



# 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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## Vesak 2006 – 2549

### Decorations for our memorable Vesak celebrations

The newly formed BSV Youth Group spent the afternoon before the Sunday celebrations on May 21<sup>st</sup>, braving the cold and making two large, beautiful paper lanterns one red and one white and a colourful sign for the front of the meditation hall, which reminded us that we were celebrating the commencement of the 2550<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the birth of the Buddha. We are very appreciative of their efforts as they contributed to the atmosphere of great joy and beauty which prevailed during the three days and four evenings of our celebrations which were led by our spiritual advisor, Ajahn Brahm.

The meditation hall was absolutely packed on each occasion and many people could not fit in but were listening to the Dhamma talks from in the library and the Vihara. The two retreat days were also exceptionally well attended with about 150 people on each of those days. We are very grateful to Ajahn Brahm for making our Vesak period such a wonderful event and for his great compassion and generosity.

We are also grateful for the consideration and patience shown by all those who helped and attended. It is perhaps a little ironic that because of the huge attendances this year and the pressure this puts on parking in the neighbourhood and indeed our own facilities, the Committee is presently looking for an alternative venue for next year!



*from President Cora Thomas*



does at Vesak and Kathina...a wave

of people rolled in bearing food and filling the

It was to be an awful day. We were to have a choice of either sleet or hail. Well that was the forecast anyway. As it turned out, Sunday morning the 21<sup>st</sup> of May dawned crisp and clear. I know this, there was frost on my car.

I was at the BSV early. It was weird, the Dhamma Sala was full, but there wasn't a lot of food in the dana area. Kat Pee remarked that there wasn't as many people or as much food as he remembered there being in previous years. Wise ears, upon hearing this, counselled him to wait an hour. Then the BSV did that remarkable thing that it

Dhamma Sala to beyond full. I never get used to this. People coming to listen to Dhamma and bringing enough food to share with everyone. People happy to listen and share !!



At about the right time...11ish, lunch was held. It is genuinely nice to see so many happy faces (some of them absent from the BSV for way too long) standing in line to give Ajahn Brahm & Venerable Nissarano dana. Again, a manifestation of something remarkable....how many other places will you see people happily waiting in the cold for a chance to put a spoon of rice in an alms bowl? Learned minds...and at least one very unlearned one, estimated that there was 200 + people celebrating...well eating actually... Vesak.

People remarked at how happy everyone was. More than likely due to Ajahn Brahm being present. Or it could be that the BSV is simply a happy place these days and Vesak is the first chance that we have had to see just how happy it is. Easily the best Vesak at the BSV for a number of years.

Many thanks to the people who worked so hard for Vesak to happen. And a reminder... everyone is welcomed when they approach a sub- committee wanting to help.

*from member Russell Dunne*

## Hail The Blue Mountains!

On 19th May Sayadaw U Pandita, around a dozen yogis (including a bhikkhu, and 3 BSV members) were present at the Blue Mountains *Insight Meditation Centre* for the start of a retreat led by Sayadaw.

We were privileged to hear Sayadaw's wise Dhamma talks and interviews daily, be warmed spiritually by beautiful metta chanting, and be warmed physically by the central heating pipes!

Equally heart- warming was the support not only of other meditators but also the cooks and management.

Gleb Adlivankin, who has much gratitude to BSV and Bhante Thitinyano, used the retreat as a launching pad out of lay life and went directly from there to Bodhivana Monastery as an Anagarika.

One afternoon suddenly changed from sunny to lightning and thunder, largish hailstones arrived, still on the ground 7 cm thick in the morning. Yogis had fresh insight into "anicca", and Sayadaw

saw (and felt) hail for the first time in his life- so there was much mutual learning!

Those interested please note *Dhamma Sukha Meditation Centre*, Sayadaw's Temple, will hold a retreat led by him between 18 to 22 August at Healesville. Sayadaw will also lead a retreat in Healesville for the BSV between 10 and 19 November, this year.

