



FOREST SANGHA

newsletter

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On Adaptation and Change

*A talk given at Amaravati in March 2003 by Ajahn Candasiri
towards the end of the Winter Retreat*

I sense that the retreat is going along in a gentle way for all of you – nothing too major or dramatic; in most ways it seems to have been pretty steady. For myself it's been a rather different kind of retreat. It's felt gentle and, at some level, it's felt steady; but externally it's been quite – 'dramatic' is too strong a word – but it's certainly been very powerful.

As you know I set off about a month ago to spend two or three weeks' self-retreat time at the monastery in Devon. On my way down I went to visit Patricia, a close friend who was about to die – at least that was my assumption. We had a very lovely meeting. We laughed a lot, and also expressed our appreciation for each other. It was rather emotional for both of us – lots of tears and drama – saying good-bye to somebody I had known for 30 years and shared so much with. Patricia had supported me all through my monastic life. There's something very precious about having somebody believing in you like that, who is definitely on your side. It was a friendship I valued greatly. So this leave-taking – the first leave-taking as it turned out – was very moving. When I was leaving, Patricia asked if I wanted to know when she was actually dying. I said yes, that it would be great if a message could be sent. Then off I went to Devon and began my self-retreat.

The monastery in Devon is a beautiful place for retreat. I was staying in a tiny kuti up on a hill. The kuti had a big window, so I'd sit on the bed watching the sun

coming up. There were these dramatic sunrises; bright red sun and wonderful cloud formations – a continuous variety of visual impressions throughout the day. The only day that didn't change much was a foggy day; it was misty all day. For hours and hours I looked out and couldn't see anything but this fog. It resembled what can sometimes happen to me in my mind – particularly in retreat time, where I can get into a dull, foggy state in which everything looks dreary and depressing; nothing is

clear. These states can seem very solid, fixed. So on this particular day I more or less settled into just being with the dull fog. Then, quite suddenly, the fog lifted; when I wasn't looking, it suddenly cleared! This is very much like meditation practice. There's a dull fog and you might struggle with it. You're aware of it, its dullness and misery, but then somehow or other, when you're not looking, something seems to shift. There's a letting

go of the struggle, and it's all bright and clear again.

So I was really enjoying living in the kuti, and allowing the impressions of Amaravati and the community here to fall away a bit. When I start a retreat after having been quite engaged, for the first few days I often find that there's a remembering of impressions of things that have been happening to me. So it was a chance to allow those impressions to fall away. I had a very nice walking path so I did a lot of walking practice.

Each day I was waiting – expecting Diana, the retreat manager, to come along with news from Patricia – but



nothing happened. The days went by and I thought, 'Well, this is strange... When I saw her she had said her kidneys weren't working; it had seemed she would only have a few more days.' So I thought it must surely be about time. Eventually I couldn't contain my curiosity any longer, and phoned the hospital. They said, 'Well, yes, she's very comfortable, quite peaceful and is receiving visitors.' So Diana asked me if I would go to see her again; but I thought, 'No, no, I'm on retreat.' However, after a couple more days, suddenly I thought, 'Actually, I will go.' I had a rail voucher, so it was easy to arrange. Also, I had found out that the hospital was very close to the station; it would be easy to walk there.

I phoned Patricia and said, 'Would you like me to come? - I'd like to come.' And she replied that she would love it if I could be there. So I had 15 minutes to shower and pack, and get in the car with Diana to go to the station and catch the train to London. I asked for a three-day return ticket. The doctors had given Patricia some medicine to keep her going, even though her kidneys weren't working, because she had wanted to attend to some legal matters. She had planned to stop taking the medicine on the day that I would arrive. So I thought, 'Well, three days should be enough time,' and I took a three-day return ticket to Clapham Junction, and soon found myself walking through Clapham with my bowl and robes.

Clapham is an interesting area. There are all different nationalities, many Muslims and Hindus, but hardly a single native-born British person living there. I walked through Clapham, across Prince Albert Bridge, and up to the hospital. I knew a few people in London who were close friends of the Sangha. If I needed help I would be able to contact them; they might be able offer me a place to stay and food if I needed it. Actually, it was a step into



the unknown. I was just going to see how things unfolded.

I found Patricia in her room. We talked and talked. The nurses came and went, and by the time evening arrived I still hadn't made any plans. However, it was obviously OK for me to stay in the hospital. I asked the nurses if I could sleep on the floor and they said, 'Oh no, we'll bring you a bed.' In the end I just slept on the floor. I had my robes, I had my alms bowl, a couple of blankets, and I just lay down on the floor.

By this time Patricia had more or less stopped eating, but we ordered toast for breakfast and then the vegetarian option (for me) at lunchtime. The catering lady was absolutely delighted, because she had been concerned about Patricia not eating. She was even trying to trick her into eating more. So when larger helpings were arriving and being consumed the catering lady was very, very happy. We never told her what was going on.

The days went by and we had a really good time. It was a relief to have done our weeping at that previous meeting, to have got that out of the way. Patricia slept. Every now and again when she woke up, we'd have a chat and a laugh. She had a phone, so people would phone up. We talked about the funeral, and thought about what she would like to have happen. I said I was thinking of inviting Ajahn Sucitto to come to the service at Amaravati, and asked if that was something she would like? She said 'Yes, and you too, of course. You could do the service together.'

