



NEWSLETTER

OF THE BUDDHIST SOCIETY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Spring 2004

www.bswa.org

18-20 NANSON WAY NOLLAMARA WA 6061

Tel: 9345 1711

Fax: 9344 4220

An Interview With Venerable Sister Nirodha *by Erandathi Ratanayaka*

1. What influenced your decision to become a Nun? After practicing many years as a lay person there was a deepening of yearning for a Monastic life as set out by the Lord Buddha for the realization of Nibbana, the complete ending of suffering.

2. Were there any role models that assisted you in reaching this decision? The Buddha & the well practicing Monks & Nuns.

3. What does your family think of it? For many years my family had to come to terms with my new direction in life, and they are still stunned, that I carried out the final step, leaving everything behind. It had a great impact on them, that the world has nothing to offer anymore & any longer.

4. What other preparations did you do? If you practice sincerely as a layperson you have already paved the way for a monastic life. Being a female waiting for the right conditions was a major factor. The perfect karmic conditions came together for Dhammasara.

5. What is the hardest thing to adjust to? Being part of a new Monastery I like to see quick development, given the need of so many women. Ajahn Vayama develops everything on a solid foundation, which is probably what is needed for this unique monastery.

6. What is it you miss most from lay life? Nothing - I am glad to have this opportunity to be a monastic at Dhammasara

7. How do you intend to use your monastic life in furthering Buddhism in the Community? By full filling the high standards of a 10-precept nun at Dhammasara, observing the vinaya (the monastic

rules) resulting to teach by example of ones life.

8. Are there any goals you have set for the future? At the time of my death that I may say I have done my best or close to it.

An Interview With Venerable Sister Seri *by Erandathi Ratanayaka*

1. What influenced your decision to become a Nun? After what seemed a successful career & happy home life, I still felt unfulfilled & a lack of inner happiness. On my pilgrimage to India I met Ajahn Vayama and traveling though the holy sites gave me the inspiration and faith to walk the path of the Buddha and experience in myself the peace & happiness that the Buddha experienced.

2. Were there any role models that assisted you in reaching this decision? The Buddha, & meeting Ajahn Vayama, and to see that it is possible to live as a nun.

3. What does your family think of it? Waste of a professional training and education. However they respect my decision to follow this path to find happiness & peace.

4. What other preparations did you do? I had no preparation only a Buddhist keeping 5 precepts doing a few weekend Retreats. It is a leap of faith.

5. What is the hardest thing to adjust to? The uncertain nature of the monastic life and feeling out of control of my life (e.g. Cannot eat when I like and when I want, and should follow the rules of the monastery). A total surrender of my life.

6. What is it you miss most from lay life? Nothing. I am bright, beautiful, happy and contented.

7. How do you intend to use your monastic life in furthering Buddhism in the Community? I would

like to give all my life to serve the Buddha, the Dhamma & the Sangha.

8. Are there any goals you have set for the future? The future is uncertain, but my goal is to attain Nibbana.

News from Dhammasara

The kuties being completed, the Community is enjoying a little more space with everybody having separate accommodation. Upgrading of the water collection and storage system has been completed. The visitors, as usual continue to appreciate and enjoy the peaceful and serene surroundings of Dhammasara.

Plans for New Retreat Centre

by Tanyia Macted- Frost

A large retreat centre catering for 50 participants plus teachers is planned on 10 acres just one kilometre east of Bodhinyana Monastery in Serpentine. Buddhist Society President Sol Hanna says the independent facility will have a live-in caretaker and an elaborate "outside the box" architectural design. Retreats will be run throughout the year, enabling the society's current nine day and one weekend retreats to be held at the centre every month. Other Buddhist groups will also be able to book and use the centre, and it's also expected to cater for people from overseas and the eastern states. Sol says the new centre is being built as costs at the society's current retreat venues have risen, and demand is exceeding supply - many people miss out on places as they are limited.

The society is aiming to raise between \$2-3million for the project, and donations can be made at the society with 'Donation for Retreat Centre' written on an envelope. More information will be released about the centre in the near future.

Bodhinyana News

As I write this newsletter we are exactly half way

into our annual Rains Retreat (Vassa in Pali, Pansah in Thai). The cold wet weather is still hanging on, even though it's supposed to be Spring. For those unfamiliar with the monastic calendar, every year the Sangha retreats from the world - even more - for three months, from the full moon in July or August to the full moon in October or November. As traditional Buddhists, we follow the lunar calendar, which is a much more luminous and imprecise way of marking the time than the Western system.

