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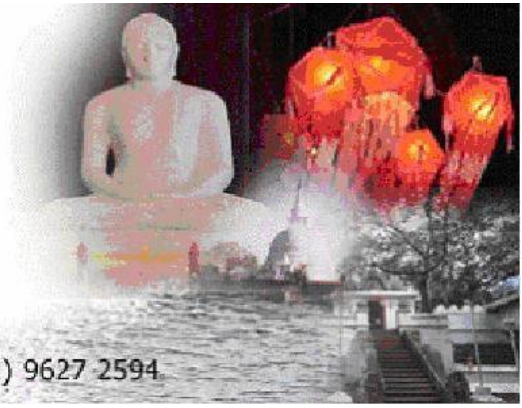
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Electronic newsletter of the Lankarama
Buddhist Vihara, Sydney, Australia

Lankarama Vihara, 35, Oak St, Schofields, NSW, 2762

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Lankarama News – OCTOBER 2009 – Katina Issue

1. SLBVA AGM – Saturday 12 September

A large number of devotees attended this AGM and passed a resolution to apply for suitable funding assistance from a bank to begin new Dharma Salawa construction project. This AGM appointed a new management committee for 2009/2010. See page 5 for details.

2. Monthly Sil Program – October – Wap Full Moon Day

On Sunday, 4th October Lankarama conducted Wap Sil program from 8.30am to 5.00pm. There were many devotees participated in this wholesome activity.

3. Special 'Pirith Chanting'..... leading to 'Katina' Proceedings will be held from 8:00PM on Friday 9th October 2009 At Lankarama Vihara

Special 'Pirith Chanting'..... leading to 'Katina' Proceedings

A special, Pirith Chanting

(Maha Piritha and Dammachakka Sutta)

will be held from 8:00PM

On Friday 9th October 2009

At Lankarama Vihara

4.

Lankarama Katina Pinkama



Lankarama Katina Pinkama
will be held on Saturday 10th October 2009 at Lankarama Vihara.

KATINA PROGRAM

- 9.45 am - 10:15 am** - Katina Perahera
(Please encourage your children to attend this occasion)
- 10:30m** - Buddha Pooja
- 11:00am** - Offering of Katina Cheewara and Sangika Dana
- 12:00pm** - Anumodana
- 1:15pm** - Meal for Lay People
- 11.00 am – 6.00 pm** - Sewing Katina Cheewara
- 6.30 pm** - Buddha Pooja & Katina Anisansa Dhamma Desana

Kapruka will be held in Lankarama and offering can be made on 9th. All are welcome to take part in this meritorial act.

The Practice of Rains Retreat (Vassana Retreat) by Buddhist Bhikkus and Katina Ceremony

The Prelude to the Development of the Social, Psychological and Cultural heritage of the Sri Lankan Buddhist Society

To understand the relevance of Vassana it is important to understand the background of the Buddha's place of birth and where he personally spread the Dhamma. This area spreads from Kapilavasthu to Buddha Gaya, to Saranath and Kusinara, all in the Madhya Pradesh, (North Central and Eastern provinces) where the river Ganges flow. One of the biggest natural disasters in this region is the Monsoon rains and floods which devastate the whole region of the river valley. Because of continuous rains river valleys get flooded to the detriment of life – human and animal. As in the time of the Buddha it continues to be the same even today.

What actually happened during the time of the Buddha was, that when he was staying in Sravasthi in Jethavanarama during his first rainy season, thirty monks drenched in the rains came to see him. He then gave them permission to have an extra robe to keep them warm and this was the start of the practice of offering of Vasi Salu or Cheevara (robes made of thick material) to the Bhikkus.. He gave specific instructions to the Bhikkus to stay in a dwelling with four walls and a roof which is referred to as a Pansala. One reason was to prevent illness by getting exposed to the severe weather conditions. Their numbers were large and if they travelled together they could also damage cultivation in the countryside.

According to the code of conduct of Buddhist monks they give up all secular comforts and live a simple life with what they receive as alms from the people. Also they have no permanent abode. They travel to spread the Dhamma.

What started as a dire need in the time of the Buddha is now established as a very strong tradition in Theravada Buddhism. The outcome of this practice was that the Bhikkus stationed in one place strived to give their best to the lay community. In return the lay devotees advanced their knowledge and practice of the Dhamma. This became the most beneficial time for everyone.

