

WINTER 2012

vajrabell

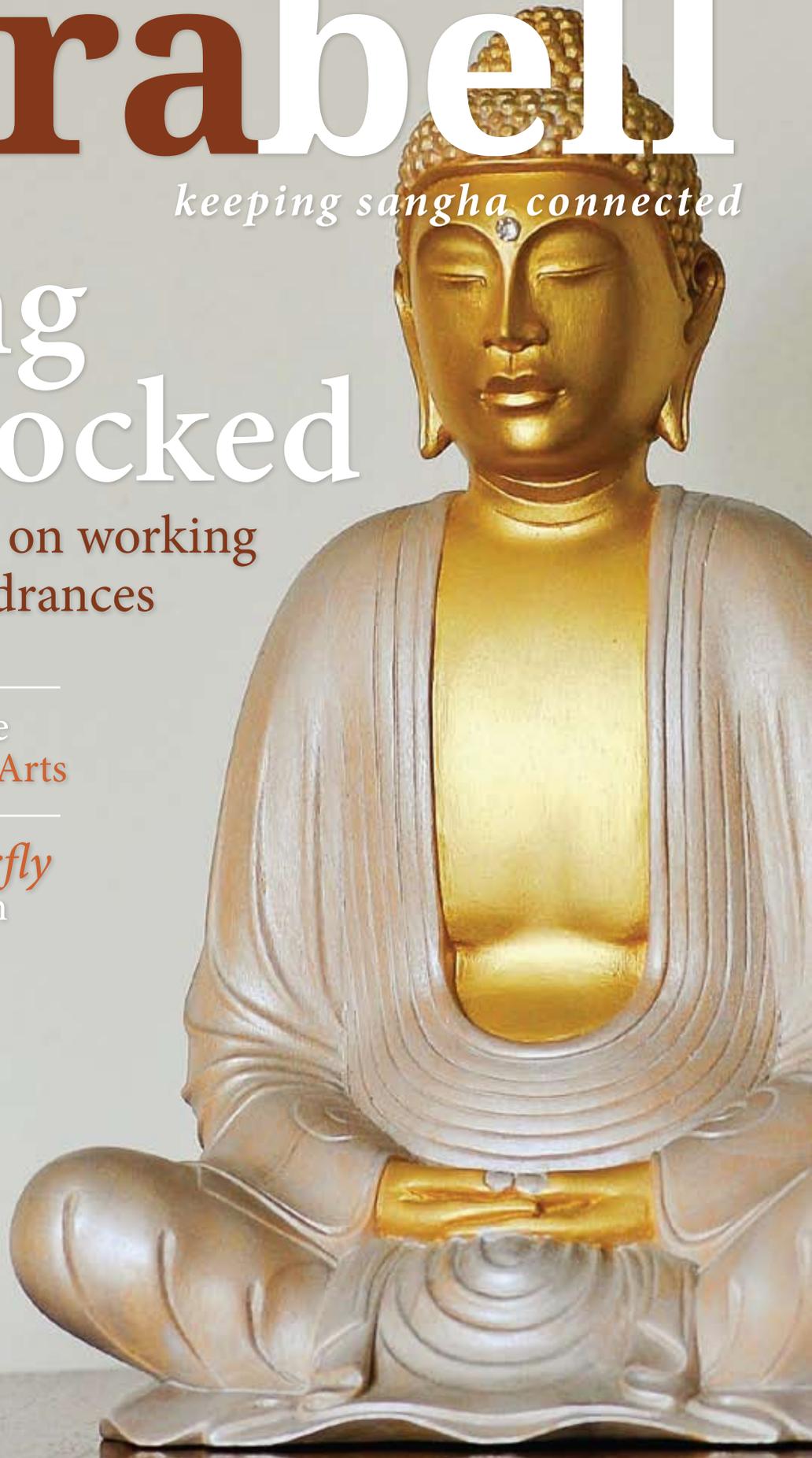
keeping sangha connected

Getting Unblocked

Saddhamala's tips on working
with the Five Hindrances

A Men's Day Adventure
at the **Museum of Fine Arts**

Releasing the Butterfly
On impermanence with
Ashley Davis Bush





Hello Dharma brothers and sisters, and welcome to 2012! There's lots to look forward to in the new year for our Center, our sangha, and ourselves.

Saddhamala rewards us with a wonderful piece in this issue on the Five Hindrances, and how we can work on them in our meditation practice. At this time of year, when we're laying down resolutions for how we'd like to move ahead, I think taking some time to better understand the Hindrances is very relevant and helpful to our Buddhist practice in general.

The Five Hindrances are one of those useful lists that you may not immediately take in when you begin to meditate — their importance may not really start to sink in right away, even if you are exposed to them from the get-go. I know it was that way for me. It actually wasn't until I became a mitra that I really started to get what they were all about. I remember sitting in men's mitra study with Surakshita, reading about the Hindrances, and he explained to us — from a place of obvious experience and earnestness — that without really putting some focus on them in your meditation practice you were going to have real difficulty in getting very far. And he was absolutely right.

The first challenge in working with what comes up in meditation is just being able to see what's coming up, and I've found the list of the hindrances to be invaluable in this regard. It's a very straightforward system to categorize the often overwhelming variety of distractions during meditation into workable chunks. You can then apply antidotes to those areas to help mitigate their distractive potential. In a sense it's like medicine for the mind.

I struggle with the Hindrances — whether they occur on the cushion or in everyday life — but to be able to understand what's happening in my mind using these methods is a vital tool in my toolbox. Something comes up, and I can recognize it. I can ask why it's coming up and get to the root of the mind state. I can shift gears before it becomes an issue, get creative with my response, and transform it instead into an opportunity to learn and cultivate

the positive qualities that I would like to manifest in my life.

I don't know that this is something you ever stop doing — it just becomes more of a natural reflex of the mind to switch gears in this way. As far as I know, there is no getting over the Hindrances. Their potential is always there when you're stressed or tired or feeling a lack of one thing or another. With practice, awareness, and accumulated moments of insight, though, one's positive reaction time becomes quicker and quicker until, one would suppose, for an enlightened being it becomes so simultaneous with the moment that it's imperceptible.

The Hindrances can feel like mile-high brick walls when times are tough and vision is clouded — impenetrable barriers keeping us from the calm and enjoyment that we so rightfully deserve out of meditation, every time... right? "Who put this thing here, and where's my jackhammer?"

Actually, though, the hindrances *are* very much the practice itself. They're kind of a gift, really. They show us vividly where our tendencies lie, where we get stuck, and they require commitment from us in the sense that we can't move forward without dealing with them. If we don't work with them one way, they'll find another way to demonstrate the obvious to us. They'll keep coming back in subtler forms until we truly understand ourselves better. Rather than being a mile-high barrier they are more like the stone we sharpen our flaming wisdom swords upon.

May this new year bring all of us happiness, health, and opportunity, and may the lotus petals of our beautiful sangha continue to blossom.



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vajrabel

www.aryaloka.org/category/vajra-bell

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Cover photograph by Tom Gaillard

musings from the chair || Dh. Dayalocana



Welcome to a new year at Aryaloka - a year full of possibilities, opportunities, and even challenges! We could consider it as a year in which we will make the time to meditate, study, re-

fect, and take our practice into the world. Hopefully it will be a year for our community to develop connections as we come together for practice. And it could be a year for each of us to contribute in our own way to the noble project of sharing the teachings of the Buddha.

