

LOOKING AHEAD

No 22

News from Amaravati – Summer 2015

Living with People in a World of Problems

“Someone once described community life as being like one of those rock polishing machines.

You throw in rough-looking pebbles, all grey and coarse and lack-lustre, the machine goes round and round and stirs everything up, and all these pebbles rub up against each other.

Eventually, they come out very beautiful, with shiny surfaces and beautiful colours, because the exteriors have been worn away.

That is what community is like.

You are thrown into this machine, you are constantly rubbing up against and polishing each other, and eventually what comes out are the beautiful qualities that lie hidden beneath the rough surface.”

– Luang Por Sumedho

from: *The Riches and Difficulties of Community Life in: Like a freshly dug garden: a week of reflection for World Fellowship, Caux, Switzerland, Caux Books, 1999.*

This quote from Luang Por Sumedho comes to mind as the sangha and community at Amaravati are coming up to the three month rains retreat or Vassa (Khao Phansa in Thai), the time of year when we determine to stay in one place and live with each other, practising and studying Dhamma-Vināya together.

Living with other people is often not so easy. In the cortège of everyday villains, there's the flat-footed elephant that walks the corridors or the usually quiet person that slams the doors every time they go through them. There's many minor ways in which we can feel upset about each other and it's easy to think like that about others, but in truth, this labelling is all about one's inner moods.

If I'm trying to be quiet in my room, the bang of the door slamming might be incredibly irritating, but if I'm oversleeping, the sound of the door slamming might be welcome because I can still make it in time for early morning pūjā. The same goes for the feeling of having to stay in one place and live with 'them' or being happy that finally we can all be together, as spiritual friends; or there can be a feeling of dread at the prospect of having to be in meetings and of the crowds at the weekends

over the summer. Or there might be a feeling of joy at being able to study vināya and meet all these wonderful practitioners!

Then there are the more deep-seated difficulties of incompatibilities and differing opinions all of which can make living together very challenging.

How much we are affected and how we react is all going to be influenced by our personalities, previous experience and the environment we have been familiar with, but seeing the world as full of problems, full of things which are unwanted one way or another, people who are simply 'not right' is a very common theme, and not just in the monastery. In many ways, human beings all live in community, some of us more formally but we all belong to some group, by choice or by convention.

But being together in the Amaravati community, practising together, we have to find ways of living with each other and actively look to develop those skills that lead to harmony, because we do aspire to the beautiful qualities mentioned in the quote, and can't avoid rubbing up against in other.

When seeing others, it helps to bring to mind their commitment to the precepts that govern outward behaviour or to the good things they do, the good qualities they have, rather than focusing on aspects of their behaviour which one finds negative. One can do this for oneself too, bringing to mind good qualities, times when we handled a situation well. Doing this for oneself also makes it easier to recognise these things in others, thereby understanding their point of view.

This opening up to others, seeing their qualities and opinions and respecting them as one would one's own, is one aspect of this process of polishing and smoothing, a start to letting go of the feeling of living with others in a world of problems.

News & Announcements

Nursing Kuti Update

The planning phase of the new building and driveway continues to make good progress. An initial garden design has been presented. The architect has now produced working drawings and is confident that building costs

can be significantly reduced to fit within the available budget. Though the timeline for construction is not yet fixed, we will be aiming to go to tender in the summer and to break ground in late autumn.

Volunteer Health and Safety Coordinator wanted

Amaravati has an opportunity for a volunteer Health and Safety Coordinator. The role takes about 2-3 hours per week, or 1-2 days a month and suits someone who is familiar with Amaravati. Further information about the role and contact details for expressions of interest are available on the website

For more details see www.amaravati.org/volunteer-health-and-safety-coordinator/

Amaravati Retreat Centre Household and Housekeeping Volunteer Manager

The Retreat Centre at Amaravati Buddhist Monastery is looking for a long-term resident (preferably male) with good practical and maintenance skills who would appreciate living within a Theravadan monastic community to further their practice

For more details see <http://www.amaravati.org/retreat-centre-household-volunteer-manager>

Library Update

The Dhamma-Vault computers have been upgraded for ease of use. The recent inventory allowed us to identify many missing titles, of which over 600 have now been returned. A big thank you to everyone who responded to our call for returning overdue books!

