



FOREST SANGHA

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Dwelling on Conditions along the Way

*Ajahn Kāruniko – from the Winter retreat
at Cittaviveka March 1999.*

In recent mornings we've heard readings of some of the statements of the enlightened monks and nuns. Now, one of the things that we contemplate, is the enlightenment of the Buddha – and in the same spirit, the enlightenment of the disciples of the Buddha – for faith: as a way of giving us that energy and aspiration towards realising enlightenment ourselves. When we read how life is for those enlightened beings, does that really speak to us? Is that something that we would like to aspire towards and experience for ourselves?

We've read these stories in the morning, and we've heard of the story of a monk who used to be a ruler – he retired to be a monk – and he kept on saying, 'Oh, what bliss! What bliss!' People thought that he was thinking about the old days when he was a king in a palace.

But he was talking about the bliss of the present moment: not having all the fears and complications of being a ruler, and having the simplicity of life in the forest, under trees. And then, Adhimutta, who met the bandits on the road. Usually when people meet bandits on roads, they shiver and quake and tremble. But when the bandits met Adhimutta, he was all bright and smiley. And they asked him why: 'Aren't you afraid that we're going to chop you up?' But Adhimutta said, 'Well, if you want to do that, it's up to you.'

Enlightenment is to live without hassle, to live peacefully; to live without fear in all situations –

not accumulating material things, or having romantic episodes, or having power and status: but being totally at peace – clear and wise to the way things are. Now, that's really what my heart leaps towards.

So when I read about these things and bring them to mind – even in the midst of things, when I'm walking or sitting; or going through lustful times, or anxious times, or deluded times – I find this is something that gives me the strength to bear with these things: to try not to get caught up in

them, and to let go of them. And I understand that this is what the Buddha and his disciples went through themselves before they realised enlightenment. I find these statements very different from the success statements of the people of the world

– the people who have fame and fortune – and I wonder if, at the end of the day, they have the same peace of mind: the same bliss and happiness.

In the Buddha's teaching, faith is something we cultivate to balance against wisdom. The path unfolds in a more smooth and meaningful way when both faith and wisdom are balanced. Now, when I consider people in the West – maybe we don't tend to have such a strong faith orientation (and when I think of it, before I came to Buddhism I didn't have a lot of faith in anything) – we have a more thinking, reflective approach to the practice. This is good for contemplating Dhamma; but one

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has to also realise its limitations, and be careful our practice doesn't become what one might call a head-trip, where we just sit there all day, thinking and trying to figure it out. Because, in our life, that's what we're taught to do. If there's a problem – if you want to solve anything – you think it out: figure it out on a more rational, logical, thinking level. We try and work out all our problems. But those who've tried to work out enlightenment on a thinking level have been pretty disappointed, because it involves more than just the rational understanding of the teachings.

When we go through difficulties in the practice, we have a desire to know – What's the cause of all this? How has all this come about? We look for the thoughts and ideas that will get rid of this difficulty for us. But when we're confused, and we think about it, do we get less confused? Or when we're caught in doubt, and we try to figure it out, does that allay our doubt? Does a lot of thinking and trying to work things out lead us to a sense of tranquillity or peace of mind? We can see that it has its limitations. The analogy that I find quite meaningful, that the Buddha gave, was of the man being hit by the poisoned arrow. As a doctor came to take out the arrow, the man asked, who fired the arrow; where did it come from; 'who made the flints; what type of wood was it?' When the man asked all those questions, he wasn't allowing the arrow to come out. And with that preoccupation with wanting to know – wanting to figure it out – you get sucked into what you're experiencing, and don't actually let go. Faith is something to balance our tendency to get too caught into this approach. Like: when I'm on the walking path – maybe I feel anxious about something – I'm saying, 'Why am I feeling anxious?' And I can be thinking like this, and it's easy to get caught into it: get caught into the momentum of thinking about things that will happen in the future, and all that. But, when I consider the idea of enlightenment – going beyond these anxieties – somehow it brings me out of that. I'm still very much aware of the anxiety, but it expands one's awareness, and the anxiety doesn't seem so heavy anymore. So, that's why I see faith as something that puts the brakes on trying to work it out on a rational level.

How much do we need to know? Do we have to know everything about everything? In all our experiences, in all the mind states that we experience, do we have to know all the causes: are they from our childhood, from our relationship with our parents; from this or from that – from past lives – due to our astrological predicament? When I consider the Buddha's teaching, he talked about right understanding, and he talked in terms of suffering and how to end suffering. So, we're experiencing something, and we feel suffering.

What's the cause of that suffering? The cause of that suffering is that we're clinging to that experience. And if we don't cling to that experience it will go. How much do we have to know about experience to let it go? Do we have to know everything about the causes of something before we can let go of that thing? I don't find that you have to. In fact, if one just turns to the thing itself and doesn't think about it I find it goes, because I'm not getting involved in it; I'm not making any more out of it; I'm not reacting to it. I can appreciate that sometimes some sort of understanding of something does help us to find peace with it. But there are some things we can't understand. So, can we find peace with something even if we don't know why we're experiencing it? Sometimes people tell us things that are quite meaningful about something we're experiencing and it helps us to understand it and find more peace with it. Sometimes people say, 'why can't I get on with that person?' – 'Oh, it's because his Venus is in Aries, and your Jupiter's in Scorpio.' And even with those sort of explanations you sometimes find peace with the way things are. But some things we don't initially understand. And what can help us find peace with that?

Another aspect of what the Buddha called Right Understanding, is to contemplate impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and not-self. These are the tools the Buddha gave to help us to find peace with our experience: it won't last (it's not permanent); it doesn't really belong to you; and it's not satisfactory (it's suffering to hold on to it). Not trying to understand all the things that have brought this about: but just seeing it and understanding it in the present moment, for what it is. These are the reflections offered by the Buddha. And in terms of understanding the mind, when you consider the Satipatthāna Sutta, what does the Buddha say concerning *cittānupassanā* – concerning the mind? Know the mind that is lustful; know the mind that is not lustful. Know the mind that is hateful; know the mind that is not hateful. Know the mind that is confused, as confused; know the mind that is not confused, as not confused. He's not saying know all the causes of all these things. Just know them for what they are. And this, to me, is about knowing impermanence: knowing that the mind is not always like this.

Another thing that comes under right understanding is the reflection on kamma. Kamma is the law of cause and effect, and one might think the Buddha says you've got to find out what the cause is. But when you look at the teachings, the Buddha actually discourages people from trying to work out all the causes. In one Sutta, about what the Buddha called the Four Unthinkable – the things not to try to work out on a rational level – one of these things is all the intricacies of kamma. But the

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EDITORIAL

The Hinge of Silence

The easiest Buddhist response to the century's end would be silence: I mean it's the second month of 2543, isn't it? And, as is not unusual around Christmas and New Year in the monasteries, we will be no doubt be joined by people who want to get away from the hype and commercialisation that these commemorations bring along with them. However, that fact alone – that turning to silence – is itself worthy of note, no matter what occasion triggers it.

That turning – the 'turning of the Wheel of the Dhamma' as a direct experience – is the turning of the human urge for fulfilment away from accumulation and stimulation towards pure presence, towards Awakening. Each of us may note what is its hinge-point: a realisation of an inability to cope, or of the sudden vertigo that loss of place, person or occupation drops us into – the first Noble Truth of dissonance. Or

that intuition that this dissonance is not haphazard or obligatory: it is caused and we could check it. Thus the second Noble Truth. Or perhaps the turning point is a moment when darkness drops away, or

a moment of the stopping of treadmills of emotion or thought – the Third and Fourth Noble Truths of realisation and clarity. These experiences, whether one has a Buddhist expression for them or not, are the 'soul moments' that indicate we can be more fully Alive than the mere repetitive cycles – the *samsara* – of biological, social or egoic existence.

