THE BUDDHIST SOCIETY OF W.A.

NEWSLETTER

APRIL - JUNE  BE 2536/7 (1993)
VESAKHA DAY

Sunday 16th May, 1993

The full moon day of Vesakha is an event of the utmost importance as it commemorates the Birth, Enlightenment and Parinibbana (final passing away) of the Lord Buddha who, through his own efforts, was able to reach the pinnacle of perfection and wisdom. This gives us all much encouragement and inspiration in that, if we make the necessary effort, we too can attain the same enlightenment.

This year's celebration will be extra special as we will not only give reverence to the Blessed One, but will also be ordaining a novice, moving the Buddha Rupa into the new meditation hall and planting a Bodhi tree in the park. Everyone is encouraged to attend, take the eight precepts for the day and commemorate this important occasion.

Programme for the Day

9.30am Carrying of the Buddha Rupa into the new Meditation Hall

10.00am Group chanting, taking the Three Refuges and the Five or Eight Precepts, Auspicious Chanting & Dhamma talk.

10.30am Offering of food to the Monks & sharing a meal together

2.00pm Taking of the Three Refuges and Five Precepts for new Buddhists. Meditation & Discussion for others

3.00pm Novice ordination ceremony

4.00pm Planting of a Bodhi Tree in the park

5 - 6.00pm Tea and biscuits
Meditation and discussion

6.00 - 6.30pm Traditional Sri Lankan Buddhist Devotional Songs

6.30 - 8.00pm Evening ceremony including chanting, Dhamma talk and circumambulation of the shrine
"NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO SAMMASAMBUDHASSA"

Peace is a much talked of thing these days, but it is something that eludes most people most of the time. The world is certainly not a peaceful place, even in Australia, which we would call a peaceful country, there is still a lot of violence. Ultimately all conditions in the world and society come back to the individual human being. The fact that there is a lack of peace in the world and society only indicates that there is a lack of peacefulness in the minds of individual human beings.

When we say we want peace in this world, what are we prepared to do? Now there are many things that we can do, but the most important thing is to become a peaceful human being. This is not an easy task because everything in this society is pulling us the other way, making us anything but peaceful. Our conditioning is very aggressive, we have to assert ourselves, our rights and demands. This is very discriminating conditioning as we see ourselves as separate and insulated from everyone else. We have this insatiable desire to have, achieve and possess everything, everyone, whatever we like. So is this the kind of conditioning which makes for a peaceful person and society?

Just consider what conditioning we are receiving from the media and from other things around us. What is it training us to be like, what character is it instilling in us, what tendencies is it encouraging within us? Television, newspapers, movies and sports, everything that we contact through our senses, is it encouraging peace? It is so rare that peace is ever encouraged and this is why meditation is so difficult, it is one activity which goes against the grain, against the stream of desire, aversion, delusion, illusions and ignorance.

It's a very sad state of affairs when we reflect on our society - civilisation they call it. This society and culture is the result of many thousands of years of evolvement and what are we creating? Everything possible to increase greed, desire, aversion, hatred, violence, stupidity, a lack of clarity and peacefulness. When we are caught up in it, it seems quite alright, but when
we stand back from our society and begin to turn inwards and experience some peace of mind, we begin to see the direction in which we have been going and really it's not so good at all. Of course this can only be done when the mind is not just caught up in greed, lust, aversion and violence, so we must develop a mind that is clear, bright, awake and peaceful.

Our children are brought up in a world of fantasy through movies and television where people shoot each other, blood goes everywhere but nobody really dies. It's so unreal, you're watching people being shot and blown up and it just doesn't matter. What sort of effect does all this have on people? It just makes for a very greedy, lustful and violent person. You begin to have a lot of violence within you because it is implanted in your conscious stream and it makes you a person completely out of touch with reality. Children brought up on this conditioning have very strong tendencies in that direction. They are very greedy and never satisfied. They have seen so much, so much is possible that the ordinary is just boring.

Life is very ordinary. Basically humans are the same as they were one hundred, two hundred, three thousand years ago. That is why the Teachings of the Buddha are still very much alive today, because these Teachings are about reality. In these past decades we have become further and further removed from the ordinary reality of life. Now we find we can't cope, we can't live or relate, we can't find how to live this ordinary life because our minds are conditioned in a very foolish way.

