The following talk was given by Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi during the days following the Temple Opening at Amaravati.

The topic that I have chosen to talk about this afternoon is a rather basic one, but I think it is always important for us to go back to the beginning and review our first steps as a follower of the Buddhist path. While we should keep our eyes focused on the stages of the path that we have not yet traversed, we should never forget the initial steps that give us a sense of purpose and direction. If we don’t keep these basic steps constantly in mind, we are likely to become either too easily discouraged or overly optimistic, and thus lose our bearings along the path.

My topic is the Going for Refuge to the Triple Gem, an act that is taken to define one’s status as a Buddhist. When somebody wants to become a Buddhist, they are initiated into the Dhamma by the formula of Going for Refuge, and thereafter they may repeat this formula every day. Moreover, every Buddhist ceremony begins with the act of Going for Refuge. Often, however, this recitation tends to turn into a mechanical and unthinking ritual, the meaning of which is barely understood. To prevent this from happening, to fix our mind firmly on our original resolution to follow the Dhamma, it is useful for us to repeatedly review this act in its diverse aspects.

At the start, what should immediately arrest our attention is the fact that one enters the Buddhist path by seeking refuge. The word ‘refuge’ means something that gives protection from danger, and this raises the question: ‘What are the dangers facing us that make the quest for a refuge necessary?’ In the Suttas the Buddha describes the normal human condition as an extremely precarious one. He compares human life to a man being swept down a river towards the ocean. The man tries to rescue himself by grasping the grasses and branches growing along the river bank, but each time the grasses break off and he is finally swept away to his death.

We might consider three basic levels of dangers we face from which we need protection. The first is the danger that confronts us in everyday life, namely, the danger of continually oscillating between extremes – extremes of clinging to desirable things and of trying to avoid things we regard as undesirable. Thus we seek pleasure, and are averse to pain; we seek success, and are averse to failure; we seek praise, and are averse to blame; we seek fame, and are averse to a bad reputation. If we cannot protect ourselves from being spun around by these pairs of opposites, when we fail to get what we want we reap disappointment. And when we succeed, we become attached to our success and thus prepare the ground for future misery.

Even if we manage to live comfortably through the greater part of our lives, without any major catastrophes, we still have to undergo old age. Occasionally we will be assailed by illness, and even if we manage to preserve good health all our lives, inevitably we have to die. If we don’t have any protection for the mind, when we are afflicted with old age, we may become dejected. If we fall ill we will be helpless in dealing with our illness, and when we lie on our deathbeds we will be overwhelmed by fear, terror, and despair. But if our minds have been trained and disciplined, we can face all these calamities without being shaken by them. Thus the first reason for seeking refuge is to tread the path of mental training that will enable us to ride the ups and downs of daily life without being tossed around by the pairs of opposites, without being plunged into misery and despair by the inevitable slide towards old age, illness, and death.

A second type of danger from which we need protection is that associated with rebirth. The Buddha constantly teaches that this present life, which begins with birth and ends with death, is only one single link in a beginningless chain of existences, a series of rebirths. The mode of existence that we take in our next birth is determined by the actions we perform here and
now. These actions are called kamma. Kamma is volitional action, deeds of body, speech, and mind springing from intention. Below the threshold of awareness, all such volitional deeds leave subtle deposits in the onward flow of our consciousness, in our mental continuum. We can think of these kammic deposits as seeds, seeds that lie dormant until they meet the right conditions. Then they ripen and bring forth results, their fruits.

Of the many seeds that we deposit in our minds through our volitional actions, one that is especially prominent and powerful will take on the role of generating the new existence, that is, it will produce rebirth. When we hear about rebirth, we might imagine that we are to be reborn in celestial realms of bliss or as kings, queens, and millionaires. Such thoughts, however, are usually just wishful fantasies. The Buddha teaches that there are many planes of existence into which rebirth can take place, and most rebirths occur below the human plane. The early texts describe five main spheres of rebirth. Three are realms of misery: the hells, realms of intense suffering; the animal realm; and the sphere of the pretas or hungry spirits, beings afflicted with extreme pangs of hunger and thirst which they can never satisfy. Then there are the fortunate realms: the human realm and the celestial planes. These last two are considered fortunate realms because within them happiness is more prevalent than suffering and because they offer the opportunity for spiritual progress in line with the Dhamma. In the realms of misery no such progress is possible.

Now there are distinct courses of kamma that lead to rebirth into these different realms. However, if we have to rely on our own resources – on our ordinary, unenlightened minds – we will have no idea what these are. Thus it is imperative for us to rely on a perfectly qualified guide, on someone who can teach us – precisely, exactly, and thoroughly – what courses of action we must abandon if we are to escape the danger of rebirth into a bad realm, and what courses of action we have to cultivate to assure ourselves of a fortunate rebirth. This is the second reason for going for refuge: to find protection from the danger of a bad rebirth and to assure ourselves of a pleasant rebirth congenial to our quest for the noble Dhamma.

