

AUTUMN 2011

vajrabell

keeping sangha connected

Absorbed in Meditation

Karunasara discusses *the Formless Dhyanas*

Triratna celebrates the opening of the new

Portsmouth Buddhist Center

Photography as

*Spiritual
Practice*





As I ushered my eldest daughter onto the school bus for the first day of a new school year, the slightly bittersweet smell of leaves readying for change teased my senses and a light

breeze began to wake itself on my neck, preparing to bluster indignantly come winter. I remembered myself in my daughter's place, many years ago - shiny new first-day outfit on, mind wide open and ready to experience new things, a new teacher, a new classroom, maybe new friends - and there's the excitement and rush of sheer possibility that the autumn brings.

I don't think I've ever lost that feeling. It's one of the reasons why I love New England. Every year when the wind turns round the feeling wells up again - a shiver that begins at my heart. This season comes with endless cues, beckoning us to leave behind the work, play, and activity of the summer months and turn inward. Nature tells us in no uncertain terms that all things pass away before our very eyes, and reminds us subtly that we are no different. There is just a little time. We have this moment and we must make the best of it and prepare well before our winters are upon us.

This year, autumn seems to be even more strongly imbued with an awareness of impermanence. As a sangha we have witnessed the passing of good friends, mourning their loss while celebrating their beautiful lives and how they've changed us. In my own personal life I've been continually reminded of the sickness, old age, and death of loved ones and friends, and some of my ways of relating with others have taken dramatic turns.

Our men's mitra study group is currently studying the Four Mind-Turning Reflections, which are reminders meant to focus our minds on the opportunities we have for spiritual practice and keep our highest ideals constant in our awareness. Two of these reminders are especially poignant in this season - The Preciousness and Rarity of Human Life, and The Transitoriness of Life and the Certainty of Death.

Human life is hard won, and the conditions that we have been blessed with, that support our spiritual life in this time

and place, are like a precious gem that we should never forget the value of or take for granted. Shantideva, in the *Bodhicaryavatara*, reflects:

*So hard to find such ease and wealth
Whereby to render meaningful this
human birth!*

*If now I fail to turn it to my profit
How could such a chance be mine again?*

Human life, we can so easily forget, is also unbelievably fragile and fleeting. Though we are years in the making, each of us is here for a only a heartbeat in the universal scheme of things, and our final breath could just as easily be moments away as it could be decades away. What better reminder could there be to take advantage of each moment, to live ethically and with love, and to spend what time we have in pursuit of a deep understanding of the way things are?

The clarity of awareness that occurs in moments where the impermanence of life is plain, like a sudden cool autumn breeze, can also bring with it that familiar rush of possibility and a heartfelt connection with our highest ideal, the pursuit of Enlightenment and the end of suffering for all beings.

These sudden changes, while they can be difficult to bear, if seen in another way can be a cherished gift given to us - a reminder to live well, and to honor those who have come before who have known how to live well themselves.

May we all find warmth, comfort, clarity, and wisdom as we turn within and prepare for a new winter.

vajrabel

www.aryaloka.org/category/vajra-bell

VAJRA BELL KULA

EDITOR IN CHIEF: *Eric Wentworth*
eric@wintercrowstudio.com

ADMINISTRATION EDITOR: *Dh. Vihanasari*
vihanasari@comcast.net

SANGHA EDITOR: *Stephen Sloan*
sloan@comcast.net

FEATURES EDITOR: *Mary Schaefer*
mbschaefer@comcast.net

ARTS EDITOR: *Elizabeth Hellard*
ekhellard@comcast.net

MEDIA EDITOR: *Daniel Bush*
daniel.bush21@gmail.com

SPOTLIGHT EDITOR: *Ashley Bush*
ashleybush@comcast.net

ASSISTANT EDITOR: *Christine Shorey*
hugr@aol.com

ARYALOKA COUNCIL MEMBERS

COUNCIL CHAIR: *Dh. Dayalocana*
dayalocana@comcast.net

TREASURER: *Tom Gaillard*
tgaillard@yahoo.com

Dh. Amala
amalamaeve@gmail.com

Dh. Vihanasari
vihanasari@comcast.net

Dh. Akashavanda
akashavanda@gmail.com

Dh. Arjava
havaughan@comcast.net

Dh. Shrijnana
shrijnana@wildmind.org

Brian "Jumbo" Jervis
jervisbrian@yahoo.com

Eric Wentworth
eric@wintercrowstudio.com

Aryaloka Buddhist Retreat Center
14 Heartwood Circle
Newmarket, NH 03857
603-659-5456

info@aryaloka.org • www.aryaloka.org



clearvision
Audio-visual resources
exploring Buddhism
www.clear-vision.org

musings from the chair || Dh. Dayalocana



The months of autumn remind me of the constant flow and change of life, of the impossibility of keeping the splendor of autumn leaves until January or holding onto sunsets or the

people we love. Our friend Bodhilocana died in July. She is greatly missed. We hold onto the memory of the beauty of her life, her thoughtfulness, kindness, and wisdom.

Bodhilocana was an interesting woman. You never knew where her inquisitive mind and positive energy might lead her. She had a special connection with Dhardo Rimpoche, one of Sangharakshita's teach-

ers when he lived in Kalimpong. Dhardo Rimpoche established a school for Tibetan refugee children and gave it this motto: Cherish the doctrine, live united, radiate love. Bodhilocana took those seven words to heart.

It was clear that Bodhilocana cherished the teaching of the Buddha. Meditation and reflection on the Dharma were of great importance in her life. Most importantly she put into practice what she learned. Bodhilocana exemplified friendship, generosity, connection, and caring for all beings. She reminded us how to live every day from the depth of practice.

To live united is to live in peace, without conflict. Bodhilocana never failed to amaze us with her ability to see clear-

ly, with equanimity, humor, and wise perspective. Without a doubt Bodhilocana was able to radiate love and compassion to all beings. So many in this world were touched by her goodness.

To live with a radiance, soft and gentle, yet brilliant and strong, a glow of loving kindness, friendliness, and compassion - that is how we remember Bodhilocana.

She would have been pleased to join our community this autumn to welcome and celebrate the opening of the Portsmouth Buddhist Center. The new Triratna center brings to the people of the Seacoast the opportunity to hear the Dharma, to practice the teachings, and to follow in the footsteps of Bodhilocana to develop loving-kindness, compassion, and wisdom.

from the council || Dh. Vihanasari

In June the Council approved a proposal for **Buddhist Recovery Group** meetings to be held at Aryaloka. Led by Barry Timmerman, with support from others, these meetings are open to sangha members and will be held on the first and third Wednesday of each month.

As of yet, there is no overall coordinator for our **annual auction** in December. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Akashavanda.

Additional work on the **outside stairs** has been completed and squirrel mitigation is complete. The latter carries a one-year guarantee with an option to renew.

The **evaluation form** for retreats and classes has been revised and has been well-received. Many thanks to those of you who fill these out at the end of an event - it really helps us to continually improve what we offer here.

The Spiritual Vitality Team encourages **those who teach at Aryaloka** to keep their own practice strong in order to be able to teach from experience and to avoid burn-out. Unpaid teachers will be offered in-kind compensation by giving them access to retreats and programs at no charge.

It was voted to offer the **Foundation** part of the Dharma Training Course for Mitras for a full year, beginning this September.

The Dhardo Rimpoche **stupa committee** continues gathering data. No decisions have been made and no action has been

taken yet.

Thank you to all those who completed our **recent survey** - the results are being collated and will be shared very soon.

The Council, led by the Finances Team, is currently planning the next **annual pledge drive** which will be held in the fall this year.

Hurricane/tropical storm Irene caused the center to lose power for three days. Vihanasari will submit an insurance claim for lost income and food spoilage during that period.

A part-time **publicity coordinator's**

position was approved for four hours per week.

Sangharakshita has requested that **all Triratna centers collect and maintain their individual archives**. The Council will ask the library kula to address this, with other volunteers from the sangha.

Finally, the Council discussed a **culture of dana and community-building** at the center.

Future Council meetings will be held on Oct. 26, Nov. 16, and Dec. 14. Meetings are open to all - please contact Dayalocana for details.

Policy for Retreat Deposits:

RETREATS/CLASSES/SOLITARIES

Those registering for retreats (including solitaries) and classes of any length will be asked to pay a minimum deposit of one-half of the total cost to finalize registration. If a registrant cancels two weeks or more before the retreat, s/he will receive a credit of the full amount toward another event. If the cancellation is received less than two weeks before the event, the registrant forfeits half of the retreat fee, and the remainder may be credited toward another event.

YOGA RETREATS

Those registering for yoga retreats will be asked to pay the full cost in advance in order to finalize the registration. If a registrant cancels two weeks or more before the retreat, s/he will receive a credit of the full amount toward another event. If the cancellation is received less than two weeks before the event, the registrant forfeits half of the retreat fee, and the remainder may be credited toward another event.

Note: In all situations, special circumstances will be taken into consideration.

sangha notes

ARYALOKA SANGHA (NEWMARKET, NH)

As I write there is a slight nip in the air and a little twinge of color to the leaves around my home. Alas, summer has ended and as we move into autumn I reflect back on the many activities of the Aryaloka Sangha and the exciting events to come.

Monk's Sacred Arts Tour

In early August we hosted eight Tibetan monks from the Drepung Gomang Monastery in Southern India. The whole week was filled with many activities, but the central event was the creation of a sand mandala which could be viewed live online from a link to the Aryaloka website. The monks were on tour to raise money to educate, feed, and house 2,000 exiled monks. It was an exciting time and their events were well-attended throughout their week-long visit. For more on the monks' visit, see Elizabeth Hellard's piece on page 12 of this issue.

