



# FOREST SANGHA

## newsletter

April 2002

2545

Number 60

## Doubt and Other Questions

‘Doubt may be an uncomfortable state of mind  
but certainty is ridiculous.’ Voltaire.

*Questions and Answers with Ajahn Amaro,  
Thanksgiving Retreat, Santa Rosa, California, December 1999.*

**Ajahn Amaro:** Feel free to ask whatever questions you might have....

**Q:** Do you have any words of encouragement for those of us dealing with strong doubt? I doubt if I can do this, or if I even want to. [*laughter*] I want to go home.

**AA:** There are a couple of different approaches.

One is just to go home. But that’s probably not going to solve a lot. Perhaps it’s useful to bear in mind that there are a lot of different characters that come

under the heading of the word ‘I’: there can be one who sincerely, completely wants to go home but there

are a few other people, other voices, contributing to the chorus. So one way of working with it is to very sincerely respect the voice that says: ‘Yes, I want to go home,’ and actually allow ourselves to think that. But then also not to believe that it’s the one true representative, that it’s what we *really* think, what we *really* feel. Listen to it as if it’s a contribution from one of the members of a committee.

That’s one way; because if we try to deal with doubt just by trying to make it shut up or go away that won’t work. It loves that: ‘Oh right, nothing like a good fight.’ Also trying to think our way to the end of it doesn’t work either.

Instead of these kinds of approach we can learn to listen to the mind.

One of the best ways of doing this is by actually giving it full voice: ‘Please tell me, why do you want to go home? Tell me all about it.’ There is a quality of inviting it into the centre. Say: ‘Please speak up. Tell me your story.’ In that very gesture of accepting it and being ready to listen to it we take away a lot of its power. The ability of a doubt to become alive depends on a sort of

suppressive, fearful, irritated energy. The more we meet it with that, the more we throw fuel on the fire.

---

*One of the things about doubt is that we can’t think our way to the end of it – a really good doubt is impossible to resolve with reason.*

---

Giving it space and not buying into its contents removes the fuel.

One of the things about doubt is that we can’t think our way to the end of it – a really good doubt is impossible to resolve with reason. It’s like one of those endless courtroom battles, it just goes on and on and on. An objection comes up, with a whole pile of evidence that goes against the other option. So if we are to understand the nature of a doubt it’s crucial to recognise that it’s not something that can be resolved by reason. Because the very nature of reason is that it can make an argument for anything, absolutely anything: up is down, black

is white, bad is good, good is bad.

Even though a doubt can get extremely demanding and be screaming away in the mind, the most skilful way I've found of working with it is to take a step back from the whole thing and realise: there is this particular kind of thought that's coming up with a question, and it's actually only a thought. There is an emotional quality associated with it as well, but in itself it's just another *sankhāra*, another factor of nature like the breeze on our skin or the force of gravity or the shape of the room. It's entire unto itself.

So that when the doubt arises: 'What should I do?' That, in itself, is a complete and whole thing. It arises, it does its thing, fades away, and comes back again. Just like everything else, every breath, every sight or sound. When we take a step back from that, using the reflections on impermanence, selflessness and unsatisfactoriness, it's like saying: 'This is an impermanent condition. This is an aspect of nature. It arises and it passes away. It's perfect. It doesn't need anything else added to it to make it complete.'

Now the content of it – and this is the difference between the process and the content – is saying: 'Complete me, complete me, complete me. I need my answer, I need my answer.' But if we step

out of the content and look at the process of it, it is absolutely perfect. It arises, does its thing and passes away. It's almost like seeing the space around it. And in that recognition, in allowing spaciousness around it, what we begin to notice is that any answer to a question can only be a partial truth. There is no answer that can completely satisfy us. We begin to see that we've been looking for wholeness in the wrong place.

One of the ways of working when a doubt comes to mind, is simply to say: 'Good question.' We're not being intimidated and buying into its demands: 'I've

gotta know. I've gotta know.' We consider: 'Yes, you really feel like you've got to know, don't you.' We are holding the doubt with mindfulness and thus opening to the fact that a lot of the world we experience is in truth unknowable or at least mysterious to the conceptual mind. We're opening to the fact that we live in a world of uncertainty. That is why the Buddha encouraged the reflections on *anicca*, on uncertainty, because actually all things are uncertain and ultimately any definition can only be a partial truth.

Also it can help to consciously state the question. Deliberately make the mind as clear and steady as possible, and just state the question: 'Should I leave? Would it be the best thing for me to leave?' So we're inviting it in, and then noticing the space before saying the words: 'Should I leave?' and noticing the space after. The silence before, the silence after, the silence behind it, around it, permeating it. In that very gesture we begin to recognise all of the assumptions that are being made around the question. How we are defining what we are, where we are, what we want. All of that starts to become a bit clearer. Whereas if the attention is buried in the text of the question we can't see that. What happens when we just let the question be in this way, is that we then allow our intuitive wisdom to operate, the natural attunement of the

heart to the true nature of things. That spaciousness allows a different kind of knowing to percolate through.

It depends on the kind of doubt, but sometimes what will come forth in the heart when we leave the question alone like this is: 'This is not knowable. There is no answer.' So continuing to pursue the question has no point. Or it might be vividly clear, like: 'Where is there to go? *You'll* still be there.' Or it might be: 'Yes, this is the wrong place to be.' But we haven't thought our way to that conclusion. It's like



'The Valley of Doubt:' or 'A Living Question'

putting on a pair of shoes. The shoe fits or it doesn't fit. It's a knowing of a whole different quality. We can't will that kind of knowing into existence, it is caused to arise solely by sincerely leaving the doubt alone. It's like in the Chinese and Japanese tradition of koan practice – they have thousands, literally thousands of deliberately impossible questions to help get the mind to that point of dropping the question and allowing the intuitive wisdom to operate instead.

**Q:** Is there a way to shorten the period from when you start drifting during meditation, to when you realise you're caught up in thought and come back? If it's short I feel like I'm doing the practice but if it's long I feel like I'm blowing it. And is there a way to deal with those feelings about it?

