



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 2007 / 2550

The Vesak sub-Committee has been active in planning the Vesak festivities this year. The most up-to-date program can be found on the Society's web page (www.bsv.net.au), but the program includes –

- Friday 4th May – Drama performance by Dhamma School students and the Young Adults Group at the Buddhāloka Centre, starting at 7:00 pm.
- Saturday 5th May – Ajahn Brahm will conduct a special dialogue with youth (age < 30), at the Buddhāloka Centre, starting at 8:00 pm.
- Sunday 6th May – Vesak day-time program at the Buddhāloka Centre, from 8:00 am to 5:30 pm. Ajahn Brahm will lead the day's activities.
- Sunday 6th May, Monday 7th May and Tuesday 8th May – Dhamma talks by Ajahn Brahm at the Monash University Religious Centre (Clayton campus – Building 9), from 8:00 pm to 10:30 pm.
- Monday 7th May & Tuesday 8th May – One day retreat(s) at the Buddhāloka Centre, 8:00 am – 5:30 pm.

In preparation for Vesak, there will be a working Bee on Saturday 28th April, starting at 9:30 am, to clean and tidy up the Buddhāloka Hall and surrounds. All are welcome for the clean-up. Please bring any tools you feel may help.

Vale Elizabeth Bell



On the morning of Saturday 17th March, our President for many years and Honorary Life Member, Elizabeth Bell, passed away. Elizabeth has been a stalwart of the Society almost since its inception. She was President for more years than any other presidency (20 years - !) and also managed a period as editor of the national journal *Metta*. She was central to the successful growth of the Buddhist Society and a tireless and effective contributor to the development of Buddhism in this country and in Victoria. In 1999 she was awarded the OAM in recognition of her services to Buddhism and the wider community. She was a woman of great strength, equanimity and loving-kindness. She will be missed. She will also be remembered with great affection and real

happiness.

On 31st March a memorial service, celebrating Elizabeth’s life and contribution, was held at the Buddhāloka Centre. Members of Elizabeth’s family participated and planted a commemorative tree in the vihara garden.



Memorial Service for Elizabeth Bell



A Personal Reflection ...

My first memories of Elizabeth go back to a cold autumn evening in 1979. I had read a few books on Buddhism that just seemed to ‘click’. The type of book that, when you put it down, your main reaction is “*Of course - how sensible and obvious really*”. So I had decided to turn up at the local Buddhist Society to ‘take the next step ...’.

It is no small thing to wander into such a foreign-seeming group, seemingly at variance with a whole upbringing, a whole family background. What did I find?



In that old, rambling white timber house, overlooking the park in Richmond, was a small group of disarmingly ‘ordinary’ people. No strange bells and smells, no strange incantations and foreign formulas, no off-putting earnestness to ‘sign up and capture’ this latest susceptible tyro. I particularly remember the warm and genuinely open welcome from this white-haired old lady, Elizabeth. I was almost disappointed at the lack of the exotic ... But I joined that night.

←A Mary St group in the early 1980s
(Elizabeth is third from the left)

As I gradually learned more and more of the Dhamma, I also came to appreciate that this “white-haired old lady” was the Society’s President - another good lesson in ‘not judging a book by its cover’ and in the need to leave the arrogant prejudices of youth outside the door. At first, I thought she must be a ‘tolerated public face’, in order not to frighten the horses, and the real movers & shakers would obviously be the professionals ‘behind the scenes’.

Not so. Elizabeth had been part of the Society, almost from its very beginning. She had seen it grow from a small group of enthusiastic amateurs (in the original meaning of the word, ie. those who do what they do for the love of it) in borrowed lounge-rooms, to a more or less established group of people with their own premises. And she had not just observed this growth, she had participated in it, fostered it and led it. This “white-haired old lady” was also editor of the national publication and a principal spokesperson for Buddhism in the wider community. I watched her guide, cajole and shepherd a sometimes impetuous, sometimes timid group of people thru difficult times and decisions - a truly remarkable woman.

