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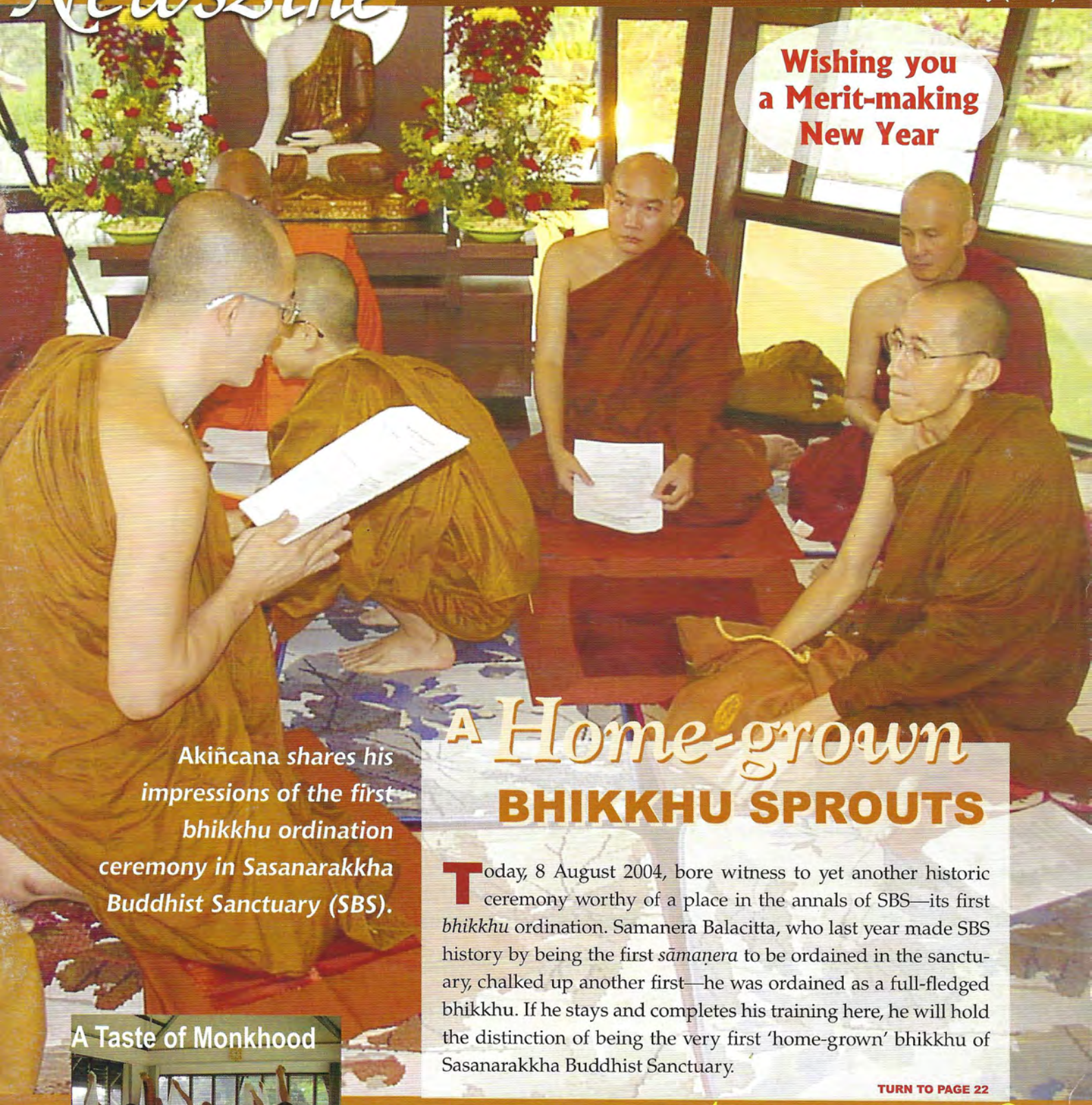
Sāsanārakkha Newszine

News and views from Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary (SBS)



Wishing you a Merit-making New Year

Akiñcana shares his impressions of the first bhikkhu ordination ceremony in Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary (SBS).

A Home-grown BHIKKHU SPROUTS

Today, 8 August 2004, bore witness to yet another historic ceremony worthy of a place in the annals of SBS—its first *bhikkhu* ordination. Samanera Balacitta, who last year made SBS history by being the first *sāmaṇera* to be ordained in the sanctuary, chalked up another first—he was ordained as a full-fledged bhikkhu. If he stays and completes his training here, he will hold the distinction of being the very first 'home-grown' bhikkhu of Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary.

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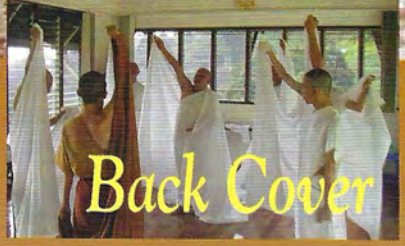
A Taste of Monkhood



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SANGHA speaks

editorial

accomplishment & appreciation

With the dawning of 2005, Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary looks back at the old year with a feeling of accomplishment.

The first SBS nurtured bhikkhu was ordained in a simple, yet meaningful ceremony on 8 August, witnessed by an august assembly of 23 monks. Monks from the major traditions that have played a significant role in the development of Theravada Buddhism in Malaysia joined Malaysian monks in this ceremony. Would we be presumptuous to believe that this is the beginning of an evolution in the development of Buddhism in Malaysia?

As part of his efforts to expose SBS monastics to Buddhist monastic practices of other countries in which the roots of Buddhism are strong, Ven Aggacitta led a group of SBS monastics and supporters on a study trip to Myanmar, thus taking development along a different plane.

The final months of the past year were busy times. In October, USM students held its annual English Dhamma Camp here. This was followed by Kathina. The third Introduction to Monkhood Programme was next, followed shortly by the year end retreat for SBS supporters. A Teens Camp rounded off the year in SBS. Ven Aggacitta then bid farewell to 2004 by conducting a camp in Singapore.

Read on for these stories.

EDITOR

We've Got Mail

Thank you for sending us the updates of events in SBS and the Dhamma talks. I am a great fan of the SBS website because of the interesting Dhamma talks (much Malaysianised) and articles. I have learned a great deal from the Dhamma talks!

Lim Sze Hui

My spirits soared on reading Sasanarakkha # 2, June 2004. I only came to know of its existence two months after leaving Malaysia in June 2004. I would like to share a little of what I have been studying here (*Editor's Note: the writer did not say where or what he has been studying*) for the past three months—something that might be related to the article "Ways to Enlightenment" (see *Sasanarakkha Newszine* #2). I am very junior in Abhidhamma learning, but I would like to share what I understand about the path to Enlightenment.

Anonymous

Editor's Note: It was also just as uplifting for us to read of your interest in Sasanarakkha. Ven Aggacitta wishes to express his thanks to you for taking the time to write him such a long and detailed letter to expound what you have learnt of the suttas and the Abhidhamma as conventionally taught. We are sorry that we have the space only to include in this column the above extract from it, though.

Ven Aggacitta's article is an attempt to put forward one possible view of the understanding of jhāna*; one that is different from what you have learnt, i.e. the conventional understanding of it. Based on canonical evidence, he observes that so long as one acquires a level of* samādhi *enabling the Five Hindrances to be abandoned so that a meditation subject can be penetrated with wisdom, then this could be a type of jhana that qualifies as Right Concentration. He also proposes that more research be carried out on the scope of jhana based on canonical evidence and the experiences of Dhamma practitioners, bearing in mind the distinction betweeen canonical and exegetical terms.*

I have benefitted from the CDs my brother Dr Soo brought back from Taiping. *Sādhu* to Bro How Eng Keong and family for such a meritorious deed. May all of us be liberated by listening to the Dhamma talks by Ven Aggacitta. May we help the rest be liberated as well.

Soo Siew Peng

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SPECIAL THANKS to Tan Joo Lan for editing "A Mind Opening Retreat"
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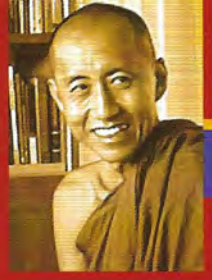

abbot's address

Reaching **Out**

Little did I realise that the minor earth tremor I felt in my office at Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary (SBS) on the morning of 26 December 2004 would result in such massive devastation. In the evening of the same day, still oblivious, I flew from Penang to Singapore for Dhamma propagation activities and knew of the tsunami disaster only on the morning of 27 December. In the days following, I was tremendously touched by the ensuing 'Tsunami of Compassion' as millions of fellow humans reached out to give unprecedented aid to the poor victims.

There were also symbolic tremors here in SBS during the year 2004 that may well herald more 'aggressive' efforts to reach out to our devoted supporters and potential trainees.

Sponsored by How Eng Keong and family, four audio CDs of my Dhamma talks have been published for free distribution. (see advert on pg 39) They were released on Kathina Day, 14 November 2004. We embarked on this new medium of sharing the Dhamma because it seems to be gaining popularity among the public. So far, feedback has been most encouraging. We shall be publishing more in future—be on the lookout!

Our multi-media team headed by Tan Joo Lan has also produced a VCD entitled *An Invitation to Monkhood* that promotes our Introduction to Monkhood Programme (IMP), which was held successfully twice this year (10 – 30 March and 26 November – 10 December). If you're interested to view it, please contact your nearest SBS representative or SBS Main Office. Joo Lan is also working on a sequel to the VCD on the founding and development of SBS, *Shaping the Future Now*. This time around she's aiming to do a DVD instead.

From 25 – 29 October 2004, SBS opened its communal facilities to youth activities for the first time, when 30-odd members and friends of Persatuan Pelajar Buddhist Universiti Sains Malaysia (PPBUSM) held their English Dhamma Camp (EDC) here. Then, following the year-end meditation retreat (10 – 20 December 2004) for SBS helpers and friends, Ven Kumara conducted a three-day Teens Mindfulness Camp organised by Taiping Insight Meditation Society.

This seems to be the start of a natural unfolding. In October, while I was planning for the USM EDC, I again received an invitation to help conduct another Dhamma camp, this time organised by the Nanyang Technological University Buddhist Society in Singapore. So in the wake of the tsunami disaster, I was busily sharing the Dhamma and fostering *kammic* links with the youths at Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery and with members of Buddhist Fellowship, Singapore.

These are the minor tremors that indicate our initial efforts to establish and nurture important kammic links with the younger generation. We are planning a more extensive strategy for 2005 to reach out to varsity students on their respective home ground, particularly in Perak, Kedah and Penang.

We haven't forgotten our faithful and generous supporters of the older generation either. Plans are afoot to hold residential weekend *sutta* study-cum-meditation workshops in SBS, each of which will accommodate 15-20 members of a supportive Buddhist organisation. As a token of our gratitude for your invaluable support, all expenses will be sponsored. So this is a chance to enjoy the taste of the Dhamma in a secluded yet modern environment that you helped create at the edge of the forest!

The first Bhikkhu Ordination Ceremony in SBS on 8 August 2004 was, however, not a minor tremor. Considering that Ven Balacitta is our first home-grown *bhikkhu* bred (one year as a postulant and another as a *sāmaṇera*) and born (from the womb of Sasanarakkha Sima) in SBS, we consider this momentous event to be of earthquake proportions. The great support we received from both the Sangha and laity is indicative of the pride we take in this achievement, without being conceited about it.

With the completion of Phase 3 development in early 2004, we have had more time to devote to human

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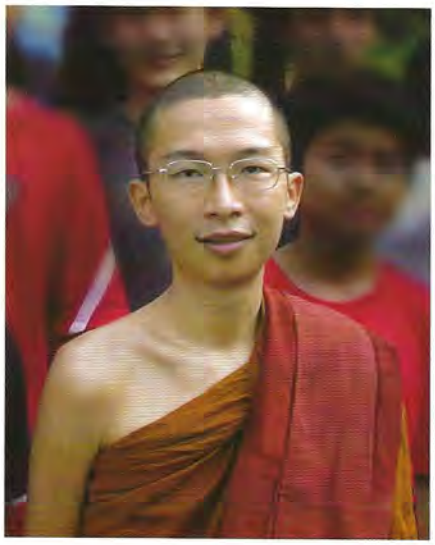
The sky has turned white
even in the west.
Dawn has 'lifted'.
'Right time' has begun.

can we Eat yet?



If you are observing the precept of not eating at the wrong time, during **which period** of the day can you eat?

In Sasanarakkha Newsletter #6, **Ven Kumara Bhikkhu** explained that you have to stop eating by solar or real noon (which is never 12 o'clock in Peninsular Malaysia). Now, he wishes to explain when you can start eating.

In Malaysia, many monastics and lay *yogis* observing Eight Precepts have their breakfast as early as 6.30am. They understand that the 'right time' (*kāla*) to eat has begun by then. In the Peninsular, it is actually still rather dark at that time, if not for artificial light.

Some people think that is too early. I was told that when Ajahn Brahmavamso was in Malaysia, he chose to receive food only at 7.30am, which is a time when the sky is obviously bright at any time of the year. Yet in Myanmar monastics and eight precept holders generally start having breakfast when it is still rather dark—too dark to walk around safely unless there is artificial or bright moon light. When I was in Dhamma Sukha meditation centre in 2001, the late Shwe Oo Min Sayadaw U Kosalla (who was known to be very strict in the Vinaya) came over for a stay. In the first *uposatha* gathering after his arrival, he said that we were eating too early, and that the monk in charge of the kitchen should sound the gong for breakfast only when the

...we should not let the failure to observe one precept tarnish the purity of our morality.

sky is fairly bright. The next day, we had breakfast at least half an hour later than previously.

So, when does the actual 'right time' to eat begin? Is this important? I think it is. When speaking on the matter, the late Shwe Oo Min Sayadaw advised that we should not let the failure to observe one precept tarnish the purity of our morality. So let us look into the matter.

Many who know something about the precept will tell you that the 'right time' begins at dawn, which the dictionary generally defines as "first light of day or daybreak". So, by that definition, the common Malaysian Buddhist practice of having breakfast at 6.30am *may* be acceptable since by then we can usually see some light appearing where the sun is coming up. But is that in accordance with the actual rule?

Let us look at what the scripture says. In the sixth of the Eight Precepts, it uses the term, "*vikāla-bhojana*", literally "wrong time eating". What 'wrong time' actually means here was not indicated for lay observance. However in the Vinaya Pitaka, which has a similar rule for monastics, it is defined as "*majjhanhike vītivatte yāva aruṇuggamanā*", meaning 'when noon has passed till lift of dawn'.

In his book *When is Dawn and Dawnrise*, Ven Bhikkhu Ñanadassana emphasised that "it is not 'dawn' (*aruṇa*) but 'dawnrise' (*aruṇuggamana*) (that is) to be taken into consideration". (I prefer 'lift of dawn' for 'aruṇuggamana', as suggested by Ven Aggacitta, to make it more English and perhaps more meaningful.) That is the time when dawn has 'lifted' or has ended and sunrise shall occur soon.

So, now we know that 'right time' begins at the 'lift of dawn' (and not dawn itself as is widely mistaken), we arrive at the question of how to determine when that occurs. The Pali Canon lacks a clear-cut definition, probably because the matter was too commonplace then to warrant an explanation. The only way to form a good idea of what 'lift of dawn' means is to base it on incidental descriptions from other parts of the Pali Canon and commentaries, and one direct and detailed description from a Vinaya sub-commentary. This is what Ven Ñanadassana, a Greek monk staying in Sri Lanka, has done. Let us go straight to the conclusion of his extensive research clearly presented in his book *When is Dawn and Dawnrise*:

...the time when dawn 'has lifted' or has ended and sunrise shall occur soon.

> **At this time the night becomes light (*ratti vibhāyati*), the four quarters become white (*odāta-disā*), and there is considerable visibility on land. Natural light (*āloka*) surrounds the observer who is out of doors, to such a degree that there is considerable visibility close at hand: he can see a path, foot-prints, can distinguish between colours, between the rigidity or softness of objects, and so forth.**

Some communities may feel that this cannot be right as it has long been their practice to start eating at an earlier time.