Looking back, 2011 was a year full of activity and growth at Aryaloka. The year began, as is our custom, with a Meditate for Peace Day on January 1st. The program included meditation events throughout the year: introductory classes each month; weeknight meditation and Bud-

dism classes; and meditation retreats on the *brahmaviharas*, the *dhyanas*, Noble Silence, and yoga and meditation. The year ended with the winter meditation retreat in the stillness and peace of the domes.

We welcomed new people to our Triratna Community and filled the Center on Sangha Nights, offering three class options each Tuesday. Mitras studied seriously two nights a week. Introductory Buddhism classes were offered in the evenings, and weekend retreats focused on *sutta* study, mindfulness, and spiritual friendship.

Several men and women took part in mitra ceremonies this past year, expressing their commitment to follow a Buddhist path with the Triratna Community at Aryaloka. Other mitras deepened their practice by joining the ordination process, committing to many years of preparation.

As a community we celebrated, along with other Buddhists, four important days – Parinirvana, Buddha Day, Dharma Day,

and Sangha Day – expressing our gratitude for the Three Jewels in our lives. We came together for the devotional practice of puja each month on the Friday night closest to the full moon.

We held practice days for men, women, and Order members; a chanting workshop; arts events that featured poetry, music, Japanese brush stroke painting, mindful movement, and talks by artists whose work hung in our “gallery” to be enjoyed by all.

Our sangha welcomed Triratna Order members from England and centers in the west who came to share the Dharma. We spent a week with Grepung Gompa monks as they shared their tradition of Buddhist practice and we gathered for a delicious fundraising dinner for the Triratna Buddhist Community in India.

We shared warm times with each other hiking in the New Hampshire mountains and joined together at the summer picnic

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from the council || Dh. Vihanasari



At the annual meeting in December, the following people were elected to the Aryaloka Council for 2012: Dayalocana, chair; Brian “Jumbo” Jervis, secretary; Tom Gail-

lard, treasurer; Arjava; Akashavanda; Eric Wentworth; Shrijnana; and Vihanasari. The Aryaloka budget for 2012 was also reviewed and approved.

Since the last issue of the Vajra Bell, the Council has heard monthly updates from the five working teams (Spiritual Vitality, Finance, Administration, Development, and Facility). Each of the teams and some subcommittees are currently working on goals for the coming year and into the future.

Many thanks to Rick Lee for grading the driveway and for transporting the equipment. Thanks, too, to Shrijnana and Danakamala for a successful fundraising dinner for Karuna Trust, a Triratna charity that raises funds to assist disenfranchised Buddhists in India. And much appreciation to Arjava and Jumbo who have donat-



ed generators to the Center for use when there is a power outage. An electrician will install interlock switches and outside plugs to accommodate the machines.

The Council has voted to explore a new, tiered, pricing schedule for most Aryaloka events, starting on January 1. The new fee structure states that “At Aryaloka, we strive to make our programs available to everyone regardless of their financial circumstances. Our fee structure allows you to pay according to your means. The **Sustaining price** is for people com-

fortably paying their rent or mortgage, and who can afford the occasional meal out and movie. The Sustaining price level also helps Aryaloka offer lower prices to those who could otherwise not afford to attend. Any payment above this price is a tax-deductible donation. **Mid-Level** prices are for those who have a regular income and are paying their mortgage or rent. Prices at this level contribute to the range of Aryaloka’s operating costs. The **Base-Level** price is for those without an income or with an

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sangha notes

ARYALOKA SANGHA (NEWMARKET, NH)

The National Weather Service calls November 2011 the warmest on record. December is turning out mild as well. I have to say I am ready for winter, for snow, and for the warmth and light of the Sangha to get me through the darker months. As always, there is so much happening at Aryaloka.

Sangha Day Festival

In the Triratna Buddhist Community we celebrate several festival days and in November we celebrated Sangha Day with a lovely talk given by Dh. Dayalocana, Aryaloka's Chairperson, on the value of sangha. This was followed by puja, a devotional practice, in the shrine room. The event was attended by many friends, mitras and Order members, many of whom brought a dish to share and enjoy. The domes were alive with the echoing sounds of several exuberant children who joined this event and their little faces were adorable as they made their offerings to the Buddha. The next festival day will be on February 12, 2012, when we celebrate Parinirvana Day.

Meditation Classes

Beginning in January and extending into February, Bodhana is leading an Introduction to Buddhism and Meditation class. This six-week Wednesday night series is a popular one and will explore basic Buddhist teachings as well as several traditional Buddhist meditations, including mindfulness of breathing, development of loving-kindness (*metta bhavana*) and walking meditation.

This class would be helpful for everyone by helping us to focus, to become more at ease, and to know our own minds more fully. The Buddhist teachings to be shared will include the five ethical precepts, the principle of conditionality or interconnectedness, and the Four Noble Truths.

The course emphasizes how the Buddhist tradition applies to our lives and the world as we know it. In addition to this offering, please see the upcoming events calendar in this issue or the Aryaloka website events calendar for upcoming retreats, classes, and programs.

Sangha Night Discussion

On Tuesdays there are two choices for visitors: a led meditation in the library with Arjava, or silent meditation in the shrine room led by an Order member.

After our period of meditation there have been three study groups one can attend. Arjava, Barry Timmerman, and Brian Jervis led one group in an eight-week beginner series on the Eightfold Path.

Amala and Stephen Sloan have been leading an engaging dharma study of select readings from the Pali Canon. The readings are paired with moments of contemplation and discussion.

The third discussion group is being led by Akashavanda and Sheila Groonell utilizing the book *What is the Dharma?* The emphasis for this group has been to apply the principles of practice to daily life, moving out of the brain and into the heart.

The Sangha Grows

We recently welcomed several new mitras and friends of the Triratna Community here at Aryaloka.

Surakshita led a ceremony to welcome Mark Wampler and Sam Chaney as mitras, and Saddhamala led a ceremony to welcome Jo Ann Beltre, Tobbie Krantz, Trish Moulton, Lois Sans, and Linda Tyler. At Aryaloka, mitras have an opportunity to deepen friendships and participate in specialized study led by experienced order members. A big sadhu to each of you!

As the sangha continues to grow, if you join us on Tuesday evening you will now have two choices for silent meditation: the main shrine room, as usual, and now the yoga room, which will transform into a second space for silent meditation. This allows a safe number of participants upstairs who would be able to exit quickly if ever there were an emergency. The leader in the shrine room wears a microphone so those down below can follow along.

Mitra Study

The beginners mitra study group resumed in January for both men and women. Newer mitras will be studying the *Foundation Year, Part Three* with a concentration on exploring Buddhist practice with regard to meditation. Saddhamala will be teaching the online course for those unable to attend classes.

The men's mitra study group meets on

Monday evenings from 7 to 9 p.m., beginning with meditation together and followed by study. This group is working its way through year three of the *Dharma Training Course for Mitras* and following a format of having a member of the group volunteer to facilitate an upcoming unit. The resulting discussions are lively, informative and a great way to get to know fellow mitras.

