



# Buddhāloka

L I G H T O F T H E B U D D H A

Newsletter of the Buddhist Society of Victoria

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Volume 14 No. 11

Autumn 2006 / 2549

## Vesak Celebrations at the temple

Vesak is a major celebration in the Buddhist calendar and occurs on the full moon day of May. It commemorates the Birth, Enlightenment and Death of the Buddha. This year Vesak will be celebrated on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> May, led by the Society's Spiritual Director Ajahn Brahm. Members are encouraged to bring food for the communal lunch.

### Program – Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> May

8.00 am	Taking of Precepts (five or eight)
8.30 – 9.30 am	Meditation
9.30 am	Dhamma talk by Ajahn Brahm
10.15 am	Buddha Puja (offering of flowers and incense)
11.00 am	Offering of Dana to the Sangha
11.30 am	Community lunch in dining area. Eight preceptors served first
12.30 – 2.00 pm	Meditation
2.00 – 3.30 pm	Dhamma discussion with Ajahn Brahm
3.30 – 4.30 pm	Meditation led by Ajahn Brahm
4.30 – 5.00 pm	Afternoon tea
5.00 – 6.00 pm	Dhamma discussion with Ajahn Brahm
6.00 – 7.00 pm	Meditation
8.00 pm	Dhamma talk by Ajahn Brahm, followed by Transfer of Merit

Ajahn Brahm will be staying at the temple from 20<sup>th</sup> May to 23<sup>rd</sup> May inclusive. Whilst in Melbourne he will be offering Dhamma talks and conducting meditation retreats, *as per* the following schedule.

**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> May** Ajahn arrives at the BSV.

8:00 pm - Dhamma talk at Buddhāloka Centre

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> May** Leads the Vesak celebrations at Buddhāloka Centre (see the program above)

**Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> May** 7:00 am – 6:00 pm. Conducts a one day retreat at Buddhāloka Centre  
8:00 pm Dhamma talk at Buddhāloka centre

**Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May** 7:00 am – 6:00 pm. Conducts a one day retreat at Buddhāloka Centre  
8:00 pm Dhamma talk at Buddhāloka centre

## New Committee for 2006 / 2549

The Annual General Meeting of the Society was held at the temple on 26<sup>th</sup> March last. The Society invited Sue Smith from the Buddhist Council of Victoria to talk on the Education Initiative, which now reaches over 200 students and is soon to start in its first rural locality (Daylesford). Sue's report will be presented in the next Newsletter.

From there the meeting proceeded thru its normal stages, ie. President's Report, Treasurer's Report (the Society owes considerable thanks to Haneef Badrudeen for again auditing the Society's financial records) and further reports from the Dhamma School, the Library and the Newsletter.

As the number of nominations for the incoming Committee equalled the number of vacant positions, no election was necessary and the Society's Committee for the coming year is-

- President – Cora Thomas,
- Vice-President – Padmini Perera
- Secretary – Prem Nawaratne
- Treasurer – Chin Look Tan
- Committee Members – Giovanna Cori, Gary Dellora, Dhananjaya Jayasekera, Yasmin Moore, Bala Mudaly



BSV Committee for 2006 / 2549  
Upper from left – Gary, Bala, Yasmin  
Lower from left – Prem, Giovanna, Cora,  
Padmini, Chin

## Report from the Dhamma School

Last year we had a total of 46 students who attended at some time during the year. The average attendance over the whole year was 14 children per week. We have observed the effect that a lack of monk at the Buddhāloka Centre has on the attendance at the Dhamma school. When there is someone giving a talk at the temple there is a marked rise in attendance at the school because their parents have a reason for coming to the temple themselves.

So far this year 27 students have attended the school with an average of 10.5 per week. Those who attend regularly are very enthusiastic. One has remarked that it is unfair that Dhamma school is so short when ordinary school lasts the whole week! Syllabus across all levels includes meaning of refuge, precepts and chanting. Short meditation practice is given and often an illustrative story from text, Jatakas or commentary, followed by a task dependent on age level. Because senior students are unfortunately few, most in the upper level (taught by Gary Dellora) range from 11-13 years, while lower and middle group ages range from 5 to 10 yrs. These 2 levels are taught by Suzanne Palmer-Holton and her husband Trevor respectively. We are getting a sign: "Dhamma school/meditation in progress-do not disturb" so community members understand how serious students and staff are about interruptions to our Dhamma studies! We are grateful for the finance that was allocated to us by the Committee last year. It has provided us with some extra items that the teachers themselves could not afford to supply.

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*from Committee member Gary Dellora*

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## Report from the Youth Group

The Society's Youth Group (oriented towards ages 17 to 30) is a recent initiative that grew out of the weekly talks conducted by Visu and Barbara. There are 7 to 15 regular attenders who meet to discuss various day to day issues from a Buddhist perspective. Even tho' Visu and Barbara have moved on, the group wants to continue meeting with an expanded program, perhaps including meditation classes specifically oriented towards younger people. Currently the group meets every fortnight at the temple, on Sundays, from 5:00 pm to (roughly) 6:00 pm, but check the web page for latest details.

