



# FOREST SANGHA

## newsletter

April 2001

2544

Number 56

## Touching the Meaning

*From a talk given by Ajahn Sucitto at Cittaviveka,  
January 1st 2000.*

New Year's Day: It's been quite a full couple of days... and what about tomorrow? Just notice: when one looks back, or looks forward; is it pleasant? Enjoyable? Tiring? A bit much? Peaceful? Or what? What particular perception does the mind log on to, and what does it make out of that? Such as last night, when we placed those tiny wooden boats with prayers on their sails into the pond: the lovely image of these candlelit boats bobbing around on the black water. The delicate buoyancy of those things – they're fragile, and yet they represent a stability, an ability to float, to be light among these huge elements of rain, earth, and sky – a very touching image. When there's something like that, you can recollect it, use it as a treasure.

One of the opportunities in our lives is to be able to create particular perceptions that have meaning in them – not that meaning is a literal truth. People get very one-dimensional on these things: 'Either it's true, or it's not true!' So we could say: 'Well, it's just bits of wood floating around on a muddy old pond in Sussex; so what?...' The mind can work like that – not realising that much of meaning is metaphorical, rather than literal. The literal is only one, rather

thin, take on reality – which doesn't take into account the mind of the observer, and the nature of the actual experience. The literal truth is a half-truth – which excludes the moment of perception, the relational dynamic and the resonance of things. It's sad that people can imagine this eviscerated version of reality to be the bedrock of what reality is: stripped of consciousness, stripped of perceptions, stripped of resonance, stripped of meaning, stripped of anybody who's in it. It becomes some bleak, external world in which nobody belongs, so we don't experience light,

flow, coolness, gathering, quiet, celebration, festivity, aspiration, joy – these things. When there's meaning we're included in something, our living process participates and is involved.

Meaninglessness

is when it's not involved, or when the sense of being involved is hidden beneath a mind that's unwilling, blinkered, or shut down in some way.

The fact of it is that actually we're always involved, only sometimes we bring into such a situation a dismissiveness, or a fear of unknowing, or uncertainties about our capacity. We stay with a blank reality; a reality that is 'out there' – mostly indifferent, and occasionally hostile – all flat

---

*The literal truth is a half-truth –  
which excludes the moment of perception,  
the relational dynamic and  
the resonance of things.*

---

surfaces and planes: 'But it's real (out there), and I know where I am – separate from it.'

Of course, the sense of participation – of play – is a risky thing because it brings us to our feelings, and we don't really know what they might be.

It's an act of trust to allow oneself to really feel what one is feeling, and to know that that is the

'meaning' of that reality right now. But

when we understand and are not frightened of meaning, then we can make use of many different things; for example, myths or legends, religious forms, rituals, idols, icons or mysteries...

they make sense to us, because they involve us, we feel the

meaning. They bring out our sense of awe, our joy, and we're part of something. It goes wrong if we canonise such things, saying that they're true rather than meaningful, that they're something that stands apart 'out there' rather than 'here'.

Pūjā and ceremonies are meaningful because we can allow ourselves to be part of them. In that willingness to give oneself into something, to not be embarrassed or intense about it, there is a wholeness of heart; we may find ourselves touched in ways that are acute, and even mysterious. It's not always that secure, but it is revealing. We begin to access the core perceptions of our

minds – the joy, the fear, the love, the sense of belonging, the sense of aloneness, the dark, the light – and how perceptions get assembled; how it is that people can be the loved, the blessed, the company – or THEM:

the nuisance, the impingement, the irritation! Both of those will stand up as truth; both of those can have a meaning: a negative meaning or a positive meaning. But if we acknowledge what occurs and realise that this is perception playing, we don't have to be stuck in them, we don't have to externalise them as facts.

Perception and feeling are what are called the *citta-saṅkhāra*, or the things that influence or

determine the mind. What we take our mind to be at any moment is determined by a perception: an image, a thought fragment, a memory – and the feeling tone that goes with it: pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Anything you focus your mind upon, as an object, is a perception; it's a perceived thing, right? So if you think of yesterday night, or of me, or of home, or of tomorrow – a perception comes up; and there's the feeling that goes with it: dynamically pleasant, vaguely pleasant or sort of pleasant oscillating into unpleasant with dashes of neutral in it! These two together determine what we seem to be going through; what kind of a day we're



*Candlelit boats bobbing on the black water*

*continued on page 4*

# EDITORIAL

## House Builder

After two months of retreat time, enjoying the luxury of not having to speak to each other or to attend to any other than the most essential duties, there arises a sense of ease, of inner quietude. Under normal retreat circumstances this is a cause for pleasure – delight even. However, confronted with the task of writing the newsletter editorial, I notice instead a sense of mild anxiety, tinged with curiosity: there doesn't seem to be anything there... I wonder if anything will arise and, if anything does, I'm interested to see what that will be.

Bringing things together – raw materials (pencil, paper); a specific occasion; ideas, concepts, teachings; and whatever understanding and volition may have arisen as fruits of practice – seems a good place to begin. The first is here. The second? Well, it's that sort of time (anyone who has edited things will know what that means); the fourth, such as it is, is here – which leaves the third.

