

FEARLESS MOUNTAIN

Inside:

From the Monastery
PAGE: 2

Happy Anniversary
to the Abbots

Ajahn Pasanno 30 Years

25 Ajahn Amaro
YEARS PAGE: 4

Calendar
PAGE: 8

What is the
Kathina
Ceremony?
PAGE: 14

Into the Buddha's Flame

by Ajahn Amaro

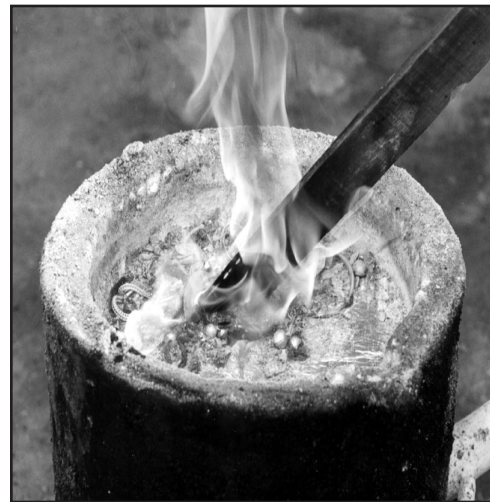
One of the most compelling and inspiring sights that I have ever seen in twenty-five years as a monk was at the pouring of the Buddha image—Phra Buddhahammacakramaravati—that was to occupy the central position at the new temple at Amaravati Monastery in England. The ceremony took place in Thailand late in 1995, a few years before the temple was even built. I had somehow landed the good fortune of traveling with Ajahn Sumedho for five months acting as a partially-fluent secretary-cum-factotum as he traveled to teach in Thailand and Indonesia and attend a conference with H. H. the Dalai Lama in India.

Up until the day that the ceremony happened I had merely recorded it as another of the ever-changing list of events that I had to liase about and make sure we had transport to and were somewhere near on time for. In the back of my mind I had registered that it was due to be more than

just a visit to the foundry when they poured the molten metal into the mould, but I was not at all prepared for the true scale of the occasion.

The master founder, Khun Pyrote, had built a whole sacramental area into the factory compound so that as you entered the drive past huge half-finished Buddha rupas

and Kuan Yin statues, as you took a swing to the left, you entered into a courtyard framed by white flagpoles and bordered on two sides by a meditation and ceremonial hall and a monastic residence. At the center of the courtyard the inverted mould for the new rupa was already in place, and white blessing cords were



strung from the mould, around the four corner posts, and across to the front of the ceremonial hall, where a slowly expanding number of monks were gathering.

It was another world.

As the Elders from Wat Nong Pah Pong, Ajahn Chah's own monastery, and other monastic dignitaries gathered, the air

(continued on page 10)

FROM THE MONASTERY

COMMUNITY

The time since the end of the winter retreat has been one of comings and goings. Ajahn Amaro left in early April to visit his mother in England and also to spend some time with Ajahn Sumedho on a trip to Svalbard (near the North Pole). At the same time Tan Sudanto, Tan Karunadhammo and Samanera Ñaniko headed up to Seattle, Washington, to lead a retreat which Ajahn Amaro had been scheduled for. These excursions turned out to be enriching both for those involved, and for the community upon their return.

Ajahn Amaro returned in late May, and then left for England once again, to be with his mother in her final days. She passed away peacefully on the evening of July 16, and the community gathered together to chant the Pali funeral chants as Ajahn Amaro sat alone with her in the early hours of the morning, 5,000 miles away.

We have also had visits from several monastics since the end of the winter retreat. Ajahn Dhammiko from Santacittarama Monastery in Italy arrived in mid-May. Having come to San Francisco for a six-week course with the Zen Hospice Project, he decided to spend another few weeks at Abhayagiri. Sister Metta from Amaravati also came for two weeks in May, accompanying Ajahn Sundara, who had been away in Massachusetts for the opening of the Forest Refuge of the Insight Meditation Society and leading a retreat. Ajahn Sundara has since left to stay at Bodhi Monastery in New Jersey. The monastery, in the lineage of Master Yin Shun, has become a center for the study of both Theravada and Mahayana teachings, and is currently where Bhikkhu Bodhi, well-known translator and teacher, is residing.

Bhante Gunaratana, respected teacher, author and founder of the Bhavana Society in West Virginia, came to visit us in mid-June. Though his stay was just short of a week, we were all touched by his presence here. We spent many evenings gathering for question-and-answer sessions, which were interspersed with humorous anec-



Bhikkhu ordination ceremony of Ven. Ñaniko

dotes from his life and detailed meditation instructions. Having the good fortune to be with such a noble elder was indeed a privilege and a delight. Other visits included Venerable Phong from Deer Park Monastery in Escondido, Venerable Luminous Owl from No Abode Hermitage in Mill Valley, the monks of Shasta Abbey, the monastics of Buddha Gate Monastery in the Ch'an tradition, and numerous visits from the lay and monastic community of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. The cumulative effect of these visits has been both a sense of the richness of Buddhist practice in this area, and also the expanding sense of Sangha that arises from contact with such a diversity of monastic traditions and lineages.

The community was glad to welcome Adam Kane into the position of anagarika in mid-June. Having spent the winter retreat here as one of the lay support team, he has decided to make a one-year commitment to the anagarika training. Anagarika Harald left us at the end of April to be with family in Germany. We wish him every blessing and extend our gratitude for the generosity—both in spirit and service—which he offered during his year here. Venerable Ñaniko took full ordination as a bhikkhu on Asalha Puja, July 13. The ceremony took place in the forest on a new platform especially built for the occasion, which had been the focus of two community work days the previous week and a stretch of many full days in the week leading up to the ceremony. Many lay supporters came to help, including Cheryl Maglosky, Kathy Lewis and Robert Hohn, who kindly offered their carpentry skills. Tan Ñaniko's parents and sister came to stay for a week and were able to participate in the ceremony. Also present was Reverend Heng Lai, a senior bhikshu of 28 years from the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, and one monk and three nuns from Tan Ajahn Toon's monastery, situated just over the ridge at the top of our property. A delightful addition to the already ethereal atmosphere was the melodious chiming of the bells from the



Anagarika Adam Kane

monastery of the monks of Mount Tabor, our Christian neighbors. Curiously, the tones managed to sound on two poignant moments—towards the end of Ajahn Pasanno's exhortation on the use of the four requisites, and once again at the conclusion of Tan Ñaniko's final forgiveness chants.

A week earlier, Venerables Jotipalo and Phasuko returned from their year away in Thailand and England, respectively. It was great to receive them back into the fold and hear tales of their time away. Around this time, Tan Karunadhammo left Abhayagiri to spend some time at Bodhinyanarama Monastery in New Zealand. Having been here since Ajahn Amaro first arrived on the land seven years ago, Tan Karunadhammo has been instrumental in maintaining many areas of the monastery's life, both functional and also social. He will no doubt be missed, but the sense of *mudita* (appreciative joy) in supporting his practice is equally present.

DEVELOPMENT

Delays finishing the final plans has hampered our ability to receive any attractive bid submissions for the groundwork and foundations of the cloister building this year. The building committee therefore has decided to postpone its construction until spring of 2004.

The cloister building is the final structure needed for the monastery to complete its first and most critical phase of the construction plans. In addition, the building will provide much needed bathrooms for the male members of the community, a required wheelchair-accessible bathroom and guest accommodation, and offices and extra storage space. If sufficient funding is available, we hope to complete construction next year.