So we search for peace in our society, world peace, peace within, but we have all these disruptive forces within us. These disruptive forces are the result of our instinctive temperaments, the instincts of an animal for self-seeking gratification. Now add to that the conditioning of a foolish society conditioned by greed, hatred and delusion and we have a very sad state. But there is always hope and the hope for us is that we can recognise that foolishness. As human beings we have the unique opportunity of being able to reflect, we can stand back and observe the foolishness. Wisdom knows ignorance, but ignorance does not know wisdom.
Our mind need not be completely overwhelmed by greed, lust, desire, violence, anger and negativity. Our mind need not be dull and stupid, just conditioned in habitual mechanical activity. It is possible for the mind to be very noble, bright, awake and this is what the practise of meditation is for, it corrects, reshapes and redirects the mind. This abstract thing which we call the mind is the most precious and important thing in our lives because it shapes our lives, our society, the world. The mind is what we are interested in during meditation, we sit meditation in order to realise peace and clarity. When you sit meditation do you realise peace and clarity? If not, why not? Why is the mind not peaceful, what is the problem? What is hindering the realisation of peace and clarity? Just as our life is a continuous reflection, so should our meditation be. Our goal in meditation is peace. When you sit meditation and you don’t experience peace, if you can see the reason why you are not peaceful, then you will also see why you are not peaceful in your daily life.

So reflection is very important, meditation is not just a mechanical exercise where you concentrate on the breath and that’s it. No, meditation requires a reflection, we must reflect on what we are doing. If you observe well you will find these two disruptive forces; desire and the inability to be satisfied. The Zen Master Rinzai is quoted as saying “Nothing is more precious than a person who has nothing further to seek”.

When we sit meditation and we put our concentration on the feeling of the breath coming in and out of the nostrils, can we be satisfied with just that, just one breath at a time? If we can be satisfied with one breath, with the touch of the breath we will be peaceful. At that time you are not seeking or wanting anything else, you are perfectly satisfied. And there is nothing more precious than peace. Being satisfied doesn’t mean we become incompetent, lazy or negligent. It means that we are peaceful, satisfied with the reality now, not obsessed about the future or the past. We still live life, act and do, but there is satisfaction and peace of mind. So recognise that the force of desire and obsession is always pulling us away from reality.

As well as chasing after something we have the opposite, that is running away or aversion. Desire and aversion are the two activities of the ignorant
mind. This is something to be seen, a force to be experienced and noticed within one's own mind. See how it destroys peace and enslaves us. So what is the remedy. The first step is recognition and the second is learning to step back and say no, to stop. To learn not to feed those tendencies and habits of the mind. It is possible for the mind to be free of desire and aversion.

One's mind is not always full of desire and aversion, sometimes it is free of all that and in meditation we can begin to experience the calm mind.

The mind that is not striking out or chasing anything but is content, satisfied and peaceful with one breath. One begins to know that this is peace, and this peace results when the mind is not obsessed with desire or aversion. Wouldn't it be nice to extend this peace to the rest of your life? So why do we torture ourselves by dwelling on negativity and anger and being so excessively greedy and wanting all the time? We want peace and yet we keep on creating this unpleasantness for ourselves. The reason is we don't reflect, we get caught up in habits, mechanical, deluded living, we've done it like that before and we keep doing it like that.

The peaceful mind creates a peaceful world. If we want a peaceful world let's have a peaceful mind and practise meditation. Let us all take the time to be still, to be quiet in our lives each day. Having this peaceful mind, let us reflect on what we do and how we relate. Let us become aware and awake so that we can avoid creating suffering and misery. The process is not difficult, but the doing is quite hard and difficult. Being negative or angry is not nice, but how do we stop? Being greedy and never satisfied
is painful, but how do we change? By being awake, and wise and remembering. The practise of remembrance is what we call mindfulness. Developing mindfulness is developing the practise of being awake, remembering to be here and now. When you are doing, speaking, relating, be awake. This is very difficult so we need to be very patient, just a little bit each day. Just try to be awake a little bit more each day.

I offer you these few words for you to contemplate. If you want peace then try to be a peaceful person. A peaceful mind is the most precious and useful thing you can have in any situation or place we go. Anything we undertake to do, if we bring a peaceful mind to that place and undertaking, the results will be alright. Whatever we do will be fine and whoever we meet will appreciate it. But if you take anything else but a peaceful mind the results will not be so sure.

I encourage you all to develop a peaceful, quiet, clear mind. Not a dull mind - awake but peaceful and if you have this mind, wherever you go, whatever you do it will be alright.

Taken from a talk given by Ven. Ajahn Jagaro
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF VESAK*

The significance of Vesak lies with the Buddha and his universal peace message to mankind.

As we recall the Buddha and his Enlightenment, we are immediately reminded of the unique and most profound knowledge and insight which arose in him on the night of his Enlightenment. This coincided with three important events which took place, corresponding to the three watches or periods of the night.