These moments are awesome, and it is supremely good news that this can be a common-enough ground for human experience in the twentieth century that not only do oddball mystics seek them, or highbrows write about them, but that they can be referred to and revered by the manyfolk. For me, the brightest glint that comes out of this dark century is the Awakening of the West, a stirring towards the Unconditioned even in parallel with the drive to with perfect conditions – for oneself, that is. Hence, even more profound than finding 'perfect' silence for oneself is the holding of empathetic silence: there can be a communion of silence. And that entails grand-heartedness, even forgiveness. What better antidote can there be to the competitive instincts that haunt the planet?

Without aggression or politicking, Buddha-Dhamma has penetrated schools and language. It services sportsmen and women and unstresses the business community. There is an ongoing interfaith dialogue; the dialogue with psychotherapy is also rich and fruitful. There is a Buddhist Prison Chaplaincy, a Buddhist Hospice Trust, an Engaged Buddhist Network, a Dharma School. A Buddhist Trust for the care of the Elderly is in its initial

stages. There are Buddhist monks and nuns of every hue, including a small Theravada community, members of which trudge the highways and byways of Britain as did the samanas of the Buddha's age and there is a lively renunciate community members of which trudge the highways and byways of Britain as did the samanas of the Buddha's age. All seems to be going very well in Buddha-Land. But perhaps the most difficult danger to guard against is that of success. At the Vipassana Teachers' Conference in June of this year, Joseph Goldstein reminded us of the prophesy of the Master who established the Tea Ceremony as a consummate spiritual exercise (and whose name I forget). Anyway, the Master commented that he was sure that within a matter of a decade or so, he had no doubt that the Tea Ceremony would be fully accepted and incorporated into Japanese

culture. And that within that same span of time its true meaning and value would be lost.

Perhaps the most valid cause for concern about the Buddha-Dhamma is therefore that its meaning get diluted into universalist sentiments,

or sidetracked into socially supportive gestures. Do all religions really have the same goal? Or isn't Awakening a personal thing that religious expressions can only highlight when the individual's mind is ready? Does Dhamma have to adapt to and support a society, or is it the other way round: that the urge for Truth will gradually achieve social expression through first affection of the heart? One Way of cultivation is to serve others; but that has to be balanced with the perception that whatever the effort, the world will continue to be a mottled and perilous place. Having personally done a bit of work in establishing monasteries, teaching retreats and producing publications, I have come to note the tingle of enthusiasm with which one starts a project, and the rush of conviction that this is really needed; then the amount of struggle entailed in getting it going; and then a result which always falls short of expectation. It doesn't mean I don't do it – the results are generally better than having done nothing – but that I understand the tingles and rushes more fully. If I grab them as guides, they lead me into the aches of *dukkha*. But to work in terms of 'soul sense' – out of compassion and joy and for the letting-go of doubt, cynicism or self-concern – this is possible. In this way, communities and projects can kick-start, guide and express spiritual growth. Let's be wary that they don't replace it.

Perhaps on a social level, one can only expect a 'Buddh-ish' effect, and that alone would be as good a

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continued from page 2... Buddha encourages us to cultivate good kamma: to cultivate skilful things. And, in many instances, the Buddha talked about cultivating good kamma to allay bad kamma. On this meditation retreat we're cultivating virtuous behaviour: skilful behaviour; cultivating the *brahmavihāras* of kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity; cultivating more mindfulness and awareness and cultivating more calm. This is something it's good to contemplate. We might feel quite despairing sometimes when we dwell on the difficulties we have to go through. But it's good to bring to mind the good things that we're developing at present, and see this cultivation as a way of allaying the bad things; rather than trying to allay the bad things by figuring it all out.

So consider the tools, the wisdom tools, of the Buddha – they're not highly complex – in terms of the Four Noble Truths; in terms of the three characteristics, of impermanence, not-self and unsatisfactoriness; and in terms of kamma: cultivating good kamma. And consider the path of meditation: it's guiding us towards awareness of what's going on in the present without a lot of thinking; to see things as they are in their bareness, not coloured by opinions and ideas. The silence of the mind is something that's productive of a greater wisdom than a lot of figuring out. When the mind becomes more calm and clear, insights – the deeper understandings – just come by nature.

But our mind is so quick – isn't it? – to go into ideas. Just for an example: as you sit here listening to me, are you thinking? When I say something, does your mind run to try and think it out? Can we just listen to the words without the mind going anywhere: without adding anything of our own opinion, or trying to work it out? People listen to talks, and sometimes listen to them again on a tape, and realise how much they've missed. Why is that? Because the mind runs off, and then you're not actually with the moment, with what's happening: not actually listening to what's going on in the present. So, silence – inner silence – really gives us the opportunity to be fully receptive to what's going on in the present. I think in therapeutic circles now, they have these group meetings where they have to practise to learn to listen to each other. Because people find it difficult to listen to each other. Somebody starts to speak, and while they're still speaking, the other person's trying to figure something out about the first thing they said and not listening to the rest.

How much do we trust our own opinions? Do we think they're always wise? Sometimes when I see some of the ideas that go through my mind I consider it's a bit like a newspaper report on an event. I don't know if you believe what you read in the newspapers, but sometimes you get the impression that they're biased in some way. I remember reading an article about when the Karmapa

was instated in Tibet. I read two newspaper reports from two different newspapers. One said it was a wonderful occasion; and the other was very critical about it all: the same event but different ways of reporting, because they were seeing it through their own bias and their own responses.

I'd like to finish with a simile. This simile is one of a journey. It's a journey through the countryside, and the journey is to a place called Nibbāna. And this place called Nibbāna is a place of great safety. But as we go along the way, there are many interesting things: many things that, maybe, we want to know about. Have you ever walked along the Downs with a botanist? He walks four yards, and, 'Wow! Look at this!' If you ever walk along the Downs with a botanist, you make very slow progress. And you make very slow progress, because he gets so much caught up in the beautiful flowers along the way: he knows so much about them. This is what I call, dwelling on conditions.

The Buddha says, it's a nice walk, but actually there's three bandits along the way. Two of them could strike at any time: Sickness and Death. Who's to know when they will come? And if they don't get you, there's Old Age. Unless you find and realise the security of Nibbāna, one of these three bandits will get you. So, don't dwell on the flowers. Then again, we might meet something not nice along the path: a corpse of some animal, something unpleasant to see, and we get afraid – 'Ugh! I'm not going to go any further!' But, don't dwell on that either. There are many things along the way. But faith is saying, keep your heart set on Nibbāna. The Buddha said: a person has to give up the smaller happiness for a greater happiness. And, you know, there is a happiness of dwelling on the nice things along the way, and looking at a pretty orchid, or something of the like; but, are we going to stop there, or are we going to aspire towards a greater happiness?

Have you ever walked through nature without dwelling on anything? Without getting caught up in any particular tree or plant? Actually, it's quite wonderful. Because it's like opening up to all the experiences of that present moment, without getting limited by anything. You won't miss out on anything because you don't get distracted by anything. It makes the walks in nature a very uplifting, very open-heart experience, with less a feeling of separation, because one's not caught up in being the one who knows what everything is. And if one doesn't dwell on the way, maybe these three bandits won't get one. So, contemplate faith, and not dwelling on things and getting caught up in trying to know everything. Trust that what you need to know, you'll know.