Although the groundwork for the cloister building has been delayed until next spring, several smaller projects are under way this summer to continue the long-term development of the monastery. More than twenty volunteers came to participate in building a new ordination platform (on the site of the future Dhamma Hall) and cleaning up the forest around it in preparation for the ordination ceremony for Ñaniko Bhikkhu. A shrine will be constructed behind the platform to house a beautiful new Buddha image being cast in Thailand (see article on page one). In addition, many braved the hot weather and carried all the supplies needed to construct an additional monk's cabin in the forest. With a simple design and volunteer labor (monks included), estimated total construction costs are under \$10,000. Construction began mid-August and should be largely complete by early September.

On behalf of the monastic community, thank you to all who have provided support for these projects and the development of the monastery.



Monastery photo

TEACHINGS AND EVENTS

In the first part of April, Ajahn Amaro was scheduled to lead a week-long monastic retreat on Samish Island, in northern Washington State. Since he had to leave for the U.K, the retreat organizers agreed to the idea of having Tan Sudanto and Tan Karunadhammo co-lead the retreat. Both have had only little experience teaching and leading Dhamma events. Tan Ñaniko, then still a samanera, accompanied them on the trip. A standard monastic schedule was followed, with morning and evening chanting, almsround for the monastics, group interviews and question-and-answer sessions. The lunar observance night was also observed mid-retreat, and those who were able practiced until midnight. In the end, the retreatants and the organizers were very happy with how everything fell into place. Much gratitude was expressed.

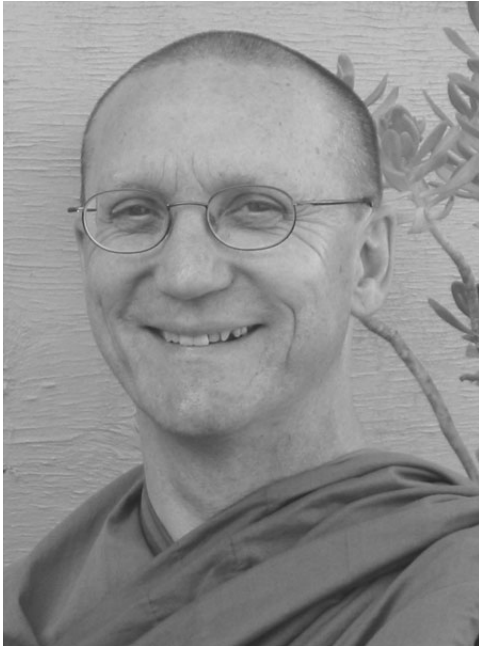
Thai Meditation master Ajahn Jumnieen came to California in late May and several members of the community were able to attend his week-long retreat at the Angela Center in Santa Rosa. The mixture of traditional Theravada teachings and Ajahn Jumnieen's own unique style made for a very rewarding time. His use of humor and personality made the teachings very accessible and provided a way to connect on a direct heart level. An additional cause for uplift was the presence of Joseph Kappel (former Pabhakaro Bhikkhu) and Paul Breiter (former Varapañño Bhikkhu), who along with Ajahn Pasanno helped with the translating. To spend time with some of the "old school" of Western Ajahn Chah disciples is always very special.

On June 22, Ajahn Pasanno and Tan Ñaniko left to give a week-long monastic retreat in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The retreat was sponsored by the Life Transition Institute and Ralph Steele, who has also had a year of experience as a monk in Burma and Thailand. The retreat was preceded by a few

(continued on page 15)

Happy Anniversary

Ajahn Pasanno: 30 Years a Monk



Ajahn Pasanno

July 26, 1949 – Born Reed Perry.

1949 to 1968 – Grew up and went to school in The Pas, Manitoba, Canada.

1968 to 1972 – Studied at University of Winnipeg, Canada, and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (History).

1973 – Travelled to Asia.

January 4, 1974 – Ordained as a Buddhist Monk at Wat Pleng Vipassana in Bangkok, Thailand, at the age of 24.

1974 to 1978 – Trained under Venerable Ajahn Chah at Wat Pah Pong Monastery, Ubolrachatani Province, Thailand, and at Wat Pah Nanachat.

1979 – Spent a year on retreat and pilgrimage in Thailand.

1981 – Returned to Wat Pah Pong to continue training with Ajahn Chah.

Fearless Mountain: What was your early religious experience?

Ajahn Pasanno: I was raised in northern Manitoba, 600 miles north of the U.S. border. My religion was Anglican, which is Episcopalian in the U.S. I had a good experience growing up as a Christian. It was a small town and a small church. My family was reasonably devout. My father had grown up in the United Church, and we took religious classes together. But by the time I was 16 or 17, I found it difficult to maintain any kind of faith. I stopped going to church and taking communion. I started to look for alternatives.

FM: Did you ever think you would become a monk?

AP: I certainly didn't spend my years growing up dreaming of becoming a monk. However, I definitely had an attraction to religion, and the mystique of hermits interested me. But there were no Buddhists in northern Manitoba, or even in Winnipeg, where I attended university. However, I did take an Eastern religions class, which covered Buddhism. This reading motivated me to continue the search. When I finished university, I had a vague idea to study Buddhism some more. I was looking for a way to learn to meditate since I knew from my reading that meditation was essential if I was to continue.

I had read mostly Zen books because that was what was available in Canada at that time. Because of this, I had a vague idea to go to Japan. I left Canada in 1972 with a one-way plane ticket to Europe. My plan was to travel overland to Asia, then go down to Australia to work and make money, and then go to Japan. I wanted to get my fill of the world before meditating in Japan.

I travelled from Europe, through Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, to India and Nepal. In India, I kept my antennae out, yet nothing resonated there or in Nepal. A year after I began my travels, I arrived in Thailand. I felt totally comfortable and decided to stay for a while. I wanted to find a place to meditate. The second day I was there, I bought a dictionary and Thai grammar instruction book.

It was hot in Bangkok and cooler in the north, so I traveled up to Chiang Mai and stumbled across a monastery which had the Tripitika in English. I stayed at a hotel and went to the monastery to read the Tripitika every day. It happened to be a meditation monastery. There was a German novice who helped arrange a meditation retreat for me. It was a month-long silent retreat, the first meditation I ever did.

FM: You really jumped into it!

AP: That really opened me up. I had some powerful experiences of calm and concentration and insight, which made me want to continue to study and practice vipassana. The monks encouraged me to be ordained. I said, "No, I have traveling to do; I'm not ready to make a long-term commitment." They explained how ordinary it is to do a three-month temporary ordination in Thailand. I thought I could handle three or four months, so I was ordained.

It was there that I first heard of Ajahn Chah. One of the other monks encouraged me to visit and pay my respects to Ajahn Chah. I had only been ordained for

(Continued on page 6)

to the Abbots

Ajahn Amaro: 25 Years a Monk

Fearless Mountain: What was your religious experience as a child?

Ajahn Amaro: My family was only nominally Church of England. My parents were not at all church-going people. But like many Brits, they thought that even if they didn't go to church or have any religion of their own, the children ought to have something. In British schools, the only compulsory subject is religious study. We had a Church of England religious service at the beginning of each day. But I had a lot of questions about Christianity, particularly about the need to believe in doctrines. I was one of those children with 10,000 questions. A lot of what we were taught in religious studies classes really puzzled me. I couldn't figure out what it really meant.

FM: Had you even thought of becoming a monk, or did it come as a surprise to you?

AA: It was a surprise. Then again, it's tricky to say. I remember one exchange in primary school. We had to learn to recite the Apostles' Creed, which begins with "I believe in God the Father." I remember sticking my hand up and asking, "Please, sir, we are supposed to be learning this, but if we don't believe in God, what are we supposed to do? Should we learn it and be lying, or not say it?" I don't quite remember the exact response, but it was somewhere along the lines of "Don't ask difficult questions." The idea was that you would have to make yourself believe. I remember thinking: "Well, that's ridiculous!"

