THE BUDDHIST SOCIETY OF W.A.

NEWSLETTER
April - July 2541 (1998)
VESAKHA DAY

SUNDAY 10TH MAY, 1998

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 Buddha, who through his own efforts, was able to reach the pinnacle of perfection and wisdom. This gives us all much encouragement and inspiration in that, if we make the necessary effort, we too can attain the same enlightenment.

The unique and profound knowledge which arose in the Buddha on the night of his enlightenment is of great significance to human destiny as it provides a way by which all could cross to a world free of superstition, hatred and unhappiness to one of true love and happiness.

The Vesakha Day celebrations will be held at Dhammaloka Buddhist centre on Sunday 10th May and all are invited to attend.

Programme for the Day

9:00am  Gathering at Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre
9:30am  Group chanting, taking of the Three Refuges and the Five or Eight Precepts, auspicious chanting and a Dhamma Talk
10:30am Offering of food to the monks and sharing of a meal together
2:00pm  Taking of the Three Refuges and Five Precepts for new Buddhists, meditation and discussion for others
4:00 - 6:00pm Tea and biscuits Meditation and Discussion
6:00 - 6:30pm Traditional Sri Lankan Buddhist devotional songs
6:30 - 8:00pm Evening Ceremony including chanting, Dhamma talk and circumambulation of the shrine
Meditation is the way to achieve letting go. In meditation one lets go of the complex world outside in order to reach the serene world inside. In all types of mysticism and in many traditions, this is known as the path to the pure and powerful mind. The experience of this pure mind, released from the world, is very wonderful and blissful.

During this meditation retreat there will be some hard work at the beginning, but be willing to bear that hard work knowing that it will lead you to experience some very beautiful and meaningful states. They will be well worth the effort! It is a law of nature that without effort one does not make progress. Whether one is a layperson or a monk, without effort one gets nowhere, in meditation or in anything.

Effort alone, though, is not sufficient. The effort needs to be skilful. This means directing your energy just at the right places and sustaining it there until its task is completed. Skilful efforts neither hinders nor disturbs you, instead it produces the beautiful peace of deep meditation.

In order to know where your effort should be directed, you must have a clear understanding of the goal of meditation. The goal of this meditation is the beautiful silence, stillness and clarity of mind. If you can understand that goal then the place to apply your effort, the means to achieve the goal, becomes very clear.

The effort is directed to letting go, to developing a mind which inclines to abandoning. One of the many simple but profound statements of the Lord Buddha is that “a meditator whose mind inclines to abandoning, easily achieves Samadhi (the goal of meditation)”. Such a meditator gains these states of inner bliss almost automatically. What the Lord Buddha was saying was that the major cause for attaining deep meditation, for reaching these powerful states is the willingness to abandon, to let go and to renounce.
During this meditation retreat, we are not going to develop a mind which accumulates and holds on to things, but instead we develop a mind which is willing to let go of things, to let go of burdens. Outside of meditation we have to carry the burden of our many duties, like so many heavy suitcases, but within the period of meditation so much baggage is unnecessary. So, in meditation see if you can unload as much baggage as you can. Think of these things as burdens, heavy weights pressing upon you. Then you have the right attitude for letting go of these things, abandoning them freely without looking back. This effort, this attitude, this movement of mind that inclines to giving up, is what will lead you into deep meditation.

"A mediator whose mind inclines to abandoning, easily achieves Samadhi"

Even during the beginning stages of this meditation retreat, see if you can generate the energy of renunciation, the willingness to give things away, and little by little the letting go will occur. As you give things away in you mind you will feel much lighter, unburdened and free. In the way of meditation, this abandoning of things occurs in stages, step by step.

You may go through the initial stages quickly if you wish, but be very careful if you do so. Sometimes when you pass through the initial steps too quickly, you find that preparatory work has not been completed. It is like trying to build a town house on a very weak and rushed foundation. The structure goes up very quickly, but it comes down very quickly as well! So you are wise to spend a lot of time on the foundations, and on the “first storeys” as well, making the groundwork well done, strong and firm. Then when you proceed to the higher storeys, the bliss states of meditation, they too are stable and firm.