*from Committee member Gary Dellora*

**Sangha**

**Ajahn Brahmavamso** (the Society's Spiritual Advisor) has been granted the ecclesiastical title of *Phra Visutisangvornthera* by the King of Thailand. Now we can call him "Chao Khun". This is a title previously held by Ajahn Liam, the Abbot of Wat Nong Pa Pong. (as announced on the web site of the Buddhist Society of Western Australia, [www.bswa.org](http://www.bswa.org)).



Ajahn Brahm on his recent visit to the BSV

**Ajahn Chandako** has been invited to come in November, for about four weeks.

**Ajahn Dhammanando** should have arrived by the time this newsletter has been printed. Unfortunately, we couldn't predict accurately the date of his arrival as he was compelled, for medical reasons, to come to us from New Zealand by ship, and, unlike our suburban trains (?!), trans-Tasman ships do not follow a tight schedule.

Nevertheless, he should have arrived and will be in residence for the *Vas* (the Rains Retreat).

**Venerable Nissarano** The members and friends of the BSV are very grateful to Venerable Nissarano for his beautiful teachings and example during his seven week stay in Melbourne. Not only did he give us great joy, but the immediate neighbourhood also benefited by his almost daily alms round which enabled people to open their hearts and practise generosity. He was also always willing to give his time and attention to individuals and we are truly looking forward to his returning to the BSV in 2008. He left us on 28 May last, but we're hopeful that he'll return and stay for a longer period in the not- too- distant future.

**Ajahn Sumedho** has accepted an invitation to visit the BSV in 2008/2551.

**Australian Sangha Association**

**National Sangha Conference, June 2005**

'Sangha' is a word that has been used for 2500 years to denote the community of Buddhist monks and nuns, the world's oldest and most widespread spiritual order. Not so long ago the sight of a Buddhist monastic, with their distinctive, elegant robes and shaven heads, was a curiosity in Australia. But the spectacular, sustained growth of Buddhism in Australia has been paralleled by the growth in Buddhist monastic communities.

Every major Australian city now boasts a dozen or more monasteries, with Sydney and Melbourne having over fifty each. These monasteries stem from varied national cultures – Thailand, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, China, Vietnam, Korea,

Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Tibet, Japan – and from various Buddhist traditions.

Up until now there has been no organization linking these different monastic traditions. But consultation and dialogue among Buddhist monastics in Australia has resulted in a growing consensus that the time is ripe to form a national representative body. Accordingly, the first National Sangha Conference was held on 8-9 June, 2005.

The aim of the conference was to formally establish an '*Australian Sangha Association*' (ASA). This will act in two main areas: firstly, to encourage spiritual harmony and understanding among Buddhist monastics and in the wider community; and secondly, to provide practical support and resources for Buddhist monks and nuns in Australia.

The conference was held in the beautiful bush surroundings of the Baden Powell Scout Centre in Pennant Hills, north Sydney. About fifty monks and nuns attended, representing virtually every Buddhist tradition, as well as a few lay guests. Speakers included Ajahn Brahm (the Society's spiritual advisor) and Ajahn Vayama. Accommodation was provided at the centre, and food was abundantly offered by the different Buddhist communities. It was, of course, at the meal times that many of the personal connections were made.

The MC for the event was Ajahn Brahm, whose humour, directness, and diplomacy kept the proceedings flowing agreeably.

The first panel addressed the state of the Sangha in Australia today. We heard Venerable Man Chung from the Taiwanese tradition of Fo Guang Shan, Venerable Dhammavasa of Sri Lanka, and Venerable Tenzin Tsapel of the Tibetan nun's community at Chenrezig all speak about the activities, problems, and successes of their monastic communities. Various essential problem areas started to emerge, such as the

necessity for English education for monks and nuns, and finding the balance between catering for a traditional Buddhist group and the broader community.

