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Spiritual Friendship

*A Sunday afternoon talk, given by Ajahn Amaro
at Amaravati Buddhist Monastery on 19th September, 1993.*

In some of the Theravada countries the tradition of forest monasticism still flourishes. This style of practice, going off and living in the countryside, finding solitude and meditating alone in the wilds, is very often praised. Our teacher, Ajahn Chah, practiced in this way for many years. But in the latter part of his life, after spending a long time travelling, meditating and living alone, he integrated practice and teaching into the creation of a spiritual community.

He had found that he could develop profound concentration and insight, and experienced some interesting mind states when he went off into the hills alone, but then when he would come back and stay with the other monks, he could only cope for a little while. He would begin to lose his temper and get upset, angry and annoyed about how incompetent and useless everybody else was. After a few years of this, he realised that he had some lessons to learn: 'Well, it is easy for me to go and be alone and be the fierce ascetic off in the forest. What is difficult is to be with other people, to learn how to spend time with others.' So he began to put himself in that position more and more, and eventually he developed his monasteries in that style.

Often his monasteries were criticized because the monks and nuns seemed to have so little time

to meditate. They were always working, and people seemed to have to spend so much time together: chanting together, meditating together. Many complained that this was an obstruction. He listened and understood the criticism but was never intimidated by it. He saw that there were profound lessons and great richness in learning to

live together with other people.

In fact, it is the spiritual community or spiritual friendship that really holds the spiritual life together. It is

interesting that of all the meditation masters in Thailand (not that one is keeping score), Ajahn Chah managed to establish far more monasteries than any other meditation teacher – all in all about 130–140. So it really works for ordinary human beings. We realise that to develop in the spiritual life, we need the support of companions; without that, we tend to drift or sink.

There is a very often-quoted saying in the scriptures on spiritual friendship. One day Ananda, his closest disciple, came up to the Buddha and said: 'Lord, I think that half of the of the Holy Life is spiritual friendship, association with the Lovely.' And the Buddha replied: 'That's not so; say not so, Ananda. It is not half of the Holy Life, it is the whole of the Holy Life.'

The entire Holy Life is friendship, association with the Lovely.' Now, the Pali word for

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'friendship with the Lovely' is *kalyanamitta*. '*Kalyana*' means 'lovely' or beautiful and '*mitta*' means 'friend'. So it is often translated as association or affiliation with the Lovely (with a capital L), being an epithet for Ultimate Reality or the Unconditioned.

It is interesting that for years I always used to quote it as: 'Spiritual friendship is the whole of the Holy Life', but the Buddha was making a play on words – he was also saying that it is not just having spiritual friends that is the whole of the Holy Life, but our affiliation, our intimacy with the Lovely, with the Ultimate Truth. These two support each other. Our like-minded companions and associates in spiritual life support our effort, but it is actually our ability to awaken to that which is truly Lovely, to the Wonderful, to Ultimate Reality – that is, in its own way, the very fire of our spiritual life.

When we say 'spiritual friendship', do we just mean the kind of people we meet in Buddhist monasteries? Does the spiritual friend have to have a shaven head? Or could it also be our husband, our wife, our life's companion? There are many different kinds of relationship or friendship that we can have. So we might wonder which ones are spiritual and which ones are not. Can a romantic friendship be spiritual? Or does spiritual friendship have to be platonic? Can it be a relationship of teacher to student, or of brother and sister? Rather than categorising it in these ways, or trying to figure out which styles of friendship are spiritual and which are not, it is much more important to look at the basis of that relationship and our approach towards it. Relationships, I would suggest, fall into two basic categories. In one kind of relationship we tend to relate to the other person with a sense of separateness, in the other we relate with a sense of wholeness.

The relationship of separateness hinges on a profound sense of 'me' and 'you', of 'self' and 'other', and that is something very concrete, solid. We always look to the other person to fulfil a need that we have, due to a feeling of something lacking in ourselves; and that other person seems to fill that space. So this kind of relationship or friendship has a quality of dependency in it. We need the other person to be around in order to support us, to make us feel good; or we may even need to have the other person around to be an enemy – a good protagonist that we can struggle with!

We may have a very intense, profound relationship when we're in love with someone and we experience very blissful times, a sense of wholeness or completeness. But these times also entail feelings of desolation and loss, of loneliness and separation. Even a strong friendship, such as with a teacher or a helper with whom we meditate or share a profound understanding of each other's innermost world, may disappoint us in

this way. As long as that relationship is based on a sense of 'me' and a sense of 'you', and that polarity is not recognised, there will always be pain and loss in it.

An incident is described in the scriptures when Visakha goes to the Lord Buddha one morning, having just come from the funeral for one of her grandchildren. Visakha was one of the Buddha's great disciples. She had ten sons and ten daughters, and each of those had ten sons and ten daughters. So she was surrounded by an ocean of grandchildren, and she adored them. The Lord Buddha saw that her hair and her clothes were all wet, and he asked her why.

'Lord, a dear and beloved grandchild of mine has died, that is why I have come here in broad day with my clothes and hair all wet.'

'Visakha, would you like to have as many children and grandchildren as there are people in the

whole city of Savatthi?' (the local capital)

'Yes indeed, Lord.' She replied.

'But Visakha, how many people die each day in Savatthi?'

'Ten people die in a day in Savatthi, Lord, or nine or eight...or three or two or at least one. Savatthi is never without people dying.'

'Then what do you think, Visakha, if you had as many children and grandchildren as there are people in Savatthi, you would be attending funerals for your offspring every day. Would you ever be with your clothes and hair not wet?'

'No Lord – enough of so many children and grandchildren for me!'

Then he said: 'Those who have a hundred dear ones have a hundred pains..' (*Udana VIII 8*)

The ones who are dear to us, that attachment that we have towards them, this is beautiful and lovely but it also brings us pain. It carries a sting with it, a shadow, and this is unavoidable. If we invest in the delight of such association then, when there is separation, we cannot avoid feeling loss. So, a spiritual friendship of this type will always have this slightly unbalanced quality to it.

Now, on the other side, what I like to call a relationship of wholeness, is where our association with another person is based not around the sense of self at all. Instead, it is based on an attitude of relinquishment, of unselfishness; of openness rather than neediness.

This can be consciously developed in various ways. One such way is through devotional practice towards an idealised figure, such as Buddha, God, Jesus, Krishna or whoever it might be; or some living person, such as a guru. That act of self-relinquishment, of giving oneself in devotion to a divine figure, works by the power of one's faith in the divinity of the person and their presence. This forms an important bond between oneself

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EDITORIAL

Lessons in Living

While, broadly speaking, the focus in the April newsletter was meditation, in this issue it is clearly relationship: the benefits, difficulties, sadnesses and the understanding of relationship in the context of spiritual practice.

Entering into community or embarking on life in relationship may, for some, appear to be the answer to all life's problems. There is that phrase from fairy tales: 'They got married, and lived happily ever after'... or, a more cynical version: 'They got married and lived un-happily ever after'. However, instead of either endorsing or dismissing any such formalised relationship, it seems that what is needed is a reappraisal of our attitude to it. Are we entering into it to get something, or to maintain what we have or think ourselves to be? Or is the action one of giving ourselves, and being transformed by the experience?

I imagine that most people would assume that the idea of giving and transformation would be the 'right' answer – and it certainly has an appealing ring to it. It's the answer that I would give in regard to my commitment to Sangha; but almost 18 years have shown me that often, in spite of all our noble aspirations, what is actually going on accords more closely with a subtle clinging to a sense of 'self' identity. Although we love the idea of transformation, the actual experience of the process is another matter; in fact, there are times when we find ourselves adopting almost any strategy to avoid it!

Significant events such as the Going Forth, formally entering into a relationship, or giving birth to a child represent the culmination of a process, but we also need to remember that they are actually a beginning. It is more like the image of preparing to set out on the journey – putting our feet onto the path – than of finally arriving at our destination.

As the Sangha of Western monks and nuns settles into Western culture, there has been a need for us to reevaluate some of our accepted norms of behaviour, particularly in regard to the hierarchical structure. During this process I have found it helpful to look at the basic principles of training that the Buddha established and some of the guidelines he gave for living in community.*

Underpinning everything is the need for good friends (*kalyanamitta*); a relationship with a teacher or spiritual companions, from whom the initial inspiration may come, and who can provide guidance through their teaching and example. So we enter the relationship.

Next comes the training: the curbing of our selfish and heedless habits. It can get pretty uncomfortable at this stage, but the Buddha, likening it to the training of a royal elephant, said that at this stage the trainer speaks kindly and

gently, and rewards appropriate behaviour. (Is that something we remember to do for ourselves? Sometimes we can be excessively harsh.)...

Next, comes restraint: 'guarding the doors of the senses'; and then moderation in eating, wakefulness, mindfulness and full awareness. We notice the interplay between the external (what we call 'the world') and the internal – how we interpret the messages we receive; this in turn determines our response. Through meditation, we become aware of the hindrances and, in the process of their abandonment, we come to a clearer understanding of what 'me' actually is. We begin to see the stress, or dukkha, that is involved in maintaining that sense of being 'somebody' in relation to other 'somebodies'.

