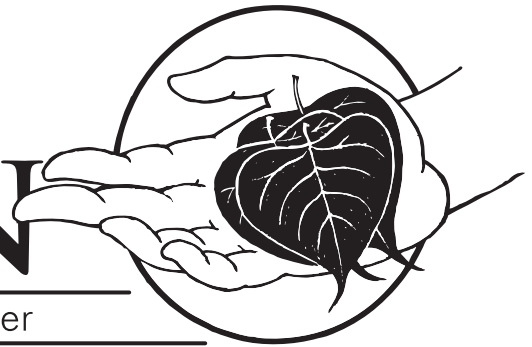


FEARLESS MOUNTAIN

The Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery Newsletter



Spring 2011 • 2554

Volume 16, Number 2



Ajahn Pasanno and Ajahn Sudanto lead a traditional almsround in White Salmon, WA, close to Pacific Hermitage

Measuring the Mind

A talk given by Ajahn Pasanno on July 31, 2010

This evening I'd like to talk a bit about meditation practice. Particularly as we've begun the Vassa, the formal rains retreat, we are trying to encourage everybody to give more time to the formal side of practice. In doing that, one of the things we need to learn is how to measure our own minds. The term "measure the mind" means to give ourselves a more clear sense of what the mind actually needs, what is going to be useful and beneficial. Oftentimes when we evaluate the mind, we produce a running commentary on how things relate to the self: "I've got this defilement or that defilement," "I've got this problem or that problem," "I'm like this or I'm like that," "I shouldn't be like this or like that." When we do this, we tend

to fill our minds with things that actually create more suffering than is useful, and more confusion than is necessary.

But there is another way to practice. We can attend to the actual need of the mind, gauge what's going to be useful, and discern how we can bring about a certain balance in the mind. If the mind is restless or agitated, rather than launching into a running commentary on how awful it is, we should ask, "What is it that would be a source of balance? What would be useful in bringing about settledness?" If the mind is dull or lacking energy, we should actually recognize that, not as some personal trait or some personality flaw, but instead as the state of the mind right now. Then ask, "What would be useful to brighten

it? How could I engage the mind in a way that brings a quality of lightness to it?"

When we practice this way, we are employing appropriate attention. It's measuring the mind from a place of Dhamma, as opposed to a perspective of personality, of "me" and "mine." We recognize that the mind is just a force of nature that can bring benefits or have drawbacks. When we simplify things for ourselves in this way, we can engage in a manner that brings forth the benefits that are possible.

For working with the mind, the most general perspective on practice is to divide it into the aspects of *samatha* and *vipassanā*—the development of tranquility and of insight. These are different qualities that the mind needs to rely on. They can be developed in a variety of ways. To create balance within the mind, we need to have both of those capacities available to us. The mind has the potential to become peaceful, tranquil, settled, still. It has the capacity for insight, understanding, wisdom, and discernment. Those are both fruits of the practice that can arise, but they're also ways of attending to the mind and skills we can develop: attending to the mind in ways that foster tranquility and

(Continued on page 12)

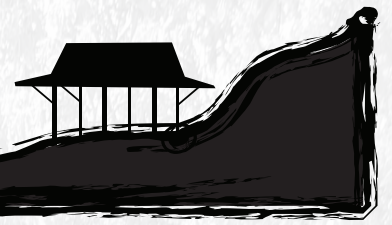
INSIDE:

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| <i>From the Monastery</i> | Pg 2 |
| <i>Gratitude, Death, and the Third Noble Truth</i> | Pg 4 |
| <i>"Namatthu Ācariyassa" – Homage to Our Teacher</i> | Pg 6 |
| <i>Calendar</i> | Pg 8 & 9 |
| <i>The Concept of "Retreat" in Early Buddhist Texts (Q & A)</i> | Pg 10 |
| <i>Venerable Day...</i> | Pg 14 |

Contributors: *The Sangha, Ajahn Chah, Ajahn Pasanno, Kovilo Bikkhu, and Anagarika Brian*

From the Monastery

Spring 2011



Winter Retreat—Going Back to the Roots

The monastery undertakes many important activities in the areas of generosity and virtue, but cultivation of the heart through formal meditation is the emphasis of the Winter Retreat. Fifteen years ago, the first American branch monastery of the Ajahn Chah Tradition, Abhayagiri, opened its doors to the public. The community took this 2011 retreat time to reconnect with the roots of its tradition by focusing on the life history, teachings and practice of Thai meditation master Ajahn Chah.

In January, Ajahn Pasanno led the community in the three month annual Winter Retreat before taking leave for a week in Thailand. While there, he participated in the regular commemoration of Ajahn Chah's 1992 passing. Thousands of lay people and several hundred monks came to pay respects to the relics of Ajahn Chah in order to remember his goodness, his teachings, and his example. It was a time for Sangha harmony as monastics gathered from many regions and re-connected with spiritual friends they had not seen for a long time. Elders

held meetings that focused on the skillful guidance of the Sangha in its many dimensions. Devoted laypeople came from far and wide to cook food for all participants, offer material requisites to the monastics, and participate in the commemorative events. The overall feeling of Sangha and faith was both nourishing and inspiring as the best in people was brought out by the focus on Ajahn Chah and his teachings. After returning to Abhayagiri and re-joining the retreat, Ajahn Pasanno continued to read the teachings of Ajahn Chah to the community for the remaining 10 weeks. For many, the most memorable readings included Ajahn Jayasaro's draft of the biography of Ajahn Chah. The voice of Ajahn Pasanno held a natural authority as he not only read the translations, but answered questions and added recollections from the time he had spent with his teacher in the tropics of Thailand. Hearing about the life of a forest master living in Northeast Thailand from 1918 onwards helped the community understand more about its origin and tradition.

During the three month retreat, a group sitting and walking meditation



Scattering J's ashes at McKerricher State Park

schedule was varied to support the needs of the community. The middle of the retreat focused on more solitary practice and allowed the monastics to create their own schedule of meditation and study. A group of monks continued with their Pali classes and found inspiration from the Buddha's teachings in the original language of the Theravada Canon. Throughout the retreat, a crew of resident laypeople generously supported the monks as well as participated in the retreat schedule. The community ended the retreat with a day out to the coast, eating the morning meal at Three Jewels Dhamma Hall in Fort Bragg. At the coastline, the Sangha held a ceremony in commemoration of J. Steiber-Buckley's death. J. died of throat cancer in 2008 after spending more than six years selflessly serving the Abhayagiri Community. Many community members allowed his ashes to drop through their fingers and softly combine with the water element of the Pacific Ocean.

Meanwhile, the Pacific Hermitage in Washington was ending their winter retreat. Despite the snowy weather during



Abhayagiri cloister area with heavier than usual snowfall

the retreat, they continued walking alms round once a week. As of April the three bhikkhus present resumed their daily alms round and teaching schedule. The local support and good wishes have been very beneficial for the monastics and the project as a whole. Anagārika Joe Ginsberg, who spent the Winter Retreat at the Pacific Hermitage, returned to Abhayagiri in April. Tan Pamutto left a few days later to join Ajahn Sudanto and Tan Cāgānando at the hermitage. The hermitage continues to progress smoothly, and many photos are available at hermitage.abhayagiri.org.

