



FOREST SANGHA newsletter

www.fsnewsletter.amaravati.org

July 2006

2549

Number 76

Gratitude for Luang Por Chah

Excerpt from a talk given at Amaravati on 17 June 2003 by Luang Por Sumedho

This evening we have an opportunity to reflect on the great teacher Ajahn Chah. Today is his birthday, and each year at this time a Sangha meeting is held at his monastery Wat Pah Pong in Thailand where disciples and lay people gather. They usually hang their glots (mosquito nets supported by a large umbrella) under the trees, camping out in this way for the week. In the evenings monks give talks on Dhamma.

The great teacher Ajahn Mun, who died many years before I arrived in Thailand in 1966, was one of the great meditation masters of modern times, and many of his disciples were, by then, becoming increasingly well known. Ajahn Chah said his association with Ajahn Mun was very brief.

Ajahn Chah began life as a monk at the age of twenty, in a village monastery where he studied the pariyatti Dhamma, the more academic aspects of practice. After four years or so, he decided to develop his meditation practice, and travelled through Thailand seeking out various teachers. He spent some time with one teacher in Lopburi and then with another teacher in Ubon, but most of the time he travelled alone gradually gaining insight through his practice of meditation. It was during this period that he spent two nights at Ajahn Mun's monastery where his insights were affirmed by the great teacher.

Luang Por Chah liked the style of practice of the Dhammayut sect - one of the two sects in Thailand - in

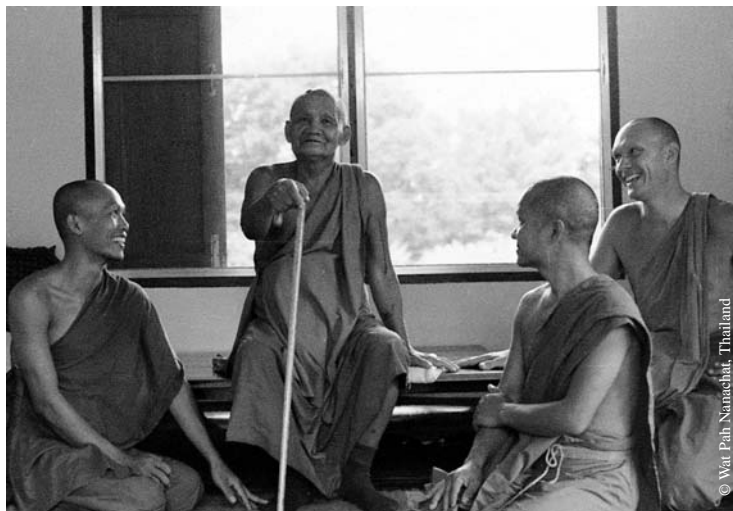
which Vinaya – the monastic discipline - was very much part of the practice. It offered a complete lifestyle and was therefore unusual in Thailand where much of the meditation was taught as a technique and could therefore be quite separate from the monasticism. For example, with the Mahasi Sayadaw system it didn't matter if you were a layperson or a monk. It is a technique that works

just as well for a layperson. But Luang Por Chah's approach was in mindfulness through ordinary monastic life. It was a way of using the monastic form to develop awareness and reflectiveness.

In his monastery, Luang Por Chah didn't encourage much study. When I eventually met him he saw that study was the last thing I needed to do. I had been through the university

system in the United States and was an obsessive reader; I was addicted to literature. Wherever I went I always had to have a book with me or I would feel nervous and ill at ease. I always had to have a book in order to relax. When I met Ajahn Chah I didn't tell him this, but he seemed to pick it up intuitively because he said "No books!"

In Thailand they always ask me "How could he teach you?" because when we met I couldn't speak Thai and he couldn't speak English. Ajahn Chah always put a reflective tone into answering this by saying "Sumedho learnt through the language of Dhamma". And then people would ask, "Well, what language is that?" They



© Wat Pah Nanachat, Thailand

obviously didn't quite understand...

The language I really learned from wasn't English or Thai but came through living, through awakening and learning from the experience of being conscious, of having a human body, feelings, thoughts, greed, hatred and delusion. These are common human things; they are not cultural things. This is what we all share, they're common human problems and conditions.

I remember feeling an immediate confidence with Ajahn Chah, a sense of trust. I met him through a series of coincidences. Some people like to think that I was *meant* to be with Ajahn Chah, it was in the stars; but maybe it was just good luck or coincidence. It is interesting how, in life, one can experience things that can't be traced to what one is expecting. Meeting a teacher like Ajahn Chah wasn't what I was expecting. By the time I met him I had been to all the other teachers. It wasn't that I didn't like those teachers or that I was critical of them or felt they weren't good enough for me, but nothing clicked, the magic didn't happen. I just didn't feel I wanted to be with them.

So I went my own way, the first year as a samanera and, just by chance, ordained in Nongkhai up in the Northeast of Thailand and spent my first year teaching myself. Then the following year I met Phra Summai, the *devaduta* monk ['divine messenger'] who you've all heard about.

While living alone I had the insight that I could get to a certain point, but never get beyond it, never see clearly, unless I learned humility. I remember having a wish that I could meet a teacher (because at that point I still hadn't taken up the bhikkhu training. I was planning to do that in 1967). Then, almost immediately, Ajahn Chah's disciple, Phra Summai, appeared. Coincidence? I don't know. Whatever you want to think, but this is the truth. He was about my age, 32 or 33. He could speak English. He had been in the Thai Navy during the Korean War. I had been in the American navy during the Korean War. When we met I hadn't spoken English for months and months. If you haven't spoken your native tongue for months and months, then at the first opportunity it is like a burst dam. You can't stop. At first I thought I had frightened him. It was like having diarrhoea; there was no way I could stop it. Nonetheless, he stayed with me at this monastery for a while and eventually convinced me that, after I had ordained, I should go and meet Ajahn Chah. My preceptor agreed with this. He gave me upasampada and sent me off to stay with Ajahn Chah.

