Jhana Grove Retreat Centre to celebrate the end of the rains retreat (Vassa). The crowd gathered early and the carpark was filled with cars by 9:30am. Thankfully, Prem and his army of volunteers deftly directed traffic to alternate parking areas, ensuring a smooth flow of traffic.

The volunteers were a hive of activity, making sure that everything was prepared for the start of the official ceremony. Some of them helped to setup the dana hall and food for the pindapata while others arranged seating in the main hall for the ceremony.

Before the ceremony, devotees were lining up to offer robes to the Sangha. Ajahn Brahm, as the Abbot, accepted the robes on behalf of the Sangha. He later told that offering robes to the entire Sangha is of higher merit than offering robes to a single member of the Sangha.

To start the event, the Sangha led everyone in taking refuge and the five precepts. Ajahn Brahm gave a blessing to all who were present and a short talk. Everyone then moved outside to offer dana for the monks on pindapata. The line of lay people offering dana was very long, covering almost the whole of Jhana Grove.

After lunch, the Thai Association, along with their mascot led a procession around the centre. The kids were captivated by the mascot and many people posed for photographs with the mascot.

Soon after lunch, everyone gathered in the Shrine hall for the offering of the Royal Kathina Cloth from His Majesty the King of Thailand. After the Kathina ceremony, Ajahn Brahm explained that the Sangha practises democracy as the Sangha members choose among themselves whom to offer the Royal Kathina Cloth to for making the robe for that year. The members of the Sangha unanimously chose Ajahn Brahmali to be the recipient of the Royal Kathina Cloth this year. Ajahn Brahm also explained the history and meaning of Kathina.

After the ceremony, volunteers offered to take people on a walk of the new property bought by BSWA in Serpentine. Even though it was raining, the weather did not impact the event. It was funny how the weather behaved itself. It only rained when everyone was in the Shrine hall and stopped raining when the activities was outdoors, such as the offering of dana.

BSWA would like to thank the many volunteers who helped setup Jhana Grove, directed traffic and more importantly, cleaned up the place after everything was over. It was a big task but it was organised well. Having the Kathina ceremony at Jhana Grove made it easier in terms of logistics for such a large crowd.

With the excellent Sangha and many lay supporters in Western Australia, may the Buddha Sasana grow ever stronger for many, many more years to come.

Kathina is name of the frame used to make robes by the Sangha. Typically, members of the Sangha would work together to sew a robe. It is a practise of cooperation within the Sangha as they have to work together to sew a robe. The word Kathina literally means “hard,” and it also connotes stability and durability. So, Kathina is not just about cloth; it is also about firm commitment to monastic life.
Dhammasara Nun’s Monastery celebrated the end of rains on Sunday, November 11, 2012. Volunteers helped setup tents to house the food offerings brought by the lay supporters for the dana to be held later. The tents were quickly filled out with food as people arrived.

Outside the main hall, volunteers were selling the new book, “Wisdom Born of Stillness”. The book was snapped up quickly as it not only contains words of wisdom but the proceeds go towards supporting the Dhammasara Building fund.

The main hall was soon overflowing with people. The Bhikkunis started the ceremony with the offering of three refuges and five precepts. After a short talk, the members of sangha performed a paritta chant or blessing to mark the end of the rains.

Upon completion of the paritta chanting, the lay devotees stood along the walkway with a bowl of rice to offer dana to the monastics. The line of people kept growing with the young moving back to make way for the elderly to offer dana first. It was very heartening to see a large number of nuns go on the pindapata.

After the dana, the lay followers had their own meal. A lot of care was given in the preparation of the food and it showed as the food was bountiful and delicious. After lunch, the people were in for a treat.

Ven. Hasapanna and a few other nuns took the lay devotees on a bushwalk to show the beautiful grounds of the monastery. They first visited a typical nun’s kuti, in this case Ven. Hasapanna’s own kuti. The kuti’s come with an ensuite and is very spartan. They have a covered walkway for the nuns to practise walking meditation. Everyone then visited Stupa 2 which was still under construction. From there, we could see the enclosure where the Bodhi Tree was to be planted in two weeks time. Along the way, Ven. Hasapanna pointed out a few cubby houses. While they look like regular cubby houses, it is not for children to play in but for meditators to sit in solitude to practise meditation.