**AA:** Yes, it's a good question. In a way you said: 'Apart from doing more practice,' but.... [laughter] What you describe is the substance of the practice for most of us: to some degree getting lost and trying to catch that sooner and sooner. I think that the point to begin at is the point of self-judgement: 'If I'm meditating well, I'll do it like this, if I'm meditating badly, I'll do it like that' – the mind that goes into success and failure, the self-image of doing well or doing badly. Even though we're not trying to justify lack of effort or slackness, it's very crucial to get a sense for forgiveness and of not creating a success/failure model. Reflect deeply to see that success and failure are completely arbitrary concepts. We make success an absolute good and failure an absolute bad very easily. We make them very concrete and personal. It's most helpful when we find we've drifted off – ten minutes, half an hour – and we feel: 'Whoa, where did I get to?' And then, as that self-judgement leaps in: 'Oh you completely useless schmuck, what are you doing here?' to aim right at that. To be clearly conscious of that as an emotional reaction.

Once again, it can be helpful to spell it out, to let that self-critical voice speak rather than immediately trying to do something with it. Just to clarify: 'What is this reaction? Why is this so bad or so wrong?' We can listen to that and realise: 'Oh, this is a habit of pride, I don't want to get this wrong. I don't want to be wasting my time. I want to get this right.' We thus become clearly conscious of the self-image that is involved in that, hearing how much 'I' there is in that: 'I like, I want, I shouldn't, I should.' We hear all the 'I-ing' going on and recognise that any sentence with 'I' in it is not to be trusted. Seriously. When we clearly state those kind of things we get a sense of the tone of it.

We sincerely make an effort, but recognise the self-creation and learn to let go of that. We respond to it by reflecting: 'Sometimes it's like this.' Some days the mind is very agitated, it's determined to run. In terms of catching it sooner, there are different

things we can do: as the mind goes into a state of fantasizing or drifting, then often it's a subtle kind of confusion, a subtle dull state. If we can keep the level of alertness higher, that can help support catching it sooner, before it gets carried away.

There are things we can do with our posture, or the *mudrā*, how we hold our hands, to detect when the mind starts to drift and we lose that alert quality. We can use the feeling of the thumbs touching each other as something to focus on, being very precise in the way we hold our hands. As soon as we find ourselves squeezing them together, it's called 'mountain thumbs,' we're getting too revved up, or if we're dozing then we get 'valley thumbs,' they drop down. When we find our mind has been drifting for a long time, we don't let the self-recrimination take over but just say: 'Begin again.' And then sit with the eyes open for a little while – open the eyes, and then re-establish where we are and what we are doing.

We can use the visual consciousness to keep us attuned to where we are physically. And if we find the mind is really wandering a lot, don't close the eyes at all. So, if we're sitting there staring at the shrine and we realise: 'I'm not in Peru. How can I be in Peru, on my way to India, when I'm sitting here looking at these

## Lay Events at Amaravati 2002

**Day events:** (10.00am – 5.00pm)

N.B. No need to book. Please bring some food to share on the day

<b>1<sup>st</sup> June</b>	Media and the Monkey Mind
<b>20<sup>th</sup> July</b>	Meditation – Insight or Delusion?
<b>19<sup>th</sup> October</b>	Walk your Talk – The Path in Practice
<b>7<sup>th</sup> December</b>	Who Am I?

**Weekends:** (Friday 5.30 pm – Sunday 4pm)

N.B. For weekends, advance booking is essential

<b>12 -14<sup>th</sup> April</b>	Nama - Rupa, Mind and Body?
<b>5 – 7<sup>th</sup> July</b>	Our world and Nature: <i>including local walks</i>
<b>6 – 8<sup>th</sup> Sept</b>	Creative Arts Weekend

All events are held in the Retreat Centre. They are a valuable opportunity to meet and practise with others, both in silence and interaction. They include silent and guided meditation, discussion groups, sutta study groups, yoga groups, as well as opportunities for questions & answers, this allows you to participate in silence or more interactively, as you prefer on the day.

Newcomers are welcome, and so are you.

For further information, please contact either Nick Carroll 020 8740 9748 or Chris Ward 01442 890034

Organised by the Amaravati Upasaka / Upasika Association (AUA)

monks, and this shrine?’ – the mental and visual realities are not matching. The cues are much quicker than if we have our eyes closed, where we have a free open screen and we can project on it whatever we like. We can be in Peru for half an hour. Sometimes people find that having the eyes open makes it more difficult to concentrate but if you’re trying to break the habit of drifting then that is a good way of doing it. One can either look straight ahead at a blank object or down at the ground in front.

Alternatively, one can just apply will and resolution – when we see the mind drifting we can try just saying: ‘NO.’ Not in an aggressive way but simply stating: ‘No. This is something that is not being followed.’ It’s a retraining of the mind.

**Q:** I wonder if you have any words of wisdom on one’s mind wanting to rehearse the future repeatedly, the same thing over and over and over?

**AA:** This was an extraordinarily regular feature of my early meditation career. Probably about the first six or seven years. *[laughter]* Yes, patience is a big commodity in this business. Recently someone quoted to me a Christian monk who said: ‘The first twenty years are the worst.’ *[laughter]* This is not a quick fix system.

I had an amazingly strong tendency to be scripting the future, creating scenarios and then getting really excited or really upset about the outcome. *[laughter]* Part of us is saying: ‘This is absolutely absurd, this hasn’t even happened yet.’ But the mind is going: ‘When he says that, I’m going to tell him such and such. And if comes back at me and says such and such, well you know, it’s really too much. Wait a minute, wait a minute...’ I found all I could do was just listen to it.

Be very kind, because at first there is no off button, or even a pause. We can’t even take the batteries out, except maybe by going to sleep. We recognise the power of a life-long tendency, or from many lives probably – that ‘wanting to know.’ In a way it’s an impulse to counteract uncertainty. We’re fending off our fear of the future by creating a belief, because when we’re facing the unknown it’s frightening to the ego. It wants to know, so it needs a game plan, it needs to work it out. Even if it’s something bad, at least we know what is going to happen. The not-knowing is the most unsettling and painful thing to the ego because it conveys a sense of threat.

We all have had that experience, where we’re really afraid something terrible is going to happen and then we think: ‘Oh my god, it’s not going to work, I’m going to fail.’ And then finally we get the letter saying we have failed: ‘Ahh what a relief! Now I know.’ The not-knowing is worse than knowing the worst, right? It’s weird, but that’s how it is, that uncertainty is horrible to the ego. So we fill up that uncertainty with

scenarios, because even having ghastly scenarios is more comforting than not knowing. The frightened ego has created this habit of trying to map the future. My own experience of it was of hauling back on the reins for six or seven years just trying to get the thing to slow down.

