My First Experience of Kathina

Article and photos by Marcos Miranda

I woke up very excited on Sunday morning, 31st October, because I knew it would be a very special day, for me and my friend as we are attending our first End of Rains Retreat Ceremony.

After driving for more than an hour, I got to Bodhinyana Monastery but the building was closed. Fortunately, a kind volunteer from the Buddhist society told me that the ceremony was going to be held at the Jhana Grove Centre.

Once I arrived at my destination, I was astounded by the multitude of people who had gathered there and that each of them were so happy, friendly and kind.

All this kindness and sharing made me feel as if I were at home.

Certainly the Buddhist community has been very helpful to me in my process of settling down in Perth, where I am so far away from my family, friends and my beloved country, Chile.

As a person coming from a Catholic country, it is easy to relate to these kind of ceremonies that are related to faith and God, but after sharing with the people there, looking at their smiles and opening the door of my heart, I did remember why I and all these people were there.

We were all rejoicing at the return of our beloved monks after spending a long time cultivating peace and insight so they could help us all to learn how to let go and live in happiness and harmony. You could see this in the faces of the crowd there, who were all glad that the Sangha could once more continue to teach the Dhamma and conduct meditation retreats for lay people.

After the Kathina (donating cloth) ceremony, we all gathered in the main hall and performed 'Dana' (giving alms) to the monks and then proceeded to the lunch room where I have never seen so much food in my life. I found an extensive variety of vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes, many delicious desserts and tasty fruits.

After lunch, we enjoyed the delights of some traditional Thai dancing. We went around the outside of the main building singing and dancing for 3 times and then came back to the main hall where we did some chanting and listened to a talk by Ajahn Brahmin.

I am already looking forward to the next Dhamma talk and meditation retreat, from now until the next rains retreat in 2011.
Heartwood of the Dhamma

Celebrating the end of the wet season with the Nuns of Dhammasara Monastery

It was a cold and windy morning as people from all corners of Perth made their way down the winding gravel road through Gidgegannup forest, to a make-shift car park, which at first glance, appeared to be in the middle of nowhere. However, as we were soon to discover, this couldn’t be farther from the truth.

It was this gathering point, as the cars sidled up considerably next to each other leaving plenty of space, which signalled the beginning of an afternoon of generosity.

Everyone there opened their hearts and shared with others, many of whom were meeting each other for the first time. They shared their food, their compassion, and best of all their minds.

The first thing to catch my eye as we waited outside for the Nuns talk, was a little wooden statue, on which the words 'Heartwood of the Dhamma' were engraved. Intrigued by this, I went on to explore inside and as we joined our hands at our chests in unison to chant, wrapped in our soft, warm scarves and comfy pants.

While the wind outside was whistling through the gum leaves, the thick rammed earth walls gave off the scent of fresh flowers and incense, filling our nostrils with every deep breath.

Above us, I noticed a framed inscription that explained the engraved words:

'So this holy life does not have gain, honour and renown for its benefit
or the attainment of virtue for its benefit
or the attainment of concentration for its benefit
or knowledge and vision for its benefit
but it is the unshakeable deliverance of mind
that is the goal of this holy life
its heartwood and its end'

Venerable Nirodha later explained to me that this was their mantra. To foster an unshakeable core, as if it is the pure centre underneath all the layers of bark that both protect us and blind us. We should foster and cherish this core with wise intention.

The venerable then went on to say that "by gaining more depth in understanding, hopefully we can pass it on."

This serenity of mind and willingness to share was demonstrated by all the Nuns of Dhammasara in welcoming us with open arms. They made sure that we immediately felt at home, not as if it was their space we were invading, but as though this place belonged to all of us.

Their peacefulness within themselves, with each other and union in living with the environment is a shining light for us laypeople to follow.

It was with this experience that it became clear, this hollow in amongst the beautiful natural Australian bush may appear to be a barren nowhere to an outsiders, but it is the middle of everywhere to the Nuns who call it their home.

It is their heartwood.
And so it became ours.

by Cassie Tanner
Photos by Marcos Miranda
Buddhist Boot Camp: Forging Friendships BSWA Style

by Sonia Neale

In September 2010, two dozen people from the Dhammadala Buddhist Centre spent the weekend at Nanga Bush Camp, 110km from Perth at Dwellingup, beside the Murray River in rustic log cabin accommodation. And what an extraordinary, magnificent weekend it was, thanks to the combined efforts of Ron Mutton and Chris Perrier who organized the event and did all the hard grunt work beforehand.

We stayed in three wooden cabins and conducted activities in the main cabin, which was two storey high, open plan with many levels and wooden staircases.

The aim of the venture was all about meeting and getting to know like-minded Buddhists, connecting over new experiences, sharing different ethnic foods, long hilly bush walks, gentle canoeing, meditation and listening to internet interviews by Bill Moyers: On Faith & Reason - Pema Chödrön, David Logan on tribal leadership and Nature Deficit Disorder by Richard Louv on Radio National.

Many nationalities were represented over the weekend, including Sri Lankan and Vietnamese. No one quite knew what to expect but by the first night everyone had settled in very comfortably.

There was a deep, rich, safe, intuitive and enlightened atmosphere prevailing which blanketed us all in warmth and security against the cold night air.