After that, some people left the monastery while the more adventurous ones followed the nuns for a 1 hour round trip hike through the hills to visit stupa 1. Unlike stupa 2, stupa 1 is complete and overlooks the monastery. Everyone got back tired but happy.

Overall, it was a good day, full of blessings for everyone. The growth in numbers, of the Bhikkhuni Sangha and lay supporters, is very heartening. May the light of Dhamma shine ever brighter for everyone.
Nanga Weekend Bush Camp
By Rosemary Mero

BSWA organised yet another remarkable camp that was enjoyed by participants at Nanga. The camp was facilitated by Venerable Amaranatho.

The emphasis of the camp was on being in the present and telling our story over the weekend. We started with paying our respects to the traditional owners of the land and expressing our gratitude to them for being able to commune and connect with the land and its nature.

To me, the highlight of this camp was the homely camp fire burning all weekend on the verandah of Bellevue Cottage overlooking the bush. The constant glow of warmth and the comfort of the fire was conducive to the unfolding stories over the three days.

We were able to sit and reflect in a favourite part of the bush, being mindful of the exquisite beauty and allowing it’s inspiration to evoke our story. Sharing our stories with each other forged a strong bond of friendship to such an extent that the 'Friends of Nanga' social group was formed. We have organised several different wholesome activities, such as walks, theatre nights, etc. for us to enjoy the company of good Dhamma Friends.

Once again, thank you Venerable Amaranatho for your brilliant facilitation and to fellow Nanga meditators for your openness and friendship.

'Friends of Nanga' at the Nanga Bush Weekend Camp

A Star Rises in the East

You were born in a country,
Where Buddha is unknown
But you sought His infinite light,
And captured it for the world

Having struggled to the apex
Of the mountain of academia,
You let go of sensual pleasures,
Finding freedom in orange robes,
Under the Great Ajahn Cha,

And what a task, what a task,
Bringing Dhamma to the Western sphere,
A tidal wave of positive energy,
You awakened the spirit of Buddha,
Within people deep asleep,

To me you seem,
More than a man
But a being called down
By Sakra himself
From your heavenly abode,

Now you sit,
Before us Canadians
Extending your great compassion,
Please accept my garland of verses
As a token of my gratitude

- Kalinga Mendis, Ajax, ON
Bodhinyana (Monks) Monastery

The rains retreat began on August 2nd this year. We have a full house of 20 monks and novices as well as a complement of anagarikas and lay residents. A Sri Lankan monk, Venerable Damita, arrived just in time for the beginning of the rains. Since he only has a three month visa will be departing the day after the end of the rains.

Ajahn Brahm made one short trip during the rains to support the sangha at Santi Forest Monastery. Things are still being restructured there following the resignation of Ajahn Sujato as abbot. Ajahn Brahm spent a few days there and returned to Bodhinyana.

Ajahn Brahm was on personal retreat for two weeks. During that time, an arsonist set fire to the bush at Jhana Grove and Venerable Buddharakkhit found the body of a man who had hung himself in February. Ajahn Brahm feels he can't leave us alone for a moment without hell breaking loose!

However, our sympathies are with the family of the man who died. There had been a large scale search for the man when his car was found abandoned up at the lookout next to the monastery. Perhaps now the family will have some closure.

Venerable Nyanavaro made two visits to the new Bunbury Meditation Group, staying for a weekend on both occasions. He was accompanied by anagarika Neal.

Our monks have continued to support the community when required. This includes a number of funerals and hospital visits.

Finally, we have just welcomed a small group of Indonesians from the Ehi Passiko group. They have turned up in "Kangaroo Guru" t-shirts and some photos of Ajahn Brahm's "Opening the Door of Your Heart 3", which like the other two is a number 1 best seller in Indonesia.

Jhana Grove Meditation Retreat Centre

Things have been going very smoothly at Jhana Grove over the rains retreat. Rains retreatants having been doing their retreat at Jhana Grove over the past 3 months and the PIMG group had a 9 day retreat in September.

The Buddhist Fellowship of Singapore commenced their 9 day retreat at Jhana Grove at the end of October, followed by the Kathina ceremony for Bodhinyana Monastery on November 4th.