I wish you all a safe journey, and may you all reach that place of safety, of Nibbāna. ❖

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The Monastic Millennium

Whatever else will be happening on the planet over the next few months and years, life in the monasteries/nunneries continues with the cultivation of Dhamma. Some of the monasteries are still establishing their living structures, some developing new facilities, some, having completed their building, are focusing on the structures of contemplation.

What follows is a round-up report from several of the monasteries in this large community.

As there are quite a few now, the report will extend into the next issue.

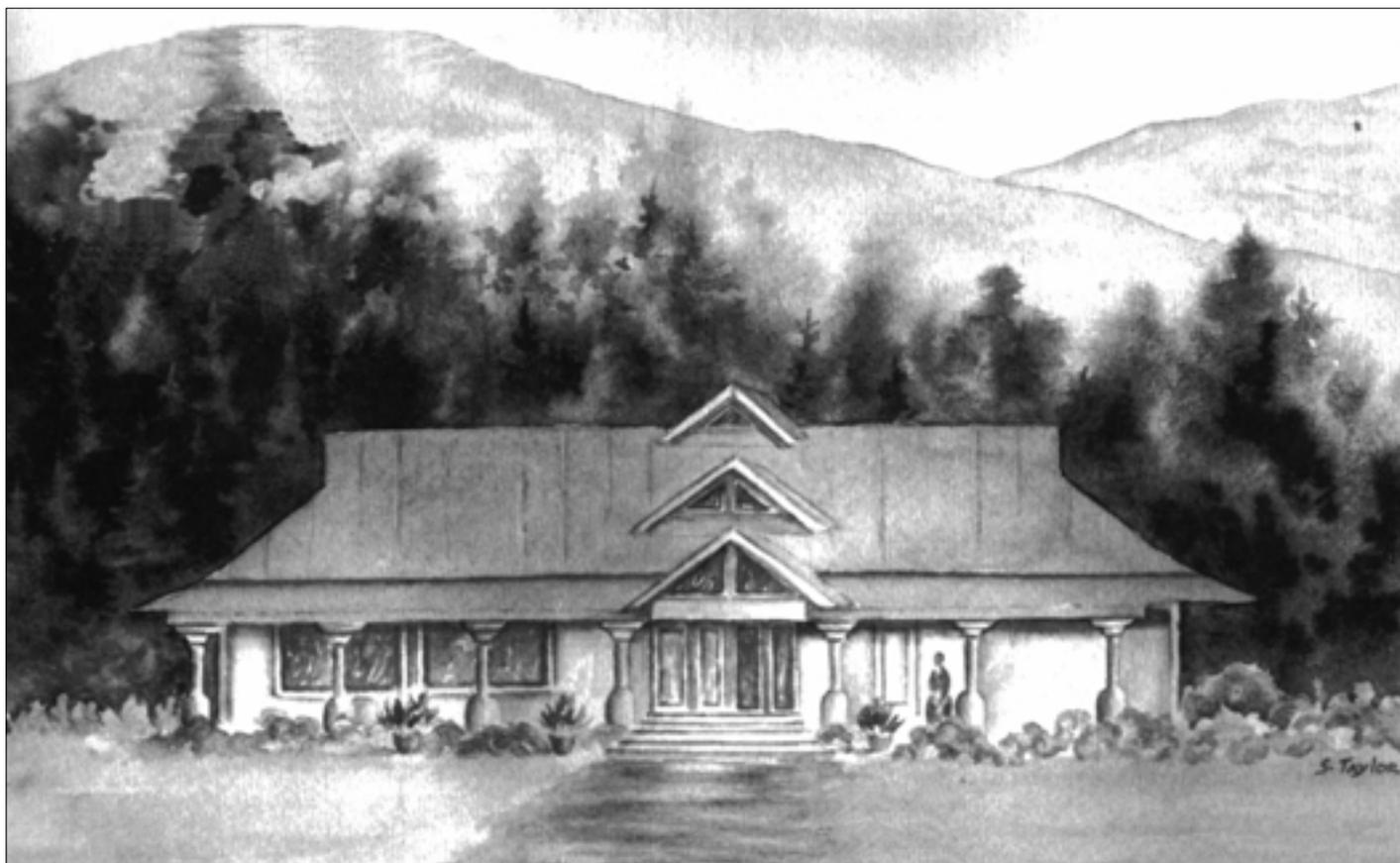
ABHAYAGIRI: PLANS FOR THE FEARLESS MOUNTAIN

Abhayagiri Monastery is situated on 250 acres of steep, rugged, forested land about 130 miles north of San Francisco, California. It was opened in June of 1996. Ajahn Pasanno & Ajahn Amaro are co-abbots there and at present there is a monastic community of ten: five bhikkhus, one siladharā, two sāmaneras and two anagārikas.

THIS REPORT IS BEING WRITTEN as of late October, on our first day of rain since April and, to say the least, we are in the middle of major events. After obtaining our planning permission in May, we courageously began our

infrastructure project on a budget which eventually expanded to a somewhat mind-boggling \$240,000.

The project has been (1) to create a new entrance for the monastery property allowing easier and safer entry and exit, (2) to provide parking places alongside the driveway below the current Dhamma Hall, (3) to construct a 31 space parking area (of a total 80 spaces required by the County), and (4) to dig trenches for water, electricity and gas as well as septic. Involved in this massive earth-moving operation was also the construction of extensive retaining walls. Additionally we had hopes of at least beginning construction of the women's shower and bathroom facility as well as perhaps building one if not two of the 'abbots' kutis'.



Vision of proposed Abhayagiri Reception Hall

continued from page 2... service as Christianity performed for Western Culture during the Dark Ages. But the Buddha gave a teaching to keep us centred on those 'soul moments.' Do we seek out situations that bring them to light? Do we open into them, despite the discomfort of

having our self-image laid bare? And can we then integrate that seeing into living as a person? The Four Noble Truths are the door to that perfection; and empathetic silence is the hinge on which they turn.

Ajahn Sucitto

The Best Laid Plans . . .

As is common with major construction projects, one does not fully know what one is getting into until the work is well in progress. Moreover, when one is dealing with a County agency (Building and Planning), 'surprises' are apt to occur. Such has been the case for us.

The project has gone along beautifully in terms of what has been done so far. (Special mention goes to Bud Garman and his crew of earth-movers who have truly put their hearts into this work, as well as trying hard to keep down costs). Unfortunately, owing to an administrative oversight, we converted the garage into a Dhamma Hall without obtaining prior approval from the County. So we are now in the position of having to bring the building up to scratch, with the price for this part of the project alone perhaps as much as \$60,000. Having thus been technically 'red tagged' we are obliged to begin this improvement process immediately.

Re-visions

Because of this and a few other cost over-runs we have had to put a number of projects on hold, namely, the women's shower & toilet facilities and soakaway construction, and the building of the two abbots' kutis. Even though we are in great need of the above projects (as our facilities are overstrained), our priority is to show our good faith to the County in that we are trying to fulfill the conditions of the planning permission we were granted. This also means we now have to regularise all structures which do not meet the Code, which most significantly includes the five existing kutis which we also built during our first year. For some of these it might prove more economical to dismantle them and rebuild from scratch, rather than to try to bolster them up.

We have to complete the roadway, parking lot and retaining wall projects before the serious rains begin this winter and we are well on the way to achieving this. However, this effort will take us to the limits of our budget and, although we are committed to bringing the Dhamma Hall up to Code, we are not yet sure where those extra funds will come from. Suffice to say, this is our first real financial crunch as a new monastery.

Projects for the Year 2000 & Beyond

Those readers who might have been to Abhayagiri will know how taxed and overcrowded our facilities can be. In addition to the left-over projects from this year (the women's bathhouse and the abbots' kutis) we would like to construct a small office building, with a nuns' day-room and quarters for a disabled person, near the current house, and a monks' utility building up in the forest (3/4 of a mile from the house) – comprising toilets,

showers, sewing room, small workshop & common room – where the male monastic community will be centred. There is also a high priority to build another four to six standard kutis.

