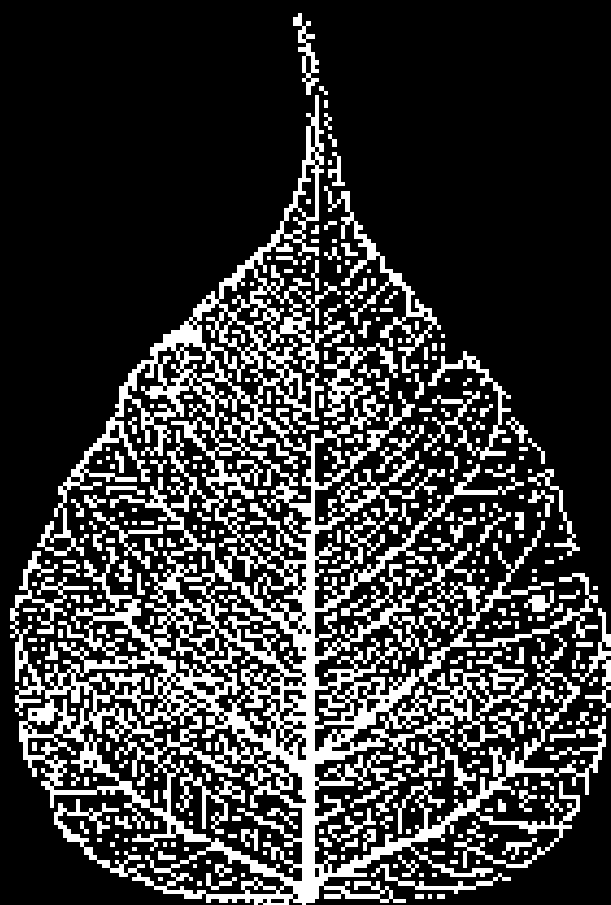


BODHI LEAF



**WAT
BUDDHA
DHAMMA**

**FOREST HERMITAGE
RETREAT CENTRE
VILLAGE**



FEB 1999 — 2542
VOL. 21 NO.1

Directions for Insight

1. Training in Renunciation

1st November, B.E. 2506 (1963)

As you steadily develop your self-inspection, carefully note where it is heading so that any lapse or imprudence in your daily life can be corrected. Failing to uphold a high standard will cause a continuous deterioration in the mind due to selfishness. You must persevere with the self-inspection because any lapse will cause this disease of selfishness to spread its infection everywhere. Whenever you become neglectful, make sure that you then purge any selfishness that has arisen. This is especially necessary when it flares up in force, but even when it manifests more subtly, it still needs to be thoroughly searched out. If you do not eradicate this virulent disease, your practice cannot be considered to accord with the Lord Buddha's Teaching.

It's therefore imperative that your self-inspection becomes comprehensive, and that it is based and develops out of the Five or Eight Precepts. Generally, the precepts can reduce selfishness at one level and then our mind-development can come in and remove it at a medium level. This is something you should all understand quite well. Finally, however, mindfulness and wisdom will need to become engaged in eradicating the selfishness that results from overlooking the truth about impermanence, suffering, and not-self. With repeated attention, your concern will deepen and the defilements — craving and clinging — and self, in its various manifestations, can be disposed of. It's not seeing the impermanence and deception of things that permits desire to grasp hold and cherish them. This disease is made even more difficult to treat by our predilection in examining other people before ourselves.

To be able to turn within and apprehend self with its machinations concealed deep in one's nature, does indeed require potent mindfulness and wisdom. Yet also actually to get rid of them isn't so simple, and one really only manages to view self's

deceptions and desires. These multifarious schemes of greed are worthy of great attention and need to be carefully examined. Any shortcoming will force the practice to veer off course and may end by actually facilitating and increasing one's sense of self.

In the beginning, we should be content with what we already have so as not to feed and inflate this sense of self. Greed for anything — however coarse or refined, no matter how attractive — must be put aside. This is something each one of us must see and understand for ourselves; but because it can be all so misleading and deceptive, that isn't so easy. The predicament is compounded because 'self' is always looking out for distractions to involve us in. Should we enquire what it is grasping for, what it is in turmoil over — it just pretends not to have heard. It is only interested in wanting more and more, without end.



