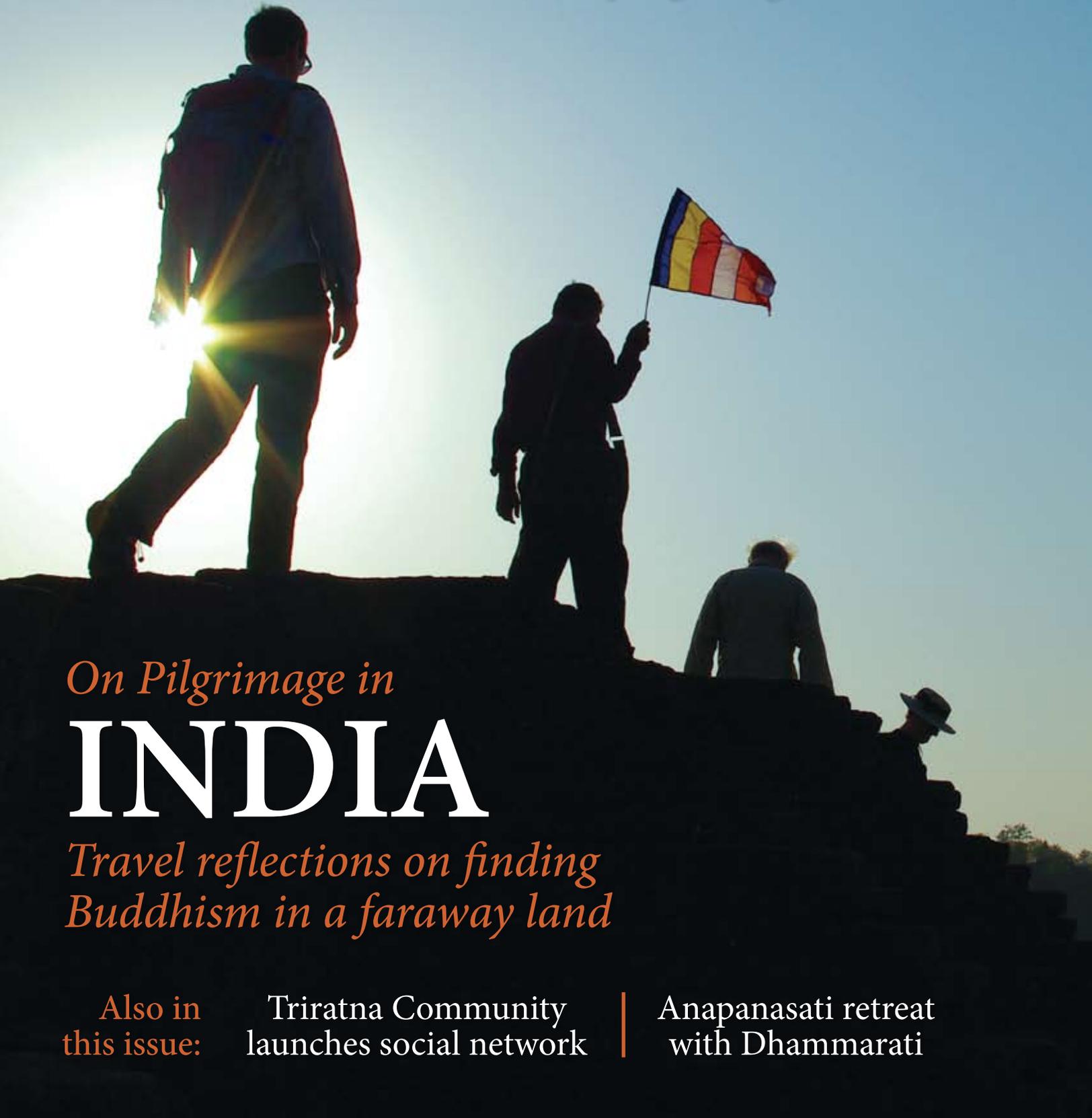


SPRING 2012

# vajrabell

*keeping sangha connected*



*On Pilgrimage in*

# INDIA

*Travel reflections on finding  
Buddhism in a faraway land*

**Also in  
this issue:**

Triratna Community  
launches social network

Anapanasati retreat  
with Dhammarati



Usually when I write the Editor's Note, it's a bit of a side comment on the main theme of the current issue of the newsletter, but since I've already written extensively

in the main article, I'm going to take this opportunity to go in a different direction and talk a little bit about the *Vajra Bell* itself, and more specifically, *how you can get involved*.

Vajra Bell is run entirely on the contributions of the people in our sangha - it would not exist without the generosity, writing, and careful stewardship of those who make it all happen every three months. There are three ways in which the newsletter is supported:

### 1) Council funding

The printing costs of each issue of the Vajra Bell are funded entirely by the Aryaloka Council based on donations from you! So, when you donate to Aryaloka you are, in a small part, contributing to making the newsletter available to those who like to have a printed copy.

This is important especially for new people coming to our sangha, as one of the first ways they're able to learn more about us is by picking up a copy of the Vajra Bell at an event or retreat.

### How can I help?

Keep making contributions to the dana bowl, and even better, make a yearly pledge for funding to Aryaloka! The center sustains itself currently, but there is so much more we can do with more resources. Every dollar you contribute matters.

Also, a great way to keep printing costs down is to skip the paper copy of the Vajra Bell and read us online at [www.aryaloka.org/category/vajrabel](http://www.aryaloka.org/category/vajrabel). You'll get to see the whole issue in color, and if a website is mentioned you can just click on the link.

### 2) Contributed Content

Without articles, updates, and images from sangha members, the Vajra Bell would quite literally have nothing to print. Every issue is full of items that have been contributed from you or the people around you, and as good as we are at coming up

with new things to write about, we want to hear from you!

### How can I help?

What are you interested in? What would you like to say about a retreat or event you've attended? What can you contribute? If you have a photo, or a poem, or reflections on a topic, let us know by contacting one of the people in the kula list to the right of this page!

### 3) Vajra Bell kula

This is a very important one, so I'm going to shamelessly plug the work we do, and just as shamelessly ask for your help.

The Vajra Bell kula, a small gang of seven people at the moment, is responsible for planning the content for upcoming issues, staying abreast of what's going on in the North American sangha and staying on top of the zeitgeist of the current topics in the movement at large, identifying and contacting possible contributors and helping them to produce excellent articles, managing the articles and photos as they come in, locating photos to supplement stories, editing content for accuracy, creating the layout and design of the newsletter itself, and getting it off to the printers on deadline. Whew!

These are no small tasks! But all of our kula members are passionate about what they're doing and know how important it is to our sangha.

### How can I help?

We need you to join our kula! If you have skills in editing, writing, design, tech, photography, or you're just a particularly skilled communicator, we can use your abilities. You can be part of one of the most important engines of sangha-building we have at Aryaloka, and help us reach even further to become a connecting force for our Triratna sanghas all across North America.

We're basically talking about one meeting and around five hours of work every three months - mostly via email and the internet - really not that much. And even a smaller time commitment can be very valuable in assisting the work we do.

So, consider for yourself how important the newsletter is to you, and then consider how you can become a part of what makes it great. There are so many opportunities!

# vajrabel

[www.aryaloka.org/category/vajra-bell](http://www.aryaloka.org/category/vajra-bell)

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Cover photograph: Eric Wentworth

## musings from the chair || Dh. Dayalocana



Welcome, Kavyadrishti, to the Triratna Buddhist Order, our worldwide network of centers and to the Aryaloka community. Those of us who practice at Aryaloka have known you for many years as Joan — she who brings the gardens alive with beauty and who deeply touches our hearts with poetry and stories. We also have experienced your heart full of compassion and caring balanced by a mind rich with inquiry and understanding.

Ordination takes place when one has made a strong and effective commitment to base their life on the Three Jewels — the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. At ordination one is dedicated to a daily practice based upon the principals of the Dharma and has a desire to con-

tinue practice that leads towards spiritual awakening. At ordination, a name is chosen by the private preceptor to indicate the step the person is taking, committing themselves to a new way of life.

Kavyadristi (*Kahv-yah-drish'-tee*) was ordained on March 4<sup>th</sup> at Aryaloka. Her name means "She who has the vision of a sage or poet." The dharmic meaning of *Kavya* is "sage," and also "poet." *Drishti* means "vision, view, perception, understanding, intellect." Initially, it is a perspective for practice — that which is essential for embarking on the spiritual life. It is the foundation for actions. It is necessary for the arising of wholesome states of mind and for promoting the good of all living beings.

The altruistic spirit of the Buddhist path is acknowledged in the ceremony by accepting the ordination for the benefit of all beings. The Order can be imagined as a multitude of arms and hands

extended to offer compassion and assistance to all. This ideal is beautifully expressed by Kavyadrishti in her written tribute (below) to Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva with 1,000 arms extended in compassion to the world.

### Avalokitesvara Was Born With Two Arms

Avalokitesvara was born with two arms. He worked on the first and third Tuesdays of every month at the local food pantry, but when the economy got bad and the line there grew he needed two more arms so he could work every week. When he overheard an elderly woman who'd been a regular there for sometime talk about how her roof was leaking, he needed a few more arms to get volunteers together to patch the spot where shingles had blown away. When the pale young woman with the three

*continued on page 4*

## from the council || Dh. Vihasari



The January, 2012 Aryaloka Council meeting opened with expressions of profound gratitude for Amala who is leaving the Council after many years of service.