*from member Dulki Perera*

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### **Buddhist Council of Victoria receives Multicultural Award**

On December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2005, the Buddhist Council of Victoria (BCV) was honoured to receive an Award from the Multicultural Commission of Victoria for "*Meritorious service to the Victorian community*". The Council represents a wide range of affiliated Buddhist organizations in Victoria. From time to time it is called upon to comment and advise on Government policy, community activities, issues affecting Buddhist sangha *eg.* visas, and other matters where an overall Buddhist perspective is required.. Mr Brian Ashen, the long-standing President of the BCV, is well-known to the BSV community for his efforts to support and bring together Buddhist communities in Victoria.

In addition, the BCV is the auspicing body for initiatives such as the prison visiting program, the Buddhist education in primary schools program and a publication on the special needs of Buddhists in death and dying.

This year the BCV has celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the publication of a booklet on the history of Buddhism in Victoria. This booklet was launched by Mr George Lekakis, Director, Victorian Multicultural Commission at the BCV Annual General Meeting which was held at the BSV on Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> February last.

*from member Judith Macdonald*

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### **Buddhist Religious Instruction in Primary Schools continues in 2006**

2005 was a highly active and successful year for the Education program, with more than 10 classes taking place in Melbourne primary schools, from Footscray to Mt. Waverley. In 2006 the program goes to the country with a class ready to start at Daylesford Primary School. More than 25 volunteer teachers were trained in the 2 training rounds offered over the year. For some inside information and some very funny stories talk to Ray Anthony of his experiences. Vicki Fairfax and Poh Lan Chen were other BSV members who trained and will be placed in schools this year.

The response from the children, teachers and School Principals is most encouraging and the program cannot keep up with the demand for on-going classes from primary schools. Unfortunately, the funding we hoped to receive from a philanthropic trust is not available this year so we will be turning to the Buddhist communities for support to keep the program afloat and moving forward. This program is very much about planting seeds for future peace, harmony and the preservation of the Buddha's teaching.

If you can help in any way – not only as a teacher, but with administration, resource development and support generally we would love to hear from you. Of course financial contributions

are always welcome and the program has tax deductibility status.

For further information please contact:

Judith Macdonald 9489 1127, or

Sue Smith 0431 488 335, or visit the website : [www.bcvic.org.au](http://www.bcvic.org.au)

*from member Judith Macdonald*

### ***Sangha***

**Ajahn Brahmavamso**, the Society's Spiritual Director, will visit us at Vesak (21<sup>st</sup> May) and stay on for a few days afterwards (see the Vesak program on page 1).

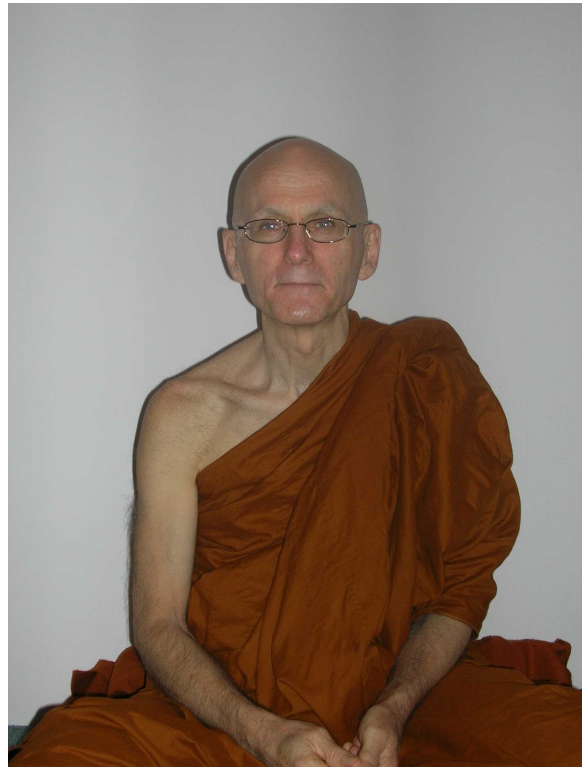
**Ajahn Chandako** will return to the Society in November for an in-house retreat.

**Ajahn Chandapalo's** visit to the BSV was a short one but appreciated by many members and friends. Ajahn is Abbot of the monastery near Rome and had been visiting New Zealand and South-east Asia since January. His warmth, kindness and generous teaching offerings during the period 14<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> March endeared him to us. He has commented in a recent letter that he feels sure he will come back to Melbourne one day and will perhaps be able to stay over a much longer period. We hope so!

**Ajahn Dhammanando** will be visiting from 25<sup>th</sup> June to 17<sup>th</sup> October and hence will be at the temple for the Vas (the Rains Retreat).

**Venerable Nisarrano** arrived in Melbourne after Visu and Barbara left and will stay at the vihara for approximately two months, from 10<sup>th</sup> April to 28<sup>th</sup> May. He has been at Bodhinyana Monastery near Perth and more recently in Thailand, where he will be returning for the Vas (the Rains retreat) this year. Many members knew him well as the former librarian at the Society.