On August 1st we had our 21st Entrance to the Rains Ceremony, with a record 21 resident monks present. About 500 people came for the day, in spite of the rainy weather. The rain turned out to be a blessing though, as we were able to show off our brand new covered pavilion, opposite the kitchen area. The day went by smoothly, with our usual, impressive, multicultural band of supporters showing how beautifully the local Buddhist community works together in harmony and unity. The tours of the monastery were well attended, providing our supporters with a great opportunity to see where all of their donations go. And no, the monks do not have DVDs and home theatre systems in their huts, just a small room with little furniture and a walking meditation path. Simple and sufficient for the monks to spend their time devoted to meditation and intensive study of the Dhamma- Vinaya (Doctrine and Discipline).

Ajahn Brahm travelled to Singapore in early August where he taught a meditation retreat at Santosa Resort, and signed a staggering 940 copies of his new book 'Opening the Door of Your Heart' at three separate book launches in the city. On August 14th the book was also launched at Dhammaloka, where poor Ajahn had to sign another 460 copies! He's now fed up with signing, anything. The first print run of 3000 copies sold out very quickly, and the publisher, Lothian Books, has just issued a reprint of another 4000 copies. All profits from the book are going to the BSWA's building fund, and not to Ajahn Brahm's 'slush fund'.

Venerable Culaka was unfortunately taken ill, with intestinal problems, on 14th August. After spending almost two weeks at St John of God Hospital, Murdoch, including a few days in intensive care, Venerable Culaka is now recovering in

our 'sick monk's hut', next door to Ajahn Brahm. He thanks everyone for their kind support during his illness, and the recovery period.

During the Rains Retreat the monks, anagarikas and lay guests are encouraged to spend as much time as possible in their huts sitting and walking meditation, and not socialising or getting involved in 'projects'. Thus, there is very little external activity around the place at the moment. Outside of the meal times the central area is practically deserted. This is my favourite time of the year - peaceful, quiet and intensely joyful. With 21 monks, 5 anagarikas, 4 male lay guests and 3 female lay guests all intent on citta-bhavana (meditation practice) the atmosphere here is very inspiring and uplifting. It is also incredibly rare to see such a large group of people living together in harmony and mutual respect.

The Kathina Ceremony, which marks the end of the Rains Retreat, will be held on Sunday 31st October at the Monastery. All are welcome to attend. See the monthly bulletin for full details. Wishing you much happiness for the remainder of the Rainy Season.

With metta, Venerable Mudita

Ajahn Brahm Awarded John Curtin Medal for 2004

Ajahn Brahm was this year's only recipient of the John Curtin Medal, presented to him on the 7th October at Curtin University. The recipient of this prestigious award must show vision, community service and leadership, areas in which war time Prime Minister John Curtin excelled.

Buddhist Council of Western Australia

by Erandathi Ratnayaka

Last year at an event in Dhammaloka there was a gathering of Buddhist traditions. Sol Hanna of BSWA, John Waite from Hayagriva & Man Wong from Buddha Light International together discussed forming a Buddhist Council. The progress so far has been a series of meetings and

has collectively perused other constitutions. Many friendships have been formed and they are now in the process of finalising the draft for a Constitution for the Buddhist Council of Western Australia, which would represent all Buddhist Groups in WA.

The Councils role would be to liaise with State & Local Governments, Corporations and Community Groups and also to facilitate and assist in projects such as a joint Vesak celebration. Its objectives are the promotion of Buddhism, assist in dispute resolution and foster fellowship and goodwill for Buddhist and other communities.

New Chanting CD

Jake Mitra Interviewed by Kanchana Thilakasiri

I understand you've been instrumental in organising new chanting CDs, what prompted you to do this? I wanted to learn how to chant. I found the existing recordings were unclear and difficult to chant along. Also I wanted to see more people chanting together in harmony and confidently.

How will the new recording be different from the old? They'll be in Ajahn Sr. Vayama's style which is gentler and easier to follow. Many people have said she is a good chanter, and in recording her I couldn't agree more.

