



LOOKING AHEAD

No 19

News from Amaravati Autumn 2014

Pausing to Reflect

KATHINA ANNOUNCEMENT

A Royal Kathina Festival will be held at Amaravati Buddhist Monastery on Sunday, 2nd November. The Kathina is a tradition that has been followed for over 2500 years. It takes place during the month following the end of the Vassa (the three months' Rains Retreat).

Kathina is a very happy, warm-hearted time for celebration. It is a time to come together, focusing on the single act of generosity of offering the cloth and other requisites.

If you would like to offer any useful items on this occasion, a Kathina list is available. Details of the Kathina programme and Kathina list can be found on the Amaravati website.

The lay Kathina organising committee is also seeking volunteers to help out during Kathina day. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Sharron Chan on 07825 013110 or email her at sharron.chansc@gmail.com

Ajahn Chah once said: 'You say you are too busy to meditate, do you have time to breathe? If you see that Dhamma practice is vital to your life, then you will feel that breathing and practising the Dhamma are equally important.'

Similarly, when life seems rather too full of other things, it can feel like there is little time to reflect. But just as we are always breathing, we are always pausing in between everything we do and to bring awareness to the pauses can be enough for *sati* to be present. Drop by drop, a short pause to recollect makes all the difference to the mind.

2014 has truly been a year of gatherings and celebration, the final one being the Kathina in early November. Our founding abbot, Luang Por Sumedho will once more be there to offer his encouragement and wisdom. He will then return to Thailand on the 10th November. Seeing him and hearing him teach the Dhamma on various occasions through this year has been a true blessing, so we very much look forward to welcoming him for this last visit for this year. A display reflecting on Amaravati Monastery's story from its opening in 1984 to now is planned to be on show for the Kathina day. This promises to offer a fascinating glimpse into what it was like at Amaravati back when it started and how it has evolved.

Prior to this, Ajahn Amaro will be away travelling after the close of the Rains Retreat on the eight of October. Once again, after a period of relative stability, the community is on the move; returning to Amaravati having spent the Rains elsewhere; returning to a usual place of residence having spent the Rains at Amaravati; moving away to other monasteries or moving away entirely.

The autumn is when the schedule of retreats is made available for the following year

and you will find details of all the retreats running in 2015 on the inside pages. A notable innovation for the Retreat Centre is the introduction of an online booking system for the monastic retreats, scheduled to be available by the first of November. For a number of years now, the RC office has been getting requests to submit forms through the website. The numbers of cancellations for all the retreats keep increasing too, leaving the office volunteers having to juggle demand and fill places at the last minute. The online system will help reduce the workload involved in managing the bookings and introduce a feature retreatants have been asking for.

This is quite a big change for the Retreat Centre and for our regulars, so please bear with us as we introduce this new system. Note that the Family, ALBA, and BWN events will continue to have separate booking arrangements. Details of how to book for these retreats are also listed inside.

Ajahn Amaro's thirteen day retreat will be happening in May next year rather than September, then there is the usual mixture of longer retreats for more experienced meditators and shorter introductory weekends, with a few new faces and the return of some old friends as teachers.

The Amaravati Monastery website has also been re-developed this year, with a go-live date scheduled in October. The intention has been to simplify the upkeep and updating of the site; reducing reliance on tech-savvy community members and avoiding costly re-designs. Visually, it retains the openness of the current website but with simplified navigation. While not directly related, the Family Events website has been given a complete overhaul. New structure, new content, new forms and everything up-to-date.