Bhante will be conducting a guided meditation on Tuesday evenings from 7:30 pm while he is in residence (April and May), followed by a discussion. He advises that regular attendance will lead to most benefit. These sessions are suitable for beginners and experienced meditators.



Venerable Nisarrano at the vihara

**Ayya Sucinta**, has been invited to be Bhikkhuni-in-residence at the vihara in East Malvern for 2007/2550.

**Ajahn Sumedho** may be visiting next year for a short stay. Watch this space (or the web page) for further news.

**Ajahn Thanasanti** has expressed hopes that she will be able to return to the Society next year, accompanied by **Ajahn Thaniya** from New Zealand.

### **Thank You to a Recent Teacher**

A heartfelt thank you is the best way to express our gratitude to Visu for the intensive two months of Dhamma talks and meditation teaching he has offered at the BSV. This is only too soon to come to a close. The weekend metta

retreat over the March long weekend was very well attended and very much appreciated and the vipassana meditation evenings have brought many new people, as well as “old” ones, to the BSV. Thank you Barbara, also, for being a warm and accessible presence for so many people.

*from President Cora Thomas*

### **What Goes Around Comes Around!**

Reciprocal generosity between Sangha and the lay people is as important today in the Theravada tradition as it was in the time of the Buddha in that it allows the Dhamma to flourish. We can also reflect upon the success of this time-honoured tradition in Buddhist practice when we realise that Visu and Barbara’s time with us was entirely supported by the generosity of lay people and official funds were necessary only for the purchase of air fares. People donated many hundreds of dollars over the eight week period they were with us to provide for the requisites and many invitations to meals were forthcoming, accommodation was made available free of charge, and two BSV members in turn donated the use of a vehicle. It is heart warming to consider how Visu’s great generosity in his teaching offerings and Barbara’s assistance in so many ways was recognized and supported in the very best way one could hope for. Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu

*from President Cora Thomas*

### **New Members**

The following new members are welcomed to the Society –

Peter Alexander  
 Russell Dunne  
 Janakie & Sunil Kuruppu  
 Dushini Lokadassuriya  
 Clare Linden  
 Adrian Tee  
 Paul Du Ve  
 Priangi Weerasuriya

We hope they find that the Society is of real assistance in aiding their understanding of the Dhamma and of the value in permitting the Dhamma to guide our daily lives.

### ***From the Committee***

#### **Buildings maintenance**

- i - A structural engineer will be consulted to look into the fault on the western wall of the Dhamma Hall.
- ii – The (former) vents on the interior western walls were covered and painted to match the hall.
- iii – The hall and vihara carpets were steam- cleaned.
- iv – Quotations will be sought for the repair of the ceiling in the kitchen.
- v – The water leakage in the exterior notice board will be fixed.

**Garden maintenance** The Committee has agreed to purchase a whipper snipper and is asking for donations.

**Nuns Monastery/Retreat Project** The Working Group created to further the Society’s aim of establishing a Nun’s Monastery or Retreat Centre in Victoria has been made an official sub-committee of the Society. The Committee has approved the proposal to invite Ayya Sucinta to be Bhikkhuni-in-residence in 2007/2550, with a view to furthering the aim of establishing a Nun’s Monastery. The members are Diana Wadasinghe, Margaret O’Riordan, Catherine Lavars, Ray Anthony and Padmini Perera.

#### **Buddhist Council & Nuns’ Support**

History was made at the BSV on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> February, when over 50 members of the *Buddhist Council of Victoria* held a meeting at the BSV. The BCV required finger food and drinks after their meeting. This was very successfully catered for by a sub-committee of the BSV, the *Buddhist Nuns’ Support Committee* [BNSC], which

was recently formed to raise funds to support and accommodate Theravadin nuns. This catering enterprise was our first foray into fund raising and netted us \$700; well done BNSC and a big thankyou to the many women who donated their time and experience cooking cakes, savouries, making sandwiches and cleaning before and after the event, laying the tables, setting out the food and drink and attending to the guests. Professional caterers could not have done a better job. It is so gratifying to see BSV pulling together for a good cause. Our thanks also to Cora our President, who works like a Trojan for BSV and to all the Committee members who helped out. Watch this space for upcoming cooking course at BSV to be run by the sub-committee.

*from member Ray Anthony*

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## Retreats

**December Lay Retreat** The lay retreat which was held from 24<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> December last was attended by 10 to 20 people each day. Member Diana Wadasinghe is offered the thanks of the many who attended and benefited. The efforts and kindness of her friends, who provided lunch for the retreatants each day, are also appreciated.

**Maitripa (Healesville) Retreat** Those fortunate enough to attend the retreat at *Maitripa Contemplative Centre* led by Visu over 3 or 8 days from the start of April were no April fools! We were privileged to hear Dhamma Talks incorporating much wisdom and loving-kindness. A peaceful inner mental environment was enhanced externally by Healesville's bush and rolling hills and the added blessing of having a retreat in a fully operational Buddhist retreat centre, set up by the *Kagyū Evam Buddhist Institute* (many thanks to cook Sue- Ellen).