In the way that I teach meditation, I like to begin at the very simple stage of giving up the baggage of past and future. Sometimes you may think that this is such an easy thing to do, that it is too basic. However, if you
give it your full effort, not running ahead to the higher stages of meditation until you have properly reached the first goal of sustained attention on the present moment, then you will find later on that you have established a very strong foundation on which to build the higher stages.

Abandoning the past means not even thinking about your work, your family, your commitments, your responsibilities, your history, the good or bad times you had as a child ... you abandon all past experiences by showing no interest in them at all. You become someone who has no history during the time that you meditate. You do not even think about where you are from, where you were born, who your parents were or what your upbringing was like. All of that history is renounced in meditation. In this way, everyone here on the retreat becomes equal, just a meditator. It becomes unimportant how many years you have been meditating, whether you are an old hand or a beginner. If you abandon all that history then we are all equal and free. We are freeing ourselves of some of these concerns, perceptions and thoughts which limit us and which stop us from developing the peace born of letting go. So every part of your history you finally let go of, even the history of what has happened to you so far in this retreat, even the memory of what happened to you just a moment ago! In this way, you carry no burden from the past into the present. Whatever has just happened, you are no longer interested in it and you let it go. You do not allow the past to reverberate in your mind.

I describe this as developing your mind like a padded cell! When any experience, perception or thought hits the wall of the ‘padded cell’, it does not bounce back again. It just sinks into the padding and stops right there. Thus we do not allow the past to echo in our consciousness, certainly not the past of yesterday and all that time before, because we are developing the mind inclined to letting go, giving away and unburdening.

Some people have the view that if they take up the past for contemplation they can somehow learn from it and solve the problems of the past. However, you should understand that when you gaze at the past, you invariably look through distorted lenses. Whatever you think it was like, in truth it was not quite like that! This is why people have arguments about what actually happened, even a few moments ago. It is well
known to police who investigate traffic accidents that even though the accident may have happened only half an hour ago, two different eye witnesses, both completely honest, will give different accounts. Our memory is untrustworthy. If you consider just how unreliable memory is, then you do not put value on thinking over the past. Then you can let it go. You can bury it, just as you bury a person who has died. You place them in a coffin then bury it, or cremate it, and it is done with, finished. Do not linger on the past. Do not continue to carry the coffins of dead moments on your head! If you do then you are weighing yourself down with heavy burdens which do not really belong to you. Let all of the past go and you have the ability to be free in the present moment.

As for the future, the anticipations, fears, plans, and expectations - let all of that go too. The Lord Buddha once said about the future “whatever you think it will be, it will always be something different”! This future is known to the wise as uncertain, unknown and so unpredictable. It is often complete stupidity to anticipate the future, and always a great waste of your time to think of the future in meditation.

When you work with your mind, you find that the mind is so strange. It can do some wonderful and unexpected things. It is very common for meditators who are having a difficult time, who are not getting very peaceful, to sit there thinking “Here we go again, another hour of frustration”. Even though they begin thinking like that, anticipating failure, something strange happens and they get into a very peaceful meditation.

Recently I heard of one man on his first ten day retreat. After the first day his body was hurting so much he asked to go home. The teacher said “Stay one more day and the pain will disappear, I promise”. So he stayed another day, the pain got worse so he wanted to go home again. The teacher repeated “Just one more day, the pain will go”. He stayed for a third day and the pain was even worse. For each of nine days, in the evening he would go to the teacher and, in great pain, ask to go home and the teacher would say “Just one more day and the pain will disappear”. It went completely beyond his expectations that, on the final day, when he started the first sit of the morning, the pain did disappear! It did not come back. He could sit for long periods with no
pain at all! He was amazed at how wonderful is this mind and how it can produce such unexpected results. So, you don’t know about the future. It can be so strange, even weird, completely beyond whatever you expect. Experiences like this give you the wisdom and courage to abandon all thoughts about the future, and all expectation as well.

When you’re meditating and thinking “How many more minutes are there to go? How much longer have I to endure all of this?”, then that is just wandering off into the future again. The pain could just disappear in a moment. The next moment might be the free one. You just cannot anticipate what is going to happen.

When on retreat, you have been meditating for many sessions, you may sometimes think that none of those meditations have been any good. In the next meditation session you sit down and then everything becomes so peaceful and easy. You think “Wow! Now I can meditate!”, but the next meditation is awful again. What’s going on here?