Aryaloka Picnic

The cloudy skies on August 14th did not dull the spirits of the many friends, mitras, and Order members who attended the annual Aryaloka Picnic. Arjava, Brian Jervis (Jumbo), and Bodhana did most of the cooking and attendees brought many delicious dishes to share. Steve Cardwell made announcements, thanking many attendees for all they do to support the center.

Meditation Classes

Beginning in September and extending into October Bodhipaksa is leading an Introduction to Buddhism and Meditation class. This six-week series is a popular one and the perfect fit for anyone interested in learning more about Buddhism and meditation, or for one looking to deepen their practice. In addition to this offering, please see the full events calendar in this issue or the Aryaloka website for upcoming retreats, classes, and programs.

Sangha Night Discussion

The regular Tuesday Sangha Night continues to be well-attended with what seems to be more and more new faces each week. Following the guided meditation in the li-

brary for newcomers and the meditation in the shrine room for regulars, three rounds of discussion began early in September.

Arjava and his discussion group are leading an eight-week beginner series of Introduction to Buddhism.

Stephen Sloan, Kiranada, and Surakshita are leading a group titled *Getting to know Sangharakshita*. As the Triratna Buddhist Community founder, Sangharakshita's interpretation of Buddhism serves as a framework for practice and understanding for westerners. This is a wonderful opportunity for friends to be introduced to Sangharakshita and for others who are familiar with his work to perhaps form a heart connection.

The third discussion group is being led by Akashavanda and Sheila Groonell and is focused on the book *A Deeper Beauty* by Paramandana. They will have lively discussions on getting to know the self and presenting the authentic self to the world.

Bodhisattvas at Play

On October 9th don't miss your chance to have fun with Aryaloka friends during our Fall Work Day. There is something for everyone, from cleaning out our beautiful flower gardens to getting the building ready for winter. Lunch and snacks will be provided.

Autumn Hike

Mount Chocorua, one of the most beautiful peaks in New Hampshire, should be decked out in all its autumn glory on October 15th (rain date October 16th) when an organized hike will head up the mountain via the Piper Trail and have lunch at the summit. Hikers will meet at the trailhead at 8:00 a.m. See the Aryaloka website for more details.

Mitra Study

Mitra study resumed at the end of September for both men and women.

As mentioned in our last issue, The women's fall study program will run as follows:

Karunasara will lead one group studying *The Nature of Existence II, Buddhist Vision of Reality*. This group will explore various models of reality found in the later Buddhist traditions.

Vihanasari and Surakshita will lead a mixed group of men and women mitras

in studying *Ethics*, Part II of the Foundation Year. This is an introduction to Buddhist ethics followed by a look at each of the Five Precepts in turn. *Ethics, Year I* will be taught online with Saddhamala.

The men's mitra group has begun a study from Year Two of the *Dharma Training Course for Mitras* on the Four Mind-Turnings.

~ Chris Shorey & Stephen Sloan

NAGALOKA SANGHA (PORTLAND, ME)

The chill in the air is beginning to find us once again here in Maine as autumn is approaching. Nagaloka bids a farewell to a summer that has really been packed with happenings. First let us rejoice in the fact that Louise Tuski became a mitra in June this year. Louise is a joyous spirit and has jumped right into the sangha here at Nagaloka. Louise's enthusiasm is inspiring and she has been so helpful to us by spending time working on our Fundraising kula, our weekly announcements, joining our Council, keeping our kitchen tidy and organized, and so much more! Louise has also started a Mindfulness Movement class on Tuesday mornings for children ages five and under. Ian, Louise's son, performed a classical guitar recital to benefit Nagaloka this summer. He played to a full house and shared his beautiful talent to a very appreciative audience.

We have been studying *The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path* at our Wednesday Friends' Nights. This inspiring and very practical teaching has really come to life in our discussions and brought us many opportunities to relate the Dharma to our daily life. We will be finishing this study just in time to take part in the *International Urban Retreat*.

Dharmasuri and Maitrimani spent some time in the UK over the summer attending the Order Convention. Thank you to both of them for sharing their experiences there and bringing home to our sangha much that the world-wide Triratna Buddhist Community has to offer.

Mitra study is off to a fresh start with Maitrimani leading us through *The Bodhisattva Ideal*. Here we can also welcome our newest mitra-to-be Trish Moulton.

continued on page 5

Triratna Comes to Portsmouth, NH!

After twenty-five years of sporadic momentum and two years of focused energy, a small group of Dharma-farers has finally found a space in downtown Portsmouth to teach meditation and offer Buddhist practice and study.

Six members of the local sangha have formed a New Hampshire non-profit and have been actively looking for suitable space to lease for nearly two years. They have been in communication with the Aryaloka Council to share their plans and aspirations and to talk through the potential impact of an urban center so close to Aryaloka, which functions both as a public center and a retreat center.

It is our collective hope that bringing in a second Buddhist center into such a thriving community will help to spread the Dharma even further and wider throughout the region.

Maryellen Burke, a Portsmouth resident and Executive Director of the Portsmouth Historical Society, told us, "It has often surprised me that with all my connections in Portsmouth, very few people have heard of Aryaloka even though it has been a vibrant part of the greater seacoast community for over twenty-five years."

After viewing many potential available properties - all of which had merit, but didn't work out for one reason or another - we have been granted a great opportunity by a local developer who has offered us a donated space in his new building at 99 Bow Street, overlooking the Piscataqua River. Although not a permanent home for the center, this will give us an opportunity to experiment with a program and learn as we go what people are looking for in terms of meditation and Buddhist studies.

"It will be really great to have a place

to gather to meditate that is close to where I live and work" said John Gregg, a Portsmouth resident and member of the Aryaloka sangha.

The Portsmouth Buddhist Center plans to offer introductory meditation classes, a Sangha Night, and periodic weekend day retreats and courses aimed at both beginners and advanced practitioners.

As part of the international Triratna Buddhist Community, the Portsmouth Buddhist Center is affiliated with Aryaloka Buddhist Center in Newmarket, New Hampshire, Nagaloka Buddhist Center in Portland, Maine, and groups that meet in Boston and New York City.

We look forward to providing further opportunities for meditation and the study of Buddhism.

~ Dh. Viriyalila

How Can You Contribute to the Vajra Bell?

As a sangha, one of the most important things we do is to share our individual experiences of the spiritual life. By contributing our own stories to the richly-flavored stew of Dharma life that surrounds our center, we create strong connections between each other and strengthen each others' practices, sometimes without even knowing it. Just by telling another person about something you know or an experience you've had, you may provide the missing part to a puzzle that has been unfinished in their mind. You may bring them peace, simply in the knowledge that they are not the only one struggling with an issue. You might say the right word at just the right moment that will alter their lives forever.

With this in mind, if you've ever been interested in contributing to the Vajra Bell, this is the time to do it! Have you taken an amazing photo lately? We can use one! Trying your hand at poetry? We're eager to share one of your poems. If you've attended a retreat or event at an Triratna center, we would love to have you write something

about it for us. If you have a great website to share, a Dharma movie you're eager to talk about, or a page-turner of a Buddhist book that you have to let everyone know about, let us know! There are so many ways that you can enrich the pages of the Vajra Bell - let your imaginations run wild!

So, you say that you're not a great writer? Well, now is the chance to challenge that self-view. The Vajra Bell kula has among its volunteers an excellent set of editors to help you on your way. Have an idea, but you're not sure if it's prime-time material? Let us know what you're thinking - it may grow from a seedling thought into a solid story.

The important thing is to take the leap. You never know what will happen unless you give it a shot, and there may be someone out there just waiting for what you have to say.

To contribute, or to suggest an idea for a future issue of the Vajra Bell, you can contact any of the kula volunteers, listed in the contact column on page two of this issue, by email or in person. ♦♦

sangha notes

Continued from Page 4

Trish is looking forward to her mitra ceremony on September 25th.

Also this summer, we had day retreats with Bodhipaksa and Amala, a visit and talk by Nagabodhi, a Dharma Day celebration, women's and men's practice days, a visit from Parami for mitras, as well as our ongoing meditation sessions, intro classes, and Friends' Nights. Keep your eyes on our website - www.nagalokabuddhistcenter.org - for updates on upcoming events and our regularly scheduled happenings.

~ Gail Yahwak

For Your Information...

TRIRATNA CENTERS IN THE U.S.

Newmarket, NH
Portland, ME
Lubec, ME
Somerville, MA
New York City, NY
Missoula, MT
San Francisco, CA
Seattle, WA
Richland, WA.

