



# Buddhāloka

L I G H T   O F   T H E   B U D D H A

Newsletter of the Buddhist Society of Victoria

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Volume 14 No. 24  
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Winter

## Dhammapada in Parliament

A copy of the Dhammapada has been presented to the Federal Parliament by the President of the Australian Federation of Buddhist Councils (Brian Ashen). It will be kept in the despatch box, on the central table, in front of the Prime Minister.



from the left: Mr Ian Harris (Clerk of the House of Representatives), Indra Kuruppa (Parliamentary Library), Ven. Chi Kwang Sunim, Mr Jim Ferguson, Ven. Quang Ba, Mrs Mohini Gunusekera, Mr Harry Jenkins (Speaker of the House of Representatives), Mr Brian Ashen (President, Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils), Ven. David Lungtuk (President, Australian Sangha Association), Lama Choedak Rinpoche, Ven. Sujato

The following speech was made by Brian Ashen on the presentation of this copy of the Dhammapada.

*We come together today to present to our federal parliament a very special Buddhist text, the Dhammapada. In Buddhism there is not one single text that we can point to and say that is our 'Bible' or 'Koran'. The Lord Buddha taught many thousands of teachings or sutras. Some are short and some long; some are thousands of verses in length and are bound in many volumes. However, there are some*

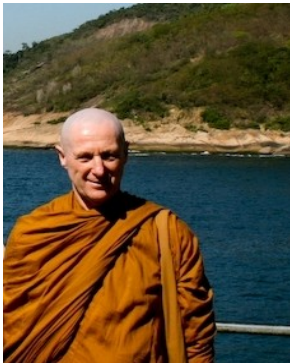
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teachings of the Buddha that hold a special place in all the traditions and that text is the *Dhammapada*. This is the book that we present to you today.

We are not aware of any Buddhist followers in the federal parliament. However, in the event of a Buddhist being elected, what ever the party of politics they represent, this book will be ready to guide them as they take their oath of service. And I hope that this book is used many times in the future.

Mr Jenkins, thank you for your hospitality and your acknowledgment of the Buddhist communities in Australia.

## Interview with Ajahn Ariyasilo



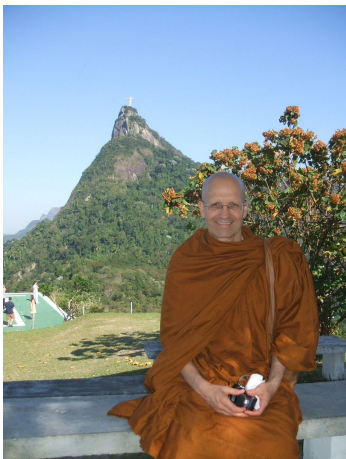
1 What countries have you lived in since you were last in Australia?

England and Brazil

2 What took you to Brazil?

The current president of the *Buddhist Society of Brasil* (SBB) Fabiana Gomes visited Amaravati Monastery in England in the Autumn of 2007 to talk to Ajahn Sumedho and other members of the community about the situation of the *Buddhist Society of Brazil* and their established Vihara in Rio de Janeiro and to ask if any of our community would be interested to visit there to teach, as they now have no permanent resident teacher. She also wanted to see how Amaravati was established as they have hopes of establishing a Theravada Monastery in Brazil in the future and feel that the style that has evolved in the west through the Ajahn Cha tradition, and especially through Ajahn Sumedho in England, is of interest to them.

I returned to Amaravati in November 2007 from Australia after spending eighteen months in New Zealand and the 2007 Vassa here at the BSV. Fabiana was still at Amaravati but I did not meet her. In April 2008 I heard about the visit of Fabiana and her request for someone to visit Brazil to stay and teach at their Vihara. I was very interested in this opportunity so I asked Ajahn Sumedho if it would be possible for me to spend the next Vassa there. After some discussion about what it might entail he agreed to this idea and suggested that I should speak to Ajahn Vajiro who was going to visit Rio in July for three weeks before returning to spend the second Vassa at Amaravati. Ajahn Vajiro also very kindly agreed with my request so after he returned in early August from his visit, I went to Brazil to spend the second Vassa of 2008.



← Ajahn Vajiro with the Christ statue in the background

3 Could you please give a brief history of the Rio Vihara?

From what I understand there has been an interest in Buddhism in Rio de Janeiro since the mid 1950s. This I believe was introduced through the Theosophical Society which as they were doing in other countries started to introduce the teachings of the Buddha to a wider public through classes and discussion groups. Certainly, Buddhism was being taught in Rio de Janeiro in the 1960s in a group made up of the various schools that were representing Buddhism by that time and meditation was popular.

In the late 1960s a Theravada Vihara was established in the Rio suburb of Santa Theresa on the edge of the Tijuca National Park. It was established by a Sri Lankan Bhikkhu Ven. Anaruda who then became the resident teacher there. After a period of seven years teaching at the vihara he disrobed and returned to

lay life. Living now in Rio de Janeiro he is still much respected by his old students for establishing the vihara and for his teachings especially on meditation, he is now known by his lay name Don.

