The Newsletter of
The Buddhist Society of
Western Australia

March/April 1984
The Annual General Meeting of the Buddhist Society of W.A. was held on Sunday 19th February, 1984. Special reports were prepared and read from the President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary at this meeting and will be printed for distribution in the near future.

We would like to thank all office bearers and committee persons for their hard work and continued support during 1983 and warmly welcome in all those new office bearers for 1984.

May the Buddha-Sasana continue to grow and flourish in Australia and may all beings come to true peace and happiness.

President - Warren Smailes
Vice President - Sanath de Tissera
Secretary - Lynne Jackson
Treasurer - Rosemary Roche
Committee - Supart Delaney (Librarian)
- Mrs Mendis
- Telicia Ellies
- Ross Anderson
- Philip Wee and
- David Miller.

The sub-committee for the establishment of the Serpentine Buddhist Monastery:

Warren Smailes
Ross Anderson
Rosemary Roche and
Lynne Jackson.

The sub-committee for social events and fund-raising:

David Miller (Social co-ordinator)
Khanti de Tissera and
Tim Dhamma.
Dhamma Greetings,

The new year has started with a period of increased activity for both Ven. Brahmavamso and myself. In addition to the regular teaching and other commitments at the North Perth Buddhist Centre we are now spending a few days of each week, Tuesday through to Friday afternoon at the monastery at Serpentine. Consequently, the monks will be available at the North Perth Buddhist Centre only on Friday evenings, Saturday, Sunday and Monday of each week.

Work is under way to establish the first buildings at the monastery. The first job was to erect some basic facilities such as 'bush toilets' and a bathing enclosure to serve temporarily until an ablation block (containing toilets and showers for men and women) is built. A caravan overlooking the dam is the kitchen and storeroom as well as a shelter for the layperson who comes to cook for us. As for Ven. Brahmavamso and I, we are still camping out under our 'forest monk's umbrellas' beneath the trees. We have already begun work on the ablation block which will consist of 6 showers, 6 toilets, a small laundry and a store room. Although some may think a toilet is not a very inspiring building with which to begin our monastery, it is the most urgently needed facility. Being limited by our funds, we are doing most of the work ourselves and, having little experience in building this type of structure, the project is becoming a good test of patient endurance and resourcefulness. However, after two months of hard work, often working 12 hours a day in the sun, the first signs of progress are apparent. The septic tanks and leach drain have been installed, the site for the building has been levelled and the foundations dug. Hopefully, by the time you receive this newsletter, the concrete foundations and the floor slab will have been completed.

Our sincere thanks go to our architect Dennis Sheppard, to the Thai students, members and friends who spent two Sundays digging and moving piles of earth and rock, to John and Pat our two stewards, to Robert, Cameron and Peter. Huge piles of earth and rocks by the site attest to the hard work and effort of all those involved, work which has been done not for material reward but as a generous gift for a worthwhile cause.
There is much still to be done. We hope to complete the ablution block as well as a dormitory, possibly of rammed earth, before the beginning of the Rains Retreat in July. "A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step" so we will continue with the construction work one step at a time without worrying unduly about when the last step will be taken. This is the same attitude required in meditation and in every aspect of the spiritual path. Building the monastery should not be seen as a distraction from the path, nor as something to be temporarily endured to get it out of the way so that one can start the 'real' practice again. In fact, building the monastery is a way of growing in the good Dhamma. It is an excellent opportunity for developing the essential qualities of Dana, selfless giving towards something that is pure and noble, being able to share a part of one's life with others by working together in harmony whether the going is easy or difficult, and learning to be patient with the ups and downs, periods of inspiration and frustration, high energy and tiredness. The school room and the texts used may be different but the lesson to be learnt remains the same. Whether in meditation or in one's daily life, it is these qualities together with Right Attitude which lead to Peace for the mind.

With Ven. Ajahn Sumedho's visit at the end of February we will be taking three weeks 'holiday' from the work at the monastery to give everybody the opportunity to benefit fully from Ven. Ajahn Sumedho's inspiring teaching, both during his evening talks at the North Perth Buddhist Centre and during the 9-day meditation retreat at Mt Helena. It is indeed wonderful that we can build an inner monastery at the same time as building the 'outer' monastery, for a monastery is but a 'place of peace'.

