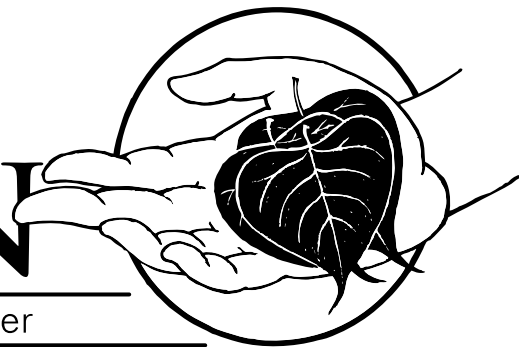


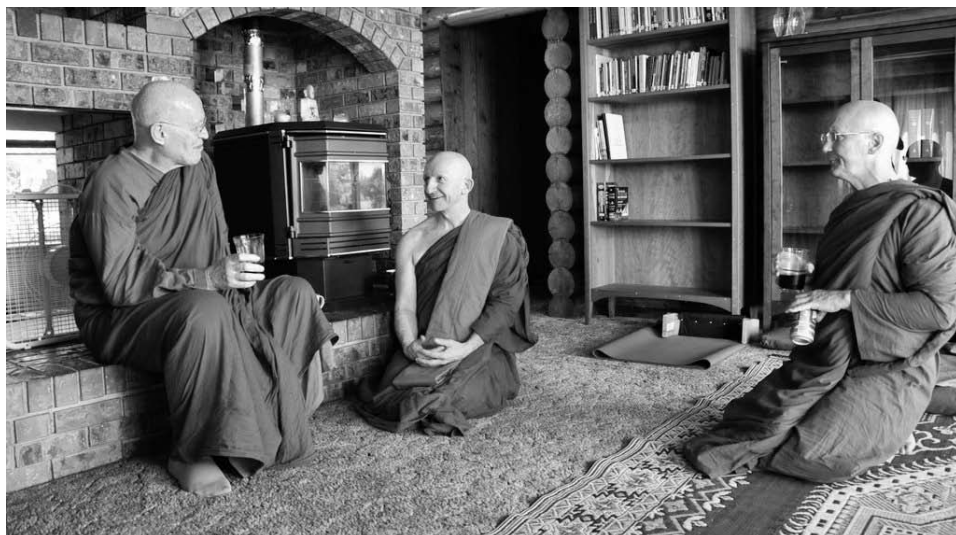
FEARLESS MOUNTAIN

The Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery Newsletter



Summer 2010•2553

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Abbots past and present assembled in support of the opening of the Hermitage, Ajahn Sumedho, Ajahn Amaro and Ajahn Pasanno Photo: Ajahn Paññasāro

Pacific Hermitage Fulfills Vision of Lay Practitioners and Provides a Lesson in Letting Go

by Paul Gerhards

Pacific Hermitage, Abhayagiri's first branch monastery, officially opened on July 11 as Ajahn Sudanto, Tan Cāgānando, and Tan Thitābho took up residence there.

The Hermitage rests on five acres of leased property high in the hills above the riverside communities of White Salmon and Bingen on the Washington side of the scenic Columbia River Gorge. Central to the partially forested property is the single-story, three-bedroom log house. The bright red metal roof complements the deep brown logs. The spacious vaulted living room serves well as the shrine room. Covered walkways front and back seem ready-made for walking meditation during inclement weather. One meditation cabin is now in place on the land, with one or two more in the plans. From its inception,

Pacific Hermitage has been a sublime example of a lay community's support of the monastic Sangha and of bringing the Dhamma to a specific region.

To have monks from Abhayagiri close by to offer teachings and inspiration in the greater Portland area has been a long-held vision of Sakula (Mary Reinard), spiritual director of Portland Friends of the Dhamma. Sakula, who for many years has had Ajahn Pasanno as her spiritual mentor, has had a long association with Abhayagiri.

Although the Hermitage fulfills a dream of hers, Sakula has stayed carefully and intentionally in the background of the developments that have made it possible. Instead, she has entrusted others in the Friends of the Dhamma community—and there are many—to take on the numerous

responsibilities of bringing the Hermitage to fruition.

"A lot of very mature practitioners have helped make this possible," said Carole Melkonian, another Friends of the Dhamma member with long ties to Abhayagiri. But Carole credited Sakula's ability to foster harmony among and within the various groups who meet at the Friends of the Dhamma center in Southeast Portland as being of central importance. "Sakula's love of the Dhamma and her relationship with the Abhayagiri monks have helped create the conditions to allow our sangha to grow."

Establishing a monastery like Abhayagiri is no small thing, nor is establishing a branch monastery like Pacific Hermitage. Since Theravāda monks of the Thai forest tradition are supported entirely by the community in which they live, the Abhayagiri monastic community needed to be sure there would be sufficient local support before making a commitment to branching out. In the early summer of 2007, preparations got underway to accommodate two monks, Ajahns Sudanto and Karunadhammo, in Oregon for Vassa, the annual Rains Retreat from July through October.

Planning for what is now known as "The 2007 Summer Hermitage" began

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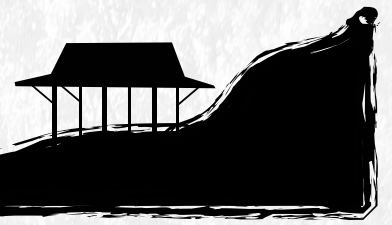
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Contributors: *The Sangha, Ajahn Amaro, Paul Gerhards, Dennis Crean and Mettikā Hoffman.*

From the Monastery

Summer 2010



By the beginning of May the regular Abhayagiri work week was gearing up and Ajahn Amaro was already off for a final trip to the East Coast to offer teachings at a number of venues, including a ten-day retreat at the Insight Meditation Society in Massachusetts, as well as a variety of engagements in New York City.

By the middle of July Ajahn Amaro concluded his last stint of planned teachings in the United States as his time as co-abbot drew to a close. Many farewells both large and small were offered throughout the spring and summer, including a send-off by the Spirit Rock Teachers Council and finishing with a one-day farewell and ordination ceremony combination on July 18. A reflection on Ajahn Amaro's role as a teacher is on page 10. Furthermore, the final segment of this article explores the bigger picture of Abhayagiri, Ajahn Amaro and *anicca* (impermanence).

After holding down the fort during Ajahn Amaro's teaching engagements in May, Ajahn Pasanno embarked upon a journey of his own to Ladakh, in the Buddhist Himalayas, accompanied by Abhayagiri-grown monk Tan Nāniko. Also, included in the travel group were Manu and Aneesa, friends of the community who now live in India, as well as long-time supporters, Alistair and Sakula, who made the initial invitation to Ajahn Pasanno. The pilgrimage was an opportunity for Ajahn Pasanno to temporarily set aside many of his extensive administrative and community responsibilities while exploring an interest in this spiritually rich region. Despite an ambitious travel schedule and unexpected adversities, the group maintained regular periods of meditation and chanting in the morning and evening.

Tan Thitābho and Tan Kassapo returned in June from one year of training and adventures at affiliated monasteries in Thailand. During that time they

practiced in various situations in national parks and forests near the borders of Laos and Burma, as well as participated in the epic construction of a new Dhamma Hall at the International Forest Monastery, Wat Pah Nanachat, in Ubon. These two venerables also carefully escorted a 700-year-old Sukhothai Buddha image back to Abhayagiri. The Buddha-rūpa was offered to the abbots during their last trip to Thailand and now watches over the central meeting room of the Bhikkhu Commons in a specially built shrine.

On July 18, the same day as Ajahn Amaro's farewell, the fully ordained Sangha, as well as family, friends and supporters, welcomed two new members to its ranks: Kovilo Bhikkhu and Pamutto Bhikkhu. Each of these candidates spent one year as a postulant (*anagārika*) and one year as a novice monk (*sāmanera*) before taking this step of higher ordination. In becoming fully ordained monks, they have expressed their aspiration to uphold the tradition of extensive protocols that have been passed on for two and a half millennia since the time of the Buddha. Furthermore, in entering the bhikkhu Sangha at Abhayagiri, they indicate their intention to train under their preceptor and teacher, Ajahn Pasanno, for a period of five years.

