

LOOKING AHEAD

No 28



News from Amaravati – Spring 2017

There is an Island ...

All through the wintertime, except when he was on personal retreat, members of the resident community of monastics and lay people gathered to listen to Ajahn Amaro give teachings and respond to questions based on the book 'The Island – an anthology of the Buddha's teachings on Nibbāna.'

At whatever level the concept of 'Nibbāna' – unbinding, going out, coolness – was understood, and some of the texts we read were very refined indeed, there was a strong feeling expressed in the group that gathered throughout the retreat that there isn't much that is more excellent than exploring these teachings in the company of spiritual friends, even when the language of what is being said is sometimes going completely over one's head.

This reflected a major theme emerging from this winter retreat, that of harmony. Undoubtedly, not everyone's days were spent in a cloud of happiness, with no-one having unpleasant experiences or always getting along with each other, but there was a tangible sense of harmony in the group. Not the kind of harmony that comes from doing one's best to get along, gritting one's teeth as one does so, but the harmony that is the natural result of being interested in what is good, in being interested in what is conducive to living together in a good way. And equally, of not being so interested in cultivating those things which would lead to conflict, to opposition.

In terms of the teachings on Nibbāna we explored, this is said to be related to the conceit of 'I am', to a basic sense of self-identity. In this case, conceit does not mean egotistical pride but simple conceiving. It is the basic sense of being 'here', of feeling that one is made one way or another; that other people are *there*, they are like *this* or *that*. At the heart of 'conceiving' is a person that extends through time and space. Conceiving the 'me', 'you', 'them'. Conceiving of 'my stuff', 'my world', 'my experiences'. It is all seemingly very real and correct, and without thinking one has the perspective of 'me' in opposition to 'that'. But if one takes time to examine, to reflect on this way of looking at one's world, it is seen to be a source of pain and of conflict based on a perception that is not truly solid.

There is a quote from Ajahn Chah in the book that says: 'All things are just as they are. They don't cause suffering in themselves, just like a thorn, a really sharp thorn. Does it make you suffer? No, it's just a thorn, it doesn't bother anybody. But if you go and stand on it, then you'll suffer. Why is there this suffering? Because you stepped on the thorn. The thorn is just minding its own business, it doesn't harm anybody. Only if you step on the thorn will you suffer over it. It's because of we ourselves that there is pain. Form, feeling, perception mental formations, consciousness ... All the things in this world are simply there as they are. It's we who pick fights with them. And if we hit them, they are going to hit us back.'

The retreat concluded on the 31st March. It was a real privilege for us to be able to devote all this time to exploring and developing the teachings, living with spiritual friends, with a teacher who never seems at a loss for words, no matter how unformed or difficult the question being asked. And as we move on, the generosity, deep gratitude and understanding generated remains available to share with our many visitors and to be a protection and support for everyone who practised here this winter, for us 'to be an island onto ourselves.'

On a more mundane level, the winter saw the completion of building work on the access road and parking at the front of the monastery, in time for us to receive our many guests and visitors for the upcoming visit by Luang Por Sumedho. Other substantial changes involved re-decoration work in the *sālā* and fitting out the new nursing *kuti* in time for the visiting Elders. The *sālā* work in particular required the support team to be very flexible and run two kitchens for most of February. They helped with incredible efficiency and good grace. The result can be seen in the brighter meeting space available to the community and our visitors.

New Visitor Parking

Nearly fifty new parking spaces are available at the front of the monastery. Access is by turning sharp left just as you enter the gates onto a two-way road. If needed, there is also a turning-head at the far end. **Please follow the signs as you come in and use this parking area first.**

We will no longer be using the road to the field except on very busy days such as festivals. To help re-establish a sense of seclusion around the new Aroga *Kuti* and the car park, after the last year and a half of building work, please could visitors avoid driving or walking from the car park through the *bhikkhu vihāra* to get to the field, unless it is clearly indicated that it is possible to do so.

