THE JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1984
NEWSLETTER

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Front cover: Venerable Ajahn Jagaro and Venerable Brahmavamso on alms round in the streets of North Perth.

Back cover: Venerable Ajahn Jagaro at the Buddhist Forest Monastery, Serpentine. The Ven. Ajahn is sitting under a forest bhikkhu's umbrella which will serve as shelter until construction of buildings begin at the monastery.
Dhamma Greetings,

As is the nature of all things, the year 1983 is now old and will soon die so that the new year, 1984, can be born and grow old in its turn. Both Ven. Brahmvamso and I would like to take the opportunity to wish you all the best for continued growth in the peaceful Dhamma throughout the coming year of 1984.

The progress made during 1983 towards establishing our Forest Monastery has been remarkable and inspiring for all of us involved. On the 1st of December 1983 the Buddhist Society of W.A. formally took possession of the 97 acres of forest and in the hills at Serpentine, the site for the monastery. It seems as if the power of the Dhamma, the purity of our intention and the worthiness of the project were there to help at all times by inspiring so many to come forward with all forms of assistance. The Buddhist Society has now received approval from both the Shire Council and the M.R.P.A. (Metropolitan Regional Planning Authority) to develop the land at Serpentine as a Buddhist Monastery. The year 1984 will mark the birth of the first Buddhist Monastery in W.A., for we expect that a complete 'Sangha' (a quorum of four monks) will be present and able to spend the next Rains Retreat there. It is the springtime of Buddhism in Western Australia, and a time of growth for the Sangha in the west.

Shortly after the new year Ven. Brahmvamso and I, together with one or two laymen will begin camping on the land at Serpentine, staying there on the week days while returning to Perth for the weekends (Friday to Monday). A caravan has been bought to serve as a temporary kitchen, store room, and accommodation for one layman. The dam on the land is quite big and full so that bathing and washing water will be no problem. Drinking water will be delivered and stored in a large tank until we have the facilities to collect rain water ourselves. It is not intended that the monastery become self sufficient, especially as regards food, but rather to depend upon, and thereby nurture and encourage, the generosity and kindness of all who see the value in supporting such a spiritual centre. This way, we will be keeping another of the valuable traditions of Buddhism.

Towards the end of February at least one more Australian monk, and possibly two, will be coming to stay with us at the monastery and help with the building. Funds permitting, we hope
to start by building the toilet and shower block and the dormitory, so that the monks will be able to spend the winter in the idyllic setting of our monastery. To keep down the cost of construction, most of the work will be done by the monks together with whatever laypeople wish to come and lend a hand - what better way to develop a personal relationship with the monastery than to help build it? There will be much to be done, many difficulties to be overcome and much sharing will be needed, but there will also be ample time for meditation and ample space for peaceful solitude.

For Mr George Orwell, 1984 was a bleak and frightening year, but for the Buddhists in W.A. 1984 looks to be the bright dawn of a period of encouraging growth in Buddhism.

May the blessing of the 'Triple Gem' (The Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha) bring happiness and peace to you all during 1984.

... Jagaro Bhikkhu.

### TOOLS FOR THE FOREST MONASTERY

Early in 1984 we hope to begin building on our land at Serpentine. The first stage of the building will be to construct a toilet and shower block and to make a start on the first of the chalets to provide shelter for the monks during the Rains Retreat.

This is an exciting and joyous time for all Buddhists in Western Australia and if you feel that you can help in such ways as labouring, offering food to the monks and workers, financial help or donations in the form of tools and building materials (both old and new) please contact the Ven. Ajahn or the Secretary at the Buddhist Centre in North Perth.

Following is a list of the tools we will need now to begin building:

| Hammers | Trowels | Drill bits | Water level | Axes |
| Saws    | Squares | Tape measure | Plumb line | Spades |
| Chisels | Drills  | Wheelbarrows | Cement mixer | Picks. |
"WHAT IS BUDDHISM"?