At that time Ajahn Chah was not well known in Bangkok even by Thais, not to mention the expatriate community, but was increasingly well known in northeast Thailand, known as 'the Isaan'. It's strange,

because the Isaan was the last place that I had wanted to live. It's the poorest part of Thailand. I had always imagined living down on the coast where all the resorts are now. I had this romantic image of being a monk sitting under a coconut palm tree on a white sand beach. Instead I ended up spending ten years in the Isaan.

What impressed me about Luang Por Chah was his emphasis on teaching the Four Noble Truths. I hadn't come across this before with other teachers, or perhaps I just hadn't picked it up – there was always a problem around language because I didn't speak Thai. Many of the meditation techniques I learned were based on Abhidhamma teaching, which I found very boring. The last thing I wanted to learn was all that incredibly complex Abhidhamma. I remember going to an Abhidhamma teacher in Bangkok who gave lectures on it in English; I was never so bored in my life. I thought, "That is not what I want from this religion".

In that first year on my own, learning from a little book, I had developed a lot of insight into the Four Noble Truths. I found it a powerful teaching, very simple in its form; it's just 'one-two-three-four'. That's easy enough, I thought. It pointed to suffering (*dukkha*) and I had plenty of that. There was no shortage of it. I didn't have to go looking for it. I realised that this was the teaching I had been looking for. And when I met Luang Por Chah I found his whole emphasis was also in developing insight into these truths through daily life in the monastery.

I feel that I have received the very best from life, not only in terms of the Buddha's teaching, but also in terms of its manifestation in the form and life of Ajahn Chah. It is not that I'm a devotee of Ajahn Chah or a cult follower of his. Towards Ajahn Chah I have gratitude



(*katannu katavedhi*) because of his compassion.

He didn't want us to make him into a cult figure. He never pointed to himself saying that he was a sotapanna or an arahant. Whenever one wanted to find out where he was at - and I don't know how many people asked him if he was an arahant - he would answer in a way that made you look at what you were asking. Who is it that is asking? Why do you want to know? So he'd point you in the right direction, by refusing to answer either yes or no.

What I gained from that ten years was a good foundation in practice and in Vinaya. By the time I came to England I was only ten years as a bhikkhu. I sometimes think that I was crazy to come here having just ten years in the robes. Nowadays we wouldn't *think* of putting a ten-year monk in such a position. But my confidence in the practice was firmly established during that ten years, and Luang Por Chah obviously realised that, because he was the one who encouraged me to come here. Once you have confidence in awareness, then whatever happens to you, you can reflect on and learn from it.

I have now been in England for over twenty-six years, which has been a time of learning from all the many things that have happened to me; I get praise and blame, things go well and fall apart, people come, people go, ordain and disrobe. But reflectiveness is always the way.

Even a teacher is not a refuge, because eventually even Ajahn Chah became very ill. He was incapacitated for ten years. He couldn't say a word and was nursed until he died in 1992. So the refuge is not in a teacher or in the scriptures or in a monastery or in a religious tradition or Vinaya or anything like that - but in awareness. Awareness is so ordinary, so natural to us, that we ignore it, we overlook it all the time. So, this is where we need continuous reminding, awakening, reflecting, so that when tragedies and so on happen we can use those very things as part of our training, as part of the path of cultivating the Way. This is the fourth Noble Truth.

You only need the confidence to reflect, to be aware, not of how things *should* be but on what you are actually experiencing, without claiming it, without adding to it in any way. Thus, when I feel sad, if I think "I am sad" then I have made it more than what it is. Instead, I am simply aware of the sadness - which is pre-verbal. So awareness exists without the arising of thought. The habit tendency is to think, "I am sad, and I don't want to be sad, I want to be happy". Then it becomes a big problem for us. Awareness is not a special quality that I have more of than you. It is a natural ability which we all share. The practice is in using this natural ability and in being willing to learn from it.

The Founding of Wat Pah Pong

By Ajahn Jayasaro



© Wat Pah Nanachat, Thailand

On the 8th March 1954 the gorged red sun was already dropping below the forest ahead of them. As Ajahn Chah and his disciples walked westwards from Bahn Gor village, the cracked earth of the paddy fields on either side of them soon gave way to trees - at first scattered, spindly and forlorn in the heat, and then increasingly luxuriant - patterning the cart track with welcome pools of shade. Pong Forest, their destination, loomed ahead of them, dense and cool. Despite the deafening shrill of cicadas as they put up their *glots* at the edge of the forest, the bhikkhus found Pah Pong's presence calm and benign.

It was a place that held strong associations for Ajahn Chah. During his early childhood, Luang Boo Sow had passed through the area and, for a few days, put up his glot in Pong Forest. Ajahn Chah's father had gone out one morning with some friends to offer alms to the great monk and in the evening Ajahn Chah had listened with fascination to his account of it. This was the first time he had heard about wandering monks living austere lives in the jungle. He always remembered how impressed his father had been that Ajahn Sow ate all his food from his bowl, rather than from plates as the village monks did. And also he recalled his father's slight puzzlement at Ajahn Sow's teaching style, "It wasn't like a proper sermon at all," he had complained. "It was just

like normal talking.”

Many years later Ajahn Chah related: “When I set off and started practising myself, the memory of my father’s words was constantly with me. Whenever I visited home my mind would always turn to this forest. Ajahn Dee from Pibun and Luang Por Put once passed through and the villagers invited them to stay in Pong Forest. They said they couldn’t. Ajahn Dee said “It isn’t our place. We can’t stay. It won’t be long till the owner arrives.” Luang Por Put still speaks of that to this day.