Samanera Pabbajjā & Anagārika Going-Forth Ceremonies, Wednesday May 3

Anagārika Daniel Schneider will be requesting Pabbajjā, the Going-Forth as a Samanera or novice monk.

Thomas, Jiří and Dāvis will be requesting taking on the 8-precept training, going forth as anagārika.

The ceremonies will take place during the evening *pūjā*, starting at 7.30 pm in the Temple. This will be followed by a Dhamma talk and midnight vigil.

Everyone is welcome to join us to witness this occasion.

Amaravati May Events

Sunday May 7: Visākha Festival

Wednesday May 10 – Observance Day: Full Moon of Visākha

Friday May 12 to Friday May 19: Luang Por Sumedho Open Retreat

Monday May 22 to Friday May 26: International Sangha Gathering and Elders Meeting (IEM)

Wednesday May 24: Visit by Tahn Chao Khun Bromasiddhi

Our founding teacher, Luang Por Sumedho will be at Amaravati starting April 27, together with a number of Elders from the Ajahn Chah tradition, including Luang Por Liem, Luang Por Anek and others. They will be present for the Visākha celebrations, which are followed by an open retreat in the Temple lead by Luang Por Sumedho. Later in the month, nearly 100 monks and nuns will gather from the branch monasteries worldwide for five days of sangha meetings.

We have extra accommodation available from the 5th to 29th. Bookings can be made through the guest nun/monk. The retreat time is very popular and nearly fully booked, though there are still places, but there are also opportunities for guests to stay at other times to pay respects or listen to teaching from any of the visiting Ajahns.

Visākha Celebrations

The public celebration of the birth, enlightenment and passing of the Buddha is on Sunday May 7. The day will start at 9.30 am with Paritta Chanting, followed by a rice pindapat, meal offering and Dhamma talks by visiting Elders in the afternoon.

May 10 is the full-moon observance day. Starting at 19.30 in the Temple, there is a pūjā, meditation and Dhamma talk, followed by a candlelight circumambulation of the Stupa and late-night vigil.

Open Retreat Schedule

The 'Open Retreat' will be held in the Temple. Day visitors are welcome to attend either on a daily basis or for an occasional session or there is limited accommodation at the monastery.

Friday 12 – Arrivals and registration

19.30 – 22.00 Opening Pūjā and Dhamma talk

Saturday 13 – Thursday 18: Morning

5.00 – 6.30	Meditation and Pūjā
7.00 – 8.00	Breakfast
8.30 – 9.15	Meditation Instruction + Sitting
9.15 – 11.15	Sitting and Walking
11.30 – 14.00	Meal and rest

Saturday 13 – Thursday 18: Afternoon & Evening

14.00 – 16.15	Sitting and Walking
16.15 – 17.15	Q&A with senior Ajahn
19.30 – 21.45	Pūjā, Meditation & Dhamma Talk by Luang Por Sumedho

Fri. 19 – Closing Day

5.00 – 6.30 am	Meditation and Pūjā
7.00 – 8.00 am	Breakfast
8.30 – 9.15 am	Meditation Instruction + Sitting
9.15 – 11.15 am	Sitting and closing talk
11.30 – 14.00	Meal and rest
14.00 – 15.00	Sitting
15.30 – 16.00	Closing Ceremony

International Sangha Gathering & Elders Meeting (IEM)

The sangha meetings are private but visitors and guests are welcome to join the daily morning and evening pūjā. Public Dhamma reflections will be offered every day in the Temple at the mealtime and a longer talk in the evening.

Contact

Our website www.amaravati.org has the latest information about the events.

For staying as a guest or helper during the month of May see www.amaravati.org/visiting/may-2017-events

For enquiries about giving dāna or the kitchen, please contact Suvira in the office.

Tel: 01442 842455 or infomay2017@amaravati.org

For general enquiries about the May events, write to infomay2017@amaravati.org

Call for Volunteers

Visākha Festival Sunday May 7

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. 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.