Whether you call yourself a Buddhist or not, when you start coming to the Buddhist Centre, listening to talks, learning meditation, reading Buddhist books, sooner or later somebody is going to ask you "Well, what is Buddhism then"? Usually it is only with an "Er.." and an "Um.." that one painfully struggles to put into words the essence of Buddhism. Our view of life is in sympathy with the Teachings of the Buddha and we have heard it taught many times, but how to crystallize these ideas into words?

You could always look your questioner straight in the eye and pronounce with a profound air "He who speaks does not know; He who knows does not speak", and then smile silently. But such slick Zen-like answers do not help much do they? Moreover they give the impression that Buddhism and Buddhists are more than a little eccentric. Alternatively some of us could plunge into a highly intellectual and analytical description of pure Buddhism which again does not help, unless your listener has a philosophy degree. There is a middle way between these two extremes, that of simple Theravada which explains the basics of Buddhism in an easily understood though intellectually satisfying way.

When explaining Buddhism, a good place to begin is with what Buddhism is not. First of all, any confusion between Buddhism and the other religions should be cleared away.

Most religions are centred on God, The Supreme Being, All Powerful Creator and Destroyer, who punishes and rewards, who is feared but is to be worshipped. There is no need for such God in Buddhism. Buddhism does have its 'gods' though, its cosmology includes a hierarchy of sentient beings of a higher order than mankind. Call them gods if you like, but these beings are not supreme, they are imperfect, limited, they are born into the heavenly worlds and they die from there. Buddhism is not centred on God, it is centred on the human individual. It is the human being who has the potential to become perfect, to reach the ultimate, to become enlightened. The Buddha himself did not claim to be God or the son of God, but a human being who had achieved the highest perfection and as a human being he is an example which we can all follow.
Buddhism does not demand blind faith. Buddhists are not required to believe in any dogmas or doctrines which they can never realize for themselves. Instead a Buddhist needs only confidence that the Way of The Buddha is a path worth treading. This is like the confidence one has in one's doctor; you know that he has been well trained, you see him healing others and so you are willing to follow his directions. Blind faith has no part in Buddhism, rather one is encouraged to investigate, to reflect, so that one sees and knows for oneself without just depending on a guru or a book. What one is encouraged to have as a Buddhist is an open mind willing to mindfully reflect.

Further, Buddhism is not concerned with speculation, for example making conjectures about the beginning of the cosmos, the origin of man or the end of the world. Buddhism is only concerned with what you can know for yourself, beyond doubt, here and now. Whereas other religions rely heavily on speculation and revelation in Buddhism only the immediate reality is important, only that which you can know for sure.

WHAT BUDDHISM IS

A lot of people ask the question, "Is Buddhism a religion, or is it a philosophy, a science, a psychology or a way of life"? In fact it is all these things. Many of us who have had a Christian upbringing wrongly assume that a religion must include a belief in some sort of God, a system of worship, a faith. If this was so then Buddhism would not be a religion. In fact, the word 'religion' comes from a root word meaning 'to bind', that means that a religion is something that binds one to the highest, the ultimate, the Truth. Buddhism is a way to realize the ultimate truth, and thus it is a religion in the best sense of the word. The path to this realization is a way of life, philosophically sound, scientifically practised which gives rise to a clear understanding of the psychology of the mind – thus does Buddhism deserve these other epithets as well.

In Buddhism as in other religions one has to distinguish the essence of Buddhism from the cultural and traditional extras. Unfortunately, it is all too easy to mistake these embellishments for the true Teachings of The Buddha. The outer garb of Buddhism, the rites and rituals of the common people and their secular priests, will differ from country to country, even differ within the same country, but when one looks behind
the outward expression to find the underlying form, common to all Buddhist traditions, then there one sees the essence of Buddhism - the Teachings of the Buddha.