May all beings be happy,

... Jagaro Bhikkhu.

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"If a person can become pure simply by changing one's views, if by mere knowledge one can be freed of sorrow, then something other than the Noble Eightfold Path makes and puts an end to sorrow. But this cannot be". (Sutta-Nipata 789)
Meditation is aimed towards Nibbana - literally meaning 'getting out of the jungle'. The jungle is a place of danger, requiring alertness if one is to survive. Life in the jungle is conditioned by fear; with senses fully alert the jungle animals are extremely cautious. Today, the actual jungle is not a cause of concern for us, yet the 'jungles' we create around us, the complexities of fear, desire, pride and aversion which we make around the experiences in our life, are our real danger.

So the goal of meditation, Nibbana, is to get away from the jungle of all that is conditioned by fear and desire in the mind. We move towards that which is unconditioned, that which does not arise or pass away. This is Nibbana, the realisation of the Peace in the mind.

At the beginning meditation seems like a hopeless task! The more you try to stop the mind thinking the more obsessed it becomes. This is because you have an ideal, or an image of Nibbana as a peaceful mind but not yet the realisation of it. To reach Nibbana we must first understand the jungle, Samsara, which is all the conditions of the mind we tend to identify with, reacting with liking or disliking, attraction or aversion. We spend most of our lives trying to get rid of that which we dislike and securing that which we like. In meditation though, we sit down and watch, wait and be patient with whatever presents itself to the mind, determined to patiently endure even with the most miserable states of mind. We recognise that being impatient with the negative qualities in the mind just reinforces them and only adds to the confusion.

To develop patient endurance requires resolve, but without being too ambitious. We must humbly recognise the present limitations to our endurance. We then work to extend those limits, little by little, by resisting the old habitual reactions to the conditions we experience. For example, when pain arises in the knees when meditating we usually think
"I don't want this pain, I want peace!" But we should be willing to be a little more patient with the pain, for a little longer than if we hadn't resolved to meditate.

At first, meditation is a kind of purification process - but not like the type where one pours down cleansing liquids and agents to exterminate all the germs! We are not after sterilisation! Progressing towards Nibbana requires us to be gentle and patient, allowing things to become fully conscious in the mind and then letting them go. We have to begin to know ourselves, the energies, character and personality that we have and all the conditions we experience whatever they are. There is no condition that we have that is an obstacle to Nibbana as long as we are willing to recognise it. No matter what we think of ourselves and believe ourselves to be, no matter what we have done in the past, if we patiently watch and begin to notice these conditions of mind and body, reflecting on them, then that way will take us to the Unconditioned - Nibbana. The realisation of the Truth. Thus all conditioned phenomena can lead us to the Unconditioned. Everything that we experience in our mind, every condition, even hatred, if we are patient and reflect on them instead of just trying to get rid of the unpleasant and recreate the pleasant, they can all take us to Peace. All conditions cease in the Unconditioned.

Awakening the mind means that we no longer need to believe in concepts, views, opinions and doctrines about the Unconditioned. It is not a matter of believing in Nibbana or believing in Buddha. These are just religious conventions that we use in order to awaken the individual so that one will pay more attention to the mind, one's own mind. So, when we talk about Buddha we are not referring to some sort of god, or outside force, or even to a famous wise person of the past, but to the Buddha as Knowing in the present. We use the word Buddha as "The one who knows the truth, that which realises, that which is truly wise". If we start to think "What is Buddha in my own mind?" and start looking for a Buddha we might end up with some creation we call Buddha, but that is only a creation, a condition, impermanent. We are not trying to find the Buddha as a creation or condition in our mind, but rather we are trying to be the Buddha, being that very wisdom itself by being patient, awake and alert.
The practice of meditation is therefore a very immediate being Buddha. That may sound strange and you may think "How can I be Buddha. Me, with my mind?" How can you be Buddha right now? By thinking about being Buddha? No, this is just thinking about being this or being that, forming concepts. However, being aware of that thinking as just a condition in the mind - that is being Buddha. What is it that is aware of thought? Is it possible to find that which knows, that which is aware? I've never been able to do it! But I can be aware! So the practice of meditation is being aware, being awake, being Buddha in the present moment.

