



# FOREST SANGHA

## newsletter

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## Wings of the Eagle

*Ajahn Jayasaro, who is currently Abbot at Wat Pah Nanachat, gave the following teaching during a retreat for the monastic community in 1995.*

In Thai language they speak of two kinds of friends. There are 'eating friends', who are friends when there is something to eat, when everything is going well, but who disappear as soon as things get heavy; and 'dying friends', who would die for you. I sometimes think of those phrases in reflecting on our Dhamma practice.

There are practices that we use as refuges when things are going well, but they disappear as soon as things start to get tough. It reminds me also of a scene in a movie I saw many years

ago, in which the hero, Woody Allen, had thought up a clever idea of how to escape from jail. He had a bar of soap, which he carved into the shape of a hand gun, painting it black with boot polish.

But then there was a heavy rain storm on the night he was planning to make his get-away, and there he was, trying to look really fierce, with the boot polish beginning to run down his arms – until eventually the revolver just disappeared into a mass of soapy suds! Sometimes in the early years of practice we can feel that we're using the Buddha's teachings rather like Woody Allen with his soap revolver – as soon as it begins to rain the whole thing dissolves.

We have to put effort into developing our practice because these teaching that we have

discovered are still fragile, they don't stand up to adverse circumstances. We have to nurture and protect them, and sometimes we have humbly to accept that there are certain things that our minds are not strong enough to deal with yet. So we need to give attention to developing wisdom in relating to various phenomena or problems that arise in

our practice. In the *Sabbāsava Sutta* (Majjhima Nikaya 2) the Buddha gives many different methods of dealing with *āsavas*\* or their manifestations.

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There are certain things to be avoided, for a monk they'd be *pārājika*\* offences. It would be like walking along too close to the edge of a cliff, which is a practice to be avoided – not one in which we would just endure, or practise letting go.

Then there are other things to be endured, like heat and cold, hunger and thirst and so on, and other things to be used mindfully, wisely. For example, the requisites of food, clothing, shelter and medicines – we can't let go of these. It is necessary to have some kind of association with them, even though they are part of the sensory

\**Āsavas* – the basic outflowing energies that prevent us from seeing things clearly. These are sensual desire, the desire for eternal existence and ignorance.

\**Parajika* – the most serious offence for a bhikkhu. The penalty is that one is no longer considered to be part of the Bhikkhu Sangha.

realm, because our bodies have to dwell in the sensory realm; they are part of it. So the Buddha taught the principle of wise reflection (*yoniso patisankha*) on the use of the things which we have to use. Other *āsavas* are dealt with by gradual reduction and wearing away at them through our practice.

There's not just one blanket practice to be used in all circumstances, so we need to develop a sensitivity and awareness of the nature of the conditions with which we are faced, and the knowledge and strength of mind to relate to that condition in the correct way. This can save us a lot of frustration, because if we lack that wisdom faculty, then sometimes we can be enduring things that should be cut off, or trying to cut off things that should be endured. Or we may be avoiding things which have to be used in a mindful way, or trying to be mindful and careful in our usage of things which should be avoided altogether. Again and again we come back to the importance of right view, which is the wisdom faculty.

If we are experiencing a recurrent difficulty in our practice, we need to take up that difficulty, and start looking at it from various angles. In certain cases, it may be like using a soap revolver in a rain storm: we have the teaching, we're doing the right thing but we're not applying it in the right way. We're lacking vigour in our application, we're lacking integrity and continuity so, instead of the real thing, we end up – through our slack grasping of it – with a poor replica. It doesn't do the job. In other cases we can be using the wrong tool for the job, or perhaps we take up a particular practice, without a full understanding of its relationship to other factors which are necessary supports for it.

So if we are getting stuck in our practice the *indriyas*\* can be used as the basis for our investigation. Suppose we are having trouble in maintaining mindfulness, then we can look to the foundation for mindfulness which, according to the five *indriyas*, is *virīya* (energy, vigour). And we can ask: 'Is our mindfulness slack because we're lacking in vigour? Is there some way that we can put more effort into practice?' – because right effort will naturally support right mindfulness.... If we then find that there is a lack of effort, and we can't seem to do much with will power or resolution (*adhittana*), we can go back a step further and we come to faith (*saddha*). So if right effort is lacking and we can't seem to get it together really to put any concerted effort into our practice, we can ask whether the faculty of faith is weak.

Faith here may be of different kinds. There is the basic underlying faith of a Buddhist, which is faith in enlightenment of the Buddha as a human being, and therefore faith in the human potential for enlightenment  
\**Indriyas* – the five spiritual faculties: *Saddhā*/faith; *virīya*/energy, effort; *sati*/mindfulness; *samādhi*/concentration, collectedness; *paññā*/wisdom.

and in our own potential for enlightenment. Do we have that kind of faith?...Or are we getting caught up in self-critical kind of mind states, thinking that we can't really do it or that our problems are too intractable – generally taking a very dreary and depressed view of things? If we are, it means that at that particular moment the faculty of faith is lacking. And if the faculty of faith is lacking, *virīya* will be lacking; if *virīya* is lacking *sati* will be lacking, so there'll be no *samādhi*, no *paññā*.

It is important also to have faith in our meditation object, so we should ask: 'How much faith, how much confidence, do we have in our meditation, in the meditation process? How important is it to us? Do we really think that the practice of meditation can lead us to

enlightenment?' If we don't, if the mind is lacking in faith, then again energy is not going to be there and so we will not be able to maintain *sati*.

These *indriya* are all things that go

against the stream, they don't just arise naturally. Their opposites arise naturally: lack of faith, laziness, heedlessness, distraction, delusion – these things arise very easily, they're natural to the untrained mind. But those virtuous qualities which oppose them – faith, energy, mindfulness, *samādhi*, *paññā* – are brought into existence with difficulty.

Now the very fact that one finds practice difficult is not surprising; in fact, that is what gives it its spice, it's what makes it so challenging and enjoyable. If it was easy, it would be really boring. Why would we want to do it, if it was so easy? Once we've flipped a problem over into a challenge it's easy to feel strengthened and inspired by it, and for energy to arise. If you look at something just as a problem then you can feel oppressed and discouraged by it. So we ask ourselves: 'Do we feel weighed down, oppressed or averse to the particular things that we're working with? Do we think it should be some other way?' The way we feel about our practice and how we interpret it has an effect on the practice itself – it's a two way thing. We can bypass quite a lot of suffering by skill in our way of looking at things.

The ability to use thought wisely and intelligently is what the Buddha called *yoniso manasikara*. Without it, thought – instead of simply resting in a neutral state – becomes *ayoniso manasikara*; it naturally takes the path of unwholesomeness. So we are using the wisdom faculty to evaluate and to adapt. We come to know what things have to be endured and to recognise the various kinds of wrong thought (*micchāsankappa*), which are not things just to abide with patiently and allow to pass away by themselves. For example, sexual fantasy or thoughts of hatred and ill will are habits that are extremely heavy *kamma* in the mind. They intoxicate the mind, they make it lose its sense of balance and can lead it into hell realms very easily, so the Buddha said: 'At the moment

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# EDITORIAL

## *Peace on Earth*

As I sit in my room on a glorious autumn morning, I am aware of cool fresh air, sunshine, blue sky and trees, the sound of birdsong and of the stream running through the garden... and that transistor radio of those workmen in a nearby cottage! There is instant contention – *dukkha* – based on the assumption that it shouldn't be like this; that I should not have to hear or experience anything that doesn't accord with what I like, with what I find pleasant and agreeable.

I imagine that many people would consider the initial averse reaction to be completely sane, reasonable and justifiable. In one sense it is, but we need to ask ourselves: 'If we act on such a response, is this something that will further a sense of ease and well-being – or not?' A moment's reflection on the Buddha's guidance on Suffering and the Way to End It, is enough for us to realise that allowing any kind of negative response to linger in the heart is harmful, both to ourselves and to others, and in no way accords with the basic teaching that he continually presented throughout his life: *'Even, O monks, should robbers and murderers saw through your limbs and joints, whosoever should give way to anger there at would not be following my advice!* (MN21)... A tall order perhaps, but one that we should reflect on if we really intend to free the heart from suffering.

Our basic ignorance might convince us that it is possible to have our world as we would wish it be all the time, and that it is worth expending enormous amounts of time, energy and money in order to achieve that end. However, a brief reflective glance at Nature indicates, in no uncertain terms, that this is not the case. But the voice of ignorance, of Mara, is persistent, wheedling and we all quite regularly fall prey to its arguments and expositions... no blame, that's just how it is.

Out of compassion and a clear understanding of this human predicament, the Buddha in the course of his lifetime formulated and presented the *Dhamma Vinaya*. These Teachings and Rules provide a way of life and practice for human beings that leads away from passion, attachment, discontent and laziness that tend to cloud or agitate the mind, towards dispassion and mental calm and clarity, thereby enabling the arising of complete understanding of how things are.

So within the monastery there are precepts, routines and procedures that constantly check our impulse towards stubbornness, greed and selfishness – wearing away the image of ourselves that we've nurtured so

unquestioningly over the years. And, to check the tendency to settle into an institutionalised existence – a dumb, submissive dependence on an external structure – the Buddha also encouraged his disciples to go forth from the known, the secure, and to *'wander for the welfare and happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, welfare and happiness of gods and humans'*.

Of course for householders (who comprise the greater proportion of disciples) similar considerations apply. What is different is the contexts but still there are precepts; constraints in regard to relationship and to the material world (livelihood etc); the need for some kind of structure or routines for meditation and devotional practice, and relationship with others on the Path. Also needed is the skill and sensitivity to respond to a world that, for the most part, knows nothing of Buddhism or spiritual values, in a way that enhances our own practice and that perhaps brings just a little clarity and steadiness into the lives of those we contact – a healthy challenge!

In two months time, I will be in Calcutta – far from the serenity of West Sussex (and the workmen's transistor) – at the start of four months of pilgrimage to the places where Siddhattha Gotama was born, became a Buddha (Awakened One), presented his first Teaching and passed away. I feel very blessed to have this opportunity, although I don't expect it to be easy or particularly pleasant for much of the time, but it will be a chance to honour our Teacher and to deepen a sense of Refuge, a freedom from suffering that is not dependent on having things the way I want – which I'm sure they won't be for much of the time!