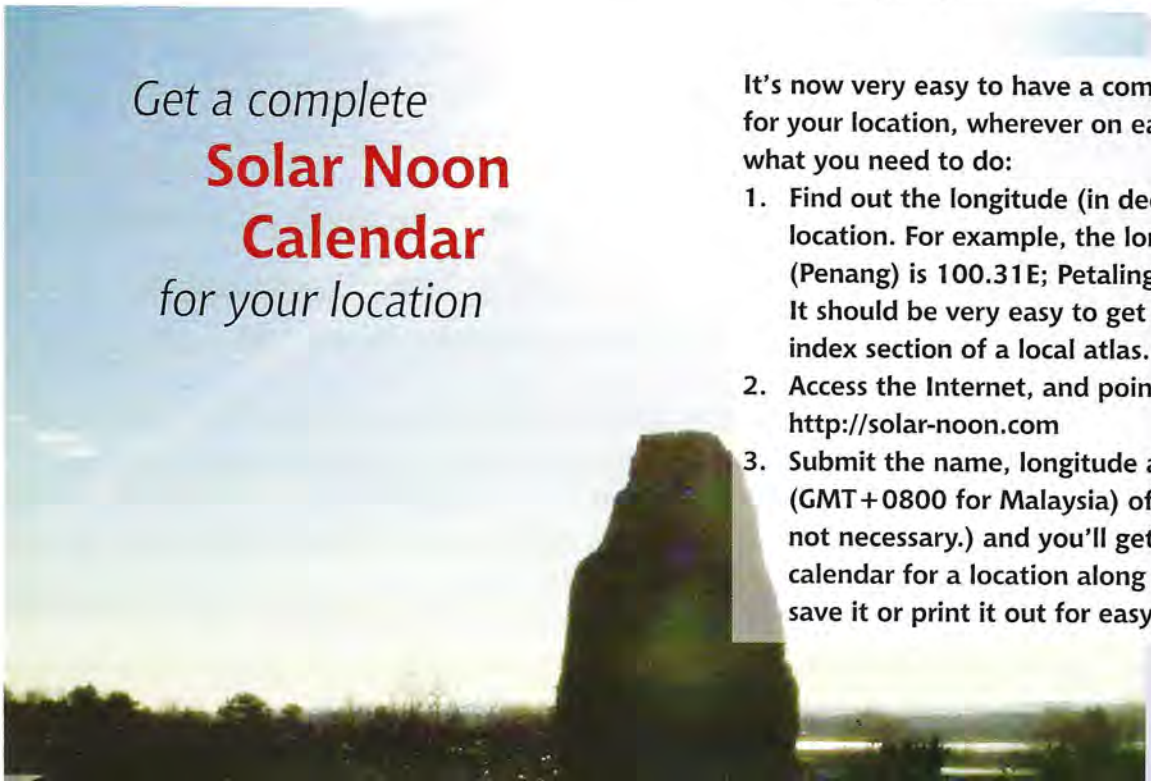
Let us be aware that his findings are the result of extensive and detailed study of pertinent Pali canonical and post-canonical texts. They are in no way his own ideas. On top of that, he has also looked into various literature—ancient and modern, eastern and western—on the subject. He has also presented empirical data collected through direct observation of the sky from various points in Sri Lanka. So, we can agree that his findings are no mere guesswork, but are firmly based on sound investigation. Furthermore, many communities seem to have been using dawn as the marker; when it should rightly be the end of dawn. This contributes to the mistaken reckoning and practice.

Should we allow our attachments to our own established practice prevent us from seeing and doing what is right?

Now, let me add that the clock time of 'lift of dawn' differs from place to place according to longitude, latitude and time zones and even from day to day. I believe that it is possible to use a mathematical formula to arrive at the actual time for a particular place and day of the year, but I think that may be too complicated for most of us.

So, probably the most practical thing we can do is to observe for ourselves the time when things occur as described in the above quotation. Do bear in mind that it changes throughout the year. If for the sake of administrative convenience you wish to decide on a fixed clock time throughout the year, do your observation between January 26 and February 13. That is when dawn ends the latest.

Now that we have a sound definition of **when** monastics and eight precept holders can start eating and **how** we can determine a suitable clock time for the sake of convenience, we should try to make the necessary changes so as not to eat before the right time. Again, as the late Shwe Oo Min Sayadaw U Kosalla put it, do not let the failure to observe one precept tarnish the purity of our morality. S



Get a complete **Solar Noon Calendar** for your location

It's now very easy to have a complete solar noon calendar for your location, wherever on earth you may be. Here's what you need to do:

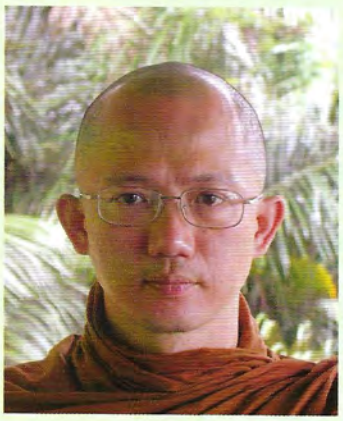
1. **Find out the longitude (in decimal format) of your location. For example, the longitude in Georgetown (Penang) is 100.31E; Petaling Jaya (Selangor), 101.65E. It should be very easy to get this information from the index section of a local atlas.**
2. **Access the Internet, and point your browser to http://solar-noon.com**
3. **Submit the name, longitude and time zone (GMT+0800 for Malaysia) of the location, (Latitude is not necessary.) and you'll get a complete solar noon calendar for a location along that longitude. You can save it or print it out for easy reference.**

SBS Dhamma Talks *June to December, 2004*

You can find edited transcriptions of the talks in our website <http://www.sasanarakkha.org>. In this issue we include one of them: "A Layman's Welfare" by Ven Balacitta at a devotee's house in Taiping on 6 June 2004.

Topic / Speaker / Date	Synopsis
Layman's Welfare Ven Aggacitta, Ven Balacitta, 6 Jun	Four deeds that will lead to a good life in the present and four that will lead to a good life in the hereafter
Gilana Sutta (Sick Person's Discourse) Ven Aggacitta, 13 Jun	Comparing three types of patients to three types of people who can benefit from the Buddha's teachings
The Importance of Dana, Sila and Bhavana Ven Tejaniya, 20 Jun	Besides doing good and avoiding evil, we should also work at purifying our minds
1st Bhikkhu Ordination Ven Aggacitta, 8 Aug	Elements of novelty in SBS' First Bhikkhu Ordination ceremony
Personal Experiences Ven Kumara, Ven Balacitta, Ven Attarama, 15 Aug	Ven Kumara and Ven Balacitta share their recent encounters abroad; Ven Attarama shares his experience of monkhood
Kamma and Merits Ven Aggacitta, 22 Aug	Varying degrees of merit arising from different meritorious acts
The Three Refuges and the Five Precepts Ven Kumara, 29 Aug	Taking Refuges and Precepts before *dāna* and sharing merits with *devas* after dana
Significance of the Stupa Ven Aggacitta, 8 Sep	Origin, history and purpose of the *stūpa*
Three Sectarian Standpoints Ven Kumara, 12 Sep	Three flawed beliefs that give justification for one to be irresponsible for one's actions
Disciples of the Buddha Ven Aggacitta, Ven Balacitta, 19 Sep	How to be a virtuous disciple of the Buddha
Lofty Blessings Ven Aggacitta, 19 Sep	The blessings of humility, contentment, gratitude and timely listening to the Dhamma
Precepts for the Young Ven Kumara, 26 Sep	Bringing across to Sunday School kids, the importance and benefits of the five precepts
Blessing the Mission of Sukhi Hotu Ven Aggacitta, 2 Oct	Blessings for Sukhi Hotu to be successful in its noble quest to propagate the Dhamma
To Live and Die Well Ven Kumara, 3 Oct	Let us be heedful in doing what is good and in avoiding what is not, so as to live and die well
Happiness for the Lay Person Ven Balacitta, 10 Oct	Happiness based on: the possession and enjoyment of wealth derived through righteous means, freedom from debt and blamelessness
The Aims of People Ven Aggacitta, 24 Oct	Differing aims, quests, mainstays, desires and ideals of different types of people
The Significance of Kathina Ven Aggacitta, 14 Nov	Kathina as an occasion for monks to practise humility and harmony and for lay people to perform merits
A Successful Woman Ven Balacitta, 21 Nov	Four qualities for success in this life and four more to ensure success in the next.
The Purpose and Meaning of Life Ven Aggacitta, 28 Nov	Looking at the reasons that inspired participants of the Introduction to Monkhood Programme to get a taste of monkhood.
Caring for the Sick Ven Kumara, 5 Dec	The Buddha sets the example of caring for the sick and explains what makes a good caregiver and a good patient
Between Darkness and Light Ven Balacitta, 12 Dec	Rebirth into a brighter or darker existence is dependent upon our thoughts, speech and actions
Reasons for Giving Ven Kumara, 19 Dec	Eight reasons why a person gives
Spiritual Self Defence Ven Aggacitta , 26 Dec	Five weapons we can arm ourselves with when troubled by unseen beings

A Layman's *Welfare*



Ven Balacitta talks about four deeds that will lead to a good life in the present and four that will lead to a good life in the hereafter

Last night I received a surprising challenge from Ven Aggacitta when he suddenly informed me at 7.00 pm that I would be giving a talk here this morning. After contemplating for some time, Bhante finally suggested that I speak on "A Layman's Welfare", based on Dighajanu Sutta (AN 8:54).

One day, Dighajanu of the Koliya clan approached the Buddha. He said that he had much worldly enjoyment but would like to know how to live a good life now and in the hereafter.

The Buddha then explained that there are four deeds a layman could perform to build the foundation for a good life in the present and four which would lead to a good life hereafter.

HOW TO CONDUCT ONESELF IN ORDER TO ENJOY A GOOD PRESENT LIFE

- **Be diligent**

  He always strives to perform well and always sets his affairs in good order.

- **Protect property and wealth**

  In the past, a man protected his property from the elements of nature such as flood and fire. Now, he keeps his wealth in the bank.

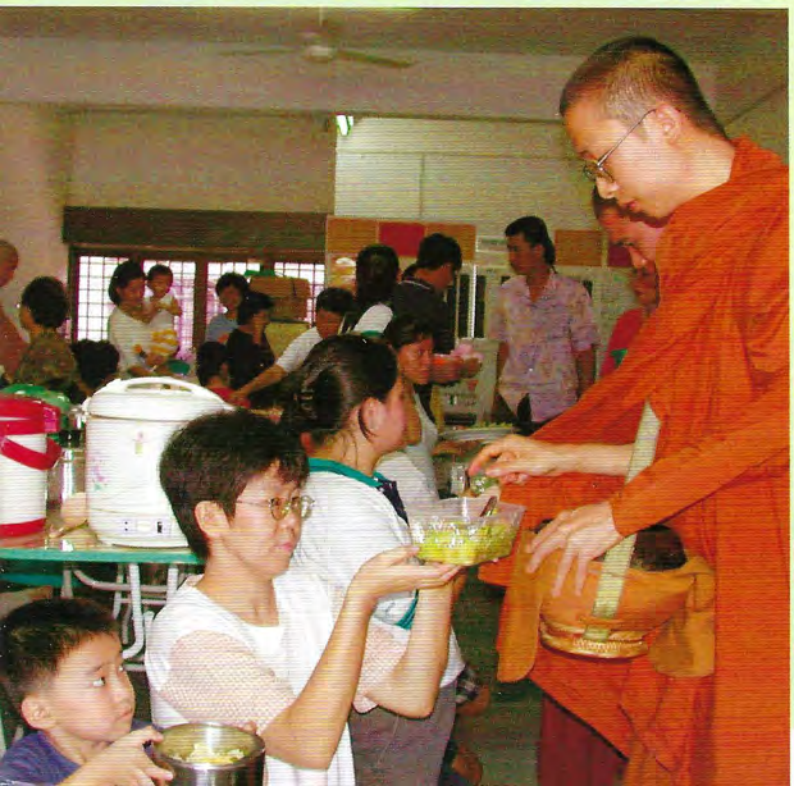
He has the wisdom to do business only with people who have good morals.

■ **Associate with the wise**
He associates with those who have faith in the Buddha Dhamma and with those who keep their precepts well.

■ **Spend wisely**
He should always spend within his means. The Buddha taught us to administer our wealth such that
- half is used to generate further wealth,
- a quarter is put aside for emergencies, and
- a quarter is spent on enjoyment and on charity.

He must however be on guard against four kinds of acts that will fritter away his wealth. These are womanising, drinking, gambling and association with the unwise. Those who do strike it rich in gambling are the exceptions rather than the rule, and do so only because of the ripening of some past good *kamma*.

These four unwholesome actions can be likened to a water tank having one inlet at the top but four outlets at the bottom. This tank can never fill up but will drain dry rapidly.



HOW TO CONDUCT ONESELF IN ORDER TO ENSURE A GOOD HEREAFTER

There are four deeds that will ensure rebirths in happy realms. I would like to quote Ven Suvanno who explains that there are 31 planes of existence and that we must be careful not to be reborn in the hell, ghost or animal worlds where there is immense suffering.

■ **Have faith in the Buddha**
This will help you to understand the Dhamma better.

■ **Keep the precepts well**
Keep well the Five Precepts. Some people make the extra effort to observe the Eight Precepts on the first and fifteenth day of the Chinese lunar month.

■ **Practise *dāna***
A lot of people have the 'I want more' attitude in life and this contributes greatly to making life burdensome. To do dana is to 'let go', to lighten your load in life. When you are reborn in the heavenly worlds, even the celestial beings will look up to you. Generosity is indeed a virtue.

■ **Cultivate wisdom**
There are three types of wisdom. The first stems from studying or listening to the Dhamma; the second when you use your own ingenuity to think; the final one is when you meditate and understand the three characteristics of life, namely *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*.

Your future rebirths depend largely on how well you have practised these four deeds in this life. If you do so only every now and then, you might be reborn as a human but live in dire conditions, e.g. suffering famine in Africa or in war-torn countries, which is a form of living hell. If you practise them moderately, you might be reborn as a wealthy and happy human being with the Midas touch. If you practise them diligently, you are guaranteed to be reborn in one of the heavenly planes.

I would like to end my talk today by saying that as I am still a *sāmaṇera*, I may not be capable of expounding the Dhamma as well as a *bhikkhu* like Bhante here. Therefore if I have said anything that is incorrect, it is probably because I have yet to fully understand the Dhamma or to explain it clearly. If I have done well today, then I have to thank Bhante as I owe it to him for his invaluable guidance to me.

CONCLUSION BY VEN AGGACITTA

Ven Balacitta has given a very lively talk today. If he can do so well as a mere samanera, imagine how much he can teach us when he becomes a bhikkhu—he will probably become famous worldwide!

We are here today for a thanksgiving dana. Our hosts, Mr and Mrs Koay Boon Hin, are expressing their gratitude because their daughter succeeded in gaining admission into Universiti Malaya. They want to express their thanks to us for chanting and radiating *mettā* to her. However, I would like to stress that Lay Suan's success is not due so much to our chanting as to the ripening of her past good kamma.

Today's topic has been chosen because it gives guidance to Lay Suan in her daily life as an undergraduate away from home.

Firstly, she can practise diligence in her studies and be skilful in all that she undertakes. Next, she should be wise to maintain presence of mind in her work. She must also learn to take care of possessions, given to her by her parents.

She must also choose wise and good friends—those who have faith in and practise the Dhamma. It is the trend nowadays for youngsters to frequent internet cafes or spend nights and early hours of the morning chatting at *mamak* stalls. This is neither wise nor healthy. She must learn to budget the allowance given her by her parents. I heard from one of our committee members that his son spent a fortune on his hand phone bill, a sum more than that of his father's.

Ven Balacitta gave the simile of the water tank. Thus you should avoid sexual misconduct like flirting with members of the opposite sex; avoid intoxicants such as alcohol or hard drugs; avoid gambling and associating with the unwise.

Our environment and the people we mix with play an important part in our lives. If we are not wise, firm or virtuous enough, we tend to be led astray. However, if we are very strong in our wisdom, we can help lead people along the right path.

Our environment and the people we mix with play an important part in our lives. If we are not wise, firm or virtuous enough, we tend to be led astray. However, if we are very strong in our wisdom, we can help lead people along the right path.

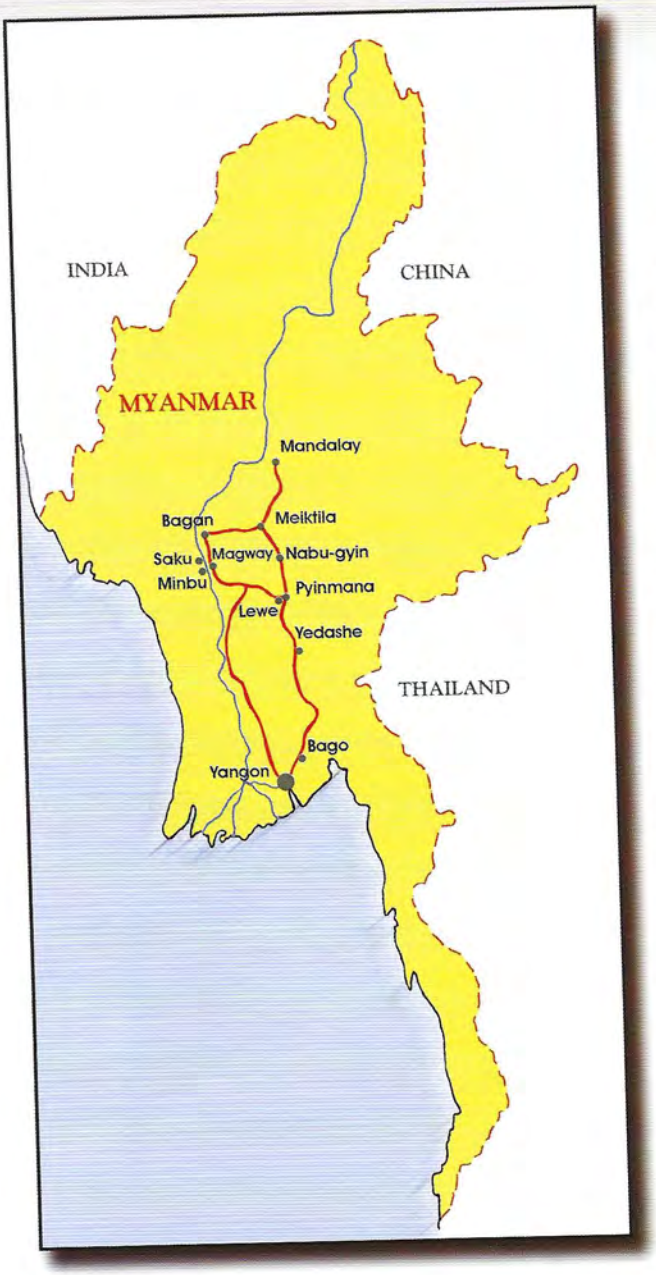
How should you practise the four deeds that will lead you to a good life in the hereafter? Keep your faith in the Buddha Dhamma; keep your precepts; be generous and practise good Buddhist economics even though you are still financially dependent. Finally, cultivate wisdom. *Pañña-sampada* means being accomplished in wisdom. You have practised meditation before and if you continue doing so, you will eventually grow in spiritual wisdom and understand the rising and passing away of phenomena.