Now that sounds easy doesn't it? Being Buddha for one moment one is aware but through force of habit the mind wanders off and one loses the Buddha. You may sit down and determine to be Buddha for one hour but then what usually happens is that you are unable to be Buddha for even one second, and you probably only get a headache. You can not do this just by a sheer act of will. However by being patient, by being gentle in our practice of meditation we can be more mindful, more aware. Being mindful we begin to watch all the goings on in the mind - the fears, the infatuations, the doubts ... the whole gamut of emotional experience. We recognise that these are just changing conditions in the mind and when we learn to be patient enough to allow all these conditioned phenomena to take their natural course to cessation we experience the Unconditioned, Nibbana. Once you experience the Unconditioned, the Uncreated, the Unborn, then you recognise the way to live your life. You have right understanding and are inclining towards Nibbana, away from the jungle.

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Words spoken by the Lord Buddha: "The person enmeshed in delusion will never be purified through the mere study of holy books, or sacrifices to gods, or through fasts, or sleeping on the ground, or difficult or strenuous vigils, or the repetition of prayers. Neither gifts to priests, nor self-castigation, nor performance of rites and ceremonies can work purification in one who is filled with craving. It is not through the partaking of meat or fish that a person becomes impure, but through drunkenness, obstinacy, bigotry, deceit, envy, self-exaltation, disparagement of others and evil intentions - through these a person becomes impure".
VENERABLE AJAHN SUMEDHO'S

VISIT TO PERTH FEBRUARY 1984

The Buddhist Society feels both happy and privileged to welcome the Venerable Ajahn Sumedho to Perth once again this year. While in Perth Ven. Ajahn Sumedho will give nightly Dhamma talks at the Buddhist Centre at 7.30 pm and will conduct a 9-day meditation retreat at the Theosophical Centre, Bunning Road, Mt Helena.

Following is a more detailed schedule of events while Venerable Ajahn Sumedho is in Perth.

SUNDAY 26TH FEBRUARY - a welcome dana at 9.30 a.m. at the Buddhist Centre. 7.30-8.00 p.m., meditation followed by a Dhamma talk.

MONDAY 27th - 7.30-8.00 p.m. - meditation followed by a Dhamma talk at 8.00 p.m.

TUESDAY 28th - 7.30-8.00 p.m. - sitting meditation followed by a Dhamma talk.

WEDNESDAY 29TH - On this day we will be offering dana to Ven. Ajahn Sumedho at the Serpentine Monastery at 10.30 a.m. Evening meditation from 7.30 to 8.00 p.m. followed by a Dhamma talk.

THURSDAY 1st - Sitting meditation from 7.30 to 8.00 p.m. followed by a Dhamma talk.

FRIDAY 2nd to SUNDAY 11th MARCH - a 9-day meditation retreat at the Theosophical Centre, Mt Helena. The cost of food and accommodation is $120.00, the teaching is of course free.

(Please note there will be no Dhamma talk in the evening of Sunday 11th.)

MONDAY 12, SUNDAY 13th and WEDNESDAY 14th - Nightly Dhamma talks and meditation at the Buddhist Centre at 7.30 p.m.

THURSDAY 15TH - Venerable Ajahn Sumedho departs for Sydney.

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"Students of the Dhamma, you must not cling to your own personal views. Even though you may understand, you should search widely for a good teacher and examine the sayings of the old Masters if you feel that there is something lacking or that there is some understanding superior to your own. Yet you must not cling to the words of the old sages either; they, too, may not be right. Even if you believe them, you should be alert so that, in the event that something superior comes along, you may follow that". Words spoken by the Master Dōgen from "A Primer of Sōtō Zen" trans. Reihō Masunaga.
TAI CHI CLASSES

Ross Anderson, a member of our Society will be conducting Tai Chi classes at the North Perth Resource Centre, 66 Angove Street, North Perth. The first class will be on Saturday 17th March beginning at 4.00 and finishing around 5.30 p.m. There will be a small charge for the classes and all proceeds will go towards the Forest Monastery Building Fund. If you would like to join the class please register with Ross or Lynne at the Buddhist Centre, North Perth. Everyone welcome, tell your friends.