During the first watch of the night, when his mind was calm, clear and purified, light arose in him, knowledge and insight arose. He saw his previous lives, at first one, then two, three up to five, then multiples of them ... ten, twenty, thirty to fifty. Then 100, 1,000 and so on. As he went on with his practice, during the second watch of the night, he saw how beings die and are reborn, depending on their Karma, how they disappear and reappear from one form to another, from one plane of existence to another. Then during the final watch of the night, he saw the arising and cessation of all phenomena, mental and physical. He saw how things arose dependent on causes and conditions. This led him to perceive the arising and cessation of suffering and all forms of unsatisfactoriness paving the way for the eradication of all taints of cravings. With the complete cessation of craving, his mind was completely liberated. He attained to Full Enlightenment. The realisation dawned in him together with all psychic powers.

This wisdom and light that flashed and radiated under the historic Bodhi Tree at Buddha Gaya in the district of Bihar in Northern India, more than 2,500 years ago, is of great significance to human destiny. It illuminated the way by which mankind could cross, from a world of superstition, or hatred and fear, to a new world of light, of true love and happiness.

The heart of the Teachings of the Buddha which remains as a universal message to mankind is contained in the teachings of the Four Noble Truths, namely,
the Noble Truth of Dukkha or suffering
the Origin or Cause of suffering
the End or Cessation of suffering
the Path which leads to the cessation of all sufferings.

The First Noble Truth is the Truth of Dukkha, which has generally been translated as “suffering”. But the term Dukkha, which represents the Buddha’s view of life and the world, has a deeper philosophical meaning. Birth, old age, sickness and death are universal. All beings are subject to this unsatisfactoriness. Separation from beloved ones and pleasant conditions, association with unpleasant persons and conditions and not getting what one desires - these are also sources of suffering and unsatisfactoriness. The Buddha summarises Dukkha in what is known as the Five Grasping Aggregates. Herein lies the deeper philosophical meaning of Dukkha for it encompasses the whole state of being or existence.

Our life or the whole process of living is seen as a flux of energy comprising of the Five aggregates, namely the Aggregate of Form or the Physical process, Feeling, Perception, Mental Formation, and Consciousness. These are usually classified as mental and physical processes, which are constantly in a state of flux or change.

When we train our minds to observe the functioning of mental and physical processes, we will be able to realise the true nature of our lives. We will see how it is subject to change and unsatisfactoriness. And as such, there is no real substance or entity or Self which we can cling to as “I”, “my” or “mine”.

When we become aware of the unsatisfactory nature of life, we would naturally want to get out from such a state. It is at this point that we begin to seriously question ourselves about the meaning and purpose of life. This will lead us to seek the Truth with regards to the true nature of existence and the knowledge to overcome unsatisfactoriness.

From the Buddhist point of view, therefore, the purpose of life is to put an end to suffering and all other forms of unsatisfactoriness - to realise peace and real happiness. Such is the significance of the understanding and the realisation of the First Noble Truth.
The Second Noble Truth explains the Origin or Cause of suffering. *Tanha* or craving is the universal cause of suffering. It includes not only desire for sensual pleasures, wealth and power, but also attachment to ideas, views, opinions, concepts, and beliefs. It is the lust for flesh, the lust for continued existence (or eternalism) in the sensual realms of existence, as well as the realms of form and the formless realms. And there is also the lust and craving for non-existence (or nihilism). These are all different forms of selfishness, desiring things for oneself, even at the expense of others.

Not realising the true nature of one’s Self, one clings to things which are impermanent, changeable and perishable. The failure to satisfy one’s desires through these things causes disappointment and suffering.

Craving is a powerful mental force present in all of us. It is the root cause of our sufferings. It is this craving which binds us in *Samsara* - the repeated cycle of birth and death.

The Third Noble Truth points to the cessation of suffering. Where there is no craving, there is no becoming, no rebirth. Where there is no rebirth, there is no decay, no old age, no death, hence no suffering. That is how suffering is ended, once and for all.

The Fourth Noble Truth explains the Path or the Way which leads to the cessation of suffering. It is called the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path avoids extremes of self-indulgence on one hand, self-torture on the other. It consists of *Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness* and *Right Concentration*. These Path factors may be summarised into 3 stages of training, involving morality, mental culture and wisdom.

Morality or good conduct is the avoidance of evil or unwholesome actions - actions which are tainted by greed, hatred and delusion; and the performance of the good or wholesome actions - actions which are free from greed, hatred and delusion, but motivated by liberality, loving-kindness and wisdom.