Looking at Ajahn Munindo's piece about the Sanghamitta project, I am reminded of early days of the monastic community at Harnham, when the extremely dilapidated structure down the lane, with its crumbling stone walls, 'roof' and sagging wooden door frame, would affectionately be referred to as 'the nuns' vihara.' Then, when it became apparent that there was unlikely to be a nuns' community living there, it went back to being, simply, 'Number 5 – Farmer Wake's birth place.' Now, some fifteen years on, it's 'The New Retreat House' and a process of physical transformation has begun. Hopefully, in due course there will be the completion of this bringing together of physical elements, and something that is clearly recognisable and usable as 'the new retreat centre' will be in place. It will no longer be solely an effort of will and imagination that maintains the concept or vision – it will be there for all to see and make use of: a place of practice.

I find it interesting that the simile used by the Buddha for craving is of a house builder – one who assembles elements to create what is commonly known as 'a house.' He described his enlightenment as seeing the house builder and dismantling his creation: 'The rafters

are broken; the ridge pole is shattered!' This is a powerful image for the penetration of that activity of consciousness, which is continuously bringing together the elements of mind (*nāma*) and body (*rūpa*) to give meaning or significance to something that, ultimately, simply isn't there. The Self or Person's existence, and its relationship with the physical form and all that surrounds it, is brought into existence and sustained solely through craving, based on a misunderstanding!

When we clearly see what the Buddha saw in his awakening, our suffering can end – apart, that is, from the natural discomfort experienced in the body as it registers physical hunger, the extremes of heat and cold, disease, its wearing down with age. It's actually very simple, but the power of craving and ignorance or *Māra* – the skill and strength of the 'house builder' in holding the illusion of Self together – is such that we need all the help we can get (and, even then, it can take a long time). We have different characters and different needs at different times, so we are fortunate that the Buddha presented many different strategies that can help us arrive at this understanding that frees the heart. Sometimes

Through many births I wandered in *Samsāra*;  
Seeking, but not finding the builder of this  
house,  
Painful is repeated existence!  
Housebuilder! You are seen now,  
You shall build no house again.  
Your rafters are broken!  
Your ridge-pole is shattered.  
To dissolution goes my mind.  
Achieved is the destruction of craving.

(*Dhammapāda v. 152-153*)

it's phrases like 'Let go of everything' or, 'plunging into the Deathless' that can arouse faith, enabling us to make a shift away from our ego-centred view of things. Sometimes a more analytic approach as demonstrated in Ajahn Sucitto's talk, '*Touching Meaning*,' is what is needed. This might be a questioning – or challenging – of our assumptions step by step; or a systematic listing of factors that sustain a particular awareness. When these mirror our everyday experience (which can of course be somewhat humbling), this is particularly efficacious. We realise that, 'Yes, it's a Teaching that is there for all of us; even 'Me' with my confusion, and occasionally less than completely pure, unselfish motivations. What a relief! I can begin where I am: '*No, they don't hate dahl!*' and feelings coursing through the system at that moment... 'What's happening here?... What perceptions am I holding on to?... What am I adding to this event?...'

Practice. It takes time and repetition of the same basic lessons over and over and over again, until eventually we

*continued at the bottom of page 4*

continued from page 2... having; what our future or past is, and hence – what we take ourselves to be. This self-image is a conditioned thing, created by perception and feeling. There are the various ways in which we navigate through all that, involving a juggling of different perceptions; so these *citta-saṅkhāra* are also the measure of how the mind moves, in terms of perceptions and feelings – from this one to that one. What makes the mind move? It moves because of an underlying volitional choosing, an intending quality, or *cetana*. There's a seeking and a finding, and that activity 'personalises' or 'internalises' the experience: 'Now, there's something in it for me.'

So what are the boundaries, the range, of that activity?... Its boundary is called attention, *manasikāra*: that is, where the mind lingers. In the immediate moment of that lingering there is the contact impression, which is where the perception and the feeling occur. The



## Cittaviveka Dhamma Hall

Work continues on the Dhamma Hall this year after the winter break. Last year, despite delays due to weather, the walls were completed. In the spring this year, the roof timbers, cut from green oak and crafted locally, will be set in place. This will allow the roofing to begin in the summer: the tiling is expected to be completed by the autumn. Then the frame has to season for a year – to allow the green oak to twist and settle into the structure before plastering the walls and completing the interior. And then the fittings: heating, lighting, cupboards.... So the project is still moving along, and all help is much appreciated.

For an up-to-date review, meditation and celebration, we invite you to a Dhamma Hall weekend, July 7th-8th. For details contact the monastery.

mind contacts something and has a take on it; perception, feeling, intention, attention and impression constitute 'naming' – *nāma* – which is what defines our presence in each moment of consciousness. However, the Buddha said all this activity of consciousness is dependently arisen, it's not an ultimate truth in itself. This implies that we can have some flexibility; we can pick up or let go of particular perceptions. We can know how to pick up meanings that lift us up and how to relinquish meanings that bring us down. We can learn how to understand the nature of these things, so that we are no longer mesmerised by perceptions and feelings.