The first night we had a meet and greet with soup and rolls in front of the roaring wood fire and due to the organized activities planned, it was quickly dubbed Buddhist Boot Camp, much to the delight of all the people there.

For anyone up very early on the first morning, they were greeted by a fine mist arising from the river in the valley below and the many kookaburras laughing in the trees. They were tame enough to hand feed and we were able to get many lovely pictures of them whilst drinking a much needed coffee on the wooden balcony overlooking Nanga Pool.

Afterwards, half of us went canoeing along the river, entering at Baden Powell Pool and the other half hiked up and down the river. Canoeing was a fabulous experience once you got your sea legs (or river legs) but we really had to keep our wits about us as many canoeists from another organisation was competing and coming at us from the opposite direction.

There were several places where the river was narrow with rocks around us. We had to paddle fractionally through them against a quite difficult current. This was hilariously fun. We went further down the river before turning back.

Izzy and Migara, a brother and sister team, spent their entire time playfully fighting with each other till the canoe tipped over in the water and they both got soaking wet, much to the amusement of all concerned.

Afterwards several people dragged the canoes over the Baden Powell Pool rocks and went in the opposite direction downstream towards the camp while some of the more adventurous members took a long hike back along the meandering mountainous roads.

We were famished when we reached the base camp. The food was delicious. We ate a huge variety, much of which we could not identify.

While we could not identify the ingredients, the delicious smell and taste filled our senses. It was a smorgasbord of delight and we all went back for seconds.

On the second morning, we went on a guided bush walk up and down many hills and down to the beautiful Baden Powell pool. Our guide kept us amused with local stories and told us about the natural spring that supplied the bush camp with extra fresh water which tasted delicious.

During the entire time we were there, it was so easy to talk to everyone as we were having such a good time, and the intelligent and enlightened conversation flowed freely. The most fascinating part of the weekend was that we were all new to each other and situated in an isolated spot that required much team work, activities, cooking and cleaning.

We all just bugged in and did what we had to do without whining or slacking off. We all worked together as a single unit. It was a bonding experience and we made friends and now we see each other on Friday nights at Dhammadala.

This is something we will be talking about for years to come.

Kalyana Mitta ventures into the World Our Rains Retreat Adventures

By Tse-Ling Wong

Group photo with Rachel Green following our bushwalk.

This rains retreat period has been a rather busy one for the Kalyana Mitta Young Adult group as we used this time to extend our horizons. We had a variety of speakers from Tibetan to Zen to eco-Buddhists as well as other community based activities.

We began with a trip up to Hillarys to visit Eric Harrison, a long practicing mediator and teacher. There, we lapped up the gorgeous (and very unseasonal) winter sunshine out on his boat. With the soothing sound of the ocean and nature around us, we spent the afternoon fascinated with his stories and experiences.

Our next meeting had us visiting Sam Nelson over to Dhammadala where we learned about how Buddhist principles (the five precepts in particular) applied to environmental issues. It reaffirmed that, Buddhists or not, we should practice more kindness to the world that we live in and do the best we can to reduce our carbon footprint.

Following that, the Young Adult group went on a bush walk in early spring. We were extremely privileged to have the expert guidance and hospitality of Rachel and Michael Green, who welcomed us to their home and introduced us to the gorgeous bushland around their property.

On a beautiful early spring day, we walked, learned and experienced the wonders of our native wildflowers. We were even treated to an impromptu piano concert and very delicious afternoon tea, followed by a spectacular sunset enjoyed with great friends.

With all our activities, we decided that we had to do something good for the community. Hence, we joined in with the volunteers at the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation at their weekly stint at a retirement home, spreading a little music, compassion and company to the residents there.

Our rains retreat program this year has given us a variety of rewarding experiences although we are all very happy to welcome back our monastics. With the end of 2010 and summer approaching, we can’t wait to see what 2011 will bring for the Young Adult group. As Ajahn Brahm says: “the future is uncertain…”.
**Rains Retreat & Kathina**

We have just emerged from the deep peace of the Rains Retreat, during which time the monks have remained in residence at Bodhinyana. All travel, work projects and general business were put aside for the three months of the retreat. What a shock then when we were visited on Kathina day by over 2000 faithful lay-folk! I have to admit it was all a bit overwhelming.

Throughout the retreat, Ajahn Brahm focussed on teaching the monks, anagārikas and lay residents. Having so much time with our teacher was a real blessing. In addition to the Wednesday night Dhamma talks, the junior members of the community studied "The Word of the Buddha" every Saturday night. Once per fortnight, every member of the community had a chance to discuss their meditation with Ajahn Brahm.

Two days before the end of the Rains Retreat, the 9-day retreat for Ajahn's Singapore disciples got underway. This retreat ran until Kathina day when the recently refreshed retreatants made a great contribution to getting Jhāna Grove ready for the ceremony.

Five days later the November BSWA retreat began. Once again this was booked solid within minutes of the opening of bookings.

**Ajahn Brahm's Travels**

After the retreats, Ajahn made his way to Colombo, Sri Lanka, to attend the World Fellowship of Buddhists 60th anniversary. While in Colombo, he also spoke at the "Business and Buddhism Forum". From there he went to Singapore to give a talk, and then on to Malacca, Malaysia for a conference.