In the evening, we listened to the chanting offered up by all the different traditions, all with their unique languages and inflections, yet all conveying a sense of tranquil, heartfelt devotion. Venerable Tony Beaumont gave a short Dhamma talk on maintaining equanimity in the face of worldly conditions.

Key principles of the Sangha Association, that were decided at the Conference, included equal participation by monks and nuns and inclusion of all traditions.

There was some discussion about who exactly qualified as 'Sangha'. Each tradition has full ordination, which is unproblematic, but also each tradition has novices and other not-yet-fully-ordained monastics, and it is not always clear where the line between 'Sangha' and 'laity' lies. In the end it was agreed by all that the basic definition of Sangha was: 'A celibate monk or nun ordained in a recognized tradition of Buddhism'. In grey areas, we agreed that it should be left to the elders of a particular tradition to determine who constituted 'Sangha' in that tradition, providing they lay within the basic definition.

A two-tiered system for the Association's structure had been proposed. The 'upper house', so to speak, would be a Council of Elders, made up of the most senior respected monks and nuns in Australia. They would provide the spiritual leadership and inspiration, but would not deal with day to day administration. This would be handled by a Management Committee, the 'lower house'. Both of these would be elected bodies, the Council of Elders being elected for six years, the Management Committee for two years. This proposal was supported by all.

We then proceeded to decide on criteria for inclusion, designed to ensure fair representation of both monks and nuns from all traditions. After taking everybody's names down as the founding members, a vote was held for the Management Committee and the Council of Elders.

The closing address was given by Chao Kuhn Samai, which was admirably fitting, since he has lived in Australia as a monk perhaps longer than anyone else, and has always worked for understanding and harmony among the traditions. It is due to the long-established work by such as him that we are able to reap these benefits.

Those who attended were impressed by the total lack of ego and grandstanding among the participants. We had a job to do, and all pulled together to see it done, accomplishing a tremendous amount in a short time. By the end of the conference, the combination of spiritual harmony with practical achievements produced a tangible energy which we shall all treasure.

*by Ajahn Sujato, extracted from  
www.buddhistcouncil.org*

## **Short History of Ajahn Dhammanando**

### **our resident Sangha for the Vas**

Ajahn Dhammanando spent two years in Thailand as a VSO teacher in his early twenties without becoming interested in religion. Nevertheless, it seems likely that certain seeds were sown then, as most of the time he lived with Thai people rather than with Europeans. Several years later, in London, he met the nascent western Sangha, having been invited to a ceremony and meal by a Thai student in one of his language classes.

In 1982 he undertook his first retreat with Ajahn Sumedho and has been a practising Buddhist since that time. In lay life he helped to found a Buddhist group in Northampton, England and had

monks frequently stay at his house, as well as attending retreats whenever possible.

Later, he entered the monastery and became an Anagarika for twenty months, spending time with Ajahn Sumedho and Ajahn Anando before returning to the lay life.

Finally, in 1991, he returned to monastic life, ordained as monk 1993 and has been in the robes ever since. His Upajjhaya was Ajahn Sumedho and he trained for the first five years with Ajahn Sucitto at Cittaviveka (Chithurst) Monastery in West Sussex, before going on to gain experience in Switzerland with Ajahn Thiradhammo and in Italy with Ajahn Chandapalo.

Subsequently, he returned to the UK and spent a year with Ajahn Sumedho at Amaravati before returning to Chithurst for a further three years 2001-04. In May 2004 he flew to Australia, spending time in Adelaide and then Perth, where he stayed four months with Ajahn Brahm in Bodhinyana Monastery. The next step was crossing Australia by rail, revisiting Adelaide and then coming on going to Melbourne. In Melbourne, he stayed at the BSV with Ajahn Thitinyano for two weeks and visited Bodhivana Monastery and the Vimokaram Hermitage at Kallista.

