the Buddhist Society of W.A.
NEWSLETTER
APRIL - JUNE BE 2534 (1991)
VESAKHA DAY
SUNDAY 26 MAY, 1991

To Buddhists all over the world, the full moon day of Vesakha is an event of the utmost importance as it commemorates the Birth, Enlightenment and Parinibbana (final passing away) of the Lord Buddha. The Lord Buddha, as a human being, was able to reach the pinnacle of perfection and wisdom through his own efforts without the aid of any supernatural agency. This achievement of the Buddha gives us all much encouragement and inspiration in that if we make the necessary effort we too can attain the same enlightenment.

On Vesakha day our hearts and minds are naturally directed with reverence to the Blessed One who strove earnest and strenuously to gain Supreme Enlightenment and proclaim the Dhamma for the benefit of all beings.

Programme for the Day:

9.00 am. Gathering at Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre
9.30 am. Group chanting, taking the Three Refuges and the Five or Eight Precepts, Auspicious chanting and Dhamma talk.
10.30 am. Offering of food to the Monks and sharing a meal together.
2.00 - 3.00 pm New Buddhists are invited to formerly take the Three Refuges and the Five Precepts.
3.00 - 4.00 pm Meditation and discussion.
5.00 - 6.30 pm Slides of Buddhist holy places and a pictorial history of Bodhinyana Monastery.
7.00 - 8.30 pm Evening ceremony including chanting, Dhamma talk, and circumambulation of the shrine
8.30 - 9.00 pm Traditional Sri Lankan Buddhist chanting.
Dear Friends,

I feel that there are many good things happening in the world today, but unfortunately there are also a lot of unpleasant things going on at the same time. The most obvious and striking failure of humanity is in its inability to live with itself in peace and harmony. There is a never ending source of conflict and strife amongst human beings, even though we are all individually striving for happiness. It seems that in our quest for happiness we tend to create a great deal of misery and suffering.

Buddhism is primarily concerned with peace. We say that the Buddha achieved true peace and then taught the path to peace. So I feel that Buddhism must have something very relevant to offer human beings today, especially concerning the path to true peace and happiness.

If we understand that ‘The mind is the forerunner to all good and bad states’ then we can see that world peace is directly related to the peace of individual human beings. To create inner peace within an individual is to contribute to the outer peace of the world, because peaceful human beings will create a peaceful world. On the other hand, human beings who are confused and in inner turmoil will surely create a world full of conflict. This is why in Buddhism we place so much emphasis upon meditation or ‘cultivating the mind’. We train the mind so that we begin to understand it and ultimately liberate it from all inner conflict.

When I first went to stay with my teacher, Venerable Ajahn Chah, he was always encouraging me to ‘watch the mind’; but being new to meditation I found it very difficult to understand what he meant. “Where is the mind?” “What is it?” and “What watches what?” For many people the mind is something which hasn’t been explored. People spend most of their lives exploring the physical world, scientific phenomena or intellectual concepts. But regarding the mind itself, very little is known from direct experience.
Most people are very caught up in concepts, beliefs and ideas. We live in a world of thought: thinking about life, ourselves and existence. But ‘thinking about’ means ‘going around’, not going to the centre - the point of rest...peace.

The Buddha was pointing to the way of liberating the mind from all concepts, all views, opinions and beliefs. He was pointing to the essence of mind, and the essence of mind is not a concept, not a view or a thought. Rather, it is bright and empty; it is the Buddha-mind, the mind that knows things according to reality.

So the Buddha was pointing towards letting go; liberation of the mind. Instead of tying up the mind with more concepts, ideas and beliefs.

Buddhist meditation is primarily concerned with developing this clear, peaceful state of mind, that is fully awake and knowing. The technique used to achieve this is not the main concern; any technique that is based on a skillful and peaceful approach will do. There is no need to become attached to a particular technique or method - just learn to make the mind peaceful.

As the mind becomes more peaceful and clear through repeated training, we can then begin to reflect. What does it mean to reflect? It means to look closely and directly. If we want to understand the nature of the world and existence where can we possibly look other than in this very mind? The Buddha said that the Dhamma is to be seen ‘within this fathom long body’, with its perceptions and feelings. The mind is that which knows; the body can only offer the sense faculties of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. So what is it that knows? It is the mind itself which knows the world through the senses; there is no other way that we can know the world. So if we want to understand the world we must come within and observe very carefully with the clear, silent mind.

