

LOOKING AHEAD

No 27



News from Amaravati – Autumn 2016

The end of the vassa is a time of parting. After spending the rains, and closing our time together with the traditional request for feedback and asking for forgiveness, many sangha members will move to other places and some have chosen to leave the training.

The group that came together and lived together for the last three months is dispersing. The concerns and the cohesion of this group, formed as it was by agreeing to the conventions of keeping the vassa and determining to live together as sangha, naturally end when the time comes to depart. Perhaps there is a sense of loss of what is familiar, or a sense of escaping into new possibilities, but the reality is we part, and there is change.

Then, as this issue of the newsletter was coming together the news came of the passing of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the king of Thailand for the last seven decades. He clearly was a much loved and respected man, who put great effort into his duties and care for his people and was seen as a father figure by millions of Thais. With the passing of a figurehead there is, for many, the feeling of loss, grief and the sense of uncertainty.

Each day since, the community has been chanting what we call the *Mātikā* or funeral chanting, the reflections on what makes up our experience and conditioned reality, the Four Noble Truths and the chain of cause and effect. In the chant *Sabbehi me piyehi manāpehi nānābhāvo vinābhāvo*, we are reminded that all that is mine, beloved and pleasing will become otherwise, will become separated from me. We recite the verses saying that this life of ours is brought together by being born and it too is transient; *Aniccā vata sankhārā*, all conditioned things are transient. How could it be otherwise? Ajahn Amaro has also been reflecting on what could be a more beautiful way to honour a good person's example than following that example oneself? Whether we try to follow the example of the Buddha or of a wise and caring person, we should reflect on reality, on the lessons of parting; reflect that anything that comes together, will eventually cease to be. This way of seeing, accompanied by an openness to the good, brings a profound sense of truth and peace.

Monastery News

The autumn issue of Looking Ahead is when we publish the retreats for the coming year. Due to a number of unforeseen circumstances, the issue is being published a

little later than usual and you will see that several retreats are already open for booking. In addition to the usual schedule of monastic, lay and family retreats, next year our founding teacher, Luang Por Sumedho, will be giving an open retreat from May 12–19. This will be held in the Temple, with Luang Por Sumedho and other senior Ajahns providing instructions and Dhamma reflections every day. Camping accommodation will be available for lay guests who can commit to staying for the whole week, with day visitors being able to join for all or part of the day.

Following this, from May 22–26, Amaravati will be hosting the International Elders Meeting (IEM). The IEM is a gathering of elders and abbots from the branches of the Ajahn Chah group of monasteries in the western world. This is held roughly every three years, the last time having been 2014, when it was also held at Amaravati.

We are expecting many lay and monastic friends from all over the world and extend a warm welcome for those who wish to join us for these very special opportunities to see and hear teachings from our community elders. The full schedule of events in May as well as information on accommodation at the monastery and close by, how to book and how to help out during the events is available on the monastery website at www.amaravati.org/visiting/may-2017-events

During the summer, the English Sangha Trust held a consultation on proposed amendments to the Trust's Objects. After collating and responding to the feedback received, the proposed amendments were submitted to the Charity Commission, who have approved the changes.

Finally, the work on Aroga Kuti, the new facility for ageing and sick monks, has been proceeding apace. Happily, the builders and community have moved on to the 'Fitting Out' stage of the new Aroga nursing kuti. We hope it will be open for visitors coming for Kathina on November 6, but even if the building is not available to enter we will at least be able to walk around it. In order that it should be open for viewing by the many donors who have contributed to it, or by those who are simply interested in a 'Passiv Haus' (the type of eco-friendly heat-efficient construction we have used), the sangha has confirmed they will not be occupying it until after December 1. At that time it will, of course, become a private sangha residence. So, time to come and have a look whilst you can!

Retreat Centre News

In 2017 we are offering monastic-led retreats between April and June to December. In May, the Retreat Centre is closed whilst the monastery welcomes Luang Por Sumedho and hosts other major monastic events.

If you are interested in booking a place on one of our retreats, you need to book online by selecting Retreat Calendar on: www.amaravati.org/retreat-centre/

Booking opens six calendar months before the retreat start date. You can apply for up to 3 retreats in a calendar year. If you are on the waiting list for one of those retreats and do not get offered a place, you may then apply for another retreat in the same year.

However, as many of know, if you are on the waiting list there is a good chance that you will be offered a place

if you can attend at the last minute, which could mean getting a phone call on the morning the retreat starts!

For full information about coming on retreat, how to book, what to expect and what to bring, please visit the Retreat Centre webpage: www.amaravati.org/retreat-centre/

The FAQ section of the webpage has lots of useful information. Once you have booked a retreat, if you need to change any of your personal details, your email address or cancel your retreat, you can do this by going to: www.amaravati.org/retreat-centre/ and selecting 'Manage your details' or 'Cancel your retreat'.