Esteemed Visitors

An international array of experienced teachers enriched the spring and summer of the Abhayagiri community. During the spring, the Monastery offered Ajahn Khemasiri and Ajahn Anandabodhī each the opportunity for retreat time, to focus on meditation practice and study in a peaceful environment. Ajahn Khemasiri is abbot of Dhammapala Monastery in Switzerland, while Ajahn Anandabodhī is a senior nun of the new nuns' community at the Aloka Vihara in San Francisco. American-born Ajahn Chandako stayed at Abhayagiri for a week

during a hiatus from his role as abbot of Vimutti Monastery in New Zealand. Furthermore, Ajahn Sucitto, abbot of Cittaviveka Monastery in England, spent a few weeks on the West Coast. During his time in the area, Ajahn Sucitto led a day of study and reflection at Abhayagiri, as well as a ten-day retreat at Spirit Rock. The retreat was co-led with Ajahn Mettā, accompanied by a support crew of junior Abhayagiri monastics.

During the month of June, esteemed Sri Lankan monk Bhante Seelananda offered his delightfully peaceful presence as well as six classes a week of Pali, the scriptural language of Theravāda Buddhism. Residents and visitors alike took advantage of the opportunity to benefit from Bhante Seelananda's sincere enthusiasm for the Buddha's teachings as well as his extensive monastic training in Sri Lanka, a traditionally Buddhist country.

The Story of the Bhikkhu Commons

The community has been engaged in many projects to maintain and develop the Monastery including an ambitious plan to restore Abhayagiri's extensive network of trails for the benefit of all, which is proceeding very well. However, the major news on the work scene has been the eagerly awaited completion of



The West deck of the Bhikkhu Commons



The 700 year old Buddha image watches over the central meeting room of the Bhikkhu Commons. Seated below are Ploern Petchkue, Ajahn Sudanto and Krit Leekamjorn at the opening ceremony.

the Bhikkhu Commons, the building formerly known as the “MUB.”

In the late 1990s the extended Abhayagiri community worked out the Master Plan, a vision for the long-term development of Abhayagiri. The Master Plan included a resource center further up the mountain and deep within the forest. This building was to provide basic facilities such as showers, toilets and a sewing room to support the monastic community.

Until a few years ago it was far from certain if the Bhikkhu Commons would ever come into existence, partly because other construction projects, such as the completion of basic amenities for all residents and visitors in the cloister area, were higher priorities. Since Abhayagiri is

opening ceremony. In addition to the Bhikkhu Commons, the construction also included the creation of a public bathroom block up in the forest for all who visit the Monastery. These new restroom facilities were appreciated this summer during the various events at the Upper Meditation Platform such as the morning and evening meditations as well the ordination ceremony.

As the verses in the *Abhayagiri Chanting Book* remind us: “Our very lives are sustained by the gifts of others.” It is touching how so many different acts of generosity have crystallized into this beautiful resource for the monastic community. Last year during the teen weekend, two monks, a number of teens and a teen counselor

all wielded paint rollers in the lower parking lot to cover the building’s exterior panels. More recently, during the May Community Work day, helpful people from the extended Abhayagiri community came from near and far to clear the surrounding forest of fire hazards. Even those who have not been able to visit the Monastery since the construction began have still maintained a connection with the process by following progress via the picture gallery on the internet and offering dona-

tions both large and small. Furthermore, even during times of retreat, the monastic community has kept a careful watch over the construction progress. For example, Ajahn Pasanno kept up his daily check-in on the construction even during his precious once-a-year period of seclusion.

Ajahn Pasanno, Ajahn Sudanto, the monastic community, the Building Committee, the architects and the construction teams have all taken great care in honoring the generosity of all those who have made this building possible. The Bhikkhu Commons has been constructed with concern for the welfare of future generations. The different materials used were selected to be low-maintenance and long-lasting, allowing for at least 50 to 100 years of use. Furthermore, in keeping with Abhayagiri’s aspiration for environmentally responsible development, the building operates without the use of fossil fuels. Electricity is provided primarily by Abhayagiri’s solar panels, while heating and hot water are both supplied by an innovative combination of solar-heated water and a high efficiency wood boiler. Already the building has been put to good use. Bhante Seelananda taught Pali classes to the monastics in the sewing room. The sewing facility has also been used by Tan Kovilo and Tan Pamutto in making their robes for their ordinations, while the central meeting room has been used for the traditional fortnightly recitation of the monastic rules as well as for regular discussion meetings to encourage communal harmony. In addition, the showers, laundry and restroom facilities have allowed community members more time to be up the hill in the forest and near their dwellings amongst the trees.

May the practice of all of us who will benefit from the Bhikkhu Commons, both near and far, directly and indirectly, honor the generosity that has gone into its creation.

Abhayagiri – the next chapter

The departure of two long-standing members of the community, Ajahn Amaro and Ajahn Sudanto, as well as the official opening of the Pacific Hermitage marks

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Spirit Rock teens painting the exterior panels for the Bhikkhu Commons. Photo: Ajahn Amaro

The Body Of Truth And The Body Of Fear

by Ajahn Amaro

Excerpted from *Freeing the Body, Freeing the Mind: Writings on the Connections Between Yoga and Buddhism*
Edited by Michael Stone; Published by Shambhala Publications

One of the aspects of our lives that causes discordancy is our routine identification with emotional states. Given a little practice with meditation, before long most people can recognize that a passing thought is just like that passing car along the street, or that barking dog across the valley. At first it's just once in a while, but soon we can see such things as insubstantial and let them go on a consistent basis.

If the thought is emotionally loaded, however—"They're not supposed to drive up here when the meditation is going on!" or "That damned dog; they promised to keep it quiet!"—then it's a very different story.

Our society is one that reveres clear thinking but emotionally most of us are very muddy. We easily get lost in feelings of resentment, excitement, depression and so forth. In addition, we tend to relate to these states as what we are rather than something that we're experiencing: "I *am* happy," "I *am* distraught!" "I *am* afraid," rather than, "I *feel* happy/distraught/afraid," or, even more realistically, "There is the feeling of happiness/distress/fear."

Thus in meditation it may be reasonably easy to put random chattering thoughts aside, but if they are emotionally charged we rapidly get lost in the story. Before we know it we're tangled in a suffocating web of self-created imaginings.

There are a great variety of practices that contribute to mindfulness of the body. One of the most valuable of these is "feeling and knowing the mind in the body" or "embodying the mind." We can use this practice as one way to help us establish greater clarity in our lives, not through any kind of suppression or distraction, but rather through the realm of feeling and a mindful, radical acceptance.

This meditation is usually developed in the sitting posture but later,

when it is more deeply established, it can be applied in all situations. To begin with it requires that there be a certain level of mental tranquility so, unfortunately, this is not a method for total beginners to meditation. Having said that, once it is possible for a person to establish an average degree of calm, it can be used quite effectively.

EMBODYING THE MIND – THE CASE OF FEAR

Say for example that you feel you have a particular problem with fear; your relationship with life is that: If it exists, worry about it!

Your habit is to think in terms of: "I have got a fear problem. How can I get rid of my fear? If I could get rid of it, then there would be me without the fear and then I would be happy." It all sounds reasonable enough. . . So you wish to investigate this fear and understand it.

You begin the meditation by relaxing the body as much as possible around the spine, which is upright but not tense. Take the first ten minutes to sweep the attention up and down through the body, relaxing completely, then focus on the rhythm of the breath.

Let yourself settle as much as possible, to establish the qualities of calm and clarity. When you feel that the mind is undistracted from the present, deliberately

bring into consciousness either a memory of a frightening event, the thought of a person who intimidates you, or the prospect of an event that is worrying; the stronger the better.

As soon as you have triggered the fear reaction by recalling that perception, consciously leave hold of all the conceptual thought that wants to take hold of the story and run. This takes considerable resolution but it's a crucial piece of the practice.

Our habit is to leap into the stories we tell ourselves and not to notice what we're actually feeling. We thus need to let go of the verbals and to seek where we feel the sensations of fear in the body.

