



FOREST SANGHA

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Sati-sampajañña: **The Brightest Kamma**

A talk given by Ajahn Sucitto at Cittaviveka to commemorate the completion of the Buddha-rūpa for the new Dhamma Hall, August 2002.

In the last few weeks, we've been having a Buddha-image created in this monastery by Ajahn Nonti. He's a sculptor from Thailand who came over here to do this as an act of *dāna* (generosity). It's been a very lovely occasion; both the fact that the Buddha is being made and offered freely, and that it's been done in a friendly and enjoyable way. Many people have been able to help with it. Yesterday there were nine people sanding the Buddha-image. It's not *that* big, yet nine people were scrubbing away on it, not colliding with each other and enjoying doing that together. Getting nine people to do anything together in an enjoyable way is a pretty good thing to have happening. I think this is the power of the occasion and the power of the Buddha!

Everybody was doing it from a place of freedom, willingness and co-operativeness. There's a very lovely quality of good *kamma* in that; doing something which will have lasting significance and also doing it in a way that one is able to feel happy rather than intense, fearful or worried. There's an immediate result – one feels happy – and a long-term result – you're doing something you feel will be of benefit for others.

In the way that good *kamma* works, there's immediate results (*vipāka*), and long-term results that other people can also benefit from. In a few days we hope to be able to install the Buddha-image in the Dhamma Hall. As an image I find it very lovely, it makes me feel happy just to look at it. It has a quality of softness – nothing harsh, nothing intimidating, nothing

intense about it – just a very soft, inviting quality that, when I look at it, brings up a sense of feeling welcome, feeling okay and feeling relaxed. This is a very good reminder for meditation. Sometimes in meditation people can get quite grim and fraught with all kinds of worries, needs, possibilities and demands going on in the mind; we really need a basis of feeling welcomed and blessed. When I use these words I'm just trying to give words to something that's more a mood than a thought.

When we are sitting somewhere where we feel very welcome and trusted, that there's benevolence around us, we can let ourselves open up. This is what the image brings up in my mind. It's another reflection on what good *kamma* is about.

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Good *kamma* (volitional action) in the scriptures is generally called 'bright *kamma*' as opposed to 'dark *kamma*'. 'Bright' means you feel bright; it's not just a matter of an idea but of a felt sense of 'bright' and uplifted. 'Bright' has the sense of something opening, of softness and joy; it has these tones to it. While 'dark' means shut down, contracted, closed. What would we like to sit in when we meditate? Meditation implies dealing with the discomforts of the body and the pains of the heart. So it would be nice to have a good place to sit, so that you've got something on your side, wouldn't it? Externally we can say a Buddha image, a Dhamma Hall, a monastery or friends can do that; internally what does that is the results of one's good *kamma*. To have good friends, a monastery and a Buddha-image is a

source of brightness. That there was a historical Buddha whose presence is still glowing through the ages, and that we hear that and resonate with it – this is a bright result for us, something we should not take lightly or squander. The image of the Buddha gives us a reminder of what brightness is about, the beauty of that. Brightness is a heart-tone, a felt tone rather than a judgement – good/bad, right/wrong. This is something to check inwardly: the quality of the actions that we do and the context that we generate around ourselves, is it bright? The quality of what we say and think – does it give bright results or dark results? We're dependent upon what we say and do; that's what creates the particular situations that we end up living in.

To be able to know, not just think or have somebody tell you, but to really feel the quality of good *kamma*, you have to enter into the heart, the *citta* (the affective sense of mind). This is a source of *kamma* and repository of its results. There are three main sources and repositories of *kamma*, of action that we do. The first is the body; physically we do things. The second is through the heart; we aspire, we love, we share – this is bright; we feel negative, malicious and so forth – this is the dark. The dark *kamma* is generated in the heart, isn't it? We then act upon that through our body, or our speech. The speech faculty is the third form of *kamma*. Our speech faculty also refers to the thinking mind. In English 'mind' straddles both the mood or the affective sense, and also conceptual activity. It means both. But in the Pali language we have '*citta*' which is to do with the affective, emotive, feeling sense; and '*mano*' which is to do with conceiving or organising, with the production of concepts.

Mano deals with the articulation of thoughts; it defines things. Through that we then produce speech. *Mano* produces a particular object so we're able to say, 'This is a dog.' 'This is a bell.' 'This is tomorrow.' We are able to imagine things and juggle theories around quarks and mesons, or the other side of the universe and what happened before the universe began. We can also define particular mind-states. This is the act of *mano*. *Citta* is the quality of that which moves – we're uplifted, we're excited, we're depressed, we're joyful, we're hurt – it's that affective sense. It's in the affective sense that you can fully feel and know the effects of volitional action, because everything proceeds from there. We're also very much affected by physical and mental feelings. Mental

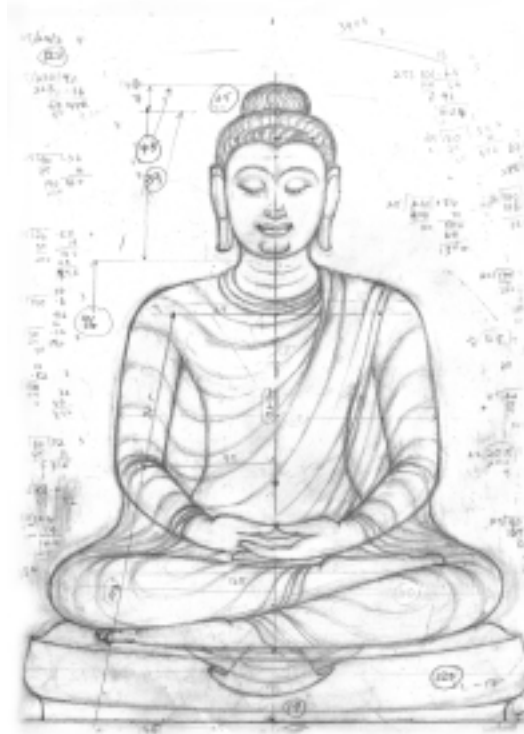
feelings are to do with perception. When we feel hurt it's likely that what will come out of that sense, is something unsteady, or cloudy, a reaction. Somebody says something and, 'Oh, that sounded really hostile to me.' That's a perception, isn't it? There's an interpretation of the words – 'Somebody was reading the names out of all the monks and they left my name out. I feel completely ignored.' That mood is a creation of mental *kamma*. 'My name's been left off the list and I've been here all these years! I feel quite hurt by that.' There's a powerful feeling; more so than if somebody accidentally dropped something on me.