The women's mitra group will be led by Amala and will study the *brahmaviharas*.
~ Chris Shorey

NAGALOKA SANGHA (PORTLAND, ME)

Winter greetings from Portland, Maine! Nagaloka is approaching its one-year anniversary in our new space at 54 York Street in downtown Portland. Our sunny, spacious area with lots of large windows has quickly become a comfortable and warm home to our sangha. We have had lots going on all year and have been able to hold day retreats and offer lunch with our new kitchen facilities. How nice to break bread with each other!

Our Wednesday Friends' Night has just finished up with the book *Sailing the Worldly Winds* by Vajragupta. We started off this book in conjunction with the Urban Retreat. Our sangha found it to be a very useful and practical guide on identifying how the Worldly Winds blow in our everyday life. Our weekly discussions were full of personal insights into how windy things can be, yet also what we can do to slow our swinging between the opposites of gain and loss, praise and blame, fame and disgrace, and pleasure and pain.

Our Friends' Nights will finish the year by spending time with the Five Jinas, a puja, and a talk by Dharmasuri. In January we will start up with a study on ethics. What a great topic to go along with all our New Year's resolutions!

January 1st will bring an open house for Nagaloka. We will have an introduction to meditation, a mindfulness movement class for children, potluck lunch, and information on the Triratna Buddhist Community. It should be fun for all ages!

Thank you to Narottama and Amala for coming to Nagaloka to lead day retreats this fall on the *metta bhavana*. Our sangha so

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musings from the chair

Continued from Page 3

to express appreciation to the many volunteers who make it possible to offer so much to so many.

In order to better manage the many activities of our Buddhist Center, the Aryaloka Council developed teams to oversee five important areas: Program/Spiritual Vitality, Administration, Finance, Facility, and Development. Council members headed up the teams and worked closely with volunteers who generously gave their time, energy, and talent.

The area of spiritual vitality has been of special interest to Amala, who has led several Order members in an exploration of how we might continue to deepen practice along our path. Shrijnana, as Program Coordinator, developed the Aryaloka program, keeping in mind the needs of all practitioners and utilizing feedback from events.

The Teaching kula (under the Pro-

gram/Spiritual Vitality team) created three sub groups: Curriculum, Teacher Training and Support, and Quality Assurance and Implementation. Each of these groups met throughout the year to develop tools, guidelines, and methods to improve presentation of the Dharma and Buddhist practices at Aryaloka.

The Administration Team (now known as the A-Team!) has the difficult task of making sure that everything (yes, everything!) runs efficiently and smoothly. Vihanasari, our Center Administrator, and Steve Cardwell, our Office Manager, along with other A-Team members are to be commended for their perseverance.

The Finance Team ran a successful Pledge Drive this fall under the able leadership of Aryaloka's treasurer, Tom Gaillard. He monitored our fiscal practices, developed the budget, and kept us up-to-date on financial matters.

The Facility Team, led by Arjava and supported by Brian Jervis, not only looked at the future needs of our facilities but also

responded to every current need, urgent and otherwise, regarding our buildings and grounds. They created a comfortable and safe surrounding for our practice.

The Development Team, led by Akashavanda and Eric Wentworth, were determined to move Aryaloka into the 21st century with knowledge of marketing, web design, and programs. The Development Team also was responsible for the annual fundraising auction. Stay tuned for new developments in 2012!

Thank you for all you gave in 2011 to help make Aryaloka an excellent place to practice and learn the teachings of the Buddha. Throughout the next year let us recall our connections with other Triratna communities in North America and throughout the world.

We send our thanks to Sangharakshita, the founder of our movement, for giving us the opportunities to learn the Dharma and change our lives.

Wishes for happiness, peace, and wisdom in the year ahead.

from the council

Continued from Page 3

income low enough that making ends meet is a challenge. Those whose circumstances are not included above can call the office to arrange alternate pricing." The tiered pricing system will be reviewed in March and again in June to analyze its effectiveness.

Being mindful of the optimal capacity of the shrine room and the difficulty some folks have in climbing the stairs, it was vot-

ed to hold simultaneous meditations in both the yoga room and the shrine room on Tuesday Sangha Nights.

The Council would like to thank all those who helped with the recent pledge drive, the annual auction, and the end-of-year fundraising letter.

A reminder that Council minutes are posted on the bulletin board at the foot of the stairs. Visitors are welcome at Council meetings; please contact Dayalocana in advance.

sangha notes

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appreciates having visiting Order members join us for a full day of meditation and study.

Our mitra study of the Bodhisattva Ideal continues into the new year. Thank you, Maitrimani, for leading our mitras through this deep and inspiring study. Also, thank you to Louise for leading a children's mindfulness and movement class for ten weeks this fall. The children truly loved it... and LuLu!

Keep an eye on our website for upcoming events at www.nagalokabuddhistcenter.org. ~ *Gail Yahwak*

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.

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.

2011 Ends on a High Note for Aryaloka!

It's with tremendous gratitude and appreciation that we look back and celebrate 2011! Our programs and retreats brought Dharma teachings to hundreds of aspirants. Tuesday evening Sangha Nights were filled to bursting, and the study groups explored teachings new and old. Fantastic events like the Tibetan monks' visit and sand mandala creation exposed us, and the Seacoast, to ancient teachings from many traditions. Sadhu!

The Council had a recent opportunity to reflect on all of this, and the year ahead, at our December annual meeting. An important element of the Council's work is establishing and maintaining Aryaloka's solid financial footing. I'm pleased to report that we expect to record a modest income in 2011, and have approved a breakeven budget for 2012. Both of these are impressive, particularly in these uncertain economic times!

We'll have a complete 2011 report in a couple of months, once the year is fully closed. At the time of this writing we were projecting final results very close to our original budget. Income will be slight-

ly more than \$140,000, with a third of that from retreats, 20 percent pledges, another 20 percent from our programs, and the balance from rentals, dana bowl, and the bookshop. Our largest expenditures are for staff, at 41 percent. Next is our facility expenses including mortgage, repairs, and utilities, at 34 percent. We were able to afford certain much-needed repairs during the year while maintaining our cash reserves at approximately \$52,000.

Our recent 2012 pledge drive, too, was a success. The development team provided a warm and happy welcome to all Sangha night attendees for four weeks this fall, greeting newcomers and inviting all to participate in the drive. We exceeded our goal and were rewarded with more than \$40,000 of 2012 pledges. Thank you to all who made a generous pledge. And, if you have not yet had a chance to make a pledge for 2012, you still can do so on the Aryaloka website.

Looking ahead to 2012, our approved budget has us break even with a slightly higher income of \$148,000. We will continue to look for three pillars of support; re-

treats, programs, and pledging together contribute more than 75 percent of our income. The bookstore continues to be an important source of income at 10 percent of the total. As for expenses, our wonderful and energetic staff represent close to half of our expenses for the year. Maintaining our facilities is our second largest expense at more than \$45,000 per year. Retreat expenses, including food and leader travel, will run about \$10,000 this year, as will the administrative costs of running our center. The Council budgeted a modest amount for facility repair, but there are no major capital expenditures budgeted for 2012.