There are also guidelines for offering and receiving admonishment or guidance. Firstly, we should make sure that we understand the training and are practising correctly ourselves. The Buddha goes on to suggest that we find a suitable time and place; that we speak gently; and with real kindness (not while we are still angry or upset); that we speak according to what we know to be true; and say what is helpful... Then, receiving correction, we need humility, honesty and kindness. There is also a kind of courage that enables us to actually feel the pain or the indignation, to allow it to be right there, so that we can learn what we need to learn, pick ourselves up and begin again. Having done that fully, we can then feel the arising of joy and gratitude.

So there are many lessons that we can learn through relationship, if we are willing to take an interest in 'difficulties' or 'problems' as they arise; to be curious about their origin and, through understanding that, help them to cessation.

Finally, on a very different note, Venerable Kusalo, who for the past five years has faithfully translated a mass of Dhamma teachings and other useful information into the form of this newsletter, has had to 'retire' owing to the pressure of other commitments within the Sangha. Tavarro (Robert Brown) has kindly offered to have a go as his successor so, hopefully, Venerable Kusalo's disappearance will be a barely perceptible phenomenon. Also, in November this year, I will be taking about four months to go on pilgrimage to the Buddhist Holy Places in India; and fortunately, Ajahn Sucitto has undertaken to fulfil the role of editor during that time. It's important to be dispensable... and I can see further good lessons in this very situation about appreciating one another – but without attachment!

May all beings realise Nibbana.

* See: *Majjhima Nikaya Suttas 125+15*,
Anguttara Nikaya Book of Tens Ch V. 44

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and the other. By giving oneself up completely to the Divine, whether it is internal or external, whether we create an object for it or we relate to a person who exhibits divine qualities, we can bring about a truly spiritual relationship. As the mind opens to that, we begin to internalise the qualities that they embody. We develop an inner joy and release from within our own being, without creating a state of unwholesome dependence.

Last weekend we had a conference of contemplatives here, with many Christian nuns and monks of different orders, as well as some Hindus and Sufis attending. It was interesting talking with them because, whereas Buddhists are quite unusual in practising a non-theistic religion, most other traditions have a very strong God-figure that occupies the focus of their attention. The whole manner of their prayers, liturgy and religious expression is created around devotion to God; giving yourself to God, praying to God, or giving up your heart to Jesus, Mary or Krishna.

It was apparent that the more you practise in this way the more you see Krishna or God, not only on the outside, but also on the inside. You begin to find yourself through this process of self-relinquishment in a complete, pure identification with that divine figure.



Firing an almsbowl

In Sufi mystical poetry they often refer to Ultimate Reality. Their traditional verses move back and forth between sounding like love-songs describing a passionate affair, and the relationship between the individual and the Divine. We can see in some of the Sufi poetry the whole process of spiritual practice ends up with the realisation that we ourselves are 'The Beloved'. There never was any real difference or separation between myself, as an apparent individual, and the Divine or God or Ultimate Reality.

The other way of developing this relationship of wholeness is through the path of meditation and wisdom. Using this approach, we become more aware of how we create the sense of 'self'. By letting go very directly of the sense of 'I' and 'me' and 'mine' in our daily activity, we engage in a process of self-relinquishment, without any external object, being or deity to empower or to strengthen us. Just by inquiry, contemplation and insight – using the power of the mind – we break through the sense of 'self', allowing the mind and the heart to be fully opened to the Truth.

A friendship or relationship that is developed in this way brings with it a freedom from *dukkha* – incompleteness and dissatisfaction. If we relate in this way, letting go of 'self' and dropping the feeling of 'I' and 'me' and 'mine', the experience of being together is one of delight, of pleasantness, rather than neediness. There is no sense of insecurity, alienation or loneliness in the relationship and so there is a tremendous freedom. We can enjoy each other's company and be supported by each other, but we are not requiring it. It is the same in a spiritual training, where we must be careful not to become dependent on the teacher; likewise, a true teacher will not need the admiration or attention of their students.

There is a whole culture nowadays of blaming our problems in life on our 'dysfunctional' family or on a dysfunctional relationship. We can find ourselves locked into a relationship where we can neither love the other person, nor can we leave them. We are, to use another current term, 'co-dependent'. The relationship is very destructive: we can't live with them, and we can't live without them.

If we try to establish a spiritual friendship without any real understanding of spiritual beauty, or Truth, then it will always end up being dysfunctional and co-dependent; but if we try to live with an awareness of or an intimacy with Truth, without any spiritual companions or support, we very easily lose our way. Neither approach will bring good results. The two support each other and it is just this symbiosis that, ideally, the four-fold community of Buddhist disciples symbolises and embodies. Laymen, laywomen, nuns and monks, as spiritual community, can empower the opportunity for insight into Truth.

Even though many of us like to be alone, we can find it difficult to use such an opportunity fully. I often feel it is rather like Ajahn Chah's experience: he liked to be alone, he could enjoy himself being off in the forest without anyone to bother him, but it was the monastic

form within a community lifestyle that he used to train his monks and nuns. In community life spiritual maturity, that quality of true independence, is put to the test. Regardless of what the world throws at us, there has to be the effort to sustain an equilibrium; we have to open ourselves up to the points of view and feelings of others, and yet sustain an inner integrity, so that we don't wobble, crumple or sink. I am always impressed by those who maintain their spiritual life and practice far away from other people. It takes tremendous strength to develop a real penetration of Truth, and there may only be a handful of people that can do it on their own without support.

Certainly, for myself, I deeply value coming across the Sangha. I started my vague attempts at spiritual practice as a teenager; by the time I was twenty-one I was in a profound mess. It was then that I visited a branch of this monastic community in Thailand. What really impressed me there was how powerful a presence that group of people had. Simply knowing on my own that it would be a good thing for me to meditate and practice yoga, or to stop drinking and smoking did not have the same impact in helping me to break my habits, and to resist the influence of social norms. I just did not have the clarity of mind to sustain a true and honest spiritual perspective. But suddenly, being in a place where people had given up all the things that I was trying to give up, and were doing all the things that I was trying to do, it felt rather like having been lost in the wilderness and then stepping onto a bus that was heading in the right direction. At last I did not have to struggle on my own.

From an idealistic position one could say: 'It's better to do it on your own; that's the way to be strong.' But for most of us it's very easy to be fooled, to follow our own desires and fears and to be dishonest with ourselves. Living amongst like-minded people provides a great mirror to see our own preferences, our own fears and shortcomings.

One of the great blessings of giving oneself to a spiritual community, or even to a standard of spiritual teachings, is the objective measure we receive for the conditioning of our own mind; it is like watching the habits of the mind being projected onto a screen, rather than just following them around and never really seeing them. We are given the chance to stand back from them and to see what we always run away from, what we are always being pulled towards, what we seek as a place of comfort and safety, what makes us feel good or bad. That kind of objectivity enables us to stop being impressed by our thoughts or moods; once we can see things as they are, we are able to witness the movements of the mind and we are then able to transcend them.

This year I learnt the word, 'schmoozing', 'to schmooze'; I think it is a Yiddish word. It means to hang out with your friends, and chat and drink tea, doing nothing very much, just having a good time

together. To schmooze is a very admirable and useful activity, and I'm not being facetious here. It is amazing how often people who are interested in spiritual practice come to a centre like this monastery, and listen to a talk or do a retreat and, as soon as it is over, everyone goes home. Sometimes you go to Buddhist groups for years, and you find that the people in the group hardly know each other. But part of developing our spiritual life is to spend time with each other, to generate a sense of respect and gratitude for each other's interests and commitment to spiritual values; not to just think: 'The talk is over, now it's time to go home.' or, 'The retreat is finished, now I'll go off, I've got this and that to do.'

Through getting to know those who delight in the Buddha's teaching we create a connection with them; we establish a support system. This is *kalyanamitta*, the network of spiritual friendship. This is what really enables us as a human society to hold together. Political agreements don't work, laws don't work; it is our ability to strengthen and affirm our qualities of inner beauty, of kindness and generosity, and to encourage those in others – that's what enables human beings to live in a wholesome and profitable way.

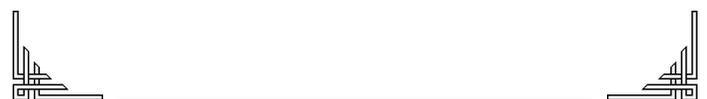
In spiritual friendship, we can actually be with each other. We open ourselves to the other person, ready to notice any grudges that we have, or the opinions and obsessions we have about them, as well as the attractions towards them. Then we can enter more into the place of listening, of forgiving, of letting go of the past and just being open to the present. And this is the most wonderful and beautiful gift we can give. ❖

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*'The minds of some people are filled
with opinions about things.
They are too clever to listen to others.
It is like water in a cup.
If a cup is filled with dirty stale water,
it is useless.
Only after the old water is thrown out
can the cup become useful.
You must empty your mind of opinions
then you will see.'*

Ajahn Chah



The Joy Hidden in Sorrow

*Reflections given by Sister Medhanandi,
at the Death and Dying Retreat, Amaravati Buddhist Monastery;
November 1996.*

During these days of practice together, we've been reading the names of many people – our departed loved ones, and also relatives, family members, friends, who are suffering untold agony and hardship at this time. There is so much misery all around us – how do we accept it all? We've heard of suicides, cancer, aneurysms, motor neurone disease plucking the life out of so many young and vibrant people. And old age, sickness, decay and death snuffing the life out of many elderly people who still have a lot of living that they want to do. Why does this happen?