Subsequently, he continued his journey to NSW and spent four months at Wat Santi with Ajahn Sujato, before crossing the Tasman in March 2005 and taking up residence in Bodhinyanarama Monastery, Wellington. He has been in Wellington for 15 months, during which time he has seen the resident Sangha grow from two monks to seven plus one novice. He looks forward to getting to know supporters of the BSV a lot better and to meeting other monastics in the Melbourne area. He's wondering if Melbourne's weather is any better than Wellington's in the Winter...

*from President Cora Thomas*

## The Full Moon day in May

How fortunate we are that Venerable Nissarano was with us for the Full Moon day on Friday, 12<sup>th</sup> May. We opened the meditation hall at 8am when Venerable offered the eight precepts to those who wished to take them and gave us a short talk. The evening was truly memorable as Venerable led chanting and meditation as well as readings from the Suttas about the enlightenment and death of the Buddha, and about the special qualities and virtues of the Buddha. An atmosphere of calm and happiness prevailed, and the evening was made even more special by a triple circumambulation of the meditation hall and the Buddha rupa. Our path was guided by tea lights and we each carried a flower, incense and a candle which at the end were placed at the base of the Buddha rupa.

*from President Cora Thomas*

## Forthcoming Retreats

Venerable U Pandita's retreat will be held from 10 to 19 November this year at the Maitripa Retreat Centre.

Ajahn Dun will be conducting a meditation retreat in March or April 2007 / 2550.

## Lay Course – Introduction to Buddhism

The latest lay teachers' course *Introduction to Buddhism* started on 3 May and finished on 21 June. Most of those who attended found out about it from the Society's web page. The next course will probably be held later this year (watch the web page or notice boards at the temple for further advice).

## BSV Youth Group

BSV youth have been fortunate over the last few months to have had insightful discussions on religion, life and even at times quantum physics, led by some of

the knowledgeable heads of the BSV community.

BSV youth would like to send many thanks to the speakers who have so far lead our discussions, who not only have increased our insight on different aspects of the religion but also have enabled us to look at ourselves with further clarity.

I would like to invite all those who may be interested between the ages of 18 to 30 to join us, as we found these discussions not only insightful but quite enjoyable - especially after discussion chats over tea and biscuits.

Discussions are held every fortnight with different guest speakers leading our discussions. Details are posted in the BSV web site – including upcoming dates and times.

Hope to see you there.

*from member Dilky Perera*

## Teaching Program

Teaching Buddhism in a State Primary School to a mixed group of children is both interesting and challenging. My fellow buddy teacher and I are very lucky to be in a well-run school with a very supportive staff. Most of our students, but not all, have an Asian Buddhist background and we felt it would be of benefit to them to be visited by a Western-trained Caucasian monk. The BSV in East Malvern had in residence just such a monk, Venerable Nissarano, who kindly offered to visit our students and talk to them of his duties and life as an alms mendicant and to have them offer him dana. The children were told of his visit a week prior and that they could bring him food if they wished. We had small tid-bits to give to those who did not, so they would all experience the joy of giving dana. We had our two classes sitting around Venerable who went into great detail on the life of a monk or nun showing them how the robes were worn, how monks and nuns live on the

generosity of the lay community, why they shave their heads. This prompted many good questions such as – “*Do any monks not receive food, and do they starve to death as a result?*” One bright girl said “*If all monks and nuns have always shaved their heads why is the Buddha depicted with curly hair?*” All the while each child was clutching his or her offering of food, which was duly done with great reverence, one young boy had a tim-tam firmly clenched in a now very chocolaty hand he showed it to us and asked “*Will I put it in the bowl?*” We said “*Better not*”, so he not reluctantly ate it very quickly. The visit was a great success, made so by Venerable Nissarano who is such a compassionate and sensitive man. The feedback the next week was better than I had hoped for. They all said “*The monk was like a normal man*” and he was “*So cool*”. I would like to continue these visits with other monks and nuns.