After almost three years of service at Abhayagiri, Ajahn Yatiko was invited to spend the month of January wandering (*tudong*) as an alms mendicant in India. He walked alone in the heartland of the Buddha with just the bare necessities. Without carrying food or money, he had a number of adventures along the way and met many people who were not acquainted with the Theravada Forest Tradition. Many Indians wanted to know why he would practice in such an austere way. He gave teachings and had much time to meditate on the trip. Upon safely returning to Abhayagiri, the community enjoyed hearing the account of his travels (now available on the Abhayagiri website). Ajahn Yatiko's experience of seeing Indians facing extensive physical suffering in their day to day lives was a great teaching in compassion. Without such experiences it can be easy to forget how others live with such great difficulty. In May, Ajahn Yatiko is planning to depart for another *tudong* from Northern to Southern California.



Abhayagiri sangha members, led by Ajahn Gunavuddho, visiting the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas

CTTB Connection

In the dark of the night, Ajahn Gunavuddho departed Abhayagiri and walked 20 miles to attend a special meditation session at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas (CTTB). CTTB is located just outside of Ukiah and is a large Chinese Mahāyāna monastery of the late Master Hua. The tradition of walking from monastery to monastery was common for monks in the time of the Buddha, and in these unprecedented times of global and environmental problems, Ajahn Gunavuddho tried this practice both to and from CTTB. During Ajahn Gunavuddho's two weeks at the monastery he was able to meet a number of the community members who greeted him warmly. This was also an opportunity to see the workings of the Dharma Realm University located inside the monastery and to participate in the daily routine after the session ended. The experience was rewarding on many levels.

The connection between Abhayagiri and CTTB is important historically, as the late Master Hua of CTTB was instrumental in planting the roots of Abhayagiri 15 years ago by making a large offering of land (about 120 acres) where the monastery rests today. Since the time when Master Hua and Ajahn Sumedho met, there have been a number of opportunities to connect. Just before the Abhayagiri Winter Retreat a group of monks visited CTTB's December Retreat session of bowing and chanting. Every first Tuesday, the Abhayagiri monks teach at Berkeley Buddhist Monastery which is a branch monastery founded by Master Hua and led by Reverend Heng Sure. As the Abhayagiri monks continue the ancient practice of walking for alms in Ukiah and Redwood Valley on the weekly moon days, a number of CTTB's supporters come to regularly offer food (including Master Hua's nephew). Whether Abhayagiri monks go to visit CTTB to learn or are invited to teach, the best part of this connection is the attitude of harmony and friendship.

After the Retreat

When the retreat ended there were a number of goodbyes to the dedicated retreat crew as well as to a couple of the monastics. Anagārika Kevin Merfeld decided, after



Ajahn Pasanno with his mother Rhoda Perry

much careful consideration and consultation, to leave the monastery and explore lay life in his young age. His father picked him up, expressing gratitude to the community for Kevin's 18 months at Abhayagiri—an experience that seemed to benefit all of his family. We wish him the best of luck and needless to say, the door is open for him if he so wishes to return. Brother Samatā, a visiting monk from the Plum Village tradition (headed by Vietnamese master teacher Thich Naht Hanh in France), has left after his five month stay at Abhayagiri. He will also be missed.

After 13 years of monastic training in Thailand, Ajahn Saññamo visited his family for three months in Canada. In April, he came to Abhayagiri and has been staying for an indefinite amount of time. Ajahn Saññamo ordained in Thailand with Luang Por Liem as his preceptor. He lived at various monasteries including Wat Pah Nanachat while Ajahn Jayasaro was abbot and Wat Marp Jan with Ajahn Anan. Some of the current Abhayagiri ajahns had lived with Ajahn Saññamo for many years in Thailand and were very happy to see their friend again.

Also in April, there were a number of teaching engagements and family visits which provided an opportunity to spread the Dhamma and show respect to those who have helped us in the past. Ajahn Pasanno's mother, Rhoda, came from Canada to spend time at Abhayagiri and see what her son was up to. It is always good that someone like this is able to check up on the abbot and make sure he is not

(Continued on page 14)

Gratitude, Death, and the Third Noble Truth

Written by Anagārika Brian

Bhikkhus, there are these ten dhammas which should be reflected upon again and again by one who has gone forth

As the date of my novice ordination approached I often found my mind turning to certain aspects of leaving the home life to go into the homeless state of a Buddhist monastic. During the last few months as an anagārika I had been practicing various chants, one of which is a reflection from the Suttas: “The ten subjects for frequent recollection for one who has gone forth.”

I think the main intention of this set of reflections is to help keep monastics oriented properly, to encourage right effort in living the homeless life. In working with these I have come to see that they illuminate my intentions in undertaking this lifestyle in the first place.

The reflections aren't new to someone who has seriously thought about becoming a monk or nun because they touch on all the key issues which cast an attractive light on the prospect of homelessness and one's motivation to practice in this way. The reflections concern making a firm break with the worldly household life left behind, one's conduct as a follower of the Buddha, and the motivation to strive towards spiritual liberation, which is the goal of the monastic life.

Of the ten, two have long stood out as particularly meaningful and immediate for me:

My very life is sustained through the gifts of others.

The days and nights are relentlessly passing, how well am I spending my time?

I have spent most of my life living according to worldly aims and values, living primarily to accumulate and experience wealth, possessions, status,

and pleasure. This included among other things, a 17 year career in high tech, a marriage, ownership of a number of cars and houses, and seemingly endless rounds of stimulating pursuits and general busyness. I often enjoyed moments and experiences, but I kept noticing how everything—my job, my relationships, my possessions and experiences—were haunted by the specters of disappointment, loss, and plain old unsatisfactoriness.

In the midst of the welter of distractions that seemed to compose life I was occasionally stabbed by a reminder of the ever looming boundary of death.

When I discovered the Dhamma I recognized the possibility of a way out of the round of gain followed by loss. The Third Noble Truth—that this unsatisfactory cycle can be brought to an end—seized my interest. Up until that point I had been trying to reconcile

myself to the unlovely reality of simply getting old and dying, gaining and losing all the way to the end. In the Buddha's teaching I discovered a workable solution to what has long been the central dilemma of my existence. At long last, as if by happenstance, I learned of a way to transcend birth-and-death. The more I investigated and practiced this teaching the more convinced I became that it did indeed describe a path of practice that an ordinary person like me could follow, all the way to the end.

I looked at my life more closely in the light of this teaching. One thing I noticed was the profound interdependence that we all share, and how much I had been blind to this. No matter how much money I might have made, I could not eat without the labors of farmers, truckers, grocers, and so forth. The education that enabled me to make my salary was sponsored by my parents



Ordination of Sāmanera Khemako (formerly Anagārika Brian) and Anagārika Robert

and others, the coursework conveyed by teachers, the original discoveries uncovered by earlier generations and carefully preserved. My house was built by construction workers, my health supported by nurses and doctors.

The network of exchange between all of us allowed us all to live and prosper, but the money-and-time basis of this arrangement reinforced the notion of an isolated self conducting business with the rest of the world as though through a ticket window. One has the impression that one is earning one's life, that one is entitled to what one gets and has, that everything of value is the result of some sort of commercial transaction in which one has paid in full and owes nothing further to anybody.

