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The Path to Peace

Venerable Ajahn Chah passed away six years ago this January; from time to time new translations of his talks get published.

What follows is edited from 'The Path to Peace', a small collection that came out last year.

*S*īla, *samādhi* and *paññā* are the names given to the different aspects of the practice. When you practise *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*, it means you practise with yourselves. Right *sīla* exists here, right *samādhi* exists here. Why? Because your body is right here! You have hands, you have legs right here. This is where you practise *sīla*.

It's easy to reel off the list of wrong kinds of behaviour as found in the books, but the important thing to understand is that the potential for them all lies within us. Your body and

speech are with you right here and now. You practise moral restraint, which means taking care to avoid the unskillful actions of killing, stealing and sexual misconduct. For instance, in the past you may have killed animals or insects by smashing them with an axe or a fist, or perhaps you didn't take much care with your speech: false speech means lying or exaggerating the truth; coarse speech means you are constantly being abusive or rude to others – 'you scum,' 'you idiot,' and so on; frivolous speech means aimless chatter, foolishly rambling on without purpose or substance. We've indulged in it all. No restraint! In short, keeping *sīla* means watching over yourself, watching over your actions and speech.

So who will do the watching over? Who will

take responsibility for your actions? Who is the one who knows before you lie, swear or say something frivolous? Contemplate this: whoever it is who knows is the one who has to take responsibility for your *sīla*. Bring that awareness to watch over your actions and speech. That knowing, that awareness is what you use to watch over your practice. To keep *sīla*, you use that part

To keep sīla, you use that part of the mind which directs your actions and which leads you to do good and bad.

You catch the villain and transform him into a sheriff or a mayor.

of the mind which directs your actions and which leads you to do good and bad. You catch the villain and transform him into a sheriff or a mayor. Take hold of the

wayward mind and bring it to serve and take responsibility for all your actions and speech. Look at this and contemplate it. The Buddha taught us to take care with our actions. Who is it who does the taking care?

The practice involves establishing *sati*, mindfulness, within this 'one who knows.' The 'one who knows' is that intention of mind which previously motivated us to kill living beings, steal other people's property, indulge in illicit sex, lie, slander, say foolish and frivolous things and engage in all the kinds of unrestrained behaviour. The 'one who knows' led us to speak. It exists within the mind. Focus your mindfulness (*sati*) – that constant recollectedness – on this 'one who knows.' Let the knowing look after your practice.



Luang Por Chah

Use *sati* or awareness to keep the mind recollecting in the present moment and maintain mental composure in this way. Make the mind look after itself. Do it well.

If the mind is really able to look after itself, it is not so difficult to guard speech and actions, since they are all supervised by the mind. Keeping *sīla* – in other words taking care of your actions and speech – is not such a difficult thing. You sustain awareness at every moment and in every posture, whether standing, walking, sitting or lying down. Before you perform any action, speak or engage in conversation, establish awareness first. You must have *sati*, be recollecting, before you do anything. It doesn't matter what you are going to say, you must first be recollecting in the mind. Practise like this until you are fluent. Practise so that you can keep abreast of what's going on in the mind; to the point where mindfulness becomes effortless and you are mindful before you act, mindful before you speak. This is the way you establish mindfulness in the heart. It is with the 'one who knows' that you look after yourself, because all your actions spring from here.

By guarding your speech and actions they become graceful and pleasing to the eye and ear, while you yourself remain comfortable and at ease within the restraint. If you practise mindfulness and restraint until it becomes comfortable and natural to you, the mind will become firm and resolute in the practise of *sīla* and restraint. It will be consistently paying attention to the practice and thus become concentrated. The characteristic of being unwavering in the practice of mindfulness and restraint is called '*samādhi*.' The mind is firmly concentrated in this practice of *sīla* and restraint. Being firmly concentrated in the practice of *sīla* means that there is an evenness and consistency to the practice of mindfulness and restraint. These are the characteristics of *samādhi* as an external factor in the

practice. However, it also has an inner, deeper side to it.

Once the mind has an intentness in the practice and *sīla* and *samādhi* are firmly established, you will be able to investigate and reflect on that which is wholesome and unwholesome – asking yourself 'Is this right?'... 'Is that wrong?' as you experience different mind-objects. When the mind makes contact with different sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations or ideas, the 'one who knows' will arise and establish awareness of liking and disliking, happiness and suffering and the different kinds of mind-objects that you experience. You will come to see clearly, and see many different things.

If you are mindful, you will see the different objects which pass into the mind and the reaction which takes place upon experiencing them. The 'one who knows' will automatically take them up as objects for contemplation. Once the mind is vigilant and mindfulness is firmly established, you will note all the reactions displayed through either body, speech or mind, as mind-objects are experienced. That aspect of the mind which identifies and selects the good from the bad, the right from the wrong, from amongst all the mind-objects within your field of awareness, is *paññā*. This is *paññā* in its initial stages and it matures as a result of the practice. All these different aspects of the practice arise from within the mind. The Buddha referred to these characteristics as *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*.

As you continue the practice, fresh attachments and new kinds of delusion begin to arise in the mind. This means you start clinging to that which is good or wholesome. You become fearful of any blemishes or faults in the mind – anxious that your *samādhi* will be harmed by them. At the same time you begin to be diligent and hard working, and to love and nurture the practice.

You continue to practise like this as much as possible, until you might even reach the point where you are constantly judging and picking fault with everyone you meet, wherever you go. You are constantly reacting with attraction and aversion to the world around you, becoming full of all kinds of uncertainty and continually attaching to views of the right and wrong way to practise. It's as if you have become obsessed with the practice. But you don't have to worry about this yet – at that point it's better to practise too much than too little. Practise a lot and dedicate yourself to looking after body, speech and mind. You can never really do too much of this. The practice of mindfulness and restraint with body, speech and mind and the consistent distinguishing between right and wrong is what you hold as the object of mind. You become concentrated in this way and by firmly and unshakably attaching to this way of practice, it means the mind actually becomes *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* – the characteristics of the practice as described in the conventional teachings.

As you continue to develop and maintain the practice, these different characteristics and qualities are perfected together in the mind. However, practising *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* at this level is still not enough to

EDITORIAL

The Four-fold Assembly

Someone visiting one of the monasteries in Britain this winter may be puzzled as to why there seem to be less bhikkhus and siladharas 'at home' than in some previous years. It's not just that there is always a percentage who choose to leave the robes and take their practice into the lay arena; it is also becoming the case that there are always a number of bhikkhus and siladhara travelling, in Britain and overseas, or on solitary retreat for long stretches of time. From the point of view of samanas running monasteries this latter trend is disturbing, but it's hardly a loss of faith. Looking back, back through the socialisation of Buddhism into a monastic form, back into its roots, we find the exhortation to 'walk on tour for the welfare of the many folk' along with the advice to seek out 'roots of trees and lonely places.' In terms of the Buddha's path, the current diaspora seems utterly authentic.

When Ajahn Chah was asked about the possibilities and impossibilities of establishing the Holy Life in the West, his reply was that there must be good people in the West; that being so, there must be generosity and virtue, which are the foundations of the Dhamma; that being so there must be the possibilities, and even the need, for samanas to uplift and focus such people. Prior to this point, the foundations of the Western Sangha had been through an arrangement whereby a trust, the English Sangha Trust, acted as the patron of the Sangha, guaranteeing a provision of the four requisites. This was understood to be a temporary measure until the society would itself be the patron of the Sangha. This is the way it always has been in Asian countries since the time of the Buddha. When a teaching inspires a society, it moulds a culture and becomes a religion.

Then there are complexities: a lot more interest, more support, and an interweaving of the spiritual and the social life. Within this nexus, the Buddhist Sangha has flourished — and floundered. Gains, respect and honour would be the source of the Sangha's decline, warned the Buddha, and it is evident how weak minds and unsteady hearts can get corrupted by these influences.

More subtly, the goal of the Holy Life can get diverted into one that is social in its orientation: to dilute the Dhamma-Vinaya so that it fits in easier, so that the samanas are more accessible and play more of an active role in the society. This is the most honourable form of diversion, but a diversion none the less. This is why forest monasteries have developed: to aim for a

more specialised position in the society. Patronage itself is a precarious business, behind which stalks the phantom of control and influence: one of the reasons for the demise of the first English Sangha was that without the clear understanding of the proper relationship between the samanas and their lay supporters, the bhikkhus were seen basically as lecturers on Buddhism for whom the Trust provided board and lodging. Eventually the last surviving bhikkhu headed off for the forests of Thailand and has only returned for a visit, briefly, once.

However some 21 years ago, under the guidance of Ajahn Sumedho, a Sangha returned, few in numbers but with a far stronger grounding in samana training. And it was backed up by the respect and authority that Ajahn Chah's example gave; an authority readily accepted by Thais, and increasingly understood by Westerners. It was the authority of the Buddha's practice. The central aim of this Sangha was not to spread Buddhism, let alone change it to fit Western values: it was to live under the Dhamma-Vinaya for the complete cessation of all dukkha; to live the Holy Life in its spirit and letter.

But that's difficult without the lay community's understanding and interest in the same goal...how many bhikkhus in the world are supported to effect magical ritual, to manage estates or to act as the local village council? And how does that affect the nature of their efforts, and the nature of the message that they give back to the society? However, the Buddha taught that the Holy Life could last long for the welfare of a society, and recommended interaction in terms of teaching and presence; but for that precious opportunity, the samana Sangha has to be held within the supportive structure of lay disciples. Then the Four-fold Assembly (*parisa*) of samanas and lay disciples gets established, within which the jewels of liberation are to be found.

