

LOOKING AHEAD

No 28



News from Amaravati – Winter 2017

Winter Retreat

The final weeks of December were busy with preparations, then welcoming many visitors who came to bring to close the old year and bring in the new in a peaceful and wholesome way. On New Year's Eve the community and friends joined in meditating, taking the precepts and chanting. The Temple had been laid out with many flowers and candles giving the occasion a magical, deeply peaceful feeling.

As the end of the year approached, there were preparations for the winter retreat to attend to, putting things in place, making decisions about what still needed attention, making sure most of the loose ends had been tied up, then finally, letting go into the schedule of the winter retreat. Having been living at Amaravati for some time, the rhythm of the year has become one long flow, a succession of momentary experiences rather than blocks of time with sharply defined beginnings and endings. At times the focus of attention is internal, at other times, external. There are periods of great activity and periods of pause. Times when things go according to plan and times when they really do not. Times of feeling good and well, times of feeling over-stretched and tired. It is interesting to see that by doing the 'simple' practice of enquiry and meditation day-in day-out, a basic sense of awareness of my own experience as not entirely solid, categorically true and undoubtedly right grows subtly over time, until it seems somewhat ordinary to view all these experiences and everything they invoke in oneself from a distance. Perhaps this is what is described in the talks as 'the Buddha seeing the Dhamma'. The ability of the mind to cultivate space around or distance from its own thinking, convictions, longings and imaginings and see the pattern of experience itself. So no matter how hard or unproductive it can appear to do the simple practice day-in day-out, and no matter how much one may believe that 'everyone except me knows what to do and how to do it', slowly slowly and with the support of all the teaching we receive, the wish to understand the world of experience or to simply be truly happy, starts to show results.

Monastery News

The preparations for the May Events continue and you can now find the schedules for Luang Por Sumedho's open retreat and other times on the Amaravati web pages. As well as Luang Por Sumedho, we expect to be hosting many Thai elders over the course of the month, including Luang Por Liem, Luang Por Anek and others.

On May 21, Tahn Chao Khun Bromasiddhi will be visiting along with a number of his followers. There have been requests from all over the world for people to come and be present, especially at the time of the Open Retreat. There are still some camping places available which can be booked in April, and of course it is possible to come as a day visitor to hear the teachings on offer.

In other news, Joshua Pogge, now Kantasāro, who had left a few years ago after being with us a long time as groundsman and retreat centre manager, has returned as a long term resident groundsman. We will also be saying goodbye to Dan Sinnott in the spring. Dan has been with us as a groundsman and then working in maintenance for a number of years, but more than anything his presence and wisdom will be missed.

On Jan 3 we held a blessing ceremony for the Aroga Kutī. The result of years of planning and the concerted effort of many generous people, the building is now occupied and available. The ceremony included a formal handing over of the keys to the sangha by Caroline, on behalf of our stewards, the English Sangha Trust and the lay people. To all those present who have been involved, it felt like a very sweet moment indeed.

The winter months at Amaravati

Our monastery is usually a very active place, but starting January 3 in the evening and extending over three months to March 31, the community is on retreat. As those familiar with the monastery's routines will know, it is a time when the sangha turns their focus inwards for a period of prolonged formal practice, when sense-restraint and silence are particularly encouraged and outward activities put down. While the sangha is on retreat, the monastery will be supported by a group of lay men and women who ensure the continued running of the place.

Visiting

Visitors are very welcome to come to participate in the meal offering at 10.45 am (10.30 am on Sundays), attend the weekly Saturday afternoon meditation workshops, spend some quiet time, use the library, attend the moon day talks and join in the group meditation in the Temple. Ajahn Amaro will offer readings from the book he co-authored with Ajahn Pasanno 'The Island' at 6 pm in the sālā. (Except February 8-28, on moon days and the day after).

We kindly request that visitors respect the quiet as much as possible, especially when entering or leaving the Temple. The sangha are expected to keep Noble Silence; as a support for their practice, please try not to engage them in casual conversation.

The Saturday workshops continue, lead by experienced lay teachers. They will be held in the sālā except on Feb. 11, 18 and 25 when they will be held in the Temple.

Guest Enquiries and Retreats

There is no overnight accommodation available Jan-Mar and the guest monk/guest nun will not be answering booking queries until the end of March. This includes requests for camping in May.

The Retreat Centre is closed, with the first retreat of 2017 taking place in early April. You can however, still make bookings for the Retreat Centre, ALBA, BWN and Family Events.