She had strongly absorbed the Dhamma. Altho’ her knowledge of Dhamma and the Tipitaka was prodigious, she not only knew it - she lived it. Being President (and for 20 years - !) is not an easy task. You must convene meetings when many different opinions are being determinedly expressed. You must bite your tongue and hold back your personal opinions in order to remain an effective representative of the whole membership. She rarely, if ever, expressed the exasperation I know she must have felt when Committee meetings rambled on and went over ‘old ground’, yet again. But, at the same time, I know she had her own points of view, always informed and wise, of the direction we should take. I remember sitting in admiration as she gradually and gently led a proponent thru the arguments that we had all dealt with a number of times before, to arrive at the consensus decision we had already previously reached. And this was not patronizing guidance. It was genuine concern that we all felt ourselves to be equal ‘owners’ of the deliberations and decisions. She was an extraordinarily effective President.



Yet her amazing competence at this task was rarely properly appreciated by the wider membership. Elizabeth deeply knew the Dhamma. If ‘*true goodness is to do in silence what we would do before the whole world*’, then Elizabeth was truly good. She was truly modest and ever-willing to attribute successes to the efforts of others.

But there was even more to her, as I learnt after she relinquished the presidency. She was a very intelligent woman. She not only knew the Dhamma and wider teachings, she deeply understood them. They informed her daily life. She integrated them into the mundane dilemmas we all face. A small group of us would meet in her place on Monday evenings, until less than a year ago. She not only provided a venue, she often led us thru the discussions and drew us back to the central point of our ramblings. In spite of her insightful intelligence, she was not arrogant nor self-important in any way - she did tolerate fools gladly. She became a living lesson for me.

I will miss her. We will miss her. But she has taught us all so much.

We should offer sincere thanks to her family for enabling and supporting her contribution to us all, over many, many years. I know that I am a far better person for having known her and she still inspires me. I am truly grateful. Thank you Elizabeth.

from member David Cheal

What I particularly noticed about Elizabeth was the depth and genuineness of her compassion, whether it was for all those who suffered during World War II and other conflicts, the sick and the dying, or all suffering animals, even pests such as foxes - in fact all those who suffer in the world.

If the topic of World War II was raised, she almost couldn't bear to think about the horror of it.

Her advice was sought, when difficult decisions arose. She would consider carefully, and almost invariably give most helpful ideas, being rarely stumped.

She was most generous with her time, even if she was inadvertently disturbed during mealtimes, and heavens knows how many times she drank cold tea.

Her interest in animals dated from her earliest days. She said her mother was always taking in lost animals, and it was as if there was an invisible sign on the family's roof, which only the strays could see, inviting them to go to that house. Although she loved and cared for other animals as well, many people know that she had a particular affinity with cats, especially Siamese cats, which have a character all their own. She described how her latest addition, Tara, had been such a comfort to her, especially during her illness.

When she was President of the BSV, she was concerned to involve the committee in whatever was going on, and would always make telephone calls to air and discuss topics as they arose, to keep the committee informed, even if it was just the executive committee. In the days before conference calls, her telephone bill must have been considerable for a pensioner.

She was a wonderful friend to have, and her presence will be greatly missed.

from member Liz Cook

I first met Elizabeth at Mary St, Richmond in 1977 when I visited the BSV as a new migrant. Elizabeth was very welcoming and friendly. That was the beginning of my association with the BSV and Elizabeth. She had been a pillar in the first Buddhist institution in Victoria. She worked very hard during her involvement with the Society as a member and President of 20 years. She was very knowledgeable in the Dhamma and till her end was able to hold a conversation on the Buddha's teaching with clarity.

I followed Elizabeth as the President of the BSV and it was a hard task to fit into her shoes. She gave me all the support of eight years during my tenure as the President. She advised me on various issues and stood by me during difficult times. The BSV will not be what it is today if not for the contribution by its pioneers, especially Elizabeth.

I will always remember her as a beautiful human being full of Metta Karuna Muditha and Upeka – which means love compassion altruistic joy and equanimity.

Elizabeth wherever you are may you be well and happy. May you attain the ultimate goal Nibbana.

from member Metta Muniratna

Although I first met Elizabeth Bell as recently as 1999, shortly after she had received her OAM and published her book on the history of the BSV, I always felt she was very welcoming and very willing indeed to be of assistance to me, firstly as a new Buddhist and later as secretary then president of the Society. During the period of about 18 months when we conducted a quite intensive lay teaching program I occasionally sought her advice on how to convey to beginners some of the fundamental Teachings of the Buddha and her wealth of experience in teaching the Dhamma was immediately apparent in the generous advice she gave me. The most interesting recollection of Elizabeth is from the occasion when I was discussing with her the importance to me of the practice of metta as a way of keeping wholesome mind states. Her response to me was unforgettable. She said, "I find my mind very peaceful. I feel like a leaf blowing in the wind."

from President Cora Thomas

Sangha

Ajahn Ariyasilo will be staying with the Society for the *Vas* (the Rains Retreat), at the vihara in East Malvern, and may stay longer after the *Vas* has finished. He arrives in Melbourne in July, from Wellington in New Zealand (so let's hope he brings the rains with him and we have a truly rainy Rains). He has kindly offered to support the busy teaching schedule established by Ayya Sucinta since her arrival.