The following morning the group of monks entered the seemingly impenetrable forest for the first time with villagers from Bahn Gor in front of them expertly hacking a way through the stubborn vines and tangled undergrowth with their machetes. Eventually, at the cool heart of the forest, they halted. The wiry villagers, sweat running down the protective spells tattooed on their chests, squatted in a



© Wat Pah Nanachat, Thailand

circle and rolled cigarettes. The monks sat down some distance apart, with Ajahn Chah at the foot of an ancient and imposing mango tree, drinking water from their bamboo flasks, and tranquillity from the air around them.

A group of women had been following in the monks’ wake. After a short rest they joined their men-folk in methodically removing all the vines, stumps and thorns in the neighbourhood of the old mango tree. Clearing land was work at which the villagers were adept, and a central open area soon started to take shape amongst the larger shade-bearing trees, creating a neat, stately, almost park-like atmosphere in the midst of the thick and tangled jungle that surrounded them. At the foot of some of the larger trees beyond the edge of this area, small squares of land were cleared for the monks to set up their glots. The monks themselves, forbidden by the Vinaya to dig the earth or destroy plant life, helped by dragging off cut branches into the forest and sweeping the cleared areas. There was a break at midday for the villagers to eat their lunch - sticky rice and fermented fish brought from home and fresh forest leaves gathered along the way - and then with the sun overhead filtering

down between the large patches of shade in bright, hot pools, it was back to the steady rhythm of the work. By late afternoon a rudimentary path had been cut to the edge of the forest, and after taking their leave of Ajahn Chah, the laypeople made their way along it for the first time hurrying a little in order to reach their homes before dark. In the heart of the forest, as darkness set in, the monks sat in meditation in their glots.

Early one morning a few days later, a group of volunteers from the villages of Bahn Gor and Bahn Glang arrived to build kutis for the monks and expand the open area. They brought with them sections of thin *yaka* thatch for the roofs and cut the main posts and beams from the trees around them. Deftly the men split bamboo into long strips to weave into flooring, while the women attached large dry chat leaves to bamboo frames for the walls. Four huts were completed by

the evening - simple dwellings but sufficient for the monks’ needs. The flimsiness of these shelters could not conceal their significance. Their creation, in the space of a day, had transformed the monks’ presence in the forest from that of respectful guests of its peace and shade, to gentle settlers.

Pong Forest, the monks’ new home, possessed a certain notoriety amongst local people. In former days the now-dry, fresh-water pool towards its northern end had attracted many wild animals, including tigers and elephants. Adding to the forest’s daunting nature was the general belief that a harsh and vengeful guardian spirit had determined to protect it from human intrusions. Unusually, Ajahn Chah, generally very forthright in his opposition to superstitions, did not counter this belief. He once explained to some guests:

“When I first came to stay here it was a tough place to live: there were none of these buildings you see now, nothing but forest. There’s no need to tell you there were no roads; coming in and out was very difficult. The local farmers lived a long way away. They didn’t dare to come into the forest because the guardian spirit here was so

fierce. This spirit was once an elephant herder who would often pass through the forest on his expeditions to capture elephants and would water them at the pond on the way back. In the end he settled down here to look after the forest, and it's thanks to him that by the time I came to live here there was still some of it left, otherwise it would probably all have been cut down long ago. One time some villagers from Bahn Bok and Bahn Peung did manage to clear a patch of land and plant some rice and vegetables, but all of them came to an unfortunate end. People who have come in and cut down trees have tended to die from mysterious causes. Wild potatoes grow abundantly in the forest but nobody has dared to touch them. It was only after I'd come to live here that people started to farm more closely to the forest edge."

On the full moon day of March marking the first uposatha (Observance Day) since the monks' arrival in the forest, about a dozen laypeople came to spend the day and night practising with the Sangha. At seven o'clock, the evening chanting completed and the last light of the day fading away, Ajahn Chah began to expound Dhamma, his voice energetic and compelling. As the words flowed more and more surely he became illuminated by the rays of the newly-risen moon. Then quite without warning, in the full spate of his exposition, Ajahn Chah suddenly fell silent. Many of his listeners found their eyes jerked open in surprise to be greeted with the view of their teacher sitting in the moonlight as still and composed as a Buddha image. After a few moments he spoke to them,

"Everyone just sit calmly. If anything strange occurs, there is no need to be alarmed." And then, without further explanation, he resumed his discourse.

A few minutes later a bright light, like a comet, appeared in the sky to the northwest of the small cleared area in which they sat, passed very low above their heads and dropped earth-wards to the southeast of them. The whole forest grove was bathed in a dazzling light. Despite the forewarning, monks and laypeople were profoundly thrilled at what they considered to be quite obviously an auspicious portent for the new monastery. Ajahn Chah, however, paid no attention to the light whatsoever and carried on with his Dhamma talk as if nothing had happened. Gradually the spell and power of his exposition re-asserted its hold over the audience.

Ajahn Chah was never to refer to this matter again. Nevertheless, the following morning when he led a small group of laypeople to mark with stakes the limits of the new monastery, it did not pass unnoticed that the boundaries he chose, enclosing an area of some sixty-seven acres, were governed by the points at which the strange light had risen and fallen.

The Chapter of Octads

The Atthaka Vagga, ('chapter containing suttas with eight verses' - although some suttas have more than eight verses) is the fourth chapter of the Sutta Nipata. Its last three suttas are translated here by Tahn Varado.

Introduction

Venerable Mahakaccana was one of the eminent disciples of the Buddha, considered chief amongst monks who could explain in full the brief sayings of the Buddha. He was born in Ujjeni town (modern-day Ujjain) in an area called Avanti. This area, now part of modern-day Madhya Pradesh, lay 400 kilometres south-west of Savatthi, one of the centres of early Buddhism. Having travelled to visit the Buddha and having attained arahantship, he returned to Avanti.