A basic feature of human beings is the enterprise they apply when acquiring things. The defilements possess a certain cleverness in procuring, but not in giving up or forgoing. If only this could be transposed so that instead we became creative in bestowing and giving away. The benefit would be great because the grasping at things would stop and gradually, with intensive contemplation, the basic attachment would be destroyed. Blocking the defilements from taking their fill by cutting off their nutriment is following the Way of the Noble Disciple. But the other way, the way

of deception and sponsoring self, makes one a firm follower of Māra, the Evil One, who personifies the defilements. Instead of dispensing things one then endlessly acquires and consumes them.

There are, therefore, two possible ways to go. You have to discern in yourself the existence of the acute disease of selfishness, with its 'getting-cleverness'. Yet, if you aren't sharp enough, you'll be fooled by self's duplicity: "The more [things acquired] the merrier," as Māra would say. Ask yourself, "Am I really following the way to enlightenment or is it the way of Māra and selfishness? On which path does my proficiency really lie?" This is something to always question.

The household stores in this area have been donated for the use of those who come here to practise Dhamma. Be careful never to appropriate such communal property to yourself and always ask about such things first. Grabbing this and that to make yourself as comfortable as possible, even if it may have been done unthinkingly, is still the same as theft. These communal household utensils should therefore not be requisitioned as your own; even those things donated specifically for your use should, on occasion, be brought out and shared. In that case there is no attachment and one does not plan just for one's own convenience. Otherwise, the instinct of 'self' — which needs to appropriate things to itself — is too manipulative and cunning, and its villainy is so difficult to see. One then mistakenly endorses the dictum, the more I can get the better, and such selfishness puts one under the domination of Māra.

Now that we have become disciples of the Lord Buddha, how can we possibly be like that? If we should see that the greed arisen in ourselves becomes particularly grasping, then the only way out is to give up the thing (that we're grasping at). Let go of it! Under no circumstances should you quietly appropriate it on the side. Absolutely not! I will tell you plainly, anyone living in a religious

community who behaves in such a way will only go from bad to worse, because there is no sense of shame or fear of doing evil. Without these two fundamental principles as a foundation, how can Dhamma possibly be built up? Though one might be knowledgeable and skilled in reciting the scriptures, one can't even put right such an underlying character defect. A personality that knows no bounds to its greed really seems disgusting, or rather the disease that infects that mind does. What can we do to cleanse such a mind? Anyway, to associate with extremely selfish people will inflame the disease still more and its infection will penetrate deep into the mind.

All this remains a hidden subject which people don't wish to speak about. It's not pleasant talk for it disturbs and disconcerts with its sinister implications. It's only through mindfulness and wisdom examining within yourself that you'll be able to know the deceit of the defilements and greed. How can they all be eradicated? This is not a matter about which you can be halfhearted. You'll have to disavow and give away as much as possible. Anything that is involved in upholding such selfishness must be relinquished. Don't agree amongst yourselves that everyone may grab as much as they can, but rather encourage one another to give as much as possible. Failure to do this will cause the mind to fall into anguish, because you twist round and infect yourself with the dirt and disease of selfishness. Who else can possibly come and treat you?

When you decide to examine this malignant disease, you'll have to recall all this for yourself, because nobody else will want to discuss it with you. Even though they too are saturated with the same infection, they prefer to talk of other matters. The occasional giving away of various things is relatively easy, but to relinquish self is both recondite and extremely difficult. Nevertheless, the effort is worthwhile because this self is the sole source of all suffering. Should this root not be destroyed it will continue to sprout and flourish, so we must turn and apprehend this self.