The function of good conduct or moral restraint is to free one’s mind from remorse (or guilty conscience). The mind that is free from remorse (or guilt) is naturally calm and tranquil, and ready for concentration with awareness. The concentrated and cultured mind is a contemplative and
analytical mind. It is capable of seeing cause and effect, and the true nature of existence, thus paving the way for wisdom and insight.

Wisdom in the Buddhist context, is the realisation of the fundamental truths of life, basically the **Four Noble Truths**. The understanding of the Four Noble Truths provide us with a proper sense of purpose and direction in life. They form the basis of problem solving.

The message of the Buddha stands today as unaffected by time and the expansion of knowledge as when they were first enunciated. No matter to what lengths increased scientific knowledge can extend man’s mental horizon, there is room for the acceptance and assimilation for further discovery within the framework of the Teachings of the Buddha.

The Teaching of the Buddha is open to all to see and judge for themselves. The universality of the Teachings of the Buddha has led one of the world’s greatest scientists, Albert Einstein, to declare that *"if there is any religion that could cope with modern scientific needs, it would be Buddhism".*

The Teaching of the Buddha became a great civilising force wherever it went. It appeals to reason and freedom of thought, recognising the dignity and potentiality of the human mind. It calls for equality, fraternity and understanding, exhorting its followers to avoid evil, to do good and to purify their minds.

Realising the transient nature of life and all worldly phenomena, the Buddha has advised us to work out our deliverance with heedfulness, as *"heedfulness is the path to the deathless".*

His clear and profound Teachings on the cultivation of heedfulness, otherwise know as *Satipatthana* or the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, is the path for the purification of beings - for the overcoming of sorrows and lamentation, for the destruction of all mental and physical sufferings, for the attainment of insight and knowledge and for the realisation of *Nibbana*. This has been verified by his disciples. It is therefore a path, a technique which may be verified by all irrespective of case, colour or creed.

*by Venerable Mahinda*

*Vesak is the abbreviated form of Vesakha*
SANGHA NEWS

Coming and going. Coming and going. Coming and going. For those of us who stayed at Bodhinyana Monastery in the last few months that has been the predominant pattern. The first to go was Sister Aruni, who having spent a year and a half with us, has gone to Thailand to train with Ajahn Gunhah. Next to go were Song and Graham, having been here for nearly a year, returning to their studies and work in Canberra and Melbourne. Then Ajahn Jagaro departed for Thailand for three weeks to take part in the funeral ceremonies of Ajahn Chah.

During that time we had our own 10 day vigil in memory of Ajahn Chah, including a photographic exhibition. Each day we had some readings or talks by or about Ajahn Chah and for those 10 days at least one person would be meditating day and night. It seemed to arouse inspiration and effort and quite a few lay people came to join the monastic community in this event.

Also whilst Ajahn Jagaro was away, we were very fortunate to have two visiting monks: Venerable Santikaro, from Ajahn Buddhadasa’s monastery, Suan Mokh in South Thailand, and Ven. Dhammadika from Singapore. Both monks gave some good talks and also gave us a chance to see ways of approaching the Dhamma-Vinaya, which are different from our own.

Towards the end of January we said goodbye to Ven. Sudhammo, the last of the home grown monks of Bodhinyana, who has been living here about 6 years all in all. Before he left he finished his Toodyay Stone work, at which he is quite an expert, and also gave some much appreciated reflections on his monastic life. He has gone to stay at Amaravati in England, the main monastery of Ajahn Sumedho, and seems to be settling down well into the larger community and greyer weather.

At the end of January, Ajahn Jagaro returned from Thailand closely followed by Ven. Ariyasilo, Ven. Thanasilo and Ven. Kusalo on their way back to New Zealand. This was another special time and a chance to renew old acquaintances, make new ones and catch up on the Sangha news from around the world. But then after a week they left us too!
Ven. Visarado, well known to many old hands at Nollamara, was next to come. He is intending to stay until the end of the year - a welcome addition to our depleted numbers. Another familiar face was Sister Sumedha (or Sumall) who has come to stay for a while before going to England to train with the nuns at Amaravati. Then some more departures as Sister Obhasavati and Eip, who have stayed here for a few months, flew to NSW and later plan to go to Thailand.

And the last returned, Ajahn Brahm, looking refreshed and invigorated and ready to go (to work not away!) from his 4 month sojourn to England and Thailand.

Along with all this the daily routine of cleaning, cooking and chanting, sitting, sweeping and sleeping and continuing the teaching commitments of the Armada group, the Dhamma School, the Youth Group, Prison visits and a weekend retreat in Albany. So quite a busy time!