Amala has greatly influenced the positive growth and development of Aryaloka during her time on the Council. Her continued commitment to the Teaching Kula, the Teaching Cadre, the Spiritual Vitality Team, the Ordination Kula group, the Administrative Team, Dharma teaching, the stupa committee, and many other aspects of the center are much-valued and appreciated! Sadhu, Amala, and heartfelt gratitude!

A septic tank at the front of the building was located and pumped out, and a new riser was installed to make future access easier. A number of tree branches were removed from behind Akasaloka in order to disrupt existing squirrel highways onto the roof. Repairs made during the last several months have included the dishwasher, the washing machine, the water

heater in the laundry room, the shower at Akasaloka, bathroom fixtures, and blocking squirrel access to Akasaloka.

We ended 2011 with a surplus of \$3,500 which will help to offset the unexpected expenses for appliance repairs and critter control.

A number of issues were discussed at the February meeting. The Council talked about the need for guidelines concerning the inclusion of links to other businesses/groups on our Aryaloka website. No action was taken and the discussion will continue at the April meeting. It was decided that teachers only need to sign a Code of Conduct form once each year rather than for each class as has been done previously. Insurance coverage for rentals was reviewed and Tom will contact our agent for additional information.

The Council approved two drop-in meditation classes taught by Shrijnana to begin in April (Wednesdays) and May (Fridays). No registration will be necessary and the fee will be \$10/8/6/person/session with 60% going to the teacher and 40% going to the center.

It was decided to hold a Council/Sangha potluck meeting on Thursday, May 31

beginning at 6:30 p.m.

At the March meeting, a preliminary review of the new three-tiered pricing schedule showed that it is working well so far. A more in-depth review will be done in May.

Amala and Viriyagita gave an update on the Dhardo Rimpoché stupa project with information about what has been done as of March, 2012. The Council has agreed to donate land to the project, with a site yet to be determined. The committee will continue to meet to discuss details of the project and fundraising ideas.

The Council also discussed a new fundraising idea proposed by the development team, the formation of a new social network for the world-wide Triratna community that will open us all to a larger communication universe, and the results of last year's sangha survey. Tom has designed financial pie charts to be included in this issue of the *Vajra Bell* newsletter.

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

### PORTSMOUTH SANGHA (PORTSMOUTH, NH)

The team from the Portsmouth Buddhist Center writes to share that their first six months offering opportunities to learn meditation and Buddhism have gone very well.

Many people in the seacoast area have expressed appreciation for a second space to practice and engage with other people with similar aspirations.

Their opening Sangha Night program was mainly focused on meeting the historical Buddha with the sharing of sto-

ries from the early texts and exploring how through his example the Dharma can be discovered, learned, and applied in one's own life.

Sangha Night takes place on Wednesday evenings from 7-9 p.m. Several day retreats have been offered on topics including spiritual friendship, working with addictions, and exploring early teachings from the Pali Canon.

Upcoming retreats include *The Buddha in the Dark*, a poetic and pragmatic look at applying the Buddha's teachings in times of trouble; *The Key to the Universe*, an exploration of the central Buddhist value of "seeing things as they really are;" and *Soar-*

*ing with the Seven Bodhyangas*, a simple spiral path of spiritual development beginning with mindfulness and culminating in complete equanimity.

In February the team was notified that the space they were using on the waterfront was being leased to a new tenant (this was known to be a temporary location). The owner of the building, Mark McNabb, very graciously offered the center use of another very suitable space at 40 Congress Street, on the fifth floor overlooking the whole of the city.

For more information on their program offerings, contact [portsmouth@the-buddhistcenter.com](mailto:portsmouth@the-buddhistcenter.com) or call (207) 200-1875.

## Finances Stable for the Year's Start

Aryaloka was slightly ahead of plan through the first two months of 2012. Income from programs and retreats was higher than expected. Pledge income was in line with the budget, and we'd love to have more pledges to strengthen our financial picture!

Unexpectedly high expense for facilities repair and high utility costs hit us in the first two months, but happily our other expenses were held below budget.

Aryaloka has approximately \$59,000 in cash in reserve, which gives us a cushion against unforeseen expenses.

If you'd like more detailed information on Aryaloka's finances, please contact the office. And please, please continue to provide financial support through a monthly pledge OR through regular gifts to the dana bowl. Thank you!

~ Tom Gaillard, Treasurer



## musings from the chair

Continued from Page 3

pale young children came in for the third time with bruises on her face, he needed at least two more so he could take her aside and gently tell her about the women's shelter.

When the mill in the next town closed, the lines at the pantry were just too long and people were using too much gas to get there, so he needed a few more arms to start another pantry across the river. When the young couple

adopted two babies from Somalia he remembered all those left behind and suffered the knowledge the best he could. He needed more arms to do something about the overcrowded schools downtown and found a few grandmother arms to read with the youngest ones every week. When he heard more and more about what was happening in the war, he knew he could just never do enough. And a man was dying of AIDS all alone, the woman so ill from the chemotherapy needed to cry with someone, the kid who was so very bright might not get the

scholarship without help with his application, the woman who started the community garden plots needed spades and a load of manure, the local Buddhist center needed a new roof, a few inmates at the state prison wanted to learn to meditate, so Avalokitesvara now has a thousand arms and still needs yours."

All of us can take up this call to extend our arms in compassion with energy and actions that make a difference. Thank you for sharing your vision, Kavyadrishti. Sadhu!!

# Council Follows Up on Survey Results!

The October *Vajra Bell* provided a snapshot of early highlights from our Fall 2011 online survey. Close to 150 of you volunteered your opinions and thoughts, and the Council is working hard to distill those ideas into improved programs and practice for 2012... and beyond! In fact, the Council's recent day-long retreat dedicated several hours to an earnest and thought-provoking discussion on this very topic.

It was with gratitude that the Council acknowledged two very positive messages that rang forth from the survey. First, over 90% of respondents were satisfied with Aryaloka's communications efforts! In these days of divisiveness and conflict, 90% is a truly satisfying result, and indicates strong support for our emphasis on web and email communications. Second, there was a clear message that meditation is a core interest. It's a primary reason many were initially drawn to Aryaloka, and it remains a compelling passion for study and motivation.

The Council's discussion at the March retreat was highlighted by the following observations and action items:

## **Meditation**

The survey revealed keen interest in additional information, guidance, and pro-

grams to enhance people's meditation practices.

Our programming, which has always embraced meditation instruction, has focused even more on this core practice. Please see our website to enroll in Aryaloka's expanded weekly courses and weekend (and longer) meditation retreats. Your practice will go ever-deeper if you take advantage of Aryaloka's teachers and programs!

## **Communications**

The survey was conducted in the Fall of 2011, right after the Council approved a publicity coordinator position. Since then we've enjoyed a wonderful, and wonderfully "branded," online presence – all supplementing Aryaloka's gorgeous and easy-to-navigate website. We hope that Shrijnana's emails, web postings, and social media offerings (please find us on Facebook!) are meeting your needs for timely and comprehensive information on everything that's happening at Aryaloka Buddhist Center.

## **Financial information**

Aryaloka is dedicated to providing complete financial transparency to its Sangha members.

Our Treasurer provides a current finan-

cial snapshot in each *Vajra Bell*, and more complete information is available by calling the office.

Please do your best to support our Center, and if you'd like to discuss how you could help please email or call.

## **New Media**

OK, we all know YouTube. But Vimeo? Audioboo? Soundthread? These are unfamiliar terms to many of us, but in addition to our Facebook page, the Council is embracing new media as a way to spread the Dharma. Video? File sharing? Audio files? Yes to all!

Working in collaboration with the global Triratna Buddhist Community, we hope to share resources, build excitement, and create an online sangha that reaches everyone — regular sangha members and occasional retreat visitors alike.

Stay tuned to *Vajra Bell* and our website for more about these compelling online resources.

If you have questions about the survey or the Council's response — OR would like to participate to make our sangha even stronger — please call the office today! We're eager to hear from you!

~ Tom Gaillard, Treasurer

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## 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. ♦♦

## thebuddhistcentre.com

*A social network for Buddhists*  
<http://thebuddhistcentre.com/>

Imagine a social network for Buddhists, something of a cross between The Huffington Post and Facebook but slower, calming, and more intentional. Starting in 2008, Candradasa — the director of Dharmachakra (the Triratna audio and text archives) — and others did just that. They imagined a space for the Triratna community and other Buddhists from all around the world to connect in their practice. The platform for this space is the newly launched [thebuddhistcentre.com](http://thebuddhistcentre.com), which first launched in August 2011.

For our online readers, [click here](#) for a video preview.

The Buddhist Centre online is designed to be a multi-media information platform and social media site all in one. It offers a general directory of information including upcoming events, meditation resources, information on retreat centers around the world, and Triratna news. But it is also a vibrant space to connect, share, and communicate. In part, the site mirrors Triratna demographics, with higher-level project pages created by our centers around the world. Each autonomous project site can choose to offer information, resources, and space for private and open groups. Individual members will be able to create their own journal page and groups, and connect with other individuals. They will get updates from all the people, groups, and projects they follow in their personalized feed.

