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The Power of Faith

Taken from a talk on the spiritual powers given by Ajahn Viradhammo, Amaravati Winter Retreat, January 1998.

I was thinking about the five powers: *saddhā*, *virīya*, *sati*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. Our teacher, Luang Por Sumedho, told me that during his first year in Thailand he used this sequence as a mantra. He'd just recite this formula over and over and over again: *saddhā*, *virīya*, *sati*, *samādhi* and *paññā* – partially just to stop his mind. He wasn't even sure what it meant, but he just used it as a mantra to concentrate on. Then later on he began to contemplate the meaning of the words: faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.

The way of contemplation is like that. We bring a teaching into our hearts, not in merely academic terms but in a way where the teaching begins to work on us. It somehow percolates through us. It affects us, it informs us and we see things through the teachings more and more. Our sharing of Dhamma can be very rich, but if it's just in intellectual terms, we sometimes get confused. We try to get it right in our head and then we swing between intellectual assurity and doubt, and it just goes on and on. But the way of contemplation is to take a teaching and actually bring it into your heart.

Luang Por said he did this contemplation of the five powers for a long time. A whole year just chanting: *saddhā*, *virīya* etc. You can imagine that if you take something like that and just chant it

over and over again, it's going to start coming up in your mind. You're going to ponder: 'What is faith? What does that mean? What does that word mean to me? What does it mean in the texts?' So then you go to the texts, you talk to someone else, you hear a teacher talk about it; and of course that stimulates your contemplation, and then your inclination.

Faith is obviously very important to monastic life. How do we carry this life? How do we make it a life-style, rather than just an event? Obviously

monastic life is different from a ten-day retreat. Retreats are a very good thing, but to actually live this life as we do – day in and day out, year after year – is a whole different ball-game. It's different from just being inspired for ten days; it takes a lot of faith to do this.

Some people find that it doesn't work for them, and that's fair enough. But actually this isn't a life-style for very many people anyway. I think that one of the problems that Westerners might have with it is cynicism because if anything is going to wipe your faith out, it's cynicism – which seems very clever. You talk to a faith person, they seem pretty simple, whereas the cynic with their views and opinions can be very clever. The faith-oriented person won't have a chance with a cynic, unless they too are very clever, and sharp and fast. They'll say, 'Well, I just love the teaching'... and

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then the cynic will have some retort to that!

I've suffered a lot from cynicism. To have clever views and opinions seemed like a very powerful thing: to be able to put other people down, to be able to judge everyone and find fault with everyone – it has a kind of power. But it's very alienating power; it's a lonely kind of power, and it doesn't make for much happiness. And yet to be clever, to have sharp opinions, can be an important thing in our society. To see what's wrong is an easy thing to do, compared with a life of faith. But what does a life of faith require? What is faith? What sustains your faith? What makes your faith grow?

For me, it's a matter of putting a lot into this life, really going for it. That has always been something that's increased my faith. When I first met the teaching, I thought: 'If you're going to do this you're just going to have to do it, you can't muck about with this!' There's a lot of work involved, and to do it only 50% just doesn't make any sense to me. If you're going to do it, really do it! And yet you can't just meditate all the time. How many of us could meditate for the next six years? You may think, 'Oh yes, just a bit more', but how many people could sustain a formal silent retreat for six years? Very few. So you can't meditate constantly, you need a whole life-style, I think.

Traditionally, a tudong monk would spend some time wandering, living in rice fields, and then ending up in some village monastery where everyone is playing bingo; and then, escaping from there, he'd struggle at living in a forest. Tudong life is very hard physically, if you're doing it full on. And then he might get into a forest monastery and do a lot of formal practice – sitting practice, study – and then go tudong again, which would be more like survival practice, surviving the mosquitoes! In the little time that I spent doing this just getting a meal for the day was tough, or finding a place to bed down which wasn't full of ants, or getting some water; just to physically survive was an occupation. We don't have that here, we have a different kind of pattern. We have responsibilities, a very big community; we serve a lot, we give a lot, do maintenance work, receive guests and wash dishes! So the sort of pattern here at Amaravati is one where you have social situations and you have retreat situations. Our tudong isn't looking for water – it's more like looking for silence and space.



Now it's time to give ourselves fully to this retreat. Then, when the Sangha Gathering comes or there's maintenance work in the viharas, we give ourselves fully to that. But the cynical mind often resists. The critical mind is always realising how it should be different – how the retreat should be different, or thinking: 'Now is not the time for a retreat, now's the time to build something'; or, when it's time to work, it can think: 'Now it's time to do meditation.' There's a resistance to

what has to be done. But a full giving of oneself with generosity, and the practice of *mettā* – these are important parts of the faith mind. Notice how, when you ask a cynical person to do *mettā*, they can get really resistant and say it's smarmy and 'wet', and that it's not really wisdom. Notice in yourself if you find resistance to *mettā* – to just saying: 'May I be free from suffering...' – that's cynicism. That's what blocks *mettā* and generosity, these aspects of the faith mind.

To live this life, to make this a life-style rather than just an event, I think we need some way to express ourselves. We have energy, we have talents, gifts – and to use these with some sense of service and generosity is

tremendously sustaining and nourishing. But it has to be done with wisdom; just to give without any sense of one's own needs would be foolishness, not giving. So giving should not come out of pressure: 'You must give, you must serve...' not that kind of nonsense – but because it's right and it's wholesome, because you realise that that is the way to use this mind and body. This is very much a part of faith.

In the traditional sense, faith is that there is transcendence, that the apparent isn't all that there is; that there was a Buddha, and that there is Enlightenment – that there is transcendence, that there is an end to suffering. That, for me, is a very important part of faith: that there is some profound insight which humanity has the possibility to realise – and it is always here and now. It's not a matter of time, or a matter of place, or situation. It's always here and now.

And so what I have used for that quite often is to imagine Ajahn Chah sitting beside me, and I ask him: 'Well, Luang Por, how would you handle this situation?'

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EDITORIAL

The Best Wealth

There is a sutta in which the Buddha responds to questions asked by a certain yakkha, Alavaka, concerning the best kind of wealth, the practice that brings happiness, the sweetest of all tastes and the noblest manner of living. His reply has always struck me as worthy of reflection, particularly in regard to the first aspect, where the Buddha says that confidence is the best wealth to a man in this world.

At first we might find ourselves asking why this confidence is given such importance, but after thinking about it for just a short while, it becomes clear that it is faith or confidence (*saddhā*) that motivates us to begin to practise and to keep going – even when things are difficult – until we reach the final goal.

If we don't have faith that liberation is possible and that we ourselves are capable of realising it, either we simply will not even be inclined to begin, or else we will give up when we find some obstacle along the way.

It is similar to when we fall sick. In order to benefit from the expertise of a good physician, several things need to come together. We need to recognise that we are sick (that there is suffering). We need to know or to hear of someone who understands the type of sickness that we have and who knows how to cure it. And we need to have confidence, or faith, that if we follow the instructions of our physician carefully, we will be cured; this may arise from the testimony of others or their example, or simply that we have tried everything else and this is our last hope. Contact with anyone who doesn't seem to be benefiting from such a cure, or absence of the hoped for improvement in our own condition lead naturally to a diminution of confidence, and in time an inclination to stop taking the medicine – particularly if it is unpleasant to take!

But this faith is not a matter of logical reasoning, it is a function of the heart; and it can only happen once we are willing to let go, even to the smallest degree, of the structures and props – the 'certainties' – of mundane existence. When we enter into any undertaking, 'religious' or otherwise, in this spirit we actually engage ourselves in a particular relationship with 'Life', the 'Universe', 'Truth', 'God' – whatever we choose to call it. Instead of regarding ourselves as separate entities and feeling the need to understand and to keep everything

under control, we relinquish our hold and – provided with a few simple guidelines – step forward bravely into the unknown. We trust in the possibility of total liberation and that, having taken one step along the path, we will have what we need to take the next. It is also clear that there is no certainty whatsoever regarding what that process itself may involve for us – there is no knowing... and this turns it into a rather joyous experience. It reminds me of someone I met while on pilgrimage, who has established schools in many of the

poorest villages of Bihar. When under pressure to be more organised and 'public' in order to raise funds for her work, she said simply that it didn't feel right in her heart: 'I'd rather rely on Providence than

publicity.' For her, it certainly seems to work, things come. Each day she witnesses the most extreme situations of poverty, which could engender oceans of anxiety, but instead she carries with her a sense of ease and joy – the blessings of a compassionate heart which is free from 'self' concern.

Our life of contemplation can have a similar quality, irrespective of the outer circumstances of our life. But, like anything: flying a kite, riding a bicycle, water skiing or anything else that looks delightful and appears easy, it takes effort, it takes training: a willing application, experiencing failure and trying again. Although in many areas the effort involves bodily action of some kind, above all, it is an application of attention that is needed. We need to learn how to listen to the heart: is it at ease, peaceful, joyous? Or does it feel burdened or agitated, as it struggles with conflicting and confusing longings: wanting to be perfect, to look good, to do the right thing; fearful of making a mistake, looking foolish or unworthy, or doing the wrong thing. We discover that in times of confusion or agitation it is better to wait until these things have passed and the prevailing mood is one of serene confidence and ease before acting; the benefit that comes then is infinitely greater.

On paper or thinking about it, it seems so obvious. Doing it is another matter.