**Building and Maintenance**

During the Rains there was very little building work, as one might expect. Some planning began for the major building projects of the coming year. The biggest project is the renovation of the male guest quarters.

This work will involve adding new walls between the rooms to improve sound insulation, putting in a concrete ceiling, replacing all structural timber with steel and bricks and removing the sliding glass doors and replacing them with a normal door and shuttered windows.

During the time of renovations, the anagārikas will be housed in monk's kutis, and the anagārika quarters will house lay guests.

Our visitor Scott, a carpenter by trade, has replaced our old rusty cabinet in the laundry with a lovely black wooden cupboard.

Much work is now underway to remove the Flinders Ranges wattle. Native to South Australia, these trees were planted to provide some screening. However, the plant has become a real pest, choking the bush and causing terrible hay fever to some monks. These trees also pose a major fire danger in the central area of the monastery.

We are still looking at native WA plant options which could provide screening in the future. Bottlebrush may be one option. In the meantime, the monastery might seem a bit barren in places.

More screen doors are to be installed. These provide much needed relief on hot summer's nights; allowing monks to leave their kutis doors open for the breeze.

Venerable Cunda, once a mechanic, is repairing our old tractor. His work has saved us thousands of dollars in labour costs, with the cost of a few hundred dollars for the actual replacement parts. It was quite astonishing to see the tractor literally split in half. Ven. Cunda says we can probably get another 20 years out of it. They sure don't make them like they used to!

**Comings and Goings**

One of our monks, Venerable Jaganatha, has left for Santi Forest Monastery, south of Sydney. Another, Venerable Santutthi, left on pilgrimage to India on the 5th of November. All the other monks and novices are staying put and are back to work on the various needs of the monastery.

Venerable Vimokkha, a Bodhinyana monk, has returned from Sri Lanka after a stay of two years and plans to stay with us indefinitely.

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**Jhāna Grove Retreat Centre Report**

Two successful 9 day retreats were held at the centre, namely the Singaporean Buddhist Fellowship Retreat and the BSWA nine day retreat. Ajahn Brahm led both retreats with his usual blend of kindness, humour and profound wisdom.

The Kathina ceremony was held at the centre and everything ran smoothly. The Buddhist Fellowship retreat participants & many volunteers helped with the cleanup afterwards. As the nine day retreat started soon after the Kathina, it was suggested that from next year, we kindly ask for volunteers to help cleanup Jhāna Grove after the Kathina. There was a lot of work involved in the cleanup and more help is greatly appreciated.

We are kindly asking Kathina attendees to take more care of Jhāna Grove as one of the main issues was food stains on the concrete paths.

**Building and Maintenance**

Bamboo floors are still an issue but slowly getting fixed.

Jorge, a professional floor installer from JPC Flooring, donated his labour to fix some of the bowing in the bamboo floor. We were impressed with this since he is not even a Buddhist!

Work has begun on the Teachers' Cottage.

Carl is doing a great job with mulching the garden beds, doing maintenance work and many other small jobs around the centre.

A big thank you to Mary & Kath Mundz, who came to stay and helped with weeding & gardening.

Eiji & Sam Morazumi came for a few days prior to the retreats to work on the banks above cottages 1 - 5. They are now covered with mulch and have a few new native plants to hold the soil & improve the appearance. They did a brilliant job.

Bill and Thom Prins were very helpful in the post-Kathina clean up and did many small maintenance chores. Thanks!

*Reported by Dania & Michael Percy*
Ajahn Brahm answers a question during the Buddhist Fellowship of Singapore retreat at Jhana Grove Meditation Retreat Centre, October 2010.

The meditation on metta is a wonderful meditation because one of the reasons that people don't have a still mind is they're not kind enough to their mind. You need to look upon your body and mind as a good friend.

Metta meditation is actually learning how to generate a feeling of goodwill to all beings. In my book, Opening the Door of your Heart, I give a definition of metta, and that is being able to open the door to your heart no matter what you're experiencing, no matter what's happening. That's beautiful good will.

Sometimes you may be lazy. Many people, they feel they need to be punished. That's not true. You can give yourself metta even if you've been lazy and slack, whatever you've been up to. Give yourself a break.

It doesn't matter if other people have been creating all sorts of noise or whatever else they've been doing. They may have happiness and well being, as well. And so this beautiful feeling of metta is irrespective of what other people have done or what you've done.

Give good will to every moment, no matter what you're feeling in this moment. Give metta to every moment. In other words wish this moment well. If you can do that, you'll have a peaceful and wonderful retreat.

Metta meditation is a deliberate practice to recognise metta and develop it. So in metta meditation, usually people choose a few words to say over and over again. May I be happy. May I be well. May I be free from suffering. Give the words a chance to work. May all beings be happy. May all beings be free from suffering. The important thing with a meditation like that is to listen to the spaces between the words. May I be happy. May all beings be free from suffering.

You'll find words have power. Pause a little while to listen to that power. Understand what you're saying.

