

LOOKING AHEAD

No 26

News from Amaravati – Summer 2016

Looking for a Turtle with a Moustache

A phrase that has been in the media recently in the context of the political and social uncertainty following in the wake of the June EU referendum is ‘peak chaos’. This expression is striking in its implications of instability and confusion. When it seems society has become polarised around strongly held opinions, and uncertainty gives rise to concern about one’s future safety, status or prospects, the mind can tend towards fear and worry. The dominant discourse or mood shifts to not being able to include views of a situation, or of what needs to be done, that are very different, right or wrong, from one’s own. Ajahn Amaro gave a reflection on the topic of freedom on the new moon day observance night of July 4 in which he touched on all the ongoing uncertainty that people are telling us is affecting them. After the talk, a quote from Ajahn Chah came to mind:

‘Looking for peace is like looking for a turtle with a moustache. If you go looking for it, you won’t find it. But when your heart is ready, it will come looking for you.’

The question then is: as Dhamma practitioners, where do we find stability? When the mind is full of fear, there is nothing it can rely on, nothing it can trust. If I look closely at myself, the very source of both confusion and peace is the mind/heart, experienced as opinions and views arising in the push/pull movement towards and away from what is likeable and what is not likeable. Yet, there is also the deeper sense that the wise heart is one that knows to cultivate the good and works to let go of what is not helpful to oneself or to others. And with that comes the sense that stability is to be found in the cultivation itself; that the refuge from fear and chaos is the mind that knows itself.

Monastery News

With the coming of the Rains Retreat or Vassa and the restrictions on monks’ and nuns’ travel during this period, the community becomes more settled, but also moves into the busiest time of the year. For three months, alongside their usual duties and engagements, the monastics spend time studying the Vinaya, or monastic code of discipline, and engaging in periods of formal practice, both as a group and in solitude.

Leading up to the Vassa, the week July 12-18 will be a ‘quiet week’ at the monastery, with no formal morning and evening meditation sessions and a more open

schedule than usual. This is an ideal time to do maintenance work in the Temple building, which will be closed from July 11-15. The lunar observance night pūjā, Dhamma Talk and midnight vigil on July 12 will be held in the sāla. The Bodhinyāna Hall by the Retreat Centre is available for meditation while the work is being carried out.

We enter the vassa formally as a community on July 20, starting with a week of group practice that will be held in the Temple. Just prior to that, on July 17, there will be an upasampadā, or full admission ceremony, for two novice monks, Samaneras Pāradassī and Pemasilo.

The group practice time will conclude on Acāriyā Pūjā day, July 27, our root teacher Luang Por Sumedho’s birthday. A siladharā pabbajjā ceremony is being held that afternoon for Anagārikā Crystal, who will be requesting the Going-Forth into the nuns’ community as a Siladharā. The last such ceremony having been four years ago, the nuns are especially delighted they will soon be welcoming a new sister.

The Vassa will also see the return of the popular public Sunday talks. Full details are listed overleaf.

Retreat Centre News

In April, the Retreat Centre said ‘goodbye’ to Didier, our Household Manager for the last 3 years, who as he said: was ‘going to the other side’. He joined the monastic community, taking on the white robes of an anagārika on May 20, 2016. We wish him well on his spiritual journey and will greatly miss his easy, friendly and open-hearted approach to all the joys and challenges that life at the Retreat Centre presents. The position of Household Manager has been taken up by Nick Halliday who brings a wide range of practical skills to the role, which we are sure will be of benefit to all who use the Retreat Centre.

The Retreats for 2016 are now all open and fully booked. Although as always, if you are interested in attending a retreat it is worthwhile going on the waiting list, especially if you are able to come at short notice, (Cont from p.1) ... which could mean being offered a place on the morning the retreat starts! Finally, for those already thinking of 2017, next year’s retreat schedule will be published on the website and in Looking Ahead, in mid-October 2016.

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Amaravati Retreat Centre Monastic Retreats 2016

Dates	Duration	Teacher	Booking opens
29 July–7 Aug. ***	10 days	Ajahn Candasiṛī ***	29 January
12–16 August	5 days	Ajahn Amaro & Ajahn Ratanawanno Thai Language Retreat	12 February
16–18 Sept.	weekend	Ajahn Brahmavarā	16 March
23 Sept.–5 Oct. **	13 days	Ajahn Amaro **	23 March
14–16 October	weekend	Brother Nicholas & Ajahn Mettā Buddhist/Christian Retreat	14 April
21–25 October	5 days	Ajahn Nyānarato	21 April
11–20 November	10 days	Ajahn Vajiro	11 May
9–11 December	weekend	Ajahn Bodhipālā	9 June
27 Dec.–1 Jan. 2017 *	6 days	Ajahn Sundarā – New Year Retreat *	27 June

* Previous silent meditation retreat experience required

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

*** Previous silent meditation retreat experience recommended

Booking opens six calendar months before each retreat start date and you can apply for up to three retreats in any one year. There are always waiting lists but if you can attend at the last minute it is always worth applying, as we often receive late cancellations which can be difficult to fill. Full information about attending retreats, how to book, what to expect and what to bring, is available on the Retreat Centre web-pages at: www.amaravati.org/retreat-centre/ You can also change your personal details, your email address or cancel your retreat on these pages by selecting 'Manage your details' or 'Cancel your retreat'.

If you have any queries about monastic retreats that cannot be answered by visiting the website, please contact the Retreat Centre at retreats@amaravati.org.

Retreat Centre Lay Retreats and Family Events 2016

Amaravati Family Events

Family Events are held in the Retreat Centre. 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 July is intended as an introduction for new families thinking of applying for the longer camp in August. The theme for 2016 is 'The Life of the Buddha'.

