NEWSLETTER OF THE BUDDHIST SOCIETY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

October/November/December, 1985 (2528)

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MEMBERS OF THE SANGHA RESIDENT IN PERTH, W.A.


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"Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhassa"

Dhamma greetings to all,

We are now in the middle of the Rains-retreat which is a time for quiet reflection for both the monks at the monastery and the lay members of the Buddhist Society. It is indeed a blessing to have the time and space to slow down and try to develop a proper perspective on things. If one must speak of progress on the path to Enlightenment then it may be best to speak of an increasing ability to have a true perspective of the way things are.

Being conditioned by habitual ways of seeing and thinking we rarely have a true perspective on what we do, what we experience and what we are. It is often said that unless we take the opportunity to stand back and reflect on the way things are it is difficult to arrive at a true perspective. So sometimes a change can be very beneficial and I write this because I would like to share with you a few of my own observations as a result of having returned to Thailand for a short visit just before the Rains-retreat this year.

The first impression that always strikes me on returning to Thailand is how tranquillisng the form of a Buddhist monk is in that environment. In the time of the Buddha they would call the monk a "Samana", which is a Pali word meaning, "one who makes oneself peaceful". So a monk follows a training in body and speech which conveys the peace of mind derived from meditation and wisdom. When a monk follows this training in body and speech it has a tranquillisng effect on himself as well as on those who see him. One could say that the Buddhist monk on his morning almsround is a perfect expression of peace. Even walking for alms in a big noisy city such as Bangkok can be a tranquillisng experience and I think it is one of the blessings of a Buddhist country to have monks walk for alms in the morning, because by their very example they make people aware of peace and its relevance to life.

Naturally Westerners by their conditioning will have more exuberant tendencies and monks living in the West will quite often have to undertake a more active role in the Buddhist community. However it is good to remember that the Buddha encouraged the balancing of energy with tranquillity.

So in our Western culture where there is much emphasis on outer exuberance, the presence of Buddhist monks can have a very good balancing effect. As mendicants relying on alms, monks cannot contribute to the material output or
economic growth of the society; they are not meant to be socialites or entertainers and most of them are not brilliant intellectuals who will come up with intriguing new philosophies or discoveries. However, they can contribute something which is now far more important, and that is the quality of peace. I see this as the most important role of the monks and the monastery which we are establishing here in Serpentine for the benefit of the many. The practice of the Dhamma is for cooling and making one peaceful, and the presence of such people in one place is what makes an ordinary piece of Australian bush into a Buddhist monastery.

The second observation that one cannot fail to make because it is so overwhelming and widespread throughout Thai Buddhist culture, is the degree of generosity and gratitude shown by both the laypeople and the monks. In fact being a Buddhist monk in Thailand can be quite embarrassing because the people are so generous, and in particular towards their religion. But one quickly sees the joy that arises in people when they give with a pure heart because they are sharing their lives with others and so are no longer isolated little beings. It is indeed a blessing to see this since in the world there is so much of the opposite tendency to think only of 'me' and 'mine' and 'what can I get out of this relationship and this place?' Such an attitude only leads to a miserable existence rather than joyous living.

On returning to Wat Nong Pah Pong to visit my Teacher, the Venerable Ajahn Chah - whose condition of physical immobility remains much the same as last year-I could not help but be greatly impressed by the continued dedication of the monks looking after his every need throughout the day and night. This is an expression of true gratitude, being one of those beautiful virtues which marks a sincere Buddhist. The Buddha said that gratitude was one of the highest blessings and spoke in praise of it many times. Unfortunately it is a quality quite often lacking in the West for it has rarely been emphasized. It will surely be the right direction for society in general and our Buddhist community in particular to really develop a greater sense of respect and gratitude towards parents, teachers, friends and all the people who contribute to our well-being. Naturally where there is respect and gratitude there will always be the corresponding wish to reciprocate by helping in any way possible. Life is very much what we make it and it is indeed possible to make it a blessing if we choose to do so.

