THE BUDDHIST SOCIETY OF W.A.

NEWSLETTER

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EXPENSIVE OBJECT

Suppose we come to possess a very expensive object. The minute it comes into our possession our mind changes: "Now where can I keep it? If I leave it here somebody might steal it." We worry ourselves into a state, trying to find a place to keep it. This is suffering. And when did it arise? It arose as soon as we understood that we had obtained something. That's where the suffering lies. Before we obtained that object there was no suffering. It hadn't yet arisen because there was no object yet for the mind to cling to.

The self is the same. If we think in terms of my self then everything around us becomes mine. And confusion follows. If there is no I and my then there is no confusion.

A Tree In A Forest
Ajahn Chah
The Basic Method of Meditation - Part 2
(Edited from a talk given by Ajahn Brahm during a 9 day retreat in North Perth)

In part one of this three part article, I outlined the goal of this meditation, which is the beautiful silence, stillness and clarity of mind, pregnant with the most profound of insights. Then I pointed out the underlying theme which runs like an unbroken thread throughout all meditation, that is the letting go of material and mental burdens. Lastly, in part one, I described at length the practice which leads to what I call the first stage of this meditation, and that first stage is attained when the meditator comfortably abides in the present moment for long, unbroken periods of time. As I wrote in the previous article "The reality of now is magnificent and awesome.... Reaching here you have done a great deal. You have let go of the first burden which stops deep meditation." But having achieved so much, one should go further into the even more beautiful and truthful silence of the mind.

It is helpful, here, to clarify the difference between silent awareness of the present moment and thinking about it. The simile of watching a tennis match on television is informative. When watching such a match, you may notice that, in fact, there are two matches occurring simultaneously - there is the match that you see on the screen, and there is the match that you hear described by the commentator. Indeed, if an Australian is playing a New Zealander then the commentary from the Australian presenter is likely to be much different from what actually occurred! Commentary is often biased. In this simile, watching the screen with no commentary stands for silent awareness in meditation, paying attention to the commentary stands for thinking about it. You should realize that you are much closer to Truth when you observe without commentary, when you experience just the silent awareness of the present moment.

Sometimes it is through the inner commentary that we think we know the world. Actually, that inner speech does not know the world at all! It is the inner speech that weaves the delusions that cause suffering. It is the inner speech that causes us to be angry at those we make our enemies, and to have dangerous attachments to those we make our loved ones. Inner speech causes all of life's problems. It constructs fear and guilt. It creates anxiety and depression. It builds these illusions as surely as the skilful commentator on T.V. can manipulate an audience to create anger or tears. So if you seek for Truth,
you should value silent awareness, considering it more important, when meditating, than any thought whatsoever.

It is the high value that one gives to one’s thoughts that is the major obstacle to silent awareness. Carefully removing the importance one gives to one’s thinking and realizing the value and truthfulness of silent awareness is the insight that makes this second stage - silent awareness of the present moment - possible.

One of the beautiful ways of overcoming the inner commentary is to develop such refined present moment awareness, that you are watching every moment so closely that you simply do not have the time to comment about what has just happened. A thought is often an opinion on what has just happened, e.g. "That was good", "That was gross", "What was that?" All of these comments are about an experience which has just passed by. When you are noting, making a comment about an experience which has just passed, then you are not paying attention to the experience which has just arrived. You are dealing with old visitors and neglecting the new visitors coming now!

You may imagine your mind to be a host at a party, meeting the guests as they come in the door. If one guest comes in and you meet them and start talking to them about this that or the other, then you are not doing your duty of paying attention to the new guest that comes in the door. Because a guest comes in the door every moment, all you can do is to greet one and then immediately go on to greet the next one. You cannot afford to engage in even the shortest conversation with any guest, since this would mean you will miss the one coming in next. In meditation, all experiences come through the door of our senses into the mind one by one in succession. If you greet one experience with mindfulness and then get into conversation with your guest, then you will miss the next experience following right behind.

**inner silence ...**

**like giving up**

**another great burden**

When you are perfectly in the moment with every experience, with every guest which comes in your mind, then you just do not have the space for inner speech. You can not chatter to yourself because you are completely taken up with mindfully greeting everything just as it arrives in your mind. This is refined present moment awareness to the level that it becomes silent awareness of the present in every moment.

You discover, on developing that degree of inner silence, that this is like giving up another great burden. It is as if you have been carrying a big heavy rucksack on your back for forty or fifty years continuously and during that time you have
wearily trudged through many many miles. Now you have had the courage and found the wisdom to take that rucksack off and put it on the ground for a while. One feels so immensely relieved, so light, so free because one is now not burdened with that heavy rucksack of inner chatter.