Perhaps a good beginning is to take a look at what destroys this faith. On the one hand it is the over – critical mind, and on the other – perhaps surprisingly – the dull, sloppy mind that can't be bothered to look for

*Confidence is the best wealth to a man in this world.
Well practised Dhamma brings the most happiness.
Truth is the sweetest of all tastes. Living with wisdom
is said to be the noblest kind.*

(Sutta Nipata v. 182)

continued from page 3 anything beyond a vaguely pain-free abiding right now. In fact I've noticed in my own mind a tendency to swing from one extreme to the other: 'I'm not good enough; I'm this and this and this, and I just can't do it!' and: 'Oh, I can't be bothered. What's the point of even trying?'... So, to counterbalance each of these tendencies, we need to question, to introduce an element of doubt into the mind that seems so certain: 'Who says you're not good enough, that it can't be done? You don't want to believe everything that clever mind of yours tells you!' and, 'Hey, wait a minute. Didn't the Buddha, himself say that there's a teaching for gods and humans (you're a human, aren't you) that can free the heart from all this suffering. He did it; others have done it – come on! Give it a go!'

We could start by doing something good, kind – or refraining from doing or saying something unkind. How does that feel? It feels good, doesn't it...

Little by little we learn to flow with life, to participate skilfully in it rather than feeling the need always to be in control, to have things happen according to my ideas and avoiding the things that I'm afraid of or don't like. It can be like a pilgrimage. We set out to honour, to celebrate the good; that is our intention. Along the way there are all kinds of unexpected delights, surprises and also obstacles, hardships. The only certainty is that things are uncertain; even with the most definite plan, there is no knowing what actually is in store for us along the way. All we can trust in is our ability to be present but, actually, in a manner of speaking that's all we need!

Ajahn Candasiri

continued from page 2 'What do you think Luang Por, is there any hope?' And I know darned well he'd say: 'You'd better sit through this one and figure it out. This is something you've got to learn from.' Or I'd imagine the Buddha beside me and ask: 'What do you think? Is there a way out of suffering?'... That has always helped me to bring forth the faith mind – that there is a way out of suffering, here and now, and it's something that I have to realise.

Because all of us – whether we're monastics or lay people – we're going to face a lot of stuff, you just can't get around it. People are going to insult us, we're going to get sick, all kinds of things are going to happen to us. There are going to be disappointments, betrayals, all kinds of things; it's going to happen in monastic life, and in married life too. So what keeps us going through all that?... I don't want to sound pessimistic or negative, but although I've been in perfect monasteries, which had the best lay support and good monastic support, I haven't seen one where there aren't problems: misunderstandings, conflicts, sickness, a bit of death here and there. Life is that way, so if one puts all one's

faith in an inspiring teacher, then when they die or go to another monastery – if that is your faith, your going to suffer. Teachers are fine, but they're not a refuge; it's got to be deeper than that. So our refuge in Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha is quite hard to understand.

What does it mean to have faith in the Sangha vehicle?

Well, it doesn't mean you necessarily like it. How long is that going to last – ten minutes?... 'I really love everyone here, all the time' or, 'I love Theravada Buddhism.' Faith is certainly not a matter of liking; it's something deeper than that. If having faith in the Sangha were just a matter of us as personalities, I'm sure most of us would like to shuffle the deck a little bit – put a few more jokers in! So the Sangha vehicle is not the people you like, but rather the Sangha that we're living with. These are the beings who aspire to Enlightenment, whether you like them or not. We will have conflicts, we'll have difficulties, we'll disagree, we'll see things differently, but this is who we've got. This is the family: these are your uncles and aunties, your brothers and sisters, these are the ones you live with and work with. And what does surrender to that mean? It means that while I'm here, this is where I'm going to find freedom...rather than thinking that I'd be happier off, if A,B,C and D left, and we got another batch in and somehow made it a perfect place.

So refuge in the Sangha is not a personality trip. It's not about finding a sympathetic friend or relationship, but it's broadening the heart to practice with these people. Within that of course one is faced with all kinds of difficulties. One can feel very judgmental, or critical about some; one can feel intimidated by or just downright bored with others.

So what is surrender? What is giving up to the vehicle? It's having the faith that peace is here and now, in this situation, with these people not with anyone else. And that takes a lot of work because there's resistance, there's love and hate, preferences, all these things that we go through. That's why *mettā* is so important; it's hard to accept everyone just the way they are.

This is all within the context of vinaya. We have our rules and boundaries that we all have to observe and obey, and if we break those boundaries then we're called for it. This is what allows us to contemplate the aspiration of each person, rather than the personality; it provides a different perspective. Say a person's going through some kind of difficult situation and they're dumping it on you, and you feel you want to leave the monastery, or whatever, then think: 'How can I help this person with their aspiration?' That takes a real strength doesn't it, to see that this person, even though they might be difficult now, also aspires to Nibbāna – otherwise they wouldn't be here. So how can I help them in that aspiration?

It's not a worldly way. The worldly way is to perceive through personality view, through preferences, and with

the judging mind – if you're sitting at breakfast and cynically looking at everyone, you think: 'There's that one slurping their gruel again' or 'Look at that one mixing his muesli with his tea. That's disgusting.' Or you think: 'Oh no, got to go to gruel again, have to sit by those people'... this is very destructive of the Holy Life. It takes away joy, it takes away love; it takes away the ability to sustain this life.

Our criticisms might be true at some rational level, but do they bring any kind of joy or happiness? The religious view is one where we're looking at each other in a different way and trying to help each other's

aspirations. So can I use the critical faculty to see: 'How I can help this person? How can I make this person's life more beautiful? How can I help them through this difficult time? How can I help them bear with their own difficulties?'...

And taking refuge in Dhamma, what is that? We can reflect on it as here and now, not a matter of time, something each individual has to realise for themselves; and that there is the unconditioned, the unoriginated, the unformed; that suffering is something here and now, that I can let go of – there are these different ways of contemplating Dhamma as a refuge. Of course insight is important in this and so we find that the more we really contemplate Dhamma, the more we bring those ideas into consciousness, the more the faith moves to confidence.

It really moves to a steadiness of mind which knows Nature, rather than having views and opinions about it. It knows a judgement as a judgement; it knows a perception of your brother or sister as just a perception, rather than Ultimate Truth. That's a big relief, isn't it? The perception I have of you is just a conditioned thing, it's not who you really are; it just happens to be how the mind is creating you right now. It's not Ultimate Truth. But if we believe in the perception of each other, then of course we get all this arrogance and competitiveness, lack of forgiveness – and a lot of suffering. So to know that the nature of perceptions and concepts is just arising and ceasing, and therefore uncertain, is to have refuge in Dhamma, rather than believing in our endless views and opinions.

Refuge in Buddha: people who have come from Buddhist cultures have a head start; they already have a natural devotion to the Buddha and the lineage. Their challenge is often that they believe too easily; whereas for us the challenge is cynicism. So to bring faith, we ask: Who is the Buddha? And what is his lineage?... It's good to recollect people like Ajahn Chah and Ajahn Sumedho and the whole lineage of practitioners, to consider that there are people who seek and love Truth. Also, that there *is* Truth, there is transcendence. This is very

important; this is what the Buddha represents, and that which is Buddha-like in all of us. The world is not the be-all and end-all. Sense experience, sights and sounds and tastes are not the be-all and end-all. For me, that sense of transcendence is very important – otherwise the world seems so important and so compelling.

So these are different ways to look at faith – and the

lack of it. So much of the energy, the *viriyā* in the Holy Life is just about getting out of the gravitational pull of habit, in which the mind is forever criticising and judging, or fantasising in an endless dirge of self-views. So

consider what brings you joy in this life? What crushes your heart? What makes your heart feel like a flat tyre? Certainly, endlessly looking at yourself in critical ways is going to defeat you. Self-disparagement, and looking at others in that way is going to make life miserable and fearful with a lot of alienation and separation – faith, *mettā* and generosity are intuitive energies. These are the energies which help you keep going. ❖

*So what is surrender?
It's having the faith that peace is here and now,
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not with anyone else.*



Sunday Afternoon Talks at Amaravati

July 12 – Ajahn Sumedho

Self and Non-self

July 19 – Ajahn Sumedho

The Gate to the Deathless

July 26 – Ajahn Sumedho

Morality & Spirituality

August 2 – Ajahn Sumedho

Beauty, Goodness and Joy

August 9 – Ajahn Viradhammo

Sentimentality, Cynicism, Empathy

August 16 – Ajahn Sumedho

Doom, Destruction, Death, Decay

August 23 – Ajahn Viradhammo

Purification and Attainment

August 30 – Ajahn Viradhammo

Letting go is not rejecting

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

Don't Lose Your Wits

In this Dhamma talk given at Hartridge Buddhist Monastery, in May 1998, Ajahn Siripaṇṇā offers some reflections to encourage an attitude of careful discernment in regard to practice.

The practice of meditation can be summed up as bringing a whole-hearted and non-interfering attention to the present reality of each moment. When we enter into a learning relationship with the moment we can come to see clearly how to make a light-hearted peace with our lives.

It can be comforting to hear that in essence the path is just that simple; and yet it is and it isn't. Although we are trying to make our way back home to that pure simplicity of being with life, getting there involves a certain amount of doing. We can have a feeling that we shouldn't have to do anything: 'I'll just sit here and open up and gradually everything will become clear.' There can be either a kind of passivity, a lack of resourcefulness, or perhaps a fear – doing just increases the sense of self, doesn't it?

So we have to understand how to pick up and use techniques and reflective frameworks – the 'doing-ness' of the practice – as a useful vehicle, a raft. We have to gain practical skills in raft making; we have to get on the raft; we have to figure out how to sail it; how to get off the sandbank; how to stop being swept down the river; and finally, hopefully, how to be able to let go of our raft when we get to the other shore.

