The Buddhist Society of W.A.
4 Magnolia Street
North Perth, W.A., 6006
tel: (09) 444 7013.

Serpentine Buddhist Monastery
Lot 1/Kingsbury Drive
Serpentine, W.A. 6205
tel: (095) 252420.

REGULAR ACTIVITIES FOR JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER

For July: At the Buddhist Centre (Vihara), 4 Magnolia Street
North Perth.

Fridays: 7.30-8.00pm Guided sitting meditation
8.00-9.00 A talk on Buddhism by Ven. Ajahn Jagaro.

Saturdays: 3.00-3.45pm Sitting meditation for beginners
7.30-8.30 Sitting meditation

Sundays: 3.00-4.00pm Dhamma School for children every
other Sunday beginning 14th July.
7.30-8.30pm Sitting meditation

During August and September there will be no activities
on Sundays at the Buddhist Centre in North Perth as we
will be having a Dhamma Day at the Serpentine Monastery.
Activities for these days will include -

10.30 am Offering of dana and a shared meal
2.00-4.00pm Group sitting meditation and a
Dhamma talk.

Resident Sangha: Venerable Ajahn Jagaro
Venerable Brahmavangso
Venerable Panyavaro and
Samanera Ariyasila.
"Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhassa"

Dhamma greetings,

It is often the case that we feel an inner conflict between what we know and what we are able to live up to. This conflict results from a discrepancy between our intellectual understanding and our emotional maturity. Because we have developed our intellect, the ability to think, reason and analyse, to such a high degree we can have some very high ideals and aspirations but we soon discover that the practical application of these ideals in our lives is quite a different matter.

Of course we know that hatred and jealousy, greed and selfishness are negative states that bring suffering and misery for all concerned but yet we find ourselves repeatedly caught in these states of mind. Those of us who have been inspired by the wonderful talks on loving kindness and the living examples of compassion of the great Teachers are sure to have complete confidence in the excellence of these two qualities. However, when we look into our own way of living and relating we find it quite often to be rather petty and small minded and we think, "Why is it like this?" Most students of the Dhamma greatly enjoy listening or reading, thinking or talking about Enlightenment, the transcending of all duality, limitations and discriminations but yet will become quite upset if someone sweetens their tea with white sugar rather than honey. How strange we are!

Venerable Ajahn Chah said that most of us are similar to vultures which fly high amongst the white clouds and blue sky, soaring over the mountains and valleys but in fact the food that they eat is not very clean for they remain scavengers. In our thoughts and concepts we can be so high yet there is much to be done if we are to live up to these ideals. That which needs to be done is called the practice or walking the path and it involves the training of body, speech and mind.

Traditionally this training is presented in the form of the Noble Eightfold Path or in brief as morality, concentration and wisdom which cover the physical, emotional and intellectual aspects of a human being. So that in this training we do not isolate the intellect but rather endeavour to synthesise and harmonize what we know with the way we live and feel.

In his very succinct manner Venerable Ajahn Buddhadasa has said that the entire teaching of the Buddha can be summed up in the single sentence; "Nothing should be grasped at". However our habitual tendency is always to grasp at things. Either we 'grasp' with desire for the pleasant things that flatter and enhance the ego or we 'grasp' with aversion at
the unpleasant things which threaten or slight the ego. It is for this reason that the Buddha, in his compassion, taught the various skillful means in the Noble Eightfold path and encouraged us to cultivate this path.

Through the training in morality we begin to train and restrain ourselves thus beginning to live some of the more basic physical and verbal consequences of our intellectual ideals. However it is only through meditation that we can truly bridge the gap between what we know and what we can live; the gap between what we understand intellectually and what we feel emotionally. For it is only through meditation, the calming of the mind and stilling of the continuous rambling thoughts, that we can look deeply and penetrate beyond the very superficial perceptions that we have of ourselves and the world. With the refinement of awareness, so that it becomes a more constant factor rather than the occasional flash in the dark, one not only begins to understand that all conditions are impermanent, unsatisfactory and not-self but one has also the means to live up to such insight.