"All of that history is renounced in meditation"

The first meditation teacher I had told me something which then sounded quite strange. He said that there is no such thing as a bad meditation! He was right. All those meditations which you called bad, frustrating and not meeting your expectations, all those meditations are where you do the hard work for your ‘pay cheque’....

It is like a person who goes to work all day Monday and gets no money at the end of the day. “What am I doing this for?”, he thinks. He works all day Tuesday and still gets nothing. Another bad day. All day Wednesday, all day Thursday, and still nothing to show for all the hard work. That’s four bad days in a row. Then along comes Friday, he does exactly the same work as before and at the end of the day the boss gives him a pay cheque. “Wow! Why can’t every day be a pay day?!"

Why can’t every meditation be ‘pay-day’? Now, do you understand the simile? It is in the difficult meditations that you build up your credit, you
build up the causes for success. Working for peace in the hard meditations, you build up your strength, the momentum for peace. Then when there’s enough credit of good qualities, the mind goes into a good meditation and it feels like ‘pay-day’. It is in the bad meditations that you do the work.

In a recent retreat that I gave in Sydney, during interview time, a lady told me that she had been angry with me all day, but for two different reasons. In her early meditations she was having a difficult time and was angry at me for not ringing the bell to end the meditation early enough. In the later meditations she got into a beautiful peaceful state and was angry at me for ringing the bell too soon. The sessions were all the same length, exactly one hour. You just can’t win as a teacher, ringing the bell!

This is what happens when you go anticipating the future, thinking “How many more minutes until the bell goes?”. That is where you torture yourself, where you pick up a heavy burden which is none of your business. So be very careful not to pick up the heavy suitcase of “How many more minutes are there to go?” or “What should I do next?”. If that is what you are thinking, then you are not paying attention to what is happening now. You are not doing the meditation. You have lost the plot and are asking for trouble.

In this stage of the meditation keep your attention right in the present moment, to the point where you don’t even know what day it is or what time it is - morning? afternoon? don’t know! All you know is what moment it is - right now! In this way you arrive at this beautiful monastic time scale where you are just meditating in the moment, not aware of how many minutes have gone or how many remain, not even remembering what day it is.

Once, as a young monk in Thailand, I had actually forgotten what year it was! It is marvellous living in that realm that is timeless, a realm so much more free than the time driven world we usually have to live in. In the timeless realm, you experience this moment, just as all wise beings have been experiencing this same moment for thousands of years. It has always been just like this, no different. You have come into the reality of now.
The reality of now is magnificent and awesome. When you have abandoned all past and all future, it is as if you have come alive. You are here, you are mindful. This is the first stage of the meditation, just this mindfulness sustained only in the present. Reaching here, you have done a great deal. You have let go of the first burden which stops deep meditation. So put forth a lot of effort to reach this first stage until it is strong, firm and well established. Next we will refine the present moment awareness into the next stage - silent awareness of the present moment.

(To be continued next issue)

Ajahn Brahm
THE ORDINATION CEREMONY OF A MONK

The ordination ceremony (UPASAMPADA) which makes a Theravada Buddhist monk is one of the ‘legal acts of the Sangha’ contained in the Buddhist Monastic Rule (VINAYA). The ceremony must be performed according to this Rule or else the ordination in invalid and the candidate not a monk. The strict requirement to follow the Rule has meant that the ceremony has remained unchanged since the time of the Lord Buddha. It is still conducted in Pali, the language of original Buddhism, to give the rite a solemn formality which reflects the importance of the occasion. However, as the ceremony is always public, with relatives and friends and other well-wishers in attendance, the Pali phrases are often translated and the ceremony explained.

According to the Rule, some may not become monks: one who has murdered an Arahant (Enlightened Being), one who has murdered his mother or father, one who has injured the Lord Buddha, one who has raped a Buddhist nun, one who has caused a schism in the Sangha, one who has pretended to be a monk without ordination, one who has left the Sangha and ordained in another religion, one who as a monk committed any of the four ‘disrobing offences’ (see below), one who is a Eunuch, Hermaphrodite or who is an animal ...