I recently met with Candradasa and asked him a few questions about this new social network.

**Dan:** How did the Dharmachakra Archives of the 1970s go from shipping reel-to-reel tapes to offering digital downloads for free to hosting a social media site?

**Candradasa:** The origins of Dharmachakra lie in its initial function to preserve and distribute the sound and text archives of the FWBO (Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, now the Triratna Buddhist Community) Buddhist Order. And it has done this very well, moving from analog to digital archives in the

late 1990s. From 2000 to 2006 I worked with others to restructure Dharmachakra Archives in a way that would complete its mission of reaching the largest audience possible. This meant embracing the Internet. In 2006, [freebuddhistaudio.com](http://freebuddhistaudio.com) was launched and it has seen well over a million downloads in the first five years. Although [freebuddhistaudio.com](http://freebuddhistaudio.com) still remains the home of Dharmachakra's online service, [thebuddhistcentre.com](http://thebuddhistcentre.com) now serves the quite different function of a general directory and social media platform.

**D:** What is it that you are trying to create that doesn't already exist in other social media platforms like Facebook?

**C:** Our goal has been to create a space that encourages people to use it in a mindful way. We don't want to bombard people with too much. We want to develop an environment that is calming rather than necessarily exciting, what I like to term a "slow network." Our hope is to create a space that is an online manifestation of our community, one that is at once autonomous and interconnected. Ultimately, it's a space about Buddhist practice, one that will connect us in the virtual world and give people a space where they can share more widely within a Buddhist community.

**D:** What do you mean by "online mani-  
*continued on page 7*

# 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](http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/donate)

fba: building community online

*Spring, Summer, Fall,  
Winter... and Spring*

(2004), 95 minutes, Rated R  
Available on Netflix, Amazon

Behind two ornately carved wooden doors, each one guarded by a fierce spirit warrior, floats a tiny Buddhist monastery on the still surface of a tree-lined lake. As each season comes, a window opens into one of four stages in the life of a Buddhist monk.



Directed by Kin-duk Kim (award-  
ed best director for

two of his many films: *3-Iron* and *Samaritan Girl*), this 2003 Korean film is a powerful expression of the inevitability of suffering and the consequences of our actions. In spring we watch a young novice monk move carelessly through his days. In

summer, as a an adolescent, he is absorbed in the passions of love, lust, and independence.

And so on through the seasons we watch as he moves through the cycle of life, even as his spring carelessness becomes a heavy burden in the winter of his days.

With the snow gone and the leaves in nascent green, an eight-year-old novice monk explores his world, playful and inquisitive. As observers, we experience a curious kind of tension when the boy ties rocks to little animals — first a fish, then a frog and a snake.

He giggles as each struggle with their burden. On the one hand we forgive him — he is a child, sweet in his playfulness and innocence, unknowing. On the other hand, we recognize the seeds of unkindness and even torture.

When his master learns of his deeds, he goes to him in his sleep and ties a rock to his back. “Go and find the animals and release them from the stones. Then I will release you too. But if any of the animals, the

fish, the frog, or the snake is dead, you will carry the stone in your heart for the rest of your life.” When the boy finds that the fish is dead, he awakens, as if for the first time, to the fragility of life and his part in the suffering he has caused. His tears express the weight of the burden, as if he senses the heavy stone in his heart.

The dialogue is sparse but the imagery is simply spectacular, ranging from majestic in the scenic mountain views to poetic in the details of the frozen brook in spring thaw. The story carries us through the cycle of life and death, loss and renewal, suffering and peace. Give yourself a quiet space to watch this film. It is meditatively slow at times and there are more sounds of nature than there is dialogue. But it is well worth every minute and you may even decide to watch it again.

*Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring*, rated R for some strong sexual content, runs for 95 minutes. It is available as a Netflix DVD or for purchase on Amazon.com for \$6.99.

## online insight

Continued from Page 6

festation of our community?”

**C:** Triratna is a community made up of autonomous centers and individuals around the world. Sangha is something that we do very well. So our hope is to reflect this very successful characteristic of the Triratna community in thebuddhist-centre.com. Now there is another way to engage, another space in which we can connect.

**D:** Other social media platforms use advertising and/or membership fees to finance their sites. How will thebuddhist-centre.com keep afloat?

**C:** We are currently supported primarily by the Triratna European Chairs' Assembly and Dharmachakra itself. Our hope is that the site will ultimately be supported by its users through online donations.

We have a model for this support structure in freebuddhistaudio.com, which continues to demonstrate increased user donations over time. I think that our natural

response as users is to support a site after we become familiar and engaged with it. As long as the emotional investment is there, generosity works.

**D:** How do you imagine the site will develop once users begin to engage?

**C:** We have set up the platform, now

we'll see what happens. There is no doubt that we are trying to do something slightly different. It will be interesting to see how things evolve once the site becomes active. Will our community manifest itself online? Will the development of online connections change our community? It will, no doubt, change our community's perception of itself!

## 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.*

**Ashley:** How did you become acquainted with Buddhism?

**Amala:** I started when I was seventeen, although some seed must have been planted even before that. I was taking a religions course in college, specifically Asian religions, and the Buddhism section felt



like home almost instantly. So I read voraciously and studied a lot. It was mostly academic, but I was also part of a sitting group and a specialized study group. Then it went underground and became

my own personal interest. I meditated on my own and read and had a Buddhist perspective, but I didn't do anything about formal practice or sangha until I went to Aryaloka in 1991, sixteen years later.

**Ashley:** How did you find Aryaloka?

**Amala:** I saw an article about it when it started in 1985 but I didn't do anything about it at the time. I remember the color pictures in the newspaper; in fact, I even saved the article. Seven years later, I wanted to revive my meditation practice. I was in some distress and I thought "I have got to meditate." I went to a class with Viriyagita (she was Marilyn then) and I never left. I loved being able to talk about the Dharma with people who understood. I was very excited and it completely clicked.

Then, because I had small children (my son was one and my daughter was three) and my husband was in night school, I hired a babysitter two nights per week. You could say that I made a large investment in a young woman's college fund by hiring her for so many years! My family knew there was no stopping me; it's just the way it was.

*(Editor's Note: Amala decided to ask for ordination in 1994 and was ordained in 2000).*

**Ashley:** How has practicing Buddhism changed your life?

**Amala:** It's certainly my road to happiness. I spent way too many years being unhappy. I wasn't finding an easy path

in the conventional ways (family, being in the world, social life). The spiritual life was crucial and it had to be Buddhist – none of the rest made any sense to me.

There's something about taking my responses and my emotions and understanding them to be my own, and not inflicted upon me somehow. In meditation, watching my mind, getting accustomed to my own inner experience, really getting more skilled at moving around with everything that happens in my subjective experience – these qualities have really been the key for me. I don't need to be a victim of my own moods, and that has been confirmed by my practice.

The other part for me that has been transformational is sangha. It has been a long, slow journey to me to feel the sangha jewel and all its gifts. It was dharma first, way back when (forty years ago now), and then a feeling for the Buddha (as an embodiment of enlightenment). Sangha developed gradually through my years at Aryaloka. Somewhere it dawned on me that I couldn't pursue this passion alone, even though so much of it is internal work.

**Ashley:** When did you start teaching?

**Amala:** In 1999 before I was ordained. In 2001, I was asked to start teaching regularly. I love seeing people get interested, get calmer. I learn all the time by teaching.

**Ashley:** What's your favorite class to teach?

**Amala:** Whichever one I'm currently teaching! Absolutely.

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

**Amala:** Recently, I've recognized an old *samskara*, an old deep pattern — a subtle old doubt about my self-value. We all have these old patterns. I work with Buddha figures as a way of getting in touch with a different perspective for myself. Challenges don't derail me anymore, I just keep at the practice. There are always things to work on until we're enlightened!

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

**Amala:** I have a much more positive

lens than I used to — much less fear. My sense of delight in people and the world is much closer. I don't have to go looking for it because it's close at hand.

**Ashley:** Does it help you with the hard stuff in life?

**Amala:** I have to admit, I don't really like change all that much. But of course it does happen all the time. I watch it, basically. I notice "I'm sad," and let myself feel it. When I sit down and have quiet time and decide to look at it, then very quickly it becomes clear to me. I allow space for the emotions to come up and then they move on. It sounds simple, and actually it is. It is quite simple. In the past, I was a volatile person who felt things really strongly. Now, the amplitude of the emotion is smaller – less dramatic. It's easier to notice it sooner, give it its space and let the wave pass by.

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

**Amala:** The suttas of the *Pali Canon* – I love the parable of the broken arrow.

**Ashley:** How are things different for you since becoming an Order member?

**Amala:** My confidence went deeper by multiple notches. Going through that whole experience of being acknowledged and being welcomed into the Order — it was very encouraging along with the sense that I'm not doing it alone. I benefited hugely from having that context for my practice.

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

**Amala:** Follow your curiosity, really actively pursue it. Ask questions. Read. Talk to people. Meet up for coffee. Show up at classes and events. Try to meditate even if it doesn't feel comfortable. Get muddy. Get your feet wet. The truth of the matter is that when you practice, it all gets easier year by year. The spiritual path has so much to offer. There's no end to the benefits or the wonderful people I've met, or the unfolding practices, the learning and the growing – it just keeps going.