Is it in your jaw? Is it in your shoulders? Is your solar plexus knotted into a dense wad? Where is it? How does it feel? Is hot? Is it dead and cold? Can you tell?

Different people have different emotional maps written through their bodies; every one of us has our own variations. There are a few general patterns though and, in this example, fear is most often felt as a tightness in the solar plexus area.

If this is where you feel fear located, then bring your attention to that spot. If the mind starts up with thoughts such as, "I have got a fear problem. I've got to get rid of this!" Gently but firmly say, "No, right now there's simply this feeling of fear—it's a presumption to call it 'my problem.'"

Keep the attention on the physical sensation within the belly and do not let the mind verbalize around that. Explore it and be interested in it. What you will find is that the sensation itself is not that uncomfortable. It's certainly not pleasant—it's not supposed to be—but it is far less irksome or painful than, say, a toothache, let alone a migraine.



Witness and allow yourself to know that sensation in the abdomen fully, open the heart to it and accept it as it is. Recognize that it is simply one of the many feelings within this body and mind. It is part of the natural order. It is important to recognize that you are not trying to make yourself like this feeling, or to call it good. In fact it's best to refrain from all judgments around it if possible, other than "Here it is." You are simply feeling the body of fear, the fear-filled body. The more radically, simply and mindfully you can accept this sensation, the more completely the process will help to clarify things for you.



RESPONSIVITY RATHER THAN REACTIVITY

There is a passage in one of the Upanishads that aptly illustrates this relationship between ego-centeredness and fear; Joseph Campbell summarizes it as:

"In the beginning... there was only the Self; but it said 'I' (Sanskrit *aham*) and immediately felt fear, after which, desire." Brihadarañayaka Upanishad 1.4.1-5 *Oriental Mythology*, p. 14

In this pattern of experience we are watching the fear feeling being born from the empty mind, bursting into being and evolving; it is one embodiment of the isolated self-feeling. It is then seen, felt and known as having come out of nothing, done its piece, and then dissolved back into nothing again. Moreover, all along the way, the whole cycle was known and accepted as simply Nature in action. It is thus seen and known as an embodiment of Truth.

The key transforming element in this entire process is the heartfelt quality of acceptance. In that open-hearted acceptance there is a profound non-conceptual recognition that fear is "all right," in the most literal sense of the words—it's all part of the natural order—and that there is indeed no thing to be afraid of.

The fear is part of Nature; it's uncomfortable when it's present, for sure, but fundamentally it is not a problem—how could it be?

Another aspect of the transforming quality of this kind of practice is that, once we have wholeheartedly accepted the

feeling, we have to some extent also accepted where it came from. Having drunk from the stream we have also drunk from the source of the stream.

This is to say we have accepted and attuned ourselves to a quality that we were previously blind to and out of harmony with—the thing that caused the imbalance in the first place. Unconscious fearful attitudes, for example, produce stressful self-preservative reactions. To have attuned to some degree with that which ignited the fear reaction is to have recognized it as being part of Nature, part of *us*. It was frightening because it was seen as alien; when its relatedness to us is recognized, the heart relaxes.

This aspect of the practice becomes particularly significant as we go about our daily lives and experience encounters with those things that frighten us, or whatever the habitual emotional reaction might be. We find that, whereas in the past the attention would immediately go into telling ourselves the familiar stories and believing them—"I can't believe he said that—that's evil!" "That's sooo beautiful, I've gotta have it!"—we notice: here's the feeling of desire; here's the feeling of fear...that's all. We realize we don't have to follow it blindly.

We also find with practice that we can develop mindfulness of the body to help sustain clarity around emotional states. When something causes an emotional reaction of any kind to be launched, we can bring the attention into the body and notice where we're feeling it: "Where is this anger lodged?" "This is anticipation—where is it felt?" "Here's nostalgia—is it hot or cold?"

Rather than suppressing or dissociating from the experience we are receiving it fully, but we take the option not to buy into it blindly. The body is thus our means of attuning to the moment and through its medium we cultivate a responsivity, rather than a blind reactivity. This also allows us to "hear" the body's signals before they become howls. This is useful when practicing Hatha Yoga as well—to prevent injury and establish a mindful practice in motion.

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The body and mind work like a pair of cisterns connected by a pipe at their base; what happens to the water in one affects the levels in the other. Most of us are blithely unaware of the extent to which our moods are affected by our physical habits and vice versa. The kind of practice just described shows us how anxiety (for example) is sustained by tension in the body. When that physical tension is relaxed, it's hard to stay anxious.

This is no new discovery. In fact, as well as being ancient wisdom, it is the basis of pharmaceuticals like Valium. Apparently this drug works through being a muscle relaxant, rather than having any mood-altering effect on the central nervous system. By developing this dimension of body awareness and responsivity, we are employing Mother Nature's Valium; the advantage is that this spiritual version is organic *and* non-addictive.

KNOWING THE BODY THROUGH THE MIND

One way of describing this series of practices is "knowing the mind through the body." However, these are by no means the only ways to use meditation on the body to bring our lives into a more profound state of harmony—far from it.

Jill Satterfield, a colleague I have worked together with on numerous meditation retreats and who runs the Vajra Yoga and Meditation Studio in Manhattan, teaches a practice which might well be named "knowing the body through the mind."

It employs a method of visualization, imagining the body as a house. With an initial injunction to her yoga students to keep the framework of the exercise "as childlike as possible," she then walks them through a series of inquiries:

- Where is the brightest room? Where is the darkest?
- Which is the most cluttered room?
- Where do your parents live when they stay? Do they ever leave?"
- Where do you store your childhood memories?
- If you could bring in a handyman, what would you ask him to fix?
- Which is the coziest room?

- Would you like to exchange houses with anyone?

She then directs a mindful breathing into the dark or cluttered areas and advises on poses to open and illuminate that part of the body.

Finally, she encourages the students to self-prescribe restorative poses. These the yogis choose through visualizing the opening of the windows, throwing out the clutter or through non-fixing of the imperfections but just sitting close by and being with what is—just as any friend would with one in need.

A SELF-ADJUSTING UNIVERSE

A few practices have been spelled out here, but there's an issue that always comes into play along with the attempt to apply such things in our lives.

In any kind of spiritual discipline, be it Buddhist meditation, Hatha Yoga or whatever, a perennial problem is that of getting caught in the doing-ness of a practice.

We might faithfully follow the formula, putting forth great effort with sincerity; however, being guided by the paradigm of "me doing it how it *should* be done" often leads us to depression. We get confused by this and presume that we're just not sincere, not trying hard enough, so we pile on more of the "right" thing.

We might carry on in this vein for a while but after some years it can become disheartening. We then either cave in completely and go back to the beach, or to the bottle, or both. As a more promising option we might find ourselves a new brand of Buddhism, a new yoga teacher, or go back to Christianity... but after another stint, this starts to pale too. We grasp it all

too tightly or we throw it all away—so it goes. . .

We want to change something in us, yes—all spiritual disciplines are based upon this fact—so this is not the issue. The issue is more about the attitude with which we pick up a practice than about the particular factors which comprise it.

The two areas of our mishandling in the above paradigm are the "me doing it" and the "how it *should* be done." We unconsciously create a solid sense of me-ness—known as *ahamkara* in Pali—along with an equally solid thing that we're trying to do. In Pali this quality of mine-ness is known as *mamamkara*. The tighter we grasp the "me" and the sense of doing, together with the perceived substantiality of "my practice"—be it a yoga *asana*, a meditation technique or our Jewish faith—the more prone we make ourselves to disappointment. It is a direct relationship.

So, what to do? We seem to find ourselves straddled between the wisdom of the Third Zen Patriarch, who said, "The faster they hurry, the slower they go," and the wisdom of the Red Queen, who said, "It takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place."

A way forward is in gently turning away from the habits of either grasping or rejecting the way things are. Rather, the heart attunes itself to the present and then, through the intrinsic participation of our bodies and minds in the way things are, means of working fruitfully with the present reality arise spontaneously. We *work with* the way things are.

It is interesting that in the Pali language the word for "truth" is *Dhamma*. In addition to this it means "duty" or "work, métier." It can also validly be rendered as "Nature." This implies that not only are all of our physical and mental attributes part of the natural order but also that participation is intrinsic. We are not disturbing the universe (as T.S. Eliot put it) by responding and choosing. Our free-willed choices are part of "the way things are" and, when these choices come from mindfulness, wisdom and kindness, the result is joyful and liberating. It is an unentangled participation.



HOLDING IN AWARENESS

There is a simple method of viewing this process of unentangled participation in action.

Take some occasion when you are by yourself. It is not crucial that you be sitting in meditation; the important thing is just that you have a few minutes to yourself and can freely turn the attention inward.

Let your mind relax and do not focus on any particular thing; in fact, for this purpose, it will help to let your mind wander for a while. After a few minutes bring attention into the body. You will notice areas in the body that seem tight or slumped. Choose the most prominent of these to focus on, for example, the spine.

Notice any impulses to straighten your back but do not act on them. Don't *do* anything. This is a practice of non-doing, a diligent effortlessness.

Let the attention settle on that feeling in your back and hold it in awareness. Let that holding be as impartial as possible: you are not tensing up against it, you are not waiting for it to go away, you are not freezing in position—there is a simple acceptance of how it is. You are not wanting it to change or not to change. No agenda but awareness.

As you relax into this open-hearted awareness, let go of control of the body so that if it wants to move, it can move.

Soon you notice the body starting to make little adjustments—as these movements occur don't try to influence them. Don't try to make them happen. Don't try to make them not happen. Trust in awareness.

Sustain the environment of awareness and simply watch; feel the body changing. Surrender, with faith in the body's own wisdom. Let the universe adjust itself.

Within a few minutes you find that the body has straightened and the spine is as perfectly aligned as it has ever been. *You* didn't *do* any *thing*.

If thoughts arise such as, "This is great! Now I'm sitting perfectly," let them pass.

I often describe this process as "the heat-lamp effect." The combination of awareness and radical acceptance (otherwise known as loving-kindness) acts like a heat lamp on a knotted muscle; under



the influence of those rays all resistance is futile and the knot surrenders, the muscle returns to its relaxed state. *You* just lie there while it happens; all you have to do is receive the heat and let nature take its course. This method of holding in awareness is analogous, although these "rays" are coming from inside.

Practitioners of Hatha Yoga will also be somewhat familiar with this way of working with the mind and body. In the past I have heard this kind of letting go of self-centered motivation, or non-doing, as "surrendering into the pose," "relaxing into the full expression of a pose" or simply as "getting out of your own way."

In Sanskrit "surrender" is *pranidhāna*; it is the relinquishment of the self-centered perspective. Even though it might seem to have the opposite meaning, it is related to the Buddhist concept of faith (*saddhā* in Pali). For when we let go of the self-centered view of things, we are expressing a trust in the orderliness of Nature. We surrender the urge for control by "me" since we have faith in the infinitely more trustworthy, self-adjusting universe. The result is the beauty of what is known as "full expression."

Jill Satterfield speaks of this kind of selfless full expression of a yoga asana as being like origami. The paper surrenders to its folding and unfolding without resis-

tance; the folder lets the fingers make their well-practiced moves, guided simply by kindness and awareness.

She describes the way she uses the metaphor: "The paper is folded into various shapes, then unfolds back into just a piece of paper again, then another shape, then paper again. No matter what the shape, it's still just a piece of paper. No matter what "pose" it's still the body with a potentially clear uninhibited mind."

THE SUCHNESS OF THE BODY

The word that the Buddha chose to refer to himself—*Tathāgata*—has a curious blend of meanings. It is made up of two well-known parts yet scholars have debated for centuries as to what it really means; is it "Tath-āgata," "thus come" or "Tathā-gata," "thus gone?" "Come to suchness" or "gone to suchness"?

The Buddha was very fond of word-plays so my suspicion is that he coined the word "Tathāgata" precisely because it implied both attributes: completely transcendent, utterly gone, AND immanent in the physical world, completely present. The term is ideal in that it carries both these meanings equally and indicates that the two, embodiment and transcendence, do not exclude each other in any way.

This attribute of suchness thus carries with it the spirit of inclusivity, being the point of intersection of the embodied and the transcendent, of time with the timeless. It directs us toward finding spiritual fulfillment in the suchness of the embodied mind, here and now, rather than in some abstracted, idealized "me," some other place and time, or in a special über-heavenly state we might reach through withdrawal of the senses.

A MEETING OF THE WAYS

When the light of these insights is brought to bear on the interface of Hatha Yoga and Buddhist practice, just as with our heat lamp, we can witness a transforming realization. As Mary Paffard, another close collaborator and friend of ours who helps run Yoga Mendocino in Ukiah, California, put it: "The yoga is not simply a supplement to an aching back, for meditation, and the Buddhism is not just a philosophy of mind

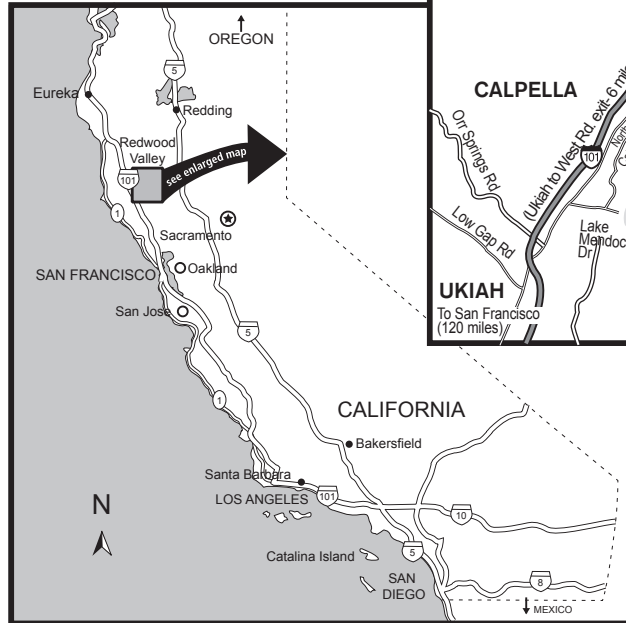
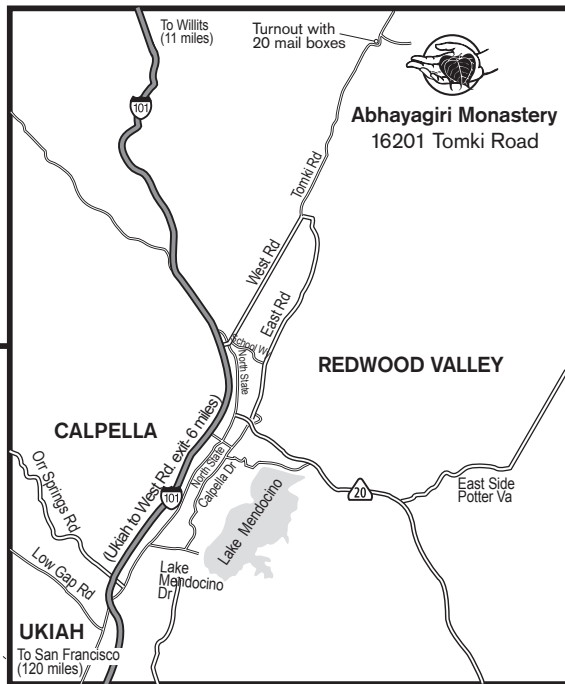
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LUNAR OBSERVANCE DAYS

2553	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
	TUE 3	THU 2	FRI/SUN 1/31	MON 29	WED 29
	TUE 10	WED 8	FRI 8	SAT 6	MON 6
	WED 18	THU 16	SAT 16	SUN 14	TUE 14
	WED 25	THU 23	SAT 23	SUN 21	THU 21

DIRECTIONS TO ABHAYAGIRI

1. Take WEST ROAD exit from HWY 101.
2. Go straight over NORTH STATE ST. and SCHOOL WAY.
3. Follow WEST ROAD **3 miles** until you reach a T-Junction.
4. Turn left at the T-Junction onto TOMKI ROAD. Continue for **4 miles** until you reach a turn-out with 20 mailboxes. The monastery entrance is on the right.



CONTACT INFORMATION FOR EVENTS

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1632 48th Ave.,
San Francisco, CA 94122
- Sitavana Birken Forest Monastery**
PO Box 5, Knutsford, B.C.
Canada V0E 2A0
+1 (778) 785-6059
email: meditate@birken.ca
(preferred method of contact)
- Tisarana Buddhist Monastery**
1356 Powers Road, RR #3
Perth, Ontario K7H 3C5
Tel: +1 (613) 264 8208
www.tisarana.ca
Stewards: Tisarana Buddhist Monastery
- Berkeley Buddhist Monastery
Institute for World Religions**
2304 McKinley Ave.
Berkeley, CA 94703
Tel. (510) 848 3440
Fax. (510) 548 4551
www.drba.org
- Portland Friends of the Dhamma**
1422 SE Tacoma St., 2nd Floor
Portland, OR 97202
sakula@notjustus.com
- Spirit Rock Meditation Center**
5000 Sir Francis Drake Blvd.
Woodacre, CA
Tel. (415) 488 0164
Fax. (415) 488 1025
www.spiritrock.org
- Yoga Mendocino**
206 Mason St.
Ukiah, CA 95482
Tel. (707) 462 2580
www.yogamendocino.org

UNITED KINGDOM

- Amaravati Buddhist Monastery**
Great Gaddesden,
Hemel Hempstead,
Hertfordshire HP1 3BZ.
Tel. +44 (0) 144 284 2455
Fax: +44 (0) 144 284 3721
www.amaravati.org
- Cittaviveka
Chithurst Buddhist Monastery**
Chithurst, Petersfield,
Hampshire GU31 5EU.
Tel. +44 (0) 1730 814 986
Fax. +44 (0) 1730 817 334
www.cittaviveka.org
- Aruna Ratanagiri
Harnham Buddhist Monastery**
Harnham, Belsay,
Northumberland NE20 0HF.
Tel. +44 (0) 1661 881 612
Fax. +44 (0) 1661 881 019
www.ratanagiri.org

NEW ZEALAND

- Bodhinyanarama
Monastery**
17 Rakau Grove
Stokes Valley,
Lower Hutt 5019
Tel. +64 (0) 4 5637 193
www.bodhinyanarama.net.nz

Vimutti Monastery

- PO Box 7
Bombay, 2343
Tel. +64 (0) 9 236 6816
www.vimutti.org.nz

AUSTRALIA

- Bodhivana Monastery**
780 Woods Point Road,
East Warburton,
Victoria 3799.
Tel. +61 (0) 3 5966 5999
Fax. +61 (0) 3 5966 5998

For a comprehensive directory of branch monasteries please visit www.forestsangha.org

ABHAYAGIRI BUDDHIST MONASTERY COMMUNITY LIST

Vassa (Rains Retreats/years as a monk)
Updated July 26, 2010

Pasanno Bhikkhu	36
Yatiko Bhikkhu	17
Pesalo Bhikkhu	14
Karunadhammo Bhikkhu	12
Gunavuddho Bhikkhu	10
Pavaro Bhikkhu	6
Kassapa Bhikkhu	3
Cunda Bhikkhu	2
Kaccāna Bhikkhu	1
Thitapañño Bhikkhu	1
Kovilo Bhikkhu	0
Pamutto Bhikkhu	0

- Anagārika Nate Bertram
Anagārika Bryan Johnson
Anagārika Kevin Merfeld

LONGTERM LAY RESIDENT

Upāsikā Debbie Stamp

AT PACIFIC HERMITAGE

(hermitage.abhayagiri.org)

Sudanto Bhikkhu	15
Cāgānando Bhikkhu	5
Thitābho Bhikkhu	3

Also visit our online calendar at www.abhayagiri.org/index.php/main/days for the most up-to-date information.

Aug

- 19 Meditation and Dhamma talk at Lakeport Yoga Center, 422 Lakeport Blvd., Lakeport, CA – Contact: (707) 263-9400
- 21 Upāsika Day at Abhayagiri – ‘Daily-life practice: relating to friends, family, and colleagues’
- 27-29 Spirit Rock Teen Weekend at Abhayagiri – Contact: Rebekkah LaDyne at Spirit Rock (415) 488-0164 ext. 227, www.spiritrock.org

Sept

- 6 Dhamma talk at Three Jewels Dharma Hall, Fort Bragg, CA – Contact: Mettika Hoffman (707) 964-4606
- 7 Monthly gathering at Berkeley Buddhist Monastery
- 8 Meditation and Dhamma talk at Yoga Mendocino (Yomo), Ukiah, CA
- 12 Community work day at Abhayagiri
- 19 Daylong at Spirit Rock – ‘Recollections of Ajahn Chah’ with Ajahn Pasann – Contact: www.spiritrock.org
- 25-26 Buddhist Bicycle Pilgrimage from Spirit Rock to Abhayagiri – Contact: www.dharmawheels.org

Oct

- 9 Upāsika Day at Abhayagiri – ‘Contemplation on the Unattractiveness of the Body’
- 10 Community work day at Abhayagiri
- 13 Meditation and Dhamma talk at Yoga Mendocino (Yomo), Ukiah, CA
- 21 Meditation and Dhamma talk at Lakeport Yoga Center
Call to confirm
- 23 Pavāranā Day full moon—the ending of the Rains Retreat
- 24 Kathina Festival at Abhayagiri

Nov

- 1 Dhamma talk at Three Jewels Dharma Hall, Fort Bragg, CA – Contact: Mettika Hoffman (707) 964-4606
- 2 Monthly gathering at Berkeley Buddhist Monastery
- 10 Meditation and Dhamma talk at Yoga Mendocino (Yomo), Ukiah, CA
- 13 Community work day at Abhayagiri
- 19-28 Monastic Retreat led by Ajahn Pasanno and the Abhayagiri Community at the Angela Center, Santa Rosa, CA – Contact: Paul at Retreat10@juno.com or www.abhayagiri.org

Dec

- 5 Upāsika Day at Abhayagiri – ‘Practice in the Broader World: Forgiveness & Reconciliation’
- 7 Monthly gathering at Berkeley Buddhist Monastery
- 8 Meditation and Dhamma talk at Yoga Mendocino (Yomo), Ukiah, CA
- 12 Community work day at Abhayagiri
- 16 Meditation and Dhamma talk at Lakeport Yoga Center
Call to confirm
- 19 Daylong at Spirit Rock – ‘Simplicity and Transcendence,’ with Ajahn Yatiko and Ajahn Karunadhammo

Jan

- 3 Abhayagiri community enters three-month Winter Retreat period, ending on March 31

Check the online calendar at www.abhayagiri.org/index.php/main/days for updates on events.

- Every Saturday evening at Abhayagiri**
Chanting, meditation & Dhamma talk, beginning at 7:30 pm.
- Every Lunar Quarter at Abhayagiri (see calendar on this page)**
Chanting, meditation, Precepts, Dhamma talk, and late night vigil, beginning at 7:30 pm.
- Second Sunday of each month at Abhayagiri (April through December)**
Community work day, 8:00 am–4:00 pm.
- First Tuesday of the month in Berkeley, CA**
5:00-6:00 pm, Informal tea gathering. 7:30-9:30 pm, Meditation, Precepts & Dhamma talk by monastic at the Berkeley Buddhist Monastery, 2304 McKinley.
- Second Wednesday of each month at Yoga Mendocino**
7:30 pm–9:00 pm: Meditation and Dhamma talk by Theravāda monastic. During the months of Jan, Feb, Mar, the evening will be led by an Upasika.
- Every Tuesday and Friday at Portland Friends of the Dhamma**
7:00 pm–9:00 pm: Meditation and Dhamma discussion with lay practitioners.

Who Will Teach the Students?

By Dennis Crean

When Ajahn Amaro leaves the U.S., who will fill his shoes (or sandals) as a Dhamma teacher? I'm sure that's a question that many of his lay students—not to mention his fellow monastics—have been asking since news broke that he would be moving to England after over 14 years at Abhayagiri.

Ajahn Amaro began teaching in America back in the early '90s, when he first travelled to this side of the “pond” to begin laying the foundation for a new monastery. Ever since then, through his wise, humorous, charismatic, and accessible teaching, he has touched thousands of lay students across the continent. Year after year, he has led ten-day retreats, daylong retreats, Upasika study days, monthly meditation groups, Dhamma classes, bicycle pilgrimages, and more. He's taught from Florida to Washington, Kansas to Wisconsin, Massachusetts to New Mexico. And he's worn a deep groove into Highway 101 between Redwood Valley and the Bay Area through more trips than he can likely count. During his early years at Abhayagiri, he set such a demanding pace accepting outside teaching engagements that the community of monks finally had to ask him to stay put for a year so they could benefit from his teaching, too. After all, he was their abbot.

It's in the capacity as “travelling preacher” of the Dhamma, however, and not so much as Abhayagiri's co-abbot, that Ajahn Amaro is known by most people, some of whom have never seen him in person but know him by listening to his recorded talks or reading his many books. It's likely that the vast majority of

his students have never been to Abhayagiri and have only vague ideas about his “home” life as a monk and co-leader of a monastery. After all, Buddhist monasteries are few and far between in America, and the lifestyle of monks and nuns remains a mystery to most Western meditators. And so many relate to Ajahn Amaro as a great teacher who just happens to be a monk from a distant monastery somewhere in Mendocino County, California.

Ajahn Amaro's departure, however, will likely result in a shift to the perception that lay students can rely so heavily on a single, travelling monastic teacher. Undoubtedly, the American Buddhist community will feel a great loss without Ajahn Amaro's physical presence in our town, state, country, or even continent. Surely, he has touched many lives due to his unique personal gifts and qualities. But now we can no longer expect Ajahn Amaro to answer the call for a monastic “brand” of teachings.

Fortunately, while Ajahn Amaro may be gone, Abhayagiri is not. The monastic lifestyle that helped to produce such a fine teacher—with a particular, traditional presentation of the teachings—is becoming more established on our soil as Western Theravāda monasteries take root. This is true not just in regard to the ever-growing Abhayagiri Monastery but also with the newly forming hermitage near Portland; the recent establishment of Aloka Vihara, the first Thai forest tradition nuns' community, in San Francisco; and three monasteries in Canada. Ajahn Amaro comes from a tradition of many inspiring monastic teachers. What he has taught continues to be nurtured—as it has for millennia—especially in monasteries by, as he is fond of saying, a growing number of “professional meditators.”

Further, it may surprise many to learn that an invitation to Ajahn Amaro to teach has not been considered as a particular request but has almost always been treated by the Abhayagiri community as a general request for whoever was most willing and able at that time. After meeting together,

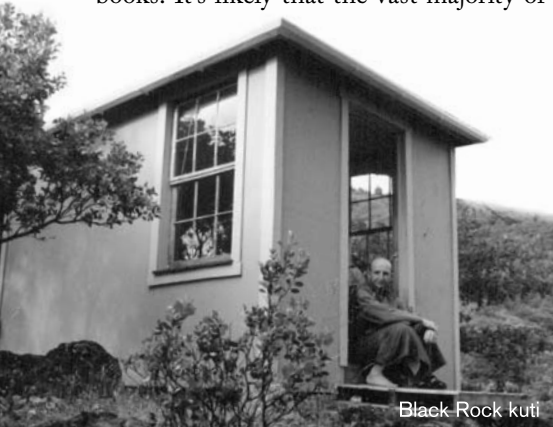


Ajahn Amaro, Summer of '96. Photo: Glen McKay

the Sangha decides which invitations can be accepted and by whom. It happened that Ajahn Amaro has most often been happy to fulfill the requests himself, due in no small part to his particular calling as a teacher. (And his brethren have been mostly relieved by not having to fill this role themselves.)

Now, however, things are different. An invitation for teachings will most likely be filled by a wider variety of monastics. While Ajahn Pasanno's great strength as a teacher is certainly known to regular visitors to Abhayagiri, perhaps his renown as a teacher will now spread in North America in the way it did during his many years as an abbot in Thailand. And the “younger” crop of home-grown monastics who have been ripening in the various Western monasteries can also step out from the shadows and into the light as teachers. In this way, lay students in America may come to relate to monastic teachers with a greater awareness of their place in an ancient lineage and of the importance of the monastery itself in their formation.

Ajahn Amaro's departure is leaving a big gap, but we're fortunate that the monastic tradition as it settles in the West is more than large enough to fill it. As he's said himself of late, “When a boat is lifted out of the ocean, it doesn't leave a dent.” 🙏



Black Rock kuti

Ajahn Amaro and the community...



Summer of '96 at Abhayagiri, with all the first residents



With Jack Kornfield in '96



First bhikkhu ordination at Abhayagiri, of Ajahn Karunadhammo, July '98



Visiting Ruth Denison, at Joshua Tree, '98



With the Sanghapala Board at the Novato vihara, '94/'95



The buddha rūpa being moved into the hall, '97



Kathina, '09



Rains retreat at Bell Springs Hermitage, with Ajahn Thanavaro, Tan Khemarato & Tan Sugato, Vassa '95



Sanghapala Board at first bhikkhu ordination at Abhayagiri, July '98

Pacific Hermitage... (continued from page 1)

a year earlier with the establishment of Sanghata, a committee of Friends of the Dhamma formed specifically to explore the possibility of Abhayagiri opening a branch monastery in the area.

For several weeks that summer, a number of volunteers from Portland made many trips to Mosier, Oregon (just south and east of Pacific Hermitage) to create tent platforms and walking paths and make other preparations on the property owned by some friends of the monastic community. The terrain of the Mosier property is no less steep and rugged than you might find at Abhayagiri. Also in common with Fearless Mountain was poison oak.

For Greg Satir, Sanghata chair at the time, the Summer Hermitage was “an immersion in the monastic experience. I got to see for myself the benefit of that level of contact with the monks and how it affected my level of happiness,” he said.

The Summer Hermitage ended in October with a meal offering and ceremony presided over by Ajahn Pasanno and including a few other Abhayagiri monks and three dozen or so supporters from Portland and the surrounding area. After the ceremony, the monks returned home and Sanghata, its goal seemingly accomplished, briefly disbanded.

Months later, Greg and others began to wonder, “What’s next?” With renewed vigor and determination, the group reconvened and initiated serious discussions between Sanghata and Abhayagiri.

It’s one thing to support two monks on borrowed land for three months, but what about long-term support? Would there be enough dedication to sustain—both financially and materially—a small monastery indefinitely? Another major point of concern for Abhayagiri was the process through which Sanghata functioned. Clarity, consensus, and harmony were imperative. Sanghata made extraordinary efforts to maintain these qualities of operation.

In May of 2009, Ajahn Liem—accompanied by several other monks from Wat Nong Pah Pong, where he is the successor abbot to Ajahn Chah, and monks from Abhayagiri—paid a visit to Portland. As well as being an auspicious



A gathering of Abhayagiri monastics in honor of the opening of the Hermitage

coincidence, this meeting gave those experienced Elders the chance to meet the people who wished to have a branch of the Ajahn Chah monastic community in their midst and to see if they knew what they were taking on.

A few weeks later, during the Upāsika Renewal weekend at Abhayagiri, several of the monks and those members of Sanghata who were able to attend the ceremony had a meeting. The good news for Sanghata was that the Abhayagiri community had agreed that it was time to move ahead with concrete plans to establish a branch monastery in the Pacific Northwest. Ajahn Sudanto, who was later asked to help establish the Hermitage and to take on the responsibilities of being senior monk, began to act as the liaison between the monastery and Sanghata.

Sanghata took up its charge with unbounded energy and enthusiasm. Scott Bengé assumed the chair in September of 2009, and vice-chair John Hines took on the daunting role of coordinating the land search and organizing the mounds of property data that quickly accumulated. After all, a suitable property was the first necessity.

The Pacific Northwest has two climates. West of the Cascade Range, the weather is mild but damp. East of the mountains it is dryer, but winters are significantly colder. The monks chose cold and dry over mild and damp, so the search was focused on the eastern flanks of the mountains on either side of the Columbia River.