... Once a Naga, a powerful serpent who can take the form of a human being, was mistakenly ordained as a monk. Shortly after, when asleep in his hut, the naga returned to the shape of a huge snake. The monk who shared the hut was somewhat alarmed when he woke up to see a great snake sleeping next to him! The Lord Buddha summoned the naga and told him he may not remain as a monk, at which the utterly disconsolate snake began to weep. The snake was given the Five Precepts as the means to attaining a human existence in his next life when he can then be a monk. Then out of compassion for the sad snake, the Lord Buddha said that from then on all candidates for the monkhood be called ‘Naga’ as a consolation. They are still called ‘Naga’ to this day.

... all the above may not be monks and if ‘ordained’ mistakenly must be asked to leave.
The candidate must be 20 years of age or more, counting from when “consciousness first appeared in his mother’s womb”. Because of the obvious difficulty in knowing when this occurred, it is usual to insist on at least 20 years since birth. If, by mistake, he was ‘ordained’ under the age of 20, the candidate remains a ten precept novice and is not a monk.

There are others still who should not be ordained, although if they are ordained by mistake their ordination is valid. These include: one with infectious diseases, a slave, one escaped from jail, one known to be wanted by the police, one with unpaid debts, one in the ‘King’s Service’ (e.g. a soldier), one maimed, deformed, disabled or very old (meaning to the extent that it is impractical to perform the duties of monastic life). One also needs the permission of one’s parents.

The ceremony begins with the candidate’s sponsor, often his parents, presenting him with his monk’s robes and bowl. One may not be ordained without a set of robes and a bowl of one’s own. When the sponsors are his parents, he often takes the opportunity to show his gratitude to his parents by formally asking for their forgiveness for any wrong he has done to them over the years, intentional or unintentional, by body, speech or mind. Then with his parents’ blessing, the candidate approaches the waiting Sangha.

To perform the ordination ceremony, one needs a Sangha of at least five monks, one of whom must be a knowledgeable senior monk of at least ten years who will be the candidate’s Preceptor (UPAJJHAYA). The Preceptor will be responsible for that candidate throughout his monastic life and the candidate should, in turn, take care of his Preceptor as if he was his father. Thus the ceremony continues with the candidate choosing his Preceptor, and the Preceptor agreeing.

The candidate is then briefly instructed about the ceremony and given his new name, a monk’s name to always remind him of his new life’s purpose. He is sent to stand outside of the gathering of monks and then two senior monks are chosen to go out and question the candidate on his suitability to be a monk. They ask him if he has any infectious diseases, if he is a human being (to prevent nagas), a man, a freeman (to prevent someone on the run from the police), without debt, free from government
service, that he has his parent’s consent, he is over 20 years of age, that he 
has his bowl and robes, and that he has chosen a Preceptor. Having 
successfully examined the candidate, the senior monks return to the gathering 
of monks, inform the monks of the examination and then call the candidate 
back into the gathering. The candidate is asked the same questions again 
within the gathering just to make sure.

One cannot be forced to be a monk against one’s wishes and so, in the 
next part of the ceremony, the candidate makes a formal request to the 
Sangha to be ordained as a monk. Now the crucial part of the ceremony 
begins, wherein the whole Sangha formally agree to accept him as a monk. 
If this part of the ceremony is performed incorrectly, the ordination is invalid.

All the monks within the agreed monastic boundary (SIMA) must be present 
and sitting within arms length of each other. Then two senior monks make 
a formal announcement to the gathering that the candidate has requested 
ordination and has been found suitable to become a monk. They continue 
by proposing three times that he be admitted as a monk. Should any monk 
in the gathering object to the ordination during these three proposals then 
the ordination is stopped and the candidate fails to be a monk. If no monk 
objects, at the end of the third proposal the candidate becomes a monk.

The time has to be noted because the new monk’s seniority will be counted 
from that time. Another monk ordained even a few seconds before him 
will sit ahead on the line.

The Preceptor will then usually instruct the new monk on the four disrobing 
offences (sexual intercourse, stealing, murder and falsely claiming high 
attainments), and the four basic needs of a monk (food gained on alms 
round, robes made of rags, a shelter under a tree, and medicines made 
from urine), adding that anything more than this is to be regarded throughout 
his monk’s life as an unnecessary luxury! With this lesson in the four dangers 
to his monkhood and the encouragement in frugality, the ceremony comes 
to an end.