From 1975 to 1979 the Sri Lankan Bhikkhu Ven Shanti Bhadra took up residence there.



← Arthur & Don (at right)

By this time, the first Bhikkhu of Brazilian origin, Ven Dhammanando had been ordained in Thailand and, after six years living in Sri Lanka and Thailand, returned to Brazil and became the resident monk and teacher for the many Brazilian people who were coming to the vihara at that time. Unfortunately, after some years, he also decided to disrobe so that he could care for a family member who was sick. The

next Bhikkhu to become the resident teacher at the Rio vihara was the Ven. P Vipassi Nayaka Thera, a senior Sri Lankan monk who was invited to come from Sri Lanka. He served as the resident teacher at the Rio Vihara from 1986 until he passed away in 2006 at the age of 72. While he was resident teacher at the Vihara Bhante Vipassi invited Bhante Gunaratana from Bhavana Society in West Virginia USA, to visit once a year to teach meditation, so the students at the vihara have been fortunate enough to have teachings first from him and later from Bhante Rahula also from Bhavana society. Two other monks Bhante Kasapa, who is English, spent a period there and a Thai Bhikkhu also spent a vassa at the Rio Vihara offering teachings. There is still much interest in Buddhism in Rio de Janeiro but as the social climate has changed over the years and because of the lack of a resident teacher, especially a Portuguese speaking one, not so many people come to the weekend pujas now as they did before. Over the years other Theravada groups, which are associated with the Buddhist Society of Brazil, have started in three other cities, a permanent Portuguese speaking sangha representation would no doubt help to increase the size of the groups and create more interest in Buddhism, especially in meditation.

The SBB committee work hard keeping the vihara going, providing weekend pujas, meditation retreats and also translating for the visiting teachers. When there are no visiting teachers some of the committee members do the teaching. Portuguese is the language of Brazil so in the nearly four months I was there every talk had to be translated into Portuguese which is a lot of work for them, and certainly has its disadvantages for both the speaker and the listener. They are a very dedicated group of people.

The Vihara itself is in amongst the lush trees of the Tijuca national Park and is approached from the road by three fairly long steep flights of stairs, which certainly puts a limit on who can visit it. There is no vehicle access. The hill continues up through the vihara but there is a small flat area at the top of the steps on which the goldfish pond, shrine room, men's dormitory, kitchen and toilet block stand. Above these are women's dormitory and clothes drying area. Another steep flight of steps takes you up from the meditation hall to a large monk's Kuti above with the property and forest continuing on above that.



Some committee members (from left) Guillaum, Fabiana (President), Joao & Cara

4 *Are there many other Buddhist groups in Brazil?*

Buddhism in Brazil is represented by the usual groups that you find in most non-Buddhist countries. As well as Theravada, I know of followers of Tibetan Buddhism, Zen temples and societies and I visited a large Taiwanese Fo Guang Shan monastery outside the city of Sao Paolo. There is an active Vipassana Meditation Centre built and run by Brazilian disciples of the famous meditation teacher Goenkji. Also in the city of Sao Paolo there are large Japanese and Korean communities which may well have their own temples.

5 *Is meditation popular in Brazil?*

Meditation is one of the aspects of Buddhism that people are interested in, in fact while I was there one of the television companies did a program about Meditation and the film crew spent a long time at the Rio vihara filming and interviewing various people.

6 *What sort of problems do Brazilian people ask you about?*

The problems that people talk about in Brazil or ask questions about seem to be the same ones that concern people all over the world. Family, work and social relationships, social problems such as drugs and violence, personal confusion and stress. Also questions of how to bring the teachings into daily life are often asked.

7 *Can you see any changes at BSV other than the building project?*

Not much change here really. *Sanghamittarama* is more established and separate. But otherwise BSV is much the same.



Vihara shrine room, Rio de Janeiro vihara

## Vesak Cards from the Dhamma School

As part of this year’s Vesak festivities, six of the Dhamma School children made Vesak cards. They were happy to be able to use the facilities available in the new library for this purpose.



The cards were offered for sale on a stall during the celebrations, the proceeds going to the Temple. It was a worthwhile activity for the children who were able to experience the joys of creative teamwork and then to see their efforts appreciated by those who purchased the cards.

The sales netted a total of 185.

← The children making the cards and displaying them at the stall



*from Dhamma School teacher Trevor Holton*

## Dhamma Plays by the Dhamma School

On May 29<sup>th</sup> at the Community Centre in Glen Waverley, students of the Dhamma School entertained parents, family members and friends with three plays each quite unique in theme and dramatization. Furthermore, during interval when supper was served, we were delighted by Kandyan dancing performed with grace and much talent by Samadi Mallawa and Goveena Fernando.