Another criterion for the Hermitage was its proximity to heavily populated areas. The monks didn’t want to be too close to the Portland metropolitan area, but they didn’t want to be so far away that it would be a travel hardship for others. The purpose of a hermitage is to provide a forested place of seclusion for extended periods of retreat for the monks. Abhayagiri can be a busy place with many visitors, events, training of novices, and ordinations. Unlike Abhayagiri the Hermitage will not principally be a place for monastic training; there will be no overnight accommodations for guests, nor will it be a place where retreats are conducted for the lay community. Rather, visitors will always be welcome there during meal times, and the senior monk will be happy to be available then, as this is traditionally when people who have come to visit the monastery take the opportunity to meet the teacher and to ask any Dhamma questions they might have.

These arrangements have all been established to help sustain the qualities of seclusion and quietude that are seen as essential to the aim of the Hermitage. As the natural adjunct to this set-up at the Hermitage, Ajahn Sudanto has generously committed to coming into Portland for one weekend every month; during these stays in town he will lead a meditation daylong for the lay community and will be available to offer other teachings at the Portland Friends of the Dhamma center.

Pacific Hermitage... (continued from page 12)

If being a distance from heavily populated areas was a major criterion, being completely isolated was not. Because the Buddha made clear the importance of interdependence between the monastic Sangha and the lay community, the monks wanted to be close enough to a town which they could, at least occasionally, walk to for alms.

Through the land-search process, Sanghata and other enthusiastic community members made many supportive contacts in the region. Friends of the Dhamma found this encouraging because it increased the probability that support for the Hermitage would be region-wide rather than just from within the Portland community.

This is proving to be the case, according to Carole Melkonian, Hermitage meal-dana coordinator: "People are coming forth from the White Salmon area to help, even without a lot of publicity," she said. "That has given me a lot of hope" for a broad base of support.

A significant factor in the decision-making process was whether to buy or lease a property. Sanghata had about \$25,000 in seed money (thanks largely to a single donor), but it was not enough for an outright purchase of land. Even though large parcels of land were available at relatively low prices, they were remote and undeveloped. Both factors would combine to increase the start-up costs. Therefore, renting or leasing a smaller, developed property for the relatively short term had always been a consideration.

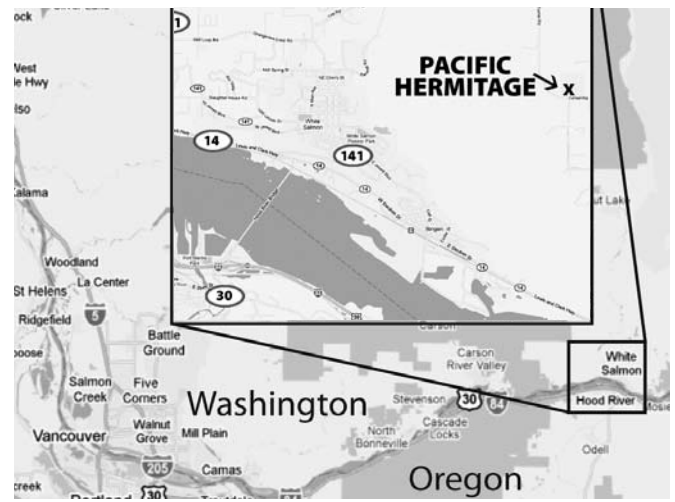
The goal, then, was to have a place ready to move into by early July 2010, in order for the monks to be able to settle in by the

start of the Rains Retreat, on July 27. As time passed and no suitable property had been found, it looked as though the window of opportunity was closing. Although there was a backup plan to have the monks reoccupy the Mosier property (site of the 2007 Summer Hermitage) for the Rains, it was not ideal. Although it would afford a few more months to continue searching for the right spot, it meant that occupancy—with perhaps weeks of preparation—would not begin until fall or later.

However, just before needing to make a Plan-B decision, the "Tunnel Road" property caught the attention of the land-search team. They took a look and sent Ajahn Sudanto some photographs and a description of the property, and it was agreed to carry on with Plan A. On April 30, Scott Bengé signed the lease and picked up the keys for what would become Pacific Hermitage.

Since officially taking on the property, activities in Portland took off in two related directions. Of course, there was the preparation of the property. Even though the house was in reasonably good condition and well suited to the purpose, there were the usual minor details—scrubbing, painting, window-washing, and laying waste to the field of dandelions that surrounded the house, for example. Unusual to the occupancy of a house by ordinary folk, however, was the purchase and construction of a *kuti*, or monk's hut. Even though the house has three bedrooms, Ajahn Sudanto wished to use one of them to serve as a library and office space. What's more, the ideal situation is where each monk has his own well-separated living quarters.

Of course Sanghata applied its typical thoroughness and thoughtfulness to the purchase and construc-



Location of Pacific Hermitage <http://maps.google.com/>

tion of some cabins, while keeping three questions in mind. Does it meet legal requirements yet not need the otherwise necessary building permits? Will it be of good quality and well-enough insulated to keep maintenance and heating costs to a minimum? Will it be portable? The committee chose a company whose prefabricated units could be modified to allow for disassembly. After all, the Tunnel Road property is only temporary. An ongoing quest for a more suitable location continues.

Sanghata's other avenue of activity concerned the process whereby the committee would officially and legally separate from Portland Friends of the Dhamma. It is now incorporated in its own right in Oregon as the Sanghata Foundation.

Not only did Sanghata separate from Friends of the Dhamma through its incorporation, it is also making an appropriate 180-degree turn in its role and relationship with Abhayagiri. What began as "our" project to bring monks to the region for "our" benefit has transitioned into a gift decisively given to the monastic Sangha for the benefit of the monks of Abhayagiri and the purpose of dedicated practice. It's a gift to be let go of, just as any other gift is let go of.

However, Sanghata was not unprepared for this transition. Early in the process, Ajahn Amaro made it clear that, even though the Portland community would carry the load of responsibility of bringing a hermitage to the region, the day would come when the load of responsibility would need to shift to Abhayagiri. Sanghata's role



Many people gathered in mid-July for the opening weekend of the hermitage

(Continued on page 15)

From Māra's Desk - Me and My Personality

By Mettikā Hoffman

While sitting at my desk, I look out over the vast domain of worldlings afflicted by pain, sorrow, grief and lamentation. I am Māra, king of deceit, deception, fear, pride, ego, vanity and delusion. The scenes are so pitiful that, in some ways, I almost care for their well-being. Sometimes I try to awaken them to the reality that they are not alone, if they would only look around and have empathy for others in the same condition. However, what I see and hear is the fixation of “me” and “my” and “mine.” *My* likes and dislikes, *my* opinions and views, *my* successes and failures, *my* interests and disinterests, *my* spiritual quest, *my* enlightenment or lack of enlightenment, *my* insights and fixations, *my* need to be liked and important, *my* need to be included and in control. *My* need to be right and *you* wrong; *my* personal stories ad infinitum. There they are again, spinning on and on, pinned to the wheel of life and death.

The question arises in their minds: “Why am I like this? There must be an answer out there, a person, a system, a technique. . .” The untrained worldling is attracted to systems that define and classify, categorize personality types, and give quick answers to complicated and often imponderable questions. When I peruse, with my sublime powers, the esoteric and mundane literature, I find books, articles, workshops, retreats, teachers, masters of the occult, magicians, wizards and shamans, and even communes devoted to numerology, graphology, phrenology, palmistry, reading tea leaves, fortune-telling, psychics, astrology, the Enneagram, I Ching, crystal-gazing, gem-alignment, aromatherapy and Tarot. Then there are all the shortcuts, such as “Meditate like a Monk in 15 Minutes,” “Stop Worrying and Kvetching Forever,” “Become a Shaman in Two Weekend Workshops in Beautiful Marin County,” “Sweat Poisons out of Your System in One \$500 Session and Achieve Purification in the Native American Tradition,” and so on. . .