All being well, the Newsletter will continue to appear in my absence with Ajahn Sucitto's experienced hand, assisted by others, guiding it into manifestation. It may come late, a pattern that unfortunately can be the cause of irritation, when important information is conveyed only days or weeks after it is relevant, but it certainly will not be for lack of effort or willingness on the part of those involved. They will try to provide relevant information well in advance, but if there are questions about events in the monastery, please contact the relevant monastery, to find out about them.

May we all live free from suffering.

*Ajahn Candasiri*

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that we become aware of such thoughts, we cut them off without a moment's hesitation. We give not harbour to them'. In our practice we need many different kinds of qualities – a vast array of tools or weapons. So we need warm and gentle kindness, compassion, forgiveness and also, at the same time, a ruthlessness of mind as regards unwholesome intentions.

Through it all we develop a strong wish to be free of cyclic existence – free of the attachment to those things that make up the personality: form, feelings, sensations, mental formations and consciousness. By constantly reflecting on the suffering of attachment – not just as a theoretical study, but through our own experiences – we gradually turn away from things.

This is not with aversion or the desire to get rid of things (*vibhavatanha*).

It's more as if, while driving along a road we see a left turn ahead that looks a beautiful way to go with trees and mountains and beautiful views, but it is not the way we want to go. We don't feel,

'Maybe I could go along that road...', we make a definite choice not to go that way because we see that it's not the way that we want to go. The mind is cool, there's not the heat, the movement of aversion; there's no need to be angry or to feel any ill will. So although forms, feelings, perceptions, mental formations and the various kinds of consciousness may have pleasant, loveable and enticing aspects, they are not where we want to go – because we have been doing that for so long. We've been attaching to these conditions for life after life, and where has it got us?...In times of pain and distress, loneliness, anxieties, fears or depression arising in the mind, what can all the past pleasures and wonderful experiences do for us then? Nothing.

So we train ourselves to see that forms are just forms, sounds are just sounds, odours are just odours, tastes are just tastes, physical sensation. They're just that, they are just part of the material world; they're just *dhammata*, as they say in Thai. But then the moment there is craving or attachment to anything in the mind, it is no longer just *dhammata*, it isn't just ordinary – the way it is – it automatically grows in significance; we project onto it, giving it importance, meaning. Whereas seeing things as *dhammata* means that we're aware of phenomena simply for what they are. But when habitual thoughts come up: 'It shouldn't be like this!', 'Why me?', 'He shouldn't have said that!', these kinds of

judgements are all based on the feeling that things should be other than the way they are.

Guilt is based on the feeling that we shouldn't have said what we did say or we should have said something that we didn't say, that somehow we should have been better than we actually are. However the understanding of *dhammata* is that things are exactly this way because of certain causes and conditions. When we understand this then we can see that, at this moment, it could not be any other way. In response to a question: 'How could someone possibly act in such a crude gross fashion?'... we see that it's because of all the causes and conditions,

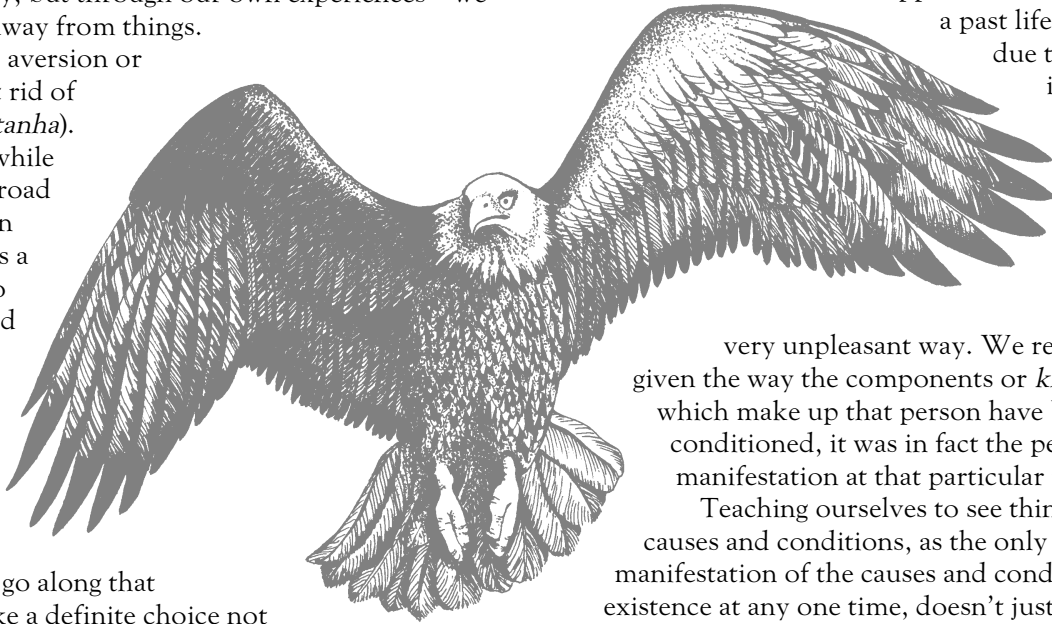
maybe right back to things that happened in childhood or in a past life. Or it may be due to some illness or a particular mental state that's causing the person to act in a

very unpleasant way. We realise that given the way the components or *khandas*\* which make up that person have been conditioned, it was in fact the perfect manifestation at that particular moment.

Teaching ourselves to see things in terms of causes and conditions, as the only or the perfect manifestation of the causes and conditions in existence at any one time, doesn't just take us to a kind of dull passivity: 'Well that's the way things are, and they'll always be that way'....It means things are like this because of causes and conditions at this moment; but causes and conditions change. It is only when the mind has realised equanimity that it will be able to respond in an appropriate way, in a creative way. This directly opposes quite a common view in the West that you have to be passionate before you can get anything done. To be passionately involved in something is highly praised nowadays – people think that positive change, action, can only spring from passion – dispassion is not a word that one hears bandied around very much. But the Buddha said that actions springing from passion will always be slightly distorted, will never quite fit the situation. They will always lack a certain circumspection and maturity of vision.

So the way to resolution and to peace lies, first of all, in the recognition and acceptance of the situation as *dhammata*. It's like this, because of past experiences, past situations and so forth, which have culminated now in these particular phenomena. With the recognition and acceptance of *dhammata*, aversion and various unwholesome dhammas are abandoned. The mind enters a cool state of equanimity, just as a car shifts into

\**Khandas* – form, feeling, perceptions, mental formation, consciousness.



the neutral gear before going on to a higher gear. We see that equanimity is a necessary stage, which then leads on to the active stage of speaking or keeping silent, of doing or not doing, or whatever.

One basic truth of the human mind that the Buddha pointed to very often is that wisdom and compassion are inseparable. In one of the traditional similes there is the giant bird, the great eagle with two wings, one wing of which is wisdom and the other is compassion. The Buddha pointed out that the more clearly we see the nature of suffering, the more clearly we understand that suffering is conditioned by desire born of ignorance; we see the efficacy of the Eightfold Path in alleviating that suffering, and we begin to see cessation. As our understanding of the Four Noble Truths deepens, we feel more compassion for ourselves and for others – indeed for all sentient beings. So the test, if you like, of the wisdom that we have developed through our practice is the amount of compassion there is, and a test of the compassion in our heart – knowing whether it's true compassion, and not mere pity or sentimentalism – is the wisdom faculty.

Where there is true wisdom there is compassion, where there is true compassion there is wisdom. But if compassion lacks wisdom it can do more harm than good. There is an old English saying: 'The road to hell is paved with good intentions.' Sometimes people try to do good or to help, without understanding their own mind and motivation, and without understanding the people they want to help. They have no sensitivity to time and place or to their own capacity, and so they don't achieve the results that they hope for. Then they can become angry, disillusioned or offended and if there is any criticism, such a person will feel even more hurt. They might think that the action must have been correct because it was based on a good intention, that their hearts were pure in their intention. But purity of intention is not enough, it has to be based on wisdom: understanding the nature of suffering, how it comes into existence and how it is alleviated. It has to be based on the true understanding of suffering.

So the more we look at ourselves in practice, the more we see suffering in all its myriad forms – from the gross to the very subtle – and the ubiquitous presence of *tanhā* (craving) every time we suffer. We begin to see how unnecessary suffering is, and deep compassion arises for ourselves and for other people. In fact, the distinction between self and others becomes far less rigid. It may almost disappear as the mind becomes firm and strong, bright and powerful, through our practice. At the same time, paradoxically, it becomes incredibly sensitive to suffering, we find suffering intolerable; and the inability to withstand suffering is a sign of a compassionate mind. Through the threefold training (*sīla, samādhī, paññā*) we gradually free the mind giving

psalmody of our birth -  
a still mind,  
the temple of the sky  
bringing the sun in  
a hymn of light;  
life illumined in silence,  
awareness awash  
with the cool tide of knowing  
and a timeless joy growing.

it a true independence, an integrity. We are increasing its wisdom and understanding of the way things are, and a sense of compassion arises towards all sentient beings, including ourselves.

So as we practise, we can try to look at our practice as a challenge. When any particular problem comes up, that's our challenge, that's our practice, it's not a distraction from it. Sometimes we can learn a lot from these particular challenges, since a particular kind of habit or imbalance may become clear in our formal meditation practice. When we see such a recurrent pattern, we realise that is obviously unlikely to be

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restricted to our meditation practice – it is usually symptomatic of our whole approach to life. It's as though, in meditation, we're looking through a magnifying glass at the germs of the things which cause us suffering. So there is a lot to be learnt from

what is preventing us from realising *samādhī*.