Burn offs have been done on the property to lessen the fuel load and a fire break has been extended to protect the property and people from potential bush fires.
It is with great pleasure that we announce that the Buddhist Society of Western Australia (BSWA) is no longer confined to Australia. BSWA is now a global brand!

BSWA was established in 1983 as the first Theravada Buddhist forest monastery for monks in the southern hemisphere. The present abbot of Bodhinyana Monastery, Ajahn Brahmavamso Mahathera (known to all as Ajahn Brahm), is the spiritual director of BSWA.

One of the core missions of BSWA is to propagate the Buddha’s Teachings. We have managed to do this with the support of many people, particularly from South East Asia as well as in Australia. Through their continuous support, we have many monastics who deliver excellent talks and meditation retreats in Perth, Western Australia.

Recent upgrades to our internet services have allowed us to deliver live streaming services through the Dhammaloka’s own global digital TV station. This has now allowed BSWA to deliver Dhamma to a vast international audience as well as local audiences who are unable to physically attend the talks at Dhammaloka Centre.

The growth in the number of local and international audience, more than 15,000 unique views in 6 months, for the Friday evening Dhamma talk is testimony of the esteem held for the Sangha and the quality of services delivered. Consequently, BSWA membership has grown, encompassing the following countries:

All states and territories in Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Malaysia, Netherlands, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Solomon Islands, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, UK, UAE, USA and Vietnam.

Australia leads in terms of membership numbers followed by USA. Dhamma has enabled cutting across the divide of a variety of backgrounds, ages and nationalities.

The worldwide members can now view and participate in meditation and Dhamma talks in real time, on large screens or watch on mobile devices. Questions from the global audience are answered 'live' by the monks and nuns conducting the programme of the day.

The Friday night Dhamma talks, Saturday afternoon Meditation classes and the Sunday Sutta classes are streamed live and can be replayed later for those who missed it.

Additionally, the participants can now take the 5 precepts online at http://community.dhammaloka.org.au/content.php/41-Taking-the-Five-Precepts. We are heartened by the interest and take up of people, not just in Australia but internationally, who are practising the 5 precepts.

BSWA will continue to deliver quality Dhamma talks and organise meditation retreats for our members and supporters. Your interest and support makes this possible, not just bringing benefit for yourselves but for the larger community. BSWA would like to thank you and hope that you will continue to participate in BSWA activities, whether in person or online, no matter where you are.

Those who have been to Dhammasara recently might have come across a book entitled “Wisdom Born of Stillness”. This 106 page book is a compilation of Dhamma treasures by Ajahn Brahm and has many lovely photos of Dhammasara Monastery. The foreword to this compilation is given by Ajahn Brahmali. This book is an excellent source of inspiration for your own spiritual practise, just as Dhammasara Monastery is training Bhikkunis to follow and spread the Buddha’s Teachings.

The lovely book is available for purchase at Dhammasara Monastery or at Dhammaloka library.

It costs AUD $20 and the proceeds go to the Dhammasara Nuns' Monastery Building Fund. If you have not got yours yet, hurry down to Dhammaloka or Dhammasara to get your copy.
John Kiszko's landscaping and paving work are already well known to regular visitors and residents at Dhammasara Nuns’ Monastery, but the winter and spring of 2012 have seen John working almost daily on the monastery’s most ambitious landscaping project to date. John is preparing the area set to house the new stupa, Kwan Yin rupa and sacred bodhi tree. The elevated site has superb views across the monastery’s extensive jarrah forest.

Facing north, visitors overlook the new sala complex site, and in the distance the distinctive granite outcrop that is now home to the monastery’s second stupa beckons. There is an air of serenity here, even amidst the heavy lifting and industrious labour of John and his helpers.

John’s latest landscaping work follows a free-form design, incorporating limestone blocks, Toodyay stone, local coffee rock and natural granite boulders. The blue-grey tread of the twenty-six stairs leading up to the stupa and bodhi tree is being laid as John and I speak on a wet afternoon in late winter. Even half-finished, it looks magnificent.

“It’s the best stairway in all of Australia,” laughs regular monastery supporter, Eric.