The biggest of these projects are the monks' utility building and the new office; when constructed they will limit the number of monastics needing to work around the small house, which currently serves all the functions of office, kitchen, book & tape library, bathing facilities and tea-room. Dividing these functions will help create more suitable space for those entering monastic training, and will help move the centre of gravity of the monastic community further into the forest.

When the above construction is completed we will think about beginning the first of the two great buildings, that is, the reception centre/storage/kitchen/lay people's utility building; this is proposed to be a 6,000 square foot structure. By the time of its completion it would serve well to provide for the needs of all our lay guests and visitors.

The other large building planned for the distant future is an octagonal meditation hall up in the forest – suitable for eighty people spaciouly seated, or a hundred and twenty-five snugly for a festival day.

The above plans describe our wishes and represent our best efforts to surmise how to proceed with the construction of the new monastery. Ultimately it is expected to house about 30 permanent residents (reckoned with kutis for eighteen monks, six nuns and six lay people) with some facilities for temporary guests.

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AMARAVATI:

THE LAST YEAR has seen many endings at Amaravati. The end of a prolonged phase of building repairs. The completion of the Temple and the opening ceremony. The 'moving-on', in different directions, of many of the group of senior monastics who have been resident in recent years. Perhaps less easy to see, a fading of the sense that 'there's things to be done'. Although the sense of a pioneering spirit, predominant in the early years, had gradually faded, it might well be that we look back on 1999 as the time when it truly felt that Amaravati had arrived, much as many might say the same of 1989 for Chithurst.

After the obviously busy period leading up to the Temple opening, the Vassa has been relatively quiet, and a welcome opportunity to allow more space for things to settle and finish.

What might this mean for the future of Amaravati in the new millennium? We can easily say that the future is

unknown, and equally easily that it will appear to grow out of conditions. If we are at the start of a new chapter, or the next cycle, what might be its characteristic signs?

It's easiest to consider the ways in which there might be some continuity. At its simplest, we imagine that the monastery will continue as a place intended for those people interested in the teaching and practice of Dhamma. As a physical environment, it's now essentially good enough, complete, given the work that has been done in the past few years. It's large enough to offer opportunities for many people. The four requisites – the material support – are well supplied, and there is more time and opportunity to develop formal practice both individually and as a group. There is a firm foundation within the traditions and forms of Theravāda Buddhism, and still a strong connection with the Thai roots of Wat Pah Pong, Ajahn Chah's monastery. And, now that Ajahn Sumedho is 65 and has moved into the new Abbot's kuti, he hopes to see out his days here.

The place is well equipped to provide for all quarters of the four-fold Sangha.

As previously, it will be possible to connect at many different levels and in different ways, because many worlds intersect here. With the monastic Sangha as a focus, there is an assortment of orbiting universes. There are lay people who find support through the developing Upasikā group. The retreat centre offers a consistently full programme. There are ex-monastics, people who have been anything from a few months to many years living in the monastic form, and are now in lay life. Another growing fraternity is of people who have lived for extended periods – as laymen and laywomen – in the monastery. Myriad other groups, friendships and associations have arisen in all sorts of ways – being on retreat together, meeting up at Sunday afternoon talks, the Saturday meditation class, the *dāna* meal on Sundays, coming to Wesak or Kathina. There are regular and familiar faces from all the main countries where Theravāda is common – Thais, Sri Lankans, Cambodians, Laos, and Brits too (or is that Europeans or Westerners?). For each group Amaravati both signifies something particular to a culture, and something grander and greater, more universal and inclusive.

The new chapter will hopefully see something of a 'rounding and deepening' from what has already developed. For some, characteristics of Amaravati have been its apparent size, seeming complexity, and relentless busy-ness. And yet the new chapter is likely to be much more relaxed. It seems quite possible to foresee sustained periods without too many things all happening at once. If nothing more, there is a much more settled backdrop against which to see the ongoing chaos and complexity. And there is an opportunity to encourage greater balance by providing for complementary ways to practise –

communal/solitary and engaged/withdrawn for example. So we are likely to develop the scope for more flexibility. This might include, for example, further support for the Upasikā group, more shared responsibility, and finding ways to create some more secluded spaces here, including ultimately some kutis.

Looking at a much bigger picture, over the last couple of decades Buddhism has gradually become an influence in this Western culture, and equally – as found here – has been much adapted by it. Amaravati was born out of a deep faith, and continues as an expression of the faith, generosity and practice of a great diversity of people.

We hope, through our presence, example and participation, to be a positive force within this society, and a benefit to all beings.

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BODHINYANA MONASTERY, WESTERN AUSTRALIA:

AUSTRALIA IS BLESSED with space, plenty of it. Thus in 1983 it was relatively easy to find 100 acres of forest on a hillside with views to the Indian Ocean, which was far enough away from the city to be secluded but near enough to be easy to get to. We are an easy one hour by car from the very centre of Perth.

Even so, the only lay activities we encourage here is the daily *dāna*. All teaching and so on are performed on the weekend in our city centre, 5 km north of central Perth, and retreats are held elsewhere. By keeping all lay teaching outside the monastery, we have successfully preserved its atmosphere of seclusion.

We have attempted to make this monastery a place for monks, not for lay people. A place to realise Nibbāna not to spread the Teachings. This is a totally monk-centred monastery. We do not even allow nuns to stay here for long periods, thus we are building a completely separate nuns' monastery on 583 acres of forest to the east of Perth.

This is a training centre for monks with a strong emphasis on the *Vinaya* and the study of Suttas. Also the Pāli language is taught to those monks interested. But it is the practice of meditation, using *samatha* and *vipassanā* together, which is the core practice of this monastery.

Thus, each monk has their own kuti (hut) in the forest, separated enough so the monks can neither see nor hear each other. There are now 20 such kutis in this monastery. Many have covered walking meditation paths attached to the kutis to encourage *cankama* meditation. There is also a 3-room visitors' block for men and a 3-room visitors' block for women. Soon there

will be a 4-roomed anagarikas' block for those in training to be monks. That will be our last accommodation building here. A community of 30, including 6 visitors, is sufficient.

Our Dhamma Hall, separate kitchen-dining room building, toilets, etc. are also sufficient. So we are very close to the end of all major building work here. All that is left is building up the practice.

There were 15 bhikkhus and 1 novice here for the Vassa, which is close to capacity. As the numbers increase, I hope to establish hermitages for 2 or 3 *majjhima* monks much further from Perth for even greater seclusion. Such hermitages will be small, extremely frugal and only for healthy monks with a solid foundation in *samatha* who want to further such practice. I expect these to go to such hermitages for, say, 3 months at a time, coming back to Bodhinyana to help the Sangha for the rest of the year. Such hermitages will be cheap and easy to find say, 4-5 hours from Perth, deep in the empty Australian bush.

Our aim is to produce experienced meditators, *ariyas* even, capable of realising the Dhamma for themselves in a protected environment, before taking it out to a world hungry for experienced teachers.