We begin to regard whatever arises, whether it's hindrances or enlightenment factors or whatever, as *dhammata*; these are conditioned phenomena, they are this way because of specific conditions. Realising this, we can actually enter into the stream of causality and affect it in a positive way. Through just recognising things as being *dhammata* we remove the instinctive emotional reaction to them, whether of like or dislike, and come to a state of equanimity. Then from equanimity, the neutral state, the mind can shift into the active mode which is most appropriate to dealing with that phenomenon. If it's an unwholesome phenomenon we make effort to abandon it, if it's a positive wholesome phenomenon we can mindfully encourage and develop it. The more and the closer we look, the more we understand and the more compassion arises in the heart. So if wisdom is being developed as a practice it's not just a one-sided development, it includes the whole being – because wisdom and compassion are the two wings of the bird. ❖

# Meditation Class

*In 1993, Ajahn Sucitto gave a series of classes at Cittaviveka covering basic themes of meditation practice.*

*What follows is the first section of a talk on Mindfulness and Clear Comprehension.*

In considering mindfulness and clear comprehension we see that these two terms are often conjoined. They support and amplify each other. Mindfulness is the ability to attend in a particular way, to turn the mind on to something and feel it out. Clear comprehension is the thing that helps to determine what we should be mindful of and how. These two together form a helpful practice for the arising of understanding.

There are various techniques and ways in which to develop and cultivate mindfulness, but sometimes what happens is that people consider mindfulness to be developed only through refining the preliminary object of meditation. For example, they may become attentive to particular refined sensations – but what they really need to be mindful of is motivation. A rather facile example might be that a person could be mindful of the feelings in their hand, when maybe they should be more mindful of the fact that they are holding a gun, with which they are about to blow someone's brains out! In terms of meditation, motivation can be corrupted with a kind of self-importance or alternatively self-denial, and we tend to be mindful of things that accord with these habits. So we recognise that clear comprehension is very important as a determinant for mindfulness.

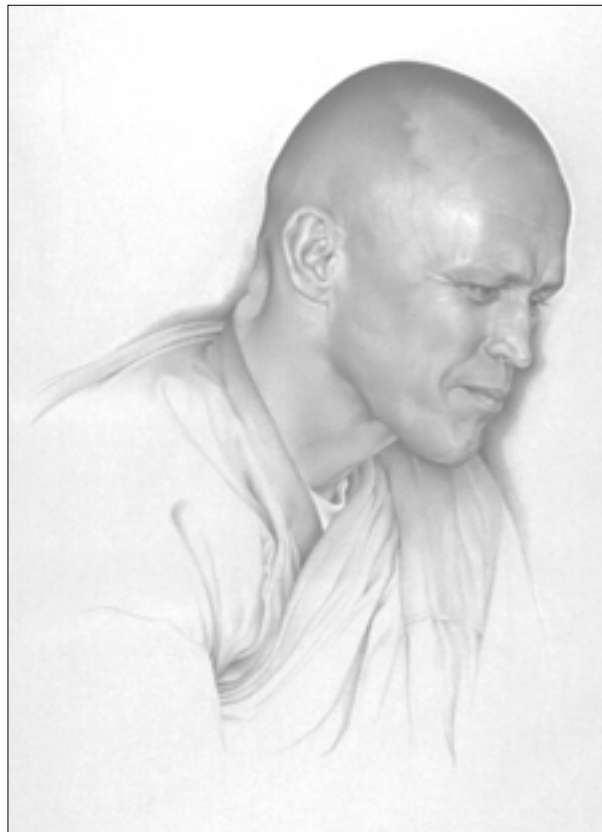
Mindfulness is also the power of the mind to attend objectively; the mind just opens up to something, without any particular angle or any particular ambition – and it's not in a hurry. When conjoined with clear comprehension it is not dependent on the quality of the object, instead it establishes a continuity of knowing

attention. It has the quality of dispassion, rather than attending only to things that we feel are dramatic; therefore an important development of mindfulness is in its extension.

Most of us can be fairly attentive to things when we are threatened or in danger – then we become extremely attentive – but most of the time there is no mindfulness. We live in a kind of fairly all right ordinary state, or else things become habitual; we barely notice them because we've got so used to them. Life seems to operate in terms of routines and habits: the same place and the same people – things changing very slowly – same old body doing more or less the same things every day. So we need skill to develop mindfulness in this, because normally the mind is only attentive to things that are dramatic, painful, searing or intense, wonderful or luminous.

Such a bias affects our meditation, and so we feel that we can't be mindful because we can't find anything special to be mindful of. We can tend to imagine that mindfulness is a state of being

concentrated on an object, so that if we're fully concentrated upon the breath or upon a sensation then we're very mindful of it. But concentration without mindfulness is fixation, rather than *samādhi*: it doesn't take into account an awareness of the mind's responses to an object, so only a fraction of the mind gets involved. Limiting mindfulness in this way is also unproductive if, for most of the day, we can't be mindful of breathing in and out because of being occupied with other things. It's not possible to have mindfulness in a controlled way, because life tends to be multi-faceted



and multi-dimensional. We are always going from the eyes to the ears, to the brain and the body and then back to the brain, the thoughts and memories. The attention has to keep swivelling around in order to function with things. However we can be mindful of the awareness (*citta*) which receives impressions and comes up with skilful responses, so flexibility in choosing a suitable place for attention is very useful. The reason that often people feel that they can't be mindful is that they can't relate mindfulness to the active states of consciousness when the mind is moving around, but this is getting confused between mindfulness and the ordinary understanding of concentration.

Concentration alone does tend to alter the consciousness: it makes it become more refined and take on the quality of what is concentrated on. So if we concentrate on beautiful music then we may feel very patriotic, or romantic, or excited – the mind takes on that particular mood. If we concentrate on a calm sign, like breathing, the mind becomes calm; but it tends to fix on that, and then when we can't concentrate on the breath we're all at sea again. Even if we can sustain it over a long period of time, which is difficult, that practice tends to make the mind take on the quality of the thing that it's conjoined with and not much more. So in terms of our 'view' or perspective, we remain very much affected by whatever we are in contact with. For much of the day most people have to be in contact with things like newspapers, traffic, duties, telephones, so then if we're just concentrating, associating the mind with the thing it is conjoined with, it gets very agitated and frazzled. Even in meditation, unless it comes through mindfulness, concentration will not be endowed with the skilful mental attributes that ripen to give rise to *samādhi*.

Mindfulness has the ability to notice something dispassionately and to maintain a state of coolness, of dispassion, by referring to and working with the mind's responses; this is a highly focused but not fixated state. For example, on hearing a sound we can notice what that sound does to us. When we hear a powerful sound, like a chainsaw or some machine screeching away, we can feel the mind tensing up. But then if we're mindful, keeping a sense of coolness about that, the mind actually relaxes; we hear the sound simply as a sound, and we don't get this build-up of stress. So in some ways, although it's rather undramatic, this is a very valuable practice. Now we're not saying, 'The way to meditate is to go and listen to a chainsaw' or, 'Go and sit in front of a spin drier all day long', but it's a way of dismantling the compulsiveness – the ways that we get caught with things – not by antagonism, but by just staying objective and dispassionate.

With an unpleasant experience, the mind habitually tenses up and tries to push the feeling away, but with a pleasant sound or taste the mind tends to go towards it

and tries to hold on to it and linger in it, or gobble it up. But then, through simply noticing that, we begin to find a sense of calm composure in ourselves so that, no matter what comes into consciousness, we are able to register it for what it is and to maintain the emotional mood of dispassion, of objectivity.

We see that whatever we experience comes, and then goes. It has the nature to arise, and then cease. It is impermanent, it's transient. Now although that's a very obvious statement, it's not an obvious experience. Most of us don't experience the ending of something. When something ends the mind jumps to the next thing. We don't notice a sound fading away. Instead, we notice the sound and we think about it, and then either forget it as we go on to something else, or the mind argues with it and proliferates around it: 'Oh that's very nice, I wonder where that's coming from.' Or with a smell, you think,

'That's a nice smell, that reminds me of so and so...' or, 'Where's that pong coming from? I don't like that...' We engage with things.

But to be mindful means that we notice the sound or the smell come into

consciousness, and then, instead of pushing the sense impression away or holding on to it, we're aware of how the mind reacts. We stay centred and notice that the impression and the feeling that arises comes, and then goes. We can actually watch and feel the mind's inclination to lunge out towards something that's pleasant, whereas before it would simply lunge out, grasp and then proliferate about it. With mindfulness we can notice the movement of the mind arise and then, when we don't engage with it, we see it falling away, ceasing. We see that it comes and goes in a wave pattern, and we begin to experience a steadiness underneath the waves.

So in this respect mindfulness has two qualities. Firstly, it is dispassionate; it has no particular ambition, it's neither rejecting or ashamed of anything, nor is it fascinated by anything. Secondly, it notices that things arise and cease.

If mindfulness covers the context in which apparent phenomena appear, we get in touch with motivations and responses that would otherwise be screened out, which are the source of the hindrances that can afflict us. If we can cease engaging in a blind way, we develop perspective. Rather than fighting with ourselves, saying we shouldn't feel this or think that, we can just notice all of the sounds, the sights, or the tastes or the touches, and what the mind makes of each impression. We see that they are all of the same nature in that they arise and cease.

This is the function of mindfulness. It leads to inner composure and freedom, because we're not rejecting anything, nor are we grasping after anything. We see that it's like this. There is a levelness, a groundedness in which the rich qualities of awareness can begin to reveal themselves. ❖

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## Living in Faith

*The training of a samana is to live on alms; from time to time monks and nuns living in monasteries in the West have an opportunity to leave the relative 'security' of the monastery to go tudong, following a path of faith and vulnerability.*

*For those in Thailand, the almsround is a daily practice.*

*Here are reflections from several samanas on what it feels like to live in this way.*

### **N**uns on Tudong in England – Extracts from a letter to friends and family about the five weeks of walking from Amaravati to Hartridge Monastery in Devon:

The journey wasn't all inspirational by any means. In concept and theory and in philosophical retrospect ... yes, perhaps ... but the nitty gritty of it at times was quite challenging ... physically, mentally and emotionally, but then that is what this kind of walk (tudong) is all about. It's a kind of stripping away of the usual 'comfort zones' that one can retreat into, so as to contemplate the sense of insecurity that is thus laid bare in the face of the unknown ... They are a monastic practice, intended to help deepen mindfulness, to cultivate a heart of faith, and to develop qualities such as patient endurance, equanimity and gratitude. It's also true to say that generally they are undertaken with great enthusiasm as an opportunity to get out the monastery for a while and enjoy life in nature! ... Always moving on is helpful; not going backwards or hanging on to what's gone before. Also not knowing what's to come, but knowing only each step as it is and constantly seeing all imagined futures to be pure projection, things unfolding never as expected.