Greetings and good wishes from the Kula Corner. We have a very vibrant kula system at Aryaloka. Kulas are groups of volunteers working together to make Aryaloka operational and beautiful. Please let me know if you would like to join a kula. Just email the office at info@aryaloka.org

Here is a list of the current kulas and their members:

Vajra Bell: Eric Wentworth, Vihanasari, Stephen Sloan, Mary Schaefer, Elizabeth Hellard, Daniel Bush, Ashley Bush

Arts: Kiranada, Eric Wentworth, Jean Corson, Gayle Joyce, Elizabeth Hellard, Joan Rochette, Melissa O'Reilly

Buddhaworks (The Bookstore): Steve Cardwell

Building projects: Arjava, Dayalocana, Vidhuma, Narottama, Jumbo, Paul Dupre, Bodhana, Aaron Brown

Children's Program: Shrijnana, Margaret Crowley, Nina Jordan, Chris Peters

Cleaning: Sheila Groomell, Kathy St. Hilaire, Richard Thivierge, Nina Jordan,

Jon Prichard, Michele Arista, Susan and Emma Sosa, Gayle Joyce, Peter Ingraham, Diane Wright, Lisa Vicens, Jackie LeHoullier, Josh Nute

Furnishings: Dayalocana, Sheila Groomell, Karunasara

Gardens and Grounds: Joan Rochette, Barry Timmerman, John Gregg, Vidhuma, Jaime Grady, Pam Raley, Stephen Pitman, Shana Clark, Jean Corson, Sandra Stewart, Dayalocana, Jan Walsh, Susan and Emma Sosa, Elizabeth Crepeau

Events and Festivals: Nina Jordan, Sandra Stewart, Jacky LeHoullier, Trisha Reid

Hospitality: Vihanasari, Nina Jordan, John Gregg, Jumbo, Stephen Sloan, Jacky LeHoullier

Library: Anilasri, Diane Palaces, Samayadevi, Kiranada, Joyce Hill, Deane Kellison

Outreach: Amala, Vihanasari, Steve Cardwell, Samayadevi, Karunasara

Pledge Drive: Tom Gaillard, Jumbo, Prasannavajri, Elizabeth Hellard, Maryellen Burke, Mary Schaefer, Dayalocana

Program and Teaching: Dayalocana, Shrijnana, Amala, Karunasara, Saddhamala, Vihanasari, Viriyalila

Recycling: Steve Cardwell, Kathy St. Hilaire

Shrine: Joan Rochette, Elizabeth Hellard, Kiranada, Trish Reid

Tech Support: Stephen Sloan, Eric Martin, Eric Wentworth

Transportation: Christine Shorey, Jumbo, Bodhana, John Gregg, Deb Cardwell, Nina Jordan, Pam Raley, Karunasara, Vihanasari, Jacky LeHoullier, Sandra Stewart

Work Days: Dayalocana, Vidhuma, Arjava, Jumbo, Narottama, Vihanasari, Joan Rochette

~ Steve Cardwell

The 2012 Pledge Drive is Here and Your Support is Vital

Balloons, flowers, music, smiles, and fellowship. It will all be present on Sangha Nights beginning mid-October during Aryaloka's 2012 Pledge Drive! This won't be your typical fundraising effort, but then again, Aryaloka's not your typical Buddhist center!

At a recent Council meeting, the discussion centered on how to build Sangha, connections, and an increased awareness of *dana* (generosity). Our talk turned to the upcoming pledge drive, and a compelling idea flowered to increase the warmth we display on Tuesdays and invite fuller exploration of *dana* – all while having fun with an innovative 2012 pledging campaign. Come see for yourself on Tuesday nights this month and join in the joyful noise, fun and heartfelt *metta* as our pledge drive unfolds.

The annual appeal is a vital fund-

ing source for Aryaloka along with Sangha night donations, retreats and other programs. Unlike the other sources, though, the monthly pledge provides the bedrock of certainty to our monthly income and enables us to better plan and dedicate the resources towards teaching and spreading the Dharma in southern New Hampshire.

Aryaloka is fueled by a considerable volunteer force, and for that we are deeply grateful. Funding is still needed, though, to pay for our small staff, utilities, building maintenance, and upkeep, including meeting unexpected (and costly!) issues like squirrel control.

Pledging sangha members contributed more than \$30,000 in 2011, representing twenty percent of Aryaloka's annual income. Our center has grown significantly this past year as word of mouth spreads and draws in friends from across New

England. We want to continue to provide the space, grounds, and programs to welcome everyone and support their spiritual practice. For that, we need your support.

Most Order members and mitras contribute monthly and are joined in their pledging by many Aryaloka friends. This year we are expanding our appeal to all those who attend Aryaloka - whether on Tuesdays or by attending retreats or classes - through a campaign that will run from mid-October through November. Please consider your own support, and give as generously as you can. If you'd like to help with the pledge drive, please contact the office or email Tom Gaillard at tgaillard@yahoo.com.

In overall financial news, the center is forecasting stable results for 2011. Through July we had a slight profit, and expect to

continued on page 18

movie review || The Story of a Legend

Kundun

(1997), 135 minutes, PG-13
Available on Netflix

"Centuries ago, a boy was born in Tibet. His name was Gedun Drupa. The night of his birth, robbers came to his home and his family had to run to save their lives. They hid the baby. When they returned the next day, the baby was alive. He was guarded by a pair of black crows. He was the first. We call him Kundun."



Kundun, the movie, opens with myopic perspectives of a sand mandala coming into being. Bright reds, yellows, blues, and whites arrive one grain at a time to build ridges and valleys - each topographic wonder meeting the other with precision. I was in awe over its intricate beauty and spectacular detail. Yet even in that moment of awe, there was an uneasy feeling of impending destruction - its fragility a stark reminder that everything is temporary, that all that is created

will one day change.

And so it is with Tibet. In the foreground, this is a story of the 14th Dalai Lama's courage and compassion in the face of Chinese aggression. But this is also a story of the beauty and sanctity of the once independent Tibet. It is a story of the Chinese, who, like taking a brush to a sand mandala, wipe it all away. It is a story of impermanence.

Although most of the film was shot in studios in Morocco, the director, Martin Scorsese, and cinematographer Roger Diakins bring the Tibetan Plateau to life. Panoramic views of the Himalayas that pan in to a small Tibetan farming village set the scene. The house of a small boy, Lhamo Dhondup, is just starting its day. We are offered a sense of waking up to the world as the images of adults moving about in a small wooden home come to us sideways, the perspective of a small boy just opening his eyes from his bed.

The uniqueness of this boy is made evident at breakfast in his obsession with hearing again and again the story surrounding the circumstances of his birth, in his insistence to sit at the head of the table and, later, after quietly watching two large beetles fight, in his compassion and

calmness in removing the loser to a place of safety.

Even as we watch the chronological development of Lhamo, from his discovery by two wandering monks to his adolescent coming of age as the 14th Dalai Lama in Lhasa, we are never far removed from the increasing and impending conflict with the Chinese government. At one point the Dalai Lama comes face to face with Mao Tse Tung in Peking. Mao, who claims to only want to liberate Tibet from its own backwardness, offers these parting words, "Tibet has been poisoned by religion. Your people are poisoned and inferior." Later, in a final plea from a Chinese general for the Dalai Lama to accept Chinese "liberation," the Dalai Lama replies, "You cannot liberate me, general Chan, only I can liberate myself."

Kundun, nominated for four Academy Awards, is a thoroughly captivating movie. The music, by Philip Glass, draws us into a mood of wonder and self-reflection. In the end, we are left to contemplate the Dalai Lama's powerfully terse statement, "Non-violence takes a long time."

Kundun is available on Netflix and is also available for purchase on Amazon for as low as \$5.60, new. ~ *Daniel Bush*

online insight || The Vajra Bell Speaks to the World

The *Vajra Bell* is a sangha newsletter dedicated to keeping us all connected with what's going on in our community and deepening our understanding of the Dharma. Over the last year the *Vajra Bell* newsletter has undergone many changes, and these continued over the summer with a complete redesign of our publication. Many of these changes were geared towards improving the *Vajra Bell* online.

If you're currently reading the online version, some of the changes will be evident. These include full-color pages, clickable links, and an earlier release date than the paper version. Because of the high cost of the printed version of the *Vajra Bell*, its distribution has been limited. The *Vajra Bell* online, however, has allowed us to decrease our printing costs while still increasing availability to our quickly growing sangha. In fact, its online presence has allowed us to share the *Vajra Bell* with oth-

er Triratna sanghas around the USA and around the world.

For our very first email distribution of the *Vajra Bell*, the demographics of those who read it were impressive. The *Vajra Bell* had readers in at least twenty-four states, including Alaska, Texas, Florida, Tennessee, all three west coast states, and the eastern states from Maine to North Carolina. Internationally, the last issue saw readers in Germany and England.

Each *Vajra Bell* will have a permanent address on the web. This means that it is available to anyone anytime. And each of its issues will remain accessible on the web. The most exciting aspect of this is that the in-depth Dharma articles that the *Vajra Bell* is known for will become a growing resource to return to whenever we'd like.

If you haven't yet read the *Vajra Bell* online, we encourage you to take the opportunity. Aside from keeping our costs

down (each complimentary paper version costs over a dollar to print) while offering full color, the online version is ecologically friendly - less printing reduces the demand on live trees, reduces waste, and reduces the leaching of chemical inks into the water system.

Paper versions of the *Vajra Bell* will continue to be available at Aryaloka for our new sangha members and for those who don't have internet access. You can find all current and past issues of the *Vajra Bell* on the Aryaloka website by clicking on "About" in the menu bar, then "Vajra Bell." There's also a *Vajra Bell* Link in the "Quick Links" section.

The *Vajra Bell*, Aryaloka's voice in print for over seven years, once spoke only to a few hundred of its local sangha members and visitors. Today our little newsletter speaks to potentially thousands around the world. ~ *Daniel Bush*

spotlight || Viriyagita

Editor's Note: Spotlight is a regular column which focuses on one Order member's journey on the spiritual path.

In 1986, Marilyn saw an article in the newspaper advertising meditation at the new Buddhist center, Aryaloka. She was excited to discover a local meditation resource and asked a friend to accompany her. She remembers getting completely lost trying to find the nearly hidden driveway off of Heartwood Circle. They stopped in town and asked for directions but no one seemed to know the whereabouts of this mysterious center. Amazingly, they did eventually find their way and stumbled into a sparsely attended class.

Viriyagita (as she was later ordained) wasn't new to Buddhism. In fact, she had been practicing on and off with a Tibetan Buddhist center in Vermont. She had chosen that particular site because it offered retreats with childcare for her then seven-year-old son. Her first taste of meditation was an eight-hour sit! Rather than feel daunted, she immediately felt like she had "come home."