Sometimes we'd like someone else to do it all for us. There is a little bit in most of us that wants some great big Mummy or Daddy to come along and sort us out. A guru perhaps. You go to them and they just emanate, and something happens to you. That would be nice, wouldn't it? Or, maybe you want them to tell you what your problems are and how to solve them. 'Please could you tell me what I'm like?' We can get quite excited if somebody we respect tells us something about ourselves. 'Oh, thank you! What should I do about it?' They tell you and then you think, 'I really know what to do now. Great.' There is that inclination in us not to want to bother making the effort to figure it out for ourselves. But what happens if you can't find that all-knowing person? And even if you have found them, what if they've got it wrong? Even if they've got it right, what happens if you're just happy to believe that, and you don't actually find out for yourself if it's true? It is difficult to find someone trustworthy to take that role in our lives, and then there are potential difficulties in using such a relationship in a way which is actually liberating.

The Buddha didn't offer us this option. He offered a very practical Do-It-Yourself path, it requires that we take responsibility for our own practice; we have to do the work ourselves. Actually, any teaching that takes us to release of the heart requires the same demanding self-inquiry, but the Buddha was particularly up front about it. It's good to know where we stand, because then we're not going to be disappointed or confused if things don't work out. We fully take responsibility for the fact that if we only make a little bit of effort we're only going to get a meagre result; if we make a lot of effort we'll get a better result and if we make a courageous and wholehearted effort we'll get a correspondingly abundant result.

Intelligent, resourceful self-assessment of what we are doing is crucial. Sometimes we might feel that other people see us better than we do – certainly this can be true at times but overall, we're the ones who can know what's going on. We're the ones who have to be honest with ourselves. We are in the best position to be able to

understand our own experience, and that understanding arises from our interested and attentive inquiry. It can't arise simply from reading books, or from memorising inspiring

poems, or from someone else's Dhamma talks. It's not that we shouldn't read, or memorise poems, or listen to Dhamma talks, but we need to realise that they're only pointing towards the way.

Second-hand knowledge is probably one of the biggest obstacles to the clarity and awareness needed for insight to arise. The Buddha understood this and brilliantly framed his teaching in a way which minimises the opportunity for grasping at ideals. His whole teaching undermines our attempts to hold on to notions of what we should be, and how we should get there. He probably said less about the goal of the spiritual path than any other religious teacher. He realised that as soon as we get an idea about it, then that's something we're ambitious for and struggling to grab hold of. If we do that, all we end up with is second-hand knowledge; we don't have the experience itself. As an ideal, the goal of the Buddha's teaching may not immediately seem uplifting and inspiring. He is pointing to what the truth is not; helping us see beyond all our greed, our aversion and our confusion, until through gradual distillation, the truth shines through.

...if we make a courageous and wholehearted effort we'll get a correspondingly abundant result.

But we have to keep our wits about us. Now where are our wits? They are in our heart, in our head, in our guts, they're in our very bones. I'm not talking about a kind of cunning, or something that is dependent upon IQ or education, but rather the real understanding and clarity which come from being fully present in the body and in the mind, experiencing it all in a fresh way. We each have to find out for ourselves how to relax back into this natural intelligence which can really assess our experience, and which has an overview of how we're working with what arises. Where is it taking me to? Is this helping me? Is my life getting better? Am I becoming more relaxed? Am I feeling more ease, more confidence? Am I feeling more depressed, more despairing? If so, is it a healthy depression or despair, or is it destructive?

There are obviously times when some people would really benefit from a bit of skilled support from others if it enables them to open constructively to pain which cannot, for whatever reason, be addressed alone. Talking with a good spiritual friend can also be valuable – we all have blind spots which are very difficult to see by ourselves. Nevertheless, a good teacher, guide or friend will eventually fling us back upon our own resources. We might be given some helpful pointers, but then it's a pat on the back, and on we go. If we want our practice to bear fruit we have to realise for ourselves the spacious intelligence of the non-attached mind, where nothing is taken for granted and we begin to see through all the second-hand ideas and habits, the staleness and assumptions which prevent clear vision.

Consider the use of meditation techniques; these, can be very useful. When we first start to practise we discover that our minds are amok with a cascade of thoughts, moods, drives, impulses most people are quite shocked by this. How to make sense of it all? The various techniques can help us feel we know what to do. At first that's very valuable because if we're too confused we can give up, or we just don't know where to put our attention so nothing much comes from our practice. Mindfulness with breathing, body-sweeping and other ways of systematically bringing the attention back to the present moment are very helpful if we understand how to relate to them properly. But we do have to keep our wits about us. What are we doing? Are we using practice as a daily sedative? Is it helping us to wake up, or are we using it to put ourselves to sleep and dissociate from experience? Is it working? Sometimes people plug away numbly for years or decades at some technique: 'I've been doing this for 30 years and I don't think I've learned a thing.' Why didn't they stop? I've heard somebody say this; they were obviously doing

something wrong. They were not applying this kind of assessment: 'What am I doing? Why am I doing it? What is the result?'

Then, you get conflicting meditation instructions. One teacher says keep your eyes open; another says keep them closed. 'Sister, should I keep my eyes open when I practise or should I keep them closed? Could you just give me your opinion?' Well, why don't you find out for yourself? Keep them open for a while and see what happens; and then try keeping them closed. Find out for yourself what the difference is, and you'll know for sure. If you know for yourself it gives you a confidence – you know why you're doing things, and you know what the result is.

'Should I do body sweeping? Or should I do *mettā* (loving-kindness) practice? Or should I do mindfulness with breathing? And, if I do mindfulness with breathing, should I do it just as a concentration exercise or should I try and

develop the four tetrads of the *Anāpānasati Sutta*? Ajahn so-and-so says you should adjust the breath and make it comfortable, but Ajahn Chah said you should never interfere with the breath. Now, who is right?' At first it's best to follow the advice of the particular teacher or tradition that you're close to. Don't muddle things up too much. But, when you really know what happens when you practise different techniques then have the confidence to experiment.

We can be very unadventurous. It feels safe and easy to snuggle down into a meditation habit, and say, 'OK, that's my meditation.' To bring new life to our practice it can be good to try different things out, to take the risk of not knowing what we're doing for a while; this can be particularly helpful if we feel stuck. There was one person who always had this pressure in their head when they practised mindfulness with breathing, and they

*What are we doing?
Are we using practice as a daily sedative?
Is it helping us to wake up, or are we using it
to put ourselves to sleep
and dissociate from experience?*

**'Our way of practice is looking closely at
things and making them clear.**

**We're persistent and constant, yet not rushed
or hurried. Neither are we too slow.**

**It's a matter of gradually feeling our way and
bringing it together.'**

Ajahn Chah

said, 'I can't really feel my nose.' I asked: 'Well, how long have you been doing this?' and they said, 'Years and years.' I said, 'Well, why don't you try focusing somewhere else?' 'What! But I thought you had to meditate at your nose.' 'What's the use of that if it's not working? It's just a means to focus the mind; if it makes your head explode, try focusing somewhere else.'

Dare to think, could you be your own teacher? Could you be the one who knows best? Could you make up your own *mettā* (loving-kindness) meditation? Surely we have to do one that's been printed in a book or given to us by an experienced meditation teacher? But maybe the way I teach *mettā* practice is going to be hopeless for you. 'I'd better read Ajahn Sumedho's books, I should try his one.' Maybe his isn't right for you either. The Buddha didn't actually give many detailed

instructions on *mettā*. He said: 'Even as a mother protects with her life her child, her only child, so with a boundless heart should we cherish all living beings; radiating kindness over the entire world, spreading upwards to the skies and downwards to the depths, outwards and unbounded, freed from hatred and ill will.' That's about it. He left people to figure it out for themselves. 'Oh, how do I do that?' Well, it's good to think that; it's good not to know. That'll get you interested, and help to awaken your own intelligence.

The danger of any religious tradition is that we simply follow the established way of doing things and surrender our natural ability to review and assess what we're doing and to learn from our successes and failures. But we need those resources because there is nobody around who is going to do that for us. Don't surrender your most precious treasure. That doesn't mean that we should be arrogant and conceited, either, and just say 'I'm doing it my way, thank you,' because there is often something to be learned from the experience of people who've been practising a long time. We should at least listen with an open mind; but listen with our wits turned on. Then we can try things out and find out for ourselves.

Develop skilful means. What are we trying to do? We're remembering to be awake now at every moment. So we're remembering to be awake in the shower, we're remembering to be awake in bed, we're remembering to be awake when we're eating, when we're cleaning, when we're working, whatever we're doing. Now that's a lot of situations. A lot of different things sweep us away, so ask: 'Where do I always fall down? Where am I always

going off? Is it when I'm talking? Is it when I'm working? Is it everything? It's probably everything! But at least we know. Once we've had a really good look and evaluated it, we know where we're starting. We need to get to know our own personal ways, our own personal tape-loops, and the places where we get hooked, and start to blame. There needs to be this freshness, this ability to step back and have a clear look at how we relate to life, to people and to our own mind.