While we're pleased with our financial footing and our plans for 2012, there's so much more we could do to spread the Dharma in the Seacoast area and beyond. By continuing to actively participate in our programs and retreats, by giving to the Dana bowl, and, most important, by pledging to Aryaloka, we can expand our reach and our programs. Thank you for your generous support in 2011 and for what you will give in 2012.

~ Tom Gaillard, Treasurer

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. ♦♦

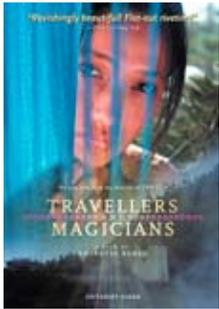
The Aryaloka Council minutes are posted on the bulletin board at the foot of the stairs.

movie review || A Teaching on Impermanence

Travelers and Magicians

(2003), 107 minutes, Not Rated
Available on Amazon, Netflix

What do a jealous woodcutter, a drunkard, a Bhutanese monk, and an apple seller have in common? They are all characters in Kyentse Norbu's 2003 award-winning



film *Travelers and Magicians*, the first feature film to be produced in Bhutan.

Set in the rural highlands, *Travelers and Magicians* shares with us the story of a young Bhutanese official,

Dundop, who dreams of going to the U.S. "An American apple picker makes in a day what I can make in a month," Dundop tells his friends. Hoping for an American visa, he dresses in a denim gho, takes his boom box in hand, and rushes from his

rural post to catch the next bus to the town of Thimphu. He misses his bus, however, and finds himself hitchhiking a winding rural highway with a ragtag band of five travelers, including a monk and a rice paper maker's beautiful 19-year-old daughter, Sonam. Anxious to get to Thimphu in time and annoyed by his easygoing companions, Dundop is at first grumpy and rude. But the monk's good humor, patience, and storytelling slowly win Dundop over. "You should be careful with dreamlands," advises the monk, "because when you wake up they may not be so pleasant."

The director, Kyentse Norbu, also known as Dzonsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche (the third incarnation of the founder of Khyentse lineage of Tibetan Buddhism), stirs a rich Buddhist flavor into every aspect of this film (not to mention that most, if not all, of the actors are Buddhists). Kyentse Norbu served as a consultant on the film *Little Buddha* (1993) and subsequently studied filmmaking with the director Bernardo Bertolucci. In 1999

Kyentse wrote and directed the award-winning film *The Cup*, and in 2007 wrote the book *What Makes You Not a Buddhist*.

Along the road to Thimpu, Kyentse's Bhutanese monk tells the story of a farm boy, not unlike Dundop, who, anxious to leave his rural village, finds himself lost in another land where he succumbs to romance, jealousy, love, and deceit. The monk's story parallels Dundop's changing emotional journey with his companions, especially his romantic interest in the shy Sonam.

Travelers and Magicians is a Buddhist tale about the happy and sad sides of impermanence. "A blossom is only beautiful because it is temporary," teaches the monk. As the story comes to a close, the monk leaves us with this Buddhist wisdom: "The minds of humans are so convoluted... what we wished for yesterday we dread today."

Travelers and Magicians, with subtitles in English, is available new for \$22.50 on amazon.com and streamable on Netflix.

~ Daniel Bush

online insight || Keeping it Interesting with Buddhist Blogs

There are a lot of blogs out there on the internet — a lot. Even when we narrow the list down to all blogs with some semblance of a Buddhist flair, we have more than we can peruse in a day's sitting. Many of them are insightful, interesting, and informative. Here are three that are worth looking at:

Dharma Forest

Deep Roots, Ancient Wisdom
<http://paramita.typepad.com/>

With posts from as early as 2004, *Dharma Forest* is one of the more senior Buddhist blogs. Monk Hengsure seems to be the author of most of the posts. You can also read his thoughts on Facebook at www.facebook.com/hengsure. Rev. Hengsure, as he is known in some circles, is also a musician and, as a result, *Dharma Forest's* archives are chock full of Buddhist folk music: a recent post, with video, is titled *Moving Musical Tribute to Children Lost in Bus Accident in Lanzhou, China*. Besides Hengsure's strong musical bent, another strong thread in his blog includes a running post he calls *Acts of Kindness Sto-*

ries, which include acts of kindness experienced and submitted by his readers. Last month, *Dharma Forest* posted its 23rd page of these experiences.

Moonpointer

Buddhist Blog of Everyday Dharma
<http://moonpointer.com/new/>

The name *Moonpointer* references the classic Buddhist analogy that one ought not to mistake the finger pointing at the moon for the moon itself. To see the truth, one has to see beyond that which shows the truth.

The *Moonpointer* project has been posting frequently since 2002, often several posts per day. Its posts run a wide gamut of topics, from news and poetry to specific Dharma teachings. *Moonpointer* has a strong current of vegan information and news, as well as a heavy emphasis on Chinese-language Buddhist literature. A recent post offers a translation of a Chinese poem:

The rounds of rebirth are dangerous.

From life to life, love becomes hate, hate becomes love.

Why not, everyone, renounce Samsara, aspire for Pure Land, to gather with all of superior goodness in one place, to practice the Bodhisattva path, together attaining Buddhahood?

Buddhist Art News

News on Buddhist art, architecture, archaeology, music, dance, and academia
<http://buddhistartnews.wordpress.com/>

Buddhist Art News offers just what it advertises and more. It is an intelligent and informative site with a strong academic flair. It is not a "spiritual" site, nor does it claim to be. It is meant as a resource for current news about Buddhist culture. Its "links" page offers a very cool list of web resources, from blogs to museum archives. Not only does it have a separate page with a very comprehensive list of recently published books on Buddhist topics, but it also offers a separate page for book reviews.



Getting Unblocked

Working with the Hindrances in Meditation

By Dh. Saddhamala

I remember my first weekend retreat at Aryaloka Buddhist Center in the summer of 1993. I took the weekend “off” from family and work obligations to learn how to meditate and take an Introduction to Buddhism class. My first experience in the meditation hall at Aryaloka was blissful — even the outdoor birdsong quieted and the stillness was palpable.

During that first meditation class, I was excited to learn the list of hindrances to meditation: sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and anxiety, and skeptical doubt. I could relate to that list because I experienced those hindrances off the cushion too — to varying degrees, and regularly.

Having the list of hindrances was helpful because when I meditated and watched the antics of my mind, I had a way of working in meditation to move beyond them... sometimes.

The hindrances distract our minds with mundane thoughts that can, and often do, become obsessive. If we are obsessing about mundane issues, we are distracted from our spiritual work and spiritual progress.

Let’s explore the hindrances:

1. Sensual desire (*kamacchanda*)

Our meditations often reveal what we desire and crave. We sit down to meditate, to still the mind and find calm and tranquillity and we start thinking about a person we are attracted to, or the aroma of the bread baking in the oven in our kitchen, or the concert we have tickets for - you know what’s on your list.

When we compulsively crave sensual pleasures (sex, food, etc.), we are alienated from the depth of the here and now and from those people, places, thoughts, and activities that are in the present moment. So there is nothing wrong with sensual pleasure, but when it becomes compulsive we distract ourselves from being present to the moment, being present to our lives.