She was quite pleased to have discovered a place to study the Dharma in her own backyard. She became one of the pioneers who helped make Aryaloka what it is today. She was among the first women here to become a mitra, in 1987, and was the first to become ordained, in 1995. While she left the Order for awhile, she was reordained in 2007.

At Aryaloka, she loves soaking in the



intellectual clarity of Sangarakshita's teachings. She not only values the Mahayana tradition, with its emphasis on the Bodhisattva Ideal, but also loves the sense of connection and support between sangha members. Early on, she realized that she needed a community to help her go further on her own spiritual path.

Her practice includes the daily meditations of Mindfulness of Breathing and *Metta Bhavana*, as well as visualizations with her *yidam* - a Bodhisattva or enlightened being who is the focus of a personal meditation - Ksitigarbha. This Bodhisattva embodies the story of descending into the hell realms to be sure that no one is left outside the circle of compassion.

Viriyagita - teacher, Order member, Buddhist, wife, mother, grandmother - answered a few questions for the *Vajra Bell*:

Ashley: How has practicing Buddhism changed your life?

Viriyagita: One of the bigger things is taking responsibility for my state of mind and my actions. I really understand that I'm creating my own happiness and that it's

up to me to get out of blame and resentment.

Ashley: What do you struggle with in terms of your practice?

Viriyagita: Practicing *metta* in situations where I don't really feel it. It's fine to spread *metta* toward friends but to really extend it out to everyone, that's something.

Ashley: How do you see life differently because of your practice?

Viriyagita: I feel very differently about sickness, old age, and death. Before, I would have been devastated by my chronic illness (Parkinson's disease) but now I approach it in a different way. I tell myself, "Ok, that's one of the things to deal with..." in a real way. I'm not fighting it. I'm not as attached to the body as I was before, since I have another context for it.

Ashley: What Dharma book do you return to for inspiration and contemplation?

Viriyagita: the *Dhammapada* (one of the best known and most beloved Buddhist texts, from the Pali canon). I read it when I need to remember what's important.

Ashley: What advice would you give to people just beginning the path?

Viriyagita: Stay with it. Don't get discouraged. Sometimes it becomes too much of a discipline... find out what works for you. It's very easy to take on someone else's ideas of how you need to meditate. There's so much room for your own way of doing it, for all aspects of yourself. Really go for the joy in the practice. ~ Ashley Bush

Buddhaworks

The Aryaloka Bookstore

- * Meditation Candles
- * DVDs from Pema Chodron and Lama Surya Das
- * Meditation Journals
- * CDs from Thich Nhat Hanh
- * Singing Bowls
- * Brass Door Chimes from Nepal and India
- * Children's Coloring Books
- * Lots and Lots of Great Books!

Your support brightens Aryaloka's future.

Buddhaworks is located at the Aryaloka Buddhist Center



Survey Provides Snapshot of Aryaloka Sangha

Aryaloka conducted an online survey in September to learn from sangha members and friends how we can do a better job of keeping you informed about the Center and its various events, activities and classes. Nearly 150 of you responded. Thank you for taking time to give us your input - your participation is deeply appreciated. We will be contacting the winners of the workshop prizes.

Over the next few weeks, the Aryaloka Council will be taking a closer look at your responses. With that information they can consider your suggestions and ideas on how to can provide the information you want, in the form and frequency you want, to support your spiritual practice and to keep you up-to-date about Aryaloka events and activities. We will be providing a more complete report once we've had a chance to evaluate the data. The following are some of the highlights.

- Respondents were 70% women and 30% men. The breakout of types of respondents included: Those who only attend retreats or special events - 39 (30%); Sangha Night regulars - 28 (21%); Sangha Night periodically - 23 (17%); mitras - 34 (26%); Order members - 14 (11%)
- The top reasons people are attracted to Aryaloka include a desire to learn about Buddhism (61.2%) and meditation (59%) as well as the center's peaceful setting (48.9%).
- Word about Aryaloka is spreading as 53.8 percent indicated they heard about the center through word of mouth. People also hear about the center through the website (25.6%) and web searches (23.1%).
- Some 90 percent indicated that details on activities and events at Aryaloka are very useful, and they are generally satisfied with the amount of information they receive. They also indicated a high interest in information/

guidance on meditation (71.6%) with 53 percent indicating they'd like more guidance on meditation

- Email seems to be the most used and useful means to keep people abreast of Aryaloka news and activities. Nearly 100 percent said they found emails useful in staying informed, and some 56.8 percent want some communication expanded or improved. The website is also a key tool in keeping friends apprised of center news; nearly 20 percent found it somewhat useful, 79.4 percent found it "very useful," and 47.5 percent suggested expanding or improving it.
- 90% of the respondents said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with

Aryaloka's efforts to keep them informed.

- Regarding respondents' support of Aryaloka, 61% said they donated on Tuesday nights and 60% said they volunteer their time. The survey showed that 32% donated through a regular monthly pledge.
- Eighty percent of the respondents indicated that they would increase their support if they had a better understanding of Aryaloka's needs and 45% said they would be more likely to offer more financial support if they understood the center's finances better.
- 108 of the respondents have been coming to Aryaloka for eight years or less.

freebuddhistaudio

Spreading the Dharma in 180 countries.
40+ Centers worldwide. One million
talks downloaded by the end of 2010.

"It gives me very great satisfaction to know that the work of FBA is benefitting so many people – this is one of the most important developments within our new Buddhist Movement to have taken place for many years. I hope you'll support them by pledging whatever you can afford to help this excellent project flourish for all in the years to come."

(Bhante Sangharakshita, Summer 2010)



Aryaloka now has its own section for local talks on FBA!

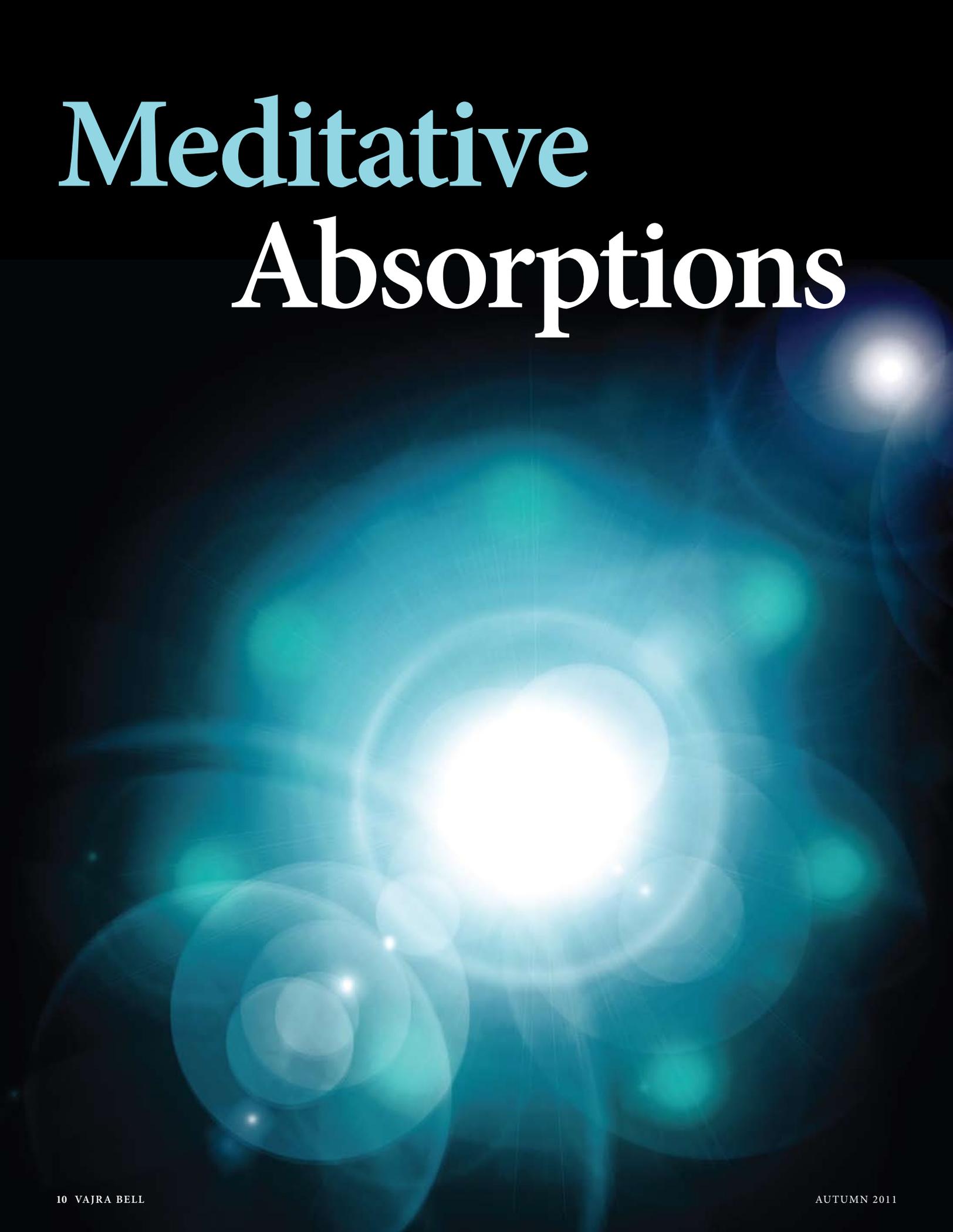
We depend on the generosity of all our supporters worldwide to keep our service free - please give if you can. Any amount you can offer is welcome!

Become a Supporting Friend of Free Buddhist Audio at:
www.freebuddhistaudio.com/donate

fba: building community online

Please be sure Aryaloka's windows stay closed in winter and remember to close them when leaving the center in warmer months.
Thank you!