A SERIES OF FIVE LECTURES

"THE TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA"

Monday evenings during April we will have a series of five lectures on the basic Teachings of the Buddha. The classes begin at 7.30 p.m. and end around 8.30 with time for discussion/question and answers.

So make a note on your calendar - "The Teachings of The Buddha" - 7.30 p.m. - 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th of April at the North Perth Resource Centre, 66 Angove St., North Perth. Everyone welcome.

"AN INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHIST MEDITATION"

This is a graduated four weeks course in meditation for beginners conducted by Ven. Ajahn Jagaro. During these four weeks students will be gradually introduced to the various aspects of Buddhist 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 sessions will close with discussion/questions and answers.

Classes will be on SUNDAYS 1st, 8th, 15th and 22nd APRIL at the North Perth Resource Centre, 66 Angove St, North Perth beginning at 3.00 P.M. to 4.30 P.M.

Please wear comfortable loose clothing and bring along a cushion suitable for sitting meditation. This course is free and open to all interested people.
CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR MARCH

The 8 Precept Observance days for March are 1st, 9th, 16th, 24th and 31st.

THURSDAY 1st MARCH

7.30 p.m. Talk by Ven. Ajahn Sumedho at Buddhist Centre.

FRIDAY 2ND TO SUNDAY 11TH MARCH

9-day meditation retreat at Mt Helena.

MONDAY 12TH to WEDNESDAY 14TH MARCH

7.30 p.m. An evening talk by Ven. Ajahn Sumedho at the Buddhist Centre.

THURSDAY 15TH MARCH

9.00 a.m. Farewell dana for Ven. Ajahn Sumedho.

SATURDAY 17TH MARCH

4.00-5.30 pm The first Tai Chi class conducted by Ross Anderson at the N.P.M.R.Centre.*

SUNDAY 18th MARCH

3.00 p.m. Dhamma school for children.

TURSDAY 31st MARCH

12.30 Family picnic at Hyde Park.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR APRIL

The 8 Precept Observance days for April are 8th, 15th, 23rd and 29th.

SUNDAY 1st APRIL

3.00 p.m. Dhamma school for children.

We welcome all children from 5 to 14 years to the Dhamma School at the Buddhist Centre.

SUNDAY 15TH APRIL

9.30 a.m.  Songkran (New Year) Celebrations at the Buddhist Centre.

For many South-East Asian countries the 13th of April is a time of celebration, as it traditionally marks the beginning of the new year. About this time the oppressive heat of the hot season is relieved by the first rains of the year, which bring new life to the land.

In Thai this festival is called "Songkran", but most westerners know it as the "Water Festival", for at that time there occurs a lot of good humoured throwing of water. However, there is a more serious side to this festival as it is a time to show gratitude and respect to one's parents and teachers. Also, as on most other important occasions for Buddhists, it is a time for going to a monastery to reaffirm one's confidence in the Triple Gem and share the merit of one's life with others.

The new year actually falls on Friday 13th April but for the sake of convenience we will celebrate this occasion on Sunday 15th April. Please come along and share this happy occasion all together with your families and friends.

3.00 p.m.  Dhamma School for children.

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A SPECIAL DHAMMA TALK EVERY FRIDAY EVENING AT THE BUDDHIST CENTRE, 4 MAGNOLIA STREET, NORTH PERTH

A special Dhamma talk is given by Ven. Ajahn Jagaro every Friday evening at 8.00 p.m. This talk is preceded by a half hour guided meditation beginning at 7.30 p.m. These talks are always interesting and informative and we encourage all members and friends to come along.

"So, Ananda you must be your own lamps, be your own refuges. Take refuge in nothing outside yourselves... One becomes one's own lamp and refuge by continually looking on one's body, feelings, perceptions, moods and ideas in such a manner that one conquers the cravings and depressions of ordinary humans and is always strenuous, self-possessed and collected in mind"

... Words of the Lord Buddha.
We would like to advise members and friends of the Society that the monks will now be at the North Perth Buddhist Centre only on Friday evenings, all day Saturday and Sunday and early Monday mornings. The rest of the week will be spent at the Serpentine Monastery constructing the first buildings. If you would like to offer the daily meal to the monks could you please ring the Centre first (444 7013) to check if the monks will be there as sometimes work parties for the Monastery are arranged in the weekends or the monks have been invited to take their meal at the home of a supporter.