What tracks will be on them? All the basic chanting for the lay practitioner. You can use the CD to learn how to chant-along on Fridays at Nollamara, Retreats, for formally undertaking the Five or Eight Precepts and your own daily meditations or devotionals.

Will there be more than one CD? I hope to record the monks of Bodhinyana in the Thai style. Also would like to record guided meditations.

What do you feel you have achieved with this project in terms of having made a positive contribution to the Buddhist community here?

That is to be seen. But what I hope is that more

people will chant together confidently and this will help foster a greater sense of community.

What equipment was used and what did this involve in terms of the tasks you had to perform? Professional equipment was used and recorded in the same high quality format used for commercial audio CDs. A multi-track recorder was used, which meant chanters were recorded on separate tracks and their voices blended together. Ajahn Vayama, Venerable Sister Nirodha and Anagarikaa Jui Lee (now Ven. Sr. Seri) were recorded at Dhammasara. Ven. Sirripanno was recorded at Bodhinyana. Other chanters were recorded at my home. This meant some background noises were picked up because of the sensitive recording equipment used. It also meant a lot of equipment had to be lugged along!

New Chanting Book

Kanchana Thilakasiri interviewed by Jake Mitra

What prompted the need for a new Chanting Book? I'd been hearing for a little while, from a couple of our Teachers here, that there were a few inaccuracies in the translations that we had - which are otherwise very good. We currently have access to wonderful monastic role models who happen to be experts in Practise and also experts in Pali, so I made use of them!

How will it be different from the old one?

The new book will have a new look design and format. Our secretary (that's you!) made an extremely fortunate announcement one Friday night asking for volunteers. Through this we have come in to contact with a very professional designer and a very passionate photographer who have basically *been* an incredibly enthusiastic design process.

More importantly the book will be a guide for laypeople at the BSWA. It will feature chants which are a regular part of lay life at the BSWA. If you're a layperson and you hear/chant it here regularly then it will be in the book - I hope!

The book will include the chants which are done by the laity and the monastics during the food offerings and it will also include the flower puja

which is a regular part of the dana ceremonies at Dhammasara Monastery. The 8 precepts will also be a part of the new book.

When will it be available and what was your role in the new Chanting Book? I hope by November. My role was to find the chants for the book along with their translations. Doing this involved consultation with the Sangha from both monasteries. After this I took several drafts to those Sangha members who are experts in Pali. I also liaised with John Ilian (as you did for the CD) from the Sharper Pencil, a professional designer and Greg Hamilton, a professional photographer, both of whom volunteered their services.

Bangladesh Orphanage Visit

by Scott Andrews

It was very nice to stay at the orphanage in South East Bangladesh during February, I spent about three weeks there. The orphanage is comprised of two venues located in two different villages - Rajasthali (in the hill tracts bordering Myanmar) and Rangunia (a little bit further inland on the plains). The Rajasthali venue is the largest and is located on land shared with the local village Buddhist temple (Moytri Vihar).

The political situation is not very good in this area due to causes and conditions some of which are almost 50 years old. This has resulted in a drastic decline in the socio-economic conditions of the local people and the impetus for the formation of the orphanage. This also caused some restrictions to our movements and privacy during my stay. Despite this I very much enjoyed my interactions with everyone at RBSS. They are very supportive of the Dhamma and are a very patient, soft and kind hearted group of people.

A total of about 50 children and teenagers are being supported by the orphanage, some of these children are orphans (ie. they are lacking one or both of their parents) but some of them aren't. They are mainly from local tribal groups and Buddhist, which makes them a minority in the overall population. In Rajasthali there are about 20 boys resident at the orphanage and about 14 girls sponsored to families in the community (this venue is not big enough yet to mix genders

residentially). In Rangunia there are about 14 girls in residence.

The orphanage seems to be very well run on a practical level, all the children are well loved and receiving a great standard of care. For example they all sleep on beds (with blankets, pillows and mosquito nets), are well clothed and eat 3 meals a day. During my stay the children were well engaged in schooling, residential chores and recreational activities, as well as daily spiritual interaction with the Sangha.