Meditative Absorptions

The background of the page is a dark, almost black, space filled with ethereal, glowing light effects. A large, bright white circular glow is the central focus, surrounded by several overlapping, semi-transparent teal and light blue circles of varying sizes. These circles create a sense of depth and movement, resembling light trails or energy fields. The overall aesthetic is serene and spiritual, consistent with the title 'Meditative Absorptions'.

"The formless *dhyanas* are not Insight into the ultimate nature of reality. They lead us toward this experience but are still on a mundane level."



Exploring The Formless Dhyanas

By Dh. Karunasara

D*hyana* is a Sanskrit term for meditative absorption. In Pali the word is *jhana*. There are eight stages of *dhyana*. Each of these describes a progressively deeper meditative absorption. They follow naturally from one stage to the next but are not always experienced sequentially.

There are several meditation methods or practices that aid us in entering meditative absorption. In the last issue of *Vajra Bell*, Bodhipaksa gave us a very clear picture of the characteristics of the first four *dhyanas*. As he states, we enter the experience of *dhyana* when the five hindrances of ill will, sense desire, restlessness and anxiety, sloth and torpor, and doubt have been dispelled. I would suggest you review his article to refresh your understanding of these first four *dhyanas* and to help you have a better understanding of the process of moving from the first level of absorption through the eighth level.

The first four *dhyanas* involve physical sensations and emotions. In the fourth *dhyana* we experience a deep calm and stillness of our body, mind and emotions that enable us to move into the four formless *dhyanas*, which are strictly mental states. This takes place due to the consistent practice of the first four absorptions which makes our mind pliable and flexible enough to experience the formless *dhyanas*.

In the fifth *dhyana*, or "sphere of infinite space," we move beyond body sensations; we expand our bodies into infinite space. Not only do we use meditation practice to bring us to this experience, but we also use contemplative practices. We meditate to calm and collect our mind; contemplation is trying to see things in a different way.

Both are necessary. Experiencing or imagining the infinity of blue sky may be one way to do this. Contemplating the interconnectedness of the elements of our body with all other elements in the universe may be another. Here we expand our awareness to fit the whole

of space. We no longer experience ourselves as a separate self, but as a part of this whole space – there are no boundaries.

The sixth *dhyana* is known as the "sphere of infinite consciousness." With practice, we become aware that our consciousness is also without boundaries and we are even less concerned with our "separate self."

In the seventh *dhyana*, or "sphere of experience of infinity of space and consciousness," we are aware there is nothing to grasp onto; all is constantly in flux.

This progresses to the eighth *dhyana*, "neither perception nor non-perception." Another way of saying this is, "neither identification nor non-identification." The mind rests within itself. The observing mind is now so minimal it cannot explain this stage.

The experience of *dhyana* is a result of the progressive integration that takes place through meditation. The formless *dhyanas* are not Insight into the ultimate nature of reality. They lead us toward this experience but are still on a mundane level.

The Buddha did not give highly detailed information or descriptions of the formless meditative absorptions because they cannot be understood without experiencing them and then exploring what has been experienced.

We begin with a sound ethical practice and the first four *dhyanas*. This is where most of us practice for a long time. Although we may have glimpses of formless *dhyana* at times, this will not be consistent without the integration that comes from serious, consistent meditation and contemplation practice over time. As we approach the experiences of the formless *dhyanas*, it is important that we have the guidance of one who is knowledgeable and who has experienced these states.

The result of our meditation and the meditative absorption that ensues as the result of our increasing integration is the increasing ability to become enlightened through the experience of total calm, peace and compassion.



A Look Back at the Monks' Visit

By Elizabeth Hellard

From July 31st through August 7th, Aryaloka Buddhist Center was blessed by a visit from eight monks from the Drepung Gomang Monastery in Karnataka State, Southern India. These delightful monks are approaching the end of a year-long “Sacred Arts Tour” of the USA. They spent the week at Aryaloka spreading their message of peace, wisdom, and compassion through dharma talks, an introduction to the arts and culture of Tibet, and the creation of a simply magnificent Avalokitesvara Compassion Mandala. During the monks' stay at Aryaloka our technology kula set up a live stream of the mandala construction so that during the week we were able to watch online as the monks worked on it. As a perfect example of impermanence, the mandala was dissolved on Saturday afternoon with a closing ceremony and procession to carry the blessed mandala sand to the river.

All during the week the monks were available to give instruction in the art of sand painting to both young and old. They demonstrated the technique of using an authentic *chakpur* (metal funnel used to apply the sand) and helped everyone create their own mandala. The monks held a workshop on mani-stone painting and Tibetan butter sculpture. (Newmarket had a shortage of yak

butter so we used play-dough for the butter sculptures.) The children and adults thoroughly enjoyed the hands-on opportunity to work and interact with the monks as they created beautiful flowers and Buddhist symbols out of play-dough. Thursday evening brought a slide show presentation and the opportunity to discuss Tibetan Buddhism at their monastery in Southern India. (For more information on the Drepung Gomang Monastery and the year-long Sacred Arts Tour please go to their website at www.gomang.org).

The finale took place on Saturday night with an evening of authentic, ancient, traditional Tibetan chanting; debate; and a lively snow lion and panda dance. It was simply outstanding.

The entire week's activities were beautifully coordinated and the events seemed to flow effortlessly; but what I personally found most interesting and memorable were the quiet moments I spent in conversation and meals with the monks. They were joyful moments, and the monks made me laugh every time I was in their company. When I first met the monks I have to admit I was a bit uncomfortable – I thought, I don't speak their language; how will we communicate? What will we talk about? Then I realized the discomfort was completely mine. The monks were eager to com-

continued on page 15

Death May Be Hazardous to Your Self-View

By Prasannavajri

Some form of death or ending occurs all the time. There is not one shading of life that does not have a beginning, a middle, and an end - one's breath, a moment, a second. Our own pending death carries a powerful potential for "waking up" from whomever we think we really are. Similarly, death of a significant person can jar loose the conditioned view we carry of ourselves.

On March 11th of this year, my 91-year-old mother was transferred from the hospital to a hospice house. She knew she was going to die and often prayed to Saint Jude to come and get her. I told her he would and it would not be long now. That first evening at hospice, she asked to sit up in the recliner. My sister Jeanne and I sat near her, talking quietly. With unusual intensity in her voice, my mother suddenly asked Jeanne, "Do you love me?" Startled, Jeanne responded, "Yes, mamma, I love you." Then she looked at me and asked, "Do you love me?" I replied, "Yes, very much. I love you." There was a long pause, and looking down, she asked, "I didn't do anything wrong?" I said, "We all do the best we can." Looking away, she thought about that a bit and responded, "Yes... we all do the best we can." That was the last conversation I had with my mother. Six days later, at 5:45 p.m., she drew her last breath.

*Give me the strength to burst the sheath of selfhood,
And like the seed that dies in order to be reborn
Let me fearlessly go through the portals of death,
So that I may awaken to the greater life.
~ Lama Govinda*

From his work, *The Essential Sangharakshita*, Bhante writes, "Reflecting on impermanence is so important because through it we begin to break down the tendency to over identify with the body, and thus the delusion of a fixed self is weakened. This is the heart of the matter." (p. 204)

Something happened within my awareness during those six days while I kept heightened vigil with my mother and her dying process. I felt attuned to every moment, every nuance of what time there was left. There was no past or future. The mind was drawn to neither one, only the present that felt exquisite, profound, sacred. And in these present moments, my love for her had transformed into something filled with grace and gratitude. My heart was no longer hidden with anxiety and I felt how much I really did love her. How did this happen? How did I get to this "present" with my mother's end of life that felt so deep and profoundly liberating? Bhante wrote, "If you apply what you understand and experience to yourself, you will gradually deepen that awareness of impermanence to allow real insight to emerge." (p. 205)

There arose in my awareness the recent memory in the hospital when after speaking with the doctor, my mother realized that her time was limited. All of a sudden, my mind was benignly jolted with the fact that the future was gone. There was no more future for her - nor for she and I - nor for my living experience of her. The psychological, karmic underpinnings that painfully punctuated and held our relationship throughout this lifetime began to come apart, to dissolve at a fundamental level. For example, in

addition to seeing her once or twice a week, I would receive letters nearly every day and get several phone calls, day or night. As soon as I would see her number on my caller ID, my conditioned response jumped to the future. Disheartened, I was convinced it was always going to be that way. However, without a future to attach to, the past conditioning simply could not hold itself together. It was like a house of cards falling apart in very slow motion. Only the present remained. All I wanted for my mother was for her to be at peace, to be pain-free, to know how much she was loved, and to carry these qualities into her forward experience. For six days, I breathed in this altered state of acceptance and gentleness. My heart and mind were opened... wide. There was a felt experience of something deeply spiritual touching my core. In *Know Your Mind*, Sangharakshita describes an element of Enlightenment that I have begun to understand through my mother's experience:

When you attain Enlightenment....you no longer have a will that is separate from that of others....You no longer want one thing while they want another, or want something from them that they are unwilling to give. What they want, you want; what you want, they want. You don't experience another person as a sort of brick wall that you are coming up against, and you no longer experience yourself as a separate and conflicting solid force. You experience others in a completely different way: they become diaphanous or transparent, because your will is not coming into collision with theirs. This completely different, more relaxed, lighter, and freer attitude, taken to the nth degree, is something of the nature of Enlightenment. The world is the same but you see it differently. (p. 53)

Initially, I felt an exquisite sense of freedom of living in the moment; a luminous, vibrant present. It was a light taste of the unconditioned, the flavor of love devoid of expectations of self and other, especially of and for my mother. I intuited that it is possible to live this way, thus launching a strong desire to move increasingly in this direction. At the same time, death, be it one's own or of a significant other, is hazardous - disruptive to one's self-view. That is its natural endowment. The multifaceted façade we think to be us, to be real, solid, something we could count on to move about in the world, is exposed and is stripped of its concealment. The personality's substructure is shaken, creating tiny fissures into which awareness can penetrate.