... Even on the last day of our walk we battled with low energy and fatigue. Perhaps it was an accumulation of tiredness as there

were many nights with little sleep because of either cold, discomfort, throbbing feet, exhaustion, or all of it! It might sound rather horrible as you read this but actually, it was all right. It was just how it was and there was no alternative to be had so although not particularly pleasant, it was all good stuff to practise with. We were never in any danger.

Much of the time, despite the difficulties, a certain kind of ease or quiet joy could be detected in the heart ... in just the simplicity of it all, not having to think too much, being 'unburdened' (bar the weight of the pack), and wandering as we were. It was good not to have any planned rendezvous which meant we didn't have to stress ourselves out in covering miles or making deadlines that inevitably become difficult to meet. We could rest when we needed to, and move on when we

were ready.

... For me, and I think for all of us, the alms-rounds were the high points of our walk. It's so powerful to receive people's generosity in this way (especially in Western countries) ... such a touching and poignant reflection in that simple interaction for both giver and receiver, and a deep and strong sign in the psyche of the path and fruit of the religious life. The feelings of gratitude and blessing that can well up within one in those moments are 'other-worldly' and feel quite transformative. Memories of those who offered us hospitality in various forms would often come to mind at later times bringing again warm feelings of gratitude and a deep sincere well-wishing towards them.

It was remarkable that people in these places were so keen to help us. They weren't particularly Buddhist or even knew that we were much of the time. They were just kind, thoughtful folk, all too happy to give. Most tried to offer us money at first but we would gently explain that our monastic rule did not allow us to accept or use money. This always amazed people ... some could not fathom it, others apologised, and some even tried to

convince us that it was all right to take their money. Almost always people would come back with food, once they had understood what our almsbowls were for.

Being Westerners and not living within a Buddhist culture however, this practice of almsround can feel quite uneasy at first. Having been brought up with ideas about being independent and self-sufficient, pulling your own weight, not being a drain on society and all that, and with most of us coming from a rather middle class background, to actually stand there with our bowls, defenceless, open to whatever ... can feel quite embarrassing at first, it's not so easy to learn to 'receive' whole-heartedly and unconditionally.

... We spent about three days and nights around Dartmoor, staying with friends on two nights, both in beautiful, magic places, and camped out for one night. That particular morning we sat around our camp-fire savouring a warm cup of tea in the middle of nowhere, quietly taking in the misty landscape of the moors, when

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*Much of the time, despite the difficulties,  
a certain kind of ease or quiet joy could be detected  
in the heart...in just the simplicity of it all.*

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suddenly over the hill charged an army squadron of about forty young men in full combat gear, packs on their back and machine gun under arm, their commanding officer loudly and roughly urging them on. They looked rather tortured running (some limping) in those hard black boots. They were quite surprised by our presence I think, probably looking somewhat like over-grown Brownies to them I suppose, and they had to run right by us to avoid the bogs, some looking rather longingly at our relaxed formation and our steaming tea, others obviously quite interested in our army-style bivvy-bags still laid out from the night's rest! ... 'Keep away from them, gentlemen' ... the commanding officer shouted, and we watched silently as they charged over the stream and up the next hill. When the clamour of their manoeuvre had faded back into silence we all just looked at each other and laughed at the impression this surreal scene had left.

Some twenty minutes later, another squadron burst over the crest of the same hill. We hadn't moved much at all, and we watched again as the same scene took place ... Was this 'take two' of a Monty Python skit? This group seemed a little more chirpy though, and in better humour ...

'Good morning, ladies, that's a cosy little scene you have there!' ... they all looked quite interested as they ran by.

'How long have you been out?' I asked ...

'This is our fourth day, we're on our eighty-ninth mile.'

Hmm, pretty impressive ... we were certainly taking things a little easier at about ten to twelve miles a day! Strange to think that people think our lives are too tough, but they do this voluntarily as well! Not long after, a third troop charged over the hill, but headed off in a different direction, and we knew it was time for us to head off as well.

... We staggered up the far end of this pebbly beach at dusk, exhausted, to find our own privacy near a rocky niche. It felt nice to be there: clear weather, no worries about private property, having a camp-fire or making noise, and finding the sand quite comfortable ... at last completely level ground; to fall asleep and wake to the

sound of crashing waves at the shore some fifty yards away. We didn't rouse early that morning, we only had a few miles to walk that morning, so we took our time over breakfast and enjoyed the solitude and relaxed atmosphere for a while. At around eight-thirty some people started trudging up the beach towards us. 'Typical British!', we thought; it was not a great beach day, but the sun was up and they carried wind breaks. It was the beginning of a long weekend. But why make such an effort to trudge all the way up this pebbly end, there was plenty of sandy beach – about five miles of it?

Soon more people turned up. Then, as one rather weighty man and his wife settled in just a few yards from us and undressed – completely – we began to realise what was so attractive about this part of the beach. It wasn't us. When this man began to strut up and down proudly airing his naked body right in front of us we knew it was time to go. It felt ridiculous at the time, to wrap ourselves up over both shoulders in robe, don packs and, covered from neck to toe, walk back past all these nature loving bods!

Sister Jitindriyā



## THAILAND from Wat Pah Nanachat:

It is almsround and it is raining, and any available energy for thought is turning over itself and tying itself into knots. Most of these thoughts I have witnessed before, different characters, different colours, same plot. Having refrained from speech for some time, it seems that I can feel the movements of my mind with a little more sensitivity. Under an umbrella I recollect Sylvia Plath's famous novel title, *The Bell Jar*.

Stepping over a trail of ants, slipping a little in the mud – the sharp little stones scratching lightly between my toes – I recognise a pattern of thought. The contents of my mind are like an old record collection and many of the tracks have cracks where the needle gets stuck. How many days can I walk these same tracks and roads and think the same things? Want the same things? Remember the same things? ... It could be years! Lifetimes! My heart sinks and gets annoyed. The umbrella hangs like that bell jar and I too feel trapped

*continued on page 12*

# Universal Loving Kindness

*Extracts from a Dhamma talk given by Ajahn Sumedho  
at the Leicester Summer School in 1996.*

... *Mettā*, loving kindness, is an all-inclusive practice. Although liberation comes through letting go of our attachment to the conditioned world, if we concentrate on this alone we may develop an attitude which is excluding, almost annihilistic. The tendency will be to see conditions solely in terms of not being attached to them, or even trying to get rid of them. But with *mettā*, we are relating to all conditioned experience with an attitude of kindness, accepting things as they are. Consider what this does to the mind as a practice. We contemplate all phenomena, all sentient beings, in terms of loving-kindness rather than in terms of which is best, which is worst, what we like, what we don't like.

... *Mettā is non-discriminatory. It doesn't mean liking one thing rather than another, it isn't a question of singling out: 'I love this person, I don't love that one.'* Ours is a highly critical society. We are brought up to emphasise what's wrong with ourselves, our family and friends, the government, the country, the world at large – and so we become very conscious of the negative. We see the fault in people or things and become obsessed with that, and are no longer able to see what's right about them. In practising *metta*, however, we deliberately avoid clinging to faults and weaknesses. We're not blind to them, we're not promoting them, rather we maintain an attitude of kindness and patience towards defects in ourselves and others.

... In contemplating the law of *kamma*\*, we realise that it is not a matter of seeking revenge but of practising *mettā* and forgiveness, for the victimiser is, truly, the most unfortunate of all. There is a justice in the world. If we do wrong we may not be discovered and punished by society, but we don't get away with things. We must be reborn again and again until we do resolve our *kamma*. We don't know how many lifetimes we have had so far, but here we are in this incarnation, with our own particular character and kammic tendencies. We have had the good fortune to come across the Dhamma, and so we have been given great gifts with which to resolve

\*Kamma – Volitional 'action', which may be physical, mental or verbal.

things. But how many people have such opportunities? Considering the billions who now live on this planet, there really are very few who have that chance.

... *The urge to seek revenge is a common human reaction, but in terms of the law of kamma we can contemplate it and ask, 'Is that really how I want to conduct my life? Isn't it better to forgive and to develop compassion towards all sentient beings, demonic, angelic, whatever they may be?'*

... Where we can get confused is that we have idealistic concepts of what we should be: 'I shouldn't want to get my own back, I shouldn't have vengeful feelings for victimisers. Ajahn Sumedho says I should have *metta* for them!' Then we might feel, 'No, I can't, it's too hard. I can have *mettā* for everyone else, but not that person. He's totally hateful.' But we can have *mettā* for that very feeling – an attitude of kindness rather than criticism. We know it for what it is, we don't indulge it or repress it, we are simply patient with that particular state as it is in the present moment.



... *The basic pattern of Theravadan Buddhist practice is dāna, sīla, bhāvanā – generosity, morality and meditation. Dāna means simply to be a generous person, not selfish, able to share what one has with others; that is the basis for being a good human being. Generosity is highly developed in countries such as Thailand, and in general Thai people like themselves rather than hating themselves, as many of us do in the West. Generosity is, of itself, better than mean-heartedness. There is a joyfulness to it, for sharing brings gladness into our lives. With sīla, morality, there are precepts to be kept, actions to refrain from; as we practise this we learn to take responsibility for our actions and speech. The two together, dāna and sīla, bring us a sense of self-respect. Then there is meditation, bhāvanā, through which we begin to relinquish all the delusions we have about 'self'. The whole process is one of purification.*

... So as we meditate, we can even be glad when unpleasant states keep coming up! By having *mettā* for these wretched creatures we lock away inside us, we're opening the door of the prison. We're letting them go, but it's out of compassion rather than the desire to be rid of them. If we contemplate it in this way, these things can be borne, because we are looking at them with wisdom, rather than seeing them as 'me' and 'my problems'. As long as they are 'mine', I can only hate myself for thinking or feeling that way.

... We are not trying to say it's something it is not, but with metta we allow it to be. We're willing to be with it and, as its nature is impermanent, it does not stay. In that willingness to let things be what they are we liberate ourselves from them. What is more, as we become increasingly skilful at releasing these habits, there is a sense of lightness, because the heart isn't burdened by guilt, dislike, blame and all the rest.