In spite of this instruction in monastic frugality, parents and well-wishers 
often continue by offering gifts to the new monk! Having received the gifts, 
however, he can later give them away if he wishes! After all, ordaining as 
a monk is all about letting go.

Ajahn Brahm
SANGHA NEWS

The Sangha News article, so many have told me, is way ahead of its time. By which they mean it should have been stopped a long time ago! However, it is my duty as a monk to teach about suffering and so I am only doing my job when I inflict on my readers these awful puns, ‘pun-ishment’ I call it!

In this edition’s article, though, I will be more high minded, far reaching and give a broader view of Sangha life. You see, I have recently returned from a pilgrimage to India, via Thailand. One becomes very high minded in an aircraft at 37,000 feet and travelling through India is far reaching enough for me. Then as for a broader view of Sangha life, well, this is a view of the Sangha abroad!

Twenty four lay Buddhist disciples, or four six-packs of Aussies if you prefer, plus Ven. Sukhito and I descended through the dust hovering over Calcutta on an Indian morning in early February. The terminal at Calcutta is called Dum Dum Airport, for it lies between the towns of Dum Dum and South Dum Dum. Fortunately, the air traffic controller was not a local Dum Dum man and our plane landed safely! After a pleasant few hours waiting in the Immigration Hall getting used to the cow-like pace of Indian bureaucracy and embracing the unforgettable ambience of our first Indian dunny, we successfully transferred to a domestic flight to the ancient Buddhist city of Pataliputta, now Patna. This was to be a journey back 2,500 years to the time of the Buddha and the aircraft waiting to take us to Patna looked like it came from about that time! It was an ancient craft, surely a borrowed exhibit from a neglected museum, an amazing antique full of character and rust. As I walked up the steps, a ground crew were desperately mending the punctured tyre on the landing gear and a suspiciously oily looking liquid was dripping in quantity from the belly of the fuselage, but we were assured it was not the aircraft’s fuel! Being good Buddhists on a journey of devotion, we started our prayers there and then! As a consequence of this and much previous good kamma we arrived safe and sound, some safe and sound asleep. A brass band was there at the hotel in Patna when we arrived, which I thought was a thoughtful gesture. But then
I found out it was waiting not for us but for a visiting Indian politician on an election rally tour. It was the first of many disappointments in inscrutable India. Indeed, the band did start playing, it that’s what you’d call the ear-hammering racket, right beneath my window just after I lay down to rest. With the incessant and piercing tones of out of tune saucepans being vigorously banged together, for that is what it sounded like, I closed my eyes to our first day in India.

The time in India was not all as bad as this. Sometimes it was worse! But there were also many highly inspiring hours, memories of which will remain with me all my life and which make any hardships well worth enduring. In fact, on the whole, the tour was very well organized, comfortable and pleasant.

The first holy site that we were privileged to visit was GJJHAKUTA, the Vultures Peak mountain where the Lord Buddha often stayed. The mountain can have changed little since those ancient days, except for the disappearance of the once great city of Rajagaha which then spread across the whole valley beneath the Vultures Peak and is now replaced by silent bushland. There remains a distinct echo of those world shattering times, up there on the Vultures Peak, a change of atmosphere and pace which makes even the few hairs left on a Buddhist monk’s head all stand on end as one approached the peak. There, on the right, is the famous Boar’s Cave where Ven Sariputta, while listening to the Lord Buddha teach another, attained to the unsurpassable Enlightenment. We sat meditation in that small cave and I can’t even come close to describing how awesome it is meditating in such a spot. Above, on the top of the peak, is where the Lord Buddha abided and the power lingers strongly on the rocks and the ledges. Some of us cried up there. It was so unearthly a realm, cool and so safe, shimmering with the Joy of Enlightenment and the brilliance of Wisdom. Because the Lord Buddha once lived there it carries for ever the imprint of Nibbana. I have never felt anything like it before.

I was to feel the same heart soaring emotion at each of the sacred sites. The Vultures Peak was just the beginning. We went to Bodh Gaya where the Lord Buddha won Enlightenment under the famous Bodhi Tree. Now it is a noisy place during the daytime but at night,
for we were given special permission as a group to enter the normally closed compound after hours, the electric serenity returned. We stayed there throughout the night, meditating under the branches of the Maha Bodhi Tree, just a few feet from the sacred spot where the Lord Buddha once sat and overturned the world. Wow! and that is an understatement.