Ajahn Brahmavamso

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BODHINYANARAMA MONASTERY, NEW ZEALAND:

THIS HAS BEEN A TIME of consolidation and expansion at Bodhinyanarama. Last year the Trust purchased a 34 hectare block of land out the back of the existing monastery property. This now makes the total size of the monastery 51 hectares or 126 acres. A retreat kuti or hut was flown in by helicopter to a remote site on the new land and Ajahn Viradhammo is enjoying being the first person to use it for his 6 month solitary retreat. We have enjoyed offering longish solitary retreats to Sangha members from overseas and so far Ajahn Sucitto and Ajahn Medhānandī have enjoyed the seclusion and tranquillity of the Stokes Valley bush. Having Sangha members here on retreat and out of the normal routine and dynamics of the rest of the community is a helpful reminder to us all of the direction of the practice and a lovely situation to offer to those in need of the solace of solitude. We also enjoy the visits and presence of Sangha members from overseas from time to time as it is easy to feel isolated from the larger Buddhist family living in the South Pacific as we do. This year we have had the pleasure of visits from Ajahn Munindo, Ajahn Pasanno, Ajahn Kāruniko, Ajahn Medhānandī, Venerable Sujivo

and Ajahn Boonme from Thailand.

There are now 9 individual kutis for the resident Sangha to live in complete with small gas heaters and wooden walking meditation tracks. It is a delight to live in the forest in solitary surroundings and in close touch with the rhythms of Nature. It offers a respite and a balance to the intensity and demands of the group activities of the community. Finding that balance between being solitary and living in community and having the skill and the agility to move between the two is something we've been trying to develop here. We have also been exploring more communal decision-making processes and a less hierarchical way of living together. Sangha life evolves and is a dynamic expression of the Tradition we belong to, the individuals who have made a commitment to it, and the culture and the needs of the society who support it. The monastery has been in New Zealand for thirteen years now and we continue to gain skill and understanding in how to make this venerable monastic tradition thrive in the West?

The past year has also seen the construction and consecration of the beautiful Mahābodhi Stūpa. Perched on a hillside overlooking the monastery and the valley below, it is a lovely reminder of the Buddha and his teachings. It stands 8 meters tall and is a replica of the famous Shwe Dagon Pagoda in Rangoon, Burma. Most of the money was raised in New Zealand and the work was carried out by local contractors and a team of artisans from Burma. They spent 5 months doing the intricate and detailed finishing work using traditional methods that have been passed down through their families for centuries. The result is a beautiful monument worthy to be venerated and a lovely offering from the Buddhist community to the people of New Zealand for a peaceful and harmonious new millennium.

The ordained community has hovered around the 6-8 people size for the past couple of years. We've had 3 senior monks living here for the past year and that creates a rich sense of experience and diversity. We have just recently had a *pabbajjā* 'going forth' ceremony for a Kiwi sāmanera and an *upasampadā* or bhikkhu ordination. The latter was the 4th ever bhikkhu ordination to occur in New Zealand and the first in about 8 years.

A web site for the monastery has been set up at <http://yourname.co.nz/www/bz/bodhinet.htm>. Anyone who'd like to know more about the monastery and its activities or have a visual look at where we are, could get it from there. Or better yet, come visit. It's well worth the trip.

Ajahn Sugato

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SANTACITTARAMA, ITALY:

'THEY DIDN'T MAKE ROME IN A DAY' is a helpful reflection to bear in mind here at Santacittarama, 50 kilometres from Italy's bustling capital city. In the two years since we moved to the present address much has already been achieved towards developing a modest-sized forest monastery. Its full potential, however, has yet to be realised. Fortunately, the relocating from the old monastery went quite smoothly – the buildings were already in fair condition – and since those hectic early days we have been attempting to maintain a healthy balance between formal practice, work and teaching.

Work that has been done include a large amount of land-clearing, road-repairing, opening up woodland paths and gardening. The first Christmas here was spent relaying 70 metres of sewage pipe. New monasteries often have problems with their sewage systems – I have some previous experience from my time at Amaravati. We now have three simple wooden kutis, two of them in delightful locations in the woodland overlooking the stream. A heating system has been installed in the guest house, and upgraded in the main building. Visitors and guests can now take advantage of a quiet meditation room that used to be the workshop – which has been moved to the more spacious garage.

Plans for the future include acquiring more land. There is now the possibility of buying an adjoining 13 acres, with woods and meadow, that would double the size of the property, extending it right to the edge of the abandoned cemetery of a medieval town called Poggio Nativo. We need to research how best to conserve and develop this land, in a way that will also benefit the various forms of wildlife that have been seen on it, such as fox, badger, hare, porcupine, squirrel, dormouse, weasel, beech marten, tortoise and several species of lizard, snake and birds. It would also offer further suitable sites for kutis, sponsorship having already been offered for three of them. Accommodation for guests could be extended by converting an outbuilding that served in the past as a stable. Finally, although we're not in too much of a hurry, it would be nice to replace the large and draughty tent with a proper temple/meditation hall some time during the new millennium.

A monastery, of course, is not just about buildings and building projects but, more importantly, about people. The resident community, as elsewhere, is not fixed but in a state of flux, of comings and goings of monks, novices, anagārikas and laity, at any one time numbering around 5-8 people. Although the daily routine is usually quite structured, with morning and evening chanting and meditation and a morning work period, the afternoon is free for private study and practice. Opportunities are also offered for individual retreats in the kutis. This summer our Thai monk, Ajahn

Jutindharo, who has been here for more than six years, was able to spend the whole of the three-month Vassa period on solitary retreat.

Having a mixed Sangha of Thai and European nationalities is enriching and at times challenging – often we lack even a common language – and allows us to better serve the needs of both the Thai and Italian lay communities. As is usually the case with other monasteries in the West, the Thais tend to come mostly to make offerings and participate in ceremonies, while the Italians come to meditate and to learn about the Buddha's teachings. Gratifyingly, however, we have recently been witnessing more and more Thai people coming to ask questions about Dhamma and to spend a few days participating in the daily meditative life of the monastery. Some Italians, on the other hand, are also coming to request the refuges and precepts, to make offerings and help out. A young man recently drove 850 kilometres from Sicily to offer his jeep!

With the monastery now well established we have felt more free to respond to teaching invitations, after having kept a low profile for a couple of years. The Mindfulness Meditation Association of Rome, just a few minutes walk from the Vatican, hosts us regularly for meditation classes and retreats. They are very skilfully guided by Professor Corrado Pensa and the level of interest shown is always very encouraging. A Theravāda retreat centre near Piacenza that used to be a hotel, until it was inherited by an Italian meditator, is another venue to which we are regularly invited. Other invitations have come from such places as Bari and Naples in the south, Arezzo and Lucca in the north. This year I had a very fruitful trip to Slovenia, part of the former Yugoslavia that has a common border with Italy, for a public talk in Ljubljana followed by a weekend retreat in the unspoiled beauty of the Julian Alps. Mostly, however, we stay in the monastery, which is also very much appreciated for its lovely tranquil setting, where we hold occasional beginners' meditation classes and day-long study and practice retreats.

With the coming of the new millennium, and all the preparations underway to cater for millions of extra tourists expected at this time, Rome is even more chaotic than usual. One of the jubilee events that will be of special interest to us is an interfaith gathering in St. Peter's Square, with the Pope, Dalai Lama and other religious leaders, in the spirit of collaboration between the various religions on the threshold of the new millennium. Better late than never!

'All roads lead to Rome', as the saying goes, and one of them goes right past our monastery, so if you happen to be down this way, do call in for a visit.

Ajahn Chandapālo

Recollecting on the Vow Power of the Buddha

Kittisāro – from the Amaravati summer retreat 1998.

Before this retreat dissolves, it's good to recollect on how it's been. Thānissarā and I both feel a lot of gratitude. There's a lovely word in Pāli for gratitude which is '*kataññutā*'. '*Kata*' means 'done' and '*ñutā*' means 'knowing' – knowing what has been done. Recollecting what has been done is the essence of gratitude. I feel a lot of gratitude for this opportunity to come back to Amaravati, a special place in the world for cultivating the Dhamma. I feel a lot of gratitude for the people here, everyone who has come and made the effort to offer their energy to this retreat, your willingness to work with that which isn't easy to work with.