This practice can lead to a very liberating experience, because we see with insight the nature of the conditions of our mind and then we can let go of them. Thus we are no longer caught, we are no longer obsessed; we will no longer become fixed or attached to conditioned phenomena. So we will not be caught in conflict because we know the limitations of ideas, views and beliefs. This is the true way to peace.

With Metta
Jagaro Bhikkhu
THE WAY THINGS ARE!

When I was a student in an American university, we spent a long time drinking beer and criticizing everything - American government, American economy, American civilization, American values; we knew how Americans should be. I could tell you how you should be. Do you want to hear?

Then you can tell me how I should be. It is easy, isn't it? All of us are good at that. I can tell you how I think women should be - they should be kind, generous, loving, obedient, faithful, intelligent, hard-working, sweet, never a cross word, never a frown! That is how I would like all women to be, just for my sake. Men should be strong, brave, noble beings, hard-working, intelligent, enduring! I can tell everyone how they should be according to how I would like them to be for me, how I would like the British government to be, or the American government, the French, the Soviet.

No matter how much we want things to be otherwise, they are as they are. We know how we would like to sit in meditation, for example, as an ideal meditator. But how are we really? What goes? Whatever it is, that is what we have to observe and learn from. Meditation is not a kind of analysis, putting a judgement on things, but a recognition of the way things are at this moment - not believing that things are like "this" in a permanent way, but just recognizing them as they are in the moment.

You think how you would like to be at home, and how you would like everybody else to be at home. Your mind is quiet, and you want everybody else to be quiet. You go to work feeling very kind and calm, and you want everybody to respect that, not to say harsh things or stir you up, or make you angry. It takes a lot of energy, doesn't it, just trying to stop yourself from hitting somebody at the office! The world is an irritating, frustrating
place; there is an incredible amount of friction in society, in families, in situations.

We can be irritated with each other even when sitting quietly in meditation! How many of us have felt really irritated by the habits of those around us - just wanting to bash them, wishing they would go away, and leave? They might scratch themselves at a time when we do not want them to and we find that very annoying. Or they might move, or say something and we do not want to listen to it. So even in the most idyllic conditions we can get very irritated.

There was a monk I knew once. He kept all the cakes for himself. I was sitting in the line of monks at the meal with my little bowl of sticky rice and bamboo shoots, waiting for some cakes to be passed down. Talk about friction in the mind! I looked up after awhile and saw that monk at the head of the line with a mischievous gleam in his eye - he was not going to send those cakes down. I observed the desire to murder - the frustration, the wanting, the resentment at someone stopping me having something I thought I deserved: "Those cakes were given for all the monks; they weren't given for just that one monk.

That is a dirty trick to play on the lay people. Those generous kind lay people came; they brought those cakes, and they should be for everyone. Is a good monk one who hoards up food for himself? No! Is a good monk one who doesn't care about himself, just takes what he needs and shares the rest? Yes! That is a good monk!" So I could go and tell that monk what he should be. But he already knows! He knows what he should be. He knew at the time, and he knew what I was thinking - that was obvious from the glint in his eye. All there is left for me to do is go to the sensation, the anger, the heat, where it really hurts - he inside. That kind of practice makes us very soft; we become very, very patient.

We need to take into account the conditions we have to exist with, not condemning or judging them, but just recognizing them. These are the people; they are "this" way - the people at the office, in the factory, in the hospital, at home. This is what we have to exist with, be patient with, reflect on, these kinds of people, these kinds of situations. "I don't want it like this. I hate it!" By this attitude we make a suffering situation for ourselves.

But we can reflect and allow the friction that arises in the mind to become a fully conscious experience - just frustration, or
anger, or resentment. Then we know what it is and do not push it aside, trying to repress it, or we do not indulge in it. We may go to the office on Monday morning and somebody says something very irritating” “I’m going to leave, I’m going to quit this! I’m... I’m not going to put up with this any more!” We get carried away. Alternatively, we can just watch, reflect on the feeling that arises in the mind, the irritation. What is that irritation? We can observe it, have the time, the patience, to just observe the feeling that arises from friction.