The barcode labelling project mentioned in a previous issue of *Looking Ahead* is underway, this being the next step in simplifying managing the library long-term.

Finally an additional 500 new titles have been added to the shelves in the last few months and are now available for borrowing.

As ever, everyone is welcome to use the library and if you can spare some time to help, that is always appreciated.

For your diary

The Sunday talks resumed August 2. The list of topics and speakers is posted below.

The next big festival will be the Kathina, the traditional offering of robes and requisites after the Vassa. The Amaravati Kathina will be held on **November 15**.

If you are available to help out on the day, please contact the Lotus Volunteer Group at lvj.enquiry@gmail.com or see further contact details on p.4.

Introductory Meditation Workshops

Saturday afternoons 2–4 pm

Meditation instruction for beginners led by a member of the sangha, with an opportunity for questions and dialogue.

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

Classes are held in the temple

Vassa Sunday Talks Schedule

Date	Speaker	Title
Aug 2	Ajahn Amaro	Being a complete non-achiever
Aug 9	Ajahn Amaro	Buddhism and banana skins
Aug 16	Ajahn Amaro	Satan versus Mara
Aug 23	Ajahn Sundarā	Is perfection a delusion?
Aug 30	Ajahn Amaro	‘My opinion ...’
Sept 6	Ajahn Amaro	Fearing to leave fear behind
Sept 13	Ajahn Sundarā	‘Hiri & Ottappa, my spiritual friends’
Sept 20	Ajahn Kongritthi	Dhamma in the digital age
Sept 27	Ajahn Amaro	‘Desire is a liar ...’
Oct 4	Ajahn Dhammanando	Compassion in dispassion
Oct 11	TBD	Living well and dying well
Oct 18	Ajahn Cittapālā	No time to meditate?
Oct 25	Ajahn Sundarā	‘What Bliss! There is no happiness in the world (or ‘Don’t worry, be grumpy’)

The afternoon includes an approximately one-hour Dhamma talk followed by a Q&A session with a break for tea in between. The talks are held in the Sālā (Meeting Hall).

Retreat Centre

News

The online Booking System is complete! The last section, which allows you to 'Manage your details', went live just a few weeks ago. Completing this mammoth project has largely been down to the hard work and dedication of Julian Wall to whom we are extremely grateful.

All this year's retreats are now fully booked. However, as those who have already been on our retreats know, we generally receive a high number of cancellations. It is, therefore, always worth applying for a waiting list place, especially if you are able to attend your chosen retreat at the last minute. It is not unusual for us to be contacting number 30 or 40 on the waiting list a day or so before a retreat begins!

For those who want to plan ahead, the 2016 Retreat Schedule will be available on the Website and in Looking Ahead sometime in October 2015. Booking will open six calendar months before the start date of each retreat. It is only possible to apply through the online booking system. If you do not have easy access to the internet, a friend or family member can book on your behalf, so hopefully no one is excluded from the opportunity of attending a monastic-led retreat at Amaravati. We look forward to seeing lots of you on retreat!

Monastic Retreats

2015	Duration	Teacher
31 July – 4 August	5 days	Ajahn Ahimsako
11 – 20 September	10 days	Ajahn Amaro – 'Have you seen the messengers? – ageing, sickness, death and renunciation' †
2 – 6 October	5 days	Ajahn Ānando – 'Why Metta?'
16 – 18 October	weekend	Ajahn Mettā & Brother Nicholas – Buddhist/Christian Retreat
23 – 25 October	weekend	Ajahn Brahmavarā
6 – 10 November	5 days	Luang Por Pasanno
20 – 29 November	10 days	Ajahn Sundarā ☸
11 – 13 December	weekend	Ajahn Subhaddo
27 Dec. – 1 Jan.	6 days	Ajahn Nyānarato

☸We request that you complete a five-day or longer retreat, either at Amaravati or elsewhere, before attending this retreat.