From what has been said one can see that a spiritual life without a strong foundation in meditation with a quiet and simple life style is bound to be difficult and of little fruit. For the last year and a half we have all worked very hard on the various work projects at the Serpentine Monastery in order to make it a suitable place for monks to live and practise. We have been very fortunate in receiving the assistance from so many people and much progress has been made with the various buildings. Although there is still much to be done it seems now appropriate to 'put on the breaks' for a while especially during the coming three months Rains Retreat (Vassa) beginning on the 1st of August.

Traditionally the Rains Retreat is a time when monks devote themselves more fully to the study and practice of the Dhamma. In keeping with this tradition we will stop all the work projects during this year's retreat so that the monks as well as interested laypeople can devote all their energies to the practice of meditation and quiet living. It will be a good change for all of us and you will be able to visit the Monastery without the usual fear of blistered hands and aching muscles at the end of your day of 'rest' with the monks.

During the Rains Retreat we would like also to begin a Dhamma Day at the Monastery on each Sunday. As we now have ample and comfortable room for gatherings, meditation and talks it seems a good time to encourage people to come for a day of sharing at the Monastery so that all can benefit from
the results of the good work towards which so many have contributed.

May you all continue to take refuge in the Buddha-Dhamma and progress on the path to peace.

With Metta,
Jagaro Bhikkhu.

Venerable Ajahn Jagaro receiving dana on the occasion of Vesahka Puja, 2528 at North Perth, Western Australia.
The following teaching is adapted from a Friday night Dhamma talk at the Perth Vihara, 7th June, 1985 in a response to the question "What is happiness"?

... Happiness is something close to the heart of everybody. We all want to be happy. Happiness in the normal sense means that you always get what you want, when and how you want it. This is very difficult because so many things are beyond our control. The weather, one's appearance, health, relationships, one's meditation, so many things we cannot control. One's striving for worldly happiness seems constantly hindered. Where is this happiness? How can we possibly be happy when everything is in this state of uncertainty and constant change? We may spend all our lives seeking for it and finding disappointment. If you are a fortunate person with good conditioning and positive states of mind you may be happy most of the time. However there is always the opposite, when things are not as you want them to be, when the mind doesn't do what you want it to do, when people are not as you want them to be, and naturally the opposite emotions and feelings, which we call unhappiness, will arise. Unhappiness has to be there as long as there is happiness.

It is like Nasrudin, the wise man who acted like a fool or maybe he was a fool who acted like a wise man. He was sitting with this big bag of little red chillies - very hot! Tears are streaming down his face and he is panting and crying and eating chillies. An old friend comes by and asks "Nasrudin, what are you doing there eating all those really hot chillies?" Nasrudin, between gasps for air and wiping away his tears and blowing his nose managed to say "I'm looking for the sweet one."

And so we continually look for the sweet one, continually seek happiness in the conditioned, and we haven't found a sweet one yet. Even when you are getting what you want, maybe you can be 90% happy, but still there is that 10% at the back of the mind that's a little bit concerned, a little bit afraid, a little bit possessive. Underneath you know it can't last! That nagging fear leads us to a spiritual path, to seek an alternative source of happiness.

In Buddhism we are striving for a different sort of happiness. Do you think there can be a happiness and a joy in the mind which is self contained, independent of all conditions and perceptions, completely independent of anything whatsoever? This is the happiness of the Buddha. This is Nibbana, the happiness of Enlightenment and non-attachment, the happiness
of no limitations, the happiness of no self.  
When you stop having an invested interest in conditions
and results, you are not burdened by anything. When one is not
burdened, the mind is at peace, it is naturally joyful and
happy. The Buddha was a shining example of this happiness.
From my own experience of having met many great meditation
Masters they share this quality of inner tranquillity, despite
the inability to control conditions and events.

When I went to live with Ajahn Chah at first I was amazed
and then I was quite upset to see how he ran his monastery.
I expected him to have a really tight control over everything,
keep the monks in line, keep the laypeople out of the way,
have a regular timetable. But Ajahn Chah didn't do anything
like that at all. Things would continually change in the
monastery, sometimes we would meditate in the morning, some-
times we would chant, then for a month or so we would do a lot
of formal practice, then we would work, continually flowing
with the conditions. I began to realise that Ajahn Chah didn't
go out of his way to control and regulate conditions. Every-
body wanted him to have a timetable and he just never kept to
it. He would just sit there and if people came he received
them, he never turned people away. If they didn't come then he
was perfectly happy to be alone. He didn't bother to control
events, yet if I have ever met a joyful happy person it was
Ven. Ajahn Chah. Not because he was always laughing, although
he did laugh a lot, but he just had this joy about him, what-
ever he was doing. He wasn't seeking anything from anybody,
wasn't trying to control things in order to be happy.