For example, with a concept like 'The Millennium' the whole world can just go into a trance – or we can make use of it. We can use it as a time for determining to begin anew, say, to be good to one another – rather than dismiss it as, 'just another day in *samsāra*.' What's the volitional quality that personalises, and makes a meaningful perception out of the concept? We can ask: 'Is it eager, cynical or willing to find a skilful meaning?' and, 'Is the internalisation of that experience something that's worth keeping going?' Perception and intention will reinforce each other. So the mind can create perceptions that externalise as importance, urgency and utter necessity, when actually they are only a result of the volition – the energy of the mind's mood. Maybe somebody's trying to do something good: 'I think I'll make some nice food and offer it to the Sangha, to the nuns and monks. Oh, that'll be good. Lovely!' and they think of what they'd like to offer: shepherd's pie, pickled gherkins, truffles. That's their perception. But then because they really want to do something nice, maybe the internalisation takes over the situation; the offering *has* to be pickled gherkins, shepherd's pie and truffles. Then: 'But where do I get truffles in Petersfield!' and they get into a panic over it. Rather than staying with the intention to do something good through generosity, the mind has lost the meaning and externalised its internal perception to a literal unchangeable fact. The participation, the play, is lost. So then I say to them: 'Don't worry, it doesn't really matter...' 'Oh, it doesn't

continued from page 3... get it – until our house eventually collapses and there is no longer the slightest interest in reassembling the elements comprising it. Throughout our training, and even after the task is done, the encouragement is always to develop and use skilful dhammas – generosity, goodness, wise reflection and collectedness – and to shun what is unskilful, that which embellishes, either negatively or positively, the sense of

Self, or which harms others. Whether living alone as a hermit, or in the midst of society, it's a progressive opening and extending beyond the limitations of 'Me' and 'Mine' – not to obliterate anything, but in order that we may experience the bliss of realising what we seem to be as simply included in 'All that is.'

Ajahn Candasiri

really matter? This was my dana! What do you mean, my dana doesn't really matter?' Or scenes can occur in the monastery kitchen over people trying to make a nice offering to the Sangha: 'We don't want dahl here, they hate dahl.' 'They don't hate dahl!' 'Yes, they do hate dahl!' Instead of staying with the participation in goodwill, the meaning has been lost. Doesn't this happen quite a lot in our lives? How many times have we tried to do lovely things, but then lost the attitude of mind and become fixated on the Thing-That-Has-To-Be-Done – and missed the meaning? In a dependent reality we own our reality, not as something 'out there' or as – exclusively – 'in here,' but as a conditioned event that we're part of. So we need to consider: 'How are we participating in that? What is our part in it?' This process really illuminates things in us that may be uncomfortable, but that should be acknowledged. When we're prepared to know about them, what we find is that the thing we do know about them is that they're changing.

The Buddha said we should be mindful and fully aware of mind and mind-states, internally and externally. For example, 'This is a wonderful day' or, 'This is a horrible meal.' Those are mind states that are external; they're saying it's something happening 'out there,' but when you own them you realise: 'No, it's not a wonderful day – it's a day in which I feel wonderful!', 'It's not "my unpleasant body" – it's a body that I don't like.' If there is no mindfulness and full awareness, then a mind state that expresses itself in terms of an external reality automatically gives rise to a sense of a person, to

someone who's not responsible for that – and yet can't separate from it. This is confusing, and even dangerous. We're passive, cut off, in an external world – which

includes even our own bodies.

The internal does very much the same. An internal mind says, 'I am. I am happy, I am unhappy, I am bored, I am depressed, I am clear,' and separates from a field of events; it solidifies an internal world, just as the other articulates a solid, external world. And that solid, internal world is just as frustrating as the solid, external world – because the proper dynamic, the flow of meaning, is inaccessible. Meaning is only true when there is a coming together, a participation. This is why we should contemplate these things.

Contemplate the mind state when it expresses itself internally as: 'I am' – and when it expresses itself externally as: 'He is, she is, the world is, the day is, my body is, the future is, everybody does...' – all that.

Contemplation means holding your attention on something, with the intention of feeling the resonance, the meaning of it: 'This is dread', 'this is joy', 'this is love;' then we're able to reflect on the volitional quality of the wholesome or unwholesome effects that are arising. When these wholesome or unwholesome effects create the perception of, 'I am in "here", and that is "out there"', this is called the mundane reality; a mind-state with an attendant object is established. When this is

wholesome (I am happy, this is a lovely day, etc.) that's called mundane wholesome; there are also mundane unwholesome states. However, when any of these are attended to in full awareness with the consideration:



*Bodhisattva Maitreya 7th century  
gilt bronze 3feet 2 3/4 inches high*

‘What is the mind state? What is the perception? What’s the feeling?’ Then what’s called the supramundane is approached. When approached with the awareness (not just the phrase!): ‘There is’ – ‘There is joy’, ‘there is clarity’, ‘there is anxiety’ – this is supramundane; there is no seeking and finding that personalises the experience, leaving a perceptual ‘person’ in there. In fact there are no supramundane unwholesome states, because any unwholesome volition makes it impossible to contemplate things in that way. If awareness is motivated by greed, aversion, attachment or confusion, then it doesn’t enter the supramundane.

So there’s a path being described here, isn’t there? Any unwholesome state will cease when held in full awareness as: ‘There is...’