Venerable Mahakaccana had a lay supporter in Avanti called Sona Kutikanna. Sona was a layperson, and keen to become a monk, but Venerable Mahakaccana discouraged him by recounting the difficulties of the monks' life: "Difficult, Sona, for as long as life lasts are solitary sleeping places, eating once a day and the brahmacariya (celibacy). Please Sona, remain a householder as you are and on the Observance days practise the solitary sleeping place, the one meal a day and the brahmacariya."

Sona was not to be discouraged, however, and eventually Venerable Mahakaccana agreed to give him ordination. As they were so far from the centre of Buddhist practice in India, it took three years to gather the necessary quorum of monks for the ceremony. After spending his first vassa (rainy season) in Avanti, Venerable Sona felt it was time to go and visit the Buddha. When he asked his preceptor for permission, his preceptor replied: "Yes, very good, Sona. Go and see the Blessed One, the Arahant, the Perfectly Self-Awakened One. You will see the Blessed One, lovely to behold, inspiring confidence, with senses calmed, with tranquil mind, attained to the greatest self-mastery and calm, who is tamed, watchful, well controlled, a Great Being. In my name, bow your head to his feet and say, 'My preceptor, Venerable Mahakaccana, bows his head to your feet and asks if you are well, in good health, with little illness, vigorous and abiding in comfort.'"

With this, Venerable Sona set off and eventually arrived at Jeta's Grove, Anathapindikā's Monastery in Savatthi and paid his respects to the Buddha. The Buddha said to his attendant monk, Venerable Ananda, "Assign a place for this visiting monk to rest." Venerable Ananda thought, "The Lord wants to share a dwelling

with this visiting monk,” and assigned him a place in the Buddha’s own dwelling.

The Buddha and Venerable Sona spent the early part of that night meditating outside then rested till early dawn. When the Buddha arose he invited Venerable Sona to speak Dhamma. Venerable Sona recited the Chapter of Octads. When he had finished, the Buddha praised him saying:

“Well done, monk! The Chapter of Octads is well memorised by you. You have pondered it carefully, reflected upon it thoroughly. You have a beautiful voice, a good delivery, and clear articulation. You made the meaning clear. How long have you been a monk?”

“I am of one year’s standing, Lord.”

“How did it take you so long to receive ordination?”

“For long Lord, I have seen the danger of sensuality, but the household life is obstructive: it involves many duties and obligations.” (Vin.1.194-7)

The Buddha later declared:

Chief among my monks who are of beautiful speech is Sona Kutikanna. (AN.1.24)



© Wat Pah Nanachat, Thailand

14: The Quick Discourse

Questioner:

I ask the Kinsman of the Sun, the Great Master,
About seclusion and the state of peace.
Seeing in what way is a monk free of passion,
Grasping at nothing in the world?

The Buddha:

A sage should put an end to the root cause of psychological distortion,
The thought “I am.”
Ever mindful,
He should train himself to abolish whatever craving he finds in himself.

Whatever he is aware of, either within himself or externally,
He should not allow it to be a cause of obstinacy,
For this is not called peaceful by the Good;

He should not think himself to be better, inferior or equal
on account of anything.

Although affected by a variety of experiences
He should not acquiesce in the thought of self.

A monk should find peace within.
He should not seek it from someone else.
For one who is peaceful within,
Having taken up nothing,
How could he reject anything?

In the depths of the ocean
There is no ebb and flow
Nor do waves swell up.
So in the monk,

There should be neither the ebb and flow of desire
Nor swellings of conceit about anything.

Questioner:

The Seer, the Dhamma Eyewitness, has proclaimed the
removal of danger.
Now, Venerable Sir, speak about the path of practice,
About monastic discipline, and also about samadhi.

The Buddha:

A person should not have covetous eyes.
He should close his ears to ordinary chatter.
He should not be greedy for flavours.
He should not cherish anything in the world.

In whatever way he is affected by sense contact
He should not lament over anything.
He should not long for continued existence.
He should not tremble amidst danger.

He should not store up what is given to him
Whether it is rice, other food, drinks or clothing,
Nor should he be concerned if he gets nothing.

Being meditative, a bhikkhu should not be foot-loose.
He should desist from worrying.

He should not be indolent.
He should live in lodgings where there is little noise.

He should not be given to oversleeping.
Being zealous, he should be given to wakefulness.
He should abandon laziness, deception, merriment,
Various kinds of amusements, sexual matters, and
anything else like it.

A disciple of mine should not practice sorcery
Nor interpret dreams, tell fortunes, practise astrology, or
interpret animal cries.
Neither should he treat infertility, nor practice medicine.

A monk should not fear blame,
Nor should he be conceited when praised.
He should drive out greed, selfishness, anger and
malicious speech.

A monk should not engage in buying and selling.
He should not abuse anyone for any reason.
He should not linger in the village.
He should not chatter with people in the hope of gain.

A monk should not be a boaster.
He should not speak scheming words.
He should not make a habit of impudence.
He should not utter quarrelsome speech.

He should not be moved to tell lies.
He should not be deliberately treacherous.
He should not despise others for their way of life,
For their wisdom,
Or for their moral conduct and religious practices.

If contemplatives or ordinary people irritate him with
their talkativeness
He should not respond harshly.
For the peaceful do not retaliate.

Knowing this Dhamma,
An ever mindful monk who investigates it should train
himself in it.
Knowing the cooling of desire as Peace,
He should not be negligent in applying Gotama's teaching.