So what IS the essence of Buddhism? The Buddha, when asked this, answered that He taught Dukkha (existential dissatisfaction) and the end of Dukkha. Not that the Buddha was being pessimistic, He just pointed out what should be obvious to anyone who reflects - that it is impossible to derive lasting happiness, security, permanent peace from all mental and physical things in the world because they are all unreliable, continually changing and beyond one's control. It is possible to be blissfully happy for a while, but how long can it last? Even when one is happy, everybody but a fool will know, in the back of their mind at least, that it all could change very quickly, so even then they must worry and struggle to protect their "happiness". Where is the peace in that? However, like a good physician, the Buddha did not stop at the diagnosis that the human condition is ill, He also taught the end of Dukkha, the remedy for the illness, the path to get beyond the conflict, confusion, dissatisfaction and so on in the mind.

What is that path? The Buddha summed it up as "Refraining from bad, doing good, and purifying one's mind". Refraining from bad means not doing things which hurt oneself or hurt others. Basically this refers to keeping the Five Precepts of refraining from killing, stealing, being unfaithful, lying and taking intoxicants which stupefy the mind. Doing good means learning to live in such a way that creates more peace and harmony with oneself as well as others. This is morality, learning to make the best of this imperfect life by skillfully using one's body and speech in all situations and relationships so as to create a more peaceful and harmonious society. But this morality is not peculiar to Buddhism, most religions teach the same. Though in Buddhism, morality is not a dogma, an absolute law, even the Five Precepts are not considered as commandments revealed by a superbeing. Morality in Buddhism is a guide to skilful living to be undertaken voluntarily having realized for oneself that it is useful. But if this was all there was to Buddhism, then it would just be an ancient form of Humanism, it would not be anything all that special. Many people other than the Buddha have also known these things. However, beyond this foundation of morality, Buddhism also teaches one to purify one's mind
and, by transcending all limitations, realize the ultimate Truth.

The way to purify one's mind from greed, hatred and delusion, the Path to enlightenment, is the heart of the Buddha's Teaching. This is beyond a mere way of life, this is what makes Buddhism a religion. The Buddha himself searched for perfect peace and, having realized it, he taught the way to all who were interested. One can try and describe this enlightenment by using adjectives such as 'unshakeable calm', 'that which is beyond all forms of anguish or conflict', 'the Ultimate Truth' and so on. But in Buddhism we realise that one cannot really describe the purified mind or conceptualize enlightenment because ideas and views cannot reach the Ultimate Truth, the finite cannot embrace the infinite, creations in the mind cannot encompass the uncreated. That is why the Buddha did not try to explain the Truth but rather taught a Path by which one may realize the Truth for oneself. This Path involves bodily restraint (morality) and mental restraint (meditation) in order to achieve that peaceful clarity of mind where insight can arise, where one can experience and know Reality for oneself. So we are not concerned with just speculating, believing or having views and concepts about the Truth, but rather realizing it.

So, when somebody next asks you "What is Buddhism"? perhaps you will be able to answer them!

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DHAMMA SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN IN THE NEW YEAR

Dear parents; don't forget to enrol your children in the Dhamma classes for 1984.

Classes will commence on Sunday 8th January at 3.00 p.m. and the children will be arranged into the following groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>5-7 year olds</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>7-10 year olds and</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>10-14 year olds.</td>
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Dhamma school will be on the first and third Sundays of every month and will be for a duration of only one hour. Everyone welcome!
ACTIVITIES FOR JANUARY 1984

The 8 Precept Observance days for January are 2nd, 10th, 17th (Full Moon) and 25th.

SATURDAY 7TH JANUARY

"An Introduction To Buddhist Meditation"

3.00-4.30 p.m. at the North Perth Migrant Resource Centre, 66 Angove St, North Perth.

This is the first class in a graduated four weeks course for beginners conducted by Ven. Ajahn Jagaro. During these four weeks students will be gradually introduced to the various aspects of the Buddha's Teaching and meditation beginning with right posture, right attitude and the actual meditation techniques for calming the mind and developing insight. The sitting meditation times will be short and the session will close with discussion. Tea will then be served.

SUNDAY 8TH JANUARY

3.00 p.m. - Dhamma School for children.

SATURDAY 14TH JANUARY

3.00 - 4.30 p.m. Second week of "An Introduction To Buddhist Meditation" course.

