



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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Burmese Cyclone "Nargis"

Ashin U Pandita (at right, in Burma) has made two trips to Burma to help alleviate the suffering from the cyclone, and will go again after the rains retreat.

Corpses of adults, children and cattle were visible. Waves up to three metres high washed inland; Sayadaw likened the effect to being caught up in a giant tumble cycle of a washing machine. He investigated what was urgently needed and went to where some of the most destitute were needing food shelter and medicine, travelling for hours in an open boat. The local temple was like a refuge and distribution point, for kids and adults it was like a community hall: 300 families



from the village assembled and were given money for basics such as bowls and cutlery and plastic and bamboo for building temporary shelters. He helped at Kun Gyan Gone Jetty and Tamartakaw village in the vicinity of Rangoon. Many thanks to Australian donors to the ongoing appeal, as the infrastructure and saltated Irrawaddy rice bowl for the year's crops are now being rehabilitated painstakingly and gradually.

Large jars of 1000 water purification tablets have been made available at a cost of \$600 each.

Where tragedy is ghastly, as with Patacara who lost her infant, people can go temporarily mad; however, as with Patacara, Sangha can help with Dhamma. No small part of Sayadaw's mission was the comfort to mental affliction provided by a calm, compassionate Sangha member who could allow devout locals to focus on the familiar and feel that all was not lost and the world was not completely mad as long as the Dhamma was available.

To donate to the Dhamma Sukkha Meditation Centre cyclone appeal, contact the Centre at 69 Glendale Rd., Springvale, 3171.

from Committee member Gary Dellora

United Nations Day of Vesak

Springvale Town Hall on Monday, May 19th saw not only colourful pageantry but also solid Dhammic wisdom and compassion, all in action when Melbourne hosted the International Day of Vesak. Sometimes at the BSV we forget the contribution of our Dhamma brothers and sisters in the other strands of Buddhism, but here was an opportune and timely reminder.

The entry of what appeared to be well over 100 Sangha members (including Sayadaw U Pandita, Ayya Sucinta and Sister Attapi, and Sangha from interstate or abroad) was heralded by a spine-tingling blast of Tibetan horns, some of which have traditionally been made of human thigh bones as a sober reminder of our impermanence.

Once the array of Sangha representatives from Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana were impressively and statuesquely seated above us on the stage, we were treated to wise Dhamma advice from representatives from each group - from very senior elderly monks with calm wisdom of years to younger speakers, one of whom exhorted young Buddhists not to be passivist but to demonstrate compassion thru social activism. A tangible beneficent presence disappeared with the Sangha as they left the hall, some departing in busloads. Countries and cultures included Vietnamese, Taiwanese, Tibetan, Burmese, Sri Lankan, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai and on it went...

Three or four youth representatives - doctor, lawyer, lecturer- gave their inspiring insights into the vital relevance of the teachings in everyday life. They were very impressive in their understanding and clear practice of Dhamma, and ability to clearly and humbly convey it. This truly gave one optimism for the future.

A young child sang upon loving-kindness to all beings and other similar musical items gave joy. The BSV and many other groups set up tables with information and free books on Dhamma.

Unbounded gratitude is expressed to the Vietnamese community who along with others on the UN Vesak night and at a special concert arranged shortly after this event raised tens of thousands of dollars for the Burmese Cyclone Appeal, and China Earthquake appeal. Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

from Committee member Gary Dellora

Vesak 2008 / 2551 at the Temple

Thank you to everyone who helped to make this year's celebration a great success. With the



understanding of all those participating, we managed to celebrate Vesak with minimal disruption from the construction work of the library extension. The work was temporarily stopped for about a week for the occasion.

The offers from number of members and friends towards arranging transport, attendants to the monks, recording the talks, video taping the Ajahn's talks at the Buddhāloka Centre and the public talks at the Monash Religious Centre were greatly appreciated. Thanks also to those who tried to make some

decorations around our temple and centre, in spite of the construction work, making lanterns, helping with the Dana, collecting and disposing of the garbage.