Words are just the switch which one uses to turn on the lights, to get the metta started, it's like lighting the match to get the fire going. Words are the catalyst to get the metta started. It's the feeling that comes through or after the words, that's what matters.

So I encourage people to say these sorts of words over and over again. There are many versions. The verses are there to help you to cultivate the feeling of metta. May all beings be happy and well. Feel the words. May all beings be happy and well. Listen afterwards to that feeling that is really, really strong.

Now, the feeling of metta is incredibly pleasant. Once you get it going, it feels really nice to have metta for the whole world. Once it gets to a certain stage it is self sustaining, you don't need to say anything anymore, you just think metta. And if you want to take metta further, you get so much peace and joy, you start to bliss out.

May all beings in this great universe have joy and peace and freedom from the many problems which beset us. May all people live in peace and harmony and comfort.

That joy starts to create the most beautiful lights in the mind, you just sit there blessing out, and the most beautiful metta nimitas come up, so lovely, so easy to focus on. This helps you to go deeper into the jhanas, because you're generating bliss and happiness.

As I kept on telling the monks during the three month retreat, Sukhino citta samadhipati, said the Buddha many times. In that happiness, in that bliss, the mind becomes very still. So we generate the bliss and happiness of metta, and the mind gets incredibly still, and all these nimitas and jhanas, they just happen.

So that's how we do metta meditation, sitting down there, May all beings be happy, feeling what metta is, focussing on the resonance which happens after the words. May all beings be at peace. Keep on saying that, so that you dwell on those feelings until they get very strong and become self-sustaining.

You just have to strike the match. The words are just lighting the fire. You might find sometimes you have to start the fire several times before it gets started. Once the fire gets started, it just takes off. And it's very powerful as well.

One of my favourite metta stories is about a famous Thai monk. He had been wandering in the forest and he came to a village, and announced to the headman that he was going to stay there that night.

So, the headman said, 'That's great, it's great to have a forest monk visit.' It meant the lay people could come and hear a dhamma talk and feed the monk the next morning. So they made an arrangement for a dhamma talk in two hours' time.

The monk had some time and he thought, 'What will I do? I'll meditate.' He sat under a tree. He started to meditate. But, he realised after a couple of minutes, he had sat under the wrong tree!

Continued over page
There was a big ants' nest nearby. The big red ants started crawling up his leg. They started biting. First, one, then a second, then a third, then twenty. Biting. He was a tough monk. He just sat there.

But, look this is what happens. Somehow or another, the mindfulness gets lost. The next thing he knew, he was running away. He never actually knew how he managed to change from sitting posture to running posture. He was just escaping.

But when he caught himself running away, he stopped himself. He thought, 'I'm a forest monk, I shouldn't be like this.' So, he turned around. Then he saw where he had been sitting, swarming with thousands of ants.

They don't make monks like this anymore! Those were the real monks!

He sat down under the same tree, and of course the ants crawled up him and started biting him again. But he changed his meditation. He started doing metta meditation. *May all beings be happy.*

Once he started doing metta meditation, the ants stopped biting. They were still crawling over him, irritating him, but they were not biting. And after another couple of minutes he felt a strange sensation. Instead of the ants crawling up, the ants were crawling down, they were crawling off him, each and every one, until the very last ant crawled off his foot.

He continued his meditation, and he had a wonderful meditation focussing on loving kindness. After the two hours were finished he opened his eyes. The lay people were coming. He could hear them coming because they were making a strange noise.

He thought, 'This is a strange custom!' They were dancing. The lay people were dancing! Then he realised why they were dancing. Except for a one metre circle around him, the whole place was crawling with these fierce red ants. They had left a metre circle around him, like a no man's land. But everywhere else they were as busy as ever. That's what happens when you have a loving kindness meditation. The animals are kind to you.

So... were there many flies around you at lunchtime? When the flies come out: *Flies, the door of my heart is open to you. May all flies be happy.* Try this, and you'll find you'll be going around with this ring of flies, protecting you, content to be with you, not touching you!

There are lots of stories about loving kindness. It really works!

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**SPECIAL NOTICE**

Ajahn Vayama and Venerable Seri are moving to a new address at the end of November.

If you would like to offer Dana or other requisites, please call Venerable Seri after 26th November between 5pm to 7pm on mobile No: 0459 471 047 or send an email to ajahnvayama@gmail.com

Thank you very much

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**The Meditation of the Falling Leaf**

If you watch the leaves that fall, from those trees that change as the seasons turn...

Sometimes it is a slow and graceful dance.
At others, a swift play upon the winds.

Close your eyes and see the leaves Brown and gold, green and tawny-red They fall at nobody's will Sometimes blown about by the wind

See behind them the still and cooling world.
See the spaces between them silent and empty do they grow as all the leaves have settled down

These leaves are like the mind's own thoughts, the emotions, stories, feelings, plans As you sit still they fall about, that is their nature, their season and their time.

Touch it, will it, try and change it and you are the wind, whipping up each thought again, growing new ones till the clouds of them are like leaves that whirl about.

Be the tree that is still and calm, Patient in youth and old age. Be the stillness that grows, as all those whirling mind-made leaves settle slowly to the ground.