We would like to thank all those who have given so generously to the Sangha in the past and to those who have recently donated dried and canned foods to take to the Serpentine Monastery.

While the monks are resident at the Centre in North Perth they continue the traditional alms round in the mornings between 8.00 and 8.30 a.m. If you would like to offer food in this traditional way could you please be outside the Centre between the above times. The picture above shows supporters offering food to the monks in this traditional manner.
"Wandering by stages the Blessed One at length arrived at Savatthi. There he went to stay in Jeta's Grove. Anathapindika's Park. Then Anathapindika went to the Blessed One and invited him for the following day's meal. When the meal was over and the Blessed One no longer had the bowl in his hand, Anathapindika sat down at one side, and he asked: "Lord, how shall I act about this Jeta's Grove?"

"Then, householder, you may present it to the Community of Bhikkhus of the four quarters past, future and present".

"Even so, Lord", he replied, and he did so.

Then the Blessed One addressed him with these stanzas:

"It keeps out cold and heat,
Wild animals besides,
And creeping things and flies,
And chills and rain as well,
And it affords protection
When sun and wind are fierce.
The aim is to be sheltered and at ease
In order to concentrate and practise Insight.
Gifts of dwellings to the Sangha
Are praised most highly by the Buddha,
So let a person possessed of understanding,
Who sees wherein ones own good lies,
Have comfortable dwellings made
And have the learned live in them.
One can give food to them and drink
And clothing and a resting place,
Letting ones heart repose its trust
In those who walk in righteousness;
And they will teach the Good Dhamma to all
That leads to freedom from all suffering,
Knowing the Dhamma, one here attains
Nibbana and is free from all defilements".

Then when he had given his blessing, he got up from his seat and went away."

(Vinaya Pitaka, Cullavagga Chapter 6 - trans. Bhikkhu Nanamoli "The Life Of The Buddha".)
SOCIAL EVENTS FOR MARCH AND APRIL

A PICNIC ON SATURDAY 25TH FEBRUARY

The social committee have organised a family picnic day at Hyde Park. Please all meet at the Children's Playground area at 12.30. We will be hiring the "Life Be In It" sporting van with games for everyone to enjoy. We will be serving a delicious home cooked meal - only $3.50 for adults and $2.00 for children. Please all come along and bring your children and friends. Cool drinks will be on sale.

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SATURDAY 31ST MARCH - A FAMILY PICNIC

We're going to make the most of this beautiful weather and have another family picnic on the last Saturday of March. Please meet at the same spot - the Children's Playground area at 12.30. Lunch will be served at the above prices and cool drinks available. These are good family days and an opportunity to meet other members and friends of the Buddhist Society. Everyone welcome.

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SUNDAY 22ND APRIL

The social event for April will be A PANCAKE EVENING at the home of Dr and Mrs De Tissera, 102 Davies Road, Claremont. This will be an alfresco evening with piping hot delicious savoury and sweet pancakes made on the spot by our expert pancake cooks. Only $3.50 per person for an enjoyable night out - starts at 7.00 p.m. Everyone welcome.

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All proceeds from the above events will go towards the Buddhist Centre, 4 Magnolia St., North Perth.
SERPENTINE BUDDHIST MONASTERY

We have now begun building at the Serpentine Monastery and have accomplished quite a lot of the groundwork for the first building which will be the ablution block. We have had three big work days and the picture above shows a lunch break on one of these days when around 60 people gathered to help dig the leach drain and holes for the septic tanks. We would like especially thank the Thai Agricultural students who have worked extremely hard on this project, the members and friends of the Society and those who prepared lunch for us all on these days. There is always something to be done on the land and if you feel that you could donate some time to help in this project could you please contact Ven. Ajahn Jagaro at the North Perth Buddhist Centre (tel: 444 7013).

Because of the high risk of bush fires which cause untold suffering to animals and birds and damage to property we ask if you would kindly observe the NO SMOKING restrictions at all times while at the Monastery.

Thank you again for your support.
The Buddhist Society of W.A.(Inc)
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Tel: (09) 444 7013.

Serpentine Buddhist Monastery
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