

## **STARTING A SOCIETY**

### **Why Establish A Buddhist Society?**

A club provides a place for like minded people to come together and explore Buddhism, to develop friendships, and learn more about Buddhism. Many students at university and young people generally become curious about spirituality and their 'purpose in life'. A Buddhist society can benefit many people by using their resources to address all of these issues. Forming a society allows representations to be made to the university or other bodies for resources/funding/publicity and it also gives people who are interested in Buddhism, a point of contact. Once you have decided to start a Buddhist society, some of the things you need to consider are listed below.

### **People**

People form the basis of all societies. Ideally in the beginning, a group of people will share the same interests see a need to start a society so that they can learn more about Buddhism and help others do the same. These people usually become part of the committee and keep each other motivated in the task of running a society.

### **Objectives**

Objectives are general principles that give societies direction and help to determine the activities which a society will engage in. An example might be 'to spread the Buddha's teaching amongst university students', or 'to provide support and resources to help Buddhists to further develop wisdom'. The objectives set the tone for the society and will determine the type of people which join the society e.g. a club which seeks to learn only Zen Buddhism will only attract those interested in Zen.

### **Patrons**

Patrons are a very important part of a society. A good patron should be approachable, should live according to the Buddhist teachings, and provide practical and spiritual guidance for the society when requested. Although having a patron can be a good thing, it should only be done after carefully considering the person's experience with Buddhism and interest in assisting youth Buddhists. Most importantly, the society should get to know the potential patron before asking him or her to become patron for the society. Potential patrons can be found in the Buddhist directory and through friends.

### **Procedures**

Depending on the society and its affiliation (e.g. university, temple, monastery, senior Buddhist group) it will have many guidelines and procedures to deal. For example, a university based society might need to produce a financial and general activity report annually to be able to keep running under their university's rules. It is important to become aware of all these as different institutions/groups will have different requirements of their affiliated groups. University groups can approach their respective student associations/unions, whilst community youth groups can seek the assistance of their parent group.