We can concentrate on it, right in the heart, listen to it, make it a full conscious thing - and then let it go. It goes away. And we have not been foolish, we have not said anything, done anything, that we would later regret. We can easily get caught up in depression or the desire to run away, but we should take into account that the world is like this. There is always going to be plenty of friction, irritation, wherever we go. There is plenty in the monastery, and there is plenty in family life - even in happy marriages.

The sensory world is one of irritation and friction. But if we use it, we shall become very patient, gentle, mellow creatures, lovely wise beings. Anyone who practises with that friction wisely becomes gentle and soft. The friction grinds away all the hard edges, the nastiness and harshness of our minds.

Frustrations, difficulties in our daily lives - we can use them for meditation. We can just keep facing the things that come up in our minds, the fears and desires. And we become someone who reflects and learns from life, not someone who always complains and feels disappointed when life fails to come up to expectations. Being able to work with life as it is, with ourselves, with the people we live with, with the society we live in - that is meditation in daily life.

Anguish, despair, sorrow can be transmuted into patient endurance, into wise reflection. Life is as it is. Some of it is going to be very nice, some of it awful. A lot of it is going to be neither nice nor awful, just boring. Life is like that. We observe: “This is how our lives have to be”. Then we wisely use what we have, learn from it, and free ourselves from the narrow limits of self and mortality.

From “Teachings of a Buddhist Monk” by Ven Ajahn Sumedh
The thermometer under the kitchen-block verandah was reading a brain-numbing 49°C (120°F). It was the last day of January and the hottest day that had ever been recorded in Perth. At our monastery, it was soon to become even hotter still!

We first saw the smoke in the mid-afternoon. It was rising from bushland some 2 km to the S.W. of us. A fire in such a direction on such a day was a black omen indeed. We were in the middle of a dry West Australian summer where the dripping of rain had not been heard for at least two months. The intense 120°F heat, we were told, would be vaporizing enough of the eucalypt oil in the leaves of the trees to turn the very air into a flammable mix. The fire was almost directly down the valley from us and any wind, from the afternoon sea breeze, would send the flames raging towards us. Many times we had been warned of such a dangerous scenario, and of the threat it posed to our life and property. Now it was happening.

We had taken precautions. Our fire breaks were wide and well maintained. Much of the fuel in the forest had been removed by cool spring burns. We had installed expensive fire-fighting pumps with big professional hoses. Our gutters were kept clean of leaves. We had even had a fire-drill only a week or so before. We thought that we were prepared.

The fire-front hit us at dusk. “Hit” is the right word for it conveys some of the incredible speed and awesome power of a summer wild fire in these parts. The fire arrived before we even saw it coming. Suddenly, the whole trees, from trunk to crown, exploded into flame. The roar of the inferno was deafening. We had been hosing down our buildings and surrounds but it was immediately obvious that it would be fatal to linger to try to do battle with such a monster. Our hoses were thrown down, some with the water still running, and we ran for our lives to the shelter of our Hall.

“Get out of here!” screamed the officer from the bush fire brigade who appeared at the Hall no sooner than we had arrived. The fire had almost enveloped us and the officer’s contorted face spoke decisively of his fear for our lives. Taking nothing, we
scrambled into two cars and sped away, out of the flames, unable to do any more for our monastery.

From the size of the fire, I felt sure that all the huts would perish, and many other buildings as well. Maybe the solid Main Hall would survive, perhaps. Later that evening, as we gazed helplessly towards the monastery from the bottom of the hill, I had even less hope. Above our monastery rose monstrous clouds of swirling smoke. Vicious tongues of flame leapt twice the height of the tallest trees. The whole horizon was one huge bonfire as if the hills themselves were burning away. It looked like seven years of toil building the monastery would be destroyed in an evening - this would test us!

The scorched landscape at Bodhinyana monastery.

At 6 a.m. the next morning we were allowed through the road block to see what was left of Bodhinyana. As we climbed the hill
we saw the devastation of the forest was complete. There were no shrubs, no green leaves - only rows of charred trees, skeletons black from root to twig still smoking in the early dawn. Then, in the midst of the lifeless forest, we saw a kuti clean and shining in the morning sun. It looked so out of place in the wasteland. There wasn’t even a spot of soot on it. Then we came upon our entrance which was still standing; then the workshop - unscathed, the Hall - gleaming .... It was hard to believe, but all our buildings had survived with almost no damage.