Building & Maintenance Works

In late January, work is due to start on a new driveway and car-parking spaces at the front of the monastery. The work will take around six weeks to complete. Access should not be affected, but there will be some disruption and we kindly ask that you take care when entering and leaving the monastery as there may be lorries or other machinery working near the entrance gates.

In February, the Sālā building will be closed for some refurbishment work to take place. The building will close Feb. 8 to Feb. 26. During this time, the meal offering will take place in the Retreat Centre kitchen. The Anumodanā chanting will be offered in the RC kitchen on weekdays and in the Temple at weekends.

General Monastery Enquiries and Office Hours

From Jan 3 to March 31, there is someone in the office to take calls and answer queries from 8.30-11.00 am, Mon-Fri only. At other times, there is an answer phone for leaving messages. The monastery secretary will check messages regularly but only reply to those deemed urgent. General enquiries will be filed away to be answered once the winter retreat is over.

For general enquiries about the May 2017 events, including enquires about the kitchen, use the contact form on www.amaravati.org/visiting/may-2017-events/

Website

The website will be updated with occasional information regarding the May Events and information about construction work that might affect access for visitors. We will not be posting Dhamma talks over the winter, any new talks and readings will be uploaded in April. All the archive of over 3500 talks remains available for listening, so there is plenty there for instruction and inspiration.

Library Update

Juan will be working on the Amaravati Archives project over the winter. Much progress has been made on the structure of the archives catalogue and he will now be training volunteers in cataloguing specific items, starting with the photo archive. The Library offers good opportunities to make a contribution to the community. If you think you can help us, please contact Juan by email: library@amaravati.org

Retreat Centre News

As 2016 came to an end, the first four retreats of 2017 were already fully booked. However, as many will know from direct experience, it is always worth going on the waiting list, especially if you can attend a retreat at the last minute, which may mean receiving a phone call, offering a place on the morning that the retreat starts. If you cannot do this, then it is worth making your booking as early as possible. The retreat calendar can be accessed from the Retreat Centre homepage www.amaravati.org/retreat-centre/

Anicca (impermanence) is an ever present characteristic of the Retreat Centre. This year started with Nick Halliday joining us as Household & Housekeeping manager and as the year closes, he will be leaving. He will be at the Retreat Centre until the end of March to complete some of the repair and maintenance work that has been planned during the Winter Retreat. As of

January, we are still looking for someone who could take on the role in the Spring.

We look forward to seeing many of you in 2017. If you have any queries about monastic retreats, please contact the Retreat Centre at retreats@amaravati.org or visit our webpages.

Retreat Centre Household and House-keeping Volunteer Manager

The Retreat Centre at Amaravati Buddhist Monastery is looking for a long-term lay resident (preferably male), with good practical and maintenance skills to look after the Household and Housekeeping aspects of the Retreat Centre.

The main purpose of this role is to create and maintain a clean, safe and welcoming environment for retreatants attending retreats at the centre, and to manage and organize short and long-term maintenance of the buildings and equipment contained within. The role also involves greeting and supporting retreatants during retreats by responding appropriately to their various needs and queries.

Further information and details for submitting applications are available at www.amaravati.org/retreat-centre-tlr-2017



Call for Volunteers

Visākha Celebrations May 7

As this year's Visākha Celebrations will be attended by LP Sumedho, LP Liem and other visiting sangha, we will be expecting more visitors than usual. We need help with managing car parking, the food tent, crowd coordination and various other chores. We would really appreciate if you can spare some time and join us to celebrate the Buddha's life while helping out to make the event an enjoyable day for all.

Drivers

Large numbers of monastic Sangha will be visiting from around the world through the month of May so we are looking to add to our pool of volunteer drivers. Most of the drives will be collecting and dropping-off from/at local airports (Luton & Heathrow) and stations (Berkhamsted & Hemel Hempstead). If you are a confident and safe driver, with good knowledge of the roads in this region; available for one or more drives during this period and able to use your own (suitable) vehicle, please get in touch. Once you have been registered the Transport Coordinator will contact you directly as and when needs arise.