Perhaps it was childhood arrogance, but I really did feel quite sincerely that these people knew little more than I did. They had more knowledge of theology and reason. Yet, if you took one key element out of their theology, such as Jesus being a totally unique being who was the son of the creator of the universe, then the whole edifice of the church fell to bits. Turning away from religion as a child was perhaps my first step along the Buddhist path, the path of free inquiry. This is the encouragement from the Buddha: to find out for yourself and not take it on trust from anyone else.

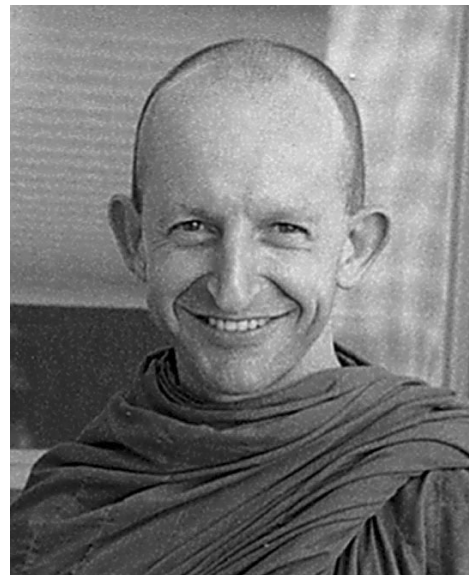
By age eleven, although I was a rough and tumble child, I had formulated a lot of philosophical questions. One night I sat on my bed and looked out the window and decided to figure out the nature of God. I came to the conclusion that God was much more vast and formless than the kind of super-parent in the sky that most people seem to go along with. I wrote all this down at length. So there was no concept of becoming a monk but rather a longing to understand the nature of reality and the nature of mind. To my young mind, organized religion was the worse offense of all. That's probably why I've become a monk in an orthodox tradition. [Laughter]

FM: What you most hate comes back to you!

AA: It's called karma. Hating something often creates a tighter bond than loving something.

By the time I finished university, it was clear to me that spirituality was the only meaningful thing. I could have done post-grad stuff at the university, but I had made a vow to never take another exam as long as I lived. My godfather was a partner in de Beers Diamond Corporation and offered me a job there, but the business world was totally unappealing. Taking psychedelics had underscored my feeling that spirituality was the only important thing in the human world.

(Continued on page 7)



Ajahn Amaro

September 2, 1956 – Born J. C. J. Horner.

1966 to 1973 – Attended Sutton Valence School in Kent, England.

1974 to 1977 – Attended London University, Bedford College, and graduated with a degree in Psychology and Physiology.

September 1977 – Set out for Asia on a plane carrying twenty-two race horses.

1978 – Showed up at Wat Pah Nanachat in January; started anagarika training three weeks later. Started novice training in July.

1979 – Ordained in April as a bhikkhu with Ajahn Chah as preceptor. Left for England to train with Ajahn Sumedho in October.

1979 to 1983 – Lived and trained at Chithurst Monastery.

1983 – In May, set off on a tudong with Nick Scott, walking 830 miles north to Harnham Monastery. Arrived in August and stayed on to live and train there.

1982 – Appointed abbot of Wat Pah Nanachat, taking on responsibility for teaching, leading ceremonies, building, and administration.

1987 – Initiated development projects in the village of Bung Wai, the nearest village to the monastery. The village won first prize in the region for their efforts.

1989 – Established Poo Jom Gom Monastery in Ubolrachatani Province as a forest retreat facility for Wat Pah Nanachat.

1990 – Established Dtao Dum Monastery in Kanchanaburi Province as a forest retreat facility for Wat Pah Nanachat.

1992 – Assisted in organizing the state funeral of Ajahn Chah. The preparations took one year and the event was attended by the King and Queen of Thailand, the Prime Minister, and various dignitaries, with close to 10,000 monastics and 400,000 laypeople.

1994 – Established Nature Care Foundation in Ubolrachatani to assist in the protection of the forest near the Poo Jom Gom Monastery.

1996 – Linked the Nature Care Foundation to Dtao Dum Monastery to protect the forest in that region as well.

1997 – Arrived at Abhayagiri Monastery on January 1 to take up duties as co-abbot.

1998 – Appointed as an *upajjhaya* and ordained the first “home-grown” bhikkhu at Abhayagiri, Venerable Karunadhammo.

a month or two before I was given permission to visit Ajahn Chah. I traveled up to Wat Pah Pong to pay my respects to Ajahn Chah and was very smitten. One of the first things he said was that if I wanted to train with him, I would have to stay for five years. That was difficult. I wasn't ready to make such a commitment. I stayed for about a month and then took leave to go to another monastery, Wat Sai Ngam, where I had an opportunity to do a lot of formal practice. I continued to have many good experiences in meditation. What kept coming up was: “If I am really going to do this, then I have to go back and give myself to Ajahn Chah. Five years is five years. Don't think about it.”

I wrote, and Ajahn Sumedho responded and said I was welcome to come for the Rains Retreat. However, my teacher invited me to spend the Rains Retreat with him instead, and then he took me to Ajahn Chah himself after the Rains. That delay was quite good. I had been all fired up to go back to Ajahn Chah, and then there was an obstacle. I used it to let go of preferences. I also settled in to a lot of formal practice and learned the Thai language, which came in handy up in understanding the Laotian dialect they speak up in Ubon.

FM: What happened then?

AP: When you have been ordained somewhere else, you are taken on as a guest monk. Then you observe the practices and decide if you want to make a commitment to stay. The senior monks keep an eye on you, too. After two to three months of waiting, I was accepted. If any of your monastic requisites were not properly acquired, say if you bought something with money, then it had to be relinquished. This happens because most monks use money. Even if you had a robe offered but you had been washing or dyeing it with detergent or dye that you bought yourself, then Ajahn Chah would require you to change it.

There is an excitement to get these new requisites. The robes have been sewn at the monastery. The dye is monastery dye. The robes are real forest monk robes. The bowls are usually bigger because in the forest you carry requisites in them when you are traveling. If it's raining, you can at least keep some of your robes dry. Also, because forest monks eat from their bowls, the bowl tends to be bigger. These bowls are special, and one looks forward to receiving them.

FM: It sounds deeply traditional.

AP: Yes, that was the feeling of going to Wat Pah Pong: It feels as if the tradition has been passed on since the Buddha's time. There is an antiquity, integrity and simplicity that was so palpable. What struck me was the peace. Things were well taken care of. The diligence of the monks and novices and the commitment of the laypeople were obvious. In such a poor area as Northeast Thailand, the laypeople were out every morning sharing their offerings with the Sangha. On the observance days there were lots and lots of laypeople listening to Dhamma, meditating and chanting. You felt the sense of a living tradition.

FM: I've heard that the laypeople stay up all night meditating.

AP: Yes, they stay up the whole night, once a week on observance nights. For myself, just arriving, it was difficult to sit still for even an hour. You were not sitting still on a zabuton and zafu with a few foam props. You had a one-layer sitting cloth on a concrete floor. Some of the people would sit for two to three hours and then do some walking meditation, and then sit for a few more hours till dawn. Close to dawn you would do chanting. It was awe-inspiring. It also felt so healthy, the interaction between the monastic community and the lay community. There would be people

(Continued on page 12)

I was in search of spiritual guidance. I wasn't looking for a teacher or a community. I was looking for a system of practice or training, or way of being, that was true or real. After my twenty-first birthday party I set off on a one-way ticket to Asia. But rather than mingling with Asian culture and spirituality, I found myself hanging out with the same middle-class white crowd of dope-heads that I had been living with in England, only now we were in the tropics. I found myself in a quandary. I knew I needed to learn how to meditate.