With metta, Jagaro Bhikkhu.
VISITING TEACHERS

Early in November we will have the great good fortune to receive two very senior monks from Thailand. Firstly, Ven. Ajahn Too-ey, one of Ven. Ajahn Mahaboowa's senior disciples, will be coming to stay for possibly a month, accompanied by Ven. Nyanadhammo, an Australian disciple of Ven. Ajahn Chah.

Then around mid-November we expect Ven. Ajahn Pannananda to be visiting us again, accompanied by Ven. Ajahn Pasanno, the present Abbot of the International Monastery in Ubon.

Ven. Pannananda has kindly consented to preside over the first ordination of a Buddhist monk in Australia, when Samanera Ariyasila will request full ordination from the Sangha. This will be a very special and historic occasion. To be able to take robes in one's own country is indeed a great blessing. This practice has already been established in England under Ven. Ajahn Sumedho with great success and has become a reality for us in Australia. At this favourable time Ian Sloane will be taking the ten precepts of the Samanera, or novice (nak). All who know these fine men wish them success and happiness and we as lay Buddhists continually gain joy and inspiration from having with us a strong western Sangha to emulate and support.

Symbolic perhaps of the wholesome growth of these two men, will be the planting of two young Bodhi trees at Serpentine during this auspicious period. These seedlings have come from the Mahabodhi tree in Sri Lanka which is a branch from the tree in India under which the Lord Buddha attained supreme Enlightenment.

Visiting teachers, additions to the Sangha and a tree planting - many good things happening in November! We hope that all our members and interested friends will avail themselves of this opportunity to meet and benefit from these honourable visitors, who are shining examples of knowledge and experience
in living the life of Dhamma. For details of their visits, scheduled talks and localities for offering dana, please refer to the noticeboard at the rear entrance of the Vihara, 4 Magnolia Street, North Perth or tel. 444 7013 or ring the Serpentine Monastery on (095) 252420 for more information.

"WHAT I CAN SEE - CAN'T BE ME"

In our practice we can use doubt as a skilful means. There are the (Zen) koans of "Who am I?" and "Who is the Buddha?" which are ways of deliberately bringing up that state where the mind becomes quite blank. The natural tendency is to try and fill the emptiness with something. "Who is the Buddha?" The Buddha is this or the Buddha is that. "Who am I?" Immediately there is the desire to find oneself as something, with some quality, in some shape or form. But in this practice we observe all of this and rather than constantly trying to find shapes and forms to grasp, to create or to believe in, we begin to abide in the spaciousness of the mind.

Just watch yourself thinking. Deliberately think something like, "I am a Buddhist". This is not just an habitual thinking obsession but rather deliberately think this so that you are observing. What is there before you think it? If you are watching the mind it's still, alert and clear. Then you start, "I-am-a-Buddhist", and when that thought ends there is nothing left, but the mind is still clear isn't it? There is still clarity, alertness but no thought. In this way you begin to see the space that surrounds thought - thought arises and passes away within the mind. But if you don't do this, then you tend to be just obsessed with thinking, becoming overwhelmed by your thoughts, ideas and opinions just going from one thing to the next, to the next, on and on. Or you become fed up with thinking and so you try to stop thinking by doing some concentration practices in order to suppress thought.

In meditation we are examining these things not by analysis but by having a perspective on the perceptions and thoughts themselves, on that which is conditioned into the mind. In this way of meditating you begin to free yourself because you begin to recognise the space in your mind. You can see all the perceptions and thoughts from the most important, righteous and holy ones to the most
trivial and foolish ones as just a heap of conditions in the mind.

It is like seeing it as an object, like seeing this microphone in front of me. No longer do I think that this microphone is me or I am the microphone, because I can see it it is obviously not me. The same with perceptions and thoughts, when you really begin to cultivate this way, you begin to see them like this microphone. It couldn't possibly be me because it's so obviously separate, it is an object and one is no longer deceived by the conventional appearance nor is one caught by the force of habit.

