



FOREST SANGHA

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Self and Self-Naughting

Ajahn Sumedho –
from a Sunday talk given in Summer 1993

I think something that interests us all is ourselves – because we are the subject of our lives. No matter what you think of yourself, there is a natural interest there because you have to live with yourself for a lifetime. The self view is therefore something that can give us a lot of misery, if we see ourselves in the wrong way. Even under the most fortunate circumstances, if we don't see ourselves in the right way we still end up creating suffering in our minds. So the Buddha was trying to point out that the way to solve the problem isn't through trying to make everything right and pleasant on the external dimension, but to develop the right

understanding, the right attitude towards ourselves. This is the whole thrust of his teaching.

Living in Britain at this time, we expect comfort and all kinds of privileges, rights and material comforts. This makes life more pleasant in many ways, but also when our every need is provided for and life is too comfortable, something in us doesn't develop. Sometimes it is the struggle through hardship that develops and matures us as human beings. I remember when we lived in London, we used to take walks up on Hampstead Heath in the morning and watch these

well-off people taking their pet poodles for walks on the Heath. We'd start thinking that it wouldn't be so bad to be born as a lap dog here in England: have some nice lady constantly pampering you, making you little jumpers for the winter, and finding tasty little dog biscuits to feed you. It looked like a life of affection and comfort could be rather pleasing! But the truth is that most of us would find that suffocating: we need to measure ourselves against something, we need to struggle

and to learn how to get beyond the limitations that we think we have at this time. Where we get defeated is where we give up to the limitations that we have through resignation and apathy. Then of

course we just get depressed and miserable.

But when we give up or surrender to restriction and to restraint through wisdom, then we find liberation! Life is the experience of restriction and restraint, being born in the human body and having to live under the laws of nature on planet earth. Mentally we can soar up into the sky, we can go up into the heavens, but physically we are bound to limitations that get increasingly restrictive as we grow older. This need not be seen as suffering because that is the way things are. You can develop a different attitude and learn to accept

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the limitations – not out of a negative resignation but just because you realise that what you really are looking for is within you. You need not seek for it outside, you need not think that it is something far away or inaccessible to you. It comes through the willingness to calm down and stop resisting and to listen and awaken to your own conscious experience. But of course the big obstruction to that is that we have the sense of ourselves as being this or that or the other.

The sense of oneself is something that we become conscious of when we are children; when we are born there is no sense of a self as being anything. As we grow up then we learn what we are supposed to be, if we are good or bad, if we are loveable or not, if we are approved of or disapproved of. So we develop a sense of ourselves. We also often compare ourselves to others and have role models of what we should be when we grow up. I noticed from my own experience that the ego really started consolidating when I was sent off to school: I was thrown into those classrooms with all those strange children and then I started noticing who was the strongest, who was the toughest, who was the one the teacher liked the best. We saw ourselves in terms of our relationships to others. This develops through a lifetime unless we deliberately choose to change and start looking more deeply than just living our lives through the conditioning of the mind that we acquired when we were very young. Even when we get older, sometimes we still have very adolescent attitudes or childish emotional reactions to life that we have been unable to resolve except by suppressing or ignoring them. And these can be very embarrassing or shocking to us.

There is one way of talking about the self that makes it sound very doctrinal. Buddhists can sometimes say that there is no self, as if it was a proclamation that you have to believe in; as if there were some God on high saying 'THERE'S NO SELF!'; and in that presentation something in us resists. It doesn't seem true to just go announcing that there isn't any self – because what is this experience that we are feeling right now? Here there seems to be very much a sense of oneself! You're feeling, you're breathing, you see and hear; you react to things – people can praise you or criticise you and you feel happy

or depressed accordingly. So if this isn't me then what is it? And am I supposed to go round as a Buddhist believing that I don't have a self? Or if I am going to believe in something, maybe it is better to believe that I

do have a self, because then you can say things like: 'my true self is perfect and pure.' That at least gives you some kind of inspirational encouragement to try to live your life, rather than saying that there is no self, no soul, leaving a total annihilation of any possibilities.

These are just examples of the use of language; we can say 'there is no self' as a proclamation, or 'there is no self' as a reflection. The reflective mode is to encourage us to contemplate the self. The Buddha was pointing to the fact that when we really look at these



Ajahn Sumedho receiving alms food from a young supporter

changing conditions that we tend to identify with, we can begin to see that these are not self. What we believe in, what we hold to and cling to and assume, is not what we really are: it's a position, it is a condition, it is something that changes according to time and place. Each one of us is experiencing consciousness through the human body that we have, and it is like this.

Consciousness is a natural function, there is no sense of self in regards to consciousness. The only reason that we might assume a self is because consciousness operates in terms of subject and object; to be conscious we have to be a separate entity, so therefore we are operating from this position of being this subjective being here. Then we can get obsessed with a very personal interpretation of everything: every reaction or experience, whether it is instinctive or whatever, can be interpreted in the sense of it being me and mine. We can interpret the natural energies of the body in a very personal way as if this is me, my problem, rather than seeing them as part of the package that we get from being born as a human being. Even a baby when it is first born has instinctive drives to survive, so when it is hungry it cries. Babies are usually born beautiful creatures so that we naturally want to love and take care of them. Do you think that the baby is doing this deliberately – 'I'm trying to be cute so that Ajahn Sumedho will hold me, my mother will love me' – or is this just the way it is, just nature in operation? These are just natural things, but we tend to see them in very personal ways.

We hold views about each other that we carry with us

continued on page 4

EDITORIAL

A personal tradition

It must be one of the most obvious, but least commented on, features of practice-oriented Buddhism, that all of its masters (of either sex) from the Buddha on down the line have been impressive and remarkable personalities. Yet as we all know from our primers on Buddhism, Buddhism is about no-self, and eradication of the ego...isn't it? Of course in the case of the Buddha statements about personality must be speculative, but a careful reading of the suttas, whose aim and style is to present the Dhamma not the personality of the Master, reveals a man whose use of language reveals a great interest and careful observation of the workaday and natural world, someone possessed of a great wit and ability to play on words, a character that could be serene, warm and comforting, or ferocious. A leader in fact, someone with the ability to relate to a wide range of people on a variety of levels and topics. That agility *must* be an aspect of a Buddha's mind; in fact a requirement – in order to bring the Dhamma across to as many people as are capable of receiving it.

For those who knew him there must be a hundred stories about the character of Ajahn Chah: his willingness and ability to engage with a whole slew of people, some of whom – generals, owners of gambling clubs, simple-minded villagers, people looking for lucky charms – many of us would have written off as hopeless and not worth wasting time on. Yet he had the kindness and the skills to draw them towards the Dhamma. Other masters seem to approach things differently – Ajahn Mun for example tended to shun society and avoided, as if it were quicksand, settling into any monastery until the last seven years of his life. So one had to track him down to some remote forest dwelling to receive a teaching; and pretty soon he'd be off on his wanderings, without telling anyone where he was going. Yet it is from him that at least two generations of great forest masters have derived their inspiration and standards of practice. Elusive he might have been, but his accomplishments have given enormous vitality to the Sangha: where would we have been without him? Ajahn Lee, on the other hand, was one of the first of Ajahn Mun's disciples to come out of the forest; he established several monasteries, took lay people off on tudong, and gave hundreds of talks—some of them amongst the earliest Dhamma talks to be recorded on tape in Thailand. And there are many other masters, by turn humorous, remote, silent or highly articulate; part of the richness of the Dhamma inheritance is that it manifests through

forms that, however purified, are still remarkably personal and idiosyncratic.

In a way this is a statement about what *anatta* (not-self) does *not* refer to – there is a *citta* that is the subjective core of the personality. *Citta* is not actually a thing, it is a process of sensitivity and response that modulates according to circumstances in accordance with inherited tendencies; it is changing from moment to moment. *Anatta* is the realisation that the *citta* is dependently arisen; that means it is not Self – not some isolated and independent, unchanging entity. Rejection of the *citta* as a process is at least as harmful as the assertion that it is a permanent thing.