At the moment when one recognises with awareness (not memory) the fear or the anger

that’s occurring, then that falls away. So when we feel fear, hostility or whatever, rather than either: ‘I am it’ or ‘It’s that way – “out there”’ just try to touch into: ‘There is this.’

The key is the approach. Mind states are impermanent and ephemeral when they are directly approached. If they’re indirectly approached – if we think about them, worry about them, or celebrate them – there is an engagement, an activation, and an internalisation or externalisation. We get into a long, sustained mood, because the mind has not been able to see that state with right seeing. So maybe we feel: ‘I’m depressed. I’m always depressed. I was depressed yesterday; the world is meaningless – it doesn’t seem very impermanent to me!’ Here the faculties of

mindfulness and full awareness have not been activated – and the faculties that keep solidifying the mood are continually re-engaged. So it seems to be permanent, because it’s re-activated moment after moment.

As I work with some of my habitual mind

states (and they’re the ones I don’t really like), I feel they help me know who I am, they give me a home – even if it’s not a particularly nice home. They give this sense of being, of self-definition – an easy familiarity. It’s certainly not that they’re pleasant, but they are the easy, default route, that I have created strategies for. So it can be difficult even to recognise behaviour patterns in an unbiased way because they help ‘me’ to be ‘myself’ – separate from things. But if I can contemplate: ‘This is the mind internally’ or, ‘This is the mind externally,’ it starts to free up. When it is: ‘This is the mind affected by fear’ or, ‘This is the agitated mind,’ and there’s an easeful presence with that, then an effective response can occur. The process becomes one of a participating awareness in something that’s more dynamic – and more meaningful – than a literal one-dimensional truth that some ‘I am’ is stuck with. So if the way of focusing is a full giving of awareness, the mind brightens up, the internal voices go quiet, and the re-creation can stop.

Notice, when a particular quality of mind state softens, recedes, goes to stillness... the place it goes to is the same, whatever one has come out of. It’s the same place where we started from; there was no going anywhere, no way of going on, really. There is a going on but, at an another level, there’s no going on. I find this wonderful because sometimes I feel there are so many things going on, so many things to do, and so many things on the back-burner that the back-burner is brimming over; all these issues pending – issues I don’t

---

*...if the way of focusing is a full  
giving of awareness, the mind brightens up,  
the internal voices go quiet, and the  
re-creation can stop.*

---

## *Music Lesson*

*On due occasion, there’s still the allowance –  
even in a set-up made dense with things –  
that place may have its familiar spirit:  
a way of harnessing transcendence  
by tethering it to river, rock, tree or sky.*

*What address then for the dislocating angel?  
Who flies between appearance and change  
bending a blue note – dissonant, plangent;  
in the minor key of expectation,  
plays riffs and ragas of the Way It Is.*

*This spirit’s here. Listen and enter:  
between two thoughts is place enough;  
and a moment when a sensed solidity  
is turned back, purely, on itself –  
that’s occasion enough to unleash your silence.*

*Time for Creation’s closet demon  
to come out, let go, and face the music.*

– urghh – even want to touch into!... It's a lot. But then to get to the end of the day, with the realisation: 'Oh, there's nothing going on!' Or: 'There was nothing "out there" going on.' It was just that nerve ending, that nerve ending of volition; around that, arises 'me' and 'the world'.

Coming back to the 'nothing going on' challenges my self-definition, because I can't really get a boundary around that one. I can't feel myself as separate from things, and that's precarious. I can't have clear plans as to what will be happening for me or what I'm going to do, so I have to trust in mindfulness and full awareness. (Maybe that's why there has to be so much going on!)

In meditation we can allow ourselves the time to follow the quality and meaning of our lives in line with

some of these teachings. We can focus on the stream of mind as just that, whether it's a day, a memory, a thought, an idea of oneself – just as part of the stream of mind states. Then, when we feel ourselves losing balance, we can review the process of mind states: 'What is holding them?' It's not that they're happening to somebody. That 'background identity' is the internalisation that continually seeks and needs to have mental patterns, in order to maintain its existence. This is where the challenge is, and the skill: to be able to gently let go of an identity; to create the conditions of mindfulness to see when one's identity stops. The sense of 'I am' or 'he is' can unfold into openness. It's not that there's nothing there, it's not a meaningless place – it's a place of peace and warmth. ❖

## ***Journey of a Life Time***

Mindfully knowing in breath as in  
breath  
Mindfully knowing out breath as out  
breath.

The ticket to an island,  
An island in the middle of the deep  
blue sea  
Where the sun shines all day  
and the birds fly like birds  
and the fish swim like fish  
On the island in the sun.

'Attention attention!'  
Huxley howls,  
'Attention, here and now!'  
On the island in the sun.

Sit back – relax  
watch the clouds  
Forming – and unforming  
On the island in the sun.

All the while  
Endless hum  
That zinging in the air  
On the island in the sun.

Past and present  
Future too  
known only as now  
On the island in the sun.

Just as it is  
with its faults  
Perfect... embracing all  
On the island in the sun.

Though best of all  
This home of homes,  
Surrounded by the deep blue sea  
Where the sun shines all day  
and the birds fly like birds  
and the fish swim like fish  
On the island in the sun,  
Is that there's no One living there.