The body and mind which includes everything you can think of, conceive of, perceive of, be conscious of through the senses is all "anatta" - not self, because it is an object, it is something that you can observe. You can't observe yourself, you can only observe what is not yourself. So then the question arises, "Who is it that is observing, who knows? What is it?" We want a name for that which knows. Is it really my true self or my soul, or is it the Buddha, or is it....? - always a desire to have some kind of concept for ultimate truth.

This opening of the mind, a recognition of the way things are is not an analysis, there is no concept for the way things are, it is suchness. Meaning that you can't sum up the way everything is now at this moment in a concept. So rather than trying to figure it all out from concepts and theories, we develop the practise of letting go, of non-attachment. Through that non-attachment we begin to realize Nibbana because Nibbana is when you are no longer attached to things and you are fully aware that there is no attachment.

... 

The above Dhamma talk was compiled from a talk given by Ven. Ajahn Sumedho in Thailand, February, 1984.

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Welcome

The Executive Committee and members of the Buddhist Society of W.A. would like to extend a very warm welcome to Ven. Kassapo who has recently joined the Sangha of Serpentine Monastery. Ven. Kassapo is originally from Melbourne and was living at Wat Buddha-Dhamma before going to Thailand to be a novice and later ordaining as a monk. He has spent six years in Thailand and this is his fifth Vassa as a Bhikkhu.
NEWS FROM THE SANGHA

For the past year and a half "News from the Forest Monastery" has been about work, work and more work as we all laboured hard to erect the essential facilities of our monastery. Since the beginning of the Rains Retreat in early August, though, the community of residents and visitors at the monastery have stopped 'doing things' and have been resting, meditating and reflecting on the nature of this world in the quiet of the Australian bush. There has been no work and therefore no building news to relate here. No news is good news indeed! for we were all quite exhausted and needed a rest.

Nevertheless, it is not quite accurate to say that now we are doing nothing more than sitting down all day, taking it easy. The monks, the senior ones anyway, have an obligation to teach when invited, even during the Retreat. So here is a good place to relate some of our non-building activities which many may be unaware of:

Both myself and Ajahn Jagaro have been invited many times to schools, Primary and High, in and around Perth to explain about Buddhism, its history, its principles and its traditions. Some of the school children have come to the centre in North Perth, some have come to Serpentine, but on most occasions we go to the school where the sight of flowing brown robes beneath a shaven head turns more than just a few heads in the playground. We talk to children from grade 1 to grade 12, though the subject matter may be different, and I have had even grade 2 children quietly sitting meditation for five to ten minutes (the teacher had never experienced such silence in her classroom!) and they all enjoyed it including me. Sometimes, someone writes back to us, telling us how it appeared through young eyes to have a Buddhist monk at their school - here are some of the gems from a class of grade 5's (the spelling is their's).

"Hi Braham"..."I liked your hair and your clothes"...
"The things you do are not strange, just different"...
"The things I liked best were the incense the flowers and the candle"..."I have never smelt incense before but when I had a chance to I had a blocked nose"...
"Brendon Manning said it smelt like French Fries, Mr. Baker cracked up"..."I always thought Hindu started in India and Buddha started in Bangkok"..."A girl in my class called Angie she wants to be a nun"..."I never
knew that you tried not to even kill an insect"...
"Besides (bringing) meat pies at the Buddha's Birthday (Vesakha) that is for the Australia Buddhist what else do you bring"..."Tell your mates they can read this letter to"..."but you are kind and I hope I see you again"... Bye Braham - your buddy Miguel".

The purpose of our schools is to learn about our world and it seems shameful to me that many children complete school here without ever learning the first thing about the major religions of this world. Because of this, not only do we accept invitations to schools, but also Ajahn Jagaro has been serving as the Buddhist representative on the Education Minister's Advisory Committee for Religious Education for the past three years.