Death is all around us in nature. We're coming into the season now where everything is dying. This is the natural law, it's not something new. And yet time and again we keep pushing it out of our lives, trying our best to pretend that we're not going to die – that we won't grow old, that we'll be healthy, wealthy and wise until the last moment.

We are constantly identified with our bodies. We think, 'This is me', or, 'I am my body, I am these thoughts. I am these feelings, I am these desires, I am this wealth, these beautiful possessions that I have, this personality.' That's where we go wrong. Through our ignorance we go chasing after shadows, dwelling in delusion, unable to face the storms that life brings us. We're not able to stand like those oak trees along the boundary of the Amaravati meadow – that stay all winter long and weather every storm that comes their way. In October, they drop their leaves, so gracefully. And in the spring, they bloom again. For us too there are comings and goings, the births and deaths, the seasons of our lives. When we are ready, and even if we are not ready, we will die. Even if we never fall sick a day in our lives, we still die; that's what bodies are meant to do.

When we talk about dying before we die, that does not mean that we should try to commit suicide to avoid suffering; it means that we should use this practice, this

way of contemplation, to understand our true nature. In meditation we can go deeply into the mind, to investigate: who is it that we really are? Who dies?... Because what dies is not who we are.

Death can be peaceful. A peaceful death is a gift, a blessing to the world; there is simply the return of the elements to the elements. But if we have not come to realise our true nature, it can seem very frightening, and we might resist a lot. But we can prepare ourselves, by investigating who it is that we really are; we can live consciously. Then when the time comes, we can die consciously, totally open, just like the leaves fluttering down, as leaves are meant to do.

Chasing shadows... What is it that we are really looking for in life? We're looking for happiness, for a safe refuge, for peace. But where are we looking for these things? We desperately try to protect ourselves by collecting more and more possessions,

having to have bigger and bigger locks on the door, putting in alarm systems. We are constantly armouring ourselves against each other – increasing the sense of separation – by having more possessions, more control, feeling more self-importance with our college degrees, our PhD's. We expect more respect, and we demand immediate solutions; it is a culture of instantaneous gratification. So we're constantly on the verge of being disappointed – if our computer seizes up, if we don't make that business deal, or if we don't get that promotion at work.

This is not to put down the material realm. We need material supports, food, clothing, medicines; we need a shelter and protection, a place to rest; we also need warmth, friendship. There's a lot that we need to make this journey. But because of our attachment to things, and our efforts to fill and fulfil ourselves through them, we find a residue of hunger, of unsatisfactoriness, because we are looking in the wrong place. When

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somebody suddenly gets ill, loses a leg, has a stroke, is faced with death, gets AIDS and has to bear unspeakable suffering, what do we do? Where is our refuge?

When the Buddha was still Prince Siddhartha before his enlightenment, he had everything. He had what most people in the world are running after, as they push death to the edge of their lives, as they push the knowledge of their own mortality to the farthest extreme of consciousness. He was a prince. He had a loving wife and a child. His father had tried desperately to protect him from the ills of life, providing him with all the pleasures of the senses, including a different palace for every season. But he couldn't hold his son back, and one day the Prince rode out and saw what he had to see: the Four Heavenly Messengers.

Some of us might think it's contradictory that a heavenly messenger could come in the form of a very sick person: 'What's so heavenly about a very sick person?' But it is a divine messenger, because suffering is our teacher, it's through our own experience and ability to contemplate suffering that we learn the First Noble Truth.

The second and third messengers were a very old man struggling along the roadside, and a corpse, riddled with maggots and flies, decaying on the funeral pyre. These were the things the Buddha saw that opened his eyes to the truth about life and death. But the fourth heavenly messenger was a *samana*, a monk; a symbol of renunciation, of someone who'd given up the world in order to discover the Truth within himself.

Many people want to climb Mount Everest, the highest mountain in the world, but actually there is a Himalaya in here, within each of us. I want to climb that Himalaya; to discover that Truth within myself, to reach the pinnacle of human understanding, to realise my own true nature. Everything on the material plain, especially what we seem to invest a lot of our energy hungering for, seems very small and unimportant in the face of this potential transformation of consciousness.

So that's where these four celestial signs were pointing the young Siddhartha. They set him on his journey. These are the messengers that can point us to the Way of Truth and away from the way of ignorance and selfishness, where we struggle, enmeshed in wrong view, unable to face our darkness, our confusion, our pain. As Steven Levine said: The distance from our pain, from our wounds, from our fear, from our grief, is the distance from our true nature.'

Our minds create the abyss – that huge chasm. What will take us across that gap? How do we get close to who

we really are – how can we realise pure love in itself, that sublime peace which does not move towards nor reject anything? Can we hold every sorrow and pain of life in one compassionate embrace, coming deeply into our hearts with pure awareness, mindfulness and wise reflection, touching the centre of our being? As we realise who we are, we learn the difference between pain and suffering.

What is grief really? It's only natural that when someone we are close to dies, we grieve. We are attached to that person, we're attached to their company, we have memories of times spent together. We've depended on each other for many things – comfort, intimacy, support, friendship, so we feel loss.

When my mother was dying, her breath laboured and the bodily fluids already beginning to putrefy, she suddenly awoke from a deep coma, and her eyes met

mine with full recognition. From the depths of Alzheimer's disease that had prevented her from knowing me for the last ten years, she returned in that moment to be fully conscious, smiling

with an unearthly, resplendent joy. A radiance fell upon both of us. And then in the next instant she was gone.

Where was the illness that had kidnapped her from us for so many years? In that moment, there was the realisation of the emptiness of form. She was not this body. There was no Alzheimer's and 'she' was not dying. There was just this impermanence to be known through the heart and the falling away, the dissolution of the elements returning to their source.

Through knowing the transcendent, knowing who we really are – knowing the body as body – we come to the realisation that we are ever-changing and we touch our very essence, that which is deathless. We learn to rest in pure awareness.

In our relationships with each other, with our families, we can begin to use wisdom as our refuge. That doesn't mean that we don't love, that we don't grieve for our loved ones. It means that we're not dependent on our perceptions of our mother and father, children or close friends. We're not dependent on them being who we think they are, we no longer believe that our happiness depends on their love for us, or their not leaving, not dying. We're able to surrender to the rhythm of life and death, to the natural law, the *Dhamma* of birth, ageing, sickness and death.

When Marpa, the great Tibetan meditation master and teacher of Milarepa, lost his son he wept bitterly. One of his pupils came up to him and asked: 'Master, why are you weeping? You teach us that death is an

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illusion.’ And Marpa said: ‘Death is an illusion. And the death of a child is an even greater illusion.’

Marpa showed his disciple that while he could understand the truth about the conditioned nature of everything and the emptiness of forms, he could still be a human being. He could feel what he was feeling; he could open to his grief. He could be completely present to feel that loss.

There is nothing incongruous about feeling our feelings, touching our pain, and, at the same time understanding the truth of the way things are. Pain is pain; grief is grief; loss is loss – we can accept those things. Suffering is

what we add onto them when we push away, when we say, ‘No, I can’t.’

Today, while I was reading the names of my grandparents who were murdered,

together with my aunts and uncles and their children, during World War II – their naked bodies thrown into giant pits – these images suddenly overwhelmed me with a grief that I didn’t know was there. I felt a choking pressure, unable to breathe. As the tears ran down my cheeks, I began to recollect, bringing awareness to the physical experience, and to breathe into this painful memory, allowing it to be. It’s not a failure to feel these things. It’s not a punishment. It is part of life; it’s part of this human journey.

So the difference between pain and suffering is the difference between freedom and bondage. If we’re able to be with our pain, then we can accept, investigate and heal. But if it’s not okay to grieve, to be angry, or to feel frightened or lonely then it’s not okay to look at what we are feeling, and it’s not okay to hold it in our hearts and to find our peace with it. When we can’t feel what must be felt, when we resist or try to run from life, then we are enslaved. Where we cling is where we suffer, but when we simply feel the naked pain on its own, our suffering dies... That’s the death we need to die.

Through ignorance, not understanding who we are, we create so many prisons. We are unable to be awake, to feel true loving-kindness for ourselves, or even to love the person sitting next to us. If we can’t open our hearts to the deepest wounds, if we can’t cross the abyss the mind has created through its ignorance, selfishness, greed, and hatred, then we are incapable of loving, of realising our true potential. We remain unable to finish the business of this life.

By taking responsibility for what we feel, taking responsibility for our actions and speech, we build the foundation of the path to freedom. We know the result that wholesome action brings – for ourselves and for others. When we speak or act in an unkind way – when

we are dishonest, deceitful, critical or resentful – then we are the ones that really suffer. Somewhere within us, there is a residue of that posture of the mind, that attitude of the heart.

In order to release it, to be released from it, we have to come very close. We have to open to every imperfection – to acknowledge and fully accept our humanity, our desires, our limitations; and forgive ourselves. We have to cultivate the intention not to harm anyone (including ourselves) by body, speech or even thought. Then if we do harm again, we forgive ourselves, and start from the beginning, with the right

intention. We understand *kamma*; how important it is to live heedfully, to walk the path of compassion and wisdom from moment to moment – not just when we are on retreat.