Another useful method of developing silent awareness is to recognize the space between thoughts, between periods of inner chatter. If you attend closely with sharp mindfulness, when one thought ends and before another thought begins - THERE! That is silent awareness! It may be only momentary at first but as you recognize that fleeting silence you become accustomed to it, and as you become accustomed to it then the silence lasts longer. You begin to enjoy the silence, once you have found it at last, and that is why it grows. But remember, silence is shy. If silence hears you talking about her, she vanishes immediately!

It would be marvellous for each one of us if we could abandon the inner speech and abide in silent awareness of the present moment long enough to realize how delightful it is. Silence is so much more productive of wisdom and clarity than thinking. When you realize how much more enjoyable and valuable it is to be silent within, then silence becomes more attractive and important to you. The Inner Silence becomes what the mind inclines towards. The mind seeks out silence constantly, to the point where it only thinks if it really has to, only if there is some point to it. Since, at this stage, you have realized that most of our thinking is really pointless anyway, that it gets you nowhere, only giving you many headaches, you gladly and easily spend much time in inner quiet.

The second stage of this meditation, then, is silent awareness of the present moment. You may spend the majority of your time just developing these two stages because if you can get this far then you have gone a long way indeed in your meditation. In that silent awareness of “Just Now” you will experience much peace, joy and consequent wisdom.

If you want to go further, then instead of being silently aware of whatever comes into the mind, you choose silent present moment awareness of just ONE THING. That ONE THING can be the experience of breathing, the idea of loving kindness (METTA), a coloured circle visualised in the mind (KASINA) or several other, less common, focal points for awareness. Here we will describe the silent present moment awareness of the breath.

Choosing to fix one’s attention on one thing is letting go of diversity and moving to its opposite, unity. As the mind begins to unify, sustaining attention on just one thing, the experience of peace, bliss and power increases significantly. You discover here that the diversity of consciousness - like having six telephones on ones desk ringing at the same time - is such a burden and letting go of this diversity - only permitting one telephone, a private line at that, on ones desk - is such a relief it generates bliss. The understanding that diversity is a burden is crucial to being able to settle on the breath.
If you have developed silent awareness of the present moment carefully for long periods of time, then you will find it quite easy to turn that awareness on to the breath and follow that breath from moment to moment without interruption. This is because the two major obstacles to breath meditation have already been subdued. The first of these two obstacles is the mind’s tendency to go off into the past or future, and the second obstacle is the inner speech. This is why I teach the two preliminary stages of present moment awareness and silent awareness of the present moment as a solid preparation for deeper meditation on the breath.

It often happens that meditators start breath meditation when their mind is still jumping around between past and future, and when awareness is being drowned by the inner commentary. With no preparation they find breath meditation so difficult, even impossible and give up in frustration. They give up because they did not start at the right place. They did not perform the preparatory work before taking up the breath as a focus of their attention. However, if the mind has been well prepared by completing these first two stages then you will find when you turn to the breath, you can sustain your attention on it with ease. If you find it difficult to keep attention on your breath then this is a sign that you rushed the first two stages. Go back to the preliminary exercises! Careful patience is the fastest way.

When you focus on the breath, you focus on the experience of the breath happening now. You experience “that which tells you what the breath is doing”, whether it is going in or out or in between. Some teachers say to watch the breath at the tip of the nose, some say to watch it at the abdomen and some say to move it here and then move it there. I have found through experience that it does not matter where you watch the breath. In fact it is best not to locate the breath anywhere! If you locate the breath at the tip of your nose then it becomes nose awareness, not breath awareness, and if you locate it at your abdomen then it becomes abdomen awareness. Just ask yourself the question right now “Am I breathing in or am I breathing out? How do you know?” There! That experience which tells you what the breath is doing, that is what you focus on in breath meditation. Let go of concern about where this experience is located; just focus on the experience itself.

A common hindrance at this stage is the tendency to control the breathing, and this makes the breathing uncomfortable. To overcome this hindrance, imagine that you are just a passenger in a car looking through the window at your breath. You are not the driver, nor a ‘back seat driver’, so stop giving orders, let go and enjoy the ride. Let the breath do the breathing while you simply watch without interfering.
When you know the breath is going in, or the breath is going out, for say one hundred breaths in a row, not missing one, then you have achieved what I call the third stage of this meditation, sustained attention on the breath. This again is more peaceful and joyful than the previous stage. To go deeper, you now aim for full sustained attention on the breath.

This fourth stage, or full sustained attention on the breath, occurs when one’s attention expands to take in every single moment of the breath. You know the in-breath at the very first moment, when the first sensation of in-breathing arises. Then you observe those sensations develop gradually through the whole course of one in-breath, not missing even a moment of the in-breath. When that in breath finishes, you know that moment, you see in your mind that last movement of the in-breath. You then see the next moment as a pause between breaths, and then many more pauses until the out-breath begins. You see the first moment of the out-breath and each subsequent sensation as the out-breath evolves, until the out-breath disappears when its function is complete. All this is done in silence and just in the present moment.