Since the middle of last year, every three or four weeks, I have been teaching meditation to a 'captive' audience in Bunbury Regional Prison. We have also visited most of the major prisons around Perth and I understand from the prison 'grapevine' (through my students in Bunbury) that invitations to regularly teach at Fremantle and Canning Vale Prisons will soon arrive in our letterbox. The initiative for these invitations has come from the prisoners themselves and it does take them many months of writing applications and stubbornly persisting through tangles of 'red tape' before a Buddhist monk is allowed to go inside (and come out again!). These visits have been worthwhile for there is much time for the prisoners to practise meditation and they soon find out that it effectively counters the atmosphere of aggressive negativity that pervades a prison and it provides the clarity of mind wherein they can wisely reflect upon themselves and their situation. Even though the prisoners have no income but for a weekly allowance of $2.00 (I think), an unsolicited donation for the Buddhist Society from the prisoners has been arriving once a month.

As Buddhist monks we are also regularly involved in conducting some of the traditional ceremonies where a religious presence is required, from funerals (and I never, never imagined when I became a monk that conducting funerals would be one of my duties) to blessing marriages, to performing the auspicious chants when a Buddhist family moves into a new home, even once this year doing some chants in the house of a family who suspected some ghosts were about!

These are some of the activities of the monks which you
may not have been aware of, performed out of compassion, to share our lives with others for the benefit of all. When I was first a monk I thought that it was all about sitting quietly by oneself, but now I have come to realize that this has to be balanced with giving out to others. Helping others as well as oneself is more peaceful, and much more enjoyable!

... Ven. Brahmavamso.

A new name for our monastery

Since acquiring the property at Serpentine we have been seeking a suitable name for the monastery being established there. Many suggestions have been made by many people and finally a few months ago, a decision was made. The name chosen is BODHINYANA MONASTERY which can be rendered in English as the "Monastery of Enlightened Wisdom". The main reason for this choice is that Bodhinyana is the honorary title given to Ven. Ajahn Chah by the King of Thailand. By this gesture we hope to express our gratitude to Ven. Ajahn Chah for his gift of Dhamma which is now benefitting so many of us here in Australia.

END OF THE RAINS ALMS PRESENTATION CEREMONY

SUNDAY 27TH OCTOBER, 1985

Traditionally after the end of the three months Rains Retreat lay Buddhists take the opportunity to make offerings of requisites and other forms of support to the Sangha. This year the 'End of the Rains Alms Presentation' ceremony will be held at Serpentine Monastery on Sunday 27th October.

Bhikkhus depend on the lay people for the four requisites of robes, alms food, shelter and medicines in time of sickness. In addition to the opportunity of offering the day's meal to the monks and participating in the religious ceremony visitors and friends will have an opportunity to stroll around the 98 acres of the Monastery.

The programme for this day will include:

9.30am  Gathering at the Monastery
10.00   Receiving the Precepts, chanting and a short Dhamma talk
10.30   Offering of food and blessing by the Bhikkhus
12.00   Sharing a meal with all those present
12.30   An opportunity for all to stroll around the Monastery.
2.00pm  Group meditation and Dhamma talk for those who wish to participate.
A New Centre for Perth

During the last few years a large proportion of the Buddhist Society's and Sangha's resources and energy has been channelled into the establishment and development of Serpentine Monastery.

Ever since the formation of the Society it has always been our aim and aspiration to have a resident Sangha firmly based in W.A. as we saw this to be an essential factor if the Teachings of the Lord Buddha were to firmly take root. Our earnest wish to see the Third Jewel in the Triple Gem established and growing has now become a reality - due greatly to the tireless and selfless effort and compassion of our Teacher, Ven. Ajahn Jagaro.

Our city centre in North Perth was purchased in 1979 when our community was only quite small and anyone who tries to attend our regular Friday night Dhamma talks can readily testify that we have certainly outgrown our present quarters.

All of our other activities such as meditation retreats, "Introduction To Buddhist Meditation" courses, social activities and classes have to be held at various outside venues which proves not only time consuming for those involved in organisation but our Society lacks that cohesiveness essential to any developing group.

On Wednesday 28th August a special meeting of the Executive Committee under the guidance of Ven. Ajahn Jagaro was convened and it was unanimously decided at that meeting that the present Vihara at Magnolia Street be sold and larger premises be purchased and established as our new Vihara.

There are at this time different options open to us - we can purchase land and erect a building, buy a large old house suitable for renovation or another possibility would be to acquire an already established church or church hall.