Around the mental perceptions we create all kinds of things, like deliberation – 'He did that on purpose.' This produces a tremendous amount of feeling for us. Also, mental perception itself is based upon past *kamma*, on things that have happened. So, 'This is the fourteenth time this year they've left my name off the list. Ugh! If they'd done it once I'd have thought it was just a mistake. I'm out of here!' That one action was felt more because of all the previous actions that had occurred. This is called 'inherited' *kamma*: the inherited result (*vipāka*) acts as a foundation for fresh *kamma*, it intensifies it. If somebody turns up late for a meeting – well, okay. *Every day* he turns up late; this really is quite a different effect,

isn't it? Perceptually it feels disrespectful. Based upon that mental perception comes a feeling. That produces an emotional reaction, and from that we decide to do something about it. We can feel angry, irritable or hurt but we may be able to check those and not say anything. But even if we do check them they can still linger in the heart as a resentful or depressed feeling. So these kinds of mental *kamma* can stain the whole of one's heart, so it doesn't feel bright any more.

When we cultivate good *kamma*, it also cleans away old stuff. We recognise that once we have done something, there must be a result. But from that result we can refrain from creating a new thing dependent upon that. That is, I don't have to keep on doing something – either missing people's names or turning up late, or anything like that. I can stop and put a bit of effort and intelligence into it and be clear. I don't have to keep creating fresh *kamma* based upon negative inheritance. It does mean we have to be able to keep looking carefully – 'Is the mind bright? Is the mind clear? Is the mind present?' We might say that the supreme *kamma* is to be mindful, because if we

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EDITORIAL

Cycles of time: Renewal

'Rahula, after you have done an action by body, speech, or mind, you should reflect on that action thus: "Does this action that I have done, lead to my own affliction, the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both? Was it an unwholesome action with painful consequences, with painful results?" When you reflect, if you know: "This action that I have done, it leads to my own affliction, the affliction of others or the affliction of both. It was an unwholesome action with painful consequences, with painful results," then you should confess it, reveal it, and lay it open to the Teacher or wise companions. And, having done so, you should undertake restraint for the future. But when you reflect, if you know: "This action does not lead to my own affliction, or the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both; it was a wholesome action with pleasant consequences, pleasant results," you can abide happy and glad, training day and night in wholesome states.' *Majjhima Nikāya: Sutta 61*

Once again winter is drawing close; the season of inwardness is upon us. Once again we find ourselves withdrawing from the elemental play – out of rain, wind, cold and mud. With this winter mood there can be an awareness of cycles of time, a sense of, 'here we are again;' there are aspects of the familiar, but everything – inside and out – is undeniably different. It is valuable to pause, before we get swept into the tumbling momentum of the new arising, so we can contemplate what the results of this past year are. If we take the conceptual boundary of a year coming to an end, we can feel what traces there are left from it for us.

Some of this vipāka will be manifest externally. But of profound importance are the internal residues from how we have lived. At Cittaviveka the Dhamma Hall is no longer a skeleton of a building, only usable when the season is warm and gentle; it now has a stone floor, plastered walls, and doors to keep the cold out – a welcome space for meditation. And of particular loveliness is the white Buddha-rūpa who smiles down on all who enter – a year when such a beautiful Buddha is born is indeed a fortunate one. So, amongst all that has arisen, some of it difficult and heart-rending, there is this

obvious sweet fruit of the past year. Then there is the heart-fruit of the goodness that nourished it, the gladness and faith that have been strengthened in all those who supported it. We can feel what it is like to be able to stop and recollect, 'I'm part of that. I supported its coming into being.' As with this, so it is with so many things we offer our life energy to.

To review the consequences of action is certainly something the Buddha encouraged. He said it is a way we can train ourselves, purifying our bodily action, our verbal action and our mental action. Then, when we channel our heart's wholesomeness into supporting what is for the well being of others, the consequences are naturally fortunate. We can feel that we are part of a field of merit. These results then give us courage to continue with this path of purification.

When we sit quietly with ourselves, when we turn

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our eyes inward, we can see that the bright or confused actions of body, speech and mind all leave traces in our hearts. It is important that we bring these into the field of mindfulness and full comprehension; we can then allay what is unfortunate, and find strength and encouragement from what is

bright and noble. We clear out the residue that, if left to re-seed, would only be to our harm. We can feel into the resentment we may carry, touch the darkness of it and through compassion for ourselves let it be cleared out. From this place of care for ourselves, we can allow forgiveness, and with this a sense of wisdom arises – 'given the conditions how could it have been any other way?' This clear attention brings a sense of renewal: when we attend to our hearts fully there is the possibility of new growth and a verdant flowering.

As we rest into our goodness, letting it be medicine to soothe and allay the pain of what has been hurtful for us, we can start to sense a deeper reality that holds all of it. Through mindfulness and a full comprehension of the whole of our experience the traces the heart carries are perceived, and the very knowing of the mind becomes revealed to us. We come into awareness itself: we feel this profound ground of being, and taste its ambrosial fruit.

Ajahn Thāṇiyā

continued from page 2... establish that it momentarily frees the mind from results of the past. This means that our moods are going to be clearer and brighter; our actions and speech are going to be clearer and brighter. If we do this for ourselves, it means what we put out is going to be clearer and brighter. This means other people have an easier time: there's an element of compassion in that for others.

Mindfulness is the factor that brings us into the present and keeps us clear. Mindfulness is linked to the *mano* faculty; that is, it defines boundaries and objects, it says 'That's that'. Tonally, it's quite neutral. It's not happy or anything; just, 'That's that.' The ability to form a boundary around something, to say 'That's a feeling. That's a mood.

That's happening there.' this is mindfulness. The two aspects of mind work with each other. That is: *citta*, the subjective sense of what's happening to me, produces a mood, a felt sense; and *mano* helps to pin-point, define and say 'That's that.' Mindfulness helps, doesn't it, because in the feeling sense there are no boundaries. You just feel 'Whoa...!' It's everywhere. And if that felt sense doesn't have a boundary around it, it starts to proliferate; 'I am. I always will be. People don't like me. I'm terrible...' It just goes on and on and on escalating. If we get over-ebullient we can be charging around feeling, 'Well, I'm feeling on top of the world and everything's great,' and being quite insensitive to how our behaviour affects others. So, even when our intentions are good, not to be mindful means that our good intention doesn't have this essential quality of reflection, placing and measuring it within what's happening right now – 'How does this affect others?'