Once we know ourselves a bit better we are able to learn how to counterbalance our own tendencies; what I

need to do is going to be totally different to what each of you need to do. One person, for example, might be very uptight and if they go on a retreat, they might want to get up at 2.30 a.m. – one hour of yoga and then sit, walk, sit, walk, sit, and then maybe five minutes of rest and then sit, walk, sit, walk,

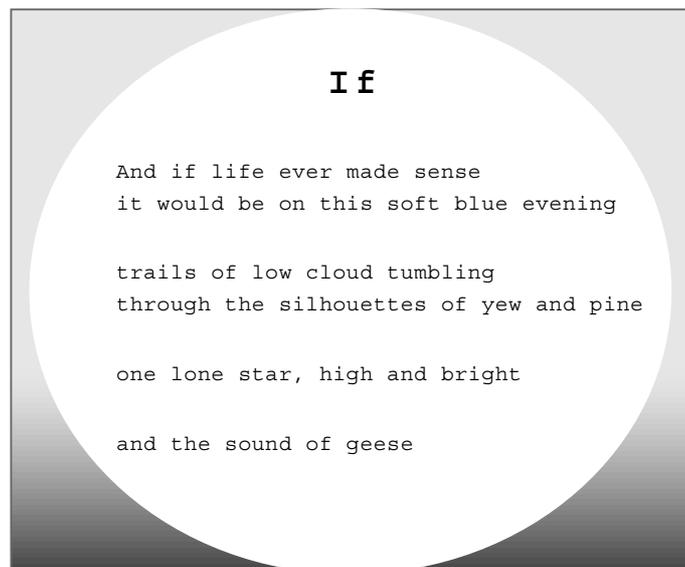
until night time, and feel great. But actually, maybe it would be better for them just to relax – sit on the balcony and look at the birds. Maybe that would counterbalance the driven-ness and need for structure. A person who is reflecting would take a look at that. What's the natural tendency? Then you can choose the most skilful response. It is not automatic that one should always go against one's natural inclination, but you have to know what it is so that you're taking it into account; then you can either keep a look out to make sure that it's not obsessing you or, perhaps, try going against it to learn from that experiment. And then another person thinks 'Oh, well, you know they always say we should relax. Now, I feel a little tense if I get up before 9.00 a.m. so I'm going to take it easy.' You probably need to get up at 2.30 a.m... or at least 8.00 a.m! Know where your edge is, know where you're going to lose your ability to be skilful, to be awake. Find ways of extending that edge just by experimenting, by challenging yourself a little bit, by going against the grain. It's very energising and invigorating if we take our own needs into account. It really helps us to feel that we've got something worth doing that is interesting to us, and it's very personal because it's coming from our own motivation.

In balancing the mind out, the basic frameworks that the Buddha taught are very useful. Just simple frameworks like the Five Spiritual Faculties: *Saddhā* is a heart quality – a receptivity, a willingness to be open, to take a leap and to let go of certainty. At the opposite end of the spectrum, *Paññā* – intuitive wisdom or discernment, is the evaluating mind. We have to learn to

There needs to be this freshness, this ability to step back and have a clear look at how we're tackling things, at how we relate to life, how we relate to people, how we relate to our own mind.

juggle the two so that the mind is not always stuck onto focusing and picking things apart which is quite a clinical and heartless experience. Another pair to counterbalance is *Samādhi* – collectedness or concentration, and *Viriya* – energy, which, in excess, leads to us being scattered and unfocused. We notice – in our life, in our day, in our formal meditation – how much concentration is there? Does it need to be more emphasised? Or is it getting so nose against the window pane’ that we can’t see the wood for the trees? When our mind is half-concentrated, but without any discernment or energy in it, we can end up feeling like an over-cooked pudding or a tree stump. If we recognise this we can inject some vigour by investigating something. We need to learn to know our tendencies to bring ourselves into balance. The overall balancing faculty is mindfulness. The Spiritual Faculties can help us evaluate ourselves and our practice, to notice where we’re going right and where we’re going wrong.

Develop skilful means, what we call ‘*Upayas*’ – personal means that help you in your determination to be awake. Evaluate the way you relate to the teachings, the way that you relate to techniques, what you’re using them for. Try something different if you think that would be good. Give it a good trial though – don’t just bounce around doing one thing and then another, never trying anything with enough commitment to produce results. It’s



like digging a well; you’ll never find water by digging 100 little holes. If you find the right place you just need to keep digging and you’ll eventually reach the water. If you like, once you’ve found water in once place you can start digging another well and increase your resources. But remember – keep your wits about you! ❖

LAY RESIDENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES AT AMARAVATI

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

WHAT WE OFFER:

The chance to live at Amaravati, joining in as part of the community. Time for group and private practice and retreat, with a variety of Dhamma friends. A five day working week in a supportive and changing environment. A modest stipend is available if necessary.

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.

WHAT WE ASK:

Commitment to meditation practice and to the 5 precepts, and respect for the style of training offered. Our life is busy, physically demanding and can be quite testing, so a good standard of health, as well as the ability to live and work harmoniously with others is also necessary. Commitment for one year and competence within your area of responsibility.

MAINTENANCE This is an excellent opportunity for someone to enjoy a diverse range of challenges. These include planning, co-ordinating and executing all types of building works over 22 buildings, from carpentry, decorating, plumbing, roofing and electrics. You would be working both with the Sangha and Lay Guests, as well as arranging outside contractors. A broad range of experience would be highly advantageous.

For more information please contact the Secretary.

A Place to Meet

*Luang Por Paññānanda gave this reflection at Wesak,
during the Amaravati Temple ground breaking ceremony on 19th May 1995*

All of us who have come together today are relatives; we are related to each other by the Dhamma. All the various scriptures and holy books have a similar direction; they teach us to live together with love and kindness and to free ourselves from suffering and difficulties in our daily life. There isn't any religious teaching that teaches us to hate each other or to be in conflict with each other!

However, the people of the world don't seem to follow these teachings in the proper way; this is why there is always conflict and harming and killing each other. Nobody ever seems to think, 'Why are we in conflict? Why do we keep getting into difficulties with each other?' They don't seem to adhere to those religious teachings or enter into the heart of them, instead they just take the externals of teachings. That's why there is always a sense of confusion and chaos in the world. It's like a fruit; you've got to peel it in order to get the fruit inside, otherwise you're left with just the outside part, you never taste what's inside. It's not a fault of the teachings. The teachings are correct but the teachers are not teaching people how to use those teachings properly, so they end up holding to various selfish ideologies or superstitious beliefs, and miss the point of religion.

Today a great number of people have come together for this ceremony. I notice that there are many people who follow different religions here as well, and that makes me very glad because the world today needs unity, it doesn't need conflict and diversity, splitting up. When we feel some sort of conflict we should sit and make ourselves quiet and peaceful for a minute, bringing our attention to our hearts to see: 'Why is this conflict here? What are we looking at that makes us feel this conflict? Why do we feel this sense of dislike or aversion? Why does this happen in our minds? How can we change it?'

All of us have the same characteristics. We're born into this world in the same way, we grow up, we get old in the same way. We have sickness and illness in the same way. We have all the difficulties in our life in the very same way. Each person has something that is exactly the same in every person – their hearts and their minds, which are actually very pure and clear and peaceful. Unfortunately we don't pay attention to that inside, instead we look at things outside. So we look at the different languages, different races, different colours, different customs, different traditions, different ways of doing things, and then we create problems. But we should reflect on that, and see that these are not the important things; the important thing is our heart.

These days the world is very very small. We can look at our televisions and know about anything that happens in different parts of the world immediately. We hear about all these different conflicts and people hurting each other and having wars with each other. I wonder why that is... But if we look around at the gathering of people today, we see people with white skin and dark skin and yellow skin, and all different kinds of races. People are speaking in different languages, but if you really listen, actually we are all speaking about the same thing; we have the same mutual aspiration. This is what we have to look at. When we do the Buddhist chanting for spreading loving kindness we always spread loving kindness to all living beings. We wish that they all may be free from suffering, free from any kind of ill will and free from difficulties. This is our mutual aspiration.

The problem is that people can't live together in a proper way or in a harmonious way because they tend to hold on to the sources of conflict. In the Buddha's terminology this is what is called, 'attachment'. Even within one country there can be division, just because people live in a different places. Say, we have the 'Northerners' and the 'Southerners', who don't get along with each other – even though they have the same language, same racial features, same customs.

We are in a world that is changing very rapidly, supposedly developing. But, rather than developing in a material way, we should put the emphasis on developing our hearts and our aspiration toward truth so that we can live together harmoniously. When various animals come together, especially when they come into each other's territory, they tend to react in a very aggressive way, maybe even hissing or barking and biting each other. We, as human beings, can tend to react in the same way, so then we're not much better than the animals! We have the intelligence and ability to consider how we can develop ourselves, but if this is used in a way which increases conflict and creates a sense of disharmony, then it is not development.

There are various meetings, conferences, concerning different problems in the world but there never seems to be any real solution on an external level. This is because people pack their selfishness and all their opinions and views into their luggage, when they prepare to come to a conference; then they bring that out in the meetings! They tend to always look for their own benefit, their own advantage and don't really think very much of what can they give, what can they share. They may be intelligent, well educated people but they don't use this intelligence in the right way. Instead, they bring out their

opinions and selfishness, so that there is never any resolution.

The teachings of the Lord Buddha and also the Christian teachings are supposed to be for the relinquishing of selfishness – for ridding oneself of the tendency to selfishly hold to just a small, narrow minded way of living. In Christian teachings there is surrender to God; the teaching is to relinquish, to give up everything, not to hold anything back at all. The meaning of the cross is to be able to relinquish that sense of self completely: there is the long section that goes up and down; that's 'I', 'My Self' – and then the cross bar, which means that you've got to be able to cut through that. When Christians have a cross around their neck, or in the villages and towns where there is a cross, that should be a reminder to people to relinquish all selfishness. But sometimes, even when there are crosses all over the place, people can still be very very selfish, very very narrow and rigid – because they don't actually enter into the understanding of what that religious symbol is for. The external symbols in religion are to remind us to develop awareness, to bring our attention back to what's important.