If you need to contact the Retreat Centre directly, please email: retreats@amaravati.org.

The Retreat Centre looks forward to welcoming many of you in the remainder of 2016 and throughout 2017.

Monastic Retreats

Dates for 2016	Duration	Teacher
11–20 November *	10-days	Ajahn Vajiro
9–11 December	weekend	Ajahn Bodhipala
27 Dec.–1 Jan. 2017 *	6-days	Ajahn Sundara <i>New Year Retreat</i>

Dates for 2017	Duration	Teacher	Booking opens
7–9 April	weekend	Ajahn Nyanadassano	open
14–23 April *	10-days	Ajahn Anando & Ajahn Ahimsako	open
2–11 June **	10-days	Ajahn Amaro – ' <i>Mind is What Matters</i> '	2 December
23–27 June	5-days	Ajahn Bodhipala	23 December
7–11 July	5-days	TBC	7 January 2017
21–23 July	weekend	Ajahn Cittapala	21 January
28 July–6 August *	10-days	Ajahn Sundara	28 January
11–15 August	5-days	Ajahn Amaro & Ajahn Ratanawanno <i>THAI LANGUAGE ONLY</i>	11 February
8–20 September **	13-days	Ajahn Amaro	8 March
29 Sept. –1 Oct.	weekend	Ajahn Karuniko	29 March
13–15 October	weekend	Ajahn Candasiri & Brother Nicholas <i>Buddhist/Christian Retreat</i>	13 April
20–24 October **	5-days	Ajahn Pasanno	20 April
3–7 November	5-days	Ajahn Brahmavara	3 May
17–26 November **	10-days	Ajahn Vimalo	17 May
8–10 December	weekend	Ajahn Jutindharo	8 June
27 Dec.–1 Jan. 2018 *	6-days	Ajahn Nyanarato <i>New Year Retreat</i>	27 June

* Previous silent meditation retreat experience required

** This retreat is for experienced meditators. Attendance at a previous 10-day retreat required

Amaravati Lay Buddhist Association (ALBA)

ALBA runs a programme of Days of Practice and short retreats at Amaravati Retreat Centre led by experienced lay Buddhists. All are welcome including those new to Buddhism or meditation.

Days of Practice: no need to book, just turn up. Registration is in the Retreat Centre kitchen from 9.30am for 10.00am start. The day finishes at 5.00pm.

ALBA Retreats: advance booking is essential.

To find out more and to download an ALBA retreat booking form visit us at: www.buddhacommunity.net or email: buddhacommunity@gmail.com

Next Days of Practice: 5 November, 17 December.

ALBA Dates for 2017

Days of Practice: 7 January, 4 February, 4 March, 1 April, 6 May, 15 July, 28 October, 16 December.

Retreats: 16–18 June, 1–5 September, 10–12 November.

Amaravati Family Events

Family Events are held in the Retreat Centre, with camping available during the long August Camp. They are led by the monastic sangha in cooperation with a group of lay coordinators and helpers. There are five retreats held each year, including a retreat for 13–19 yr-olds. The weekend in June is intended as an introduction for new families thinking of applying for the camp.

Next Family events:

25–27 November Young Person's Retreat (13–19 yrs)

2–4 December Creative Weekend (18 yrs +)

For bookings and information visit:

www.family.amaravati.org

Family Event Dates for 2017

Rainbows Retreat: 28 April–1 May

June Weekend: 30 June–2 July

Family Camp: 19–27 August

Creative Weekend: 22–24 September

Young Person's Retreat (YPR) 1–3 December

Buddhist Women's Network (BWN)

The BWN was set up in 2004 by women who are associated with Amaravati. It provides an opportunity to develop spiritual friendship and support for practice. These events are led by experienced lay women and include periods of sitting and walking meditation, sharing and discussion. Beginners and those new to this tradition are welcome.

Next Day of Practice: 18 December.

Weekend Retreat: 28–31 October.

For bookings and information please write to: buddhistwomensnetwork@gmail.com

BWN Dates for 2017

Days of Practice: 8 January, 5 March, 16 July, 17 December

4-day retreat: October 6–9

Change to Meal-Time Ceremonies

With the sālā becoming increasingly crowded at weekends, the community have decided to gather for the meal-time ceremonies in the Temple on Saturdays and Sundays. If you are bringing food offerings at the weekends, please take them to the kitchen or sālā, then make your way to the temple for the precepts and blessing chanting. On other days the community will be gathering in the sālā as usual. After the clocks change, from October 29, the meal-offering will be taking place at **10.45 am Mon-Sat** and at **10.30 am on Sundays**.

Library Update

The library volunteers have been busy adding 700 new books to the library collections in the last few months. If you are a German speaker, you will be pleased to know the German section has been re-organized to make it more accessible.

