

# LOOKING AHEAD

News from Amaravati  
Winter 2012 – Issue no. 8

## STEPPING BACK FROM ROUTINE

**T**HIS EIGHTH ISSUE OF *LOOKING AHEAD* MARKS THE END OF TWO YEARS OF THE 'NEW' AMARAVATI NEWSLETTER. Time has passed – where did it go? What comes to mind is one of the Buddha's reflections for skilful living as a *samana* or religious seeker: 'The days and nights are relentlessly passing, how well am I spending my time?' As our monastic communities in the western and northern hemispheres prepare to enter our annual three-month Winter Retreat, it seems an appropriate time to highlight and bring into focus this particular teaching that the Buddha encouraged us to reflect on daily. Somehow, when the passing of time becomes more apparent, this teaching can take on more of a sense of spiritual urgency. The days and nights *are* passing, and quickly!

The Winter Retreat offers our monastic community the opportunity to step back from the regular routine of life at Amaravati. Every year a dedicated team of lay supporters generously comes and stays with us, looking after the day-to-day running of this large monastery. Some of these supporters have been doing this for years, whereas each year some people are coming for the first time in this capacity. With these twenty-four people here with us, a new and relatively stable community is formed, everyone with the intention to practise in accordance with the Buddha's teachings.

For the monastic Sangha, being able to lay aside duties for three months offers the mind and body an opportunity to settle. The mind looks deeper, perhaps seeing the more subtle aspects of our world, our being. The retreat structure will include periods of group practice, following an agreed-upon prescribed routine. Periods of a more spacious and reduced schedule are also part of the mix, as well

as solitary retreat time when individuals are able to step back even further – you could call it a retreat within a retreat. And, as mentioned above, all of this is made possible because of the generosity and kindness of the lay community. *Sādhū anumodanā* (we rejoice in the goodness that has been done)!

Two major events within our Buddhist tradition take place during the winter. The first significant event is the death-anniversary of Ven. Ajahn Chah, who passed away on 16 January 1992, at the age of seventy-three. This year marks the twentieth year since his death. Each year on this day, thousands of monks, nuns and laypeople gather together at Wat Pah Pong, the first monastery established by Ajahn Chah, to commemorate his life and teachings. Ajahn Amaro, abbot of Amaravati, as well as a number of senior monks and nuns from our Sangha, will be in Thailand for this auspicious event. Here at Amaravati we will mark this event during our regular lunar observance night programme, which commences at 7.30 p.m.

The other major event from the Buddhist calendar that takes place during the Winter Retreat is Māgha Pūjā, which this year falls on 7 March, the full moon day of that month. This day, sometimes called 'Sangha Day,' commemorates the spontaneous assembly of twelve hundred and fifty *arahants* in the Buddha's presence. One thousand of the gathered monks had previously achieved Awakening upon hearing the Buddha's delivery of the Fire Sermon; the remaining two hundred and fifty were followers of the elder monks Ven. Moggallana and Ven. Sariputta. To mark this auspicious gathering, the Buddha delivered the *Ovāda-Pātimokkha Gāthā*, a summary of the main points of the Dhamma, which he gave to the assembly before sending them out

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Inside: Calendar, Announcements, 2012 Retreat Schedule & more

# Retreats

## Amaravati Retreat Centre

The following retreats and events are held at the Retreat Centre at Amaravati. Please note that the Retreat Centre Managers deal only with bookings for Monastic Retreats. For contact details of other organising groups, please see below.

### Monastic Retreats (led by a monk or a nun)

For bookings and information please visit [www.amaravati.org](http://www.amaravati.org) (Retreat Centre), email [retreats@amaravati.org](mailto:retreats@amaravati.org) or ring 01442 843239

#### Dates 2012

R1	20–22 April	Weekend	Ajahn Bodhipala	
R2	11–20 May	10 Days	Ajahn Ariyasilo	
R3	25–29 May	5 Days	Ajahn Metta	
R4	8–10 June	Weekend	Teacher TBA	<i>Thai language</i>
R5	15–19 June	5 Days	Ajahn Kalyano	
R6	29 June–1 July	Weekend	Jointly led by monastic and lay teachers	<i>Mindful Ageing Seminar</i>
R7	2 July–8 July	7 Days	☸†Ajahn Amaro and Joseph Kappel	<i>Death and Dying Retreat</i>
R8	20–29 July	10 Days	☸†Ajahn Viradhammo	
R9	3–7 Aug.	5 Days	Ajahn Sukhacitto	<i>Introduction to Insight Dialogue</i>
R10	31 Aug.–12 Sept.	13 Days	☸†Ajahn Amaro	
R11	21–25 Sept.	5 Days	Ajahn Gandhasilo	
R12	5–7 Oct.	Weekend	Ajahn Dhammanando	
R13	12–21 Oct.	10 Days	Ajahn Sundara	
R14	2–4 Nov.	Weekend	Ajahn Candasiri & Brother Nicholas	<i>Buddhist/Christian</i>
R15	16–20 Nov.	5 Days	Ajahn Nyanarato	
R16	30 Nov.–9 Dec.	10 Days	☸†Ajahn Sucitto	
R17	27 Dec.–1 Jan.	6 Days	Ajahn Vajiro	

☸ Fully booked – waiting list in operation. † Participation is restricted to those who have previously attended a 10-day retreat.