The partner to this, which is equally virulent, is the rewriting of the past, which is almost more absurd. I don’t know if your mind does this, but my mind used to have a great time going back to some little scenario and then changing the characters around a bit, usually with myself coming out on top or having things wonderfully the way I liked them. We get really stuck into reworking the plot. And then a little voice says: ‘It wasn’t that way.’ And yet the desire is to think: ‘Yeah but, but if only I’d done this and he’d done that and she’d done this... That would have been great. And I *could* have. And then I could have...’ But it wasn’t that way. A lot of it is just the desire-mind seeking satisfaction. The sense of ‘I’ looking for some kind of wholeness, some kind of completion, some sort of security.

It takes a lot of training to let go and just keep saying: ‘The future is uncertain, don’t worry about it, figure it out at the time.’ That is a direct affront to the ego. It’s not used to that. It’s a matter of training the heart to really trust – when the situation comes about then we’ll know what to do, we’ll respond to it mindfully. We see over and over and over again, when meeting situations, that we can respond sensitively to the time and place in ways that we couldn’t have necessarily predicted. Besides, everything usually works out fine. Or even if things don’t work out fine and we make a real mess – even that is fine. As Ajahn Chah would say: ‘Good is good; bad is good’ – i.e. we can learn and adapt in all situations if we’re mindful.

We realise that the initial reaction: ‘Oh I failed, I got it wrong, what are people going to think of me?’ is an egoic knee-jerk that we don’t need to build our life around. People are generally more concerned about consoling us, making us feel okay. The one who is really suffering is *me* – because things didn’t work out according to *my* plan. Over and over again we learn to trust that the resources are there to respond to every situation. If we give our heart to it, if we do the best we can, it will be fine. It’s a matter of teaching the heart that that is the way it works, and that it doesn’t have to have a game plan.

**Q:** You talk a lot about getting the thoughts to stop, can you speak a little bit about once your thoughts stop, and there you are...

**AA:** And then what?

**Q:** And then what...?

**AA:** This was another sobering experience. Roughly around the same time I found myself no longer creating the future all the time, I found I could stop

thinking. So there I was on a retreat, finally, after six or seven years of meditation practice... 'It stopped...' – just like when a refrigerator switches off, we feel: 'Ahhhh, silence.' That's what it was like. Then there were a couple of days of: 'Wow this is great, this is so good, this is marvellous, this is fantastic, at last I've made it.' After a couple of days of that, [*pause. . . AA makes a face...laughter*] 'So, this is it?! This is pretty boring....' After a few more days I thought: 'This is *really* boring. There's just me and this nothingness, this sterile, bland quality.'

Then I began to have some doubts: 'Did the Buddha really manage to build a world religion around *this*?! Is this supposed to be *Nibbāna*? The thinking stops and then we just kind of sit there like a switched-off TV?' It was very perplexing. For a long time I thought: 'I'm missing something, this is just so dry and joyless. Okay, maybe I should get more light in here. Maybe I should do more *mettā* practice.' I couldn't figure out what was missing, it was just so bland and dry and nondescript. Then it occurred to me: 'Maybe it's not something *missing*, maybe there's something getting in the way.' This little intuition perked up: 'Yes, that's what it feels like, it feels like the works are clogged up. What could it be?' Suddenly there was the realisation: 'Oh, *I'm* here! There's me, the meditator. *I'm* here.' There was one of those little 'Bings' – a light bulb appeared.

I realised that the whole of the meditation was cast in the structure of *me* the meditator. Even if there wasn't a sense of the personality, there was a very clear sense of 'I: I am practising. I am doing this. I am being aware. I am the experiencer.' Even though the 'I' was not characterised as a personality, there was a very strong feeling of it. So I started to use a practice that Ajahn Sumedho had described a few years before (that previously I'd just used as a concentration exercise) which was to investigate the sense of self using the question: 'Who am I?'

What we are doing is we are using the question as a way of tripping up the self-creation program. In that moment of asking the question: 'What is it that knows?' or 'Who am I?' or 'What is the 'I' that is knowing this?' it's almost as if we are turning the camera back on to the photographer. It's caught in the lens, the sense of 'I', that subtle quality which has actually been encapsulating the whole thing. What I found was that as soon as I did that the walls fell out. I suddenly realised I had been in a grey box. It was an experience of the walls of the building dropping open and suddenly there was free space, sunshine and fresh air: 'Ahhh.' A completely different quality.

I often liken the sense of self to the force of gravity. It's so normal to us we don't notice that it's there – without question, an unarguable reality of life – the fact that the ground is down, that there is a down, and

## Lord Young

As many readers will know, Lord Michael Young, one of the leading educational reformers and social innovators of 20th century Britain, passed away on January 14th this year. What might not be so well-known was that apart from his roles in promulgating new thinking in terms of education (via Dartington College, the Open University and the University of the Third Age) and social services (Institute of Community Studies, the Consumers' Association), Michael also supported the Sangha as a Trustee of the English Sangha Trust. His involvement with the Sangha came about through his daughter, Sophie, who, as Sister Cintāmanī, spent some ten years as an anagārikā and nun at Cittaviveka and Amaravati. Michael's legal training, energy and many connections were invaluable assets, particularly at the time of the contested planning permission over the development of Amaravati. Many will remember his gentle and reflective speech at the Amaravati Temple Opening. Of great personal modesty, he nevertheless seemed tirelessly determined to see that what was right and true should be protected, encouraged and made freely available.

Our gratitude to Michael, and condolences to his relatives and friends.

an up. However, just as 'down' and 'up' are actually relative constructs, dependent on the earth as is the pull of gravity, so too is the feeling of 'I-ness'. There are different kinds of practice that one can use to focus on this subtle feeling but the method of questioning is, I find, the most helpful: by aiming the attention at this very feeling of selfhood, the reality is being revealed. By doing this we begin see how much the feeling of self is constantly regenerated and is masking the reality all the time. If we examine it closely we realise that the feeling of self is just a feeling and that it is not self. The feeling of 'I' is not-self. It's just like gravity or the texture of cloth, it's just a feeling, just a particular texture. It has no absolute substance at all. There is no thing there. We might then get into doubt again, wondering: 'So, what *am* I...?' There is no definable quality of which we can ultimately say: 'I am this' or 'I am that.' We are using the questions to arrive at the realisation of what IS – without aiming to verbally or conceptually define it; we don't need to. It is the reality anyway – the Dhamma upholds itself. ❖



# Where are you going?

From Chapter 8: Cycles.