It was interesting to notice the different stages of the dying process. When she was first given the diagnosis, Patricia was very distressed. After that she felt a rising sense of urgency, having to sort things out on a practical level; she was concerned about her will - who would have what, and how things would be sorted out. The illness developed more quickly than we had expected.

She had thought she'd have several months, so the speed of it took her by surprise.

One day a healer visited us. He was obviously connected on some different level. While he was working with her he'd say, 'Yes, they're all gathering up there, waiting for you. You'll probably go quite soon.' I was very touched to hear him say this. Then he said gently, 'I think you're probably just about ready.' He turned to me and asked, 'Do you think she's ready?' But at that point I was choked up and couldn't speak, so I just nodded.

I had wanted to ask him how I could best help her, because when you die there's a tremendous amount to be let go of. In our lifetime we make many connections, to material things we have, to areas of interest, and things that we are concerned about. We have causes that we put energy into. For myself I have a tremendous investment in the Sangha, in the community here. I really care about it and want to support it; also, I have concern for the welfare of various friends and relations. So it was clear that

with Patricia, my presence could either be helpful or, if I wasn't skilful, I could hinder her leaving in some way. I had really wanted to ask this healer for advice on how to manage this, but unfortunately I was too choked up to ask. He left her a little bottle of special oil. He said that if Patricia needed support or extra strength, she should sniff some of this oil. I noticed the oil there, and during the next days I was using it just as much as she was.

The effect of the healer's visit was interesting. When he had left, the realisation of what was happening in Patricia reached her at a deeper level. There seemed to suddenly be a deeper understanding of her predicament. She said to me, 'I really am going to die, aren't I? I really am leaving.' There was some level in her that began to accept that, to take it on board.

It was helpful being able to talk with the nursing staff about the dying process. There was one very lovely

nurse who talked to both of us about how it would probably be. I was impressed with the nurses. They were so tuned in to both Patricia and also to me, about what it was like for both of us. One of them said to her, 'Well, either you'll just go to sleep and leave in that way, or else there'll be some kind of a crisis and you'll slip into unconsciousness and go like that.' She asked Patricia, 'How does that sound to you? How do you feel about that?' It was very lovely to hear, the sense of ease this nurse had with the dying process.

In this culture, most of us aren't at ease with the idea of death. This was the first time that I myself had been with anybody dying. I felt very privileged to be so involved, to be able to go through it step by step, to notice the changing process. At first there was quite a lot of energy but gradually Patricia's skin colour changed, and she became weaker. Then I became the receptionist. When people phoned up, I would be the one to speak with them. I'd often have to say, 'Well, she's too weak to talk.'

One day they phoned up from Chithurst. Sister

Thānīyā rang and chatted with me. Ajahn Sucitto was there, so then we also talked. Ajahn Sucitto said to me, 'Please tell Patricia how much I appreciated her.' I said, 'Maybe you should say that to her yourself.' The two of them had a hilarious conversation about coffins. At one point Patricia burst into laughter. Ajahn Sucitto had said how he rather fancied a pale mauve coffin. Patricia said, 'But wouldn't you want ochre, like the monks' robes?' Ajahn Sucitto's response was, 'I think I've done what I can in ochre. I thought it would be good to go out in mauve!' So, far from being a mournful experience, the process was light and calm.

The last evening she became very restless. They had given her medication to relax her muscles, because she had been having painful cramps. With the muscles relaxed, she had slept for most of the day. In the evening she woke up and was mentally alert, but because the



muscles were so relaxed she couldn't move. It was frightening for her. We had to turn her and move her limbs. I bathed her and even had to clean her teeth – I've never done that before for anybody. The nurse said she would come by every couple of hours to help turn her. I sat quietly with Patricia. After about ten minutes she asked, 'What time is it?' I'd say, 'Ten past nine,' and then she'd moan. I could tell it was going to be a difficult two hours, because every few minutes she would ask, 'What time is it?'

I massaged her, we talked, and I did lots of chanting.

Eventually we got to the end of the two hours. I went and spoke with the nurse about her condition. She explained that quite often near the end people develop something called terminal agitation, where they

become very edgy, which is why Patricia was so restless and agitated. The nurses did what they could to help, and I sat with her through the night. Then her breathing began to change.

In the morning I had her breakfast, and at midday I had her lunch. I had arranged to go and have a bath and a rest in a friend's house during the afternoon. Someone else had arranged to come and sit with her while I was away. So I said to her, 'I'm going for a bath and a rest. I'll be back in an hour or two. Please don't go without me – unless you have to; you can go if you need to!' While I was resting, a call came from the hospital to let me know that she was going, so I returned to her room and we sat with her. We sat quietly; it was an extraordinary time. It was evening, just as the light was changing, about five o'clock. We just sat there, and

watched her breathing. There was a point when there was a little in-breath and then a little out-breath – and then not another in-breath. Suddenly she was quite still. We sat quietly for a while, then I did the Buddhist chanting. Patricia was lying with her mouth open, and the other friend tried to close it, but it just flopped open again. So I thought, 'Well, never mind. No one is going to see; it doesn't matter.' We sat and talked for a few minutes, then the friend beside me looked up and said, 'Oh look. She's closed her mouth.'