For the blossoming of the Holy Life, maturation has to occur throughout the Assembly. It seems that as they mature, and to induce greater maturity, samanas can benefit from moving out of the daily monastic routine. Of course, the teacher has to know the time for the disciple to stay and the time to go; restlessness and wanting to avoid the firm embrace of the training are natural enough defilements to come across. Yet long retreats, in Britain and overseas, give a depth to the practice, and the cultivation of greater insecurity — and faith — through wandering is also an inspiration for people who may not normally come within the sphere of

influence of a monastery. The question which all this raises is how does the concept of ‘monastics’ — a term associated with the Christian tradition of staying in one monastery for a lifetime — fit in with the ancient tradition of the samanas, the wanderer who dwells in a training? One answer, I would suggest, is in the development of the lay community.

This stems from the fact that Buddhist monasteries were set up at the behest of lay people, in proximity to a town or village, for the welfare of the Four-fold Assembly. A monastery provides a good supply of spiritual food for the laity and samanas alike: in terms of teachings — and also the learning through relationship which opens mind and heart. When the roles and responsibilities of the monastery can be worked on as Dhamma-practice, they present a model of transcendence — of that ‘seeing through’ which is not a denial of the world, but an illumination. And this comes about through a firm holding without attachment, in which the forms and energies of the world become transparent and flowing. This is a real and present opportunity: because monasteries, in Buddhism at least, are an interface. But they will only flourish and develop as the Assembly does. Financial and material support is an obvious requirement — despite some very impressive properties, the daily requisites and maintenance of those properties has to come from local ongoing donations.

That however is only one aspect. There is a lot of learning to be had in picking up the opportunities where the timeless truths of the Buddha may find new expressions and new relevances. And in seeing the Four-fold Assembly become a living, and indigenous, reality.

This is taking place, at least as far as I can see, in the British monasteries. Retreats, workshops, and forums have been a regular feature of what one can expect at these places for quite a while. At Amaravati, the structure of retreats is being reviewed by lay people: what teachings are most urgently required? In most places upasika groups are undertaking study, Dhamma-discussion and instruction in Buddhist conventions, and thus a lay Vinaya is getting tuned up. At Harnham, the vision is to have a suitable residence for a lay community adjacent to Ratanagiri Vihara. Then there are the aspects of skilful service. Administration is increasingly a blend of lay know-how with Sangha vision. Kathina season saw these ceremonies being organised and managed by lay people, Westerners by and large.

Yes, the Buddha lived in and welcomed monasteries - for the welfare of the Four-fold Assembly. And without contradiction, in that very unsettledness of the samana lifestyle is the chance for the strengthening and maturation of the Assembly as a whole.

Ajahn Sucitto

LAY RESIDENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES AT AMARAVATI

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

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

WHAT WE OFFER:

The chance to live at Amaravati, joining in as part of the community. Time for group and private practice and retreat, with a variety of Dhamma friends. A five day working week in a supportive and changing environment. A modest stipend is available if necessary.

WHAT WE ASK:

Commitment to meditation practice and to the 5 precepts, and respect for the style of training offered. Our life is busy, physically demanding and can be quite testing, so a good standard of health, as well as the ability to live and work harmoniously with others is also necessary. Commitment for one year and competence within your area of responsibility.

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

OFFICE ASSISTANT: We are looking for someone with office experience who would feel confident working in a busy administrative hub of the monastery. Duties include telephone communication, secretarial work, arranging appointments and transport, and welcoming visitors to the monastery. Competence in wordprocessing and preparing correspondence, organisational and good interpersonal skills are important for this work along with patience, flexibility and love of service to the Sangha.

For more information please contact the Secretary.

The Path to Peace continued from page 2 produce the factors of *jhāna* (meditative absorption) – the practice is still too coarse. Still, the mind is already quite refined – on the refined side of coarse! For an ordinary unenlightened person who has not been looking after the mind or practised much meditation and mindfulness, just this much is already something quite refined. At this level, you can feel a sense of satisfaction with being able to practise to the full extent of your ability. This is something you will see for yourself; it's something that has to be experienced within the mind of the practitioner.

If this is so, it means that you are already on the path, i.e. practising *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. These must be practised together, for if any are lacking, the practice will not develop correctly. The more your *sīla* improves, the firmer the mind becomes. The firmer the mind is, the bolder *paññā* becomes and so on ... each part of the practice supporting and enhancing all the others.

As you deepen and refine the practice, *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* will mature together from the same place – they are refined down from the same raw material. In other words the Path has coarse beginnings, but, as a result of training and refining the mind through meditation and reflection, it becomes increasingly subtle.

As the mind becomes more refined, the practice of mindfulness becomes more focussed, being concentrated on a more and more narrow area. The practice actually becomes easier as the mind turns more and more inwards to focus on itself. You no longer make big mistakes or go wildly wrong. Now, whenever the mind is affected by a particular matter, doubts will arise – such as whether acting or speaking in a certain way is right or wrong – you simply keep halting the mental proliferation and, through intensifying effort in the practice, continue turning your attention deeper and deeper inside. The practice of *samādhi* will become progressively firmer and more concentrated. The practice of *paññā* is enhanced so that you can see things more clearly and with increasing ease.

The end result is that you are clearly able to see the mind and its objects, without having to make any distinction between the mind, body or speech. As you continue to turn attention inwards and reflect on the Dhamma, the wisdom faculty gradually matures, and eventually you are left contemplating the mind and mind-objects – which means that you start to experience the body as immaterial. Through your insight, you are no longer groping at or uncertain in your understanding of the body and the way it is. The mind experiences the body's physical characteristics as formless objects which

come into contact with the mind. Ultimately, you are contemplating just the mind and mind-objects – those objects which come into your consciousness.

Now, examining the true nature of the mind, you can observe that in its natural state, it has no preoccupations or issues prevailing upon it. It's like a piece of cloth or a flag that has been tied to the end of a pole. As long as it's on its own and undisturbed, nothing will happen to it. In its natural state, the mind is the same – in it, there exists no loving or hating, nor does it seek to blame other people. It is independent, existing in a state of purity that is truly clear, radiant and untarnished. In its pure state, the mind is peaceful, without happiness or suffering – indeed, not experiencing any *vedanā* (feeling) at all. This is the true state of the mind.

The purpose of the practice, then, is to seek inwardly, searching and investigating until you reach the original mind. The original mind is also known as the pure mind. The pure mind is the mind without attachment. It doesn't get affected by mind-objects. In other words, it doesn't chase after the different kinds of pleasant and unpleasant mind-objects. Rather, the mind is in a state of continuous knowing and wakefulness – thoroughly mindful of all it is experiencing. When the mind is like this, no pleasant or unpleasant mind-objects

it experiences will be able to disturb it. The mind doesn't 'become' anything. In other words, nothing can shake it. The mind knows itself as pure. It has evolved its own, true independence; it has reached its original state. How is it able to bring this original state into existence? Through the faculty of mindfulness wisely reflecting and seeing that all things are merely conditions arising out of the influence of elements, without any individual being controlling them.

This is how it is with the happiness and suffering we experience. When these mental states arise, they are just 'happiness' and 'suffering'. There is no owner of the happiness. The mind is not the owner of the suffering – mental states do not belong to the mind. Look at it for yourself. In reality these are not affairs of the mind, they are separate and distinct. Happiness is just the state of happiness; suffering is just the state of suffering. You are merely the knower of these. In the past, because the roots of greed, hatred and delusion already existed in the mind, whenever you caught sight of the slightest pleasant or unpleasant mind-object, the mind would react immediately – you would take hold of it and have to experience either happiness or suffering. You would be continuously indulging in states of happiness and suffering. That's the way it is as long as the mind doesn't

*There are two kinds of peacefulness –
one is the peace that comes
through samādhi, the other is the peace
that comes through paññā.
The mind that is peaceful through
samādhi is still deluded.
The peace that comes through the
practice of samādhi alone is dependent on
the mind being separated from
mind-objects.*

know itself – as long as it's not bright and illuminated. The mind is not free. It is influenced by whatever mind-objects it experiences. In other words, it is without a refuge, unable to truly depend on itself. You receive a pleasant mental impression and get into a good mood. The mind forgets itself.

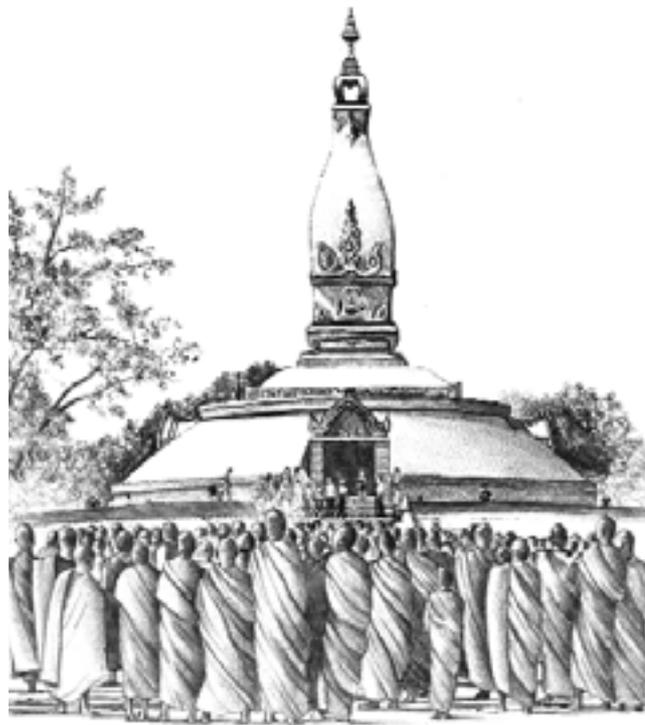
In contrast, the original mind is beyond good and bad. This is the original nature of the mind. If you feel happy over experiencing a pleasant mind-object, that is delusion. If you feel unhappy over experiencing an unpleasant mind-object, that is delusion.

Unpleasant mind objects make you suffer and pleasant ones make you happy – this is the world. Mind-objects come with the world. They are the world. They give rise to happiness and suffering, good and evil, and everything that is subject to impermanence and uncertainty. When you separate from the original mind, everything becomes uncertain – there is just unending birth and death, uncertainty and apprehensiveness, suffering and hardship, without any way of halting it or bringing it to cessation. This is the endless round of rebirth.