The unconquered Conqueror
Realised Dhamma through his own insight, not through
hearsay.
So, with regards to the Blessed One's teaching,
One who is diligent should constantly venerate it by fol-
lowing his example.

15: Discourse on Violence

The Buddha:

Violence breeds fear.
Looking at people in conflict,
I will tell you of my dismay, how moved I was.

I saw people floundering,
Feuding with each another like fish in a small pool.
When I realised this, dread arose in me.

The world is entirely worthless.
Every quarter is in turmoil.
Wanting somewhere for myself,
I saw nowhere that wasn't taken.

Seeing nothing in the end but competition, I became disgusted.
Then I saw a splinter, hard to see, embedded in people's
hearts.

A person affected by this splinter rushes about in all
directions.
But on pulling it out he neither rushes about nor
dwindles away.

[Now follows the recitation of the training rules:]
Whatever is binding in the world, you should not pursue
it.
Having wisely seen sensual pleasures, you should train
yourself for Nibbana.

Be truthful, modest, not underhand, and rid of malicious
speech.
Free of anger, the sage should overcome greed and selfishness.

He should conquer sleepiness, weariness and sloth.
He should not live negligently.
The man whose heart is set on Nibbana
Should not allow himself to be conceited.

He should not sink to false speech.
He should not cultivate lust for physical forms.
He should comprehend pride.
He should abstain from impetuous behaviour.

He should not be nostalgic for the past.
He should not relish what is new.



He should not grieve for what is lost
Nor be bound to whatever comes forth.

I call greed “the great deluge.”
Lust I call “the torrent.”
Plans are “the basis of the operation.”
Sense pleasure is “hard-to-cross mud.”

Not deviating from truth,
The sage, the Brahman, stands on high ground.
Having forsaken everything
He is called “truly peaceful”.

In discovering, he is the knower of the highest.
Having found Dhamma, he is emancipated.
Wandering through the world in the right way
He does not envy anyone here.

Whoever here goes beyond sensual pleasure,
An attachment hard to leave behind,
Is free of sorrow and anxiety.
With the torrent of craving destroyed, he is free of bonds.

Let wither what is gone.
Let there not be for you anything to come.
If you do not take up what is in between,
You will live at peace.

For whom there is nothing cherished in this body/mind
complex,
And who does not grieve over what does not exist,
He suffers no loss in the world.

For whoever there is no thought “This is mine,”
Or “This belongs to others,”



Who has no feelings of possessiveness,
He does not grieve for anything, thinking “It is not
mine”.

Being free of cruelty, hankering and craving,
And being everywhere tranquil:
When asked, I say that all these are the blessings for
those who are unshakeable.

A person without craving, one of discernment,
Is free of accumulated kamma.
He abstains from initiating new kamma.
He knows safety everywhere.

The sage does not speak of himself as someone
superior, inferior or equal.
At peace, unselfish, he neither possesses nor
dispossesses.

16: Discourse with Sariputta
Venerable Sariputta:

Never before have I seen or heard
Of a teacher coming from the host of Tusita heaven,
One having such lovely speech.

For the sake of the world with its gods
The Seer appears thus.
Having dispelled all darkness,
He alone has attained delight.
To that Buddha, unentangled,
Of such good qualities, sincere,
Having arrived here with his following,
I come with a question
On behalf of the many people here who are fettered.

For a monk repelled by the world,
Resorting to a lonely sitting place,
The foot of a tree, a cemetery, a mountain cave,
Or to various sleeping places:
How many fearful things are there at which he need not tremble,
There in his quiet abode?

For the monk going where he never before has gone,
How many are the difficulties that he must bear,
There, in his secluded abode?

What should be his manner of speech?
What should be the range of his conduct?
What should be that resolute monk’s precepts and
religious practices?

For one attentive, prudent and mindful,
Undertaking what training could he remove

his inner dross
Like a silversmith purifying molten silver?

The Buddha:

As one who knows, I will explain to you
What comfort is for someone repelled by the world,
For someone resorting to a lonely place for practice,
Desiring awakening in accordance with Dhamma.

A sage, a bhikkhu, mindful, having a circumscribed
lifestyle
Need not be afraid of five fears:
Horseflies, mosquitoes, snakes, humans and animals.

He need not be frightened by those following other
religious teachings
Even on seeing their manifold threat.
He must bear other difficulties too, as he seeks what is
wholesome.

Affected by illness and hunger,
By cold and suffocating heat, he should bear it.
That homeless one affected in many ways
Should put forth energy and make a firm endeavour.

He must not steal.
He must not lie.
He should touch beings with good-will,
Both the timid and the mettlesome.
When he is conscious that his mind is agitated
He should allay it with the thought:
“It is part of Darkness.”

He should not come under the influence of anger or
conceit;
He should abide having uprooted them.
Then he should master what is loved and unloved.

Esteeming wisdom,
Delighted by what is morally good,
He should conquer his difficulties.
He must overcome discontent in his secluded resting
place.
He should overcome four laments:

“What will I eat?”
“Where will I eat?”
“How uncomfortably I slept!”
“Where will I sleep tonight?”

The person in training, wandering homeless,
Should subdue such thoughts which lead to lamentation.

When offered food and clothing at the appropriate time
He should know how much is enough for contentment.
Constrained in this respect, he should wander in the
village with care.
Even when provoked, he must not speak a harsh word.

He should be restrained with his eyes.
He should not roam about.
He should apply himself to jhana.
He should be very vigilant.
He should develop equanimity and composure.
He should cut off the tendency to doubt and worry.

When being reprimanded,
Maintaining presence of mind, he should welcome it.
He must destroy any unfriendliness he might have for his
fellows in the holy life.
He should utter words that are skilful and timely.
He should not think about things which are matters of gossip.