Last week, Ven Tejaniya told us that meditation helps us to relieve stress. So, whenever you are too stressed out in your studies, you can always spend some time to watch the rising and falling of the abdomen. This will help calm and recharge you. We have also taught you metta meditation which you can fall back on when the people you are incompatible with disturb your peace. Just send thoughts of metta to them. You can also practise chanting and meditation every morning. It is entirely up to you, as the life you wish to lead depends on the amount and the kind of effort you put into living it.

Physical development to meet present needs has been achieved. Now SBS focuses more on human development as Ven Aggacitta leads SBS monastics on a field trip to Myanmar to expose them to a living Buddhist tradition.

Enrichment

... Along the Road in Myanmar



by Cheong Thoong Leong

Ven Aggacitta had been contemplating a visit to his teachers in Myanmar for some time but Bhante's intended trip did not materialise until June 2004. When Bhante offered me this rare opportunity to join him, I was excited and decided to jump onto the wagon along with Ven Balacitta and Yeoh Kar Kheng. It was a trip down memory lane for Bhante and a field trip for the rest of us.

Our plan was to spend the first nine days travelling north to visit the places where Bhante had stayed before and to meet his teachers and brother monks. Then we would return to Yangon for a retreat in Shwe Oo Min (SOM) Dhammasukha Tawya, to be joined by Tan Guan Soon, Looi Sow Fei and Eng Lai Hiang who were due to arrive just in time to begin the retreat with us.

Sim Poh Hock, who was already in Myanmar, was at the airport on 16 June to meet us together with U Win, Bhante's former *kappiya*. The latter was overjoyed to see Bhante again after almost 10 years. They too joined us on our trip up north.

ON THE ROAD

On our first day in Yangon, we visited some of the places whose names are familiar to many Malaysian *yogis*—Panditarama, Mahasi Meditation Centre and Chanmyay Meditation Centre. Sayadaw U Pandita was not in Panditarama, but we paid our respects to him the following morning at his forest monastery.

With Sayadawji U Tissara in Htan Tabin Tawya, 18 June 2004

We started our journey north the next day after an overnight stay in SOM—a long and arduous journey along uneven tar roads and dirt tracks—to visit several *tawyas*. A tawya is a monastery for monks to observe the forest *dhutaṅga* tradition.

Our first destination was Hman Taun Tawya near Yedashe, situated about 190 miles north of Yangon. There we met Sayadaw U Candobhasa, an experienced meditator of the forest tradition, with whom we had a fruitful discussion on meditation and Dhamma.

After lunch the following day we dropped by Thabye Pin Yankin Tawya to meet Ven U Khemananda, a Nepalese born in Myanmar. Then we proceeded to Sutaun Pye Tawya, located near a town called Lewe, about 240 miles North of Yangon. We were greeted by the Abbot, Sayadaw U Kevala. He is also an old friend-cum-Dhamma brother of Bhante. I could see the tremendous joy in him when he spotted Bhante; it was just like meeting a very close friend again after so many years.

The next morning we accompanied Bhante next door to meet his teacher, Sayadawji U Tissara of Htan Tabin Tawya. He looked deceptively simple but he is very learned and is strict in *vinaya* and dhutanga practice—a rare monk to meet, I would say. The serenity and beauty of the monastery struck me the moment I stepped in. The atmosphere there is very serene and is perfect for monks looking for solitude. On the same day we also visited Mahamyain Tawya where Sayadaw U Jotika once stayed. Bhante himself had a short stay there during his sojourn in Myanmar 19 years ago.

The next day we made our way to Tama Taun Tawya to meet Sayadaw U Sobhita, a forest monk who has been staying in a man-made cave tunnel for more than 15 years, stopping en route at Nabu-gyin Yankin Tawya (near Sayadawji U Tissara's home village of Nabu-gyin). This involved a journey by car followed by a 10-mile walk barefooted along wet, sometimes slippery, muddy paths across fields planted with a variety of crops such as sesame, sunflower and groundnuts—a hard and tiring

The serenity and beauty of the monastery struck me the moment I stepped in. The atmosphere there is very serene and is perfect for monks looking for solitude.

With Sayadaw U Sobhita in his tunnel cave, Tama Taun Tawya, 20 June 2004

A TownAce definitely cannot function like a 4WD—along the rugged journey from Pyinmanah to Saku, 22 June 2004.

journey, where thorns occasionally assaulted our tender soles. However we were rewarded with the beautiful scenery of a typical Burmese countryside.

Next morning we returned to Sutaun Pye Tawya where we rested for a day, after which we proceeded to our final destination before travelling back to Yangon. This time it was to visit Bhante's former *kuṭi* in Saku where he had stayed in solitude for 7 years. We travelled about 280 miles westwards for almost 12 hours in a van on a long and rugged journey that took us through a beautiful and quite hilly area. Midway, our van got stuck in the mud and we had to push it along a stretch of rocky and muddy road.

On arrival, we saw many devotees waiting patiently by the roadside for Bhante. They had been his supporters during his stay there and could still recognise him even after so many years. They paid respects to Bhante and it was obvious to us that their faith in Bhante was strong. Before we left, they offered oil and honey to Bhante.

At Saku Yankin Tawya where Ven Aggacitta stayed in solitude from 1986 – 1993, 23 June 2004

IMPRESSIONS

I knew very little about Myanmar—not having been there before—so my first glimpse of this country when we landed at Yangon International Airport gave me a bit of a surprise as almost everybody around was wearing a *sarong*. Back home, people do so only in the *kampungs*. To assimilate into the society, I learned to wear a sarong, Burmese style, and very soon found myself enjoying wearing it all the time.

I benefited in various ways from this short trip of several days. From what I observed, the people are generally poor and the economic gap among the population, wide. The infrastructure is not that developed, with poor quality roads,

Dhamma discussion with Sayadaw U Jotika at his residence in Yangon, 24 July 2004

built mainly with manual labour. For example, big rocks for making roads are broken down manually.

Public transport is grossly insufficient to cater to the needs of the public, who mainly rely on it as not many can afford to own a car or motorbike. It was a common scene where a bus or pick-up truck was at least 100% overloaded. Burmese people have a simple lifestyle. Their respect shown to monks, Buddha images or religious structures like *stūpas* is too obvious to be ignored. I was told that when making food offerings to monks, they give the best, leaving poorer quality food for their own consumption.

Despite such poverty, they are a sincere and helpful people. I was personally very touched by the hospitality of devotees of the monasteries we visited. During mealtimes, especially in monasteries, we had VIP treatment. Meals were laid out nicely for us and there would be people by our side ready to attend to our needs. Normally they waited for us to finish our meal before they took theirs. There was an occasion where they had to bear with their hunger because for some reason we were late for dinner. We had delicious and quality food most of the time and I felt moved when Bro Sim told me that due to poverty, they seldom consume food of such high quality. Despite this they never failed to give their best to their guests. I think this is a virtue that everyone should cultivate.

In some places, I noticed that some monks did not carry umbrellas even on rainy days when they were out for piṇḍacāra. Some monks carried fans with them during alms round and they walked in single file according to seniority.

We also followed the monks on a few occasions for alms round. It is a practice for them to collect their alms food going from house to house. In some places, I noticed that some monks did not carry umbrellas even on rainy days when they were out for *piṇḍacāra*. Some

Setting out from Shwe Oo Min Dhammasukha for pindacara, June 2004

monks carried fans with them during alms round and they walked in single file according to seniority.

There are many monks in Myanmar. I have never seen as many monks in a single gathering in Malaysia as what I saw in Myanmar. They are highly respected by the lay people. For example, there are many toll booths in Myanmar and on most occasions the charges were waived because there were monks in our van. Short-term bhikkhu ordination is very common in Myanmar. I saw people ordained to be monks for only a few days.

Bhante Aggacitta offering SBS newszine and other publication to Sayadaw U Jotika

DHAMMA DISCUSSION

Most of the *sayādaws* we met throughout this short trip are veteran yogis with wide experience in various meditation traditions. They do not speak English, but with Bhante as our interpreter, we had very interesting discussions. I gained a lot of Dhamma knowledge through such discussions. We asked a lot of questions on meditation. On one occasion, we posed an interesting question to a forest sayadaw: whether or not one needs to practise *samatha* meditation in order to do *vipassanā* meditation successfully. His answer was, 'not necessary'; but he added that a yogi with a samatha base can progress rapidly when he practises vipassana. However, he also said that the time frame needed to reach a certain level of vipassana attainment could be the same whether or not a yogi has a samatha base.

We were also privileged to meet the reclusive Sayadaw U Jotika at his residence in Yangon. We had a very interesting Dhamma discussion with him. He said that practising vipassana awareness in activities involving lots of thinking—which is *paññatti* (conceptual)—is still possible even though vipassana is concerned with *paramattha* (ultimate reality). For example, while reading, we are involved in conceptual thinking but when feeling arises (paramattha) and we watch it, then it is vipassana. In so doing, we shift from paññatti to paramattha. So we can practise vipassana even in daily activities that involve lots of "mental work" such as thinking, if we know how to shift from paññatti to paramattha.

MEDITATION RETREAT

We started our retreat in SOM immediately after this short outing. The method taught in this centre is about 'watching mind with mind'. Some people call it *"cittānupassanā"* but for me it is a *satipaṭṭhāna* practice, as eventually we will be practising all the four satipatthanas although the access door is *citta*. We were taught to observe and study the mind. I think this method is very relevant in daily life as it renders the mind versatile enough to shift between paññatti and paramattha as explained by Sayadaw U Jotika. I am grateful to Sayadaw U Tejaniya who is very skillful and showed patience and compassion in guiding us Malaysian yogis during our interview sessions which were filled with informal lively discussions. (see story on next page)

It was an enriching trip for me and I really enjoyed it. I would also like to thank everyone in the group for making this trip a successful one. My special thanks to Bhante for inviting me along.

THE Inward Journey

In Shwe Oo Min Dhammasukha Forest Centre in Yangon, Myanmar, SBS yogis learn more techniques to deal with lobha, dosa and moha. Laura Zan, also there for her own retreat, brings you vivid impressions of their journey into their hearts and minds.

I am standing at the end of a long wooden walkway saying goodbye to Cheong and Yeoh, the last two Malaysian yogis in a group I came to know well through our two-month journey together. We are at Shwe Oo Min Dhammasukha Forest Centre, a large brick-and-mortar compound shaded by palms and evergreens and surrounded by fields and villages. It is the centre of the late Sayadaw Shwe Oo Min, a highly respected elder monk in the Theravada tradition. Together we completed one leg of the journey into our hearts and minds; separately, we will now walk the next one. Reflecting on the summer experience, I feel gratified for the meditation and Dhamma service.

At the end of June 2004 and a week into my summer rains retreat, the teacher, Sayadaw U Tejaniya asks me to help translate for the Malaysian yogis arriving in a few days. I am at first hesitant, fearing it would detract from my own practice. As time goes by, I realise the blessing in disguise.

CLEARING THE PATH

The Malaysian yogis are not new to *vipassanā*. Yeoh, Looi, and Eng have been practising insight meditation for a few years and have attended Mahasi retreats in Malaysia. Tan has practised for over 15 years and for Sim, Myanmar is his 'second home', having been there on multiple occasions. Yet, however seasoned the group is, Sayadaw's presentation of the technique of *cittānupassanā* sparks new interest for the yogis.

The schedule alternates periods of formal sitting and walking meditation with a stress on continuity of awareness in daily activities. Every morning, two hours before the crack of dawn, we file silently towards the Dhamma hall. The wooden walkways are illuminated by bare light bulbs around which tiny white insects gather, making their last rounds before expiring. The air is usually moist with the morning dew and whiffs of coal and smoke occasionally come in from the villages beyond.

Sayadaw manoeuvres each onto the next step and encourages the yogis to continue practising. It is a conversation and exploration in one, a problem-solving session with the feel of a continuing education workshop. Sayadaw prefers to stress his role as a guide, for ultimately we all have to find our own comfort zones and answers.

Sayadaw U Tejaniya says, "Be aware of pain through the mind".

We head into the protection of our sitting nets in the Dhamma hall. The complete stillness of the early morning is broken intermittently by the cricket calls from beyond the walls. Later on, as dawn breaks and silence gives way to the day's activities, we continue to be aware as we sweep dust and insect remains from the Dhamma hall.

Every other day, we meet in the Dhamma library, a year-old building next to the Dhamma hall. Each yogi has a story to tell and his or her own demons to exorcise.

The room is quiet except for the bird calls and the air conditioner's soft whirring. On some oppressively humid days without electricity, we fan ourselves with the booklets we bring for the interview.

Ven Balacitta reports first. He pauses for a moment before beginning his report. Demons from the past keep resurfacing at the mind door and he is determined to figure out the answers for himself. After him, the other yogis take turns sharing their unique experiences from the previous two days' work. In turn, Sayadaw manoeuvres each onto the next step and encourages the yogis to continue practising. It is a conversation and exploration in one, a problem-solving session with the feel of a continuing education workshop. Sayadaw prefers to stress his role as a guide, for ultimately we all have to find our own comfort zones and answers.

Initially there are many questions for Sayadaw U Tejaniya. "What do I do about pain?" "My mind keeps wandering. What should I do then?" "Should I only focus on the breath or can I be aware of the sounds?" The inquisitive students bring far more than their daily practice to the interview room; they ask questions regarding tranquility meditation, cittanupassana, and much more. More than once, a report turns into a lively discussion, spurring more questions and related experiences from other yogis. It is not unusual for anyone peeping through the window to find us laughing at something a yogi has reported.

TRANSFORMATIONS

The interview sessions serve as forums to air questions and resolve misconceptions. The yogis, who started out with 'brute force' meditation techniques, relax and give in to choiceless awareness. When choiceless awareness becomes the modus operandi, the yogis discover

the clarity that arises from settling back in the moment. They come to enjoy watching the mind with equanimity.

Weeks pass and the monsoon season is now in full swing. During especially heavy downpours, drains overflow and the far end of the meditation centre floods. Standing at the gate and looking from one end to the other, all I can see is swirling murky water.

In the Dhamma library, we continue with alternate day interviews where I notice an opposite reaction at work. As much as there is turmoil in the weather outside, there is a transformation taking place in the yogis. I sense a serenity and inner calm exuding from them.

It is now almost the end of July and there is progress.

The awareness comes out like the fits and spurts of a rusty water faucet for some while for others it has the momentum of a marathon runner. Their experiences are not the stereotyped, hyped-up meditation reports of new-age books, but of those who have been practicing for weeks. One yogi learns to forgive a long time enemy who has haunted him incessantly in thought. Another feels the buoyancy of continuous awareness. Still another starts to discern the procession of minds and mental states clearly and describes each experience with the awe and wonder of one making an incredible find. It is a time of self-discovery, and in some cases, a discovery of a lack of self. While the hours and days pass in the great scheme of time, the yogis are coming to terms with the present moment.

As much as there is turmoil in the weather outside, there is a transformation taking place in the yogis. I sense a serenity and inner calm exuding from them.

