BODHINYANA MONASTERY

SERPENTINE, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

NEWSLETTER OF THE BUDDHIST SOCIETY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

October/November/December 1986 (2529)

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REGULAR ACTIVITIES

AT THE BUDDHIST CENTRE (VIHARA)

THURSDAYS:
(Oct & Nov)

7.30-9.00pm  HATHA YOGA

FRIDAYS:

7.30pm-8.00pm  Guided sitting meditation

8.00pm-9.00pm  A talk on Buddhism by Ven. Ajahn Jagaro

SATURDAYS:

9.00am  Food offering (dana) to monks

3.00pm-3.45pm  Meditation for beginners. Instruction by Ven. Ajahn Jagaro

7.30pm-8.30pm  Sitting meditation

SUNDAYS:
(alternate weeks)

4.00pm  Dhamma School for 8-14 year olds

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ADDRESSES

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"NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO SAMMASAMBUDDHASSA"

Dear Dhamma friends,

One of the central teachings in Buddhism is that existence in whatever realm, at whatever time and in whatever place is essentially unsatisfactory. This is why the Buddha said that he did not praise any form of becoming but rather stressed the realization of Nibbana as being the only way to true happiness.

Having made these two statements I can almost hear the objections that this is a very pessimistic view of existence and that Buddhism only seeks to escape from life. However, we are not interested in quibbling about whether one should say that the glass is half empty or half full which is the difference between pessimism and optimism. We are more interested in seeing things as they are according to our experience in life. With regards trying to escape, that is what most of us are doing when we continually seek for the perfect place, perfect relationship, perfect state etc. Ven. Ajahn Chah compared this to seeking for a turtle with a moustache! Escaping is the process of becoming while the realization of Nibbana is no longer seeking for perfection but being fully awake in the presence of reality as it is.

Now we can say that life is satisfactory or even wonderful, but is that really the way we experience it? Is that the way ordinary human beings living in a physical world with their sensitive bodies and deluded minds experience life? Certainly we experience periods of happiness and have our wants momentarily gratified but at that very same time there are so many living beings in this world who are experiencing unhappiness and deprivation. Our own ceiling of happiness always seems to slip through our fingers and the more tightly we hold on to it the more quickly it slips away. If we look closely we see that the feeling of having enough immediately turns into wanting something more. So where is that satisfactory state that implies happiness and perfection?

Having developed our intellect and thus the ability to conceive mental concepts to such a refined level we can easily conceptualize the ideal state. In our minds we can conceive of the perfect place, perfect relationship, perfect system of government etc., but the realization of them seems to always escape us. In our perfect world
there should be equality, trust, peace and freedom. But where is this world? And even if there is such a world who could live there? Certainly not ordinary beings with a sense of "me" and "mine", "what I want", "what I think is right" etc. for if it were so then our perfect world would immediately become just like this world again!

When we look around us at the world as a whole, our society, our personal relationships and even our own bodies and minds there seems to be so much that is wrong, so much that should be otherwise. We have the superpowers who, through fear and mistrust, are threatening each other with the most destructive weapons; people dying of starvation; killing and destruction of life and the environment; breakdown of the family unit, drug addiction; disappointment in relationships and the list can go on and on.

What can we do about all this? Well, certainly there is a lot of scope for improvement by controlling and changing conditions. World peace may be a little more viable if the superpowers can agree to trust each other enough so as to reduce their nuclear stockpiles. If we could manage a more fair distribution of food, starvation could be greatly eliminated. If we have more aid, more sharing, more laws and restrictions, more incentives and punishments then things will be better – but will they ever be perfect? Is there an end to it or will there just be an endless supply of problems in accordance to the principle of "need is the mother of invention and invention is the mother of need".

I think that a great number of people are now realizing that the "band-aid" approach is not going to resolve the problem. Even in our international aid projects we are realizing that it is not enough to just give food, money or whatever to relieve the symptoms of a problem. More interest is being taken in understanding and treating the cause of the problem. Naturally we do not discard the "band-aid" approach for where there is an immediate problem we must do what we can to relieve the suffering, but at the same time we shouldn't stop there for there is more to be done in treating the cause.