Following the funeral, there were a number of weeks where I felt very much off balance. For over a year and a half, I was accustomed to reacting and responding to my mother's full array of needs and requests. As I did when I was younger, I tried to anticipate her needs as well as respond quickly to her articulated ones. It was more than lovingly attending to my elderly mother, it was a compulsion. I knew it, but I was not able to put the brakes on the reactivity. Suddenly, I did not have to do that anymore, yet, my energy was still heightened, looking for a need to respond to. With nothing to come up against, I had a face to face encounter with my self-view that was tethered to the conditioned relationship with my mother.

I saw that what fueled my irresistible impulse to respond to her was a lifelong need to prove I was a good daughter. The im-

continued on page 19

Photography as Spiritual Practice

Arts at Aryaloka is pleased to welcome a most unique exhibition of abstract photography by Josh Bartok, Osho, in the fall exhibition, *Photography as a Spiritual Practice* from October 18th to December 1st. We will exhibit more than fourteen contemplative photographs - some deeply subtle and others quite luminous. There is a clear reference to the past centuries of Zen artists, the contemplative calligraphers of Asia, and to Dharma studies.

A Zen priest, editor, and Dharma teacher, Josh Bartok writes poignantly of his work in the arts, "These photographs arise out of my own Zen meditation practice, which is fundamentally a practice of presence, of continual opening to the world precisely as it is, to all the richness each moment offers." Through these photographs, Josh hopes we will see some of the luminous beauty in the most unexpected places, "without judgment or commentary."

A self-taught photographer, Josh's first Zen teacher was John Daido Roshi, himself a renowned photographer and the author of *The Zen of Creativity*. In addition to Asian art references, Josh's work also connects to some dynamic abstract expressionists, such as Mark Rothko, Paul Klee, and Piet Mondrian, and yet often depicts intimate spaces found in urban landscape. The rusty patinas of peeling surfaces become paintings with Josh's sensitive "framing" as a photographer.

"In a way, I think of myself as an abstract expressionist painter who creates only jointly with the universe, through the guiding hand of the world itself," Josh says.

The photographic work, printed as giclée prints on canvas, comes in a variety of sizes from 36" x 45" to 16" x 20". Titles such as *Morning Star*, *Beholding the Cries of the World*, *The Hazy Moon of Enlightenment*, and *One Bright Pearl* all have Bud-

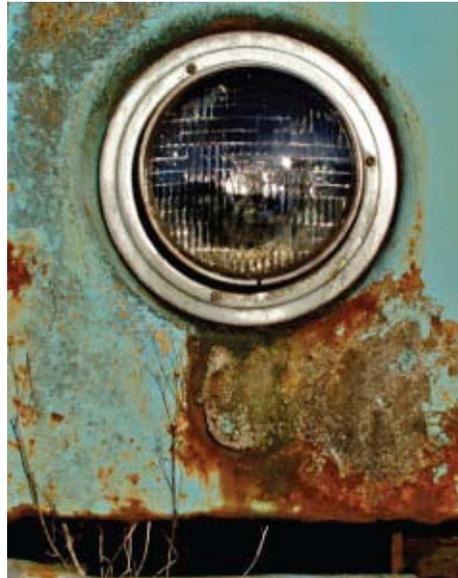


Photo courtesy Josh Bartok, Osho

"Hazy Moon of Enlightenment I" (left), "Hazy Moon of Enlightenment III" (right).

dhist references - the Buddha's enlightenment experience, Kuan Yin's compassion, and the *Shobogenzo* (True Dharma Eye Treasury) of Zen Master Dogen (13th c. Japan). The *Boulder Vase* sits against a luminous turquoise wood holding the "healing medicine of the Dharma." The delicate web of *Buddhafields* speaks of Indra's connections.

In this first New Hampshire exhibition, the strong themes of mountain/sun/moon are found in unusual urban spaces. Ensō, commonly known as the "Zen Circle," appears abstractly as a flaming sun of rust carrying a "luminous thusness, the perfection of things as they are." Found mountain shadow images, a frequent subject of Zen painters, bring a literary illusion to *sama*, a Japanese honorific word for both a great Zen master as well as a spiritual mountain (Fuji-sama), worthy of deep respect.

In addition to his evocative photographic talents, Josh Bartok, Osho, is the senior teacher for the Ralph Waldo Emer-

son Zen sangha in Boston, a Dharma holder in Boundless Way Zen, and a transmitted Soto Zen priest. Josh has studied Buddhism with John Daido Looori Roshi, and calligraphy with Kaz Tanahashi and Stephen Addiss. He is a senior editor at Wisdom Publications, in Somerville, MA, where he has been staff editor for over 150 books in all Buddhist traditions. Josh is co-author with Ezra Bayda of [Saying Yes To Life \(Even the Hard Parts\)](#). He has also had a career in behavioral rehabilitation for people with brain injuries.

We are exceedingly pleased to feature Josh Bartok's unique vision at Aryaloka Buddhist Center this fall and invite you join us on Sunday, November 20th, at 6 p.m., for an Arts Evening that will include the artist sharing his personal insights on *Photography as a Spiritual Practice*.

Please consider a special purchase of one of these paintings, as every sale benefits both you and the Aryaloka Buddhist Center. ~ Dh. Kiranada

Please be sure Aryaloka's windows stay closed in winter and remember to close them when leaving the center in warmer months. Thank you!

Upcoming Arts Events You Won't Want to Miss

Hello friends. This is an update on arts activities and also a small plea for help in the next three months (only a *little* help - we try to keep our volunteer needs to a minimum.)

First... the exciting *Contemplative Movement Day* is coming up on Saturday, October 8th. Dawn Kramer, a choreographer from MassArt, and her partner Stephen Buck, a video artist, have volunteered to come to lead us for a day of movement in relationship to the environment. Do sign up now, if you would like to participate. Could be VERY exciting. We are hoping to film some of the short "movement poems" for sharing later. We need some help with lunch set-up and clean-up only. Lunch will be provided by the center. Joan Rochette has volunteered to bring snacks for us.

Secondly... we have a new photography exhibition going up on October 18th, *Photography as Spiritual Practice*. Josh Bartok, a Zen priest from Boston, is exhibiting. It should be *quite* interesting. Josh and I could use some help on Tuesday afternoon, on October 18th, if anyone is available, or I can swing it myself.

Thirdly, we have one of our very special Arts Evenings scheduled for Sunday, November 20th. These have been very popular and well-received, a good time to bring your friends and family members to see Aryaloka at its best (Yes, it's always at its best!). It will be our third in this series with possibly some poetry, music, and our visiting artist to speak about his work. Could use some help with yoga room set-up, sweets, pleasing kinds of liquids to drink, and someone to coordinate setup of a reception table.

FOR YOUR CALENDAR:

Center scheduling is tight, and we have had to put off our *Shodo Ink* practice day until next spring, but we will do it again, and invite others (Saturday, April 28th, for your calendars).

We will have a *Poem-Making Day* on February 11th with Lin



Photo courtesy Dawn Kramer

Illingworth. There will be a *Kado: Way of Flowers Day*, on June 3rd.

Thanks so very much for being active with this great group of friends on the arts kula... and for volunteering for some of these tasks to make our load lighter and more creative.

~ Dh. Kiranada

Monks' Visit

Continued from Page 12

municate and they saw no problem with language at all. They just saw an opportunity to share their culture and good news with new friends.

Early in the week I found myself drawn to their company and wanting to spend my free time at Aryaloka. In quiet conversation we talked about their homeland in Tibet and the hardships of having to flee Tibet and establish a home in India. They talked about their families who still lived in Tibet and their sadness of not being able to visit their families and homeland. One monk said when he gets a chance to call his family in Tibet his mother cries when she hears his voice. Another monk talked about his seventeen-year-old brother in Tibet who doesn't want to get dirty

– he doesn't want to tend the yak herd or farm the land - he just wants to dress up and hang out with his friends. The monk said his parents ask him to try and talk sense into this younger brother but he knows when they speak his brother is not listening. The cultural barriers definitely dropped as we laughed about our similarities and shared stories of our own lives and families.

During the week the monks taught us Tibetan phrases and we taught them English and laughed with each other as we tried to pronounce the other's native language. During lunch one day we entertained the monks by singing our alphabet in the childhood tune we all knew. They laughed and then sang their alphabet. We all walked around with cheat sheets in our pocket with "Hello, thank you, you're welcome, etc." written on them. It was tru-

ly one of those weeks that produced a shift in me – something that I could actually touch. I knew I was in the company of holy men, but these holy men were just like us in so many ways.

At the end of their stay, as we said our good-byes, one of the Geshes took my hands. As we stood there, with our foreheads touching the Geshe gave me his blessing for a long and healthy life. Unexpectedly tears filled my eyes as I said good-bye to our new friends, all the while being assured that they will continue to hold me in their prayers and knowing that I will hold them in mine.

Our hearts were filled with gratitude for the beautiful gifts we enjoyed this past week and I wished our friends safe travels across the USA until they finally return back home to their monastery in India.

May all blessings be theirs.