Samādhi means the mind that is firmly concentrated, and the more you practise the firmer the mind becomes. The more firmly the mind is concentrated, the more resolute in the practice it becomes. The more you contemplate, the more confident you become. The mind becomes truly stable – to the point where it can't be swayed by anything at all. You are absolutely confident that no single mind-object has the power to shake it. Mind-objects are mind-objects; the mind is the mind. The mind experiences good and bad mental states, happiness and suffering, because it is deluded by mind-objects. If it isn't deluded by mind-objects, there's no suffering. The undeluded mind can't be shaken.

Simply speaking, this state that has arisen is the mind itself. If you contemplate according to the truth of the way things are, you can see that there exists just one path and it is your duty to follow it. If you attach to happiness, you are off the path – because attaching to happiness will cause suffering to arise. If you attach to sadness, it can be a cause for suffering to arise. You understand this – you are already mindful with right view – but at the same time, are not yet able to fully let go of your attachments.

So what is the correct way to practice? You must



Memorial Chedi to Luang Por Chah, Wat Pah Pong, Thailand.

walk the middle path, which means keeping track of the various mental states of happiness and suffering, while at the same time keeping them at a distance, off to either side of you. This is the correct way to practise – you maintain mindfulness and awareness even though you are still unable to let go. It's the correct way, because whenever the mind attaches to states of happiness and suffering, awareness of the attachment is always there. This means that whenever the mind attaches to states of happiness, you don't praise it or give value to it, and whenever it attaches to states of suffering, you don't criticise it. This way you can actually observe the mind as

it is. Happiness is not right, suffering is not right. There is the understanding that neither of these is the right path. You are unable to drop them, but you can be mindful of them. With mindfulness established, you don't give undue value to happiness or suffering. You don't give importance to either of those two directions which the mind can take, and you hold no doubts about this; you know that following either of those ways is not the right path of practice, so at all times you take this middle way of equanimity as the object of mind. When you practise to the point where the mind goes beyond happiness and suffering, equanimity will necessarily arise as the path to follow, and you have to gradually move down it, little by little – the heart knowing the way to go to be beyond defilements, but, not yet being ready to finally transcend them, it withdraws and continues practising.

Whenever happiness arises and the mind attaches, you have to take that happiness up for contemplation, and whenever it attaches to suffering, you have to take that up for contemplation. Eventually, the mind reaches a stage when it is fully mindful of both happiness and suffering. That's when it will be able to lay aside the happiness and the suffering, the pleasure and the sadness, and lay aside all that is the world and so become the 'knower of the worlds.' Once the mind – 'the one who knows' – can let go, it will settle down at that point.

It is here that the practice becomes really interesting. Wherever there is attachment in the mind, you keep hitting at that point, without letting up. If there is attachment to happiness, you keep pounding at it, not letting the mind get carried away with the mood. If the mind attaches to suffering, you grab hold of that, really getting to grips with it and contemplating it straight

away. Even if the mind is caught in an unwholesome mental state, you know it as unwholesome and the mind is not heedless. It's like stepping on thorns: of course, you don't seek to step on thorns, you try to avoid them, but nevertheless sometimes you step on one. Even though you know this, you are unable to stop stepping on those 'thorns.' The mind still follows various states of happiness and sadness, but doesn't completely indulge in them. You sustain a continuous effort to destroy any attachment in the mind – to destroy and clear all that which is the world from the mind.

Some people want to make the mind peaceful, but don't know what true peace really is. They don't know the peaceful mind! There are two kinds of peacefulness – one is the peace that comes through *samādhi*, the other is the peace that comes through *paññā*. The mind that is peaceful through *samādhi* is still deluded. The peace that comes through the practice of *samādhi* alone is dependent on the mind being separated from mind-objects. When it's not experiencing any mind-objects, then there is calm, and consequently one attaches to the happiness that comes with that calm. However, whenever there is impingement through the senses, the mind gives in straight away. It's afraid of mind-objects. It's afraid of happiness and suffering; afraid of praise and criticism; afraid of forms, sounds, smells and tastes. One who is peaceful through *samādhi* alone is afraid of everything and doesn't want to get involved with anybody or anything on the outside. People practising *samādhi* in this way just want to stay isolated in a cave somewhere, where they can experience the bliss of *samādhi* without having to come out. Wherever there is a peaceful place, they sneak off and hide themselves away. This kind of *samādhi* involves a lot of suffering – they find it difficult to come out of it and be with other people. They don't want to see forms or hear sounds. They don't want to experience anything at all! They have to live in some specially preserved quiet place, where no-one will come and disturb them with conversation. They have to have really peaceful surroundings.

This kind of peacefulness can't do the job. If you have reached the necessary level of calm, then withdraw. The Buddha didn't teach to practise *samādhi* with delusion. If you are practising like that, then stop. If the mind has achieved calm, then use it as a basis for contemplation. Contemplate the peace of concentration itself and use it to connect the mind with and reflect upon the different mind-objects which it experiences. Contemplate the three characteristics of *aniccam* (impermanence), *dukkham* (suffering) and *anattā* (not-self). Reflect upon this entire world. When you have contemplated sufficiently, it is all right to re-establish the calm of *samādhi*. You can re-enter it through sitting meditation and afterwards, with calm re-established, continue with the contemplation. As you gain knowledge, use it to fight the defilements, to train the mind.

The peace which arises through *paññā* is distinctive, because when the mind withdraws from the state of calm, the presence of *paññā* makes it unafraid of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations and ideas. It means that as soon as there is sense contact the mind is immediately aware of the mind-object. As soon as there is sense contact you lay it aside – mindfulness is sharp enough to let go right away. This is the peace that comes through *paññā*.

When you are practising with the mind in this way, the mind becomes considerably more refined than when you are developing *samādhi* alone. The mind becomes very powerful, and no longer tries to run away. With such energy you become fearless. In the past you were scared to experience anything, but now you know mind-objects as they are and are no longer afraid. You know your own strength of mind and are unafraid. When you see a form, you contemplate it. When you hear a sound, you contemplate it. You become proficient in the contemplation of mind-objects. Whatever it is, you can let go of it all. You clearly see happiness and let it go. You clearly see suffering and let it go. Wherever you see them, you let them go right there. All mind-objects lose their value and are no longer able to sway you. When these characteristics arise within the mind of the practitioner, it is appropriate to change the name of the practice to *vipassanā*: clear knowing in accordance with the truth. That's what it's all about – knowledge in accordance with the truth of the way things are. This is peace at the highest level, the peace of *vipassanā*.

Developing *samādhi* so that you can just sit there and attach to blissful mental states isn't the true purpose of the practice. You must withdraw from it. The Buddha said that you must fight this war, not just hide out in a trench trying to avoid the enemy's bullets. When it's time to fight, you really have to come out with guns blazing. Eventually you have to come out of that trench. You can't stay sleeping there when it's time to fight. This is the way the practice is. You can't allow your mind to just hide, cringing in the shadows.

I have described a rough outline of the practice. You as the practitioners must avoid getting caught in doubts. Don't doubt about the way of practice. When there is happiness, watch the happiness. When there is suffering, watch the suffering. Having established awareness, make the effort to destroy both of them. Let them go. Cast them aside. Know the object of mind and keep letting it go. Whether you want to do sitting or walking meditation it doesn't matter. If you keep thinking, never mind. The important thing is to sustain moment to moment awareness of the mind. If you are really caught in mental proliferation, then gather it all together, and contemplate it in terms of being one whole, cutting it off right from the start, saying, 'All these thoughts, ideas and imaginings of mine are simply thought proliferation and nothing more. It's all *aniccam*, *dukkham* and *anattā*. None of it is certain at all.' Discard it right there. ❖

A Slice of Life

*Kathryn Guta, a close associate of Abhayagiri and
the Sanghapala Foundation, worked as a nurse.*

Then one day, noticing some small marks on her arm, she went to see the doctor...

‘Take the valium, you’ll feel a lot better.’ Dr. Erhart dangled the vial of pills in front of my eyes. I felt a small pop in my chest like my heart was deflating from this well-meant offer. ‘Thank you, but I don’t want the valium I want to know why I was never told of my malignancy nine years ago when I came into this office.’ I knew I sounded condemning using language like that yet I really did want to understand why. I had once been warned by a meditation teacher never to ask or answer ‘why questions’ largely because they were unanswerable questions. ‘Why is the sky blue?’ ‘Why was I born?’ These questions tend to make the mind spin round and round without getting to the bigger issue of how blue the sky actually is and what is birth after all. I forgot this warning and all I could think of was ‘why, why, why’ and who was to blame. The force of habit led me to blame myself. Someone had to be at fault.

Yes I was regressing spiritually. I was secretly happy of that. I hated anything that made people superior, and spirituality was sometimes worn as a badge of achievement separating rather than connecting people. I hated that, but couldn’t deny that I had done it too. My body cried from every pore, from every soft surface and hard angle: ‘Please take care of me. Enough of your spirituality.’ I had spent nights up till dawn in meditation. I had awakened early with sleep still in my eyes. I had endured cold and heat and scorpions and insects. All, I supposed, to toughen me for this moment of a diagnosis, a cancer diagnosis.

Being a nurse and knowing my family’s cancer track record, I could hardly be surprised when the three tiny dark flecks that appeared on my arm. The three wise men I called them, when they stayed to impart a teaching. All great teachings are received with dread. I knew this. I had always wanted to bargain the great teachings out of my life and this was no different.

My arm pains me now as I write this. My fingers are stiff and difficult to use. I wonder how I will work. How will I work when I need my hands to work? How will I support myself? What will I do? I loved to swim, to dance and walk around the Marin headlands all day. What would I do?