### Booking Guidelines

All weekend retreats are suitable for people new to meditation as well as those who have not attended a retreat before. It is advisable to attend a weekend retreat before booking a longer retreat. Due to high demand, there is a limit of three retreats per person per year.

Bookings are only accepted on receipt of a completed booking form which can be downloaded from the website, or requested from the Retreat Centre. Please send your booking form by post. Only in exceptional circumstance we will accept booking forms sent by email. No booking fee is required. Donations are welcomed at the end of retreats.

Registration is from 4.00-7.00 p.m. on the first day of the retreat. Weekend retreats end at 5.00 p.m., longer retreats end after lunch.

### Amaravati Lay Buddhist Association (ALBA)

Retreats and Days of Practice (led by an experienced layperson). For bookings and information please visit [www.buddhacommunity.org](http://www.buddhacommunity.org)

#### 2012

11 Feb.	Day of Practice	10–14 Aug.	5-day Retreat
3 March	Day of Practice	15 Sept.	Day of Practice
31 March	Day of Practice	28–30 Sept.	Weekend Retreat
27–29 April	Weekend Retreat	24 Nov.	Day of Practice
2 June	Day of Practice	15 Dec.	Day of Practice

### Buddhist Women's Network (BWN)

Retreats and Days of Practice (led by an experienced laywoman). For bookings and information please contact Shirley McDonald at [shirleymcdonald@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:shirleymcdonald@hotmail.co.uk)

#### 2012

4 March	Day of Practice
13–15 July	Weekend Retreat
16 Sept	Day of Practice
16 Dec	Day of Practice

### Family Events

For bookings and information please visit [www.family.amaravati.org](http://www.family.amaravati.org) or contact [familyevents@amaravati.org](mailto:familyevents@amaravati.org)

#### 2012

4–7 May	Rainbows Weekend
22–24 June	Family Camp Weekend
18–26 Aug.	Family Camp
26–28 Oct.	Creative Weekend (Age 18+)
9–11 Nov.	Young Persons' Weekend

## Temporary closure of Amaravati kitchen ~ 3 January until mid-February

The main kitchen at Amaravati is scheduled to be closed for major refurbishments from 3 January until at least the middle of February. All meal preparations, along with the offering of food to the monastic Sangha, will take place at **the Retreat Centre kitchen**. The Retreat Centre aims to provide the use of other rooms there, to accommodate this temporary shift, and to give visitors their usual opportunities to share the meal offering and to meet with the Ajahn afterwards.

# Calendar

## 2012

- ① 15 Feb. (Wed) ~ half moon day ~ Dhamma Talk & Precepts, 7.30 p.m.
- 21 Feb. (Tue) ~ new moon day ~ Dhamma Talk & Precepts, 7.30 p.m.
- ① 29 Feb. (Wed) ~ half moon day ~ Dhamma Talk & Precepts, 7.30 p.m.
- 7 March (Wed) ~ Māgha Pūjā full moon day ~ Dhamma Talk & Precepts, 7.30 p.m.
- ① 15 March (Thu) ~ half moon day ~ Dhamma Talk & Precepts, 7.30 p.m.
- 22 March (Thu) ~ new moon day ~ Dhamma Talk & Precepts, 7.30 p.m.
- ① 30 March (Fri) ~ half moon day ~ Dhamma Talk & Precepts, 7.30 p.m.
- 31 March (Sat) ~ Winter Retreat ends
- 6 April (Fri) ~ full moon day ~ Dhamma Talk & Precepts, 7.30 p.m.
- ① 14 April (Sat) ~ half moon day ~ Dhamma Talk & Precepts, 7.30 p.m.



## Lotus Volunteer Group

January 2012 saw the launch of the **Lotus Volunteer Group** (LVG). Founded and managed by a group of lay supporters, the LVG aims to facilitate volunteer support to the community of monks and nuns living at Amaravati Buddhist Monastery. Willing lay friends are invited to visit the LVG website – at [www.lotusvolunteergroup.org](http://www.lotusvolunteergroup.org) – where you will find information about opportunities to volunteer your time, energy and skills in support of the monastery. Current opportunities include helping with proof reading and driving (including trailer driving).