We were given 20 minute. interviews to discuss our meditation practice, and the

advice was sure - founded as it was on Visu's 17 yr. experience as a meditating monk.

We have much gratitude to Visu, who gave us guided metta meditations as well as vipassana instructions. Also, for the constant work helping with the logistics/organisation during retreat we owe a debt of gratitude to his wife Barbara; likewise to our competent retreat manager, Padmini.

We all expressed the fervent wish that Visu might soon return to offer us more Dhamma- Dana! Sadhu, sadhu, sadhu!

*from Committee member Gary Dellora*

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## Working Bee

The recent Working Bee (Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> March) cleared out the back shed and the shelving from the meditation hall, and renovated the path at the side of the vihara (so it could be used for walking meditation). Thanks to all those who contributed their time and efforts.

The next working bee is scheduled for Saturday 13 May – to clean up and prepare for Vesak.

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## Library Catalog on the Web

The catalog of all books and audio tapes in the Centre's Library is now available on the Society's web page ([www.bsv.net.au](http://www.bsv.net.au)). A search function is included, so a simple key word search is possible.

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## Audio Training

Recent events have highlighted the fact that the operation of our Audio system needs more personnel with 'hands-on' experience to:

- operate the sound system satisfactorily
- record the talks on the analog system (tapes), as well as the

electronic system (computer). As the tapes are being discontinued by the manufacturers, the computer system is getting more important.

The above tasks have to be done every time a teacher is giving a talk. On days when full & continuous activity is in place, it puts a burden on those who are attending to these tasks and it is preferable if there are sufficient competent persons available to share the load.

In addition to the above, there is also the need to edit and transfer the recordings to CDs. This is also time consuming.

Our previous attempt to set up a sub-committee to assist in this matter has not been very successful. Can I therefore make another appeal as a matter of importance for volunteers who wish to be trained in the operation of our audio system and the recordings?

*from Secretary Prem Nawaratne*

### **Patience and process:**

#### **why they will be necessary in 2007**

As we know, Ayya Sucinta has accepted the invitation of the BSV to take up residence in January 2007. We also know that she is interested in opening a centre for female monastics, perhaps initially an hermitage or vihara, and perhaps later, a monastery. But how these two happenings will connect we cannot know at this stage.

As she says in her letter of acceptance of residency for 2007, and in response to my initial correspondence with her, "I agree with you in seeing this project (for nuns) as a process that will develop in time with right intention and perseverance". At first, and for some indeterminate time, it will be a matter of Ayya getting to know us and the community learning and listening to Ayya as our teacher. The "unfolding of

a spiritual relationship that supports further growth in the Dhamma for both sides, ordained or not", something Ayya expressed in her letter, is what will take place first. The project beyond this will develop organically if conditions are right, that is if the community is ready to make the commitment of time, energy and finances that such a project will require. There will need to be much listening, quiet reflection, perseverance and support at first, and then, perhaps, we will succeed.

*from President Cora Thomas*

#### ***Extract from a letter from Myanmar***

The following letter was sent to Cora Thomas (President) from Greg Kleiman (former Committee member, who also organized many of our recent meditation retreats). Greg is now in Myanmar.

*I have managed to get access to my hotmail account so I can send and receive emails now even though I am far far away.*

*I have been working hard here and meditating a little. We have 60 people here all meditating and a couple of us running around trying to keep the essentials running. Most importantly keeping the water going. We need to run a diesel engine to pump the water for about 4 hours a day.*

*The buildings here are mostly completed, but there are many things in them that need fixing and the retreat has started and we try to fix things when we can. As we fix one thing another one breaks. For example a chandelier came crashing down in the meditation hall late one night. It had been screwed to*

the ceiling with screws that were too short. This meant I had to remove all the others and have to refit them. Then many of the taps in the room are cheap and are breaking so we have to replace them one at a time. Then the water pipes were put together poorly and they leak ,but to fix it you have to pull the whole assembly apart in each of the 24 bathrooms and redo it.

The whole place has been put together by people who have little experience and care even less about their workmanship. The contractors have fled and take no responsibility to fix anything. This is my problem now.

Besides that the centre runs ok. It is good by Burmese standards. The local hydroelectric station that powers this area has run out of water too. So we have limited electricity only when we run our own generator. At the moment we run it about 1 hour per day.

I have been in contact with my work colleagues in Australia and they are unable to obtain any idea when of it we will be working on the project we have quoted for. So at this point in time I am happier to stay here until this retreat ends on June 20th. I think in any event I may not return home till at least August. In that regards I am thinking that you should not nominate me for the committee as I wont be able to

do anything anyway. I will leave you to work this out and do what you think is appropriate.

...I am doing a lot of veyyavacca kusala here while others meditate. I am enjoying doing work that benefits others and get to meditate a little myself. It still beats working in an office any day.

...