... In the Western world, especially, it is very important to develop this attitude of patience and non-aversion to everything about ourselves: our fears and desires, our emotional habits, our sicknesses, our physical aches and pains; to all the mental and physical phenomena we experience; to arthritis, cancer, crumbling bones, old age, all the rest of it. This doesn't mean we don't try to heal the body. To do so comes quite naturally, and we do the best we can. Trying to make the body feel well can be a loving-kindness towards it. But to hate the body because it's sick or painful or old leads to misery, and is an obstruction to spiritual development.

... Practice is always in the present. Noting our experience, seeing it clearly, is in the present; we begin where we are now. We need to trust more in liberation in the present.

... By reminding ourselves to have *mettā* for the feelings we experience – not thinking about them or analysing them but going to the place in the body itself, to the mental quality, really embracing that – really being willing to feel those particular emotions, they become bearable. By changing our attitude to one of acceptance rather than of rejection, to interest, rather than just wanting to get rid of them, we find that they are things we can tolerate. Then they cease on their own, for all conditions are impermanent.

... It is question of changing our attitude from, 'I don't like this in myself, I want to get rid of it', to, 'Oh,

*so this is what I'm feeling...'* and having patience and a willingness to experience what is, in the present moment. This willingness to feel jealousy or anxiety enables us to take an interest in it as experience – because that which is aware is not worried, is not angry, is not the condition that is present. We start to develop confidence in this state of pure awareness. Through that patient attitude the conditioned realm stops being an endless struggle to control or get rid of things. More and more there is a sense of resting in the silence of the mind in that pure state of being in the present.



... In terms of Dhamma, it isn't a question of justifying our own weaknesses, it isn't some kind of cop-out. It is understanding that this is the nature of humanity, it is how things are. We are not ideals. Ideals are static, pure, unchanging, and yet we hold to them as how things should be, and despise ourselves because we can't be an ideal! But when we contemplate ourselves in terms of Dhamma we see that the body, the feelings, the consciousness, are constantly changing. We have so many things to deal with: first there are the instinctual drives of our basic animal nature – the need for food, for survival, and so forth – then our whole emotional range, and all the different things that have happened to us or that we've done. We tend to be so involved with life and to interpret it all in a very personal way. Sexual desire, for instance, becomes a personal problem rather than a natural energy which comes simply from having a body.

... But the natural state of the body is not that of some cold, sculpted piece of marble that holds its beauty under all conditions. It's soft, with blood coursing through it, it has nerves and various bodily functions, and we have to live with it. We have to bear the changing and ageing of this body and of the world around us. That is why meditating on impermanence helps us to break out of the assumption that somehow things should be fixed in an ideal state.

... Through seeing the impermanence in things, understanding that in this realm there can be no such thing as perfection, we begin to realise we don't have to waste our time on trying to control life, to force it to fit our fixed ideas. To attempt to do that is exhausting and debilitating. When we realise there is no need to do it, and begin to have this sense of flowing with life, then we feel, 'This is my path, these conditions I experience are my *kamma*, and I'll work with them', rather than thinking, 'Oh these conditions shouldn't be happening, I shouldn't have them. They're an obstruction to my path. ❖

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while the contents of my mind ferment in their own gases.

I try to remind myself that I should not be too critical of these phenomena. Many times before I've returned to the monastery after the almsround dizzied and exhausted by my thoughts, inclining towards respite. Then, sitting down cross-legged, there has been a sweet refuge in knowing the simplicity and honesty of a body breathing. But it will be another forty five minutes before we get back to the monastery, and this impatient mind wants rest prescribed now, thank you!

On days when the sky is clearer, turning my mind to notice space sometimes helps. In that space surrounding this wet season magical dawns often occur. Pink,

purple and gold caress a remarkable bouquet of cloud types and formations. Dragonflies may hover and dance while a small flock of birds draws a temporary line through the sky. In the corner of my eye I may catch a blooming lotus, turning to appreciate it, lucid and commanding almost, red against the celebratory green of the newly sprouted rice fields, reminding me of the mind's transcendent capacity.

But today there is no space and little appreciation for natural beauty. It is being concealed by a mesh of constricting thoughts, vigilant in their persistence. So I try to notice when each thought ends. No, it's not working; walking swiftly and coordinating the alms receiving is keeping my mind alert, but it is agitated. There are no spaces. There is excessive thought energy. What can I do? Surely all thought is not bad – many teachers in fact encourage the cultivation of the reflective capacity, using thought ... 'Wisely reflecting ...' Yes! So then I decided to try to hold the thoughts that may lead to increased wisdom.

As we walk through Tung Bon village several old men squat down as they see the monks approach. This is the only village on all the almsrounds that I've walked where the men also squat. As they drop the rice in the bowl, what may be read by the lines on those faces? Falling to their knees, are they ashamed or afraid? No, it seems not; in their faces, there lies a richness and a joy. You see? I say to myself, a mind with humility and respect is enriched but not belittled.

Now coming to a junction, oh yes, the loud music. A buffalo walks by casually followed by its caretaker walking in a manner equally casual. The buffalo is apparently oblivious to its friend lying carved up in the back of the black utility, which is the source of the noise – loud guitar rock, crackling through straining speakers. Considering the scene, I am amused by its metaphoric potential. I have mind states like that. Like a loud obnoxious black meat truck rocking into town and parking smack in the middle of the junction, demanding that its goods be purchased. Those greedy moods that demand sense gratification, slaughtering the subtle and

sensitive. Try not to believe it, I say to myself, just wait until it drives back out of town.

Some way out of the village on the way back to the monastery, we approach the chicken farm. It's interesting to note that the bowl around my neck seems heavier, the robe more constricting and the stones a little sharper. This kind of thinking doesn't seem to do much for my equanimity towards physical discomfort. Oh well! I can't develop everything at once ...

The chicken farm is an obvious but pertinent reflection. One day they arrive, hundreds of little

chirping chicks. Passing each day in their quarters which grow more cramped as their bodies grow. Then one day after only three or four weeks they're just not there any more!

Somebody came with a truck full of boxes, filled the boxes with plump chickens and drove them away to a predictable and bloody fate. How quickly it seemed to happen. They hatched, clucked a few times, maybe laid an egg or two, and now they've probably become part of somebody else's body – possibly even mine! ... And when will my turn come?

Entering the cool and subdued tones of the forest there is, as there has been many times a mild feeling of relief, of homecoming. Still a little agitated by excessive thoughts, what could I do? Maybe I could share some of these almsround reflections ...

Acalo Bhikkhu

## **T**wo Bhikkhus go Tudong in Ireland – Ajahn Karuniko shares some of his impressions:

My two previous tudongs in Devon and Cornwall had been pleasant experiences. Lots of invitations for food and places to stay with friendly people interested in Dhamma, as well as very favourable weather. However this year I thought I would undertake a more faith orientated tudong ... I consider a quality of faith to be the willingness to go into the unknown, to challenge the attachment to worldly security, as we aspire to realise that which is beyond the world; tudong also requires a willingness to learn from whatever situations present themselves, whether favourable or unfavourable, pleasant or unpleasant. Thus the journey becomes one that takes us beyond the security of the world.

County Clare seemed a suitable place. Few people we know live there, probably very few Buddhists, I had never been there before and it even had the reputation of inclement weather. One thing I had heard on a few occasions though was that the people there are friendly. So Venerable Thitadhammo and myself spent almost two weeks wandering around Co. Clare ...

... The almsrounds (*pindapāta*) were quite memorable, some for their pleasant aspects and some for their not-so-pleasant ones. Our first was in a small town

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*How many days can I walk these same tracks and roads*

*and think the same things? Want the same things?*

*Remember the same things? ...It could be years! Lifetimes!*

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where the prominent feature was the ruin of a Franciscan Abbey. I felt reasonably confident, thinking that the people there may be sympathetic to a couple of monks whose lifestyle resembles in some way that of the Franciscan monks. However, as we stood there on a showery morning only one gentleman showed any interest in us and almsfood was not forthcoming. We were pretty much resigned to not eating that day when the friends we had just been staying with happened to drive by ... so our bowls were amply filled that day after all.

... Another memorable occasion was when a friendly and smiling Catholic nun put some food into Venerable Thitadhammo's bowl. One of the items was some cheese and as she offered it, she added the comment, 'Eat it within seven days'. I wondered how she knew that cheese can be kept for seven days as a medicine. Later, when we came to eat the cheese we read, written on the packet: 'Once open, eat within seven days'. Some things do have a rational explanation!

... There were a few occasions where the almsrounds offered us the opportunity to develop patient endurance. On one such occasion the only shop around was connected to a service station on a busy main road. It began to rain quite heavily and we stood there for quite a while watching our bowls fill up with water and listening to the noise of the traffic. I smiled as Venerable Thitadhammo drank the water from his bowl in appreciation of the offering from above, while I appreciated receiving some bowl rinsing water. Also, by this stage of the walk, Venerable Thitadhammo had developed some back pain, so he had more to endure than cold hands and feet. However our patience was rewarded as eventually we received enough food for our meal; and it was nice how just as we were leaving,

the people in the service station gave us a bag of apples.

... There were only two occasions when we did not receive enough food for a meal. One of these was on a wet day; we watched our bowls fill up with water, and all that manifested was a large tin of baked beans. We had fun though trying to open it, with cold hands and an

inefficient pocket knife can-opener. But, thanks to Venerable Thitadhammo's expertise, we succeeded and were eventually appeased by the beans!

... Tudongs can also be undertaken in the spirit of a pilgrimage, visiting religious sites – old or not-so-old. As you may imagine, there are no Buddhist places of pilgrimage in County Clare. However there are several old ruined Abbeys, so to give our tudong also a sense of pilgrimage, we visited and spent our evenings around a few of them. I found them pleasant places for meditation and although one of them was next to a railway line; fortunately the trains were infrequent. I

sometimes felt a tinge of sadness, as I recollected that this once thriving abbey was now a ruin; but, alas, that is in the nature of things. But I could also experience gladness, recollecting that this was a place where people once lived, cultivating the spiritual path and follow their

example. It just shows how we can reflect on the same object from the past in a way that brings sadness or gladness. The Buddha recommended

gladdening the mind as conducive to well-being, to concentration and to seeing things as they are, so I opted for this way of reflecting. In the ruins were also many grave stones, old and new, as local people continue to bury the dead there. We spent an evening amongst the grave stones and were undisturbed. It was a suitable place for those who wished to 'Rest in Peace'. For the wise, things end in peace. So on that note I shall end here and leave you in peace, I hope.