Mindfulness is based upon Right View. Right View is that there is a good result to good deeds. There is a sense of recognising the laws of *kamma* and what we're connected to; recognising parents, recognising enlightened beings and what good we do. It's not just that there's a good feeling, but seeing that this good feeling is also one that leads to a good result. There are different kinds of pleasant feeling we can have, but the quality of mindfulness is to know, 'This is a feeling,' and it's able to recognise the mind-state that accompanies it. There's some clarity there, a steadying effect. We don't just go into the feeling; we go into the feeling area itself, which is the *citta* area, and we're able to be clear and conscious of it. It's not something we're careless about. With a negative feeling, 'okay this is a negative feeling; it feels like this; it arises with that perception or that memory, and it subsides when I practise *mettā* or forgiveness, or when I just sit with it and let it subside by itself.' With a good feeling, 'it's based upon this

perception and thought, and it subsides when that thought or perception is removed.'

The other aspect that acts as a ground for our meditation is called *sampajañña*, which means something like 'full comprehension'. This is a *citta*-effect. Just as the mindfulness is a *mano* thing where you direct your ability to form a boundary, *sampajañña* is the ability to subtly sense. It's a very subtle form of *citta*-effect. It's not really to do with the feeling tone so much as the receptivity, the ability to feel. There's pleasure and

displeasure, which are feelings, but there's also our ability to feel, our sensitivity. The quality of *sampajañña* provides this; you really sense something, you get the whole of it. This is essential. Mindfulness can point to something,

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rest upon it so you don't just scurry past it; and *sampajañña* is sensitising to the whole of it. 'What's the meaning of this? What's the whole of this?' In our daily life, it's important both to do good but also to know it's bright. Which means you have to spend some time to focus on and get the whole sense of it. This is the ground for meditation – mindfulness and full comprehension.

In the on-going cultivation of the path, bright *kamma* is significant. The Buddha teaches *kamma* and the dissolution of *kamma*, the dissolution of the need for these on-going volitional tendencies. The possibility of these only comes around through good *kamma* – through the bright *kamma* of mindfulness and full comprehension.

It's pretty difficult to have full comprehension of something that's unskillful. If we try to get our minds to spread over and sensitise to a negative act, it doesn't do it

very easily. When the results (*vipāka*) of dark *kamma* are present, it's not so easy to have mindfulness and full comprehension. The mind begins to writhe, wriggle and run away; the feeling is so unpleasant. So we have to apply bright intention in the present in order to fully acknowledge, understand, and allow dark residues to pass away. Patience, courage, love: these bright intentions can support mindfulness and full comprehension. Then there's not the impulse to move into negative deeds; there's a sense of recoiling from them. The mind moves away from dark *kamma* because



our system does not want pain, and dark *kamma* is painful. Even to hold a negative thought about someone is unpleasant. We're left with a sense of cultivating bright *kamma* not from some moral 'Thou shalt-' point of view, but just because it feels enjoyable and the way we can live with ourselves, feel we have dignity and worth.

We might say that mindfulness and full comprehension perfects bright *kamma* and eradicates dark *kamma*, not through disapproval but because of this simple sense of not wanting to be with something that feels bad. We don't have to form judgements about ourselves. Picking up everything we've done and complaining about it, that is dark *kamma*, isn't it? There's negativity and harshness there. There may be some truth (whatever that is) to it; we can always find facts to back it up. But you realise that these facts are just conceptual things like, 'On Thursday 19th you did this.' You don't get the full sense of what was happening on Thursday 19th, where my mind was at, what was going on and how bad it really was. But you can come to that sense of 'Oh, in the heart there's a sense of disappointment, and agitation.' This is the residue; this is the *vipāka*. Okay, there's a dark residue but it could mean anything really. It could be a bad physical action; it could be a bad verbal action; or it could be bad mental action happening right now – the critical, negative mind acting right now. We don't have to know which. All we need to know is, this is dark *vipāka*. It could be because I'm being harsh or judgemental; I'll only be able to be clear about that when I come into a bright space. The main thing is to clean it out. This is a meditative process.

A meditative process means we take refuge, we



establish our ground in what's good, what's bright: in *Buddha*, gentleness, loving-kindness, clarity, that we're someone in the family of the Buddha who can attune to these qualities and feel them as worthy. We can establish that ground and begin to get a sense of being on the beautiful ground of the Dhamma.

In meditation first of all establish the good ground – we shouldn't be in too much of a hurry to get into regurgitating all our old stuff. It can be through *Buddhānussati* (recollection of the Buddha), recollecting good deeds or loving-kindness. The primary meditation

is to get to a good place so that mindfulness and full comprehension can unfold. If you start from a dark place, mindfulness and full comprehension tend to contract because it's so unpleasant. Sometimes if we meditate from the idea of, 'just be mindful,' and we start off feeling dark – 'just be mindful of being dark or fed-up'; that this is being authentic as we're dealing with real issues – we're not actually dealing with them because the proper basis to do so isn't established. Instead one establishes that proper basis of bright *kamma* in the present moment by reflecting on good deeds – 'It's safe here. Right now nobody wants to harm me. Right now I don't want to harm anybody. There are the results of good deeds. I am one who can understand that and is interested in it.' The sense of being able to be with yourself is enhanced and mindfulness and full comprehension are there. We're then able to actually review something that is in the mind – a doubt, or a worry – because we've got the proper capacity to do so. Essentially mindfulness and full comprehension establishes a place that's both clear (mindfulness) and spacious (full comprehension). There are these two qualities to it. The *citta* feels open and bright. Then you can sense it contracts when something negative or hurtful comes into it.