In Buddhism we are interested in freedom, the freedom of
non-attachment. We carry around an immense burden of attachment
to everything we consider me and mine, like a big heavy stone
on our shoulders. When a wise person points out to us that we
should throw off this burden we regard them with suspicion.
"Throw it off? Then I wouldn't have anything left! I couldn't
do that!" Thinking they will bring us happiness we continue to
lug around our personal investments and self interests, this
great big heavy burden! The Buddha taught that nothing is worth
attaching to. Do not attach to anything, that will bring true
peace and happiness. Reflect on the process of what we call
suffering. What it really is. How it arises. Only then can one
begin to appreciate what attachment really is, what the result
of attachment is and begin to glimpse the idea and possible
results of non-attachment.

Attachment is something we create in the mind. When we let
it go we begin to experience the silent empty mind. This still,
peaceful mind can be found when sitting in meditation. Is it possible to bring it also into our daily lives? Can we live as ordinary people with this non-attachment? There is one vital factor needed if we wish to live skilfully and that factor is mindful awareness. This factor of knowing, of being present is essential if we wish to go beyond our continual stream of thinking, projecting, analysing and reacting. It is difficult, isn't it? Without awareness we are locked into our stale conditioning, like a monkey with its paw stuck in the biscuit jar, all it has to do to become free is let go but this is just what it won't do. Actually non-attachment is not something you have to do, all you have to do is stop attaching. This is natural for the enlightened mind, and it is awareness which makes this a real possibility in our lives.

The Buddha taught a path, gave us a method of skillful means. Meditation is the tool to help us with the process of being present, of seeing attachment and tensions arising, of knowing when to relax and let go. The practice of meditation is very highly emphasized. The more you become aware the more you can begin to experience true peace and happiness. No need to have anything else, no need to achieve anything.

Through Enlightenment you gain nothing at all, all you do is get rid of the extras, you just put down your rock. Life is still life, there are still relationships and there is still action. The big difference is that one is perfectly at peace and there is a real and lasting happiness. So we should all make an effort with our practice. Without meditation life is very difficult, progress on the spiritual path is very hard. I once knew a German who even at that time had been a monk for fifteen years and I asked him "Do you still meditate?" and he said "Yes, I meditate regularly, I don't think it is possible to lead a spiritual life without meditation". I have always remembered that and I have always reflected on how true it is. Without the ability to calm the mind, without the ability to clear the mind, without the ability to sustain awareness and reflect and observe the nature of the mind and body it is not possible to develop in the spiritual direction. The ultimate direction which enables us to let go, to stop seeking happiness from anything or anybody.

...**...
NEWS FROM THE FOREST MONASTERY

The annual, three month long 'Rains Retreat' approaches and the community at the monastery are all looking forward to putting away all the tools, resting and spending the winter in quiet meditation and reflection. We have all worked hard, building the basic amenities of a Buddhist forest monastery and many of our visitors have commented on how much has been done in such a short time, well done too. But there is little chance of reacting self satisfied to such praise for a little groaning voice inside reminds me of all that has still to be done to be in shape for the Retreat. I am reminded of a Law, a rule of thumb in the building industry called Parkinson's Law, which says that a building project will always take as long as the time available for it. We have until the start of the Retreat and I doubt if we will be finished much before. When we began our kitchen-dining hall complex in December I was confident, certain, that we would be sitting in the hall eating food prepared in the new kitchen well before the Retreat. I suppose I should have known better. Impermanence! All expectations are impermanent; for certain they are uncertain; they are "reliably unreliable". As I write, winter is upon us and the monastery is already soggy with the first rains; the Retreat looms close and that groaning voice lets me know of all that has to be done. But the kitchen-dining hall should be ready for the start of the Retreat, I am confident of it, certain.....

Since the last newsletter we erected the roof on the kitchen-dining hall building. We used dead jarrah trunks from our own forest for the posts supporting the verandah and they blend in perfectly. We soon had all the timbers of the roof nailed into place and we needed only two more dry days to put up the plasterboard ceiling and cover it with the roofing iron. It was the Eastern weekend, only April and it doesn't start raining here until May; dry weather was certain, reliable..... Rain! It poured down. It has become an old joke at the monastery that we must always do our washing a day or two before we intend to erect a roof. Just about every time we are about to seal a roof, on a hut or a larger building, the heavens have opened. I must admit that in difficult moments when trying
to put on a roof in wind driven rain I have sometimes pondered that the powers above must all be of the other religion, but such silliness can only be due to the effect of wind and rain on a bald head, chilling a brain bereft of its natural insulation. Indeed, after the Easter showers the "powers above" were much kinder to us; the rest of April and May were mostly dry and warm, perfect for building. So much so that we began a three-roomed ladies dormitory overlooking the dam and it did not rain, not a drop, when we put the roof on (though I did do my washing a few days before just in case!). Now the ladies dormitory is almost complete and looks very inviting under the gum trees close to the water's edge. In fact, the only important thing still needed in the dormitory is someone to stay in it!

Meanwhile, back at the kitchen block, ceilings were installed and painted; water tanks, gutters and pipes were laid and connected so that the rain falling on the building is collected, pumped up the hill to the large concrete storage tank, to come down the hill again as the supply in the kitchen for washing up and drinking; paving bricks were laid on the verandah; Don, George, Greg the Thai students and others all helped lay and bury an underground power cable and put the wires in the building for our electricity supply - a case of many hands made light work! (made fridge work too!). A wood burning stove was installed in the dining hall which will also be our meditation hall for a while making it a comfortable room to get enlightened in; then a road was put in which circles the kitchen block so that visitors in winter, the lazy one's anyway, can drive to the door.

Making our monastery convenient for visitors, some may even say we have a "drive-in" monastery, has its disadvantages for already a few cars have been seen turning into the monastery from the Scenic Drive, driving around the kitchen block and out again without even stopping and, it has seemed, even accelerating away on seeing one of the monks. Then a few days ago I could hardly believe my eyes when a tour bus full of pensioners on a days outing from the city pulled up right outside the new dining hall as we were about to begin our meal. "Are you open for tourists yet?"
the driver politely enquired as a group of old ladies smiled and waved at me through the bus windows. One tries to retain one's equanimity as a monk in a western culture but sometimes it is difficult. Then again, quite a few people have come into our monastery and have had a worthwhile talk about Buddhism, monks and monasteries, with one of us and just because they saw our direction sign on the highway; their interest overcoming any shyness. That a signpost on the highway can lure passers by into the monastery for a serious discussion strongly suggests to me how wide is the potential interest in Buddhism here. The hard work in building a monastery will not be wasted for it seems that our monastery is being planted in a region very fertile at this time.

... Brahmavangso Bhikkhu.

Mr Hansen and Ven. Pannavaro putting the finishing touches on the ceiling of the new kitchen/dining complex.
THE SECOND RAINS RETREAT AT THE

SERPENTINE BUDDHIST MONASTERY

Following the ancient tradition all Buddhists in Western Australia are invited to attend this most auspicious ceremony marking the beginning of the Rains Retreat (Vassa) at Serpentine Buddhist Monastery.

On Sunday 4th August we will celebrate the 'Entry into the Rains Retreat' at Serpentine Monastery and we invite all the Buddhist community and their friends to join us on this auspicious occasion.

The programme for this day will include:

10.00 am  Auspicious chanting
10.30 am  Offering dana to the bhikkhus
11.00 am  Sharing a meal
2.00-4.00 pm  Sitting meditation and a Dhamma talk

Please come along and join us on this special occasion.

VASSAVASO - The Rains Residence

During the Lord Buddha's time a rule was laid down for all the monks, directing that they should spend the three lunar months of the rainy season in one particular place, either in a monastery with fellow monks or alone in a suitable location. Traditionally this is a period when external work is kept to a minimum and the emphasis is placed on developing one's introspective meditation practice, facilitated by the quiet surroundings and many hours devoted to the formal sitting and walking meditations.
For the monks, novices, nuns and interested laypeople it is also usually a time when the Vinaya, the monks discipline, is explained at length and discussions on current applications of the rules is encouraged. Also due to the less hectic atmosphere, the members of the community are able to take on some of the more ascetic practices if they so wish, such as eating all the food for the day at one sitting, determining not to lie down to sleep (if you're not sure what attachment is you can try this one yourself!), or determining only to use the three main robes allowed for each monk as clothing.