SUNDAY 15TH JANUARY

8.00 a.m. - 4.30 p.m. This will be a working day at the Forest Monastery, please bring a lunch to offer to the bhikkhus and to share later. If you are interested in helping, could you please contact the Ven. Ajahn before this date.

TUESDAY 17TH JANUARY

Full Moon Observance Day. 7.30 p.m. Sitting meditation at the Buddhist Centre.

SATURDAY 21ST JANUARY

3.00 - 4.30 p.m. Third week of "An Introduction to Buddhist Meditation" course.
SUNDAY 22ND JANUARY
3.00 p.m. Dhamma School for children.

SATURDAY 28TH JANUARY
3.00 - 4.30 p.m. The fourth and final week of "An Introduction to Buddhist Meditation" course.

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ACTIVITIES FOR FEBRUARY 1984

The Eight Precept Observance Days for February are 1st, 9th, 16th (Full Moon) and 24th.

THURSDAY 2ND FEBRUARY
Chinese New Year.

SATURDAY 4TH FEBRUARY
3.00 - 4.30 p.m. Sitting meditation at the Buddhist Centre, North Perth. Ven. Ajahn Jagaro will give a short introduction to meditation followed by sitting meditation for half an hour, then discussion time for question and answers concerning Buddhism and one's practice. Tea will then be served. These meditation sessions will be conducted every Saturday afternoon during February and it is intended to be an extension to "An Introduction to Buddhist Meditation" course, designed for those folk who find it difficult to visit the Buddhist Centre in the evenings or cannot sit a full hour.

SUNDAY 5TH FEBRUARY
3.00 p.m. Dhamma school for children.

SATURDAY 11TH FEBRUARY
3.00 - 4.30 p.m. Sitting meditation at the Buddhist Centre.

SUNDAY 12TH FEBRUARY - MAGHA PUJA DAY

Magha Puja is a holy day celebrated on the full moon day that usually falls in the month of February or March. This year the day falls on the 16th February but will be celebrated at the Buddhist Centre on Sunday 12th February. For those who are unfamiliar with Magha Puja Day this is a brief history of its origin.
Magha Puja commemorates the great gathering of 1,250 Noble Disciples coming to see the Lord Buddha without previous appointment. It is also called "Buddhist All Saints Day" in some countries. The gathering was blessed with four coincidents or factors - the assembled bhikkhus were all Noble Ones, Fully Enlightened, Arahants - they were personally ordained by the Lord Buddha himself - they all travelled spontaneously to the town of Rajagha where the Lord Buddha was staying without prior notice and the Lord Buddha delivered to them a special Dhamma sermon wherein He summed up His Teachings, pointing out the Noble Way of life which is the means of attaining the Supreme Goal of Nibbana. The instruction He gave is summed up in the following verses:

"The not doing of all evils,
The doing of what is wholly good,
The cleansing of one's own heart,
These are the Teachings of all the Buddhas.

The not speaking of evil, the not hurting,
Being restrained according to the Patimokkha.
Knowing what is sufficient in taking food,
Having a secluded place for sleeping and meditation.
Making efforts in practice for a Pure Heart -
These are the Teachings of all the Buddhas."

Our programme for Magha Puja Day will be as follows ...

9.00 a.m. Gathering at the Buddhist Centre to offer dana to the bhikkhus. 9.30 a.m. Offering the one meal of the day to the bhikkhus. 10.30 a.m. Taking the 3 Refuges and the 5 Precepts followed by a short Dhamma talk.
7.00 p.m. Evening chanting, taking the 3 Refuges and the Precepts, a Dhamma talk followed by circumambulation of the Buddhist Centre.

SATURDAY 18TH FEBRUARY

3.00 - 4.30 p.m. Sitting meditation at the Buddhist Centre.

SUNDAY 19th FEBRUARY

3.00 p.m. Dhamma school for children
Annual General Meeting.
SATURDAY 25TH FEBRUARY

3.00-4.30 p.m. Sitting meditation at the Buddhist Centre.