So the issue of personality also makes a statement about the practice, and the expression of the Dhamma. Quite a few of the forest masters express their insights in terms that are doctrinally questionable – Ajahn Maha Bua refers to the “deathless *citta*” and Ajahn Thate had his own way of defining *samādhī* as distinct from *jhāna*. Yet these are people who have given massive amounts of endeavour and commitment to the path of practice, and whose accomplishments are self-evident. Then there was Ajahn Buddhadasa whose swipes at Acariya Buddhaghosa, the foundation stone of Theravada, are an embarrassment to the faint-hearted...then Ajahn Sumedho raises eyebrows in Buddhist circles by references to God....The Buddha's statement on teaching doesn't seem to allow much room: *Bhikkhus, these two things conduce to the confusion and disappearance of True Dhamma...the wrong expression of its basic meaning and wrong interpretation of its significance.* (Anguttara Nikaya, Twos, 20)

Maybe when it comes down to practice, we have to allow that language can only offer *basic* meanings, the master has to indicate, within a framework of consistency of aims and means, which expression and approach works best for which individual. Direct practice means that the results can only be known in oneself. More precariously, it also means that in the process we have to fully *be* ourselves – in order to realise that our subjective core is not-Self. The classic tools of practice are calm and insight, but do we always use them to enter the core? Or just to change the form of the identity? Any experienced meditator will know how readily self-deception covers the changing *citta*; how strong is the desire to *be* Somebody Who is Enlightened; how in fact the most deeply-rooted hunger is not for sense-objects, but to have an unchanging, satisfied Self. Calm, and even insight at a certain level, get enrolled in

the mission to accumulate and bolster up the self-image. So the other renowned strategy of the tradition is one of “pushing your buttons”: things seem settled and peaceful, so let’s try a few weeks of tudong with little to eat, insecurity and some sickness; let’s see what being in a noisy crowd of people asking pointless questions does to mindfulness. What’s it like when the daily routines seem dreary, or the teacher doesn’t come up with a talk that inspires us? What comes up out of the “enlightened heart” is: “This is ridiculous! I didn’t come here to do this! Who does he/she think they are!” And a dawning recognition that the cosmetic job on the mind is starting to crack.

continued from page 2

for a lifetime: she is like this, he is like that; and these influence how we react and we respond to each other – just in the way someone looks: pleasing, happy, welcoming; mean and unpleasant; or somebody praises us or insults us. We can carry resentment about being insulted for a lifetime and never forgive that person. Maybe they did it when they were just having a bad time, even after thirty years, we can still make a problem about it if we want. So this self needs to be examined and looked at and contemplated, in religious terms.

Every religion has its self-naughting teachings: in some ways religion is about relinquishing the selfish tendencies of the mind, so before we can, say, realise the Kingdom of God we have to let go of our selfish fascinations and obsessions. Or, if we are going to realise the true Dhamma, we need to let go of the self view. So this can be another command from above, like ‘You shouldn’t be selfish! Get rid of any selfishness and try to become somebody who is pure!’ We would all agree with that, nobody here would relish the idea of becoming more and more selfish, but sometimes we don’t know how not to be selfish. We may have grand ideas that we should give up all our wealth, not hold on to anything; then we’re getting closer to not being selfish – but the strange thing is that when you become a monk or a nun, sometimes, although you are thinking you are getting rid of selfishness, you find yourself getting more and more selfish. Your selfishness becomes very concentrated, because you can’t spread yourself over such a wide area as in lay life. So you become much more aware of it. And if you condemn it, then it seems to be a hopeless situation, because you begin to interpret life from that sense of ‘I’m selfish and I’ve got to get rid of this selfishness.’ And one of the biggest problems in our way of thinking is to relinquish that basic premise that ‘I am this person and I have got to do something, in order to become an unselfish, enlightened person in the future.’

The tests and trials vary in terms of persons and situations; but you notice that the master is the one who doesn’t get caught up in the drama. Sometimes that one is outside, sometimes within. Whichever way it is, the teaching is right there: with the revealing and acceptance of oneself as a pre-requisite. Then it requires discipline to take hold of the self-process as phenomena that are dependently arisen; otherwise the practice turns into a personality cult – narcissism or hero-worship. It takes a pretty solid kind of a person to know what they have – in order to know who they’re not. It’s a deeply personal thing.

Ajahn Sucitto

We are conditioned to think this way in our culture: be a good boy and therefore you do this and you do that and in the future you will become somebody who will be worthy and acceptable in society. This makes sense on the worldly side of life, because we start out illiterate, so we have to learn, and from then on we have to study all the different subjects in a school in order to become someone who can get through the system. If we fail then we become someone who fails. And failure is despised. It is interesting in teaching meditation to people who have this fear of failure, they fear that they are going to fail in meditation. But there is no way you could fail in meditation. It is not about failure, otherwise even

meditation becomes just another way for us to prove ourselves. ‘I can’t do it now. If I practise hard, I will become a good meditator and I will become enlightened, hopefully...’ And then

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the doubt comes: ‘But I don’t think I could ever get enlightened. Who is enlightened?’

People like to check us all out to see if Ajahn Sumedho is enlightened or whether Ajahn Viradhammo is, or whether we have reached some kind of advanced level. Or are we just blokes who haven’t quite made it? But there is a different way of looking and thinking which is the opposite of seeing ourselves in terms of being somebody who has to do something to become somebody who is better than he or she is right now. That is the worldly way of thinking. That’s what people like to hear isn’t it: ‘I had all kinds of problems and was a very miserable, unhappy man and then practising meditation I saw the light and now I’m happy and fulfilled.’ From the worldly conditioned attitude, ‘I am this person, I am this personality, I am Ajahn Sumedho... I am all kinds of things... I should be and I shouldn’t be.’ But the aim of Buddhist meditation is about changing one’s attitude by using the reflective or intuitive function of the mind.

When we go into the stillness of meditation, often

times the sense of oneself will take us over, we'll be filled with all kinds of memories and ideas about ourselves. We sometimes wish that... 'if I go and meditate then I'll go into stillness and I'll get out of this ugly scenario of myself.' Sometimes the mind will suddenly just stop and we'll experience a kind of bliss, or a peace that we have either forgotten or never really noticed before. But the sense of oneself will still operate because of the force of habit. So we develop an attitude of listening to this self, not in terms of believing or disbelieving but in noticing what it really is that arises and ceases. Whether we think of ourselves as the greatest or the worst doesn't matter, the condition itself comes and goes. Through letting go or 'self-naughting', not trying to get rid of it but allowing it to go, then we begin to experience the true nature of mind which is bliss, silence.

So there are moments in our lives when the self does stop functioning and we get in touch with the pure state of conscious experience. That is what we call bliss. But when we have those blissful experiences, immediately the desire to have them again takes over, and no matter how hard we try to have it again, as long as we're attached to the view of wanting bliss again, we will never get it. It doesn't work that way. Wanting it means that we have already made it impossible, so the attitude then is one of letting go of desire. Not trying to suppress desire, because that is another kind of desire: the desire to get rid of desire is still the same problem. So if we're trying to suppress or annihilate desire, it doesn't work. Nor does just following desire. But in this state of attentive awareness, we begin to see what is actually taking place, then we can let go of the causes of our suffering. We see how it actually is, and we have that intuitive wisdom to let go. So in this life as a human being from birth to death every moment is an opportunity for understanding in the right way. Success or failure suddenly doesn't mean anything because even if we fail, we learn from that. This doesn't mean that we don't try or put ourselves forth but that our aim is no longer to succeed but to understand things.

It takes a long time to get underneath this self view because it is an all pervasive influence on our conscious experience. With meditation also, we bring attention to very ordinary things like the breath and the body, and so we learn how to bring our attention into the present moment, to sustain our attention rather than be caught up in trying to become something, or trying to get something out of our practice. This 'trying to get something' doesn't work because whatever we get we are going to lose; so if you feel you've got *samādhi* that means you are going to lose it also. When we go on a very formal quiet meditation retreat, we can get into a blissful state. But then when the retreat ends, we lose it. This doesn't mean to dismiss retreats but to try to look at these opportunities, not from the worldly, self-centred position any more but from observing how things are when we remove sensory stimulation, or when we get out of the sensory deprivation tank and walk out into

the street, with the traffic noises, the pollution, and people rushing by – we can feel even worse than before because now we have become refined and the coarse world is too unbearable. But if we contemplate in the right way, we see the sensory deprivation or the sensory stimulation as 'the way it is'. Then it doesn't stir up or aggravate the senses and we're more or less in touch with the mind that is blissful. It's always present: but when we're caught in irritation and agitation, we don't notice it.

So the Buddhist approach to this, rather than going off and living in a sensory deprivation tank, or becoming a hermit, is to develop that awareness, because through mindfulness we begin to realise that the pure nature of the mind is always with us, even now. Even though we might be agitated or irritated, if we are mindful we'll experience a natural bliss beyond that. And once we realise that for ourselves, then we know how not to suffer. The end of suffering is in seeing things as they really are, so that our refuge isn't in this reactive excited condition of the eyes and the ears and the nose, the tongue, the body, the brain, the emotions. In these are the conditions that are irritating, agitated. Through mindfulness we realise that which transcends these conditions. That is our real refuge. This we can realise as human beings through wise contemplation of our own personal predicament. ❖

GOING FORTH & ACCEPTANCE

Amaravati Saturday, May 9th

*All are welcome
to attend the ceremony in which*

Anagarikā Sylvia Bayer

will request the Going Forth (*Pabbajja*),
from Ajahn Sumedho, to be accepted into
the Order of Siladharas.

The ceremony will take place in
the Temple at 1.30pm
The meal offering will be at 10.30am

BHIKKHU UPASAMPADĀ Cittaviveka, June 28th

Samaneras will be accepted into
the Bhikkhu Sangha

Ceremony begins at 1.30 pm

*If you require overnight accommodation
for either of these events please write to the guest nun
or monk well in advance.*

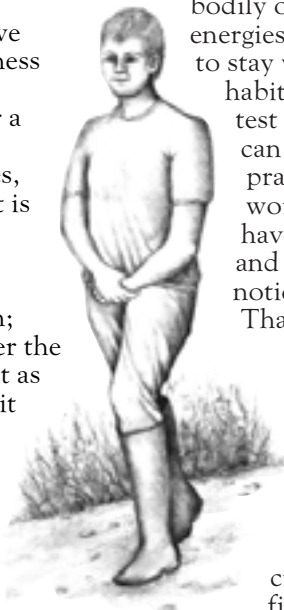
Meditation Class

Ajahn Sucitto

Now, to practise mindfulness of walking, we find an open space. Ideally we should try to have a path of about twenty paces, but in a house we'd probably have to circumambulate, to walk around a room, rather than backwards and forwards. We have to do the best we can if we're inside, but if there is a garden or driveway we can use that. It may drive the neighbours absolutely crazy, they may wonder what we're doing, and generally think we've lost something! Because what we do if we are doing walking meditation is stand, and then walk straight forwards for about twenty paces, and then stop, stand still, turn round and walk back again – and we keep doing this, walking back and forth. While walking we keep the gaze, the attention of the eyes, lightly focused on the ground in front, say about two to three metres away, so that the head is ever-so-slightly angled down. Rather than looking at anything in particular, we are just collecting attention; this is quite important because if we're just looking at everything around then we can get very distracted. What happens in walking meditation is that there are so many things that come through the mind anyway that it is very helpful to learn to sustain just a light, focused gaze that is not looking at anything in particular. While walking up and down we very quickly notice that when we see things, the mind picks up: 'Ooh, look at that flower, that bird...', and the same with hearing, thinking or feeling; but the idea is to maintain a central position so that things are just passing through that central position of walking.

To heighten it a little more, generally we try to focus the attention on the feelings in the feet as we walk along. As with breathing meditation when we go, 'in breath, out breath', with walking, the feeling's in the foot, the left foot, then the foot hits the ground, then the right foot hits the ground. So that rhythm acts as a sort of base line, or underlying theme, that we keep referring to and bringing the attention back to through this changing realm of sense-consciousness

Then when we get to the end of the path we stand still, trying to expand the whole awareness from the soles of the feet up to the top of the head, so we can imagine ourselves like a pole or a tree, or the whole body just standing, so that the whole body is attentive. We close the eyes, breathe in and out a few times, feeling what it is like to stand still. Then we turn around and walk back again. Stop at the end of the path, stand still, we give ourselves two or three breaths, turn round and then walk back again; stay cool with it all. The mind will run all over the place, apparently, but instead of thinking of it as my mind running all over the place, think of it as the place is running all over the mind – just letting stuff run through as it will – and staying centred and peaceful about it; and then contemplating and noticing the experience of the change of it all, the flow of it all.



Clear comprehension can be seen as reflecting, considering, and there are four ways of doing this. Firstly, there is clear comprehension regarding purpose. So, for example, when you sit to meditate, just notice what your intention is. This may not be something that you have much feeling for. You might think, 'Well, I suppose it seemed like a good idea at the time', or, 'it's seven-thirty'. But if you're not clear about intent then in a way the mind is not fully attentive, and things get done in an habitual way. One can certainly do this with meditation, it can become just a something one does, without really knowing why, or what one is doing.

This doesn't mean that you need to have an intellectual analysis of motivations, but just to get the feeling of purpose that is there as one sits down to practise meditation. There may be a feeling of wanting to look at what one is doing, and being attentive to where one is at or of coming to terms with oneself – some feeling that the mind is inclining towards attentiveness in a particular way. This can also help us to consider what we should be focusing upon, which is important because it can sometimes be the case that we focus upon things in order to *not* be aware of what's going on. We might try to use meditation as a way of blocking out, perhaps focusing on the breath because of *not* wanting to be aware of guilt or fear. We can twist meditation into a way of suppressing things that should actually be acknowledged and investigated; so instead of looking at the mind-state we're in, we might look at a physical experience, whereas actually what would be more significant would be to look at the mind-state. So we have to look at our sense of purpose: do we wish to understand, or are we trying to avoid something?

Another basis for clear comprehension is regarding domain or resort. This refers to where you place and sustain your attention: are we going to contemplate body, feeling, mind, or what? And then to make a practice out of that so that one can really experience a bodily or mental process through a range of times and energies.... it means knowing what to focus on, and how to stay with it. And in the course of doing that, mental habits will bring up all kinds of challenges that will test one's skills. These obstacles are all things that we can look at with mindfulness, so the on-going practice is to be able to open up the fears and worries and nagging thoughts and moods that we have – to open up the Pandora's box of the mind and let a few things out to be examined, to be noticed and be seen as that which arises and ceases.

That entails staying within the meditation theme so that aspects of consciousness that normally we either act upon or repress can be seen coolly and objectively. That allows us to let them go. To stay within the domain means to abide in the direct experience, rather than in conceptual interpretations. Then an understanding will arise that allows the heart to find peace, rather than explanations or criticisms or speculation. This is what is meant by finding the right resort, the right place, the right

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foundation as a basis for clear comprehension.

Another one is suitability, the suitability of the meditation object – choosing an object which will bring around the right results. So, for example, maybe there's no point in focusing on the breath if you're very tired – you'd just fall asleep; neither is there a lot of point if the mind is very agitated, because we just can't get to it. In such cases it's best to find a meditation object such as the feelings in the hand, or the feelings in the head or body, or just the bodily posture. With sexual longing, contemplate the body in its constituent parts and elemental forms; with grudges and aversion reflect on the personal harm that these states cause and exercise a broader viewpoint. Such exercises free up the mind's energy for more far-reaching goals. So what is suitable in terms of the meditation object or in terms of effort means it's possible through meditation to bring up the right kind of effort that's neither strained nor forced, but it's enough so that your mind can apply itself purposefully.

And the fourth consideration, which in a sense, covers the others, is just to be undeluded, clearly comprehending the state of mind. In other words, to be experiencing these in and of themselves rather than as aspects of a personality. This is tricky. It often entails, first of all, coming to terms with why we take the energies and permutations of mind so personally. What do we base our self-esteem on? What have we been trained to think, or stimulated to feel? Are those programmes and messages created and owned by our personality – or isn't it the other way round? This doesn't mean denying personality, but noticing that it is the agent rather than the author of our lives. If you have self-pride you have self-aversion.

So there is always that need to keep a fresh angle on this stuff. We can start to use a suitable object for meditation, such as the breath – the full breath – breathing in and out and notice what comes up. We may feel happy, calm, confused or restless; and then, if we can actually just sustain mindfulness that notices these mental experiences coming and going, then all is well and good. However, if, after some attempts, we just can't keep our sense of balance then we have to change and find another meditation object, such as just listening to the sound of the mind, or focusing on another aspect of the body.

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QUESTIONS

Q. Is meditation just introspective and self-obsessed, just a study of the self?

A. This kind of meditation helps us to centre on how things are to us, which is quite valid, because actually, what seems to be the world out there is really just our picture of it. It is strongly affected by what we choose to be aware of, how we receive that, and what we do about it; so really the idea of the world and the self as separate is very misguided.

What is the world? Well, for a start, it's what you choose to look at. For example, blue-green algae may not mean very much to you, but it might mean something to a biologist. It might be his whole world – he knows blue-green algae, but knows nothing about legal systems. If you're in the teaching profession your world is very much that, or you read the newspapers and then the world seems to be Yugoslavia, Iraq or Somalia and an

endless series of woes and horrors. So the world is what we choose to look at, or what is directed to us.

The world is also the way we perceive things. We can perceive things in terms of ambition – how we're getting on at it – or we can perceive it in terms of how we feel about it. We can see it as a frightening place, a place where you've got to get ahead. Or we can perceive the world as a place where we're supposed to be compassionate and kind. Those very attitudes will naturally affect the way we perceive the world. Now, this can go on and on, but the point really is that we can't really understand the world until we understand ourselves, but that we don't really understand ourselves until we understand the world! Because the two are a totality, a continuity, different ends of the same thing. So you can look at one end of a stick or the other end, but they're still the same stick.

It is certainly the case that some people who meditate can get intensely obsessive and self-conscious, but that's not the idea of it. That's getting it wrong – that's where we don't understand it; so meditation does involve an element of reflection. Learning is important, because otherwise we do find ourselves getting obsessed or stuck into selfishness which becomes refined in particular terms, such as wanting to get away from it all, or to have some kind of pleasant experience, or become somebody special, with some special esoteric knowledge. Those drives and instincts can happen in us, it's true, but the aim in this meditation is not to develop those, but to understand and transcend them. When there's mindfulness and clear comprehension, when we're mindful of the mind, then we're also looking at the kind of desires we have. This is not to start being moralistic about desire, but just to notice what desire feels like, with the mind reaching out. The point is to understand that movement of trying to hold something and have something, to be somebody or to get somewhere – to really notice that feeling as not being what mindfulness is about. Mindfulness actually sees it, and we let go.

So we are always coming back to the ground in meditation – to the place of stability and coolness and steadiness and non-acquisition, non-achievement, non-becoming, non-obsession. It's a great earther. So the more we can do that, the more we actually can be open to what apparently is the external world, because we're letting go of our defensiveness or our greed, our selfishness with it. We're more able to avoid following those habits – those patterns of mental behaviour – so we really can be much more open and responsive to the world through this kind of meditation, if it's done properly.

But it's also very much the case that we do have to go through these obsessive states. Sometimes the mind comes up with the most foolish obsessions, ridiculous stuff that doesn't even make sense. So when we get an obsessive nagging thought the thing to do is not to get irritated by it – thinking we're going crazy, or asking what it means – but to notice and stay centred. We notice the thought arise and, instead of following it or believing in it or denying it, we just notice it as a thought that moves through the mind. The mind can think of anything, and will do so once we start to deprive it of anything in particular to think about. So the practice is one of non-obsession and non-self – of seeing it all as just stuff, and letting it go.

continued on page 9

Discernment vs. Self-Deception

Upasika Kee Nanayon – also known as Kor Khao-suan-luang after the hill on which she established her hermitage – is generally regarded as the foremost female Dhamma teacher in Thailand this century. She never took any formal ordination or discipleship under a teacher; using the eremitic situation, the Pali Canon and her own determined introspection as her Dhamma-guides. As a result of her practice and example, other women came to live with her as their teacher, and the resultant community continued to maintain the hermitage after her death in 1978.

Collections of her talks have been published both by the Buddhist Publication Society of Kandy, Sri Lanka, and for distribution in Thailand and the West. The following extract comes from a collection translated by Ajahn Thanissaro entitled “An Unentangled Knowing” and distributed as an act of dana from Barre, Massachusetts.

It's important that we discuss the steps of the practice in training the mind, for the mind has all sorts of deceptions by which it fools itself. If you aren't skilful in investigating and seeing through them, they are very difficult to overcome even if you're continually mindful to keep watch over the mind. You have to make an effort to focus on contemplating these things at all times. Mindfulness on its own won't be able to give rise to any real knowledge. At best, it can give you only a little protection against the effects of sensory contact. If you don't make a focused contemplation, the mind won't be able to give rise to any knowledge within itself at all.

This is why you have to train yourself to be constantly aware all around. When you come to know anything for what it really is, there's nothing but letting go, letting go. On the beginning level, this means the mind won't give rise to any unwise or unprofitable thoughts. It will simply stop to watch, stop to know within itself at all times. If there's anything you have to think about, keep your thoughts on the themes of inconstancy, stress, and not-self. You have to keep the mind thinking and labelling solely in reference to these sorts of themes, for if your thinking and labelling are right, you'll come to see things rightly. If you go the opposite way, you'll have to think wrongly and label things wrongly, and that means you'll have to see things wrongly as well. This is what keeps the mind completely hidden from itself.

Now, when thoughts or labels arise in the mind, then if you focus on watching them closely you'll see that they're sensations – sensations of arising and disbanding, changeable, unreliable, and illusory. If you don't make an effort to keep a focused watch on them, you'll fall for the deceptions of thought-formation. In other words, the mind gives rise to memories of the past and fashions issues dealing with the past, but if you're aware of what's going on in time, you'll see that they're all illusory. There's no real truth to them at all. Even the meanings the mind gives to good and bad sensory contacts at the moment they occur: if you carefully observe and contemplate, you'll see that they're all deceptive. There's no real truth to them. But ignorance and delusion latch onto them all, and this drives the mind around in circles.

In other words, it doesn't know what's what – how these things arise, persist, and disband – so it latches onto them and gets itself deceived on many, many levels. If you don't stop to focus and watch, there's no way you can see through these things at all.

But if the mind keeps its balance or stops to watch and know within itself, it can come to realise these things for what they are. When it realises them, it can let them go automatically without being attached to anything. This is the knowledge that comes with true mindfulness and discernment: it knows and lets go. It doesn't cling. No matter what appears – good or bad, pleasure or pain – when the mind knows, it doesn't cling. When it doesn't cling, there's no stress or suffering. You have to keep hammering away at this point: when it doesn't cling, the mind can stay at normalcy. Empty. Undisturbed. Quiet and still. But if it doesn't read itself in this way, doesn't know itself in this way, it will fall for the deceits of defilement and craving. It will fashion up all sorts of complex and complicated things that it itself will have a hard time seeing through, for they'll have their ways of playing up to the mind to keep it attached to them, all of which is simply a matter of the mind's falling for the deceits of the defilements and cravings within itself. The fact that it isn't acquainted with itself – doesn't know how mental states arise and disband and take on objects – means that it loses itself in its many, many attachments.

There's nothing as hard to keep watch of as the mind, because it's so accustomed to wrong views and wrong opinions. This is what keeps it hidden from itself. But thanks to the teachings of the Buddha, we can gain knowledge into the mind, or into consciousness with its many layers and intricacies that, when you look into it deeply, you'll find to be empty – empty of any meaning in and of itself.

This is an emptiness that can appear clearly within consciousness. Even though it's hidden and profound, we can see into it by looking inward in a way that's quiet and still. The mind stops to watch, to know within itself. As for sensory contacts – sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and that sort of thing – it isn't interested,

because it's intent on looking into consciousness pure and simple, to see what arises in there and how it generates issues. Sensations, thoughts, labels for pleasure and pain and so forth, are all natural phenomena that change as soon as they're sensed – and they're very refined. If you view them as being about this or that matter, you won't be able to know them for what they are. The more intricate the meanings you give them, the more lost you become – lost in the whorls of the cycle of rebirth.

The cycle of rebirth and the processes of thought-formation are one and the same thing. As a result, we whirl around and around, lost in many, many levels of thought-formation, not just one. The knowledge that would read the heart can't break through to know, for it whirls around and around in these very same thought-formations, giving them meanings in terms of this or that, and then latching onto them. If it labels them as good, it latches onto them as good. If it labels them as bad, it latches onto them as bad. This is why the mind stays entirely in the whorls of the cycle of rebirth, the cycle of thought-formation.

For this reason, to see these things clearly requires the effort to stop and watch, to stop and know in an appropriate way, in a way that's just right. At the same time, you have to use your powers of observation.

That's what will enable you to read your own consciousness in a special way. Otherwise, if you latch onto the issues of thoughts and labels, they'll keep you spinning around. So you have to stop and watch, stop and know clearly by focusing down – focusing down on the consciousness in charge. That way your knowledge will become skilful.

Ultimately, you'll see that there's nothing at all – just the arising and disbanding occurring every moment in emptiness. If there's no attachment, there are no issues. There's simply the natural phenomenon of arising and disbanding. But because we don't see things simply as natural phenomena, we see them as being true and latch onto them as our self, good, bad, and all sorts of other complicated things. This keeps us spinning around without knowing how to find a way out, what to let go of – we don't know. When we don't know, we're like a person who wanders into a jungle and doesn't know the way out, doesn't know what to do....

Actually what we have to let go of lies right smack in

front of us: where the mind fashions things and gives them meanings so that it doesn't know the characteristics of arising and disbanding, pure and simple. If you can simply keep watching and knowing, without any need for meanings, thoughts, imaginings – simply watching the process of these things in and of itself – there won't be any issues. There's just the phenomenon of the present: arising, persisting, disbanding, arising, persisting, disbanding.... There's no special trick to this, but you have to stop and watch, stop and know within yourself every moment. Don't let your awareness stream away from awareness to outside preoccupations. Gather it in so it can know itself clearly – that there's nothing in there worth latching onto. It's all a bunch of deceits.

To know just this much is very useful for seeing the truth inside yourself. You'll see that consciousness is empty of any self. When you look at physical phenomena, you'll see them as elements, as empty of any self. You'll see mental phenomena as empty of any self, as elements of consciousness – and that if there's no attachment, no latching on, there's no suffering or stress....

So even if there's thinking going on in the mind, simply watch it, simply let it go, and its cycling will slow down. Fewer and fewer thought-formations will occur. Even if the mind doesn't stop completely, it will form fewer and fewer thoughts. You'll be able to stop to watch, stop to know more and more. And this way, you'll come to see the tricks and deceits of thought-formation, mental labels, pleasure and pain, and so on. You'll be able to know that there's really nothing inside – that the reason you were deluded into latching onto things was because of ignorance, and that you made yourself suffer right there in that very ignorance....

So you have to focus down on one point, one thing. Focusing on many things won't do. Keep mindfulness in place: stopping, knowing, seeing. Don't let it run out after thoughts and labels. But knowing in this way requires that you make the effort to stay focused – focused on seeing clearly, not just on making the mind still. Focus on seeing clearly. Look on in for the sake of seeing clearly...and contemplate how to let go. The mind will become empty in line with its nature in a way that you'll know exclusively within. ❖

continued from page 7

Q. When you first start meditating do you just do it for short times, then go for longer and longer, or just let it flow?
A. When I first began to meditate ... I started by doing 15 minutes of sitting and 15 minutes of walking. I found that to alternate sitting and walking was good, because then I could get a whole half-hour in, whereas just to sit still for half an hour can be pretty strenuous at first, or really difficult because the mind can't stay with one object for very long, so we can find ourselves getting physically very uncomfortable, or over-stressed trying to hold onto the particular meditation object. But if we

alternate, do a little of one then a bit of another, have a break, then we can actually sustain a meditation practice over a longer period of time. Then of course we can build it up – to half-an-hour sitting, or an hour sitting even, and so on... but one moment is better than nothing! If we start to think in terms of how much we've got to do, then that particular thought is an obstacle. It's better to try to do it purposefully, in the way we'd do any exercise – doing it to a point where there is a little bit of push required, a little bit of stretching, not over-much, then developing it. ❖

Dhamma

Shortly after his 50th birthday last year, Ajahn Viradhammo set out on a journey. This is hardly the Buddhist heartland, but of heartfelt significance. He was born in Germany, but left there when he was young. Last year then was the first time that



Q. What are some of the words you would use to describe this trip?

A. Interesting, exciting, and sorrowful. It was a mixture. I had a deep interest in my people's country, which I'd so much heard about in my childhood, and in speaking my mother's tongue and finding out people's personal histories. Then there was the sadness of seeing the mistreatment of people and the attempted destruction of a culture over the past fifty years.

What was surprising was how well it went and how everything came together so perfectly – whether it was through bus rides, or people helping us out, or finding places to sleep in the forests, or in a whole variety of things. So that sense of being taken care of by forces of goodness was very magical. However, in terms of what I saw politically, socially and economically there were no real surprises; I had expected something like it from my readings and from what I'd talked about with my mother and other Latvians. Seeing it in real life, however, is much different.

It was also interesting when we weren't with people. Some of the bird watching we did was fabulous: eagles and cranes and black storks and white storks and all kinds of water birds. But the overall feeling was that I was very grateful that my parents had escaped from Latvia!

Q. Was it a kind of *tudong* (pilgrimage)?

A. Well I didn't go with that intention. I just was going more as a person whose heritage was Latvian. I didn't go pindapata or seek alms. Nick was there, he had money and took care of us, but it ended up that people were very interested in what I was doing. Seeing something so exotic as a Buddhist monk in the backwoods of Latvia was very fascinating for them. So it did end up being like a *tudong* in the sense that we made lots of contacts and people seemed to be very grateful for us being there. There was the magic of *tudong*, of spontaneous happenings through just being open and trusting and having faith.

Q. How do you think you can bring back a little bit of that magic to our monastery?

A. Well I think one of the big lessons of *tudong*, for me, always is, and this time especially was, trust and faith. Life in a monastery is more regulated by meetings, there isn't the spontaneity of just taking off and walking which is a very free, liberating feeling. Because of the complexities of monastic life and because we live on



Refugee

*... out with Nick Scott on a pilgrimage through the Baltic States.
... ce to the Ajahn: his parents fled Latvia when Stalin took over.
... hen he was seven to grow up in Canada.
... t he had seen his ethnic homeland.*

alms, there can easily be a tendency to worry. The magic is in just doing your best and trusting that things will somehow work out OK; that the forces of goodness will provide. That quality of faith is something that brings a lot of joy and sparkle to the monastic life.

Q. Did you have any Buddhist contacts before you went?

A. Strangely enough most of our contacts were outside of Latvia. We had a good contact in Poland; a good contact in Vilnius, Lithuania; a kind of vague contact in Estonia and a good contact in St Petersburg; but our Latvian contacts were a bit vague. In some of the places we walked through we had no contacts, and we just went without knowing anyone. In many ways that was the most interesting because then one has to live in complete faith. The contacts that we did have were the ones which created the most populous situations for sharing Buddhist teachings with groups. We were invited to teach in Riga (Latvia); in Poland we did some teaching, just to small groups who were interested, we did a one-day meditation in Bialystok in N.E. Poland; and then in Riga I came together with a group several times. There was a sort of vague invitation, a possibility of doing a retreat next year in Latvia. Then in Estonia we had a name from a Buddhist Directory which we made contact with, and that turned out to be a Kagyu group. We met them every evening and had Dhamma discussion on several nights. St. Petersburg was the most organised venue: people had rented a school room and about thirty people were there every night. One night we had a meeting in the Buriyat Temple, which is the Buddhist Temple in St. Petersburg.

Q. What differences do you see between what you teach in those places and the things that would come up, say, in Canada or here in England or New Zealand?

A. I taught so briefly to people there that it's hard to say, but I should think the sense of freshness, of people not having had much contact with Dhamma and being very fresh and grateful. That was very, very strong. I

think what was different in their lives was the physical and social difficulties they're facing in order to just pay the rent and have a place to sleep. So to hear someone talking Dhamma when most of the time the discussion is about how to survive – I think just that was very refreshing.

Q. So you found they were open to you.

A. Yes, very open: even the ordinary farming people that we ended up talking to. There was one incident when Nick and I were backpacking, walking along a river bank and we ended up spending the night in a deserted barn. In the evening I sought out the local farmer to get some drinking water, and it turned out that he was a policeman. He gave us the water and then came by later with a whole basket full of cottage cheese and milk and rhubarb and all kinds of lovely things. He had studied philosophy at the University of Leningrad for five years and then taught Marxist philosophy in University of Riga for twenty years; then with the collapse of the Soviet empire and Marxist philosophy being no longer in favour, he had no job and so he ended up having to do subsistence farming with his wife and her brother. His salary as a policeman is barely enough to pay for petrol so they have to do subsistence farming. So he is a policeman and farmer – and he loves it. We sat for many hours and talked.

Q. But do you think that the people in these countries need to hear something different than say people in England and New Zealand?

A. Yes, I think so, I think somehow one has to address the predicament of their conditioning which has been for the last fifty years through the Soviet system. So basically I had to get to know that first through their questions. I can speculate that part of their conditioning has been of a very suppressed mentality which has no chance of self-expression, so there's the fear of self expression and of initiative. But also there's been the security of a system which gives you enough to survive





on. So that's created an apathetic kind of mentality based both on fear and on being minimally taken care of. This is something that people talked about and would have to be addressed.

Sadness was prevalent and pervasive, one sensed what had happened there. It wasn't the sadness that you might have if you walked into the killing fields of Cambodia. There wasn't that kind of horror around. It was more the sadness of a culture which had been dominated by something very grey, very humourless and totally lacking in love. Also there had been economic mismanagement. So there was a pervading sense of how unnecessary and stupid it had all been, and the sadness of what people had to endure. But because there wasn't a lot of killing it didn't get depressing in that way.

I'd be speaking to someone in Latvian and I'd hear their story. Say, as of one man who had been sent to Siberia twice and now he's 75 and retired, he started to cry and we talked for two hours. Just reflecting on the sadness brought a lot of compassion and warmth and feeling for those people. And all the time it was interesting because there was an unveiling of history happening.

Q. Can you explain just some of the practicalities; how you slept, what you carried, how you ate?

A. We had minimal sized packs, Nick had a bigger pack than me, so he tended to carry more than me. We had middle-weight sleeping bags, bivvy bags – which are kind of waterproof sack that you sleep in, some rain gear and a minimal amount of clothing. I used sandals.

Sometimes we'd stay in Bed and Breakfasts, sometimes we'd stay with people who had arranged things. Some people in Riga gave us a flat, people in Tallinn in Estonia gave us a flat, art students in Vilnius gave us a studio, and someone let us use their flat in St. Petersburg. So in the cities we tended to live in people's flats, but then out in the wilds we just lived in our bivvy bags, which was very difficult with the mosquitoes which were horrendous from Latvia onwards.

Our journey started in Poland in mid-May and we were there almost a week in two big national parks. From there we went to South-East Lithuania where there is a big national park; then on to another large wetland area in Lithuania. In Lithuania we travelled to the capital, Vilnius, then from Vilnius we went to Riga. In Riga we took a bus over to the coast and then we walked along the coast for three weeks, which was the major walking portion. Then we went back to Riga again and

did a canoe trip east of Riga in the Gauja National Park which has a beautiful river. Then we went very briefly up to Tallinn in Estonia, and finished off with five days in St. Petersburg.

Q. Were you recognised as a religious person?

A. Oh definitely – but in the cities we were often thought to be Hare Krishna. Especially in Riga, because Riga has a big Hare Krishna restaurant and a very compassionate soup kitchen. In the country the people didn't know really what we were but they knew I was some kind of religious person.

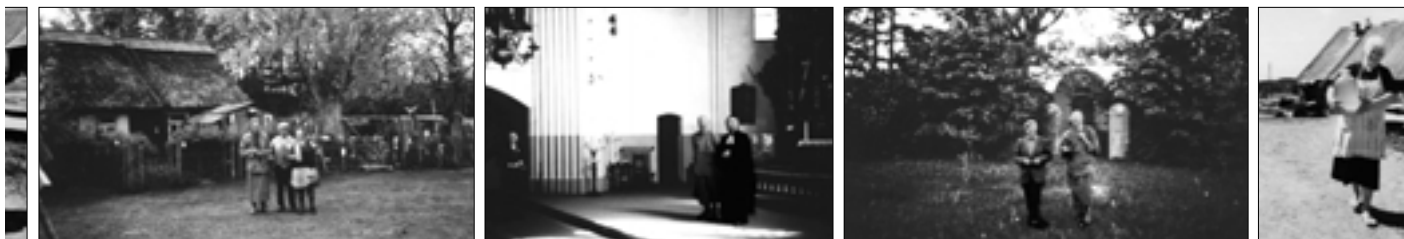
I stuck to the Vinaya even though people would always want to feed us. For instance, there's a festival in Latvia on the longest day of the year in June, and it's big, bigger than Christmas, which they celebrate and they do a lot of eating and drinking all night, and we were with a family who were having a barbecue. They really wanted me to eat, you know, "have something to eat" and so on, so I said to Nick "You eat for me." So Nick nibbled on a few things. But I tried to show them how a bhikkhu lives; but not in an oppressive way.

Q. Did they understand after a while?

A. The people that we stayed with for longer periods of time respected it. Obviously people who we met for just an hour or two didn't really pick up on what the rules and the Vinaya structure were about. I think they just appreciated seeing a different kind of person. A lot of people seemed honoured that we would be there, because a lot of the places that we went to are just so off the map, so forgotten and the people feel like they've been cast aside. We were often treated like honoured guests.

Q. How do you see that trip now?

A. One of the most powerful memories for me is of a time when Nick and I were walking in Old Riga. In Old Riga you'll find pensioners begging; people who have been trapped between two political eras and who just can't make it. They are very poor and try to survive by selling little bits and pieces. One of these women came up to me thinking that I was a Hare Krishna person and she tried to sell Nick and I some postcards. I had to get to another place so we couldn't do anything right then but she seemed so embarrassed and so humiliated by having to ask to sell those little postcards. She looked quite intelligent, she probably had a PhD or something, and she looked about 60 years old. It just kind of broke my heart. So we went back about a quarter of an hour



later and found her sitting on a bench looking at her postcards and we bought them at twice the price, and she was over the moon, she was so happy. It wasn't the kind of poverty you might see in Calcutta but there was something about those people who had lost their culture and who had no real stability and no possibility of income... it really broke my heart. And this is still with me.

Visually what stands out is the beauty of the huge pine forests which are mostly untouched. Because they haven't had much economic development they've remained quite pristine. So there are the beautiful nature images and then the images of people who are struggling to survive and being very generous with whatever they have. In the midst of that human difficulty and tragedy there is this goodness shining through, people not just dwelling in bitterness or in anger at the Soviet system but struggling with what they can do.

Q. Thinking personally, you were in your fiftieth year, and you went back into your roots, did you touch something deeper?

A. Yes, I think what it really touched was the feeling that my parents' lives were tragic, but that I've found my roots in Dhamma. What I could see was the conditionality of my personality. I could see what some of that was; I felt really at home being able to hear

Latvian which had been a foreign language in Canada. And even though I can speak English much, much better than I can speak Latvian, just being in a Latvian culture and hearing Latvian made me feel very much at home. So there was that feeling. But I could see that all that's the conditioned mind; that some of my personality has been conditioned through that language and that culture. And obviously I was very grateful that my roots are in Dhamma; like Luang Por Chah would say: "Our real home." ❖



Ajahn Viradhammo has subsequently received an invitation to teach a ten-day retreat in Latvia; this will be in June of this year.

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

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.

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.

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.

Pilgrims' Way: the Place of the Buddha

Pilgrimage is a part of the tradition of any religion.

It is a way of travelling to commemorative and sacred places to encourage recollection; although it is also the case that as much of the learning goes on in the course of the journey as at the destinations. In a way it is a symbol of the spiritual path itself, whose aim in the end is not to go anywhere, but to be more fully aware of where we are. The journey is the goal.

Here are some extracts from letters that Ajahn Candasiri and Mei-chi sent us from their pilgrimage in India.

“**Calcutta, 18th November ...** we are enjoying a very benevolent introduction to Mother India staying these first few days with Bhante Dharmapal Mahathera in his temple...Bhante has been incredibly kind. He sent the temple car to meet us at the airport...A couple of monks appeared at the entrance of the departure lounge where we had been told to wait...and we were ushered into the car and driven off through the sleeping city. Mei-chi is a little concerned that it's all a bit soft – we have a pleasant room with its own bathroom and food appears at regular intervals. I told her I thought it would change....

“**Lumbini, 4th - 7th December...** Contrary to reports, we have discovered that there are mosquitoes in India and Nepal, but Mei-chi has a theory that they're timid and won't come in if they see light. So, after a disastrous night in Patna where we both got eaten alive, we have been sleeping with the light on – it seems to work...

“ People had told us that we would probably get a tour bus up here from Bodh-Gaya, but it would probably take 4-5 days. So then we were told with great authority 'You must take the train from Gaya to Varanasi; and from there another train to Gorakhpur and then buses' – but then we were told with equal certainty, 'You must take a bus to Patna, that would be quicker than the train, and from there there are luxury buses to Lumbini'...so we tried to get a ticket for 7 a.m. but... 'no, that bus doesn't run anymore, there is a bus at 2.00 p.m.' That was a difficult journey: I had a horrible headache and Indian buses are NOISY and really shake you about. But the people were kind and made a special stop when I threw up. (After arriving at Patna) 'Oh, no, you must take the train or bus to Varanasi and from there to Gorakhpur'....so we spent the day in the train to Varanasi.. and then another happy day on trains and buses and a jeep – did you know that you can get 17 people in/on a jeep?

“We both like it here very much...I think it's because it feels very feminine. Of course the Buddha is here, but really in contemplating His birth it is His Mother Mayadevi whose presence is most strongly felt. So we have enjoyed that. We asked Bhante (Vimalananda) if it would be all right to meditate at night in the Mayadevi temple...there is that extraordinary sculpture of the birth of the Buddha...that has...for me the quality of the mystery of birth and the coming into manifestation.

“ Lumbini is certainly developing, with lots and lots of temples...funded by the countries that they represent. I'm afraid that it won't be such a pleasant place to visit in a few years' time... already people seem to have caught on to the idea that foreigners mean money...everybody, every creature seems to want something from us. I watch the judging mind, especially where 'Holy' people are

concerned; like the Indian samanera who told us that he was staying on his own in a temple in the next village and then asked for a donation... the shaven headed *sadhu* who came up to us with his tin and one-stringed instrument and began to sing 'Buddham saranam gacchami' at us as if it was some kind of lewd love song...the kids, the beggars, the smartly-dressed man in Calcutta who asked if we had any pens or pocket

calculators...so we contemplate need and greed and I notice I am not yet free of these things – I contemplate Luang Por Chah's definition of 'bhikkhu' – 'one who waits' – who lives on what is freely given, or does without...it is so easy to feel smug when one's needs are freely met. For us for the most part there is physical ease and each day the belly is filled.

“ Tomorrow we leave early for Taulihawa (the 'Nepalese' Kapilavatthu) walking with basic necessities in bundles on our backs...We will return here the following day and have a resting day before making our way to 'Indian' Kapilavatthu.. then we will set off in Mahapajapati's footsteps for Vaisali!” ❖



Mahaparinirvana Temple, Kusinara

At the end of 1996 and for the first three months of 1997, Ajahn Samvaro and Venerable Asabho went on tudong around the Holy Places of India. Venerable Asabho (now in Thailand) gives a sketch of their experience.

India, as a backdrop for one's pilgrim experience is unsettling. It unsettles old notions of self and of what one is doing, old relationship-patterns and values. I think that very power is also the fascination for people like myself who come from a Western, urbanised culture. So part of the attraction is the huge gap between Berne, Switzerland, and Bihar, India. I was not disappointed on that score, at all! It was unsettling – inspiring, moving, heart-opening – but unsettling, and somewhere in the recesses of my heart, it still is.

One of the revelations was that not all poverty – even the brutal poverty of which there is so much in Bihar – is necessarily miserable. I can't help feeling that I've seen as many happy people there as in Switzerland. It seems trite but also true that relative wealth seems to have little to do with how skilfully we live with our minds and hearts and how much happiness and how much misery we manage to generate. The messages are constant in India. It seems that I have seen nowhere such dogged determination to be happy and to survive – somehow.

Physically, we ended up in better shape than we expected. We didn't lose much weight. Of course, we were unwell for a great deal of the time. My feet cracked up; we were both very sick in Bodh-Gaya with colds and flus that had a strength that we were unused to – I especially had a very high fever and was grateful to the people we got to know at the Burmese Vihara, and later, on Christopher Titmuss' retreat.

I was touched by Bodh-Gaya very powerfully. It's the only place I felt something of a grandeur in Buddhist sacral architecture. The Buddhism I grew out of in the West comes out of converted lofts and basements. To actually see an intact temple where Buddhists from all corners of the world unite and worship that is based on the first memorial buildings of King Asoka was very powerful. I had not anticipated it; it was really, really touching to walk in there.

We had just put in a 40 kilometre walk that day, and I was absolutely shattered. I had to spend an hour or two in bed, just shivering, shivering with exhaustion, before I was even capable of walking from the Burmese Vihara over to the Temple. It was nevertheless, very, very uplifting. I had rarely expected such a wealth and texture of devotion; the basic sense of how wonderful that there is a Buddha – which, if you put it in words, is so trivial – but the wonderment and gratitude that there had been such a teacher and there was a chance to witness that and to sail in the wake of this being's work; to find that enshrined, embodied, remembered and symbolised by the stupa alive with bustling Tibetans, Bhutanese, Taiwanese, Koreans, Thais; the whole beehive atmosphere there is in Bodh-Gaya – it was really powerful.

Regarding our route: we flew into Calcutta, and spent two days there before flying on to Patna where we landed about midnight. We started walking out from the airport right away. From then on it was walking down to Nalanda, Rajgir, Gaya, Bodh-Gaya; arrived at Bodh-Gaya about December 31st.

Quite soon I got involved in an incident with a young Belgian man who had a bad experience – he jumped off the roof of the Burmese Vihara and broke his back. I found him there in the morning, so it seemed to fall to me to organise help for him and so I called the Belgian Embassy in New Delhi, and got him flown out after watching over him and looking after him for about 4 days and nights. That was quite a challenging venture which united everyone in the Burmese Vihara making us into a solid community of carers.

Shortly after that we moved over to the Japanese Temple on invitation from the Japanese monk (who happened to be a Theravadin), and then we joined in on Christopher Titmuss' retreat – which we greatly enjoyed. One of the greatest compliments to Christopher I think, are his managers, and these people looked after us very wonderfully when we were sick, and when we were well. We had a very fine time with them.

After that, we walked on to Gaya, to Varanasi, and Sarnath in about 8 days which seemed a bit quick – I wished we had taken a day or two more. I think it took the Buddha 11 days. I needed to recover from that; my feet were all chewed up. There, we were offered train tickets to Deoria and then we walked from Deoria to Kusinara where we spent some time in a Thai monastery.

There the stomach bugs caught up with us, nevertheless, we had an inspiring time at Kusinara. Nothing much seems to happen there anymore but after resting up from the sickness for a while, we ended up taking a ride with a Thai tour-party to Lumbini. That was a little disappointing since we only had one day there and we were still in poor health so we didn't feel like walking off into the yonder, even though this, with hindsight, seemed one of the better places to do some walking.

Someone invited us to Savatthi, so we trekked by Gorakhpur and spent quite a bit of time there in the old Sinhalese Vihara where there was a Sri Lankan monk looking after about fourteen Indian novices. I taught them meditation and Tai Chi exercises and then spent the nights over in the Jetavana. Venerable Samvaro and I would take out what little gear we needed, and meditate there, until we got too sleepy. Then I'd just roll over at the foot of one of the stupas, and wake up early under the starry sky and continue to meditate – and it was beautiful.

On the way back, we stopped over in New Delhi and then landed up in Thailand on an Easter morning, wondering where all the cows were that should be on the road...everything seems so strangely organised! ❖

Signs of

SANTACITTARAMA MOVES TO POGGIO NATIVO

Santacittarama's move to a new site has come at an opportune time: Ven. Abhinando arrived from Cittaviveka in December, we have two anagarikas; and a Japanese bhikkhu, Ven. Aki Paññavuddho, will be arriving from Thailand in spring to bring our resident community up to eight.

The main house is quite comfortable, the central heating is rather ancient – but at least it works. The small house can accommodate seven or eight guests at a pinch. We have some lovely spots for kutis (we have brought two up from Sezze), and we are thinking of buying a second-hand caravan to increase our accommodation.

The monastery land is delightful and we are still exploring it. At one end of the property there is a group of three caves, two of which are high enough to stand up in and perhaps 8-10 metres deep. A discreet path then runs along the stream through the predominantly oak woodland about half a kilometre to the ruin near the other end of the property. There is a hidden ruin among the trees which was said to have been a staging post for changing horses when the old 'salt road' (via Salaria) passed nearby. They probably kept the horses below and the people stayed upstairs. It is a very attractive and secluded spot with trees growing in, through, and out of the stone walls. We think it would make a very nice 'meditation garden', with the sun filtering through in the winter, and the trees providing a pleasant shade in the summer.

It is possible to continue walking beyond our property until reaching the road that leads to the small town of Poggio Nativo, or to a derelict cemetery, where one can easily peer into ill-kept tombs to see human skeletons. What more could a forest monastery ask for – trees, caves, and a nearby abandoned cemetery! We are still in Italy however, and the lack of concern for the environment manifests itself in the polluted stream and the piles of festering rubbish dumped in any convenient place. We are gradually trying to clean up the area.

The neighbours seem very friendly. Our closest neighbour is a farmer who very kindly towed our truck out of the mud when it got stuck the first time that we came. Since then he has been to visit several times, bringing offerings of his own produce – a four kilo sheep's cheese, eggs, honey, vegetables and olive oil. He really seems to have taken to us!

ABHAYAGIRI BUDDHIST MONASTERY

The most memorable event of last summer at Abhayagiri was certainly the full moon day celebrations of July. First of all, during the afternoon, the programme of training for the Upāsika community was launched. It was a small beginning, with an initial twelve people making the commitment, but with many other friends and supporters looking on.

During the evening, after the Upāsika Precept ceremony, we held two Eight Precept ordinations and then the Ten Novice Precepts were given by Ajahn Pasanno who has been given the authority to confer bhikkhu ordination by the Thai Sangha, to the then Anagarika Tom. Tom now bears the name Samanera Karunadhammo, and we expect to give him bhikkhu ordination at *Wesak* this year.

As the senior monks and nuns in Britain have felt it unsuitable for women to undertake training in a situation where there are no resident nuns, we have decided to create the opportunity for women to take on a temporary ordination, for stays of up to three or four months here. So far three women have taken up this option, with two of them subsequently going to join the nuns in England.

As there were only three bhikkhus residing at Abhayagiri for the Rains we did not have the full-scale Kathina ceremony, holding an Alms-giving Ceremony instead. It was a joyous occasion, spread over two days – the Saturday being our third 'Upāsika Day' and the Sunday the Almsgiving itself. About 75 people – including Ven. Sona from British Columbia and Ven. Punnadhammo from Thunder Bay – gathered for the event, which was the largest we have held here so far.

Owing to a large number of generous donations from Thailand, in the Spring of this year we were able to pay off the entire loan which was taken out for the purchase of this property.

This has enabled us to pursue the development of the land (250 acres of rugged forest) according to our current needs and work capacity. We now have five kutis and two geodesic dome tents for residents; also the sizeable garage has been converted into a Dhamma Hall until we can go ahead with a larger building. Otherwise as far as the improvements to the site have been concerned, last year was a fairly quiet one. We are still preparing all the paperwork, drawings and studies necessary for our 'Change of Use' application, and we have undertaken not to put up any new buildings until the 'Use Permit' is through.

The major item to be resolved was the question of our water supply. The well that we use at the moment

Change

only produces one third to one-half a gallon a minute in the dry season: thus, with a population of 10-12 people, we had been regularly running out. During August things got so dire that we had to do an emergency installation of a 2,500 gallon holding tank, just to stop the water from dying on us during the washing up and when taking showers. We have now drilled a new well in the interior of the forest and it looks as though it will answer our problems for the foreseeable future. We have also been investigating the re-institution of a pipeline from a spring to which we have the water rights (half a mile away).

In a way it has been something of a blessing to be holding off on any major construction for now: this situation has afforded us the opportunity to finish off a lot of things which didn't quite get completed last year – such as decking and proper steps for the kutis – as well as giving us the time to install good, level walking paths at all of the dwelling sites. It has also helpfully given us a considerable length of time to consider the most suitable ways of developing the land. More to the point it means that we have been able to have long retreats both during the Vassa and the winter, without ongoing projects to oversee.