You experience every part of each in-breath and out-breath, continuously for many hundred breaths in a row. This is why this stage is called ‘FULL sustained attention on the breath’. You cannot reach this stage through force, through holding or gripping. You can only attain this degree of stillness by letting go of everything in the entire universe, except for this momentary experience of breath happening silently now. ‘You’ don’t reach this stage; the mind reaches this stage. The mind does the work itself. The mind recognizes this stage to be a very peaceful and pleasant abiding, just being alone with the breath. This is where the ‘doer’, the major part of one’s ego, starts to disappear.

You will find that progress happens effortlessly at this stage of the meditation. You just have to get out of the way, let go, and watch it all happen. The mind will automatically incline, if you only let it, towards this very simple, peaceful and delicious unity of being alone with one thing, just being with the breath in each and every moment. This is the unity of mind, the unity in the moment, the unity in stillness.

The fourth stage is what I call the ‘springboard’ of meditation, because from here one can dive into the blissful states. When you simply maintain this unity of consciousness, by not interfering, the breath will begin to disappear. The breath appears to fade away as the mind focuses instead on what is at the centre of the experience of breath, which is the awesome peace, freedom and bliss.
At this stage I use the term ‘the beautiful breath’. Here the mind recognizes that this peaceful breath is extraordinarily beautiful. You are aware of this beautiful breath continuously, moment after moment, with no break in the chain of experience. You are only aware of the beautiful breath, without effort, and for a very long time.

Now you let the breath disappear and all that is left is ‘the beautiful’. Disembodied beauty becomes the sole object of the mind. The mind is now taking its own object. You are now not aware at all of breath, body, thought sound or the world outside. All that you are aware of is beauty, peace, bliss, light or whatever your perception will later call it. You are experiencing only beauty, with nothing being beautiful, continuously, effortlessly. You have long ago let go of chatter, let go of descriptions and assessments. Here, the mind is that still that you can not say anything.

You are just experiencing the first flowering of bliss in the mind. That bliss will develop, grow, become very firm and strong. Thus you enter into those states of meditation called Jhana. But that is for part three of this talk!

(To be continued next issue)
Ajahn Brahm

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SANGHA NEWS

Today, so I am told, Buddhism is ‘cool’. Indeed, as I write this article on a cold winter day at Bodhinyana Monastery, Buddhism seems so cool its freezing! The thermometer at our monastery showed a temperature of 20°C below this morning! That’s right, 2° below.... Below what I would like it to be which is a comfortable 25° or thereabout. The wind is howling, or is that me?
As the old saying goes, today it is cold enough to freeze the bald heads of brassy monks, or something like that. The only thing that keeps me going is the knowledge that I will live longer in cold weather, which view is reasoned on the experience that perishables, like me, last longer in the fridge! When our dear supporters ask me if the monks have heaters in their huts, I honestly reply in my West London accent “All monks ‘ave an ‘eater - and it is called their mouth!” And in truth, a good meal does warm one up, especially when it is ‘biting’ cold!
What really warms my heart, though, is seeing all our kind hearted lay supporters come to this monastery on a Sunday in July to enjoy the Entry to the Rains Retreat Ceremony. Following long established tradition here, that morning the radio predicted rain, strong winds and thunder, but it never came. Instead we all enjoyed a lovely day, especially when the warm sun came out just as the monks left our main Hall for the alms round and then went behind clouds again just as the monks finished the alms round and went in the Hall to eat. Every year, I see many such miracles, I see many wonderful lay visitors, I see many happy smiles - which makes it all sound very “i-cy”. Then as for snow, well, there’s no business like slow business, as they say, and the ‘slow business’ of gentle Buddhist meditation is what a Rains Retreat is all about.

This Rains Retreat is our fifteenth and, keeping to another local tradition, this year we have 15 fully ordained monks (bhikkhus) resident, plus 1 nun (Ajahn Vayama), 2 novice monks (samanera), 5 male 8-preceptors (anagarikas) and 3 female 8-preceptors (anagarikars) plus 2 shameless cats on no precepts whatsoever as far as I can see! If it was not for the teaching of no-self, which shows that no-one is really here anyway, this monastery would be unbearably full. But as no-one is here, no-one is welcome to stay overnight, that is until the end of the retreat in October! I am indebted to Ajahn Vayama for reminding me of such emptiness for, as you know, the empty number 0 represents nun!