John has not followed a set of plan drawings.

“Every morning he sits down with a cup of coffee and thinks about what to do next,” says regular volunteer and all-round handy-man, John Field.

“It’s sort of created by the universe, and I’m the one trying to put it together,” laughs John Kiszko.

The two Johns – Kiszko and Field – work well together.

“He likes things balanced and I don’t,” says Kiszko. “So we have to work it out.”

John Kiszko has been helped regularly with the physical labour by a variety of monastery supporters, especially John Field, Ed and Chee Way. The Sri Lankan community has also been very helpful, forming impromptu busy-bees on weekends. “Everyone’s had input. Chee

Way thought of sweeping the stairs in that direction, down towards the road,” nods John Kiszko. “I didn’t think it would work, but it does.”

The rich colours in the eclectic mix of materials bring a beautiful sense of artistry to the site. The Naples yellow of the limestone sets off the rich oranges and reds of the local coffee rock; these, in turn, complement the blue-grey hues of the Toodyay stone. Around the limestone planter, which will soon house the sacred bodhi tree, John has used a bullnosing effect with coffee rock, cut with an onsite saw and polished using a diamond grinder. Natural granite boulders the size of chairs surround the bodhi tree amphitheatre. “These are meditation rocks for people to sit on,” John explains, “or maybe not!”

John Kiszko’s talents with landscaping are well known locally. His feel for his material is on display on approach to the nun’s cottage, as well as in the visitor’s walking area near the dam at Dhammasara, where he has sculpted a wall of niches to house the ashes of lay supporters. “I’m planning to do a similar wall for the Sangha, in another part of the monastery,” he tells me. “That’s going to be quite a different design. There’s a friend of mine who can no longer work with his hands, but he’s good to bounce ideas off. He was out here the other day. He pulls me up if something’s not up to scratch.”

Cont overleaf
While the physical labour of moving sand and cement, and lifting rocks and boulders into place is demanding, the volunteers work happily together, with plenty of pauses for jokes and laughs. Their good intentions, coupled with the peaceful setting of the stupa site, seem to make for an ideal workplace.

The new ashes wall for the Sangha may be some time coming in to being, I think, because there's plenty more work to keep John and his crew occupied on the present site. The stairs will be finished in time for the ceremonial planting of the sacred bodhi tree in November this year, but following that there are plans for a new wall, blending limestone and the local in-situ coffee rock, to sit behind the spot designated for the new Kwan Yin rupa, and then landscaping work will intensify around the actual stupa. John walks me through his plans, sweeping one hand around in a curve behind the area that will seat Kwan Yin. There is nothing on paper, but clearly the new feature is already coming into focus in John's mind.

John Kiszko supervising the construction of the best stairway in all of Australia. August 2012.

Illumination of Vesak or Dhamma – Part 2

by Prem Mirihagalla

“What is the significance of this lantern to Buddhism or Vesak?”

I had a number of comments to compliment the response I gave in the previous edition of ET. These beautifully decorated lanterns are shred to their bare frame within minutes of completion of the ceremony for safe keeping for the next occasion. This shows impermanence of all things - Anicca.

The strong structure of the seemingly delicate lantern signifies the robustness of the truth or the dhamma.

Next challenge: make a lantern with a meaningful pictorial representation for next Vesak to win a prize.
Three Degrees of Separation from the Buddha

Two thousand years ago, a woman carried a sapling from India to Sri Lanka. She travelled in a ship to an island where the Buddha's teachings was still new; I imagine, much as they are here in Western Australia today. The old records tell us that the sapling was the child of that tree, under which, 500 years previously, a young ascetic named Siddhatta had entered into the Jhanas, emerged from them and seeing the Truth; became the Buddha, the Awakened One.

The stories tell us that the woman's name was Sanghamitta, that she was a Bhikkhuni, that she was an Arahant, that she was the daughter of the great, Buddhist Emperor, Asoka, whose symbol of the wheel, adorns the flag of modern India today.

Fast forward to last year. Our new stories tell us, through pictures as well (check out the Dhammasara website to view these) that a few Bhikkunis from Western Australia, travelled to Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, to meet the monks and community there - guardians of the now ancient tree that was brought by Sanghamitta all those centuries ago.