*As long as we’re holding one negative thing
in our hearts – towards ourselves or anyone else
– we cannot fully realise our true nature.*

We cannot be free.

Meditation is all the time. Meditation is coming into union with our true nature. The Unconditioned accepts all, is in total peace with all... total union, total harmony. As long as we’re holding one negative thing in our hearts – towards ourselves or anyone else – we cannot fully realise our true nature. We cannot be free.

How can we really take responsibility for our actions? By reflecting on our virtuous, or wholesome actions we are taking responsibility, and this is a support for the practice in the present moment. We feel the momentum of our mindfulness, confidence, trust, the energy of purity of mind, and that helps us to keep going. Contemplating things that I don’t feel good about can perhaps bring a dark cloud over consciousness. In fact this is very wholesome; it is the arising of moral shame and moral fear, *hiri-ottappa*. We know when we’ve done something that was not right, and we feel regret; being completely honest. But then we forgive ourselves, recollecting that we are human beings, we make mistakes. Through acknowledging our wrong action, our limitation, our weakness, we cross the abyss and free our hearts. Then we begin again.

This moral fear engenders a resolve in the mind towards wholesomeness, towards harmony; there is the intention not to harm. This happens because we understand that greed conditions more greed, and hatred conditions more hatred – whereas loving-kindness is the cause and condition for compassion and unity. Knowing this, we can live more skilful lives.

Once, when the Buddha was giving a teaching, he held up a flower. And the Venerable Mahakassapa, one of his great devotees and disciples, smiled. There’s a mystery why the Venerable Mahakassapa smiled when the Buddha held up the flower.



What is it that we see in the flower? In the flower we see the ever-changing essence of conditioned forms. We see the nature of beauty and decay. We see the 'suchness' of the flower. And we see the emptiness of experience. All teachings are contained in that flower; the teachings on suffering and the path leading to the cessation of suffering – on suffering and non-suffering. And if we bring the teachings to life in each moment of awareness, it's as if the Buddha is holding up that flower for us.

Why are we so afraid of death? It's because we have not understood the law of nature; we have not understood our true nature in the scheme of things. We have not understood that there's non-suffering. If there is birth, there is death. If there is the unborn, then there is that which is deathless: 'The Undying, Uncreated, Love, the Supreme, the Magnificent, Nibbana.'

In pain we burn but, with mindfulness, we use that pain to burn through to the ending of pain. It's not something negative. It is sublime. It is complete freedom from every kind of suffering that arises; because of a realisation – because of wisdom – not because we have rid ourselves of unpleasant experience, only holding on to the pleasant, the joyful. We still feel pain, we still get sick and we die, but we are no longer afraid, we no longer get shaken.

When we are able to come face to face with our own direst fears and vulnerability, when we can step into the unknown with courage and openness, we touch near to the mysteries of this traverse through the human realm to an authentic self-fulfilment. We touch what we fear the most, we transform it, we see the emptiness of it. In that emptiness, all things can abide, all things come to fruition. In this very moment, we can free ourselves.

Nibbana is not out there in the future; we have to let go of the future, let go of the past. This doesn't mean we forget our duties and commitments. We have our jobs and the schedules we have to keep, we have our families to take care of; but in every single thing that we do, we pay close attention, we open. We allow life to come towards us, we don't push it away. We allow this

moment to be all that we have, contemplating and understanding things the way they really are – not bound by our mental and emotional habits, by our desires.

The candle has a light. That light, one little candle from this shrine can light so many other candles, without itself being diminished. In the same way, we are not diminished by tragedy, by our suffering. If we surrender, if we can be with it, transparent and unwavering – making peace with the fiercest emotion, the most unspeakable loss, with death – we can free ourselves. And in that release, there is a radiance. We are like lights in the world, and our life becomes a blessing for everyone.

Jelaluddin Rumi wrote: 'The most secure place to hide a treasure of gold is some desolate, unnoticed place. Why would anyone hide treasure in plain sight? And so it is said: 'Joy is hidden in sorrow.'

The illumined master Marpa weeping over his child – does his experience of the loss of his young child diminish his wisdom? Or is it just the supreme humility of a great man, a great sage expressing the wholeness of his being, of his humanity.

I want to encourage each one of you to keep investigating, keep letting go of your fear. Remember that fear of death is the same as fear of life. What are we afraid of? When we deeply feel and, at the same time, truly know that experience we can come to joy. It is still possible to live fully as a human being, completely accepting our pain; we can grieve and yet still rejoice at the way things are. ❖

Hammer Wood Restoration

November 1st - 30th 1997

If you enjoy woodlands and Buddhism and can offer a month of your time, you may be interested in participating in the Hammer Wood Project at Cittaviveka this year. The month will entail working in the wood five days per week, with the possibility of spending free time in a woodland meditation hut (kuti). Great strength or expertise are of less importance than an interest in working in a contemplative manner, with periods of silent meditation, and an emphasis on working as part of a small group of five or six people. Unfortunately, the invitation is open to men only, although there will be an opportunity for women to come for the forest weekend (1st/2nd November).



Please write to the Forest Committee
at Cittaviveka for details.

Regret and Well Being

Ajahn Munindo, who is currently the senior incumbent at Ratanagiri (Harnham) Monastery in Northumberland, presents these reflections in response to a question posed during a 10 day retreat held there during vassa 1995.

Q. *Harsh and cruel words can come out so quickly when one is in a heated discussion or argument, to one's immediate regret. How can one try to avoid this?*

A. Well the experience of regret is actually the message; it's the lesson, the *dukkha* that happens when we make a mistake. It's really important that we understand that, because otherwise it's like fighting ourselves. It's as though healing is taking place, but we are resisting it.

When there's some heat in a discussion, something is going on that we are not so happy about, we can end up saying something hurtful to somebody. Then afterwards, when we remember what happened, we feel regret. Now that regret is right, it is appropriate – not just the mental dimension of regret, the thought: 'I wish I hadn't said that' – but the actual feeling of embarrassment, the heat as we go red in the face and the feeling in the stomach or the throat. That's the consequence of having generated hurtful action. It's also the doorway beyond.

Now we need to have the appropriate attitude to regret, otherwise we'll never learn. The Buddha said regularly that it's only through seeing the consequence of our harmful actions that we can be released from them. That is why the whole teaching, the basic Buddhist teaching, is established on mindfulness of *dukkha*. It is only through mindfulness of *dukkha* that we can see the end of *dukkha*. By feeling the consequence of our inappropriate speech – in other words, by suffering consciously – the whole body mind gets the message. We realise: 'I don't want to do this, I don't want to be this way.'

This is a very simple but very important message,

because often we intellectualise around the consequences of our heedlessness. We say something unkind, and we feel the pain of regret and embarrassment. Then maybe we start to feel guilty, sticking darts into ourselves for having been so foolish, really getting off on feeling guilty. We go up into our heads and we stop feeling, no longer experiencing the reaction; instead, we theorise about it and say something like: 'Well my parents always did this to me. What else do you expect?... Of course it's

unfortunate and I'm sorry I said it, but it's perfectly understandable.'

But when we go on like that we're not in touch with the reaction any more; we're not being mindful in that moment. This is the displacement activity of the age. Instead of being sensitive to the actual feeling, we think about the cause of our problems. We miss the opportunity to put ourselves into the optimum position for reading feeling accurately – and to move through, and beyond it.

For example, we might do an astrological interpretation: 'I've got Mars in Leo, she's got Mars in Pisces. What else do you expect? Of course we speak to each other like that,

that's how we are.' Now while that might alleviate some of the regret for a while, actually it's just displacement, it's not really dealing with it; it won't really help us in taking responsibility for our heedlessness. So if we habitually allow the passions to come out through our mouth as cruel and harsh words when 'I' am not getting my way, we really need to take an interest in how to adjust that. The painful *kamma* made in causing hurt to other beings through our unkind speech is enormous. If we think unkind thoughts then, mostly, we are the only ones that suffer; but we can just slice people to pieces with words. So if we have such a disposition, such a habit, we should be interested in how to alter it.



From the Buddhist perspective, the way we show interest in it is by feeling the regret – really letting it sink into our bones. This may sound as though we are being caught up with guilt again, but we really need to see and understand the neurotic tendency that we have of making ourselves and one another feel guilty – otherwise we'll never get past a certain point in practice. When guilt gets a hold on us, then as soon as we start to feel suffering we grasp it, we indulge in it: 'Well I should suffer, I should be miserable. Look how hopeless I am... those awful things I've said – it's just despicable! I should know better after all these years...' And of course, I *should* know better so, in a sense, I can justify my argument. But really what I'm doing is feeling very righteous, hating myself for having made a mistake; and there's absolutely no justification for that. Instead, what we need to do is learn the lesson that by getting caught up and following these wild passions – shooting that energy out through our mouths – we cause suffering for ourselves and others. We don't have to look very far to see the horror of what's going on in the world, the suffering that gets caused in this way.

But then we can also consider the consequences of exercising restraint – how we feel about ourselves then. We can notice how it feels if we're about to really let somebody have it but, rather than following that, we just do whatever we need to do to stop it: clenching our fists, going outside – doing anything to stop it, even if it is just blind repression (well it won't be blind, because we know what we are doing). The Buddha said that sometimes you've got to push the tongue up against the roof of your mouth, and just grit your teeth... sometimes passion is that strong. But you just do anything to stop it from coming out and hurting somebody.