This year a few of us at Serpentine Monastery would like to determine not to eat any meat for the three months, out of compassion for all the animals slaughtered daily and to hopefully encourage others to do the same. Though not something to become dogmatic about, we feel it is worthwhile to encourage and support the vegetarian life according to the ideal of harmlessness and being kind to all sentient beings to which all good Buddhists should be aspiring, especially in this country where the choice and availability, of nutritious and economical alternatives to meat eating abound. If you would like to join us, you are most welcome, and if you are not sure how to keep yourself healthy this way a vegetarian cookbook will be on sale at the Vihara in North Perth.

Finally, as Ajahn Jagaro mentioned in his discourse at the beginning of this newsletter, Sunday's during the rains residence, will be a Dhamma day at Serpentine Buddhist monastery, when you will have the opportunity to enjoy the peaceful forest surroundings, receive Dhamma teachings and have the chance to practice the art of meditation in our new dining hall.

Thus for the rains retreat at least, there will be no regular meditation meetings at the Centre in North Perth on Sundays.

May you all make a steady progress along the Middle Way,

On behalf of the Sangha
Panyavaro Bhikkhu
SOCIAL AND FUND-RAISING HAPPENINGS

JULY  SUNDAY 28TH AT 12.30 PM

A LUNCHEON FEATURING THE FOOD FROM THAILAND

at the North Perth Migrant Centre,
66 Angove St. North Perth

We will also be showing a very interesting
video from Thailand.
Please all come along and join in.

AUGUST  WEDNESDAY 7TH AT 8.00 PM

A WINTER/SPRING FASHION PARADE

at 76 King St. Perth

M.J. Williams & Associates, a wholesale fashion
company, have kindly organised an evening fashion
parade for us as a fund raising function.

Tickets must be booked through Chris Banks at
$3.00 each. Phone Chris on 448.2180 (h) or
328.3725 (w). You can pick up the tickets at
the Vihara on Friday evenings or from Chris at
Highgate Primary School. (Sorry, Ladies only)

AUGUST  SUNDAY 25TH AT 12.30 PM

A SRI LANKAN LUNCHEON

kindly prepared by Mrs Nirangela Galhenage
(a superb cook!)

at the North Perth Migrant Centre,
66 Angove St. North Perth

Please ask your friends and relations and join in these
social occasions when we have the opportunity of meeting
old and new friends and helping to support financially
the Buddhist Vihara. Only $3.50 per head. Please ring
Mrs. Khanti de Tissera on 384 6896 for more information
on our social and fund-raising activities.
DHAMMA-DAY AT THE MONASTERY
(every Sunday during the Vassa)

You are all welcome to come and share your Sundays at the Monastery in a day of rest and meditation.

The basic pattern for the day will be:

- 10.30 am  Offering of dana and sharing of a meal. (Please bring a little something; preferably vegetarian).

- 2.00 to 4.00 pm  Group meditation and Dhamma talk with time for questions and answers.

The rest of the day is free time to appreciate nature and the joy of being in a place of peace.

DHAMMA SCHOOL DAYS FOR CHILDREN - please note changes of date and venue during the Rains Retreat.

July 14th and 28th at the Vihara in North Perth at 3.00 pm.

August 11th at Serpentine Buddhist Monastery at 2.00 pm

August 24th (Saturday) at the Vihara in North Perth at 2.00 pm.

September 22nd at Serpentine Buddhist Monastery at 2.00 pm.

EIGHT PRECEPT OBSERVANCE DAYS

July - 1st (full moon), 9th, 16th, 24th and 31st (full moon)
August - 8th, 15th, 23rd and 30th.
September - 7th, 13th, 21st and 28th.

During the Rains Retreat there will be all night meditations at the Monastery on these Observance Days and all are welcome to participate.
From the Dhammapada -

Impermanent, all that is conditioned;
when with wisdom one sees this,
then one tires of dukkha -
This is the path to purity.

Dukkha, all that is conditioned;
when with wisdom one sees this,
then one tires of dukkha -
This is the path to purity.

All the dhammas are not one's self;
when with wisdom one sees this,
then one tires of dukkha -
This is the path to purity.

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