.Buddha also instructed Bhikkus on how to spend the Rains Retreat. They were instructed to stay with senior teachers to improve their knowledge of the Abhidhamma and Suthras. Even in the present time the seniority of a Bhikku depended on the number of Vassanas he has observed. Also the Bhikkus were instructed to practice kindness towards the laymen who were looking after them during the season. This was by giving them extra Dhamma sermons and more opportunities to develop their meditation.

Only Upasampada Bhikkus could undertake to observe Vassana or the Rains Retreat. Bhikkus are not permitted to leave the Retreat. They could only leave on special circumstances like sickness of a family member where the senior Bhikkus give them permission.

The lay persons take the responsibility to look after the Bhikkus with regard to all their needs such as food, health and living conditions. The community where the Bhikkus stay take this upon themselves to undertake all the work. During Buddha's time the kings and the rich nobility took the full responsibility of providing all their needs and gained much merit in doing so. Such benefactors are born in the Deva Lokas and Brahma Lokas after their death.

.It is mentioned in the scriptures, that the Buddha spent his seventh Rains Retreat in the heavens where his mother Queen Mahamaya was born as a divine being after she passed away, seven days after the birth of Prince Siddhartha Gautama. The Buddha explained the Path to Nibbana and she attained the state of Sothapattha.

Every year the Buddha spent the rainy retreat in one place. The largest number was in Sravasthi in the Jetavanarama. This is how, in most Suthras Buddha's discourses are in the Jethavana Vihara.

This could be the beginning of temples on a more permanent basis. Thus it becomes a very important development in the history of Buddhism. Building of Jethavanarama Vihare by Anathapindika Sitana was one of the first such temples offered to the Buddha..

This brings us in the western countries to pose the question, why it is important to observe the Rains Retreat in the absence of unfriendly weather conditions. To my understanding what is important here is the establishment of a tradition where a period of three months are specifically set aside for Buddhists including the Buddhist Clergy all over the world to concentrate on their spiritual development. In the present time all Theravada Buddhist countries from the North Pole to the South practice this tradition. Every Buddhist country in the world observe the Vassana Retreat from August to October when the Bhikkus stay in one Arama and observe the vinaya rules as laid down by the Buddha. The beginning and conclusion coincide with the full moon poya days of the months.

The present practice is that the devotees invite the Bhikkus to stay in the temple during the Vassana Retreat and undertake to look after all their needs to the best of their ability.

The Vassana Retreat concludes with an impressive ceremony where many Bhikkus are offered the Mid day Dana and other offerings as a mark of gratitude. These include Vasi Salu, (robes) items for personal use and for the upkeep of temples.

THE KATINA POOJA

Katina is the celebration to conclude the Vassana Retreat of the Bhikus. It is held at the end of the three months. In the Theravada countries the month of October is the time for Katina Pooja. One significant event is that all priests renew their vows as Buddhist priests. According to the Bhikku Vinaya they abide by a strict code of conduct. In the Lankarama the new Chetiya has a special Seema (marked space) for this. All the monks gather here for this purpose.

Katina celebration is one way of showing gratitude to the monks for looking after the spiritual well being of the devotees. As the monks stay in one place during Vassana they conduct more Dhamma sermons , meditation retreats and other activities to help people understand what the Buddha taught. During the time of the Buddha this was the time when many of the followers developed spiritually in the path to Nibbana.

In the Buddhist culture a Kapruka (wishing tree)is set up in the alms hall for people to place their offerings. Everyone who takes part in the ceremony brings offerings to the Bhikkus. One person will take the responsibility of preparing the Katina Cheevara which is a special robe made on the day and is taken in a procession and offered to the chief Bhikku of the temple. In the evening the Bhikku wears this special robe and delivers a Dhamma sermon at the temple. According to tradition preparation and the stitching of the Katina Chhevara is one of the highest meritorious deeds a layman could do.

Looking at the background to the Vassana Retreat and Katina ceremony it is understandable why this is held in high esteem. The noblest and highest offerings one can give are those conducted during the rainy retreat and the Katina Pooja. The good Kamma that results from all these Punya kamma is good birth in the human form , good health good friends and happiness in the cycle of rebirth. This also leads to birth in the celestial worlds.

As Buddhists everyone should make a very special effort to fulfil all requirements to the best of ones ability. Every Theravada Buddhist temple will conduct this ceremony at this time of the year. The Bhikkus dedicate their highest efforts to engage in their spiritual development and also help the devotees to gain Kusal kamma (merit) as good Buddhists.