20–28 August	Family Camp
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

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.

Days of Practice: 11 September, 18 December.

Weekend Retreat: 28–31 October.

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

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. ALBA runs a series of days of practice and short retreats at Amaravati, led by experienced lay teachers.

Days of Practice: 10 September, 5 November, 17 December.

Retreats: 15–19 July, 7–9 October.

For bookings and information visit:
www.buddhacommunity.org

Introductory Meditation Workshops

Saturday afternoons 2–4 pm

The workshop is suitable for all levels, 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 monk or nun and held in the Temple.

Sunday Talks 2016

Date	Title	Speaker
July 24	Not my circus, not my monkeys	Ajahn Amaro
July 30	Can desire for freedom lead to freedom from desire?	Ajahn Amaro
Aug 7	Cultivating the heart of goodness	Ajahn Kongrit Ratanavanno
Aug 14	Why discipline? I just want to be happy!	Ajahn Sundarā
Aug 21	Why do we die?	Ajahn Nyana-dassano
Aug 28	I am right, why don't they notice?	Ajahn Amaro
Sept 4	Creating our world, do we have a choice?	Ajahn Amaro
Sept 11	Is emptiness nothing?	Ajahn Amaro
Sept 18	Forgiving and compassion	Ajahn Amaro
Sept 25	Finding 'Amaravati'	Ajahn Bodhipālā
Oct 2	Cherishing all living beings	Ajahn Bodhipālā
Oct 9	Entering the stream	Ajahn Amaro
Oct 16	Samsāra – leave or remain?	Ajahn Ahimsako

Coming on retreat vs. staying overnight as a guest

If you are thinking of booking to stay at Amaravati, it is useful to consider the difference between coming on retreat and staying as a monastery guest.

The monastery offers taught meditation retreats, within the setting of their Retreat Centre. The Retreat Centre is self-contained, with its own facilities, booking system and schedules as listed on the page opposite.

Information about the Retreat Centre is on the website at: amaravati.org/retreat-centre

Additionally, the monastery has guest accommodation for both men and women, giving interested practitioners the opportunity to join in the life of the community. Guests follow the Eight Precepts and the routines of the monastic community. The days include morning and evening meditation, work, chores and time for individual practice. Bookings and enquiries for staying as a guest of the monastery should be directed to the guestmonk and guestnun (see details on p. 4).

Information about staying overnight as a guest is on the website at: amaravati.org/visiting/staying-overnight/

Kathina Volunteer Group

A Kathina Festival will be held at Amaravati Buddhist Monastery on Sunday, November 6. A tradition that has been followed for over 2500 years, it takes place during the month following the end of the rains, when samanas would be getting robes and other necessities ready before going back to wandering. At this time, lay followers

come together to make a special offering of robe cloth (the Kathina cloth), and other useful items to the Sangha. This 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.

This year the Kathina Volunteer Group have been given the opportunity to sponsor this festival. If you are interested to join us in volunteering your time on Kathina Day and to participate in the sponsorship, please contact Sharron Chan on 07789 710855 or email sharron.chansc@gmail.com.

Long-term resident opportunities

The community at Amaravati Buddhist Monastery is looking for two female long-term residents who would appreciate living within a Theravadan monastic community to further their practice.

Work Assistant: We are looking for someone with good practical and maintenance skills, who would be willing to be a part of the maintenance team, and to support the work nun in carrying out essential maintenance and housekeeping tasks on a day to day basis, including supervising female volunteers.

For more details see www.amaravati.org/work-assistant-2016, or email Sister Tisārā, tisara@amaravati.org by August 1.

Gardener: We are also looking for someone with gardening and practical skills to take responsibility for the general maintenance and appearance of the monastery's ornamental gardens and trees, working together with the other volunteers and monastics looking after the site.

For details see www.amaravati.org/gardener-2016 or contact the garden nun, gardener@amaravati.org by August 1.

Proposed Amendments to the English Sangha Trust Objects

The English Sangha Trust (EST) is the steward for all donations offered to the Cittaviveka and Amaravati Buddhist Monasteries. Some amendments are being proposed, and the aims of these are:

1. To define the 'English Sangha' and clarify that it includes bhikkhus, nuns and samaneras.
2. To clarify that donations are received for all bhikkhus, nuns and samaneras and distributed according to need as the community defines it.
3. To clarify that the senior sangha of Theris and Theras can propose both sangha and lay followers who are considered eligible to be beneficiaries of 'charitable relief'. This is a very rarely used but useful provision.

For the full text of the amendments and to make comments, please visit: amaravati.org/est-consultation

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

Lunar Observance Days 2016

Jul	● 4 (Mon)	● 12 (Tue)*
	○ 19 (Tue)	● 27 (Wed)
Aug	● 3 (Wed)	● 11 (Thur)
	○ 18 (Thur)	● 26 (Fri)
Sep	● 1 (Thur)	● 9 (Fri)
	○ 16 (Fri)	● 24 (Sat)
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)

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.

Notable Dates

Temple building closed for maintenance – July 11-15
Bhikkhu Upasampadā – July 17
Āsālhā Pūjā – July 19
Vassa Begins – July 20
Sunday Talks Begin – July 24
Ācariya Pūjā – Luang Por Sumedho's Birthday – July 27
Sīladharā Pabbajā – July 27
Pavāranā Day (End of Vassa) – Oct 16
Amaravati Kathina – Nov 6

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, (11.30 am) 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.

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 address below or email: monasterysecretary@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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Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead
Hertfordshire HP1 3BZ
Office: +44 (0) 1442 842 455
Retreat Centre: +44 (0) 1442 843 239

Website

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

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.