Be that space between branches and ground. Growing stillness, as all thoughts fall.

by K. Lafrentz
Children's Sunday Morning Dhamma Class for 2011

On Sunday, 9th January 2011, the BSWA will begin conducting Children's Sunday Morning Dhamma classes every Sunday morning for children aged between 3 and 17 years.

It will be conducted in both the Shrine Rooms and the Dhammaloka Meditation Hall between 9:15am and 10:15am.

All children are welcome. Parents/Guardians who would like their children to grow up learning the wise and compassionate teachings of The Lord Buddha are encouraged to take this opportunity to enrol their children.

For more information, please contact Lee Chan (coordinator/teacher) on 08-93853239 between 8am and 6:30pm.

Having Fun

by Eric Williams

I'm writing this in memory of my friend Wunneeatd. I've always thought myself a very fortunate fellow indeed to have had a friend like Wunneeatd. She had fun and would not let the fact she was about to die stop her. We had many laughs right up to the week she left us.

And again I was fortunate enough to be able to kiss her goodbye 4 days before she died as I went overseas to Bodhinyanarama Monastery in New Zealand the next day.

My friend gave me permission to go and told me not to be sad for her, "This was very difficult for me". I knew this was going to be the last time I would see her. Wunneeatd and her partner Ron could never have known how much I miss my friend.

I don't often ask a favour of anyone but I ask one of you

PLEASE SEND 'MEGA' METTA TO WUNNNEATD
A genuine Buddhist & a very nice lady
MANY THANKS
As a team, Ajahn Brahm and the current President of the Buddhist Society, Dennis Sheppard, have married many people. They have officiated over the weddings of possibly hundreds of couples in their roles as Abbott and Marriage Celebrant, respectively, for a number of years.

So you can imagine, how joyful it was to see Dennis on the receiving end for a change, when, he married his lovely partner Heidi Lemke in the Dhamma Hall at Dhammadaka before a large gathering of family and friends, on Saturday, 30th October.

Their Marriage Celebrant was Jill Hanna, who is also a good friend, making a fitting and harmonious guide for the proceedings. She is also a former President of the Society and is one of the Society’s two Buddhist Celebrants.

So what’s in a Buddhist Wedding, you may ask, what’s so different?

The main features of a wedding ceremony, the exchanging of vows and rings, and the signing of the register are all there, but, for a practising Buddhist there are some distinct and meaningful differences, to a conventional or traditional wedding.

Perhaps the most obvious point is that Buddhist monks and nuns are asked to be present to bless the union. Ajahn Brahm was there, of course, and the Bhikkhunis from Dhammadaka also made a much appreciated effort to be there on what was for them, a very busy weekend.

Firstly, the symbolic Buddhist rituals taken from South-East Asian countries are replete with symbolic meaning. The white cotton string or parisa string (meaning “protective” in Pali) was unwound, starting from the Buddha statue (and monks and nuns) and taken to encircle the whole group of around 200 people, to unify and harness our collective good will for the bride and groom, so finally being wrapped around them three times as its recipients.

As was mentioned jokingly, this was not just to prevent them from changing their minds or running away – but because the number three, occurring often, is significant as representing the Three Jewels of Buddhism: The Buddha, The Dhamma and The Sangha. Then, it is traditional to hold onto the string while the blessing is chanted in Pali.

Secondly, the holy water used to bless the couple is important as a reminder of its four harmonizing qualities, they are: purity (clarity and truth), coolness (putting out fires & reducing anger), prosperity (bounty, as in, plentiful rains for a good harvest) and binding (holding things together and unifying).

There was however, for this particular ceremony, a strictly, “No soaking the bride with water” condition, owing to the brides new silk dress. Even though a good blessing (or soaking) is something that Ajahn seems to relish, he handled the special request with dexterity and wit.

Being ever so kind and adaptable, he “magically” isolated the O out of H₂O and blessed the happy and (relieved) couple with that, flicking and sprinkling them with air or, as he put it “the essence of water”, adding “if you want the real thing, just add water!”

Thirdly, they made a point of promising to uphold the Five Buddhist Precepts, reciting the ethical standard of a Buddha, a mutual reflection of the way they’ve chosen to live their lives, by actively and consciously generating harmlessness, generosity, honesty, fidelity and cultivating the mind to stillness and peace.

Fourthly, a recitation of the Metta Sutta in English, by everyone present reverberated softly and filled the room. This ancient teaching, familiar to all Buddhists, reinforces the intention in one’s heart, to cultivate loving-kindness, towards oneself, each other and everyone, one encounters.

Amongst the pieces of advice offered, the one I found most moving, was Ajahn’s encouragement to make use of a particularly skilful practice in Buddhism, the forgiveness ceremony. He explained that at least once a year, or on around their anniversary, that they reflect on and ask forgiveness for anything, they may have done intentionally or unintentionally, that may have caused harm by body, speech or mind.

Everyone was touched by their heartfelt pledges when they exchanged their vows. Quite naturally the emotion was heightened and what came through was the deep devotion and confidence of two people whose lives are enriched by and committed to each other, and who also mirror their aspirations to walk the Noble Eightfold Path of the Buddha together.