The next stop was the Deer Park at Sarnath just outside Benares where the Lord Buddha gave His first sermon and set in motion what we now call Buddhism. Then to Kusinara where the Lord Buddha passed away from Samsara; and on to Lumbini in Nepal where the Lord Buddha was born. In each of these holy places, the stories that one reads in the old Buddhist Scriptures come vividly to life, and the same power of other worldly peace spreads thickly across the sites. The last holy site that we visited was the Jeta Grove Monastery where the Lord Buddha spent the most part of His final 25 years. This was the quintessential monastery in the days of the Lord Buddha, the powerhouse of the Teaching. Now, the kind shady trees, the softness of the air and the Peace of Enlightenment pervade every corner of this greatest of monasteries. Only, I say, one who is dead could not feel something very special in the Jeta Grove Monastery. As for me, I did not want to leave.

From this last sacred site on our itinerary we went westwards to New Delhi, away from the Land of the Lord Buddha into the relative bedlam that is India. On the road to New Delhi we saw many more holey places for every few feet there were pot holes in the road(!) and our faith continued to be tested whenever, and it happened often, our bus braked erratically and swerved most uncertainly around carts, cows and coolies. Indeed, we paused often to admire the scenery when our bus was suddenly halted by the omnipresent Indian cow who stands firm against all traffic in the middle of the busy highway, letting all know that cows own this land. We immersed ourselves in the local culture as our bus became hopelessly stuck in the middle of villages and towns, imprisoned in swarming streets more crowded than the terraces at a Grand Final. In France and Japan one rides the impressive bullet trains, so called because of their speed, and in India we rode the depressive Bullock-train, ‘cause that’s about as fast
as they travel! India is where the insanitary is close to insanity, where even the rats don't race.

In the evenings, though, there was usually the clean and quiet, Western-style hotel where our group of tired pilgrims could wash, eat and relax in comfort. Indeed, one night our group stayed in Hotel Nirvana! Moreover, for lunch there we were served fish and chips, with ice cream for dessert - I always said you'd get fish'n chips in Nirvana!

By the time we reached New Delhi, with the holy sites two days behind us and not much inspiring in between, I was becoming quite bored. Even the famous Taj Mahal was a disappointment as it appeared to me an extravagant edifice to worldly lust and unwise attachment, at the opposite end of the spectrum to the inexpensive simplicity and serenity of the Vultures peak. In New Delhi, someone suggested that we visit the National Museum as there might be some statues there of the Lord Buddha which might cheer me up. Wandering soon after into one of the many rooms in the museum, my eyes grew as wide as their sockets would allow and my heart rate leaped as I saw, perfectly exhibited in a beautiful gold and glass case with a huge diamond on top, all donated by the King of Thailand only in 1997, were holy relics of the Lord Buddha. These were not the tiny grain-of-sand like crystals I had often seen before, but sizeable pieces of burnt bone similar to the fragments I have often seen in the forest monasteries of Northeast Thailand among the ashes remaining after a cremation. These relics were discovered only recently, some twenty years ago, by the Indian Archaeological Survey under the main Stupa (funeral mound) at Kapilavatthu, the home town of the Lord Buddha. After the cremation of the Lord Buddha, the remaining fragments of bone were divided into eight portions, one of which was given to the Sakyanas of Kapilavatthu. Very soon after, Kapilavatthu was destroyed and then lost to the Jungles of Bihar for 2,500 years. It was only discovered a few years ago. Thus those relics, tastefully displayed in the museum at New Delhi, are almost certainly that same portion given to His relations, preserved for us through being lost to the world for 25 centuries! As in every museum, there were signs on the wall requesting visitors to keep quiet, but in
this most exceptional of circumstances one of our group slipped the curator a few rupees and soon after “ITIPI SO BHAGAVA—” boomed around the room as our group chanted the qualities of the Triple Gem and then performed a silent circumambulation. These were Real, Chunky, RELICS OF THE LORD BUDDHA, not hidden away but clearly displayed! Wow! and my eyes are going teary again at the memory even as I write this. The greatest delight comes from the unexpected. This was the most delightful climax of a journey of devotion that I will cherish until I die.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, as they say, Rancho Bodhinyana, Ajahn Nyanadhammo and the other members of the Sangha did an excellent job looking after the monastery in my absence. The deeply disturbing gravel pit proposal, only a (piece of gravel) stone’s throw away from our monastery, was buried by our Shire Council after our powerful but non-aggressive campaign of protest, pitting our wits against the pit, which would have been the pits for our peace! We completed four new Kutis at the monastery, but here I will not dwell on other monk’s dwellings! The new dam has been landscaped and is now a beautiful monastery pond, thanks to the natural skills of our pondering monks! Two new monks arrived to join our Sangha: Ajahn Ariyasilo who was the first to be ordained in our monastery twelve
years ago, and Ven. Dhammarato who is a local West Australian who was ordained in Thailand. We hope that they enjoy a long and happy stay in this Buddhist Monastery that is the ‘Best in the West’ - we have sixteen monks now resident here.