~ Ashley Davis Bush

# Anapanasati Retreat with Dhammarati this Fall

This fall (October 14<sup>th</sup> through October 20<sup>th</sup>) there will be a very special opportunity to learn Anapanasati meditation from Dhammarati, a skilled teacher who has been practicing the method for many years.



Anapanasati (literally mindfulness of in-and-out breathing) was praised by the Buddha. He stated,

*Mindfulness of in-and-out breathing, when developed and pursued, is of great fruit, of great benefit. Mindfulness of in-and-out breathing, when developed and pursued, brings the four frames of reference to their culmination. The four frames of reference, when developed and pursued, bring the seven factors for awakening to their culmination. The seven factors for awakening, when developed and pursued, bring clear knowing and release to their culmination. ~ MN 118*

Dhammarati describes the format of the retreat this way: "The Anapanasati Sutta is one of the most detailed meditation

instructions in the Pali Canon, and takes us step by step from a simple awareness of the breath and body, through awareness of feelings and mind, to an awareness of the open, impermanent nature of our experience. On this mainly silent retreat, through sitting and walking meditation, we'll follow the step by step structure of the sutta, learning how to connect more clearly and subtly with our experience, and the deeper nature of things."

Further he says, "The crucial thing about the Anapanasati sutta is that it's progressive. Each later tetrad builds on the one before. It makes a lot of difference to the experience of the subtler levels of the later tetrads if you've had time to build up awareness and concentration in the early stages. It will be a deeper and richer experience — building the foundation in the early part of the retreat, and going more deeply in the later part."

Since Dhammarati rarely visits Aryaloka, except during retreats for men in the ordination process, some introduction may be helpful. Originally from Glasgow, Scotland, Dhammarati joined the Western Buddhist Order in 1976. He was chairman of the London Buddhist Center in the 80s

and 90s, where he was involved in developing meditation and Dharma teaching. Currently, he is chair of the Triratna College of Public Preceptors among many other duties, providing leadership for the Triratna Community.

In the United States, Dhammarati serves as President of the San Francisco Buddhist Center (also Seattle and Missoula) and along with Nagabodhi is one of two Public Preceptors ordaining men in the U.S.

Dhammarati has been teaching Anapanasati for many years. He has an exceptional ability to provide instruction accessible to students regardless of their level of experience.

Anyone with even a basic understanding of the Mindfulness of Breathing practice could benefit from this retreat.

Don't miss this chance to work with Dhammarati; another opportunity like this may not come around soon. Also, since Dhammarati will be traveling from the U.K. especially for this retreat, we're asking those interested in attending to sign up as soon as possible so we can assess potential attendance.

~ Stephen Sloan

## Full Moon Puja a Time-Honored Buddhist Tradition

The Sevenfold Puja is celebrated monthly at Aryaloka on the Friday evening closest to the full moon. This follows a tradition that goes back to the time of the Buddha. The Buddha's disciples, who spent most of the month on the road spreading the Dharma, would gather together around the time of the full moon for confession and devotion. Here's a description from the *Sutta Nipata*, one of the earliest of Buddhist texts.

"With fools no company keeping,  
With the wise ever consorting,  
To the worthy homage paying:  
This, the Highest Blessing."  
~ *Sutta Nipata* 2.4 (Soni)

### In Pali:

Asevanā ca bālānam  
panditānañ ca sevanā

pūjā ca pūjanīyānam  
etaṃ mangalam-uttamam

Sangharakshita, the founder of the Triratna Buddhist Community, has spoken frequently about the importance of the Sevenfold Puja and devotional activities in general. In 1967, during the earliest days of the (then) Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (renamed the Triratna Buddhist Community in 2010), Bhante gave a talk entitled *Poetry and Devotion in Buddhism: the Sevenfold Puja* (part of the *Ritual and Devotion in Buddhism* series).

In describing the Sevenfold Puja that is still used today (the Sevenfold Puja is drawn from Shantideva's *Bodhicaryavatara*) Bhante observed, "This is the Sevenfold Puja, and when you hear the verses recited you will see that the Sevenfold Puja, in Shantideva's version, extracted from his great work, combines both poetry and de-

votion. The poetry is of course Indian poetry, the idiom is a little unfamiliar. It may not strike home to the hearts of everybody, but you may be interested to learn that some of our friends, not in London but in the North, are at present working on an English style poetical version of the Sevenfold Puja. So let us see what they are able to make of it, and let us see also, eventually I hope, how it functions and what its effects are.

"So in this way, by celebrating, by participating in the Sevenfold Puja which combines faith and devotion and poetry, and sometimes the image of visual beauty, sometimes even music in some Buddhist traditions, we find that the emotional energies are to some extent refined, and it thus becomes possible for the vision and the insight of the higher thinking centre to act through these refined, sublimated emo-

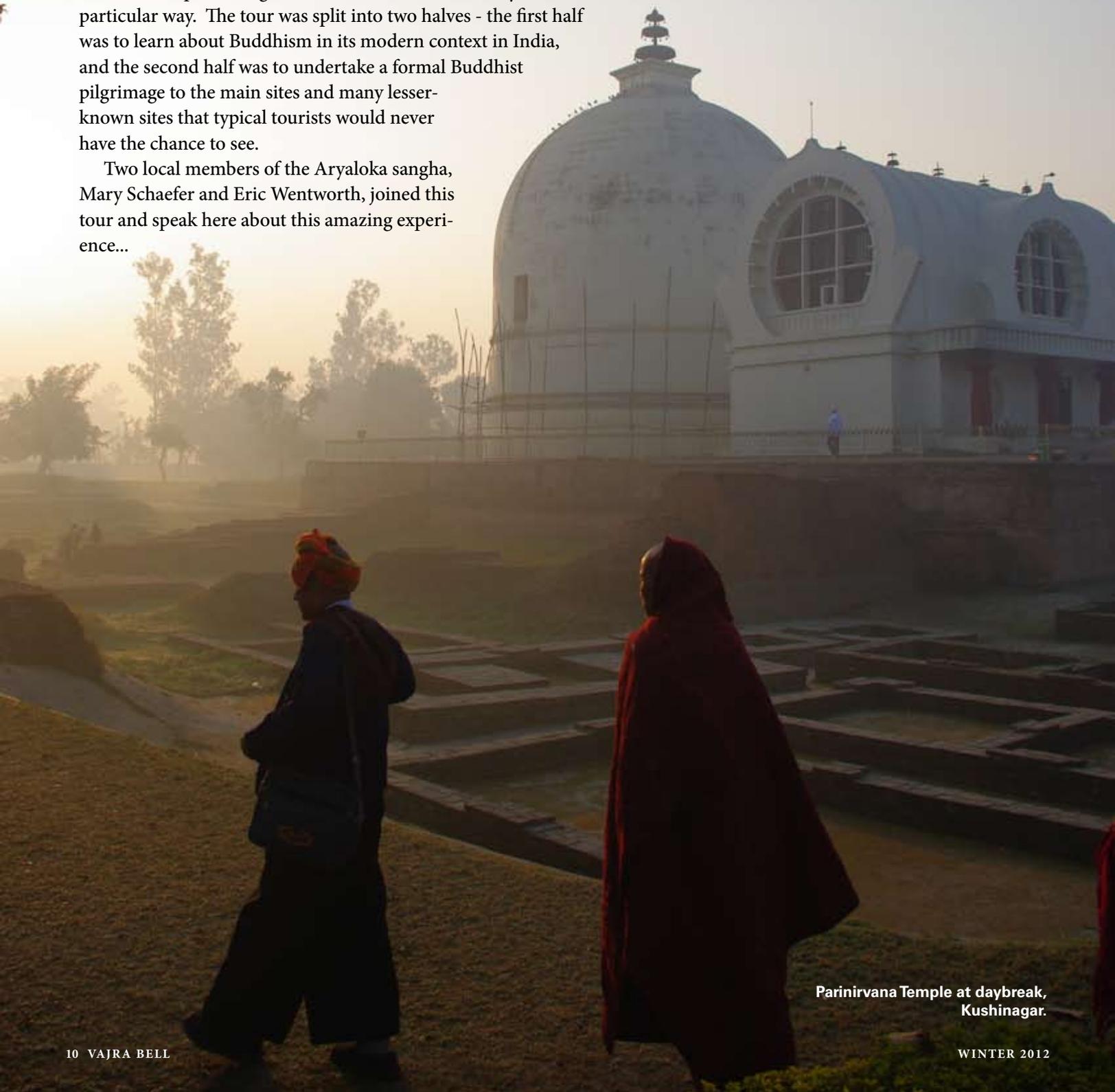
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# In the Land of the Buddha

By Mary Schaefer &  
Eric Wentworth

**I**n January of 2012, a small group of travellers from all over North America made a journey of pilgrimage to India. Organized by Order member Viradhamma and his good friend Manidhamma, this was the first attempt to bring Westerners to tour the country in this particular way. The tour was split into two halves - the first half was to learn about Buddhism in its modern context in India, and the second half was to undertake a formal Buddhist pilgrimage to the main sites and many lesser-known sites that typical tourists would never have the chance to see.

Two local members of the Aryaloka sangha, Mary Schaefer and Eric Wentworth, joined this tour and speak here about this amazing experience...