In the Buddha's life, the fourth heavenly messenger was a wandering yogi. My version of this came in Java at a point when I was feeling extremely neurotic, stoned and grubby. Here I was on a perfect tropical beach, very quiet and beautiful, with absolutely nothing to complain about, and yet I was in a confused and messed-up state. As I walked along the beach at sunset, I saw a blond, bronzed "surfer dude" sitting in full lotus on a ledge in front of a cave. Approaching him, I thought, "It's God!" I was half joking, yet a clear intuition arose: This is what you have to do.

Four months into my travels I went to Northeast Thailand to escape the tourist scene. I found out you could stay in a monastery for free, and I heard of a monastery for Western monks. My first mental image was of a bunch of prune-faced ascetics with thick glasses and dour looks. To my surprise, I found that the abbot, Ajahn Pabhakaro (Joseph Kappel), was a regular and pleasant guy. The other monks were the same. A few days later Ajahn Pabhakaro took me to Wat Pah Pong to meet Ajahn Chah. He explained that I had been a student in London about a mile away from the Hampstead Vihara, where Ajahn Chah had visited only six months before.

I had read spiritual books telling stories about the master and disciple meeting—the meeting of the eyes and the blinding flash of the heart. I was expecting Ajahn Chah to welcome me into the fold as a spiritually sensitive and mature being. Instead I got this absolutely expressionless face. "There are lots of pretty girls in Hampstead," he remarked. I had wanted a loaded first exchange, but I didn't want it to be loaded with that. I felt I was way beyond sexual obsession and quite the spiritual person. Even though this teaching wasn't what I wanted, it was very powerful. I found myself wondering why he was noticing pretty women, and then I realized that a spiritual being could notice an attractive person and acknowledge it. Ajahn Chah seemed to be asking where I was on the sexual attraction question. Unless this dimension is understood and transcended, he knew I was not going to make it as a monk.

FM: Have twenty-five years as a monk just flown by like they have for the rest of us, or is there a slowing of time living in the monastery?

AA: The patterns of our days changes throughout the year. When there is a lot going on, days fly by in a finger snap. Yesterday, my alarm went at 3:45 A.M., and the next thing I knew it was 9 P.M. Things were scheduled all day long. But we take a couple of weeks of solitary retreat a few times a year. I usually fast and just stay up at my *kuti*. I really enjoy these times. Time stops. There is the cycle of day and night, but the time is completely your own—no schedule to meet, no personality to be. I don't have to be Ajahn Amaro, which is a great relief. There is an oceanic presence of timelessness. The heart can be fully aware that this moment is infinite.

Ajahn Chah was completely disrespectful of time. He wasn't insensitive or casual, just unaffected by the clock. If there was a good Dhamma conversation going on at midnight, he would continue, and the next thing you would know it was 3 A.M. He demonstrated a quality of timeless presence. His way of walking was one step at a time; there was never a "becoming" quality. Just watching him you were reminded of the timeless dimension of our nature. (Continued on page 13)

1984 – Led his first weekend retreat at Harnham Monastery. Published *The Long Road North*, diaries of his tudong north through England.

1985 – Went to live at the newly founded Amaravati Monastery in July.

1986 – Led his first ten-day retreat at Amaravati.

1990 – Made his first visit to California.

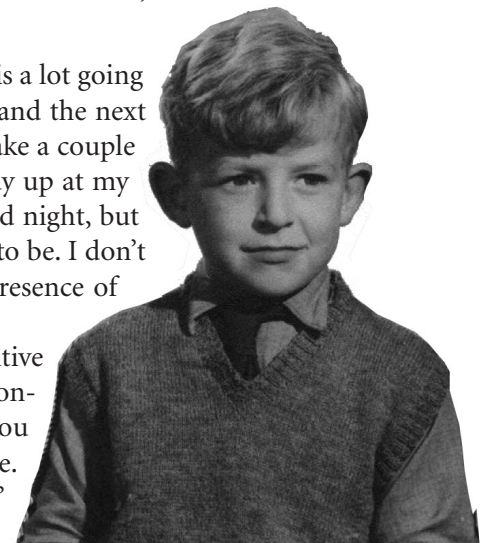
1995 – Left Amaravati in July to spend the vassa with three other bhikkhus at Bell Springs Hermitage, California—the first vassa spent in the U.S. Published *Silent Rain*, a compilation of talks and travels.

June 1996 – Founded Abhayagiri Monastery.

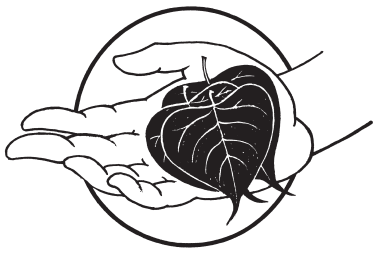
1998 – Taught the first-ever Theravada/Vajrayana retreat, held at Spirit Rock Meditation Center, with Tsoknyi Rinpoche.

1999 – Edited and published *The Pilgrim Kamanita*, a Buddhist novel by Karl Gjellerup.

2003 – Published *Small Boat, Great Mountain*, a compilation of talks given during the 1998 Theravada/Vajrayana retreat.



Photos courtesy of Ajahn Amaro

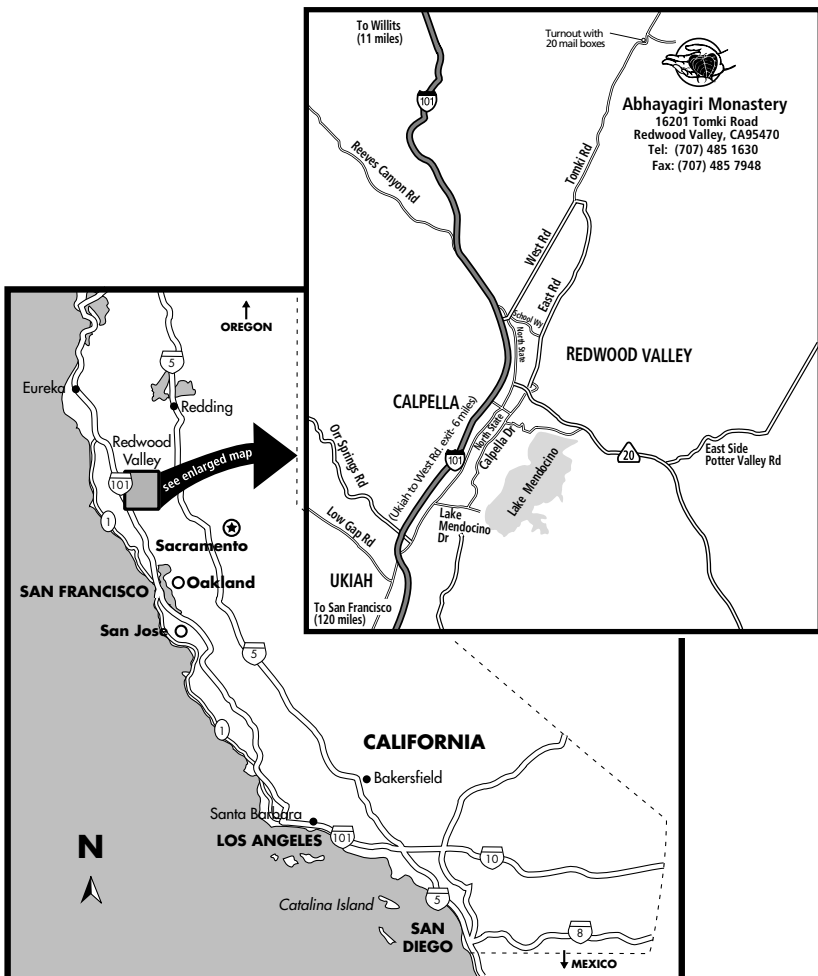


Abhayagiri Sangha Calendar

Lunar Observance Days

	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
1ST QUARTER	3	3	1	1			
FULL MOON	10	10	8	8	6	5	5
LAST QUARTER	18	18	16	16	14	13	13
NEW MOON	25	24	23	22	21	19	20
1ST QUARTER				30	29	27	28

Directions to Abhayagiri



1. Take the WEST ROAD exit from 101
2. Go straight over NORTH STATE ST. and then SCHOOL WAY
3. Follow WEST ROAD till it reaches a T-junction. (3 miles from the exit).
4. Turn left at the "T" onto TOMKI RD. Continue for 4 miles to the big turn-out with 20 mailboxes on your right. The monastery entrance is right there.