The first play, *'The story of Samantha'*, adapted by Trevor Holton from a story by Suzanna Palmer-Holton, provided insight into the reasons children tell lies and the negative outcome of this behaviour. Set in a contemporary primary school we learn that a group of students want to organize a fundraiser to help send children in Africa to school. The children approach Samantha for a place to hold their fundraiser as she had previously told them of her parents considerable wealth and large house only to discover that Samantha has been telling lies and that her family home is very modest. This lie reflects badly on Samantha and for a while she is the outcast of the group.

Again the second play, based on a North American folk story and called *'The Jumping Mouse'*, has a very strong message, this time about the quest for the Sacred. It reminded me very much of the Jataka stories as the great generosity and compassion of the mouse is like that of a bodhisattva. This time the story is beautifully dramatized by colourful and animated puppets and tells us how the jumping mouse, one of the puppets, in spite of the scorn of the other animals, sets off to trace a strange noise he has heard and finds a river. From this river, after a frog encourages him to jump, he can see the sacred mountain and he resolves to journey on a quest to climb the mountain, again disregarding criticism from his animal peers. While on his journey he gives a dying buffalo one of his eyes and runs under the belly of this buffalo to keep safe from the eagles as he crosses the prairies. He then heals a wolf by giving his other eye and the wolf leads the mouse up the mountain. The mouse however still feels vulnerable once on the peak and when an eagle picks him up in his beak he believes this is his end but then we realize he has been

transformed into an eagle and can rise above in safety. Gary Dellora dramatized this story and the puppet play was very enjoyable indeed.

The last play, a new play by Trevor Holton, was interesting in the way it linked the difficulties for women to become fully ordained in the time of the Buddha and for the children of the ordained nuns with contemporary times in Bangkok. Magandiya considers herself abandoned by her mother in the Buddha’s times when her mother joins a community of bhikkhunis and the same feeling is echoed by her modern counterpart. The quest of women for ordination in the Buddha’s times is effectively presented and the appeals of Yasodara and Pajapati to Ananda are very clearly debated. The nuns’ moving presence at the back of the stage in the last act also provides a sense of continuity and seems to invite the audience to consider themes such as rebirth and anatta. An end to a very good night and congratulations to the Dhamma students and teachers and all other helpers!!

*from Vice-President Cora Thomas*

## Food Fair 2009

A food fair was held on the 13th of June, 2009 as a fund raiser for both Sanghamittarama and BSV. It was run as a multicultural event with so many different cultural groups represented. Thanks to all those who did lots of bulk cooking to make it a great event and to those who came to taste the food. Some who could not take part in the preparations contributed in cash which was used in purchasing the other requirements for the fair. The preparations ran to weeks of hard work. It was a great success. We managed to raise \$5000 from it. Thank you to all those who helped us in many ways, cooking, buying, getting the hall ready for the fair etc.



↑ Members & friends at the recent food fair

GRATITUDE to Padmini Perera for her dedicated hard work in organizing our very successful Food Fair. Hard work can go unnoticed as its outcome is usually reflected in the smooth operation of an event. Thanks Padmini and also her helpers! It was a very happy occasion indeed.

*from Committee member Padmini Perera*

### Sangha

**Ajahn Brahm** led our Vesak celebrations again this year. His generosity and energy and beautiful Teachings brought many, many people to the BSV and to the evening public talks, one of which was held at Buddhāloka this year. Again, the two retreat days were very well attended and adequate words cannot be found to describe the benefits that the Dhamma over this short time bring to us all.

**Venerable Ekagatha** has indicated his willingness to visit the Buddhāloka Centre by the end of this year, possibly around the time Ajahn Sucitto will be here as well.

**Ajahn Sucitto** has accepted an invitation from the Committee to visit the Buddhāloka Centre, some time from the end of November to early December this year.

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**Ajahn Sumedho** has been invited to stay<sup>1</sup> at the vihara and to conduct Dhamma teaching before or after the Abbots' Conference in Perth later this year.

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<sup>1</sup>editor's note - the text in the draft version of this newsletter advised that "*Ajahn Sumedho has been invited to stray at the vihara ...*". It was tempting to leave this text uncorrected ... just for fun.

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# Retreats

**Ajahn Sucitto** is planning to conduct an in-house retreat and a teaching program at the Buddhāloka Centre from 25<sup>th</sup> November to 6<sup>th</sup> December, this year. For further details, watch the Spring newsletter and the society's web pages for further details.

**Sayadaw Lakkhana** will lead a retreat at the *Maitripa Centre* in Healesville, from 10<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> December coming. Further details will be found in the Spring newsletter and on the Society's web page.

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## From the Committee

**Air fares** – Air fares for Ajahn Brahm's visit at Vesak and for Ajahn Ariyasilo's current visit totalled around \$1700. Generous members and Dhamma friends donated the funds to cover these travel expenses.