To volunteer for the Visākha Festival or as a driver contact Sharron Chan lvg.enquiry@gmail.com or call 07789710855

Monastic lead Retreats at the Retreat Centre

Dates for 2017	Duration	Teacher
7–9 April	weekend	Ajahn Nyanadassano
14–23 April *	10-days	Ajahn Anando & Ajahn Ahimsako
2–11 June **	10-days	Ajahn Amaro – ‘ <i>Mind is What Matters</i> ’
23–27 June	5-days	Ajahn Bodhipālā
7–11 July	5-days	Ajahn Ariyasilo
21–23 July	weekend	Ajahn Cittapālā
28 July–6 August *	10-days	Ajahn Sundarā
11–15 August	5-days	Ajahn Amaro & Ajahn Ratanawanno THAI LANGUAGE ONLY
8–20 September **	13-days	Ajahn Amaro
29 Sept. –1 Oct.	weekend	Ajahn Karuniko
13–15 October	weekend	Ajahn Candasiri & Brother Nicholas Buddhist/Christian Retreat
20–24 October **	5-days	Ajahn Pasanno
3–7 November	5-days	Ajahn Brahmavarā
17–26 November **	10-days	Ajahn Vimalo
8–10 December	weekend	Ajahn Jutindhāro
27 Dec.–1 Jan. 2018 *	6-days	Ajahn Nyanarato New Year Retreat

* Previous silent meditation retreat experience required

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

Other Retreats held at the Retreat Centre

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.

Advance booking is essential for ALBA retreats. To find out more and to download an ALBA retreat booking form visit us at: www.buddhacomcommunity.net or email: buddhacomcommunity@gmail.com

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.

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.

BWN Days of Practice: 8 January, 5 March, 16 July, 17 Dec
4-day retreat: October 6–9

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

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. The 2017 dates are:

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

For bookings and information please visit the Family Events Website www.family.amaravati.org or contact the bookings coordinator Gina Willow family@amaravati.org

Introductory Meditation Workshops Every Saturday 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.

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If undelivered, please return to:
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. During the winter, the community is on silent retreat (see info on page 2). The monastery runs entirely on donations, there are no charges for the activities offered. We offer introductory meditation workshops on a saturday at 2 pm and run retreats and other activities through the year.

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.

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. During the winter months, the office is open Mon-Fri, 8.15-10.45 am only.

Website

For news and events updates see 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
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Office: +44 (0) 1442 842 455
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Notable Dates 2017

Jan 3 – Mar 31: Winter Retreat
Jan 16: Ajahn Chah Memorial Day
Feb 11: Magha Pūjā
Apr 4 - 5: Elders Council Meeting

May 7: Visākha Celebrations

May 10: Visākha Pūja

May 12 - 19: Luang Por Sumedho's Open Retreat

May 22 - 26: International Elders Meeting & Sangha Gathering

July 8: Asalha Pūjā

July 9: Enter Vassa

June 17: Ajahn Chah Birthday

July 27: Acāriya Pūjā (LP Sumedho's birthday)

Oct 5: Pavarana Day (end of Vassa)

Oct 29: Kathina

Lunar Observance Days 2017

Jan	● 5 (Thur)	○ 12 (Thur)
	● 20 (Fri)	● 27 (Fri)
Feb	● 4 (Sat)	○ 11 (Sat)
	● 19 (Sun)	● 25 (Sat)
Mar	● 5 (Sun)	○ 12 (Sun)
	● 20 (Mon)	● 27 (Mon)
Apr	● 4 (Tue)	○ 11 (Tue)
	● 19 (Wed)	● 25 (Tue)
May	● 3 (Wed)	○ 10 (Wed)
	● 18 (Thur)	● 25 (Thur)
Jun	● 2 (Fri)	○ 9 (Fri)
	● 17 (Sat)	● 23 (Fri)
Jul	● 1 (Sat)	○ 8 (Sat)
	● 16 (Sun)	● 23 (Sun)
	● 31 (Mon)	
Aug	○ 7 (Mon)	● 15 (Tue)
	● 21 (Mon)	● 29 (Tue)
Sep	○ 5 (Tue)	● 13 (Wed)
	● 20 (Wed)	● 28 (Thur)
Oct	○ 5 (Thur)	● 13 (Fri)
	● 19 (Thur)	● 27 (Fri)
Nov	○ 3 (Fri)	● 11 (Sat)
	● 18 (Sat)	● 26 (Sun)
Dec	○ 3 (Sun)	● 11 (Mon)
	● 17 (Sun)	● 25 (Mon)

On lunar observance days there is usually a pūjā, Dhamma talk and midnight meditation vigil.