Amongst their many friends, some real talent emerged. There was a sweet rendition of the song, “If the Stars Were Mine” by their friend, Laura Bernay and a beautiful poem composed and recited by their good friend, Martin Goodall. Ajahn Brahm kept us entertained with a few more marriage related jokes and then they were declared, husband and wife.

Later at the Reception party, the merriment continued long into the night. There was a three piece dance band and vocalist, playing romantic favourites. Loving words were shared by family members Lee, Margaret and Cindy in their speeches, acknowledging their pride and gladness in welcoming their new kin into the fold.

There was a thrilling salsa demonstration and at one point a spontaneous conga line snaked its way around the dance floor. As a wedding gift was not required, everyone, in its place, brought lots of lovely food to share which formed a sumptuous banquet.

Everyone will have their own memories of the event, a beautiful ceremony on a spring afternoon, followed by an enchanting evening spent with many familiar well-wishers. The beauty and atmosphere created was the result of contributions made by many kind family members and friends (you know who you are).

Sincere congratulations go to Dennis and Heidi, and on behalf of everyone at BSWA, I’d like to extend our best wishes for your married life and for every happiness now, and in the future.
Meaning of a Buddhist Marriage

Marriage is a bond of partnership for life entered into by a man and a woman. Patience, tolerance and understanding are the three principal qualities that should be developed and nurtured by the couple. Whilst love should be the knot tying the couple together, material necessities for sustaining a happy home should be made available for the couple to share.

The qualification for a good partnership in marriage should be 'ours' and not 'yours' or 'mine'. A good couple should 'open' their hearts to one another and refrain from entertaining 'secrets'.

A good marriage should grow, develop gradually from understanding and not impulse, from true loyalty and not just sheer indulgence. The institution of marriage provides a fine basis for the development of culture, a delightful association of two individuals to be nurtured, and to be free from loneliness, deprivation and fear.

In marriage, each partner develops a complementary role, giving strength and moral courage to one another, each manifesting a supportive and appreciative recognition of the other's skills. There must be no thought of either man or woman being superior; each is complementary to the other, in a partnership of equality, exuding gentleness, self-control, respect, generosity, calm and dedication.

— What Buddhist Believe (4th Ed.), Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda

Dhammasara (Nuns) Monastery Report

Vassa

Our first Vassa as Bhikkhunis (Ven. Nirodha & Ven. Hasapanna) at Dhammasara as well as our 1st Bhikkhuni Ordination Anniversary was a very special occasion. The Bhikkhuni would like to take this opportunity to express their gratitude and appreciation for all the support given by the Bhikkhu & Bhikkhuni Sangha, BSWA members and lay supporters.

End of Rains Ceremony

The End of Rains Ceremony for the Bhikkhuni Sangha at Dhammasara was on Saturday, 30th October, 2010. Approximately 100 supporters and well wishers received our blessing in our Traditional Ceremony. The short and long walk was enjoyed in perfect weather condition. Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu! to all our usual reliable support group (preparation & clean up).

A happy team is an efficient team and hence we all managed after our End of Rains Ceremony to attend our President's wedding with good wishes and blessing at Dhammadola.

Community

Samaneri Khema will be joining the community beginning of December, 2010. Lin, who had spent 3 months Rains Retreat with us will be returning to Dhammasara soon to take up the Anagarika training.

Mae Chee Eip was scheduled to arrive on 31st October, 2010, but due to some unforeseen circumstances, she can only join the community on 1st February, 2011 to 12th March, 2011. At the moment we are quite fully booked with long and short term visitors and also women interested in becoming a nun.

A very senior Bhikkhuni Venerable Thich Nu Phuc Lien from Vietnam visited Dhammasara on 3rd November, 2010 and Venerable Gunanusa Bhikkhuni (Vietnamese Canadian Citizen) on the 4th November, 2010. We appreciated their visit and support.

On the 21st October, 2010 Venerables Nirodha and Hasapanna were invited to conduct a pre-funeral service for Mr. Tan at 'Chippers', Subiaco.

Special Announcement

There will be a Samaneri Ordination for our two Anagarikas, Upekha & Sally Lee, headed by Venerable Ayya Dhammananda from Sanghamittarama, Melbourne on 6th March, 2011 at 1 pm, in Dhammadola.

Aiahn Vayama decided not to come back to Dhammasara. Aiahn Vayama and Ven. Seri are moving to a new address at the end of November, 2010. They continue to be supported in their medical requirements (e.g Dental, Alternative Treatments and all Medicines not covered by their Medicare) from the Nuns Expense Account.

Our next busy-bee (clearing leaves & debris), in conjunction with Dhammasara’s 12th Anniversary, will be on Sunday, 5th December, 2010 at 8:00 am. All are welcome to participate in the work party on this auspicious day!

Building and Maintenance

Geoff and Brett have kindly collected about 50 concrete paving slabs for Dhammasara and we will use it for making a proper wider path in the visitors walking area leading to the beautiful Pagola at the first dam. Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu! to Geoff & Brett and also those who helped with loading, unloading and especially transporting of the paving slabs.

Thank you Clinton, John and Wayne for completing the small irrigation project around the vhara.

Apart from the general busy-bee, we will have a small busy-bee on Saturday/Sunday afternoon to help with shifting some stones to build a retaining wall at the back of the Vihara.