*from member Ray Anthony*

## Books from Taiwan

The Society has received a large consignment of books from the *Corporate Body of the Buddha Education Foundation* of Taiwan, for free distribution. The consignment includes a number of highly-valued and hard-to-source titles. Contact the Society's Librarian Yasmin Moore if you would like to see what has been made available thru this very generous shipment. We are very fortunate that this group in Taiwan has been so big-hearted.

## Garage Sale

On the 17 June last the BSV held a garage sale to further the project to establish a nun's monastery in Victoria. Sales on the day (plus a few on the day after) raised around \$2000.

## New Members

The following new members are welcomed to the Society –

Asoka Athuraliya

Simon Du

Bea Garnet

Vinitha Jayasinghe

Mrs Kalyani Rahatungoda

Mr and Dr Rukmal

Mrs Gayami

Samarawickrema

Sujeeva Setunge

Darta Tjahjad

Rohan Wimalasuriya

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

### Buddhist Conference in Perth

President Cora Thomas and Committee members Padmini Perera and Bala Mudaly represented the Society at the Fourth Global Buddhist Conference in Perth on 10 and 11 June last.

**Computers** The office computer has been updated and most of the data reinstalled. A wireless link router has also been installed at the modem, to allow independent internet communication to the library and the Sangha residence. A computer will be installed in the vihara before Ven. Dhammanando's arrival. It is proposed that the existing audio room computer will be installed in the vihara, and a new computer (with high capacity hard disk) will be procured for the audio room.

**Donations** \$500 has been donated to Bodhivana Monastery and \$250 sent to Ajahn Chandipalo's monastery, on behalf of the Society and its members. Venerable U Pandita is organizing the

building of kutis for both men and women at the temple in Springvale. One of the full-length curtains removed from the BSV hall has been donated to Venerable U Pandita's temple. The (BSV) Committee will also donate some money to his temple, in recognition and gratitude for Bhante's generous efforts at the BSV.

The Committee would like to acknowledge further donations to the Society from Gleb Adlivankin towards the nuns' monastery project. Other generous donations were received to cover the costs associated with Visu and Barbara's visit.

**Expenses** March to April saw some major expenses at the temple. \$5000 was spent on installation of air conditioning for the main meditation hall, further renovations to the hall and software for our (aging) computer system.

**Maintenance** The plumbing in the vihara (residence) had an emergency repair job immediately before Vesak and the installation of the new wooden cupboards on the western wall of the main shrine room has now been completed. Napasri Tanthuwani and her daughter are gratefully acknowledged for donation of paint and candlesticks. Lockable doors have been fitted to the rear shed side accesses.

**Parking** In spite of the notices regarding off-site parking, inconsiderate parking along adjacent streets by members and visitors on Vesak day caused many problems with the neighbours. The following guidelines should be emphasized for all visitors to the temple :

- do not use the private car park behind the corner grocery shop,
- when parking on the nearby streets, vehicles should be at least 60 cm clear of the approach curve to driveways, so as to ensure easy

access to the property owners' vehicles.

Even on busy days, such as at Vesak and Kathina, there is ample parking along nearby Waverley Rd, and you may wish to check whether there is parking available in the School grounds at Darling Rd.

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## Female Monks Revive Buddhist Tradition after 1000 Years

**Bangkok, Thailand** -- Women in the Buddhist monastic tradition known as bhikkhunis, or female monks, are gradually reviving the order which has lain dormant for almost a millennium, but their efforts are meeting with scant enthusiasm in Burma, Buddhist practitioners say.

*"When I did research on becoming a bhikkhuni, I found indications in all of the research that it was possible to recreate bhikkhunis, and I was greatly pleased,"* Burmese bhikkhuni Daw Gunasari said in an interview at a U.N. award ceremony in Bangkok in honour of International Women's Day.