Samdech Preah Maha Ghosananda, the wonderful, boundlessly kind monk whom many have called Cambodia's Gandhi, died in the US Monday 12th March at about 8 a.m. An afternoon of chanting was observed thruout the whole of Cambodia. It is the kind of loss that cannot be measured.

From the Committee

Donation – On behalf of the Society, a donation of \$200 was sent to Ven. Dhammajeeva for the Mithirigala Monastery fund.

Hall Improvements – A Planning Application for the hall improvements, prepared by Asoka (the architect who prepared the concept plans as outlined in the previous newsletter) has been submitted to Stonnington Council. Notices (as required by Council) were erected on all external boundaries of the temple grounds, advising passers-by of the proposed improvements. We are now awaiting Council's response.

Vesak Grant – The Committee was successful in its submission to the Victorian Multicultural Commission and a grant of \$1650 was received by the Society for the Vesak Festival this year. The Committee also received a letter from the Premier confirming this grant from the state government.

Retreats

Sayalay Dipankara will be returning to the Society in July, this year, to conduct a retreat at Coastal Forest Lodge, Anglesea, from Friday 6th July to Sunday 15th July. Application forms are available on the web site (www.bsv.com.au) or at the temple in East Malvern.

Sil Observance

The observance of Sil and meditation on full moon days has resumed at the BSV this year, under guidance from our Bhikkhuni-in-residence, Ayya Sucinta. Each day commences with observance of the Eight Precepts at 8:00 am, followed by meditation thruout the day. If you are unable to come for the Eight Precepts or to meditate the entire day, then you may come for whatever time is available to you. Please bring lunch Dana to offer and share if you're staying thru the lunch period, 11:00 am to noon.

If a Sil observance day falls on a Sunday, then, after taking the Eight Precepts with Ayya Sucinta at 8:00 am, the regular Sunday morning program will be followed and the Sil observers continue meditation after lunch.

Sil days for the remainder of this year are –

Sunday 6th May (Vesak)
 Saturday 2nd June
 Saturday 30th June
 Sunday 29th July (Vassa)
 Sunday 26th August
 Saturday 29th September
 Saturday 27th October
 Saturday 24th November
 Sunday 23rd December

Sutta Discussions

Sutta discussions are held on alternate Saturday afternoons at the Buddhāloka Centre, between 4:00 pm and 5:30 pm. Everybody is welcome to participate.

Sutta (Sutra in Sanskrit), literally means thread. It is a discourse or sermon given by the Buddha or his contemporary disciples. After the Buddha's death, the suttas were passed down in the Pali language. In the beginning they were transmitted as an oral tradition, and finally committed to writing in 100 BCE. There are more than 10 000 suttas, in the collection known as the Sutta Pitaka, in the Theravada tradition. These suttas are widely regarded as the earliest records of the Buddhist teaching.

Sutta discussion group dates are –

Saturday 12th May

Saturday 26th May
 Saturday 9^h June
 Saturday 23rd June
 Saturday 7th July
 Saturday 21st July

New Members

The following new members are welcomed to the Society –

Saroja Disanayake
 Vikki Edlich
 Craig Hall
 Ngoc Bich Huynh
 Bill Jacobs
 Mai Nhu Pham
 Tranh Pham

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.

Library

The librarian would welcome donations of old (past) copies of the BSV Newsletter, in order to establish a newsletter archive. If you have any old copies that you're happy to donate, please contact Yasmin. You may have just the editions to fill the gaps in the existing archive.

Online Subscription Renewal

It is encouraging to see that members are increasingly using the *Renewing Online by Electronic Fund Transfer* system to renew their annual subscriptions. However, please note that just making the fund transfer is not enough, as the Bank statement only shows an amount paid into BSV's account, and we do not have any means of identifying who paid the money and for what purpose. Therefore, it is important that after transferring the funds, to follow through the next two steps of the procedure:

1. Note down the bank's receipt reference number for the transaction.

2. Complete the [Online Membership Renewal Form](#) and insert the bank's receipt reference number (obtained from step number 2 above) and submit.