A NEW BEGINNING

A few weeks later it is time for Looi, Eng and Sim to leave. I remember their last interview clearly. The air is charged with nostalgia and excitement from Looi and Eng as they report their last accounts and pay respects to the teacher and Ven Aggacitta. Sayadaw U Tejaniya uses this opportunity to stress the importance of carrying the continuous meditation into the outside world. With the knowledge of one who has practised outside of a retreat situation, he warns the yogis that this is just the beginning, and that awareness and wisdom are a shield and armour for life. Time at the center is for intensive retreat; however, it is only one leg in the long journey towards wisdom.

abbot's address FROM PAGE 3

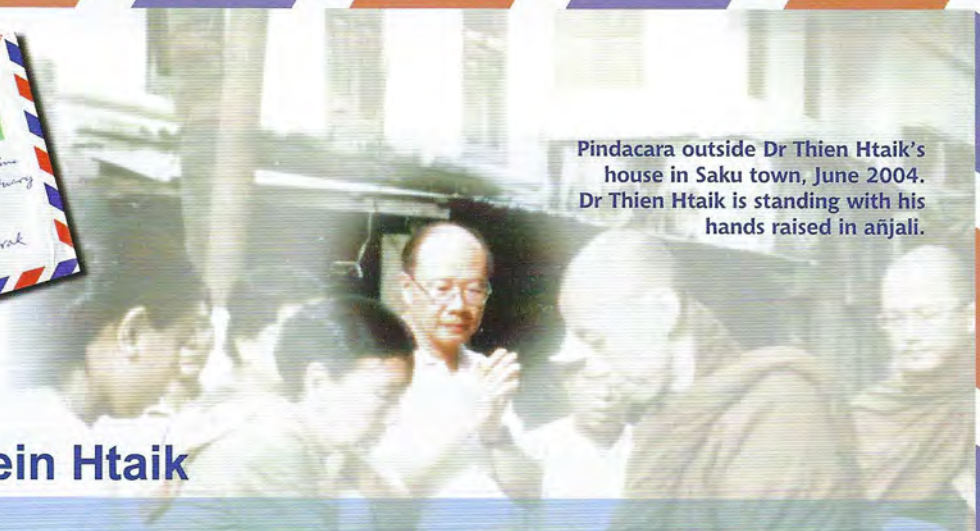
resource development. In mid-June, I led Ven Balacitta and two ex-IMP participants on a field trip to Myanmar, returning at the end of July. Ven Kumara was also supposed to join us, but he went to China for *qigong* therapy instead.

The purpose of the trip was threefold:

- to visit the forest monasteries I stayed in more than ten years ago and to pay respect to my venerable teachers
- to expose SBS trainees to a living forest monastic tradition and lay Buddhist practice in the rural areas
- to explore another approach to the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation as taught in Shwe Oo Min Dhammasukha Forest Centre.

Ironically, in a way it was a 'hello-goodbye' trip for me. On 19 June, I met up with my Vinaya-*dhutaṅga* teacher, Sayadaw U Tissara, after an absence of 10 years. Shortly afterwards, on 26 July, I attended his funeral. He died, with hardly any suffering, of liver cancer at the age of 84. Here, I pay tribute to a dying breed of forest monks who are exceptionally learned in the Pali scriptures, conscientious in the Vinaya and austere in practice.

The 'Tsunami of Compassion' swept through the world at the end of 2004, thus setting the stage for 2005 to be a year of reaching out compassionately to the needy. With the diversion of public resources for short-term and long-term relief work, it would not be prudent to plan for Phase 4 development, which covers proper retreat centre facilities, in the near future. Nonetheless, we need to go ahead with the reconstruction of our main office where there is a lack of essential facilities, such as a spacious public reception area, washrooms and a kitchenette—but otherwise, for us too, 2005 will turn out to be a year of reaching out compassionately to those who are in need of the Dhamma to enrich their lives.



Pindacara outside Dr Thien Htaik's house in Saku town, June 2004. Dr Thien Htaik is standing with his hands raised in añjali.

Letter from Dr Thein Htaik

Dr Thein Htaik, a staunch satipaṭṭhāna yogi and advocate, was one of Ven Aggacitta's chief supporters during the latter's solitary stay in Saku Yankin Tawya from 1986-1993

The Editor
Sāsanā rakkha Newszine

11 October 2004

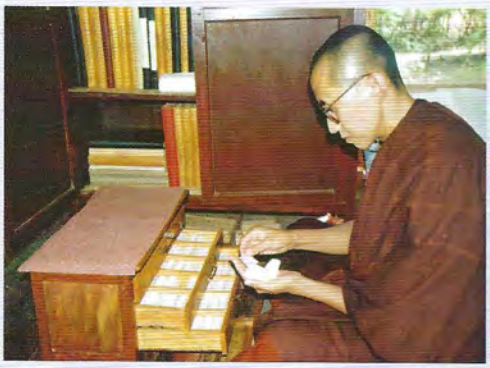
Dear Editor,

I was extremely joyfully surprised to learn that our most venerable forest-dwelling monk is now the Spiritual Director of a most promising Dhamma Sanctuary in modern society — the S.B.S. in Taiping, Malaysia.

Fond memories and unforgettable scenes of the Bhante replayed in my mind's eyes. The unfoldment starts as a young foreigner monk practising the Satipaṭṭhāna energetically for years under the expert guidance of Ven. Paṇḍitā Abhivaṃsa in Yangon.

The second episode highlights a forest dwelling monk studying the Dhamma (Tipiṭaka) in daytime and practising Satipaṭṭhāna meditation at nights, residing in accordance to very strict Vinaya practices (including Dhutangas). This has also lasted for many years in a number of places in our country.

The Bhante's life then will never be complete without mentioning the thousands of neatly written tiny pieces of paper he scrupulously



Ven Aggacitta working on his index of the Vinaya and other Pali texts in Saku Yankin Tawya, 1992

toiled to compile — the index to the Tipitaka, especially the Vinaya). And also the thick and heavy hand-sewn and -dyed (by himself) dukuṭṭa robe of hand-woven cloth (picked from cementry and road sides). Outside his forest abode, his eyes were always serenely cast down, robes neatly dressed, use no foot wear and very seldom spoke, etc, etc. A model monk, true lineage of the Sakya Muni, so serene, so pure, such a holy personality to behold, dassanuttariya ..... Well, I am at a loss for words. As I am writing this piti is flooding me and tears are a-welling. Sādhu.

You all at the SBS. are extra superbly fortunate to be under his guidance. Sādhu. From afar I humbly and respectfully bow low at his feet. I rejoice in your services to the Bhante and to the Sāsana.

May you all be well and joyous.

yours in the Dhamma

Thein Htaik

THEIN HTAIK
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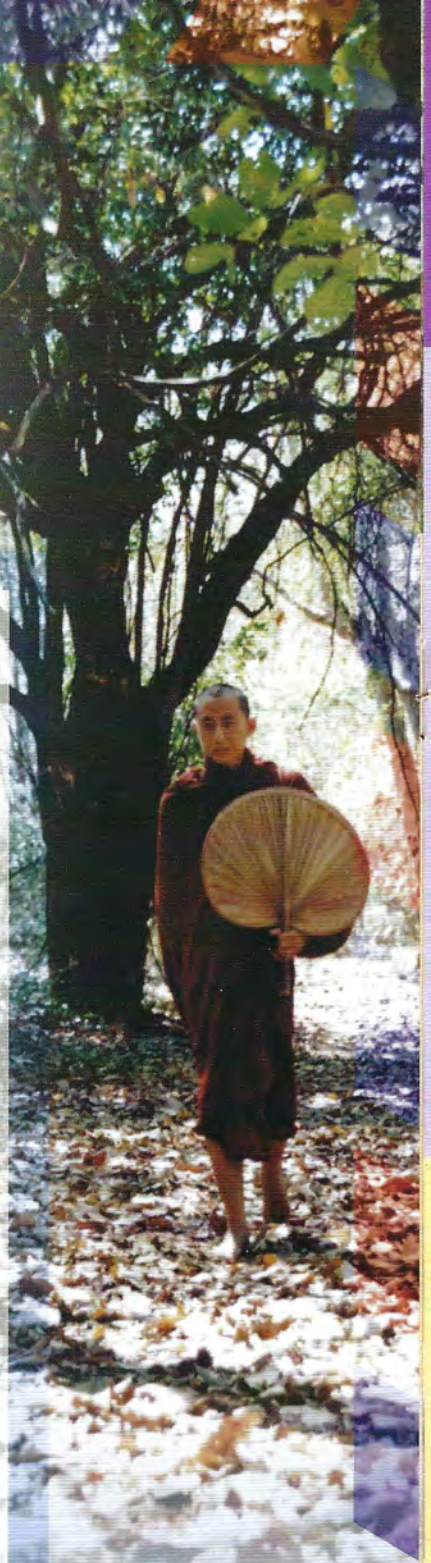


Walking through the forest behind Saku Yankin Tawya, 1992

AN *Unusual* Twist

by Mah Tuck Cheong

When I was a young boy, I used to go to the river just below SBS to swim and fish like most *kampung* boys. In my youthful ignorance, I thought it was fun and never imagined that one day I would come back to these forest surroundings, not to relive my childhood days of swimming and fishing but to work for the *sāsana*. Life certainly has its unusual twists and turns for some of us.

I began working here a year and a half ago. How time flies! When I first came, Phase 3 of this SBS project was still in progress and I was fortunate to witness and contribute towards its completion. Now, seeing this wonderful project being put to use for the benefit of the Buddhist community to achieve the noble goals set out by the Abbot, Ven Aggacitta, and the founding members, I get a sense of joy and satisfaction—a feeling that I have given back 'something' in return for the wonderful guidance and teachings the Buddha bequeathed to us.

It is time for me to move on to allow others the opportunity to contribute and to take SBS to greater heights. This experience has enriched and benefited me and I hope it will do the same for others too.

Just as SBS appreciates his contribution, he too is grateful for the chance to serve.

A Big *Challenge*

by David Chang PP

Parting words from our out-going General Administrator.

My first day as General Administrator (GA) in SBS coincided with its first *sāmaṇera* ordination, a ceremony which I witnessed. It was 13 July 2003. It has been almost a year and a half since then. Time has flown and now it is time for me to leave.

Looking back, I realise that being GA in a monastery is a big challenge, at least for this out-going GA. I found that my approach towards people had to be totally different. I needed to be humble, patient and compassionate towards others as well as towards myself. SBS brings out latent talents in one. Often, matters relating to buildings crop up and one has to take the initiative to solve minor problems instead of waiting for contractors to do so. Thus I had to be a handyman, a jack of all trades. In parting, I would like to give some advice. Follow your heart and work sincerely and unselfishly. We should emulate the Buddha and do *dāna* not for oneself, but for the greater good.

In future, should conditions allow and I'm given a chance to serve again in SBS, I will definitely come back because the SBS Sangha and the devotees in Taiping are 'one of a kind'.

gathered outside the door with cameras to record the event inside. This was the nearest a lay person could get to observe the event. I was among these lucky few—must be my good *kamma*.

On looking around I saw the crowd swelling with each second. The slopes around the *sima* pond were inundated with people, young and old. At the edge of the water one could see some inflated rubber tubes—a wise standby should someone fall into the pond which is quite deep—12 feet at the deepest end, I was told.

Mingling with the guests and visitors were people in bright orange vests—volunteer helpers going about their duties to make sure the morning's programme ran smoothly. The opportunity to meet up with old friends seemed to be the norm that beautiful morning. Just seeing the happily lit up faces of those who chanced upon an old friend was enough to light up one's spirits. I too, had the opportunity to meet up with quite a number of old acquaintances, some of whom I had not seen for some time.

That memorable morning saw seven busloads of devotees and supporters as well as those who had come on their own, gathered at the Hokkien Cemetery Pavilion to wait for transport up to SBS. A fleet of 4WDs was there to take them up the steep hill. They eagerly rushed to board the vehicles to beat the 9.00am deadline when the ceremony would commence at the hilltop. *Sādhu* to all those who loaned their vehicles and to the volunteer drivers for making sure that everyone was in time for the ordination. It was indeed a task well done.

When I reached the Sima Hall, almost all the monks were already inside waiting to start the ordination ceremony. We were told no lay person was allowed in the Sima Hall, as anyone being too near the Sangha assembly during the monastic legal proceedings would render them null and void. A few people

At 9.00am sharp the ordination ceremony started. In the background, the soothing strains of the theme song of SBS slowly died down. The crowd too, quietened down.

Ven Kumara was given the task of explaining to the devotees the procedure of the ordination itself. I could see the multitude of people who had positioned themselves all around the sima pond straining their

In his speech at the first Bhikkhu Ordination Ceremony, the Abbot emphasises the Malaysian nature of the ceremony

Coming of AGE

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

Venerable Mahatheras and other members of the Sangha, Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary supporters and Dhamma friends. Welcome again to Sasasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary.

First and foremost, I must express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to the venerable members of the Sangha who have taken the trouble to come and participate in this Bhikkhu Ordination Ceremony (BOC) at a time when the *vassa* has just commenced. Most of them are from Penang, Selangor and Johor. *Sādhu*, venerable ones.

Some of you who have not been here for quite some time will notice that we have more facilities available now—particularly, proper toilets and shaded places to sit under. Of course all this could not have materialised without your continual support—moral support, spiritual support, volunteer necks, trying to peep through the windows of the Sima Hall to see what was going on. If only the hall was constructed with clear glass all round—wishful thinking! Anyway the explanations were clear and we could follow what was actually going on in the hall.

We were told that even though it was enough for the monastic legal text to be read once in order to execute the ordination, it would nevertheless be done three times as there were so many monks present that morning. What an honour it was for the bhikkhu-to-be and SBS too, to be blessed with the presence of all these bhikkhus who had come from various centres in Malaysia. It certainly was history in the making.

Samanera Balacitta was asked to move aside, away from the Sangha assembly, to be instructed by Ven Kumara on some questions that he had to answer truthfully before the Sangha could formally ordain him. After that, he returned to the Sangha assembly for the ordination proper to be executed. A group of three monks then read the monastic legal text for ordination, which sounded more like chanting. At the end of this reading the time was recorded and this was deemed to be the exact moment Samanera Balacitta became a bhikkhu. SBS had ordained its first bhikkhu!

To allow more monks to participate, the same text was read again twice by different groups of monks. A precedent has been set, and I believe many more such ordinations will follow suit. *Mahāsādhu* to you, Ven Balacitta. May you continue to grow in wisdom and purity!

With the ordination ceremony successfully completed, everyone was instructed to prepare to offer

support and financial support. So for making all this possible, all of you here and elsewhere also deserve a big sadhu.

I am also very touched and inspired by your tremendous response today. Although many of you would be familiar with *sāmanera* ordination through the many novitiate programmes offered annually throughout the country, *bhikkhu* ordination may be something quite new.

Moreover, there are certain elements of novelty in this historic first Bhikkhu Ordination Ceremony at SBS that will, I'm sure, make your trip to this hidden valley among the evergreen hills of Taiping, a memorable one. What are these elements of novelty?

1. Educational in a graphic way
2. A Malaysian affair
3. International participation

Let me explain.

EDUCATIONAL IN A GRAPHIC WAY

Most bhikkhu ordinations are exclusively a monks-only affair where the laity just looks on without really understanding what is going on. Here we try to explain the whole procedure to you so that you can better appreciate the actual process of higher ordination as well as the commitments of bhikkhuhood.

piṇḍapāta to the monks. In the meantime, the Chairman of the SBS Management Committee and the guest of honour delivered their speeches. Sad to say, not many really listened to them. Most were busy catching up with old friends or making new ones.

The crowd was then organised for *piṇḍacāra*. It took some organising to get the people to line the pindacara route and to distribute the packets of rice to offer to the Sangha. After collecting the alms food, the monks assembled in the Sangha Classroom for the rest of the programme. The Abbot of SBS, Ven Aggacitta, gave an inspiring Dhamma talk which was translated into Hokkien by Ven Dhammavuddho. It was very professionally done.

Offering of requisites then followed after which the monks had their lunch. The lay people sought comfortable spots in which to enjoy their lunch. Those who remained in the vicinity of Sangha Court were given a photo rehash of the events that morning, thanks to modern technology like the digital camera and LCD projector.

After lunch outstation devotees descended the hill to board the buses back to their hometowns. Soon, the crowd dwindled to a few who lingered on to savour the beauty of SBS. Some were first timers there. It had been a most glorious morning well spent amongst good company with a chance to witness an auspicious event. Sadhu to all who have in one way or another contributed to the successful first bhikkhu ordination in Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary. We shall meet again for the next ordination. S

A MALAYSIAN AFFAIR

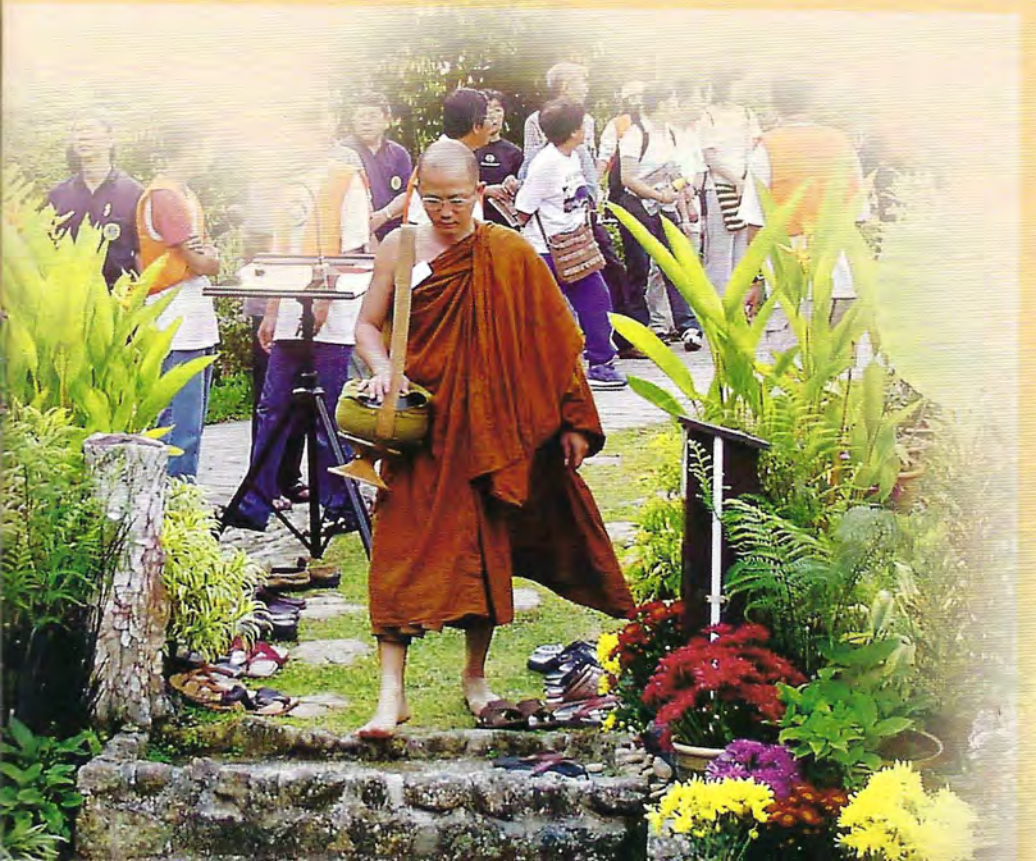
This first BOC in SBS can be considered a Malaysian affair because a Malaysian has been ordained in Malaysia by a Sangha assembly, the majority of which are Malaysian monks. So what is so novel about that? Let me explain.