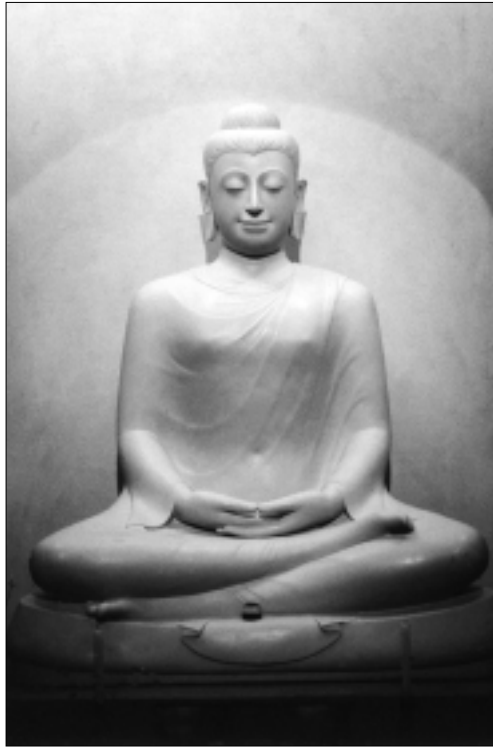
The process of clearing one's dark residues is almost like putting a piece of dirty laundry into a lake. The cleaning is done both by action (placing the laundry in the lake) and without it – the water of pure awareness does the cleaning. So you take that dark and put it into the clean water and keep washing it until the dirt comes out. You keep feeling it and sensing it, and let go of what comes up. We establish mindfulness, such as around the body, around the Buddha, or around *mettā*, and keep cleaning the heart of the dark residues – the fearfulness, the hurt, the worry or whatever it is. This is a healing process. Whenever we're able to clear some of the dark residues there is an increasing sense of lightness, of brightness. Over time as we cultivate, there's an increasing ground of well-being, a sphere of brightness that we can abide in.

Right at the heart of that are what are called the Enlightenment Factors: mindfulness, which is coupled with comprehension and investigation (*dhmma-vicaya*), energy, rapture, tranquillity, *samādhī* and equanimity. These are the qualities of this ground of brightness that begins to be more discernable in the heart. The healthy quality of the *citta* is like this. It's able to investigate and handle material; it's able to feel bright and uplifted; it has the energetic resources; it can calm itself; it can be equanimous; it can gather itself together; it's fully flexed.

We might say that all these seven awarenesses, are

one way of defining what wisdom and compassion are. Wisdom is both the ability to rest and to know that ground of being, the 'Buddha-ground'. To know that we can understand that as this; not as an entity, not as myself, but something that's been revealed through skilful cultivation; this is wisdom. Compassion is, whatever afflictive experience there is, I'm prepared to place it on that ground in order to heal it. There's compassion for what happens internally. Whatever afflictive residues there are I am willing to bring my full comprehension around them, to bear with them, to feel for them. We're able to digest this stuff. What happens externally I can allow myself to open and sense. Compassion is the active aspect of enlightenment, and wisdom is the stasis of it. This is what we are building up through every bright deed that we do, as long as they're coupled with mindfulness. This bright ground doesn't arise spontaneously. One enters it dependent upon conditions – conditions of good *kamma* and attending to the results and aspirations of our lives – what's called merit (*puñña*).

It's good to recognise how in the Buddha's teaching the emotive nuances that go along with any skilful deeds amplify it. If there's an act of generosity – which is very good – if it's coupled with respect then that magnifies it. So that if we connect to and do things that are respectful towards the Buddha, or the meaning that very word



carries for us, the heart is made bright because of the power of perception and meaning. Externally, if we do something that's supportive to a Buddha or an entire Sangha, and by supporting them, their vast ability to support others – we generate good *kamma* that way.

In the heart, the very quality of respect always heightens the significance of something, doesn't it? The fuller implications of a good action one senses more clearly when we're doing things which allow the time and space to fully reflect on their meaning. The subtle volitional or perceptual mental factors involved in reflection amplify the sense of brightness. So then, we find that doing small things, like offering one stick of incense to a

Buddha, has very powerful *kammic* effects. We can look at it and think, 'Well, incense, metal image... What's the point of this?' But how narrow and stultified is the mind being in that moment? The reflective sense of 'I am making an offering to a completely enlightened being' is a lot bigger, isn't it?

Kamma is a large area. When we consider it in terms of the immediate effect of brightening, it gives us a great sense of ability and possibility. If we can amplify whatever we do with a quality of love and devotion then the effects are powerful intimately, internally. We may think that we've got to do something massive and important, build a hospital or something – which certainly is bright *kamma* – but perhaps we don't have the resources or the capacity to do that. As you know, there are philanthropists who earn five million dollars a day. So then, 'Okay, there's \$11 million to some university.' It sounds very good, doesn't it? But what are the results in their minds if they haven't trained in mindfulness, clear comprehension and full sensitivity? Yet when one poor person offers one stick of incense to a Buddha with a full loving heart, we recognise, 'Well, they have made a lot of bright *kamma*!' In the terms of the heart, it makes complete sense, whereas in the thinking mind it's nothing much. And it's in the heart-sense where the most powerful *kamma* is accrued.

With a sense of respect and deep appreciation for his work, I would like to dedicate this talk to Ajahn Nonti, who will be leaving us in a few days, acknowledging the enormous good *kamma* in his gift. We hope his work will stay with us for many years and be an inspiring image for our practice. ❖

HELP NEEDED AT CHITHURST

We are interested in hearing from anyone who has suitable experience with regard to the following areas of responsibility, and would like to work and practise alongside a monastic community.

- Help in the office (8 – 10 hours per week) e.g. responding to phone-calls, general correspondence, guest enquires, transport arrangements etc.
- Help with the management and implementation of our maintenance programme, working with contractors and other less experienced helpers.

We are open to discuss suitable arrangements e.g. residential or non-residential. In the first instance, please write to the Trust Secretary at Amaravati, giving some idea of your circumstances and the skills and experience you could offer. We will contact you again when the winter retreat ends

Silent Attentiveness and the Mirror-like Mind

From a talk offered by Ajahn Vimalo at Amaravati Monastery in August 2002.

I have trust in a silent way of being, in intuiting mind in presence, in an openness where thinking occurs but it's not taken too seriously. I have faith in mindfulness. I have faith that if the mind is always taken into silent attentiveness then what happens is it becomes more mirror-like. It begins to reflect the way things are.

Faith in awareness is learning to remain in, and have appreciation for, presence of mind. It's this that is my practice. When things are difficult I will just sit with my eyes open and bring my mind as near into presence as I can, and then try – even though we can't look back into ourselves – to feel out what presence of mind is like. This can become very beautiful. Even though consciousness is a momentary thing, arisen by way of eye and visible object, in our experience there can be an appreciation for it.