FEARLESS MOUNTAIN

Editor: Dennis Crean
 Assistant Editor: Kathryn Guta
 Calendar: Bill Lloyd; Photos: Various Venerables



Fearless Mountain is the thrice-yearly newsletter of Abhayagiri Monastery, a Buddhist community in the tradition of Ajahn Chah, Ajahn Sumedho and Amaravati Buddhist Monastery. It is composed of materials submitted to or written at Abhayagiri Monastery and distributed free of charge to friends of the Abhayagiri community. Comment within is personal reflection only and does not represent the opinion of the Sangha as a whole. Please keep us informed of your current address.

Appropriate articles and artwork, information for fellow Buddhists, or comments from readers are welcomed. Submissions for the next issue (January 2004) should be received by November 1. For permission to reprint any materials, please contact us.

© 2003 Abhayagiri Monastery. All rights reserved.

16201 Tomki Road
 Redwood Valley, CA 95470
 Tel: (707) 485-1630; Fax: (707) 485-7948
 www.abhayagiri.org; sangha@abhayagiri.org

2003 • 2546/47

Sept

- 13-14 Ajahn Amaro in Massachusetts for "Investigating the Mind," a seminar with His Holiness the Dalai Lama.
- 19-23 Retreat with Ajahn Sundara at Cloud Mountain, Castle Rock, WA. *Contact: (888) 465-9118, www.cloudmountain.org.*
- 20-21 Buddhist Bicycle Pilgrimage. *Contact: www.dharmawheels.org or Corry Wagner at buddhistbike@yahoo.com.*
- 28 Daylong Retreat with Ajahn Amaro at Three Jewels Dhamma Hall, Fort Bragg, CA. *Contact: Mettika, (707) 964-4606, cindyho@mcn.org.*
- 29 Dhamma teachings with Ajahn Amaro in Caspar, CA (North Coast Buddhist Sangha). *Contact: Pam Huntley, (707) 937-1367.*

Oct

- 5 Upasika Day (Community Work Day) at Abhayagiri.
- 6-10 Monastic conference at Vajrapani Institute.
- 7 Monthly gathering with Ajahn Amaro in Berkeley, CA (*see below*).
- 8 Monthly gathering in Ukiah, CA (*see below*).
- 10 Full Moon Day (Pavarana) at Abhayagiri. End of Rains Retreat.
- 19 Kathina festival at Abhayagiri.
- 24-11/2 Ten-day Retreat with Ajahn Amaro and Taraniya at Spirit Rock Center, Woodacre, CA. *Contact: (415) 488-0164, ext. 366, www.spiritrock.org.*

Nov

- 4 Monthly gathering with Ajahn Amaro in Berkeley, CA (*see below*).
- 7-9 Dhamma teachings with Ajahn Amaro at Friends of the Dhamma, Portland, OR. *Contact: Sakula (Mary Reinard), (503) 230-9541, sakula@notjustus.com.*
- 9 Buddhist New Year 2547.
- 10-16 Retreat with Ajahn Amaro at Great Vow Monastery, Clatskanie, OR. *Contact: (503) 728-0654, www.greatvow.org.*
- 12 Monthly gathering in Ukiah, CA (*see below*).
- 19 "Compassion in Action" class with Ajahn Amaro (1 of 3), 7:30 pm, Yoga Mendocino, Ukiah, CA (*see below under "2nd Wed."*).
- 21 Ajahn Pasanno departs for Canada and then on to Thailand.
- 24 Dhamma teachings with Ajahn Amaro in Caspar, CA (North Coast Buddhist Sangha). *Contact: Pam Huntley, (707) 937-1367.*
- 26 "Compassion in Action" class (2 of 3) (*see above*).
- 29 Ordination ceremony conducted by Ajahn Pasanno at Birken Forest Monastery in British Columbia.

Dec

- 2 Monthly gathering with Ajahn Amaro in Berkeley, CA (*see below*).
- 3 "Compassion in Action" class (third of 3) (*see above*).
- 7 Upasika Day at Abhayagiri.
- 10 Monthly gathering in Ukiah, CA (*see below*).
- 21 Daylong Retreat ("Nada Yoga: Entering the Silence") with Ajahn Amaro at Spirit Rock Center, Woodacre, CA. *Contact: (415) 488-0164 ext. 318, www.spiritrock.org*
- 21 Ajahn Pasanno returns from Thailand.

Jan

- 3 Monastic retreat period begins, continuing through March 31.

Every Saturday evening at Abhayagiri

Chanting, meditation & Dhamma talk, 7:30 pm.

Every Lunar Quarter at Abhayagiri

Chanting, meditation, Precepts, Dhamma talk & late night vigil, 7:30 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 (at Bancroft).

Every Tuesday in Berkeley, CA (except first Tuesday)

7:30-9:30 pm at the Berkeley Zen Center, 1929 Russell Street. Meditation and Dhamma program with lay practitioners. Arthur Levy, (510) 530-1757, adl@lrolaw.com

Second Wednesday of the month in Ukiah, CA

7:30-9 pm, Meditation, Precepts & Dhamma talk by monastic at Yoga Mendocino, 206 Mason St., (707) 462-2580, www.yogamendocino.org

Every Tuesday in Portland, OR

7:00-9:00 am at the Friends of the Dhamma Resource Center, 1701 NW Thurman, Ste. 202. Meditation and Dhamma discussion with lay practitioners. Mary Reinard, (503) 449-7916, mary.reinard@bigfoot.com

Into the Buddha's Flame

(continued from page 1)

in that zone of blessing became both more charged yet more serene. Large numbers of lay friends and supporters were also arriving by now, gathered before the monks arrayed across the front of the pavilion and spread around the other sides of the square enclosed by the flagpoles.

At some unsignaled moment the entire crew of foundry workers appeared on the scene and entered the central area. And these were not smoke-smearing and tarry rough-necks—at least not today—for all of these young men were clad in classical Thai costume: pure white *kurtas* and wrapped pantaloons, their heads crowned with neat white bandanas. The team of thirty or so paid their respects to Tan Chao Khun Pañnananda, the *pratahn*, or senior elder, presiding over the ceremony, and swung into action to prepare the ingots and the fires and to ensure that all was well with the mould—sitting like a shining white inverted pyramid at the center of all our attention.

The blessing cord was brought across to Tan Chao Khun Pañnananda, and to Ajahn Sumedho and Ajahn Liam beside him, and the ceremony seemed ready to begin, but there was one more element of the alchemy that had yet to be introduced.

All those who were intending to be at the ceremony had assembled by now—probably twenty-five monastics and 200 laypeople. As we sat there in the slowly amplifying heat of the day I noticed that Mr. Tan Nahm, the only person standing, was slowly moving around through the crowd. He was a



Cambodian man who in pre-Khmer Rouge days organized all the religious ceremonies in the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh. In that terrible holocaust he had lost everything but his immediate family and his faith in the Triple Gem, however he had made a new

life in England and was currently traveling with us as our steward.

As he gently picked his path among the people seated on mats all around the square, I saw folks—women and men—seeming to unhook necklaces, pull off rings, fish into their bags, draw amulets over their heads, and, usually reciting a short prayer, tenderly place the sacred objects and jewelry into a zippered bag that Tan Nahm was carrying.