The talks at the Monash Religious Centre were well attended. This year's talks were held in collaboration with the Monash Buddhist Society. Thanks to those who helped us to collect donations and the sale of the books at the door.

The letter drop to the neighbours was repeated this year. Thanks to those who helped with the task of going around the houses. The car parking went without any complaints.



This year's celebration started with a very short meeting with the Dhamma School children followed by the dialogue with the young adults as in the previous year.

The last item of our Vesak Celebration was the fund raiser which included the play by the Dhamma School students. Thank you to all the organizers, actors, the parents of the students and all other supporters for a happy evening.

from Committee member Padmini Perera

Vesak 2008 / 2551

Dhamma School's Plays

This year's Dhamma School Vesak plays were presented on 30th May at the Glen Waverley Community Centre with great enthusiasm. Some ancient stories were brought vividly to life by the children and their costume designers.

The three age groups were represented by three separate plays. The first was the well-known Jataka, *The Quail King*. The second was *The Happy Monk* and the third was a tale from the Dhammapada: *The Wives of King Udena*.



Glen Waverley Community Centre) which proved to be particularly suitable for our production.

The performances were very entertaining, enjoyable and well received by the capacity audience at the venue (the



We would like to thank all those who took part, the costume designers and scenery makers and also the necessary props which contributed to the success of the evening. The plays themselves were scripted by Gary and Dilkie and a couple of her friends who also produced and directed with the assistance of Trevor, Suzanne and Teleri. We particularly thank the parents of the children for their unstinting support and encouragement as well as all those who provided finger food on the night and helped make it a financial success for the temple building fund.

from our Dhamma School teacher Trevor Holton

Introduction to Meditation Course

Introduction to Meditation: a four week course for beginners, and those interested in a refresher.

Date: Wednesday: 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th August, this year

Time: 7:30 pm to 8:20 pm formal session in meditation hall. Please enter meditation hall on lane side as front of building is under construction.

Venue: Buddhist Society of Victoria, 71-73 Darling Road, East Malvern Victoria, 3145.

Please note that we welcome all-comers and that there is no charge for the Teachings.

The purpose of the course is to give newcomers experience of a variety of meditation techniques, which can be used in formal practice as well as in daily life. Each class will consist of about 30 minutes of information about meditation, followed by a 20 minute guided meditation and a period for questions, comments and answers. After each session, there would be opportunity for refreshments and an informal chat with each other. Please endeavour to attend each class as new information and techniques will be presented each time.

The course will begin by introducing how to develop mindfulness, as the basis of all meditation practice. It will then introduce breath meditation. The second lesson will be devoted to those things that hinder or help meditation. It will also bring in some techniques that can be used in conjunction with breath meditation, such as mantra and visualization. The third week will cover mindfulness in daily activities and walking meditation. The final week will introduce loving kindness meditation.

Committee note: We need 2 or 3 lay people to attend each Wednesday to welcome and “host” the newcomers and perhaps offer a cup of tea over in the dana sala after the 40 minute session, that is at about 8.20 pm. These volunteers would probably be from the BSV’s more experienced meditators. You would not need to commit for more than one week and the evening would be over by 9:00 pm at the latest. Please email the BSV or Cora on corak@bigpond.com, or speak to me or another committee member if you can help. We do need helpers!! This is a great opportunity to contribute to the spread of the Dhamma.

from President Cora Thomas

Sangha

Ajahn Ariyasilo will not be visiting us this year, as we had hoped, as he is going to Brazil to a temple that has been without Sangha for a long period. Such is his generosity that he offered to go when he heard of the need. We are hopeful that he will come again next year.

Ajahn Brahm (the Society's Spiritual Advisor) will spend the night of Thursday 21st August coming at the vihara. His flight is scheduled to arrive at about 7:15 pm but he seems happy to offer a Dhamma talk commencing at (around) 8:00 pm that night.