With metta, Greg

from member Greg Kleiman

*The evil doer laments here, he laments hereafter. He laments in both worlds. He laments thinking that he has done evil. He laments even more when he goes to the woeful state.*

Dhammapada 17

The *Dhammapada* ('Words of Truth') is a collection of 423 verses in Pali, uttered by the Buddha on some 305 occasions for the benefit of all. The stories about the circumstances in which the verses were uttered were added by the commentator Buddhagosa in the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE. It is generally believed that most of these stories associated with each *Dhammapada* verse have been handed down orally for generations since the days of the Buddha. The Buddha's teachings were not committed to writing until more than 400 years after his *Mahā Parinibbāna* (passing away).

Copies of the *Dhammapada* are available for loan or purchase from the library.



*Here he is happy, hereafter he is happy. In both states the well-doer is happy. "Good have I done" (thinking thus) , he is happy. He is happier still when he is reborn in a blissful state.*

Dhammapada 18

**Email Bulletins** can be sent to members if they indicate their interest in receiving updates and news of forthcoming activities by email. To be placed on the circulation list, please send a message to the Buddhist Society of Victoria <[bsvmelb@bigpond.net.au](mailto:bsvmelb@bigpond.net.au)>, marked for the Secretary (Prem Nawaratne).

**Updated email contacts** – Unfortunately the Society's computer crashed recently and contact details for associates (non-members) were lost. Hence, it would be appreciated if all associates (non-members of the BSV) who would like to be kept on the mailing list would (re-) send their contact details (including name, telephone number and email address) to the Secretary (Prem Nawaratne) at <[bsvmelb@bigpond.net.au](mailto:bsvmelb@bigpond.net.au)>.

## Visit to Sri Lanka

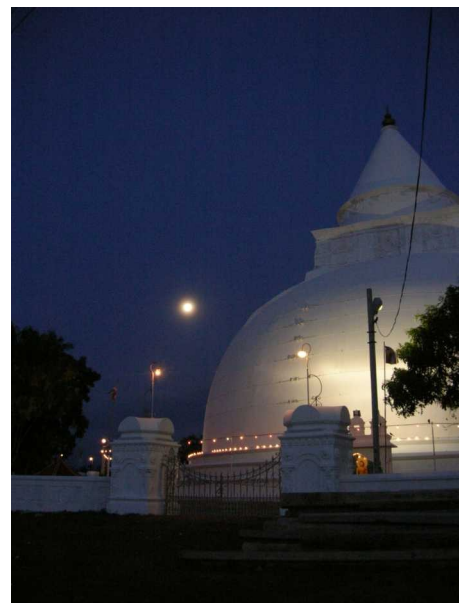
Committee member Bala Mudaly has intentions of visiting Sri Lanka in November/December 2006 for about 10

days to see some of the famous/historical Buddhist places there. He would very much like to know if there would be others at the BSV with a similar interest so that a group tour may be considered. A member of the BSV who is very familiar with Sri Lanka may be a most useful unofficial guide on such a group tour. Comments and expressions of interest will be most welcome.

Contact details: (H) 95697802 or (W) 85589113.

email:

[bala.mudaly@southernhealth.org.au](mailto:bala.mudaly@southernhealth.org.au)



Tissamaharama Dagoba under a Vesak moon

This edition of *Buddhāloka* was edited by David Cheal (contact via the BSV or at [rorippa@bigpond.net.au](mailto:rorippa@bigpond.net.au)). The views contained within do not necessarily reflect those of the Buddhist Society of Victoria. Contributions and news are welcome, particularly from members.

## SACRED TOOTH RELIC IN SRI LANKA

The sacred Tooth Relic is an incisor said to have been taken from the flames of the Buddha's funeral pyre and smuggled into Sri Lanka in the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, in the hair of a princess.

From then until the end of the 10th century CE, when the capital Anuradhapura was shifted to Polonnaruwa, only a few instances are recorded in the chronicle *Mahavamsa*.

Yet Fa-Hsien, the Chinese traveller monk, who lived in the Abhayagiri monastery in the 5th century, has left behind many details about the worship and rituals connected with the Tooth Relic. According to him, the procession instituted by king Kirti Sri Meghavanna in the 4th century CE, was continued on a grander scale. The sacred Tooth Relic was taken in procession from the Tooth Relic shrine to the Abhayagiri Vihara where the Relic was exhibited for three months with elaborate ritual worship.



Remains of Abhayagiri, Anuradhapura

Going by the descriptions of literary texts, and the sporadic references of the chronicle, it is possible to conclude that the sacred Tooth Relic was well guarded by the kings and it was considered to be the palladium of kingship. Some of the kings even went to the extent of prefixing the term 'Datha' (Tooth) to their names, e.g. Dathopatissa, Dathappabhuti, Dalamugalan etc., which clearly indicates their close association with the sacred Tooth Relic.

The intrusion of South Indian Cholas and the internal disharmony in the ruling houses resulted in the Tooth Relic facing unsafe times now and then. Yet, the historical records indicate that the Tooth Relic continued to be in the custody of the Anuradhapura rulers, until king Vijayabahu I shifted the capital to Polonnaruwa in the 11th century CE.