The television crews and newspaper reporters came later that morning to get a story on ‘the miracle at the monastery’. Indeed, one has to admit that the lack of damage was amazing. But there was no time to indulge in our sense of relief. The monastery was a black and sooty mess and the clean up would take weeks. We all worked extra-hard, so hard in fact that I began to understand what it really means to feel “Burnt Out”!!! Many volunteers came over these few weeks to help tidy up the forest and bring the monastery back to normal. May I give a mighty thank you to you all. If there ever was a miracle at Bodhinyana, it was seen in the number of people who came to help.

As I write, it is more than a month since the fire. Rain has fallen and some trees are already sprouting. For a while, the only greenery in our monastery was to be seen on our three big water tanks, prudently painted a gum-leaf green only a fortnight before! Now the grass and clover are beginning to cover the blackened earth. By the end of next winter (our wet season) our forest will be greener and lusher than ever. Wild fires are part of the natural Australian Bush. Fire is required to crack the pods to release the seeds and ash needed to nourish the new growth. Fire cleanses and regenerates the eucalypt forest. So, we are none the worse for the ordeal. It takes more than the worst fire in our shire for thirty years to shift us!

Nor have we found it easy to shift our two cats. Unlike the other residents at our monastery, our cats refuse to keep the Five Precepts! In particular, they have been making many an afternoon meal out of birds who are sadly lacking in any Mindfulness. So our cats had to go. We found a nice Buddhist home for them in Watermans, a northern suburb of Perth, and delivered them one Friday afternoon.
The following evening, the elder cat bolted heading south. Two hours and 10 km later she was meowing at the front door of our city centre in Nollamara. Tales abound of cats finding their way home from afar. But in this case our cat had returned not to the monastery but to the monks’ city quarters. She had never been there before. Her only trip to the metropolitan area had been the journey from the monastery to Watermans and that had been in a sack and hadn’t come close to Nollamara. How she found the home of the monks within the sprawl of Perth will be a secret forever hidden between those whiskers. But my theory is that she has been meditating secretly and developing powers .... Both cats are now back at the monastery. To protect the birds, we will hang a bigger bell from their collars - the big monastery bell has been suggested!

In this article on miracles, I recall the Buddha once saying that the greatest of all miracles is the teaching of Dhamma. Accordingly these last three months have been miraculous indeed.

First we were honoured to receive a visit from Venerable Maha Suthep, a Khmer speaking monk now resident in new Zealand. Ven. Maha Suthep spent a very busy but successful fortnight propounding the Dhamma in Khmer to a delighted Cambodian community. Then we were privileged to receive a visit from the famous Thai forest monk Ajahn Yantra who not only inspired the Thai Buddhists in Perth but also delivered a discourse in English at the Friday night meeting at Dhammaloka.

Accompanying Ajahn Yantra was Ven. Mahinda, a Malaysian born monk resident in Sydney. Ven. Mahinda gave a most inspiring discourse in English at Dhammaloka. Both teachers, together with the monks and lay people accompanying them, came to the monastery the day after the fire to help us tidy up.

Ven. Mahinda.
It was a great morale-boost for the residents. In March we were extremely fortunate to be visited by Ven. Ajahn Anando, American born Abbot of Chithurst Monastery in England and fellow disciple of Ajahn Chah.

Ajahn Anando led an inspiring weekend retreat on Metta, gave a Friday night discourse at Dhammaloka and gave many wonderful talks to the residents at the monastery. With such wonderful teachers visiting us, how can one do otherwise but believe in miracles?

Ajahn Brahm

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**WEEKEND MEDITATION RETREAT**

The Buddhist Society will be conducting another weekend meditation Retreat from the evening of Friday the 5th to Sunday the 7th of JULY.

**Venue:** Mt. Helena Centre of Theosophy

The cost of the weekend is $45.00 which covers food and accommodation - the teachings are of course free.

**Registration forms and more information will be available from the Buddhist Centre in June.**
GUIDELINES FOR VISITING THE MONASTERY

Many people may feel shy about visiting the Bodhinyana Monastery for the first time.

This article is written to explain the protocol, in the hope that your visit will be more relaxing and that you will easily be able to observe the correct procedures.

Firstly, please telephone the Monastery to advise the cook of your visit. A good time to telephone is 7 a.m. or 8 a.m. You may wish to offer food to the Sangha, (the community of monks), thus honouring the beautiful Buddhist tradition of generosity (dana).

The Sangha share their only meal of the day at 10.30 a.m. Please arrive in time, or earlier if you wish. You may offer one dish or a full meal according to your wishes.

When telephoning, please advise the cook what you are bringing and ask how many residents are likely to be there on that day.

Simple, wholesome, vegetarian food is highly appreciated. If you are unable to cook, you may wish to offer some fresh vegetables, fruit or any nutritious pantry items. Milk, bread and cheese are acceptable items also.

Clothing:

For both men and women it is appropriate to wear modest clothing. What is inappropriate, for example, is revealing, scant, or scruffy clothing.

Temple Etiquette:

Please sit with your feet pointing away from the monks and the Buddha statue. Sprawling or lying down is not acceptable. You may wish to consider the Buddhist Temple as equivalent to a church and moderate your behaviour accordingly.
Meal time:
The senior monk will explain how to offer the food if it is your first visit. Usually the meal is placed on a tablecloth on the floor of the dining room. When the whole community is assembled the senior monk will receive each dish singly on a small cloth. Offer the food mindfully, while kneeling respectfully.

The Sangha pass the food down the line, with each person taking it in turns to receive food. The remaining food is then taken into the kitchen and the visitors share a meal quietly, after the blessing has been given.
The Blessing:

This Pali chanting by the Sangha is a traditional way of sharing the merits of this good action bestowing the blessing of health, long life, beauty and happiness on the donor.

After the meal you may wish to help with the kitchen “tidy up” which usually does not take long. Then it is time for that well earned cup of tea! The senior monk (Ajahn) is available at this time to answer questions about your Dhamma practice or to have a friendly chat.

You might be interested to know that the rules for monks (Vinaya) specify that a monk needs another male in attendance while speaking to a female.

You may wish to spend the afternoon bush walking or meditating in the peaceful environment.

With metta
Brigid Lowry & Chris Banks

INVITATIONS

AN EIGHT PRECEPTS DAY:
On Vesakha day we would like to encourage as many people as possible to mark this important occasion by taking the Eight precepts and dedicate themselves to spiritual practice.

Devotees wishing to participate may like to wear white clothes and spend the day at the Vihara following the activities outlined in the official programme.

FOR THE NEW BUDDHIST:
As the number of people interested in the teachings of the Buddha continues to grow there are now many new Buddhists within our society, some of whom have expressed the wish to formally receive the Three Refuges from the Sangha in a formal ceremony. In response to this wish we are organizing such a ceremony on Vesakha Day at 2 pm at Dhammadaloka.

If you would like to participate in affirming your commitment to the Triple Gem please contact Ajahn Jagaro well before the occasion.
DHAMMALOKA DHAMMA

Sabbadanam dhammadanam jinati
"The gift of Dhamma surpasses all other gifts"

The modest buildings of the Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre are something of an oasis in the desert for many of its visitors. The healing fountain of this oasis is the Triple Gem - the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. To remind us all just how important this fountain is as a precious source of spiritual sustenance, the next few editions of the Newsletter will feature selections from recent Dhamma talks given by our monks. If you feel you would like to hear the entire talk after reading the vignettes below, the tapes can be borrowed from the Library.

Tape No.631: "How On Earth Can We Be At Peace?"
Venerable Ajahn Brahmavamso - 11/1/91

Against the background of the impending onset of war in the Gulf, Ven. Ajahn Brahmavamso, gave a Dhamma talk on the importance of peace for the Buddhist.

"When I came in this evening a lady asked me a very important question: "What is behind all of this Buddhism anyway?" The answer I gave her was that what is really behind all of this Buddhism is learning how to live in peace amongst war. It is learning how we can be at peace even though everyone around us - even the situation we are in - is unconducive to the peaceful life, to peace in the heart or in the mind."

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"The first thing which Buddhism offers us is honesty - just facing up to the situation, to what we call reality. Or, in the Buddha's words - "The truth of things as they really are". Not the truth of things as we would like them to be, or as they should be, but as they actually are."

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"The only way we can come to peace is by acceptance. This is the Buddhist way - acceptance of the way things are in our world. And working in little, humble ways to improve it just a little bit. That is all we need to do. This is the Buddhist way - a very very quiet way, but it is amazing how powerful it can be. It can bring great peace and happiness to people’s lives. It can grow great flowers and trees of patience and of kindness; it can grow a peaceful heart."

Transcribed by Michael Kile

Ven Ajahn Sumedho

Ven Ajahn Sumedho will be visiting Perth from the 4th to 15th April, 1991.

Talks will be given at Dhammaloka on Friday evenings at 7.30 p.m. and on Saturdays from 2 p.m. till 4 p.m.

Buddhism for Youth

Teenagers are invited to attend this workshop which will cover various aspects of Buddhist meditation and teachings.

A CHANTING BOOK

A book of chants and an accompanying tape have been put together to facilitate learning of the chants to be used at future religious gatherings of the Buddhist Society. These will soon be on sale at the library.
COMMITTEE NEWS

The Committee held its first meeting on the 16th March and for this year the committee is hoping to concentrate on three special objectives in addition to the normal day to day running of the Society.

The Society has grown considerably during the past few years both in numbers and in the range of activities. As a result of this growth there appears to be an ongoing need to establish procedures and to work in a more formal manner.

The Society has now expanded to become one of the largest multicultural groups in Western Australia and it is intended to bring this fact to the attention of the Government and the community at large, as well as alert people to the positive contribution made by the Buddhist Society in the area of community relations.

The final and most important objective for this year is to build the new library block and the monks’ residential block. The Society is also expecting to start construction on the new Dhamma Hall this year.

Don Weerakody
President.

AN APPOLOGY

Due to a computer error some incorrect receipts have been issued for January. If you have received one please disregard it or return it to the Treasurer. Thankyou.
The new Committee of the Buddhist Society

Hammāloka Buddhist Centre

Front Row: Trish English (Vice President)
            Margaret Durrans
            Duangchai Nana (Secretary)
            Jan Kernahan (Librarian)

Second Row: Wunneenatd Intrarangson
            Lynne Collins
            Shirley Jackson
            Don Weerakody (President)
            Ven, Ajahn Jagaro
            Ron Storey (Treasurer)

Back Row:   Eddie Khoo
            Jay Meddin
            Noel Hatton
# REGULAR ACTIVITIES

**DHAMMALOKA BUDDHIST CENTRE, NOLLAMARA.**

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<th>DAY</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<td>FRIDAY</td>
<td>7.30-8.00pm</td>
<td>Guided sitting meditation</td>
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<td>8.00-9.00pm</td>
<td>A talk on Buddhism by one of the senior monks.</td>
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<td>SATURDAY</td>
<td>9.30am</td>
<td>Food offering to the Sangha.</td>
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<td>10.00am</td>
<td>Lohan Kung with John Ross.</td>
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<td>3.00-4.00pm</td>
<td>Meditation and discussion</td>
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<td>SUNDAY</td>
<td>8.30-9.30am</td>
<td>Sitting Meditation.</td>
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<td>9.30am</td>
<td>Food offering to the Sangha.</td>
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<tr>
<td>WEDNESDAY</td>
<td>7.30-8.30pm</td>
<td>Yoga, Relaxation and Meditation.</td>
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<td>&amp; THURSDAY</td>
<td>9.30-11.00am</td>
<td>Beginners welcome and creche available.</td>
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**SOUTH OF THE RIVER**

**WEDNESDAY**

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>7.00pm</td>
<td>Instruction for Beginners.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.30-9.00pm</td>
<td>Meditation and Dhamma talk at the Community Health Centre, Armadale Kelmiscott Hospital, Albany Hwy.</td>
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**ADDRESSES**

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Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre  
18-20 Nanson Way.  
Nollamara, 6061.  Tel: 345 1711

Bodhinyana Monastery  
Lot 1, Kingsbury Drive  
Serpentine, 6205  
Tel: 525 2420

Buddhist Community Services  
Social Worker,  
14 Nanson Way, Nollamara, Tel: 344 4220