Part of my motivation to come to the monastery was a desire to break out of that habitual worldview, to live in a way where the actuality of interdependency is made explicit.

Here at Abhayagiri I am frequently reminded: my delightful lodging was a gift. My meals are simply given to me. The monastery land was bought with money provided by supporters. My robe is made of donated cloth. I am living within a gigantic present, floating in a sea of kindness and gifts. Often I am moved deeply by the steady outpouring of conscious giving that makes this life possible.

Living in this setting strongly undercuts my laziness and complacency. How can I be idle when others work to feed me? Their generosity has a tremendous power and beauty, and I cannot make light of it. My end of the bargain is to practice with diligence. To do less than that both dishonors their gifts and makes me squirm with the unease of a debtor falling more deeply into debt. Every meal comes with an unwritten reminder: "This is for your practice, use it well."

Along with the cascade of gifts bearing this demand, I feel the weight of my age. At 52 years I may not be the oldest "new monk" to ever struggle into the robes, but I am certainly quite advanced in years compared to most.

The Ten Reflections for One Gone Forth

I am no longer living according to worldly aims and values



My very life is sustained through the gifts of others



I should strive to abandon my former habits



Does regret over my conduct arise in my mind?



Could my spiritual companions find fault with my conduct?



All that is mine, beloved and pleasing, will become otherwise, will become separated from me.



I am the owner of my kamma, heir to my kamma, born of my kamma, related to my kamma. Whatever kamma I shall do, for good or for ill, of that I will be the heir.



The days and nights are relentlessly passing, how well am I spending my time?



Do I delight in solitude or not?



Has my practice borne fruit with freedom or insight so that at the end of my life I need not feel ashamed when questioned by my spiritual companions?

The reflection on the passing days and nights becomes more poignant as I age. The body shows signs of wear and tear. Every ache and wrinkle points to its impending end. There's a passage in the commentaries regarding this reflection: to see how each passing day draws one closer to death, that one is like an animal in a cart being taken to slaughter. One doesn't know when the cart will arrive, but it moves steadily and exclusively in that direction.

These days I can feel the wheels of the cart lurching and grating over the ruts in the road; the ride is no longer smooth. With each breath I am one

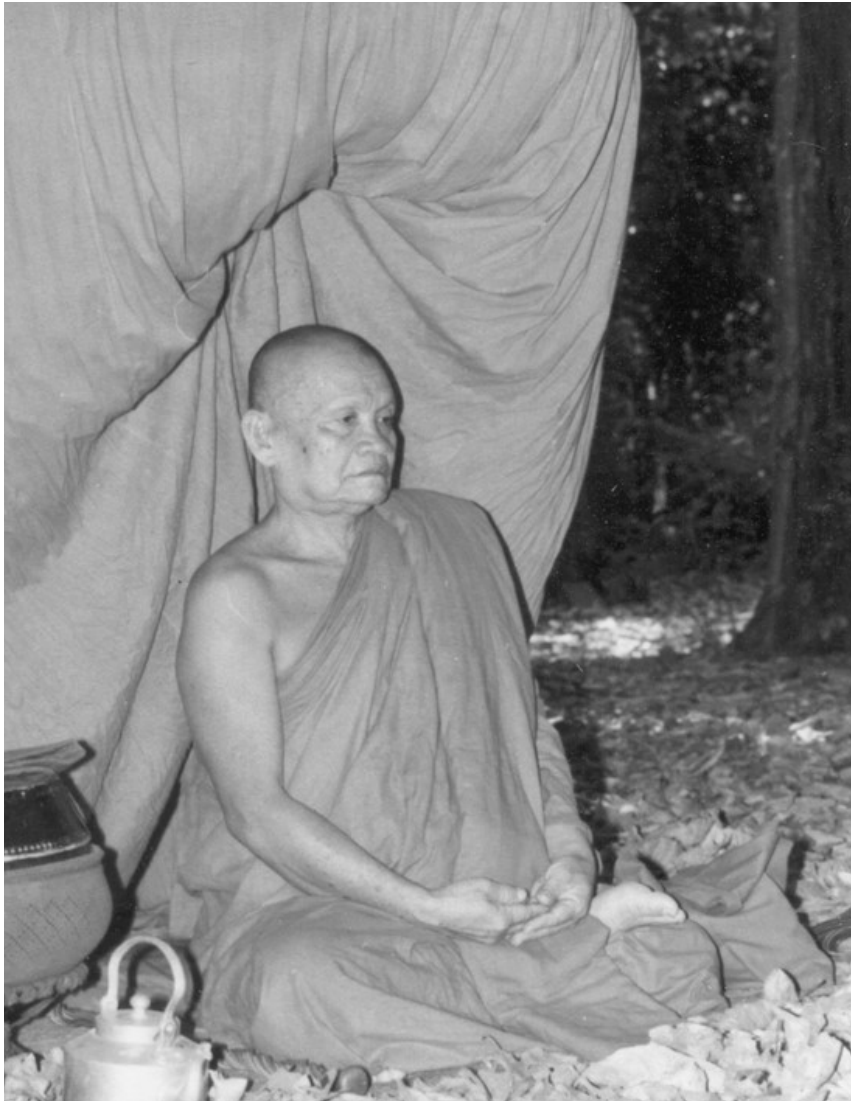
breath closer to my final exhalation.

Going forward with the training and taking on the robes of the sāmanera was not really a difficult decision for me. I have an abiding confidence in the goal of the training and the possibility of reaching it. I have an excellent teacher—Ajahn Pasanno. I live amidst a community of spiritual companions pursuing the same goal, supporting each other, and being supported by a beautiful current of the gifts. And death is coming for me, there's no time to waste.

Whatever might I do instead? 🌿

“*Namatthu Ācariyassa*” – Homage to Our Teacher

Ajahn Pasanno paid homage to Ajahn Chah in Pāli before beginning the daily Winter Retreat readings. Here is a sample of the many faces of Ajahn Chah accompanied by quotes taken from *No Ajahn Chah*.



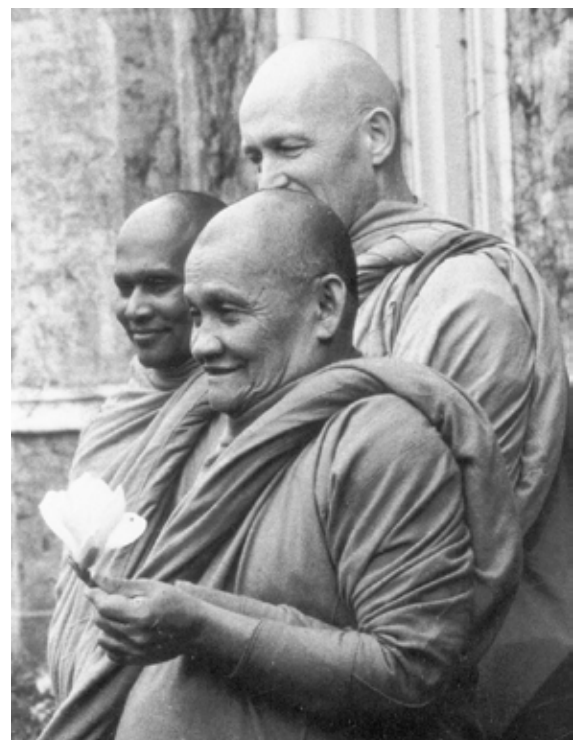
Ajahn Chah with Ajahn Pabhakaro (Joseph Kappel)