Parinirvana Temple at daybreak,  
Kushinagar.

# Buddhist Revival, Inner Revolution

by Mary Schaefer

We went to India on a Buddhist pilgrimage and found ourselves in the midst of a revival.

The "we" included Steve Wade of the Boston sangha, and Eric Wentworth and I from Aryaloka. We joined seven other Americans (four from the Montana sangha and three from the San Francisco sangha), and two Canadians from Vancouver, BC. We ventured to India for three weeks in January to retrace the life of the Buddha and meet the people who are bringing Buddhism back to modern India.

The tour was organized by Dharmachari Viradhamma of the San Francisco sangha and Dharmachari Manidhamma of Nagpur, India, under the auspices of DharmaJiva, a Triratna group that is working to publicize the Buddhist revival in India.

On one-half of the journey, we traced the steps of the Buddha — where he lived and died, taught the Dharma, and found Nirvana some 2,500 years ago. But before we travelled those ancient paths, we took a close look at the revival of Buddhism in India today and how it is being used as a powerful tool for personal and social improvement.

We went to India with our limited views and misperceptions of the country, its caste system, and even Mahatma Gandhi who is glorified in North America. We learned of the work of Dr. Bhimaro Ramji Ambedkar — lawyer, politician and chief architect of India's constitution who is revered across Maharashtra and Bahir, the



Rekha Kumari, Mary Schaefer, and Jyati Bouddh at Nagaloka Centre, Nagpur.

two Indian states where we focused our travels.

Rarely, if ever — outside of Triratna — did I hear of Ambedkar. Yet, dozens of statues of him look out over the many villages we visited. He is described by Sangharakshita as the lifelong champion of India's outcasts and the man responsible for the historic revival of Buddhism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ambedkar himself was an

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## The Great Mystery of Pilgrimage and India

by Eric Wentworth

India is a mystery to me. A whole two months have passed since my fellow travelers and I returned from a great journey to the other side of the planet - to make a pilgrimage to the places that the Buddha walked and lived, and to find out for ourselves what Buddhism looks like today in the place that it was born. I am still struggling to know exactly what to say about it. It's unusual for something to have affected me so strongly that I find it impossible to say anything about it that does it justice, and neither can I completely discover how I truly feel about it. A tectonic shift deep within my core, with uncertain results, approaches some understanding of it.

Mary Schaefer speaks eloquently elsewhere in this article about what it meant to all of us to meet modern Buddhists in India during the first half of our tour, and I won't cover the ground she has already traveled. This first half of our trip touched and inspired us all deeply and it was invigorating

to encounter our sangha in a way that is so familiar and yet so different on many levels. It was a strong reminder of the power of the Dharma to connect people from all walks of life, and also a brilliant demonstration of the Dharma as catalyst for radical change - both within individuals and in the larger world. The second half of our trip was focused around Buddhist pilgrimage, and began in earnest once we departed Nagpur and headed northeast toward Varanasi. This is where I'll begin.

So, what is pilgrimage? That is a complicated question and the answer varies depending on who you talk to. To start with, in the earliest written accounts of the Buddha's teachings, he mentions four sacred places, and says that at least once in one's life it would be very beneficial to one's spiritual development to undertake a pilgrimage and visit them with a "devout heart." These four places are: Lumbini (the birthplace of the Buddha), Bodh Gaya (the spot where the Buddha is said to have gained



Eric Wentworth beneath the Bodhi Tree, with offerings, Bodh Gaya.

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## buddhist revival

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untouchable by birth.

Our journey gave us a close look at the extraordinary work of Triratna and its social action programs. We heard first hand of the inhumanity of the caste system through the personal stories of Dalits, now our fellow Buddhists. Even though the caste system was outlawed in the 1940s, its roots run deep in modern India.

Our first stop, after landing in Mumbai, was Pune in Maharashtra. We stayed for several days at the Manuski Institute that serves as a hub of Buddhist-directed social work in western India. Our dedicated hosts welcomed us warmly and showed us the Dharma in action at a girls' school and hostel and a women's development center in the slums that provide child care and skills training to poor women. We could see as we watched these women proudly show us their sewing work how Buddhism liberates not just individuals but a whole class of humans. And we saw how less than \$100 could transform a family's life.

Through these visits, along with talks at the Institute, we got a "graduate level course" in the complex history of India and its caste system. Mangesh, one of our inspiring and passionate guides at the Institute, described the thousands of castes that exist in India and how Ambedkar believed that social transformation must start first with personal transformation. Mangesh told us that when a Dalit becomes a Buddhist they no longer define themselves as being hated and less than human.

Briefly and fortunately, while at Manuski, we were able to meet with Dharmachari Lokamitra, president of The Jambudvipa Trust, an active advocacy project. Lokamitra moved to India on Sangharakshita's encouragement in 1978, and has been a key force in the understanding and practice of Buddhism in India among the followers of Ambedkar, most of whom were previously known and treated as untouchables. Lokamitra has helped set up teaching and retreat centers throughout India along with many social works for those who are deprived and discriminated against.

From Pune, we traveled to Nagpur to stay at one of these centers — Nagaloka — a pilgrimage destination and residential training center for young Buddhists. Young people aged 18 to 30 come from all over India — many of them from very poor backgrounds — to learn computer skills, lan-



Young boys smile for the camera on a tour of slums near Pune.

guages, and social practices that motivate them to go back to change the caste system conditions in their areas.

These students eagerly gathered around us, curious about who we were and what we do. They held out their notebooks and pens, asking for our email addresses. We were equally curious about them and were deeply inspired by their commitment to improving their lives and those of their fellow Indians. One young woman, Rekha Kumari, told us of her plans to help handicapped girls, like her sister, in her home region. Another youth, Lakhan Gaikwad who introduced himself as "Lucky," launched an NGO a year earlier to provide access for the poor to education and other resources in his city. Today, these students are among our Facebook friends who keep us posted on their work and lives.

On one day trip while in Nagpur, we stood at Deekshabhoomi where Ambedkar with 400,000 untouchables converted to Buddhism as a means to gain dignity, self-confidence, and a path to a better life in the 1950s. Our teacher and guide, Manidhamma, took special care to bring to life not just the Buddha but the work of Sangharakshita and Ambedkar. While we sat under a Bodhi tree on the Deekshabhoomi grounds, we took turns reading aloud Sangharakshita's moving account of that momentous, historical event from his book, *Ambedkar and Buddhism*.

After a long drive through villages and the Indian countryside later that day, we visited the Ambedkar museum where we saw the decaying suits of Ambedkar, his eyeglasses, and even his typewriter on

which he drafted the constitution. As the sun set and we travelled back to Nagpur in the dark, our bus pulled into what seemed like a large, vacant lot. A man pulled up with a rickshaw as if on cue.

Dharmachari Priyadaka of the Karuna Trust in London, who had joined us for the day, stepped up on the rickshaw with a flashlight and read from Sangharakshita's book on Ambedkar. We listened to how Sangharakshita, standing in that very park on a rented rickshaw at night following the death of Ambedkar, consoled thousands of Ambedkar's grieving followers.

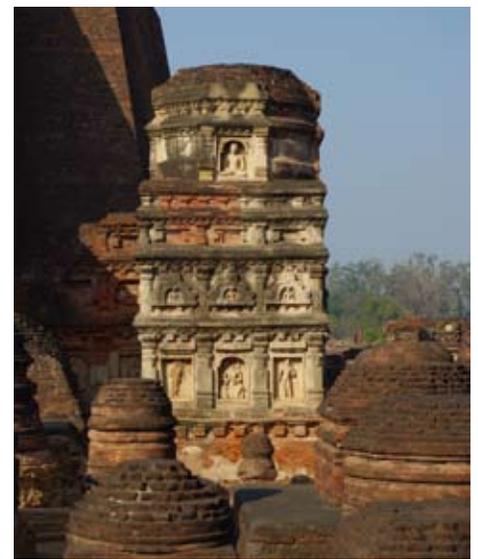
Such stirring experiences were a daily occurrence on this journey. I began to develop a clearer sense of just how, as a Buddhist, I could work for the benefit of other beings beyond my own personal development. I agreed with fellow traveller Kay Jones of the Montana sangha. Many of us in the comfort of our North American sanghas, she said, focus about 80 percent of our practice on our personal transformation and the smaller percentage on improving the lives of others. In India, the percentage seems reversed among the Buddhists we met. There is tremendous commitment to put the Dharma into action to improve society while facing enormous obstacles.

We came to be inspired, and we were. What we didn't expect was to be inspiring to our fellow Buddhists. Manidhamma told us, though, that our visit and our interest in their work encouraged our fellow Buddhists who are working tirelessly to use Buddhism as a force for social change. We were privileged to be such an inspiration, Steve Wade said, "for just showing up."

Our travel accommodations were basic and, in some cases, uncomfortable. Yet, they seemed luxurious compared to how we saw people living in the many villages we passed through; some villagers living in ways the Buddha did in thatched huts some 2500 years ago. I came home to my spacious home that could house a village. I felt a different sense of appreciation for my dry, warm bed and hot, running water, and how deeply fortunate we are in this country.

Many of us now are looking to see how we can further encourage, raise money for, and, in some cases, even work beside our fellow Buddhists in India to support this "Peaceful Revolution" so that it gains visibility, voice, and support not just in India, but around the world.