Ven Ajahn Brahm

One very nice event has been the fortnightly Patimokkha meetings which we have done a couple of times with Ven. U. Nyanika at the Bullcreek Vihara. It was lovely to see monks from all different traditions, temples and countries - Ven. U. Nyanika from Burma, Ven. Santikaro from the USA, Ven. Lay Hout from Cambodia, Ven. Sumangalo and myself from the UK and Ven. Suddhamo from Australia - coming together in harmony and concord to listen to the recitation of the monastic discipline.

We would like to express our gratitude to everybody who supported us in this time, particularly when Ajahn Jagaro and Ajahn Brahm were away, and to wish those who have left (and those who have stayed) good luck on their journey.

May all beings be well.

Ven. Kovido
REFLECTIONS OF A TRAVELLING MONK

I have escaped writing a newsletter article for the previous two issues but this exceptional run of luck has now come to an end. At first my arm was twisted to write the Sangha News, but having only recently returned to this beautiful monastery, I still don’t know much of what has occurred while I was away. Thus Ven. Kovido has written the Sangha News and I will be interested to read it. Then my arm was twisted once again, this time to write about the exceptional event of Ajahn Chah’s funeral in Thailand as well as some of my other experiences while overseas. So, writing with an arm badly strained from all that twisting, here is a personal view of Ajahn Chah’s funeral and my trip overseas.

I left Perth 4 months ago, that’s a third of a year, half a percent of a lifetime. The main reason for going was to visit my family in England, especially my mother, who I haven’t seen for five years. The Buddha said that the debt to one’s parents is such that even if one carried them on one’s shoulders for the rest of their life the debt would still not be repaid. Fortunately my Mum preferred to walk using her own legs. But I still found other ways to pay off some of my debt. The newsletter before I left had contained a paragraph wishing me a good trip and asking that nobody offer me a hammer, a trowel or a drill because this was to be a holiday for me. But the newsletter hadn’t mentioned the paint brush, so I ended up painting my mother’s kitchen. May I request that the editors of this newsletter give more details in listing the tools not to be offered to me next time!

Of course I didn’t mind a bit and enjoyed helping my mother. I also enjoyed visiting other family and old friends - and they do all look old now. One friend with whom I went to school told me he had gone to a class reunion two months before and, entering a room full of middle-aged, pot-bellied, balding men, turned around to leave thinking he had entered the wrong room. Then he recognised a friend and realised with a start for the very first time that he too was middle-aged, pot-bellied and balding! I also visited old monk friends. They too are balding, but that doesn’t say much, does it?
It was a pleasure, though, to feel part of a large, world wide, Sangha of excellent monks and nuns. As for London where I spent most of my time, it was winter and it was grey - the sky was grey, the buildings were grey and the drizzle was grey and the natives wore grey clothes under grey umbrellas and they even drank Earl GREY tea! So it was a bright change for me to arrive in Thailand for the funeral of Ajahn Chah.

I quite like funerals. They are simple and reflective occasions here in Australia, offering all involved the time to think over the meaning and direction of their own lives. Ajahn Chah's funeral, though, was quite exceptional. Authoritative sources estimated that 500,000 people attended the funeral. That's half the population of Perth! Even the monks numbered about five thousand. It was difficult to move in such a crowd so, on the day of the cremation, I sat in the seat where I was asked just before 10am and sat there under the sun until the ceremony had ended about 5.30pm, just one monk amongst a sea of monks. All I saw of the ceremony was the back of the bald heads of the monks in front of me! But then Ajahn Chah had always taught emphasising contentment with little. The King and Queen of Thailand attended and so had the Supreme Patriarch and the Prime Minister as well, so I was told. I confirmed the accuracy of this report a few weeks later when a disciple in Bangkok showed me a video recording of the ceremony (it had been televised live throughout Thailand). I saw more of the funeral in that half hour in Bangkok than I had seen in over seven hours at the scene. Moreover, after so long under the sun I had had sunburn on my exposed head and shoulder, heat rash on my legs and a case of sunstroke which laid me up for the next two days. However, I consoled myself by recalling that this was a cremation after all, and I didn't get burnt half so bad as some!

A few days later the ashes were collected and amongst the remains were the brilliant white, coral like fragments of bone which everyone was looking for. In Thailand, it is understood that only Enlightened beings have the purity and power to transform their bones into crystalline relics, PHRA-DHATU, and there were some very impressive bones amongst the ashes of Ajahn Chah! But that was not the only extraordinary power exhibited by Ajahn Chah at his cremation ceremony. His most amazing
power over the bones was that he could pull 500,000 complete skeletons, flesh and organs attached, away from their homes and into the monastery for the day! Now that IS astonishing and worthwhile. Throughout the whole 10 days of the extended ceremony many well known monks gave inspiring talks on Dhamma, monks, nuns and laypeople meditated under the trees, and all who came reflected on the life and example of Ven. Ajahn Chah.

