

LOOKING AHEAD

- No 31

News from Amaravati – Spring 2018

Warm greetings and good wishes from the Amaravati community

As usual, we have been on retreat since the beginning of the year. The resident monks, nuns and novices have the chance to experience the benefits both of solitary and of silent group practice for these three months, freed up from the usual duties and responsibilities toward the wider community. A team of lay supporters, twenty or so people at any given time, have been providing support while also enjoying the benefits of the quiet monastic environment and retreat schedule.

As the winter quietude and chill gives way to the warmer spring weather and longer days, as the snowdrops pass on and an abundance of daffodils and primroses appear, budding branches, early blossoms and energetic birdsong, we move from the stillness of retreat and begin ourselves to emerge into the more interactive life of community, welcoming a stream of new guests and visitors, conducting weekend meditation workshops, helping maintain the buildings and gardens and hosting school groups. In the Retreat Centre, the schedule of residential meditation retreats begins again soon.

We are blessed to live in a contemplative environment, where the activities and happenings of life are seen as less significant than the awareness within which they occur. Indeed, the awareness, given priority and wise attention, can be understood to be the reality from which the activities seem to emerge. The whole emphasis of the 'Holy Life' is to listen, to watch, to be receptive to experience and to learn continuously from it, while not investing it with a sense of being ultimately true and reliable.

An encouragement from Ajahn Chah is to "Keep listening, keep listening. Don't just believe what you hear and don't disbelieve. Make yourself neutral. Keep listening. It will bring good results, and there's no danger in it. The peril lies in believing too much in what you hear, or in disbelieving. Listen and contemplate. This is what practice is about: being a listener and being one who reflects on things . . ."

This quote comes from a new compilation of the life and teachings of Ajahn Chah, 'Stillness Flowing.' It is the fruit of many years of research and writing by senior disciple Ajahn Jayasāro, published to coincide with this, the centenary year of Ajahn Chah's birth. It is filled with many of his disciples' personal reflections and memories of their time with their beloved Teacher. During the winter retreat time, Ajahn Amaro, as is his custom, generously offered readings from this text, enabling a coming together of the resident community as well as local friends to illuminate many a dark winter's evening with these timeless Dhamma teachings. Our respected Abbot has also been encouraging and supporting the retreat with Dhamma talks, weekly meetings with the junior monastics and interviews with all the resident sangha.

Ajahn Amaro also organised a pilgrimage, mid-January, of a group of monks, nuns, English Sangha trustees and other friends to Thailand, to join the international gathering at Wat Nong Pah Pong, Ajahn Chah's main monastery. Sangha members from the branch monasteries in Thailand and all over the world converged in large numbers for the death anniversary of Ajahn Chah in this centenary year.

There was a week of formal practice at Wat Nong Pah Pong, where thousands gathered to meditate together, supported by Dhamma talks given by many of the senior monks of the international Forest Sangha. There were offerings of food and drink freely given by the many people, mainly locals, but also groups from branch monasteries around the world, who set up food stalls and took the opportunity to reap the merits of generosity on this auspicious occasion. As a culmination of the gathering, there was a great procession of all the monks and nuns present on 16 January, the actual anniversary of Luang Por Chah's passing, which circumambulated the great stupa that was built for the cremation of Ajahn Chah's body and to pay respects within the stupa, where his relics have since been enshrined.

The group from Amaravati stayed for two weeks in Thailand and had the chance to visit a number of other branch monasteries, to pay respects to many of his most senior disciples, including precious time with Luang Por Sumedho, beloved ex-Abbot of Amaravati, to pay respects at the stupa of arahant nun Mae Chee Kaew, to visit the Ajahn Mun museum and receive a warm welcome from Ajahn Jayasāro at his hermitage. It was uplifting and inspiring for us to experience the goodness, friendliness and generosity of the many Thai people we met, to enjoy warm meetings and Dhamma sharings with the Sangha and to feel the benefit and support of being rooted in a monastic tradition that extends far beyond any one monastery.

Samanera Going-Forth Ceremony

Sunday 3rd June 2018

Anagārikas Davis & Jiri will be requesting Pabbajjā, the Going-Forth as a novice monk. The ceremony will take place in the Temple at 1.30 pm on the Vesākha Festival Day.