In my advancing years, I am getting more absent minded, by which I mean not minding being absent from Perth on Buddhist business elsewhere. However, even though “Travel is a moving experience”, as they say, there is no place like home. As Tibetan Buddhists say “Om Sweet Om”! So I am glad to be back. But I will always remember those Buddhist Holy sites in India and I encourage you to be ‘absent minded’ as well, enough to think of going to these inspiring places at least once in your life.

*Inspired but not expired yet, Ajahn Brahm*
MEDITATION RETREATS

We are very fortunate in Perth that we are frequently offered the chance to attend a meditation retreat. These retreats are a wonderful opportunity to receive special guidance and focussed teachings in the practice of meditation under the skilful guidance of a Sangha member.

The retreat program for the rest of 1998 and into 1999 is:

1998

June 26th - 28th  Weekend Retreat at St Joseph’s Retreat House, Safety Bay

November 20th - 22nd  Weekend Retreat at St Joseph’s Retreat House, Safety Bay

1999

April 1st - 9th  Nine Day Retreat at the Redemptorist Retreat House, North Perth (Thursday - Friday)

Due to requests received by Ron and Bianca the December retreat has been replaced by the April retreat which is timed to coincide with the Easter break.

Registration forms will be available from Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre four weeks prior to the start of each retreat.

If you have any queries regarding these retreats, please phone Bianca or Ron on 9299 7185.
SOCIETY NEWS

The Annual General Meeting, held at Dhammaloka in February, marked the official end of another year, and saw the voting on and appointment of the new committee.

Reports of the year’s activities were presented by Ajahn Brahm as the Spiritual Director, Chris Banks - outgoing president and Rodney George - treasurer.

- **Membership** - We now have 641 members - 161 full members and 480 associate members. Membership fees have remained the same for about ten years $40 Family, $30 Single, $15 Unwaged. Friday evening meditation and dhamma talk continue to attract about 250 people each week, reduced to around 100 during the rains retreat.

- **Gravel Quarry** - This year the peacefulness of Bodhinyana Monastery in Serpentine was under threat of being disrupted by the development of a gravel quarry on Kingsbury Drive. A Working party was formed to peacefully protest against this development. On 12th January, 1998, the Shire of Jarrahdale and Serpentine, after consultation with CALM, unanimously passed a resolution to not proceed with the development of Kingsbury Drive/Scarp Road. Many thanks to all those who offered their support and time during this anxious period.

- **Nun’s Monastery** - Ajahn Brahm and Sister Ajahn Vayama agree that the initial Nun’s Monastery should be a Hermitage, set in a peaceful forested area, away from Bodhinyana Monastery at Serpentine. It should preferably have a house for a caretaker and the land be suitable for kutis to be built; have access to a plentiful supply of water, privacy, security and be free from any adverse long-term Shire plans.

To date we have $226,357 in the Nun’s Monastery account thanks to some very generous donations, particularly one large, anonymous donation by a Perth couple to celebrate the birth of their daughter. Due to this we are now ready to start looking for suitable land. This year we have formed a Nun’s from August
Subcommittee comprising of Lynne Jackson, John Hale, Ron and Bianca, Chris Banks and Prem Mirihagalla.

- **Fund-raising** - We have held three fund-raising events this year - continuing our reputation as the “best restaurant in town”. Many thanks to all the cooks and supporters.

- **Newsletter** - Many thanks to Jill Hanna for her wonderful efforts over the past nine years in producing our beautiful Newsletter. Thank you to Tony and Joyce for taking on this job.