In Buddhism too we teach that we've got to free ourselves from selfishness; the different Buddhist practices are all for relinquishing selfishness. There is *dana*, generosity – that's to let go of our self-centredness; then *silā*, when we practise with the precepts – again this is something which goes against our selfishness; with *bhāvanā*, when we do the meditation, developing mindfulness and awareness – it's to develop a more refined sense of how to relinquish selfishness. But people can misuse religious teachings and, rather than using them to let go, they get caught up in: 'What am I going to get?' or, 'What am I going to become?' The traditional Pali phrase when making offerings ends with, 'For my benefit and my happiness'. But it's not generosity, it's not true giving, if one is still wanting to get something back from it. What has been traditionally taught in religious institutions is often not actually very correct, so we need to be able to get back to the original idea of learning how to relinquish, how to give up.

Why is the focus of teachings, religious teachings, on the relinquishing of selfishness?... It's because selfishness is the central point of all the evil, unskilful and unwholesome tendencies that come up in the human condition. All the chaos and the confusion comes back to this sense of selfishness.

If we know the cause of something then we can rectify that; if we can relinquish the cause then, having dealt with the cause skillfully, the results will come – a sense of well being and peace will finally come to us. But

if one gives with selfishness, then one's always going to be sitting there wondering: 'When am I going to get something back from this?'... So think carefully of what is the source of the mind which is not so peaceful – the anxieties, fears and what not.... It all comes back to thoughts like: 'What am I going to get? How am I going to be?' But if one is able to relinquish that, and just be at peace with the giving up of that kind of thinking, then that is the end of the problem.

We need to study these religious teachings and then put them into practice; this is the most important thing. Then we can start to see the results of this practice in our own minds, our own hearts. We start to see the unskilful tendencies – the unwholesome mental states and actions – decrease and not have such a hold over us. Then we can realise that these teachings are working, so we begin to put more effort into the practice until these unwholesome tendencies will slowly fade away into the background and lose their power.

The birth of the Buddha which we are commemorating today is something which people of the world should rejoice in. It is the birth of someone who came into the world specifically and completely for the well-being and happiness of all of us – not for any kind of unpleasant or unfavourable thing that could come about. The teachings which he gave are the source of this well-being; but he also said that he only points the way, and it's the duty of each person to practise and to follow that way themselves. This is a very important aspect, but unfortunately people don't tend to rely on themselves and this way that the Buddha pointed out as much as they should. Sometimes I think that if the Buddha images that are in religious buildings could speak, then, when people go to pay respects and ask for protection or for benefits and assistance, these images would say: 'Why do you come and bow to me like this? It's your duty to do the practice, and to follow the teaching. It's your duty to make the best of those teachings!' But unfortunately people don't want to walk themselves, they want other people to carry them, so they never get to their destination. A very simple and straightforward teaching that the Buddha gave is to realise that we are responsible for ourselves. There isn't anything external that has power over us; we're creating our life all the time by our actions, speech and thoughts.

There is a tendency for people to blame everything around them for what is causing difficulty in their lives, rather than taking responsibility for themselves. But the Buddha tells us to look inside because the causes for all that we experience in our life is there. If we pay attention to our thoughts, our speech, our actions, we can see the results of those things; we see that this is what is creating

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and miss the point of religion.*

our life. If we try to find the causes and conditions externally, then there's no end to it. So we need to turn our attention inwards and see that it's just this body, which is only about 5 or 6 feet high, and this mind – it's all within this. Our bodies and our minds depend on each other, but it is the mind that is the most important. If we learn how to train and develop our minds then however our body is we can still be peaceful with it, we can still be happy with it. Every day we eat plenty of food for our bodies, but how much food do we give for our minds? Often our minds, our hearts are getting very underfed and undernourished, and so there is not enough strength to deal with the difficulties in life. So we've got to pay the most attention to nourishing our minds, nourishing our hearts.

A skilful thing to do first thing in the morning is to just take a short reading of some Dhamma teaching; then to take that teaching and reflect on it, and try to apply it during the day. In this way, we carry the teachings with us, we carry the Buddha with us. The results of these teachings, this Dhamma of the Lord Buddha brings a quality of peace wherever we put it into practice, whoever we come into contact with.

The external world is developed; materially, it's well off but spiritually it's not so well off. That is why there is all this confusion. It's not that material development is not good, but it's just that our spiritual development is what is more important. These two kinds of development, the external and the internal, have to go together but it's very difficult because the pulls of the material world are very very strong. Sometimes people say, 'Oh England is not the same as it used to be...', but it's the same everywhere really, because of the increasing confusion, increasing selfishness. These things are covering people's hearts.

So we've got to take a step or two back and take a good look at what we are doing, and consider where we want to go; then to go in the direction of what is truly beneficial. We have to rely on wisdom and awareness, we can't allow the ignorance and delusion to keep pushing us around. In this the way we can be truly independent, rather than simply having the freedom to follow our desires.

So we still have to rely on the external world and on the material things around us, but we have to learn how to use them with wisdom, rather than being trapped by our delusion. We should ask ourselves: 'How can I live my life with wisdom and intelligence, rather than delusion, ignorance? How can we live so that there is an increasing purity in our intentions and our aspirations?' We should keep trying to bring up this aspiration for a sense of purity of thought and speech when we are in contact with other people and in the activities we are involved with – investigating how these can further a quality of pure heartedness. If we keep practising this, if we just keep reminding ourselves of this aspiration, then our suffering will decrease. ❖



Maurice's commitment to Buddhism began in 1951 and he implemented his interest with the scholastic training and personal vigour that had marked his German studies. So apart from learning the Pali language in which the scriptures of Theravada Buddhism are written and writing numerous articles and booklets on the theory and practice of Buddhism, he took up the practice of meditation, visited Buddhist monasteries in South East Asia and most importantly, was a leading figure in the development of Buddhism in Britain. He was both a Vice President of the Buddhist Society and Chairman of the English Sangha Trust. This Trust was established in 1956 with the aim of supporting a Buddhist monastic foundation in Britain. He continued to serve this Trust as a Director into his seventies and helped with founding its two monasteries - Cittaviveka in West Sussex and Amaravati in Hertfordshire.

After the death of his second wife, Florence, Maurice entered the monastic Order of Monks for several months at the age of 77. Having spent the three-month Rains Retreat as a monk according to the Thai custom, Maurice remained a regular and much-loved member of Amaravati's congregation whilst continuing to travel and write. He joked (or maybe it wasn't a joke) about becoming a monk again when he was 90 in order to finish his days close to the heart of the religion towards which he had given so much.

He was always ready to help with linguistic and other problems and extremely generous and kind. He will be greatly missed by his university colleagues and Buddhist friends.

MAURICE O'CONNELL WALSHE – A TRIBUTE

MAURICE O'CONNELL WALSHE was born in London on the 22nd December, 1911 and died on the 18th April, 1998. He was a student at University College, London, and at the Universities of Berlin, Goettingen, Vienna and Freiburg-im-Breisgau.

He taught mediaeval German language and literature at the University of Leeds, and as a Reader in German at Nottingham University and Bedford College, London.

After retirement in 1979 he became deputy director of the Institute of Germanic Studies, University of London.

His published works include a three volume set of essays of the 13th century mystic, Meister Eckhart and, in 1987, *Thus Have I Heard* – the most popular and contemporary version of *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*.

A few months before he died he completed a Buddhist Pali dictionary which, hopefully,

George Sharp writes:

Maurice Walshe's funeral took place in the Amaravati Temple at 2 o'clock in the afternoon of Monday 4th May. Many of his old friends were there, perhaps seeing this aspect of his life for the first time. Ajahn Viradhammo, the Abbot, invited a number of them to speak. Without exception everyone took pleasure in reminding us of Maurice's dry wit. Garry Thompson, former Vice-President of the Buddhist Society, and EST member, aired a philosophical speculation Maurice would have enjoyed very much – 'Maurice Walshe does not exist' – and by this humour, for a brief time, he was brought back to life in fond memory. But, perhaps, the most memorable moment took place ten days earlier when the body was carried into the Chapel and laid with face exposed. Seeing our old friend's corpse was a shock. We were contemplating a thing once animated, once a person, now dead; once the Maurice Walshe we knew, and now utterly gone. And to touch that cold, putty-like flesh was all the confirmation of the fact one could ever need. But my own emotional response was one of joy to see his body there, in that beautiful little Chapel, at the end of a long and fruitful life, surrounded by Monks and Nuns of the Order he had, for so long, sought to establish in this country.

They stood in silent respect regarding the truth of the death against the backdrop of the glass reclining Buddha, and I thought the scene quite beautiful, and it seemed to me that Maurice could not have wished for more; for all that surrounded his body was the culmination of his hopes and aspirations. The work was done, the dream achieved, and this a home-coming more complete than he might ever have hoped, and perhaps despaired of achieving, during the many arid years of difficulty and disappointment as Chairman of the English Sangha Trust during its early years.

Always self-deprecating, almost shy by nature, he made

little of his extraordinary achievements and possessed a keen sense of the absurd: hence the jokes, puns and wry comments which peppered his talks. He would have enjoyed the irreverence and absence of funeral sentiment. For our part, there was only joy that he had lived to touch the lives of so many.

Being an only child, having been predeceased by his wives Ruth and Florence, Maurice's only immediate family was the Sangha he served so devotedly and who were gathered there to bid him farewell.