I can’t deny that somehow behind the horror of this

catastrophe, I wanted to die. How strange. I understood then that my mind was excited by this new terrain yet my body was kicking and screaming resisting every second. Bodies don’t want to die. You only have to observe an ant in trouble to realise that. Minds can look at death as some different type of vacation. Club Death. Nothing to pay for an eternity of bliss if you played your cards right in this lifetime. My body was singing all the while a very different tune. It wanted to be hugged and caressed and told everything would be all right. All right? Can things be all right when you are dead? The body ceases to exist when it is abandoned by the mind. Perhaps it is the ultimate abandonment. The mind can careen through galaxies yet the body turns to dust in a matter of weeks or months. In the Thai jungle, corpses explode into a gooey mass in just a few days.

‘I was going to get my hair cut but why bother.’ There again another ‘why?’ question. My mind amused me. The thoughts were cascading and ricocheting in its canyons. One moment I felt guilty that I didn’t take better care of my body and then I remembered that I took better care of my body than anyone else I knew. I was grabbing moments as they came to me. Walking down the street I noticed how blue the sky was. I didn’t ask why. I grabbed that moment and realised that there was absolutely no problem right then. It was only in my mind that the chatter continued.

‘Take the valium’ the doctor had said. ‘Melanoma’, the pathology report had read. I read the report thoroughly studying it like a lawyer with a brief reviewing it to find some flaw, something that did not fit. There it was: recurrent melanoma. If it was recurrent, why was I not told of it nine years ago when I had first gone to the doctor noting a change in a mole? Guilty! I requested and got the slides of my skin. I carried them home in a plastic case in a manilla envelope under my arm. Exhibit A. I wanted to see the slides for myself. Not that I doubted the diagnosis. It was just that the story did not fit. I was going about things in my usual logical manner. I was not calm. I was not unafraid. I was only gathering all my intelligence to apply it to the problem. Later I could afford to fall apart. Now I wanted to understand what had happened. I wanted to see the

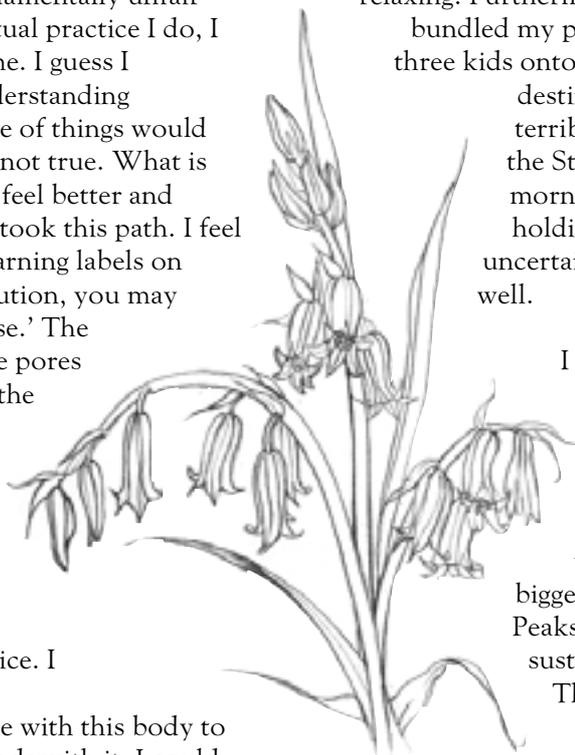
slides for myself.

My mind travelled to India to the cremation ghats at Benares. Rather, my sense of smell remembered the acrid smell of human flesh burning. There's nothing like it. One night I took a river boat out on the Ganges. Coloured lights outlined the boat. It looked happy like a party boat only it took you down the river for a visit to Club Death. As I passed each funeral pyre, I pressed my hands into the railing and tried to continue to breathe as the smoke filled my lungs. Some day this would be my fate. 'Know this now,' I thought.

It always seemed to me fundamentally unfair that no matter how much spiritual practice I do, I still feel like hell a lot of the time. I guess I thought that practising and understanding something about the true nature of things would cushion me against life. This is not true. What is true is that I feel things more. I feel better and worse than I did before I undertook this path. I feel ripped off. I wish there were warning labels on these meditation practices. 'Caution, you may feel better or you may feel worse.' The point is to feel, to live life in the pores of the flesh and the marrow of the bone. Yet I hate it when it's bad. I won't try to be philosophical about it. I had one week of hell. Walls pressed in against me. Then I woke up on Friday morning and I was peaceful. I understood the fruits of practice. I cried in gratitude.

I understood that cancer may be with this body to the grave but I could make friends with it. I could understand cancer. Cancer could have its place in my body. I always saw a clear distinction between cancer and not cancer, between those with cancer and those without. Now I only saw grey areas. I am the same person I was before cancer. In fact I may have had cancer a long time without knowing it. I am not different yet I am fundamentally changed by this news. I feel no escape yet I'm not unhappy either. I want to work it out with this demon cancer.

Two doctors said I had a poor prognosis. They seemed certain. The third said he didn't know. How I grabbed onto those words. I wanted to unfurl a banner



and march through the streets yelling: 'He doesn't know. He doesn't know.' People tell me how difficult it is not to know; how much better it is to know even if it's bad news. Sure it's hard to live in uncertainty, but I'd take it any day over being presented with a dire, hopeless, statistical prediction of the timing of my demise. Of course we all know the death rate is 100%. For those of us presented with a life-threatening diagnosis, this ceases to be a concept. It is felt deeply in the pit of the stomach. It's hard to forget. To remember then that one never really knows when one will die feels wonderfully relaxing. Furthermore, it's the truth. Two years ago I bundled my perfectly healthy brother, his wife and three kids onto a plane and they never got to their destination. 'Plane crash, Kathmandu, terribly sorry, all are dead,' the man from the State Department said in an early morning phone call. 'Don't know' is a gem holding within it the truth that life is uncertain. It leaves room for magic to enter as well.

I don't worry about retirement now. I had feared I might die living on the streets as a bag lady. Now I feel the support of my family and friends and I know I am alive right now only from their generosity. I have become a receiver. This is a different role. I have become a giant receiver, bigger than the radio tower on top of Twin Peaks, because there is no other way to sustain my life. This is not logic speaking, This is wisdom carried in my bones from the bones of my ancestors. The two supporting wings I felt sprouting on my shoulders at the time of

diagnosis have been nurtured and tended to by many loving hands. I feel I am being carried by kindness. I hope I never again doubt that I am loved.

My patient and friend Michael told me: 'Don't think this melanoma has taken anything from you. It has given you something more. It has made you greater.' I looked into his freckled face severely darkened with KS lesions and saw his eyes were as bright as a blue bell flower. I could not doubt that what he said was true. ❖

(Kathryn has subsequently recovered from the diagnosed melanoma.)

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Remembering our Goal:

(Cittaviveka)

Ajahn Pasanno is currently the Co-Abbot

FSNL: Do you have any general comment on establishing monasteries in the West?

AP: Reflecting on the development of the Western monastic community, I think it's really important to consider that there are kammic consequences in establishing places – you have to look after them. If the monks don't feel comfortable taking responsibility, or they feel comfortable but aren't competent in doing it, it's really problematic for the rest of the community as well as for the lay community.

I think we have to really remember what our goal is – it's practising this Dhamma-Vinaya and trying to understand the teachings of the Buddha: how to apply them, so that there's a clear acknowledgement of the fact that there is suffering and there is the end to suffering and be able to experience liberation. I think it must be oppressive for monks if they have to view their life as a career – that they're slotted into that pattern. If that was my perception of what I'd have to do – to fulfil the external duties of the monastic community and finally become an abbot – that would be oppressive. Because, really the emphasis always has to be on how we can live this way of life so we can participate or partake in the virtues of wisdom, compassion and purity. Without that it turns into a job, or a duty, which is even worse than a job in that you have to do it, and that is quite burdensome.

FSNL: It's quite specific, isn't it, to be able to listen to a lot of people, make decisions, act as a go-between with lay-people, between this monk and that monk, and also have an eye on practical things. I mean, it's not just a matter of if you can meditate, you can therefore be the abbot of a monastery.

AP: Yes, right, in terms of abbot-ship, it's really an art: learning how to listen to people, learning how to communicate, how to administrate, how to harmonise the community, learning how to be patient with things. I mean, that's an on-going sort of learning – when do you push people, when do you try to push the community, and when do you just have to sit back, be patient and let it unfold and work itself out? That's something that you're always learning.

It's hard to get a balance, because sometimes people really need to be pushed and encouraged to make or do something better than what they're doing and other people just need to be left to go on their own. We've been thinking more and more of the necessity of screening, in terms of the training before people get ordained, because the longer that I'm a monk I see that it's not actually for everybody. It's not something that

everybody is either happy doing or wants to do, and even if they sometimes feel they'd like to, sometimes they're not cut out for it.

FSNL: What do you see as the different ways that monks can develop? First of all they have to learn the basics of the Dhamma but then after 3 or 4 years or even 5 years or so, what lies ahead for them?

AP: I think that is something we've not been very clear on in our community, and I think there should be more structure to support this development. You know, having places and situations where people can study, can have opportunities for meditation – not just as a part of everything else that's going on, but to have the time to really focus on aspects of study, on consistently developing meditation, like taking *ānāpānasati* or *mettā bhavana*, for example, and over 6 months, a year, 2 years, really getting it clear just how to use those tools.

You do need to be able to get good foundations in both the theoretical and experiential aspects of the teachings of the Buddha to really understand how the Four Noble Truths work, what the Four Foundations of Mindfulness are and how to apply them, and the Seven Factors of Enlightenment – what do those mean? How can you relate them to the other teachings the Buddha gave, so that then they become something you can really apply and therefore a foundation of *saddhā* (confidence).

Now, as Westerners, we come from a background where we have so much information and knowledge, that it takes a long time to clear the clutter away. Once we have a basic understanding of how to use the tools of the Dhamma: how to live with the community; how to use the Vinaya, how to use the Teachings in that way – because that takes a lot of the rough edges off – then, to have a period of being able to settle into consistent study and consistent practice. Having time to delve into it not as some research project, but as a practice.

FSNL: Do you have any situations in North East (Thai) branch monasteries where you can do that?