One of the strongest impressions I had of the

experience was how ordinary it was. Along with this came the realisation that this is something that is going to happen to each one of us. I don't mean that in an unpleasant way, but just that this is part and parcel of human existence.



At Amaravati we are incredibly fortunate to be able to practise in the way that we do, with spiritual teachings and the opportunity to review our lives – to consider what's worth investing energy and interest in. Patricia herself was also fortunate. She had practised meditation for many years. She had visited Amaravati regularly, and had a keen understanding of Dhamma. So for her, death was as easy as it could have been.

During the last days there were times when she needed reassurance. For instance, she had a cottage which she would worry about. What was going to happen with it?... Or she'd worry about her friends – would they be all right?... I would say to her, 'Look, don't worry. Things are going to be all right. Don't concern yourself with those things any more. It is time for you to do something different. It would be good for

you to give your full attention to what you're going through now; we'll take care of the rest. Try to just trust that things will be taken care of.'

Sometimes it's difficult to trust that things will be taken care of. We can feel that we have to hold everything together. Retreat time can be a good practice in this, particularly for people who are very conscientious. We can experiment with setting things aside. When we learn how to do that, then we can pick things up and put them down quite consciously – rather than obsessively or compulsively. Most of the year here, we have the opportunity to pick up duties and responsibilities – we try to do it in a measured and mindful way. When

it's time to be taking care of something, we give it our full attention. But then, when it's not necessary, we should learn how to put our duties down, like Ajahn Upekkha, who had the duty of looking after the support group during the first weeks of this retreat. She picked up that duty and gave it her best shot; she did it very conscientiously.

Now she is on self retreat and has set aside all those duties; she's having a great time. This is the ability I mean, the ability to pick things up when it's appropriate and to put them down when it's not necessary.

It's useful too to reflect on why putting things down is sometimes so difficult. For myself, I find it difficult if there's been a tremendous investment of self, if I'm responsible for something and have made it part of me. This is like taking birth – for example being reborn as the kitchen coordinator. I used to be reborn as the newsletter editor; that was an interesting one... It's not that it's bad to take up duties. It's lovely when people do this, and serve the community in some way. But when there's too much self-investment, then there's a great potential for suffering, because when our position is challenged we will inevitably feel hurt. Also, if we identify too closely with these things, we can feel over-



concerned about them, and suffer when things don't go the way we think that they should. So we need to be able to pick things up when it's appropriate, and put things down when it's not appropriate, to adapt and change.

There was an impressive example of this during the funeral. Most of you were here in the Temple for the first part of the ceremony; that part seemed to go very well. Then we went to the crematorium for the second part. A good friend of mine called Daena had been invited to officiate, and had carefully planned what she would do. She would welcome everybody and give a little introduction, then there would be a few moments of silence, followed by a programme of readings and so

on. At the end she would give a short blessing. So it was an important role for Daena.

We set off for the crematorium, having allowed plenty of time – so we thought. The car I was in was leading; behind us came the hearse and behind that a string of other cars. However, one thing we hadn't reckoned on was that hearses go more slowly than ordinary cars; so we also had to drive

slowly. Then there was a lot of traffic too, so that slowed us down even more. Eventually we arrived at the crematorium about five minutes late. As you may know, crematoriums are very particular about time; you have a set slot, and after that you must leave – no matter what. So obviously, because we were five minutes late we would have five minutes less for the ceremony. We went in and sat down. The lady funeral director was very composed. She had the list of people participating and began asking, 'OK, is so-and-so here?' – and most of the people weren't there. The minutes were ticking by ... ten minutes late ... twelve minutes late. Then she said, 'Well we're just going to have to bring in the coffin anyway. We must begin.' Only two of the coffin bearers were there, so the two lady funeral directors helped. They brought the coffin in, and she asked again, 'Is so-and-so here?' – and so-and-so wasn't... 'Well, how about

so-and-so and so-and-so?’ Fortunately they had arrived, two young twins, so they read out poems they had written. Then the next person read a psalm, and so on. I kept looking around for Daena, but she didn’t arrive and didn’t arrive.

When we got to the very end, she walked in. The closing music had begun and the funeral directors were opening the doors for everybody to leave. But Daena wouldn’t budge; she wasn’t going to be pushed out by the funeral directors. She stood there and, with great dignity and presence, read out her beautiful blessing. She did it with a lovely smile. It was just great. I thought how difficult it must be for her to arrive 25 minutes late, knowing that there was only a half hour slot, to maintain her composure, abandon all the other plans, and just read. It was a great tribute to her, to be able to maintain her mindfulness even when things had gone so disastrously wrong. This is the ability I was talking about, the ability to be aware of circumstances, to adapt and change.

This lifestyle of ours can be a useful preparation for the time of death. If we cultivate letting go in this way, it will be a easy for us to go with dignity and grace, rather than with fear, remorse and regret. Then that last breath can be just a simple exhalation, a slipping away, a peaceful moment – nothing to be afraid of. This is how it was with Patricia. When she stopped taking the medication that was maintaining her, having had the final meeting with her solicitor to sort out her will, she said, ‘Oh, I feel as though I can go on my holidays now. This is like a great adventure!’

At Amaravati we have the opportunity to invest our

time in cultivating mindfulness and presence, just learning to be present with every moment. During this retreat we can practise being with the breath, observing states of mind, and cultivating presence in our daily life activities. Once the retreat is over we will have more challenging conditions, times when we are interacting

with one another. Perhaps we will have difficulties, times when things don’t work out the way we would like them to, moments of anger, irritation, despair, discouragement, boredom, or times when we’re excited and looking forward to something. Our practice then, is to be with any condition as it is – taking an interest in every moment, rather than struggling to get away from it or to make it otherwise. We cultivate a sense of ease, a sense of presence, no matter what might be happening for us, so that even when things go horribly wrong we can maintain some sense of mindfulness and dignity.

Since Patricia died I’ve had times when I have felt very upset. It comes over me all of a

sudden. Someone will say something or I’ll remember something or see something and this enormous emotion sweeps in. It’s interesting to see how incredibly all right that is. People round about might feel concerned for me, but when I am mindful, I have found that it doesn’t really matter. If I’m happy that’s fine, if I’m sad that’s fine too. There is a sense of ease, of equanimity with all the feelings that arise; I try to practise with all of them.

So, I’ve said enough for this evening. I offer this for contemplation and reflection as a wish for everyone’s perfect liberation, hoping that for all of us the moment of death will be a moment of ease, or even delight perhaps – who knows? Evam. ❖



The Making and Sharing of Merit

A guided meditation by Ajahn Sucitto at Cittaviveka during the Winter Retreat, 2004

Sharing of merit is a practice that we do in the monastery every day, although sometimes we may not give it our full attention. What merit is about and what sharing is about are areas we may not fully appreciate.

Merit is any degree of good fortune or blessing. It's a result that we receive. For instance, we have received the merit of this human birth; the merit of being able to reflect; the merit of being able to step back from instinct and passion; the merit of knowing the difference between what is skilful and what is unskilful; the merit of being not completely dominated by sense appetite or aversion. From this basis we can cultivate meritorious actions.

In our present situation we are mostly relieved from pestilence, famine and violent acts of nature – cold winter is about as tough as it gets.

We are free from war and oppression. This is something to acknowledge.

Also we have received the merit of being free to practise

the Buddha's teaching. We have physical forms that are capable of sitting still. We live in a situation where Dhamma is taught and lived and exemplified; where generosity is the standard; where every day we are supported by people's free will offerings of material requisites, teachings, efforts and work. We live in a place where precepts are kept, where we feel safe. There is no cursing, swearing, reviling, no stealing, no physical violence. These are the blessings of this situation. There isn't even the demand: 'You should feel grateful.' In our practice we can acknowledge this and let ourselves drink it in. We can float in it, this field of merit.



How much bigger than ourselves is this field of merit – how much vaster! It includes parents that provided and nourished our bodies, the many people who have healed them and fixed them. It includes the people who have instructed us, and people – some of them far removed – who have provided requisites, a reasonable degree of security, and freedom of speech. It includes teachers

from the time of the Buddha onwards who have preserved the Dhamma, revealed it, explained it, expressed it, presented it, translated it, transfused it, and brought it to where we are now. None of all this could we have done through our own efforts. None of us could have organised and made this happen ourselves. That assumption of 'me making it happen' has no place here. So we relax that assumption, and tune into how things have actually come to be.

As we contemplate that galaxy of merit, we should recognise our own star. Of course, that star is not the only thing going; but we should recognise for

ourselves the goodness that each one of us has done, the harm that each of us has refrained from, the generosity that each has practised, and the aspirations and good intentions that we have each followed. We should not be shy about acknowledging our own efforts, our patience, our struggling and our generosity. We are all part of that field. We share and are shared; we are blessed and we bless. Our efforts are part of the galaxy of merit. Though we have our own personal channel – our particular ways of offering, of giving, loving, and forbearing – the quality of that light is common to that of all the stars. If we recognise this, we relax the differentiation between 'me'

and ‘others,’ not only in the present, but in other times too. The merit of the past and the future is in the same continuum.

In understanding this we see that the mind is more of a channel than a doer – something that can connect and receive and be shared, rather than a personal possession that we do things with. It is something that can touch and suffuse a vast array of beings, states and dimensions. To hold it as ‘me’ or ‘mine’ would be a gross injustice.

If we see this, then there is a marvellous possibility of being, where the mind is not held or cramped or twisted.

The creation of merit lies not merely in helping other people. It also arises from recognising the selfless nature of mind, the shared dimension of the mind and our activities. There isn’t any

achievement of which one can say: ‘This is mine. Only I did this. There were no other agents involved.’ There are always other causes and conditions which point to the shared and sharing dimension of our lives.

The mind shares not only the dimensions of our other senses, it shares the dimensions of other people’s actions, and what we attribute to other people. If we don’t attune to its sharing nature, then the mind will always grasp at something to have; it will always try to get something and walk away with it – to have an experience and walk away with it – then fondle it and treasure it like a dragon sitting over a pile of gold. And, like that dragon, the mind will never really take in the

gold. When it grasps something, all it can do is sit on it. All that one experiences then is the holding and a vague sense of smugness with the gleam of the collected gold. But you can’t *be* the gold; its shine is not your shine. This grasping of experience is a defilement, a distortion of the mind’s true nature.

The sharing that takes place with the mind can be compared to the physical sharing that takes place in the body. When we breathe, external air enters and internal

air is breathed out. It happens quite naturally. There is a membrane between them, but it’s porous – otherwise there’s no breathing. In the mind, the subjective sense is similar; it is not held within a casing. It is subjective but it’s not a self – it is not a separate thing. If I see this, then how can I say that anything is really mine?

What could the word ‘mine’ mean? The mind is boundless; boundaries are our artificial creations. In truth, we partake of and share the merit of our lives as if we were floating in a vast river, allowing ourselves to be swept ever onwards.

In sharing merit with other people, we must first of all be able to meet them. You cannot share or bless someone if you’re not meeting them. This meeting occurs in a shared dimension. In the practice of sharing merit, we begin with people that we don’t feel defensive or anxious about, where there’s a feeling of gratitude and trust, with people from whom one feels a sense of blessing, beginning with one’s spiritual mentors, from



the Buddha on down. When you bring someone like this to mind, you can bring up the name or the face or the image. You can relax with it, without feeling you have to prove anything, or pay back anything, or feel guilty that you haven't been good enough. Just take in the blessing; let yourself be blessed; let the energy of the mind in that uplifted state flow, so that it is shared with that person. It feels like a mind-to-mind or heart-to-heart connection – a meeting at a place of blessing.

With people having aspects that we feel less blessed by or feel confused by, we put those aspects aside and go to that place of blessing where there is a merging and sharing. With anything that is uncomfortable or disagreeable, either in oneself or the other person – the grittier bits of fear or irritation – we digest them; we take them in as if absorbing them. Merit can do that – just as when we eat, we take in the skin of apples and the fibre of the vegetables – we digest all of it. In the same way with these grittier elements, we absorb them all, doing it with the feeling: 'May this be well. May this be received without aversion.'

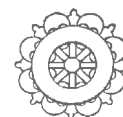
So we take on the texture of the conditioned realm, its edges and hardness and grit. We take in the blessings; we take in the grit; we take it all, with the attitude, 'May this be well. May this be released.' So if you find yourself with a memory of someone, and the mind gets agitated or anxious about their welfare, or tries to fix or change something, just stop, breathe in, breathe out; then, rather than becoming involved in some personal activity that you feel you have got to do, trust in the goodness, trust the connecting, trust the sharing to bestow its blessing, to have its effect.

We can practise this sharing from the highest of beings to the least fortunate; with those we feel a lot of sorrow or distress for, and with people we feel antipathy towards, or fearful of, or numbed by. We digest everything with the merit. We can be bigger than these particular divisive qualities. The merit can be bigger than that; the goodness doesn't have to be held back by the trembling and tensions in the mind. The mind is capable of sharing. So every time it wants to retreat, or it loses confidence, gather it up, incline it towards the sharing,

the trusting, the goodness. This attitude is reflected in the chant we do every day: 'Through the goodness that arises from my practice, and through this act of sharing, may all desires and attachments quickly cease.'

Sharing is the truth of the mind. As for the holding, the needing and the wanting, the merit lies in quelling them. It does not lie in aversion to them, but in just quelling the holding and attachment to things and actions – in quelling the sense of 'mine' and 'yours.'

May this meditation, this sharing, generate that field where beings receive blessings and where the pain of selfhood, with its fear and tension, is quelled! ❖



Sunday Afternoon Talks at Amaravati

1st August: **Mirror of the Universe**

8th August: **Selflessness and Self-esteem**

15th August: **Confidence and Faith**

22nd August: **The Nothing that Supports Everything**

29th August: **The Unshakeable Deliverance of the Heart**

5th September: **Dhamma topic and speaker to be announced.**

12th September: **Dhamma topic and speaker to be announced.**

19th September: **How to Stop Thinking**

26th September: **Creator of the World**

3rd October: **Gratitude to Parents**

*All talks begin at 2.00pm
and are followed by tea and discussion*

Ajahn Sumedho will give the talks
except on the 5th and 12th September.

All are welcome

**AMARAVATI NOTICES****Bhikkhu and Samanera Ordination**

On Wednesday 21 July at 2pm, Samanera Bodhinando and Samanera Mahapañño will request Bhikkhu ordination, and Anagārika Trevor will request Samanera ordination. All welcome.

Siladhara Ordination

Anagārikā Hannah will request Siladhara Pabbajjā on Sunday 25 July at 2pm. All welcome.

Sunday Talks at Amaravati: Every Sunday between August 1 and October 3 at 2pm. One hour talk followed by tea and discussion. All welcome. For details, see page 9.

Annual Gratitude to Parents Day will be Sunday 3 October. 11.00 am arrival for 11.30 am meal offering. Public talk by Ajahn Sumedho at 2 pm followed by tea and discussion. Enquiries to Mr. Chandī Perera, Tel: 0208 977 7642 after 6 pm, or phone Amaravati office. All welcome.

Amaravati Lay Events: Days of Practice

July 17:

September 18:

November 13:

All are welcome. 9.45am till 5pm No need to book. Bring food to share.

Amaravati Lay Events: Weekend Retreats

July 30–August 1: Women's retreat

October 8–10:

Advance booking essential.

Registration from 5.30pm. Retreats end at 4.30pm on the last day.

For information write to AUA c/o Amaravati, or phone Nick Carroll 020 8740 9748 or Chris Ward 01442

890034. Booking forms can be

downloaded from

www.Buddhacommunity.org.

Family and Young Persons' Events:

21–29 Aug: Family Camp (full)

Oct 22–24: Young Persons' Retreat

Kathina celebration: will be November 7.

To offer help, contact Anne Jameson 01234-714148 or a.jameson@btinternet.com.

Introduction to Meditation: Every Saturday 2–4 p.m. in the Bodhinyāna Meditation Hall. Everyone welcome. No booking necessary.

First Aid Training

I have established a First Aid training programme at Amaravati. If anyone would like to help, please let me know. Tahn Varado

Safety in the Workplace

In recent months, we have been improving the standard of health and safety at Amaravati. If anyone with would like to help with training, particularly in the area of workshop skills, please let me know. Tahn Varado

CITTAVIVEKA NOTICES

Garden Day: July 11

Forest Days: Sept 19, Oct 17, Nov28.

Lay Forums: Oct 31, Dec 5.

Kathina celebration: will be Nov 14. Contact person: Mrs Buddhi Vinitharatne, tel: 01903-600292

RATANAGIRI NOTICES

Creative ideas anyone? The sewage processing plant at Ratanagiri has to be replaced. Independent experts have identified two possible solutions, both alarmingly expensive. The trustees find themselves obliged to appeal to the larger community for support.

Any creative ideas would be most welcome. Please phone Penny Cooley: 01670 783 209 or email: pennycooley@tiscali.co.uk

Other help needed: We are currently looking for supporters to help out in the monastery kitchen and in the garden. We have modest accommodation for men or women who can offer between 1-4 weeks at a time. Please phone 01661 881 612 or email community@ratanagiri.org.uk (FAO Guestmaster).

Kathina celebration: will be held on October 31. It is being offered this year by Dr Mo Thuzarand family from Glasgow and will start at 10am. For further details please contact the sponsor on 0141 339 1168 or email moethuzar2004@yahoo.com

DHAMMAPALA NOTICES

Kathina celebration will be on October 31.

SANTACITTARAMA NOTICES

Kathina celebration will be on October 31. For more information, contact the monastery.

Residential Retreat at GRECCIO (Rieti) September 1–5, near the Franciscan Sanctuary, organized by 'AMeCo'. It will be taught in Italian by Ajahn Chandapālo. Bookings will be accepted from August 2 by calling Samira at 338 439 44 44 from 5–8pm Monday to Friday

GENERAL NOTICES**Sunyata Retreat Centre**

A group of Dhamma supporters in Ireland are trying to raise the funds to purchase Sunyata Retreat Centre and continue it as a Dhamma centre in the Theravādan tradition. The project is going well but they need further support. If you would like to contribute to the fund and/or are interested in coming to live at and help manage this beautiful centre in the west of Ireland please contact Stan or Clare de Freitas on 00-353-61-367073 or email info@sunyatacentre.com

Out-of-print books wanted: The Buddhist Group of Kendal (see p.11) would like BPS Bodhi Leaves 2, 22, 31, 107; Wheels 12, 13, 33, 67, 68, 69, 136, 334; *The Discourse on the Root of Existence* by Bhikkhu Bodhi; *Buddhist Birth Stories* by Rhys Davids. Can anyone help?

Useful websites

- The progress of the stupa at Amaravati can be followed at <http://www.buddhamind.info/leftside/artyp/progress/stu-frame.htm>

- For a virtual tour of Amaravati monastery: <http://www.thegrid.org.uk/learning/re/pupil/buddhistrail/index.html>

- For young Buddhists: <http://www.buddhamind.info/>

- The newsletter of the lay Sangha: <http://www.buddhacommunity.org>

Dhamma talks on tape cassettes

Recordings of Dhamma talks given by Sangha are available at cost price. For catalogue and information send SAE to: Amaravati Cassettes, Ty'r Ysgol Maenan, Llanrwst, Gwynedd. LL26 OYD, U.K.

NEWSLETTER**Production Coordinator needed**

I would like to express much appreciation to Tavarō who has been the Newsletter production coordinator, in charge of page layout, since July 1997. He would like to hand over this duty to someone else sometime after October. He says, 'I'm presently using QuarkXpress on a Macintosh platform to produce the page layouts, more for convenience over necessity, but someone could easily convert the page templates for use in any other desktop publishing software, as I did when I took over the production reins in 1997.'

If anyone has the necessary desktop publishing skills and would like to help with Newsletter production, please let me know. Tahn Varado, c/o Amaravati, or sangha@amaravati.org.

This issue's contributors: Ajahn Sucitto is Abbot of Cittaviveka. Ajahn Candāsiri is Senior Nun at Amaravati.

This issue's photographs are of Amaravati, Spring 2004.

Forest Sangha Newsletter Online

The current and many previous issues of the Forest Sangha Newsletter are now available to view or download from the internet at <http://www.fsnewsletter.net> or by following the link from <http://www.amaravati.org>

Subscription and Address Changes

Subscription and address changes for printed and electronic copies of the newsletter can be made online at the same addresses.

Teaching and Practice Venues

MEDITATION GROUPS

These are visited regularly by Sangha members.

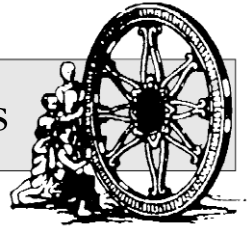
BATH – Thursday/Weekly	
EDINBURGH – Thursday/Weekly	Neil Howell, 0131-226 5044
GLASGOW – 1 st Friday/Monthly	James Scott, (0141) 637-9731
LEEDS AREA – Friday/Weekly	Daniela Loeb, (0113) 2791-375 Anne Grimshaw, (01274) 691-447
HAMPSTEAD – 1 st & 3 rd Wednesday/monthly	
1 Hillside (Room 6), London NW5 Caroline Randall, (020) 8348-0537 Entrance in Highgate Road. Ann Booth (020) 7485-0505	
LONDON BUDDHIST SOCIETY	Tel: (020) 7834 5858
58 Eccleston Square, London SW1(Victoria) Meditation Sundays: led by a monk or nun, every 2nd month. 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Thursday classes – 6.00pm	
SOUTHAMPTON –	Ros Dean, (02380) 422430

MEDITATION GROUPS

These meet regularly & receive occasional visits from Sangha.

BEDFORD	David Stubbs, (01234) 720-892
BELFAST – Sunday/Weekly	Paddy Boyle, (02890) 427-720
BERKSHIRE – 2 nd & 4 th Wed/Monthly	Penny Henrion (01189) 662-646
BRIGHTON – Wednesday/Weekly	Nimmalā, (01273) 723-378
CAMBRIDGE – Sunday/Fortnightly	Dan Jones, (01223) 246 257
CANTERBURY	Charles Watters, (01227) 463342
CO. CLARE, IRELAND – Wednesday/Weekly	Stan de Freitas, (00 353) 61 367-073
DUBLIN	Rupert Westrup, (01) 280-2832, (Dial: 00441 – from the UK)
HARLOW – Monday/Weekly	Pamutto, (01279) 724-330
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD Bodhinyāna Group – Wednesday/Weekly in school term times	Chris Ward (01442) 890-034
KENDAL – Sunday/Monthly	Fellside Centre, Low Fellside, Jayasīli, (01539) 740-996
LIVERPOOL – Wednesday/Every two weeks	Ursula Haeckel, (0151) 427 6668
LONDON/NOTTING HILL – Tuesday/Weekly	Jeffery Craig, (0207) 221 9330
LEIGH-ON-SEA	Rob Howell (01702) 482 134
MACHYNLLETH/MID. WALES – Monday/Weekly	Angela Llewellyn, (01650) 511-350
MIDHURST – 2 nd /4 th Wed/Monthly	Barry Durrant, (01730) 821-479
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE – Wed/Weekly	Andy Hunt, (0191) 478-2726
NEWENT, GLOUCS – Friday/Every 3 weeks	John Teire, (01531) 821-902, john.teire@virgin.net
NORWICH – 2 nd Thursday/Monthly	Elaine Tattersall (01603) 260-717
PEMBROKESHIRE/S. WALES – Weekly meeting and other events	Peter and Barbara (Subhdrā) Jackson, (01239) 820-790
PERTH – Saturday/Every 2 weeks	Neil Abbot, (07765) 667-499
PORTSMOUTH – 1 st Mon/Monthly	Dave Beal, (02392) 732-280
REDRUTH – Mon & Wed/Weekly	Daniel Davide, (01736) 753-175
SHEFFIELD	Greg Bradshaw, (0114) 262-0265
SOUTH DORSET – Thursday/Weekly	Barbara Cohen (Sati-sati), (01305) 786-821
STEYNING / SUSSEX	Jayanti (01903) 812-130
STROUD	John Groves, (07967) 777-742
SURREY/WOKING – Wed/Weekly	Rocana, (01483) 761-398
TEESIDE THERAVADA BUDDHIST GROUP – Weekly/Wed or Thurs	David Williams, (01642) 603-481 and John Doyle, (01642) 587-274
TOTNES – Wednesday/Weekly	Jerry, (01803) 840-199

Amaravati Retreats



2004 – Retreats remaining:

- July 23 – 25 (Weekend) Ajahn Visuddhi[#]
 Aug. 6 – 15 (10 day) Ajahn Vajiro[#]
 Sept. 3 – 12 (10 day) Ajahn Sumedho **FULL**
 Sept. 24 – 26 (Weekend) Sister Mettā^{*}
 Oct. 15 – 17 (Weekend) Ajahn Vimalo^{*}
 Oct. 29 – Nov. 2 (5 day) Ajahn Natthiko^{*}
 Nov. 19 – 21 (Weekend)
 Nov. 26 – 30 (5 day)
 Dec. 10 – 12 (Weekend)
 Dec. 17 – 19 (Weekend)
 Dec. 27 – Jan. 1 2005 (6 day) Ajahn Khantiko[#]

^{*}Male places left only

[#]Waiting List for places on these retreats

Retreats in 2004 will operate on a donation basis

No booking fees are required

- Bookings are only accepted on receipt of a completed booking form. Note that bookings cannot be made by telephone or by e-mail messages
- Unless specified otherwise, retreats begin in the evening of the first day. Registration on the first day is at 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Orientation talk is at 7.15 p.m. Weekend retreats end at 4p.m. Other retreats end at lunch time.
- All weekend retreats are suitable for beginners. Generally it is advisable to do a weekend retreat before doing any of the longer retreats.
- Applicants requiring confirmation – either that they have a place on the retreat or that they are on the waiting list – are asked to supply a stamped addressed envelope or an e-mail address.