The Lord Buddha has laid down the Recollections of the Four Requisites

[of life], which, for the monks, are: robe material, alms food, shelter, and medicine. He said that if they weren't considered merely as material exigencies, as elements,⁽¹⁾ free of all ideas of self, then the yellow robe, the lump of rice, the hut and medicines would all burst into flame. Even though we may not be monks and only beginners in Dhamma practice, if we really have the determination to be rid of the defilements and self, then there's no loss in trying to follow a similar basic rule. If we don't, imagine how the defilements, craving, clinging, and self will relentlessly proliferate. So we have to make our choice: simply to follow the old way, or to strive towards the ending of self. Each one of you should take this to heart. Turning to examine internally is difficult, but even modest application will result in great benefit. Actually catching the deceit of self in the act of plunging one still deeper into suffering, and being able, there and then, to wipe it out — this is truly a reward beyond price.



The failure to implement this eradication, this giving up of self, lays the basis for the intensification of suffering. For, by not bringing it in for examination, it is able to grow freely. You may be able to quote and recite the scriptures — and even skilfully teach others — yet the mind remains impure and confused. By clearly seeing this you will feel revulsion for everything involved with this craving and desire. You will start to give generously and to make sacrifices, no matter how difficult it seems, and thereby suffering can no

longer secure a hold. Each small renunciation builds its own reward in the mind until there is complete victory.

Anyone having a strong tendency towards stinginess — which is a particular defilement — seems unable to give anything up. They are reluctant to examine themselves or admit that they can possibly harbour a disease as severe as selfishness. If they would frequently make an inspection, that sort of defilement wouldn't dare to show its face. But by being negligent the defilement grows strong and bold, and is capable of the most selfish and despicable acts. Such people will then be able to appropriate the property of a community, such as we have here, for their own selfish purposes.

By turning to a constant probing of your mind, you'll be able to succeed in the giving up of unworthy attachments. Whatever you do will then become Dhamma, and will be of assistance to our companions in [this world of] birth, sickness, old age and death. The getting rid of selfishness will also allow you to come to the aid of others, without caring about the hardships involved. Without self we are truly on the noble way.

The practice of Dhamma needs orderliness in daily life. Any slackness is inappropriate. Another point here is that any shortcomings in behaviour allow defilements a chance to come forth more easily. Orderliness helps to arouse mindfulness, which may in its turn forestall the defilements. Disregard for rules and regulations brings nothing, whereas conscientiously abiding by them can bring benefit. They give one a sense of how properly to respond to any situation, and this is necessary because we still can't completely understand by ourselves. The Lord Buddha knew the situation from every side, whereas we are surrounded by darkness and ignorance. This means we can't be sure of ourselves — either externally or internally — and so must depend on Dhamma and the Way it points out to us. The decision — to follow Dhamma or to wander away — remains with each one of you.

Anyone who wishes to be rid of their defilements and suffering, will need vigilance as an asset of mind and must

then be diligent and persevere. Forever encountering the scorching fire of suffering, they will finally have to stop, turn and set themselves the task of struggling to be free. Without a clear and thorough understanding about oneself, the defilements will thrive and spread their virulent infection, which can only bring more and more suffering. We must therefore reinforce our mindfulness and wisdom, for no other instrument can fight and destroy the defilements.

The persistent quest to train the mind needs mindfulness and wisdom to point the way. Halfheartedness merely wastes time and one remains the same unmitigated fool. When you come to realize this the benefits from the resulting effort are immense. Eventually, you will be able to destroy the defilements, relinquish all attachment and the mind will transcend suffering. But any failure to achieve this will see you swept away by the power of craving and defilements. Negligence and carelessness will allow them to lead you away by the nose; they'll pull you here and drag you there. This is why the Lord Buddha emphasized, in so many ways, the necessity of letting go, sacrificing and disentangling yourself. This is the way to excise the cancer from the mind.

This kind of malignant disease is very insidious and though it may reveal a few symptoms, it's usually not enough to alert one to the situation. Eventually, it will usually triumph and sometimes you may even submit to its terms with alacrity. Your examination therefore must be circumspect and alert, otherwise it's like plugging one hole in a leaking boat only to find it's leaking elsewhere. There are six holes or apertures — the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind — and if you have no control over them, they are left open to follow after emotional objects. And this causes great suffering. You must use mindfulness and wisdom to seek out and review the true situation present within yourself, and this must become the most important activity throughout the day.