AP: Well, there are places like Poo Jom Gom and Dtow Dum on the border with Burma. Those two places are very quiet and inaccessible; there's not a lot of coming and going and once the monks are there, they can settle into longer periods of practice.

Once a monk has gone and done a bit of tudong, visited some of the other teachers who are available – and I think it's very important for monks to see other places of practice and other teachers – then it's good to have a place where they can come back and settle into

an interview with Ajahn Pasanno

October 1994)

of Abhayagiri Monastery in California.

periods of retreat and practice on their own. And that can be balanced out with periods of helping at Wat Pah Nanachat, which is the main training place.

FSNL: Do you think that's possible in the West, or do you feel we're still at the stage where there's a lot more work to get things going?

AP: Just from my period of stay in Britain, I think it'd be really useful to have one of the branch monasteries where the *majjhima* monks (those with five to ten years training) could go, study and practise, and be in an environment where they're not seeing the same old situation, with the responsibilities and activities that go on around that. I think people would benefit from it and appreciate it a lot. I think especially in the West where there are so many external pulls and where the pulls go into very diverse directions, it is important to take the opportunity to really focus on the Theravada teachings.

Here there is a whole range of Buddhist teachings and teachers, and this Hindu teacher and that Swami and that guru and these Christian ones; and they're doing this and they're doing that, and that's interesting and we can learn something from all that; but then to be able to come back and focus really clearly on the Theravada teachings – this teaching as it is available to us, the teachings of the Buddha in the Theravada tradition. They're a bit stodgy, so you actually have to make an effort to investigate them, and it's when you start looking at them clearly that you really start to appreciate the directness and the clarity and the focus – the quality of it. There's a real integrity to these Teachings. Sometimes the commentary, the explanations and the overlay of things can be dry and you have to sift through things. Sifting through a lot of sand you come to some real gems!

FSNL: Don't you think that the situation in Thailand would favour that a lot more, because there, for a start, the very context is so very solidly Theravada Buddhist, in a way you're much more hard-pressed to actually find anything else anyway – whereas this is a cosmopolitan, multi-cultured society. Also, the monks and nuns have to be available to some extent to physically run the places, to do maintenance work, which perhaps isn't so necessary in Thailand.

AP: That's true, I mean we're pretty blessed in Thailand to live in the situations we have and to be supported so completely. Here in the West there is the necessity to be involved in so many ways. But I think that's also why it's important to bring up as an option a situation where people could focus more clearly.

Because the more clearly you can focus on the practice and the teaching of the Buddha, then the more clearly you're able to give that reflection back to the lay community and channel their interest. And as you get more clear in the practice and the Teachings, people recognise that, want to follow that and be like that. That's why we're all here. But the level of our minds tend too much to chaos and busy-ness, it's just so easy to get lost. But as soon as you see a reflection and something reminds you of that, then you get back down to it.

I think that it's useful for us as senior monks to take the time to have periods of retreat. Then that emphasis on the roots of the practice acts as a focal point for everybody else.

When you're leading a community, if you're doing it as a practice, you're really doing it completely and making yourself completely available all the time. And as a practice you really learn a lot from that. But then I think it's quite necessary as a balance to that, to have the time to meditate in a consistent way. Because when you're always available for everybody, you don't have this same sort of time to develop the meditation consistently, or time to just sit down and read the scriptures. You have to be able to sit with them and chew them over and really investigate them. And when you're taking on all sorts of responsibilities for the external aspect of the monastery and the monks and the lay-people there, then you've got so many things on your mind, it's difficult to have the continuity of reflection.

So it's quite necessary for senior monks to have periods of time – some months, a year, two years, because it takes time when you do go into retreat to just settle down and get into it – so that you can clear out all the stuff you've been carrying around. We can only help the community to the point to which we ourselves have developed. So we need time as well to come back and consider our own development.

FSNL: Do you think there are commonly held wrong views about Theravada – particularly in the West it can often be portrayed as a rather stale and life-denying experience?

AP: That is a perception, definitely how some people see it. Again, we get a lot of our perceptions from books and that's how it's presented. But, especially in Thailand, we've been blessed to have a teacher who was a model of how to live the Teachings and what the results of the practice were. Maybe written down it looks like that, but when it's lived, it's lived like this and

the results come about like this. You've got a living tradition. So there's a more clear sense of how to apply it.

I think it's important how human these teachings are. I think that the general perception of the goal as it's sometimes presented in Theravada Buddhism is as some sort of miserable extinction! I don't think that accords with the teachings, once you start delving into them. It doesn't really accord with the way the Buddha presented it, but it's how it's been presented. In a society like Thailand that presentation can act as a balance because within the whole society there's a tremendous life-affirmation and enjoyment of life. But as Westerners, we have a pretty miserable world-view to begin with and we take that perspective and it turns into something really dreary!

But if one goes back to the scriptures, you start realising that there is a stress on the importance of happiness. The reason why you keep moral precepts is in order to be happy, to be free from a sense of oppression from the things that agitate the mind. This sense of restraint is to allow the mind to really dwell in well-being, so it's not bounced around all the time. If one practises meditation, the whole reason why samādhi actually establishes itself in the mind is because of happiness. If the mind isn't happy, then meditation doesn't come to a point of fruition. And your clear-seeing of the true nature of reality is the source of tremendous happiness. So the whole path is a path of happiness and often that's not seen or understood.

FSNL: How about Thailand? I mean, if we're looking at, say, an example of how Theravada Buddhism works in a society, sometimes you get some pretty grim reports: AIDS, the drinking, the rabid development, de-afforestation, crime rate, child prostitution and so on, and also quite a lot of reports of the Sangha seemingly not living up in any way to what the Buddha would have wanted them to live.

AP: I think the Buddha would be pretty horrified by what he'd see. I mean you can definitely see those things; they're definitely there. I think it's like a natural phenomenon in a religious society – a religion tends to get old and creaky and corrupt, and it doesn't matter whether it's a religion, a bureaucracy, a government, or whatever – the seeds of their own destruction or

degeneration are sown within them. So it's an old tradition and it's getting pretty rickety and falling apart in certain aspects.

On the other hand, there are some really vital things going on in Thailand, in terms of Dhamma, in terms of practice. People who are most interested in Buddhism in Thailand are middle-class or upper-class people, educated people who have a really sincere interest. In

Bangkok you've got Buddhist groups established in various places. Government ministries, hospitals, banks, private businesses, will get a Buddhist group together and then try to get a monk or a nun, or a layman or a laywoman who is knowledgeable in Dhamma, and a group will form. There are different teachers, they'll hear so-and-so is coming to Thailand and so-and-so is giving some teachings, then these

different groups will invite different people, so in Bangkok there are always places where you can go and listen to Dhamma. And there are monasteries which are doing a similar thing, that get really large groups of people coming to listen to talks and who want to practise meditation.

When I first went to Thailand over 20 years ago, there was very little interest in meditation within the society at large – it was seen as something that was for the monks. Now that's not the case at all. You've got places where people want to practise, they want to get the tools, so they can go home and meditate and find out more about the Buddha's teachings. You've got not just meditation groups, but study groups, sutta study groups, you've got Abhidhamma study groups – it's very active that way. And that is something really promising.

FSNL: Do you get some kind of trickle-down effect, say from the lay interest in meditation and the suttas into something that's working in terms of dealing with their social problems, like welfare, employment or charities?

AP: One of the things that works really well in Thailand is the charities and different things that people can support. The whole concept of *danā* is just so strong in Thailand that people are very willing to give, to help with things.

A really good example is a monk called Phra Phayom who lives on the edge of Bangkok. He's built a kind of hostel beside his monastery. Normally when the country people come into Bangkok it's very easy for them to be taken advantage of and badly abused in various ways. So

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he's made a hostel where anybody who comes to the city can have a place to stay, to be safe. Because he's a well-known teacher, various companies and businesses will let him know when they have jobs available, so he'll make sure these people get jobs where they won't be taken advantage of. If somebody's in Bangkok, without a job and doesn't know where to go, they can go to that monastery and be looked after. There are other groups that take in all sorts of second-hand things and make them available to poor people very cheaply, such as food and clothing. All these things are done through Dhamma groups and monasteries.

FSNL: And you've been doing some work in terms of preserving natural forest?

AP: Yes, particularly around the Poo Jom Gom area. I'd been in Ubon say, 15 or 16 years at the time and I thought that Ubon province was all flat paddy fields with scrubby trees scattered around, but this is one area that is left. It's along the Mekong River and up until recently was very inaccessible, so there's still existing forests left and a National Park has just been established. We established the monastery there before the National Park was made legal, so we started to try to help preserve that area of forest, because it's definitely encroached on and threatened, as any forest in Thailand – it doesn't matter whether it's a National Park or not. The forests are disappearing incredibly quickly.

There are eleven villages surrounding this large area of forest and in order to protect the forest, you've got to educate the villagers, you've got to have the co-operation of villagers. Basically you've also got to be able to give the villagers some means of making a living without destroying the forest, because right now, it's a very poor area of Thailand so they survive by poaching the logs and shooting the animals and eating them or selling the skins, so you've got to have alternatives for them to actually make a living. And this is something that has



never been done before. Generally, when a National Park was set up, the policy was to keep everybody out of it; and then all that did was to alienate the villagers. The forestry officials don't have the manpower or the power within the society to change things, so they just get swamped and the forest just keeps being destroyed.

FSNL: So what can the monks do?

AP: Monks can act as arbitrators. Senior monks are respected, so we can act as a go-between, between the government bureaucrats and the villagers. There are people who are actually hired to work in public health, but often with these outback villages, the civil service or the government never really gets there, or when they do get there they come in and lord it over the villagers, or the villagers get taken advantage of by the civil service, so you've got to re-establish a relationship. The monks can do that.

And then also the monks can get volunteer groups involved. Right now there are students from the teachers' college and the technical college, who put on plays and skits concerning ecology, the environment and looking after the forest. So once you get the kids involved, then you get the teachers involved. The teachers are quite important in terms of the society. Then once the kids are talking about things, the parents are involved, so it has an indirect effect on things.