This place is here because of those who are willing to be here and cultivate the Path – people like Ajahn Sumedho all those years ago leaving his home, leaving what was familiar, what normal people respected, to go off to Thailand for the sake of Awakening. Being willing, as a huge *farang*, to sit with a shaved head at the end of a long line of monks alongside the little novices. Imagine what he went through because there was a spark of faith that there was something to be learned through persevering – then eventually going on to gather others around him so that the Dhamma could come here to England.

Part of what allowed Ajahn Sumedho to be so inspired was the presence of Luang Por Chah. I feel profound gratitude to Ajahn Chah and '*kataññutā*' just recollecting what he did with his life: the incredible patience, perseverance, effort, investigations and breakthroughs, his immense willingness to share. When I came in 1976 before he was ill, streams of people continually came to see him. I think at that time he already had 20 or 30 branch monasteries; that's hundreds of monks and nuns and thousands of lay people who looked to him for guidance. He was willing to be with and respond to us fellow human beings, to encourage us to practise Dhamma.

I think the great gratitude that I have for Luang Por Chah is remembering that he made the Path seem possible, do able. He didn't make it seem impossible, he made it seem possible. In Thai he said, '*Ben yung nee*' – 'It's like this.' We are capable of doing that, acknowledging that 'it's like this, here and now'. Is it painful, is it pleasing, is it hot, cold? That's how we come back to the Refuge of the Buddha, just to be that which is knowing 'It's like this.' That's something I can do.

Then we can look at who inspired Ajahn Chah,

various teachers and the teachings of the Buddha, and as we keep going back we reflect on the Buddha himself. When people kept lavishing praise on Ajahn Chah he would say, 'Not mine, it's the Buddha. Give it to the Buddha.' Let's reflect on the awesome accomplishment of Sakyamuni Buddha, on what has been done.

It's important to feel gratitude. It's very important because it honours the context. It fills us up and allows us to see beyond the distorted contraction of self. Yes, it's also important sometimes to notice cracks and flaws and things we need to improve, things we need to do, but when we're obsessed with 'what's wrong' that's just living in a hell realm. It's important to be able to recollect blessings, to recollect fullness, to recollect the good fortune in our lives, and yes, also at the right time to give attention to what can be transformed.

We can recollect the good fortune of meeting the teachings of the Buddha. Here at Amaravati we've struggled through a ten-day retreat, but just imagine the conditions that gave rise to *Sammāsambodhi*, the full awakening of a Buddha. We can each get a feeling when we go to 'This is how it is' for the suffering that comes from grasping and the suffering that comes from rejecting. When we try to possess the changing nature of things we generate stress, and in seeing this we recognise the peace of non-grasping, the stillness and peace in the midst of movement. In not grasping and not rejecting, the flow of conditions doesn't agitate us.

There is resting in the Refuge of just knowing. That's called non-agitation, non-birth and death. It's the Deathless. So we can realise a little peace, a little freedom and we know the possibility of continuing to cultivate so that freedom is more sustained, more uninterrupted. That taste of peace is the same taste that the Buddha had because all things merge in the Deathless. This is where all things come together, that place of non-possession. But the Buddha's accomplishment wasn't just unshakeable peace, which is an awesome accomplishment in itself.

Ancient countless eons ago our Buddha, when he was an ordinary person like us, met a previous Buddha and was so touched by the capacity of that Buddha to help living beings that an aspiration and vow arose in him. 'I too could help others. I want to become a Buddha. I vow to accomplish that.' It's a natural thing, and so he was inspired to make a resolve which is now sometimes articulated in the Four Great Vows of a bodhisattva.

The first vow is: 'Living beings are numberless, I vow to help them all to cross over the sea of suffering, the sea of birth and death.' That's a huge vow. The second Vow is: 'Though afflictions are endless... afflictions such as difficult moods, aversion, greed, confusion... though these afflictions seem inexhaustible and endless, I vow to penetrate and to cut through them all.' The third Great Vow is: 'Dhamma doors are measureless, I vow to cultivate them all.' Why did the Buddha make this vow? One of the incredible qualities of our Buddha is he was able to respond to different people's needs. If we, in our present individual cultivation, think we have to do all the countless meditative practices, we would feel confused and overwhelmed. The Buddha, however, might give one teaching for someone to go off and reflect on for six months, knowing that that teaching would be perfect for them. For one person he might emphasise *samatha* practice, for another contemplation of death, or more attention to Vinaya discipline. Through the third Great Vow the Buddha cultivated skill in countless

... 'full' enlightenment:

the enlightenment that not only knows how to let go and be peaceful but the enlightenment that also knows how to perfectly respond to conditions in a way which is a true blessing for all beings.

approaches to the Path. The Buddha mastered all the Dhamma Doors, all the skilful means to enable beings each with their unique tendencies to give rise to insight into the true nature of things. The fourth Vow is: 'Though the Buddha Path is unsurpassed I vow to realise it.' The Buddha Path conditions that which gives rise not only to peace but to *Sammāsambodhi*. It means 'perfect', 'big', and 'full' enlightenment: the enlightenment that not only knows how to let go and be peaceful but the enlightenment that also knows how to perfectly respond to conditions in a way which is a true blessing for all beings. *Sammāsambodhi* knows fully how to receive the forms of fellow beings, how to listen to you and then respond to what you need for awakening. The Buddha is the Great Physician.

The Buddha consciously chose to be reborn again and again for the sake of cultivating this skill and for the



sake of using his many births to cultivate a profound field of blessings generated from perfecting the *pāramitās*. He was even born as an animal, or as a king, a beggar, every conceivable circumstance, just for the sake of learning – motivated by this resolve to fully realise truth so that it can also be shared with everyone. What an amazing thing. It's awesome. And then to set down a teaching and consciously consider that it can deteriorate in this or that way, therefore he put these safeguards in place so the Teaching could last through time.

I am similar to Thānissarā in that in the beginning I didn't have much of a feeling for the Buddha. Who's the Buddha anyway? In parts of the Northeast of Thailand some of these huge Buddha images weren't the most inspiring in the world. Some even had Christmas lights flashing on and off continually. But then meeting living breathing embodiments of the Path like Luang Por Chah and getting a feeling for someone who's devoted his time to this practice, faith arose. This is the power of Sangha. In seeing the beautiful fruits of that I was inspired to practise myself. Then as I started to reflect more on

these amazing teachings that had been laid down and that are rolling through time and space, I started to reflect 'Well how did this get here' and then little by little a great sense of gratitude arose for the Buddha.

So in our daily life I think it's useful from time to time to reflect on our blessings, to reflect

on our good fortune. That's very important. There's something else I'd like to mention that I think is helpful in linking what happens in this rarefied, more protected space of retreat to our everyday life. I think that prayerfulness is very helpful. It certainly has been for Thānissarā and myself. Remember the Buddha's teaching on the salt crystal. When a lump of salt is dissolved in a small amount of water it's bitter, and you can't drink it. Sometimes the resultant karma or the obstructions that are coming to us from what we've set into motion are pretty bitter to taste, they are hard to digest and transform. Sometimes our sword of wisdom gets blunted or even shattered when trying to cut through chaos, confusion, despair. Our *samādhi* is scattered and though we might intend to see how things are, we get overwhelmed and inexorably dragged into very painful places, losing all perspective. Even the 'it's just like this' teaching seems impossible. The Buddha says when a lump of salt is put into a larger body of pure water it can dissolve and dilute the bitterness. Then it's drinkable. And sometimes we need to remember to

generate blessings, to dilute the overwhelming toxicity of our resultant karma. Yes, the highest and most wonderful teaching is 'seeing how it is', but sometimes it's hard to see how it is because the obstructions are so difficult and deep rooted.