However, even if we can secure a happy rebirth for ourselves, we still face a third danger, one rooted in the very nature of sentient existence. The Buddha teaches that existence in every realm, in every mode, is impermanent, bound to come to an end. Because all forms of conditioned existence are impermanent, they are also unsatisfactory, insecure, and vulnerable to suffering. Birth leads to old age and death, death is followed by new birth, and even the most felicitous type of birth must again end in death and in the misery inseparable from conditioned existence. This is the suffering of samsāra, the danger of samsāra. The ultimate purpose for the appearance of a Buddha is to find the way out from the suffering of samsāra and to make that way known to the world. Therefore the ultimate goal for a follower of the Buddhist path is to break free entirely from this cycle of becoming, to attain that state which is not subject to birth, change, and death, to attain Nibbana, the Unconditioned, the Deathless. Now in order to attain the Deathless, to win deliverance from the round of birth and death, we have to understand what keeps us in bondage and what factors we must cultivate to eliminate the causes of bondage. Thus we have to rely on a fully qualified guide, to take refuge in one who has fully understood all this and can teach it with impeccable precision. The only one who meets this criterion is the Perfectly Enlightened One, and the one body of teachings that provides the necessary security is his Dhamma.

Now when we go for Refuge we look to Three Refuges: we go for Refuge to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. These Three Refuges hang together inseparably and indivisibly. Of the three, the Buddha is the Supreme Teacher, the one who points out the path. The Dhamma is the Teaching itself: the map of the path, the way to liberation, and the final goal. And the Sangha is the community of noble disciples who embody the ideal, the models to emulate, our advisors and helpers in travelling along the path to liberation.

In Going for Refuge with depth of conviction it is important to understand clearly the meaning of these Three Refuges, both individually and collectively. The first is the Buddha.

It is quite significant that structurally the Three Refuges begin with a person rather than with some abstract ideal like the Dhamma. Though the Dhamma is the actual means to salvation, the Buddha comes first, for when we are lost in the jungle of confusion we first look for a person who knows the way. We need somebody who has reached the goal himself and who represents or manifests that final goal in his own person.

So the Three Refuges begin with the Buddha as the supreme personal refuge, as the unsurpassed teacher. But we do not simply Go for Refuge to one particular historical individual. The word ‘Buddha’ is an epithet meaning the Enlightened One. This epithet has been given to a lineage of individuals who discovered the Dhamma at a time when the precious Teaching had completely disappeared from the world. Thus when we take refuge in the Buddha, we are taking refuge in the collection of qualities that define this person as a Buddha, as one of the line of Perfectly Enlightened Ones.

These qualities can be summed up very concisely as the abandonment of all faults and the achievement of all virtues. The faults are the defilements together with their vāsanās, or residual impressions, all of which the Buddha has eliminated totally, permanently, and irreversibly. Therefore his purity is complete and unparalleled. The incalculable, inconceivable positive virtues that the Buddha has acquired are headed by two

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The Buddha teaches that existence in every realm, in every mode, is impermanent, bound to come to an end.
supreme qualities. One is perfect wisdom, the wisdom that understands all phenomena in all their modes and relationships. The wisdom that knows the path to enlightenment and liberation in all its details. The wisdom that understands the dispositions of living beings. The wisdom that knows how to teach people in the precise way needed to lead them on to the path of awakening and to bring their faculties to maturity.

The other sterling quality of the Buddha is his great compassion. The Buddha did not achieve Enlightenment just for himself, but to confer the blessings of the Dhamma upon the world. The Buddhist tradition speaks of the Buddha as having undergone countless previous lives as a Bodhisattva. Moved by great compassion he underwent inconceivable hardships pursuing the goal of supreme Buddhahood in order to make the Dhamma – the way to liberation from suffering – available when it was no longer known and preserved in the world. That great compassion of the Buddha continues to operate through the centuries after his demise, as embodied and preserved in his Dhamma.

As a refuge, the function of a Buddha is to point to the Dhamma as the Teaching, the Path, and the Goal. The Dhamma as the Teaching is the verbal teaching of the Buddha preserved in the Tipitaka (the Vinaya Pitaka, the Sutta Pitaka, and the Abhidhamma Pitaka). As a teaching, the Dhamma is essentially a map of the way to be followed to arrive at the goal to which the Buddha points. It is a very precise and detailed set of guidelines to understanding and practice, one that we have to apply in our daily life.