Ajahn Chah on Pindabhat with Ajahn Sumedho in UK



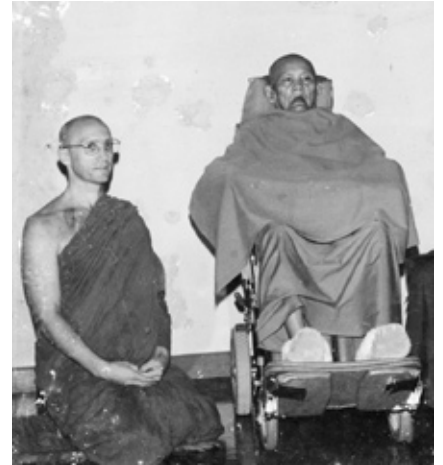
Ajahn Chah with Ajahn Varapañño (Paul Breiter) and Ajahn Khemadhammo



Ajahn Chah with Ajahn Sumedho and Ven. Kondañña

Quotes from *No Ajahn Chah*:

36. The mind is intrinsically tranquil. Out of this tranquility, anxiety and confusion are born. If one sees and knows this confusion, then the mind is tranquil once more.
37. Buddhism is a religion of the heart. Only this. One who practices to develop the heart is one who practices Buddhism.
57. When you do something bad, there is nowhere you can go to hide. Even if others don't see you, you must see yourself. Even if you go into a deep hole, you'll still find yourself there. There's no way you can commit bad actions and get away with it. In the same way, why shouldn't you see your own purity? You see it all—the peace, the agitation, the liberation, the bondage. You see all these for yourself.
90. A newly ordained novice asked Ajahn Chah what his advice was for those new to meditation practice. “The same as for those who've already been at it for a long time,” he replied. And what was that? “Just keep at it,” he said.
98. All bodies are composed of the four elements of earth, water, wind, and fire. When they come together and form a body, we say it's a male or a female, giving it names and so on, so that we can identify each other more easily. But actually there isn't anyone there—only earth, water, wind, and fire. Don't get excited over it or infatuated by it. If you really look into it, you will not find anyone there.
100. Peace within oneself is to be found in the same place as agitation and suffering. It's not found in a forest or on a hill top, nor is it given by a teacher. Where you experience suffering, you can also find freedom from suffering. Trying to run away from suffering is actually to run towards it.
101. If you let go a little, you will have a little peace. If you let go a lot, you will have a lot of peace. If you let go completely, you will have complete peace.
134. Sometimes teaching is hard work. A teacher is like a garbage can that people throw their frustrations and problems into. The more people you teach, the bigger the garbage disposal problems. But teaching is a wonderful way to practice Dhamma. Those who teach grow in patience and understanding.
174. Someone commented, “I can observe desire and aversion in my mind, but it's hard to observe delusion.” “You're riding on a horse and asking where the horse is,” was Ajahn Chah's reply.



Ajahn Chah guided Ajahn Pasanno's practice for nine years until he became too ill to teach in 1982. Because of the strong feeling of debt of gratitude, Ajahn Pasanno was much involved in organizing Ajahn Chah's medical care (above) and helping with the funeral and construction of the Wat Pah Pong Chedi (below).



No Ajahn Chah can be found online at www.ajahnchah.org.

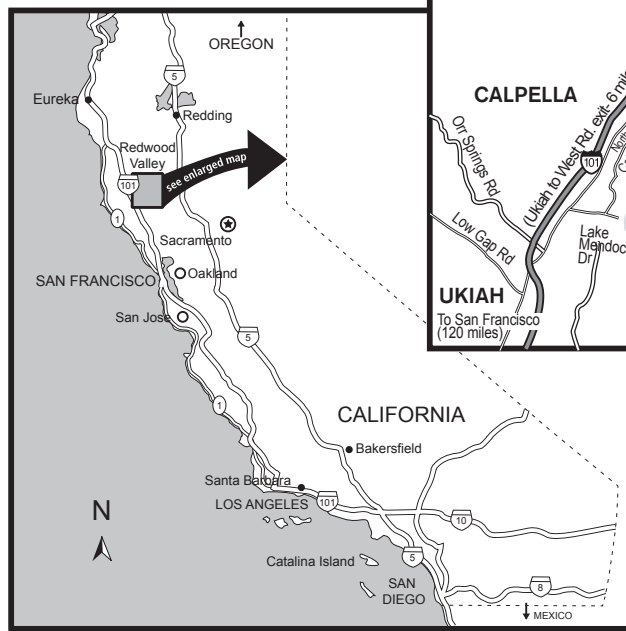
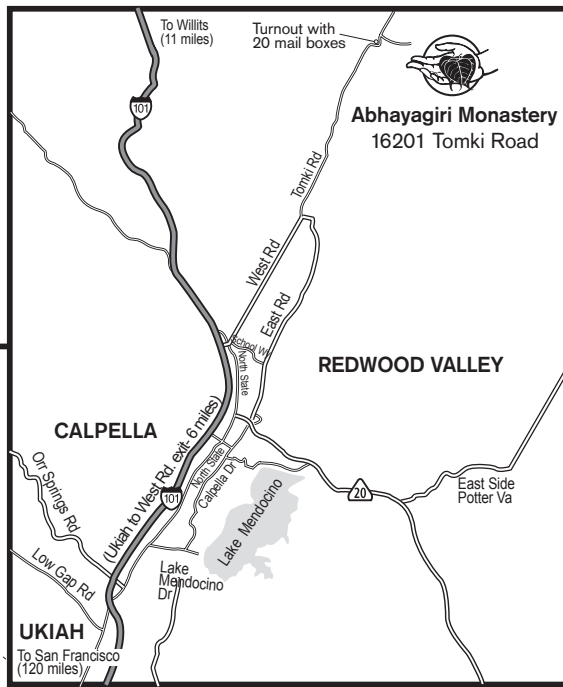
LUNAR OBSERVANCE DAYS

| 2554 | June | July | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|------|--------------|---------------------|--------|--------|---------------------|--------|--------|
| | THU 9 | FRI 8 | SUN 7 | MON 5 | WED 5 | THU 3 | SAT 3 |
| | THU 16 | FRI 15 ¹ | SUN 14 | MON 12 | WED 12 ² | THU 10 | SAT 10 |
| | FRI 24 | SAT 23 | MON 22 | TUE 20 | THU 20 | FRI 18 | SUN 18 |
| | WED/THU 1/30 | SAT 30 | SUN 28 | TUE 27 | WED 26 | FRI 25 | SAT 24 |

1. Āsālhā Pūjā 2. Pavāranā Day

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

NORTH AMERICA

- Āloka Vihāra**
1632 48th Ave.,
San Francisco, CA 94122
www.saranaloka.org
- 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 94973
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. +w44 (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
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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