In December 2004, Burmese authorities detained another bhikkhuni, Daw Thissawaddy, on her return to the country after she wrote to the top Buddhist authority, the Sangha Nayaka Council, asking for the practice of female monks—known as bhikkhuni and accepted in Sri Lankan traditions of Theravada Buddhism—to be reinstated in Burma, citing historical precedent.

Asked about her government's attitude to the order, Daw Gunasari said:

*"When they said we were destroying the teachings of Buddha, we don't have any intention to cause any disharmony in the monastic community. We just look at the rules of conduct and believe that we are right."*

*"Actually, all the abbots, if they had really looked, they would see that all*



*other people have become bhikkhunis. Only in this country are there no bhikkhunis. Sri Lanka has them now. Thailand is starting now. And so, only Burma will be the only one without them."*

*"It's really sad if you look at these things. What we are doing now is not to destroy the teachings of Buddha. You can find them if you search history. And so, we don't want to argue much. We don't want to say anything. History will show that we are doing the right thing,"* she said.

"Bhikkhuni" was the name given to followers of the Buddha during his lifetime, without regard to the person's gender.

Later traditions evolved into separate monastic traditions for Buddhist monks and nuns, with nuns generally accorded a lower status and barred from leading others in religious activities.

Daw Thissawaddy, 40, had been studying for a PhD in religious philosophy in Sri Lanka and been ordained there as a bhikkhuni, a fellow nun told RFA's Burmese service.

She was detained after returning to the Burmese capital, Rangoon, in December 2004 to attend the World Buddhist Summit, attended by Buddhists from all over the world.

A Burmese abbot living and practising religion in Thailand said the practice of female ordination as monks shouldn't be allowed.

*"It is not due to gender distinction,"* he said. *"It's like this—for one thing, the order of bhikkhunis disappeared... Their mentor no longer exists."*

*"It's because the order was destroyed. I'm looking at it according to the rules of conduct. It's not my opinion. It's the Buddha's opinion,"* the abbot said.

Thai Buddhist and bhikkhuni Chatiwan said the lineage was unbroken, however. *"A group of bhikkhunis went from Sri Lanka to China and they established another ordination of bhikkhuni,"* she said. *"The lineage is alive."*

Daw Gunasari said many in Burma were uninterested in the revival of female monks due to lack of awareness of the issue, rather than informed judgment.

*"Since these people do not know any historical evidence, if I talk to them, I need to show them the evidence and tell them about it. If we don't get an opportunity to do so, we can't do anything."*

*"However, we can only explain to those within our reach from here, from this country, from a Western country, as much as we can. We don't feel anything against them. I just believe that this is happening only because they don't know about this,"* she said.

from Radio Free Asia, March 25 2006

Original reporting in Burmese by Tin Aung Khine and Khin Maung Nyane. Written for the Web in English by Luisetta Mudie and edited by Sarah

Jackson- Han.

## **Europe's biggest Buddhist temple opens in Kalmykia**

**Kalmykia, Russia** -- On December 27, last year, the Golden Temple was opened in the capital of the republic of Kalmykia Elista (Russia), reports a REGNUM correspondent. The Golden Temple is the biggest Buddhist temple in Russia and Europe as well. Over 5000 people came to the opening ceremony, including residents of Kalmykia, representatives of Buddhist communities from Moscow, Volgograd, Saratov, the Kalmyk President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov and the Nepalese Ambassador to Russia. Representatives of Buddhist communities from Buryatia, Tuva, Mongolia and Tibet all participated in the ceremony.

Simultaneously, in front of the temple a statue to the White Old Monk, Kalmyk national deity, was also opened on Tuesday. The two-metre high statue symbolizes residents of the steppe republic. During the opening ceremony, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, called the monument a dedication to the Kalmyks who died during the years of deportation: “*We were in a hurry to construct the temple by the end of December, the tragic day when the deportation of the Kalmyk people started.*”

The size of the Golden Temple and the Buddha statue let the Mongolian delegation call the temple ‘a centre of world Buddhism’. The Buddha statue, reportedly to be the biggest in Europe, will be made in the town of Volgodonsk (Rostov Region) and erected in Elista (Kalmykia). As “*Nezavisimaya gazeta*” reports, the decision was taken by the republican working group to construct a Buddhist religious complex in Elista.