Irish Washerwoman

By Joan Rochette

Someone planted roses.
These old row houses, full of immigrants once,
one of them. And her husband worked on the docks
loading and unloading. Do you suppose he cared
if he was loading or unloading, coming or going?
He drank too much beer,
whiskey when he had the chance,
sometimes drained his manila pay envelope
and there was not quite enough to pay the rent.
So on the day she planted roses
she ironed in her kitchen into the night,
a light bulb hanging in the middle of the room,
till she finished the laundry job
for the woman up on West Street,
starched the collars and cuffs,
folded the linen tablecloths just so,
Irish linen, for the woman up on West Street
where there was a garden in the back.
And maybe she's buried up the hill
next to St. Catherine's Church,
and a great grandchild lives in a Cape Cod house
out behind the mall, descendant of that son of hers
who wet the bed till he was six,
leaving her with reeking sheets every morning,
urine saturated sheets
there with the linen table cloths and starched cuffs
and pillow cases with embroidered hems, every morning,
even mornings when her husband came in,
his pay envelope almost dry, and hit the older boy so hard.
Maybe she was the one
who planted roses anyway, anyway she could.
You don't think she had a spade?
And they're there, still there,

blooming,

pink.

Aryaloka Poetry Group Small, But Thriving

The poetry group, even though it has only met twice so far, is small and thriving. Irene forced us to stay at home in August. Everyone who has attended has brought something quite different and valuable to the group, just as each color in a bouquet is valuable. Those who listen and participate support the discussion, just as green leaves support a bouquet. We have heard poems

in "Buddhist language," imaginings of play with Bodhisattvas, as well as metaphors of nature - as in traditional haiku - that hold quiet insights. There have been poems drawn from contemporary images where we can search for Dharmic meaning, and poems, published and unpublished by others, that have been shared by those who've found meaning or a sense of beauty in them.

On one Sunday afternoon near the end of each month the group will continue to meet at Aryaloka from 4-6 in the afternoon. You are invited to join us with what you've written, what someone else has written, or to listen. Please watch for the announcement sent to the sangha each month. No prior registration necessary.

~ Joan Rochette

Bodhilocana's Dream

A stupa for Dhardo Rinpoche

By Viriyagita

Editor's note: *A kula has been meeting for some time now, charged with the mission of creating a stupa for Dhardo Rinpoche at Aryaloka. Great strides have been made in turning this vision into a reality.*

I can't say exactly when the dream came into being – maybe it was the first time Bodhilocana connected with Dhardo Rinpoche. He was a Tibetan monk who, although he had been a high-ranking lama in the Gelugpa school and was an abbot of a monastery in Bodhgaya, spent most of his life in the Indian village of Kalimpong. He founded an orphanage and school (Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Cultural Institute or ITBCI) for Tibetan refugees in 1954. That school still exists, and just recently money that Bodhilocana had set aside to contribute to the school has been sent to ITBCI in her memory.

When Sangharakshita was in Kalimpong he received teachings from Dhardo Rinpoche. After he left India, he came to England and when he founded the Triratna Buddhist Community (the FWBO at that time) he made it clear that Dhardo Rinpoche was one of his eight key teachers.

Many of Sangharakshita's followers travelled to Kalimpong to see this wise and compassionate teacher who considered Bhante's disciples to be his disciples. Sangharakshita has regarded Dhardo Rinpoche as a living Bodhisattva. He died in 1990, but many of his followers continued to experience him quite directly. Bodhilocana spoke of her heartfelt connection to him even though she had never met him on this physical plane.

I can't say exactly when the dream came into being – but it was certainly alive when Bodhilocana (then Denise), Kiranada (then Betsy), and myself led the first Dhardo Rinpoche Day here at Aryaloka several years ago. We spent the day revering him, recollecting our connections with him, giving talks on his teaching of "Cherish the Doctrine, live united, radiate love."

We chanted the White Tara mantra and we watched in awe the video of his cremation ceremony.

I can't say exactly when the dream came into being – but as it took shape a mythic journey was begun.

On the North American Convention last year Bodhilocana breathed life into the dream and we were surefootedly moving towards its realization. We had decided to build a *stupa* on the grounds of Aryaloka that would serve as a reliquary for some part of Dhardo's physical presence here.

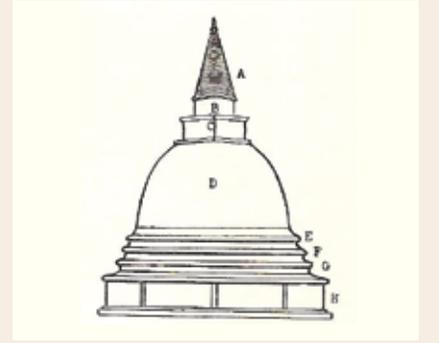
Initially we thought that there were no ashes available, but that perhaps there was a toothbrush we could have. We were excited to receive anything of Dhardo's, but even more thrilled when we heard there were possibly some ashes remaining.

Arrangements were put in process through Suvajra to have these ashes come west. We then began a series of meetings, formed a kula (Bodhilocana, Amala, Kiranada, Viriyagita, and Dayalocana), and researched the *stupas* that had already been built within the Movement: Taraloka and Padmaloka in England, Tiratnaloka in Wales, Guhyaloka in Spain, Vimaladhatu in Germany, and Sudarshanaloka in New Zealand. Kiranada also researched quite extensively *stupas* built by other Buddhist communities. We requested information on the time it took to complete the *stupas*, the cost and fundraising needs, the design process, challenges and difficulties, what went well, and what would be done differently.

Our discussion and research led us to some core principles for the design of the stupa: simplicity, durability, reference to tradition, reference to our region, attainability, affordability, and most importantly that it contain the five elements of the *stupa* meditation practice. Not only is the *stupa* to act as a reliquary for Dhardo's ashes and as a memorial to him, but it will ultimately be a symbol of the Enlightenment experience itself.

I can't say exactly when the dream

continued on page 19



What is a Stupa?

The *stupa*, or "heap" in Sanskrit, is the oldest Buddhist religious monument. As the Sanskrit word implies, it was originally only a simple mound of mud or clay to cover supposed relics of the Buddha. Over the centuries, *stupas* have grown to be places of worship and veneration, an ancient form of a mandala. [See the *stupas of Sarnath and Sanchi (3 BCE) and Borobudur in Java, Indonesia, the largest in the world (8 CE)*]

The symbolism of the *stupa* shape represents the Buddha in a meditation pose, sitting on a lion throne. The base is the throne, the area of the steps represents his legs, the vase or spherical shape represents his body, his head is the conical section, and the top spire is his crown.

We can also see the five elements in the *stupa* form: the square base representing the earth element; the hemisphere dome or vase is the water element; the conical shape is the fire element; the upper portion, sometimes a parasol as well as the crescent moon, represents air; and the dissolving point, the element of space.

Participating in the building of a *stupa* is considered an extremely beneficial act, leaving very positive karmic imprints on the mind. *Stupas* in other countries are called Chorten (Tibet, Ladakh, India, Bhutan), Daga-bo (Sri Lanka), Thart (Laos), Chedi (Thailand, also Sinhalese, Tamil), Tō (Japan), Ta (China), Candi (Malaysia, Indonesia), Chaitya (Nepal).

References: Sangharakshita, *Creative Symbols in Tantric Buddhism*, Lama Govinda, *Psycho-cosmic Symbolism of the Buddhist Stupa*, Wikipedia search, 'stupa'

Arjava discusses the Going Deeper Series

A new series of workshops was added to the program this autumn, the *Going Deeper* series. Arjava explains what these workshops are about.

Who would benefit from the *Going Deeper* workshops?

The workshops are designed to give anyone who has started to explore meditation and Buddhism a way to deepen their meditation practice and their understanding of the Dharma. They are a good "next step" for people who have begun attending the Tuesday Sangha Night regularly. Although each workshop has a different theme, the primary purpose of all of

them is to help us learn how to incorporate meditation and Buddhism into our everyday lives.

What do people do on a *Going Deeper* workshop?

All the workshops start off with a meditation session. Depending on the workshop's theme, the rest of our time together will contain short lectures, group discussions, or more meditation.

You've already had a workshop on Mindfulness; what do you have planned for upcoming workshops?

The next one is on conditioned co-production, one of the fundamental principles of Buddhism. Vidhuma and I will be

co-leading this on November 12th. On December 17th we will be *Going Deeper into Metta* (loving-kindness). As some of you know, metta and the brahma-viharas are two of the main focuses of my practice, so I am really excited about offering the first of a series on metta. This workshop will give you some tools to help with the stress of the holidays. The goal of the workshop is to begin the season with a peaceful mind and an open heart.

More information about the *Going Deeper* workshops, including dates, times, and registration information can be found on our website.

Puja Asks That We Call Forth As Much As We Can

Devotional practice can be difficult for westerners. But Sangharakshita tells us:

The expression 'call forth,' after all, suggests that we are to bring forth something that is already there. The love, the respect, and the faith are all there, latent within us: they are natural human endowments. It is as though the Buddha is saying, 'Let them express themselves, let them manifest themselves.'

This idea, fundamental to Buddhism, is one that goes against the grain for those of us who imagine our socialized selves are

sitting on a lot of unattractive, basic, animal urges, and that if we become more uninhibited, all sorts of unpleasant negative emotions are going to come pouring out. But that is a one-sided view of things; there is a lot that is good and positive that also gets repressed. In a largely secular society this is perhaps especially true of devotional feelings - your love and reverence and faith remain unused and stifled. You may even have come to the conclusion that you simply have no devotional feelings.

I have known a lot of apparently quite intellectual people who, while they used to find the devotional demands of religion

quite suffocating, nevertheless discovered, when they eventually took up Buddhist devotional practices, that they enjoyed being devotional. They found - rather to their surprise - that they really enjoyed offering flowers and lighting candles; that it was, in fact, quite a relief to feel able to do so at last.

Here at Aryaloka we join together for meditation and *puja* on the Friday each month closest to the full moon (see the website - www.aryaloka.org for details). Please join us to "call forth as much as you can."