There are now 19 kutis (monastic huts) at our monastery, many with covered walking meditation paths attached. Next year we will build one more kuti (a donor has already come forward) and then we’ll convert to the ‘diesel’ system - meaning, ‘dese’ll do…! Enough kutis for the monastery. Twenty monks, and thus twenty kutis, is a good limit for a meditation monastery of our tradition. We will still upgrade the existing kutis by adding covered walking meditation paths to each (to prevent overhead birds making bad karma on bald monks below!). Then eventually we will install electric powered moving walkways (as at major airports) for the old monks, so that they may continue their walking meditation on reversible conveyor belts... Only joking, but many a true word said in jest!

Talking of airports, Ajahn Nyanadhammo and Ven. Nandiyo recently returned from a 2-month religious mission to the ends of the earth -DeutschlEND, SwitzerlEND and EnglEND! They also visited Italy but then there’s no ‘end’ to some things. They went to visit our sister monasteries in Europe as a gesture of good will and harmony between our far-flung Sangha, and to give Ven.
Nandiyo the opportunity to visit his parents in Germany. Mothers of monks aren’t allowed to hug their sons but they more than make up for this by feeding their monk-sons in stomach-challenging proportions! So Ven. Nandiyo’s trip home became something of a “fat-finding mission”, as they say! Many years ago, a fellow monk visited his parents in New York, had an unfortunate accident, broke his arm and was put in hospital for a fortnight. He told me that when his mom visited him in hospital on the first day she smiled, obviously pleased, and said to him “Now I’ve got you where I want you for a while”!!! He returned to Thailand much overweight.

Our two Dutch monks, Ven. Vappa and Ven. Medhino, have now returned to Thailand at the end of their one-year visa. They have been replaced by Ven. Chandako, an American born monk who has trained in Thailand for many years, and Ven. Dhammasinha, who is a German born monk who has trained in Sri Lanka. We wish our two new monks a happy stay in Western Australia. May they make swift progress on the Path to Enlightenment and may their passions become cooled.

Which reminds me that passions easily become cooled in this wintry weather. So, this is good weather for meditating, ‘cos it ‘aint much good for anything else. And we can all enjoy the ‘bitter’ weather - bit ‘o’ sun, bit ‘o’ rain - that is typical for the time of the year. There are plenty of jumpers at our monastery (the other day I counted 12 kangaroos), lots of ‘beanies’ (monks who like baked beans, soya beans and kidney beans) and as for socks, well, you know we are all celibate here so we do not allow sox or anything sounding like it! And with a freeze on all teaching engagements until after the Retreat ends on October 9th, it looks like all is cool at Bodhinyana Monastery.

Chilling out until October
Ajahn Brahm
THAMKRABOK FOUNDATION

Many of our readers may not know that as well as being the abbot of Bodhinyana Monastery in Serpentine and Spiritual Director of Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre in Nollamara, if that is not enough (!), I am also a patron of the Thamkrabok Foundation based in Perth.

The Thamkrabok Foundation was established in 1996 to create a more formal link with the Thamkrabok Monastery in Thailand, famous throughout the world for its radical but effective treatment of drug addiction. The Thamkrabok Foundation assists those in Australia to gain access to the treatment offered in Thailand.

"Most hungry fish, seeing the juicy worm, will swallow the bait that hides the deadly hook. Just as a good friend of yours, hungry for satisfaction, acceptance or meaning, will take the exciting drug which hides the deadly addiction.

It is the goal of the Thamkrabok Foundation, based in Australia, to remove the obnoxious hook of drug addiction and sever the line which leads to tragic death.

Detoxification, though, is only half our aim. We also want to encourage the hungry fish to be wary of juicy worms and seek their food in safer streams - meaning that we will strive to support those former addicts in leading a meaningful life which does away with the very need for drugs!

We therefore offer our services, seek your support and wish you all well."

This is a little service to the wider community which I happily perform alongside my other duties. The Executive Director of the Thamkrabok Foundation, Mr Brian Haffenden, also serves as an active committee member of our Buddhist Society.

For more information on the Thamkrabok Foundation, please contact Brian on 9354 1182, speak with Ajahn Brahm or ask at the reception desk at our Nollamara Centre.

With Metta, Ajahn Brahm.

PS Thamkrabok Foundation may also be found on the Internet at http://www.thamkrabok.org.au
Life is about expecting the unexpected. And so it was when Ajahn Brahmavamso said he wanted me to leave the monastery. So started a wonderful journey to the other side of the world, visiting seven monasteries and meeting with Dhamma friends in six countries.

It began simply enough. Venerable Nandiyo had promised to visit his ageing parents in Germany, and for a monk a promise is a promise. So he was on his way except for the fact that the Buddha had laid down a rule that monks ordained for less than five years must travel with a senior monk. That was one reason why Ajahn Brahm asked me to leave Bodhinyana. But there was also a bigger picture. Ajahn Brahm felt this would be an excellent opportunity for a representative of our Sangha to visit the branch monasteries of Ajahn Chah in Europe. The Buddha had encouraged monks to meet frequently to enhance communication, but due to the ‘tyranny of distance’ it had been some years since we last had had direct contact.