This is exactly the approach that the Buddha taught over 2,500 years ago. All his teachings of generosity and morality, loving kindness and compassion, respect and gratitude were given to try and alleviate the problems and the suffering in life. However, he did not stop there but
rather pointed to the root cause which must also be treated in order to truly resolve the problem.

The story goes that on the night of His enlightenment the Buddha-to-be sat in meditation and traced back the cause of suffering step by step through the process of conditioned arising until He came to its root — the mind which is obstructed by ignorance. It is this ignorance which causes selfishness, expressed through greed and aversion resulting in the world being the way it is. It is this ignorance which must be transcended if one is to really come to an end of the problems of existence.

Jagaro Bhikkhu

VEN. AJAHN JUN'S VISIT

It is our great good fortune that one of Ajahn Chah's most senior and respected disciples has agreed to visit Perth in early November. Ven. Ajahn Jun, teacher to many of the Western monks, including Ajahn Sumedho, will be arriving in Perth on Saturday Nov. 1st.

On the morning of Sunday 2nd November all are invited to a welcome dana at the Vihara at 9.30am.

Ven. Ajahn Jun will be staying with us until the 23rd of November and we are sure that all will benefit from his warm kindness and wise words.

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"To refrain from all evil,
To cultivate the good,
And to purify the mind —
This is the teachings of all the Buddhas."
"LOVE AND COMPASSION"
by Tenzin Gyatso, The Fourteenth Dalai Lama

Through various factors, mainly material, the world is becoming smaller and smaller, providing the peoples of the world with good opportunities to meet and talk with each other. Such contact provides a valuable chance to increase our understanding of each other's way of living, philosophy, and beliefs and increased understanding will lead naturally to mutual respect.

As we meet, I always keep in mind that we are the same, being human beings. If we emphasize the superficial differences, I am an Easterner and furthermore a Tibetan from beyond the Himalayas, with a different environment and a different culture. However, if we look deep down, I have a valid feeling of I, and with that feeling, I want happiness and do not want suffering. Everyone, no matter where they are from, has this valid feeling of I on the conventional level, in this sense we are all the same.

With this understanding as a basis, when I meet new people in new places, in my mind there is no barrier, no curtain. In my mind, as human beings, we are brothers and sisters; there is no difference in substance. I can express whatever I feel, without hesitation, just as to an old friend. With this feeling we can communicate without any difficulty and can contact heart to heart, not with just a few nice words, but really heart to heart.

Based on such a genuine human relation — real feeling for each other, understanding each other — we can develop mutual trust and respect. From that, we can share other peoples' suffering and build harmony in human society. We can create a friendly human family.

This attitude is very useful. If we put too much emphasis on the superficial differences — culture, ideology, faith, race, color, wealth, and education — if we make small rigid discriminations, we cannot avoid making additional suffering for human society. A troublesome atmosphere will be created from the exaggerated but very small differences.

As one brought up in the Mahayana Buddhist tradition, I feel that love and compassion are the moral fabric of world peace. Let me first define what I mean by compassion. When you have pity or compassion for a very poor person, you are showing sympathy because he or she is poor; your compassion is based on altruistic considerat-
ions. On the other hand, love toward your wife, your husband, your children, or a close friend is usually based on attachment. When your attachment changes, your kindness also changes; it may disappear. This is not true love. Real love is not based on attachment but on altruism. In this case your compassion will remain as a humane response to suffering as long as beings continue to suffer.

This type of compassion is what we must strive to cultivate in ourselves, and we must develop it from a limited amount to the limitless. Undiscriminating, spontaneous, and unlimited compassion for all sentient beings is obviously not the usual love that one has for friends or family, which is alloyed with ignorance, desire and attachment. The kind of love we should advocate is this wider love that you can have even for someone who has done harm to you: your enemy.