Our life is for working on the elimination of the defilements, not for anything else. Yet the defilements and suffering continue to hover about, and

if we aren't equal to their threat we'll surely get burnt. We need to pull ourselves around and question how to deal with this, for then we'll be heading for great success. While we still have breath and our body isn't yet rotting in its coffin, we must take counsel and search for a way to eradicate the root infection of this terrible disease, the germ of defilements and craving. This cancer, which has gnawed deeply into the mind, can only be remedied with Dhamma. The Lord Buddha prescribed his Dhamma medicines with their various properties. Each one of us must carefully select from them and blend what is correct and most suitable, and then use it to destroy the root infection. All this necessitates great circumspection.



Should your self-inspection remain insufficient to destroy the defilements, they will grow stronger and burn like an unseen fire inside the mind. Introspection is the extinguisher to use, so that when you notice greed arising for an object, you can snuff it out and let go of it. Now, look at the mind, is it free or entangled in turmoil? If you don't persevere, it can only end in your getting burnt. No matter how smart you think you are, you always seem to succumb to greed. Greed seizes the commander's position and you make no attempt to dislodge it — and even go out to receive it in with compliments. The mind is then the oppressed slave of desire, and has fallen into delusion, with the grasping of this and that. There's no obvious way out of such wretched entanglement; we just don't know

how to escape the dilemma that viciously encircles our mind.

We are trapped by our lack of true resolve and finally, when we are at our wit's end, we become slaves to the defilements just as before. The more often we submit to them the more their power grows. The only true way to overthrow them is strenuously to bring mindfulness and wisdom to bear. We can then examine, from all angles, the suffering they bring until the mind refuses to stay a slave any longer. It's no use just making an external show of it, because the greater the fuss the more stubborn the defilements become. Yet, we also can't be halfhearted about it. You must have the appropriate response for whatever the situation brings. You can't rush in with massive good intention to wipe them out, but must first carefully focus and enhance mindfulness and wisdom. This will all require great circumspection, and all these points will need to be remembered.

To genuinely understand, the mind will have to investigate in every posture, with every breath. It will then be equal to the task of stopping those moods and tendencies that continually fabricate notions, without reason or value, under the compulsion of delusion. Without true determination, practice becomes halfhearted. This leads to distraction and a waste of valuable time, with it all being nothing more than delusion. We must turn our vision within and persevere until we see clearly. Once we are adept, it's actually more enjoyable to look inside than out. Externally there is just the dissolution of things seen — why be so engrossed in that? But the inner eye can penetrate to the clear light and then to the Truth of Dhamma. By seeing the nature of the dissolution of all determinations,(2) new insight will arise as to that nature that doesn't deteriorate, a nature that can't be altered but just is.

If your all-round mindfulness and wisdom remain insufficient and weak, the defilements will be overwhelming. However, if you can persistently build up mindfulness and wisdom, the strength of the defilements will proportionally decline. You'll notice that though the mind was previously confused, it has now become resolute.

It's able to see the impermanence of things more clearly, so that they can be let go of. This insight into impermanence empowers mindfulness and wisdom to move towards an even deeper discernment. Yet this penetration must be truly focused, otherwise the slightest inattention will be disruptive. If it doesn't wander off target, even for a moment, then this is truly the way to control the defilements. Negligence, however, means that they can never be threatened and they'll regroup stronger than ever.

Mindfulness and clear comprehension must be developed in every posture, with every breath. We must make the effort so that the mind is attentive and doesn't drift away following various emotional objects, or lose itself in the confusion of concocting thoughts. You should be forewarned here about the tendency to think, "I know!", when you don't really know at all. Until the mind penetrates to true insight there must always be doubt and uncertainty; but when you begin truly to see, such doubts fall away and speculation is no longer necessary. One truly knows. How can you be certain that you have true insight? When the mind truly comprehends, the defilements and suffering are really eliminated. However, if one just thinks that one sees — whilst having no real insight — then one can't possibly destroy the defilements and suffering.