I went to India. I came home changed. And now I must help change the world. ♦♦



FROM LEFT, CLOCKWISE: Triratna pilgrims from the tour at Dhammekh Stupa in Sarnath. View from the Ganges River at Varanasi. Vulture Peak decorated with prayer flags. Small stupas surrounding Sariputra Stupa at the ruins of Nalanda University.

## mystery of pilgrimage

*Continued from Page 11*

Enlightenment beneath the Bodhi Tree), Sarnath (the place where the Buddha first taught the Dharma and, as a result, where the Sangha was born), and Kushinagar (the place where the Buddha met his death and attained Parinirvana). On this trip, we were able to visit all but one of the four main pilgrimage sites. Unfortunately, Lumbini lies within the borders of Nepal, and we did not have the necessary visas to make that journey.

Aside from these four, there are many other sacred sites around the world which are also visited by Buddhists who undertake pilgrimage. Within India it seems that every corner you turn is a sacred spot for someone. There are thousands of Hindu shrines dotting the landscape. Buddhist sacred places are less numerous after centuries of destruction and neglect, but in the many places we had the opportunity to go, Buddhists from all over the world could be seen making offerings, bowing and prostrating themselves, meditating, and performing rituals. Many of these places have

only been rediscovered in the last couple of centuries and have lain in ruin or buried for hundreds or even thousands of years. There are so many more sites important to the Buddhist world just waiting for discovery beneath the soils of India which will no doubt also become destination spots for practitioners someday.

Along the winding path of our pilgrimage through northern India we circumambulated the mountainous Dhammekh Stupa at Sarnath, meditated together where the

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**Living Fully: Finding Joy  
in Every Breath**

by Shyalpa Tenzin Rinpoche

This is one of those Buddhist books that produces inspiration immediately as you are reading it. I found myself feeling the wisdom of Tenzin Rinpoche on every page of this wonderful book. There are recommendations for our lives that are kind but have the power of a thunderbolt and could strengthen our Buddhist practice in many ways. The chapters are very short and the sections in each chapter are only a few pages. It's like Tenzin Rinpoche is talking to us about life without the need for twenty or thirty pages for each aspect of the Dharma. His writing has the abundant degree of talent that says volumes in only a page or two. Here is a sample from the book:

"Whatever you plan to do, begin by taking a moment to reflect before you act. Generate a pure thought and nurture it within your heart. Keep it always in your mind. Have the sincere wish that every interaction you have with others will be the cause of their happiness in this and future lives, and that ultimately it will lead others to the unsurpassed happiness of complete enlightenment."

**The Buddha Walks into a Bar:  
A Guide to Life for a  
New Generation**

by Lodro Rinzler

This title really caught my attention and here are some comments by others:

"A young, New York-based Buddhist teacher, Rinzler is able to take a relaxed, colloquial approach to meditation and its many benefits because he's so well-versed in Shambhala and Tibetan Buddhism. With examples ranging from superheroes to YouTube videos, Rinzler brings timeless teachings to the buzz of now in an engaging, richly instructive, genuinely illuminating spiritual guide."

~ Booklist

"Don't let Rinzler's youthful exuberance fool you. The kid knows his stuff"

~Tricycle

"Enjoyable, engaging, and inspiring. I loved the book and think it's a great introductory read for a younger person who would like to know more about Buddhism, or just life in general."

~Wildmind.org

**Your True Home: The Everyday  
Wisdom of Thich Nhat Hanh**

by Thich Nhat Hanh

This gentle monk's books were my first exposure to Buddhism. His vast wisdom and compassion are gifts to everyone. Here are some reviews:

"365 days of practical, powerful teachings from the beloved Zen teacher."

~ Melvin McLeod

"Thich Nhat Hanh shows us the connection between personal inner peace and peace on earth."

~ His Holiness the Dalai Lama

**The Wise Heart:  
A Guide to the Universal Teachings  
of Buddhist Psychology**

by Jack Kornfield

Another Dharma book with critical acclaim by Jack Kornfield. Here are comments by Alice Walker and by Publishers Weekly:

"What an extraordinary mind is Jack

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# Buddhaworks

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

## mystery of pilgrimage

Continued from Page 13

Buddha gave his first sermon, sat beneath the Bodhi Tree in Bodh Gaya with the deafening sounds of Tibetan horns all around us, made silent offerings in the place that the Buddha's body was cremated, stood level with the crown of Ashoka's pillars, climbed the ancient ruined steps of Nalanda's library near the spot where Shantideva taught the Bodhicaryavatara, watched the sunset fall behind prayer flags on Vulture Peak, witnessed the sunrise as we floated by rowboat down the Ganges River to the sound of sitar and tabla music, and read from the Pali sutras at Sravasti where the Buddha gave most of these teachings. There were so many amazing, breathtaking moments. So many.

And there were some very difficult moments, too. India is not an easy place to travel. One leg of our trip took two and a half solid days of uncomfortable and exhausting bus jostling. It was like winning the lottery to have hot water in the places we stayed. And that success always seemed to be balanced out by having to use a pit toilet, or being stuck in a room with black mold all over the walls, or having a burst pipe in the bathroom, or wet sheets. There were occasions that danced on the edge of dangerous, like being pulled over by corrupt cops looking for a bribe, or speeding between two enormous oncoming trucks down the middle of the road in a rickshaw that wasn't much more than a tin can with a motor. Everything was frustratingly at least two hours late - what some like to call "India Time." It was a merging of polar opposites, both externally and internally. But, as Subhuti, Order member and well-worn Indian traveler, has put it, "Nothing ever goes according to plan. Something else will happen. It will all be okay!"

The key to the question of "what pilgrimage is" isn't what you see, it's how you see it. Going on Buddhist pilgrimage is not a sightseeing tour, and the destinations are secondary to the journey itself. Pilgrimage at its core is an expression of one's spiritual confidence and faith, and it deepens one's experience of the Three Jewels. When we go on pilgrimage, we connect with the very roots of our spiritual lives and we attempt to make a mental and emotional connection with our greatest teacher, the Buddha. Being in or near the places where the well-known events of his life took place can arouse strong emotions for some, and cre-

ates conditions for positive mental states to arise. The act of going on pilgrimage itself is a huge undertaking. It requires great effort, carefully saved resources, personal willpower, careful preparation, self-reflection and study, renunciation of physical comforts, and the practice of patience and loving-kindness. The life-changing experiences that come out of this journey are food for spiritual practice. It will be hard, it will be amazing, it will be a treasure to remember forever.

Personally, going on pilgrimage was an expression of my own going forth that was intentionally self-designed to push the limits of what's possible for me. Those who know me well know that I am truly a householder, particularly at this juncture of my life. I'm a dedicated husband and stay-at-home dad with two young children, trying to make ends meet as best I can with a self-owned and run right livelihood business - both of which occupy lots of time. I am both a deeply committed Buddhist practitioner whose life has been irrevocably altered for the better and permeated by the Dharma, and I'm strongly involved in the Triratna sangha. In the Buddha's day, and for some people today, leaving worldly concerns behind and dedicating one's every waking moment to the spiritual life was something commonly done, and this was the act of "going forth" into the spiritual life.

The monastic life, however, is obviously not my path. At times that is difficult, because worldly responsibilities can prevent me from practicing the Dharma the way I might sometimes like, in the ideal manner of having lots of time and energy to devote to nothing but meditation and study. But I find it incredibly enriching and fulfilling to practice the Dharma under the conditions that are present for me - whether they're something I prefer or not. After all, isn't the practice all about letting go of what our egos would like the conditions to be? So, in lieu of leaving my family and letting them fend for themselves, taking a trip of this magnitude - trying to gather enough resources, being far away and out of communication with family for so long, making the commitment and effort to make this idea a reality, and being receptive to the change that it would bring - was my own doable version of leaving worldly concerns behind and immersing myself in the intensity of spiritual life in this particular way.

India and pilgrimage required resources I didn't think I had, and it surprising-

ly reflected parts of me that I didn't know needed work. It broadened and deepened my spiritual practice. It gave me a context within which to see the Buddha and the immense contribution he made to the world and beyond.

A funny experience occurred while I was seated beneath the Bodhi Tree at Bodh Gaya, with the grandeur of the Mahabodhi Temple towering above me and innumerable other Buddhists milling about in varying levels of seriousness about making offerings to this or that spot. In one laughable moment I realized that in no place that I'd visited had I actually found the Buddha.

In every place I had been the landscape had changed over and over throughout the centuries, and in many spots it was only a guess that the Buddha had ever been there at all. Even if he was, I had missed him by 2,500 years. Some places had been dressed up to please pilgrims and tourists. Others had been utterly destroyed by the ravages of time and no longer resembled their original state.

A twinge of disappointment arose until I reflected further and saw that the Buddha was there after all - in the collective energy held in place by the hearts of the Buddhist pilgrims, in the hearts of the Buddhists from the various Triratna centers we'd visited... and there he was in my own heart, too. "I've gone halfway around the world to find the Buddha and it could have happened at home - how silly!" was my first reaction. But I believe there's something very mysterious and special about finding the Buddha in one's own heart on pilgrimage that can't happen at home.