There are five kinds of impurity
For the removing of which he mindfully should train.
He should overcome passion for
Forms, sounds, tastes, smells, and tactile sensations.

Being possessed of mindfulness,
With a mind that is well-freed,
A monk should remove his desires for these things.
Contemplating Dhamma at suitable times in suitable
ways,
With an attentive mind, he should put an end to Darkness.



NOTICEBOARD

AMARAVATI NOTICES

Bhikkhu Ordination

Sunday 9 July at 2pm, Samaneras Dhammiko and Vineetha will request upasampada. Everyone is welcome.

Sunday Public Talks

Every Sunday between July 16 and October 1 at 2pm. See notice.

Gratitude to Parents Day

Sunday 1 October. Offering of alms and paritta chanting, 11am. Dhamma talk by Ajahn Sumedho, 2pm. Then tea and discussion. All welcome.

Kathina Celebration

will be Oct 29. To offer help, contact Amara & Damani Makalanda. Tel: 0208 366 5749 mob: 07960177732.

Introduction to Meditation

Every Saturday, 2pm till 4pm in the temple. All welcome. No booking necessary.

Family Events

- Family Summer Camp: Aug19-27 (waiting list only)
- Young Persons Retreat: Nov 24-26
- Family Camp Over 18's Activity Weekend: December 15-17 (help to organise this is needed, please) Information and registration: <http://www.family.amaravati.org>

Amaravati Lay Events

- Days of Practice: Aug 12; Oct 28; Dec 2. No need to book. Bring food to share.
- Retreats: July 14-16; Sep15-19; Nov 10-12. Booking essential. Information: www.buddhacommunity.org

CITTAVIVEKA NOTICES

Blessing of Rocana Vihara

On the first of May after a rainy morning the sun came out to shine upon the folks gathered at Rocana Vihara for its blessing. Luang Por, some of the Venerables and all the Sisters from Amaravati came; also Vivienne, Rocana's sister, Thanissara, many of the EST trustees and some of our friends. It was a lovely occasion, flowing and evolving as it went. Many observed that it was as much a blessing - and recognition - of the Nuns' Community as of the cottage itself. An essential aspect of all this is the support that continues to flow in from the four quarters. Rocana Vihara is certainly a boon.

Forest Work Session, Autumn 2006:

Most years, as part of our long-term commitment to restoring Hammer Wood to native woodland, we have a work period of up to a month dedicated to that end. This year we are looking at some time between the middle

of October and late November. It is an opportunity for three or four laymen to live in the monastery and in the woodland, to work together with Sangha members and enjoy the forest life. Commitment to the eight precepts is necessary, and also some experience of meditation and monasteries. The work requires no great expertise or great strength, mostly a feeling for nature, Dhamma, and the joy of good companions. If you are interested, please write with details and say when you could come, to 'Forest Work', Cittaviveka, Chithurst, Petersfield GU31 5EU.

RATANAGIRI NOTICES

Kathina Celebration and 25th Anniversary

This year's Kathina will also be an occasion for celebrating the 25th anniversary of Aruna Ratanagiri Monastery. Luang Por Sumedho and many other senior monks and nuns, including some of the previous abbots will be joining us. It will be sponsored Mrs. Kahakachchi and Mrs. Samarage. For further information please phone Mrs. Kahakachchi at +44 0191 386 7600. The celebrations will start at 10am. Please come and join.

Retreat House Building Project Work

on our Retreat House has recently seen much progress through building contractors. We are still interested to find volunteers to help with decorating, carpentry and landscaping. If you are interested to help, please contact us at retreathouse AT ratanagiri.org.uk or by phone on 01661 881 612.

Summer Retreat: Aug 12-20 at Harnham, led by Ajahn Abhinando. Information and booking: www.ratanagiri.org.uk or phone Nick Pearce on 01573 420 701

HARTRIDGE NOTICES

Saturday Meditation Workshops:

July 29th, August 26th, & September 30th

GENERAL NOTICES

Leicester Buddhist Summer School

August 14-19 with Ajahn Sumedho and others. Price £360. Further info: www.goldenbuddha.org or tel: 01364 73711

Buddhist Publication Society: artwork for book covers

BPS would appreciate good quality digital pictures or artwork for book covers. Please contact Bhikkhu Nyanatusita, Forest Hermitage, Udawattakele, PO Box 61, Kandy, Sri Lanka or email nyanatusita AT gmail.com

Retreats at Sunyata Centre, Ireland

July 28-30: Thanissara *Dawn of Contemplation* Euro 160

Aug 12: Jitindriya *Daylong Meditation Workshop* Euro 40

Sept 22-24: Nick Carroll *Mindfulness and the Therapeutic Encounter* Euro 220

Oct 27-30: Geraint Evans *Long-weekend Meditation Retreat* Euro 200

Nov 18: Margaret Smith *Meditation Daylong* Euro 30

Nov 24-26: Nick Carroll *Personal Practice and the Therapeutic Encounter* Euro 220

Meditation classes every Wednesday 8.00-9.30pm. All welcome. No charge.

Private self-catering accommodation is available for self-retreat outside of scheduled retreats.

Further info: www.sunyatacentre.com
info@sunyatacentre.com

NEWSLETTER

Editor's message:

I have been the editor of this newsletter since October 2003. This will be my last issue. I have enjoyed my role very much and take the opportunity to thank the contributors for allowing us to publish their precious material. Thanks also to Robert Brown, Brian and Laura Wollen, Chunyang and James Butler, who were our Production Coordinators; to Ashford Printers for their considerable helpfulness; and to all the many helping hands who gave their labour for free. Finally, I thank the many kind people who have sent us messages of appreciation. May you all be well. Tahn Varado.