ABHAYAGIRI BUDDHIST MONASTERY COMMUNITY LIST

Vassa (Rains Retreats/years as a monk)
Updated Spring 2011

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Pasanno Bhikkhu | 37 |
| Yatiko Bhikkhu | 18 |
| Pesalo Bhikkhu | 15 |
| Karuṇadhammo Bhikkhu | 13 |
| Saññāmo Bhikkhu | 12 |
| Gunavuddho Bhikkhu | 11 |
| Jotipālo Bhikkhu | 11 |
| Ṭhitābho Bhikkhu | 4 |
| Kassapo Bhikkhu | 4 |
| Cunda Bhikkhu | 3 |
| Kaccāna Bhikkhu | 2 |
| Suvaco Bhikkhu | 2 |
| Ṭhitapañño Bhikkhu | 2 |
| Kovilo Bhikkhu | 1 |

- Sāmaṇera Suddhāso
Sāmaṇera Khemako
Anagārika Joe Ginsberg
Anagārika Robert Coyner

LONGTERM LAY RESIDENT

Upāsikā Debbie Stamp

AT PACIFIC HERMITAGE

(hermitage.abhayagiri.org)

| | |
|-------------------|----|
| Sudanto Bhikkhu | 16 |
| Cāgānando Bhikkhu | 6 |
| Pamutto Bhikkhu | 1 |

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

June

- 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 – Contact: *www.yogamendocino.org*
- 11 Upāsika Renewal Day at Abhayagiri – “Meditation: Standing, Walking and Lying Down - Meditation in the Other Three Postures”
- 12 Community work day at Abhayagiri
- 17 Ajahn Chah’s Birthday
- 18 Meditation & yoga daylong led by Ajahn Pasanno & Cator Shachoy – “Harmony of Mind & Body” – NEW LOCATION at Unitarian Universalist Church, 1187 Franklin at Geary, SF, 94109 Contact: 650-992-9642 or *info@youthyogadharma.org*

July

- 5 Monthly gathering at Berkeley Buddhist Monastery
- 8-10 Teen weekend at Abhayagiri – Contact: *Rebekkah LaDyne* (415) 488-0164 x 227 or *www.spiritrock.org/calendar/display.asp?id=TEIR11*
- 10 Community work day at Abhayagiri
- 13 Monthly gathering at Yoga Mendocino, Ukiah, CA
- 15 Āsālhā Pūjā – full moon observance at Abhayagiri
- 16 ‘Rains Retreat’ (Vassa) begins

Aug

- 1 Dhamma talk at Three Jewels Dharma Hall, Fort Bragg, CA – Contact: *Mettika Hoffman* (707) 964-4606
- 2 Monthly gathering at Berkeley Buddhist Monastery
- 3-7 Spirit Rock Family Retreat with Ajahn Pasanno, Gil Fronsdal, Rebekkah LaDyne, and Betsy Rose Contact: (415) 488-0164 x 253 or visit *www.spiritrock.org/calendar/display.asp?id=280R11*
- 10 Monthly gathering at Yoga Mendocino, Ukiah, CA
- 13 Bhikkhu Ordination ceremony (Upasampadā). Sāmaṇera Suddhāso plans to formally request acceptance into the Bhikkhu Sangha. Time TBA.
- 14 CANCELLED – Community work day at Abhayagiri
- 21 Upāsika Day at Abhayagiri – “Practicing in a Global Context: The Fourfold Sangha Engaged in the Community”

Sept

- 11 Community work day at Abhayagiri
- 14 Monthly gathering at Yoga Mendocino, Ukiah, CA.
- 24-25 Buddhist Bicycle Pilgrimage, from Spirit Rock Center to Abhayagiri – Contact: *www.dharmawheels.org*

Oct

- 3 Dhamma talk at Three Jewels Dharma Hall, Fort Bragg, CA – Contact: *Mettika Hoffman* (707) 964-4606
- 4 Monthly gathering at Berkeley Buddhist Monastery
- 8 Upāsika Day at Abhayagiri – “Sutta Study: The Three Cardinal (Chanting) Suttas”
- 9 Community work day at Abhayagiri
- 12 Pavāranā Day full moon—the ending of the Rains Retreat Meditation and Dhamma talk at Yoga Mendocino (Yomo), Ukiah, CA
- 16 Kathina Festival at Abhayagiri

Nov

- 1 Monthly gathering at Berkeley Buddhist Monastery
- 9 Meditation and Dhamma talk at Yoga Mendocino (Yomo), Ukiah, CA
- 13 Community work day at Abhayagiri Daylong at Spirit Rock with Ajahn Yatiko and Ajahn Karunadhammo – Contact: *www.spiritrock.org*
- 18-27 Thanksgiving Retreat led by Ajahn Pasanno and the Abhayagiri Community at the Angela Center, Santa Rosa, CA. *Registration opens on September 1*

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 Upāsika.
- Every Tuesday and Friday at Portland Friends of the Dhamma**
7:00 pm–9:00 pm: Meditation and Dhamma discussion with lay practitioners.

The Concept of “Retreat” in Early Buddhist Texts (Q & A)

Completely made up by Kovilo Bhikkhu

Q: *Since Buddhism has come to the West, there has emerged the idiom and concept of “going on retreat.” Was this encouraged by the Buddha?*

A: The English word “retreat” has a wide breadth of meanings some of which are in line with certain ideals and practices praised by the Buddha and other meanings which are misleading and not in accord with the Dhamma. In its “mystical” connection, the term can take on amorphous connotations of being a “time for reflection, prayer, or... reconnection to one’s (True) self,” possibly having implications of absolute silence, total solitude, maybe darkness, and perhaps done in the desert (Wikipedia). When spoken of by skeptics, the word becomes a rebuke referring to “an escape from the world of men (...into the egocentric), a refusal to accept the responsibility of social and adult life,” or even an asylum, “for down-and-outs...aged and invalid members” (Webster’s). As in many areas, the Buddha’s use of such terminology takes a middle way, perhaps best expressed by the most neutral and matter-of-fact definition of “retreat” meaning simply “to retire or withdraw (Webster’s).”

Q: *Something which complicates the question is that the English “retreat” can be used in several different grammatical ways. To be more specific, what are the equivalent words which the Buddha used when referring to this?*

A: In early Buddhist texts (what is known as the “Pāli Canon”—Pāli being the language in which they were recorded), this concept of “retreat” is encountered in three modes of expression: 1) as a verb suggesting the act of withdrawing, 2) as a noun referring to the physical locality which is retired to, and 3) as a noun state of being (perhaps more frequently expressed as the related term being “in seclusion”).

1) As a verb: When encouraging practitioners to seek solitude of body, the Buddha frequently used two fairly

synonymous words *bhajati* (i.e. MN 122) and *sevati* (i.e. MN 114), each having the general meaning “to associate with, to resort to” (Pāli English Dictionary). In addition to these general terms, the more particular verb “*paṭisalliyati*” is also used, being defined as either “to go into,” or “to be in seclusion” (PED).

2) As a noun of geographical location: When referring to the actual place of seclusion, the two most common words used are *paṭisallāna* (the noun form of the above verb) and *viveka*. *Paṭisallāna* appears in its various forms over 400 times in the canon most notably being a member of the stock phrase describing the ideal dwelling for a monk: “dwelling places that are free from noise, free from sound, their atmosphere devoid of people, appropriately secluded (*paṭisallāna*) for resting undisturbed by human beings.”