The present ruins of the Atadage at the Sacred Quadrangle (Dalada Maluva) in the ancient city of Polonnaruwa, are identical with the Tooth Relic temple built by Vijayabahu. It appears that the Tooth Relic, together with the Bowl Relic, was brought down from the Uttaramula - ayatana monastery of the Abhayagiri Vihara and installed in the Atadage shrine. This shrine, according to the Velaikkara inscription, was placed under the protection of the Velaikkara mercenaries who were in the service of the king.

The Atadage was well known for the ritual in which the eye-balls of the Buddha image located in the ground floor shrine room were washed annually with unguents. The architectural plan of the Atadage too, is significant in that this two-storied plan seems to have been the prototype followed in the later periods down to the present Dalada shrine at Kandy.

According to the text *Sasanavamsa*, king Vijayabahu I maintained friendly relations with his contemporary, king Anuruddha of Burma even to the extent of the latter requesting the Sri Lankan ruler to send him the sacred Tooth Relic. The wise king appeased the Burmese king's desire by sending him a replica of the Relic, which is said to be greatly venerated by the Burmese.

The years following king Vijayabahu's death appear to have been quite calamitous. The country came to be ruled by separate and weak rulers. Consequently, many Buddhist shrines were destroyed. In this state of affairs, fearing the destruction of the sacred Tooth and Bowl Relics, the monks secretly removed them to safer locations in the south, Rohana. With the accession of king Parakramabahu I in 1153 CE, the Sri

Lankan political scene assumed a firmer basis again. While rebuilding the country's economy, especially thru vast agrarian schemes, he lost no time in bringing about a renaissance in religious activities. Most of the existing religious edifices in Polonnaruwa can be attributed to his efforts. Parakramabahu I enshrined the sacred objects in a new edifice built in the centre of the city. He was also said to have had the exposition of the Tooth Relic in a circular shrine built at the Jetavana monastery, at the northern extremity of the ancient city.

The next great ruler to build a formidable Relic shrine was Nissankamalla (1187- 1196 CE). As recorded in his inscriptions, he had the Relic Shrine Hatadage built and, having offered his son and daughter to the Relics, redeemed them with the completion of the shrine.

By the beginning of the second quarter of the 13th century CE, the glory of Polonnaruwa waned, and with the invasion of Kalinga Magha, the capital was shifted to the south- western part of the country in the wet zone. Thus, began the Damabadeniya period, which period saw the blossoming of an era of classical literary works. By this time, the Tooth Relic and the Bowl Relic had again been taken away by the monks to a safer location in Kotmale in the central hills.

Later, King Vijayabahu III was reported to have brought down the two Relics and enshrined them in a beautiful edifice built for the purpose on the hill top of Beligala. The king re-instituted the rituals connected with the Relics and handed over the custody of the Relics to his elder son, who succeeded to the throne under the name Parakramabahu II (1236- 1270 CE).

Parakramabahu II brought down the Relics from Beligala in a procession with great veneration and placed them in a shrine built near the palace at the Damabadeniya rock. Parakramabahu conducted the Relics to Srivardhanapura, the city of his birth, and held a great ritual worship. He was responsible for the building of the Tooth Relic shrine at the Vijayasundararama at Dambadeniya, where the Relic was deposited and festive rituals were conducted by the king.

The peaceful and prosperous time under Parakramabahu was disturbed by the invasion of Chandrabhanu of Java. However, the king was able to expel the enemy and bring the country back to a stable status again. It is recorded that during a severe drought, the sacred Tooth Relic was taken out of the shrine and a great procession held. He placed the Relic on the throne and having worshipped the Relic for seven days, offered the kingdom to the sacred Tooth Relic, which resulted in the termination of the drought. This incident indicates the esteem that the sacred Tooth Relic enjoyed as a symbol of kingship.

Even during the lifetime of Parakramabahu II, his son Vijayabahu as sub- king, renovated and enlarged the Relic shrine and conducted great ritual services. As the chronicle records, he restored the ruined religious edifices at Polonnaruwa, including the Tooth Relic shrine and having placed the Tooth Relic therein, conducted an abhiseka (coronation) ceremony.

However, Chadrabhanu of Java invaded the country for the second time and after defeating the local sub- ruler at Yapahuva, demanded the Tooth Relic from Vijayabahu of Dambadeniya. Yet, the Sri Lankan ruler was able to defeat him and bring peace to the island again.

Bhuvanekabahu built a shrine for the sacred Tooth Relic at Yapahuva with a grand stairway, the ruins of which still portray the aesthetic achievement of the 14th century CE. He continued the tradition of paying homage to the sacred Tooth Relic daily.

Almost after his reign, Sri Lanka again faced severe droughts and also an invasion from the Pandyan country in South India, under the warrior Arya Cakravarti. He devastated the country and plundered much wealth and treasure, including the Tooth and Bowl Relics, which he handed over to the Pandyan king Kulasekera. The next king, Parakramabahu III visited the Pandyan capital and after friendly discussions, brought back the Relics and restored the traditional rituals. It is interesting to note that even at this late age, Polonnaruwa Tooth Relic shrine was in existence, for the king is said to have brought the sacred Relics from India to Polonnaruwa and enshrined them at the old Tooth Relic shrine at the ancient capital, which was abandoned by this time. According to Marco Polo, the well known traveller, the Chinese Emperor, Kublai Khan, sent a messenger to obtain the Tooth, Hair and Bowl Relics from the king. However, the king was able to please the Chinese Emperor by dispatching two fake teeth, which were graciously received by the Emperor who established ritual worship for the objects.