When we become aware of sensual desire we can bring our awareness back to the focus of the meditation. We can look at what we desire and see through our projections and unrealistic expectations. We can look at what discom-

five hindrances

Continued from Page 8

fort might be beneath the compulsive desire. For instance, when we are distracted by thinking about someone we are attracted to, we may be distracting ourselves from looking at something that is troubling us in our relationships, or disappointment in not achieving a goal, or something we are concerned about. We might ask ourselves, “What am I distracting myself from?”

Guarding the doors of the senses is a way of working with sense desire. This involves recognizing what situations, images, and thoughts create sensual desire and avoiding them. For instance, when on a retreat or when meditating in a group, we can avoid conversations just before the meditation.

2. Ill-will (*byapada*)

Ill-will, or aversion, like sensual desire, obstructs our ability to be mindful and free and alienates us from kindness. We feel restricted and reactive rather than open-hearted and expansive.

Ill-will can be sparked by:

- remembering what we heard a friend say about us that was hurtful
- going over an angry interchange with a relative
- wishing we had something that someone else has (a material possession, a relationship, confidence, teaching ability, etc.).

We can work with this hindrance by questioning the ill-will, noticing the effect it has on our bodies and exploring how it affects our energy and what it might be covering up such as frustrated ambition, fear, embarrassment, or protection from feeling disappointment.

When we are aware of ill-will, being attentive to it and stopping ourselves from fanning its flames will help it to dissolve and build confidence in our ability to be present and mindful.

When working with ill-will, I realized I have sometimes reacted to someone or to a situation, and have come to see that the ill-will was centered in my own story line or way of interpreting someone's action or comment. Working with ill-will offers the opportunity to have compassion toward myself and other people.

Practicing and cultivating loving-kindness, empathy, and equanimity, and meditating on karma are good antidotes for ill-

will.

3. Sloth and torpor (*thina-middha*)

Sloth is a lack of energy and alertness to keep interested in the focus of meditation. We feel drowsy and sleepy and it feels as though our vitality and effort are limited.

Torpor is a lack of mental energy. The mind is dull or easily drifts in thought. This hindrance may be a result of discouragement, frustration, boredom, indifference, hopelessness, or resistance.

Sloth and torpor may be overcome by consciously arousing more energy through walking meditation; sitting up with a more erect, energized posture; opening the eyes; washing the face with cool water; opening a window, or bringing curiosity to and finding interest in the object of meditation.

Developing curiosity about why we are feeling sloth and torpor and understanding how particular thoughts, beliefs, and evaluations feed into the hindrance can be helpful.

Being mindful of what we eat before meditation and how that affects our energy in meditation, reflection on impermanence and the importance of practicing here and now, and reflecting on a dharmic topic that inspires us are all ways to work with this hindrance.

4. Restlessness and worry, anxiety, or remorse (*uddhacca-kukkucca*)

This hindrance manifests as our being unable to settle and concentrate due to a physical feeling of wanting to move the body. It is accompanied by memories and thoughts about things we are worried about or feel remorseful for.

We may feel agitated and restless, unsettled, and uncomfortable. It takes courage, patience, and discipline to stay with discomfort and to explore our thoughts and actions in order to understand what triggers them (frustrated desire, pent-up aversion, fear and resentment, or dissatisfaction).

I have found reflection, writing in a journal, and talking with spiritual friends helpful in working with this hindrance. Walking meditation, yoga, and exercise are also helpful when dealing with restlessness and worry, and confession is beneficial when dealing with regret and remorse.

Remembering how it feels to be still and calm may help. Remembering to consciously breathe or focusing on the ongo-

ing rhythm of breathing can calm the body. The more attention that is given to breathing, the less attention is available to fuel the restlessness or worry.

Strong opinions about what is or is not supposed to be happening and judgments of what is “good” and “bad” seldom lead to calm. Attachment to a self-image can be agitating. It can be liberating to realize that we don't have to believe every thought we have.

5. Skeptical doubt (*vicikiccha*)

This hindrance manifests as uncertainty about meditation (“Does meditation really work?”) and in one's own ability (“I'm not good at meditating.”) and culminates in a lack of confidence.

Some doubt inspires action and the impulse to understand, encourages deeper investigation, and can be healthy.

Doubt that hinders meditation is a doubt regarding the practice, in the Dharma teachings, in one's teachers, and/or in oneself. When doubt involves uncertainty about the practice or the teachings, it is helpful to study and reflect on the Dharma itself.

Questioning deeply-held beliefs, attending to unresolved feelings, challenging ingrained convictions about self-identity, or remembering something that inspires us in the practice (such as a teaching, a person, or some experience you have had in the practice) can all help to dissipate doubt.

Working with the hindrances can help us to answer the following queries:

- Where do I put my attention?
- What thoughts and actions cause my mind to fixate its attention on what I want or don't want?
- How can I apply mindfulness rather than allowing this mental activity to continue?
- How can I work with this impulse of preoccupation and obsessive thinking?
- How can I bring curiosity and exploration, understanding, kindness, and non-reactivity to my meditation practice?

Working with the hindrances can strengthen our faith; our firm conviction in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha; and remind us of why we meditate and practice ethics and how much we value our practice.

Faith gladdens the heart, clears away the hindrances, and breathes life into our efforts to continue our path to freedom. ♦♦

We are very excited to have more Samadhi mats and cushions in stock for your meditation practice. We have both red and black mats and we have two choices of colors for cushions. These are durable as well as beautiful and will give you years of comfortable use.

Triratna Buddhist Community has its first International 2012 Calendar, with pictures of rupas from centers around the world. They're being sold at a special discounted price as a thank you for your support of the bookstore this year.

Sangharakshita has a new book that you will definitely want to read:

Dear Dinoo, Letters to a Friend
by Sangharakshita

"The letters in this book are the product of a friendship between two very different people. Dinoo Dubash was the founder of one of the first Montessori schools in India. In her spare time she liked to paint and to meditate, being keenly interested in all things spiritual. She met Sangharakshita at a lecture he delivered in Bombay in 1955. She took a liking to him and immediately invited him 'round for tea. Soon afterwards they began to correspond — a correspondence which continued for nearly twenty years, spanning some of the most formative years of Sangharakshita's life.

Sangharakshita's letters, brought together in this volume, cover a wide range of subjects: from an exploration of *sama-*

tha and *vipassana* meditation, to an account of his experiences when addressing the hundreds of thousands of followers of Dr. Ambedkar immediately after their great leader's demise. Art, travel, and books are topics that recur, and we hear of mutual friends and teachers such as Dr. Dinshaw Mehta of the Society of Servants of God, the Dalai Lama, and Bhikshu Jagdish Kashyap, Sangharakshita's first Buddhist teacher.

These letters will be of interest to anyone who wants to know more about Sangharakshita's life and work, and to hear about his experiences as they happened. They will appeal to all those who value friendship, for to read these letters is to find oneself listening in to a private conversation and catching a glimpse of a rather unusual friendship."

Taking the Leap
by Pema Chodron

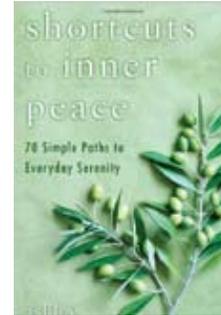
"It's completely in our power to break free of destructive patterns in our lives and experience a new sense of freedom and happiness.