Our Treasurer Chinlook is unable to identify some of the recent electronic payments to our Bank (CBA). Could all members who did not fill in and submit an [Online Membership Renewal Form](#) as above, please arrange to send one ASAP so that he can reconcile the accounts.

from Secretary Prem Nawaratne

Replacement Computer

The computer in the vihara has been showing its age lately. If anyone has a redundant (IBM-compatible) computer, Pentium P3 / P4 (not older) and at least 300 MB memory, please let the Secretary (Prem Nawaratne) know.

Nuns' Monastery

To further this major project of the Society, Ayya Sucinta Bhikkhuni will soon move to a new residence in East Benthleigh (a new vihara). As this is a rental property, the Society will be asking supporters to make financial commitments for its rent, services and upkeep. This further step has been enabled, not only by Ayya Sucinta, but also by Ajahn Ariyasilo's stay, and will permit Ayya to take the next steps in establishing *Sanghamittarama*, both in the physical and the spiritual senses.

In addition, to secure the procedural and legal status of the Sanghamittarama Monastery, there is a need for a revision of the Society's constitution. We are grateful that Ajahn Sujato has agreed to advise us on these (new) constitutional requirements. A sub-committee has been established to draft the necessary changes. Catherine Lavars, Yasmin Moore, Prem Nawaratne, Padmini Perera and Cora Thomas have all agreed to serve on this sub-committee. Ayya Sucinta is leading this group. Other contributors are welcome.



Sanghamitta's arrival in Sri Lanka, with a Bodhi Tree sapling, from a mural in Kelaniya Temple, Sri Lanka

Installation of Buddha Relics

On Sunday 11th March last a ceremony was held to install relics of Lord Buddha in the (head of the) main Buddha statue at the new Uposatha Hall of Buddha Bodhivana Monastery, in East Warburton. The ceremony was led by Venerable Ajahn Anan (visiting from Thailand) and the local Sangha at Bodhivana, including the abbot Ajahn Kalyano. The ceremony also marked the anniversary of 2550 years of the Buddha's teachings.

The day was also declared a Pa-Ba, an opportunity for the lay community to contribute towards the funds needed for the new meditation hall. It is anticipated that the hall will be completed later this year.



Uposatha Hall, Bodhivana



Installation of the Buddha Relics



Chanting on installation of the Buddha relics

Bhante Kiribathgoda and Bhante Seevali have established a charitable trust to promote the training and education of the Indian Sangha. With the growth of Buddhism in India there are now many Indian monks and nuns, but they have very limited opportunities for learning and practice of Dhamma.

Bhantes Seevali and Gnananda initiated a chanting ceremony underneath the Bodhi tree at Bodhgaya as a suitably auspicious event to bring together the Indian Theravadin Sangha. The Tibetan teacher, Tarthang Tulku (the Executive Director of *Light of Buddhidharma Foundation International*) encouraged his daughter to sponsor the event and to help work for the re-establishment of the Theravadin Sangha in India.

Thus began the International Pali Tipitaka Chanting Ceremony at Bodhgaya, starting in 2006 and with about 200 monks.

During the many discussions that took place amongst participants, the issue of training for the Bhikkhuni Sangha was raised. All agreed that this was a necessary and wonderful thing. A meeting was quickly organized to crystallize the idea into a practical format. That meeting was held on 24th February this year at the *Maha Bodhi Society*, Bodhgaya, and was attended by many senior members of the Sangha, including Venerable Sujato from Santi Forest Monastery in Bundanoon, New South Wales.

The next priority is to find some suitable land for a training institution and develop rules governing its operation. The proposed centre is specifically for committed trainees (no casual or guest accommodation) and is intended to follow the Pali Vinaya, including the eight garudhammas. Graduates would have a minimum of 5 years as a Bhikkhuni before they undertook teaching duties.

Progress may be followed on

<http://buddhavision.googlepages.com/home>.

from a report by Bhante Sujato, relayed by Ayya Sucinta

An idea whose time has come

...