We've got the involvement of the Population and Development Association and the head of the Family Planning has committed his organisation to helping us by focussing on alternative livelihood for the villagers. Then there's the nature care group that started with me, we're focussing on education...

but it's about everyone working together, and a monk can be very effective in bringing all these different groups together. It's one of the functions of a monk and a monastery to be a meeting place for different levels of society and different groups of people. ❖

Meditation Class

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

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

Effort in meditation is a vital factor. The Buddha said that right view, right effort and right mindfulness accompany and develop every aspect of the path. With mindfulness, we can experience the immediate results of right and wrong effort – and of no effort. Is the mind just rambling on all the time? Are we feeling strained or rigid?... These are signs of wrong effort. Mindfulness helps to check and link up moments of right effort to form a cohesive flow of bright energy and an abiding in a skilful state. We become grounded in a meditation object and can study it, as well as experience calm and well-being.

A systematic way of looking at this sense of groundedness is in terms of mindfulness, and this has four bases or foundations. This is a means of applying mindfulness in a specifically focussed way that will develop both collected tranquillity – *samādhī* – and insightful wisdom. The first and most easily accessible of these foundations is the body. When we're doing formal meditation practice we keep bringing attention back to the body – in its own terms. Notice what gives rise to the impression that there is a body here. So this meditation centres on the breath, which is a physical experience; or on the body walking up and down, or on it sitting or standing. To do this in a sustained way – and to discard other experiences – is the first foundation.

Now say we're meditating, sitting there, and coming back to its associated sensations, but then the mind drifts off onto something that seems more pressing or more urgent – worries, doubts. Even so to just keep coming back to that foundation is a way of unravelling a lot of the mental stuff of the day. Mindfulness is a moment-by-moment thing; the main technique of such a practice is to set it up – to make that the intention – then to keep re-establishing it. A lot of grief and distress in meditation comes from expecting ourselves to be fully mindful of one particular thing in an unbroken succession, when actually that isn't always possible.

What is important to sustain is the coolness of it so that when the mind wanders off, as it does almost incessantly at first, one can learn from what happens then; three minutes later, or ten minutes later, when lost in a train of thought and emotions, when suddenly 'Oh! Where am I?' We recognise that we were supposed to be sitting here feeling our breath... so then what happens?... we get irritated, thinking, 'I can't do this', or 'Oh, shut up and get back to the breath!'

Now this is actually where a lot of learning can occur; not just through sustaining the attention on the object,

although that's important, but also in how we go about doing that. I guess it's rather like training a dog or puppy. We might want to train it to fetch a stick, or to stay at heel. Of course, having it stay at heel may be one's aim, but recognise that a vital aspect of the training – and in learning about yourself – is how one reacts to the puppy continually running away. We can start to replace the impatient and negative traits of the mind with more positive and peaceful ones. We can ask, 'Where am I now?', 'Who is thinking?', or 'What about the breath?' This is a constructive means of re-establishing awareness of the meditation object – in a patient way, rather than bullying or nagging yourself. Then mindfulness is endowed with some degree of wisdom and responsiveness, and it becomes accordingly much firmer.

But all of this can only occur when we have established mindfulness as our aim: mindfulness, to be dispassionate, to stay cool, to keep reflecting. Recognise that things change, they are impermanent, don't expect the mind to stay still in one place. Then one is less likely to get stuck in the moods that occur, or jump to conclusions that it is either a complete waste of time or that one is a failure. These ideas and perceptions that come up also have the nature to arise and cease. In training and bringing the mind to attention in this way, we begin to discover that the judgements we make about ourselves and about life, the apparent obsessions of the mind – the things we seem to be stuck with permanently are, in fact, only impermanent things that we're not being mindful of. One allows oneself to get caught in them because at that moment, one is not bringing mindfulness to bear. But that can change right now: mindfulness can be brought to bear, when there's the intention to do so.

Two very common themes of body meditation are 'body-sweeping' and 'mindfulness of breathing', both of which require a patient and thorough practice. I can only give a brief outline here. Body sweeping is the practice of 'sweeping' awareness over the body and recognising the quality of sensation at each moment. We can do this in a refined and systematic way – say focussing on one toe at a time, and then the ankle of one leg and so on; or in a simpler broader way, such as one leg, then the other; or by 'touching' chosen points in the body in a regular sequence – such as right elbow, right shoulder, left shoulder, left elbow, right hip, left hip, and so on. It can also be good to notice one point – say, a finger tip – and how it relates to the general flow of sensations in the hand and the arm. Moving attention around in this way

helps to release blocks; numb patches become more sensitive, a balance of body vitality is achieved.

With mindfulness of breathing, the field of attention is trained to cover the entirety of the breathing as it is experienced in the present. This may change in character but I think it is important to fully *receive* what *is* felt, rather than search for what one thinks one *should* feel. If we search too hard we establish trying, rather than awareness. So to be receptive, and extend and tune that receptivity is more conducive. Thus the mind is capable of knowing the physical, and then the mental, feelings that are associated with the breathing.

To return to the foundations: mindfulness of feeling is the second. It refers to the particular pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral physical or mental feelings that arise. We can note the feeling in the body as pleasing, or displeasing, or just nothing special. Or with the mind, we can notice the feeling that may be associated with boredom, or low energy. Then, rather than just getting involved in the state itself, we can just keep observing the associated feeling. We may not like it. But rather than just hanging on to that reaction, we can actually contemplate the not liking – the unpleasant feeling – knowing it that way. So then, rather than rejecting unpleasant feelings and trying to find a pleasant one, we can realise that unpleasant feelings come and go, and do not have to be sustained by mental reactions. The very quality of mindfulness achieves a state of peace and non-attachment with unpleasant feelings. So if we can establish a steady mindfulness through the range of feeling, we will have overcome a major obstacle to meditation.

This takes us to the third foundation, which is the mind. We can be mindful of the mind; whether the mind-set is gloomy, distracted, free, bright, luminous, constricted – just getting a reference to the mood of the mind. If we come to this, if we learn to get attentive to the mood – it helps us to understand and to be aware of what the mind creates. So if the mind-set is dark and gloomy, then naturally that's going to affect our energies, the way we think, the way we talk; it's going to affect the way we see and experience things. But if there can be mindfulness of that mood, then we can recognise, say,

feeling depressed, feeling gloomy, feeling nervous and stay cool about that rather than fighting it, justifying it, or getting involved with it. We see that mood also has the nature to arise and cease.

The fourth foundation is called mindfulness of dhamma – meaning mental processes. This means we begin to look at the personality, psychological states, hang-ups, problems – our life situation – in an objective way. When we look at it objectively we see that really it amounts to a set up of wanting pleasure, wanting happiness, wanting peace, and being irritated by things we don't like; sometimes feeling dullness, worry and restlessness, or doubt.... There are these qualities, and they are centred in the ground of personal interest; everyone's personal interest – so they are universal qualities. So rather than making personal problems out of these, we start to see them as impersonal. They come around because of causes and conditions. That helps to remove the ground which harbours these hindrances, rather than further add to the intensity of identification.

The details of clearing the hindrances are based on this clear perspective. This makes it possible to get in touch with the spiritual qualities that will repel afflictive states and be conducive to deep clarity. These enlightenment factors – mindfulness, investigation, energy, joy, tranquillity, collectedness and equanimity – also are dhamma. They are things rather than ourselves. When mindfulness and clear comprehension have developed to the point of being able to recognise, develop and use these faculties to combat the hindrances, this can be called *satipaññā* – mindful wisdom. Mindfulness of dhamma evolves to include everything.

As we train ourselves to witness and experience body, feelings and mind and its states as impermanent, coming and going, changing, we find that we have a more centred and reflective view upon our life. Instead of seeing it in such fragmented, circumstantial and personal ways, we see ourselves and others in very much the same light – there's this body, there's that body, they all have the same qualities; a pleasant equanimity arises. We arrive at a sense of universality which is peaceful and compassionate. ❖

The Sangha and its Trusts

The Sangha in Britain is supported by a number of trust bodies that act as the stewards of donations offered to the Sangha. The role of the steward is prescribed by the Vinaya to be one of a go-between, someone who acts on behalf of a donor to ensure the provision of designated requisites. When many donor and many samanās are involved, matters can become quite complex, so the function of steward, which is carried out through the voluntary and unpaid service of a few lay people, is an aspect of the life of the Sangha that is essential and perhaps rarely-acknowledged. Representatives of the various trusts give brief reports of their respective activities:

Amaravati: English Sangha Trust

The English Sangha Trust is responsible for Amaravati Buddhist Monastery and Cittaviveka, having established these places after selling its London premises in 1979. The Trust meets formally between six and eight times per year to discuss the supervision of ongoing projects and the current and long-term requirements of the monasteries. The meetings include Sangha and lay representatives from Amaravati and Cittaviveka, and have recently opened up to include a range of interested parties in order to access a wider range of input. The Trust operates according to

consensus, and reports of its meetings are given to the Council of Sangha Elders. The requirement to make Amaravati into a suitable site for Sangha and lay residence and public occasions has been a primary concern for the Trust over the last decade. This year has seen the completion of the Temple building and part of the cloisters as a result of many generous donations, including a large proportion from well-wishers in Thailand. There is a possibility of completing the cloisters before the formal Opening of the Temple in July 1999, if further funds are forthcoming. Meanwhile, Amaravati is on year two of a five-year maintenance programme, the purpose of which is to fit the rather rudimentary wooden buildings with adequate plumbing, heating and fire protection. Half of the flimsy roofing - which has a tendency to fly off in gales - has been replaced with sturdier simulated tiling. There are separate accounts for the Amaravati Monastery and Retreat Centre, and also Publications. 'Amaravati Publications' such as the Newsletter, leaflets and material for children are sponsored by the Trust out of general funds; other publications, principally Dhamma books, are sponsored when a donation is specifically given for that purpose.