Then it's useful to do something that is tangibly good. Like putting our palms together and praising that which is worthy of praise. It's called *pūjā*. When everything else is crazy, if we can just connect with and lift up into our heart that which is worthy of praise, we're allowing into our cramped bitter heart a whole vast reservoir of pure energy. It might be just offering a stick of incense or putting a flower on a shrine, it might be in the middle of nowhere remembering the Buddha, the great bodhisattvas and sages, the precious qualities of Dhamma and Sangha. In this way we begin to resonate with the energy of that which we're honouring. Some may think, 'Gosh this is like jumping through hoops again, I came to Buddhism to get away from that'. Yes if they are blind rites and rituals, but I'm encouraging us to really investigate what happens when we praise, when we

say '*Namo*.' 'I honour, I offer my life into this Refuge. I honour all the enlightened beings of the past, present and future and the amazing array of invisible beings around us.' Whether we believe or not they are there. This is a dynamic, mysterious universe and there is a response. The universe

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demonstrates that this Path isn't just about
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*By honouring the context through pūjā, or gratitude,
or connecting with Sangha, the whole nature
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responds. I have found that creating *kusala kamma* generates a virtuous energy and a field of blessings that helps to dissolve some of the obstructions that are rolling in from all sides. This sort of prayerfulness is a great friend.

To use a more coarse example, let's say we have something heavy to lift up and we can't lift it up. If someone else comes along to help us, we might be able to lift it up. Yes, the Buddha focused on the important effort we each have to make in this teaching. The Buddha and the great saints can't give us enlightenment. We have to see it for ourselves; it's we who have to let go. But the idea that we can't be helped is erroneous, we're helped tremendously in many ways all the time. If we are in a terrible state and a good friend comes along, it makes a difference. Their presence, energy and reflections can sometimes make a big difference in how we are relating to the moment, how we might be perpetuating the problem. The great principle of Sangha as a Refuge demonstrates that this Path isn't just about 'Me' doing it. By honouring the context through *pūjā*, or

gratitude, or connecting with Sangha, the whole nature of the present afflicted mind-states is shifted. You can make a phone call to a wise friend that might make a difference. A *pūjā* in a way is like making such a phone call. One is connecting and resonating with the 'here and now' Dhamma realm which is wise, pure, trustworthy. I encourage you to investigate this, I've found it very helpful.

Another way to help generate a reservoir of goodness in our lives that blesses the world around us and also blesses our whole sense of well being is to practice this wonderful quality of *dāna* or generosity. This profound and incredible quality can make such a difference to our whole sense of self respect and our whole sense of well being. The nature of a deluded sense of self is a contraction around the perception of possession. *Dāna* directly opposes that contraction and is also very natural. It is our nature to give, to share, as it's the nature of a fragrant flower to offer its fragrance in all directions, it doesn't think 'Oh God, do I have to give that out today again', it just does it. Like the sun, 93 million miles away, it is just being itself. One tiny slither of the sun's radiance touches and energises this planet. What if the sun called it off for a while? When we are natural, not clinging, then our own natural energy is also being shared, also being offered. Let us check this out in our daily life, offering our kindness, our time to listen, our encouragement to another and our extra resources to those that need them.

So let us all consider in our own lives how to cultivate more consciously a field of blessings, following the example of the Buddha in his many lives, using every circumstance to generate a vast and pure pool of *pāramitā*. Today is a special day for Thānissarā and myself, it's our wedding anniversary. I feel fortunate to have such a good spiritual friend. We encourage each other to practice Dhamma, to deepen our understanding and to find ways to share with others. By chance we've ended up in South Africa these last years. Recently we read the impressive life story of Nelson Mandela. His life is a wonderful inspiration. Just think of someone imprisoned in awful conditions for 27 years, who was determined to transform that prison into a university, into a temple and a place of learning. Amazingly he came out of that without bitterness. I think we all have our prisons, our obstructions and our limitations that we are wrestling with. But you know it's possible to overcome these difficulties. We can grow through these challenges. Ajahn Chah always made me feel I could do it. Let's remember our blessings, and meet this moment afresh with faith.

We are honoured to be here in this position of sharing Dhamma. Please forgive us for the things that we say that aren't helpful or are confused, we are still finding our way and are keen to keep learning. ❖

H O M E W A R D J O U R N E Y

Travelling, the location gets smaller:
a lodge, a room, a train, a car.

At the airport it had come down
to my worn immediacy and zip-up bag -
and that lighter and less important now
with the "Return" label dangling down
like a notification of terminal disease.
And how much, then, does anything weigh?

Half my world goes down the belt and in
exchange
a right to passage, a gate, and a time are
given;

and finally a seat in the segmented hull
crammed with similarly unsubstantiated cells.
Craft within craft, all span with no depth,
we are verbs held in tense, third person
singular.

Everything is sealed under a pressure
through which remote stewards flutter
bearing consolations wrapped in plastic.

Iturn down the lot, choose helplessness:
let it become us truly and fly between our
poles;

let the resonances of the displaced moment
flow clear presence into this unloved night;
under the glass of my name and number,
let the storm-swung compass needle flicker
and address outcast oceans. The wraps are
off;

I am unpacked - to be swept in and through
another pulse, another gravity,
to the shared lost planet. Homeward journey.

Shine on, our planet, under a travelling
star.

All directions home pull out of orbit,
clear off-track. And tuck snug into vastness.





AMARAVATI NOTICES

Winter Retreat

There will be a three-month retreat in all the European monasteries in the first part of 2000, beginning early in January and concluding either towards or at the end of March. During this time the Sangha will be devoting its time to meditation and introspection. Different monasteries have slightly different opportunities for visitors and guests and it is best to phone or write to them if you are considering a visit or wish to support the retreat. It may well be the case that the meditation hall is open and you are welcome to attend any teachings that are being given. At Amaravati and Cittaviveka visitors are welcome to come and offer dana or help in the kitchen generally. You are especially welcome to join the evening puja. Other than observance days it would pay to telephone to confirm it is on.

It is however unlikely that anyone will be available to attend to you personally.

Staying at Amaravati: The community will be on retreat during January, February and March, there will be no guest accommodation available until after this time.

If you write enquiring about staying please allow that your letter won't be replied to until after March 15.

Rainbows Weekend: 26th – 29th

May: a weekend of creative activities to produce 'Rainbows' Magazine.

Weekend Camp: 14th – 16th July:

a relaxed low key event. A good introduction to the monastery for both children and parents.

Summer Camp: 19th – 27th August:

over a week of activities catering for all the family. It follows a relaxed monastic schedule with classes for children.

Young Persons' Monastery Retreat:

3rd - 5th December: A taste of silent meditation for teenagers.

For all of the above contact: Kim Waller, 16a Great Russell Mansions, 60 Great Russell Street, London. WC1B 3BE
Telephone: 0171 404 5057 or Dan Jones, Telephone: 01223 246257

CITTAVIVEKA NOTICES

Cittaviveka: Lay Forums

The following dates have been fixed for Lay Forums in the monastery:

Sunday April 9th

Sunday May 14th

Sunday June 25th

(themes as yet to be chosen)

The format of the Lay Forum is of a meeting chaired by a lay person. The meetings begin at 2:00pm and conclude at 4:00pm approximately. After brief preliminary talks by a monastic and a lay person, there is discussion of the current theme in small groups, followed by a general discussion and tea.