To volunteer for the day at the Visākha Festival or as a driver contact Sharron Chan

07789710855 or lvg.enquiry@gmail.com

Introductory Meditation Workshops Every Saturday 2 – 4 pm in the Temple

The workshop is suitable for all levels, and includes meditation instruction for beginners and the opportunity for questions and dialogue. Instruction is given by a member of the monastic community.

Everyone is welcome – there is no fee and no booking is necessary.

Retreat Centre News

The Retreat Centre has had its annual deep clean, repairs have been completed, coats of paint applied and new Zen gardens created in the outside areas. We are now ready for the start of the 2017 Retreat year.

This year begins with change, as we say goodbye to Nick Halliday who has been the Household and Maintenance manager for the last year. Until we appoint someone, two past Retreat Centre managers, Kantasāro and Jenna, will be covering the first two retreats in April. Another change this year is that during May, the Retreat Centre will not be offering retreats. Instead, it will open its doors

to accommodate the many visiting monastics from monasteries and viharas in the Ajahn Chah tradition, from all over the world. The whole monastery will be on retreat from the May 12-19, when Luang Por Sumedho will be teaching.

If you are interested in attending any of our retreats, booking opens six months prior to the start date of each retreat. If you have not already booked a retreat and are interested in doing so, please complete the Online Booking application, which you can find on the Retreat Centre webpages. If you have any queries about the monastic retreats that we offer, please contact the Retreat Centre at retreats@amaravati.org or visit the website www.amaravati.org/retreat-centre.

Monastic lead Retreats at the Retreat Centre

Dates for 2017	Duration	Teacher
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 <i>THAI LANGUAGE ONLY</i>
8–20 September **	13-days	Ajahn Amaro
29 Sept. –1 Oct.	weekend	Ajahn Karuniko
13–15 October	weekend	Ajahn Candasiri & Brother Nicholas <i>Buddhist/Christian Retreat</i>
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 Nyānarato <i>New Year Retreat</i>

* 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 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.

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 Cheetam family@amaravati.org.

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.

For the Days of Practice there is 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.buddha-community.net or email: buddhacommunity@gmail.com

Days of Practice: 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 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: 16 July, 17 December

4-day retreat: 6–9 October

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

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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. We offer introductory meditation workshops on Saturdays at 2 pm and run retreats and other activities through the year. There is also the possibility to stay as a guest and join in the monastery routines.

Those new to the monastery may wish to visit in the late morning when the community gathers for the main meal (11.30 Mon-Sat, 11.15 am on Sun) and there are opportunities to meet other visitors and speak to one of the senior monastics. The monastery runs entirely on donations, there are no charges for what is offered.

Please use the car parking area at the front of the monastery grounds. The main parking is entered by turning left as soon as you enter the front gates. We kindly request that visitors do not leave their cars outside the monastery grounds.

Enquiries

For enquiries about giving dāna, the kitchen and what is happening in the monastery on a given day, please contact the monastery office on 01442 842 455. There is usually someone there 8.30-11 am and 2.30-4.30 pm, Mon-Fri.

To make a booking to stay as a guest please contact the guest-monk or guestnun via the website at www.amaravati.org/visiting

For all other enquiries, including school visits, please contact the Monastery Secretary at monasterysecretary@amaravati.org

Stewards

The English Sangha Trust (EST) is a registered charity 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

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Website

For news updates, an extensive downloadable audio and book catalogue and other information, visit www.amaravati.org

Notable Dates 2017

- May 3: Pabbajjā & Going-Forth ceremonies
- May 7: Visākha Celebrations
- May 10: Visākha Pūjā*
- May 12 -19: Luang Por Sumedho's Open Retreat
- May 22 -26: International Sangha Gathering & Elders' Meeting
- June 17: Luang Por Chah Birthday
- July 8: Āsālhā Pūjā*
- July 9: Enter Vassa
- July 27: Acāriya Pūjā (Luang Por Sumedho's birthday)
- Oct. 5: Pavarana Day (end of Vassa)*
- Oct. 29: Kathina Festival

Lunar Observance Days 2017

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 a pūjā starting at 7.30 pm, a Dhamma talk and midnight meditation vigil in the Temple. All are welcome to attend.