Ajahn Nissarano, who is leading our in-house course *Introduction to Meditation*, is now in residence at the vihara for Vassa (the Rains Retreat). He has been a fully ordained Buddhist monk for 10 years. He trained under Ajahn Brahmavamsa for 9 years at *Bodhinyana Monastery* in Western Australia. He has been practising meditation for more than 25 years, and has experience of a number of different meditation techniques. It feels as tho' he is part of the BSV family as he was a member and librarian before he took robes.

Ajahn Sumedho, Abbot of *Amaravati Monastery* in the UK, may be visiting the BSV in late 2009. His prime reason to visit Australia is to attend and an Abbot's conference in Perth (WA), and has indicated his willingness to visit the BSV as an extension of the same trip.

Bhante Gunaratne from the *Bhavana Society* in West Virginia (USA) will be visiting the BSV for a two week period (approximately) in early November this year, according to advice received from Ayya Sucinta. Afterwards, he will be heading to the Global Buddhist Conference in Auckland (NZ) in December.

Retreats

Sayadaw U Lakhana (from Burma), will conduct a retreat for the BSV in liaison with

Dhamma Sukha Meditation Centre in Springvale from 30th November to 9th December, inclusive. The retreat will be held at Candlebark Farm, Near Healesville. Watch the web page for further details.

From the Committee

Premier's Vesak Reception – Committee member Prem Nawaratne represented the Society at the (Victorian) Premier's reception to recognize Vesak, held on 14th May last.

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 –

Metta – ... *loving-kindness, divine love, active good will*

It is also a warm and friendly feeling of good will and concern for the well being of one self and others. It is a practice of positive mental qualities to overcome anger (**dosa**) ill will, hatred and aversion.

Just as a mother will protect her only child, even at the risk of her life, even so one should cultivate boundless love towards all living beings.

Metta should be radiated in equal measure towards oneself, and to friends, enemies and neutral persons, regardless of their strength and size, whether they are seen or unseen, whether they dwell far away or near.

The culmination of this **metta** is the identification of oneself with all beings, making no difference between oneself and others thus the so-called "I" does not exist.

Metta is neither passionate love (**pema**) nor desire to possess (want). It is above the normal

human love of caring, trust and respect. It is universal and limitless in its scope.

Metta possesses a magnetic power that can produce a good influence on others even at a distance.

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>

New Members

The following new member is welcomed to the Society –

Vidura Nalin Jayaratne

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.

Vassa - Rains Retreat

The Asahla Puja (the start of Vassa – the Rains Retreat) was celebrated at the Buddhāloka Centre by the chanting of the *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta* (Teaching on ‘Setting the Wheel in Motion’), led by Sayadaw U Pandita and Ajahn Nissaranao, of the full moon day of the 17th July last.

He whose mind is not steadfast, he who knows not the true doctrine, he whose confidence wavers – the wisdom of such a one will never be perfect.

Dhammapada 38

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 (al tho’ borrowing from the library is temporarily unavailable, due to the current renovations). 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.

He whose mind is not soaked (by lust), he who is not affected (by hatred), he who has transcended both good and evil – for such a vigilant one there is no fear.

Dhammapada 39

Dana

Thank you to **Meththa Muniratna** for organizing a successful lunch and fund-raiser for the BSV library project. Over \$3500 was raised from the very enjoyable Sunday lunch, held in the (old) Abbotsford Convent at the restaurant *Lentils Like Anything*.

Thanks are also due to **Shane Brunning** for opening the meditation hall at 5:00 pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays in May and June and thus giving people more time to practise meditation in a conducive environment.

A final \$3500 has come to the Society from the estate of **Bob Greenfield**. He has been a true benefactor and a memorial plaque will be placed in the new library to honour his life and his generosity.

A Match

Long time friend of the BSV Russell Dunne (whom most of you would know) would like to announce his engagement to Selina Konjo. Russell and Selina met at Melbourne University

where Selina is studying for a Bachelor of Science in March. A wedding is planned for May of 2010. If you see a couple glowing at each other on Sunday mornings it is reasonable to expect that they are Russell & Selina, who will accept your congratulations with alacrity and much joy.