Why was it that over half a million people came to pay reverence to a simple monk, someone born of a poor family in a remote village in the backward North-East of Thailand, educated for only four years in a basic village school, who spent the first half of his long monastic life avoiding people and seeking the solitude of the wild forests in which to meditate alone, and who only in his later years went outwards to teach the Dhamma in its fullness? Many felt that Ajahn Chah had gained something very precious in those early years of solitude enabling him to touch the hearts of all who came from East or West or South and awaken within them a whiff of that which lies beyond the mortal world. Seeing such a large number gather out of gratitude and express their devotion made it abundantly clear that religion isn’t dead in these material times. Moreover, when the next cynic asks me what use to the world is the life of a Buddhist monk, I will suggest that they ask the same question of those half a million people who assembled from all over the world for the final teaching of Ven. Ajahn Chah.

After the funeral, the western born monks, over 70 in all, held a conference on the timeless theme of “this, that and the other”, ie giving all who were present the opportunity to bring up for discussion any matters of concern. The conference was remarkable because although various views were expressed and some disagreements were voiced, it never seemed to affect the harmony of the group. Such is the importance that the Buddha gave to harmony within the Sangha that differences of view don’t count for all that much and are not allowed to lead to ill will. It is immensely reassuring to see in this world a large group of people who can freely discuss the points where they differ while still keeping in mind that what they have in common is always much more.
Some of the Western Monks after Ajahn Chah's funeral

With the funeral finished and the conference concluded, I had no real excuse to remain in Thailand, but still I remained a further three weeks! I chose to use this time first to visit some of the monasteries of the leading Teachers of the Thai Forest Tradition so as to remind myself of what that tradition is. Then I sought solitude in the remote mountain hermitages far in the north of Thailand, hidden in forests, remote and cool, where one is left undisturbed to dwell at peace deep within. Those last three weeks were a wonderful rest so that now I have returned, I can serve once again.

Content to be back,

Ajahn Brahm
PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION IN NORTH EAST THAILAND

Loving Kindness without Limitations

A large number of monks, nuns and lay people gathered for ten days in January this year to give of their time and energy as a witness to the Teaching and to show respect at the cremation ceremonies for Ajahn Chah, forest tradition meditation master and inspiration for the development of Buddhist monasteries in the UK, Europe and Australia and New Zealand. Ajahn Jagaro, Ajahn Brahm and a number of laypeople from Perth were able to participate in this peaceful demonstration of loving kindness and generosity on a scale not often seen in the world.
From the 10th to the 20th of January about half a million people visited Wat Nong Pah Pong, a normally peaceful forest monastery near Ubon Ratchatani in north eastern Thailand. The focus of attention was the massive but beautiful chedi or memorial tower holding the remains of Ajahn Chah.

How was it possible for a monastery, about the same size as Bodhinyana, with accommodation nearly as sparse and some distance from the city, to accommodate, feed and look after so many people? Most people came with their own camping gear, a mat, blanket and mosquito net. Everyone learned to sleep on hard surfaces, the lucky ones on open verandahs, most on the ground. All the white umbrellas looked quite ghostly in the forest at night.

The provisioning of food was planned long ago. Through donations of money, labour and food, a “Rong Tahn” of forty food stalls was set up inside the monastery and for the ten days provided food free to everyone. Most stalls were arranged by several monasteries in cooperation. Bodhinyana Monastery was represented through the kind invitation of Ajahn Jundee of Wat Suan Ampawan, Chonburi, Thailand. A contingent of lay supporters came from Chonburi. Ajahn Jundee and Tun Tawee both have family near Ubon and they and other local people supported the large scale cooking and cleaning exercise. Ven. Preecha also is from the Ubon area and his family were there.

Serving some of the thousands of visitors
Work at the Rong Tahn began with early breakfast at 5am. About 8am the pickup trucks arrived to carry dana for the monks, nuns and “8 precept” lay people and afterwards continued providing food and drink for hundreds of people through till about 8pm or later every day.

The Rong Tahn was supported by many generous people. Donations were given every day so that even after giving for ten days there was still food and money left over. The Wat Suan Ampawan/Wat Bodhinyana food stall donated $17,000 (290,000 Baht) to assist the chedi building fund. Huge stacks of rice and other foodstuffs left over from the stalls were trucked off for distribution to the elderly, disabled and to schools in the local villages.