GENERAL NOTICES

Tapes – and Books

Amaravati Cassettes (see address opposite) will also be helping with the free distribution of books. The first titles that they have are:

Introduction to Insight Meditation Discipline and Conventions

(guidelines on relating to monks and nuns)

Kalyāna (talks by Ajahn Sucitto)

We hope to have a more complete stock in due course. All of these will require a SAE or money order to cover postal costs: **For the books**, please send a SAE plus the following postage

for UK/Europe:

Introduction to Insight 19p/44p;
Discipline and Conventions 19p/56p;
the above two 31p/69p; **Kalyāna** 50p/£1.44p; **Kalyāna + the previous two** 61p/ £1.82p. If you can't send a suitable envelope, please add 3p to cover the cost and send a money order.

One-Day Retreats in Brighton

Ajahn Sucitto teaches one day retreats in Brighton every few months. If you would like to be informed of details, please phone

Nimmala on 01273-723-378

Young Persons Retreat 24th – 29th

April: An opportunity for 14 – 21 year olds to discuss and experience meditation and the application of Buddhist practice with like-minded people. Held in Bexhill, East Sussex (*not Amaravati*).

For this retreat only contact:

Anna Ruijterman, Acorns, Coldharbour Lane, Patching, Near Worthing. BN13 3XE
Tel: 01903 871469

Calendars for 2000

now available at your nearest monastery. Call in or send an SAE + with postage, 40p for UK or 67p Europe.

Meditation Group: Ipswich.

We are an informal group which meets regularly to practise meditation. We are affiliated to Amaravati and there is the opportunity to visit this and other Buddhist centres. If you are interested in joining us please contact Doug Gerrie on 01473 747592

Forest Sangha Newsletter is available on the internet at

www.fsnews.cjb.net

as well as many other Buddhist sites like **www.BuddhaMind.cjb.net**

We try to bring out the *Newsletter* quarterly, depending upon funds and written material. In the spirit of our relationship with lay people, we naturally depend upon donations: any contributions towards printing/distribution costs can be made to: 'The English Sangha Trust', Amaravati. In that same spirit, we ask you to let us know if you wish to be put on (or removed from) the mailing list, or if you have moved. Write to *Newsletter*, Amaravati. The newsletter is also available on the internet from: <http://www.fsnews.cjb.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 – (0181) 427-5097

Teaching and Practice Venues

MEDITATION GROUPS	
<i>These are visited regularly by Sangha members.</i>	
BATH Catherine Hewitt, (01225) 405-235	LONDON BUDDHIST SOCIETY 58 Eccleston Square, SW1 (Victoria) (0171) 834 5858 Meditation Sundays: led by a monk or nun, every 2nd month. 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Thursday classes – 6.00pm
BERKSHIRE Penny Henrion (01189) 662-646	
BRISTOL Lyn Goswell (Nirodha), (0117) 968-4089	LEEDS AREA Daniella Loeb, (0113) 2791-375 Anne Voist, (01274) 670-865
SOUTH DORSET Barbara Cohen-Walters (Sati sati), (01305) 786-821	
EDINBURGH Muriel Nevin, (0131) 337-0901	SOUTHAMPTON Ros Dean (01703) 422430
GLASGOW James Scott, (0141) 637-9731	
HAMPSTEAD Caroline Randall, (0181) 348-0537	SURREY/WOKING Rocanā, (01483) 761-398
MEDITATION GROUPS	
<i>These meet regularly & receive occasional visits from Sangha.</i>	
BEDFORD David Stubbs, (01234) 720-892	MAIDSTONE Tony Millett, (01634) 375-728
BELFAST Paddy Boyle, (01232) 427-720	MIDHURST Barry Durrant, (01730) 821-479
BRIGHTON Nimmala, (01273) 723-378	NEWCASTLE ON TYNE Andy Hunt, (0191) 478-2726
CAMBRIDGE Gillian Wills, (01954) 780-551	NORWICH Elaine Tattersall (01603) 260-717
CANTERBURY Charles Watters, (01227) 463342	PEMBROKESHIRE/S. WALES Peter and Barbara (Subhdra) Jackson, (01239) 820-790
DUBLIN Eugene Kelly, (1) 285-4076 or (1) 284-9019	PORTSMOUTH Dave Beal, (01705) 732-280
ESSEX (Billericay) Rob Howell, (01702) 482-134 or (Harlow) Pamutto, (01279) 724-330	REDRUTH Daniel Davide (01736) 753-175
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD Bodhinyana Group Chris Ward (01442) 890-034	STEYNING / SUSSEX Jayanti (01903) 812-130
LONDON / NOTTING HILL Jeffrey Craig, (0171) 221-9330	STROUD John Groves, 0796 7777-742
LEIGH-ON-SEA Gool Deboo, (01702) 553-211	TAUNTON Martin Sinclair, (01823) 321-059

AMARAVATI CASSETTES

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

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

Amaravati

Retreats:

2000



April	7 – 16	10 Day	(Ajahn Sundarā)
April	21 – 23	Weekend	(to be decided)
April	28 – May 12	14 Day	Ajahn Sumedho — (Experienced)
May	19 – 21	Weekend	(to be decided)
June	2 – 11	10 Day	Ajahn Sucitto — (Experienced)
June	16 – 21	5 Day	Ajahn Ariyasilo
Aug.	11 – 18	7 Day	Ajahn Sumedho — (in Thai)
Sept.	1 – 3	Weekend	(to be decided)
Sept.	8 – 17	14 Day	Ajahn Sumedho
Oct.	6 – 8	Weekend	(to be decided) ☸
Oct.	13 – 22	10 Day	Ajahn Ariyasilo ☸
Nov.	10 – 19	10 Day	Ajahn Candasiri
Nov.	24 – 26	Weekend	(to be decided)
Dec.	27 – Jan. 1	5 Day	(to be decided)

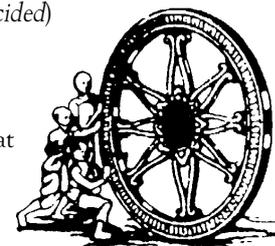
☸ These dates are still provisional.

To take part in the retreats marked 'experienced', you need to have done at least one 10-day retreat at Amaravati.

All weekend retreats are suitable for complete 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 fee. The fee is refundable on request, up to one month before the retreat starts. To obtain a booking form, please write to the Retreat Centre, stating which retreat you would like to do.

Retreat Centre Work Weekends 2000
March 31 – April 2 : June 23 – 25 : Sept. 22 – 24



INTRODUCTORY MEDITATION—AMARAVATI

Saturday Afternoon Classes 1.30 – 3.30 pm

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

Classes are in the Bodhinyana Meditation Hall.

Feel free to come along – no booking is necessary.

V I H A R A S

BRITAIN

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

Stewards: English Sangha Trust, Amaravati.
◆ 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: harnham@mailcity.com
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

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

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

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

SWITZERLAND

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

NORTH AMERICA

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

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

NEW ZEALAND

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

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

MONASTIC WINTER RETREAT

Early January until the end of March

There will be a three-month retreat in all the European monasteries in the first part of 2000, beginning early in January and concluding either towards or at the end of March.

See Grapevine for further details.

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	5 (Wed)	13 (Thurs)	20 (Thurs)	28 (Fri)
FEBRUARY	4 (Fri)	12 (Sat)	19 ☺(Sat)	27 (Sun)
MARCH	4 (Sat)	12 (Sat)	19 (Sun)	27 (Mon)
APRIL	3 (Mon)	11 (Tues)	18 (Tues)	26 (Wed)

☺ Magha Pūjā

If undelivered, please return to: AMARAVATI MONASTERY

Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead
Hertfordshire HP1 3BZ, England

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Closing date for submission to the next issue is 20th February 2000