We can explain the Path in many different ways, but its highest and fullest expression is the Noble Eightfold Path. The Path is a course of practice along which one walks, and when one walks that Path one eventually comes to the Goal. The Goal is also included in the Dhamma as Refuge. The Goal is the ultimate Dhamma, the unconditioned element, Nibbāna. Although the Noble Eightfold Path is the most perfect path, it is still not the final Dhamma, not the final Refuge. It is a means for reaching the final Refuge, and thus its value is instrumental, not intrinsic. The final Refuge can only be that which is not desirable as an end to something beyond itself, and that means it must be something unconditioned. This is the Deathless, Nibbāna. So, when one says, 'I go for Refuge to the Dhamma', one directs one's mind to Nibbāna as the final deliverance from suffering.

The third Refuge is the Sangha. Here we have to make an important distinction between two kinds of Sangha. One is the Ariyan Sangha. This is the community of Noble Ones, those who have reached certain high planes of realisation from which ultimate liberation is ensured. The texts speak of four levels of realisation: the levels of the stream enterer, the once-returner, the non-returner, and the arahant. Those who have reached any of these four levels of awakening, or who are definitively on the paths culminating in these four levels, make up the Ariyan Sangha, the Noble Community. As I understand it, the Ariyan Sangha is not an exclusively monastic order, but includes anyone who reaches one of these levels of awakening. The function of the Sangha as Refuge is to serve as guides in the practice of the Path. The most reliable guides we can turn to will naturally be those who have themselves attained the paths and experienced the fruits, and thus can teach the way from their own direct experience.

But the Buddha, in his wisdom, did not confine
Sangha only to those who have reached the highest levels of realisation. He also established a monastic community, consisting of people keen to dedicate themselves fully to the practice of his Teaching, who wish to tread the path to liberation without being distracted by the concerns and obligations of secular life. So the Buddha deliberately established a monastic Sangha to carry on his message and to fulfil his practice. When one goes for refuge to the Sangha, in the higher sense one goes for refuge to the Ariyan Sangha. At the same time, however, one also expresses a commitment to accept the monastic Sangha as one’s guide in treading the Path. The monks and nuns are one’s kalyānakittas, one’s noble friends, and even those who have not reached any stages of awakening, if they are virtuous, knowledgeable, and trustworthy, can still provide great help and support. Even those who merely accept alms silently, if they use their time wisely, become an excellent field of merit for others, and wisely, become an excellent field of merit for others, and thus the Going for Refuge becomes an act of faith and devotion, it will not be very fruitful. To be truly fruitful, faith has to be wedded with paññā – with wisdom or understanding. At the outset this is not the profound wisdom which sees into the real nature of things; it is still a kind of reflective understanding arisen from deep consideration of the nature of life. But it is wisdom all the same, and thus the Going for Refuge brings the faculty of wisdom into play. This wisdom then develops and matures through continual practice of the Path, especially through deep contemplation and meditation, until it becomes direct experiential insight.

Both faith and wisdom have to be activated, which means they require energy or vigour (viriya). But to prevent vigour from getting out of hand and leading to excessive enthusiasm, we have to balance it by concentration, by mental composure. This is the faculty of samādhi or concentration. When energy and concentration are balanced, the Going for Refuge can become a passageway to states of deep meditation.

In many Suttas the Buddha teaches contemplation of the Buddha, contemplation of the Dhamma, and contemplation of the Sangha as means to develop samādhi. In the Anguttara Nikāya (Book of Ones) there is even a series of Suttas in which he says: ‘There is one thing that leads to supreme peace, to direct knowledge, to Enlightenment, to Nibbana. What is that one thing? Recollection of the Buddha is that one thing.’ And in the next two suttas the same is said about recollection of the Dhamma and recollection of the Sangha. Thus one can use the Three Refuges as objects of contemplation for deep concentration. If this concentration is then conjoined with wisdom by the practice of insight meditation, it becomes part of the way to Enlightenment and Nibbāna.

For these four faculties – faith and wisdom, energy and concentration – to function properly, they all have to be held in proper balance. The balance is achieved by the disciplining influence of another faculty, the central one, sati or mindfulness. Mindfulness ensures that neither faith nor wisdom, neither energy nor concentration, exceeds the other. It enables all the other faculties to make their appropriate contributions in exactly the right measure. Thereby, when one Goes for Refuge, one does so mindfully, and one uses this mindfulness to bring the other faculties into balance. In this way, within the context of the Going for Refuge, all five faculties will function in unison to bring realisation of the final goal. And with that the Going for Refuge reaches its consummation.

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One reflects that one is following the path, not as an exercise in self-will, but as a way of relinquishing self-will in its entirety.
Consecration

The Amaravati Temple Consecration ceremonies took place over the weekend of 3rd/4th July. Many people came to participate – both local people and friends and special guests from far away places. It was an opportunity to honour, welcome and celebrate Luang Por Chah, the Tradition and all who have been associated with Amaravati in one way or another over the years.

In the following pages is a collection of impressions that perhaps go some way to conveying the flavour of the occasion for the many people unable to be present.

IN APPRECIATION
I feel sometimes just amazed at how well this temple has appeared – just out of nothing. My whole mind state doesn’t tend to be particularly interested in building things, and in the beginning just the fact that the predictions were that it would cost a million pounds was a bit daunting – mind boggling – to me; it seemed like an enormous amount of money. But there were several people who encouraged this and seemed to be willing to back it up; so I didn’t go into it as a total act of blind faith, I did feel confident that it might be possible. Then we had to go through many obstacles in regard to planning permission which was refused at first, so we had the appeal. Then there were criticisms and a lot of acrimony around the project, but gradually it took form and in fact the donations were no problem at all – that was the least amount of trouble! It seemed that there were many people, especially from Thailand, eager to contribute to the temple building so that all the difficulties that we encountered, the least of them was the fundraising – that all seemed to happen, even without any kind of fundraising event.

The actual opening of the temple, the ceremony on July 4th, was another unknown factor: having to prepare, and invite the venerable monks from Thailand, plus the Princess Galyani Wattana from the Thai royal family. There were many different aspects of etiquette and culture to be taken into account with the Sri Lankan community, the Thai community, the royal family, the mahā theras and the many monks and nuns from different places. So I did really appreciate the way it was organised. For the past two years Ajahn Attapemo, Ajahn Jutindharo, Sister Thānasanti and all the others who worked with them, people like Shirley and Nancy and Venerable Saccako really planned it so well. They were very good at estimating and taking into account the little details, so it wasn’t just roughly planned but was rather refined in the way it happened; the thoughtfulness that went behind it was impressive. I really felt a lot of confidence in those people – that they were doing what they could, according to the knowledge they had, to make it a smooth running and good event for everybody – and they were very successful.

Luang Por Sumedho

PREPARATION
Though on a rational level, as a novice, I had no grand map or overview for understanding the situation, on an intuitive level the work was clear. Each gesture of trimming, cleaning, fixing planting, building, moving sorting, uprooting, discarding could be an expression of devotion (heart open), or a meaningless task (heart contracted).

One sunny morning, gravel crunching under my sandals as I pushed a load of sleeping bags to be aired, I met a fellow novice pushing a wheelbarrow of topsoil. The image arose: ants shifting grains of dirt to be transformed into the cells and arches of the anthill. At the same time came a sense of joy and personal responsibility – it is true that ants simply know how to build, yet part of that knowing must be the need for division of labour.

The events themselves? The same stillness, manifesting in the splendour and chaos of the days of celebration. Reminders: don’t forget the Dhamma-root, dāna-root of these shimmering things, this vast nomad camp in the field, these pilgrims. Parts came together, long-expected names become tangible presence; each meal, each meeting, each act of attention is a consecration. I remember the slow forceful cadence of Thai forest teaching, the valiance (more wheelbarrows) of lay women bringing food to offer in the marquees; the inter-relatedness of sustained, wholehearted effort and effortless ease.

Anagārikā Julie
THE OPEN DAY
A Saturday afternoon, somewhere in southern England...

‘My Lord Robin, Bishop of Hertford!’ exclaimed the broadly smiling man in the dark blue suit – bedecked with mayoral chain of office and the escutcheon of Berkhamsted town – ‘I’ve been longing for a chance to use your proper title.’ The two men shook hands and greeted each other warmly.

It was indeed a day when banners were out and the English way of life was able to display itself in glory: bishop in full purples, tea and cucumber sandwiches on the lawn with local dignitaries, the garden party buzz of several dozen animated and inter-flowing conversations. Where could we be? Somewhere near Henley? Beaulieu perhaps? A church fête in the Chalfonts?

Spotlessly white-clad servers graciously offered glasses of fruit juice to the assembly and it was only the shaven-headed nature of these women and men – plus the preponderance of brown-robed and equally shaven monastics mingling with the dog collars, floral dresses, blazers and pastels of the crowd – that gave the clue that we were actually in a Buddhist monastery. That and the golden, pyramidal spire of the Amaravati Temple beyond the garden wall that winked and flashed in the brilliant July sun.

The Open Day at Amaravati, on the Saturday afternoon preceding the consecration ceremonies, glistened and gleamed in its own right as a small jewel in the glorious diadem which was the week-long Temple Opening session. It had been arranged to be a ‘totally English’ event and was an occasion for the monastery not only to invite the great and the good of the local area, but also the members of staff and friends from all the shops, surgeries, offices and local agencies who had served Amaravati over the years. True to the Englishness of the day many confessed that they had been longing to visit for years but had not wanted to intrude.

Everyone felt very much at home. There is a strange blend of humility, grandeur and the absurd that is close to the heart of both the English and the Buddhist way: besandalled Bishop Robin’s hearty approval of the deliberate barn-like mixture of beams and bare brick in the Temple; Nick Halsey’s insistence, even though his family have been squires of the manor of Great Gaddesden since the 15th Century, that he be introduced simply as ‘a representative of the local community’ when invited to give his speech; Lord Young of Dartington’s metaphor of the increasing comfort of a sofa as a synonym for the process of liberation; and the recollections by Mother Rosemary of Fairacres (wimple ever-so-slightly askew) of a profound and beautiful insight gained whilst rinsing her laundry.

The denouement of the guided tour that guests were given before the formal speeches began was the explanation about the luk nimit – the large gold-covered orb, at that time perched on its ramp, holding the central place in heart of the temple – and the velvet-clad chamber in the floor poised to receive it. As it was explained that 2,500 people were gathering from five continents in order to witness the Princess Royal of Thailand cut the ribbon and thus commit the ‘symbolic seed’ to rest at the Temple’s core, and that no-one quite knew when the tradition began, and that it wasn’t exactly a part of Buddhist monastic form but that no temple could possibly be considered complete without it, every head nodded in complete empathetic accord.

In a country where the highest form of knighthood is The Most Noble Order of the Garter (instituted either by Sir Gawaine, the Green Knight and King Arthur or King Edward III, depending on which history you choose), and where someone with the title of Lion King at Arms is actually only the fellow who looks after the heraldic records office, such significant pointlessness is perfectly understood, honoured and cherished.

That day in the heart of the country – a few stone’s throws from the castle of the Black Prince and where William the Conqueror received the keys to the kingdom – it seemed that the way of the Buddha and the way of the English were fully at one. Ajahn Amaro

EXTRACTED FROM A LETTER HOME:

...After bidding farewell to ‘my’ VIP, I wandered back to the temple courtyard where Ven. Dr. Vijirañāṇa – the most senior Sri Lankan monk in this country – and about 13 other Sri Lankan theras had arrived. He was looking a little flustered so I went to greet him and took him into the temple where preparations were in progress for the all-night paritta chanting. Some of the lay people had made an octagonal pavilion – a light wood frame, covered with white paper cut in the most lovely intricate patterns; it was small, about 8 feet in diameter – and elevated on the monks’ staging. Fortunately the lodgings monk was there; he took them under his wing and I continued on to the next highlight:

...talks by Christina Feldman and Jack Kornfield.

They are two of the best known lay teachers. I was very pleased that they had been invited to speak – both gave excellent talks. Jack had been a monk in Thailand many years ago and spoke very warmly of his friendship with Ajahn Sumedho there.

...and then it was time for the evening chanting and meditation...

...and then the Sri Lankan event, which was really something!

...It’s interesting that each of the ethnic groups that come to our monasteries has its own unmistakable character. I think for the Sri Lankans you’d say that they are thoroughly enthusiastic – exuberant even! So it was not too much of a surprise when the 14 senior...
monks arrived in the Temple in a procession, preceded by 4 laymen in traditional costume with trumpets and drums led by the ex high commissioner dressed all in white – one really knew that something major was about to happen! Almost all of the monks squeezed into the octagonal paper pavilion and Dr. Vijirañāna explained what was to happen: after the first hour when the whole group would chant together, there would be a rota of monks chanting through the night until early morning, then at 5.30 they’d all gather to finish at 6.00am. After the first hour or so which was quite wonderful – a very different style to our chanting – Dr. Vijirañāna emerged from the pavilion, absolutely beaming, to announce that now there’d be an interlude of drumming, and the men in national costume reappeared for a stunning performance.

...Walking past the Temple at 4.00am on my way to the shower block, I could hear them continuing – still going strong. At 4.45 I joined them again; it was a very special time...

...People gathered, and we waited for the arrival of the Princess Galyani. Looking around I saw many people I knew – quite a few of them former monks or nuns...also some important looking people I didn’t know, and a very comfortable collection of good friends from Christian monasteries...
IN RETROSPECT

As I think back to July 4th I can’t help but feel tears well up, such was the beauty and meaning of this special event. For many of us there was a strong sense of consolidation of the last twenty five years of grounding Dhamma in this particular form of the ‘Forest Sangha’ in the West. All of us, in so many different ways, have been a part of that process, but of course in particular one felt profound appreciation for the incalculable contribution of Luang Por Sumedho.

Although all have their own individual stories, there was a great sense of being lifted from everyday inter-personal dynamics and concerns into the transcendent. This communal gathering generated a very high and potentized energy which was deeply felt by many as healing, uplifting and unifying with a recognition of many strands being connected together. The mutual respect between Western and Asian Buddhists was tangible as we all savoured the positive Kamma that has been contributed by each community over the years. For many of the Vipassanā teachers who had founded lay centres, and ex–monastics, there was a sense of reconnection with lineage and family. For others it was a time to see old friends, fellow practitioners and acquaintances and to just delight in the auspicious and historic nature of the occasion.

One of the small but meaningful gestures which delighted me was the offering made by the Princess Galyani to Ajahn Sundarå and Ajahn Candasir. That the nuns’ community has developed in England on a par with the monks is the outcome of many years of delicate, considered and quite difficult processes. That the fruits of this work were acknowledged by such a high ranking member of the Thai Royal Family seemed wonderful to me!

One cannot finish without appreciating the enormous service and the substantial offerings that supported the occasion; in particular by those living at Amaravati, who have shed blood, sweat and tears to bring this remarkable happening together!

Sådhu Bhante, sådhu Sisters!
May the Dhamma long flourish upon these blessed shores!

Thânissarā

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Poem in September

Why complain if the road gets muddy when it rains?
the complaining mind has feet of clay
It is itself completely, in order, wild
like the ugly beauty of seedling thistles

Sāmanera Issaramuni
Venerable V. Dharmawara Mahāthera died peacefully in Stockton, California, on June 26th 1999, aged 110. Born in Cambodia, he was well educated and became a lawyer, judge and provincial governor before he began studying Buddhism and became a monk in his 30’s. Bhante practised in the Forest Tradition in Thailand before travelling through Burma and India, where he spent much of his life. He studied natural healing and became well known for his healing abilities, in recognition of which he was given the land on which to found The Asoka Mission in New Delhi by Jawhararlal Nehru, first Prime Minister of Independent India. He was a gifted linguist – fluent in many tongues and able to use words very precisely as many of his friends and disciples will remember. He was a great teacher and became spiritual advisor to Prince Norodom Sihanouk. He taught meditation every year to the students at Mr Bennett’s Academy for Continuous Education in Sherborne, Gloucestershire. Later, Bhante moved to USA and worked tirelessly to help settle the thousands of refugees who fled there from the war in Cambodia. He founded Wat Dhamawararama in Stockton where his wake and cremation were attended by many followers from around the world. There are plans to inter his ashes in memorials being built in Cambodia, Thailand, Stockton and at Asoka Mission in Delhi. Towards the end of a lifetime of Love and Compassion, he pronounced a simple message:

‘You are what you think; you are what you eat and drink.’

Sam St. Clair Ford

A Shared Treasure

Ajahn Sucitto comments on the laying of the Foundation Stone for the new Dhamma Hall at Cittaviveka...

It was partly because the event of July 11th occurred as the last of a series of inter-related events that linked together origins and associated growths of the Theravāda dispensation in the West, in which contemplatives – robed, disrobed and as yet unrobed – as well as well-wishers from other Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions gathered to share views, memories and aspirations. By the time that a few of us had talked and shared with the Western lay teachers at Gaia House during the Vipassanā Teachers’ Conference, moved through the many facets of Amaravati’s Temple Opening, received and attended to the deputation of Elders from Thailand, exchanged insights and state-of-play news with samanas from associated monasteries in Australia and America, I for one was becoming a little light-headed. The input was rich. Whether it was sitting by a bonfire listening to Ruth Denison reminisce over thirty years of Dhamma-practice in America, or resonating with the all-night Paritta chanting (punctuated by staccato drum-rolls) of the Sri Lankan Mahātheras in Amaravati’s temple, or sitting as part of a group conversation with one of the many distinguished visitors on the lawn at Chithurst, I was left with the impression of a huge and still-resplendent Dhamma-mandala, beautiful in its diversity, but calming in its unity of purpose and commitment.

It was also because the occasion at Cittaviveka had its momentum, though rolling along in a slightly haphazard way: the commemorative stone was driven down from Northumberland overnight by the sculptors, Ken and Jenny Grant — arriving just a few hours before the ceremony with Ken still anxiously attending to polishing final details. The stone was set in place early in the afternoon by means of a makeshift crane that Ven. Kusalo had devised for constructing the new Amaravati stūpa, with the builder and the architect nervously looking on as 82 year-old Tan Chao Khun Dhammapariyattimuni, Ajahn Liam from Wat Pah Pong and Ajahn Sumedho wielded trowels and cement. For the lay community around Chithurst it was a wonderful moment, a blessing for the materialising possibility of having a Hall in which to gather for meditation. Just the other side of the garden wall, swallows swooped exuberantly over the newly-created pond: seemingly erratic but actually unerring, living symbols of how Dhamma-processes proceed. To predict when and how the Hall would get finished would signify a loss of faith.

Eventually everyone dispersed leaving e-mail addresses, books...and memories: hours spent discussing filial piety with Dharma Master Heng Sure, emptiness with Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi, or samādhi with Ajahn Be-ak, or listening to Ajahn Jayasāro’s readings from Ajahn Chah’s (as yet unpublished) biography. Perhaps one of the fondest is of the sight of the Thai Ajahns standing out by the sīmā on a golden evening, standing in silence among the cooing of wood-pigeons and the hopping rabbits, standing and slowly looking this way and that, drinking it all in. There is a joy in seeing others looking at something with which one has become familiar and seeing it anew as a treasure enriched by the sharing. ✦
AMARAVATI NOTICES

We will be holding a New Years Retreat/Vigi 28th December – 3rd January. Additional accommodation is available in the Retreat Centre for what we expect will be a popular time to come and stay. Write to Guest monk/nun.

Monastic winter retreat – January – March 2000. As in previous years we are looking to have a small team of lay people staying at the monastery to help with the kitchen etc. We will only accept people who have stayed before, and ask for a minimum stay of a month. Please write a.s.a.p. to the Secretary.

School Groups visiting Amaravati. Are you interested in helping to make these possible? There are various types of help needed, especially with co-ordination. Please contact Ven. Kusalo for details.

Rainbow (Children’s) Room. Has now been relocated and refurbished by this year's Family Camp, and is to be found in the “Publications building”.

Family events in 2000

Rainbows: 26th – 29th May.
Family Weekend: 14th – 16th July.
Summer Camp: 19th – 27th August.
Young Persons’ Retreat: to be decided

Community Work Weekend at Amaravati November 20th & 21st, 1999
The Amaravati Community would appreciate your support with the ongoing upkeep of the grounds and garden. Can you join us to help with gardening on the above dates? If you would like to come for either a day or the whole weekend please write enclosing an SAE to Sister Kovida at Amaravati or fax 01442–843721.

CITTAVIVEKA NOTICES

Although we have no great Millennium Plans for New Year's Eve, those who would like to end the century with neither a bang nor a whimper might like to know we will be holding the usual Forgiveness and Aspiration Ceremony at Cittaviveka on the evening of 31st December. Bring good heart and a few regrets.

Winter Retreat
The Sangha will be going on retreat at Cittaviveka from January 5th until the end of March. If anybody is interested in coming to act as a retreat supporter (basically cooking) for a month or more, please could they write to the Guest Monk or nun.

Meanwhile, there are a couple of Lay Forums that you might be interested in attending. These are discussion groups taking place between 2:00 pm and 4:00 pm in the monastery's Reception Room:
November 21st: What is suffering?
December 4th: Forgiveness

Forest Work Days
All welcome – meet at the main house at 1.30
13th November, 18th/19th December
major tree planting weekend. Please contact guest monk/nun beforehand if overnight accommodation is required.

GENERAL NOTICES

Monastic Style Lay Community in France: Niccanando and June Glen would welcome people interested to live a life of simplicity and celibacy, following the routines of a Theravāda Forest Monastery.
For more information, please write to the secretary at: Mas de Molières, F-30440, Saint Laurent le Minier, France.

KATHINA/ALMSGIVING CEREMONIES

All welcome to attend
Cittaviveka, 31st October
Contact: Barry Durrant
01730 821479

Aruna Ratanagiri (Harnham), 7th November
Contact: Namtip Milligan
0191 240 3522

Santacittarama (Italy), 7th November
Amaravati, 14th November
Contact: Dilsiri & Sudanta
0181 995 2677

Almsgiving ceremonies at Hartridge (Devon) & Dhammadapala (Switzerland) monasteries took place during the vassa.

The Buddhist Group of Kendal Please send any donations of unwanted Buddhist books to: C/O Fellside Centre, Low Fellside, Kendal, CUMBRIA LA9 4NH.

Lay Events at Amaravati in 2000

Day events (no booking required)
April 22nd - Enjoyment
May 27th - Sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair
July 1st - Topic to be confirmed
Nov. 18th - Topic to be confirmed
Weekend events (please send SAE to the AUA at Amaravati, for booking form)
March 24-26th - Dukkha,
Anicca, Anatta
Sept. 29th – Oct. 1st - Greed,
Hatred & delusion

for more information contact:
Nick Carroll, 0181 740 9748 or Chris Ward, 01442 890034

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

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

This Newsletter is printed by: Ashford Printers, Harrow. Telephone – (0181) 427-5097
Teaching and Practice Venues

MEDITATION GROUPS

These are visited regularly by Sangha members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BATH</td>
<td>Catherine Hewitt, (01225) 405-235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BERKSHIRE</td>
<td>Penny Henrion, (01189) 662-646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRISTOL</td>
<td>Lyn Goswell (Nirodha), (0117) 968-4089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTH DORSET</td>
<td>Barbara Cohen-Walters (Satii), (01305) 786-821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDINBURGH</td>
<td>Muriel Nevin, (0131) 337-0901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLASGOW</td>
<td>James Scott, (0141) 637-9731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAMPSTEAD</td>
<td>Caroline Randall, (0181) 348-0537</td>
</tr>
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</table>