The sculpture will be nine metres high, made of metalware and covered by tinsel will occupy the central place in the European Buddhism Centre that will soon be opened in Elista. A plaster model of the statue has been already made by a group of Kalmyk sculptors led by Vladimir Vaskin, who in the mid-1990s created the first statue of the Buddha in Kalmykia in modern times.

(Editor’s note – Kalmykia is one of the constituent republics of the Russian Federation. It lies in European Russia, immediately north-west of the Caspian Sea and is the only European country with a Buddhist majority)

*from The Buddhist Channel*  
[www.buddhistchannel.tv](http://www.buddhistchannel.tv)

*Tho’ much he recites the Sacred Texts,  
but acts not accordingly, that heedless  
man is like a cowherd who counts  
others’ kine. He has no share in the  
fruits of the Holy Life.*

Dhammapada 19

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. We have also received many boxes of books for free distribution from *The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation* of Taiwan, including the *Dhammapada*. Contact our librarian, Yasmin, if you’d like a copy.

*Tho’ little he recites the Sacred Texts,  
but acts in accordance with the  
teaching, forsaking lust, hatred and  
ignorance, truly knowing, with mind  
well freed, clinging to nought here  
and hereafter, he shares the fruits of  
the Holy Life*

## Dhammapada 20

**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, via the

BSV web page, marked for the Secretary (Prem Nawaratne).

This edition of *Buddhāloka* was edited by David Cheal (contact via the BSV). The views contained within do not necessarily reflect those of the Buddhist Society of Victoria. Contributions and news are welcome, particularly from members.

## Can Women Become Arahants?

The following story could be of interest to those of us who sometimes wonder about this question.

Some years ago, a nun in Thailand died. She was well-known and respected throughout Thailand, among meditators in the Thai forest tradition of Tan Ajahn Mun - in fact, she was one of his original disciples. The highly-respected meditation master, Tan Ajahn Maha Bua, made it quite clear that she was to be regarded as having attained deep insight, and a chedi was built in her honour.

Her name was Khun Mer Gaaw. She was a shaven-headed, white-robed nun who would have been observing ten precepts.

Her monastery is in Muktahahn, a province in the North-East, not far from a monks' monastery.

People would travel to pay respects to her, in the same way that they visit other famous teachers. Visitors would be impressed by the level of orderliness and discipline about the place.

There are a few other women who are also well-respected in Thailand, but it is not known whether they reached the same attainment as Khun Mer Gaaw.

*from a member (name provided)*

## A Never Ending Story

Swish! Swish! Sweeesh! I am momentarily distracted by this very distinct sound of someone sweeping the path outside the meditation hall. It strikes me later that sweeping the paths at the Buddhist Society premises can be a *never ending story*!

Most times the paths are respectably tidy, but only occasionally have I seen people actually sweeping. This is a small mystery to me! Of course, there are times when the paths are heavily strewn with leaves and seeds from the many *Eucalyptus* trees nearby, and with pink flowers of the oleander bushes. Mostly this happens after a spell of wind or heavy rain. On one occasion, a notice was put up by a committee member appealing to volunteers to ensure that the paths are kept tidy.