So if we do that, and then stop and think about it – in a cool moment, not when the passion is still going – how do we feel about ourselves? If the passion is still going, we'll probably say: 'Well, yeah, I should have really told them!' – we might imagine that we'd feel good if we really tell somebody. But when we're cool and clear and we reflect on it, how does it feel not to have actually blasted them and hurt them with our speech?... We feel good. There is a natural sense of self respect that comes from such containment. The body mind gets the message that actually it is appropriate to contain the passions. If we can learn this little by little, then we'll no longer be seduced into thinking that we'll feel good if we follow these upthrusts of wild energy. It's only when we don't really inspect these things that we have the delusion that we are going to feel better by following them. Of course the same thing applies to heedlessly following any desire.

Guilt is one of the things that can get in the way of working like this; another is a lack of a sense of well-being. Even though we've got the theory down – to

be mindful of *dukkha* and all that – if we don't have a good strong sense of well-being within ourselves then it's not going to work. While we may not feel guilt we can just get crushed and depressed, thinking about how many times we've failed: 'I just keep doing this thing over and over again. Every time she says that, I say this. When is it ever going to change?'... and we can get really depressed. If that is the case then we have to use discernment and actually observe what's going on, for without a really wholesome well established sense of well-being within ourselves, we can end up destroying the spirit by dwelling too much on our mistakes. So it can sometimes be skilful to distract ourselves, if we've made a mistake or said something really terrible and we find ourselves caught up with regret, but without a sense of well-being.

Basically, remorse is the message, and when we get that message then we'll stop indulging in heedlessness. However in order to get that message, we've got to be strong with a sense of well-being; it's better not to hammer away too much, thinking: 'Well I've got to be mindful of *dukkha* and all my mistakes,' all the time. Really, we also have to be mindful of a sense of well-being, and what maintains that sense of well-being.

We need to develop positive, wholesome *kamma*, rather than always making negative *kamma* through generating thoughts and speech of ill will. We can generate kind, compassionate thoughts when we do the chanting: 'May I abide in well being, in freedom from affliction, in freedom from hostility. May I maintain well being in myself.' And then: 'May all beings be well. May they be free from suffering, may they not be parted from the good fortune that they have attained.'

If you know somebody else who sincerely says nice things, who really feels these things and expresses them, you like to have them around. It's exactly the same thing with ourselves. We actually feel good about ourselves when we have the perception of ourselves as somebody who says those sorts of things. While meditation on these divine abidings (kindliness, compassion, joy and equanimity) is helpful, sometimes we are so out of practice with exercising our hearts in this way that just to think of them is not enough; sometimes we also need to say it. We can actually go through this recitation on our own, or write it down, or better still tell others. We can also make gestures of good will in daily life; we can engage in a conversation with somebody who we would not normally bother engaging with, we can offer well-being, we can make gifts for people. This is the principle of *dana*, generosity. When we have this operating within us, it conditions, strengthens and nourishes a sense of well-being. We know that we are a source of well-being, of good will because we're giving it out.

There is a natural sense of self respect that comes from such containment.

The body mind gets the message that actually it is appropriate to contain the passions.

When we are strong in this sense of well-being, it means that we'll be able to learn the lessons we need to learn. Say we've opened our mouth and shot some toxic waste out into the world, polluting the psychosphere for goodness knows how many miles around us, and we should have known better, but we've done it; and now we've got the appropriate dose of regret and remorse. If we've got these supportive conditions, this sense of well-being – we'll be able to take it, we can get the message. But if we don't have that sense of well-being, then we need to be cautious about how much remorse and regret we open up to.

As we progress in our meditation practice, our whole appreciation of the world starts to change. We start to

see through some of the apparent realities of life – the apparent solidity of 'me', and the apparent solidity and validity of the perception of 'you' and 'the world'. When this starts to get shaken up, there's a reappraisal of how we relate to each other and to ourselves. With insight meditation we start to actually see the *perception* of somebody as just that.

For example, I have this perception of Andy. Now my perception of Andy is entirely my business, entirely my responsibility; it is actually very very little to do with that person. I could reach out and touch Andy, but what I would touch is a totally different reality from what's going on in my mind as a perception of Andy. When we start to see this, it's very interesting, because it becomes clear that what I do with this perception affects me. So if I have a very kind caring attitude towards Andy, I benefit actually more than he does; similarly, even if he had done something really wretched, it would be harmful to me to dwell on nasty, resentful, miserable thoughts about him. In fact it would be doing very little to him – compared to what it would be doing to me!

We begin to appreciate that the whole world is what we perceive in our own consciousness. When we start to appreciate that, we don't want to go around hurting people, because it's like sticking darts in ourselves. So every time I generate ill will towards somebody else, I am actually generating toxins in my own system; I'm the one that will physically, emotionally and psychically suffer as a result of that. It may manifest outwardly into some form of hurt on other people, but primarily what it's doing is generating the conditions for enormous suffering in myself.

When insight arises in meditation and we start to see this, it becomes clear that any perception of somebody in our mind is entirely our business. For example, when thinking of my father I can see that as a perception in my mind, and that's entirely my business; the process happening on the other side of the planet is a completely different affair from what's going on in my mind. Now I'm very interested in having a very healthy, wholesome, pleasant relationship with what is going on in my mind,

regardless. As it happens, I have a good father so that's no problem; but some people's fathers are not so good, so they could be spending a lot of time dwelling on unpleasant thoughts about their fathers. What they are really doing is torturing themselves. It's very helpful to see this.

This is not actually something we can imagine but, as practice proceeds, we will come to appreciate that the perceptions of each other that we have in our minds are primarily our affair. They're our business, and we maintain them, we feed them. We also have the power to release out of them.

When, in meditation, we start to undo the perceptions of self and other, our relationship to the passions also changes. It's not that we have to spend the rest of our life fighting off our unwholesome passions, we come to see that the passionate flare-ups are simply a reflection of our false views; they are conditioned by the way we think. If we start to think more clearly and see more accurately, then there are just not the causes for these flare-ups of the passions. ❖

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Sunday Afternoon Talks at Amaravati

27th July – Faith in What?

3rd August – Being Afraid.

10th August – Joy amidst Depression.

17th August – Generosity –

A Path to Liberation.

24th August – Lonely in a Crowd.

31st August – Why Worry?

7th September – Surviving Selflessly.

14th September – Ritual in Religion.

(Ajahn Viradhammo)

21st September – Love & Jealousy.

(Ajahn Viradhammo)

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

All are welcome.

*All talks will be given by Ajahn Sumedho
unless otherwise indicated.*

Commitment to Practice in a Non-Monastic Environment

Ajahn Santacitto left the monastic Sangha some three years ago.

Since then, as Stephen Saslav, he has been continuing his practice within the context of relationship. Here he offers some of his own reflections on the trials and blessings of practice in the 'real world'.

For most disrobing monastics, as for most lay practitioners, connecting with 'good friends' can be a major issue in the 'real world'. After tasting some of the challenges of practice in a non-monastic environment, I find that I treasure the blessings of good friends (*kalyanamitta*) and spiritual family (*sangha*) all the more.

As a young monastic, I used to find Ajahn Chah's example of meeting all 'with eyes like a babe' incredibly inspiring. Later, when teaching, I would sometimes put forth – perhaps a bit glibly – the challenging suggestion that, through empathetic appreciation (*mudita*), there are aspects of a 'good friend' to be discovered within everyone we meet. Although I am now blessed to have a partner who is a good friend, the biggest challenge of this time of transition has been to remember to re-member with the good folk of this 'real world' – just to keep offering warmth and friendliness without being lulled into insensitivity, amidst what feels sometimes like an onslaught of trite politeness and trivia. I have been chastened by finding that the simple verbal monastic answer that I used to give is not in itself the easy solution.

Talking with other lay practitioners at Amaravati who have expressed a similar weariness with the triviality of 'normal' social interaction, I find that we share much enthusiasm for the development of *upasika* community gatherings. They can provide an opportunity for offering the support and encouragement that nourishes and enheartens the practice of day-to-day human relationships. Of course, open-hearted acceptance and empathetic appreciation (*metta* and *mudita*) may not come easily – even towards the people we meet regularly, say, in a meditation group. It is important to remember then that our meeting is in the spirit of *Sangha*; that we can show respect and support for each other's commitment to practice, just as with those in robes. When we meet in this way, it allows each of the *brahmaviharas** to grow more easily. As the Dalai Lama has said: 'Most important of all is that we respect

* *The Brahmaviharas – the Divine Abidings: metta-loving kindness, karuna-compassion, mudita-appreciative joy and upekkha-equanimity.*

each other, and learn from each other those things that enrich our practice.' Within the containment of a monastic community, difficult personal chemistry among people who would not normally choose to live together sometimes creates a kind of pressure cooker effect; it is then inspiring to see the deepening maturity that can evolve from the practice of rising up, and letting 'self' be cooked.

Though pressure cookers are not hard to find outside the monastery, they may be leaky and malfunction. In an environment influenced by social mores which – rather than awakening and maturing urgency – entice and habituate us to let off steam unskilfully we can continually distract ourselves, escaping into the comfort of food, drink, or entertainments of one kind or another. Without the support of good friends, worldly influences can easily pull us down into an ocean of boundless opportunities for boundless mediocrity. The monastery itself provides a peaceful environment and the company of good friends, and these can empower us so that we are not dragged down by this stream of worldliness. Of

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course this is enhanced by the intention, while there, to put aside worldly responsibilities and favoured distractions.