I am a religious person, and from my viewpoint all things first originate in the mind. Things and events depend heavily on motivation. A real sense of appreciation of humanity, compassion and love, are the key points. If we develop a good heart, then whether the field is science, agriculture or politics, since motivation is so very important, these will all improve. A good heart is both important and effective in daily life. If in a small family, even without children, the members have a warm heart to each other, a peaceful atmosphere will be created. However, if one of the persons feels angry, immediately the atmosphere in the house becomes tense. Despite good food or a nice television set, you will lose peace and calm. Thus, things depend more on the mind than on matter. Matter is important, we must have it, we must use it properly, but this century must combine a good brain – intelligence – with a good heart.

Everyone loves to talk about calm and peace whether in a family, national, or international context, but without inner peace how can we make real peace? World peace through hatred and force is impossible. Even in the case of individuals, there is no possibility to feel happiness through anger. If, in a difficult situation, one becomes disturbed internally, overwhelmed by mental discomfort, then external things will not help at all. However, if despite external difficulties or problems, internally one's attitude is of love, warmth, and kind-heartedness, then problems can be faced and accepted easily.
The human essence of good sense finds no room with anger. Anger, jealousy, impatience, and hatred are the real troublemakers; with them problems cannot be solved. Though one may have temporary success, ultimately one's hatred or anger will create further difficulties. With anger, all actions are swift. When we face problems with compassion, sincerely and with good motivation, it may take longer, but ultimately the solution is better, for there is far less chance of creating a new problem through the temporary solution of the present one.

Sometimes we look down on politics, criticizing it as dirty. However, if you look at it properly, politics in itself is not wrong. It is an instrument to serve human society. With good motivation — sincerity and honesty — politics becomes an instrument in the service of society. But when motivated by selfishness with hatred, anger, or jealousy, it becomes dirty.

This is true not only for politics but also for religion. If I speak about religion with selfish motives or with hatred, then though I am talking about religion, it is not useful because the feeling behind it is bad. Things depend on our own motivation. Through money or power you cannot solve all problems. The problem in the human heart must first be solved. Then, the other human-created problems will be solved naturally.

The principles discussed so far are in accordance with the ethical teachings of all world religions. I maintain that every major religion of the world — Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism — has similar ideals of love, the same goal of benefitting humanity through spiritual practice, and the same effect of making their followers into better human beings. All religions teach moral precepts for perfecting the functions of mind, body and speech. All teach us not to lie or steal or take others' lives, and so on. The common goal of all moral precepts laid down by the great teachers of humanity is unselfishness. The great teachers wanted to lead their followers away from the paths of negative deeds caused by ignorance and to introduce them to paths of goodness.

All religions agree upon the necessity to control the undisciplined mind that harbours selfishness and other roots of trouble, and each teaches a path leading to a
spiritual state that is peaceful, disciplined, ethical, and wise. It is in this sense that I believe all religions have essentially the same message. Differences of dogma may be ascribed to differences of time and circumstance as well as cultural influences; indeed, there is no end to scholastic argument when we consider the purely metaphysical side of religion. However, it is much more beneficial to try to implement in daily life the shared precepts for goodness taught by all religions rather than to argue about minor differences in approach.

We must promote compassion and love; this is our real duty. In conclusion, no doubt you feel I am talking of an impractical dream. However, we human beings have a developed brain and limitless potential. Since even wild animals can gradually be trained with patience, the human mind also can gradually be trained, step by step. If you test these practices with patience, you can come to know this through your own experience. If someone who easily gets angry tries to control his or her anger, in time it can be controlled. The same is true for a very selfish person; first that person must realize the faults of a selfish motivation and the benefit in being less selfish. Having realized this, one trains in it, trying to control the bad side and develop the good. As time goes by, such practice can be very effective. This is the only alternative.

Without love, human society is in a very difficult state; without love, in the future we will face tremendous problems. Love is the centre of human life.