*In 1990 Ajahn Sucitto and Nick Scott undertook a six month pilgrimage around the Buddhist Holy places in India and Nepal, mostly on foot.*

*Since then they have gradually written an account, of which this is an extract.*

*We join them one month into the journey; the initial novelty and enthusiasm has worn off and they have realised just how difficult it is going to be.*

— — AJAHN SUCITTO — —

To my mind at least, the walking was mostly not a matter of eagerness to get anywhere; everywhere we arrived at seemed to display the same characteristics as the place we had just come from. The movement was more irrational, a momentum coming from inner wheels that turned through me in phases of darkness and light. The dark phases were everything that pushed the heart forward to escape, the light ones were the times when the movement seemed more like being pulled onwards in faith. Progress itself was more a psychological than geographical expression: the land always looked much the same, stretched out in paddy fields and scantily decked out with clumps of mango, banyan and bodhi trees; on its stage the events of *pūjās*, walking, going for alms, and occasional halts for tea came round repetitively. The feet and pumping legs, underscored by a mantra, provided the reference point to focus on, but the real movement happened through allowing a dark or bright cycle to carry me along until things went still.

The rhythm of walking, particularly in the freshness of the morning, provided calm – a source of energy and gladness that is a pilgrim's special food. With the possibility of uninterrupted attention, the mind, glowing with a mantra, flowed like honey. It felt good and natural to be at ease with the simple rhythms of the body, the earth and the day marked around us by village life.

The pivot of the day for us was the alms round, commenced by the ritual of adjusting my robes, and slowing the pace. Alms-faring makes you completely vulnerable to the unknown scene around you; it is time for realising humanity in a way that few people can. There was a kind of dignity in the humility of the lifestyle that the Buddha espoused.

*They do not brood over the past,*

*They do not hanker after the future,*

*They live upon whatever they receive*

*Therefore they are radiant.*

More than at any other time, on alms-round I tried to walk the balance between the palpable agitation of Nick behind me and the uncertain attention of the village ahead. I centred on the bhikkhus' rules for alms-gathering:

*I shall go well-restrained in inhabited areas, this is a*

*training to be done...*

*I shall go with downcast eyes, this is a training to be done...*

*I shall go with little sound in inhabited areas, this is a training to be done...*

Sometimes we would get out of the village only to be called back; sometimes the movement would naturally take us to a centre point beneath a tree or beside a shrine and leave us there. Sometimes the movement turned into chanting before it left us sitting in stillness. It could take a long while for the mind to give up and go still, but when we did, the bright signs appeared, and the event happened: bustling, beckoning, a hut, elders, a burlap sack on the earth floor and plates of leaves. A new anonymous friend emptied flakes of some grain (*chula*) onto the leaves and then ladled curd onto them from a goatskin bucket with his hand.

*I shall accept the alms-food appreciatingly...*

*I shall eat the alms-food appreciatingly...*

*I shall eat the alms-food with attention on the bowl...*

After the meal, we gave the blessing chant and a few words on peace, generosity, or on what we were doing. It brought me again to brightness, to the place of belonging to what is good and recognising its universality; and a little more of the hide around the heart would wear away. Because of this, it got easier to rest for a brief period in the middle of the day with a bunch of children squatting around me exchanging loud whispers, pointing at my heavy leather sandals and occasionally venturing into a few inquiries: 'Where is your house?' Then we would just gaze at each other, though they could always stare longer than me: after all they had an answer.

— — NICK — —

Our daily alms rounds were a good learning experience for me. Day after day, I'd blow it. To begin with we weren't having breakfast as Ajahn Sucitto had wanted to try to live on one meal a day as the Buddha had recommended his followers to do when possible. As we went on, that resolve slowly got worn away by my offers to stop at a tea shop in the mornings and then perhaps to have a little something with the tea, but to begin with that one meal was going to have to last us the



next 24 hours. I would try to walk into the village, five steps or so behind him, slowly and calmly keeping my eyes on the ground. I would try, but in no time I would be looking over his shoulder trying to spot the best possible place to stop. I had quickly learnt that we got better food from the big brick houses in the middle of the villages with the T.V. aerials than from the mud huts on the village edge. My mind would start yammering and I would often end up trying to give advice. 'Ah, bhante, that looks a good place over there' mentioning a little temple or tree which just so happened to be next to some big houses. Afterwards I would resolve to show more restraint next time, but usually to no avail.

Once we had stopped and sat down I would calm down. There was nothing left to do, all we could do was to be open and wait to see what would happen. My mind, being so intent on the outcome, would be right there in the moment. Waiting, not knowing. It is a very powerful experience. Then when someone did offer us food it would be such a beautiful blessing.

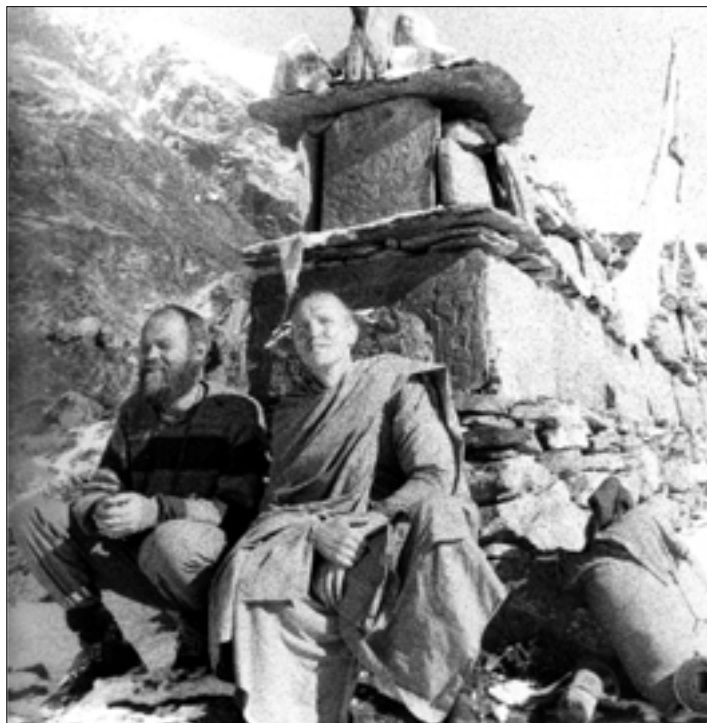
The offering would happen in so many different ways that I could never predict how it would be. There was one infallible rule, however: whoever it was that first asked us, would then feed us. No matter if there were a hundred people around us, or whether the asker was rich or poor. No matter if all they did was ask if we had eaten and then others asked about whether we ate rice, chapattis, etc. It was now that person's duty – and duty is a very powerful thing in India.