MEDITATION GROUPS

These meet regularly & receive occasional visits from Sangha.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BRIGHTON</td>
<td>Penny Henrion, (01189) 662-646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAMBRIDGE</td>
<td>Gillian Wills, (01954) 780-551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CANTERBURY</td>
<td>Charles Watters, (01227) 463342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUBLIN</td>
<td>Eugene Kelly, (1) 285-4076 or (1) 284-9019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESSEX</td>
<td>(Billericay) Rob Howell, (01702) 482-134 or (Harlow) Pamutto, (01279) 724-330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEMEL HEMPSTEAD</td>
<td>Chris Ward (01442) 890-034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LONDON / NOTTING HILL</td>
<td>Jeffrey Craig, (0171) 221-9330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEIGH-ON-SEA</td>
<td>Good Deboo, (01702) 553-211</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

LEEDS AREA

Daniella Loeb, (0113) 2791-375
Anne Voist, (01274) 670-865

SOUTHAMPTON

Ros Dean (01703) 422430

SURREY/WOKING

Rocanã, (01483) 761-398

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.

AMARAVATI RETREATS:

1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct.</td>
<td>15 – 20</td>
<td>5 Day</td>
<td>Sister Thanasanti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov.</td>
<td>5 – 7</td>
<td>Weekend</td>
<td>Ajahn Ariyasilo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov.</td>
<td>19 – 28</td>
<td>10 Day</td>
<td>Ajahn Candasiri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec.</td>
<td>3 – 8</td>
<td>5 Day</td>
<td>Venerable Kusalo</td>
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2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apr.</td>
<td>7 – 16</td>
<td>10 Day</td>
<td>Ajahn Sundarã</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr.</td>
<td>21 – 23</td>
<td>(to be decided)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr.</td>
<td>28 – May 12</td>
<td>14 Day</td>
<td>Ajahn Sumedho</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>19 – 21</td>
<td>(to be decided)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>2 – 11</td>
<td>10 Day</td>
<td>Ajahn Sucitto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>16 – 21</td>
<td>5 Day</td>
<td>Ajahn Ariyasilo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug.</td>
<td>11 – 18</td>
<td>7 Day</td>
<td>Ajahn Sumedho</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept.</td>
<td>1 – 3</td>
<td>(to be decided)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept.</td>
<td>8 – 17</td>
<td>14 Day</td>
<td>Ajahn Sumedho</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct.</td>
<td>6 – 8</td>
<td>(to be decided)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct.</td>
<td>13 – 22</td>
<td>10 Day</td>
<td>Ajahn Ariyasilo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov.</td>
<td>10 – 19</td>
<td>10 Day</td>
<td>Ajahn Candasiri</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov.</td>
<td>24 – 26</td>
<td>(to be decided)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec.</td>
<td>27 – Jan. 1</td>
<td>5 Day</td>
<td>(to be decided)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

These dates are still provisional.

To take part in the retreats marked ‘experienced’, you need to have done at least one 10-day retreat at Amaravati.

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

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

Retreat Centre Work Weekends 2000

March 31 – April 2 : June 23 – 25 : Sept. 22 – 24

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 Cassets, Ty’r Ysgol Maenan, Llanrwst, Gwynedd, LL26 OYD U.K.

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.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moon Phase</th>
<th>OCTOBER</th>
<th>NOVEMBER</th>
<th>DECEMBER</th>
<th>JANUARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 (Sat)</td>
<td>9 (Sat)</td>
<td>7 (Sun)</td>
<td>28 (Fri)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>15 (Mon)</td>
<td>17 (Sun)</td>
<td>15 (Wed)</td>
<td>5 (Wed)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>24 (Sun)</td>
<td>22 (Mon)</td>
<td>22 (Wed)</td>
<td>13 (Thurs)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20 (Thurs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Those wishing to offer requisites please contact Sister Thanasanti at Amaravati.)

Pavaranã Day (vassa ends)
Buddhist New Year 2543 begins 4th November

FOREST SANGHA NEWSLETTER

VIHARAS

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.

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

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

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

ITALY
♦ Santacittarama
Via Delle Prata 22
Località Brulla
02030 Frasso Sabino (Rieti)
Italy
Tel/Fax: (0765) 87 21 86
Stewards: Santacittarama No 20163/38.

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♦ 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: Sanghapaæa 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,
Stokes Valley,
Wellington 6008
Tel: (+ + 64) 4 563-7193
Fax: (+ + 64) 4 563-5125
e-mail: sangha@actrix.gen.nz
Stewards: Wellington Theravada Buddhist
Association.

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

NUNS’ ORDINATION
AMARAVATI, DECEMBER 12, 1999

All are welcome to attend the Pabbajja (Going Forth)
ceremony of:

Anagãrikã Renée,
Anagãrikã Jutta,
Anagãrikã Karen

who will be accepted into the
Nuns’ Sangha.

The ceremony will take place in
the Temple at 1:30 p.m.

(Sister Thanasanti please contact
Sister Thanasanti at Amaravati.)