Bhuvanekabahu II (1293- 1312 CE) is reported to have brought the Tooth Relic from Polonnaruwa and placed it within a shrine built at his capital, Kurunagala.

Next ruler was Parakramabahu IV, during whose time, there was a religious revival. He reorganized the rituals connected with the sacred Tooth Relic in a systematic manner.

The next ruler of note connected with the story of the Tooth Relic was Bhuvanekabahu IV, who selected a new capital, Gampola, in the central hills. Yet, no mention is made of his bringing the Tooth Relic to this new city. It was possibly Vikramabahu III who had the Relic shifted to this hill capital and held a festival in honour of the sacred Tooth Relic.

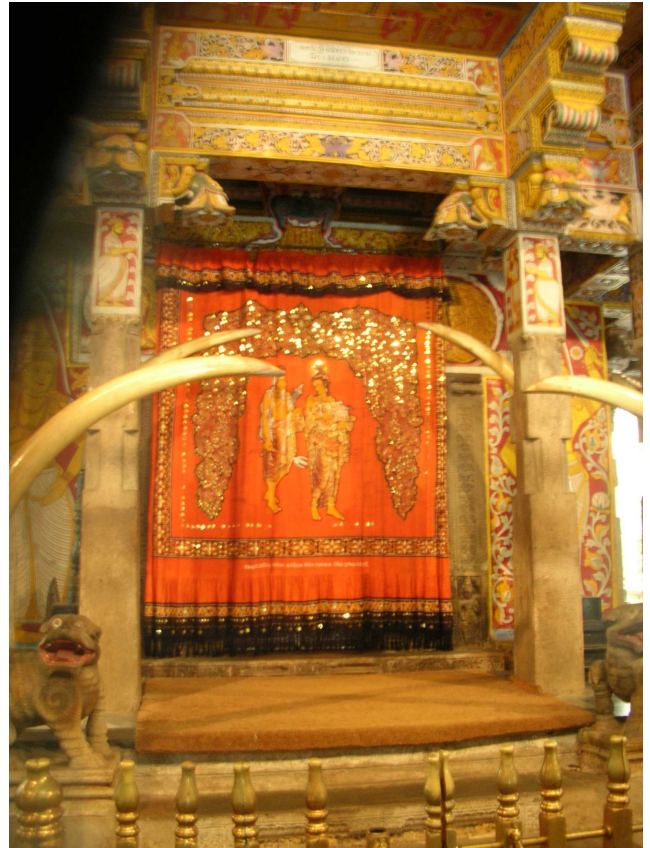
Thereafter, Bhuvanekabahu V (1372- 1408 CE) shifted the capital to Jayavardanapura Kotte closer to Colombo. Although he did not bring the Tooth Relic to the capital, he is reported to have conducted many ritual performances for the Relic. It was his successor, Virabahu, who brought down the Tooth Relic from Gampola. China again entered into Sri Lankan politics during his reign. The Chinese general, Chen Ho, invaded the island, captured the king and the family and took them before the Chinese emperor at the time, together with the Tooth Relic. However, conflicting and stronger reports conclude that the Chinese general did not take away the Relic and that he left the island after paying due homage and worship to the sacred Tooth Relic. This belief is corroborated by subsequent reports on the processions, festivals and rituals conducted by rulers like Parakramabahu VI, who was held in high esteem as the greatest ruler of the late medieval period. He is said to have built a three-storied shrine for the Tooth Relic, had four golden caskets enveloping the sacred Tooth Relic and promulgated several regulations in the service of the Tooth Relic.

The subsequent period, which saw the arrival of the first colonial power, the Portuguese, in 1505 CE, brought about the deterioration of Buddhist activities. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century CE the Portuguese seized what they claimed was the Tooth Relic, took it away and burnt it in Goa (India). However, it is claimed they were fobbed off with a replica and the real Tooth Relic was secretly carried away by faithful monks to safer locations. Thus, the Relic was shifted to the next

kingdom, Sitawaka. Prior to the bringing of the Tooth Relic to Ratnapura, it was taken as far south as the Mulgirigala Vihara and then to the Ridivihara in the Kurunegala District. The Tooth Relic was finally hidden in a cairn located in the Delgamuva Vihara in Ratnapura, and it was from this temple that the Tooth Relic was brought to its final and present resting place in Kandy by Vimaladharmasuriya I (1592- 1603 CE).



Sri Dalada Maligawa (the Temple of the Tooth) in Kandy, Sri Lanka



Inside Sri Dalada Maligawa

At 6:10 am on the 25<sup>th</sup> January 1998 CE suicide cadrés of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) exploded a massive truck bomb at the entrance of the Sri Dalada Maligawa, killing eight people, including a 2-year old child, and injuring about 25 others. The temple has since been rebuilt and a new gilded roof added over the Relic chamber.