Pema Chodron teaches us how in this book. Drawing on the Buddhist concept of *shenpa*, she helps us to see how certain habits of mind tend to "hook" us and get us stuck in states of anger, blame, self-hatred, and addiction.

The good news is that once we start to see these patterns, we can begin to change

our lives for the better."

Shortcuts to Inner Peace
by Ashley Davis Bush, L.C.S.W.



"Ashley invites readers to activate their own well-being by bringing mindfulness from their mat into their daily lives.

Within this guide are the building blocks of a simple system that will allow anyone to take a break from the negative influences of the world by linking fast, easy, and restorative exercises to ordinary, everyday activities that anyone can do almost anywhere."

Sailing the Worldly Winds
by Vajragupta

"How do we really get on in this world? Tossed around by gain, buffeted by loss, borne aloft by praise, cast down by blame — how can we not be ground under, lose all direction, confidence, and sense of purpose?"

The Buddha had clear guidance on how to rise above these "worldly winds," and Vajragupta here opens up for us the Buddha's compassionate yet uncompromising teaching."

Buddhaworks
The Aryaloka Bookstore

- * Meditation Candles
- * DVDs from Pema Chodron and Lama Surya Das
- * Meditation Journals
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- * Singing Bowls
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- * Books by Sangharakshita
- * Lots and Lots of Great Books!

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Buddhaworks is located at the Aryaloka Buddhist Center



Aryaloka Men Enjoy a Day of Art and Reflection

By Barry Timmerman

Having planned a Men's Practice Day field trip to the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), I awaited, with anticipation, outside the domes of Aryaloka for the arrival of our group. As we gathered in the late November morning, under a questionable sky, introductions of two men who had not previously been to Aryaloka were made. All told, there were seven of us: Surakshita, Stephen, Barry, Rod, Bernie, Jeff, and Russell. After deciding who would go with whom, our carpool departed, with hopes of a smooth transition to Boston.

With my GPS, Millie, programmed, she led us unerringly to Huntington Avenue. The trip down was traffic-free as the skies cleared and the temperature rose. The conversations on the way were lively and diverse, ranging from Buddhist themes to the state of the world, politics, finance, and business. Our carpool group, was never separated and we arrived to find parking right at the MFA Huntington lot.

After a picture or two to document our journey thus far, we headed inside the MFA to begin our adventure. Taking in the changes at the museum since our last visits and getting oriented to the floor plans, we found the Buddhist Temple Room, a sacred and devotional space that inspired reverence and awe.

Surakshita led us in a morning meditation. After saluting the shrine in call and response, we did a sit of our choice. Words cannot do justice to this space, which contains a collection of large Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Even children hush as they enter this room. After the meditation, many of us simply sat and contemplated the room and its guardians.

We made our way to the various exhibits, beginning with the Japanese section, then on to the Himalayan display. We reflected on each piece, marveling at the craftsmanship, the antiquity, and the significance of what each object represented. Surakshita shared historical knowledge of various time periods in Japanese and Himalayan Buddhist movements.

A high point for me was discovering, in full statuary, a Japanese version of Ksitigarbha, Jizo, the Bodhisattva of the Hell Realm, my personal Bodhisattva.

After making our way through these

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(Bhante Sangharakshita, Summer 2010)



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

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Art As Spiritual Practice: November's Arts Evening

Reading with Josh Bartok
and Joan Rochette

By Dh. Candradasa

"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 this moment offers. In my photographs, I strive to do this without judgment and without commentary, though I hope my work might help people see luminous beauty in the most unexpected places."

~ Josh Bartok

Continuing her own illuminating series of arts events at Aryaloka, Kiranada provided the sangha yet again with an opportunity to stop and consider the arts as an area of human endeavor that might be viewed not as an optional extra but more as kin to spiritual life itself. The sensitivity required for one is very much vital to the other – and whether or not we make

art ourselves or try to be alive to it and the beauty of the world (which, like art, is sometimes neither easy nor obvious), the cultivation of what we might properly call "right attention" is crucial to both. Moment to moment, in art as in life, the absence or presence of this attention is what will affect our consciousness.

Josh Bartok's work in photography is precisely that sort of "practice": looking at the ordinary world and giving it a certain kind of sustained, extraordinary attention. Beyond the influence of the Zen masters of his own tradition, beyond the apparent nods to *wabi-sabi* and contemporary Photoshop culture, what we have at root here is the simple act of an individual standing in and under the universe and paying attention. In the great abstract landscapes of his images – often, in fact, small details of the urban landscape that the artist happens to be moving through and blown-up later as if under an electron microscope – we are invited to consider not so much our own place in the grand scheme of things as our own acts of attention. Attention to detail, attention to the whole, attention to

all the small moments when we place ourselves in relationship to others and the wider, shared context of life itself.

Josh's pieces seem to know that *how* we place ourselves is everything, and whether we find them immediately beautiful or a set of macro puzzles to be held in the eye and in the heart, we too are left wondering, and even with a sense of reverence that is always "unexpected."

This much – and more eloquently! – Josh himself evoked for all of us who took part in marking his show. Joan's delightful "Buddhist fable" set in the snow said the same in its own quiet way. Words, like pictures, may not capture anything completely, but it is always good to hear people speak so directly and without pretension of everyday making, of craft. We call their efforts "works of art" precisely because they are taking part in a process that sits naturally alongside meditation and Dharma study and friendship as a resting place for our attention.

It was a genuine privilege to share that space with them even for a moment in time.

Contemplative Arts Events Coming Up in 2012

Mindfulness of Poem-Making
Saturday, February 11th, 10-3 p.m.

Once again, we welcome Seacoast writer Lin Illingworth, as well as our own Dh. Viriyagita and Joan Rochette, who will share seated and written meditations. Explore your love of nature and of the Dharma on this pristine winter day through written reflections. Bhante says "the poet is the world's interpreter." Come find your voice, on paper.

Sho-do: The Way of the Brush
Saturday, April 28th, 10-3 p.m.
(Come at 9:45 for tea)

A special day. For those of you who missed our wonderful Ink Day last July and for those who want more time with brush, ink, and paper, do come. Dh. Kiranada will lead us through a variety

of meditations to quiet ourselves and some exercises to draw Japanese *kanji* ideograms that will take us into observation and awareness as we embody the brush, let the black ink flow, and reflect our true state of mind. No "talent" needed.

Ka-do: The Way of Flowers
Saturday, June 2nd, 10-3 p.m.
(Come early for tea)

Masako Yatsuhashi, Master Ikenobu Ikebana (flower arranging) teacher will be joined by Dh. Kiranada to explore this meditative discipline that was developed as an art form and strongly influenced by Buddhist thought. It will be a joyous day of appreciating empty space, the movement of line and stems, the relationship of blossoms, and the creative process of letting go of self and working honestly with what is in front of us.

~ Dh. Kiranada

Baby Bodhisattvas at Play

Quiet and Thoughtful, Noisy and Fun: Contemplative Dance at Aryaloka

By Sheila Groonell

What an exhilarating day we had on October 8th. Six sangha members — Sam Chaney, Jean Corson, Jared Driscoll, Sheila Groonell, Kiranada, and Raena Wilson — joined Dawn Kramer, a choreographer and contemplative dancer teacher from Massachusetts College of Art at Aryaloka for a day of movement, fun, loss of inhibition, and creativity. Kiranada, who also teaches at Mass. Art, and who coordinates our Aryaloka arts program, realized that although we have an active and open program in the visual arts and in writing here at the Center, we have no program for dance or contemplative movement. To rectify this omission, Kiranada invited Dawn and her partner, Stephen Buck, a video artist, to Aryaloka to initiate us into her form of freedom and expression. Great idea, Kiranada. The only question, “Could staid New Englanders let down their hair and move and groove and have fun doing it?”

