

Observing 'Vassa' – Annual Rains Retreat

July 27, 2018 (full moon) lasting for 3 lunar months

Beginning the day of the full-moon of Asalha month (July 27), both Bhante Dhammawansa and Bhante Upasanta will observe Vassa or 'Rains Retreat' for a duration of 3 months. Bhante Upasanta will observe Vassa here in Clearwater while Bhante Dhammawansa will observe Vassa in Australia.

"Peaceful abiding here and now."

Monks and nuns spend their Vassa period engaging in intensive meditation and other spiritual pursuits. The Buddha, seeing that the period of intense spiritual practice and communal discipline had greatly benefitted the monks, formally instituted the 'Rains Retreat' whereby monks and nuns were to refrain from traveling and engaging in much activity to focus their attention inwardly towards spiritual development and purification.

This is very important to our Bhantes. In the Theravada School of Buddhism, the tradition of Vassa is ongoing. In fact, the seniority of a Theravada bhikkhu (monk) is reckoned by the number of 'Rains Retreat' he has observed since his 'Upasampada' (higher ordination).

The Buddha also encouraged lay devotees to support the material needs of the monks during this 3-month period so as to free the practitioners to concentrate on spiritual work.

Kathina, the Robe Ceremony, marks the end of Vassa. At the end of 'Rains Retreat' many of the monks' robes were often close to tatters; hence the Buddha allowed monks to receive offerings of new cloth from lay devotees.

At the conclusion of that inaugural 'Rains Retreat', the Buddha instructed the Arahant elders to:

"Go forth O bhikkhus, for the welfare and happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world; propagate the Dhamma....excellent in the beginning, middle and end....in letter as well as in spirit... There are beings with little dust in their eyes, who without hearing the Dhamma will falter and fall away... There will be those who understand Dhamma."