Pali for Daily Reflection

A Pali Word a Day by the Mahindarama Sunday Pali School is a publication of the Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc. It aims to

assist new Buddhist students who are unfamiliar with some of the Pali words often used in Buddhism. An example excerpt follows –

Anicca – *impermanence; transience.*

It is from the fact of impermanence that the other two characteristics; **dukkha** (suffering) and **anatta** (no-self), are derived.

Whatever arises and passes away is **anicca**.
Whatever is **anicca** is suffering, and whatever is suffering is of non-self.

Anicca is the natural law of the universe. Everything – be it living or non-living, mind or matter – is subject to change.

In the law of **Kamma** (cause and effect), everything is the creation of its preceding causes and is in turn a cause of the after-effects. Therefore, what is in existence is an ever-changing flux.

It is not **anicca** that causes suffering but the clinging to, and craving for, that which is permanent and everlasting.

The last words of the Buddha were ... “*All component things are subject to change, strive on with diligence*”.

extracted from A Pali Word a Day – A selection of Pali Words for Daily Reflection pub. Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc, email <bdea@buddhanet.net>

By sustained effort, earnestness, discipline, and self control, let the wise man make for himself an island which no flood overwhelms.

Dhammapada 25

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 5th 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 copies of the *Dhammapada*. Contact our librarian, Yasmin, if you’d like a copy.

Fools, men of little intelligence, give themselves over to negligence, but the wise man protects his diligence as a supreme treasure.

Therefore, one should not be negligent, nor be addicted to sensual pleasures. The man who meditates with diligence attains much happiness.

Dhammapada 26 & 27

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.

**President’s Report for Annual General Meeting of the BSV
18th March, 2007 / 2550**

The Sangha

The year 2006 – 2007 was again a very busy year, brought about not only by the supporting of visiting Sangha and the full and comprehensive teaching program, but also because of our planning and fundraising in preparation for the arrival of Ayya Sucinta at the BSV in mid January, 2007.

Venerable Nissarano, from the Perth monastery, arrived shortly after last year's AGM and stayed with us until the end of May. Venerable Nissarano is well known to BSV members and friends as he was librarian at the BSV before commencing the renunciate life. His teaching program was very much appreciated. He also endeared himself to the community in Carnegie by his almost daily alms round along Koornang Road. He returned to Perth for a week or two after his time with us before taking off to Sri Lanka for the Rains with a planned visit to Myanmar to follow. We are looking forward to his return to Melbourne and a longer period in residence, hopefully in 2008.

Ajahn Dhammanando, who has been resident at the Wellington monastery in New Zealand for some time but came originally from Amaravati in the UK, spent the Rains period with us. He had visited the BSV previously but very briefly. We highly valued his teaching program which included a very successful sutta discussion on Saturdays. A number of lay people spent time during his stay cutting and sewing an outer robe for him – a new venture for us all - but we were unable to offer the robe as we had insoluble problems with the dyeing process. We still hope to make good as we now feel so much more experienced!

Shortly after Ajahn's return to Wellington we were fortunate in being able to welcome Ajahn Ariyasilo, another English monk from Wellington. It was also his second visit to the BSV but his first was very short and during a period when he was not well. We enjoyed his stay very much indeed and are hoping he will come for a longer visit later this year.

In the month of December into early January, often a quiet time at the BSV, the generosity of the committee and Venerable Vidjita from Dhammasarana in Keysborough, enabled us to have a small share in the fine meditation teachings of Venerable Dhammajeeva from a Forest Monastery near Colombo. He gave four excellent talks at Buddhāloka Centre as well as inviting BSV members and friends to participate in retreat days at Dhammasarana. Mother Mahaviro also returned to the BSV during that period and gave Dhamma talks.

Our warmest thanks must be offered again to Sayadaw U Pandita from the Dhamma Sukha temple in Springvale. He is a regular and much loved teacher at the BSV offering meditation instructions and a Dhamma talk on Thursday evenings. Many of our members also visit his temple on celebratory and other occasions, such as Friday evenings for Dhamma talks, retreat days on the first Sunday of the month and residential retreats at Dhamma Sukkha. Sayadaw also conducted a very successful residential retreat at the Maitripa Contemplative Centre at Healesville for the BSV in November, 2006. He is now assisting Ayya Sucinta in her observing of the bikkhuni vinaya. We thank him again for his continued wonderful support.