This can bring peace and joy in our lives. People can focus on what is negative. We can do that in relation to ourselves and then we can get depressed. This examining of presence of mind is a different thing. Presence of mind is the 'door to the deathless'. It's a fullness of mind, an emptiness of mind. There is a qualitylessness about it. Like a mirror, it allows everything else to reflect in it. If we can remain or function in that dimension it is the Path. In the *Dhammapada* there is the expression, 'Heedfulness is the Path to the deathless'. And this is heedfulness. When we're mindful and we're present, we are not ignoring. In the teaching on *Paticca-samuppāda* (dependent origination) things arise dependent on ignorance. In this presence of mind we are not ignoring; there's a direct looking at experience.

People will say, 'I have to cultivate the factors of enlightenment.' And they'll say, 'I can't get anywhere because I've got to cultivate patience and all these things.' But when we remain in this presence of mind and relax more deeply into it, joy starts to arise, *pīti* starts to arise, we start to become patient. So we don't need to worry about *Nibbāna*, or about developing other things either. I can find myself sitting and joy arises. This happens not because I'm heavily concentrating, trying to develop joy; rather, what I'm doing is relaxing into presence of mind. And with this presence of mind, as it becomes more beautiful, joy arises.

At a certain point, rather than trying to relax into presence, we start to become aware that 'there is presence.' And everything else starts to arise within that. This is another dimension. It naturally starts to occur. Then, whatever we are doing, whether moving fast or slow, standing or walking, things are a bit different, the world is a bit different. I'm not saying I have attained anything, I'm just sharing my understanding of mindfulness.

When the mind has presence it becomes quite clear what is good for us and what is bad for us. Things that the Buddha taught start to appear, we don't have to think about them too much; we suddenly realise things. The more we relax into just being present then things resolve

themselves; everything resolves itself, until all self interest disappears. So my encouragement to people is to have faith in just coming into presence.

In the book *Tales of Power*, it describes what happened when rocks crushed Don Juan's son. He talks about seeing his son's body in agony. When he looked at his son, he said, 'I shifted my eye. So I didn't see my son dying. If I had thought about my son I would have seen his fine body crushed and a cry would have come up inside of me. But I shifted my eye so I watched his personal life disintegrating into infinity. Because this is the way life and death mix. I didn't watch my son, I watched his death. And his death was equal to everything else.' When this occurred, what Don Juan did was he shifted his perception, he moved it out of the perception of 'son'; and in that shift his mind became mirror-like. He saw the whole thing in a totally different way, closer to reality, closer to the way things are.

By constantly shifting perception we start to see the way things are. The Buddha said he taught the Norm. When we keep moving perception into awareness we are moving towards the Norm. Most of the time we are out of the Norm because we are ignoring. But when we move into mindfulness, this fullness of mind, then we are moving towards the Norm and allowing things to reflect within us. We are like a mirror. When the mindfulness is clear then it becomes like a mirror. When presence is very clear it is like a mirror but without the frame around it.

When we go into a room and it feels peaceful, then, when we are aware of that peace our mind is also peaceful. We tend to identify with the mind that is scattering about, but if we keep attending to the peace then we are this peace. With the peace in this room, I often sit here and feel it out. This peacefulness hasn't got borders. I close my eyes and there is peacefulness inside; there are no borders as borders are just constructs. The peace in this room has an infinite quality. This can be perceived. This is a way of moving away from the linear world. When there is *dukkha* we are often not moving away from it, but when there is moving into mindfulness we are. In moving into mindfulness then we are moving towards the deathless. It's a shift in perception.

The pyramids of Egypt were once covered in Turah limestone. Now, when they are seen against a blue sky, they are just great big triangular blocks – which are only attractive to Vittoria, a few others and me. But originally they were covered in Turah limestone so that when the sun hit them they blazed light. When people looked at them, instead of seeing triangular blocks against a blue sky, it gave an opposite effect. There would be the blue sky, and the pyramids would look like windows in the sky to somewhere brilliant beyond it. There would be a shift in perception. This shift into a non-linear way is a similar kind of shift. It is not that you are enlightened; but you are able to comprehend more fully, view more rightly, and open to the way things are. I have faith in this. This I offer you. ❖

A few words on Dhamma from Down Under

From teachings given by Ajahn Kalyāṇo at Bodhivana Monastery, East Warburton, Australia.

Like the water in the oceans, the compassion of the Buddha flows steadily around the world and continues to attract and provide spiritual sustenance for people in many different places. Having only visited Australia once before, accepting an invitation to come and live and practise near Melbourne on a permanent basis was a bit of a leap in the dark. That leap was made easier through years of training in Thailand where one gets used to moving between different monasteries, and even moving between different dwelling places within the same monastery, on a regular basis. As an alms-mendicant in the forest tradition one learns to be a bit flexible.

The leap was also made easier by the quality and sincerity of the lay support to be found in Australia. Before inviting myself and Venerable Ānando over

from Thailand, the group of people who made the invitation first went to considerable trouble and expense to find a piece of secluded forest suitable for monastics to live and practise the Dhamma in. Not only is there much uninhabited forest available in Australia, but also a growing interest in the study and practice of the Buddhist teachings amongst those living here, both locals and Asian-born. Now we have arrived in Melbourne, many people have continued to make sacrifices to support the material needs of our growing Sangha here. Reflecting on this is a continual source of nourishment for our spiritual search.

Practising in Australia is, as you might expect, essentially the same as anywhere else. Climate and culture may change from country to country, but the Dhamma is still the same. We have to make the effort to investigate the truth of our existence, to find out how to purify our minds and hearts, wherever we are. Those habits and tendencies of mind that pull us into greed, anger and delusion are still there wherever we go. We can also learn from the good aspects of Australian culture, just as we can from Thai or any other culture.

Just like people elsewhere, the Aussies must continuously expend their energy to earn a living, provide themselves with shelter, clothes, food to eat and so on. Even the wallabies and wombats have to search for food and avoid danger, no different from the animals in other parts of the world. This is the struggle involved in sentient existence. For those who have had a vision of the unsatisfactory nature of existence, the Buddha's words offer one way out.

Following the Buddha's path to peace through the development of calm and insight can be a challenge in a country where his teachings have not long been heard or practised. But there is also much joy to be found helping in some small way to make these precious teachings more available here. The reserves of goodness already existing in the hearts of Australians provide a fertile ground for the Buddha's compassion to connect with. The quiet forest and the pure mountain air perfumed with the oil from millions of gum leaves, also provide a suitable backdrop for our work of *kammaṭṭhāna*.