As Edward Albee once said, "Sometimes it's necessary to go a long distance out of the way in order to come back a short distance correctly." ♦♦



# "Spring" Into Creativity with Workshops

A soft rain is falling this March day in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico — watering the geraniums, encouraging the hummingbirds, and bringing nourishment to the corn and cane fields. Spring is coming to the New Hampshire forest as well, always a time of rebirth and promise. It's a good time to look at our practice and see if it needs some encouragement and new energy. Participating in Contemplative Arts activities at Aryaloka is an excellent way of revitalizing our core practice while gaining new insight into "self" and the dropping of duality.

As an artist of many years, I am pulled to share with others some truths and joys I have found in my own life. Joan Sutherland tells us that "the apprentice to awakening sees the self rise and fall; we climb into that self when needed and sometimes, when deeply absorbed in meditation or art or physical exertions, the self disap-

pears altogether. Underneath it all, awakening unfolds with each new experience, perhaps not complete in this lifetime, until the last breath is drawn. Awakening happens in the meditation hall, in the art studio, on the freeway and in the sickbed. In any moment of any day, awakening is already there, and in any moment of any day we might come to experience it."

So come and awaken, and join us in two special Japanese Contemplative Art workshops. Numbers are limited because of special equipment needed. Sign up early for these two workshops — *Shodo: The Way of the Brush*, on Saturday, April 28<sup>th</sup> and *Kado: The Way of Flowers* on Saturday, June 2<sup>nd</sup> — and open yourself to some new meditative experiences. For more information, or to offer your assistance in making these workshops happen, contact Kiranada (603 642-3479) [kiranada@betsysterlingbenjamin.com](mailto:kiranada@betsysterlingbenjamin.com). ~ Dh. Kiranada



## Contemplative Arts - Shodo: The Way of the Brush

In late January, the Centro Budista de la Ciudad de Mexico hosted a very popular day of *Shodo: The Way of the Brush* with our own Kiranada. The waiting list was long and after a day of ink, there were lots of requests for getting Kiranada back for a FULL weekend retreat of Shodo in the future. (Yikes!) The Mexican participants commented that they had never experienced the depth of a "moving meditation" like this, and they wanted much more.

But, Kiranada will be back soon in the U.S. and is willing to do another very special day of delving into the Japanese contemplative arts with the Aryaloka community. Shodo has long been an artistic outlet for Buddhist monks and priests, and as Kiranada presents it, it is accessible to all. We will learn to draw some Japanese *kanji* ideograms and their meaning. We will begin with meditations to quiet ourselves and some training to become sensitive to the brush and flow of black ink off the tip.

These activities will take us into observation and awareness, embodying the brush, letting the ink flow, and reflecting on our true state of mind. No special talent needed, only interest in going deeper. The workshop begins at 10:00 a.m. – come at 9:45 a.m. for tea – on Saturday, April 28. Access the website for fees and to register. Materials and lunch included. Open to all. Space limited.

~ Dh. Kiranada



## Contemplative Arts - *Kado*: *The Way of Flowers*

In our contemplative arts group we are looking at a variety of paths (or *do* in Japanese). These are considered "ways" or "paths" to awakening. *Sho-do* (calligraphy), *cha-do* (tea), *kyu-do* (the bow), *ku-do* (the sword) even *aiki-do* (martial arts) are all Japanese traditional "paths" to possible awakening.

*Kado*, *Ikebana*, *Ikenobo*, often translated as "forms of flower-arranging," originated in 15<sup>th</sup>-century Japan as a tradition of Buddhist floral offering. *Ikenobo* is closely associated with Rokakudo Temple in Kyoto and the head of this flower-arranging school is always an ordained Buddhist priest — currently the 45<sup>th</sup> generation of the original founder.

On Saturday, June 3<sup>rd</sup> we are honored to have Masako Yatsushashi-sensei, one of Boston's finest *Ikenobo* teachers, coming to Aryaloka to share this long tradition with us. We will explore the "meaning" of flowers, learn to express their inner essence, contemplate impermanence, and develop artistic sensitivity to positive and negative space, as well as sensitivity to the tension of line and rhythm. Yatsushashi-sensei has much to share with us. I hope you will see this as a special opportunity to delve into a new area of the traditional Contemplative Arts that has not been seen at Aryaloka.

When thinking of *Kado*, the art of flower-arranging, I often remember a photograph of Chogyam Trungpa Rimpoche, a powerful teacher of the Shambala Buddhism tradition, holding a delicate long-stemmed chrysanthemum, deep in concentration, considering where to next place it. Come and find the Way. Limited number of participants. Saturday, June 2nd, at 3 p.m. Come at 9:45 for tea. See website for fees and registration. Materials and lunch included. ~ Dh. Kiranada

## Do No Harm with Your Words

By Carol Doering

Do no harm with your words  
is the maxim.  
With good intentions, why not abide by it?  
But the slippery words, aimed in a benign way,  
I swear, with humor,  
slide over into insinuation,  
are perceived as hackle-raisingly hostile.  
Offense is taken.  
You are out of neutral territory  
and have pricked someone's tender self.  
Who stalks off.  
Stay tuned for the next episode.

The words meant to be gentle, witty,  
prove to be missiles of manipulative content,  
invading touchy territory.  
So withdraw immediately,  
begin diplomatic talks,  
send dignified but sincere apologies.  
Next time search harder for that  
manipulative layer  
you hid from yourself  
under the smooth, slippery words.

## Spring Flow

By Carol Doering

Sounds of water flowing over stones.  
Under the calmness  
rest  
refreshment  
of enduring flow,  
in mind or stream,  
there is scratch and tumble,  
press and shove.  
The water must meet the stony obstacle.  
Dig under it.  
Wash the gravelly mud away and down the stream.  
If the flow be compelling enough,  
tumble the rock away and out.  
Given enough time,  
wear away the grain of the granite itself  
and get through.

## Poetry Group Honors Aryaloka for Creative Support

One Sunday each month, Aryaloka honors poetry and the creative force by hosting a poetry group. Poets gather from nearby or drive hours to get to the group. Poets come who have been published, but others come who have not written for years, or are completely new to writing. We bring poems turned out of drawers, written decades ago, as well as poems jotted down this week. There are poems on any subject, sometimes directly about Buddhism, often not.

We come to the group to share our own work, to share poems we have read that are important to us and to listen to the writings of others. Poetry, like any art, needs to be out in the light and be shared with an audience. Poetry needs to come alive and be heard by others. The Aryaloka Poetry Group is a rare opportunity to do that, in a comfortable, non-judgmental atmosphere.

Having an audience in this group who love poetry, we find inspiration and write more often and more deeply. As Manjusvara said in *The Poet's Way*: "writing is like entering a meditation hall, where we can leave behind the carelessness of speech and practice a mindful approach to language... It is this attention given to language that creates what Seamus Heaney has called 'the temple for the ear': poetry as the linguistic equivalent of a meditation hall

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# Concord Sangha Member Shares Exploration of Self

By "Tissa"

Before coming to prison, I knew who I was — a father, a husband, and a son. These identities had cemented who I was. As those years have passed on I am no longer a father, husband, or a son. In the absence of these identities I was beginning to lose my sense of "being." The Dhamma provided some insight as I began an inquiry into was becoming of "me." I would like to share with you some of the things that have helped me in this exploration.

From birth we attach to many things to form our identity. We say "that is mine, that is me, this is me." I cry when I'm separated from what I think is "me," and happy when "me" returns. Most of us want to continue ourselves past the breakup of our bodies by means of some kind of legacy. So much effort is put into being something, and preventing ourselves from being nothing. Letting go of self seems to be a dominant theme of my inquiry.

Here are a couple of quotes that have really inspired me:

"Renunciation is letting go of holding back." ~ *Trungpa Rinpoche*

"Forgiveness is letting go of the hope that the past could have been any different." ~ *recounted by Oprah Winfrey*

The cycle of "becoming" is described as the process of giving rise, within the mind, to states of being that allow for physical or mental birth on any of the three levels —

sensuality, form, and formless. We do this in one way by acquiring things to define ourselves. Who I am is a process of becoming and a continuous collection of acquisitions. To stop becoming, I need to stop collecting things to define myself. If I abandon the acquisitions, what remains?

"The manifold stresses that come into play in the world, come from acquisition as their cause. Anyone not knowing (this) creates acquisition. The fool, he comes to stress again and again. Therefore, discerning (this), you shouldn't create acquisition as you contemplate birth as what brings stress into play" ~ *Sutta Nipata 3.12*

It would be nice to let go of who I think I am — to let go of being concerned about being perceived this or that way, to let go of relying on things to be a definition of myself, to let go of trying to perpetually maintain this persona.

This illusion, manifestation, self-imposed creation, that we have about ourselves begets all of our stress. It would be nice to let go, and as the saying goes, to "just be." No views, no judgements. Can you imagine it?

"And how do those with vision see? There is the case where a monk sees what has come into being as come into being. Seeing what has come into being, he practices for disenchantment with what has come into being, dispassion for what has come into being, cessation for what has come into being. This is how those with

vision see.

"Those, having seen what's come to be as what's come to be, and what's gone beyond what's come to be, are released in line with what's come to be, through the exhaustion of craving for becoming.