8.15 p.m. Ven. Ajahn Sumedho arrives in Perth.

SUNDAY 26TH FEBRUARY

9.00 a.m. A welcome dana at the Buddhist Centre for Ven. Ajahn Sumedho.

7.00 p.m. Sitting meditation followed by a Dhamma talk by Ven. Ajahn Sumedho.

VEN. AJAHN SUMEDHO WILL GIVE A DHAMMA TALK EVERY EVENING AT THE BUDDHIST CENTRE FROM SUNDAY 26TH FEBRUARY TO THURSDAY 1ST MARCH. HE WILL THEN CONDUCT A MEDITATION RETREAT FROM FRIDAY 2ND TO SUNDAY 11TH MARCH AT THE MT HELENA CENTRE OF THEOSOPHY.
Evening talks will again commence from Monday 12th through to Wednesday 14th March at the Buddhist Centre.

THURSDAY 15TH MARCH

9.00 a.m. Farewell dana for Ven. Ajahn Sumedho at the Buddhist Centre.

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1983 has been a very eventful and inspiring year for our Society. Much has been accomplished and the society has taken one more sure step in establishing the Buddha-Dhamma in Australia. As you know we now own 97 acres of beautiful bushland in Serpentine and January 1984 will see the beginning of the first buildings taking shape.

The Buddhist Centre in North Perth has now become a very busy place with meditation every evening, a Dhamma talk every Friday, Dhamma school for children and a meeting place for the many religious and social activities throughout the year for the Buddhist community in Perth. Membership of our Society has risen dramatically over the last year and donations and support for our Sangha and Centre have been constant and heart-warming. May we take this opportunity to sincerely thank you all and wish you and your families and friends a new year filled with joy and peace.

We would like to take this opportunity also to thank the Sangha and in particular Ven. Ajahn Jagaro who through his ceaseless positive energy, kindness and compassion, endless patience and deep wisdom is an inspiration to all who come in contact with him. The Ven. Ajahn has truly made our Society blossom and has made the Buddha-Dhamma dynamic and meaningful by his daily living example.

Our thanks also go to Douglas Solomon, our tireless solicitor who has generously donated his precious time preparing submissions and legal documents, writing countless letters and in every way showing patience and kindness to the Sangha and our Society.

Last but certainly not least we would like to thank our Treasurer, Rosemary Roche who has worked tremendously hard during the past year. Well over $100,000 has come into our Society both from overseas and within Australia and always Rosemary has shown diligence, consistency, skill and humour in her duty as Treasurer and we thank her sincerely.
We thought it might be appropriate, especially for those new members to have a short recap on some of the events that have happened through the year at the Buddhist Society.

January: We warmly welcomed Ven. Ajahn Sumedho for his first visit to Australia - a very successful and joyful occasion.


March: The Society represented the Buddhist religion on the nation-wide telecast from St Georges Cathedral on Commonwealth Day.

May: Vesakha Day celebrated with over 200 people attending - Ven. Brahmvamso arrived to take up residence at the Buddhist Centre - Approval from the Australian Taxation Office was given to our two Building Funds and gifts of $2.00 and upwards to the Funds were allowable deductions for income tax purposes.

July: Celebration of Asalha Puja Day - the beginning of the second Rails Retreat of our resident Sangha in Perth.

August: The "Introduction to Buddhist Meditation" classes proved so popular we had to conduct them at the North Perth Migrant Resource Centre. Over 50 people attended each class.

September: Submission and approval from the Metropolitan Water Authority for exemption from water rates for the Buddhist Centre.

October: Submission and approval from the Serpentine council to use our land at Serpentine as a Buddhist Monastery - our very successful fund-raising International Dinner - End of the Rains Alms Presentation Ceremony and the planting of the Bodhi tree at Serpentine.

November: Submission and approval from the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority to commence building development of our Forest Monastery.

December: Official acquisition of the land at Serpentine for the Forest Monastery - purchase of a caravan for the Forest Monastery - appointment of a special sub-committee for the establishment and development of the Forest Monastery.

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HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL!