



# FOREST SANGHA newsletter

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## THIS ISSUE

### Signs of Change: ■

- Cover:** ■ Gnosis and Non-Dualism, Ajahn Sucitto
- Articles:** ■ Servant of the Buddha, Buddhadasa Bhikku  
 ■ The Long Path to Peace - Cambodia  
 ■ Turning the Wheel in the West; Ven. Sobhano interviews Aj. Amaro  
 ■ Gone on Tudong; Monastic experiences
- Editorial:** ■ The Road and the Path; Ajahn Sucitto

## HOME ■

## BACK ISSUES ■

## Gnosis and Non-Dualism

In the second of this series of talks on Gnosis, Ajahn Sucitto explains how through letting go of mental proliferation and experiencing that which divides us from reality - dukkha - we come to realise Dhamma.

Though we have to talk in words that evoke ideas, images and perceptions, insight knowledge, nyana, is more than just intellectual knowledge; it is intuitive knowing or gnosis. For this kind of knowing, we have to take things deeply, and let them work on us and penetrate our being. Indeed, a lot of this practice can be described as 10% doing things and 90% being worked on by things! We apply the effort to make ourselves open to being worked on, whether it is by doubt, by worry, by thought, feelings, or emotions until the dualisms; the defences, and the justifications of self-view actually stop.

People find this rather a strain because something in us is having to work and be exercised in a way that we are not accustomed to. Normally we are accustomed to mental activity like creating and figuring things out. Such activity gives a positive impression, and we can get high on doing things. But to be is something that we haven't really learnt. Can we do 'being'? Can we just be with what is, opening to our feelings and perceptions without the need to control, understand, or make something out of it?

Although we can have positive achievements in Dhamma practice, we have to get beyond the level of doing things in order to have that sense of furtherance. We have to do them in a way where we are no longer dependent upon getting positive feed-back. We must do things simply in order to take them into us, at a far deeper level than mere liking or interest. To sustain mindfulness and awareness of things arising and ceasing, we have to open beyond our personal view of what we need, or what is important. Dealing with one silly nagging thought or a fuzzy mind in Dhamma practice is humiliating when you can't feel it is of any value. You think, 'What is there to do? What can we do with this?' But for insight all we need to do is to be able to see clearly that this is changing, this is unsatisfactory, this is not-self.

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Put another way, the watcher or meditator becomes the self, and the states of mind he/she observes becomes

## not-self.

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As long as the world is experienced as 'me' and 'it', there will always be views and judgements about 'it', whether that is some other human being, life in general, or some idea or principle. Take our attitudes towards other people: even if we're not romantically involved, relationships are generally aimed at getting positive feed-back. We want to feel that sense of somebody fitting into and supporting 'our' world. We expect our family to be supportive and if it's not, then we want to make it so, and feel disappointed or annoyed if it isn't.

Unconsciously our whole way of perceiving things is based upon wish-fulfillment. Perception is that which creates order, which recognises, which makes things knowable, if we can't place our experiences conceptually, we feel estranged, and don't know if we're doing the right thing. What should we do? What have we not understood? With insight, all you need to know is that things which arise and cease are unsatisfactory and not-self. Sometimes, that very desire to understand is what should be understood, gnostically, in this way.

However if we have 'not-self' purely as an idea we think, 'Well I suppose that's right - if I'm looking at it, it's not me, it's something out there other than me.' But then there is the 'me' who is looking at it. Put another way, the watcher or meditator becomes the self, and the states of mind he/she observes becomes not-self. But who is the self or the not-self who is practising? We may think we are watching things that are 'not' self, but there is still some residual self-view left in the watcher who puts-up with the watching - just because they feel they have to - even though they'd really like to watch something else for a change!

So at that level of the experience of meditation, we find something isn't working. We're stuck on this plane of unsatisfactoriness. This is because the experience of anatta has not been realised. If we get to the root of this dualism, me and it, we can recognise that there is only the feeling of unsatisfactoriness itself. So 'There is suffering' is an insight knowledge. 'There is' is a non-dualist statement. 'There is' is not saying 'It's that out there'; instead it is allowing the dualistic consciousness to relax until we no longer interpret the situation as, 'I'm here and that's there', but simply, 'There is.' We hold the mind open so that its dualistic tendency can be relaxed and we let go of all the defences, the projections, denials, and fascinations. Then we come to 'there is.' 'There is dukkha.' This has to be understood, not in the intellectual sense, but in gnostically seeing its origins in the desires, aversions and attachments, which are usually built into the personality way of seeing things.

The word 'dukkha' means 'hard to bear', so in order to bear something that is hard to bear, we have to cultivate endurance. This is why it is so important to become relentlessly patient in order that the abandonment, or relinquishment of dukkha can take place. (Not that 'I' abandon suffering!) In order to arrive at the abandonment of dukkha, we have to give up our time to understand the origins of dukkha namely, bhava tanha, vibhava tanha, kama tanha. These feelings operate at a very deep level; kama tanha (sense desire) is fairly obvious, but bhava tanha, the desire for becoming or being something, and vibhava tanha, the craving for non-existence, are much more subtle and very, very strong. They involve our whole sense of personal identity. So often the origin of suffering is wanting to

become something, wanting to be rid of something. These are not corrupt or foolish desires but they are still desires, and indicate the mind's lingering and identifying with the presence (or the absence) of perception and feeling.

The practice is one of awareness of our perceptions and feelings, and the response to circumstances. What does tiredness do to our mind? Whilst we may see it as an unpleasant experience, we make it that way. What does physical pain do, what does thinking do? How is our mind affected by the weather, by crowds or solitude? Essentially, these are all responses to feelings and perceptions. We note these reactions so that we begin to develop insight, direct contact with the self-view, that edge between the apparent 'me' and the apparent experience. How do we feel about our mind being this way or that way? For the development of insight, we always need to take our penetration to the ground of that authenticity. Only this persistent investigation will take us beyond the dualism of experience. We can also ask ourselves, 'Am I suffering?' We may not necessarily be squirming in anguish but nevertheless we may feel disquiet, or apathy, and we need to recognise it for what it is. 'Why is it this way?' Keep up that continual questioning attitude: do I want it to be another way, and if I want it to be another way, why? What have I built my hope, my self-view upon?

As a person, I know what I need. I need comfort, I need to feel needed. I need to feel I am achieving something, and that my life is worthwhile. I need to feel that other people understand me. We should discover what our wants are and then ask ourselves what is it that actually identifies with those wishes. And what can recognise this? A lot of this practice is holding attention onto dukkha until all the circumstantial details die away and we get to the heart of the matter: not so much 'I want to believe in something, I want to feel needed by somebody', but simply, 'I want!', or, 'There is desire -the origin of dukkha.' No shoulds and shouldn'ts about it. We need to break down all the complexities of life, all the perceptual complexities of time and events and situations, into the simple core experiences. This activity within the stillness of meditation is very

## jewels in my hand

I hold dead friends like jewels in my hand  
Watching their brilliance gleam against my palm  
Turquoise and emerald, jade, a golden band.

All ravages of time they can withstand  
Like talismans their grace keeps me from harm  
I hold dead friends like jewels in my hand.

I see them standing in some borderland  
Their heads half-turned, waiting to take my arm  
Turquoise and emerald, jade, a golden band.

I'm not afraid they will misunderstand  
My turning to them like a magic charm  
I hold dead friends like jewels in my hand  
Turquoise and emerald, jade, a golden band.

*Sasha Young 1931 - 1993*

important if we are to get to the heart of things.

The fundamental wants of the heart can never be fulfilled by grasping perceptions and feelings anyway. There is satisfaction, the cessation of dukkha, but it only comes through awareness, through insight and clarity. These enlightening qualities could be described as unconditional love, in which instead of wanting something, there is a giving, cago, an abandonment of self, a kind of communion with the way it is.

So dukkha has to be understood; not changed, but understood in terms of its cause: the origin of dukkha is our attachment to the sense of a separate self that stands back, makes the judgement, and creates ideas rather than seeing things as they are. This mental proliferation has to be abandoned. Sometimes we only have to do it once to cut the illusion, but sometimes it's not complete. Although something in us understands, to not just believe and react to them, the thoughts and moods return. This is where abandonment entails abandoning identification with those patterns, and abandoning the wish to not have those mind patterns. Insight knowledge occurs where there is this selfless recognition, and is characterised by equanimity towards all mental events. Whatever the feelings or perceptions, there is equanimity, and to cultivate equanimity you have to be really patient.

Patience is both an active and passive mental state; activity being the effort to just hold attention on and bear with conditions, whilst passivity is to let things work on us until our struggle with them and our denial of them is finished. Then the origin of suffering has been abandoned and the cessation of suffering has been realised.

The word 'realisation' seems of little significance, yet most of our life is not real. For this reason alone, insight into dukkha brings about a transfiguration. It is far better to insightfully experience dukkha than to get away from it, because as long as dukkha has not been understood, and all the time it is fended off, our lives are operating on a dualistic basis. Our life is not real. Dualistic life is a kind of phantom life, made up of fantasies, as we run around being this, being that, going here, going there, seeing this, seeing that, in a world of fleeting forms and appearances, of temporary gratifications, birth, death, arising and passing away. It's just this, just a phantasmagorical magic-lantern show; because on that level, nothing is real, everything else is transient.

When we taste something, what is the 'realness' of it? We can say, 'It tastes nice' but this is what we think about it, not what the taste is. We can say, 'It's a grape', but that's a designation, a perception, isn't it? What is the actual taste? We say, 'It's sweet', but 'sweet' is a judgement, isn't it? We come to understand that the reality of it is indefinable, and that for most of our life we are operating at the level of interpretations and classifications, of secondary experiences, rather than living the actuality of it. We never even know who we really are, because everything is constantly changing; the reference points are changing so although we feel we're something, nothing quite fits. So as long as we identify with the world of change and appearance, this is all we shall ever feel ourselves to be, just an appearance that changes and wants to find a certain position.

To understand dukkha, and to experience the cessation of dukkha, makes life real; it is realisation. It's not that the world changes, but our 'knowledge' of it, and response to it, comes from a different place. Instead of the discriminative, secondary level of knowledge, our conceptual, abstract perceptual thinking, we get to the direct 'this-ness' of things, and this is where meditation, mindfulness, and insight practice lead us to just the 'suchness' or 'thisness' of things. It is a kind of communion.

Anatta, non-dualism, is a realisation of the communion with whatever is in consciousness, from personal friendships to the wars in the world. We may think, 'Well, what can I do about it? I don't want to know.' But we can practise with that. The authentic life is one of

compassion. So often we assume that compassion is something that demands our practical intervention, but however much that may be desirable, that is not the basis for it's arising. The basis for compassion is selfless awareness; the practical aspects arise from that.

The Path of Insight is therefore an opportunity to arrive at total authenticity, to live as a real being by investigating the experiences that happen to us. We note our reactions to meditation on the breath, to routines, mind states, or even the same slightly dreary faces across the breakfast table. Being in an imperfect situation asks and allows us to bring forth the heart, the care, the forgiveness, and even the quiet inner celebration. We find an unforced empathy towards all beings. We don't have to embrace them, but recognise them as a part of our life.

Making it all a part of our life is like coming out from our shell; all beings are as much a part of our mind as any other perception and feeling. Once we begin to see our life as a way of supporting and communing, then we, in our turn, feel supported by the universe and the way our whole life has been given so mysteriously and wonderfully. The realisation of anatta is thus: without division, without separation, it is the practice and essence of the Dhamma.



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	■ The Road and the Path; Ajahn Sucitto	

## Servant of the Buddha 1901 - Buddhadasa Bhikkhu - 1993

*Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, one of the most influential Thai Dhamma teachers of this century, died on the 8th of July this year. His life was a reflection of his personal philosophy: he believed that one should follow a simple lifestyle close to nature, and make the best use of one's potential to serve society through the teachings of the Buddha.*

He was deeply aware of the problems of the modern world, believing that people were becoming slaves to their belongings, fighting, exploiting and hurting one another in order to gain more wealth. He believed that it was possible for modern societies to learn to live in balance and peace, if Buddhist teachings could be applied through social policy, with individuals dedicating their energy to their community. His use of Buddhist thinking to approach modern social problems made him one of the most progressive and original thinkers in Thailand.

He had an inspiring ability to disseminate sophisticated teachings in a contemporary language (many of his books have been translated into English.) He revitalised Buddhism, challenging many long-held rituals and popular beliefs, which at times led him to be opposed by the more superstitious and orthodox wings of the Sangha. His studies, deep into the heart of Dhamma, liberated him from blind attachment to his own tradition: he was conversant with the teachings and practitioners of diverse religions, while at the same time leading the ordinary life of a bhikkhu.

Ajahn Buddhadasa suffered great pain in the last years of his life, and his acceptance of this demonstrated his teaching that 'every illness should make us wiser.' He had prepared himself to serve as Buddhadasa, 'the servant of the Buddha', until the very end of his life.

### **Emptiness**

The following is an extract from Heart Wood from the Bo-Tree, a series of talks on emptiness given to medical students in 1961 by Ajahn Buddhadasa.

We don't have to do anything very much to make ourselves happy, we don't have to go to any great trouble. All we have to do is to empty our minds of greed, aversion and delusion, or in other words to make it empty of grasping at and clinging to 'I' and 'mine'. When the mind is empty of greed, aversion and delusion then it's truly empty and all Dukkha comes to an end. Even kamma will of itself come to an end.

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He was referring to the stopping of 'I' and 'mine', to the

stopping of grasping and clinging, or in other words to emptiness. So it is emptiness that is 'stopping'...

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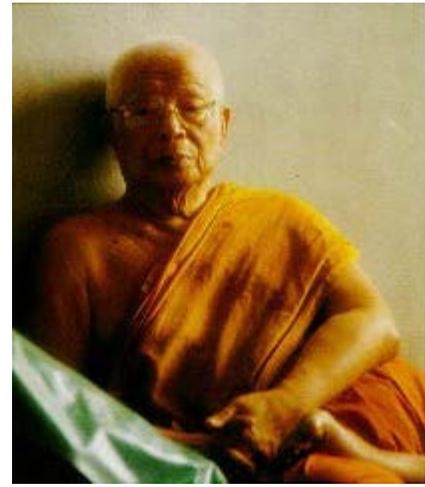
In the Anguttara Nikaya, the Buddha states that when the mind is empty of greed, aversion and delusion, empty of 'I' and 'mine', then kamma ends by itself. This means that kamma vipaka (its result), and the mental defilements which are the cause for the creation of kamma, spontaneously and simultaneously come to an end. So we don't have to be afraid of kamma, to fear that we must be ruled by our kamma. We don't have to be too interested in kamma. Rather, we should take an interest in emptiness. If we have created emptiness with regard to 'I' and 'mine', kamma will utterly disintegrate and there will be no way that we will have to follow its dictates.

It's due to this very point that someone like Angulimala could become an arahant. Don't explain wrongly, as is often done, the Buddha's reply to Angulimala, 'I have already stopped. It is you that have not stopped'. Don't explain that 'not stopped' means that he will stop killing people and that Angulimala became an arahant because he stopped murdering. Anyone who explains like that is badly misrepresenting the Buddha because when the Buddha used the word 'stop' here, He was referring to the stopping of 'I' and 'mine', to the stopping of grasping and clinging, or in other words to emptiness. So it is emptiness that is 'stopping' and it is the only kind of stopping that could have made Angulimala an arahant. If it was stopping murdering, why aren't all people who don't kill arahants? It is because cessation, the true stopping, is the emptiness where there is no self to dwell anywhere, to come or go anywhere or to do anything. That is true stopping. If there is still a self, then you can't stop.

So, we should understand that the word 'empty' is the same word as 'stop', the single word by which the Buddha was able to enlighten Angulimala, even though the killer's hand was still red with blood and around his neck hung 999 finger bones of his victims. For kamma to end by itself, to reach the stopping, we must rely on this single term; empty of 'I' and 'mine', not grasping at or clinging to dhammas.

When the Buddhist teachings spread to China, the Chinese of those days were intelligent and wise enough to accept it, and there arose teachings such as those of Hui Neng and Huang Po in which explanations of mind and Dhamma, of Buddha, the Way and emptiness were extremely terse. There emerged the key sentence that the mind, Buddha, Dhamma, the Way and the emptiness are all just one thing. This one sentence is enough; there is no need to say anything more. It is equivalent to all the scriptures. Now, that is a statement that particularly those of us studying and practising in the old style have no way at all of understanding. It might be beneficial for us to feel a little ashamed on this account. The Chinese went on to say that, 'emptiness is by nature always present, but we don't see it.' I may prove this by saying once again that at this moment everyone sitting here has a mind that is by nature empty but not only do you not see it, but what's more, you will not accept that this is emptiness.

Huang Po scolded that this is to be like someone having a diamond attached to their forehead without knowing it, who goes searching all around the world -or perhaps outside the



world in hell, heaven or the Brahma worlds, making an offering of a penny and expecting to go to heaven and satisfy every desire. Not seeing that which is stuck to our forehead, we seek all around the world, or if that is not enough, in other realms. So please, just for a while, look very closely to see what is there at your forehead, and how to go about putting your hands on it.

When speaking of the way to take hold of the diamond, the Chinese teachers spoke even more profoundly, 'There's no need to do anything. Just be still and the mind will become empty by itself'. This phrase, 'Just be still. There's no need to do anything', has many meanings. Our minds are naughty and playful. The mind wanders out of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body, gathering sense objects, and having accepted them within, is stupid enough to allow the dhammas of ignorance to 'climb into the driver's seat', so that there is nothing but grasping and clinging to 'I' and 'mine'. This is called being naughty, refusing to be still.

We must look for this emptiness that is truly worthy of our aspiration. To say that there is a kind of emptiness that gives rise to cessation, purity, clarity and peace is still to be speaking in the realm of convention. Truly speaking, there is nothing other than emptiness, there is only this one thing. It is not the cause of anything else. It is Buddha, it is Dhamma, it is Sangha, it is the Way. It is purity, clarity and peace. All these things are present in emptiness. If we still say that emptiness is the cause of this or that, it shows that we haven't yet reached the supreme emptiness because if we have reached the supreme, then we don't have to do anything. By being still the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha, purity, clarity, peace, Nibbana, everything will be present in that very immutable state.

An extremely simple method that Huang Po used to teach dull people how to recognize emptiness was to give them a riddle, 'Look at the mind of a child before its conception'. I would like to present all of you with this riddle. Look at the child's mind. Before it is conceived in the womb, where is it? If you can find it, you will easily be able to find emptiness, just, as if taking hold of that which is already there at your forehead.

This one subject of emptiness covers all of the Buddhist Teachings, for the Buddha breathed with emptiness. Emptiness is the theoretical knowledge, it is the practice, and it is the fruit of the practice. If one studies, one must study emptiness; if one practises, it must be for the fruit of emptiness, and if one receives the fruit, it must be emptiness, so that finally one attains that thing that is supremely desirable. There is nothing beyond emptiness. When it is realized, all problems end. It is not above, it is not below, it is not anywhere -I don't know what to say

about it, better to shut up! Suffice to say that emptiness is supreme happiness.

## A Life of Dhamma

- 27 May 1906- Born at Phumriang village, Chaiya, South Thailand, and named Nguem.
- 1914 - Became a temple boy at Wat Nork, Phumriang, where he lived for three years.
- 1922 - Father died, and he took over the family business while supporting his brother's - education.
- 1926 - Brother took over the family business, allowing Buddhadasa to become a bhikkhu, aged twenty-one, at Wat Nork on the 29th July. Given the name Indapanno.
- 1928 - Went to Bangkok to study Buddhist theology; returned after two months to Chaiya, his home town.
- 1929 - Wrote his first book, Giving Alms.
- 1929 - Invited to be the instructor at a school for scriptural studies at Wat Phratat in Chaiya.
- 1930 - Returned to study in Bangkok.
- 1932 - Left Bangkok to live and practise at a ruined temple near Phumriang, later re-named Suan Mokkhabalaram, 'The garden of the power of liberation.'
- 1932 - Took the name Buddhadasa, 'servant of the Buddha'.
- 1932-34 - Spent two years alone at Suan Mokkh, taking on a demanding and ascetic lifestyle.
- 1933 - Supported his brother, Dhammada, in establishing Buddhasasana, a nationally distributed magazine.
- 1935 - Dhammada and Buddhadasa established The Society of the Gift of Truth.
- During the 1940's, began to make national impact through his publications and talks, engaging in discussion with government ministers and giving controversial talks to the Buddhist Society of Thailand.
- July 1940 - Gave his first talk at the Buddha-Dhamma Society in Bangkok, giving teachings for lay people.
- During the Second World War, met with cabinet ministers and the ex-prime minister for discussions.
- Began to give talks publicly criticising current practices in Thai Buddhism. His books, relevant to the newly emerging society began to make a national impact.
- 1947 - Received the title of upajjhaya, preceptor.
- 1949 - Appointed chief of the Southern Disseminating Unit.
- Appointed abbot of the royal monastery Wat Phraparamadhatu.
- Translated teachings of two prominent Zen masters, Wei Lang Huang Po.
- 1962 - Built a 'spiritual theatre' to present the Dhamma to visitors through multi-media presentations, painting, ceramics and toys.
- 1967 - Appearance and Reality, a review of Christianity and Buddhism, published; worked actively to lessen religious sectarianism in India, Sri Lanka and the Middle East.
- 1971-1991 - initiated a Saturday Dhamma Talk programme Suan Mokkh, giving the talks himself until his health began to fail.
- 1973-1976 - Got nationwide coverage debating on television and radio.
- 1980 - The Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University conferred an Honorary Doctorate of Buddhism on him, the first it had offered in its ninety years of existence.
- Became the first monk to be made an honorary member of the widely recognised research body, The Siam Society.
- Died on 8th July 1993, aged eighty-seven.

Some of his **better known books** translated into English include:

- Handbook for Mankind (1961)
- Towards Buddha-Dhamma (1964)
- Heartwood from the Bo-tree (1984)
- Dhammic Socialism (1986)

Mindfulness with Breathing (1988)  
The Prison of Life (1988)  
Key to Natural Truth (1988)  
Buddha-Dhamma for Students (1988)  
A Buddhist Charter (1990)  
Practical Dependent Origination (1992)

[See poem](#) ■

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## The Long Path to Peace

*For the past twenty-four years, Cambodia and its people have known untold tragedy and sorrow. Carpet bombed by the United States (1963-73), bled white by a vicious Civil War (1970-75), the terror regime of the Khmer Rouge (1975-78) and a thirteen year international blockade (1979-91) which followed the December 1978 Vietnamese invasion, Cambodia is only now beginning the long process of self-healing and national reconciliation. But many underlying problems remain and Cambodia is still a long way from lasting peace. In this fragile situation, the newly revived Cambodian Sangha is a rare beacon of hope. The following two articles present encouraging reflections on the return of Buddhism and the critical role played by the monastic community in rebuilding Cambodia's shattered society and economy.*

- A Moment of Peace - A Glimmer of Hope; a report by Bob Maat SJ and Liz Bernstein.
- Dhamma Revival in Cambodia; Dr. Peter Carey

### **A Moment of Peace - A Glimmer of Hope**

An extract from a report by Bob Maat SJ and Liz Bernstein of the Coalition for Peace and Reconciliation, who took part in the Second Peace Walk in May this year.

'Our journey for peace begins today, and everyday, slowly, slowly, step by step. Each step is a prayer. Each step will build a bridge.' (Ajahn Maha Ghosananda). It was in this spirit a group of over four hundred people took their first steps on a 350 kilometre cross country journey through the war-torn provinces of Siem Reap, Konpong Thorn, and Kompong Cham down to the capital city of Phnom Penh. It was the beginning of a walk for peace in areas of Cambodia which have known nothing but war, before and since the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in October 1991.

Dhamrna Yietra (literally pilgrimage of truth), the second Buddhist walk for peace and reconciliation in Cambodia, almost ended before it began. In the early hours of May 3rd, as walkers gathered for morning meditation, the pagoda in the city of Siem Reap in which we were staying became a battle ground. Soldiers from both the Khmer Rouge (KR), and Phnom Penh (SOC) government engaged in combat, and in the ensuing four-hour firefight, three walkers were wounded. A grenade was thrown into the meditation hall in which most of the walkers had taken cover, including the Venerable Maha Ghosananda, the leader of the Dhamma Yietra. The grenade did not explode. When the shooting finally subsided, the participants gathered around Maha Ghosananda who smiled and said, 'Buddha saved us'. (Two days later, the Venerable monk told the Catholic monk among us, 'Christ saved us!' with an ecumenical smile.)

The walkers usually began their daily treks at four or five in the morning, depending on the amount of fighting in the area they were about to enter. Even as early as 4 am, in town or countryside, families would wait outside their homes with a bucket of water, candles and incense sticks. As the monks and nuns filed past two by two, they would bless the people with water and words of peace. 'May peace be in your heart, your family, your village, our country.'

In return, many walkers had her/his feet blessed or washed by those waiting alongside the road, wishing us well on our journey. 'May your journey be as cool as this water'. The incense sticks were extinguished in the water as a symbol of dousing out the flames of war, as prayers for well-being were exchanged. Minefields on either side of the road, temperatures over 400C, and rainstorms did little to dampen the spirit of the walkers, or those patiently waiting by the side of the road to greet us.

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We were told not to come, but they cannot stop us. This  
is our religion. We hunger for peace so much.

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The Dhamma Yietra walked through areas where UN peace-keeping forces do not travel further than 500 metres from their compounds for the sake of their own security; through areas where people's prayers were hauntingly simple: 'May we sleep above the ground again, instead of gathering our children for another night in the bunker.' 'May the shelling stop.' 'We just don't know where to run to anymore,' pleaded a mother of five, 'May we just stop fearing the night.' As the walk passed through this war-torn country, many soldiers started to lay down their weapons, and ask for a blessing, as the monks, who walked in front, filed past. At one stop, several armed soldiers came into the temple in which we were staying and asked to see a monk leading the walk. They then laid their weapons on the floor. They bowed in front of Ven. Kim Teng and requested a blessing of protection. 'We don't want anyone to be killed or hurt,' one said. 'Even though I am a soldier, I have no ill-will in my heart,' he continued. 'So please bless us in a way that our bullets don't hit anyone, and so that no one else's bullets hurt us.'

In some towns, government officials tried to discourage the people from welcoming the walkers, believing the peacewalk was a threat to their political interests. One of the Dhamma Yietra's warmest welcomes was in a town where the people had been clearly told not to come. Old men and women would whisper to the walkers, 'We were told not to come, but they cannot stop us. This is our religion.' 'We hunger for peace so much,' they said while they made an offering of food to the monks, nuns and lay walkers.

In another village, which was also instructed not to receive the walk, a young man related how the village had recently experienced a massacre of 30 people at the temple. 'This is the first time we have dared to gather together again in a large group,' he said. 'We just couldn't stay away. Everyone is here. The market closed, and people have left their jobs to come to receive you. We are so grateful that you have come to help us find peace again. The UN has sent people from all over the world to keep peace, but it has not worked. All we have left is Buddhism. If you will help us, it should not be so difficult to make peace. The monks and nuns must lead us out of this mess of killing one another. If we just think of killing and revenge, it will never end. Buddhism must guide us.'

Before the walk reached Phnom Penh, the city was tense with the expectation of violence. As the walk approached the outskirts of the capital, the number of walkers increased to over three thousand, as many people spontaneously joined the walk. A coalition of women's groups, student associations and human rights groups coordinated the walk through the streets of Phnom Penh, as it swelled with people from all walks of life. 'I saw the walk in front of my office, and I just had to join,' explained a Khmer worker for an international organisation. 'I just couldn't keep inside. I walked off my job. All Cambodians, and foreigners too, should stop work and walk for peace today. When I saw the monks, I was speechless.' Another added, 'People were so afraid of elections. Here in Phnom Penh they had started to stockpile rice. The walk has relieved us of our fear, and given us new hope.'

On the final morning of the event, walkers gathered in front of the royal palace to meditate in silence and pray that all beings be free from suffering, fear and sorrow. Prince Sihanouk greeted the walk with words of deep gratitude for the Dhamma Yietra. He made a solemn plea to all of his compatriots to 'put an end to violence and hatred, and take out the spirit of vengeance from this day forward.'

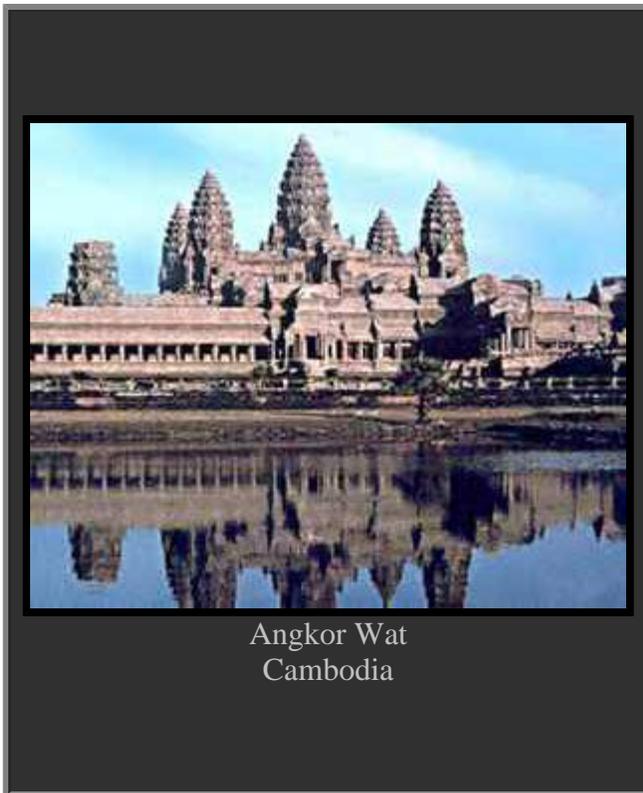
■ A Moment of Peace - A Glimmer of Hope; a report by Bob Maat SJ and Liz Bernstein.

**Dhamma Revival in Cambodia** Dr. Peter Carey traces the disintegration and subsequent revival of the Sangha in Cambodia.

The monarchy and Sangha are amongst the most cherished institutions in Cambodia. The Buddhist wat (monastery-temple), has long been a pivot of the local community, providing both a focus of devotion and a source of practical support. Traditionally, most of the primary education in both towns and villages was provided by the Sangha, and at present, wats are donating land to the homeless and participating in a multitude of rural development projects.

Unfortunately, the Cambodian Sangha has still not recovered from its near total destruction at the hands of the Khmer Rouge. Before 1975, it is estimated that there were some 62,000 monks (at a time when Cambodia's total population was some 7.2 million), a figure artificially inflated by large numbers of Cambodian males who entered the monkhood in order to escape being drafted into Lon Nol's army. By 1979, there were fewer than 2,000, mostly in refugee camps along the Thai-Cambodian border, or in the more liberal eastern zones bordering on Vietnam.

After the pattern of the Chinese 'Cultural Revolution' of the 1960's, the Khmer Rouge had singled out organised religion as a particular target of attack. It was regarded as one of the 'Four Olds' (old thoughts, old culture, old customs, old habits) which the Khmer Rouge wished to destroy in order to build their new communist Utopia. The once cherished Buddhist wats were closed or turned into pig-pens; statues and icons were destroyed, and monks forced to marry, take up secular work, or join the Khmer Rouge militia. The new collective farms established by the Khmer Rouge had no religious edifices of any kind, and the practice of religion was proscribed.



Angkor Wat  
Cambodia

Today, with the re-establishment of a formal Cambodian Sangha (by Theravada monks from Southern Vietnam) following the Vietnamese invasion of December 1978, there are perhaps as many as 14,000 monks, but the standard of their training and knowledge of the Vinaya is generally poor. There is thus a great need for the old contacts between the Thai and Cambodian Sangha to be re-established so that novice monks from Cambodia can study once again at the great Thai teaching monasteries, and breathe new life into their monastic communities.

Despite their comparatively small numbers and lack of training, the Cambodian Sangha has played a key role in the revival of Cambodian society since the holocaust of the late 1970's. Once the Khmer Rouge were ousted and basic food supplies restored in the 1979-81 period, the Cambodian people began to look to the re-establishment of their cultural and religious heritage. Almost the first thing which they did in this period was to take out of hiding the old dancing masks which depict the heroes of the Ramayana and Mahabharata (which had been brought to Cambodia by visiting Indian Brahmins), and to start rebuilding the wats. In some cases, the presence of Buddhist monks has been essential in preventing new outbreaks of violence and inter-communal strife. One recalls here, how the Venerable Maha Ghosananda prevented a Khmer Rouge-controlled refugee camp on the Thai-Cambodian border erupting into violence during the early 1980's by placing all its adult members on the Eight Precepts for a day. In other cases, such as the second Dhamma Yietra walk from Siem Reap to Phnom Penh last May, the courageous example set by the Sangha has inspired others to turn away from the path of violence.

There is no doubt that if the Khmer Rouge ever got back into power, the renascent Cambodian Sangha would suffer the same fate as the much larger monastic community of the 1960's. There is still no place in Khmer Rouge ideology for religion. But it is likely that in the future in Cambodia, no regime - however violent - will ever succeed in eradicating the Cambodians' deep Buddhist faith, for it resides in essence not in buildings or religious forms but in the hearts of the people. Painstakingly, at the cost of enormous sacrifice (some estimates put current contributions to the rebuilding of Buddhist wats and the support of the Sangha at between a quarter and a third of the disposable income of peasant households), the vehicle of the Buddha-Sasana is being rebuilt. It will take more than the Khmer Rouge to eradicate it from Cambodia's rich soil.



<b>THIS ISSUE</b>	<b>Cover:</b> ■ Gnosis and Non-Dualism, Ajahn Sucitto	<b>HOME</b> ■
<b>Signs of Change:</b> ■	<b>Articles:</b> ■ Servant of the Buddha, Buddhadasa Bhikku	<b>BACK ISSUES</b> ■
	■ The Long Path to Peace - Cambodia	
	■ Turning the Wheel in the West; Ven. Sobhano interviews Aj. Amaro	
	<b>Editorial:</b> ■ Gone on Tudong; Monastic experiences	
	■ The Road and the Path; Ajahn Sucitto	

## Turning the Wheel in the West

*In March 1993, about 30 distinguished Western-born Dharma teachers assembled in Dharamsala, India for a 4-day dialogue with H.H. the Dalai Lama. In the first of a three-part interview with Ven. Sobhano, Ajahn Amaro gives his impressions of the conference's aims and achievements.*

### PART ONE

**Question:** What were the aims of the Conference, and why was it held?

**Answer:** There were a variety of reasons. One was to bring together people from all the different Buddhist traditions who were involved in teaching Buddha-Dharma in the West, to learn from each other. The number of different issues raised was quite remarkable - particularly around the ethical conduct of people teaching Buddhism in the West. For many there was a need to establish clear ethical guidelines. There were also individuals' questions concerning problems that were unique to their own situation - such as being very isolated, or being set up as a teacher by other people and then being left to fend for themselves. Also, there were the problems entailed with shifting from one tradition to another.

There were those who had benefited from psychotherapy and felt that vast areas of their lives did not seem to be addressed within traditional Buddha-Dhamma. They had found that psychotherapy, for example, did help address these areas. So they had questions.

Another common theme was that of transposing the essence of the teaching from the East to the West into a form which is suitable for the Western psyche.

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Most people were very self-effacing about their own traditions and there wasn't even a hint of 'My path is better than yours.'

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**Q:** Did you find that all the teachers were experiencing similar problems in teaching in the West, and did this make the differences between them less obvious?

**A:** There was so much accord between us all that the differences were hardly remarked on. Discord or disparity was not created with regard to the traditional patterns in which the teachings are expressed, but more associated with the vehemence with which one believed in one's own particular pattern. The real differences were not to do with whether you were a Theravadin, Tibetan or Zen, but how prone you were to being self-righteous. The only polarity was to do with attachment to views.

We had all come up through the same cultural milieu: we all went to the same movies and we all did the same things through the sixties and seventies. I was the youngest of the delegates there, at thirty-six. Most of the others had been practising for fifteen to thirty years or more. We were all very much practice-oriented rather than academics or 'Traditional

Buddhists' - none of us had grown up in Buddhist cultures. Our practice centered around our own cultural conditioning - too much conceptualisation, too much self-obsession, too much drink and drugs, too much self-hatred. All of us have grown up and worked with this stuff. So whether you're dealing with it as Nirmanakaya-Sambhogakaya-Dharmakaya, or whether you're using a koan, or anicca-dukkha-anatta - the particular formulation seemed to be secondary.

One area of distinction, however, was between those who were still living as monastics and those who weren't. Naturally, there are particular problems, questions and attributes shared in living as a monastic. I noticed that during meal times and free time together, often there would be a separate monastic cluster - a little group of shaven-headed ones would form itself. Most people were very self-effacing about their own traditions and there wasn't even a hint of 'My path is better than yours.'

So it was remarkably free of the historical distinctions and stratifications that have been given to the Buddhist world. His Holiness helped with this and made it very clear that he regarded kindness and compassion as primary and Buddhism as secondary: that we had to base our understanding around ordinary human values and tangible human qualities, not around ideological principles.

**Q:** Can you talk about the perspectives on Sangha that were expressed there?

**A:** Most people had their own 'community' and 'congregation' which weren't necessarily monastic, so they too had a sense of Sangha. The teachers at this conference were like the nuclei of their own particular community or at least significant figures within them. In terms of Sangha, the lay people didn't view the monastics as separate from themselves - just as having a different way of doing the same thing. There was a universal recognition that 'spiritual community' is crucial and that there are many different ways of achieving that. So the monastics were viewed as having a more formalised rendition of that same quality of commitment to spiritual community which everyone agreed was essential. Conversation was more centered around what to do when that goes sour.

There seemed to be a variety of relationships between the monastics and the lay teachers. With some you could see that there was a sincere respect and admiration for the monastic life and its discipline. Others were obviously indifferent or, having been monastics, felt that they were now living more truly to the teachings outside of that form. And sometimes amongst the monastics there appeared to be a tacit assumption that if you're not a monk or a nun you don't really mean business, that having left the Sangha you somehow fell back in the training. However, if you hang on to those views then you find yourself taking on monasticism as an identity - which is precisely what it's not for. On the other hand, lay teachers can be friendly and polite but within themselves be dismissive of the monastic life, perhaps from a need to justify their decision to leave monasticism for lay life. Sometimes this can be coming from a bias to defend an individual's choice - which is okay; but it can colour the relationships between the monastics and the lay community. Because those attending had been selected in view of their

**manor farm, saxmunden**

common commitment towards Buddhist practice, I didn't experience this very strongly at the Conference. There was generally a wonderful mutual respect not born out of tradition but coming from a sincere, friendly attitude of, 'You choose to do it your way, I choose to do it mine.'

His Holiness expressed support for all forms of practice, but what I interpreted from his words was that the Vinaya and monastic form is a sine qua non of the health of the dispensation of the Buddha's teaching; that the representation of the Teaching revolves around the presence of those committed to renunciation as exemplified by the Buddha himself. That's our reference point.

Once when asked: 'How can you tell if the Buddha-Dharma is truly established in a country?' His initial response was: 'When there is the presence of the Four-Fold Assembly - monks, nuns, lay women and laymen'. Expanding on this he said that as the more essential teachings of compassion, dependent origination and emptiness were established this would lead to a greater understanding of the process of rebirth, and the more that you understand rebirth the more you see the possibility of the realisation of Nirvana and this, in turn, leads to an inclination towards the renunciant life of a monk or a nun. Q.E.D.

The world is speechless  
And a deep sorrow  
Exquisite in its dying  
Lies beneath the surface of things.  
I wander over the face of the earth  
Wondering why?

*Venerable Sobhano*

**Q:** How did the Dalai Lama reflect upon Western lay and ordained teachers who claim to have insight and yet are unwilling to practice by the Five Precepts, as we have seen of late in the West?

**A:** He pointed out that if there is a true realisation of emptiness, it has to include getting beyond afflictive emotions or kilesas. The two are intrinsically connected through understanding the relationship between desire and suffering - the realisation of emptiness and of causality has to affect your behaviour. For instance, realising that action born out of ignorance and desire leads to suffering; from this we see that the response to understanding emptiness can only be compassionate action, and well-ordered moral behaviour. His Holiness suggested that perhaps the insights of these people weren't as profound or complete as they thought, otherwise they would not be capable of acting in the way that they do - being alcoholic, or using the bodies of their disciples in a very gratuitous way.

Many examples were raised of various characters from the Tibetan and Zen traditions that behaved in these ways whilst also apparently being great 'Maha Siddhas' or realised yogis who had made the final breakthrough. (People love these stories - they're far more spicy than stories about the virtuous monk who sits on a cushion all day meditating). His Holiness, however, pointed out that in the Tibetan tradition, anyone who had developed to the level where those were really valid activities would make a drastic display of psychic power. For instance, they would float up into the air and transform themselves into a cosmic Buddha as a sign to indicate that they were not just an old lecher but to point out, 'I am a master of the Path and I know what I'm doing.'

He also commented on those who wish to practise a certain Tantric practice which entails engaging in sexual intercourse as a means of potentiating the mind for enlightenment. He said

that the traditional way of finding out whether someone is ready for such a practice is to see if they can drink alcohol, eat human flesh, drink urine and eat faeces - and experience all the tastes as identical. If you can do that then you're ready! Later, when he was pressed on the point and asked if he knew anyone who was capable of Tantric practice at this level, he couldn't name a single person. That was a powerful moment in the Conference because although these things are often spoken about in a theoretical sense, the Dalai Lama - who knows some extraordinary yogis and meditators - didn't know anyone who can get beyond conventional morality. When he said this, the room went very quiet. As the conversation carried on he suggested that it is probably best to avoid the whole thing.

**Q:** With so many representatives of the different traditions in the West who are obviously having to adapt in their own way to the situations they find themselves in, did you find that the examples that you heard from the Dalai Lama's comments confirmed things that we had been experimenting with here in England, or did it seem as though we were going off on the wrong track?

**A:** Although it seems that we're very much an institution at Amaravati, there is obviously a high degree of openness and willingness to learn from other traditions and other ways. Even though the Thai Forest tradition is quite strong in our form, there is still a liberality of practice on the internal level, and people are encouraged to find out what really helps them and works for them. Many people at the Conference seemed to have a narrow view of what Vipassana meditation was. I talked with people about Ajahn Sumedho's usage of Vipassana, and how the practice is based on using the body as a reference point, rather than the avoidance of experience or feeling - that he emphasises developing the practice of feeling life completely. People were quite surprised at this almost psychological approach, but, in fact, it's all right there in the Satipatthana Sutta; this is the original thing the Buddha was describing - opening the mind.

**Q:** Perhaps less formalised?

**A:** Yes. To me the Satipatthana Sutta, particularly cittanupassana, is very much what Ajahn Sumedho teaches. Knowing the angry mind as angry, the expanded mind as expanded and the contracted mind as contracted. Just knowing what's happening and being open to it, rather than strictly controlling things. One feels that Vipassana has been misinterpreted, as people seemed quite surprised that we weren't just concentrating fiercely on a particular sensation, or 'noting' every thing.

Much of the Conference dwelt on questions that didn't affect us very deeply. In a way the whole ethical question wasn't something that has been a problem for our community, for example having teachers who are alcoholic or profligate with their students. But with regard to the questions concerning adaptations of the teachings or translation, it was amazing to see how all the different people had developed in a similar pattern (apart from the Zen people who had not studied under Japanese teachers); the Tibetans and the Theravadins, for the most part, all had the same kind of experiences of trying to work with terms and meaning and translation.

**Q:** And with the adaptations of traditional forms that they used, were there also similar experiences in that field?

**A:** Yes. There were a number of adaptations by the Tibetans that were suggested or had been made, and other things that were proposed at the Conference that we had already either noticed or thought about. For instance, the whole issue of helping to bring the women of the community into a more egalitarian format with the men. Many of the same questions had come up concerning changes within a tradition. I think that we're closer to our Orthodoxy in some ways than the Tibetans, who are in a diaspora state without a massive national tradition still available for them to refer to. Many of the Tibetan Lamas are trying to sustain the old traditions and to keep the forms which they are accustomed to and know, but there's a sort of cultural terror of being wiped out, which obviously makes any kind of adaptation more

resisted.

To be continued...



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- Editorial:** ■ Gone on Tudong; Monastic experiences  
 ■ The Road and the Path; Ajahn Sucitto

**HOME****BACK ISSUES**

## Gone on Tudong

*This year twenty-one bhikkhus and four nuns walked thirteen different routes throughout Britain and Europe. Tudong can be a very uncomfortable experience - you can get wet, cold, lost, hungry, and physically exhausted. But it can also be a magical, inspiring time. Jos Razzell asked some of the monks and nuns to reflect on their time on tudong.*

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I always come back with the strong, very powerful sense of the role of the alms mendicant, connecting with people, going out and doing what monks and nuns were doing in ancient India. This was the first year that monks went on their own, without an anagarika, and had to rely on people feeding them. So many people wanted to help, my heart was filled with a sense of tremendous inspiration and gratitude. I am absolutely convinced that if you went out trusting completely in Dhamma, then Dhamma would provide for you: the Dhamma of peoples' goodness.

**Ven. Sudhammo** - Bishops Stortford to Cromer, with Ven. Sobhano.

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It was very clear, especially when you were out walking on the mountains, how vulnerable the human body is. I'd never realised before just how easy it is to get stuck on a mountain somewhere and die! And how easy it would be for me to have sat down and said, 'I've had enough, I'm lost,' and just stopped. That clarified why I need to live with the Sangha, because in monastic life you come to the point when you just think, 'I've had enough, I can't go any further, I just want to stop and die, but the whole momentum and support of the Sangha keeps you going when you would otherwise stop. And then you realise that actually it's all right to keep going.

**Anagarika Sheila** - Edinburgh to Harnham with Sr. Candasiri & Jos Razzell

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**Anagarika Sheila** - Edinburgh to Harnham with Sr. Candasiri & Jos Razzell

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It's not difficult for the Irish to understand us when we say that we are penniless, we are homeless people. We can see the value of a society who still have a sense of religious significance. The monks we met in Ireland were very humble. They had been celibate for forty or fifty years, and they still lived like janitors, very keen to serve the people. It's totally different from our school, from Theravada. The more we live in the monastery, the more we become a kind of big teacher. It's very powerful for me to see that; the preference of Western people, for equality and fairness.

**Ven. Pannasaro** - Dungarven to Bantree with Aj. Subbato & Ven. Khantiko

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"Getting old, ole' boy, aren't you?" was the not so subtle message of this tudong. With a young Ven. Jotikaro kindly carrying at times nearly half my gear, the body creatively found a seemingly endless variety of ways to pack up without knocking me out of action. Even got me feeling a bit embarrassed, sitting in a white dressing gown in the Casualty Unit of Salisbury's Odstock Hospital, with EGG machines on one side - backpack on the other - X-rays etc. Especially having immediately followed so timely yet so timeless a visit there with a Buddhist practitioner whose vibrancy radiated all the more as he drew so intimately close to death. Yes, those 'who know' would be probably quick to ascertain that tudong offers us many virtues; not least of which is humility.

**Ajahn Santacitto** - Chithurst to Devon with Ven. Jotikaro

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It seems to be very good for one to get physically exhausted. Sometimes in the monastic settings here in Europe, the tiredness comes more from the mind than the body, with the pressures of counselling, teaching, things like that. Everything is heightened by the physical tiredness - a cup of tea in the mountains is absolute ambrosia, but here we have tea all day long and get bored with it. It's totally meaningless. One can see that the real suffering of modern materialism is the endless attempt to hold life, to make it comfortable and safe. On Tudong you realise that life needn't be very comfortable and you can still be happy.

**Ajahn Sumedho**

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When you go forth with very little, you enter into a state of insecurity which dismantles your little private box. People recognise that you're out of your box and so they come out of theirs to meet you. For people to have a time when they come out and can do a simple good deed without any demand or pressure is a precious

### the open road

Let it be:  
The mind flutters in the heart's warm breeze.  
The road rests on the blue hills  
like a bow on a fiddle:  
and we can walk forever.

opportunity. **Ajahn Sucitto** - Lourdes to Mount Segur with Aj. Sumedho & Nick Scott

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Having to carry everything on one's back mile after mile makes one quite passionately dedicated to carrying the minimum. The smallest amount of toothpaste. The minimum water, socks and handkerchiefs, every item scrutinised with increasing zeal. One cannot afford to carry something 'just in case.' If there's any possibility you won't need it, leave it! This attitude really helped my life back at the monastery.

**Venerable Varado** - North Devon to Wales with Aj. Ariyesako & Ven. Sugato

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I didn't realise what we are for the lay people. Usually when people come to the monastery we don't have such direct contact. Sometimes I doubt what I am doing, but when I was walking I saw how people really appreciate what we are doing and have an incredible love for it. Each time we stayed somewhere it was this powerful experience. Someone said to me, 'It is so delightful to see you Sister, you are bringing the Sangha with you, you are bringing the Dhamma into our house, and for that we feel we don't give enough.' And they were looking after us so well. It was amazing because we didn't do anything special, but just to be there, you are bringing the Sangha, the Dhamma into their house. That is a blessing.

**Sister Upekkha** - The Ridgeway, with Sr. Abhassara & Jenna Ghouse.



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**HOME****BACK ISSUES**

## EDITORIAL

### The Road and the Path

The sight, even the idea, of samanas going wandering - 'on tudong' - is naturally pleasing to anyone who loves the Sangha life. Although being stationed in a monastery for prolonged periods of time is no bad thing in terms of sustaining a community and a level of practice, wandering is an element of the life that one feels must be fulfilled. Seen in abstract such long-distance rambles can seem like pleasant jaunts; in fact they rarely are. Apart from the blisters, fatigue and grubbiness, the balance between what one actually needs to stay warm, dry and comfortable, while also not being overburdened with possessions, is almost impossible to achieve. Mostly you take a gamble and accept the occasional soaking or sleepless night rather than carry too much.

In Britain another factor to be fitted in is one of obtaining alms-food. This can be done by having a few addresses of people living on the route who have offered to provide food, and taking an anagarika along who can carry or even purchase food when needed. Both of these options do, however, curtail the freedom and diminish the sense of "going forth" in faith. This year a few parties of monks - one in the South-West, one in Ireland and one in East Anglia - tried something different. They set off without anagarikas and without supportive lay people on the route. Some had lean days, some were spontaneously provided with food and lodging almost every day; but for everyone, and for the community in general, the stimulation of faith in the homeless life was extremely beneficial.

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To keep mindfulness rather than obsession to the fore  
requires faith, or, to use another word, devotion.

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The Buddha advocated such wandering as being for the welfare of the manyfolk: a statement that reminds us to see apparently minor acts in a spiritual light. What personally may seem like being tired and wet and hungry, and experiencing unpleasant mind-states accordingly; or from the other side of it, offering a hot drink, a night in a garage or a few sandwiches to a samana, is on another level, fertilising the field of faith. Tudong causes spontaneous generosity and inspiration to arise in the minds of ordinary people, whilst it takes samanas more deeply into the no-control situation that lies at the heart of the practice. In that space, faith may be the only refuge, but its timeless power to sustain mindfulness becomes evident.

Tudong is, even in long-established Buddhist countries, a comparatively infrequent event, so it is important to look beyond the external circumstance and reinforce the daily practice with its insights. Otherwise tudong creates a conflict with the daily round. How to maintain the no-control space in the mind in a community life - a life that requires organisation just to fit in with the laws and administrative procedures of this country - is one of the greatest challenges to the Sangha's practice in the West. Administration requires control, no doubt about it. Duty, the

dogged resolution of the will to fulfil functions, is just not enough. One grows hard and grey; worse still, duty condemns us to taking ourselves and our activities too seriously. To keep mindfulness rather than obsession to the fore requires faith, or, to use another word, devotion.

It seems to me that devotion is not measured by the effulgence of the heart that may arise, but by whether action can be experienced as belonging to a larger reality than oneself. Walking tudong would be a painful pointless chore (or at best a pleasant hike) if one couldn't relate it to the Triple Gem. People experience this relationship as one of living in situations where one gives up choice - over food, lodgings, comfort, for example. There is a surrender of self to a transpersonal reality. A more difficult aspect of the surrender to the Triple Gem is to see oneself, and live, as part of it: to consider one's life, for example, as a condition for the arising of faith in others. Personality-view gets in the way: to imagine that I as a person am a cause for faith to arise would take a lot of conceit. But on the transpersonal plane, the samana creates 'the occasion for incomparable goodness to arise in the world'- incomparable, because unlike most goodness, it's not 'mine.'

To participate in this requires faith/devotion. Standing back and figuring out whether one has anything worth offering, or whether others are worth it or not is the occupation of an accountant, not a disciple. Some years ago, I noticed a couple coming to Amaravati every Wednesday afternoon. They didn't come to see anyone in particular; but in the afternoon they would be working in the garden, and then leave again without talking to anyone. This went on for several months. One day I struck up a conversation. They told me that they came because they wanted to create an occasion where they weren't thinking about themselves, or expecting anything from someone else. Working at Amaravati was a situation in which they could do that without any need to explain. It provide an occasion for their incomparable goodness.

Seeing one's actions in the context of the manyfolk, the Sangha which is the fourfold assembly of laymen, lay women, nuns and monks, helps to keep it all humble, and reciprocal. It is the essential reciprocity of this field of the Sangha that establishes it beyond personal control. We can only have the faith to begin, to sustain and to bring forth our self-transcending goodness because we support, allow and interact with each other. Even in an apparently tied situation, it keeps us on the road. It keeps us on the Path, the essential tudong which is 'dhutanga' - literally, the 'shaking off' of all attachments.

*Ajahn Sucitto*

## **Buddhadasa Will Never Die**

Buddhadasa will never die,  
Even when the body dies and cannot hear  
whether it is or is not, is of no consequence,  
it is only an object passing through time.

Buddhadasa will never die.  
No matter how good or had things are  
he is one with the true teaching.  
To serve the mind and follow the Buddha's way  
is the body's true offering.

Buddhadasa will never die.  
He will be in service to all humanity for all time  
in the countless Dhamma discourses here and now.

Alas friend, can't you see!  
What dies?

Even when I die and the body disappears  
the teachings still echo in the ear  
sweet and pleasing - never sullied.  
Just as if I never died  
the body of Dhamma lives on

Treat me as if I never died,  
as though I am with you all always.  
Take whatever you choose to contemplate  
as if I sat here with you helping to explain.

Treat me as if I never died,  
then long-lasting benefits will be yours for sure.  
Every day appoint a time for Dhamma,  
don't backslide!  
Until it's truly clear -  
stop dying!

*Buddhadasa Bhikkhu*

## Faith in Awakening

*80 representatives from over 30 contemplative communities of different faiths gathered together at Amaravati for a weekend conference in September. Lewis Carlino offers a brief account.*

The Faith in Awakening conference exceeded all our hopes and expectations as much in what was unsaid and uncreated as through what was explored through topic and discourse. Many of the discussions and dialogues illuminated the ethical and aspirational commonality between the various contemplatives, but the true place of meeting and understanding seemed to arise from the silence that was shared. This silence was not based on agreed views but from an emptiness that makes no distinctions. This was the common ground, not of being a monastic or religious, but of being human. From this there arose a feeling of safety and encouragement among delegates, a natural inspiration to investigate such themes as renunciation, celibacy, commitment and compassion as well as to explore the sense of self and the divine in the spiritual life.

The two main themes were 'The Role of Contemplative Communities in Contemporary Society' and 'Transcendence, the Heart of Contemplative Life'. These were presented in turn by delegates and then discussed by all. From the first came reflections on tradition, simplicity of life and the cultivation of wisdom and compassion in the world. On the second theme delegates discussed the subjects of transcendence of the self-view and desire, restraint and renunciation and devotion and acceptance.

During the evening, delegates gathered around a flower and candle mandala to share offerings in the form of Pali chanting, evening Vespers, Hindu devotional songs - as well as the silence.

Keynote speeches as well as questions and answers are available on tape from Amaravati Cassettes, (see Grapevine). Please specify which talk.

## Greg Klein/Ajahn Anando

Greg Klein, formerly known as Ajahn Anando, is undergoing treatment for a malignant brain tumour. He entered hospital in Richmond, Virginia at the beginning of July and had an

operation which removed some of the tumour. After recovering from this, he left hospital but is now undergoing radio-therapy. The Sangha is in regular contact with him and he has been in good spirits throughout. He is hoping to be able to visit England in October. If anyone would like to write, please contact Cittaviveka for an address.

### **Meditation Hall Update**

Unfortunately, our second application for a new meditation hall at Amaravati has been refused. Although the hall was much smaller than that originally proposed, it was turned down for the same reason - the fear that it would bring unacceptable amounts of traffic to the area. In order to receive an impartial third-party decision in this matter, the next step of the process is to go through the appeals procedure, which could be heard as early as November '93 and yield a decision sometime in '94. Those wishing more information, please contact Ajahn Attapemo at Amaravati.



<b>THIS ISSUE</b>	<b>Cover:</b> ■ Gnosis and Non-Dualism, Ajahn Sucitto	<b>HOME</b> ■
<b>Signs of Change:</b> ■	<b>Articles:</b> ■ Servant of the Buddha, Buddhadasa Bhikku	<b>BACK ISSUES</b> ■
	■ The Long Path to Peace - Cambodia	
	■ Turning the Wheel in the West; Ven. Sobhano interviews Aj. Amaro	
	<b>Editorial:</b> ■ Gone on Tudong; Monastic experiences	
	■ The Road and the Path; Ajahn Sucitto	

## SIGNS OF CHANGE

### The Law of Peace

*Ajahn Munindo sends news from Ratanagiri Monastery, that despite protracted legal wranglings, local support continues to grow.*

This year's inclement weather conditions of June and July failed to foil the planned Tudong walks of the monks at Harnham. Two community members went with Nick Scott and several other laymen for a six-day hike from Harnham to Darlington. Ven. Vipassi was accompanied by Andrew Walker for two weeks' walking through the Lake District and Borders area, taking in a weekend family gathering at the Downhams' farm. Ajahn Munindo hiked for a week in Bavaria with Ven. Suriyo as a guest of his family there and Tan Sugato joined Ajahn Ariyesako for two weeks' walking in Cornwall.

The seven of us, including Tan Thitapanno and Anagarika Matthew, determined the vassa - dividing the time between formal solitary retreating and stone walling and roofing. As the weather fails to dampen the spirits of the residents here, the testing affair of litigation likewise fails to depress the community at large. In May the Trustees of the Magga Bavaka Trust won a court appeal to have the case against them struck out on technical grounds. There are several reasons why this was a successful manoeuvre. The judge had no hesitation in awarding costs (which are considerable) in the Trustees' favour. Regrettably, the Plaintiff's solicitors decided to reserve the right to appeal, so accordingly the process continues to drag on. However, our Trust's solicitors are more confident than ever about the eventual outcome of the case.

So far, the portion of the huge expenses that have required immediate payment have been met by the generosity of many devoted supporters. This still leaves enormous debts. Meanwhile, not only are the various fund-raising ventures succeeding financially, but they are serving to more firmly knit together a strong and harmonious community.

The annual retreat for the lay community took place as usual in mid-August to fit in with Scottish school holidays. Again, as usual, it was full with 30 retreatants, and was effective in renewing enthusiastic commitment to practice in daily life.

The financial constraints imposed by the legal complexities have obviously placed limitations upon the work we can do on the building projects. However, donations specified for use on the Dhamma Hall have meant that things haven't stopped completely. The old barn from which the new hall was extended is now being transformed into an entrance hall. This will increase accommodation capacity in the main hall itself. It will also house the magnificent 3 metre by 2 metre mural by Pang that was commissioned by Wanchai and Lumyai. The mural depicts the Buddha conquering Mara and provides a vivid reminder of the work we have to do and the realistic possibility of succeeding at this task.

May all beings remain strong in their true resolution.

### Santacittarama: A New Centre of Light

*Ajahn Thanavaro reports on the struggles involved in beginning a new monastery. More than three years have passed since Santacittarama opened as the first Theravadin*

monastery in Italy. I had just returned from New Zealand after a five year period, with a premonition of the task ahead, and before my brothers and sisters in the Sangha realised it, I had once again taken up the challenge of a new beginning.

At the time, the signs of interest in the Buddha-Dhamma in Italy were auspicious, and I had felt that after 14 years of training abroad, I was ready to help by establishing a vihara in my native land. This decision came as a surprise to many, but Luang Por Sumedho was behind it, and Luang Por Jun on my departure from Amaravati had assured me of the blessings and the support of Luang Por Chah and the Sangha in Thailand.

Thinking back on it now, it seems a very long time and, in addition to some grey hairs, this undertaking has brought good fruits. The embryonic stage of Santacittarama (the Garden of the Peaceful Heart) has passed, although not without discomfort and the fear of miscarriage. What had been started as a hazardous experiment, for some, has proved to be working in spite of the challenges encountered. Starting a vihara in a new country with very limited support from the laity, and -not to disregard the good will - little understanding of the Way of the Sangha, demands a lot of effort and patience. As I have generally had only one bhikkhu and an anagarika with me - neither of whom spoke Italian -the situation has put me under pressure. Needing to travel to teach and create interest in the vihara has diffused my energies at a time when one would ideally be building a strong foundation in the vihara itself. However, thanks to the continued support of the Triple Gem and my teacher, Luang Por Sumedho, I have been able to withstand the kammic winds of the 'Dark Night of the Soul.'

In the midst of all these forces at work, there took birth in Sezze Romano, a pre-Roman town, a new centre of light for the propagation of peace. The people of the village see the vihara with a sympathetic eye and the bhikkhus are much respected and loved. Our presence has become a living reality as Santacittarama is beginning to function as a meeting place and a teaching centre.

The third stage of our building project on the ground floor of the Vihara is nearing completion. This includes a large meditation hall, two large guest rooms, two toilets, a shower and a small kitchen. The extension of the physical environment reflects the degree of commitment in the work undertaken in response to the level of interest existing in Italy. In this regard, I would like to gratefully acknowledge the generous contributions already received towards the financing of this project. We hope that people will feel welcome to make full use of these new facilities by taking part in the monastic lifestyle.

In the last three years, much of my time and energy has been taken by secretarial and administrative duties as well as teaching all over the country. As a consequence, our small monastic community suffered at times from my absence.

Fortunately we are gaining more stability as Ajahn Chandapalo has chosen to reside at Santacittarama for an indefinite period and a Thai bhikkhu, Phra Preecha Jutindharo, is to join us possibly for a year or more. His presence will be much appreciated to revive our connectedness to the Thai Forest Tradition and the Thai community in Rome.

Already, the Theravadin bhikkhus are an important addition to the Italian Buddhist movement and our foundation in the Vinaya makes us a good vessel for the transmission of the Dhamma. As I am writing these words, more than a million people will watch an Italian national television documentary of film director Paolo Brunatto entitled 'The Great Peace', showing the grandeur of the funeral service of Luang Por Chah contrasted with the simple lifestyle of the bhikkhu in the monasteries of North East Thailand.

It is heart-warming to see how the integrity and the spiritual stature of our Thai master has also spread here in different ways - including translations of his books into Italian. The translation and publication of books by Ajahn Buddhadasa and Ajahn Sumedho has been one of the ways that I have been able to spread the Dhamma. In the next few months, a book containing a selection of my talks called 'Don't Create More Suffering' (please!) should also appear. Surely one day it will be possible to go forth as a samana in Italy, and then I will rejoice with all the others for having worked for the full establishment of the Dhamma in this country.

May the Light and Power and Love of the Dhamma shine in your Heart/Mind.

## Devotion in Death

*Sophie Young, previously known as Sister Cintamani, tells of her experience caring for her mother, Sasha, who died on June 22nd 1993 after a long illness.*

Looking after our parents when they are dying is one of the most natural and yet most difficult things to do. It is very painful to see your mother's body, the body which brought you into this world, gradually growing weaker before the eyes and under the touch of your hands. Your whole being cries out: no, no, this shouldn't be happening and all you can do is soothe, support and offer love. There is nothing you can do to halt the process of the disease. Yet this was also one of the most fulfilling and life-enhancing times of my life, a time I will always cherish and be grateful for having shared with dear Sasha. As she said herself not long before she died 'My spirit is strong, it's just the body that's collapsing.'

Sasha's room became a temple in those last weeks and days of her life. Going through her door you entered a sacred space where she was the high priestess, a radiant queen robed in oriental gowns. Abiding so completely in the moment, she accepted the pain and sadness of dying, she delighted in the joys of life. Everything in the room had a meaning - each flower arrangement on her shrine told a story. The red roses seemed to lean toward the Buddharupa with their green leaves touching him gently on the shoulder. Sasha explained that the red roses were the spirit of the Buddha's mother giving strength to him as she was dying. The Buddha's mother died soon after he was born.

Midsummer's day was Sasha's last full day on this earth. Propped up in bed by a mass of brightly coloured pillows, she opened her eyes in the morning and looked across at the beautiful Buddha on the shrine at the foot of her bed. She focused her gaze and slowly joining her shaking palms together, she bowed three times with respect, grace and simplicity. Devotion with no end other than wanting to bow to the Buddha on her last day, bringing tears of love and gratitude for such a noble-hearted mother.

Sasha was a regular visitor and supporter of the monasteries here in England, well known and well loved by the Sangha who in turn visited her during her illness. Her funeral, at which Ajahn Sumedho gave a talk, was attended by many of the monks and nuns.