Working with a meditation object has to be the primary activity for a monk or nun following the Buddhist path. Our minds have been so caught up in other things for so long. For one who seeks the truth, there is no alternative other than to keep practising with

Amaravati Lay Events – 2003

These events provide an opportunity to practise together and explore themes relevant to practice and lay life. They include silent and guided meditation, sutta study groups, yoga, discussion groups and other workshops. All groups are optional so you can participate in silence if you wish. All are welcome.

Days of Practice – No need to book (please bring food to share) 9.45am for 10am-5pm.

Retreats – Advance booking essential
Fri 5.30pm - 4.00pm on last day.

January 18	Day of Winter Practice
February 22	Day of Winter Practice
March 15	Day of Winter Practice
April 11 – 13	Weekend Retreat - Devotion and Ritual
May 17 *	Wesak Preparations
May 18	Wesak at Amaravati - <i>all welcome</i>
May 23 – 26	3 day Retreat - Samatha/Vipassana
June 28	Day of Practice - Are you a Buddhist?
July 18 – 20	Weekend Retreat - Karma
Sept. 12 – 14	Weekend Retreat - Creativity
Oct. 4	Day of Practice - Buddhist Cosmology
Nov. 8	Day of Practice - A Simple Life?
Dec. 6	Day of Practice - Monastic and lay life

* Helping the community with Wesak (18th May) preparations

For more information please contact:

Nick Carroll, 020 8740 9748 or Chris Ward, 01442 890034
Please write to AUA for booking form (see address below)

Organised by the Amaravati Upāsaka/Upāsikā Association (AUA)
Amaravati Monastery, Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP1 3BZ

a meditation object, bringing the mind's attention back to the present moment over and over again. When we are on the path, there must be persistent effort to establish and re-establish mindfulness. Even if the mind runs away a thousand times, we must chase after it a thousand times and try not to weary of the task too quickly.

We must also train our minds to investigate what lies behind the hindrances. As a support to our practice of mindfulness, we can use and develop our wisdom to adjust our behaviour and ways of thinking so that we turn away from the thoughts and actions that bring ourselves and other people harm.

If we can keep putting our minds beyond the hindrances on a regular basis they will finally have the chance to rest properly. The restful state produced through the practice of continuous mindfulness on an object is the fruit of *samatha bhāvanā* and this provides the mind and heart with the energy needed for *vipassanā bhāvanā*. Perhaps the most natural progression from *samatha* to *vipassanā bhāvanā* is through the contemplation of the breath or else on the thirty-two parts of the body. The five meditation objects given to us when we enter the Sangha are: *kesā*, *lomā*, *nakhā*, *dantā*, *taco* or hair of the head, hair of the body, nails teeth and skin. The Buddha encouraged us to look inwards at our own bodies as both a source of calm and insight.

The Buddha teaches that only after thorough investigation of the impermanent, unsatisfactory and ownerless nature of our bodies, will our wisdom faculty be sharp enough to look out at the rest of the sensual realm and not be deluded by it. At first in our meditation we cannot even fully believe our own thoughts, views and opinions about the world because they are still conditioned by ignorance. In the beginning of our practice we have to depend on the Buddha, our teachers and sometimes our own untrained intuition about the truth. Only after some time will that intuition strengthen to become *paññā*, or true wisdom.

The more our minds incline towards the calm of *samatha bhāvanā* and become familiar with the practice of body contemplation, the deeper the sense of peace we can experience. The Buddha encouraged us to move towards and sustain this pure awareness of physical and mental phenomena. It is this that can truly liberate our hearts and minds. The more our hearts are matured by insight, the less conflicts will arise in them and little by little we can bring some true peace to the world.

The purpose of our practice here in Australia is to develop the peace and happiness that comes through the mental development of calm and insight. This peace is what gives meaning to our efforts in building this monastery here in Victoria. The fruits of a cool heart and a peaceful mind are what give true meaning to our human existence and are the goals of our spiritual path. ❖



THE DAO OF SITTING ON BENCHES

(for Ven.Thitadhammo)

If there is a way forward it must be back
Back to the inscription

On the stone before moss

Back to the seed which is all that is left
Of the ancient forest before that

& if an intelligent thinks that I'm mad
Because I sit & watch the sun go down when it rains

So Be It, those

Who justify fail to convince

The wisdom of being

Insecure, the faith to doubt

Like the silver birches at the mercy of the wind
In the field that glitters

With pearls, with tears

Like water, which follows itself
I am my own shadow as the sun goes down

The fury of splendour fighting through clouds
& will be silent

I promise, soon

— Graham



SANGHA NOTICES

From early January until the end of March, the monastic communities will be in retreat. During this time overnight accommodation will not be available for guests. Visitors may still come during the day to meditate or to help with meal time offerings; if you would like to offer dāna, it is helpful, if possible, to let the kitchen manager know beforehand. At both Cittaviveka and Amaravati for most of the retreat time, visitors may come for evening pūjā at 7.30pm, and at least on observance nights, a Dhamma talk will be given. The Saturday afternoon meditation workshops will continue at Amaravati; they will be led by an experienced lay meditator. Telephone messages will be processed daily throughout this time, but in general, responses to written requests will not be attended to until after mid-March.

AMARAVATI NOTICES

We will be celebrating Vesākha Pūjā - the day of the commemoration of the Birth, Enlightenment and Parinibbāna of the Buddha - on Sunday 18th May. More information about the day will be available nearer to the time.

HARTRIDGE NOTICES

Several monastics will be on retreat at certain times over the Winter Retreat period. Offerings of dāna are welcome. Please contact Diana 01404 891 251. Teaching weekends will be held at Hartridge 11th - 12th January led by Ajahn Gandhasilo, and 29th - 30th March, led by Ajahn Ariyesako. These include a Saturday Meditation Workshop at 1.30pm and evening Pūjā and Dhamma reflections or questions on Sunday at 7.30pm. In addition, on 1st February (at 2pm) Jane Brown will be leading a workshop on the teachings of Ajahn Maha Boowa.

FAMILY EVENTS 2003

Rainbow Weekend 2nd - 5th May
Family Weekend 13th - 15th June
Summer Camp 16th - 24th August
Young People's Retreat 28th - 30th Nov.

For Young People's Retreat please contact:
Ray Glover, 36 Ottersfield Greet,
Gloucestershire GL54 5PN Tel: 01242 604129
All other enquiries please contact: Emily
Tomalin, 147 Whyteladies Lane, Cookham,
Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 9LF, Tel: 01628
810083, E-mail:
emilytomalin@ukonline.co.uk

The camps can be oversubscribed, so to be considered for a place, please contact me before the end of March 2003. After this date, do send me your details anyway, as last minute cancellations do occur, and I can keep your details for next year.