Retreat Centre Work Weekend 2004

Friday 1st – Sunday 3rd October

Participants gather on Friday evening. Work begins on Saturday morning. Part-time attendance is also welcomed. Please e-mail or write in for an application form.

Telephone: 01442 843-239 e-mail: retreats@amaravati.org
website: http://www.amaravati.org

V I H A R A S

BRITAIN

◆ Amaravati Monastery,
St Margarets,
Great Gaddesden,
Hemel Hempstead,
Hertfordshire. HP1 3BZ
Tel: (01442) 842-455 (Office)
84-3239 (Retreat Info.)
Fax: (01442) 843-721
Web site: www.amaravati.org
Stewards: English Sangha Trust,
Amaravati.

◆ Aruna Ratanagiri,
Harnham Buddhist
Monastery,
Harnham, Belsay,
Northumberland.
NE20 0HF
Tel: (01661) 881-612
Fax: (01661) 881-019
Web site: www.ratanagiri.org.uk
E-mail: community@ratanagiri.org.uk
Stewards: Magga Bhavaka Trust.

◆ Cittaviveka: Chithurst
Buddhist Monastery,
Chithurst, Petersfield,
Hampshire. GU31 5EU
Tel: (01730) 814-986
Fax: (01730) 817-334
Stewards: English Sangha Trust,
Cittaviveka.

◆ Hartridge Buddhist
Monastery,
Upottery, Honiton,
Devon. EX14 9QE
Tel: (01404) 891-251
Fax: (01404) 890-023
Stewards: Devon Vihara Trust.

THAILAND
◆ Wat Pah Nanachat,
Bahn Bung Wai,
Amper Warin,
Ubon, Rajathani. 34310
Mailing for Thailand:
To be placed on newsletter
mailing list please write to
Amaravati.

NEW ZEALAND
◆ Bodhinyanarama,
17 Rakau Grove,
Stokes Valley,
Wellington. 6008
Tel: (+64) 45 637-193
Fax: (+64) 45 635-125
e-mail: sangha@actrix.gen.nz
Stewards: Wellington Theravada
Buddhist Association.

◆ Auckland Buddhist Vihara,
29 Harris Road,
Mount Wellington,
Auckland.
Tel: (+ + 64) 957 955-443

ITALY
◆ Santacittarama,
Località Brulla,
02030 Frasso Sabino (Rieti).
Tel: (+ + 39) 0 765 872-186
Fax: (+ + 39) 06 233 238-629
Website: www.santacittarama.org
Stewards: Santacittarama Association.

SWITZERLAND
◆ Dhammapala,
Buddhistisches Kloster,
Am Waldrand,
CH 3718 Kandersteg.
Tel: 033 / 6 752-100
Fax: 033 / 6 752-241
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 all
USA newsletters are
distributed from here.)
Web site: www.abhayagiri.org
Stewards: Sanghapala Foundation.

◆ Boston Area:
Buddhaparisa, Boston,
Mass. Tel: (781) 8 616-837

AUSTRALIA
◆ Bodhinyana Monastery,
Lot 1, Kingsbury Drive,
Serpentine. 6125 WA
Tel: (08) 95 252-420
Fax: (08) 95 253-420

◆ Bodhivana Monastery,
780 Woods Point Road,
East Warburton,
Victoria. 3799
Tel: +61 (0) 359 665-999
Fax: +61 (0) 359 665-998

◆ Dhammaloka Buddhist
Centre (Perth),
18-20 Nanson Way,
Nollamara. 6061 WA
Tel: (08) 93 451-711
Fax: (08) 93 444-220
Web site: www.bswa.org.au
Stewards: Buddhist Society of
Western Australia.



OBSERVANCE DAYS

On these days some monasteries are given over to quiet reflection and meditation. Visitors are welcome to participate in the evening meditation vigils. At Amaravati on the Full and New moons, there is an opportunity to determine the Eight Precepts for the night.

Moon Phase	☾ HALF	● NEW	☽ HALF	◯ FULL
JULY	9 th (Fri)	16 th (Fri)	24 th (Sat)	31 st (Sat)
AUGUST	8 th (Sun)	15 th (Sun)	23 rd (Mon)	30 th (Mon)
SEPTEMBER	7 th (Tues)	13 th (Mon)	21 st (Tues)	28 th (Tues)
OCTOBER	6 th (Wed)	13 th (Wed)	21 st (Thurs)	28 th (Thu)

☸ Āsāḷha Pūjā (vassa begins next day) ☺ Pavāraṇā Day (Vassa ends)

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



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