Siladharā Going-Forth Ceremony

Thursday 5th July 2018

Anagārikās Caraline & Eva will be entering the Order of Siladharā. The ceremony of Going-Forth – Pabbajjā – will take place in the Temple at 2.00 pm.

Everyone is welcome to join us on this auspicious occasion.

RETREAT CENTRE NEWS

The 2018 Retreat Schedule is now available online, with the first retreat of the year already open for booking. As in previous years, booking opens six calendar months before the retreat start date and you can apply for up to 3 retreats in any one calendar year. If you are on the Waiting List for a retreat and do not get offered a place, you may then apply for another retreat in the same year.

However, as many of know, if you are on the Waiting List there is a good chance that you will be offered a place if you can attend at the last minute, which could mean getting a phone call on the morning the retreat starts. So if you really want to attend, keep your diary free! If you are interested in booking a retreat, go to:

www.amaravati.org/retreat-centre

All bookings have to be made online, we are not able to accept telephone or email applications. For information about Coming on retreat, How to book, What to expect, What to bring and more, please visit:

www.amaravati.org/retreat-centre

The FAQ's also have lots of useful information. Once you have booked a retreat, if you need to change any of your personal details, your email address, or cancel your retreat, you can do this by going to: www.amaravati.org/retreat-centre/ and selecting 'Manage your details' or 'Cancel your retreat'. If you need to contact the Retreat Centre directly, please email: retreats@amaravati.org.

We look forward to seeing lots of you.

Special Program with Ajahn Jayasāro

Sunday 13th May 2018

08.15 Gather in the Temple
08.30 – 09.00 Precepts and morning chanting (Thai)
09.00 – 09.30 Meditation (instruction in Thai)
09.30 – 10.00 Dhamma talk (Thai)
10.00 – 10.30 Dhamma talk (English)
10.30 – 11.00 Dual Language Q/A

*The program will be held in the Temple
at Amaravati Buddhist Monastery*

Vesākha Festival Day

Sunday 3rd June 2018

10:30 – Parittas
11:00 – Rice Pindabaht
13:15 – Refuges & Precepts
13:20 – Sanghadāna & Anumodanā
13:30 – Pabbajjā for Anagārikas Davis & Jiri
14:30 – Dhamma-talk

2018 Monastic lead retreats at the Retreat Centre

Dates for 2018	Duration	Teacher	Booking opens
20–29 April *	10-days	Ajahn Bodhipālā	open
18–27 May *	10-days	Ajahn Vimalo	open
8–10 June	weekend	Ajahn Nandiyo	open
15–19 June	5-days	Ajahn Dhammanando	open
29 June–8 July**	10-days	Ajahn Amaro	open
20–24 July	5-day	Ajahn Sundarā	open
3–7 August	5-day	Ajahn Amaro & Ajahn Kongrit Ratanawano THAI LANGUAGE ONLY	open
7–19 September **	13-days	Ajahn Amaro & Joseph Kappel	open
28 Sept.–2 Oct.	5-days	Ajahn Brahmavarā	open
12 –14 Oct.	weekend	Brother Nicholas & Ajahn Sundarā Buddhist/Christian Retreat	open
19–23 October	5-days	Ajahn Nyānadassano	19 April
2–11 November *	10-days	Ajahn Candasirī	02 May
23–25 November	weekend	Ajahn Vinita	23 May
7–9 December	weekend	Ajahn Karuniko	07 June
27 Dec.–1 Jan. 2019 *	6-days	Ajahn Nyānarato	27 June

* 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. For the Days of Practice there is no need to book, just turn up. Registration is in the Retreat Centre kitchen from 9.30 am for 10.00 am start. The day finishes at 5.00 pm.

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

ALBA Dates for 2018

Days of Practice: 12 May, 2 June, 11 August, 1 September, 17 November, 15 December
Retreats: 13-15 April, 13-17 July, 26-28 October

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

BWN Dates for 2018

Days of Practice: 7 January, 4 March, 13 May, 16 December
4-day retreat: 21-24 September

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

Family Event Dates for 2018

Rainbows Retreat: 4-7 May
June Weekend: 22-24 June
Family Camp: 18-26 August
Young Persons' Retreat (YPR): 5-7 October
Creative Weekend (CWE): November 30 - December 2

Amaravati Long Term Plan Rebuilding Amaravati

Following the dedication and opening of the Aroga Kuti for sick or disabled bhikkhus, the sangha and EST have turned their attention to buildings for the Nuns' Community.