3) As a state of mind: Both *paṭisallāna* and *viveka* can mean both “seclusion of body” (*kāyaviveka*) and “seclusion of mind” (*cittaviveka*), the latter being a synonym for the collected mind, properly secluded from sensual pleasures and unwholesome states (as used in the formula for *jhāna* meditation). The derivative “*paviveka*” is referential to, but not exclusively indicative of this more explicitly internal solitude.

Q: *What did the Buddha have to say about geographical seclusion?*

A: In many discourses, the Buddha urges his followers to “make an exertion in seclusion (*paṭisallāna*)” for “one who is secluded understands things as they really are” (i.e. SN 22:6, SN 35:100, SN 35:161, SN 56:2, etc.). Here the ancient Commentary takes *paṭisallāna* as meaning specifically *kāyaviveka* “seclusion of body.” In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10: the “Heart of Buddhist Meditation”), as in almost 50 other discourses, the Buddha begins by advising his audience to “go to the forest or to the root of a tree or to an empty dwelling.” At MN 39 and repeated in over 30 other suttas, this list is expanded

to include “the shade of a tree, a mountain, a glen, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a jungle grove, the open air, a heap of straw.” The well-known *Nāgita Sutta* (AN 6.42) gives several examples of and reasons for the Buddha’s praise of monks’ wilderness-dwelling even when those monks are as-yet unconcentrated, inundated with material requisites, or even nodding because he foresaw their future centering and release of mind based on this physical seclusion.

Q: *Is this principle of geographic retreat made explicit in any ways for the monastic Sangha?*

A: For his monastic disciples who had “gone forth from home-life,” the Buddha laid forth several specific training rules and practices to encourage this move away from the complications and entanglements which can characterize village, town, and city life. Of the 227 primary precepts for monks, at least nine deal specifically with promoting an external observance of seclusion in varying degrees. The “forma l-meeting-offenses” Sg 6 and Sg 7 give advice on the construction of certain monastic dwellings stating that they should be “without disturbances and with adequate space.” The “confession-offenses” Pc 5 and Pc 6 forbid lying down in the same vicinity with certain people and for certain lengths of time. Further confession is obliged by Pc 48, Pc 49, and Pc 50 for various degrees of excessive and unnecessary contact with an army and by Pc 46 and Pc 85 for untimely, absent-without-leave entry into “inhabited areas.” In addition to these day-to-day trainings, the Buddha implemented the more broad practice of the “rains retreat” stipulating that for at least 3 months of the year, ordained monastics must give up unessential travel and commit to leaving in one locality.

Q: *Why would the Buddha categorically approve of a simple external circumstance without taking into account*

one's inner state of purity or corruption? To quote the brahman Janussonin in MN 4: "Master Gotama, it's not easy to endure isolated forest or wilderness dwellings. It's not easy to maintain seclusion, not easy to enjoy being alone. The forests, as it were, plunder the mind of a monk who has not attained concentration."

A: This is a misunderstanding, a going beyond the principle. One of the Buddha's superior qualities was his ability to make distinctions, to "know the nature of each, knowing each one himself, and knowing how each one differed: "This is appropriate for one. This is appropriate for another." (DN 30). At MN 114 the Buddha delineates resting places as being of two kinds: to be cultivated and not to be cultivated: "Such resting places as cause unwholesome states to increase and wholesome states to diminish in one who cultivates them should not be cultivated. But such resting places as cause unwholesome states to diminish and wholesome states to increase in one who cultivates them should be cultivated." The Commentary, again, helpfully notes that the distinction does not lie in the lodging itself, but in the approach to it.

Q: *Are there examples in the canon detailing both the Buddha's allowance and his non-allowance of requests coming from particular individuals to go on retreat?*

A: When Mahāpajāpati Gotami (the Buddha's aunt and the first nun) expressed the wish (at AN 8.53), "It would be good, lord, if the Blessed One would teach me the Dhamma in brief such that, having heard the Dhamma from the Blessed One, I might dwell alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute," the Buddha, seeing she was of ready mind, approved proclaiming: "Whatever qualities of which one may know: 'This quality leads to seclusion (paviveka), not to entanglement': You may categorically hold, 'This is the Dhamma, this is the Vinaya, this is the Teacher's instruction!'" However, when the new attendant monk Meghiya, after having made a similar request to go into seclusion (AN 9.3), having been denied twice, having gone deep into the forest nonetheless, having

been obsessed by sensual and aversive thoughts, and having returned to the Buddha perplexed and seeking guidance, the Buddha suggested 9 principles for making the "immature mind mature for liberation:" 1) noble friendship, 2) restraint in line with precepts, 3) noble conversation, 4) arousing energy, 5) wisdom, and grounded in these, to cultivate 6) meditation on unattractiveness to counter biases longing only for the attractive, 7) meditation on loving-kindness, 8) mindfulness of breathing, and 9) meditation on impermanence.

Q: *Is there any other such encouragement for those of us who have not yet attained the peace of concentration but still wish to make attempts in this direction through some form of retreat practice? How can we avoid having our minds "plundered?"*

A: The Vanasamyutta ("Connected with the Woods") of the Samyutta Nikaya is entirely devoted to giving support to practitioners who have retired to seclusion. Each of its 14 individual suttas give versified odes of heedfulness for meditators encountering some of the very common hindrances which can arise in solitude: unwholesome thoughts, laziness, loneliness, conceit, restlessness, etc. A typical exhortation given by an amiable deva to the Venerable Ānanda: "Having entered the thicket at the foot of a tree, Having placed Nibbāna in your heart, Meditate, Gotama, and don't be negligent! What will this hullaballo do for you?" (SN 9:5)

Q: *What is the connection between "seclusion of body" and "seclusion of mind?"*

A: In The Greater Discourse on Voidness (MN 122), the Buddha states plainly: "That a monk who delights in company, enjoys company, is committed to delighting in company; who delights in a group, enjoys a group, rejoices in a group, will obtain at will—without difficulty, without trouble—the pleasure of renunciation, the pleasure of seclusion, the pleasure of peace, the pleasure of self-awakening, that is not possible. But, that a monk who lives alone, withdrawn from the group, can expect to

obtain at will—without difficulty, without trouble—the pleasure of renunciation, the pleasure of seclusion (paviveka), the pleasure of peace, the pleasure of self-awakening, that is possible."

Q: *Did the Buddha himself ever go on "retreat?"*

A: Yes. There are five instances (recording four specific occurrences) in the Pāli Canon of the Buddha going into "solitary retreat" (pali: paṭisallāna). A stock passage is used in each instructing the incumbent bhikkhu population thus: "I wish, monks, to go into solitary retreat...I should not be approached by anyone except the one who brings my almsfood."

Q: *What does a Fully Enlightened Buddha do on retreat?*

A: At SN 54:11, the Buddha predicts this question and instructs: "Being asked thus, you should answer... 'The Blessed One generally dwelt in the concentration by mindfulness of breathing... a noble dwelling, a divine dwelling, the Tathāgata's dwelling.'"

Q: *If we assume that the Buddha was entirely devoid of all greed, anger, and delusion and thus did not "retreat" out of desire or aversion, then why did he retreat at all?*

A: In the Bala Sutta (AN 8.28), the Buddha makes known that, just by nature, the "mind of a monk whose effluents are ended (such as himself) inclines toward seclusion (viveka), leans toward seclusion, tends toward seclusion, stays in seclusion, delights in renunciation, entirely rid of the qualities that act as a basis for the effluents." With specific reference to one of the Buddha's two-week retreats (SN 45:11), the ancient Commentary offers one possible explanation: "During that half-month, it is said, he had no one to guide. Then he thought, 'I will pass this half-month in the bliss of fruition attainment. Thus I will enjoy a pleasant abiding and set an example for future generations.'" 🙏

Measuring the Mind... (continued from page 1)

stillness, or attending to the mind in ways that foster discernment and understanding. We need to learn those skills, and we need to learn when it is appropriate and useful to direct more attention to the tranquility and stillness aspect, and when it is useful to direct attention to the discernment and understanding aspect. They have different applications; they have different results. It isn't as if one particular aspect is right and the other is wrong. It's just that the mind needs to rely on a balance of those qualities. We have to learn how to measure the mind and see what is actually going to be useful at any given moment, at any given sitting. You can't work from an idealistic program or a fixed methodology—you just have to recognize that the mind changes. We have to be ready to adapt to those changes.

For example, when we attend to the tranquility aspect, one of the ways of investigating—and there are many different ways—is to be attentive to sensory experience in and of itself: sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, mental objects. These are what we experience through the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. What are we experiencing in the present moment? What is the avenue of experience? What is the sense-medium that the mind is drawn to? As we investigate in this way, we recognize that consciousness tends to be drawn to that

which we like, things that are conducive to desire, to attraction. We recognize there are the things we dislike, and are conducive to aversion. And there are the things we're neutral to, but can easily result in dullness, restlessness, or confusion. We need to pay attention to those moods that arise following the sense contact. We need to be willing to be attentive to and relinquish that push and pull within the mind. That push and pull of likes and dislikes, the agitation of confusion or restlessness or simply dullness: these all lead the mind to be unsettled and sap its energy. They pull and drag the mind so it isn't stable. But our intention is to guide the mind to a place of balance and poise.

Fixating on a meditation object doesn't necessarily make the mind peaceful. When we use a meditation object such as the breath, we direct attention to and sustain attention on the meditation object, but as you do this you have to use the meditation object as a mirror. We have to understand the way that the moods move within the mind, that swinging towards liking and disliking, that oscillating between attraction and aversion. In using the breath—a neutral object—as a meditation object, we find that the simple rhythm of the breath is settling and soothing. It has a quality of relaxing the body and relaxing the mind, but you can't just drift into that relaxation. Instead,

you have to be aware of how you're doing what you're doing with the breath. You're focusing on the breath, but are you doing it in a way that gives up alertness and leads to dullness, or a way that leads to openness and brightness? If we are sensitive to which results our actions bring, we can discern how to proceed. We do cultivate that quality of sustaining attention on the meditation object, developing the ability to focus in a consistent way. Yet, the purpose of it is to be able to see the moods of the mind more clearly; to be able to recognize the tendency and the pull towards liking and disliking, confusion or dullness and then let those moods calm down.

In working with a meditation object and directing attention towards tranquility and settling the mind, one is still learning about the nature of greed, hatred and delusion; the nature of the qualities that obstruct the mind. We use phrases like “developing samatha practice” or “developing concentration” or “developing tranquility”, but in doing this you still have to rely on a quality of discernment and investigation to see the unskillful tendencies within the mind more clearly. The mind doesn't just magically become peaceful because you're watching the breath. We need to apply appropriate attention and ask, “What are the obstacles? What are the obstructions?”



The Pacific Hermitage community



Tan Kassapo

Measuring the Mind... (continued from page 12)

How do we relinquish them, how do we not get entangled in those habits of mind that create the swinging towards the different moods and sense-impressions?" We need to be aware that that's all we're experiencing: sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, mental objects. We should be able to deconstruct the habit of identifying things that are bound up with attachment and clinging. We need to respond to sense impressions by noting, "That's a sense-impression that rises and passes away." It's a sense-impression, and when we don't discern it clearly, it can create agitation within the mind and obstruct peace. Take up the meditation object and the goal of developing concentration and tranquility, but recognize that it's not just a passive process where you sit down and watch the breath, and the mind becomes peaceful. You have to engage in a way where you're understanding more clearly the process of the mind and learning how to measure the mind—not measuring it in a judgmental way, because that just creates more confusion and agitation. The judgments and the running commentary centered on "I" and "mine" keep the mind proliferating and off balance. But when we measure our experience from the perspective of Dhamma, letting the mind become calm gets much easier.

When we turn our attention to the aspects of discernment, wisdom, insight—the vipassanā elements—we are investigating the same phenomena of the sense-impressions and what we're experiencing in the present moment: sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, mental objects, but our perspective is that these things are elements of nature. These various moods and impressions that we experience are part of a causal process. There are causes and conditions that are unfolding and manifesting that allow us to experience these sense impressions. It's not about "me" as a solid, real, absolute core. It's recognizing that what we experience and what we call "me" and "my world" is built up of these multi-layered impressions that we tend to get lost in, confused by, fascinated by, excited by. When we don't see sense experience clearly, it tends to carry us along. It



picks us up like a tornado of experience. It picks us up and drops us somewhere else, and we don't quite see how we got there. Investigation shows that what we relate to as "my self" and "my world" are actually causes and conditions, arising and ceasing, and we don't have to get caught up by that.

That's the insight into the impersonal nature of things. When we say things are impersonal, that doesn't mean that they don't matter, but that they're not about "me" as a personality. These are just fundamental forces of nature. When we understand this, we can be at peace with them and experience happiness and well-being. When we get caught and confused and obsessed within those fundamental forces of nature, we keep perpetuating suffering, dissatisfaction, discontent. One

recognizes that one has an option. The option is understanding. It's discernment, insight into the true nature of what arises, seeing its impermanent, unsatisfactory, non-self nature. That's the fundamental insight of the Buddha: whether it's internal or external, near or far, to do with the world or the self, it's *anicca, dukkha, anatta*. It's uncertain, it's fraught with dissatisfaction and suffering, and it has a non-self nature. These aspects of insight are not something to just try to slap as a label on top of all phenomena. That's superficial, and won't lead to deep insight on its own. You have to ask, "What does it feel like? What is the experience like when something is uncertain, changing, of a fundamentally impermanent nature? What's the experience? Or is it stable? Is it actually permanent? Why not?" The Buddha points to that very nature of things: changing. Whether it's the extraordinarily rapid change of the mental state in a moment, or the arising and passing away of world systems, the scale is different but the nature of change is the same. That's the reason why Ajahn Chah when he talked of impermanence would say "uncertain" or "not sure." This brings across the internal aspect of how we experience impermanence and change: What does it feel like when we experience something that is changing, that is not stable? It helps to internalize the experience, as with the aspect of dukkha, of things having a certain imperfect, unsatisfactory nature; to be subject to change, to not being able to completely fulfill our desires and wishes. What does it feel like?