Receipts and tax time

We are grateful to all those who have generously donated to the BSV and *Sanghamittarama* this financial year. Receipts for the BSV School

Building Fund account have recently been posted. If you have not received a receipt it is probable that we do not have your postal address and you could either email the BSV or pick up the receipt from a committee member when you next visit.

from the Treasurer Chin Look Tan

This edition of <i>Buddhāloka</i> 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.
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Progress with the Library extension to the Temple



As can be seen, the frame is substantially complete – except the porches. By the time this newsletter is published, the roof should be completed.

The new switch board is in and the electrician is busy cabling. The hunt for light fittings is continuing

The air conditioner installation – external heat pump unit and the piping should be completed by the time of publication of this newsletter. Internal air handling units are to be installed after plastering & painting.

The solar water heater supplier is awaiting the builder's OK to come and install it.

After the roof goes up, the builder will concentrate on the internal plaster etc; with the intention of completing the inside work by mid August.

Then we have to do the internal finishes such as painting, carpets etc; as this is not in the contract. The Committee is looking for donors for labour & materials for painting.

Hope the above gives some idea of the status of the project.



from Project Manager Prem Nawaratne

Report on Garden Working Bee held on 4th May

On 4th May Mother Nature once again smiled upon Sanghamittarama. The weather which had been inclement all week was mild, with no rain on the day of the Working Bee. Needless to say, we all breathed a hearty sigh of relief, rolled up our sleeves and went to work.

The activity was very well attended, with 10 people working on the garden and on maintenance tasks thruout the day. It was extremely pleasing to see a number younger people attending, as it enabled many of the more physical tasks such as gutter cleaning and tree pruning to be completed. We were able to mow, weed, and plant and mulch 20 shrubs/small trees, and a range of smaller plants, which we hope will grow swiftly to provide much needed privacy. Hopefully our plant selection has been prudent and we look forward to spring with some anticipation.

Great progress has been made towards refurbishing the front garden. However, there remain two aspects of the garden project that are yet to be accomplished. They are to:

- ❖ Convert the pond area into a garden bed; and to
- ❖ Determine the cost and feasibility of replacing the veranda awning at the front entrance to Sanghamittarama.

Thanks to the generosity of people who donated labour, money, plants and a trailer, most of the weeding, planting and maintenance work has now been completed. Grateful thanks to all those who supported the Working Bee. For the time being no more plants are required, however we do need monetary assistance to procure some topsoil/compost for the pond garden bed (3 Cubic Metres x \$46 = \$138). If you would like to contribute towards this cost, please let Barbara know (tel: 94800228).

Activities at *Sanghamittarama*

First anniversary of Sanghamittarama and first winter retreat

It's been one year ago that the house at 40 Chesterville Drive was renovated by members of the BSV and other helping hands. Ayya Sucinta moved to East Bentleigh last year in mid-July. This year, two nuns will enter Vassa at Sanghamittarama, and the monastery is established to such an extent, that they can plan to begin their first winter retreat in the month of August.

Ajahn Nissarano will undertake the teaching after July 10 and spend the Vassa at the BSV Buddhāloka Centre.

Ayya Sucinta will be in retreat from August 3rd to 16th, Samaneri Athapi from August 17th to 30th. During this period, you will find one of them in the meditation room at dana time and she will also be available for the evening chanting and meditation. The nun in retreat will only come to the kitchen to collect dana, but stay in seclusion for the rest of the day.

Pergola

The last step in the garden refurbishment will be the re-construction of a pergola at the front entrance. *"Replacing the pergola roofing will improve privacy, protect the area from inclement weather and also extend the usable exterior area of the Temple"* (from Barbara Watson's description of the project, which you can find on the notice board at *Sanghamittarama* as well as at the BSV). Part of the expenses will be covered by generous donors, but further donations are still welcome. There is a good chance that this project will be finished by the end of July. The next garden working bee will be held in September. We will inform you ahead of time.