There was a palpable excitement as he made his way round, and more and more eagerly the devoted divested themselves of their valuables—and these were not all rich people by any means—and with great grins cast their treasures into the collection of offerings. The bag began to swell as thousands of dollars worth of gold and jewels, silver and sacred amulets given by great masters, burgeoned like a heart resplendent with effusive joy.

“I have been collecting offerings for this Buddha image for years,” said Ajahn Sumedho. “People have given me all sorts of rare amulets, articles made of precious metals, leaves of brass and copper stamped with mantras and *yantras*, and golden heirlooms that they wished to offer up. I even have four wedding rings!”

“Wedding rings!?” I was puzzled.

“Quite independently, over the years, four different people have given me their rings; their marriages were finished but they weren’t quite certain what to do with the ring, so they each thought to bring it to the monastery. When a marriage is over, what better to do with the symbol of its joys and sorrows than to transform it into a Buddha? Now that we are casting this Buddha image I thought it would be the ideal time to melt them down and let their fabric be transformed from a symbol of worldly attachment, and then division, into a symbol of Awakening: the Buddha image at the heart of Amaravati, the Deathless Realm.”

He explained further that, for a large Buddha image, it is customary to pour the very top section of the rupa—the “flame of enlightenment” (*ketu*) and the “mound of wisdom” (*unhisa*)—separately from the rest. All of the precious items that were now being collected—the amulets, rings, bracelets and brooches, together with all that Ajahn Sumedho and the other elder monastics had been given beforehand—would be put into a single small crucible and melted down. Once all the separate elements had liquefied and commingled it would be poured into the form of the Buddha’s crown of wisdom and its curling pointed flame.

It was a perfect alchemy: the “base metal” of everyone’s vanity, materialism, superstition, faith in protection by external powers, their loves and hates and broken hearts—all transmogrified into the pure “gold” of the joy of renunciation, a joy that the Buddha said “should be pursued, developed and cultivated.” (M 66.21, 139.9)

As Tan Nahm continued to tread his careful path through the assembly, he was now reaching the last few laypeople gath-

ered on the mats before us. The cloth bag he gingerly held in both hands was by this time literally dripping with the other offerings. It was filled to bursting, and it was obviously quite a task for him to keep all the precious items from dropping out, watch out not to tread on anyone's toes, and remain alert to the fresh offerings being made from all around him. It was a picture of heartfelt and abundant splendor, his brimming armfuls of treasure with yet more being added as one person plucked off the earrings she just remembered she was wearing and another unbuckled the thick gold bracelet he had worn for years.

Faces were wreathed in smiles, and the infectious delight of unbridled generosity, against all reason and for the benefit of all good, now filled the arena of the blessing ceremony like a gentle golden light. All was silent as the burgeoning purse of precious gifts was emptied into the crucible; within moments the fearsome heat of the furnace had dissolved it all. The chalice glowed orange at its brim, and the air above swerved and bent the midday light. The ceremony was ready to begin.

It was some weeks later that the Buddharupa was actually finished and ready to be shipped to Amaravati in England. When we made a visit to the foundry, Khun Pyrote made a point of giving the crown-piece—the mound of wisdom and the flame—directly into the hands of Ajahn Sumedho. It was very heavy.

“When you make one like this, when so many people have given their blessings and made rich offerings to be put into the crown, you have to keep your eyes open. In the past there have



been crooks who made a very good copy (weighted with lead to make it heavy like it was gold) and then switched it with the real one. So I have had this one locked in my room since the day we made it! There were about two and a half kilos of gold that went into this, so keep it with you at all times.” He grinned broadly, happy and honored to have been able to participate in the joyful and wholesome task of making the rupa and glad to have had this chance to be in the aura of the karmic potency of the noble life of Ven. Ajahn Chah and his Dhamma family.

As Ajahn Sumedho headed for the airport on his way back to England, the golden Buddha-flame packed securely in its own little case. I wondered out loud, “I hope that they don't ask you to pay duty on this, Luang Por; it's worth about \$30,000.”

“It's a priceless religious artifact,” he replied, smiling with patent delight. “Therefore there is nothing to pay.” ♡



Would you like to participate in this ceremony?

A Buddha-rupa for Abhayagiri Monastery is due to be cast in Thailand on December 6, 2003. Ajahn Pasanno and many elders of the Wat Pah Pong community are planning to be present. If you have anything you would like to offer to be incorporated into the new rupa, please get in touch with Abhayagiri to make suitable arrangements.

coming to make offerings, ask questions or pay respects to Ajahn Chah. Laypeople would also help out at the monastery. You had a real sense of the monastery being a focus for community.

FM: When did you become abbot of Wat Pah Nanachat?

AP: It was in my ninth year as a monk. I hadn't really planned on it. I had been at a branch monastery that had about a thousand acres of beautiful forest, surrounded on three sides by a reservoir, and I hoped to stay on for a long time. But one of the monks came with a message from Ajahn Chah asking me to return to Wat Pah Nanachat to start to learn the ropes of being an abbot. Because Ajahn Chah asked me to do it, I did it.

FM: He saw some qualities in you that you had perhaps not seen in yourself?

AP: I found I had to rely on what he saw in me rather than what I saw in myself. It was pretty miserable to have to be in that position, to be perfectly honest. There was obviously a sense of excitement and willingness to take it on because I had been asked to, but it certainly wasn't easy. It was difficult being in a position of leadership and having more responsibilities, mostly just dealing with people much more. Among the great sufferings in the universe, dealing with people is at the top of the list! From my perspective, I didn't have a choice. I had to make it work somehow. I had to learn from it.

FM: Has your practice changed much over the years?

AP: One of the meditation practices I have done from day one, and still do, is mindfulness of breathing. I have experimented with a variety of methods, but mindfulness of breathing is my home base. Of course, it has been refined and become a lot clearer in how to use it skillfully. The Buddha's teachings have a certain simplicity, and the profundity begins to shine out of that.

Other ways it's really changed is that there is a whole lot more ease than when I started. At the start there were a lot of good intentions and effort, but it was not so easeful. I enjoy the practice more now than when I began. It has so much more clarity and contentment.

FM: How is it to be co-abbot here?

AP: It's helpful to share responsibilities and to have somebody to consult with. Furthermore, there is not just one person at the top of the line who is the single role model. Ajahn Amaro and I have different temperaments and provide different models of how to be as a person. It's also helpful to see that there are different ways to practice. It gives people the opportunity to breathe a bit easier and figure out for themselves what is going to work for them rather than just emulating the ajahn.

I've tried to keep my focus at Abhayagiri on spending most of my time at the monastery. I want to be available for the training of the monastics, for people who want to take on

monastic training, and for people who want to come to the monastery to practice here.

FM: Is the monastic training here different than in Thailand?

AP: There are definitely differences. In Thailand, it is a more autocratic model. That's just how it works. In America there is an expectation of being involved and consulted in decision-making. Also, the tendency of American society is toward so much business.

We have to be very conscious not to let the monastery get swamped with that same kind of hyper-organization, where everything has to be scheduled and there is very little free time. It's easy for that attitude to drift over into the monastery.