RETREATS OUTSIDE THE UK

Dhammapāla - all the retreats are taught in German unless otherwise stated. *Contact:* Dhammapāla Monastery, unless otherwise indicated.

17 - 21 April, 5 day Easter Retreat at Dhammapāla with Ajahn Akiñcano
3 - 4 May Weekend Retreat at Dhammapāla
7 - 8 June, Weekend Retreat at Dhammapāla in English or French
13 - 15 June, Weekend Retreat in Berlin with Ajahn Khemasiri. *Contact:* Ulrike Schmidt, Eichenweg 14, D-16766 Amalienfelde, Germany.

20 - 22 June, Weekend retreat in Prague in English with Ajahn Khemasiri. *Contact:* Jitka Haskova, Churanovska 5, 15 000 Praha 5, Czech Republic. Tel. 00420 2 5721 0585
12 - 13 July, Weekend Retreat at Dhammapāla in English or French

GENERAL NOTICES

A message from Jill Osler

Dear Friends,
I wish to thank everyone who has contributed to the fund for the nuns' pilgrimage. Your generosity means that Ajahn Jitindriyā and Sister Ānandabodhi set off for India on December 5th with hearts full of gratitude and good intent.

Thank you once again, Jill

2003 Calendars

These are available on request, while stocks last. Please send SAE to Amaravati (44p UK mailing, 94p for Europe).

Hampstead Buddhist Group is now meeting in the Rainforest Room in the Friends Meeting House, Church Crescent, Muswell Hill, London N10. on the first Wednesday of every month at 7.20pm. For meetings on the other Wednesdays contact Ann 0207 485 0505 or Caroline on 0208 348 0537

Sunyata Retreat Centre, Ireland seeks a retreat manager to start Spring 2003: a well organised person with good communication skills and a sense of initiative to coordinate the day-to-day running of the centre, help organise retreats and workshops and to further promote and develop the centre. Applicants should have an understanding and respect for the Theravādan/

Vipassanā form of Buddhism and should be confident in their own personal practice; must be prepared to give a commitment of at least 12 months and own transport would be desirable. Contact Stanley and Clare de Freitas, Sunyata Retreat Centre, Sixmilebridge, Co. Clare, Ireland. Tel. 061 367073 (from abroad 00-353-61-367073) email: info@sunyatacentre.com A CV and 2 references required please.

Forest Sangha Community On-Line

A directory to the communities and disciples of the Venerable Ajahn Chah is now available at: <http://www.forestsangha.org/>

Lay Residential Opportunity at Amaravati

We will be looking for help to look after the gardens at Amaravati from spring 2003. If you are interested please write to the secretary as soon as possible, giving some information about yourself.

NEWS FROM THE TRUSTS

The English Sangha Trust

Dear Friends, The Trust has recently become aware that some farmland adjacent to Amaravati has become available for sale. There has long been an interest in acquiring additional land at Amaravati, particularly if it can be converted into woodland, in keeping with the tradition of a forest Sangha. Consequently, the Trust is proposing to buy the land if sufficient funds become available.

The Chithurst Dhamma Hall is now usable and we are stopping work until the Kathina in November 2003. Nick Scott, the project manager, will be taking a well-earned break and the community will be trying out the hall. This will give them a chance to see how everything works and how they would like the hall to be completed. Some detailed work remains to be done and it is hoped that the hall will be finished by July 2004, which is the 25th anniversary of Chithurst monastery. Thinking ahead at Chithurst, we are planning to undertake much needed work on the nuns' facilities, including replacing the shrine room and the laywomen's accommodation.

If you are interested in supporting any of these projects, or hearing more about them, please contact the Trust Secretary, Christina on 01442 842455 or write c/o Amaravati.

Finally, as the year draws to a close, we would like to wish you a Happy New Year and take this opportunity to thank you for all your support over the last year.

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. Back issues of the newsletter are available on the internet from: <http://www.fsnewsletter.net>

Data Protection Act: The mailing list used for Forest Sangha Newsletter is maintained on computer. If you object to your record being kept on our computer file, please write to Newsletter, Amaravati, and we will remove it. This Newsletter is printed by: Ashford Printers, Harrow. Telephone - (020) 8427-5097

Teaching and Practice Venues

MEDITATION GROUPS

These are visited regularly by Sangha members.

BATH Catherine Hewitt, (01225) 405-235	HAMPSTEAD Caroline Randall, (020) 8348-0537
EDINBURGH Muriel Nevin, (0131) 337-0901	LONDON BUDDHIST SOCIETY 58 Eccleston Square, SW1 (Victoria) Tel: (020) 7834 5858 Meditation Sundays: led by a monk or nun, every 2nd month. 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Thursday classes – 6.00pm
GLASGOW James Scott, (0141) 637-9731	
LEEDS AREA Daniela Loeb, (0113) 2791-375	SOUTHAMPTON Ros Dean, (02380) 422430
Anne Grimshaw, (01274) 691-447	

MEDITATION GROUPS

These meet regularly & receive occasional visits from Sangha.

BEDFORD David Stubbs, (01234) 720-892	MACHYNLETH/MID. WALES Angela Llewellyn, 01650-511350
BELFAST Paddy Boyle, (02890) 427-720	MIDDLESBOROUGH Colin Walker, (01642) 643-071
BERKSHIRE Penny Henrion (01189) 662-646	MIDHURST Barry Durrant, (01730) 821-479
BRIGHTON Nimmala, (01273) 723-378	NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE Andy Hunt, (0191) 478-2726
CAMBRIDGE Dan Jones, (01223) 246 257	NEWENT, GLOUCS John Teire (01531) 821902 john.teire@virgin.net
CANTERBURY Charles Watters, (01227) 463342	NORWICH Elaine Tattersall (01603) 260-717
CO. CLARE, IRELAND Stan de Freitas, (061) 367-073	PEMBROKESHIRE/S. WALES Peter and Barbara (Subhḍrā) Jackson, (01239) 820-790
DUBLIN Rupert Westrup, (01) 280-2832 (Dial: 00441 - from the UK)	PERTH Neil Abbot, 07765 667-499
ESSEX (Billericay) Rob Howell, (01702) 482-134 or (Harlow) Pamutto, (01279) 724-330	PORTSMOUTH Dave Beal, (02392) 732-280
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD Bodhinyāna Group Chris Ward (01442) 890-034	REDRUTH Daniel Davide (01736) 753-175
KENDAL Fellside Centre, Low Fellside Jayasili, 01539 740-996	SHEFFIELD Greg Bradshaw (0114) 262-0265
LIVERPOOL Ursula Haeckel, (0151) 427 6668	SOUTH DORSET Barbara Cohen (Sati-sati), (01305) 786-821
LONDON/NOTTING HILL Jeffery Craig, (020) 7221 9330	STEYNING / SUSSEX Jayanti (01903) 812-130
LEIGH-ON-SEA Gool Deboo, (01702) 553-211	STROUD John Groves, 0796 7777-742
	SURREY/WOKING Rocanā, (01483) 761-398
	TAUNTON Martin Sinclair, (01823) 321-059
	TOTNES Jerry, 01803 840199