"If they've comprehended what's come to be, and are free from the craving for becoming and non-, with non-becoming of what's come to be, monks come to no further becoming." ~ *Itivuttaka 49*

The word "disenchantment" here catches my attention. Disenchantment, like a spell wearing off, allows me to see a bit more clearly that the acquisitions that I've been collecting are really illusions. However, my self-affirming ego does a good job at trying to keep me enchanted. If I listen to my ego, so many things seem vitally important to attain and defend — things that maintain that false sense of reality about myself that I've come to rely on.

My ego has a good headstart on me, and there's a danger in trying to find oneself. Whether someone is in a quest to discover themselves or whether someone believes they already know who they are, the root of grasping, for becoming, remains. My inquiry into who I am, the "becoming" of me, as I have discovered, is fraught with more grasping and attempts to reify and define my self as something.

It is my hope that sharing this may help you in some way in your journey of "self" discovery, and may help you to alleviate any stress that may bring.

## 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.

## poetry group

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where we can start to hear ourselves think and use words to both reawaken the heart and to heal the heart."

We honor Aryaloka for hosting this monthly poetry gathering. All are welcome. Come and join us to share your work, to share poems you love, or just to join with us and listen. ~ *Carol Doering*

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

## full moon puja

*Continued from Page 9*

tional energies directly onto the moving centre and in this way transform the whole of life."

So Sangharakshita is following the tradition that flows back to the time of the Buddha. "Transforming the whole of life" is indeed the Highest Blessing referred to in the Sutta Nipata.

We, too, can begin to transform our lives and receive the Highest Blessing, join us for the next Full Moon Puja at Aryaloka.

## buddhaworks

Continued from Page 14

Kornfield's. Curious by nature and brightly shining from birth, tempered by suffering, both personal and worldly, it guides us, in this profound and useful book, on a journey of consciousness unfamiliar to most of us born in the West. The *Wise Heart* is one of those books, more than a book, more like a companion, that encourages our bravery to meet whatever confronts us in life with a caring and tranquil heart. It is a transformative gift from one of the great spiritual teachers of our time."

~ Alice Walker, author of  
*The Color Purple*

"His best book yet... Kornfield comes across as the therapist you wish you'd had... Provides convincing and illustrative anecdotes and stories, and reaches into

world traditions and literature as well as contemporary scientific research."

~ Publishers Weekly, starred review

### The Mindfulness Solution: Everyday Practices for Everyday Problems

by Ronald D. Siegel, PsyD

Every day it seems that science is discovering what the Buddha discovered 2,500 years ago. This is ever more proof that the Dharma can help the pains of our world. Here are some comments about this new book:

"Dr. Siegel offers us an abundance of exercises, transformative practices, and the skillful means to live a mindful life of conscious awareness and meaningful connection. I applaud and recommend his unique perspective, gleaned from a life of medi-

tation and psychotherapeutic practice and research. This wonderful book is a real contribution to the field of happiness studies and spiritual development."

~ Lama Surya Das, author of  
*Awakening the Buddha Within*

"Mindfulness is an innate capacity that, when cultivated, can awaken us to true health and happiness. Dr. Siegel's book is a clear and comprehensive guide for anyone who wants to apply the power of mindful awareness to challenging emotions, physical pain, or relational difficulties. Filled with wisdom that is both practical and deep, this book is an invitation to live the real moments of our life with presence and heart."

~ Tara Brach, PhD, author of *Radical Acceptance*

~ Steve Cardwell

## Upcoming Events

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- 15 Sangha Night, 6:45-9:15 p.m., open to all
- 16 Drop-in yoga, 5-6 p.m.
- 16 Introduction to Buddhism and Meditation, 7-9 p.m., Amala
- 17 Women's mitra class
- 18 Drop-in gentle yoga, 4-5 p.m.
- 19-20 WORK DAYS - Come help maintain and beautify our center, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., Dayalocana
- 21 Men's mitra class
- 22 Sangha Night, 6:45-9:15 p.m., open to all
- 23 Drop-in yoga, 5-6 p.m.
- 23 Introduction to Buddhism and Meditation, 7-9 p.m., Amala
- 23 Aryaloka Council meeting 6:15 p.m.
- 24 Women's mitra class
- 25 Drop-in gentle yoga, 4-5 p.m.
- 27 Poetry group, 4-6 p.m., Kavyadrishti
- 28 Men's mitra class
- 29 Sangha Night, 6:45-9:15 p.m., open to all
- 30 Drop-in yoga, 5-6 p.m.
- 30 Introduction to Buddhism and Meditation, 7-9 p.m., Amala
- 31 Women's mitra class
- 31 Council/Sangha meeting, 6:30 p.m.

### JUNE

- 1 Full-moon puja and meditation, 7 p.m.

- 1 Drop-in gentle yoga, 4-5 p.m.
- 2 Arts Day: Kado - The Way of Flowers, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., Masako Matsuhashi
- 3 Going Deeper Into the Eight-fold Path: Skillful Communication, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., Arjava
- 4 Men's mitra class
- 5 Sangha Night, 6:45-9:15 p.m., open to all
- 6 Drop-in yoga, 5-6 p.m.
- 6 Introduction to Buddhism and Meditation, 7-9 p.m., Amala
- 7 Women's mitra class
- 8 Drop-in gentle yoga, 4-5 p.m.
- 9 The Practical Aspects of Dying (series 2, class #3), 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., Karunasara
- 9 Women's GFR, 8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
- 11 Men's mitra class
- 12 Sangha Night, 6:45-9:15 p.m., open to all
- 13 Drop-in yoga, 5-6 p.m.
- 13 Introduction to Buddhism and Meditation, 7-9 p.m., Amala
- 15 Drop-in gentle yoga, 4-5 p.m.
- 15-16 Retreat at Concord State Prison for Men, contact Bodhana
- 16 Men's practice day
- 17 Intro to loving-kindness meditation, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
- 17 Poetry group, 4-6 p.m.
- 18 Men's mitra class
- 19 Sangha Night, 6:45-9:15 p.m., open to all
- 22-7/2 Noble Silence Retreat - Bodhana, Karunasara
- 27 Aryaloka Council meeting 6:15 p.m. - location TBA

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 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.*

### APRIL

- 2 Men's mitra class
- 3 Sangha Night, 6:45-9:15 p.m., open to all
- 4 Yoga drop-in class, 5-6 p.m.
- 4 Intermediate meditation, 7-9 p.m., Bodhipaksa
- 5 Women's mitra class
- 6 Full-moon puja and meditation, 7 p.m.
- 7 Triratna Order Day, 9 a.m.- 12 p.m., lunch included, Order members
- 7 Triratna Community Day, 1-3 p.m.  
COME CELEBRATE!
- 9 Men's mitra class
- 10 Sangha Night, 6:45-9:15 p.m., open to all
- 11 Drop-in yoga class, 5-6 p.m.
- 11 Intermediate meditation, 7-9 p.m., Bodhipaksa
- 12 *Women's mitra class*
- 12-15 Retreat - An Integrated Practice: Yoga, Meditation, and Mindfulness - Michelle and Arjava, 7 p.m.
- 14 *Living Meaningfully, Dying Joyfully (series 2, class #1), 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., Karunasara*
- 15 *Spiritual Spa Day, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., Akashavanda*
- 16 Men's mitra class
- 17 Sangha Night, 6:45-9:15 p.m., open to all
- 18 Drop-in yoga class, 5-6 p.m.
- 18 Intermediate meditation, 7-9 p.m., Bodhipaksa
- 19 Women's mitra class
- 20-22 Introduction to Noble Silence retreat, 7 p.m., Bodhana
- 21 *Men's practice day*
- 23 Men's mitra class
- 24 Sangha Night, 6:45-9:15 p.m., open to all
- 25 Drop-in yoga class, 5-6 p.m.
- 25 Intermediate meditation, 7-9 p.m., Bodhipaksa
- 25 *Aryaloka Council meeting 6:15 p.m.*

- 26 Women's mitra class
- 26-27 Monk's brief visit
- 28 *The Practical Aspects of Dying (series 1, class #3), 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., Karunasara*
- 28 Arts Day — Shodo: The Way of the Brush, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., Kiranada
- 29 Intro to Buddhism, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Prasannavajri
- 29 Poetry Group, 4-6 p.m., Kavyadrishti
- 30 Men's mitra class

### MAY

- 1 Sangha Night, 6:45-9:15 p.m., open to all
- 2 Drop-in yoga class, 5-6 p.m.
- 2 Intermediate meditation, 7-9 p.m., Bodhipaksa
- 3 Women's mitra class
- 3 Drop-in gentle yoga, 4-5 p.m.
- 4 Full-moon puja and meditation, 7 p.m.
- 5 RENTAL - domes closed
- 5 *How to Benefit Those Who Are Dying and Those Who Have Died (series 2, class#2), 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., Karunasara*
- 6 Buddha Day celebration, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., Prasannavajri
- 7 Men's mitra class
- 8 Sangha Night, 6:45-9:15 p.m., open to all
- 9 Drop-in yoga, 5-6 p.m.
- 9 Introduction to Buddhism and Meditation, 7-9 p.m., Amala
- 10 Women's mitra class
- 11 Drop-in gentle yoga, 4-5 p.m.
- 12 RENTAL - domes closed
- 12 *Men's practice day*
- 14 Men's mitra class

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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**