Cittaviveka: English Sangha Trust

Cittaviveka shares with Amaravati the benefits of the charitable status enjoyed by the English Sangha Trust. Significant elements of the monastery estate are Chithurst House - the main centre for the general public; Aloka - the nuns' cottage; and Hammer Wood, where ten retreat kutis are situated. On the administrative and financial levels Cittaviveka stands semi-detached from Amaravati. It has its own administrative committees - for the Forest, for Finance, for Events and for general works. The Cittaviveka Advisory Group, composed of longer term lay supporters, meet regularly and are available to advise the Abbot as necessary. Cittaviveka has its own bank accounts, which are maintained and administered from the monastery. Donations may be sent directly to Cittaviveka, payable either to 'Chithurst Buddhist Monastery' or 'English Sangha Trust'.

Although generous sponsorship for recent new buildings and vehicles has emerged from the wider Buddhist movement and a modest income is received from covenants and other regular donations, the majority of the funds required to maintain the community arise from spontaneous offerings from local supporters. Without a fixed or guaranteed income, budgeting is a matter of informed guesswork. As the estate is developed, the maintenance commitment increases accordingly. Mainly on this account, expenses have moved ahead of donations in recent months. This deficit may take months to balance out, and the community are currently examining ways of restricting or deferring expenditure.

Apart from ongoing maintenance work in the two main dwellings and the Hammer Wood, there are several major repairs which will require undertaking in the near future. These include the installation of an upgraded sewage system, the replacement of the rotting conservatory and the dredging of Hammer Pond, which is silting up. There is a vision and plan to provide the monastery with a suitable Dhamma Hall for their large gatherings. The site of this would be the old Coach House. However, given the

substantial financial requirements of such a venture, there are no plans to proceed with this project as yet.

Hartridge: The Devon Vihara Trust

Hartridge Buddhist Monastery has been reborn with a new name, but the body which looks after financial and other worldly matters for the Sangha continues to be called the Devon Vihara Trust. There are generally present four trustees, and meetings are held at the monastery with Ajahn Siripaṇṇā, and usually another senior nun, about every six weeks. Our income is derived from donations in the form of standing orders and covenants and occasional single large donations intended for specific projects. Regular income just about covers routine expenditure and new developments therefore have to wait for a generous donor to appear.

Thanks to a large offering by an exceptionally kind supporter, we will shortly be installing a much-needed central heating system to replace highly inefficient arrangements. Other offerings will enable us to remodel the area around the present kitchen/reception room as a first step towards the redevelopment of the ground floor of the house to bring it more in line with the needs of the Sangha. Other projects which are awaiting donors are a major upgrading of the sewerage system (but nobody seems keen to have their name on the septic tank!) and work to remedy the damp in the shrine room. The Devon Vihara Trust is in good heart and is pleased to report steady progress.

Ratanagiri: Magga Bhavaka

The Magga Bhavaka Trust was constituted in 1984 to provide stewardship for Harnham Monastery. The Board of Trustees comprises up to eight lay people. Trust meetings are always attended by a senior member of the resident Sangha, and all decisions are subject to the approval of the Sangha. The Trust works by consensus, and throughout its history all decisions at Trust meetings have been unanimous. Currently there are seven trustees, drawn from the wide geographic area served by the monastery - two from Scotland, two from N.W. England, and two from the local area. The Trust is supported by a monastery committee, comprising three local lay supporters and two members of the resident Sangha, which deals with the day-to-day administration.

The general running costs of the monastery are, overall, well matched with donations given for that purpose, to the Trust's General Fund - which every year shows neither a significant surplus nor deficit. In addition to general running costs, over recent years the Trust has had to meet considerable expenditure, about £65,000, in connection with a legal dispute (which is now effectively over). During that difficult time the Trust was very well supported, and with some help from the English Sangha Trust, has been able to meet that expenditure. On the immediate horizon is the prospect of being able to purchase some of the property adjoining the monastery, which we expect to come up for sale within the next year. Support so far has been sufficiently encouraging that we are confident of being able to obtain a bank loan for the purpose of purchasing enough of the property to provide relief from the current very cramped conditions at the monastery. Such property will also provide a secure basis for the monastery's long-term future. ❖

Signs of Change

BHUKKHIS COME, BHUKKHIS GO...

On the 18th of November Ven. Dhiravamso became the first bhikkhu to be ordained in the new temple at Amaravati. At the same time Anagarikas Graham and Christoph took the samanera precepts and the new names of Ven. Issaramuni and Ven. Suññato. During the vassa in Harnham, Anagarika Branislav also took the samanera precepts with the new name of Ven. Mangalo.

With the end of the rains retreat many of the members of the Sangha take up invitations to teach and visit friends and supporters in places far from their monastic residences. Luang Por Sumedho, Ajahn Karuniko, and Ven. Appamado left Amaravati on the 18th of November to spend 4 weeks in Cambodia and 6 weeks in Thailand. Luang Por has a very full teaching schedule in both countries. The Cambodian itinerary is being organised by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Several retreats and many teaching engagements have been planned, with people throughout Cambodia invited to take teaching from Luang Por. Participants will include monks and nuns from various provinces, university lecturers, government administrators, diplomats and university students. For Ven. Appamado (who many knew as Mr. Tan Nam), it will be his first trip to Cambodia since he and his family fled, 25 years ago.

Luang Por will return to Amaravati at the end of January in time to teach the second half of the winter retreat, which will allow Ajahn Viradhammo to spend a chilly February and March in Canada. He will be teaching retreats in Toronto and Ottawa and will be spending some time with his mother.

Also from Amaravati, Ajahn Assaji spent December in Sri Lanka visiting his teacher, brother-monks and family. Ven. Dhammaratana is also in Sri Lanka at this time, with his ailing mother. Both of them will be back to spend the winter retreat at Amaravati.

Ajahn Attapemo has gone to New Zealand to spend some months on retreat at the monastery near Wellington. He plans to return in May.

Ven. Kusalo is spending the winter retreat in Switzerland at Dhammapala with Ajahn Thiradhammo, who will have just returned from a month's visit to Burma and Thailand.

Ajahn Munindo has gone to New Zealand to visit friends and family. On the way he has visited Burma and Thailand. On his way back, he will be stopping off in South Africa for a couple of weeks for a retreat.

Also from Harnham, Ven. Jayanto has travelled to Burma and Thailand. Ven. Jayanto and Ven. Varado of Cittaviveka, will be staying in Thailand indefinitely to experience Buddhist practice in that cultural environment.

Also from Cittaviveka, Ven. Abhinando went to Italy at the end of last year to help at the new Italian monastery.

FROM THE NUNS COMMUNITY

In the last eighteen years, a steady flow of women from around the world has been passing through the gates of Amaravati and Cittaviveka monasteries to spend time with the community of siladharas. Many have become anagarikas or novices, for one or more years. And a few dozen have stayed on to undertake the wider discipline of the siladharas' precepts, a full commitment to a path of spiritual awakening.

Of those who took the robe, many have also left the community; some within a year, others after five, seven, twelve years and longer, finding their individual needs in terms of practice, relationship, creativity, service, or self-expression pressing beyond the boundaries of the monastic form.

In the early days, the nuns' Sangha, limited primarily to residence at the two monasteries, appeared both visually and emotionally, to be but a small subsidiary to the much larger and more-established Sangha of bhikkhus. As is characteristic of the Theravadan monastic tradition, the male role model and leadership prevailed, and the siladharas, still very new to practice, relied upon the guidance and support of the bhikkhus.

But, over the years, as individuals grew in Dhamma, the communities evolved, and the sensitivities and sensibility of its female members were given greater expression. Gradually, the nuns began to receive the recognition and trust to take responsibility for their own training and community leadership.

Perhaps the most telling, and incidentally historic, by-product of this movement towards autonomy has been the establishment of Hartridge Buddhist Monastery as a training venue for nuns only, for a period of two years. As the first Theravadan community for Western nuns, it clearly echoes the increasing confidence of the elders of the Sangha in the capability of nuns to live and practise independently.

The nuns currently in residence at Hartridge had their first alms-giving ceremony in November, 1997. This was the first time that the alms-giving at the end of the Rains retreat has been offered to a community of nuns. Ajahn Siripañña graciously welcomed all of the visitors, including Luang Por Sumedho, Ajahns Sucitto and Mahesi; Ajahns Candasiri and Upekkhā and the siladharas and anagarikas from the other two monasteries.

In tandem with coming into their own in terms of spiritual practice and managing community affairs, the siladharas have also begun to expand their geographic boundaries elsewhere in the last five years. They have travelled to the forest monasteries of Thailand and Burma and visited retreat centres and monasteries around the globe, thus extending the original 'boundaries' well beyond those envisioned when the Order first came into being. These sojourns have not only provided

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opportunities for nuns to practise in solitude and retreat in remote settings, and fostered exchange with other communities where women have taken up spiritual training and meditation, but also allowed nuns to make pilgrimages to Buddhist Holy Sites.

Since 1993, Ajahn Jotaka has been practising in the remote monastery in Northern Burma under the guidance of Sayadaw Bawkyun. She returns periodically to England to visit friends and take on some teaching engagements, and en route to and from Burma she often stops for periods of time in India. She plans to visit England again in 1999.

During the last two and a half years, Ajahn Sundara has had the opportunity to visit and practise in a number of monasteries in Australia, Thailand and India. Since the summer of 1996, she has lived in Thailand, teaching briefly, but for the most part, meditating in her kuti in the forest monastery of Ajahn Anan. She intends to return to Amaravati in May of this year.

In August of 1997, the Amaravati community was delighted with the return of Ajahn Upekkhā from her 'sabbatical' year. She had periods of individual retreat in Australia, the United States, Burma, and Thailand, and also travelled for several weeks in New Zealand. She was warmly welcomed both in monastic and lay communities everywhere. Aside from the benefits of being able to practise in different settings, she was also given the opportunity to see the real-life situations and problems of different monastic communities in a variety of cultural and geographic settings.