*Anagārikā Andrea Cook*



# Working with Pain

*From a talk given by Sister Thānasantī during a retreat at the Angela Center in Santa Rosa, California.*

Having spent the day speaking with different people and getting a little bit of a sense where people are in their practice, there are some themes which emerge. One of the themes which emerges is pain: how to work with pain, how to be at ease with pain.

A fundamental problem is that we have the expectation that there shouldn't be any pain; and that when there is, something has gone wrong.

Most of our lives we're very good at being able to move and to adjust and to shift around, so that we don't have to feel pain acutely. So when we put ourselves in a situation like a retreat we can get a little bit stuck. We come into the shrine room and we sit, and the idea is not to move until the bell rings. So there's the pain in the body to work with – or the pain of the heart; and how can we work with that?

There are many skilful means that we can come up with. There's the skilful means of working with the breath – relaxing in the breath. There's the skilful means of knowing where to place one's attention. We may be experiencing something that feels extremely unpleasant – yet there are ways of placing the attention that support a gentle embracing of that experience.

Sometimes one can put one's attention right in the very centre of the pain and, after a period of time, discover that it's not pain – it's just sensation. The quality of unpleasantness can completely disappear,

one's just dealing with the energy. When that happens there's a nice sense of freedom because there isn't the resistance that's associated with pain because it isn't pain any longer – it's just experience.

Sometimes we can see that the pain isn't actually connected to the body, even though that's where we experience it. It's actually coming from a place of tightening, of resistance or fear. So then we explore the mind, and look and see how the mind is actually manifesting itself into the body – how we're experiencing the mind, in the body, as pain. There are all these things that we can know, that we can discover. In the discovery of opening to something like this, there's a waking up. We wake up and we see the relationship between the body and mind, between the body and the breath. We see the relationship around things that are fearful, or that we resist.

So there's a freedom that comes with just hanging out with knees that hurt. The freedom is that one doesn't need to be threatened by pain, or to be bullied by it, or to be pushed around by it. It's OK. We can just experience it. It's not a problem. So pain is something that we can take as a curse, or something we can take as a teacher. It can be an opportunity to open our hearts to something that is difficult.

When we're meditating we sometimes have this feeling that we can just block out the pain. We can do that with physical pain – and also with the pain in our heart. However, when we do that, meditation can become a way of dissociating from life.

So learning how to open up to that which is difficult, and that which is frightening, and that which is unpleasant is part of the work we're doing. It's not inspiring work; it's not the kind of stuff that one gets all jazzed up about – but it is very powerful work, and very liberating. When we're able to live in the world in a way where we're not frightened and we're not pushed around by fear, and we don't resist pain, then we have the courage to stand and face whatever it is that we need to face.

That's a wonderful freedom – and there are times when it can actually make a difference. ❖



**Pabbajja – 6th May**  
Anagārikā Joanne Jerrold  
will request the Going Forth into the  
Order of Siladharā.

*All welcome.*

The ceremony will begin at 1.30pm.





# View from the Hill

*An update on activity at Aruna Ratanagiri  
by Ajahn Munindo*

Fifteen years ago, when Ajahn Thiradhammo was leading the community at Harnham, a group called The Sanghamitta Committee - Friends of the Sangha - was formed. Comprising a number of the resident monks, trustees and other lay friends, it was planned that this group would oversee the physical development of this outpost of Theravadan Buddhist monasticism. Back then there was little clarity regarding into what size or shape a Forest Sangha in Britain might develop. Although resources were limited the spirit of community was strong; it was wisely recognised that only through a co-operative effort could their visions be manifested.

As things unfolded there was much to oversee. Since then, despite many ups and downs (or maybe because of them) this community has continued its growth – somewhat like a weather-beaten rowan tree that grows amongst the rocks on a mountain crag – almost unnoticed but definitely there in its own way. Members of the committee have changed but the spirit remains. The buildings, as well as the residents, have changed – now changed to the point where we can say that the main site is complete. The main site comprises the owned and rented properties known as No. 2 Harnham Hall Cottages, the Dhamma Hall, monastic accommodation and a separate abbot's cottage and memorial garden. All are so well established that they almost look as though they have always been there. It

feels good.

As many will have heard, these days attention has turned to the property down the hill, known as No. 5 Harnham Hall Cottages. Now it is the turn for what used to be a 200-year-old barn to be transformed into the monastery kitchen, dining hall, office and guest accommodation. Currently, our kitchen and dining hall are part of premises that are only rented, and the guest accommodation is wherever we can find unused space.

Some have commented on the ambitiousness of the project, but to me that is like calling an acorn ambitious because it feels inclined to become an oak tree. This development – as with what has gone before – is inspired by what we feel is happening, and by 'going with it.' Already we can see the shape of a new annex which will serve as independent, wheel-chair accessible, guest accommodation, and (if the snow ever stops falling) by Vesak the main roof will be on the barn and most of the exterior stone work completed. Resources dictate that the first phase of building will be complete by the end of April, with something like twenty percent of the project in place. The Sanghamitta Committee is looking forward to co-ordinating groups of volunteers to carry on the momentum of the project, as and when the funds and skills are available. The hope is that given this ongoing co-operative interest, one day soon there'll be a fully functioning Retreat House on the hill. ❖



*Taken from the Architect's drawing of the New Retreat House.*



## AMARAVATI NOTICES

**Sunday Talks**

During vassa (6th July – 2nd October) there will be Sunday afternoon talks, given usually by Ajahn Sumedho. These will begin at 2.00pm and will take place on the following Sundays: 22nd, 29th July, 5th, 12th, 19th, 27th August (titles, dates for September to be decided).