It was the fourth day after leaving Kushinagar that we tried walking on the bund by the Great Gandak river. That proved a good idea. The bund meandered through the paddy fields, its sides planted long ago with trees which gave us shade, and there was a well-worn path along the top which was used as a local highway by people on foot and bicycle. There were no noisy lorries or buses, no need to map read and there were even mile posts for counting off our progress. It was the best walking we had had. Ajahn Sucitto was obviously enjoying it, the simplicity of it allowed him to use the walking as a meditation. He would get so absorbed and reluctant to stop that he would even miss someone offering us tea.

We were some thirty feet up and passing through a vast flatness of chequered fields, villages dotted

everywhere, with stands of trees, mostly mangoes, stopping us seeing far into the distance. Most of the villages were on the side of the bund away from the river and so protected from its flooding, and there were tracks coming up and over the bund to their fields on the other side. There were also occasional small communities on the top of the bund, which we would pass close to throughout the day. At first light there would be the pungent smoke of small fires lit outside the front doors with much of the family squatting around them warming themselves while their tethered animals snorted plumes of white vapour. The adult women were not there though, presumably they were preparing the first meal

inside. Later we would see the people making their way to the fields herding their cows and water-buffalos ahead of them. Around 10.30 the people returned alone for their midday meal and they would be back again with their animals well before sundown. Each hut would then have at least one cow or water-buffalo outside munching and snorting at raised eating troughs made of the same grey mud as the huts and filled with chopped green straw mixed with water. The animals were such an integral part of their lives and so important in extracting the maximum from the land that I could



see why the Hindus had come to worship the cow.

Walking on the bund may have been enjoyable but for me there was one problem. The idea of this big river full of wildlife, just out of site, was calling me and on the second day I could not resist it any longer. I suggested we try walking by the river; the excuse was that the bund took a couple of turns and by cutting across we might take a short cut. The suggestion did not go down well, but Ajahn Sucitto did agree and we set off across the fields on a path that was going just the right way. Or it was initially. After a bit it took a turn, and then a while later a couple more – and slowly, creeping up on me, came this feeling that we were lost. It had not been a good idea. I could not find the river or our way. Unlike rivers in England, the river's edge was an undefined thing. There were wetlands, grassland and sandbanks but no path wandering along by the river as I had imagined. Ajahn Sucitto was not impressed and eventually, with me suitably chastened, we had to double back to the bund having lost half a day's walking.

On the third day, on the bund we stopped at sunset to try again to do our *pūjā* and meditation before it got

dark. We sat on the grassed bank with a view across fields to some vultures which had collected around the carcass of a dead cow. They could not get at it yet because the village dogs were there and snarling at them if they came too close. Instead they stood, stared and waited, hopping backwards when growled at. Thus ends the lives of all the farm animals in rural India. In the same way that animals ignore their dead, no longer figuring as relevant to the living, Indians abandon their dead and dying farm stock to be recycled by the dogs, hyenas and the vultures.

Despite the interest of the distant scene we were facing and the sinking sun beyond it, I was disturbed as usual. As usual I began to hear the murmuring of voices discussing us and I knew there must be people behind us up on the bund. I stopped myself looking round but I could not relax.

— — AJAHN SUCITTO — —

The suppressed chattering behind us and the agitation beside me became more turbulent; so we turned. Up on the bank a gaggle of youths and men were looking on with excitement. Two men dressed in the Indian ‘Western’ style were wreathed in smiles, one supporting a moped, the other jiggling up and down in rapture:

‘We are very happy to see you! We are very pleased to see such devotions that you are doing! It makes us very happy, very, very happy!’ His cycling companion’s smile widened into a beam spreading across his smooth bespectacled countenance. It was the dancer however who was the man of words; a torrent in fact, a rhapsody of delight:

‘We are very much appreciating such noble activity and expression. It gives us such great happiness to see you!’ He actually wriggled with glee; infectious stuff that brightened even Nick’s tetchy reactions. We were onto a new dance, and another Singh – Naval Kishore Singh, who introduced his friend on Hero-Honda motorcycle as Mr Teewali. Mr T. was silent, but affirmative smiles underlined his broad glossy brow. They were both schoolteachers. Mr Singh taught English and very much admired Shakespeare – he was certainly too large in gesture to be properly savoured off-stage. Mr. Teewali taught Science and was, we were dramatically assured by Mr Singh, ‘of very noble character. He has GREAT affection for his children! He is very, very affectionate towards them!’

Mr Singh’s body seemed to operate in a different gear from his words – although each sentiment was proclaimed with great emphasis, his body, head lowered and thrust forward, brows puckered, adopted the posture of someone imparting a confidence. But when I slipped in an enquiry as to whether he had a religious practice, whether he did *pūjās* or worshipped God at some times, the covers came off. ‘I am ALWAYS worshipping my Lord! All day I am praising my Lord!! I sing, I dance!!..’ – sympathetically, the body squirmed with consummate glee.

Fortunately his partner of glowing brow, whose beam broadened to the point at which the lower part of his face seemed in danger of falling off, imparted a moon-like serenity to the dance. In fact, it was Mr Teewali who by some slight gesture and inaudible phrase got us moving: myself, Nick, with Mr Singh importuning us to stay at his house, himself and the Hero-Honda (which turned out to be in some minor state of disrepair) and a dwindling group of lesser characters ambling along the bund in the evening. Nick kept declining the offers firmly and explaining with calm authority that we were pilgrims and that meant sleeping outside – this only served to heighten the rhetoric which accompanied the invitations. Eventually Mr Teewali dropped off with the bike, and Mr Singh disappeared. We strode into the dusk looking for a tree to camp under; not very far before Mr Singh returned solo with redoubled pleas – it was his DUTY, he must perform his DUTY otherwise he would be a disgrace. But we were bound to homelessness. Nick’s ploy was adept and delivered squarely and with majesty. ‘You have done your duty! We are very grateful. You have offered us your hospitality. You have done your duty very well! We thank you! Now we must go.’ Turning back to the path and striding on he seemed to have stopped the show...