We would like the new centre to be in an inner suburb of Perth, easily accessible to public transport, have adequate parking facilities and to be in a quiet and peaceful locality preferably not on a main or busy road.

If the new Vihara is to become a reality we look to you for your help and support, knowing that this centre will be for the benefit and blessing of all in the Buddhist community and the society at large.

If you can offer assistance in searching for suitable land or properties, building or renovating, special fundraising or financial help, please contact the President.
David Miller, or the Secretary Warren Smailes at the Buddhist Centre, North Perth. Your new Vihara will be a beautiful monument to the timeless and liberating Teachings of the Lord Buddha and another firm step in the establishment of the Buddha-Dhamma in Australia.

_Why Not Become A Member?_

Whenever questions are asked regarding the number of members in the Buddhist Society it is always rather difficult to answer. This is because the number of financial members (people who have joined the Society and have paid their yearly subs) is in fact rather small. However, the number of people who are affiliated with the Society and in fact make use of the various facilities and benefits that it provides, both at the city centre and at the monastery, is far greater than this. The facilities and all the teachings given by the monks are freely available to all for this is in keeping with the spirit of Buddhism in which the Dhamma is so precious that one should never put a price on it.

All who are interested will always be welcomed regardless of whether or not they are members or even Buddhists.

However, we would like to encourage you to reflect on what the Buddhist Society means to you. If you are sympathetic with its aims and appreciate the teachings and facilities that it makes available, it would be a good supportive gesture to become a member. Joining the Society is not meant to be repayment or a way of deriving more benefits but it is recommended and encouraged as a simple expression of gratitude.

If you are interested in becoming a member, please speak with or write to the monks or one of the committee members.

_Other Ways in Which you can Help_

If you would like to give more support to your Buddhist Society, please note the following areas where your involvement would be greatly appreciated and would serve a worthwhile cause — (1) Join one of the sub-committees (our fundraising and social committee always welcomes your ideas and support). (2) Plan an activity eg. a picnic in the park. (3) Offer to help in the kitchen during the forthcoming meditation retreat in November. (4) Offer to chauffeur or extend hospitality to one of the many visiting dignitaries coming in the next few months; and of course (5) feel free to make donations.

Thankyou for your heart-warming support during the year.

... your Executive Committee
"AN INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHIST MEDITATION"

A Series of Meditation Workshops
Beginning Sunday 1st December, 1985

The Buddhist Society of W.A. will be conducting a series of four workshops to learn the fundamental Teachings of the Lord Buddha and to make a start on the basics of Buddhist meditation. These workshops are structured for beginners and emphasis is upon correct posture, right attitude and motivation and will teach the actual techniques of meditation to calm the mind and to develop insight. The actual sitting times will be short.

Classes are conducted by Venerable Ajahn Jagaro.


Times: 4.30 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.

Venue: The North Perth Migrant Centre
66 Angove Street
North Perth

Cost: No charge.

For more information and registration contact:

The Buddhist Centre
4 Magnolia Street
North Perth, 6006
tel: 444 7013.
The Library

Our library at the Centre continues to grow and we are very grateful that Christopher Judges has kindly volunteered to look after the English section now allowing Mrs Suparb Delanney to concentrate more fully on the Thai language books.

We have over 160 cassette tapes of talks given by visiting teachers, chanting, relaxation techniques etc and if you are unable to make it Friday night to the Ajahn's talk you will find a copy of his talk in the tape library.

We need to expand the 'books for sale' section and would like to thank Ms Kathy Shields for her generous donation of a large number of books to this area.

Only members may borrow tapes and books and borrowers should either return or renew their books/tapes after 2 weeks.