The sisters reviewed the plans and came up with a new layout for their eventual dwellings and common buildings that allows for some privacy and which are also environmentally friendly. The first ones to be built are Amara Kuti, which was previously a paint store, but in recent years has been accommodation for a senior nun, and Nissoko. Nissoko offers the nuns a Meeting Room, but is literally falling apart and is not big enough for all the activities the nuns need to undertake.

A generous donor has come forward to contribute the greater part of the funds for rebuilding Nissoko, and a legacy was received that is enabling a new Amara Kuti to be built. Both buildings will be built using Passive House methods, and unlike Aroga, which used broadly traditional construction, the two nun's buildings will be largely prefabricated, with Amara having wooden facing and Nissoko brick. Prefabrication shortens the construction period and the Passive House technologies will mean the running costs are very low.

We hope to get Planning Permission for both buildings this year and start construction either this year or after the Winter Retreat 2019.

Introductory Meditation Workshops Saturday afternoons 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.

The workshops are led by a monastic and held in the Temple.

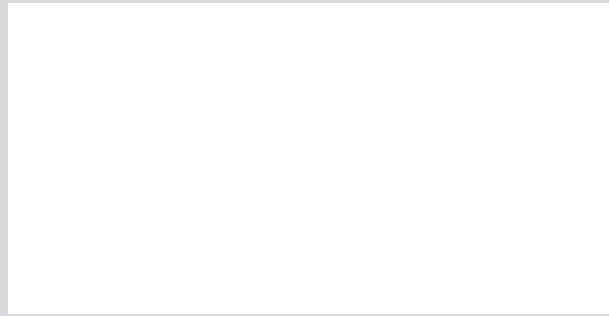
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Amaravati Buddhist Monastery, St Margarets, Great Gaddesden,
Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP1 3BZ, UK

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, meditation retreats and other activities through the year. There is also the possibility to stay as a guest and join in the monastery routines for periods of time.

Those new to the monastery may wish to visit in the late morning when the community gathers for the main meal and there are opportunities to meet other visitors and speak to one of the senior monastics. From March 25, 2018 to October 28, 2018 the meal ceremonies are at 11.30 am Mon-Sat and 11.15 am on Sundays.

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.

Visitors are welcome to use the Stupa field, Temple, Sālā, Cloister, the Rainbow Room (for children) and Library. Please respect any privacy signs and especially do not walk through the bhikkhus' area from the visitor's car-park to the stupa field.

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: www.amaravati.org/visiting
For all other enquiries, including school visits, please contact the Monastery Secretary: 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

Website

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

Monastery Contact Details

Amaravati Buddhist Monastery
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Retreat Centre: +44 (0) 1442 843 239

Notable Dates 2018

June 3 : Vesākha Celebrations & Samanera Going-Forth Ceremony
July 5 : Siladharā Going-Forth Ceremony
July 27 : Acāriya Pūjā & Bhikkhu Full Acceptance Ceremony

Lunar Observance Days 2018

Apr	● 8 (Sun)	● 14 (Sat)
	● 22 (Sun)	○ 29 (Sun)
May	● 7 (Mon)	● 14 (Mon)
	● 22 (Tue)	○ 29 (Tue)
Jun	● 6 (Wed)	● 12 (Tue)
	● 20 (Wed)	○ 27 (Wed)
Jul	● 5 (Tue)	● 12 (Tue)
	● 20 (Fri)	○ 27 (Fri)
Aug	● 4 (Sat)	● 11 (Sat)
	● 19 (Sun)	○ 26 (Sun)
Sep	● 3 (Mon)	● 9 (Sun)
	● 17 (Mon)	○ 24 (Mon)
Oct	● 2 (Tue)	● 9 (Tue)
	● 17 (Wed)	○ 24 (Wed)
Nov	● 1 (Tue)	● 7 (Wed)
	● 15 (Tue)	○ 22 (Tue)
	● 30 (Fri)	
Dec	● 7 (Fri)	● 15 (Sat)
	○ 22 (Sat)	● 30 (Sun)

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.