## FAMILY EVENTS FOR 2001

The theme for the events this year will be **Right Speech**.

**Rainbows Weekend** (4th - 7th May) – A weekend together to create the Rainbows Magazine.

**Family Weekend** (8th - 10th June) – A shorter weekend particularly suitable for newcomers.

**Summer Camp** (18th - 26th August) – A full week of activities.

For details contact Kim Waller, 16a Great Russell Mansions, 60 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3BE Tel: 020 7404 5057

**Young People's Retreat** (16th until 18th November, changed from previously announced dates) – For details contact Martin Evans Tel: 01442 409844 Email: evanses@lineone.net

## CITTAVIVEKA NOTICES

**Wesak**

The Wesak Celebrations at Cittaviveka this year will be on May 13th. (see back page)

**Lay Forums**

The venue of these discussions is the monastery's Reception Room, the time, 2:00pm. The forthcoming season's themes are:

April 29th – **Discovering the Dhamma**

May 27th – **Obstacles Along The Way**

June 24th – **Metta: Loving-Kindness in Practice**

**Forest Work Days**

These are weekend afternoons – 1:30 to 5:00 – for group work in the Hammer Wood, the ongoing nitty-gritty of

woodland restoration and management. No special skills or strength required. The afternoon is followed by tea with the Sangha and a Pūjā and meditation at 7:30pm. Dates this season are:

April 21st, May 19th, June 23rd.

Contact Steve Tucker at Cittaviveka for details.

## HARTRIDGE NOTICE

The following dates (the last weekend of each month) there will be teaching given by visiting Sangha members: 28th/29th April, 26th/27th May and 23rd/24th June. These will comprise a meditation workshop on the Saturday afternoon 1.30 – 5.30, followed by tea, and on the Sunday, evening Pūjā at 7.30 with Dhamma talk or questions. Of course, visitors will be welcome at any time on those weekends to help with the meal time offering and to speak with the monks or nuns. For further details contact Muditā on 01395 586742 or Sati sati on 01305 786821.

## GENERAL NOTICES

**Book Sponsorship:****Buddhist Rituals and Observances**

Preparation of a book based upon a series of talks given on the above subjects at Cittaviveka by Ajahns Sucitto and Candasiri is nearing completion. The book deals with topics such as funerals, house blessings, the use and symbolism of shrines and lunar observances.

I wonder if any individual or group would care to help in sponsoring this initial publication?

Anyone wishing to help should kindly contact Barry Durrant at Cittaviveka.

**Third Buddhist Fair**

July 1st 12 noon – 5 pm. The Third Annual Buddhist Fair will be held in Stedham, West Sussex as usual. It is a family event with stalls, crafts, food and Asian dancing. The proceeds will be used to make a donation to Buddhist monasteries. For details contact Mudita; Tel: 01730 812555 Fax: 01730 817459.

**Retreat Centre Help at Amaravati**

If you live near the monastery and would like to offer regular, humble, behind-the-scenes practical help (cleaning, laundry, administration, etc.) at the retreat centre, please contact the retreat managers at Amaravati.

**Sacred Spaces Pilgrimage**

On Friday, 15th December Ruth Ana Gaston reached the end of her pilgrimage: Cittaviveka, Chithurst Buddhist Monastery. The total distance cycled was 1,544 miles. Total funds raised for the Dhamma Hall Project was £1,977.56. Many thanks for all the kindness, support and generosity received enroute, and for helping to raise much more than expected for the wonderful new sacred space at Chithurst.

**Lay Events at Amaravati 2001**

The one day and weekend events provide an opportunity to spend time together, in silence and in exploring themes relevant to practice and daily life. Whether you are just starting, or whether you have a well established practice, you are welcome to participate and contribute.

**April 20 – 21** (Weekend) Dāna – Sīla – Bhāvanā.

**June 2** (Day) The 5 Spiritual Faculties.

**June 29 – July 1** (Weekend) "Countryside" meditation.

**July 28** (Day) The Four Noble Truths.

**Sept. 28 – 30\*** (Weekend) The Creative Arts and Buddhist practice (will include practical explorations of the theme). (\*Change of date from 21 – 23rd)

**Oct. 7** (Day) The 8-fold Noble Path.

**Dec. 1** (Day) A Day of Practice. for more information please contact: Nick Carroll, 020 8740 9748 or Chris Ward, 01442 890034

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. The newsletter is also available on the internet from: <http://www.fsnews.cjb.net>