The temple is a UNESCO-designated World Heritage Centre.

*extracted from the Mahavamsa by Secretary Prem Nawaratne*

## Interlude in Nilambe

I first heard about Nilambe Meditation Centre from a friend who had just returned from a retreat there, high in the mountains above Kandy, in Sri Lanka.

He was sure it would be of interest to me in my forthcoming trip to Sri Lanka. So I looked up the web page ([www.nilambe.org](http://www.nilambe.org)), wrote ahead and tentatively ‘booked’ a visit in late February this year – not quite sure what I would come across or even how I’d get there.

I needn’t have worried. I found a three-wheeler driver in Kandy who was willing to take me right there. As we climbed higher and higher, on more and more primitive ‘roads’, thru tea and pepper plantations, the air became cooler, the vistas greener and more peaceful. Then we arrived.



Entrance

After signing in and being shown my 'cell' (their word – not mine) in the males' dormitory building, I had the daily schedule explained to me. It is the conventional schedule of a meditation centre – rising around 4:00 am for an early sit and then a variety of sits, yoga, 'working meditation' and rest/study periods thruout the day. Lunch is the last meal of each day, altho' a late evening hot drink was accompanied by biscuits or the like for those unfamiliar with this schedule. We finished each day with a discussion on some aspect of



The view from Nilambe

Nilambe is nestled against a mountain side, below a pine plantation. It is a charming collection of stone buildings set in a well-tended set of gardens. It is above (and apart from) the mundane concerns – no electricity nor gas, no telephone connection, no computers, no hot water from the taps. We managed to survive (all too easily) on candles for light, cool showers and wood-fired cooking. Nilambe describes its facilities as '... adequate but basic' and these became an interesting exercise in 'letting go' ... of television, newspapers, novels, world news, personal decorations.

practical Dhamma – one of the few times that golden silence was broken.



The (relaxed) evening Dhamma discussion

This is clearly a Buddhist meditation centre, but has no aim to convert or 'sign up' any visitors. People from all backgrounds benefit from time spent at Nilambe, without them being obliged to walk away from the traditions in which they have lived. Its founding teacher, until his death in 2000, was Acharya Godwin Samaratne and the Centre continues in the lay-oriented teaching tradition he began around 25 years ago.

Other residents included some members of the Sangha on personal retreats, plus locals and foreigners – maybe 20 to 30 *in toto*. The standard language is either English or Sinhala ... or whatever is useful at the time (I remember the exasperation in the voice of Marcus from Austria at one morning yoga session “*Am I the only one here who does not speak French*” – tho’ he more than made up by being a ‘natural’ at standing on his head later on). This may illustrate the attitude to the daily rule. It was there to be followed and used as a guide – but it also freed us up from worrying about the next meal or whether the paths should be swept or whatever – thus enabling us to concentrate on why we were really there.



The kitchen & refectory

Food is more than adequate – it was satisfying and very tasty (tho’ I am not sure I should admit to looking forward to meal times ...). Accommodation is basic but comfortable and is charged at 400 Rp per night (a little under \$6). It is wise to contact before turning up (if only to ensure that the gates thru the tea plantations are not locked) – either by email ([info@nilambe.org](mailto:info@nilambe.org)) or by telephone (077- 7757216). Meditators are welcome to stay from 1 night to several years.

In short, my stay at Nilambe was a wonderfully valuable (and happy) few days. I have some very fond memories and feel I have been

prodded (ever so gently, but nevertheless determinedly) along my path. It is certainly worth considering for any visitor to Sri Lanka.

*from member David Cheal*

# Buddhist Society of Victoria

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**Buddhāloka Centre**

**71-73 Darling Road, East Malvern 3145**

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**bsvmelb@bigpond.net.au or bsvlibr@bigpond.net.au**

***www.bsv.net.au***

## **REGULAR PROGRAM**

- Tuesday 7:30 pm – 8:30 pm Introduction to Buddhist meditation  
(Library open 7:00 to 9:00 pm)
- Thursday 7:30 pm – 8:00 pm Meditation for beginners by Sayadaw U Pandita  
8:00 pm – 9:15 pm Meditation for all by Sayadaw U Pandita  
(Library open 7:00 to 9:00 pm)
- Saturday Full moon days – Sil observance (see notice board for dates)
- Sunday 8:30 am – 9:30 am Silent Meditation.  
9:30 am- 10:30 am Dhamma talk  
11.00 am Offering of dana to the Sangha followed by a shared meal. All are welcome to enjoy the food brought by members and friends. You may bring some food, as you wish.  
(Library open 8:30 to 11:00 am)

**Dhamma School** is held on Sunday from 9.30 am – 10.30 am during the school term.  
For enquiries contact Suzanne Palmer –Holton on 9776 4425.

All regular activities of the Buddhist Society are free and open to the general public.  
Non-members may not borrow from the library and do not have voting rights.



**Buddhāloka**  
LIGHT OF THE BUDDHA  
Newsletter of the Buddhist Society of Victoria

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