**Annual disbursements** – The Committee approved two annual payments – (1) \$1000 in support of the Buddhist Education in Schools project, and (2) \$1000 in support of the Dhamma Sukha Meditation Centre, where Sayadaw U Pandita resides and conducts a regular teaching program.

**Assistance around the temple and vihara** – If you are able to give a helping hand once in a while in any of the following areas please reply to the Committee by e-mail.

- Clearing after Dana.
- Cleaning mopping etc
- Provide transport
- Small fixes
- Operate audio / video equipment
- Contribute to Newsletter
- Help plan and carry out fund-raising events
- Be an ideas person, only in an advisory capacity on technical issues such as IT, plumbing, electrical work or similar.

To ensure the smooth functioning of activities at BSV it is necessary to reduce and spread the work load that often falls on a few shoulders. The Committee suggested seeking assistance from the members, perhaps by setting up small

support groups that will be involved in carrying out small tasks with great merits. These tasks will be communicated to the members and well-wishers shortly seeking volunteers to express interest.

**Car Park Gate** – The top bar of the car park gate (behind the meditation hall) was knocked down accidentally by a delivery van from a courier company. The company agreed to repair the gate, consistent with the quote for repairs obtained by the Committee. The Committee agreed to raise the top bar, to reduce the likelihood of a similar accident in future, necessitating removal of a branch from the overhanging oak tree.

**Dana roster** – There are still some vacancies on the Dana roster, especially so for August. If you are interested in contributing in this way, please contact our Secretary, Padmini Perera.

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## News from Ajahn Thanasanti

Ajahn has moved back to the United States and is committed to establishing a new monastic community - **Awakening Truth**. Details of how to find out more about **Awakening Truth** and to contact Ajahn are at the end of this notice.

Some excerpts from a recent letter from Ajahn Thanasanti :

Awakening Truth will embody a vision that includes:

- Creating training places for women monastics.
  - Developing a community of like-minded people committed to Awakening.
  - Practising and share the teachings of the Buddha in ways that both embodies essential meaning and are relevant to contemporary society.
  - Embodying for the wider community a lifestyle of ethics, compassion and renunciation appropriate to the level of commitment one undertakes.
  - Continuing to investigate ways essential Buddhist principles take form in modern society.
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- Living with ecological awareness and respect for nature.

The sisters who are part of the [Saranaloka](#) project have received the go ahead, so they are also looking forward to coming and their project unfolding in the USA. It is a potent time of change and transformation, everywhere. For me, I see it as a time to return to fundamental principles and allow forms to emerge that support our deepest aspirations.

Many of you have been in contact and offered your good wishes and support in this transition and in this new endeavour. It has meant a lot even if I haven't been able to respond to each of you. For those of you who are interested in knowing more, participating or getting regular updates you are welcome to contact [info@awakeningtruth.org](mailto:info@awakeningtruth.org)

Love,

Thanasanti



Ajahn Thanasanti, Amaravati

[www.awakeningtruth.org](http://www.awakeningtruth.org)

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## A Talk from the Heart

A well attended and appreciated seminar was led by Gerald Frappe on Sunday 28th June after Dana.

Gerald had experienced some years ago a life altering event when he had a heart attack followed by by-pass surgery.

He very articulately described his feelings surrounding this including his chanting of the 3 refuges with a Sri Lankan Buddhist nurse minutes before open heart surgery, which potentially may have been the last thing he did. Clearly his 30 yrs. experience of meditation aided him in mindfulness of breathing as the oxygen mask descended, and also walking meditation at 3 a.m. down hospital corridors.

In common with research results of others having near-death experiences, Gerald felt fear concerning the certainty of death lessen and desire for life changes to help others increase- and his well-prepared effort to tell others of this is an example. Thankyou to Gerald and all who attended.

*from Committee member Gary Dellora*

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## UN Day of Vesak

At Melbourne Town Hall on Saturday 9th May in the afternoon a large crowd attended the multicultural annual celebration of the United Nations Day of Vesak.

Included in the large Sangha present on stage was BSV representative Ayya Sucinta. Many strands of the Buddhist tradition participated. BSV Sunday Dhamma School student Andreas was on stage as part of dance group and Michael Wells directed a short play about the Buddha's birth in which hitherto untapped kingly acting abilities of our very own BSV (former) secretary were revealed!

Chanting, singing, meditation etc. all formed part of the program and we thank all organisers and participants, including those who served and set up the BSV table.

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

*from Committee member Gary Dellora*

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## 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 –

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**Sāsana** – ... *the dispensation of the Teachings of the Buddha*

**Buddha-sāsana** – the duration, beginning from the time of His first sermon (**Dhammacakka-pavathana Sutta**) delivered to the first five disciples in the Deer Park at Isipatana, to the decline and disappearance of His teachings.