**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 – (020) 8427-5097

## Teaching and Practice Venues

<b>MEDITATION GROUPS</b>	
<i>These are visited regularly by Sangha members.</i>	
<b>BATH</b> Catherine Hewitt, (01225) 405-235	<b>LONDON BUDDHIST SOCIETY</b> 58 Eccleston Square, SW1 (Victoria) (020) 7834 5858 Meditation Sundays: led by a monk or nun, every 2nd month. 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Thursday classes – 6.00pm
<b>EDINBURGH</b> Muriel Nevin, (0131) 337-0901	
<b>GLASGOW</b> James Scott, (0141) 637-9731	
<b>HAMPSTEAD</b> Caroline Randall, (020) 8348-0537	<b>SOUTH DORSET</b> Barbara Cohen-Walters (Sati sati),(01305) 786-821
<b>LEEDS AREA</b> Daniella Loeb, (0113) 2791-375	<b>SOUTHAMPTON</b> Ros Dean (02380) 422430
Anne Voist, (01274) 691-447	<b>SURREY/WOKING</b> Rocanā, (01483) 761-398
<b>MEDITATION GROUPS</b>	
<i>These meet regularly &amp; receive occasional visits from Sangha.</i>	
<b>BEDFORD</b> David Stubbs, (01234) 720-892	<b>MAIDSTONE</b> Tony Millett, (01634) 375-728
<b>BELFAST</b> Paddy Boyle, (02890) 427-720	<b>MIDDLESBOROUGH</b> Colin Walker, (01642) 643-071
<b>BERKSHIRE</b> Penny Henrion (01189) 662-646	<b>MIDHURST</b> Barry Durrant, (01730) 821-479
<b>BRIGHTON</b> Nimmala, (01273) 723-378	<b>NEWCASTLE ON TYNE</b> Andy Hunt, (0191) 478-2726
<b>CAMBRIDGE</b> Gillian Wills, (01954) 780-551	<b>NORWICH</b> Elaine Tattersall (01603) 260-717
<b>CANTERBURY</b> Charles Watters, (01227) 463342	<b>PEMBROKESHIRE/S. WALES</b> Peter and Barbara (Subhdra) Jackson, (01239) 820-790
<b>DUBLIN</b> Rupert Westrup, (01) 280-2832 (Dial: 00441 - from the UK)	<b>PORTSMOUTH</b> Dave Beal, (02392) 732-280
<b>ESSEX</b> (Billericay) Rob Howell, (01702) 482-134 or (Harlow) Pamutto, (01279) 724-330	<b>REDRUTH</b> Daniel Davide (01736) 753-175
<b>HEMEL HEMPSTEAD</b> Bodhinyāna Group Chris Ward (01442) 890-034	<b>SHEFFIELD</b> Greg Bradshaw (0114) 262-0265
<b>LIVERPOOL</b> Ursula Haeckel, (0151) 427 6668	<b>STEYNING / SUSSEX</b> Jayanti (01903) 812-130
<b>LEIGH-ON-SEA</b> Gool Deboo, (01702) 553-211	<b>STROUD</b> John Groves, 0796 7777-742
	<b>TAUNTON</b> Martin Sinclair, (01823) 321-059

### 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 U.K.

## Amaravati Retreats 2001:



April 6–8	Weekend	(to be decided)	
April 13–18	5 Day	Ajahn Karuniko – <i>FULLY BOOKED</i>	
May 11–20	10 Day	Ajahn Candasiri	
May 25–27	Weekend	(to be decided)	
June 15–17	Weekend	(to be decided)	
July 6–15	10 Day	Kittisāro & Thānissarā** – <i>FULLY BOOKED</i>	
July 20–22	Weekend	(to be decided)	
Sept. 7–16	10 Day	Ajahn Sumedho – <i>FULLY BOOKED</i>	
Sept. 21–23	Weekend	(to be decided)	
Oct. 5–14	10 Day	Ajahn Sucitto* – <i>FULLY BOOKED</i>	
Oct. 19–21	Weekend	(to be decided)	
Nov. 9–11	Weekend	(to be decided)	
Nov. 23–26	3 Day	Buddhist/Christian with Ajahn Candasiri & Elizabeth West	
Dec. 27 – Jan. 1	5 Day	(to be decided)	

\*Experienced:(i.e. must have done at least one 10 day retreat) \*\*Lay Teachers

All weekend retreats are suitable for beginners. It is advisable to do a weekend retreat before doing any of the 5 or 10 day retreats.

Please note that bookings are only accepted on receipt of a completed booking form and booking deposit. The deposit 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.

### Retreat Centre Work Weekends 2001

April 27th - 29th : June 22th - 24th : Nov. 2nd - 4th

### 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 Bodhinyāna Meditation Hall.

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

# 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  
*Stewards: English Sangha Trust,  
 Amaravati.*

♦ Aruna Ratanagiri  
 Harnham Buddhist Monastery  
 Harnham, Belsay,  
 Northumberland  
 NE20 0HF  
 Tel: (01661) 88-1612  
 Fax: (01661) 88-1019  
 web site: www.ratanagiri.org.uk  
 e-mail: community@ratanagiri.org.uk  
*Stewards: Magga Bhavaka Trust.*

♦ Cittaviveka: Chithurst  
 Buddhist Monastery  
 Chithurst, Petersfield,  
 Hampshire GU31 5EU  
 Tel: (01730) 81-4986  
 Fax: (01730) 81-7334  
*Stewards: English Sangha Trust,  
 Cittaviveka.*