Annual gathering of the Australian Sangha Association

Ayya Sucinta and Samaneri will participate in the annual meeting of the Australian Sangha Association (ASA) held in Canberra this year on July 10th. *Tibet, Myanmar, Vietnam* will be one of the subjects, since many Buddhist monks/nuns in Australia come from those afflicted countries. The use of sacred texts will be another topic (what texts we use, how we use them...).



Celibacy and the Awareness of Sexuality

by Ajahn Thanasanti (at left)

If I look at the experiences that have reappeared in my journey, I can see that over the years there have been times of intense pleasure, strong energy, deep pain, suffering, profound fear, transcendent joy and the stillness of a peaceful heart. These experiences have been both the gateway for and the result of much learning.

This entire range has also been part of my experience of sexuality, which is the theme I'd like to explore. In particular, I want to discuss the connection between the experience of sexuality with aggression, on the one hand, and loving-kindness on the other. We need to understand both these aspects of sexuality, whether we are celibate or not, as part of our endeavour to awaken to the full human condition.

For more than twenty years most of my Dhamma teachers have been men. Occasionally, there have been some very bold, insightful, sensitive Dhamma teachers who have talked about sexuality in language that I have been able to relate to and understand. I've felt grateful for their courage and compassion in bringing light and clarity into these deep waters. But when I was a laywoman I also heard Dhamma talks describing sexuality in ways that I could not relate to; that is, describing sexuality as dominance, objectification and raw attraction to physical attributes driven by a desire for gratification—all devoid of affection and genuine respect.

For me, the most familiar expression of sexuality was one accompanied by tenderness and care, spaciousness, joy, and an opening of body and mind as the sense of self is released through giving and sharing with another. To hear sexuality described emphasizing the instinctual component of desire, the raw drive for physical gratification involving the dynamics of power and aggression, sounded demeaning and foreign. However, years later, I came to realize that what these teachers described was in fact within me.

Growing up in California in the 1960s and 70s, with its lack of boundaries and cultural norms regarding courtship and sexual relationships, it took me a while to learn how much care was required to ensure ease and well-being within a relationship. I had to discover for myself the impact of sexual intimacy and the degree to which we internalize our partner's thoughts, moods, feelings and kammic formations. I discovered it is important to fully bring every aspect of a relationship into consciousness and to be clear about the forces that are operating. It is important to see the nature of desire, the nature of pleasure, the way of attachment and grasping, and the fear of rejection or loss, as well as the effects of these emotions on the mind and body. It is important to recognize that the longing for love, acceptance and fulfilment is part of the human experience and the dance of our sexuality.

After I decided to come to the monastery to live as a nun, I remember there were a few people who said in their parting blessings to me, "*Well, I hope that on your way to the monastery, you meet the man of your dreams and fall in love.*" I understood what they meant. They wanted me to be happy and, to them, going to the monastery meant choosing a life-denying existence. In our culture, the highest life-affirming experience is the consummation of a romantic relationship. Advertising strategies and movies are oriented toward the pleasure and happiness that come from falling in love and having a romantic relationship. It is considered the pinnacle of fulfilment.

Anybody in a healthy-enough relationship knows that relationships can bring a lot of happiness and pleasure, as well as the potential for healthy inquiry and learning. But anybody in a relationship also knows it is not always so sweet. There can be times when intimacy can be boring. One of the greatest experiences of loneliness is when two people are physically close but miles apart in every other way. Sometimes it becomes very ugly. I recall the story of a person whose unrequited love led to stalking, several acts of vandalism, attempted suicide and physical assault.

So, consummate love brings delights, but unfulfilled love, where desire, jealousy and power reign, can become a nightmare and easily turns to hate. This kind of love is one of attachment; it is not genuine love. Attachment and grasping cannot fulfil and, therefore, cause frustration. When there isn't insight into the frustration as it arises, the aggression that follows is an attempt to blame the trigger rather than understand the response.