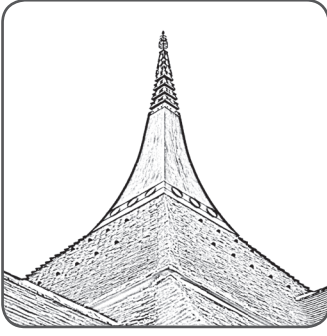
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to spread the teachings. Amaravati will mark this event during the lunar observance evening vigil, which commences at 7.30 p.m. The evening begins with chanting and will include silent meditation, a Dhamma talk and the opportunity for the lay community to determine the Eight Precepts for the remainder of the night. There will be a traditional circumambulation of the Amaravati stupa, weather permitting, including offering candles, incense and flowers in respect to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. Everyone is welcome to join us!

One practical note this winter is that the monastery kitchen will be closed for major refurbishments from 3 January until at least the middle of February. **All meal preparations, along with the offering of food to the monastic Sangha, will take place at the Retreat Centre kitchen.** The Retreat Centre aims to provide the use of other rooms there, to accommodate this temporary shift, and to give visitors their usual opportunities to share the meal offering and to meet with the Ajahn afterwards.

During the Winter Retreat, a question frequently asked by people wishing to visit Amaravati is ‘Can I still come and visit the monastery?’ The answer is a resounding **yes!** Day visitors are more than welcome to come, as always, to enjoy the quietude of this special place, offer food at the daily meal, join in with the meditation routine and pūjās, listen to Dhamma teachings offered on the lunar quarter observance nights, participate in the Saturday afternoon meditation workshop, and any other public events. Please note that the Saturday evening Dhamma talks will not take place during this three month period. The most obvious change is that the monastery does not accept overnight guests, and visitors may notice the resident monastic Sangha being more aloof with regards to verbal contact, as we are encouraged to keep ‘noble silence’ during this precious time of retreat.

Lastly, to all of our supporters and friends in the Dhamma – the large and extended family of people on this Path to liberation – we offer our very best wishes for a peaceful 2012. ♣



# LOOKING AHEAD

News from  
Amaravati

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

## Monastery Address

Amaravati Buddhist Monastery  
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Hertfordshire, HP1 3BZ  
Office: +44 (01442) 842 455 Fax: (01442) 843 721  
Retreats: (01442) 843 239  
[www.amaravati.org](http://www.amaravati.org)

*Stewards: The English Sangha Trust*

The English Sangha Trust is a registered charitable trust which stewards funds to support the Sangha at Amaravati and Cittaviveka monasteries. Contributions can be made to the English Sangha Trust c/o Amaravati or online via [www.amaravati.org](http://www.amaravati.org) » Participate.

## Useful Websites

**Lotus Volunteer Group**  
Information on opportunities to volunteer to support the Sangha at Amaravati: [www.lotusvolunteergroup.org](http://www.lotusvolunteergroup.org)

**Sangha**  
A portal to the international branch monasteries of the Luang Por Chah Sangha: [www.forestsangha.org](http://www.forestsangha.org)

**Lay community**  
The website of the Amaravati Lay Buddhist Association (ALBA): [www.buddhacommunity.org](http://www.buddhacommunity.org)

**Other**  
*Forest Sangha Newsletter* website: [www.fsnewsletter.org](http://www.fsnewsletter.org)  
For books and audio: [www.forestsanghapublications.org](http://www.forestsanghapublications.org)

**Looking Ahead** is a newsletter from Amaravati. You can pick up a copy at the monastery or receive it directly by email or by post. Please send your email and/or home address to: **abmnews at amaravati dot org** or post it to Amaravati. Please indicate whether you wish to receive **Looking Ahead** by email or by post.

## Māgha Pūjā

Tuesday, 7 March

Evening pūjā, Dhamma talk  
and meditation vigil  
7.30 p.m. until midnight

Please see cover article for more information

## Almsgiving Ceremony

for

### Thai Flood Relief

at Amaravati on Sunday, 25 March

(Tord Pah Bah organized by the lay community of Amaravati)

All contributions made to this project will be received by:

#### **The Maya Gotami Foundation**

Tan Ajahn Gavesako will take responsibility for seeing that all the donations are used for flood relief and other projects as necessary.

## Introductory Meditation Workshops

at Amaravati Buddhist Monastery

Saturday afternoons 2–4 p.m.

Meditation instruction for beginners with an opportunity for questions and dialogue. Feel free to come along – no booking is necessary.

These weekly workshops will continue throughout the Winter Retreat, led by an experienced lay teacher.

Classes will be held in the  
Retreat Centre shrine room