Ajahn Candasiri, accompanied by her fellow pilgrim Upasika Mei-chi Chan, has just embarked on a long-awaited 5 month pilgrimage to India to visit and pay homage at the holy sites where the Lord Buddha was

born, realised enlightenment, gave the First Sermon, and passed into Parinibbana. She also plans to follow in the footsteps of Mahapajapati, who made the historic walk from Kapilavatthu to Savatthi to ask for the 'Going Forth'. It was at the end of this walk that the Lord Buddha allowed the establishment of the Bhikkhuni Order.

In support of nuns on extended individual retreats, each year since 1994, one of the siladharas has been invited to spend the winter months on self-retreat in our monastery in Switzerland. This winter, Sister Thanasanti will be meditating amidst the snow-capped peaks of the Kandersteg valley. Meanwhile, taking up an invitation from the Sri Lankan community, Ajahn Siripaññā and Sister Kovida will be travelling in February to Sri Lanka and India for a four-week pilgrimage to the Buddhist Holy Sites.

As individuals mature in their practice, the community matures. Tensions dissolve and a greater ease of communication and understanding between community members develops. The simple joys of monastic community spring to life. But this too requires a sustained effort in applying mindfulness and metta to daily life interactions, and a willingness to forgive, to work things through, to begin again.

The future, as always, remains uncertain. And although the nuns community has not visibly increased in numbers, there has been a constant presence of samanās committed to the Holy Life, to practising together and reaping the fruits of living in an ordained female Sangha. And it seems, that steady flow of women from every part of the world passing through the gates of Amaravati, Cittaviveka, and now Hartridge monasteries, has not diminished; women aspiring to such a way of practice, and willing to give it a try. ❖



WINTER MONASTIC RETREATS

During the months of January, February and in some cases, March 1998 the monks and nuns at our monasteries will be on silent retreat. At Amaravati the monastery will be closed to visitors from January 4th – March 31st. There is still the opportunity for a few lay men to help serve the retreat at Cittaviveka in March. Please contact the Guest Monk. Those wishing to offer dana (and at Amaravati, to come for the Observance Days) please call the office of either monastery.

AMARAVATI LIBRARY BOOKS

We have quite a few books overdue from the library. If you have any of these books please return them as soon as possible. If it is not possible to return them in person, please send them by post.

A NOTE FROM AJAHN CANDASIRI

Setting off on pilgrimage at this time to the Buddhist Holy Places of India, it is clear that it is not just my pilgrimage - that very many people are involved, having helped in different ways and share in the aspiration towards truth that it represents.

While I have sent many notes of acknowledgement of people's kindness, I am aware that I have not been able to acknowledge them all. So I'd like to take this opportunity of expressing appreciation for all the help that Mei-chi and I have received and the ongoing gestures of good-will – without them this certainly could not have been possible!

CHRISTIAN-BUDDHIST RETREAT

28th July – 2nd August

Christian-Buddhist retreat at Worth Abbey: Ajahn Candasiri with

Elizabeth West. Enquiries & bookings c/o Father Roger, Worth Abbey, Paddockhurst Road, Turner's Hill, Crawley, W. Sussex RH10 4SB

UPASIKA EVENTS AT AMARAVATI 1998

Study Days 2 May, 4 July, 19 Sept and 28 Nov.

Weekends 3–5 April and 6–8 Nov. An opportunity to explore (with others) how to live mindfully in the world.

ANATTA IN RELATIONSHIP 1998

12 – 14 June. A weekend of conversation, dialogue and silence around the theme of 'anatta'. For meditators trained in therapy, counselling & human resources work.

For more information on the two items above contact: Nick Carroll on 0181 740 9748.

Teaching and Practice Venues

MEDITATION GROUPS	
<i>These are visited regularly by Sangha members.</i>	
BATH Catherine Hewitt, (01225) 405-235	LONDON BUDDHIST SOCIETY 58 Eccleston Square, SW1 (Victoria) (0171) 834 5858 Meditation Sundays: led by a monk or nun, every 2nd month. 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Thursday classes – 6.00pm
BERKSHIRE Penny Henrion (01189) 662-646	
BRISTOL Lyn Goswell (Nirodha), (0117) 968-4089	
SOUTH DORSET Barbara Cohen-Walters (Sati sati), (01305) 786-821	LEEDS AREA Daniella Loeb, (0113) 2791-375 Anne Voist, (01274) 670-865
EDINBURGH Muriel Nevin, (0131) 337-0901	
GLASGOW James Scott, (0141) 637-9731	SOUTHAMPTON John & Jill Chapman, (01489) 895-301
HAMPSTEAD Caroline Randall, (0181) 348-0537	SURREY/GUILDFORD Rocana, (01483) 761-398
MEDITATION GROUPS	
<i>These meet regularly & receive occasional visits from Sangha.</i>	
BANBURY Karen Ford, (01295) 758-091	LEIGH-ON-SEA Gool Deboo, (01702) 553-211
BEDFORD David Stubbs, (01234) 720-892	MAIDSTONE Joan Hamze, (01622) 751-202
BELFAST Paddy Boyle, (01232) 427720	MIDHURST Barry Durrant, (01730) 821479
BRIGHTON Alex Clingan, (01273) 327-925	NEWCASTLE ON TYNE Andy Hunt, (0191) 478-2726
CAMBRIDGE Gillian Wills, (01954) 780-551	OXFORD Peter Carey, (01865) 578-76
DUBLIN Eugene Kelly, (1) 854-076	PORTSMOUTH Dave Beal, (01705) 732-280
ESSEX (Billericay) Rob Howell, (01702) 559-241 (Harlow) Pamutto, (01279) 731-330	REDRUTH Ron West, (01209) 717-543
	STEYNING / SUSSEX Joe Bartlett, (01903) 879-597
LONDON / NOTTING HILL Jeffrey Craig, (0171) 221-9330 Nick Carroll, (0181) 740-9748	STROUD John Groves, 01453 753319
	TAUNTON 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	

Amaravati

Retreats:

1998



April	10 – 19	10 days	Ajahn Viradhammo - FULLY BOOKED
April	24 – 26	Weekend	—
May	11 – 24	14 days	Ajahn Sumedho - FULLY BOOKED*
May	29 – 31	Weekend	—
June	19 – 21	Weekend	—
July	10 – 19	10 days	Kittisaro & Thanissara**
July	24 – 26	Weekend	(Minimal guidance)*
Sept.	4 – 6	Weekend	Ajahn Sumedho (In Thai)
Sept.	11 – 20	10 days	Ajahn Sumedho - FULLY BOOKED***
Sept.	25 – 27	Weekend	—
Oct.	16 – 25	10 days	Ajahn Sucitto*
Oct.	30 – Nov. 1	Weekend	—
Nov.	13 – 22	10 days	Ajahn Upekkhā
Nov.	27 – 29	Weekend	(Death & Dying)
Dec.	11 – 13	Weekend	Ajahn Candasiri & Sister Lucy Brydon (OSB)
Dec.	27 – Jan.1	5 days	Ajahn Candasiri

* For experienced meditators.

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

*** For Beginners & less experienced meditators.

Weekend Retreats do not have a specified teacher.

FULLY BOOKED Retreats have waiting lists available.Retreat Centre Work Weekends 1998
March 27–29 : June 12–14 : October 2–4

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

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

INTRODUCTORY MEDITATION CLASSES

The Weekly Saturday afternoon meditation classes will continue through the Winter Retreat months
January – March, at Amaravati.

Meditation instruction in sitting and walking practice will be given by experienced lay teachers

Classes are held in the Bodhinyana Hall from
1.30 to 3.30

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.*

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

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

◆ Ratanagiri Monastery
Harnham, Belsay,
Northumberland
NE20 0HF
Tel: (01661) 88-1612
Fax: (01661) 88-1019
Stewards:
Magga Bhavaka Trust.

THAILAND

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

AUSTRALIA

◆ Bodhinyana Monastery
Lot 1, Kingsbury Drive,
Serpentine 6125 WA
Tel / Fax: (08) 9525-2420

◆ Dhammaloka Buddhist
Centre (Perth)
18-20 Nanson Way,
Nollamara 6061 WA
Tel: (09) 345-1711
Fax: (09) 525-2420
Stewards: *Buddhist Society of Western Australia.*

ITALY

◆ Santacittarama
Via Delle Prata 22
Lacalita, "Le Brulla"
02030 Frasso Sabino (Rieti)
Italy
Tel: 773 88-032
Fax: 765 87 21 86
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.)
Stewards:
Sanghapala Foundation.

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

NEW ZEALAND

◆ Bodhinyanarama
17 Rakau Grove,
Lower Hutt, Wellington
Tel: (04) 563-7193
Fax: (04) 563-5125
e-mail: sangha@actrix.gen.nz

◆ Auckland Buddhist
Vihara
29 Harris Road, Mt.
Wellington, Auckland
Tel: (09) 595-5443
Stewards:
Wellington Theravada Buddhist Association.

With A Friend

At least we can share
our bitterness

My father cracked up
when I was 16

At least he didn't beat me
like yours did

& the monastery's safe
it'll hold us

It'll contain the opening
up into grief

OBSERVANCE DAYS

The community devotes itself to quiet reflection on these days (and usually the day after). Days of Commitment to Precepts and meditation. Visitors are welcome to join in with determining the Eight Precepts for the night, and participating in the night vigil.

Moon Phase	☾ HALF	◯ FULL	☽ HALF	● NEW
JANUARY	5 (Mon)	12 (Mon)	20 (Tue)	27 (Tue)
FEBRUARY	4 (Wed)	11☺(Wed)	19 (Thurs)	25 (Wed)
MARCH	5 (Thurs)	12 (Thurs)	20(Fri)	27 (Fri)
APRIL	4 (Sat)	11 (Sat)	19 (Sun)	25 (Sat)

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Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead
Hertfordshire HP1 3BZ, England

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Closing date for submissions to the next issue is 20th March 1998.