We not only have updated our Bushfire Emergency Plan and a few fire drills but also have the fire fighting pump working. Thank you Lin!

Thank you Bo for helping us with the installation/setting up of our new phone & fax system (our new fax no.: 62101131) and also donation of various bits. Eric has put up a Buddha Statue (in memory of Ron Battersby) and installed a bench near the area of our first inaugural Bush Dana.

Future Plans/Projects

We are now in the process of defining details of plans for submitting our Development Plans for the Sala Complex & two Jhana Grove Style Cottages. Hopefully we can present it to the committee at the next committee meeting with the estimated costs.

PS. Good wishes and blessing to Ming & her Family, managing to become a grandmother in between her valuable contribution as Vice President!
The end of the Rains Retreat at both of our monasteries have been celebrated in fine style with many supporters attending both events. Monks and nuns were wished well and given the requisites for their continuing practice.

So the core business of our society is set and the committee is getting ready for the many activities and many celebrations in the months ahead.

We are actively planning with the nuns, a concept for their new Sala complex. You can expect to see plans for this proposal on our website very soon and no doubt details will also appear in the Enlightened Times.

The Complex will be built around the main Sala and will have a kitchen and dining facilities. We will have a library and a modest office facility together with adequate toilets and storage areas. We will also try to incorporate some Jhana Grove style bedrooms and bathrooms for nuns and guests. In this way, we can maximise the efficiency of the services provided.

The nuns at Dhammasara are building on the tremendous effort that has already been put into the place over the past years and are revitalising and renewing commitments to prospective new nuns and visitors.

The energy at Dhammasara is very exciting, which is a paradox in itself when one witnesses the peace and wisdom that is displayed by those who live there.

The Friday night session on the 19th of November at Dhammaloka is a case in point with regard to the wisdom that is brought forth through our monasteries. Sister Hasapanna resumed the practice of nuns giving a monthly talk, which was very well received.

The vitality exuberance and wisdom that was imparted was wonderful. You can see the talk on our Dhamma Channel at YouTube. Our computer man, Bo, uploaded it with the following comments:

"I think it is truly a milestone. We finally have our Dhammasara Bhikkhunis teaching the world. The wheel is on the roll! People around the world have been waiting for it. Listening to the talk, there was much that I (and I'm sure you too) could relate to. It's clear to me that there is a lot of wisdom, knowledge and experience there and I'm looking forward to more. Thankyou, Venerable!"

Speaking of computers and websites naturally brings me back to our IT specialist, Bo, who has looked after the society's website for many years now. He is one of the unsung hero's of our Buddhist Society.

I know he will not like having his name mentioned, but he will have to endure it so we can tell him how much we all appreciate his work along with the quiet wisdom he brings to our committee.

In the past, we have had some terrible things happen to our website through some very well orchestrated and malicious cyber attacks. Bo has been a steadfast anchor to keep BSWA dot org going through thick and thin. The website is now better than ever.

The Buddhist Society of WA is run largely by volunteers. The people with sashes that greet you on Friday nights and other big occasions belong to a group organised by Tony Foo.

Tony is looking for more volunteer's to help out, mainly on Friday nights. Please contact him if you would like help greet newcomers and answer question from the public. At the very least, you will get to know the Buddhist Society better.

Then there is the library, I think it is just amazing that we can have a library as sophisticated as ours, being run by volunteers alone. It speaks volumes for the dedication the various volunteers put in.

We are always looking for new people to train and help operate this little non-profit business. It is an ideal opportunity to learn some quite complex computer systems including cash and credit card control and all the systems that go to make up our very effective library. Just ask if you are interested.

Vicky McCafferty has been overseeing the library over the past year and feels the need to move on and let new energy flow in. Vicky has been a wonderful cohesive spirit in the library. She has built on its existing strengths and leaves the library in very good shape.

I do think we will name the new lounge suite that she initiated the "McCafferty Lounge". Thank you very much for you efforts Vicky.

If any one is interested in being a supervisor for the library, please come and talk to me. The role involves being involved in ordering and selecting new books, stock and a general overview of what is happening along with simple reconciliation of the accounts. You do not have to be a CEO type. There is plenty of support and sharing that goes on in the library.

Members will be pleased to know that because of the pressure that was built up for places at the November retreat and the recognition of the many disappointed people that could not get in, the committee has implemented some changes from next year.

These include a newcomers 9-day retreat for those who have not been to a BSWA nine-day retreat before, as well as a fairer retreat booking system for all our coming retreats. Details will be advertised soon.
Buddhism and Human Rights

By Ajahn Brahm, Tuesday, November 2nd at Curtin University

Looking at different religious angles to the same problem allows us to have broader knowledge and gain deeper insights into how we can solve some of the problems that exist in this world. Religion has a big influence on governments and how laws are drafted.

Some of the salient features of Buddhism which separates it from all other religions is that there is no belief in a creator God. Instead of the belief in a god or a person who can influence human affairs, Buddhism has karma and rebirth. Instead of praying to a divine being to put things right in the world; Buddhism takes personal responsibility to improve life and the world.