This issue's contributors:

Luang Por Sumedho is the abbot of Amaravati monastery. Ajahn Jayasaro has lived in Thailand since 1978. He is the author of *Uppalamuni*, the biography in Thai of Luang Por Chah. Tahn Varado was ordained in 1988 and lives at Amaravati

This issue's photographs :

Page 1: Luang Por Chah, Thailand 1981.
Page 2: Luang Por Chah, England, 1979.
Page 3: Paddy fields near Wat Pah Pong.
Page 4: Forest at Wat Pah Nanachat.
Page 6: Shrine at Wat Pah Nanachat
Page 7,8,9: Christchurch Bay and the Solent.
Page 11 and 12: Ceremony of Blessing.

Thanks to Elly Beintema and Tavarro and also to the unknown photographers involved in this issue and to Wat Pah Nanachat for permission to use the photos of Luang Por Chah.

Contact for newsletter business:

editor AT amaravati.org



Amaravati Retreats



2006 RETREATS SCHEDULE:

Waiting list places only
men women

July 21-23	Ajahn Ratanawanno##	Thai Weekend		
August 4-8	Sister Metta	5 Days	WL	WL
September 1-10	Ajahn Sumedho	10 Days	WL	WL
September 21-24	Ajahn Upekkha	Weekend	WL	WL
October 6-15	Ajahn Candasiri	10 Days	WL	WL
October 20-22		Work Weekend		
November 3-5	Ajahn Nyanarato	Weekend	WL	WL
November 17-19	Ajahn Natthiko	Weekend	WL	WL
December 8-10	Ajahn Thaniya	Weekend	WL	WL
December 27 - 1.1.07	Ajahn Nyanarato	6 Days	WL	WL

##: This retreat is for Thai speakers only.

The waiting lists for Ajahn Sumedho's retreats are closed.

See website for latest details.

General Guidelines

All weekend retreats are suitable for beginners. It is best to do a weekend retreat before doing a longer retreat. Due to demand, people may join only three retreats a year. The Retreat Centre is dependent on donations alone to meet its running costs.

Booking Procedure

Bookings can only be made with a booking form. Bookings cannot be made by email or telephone. If you want to know whether you have secured a place on a retreat or are on the waiting list, please send us either a stamped addressed envelope or your email address.

Start and Finish Times

Registration is from 4pm to 7pm on the first day of the retreat. The orientation talk is at 7.15pm. Weekend retreats end at 4pm. Other retreats end at lunchtime.

Work Weekend

Participants gather on Friday evening. Work begins on Saturday morning. Part-time attendance is also welcomed. Please email or write in for an application form.

Contact Information:

Tel :01442 843 239
Email: retreats AT amaravati.org
Website: <http://www.amaravati.org>

Sunday Talks at Amaravati

- July 16: *Why does the grass appear greener on the other side?*
- July 23: *Saying "No" without Self*
- July 30: *Interconnectedness, from a Buddhist perspective*
- August 6: *The wisdom of emotions*
- August 13: *Happiness is so simple*
- August 20: *Wisdom in the face of the challenges of life*
- August 27: *Never mind death, what about the Deathless!*
- September 3: *What is it all about anyway?*
- September 10: *Being nobody*
- September 17: *Meaning without words*
- September 24: *True love*
- October 1: *Gratitude to parents*

All talks begin at 2.00 pm and are followed by tea and discussion. They will all be given by Ajahn Sumedho except August 6 & 20 and September 3 & 10.

Rocana Vihara Ceremony of Blessing

May 1st 2006



Distributing Dhamma Recordings

By the early 1970's, even in rural Thailand, it had become normal that when Ajahn Chah gave a talk someone would respectfully place a cassette recorder in front of him. By the time Ajahn Sumedho arrived in the UK, so much recorded material had accumulated that the question of distributing tapes was being discussed; but it wasn't until the late 1980's that any structure emerged. Good friends Lynne and Barry Drayton stepped in with a generous offer to take it on. From then until earlier this year they faithfully laboured away in their Welsh cottage copying and posting out thousands of cassettes. Many people around the world would wish to express a heartfelt "thank you" to them both.

Over recent years, developments in the field of technology have frequently given rise to questions about accessing Dhamma talks on-line or as MP3-CDs: did we want to attend to this new interest in digital Dhamma and if so how? Lynne and Barrie were admirably committed to keeping their life simple, which meant no internet connection. Even though many Sangha members didn't yet know what "MP3" meant, at a meeting at Amaravati in July 2005 we found that there were enough of us with sufficient skill and interest to set up something. Ajahns Munindo and Vajiro volunteered to oversee material that was to be distributed, emphasising good, clear, quality Dhamma. Samanera Amaranatho took responsibility for technical quality. Julian offered to donate materials, to produce the CDs, and to send them to Penny and Nick who offered space at their on-line trading store, offering them for free distribution world-wide. We called ourselves "Dhamma Threads". At www.dhammathreads.org there are details describing how we operate, how to order CDs and how, if you wish, you can help.