In 1989, after ten years as a layperson, I entered the monastery. Not long after, a much loved and respected senior monk said that when he first became a monk his mind was so shattered that it was years before he could get together a healthy case of lust. He was very candid and open about it, which I

appreciated very much. In the ensuing years, I was to learn a great deal more about this subject as a monastic.

I thought I knew a few things about my body, energies, and the cycles of mood, emotion and sexuality. I thought I understood men. I was surprised to discover there was a lot I didn't know about the way energy moves through the body and mind, what it does to various parts of the system and how differently men and women experience things.

In a monastic lifestyle dedicated to meditation, inquiry and investigation, where restraint is cultivated and where there are relatively few opportunities for distraction, one's energetic system becomes more potent and the familiar becomes intensified. After entering the monastery I began to have an appreciation for what the monks and male Dhamma teachers had been saying about the connection between sexuality and aggression. I could feel the power involved in captivating and holding a person's attention. I could see clearly how fast mood swings and sexual desire were triggered by a myriad of things, not only by an expression of heartfelt openness and tenderness. I could see the desire impulse working and feel the movement of mind toward pleasure and gratification. I could see how the strategies that were employed to optimize pleasure—either for oneself or in a relationship with others—were often based on control, manipulation, competition, objectification and the desire to define one's territory.

As these dynamics became clearer to me, the connection between sexuality and aggression became more apparent. A human being is made out of energy. Thoughts, moods and feelings are all manifestations of energy that change in colour and tone depending on the characteristics it takes on. We are often absorbed by these characteristics in the same way that we are absorbed in the objects of our experience. What we think, feel and experience is of great interest. When there is intense energy in the system it can flow out in different ways. For example, sexual energy that manifests as desire, if unskillfully restrained or suppressed, can cause confusion, frustration and anger, and can easily be released as aggression.

Therefore, working with restraint requires that one become familiar with the experience of these feelings and the skilful means one can develop to work with them. Awareness is the key—you first need to allow your attention to rest with the experience. Feel the physical sensations directly in the body: the tightness, increased warmth, change in the texture of the breath. Let your attention rest there. Feel the unpleasantness, the mind contracting, and notice the desire not to experience these feelings. When you can see things as they arise and let your attention rest there, you need not be a slave to your aversions or your desire for fulfilment. You can be aware of the experience as it arises and watch as it changes and ends of its own accord, or is channelled through skilful sublimation. Once there is mindfulness and a clear comprehension of what is being experienced, options open up.

The energy doesn't have to be blocked or forced. One can allow it to flow through awareness, with attention focused on the whole body or the breath. It is important to know the difference between repression, which doesn't allow the energy to flow, and sublimation, which allows the energy to move through skilful channelling.

By bringing awareness and attention to the breath, release comes from exhalation and vitality from inhalation. When the whole body is kept in mind, energy can flow and become a source of vitality, creativity and radiance. Energy can be released or sublimated through the breath, physical work, long walks or devotional practice. It is important to recognize how much patience, skill and kindness toward oneself is needed to find one's way through this predicament. Humour helps a lot, but sometimes tears are inevitable.

Even as one becomes more skilful at allowing energy to flow throughout the system, it is necessary to see that ultimately when there is desire, there is suffering—there is “me” *here* who wants and something *out there* that is supposed to satisfy. It is important to recognize whether one is sublimating in a skilful way and working to transform desire into something useful. There is suffering as long as there is a “me” here and something out there that we either need to grasp or get rid of.

Sexuality and the way aggression is experienced and expressed need to be understood in order to open up the field of one's experience, and come to terms with what it is to be fully human. It's scary because it takes people into a realm where they feel out of control and where they are confronting things about themselves that aren't congruent with what they think they should be experiencing.

Some people think meditation is about developing clarity, concentration and kindness, and is divorced from coming to terms with primordial energies like sexuality and aggression. Understanding these energies, seeing what sets them off, what brings them into balance, how much they are part and parcel of having a human body and how they can be used once transformed, is important in our aspiration for freedom. Rejecting any aspect of what it is to be alive and to be a human being can be profoundly destructive and affect the way we see and relate to others and ourselves; it has a direct connection to our physical and mental well-being.