LAST MOMENTS

*So ordinary, such clarity and balance
in allowing that to be*

*No drama, no crisis, no special offerings
in thought and wishes.*

*Just me here, in my ordinariness, with you
It's taken you to come to this
and now I see its beauty.*

*I'm nothing, I'm hollow and this
is what I offer to you now as
your body softly heaves its
last rhythms and pulses.*

*So gentle, no attachments.
Simplicity is everything, to die
with no thing to hold the heart back.*

from a young friend who was with Maurice as he died

Mealy Redpolls and on Being Content

Nick Scott shares some reflections on the value of contentment and offers an update on what has been happening in Hammer Wood

One of the nice things about working here at Chithurst is that I get to do part of the winter retreat with the monastic Sangha. That includes some time alone in one of the forest meditation kutis. It helps that it is winter, when there is not too much wildlife to distract me. But, of course, I still notice what wildlife there is, both around the kuti and on my way in to the monastery to collect my meal. I particularly enjoy that daily walk through the forest with the birds calling as they flit about the trees and the bright green shoots of the woodland flowers appearing amidst the carpet of old leaves on the forest floor. The first year I used a kuti it was a revelation how much more I noticed on a retreat, when my mind was quiet. I would come floating in each day, happy as anything, full of the beauty of the forest. I remember being really happy that I was to be working at Chithurst and that as I would not be responsible for the Hammer Wood I could just enjoy it.

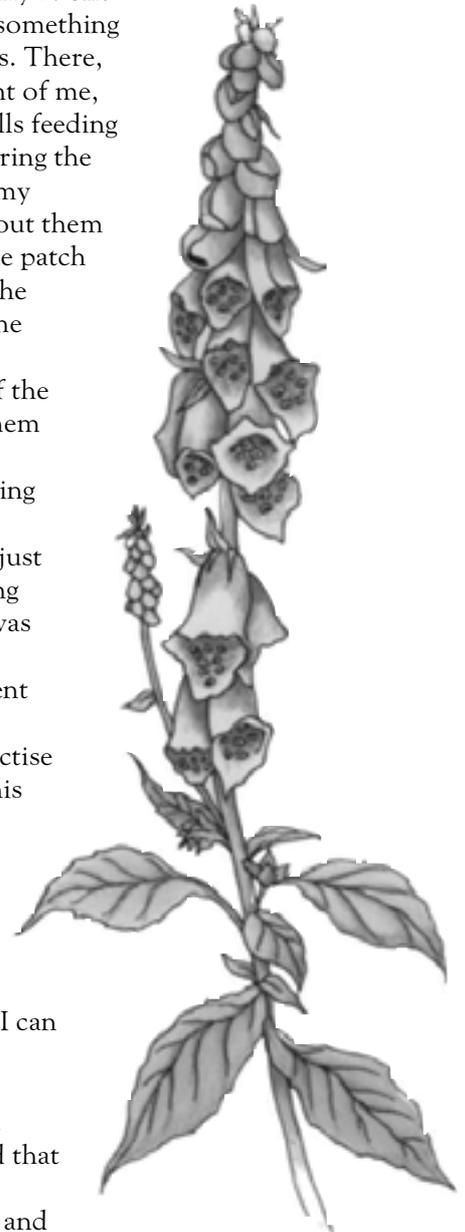
One morning I met Mike Holmes on the way. He was still the warden then and I told him about all the birds I had seen, and he asked if I had spotted the mealy redpolls. I hadn't. 'Hey, you've got to look out for them. Super flock this winter. Here most cold years. Can't miss them'. I said I would. But actually I didn't know what a mealy redpoll was. I had to look them up afterwards.

Mealy redpolls, it turned out, were a subspecies of redpoll that we see occasionally in this country. Most people would just call them a redpoll but not a keen birdwatcher like Mike. They occur in northern Europe and come to Britain in cold winters and are usually seen in flocks with ordinary redpolls and siskins, feeding on alder or birch seed. Well, of course, Mike's news completely changed my walks into the monastery. From then on I was looking for mealy redpolls. I wasn't interested in the common birds any more. I wanted to see a mealy redpoll. But although I looked everywhere for the flock I couldn't find them. The searching completely ruined the walks in. I didn't enjoy them any more I was so taken up with wanting the mealy redpolls. Eventually, after five or six days I realised that this was stupid. It was even upsetting my meditation. So I gave up on the mealy redpolls and returned to being content with what was actually there. I went back to enjoying the antics of the common birds: the sudden flash of movement and colour as a chaffinch landed on a branch

above me; the hammering of a nuthatch as it hung upside down on a tree trunk seeking grubs from under the bark. My meditation improved again too, and, as the retreat went on, I became peaceful.

Then one day near the end of my time in the forest, I was sitting in the kuti with the door open, feeling particularly at one with the world, when something made me open my eyes. There, just a few yards in front of me, were two mealy redpolls feeding on the birch seed covering the ground. I didn't need my binoculars. Even without them I could admire the little patch of red on the head of the male, and appreciate the lighter colour and the particular whiteness of the wing bars that made them mealy redpolls. And, because I was not seeking them, I could sit there and really enjoy them just as they were, for as long as they were there. It was a great lesson in the benefits of being content with how things are.

I actually try to practise being content now. This meditation business seems, these days, more like a process that is happening to me, rather than something I am doing. So I reckon, the more I can relax and be with how things actually are, the better. Even if that is a sense of dis-ease. I find that if I can manage to be content with a restless and untethered mind, then I can also be at ease with the mind when it becomes still. Before,



I tended to rush right past the more together experiences of meditation, being not quite content with them either. Now, maybe this is just the attitude I particularly need to adopt, because I am such a one for getting things done. But, I do notice how contentment is a quality in people I particularly admire for their wisdom. Like Ajahn Sumedho. When I've been walking with him I have noticed how wherever you put Luang Por, he seems to be content, whether it is a grassy knoll beside the footpath, a town square or an airport waiting lounge.

Last year my practice of being content had a good effect on someone else, which seemed to indicate that I must be doing something right. It was the winter retreat again and one of the junior nuns was having a self-retreat in one of the kutis. Although she was keen to make the most of it, the first week of her two weeks had gone poorly. Her mind just would not settle, no matter how hard she tried. Then one day she saw me on my way back to my kuti. I dare say I was taking in the beauty of the lake as I passed, or something like that. Anyway, she thought, I bet Nick doesn't have my problem on retreat. And then she pondered why that might be, deciding that it was because I let myself enjoy my time in the forest. She later told me that, because of this, she tried relaxing for her second week, tried to enjoy her time more, didn't work so hard at it, and that things went much better for her.

So practising being content can do others some good too, as well as leading to peace for oneself. However, please don't get me wrong. It is not that I am suggesting we should be giving up trying to do something, one still needs to put in effort, it's just that the perspective of also being content with how things actually are helps one to have the wisdom to apply effort skilfully, to know when not to apply effort, and to make the right decision at the time it is needed. It is the balance between the two which leads to peace.

Mike was right about the mealy redpolls, by the way. In cold winters there is a large flock of redpolls mixed with siskins here, and it does seem to include mealy redpolls. Usually the flock is chattering away in the alders along the valley above Hammer Pond, but sometimes they are amongst the birches in the forest or the monastery grounds. In fact, they can be seen all the way along the route that I was walking into the monastery that year. But I only get a brief sight of what might be a mealy redpoll, never the kind of view I had during that retreat. This winter I have seen none, as it has been particularly mild, only a small party of siskins on the alder trees hanging over Hammer Pond. Still, I've learnt my lesson from the mealy redpolls and I've been content with what I have seen on the way in for the meal each day.

I still keep to the one route when walking in, though. If I go anywhere else I start to think about the

WINTERING IN THE FOREST

It must have been the restless stars
shuddering in their nests a thousand years up
that crowed and cast me loose from sleep.

Sandals frozen to the doorstep.
My mind's sprawl spins under a glaring moon
as the warm dream shatters in the absolute jaws

of Winter's mouth. It bites off choice:
cold sense explodes, hacks the cursed logs;
fumbles numb matches - the yes! miracle spurts

...onto girls, last year's war and sport...
Old newspaper sails, billowing with flame,
bring me back home. The smoky world.

The stove croons, its guts full of wood.
I suck a skinned knuckle, chew a handful of thoughts,
letting things melt into the rippling hours.

I must have gone soft wintering here.
A gaunt man dives through me, scouring the depths
for the pearls that remind him of the sun.

Ajahn Sucitto

management of the forest, because, of course, now Mike has retired I am responsible to the forest committee for much of the work done in the forest. And a lot has been done over the last year. The rhododendrons which once threatened to take over the forest have finally been completely cleared, and to my surprise, as well as to those in the community here who were reluctant to see them all go, the bit of forest that has been revealed is quite beautiful without them. There is only the mopping up of seedlings and any regrowing stumps left to do. We have also used contractors to open up two parts of the forest to make small areas of heathland, a project which was close to Mike's heart as it was he who first realised that most of Hammer Wood would once have been heathland. This year we will be trying to get heather to regenerate in them. And there is good news again on Hammer Pond. At the end of this winter retreat we received a further offer of ten year's grant from the Ministry of Agriculture's Countryside Stewardship scheme. They are already paying for the heathland areas to be made and the new grant is to help us with the

Signs of

OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, monks and nuns from the western monasteries have begun to practise pindapāta – walking for alms in local towns or villages. Some samanas describe how it feels to be living ‘on the edge’ in this way.

Ajahn Candasiri wrote from India:

‘...The pindapāts are quite remarkable. We go bare-foot. (There is no problem at all in keeping the eyes downcast in inhabited areas, or anywhere else for that matter!) Sometimes we go to the main street in Bodhgaya itself, at other times to one or other of the nearby villages. The first day it was the main street, walking slowly and standing for a short time facing each stall. People would come up to offer food: usually small chapatis, or sweets, biscuits or fruit; or sometimes they wouldn’t, so we would just continue slowly and silently on our way.