...until the next morning, as we passed through a village. Mr Singh was at the gate of his house, ecstatic and calling us in with siren songs of food. The love of solitude and homelessness capsized with the first few bars of the song. After all, we were alms-mendicants, and our duty was to receive offerings. On the veranda in the front yard of the large house was a group of Mr Singh’s associates, fellow thinkers and philosophers, and a pot of milky tea. Here was Mr Singh’s nephew, voluble but bitter – a commentator on the political scene. Another seemed to be dozing in a chair until Nick began inquiring about plants and he reeled off, in a monotone, the name of every species in the surrounding landscape. Then entered the smiling wife (‘We have great affection for each other! Great affection!!’) bustling in from the kitchen area with two plates of hot, tasty parothas and mango and lime pickles (‘She is very CUNNING!!’) – enough to give any homeless wanderer serious doubts about the alleged unsatisfactoriness of the household life. Down went those parothas four a-piece, and as the plates emptied before our appetites, the daughters, correctly interpreting the feebleness of our protests, appeared, to top them up with more even fresher and more succulent parothas straight from the pan; five, then six, and more tea, while the thinkers and Nick exchanged ruminations on plants and land and the state of India.

It was the transcendent Mr Teewali who appeared again with moped and smile to signal the end of the cycle. I never heard him utter a word, but whispers were made in the ear of Mr Singh, who realised, ecstatically, that he was late for school. Rather than precipitating action, this lateness seemed to be recognised merely as a state of being as worthy of celebration as any other.



Perhaps it was Nick who brought down the curtain by having Messrs Singh and Teewali pose for a photograph standing on either side of the repaired motorcycle. Bringing the Hero-Honda into the picture turned the balance: devotion to the formless now turned into right action as, waving enthusiastically, the pair roared out of the gate and back up the bund.

— — *NICK* — —

As we went on that morning I thought over what had been said by one of the teachers, the one we later agreed was the dormouse in this mad hatter's tea party. As he had recited the names of every plant, I was struck by how he could also say what everything was used for. I realised that we were walking through an entirely man-made landscape. This was some of the most fertile land in India cultivated since well before the time of the Buddha, perhaps for 5,000 years. As a result everything I could see growing was there for a purpose. That was why there had been so little wildlife. In nearly two weeks of being outdoors every day and night, we had seen just one small group of chital and a mongoose. I would see much more than that walking anywhere in England.

I had noticed on the map, however, that just before we left the bund, after four days walking, we would at last be next to the Great Gandak. Sure enough, an hour after leaving Mr Singh we came round a bend and we were suddenly on a cliff being eroded by the river, trees behind, for once no one in sight and the Great Gandak slipping slowly and mightily, full of silt, past us. It was the time of our normal morning stop and Ajahn Sucitto agreed that this would be a good place to take it. So we sat there overlooking the great river. Downstream were sailing boats hauled up on a wooden jetty and across the river, on the distant bank, were flocks of grazing ducks and greylag geese. This is what I had been looking out for four days. My heart trembled. At last. I was sitting there by the river feeling at one with it all, the view, the wildlife, when...

'Shall we go on?' We had had our standard fifteen-minute stop it seemed and my companion, as ever a chap of unwavering application, felt it was time. I could have asked to stay but that kind of thing is never the same if one tries to hold on to it – so we got up and went on. After a few hundred yards we turned inland, never to see India's Great Gandak again.

— — *AJAHN SUCITTO* — —

Writing it all down helped to keep the events experienced within some wholeness, some continuum. Without something constant to refer to, we'd all go crazy. I suppose most people use their homes, relationships, or self-image as the stable reference point. For a pilgrim, a meditator, all that shifts – becomes just so much flowing process. Feelings, thoughts, moods are unstable. The only fixed reference is letting go. But how? You have to go through the cycle of acknowledging dis-

ease and that it is connected to holding on, until it gets too painful to keep holding it – then to abandon the cause of dis-ease, to realise the stillness and to let the path develop from there. These are the Buddha's Four Noble Truths, the foundation of his teaching.

A path to where? For me, I have to keep dropping the ideas and focus on the manifest human show. Otherwise I get stuck. If I give up on why and who and where, there is the wholeness in my meditation. I would ask that this walking extend to include all the people that I had contact with, that something in us would move together on this journey for a while. As I wasn't always quick enough or sure enough to take part in their play, I could write them into my diary. My way of engaging with these people could be to take them into my mind and heart and record a few images in the little ochre-silk bound book. That act connected them to the circle of Sangha that I was writing for. In a way it hardly mattered how accurately anyone else could receive those images; at least the cycle of watching and connecting to Sangha encouraged my heart.

Here are a few fragments that still remain:  
'30. Meal with Naval, + nephew + dormouse. Saw Gandak. Bike Mob. Devata Bakhra Vaishali.'

The day's events hit us in different ways and brought up contrary responses. I'd slow down and talk when Nick felt like speeding up and getting away, he'd sit and linger when I felt like moving on. We were like a bike whose wheels were turned by different gears. But in the evenings the gears had stopped whirring – there was less happening and we were tired out. The road had worn the two of us into a kind of dumb unity, again it was just the darkness and the walking. Yes, the evenings: the feeling that the challenges of the day were nearing an end, and the possibility of finding a place to stop and re-centre ourselves. And this end-of-November evening, as the pilgrimage came towards another full moon, Vaishali hove into the reach of our fond expectations of peace and reason.

Another man with a bike, a scooter this time, was waiting where the road wound through the ruts, crumpled straw and buffalo dung that signified a collection of human lives called Bakhra. Probably another Singh – but we were too dim to ask. All the initiative was his. At the sight of duty to be performed, he turned his scooter in the opposite direction to the way he had been going and insisted on guiding us, accompanying us for the best part of an hour, taking us to a chai shop for tea, and setting us on the good road to Vaishali. 'Here there will be no bandits,' he proclaimed, and turned back again, leaving us to the ongoing way. The moon glowed like Mr Teewali's brow, surely growing fuller by the minute. ❖

---

*The account of this pilgrimage is now complete and Ajahn Sucitto and Nick would like to see it published, either commercially or by sponsorship. If anyone can help with this they can contact the authors at Chithurst Monastery.*



## AMARAVATI NOTICES

**Community Work Weekend at Amaravati**  
Saturday 13th - Sunday 14th July. Can you join us to help with gardening and cleaning on the above dates? If you would like to come for either a day or the whole weekend, *please write enclosing s.a.e. or telephone:* Sister Santacitta at Amaravati.