Last, but not least, Ajahn Brahm, the spiritual advisor of the BSV and a much loved and admired teacher of the Dhamma, again led our **Vesak** celebrations in late May, 2006. He also conducted two retreat days and gave four public talks. Close to 400 people came on **Vesak** day and to his talks, and the atmosphere was one of great joy and celebration. The only negatives were caused by this huge number in attendance, which created parking problems for our long-suffering neighbours and safety issues at the temple. We have set up a Vesak organizing subcommittee this year and have planned for three of the four public talks to be held at Monash Religious Centre; that is the talks on Sunday evening, May 6th which is Vesak day and Monday and Tuesday evenings. The Saturday evening talk on May 5th will be at the BSV for the Under 30s in dialogue with Ajahn Brahm. Ajahn Brahm is again generously offering two retreat days on May 7th and 8th.

Ayya Sucinta and the Sanghamittarama project

The BSV was very happy to welcome Ayya Sucinta to the community in mid January as expected and planned. She has quickly and effectively established herself among us as an excellent teacher of the Dhamma and a Sangha member of great kindness and spiritual strength. We are indeed blessed that she is here with us and I am pleased to report that the BSV's plans to establish a centre for female monastics, *Sanghamittarama*, is proceeding very well indeed. Our initial meeting with the community was held on Sunday, 11th February, just four weeks after we welcomed Ayya to Melbourne.

When we planned this meeting there were many issues to be resolved, our most pressing issue the finding of suitable rental property so that a start could be made to setting up the monastic centre, if possible by the Rains 2007. The generosity of Dr Dhananjaya Jayasekara, a long-term supporter and committee member at the BSV, in offering the use of his rental property in East Bentleigh rent free for 6 months with the option of on-going rental is allowing us now to put our energy into other pressing matters. These include public relations and fundraising necessary for covering on-going rental and other expenses with the hope that we can eventually acquire property suitable for a forest monastery. Our immediate task is a pamphlet to help serve both of these purposes and finding a way within the BSV constitution to formally express our association with the nuns' hermitage/monastery. A sub-committee has been set up to undertake this task and the process will be carried out with great care. The draft outcome will be brought to a special meeting of the BSV. Of course the city temple will continue to function as it was originally set up to do, as an English language Dhamma centre for visiting monks and nuns. But now we have the opportunity for the Buddha's teaching to be also offered from an associated nuns' centre. Mutual support should indeed enrich us both.

Fundraising for Sanghamittarama

Fundraising efforts and donations during 2006 realised the sum of about \$7,500 for the *Sanghamittarama* project. The sub-committee set up to work on fundraising had two successful food stalls during the year, but our biggest effort was a garage sale in June which raised over \$2,000. We decided we learnt a great deal from this latter experience – as well as how to make some money - and now know the many traps! Commencing at Vesak, 2007 other fundraising efforts will be underway.

The Teaching program

Sayadaw U Pandita has continued to offer meditation and a Dhamma talk at the BSV on Thursday evenings. Ayya Sucinta and the monks who visited us during 2006 have all offered meditation with guidance on Tuesday evenings which brings new meditators to the BSV as well as the experienced. Since Ajahn Dhammanando's residence during the Rains, a sutta discussion has been offered on Saturdays at the BSV and is on-going and still very well attended. We are delighted that Ayya Sucinta has resumed the observance of the Full Moon days at the BSV, as it provides us with a quiet day for meditation together and the opportunity to take the Eight Precepts.

Lay teaching

Because of the rich teaching programs offered by Sangha during 2006 – 2007 the BSV lay teaching program, *An Introduction to Buddhism*, was reduced to a meeting once a month, finishing November last. It is probable that from time to time lay teaching will comprise an important part of the BSV program as it has proved very successful, particularly with people new to Buddhism.

Retreats

Visu, who was teaching at the BSV commencing in February 2006, conducted a retreat at Maitripa Contemplative Centre just prior to his departure for Hong Kong in early April, 2006. Sayadaw U Pandita

conducted a retreat at the same centre in November 2006. There are three retreats planned for this year under the auspices of the BSV, the first commencing 20th April conducted by the very highly esteemed senior Thai monk, Ajahn Dtun who was with us two years ago. Then from July 6th – 15th, Sayalay Dipankara, a nun from Myanmar who has already twice visited Melbourne for BSV retreats, will return after two years absence to conduct a retreat at Coastal Forest Lodge, Angelsea. From December 7th – 16th, Ajahn Thanasanti, who is already very well known to us all and will be warmly welcomed, and Ajahn Thaniya, the senior nun at Chithurst in England, will conduct a retreat at Maitripa.