This insight penetrates into the mind, for this is where the desire for things is activated and that which blocks out Dhamma resides. When this concocting stops, one sees through to the nature of mind that is without the fire and anguish of desire. This can be seen anytime when one focuses properly and with determination. One can see other things, why not this? Just truly look and you will certainly see!

But you must look correctly to be able to penetrate, otherwise you won't see anything. If you grasp at things — which goes against the basic principles of true knowledge — and then try to go straight on to the truth, it's probable that you'll get all twisted and an element of pride, or something similar, will insinuate itself. The only

way is to see the arising and ceasing of things, merely seeing and understanding without grasping. See! This is the way to freedom from attachment. It has been said, "See the world as if it were empty," and we must similarly see our moods, as they arise and cease, as empty. When the mind truly realizes the transience of things, the deceit of the world and our moods, it doesn't grasp at them any more. This is the free mind. There are many levels to this but even a temporary experience is still of benefit; just don't go and grasp after anything!



Ajahn Kor

The free mind that is called vimokkha — attaining to true and final release — we find described in one of the scriptures(3) we chant: "vimokkha is not subject to change." Those levels of freed mind that change are not true vimokkha, so we must continue to examine each level and press for the fruit, which is always freedom from attachment. It doesn't matter how many levels one has to work through until it finally doesn't change, which is when it is without any aim or attachment for anything. This is the true way to penetrative insight.

May all of you who practise Dhamma, work tirelessly to see and know this truth.

Biographical Note (*)

Ajahn Kor Kao-suan-luang is the pen name of Upasika Kee Nanayon (1901-1978), one of the foremost women teachers of Dhamma in modern Thailand. She established a women's Dhamma centre in Rajburi province. Although she did not allow men to reside in her centre, both men and women were welcome to visit on the weekly Observance Day and listen to her talks. Known for the simplicity of her way of life, and the direct uncompromising style of her teaching, she had a way with words evident not only in her talks but also in her poetry which was widely published.

She taught her disciples to develop meditation, to chant at least every morning and evening, and to avoid stimulants like coffee, cigarettes and meat. Strictly keeping the Eight Precepts and constantly trying to guard the sense doors were basic to her practice.

In later years she developed corneal ulcers and eventually became blind. She passed away in 1978 but her community still continues with about thirty residents.

(*) For more information see the new translation of four of these Talks, which, to a certain extent, supersedes this pioneer translation. The introductory article, Upasika Kee Nanayon and the Social Dynamic of Theravadin Buddhist Practice is especially interesting. They are contained in a superb collection of Acharn Kor's Dhamma entitled *An Unentangled Knowing, The Teachings of a Thai Buddhist Lay Woman*, translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

(Dhamma Dana Publications, c/o Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, 149 Lockwood Road, Barre, Massachusetts 01005, USA.) They can also be found in electronic format on many Buddhist BBSs and Internet web pages (e.g. www.buddhanet.net).

* * *

End Notes

- (1) dhātu
- (2) sa khāras
- (3) Solasapa ha Sutta



Courses and Events

**12 Mar 1999
to
14 Mar 1999**

Silent Weekend Meditation Retreat

For experienced meditators only. The theme for this retreat is “The meaning of Sangha”. The cost for accommodation and meals: \$60.
The course starts Friday 5 p.m. and finishes after lunch on Sunday.

**27 Mar 1999
to
28 Mar 1999**

Good Kamma Weekend

These weekends are a wonderful opportunity for new people to visit the Wat and bring children, family and friends along to an informal weekend. We always organize some volunteer work projects on Saturday morning and we appreciate help from visitors. It is also possible to come along and relax, meditate and enjoy the beautiful surroundings. Remember you must book by the Wednesday prior to the weekend!
Cost: \$20 flat rate per adult (one or two nights); children and adolescents up to 18 years old — free.

**2 Apr 1999
to
11 Apr 1999**

Easter Ten-Day Meditation Retreat with Rosemary and Steve Weissman

Rosemary and Steve Weissman are the resident teachers and founders of the International Meditation Programme at Wat Kow Tahm, a Buddhist monastery on Koh Phan-gan Island in Thailand. During this silent retreat a variety of Buddhist meditation techniques will be taught to help meditators develop a balanced practice. The cost for course accommodation and meals: \$340. The course starts on Thursday at 5 p.m. & finishes the following Saturday week.