Many people go on a retreat and often the big question when the retreat is over is, *How do I integrate the insights I've gained and bring the spiritual practice into my daily life?* It is very unfortunate if someone feels that practice on retreat is holy and sacred and that practice at home is inferior, complicated or impossible. There is no such split.

As for celibacy, it isn't meant to be a repression or denial of one's sexual being, nor a condemnation of sexuality or of sexual relationships. It is not a life-denying experience. The standards of behaviour are clear: our pathway is through insight and understanding, and for me, love. When lived to its full potential, celibacy is a vital, embracing and creative lifestyle in which one is aware of sexuality in all of its manifestations and aware of the way it can be transformed into other types of energy. With celibacy, one is at ease with life as a human being.

To those interested in understanding the end of suffering, the Buddha recommended seeing the value of celibacy. It is a powerful tool for understanding desire and coming to terms with the nature of attachment. It isn't an easy path, but it can be very helpful because one has to consciously face the habitual patterns of this deep-seated energy.

If we want to free the heart from suffering, we need to question our relationship with sexuality in a sincere and genuine way. We need to have the courage to look carefully at the way desire, attachment and power are embedded within our experience. We must see for ourselves what is appropriate and how mindfulness, understanding and restraint can be further cultivated. We must ask ourselves if there is room for more honesty and integrity.

Each of us has issues that are more difficult to resolve than others and we need to know what they are. I grew up in an environment where being hostile and aggressive wasn't O.K. Coming to terms with these aspects in myself has been difficult because they were not congruent with my view of being a loving, giving and caring person. When there is a lack of familiarity with the energy of anger, it gets screened through thoughts like, *"I don't want to see it, I don't want to know about it, I don't want to deal with it, I don't want it to be there."* Sometimes the thoughts aren't conscious and one suppresses the unacceptable form of energy until one has the courage and strength of mind to wake up to these energies and embrace them. Then when anger comes it is familiar and no longer terrifies, nor is it used against oneself or others. It doesn't have to go underground.

So what does this have to do with compassion and loving-kindness? Classically it is taught that we first need to have loving-kindness and compassion for ourselves before we are in any position to spread it outwardly. Awareness has an all-embracing quality—whatever the experience, awareness can embrace, know and receive it. Judgment isn't needed; resistance isn't needed. As moods, feelings, bodily sensations, tensions and struggles are held in awareness, the reactive qualities of wanting and not wanting the experience diminish. Compassion comes from opening to suffering with the right perspective. It is not the all-glorious compassion of loving a million people in a distant land. It is the nitty-gritty compassion of being at ease with the things that we experience, whether or not they are to our liking.

True loving-kindness isn't the construction of a thought or a feeling. It is the ability to be present with experience on a moment-to-moment basis with awareness—loving-kindness *is* awareness.

It is important to see that within all experience there is a direct path to the stillness of the heart. Be it rage or the coarsest desire for gratification, within each there is a direct path to the stillness of the heart. A profound change takes place when there is sufficient strength of mind to let awareness embrace the feeling, without either rejecting it or believing it, and without becoming absorbed in it. The identification with experience we normally have eases up. We no longer need to get something, get rid of something or change our experience in some way in order to find peace, fulfilment and rest; by simply resting in the awareness of the experience, peace, fulfilment and rest are found.

This still, loving heart isn't a lovey-dovey, sweet, marshmallow smear one spreads all over the universe - metta is not a kind of goo. This still, loving heart is real; it is connected and appropriate. This arises when we understand the appropriate actions of body and speech and feel at ease with the full range of what it is to be a human being. As long as one remains cut off from sexuality or aggression, one is denied full access to the heart. Cut off doesn't mean an inability to act out; it means an inability to fully feel and understand the energy, and to allow it to flow and transform. It seems to me that spiritual maturity is when we can see through the veils of the world, the great range of our human experiences, and let everything bring us back to the stillness of the loving heart.