~ Elizabeth Hellard

Putting the Dharma Into Practice

One of our goals in spiritual practice is to be able to put Dharma teachings into action. Here is an action plan to reflect on and practice, using speech as our focus.

Practice question: How do you go about changing unkind speech?

1. Hear and study the teachings on non-harm and skillful speech.
2. Notice our own speech, our mental state, and its effects, over and over again.
3. Be aware of the precept and the feedback loop of our mental state, our speech, and its results.

Again and again, every time we open our mouth to speak.

4. In meditation we have the space to cultivate clarity and metta, which will support skillful speech.
5. Slowly, over time, we make choices to speak more kindly.
6. One day we realize we have confidence in our ability to speak in a skillful way, without using negative or critical speech. We realize we can have confidence in being in touch with *metta*.

2012 Pledge Drive

Continued from Page 6

earn several thousand dollars for the full year after all expenses are met. Income from retreats and programs are each slightly ahead of budget, and we've been able to keep most expenses below budget even as we deal with unexpected costs.

In this difficult economic environment, Aryaloka is fortunate to have so many members and friends participate in our events. Your contribution - large or small - makes the all the difference. Thanks for your support, and thanks in advance for pledging your financial support to Aryaloka's 2012 Pledge Drive!

Death May Be Hazardous

Continued from Page 13

pulse did not stop with my relationship with mother. Having to prove myself as worthy, dependable, and having value was subconsciously root-bound in most of my relationships - including with the Order - especially in the years leading up to my ordination. Hindsight demonstrated how the need to prove myself drove me from within and unconsciously came out sideways. Although now moderating, the energy was pressing and forceful, disturbing my peace and that of others.

You should inquire deeply and directly into the distress of the mind and find out what has been created and who is the self that is suffering. Without this understanding, you can't develop clarity and the ability to help others. A person may be expert at undoing knots, but if he never sees that there is a knot in front of him, how will he undo it? Without clear and direct looking, you will be locked into time and space and unable to free yourself from the material world.
~ Surangama Sutra

Death brings a gift of sudden alertness. Whatever self-views are complacent, hidden, or consciously active within us will undergo a thump on the head, a kick in the shins, followed by a dramatic stirring

in the heart. The door opens and something real awakens, prepared to integrate us a little more closely with our spiritual ideal. Only one thing to do. Go with it! It is a viable opportunity. The compulsion to be good, to prove - a self-view brought to naked, transparent view - can be transformed into a dynamic intention compelled to evolve. In Sangharakshita's *The Three Jewels*, he writes: "...seeing the true nature of all conditioned things, that is, in seeing them as characterized by impermanence, pain, insubstantiality... in its depth is non-different from the Unconditioned, insight into the one becomes eventually insight into the other." (p. 123)

*Life flickers in the flurries of
a thousand ills,
More fragile than a bubble in a stream.
In sleep, each breath departs and is again
drawn in;
How wondrous that we
wake up living still!
~ Nagarjuna*

*To get this chance to practice the Dharma
is very difficult.
To be born a human being is
very difficult.
Among uncountable sperms and eggs,
you are here.
Congratulations.
~ Soen Nakagawa*

Stupa

Continued from Page 17

came into being - but it will come to fruition. The process of dreaming, working on, and bringing into being this *stupa* has been and will be a collective process. We agree with Bhante on his advice to the New Zealand sangha to have "the whole project be like one great *puja* from beginning to end."

Throughout the year our program will include talks, retreats, and artistic activities centering on Dharo Rinpoche, *stupas*, and the *stupa* meditation practice.

Please join us in this collective process of harnessing the sacred power of the *stupa* for the benefit of the community and our area. If you have any specific interests or contributions, please contact either Amala, Kiranada, or Viriyagita. An account has already been established by Bodhilocana and donations are very welcome.

The dream has come into being and the dream will be realized. Our mythic journey continues. The source of inspiration for this journey is no longer with us in the physical realm. Our dreamer has moved on and her dream has continued to inspire those of us who remain here.

May Bodhilocana's dream come into being for the benefit of all!

Upcoming Events

Continued from Page 20

- 20 Poetry Group, 4-6 p.m.
- 20 Arts Evening, 6-9 p.m.
- 21 Men's mitra class
- 22 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m.
- 23 Intro to Meditation & Buddhism, 7-9 p.m. - Amala
- 28 Men's mitra class
- 29 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m.
- 30 Intro to Meditation & Buddhism, 7-9 p.m. - Amala

DECEMBER 2011

- 1 "Photography as a Spiritual Practice" exhibition ends
- 2 Annual Aryaloka AUCTION, evening - Time TBA
- 3 Order Day, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
- 4 Women's Practice Day
- 5 Men's mitra class

- 6 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m.
- 7 Intro to Meditation & Buddhism, 7-9 p.m. - Amala
- 9 Full-Moon puja and meditation, 7-9 p.m.
- 9 "The Joy Factory" retreat - Bodhipaksa
- 12 Men's mitra class
- 13 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m.
- 14 Intro to Meditation & Buddhism, 7-9 p.m. - Amala
- 17 Introduction to Meditation: Mindfulness, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. - Samayadevi
- 17 "Going Deeper Into Metta" 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. - Arjava & Suzanne
- 18 Men's Practice Day
- 18 Poetry Group 4-6 p.m.
- 19 Men's mitra class
- 20 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m.
- 24-31 "Stillness, Simplicity, and Contentment: Winter Meditation Retreat" - Varada

upcoming events

(All events are subject to change. For the latest, up-to-date information, check our web site at <http://www.aryaloka.org> or call the office at 603-659-5456.)

Akasaloka events are in italics.

OCTOBER 2011

- 3 Men's mitra class
- 4 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m.
- 5 Intro to Meditation & Buddhism, 7-9 p.m.
- Bodhipaksa
- 6 Women's and mixed mitra classes, 6 p.m.
- 7 Karuna Trust Fundraising Dinner, 7-9
- Danakamala, Shrijnana
- 8 "Contemplative Movement in the Environment"
arts day, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. - Dawn Kramer, artist
- 8 *Intro to Loving-Kindness Meditation, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.*
- Vihanasari
- 9 WORK DAY, 9a.m.- 4p.m.
- 10 Men's mitra class
- 11 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m.
- 12 Intro to Meditation & Buddhism, 7-9 p.m.
- Bodhipaksa
- 13 Women's and mixed mitra class, 6 p.m.
- 14 *Full-moon puja and meditation, 7-9 p.m.*
- 14-15 Retreat at Concord State Prison for Men
- 14-16 "One Life: Living the Holy Life and Living in the
World" retreat - Vidhuma
- 15 Sangha Hike - Mt. Chocorua - Shrijnana
- 16 Hike rain date
- 17 Men's mitra class
- 18 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m.
- 18 "Photography as a Spiritual Practice" exhibition opens
- 19 Intro to Meditation & Buddhism, 7-9 p.m.
- Bodhipaksa
- 20 Women's and mixed mitra classes, 6 p.m.
- 20-23 "Open Heart, Quiet Mind" yoga and meditation
retreat - Michelle & Arjava
- 22 *"With Body, Speech, and Mind" class, 10a.m. -4p.m.*

- Danakamala
- 23 *Men's practice day*
- 23 Poetry Group, 4-6 p.m.
- 24 Men's mitra class
- 25 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m.
- 26 *Intro to Meditation & Buddhism, 7-9 p.m.*
- Bodhipaksa - last class
- 26-11/1 Noble Silence meditation retreat
- 27 *Women's and mixed mitra classes, 6 p.m.*
- 31 *Men's mitra class*

NOVEMBER 2011

- 1 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m.
- 3 Women's and mixed mitra classes, 6 p.m.
- 4-6 "Five Aspects of the Spiritual Path" - Order/Mitra re-
treat
- 7 Men's mitra class
- 8 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m.
- 9 Intro to Meditation & Buddhism, 7-9 p.m. - Amala
- 10 Women's and mixed mitra classes, 6 p.m.
- 11 *Full-moon puja and meditation, 7-9 p.m.*
- 12 Rental - domes building closed
- 12 *"Going Deeper Into Conditioned Co-Production,"*
10 a.m. - 4 p.m. - Arjava & Vidhuma
- 13 Sangha Day - Dayalocana
- 14 Men's mitra class
- 15 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m.
- 16 Intro to Meditation & Buddhism, 7-9 p.m. - Amala
- 18-20 Rental - domes building closed
- 19 *Men's practice day*
- 20 *"Joy of Gratitude" retreat 10 a.m., 3 p.m.*
- Akashavanda & Jean

continued on page 19

ongoing events

Sangha Night At Aryaloka

Every Tuesday evening, 6:45-9:15 p.m.

- Led by Amala, Arjava, and other sangha members, et. al.
- Open to all
- Fee: Suggested donation \$10 per class
- No registration necessary

Typically, our Tuesday night activities include:

- 6:45 - Gathering, tea and announcements
- 7:00 - Meditation and shrine room activity
- 7:45 - Study, discussion or a talk on the evening's topic
- 9:15 - End

With these activities, you are free to participate or to just sit and listen. Nothing is compulsory. If you have any questions, please ask!

Full Moon Puja

Friday evenings as scheduled (unless noted). See the Aryaloka website or *Vajra Bell* events schedule for dates and locations. 7:00 p.m. meditation, followed by puja.

The rich devotional practice of meditation and puja is shared on these special Friday nights by those who find devotion an important part of their practice.

When we celebrate the Sevenfold Puja, which combines faith and devotion with poetry and sometimes an element of visual beauty, we find that our emotional energies are to some extent refined. When this happens, it becomes possible for the vision and insight of the higher thinking center to act through these refined, sublimated emotional centers directly on the moving center. In this way, the whole of life is completely transformed.

Sangharakshita ~ Ritual and Devotion