First Stephen showed us some video of Dawn’s contemplative movement pieces, sponsored by arts grants and shot in Zen monasteries in Kyoto Japan, and on the rugged, rocky shores of Liguria, Italy. At first we could not discern Dawn as her body blended with the rocks, the foliage, or the water. Slowly, very slowly, she begins to move. Ah, yes, now we can see her! There she is! Inch by inch her hand stretches across the rock, or towards the well water. Then her shoulder moves, her back, her head. Her body follows, alive and sensing. She feels her way across the terrain. And we can see and feel her contemplation and response to each sensation. Her movement is her contemplation, and her contemplation is her movement. We are mesmerized and want this experience of watching and sharing to go on and on. But now it’s time for us to move.

We began with some gentle warming up and stretching exercises. Then we moved on to mimicking some spontaneous hops, jumps, noises, and poses that Dawn initiated. We moved as quickly around the circle imitating as we could — fast enough so that no one had time to get self-conscious, laughing the whole time. How clever Dawn was to loosen us up this way — what a blast it was. The poses were sometimes goofy, sometimes jerky, sometimes smooth, sometimes stretched up, sometimes snaked out towards the floor. And most wonderfully, each pose was interpreted slightly differently by each body. How individual and yet how the same. Next we went around initiating our own movement or pose that was then tried by everyone else. Once again, each movement was the same and different. Silly and fun, loose and laughing, we let go of all our inhibitions and felt like young colts, kittens, and puppies, frolicking and free. What a hoot.

A quick light lunch and then we moved outside to divide ourselves into two groups, each of which would design and practice



Photo courtesy Dawn Kramer

some contemplative dance of our own, which Stephen would then videotape. It sounded intimidating. Gulp. But once we started experimenting, the fun and exhilaration took over. “What about this?” “Could we try something like this?” More laughing, more fun.

As it turned out, the pieces that the two groups choreographed and danced could not have been more different. One group, that included Kiranada, Raena, and Sam, produced a very thoughtful, contemplative, slow moving, and smooth piece. As they emerged through a curtain of hydrangea reeds by the driveway, thoughts of emerging awareness and interbeing arose. They joined together and then separated. Gain and loss. The familiar cycle. Gentle, delicate, and tender.

The other group — with Jared, Jean, and Sheila — produced a noisy, playful, high-energy piece. We seemed like little bears emerging from the woods to frolic in the sun behind Akashaloka. Initial animal wariness gave way to whooping and noise-making, leaping, jumping, and rolling down the hill, falling into each other, and laughing and rejoicing in the contact. Then, slowly, we too receded quietly into the woods. The cycle of energy-out and energy-in all over again.

By the end of the day we were all happy, stretched out emotionally and physically, and grateful for the fun and freedom, the spontaneous creativity, and the loss of our New England inhibitions.

We all hope that there will be opportunities in the future for more of us to experience the freedom of shed inhibitions and spontaneous whole-body expression at Aryaloka. It is personal and social, sharing and free. It is sangha.

Thank you so much Dawn and Steve for giving us this liberating opportunity. Come back soon. And thank you, Kiranada, for initiating yet another fantastic arts experience at Aryaloka. And thanks to all who showed up, created, and played.

poetry corner

Flowers of Sangha

By Teal Furnholm

Dying world, bled by greed
Fearsome man-beasts stalk the night
Blind with cruelty, and with need
Despairing, will not see the light

From this pool of black despair
A flower most effulgent grows
Petals shining bright and fair
Blissful scent from stamen flows

Upon each petal a smiling face
No avarice to soot the eyes
Their deeds of kindness interlace
Above the dark this flower rise

Still, flowers can be torn apart
And each petal wilts and dies
But from compassion, its golden heart
Strong new petals will arise

Other seeds in darkness live
Blooms wait to see the sun someday
A guiding light this flower gives
Its light will never fade away

Beholding the Cries of the World

By Joan Rochette

Worn
he has sat waiting for more than 2,500 years,
and still he hears their cries.
You can see it in his eyes.

His hope blooms in the colors of spring.
Only I despair in winter's winds.

Patient
I sit waiting to see his tears,
but patient
he waits for a smile, a sign,
a Knowing, a golden flower in the air.

"Mindfulness of Poem Making" a Chance to Explore

From ten in the morning until three in the afternoon, a cold winter day will become an opportunity to explore new and rediscovered places through the practices of seated meditation and poem-making. For the second time at Aryaloka poet and creative writing teacher Lin Illingworth, through exercises and her experience teaching poem-making, will gently lead the way to "be present, pay attention,

write it down." And through those practices, and our practice of seated meditation led by Viryagita, hearts will open and imaginations will flourish. Guaranteed.

As Maitreyabandhu, well-known poet in the Order in the UK, tells us, "Imagination brings the whole person together – thought, feeling, volition, perception – into a single act of creation. You have to *discover* imagination, uncover it, find the

place where the poem takes off and leaves you behind. Imagination always goes beyond you."

This is an opportunity for us to go beyond our everyday selves and discover delight in the world, nature, beauty, each other, and the Dharma. Call the office to register before this opportunity is lost. 603-659-5456.

~ Joan Rochette

Upcoming Events

Continued from Page 16

- 23 Mixed mitra study
 - 23 Women's mitra study
 - 23-28 *Retreat at Akasaloka - building closed*
 - 24-26 Mindfulness Retreat, Sunada and Viriyalila
 - 26 Poetry Group, 4-6 p.m.
 - 27 Men's mitra class
 - 28 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m., open to all
 - 29 Intermediate Meditation evening series, 7-9 p.m., Bodhipaksa
- MARCH**
- 2-4 Order weekend with Karunadevi and Ashokashri
 - 5 Men's mitra class
 - 6 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m., open to all
 - 7 Intermediate Meditation evening series, 7-9 p.m., Bodhipaksa
 - 8-11 Open Heart, Quiet Mind, Yoga and Meditation Retreat
 - 9 *Full-Moon Puja and Meditation, 7 p.m.*
 - 12 Men's mitra class

- 13 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m., open to all
- 14 *Intermediate Meditation evening series, 7-9 p.m., Bodhipaksa*
- 14-16 NVC Basic Training with Shantigarbha
- 16-18 NVC Deepening + Empathy with Shatigarbha
- 17 *How to Benefit Those Who Are Dying and Those Who Have Died, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., Karunasara*
- 17 *Poetry Group 4-6 p.m.*
- 18 Men's mitra class
- 19 Men's mitra class
- 20 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m., open to all
- 21 Intermediate Meditation evening series, 7-9 p.m., Bodhipaksa
- 23-25 Yoga with Lily Sibley
- 24 *Men's Practice Day*
- 25 *Intro to Meditation - Mindfulness, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., Arjava*
- 25 Dhardo Rimpoche Celebration, 6 - 9 p.m., Viriyagita
- 26 Men's mitra class
- 27 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m., open to all
- 28 Intermediate Meditation evening series, 7-9 p.m., Bodhipaksa
- 3/30-4/1 *Becoming a Spiritual Rebel Retreat, Bodhipaksa*
- 31 *Women's Practice Day, Saricitta*

Releasing the Butterfly: Living with Impermanence

By Ashley Davis Bush

When I was in college many years ago, I had the wonderful good fortune to spend my junior year in London. Even better, I fell in love with an Englishman. It was an idyllic time in my life with relatively few responsibilities, many freedoms and the heady mixture of strong tea, hot scones, and young love.