All at the orphanage have developed a tremendous respect for Ajahn Brahm and trust in the donations they receive through the Buddhist Society. It was a great privilege to witness first hand how the generosity of people in Perth helped those at the orphanage in very meaningful ways. As far as I can make out the orphanage is doing some good and necessary work in an area of the world that is complex and with a group of people that are marginalised.

~~~~~

The donation box for the Orphanage is located near the reception area through out the year. We will also be having our annual appeal for the Orphanage in December.

### **Volunteering – the practice of letting go of self through service to others.**

*by Lynne Jackson*

It's Friday night and I'm off to Dhammaloka to chant, meditate and hear a Dhamma talk. When I arrive I know where to park, and as I walk through the gates I notice that all the paths are swept and the gardens are looking trim. The doors of the meditation hall are sparkling, the carpet is newly vacuumed and the flowers, hall and shrine look beautiful.

Someone puts on the chanting tape, leads the meditation and gives a great talk. Now it's time to go to the loo, then pick up a Bulletin and a Newsletter. I have a cuppa and a curry puff then go into the library to pick up a book and buy a CD.

Now, I'd like you to contemplate: *all*, every single

thing I have made use of since I arrived at Dhammaloka is freely done by volunteers. They are putting out parking signs, sweeping, cleaning, vacuuming, cleaning loos, typing publications and producing CDs and MP3s. Someone stays behind Friday night and washes up, vacs the floor, shuts the gates and locks up – and this is just Friday. Next morning the dana hall is sparkling, someone has cleaned loos, done the garden and swept up. This is repeated on Sunday.

Now isn't this truly wonderful? Everything at Dhammaloka is done by volunteers, nobody is paid. They all volunteer as an act of gratitude for what has been given to them freely, that is the liberating Teachings of the Buddha. You too may like to volunteer to help your community and if you do, contact Sol on 0405 182 823 or Scott or Lynne on 9345 1711.

### **Perth to Host 4<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on Buddhism in 2006**

*by Kanchana Thilakasiri*

The 4<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on Buddhism will be a rare opportunity for members of the public to ask questions (even controversial ones) of a panel of experts (lay people as well as monastics) from different traditions.

This will be a unique forum and it will be, according to Ajahn Brahm, 'very different than going to an ordinary talk. It's far more alive, it's interactive and it is penetrating.' So it won't just be promoting the Buddha's Teachings and celebrating the growth of Buddhism in Australia.

He also says it will be 'great fun!' The 3<sup>rd</sup> Global Conference on Buddhism (held in Singapore) was a huge success. According to Ajahn Brahm, people didn't want to go home at the end, everybody was paying attention and nobody left the room.

Here's what BSWA President, Sol Hanna had to say about the 4<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on Buddhism.

When is it? 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> June 2006 (plenty of forewarning!)

Where is it to be held? The Perth Convention Center. It's a brilliant venue with a 2500 seat

auditorium and facilities especially for conferences.

How did it come about that the BSWA is hosting this major event? Ajahn Brahm and I spoke at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Global Conference on Buddhism in Singapore and we were asked to do the next one.

Why do this? Well, it brings together Buddhist teachers and regular Buddhists from all the different traditions. It's a rare forum where you'll see speakers of different traditions talking on issues relevant to contemporary Buddhists and getting questioned. There'll be some interesting debates. People will get the chance to ask questions and hold the speakers to account.

The questions asked and the topics are not just arcane philosophical issues but they're issues relevant to contemporary people. It's about finding how Buddhism can help people in their everyday lives.

## **Sanghadana - how to broaden the mind through giving to the Sangha**

*by Tanyia Maxted-Frost and Ajahn Cattamalo*

Giving - or generosity - is the foundation of the Buddhist path.

Giving your time, sharing your knowledge, material wealth, and whatever else you have to give with others is a beautiful quality and the making of a kind, generous person putting lovingkindness or Metta into action.

Giving to the Sangha (who sustain Buddhism) with wholeheartedness and unselfish intention (without thought of outcome) is the ideal way for people to broaden their minds and gain much happiness - by going outside the square or comfort zone they live in. Buddhism is a gradual training, says Ajahn Cattamalo, and it starts in the busy hustle and bustle of lay life. By giving, or giving up (renouncing), you let go a little bit of the self at a time and thus make progress step by step on the way to Enlightenment (the realisation of non-self).

While an ordinary mind is stubborn, fixed and hard, with the practise of non selfishness the mind becomes pliable, open and broad. Whatever