Other BSV activities

The Global Buddhist Conference, Perth, June 9th and 10th, 2006.

A large contingent of about 40 BSV members and friends attended the Global Conference in Perth, organized by the Buddhist Society of Western Australia. There were excellent speakers from many parts of the world, both lay and Sangha, and a number of important themes were addressed by facilitated panels of speakers. The themes included: The future of lay people versus Sangha in teaching meditation; Buddhism and fundamentalism; Buddhism and politics; Buddhism and Euthanasia.

Buddha 2550

The Buddhist Council of Victoria recently organized a highly successful exhibition of Buddha rupas from the various Buddhist traditions in the Melbourne Town Hall. A rich program of chanting, meditation and Dhamma talks as well as cultural activities accompanied this exhibition. Ajahn Brahm was the keynote speaker at the symposium on Thursday evening, 1st March, in the Capitol Theatre. He spoke in answer to the question, “*Is Nibbana Guaranteed?*” Other panel members addressed the questions, “*Who’s the Buddha?*”, “*Where’s the Dhamma?*”, and “*What’s the Sangha?*”. Many BSV members and friends attended this symposium and lent their Buddha rupas for the exhibition which was beautifully organized and presented according to country of origin or purchase. We express our gratitude to the many members and friends who worked hard to ensure the success of this occasion. The exhibition and other activities were in aid of the Buddhist Education in Schools Program, a very worthy program which has always received the strong support of the BSV.

Buildings and Grounds

Maintenance of the **vihara** has been much less significant this year and has mainly comprised the sewerage system adjacent to the dana sala which was repaired just prior to Vesak 2006. Other on-going maintenance needs have, however, been highlighted by an engineer’s report on the condition of the house and will be undertaken as deemed necessary.

Completion of the cupboards in the **meditation hall** after its repainting have added to its simplicity and beauty as has the opening up of the space surrounding the Buddha rupa. Our main focus is now on gaining a Planning Permit for constructing an upstairs **library** on the front of the meditation hall which will fill many long perceived needs for space at the BSV. Other structural problems caused by the drought on the east side of the hall will become part of that planned for building program. This library development was approved by a special meeting held in September 2006.

The **garden** is suffering from the drought, but as most of our plantings are drought resistant, the front garden surrounding the Buddha rupa is still struggling on!

Communications

Our web page is without doubt our most important link with the general public and is constantly updated by the webmaster. The Newsletter is another way we make contact with the membership and thanks to the diligence of the editor, it comes out regularly and is both interesting and informative. It is always a difficult task to find sufficient good material for a newsletter, so how about more people sending contributions! Of course, emails to members and friends and the noticeboard help keep people up to date.

The taping of Dhamma talks and producing of CDs and MP3s is another link with the broader community, as Dhamma is made available for purchase and loan. We are always looking for people who can assist in this process as it is exacting and time consuming.

A great big thank you

This year has again been a successful and happy one for the BSV. I would like to warmly thank the Committee for its hard work and support, and comment on the very positive and harmonious attitude of its members. I can truly say that it is a pleasure to get together as so much is achieved. In a way, a Committee member has a fairly invisible role as the outward effect is that things work smoothly. The sub-committees have also worked hard, thank you, the hall cleaners, those who mow the lawn and tidy the garden, the people who record and make recordings for our use, those who bring flowers and offer dana, the librarian and assistants, the women who offer as lay attendants to Ayya, lay teachers including the Dhamma school teachers, those who drive the monks and nuns, those who act on other committees outside the BSV that support the Dhamma and those who assist at Sayadaw's temple, those who coordinate the Youth Group.....the list could go on.

from President Cora Thomas

Book Review

Mindfulness, Bliss and Beyond by **Ajahn Brahm**

EVERYONE SHOULD READ THIS BOOK !!!!!

Good, I've gotten that out of my system.

Q. Why should everyone read this book?

A. Because it is simply the best book on meditation that I have come across in nearly twenty years of meditation and study.

Q. So what makes this book different from every other book on meditation?

A. For a start, a lot of them are, in my opinion, pretty shallow. They help and they are sincere, but they present a pretty limited vision of meditation. Also a lot of them will talk about meditation, but few enough will actually teach you how to meditate. This one does.