By the end of his Sasana, five disappearances will occur in the following sequence:

1. The attainment of Arahantship after 1000 years.
2. The practices, such as meditation (**Bhavana**) and observing the five precepts. Monks will reduce their precept observance to four.
3. The learning of the **Buddha-dhamma**. There will be no patronage from the devotees and the monks will stop teaching the **Buddha-dhamma**. The whole **Buddha-dhamma** will disappear and leave only the last four lines in a stanza.
4. Symbols such as the monks' robes. Monks will only wear yellow tags to represent themselves as the community of monks.
5. Relics (**sārīrika**). All the Buddha's relics will reassemble in the image of the Buddha, and will finally disappear to mark the end of the **Buddha-sāsana**.

*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 members are welcomed to the Society –

Ajanta Judd  
Chandana Perera  
Elizabeth Anderson  
Fiona Judd  
Hoa Blli

Indira & Rohan Jayasinghe

Kim Qui Nguyen

Kutilla Gunasekera

Meiliany Haw

Ranitha Mapatuna

Roderick McDonald

Sanka Amadoru

Savithri Ranaweera

Weng Nie Peng

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.

*Knowing that this body is like foam, and comprehending its mirage-nature, one should destroy the flower-shafts of sensual passions (Mara), and pass beyond the sight of the king of death.*

Dhammapada 46

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

*The man who gathers flowers (of sensual pleasures), whose mind is entangled, death carries off as a great flood sweeps away a sleeping village.*

Dhammapada 47

This edition of *Buddhāloka* was edited by David Cheal. The views contained within do not necessarily reflect those of the Buddhist Society of Victoria. We welcome member contributions to the newsletter of the Society. These may include news of events, personal news, accounts of trips or retreats, happenings around the temple or comment on Buddhism as it unfolds in Australia or elsewhere. If you would like to make a contribution, please leave it in the library at the BSV or email it to the Society. Electronic contributions on disk or CD are particularly easy to incorporate, but typed or hand-written contributions are also welcome. The Newsletter is published quarterly. Deadlines for contributions are the end of the first weeks in July, October, January and April.

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## Colonel Olcott and the Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka (2)

Experience had shown Olcott that not only the children and the laity but even many Buddhist bhikkhus were ignorant of the fundamentals of their religion. He tried without success to get a Buddhist bhikkhu to compile a Buddhist catechism. Olcott therefore took it upon himself during his second visit to do the job, writing at odd moments during his travels, lectures and other activities.



His idea was to produce an elementary handbook on lines similar to those used so effectively by Christian sects. To fit himself for the task this indefatigable American read 10 000 pages of Buddhist books in English and French translations. After the manuscript of the catechism was completed Olcott got it approved by the Ven. Hikkaduwe Sumangala (pictured at left with Colonel Olcott), head of Vidyodaya Pirivena.

The Sinhala and English versions appeared simultaneously on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1881, and it became a textbook in the schools and found its way into every Sinhala family. Olcott, noting that the book had been translated into 20 different languages, commented that "*from a grain of mustard seed has developed a giant tree.*"

These various activities roused opposition, as might be expected, from all quarters. In official eyes the Buddhist educational movement was the offspring of a factious opposition which had to be crushed out of existence. Repressive measures were often adopted; more often discriminatory regulations were arbitrarily imposed to put handicaps upon Buddhist activities. One such was the "quarter mile" clause, by which no Buddhist school could

be registered unless it happened to be more than a quarter of a mile away from an existing Christian school, even in villages where there was not a single Christian family. And, what was worse the regulation was brought into operation with retrospective effect. Another was the denial of the use of the tom-tom and other music in Buddhist processions, whereas no such restrictions were placed upon either the Hindus or the Muslims.

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In the Easter Day riots of 1883, a peaceful procession of Buddhists was severely manhandled at Kotahena, and murder was committed, yet the apathy of the officials towards Buddhists was so marked that hardly any attempt was made to bring offenders to book. This roused the Buddhists to a sense of their insecurity, and they were constrained to set up an organisation known as the Buddhist Defence Committee to protect their own interests and to secure the redress of certain glaring grievances. This committee persuaded Colonel Olcott to proceed to London on their behalf, and to interview the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Olcott accepted the commission on the stipulation that "*under no circumstances could he receive any remuneration whatsoever for his services.*"

Olcott's visit to the Colonial Office was fruitful in many ways. He was successful in getting Buddhist registrars of marriages appointed in various places, so that Buddhists could have their marriages solemnised without the necessity of a church ceremony. The Christian oath which even the Buddhists took in court was given up as affirmation. Buddhist holidays appeared in the official calendar and the Buddhists began to celebrate Vesak as a festival of lights.