The monastic community that received the Bhikkunis of Dhammasara Monastery of Western Australia, deeply honoured everyone involved with Buddhism in Western Australia by presenting the nuns with a sapling from this sacred tree; which now, being so old, rarely produces any seed.

For approximately 12 months, upon it's arrival on Australian soil, it was in quarantine. However, on the 25th of November, 2012, with a deep sense of gratitude and joy, I was present to witness the planting ceremony at Dhammasara Nuns' Monastery. There, I saw the love and care that was generated by the presence of this simple, sacred symbol; it was evident in the throng of people, the organisation that had gone into the event and of course, the procession.

Incredibly skillful drummers led the way for dancers and even a baby elephant created by the children of the Singhalese Dhamma School. Monks, nuns, laywomen and laymen (and laychildren too!) from different walks of life, walked from the Nuns cottage to the site which had been carefully and lovingly prepared for the planting.

As the sapling came into view, I found myself thinking of the Buddha, sitting under the tree. I considered, how we affect each other even with simple metta; how my cat responds as soon as I even think a thought of metta towards it. I imagined how the awesome energy of an Enlightened being might have affected the living tissues of the tree which sheltered Him. Perhaps, I considered, it's deepest living cells were bathed in that transcendent glow for the whole of the 7 days that we are told, the Buddha sat there. Perhaps, its descendants carry at least some part of that glow too.

Even leaving aside the beautiful impact that reflection has upon my mind, I can feel utter inspiration at the thought of the proximity this new sapling places us in, in relation to our Teacher. Just 3 degrees of separation…just 3 trees close to Him…something that is physically related to something that was present at the Enlightenment…phew! That is powerful times a billion.

The stories tell us that the Buddha said, in his absence, in order to remember, venerate and show gratitude to him, we could use the Bodhi Tree as a symbol and representation of him. I guess, it's only natural that I thought of Him when I saw those leaves coming into view; I guess it was only natural that, considering the impact of His Teaching on my life and happiness, that I felt that my knees (I was standing at the time to get a better view) were magnetically pulled towards the Earth…I wanted most desperately to show my deep love and gratitude towards that most compassionate Teacher…so I knelt there for a while with my hands in anjali.

The programme of events was simple and thus graced with an elegance: beautiful words spoken by beautiful people, ancient chanting in Pali (binding all of us, with our different languages), the planting ceremony itself (when the Ven Dr Pallegama Sirinivasa Atamasthanadhipathi Nayaka Maha Thero and Ven Ajahn Brahmavamso Maha Thero climbed into the beautifully designed circular planter), the image of Ven Bhikkunis Hasapanna and Nirodha reverently watering the sacred sapling, the strains of further chanting floating in the air as the massive crowd slowly filed forward to offer their flowers as part of a very special Bodhi Puja.

Remembering the sound of this last bit of chanting floating in the air, I am now reminded of Ajahn Brahm's words that night: that the best way of venerating the Buddha, is not through offerings, but through cultivating and realizing His Teachings in our own lives.
Although Nepal was the birthplace of the Buddha and India was the birthplace of Buddhism, the noble Sangha in Sri Lanka has maintained and preserved Buddhism for over 2,300 years ever since it was introduced to Sri Lanka by Arahat Mahinda, son of King Asoka of India.

Sri Lanka has the record of preserving the Sri Maha Bodhi, grown from a branch of the original Bodhi tree under which the Buddha sat and attended enlightenment. This branch was brought to Sri Lanka by Theri Sanghamitta, the daughter of King Asoka of India. This Bodhi tree in Sri Lanka remains the oldest living human-planted tree in the world and is an important link to the Buddha as the original Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya was poisoned.

The first Buddhist flag was designed in 1885 in Colombo, Sri Lanka, where it was used for the first Vesak Day holiday under British rule. The flag was modified in 1886 to be as it appears today. The Buddhist Flag was hoisted in every Buddhist Temple and in many houses for the Vesak holiday celebrated in Sri Lanka in 1886. Subsequently, the flag was introduced to Japan, Burma, Korea, China and spread to many other countries. It is now recognised as the International Buddhist Symbol.