*Ajahn Karuniko*




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# Beyond Belief

*This summer Ajahn Candasiri helped to conduct a Christian/Buddhist retreat at Worth Abbey in East Sussex. She offers some reflections on the event.*

Having been brought up in a nominally Christian culture, I attended church regularly and passed through its traditional rites of passage. Although there was already quite a deep sense of devotion and reverence for the mystery of the sacraments, in my late teens I entered a period of disaffection. It was as though the transition to adulthood required some sort of rebellion against ‘the believed’, and a plunging into the experience of life itself. Fortunately it wasn’t long before the limitation of the worldly pleasures in easing the sorrows and difficulties of human existence became quite obvious, and I began to be interested in meditation. Over time there was a gradual rekindling of interest in Christian spirituality, and I was blessed with good friends and guides along the way.

However, in spite of such blessings, I could find no way of reconciling what I

perceived to be the ideal of spiritual life with the pathetic struggles of the mind and heart towards actually living it.

At the time, there were neither the concepts nor the words to express it, but basically it was a case of *dukkha* being thoroughly tasted. So the heart was well primed for the Buddha’s teaching of *Dukkha*, and the *Way to End Dukkha*; it says in the *Upanisa Sutta* that ‘Suffering brings faith’ (Kindred Sayings: Ch xii, On Cause 3.23). I attended a ten-day retreat with Ajahn Sumedho, and it became obvious that this was the Path I needed to follow. There was no turning back. The retreat enabled insight into the teachings and practices of Theravada Buddhism, but it also, to my surprise brought new light into the teachings of the Christian gospels; I could see that at some level these teachings were pointing to a way of life and renunciation that seemed to accord more or less exactly with the Way that I had just discovered in Buddhism.

One thing led to another in what felt like a truly awesome and miraculous process and now, after almost two decades of practice as a nun in the Buddhist monastic communities of Chithurst and Amaravati, an opportunity has arisen to present Buddhist teachings in the context of a Christian/Buddhist retreat. This is the second year that I have participated in such a retreat at Worth Abbey in East Sussex. Father Roger Bacon, whose inspiration this has been, encouraged and ‘engineered’

the event. I shared the responsibility for guiding the retreat with Elizabeth West, who had formerly been a nun for 25 years and is now resident at the Christian Meditation Centre in London.

I have to admit that such a retreat is not a completely comfortable experience for me. Last year I had found that the juxtaposition of a Buddha rupa and icon of Christ on the main shrine felt strange – almost as though the reverence one wished to accord these remarkable beings could only be adequately expressed on separate shrines. This was what I had planned to suggest for this year, with the central shrine simple: no image – just candles, incense and flowers.

Interestingly, it was soon clear that Elizabeth had had exactly the opposite vision of how it should be, and a young friend had made a painting to represent that vision:

Jesus Christ and the Buddha standing in an attitude of friendship, presenting teachings side by side. It is an image that is challenging (even shocking) for some, while for others it brought a sense of relief, even delight. Why should they not be there at the same level? It represented a challenge to any Christians who might have had the view that the Buddha was ‘only an ordinary human being, who is now dead’; similarly for Buddhists, who might have been tempted to speak of Jesus as, ‘only a bodhisattva – who probably learnt what he knew from Buddhists anyway!’ Needless to say, the retreat itself fostered no such prejudice; it was not an exercise in ‘comparing and contrasting’ the two traditions. Rather, it was an opportunity to find and to rest in the silence that is beyond words, images or concepts. Of the 40 or so people who attended the retreat, the majority were practising Christians, many of them with an already well established meditation practice. There were also Buddhists who had followed a similar path to my own and felt the need to review their relationship with the Christian doctrines and observances they had moved away from. Several had attended similar retreats before – others had had little or no experience of meditation.

At the start of the retreat, I noticed a tinge of concern on hearing of the joy and peace that those on the previous year’s retreat had experienced, for spiritual practice, although simple and straightforward, is not necessarily

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easy. In a sense it is like giving birth...I'm told that often the mother remembers only the joy of the experience; that nature seems to blot out any memory of the agony of labour. I was not surprised when, at the end, many people commented on how difficult they had found it. However, I suspect that last year it had been difficult too, and the memory had been overlaid with the sense of happiness and peace that arose as a result of those very efforts! It was heartening though to hear of the joy and lightness that their efforts brought; new insights into ancient teachings, and to have had an opportunity to practice with an assortment of tools that could be implemented within the context of everyday life.

Elizabeth and I had no particular plan, other than an agreement to share equally in the teaching, alternating sessions throughout the days. Themes seemed to emerge quite naturally – often in response to what had gone before. For myself, I also felt the need to present at least the basic framework of Buddhist teachings, since the majority of retreatants were from a Christian background and were continuing to use the structures within that tradition as the basis for their personal practice.

One striking feature of the retreat was how little seemed to be required in terms of interpretation or 'packaging'; there was an extraordinary openness in people, so that it didn't seem to be necessary to explain or justify what was being presented. Of course the terms, *Buddha*, *Dhamma*, *Sangha* required some interpretation, but seeing them as Wisdom, Truth and Goodness immediately transformed them into something that was in tune with a common aspiration about which there could be no disagreement. Similarly, prayer, when described as 'being completely present with what is', didn't seem to be that much different from mindfulness; whether in the context of formal meditation or in 'daily life practice'. The Buddhist teaching on the Four Noble Truths points clearly to the mechanism that limits or blocks perfect prayerfulness or mindfulness: to the greed, aversion and wrong ways of regarding ourselves, and to the way of gradually freeing the heart from these hindrances.

In considering the practice of *metta/karuna* (kindliness and compassion), a resonance could be felt with the basic principle of intercessory prayer. A difference (or may be it's not such a difference) is that in Buddhist practice these are qualities that can be brought forth from within the heart itself and consciously directed, whereas often for Christians, it is a matter of making a petition, relying on a higher being 'out there' to fix things on our behalf. However, we found it useful to reflect that perhaps the link with the Source of kindliness and compassion is to be found deep within the human heart also.... Could these be simply different ways of speaking of the same thing?

Perhaps one of the most significant insights of the retreat was that in order for it to be truly effective, this *metta/karuna* has to be directed first of all towards ourselves; we have to be kind, patient and accepting of ourselves – of our own suffering, weakness and limitation. The extent to which these can be manifested towards others is in direct proportion to the level of

understanding, acceptance and forgiveness of these within ourselves. It is quite impossible to love and be truly compassionate for others if, at the same time, we continuously nag and hate ourselves for our faults and weaknesses!

So whatever our chosen Path, we need first of all to be clear about where we are and where we want to go. In other words, there needs to be an honest recognition of our own shortcomings, as well as an appreciation of our wholesome aspiration. We need to learn to recollect our own goodness as a way of gladdening the heart and bringing a sense of self respect, instead of chastising ourselves continually. In this way we can investigate the consequences of our mistakes or 'sins', and then put such painful experience to good use as an incentive to try to understand why we went wrong, and consider how we can avoid repeating them; we don't allow feelings of guilt or inadequacy to overwhelm us.

I am left with many impressions: the simple spaciousness of the main sanctuary from which the brothers' melodious office could be heard during our morning meditation, the changing light, the sunshine, wind and rain; the smiles, tears and laughter and, above all, that attentive silence – human beings together picking up and chewing over teachings, testing them out, extracting goodness from the practice, and filling the heart with that which goes beyond words. As the young artist commented touchingly in the final sharing, 'I realise that it is the silence which brings us together, not an image, concept or idea.' ❖

## KATHINA & ALMSGIVING CEREMONIES

**19th October** Cittaviveka,  
contact: Barry Durrant 01730 821479  
Dhammapala (Switzerland)

**26th October** Ratanagiri

**2nd November** Hartridge (Devon),  
contact: Noom Curwen 01225 858544

**9th November** Amaravati,  
contact: Diana Jones 01442 872058

Everyone is welcome to attend these traditional almsgiving ceremonies which are held at each monastery following the completion of the three month Rains Retreat (*Vassa*).

The usual programme for the day is as follows:

- 10.00 am** Arrive  
Giving of Five Precepts  
Paritta Chanting
- 10.30 am** Pindapāta – meal offering to the Sangha
- 11.00 am** Meal for all
- 1.00 pm** Offering of cloth and other requisites to the Sangha
- 2.00 pm** Dhamma Talk (*Desanā*)
- 3.00 pm** Informal meeting with Sangha and friends

*Contact each monastery or relevant contact person for further details (including regional variations).*

# Signs of

## NEW ZEALAND:

Ajahn Subbato arrived in early July. Some will remember him from the very early days here. He helped with the building of the first structures on the property and the exploration of the surrounding bush. He has spoken of crawling through thickets following pig trails, and climbing trees to get an idea of the lay of the land. He has agreed to come here to be the abbot for a year or two while Ajahn Vajiro is away from the monastery. With his arrival and the return of Venerable Sugato from visiting his parents in the USA, the Sangha entered this year's Rains Retreat with a compliment of four monks. Wayne, Chris and Craig arrived to fill the gap left by Cameron's departure. Each came with a one year commitment to the monastery and in August a ceremony was held to confer anagarika status on all three. A number of lay supporters and friends attended, adding a sense of importance to this preliminary step into the brahmachariya.

Having a community of seven homeless ones makes the running of the monastery less demanding, thereby giving everyone more time and energy for all-important practice. During the month's 'closed' retreat, the monks were able to walk on almsround in Stokes Valley, where several householders had offered dana on prearranged days. Pindapāta is an important part of the monastic tradition and the Sangha is grateful to have the opportunity to experience this aspect of monastic life, so common in Buddhist countries but so rare in the West.

Ajahn Vajiro will be leaving in early November for a well earned year's sabbatical, during which he intends to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Places and to visit Sri Lanka, Thailand and Europe. Shortly before he leaves we will be welcoming Ven. Prof. Dhammavihari, who will be arriving in Wellington on 24th October; we hope that he will kindly offer a Dhamma talk in Sinhala as well as some talks in English. The monks look forward to discussing Dhamma with him.