This laying aside is certainly far more

challenging amidst the demands and comforts of home, and so I have found that it has been important to reflect on some of the things that support practice. The highest priority has been to trust the instinctual 'call of the heart' to find (or make!) time regularly to develop and maintain my practice. I used any technique that would enable me to be well-centred and to see clearly; first of all, 'reflective walking', only later, sitting. The need to return to a solid base of calm and clarity is probably best met by developing a framework of routine; for example having regular *pujas*, meditation etc. Another thing that I have found helpful during this time of transition has been having the practical needs of another to be caring for.

Since it's not so easy to practice at home, even when there may be time available, we can use such ritual as a supporting framework, both to evaluate what works best for us and to maintain the vitality of our practice and

make it more personal. One example of this is after *pūja* to bow to the Triple Gem or 'Good Friend' within each other. While keeping the Eight Precepts on the Observance Days may be a bit much for most home or work situations, we can at least experiment with a day, or part of a day, of practice. As well as meditating, we can make time for reading, listening, reflection; or maybe we need to consider a practical problem, for example: 'What should we do about those slugs?...' I have found that practising like this, it can be very refreshing to be free from the usual distractions, possibly even considering 'noble silence' for some hours as well. But it does help to explain to family and friends what one is doing, in order to avoid seeming antisocial or just plain weird!

Through having a solid base of practice that we can return to when we slip up, we can see clearly our habitual tendencies towards distraction and also the consequences of such behaviour. The monastic training has been immeasurably helpful in this, for basically what is needed is to trust actively in the heart's intuitive 'stop' signs and to hold the reins firmly and kindly. Through repeated, honest reflection on the results of our choices, the maturation of simplicity of living, and its accompanying ease, can be realised. The deepening of understanding in regard to such issues can be enhanced through making use of those times when our clearest reflections tend to arise; perhaps after meditation, on rising early, or while bathing. This process can also be helped to evolve by succinctly recording new insights on what worked in practice on tape or paper. But whatever the ways we take on the worthy path of practising at home or in society, it's good to remember that in the absence of conditions that will truly benefit us, our practice deserves all the support we can give it. It is so important that the strength of our practice is deconditioning the power of *samsara*, and not the other way round.

Within a non-monastic environment, our relationship with good friends is a crucial support for this deconditioning process. Our paths meet to varying degrees; this is particularly relevant when we aspire towards the blessing of a partnership in practice. We can see how the wish to live closely and share practice can come partly from some kind of romantic idealism. Maybe it's a bit like wanting to have one's cake and eat it, and we can find that in a more intensely personal relationship it's not so easy to make the stuff of attachment our field of practice, nor is it easy to shift trust from loving only a particular personality to a more unconditional *metta*. However, if we are willing to cultivate skill in this, we can find that similar benefits to

those found in the less personal communion of monastic life can arise. These include complementing each other's strength in the virtues of practice (*parami*), upholding each other in times of weakness, and unveiling subtler layers of self. The process is further catalysed through trust, enabling us to remain vulnerable amidst the nitty gritty of our humanity, and by sincerely working at getting 'self' out of the way. With the light and clarity of the *brahmaviharas*, it is possible to remember the source of it all as 'not-self', and to see how ephemeral are even our most important feelings and the most obvious perceptions of the other.

The foundation stone on which all this rests is a commonly felt love of Truth; with this we are willing to allow greater openness, to go beyond self. Sometimes the reward of taking such a risk is immediate; there is a deepening of connectedness and the

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spaciousness and fun of meeting life afresh through walking in the footsteps of one's friend's truth and beauty. But there will also be times when one will be confronted by boundaries that need expanding – where this unconditional acceptance is still being worked on; and it may not be felt to be the potential blessing that it actually is. For it is there that our most tenacious and habitually ignored facets of 'self' get flushed out, replete with all their assumptions. Then the inevitable disappointment of 'self's' expectations can be gently held in the protective embrace of that commonly felt love of Truth; this then can allow opening to deeper self-examining awareness.

Of course, all this is a lot easier to do when we know that our partner is working on their end of it (if not now, at least later), but it may be that people we live with have no such interest in practice. In such cases we can find that recognising and respecting their wholesome qualities may require an opening out beyond our habitual perceptions of them. I have found that giving energy thus is a brilliant investment; besides bringing out the best in them, it can also enable the whole relationship to be transformed into one that is a field of practice.

I feel that it's important to have the humility to acknowledge how very much there is to learn in all of this. Humility is not just a great antidote for pride and self-righteousness, but it also brings us back to what truly is 'right': to remembering with kindly awareness the nature of what is arising, and returning to its source. Travelling awhile with a good friend can help us to remember this truth we already know, but so easily forget in modern life; it reminds us to re-member with the good friend within. The real challenge in modern life is learning how to stay re-membered. ❖

New Year in Italy

This year Ajahn Sucitto visited the Sangha at Santacittarama, and found himself there for the celebration of the Thai New Year.

Sunday April 13th: New Year's Day as celebrated throughout S.E. Asia. Moreover, as every Thai will know, such a holy day must be celebrated with a mixture of reverence and merriment. The two are certainly not polar opposites in Thailand. This is *Songkran* (from the Sanskrit word *sankranti*, meaning the shift of the sun from one zodiac sign to the other) and that gives people the opportunity to splash water everywhere – reverentially, over the Buddha images and the bhikkhus and, with gales of laughter, over each other. Even in Italy, such things hold true. This year, although at Santacittarama we were spared the full bath, even there the ceremony concluded with some seventy Thai women filing past the seated Bhikkhu Sangha pouring water over our hands.

Water symbolises fertility and the factor of flowing together; both of these seem very appropriate signs for what occurs around the Sangha's presence in the West. Of course, cross-fertilisation is generally the case in terms of the spread of the Dhamma in the West, but the Sangha stimulates a cultural as well as an intellectual blending. You wouldn't get seventy Thai women travelling by bus through the night from Milan and Naples to Sezze Romano to go to an interfaith conference, but the Sangha's presence pulls Asian Buddhists into experiencing their religion from a new angle – and a few bemused Italian husbands also get some reflection.

The presence of monks creates a rapport and resonance with Italian society that is fuller in some ways than that with a lay meditation teacher. The retreat I had just taught had been, like Ajahn Sumedho's last year, in a Benedictine monastery – situated in a charming place on top of a hill, about an hour or so north-east of Rome. The Mother Superior came round to welcome us personally, and bid myself and Venerable Dhammiko goodbye six days later. Throughout our stay, gentle Madonnas hovered in shrines in the courtyards or gazed soulfully from the walls; but nobody seemed at all put out by us paying homage twice daily to a jaunty Sri Lankan Buddha that beamed from the shrine in our meditation room. Italian meditators – many of whom had been disaffected by weaknesses in the Church – were learning again to express devotion, to allow images to mirror their non-verbal aspirations, and to experience

the wonder of Refuge. At last, after all these murderous centuries, sacred play may yet be becoming possible in the West. At times the play seems deliberately impish: but it wasn't until after naming our *vihara* in Sezze that it became apparent how close 'Santacittarama' (Peaceful Heart Park) is to the Italian for 'the Holy City of Rome.'

Meanwhile the Vatican's acceptance of Buddhism still remains reserved. Not that the Sangha represents much of a threat: Santacittarama is a low-key operation, with a resident community of Ajahn Chandapalo, Venerables Jutindharo and Dhammiko and Maechee Amara: one Englishman, two Thais (though Maechee Amara is currently in hospital, having a back operation) and one Italian. And Ajahn Chandapalo is content to spend much of his time in the monastery anyway, giving the small community a sense of stability after the disrobing of Ajahn Thanavaro. The monastery gets on with its practice: pujas, meditation, a few chores, and some guests. The teaching is largely informal. The guests are mostly Italian, but currently there is one Thai man from Naples who, by some amazing coincidence, happened to have met one of the other guests at the vihara twenty years ago working on an engineering project in Kanchanaburi, Thailand. For those of us who are used to living in viharas, multilingual conversation over tea and chance (*or kammic*) link-ups are taken for granted. It's all part of the mingling and overflowing of boundaries that characterises the Sangha's presence in the West.

Along with the silence and the ordinariness, there is a sense of promise out of which things are growing naturally. The current monastic residence is becoming too small for the flow of the life it encases, and over the past year supporters have been looking around for new premises. Straight after the retreat, a few of us went to cast an eye over what seems to be a likely purchase a large farmhouse with 22 rooms and 5 acres of land on a hill in a rural area about 50 miles to the north east of Rome. The Italian women who took us there had no doubt: 'We must have this place!' Seven days later at the Alms-Giving Ceremony that accompanied *Songkran*, the Thais were more than delighted that their financial offerings should be put towards such a venture. New Year, old customs; new possibilities, old aspirations: quite a mingling.