EUROPEAN MONASTERIES

BRITAIN

◆ Amaravati Monastery

St Margaret's, Great Gaddesden,
Hemel Hempstead,
Hertfordshire HP1 3BZ
Tel: (01442) 84-2455 (Office)
84-3239 (Retreat Info.)
Fax: (01442) 84-3721
[http:// www.amaravati.org](http://www.amaravati.org)
Stewards: English Sangha Trust, Amaravati

◆ Aruna Ratanagiri

Harnham Buddhist Monastery
Harnham, Belsay,
Northumberland NE20 OHF
Tel: (01661) 88-1612
Fax: (01661) 88-1019
<http://www.ratanagiri.org.uk>
Email: sangha AT 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) 890023
Stewards: Devon Vihara Trust

ITALY

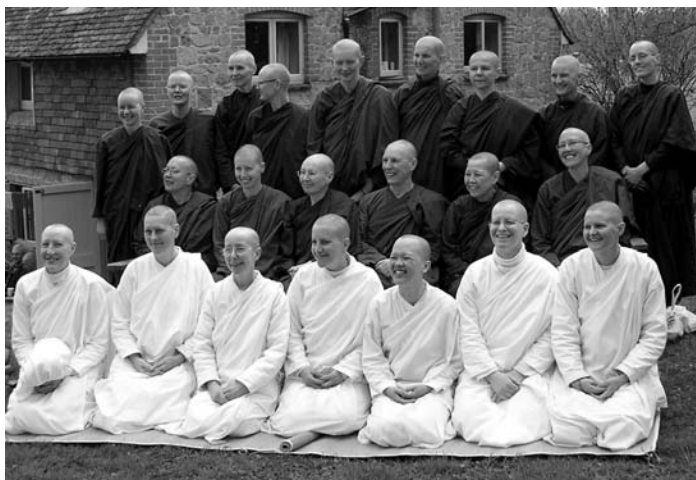
◆ Santacittarama

Località Brulla,
02030 Frasso Sabino (Reiti)
Tel: (+39) 0765 872 186
Fax: (+39) 06 233 238 629
<http://www.santacittarama.org>
Stewards: Santacittarama Association

SWITZERLAND

◆ Dhammapala

Buddhistisches Kloster
Am Waldrand,
CH 3718 Kandersteg
Tel: 033/ 6 752 100
Fax: 033 / 6 752 241
<http://www.dhammapala.org>
Stewards: Dhammapala 31921-201-5



OBSERVANCE DAYS

On these days some monasteries are given over to quiet reflection and meditation. Visitors are welcome to participate in the evening meditation vigils. At Amaravati on the full and new moons, there is an opportunity to determine the Eight Precepts for the night.

Moon Phase	☉ FULL	◐ HALF	● NEW	◑ HALF
JULY	10(Mon) ☺	18 (Tue)	25 (Tue)	3(Mon)
AUGUST	9 (Wed)	17(Thu)	23 (Wed)	2(Wed) / 31(Thu)
SEPTEMBER	7 (Thu)	15 (Fri)	22 (Fri)	30 (Sat)
OCTOBER	7 (Sat)	15 (Sun)	21 (Sat)	29 (Sun)

☺ Asalha (Vassa begins next day)

Teaching , Study & Practice Venues

ENGLAND

Bath	Bill & Carol Huxley	(01225) 314 500
Bedford	David Stubbs	(01234) 720 892
Berkshire	Anthea West	(0118) 979 8101
Brighton	Nimmala	(01273) 723 378
Cambridge	Dan Jones	(01223) 246 257
Canterbury	Charles Watters	(01227) 463 342
Carlisle	Jean Nelson	(01228) 543491
Harlow	Pamutto	(01279) 724330
Hemel Hempstead	Chris Ward	(01442) 890034
Kendal	Sumedha	(01539) 729 793
Leeds Area	Daniela Loeb	(0113) 279 1375
	Anne Grimshaw	(01274) 691 447
Liverpool	Ursula Haekel	(0151) 4276668
London Hampstead	1 Hillside(Room 6) London NW5 Caroline Randall	(020) 8348 0537
	Entrance in Highgate Road Ann Booth	(020) 7485 0505
London Buddhist Society	58 Eccleston Square London SW1(Victoria)	(020) 7834 5858
London-Notting Hill	Jeffery Craig	(0207) 221 9330
Leigh-on-sea	Rob Howell	(01702) 482 134
Midhurst	Barry Durrant	(01730) 821 479
	Viv Bell	(01730) 812 362
Newcastle-on-Tyne	Ian Plagaro-Neill	(0191) 469 2778
Newent-Gloucs	Email: john.teire@virgin.net John Teire	(01531) 821 902
Norwich	Ian Thompson	(01603) 629129
Penzance	Lee	(01736) 762 135
Portsmouth	Medhavi	(02392)732 280
Redruth	Vanessa	(01209) 214 031
Sheffield	Email: greg.bradshaw@btclick.com Greg Bradshaw	(0114)262 1559
South Dorset	Barbara Cohen (Sati-sati)	(01305) 786 821
Southampton	Ivor Minard	(023) 8089 4890
Steyning-Sussex	Jayanti	(01903) 812 130
Stroud	John Groves	(07967) 777 742
Surrey-Woking	Rocana	(01483) 761 398
Taunton	Annie Fisher	(01278) 457245
Teesside	John Doyle	(01642)587 274
Totnes	Jerry	(01803) 840 199

OUTSIDE ENGLAND

Co. Clare-Ireland	Sunyata Centre	(00353) 61 367 073
Cork, Ireland	Paddy Boyle	(00353) 21 4622 964
Dublin	Rupert Westrup	(01) 280 2832
Edinburgh	Neil Howell	(0131) 226 5044
Glasgow	James Scott	(0141) 637 9731
Machynlleth-Mid Wales	Angela Llewellyn	(01650) 511350
Pembrokeshire - S Wales	Peter & Barbara (Subhdra) Jackson	(01239) 820 790

The Forest Sangha Newsletter © is published quarterly and is distributed without charge. Comment within it is personal reflection only and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Sangha as a whole. Regarding the Data Protection Act: if you object to your record being kept on the mailing list on our computer files, please write to Newsletter, Amaravati, and we will remove it. Correspondence can be sent to Newsletter Editor, Amaravati. Contributions to printing and distribution costs can be made to The English Sangha Trust, c/o Amaravati. The Newsletter is printed by Ashford Printers, Harrow. Tel: (020) 8427 5097

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





ROYAL MAIL
POSTAGE PAID GB
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD 173