The part that really blew my mind was when we lined up in front of some beggars seated outside the main Temple – just quietly standing there. But someone else was leading, I was following so all I could do was stand at the end of the line and wait. After a short time one of the women smiled and got up; taking her small pouch of change, she disappeared and returned moments later with a packet of biscuits, to offer some into each of our bowls. Later on, another group shared bread and biscuits with us – offering into our bowls, which were already well filled, with obvious happiness

The following days we would go to the villages, moving slowly from ‘house’ to ‘house’ and standing quietly. Usually, after a short time a woman, man or child would emerge from the darkness within, with a plate of rice and maybe a little curry to offer into each bowl. My small sized bowl would fill up very fast,

continued from page 15 conservation work we are doing in the rest of Hammer Wood. It includes half the very expensive cost of dredging the pond. The dredging has now been scheduled for the summer of the year 2000. In the meantime the committee will try to raise the rest of the cost through other grants.

Despite all the changes, I still try to focus on being content with Hammer Wood just as it is. To appreciate the bluebells which are up now, and the secretive mandarin ducks which live in the swamp above the lake. You really have to be awake to notice them quietly drop into the wood of an evening. This year on my retreat the thing I appreciated most was the song of the robin. There was one using a perch at the far end of my walking path. The robin’s song, which is a short random assortment of trills, bumbles and simple notes, and

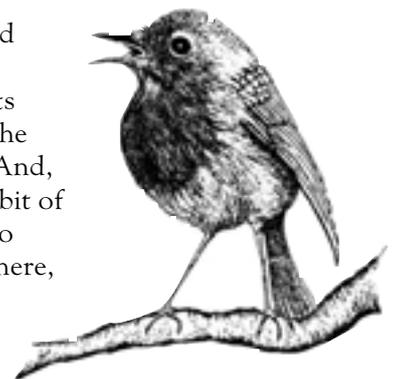
and I found it hard when towards the end, there would simply be no space to receive anything more... and yet we’d carry on, standing outside even the humblest of dwellings, until everyone had had a chance to offer something. Usually, by the time we had finished there would be a crowd of children; big ones carrying little ones, in grubby tattered clothing usually without shoes, often with runny noses – all curious...

‘It isn’t possible for these people to come to the monasteries, so this is how we bring the Dhamma to them.’ That’s how the leader of the group explains his feelings about the importance of this practice. For me, it seems to be a way of nourishing the hungry ghosts: there is a state of mind which is always wanting, wanting more and more – the antidote is to give something. In a sense this practice of pindapāta provides an opportunity for giving in a way that brings dignity, happiness, a moment without ‘self’ concern – a subtle kind of heart food that can be sweeter and more satisfying than anything material. This is not to say that these people don’t have real, pressing material needs, and it is very inspiring to see the efforts being made to provide education, health care and other things to enable them to live with greater ease and self respect.’

‘...After we had eaten what we needed from the food we had collected, the remainder would be gathered up and handed out to the beggars. Actually, in Nalanda where I saw this done, it was quite an unpleasant experience – more like feeding the ducks than offering food to human beings...The novice nun who was carrying the plastic bag full of chapatis, cakes, and bits and pieces began to hand them to the women and children, but they just kept asking for more and more, pressing closer and closer in on us. In them I could see the misery of a mind that is trapped in continual grasping and unable to rest in any sense of contentment, appreciation or gratitude...’

which is different every time, makes a lovely meditation object. You never quite know when each call is going to come, how it will be this time, and when it will end. So your mind cannot anticipate it.

The robin has a slight reflective air as it sings and the song has an evocative haunting quality which fits the dawn or dusk, when the robin most likes to sing. And, if you just stay with each bit of the song as it trails off into silence, it will leave you there, each time, in the present ever-changing moment. ❖



Change

Ajahn Sucitto writes:

The pain in my back is running down my leg like liquid fire. I keep easing it by relaxing the lumbar muscles, swivelling slightly and rotating my heel on the pavement. The concern that it not be seemly for a samana to be standing on the street in any posture, other than that of sentry duty, struggles with the pragmatism of doing the best that circumstances will currently allow. Tudong makes you pragmatic, and if the classical alms-round procedure that I learned two decades ago in Thailand has to be tweaked a little to suit what my body will allow, so be it. This is Britain – West Sussex to be precise – and the devotees are not flocking to cram rice and curries in my bowl. I have to stand, in a way that is evident but modest and undemanding – bowl covered to prevent people casually tossing coins into it – on the off-chance that someone will know, guess or inquire into the purpose of our presence.

On this tudong around West and East Sussex, Samanera Nipako and I are living on alms-food, frequently that which is spontaneously offered, on the streets that have never seen a samana. Seaford, Hailsham, Heathfield etc. The walking works up an appetite which however disappears beneath a mind-state of open faith. It is something that the mind has shifted into over years of alms-rounds in Thailand, Britain and India. It's not that I think anyone is going to give me food; it's just that the mind stops thinking. And also wonderfully, that my attention goes out in non-specific kindness to the many folk, here manifesting as shoppers on Haslemere High Street. To my mind this is the prime motivation for tudong and for alms-rounds. And it is achieved and surpassed in the one in ten-thousand moment when someone marches up illuminated with delight, and hastily pushes a pastry or a cake into my bowl. With three of those in an hour's alms-round, our physical needs are quenched in a flood of faith.

The street scenario is a gentle domestic comedy. One person in two hundred will make a brief connection to us, an inquiry maybe, or an offer of money. 'I'm sorry, we don't accept money,' says Nipako; people recoil, embarrassed or apologetic: 'Well what are you collecting, then?' 'Alms-food' 'Oh...' Generally the inquirer will then shuffle off down the street. I wriggle surreptitiously with my back problem. But it actually seems to frighten people less if we do relax a little.

However today, now we are nearly back at Chithurst, samanera Nipako has a problem. Being a samanera he can, when needed, keep food overnight on behalf of a bhikkhu; and today he has a loaf of bread and some buns from yesterday. So he is wriggling with his own ache: should he be looking for alms-food if he already has some food? Because of this he's been disengaged and 'not there' this morning. His apathy has made me feel a little



HELPING IN HAMMER WOOD

Forest Volunteer Days:

Give the Sangha a hand by working for an afternoon in Hammer Wood. Upcoming volunteer dates and tasks are: Saturday & Sunday July 11/12th Alder Coppicing, Saturday August 9th Pond Work, Saturday October 17th Helping the Sangha.

Forest Month: There are places for three men to join a small team of the Sangha who will be spending October 13th - November 9th working and living in Hammer Wood. If you are interested contact Nick Scott at Chithurst Monastery.



irritated. This is not a shopping trip, as far as I am concerned, it is a sacred act. (But in a few weeks he will be taking bhikkhu ordination: he has to figure this one out for himself.) A woman stops and talks to me, a nurse. Some of our monks had visited a terminally ill patient of hers. She is interested in us, wants to get us something to eat. What food would we like?

She goes off to get us some cheese to go with the bread. Things open up; Nipako and I have a dispassionate exchange of contradictory views about this alms-round. For my part I think of the times when I would have to lug a heavy bowl of rice around a Thai market town, with people urging me to accept more so that they can feel they started the day with a meritorious deed; only to give all the food up to the temple boys when I returned to the monastery. This is important for lay people. Isn't it? I wouldn't have left Chithurst if I thought this was just about filling my belly. I feel the fire jumping in my leg, and a wave of despond.

The woman returns with an entire shopping bag full of food. Her unambiguous happiness as she hands it over: 'I've got you a few things more than cheese; look here's some marmalade!' - pushes the pain away. We talk a little about the monastery and her patient, then she moves back into the street's stream. It's more than enough for the day. Thankfully I crouch down momentarily to ease my back, and then we can get walking. We give away all the food that we don't need to a local supporter in her baby-clothes' shop and find somewhere where the threatening rain won't get us. Eating the meal digests the aches.



SANGHA NOTICES

Kathinas/Almsgiving Ceremonies,

Everyone is welcome to attend these traditional almsgiving ceremonies which are held at each monastery following the completion of the three month Rains Retreat (Vassa). The usual programme for the day is as follows:

- 10.00 am Arrive
Giving of Five Precepts
Paritta Chanting
- 10.30 am Pindapāta – meal offering to the Sangha
- 11.00 am Meal for all
- 1.00 pm Offering of cloth and other requisites to the Sangha
- 2.00 pm Dhamma Talk (Desanā)

Contact each monastery or relevant contact person for further details (including regional variations).
See box on the back page for Lay co-ordinators details.

AMARAVATI NOTICES

Sunday Afternoon Talks: these take place during the vassa at 2.00pm on each of the Sundays mentioned.

See Page 5 for more details.

Gratitude to Parents

Contact Mr Chandī Perera (0181 977-7642, before 10am or evenings) for details of the twelfth 'Gratitude to Parents' day to be held on Sunday 4th October at Amaravati.
All Welcome.

CITTAVIVEKA NOTICES

Forest Work Days:

(See notice on the previous page)
Meet at the monastery at 1.00 pm.
If you'd like overnight accommodation, please contact the guest monk/nun in advance.

Dhamma Hall Project

We need a hand this summer taking down the old coach house which is on the site for a proposed new Dhamma Hall. As we want to reuse most of the materials the community are doing the demolition themselves. It is scheduled for three weekends so that lay supporters can come and give a hand. There is all kinds of work to do, both heavy and light. We will be working morning and afternoons each day.
The dates are: 25/26th July, 15/16th August, 12/13th September.

Buddhist Festival 19th July

All are welcome. Please contact Muditā at The Hamilton Arms, School Lane, Stedham, West Sussex BU29 0NZ
Tel. 01730 812555, Fax 01730 817459 for further details.

GENERAL NOTICES

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

Waiting List Only

Young Persons' Retreat: 4th - 6th

December a taste of silent meditation for teenagers.