We don't do this so we know what to push away. We do it to be able to say, "What is it like when we can't quite fulfill our desire?" or "When the desire is always moving ahead of the experience?" One example I've given many times over the years is the story from Winnie the Pooh, when Christopher Robin asks Winnie the Pooh, "What's your most favorite thing?" And of course, Winnie the Pooh has a very limited range of desires. He is fixated on honey. He's a honey guy. And so he is ready to answer, of course, to just blurt out "honey!" But then he realizes that actually,

(Continued on page 15)

Venerable Day, Harmonious Way: What is the Lunar Observance Day?

By Ajahn Pasanno

This evening is our observance night, an opportunity to recollect the refuges and precepts and to take the time to reflect on the direction we want to guide our spiritual practice. In the Thai language the observance day is called the “Wan Phra,” which means “Holy Day” or “Monk Day” or maybe “Day Worthy of Veneration.” Ajahn Chah used to say, “It’s helpful having these special days. They were established by the Buddha and it’s not as if he’s asking too much of us, once a week having an observance day, a day worthy of veneration. We do it once a week, so in a month you get four days worthy of veneration and twenty six ordinary days, which is a good balance. The problem is that people tend to pull the days of veneration into ordinary days. So you end up with lots of ordinary days, but not many worthy of veneration.”

So the observance day is a way to have a day to set aside and reflect, for example asking ourselves, “What do we take as a refuge? What do we hold up as something worthy of veneration in our life? What are the boundaries and bases for our conduct and interaction with the world around us? What do we hold in value? How would we like to live? What qualities of virtue and integrity do we want to really cultivate?” Just having a quiet day where we step back from the of busyness of day to day life, even the busyness of monastery life.

Here at Abhayagiri we are consistently encouraging people to step back on these days, reminding the community, “Don’t turn the computer on, don’t be checking emails on the observance days.” It is a time to step back and not clutter up the mind with that kind of activity.

It is really important to give ourselves the opportunity. Observance days and precepts are opportunities to stop and see:

**“Oh, that’s why we have that guideline,” or
“Wow, that was stupid to let ourselves get caught up in that.”
Because if we don’t ever stop, then we don’t ever reflect.**

As we try to gain some perspective on our lives, it is helpful to remember that we are not trying to force ourselves to live up to the highest ideal all the time, but what we are trying to do is to reflect and see what is actually useful for our life, what actually brings good results. When we recognize that which clutters up the mind, clutters up one’s life, then there’s an intention and motivation to turn towards relinquishment and letting things go. That’s why an observance day is quite helpful, because it gives us a structure to encourage ourselves to step back.

That perspective of reflecting from a place of letting go and relinquishment is really central to the Buddha’s teaching

and central to the ethos of how we’re using the practice, whether it’s on the level of interpersonal relationships or in terms of keeping and holding of precepts, either as a monastic or lay person. Not coming from a place of theoretical idealism but coming from a place of, “What actually works to decrease the dissatisfaction, discontent, and suffering of our lives?” 🙏

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

working too hard! Her visits are a welcome occasion and it is a joy for the community to see them together. Rhoda has always been supportive of her son’s path and traveled to see Ajahn Pasanno in Thailand on many occasions. Even in her eighties, she is as healthy as ever.

In early April, the work season started and the weather changed from rain to sunshine. Dave Rupe, from the local town of Willits, helped the monks fix the upper well pump. Many monastic hands pulled the 42 yards of piping and heavy pump. Dave Rupe has been helping the monastery with its water system since Abhayagiri’s inception and recently said that he is really glad that he has met the monks. Abhayagiri is a part of his life. Perhaps the biggest project this year is to build and complete the much needed workshop.

As for building the Sangha, on April 26th, Anagārika Brian Johnson ordained in the brown robes as Sāmanera Khemako. On the same day, Robert Coyner went forth as an anagārika and has officially started his eight precept path in training for monkhood. A few days later Sāmanera Khemako took Ajahn Pasanno to the Old Gold Mine Hermitage in Washington for a brief two week retreat. Sāmanera Khemako co-created this hermitage with his friend Roger Fox. The time was valuable for both teacher and disciple. We wish both Sāmanera Khemako and Anagārika Robert all the best as they explore the roots of the Ajahn Chah tradition in America. 🙏



***Fearless Mountain
Production Team***

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to Jebbie Lavoie for design and layout, along with editorial assistance from Gardiner Anderson, Dominic McCarty, and Wade Sanders.



Community Work Day: Pulling the ridge well pump with Dave Rupe

Measuring the Mind... (continued from page 13)

the moment just before you taste the honey is better. The moment just before is better than the actual experience. That's the nature of desire: the desire is always running ahead of the experience. It leads to things being not quite as good as one had hoped for...

When the Buddha is depicted in a Buddha image, he is never depicted as somebody who is always completely miserable because he can't get what he wants. He's somebody who is completely happy and peaceful because he sees the nature of desire. When I think of the people who I have met over time who have been reputed to have finished their work, experienced liberation—they are the same way. Ajahn Chah, my own teacher, was someone like that. Such a person can be in the midst of a lot of different responsibilities and duties and externally can live a quite austere life yet will be completely happy and completely self-contained. There is a realization that is very transformative.

Those qualities that are the basis of insight—*anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*—give us ways of directing attention. We can attend to the impermanent, unsatisfactory, or non-self aspects of things. And actually there are all sorts of different ways to direct attention as part of the insight practices. It's the same for tranquility practices. Some ways

of directing attention lead more toward tranquility and stillness and others are more conducive to insight and discernment. But they support each other; they're part of a continuum, they're not separate. We need to learn how to measure the mind and see what's going to be fruitful and beneficial. You have to do that through your own experience. You have to train your intuition; you can't just think that through. You have to experiment, try things out, and gradually get more skilled at recognizing the results. It's that engagement with the practice that gives one the skill and confidence to say "This is how the practice works." And we recognize that there are different times and circumstances when one puts more attention on the samatha practices and there are times when one puts more attention on the insight practices. One needs to develop skill in both.

One of the illustrations that Ajahn Chah gives is the example of having a candle. You've got a candle, it's got potential for giving light, but if it's not lit yet then it's not fulfilling its potential. If you've got a match, you can have a bright light that flares up really quickly, but it goes out—a match doesn't last very long. But if you put the match and the candle together, then you've got a light that shines and brings benefit

for a longer period of time. This is similar to the mind: the insight practice is like the match. It's a spark of light, a spark of insight, a spark of seeing truth. But it needs the samatha practice to sustain it. With the samatha, the potential of the mind is ready to be used, the peacefulness of the mind is there, but it needs to be lit up. They need to work together and rely on each other for the heart to be purified.

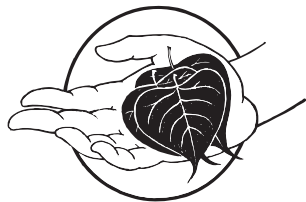
Measuring the mind and recognizing what's needed gives the space for samatha and vipassanā to rely on each other in this way. We need to develop the ability to measure the mind that does not come from a place of self-obsession, a running commentary of "me and my mind." Instead, we learn to recognize what the experience is, and given this experience, what would be useful in order to bring balance to the mind, to guide the process of experience in the direction that is fruitful. Learn how to pay attention to your experience, to draw your attention inwards and see clearly. What is the experience? What is the way of Dhamma within that? What is the way of aligning yourself with Dhamma, of according yourself with fundamental truth?

I offer this for your reflection this evening. 🙏

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after September 1 for details.