*An extract from an article by Ven. Santidhammo in Bodhinyanarama's Newsletter:*

... My personal preference has always been for a greener cooler forest and I like nothing better than to extend my dawn walking meditation into a circumambulation of the monastery. The circular pathway leads deep into the overgrown recesses of our little 'sub-valley', with a small extension at the end of the main valley (Stokes Valley proper). Twin streams merge under palm fronds, ferns, creepers, tree ferns, shrubs and trees which unite to almost block out the sunlight on many sections of the path. The combined water of both streams and many springs unite to gurgle past the sala where the circular pathway terminates.

There are meditation seats at strategic spots with either closed forest views or spectacular outlooks over the monastery buildings far below, glimpses of suburbia beyond and distant ranges-upon-ranges framing the horizon to the north. To the rear of the seated viewer, through the dense undergrowth that covers the higher slopes, lies the ridge which forms the natural boundary to the monastery, sheltering it from the southerly winds. From the summit one has views of Wellington harbour, the central cityscape and, on a clear day, the snow-capped peaks of the South Island.

Sounds of suburbia barely penetrate the inner reaches of the monastery: so much beauty, lushness and solitude put one in a joyful mood conducive to meditational calm. Proceeding mindfully along the leaf-strewn path, coloured golden brown by autumnal offerings from a delightful glade of southern beech trees, the fallen leaves give cause for reflection on impermanence. The upper layers of gold and rustic colours grade into ever deeper shade of brown feeding the rich brown humus; a return to mother earth, to provide nutrients for the whole cycle to repeat itself yet again. 'Earth', foremost of the four *mahabhuta*, the four great becoming; for earth, water, fire and air ceaselessly combine in an ever changing multiplicity of forms.

## LAY RESIDENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES AT AMARAVATI

THERE ARE a number of lay residents at Amaravati fulfilling supportive roles; with responsibilities in the office, maintenance, retreat centre, kitchen, library and grounds. Opportunities to fill these positions

**MAINTENANCE AT AMARAVATI:** This is an excellent opportunity for someone to enjoy a diverse range of challenges. These include planning, co-ordinating and executing all types of building works over 22 buildings, from carpentry, decorating, plumbing, roofing and electrics. You would be working both with the Sangha and Lay Guests, as well as arranging outside contractors. A broad range of experience would be highly advantageous.

occasionally come up and we would be pleased to receive expressions of interest for future reference. At the moment we are looking for people to take up the following duties.

**GARDENER:** We need an extra person to assist with care for the maintenance of the gardens and grounds of Amaravati (about 30 acres). The work requires physical strength and stamina, gardening knowledge, and the ability to work with volunteer helpers. A vigorous and natural way to complement one's meditation practice!

*For more information please contact the Secretary.*



# Change

## SWITZERLAND

Spring saw another major transition at Dhammapala. Upon Ajahn Tiradhammo's return from Canada, Ven. Dhammavaro set off to visit family and friends in Germany, and eventually returned to a remote hermitage in Thailand for the Rainy Season Retreat. In early June, Ven. Suññato bid farewell to many friends of Dhammapala and, after a short visit in England, returned to Canada as a lay person.

In May we had another special visit from Chao Khun Paññananda who, even at his advanced age, still has the energy to make another trip through Europe. At the end of May, Dhammapala hosted several hundreds of people for the celebration of Wesakha Puja, together with a combined alms offering from the Thai Embassy in Bern, the Thai Mission to the UN in Geneva and the Thai Mission to the World Trade Organisation in Geneva. We were gratefully assisted by two monks from Wat Sringerindravararam, and the many participants generously offered an abundance of provisions and financial donations.

A quiet June ended with a flurry of visiting Sangha, including Ajahn Tuwee from Northeast Thailand, Phra Kru Paisan for North Thailand and Ajahn Pyrote from Bangkok. We also had a surprise visit from Sister Sanghamitta on a short visit from her new home in Thailand to see her mother in Basel.

Ven. Ottama returned from Czech Republic in time to accompany us to the Ordination Ceremony in England, and then took up residence at Dhammapala for the coming months. Shortly after our return from England we received a visit from a group of Thai supporters who were inspired to travel from Vienna and Bangkok to make offerings at Dhammapala. In early August we received another surprise visit, this time from Ven. Khemasiri. He was finding his time in Asia very rewarding and had planned to stay there. However, upon receiving news that his father was gravely ill, he returned for some weeks to support his family during his father's operation, and found time to spend a week with us at Dhammapala. With his father now quite well, he has returned to Asia to spend some months on retreat in Burma.

Over the summer quite a few guests resided at Dhammapala and were very co-operative in helping out with the daily activities and our few work projects. Our September retreats, exceptionally well-attended this year, provided a more focused and calm environment to allow the Sangha time for individual retreat. October will be a more active time again with visits from Ajahn Munindo and Ajahn Chandapalo and also Ven. Dhammiko from the Italian Vihara, especially invited to participate in our annual Kathina/Alms offering on 19th October. Shortly after this, Ajahn Tiradhammo will be

travelling to England. He is also planning to visit Thailand and Burma in November to meet with Sangha members in Asia.

The year draws to a close with the traditional New Year's Retreat and then the Sangha will be able to enjoy their own retreat in January/February. Following the retreat we begin the new year's regular programme of activities, hopefully with somewhat more calm and clarity. This may seem like a small thing in our big world, however, it seems that more and more people are beginning to appreciate the difference it can make in their lives.

## DEVON:

Everything seems — to us at least — to be going very smoothly. We have been warmly welcomed by many people, both in person and through encouraging cards and letters. We all enjoy the smallness and simplicity of our new situation, although we have needed to think much about striking the right balance between structure/formality and freedom. We are also gradually feeling our way into finding rhythms and forms which work for a community of women. It will be an ongoing learning process, no doubt.

Much of our energy and attention so far has gone towards sifting through the various accumulations of the past residents, spring cleaning, and re-organising to suit our needs. We have greatly appreciated the regular help from several long-time supporters in taking care of the grounds, the various temperamental machines, and in other odd jobs. It's impossible for us to cover all the maintenance work to be done really, so it's a good teaching...trying to do what we can without getting obsessed or losing the balance. Above all, remembering the priorities of the ordained life: to nurture ourselves and each other spiritually, so as to bring about something of true worth to offer.

*Ajahn Siripaññā*

## HAMMERWOOD

Cutting down birches  
to let oak trees grow  
Leave imponderables  
to worry themselves  
Letting November  
blow away its glory  
Autumn leaves, & now  
the sun is cold

Anagarika Graham



SANGHA NOTICES

**Kathinas/Almsgiving Ceremonies,**  
see box, page 15

**Upasampada/Pabbajja at Amaravati**  
16th November, see box, back page

AMARAVATI NOTICES

**Gratitude to Parents Day**

Sunday, 12th October. Following the meal time offering at 10.30 there will be a tree planting ceremony and Dhamma Talk given by Ajahn Sumedho on 'Human Memory and its Relationship in Rebirth'. All welcome.

TEACHING ENGAGEMENTS

Ajahn Viradhammo will represent the Sangha in 3 teaching engagements at the Buddhist Society on:

- Thursday 2nd October
- Sunday 5th October & 30th October

WINTER RETREAT – AMARAVATI

During the 1998 monastic retreat January and February there are opportunities for lay people (who have experience of long, silent retreats and who have had previous contact with the Sangha) to help with the running of Amaravati, particularly kitchen duties. It will be possible to join with some of the meditation sittings and talks. A minimum commitment of one month is requested.

All those interested should apply to the Amaravati secretary by November 15th.

CITTA VIVEKA NOTICES

**Lay Forums**

2.00pm at the monastery. All welcome:  
Sunday 26th October  
– Lay Community Day

Sunday 23rd November – 'Celebration of the Sacred in Daily Life'  
(The use of ritual and tradition in daily life, presented by Ajahn Sucitto).

**Forest Work Days:**

Saturday/Sunday  
1st/2nd November – Helping the Sangha's forest work month. Meet at the monastery at 1.00 pm. If you'd like overnight accommodation, please contact the guest monk/nun in advance.  
Saturday 6th December  
– Planting Native Trees.

HARTRIDGE MONASTERY

• Devon has a new fax number:  
01404 890023

AUSTRALIA

• Bodhinyana Monastery new phone/fax no is 089 525 2420

MONASTERY ON-LINE

The Forest Sangha Newsletter is available on the internet at;

<http://www-ipc.umds.ac.uk/~crr/newsletter/>

Also for the more youthful members of the Sangha try the 'virtuous-reality' web site at;

<http://www-ipc.umds.ac.uk/c.renshaw/virtuous-reality/>

OTHER NOTICES

- Retreats elsewhere - 18th/19th November: Meditation, Chanting and Healing - a one day retreat led by Melanie Abhassara at, The Priory, Sayers Common, Near Hassocks, East Sussex. Overnight accommodation available. Contact: Nimmala (01273) 723378.
- New group at Redruth, meets on Wednesdays at 7.30pm, at The Wellbeing Centre, Old School House, Illogan, Redruth. Contact Ron West (01209) 717543.



**Rainbows Weekend: 1st – 4th May** a range of creative activities, balanced with relaxation and Dhamma.

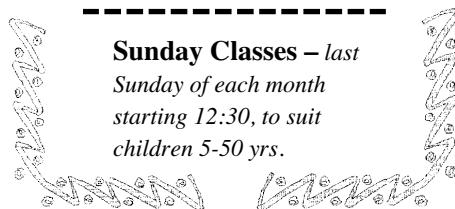
**July Weekend: 3rd – 5th July** a relaxed low key event. A good introduction to the monastery for both children and parents

**Summer Camp: 22nd – 30th August:** over a week of activities catering for all the family. It follows a relaxed monastic schedule with classes.