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

For details contact

Dan Jones, 59 Cavendish Avenue, Cambridge, CB1 4UR
Tel: 01223 246257

note new address (same phone)

BUDDHIST HOSPICE

The Buddhist Hospice Trust, a non-sectarian Buddhist charity established in 1986, is re-launching The Ananda Network – a nationwide network of volunteers willing to visit and befriend those who are seriously ill, dying or bereaved. We are looking for Buddhists across the UK who are

willing to be a local contact for the Network. If you would like to become involved, or would like more information about The Buddhist Hospice Trust, please contact: Dennis Sibley, The Buddhist Hospice Trust, 1 Laurel House, Trafalgar Road, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 1QN
Tel: (01983)526945.
(Please enclose s.a.e.)

BEING IN PRACTICE 1998 RETREAT

A weekend residential retreat for psychotherapists, counsellors and others in the healing and caring professions offering the opportunity for meditation and discussion on the links between spirituality and psychotherapy as inner journeys of exploration. We shall be taking time out of our work lives to gather with other practitioners for collective contemplation and nourishment. The main retreat facilitator is Thanissara (Mary Peacock), who is a resident teacher at the Buddhist Retreat Centre in South Africa and has followed a foundation course in Core Process Psychotherapy at the Karuna Institute in Devon.
Venue: **Ashton Lodge, Gaunts House, Stanbridge, Wimborne, Dorset.**
Dates: **Friday 4th September, 4 p.m., to Sunday 6th September, 4 p.m. 1998.** Cost: **£105 fully residential (lower costs for camping).**
Further details and reply slips from:
Judy Lown, 8 Fortior Court, 100 Hornsey Lane, London N6 5LD;
Tel. 0171 272 5738 or
Sylvia Mann, 28B Trafalgar Avenue, London SE 15 6NR
Tel. 0171 703 2599.

New Group in Oxford

We should be very glad to hear of anyone interested in joining a regular informal meditation group in Oxford as we're not able to attend meetings of the existing group. *Please phone Susanna Geddes on 01865 776426.*

We try to bring out the *Newsletter* quarterly, depending upon funds and written material. In the spirit of our relationship with lay people, we naturally depend upon donations: any contributions towards printing/distribution costs can be made to: 'The English Sangha Trust', Amaravati. In that same spirit, we ask you to let us know if you wish to be put on (or removed from) the mailing list, or if you have moved. Write to *Newsletter*, Amaravati. The newsletter is also available on the internet from: <http://www-ipg.umds.ac.uk/~crr/newsletter/>
Data Protection Act: The mailing list used for *Forest Sangha Newsletter* is maintained on computer. If you object to your record being kept on our computer file, please write to *Newsletter*, Amaravati, and we will remove it.
This Newsletter is printed by: *Ashford Printers*, Harrow. Telephone – (0181) 427-5097

Teaching and Practice Venues

MEDITATION GROUPS

These are visited regularly by Sangha members.

BATH Catherine Hewitt, (01225) 405-235	LONDON BUDDHIST SOCIETY 58 Eccleston Square, SW1 (Victoria) (0171) 834 5858 Meditation Sundays: led by a monk or nun, every 2nd month. 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Thursday classes – 6.00pm
BERKSHIRE Penny Henrion (01189) 662-646	
BRISTOL Lyn Goswell (Nirodha), (0117) 968-4089	
SOUTH DORSET Barbara Cohen-Walters (Sati sati), (01305) 786-821	LEEDS AREA Daniella Loeb, (0113) 2791-375 Anne Voist, (01274) 670-865
EDINBURGH Muriel Nevin, (0131) 337-0901	
GLASGOW James Scott, (0141) 637-9731	SOUTHAMPTON Ros Dean (01703) 422430
HAMPSTEAD Caroline Randall, (0181) 348-0537	SURREY/WOKING Rocanā, (01483) 761-398

MEDITATION GROUPS

These meet regularly & receive occasional visits from Sangha.

BEDFORD David Stubbs, (01234) 720-892	MAIDSTONE Joan Hamze, (01622) 751-202
BELFAST Paddy Boyle, (01232) 427720	MIDHURST Barry Durrant, (01730) 821479
BRIGHTON Alex Clingan, (01273) 327-925	NEWCASTLE ON TYNE Andy Hunt, (0191) 478-2726
CAMBRIDGE Gillian Wills, (01954) 780-551	OXFORD Peter Carey, (01865) 578-76
DUBLIN Eugene Kelly, (1) 854-076	PEMBROKESHIRE/S. WALES Peter and Barbara (Subhdra) Jackson, (01239) 820-790
ESSEX (Billericay) Rob Howell, (01702) 559-241 (Harlow) Pamutto, (01279) 731-330	PORTSMOUTH Dave Beal, (01705) 732-280
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD Bodhinyana Group Chris Ward (01442) 890-034	REDRUTH Ron West, (01209) 717-543
LONDON / NOTTING HILL Jeffrey Craig, (0171) 221-9330 Nick Carroll, (0181) 740-9748	STEYNING / SUSSEX Joe Bartlett, (01903) 879-597
LEIGH-ON-SEA Gool Deboo, (01702) 553-211	STROUD John Groves, 01453 753319
	TAUNTON Martin Sinclair, (01823) 321-059

AMARAVATI CASSETTES

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

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

Amaravati

Retreats:

1998



July	10 – 19	10 days	Kittisaro & Thanissara FULLY BOOKED**
July	24 – 26	Weekend	(Minimal guidance)*
Sept.	4 – 6	Weekend	Ajahn Sumedho (In Thai)
Sept.	11 – 20	10 days	Ajahn Sumedho - FULLY BOOKED***
Sept.	25 – 27	Weekend	—
Oct.	16 – 25	10 days	Ajahn Sucitto FULLY BOOKED*
Nov.	13 – 22	10 days	'Teacher to be decided'
Nov.	27 – 29	Weekend	(Death & Dying)
Dec.	11 – 13	Weekend	Ajahn Candasiri & Sister Lucy Brydon (OSB) 'Christian/Buddhist Retreat'
Dec.	27 – Jan.1	5 days	Ajahn Candasiri

☛ For experienced meditators.

☛☛ Formerly a monk and a nun with the Sangha.

☛☛☛ For Beginners & less experienced meditators.

Weekend Retreats do not have a specified teacher.

FULLY BOOKED Retreats have waiting lists available.

Retreat Centre Work Weekend 1998

October 2–4

Please note that bookings are only accepted on receipt of a completed booking form and booking fee. The fee is refundable on request, up to one month before the retreat starts. To obtain a booking form, please write to the Retreat Centre, stating which retreat you would like to do.

Unless otherwise stated, all retreats are open to both beginners and experienced meditators, and are led by a monk or nun.

INTRODUCTORY MEDITATION—AMARAVATI

Saturday Afternoon Classes 1.30 – 3.30 pm

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

Feel free to come along – no booking is necessary.

V I H A R A S

BRITAIN

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

◆ Cittaviveka: Chithurst
Buddhist Monastery
Chithurst, Petersfield,
Hampshire GU31 5EU
Tel: (01730) 81-4986
Fax: (01730) 81-7334
Stewards: *English Sangha Trust, Cittaviveka.*

◆ Hartridge Buddhist
Monastery,
Upottery, Honiton,
Devon EX14 9QE
Tel: (01404) 89-1251
Fax: (01404) 89-0023
Stewards: *Devon Vihara Trust.*

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

THAILAND

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

AUSTRALIA

◆ Bodhinyana Monastery
Lot 1, Kingsbury Drive,
Serpentine 6125 WA
Tel: (08) 952-52420
Fax: (08) 952-53420

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

ITALY

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

SWITZERLAND

◆ Dhammapala
Buddhistisches Kloster
Am Waldrand,
CH 3718 Kandersteg
Tel: 033 / 675 21 00
Fax: 033 / 6752 241
Stewards:
Dhammapala 31921-201-5.

NORTH AMERICA

◆ Abhayagiri Monastery,
16201 Tomki Road,
Redwood Valley, CA 95470
Tel: (707) 485-1630
Fax: (707) 485-7948
(Sangha literature and West
Coast newsletters are
distributed from here.)
Stewards:
Sanghapala Foundation.

◆ Boston Area:
Dorothea Bowen, Boston,
Mass. Tel.(617)332-2931

Mailing for E. Coast USA
& Thailand: to be placed on
the mailing list, please write
directly to Amaravati.

NEW ZEALAND

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

◆ Auckland Buddhist Vihara
29 Harris Road,
Mount Wellington,
Auckland
Tel: (+ + 64) 9 595-5443

KATHINA & ALMSGIVING CEREMONIES

11TH OCTOBER – CITTAVIVEKA,
contact: Nawaporn (Noi),
On Mondays 01730 817704 Other days: 01730 812555

DHAMMAPALA (Switzerland) *The Monastery*

18TH OCTOBER – RATANAGIRI,
contact: Namtip Milligan, 0191240 3522, before 12 noon

SANTACITTARAMA (Italy) contact: *The Monastery*

25TH OCTOBER – HARTRIDGE (Devon),
contact: Paul Woods, 01404 831605

1ST NOVEMBER – AMARAVATI,
contact: L. Burns Mulgirigama, 01440 761950

OBSERVANCE DAYS

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

Moon Phase	☾ HALF	☉ FULL	☾ HALF	● NEW
JULY	1&31(Wed)	☾8 (Wed)	16 (Thurs)	23 (Thurs)
AUGUST	29 (Sat)	7 (Fri)	15 (Sat)	21 (Fri)
SEPTEMBER	28 (Mon)	5 (Sat)	13 (Sun)	20 (Sun)
OCTOBER	27 (Tues)	☽5 (Mon)	13 (Thurs)	19 (Mon)
☽ Asalha Pūjā (vassa begins next day) ☽ Pavarana Day (vassa ends)				

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

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2 HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
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Closing date for submissions to the next issue is 20th August 1998.