Amandus, never missing an opportunity to serve the Sangha, decided to travel with us. The Soo family in Melbourne offered Euro-train passes, and Ajahn Brahm got us on the red-eye-special flight to Frankfurt. His parting words were to prove foresightful: “No stories about losing your passports and not being able to come back.”

Ven. Nandiyo and I were racing along the autobahn at 240km/h in four wheels of German engineering with Hans at the wheel and a smiling Amandus in the back. We headed for Ven. Nandiyo’s parents’ house honed in by the on-board satellite guidance system, as Ven. Nandiyo couldn’t remember the way after ten years away. Amongst tears of reunion we parted company to meet up again in England in three weeks time.

Before catching the train to Switzerland Amandus and I were off to stay with Ven. Cattamalo’s parents. Hans and Trudy we knew from their many visits to Perth to see their son. It so happens that their only other son also wants to become a monk and come to Perth. My comment was, “you’re not losing a son, you’re gaining a Sangha”.

The bullet train was taking us to Dhammapala Vihara perched up high in the magnificent Swiss Alps. This monastery is far more beautiful than a postcard.
could ever display. The building, a converted ex-hotel, is surrounded by high snow-capped peaks, forest, and a colossal waterfall. Even the view from the toilet window took my breath away! It was hard to shut the eyes to meditate amidst such splendour - the flash of the red dawn reflected on the snow-capped peaks, the constant flow of water from glaciers cascading over rocks into turquoise lakes far below, the fleeting movement of wild goats progressing up sheer cliff faces. Hard to meditate it was - until we were told that there used to be two hotels on the same spot. One was completely destroyed by an avalanche! Expect the unexpected.

The Canadian abbot, Ajahn Tiradhammo, explained that the Swiss have one of the highest suicide rates in the world. I thought he was the ideal antidote to that unpleasant statistic. His warm, relaxed and cheerful disposition could melt snow.

With a packed lunch, Ajahn Tiradhammo led Amandus and myself off for a day’s trip up the mountains. This monastery is probably the highest Theravada monastery in the world at 2,500 metres above sea level, and we were heading higher. The seven hour walk in the national park was to whet our appetites for the many more walks we were to do during our stay in Europe, and it made Ajahn Brahms’s parting words to us appear as wise foresight. Our planned week in each monastery was looking far too short. Coming down this mountain was when I learnt that there are snakes in Switzerland as I unexpectedly trod on one, which then wrapped over my foot. That’s when I knew why the Swiss YODEL!

Soon we were back on the train, flashing past neat Swiss graffiti, headed for Rome and the brand new monastery in the heartland of Catholicism, Santacittarama. After a run-in with the Italian railway, red tape due to confusion over our tickets, and the hustle of Rome station, it was pleasant to see Ajahn Chandapalo’s smiling, warm face and gentle calm.

With the car swerving through the Rome traffic we were heading towards the monastery a mere hours drive from the Vatican. Ajahn Chandapalo explained that the lay supporters had been looking for land for a forest monastery for two years. They had inspected over two hundred properties, all rejected as unsuitable or unaffordable. The exhausted monks had to draw the line in the sand, deciding that they would only look at one more piece of land, and if it was unsuitable then so be it. They would move back to Switzerland using it as a base from which to visit their Italian supporters. Of course, the very last property they looked at was perfect - complete with forest, hills, a stream, many caves, a large house, many out-buildings and even an abandoned cemetery for the monks to meditate in. After moving in they even discovered that they have a Thai Buddhist neighbour. Walking around the property with Ajahn Chandapalo and
Ajahn Prechah, my old friend from Thailand and Perth, it was obvious how much potential the new property had.

**Vesakha in Italy**

The day after our arrival was Vesakha and how better to celebrate the birth, Enlightenment and passing away of the Buddha than by circumambulating the freshly planted Bodhi tree in this brand new monastery. The large international gathering celebrated this day with great devotion, harmony, and joy, all boding well for Buddhism in Italy.

We monks have a saying ‘When in Rome do as the Buddha would do!’ So together with Venerable Prechah I went down to the abandoned cemetery to meditate amongst the open graves. Ajahn Brahm had hoped we would come back with some ghost stories; and indeed, as we sat there with our eyes closed with bones scattered all around us, we suddenly felt something cold and wet touch our bodies - it had started to drizzle!

The train brought us to a halt at Ashford station in England. That was unexpected, as we had been travelling at more than 300km/h through the Channel tunnel, but even more unexpected as we had plane tickets! Amandus, an old train buff, had decided to go on the Eurostar from Rome to London instead of flying. It was only at the border that we realised we needed visas for France. Fortunately, a smile and a ‘sorry’ can get you a long way - in fact, all the way to the UK.