Q. So far so good, but there has to be more to it than a couple of instructions on how to meditate, what is it that puts so much daylight between "*Mindfulness, Bliss and Beyond*" and all the other books of its genre?

A. We all know how Ajahn Brahm likes to talk about jhana. In "*Mindfulness, Bliss and Beyond*" he teaches us how to achieve them. This is what sets this book so far apart. When I unwrapped my first copy my first thought was "Now I've run out of excuses". It really is that simple. Read this book, sincerely follow Ajahn's instructions and "the bells and whistles go off". Also I swear that when I read this book that Ajahn Brahm is in the room with me. In a sense this is very true, "*Mindfulness, Bliss and*

Beyond” is full of his practical, gentle, funny instructions. It is also remarkably pedantic and complete. Ajahn quite literally details a step by step path to jhana and ultimately enlightenment. The other thing that I found really surprising is that Ajahn manages to make the book accessible to pretty well everyone. Whilst the word “jhana” possibly had you grinding to a halt, this is very much a book aimed at the beginner. It also is a troubleshooting guide for those of us who have meditated for a while and want to “head out into deeper waters”. This is, in my experience, a rare thing, most authors will succeed in addressing either the needs of the beginner or the advanced student, but few will address the needs and interests as successfully as Ajahn does. Also this is the first book on meditation that I have ever read that actually has the jhana as its goal. In fact I get the impression that this is the reason why it was written... so that we can all achieve jhana. Not a bad reason for putting pen to paper.

Q. So, this seems to answer the question, just one more. This is Ajahn Brahm’s second book, any chance of a third?

A. A third book is mentioned at the beginning of this book, but it is hard to see how Ajahn is going to write a book that beats this one. Mind you, “*Opening the Doors of Your Heart*” is a very different book to “*Mindfulness, Bliss and Beyond*” so there is every chance that a third book will see the light of day, I’ll keep you posted.

from member Russell Dunne

Buddha 2550 Years – The Exhibition

This exhibition in the Melbourne Town Hall, from 26th February to 4th March was a considerable success and well illustrated the distinctive and various cultures from which Buddhism came to Australia. Here’s a small collection of impressions from the exhibition:-



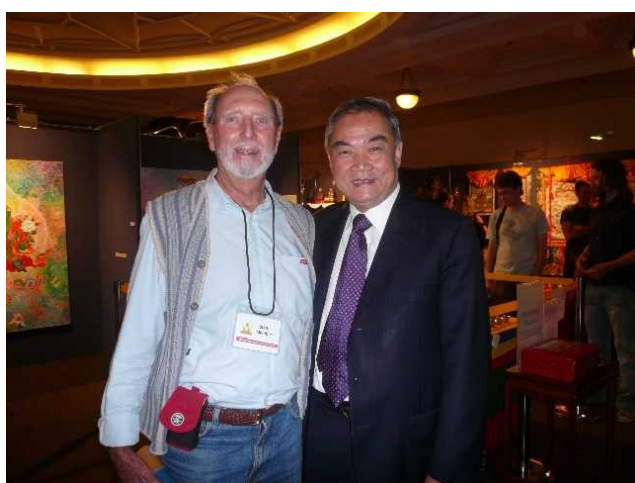
Sangha at the opening



Another part of the Exhibition



Part of the Exhibition



Two dignitaries at the Exhibition – Lord Mayor Cr. So (on the right), BSV member Ray Anthony (on the left)

Buddhist Society of Victoria

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REGULAR PROGRAM

(check on the web page for recent updates)

- Tuesday 7:30 pm – 9:00 pm Meditation for beginners & experienced meditators with Ayya Sucinta (Library open 7:00 to 9:00 pm)
- Thursday 7:30 pm – 8:30 pm Meditation for beginners & experienced meditators by Sayadaw U Pandita
8:30 pm – 9:00 pm Dhamma talk for all by Sayadaw U Pandita (Library open 7:00 to 9:00 pm)
- Saturday 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm Sutta discussions on alternate Saturdays (see schedule earlier in this newsletter)
- Sunday 8:30 am – 9:30 am Silent Meditation.
9:30 am- 10:30 am Dhamma talk by Ayya Sucinta
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 discussions with the Youth Group on alternate Sunday evenings

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

Sil and meditation on the full moon days (see schedule earlier in this newsletter)

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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