- **Library** - The society library is one of the best in Australia, with a good range of books for sale and a vast selection of Dhamma tapes and books for loan. Our current stock is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Books</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Library books for loan</td>
<td>1157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childrens’ books for loan</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books for sale</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference books including a Set of the Tipitika and Commentaries in Pali and English.</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapes for loan</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A big thank you to Ron Storey, who has put many hours into the library this year, and to all the library volunteers without whom we would not have this facility.

- **Meditation Retreats** - Many thanks go to Ajahn Brahm for his teaching at the meditation retreats and to Ron and Bianca for their work in organising them. There were three weekend retreats and one nine-day retreat offered during the past year.

- **Grant-in Aid** - The GIA Grant has not been approved by the Federal Government and the GIA workers ceased their contracts on 30th September 1997. However, we still have assistance available for the Thai speaking community, provided on a voluntary basis by Yodying Taylor.

- **Caretakers** - Phil Gurney retired from his position as Caretaker in March ’97. The committee took on his duties until Sol Hannah took up the position as Assistant Caretaker
until January when Max Willcocks joined us as Assistant Caretaker. Yodelling and Jim Taylor commenced in the position of caretaker in October '97. The committee wish to thank all of these people for their hard work.

- **Incoming Committee** - The incoming committee was confirmed as:
  
  Binh Anson  
  John Hall  
  Lynne Jackson  
  Cherry Jackson  
  Rodney George  
  Carol Cahil  
  Committee:
  | Roland Bruss | Shirley Jackson |
  | Sue Lee | Brian Haffenden |
  | Linda Ellis | Bronwyn Murphy |
  | Bert Hummer |

*With metta*

*The Committee*
POSON DAY

SUNDAY 7TH JUNE 1998

Poson Day is the celebration of the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka. A programme of events will be held on this day at Dhammaloka.

ALL ARE WELCOME

BEGINNING OF THE RAINDS RETREAT
BODHINYANA MONASTERY

SUNDAY 5TH JULY 1998

During the Buddha's time a rule was laid down for all monks and nuns directing that they should spend the three lunar months of the rainy season in one place, either in a monastery or alone in a suitable place. This is a time when external work is kept to a minimum and the emphasis is placed on developing peace and wisdom. Quiet surroundings, good Dhamma friends and many hours of meditation provide wonderful support for this noble goal.

This year we will be celebrating the 'entry to the Rains' at Bodhinyana Monastery on Sunday 5th July. The programme for the day will include:

9:30am  Gathering at the monastery
10.00am  Taking of the Three Refuges and the Five Precepts
          Auspicious chanting and a short Dhamma talk
10:30am  Offering of dana to the Sangha
11:00am  Sharing a meal
12:00 noon  Offering of requisites to the Sangha
2 - 4:00pm Meditation and Dhamma talk

ALL ARE WELCOME
**REGULAR ACTIVITIES**

**DHAMMALOKA BUDDHIST CENTRE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>7.00 - 7.20pm</td>
<td>Chanting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.30 - 8.00pm</td>
<td>Guided sitting meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.00 - 9.00pm</td>
<td>A talk on Buddhism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>10.30am</td>
<td>Food offering to the Sangha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.00 - 4.15pm</td>
<td>Instruction, meditation and discussion Separate classes for new and experienced meditators. A four week <em>Introduction to Meditation</em> course begins on the first Saturday of each month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>8.30 - 9.15am</td>
<td>Sitting meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.15 - 9.45am</td>
<td>Walking meditation and interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.45 - 10.30am</td>
<td>Sitting meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.30am</td>
<td>Food offering to the Sangha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.00 - 1.30pm</td>
<td>Dhamma school for children on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.00 - 4.30pm</td>
<td>Advanced Dhamma class on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>7.30 - 8.30pm</td>
<td>Unguided meditation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOUTH OF THE RIVER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>7.00 - 9.00pm</td>
<td>Meditation instruction Meditation and Dhamma talk at Armadale-Kelmscott Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enquiries to Chris Baunton 9524 1098</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ADDRESSES**

The Buddhist Society of WA (Inc)
Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre
18-20 Nanson Way
Nollamara WA 6061
Tel: 9345 1711

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Serpentine WA 6205
Tel/Fax: 9525 2420