The monks and local people did a massive job in arranging toilets and water supplies for the monastery and surrounding areas. (Ah, the Thai tolets, common in Asia, they are the squat down type, the aching legs, but this is the price of participation in a major event!)

The electricity authority brought in special generators, the police reorganised the surrounding traffic patterns and two thousand troops came in to manage the traffic.

On the 16th, the anniversary of the death of Ajahn Chah, several hundred thousand people sat in the forest around the chedi as the Thai King and Queen lit the first flame for the cremation. The Prime Minster, many high officials and the religious lay people then followed to add a little more flame to the still dormant fire.

At midnight, after the King and the officials had departed, the monks and the lay people gathered to witness the real cremation. The chedi for Ajahn Chah is constructed as a traditional storage for relics and also as a crematorium. The central decorated square is a firebox and a chimney is constructed up the tower. For the cremation the coffin for Ajahn Chah was moved into the firebox, the area was cleared and the carefully preserved flame was applied.

Amid the peace and serenity, so many people sitting quietly, meditatively, an unexpected drama unfolded. The chedi filled with smoke. After a while it was discovered that some of the beautiful decorated wax panels were
burning. Some items were rescued, and the fire brigade arrived to douse the flames and to cool the chedi. Later analysis revealed that, rather than some omen or portent, the chimney damper was simply still closed!

All is well with the structure of the chedi, the firebox is a little buckled, and there are traces of smoke on the roof and the chimney vents. After all had cooled, three bone fragments, white from the fierce fire, were put on display. A circumambulation of the chedi was arranged. Two thousand monks, led by Ajahn Sumedho, Ajahn Lien (Abbot of Wat Non Pah Pong) and many other disciples of Ajahn Chah were followed by many religious and lay people in silent procession three times on a one kilometre course through the forest and around the chedi.

A particularly nice activity, at times late at night when most of the really hard workers were stretched out on the bamboo tables or asleep inside the stalls, was to meet some of the monks, to sit quietly while they discussed life, provided a little Dhamma guidance to some children and generally ensured that the lay workers were in good spirits.
This was an event significant because of the many people who came to show their respect for the life and teaching of Ajahn Chah. So many people attended to recognise and show gratitude for Ajahn Chah’s inspiration and ordination of international monks and the building of forest tradition Buddhist monasteries in Thailand and in the West. Even though Ajahn Chah has left us, his teaching remains. The events at Wat Nong Pah Pong remind us of the benefits of practising generosity to all our fellow beings and all the other aspects of the Dhamma teaching of Ajahn Chah.

Trinood Brown

ORDINATION OF A NUN

A number of the Dhammaloka Buddhist Youth Group joined the family and friends of Samali de Tissera to witness her ordination on New Years Eve in Kurunegala in Sri Lanka. At the ordination Samali was given the name of Sumedha.

Sister Sumedha has since returned to Perth and is staying at Bodhinyana before travelling to the U.K. to visit the nun’s community at Amaravati.
THE ESSENTIALS OF BUDDHISM

A series of public talks — All are welcome

For a long time we have been watching our "dream" take place before our eyes - our beautiful new Dhamma Hall has materialised and will be in use from our Vesakha Day celebration. This wonderful new facility will be used to spread the Dhamma and to inspire us all to be diligent in our practice.

To lay the foundation for the future Teachings will which take place there a series of weekly public talks given from the first Sunday after Vesak from 3 - 4.30pm. They will form a systematic approach to understanding the essentials of Buddhism and will be:

1. The Buddha
2. The Four Noble Truths
3. The Eightfold Path
4. The Three Characteristics
5. Karma and Rebirth
6. Dependent Arising
7. Tranquility Meditation
8. Loving Kindness Meditation
9. Insight Meditation
10. A Buddhist approach to Life

May 23
May 30
June 6
June 13
June 20
June 27
July 4
July 11
July 18
July 25

"THE LIGHT OF THE DHAMMA"

It is planned to produce a book for free distribution taken from the series of talks on "The Essentials of Buddhism" which will be given in our new Dhamma Hall. The book, entitled, "The Light of the Dhamma" will hopefully be ready for the official opening of the Hall, or very soon thereafter. The production of this book will incur significant costs and a sponsor is being sought. If you would like to sponsor this book which will be read by many people interested in the Teachings of the Buddha please contact our Vice-President, Jill Hanna, on 321 9922 (Work) 341 6362 (Home).
AT LAST!