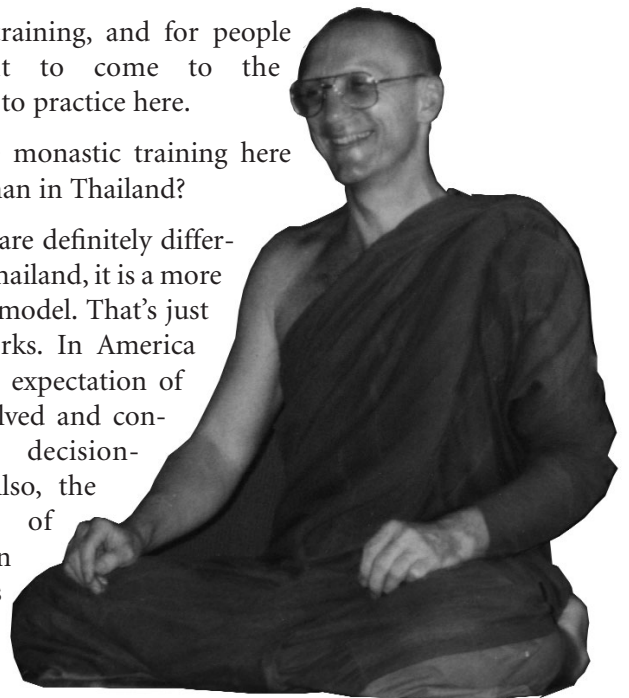
FM: I have heard that in Asia people like themselves more and don't seem to have as much self-hatred as Americans do. Would you say this is true?

AP: I don't think it's that people like themselves more. They are just not so confused about themselves, and there is a higher degree of acceptance of themselves. There is not the same kind of complicated analyzing, proliferating and assessing that goes on in Western minds, particularly Americans'!

FM: How is the emphasis of practice different in the West?

AP: I tend to steer people in the direction of what is conducive to harmony. I ask them to be really clear on their virtue, precepts and generosity. People are so wrapped up in themselves, so up in their heads that they don't recognize the value of fundamental qualities like generosity and kindness. Generosity is not just material but includes generosity of time and service and giving of themselves. It gives a lot more confidence.

There is a mystique that says: if I figure myself out, then I will be all right. But there is no end to that. People are so distant from themselves. This is why I also emphasize mindfulness of the body. It's not immediately apparent how important it is to be centered and focused in the body. However, it cuts through the mind's obsession with itself, its comparing and evaluating. The constant asking of what is the most advantageous thing for me. It goes on and on, this spinning out. Just coming back and being attentive to the body is the antidote. It might be the breath or the sensations in the body, the posture or the elements. The important thing is to be anchored in the body. ♥



Ajahn Amaro (Continued from page 7)

When I first started monastic practice, it was agony to find myself with open time to meditate, because the mind was so heavily conditioned to get on to the next thing. Over years of practice the addiction to becoming is vastly reduced. The spaciousness is delightful rather than a torment.

FM: Has your practice changed over twenty-five years, or has a core practice remained helpful throughout the years?

AA: Well, things do modulate over the years. In terms of actual techniques, two things I learned from Ajahn Sumedho have been immensely helpful. The first is the use of inquiry and reflection—*dhammavicaya*—where one uses questions and internal statements to clarify mental states, to let things go, to explore and transcend the conditioned states and experiences.

For concentration, I find the meditation on the *nada* sound to be skillful. I have used that far more than the breath ever since 1981. It's a helpful bridge between concentration and insight. You can use it in combination with the breath, in combination with reflection and investigation, or as a straight concentration object. It also helps to energize the system.

One might not think of the *vinaya* (monastic rule) as a meditation practice, yet the kind of attention it brings to your actions and intentions pulls things into focus: Was that action wholesome or unwholesome? What was the effect of that? Can I do without this? Giving attention to mind-states and motivations of liking or disliking, honesty, and having time for other people has a tremendous power. Ajahn Chah once said, "If all anyone did was keep the *vinaya* for their life as a monastic, then they would definitely realize stream-entry, even if they did no formal meditation practice." You develop a lot of powerful *paramita* in letting go of desires and aversions and fears. *Vinaya*

is not just training in ethics but much more of a meditative tool. Arousing the intention to live in a noble way has a very potent effect.

FM: Are there any further thoughts on your twenty-five years in monastic life?

AA: When I first met Ajahn Chah, I was shaken by our interaction but also struck by how incredibly at home I felt in the monastery, even as

a hippie anarchist with a conscious dislike of organized religion.

I remember an incident that really brought home to me what a different outfit Ajahn Chah's monastery was. One morning as an anagarika I woke up late because my clock had died. I have never been much of a morning person. I opened my eyes amazed by how brightly the moon was shining through the planks in my wall. Then I realized it wasn't moonlight. I raced to the main hall and acted nonchalant, hoping no one had noticed I hadn't been there for the morning sitting. Ajahn Chah had a foot wide grin on his face when he spoke to me. Ajahn Pabakaro translated: "Sleep is delicious."

Here I was, a miscreant novice, and the head master had zero recrimination. There was nothing even to forgive. It's just *this*. It was the counterpart to "lots of pretty girls in Hampstead." In both cases, I was at a loss for words, which is unusual for me. [Laughter] Something snapped inside: This is a different outfit. This is a system of authority, a type of institution I'd never experienced before. It gave me faith in what was beyond the institution; the spirit of it was extremely powerful.

One reason I found myself quite comfortable in the institution of monastic life was that I hadn't gone seeking for it. I had no *idea* that Buddhism was a wonderful thing. I was essentially in robes before I had an idea about it. It was the experience of being around people who followed these teachings that really impressed me. The fact it was called Theravada Buddhism—with all the rules and the uniform—was secondary to the actual presence of the Dhamma apparent in the people. Those who think that Buddhism or the teacher—or some sort of "ism"—is the central thing either dry up or fall away. They know all the words and can play the tunes, but they never quite learn the song—to quote the Incredible String Band.

I find it a real blessing that the experience came first and the skin of the institution followed. As Ajahn Chah used to say, "So many people peel the banana and eat the skin, throwing away the sweet and nourishing fruit." They consume the skin of the religion and then can't figure out why it tastes bitter and gives them indigestion. Ajahn Chah was a totally faithful and extraordinarily strict monk, but he was completely unfettered by the conventions of the religious form that he followed. Seeing how this works is a flat-out miracle to me. It's not that "It's empty, therefore defy it," or "It's real, therefore be subjected to it." The form is completely empty and completely meaningful, not 50-50. It's the middle way, the mysterious way of taking the convention seriously and understanding its transparency at the same time. ♡

Ajahn Amaro and Ajahn Pasanno were both interviewed by assistant editor Kathryn Guta.



Photo by Ping Amranand

What Is the Kathina Ceremony?

And How Can You Get Involved?

by Jeannie Bendik

Since the earliest days of Buddhist monastic life a three-month Rains Retreat has been observed. During this time that begins with the full moon of July, the renunciants would commit to staying in one place to live and practice together. As the name suggests, the rainy season was a logical time to stop the wandering aspect of the homeless life since travel during this time was so difficult. When this practice period (also called the vassa or *pansa*) was over, the lay community supporting the monastery gathered to celebrate the completion of the retreat with a festival called the Kathina.

Though the monsoon season affects life less in modern times, the tradition of the Rains Retreat continues. And while summer and early autumn are the driest times in California's Mediterranean climate, the Kathina celebration at Abhayagiri also marks the end of the Rains (or "no rains"!) Retreat.

The Kathina day begins with a traditional meal offering and is followed by chanting and taking the precepts. A Dhamma talk is offered and the celebration includes gifts of supplies that are needed by the community for the coming year. A central gift is the offering of cloth for monastic robes. Traditionally the monastic robes were sewn together from bits of cloth collected from charnel grounds. At some point, a generous supporter decided to offer fresh, clean cloth for a robe, and that continues in the formal part of the Kathina ceremony. Even today, an individual (or sometimes a group) will ask to offer the Kathina cloth. At Abhayagiri in past years the cloth has been offered by the Ft. Bragg lay sangha, in other years by long-distance supporters from Thailand, and once by the Sanghapala Board of Directors. This year the cloth will be given by lay supporter Regan Urbanik.