Some Sunday mornings I take up the task of sweeping myself, before the morning meditation session. I quite enjoy sweeping with a firm, fan-shaped reed broom (acquired from some South-east Asian country I presume) which effortlessly does its job. Only the most stubborn leaves can withstand the thrust and push of this remarkable broom. When the work is done, I usually turn back and admire the clean paved paths and take a little ego trip, feeling pleased with my effort. But even as I put away the broom and take myself into the meditation hall, the *Eucalyptus* trees and

oleander bushes continue blissfully and quietly shedding leaves, nuts and flowers all over the newly swept paths! *It's in the nature of things, I tell myself.*

Once when I was diligently concentrated on sweeping, someone threw me a line of encouragement as he passed by. 'Do you know that one of the Buddha's disciples gained enlightenment in the process of sweeping!' Fat hope of it happening a second time, I thought. But then I do recall that *sweeping the path* is a long established mindfulness practice



in the 'forest tradition' of Theravada Buddhism. At least I had personal experience of this ritual a few years ago when I visited Wat Pah Nannachat in Thailand, famously founded by Ven. Ajahn Chah. One awoke



There are as many meditation techniques as there are brooms. You choose the broom that best works for you

each morning, at first light, to the familiar sound in the forest of many reed brooms sweeping. And there were enough leaf-strewn dirt paths at Wat Pah Nanachat, under the sun-speckled canopy of the forest, for all to practise *mindful sweeping* to their hearts content, morning and evening. I, too, was momentarily swept up by this very eminently simple and practical means of mindfulness practice! Meditation practitioners will readily agree that purifying the mind of unwholesome thoughts, too, *is a never ending story* – a lifelong endeavour.

*from Committee member Bala Mudaly*

## Interview with Venerable Nissarano

"Some people at the BSV may remember you from when you were a lay member of the BSV, most may not, so Venerable some questions.



**Where did you ordain and who was your teacher? How long did you stay there?**

I ordained as a novice in 1997 and a bhikkhu in 1998 at Bodhinyana Monastery under Ajahn Brahm's inspirational guidance. I arrived at the 'Monks Factory' in March 1996, soon after leaving Melbourne, and stayed there for nine years.

**After you left Bodhinyana Monastery where did you go?**

In February/March 2005 I accompanied Ajahn Brahm on pilgrimage to India and when the group returned to Australia via Thailand, I remained there. I travelled to north-east Thailand and spent a few months at the International Forest Monastery,

Wat Pah Nanachat, before spending the Rains at a branch monastery in the rolling hills adjacent to a national park, not far from Bangkok. In November I returned to Australia as my mother was sick and in hospital.

**Any memorable events or teachings?**

My novice ordination in 1997 was definitely the happiest day of my life, and the most memorable event so far. I've had many memorable teachings from some very memorable teachers- - Ajahn Brahm, Ajahn Jagaro, Ayya Khema, to mention just a few.

**After you stay at the BSV where are you travelling to and for how long?**

I will return briefly to Perth for the Global Conference on Buddhism before travelling to Ven. Nissarano at Vesak Sri Lanka on the 13th of June. I am planning to spend this year's Rains in Kandy. In late November I will to Burma to spend some time at a meditation centre near Rangoon, before going onto Thailand. I plan to stay there for a year or two and see how it goes before I return to Australia.

**When are we likely to see you back here?**

Who knows? Possibly in a couple of years. I was very impressed by my recent stay at Santi Forest Monastery in Bundanoon and would like to spend more time there upon my return. I've also thoroughly enjoyed my time at the BSV and have been very well looked after indeed. So next time I would like to spend a longer time here.

**Any suggestions for/observations of the BSV?**

The BSV seems to be going very well now. Its been great to catch up with old Dhamma friends and to meet many new ones. I have been impressed by the harmony in the Society and the helpfulness of everybody during my stay. It certainly encourages me to visit again in the future.

*from member Russell Dunne*

# Buddhist Society of Victoria

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**Buddhāloka Centre**  
**71-73 Darling Road, East Malvern 3145**  
**tel: (03) 9571-6409**  
***www.bsv.net.au***

## REGULAR PROGRAM

- Tuesday 7:30 pm – 8:30 pm      Meditation for beginners & experienced meditators  
with  
Venerable Dhammanando (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 – 9:00 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 by Venerable Dhammanando  
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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