Our next stop was Amaravati Buddhist Monastery but only after sharing six glorious days of sunshine at Nick and Mary Stacey’s house in Kent. After having moved back to England from Perth, they were delighted to have Amandus and I turn their house into a monastery as they greatly miss Bodhinyana.

As you arrive at Amaravati the plainness of the converted old school buildings is immediately counterbalanced by the graceful spire of the new stupa/temple complex. The inside of the temple has an atmosphere equal to its beauty. It was wonderful to see this symbol of Buddhism in the English countryside.

By this time Ven. Nandiyo had arrived from Germany looking a few kilos heavier from his mother’s home cooking. Ajahn Sumedho and Ajahn Viradhammo received us with great kindness and attention. This warmth and hospitality shown to us by the Sangha in all of Ajahn Chah’s branch monasteries will be a lasting memory of our trip. It also shows the effect of following the Buddha’s advice that a bhikkhu should act with “bodily, verbal, and mental loving-kindness, both in public and in private, towards his companions in the holy-life. This is a memorable quality that creates love and respect and that conduces to helpfulness, to non-dispute, to concord and unity.” It was this renewing of old friendships, and the creating of new, which became the main thread drawing this journey together.
Ajahn Brahm had given me another purpose for going to England, namely to invite Ajahn Sumedho to visit Perth some time in the near future. He kindly agreed, and said he would come at some mutually convenient date. So we should soon see Ajahn Sumedho in WA again.

Next stop was Chithurst Monastery. This forest had been donated to the monks many years ago by a man who was inspired by meeting them while they were on alms round. This one hundred and eighty acres of forest has a fairytale beauty and is full of wildlife. We had only been here for a couple of hours when I trod on another snake - this time, being in England, I kept a stiff upper lip.

Walking along the ridge of the South Downs with Ven. Tanuttaro as our guide, we were very tempted to just keep on going and take up the homeless life of the tudong monk through the English countryside as many of the monks and nuns here do during the summer months. It was only Ajahn Brahm's parting words, which held us back.

Ajahn Sucitto, the abbot of Chithurst, is a monks' monk, composed, dignified and restrained. I enjoyed our conversations on Dhamma immensely. Unfortunately we soon had to leave as we were off to Harnham in the land of the Geordies.

Northumberland, where Ratanagiri Monastery is located, is an open landscape with cleared, rolling, windswept hills, not unlike the south island of New Zealand. So it’s not surprising that Ajahn Munindo, the abbot, comes from New Zealand. Harnham, an old fortified village on a hilltop, protected against the raiding Scottish tribesmen known as 'the Reapers'. Maybe this is where we get the term 'grim reapers' from as they tended to leave a trail of death and destruction - Mara's little helpers.

To add to the 'spirit' of the place a ghost is apparently sometimes seen by the residents of the monastery. A beautiful lady who died in the 1600 's had been imprisoned in the tower of her own manor house by the local vicar.

Ajahn Munindo claims Ratanagiri is the smallest Ajahn Chah; branch monastery, in the world. Covering less than one acre, it certainly is compact but makes up for size by the strength and harmony of the tight knit community; a strong reflection of Ajahn Munindo's careful guidance.

One highlight was a visit to a Zen monastery to see Sister Constance or Liz Pribac as she was known to friends in Perth. Hamlet had said 'get ye a nunnery' and Liz had taken up that advice. She ordained at Throssel Hole Priory, a Zen monastery high up on the moors of Northern England. Sister Constance had been ill so we arranged a visit. We suspected that it's not that she has a back problem but that she likes 'meditating flat out'! She certainly looked happy to see us. Throssel Hole is a thriving monastery of thirty or more monastics that are obviously dedicated to practice. The gentle conversation
and relaxed humour of the monks, who gave us a VIP reception, hid a strong commitment to a rigorous training.

Before leaving Harnham I succeeded in one more invitation, Ajahn Munindo agreed to add in a stopover in Perth in January of next year to his trip ‘down under’. I’ve already put the kettle on in anticipation of repaying his kind hospitality.

The rain of the English summer had set in by the time we reached the Forest Hermitage in Warwick. We were in Shakespearean country. The abbot, Ajahn Khemadhammo, had been an actor with a famous Shakespearean acting company, but now is better known for his compassionate and tireless work of teaching the Dhamma to prisoners through the very successful Angulimala project, which he has founded. It was also wonderful to see the Thai monk, Ajahn Norm again, and his smiling face made up for the overcast skies. Like Ven. Prechah in Italy he passed on his best wishes to everyone back in Perth and hopefully, one day they will both return.