A total of 23 bhikkhus participated in the BOC. Of these, sixteen are Malaysians, three are Myanmar, two are Thais and two are Sri Lankans. Most, if not all, of the sixteen Malaysians received their higher ordination under foreign bhikkhus, with foreign *upajjhāyas* (preceptors). Most were ordained abroad, while two or three received their ordinations locally.

It would have been more nationalistic to make this ceremony an exclusively Malaysian affair, so that we can proudly say, "A Malaysian monastic trained in Malaysia has been ordained in Malaysia by Malaysian monks." However, considering that all the Malaysian monks here have foreign ordination roots, I feel that we should express our immense gratitude to foreign monks for so graciously imparting the legacy of bhikkhuhood to us.

But of course, they have given us much, much more than just bhikkhu ordination. I myself received my initial Buddhist education by reading the English Dhamma books published by Sri Lankan monks, and pursued further education and training under Thai and Myanmar monks. I am sure every Malaysian Theravada Buddhist would appreciate the great work of foreign missionary monks, including meditation teachers. Let us give them three great sadhus.

So as an expression of our immense gratitude to foreign monks, we have invited a few to witness as well as participate in this historic event where a Malaysian trained in Malaysia under a Malaysian preceptor is ordained in Malaysia by a Sangha assembly, the majority of which are Malaysian monks.



INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION

However, this Malaysian affair has also an international flavour to it. The ordination text (*kammavācā*) was read by three groups. In each group, three monks recited the kammavaca. Of the three monks, two are Malaysians and the third a Myanmar, Sri Lankan or Thai. This arrangement is also novel, because in the ordination ceremony that we Malaysian monks received, the monks who recited the kammavaca in any one ceremony shared a common nationality.

In other words, the monks who recited the kammavaca for those of us who were ordained in the Myanmar tradition were all Myanmar monks. For those of us who were ordained in the Thai tradition, they were all Thai monks. For those of us who were ordained in the Sri Lankan tradition, they were all Sri Lankan monks.

Why was this so? The reason is that we were ordained under a specific national tradition where monks recited the kammavaca according to their own national pronunciation that is different from that of other national

traditions. This makes it almost impossible for monks from different nationalities to recite the kammavaca together in unison.

Nevertheless, we did it this morning, using the international Pali pronunciation rather than that of any particular nationality. We would like to give our thanks to the open-mindedness of the foreign missionary monks of today.

Today we have the national pride of witnessing a Malaysian, trained in Malaysia, being ordained by Malaysians in Malaysia with the co-operation of foreign monks whose presence reminds us of our immense gratitude for their compassionate and effective propagation— without which we would not have come of age today.

SUMMARY

To sum up, today's BOC is something special because it is educational in a graphic way, a Malaysian affair, yet has an international flavour to it. Today we have the national pride of witnessing a Malaysian, trained in Malaysia, being ordained by Malaysians in Malaysia with the co-operation of foreign monks whose presence reminds us of our immense gratitude for their compassionate and effective propagation—without which we would not have come of age today.

COMMENCEMENT

When a university student completes his basic degree, he has to attend a ceremony to receive his academic certificate. Here in Malaysia we call it the "Graduation Ceremony". Graduation means completion, having completed a course of study. In the US however, they call it "Commencement", meaning "The Beginning".

Venerable Balacitta has graduated from being a samanera to bhikkhuhood today, but it is also the Beginning for him to deepen his study and practice of the DhammaVinaya.

I hope that today can also be the Beginning for Malaysian Buddhist parents to be more willing to allow their sons to renounce.

I also hope that today can be the Beginning for Malaysian Buddhist youths to be brave enough to explore the possibilities of an alternative lifestyle that can benefit themselves and others. Here I would like to remind you of the forthcoming Introduction to Monkhood Programme 3 (IMP3) scheduled for November – December 2004.

CONCLUSION

Many years ago, when Ven Mahinda, the son of King Asoka, came to Sri Lanka from India to establish the Sasana, he managed to convert King Devanampiyatissa, who became a staunch Buddhist and supported the Sangha abundantly, building temples as well as encouraging many members of the royalty to become monks and nuns. Even then, when he asked the Sanghathera whether the Sasana had been established in Sri Lanka, he was told that this would not be until a local renounces, studies the Vinaya and teaches it in Sri Lanka.

So today, in our first BOC, we have actually sown the seed. It is when a monk who is ordained locally and then studies and finally teaches the Vinaya in Malaysia, then only can it be said that the Sasana has been established in Malaysia.

In conclusion, it is my hope that everyone here benefits from today's ordination ceremony. I would like to thank Ven Dhammavuddho for acting as my Hokkien translator.

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

SBS UNFOLDMENT

Things have been unfolding at a quick pace since the idea of setting up a local monk-training centre crystallised. We'd like to share with you the beautiful and exciting process of our development and offer you the opportunity to participate in our inspired, collective efforts.

2 Jun While in Petaling Jaya, Ven Aggacitta is invited by the Selangor Buddhist Vipassana Meditation Society (SBVMS) to its premises for lunch *dāna*. He then delivers a thanksgiving talk based on Velama Sutta (AN 3:93) and Sumana Sutta (AN 5:31) to a packed hall of devotees.

Later in the evening at the same place, he gives a Dhamma talk to the public entitled "Four Modes to Perfect Vision". The talk is based on Kimsukopama Sutta (SN 4:61) and will be available for free distribution in audio CD format.

6 Jun A well-wisher from Melbourne, Ida, donates a copy of *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha* to the SBS Library.

15 Jun While in PJ, Ven Aggacitta is again invited to give a public talk in SBVMS premises. Entitled "Patients in Samsara", the talk will be available for free distribution in audio CD format.

16 Jun Ven Aggacitta and Ven Balacitta together with their attending *kappiyas*, Yeoh Kar Kheng and Cheong Thoong Leong, leave for Myanmar. On arrival in Myanmar, they are joined by Sim Poh Hock, who arranges for them to visit Panditarama, Mahasi and Chanmyay Meditation Centres in Yangon before checking in at Shwe Oo Min Dhamma Sukha Meditation Centre. (see story on p16)

17 Jun Today Ven Aggacitta et al visit Hse Main Gone Panditarama and meet Sayadaw U Pandita.

They also visit a few other forest monasteries on the way to Htantapin Forest Monastery where Ven Aggacitta's Vinaya-*dhutaṅga* teacher, Sayadaw U Tissara, resides. All the monastery supporters are very happy to see Ven Aggacitta again after 10 years of absence and hosted the Malaysian guests with great warmth and hospitality. At Hmantaun Forest Monastery, Ven Aggacitta shares his experience on Buddhism and Sasana work in Malaysia.

19 Jun After 10 years, Ven Aggacitta meets again with 84-years old Sayadaw U Tissara at Htantapin Forest Monastery where the former started to observe forest dhutanga towards the end of 1984.

Later they visit Mahamyain Forest Monastery, founded by Sayadaw U Jotika in the early 80's, but now is uninhabited. Ven Aggacitta also stayed here briefly in 1985 as a lone caretaker while the resident monks were away.

23 Jun The Malaysian travellers brave a rugged cross-country journey westwards to visit Saku Yankin Forest Hermitage where Ven Aggacitta stayed alone for 7 years. Although all the Myanmar hosts are exceedingly hospitable, the oily food and foreign water are just too much for delicate Malaysian stomachs to handle. The adventurous and interesting journey is dampened by frequent attacks of diarrhoea.

26 Jun After having returned from their cross-country tour of forest monasteries the Malaysian travellers finally commence their meditation retreat at Shwe Oo Min Dhammasukha Meditation Centre today.

24 Jul Malaysian *yogis* meet Sayadaw U Jotika at his residence in Insein, Yangon, Myanmar. Ven Aggacitta offers a set of robes and some SBS publications to Sayadaw and invites him to be a guest speaker in the forthcoming IMP3 as well as to conduct the year-end meditation retreat at SBS. Sayadaw gives a profound Dhamma talk on various aspects of meditation, particularly the practice to be mindful in the present moment.

Ven Aggacitta and Ven Balacitta visit International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University, Yangon, and meet two Malaysian students there: Sis Yew Lee Chan from Penang and Bro See from Kuala Lumpur.

26 Jul Ven Aggacitta attends the funeral of his Vinaya-dhutanga teacher, Sayadaw U Tissara, a forest monk, at Yankin forest monastery near his home village, Nabu-gyin (more than 250 miles north of Yangon). Ven Aggacitta had met up with his teacher again after an absence of 10 years on 19 June 2004. Sayadaw U Tissara, aged 84, was also Sayadaw U Jotika's Vinaya teacher.

Another human resource development programme is implemented as the members of the SBSMC get an insight into the right attitudes for service.

SERVICE

by Cheaw Hon Ming

On 22 August 2004, members of the Sasaranakkha Buddhist Sanctuary Management Committee (SBSMC) participated in an induction programme at SBS. The program was designed to familiarise the new members with the workings of the different departments within the organisation. It was also meant to build rapport among committee members, making for greater efficiency in running SBS.

The Abbot, Ven Aggacitta, started off the session with a discussion on the philosophy and brief history of SBS. Subsequently, the Chairman and various department heads presented an overview of and insight into their departments. The session ended with a thought provoking presentation on "Attitudes in Service Excellence" by Hor Kwei Loon, the external facilitator. The highlight of the induction programme was a lively presentation of the qualities needed to successfully run a service organisation like SBS.

As a newly appointed member of SBSMC, I benefited a great deal from this programme; it has helped me to feel my way around SBS and be in tune with the pulse of the organisation. I now have a better overall picture

S is **selflessness**, a quality reflected in the humility and compassion shown by a person who finds himself having to deal with all sorts of people in a difficult situation.

E is **effort**, the passion and joy with which one carries out one's job. It encompasses determination, patience, resourcefulness and initiative.

R is a person's **respect** for the organisation, holding it in high esteem with a strong conviction that the organisation's goals and philosophy are in complete harmony with his own.

V is a **value system** that reflects the integrity of the organisation.

I is a system for "**inner charging**" making use of inner resources through meditation and retreats.

C is **continuous improvement** of self as well as service so that all concerned are happy with the organisation—its members as well as the public. In this way, SBS will enjoy strong support from Buddhists all over Malaysia who will identify themselves with the organisation. The public will have a good image of the organisation in particular and Buddhism in general.

E is **equanimity** in the face of negative impulses. Challenges and obstacles are unavoidable but a balanced approach will help steer the organisation to achieve a measure of success commensurate with its resources and resolve.

of SBS, the activities it carries out and its noble objectives. Moreover, I now have an excellent set of guidelines to help me adapt to the organisation's greater scheme of things so that I can give better service. Hor Kwei Loon, with his vast corporate experience in training and human resources and his involvement with similar NGOs, made it an enjoyable experience. There was hardly a dull moment in the presentation.

The Q&A session was lively and stimulating, helping many of us see things in proper perspective. We were able to express our feelings and reservations. It has helped us to be more open, purposeful and objective orientated. *S*

28 Jul Ven Aggacitta and Ven Balacitta return to Malaysia from Shwe Oo Min Dhammasukha Meditation Centre, Myanmar.

1 Aug Ven Attarama Samanera, a brother of Mr Chew, the former landlord of the durian orchard where SBS is located, arrived on July 31, 2004 and is staying in Ekagga Kuti. He will be in SBS on a meditation retreat for two weeks, but will be entering the later *vassa* elsewhere.

Ven Aggacitta, Ven Kumara and Ven Balacitta enter the vassa in SBS today. It is Ven Aggacitta's 25th vassa, Ven Kumara's 6th vassa and Ven Balacitta's 1st vassa.

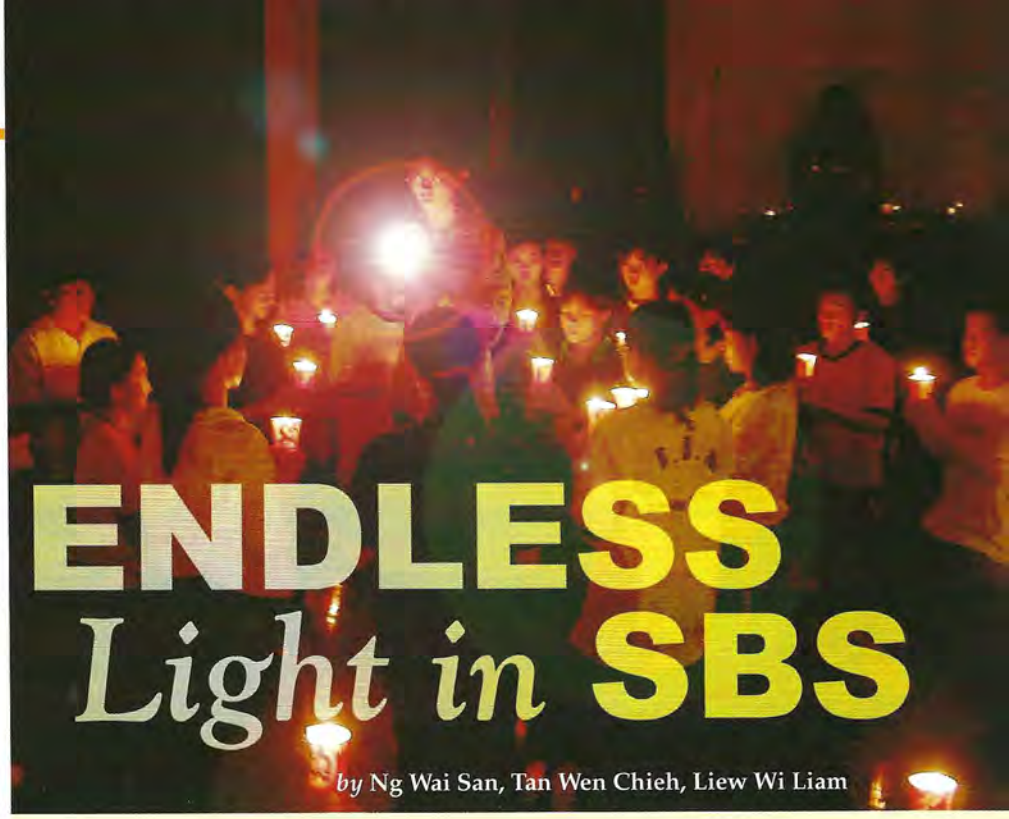
8 Aug Today is a momentous day for SBS as well as for Venerable Balacitta as it marks the First Bhikkhu Ordination Ceremony in SBS.

A total of 23 *bhikkhus* participate in the ceremony. It is quite a distinguished roll call of monks: 5 of them have more than 20 vassas while 10 of them have between 10 and 19 vassas. The Sangha has an international flair as there are three Myanmar, two Sri Lankan and two Thai bhikkhus in the assembly. (see cover story)

11 Aug A devotee from Penang who now resides in Australia donates a Panasonic fridge to SBS.

17 Aug The recent dry spell has dried up the stream flowing into our reservoir that supplies water for gardening. True to the optimist's maxim: "Every obstacle is a blessing in disguise", we discover a new, more powerful spring among the boulders of the virtually dried up stream. A volunteer mason, Teoh Chai Yu, comes up to survey how to tap the spring so that minimum maintenance will be required.

22 Aug Human Resource Head, Doreen Lim, organises an Induction Programme for SBSMC3 members in SBS. The programme is facilitated by Hor Kwei Loon, who ends the session with a very motivating talk, "Attitudes of SERVICE Excellence".



ENDLESS *Light in* SBS

by Ng Wai San, Tan Wen Chieh, Liew Wi Liam

Members of USM Buddhist Students' Society spend five memorable days in SBS and take home with them fond memories and light to brighten their lives.