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SPECIAL THANKS

The Buddhist Society of W.A. gratefully acknowledges the generous donation from lay Buddhists in Thailand who have offered funds to Bodhinyana Monastery for the construction of a Shrine Hall to house the specially cast Buddha statue which was made in Thailand for our Monastery. We rejoice in their heartfelt generosity.
It is retreat time at the monastery, a time for wearing holes in one's meditation cushion and making furrows along one's walking meditation path. The annual three month retreat is a time for much meditation. Just as well, for it has been too cold and wet to work! It is "vacation time" for the monastic community and what are we vacationing? Just this mind, emptying it of its endless dreams and schemes, its moans and groans and resting silently in the present.

The retreat did not begin very quietly though - it started with a bang, the banging of the monastery bell for the first time at our "Entry to the Rains" ceremony. On a Sunday in mid July hundreds of Buddhists and others less fortunate (!) came to the monastery from Perth for the day. The weather forecast was for rain and cold, but, of course, it was sunny and warm - a glorious day. What made the day even sunnier were the broad smiles of all those who came along and enjoyed themselves thoroughly. What made the occasion even warmer was their remarkable display of generosity; plate upon plate upon plate of delicious, lovingly prepared food was shared, first to the monks, and then to all who came. If there is an essential part of a Buddhist ceremony, a central "sacrament" if you like, it is this rite of "dana", of generosity and sharing. This is what makes a Buddhist festival so much fun. There is no need of alcohol in order to be merry - sheer generosity is enough to soften the corners of the mouth and crease the face with a selfless smile. Open the heart and joy will always burst out.

VEN. BRAHMAMOS RINGING THE MONASTERY BELL AT THE ENTRY TO THE RAINS
After the formalities of the feast, many of our guests took advantage of the fine weather to walk off some newly acquired calories and roam the monastery. It is beautiful here at Bodhinyana at this time of year. The hillsides are all green, the dam is full, the creek roars down its magnificent course, wildflowers are popping up in unexpected corners of the forest, the resident kangaroos can be seen placidly enjoying the lush grass, many with a tiny joey head peering out from the pouch. To all this our additions of a new Abbot’s hut, just completed, and two ordinary monks’ huts seem paltry. Our landscaping project around the kitchen-hall did not quite get completed, despite the valiant efforts of all those who braved the rain and cold to plant the area in a "working bee" the weekend before. Our thanks go to all those Buddhist heroes and I would add that it is probably according to a union negotiated settlement that one gets extra "merit" working at the monastery when it rains!

An unfortunate combination of Annica (the law of impermanance), Karma, and Thai Inter resulted in Ven. Nyanadhammo ("Smiley" as he was known to the prisoners up the road at Karnet) being lured back to Thailand but only temporarily we hope. However, similar conditions combined more favourably when Ajahn Jagaro returned from Thailand with our first resident Thai monk. Ven. Jundee is from the North East of Thailand and has been a monk for 12 years. He arrived a week before the start of the Rains Retreat from a steaming hot Bangkok to a freezing cold Perth,
shivering under it's coldest winter for many years. Ven Jundee has endured the change in temperature with admirable fortitude, two woolly hats, socks, gloves and many layers of jumper. We are reassuring him at present that the winter is almost over - now for the flies!

During Ajahn Jagaro's sojourn in Thailand much interest was aroused in the Buddhist activities here in W.A. The beautiful Buddha statue which was cast especially for us in Thailand has now arrived here by ship and in order to build a hall to house the image many, many, inspired Thai Buddhists donated a large sum of money. These are funds given by certain South-East Asian countries to help the under-developed countries like Australia - what is really worth developing anyway! Already plans for the hall are being conceived amongst the Sangha and this only reminds me that the idyll of a peaceful Rains Retreat is but another condition that will soon pass. But for now it is still "vacation" time at Bodhinyana monastery and just as one writes on a postcard to one's friends while on holidays:—

"...having a lovely time, wish you were here!"

Ven Brahmavamso
(on holiday at Serpentine)
Thank you to our hard working Thai friends for the wonderful lunch they prepared on Sunday 21st September!

I extend a warm welcome to all members and their friends to the following social events:-

**Thursday 2nd October:** Hatha Yoga classes start again with Mrs Helene Cotesworth at 7.30pm at the Vihara. Bring a soft mat or blanket and wear comfortable clothing.