Amaravati Retreats



2003 – Retreats

April	4 – 6	Weekend, Ajahn Khantiko
April	18 – 27	10 day, Ajahn Ariyasilo
May	9 – 11	Weekend
May	30 – June 3	5 day, Ajahn Vimalo
June	20 – 22	Weekend, Sister Thānīyā (Death & Dying theme)
July	4 – 11	8 day, Kittisāro & Thānissarā (Lay Teachers)
August	1 – 10	10 day, Ajahn Candasiri
September	5 – 7	Weekend, Ajahn Vajiro
September	26 – 30	5 day
October	17 – 19	Weekend
October 31 – Nov 1		Weekend, Ajahn Natthiko
November 14 – 23		10 day, Ajahn Sucitto*
December 12 – 14		Weekend Ajahn Sundarā
December 27 – Jan 1 2004		6 day, Ajahn Sundarā

*Experienced: (i.e. must have done at least one 10 day retreat)

Retreat Centre Work Weekends 2003

June 6–8 · Aug 29–31 · Oct 10–12

All retreats & work weekends begin in the *evening of the first day*.

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

Please note that bookings are only accepted on receipt of a completed booking form and booking deposit of £5 per day. Bookings are not accepted by phone or e-mail. To obtain a booking form, either write to the Retreat Centre or download from the website www.amaravati.org

N.B. Availability of places and retreat schedules are also shown on the website.

Applicants requiring **confirmation** – either that they have been given a place on the retreat or that they are on the waiting list – are requested to supply either an **e-mail address** or a **stamped addressed envelope**.

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 0YD U.K.

INTRODUCTORY MEDITATION—AMARAVATI Saturday Afternoon Classes 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm

During the winter retreat, January – March,
meditation instruction for beginners will be given
by experienced lay teachers.

Classes are in the Bodhinyāna 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)
84-3239 (Retreat Info.)
Fax: (01442) 84-3721
web site: www.amaravati.org
Stewards: *English Sangha Trust,
Amaravati.*

◆ Aruna Ratanagiri
Harnham Buddhist Monastery
Harnham, Belsay,
Northumberland
NE20 0HF
Tel: (01661) 88-1612
Fax: (01661) 88-1019
web site: www.ratanagiri.org.uk
e-mail: community@ratanagiri.org.uk
Stewards: *Magga Bhavaka Trust.*

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

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

THAILAND

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

AUSTRALIA

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

◆ Bodhivana Monastery
780 Woods Point Road
East Warburton
Victoria 3799
Tel: +61 (0) 3 5966 5999
Fax: +61 (0) 3 5966 5998

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

ITALY

◆ Santacittarama
Località Brulla,
02030 Frasso Sabino (Rieti)
Tel: (++39) 0765 872 186
Fax: (++39) 06 233 238 629
Website: www.santacittarama.org
Stewards: *Santacittarama
Association.*

SWITZERLAND

◆ Dhammapala
Buddhistisches Kloster
Am Waldrand,
CH 3718 Kandersteg
Tel: 033 / 675-2100
Fax: 033 / 675-2241
Stewards:
Dhammapala 31921-201-5.

NORTH AMERICA

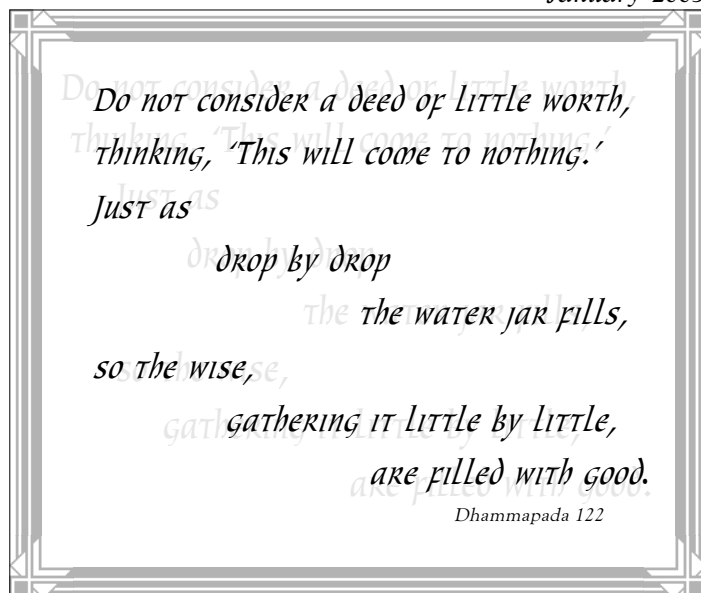
◆ Abhayagiri Monastery
16201 Tomki Road,
Redwood Valley,
CA 95470
Tel: (707) 485-1630
Fax: (707) 485-7948
(Sangha literature and
West Coast newsletters are
distributed from here.)
Web site: www.abhayagiri.org
Stewards: *Sanghapala Foundation.*

◆ Boston Area:
Buddhaparisa, Boston,
Mass. Tel: (781) 861-6837
Mailing for E. Coast USA
& Thailand: to be placed on
the mailing list, please write
directly to Amaravati.

NEW ZEALAND

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

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



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	● NEW	◐ HALF	○ FULL	◑ HALF
JANUARY	2 nd (Thurs)	10 th (Fri)	17 th (Fri)	25 th (Sat)
FEBURARY	1 st (Sat)	9 th (Sun)	☉ 16 th (Sun)	24 th (Mon)
MARCH	2 nd (Sun)	10 th (Mon)	17 th (Mon)	25 th (Tues)
APRIL	1 st & 30 th	9 th (Wed)	16 th (Wed)	24 th (Thurs)
☉ Māgha Pūjā				