The English Dhamma Camp (EDC) is a major project of Universiti Sains Malaysia Buddhist Students' Society, held annually during the semester holidays. Much to our delight, EDC this year was held at the edge of the forest, in Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary (SBS) in Taiping, from 25 to 29 October 2004. A bubbly group of 33 of us filled tranquil SBS with five memorable days of joy and laughter, having a fun-learning experience in a spiritual way.

25 Aug In the evening, Jeffery Ooi and Yeoh Kar Kheng join the monks for a Dhamma discussion on contemplation of feelings (vedananupassana) found in Mahasatipatthana Sutta (DN 22).

30 Aug It is Uposatha Day for the monks. Ven Aggacitta delivers a Dhamma talk to the monks based on selected *suttas* from Satipatthana Samyutta.

1 Sept Ven Suchanda, a fresh Vietnamese bhikkhu with a US passport, arrives at SBS and is housed at Ekagga Kuti for the duration of his visit.

4 Sept MMU student Tan Sheng Chuan, arrives to volunteer his services to SBS while on vacation. He will be observing the Eight Precepts during his one-week stay here.

7 Sept Three lay devotees and five nuns from Zu Yin Si, Alor Setar come up for a visit.

8 Sept The monastics are in Taiping Buddhist Society for a ceremony to consecrate its newly renovated *stūpa*. Ven Aggacitta gives a talk on "The Significance of the Stupa".

10 Sept The monastics have a Dhamma discussion on the difference between cittanupassana and dhammanupassana as found in Mahasatipatthana Sutta (DN 22).

11 Sept Representatives from SBS Management Committee and Building Development Team attend Persatuan Akitek Malaysia (PAM) Annual Dinner 2004 at Mandarin Oriental Hotel, KL, in honour of Jade Saw Architects for being conferred an honorary award for their excellent design of the buildings in SBS.

13 Sept Today is Uposatha day for the monks. Ven Aggacitta gives a talk on "Anupubbasikkha—The Gradual Training", making a comparison of two different expositions found in Kitagiri Sutta (MN 70) and Ganakamoggallana Sutta (MN 107).

An anonymous donor gives a Sony CD/DVD player to SBS Sangha.

19 Sept Ven Mahañano arrives with Ven Silavanta, a Cambodian monk spending his vassa at the Buddhist Hermitage in Lunas, and some devotees for a day visit.

21 Sept Yogi Sati Chan joins SBS monastics for an animated Dhamma discussion on Khandapabba (Section on the Aggregates) found in the Dhammanupassana section of Mahasatipatthana Sutta (DN 22).

27 Sept Heavy rain in the afternoon causes a major landslide at a steep slope, blocking traffic along Jalan Sima.

The purpose of this camp was to give options for a loftier stage of life with Multilevel Aims Nurturing Spirituality, using the Noble Eightfold Path as a guide.

On Monday morning we arrived at the Hokkien Cemetery Pavilion where Uncle David and his colleague greeted us. Taking the 4WDs up to SBS was a roller coaster ride. Along the way we saw oil palms, greenery, hills, a stream and even durian trees! When we reached the top, we were awestruck by the fantastic surroundings and the beautiful scenery. It felt so tranquil and peaceful.

Over five days, Ven Aggacitta and Ven Kumara gave a series of lectures on the Noble Eightfold Path as taught in the suttas. Lay speakers then elaborated, in unique and interesting ways, on each path factor, relating them to daily life and practice. Some were so amusingly presented that they are still affectionately remembered.

Ven Aggacitta gave the first talk based on the theme of the camp, "Ants' Life, Man's Life". **ANTS** (Actually Not Transcendental Stage) and **MANS** (Multilevel Aims Nurturing Spirituality) were mind-boggling. At that moment I was stumped by those phrases and quickly went into pondering mode, trying to get some insight; without much success. Bhante then explained that most of us are still caught up in an **A**ctually **N**ot **T**ranscendental **S**tage of life, being unable to transcend the limits of our senses. The purpose of this camp was to give options for a loftier stage of life with Multilevel Aims Nurturing Spirituality, using the Noble Eightfold Path as a guide.

The discussions and sharing sessions were deeply inspiring and beneficial for everyday life. During one session Ven Kumara challenged us to crack our heads to come up with ingenious ways of moving from one spot to another. It was hilarious as we ingeniously crab-walked, somersaulted, long-jumped and cha-cha'd our way across the room! Ven Kumara explained that the human mind is indeed capable of a much higher ability and creativity than we could ever imagine or anticipate. How true!

A guided meditation session at 5:30am was the earliest activity each day. We had no problem waking up at 4:45am as scheduled and were ready before Ven Aggacitta arrived. We were given clear instructions on *mettā* and *vipassanā* meditation and experienced standing, walking and even eating meditation! It was most interesting to practise mindfulness of chewing, tasting and swallowing a biscuit. However, I did find myself nodding off sometimes.

Our most unforgettable experience by far was the walk down the hill together with the monastics for *piṇḍacāra*. All of us trailed behind the monastics in a queue along a path that was at times rocky and steep; and for some, it posed a challenge which caused gaps in the queue. We continued to observe noble silence as

28 Sept It is Uposatha day for the monastics. After reviewing the 8-fold gradual training (*anupubbasikkha*) as found in Ganakamoggallana Sutta (MN 107), Ven Aggacitta gives a Dhamma talk based on Uttarimanussadhamma Sutta (AN 6:77).

2 Oct SBS monastics go to Penang for the house-warming of Sukhi Hotu's new premises at Gottlieb Road in Pulau Tikus, Penang. After dana, Ven Aggacitta delivers a talk to the devotees there.

Ven Silavanta, a Cambodian monk follows them back to stay in SBS for 6 nights.

6 Oct The monastics have a Dhamma discussion on the Section on Sense Bases (Ayatanapabba) found in Mahasatipatthana Sutta (DN 22).

7 Oct Kevin Chuah resigns from his post as Administrative Manager in the SBSMC due to heavy work commitments. Sadhu for your sporting but short service.

13 Oct It is Uposatha Day for the Sangha. Ven Aggacitta gives a Dhamma talk based on a modern English translation of a Confucian classic called *Di Zi Gui—Standards for*

A few more lights have been turned on for us to illuminate our world.

we walked past the cemetery, curiously peeping at the old, dilapidated tombstones among the weeds.

Food that had been brought by the devotees was passed to us so that we could offer them to both venerables. We were most fortunate to be able to actively participate in the dana when we had expected to be mere observers.

The final night for any camp usually marks the most memorable time for everyone and this was no exception. Held for the first time in SBS and honoured by the participation of Ven Aggacitta and Ven Kumara, our very own version of Endless Light (EL) was unquestionably the climax of EDU 2004. Deep inspiration stirred within us and fond memories still linger.

Everybody had a quick dinner without the usual dilly-dallying and by 7.00pm, we were all in position, waiting anxiously for EL to start. The bell rang. We walked in silence to the Sima Hall for the offering to the Buddharupa. Ven Aggacitta and Ven Kumara started off the offering. Each of us silently reflected on the meaning of each offering of light, water, flowers, incense and fruits.

We then proceeded to the Sangha Classroom which was dimly lit by a few spotlights

Being a Good Student and Child. More than 90% of the material in the booklet have parallels in the Pali scriptures—just shows that the Dhamma is not merely confined to Buddhism.

16 Oct Ven Aggacitta goes to Persatuan Buddhist Hilir Perak (PBHP), Teluk Intan, to give a Dhamma talk, "Mutual Care, Sure Security" from 8.30pm to 9.40pm followed by 20 minutes of Q&A.

17 Oct Ven Aggacitta gives a 15-minute talk to a gathering of more than 200 students from PBHP Sunday School based on Ambalatthikarahulovada Sutta (MN 61) at 9.45am. This is followed by a dialogue session with senior members of PBHP until 11.30am.

After lunch dana at PBHP, SBS representative (Hilir Perak) David Chew drives Ven Aggacitta to visit Ven Dhammavuddho (Bhikkhu Hye) in his monastery, Vihara Gotama, at Temor, Perak. The latter presents Ven Aggacitta with a few sets of his English and Hokkien Dhamma talks in MP3 format.

A heavy thunderstorm from afternoon to evening has caused erosion in three areas: two near Bodhi Kuti and one near the main office.

25 Oct Thirty-three members of the USM Students' Buddhist Society arrive at SBS to hold their English Dhamma Camp (EDC) here until 29 Oct. (see story on p30)

30 Oct Ven Balacitta goes to Wat Pah Santi at Ulu Tiram today to participate in their kathina ceremony tomorrow.

Ven Kumara goes to Alor Setar to conduct a Q&A session in Kedah

along the corridor. With their lighted lotus-shaped candles, Ven Aggacitta and Ven Kumara lit the candles of the first persons in our formation of two queues. This light symbolising enlightenment dispelling the darkness of fear, ignorance and suffering was in turn passed down the queues as each person's candle was lit. Ven Aggacitta gave a brief but meaningful explanation of the significance of EL and related some coincidental and important events connected to it. We paid our respects to Ven Aggacitta and Ven Kumara. When the song, "A Light in the Darkness" was played, we sang along. We then moved into a spiral formation symbolising *saṁsāra*, eventually moving out from the spiral, signifying the journey out of samsara. The candles we were holding were then offered to the Bodhi tree.

EL ended with a group sharing session. Lights remained off, as we sat comfortably on cushions on the polished timber floor. With only our silhouettes visible to one another, we poured our hearts out after days of close fellowship. The sharing was rather slow in picking up at first but eventually, the sharing got livelier and noisier. Some got emotional and teary-eyed. Jokes and laughter rang out into the silent night. Later, Ven Kumara told us we were noisiest that night! It was indeed a night to be remembered.

When it was time to leave SBS, we felt quite reluctant and had the urge to stay on forever. It was an emotional moment. On the way down the hill, we turned to look back as SBS slowly disappeared from view, wondering when we will be here again. A few more lights have been turned on for us to illuminate our world. *S*

Buddhist Association (KBA) at 8.00pm. The topics are: "Spiritual Friendship" and "Vinaya Rules that the Laity Should Know".

31 Oct After lunch dana, Ven Kumara continues the Dhamma discussion on various topics. Later KBA members send Ven Kumara back to SBS in their van and take a quick tour of SBS.

1 Nov Ang Neoh Aik comes up to spend ten days at SBS as an eight precept holder.

7 Nov Ven Kumara attends kathina ceremonies at the Subang Jaya Buddhist Association and at Samnak Sambodhi Temple at Kepong.

14 Nov SBS welcomes all for Kathina Day. This year, Kathina is sponsored by the Dhamma Rejoicing Group which is spearheaded by Kee Tian Joo, Josephine Lew, David Chang, Lee Fong Meng, Kevin Ooi and Faith Chong. They have been working hard since after Kathina 2003, systematically organising the sponsorship. A total of 12 monks are here for the event. Local devotees as well as busloads and carloads from out-of-town are also here. These include those from Buddhist Fellowship (Singapore), Bandar Utama Buddhist Society, Kota Kemuning Buddhist Centre, Buddhist Maha Vihara Brickfields, Seberang Perai and Subang Jaya Buddhist Association. (see story on p34)

17 Nov USM student, Cheong Sin Huar who's on vacation, volunteers his help in SBS's Main Office.

21 Nov Ven Ajahn Vajiro from Thailand visits TIMS and SBS with some Penang devotees.

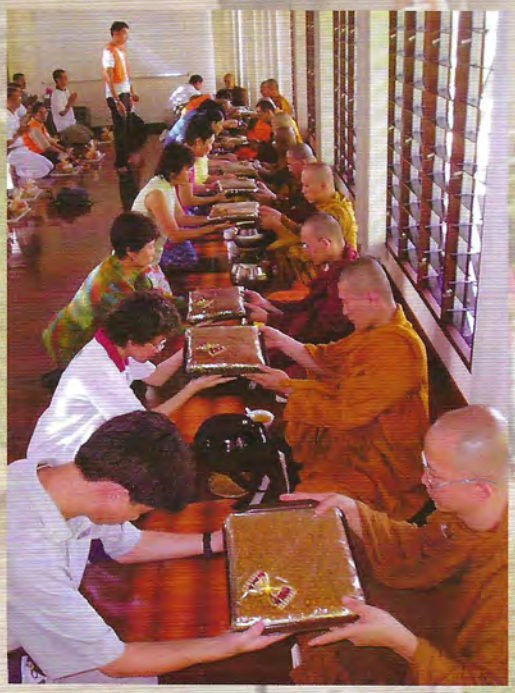
24 Nov Two Sri Lankan monks of the Galduwa forest tradition, Ven Wimalagnana and Ven Ariyagawesi visit SBS for an overnight stay.

The Dhamma Rejoicing Team, spearheaded by David Chang, Lee Fong Meng, Kevin Ooi, Faith Chong, Kee Tian Joo and Josephine Lew, sponsored this year's kathina. Their representative, Kee Tian Joo, speaks of the faith, sincerity and patience that navigated them through this meaningful experience

KATHINA DAY

THOUGHTS ON THE SPONSORSHIP

I mentioned in my speech on Kathina Day at Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary (SBS), "We have enjoyed working on this project and learnt from it." What do I mean?



With the Dhamma as our guide, we engaged sincerity and patience to motivate ourselves to move forward each day. We reminded ourselves that this virtuous effort is for the benefit of propagating the Dhamma; thus we were inspired to work tirelessly and with joy.

Firstly, we learnt that team work is the pinnacle of all concerted efforts to make our project successful. With the Dhamma as our guide, we engaged sincerity and patience to motivate ourselves to move forward each day. We reminded ourselves that this virtuous effort is for the benefit of propagating the Dhamma; thus we were inspired to work tirelessly and with joy. By transforming the difficulties and obstacles we faced into objects for learning and practising the Dhamma, we found it was possible to maintain a positive attitude towards our goal.

Whenever difficulties arose, Josephine and I reminded ourselves to always keep a pure mind with regard to the whole sponsorship and have faith that things were meant to happen in a particular way. Faith motivated us to deal with them positively.

Getting our friends, brothers, sisters and family members involved in this project has given us very precious and meaningful experiences. There were lots of brain storming sessions and discussions, as well as finger pointing, laughter and jokes. Interestingly, these brought us closer. We also learnt that having fixed concepts and expectations for the project was not healthy. It could cause frustration and disagreement among the team. So, we learnt to be open to new suggestions and ideas.

Mark this on your calendar

KATHINA 2005 in SBS: 6 November

The Dhamma has brought all of us together in this assignment. Believe me; it has been good in the beginning, good in the middle and good at the end.

KATHINA DAY

In the last two months, it had been raining almost every day at certain periods. So, there was concern about the weather. But, our faith assured us the eventful day would proceed smoothly. Sunday, 14 November finally dawned—the sky was dark, but with promise of a bright day!

We assembled at the Hokkien Cemetery at 5.45am with excitement and anticipation, to take our places in the convoy of 4WDs which had been efficiently organised to ferry devotees up to SBS. Though it was dark and few had torchlights, devotees seemed to have no difficulty finding their way around, conversing in muted tones in order not to agitate the elements at this early hour. At about 6.10am, we set off on the exciting drive up the slope to the top of the hill and SBS. Kathina Day had begun—happy anticipation was almost tangible.

SBS was a hive of activity! We had thought we were early, but there were already many devotees who were even earlier; some were busy with their duties while others gazed about absorbing the inspiring ambience of the environment—we on top of this serene hill with muted strains of "Guardian of the Sasana" in the background, gazing at the twinkling lights of sleeping Taiping below. It was simply fascinating!

By 7.00am, the time scheduled for the day's programme to begin, the 700-odd adults and children had spread out and found their own spot around the *sīmā* pond—on the slopes, Sangha Central Facilities—any place from which they could see the offering of the *kaṭhina* cloth to the Sangha in the Sima Hall. The efficient MC, speaking in English and Hokkien, kept devotees informed of proceedings.

As representative for the sponsors, I gave a speech after which devotees were ready for breakfast and the educational sketch, "Help... I'm Confused" by the Dhamma Rejoicing Team (comprising Sally, Ah Beng, Ah Lian, Jane and newspaper 'boy') who aptly put across their message on the current social ills, benefits of mindfulness, meditation and the Path leading us out of *saṁsāra*. The backup singers' final song, "Thank you for the Dhamma" which had the spectators joining in, was a hit. *Sādhu* to our script writer, Cheah Swee Seng.

Then, it was back to being serious for *piṇḍacāra* as the devotees lined the pindacara route. The Abbot, Ven Aggacitta with an entourage of 12 Sangha members following in single file, walked down the long line of devotees to receive the offering of rice from each devotee. Members of the sponsor group followed close behind, each with a tray of requisites for the devotees to touch in a symbolic gesture of offering. It was again unforgettable to see the joy on the faces of the devotees as they touched the trays and perhaps made their aspirations. The Abbot then gave an interesting Dhamma talk.