If you haven't attended a Kathina celebration before, you're in for a treat. I've come to think of it as the equivalent of all our lay holidays rolled into one. There is the abundance of Thanksgiving with gratitude for the completion of a long retreat and for having monastics in this country. The chance to gather together with gifts resembles the winter holidays of Hanukkah and Christmas, combined with a kind of birthday anniversary marking another year of monastic life. It's a particularly joyous time to show appreciation for those who have gone forth into the homeless life and who provide support and inspiration to lay practitioners. It's especially timely as fall and

winter draw nearer, when visitors become less frequent and a full storeroom of supplies is so valuable.

If you are new to the Kathina celebration, you might be wondering how to join in. There are many ways to take part and greatly varying degrees of offering support. For those living near enough to attend in person, there are many tasks to be done ahead of time. The day before you might find yourself making signs, helping put up awnings, arranging flowers or hanging prayer flags. On the day of the Kathina there are even more ways to pitch in, from directing cars for parking to receiving food, tidying bathrooms to the inevitable clean up. It's a joy to work together with both lay and monastic community members.

If you can't attend because of distance or calendar conflicts, you can still take part in the Kathina offering. If you enjoy shopping for a specific item that you know is needed, a Kathina "wishlist" is available. Many small and medium-sized gifts can be sent by mail. You can notify a contact person when you've chosen what you'd like to give, and they will update the list accordingly, which helps eliminate duplication. Financial offerings are also gratefully received. Abhayagiri has many ongoing expenses. You can designate your gift for general operating costs such as medical insurance or utility bills or earmark your contribution for building projects or publications. Gifts of all sizes and kinds provide needed support and bring much happiness to both givers and recipients.

Whether you are able to come and enjoy the actual day of Kathina or can only participate "in spirit," it is a rich experience to lend a hand, in whatever way, to the support of Abhayagiri. The monastic Sangha, as alms mendicants, exists completely through the generosity of lay supporters. In turn, the teachings offered by monastics (both by formal talks and by living example) are given freely. Their generous example helps our *dana* (generosity) flow out in response. It's such a lovely circle of giving and receiving between the lay and monastic communities.

I recall a story of several medieval craftsmen working on an enormous church. When asked what each was doing, the first answered that he was building a wall in the nave. Another replied that he was carving a panel for a side door. The wisest worker responded, "I am building a cathedral." No matter how we give or whether it's in person or from a distance, we too are "building a monastery." Please join us in whatever way you can as we celebrate the end of the Rains Retreat, this year on October 19, 2003. ♡

Kathina Celebration ~ Sunday, October 19, 10:30 a.m.

To volunteer or for information on making a donation, contact Dee Cope, (707) 824-1773; Regan Urbanik, (707) 579-1407; or Mettika, (707) 964-4606, cindyho@mcn.org. You can also visit the Abhayagiri website.

What I Enjoy about Kathina

Lay Supporters Offer Their Reflections

I enjoy Kathina because it celebrates some of the most powerful teachings of the Buddha—the symbiotic relationship between monastics and laypeople, the generosity and gratitude embodied in an offering of cloth to a well-loved Elder. Kathina is a big party, with tons of food and some cool chanting, that brings together folks from all over the world who feel some connection with Abhayagiri. It's an opportune moment to participate in and observe a rather pleasant if not altogether familiar mix of the many flavors of generosity. —*Malu Roldan*

Kathina for me is like Christmas, Thanksgiving and birthday celebrations all rolled into one. It is a time of coming together to celebrate and give thanks for the Buddha's teachings. Instead of roast turkey and Santa Claus, we have a potluck and the "money tree," replete with a little monkey, which is a tradition from Thailand. The tree is decorated with colorful paper flowers, and the little monkey sits in the tree, which turns quite green as well wishes pin "greenbacks" of all denominations onto it. This is our chance to show the monastics how much the teachings mean to each and every one of us. The party atmosphere is infectious. Who says Buddhism is all about suffering? Certainly not on Kathina Day! —*Dee Cope*

Since 1997, I have volunteered along with Dee Cope to be the contact person for the Kathina "wishlist." It has been a wonderful opportunity to connect with folks who are also connected to the monastic community in one way or another and to serve individuals who'd like to make offerings. It is fun to help people narrow down their choices from among the items monastery needs and based on their own personal preferences. It also allows me a concrete way to see dana in action. I look forward to serving again this year and in years to come. —*Mettika (Cindy Hoffman)*

Every year I prepare a Kathina brochure for supporters in Thailand and other countries. I also each prepare a Dhamma book (in Thai) of Ajahn Pasanno's talks that will be offered to guests at Kathina as a souvenir. I will travel again from Thailand to this year's Kathina to bring offerings from a group here. I am grateful and happy to serve Buddhism and all the teachers and Elders. —*Khun Ploern*

From the Monastery

(continued from page 3)

days in Boulder, Colorado, which included walks in the Rocky Mountains and picnics with scenic vistas. Next was the drive from Boulder to Albuquerque, which included a visit to Sand Dune National Park in southern Colorado and to the Taos Pueblo in northern New Mexico. The retreat was held at a very nice nuns' convent and included only twenty-one participants. The pleasant atmosphere and small turnout made for a warm and joyful retreat. A standard monastic schedule was held. People expressed their appreciation at having had the chance to taste a monastic lifestyle and learn about the usefulness of the traditional forms.

In addition to these teaching events, the ajahns have continued to offer teachings in and around the Mendocino County area. Classes have been held in Ukiah every month. Ajahn Amaro headed over to Fort Bragg on the coast and also taught his first metta daylong at Spirit Rock. Many expressed how much they valued the opportunity to practice metta with instructions and encouragement for a day. Ajahn Pasanno made a visit to the neighboring town of Willits on the invitation the local Buddhist group there. The Berkeley group seems to be doing well also, with large numbers attending the monthly talks on the first Tuesday. We are grateful to Rev. Heng Sure for his continued hospitality and graciousness in hosting the visiting community members, and the event itself, at the Berkeley Buddhist Monastery.

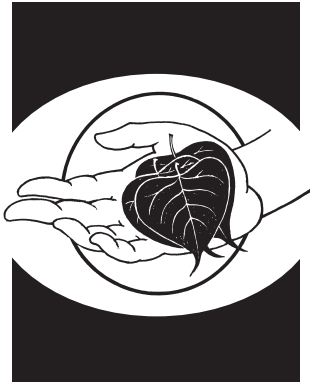
Finally, Abhayagiri hosted its first open day on Saturday July 26. The intention was to provide an opportunity for locals (who may have felt shy about coming to visit without any specific reason) to find out more about the monastery. Beginning with the meal offering and blessing, a group of about seventy people was given an introduction to the monastics, the way of life, and the basic tenets of Buddhism. During the afternoon, tours of the forest and some main sites on the monastery land were also given, as well as an opportunity to watch videos of "Forest Path at Abhayagiri" (produced a few years ago by Patriya Tansuhaj and friends) and "The Mindful Way" (a documentary of life at Wat Pah Pong, Ajahn Chah's monastery in Thailand, made in the late 1970s by the BBC). Ajahn Pasanno also led meditation and question-and-answer sessions in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Many people had some interesting questions to ask, and it was great to be able to provide a few perspectives and reflections arising from our lives and experience.

—*Ven. Dhammaso, for the Sangha*

SANGHAPALA FOUNDATION

ABHAYAGIRI MONASTERY

16201 TOMKI ROAD
REDWOOD VALLEY CA 95470



FALL 2003

FEARLESS MOUNTAIN

NEWSLETTER

NON PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
HOPLAND, CA 95449
PERMIT #15

Return Service Requested

October 19, 10:30 a.m.
Kathina Celebration
(See page 14)



Special thanks

to the nearly 30 people who helped out during the July 4th work weekend—whether it was constructing the new ordination platform or hauling building materials to the new kuti site. We're all building a monastery together!



Community Work Weekend

July 3 & 4, 2003