Such worldlings do not know that Māra's net is wide and also embodies the death of the spiritual life. I create the illusion that all the answers are “out there somewhere.” Among my Armies and Daughters are: lust, greed, desire, pride and ignorance. Māra loves to sneak into the hearts of the hordes to instill the sum total of their deepest fears. I am also known as the Lord of Death because my interruptions deaden the aliveness of here and now.

These paths to so-called freedom are lined with seeker's (aka ‘fool's’) gold. It does not seem to be a problem that some of these paths are under the eye of the Better Business Bureau or the IRS. Most worldlings are highly committed to personality as a real separate self, while also deeply ingrained is identity-view or *sakkāya-ditthi*, aka “the ego.” The Buddha and his Noble Disciples have pointed to these truths throughout the eons. Just recently, I listened to part of a Dhamma talk by one of them named Luang Por Sumedho. It was quite amusing—not only in being a showcase for this fellow's wit but also in the naïve assumption that any of his listeners might actually follow his advice—he was endeavoring to elucidate some of the confusions in the realm of personality. He said, “In meditation, we are not trying to deny personality. We are not trying to convince ourselves that we are non-people, grasping such ideas as, ‘I have no nationality. I have no sex. I have no class. I have no race. The pure Dhamma is my true identity.’ That kind of thinking is still an identity. The practice is not about the concept of grasping the concept of no-self. It is in realizing, in noting through awakened attention, the way things really are.”

Despite even such well-phrased attempts as this, my job is still so easy. All I have to do is instill the idea that each person needs to be a unique somebody. Who out there wants to be a nobody? Somebodies have name and fame. Nobodies have nothing; they are the losers. In a win-or-lose society everyone loves a winner while the nobodies

get the short end of the stick. When verification is needed, it is the somebodies who are quoted. Whoever thinks of quoting a nobody? I must admit that one of those nuns, Ayya Khema, was on the right track when she wrote a book entitled, *Being Nobody, Going Nowhere*. I wonder who read that though? You can be sure that there was hardly a single “nobody” who looked at it; besides, what somebody aspires to be a nobody? Annoyingly, there were a few who understood her, but not so many as to cause any significant ripples amongst my subjects.

When one sees pictures of the terrible natural or man-made tragedies of the world—such as Bhopal, Hurricane Katrina, Haiti, worldwide earthquake victims, tornado wreckages, to name a few—all we see are the nobodies' shanties and wrecks. Did any of the somebodies experience devastation with their homes and cars floating down streets? There seemed to be only people of color clinging to treetops. Did the somebodies of the world have fires raging out of control, thousands of slum housing falling like matchsticks, whole towns completely demolished? We saw nobodies with shattered and broken limbs, scarred for life, wounded and dead. Do governments care about the nobodies? Governments care about the somebodies, who have money, voting rights, fixed views and opinions about what needs to happen in their neighborhoods, and the clout to make it happen.

Thus, human beings all want to sign up to be somebodies and, in so doing, they think they are immune to sickness, old age, death, cataclysms and devastation. Agreed it would be an unusual sight to see the very rich—he dressed in an Armani suit and Gucci shoes, with a Rolex watch, and she in her little black Chanel dress and Manolo Blahnik three-inch spike heels—clinging to life in the branches of a beautiful tree in what was once their front yard, as they watch their Mercedes Benz, designer furniture and Persian rugs

From Mara's Desk... (continued from page 14)

roar past them in the torrents of raging flood water. However, ironically it's just this rarity that induces one of my greatest devices—the blindness of complacency—to work with such flawless reliability. They always believe it will only happen to someone else! It's wonderfully bizarre that I can get away with this patently absurd delusion over and over again—it's as if they know how the trick is done yet it fools them all (or almost all), every time.

It's so delicious a ruse it gives me the divine shivers just to think of it—especially how the biggest somebodies seem so utterly appalled and amazed that they too were vulnerable all along. It's so much fun to watch this I'd say it should be illegal, if it wasn't my Majestic Self who had written the Rule Book in the first place.

If you don't believe me, just look for yourself at how the somebodies assume that they are immune to the instability, uncertainty and change in an unpredictable world. Pay close attention to the next worldly devastation. Incidentally, do you think such devastations are all Māra's doing? Well, let's just say ta-ta for now. I am going to busy myself tinkering a little with the earth, air, water and fire elements, not to mention electricity, lava, magma, tidal waves, thunder and lightning. It's such a thrill to see what a little tinkering can do, even though it's scarcely necessary to prove my point.

Demonically yours,
Māra

The Body of... (continued from page 7)

divorced from the body. . it's beyond the two languages and, in the beingness of the body, it comes together."

Maybe if the warmth and brightness of this type of insight is allowed to shine on the Buddhist and Hatha Yoga communities of the West, the universe will be moved to adjust itself and the suchness of the body of our spiritual families will be a meeting point for us all. 🙏

From the Monastery... (continued from page 3)

the unfolding of a new chapter in the development of the Abhayagiri community. Fourteen years ago, Ajahn Amaro, Ajahn Visuddhi and Anagārika Tom, (now Ajahn Karunadhammo), arrived at 16201 Tomki Road to create a monastery with the support of committed laity, including Debbie Stamp. Since then Ajahn Amaro has shared the co-abbotship with Ajahn Pasanno, guiding the community along in its tremendous growth in both material infrastructure and the size of the resident Sangha.

After training for five years in Thailand, Ajahn Sudanto joined the Abhayagiri Community in 1998. Since then he has been a powerful and innovative force for moving Abhayagiri forward. Just a few of Ajahn Sudanto's contributions are his initiative to implement regular community meetings for the sake of communal harmony, as well as his attentive oversight and planning of the construction of many building projects over the last 12 years, including the Bhikkhu Commons. Ajahn Sudanto departed Abhayagiri on July 7 with a two-year commitment to the Pacific Hermitage in the Columbia River Gorge. Two monks from Abhayagiri, Tan Cāgānando and Tan Thitābho are accompanying him to help establish the Hermitage, which is currently located on five acres of leased land and is the first branch of Abhayagiri.

Pacific Hermitage... (continued from page 13)

would then accordingly change, steadily but distinctly, from that of patron to that of steward.

Such stewardship of the Hermitage will involve many things. Among them are meal offerings and other acts of generosity and support, be they of time, materials, monetary contributions, or land. For more information about how you can help sustain and support Pacific Hermitage through your generosity, should that be something you wish to do, visit hermitage.abhayagiri.org. 🙏

The weekend of Sunday, July 11, many people participated in a number of events, which were arranged as an opening blessing for the Hermitage. Ajahn Pasanno and Ajahn Amaro led a large contingent of monastics from Abhayagiri to offer their support. Furthermore, Ajahn Sumedho, the senior western disciple of Ajahn Chah, also offered his delightful presence and teachings to those assembled. The foundation for the Hermitage has been laid in cooperation with the Sanghata Foundation, a sincere group of practitioners associated with the Portland Friends of the Dhamma. For more information see the cover article of this newsletter.

Ajahn Amaro officially said farewell to the Abhayagiri community on July 19 in order to serve as abbot of Amaravati Buddhist Monastery in England. Although Ajahn Amaro will be missed, we wish him the best of luck and appreciate all that he can bring to that challenging position of overseeing the largest Western branch monastery of the Ajahn Chah tradition. Ajahn Amaro has committed to being abbot for five years and is being careful to avoid making outside commitments. As Ajahn Sucitto reflected during his stay at Abhayagiri, the way Ajahn Amaro is departing is a teaching itself in giving and letting go. After 14 years of putting his heart into Abhayagiri, he is leaving it all behind, sending accumulated papers to the recycle bin and many pairs of socks to Abhayagiri storage. 🙏

Fearless Mountain Production Team

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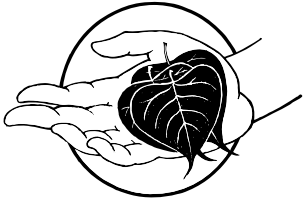
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MONASTIC RETREAT

led by Ajahn Pasanno
and the Abhayagiri Community

November 19-28, 2010
Angela Center, Santa Rosa, CA

For registration and more information:
email Paul at Retreat10@juno.com or
visit <http://www.abhayagiri.org>