The missionaries looked upon the movement at first with contemptuous indifference and with a metaphorical shrug of the shoulder. Then they began to take notice of it and referred to it as "the so-called Buddhist revival." By 1889 the position, from their point of view, was not quite satisfactory. In an appeal issued in that year, they asked for prayers and the assistance of the faithful: "*We need these prayers and this help to enable us to cope successfully with the forces of the enemy that are spreading all around us. Buddhism is multiplying its agents and activities in opposing the progress of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

In 1902 the success of Buddhist work prompted the Church Missionary Society to pass a resolution not to employ any Christian in their schools who had at any time served in Buddhist schools. By 1903 their complaints were louder against "*the conducting of preaching campaigns (by Buddhists) to draw away the children placed under our care by their parents. Many children have been withdrawn and have cost us loss in the matter of government grants.*" That same year the Rev. (afterwards Canon) G. B. Ekanayake writing in *East and West* did not hesitate to admit that "*the current of Christian concession had been effectively stemmed by the Buddhist revival.*" "*The barrenness of missionary effort calls for energetic action,*" he urged. The Roman Catholics adopted a rather strange and amusing attitude. The following is an extract from the *Ceylon Catholic Messenger* of 20<sup>th</sup> May 1881: "*The Theosophists cannot in any case be worse than the sectarian missionaries, and if Colonel Olcott can induce the Buddhists to establish schools of their own, as he is trying to do, he will be doing us a service; because if the Buddhists could have their own denominational schools as we have ours, they would put a stop to the dishonesty now practised by sectarian missionaries of obtaining government money for proselytising purposes under the pretext of grants-in-aid of education.*"

*to be continued ...*

*by M. P. Amarasuriya, Wheel no. 281, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy (1981)*

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## **A Buddhist Declaration on Climate Change**

In the run-up to the crucial [U.N. Climate Treaty Conference in Copenhagen](#) in December 2009, the Declaration that follows will present to the world's media a unique spiritual view of climate change and our urgent responsibility to address the solutions. It emerged from the contributions of over 20 Buddhist teachers of all traditions to the book [A Buddhist Response to the Climate Emergency](#). *The Time to Act is Now* was composed as a pan-Buddhist statement by Zen teacher Dr David Tetsuun Loy and senior Theravadin teacher Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi with scientific input from Dr John Stanley.

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# The Time to Act is Now

## A Buddhist Declaration on Climate Change

Today we live in a time of great crisis, confronted by the gravest challenge that humanity has ever faced: the ecological consequences of our own collective kamma. The scientific consensus is overwhelming: human activity is triggering environmental breakdown on a planetary scale. Global warming, in particular, is happening much faster than previously predicted, most obviously at the North Pole. For hundreds of thousands of years, the Arctic Ocean has been covered by an area of sea-ice as large as Australia — but now this is melting rapidly. In 2007 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) forecast that the Arctic might be free of summer sea ice by 2100. It is now apparent that this could occur within a decade or two. Greenland's vast ice-sheet is also melting more quickly than expected. The rise in sea-level this century will be at least one metre — enough to flood many coastal cities and vital rice-growing areas such as the Mekong Delta in Vietnam.

Glaciers all over the world are receding quickly. If current economic policies continue, the glaciers of the Tibetan Plateau, source of the great rivers that provide water for billions of people in Asia, will disappear within 30 years. Severe drought and crop failures are already affecting Australia and Northern China. Major reports — from the IPCC, United Nations, European Union, and International Union for Conservation of Nature — agree that, without a collective change of direction, dwindling supplies of water, food and other resources could create famine conditions, resource battles, and mass migration by mid-century — perhaps by 2030, according to the U.K.'s chief scientific advisor.

Global warming plays a major role in other ecological crises, including the loss of many plant and animal species that share this Earth with us. Oceanographers report that half the carbon released by burning fossil fuels has been absorbed by the oceans, increasing their acidity by about 30%. Acidification is disrupting calcification of shells and coral reefs, as well as threatening plankton growth, the source of the food chain for most life in the sea.

Eminent biologists and U.N. reports concur that “business-as-usual” will drive half of all species on Earth to extinction within this century. Collectively, we are violating the first precept — “do not harm living beings” — on the largest possible scale. And we cannot foresee the biological consequences for human life when so many species that invisibly contribute to our own well-being vanish from the planet.

Many scientists have concluded that the survival of human civilization is at stake. We have reached a critical juncture in our biological and social evolution. There has never been a more important time in history to bring the resources of Buddhism to bear on behalf of all living beings. The four noble truths provide a framework for diagnosing our current situation and formulating appropriate guidelines — because the threats and disasters we face ultimately stem from the human mind, and therefore require profound changes within our minds. If personal suffering stems from craving and ignorance — from the three poisons of greed, ill will, and delusion — the same applies to the suffering that afflicts us on a collective scale. Our ecological emergency is a larger version of the perennial human predicament. Both as individuals and as a species, we suffer from a sense of self that feels disconnected not only from other people but from the Earth itself. As Thich Nhat Hanh has said, “*We are here to awaken from the illusion of our separateness.*” We need to wake up and realize that the Earth is our mother as well as our home — and in this case the umbilical cord binding us to her cannot be severed. When the Earth becomes sick, we become sick, because we are part of her.