My experience is that the heart does open. Energy that used to be expressed in a sexual or aggressive way still manifests through the heart but is not coloured with the desire for gratification, possession or control. The heart is just open—it's allowing, it's receptive and it's universal. There is no focus on the one that “I” love or the one that pleases “me.” It is a bit like loving the whole universe rather than an individual person; it's not the glittery kind of being in love that rejects things that don't fit. It's abiding in love—a still, alive, vital place, a place of rest.

There was a nun whom we all loved very much who spent some time at Amaravati. I remember her saying that she felt much more sexually liberated being a nun than she ever did as a layperson. I understand what she was talking about. Within a clearly defined boundary of restraint, we have the encouragement, teachings and support to let the body be the way it is, to allow the energies to be the way they are, to understand them and be at peace with them.

We're not trying to get anybody's attention. We're not trying to dominate or control. We're not trying to live up to the culturally accepted norm of what a woman or a man should be. We are given the encouragement to know what it is to be alive, to be a human being, to be a woman, to be a man, and to know it fully and completely—not so much so that we can take this as our identity, but so that this knowing can take us to the stillness of a loving and peaceful heart. One of the many blessings of this celibate life is that one doesn't need to be tied up like a pretzel. One can be fully human, utterly alive, and be in peace.

Sexuality is a rich subject. I don't know if I've managed to do it justice or to speak to your experience. You decide. My willingness to be candid is largely motivated by the suffering and insight I've experienced over the years and by the suffering of others and their need to understand. We can, whether celibate or not, bring awareness, integrity and kindness to this aspect of our lives. If there are things I've said that you find useful, use them. If not, leave them with me. I wish for everyone what I wish for myself: that the practice bears the fruit of awakening to the full human condition, allowing suffering to end and the awareness of everything we experience be the still point of our resting in a peaceful, loving heart—a heart whose freedom is unconditioned.

Ajahn Thanasanti was a student of Ajahn Sumedho and received ordination in 1991 at Amaravati Buddhist Monastery in Hemel Hempstead, England, where she currently resides.

Program at Sanghamittarama

Meditation Day

Celebrating full moon of July and entering Vassa 2008: Saturday, July 19th

8: 30 am	Possibility to take Eight Precepts; Paritta chanting
9: 00 am	Guided sitting meditation followed by walking meditation
11:00 am	Lunch dana followed by Dhamma talk and Dhamma discussion after dana
1:30 pm	Sitting and walking meditation
3:30 pm	Tea break
4:00 pm	Discussion of Mahasatipatthana Sutta – Summary of Dhammanupassana (4 th foundation of mindfulness)

Everybody is welcome

Sutta Discussion only in the month of *July (July 5th and 19th)*, *4:00 pm to 5:30 pm*; to be continued some time after Vassa

Dhamma teachings for Children (age 6 to12) with Samaneri Athapi

Starting Sunday, June 29th, and every last Sunday of the month (July 27th, August 31st), 3:00 pm to 4:30 pm.

Meditation and Dhamma discussion for Young Adults (age 18 to 35) *only on June 29th and July 13th, 6:15 pm* to be continued some time after Vassa

The regular evening program will continue during Vassa:

Chanting and silent meditation, *Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday, 7:30 pm* (except July 9th and 10th)

Chanting and Meditation with guidance and Dhamma teachings, *Friday, 7:30 pm*

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

REGULAR PROGRAM

(check on the web page for recent updates)

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| Tuesday | 7:30 pm – 9:00 pm | Meditation for beginners & experienced meditators with Ajahn Nissarano |
| Thursday | 7:30 pm – 8:30 pm
8:30 pm – 9:00 pm | Meditation for beginners & experienced meditators with Sayadaw U Pandita
Dhamma talk for all by Sayadaw U Pandita |
| Sunday | 8:30 am – 9:30 am
9:30 am- 10:30 am | Silent Meditation.
Dhamma talk by Ajahn Nissarano |
- 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.

The **Dhamma School** is held on Sundays 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 (due to the current renovations, the library is closed until further notice)



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

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