Karma is not always accepting whatever you are dealt with in life. If there is something you can do, do it. The ingredients are only a fraction of what makes a good cake. Sometimes even someone with the worst ingredients makes the best cake. It's how you put the ingredients together that makes the best cake. We can always do something to make a better world with what we've got.

Someone asked the Buddha, just before he passed away, who will take over leadership once he's gone. He answered that the teachings that he had laid down will be the leader. He never established any individual to follow him and therefore there would be no dictatorship. Buddhism doesn't believe in anybody having that degree of power over others.

Human rights is all about giving people freedom to decide rather than being told by someone else what is right and wrong. There is no coercion. Half of the problems in the world concerning human rights is about being coerced by someone, legal system or philosophy which limits one's ability to pursue happiness, freedom, ideology, religion or whatever.

Voluntary Euthanasia

What's wrong with that? Part of religion is to ask these questions. I take Voluntary Euthanasia as a human right, which is being denied people. It's a human right to determine your own body, its health, and its longevity.

Obviously the society around you protects you from yourself if you are mentally disabled, disturbed or acting out of improper motives such as depression.

Nevertheless, as Buddhists, because of the law of karma and taking personal responsibility; it is your decision. It should be your decision if you want voluntary euthanasia. If a religion or law prohibits you from exercising your right over your own body, that’s a fundamental breach of human rights.

Religious freedom (as defined in article 18 of universal declaration of human rights) is not just freedom of religion but also freedom from religion. In other words it should be up to you what to take or leave from religion. Religion should not tell you what to do, but may hold your hand - helping, advising and giving you the opportunity to make wise and compassionate decisions. Religion certainly should not tell you what to do - which is an infringement of your human right to decide and make your own karma.

Regarding in-voluntary euthanasia, when someone else gives you that injection, it’s incredibly dangerous. This is something I would not support.

Gay Rights

Nothing is said by the Buddha which discriminates against the gay, lesbian and transsexual community at all. I’d rather have really good guys in my Buddhist community than scally-wag straights. It’s not who you are but how you act, that is the most important point.

Women’s Rights

From the very beginning, as you would expect, the Buddha had monks and nuns established in equality. Scholars said there is a way and a means to restore full ordination to women. If it is a legal possibility, then let's do it. That's what we did a year ago and got enormous amounts of support. We have our nuns monastery in Giddegumnp for bhikkhunis, fully ordained Buddhist nuns.

Religious Freedom

It is against human rights, especially for the free choice of religion or no religion to have religious schools. Think about it. Why do you have to wait till 18 to vote? Because most persons under 18 do not have the maturity to chose among politics. So how can you call yourself a Buddhist, a Christian or Muslim at 11 or 12?

Children are being coerced by their parents. Imagine what would happen if we stopped these religious schools? Then you would go to school with a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Muslim, or an Anglican. You play games with each other; become best friends, maybe even marry (in later years). If you segregate our young people according to religion, then they will be unable to understand the person they cross paths with on the street. How can they then understand other people living in their community? Respect for each other is fundamental to the growth of human rights and that can only occur when we mix.

As a Buddhist we challenge accepted wisdom.

One of my favorite sayings is: “Where everyone thinks the same, no-one thinks at all”. So it’s great to challenge each other. We get rid of religious schools so we have people thinking differently. Religion should be taught in schools but shouldn’t dominate, since that would be dividing society.

Abortion

Say a person comes to me and asks if they should have an abortion. Buddhism has a decision-making process called the “four reflections”: to make sure you are not acting out of selfishness, anger or ill will, out of stupidity (find out the other options) and forthly not to act out of fear. Acting out of these four things will cause you to make poor decisions.

You have the human right to choose. If other people tell you what to do and make you feel bad or guilty, this is against one’s human rights. The first precept in Buddhism is to refrain from killing, not: Thou Shall Not Kill. Some things are more fundamental than the rule not to kill, such as compassion, kindness, and welfare for all those beings concerned. What is the best for everyone? Everybody has to be considered. Compassion is not only to the foetus nor only to the mother, but to the family and to the world.

The child is a being that came into your life for you to care and look after, but not to own. Never look upon it as your child, a being that you own, then it becomes like a slave. Like a gardener, nurture and let it grow in its own way.

Transcribed by Dania Percy & edited by Michael Percy
Upcoming Activities

Dhammaloka

Chanting, Guided Meditation and Dhamma Talk - Every Friday, 7pm-9pm.
Beginner’s Meditation Class - 4 week course held every Saturday, starting 1st Sat of the Month, 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
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

Weekend Retreat
21 January - 23 January 2011 (Sutta Contemplation and Meditation Retreat)

Christmas & New Year’s Eve Celebrations at Dhammaloka

Christmas Eve Talk by Ven. Nirodha on 24 Dec from 8 - 9 pm
New Year’s Eve Talk and Celebration: Organised by BSWA and hosted by Ajahn Brahm from 7:30 onwards

Annual General Meeting

Held at Dhammaloka: Saturday, 12 March 2011 at 4.30 pm

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

Due to space constraints we were unable to include “The Accidental Monk - Part 2” This article will be published in the next issue of Enlightened Times

For more BSWA activities, please refer to the BSWA fundraiser Calendar 2011. If you have not purchased it yet, you can do so online or at the Dhammaloka Library

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