Our present economic and technological relationships with the rest of the biosphere are unsustainable. To survive the rough transitions ahead, our lifestyles and expectations must change. This involves new habits as well as new values. The Buddhist teaching that the overall health of the individual and society

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depends upon inner well-being, and not merely upon economic indicators, helps us determine the personal and social changes we must make.

Individually, we must adopt behaviours that increase everyday ecological awareness and reduce our “carbon footprint”. Those of us in the advanced economies need to retrofit and insulate our homes and workplaces for energy efficiency; lower thermostats in winter and raise them in summer; use high efficiency light bulbs and appliances; turn off unused electrical appliances; drive the most fuel-efficient cars possible, and reduce meat consumption in favour of a healthy, environmentally-friendly plant-based diet.

These personal activities will not by themselves be sufficient to avert future calamity. We must also make institutional changes, both technological and economic. We must “de-carbonize” our energy systems as quickly as feasible by replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy sources that are limitless, benign and harmonious with nature. We especially need to halt the construction of new coal plants, since coal is by far the most polluting and most dangerous source of atmospheric carbon. Wisely utilized, wind power, solar power, tidal power, and geothermal power can provide all the electricity that we require without damaging the biosphere. Since up to a quarter of world carbon emissions result from deforestation, we must reverse the destruction of forests, especially the vital rainforest belt where most species of plants and animals live.

It has recently become quite obvious that significant changes are also needed in the way our economic system is structured. Global warming is intimately related to the gargantuan quantities of energy that our industries devour to provide the levels of consumption that many of us have learned to expect. From a Buddhist perspective, a sane and sustainable economy would be governed by the principle of sufficiency: the key to happiness is contentment rather than an ever-increasing abundance of goods. The compulsion to consume more and more is an expression of craving, the very thing the Buddha pinpointed as the root cause of suffering.

Instead of an economy that emphasizes profit and requires perpetual growth to avoid collapse, we need to move together towards an economy that provides a satisfactory standard of living for everyone while allowing us to develop our full (including spiritual) potential in harmony with the biosphere that sustains and nurtures all beings, including future generations. If political leaders are unable to recognize the urgency of our global crisis, or unwilling to put the long-term good of humankind above the short-term benefit of fossil-fuel corporations, we may need to challenge them with sustained campaigns of citizen action.

Dr James Hansen of NASA and other climatologists have recently defined the precise targets needed to prevent global warming from reaching catastrophic “tipping points.” For human civilization to be sustainable, the safe level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is no more than 350 parts per million (ppm). This target has been endorsed by the Dalai Lama, along with other Nobel laureates and distinguished scientists. Our current situation is particularly worrisome in that the present level is already 387 ppm, and has been rising at 2 ppm per year. We are challenged not only to reduce carbon emissions, but also to remove large quantities of carbon gas already present in the atmosphere.

As signatories to this statement of Buddhist principles, we acknowledge the urgent challenge of climate change. We join with the Dalai Lama in endorsing the 350 ppm target. In accordance with Buddhist teachings, we accept our individual and collective responsibility to do whatever we can to meet this target, including (but not limited to) the personal and social responses outlined above.

We have a brief window of opportunity to take action, to preserve humanity from imminent disaster and to assist the survival of the many diverse and beautiful forms of life on Earth. Future generations, and the other species that share the biosphere with us, have no voice to ask for our compassion, wisdom, and leadership. We must listen to their silence. We must be their voice, too, and act on their behalf.

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## **Activities at Sanghamittarama**

On July 8<sup>th</sup>, Ayya Sucinta and Ayya Athapi entered Vassa, the **Rains Retreat**, at Sanghamittarama. They have expressed determination to stay at this monastery for three months (until the full moon of October, this year October 4<sup>th</sup>). This includes not travelling anywhere and spending the night elsewhere, unless for some special reason.

Before the start of Vassa, both bhikkhunis attended the annual meeting of the Australian Sangha Association (ASA). This year it was held on July 2<sup>nd</sup> in Sydney at *Phap Bao* Temple. Speakers included Ajahn Brahm, Ven. Karma Lekshe Tsomo (USA), Ajahn Sujato and Mark Allon. Ven. Athapi also visited her family in Sydney on that occasion and returned on July 6<sup>th</sup>.

During Vassa, as in previous years, the bhikkhunis will take turns in having a retreat period to intensify their meditation practice.

July 27<sup>th</sup> – August 16<sup>th</sup>, Ayya Athapi

August 17<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>, and Sept. 7<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup>, Ayya Sucinta

The regular teachings in the evenings and on weekends will continue. In addition, there will be a meditation day for everyone on a Saturday (close to the full moon day). The beginning of Vassa (Esalha Pooja) was celebrated on July 11<sup>th</sup>, 8:30am - 5pm. Another meditation day will be held on Saturday, August 1<sup>st</sup>.