†This retreat is for experienced meditators only who have previously attended a 10-day retreat at Amaravati or elsewhere.

How to Book a place: All bookings now have to be made online at www.amaravati.org/retreat-centre/booking/

This is where you will find booking opening dates, be able to check on retreat status, make a booking and see details of how to contact the Retreat Centre. Paper forms are no longer being used for bookings.

NOTE: The Retreat Centre managers only deal with bookings for the monastic retreats. The ALBA, Buddhist Women's Network (BWN) and Family Events each have their own booking system (see details below).

Amaravati Lay Buddhist Association (ALBA)

The ALBA was started in 1994 as a way to offer the lay community that frequents Amaravati a forum to connect with like-minded people. It runs a series of Days of Practice and short retreats at Amaravati, led by experienced lay teachers.

Days of Practice: 5 September, 14 November, 19 December

5-day Retreat: 7 – 11 August

Weekend Retreat: 9 – 11 October

For bookings and information please visit

www.buddhacommunity.org

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 to support each other in our 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: 20 December.

Weekend Retreat: 25 – 27 September

For bookings and information please contact

Shirley McDonald at buddhistwomensnetwork@gmail.com

Amaravati Family Events

These are held in the Retreat Centre, with camping available during the long August event. They are led by the monastic sangha in cooperation with a group of coordinators and helpers. The theme for the year is the Life and teachings of Ajahn Chah. The summer camp is full with a waiting list in operation. Information and booking forms for the Creative Weekend will become available end of August.

Family Camp 22 – 30 August

Young Persons Retreat 30 October – 1 November

Creative Weekend 4 – 6 December

For more information visit: www.family.amaravati.org

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If undelivered, please return to:
Amaravati Monastery, St Margarets, Great Gaddesden,
Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP1 3BZ, UK

General Monastery Enquiries

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

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.

Staying Overnight at the monastery

If you wish to stay as a guest, contact the Guest Nun for women (guestnun@amaravati.org) or Guest Monk for men (guestmonk@amaravati.org).

Information about staying as a guest is also available on the website: www.amaravati.org/visiting

Coming on Retreat

For information about coming on retreats, see page 3 of this newsletter or www.amaravati.org/retreat-centre

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

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

Looking Ahead is a newsletter from Amaravati. You can pick up a copy at the monastery or receive it directly by email or by post. Please send your email and/or home address to: <abmnews@amaravati.org> or post it to Amaravati. Please indicate whether you wish to receive Looking Ahead by email or by post.

Website

For the latest announcements, Dhamma resources, audio files, retreat information and more visit:

www.amaravati.org

Lotus Volunteer Group

For the many ways to help out on festival days and throughout the year visit:

www.lotusvolunteergroup.amaravati.org

www.facebook.com/LotusVolunteerGroup

or email: lvg.enquiry@gmail.com

Lunar Observance Days

July	● 8 (Wed.)	● 15 (Wed.)
	● 23 (Thu.)	○ 30 (Thu.) *
Aug	● 7 (Fri.)	● 14 (Fri.)
	● 22 (Sat.)	○ 29 (Sat.)
Sept	● 6 (Sun.)	● 12 (Sat.)
	● 20 (Sun.)	○ 27 (Sun.)
Oct	● 5 (Mon.)	● 12 (Mon.)
	● 20 (Tue.)	○ 27 (Tue.)*
Nov	● 4 (Wed.)	● 10 (Tue.)
	● 18 (Wed.)	○ 25 (Wed.)
Dec	● 3 (Thu.)	● 10 (Thu.)
	● 18 (Fri.)	○ 25 (Thur.)

Notable Dates

July 27: Ācariyā Pūjā (Luang Por Sumedho's birthday)

July 30: Asalha Pūjā (start of Vassa)*

July 31: Enter Vassa

July 31 – Aug 7: Monastic Group Retreat

Aug 2 through Oct 25: Sunday Talks

Oct 20 – Oct 27: Monastic Group Retreat

Oct: 27: Pavarana Day (end of Vassa)*

Nov 15: Amaravati Kathina