Vesakha Day, Sunday 16th May, is the most important day on the Buddhist calendar. This year it will also mark a most important event for Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre as this is the day when the Buddha rupa will be carried into our beautiful new Meditation Hall and we will use it officially for the first time. An *official* opening will be held towards the end of this year, probably November, when the gardens are established and our new Buddha rupas have arrived.

Two inspiring new Buddha rupas have been ordered for Dhammaloka. A 2m sitting, gold gilded brass statue will be inside the Hall and a 3m standing bronze Buddha will be placed outside the Hall. The very auspicious event of the pouring of the cast for these Buddha rupas will be taking place in Thailand on the full moon in May. Ven. Ajahn Jagaro will be going for this event and everyone is welcome to attend!

If you would like to financially contribute to the making of these beautiful Buddha statues which will provide inspiration to us all for many, many years please pass on your donation to the Treasurer in an envelope clearly marked "for the Buddha rupas".

Our thanks go to all those who have generously contributed to the building of this fine new hall in the way of physical labour, architectural and building skills, money and/or moral support. The Meditation Hall is a wonderful symbol of the granduer of the Teachings of the Lord Buddha.
SOCIETY NEWS

It was pleasing to see a good number of people attend the Society's Annual General Meeting in February where the following Committee members were elected. Don Weerakody (President), Jill Hanna (Vice President), Ron Storey (Treasurer), Pranom Visalpattanasinn (Secretary), Sally Lee (Assistant Secretary), Margaret Durrans, Shirley Jackson, Phussadee Cockburn, Ratana Kay, Barney Viersma and Sanath de Tissera. Eddie Khoo, Zor Ham and Ian Johnston have since been co-opted on to the Committee in line with the Constitution.

Thanks are given to all members of the outgoing Committee for all the dedicated hard work done during what was a very busy year. With a steady growth in membership and attendance at all activities the energy of a great many lay people is needed to make it all happen and thanks are given to all who have contributed during the past year.

The year will be remembered most as the year when the beautiful new Dhamma Hall, the Library and the Monks' quarters were built. The Society has had to borrow $207,000 and we now have to ensure a regular income to repay the loans. If you are able to make a contribution in any way (by way of a single donation or a regular monthly or quarterly donation) would you please put it in an envelope marked "New Vihara Building Foundation" and pass it on to the Treasurer or leave it in the box at the back of the Hall. All donations to this Fund are tax deductible.

Despite the unexpected rain, a very successful Chinese New Year Dinner and Cultural evening was organised by Eddie Khoo and his many helpers. Many thanks to all involved for the delicious food and wonderful entertainment for this fund raising event. All funds went towards the cost of the new Dhamma Hall.

A number of additional improvement projects have been carried out around the Centre. Following a series of break-ins at the Vihara, a new security system has been installed which should prevent any reoccurrence of thefts. New shelving has been ordered for the library and will even further improve this facility for the benefit of us all. It is wonderful to see so many people utilising the books and the tapes which are available to all members to help in their understanding of the Dhamma.
LOHAN-KUNG CLASSES

Lohan-Kung is a very ancient form of Tai-Chi and is very good for health and wellbeing.

Joanne and Barney Viersma conduct Lohan-Kung classes every Tuesday evening between 7 - 8.30pm at Dhammloka Buddhist Centre and adults of all ages are welcome. The cost is $3 per night and proceeds go towards the new Hall.

FOR SALE

MEDITATION CUSHIONS
Plain $20 Patterned $25

MEDITATION STOOLS: $20

All proceeds go towards the new Hall
REGULAR ACTIVITIES

DHAMMALOKA BUDDHIST CENTRE NOLLAMARA

Friday
7.00 - 7.20pm  Chanting
7.30 - 8.00pm  Guided sitting meditation
8.00 - 9.00pm  A talk on Buddhism by one of the senior monks

Saturday
10.30am  Food offering to the Sangha
2.30 - 3.00pm  Instruction for new meditators
3.00 - 4.00pm  Meditation and discussion
                Dhamma school for children

Sunday
8.30 - 9.15am  Sitting meditation
9.15 - 9.45am  Walking meditation & interviews
9.45 - 10.30am  Sitting meditation
10.30am  Food offering to the Sangha

Tuesday
7.00 - 8.30pm  Lohan-Kung

Thursday
9.30 - 11.00am  Yoga, relaxation & meditation
                 (beginners welcome)

SOUTH OF THE RIVER

Wednesday
7.00pm  Instruction for beginners
7.30 - 9.00pm  Meditation and Dhamma talk
                Community Health Centre,
                Armadale Kelmscott Hospital

ADDRESSES

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Tel: 525 2420

Buddhist Community Services
Social Worker
Tel: 344 4220