

# A Letter to Australia

*The aims and objectives of the Tisarana Viharas in London, England, and Perth, Western Australia, established by the Late Venerable Sayadaw U Nyanika.*

July / August 1995

These monasteries are established for the purpose of the establishment and preservation of the monastic regulations laid down by the Buddha, and some further important rules presented by Senior *Burmese Mahatheras*, especially by those *Sayadaws* belonging to the *Shwegyin Nikaya* in Myanmar.

The indispensable duties of all resident Bhikkhus in these *Viharas* are as follows:

They must practise the right path leading towards the higher training in virtue, concentration and wisdom.

They must guide the laity, not only in conformity with traditional rites and ceremonies such as offering *dana*, *paritta* recitation, formal teaching etc. but should also instruct them how to practise higher morality and meditation. They should encourage the younger *Myanmar* generation in the maintenance of their national traditions and religious customs.

Since the life styles and disciplinary standards of the *Burmese* forest monks, *Shwegyin Nikaya* and Thai forest monks of *Ajahn Chah's* tradition fit well together, the *Tisarana Vihara* bhikkhus should and must behave in a proper manner and maintain harmonious relations with them by performing *vinaya kammass* together when appropriate. These are the basic principals in the founding of the *Tisarana Vihara* Association. The following rules must be observed strictly:

1. Monks dwelling in these *Viharas* must neither search for nor handle money; though they can hold such credit cards as Barclays, American Express, Telephone cards, etc. that are rightly managed by *kappiya dayakas* in accordance with the *vinaya* rules in order to deal with unexpected difficulties that might be encountered while touring for the purpose of *Dhamma* propagation.

2. They should not make impromptu visits to supporters' houses without being properly invited for *dana*, *dhamma* talks or other religious services. They should not indulge in making friends with lay persons or indulge in conversations regarding worldly affairs such as politics, economics or business. Nor should they behave like householders by joking, or by slandering some persons and flattering others.

3. A monk should not be involved in such activities as political organizations, discussions regarding worldly affairs, giving speeches on non-*Dhamma* movements, nor should he allow politicians, whether they are lay persons or monks, to stay in the *Vihara*.

4. He should give as much guidance as he is able when the members of the *Tisarana* Association discuss about religious affairs and he should accept reasonable statements, advice and arguments as long as they are not contrary to the *vinaya* rules.

5. Should the necessity arise for laying down some rules or regulations, other than religious ones, he should discuss his opinions with all the Association members. The meaning is that a monk should never be obstinate in holding to his own opinions regarding administrative duties and Buddhist Welfare activities, because the work of *Dhamma* dissemination should be done jointly by both monks and lay people.

6. If a rule has been rightly laid down, he should follow it himself as an example to others.

7. All monks dwelling in these *Viharas* must be serene in appearance with sense-faculties well-restrained. At the same time he must be amenable and never coarse either in speech or actions, since such behaviour usually creates disunity.

8. On making any journey with a woman there must be a man or at least a boy to accompany them.

9. If a woman meditator or student comes to question him alone, it should be made clear that it is inappropriate according to the *vinaya* rules, otherwise some arrangement must be made to escape from this awkward situation by asking another monk or man to stay nearby.

10. This *Tisarana Vihara* has been organized and established in London and Australia by the *Tisarana Vihara* Association, and thus any monk is a representative of the Association since he dwells in these *Viharas*. So he must not act according to his own wishes without properly making his intentions widely known to the members of the Association.

11. A monk staying in these *Viharas* must not be careless or untidy regarding his personal conduct, but must observe the *vinaya* rules respectfully and strictly. He must make every possible effort to clarify questions and doubts regarding the Buddhist philosophy and to teach *Myanmar* Buddhist people the *Theravada* teaching, and instruct foreigners in both the theoretical and practical observance of *Dhamma* through the medium of English.

12. He may offer accommodation to visitors who are in search of the *Dhamma* if there is any suitable space available, but female visitors should not be offered lodging under the same roof as a bhikkhu since the *vinaya* rules prohibit this arrangement.

13. He should always exercise caution when granting ordination, only doing so after making a thorough examination and giving comprehensive instructions as to what should and should not be done. A newly ordained monk or novice must not be permitted to leave for another *vihara* or centre before receiving proper training since some new monks might bring discredit to the *Tisarana Vihara* by inappropriate behaviour. So a new monk may leave only after disrobing.

14. Lay persons who come to the *Vihara* for offering *dana*, practising *Dhamma* and so forth, should be trained not to laugh noisily or to disturb others by unruly behaviour. They should be directed to take vegetarian food, not to take food in the afternoon or to waste time in idle chatter.

A: Now let us come back to discuss the Genetic Order.

People usually say that heredity is the most important factor, both for animate and inanimate things but it is not totally true because among one family, although all family members are facially similar to each other, their characters are different to a much greater extent. One of them might become a learned professor, another may turn out to be a criminal, or another may be a great inventor while others may remain commoners. In this manner, one's environment and associates are collaborating causes making for the success of one, or the failure of another. In this connection Buddhism teaches the main cause of development or degeneration as being one's own *kamma*, and that very *kamma* also causes one to get good opportunities, such as wise teachers, good friends, thorough education, moral associates, etc. Thus *kamma* raises one person but debases another, and causes rebirth as a higher species or the lowest forms of life.