A small group of sangha and volunteers, including a specialist in the creation, curation and cataloguing of religious archives in the UK, have been looking into the creation of an archive for materials held at the monastery that might be of more general interest. Venerable Narindo has already been working for the past three years to create a repository of images and videos, some of which are available on the Dhamma Vault in the library.

The Library offers good opportunities to make a contribution to the community. If you think you can help us, please contact Juan at library@amaravati.org.

Aroga Kuti Blessing

The official blessing ceremony for the new nursing kuti will take place at 1.30 pm on Jan 3 2017. Please do join us in acknowledging the generosity of heart that has seen the project to completion.

Winter Retreat

Ajahn Amaro is away in Thailand from November 27 to December 23, and the last retreat of 2016 runs over the new year. Following this, the sangha winter retreat starts on January 3, continuing until the end of March. During these three months, the monastic sangha is focused on contemplation and formal practice and the monastery enters a period of relative quiet.

There will be a schedule of formal practice and teaching throughout the winter months which visitors are welcome to join. Additionally, the Saturday meditation workshops continue to run. During this period, we do not receive overnight guests and generally the monastics are either on personal retreat or engaging in formal group practice and observing noble silence. Further details of the schedule, the usual arrangements for the office are posted up nearer the time.

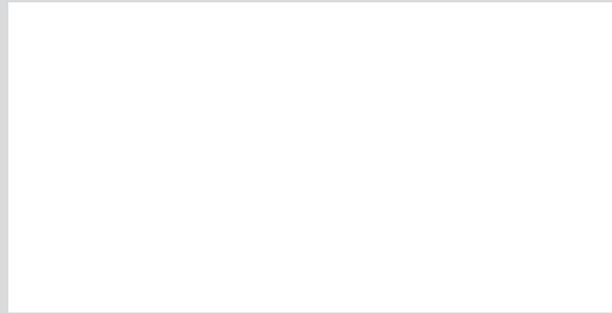
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Amaravati Buddhist Monastery, St Margarets, Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP1 3BZ, UK

Information for Visitors

Visitors are welcome. The gates open daily at 6.30 am, and remain open until after the evening meditation, approx. 9.30 pm. Those new to the monastery might like to visit in the late morning, when the community gathers for their main meal in the sālā. The monastery website is regularly updated with news of any events or activities taking place. The monastery runs entirely on donations, there are no charges for the activities offered.

When the car parking area at the front of the monastery grounds is full, there is overflow parking in the field, which is entered by following the road to the left after you enter the front gates. We kindly request that visitors do not leave their cars outside the monastery grounds.

Staying as a guest

If you would like to spend time in our community following the monastery's daily routine of work and meditation, you can arrange to stay as a guest. Contact the Guest Nun for women (guestnun@amaravati.org) or Guest Monk for men (guestmonk@amaravati.org) or visit the website for more information.

General Monastery Enquiries

For enquiries about giving dana, the kitchen and what is happening in the monastery on a given day, please contact the monastery office on 01442 842 455. The office is open Mon-Fri, 8.30-11.30 am and 2.30-4.30 pm.

For general enquiries such as arranging school visits, please write to the monastery secretary at the monastery address or email: monasterysecretary@amaravati.org

Website

For the latest audio, Retreat Centre and monastery information visit www.amaravati.org

Stewards

The English Sangha Trust (EST) is a registered charitable trust which stewards funds to support the sangha at Amaravati and Cittaviveka monasteries.

Contributions can be made to the English Sangha Trust c/o Amaravati or online: www.amaravati.org/support

Monastery Contact Details

Amaravati Buddhist Monastery
St. Margarets
Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead
Hertfordshire HP1 3BZ
Office: +44 (0) 1442 842 455
Retreat Centre: +44 (0) 1442 843 239

Notable Dates

Jan 3-March 31 – Annual Winter Retreat
Jan 3 – Aroga Kuti Blessing Ceremony 1.30 pm
Feb 11 – Magha Pūjā

Lunar Observance Days

Oct	● 1 (Sat)	● 9 (Sun)
	○ 16 (Sun)	● 24 (Mon)
	● 30 (Sun)	
Nov	● 7 (Mon)	○ 14 (Mon)
	● 22 (Tue)	● 29 (Tue)
Dec	● 7 (Wed)	○ 14 (Wed)
	● 22 (Thur)	● 28 (Wed)
Jan	● 5 (Thur)	○ 15 (Thur)
	● 20 (Fri)	● 27 (Fri)

On lunar observance days, there is usually a pūjā and meditation starting at 7.30 pm, followed by a Dhamma talk and midnight meditation vigil.

Introductory Meditation Workshops

Saturday afternoons 2–4 pm

The workshop is suitable for all levels. It includes meditation instruction for beginners and the opportunity for questions and dialogue. Everyone is welcome – there is no fee and no booking is necessary.

The workshops are led by a monastic and held in the Temple.