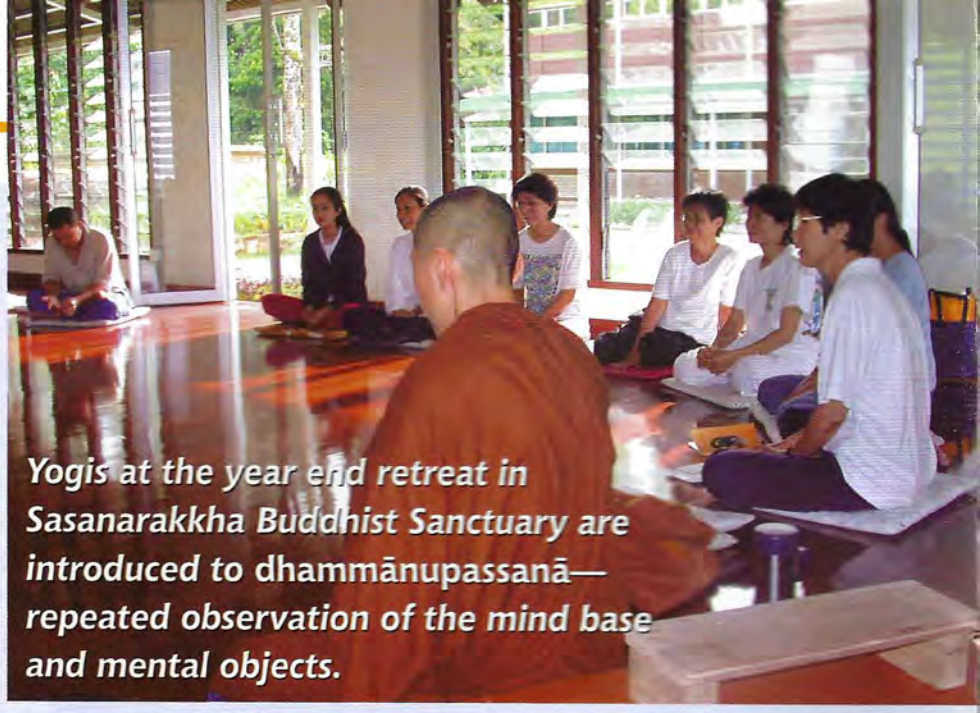
The devotees collected their lunch boxes, found comfortable places to enjoy the meal and continued to forge fellowship among themselves. Then, reluctantly, it was time to think of leaving SBS. It had been an inspiring day.

We thank the hardworking SBS Committee who contributed to making this Kathina Day a memorable experience. Last but not least, *Mahāsādhu* to supporters of the Dhamma Rejoicing Team from near and far whose encouragement and generosity have been our inspiration. S

UNFOLDMENT

A Mind Opening Retreat

by Mabel Liew



Yogis at the year end retreat in Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary are introduced to dhammānupassanā—repeated observation of the mind base and mental objects.

Not having attended a retreat for the past three years, I had feelings of apprehension as I prepared to go for the retreat at Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary (SBS) from 10 – 20 December. I am sure many other yogis also felt the same. How will we fare? Will the teacher be strict and demanding?

The whole experience turned out to be very relaxed and "pressureless". **The daily Dhamma talks given in sutta study style were so inspiring** that I listened with full attention and understood what Ven Aggacitta, the teacher, was telling us. **It felt like a journey back in time—I was sitting and listening to a discourse given by the Buddha.**

Bhante taught us *dhammanupassana*—repeated observation of the mind base and mental objects, a new technique I had not been exposed to. There was to be "no labelling—just the awareness, the knowing from the mind". I found that this technique allowed us to progress faster in our meditation. We could directly get into knowing all our thoughts and actions, instead of labelling each action, which involves an intervening thought process.

Pain became a very interesting object to watch when I practised dhammanupassana in the retreat. When it went away, it felt wonderful! In the past, I did not like sitting meditation because there was so much suffering! But this time, I started to enjoy my sitting sessions and had the patience to sit longer than before.

Another factor that contributed to the good retreat experience was that the *qi* in SBS is really good for meditation. One can get into concentration very fast. Before the retreat, I was very worried that sloth and torpor would be a big hindrance. Surprisingly in SBS, I was quite awake when I meditated.

Bhante was very open, friendly and compassionate. **During the interview sessions, he did not make us feel guilty about non-progress.** That was the time **we could really open up and talk about our experiences, no matter how stupid they seemed, and we all laughed at ourselves.** For me the interview sessions were the most enjoyable moments of the day.

All feelings of apprehension had melted away by the end of the retreat. I had acquired a strong awareness of the present moment. This was so strong that on my first few days home I could not sit in front of the computer for long, as I could sense the computer waves impacting my brain. Even when I closed my eyes, I could still feel the sensations!

I really feel privileged to have been able to attend this retreat. It is the best retreat that I have ever attended. A competent teacher, inspiring environment, good food, fresh air—the conditions were just perfect. S

26 Nov Today marks the start of the 3rd Introduction to Monkhood Programme (IMP3). There are altogether 6 participants, namely Johnny Chong, Chang Teck Boon, Tang Kow Chye, Phang Seam Hung, Chow Chang Sen, Khoo Peng Lai and Chong Yen Lee. (see back cover story)

27 Nov SBS receives 170 visitors from the Malaysian Buddhist Meditation Centre in Penang. Fifty-three novices and 13 nuns participating in the centre's annual Novitiate Programme are here on a field trip, led by Sayadaw U Sujana and Sayadaw U Nanda Siddhi, and accompanied by members of the organising committee.

30 Nov Sayadaw U Nanda Siddhi is here to share his experience of "Monastic Training in Myanmar" with IMP participants (IMPPs).

UNFOLDMENT

Taiping Insight Meditation Society held a Teens Mindfulness Camp in SBS. Read an overview of the camp by one teen and then listen to some unedited candid remarks from others.

Can We Have **Another Camp** Next Year?

by Looi Seng Chuen

I felt very excited when I got news that there was a place for me as someone had pulled out at the last minute. It was not my first visit to Sasanarakka Buddhist Sanctuary (SBS). I have been there on several occasions. I was quite relieved that we did not have to walk all the way up because I tried it twice before and it was quite tiring. We enjoyed the 4WD ride along the steep and winding road up, with a cool breeze blowing in the late afternoon.

The programme on the first day was mostly centred on 'getting to know you' activities. We were divided into 4 groups of 5 just before the briefing given by Bhante Kumara. Each was given a camp schedule and a name tag. We were quite surprised to read in the schedule that we had to wake up at 6.00 a.m. After the briefing there was an ice breaking session. We were also taught proper sitting postures and an explanation of the Eight Precepts that all participants had to keep during the duration of the camp. This was followed by an ice melting session later in the evening. By the end of the day, practically everyone knew one another.

Bhante Kumara gave us very interesting and insightful talks. I especially enjoyed the Orbs Show which was basically a compilation of photos from a few countries as well as from SBS showing orbs that can't be seen with the naked eye. I also enjoyed the talk "Heaven and Hell" because it contained a lot of information. The groups were given tasks which were interesting and fun. One of the tasks turned into heated debates when members of other groups started giving comments. There was also a Q&A session, "Dear Bhante", in which the participants were asked to write down questions that they wanted to ask Bhante Kumara. There were so many questions that we had three sessions instead of one, as scheduled.

The games were fun and entertaining. We had really good laughs during some of the games, some of which required mental effort. "Creative Moves" and "Strike a Pose" were my favorites. In the former we were asked to think of creative ways to get from one end of the room to the other. We also had exercise everyday, once in the morning and once in the evening. During these sessions, we were taught *qigong* which was lots of fun. Some of the participants had a very hard time following the complicated moves that sometimes turned out hilarious.

3 Dec STPM student Soo Li Ean is here to volunteer her services as temporary Admin Assistant.

5 Dec Benny Leow, Editor of Eastern Horizon, gives a talk to IMPPs entitled "Why Lay Buddhists Need the Sangha".

In the evening, Ven Aggacitta gives a presentation on "Celestial Cakras?" to IMPPs and SBS helpers and friends. Digital photos of orbs shot in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Australia, Taiping and other parts of the world are projected on a screen through an LCD projector. Preliminary scientific research findings on the physical nature of orbs, downloaded from the Internet, are also shown. The presentation provokes the question: Are orbs our perception of celestial beings (through the lens of digital cameras) or are they mere physical phenomena?

There were three meditation sessions everyday: morning, afternoon and night. Bhante Kumara taught us standing, walking and sitting meditation. Sitting meditation gave us backache, numb feet and some had problems sitting still for 30 minutes and more, but Bhante Kumara gave us advice and suggestions to solve the problems. I personally preferred walking meditation because I didn't have to put up with backache.

We really enjoyed the camp. I feel really happy that I participated in this camp because I learned a lot of new things and made a lot of new friends. Before we departed for home we exchanged telephone numbers and e-mail addresses.

And now for some pearls of wisdom from other young minds

"I learnt more about Buddhism and about life"
"Too much food—very full."
"I also learn how to take care of myself and be independent."
"I also learnt how to talk softly—don't simply shout."
"Overcome fear of ghosts."
"I just found out that our bodies have qi that can heal us."
"Mindfulness is something very special to learn."
"I know more about myself."
"Today's half an hour meditation was like a million years."
"I've learnt how to clean toilets."
" 'Dear Bhante' was the most interesting to me"
"All the teachings of the Bhante was very educational."
"The Bhante Kumara is very cute."
"P/S Have one next year."
"Request: Can we have another camp next year?"

6 Dec Yeam Shin Yau joins Soo Li Ean to help out with administrative work in the Main Office.

8 Dec Lim Kooi Fong, Managing Editor of The Buddhist Channel, is the guest speaker for today. His presentation is on "Sharing Dhamma in Modern Malaysia".

10 Dec The year-end, ten-day meditation retreat begins today as the first batch of fourteen participants check in. (see story on p36)

12 Dec Chammye Myain Sayadaw U Indaka comes for a visit bringing with him two Myanmar monks and devotees from Penang.

15 Dec Ven Mahañano of Balik Pulau Buddhist Hermitage brings 17 Thai monks of the Ajahn Chah forest tradition for a visit. Later in the day Ven Kusala also visits.

Steven Low, who will take over as General Administrator and Teh Chin Hoe, who will be joining SBSMC as Administrative Manager 1 next year, meet Ven Aggacitta and some members of SBSMC.

16 Dec Ng Kian Chong brings up Ven Liao Guo and Ven Da Jian, a nun and monk respectively of the Mahayana tradition from China.

19 Dec Ven Balacitta goes to Penang to attend a ceremony commemorating the death anniversary of Phra Wong.

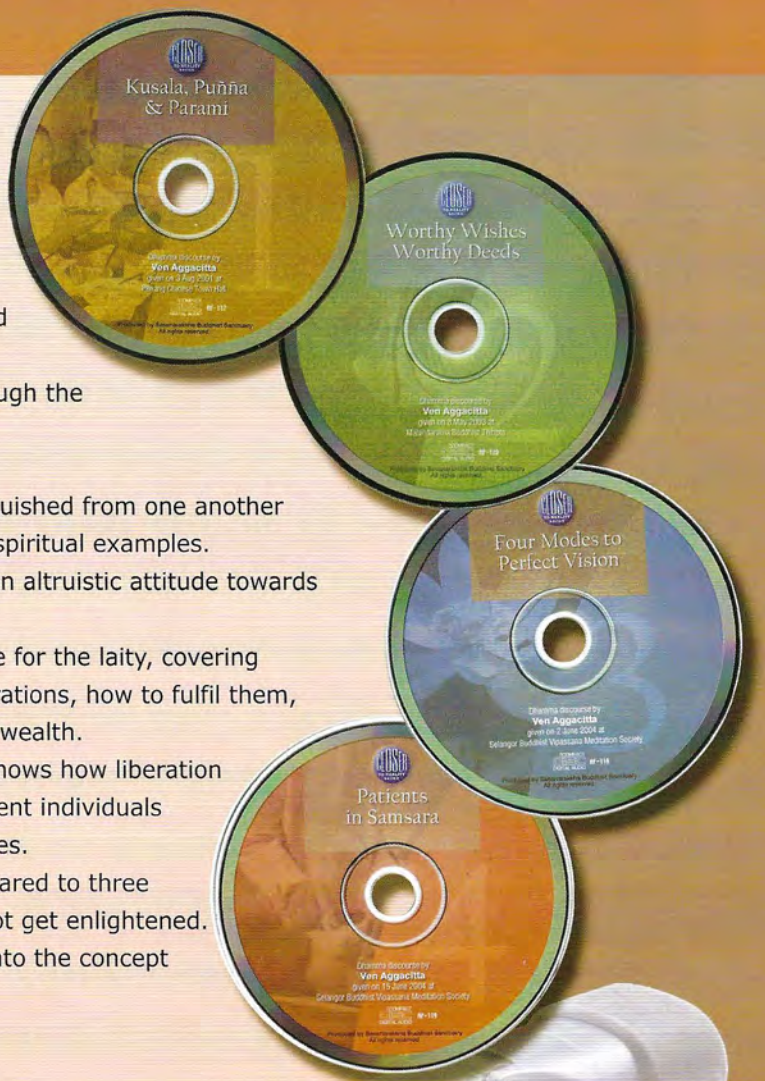
20 Dec Today is the last day of the meditation retreat. It also marks the first day of TIMS Teens Mindfulness Camp conducted by Ven Kumara. (see story on p37)

25 Dec Ven Kumara makes a day trip to Berapit to attend a *Saṅghikadāna* organised by Vivekavana.

26 Dec Ven Aggacitta leaves for Penang en route to Singapore where he will be conducting a camp for NTU students in Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery from 27 to 30 Dec. After that, he shall lead members of Buddhist Fellowship in *paritta* chanting and guided meditation.

31 Dec David Chang, who has served as our General Adminstrator for almost 1½ years, leaves to enjoy his retirement. He plans to go to Myanmar for a meditation retreat soon with his wife. We are sorry to see him go, but we are happy for the time that he has been here. May the great sacrifices that he has made serving SBS support him in all his spiritual and worldly quests. Sādhu, David!

DHAMMA TALKS



Four Dhamma talks by Ven Aggacitta have been produced in AudioCD by Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary. These CDs have been replicated for free distribution through the generosity of How Eng Keong and his family.

1. Kusala, Puññā and Parami: These concepts are distinguished from one another by the use of worldly and spiritual examples. Invaluable for cultivating an altruistic attitude towards liberation.
2. Worthy Wishes, Worthly Deeds: A comprehensive guide for the laity, covering universal worldly aspirations, how to fulfil them, and the proper use of wealth.
3. Four Modes to Perfect Vision: A perfect example that shows how liberation can be attained by different individuals through different avenues.
4. Patients in Samsara: Three types of patients are compared to three types of people who can or cannot get enlightened. Includes an interesting enquiry into the concept of Pacceka Buddhas.

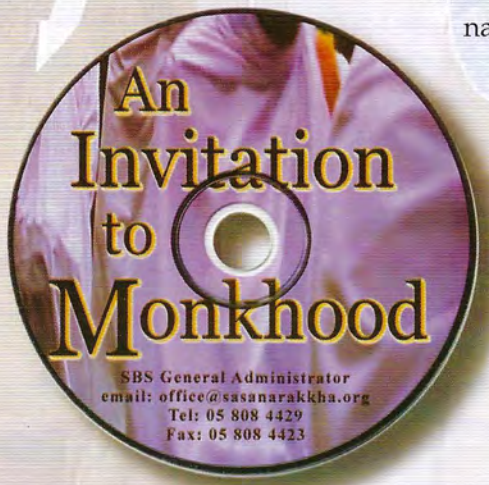
Available in major Buddhist centres in Malaysia.

INVITATION TO MONKHOOD

Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary has successfully conducted three Introduction to Monkhood Programmes (IMP) for those contemplating monkhood. This VCD has been specially produced for those of you who are interested in knowing more about the programme. Listen to Ven Aggacitta telling you about the nature of these programmes while Ven Kumara, SBS's first student, speaks to you of his commitment to monkhood. Watch and listen to past IMP participants speak about their experiences.

If you are interested in finding out more about IMP with a view to joining future programmes, do contact us to get a copy of the VCD. Buddhist libraries are also invited to ask for copies.

Email: office@sasanarakkha.org
Tel: 05 808 4429
Fax: 05 808 4423



FROM BACK COVER

(whatever is this?) at 7.00am, followed by "walk downhill for alms" and "hike uphill" at 8.15am. All this sounded like we were in for a rough and tough time topped with some activities with unintelligible names like making *aṁsa*, Ovada Patimokkha, Patimokkha rules, Broken Buddha, etc.

After a short break, we assembled upstairs in the Publication & Meeting Room (PMR) to take the Eight Precepts, a prerequisite of IMP.

As the days unfolded, the veil over our eyes slowly lifted. We began to understand the meaning of pindacara and to appreciate its significance. It was such a beautiful and meaningful experience doing our daily 'walking meditation' downhill for *piṇḍapāta* so kindly provided by the laity. Every morning, those kind Taiping folks would warmly greet the monks and offer almsfood, kneeling down with utmost respect and reverence. Each day the collection of almsfood was followed by the chanting of blessings, after which all present shared merits with their living, as well as to their departed relatives and friends. This was our first lesson on Sangha-laity harmony.