With the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lankans by Arahat Mahinda and also during the reigns of pious and devout kings, Sri Lanka became the proud custodian of most of the bodily relics of the Buddha which are enshrined in Stupas. The relics of the Buddha are regarded as representing the Buddha and their enshrinement as representing the Buddha's residence in Sri Lanka.

Anagarika Dharmapala, a son of a very wealthy Sri Lankan magnate, brought lustre to our country by becoming the world's first Buddhist Missionary to establish a Buddhist Vihara in Chiswick, London in 1926. It is the first Buddhist Vihara established in the western world. When he visited India he noted the appalling state of Saranath and Buddhagaya. Despite many hardships, he got those sacred sites from non-Buddhists and restored them. Buddhists from all parts of the world now go to these places on pilgrimages. Besides India, Buddhists around the world also visit the following places in Sri Lanka for Buddhist pilgrimages.

1 Thuparama at Anuradhapura - The first Stupa built in Sri Lanka enshrining The Buddha's jaw relic.
2 Mangala Maha Saya, Seruwavila, Trincomalee - The Buddha's fore head relic.
3 Ruwanveli Seya Anuradhapura - Many sacred relics of the Buddha
4 Somawathi Stupa, Polonnaruwa - Right Tooth Relic.
5 Dladamaligawa, Kandy - Left Tooth relic
6 Mahiyangana Stupa - Hair and neck relics
7 Sri Maha Bodhi, Anuradhapura and many more places.

The writings of the Pali Tripitaka by the Sangha in the first century BCE at Alu Vihara, Mathale, Sri Lanka, being the first written recorded form of Dhamma, has helped establish Sri Lanka's pre-eminent status as the home of Buddhism.

There has been some controversy regarding the Buddha's visit to Sri Lanka. While not mentioned elsewhere, historical records in Sri Lanka show that the Buddha visited Sri Lanka three times. The first time, he visited Mahiyangana a year after enlightenment. A stupa was built over there to enshrine a lock of his hair, a relic all the more precious because it was gifted by himself in his life time. These sacred relics are venerated as supreme objects of reverence by Buddhists all over the world.

Five years after the first visit, the Buddha paid his second visit to Nagadipa. In the 9th year after enlightenment on a Vesak full moon day with 500 Arahats, the Buddha visited Kolamiyak. On the same day, he visited Sri Pada (Adam’s Peak) where he left his foot print on the top of that unique hill. He also visited Diggapita and Anuradhapura. After giving his blessing to Sri Lanka, he went back to India.

Whether the Buddha actually visited Sri Lanka or not, His Teachings have made a lasting impression in Sri Lanka, and through Sri Lanka, to other parts of the world.
Upcoming Activities

**Dhammaloka**
- Chanting, Guided Meditation and Dhamma Talk - Every Friday, 7pm-9pm.
- Beginner's Meditation Class - Every Saturday, classes start 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**
- 18 Jan - 27 Jan (Ajahn Brahm)
- 28 Mar - 6 Apr (Ajahn Brahm)
  Bookings: 4 Jan (Full Members) / 11 Jan (Other Applicants)

**Weekend Retreats**
- 1 Mar - 3 Mar (Sutta Retreat with Ajahn Brahmali)
  Bookings: 18 Jan (Open to all)
- 31 May - 2 Jun (Senior Monks from Bodhinyana Monastery)
  Bookings: 19 Apr (Open to all)

**Dhammaloka Mobile App for Android**
Android phone users can download the Dhammaloka mobile app from Google Play Store or scan the photo to \ directly download it to your device.

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**Ajahn Brahm's 30th Anniversary with BSWA Gala Dinner**
Fundraising dinner and auction for Dhammasara Nun's Monastery
To be held at Pan Pacific Perth, 207 Adelaide Terrace, Perth, WA on Saturday, 22nd June 2013.
Buffet dinner with Vegetarian and Non-Vegetarian cuisine.
Ticket Prices: $160 adults & $120 for children (under 8 years of age)
For details and tickets, please contact: Lee Chan: (+ 61) 8 9325 8238 or Sompong: (+61) 8 9478 2445

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The activities are correct at time of printing.
*Please contact BSWA (info@bswa.org) to verify the times closer to the date.*