## ARUNA RATANAGIRI NOTICES

**Lay Retreat 3rd – 10th August** Meditation  
Retreat contact: Harnham, guest monk.

The Retreat House Building Project is proceeding. The Sanghamitta committee are currently looking for skilled volunteer labour. *Contact:* Bill Fahy c/o Harnham

## CITTAVIVEKA NOTICES

**Lay Forums** – The venue of these discussions is the monastery's Reception Room, the time 2:00pm

April 14th – Lay Buddhist Practice:

What helps and what hinders?

May 12th – Impermanence

June 23rd – The Paramitas

**Forest Work Volunteer Days**

Sunday 21st April, Saturday 15th June. These afternoons will be spent helping the Sangha in ongoing work in Hammer Woods. Meet at the monastery at 1.00pm. If you'd like overnight accommodation *write to the guest monk/nun.*

**Dhamma Hall Volunteer Days**

We would appreciate your help with work on or around the Dhamma Hall any day we are working. Particularly on May 18th and July 13th when there will be something for everybody to do.

## HARTRIDGE NOTICES

Teaching weekends continue on the last Saturday and Sunday of each month, usually with guidance by visiting Sangha members. These include a meditation workshop on the Saturday starting at 1.30pm, and a pūjā and Dhamma talk on Sunday evening at 7.30pm. Visitors are welcome to come, offer dāna and meet with the Sangha. The retreat facilities for monastics continue to be well used, and dāna offerings to retreatants are gratefully received. We shall also be holding a celebration of Wesak on Sunday 26th May, led by a monk. All are welcome. Lay Supporters' Meetings, with a sutta study group are held regularly. For more details, telephone Hartridge, or Sati sati on 01305 786821.

## FAMILY EVENTS 2002

**Rainbow Weekend** 3rd - 6th May

**Family Weekend** 21st - 23rd June

**Summer Camp** 16th - 25th August

**Young People's Retreat** 13th - 15th December

For Young People's Retreat *please contact:* Ray Glover, 36 Ottersfield, Greet, Gloucestershire GL54 5PN  
Tel: 01242 604129 *All other enquiries please contact:* Emily Tomalin, 147 Whytelady Lane, Cookham, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 9LF. Tel: 01628 810083.  
*E-mail:* emilytomalin@ukonline.co.uk

## RETREATS OUTSIDE THE UK

Ajahn Sucitto will be teaching the following retreats in **America:** Detroit 12th –15th April. *Contact:* Richard Smith, Tel:(248) 641 7620  
*E-mail:* mithras1@earthlink.net

IMS, Barre. 19-28 April. Tel: (978)355-4378

New York 10th –12th May. *Contact:* New York Insight, *E-mail:* nyinsight@earthlink.net

Ajahn Sucitto and Ajahn Candasiri: Spirit Rock, America. 16-23 June

Tel: (415) 488 0164 ext 390.

Ajahn Sucitto: **Eire** at the Sunyata Centre July 11 – 14th. Tel: 00 353 6136 70 73.

**Santacittarama (Italy)**

25th – 28th April: Retreat near Bari with Ajahn Chandapalo in Italian. Contact Ugo Milella: u.mile@tiscalinet.it, Tel: 080-556 2825 (meal times).

3rd – 5th May: Weekend retreat near Piacenza, led by Ajahn Kusalo. In English with translation into Italian. For booking Tel: 0523/878948, pidici@libero.it  
7th – 9th June: Weekend retreat near Piacenza, led by Ajahn Dhammiko, in Italian. For booking Tel: 0523/878948, email: pidici@libero.it

Ajahn Chandapalo a weekend retreat in **Slovenia**, 28th – 30th June. *Contact:* Ales for details. Tel: 00 386 01 518-61-65, email: ales.seliskar@siol.net

27th Aug – 1st Sept: Retreat near Rome, Ajahn Chandapalo, in Italian. Organised by the 'A.Me.Co'. As yet the date is provisional. Bookings accepted 1 month before at Tel: 06-6865148 from 6-8 pm Mon., 6-9 pm on Tues. or Wed., or 3-7 pm on Thurs.

**Dhammapala (Switzerland):**

The following retreats will be taught in German at Dhammapala unless otherwise stated;

April 27th – 28th Meditation Weekend

May 16th – 20th Pentecost Retreat with Ajahn Khemasiri.

May 31st – June 2nd Weekend Study Retreat

at Beatenberg Meditation Centre with Ajahn Akiñcano. *Contact:* Meditationszentrum Beatenberg, Waldegg, 3803 Beatenberg  
Tel: 033 841 21 31 (Website: www.karuna.ch)

June 1st-2nd Meditation Weekend  
(in English)

June 7th – 12th 5-day retreat in Hamburg with Ajahn Akiñcano. *Contact:* Buddhistische Gesellschaft Hamburg, Beisserstr. 23, D-22337 Hamburg  
Tel: 0049 (0)40 631 36 96.

June 14th –16th Weekend retreat in Vienna with Ajahn Akiñcano. *Contact:* Christoph Köck, Gfornergasse 3/1/39, A-1060 Wien.  
Tel. 043 (0)1 595 5018

July 5th –7th Meditation Weekend

## GENERAL NOTICES

June 14-15 Meditation and Mindfulness.

**A Buddhist/Christian Weekend**, learning from each other's traditions. Led by Sr. Lucy and Sr. Ānandabodhī. *Contact:* Turvey Abbey, Turvey, Bedford MK43 8DE. Tel: 01234 881 432

**Tape Transcription** – Can you type? Do you own a cassette player and a PC?

We need people who have some spare time to transcribe talks for publication.

This is a rewarding task, however it is not always easy. Some tapes are difficult to hear and transcribing is generally a slow process.