**Sunday 5th October:** A Vegetarian Tea following the last "Introduction to Buddhist Meditation" class at the North Perth Migrant Resource Centre at 5pm. Please ring these ladies if (a) you can bring a vegetarian dish and (b) if you are coming - Terre (276 8169), Carol (448 3702) or Chris (448 2180). Cost $4.

**Saturday 22nd November:** An International Food Fair will be our major event to raise funds for the new Vihara. We need many helpers! Please phone Naranjala (341 8627), Kathy (381 4929) or the Vihara to offer help and to obtain tickets.

I am often asked by newcomers "Is there any way I can help around the Vihara?" So, in answer to these kind offers, we need help in these areas:-

- **Male driver** to occasionally offer transport around Perth for the monks.
- **Cleaners** for 2 hours on a Friday to spruce up the Vihara (male or female!). You would only be rostered once every six weeks.
- **Newsletter helpers** to prepare this newsletter for postage. This entails only about 4 hours evening work once every 3 months.
- **Cooks for Meditation Retreats:** Cooks are required from me to time to prepare the meals for those people on meditation retreats. Bring a friend to help you!

**New Committee Members for 1987** If you can spare one Saturday afternoon each month to attend and contribute to the Buddhist Society of W.A. committee meetings we are in need of members who can truly make this commitment. Think about it for 1987. I can fully recommend working with these lovely people.

Please ring me if you wish to offer help in anyway (448 2180)

May you all hear the gift of the Dhamma and grow in it's wisdom.

Christine Banks
President
OVERDUE LIBRARY BOOKS - SPECIAL FUNDRAISER

It is easy to conclude from the thick wad of borrowing cards and the vast spaces on the library shelves that most of our library books are no longer available to Society members. We realize that Buddhist books are so amazing that, once borrowed and read, one doesn't want to part with them, but what about the rest of suffering humanity? To solve this problem and another at the same time, the suggestion has been advanced to adopt the standard library procedure of fines for overdue books. Contemplating the large number of books which have been out for a long, long time, thousands of dollars could be collected for our new Vihara simply by sending two or three largish Society members around to collect both books and fines!

Of course, such an idea is proposed "tongue in cheek", but we do want our library books back and who knows who might be on the committee next year........

MEDITATION RETREAT

A weekend Meditation Retreat will be offered to those wishing to attend on the weekend beginning Friday 6th February, at the Centre of Theosophy in Mt. Helena. To put your name down, or for further information, please phone Chris Banks on 448 2180.

THE MEDITATORS WHO ATTENDED THE RETREAT IN SEPTEMBER
END OF THE "RAINS RETREAT" ALMS PRESENTATION CEREMONY

SUNDAY 9th NOVEMBER, 1986 AT SERPENTINE

According to the old tradition, after the end of the three months winter retreat, lay Buddhists take the opportunity to make offerings of requisites and other forms of support to the Sangha in appreciation. The Sangha, the community of Buddhist monks and nuns, depends entirely on the lay people for the basic necessities of their life - robes, food, shelter and medicines in times of sickness - the four requisites.

This year the "End of the Rains Retreat Alms Presentation" ceremony will be held at Bodhinyana Monastery on Sunday 9th November. As well as being an occasion to experience the joy of sharing what we have with others, there will also be a Dhamma talk, some meditation and also plenty of time to stroll around the beautiful monastery surrounds.

The programme for the day will include:

9.30am  Gathering at the Monastery
10.00am Receiving the Precepts, auspicious chanting and a short Dhamma talk.
11.00am Offering the day's meal to the monks
11.30am Sharing a meal with all those present
12.30pm An opportunity for all to stroll around the monastery grounds.
2.00pm Group meditation and Dhamma talk for those who wish to participate

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The Sangha and the Executive Committee of the Buddhist Society of W.A. wish Candima, who disrobed prior to the "Rains Retreat", peace and happiness in her new life in the beautiful surroundings of the hills of Kalamunda.
MEMBERS OF THE SANGHA RESIDENT IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA