THE BUDDHIST SOCIETY OF WA

NEWSLETTER

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Nibbana and the Paradox of Happiness

I think that all of us here this evening would share, with every other human being, the aspiration to happiness. Even a masochist wants to be happy — it’s just that his or her idea of happiness is rather different. But how difficult it is for us to achieve happiness!

We have moments of happiness — or at least we think we do. We associate happiness with the feeling we have when everything is going well — when everything is going our way. Then we think “Well, this is the way to happiness; just make sure that everything goes my way, make sure I get everything right, then I can be happy”. But of course we all realise that such an attitude is not practical. We can move towards the goal, but never achieve it. Yet we all yearn for, and desire, happiness.

One of the most interesting statements the Buddha made about happiness was with regard to Nibbana — the goal of Buddhism. He described Nibbana as the highest happiness. He also described Nibbana as the highest peace; the giving up of all desire and aversion; the relinquishment and abandonment of any form of personal, separate entity. This description does not fit our usual concept of happiness. When we think of happiness, we don’t usually think of peace. Happiness is usually associated with a sense of excitement, like joyfulness, exhilaration or exuberance.

So we may be a little perplexed as to what the Buddha meant by the statement that Nibbana is both the highest happiness, and peace. If, by simple logic, peace is
the highest happiness, that's not very acceptable according to our normal understanding. It's nice to be peaceful, but it gets rather boring, doesn't it? How do we come to terms with this? Why should the goal of Buddhism be peace? If the Buddha had said that the goal of his teaching was love or compassion, this would have sounded more inspiring, but he made peace the goal. Whether peace can really be happiness is something for each of us to contemplate.

To understand *Dhamma* — to see and understand the way things are — we must use our reflective ability to look and know directly, with a bright, reflective mind; with bare awareness. We can use this quality of awareness to observe that which arises, that which happens around us, when we just stop and *be*, rather than *become*. We practise meditation in order to abide in this awareness so that we can contemplate and reflect.

When you feel happy, what is that feeling? If we look at happiness, we will clearly see that within it are the seeds of unhappiness. Every happy state depends on this or that; on this person or that person. With reflective awareness we can look at our experiences and see that even when we get what we want, we are still not completely happy — just a bit more happy. How can we reach the goal of complete happiness?

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Can the mind *be* completely happy? This is why the Buddha said "the mind can be perfectly peaceful". For it is in this perfectly peaceful state that the mind is perfectly happy.

There are different types of peace. Living in a quiet, secluded environment gives you a sense of tranquillity, a sense of peace. Making the mind concentrated and withdrawing from the complexity of the sensory world, as in meditation, can also give you a sense of peace. But these are very conditioned and vulnerable states. The peace that the Buddha was referring to as *Nibbana*, is the peace of the mind that has
given up preference, liking and disliking, chasing and fighting, desire and aversion and duality. It is the peace of the mind which needs nothing and lacks nothing.

Of course, this is a great mystery to us. The only way to find out what it is like is to realise it. Before you will strive to realise it, you must consider whether or not it is a worthwhile cause. Is the peaceful state of mind really happiness — ultimate happiness? Or is it just a dull and boring state of mind? I think that most people are not convinced that peace is happiness.

If we contemplate, we can see that the Buddha pointed to peace, rather than love or compassion, because if the mind is not at peace, then those qualities cannot bring us true happiness. If the mind is clinging, chasing, fighting and biased, then love and compassion will lead only to suffering.

Why, if love is such a happy state, does so much pain arise from it? Could it be because that kind of love is not the love of a peaceful mind? The Buddha pointed to the peaceful mind because, if one achieves it, the rest comes automatically, spontaneously and naturally. Love and compassion are natural expressions of the peaceful mind; they are pure and result in no suffering.

When we are not peaceful we see the mind moving, chasing something, because we need to be reassured and loved. We need to have and achieve and be successful. We need praise and recognition. We need all of this because we feel insecure. When we are not peaceful, the mind is generally fighting. It fights that which threatens our self, our self-esteem, our pride or our ego. And what’s the response? The need to conquer, to defeat, to annihilate. This is not a peaceful existence. When we live this way we are living in hell — in a constant war zone.

One of the realms of existence in Buddhist cosmology is that of the Hungry Ghosts, the Petas. Symbolically they are represented as gigantic, bloated bodies with very small mouths. They can never get enough of any food or liquid to feed themselves and are always hungry, always thirsty. We may not look like them, but quite often — to a lesser degree — we live that way. In another realm are the Green Giants which, unsurprisingly, are green and giant-size. They have fangs and big eyes, like Titans - big, ugly, monstrous, warrior types of beings.
Hungry Ghosts and Green Giants symbolise the two realms of desire and aversion, those movements of the mind that fight, chase, want and need. Of course you have to eat, you need clothing, medicine and shelter, but a lot of our chasing is not for these basic needs, but from an emotional need; from a lack of peace. We chase things for reassurance. People find reassurance in many different areas — food, for example. Eating sweets is emotionally reassuring. It appeases our insecurity. We seek after praise, too. Why? Again, reassurance. To be attractive is reassuring because I am then worth something. I need this reassurance continuously because I am a separate entity — a little me who feels vulnerable. This process drives the movement of the mind. You must contemplate for yourself just how much of the lust for power, gratification, praise and position comes from this process. Each person must discover the answer alone.

This process sets up an opposite one. With the movement to chase and seek because of inner insecurity, there also comes, automatically, the fighting tendency. Anything that threatens me, or tends to increase my insecurity, is my enemy. If someone challenges you, what is your response? If they say "I don’t agree with that... I think that is wrong... I don’t think that’s a good way to do it..." — what happens in that moment? The mind goes into an alert, defensive posture. What are we defending — the view? Most of us don’t really care so much about the view. What we are really defending is the self — myself, and the more insecure we are, the more strongly we react to any challenge. That is why people who are very aggressive are quite often the most insecure, because they are the ones who feel the greatest threat from any challenge.

That’s the Titan, the green colour, with the fangs and bloated eyes. Notice how that image makes us very aware of how we feel when challenged. We start to get very hot, our eyes begin to bulge and we grit our teeth, ready for a fight. This is suffering — it is not peaceful. Whether we win or lose, it’s suffering. This is why the Buddha said "The victor only gains enmity, the longer he dwells in his hatred. Happy live the peaceful, for they have given up victory and defeat".

To get an idea of this peacefulness, we practise meditation. We begin to see that the peaceful mind is actually a very, very happy mind. The mind that is not
chasing or fighting is self-sufficient and free from fear. It is both peaceful and happy. This does not mean that it is passive or dull, only that it is no longer under a state of siege. Now there can be real love and compassion — the natural expression of the mind when there is no self to get in the way.

Now one begins to think that peace is a desirable thing, a worthwhile goal to strive for. It seems so far away — how do we get there? Life seems so complex, it seems to demand that we chase and fight. Is the attainment of peace really possible for a human being, or is it just a fantasy that will remain forever unrealised?

Well, why not try it and see what happens? How much peace can you bring into your life? Whatever extra peace one can bring in must be worthwhile. You can see the peacefulness of the mind right now, when you stop chasing and fighting. You are not dead — just peaceful. And if you can do it for this moment, you can do it for every moment.

We have to develop this practice of remembering to be peaceful in the moment, by remembering that being peaceful simply means not chasing, not fighting; being aware in this moment, so that our natural wisdom can operate. Then our natural wisdom, our natural love, our natural compassion, can all arise spontaneously. It is greed for self that makes us go around chasing and fighting; that makes us into Hungry Ghosts and Titans; that makes us unpeaceful.

It's enough that conditions can make you uncomfortable, why allow them to make you miserable?

Try to remember, do it now and do it every moment. This is the goal, the purpose of the spiritual life - to be peaceful. It's enough that conditions can make you uncomfortable, why allow them to make you miserable? Why should you allow so many things to have power over your heart?
How many things cause the mind to race out and become this craving and wanting Hungry Ghost? What trivial, useless things? And why should some other trivial thing cause you to become a Titan, this aggressive person caught in a battle to prove that you are right and you are better? And when you win, what do you win? The enmity of the other. And what do you feel when you win? Quite often you feel sorry that you were so harsh, so cruel, that you beat somebody. It is not a very joyful or happy feeling, especially if you beat somebody you care for — and they are so often the people with whom we have most of our arguments. The person who has been defeated feels hurt and resentful. Is all that worthwhile? Why do we allow that to happen when we could live so much more peacefully? It is because we forget to be peaceful. It is because we forget to be awake. It is because the mind clings; the mind gets lost chasing and fighting because of its insecurity.

We need to understand this whole process by observing ourselves. It’s not just a matter of wanting to be happy or wanting to be peaceful. We have got to see why we are not happy, why we are not peaceful. The more we see it, of course, the more we can solve the problem. And solving the problem doesn’t necessarily mean going anywhere or doing anything very special, other than remembering to be peaceful.

This is why the practice of meditation is so important. It is a training of the mind to be awake, to see clearly, and to have the wisdom that enables us to be peaceful. Every meditation is a training. You sit there, you have pain in your legs, is that peaceful? Is that suffering? Normally, if there is pain in the legs, we try to get away from it — we either move or do something, because it is annoying. But in meditation, we don’t do that immediately. If one is able to remember, to abide in mindfulness, then it’s just pain in the legs. We experiment with developing peace by not chasing and

We have got to see why we are not happy, why we are not peaceful.
not fighting for a pleasant, comfortable posture. Can the mind be peaceful while the pain is still there? Experiment. Just stop and be awake, and don’t chase or fight, or dwell on aversion. Then the mind remains peaceful. Extend this to more and more opportunities that arise during the day.

In Thailand, if they really want to insult somebody, they call him a dog. Ajahn Chah used to say “If somebody calls you a dog, you just look around and see if you have a tail. If you have got a tail, then you know they are right. If you can’t see a tail, then don’t worry about it. You are not a dog, so what’s the problem?” Normally, if somebody insults us, we have to fight to reassert ourselves. We dwell on the aversion and spend a lot of time building anger, preparing for war. You have got to get all your ammunition ready if you are going to war. We start thinking negative, aggressive thoughts and shoot our mouths off with aggressive, hurtful words. And this is not at all peaceful - nothing is achieved, no peace. Dwelling on anger not only creates more anger within yourself, but in the other person as well.

Stop the mind from dwelling on anger and negative thoughts. Allow the mind to be peaceful and not to fight. From a peaceful mind there may be something to say — but not in anger or hatred.

There are many opportunities to be peaceful in our lives. It is only required of us that we remember to be peaceful. It’s not a secret, it’s just this much: remembering, and being awake enough, to be peaceful; not allowing the things around us to have power over our hearts. If the mind abides in this peacefulness, it will begin to experience the happiness resulting from being free; the happiness that has no blemish because it has no fear.

I would like to encourage all of you to try to begin each day by making the mind peaceful. The meditation exercise that we do is just a skilful means for getting to know the peaceful mind. The peaceful mind is sensitive to the moment. Get a feel for that in the morning, say, when you practise meditation. Get a feel for the mind that is quiet, that is not chasing, is not fighting, is not anxious, is not frightened. Get a feel for the mind that is just peaceful, awake and sensitive.

Try to maintain that awareness during the day. Of course, you will forget, but
try to remember again, and centre yourself in this peacefulness. Don’t worry that you won’t be able to deal with life, that you won’t be able to do the things that you have to do. You will do everything, and you will do it better. The more we do this practice, the more skilled we become; the more peaceful and happy our lives become. The happier our lives become, the more peaceful and happy become the lives of everyone around us. Have you noticed how people respond to you when you feel peaceful and happy? But if you feel happy in an unpeaceful way, how do people respond to you then? Just notice it. Sometimes, people who are very happy but are not peaceful are very irritating. And, if they are miserable and not happy, then they are even more irritating. But, if they are peaceful and happy, other people have quite a good response. They are positively affected because a peaceful and happy person is also a very sensitive, balanced person. The excited, exuberant, over-active, happy-go-lucky, party behaviour which we commonly associate with happiness, quite often comes from insecurity. It is a movement of the mind that attempts to reassure oneself that one is a particular type of person, and it comes from insecurity, not peace. That is why it irritates so many people.

When we are peaceful and happy we can live our lives fruitfully. Don’t think you won’t be able to do anything. You can do everything quite well, everything that is worthwhile doing, anyway. Maybe you won’t be able to get into those heated arguments and fighting confrontations, but do you really need that? When we are peaceful, we are happy, and when we are happy and peaceful, the people around us will benefit from our happiness and peacefulness.

So try to establish this state of peace from the very beginning of your day. Try to sustain it throughout the day. Try to end the day in this way. And, every day, take one more step, and cultivate this path — the path to peace and happiness. Don’t be disappointed by failure. Don’t be disappointed by forgetfulness. Just remember, and start again.

I offer these reflections and contemplations for you this evening, just as a suggestion, so that you may consider it and do as you think fit.

from a talk given by Ajahn Jagaro
A NUN’S MONASTERY IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA?

A notable weakness of Theravada Buddhism is the near invisibility of the female counterpart of the monk. Where are the nuns? Moreover, several women from Perth who have wanted to try Theravada monastic life have had to do so overseas. Perhaps it is now the moment to start discussing a nun’s monastery in Western Australia.

Traditionally, there have been both male and female monastics in Theravada. An indication of the original content of the Sangha may be seen in the list of contributors to the Tipitaka texts — the Teragatha and Therigatha. These books of poems by enlightened monks and nuns in the time of the Buddha have contributions from 264 monks and 101 nuns. The traditional form for the female Buddhist monastic was the bhikkhuni. The bhikkhunis in Theravada died out many centuries ago and it is a moot point whether the original bhikkhuni ordination can be legitimately revived today. Also, the severe restrictions imposed by the bhikkhuni Vinaya (their monastic rule) make it debatable whether women even want to revive the bhikkhuni ordination and thus have to live under a set of rules they find too impractical to keep. But this is for women to decide. An alternative form to the bhikkhuni ordination that has been developing in many countries is the ‘10-Precept nun’ (Dasa-sila-mata/Dasa-sila-dhara). Through observing celibacy (the 3rd of the ten precepts) and not receiving money or things used as money (the 10th of the ten precepts) the 10-Precept nun keeps the two essential rules basic to the Buddhist monastic life of renunciation. Many 10-Precept nuns diligently observe many other rules beyond these ten, thus giving them a complete monastic rule similar to that of the monk. How the final form will evolve will be seen in due course and perhaps it might be seen here in Western Australia!

As Bodhinyana Monastery becomes a strong and stable community and as Dhammadhaka Buddhist Centre becomes well established, the praiseworthy motive to be of ever greater service to others is now leading some of Perth’s Buddhists to reach further for the next goal — a Theravada nun’s monastery in W.A. Such a vision seems way out of reach - the Buddhist Society still has to repay a debt of around
$90,000 still owing for the new Hall at Dhammadoka — but perhaps now is the time to ‘start ploughing the field to prepare for the seed’.

You may ask why female monastics can’t share the property at Bodhinyana Monastery in Serpentine? We have tried this in the past and it didn’t work out. Visitors who were told that there were celibate monks and celibate nuns living on the same premises raised their eyebrows in surprise. Is this one reason why monks and nuns of our tradition shave off their eyebrows? Moreover, my own experience seems to tell me that nuns staying in the same monastery as monks have tended to live in the shadow of those monks. In the time of the Buddha the monks and the nuns were in separate monasteries, independent as far as administration, but working as a team to spread the Dhamma. Such was the ideal then and such is our vision now — an independent nun’s monastery working as an essential complement to the monastery of the monks for the practice and teaching of Theravada Buddhism.

But why in Western Australia? There are many advantages for a pioneering nun’s monastery here in W.A. Bodhinyana Monastery has provided an example of how such a monastery may be arranged to give adequate seclusion, yet be accessible for sincere visitors. Moreover the burden of a senior nun teaching is lessened by having senior monks who can share the teaching burden in our centre in Nollamara. In short, a Buddhist nun’s monastery in quiet bushland near to Perth would be attractive to women monastics who have a leaning to long periods of secluded meditation practice.

The easiest part, of course, is writing this, but at least it’s a start. Some suggest that we should wait until a senior Theravada nun is ready to come here, but then such a nun might not be attracted here unless there is a suitable place for her to come to. I often reflect that our first Buddhist Centre in Magnolia Street, North Perth, was purchased first, many years before Ajahn Jagaro came to stay. Perhaps, then, this is the way to go? Perhaps it is not? What do you think...?
A TRIBUTE TO AJAHN JAGARO

Ajahn Jagaro

Fourteen years ago a representation from The Buddhist Society of Western Australia visited the meditation master Ajahn Chah in Thailand with a request.

Until that time Society members had been gathering in members' homes to honour and pay devotion to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

The request made of Ajahn Chah would change all of that, to a degree that none of us, even in our wildest dreams, would have expected.

A senior western monk, Ajahn Jagaro, agreed to come to Perth with the intention of establishing a monastery and coordinating the Buddhist Society.
The Laity’s commitment was to support him — and a future Sangha — in the traditional monastic practice.

There was no understanding when the Ajahn offered his services that we had by sheer chance encountered a man whose attributes and qualities would be perfect for the task ahead.

The monk who accompanied Ajahn soon returned to Thailand and another came out to help. This monk was Ajahn Brahmavamso. Ajahn Jagaro and Ajahn Brahm complemented one another perfectly. Both worked tirelessly over the years to establish the physical representation of the Society, the monastery buildings and other structures at Serpentine. Much of the labour was undertaken by them apart from the tradesmen who were employed. The Ajahns spent the weekdays working at Serpentine on the construction of the buildings. Conditions weren’t comfortable but the Ajahns were hardy and appreciative lay people were diligent in being of service in whatever way they could to lighten their load.

Simultaneously the spiritual needs of the lay people needed to be catered for, and for some time the two Ajahns tackled all of this together.

The presence of monks attracted the organised ethnic lay communities, which helped the Society to gain official recognition from significant government departments. Ajahn Jagaro easily gained their trust and the Society took on a truly multi-cultural identity. This strengthened it both spiritually and politically.

Ajahn Jagaro’s skillful administrative ability and determination were always the force behind the achievement of many milestones over the years. Having had an academic background in lay life, he knew the value of steady perseverance. It was the Ajahn’s personal effectiveness which attracted to him people of ability who were subsequently members of the committee over the years.

The success of the Society in W.A. has been more marked than any other in Australia, and has provided a destination for many monks and nuns of high standing from all over the world.

More than any other factor it was Ajahn Jagaro who led the Society to this
status. The Ajahns alternately spent weekends at the small house in Magnolia Street, North Perth, whose mortgage Society members had undertaken — the first major financial commitment for the Society.

For six years Dhamma talks and Society business took place there, but the tiny house couldn’t contain the ever-expanding audience — intent on hearing the Dhamma, so well expounded by these monks of the forest tradition. Regularly, lay people would fill the room, spilling out into the hallway and onto the porch.

The overcrowding, and other factors, highlighted the necessity of purchasing a larger complex, and members kept a close eye upon the city’s real estate situation. In 1987 an Anglican church and rectory were purchased in Nollamara.

The rectory provided privacy and living space for the Sangha members, and the hall was allocated to all other Society functions.

Permission was given by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs to make resources at the Vihara available for the employment of a Grant In Aid worker. This office is now job-shared by trained social workers who are skilled in aiding ethnic Buddhists to assimilate into the wider community.

Concurrently, major work projects were being undertaken at Bodhinyana Monastery. A large meditation hall was constructed, its form and function alleviating the spartan image presented by the previous building projects.

Many monks and nuns came to Bodhinyana, staying for various lengths of time and contributing to the ongoing development of the monastery, such as roads — to replace gravel tracks — car parks, dams to supply water, a library and much more.

Of ongoing benefit to the Society is the opportunity it affords for its members to take retreat at Bodhinyana, taking advantage of quiet surroundings which are ideal for practise.

Back in the city the shrine room (once expected to permanently solve the problem of overcrowding) was no longer equal to the task. It’s multi-functional role
— serving, for example, as a place of devotion, a food hall for fund raising, the committee meeting venue, a yoga studio and more besides — was less than satisfactory.

With the aid of generous benefactors, a large meditation hall was built next door to the vihara, with an adjacent car park.

Throughout all this, the Sangha has provided spiritual guidance in the way of meditation and Dhamma talks not only within the Society, but at prisons, schools and universities and groups in country towns as far afield as Albany and the northwest.

The monks have officiated at funerals, attended weddings, and have given guidance to disparate Buddhist societies in other capital cities.

What started out as a tribute to Ajahn Jagaro has, it seems, become more of a potted history of the Society to date. Essentially though, the story of the Society is synonymous with Ajahn Jagaro himself. He was instrumental in every major development of the Society, from its comprehensive constitution to its current high standing among Australia's religious fraternities.

Because of Ajahn Jagaro, Bodhinyana is presently the only place in Australia where a man may take full ordination as a monk in our Buddhist tradition. In 1988 he was honoured by the people of Thailand with the presentation of the Silver Conch, for meritorious service to Buddhism. This award had never before been presented to a foreigner.

In a world of sham and lost ideals we are surrounded by leaders who continually dishonour themselves and fail to reach their high expectations, especially in those institutions in which honesty is the highest principle. For the ordinary citizen, daily news — both local and international — brings much disillusionment. It has been uplifting to our society members, and to Buddhists all over Australia, to witness the example set by Ajahn Jagaro and Ajahn Brahm. They both sacrificed much in terms of the personal development of their own practice in their efforts to consolidate the Society. Ajahn Jagaro committed himself for thirteen years to the
secure establishment of the Buddhist Society of Western Australia. Only when he was convinced that both the monastery and the Society had a sure future did he pass the reins to Ajahn Brahm, who had committed himself equally to the task over as many years.

After Ajahn Jagaro formally relinquished his position as abbot, the Buddhist Society of Western Australia pledged, at a committee meeting, the continued support of his needs as a monk – regardless of where in the world he might reside – for the rest of his life.

Ajahn Jagaro’s decision to leave was based on his belief that due to a debilitating illness, he would no longer be able to adequately fulfill the functions of abbot and spiritual director of the society. Prior to leaving Perth in late April 1995, to be near his family in Melbourne, many people took the opportunity of expressing to him their abiding gratitude for his teachings, achievements and wise counsel, wishing him well for the future.

A Buddhist monk excels neither for profit nor for glory. Ajahn Jagaro’s achievements came about through his unswerving faith in the Buddha’s teachings, coupled with the will and discipline to live by them. He leaves us with very much more than bricks and mortar.
Oh dear, I’m in big trouble now! Ajahn Jagaro came back in March and then went away again in April, leaving Perth for greener pastures since he left when the landscape here was brown and parched. His reasons for retiring as abbot were those related to his health and a wish to be free from the burdens of responsibility which he has carried so magnificently for many long years. Some of the Thai Buddhists here were informed that Ajahn Jagaro had left using the Thai phrase Py my glup, literally meaning ‘gone — not coming back’, but which is also a way of saying that he has died! And that was the way some understood it!

My word, if people weren’t upset enough already that really turned on the taps. Fortunately, Ajahn Jagaro assured me over the phone from Melbourne that he is not dead and so I have no reason to disbelieve him. Indeed, the Sangha here wishes him well, especially well if it could be a ‘well-come’ whenever or however he might visit Perth again. We will miss him. With Ajahn Jagaro definitely gone indefinitely, I am left as if holding the baby and, to continue the metaphor, looking intently for a day-care centre! I am still trying to work out how I let this happen to me.

In times such as this my motto is ‘When there is nothing one can do about it, then do nothing’. Such common-sense teachings may be a reason why Buddhist is growing so strongly all over the world. I was told by our President that her son wasn’t interested in ‘organized religion’. “Great”, I said to her, “then Buddhism is just the thing for your son”. Anyone who has experienced the delightful chaos of one of our Buddhist celebrations, who has seen at first hand how we get by, would realize that our type of Buddhism is the last thing one would call “organized”... so if you know anyone who prefers “dis-organized religion” then this is the place for them!

Mind you, it appears, but only superficially, that we do organize some things now and again such as the upper storey of the monastery dining room which is now taking shape. It should be complete by the start of the Rains Retreat but, if you do not believe me, well, it is a tall storey after all! Whenever it is finished, I’m sure you’ll agree that it will be the most lofty attainment yet in our monastery. The monks will
"Going up"

be going up in the world, so to speak, and taking their meal closer to heaven, while the old dining room will be made available for our visitors to dine in monastic comfort — that means on the floor again, of course, but sheltered inside from the bugs and the elements.

Our visitors will also be sheltered from one kleptomaniac kookaburra who has been hanging about outside the kitchen area up to no good! One day, the hard working bricklayer paused for his lunch and, holding his plate of food in his hands, saw his sausage vanish in a flurry of feathers. The brazen bird had made off with the
poor man's dinner. (Before swallowing the stolen sausage high in a tree, the kookaburra whacked the sausage hard several times against the branch, probably to make sure that the sausage was dead!) An anagarika taking his lunch outside lost a croissant and a four-year-old visitor also lost part of her meal, all in one fell swoop of the feathered felon of Bodhinyana Monastery. So beware, all ye who visit here, crime is literally soaring (!) even out here in Serpentine.

But the biggest crime, in my opinion, is the loss of good monks and wonderful friends. Ajahn Jagaro will spend the Rains Retreat somewhere in Melbourne, while Ven. Sumangalo and Ven. Boonmee will spend the Rains Retreat together in Wat Buddha Dhamma, north of Sydney. Meanwhile Ajahn Norm is still smiling at Ajahn Gunhah's monastery in North Thailand. I had been secretly thinking about a sabbatical myself once Ajahn Jagaro was back here but, as it turned out, the only 'sabbatical' I ended up getting was a three-day stint in the north-west mining town of Port Hedland. That'll teach me to secretly make plans! Actually I had a very pleasant time burning heaps and heaps of incense while visiting the several hundred Chinese-Vietnamese Buddhists in the Immigration Detention Centre and holding a delightful Vesak ceremony for the Buddhists in town. We are, after all, the Buddhist Society of Western Australia so perhaps we should visit more often the isolated Buddhist communities in this fine State.

It is also a fine state, of affairs I mean, that so many great monks came to visit our monastery in recent months. The learned Sri Lankan monk, Ven. Dhammavihari, spent a week with us in early April, followed by the impressive Thai monk and meditation master Ajahn Tui. This was Ajahn Tui's second visit here and, considering that most things are done in threes in the Buddhist tradition, we eagerly await his next visit here. We were then honoured to host a visit by the newly appointed abbot of our sister monastery in Wellington N.Z., Ajahn Vajiro. Ajahn Vajiro is one of my 'venerable mates' of yore, having spent several years together feeding the mosquitoes in N.E. Thailand. As we are both new abbots it was good to meet together and discuss abbot-talk. Many monk day visitors also dropped by to see our monastery; first came visiting Cambodian monks, then some Vietnamese monks, accompanied by a Sri Lankan monk, carrying the relics of the Lord Buddha, after came a delegation of
Mahayana monks from Hong Kong and Beijing, then an American monk resident in Thailand, and last but not least some senior Burmese monks visiting from Myanmar. They all gave me their address-cards and asked me to visit but, alas, I have been told that I've used up all my long service leave visiting Port Hedland in May!

With so many monks visiting here, it was such a pleasant change to welcome instead a visiting nun. Sister Jitindriya, an Australian born nun based in Amaravati, U.K., took a fortnight off from caring for her ailing parents in Sydney to visit us here in W.A. While in Perth, Sister Jitindriya gave some informal talks which were very well received. It was good for all to see a real Buddhist nun of our tradition, for it demonstrates the possibility of Buddhist monastic life for women.

But if I go into all that, I'll only get in more trouble, and I'm in plenty already being abbot of this joint. And 'joint' isn't such a bad word for it expresses 'coming together'. Indeed, with such excellent monks to help me, plus the devoted support of our hard-working lay community and the marvellous teachings of the Lord Buddha, what can go wrong? No doubt I'll find out in the upcoming years!

*Not really w-u-w-worried,*

*Ajahn Brahm*
A very successful Sri Lankan vegetarian dinner was held at the Centre recently to raise funds. The food was magnificent (and plentiful!) and our thanks are given to all who helped in the preparation of food and in organising this event. Thanks also to all who attended for your support.

Vesakha Day saw a large number of people coming to Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre for the celebrations. Many people took the Eight Precepts for the day, and many others joined in the meditations and talks. The evening ceremony included a circumambulation of a shrine constructed in the park opposite the centre. It too was well attended, and colourful paper lanterns — made by members of the Sri Lankan community — provided a very beautiful backdrop to the event.

*Vesakha Day illumination*

The Thai Ambassador to Australia visited our Centre recently, providing an opportunity for members of the Thai community to discuss important issues, as well as enjoying a meal and being entertained by skilled Thai musicians.

It is pleasing to see that the Introduction to Meditation classes — which have been held every month since November — are still attracting new people. The interest shown by the general Australian community in meditation was very obvious
when we advertised the classes for the month of May and more than 200 people turned up for the four weekly sessions!