**Young Persons' Retreat: 4th – 6th December:**  
A taste of silent meditation for teenagers.

**For details contact**

Dan Jones, 144 Catherine Street, Cambridge, CB1 3AR Tel: 01223 246257



**Sunday Classes – last Sunday of each month starting 12:30, to suit children 5-50 yrs.**

INTRODUCTORY  
MEDITATION –  
AMARAVATI

*Saturday  
Afternoon Classes  
1.30 – 3.30 pm*

Meditation instruction for beginners; with an opportunity for questions to be answered. Classes are in the Bodhinyana Meditation Hall.

*Feel free to come along – no booking is necessary.*

We try to bring out the Newsletter quarterly, depending upon funds and written material. In the spirit of our relationship with lay people, we naturally depend upon donations: any contributions towards printing/distribution costs can be made to: 'The English Sangha Trust', Amaravati. In that same spirit, we ask you to let us know if you wish to be put on (or removed from) the mailing list, or if you have moved. Write to Newsletter, Amaravati.

**Data Protection Act:** The mailing list used for Forest Sangha Newsletter is maintained on computer. If you object to your record being kept on our computer file, please write to Newsletter, Amaravati, and we will remove it.

This Newsletter is printed by: Ashford Printers, Harrow. Telephone – (0181) 427-5097

## Teaching and Practice Venues

<b>MEDITATION GROUPS</b> <i>These are visited regularly by Sangha members.</i>	
<b>LONDON SW20</b> Santosa Group: Mike & Carole Pearce, (0181) 549 6375	<b>BRIGHTON</b> Alex Clingan, (01273) 327-925 Monthly visits by a monk or nun.
<b>LONDON BUDDHIST SOCIETY</b> 58 Eccleston Square, SW1 (Victoria) (0171) 834 5858 <b>Meditation Sundays:</b> led by a monk or nun, every 2nd month. 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. <b>Thursday classes – 6.00pm</b>	<b>BATH</b> Catherine Hewitt, (01225) 405-235
	<b>BRISTOL</b> Lyn Goswell (Nirodha), (0117) 968-4089
	<b>GLASGOW</b> James Scott, (0141) 637-9731
<b>BEDFORD</b> David Stubbs, (01234) 720-892	<b>BERKSHIRE</b> Penny Henrion (01189) 662-646
<b>EDINBURGH</b> Muriel Nevin, (0131) 337-0901	<b>HAMPSTEAD</b> Caroline Randall, (0181) 348-0537
<b>SOUTH DORSET</b> Barbara Cohen-Walters (Sati sati),(01305) 786-821	<b>STEYNING / SUSSEX</b> Joe Bartlett, (01903) 879-597
<b>SURREY/GUILDFORD</b> Rocanā, (01483) 761-398	<b>LEEDS AREA</b> Daniella Loeb, (0113) 2791-375 Anne Voist, (01274) 670-865
<b>SOUTHAMPTON</b> John & Jill Chapman, (01489) 895-301	
<b>MEDITATION GROUPS</b> <i>These meet regularly &amp; receive occasional visits from Sangha.</i>	
<b>BANBURY</b> Karen Ford, (01295) 758-091	<b>MAIDSTONE</b> Joan Hamze, (01622) 751-202
<b>BELFAST</b> Paddy Boyle, (01232) 427720	<b>MIDHURST</b> Barry Durrant, (01730) 821479
<b>CAMBRIDGE</b> Gillian Wills, (01954) 780-551	<b>NEWCASTLE ON TYNE</b> Andy Hunt, (0191) 478-2726
<b>DUBLIN</b> Eugene Kelly, (1) 854-076	<b>OXFORD</b> Peter Carey, (01865) 578-76
<b>ESSEX</b> (Billericay) Rob Howell, (01702) 559-241 (Harlow) Pamutto, (01279) 731-330	<b>PORTSMOUTH</b> Dave Beal, (01705) 732-280
	<b>REDRUTH</b> Ron West, (01209) 717-543
<b>LEIGH-ON-SEA</b> Gool Deboo, (01702) 553-211	<b>SHREWSBURY</b> Stan Courtney, (01743) 850-055
<b>LONDON / NOTTING HILL</b> Jeffrey Craig, (0171) 221-9330 Nick Carroll, (0181) 740-9748	<b>TAUNTON</b> Martin Sinclair, (01823) 321-059

**Amaravati  
Retreats:  
1997**November 14th – 23rd  
Ajahn AttapemoNovember 28th – 30th  
Sister MedhānandīDecember 27th – Jan 1st  
Sister Thanasanti**1998 – Retreats**

April 10 – 19 10 days Ajahn Viradhammo

April 24 – 26 Weekend

May 11 – 24 14 days Ajahn Sumedho\*

May 29 – 31 Weekend

June 19 – 21 Weekend

July 10 – 19 10 days Kittisaro &amp; Thanissara\*\*

July 24 – 26 Weekend (*Minimal guidance*)\*Sept. 4 – 6 Weekend Ajahn Sumedho (*In Thai*)

Sept. 11 – 20 10 days Ajahn Sumedho\*\*\*

Sept. 25 – 27 Weekend

Oct. 16 – 25 10 days Ajahn Sucitto\*

Oct. 30 – Nov. 1 Weekend

Nov. 13 – 22 10 days Ajahn Upekkhā

Nov. 27 – 29 Weekend (*Death & Dying*)Dec. 11 – 13 Weekend (*Christian/Buddhist*)\*\*\*\*

Dec. 27 – Jan.1 5 days Ajahn Candasiri

\* For experienced meditators.

\*\* Formerly a monk and a nun with the Sangha.

\*\*\* For Beginners &amp; less experienced meditators.

\*\*\*\* Taught by Ajahn Candasiri and a Christian Teacher.

**Retreat Centre Work Weekends 1998**  
March 27–29 : June 12–14 : October 2–4

Please note that bookings are only accepted on receipt of a completed booking form and booking fee. The fee is refundable on request, up to one month before the retreat starts. To obtain a booking form, please write to the Retreat Centre, stating which retreat you would like to do.

Unless otherwise stated, all retreats are open to both beginners and experienced meditators, and are lead by a monk or nun.

# V I H A R A S

## BRITAIN

◆ Amaravati Monastery  
Great Gaddesden,  
Hemel Hempstead,  
Hertfordshire HP1 3BZ  
Tel: (01442) 84-2455 (Office)  
84-3411 (Guest Info.)  
84-3239 (Retreat Info.)  
Fax: (01442) 84-3721

◆ Cittaviveka: Chithurst  
Buddhist Monastery  
Chithurst, Petersfield,  
Hampshire GU31 5EU  
Tel: (01730) 81-4986  
Fax: (01730) 81-7334

◆ Devon Vihara/Hartridge  
Buddhist Monastery,  
Upottery, Honiton,  
Devon EX14 9QE  
Tel: (01404) 89-1251  
Fax: (01404) 89-0023

◆ Ratanagiri Monastery  
Harnham, Belsay,  
Northumberland  
NE20 OHF  
Tel: (01661) 88-1612  
Fax: (01661) 88-1019

## THAILAND

◆ Wat Pah Nanachat  
Bahn Bung Wai,  
Amper Warin,  
Ubun Rajathani 34310

## AUSTRALIA

◆ Bodhinyana Monastery  
Lot 1, Kingsbury Drive,  
Serpentine 6205 WA  
Tel / Fax: (089) 525-2420

◆ Dhammaloka Buddhist  
Centre (Perth)  
18-20 Nanson Way,  
Nollamara 6061 WA  
Tel: (09) 345-1711  
Fax: (09) 525-2420

## ITALY

◆ Santacittarama  
via dei Casali, 3° Tratto  
04018 Sezze Romano  
Latina  
Tel: 773 88-032  
Fax: 773 888-457

## SWITZERLAND

◆ Dhammapala  
Buddhistisches Kloster  
Am Waldrand,  
CH 3718 Kandersteg  
Tel: 033 / 675 21 00  
Fax: 033 / 6752 241

## NORTH AMERICA

◆ Abhayagiri Monastery,  
16201 Tomki Road,  
Redwood Valley, CA 95470  
Tel: (707) 485-1630  
Fax: (707) 484-7948  
(Sangha literature and West  
Coast newsletters are  
distributed from here.)

◆ Boston Area:  
Dorothea Bowen, Boston,  
Mass. Tel.(617)332-2931  
Mailing for E. Coast USA  
& Thailand: to be placed on  
the mailing list, please write  
directly to Amaravati.

## NEW ZEALAND

◆ Bodhinyanarama  
17 Rakau Grove,  
Lower Hutt, Wellington  
Tel: (4) 56-37193  
Fax: (4) 56-35125  
e-mail: sangha@actrix.gen.nz

◆ Auckland Buddhist  
Vihara  
29 Harris Road, Mt.  
Wellington, Auckland  
Tel: (9) 595-443

## AMARAVATI CASSETTES

Cassette tapes of Dhamma talks given by Ajahn Sumedho and other Sangha members, plus tapes of chanting and meditation instruction are available for sale at cost price. For catalogue and information send SAE to:

Amaravati Cassettes,  
Ty'r Ysgol Maenan,  
Llanrwst,  
Gwynedd, LL26 OYD

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Closing date for submissions to the next issue is 20th November 1997.

## Upasampada at Amaravati

Sunday, 16th November 1997



**Samanera Dhiravamso** (*Kevin Hunter*)

will request admission to the Bhikkhu Sangha

**Anagarika Christoph Millington  
& Anagarika Graham Brown**

will request the Going Forth (*pabbajja*)



The ceremony will take place at 1.30pm

*All Welcome.*

## OBSERVANCE DAYS

The community devotes itself to quiet reflection on these days (and usually the day after). The evening meditation continues into the night after the normal puja.

Moon Phase	☾ HALF	◯ FULL	☽ HALF	● NEW
OCTOBER	9 (Thurs)	16☉(Thurs)	24 (Fri)	1 <sup>st</sup> & 30 <sup>th</sup>
NOVEMBER	7 (Fri)	14 (Fri)	22☽(Sat)	29 (Sat)
DECEMBER	7 (Sun)	14 (Sun)	22 (Mon)	28 (Sun)
JANUARY	5 (Mon)	12 (Mon)	20 (Tue)	27 (Tue)
☉ Pavarana Day. (end of vassa) ☽ Buddhist year 2541 begins				

If undelivered, please return to: AMARAVATI MONASTERY  
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 Hertfordshire HP1 3BZ, England

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