If interested please write to: Khema, 53 Dennis Park Crescent, London SW20 8QH or E-mail to: khema@bigfoot.com

SUNYATA RETREAT CENTRE  
CO. CLARE IRELAND

**Volunteers required** over the summer (late May to mid-September) for periods of 3 weeks or longer to help with gardening, cleaning, light building work. 30 hours a week work in return for board and keep. Sunyata is a family-run Buddhist retreat centre in a beautiful rural location with a strong connection with the Forest Sangha. *Please contact* Stan or Clare de Freitas, Sunyata Retreat Centre, Sixmilebridge, Co. Clare, Ireland Tel. (+353) (0) 61 367073; email info@sunyatacentre.com; website:www.sunyatacentre.com

## NEWS FROM THE TRUSTS

**Hartridge** – Due to the lack of a resident Sangha at Hartridge, the income has understandably dropped a good deal over the last year. The English Sangha Trust have recently decided that they would like to financially support the continuing use of Hartridge Monastery as a retreat centre for monks and nuns.

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. Back issues of the newsletter are available on the internet from: <http://www.fsnews.cjb.net> We are working on improving the site and hope to be able to post latest issues in the near future.

**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



## Amaravati Retreats

April	5 – 7	Weekend	Ajahn Jitindriyā – (FULL)
April	19 – 21	Weekend	Ajahn Candāsiri – (ALMOST FULL)
May	10 – 19	10 day	Ajahn Ariyasilo
June	7 – 9	Weekend	
June	14 – 18	5 day	Ajahn Kāruniko – (ALMOST FULL)
June	28 – 30	Weekend	
July	26 – 4 Aug	10 day	Ajahn Candāsiri – (FULL)
Sept.	13 – 17	5 day	
Sept.	27 – 29	Weekend	
Oct.	4 – 6	Weekend	
Oct.	25 – 29	5 day	
Nov.	15 – 24	10 day	Ajahn Sucitto – (FULL)
Dec.	27 – Jan. 1	5 day	

In 2002 Luang Por Sumedho will be taking a sabbatical and so is not committing himself to teaching engagements for this forthcoming year.

### Retreat Centre Work Weekends 2002

April 26–28 • Aug 30–Sept 1 • Oct 11–13

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.

### 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.

### MEDITATION GROUPS

These are visited regularly by Sangha members.

<b>BATH</b> Catherine Hewitt, (01225) 405-235	<b>HAMPSTEAD</b> Caroline Randall, (020) 8348-0537
<b>EDINBURGH</b> Muriel Nevin, (0131) 337-0901	<b>LONDON BUDDHIST SOCIETY</b> 58 Eccleston Square, SW1 (Victoria) Tel: (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>GLASGOW</b> James Scott, (0141) 637-9731	
<b>LEEDS AREA</b> Daniela Loeb, (0113) 2791-375	<b>SOUTHAMPTON</b> Ros Dean, (02380) 422430
<b>LEEDS AREA</b> Anne Grimshaw, (01274) 691-447	

### MEDITATION GROUPS

These meet regularly & receive occasional visits from Sangha.

<b>BEDFORD</b> David Stubbs, (01234) 720-892	<b>MIDDLESBOROUGH</b> Colin Walker, (01642) 643-071
<b>BELFAST</b> Paddy Boyle, (02890) 427-720	<b>MIDHURST</b> Barry Durrant, (01730) 821-479
<b>BERKSHIRE</b> Penny Henrion (01189) 662-646	<b>NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE</b> Andy Hunt, (0191) 478-2726
<b>BRIGHTON</b> Nimmala, (01273) 723-378	<b>NEWENT, GLOUCS</b> John Teire (01531) 821902 john.teire@virgin.net
<b>CAMBRIDGE</b> Dan Jones, (01223) 246 257	
<b>CANTERBURY</b> Charles Watters, (01227) 463342	<b>NORWICH</b> Elaine Tattersall (01603) 260-717
<b>CO. CLARE, IRELAND</b> Stan de Freitas, (061) 367-073	<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>KENDAL</b> Fellside Centre, Low Fellside	<b>SOUTH DORSET</b> Barbara Cohen (Sati-sati), (01305) 786-821
<b>LIVERPOOL</b> Ursula Haeckel, (0151) 427 6668	<b>STEYNING / SUSSEX</b> Jayanti (01903) 812-130
<b>LONDON/NOTTING HILL</b> Jeffery Craig, (020) 7221 9330	<b>STROUD</b> John Groves, 0796 7777-742
<b>LEIGH-ON-SEA</b> Gool Deboo, (01702) 553-211	<b>SURREY/WOKING</b> Rocanā, (01483) 761-398
<b>MACHYNLLETH/MID. WALES</b> Angela Llewellyn, 01650-511350	<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.

# 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  
web site: www.amaravati.org  
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  
Upottery, 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,  
Ubon 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  
Web site: www.dhammaloka.org.au  
Stewards: Buddhist Society of  
Western Australia.

## ITALY

◆ Santacittarama  
Località Brulla,  
02030 Frasso Sabino (Rieti)  
Tel: (+39) 0765 872 186  
Fax: (+39) 06 233 238 629  
Website: www.santacittarama.org  
(in Italian)

Stewards:  
Santacittarama No 20163/38.

## SWITZERLAND

◆ Dhammapala  
Buddhistisches Kloster  
Am Waldrand,  
CH 3718 Kandersteg  
Tel: 033 / 675-2100  
Fax: 033 / 675-2241

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

# WESAK

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

Amaravati ..... 26th May  
Cittaviveka ..... 26th May  
Aruna Ratanagiri (Harnham)..... 12th May  
Santacittarama ..... 19th 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	☾ HALF	● NEW	☽ HALF	☉ FULL
APRIL	5 <sup>th</sup> (Fri)	11 <sup>th</sup> (Thurs)	19 <sup>th</sup> (Fri)	26 <sup>th</sup> (Fri)
MAY	4 <sup>th</sup> (Sat)	11 <sup>th</sup> (Sat)	19 <sup>th</sup> (Sun)	☉26 (Sun)
JUNE	3 <sup>rd</sup> (Mon)	9 <sup>th</sup> (Sun)	17 <sup>th</sup> (Mon)	24 <sup>th</sup> (Mon)
JULY	2 <sup>nd</sup> (Thurs)	9 <sup>th</sup> (Tue)	17 <sup>th</sup> (Wed)	☉24(Wed)
☉ Vesākha Pūjā		☉ Āsālha Pūjā (vassa begins next day)		

If undelivered, please return to: AMARAVATI MONASTERY  
Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead  
Hertfordshire HP1 3BZ, England

ROYAL MAIL POSTAGE PAID  
2  
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD  
173

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 Cittaviveka.  
Closing date for submission to the next issue is 20th May 2002