With the Rains Retreat about to begin we have been preparing a program for Friday nights. Ajahn Brahm has very generously offered to have a member of the Sangha attend the Centre during July, and from the first Friday in October. During August and September we will have some visiting speakers as well as listening to some recorded Dhamma talks which have not previously been heard at Dhammaloka. The timetable for Friday nights will remain unchanged, and a copy of the program has been inserted in this Newsletter for your information. The meditation session on Saturday afternoons will continue, being led by a layperson each week. The Saturday Introduction to Meditation classes will also continue on the first four Saturdays of each month.

We take this opportunity to wish members of the Sangha everywhere a happy and rewarding retreat.

*With metta,* The Committee

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**OBITUARY**

Hans Zeck died in Osborne Park Hospital on 22nd April, 1995. Hans had been a member of the Buddhist Society of WA since 1984, and a quiet supporter and worker of the Society since joining.

Hans was one of the ‘unsung heroes’ of the Society, working quietly behind the scenes to contribute to the cleaning and maintenance of Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre for many years. He enjoyed visiting the Monastery and every year he shared Christmas Day with members of the Sangha and other laypeople at Bodhinyana. He was well respected by those who knew him for his peaceful demeanour, quiet manner and ready smile.

We wish him a very happy rebirth and thank him for his contribution to the Society.
ESSENTIAL LISTENING...

A set of ten talks given by Ajahn Jagaro and Ajahn Brahmavamso, entitled *The Essentials of Buddhism*, is now available on cassette.

These talks explain the fundamental aspects of Buddhism, for a clear and comprehensive understanding of the Buddha’s teachings.

Priced at $25, the collection can be ordered from our library bookshop.

YOGA IMPERMANENCE
(or Farewell Margaret... Welcome Karen)

The sudden announcement by yoga teacher Margaret Willcocks — that she would no longer be taking the Thursday class - hit like a thunderbolt. None of those present had expected — let alone imagined — that ‘our Margaret’ would no longer take us gently through those exercises and difficult movements, nor guide us peacefully through the relaxation and meditative sessions. The group had, in fact, come to think of Margaret as being there forever. Alas, as we all know, nothing in life is ever permanent.

So Margaret moves on, but she will be remembered and appreciated for her sunny nature, her caring and, in particular, her capacity to make you feel good — both physically and emotionally.

Now the group has Karen McPherson, a devotee and student of yoga for many years, who is feeling her way into the Thursday sessions with commitment, humour and warmth.

So, a fond farewell to Margaret, and a hearty welcome to Karen.

*If anyone would like further information on yoga, contact Karen on 387 4706.*
# Rains Retreat Activities

**Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre Nollamara**

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<tr>
<th><strong>Friday</strong></th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.00 - 7.20pm</td>
<td>Chanting</td>
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<td>7.30 - 8.00pm</td>
<td>Guided sitting meditation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8.00 - 9.00pm</td>
<td>A talk on Buddhism</td>
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<th><strong>Saturday</strong></th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.00 - 4.00pm</td>
<td>Instruction, meditation and discussion.</td>
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<td>Separate classes for new and experienced</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>meditation</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Sunday</strong></th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<td></td>
<td>8.30 - 9.15am</td>
<td>Sitting meditation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9.15 - 9.45am</td>
<td>Walking meditation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.45 - 10.30am</td>
<td>Sitting meditation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>12.00 - 1.30pm</td>
<td>Dhamma school for children is on the</td>
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<td>2nd and 4th Sundays of each month</td>
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<th><strong>Wednesday</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.30 - 8.30pm</td>
<td>Unguided meditation</td>
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<th><strong>Thursday</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.30 - 11.00am</td>
<td>Yoga, relaxation &amp; meditation</td>
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<td>(beginners welcome)</td>
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## South of the River

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<tr>
<th><strong>Tuesday</strong></th>
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<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.00 - 9.00pm</td>
<td>Meditation Instruction</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Meditation and Dhamma talk</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Armadale-Kelmscott Hospital</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Enquiries to Dave Reed, 399 1411</td>
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## Addresses

The Buddhist Society of WA (Inc)
Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre
18 - 20 Nanson Way
Nollamara WA 6061
Tel: 349 1711

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

Buddhist Community Services
Social Worker
Tel: 344 4220