Books for free distribution include:

"A TASTE OF FREEDOM" by Ven. Ajahn Chah
"OUR REAL HOME" by Ven. Ajahn Chah
"NOW IS THE KNOWING" by Ven. Ajahn Sumedho
"CITTA VIVEKA - Teachings From The Silent Mind" by Ven. Ajahn Sumedho
"DIRECTING TO SELF PENETRATING' - Six Talks on Centering The Mind in Non-Attachment" by Tan Acharn Kor Khao-Suan-Luang
"WISDOM DEVELOPS SAMADHI" by Ven. Ajahn Maha Boowa

Books for sale include:

"THE BUDDHA" by Michael Carrithers ($4.00)
"HEART-WOOD FROM THE BO TREE" by Ven. Ajahn Buddhadasa ($5)
"THE VEGETARIAN KITCHEN" ($9.00).

EIGHT PRECEPT OBSERVANCE DAYS:

October 6th, 13th, 21st and 28th (celebrated on 27th at Serpentine Monastery
November 5th, 11th, 19th and 26th (full moon)
December 4th, 11th, 19th and 26th (full moon)

DHAMMA SCHOOL DAYS FOR CHILDREN

Dhamma school for children is held at the Vihara, North Perth at 3.00 p.m. and finishes around 4.00 p.m.
October 13th - November 10th and 24th and December 8th (summer school holidays begin 18th December). All children are welcome to attend these classes.
REGULAR ACTIVITIES
AT THE BUDDHIST CENTRE (VIHARA)
4 MAGNOLIA STREET
NORTH PERTH
Tel: 444 7013

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  Meditation for beginners -
                       instruction by Ven. Ajahn Jagaro.
          7.30-8.30pm  Sitting meditation.

Sundays:  Dhamma day at the Serpentine Monastery.
          10.30am  Offering dana to the monks.
                    Sharing a meal with the community.
          2.00-4.00pm  Sitting meditation, instruction and
                      a Dhamma discussion with Ven. Ajahn
                      Jagaro.

SOCIAL AND FUND RAISING ACTIVITIES

Sunday 20th October at 6.00 p.m. we will be having another
uncake Dinner. Venue - The North Perth Migrant Centre,
66 Angove St, North Perth. Cost $4.50 adults and $2.50
children. Food will be prepared by Sripin Butler. Please
ring David Miller on 459 3606 if you would like to attend.
All welcome and bring your friends. All proceeds for the
support of the Buddhist Vihara.

Sunday 15th December at 6.00 p.m.- A 'Get Together Meal'
which will follow the third workshop 'An Introduction to
Buddhist Meditation' at the North Perth Migrant Centre, 66
Angove Street, North Perth. Cost $4.50 adults and $2.50
children. Please come along and meet old and new friends
and help support the Buddhist Vihara.
DATES TO REMEMBER:

October

Sunday 13th  Visit to the Vihara by Ven. Anandamangala. Dana at 11.00 am followed by a talk.

Thursday 17th  Hatha Yoga classes will commence with Christine Banks in the Music Room (the Music Room faces Bulwer Ave), Highgate Primary School from 3.30pm to 4.45pm. Cost per class is $2.00 and all proceeds go towards the support of the Vihara. Ring Christine on 448 2180 (home).

Sunday 20th  Social and Fund Raising Evening.
A Pancake Dinner at 6.00pm at the Migrant Resource Centre, 66 Angove Street, North Perth.

Sunday 27th  "END OF THE RAINS RETREAT CEREMONY" at the Serpentine Monastery, Lot 1/Kingsbury Drive, Serpentine.

November

Saturday 1st  Weekend Meditation Retreat at the Mt Helena Centre of Theosophy. Ring the Vihara on 444 7013 for registration.

Sunday 2nd  Early November Visit to Perth by Ven. Ajahn Too-ey.

Mid-November  Ven. Ajahn Pannananda will visit Perth together with Ven. Ajahn Pasanno.

December

"AN INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHIST MEDITATION" - a series of four workshops conducted by Ven. Ajahn Jagaro. Sundays 1st, 8th, 15th and 22nd at 4.30pm to 6.00pm at the Migrant Resource Centre, 66 Angove Street, North Perth.

Sunday 15th  Social and Fund Raising Evening.
At the Migrant Resource Centre, 66 Angove St North Perth at 6.00pm. Cost $4.50 adults and $2.50 children. All proceeds for the support of the Vihara in North Perth. Please come along and bring your family and friends.