Ajahn Sucitto

Signs of

CITTAVIVEKA – CHITHURST MONASTERY

Summer time at Cittaviveka is an especially lovely season, one in which most of the community will be taking up the possibility of going on retreat in the Hammer Wood for periods of time. It has become a part of the normal routine of the monastery, outside of the extended summer and winter retreats, for all of us in turn to spend our early mornings and evenings and free days in the forest, using the meditation kutis that nestle under the canopy of leaves. Long evenings with birds and forest animals moving through the dusk; the slanting shafts of light through the tall trees; the sense of attention that a responsive and uncluttered environment afford: all these are wonderful assets for a contemplative. Spending more time there makes one realise what a very rare treasure Cittaviveka is, and brings up the wish to serve it for the benefits it can bring to many beings.

Quite recently, a few tentative sightings have been confirmed by a specialist as evidence that Hammer Pond has, and is, being used by otters as a breeding ground. This is very good news. The otter was deemed to be on the verge of extinction in southern England a decade or so ago, and although it is now on the increase again, our specialist friend (who has been ‘working for otters’ for twenty years) informs us that Hammer Pond is the only known breeding site for otters in the region between Southampton and Kent. So it becomes vital to preserve the habitat, which, although unpolluted, is not in itself so rare as the fact that the Pond is not disturbed by boats, dogs or people. It is significant in our context to note that the really unusual feature of Hammer Pond is the presence of the stillness that a Buddhist monastery can bring.

Nevertheless, in ways that try to avoid intrusion on animals’ breeding times and territories, a steady amount of work on restoring the natural environment of the wood and pond continues to get done. Some of the work that the Forest Managers, the Sangha and its impromptu volunteer labour force are undertaking this year has been the creation of otter residences and an island for nesting water fowl; otherwise there is the ongoing job of tree care. It is also likely that some small areas of heath – a natural feature of the sandy-soiled upland areas of the Hammer Wood – will be established to create habitat for butterflies and birds such as nightjars. Also, the pond will need to be dredged within the next few years – otherwise it will turn into a muddy swamp. Meanwhile the last of our ‘nesting features for humans’ will be constructed this summer in the shape of a meditation

kuti, and not too soon either, as the summer months bring about a sharp increase in the population of brown – robed samanans at Cittaviveka.

It’s likely that there will be four more bhikkhus in residence to augment our current number of six, which along with three siladhara, two samaneras and six male and female anagarikas makes up a tidy number of 21. One of the men who will be spending his first Vassa as a bhikkhu here will be a much – tried and generous supporter, Mr Tann Nam from Cambodia. This year is his sixtieth, and he has been in Britain since 1973 when Pol Pot’s regime took over in Cambodia, and throughout this time he has been supporting the Sangha here with tremendous faith and stamina. After the Vassa, he is intending to visit Cambodia again for the first time since he left: as a bhikkhu this time accompanying Ajahn Sumedho and Ajahn Karuniko. It feels very wise to undertake such an evocative ‘homecoming’ within the supportive environment of the bhikkhu training, and quite a source of happiness for us here to feel we can be help in some way to encourage the re-growth of Buddhism in Cambodia.

Meanwhile, people in Britain are becoming increasingly familiar with and supportive of the samana lifestyle. Another normal feature of the monasteries’ routines is for two samanans to go twice a week to the nearby towns for alms faring on the streets, receiving spontaneous gifts of food which then comprise their daily meal. Both this year and the last, Sangha members have extended this practice into the long-distance tudong walks of a couple of weeks or so, again living by means of spontaneous food offerings from towns and villages. No casualties – other than blistered feet – so far.

Change is a predominant feature of both woodland and monastic life, and as the leaves turn brown and fall later this year, the samana migrations will begin. As I have mentioned earlier, Ajahn Karuniko will be accompanying Luang Por to Cambodia, and then Thailand between December and February. The other familiar resident who will be flying East will be Ajahn Candasiri, who intends to spend the four months or so after the Kathina undertaking a pilgrimage with a lay woman to the Buddhist holy places of India. We very much hope and expect them to return. For those of you who would like to wish them well before they leave, the Kathina on October 19th would be a very good occasion.

Ajahn Sucitto

Change

HARNHAM – RATANAGIRI MONASTERY

As the Magga Bhavaka Trust launches an appeal for funds for the protection and further development of the monastery, Ajahn Munindo reflects on the situation. Below are some extracts from his letter in the Spring issue of Hilltop:

...‘With regard to what is happening here at this time on the hill, I would encourage each of us to ask of ourselves, how do we ‘hold’ this project. We could be getting energy from a naive hope that we will get exactly what we want, and then ‘I’ will be happy. This is the characteristic of fundamentalism. Or, alternatively, we could be afraid to really want anything at all, because ‘wanting’ is the cause of suffering and I already have enough of that, thank you very much!’ This is a pitfall for a lot of depressed Buddhists.

‘There is also, thankfully, the consideration of the Middle Way. This encourages a quality of effort that gives rise to a non-judgemental awareness that neither pushes nor pulls, accepts nor rejects, but simply receives and ‘sees’. This is cultivating the attitude of heart that has the capacity to bear with what is. And it in this heart we find the compassion and understanding that we are aspiring towards.

...‘Regarding our effort to protect and enhance this place of sanctuary at Harnham, yes, we do care. But we don’t have to have it happen how we want it. Ever since I came to Harnham I have felt that, from one perspective, the finished monastery already exists. My job is to simply serve the growing and this requires considerable agility and sensitivity. However, this kind of attention results in a rewarding familiarity with a way of ‘according with’ changing conditions. Definitely some of the changing has been hard but there has been, and there is now much that is inviting.

...‘So as this year of 1997 moves on, I am glad to have this opportunity to reflect on these matters with you, and to wish you all well in your personal practice and collective effort to generate increased well-being for all.’

DEVON – HARTRIDGE MONASTERY

Just after midnight on the full moon uposatha of June, three siladhara and one anagarika arrived at Hartridge Buddhist Monastery in Devon to take up an extended period of residence there. With quiet ceremony and well-wishing, the relics were handed over by the one remaining monk there before his departure, leaving the sisters to settle in and to settle down after a

long journey from Amaravati to the West Country.

The nuns had decided to make the journey from Amaravati on foot, using the weeks of walking to prepare themselves for the time ahead. Tudong (from Dhutanga, meaning to ‘shake off the defilements’) is a chance to move away from the relative stability of monastic life into the unknown. Apart from one dana on the first day, no other arrangements or contacts were made beforehand, preferring to go in faith and take each day as it can. That very uncertainty is in itself a form of austerity, requiring constant vigilance in order to respond skilfully to the ever changing conditions and circumstance. In addition, physical pain, poor weather conditions and the challenge of harmonising with one another (together continuously, 24 hours a day for five weeks) formed the context and opportunity for practice.

Wherever possible the nuns went for alms in the larger villages and towns on the way, and were most heartened by the kindly interest and overwhelming generosity shown towards them on the journey.

Now the sisters are settling into their new abode; gradually sorting things out and becoming acquainted with local friends and supporters of the monastery... ‘The journey is not finished though - only now we don’t strap on the rucksack and change location, but attempt to maintain the spirit of ‘tudong’: of not getting stuck in one place, of not struggling with something that is bound to change, cultivating the heart of faith and the power of renunciation; to keep seeing that the only true stability is non-attachment.’

GAMBHIRA: 1906 – 1997.

On 1st April, Gambhira (Muriel Clark) peacefully passed away in a nursing home, where she had been living for four years. Previous to that she had stayed for five years at Amaravati until her level of incapacity made it impossible for the community to provide the care she needed.

Formerly a person of considerable intellectual ability and penetrating wit, in her old age she became quite unable to sustain any kind of logical thought process or conversation. However, those who visited her would often comment on her sense of inner ease and happiness, and her immediate response to human warmth and friendliness. Ajahn Sumedho and other Sangha members and friends took part in her funeral service and subsequently Gambhira’s ashes were scattered in the Buddha Grove at Amaravati.



SANGHA NOTICES

Upasampada

13th July at Cittaviveka,
see back page for details.

(Provisionally booked) 16th November
at Amaravati

Asalha Puja – The Full Moon (19th) July, commemorates the Buddha's presentation of the First Sermon, the Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta. The Vassa (3 month 'Rains Retreat') begins on the following day. Each of the monastic communities will be observing this as a time of formal retreat and study, as well as focusing on the Vinaya (monastic discipline).

The Vassa ends on Pavarana Day, the full moon (16th) October.

AMARAVATI

Sunday Afternoon Talks: these take place during vassa at 2.00pm.

See Page 12 for details.

Gratitude to Parents

Contact Mr Chandi Perera (0181 997-7642, before 10am or evenings) for details of the eleventh 'Gratitude to Parents' day to be held on 12th October at Amaravati. All Welcome.

Family Events:

Family Camp: 16th – 24th Aug.
(Fully Booked)

Family Weekend: 26th – 28th Sept.

Young Person's Retreat: 5th – 7th Dec.

Sunday Classes on the last Sunday of each month at 12.30 (for ages 5+).

Further details from Dan Jones,

144 Catherine Street,

Cambridge, CB1 3AR

Telephone (01223) 246 257

CITTAVIVEKA

Resolution and Renewal:

10th August 2.00 pm. A chance to establish the sense of commitment to the Triple Gem by determining the Refuges and Precepts with Ajahn Sucitto.

Lay Forums

2.00pm at the monastery. All welcome:

7th Sept. – Addictions

5th Oct. – Wholeness and

Transcendence

23rd Nov. – Celebration of the

Sacred in Buddhist Life. (The use of ritual and tradition in daily life, presented by Ajahn Sucitto).