It was now time to return. The stopover at Wat Nanachat in Thailand helped warm our bones in the hot, wet monsoon air. It was in part a homecoming for me, Wat Nanachat is where the present abbot Ajahn Jayasaro and I ordained together. It was inspiring to see so many young men of good character doing exactly the same thing under his leadership.

We flew into Perth a few days before starting our next holiday, the Rains Retreat. This would give us time to be still and take in all the good-will and wonderful experiences we had had over the last two months. But expect the unexpected - Ajahn Brahmm said he wanted me to leave again! - Leave the world behind!

So be it.

Ajahn Nyanadhammo
DHAMMASARA

When allowing women to go forth into the homeless life the Buddha stated quite clearly that they have the capacity to attain full enlightenment. During the time of the Buddha and since, there have been many female arahants.

However, not for a very long time, have such favorable conditions come together to support women in leading the monastic life as those that pertain now in Perth.

I write to you as the Senior Nun of the yet to be built Nuns’ Monastery, having recently accepted the invitation of the committee of the Buddhist Society of Western Australia to take up this position. And though I am still a nun without a nunnery in the material sense, my heart is full of joy and gratitude for the work that has already been done on this project by so many faithful and committed people. Especially I would like to thank Ajahn Brahmavamso, the spiritual director, for his support, and the donors who generously offered funds for the society to purchase the 583 acres of bushland at Gidgegannup.

The purchase of the land is the first giant step towards providing nuns with the opportunity to train in Dhamma-Vinaya, in a setting ideal for a forest monastery. As such it is fulfilling one of the original aims of the society as stated in its constitution, i.e. to provide monastic facilities for both male and female Sangha. While the Nuns’ Monastery will complement the existing Monks’ Monastery, its location some distance from Bodhinyana will encourage it to develop and function independently.

First Dana at Dhammasara
As an ongoing reminder of its true purpose, we have named the Nuns’ Monastery Dhammasara: the Heartwood of the Dhamma, a synonym for Nibbana, after a simile used by the Buddha.

In the longer and shorter discourses on the Simile of the Heartwood in the Majjhima Nikaya, the Buddha compares the holy life to a man searching for the finest quality wood to use in making something. Just as this man would not serve his purpose if he took leaves and twigs, outer bark, inner bark or sapwood instead of the heartwood of the tree, so monks and nuns should not be satisfied with anything less than Nibbana.

It is unshakable deliverance of mind that is the goal of the holy life, its heartwood, its end.

So Dhammasara will be a place to practice for the attainment of Nibbana. It will primarily be for Theravadin Nuns, and women who want to train to become nuns. As resources and facilities develop there will be the opportunity for lay people who are committed to the Theravadin way of practice, and who are willing to undertake the eight precepts for the duration of their stay, to spend time as part of the community and on self-retreat.

As for myself, you may remember me from my visit to Nollamara in 1996, when Sister Upekkha, the French nun from Amarevati, accompanied me. I ordained as a ten-Precept Nun in Sri Lanka in 1985 with Venerable Piyaratana the Chief Monk of Polgasduwa Nuns’ Island and in several towns in the south of Sri Lanka during my ten years there. My senior companion nun during that time was Sister Dhammadinna, a Sri Lankan. In 1994 I was able to fulfill a long-standing wish and went on pilgrimage to the Holy Places in India for six months. Later, at the invitation of Venerable Ajahn Sumedho I spent a year at Amaravati, his monastery in England. In 1997 I returned to Australia, hoping to be able to contribute to making the teachings of the Buddha available in my home country. Since then I have spent my time in self-retreat at Wat Buddha Dhamma and Buddha Dhamma Hermitage, both near Sydney, and have been available to offer teachings when invited.

Though I am not a member of the Amaravati Nuns’ community as such, I enjoy a close and warm friendship with the nuns there, and I look forward to a time in the future when we can invite them to visit and participate with us.

My deepest aspiration for this life is to attain Nibbana, and in the process to assist others towards fulfilling their potential. So being part of this project is allowing me to express my life’s purpose, and I feel immensely blessed.

How quickly we can begin building the first amenities on the site will depend on all of you. In the meantime I invite you to join me in rejoicing in our very good fortune, to be associated with such an immeasurably significant project; one that will surely bring the Dhamma with its great blessing to so many.

Ajahn Vayama
583 ACRES OF
Natural Wilderness
GIDGEGANNUP

Lot 233
Reen Road
GIDGEGANNUP

Dhammasara
THE NUNS’ MONASTERY

On Sunday 24th May the Buddhist society of Western Australia successfully bid at auction for 583 acres of beautiful bush at Lot 233 Reen Road, Gidgegannup for the price of $650,000. The land is only 45km from Perth but has remained mostly in a natural state with deep-forested valleys, granite outcrops and two lovely running fresh water creeks that meander through the valley. The sheer size and forested nature of the land will provide a unique environment for the meditative forest tradition. Guess who spotted the land!