SIGNS OF CHANGE IN CANADA

In the past couple of years, there have been developments in Canada regarding forest bhikkhus of Ajahn Chah's lineage.

Arrow River Community Centre is located in Northern Ontario, fifty miles southwest of Thunder Bay. We have 92 acres of land in a beautiful mixed forest. There are presently five all-weather dwelling places on the property as well as a meditation-hall and kitchen, and a well-equipped workshop.

The resident bhikkhu is Ven. Punnadhammo, a Canadian, who began studying the Dhamma in 1979 under Kema Ananda. Kema Ananda was a student of Ven. Ananda Bodhi (later Namgyal Rinpoche); he had himself been ordained as a samanera (novice) but opted to disrobe and practise as a layman after one year in robes. He founded the Centre in 1975 and was the first teacher there. Kema was an expert in the Burmese Insight method of Mahasi Sayadaw and passed these teachings on to Ven. Punnadhammo who did a one-year solitary retreat as a layman at Arrow River in 1988-89. After this he went to Thailand and was ordained in Thailand in the forest tradition of Ajahn Chah in 1990. Between 1990 and 1995 he was based at Wat Pah Nanachat.

In 1995 Kema Ananda contracted lung cancer and anticipating his imminent death he asked Ven. Punnadhammo to return to Canada and to assume management of the Centre. Ven. Punnadhammo returned with the blessing of his seniors in the Order in November of that year and was able to spend some time with his beloved teacher before his death.

The Centre is now a monastery but it is our intention to continue the fine tradition established by Kema Ananda. We still offer the opportunity for serious students to pursue the practice of Dhamma in a quiet forest setting. We are ideally set-up for long-term retreats and welcome serious enquiries. From the beginning of the Arrow River Center, Kema Ananda emphasised the principle of not charging for the Dhamma and, although this policy has sometimes been difficult to maintain in the face of the financial reality, we have always adhered to it as guaranteeing the purity of the teaching. We will continue to honour this principle in the future and the Arrow River Center will operate with what is freely given.

For the foreseeable future we will try to have two or three monks and two or three lay people staying here most of the time. More can stay in the summer months if they are willing to "rough it". Eventually we hope to build additional kutis as resources become available through donations. We currently require the ongoing presence of at least one lay person to act as monastery steward. This can be a rewarding experience for the right person.

Arrow River Community Center, Box2 RR7,
Thunder Bay, Ontario P7C 5V5;
Telephone 807-933-4434.
Website: <http://www.foxnet.net/~arcc/home.html>;
e-mail- arcc@foxnet.net

Birken Forest Monastery is situated in 18 acres of land in British Columbia, a few miles north-east of Princeton. It was opened in October of last year with two resident samanans – Venerable Sona and Samanera Thitapuñño, the latter receiving novice ordination from Ajahn Pasanno on the opening day. Birken is a hermitage with some accommodation for lay guests, a library, weekly Dhamma talks and discussions and a strong commitment to formal meditation practice. Venerable Sona extends the invitation to drop in next time you're in B.C.

Birken Forest Monastery, General Delivery,
Princeton, B.C. VOX 1W0, Canada; phone/fax 250-295-3263.



SANGHA NOTICES

Ajahn Subbato disrobed in Bodhinyanarama Monastery, New Zealand on December 31st last year. A New Zealander by birth, the then Finlay Gilmour turned up at Chithurst in 1981 while there was a lot of building work going on. His energy, skills and ingenuity were, and always remained a prominent part of his offering to the Sangha. He made the commitment to bhikkhu training in 1983 and continued with the practice at Chithurst and Amaravati. He also spent time in Thailand at Wat Pah Nanachat, and a few years after his return to Britain offered to look after Hartridge Monastery (then the Devon Vihara). During the last couple of years, he mentioned some inner conflicts with his life as a bhikkhu, but his decision to disrobe was a sudden one.

We shall miss his humour and energy and wish him well with his life.

LAY FORUMS AT CITTAVIVEKA

These are opportunities for discussion involving Sangha and laity around chosen themes. They begin at 2:00 pm in the monastery's reception room. Themes for the coming season are:

- Sunday 19th April –
'Dis-ease: Buddhist and other approaches to it'
- Sunday 17th May –
'The Four-Fold Sangha'
- Sunday 21st June –
'Death and Bereavement'

CONSTRUCTION WORK AT AMARAVATI

Building work will be starting at Amaravati in April to complete the covered quadrangle (cloister) in front of the Temple. A little later, construction of a new kuti for Ajahn Sumedho will begin. The building work will not alter the schedule of events for the year, but there will be some disruption to movement around the site and access to the Sala and

Temple may be restricted. All being well, the cloister will be complete by early Autumn and the kuti by Christmas. For more information, please contact the Office.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON TALKS AT AMARAVATI

The annual series of talks will begin in the summer. The date for the first talk has not been fixed yet but will probably be in July. See the next newsletter for details.

RETREATS ELSEWHERE

Christian-Buddhist Retreat

26th July – 30th July (change from the previous printed date)
Christian-Buddhist retreat in Portsmouth: 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 (correction from the previous printed date) 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 in Oxford 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.

BUDDHIST SOCIETY

Two Ajahns will represent the Sangha in teaching engagements at the Buddhist Society on:

Thursday 30th April with **Ajahn Sucitto** and on Sunday 17th May **Ajahn Viradhammo**

GROUP NOTICES

If anyone has spare copies of the following books and would be kind enough to donate them to our library we would be very grateful:

Buddhist Birth Stories -
T.W.Rhys-Davids

Speaking of Faith -
The Women's Press

The Religious Significance of the Full Moons - Alec Robertson.

Please send to: The Buddhist Group of Kendal (Theravada), Fellside Centre, Low Fellside, Kendal, Cumbria. LA9 4NJ

FAMILY EVENTS 1998 AT AMARAVATI

Rainbows Weekend: 1st - 4th May
a whirlwind of creative activities.

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

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

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

For details contact
Dan Jones, 59 Cavendish Avenue,
Cambridge, CB1 4UR
Tel: 01223 246257
note new address (same phone)

Sunday Classes -
*last Sunday of each month
starting 12.30, to suit
children 5-50 yrs.*

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

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

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

Teaching and Practice Venues

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	LEEDS AREA Daniella Loeb, (0113) 2791-375 Anne Voist, (01274) 670-865
SOUTH DORSET Barbara Cohen-Walters (Sati sati), (01305) 786-821	
EDINBURGH Muriel Nevin, (0131) 337-0901	SOUTHAMPTON John & Jill Chapman, (01489) 895-301
GLASGOW James Scott, (0141) 637-9731	
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	MAIDSTONE Joan Hamze, (01622) 751-202
BEDFORD David Stubbs, (01234) 720-892	MIDHURST Barry Durrant, (01730) 821479
BELFAST Paddy Boyle, (01232) 427720	NEWCASTLE ON TYNE Andy Hunt, (0191) 478-2726
BRIGHTON Alex Clingan, (01273) 327-925	OXFORD Peter Carey, (01865) 578-76
CAMBRIDGE Gillian Wills, (01954) 780-551	PEMBROKESHIRE/S. WALES Peter and Barbara (Subhdra) Jackson, (01239) 820-790
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
LONDON / NOTTING HILL Jeffrey Craig, (0171) 221-9330 Nick Carroll, (0181) 740-9748	STEYNING / SUSSEX Joe Bartlett, (01903) 879-597
LEIGH-ON-SEA Gool Deboo, (01702) 553-211	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 0YD

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 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—AMARAVATI

Saturday Afternoon Classes 1.30 – 3.30 pm

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

Feel free to come along – no booking is necessary.

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.*

◆ 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 OHF
Tel: (01661) 88-1612
Fax: (01661) 88-1019
Stewards:
Magga Bhavaka Trust.

THAILAND

◆ Wat Pah Nanachat
Bahn Bung Wai,
Amper Warin,
Ubun 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 & 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

Stewards:
Wellington Theravada Buddhist Association.

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

W E S A K

❖ 10th May ❖

Celebrations of the Buddha's birth,
enlightenment and parinibbana will be
held on various dates in May.

*All are welcome to attend.
Please contact the respective monastery
for details.*

OBSERVANCE DAYS

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

Moon Phase	☾ HALF	◯ FULL	☽ HALF	● NEW
APRIL	4 (Sat)	11 (Sat)	19 (Sun)	25 (Sat)
MAY	3 (Sun)	10☉(Sun)	18 (Mon)	25 (Mon)
JUNE	2 (Tues)	9 (Tues)	17 (Wed)	23 (Tues)
JULY	1&31(Wed)	☽8 (Wed)	16 (Thurs)	23 (Thurs)
☉ Wesakha Puja		☽ Asalha Puja (vassa begins next day)		

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Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead
Hertfordshire HP1 3BZ, England

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173

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