Forest Work Days:

9th Aug. – Work on the pond or birch clearing

6th Sept. – Birch Clearing

4th Oct. – Transplanting Bluebells

1st/2nd Nov. – Helping the Sangha's forest work month.

Meet at the monastery at 1.00 pm.

If you'd like overnight accommodation, please contact the guest monk/nun in advance.

UPASIKA NOTICES

Bodhinyana Buddhist Group meets every Friday in the Bodhinyana Hall at Amaravati from 7.30 until 9.30 pm. In addition there are regular social gatherings held on the last Sunday of each month. Contact Chris Ward (01442 890034) or Barbara Pope (01727 851782) for further details.

1998 Sangha Calendar

There is limited sponsorship as yet for the 1998 calendar.

In previous years there was sponsorship for 6000 copies by a supporter of the Sangha who is now offering funds for a different purpose. There will not be sufficient copies for distribution through Amaravati or Chithurst unless there is support for the printing. £10 will print approximately 15 copies.

We will need to know by the end of July what quantity to order, so please don't wait until the last minute to let us know if you would like to help sponsor this popular publication.

Upasika group, c/o Medhina, 'Kiriya', 2 Kenmure Ave, Brighton. BN1 8SH

EDUCATION

Family Video:

The documentary (20 minutes) that was filmed during the 1995 family summer camp is being duplicated for free distribution as a teaching resource in schools. If you would like a personal copy or would like to sponsor a few copies (at £2.50 per copy) contact Veronica Voiels, 5 Victoria Grove, Manchester 14.

Amaravati school visits:

These are increasingly in demand – both at the monastery and to schools. If you have free time during the week to support this, please contact Ven. Kusalo at Amaravati.

Religious Education:

As part of the national R.E. festival Amaravati is holding three seminars for teachers and senior students; 7th, 9th, 11th October 1–4pm. Any help with preparation or on these days would be useful. Contact the Amaravati Secretary.

LAY RESIDENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES AT AMARAVATI

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

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

GARDENER: We need an extra person to assist with care for the maintenance of the gardens and grounds of Amaravati (about 30 acres). The work requires physical strength and stamina, gardening knowledge, and the ability to work with volunteer helpers. A vigorous and natural way to complement one's meditation practice!

MAINTENANCE: Someone with building skills e.g. carpentry or plumbing - who can make a significant contribution to our maintenance team. The ability to lead less experienced helpers and/or organise jobs for outside contractors would be a definite advantage.
For more information please contact the Secretary.

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

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

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

Teaching and Practice Venues

MEDITATION GROUPS	
<i>These are visited regularly by Sangha members.</i>	
LONDON SW20 Santosa Group: Mike & Carole Pearce, (0181) 549 6375	BRIGHTON Alex Clingan, (01273) 327-925 Monthly visits by a monk or nun.
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 —	BATH Catherine Hewitt, (01225) 405-235
	BRISTOL Lyn Goswell (Nirodha), (0117) 968-4089
	GLASGOW James Scott, (0141) 637-9731
BEDFORD David Stubbs, (01234) 720-892	BERKSHIRE Jeanne Scott, (01635) 429-03
EDINBURGH Muriel Nevin, (0131) 337-0901	HAMPSTEAD Caroline Randall, (0181) 348-0537
SOUTH DORSET Barbara Cohen-Walters, (01305) 786-821	STEYNING / SUSSEX Joe Bartlett, (01903) 879-597
SURREY/GUILDFORD Rocana, (01483) 761-398	LEEDS AREA Daniella Loeb, (0113) 2791-375 Anne Voist, (01274) 670-865
SOUTHAMPTON John & Jill Chapman, (01489) 895-301	
MEDITATION GROUPS	
<i>These meet regularly & receive occasional visits from Sangha.</i>	
BANBURY Karen Ford, (01295) 758-091	TAUNTON Martin Sinclair, (01823) 321-059
ESSEX (Billericay) Rob Howell, (01702) 559-241 (Harlow) Pamutto, (01279) 731-330	MAIDSTONE Joan Hamze (01622)251-202
	CAMBRIDGE Gillian Wills. (01954) 780-551
LEIGH-ON-SEA Gool Deboo, (01702) 553-211	SHREWSBURY Stan Courtney, (01743) 850-055
OXFORD Peter Carey, (01865) 578-76	DUBLIN Eugene Kelly, (1) 854 076
LONDON / NOTTING HILL Jeffrey Craig, (0171) 221-9330 Nick Carroll, (0181) 740-9748	NEWCASTLE ON TYNE Andy Hunt, (0191) 478-2726
	BELFAST Paddy Boyle (012317) 7720
MIDHURST Barry Durrant, (01730) 821479	PORTSMOUTH Dave Beal, (01705) 732280

Amaravati Retreats: 1997



Long Retreats

- July 25th – Aug 2nd – Kittisaro# & Thanissara#
 Sept. 12th – 21st – Ajahn Sumedho*
FULLY BOOKED
 Nov. 14th – 23rd – Ajahn Attapemo
#formerly a monk and a nun with the Sangha.
 * (for those who have not done a retreat at
 Amaravati before.) [spaces for men only]

Medium Retreats

- Dec. 27th – Jan 1st – Sister Thanasanti

Weekend Retreats

- Aug. 8th – 10th
 Sept. 5th – 7th
 Oct. 3rd – 5th (for Thai speakers) Ajahn Sumedho
 Oct. 10th – 12th
 Nov. 28th – 30th

Retreat Centre Work Weekends

- Oct. 17th – 19th

In order to facilitate administration, bookings for 1997 can only be accepted on receipt of the completed booking form and booking fee. (The booking fee is refundable up to one month before the retreat.)

INTRODUCTORY MEDITATION—AMARAVATI

Saturday Afternoon Classes 1.30 – 3.30 pm

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

Feel free to come along – no booking is necessary.

V I H A R A S

BRITAIN

◆ Amaravati Monastery
Great Gaddesden,
Hemel Hempstead,
Hertfordshire HP1 3BZ
Tel: (01442) 84-2455 (Office)
84-3411 (Guest Info.)
84-3239 (Retreat Info.)
Fax: (01442) 84-3721

◆ Cittaviveka: Chithurst
Buddhist Monastery
Chithurst, Petersfield,
Hampshire GU31 5EU
Tel: (01730) 81-4986
Fax: (01730) 81-7334

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

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

THAILAND

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

AUSTRALIA

◆ Bodhinyana Monastery
Lot 1, Kingsbury Drive,
Serpentine 6205 WA
Tel: (09) 525 2420

◆ Dhammaloka Buddhist
Centre (Perth)
18-20 Nanson Way,
Nollamara 6061 WA
Tel: (09) 345-1711
Fax: (09) 525-2420

ITALY

◆ Santacittarama
via dei Casali, 3° Tratto
04018 Sezze Romano
Latina
Tel: 773 88-032
Fax: 773 888-457

SWITZERLAND

◆ Dhammapala
Buddhistisches Kloster
Am Waldrand,
CH 3718 Kandersteg
Tel: 033 / 675 21 00
Fax: 033 / 6752 241

NORTH AMERICA

◆ Abhayagiri Monastery,
16201 Tomki Road,
Redwood Valley, CA 95470
Tel: (707) 48-51630
Fax: (707) 48-47948
(Sangha literature and West
Coast newsletters are
distributed from here.)

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

NEW ZEALAND

◆ Bodhinyanarama
17 Rakau Grove,
Lower Hutt, Wellington
Tel/Fax: (4) 56-37193
e-mail: sangha@actrix.gen.nz

◆ Auckland Buddhist
Vihara
29 Harris Road, Mt.
Wellington, Auckland
Tel: (9) 59-5443

AMARAVATI CASSETTES

Cassette tapes of Dhamma talks given by Ajahn Sumedho and other Sangha members, plus tapes of chanting and meditation instruction are available for sale at cost price. For catalogue and information send SAE to:

Amaravati Cassettes,
Ty'r Ysgol
Maenan, Llanrwst,
Gwynedd, LL26 OYD

Upasampada at Cittaviveka

Sunday, 13th July 1997



Mr Tann Nam

Samanera Revato (*Axel Wasmann*)
Samanera Anando (*Gary Thompson*)

Will be requesting Upasampada
(admittance to the Bhikkhu Sangha)



The ceremony will begin at 1.30pm

All Welcome.

OBSERVANCE DAYS

The community devotes itself to quiet reflection on these days (and usually the day after). The evening meditation continues into the night after the normal puja.

Moon Phase	● NEW	◐ HALF	○ FULL	◑ HALF
JULY	4 (Fri)	12 (Sat)	19☉(Sat)	27 (Sun)
AUGUST	3 (Sun)	11 (Mon)	20 (Mon)	26 (Tues)
SEPT.	1 (Mon)	9 (Tues)	16 (Tues)	24 (Wed)
OCTOBER	1 (Wed)	9 (Thurs)	16☽(Thurs)	24 (Fri)

☉ Asalha Puja. (*Vassa begins on the following day*)
☽ Pavarana Day. (*end of vassa*)

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

ROYAL MAIL POSTAGE PAID
 2 HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
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Closing date for submissions to the next issue is 20th August 1997.