BEAUTIFUL IN THE MIDDLE

Everything we did was an eye-opening experience. Walking meditation downhill in the morning sharpened our senses of hearing and seeing, and anchored us to the present. We noted every step we took, seeing what was in front of us; listening to the sounds of the waterfall along the path; the barking of Ah Leong's dogs as we passed his orchard; the chirping of early birds. These became objects of our meditation—even eyeing the leeches lurking and waiting along our path to jump onto our feet… but we were mindful!

Every morning was a happy one. I particularly liked Boy, SBS's adopted dog, leading the way to pindacara. I missed him when he didn't show up one morning. Even seeing the cat waiting at the Sanctuary for our return was a happy moment.

Our first formal lesson was a discussion on "Meaning of Life" and each of us presented our views, our understanding of life in the past and our present priorities. We talked about 'old souls' and 'young souls' and Ven Aggacitta carefully explained to us the meaning of *"anatta"* and the reality that there's no such thing as a permanent, unchanging soul. Before we realised it, days had passed and we had learnt a wide range of subjects covering areas such as health and monkhood, the Noble Eightfold Path, Ovada Patimokkha, Patimokkha rules, determination of solar noon (using a sundial), renunciation and Vinaya, basic Pali astronomy, the origins of Tipitaka, meditation and the Buddhist lunar calendar.

My favourite subject in the programme was Ovada Patimokkha. Always with love and compassion, Ven Aggacitta patiently explained to us the origin of this verse from Mahapadana Sutta (DN 14) – "Ovada" means "instruction, exhortation" and "patimokkha", "the code of monastic discipline", both of which together sum up the DhammaVinaya in a nutshell: "Avoid evil. Do good. Purify one's own mind. This is the teaching of the Buddhas."

We were taught to appreciate the worth of an arahant when we realised, through meditation, our defilements of *lobha, dosa* and *moha* and that ultimately, the meaning of life is the practice of *sīla, samādhi* and *paññā*. The latter is more commonly expanded into the Noble Eightfold Path. It is interesting to learn

OVADA PĀTIMOKKHA

Enduring patience is the highest austerity;
Nibbana is supreme say the Buddhas;
For one who has gone forth harms not another;
A samana does not oppress another.
Not doing any Evil;
Development of Good;
Purification of one's own mind:
This is the teaching of the Buddhas.
Not despising, not harming;
Restraint according to the Patimokkha;
Moderation in food;
Dwelling in seclusion;
Devotion to the higher mind (meditation):
This is the teaching of the Buddhas.

that 91 *kappas* ago, Vipassi Buddha recited the Ovada Patimokkha to the Bhikkhu Sangha. (see inset above)

We learnt, too, about the Vinaya Pitaka and the 10 benefits of promulgating the Vinaya rules that can be categorised under three main areas:

- individual spiritual development
- communal harmony and
- the prolongation of the Sasana.

We learnt that there are 227 precepts applicable to bhikkhus of which two are connected with indecision over the nature of offences and seven on procedures for settling legal cases. There are also thousands of minor rules. In fact every duty of a bhikkhu is a rule.

BEAUTIFUL IN THE END

With hindsight, we realise how much thought, planning and wisdom Ven Aggacitta and Ven Kumara have put into the IMP to make it so effective. Ven Aggacitta is truly a master of the DhammaVinaya and of meditation; he imparted to us the essence of being a monk so lucidly and concisely and answered all our questions with so much wisdom. His easy demeanour and cheerful disposition made us feel so at home as we absorbed the things he taught us like a sponge. Thank you, Bhante!

Ven Kumara shared his knowledge of the importance of health in monkhood, practical illustration in determining solar noon and his linguistic skills in Pali pronunciation. To his frustration we just could not turn our tongues fast enough but we did laugh a lot together. When Jhayi fell ill with diarrhoea and fever soon after our lessons on health, Ven Kumara came up with a concoction of raw papaya juice to cure his ills—it worked like magic. No medical certificates needed in the Sangha! The wisdom of our Lord Buddha was clearly emulated for he had said (in the canon): "Whoever would tend to me should tend to the sick." Thank you, Bhante!

Ven Balacitta did not give us any formal lesson, but having been ordained recently, he made us feel like 'one of him' and taught us some very effective, power-packed exercises. We asked him a lot of questions about his experience as a *bhikkhu* thus far, his inner struggle and his reasons for renunciation, among others. Quiet and reserved, he too is packed with much insight and wisdom. His renunciation towards the path of homelessness is an inspiration to all of us. Thank you, Bhante!

In closing, I would like to quote "The Eight Principles" from Samkhitta Sutta (AN 8:53) which I find so inspiring for anyone who has thoughts of walking the path of homelessness:

> On one occasion the Blessed One was staying at Vesali, in the Peaked Roof Hall in the Great Forest.
>
> Then Mahapajapati Gotami (the sister of Buddha's mother) approached the Blessed One, bowed down to him and stood to one side. Standing there she said to him: "It would be good, Lord, if the Blessed One would teach me the Dhamma in brief such that, having heard the Dhamma from the

Blessed One, I might dwell alone, secluded, heedful, ardent and resolute."

"Gotami, the qualities of which you may know: 'These qualities lead
to passion, not to dispassion;
to being fettered, not to being unfettered;
to accumulating, not to shedding;
to having many wishes,
not to having few wishes;
to discontent, not to contentment;
to gregariousness, not to seclusion;
to laziness, not to aroused persistence;
to being burdensome, not to being
unburdensome'—
you may definitely hold,
'This is not the Dhamma; this is not the Vinaya;
this is not the Master's instruction.'
As for the qualities of which you may know:
'These qualities lead
to dispassion, not to passion;
to being unfettered, not to being fettered;
to shedding, not to accumulating;
to having few wishes, not to having many wishes;
to contentment, not to discontent;
to seclusion, not to gregariousness;
to aroused persistence, not to laziness;
to being unburdensome,
not to being burdensome'—
you may definitely hold,
'This is the Dhamma; this is the Vinaya;
this is the Master's instruction.'"

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Mahapajapati Gotami delighted at his words.

And so were we Bhante, and so were we...

We've Got **Mail** FROM PAGE 2

Sadhu to SBS, Bro How & family for this good work of Dhamma propagation. I have almost finished listening to the four CDs and found that I have learned a lot from listening to the talks. The only regret is that we should have brought home more copies when we were up at SBS.

Ng Yee Kong

Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to work as a volunteer in SBS. I learnt a lot from doing administrative work these past few weeks in SBS. Besides having a good time there, I also learned to be more mindful. Please do e-mail me if you need volunteers in future. I will try my best to help out.

Cheong Sin Haur

Editor's Note: Here's Ven Kumara's response to your mail above: "We have been fortunate to have had you here as a volunteer. Yes, we shall keep you in mind when we need help. Do feel free to drop by when you're in Taiping."

A number of young people answered a call for help to do admin work in SBS Main Office. Cheong was one of these volunteers.

I must say I am totally impressed with the Abbot, Ven Aggacitta, but I have so far heard only his 1st CD on Dhamma discourses. It is so crisp, clear and structured as well as enlightening for a beginner like me.

Sally Lim

The move to transfer Bhante Aggacitta's Dhamma talks into digital audio format is most timely. I find this format to be more appealing and audience friendly. It is best suited for those laid-back (read lazy) seekers of the Dhamma, due to its ease of access to insights. Allow me to congratulate all those who are involved in this highly auspicious project.

Tan Guan Soon

Thanks for the news and please do keep the email Dhamma talks coming. It is really a joy to be able to share the wonderful Dhamma with others, especially with those of us who are not able to attend the talks. This email sharing is just wonderful.

Ming Tin Tan

We thank you for finding the time to give us your news and views. We do appreciate comments and suggestions and wait to hear from more of you.

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Glossary of Non-English Words

Words that are italicised (e.g. *Theravāda*) means they are explained here too.

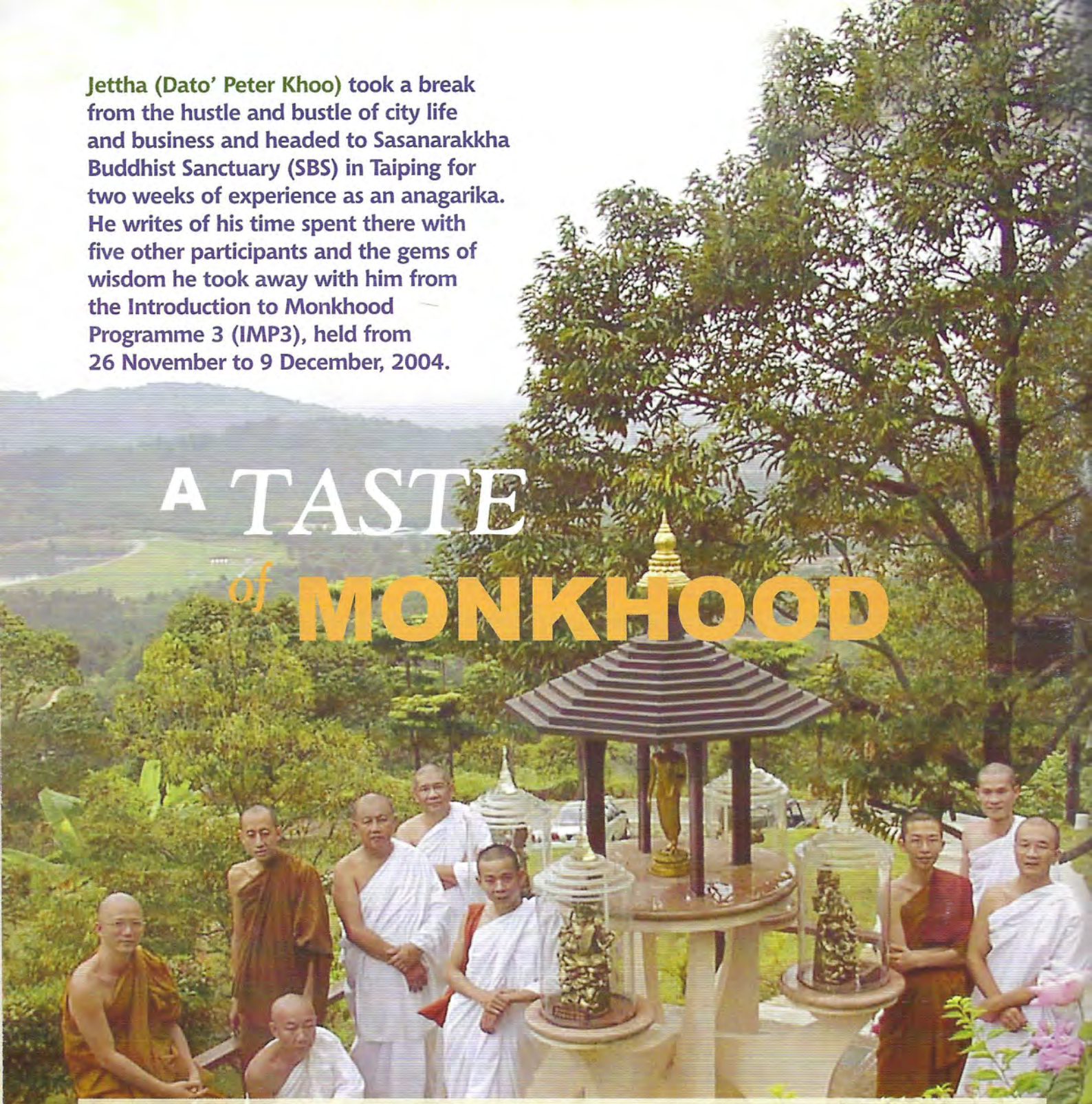
Adhiṭṭhāna resolution, determination
Aṁsa small robe worn over the left shoulder
Anāgārika semi-renunciant in white robes
Anatta non-self
Anicca impermanence
Arahant liberated person who has eradicated all mental defilements
Bhāvanā meditation, development, mental cultivation
Bhikkhu *Theravāda* Buddhist monk
Bodhisatta one who aspires to become a Buddha
Buddharūpa Buddha image
Citta mind
Cittānupassanā repeated observation of the mind
Dāna act of giving, an offering
Deva deity
Dhammānupassanā repeated observation of mental objects
DhammaVinaya "Doctrine-Discipline" — term used by the Buddha to denote the "religion" he founded
Dhutaṅga ascetic observance
Dosa anger
Dukkha suffering
Hokkien a Chinese dialect
Jhāna deep state of meditative concentration
Kamma volition; action
Kampung (Malay) village
Kappas aeons
Kappiya(kāraka) steward for monks
Kaṭhina firmness, stability, durability; special ceremony held after the *vassa* where lay Buddhists offer robes and other requisites to monks and where monks traditionally cooperate to make a special robe called the *kaṭhina* robe
Khanti patience
Kuṭi small house or hut
Lobha greed
Mahā great, big
Mahāyāna "Great Vehicle"; a major school of Buddhism emphasising universal salvation (especially through faith) and social concern
Mamak Indians who have embraced the Muslim faith
Mettā loving-kindness
Moha delusion
Ovāda Pātimokkha the Buddha's original instruction on behaviour for his ordained disciples
Pāli ancient Indian language in which *Theravāda* scriptures are preserved
Paññā wisdom
Paññatti concept or conceptual
Pāramī altruistic meritorious deed that will conduce to the attainment of enlightenment
Paramattha ultimate reality
Paritta protection; protective chant
Pātimokkha monastic code comprising summary of major rules and etiquette
Piṇḍacāra Buddhist monks' practice of going on alms round
Piṇḍapāta lump (of food) dropped (into an alms bowl)
Pūjā honour; respect; devotional offering
Qi (Chinese) life energy
Qigong (Chinese) exercise that generates and mobilises *qi*
Sādhu well done, excellent
Samādhi concentration
Samaṇa renunciant
Sāmaṇera novice Buddhist monk preparing to become a *bhikkhu*
Samatha tranquillity
Saṁsāra round of birth and death
Saṅghikadāna *dāna* for the Sangha
Sarong long piece of cloth worn wrapped around the waist
Sāsana (the Buddha's) teachings or dispensation
Satipaṭṭhāna establishment of mindfulness
Sayādaw venerable teacher
Sīla morality, virtue, precept
Sīmā monastic boundary to territory
Stūpa (**Pāli: thūpa**): Originally, a tumulus or burial mound enshrining relics of a holy person—such as the Buddha—or objects associated with his life. Over the centuries this has developed into the tall, spired monuments familiar in temples in Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar; and into the pagodas of China, Korea, and Japan.
Sutta discourse
Tawya (Myanmar) monasteries for monks to observe the forest *dhutaṅga* tradition
Theravāda "Doctrine of the Elders"; a major school of Buddhism claiming to go by the earliest, most authentic extant record of Gotama Buddha's teachings and stresses on striving for one's own liberation as the priority in spiritual practice
Tipiṭaka "Three Baskets"; the full set of canonical *Theravāda* scriptures preserved in *Pāli*
Upajjhāya preceptor; senior *bhikkhu* who 'sponsors' a monk-candidate's ordination, and on whom the new monk will depend for instruction.
Uposatha the Buddhist Sabbath; a day of religious observance and ritual for the laity and the Sangha respectively
Vassa abbreviation for vassāvāsa, which means "rainy season residence"
Vinaya monastic law and regulation
Vinaya Piṭaka "Discipline Basket"; part of the *Tipiṭaka* that contains a compilation of monastic rules and regulations
Vipassanā insight (meditation)
Viriya energy, effort
Yogi one who strives for spiritual goals; meditator

ABBR.	TEXT	REFERENCE ACCORDING TO
AN	Anguttara Nikaya	Book number:Sutta number
DN	Digha Nikaya	Sutta number
MN	Majjhima Nikaya	Sutta number
SN	Samyutta Nikaya	Samyutta number:Sutta number

All references are based on Chattha Sangayana CD-ROM (Version 3.0) published by Vipassana Research Institute, India.

Jettha (Dato' Peter Khoo) took a break from the hustle and bustle of city life and business and headed to Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary (SBS) in Taiping for two weeks of experience as an anagarika. He writes of his time spent there with five other participants and the gems of wisdom he took away with him from the Introduction to Monkhood Programme 3 (IMP3), held from 26 November to 9 December, 2004.

A TASTE of MONKHOOD



A kammic calling brought the six of us together for the IMP3. To my knowledge, none of us were ready to join the Sangha, yet we felt an inner prompting to experience monkhood, if only for two weeks. Would it inspire us to 'let go' and really don the robes some day? We were all very curious.

We were strangers meeting for the first time in Sasanarakkha Sima Hall, yet I had a feeling of *déjà-vu*—like we were long lost brethren. Had we taken up robes together in some past life?

We were a most unlikely bunch of monks: Jhayi, once a seaman, now in IT; Bhadra, a professional photographer; Yogacara, an oil rig technician; Candra, a businessman; Danta, an accountant; and finally me—a 51 year old, dilapidated chartered accountant and businessman. But there we were at Sima Hall on the afternoon of 26 November, listening to Ven Kumara introducing IMP3 to us. This was followed by an explanation of the programme by Ven Aggacitta.

I was quite excited, mindlessly absorbing the beauty of the surroundings until the first item of the daily schedule caught my eye … 5.00am WAKE UP! That jolted me … I had not woken up so early since my high school days. Further down the schedule was "get ready for *piṇḍacāra*"

TURN TO PAGE 40