The only problem for me was that I was continually aware of the fleeting nature of this bliss. I frequently was plagued with the thought, "This is all going to end when I return to the States." And in fact, it did. Perhaps that tender love would have ended regardless, but it was surely doomed to cease prematurely thanks to my own neurotic ruminations.

Every moment of my joy that year was tinged with the shadow of its transitory nature.

In other words, I wanted to cling to that which was, by its nature, impermanent. And because of that clinging I not only hastened its end, I destroyed its absolute bliss. In holding on too tightly to the fragile butterfly, I crushed its wings.

In my Buddhist studies, I have come to examine *dukkha* more closely. Commonly translated as "suffering," it is more accurately described as "dissatisfaction." The Buddha described the three-fold nature of this unsatisfactoriness: *dukkha-dukkha* (pain), *samkhara-dukkha* (conditioned states) and *viparinama-dukkha* (impermanence). Clearly I was struggling most with the latter — clinging to a desired state that would fade and, in so doing, reversing the desired state.

Once again, I find myself bumping up against the *dukkha* of joy. Why? Because at this juncture in my life, I have never been happier! Both personally and professionally, I am in a supremely blissful state. It is tempting to hold onto the butterfly, to worry that something will change (it will), that I or someone I love will get sick (it's likely, one day), that one of us will die (in fact, this is a certainty). However, what's different this time around is that after five years of Buddhist practice, I'm at peace with this reality.

I know that all of it can and will change but now this fact serves to make the butterfly's appearance more sweet, more lovely. Against the backdrop of impermanence, I can savor and absorb each delight with a keen appreciation. I can hold my hand outstretched and know that when the butterfly lifts off, I will have nothing but gratitude in its place.

men's day

Continued from Page 11

extensive collections, with all in agreement that lunch was next on the agenda, we made our way to the Garden Cafeteria. By now, the outside temperature was in the mid-sixties. With the sun warming the courtyard, we found ourselves basking in the unseasonable warmth as we ate and conversed. Meaningful and provocative discussions were had, as we all got to know each other better. Flocks of hungry and fearless sparrows made their way from table to table. With the museum soaring above us, and sheltered from the wind, we extended our lunch, all grateful that we were not due back to the office or some other responsibility.

After our repast, we went in search of a rumored Buddhist scripture display. We did the unheard of as men — we asked for help. Somewhat disappointed to discover that the scripture exhibit was not currently on display, we shifted gears and made our way to the outside Zen garden, where we encountered a group of horticulturists from Amherst College, who had been tasked with revamping the garden, a five-year project the museum had asked them to undertake. They were in the process of developing a proposal to submit to the MFA, based on an extensive and pains-



taking scrutiny of over 1,700 plants and shrubs.

After discovering we were Buddhists one gentleman in particular was quite interested in our impressions of the space in terms of its inspirational value. He was curious if the space was conducive to reflection and meditation. We shared our initial impressions. I then led the group in a meditation.

After the meditation, we resumed our conversation with the horticulturists. We were shown a beautiful book that depicted the garden in its heyday. Surakshita, who has been to Japan, shared his knowledge of the symbolic elements of the Zen garden. At a loss to figure out how to maintain the

extensive upkeep of the garden with students only available for limited periods of time, we suggested that the horticulturists contact the Boston Zen Society, who may be happy to provide such support as part of their daily practice.

With the day waning, we made our way to the MFA gift shop as a last activity. I discovered a wonderful painted Buddha made in Indonesia. Unable to resist, I purchased it as a memento of the day for my home shrine.

We had a smooth trip out of the city. We were once again fortunate to encounter little traffic. Back at the domes, we said warm goodbyes and appreciations for a quality day together.

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.

JANUARY

- 1 Meditate for Peace Day, 6 a.m. - 6 p.m.
- 2 Men's mitra class
- 3 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m., open to all
- 5 Mixed mitra study
- 6 Full-Moon Puja and Meditation, 7 p.m.
- 7 Women's Practice Day, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., Varada
- 7 *Men's Practice Day, 7 a.m. - 2 p.m.*
- 8 *Intro to Meditation - Mindfulness, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., Arjava*
- 8 Living Meaningfully, Dying Joyfully, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., Karunasara
- 9 Men's mitra class
- 10 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m., open to all
- 11 Intro to Meditation and Buddhism evening series, 7-9 p.m, Bodhana
- 12 Mixed mitra study
- 12 Women's mitra study
- 13-16 **(ends at 3 p.m.) Outlying Centers Retreat, center closed**
- 16 Men's mitra class
- 17 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m., open to all
- 18 Intro to Meditation and Buddhism evening series, 7-9 p.m, Bodhana
- 19 *Mixed mitra study*
- 19-22 Open Heart, Quiet Mind, Yoga and Meditation Retreat
- 21 *Women's mitra study, 9 - 12 a.m.*
- 22 Poetry Group, 4-6 p.m.
- 23 Men's mitra class
- 24 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m., open to all
- 25 Intro to Meditation and Buddhism evening series, 7-9 p.m, Bodhana
- 26 Mixed mitra study
- 26 Women's mitra study

- 27-29 Stupa Retreat, Amala
- 29 *Writing class, 10 - 3*
- 30 Men's mitra class
- 31 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m., open to all

FEBRUARY

- 1 Intro to Meditation and Buddhism evening series, 7-9 p.m, Bodhana
- 2 Mixed mitra study
- 3 Full-Moon Puja and Meditation, 7 p.m.
- 4 Order Day
- 5 Going Deeper Into Buddhist Ethics, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., Arjava
- 5 *Men's Practice Day*
- 5 Women's mitra study, Portsmouth, 9 - 12 a.m.
- 6 Men's mitra class
- 7 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m., open to all
- 8 Intro to Meditation and Buddhism evening series, 7-9 p.m, Bodhana
- 9 Mixed mitra study
- 9 Women's mitra study
- 11 Arts Day - Poetry, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
- 11 *Intro to Meditation - Metta, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., Viriyagita*
- 12 Parinirvana Day, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., leader TBA
- 13 Men's mitra class
- 14 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m., open to all
- 15 Intro to Meditation and Buddhism evening series, 7-9 p.m, Bodhana
- 16 Mixed mitra study
- 17-21 **(ends at 11 a.m.) RENTAL - Entire center closed.**
- 19 Women's mitra study, Portsmouth, 9 - 12 a.m.
- 21 Sangha Night, 6:45 - 9:15 p.m., open to all

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ongoing events

Sangha Night At Aryaloka

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

- Led by Amala, Arjava, and other sangha members.
- 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