Vassa is also the time of Vinaya studies. Similar to our first year at Sanghamittarama, there will be a teaching on monastic rules for lay people - for anyone interested in ordaining at some time in this life or the next, for supporters, friends of the Sangha.

### **On Saturday, July 25th, 4pm-5:30pm: Guide to the Bhikkhuni Vinaya**

This afternoon will be open for all your questions regarding monastic life and monastic (particularly bhikkhunis') rules that you may have. Our discussion will also include the Dhamma in the Vinaya and *Korwat* (monastic etiquette at a particular monastery).

### **Meditation Day**

#### ***August 1 (close to full moon of August)***

8:30am - Possibility to take the Eight Precepts; Paritta chanting

9:00am - Guided meditation

10:00am - Walking meditation

11:00am - Communal Dana (almsgiving to the bhikkhunis and sharing of food with everyone)

12:30pm - Dhamma Reflections, followed by sitting and walking meditation

3:45pm - tea break

4:00pm - Reading of a Sutta (one of the Buddha's discourses) and discussion

5:30pm - Sharing of merits and closing

### **On Saturday, July 25th, 4pm-5:30pm: Lay Guide to Monastic (Bhikkhuni) Rules**

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## Regular Program

**Chanting and silent meditation - Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday, 7:30 pm**

**Chanting, meditation with guidance and Dhamma teaching - Every Friday, 7:30pm**

**Sutta discussion - 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month from 4:00pm - 5:30pm**

**Meditation and Dhamma discussion for Young Adults (age 18-35) - July 4<sup>th</sup> and every following second Sunday, 6:15 pm**

**Dhamma teachings for Children (age 6-12) - Every last Sunday of the month, at 3:00pm, with Ayya Athapi**

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### **Some food for thought**

#### **- this time related to Vassa and making resolutions:**

One year, shortly before the Rains Retreat, a time when people traditionally make resolutions to step up their practice of the Dhamma, one of Ajaan Fuang's students approached him and said that she was thinking of observing the eight precepts during the Rains, but was afraid that going without the evening meal would leave her hungry.

He retorted: *“The Buddha fasted until he didn't have any flesh at all, just skin and bones, so that he could discover the Dhamma to teach us, but here we can't even stand going without one single meal. It's because of this that we're still swimming around in the cycle of birth and death“.*

As a result, she resolved that she'd observe the eight precepts on each Buddhist sabbath, the full moon, the new moon, and the half-moon days, during the three months of the Rains. And so she did. At the end of the Rains she felt really proud of herself for having kept to her resolution, but on her next visit to Ajaan Fuang, before she was able to broach the topic at all, he commented, *“You're lucky, you know. Your Rains Retreat has only twelve days. Everyone else's is three months“.*

On hearing this she felt so embarrassed that she has observed the eight precepts every day throughout each Rains Retreat ever since.

A woman came to *Wat Dhammasathit* to observe the precepts and meditate for a week, but by the end of the second day she told Ajahn Fuang that she had to return home, because she was afraid her family couldn't get along without her. He taught her to cut through her worries by saying, *“When you come here, tell yourself that you've died. One way or another, your family will have to learn to fend for themselves“.*

On his first visit to *Wat Dhammasathit*, a middle-aged man was surprised to see an American monk. He asked Ajahn Fuang, *“How is it that Westerners can ordain“?* Ajahn Fuang's answer: *“Don't Westerners have a heart“?*

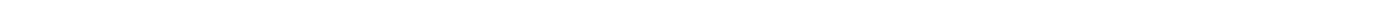
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(from *“Awareness Itself – The Teachings of Ajaan Fuang Jotiko“*, compiled and translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu)

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Photos from our recent Vesak celebrations have been held over to the next edition.



**Buddhāloka Centre**  
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***www.bsv.net.au***

## **REGULAR PROGRAM**

(check on the web page for recent updates)

- Tuesday 7:30 pm – 9:00 pm Meditation for beginners & experienced meditators with Ajahn Ariyasilo
- Thursday 7:30 pm – 9:00 pm Meditation for beginners & experienced meditators with Sayadaw U Pandita  
8:30 pm – 9:00 pm Dhamma talk for all by Sayadaw U Pandita
- Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> August & 12<sup>th</sup> September; 9:00 am to 4:00 pm Silent meditation, with guidance by Ajahn Ariyasilo at 9:00 am
- Sunday 8:30 am – 9:30 am Silent Meditation.  
9:30 am- 10:30 am Dhamma talk  
11.00 am Offering of dana to the Sangha followed by a shared meal. All are welcome to enjoy the food brought by members and friends. You may bring some food, as you wish.  
2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of the month – Sutta discussion in the library, led by Ajahn Ariyasilo (9<sup>th</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 13<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> September, 11<sup>th</sup> October)  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm Chanting, meditation and Dhamma reflections, led by Ajahn Ariyasilo (16<sup>th</sup> August, 20<sup>th</sup> September)

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.



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

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