Lankarama Vassana Rretreat and Katina Pooja

Our Temple The Lankarama Vihara has undertaken a Vassana Retreat with three Bhikkus. The Chief Bhanthe Meegahakumbure Rev. Dhammagavesi Thero , Thalangalle Rev. Siri Dhama Thero and the visiting Bhanthe Thallande Gunannde Thero. In October at the next Poya Day the Katina Ceremony will be held. The Bhanthes have relentlessly carried out many Dhamma Programmes. Still there are religious activities in the coming days.

It is an opportunity that comes once a year and living away from Sri Lanka we should make the most of it. The Lankarama News Letter supplies the devotees with the necessary information.

The religious function to conclude the Vassana Retreat, the Katina Pooja will be held in October. We all can participate in this, by supplying what the organisers have asked for. It is important to remember the Buddha's last words . "Vayadhama Sankara; Appamadena Sampadetha." All things are subject to change. Be diligent and do not delay.

On this day the Lankarama will host a large gathering of Bhikkus for the mid day Dana ceremony. The Bhikkus in the Sydney area have been invited to the alms giving. Everyone is expected to bring food for the Bhikkus and the devotees. This is organised by the SLBVA . Also devotees can offer Vassi Salu to the Bhikkus. There is every opportunity to practice generosity on this occasion . In the evening is the Vass Dhamma sermon by the Venerable Dhammagavesi Thero.

I take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Chief Bhante Rev , Meegahakumbure Dhammagavesi Thero, for showing the way and leading us in the path, to Thalangalle Rev Siri Dhamma Thero for all the extra services given to the devotees and the visiting Bhanthe Thallande Rev. Gunanada Thero for observing the Rains retreat in the Lankarama to help us in the meritorious activities.

Also it is with appreciation that I thank the present SLBVA president and committee for spearheading the activities and all past committee members for helping in this massive task.

Wishing everyone the ultimate goal of Nibbana

With Metta

Chitra Sandanayake

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Blessing for 2009 HSC Students – 6.30pm on Sunday, 11 October

A Group of devotees/parents and SLBVA are organising Buddha Pooja and Seth Pirith chanting to bless all HSC students in NSW. SLBVA invites all children, parents and all devotees to participate this activity on Sunday, 11 October at 6.30pm at Lankaramaya.

2009/2010 SLBVA Management Committee Contact List

Position	Name
President	Kumara Kulatunge
Secretary	Senarath Bambaradeniya
Treasurer	Sunil Randeni
Vice President - Develop and Maintenance	Pushpakumara Wijayasinghe
Vice President - Youth/Public affairs	Prabhath Amarasingha
Vice President - Food fairs	Thilak Ekanayake
Vice President - Religious	Vipul De Silva
Asst. Treasurer	Nimal Wijesingha
Committee Members	Cicil Fonseka
	Samapriya Sumanasekara
	Chandrasena Balasuriya
	Premaratne Samaranayake
	Ariyapala Fernando
	Shelton Peiris
	Lalith Senanayake
	Asoka Sumanaratne
	Dhanuka Ratnayake
Susil Grero	

Lankarama Membership Updates

PLEASE BE A FINANCIAL MEMBER OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP AT LANKARAMA AND BEGIN TO CULTIVATE GOOD KAMMA

HAVE YOU CHANGED YOUR RESIDENCE? PLEASE FILL A FORM BELOW AND UPDATE YOUR MEMBERSHIP CONTACT DETAILS IF YOU DO NOT RECEIVE ANY NOTICE FROM LANKARAMA

LIVES IN DHAMMA – PROTECTED BY DHAMMA

(Chq. No.) payable to the above association. The balance due will be paid

on

Payment by Internet money transfer: I will transfer/have transferred \$..... to the bank account indicated below with a description (preferably your name and/or phone number).

Bank A/C Details: Bank: Commonwealth, BSB No: **062016** Acc. No: **10013563**

To be completed by the proposer: (If you do not have a proposer, the executive council can make arrangements and this section not to be filled)

I a member of the above association nominate the applicant, who personally known to me, for a membership of the association.

.....

(Signature of proposer)

(Date)

(For office use only)

Membership Number:

The Executive Council meeting on hereby approve the proposed membership.

.....

.....
President

.....
Secretary

.....
Treasurer