After the scare of the gravel and clay pits at Serpentine, by virtue of the size of this piece of land, we will ensure a significant buffer against any adjacent development in the Reen road area of Gidgegannup.

Over the past two years we have administered a special tax-deductible account, The Nuns’ Monastery Building Fund, for the sole purpose of establishing a nuns’ Monastery in line with our constitution. This beautiful land was purchased for this sole purpose. We currently have a small debt to complete paying for the land.

Thank you to the very very generous donors who have supported the establishment of the Nuns’ Monastery. We believe this is the first monastery in Australia for female Sangha in the Theravadin forest meditation tradition.

Thank you to our Spiritual Director, Venerable Ajahn Brahm for his immense enthusiasm and support of this project. We are deeply inspired by his kindness, good energy, insightful forward thinking and drawing skills!

We hope to commence a building programme after the Rains Retreat and thank Denis Shepherd for his kind offer to draft the building plans. At the monthly Buddhist Society Committee meeting on Sunday June 21st the President, Binh Anson, formally invited Sister Ajahn Vayama to be the Abbot of the Nuns’ Monastery, she willingly and joyfully accepted. Also at this meeting the Nuns’
Monastery was given the name Dhammasara.

Ajahn Vayama and her attendant Elizabeth Gorski are guests of Bodhinyana Monastery in Serpentine for this Rains Retreat.

After the Rains Retreat Ajahn Vayama will reside at Dhammasara, Gidgegannup. She has been offered a caravan for shelter. Dana and fresh provisions can be offered in the mornings. The security gate at Lot 233 Reen Road, Gidgegannup, has a combination lock on it. For the combination lock number call the Buddhist Society, 9345-1711, or Chris Banks, 9448-0854.

If you have any skills and time to offer in this unique project please come forward.

With Metta
Chris Banks

ORDINATION

RAINS RETREAT
JULY - OCTOBER

Tranquil scenes around Bodhinyana Monastery
PROGRAMME
DURING THE RAINS RETREAT

Friday evenings will follow the normal format during the Rains Retreat with chanting and guided meditation followed by talks on Buddhism by guest speakers.

**Friday Evening Programme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31st July</td>
<td>Dennis Sheppard</td>
<td>Marriage, Monastics and Mystery A Lay Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th August</td>
<td>Maureen Roberts</td>
<td>Buddhism and Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14th August</td>
<td>Binh Anson</td>
<td>What Buddhism Means to Me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21st August</td>
<td>Rev Mieuw Hong</td>
<td>Chan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28th August</td>
<td>Dr Jim Taylor</td>
<td>Great Buddhist Teachers of the Thai Forest Tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th September</td>
<td>Chris Banks</td>
<td>Transcendental Dependent Arising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th September</td>
<td>Terry Ryan</td>
<td>Pilgrimage to India and Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th September</td>
<td>Ross Bolleter Roshi</td>
<td>A Dhamma Talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th September</td>
<td>Fr. Doug Conlan</td>
<td>The Desert Fathers and Mothers of the Early Christian Era</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Saturday meditation classes, Introduction to Meditation for Beginners and the continuing Meditation class will continue during the Rains Retreat.

Wednesday evening unguided meditation will be discontinued during the Rains Retreat.
## REGULAR ACTIVITIES

### LIBRARY HOURS:
- **Friday:** 6:00 – 7:30pm and 9:00 – 10:00pm
- **Saturday:** 2:00 – 3:00pm and 4:00 – 4:00pm

### 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>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.00 - 9.00pm</td>
<td>A talk on Buddhism (during the Rains Retreat we have guest speakers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>7.00 - 9.00pm</td>
<td>Meditation and Dhamma talk at Armadale-Kelmscott Hospital</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOUTH OF THE RIVER**

### Food offering to the Sangha
- **Saturday 10.30am:** Community Hall (not during the Rains Retreat)
- **3.00 - 4.15pm:** Meditation – instruction and discussion conducted by one of our senior Sangha. A 4-week ‘Introduction to Meditation’ Course begins on the first Saturday of each month throughout the year.

### South of the River

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>3.00 - 4.30pm</td>
<td>Advanced Dhamma class on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month (not during Rains Retreat).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Dhammasara
- Lot 233 Reen Road
- Gidgegannup

### ADDRESSES

**The Buddhist Society of WA (Inc)**
- Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre
- 18-20 Nanson Way
- Nollamara WA 6061
- Tel: 9345 1711
- Fax: 9344 4220
- Web Page: http://bswa.home.ml.org/
- Email: anisorb@opera.iinet.net.au

**Bodhinyana Monastery**
- Lot 1 Kingsbury Drive
- Serpentine WA 6125
- Tel/Fax: 95252420

**Dhammasara**
- Lot 233 Reen Road
- Gidgegannup