you put into your Buddhist practice is what you will get out of it; the greater the effort the greater the result.

In general one could say, the more deliberate, focused and pure (non-selfish) the givers intention is, and the purer in virtue and realisation the recipient is, the greater the benefit is to both.

In giving to the Sangha of the four quarters (that is, all directions) present and yet to come one truly broadens the mind, as one is not limiting the mind to a particular group or individual; thus the Buddha said that such an offering is the highest form of giving, producing unlimited or rather immeasurable results.

Every step of the way leading up to an offering of food, requisites or the lending of professional skills etc. to the Sangha is based in a wholesome mind state and thus will lead to wholesome kammic results accordingly.

In short, says Ajahn Cattamalo, we gain what we give or we get what we deserve, as we are all the heirs of our kamma.

## **Community Service News**

*by Tanyia Maxted Frost*

Community Service volunteers in the Buddhist Society are taking Buddhism to intellectually and physically disabled people in group homes, adolescents in drug rehabilitation, and inmates in prison.

Every month, Peter Smith visits people living with disabilities in a group home. For over a year now, Zor Hane has been giving meditation instruction and 'wholesome life values' guidance to adolescents and others at Palmeston Farm drug rehabilitation. Those who attend Zor's sessions have asked if Zor could conduct two sessions each week. Sessions are now Tuesdays and Fridays. Zor is also giving a series of workshops on Buddhist meditation to the detainees at the Perth Immigration Detention Centre.

Moria Wallace is visiting inmates at Acacia Prison one Saturday each month with regular attendance averaging five to seven prisoners, and she is soon

being joined by Hugh Sykes. Moria also visits East Perth Watch House with Peter Smith. Sally Lee visits five prisoners at Nyandi. Denis Shepard is visiting various prisons in the role of Prison Chaplain.

Denis recently presented Buddhist mediation to students of Emmanuel Catholic College, St Georges College, Bunbury Catholic Primary School and Ranford High School. Denis has also conducted eight Buddhist marriages over the past year. He spends considerable time with the partners to be, in preparation for the marriage.

### **Friday Night Speakers During Rains Retreat** *by Tanyia Maxted-Frost*

A diverse array of speakers from Chinese, Vietnamese and Tibetan Buddhist traditions visited Dhammaloka on Friday nights during the three month Rains Retreat. Community Services Coordinator John Treasure says the program brings the different traditions closer together, and has drawn interest from the membership.

While numbers haven't been as high as for the talks by Ajahn Brahm, there has been a constant number of members and friends attending. John says one of the most popular speakers was Glenda Lee of the Tibetan Gelugpa tradition from Bunbury's Hospice of Mother Tara for cancer sufferers.

### **Retreat Information**

The November 9 Day Retreat, to be held at the Redemptorist Retreat Centre in North Perth (Friday 19<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 28<sup>th</sup>), will be open for registration to FULL MEMBERS who DID NOT ATTEND this year's April retreat from 6.45pm on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> October to Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> October.

Other FULL MEMBERS can register from 6.45pm on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> October to Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> November. ASSOCIATE MEMBERS can register from 6.45pm on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> November to Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> November. NON MEMBERS can register from 6.45pm Friday 12<sup>th</sup> November to Monday 15<sup>th</sup> November if there are places available.

In order to simplify registration please forward the correct full payment with the registration form. Please note that the Retreat Centre has increased it's fees:

Members: \$280

Non-members: \$320

Applicants will only be notified if the retreat is already full.

Despite efforts to advertise the booking dates in advance, unforeseeable circumstances prevented this newsletter from being mailed out earlier. Apologies are extended for any inconvenience.

### **Meditation Retreats 2005:**

*Weekend Retreats* at St Joseph's Retreat House, Safety Bay:

March 5<sup>th</sup> to March 7<sup>th</sup>

June 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup>

November 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>

*9 Day Retreats* at the Redemptorist Retreat House, North Perth:

March 24<sup>th</sup> to April 2<sup>nd</sup> (Thursday to Saturday)  
Applicants who are full members of the BSWA and who have not previously attended a 9 day retreat of the BSWA, will be given priority on this retreat.

November 17<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> (Friday to Sunday)

Registration forms will be available 4 weeks prior to the start of each retreat. Forms will be placed on the notice board at Dhammaloka Centre. As the retreats are very popular, early registration is advisable.

Enquiries to Bianca & Ron (08) 9472 7634 (before 8.30pm please).