♦ Hartridge Buddhist  
 Monastery,  
 Uppottery, Honiton,  
 Devon EX14 9QE  
 Tel: (01404) 89-1251  
 Fax: (01404) 89-0023  
*Stewards: Devon Vihara Trust.*

**THAILAND**  
 ♦ Wat Pah Nanachat  
 Bahn Bung Wai,  
 Amper Warin,  
 Ubun Rajathani 34310

**AUSTRALIA**  
 ♦ Bodhinyana Monastery  
 Lot 1, Kingsbury Drive,  
 Serpentine 6125 WA  
 Tel: (08) 952-52420  
 Fax: (08) 952-53420

♦ Dhammaloka Buddhist  
 Centre (Perth)  
 18-20 Nanson Way,  
 Nollamara 6061 WA  
 Tel: (08) 934-51711  
 Fax: (08) 934-44220  
*Stewards: Buddhist Society of  
 Western Australia.*

**ITALY**  
 ♦ Santacittarama  
 Via Delle Prata 22  
 Località Brulla  
 02030 Frasso Sabino (Rieti)  
 Italy  
 Tel/Fax: (0765) 87 21 86  
 Web site: www.santacittarama.org  
 (written in Italian)  
*Stewards:  
 Santacittarama No 20163/38.*

**SWITZERLAND**  
 ♦ Dhammapala  
 Buddhistisches Kloster  
 Am Waldrand,  
 CH 3718 Kandersteg  
 Tel: 033 / 675 21 00  
 Fax: 033 / 6752 241  
*Stewards:  
 Dhammapala 31921-201-5.*

**NORTH AMERICA**  
 ♦ Abhayagiri Monastery,  
 16201 Tomki Road,  
 Redwood Valley,  
 CA 95470  
 Tel: (707) 485-1630  
 Fax: (707) 485-7948  
 (Sangha literature and  
 West Coast newsletters are  
 distributed from here.)  
 Web site: www.abhayagiri.org  
*Stewards:  
 Sanghapala Foundation.*

♦ Boston Area:  
 Buddhaparisa, Boston,  
 Mass. Tel: (781) 861-6837  
 Mailing for E. Coast USA  
 & Thailand: to be placed on  
 the mailing list, please write  
 directly to Amaravati.

**NEW ZEALAND**  
 ♦ Bodhinyanarama  
 17 Rakau Grove,  
 Stokes Valley,  
 Wellington 6008  
 Tel: (+ + 64) 4 563-7193  
 Fax: (+ + 64) 4 563-5125  
 e-mail: sangha@actrix.gen.nz  
*Stewards:  
 Wellington Theravada Buddhist  
 Association.*

♦ Auckland Buddhist Vihara  
 29 Harris Road,  
 Mount Wellington,  
 Auckland  
 Tel: (+ + 64) 9 579-55443

Forest Sangha Newsletter© is edited from material sent to or written at our monasteries in Britain; it is distributed without charge. Comment within is personal reflection only and does not necessarily represent the opinion of the Sangha as a whole. We welcome appropriate articles and artwork, information for fellow Buddhists, or comments on the Newsletter itself (please send c/o 'Newsletter' to your local monastery). For permission to reprint any material please write to the editor c/o Amaravati.  
**Closing date for submission to the next issue is 20th May 2001**

## WESAK 2001

A Celebration of  
 the Buddha's Birth, Enlightenment and  
 Parinibbāna  
 will take place at the following  
 monasteries on the following dates:

**Aruna Ratanagiri (Harnham) .. 6th May**  
**Amaravati ..... 7th May**  
**Cittaviveka ..... 13th May**

*All welcome.*

Please contact the relevant monastery for  
 specific details of time programme etc.

**OBSERVANCE DAYS**

On these days the community devotes itself to quiet reflection and meditation. Visitors are welcome to join in the evening meditation vigils, and on the Full and New moon, there is an opportunity to determine the Eight Precepts for the night.

Moon Phase	☉ FULL	☾ HALF	● NEW	☽ HALF
APRIL	8 <sup>th</sup> (Sun)	16 <sup>th</sup> (Mon)	22 <sup>nd</sup> (Sun)	1 <sup>st</sup> & 30 <sup>th</sup>
MAY	☺7 <sup>th</sup> (Mon)	15 <sup>th</sup> (Tues)	22 <sup>nd</sup> (Tues)	30 <sup>th</sup> (Wed)
JUNE	6 <sup>th</sup> (Wed)	14 <sup>th</sup> (Thurs)	20 <sup>th</sup> (Wed)	28 <sup>th</sup> (Thurs)
JULY	☼5 (Thurs)	13 <sup>th</sup> (Fri)	20 <sup>th</sup> (Fri)	28 <sup>th</sup> (Sat)
☺ Wesakha Puja      ☼ Asalha Puja (vassa begins next day)				

ROYAL MAIL    POSTAGE PAID

2

HEMEL HEMPSTEAD  
173

If undelivered, please return to: AMARAVATI MONASTERY

Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead  
Hertfordshire HP1 3BZ, England