**16 Apr 1999
to
18 Apr 1999**


Weekend Meditation Retreat with John Barter

“With Regards to Relating” - The way we experience and know ourselves, others and the world is through relationship.
This meditation weekend addresses the process and dynamics of relating. Through mindfulness meditation we will explore how we relate to experience. This enables the possibility of enhancing the relationship that we have with ourselves, others and the world. The cost for course accommodation and meals: \$60. This course starts Friday 5 p.m. and finishes after lunch on Sunday.

**23 Apr 1999
to
25 Apr 1999**

Beginners' Meditation Weekend with Judith Lai

This weekend we will practice basic methods of sitting and walking meditation with an emphasis on letting go of tension in the body and mind.
The cost for course accommodation and meals: \$60.
This course starts Friday 5 p.m. and finishes after lunch on Sunday.



Please phone the Wat for further information about any of the listed events. Booking for courses and Good Kamma Weekends is essential. Please remember that teachers are not paid by the Wat. It is the Buddhist tradition that teachers are supported by their students. We strongly encourage any course participant to practice generosity towards teachers by making a donation at the end of course. Office hours: Mon–Sat, 9–12 noon: (02) 4323 3193.



22 May 1999
to
23 May 1999



Sunday
23 May 1999

Good Kamma Weekend

For details see March entry. Cost: \$20 flat rate per adult (1 or 2 nights); children & adolescents up to 18 years free. Please book by Wednesday before weekend.

Vesak Celebration

During Vesak we celebrate the birth, death and enlightenment of the Buddha. It is the most important celebration in the Buddhist calendar. We invite you to join us on this day to share in the celebrations. Tan Chao Khun Maha Samai will lead the celebrations.

28 May 1999
to
30 May 1999

Weekend Zen Sesshin with Geoff Dawson

This intensive meditation weekend will be conducted in a traditional Zen style with a clearly structured schedule. As there is extensive silent sitting meditation (9 hours a day), it is only recommended to those with advanced meditation experience. There will be a Dharma talk given each day and private one-to-one meetings with the teacher to discuss practice issues. Please see Geoff's biography on page 11. The cost for course accommodation and meals: \$60. The course starts Friday 5 p.m. and finishes after lunch on Sunday.

4 Jun 1999
to
7 Jun 1999

June Long Weekend Meditation Retreat with Andrea & Ian Johnson – "Know Thyself"

Using the Buddha's path of meditation to penetrate the illusion of "self". Andrea and Ian had been practising meditation for 14 years when they became Buddhists in 1988 and spent 2 months in retreat with Ayya Khema in Sri Lanka. She encouraged them to teach and they have been doing so in various parts of Australia. Since 1988 they have studied with many of the leading teachers in both Insight and Tranquility meditation and now run the Paddington Meditation Centre in Brisbane. Their teaching style is practical, down-to-earth and focuses on integrating the Buddha's teaching into our lives. The cost for accommodation and meals: \$120. This course starts Friday 5 p.m.

19 Jun 1999
to
3 Jul 1999

Two Week Intensive Meditation / Study Retreat

The first week of this retreat will be a combination of intensive study and meditation, while the second week will have more emphasis on meditation. This retreat is offered for experienced meditators only and has no designated teacher. It is possible to do the first week only. Please ring the Wat office for more detailed information. The cost for course accommodation & meals: \$320.

16 Jul 1999
to
18 Jul 1999

Beginners' Meditation Weekend with Judith Lai

On this weekend we will practice basic methods of sitting and walking meditation with an emphasis on letting go of tension in the body and mind. The cost for course accommodation and meals: \$60. This course starts Friday 5 p.m. and finishes after lunch on Sunday.

30 Jul 1999
to
1 Aug 1999

Good Kamma Weekend

For details see March entry. Cost: \$20 flat rate per adult (1 or 2 nights); children & adolescents up to 18 years free. Please book by Wednesday before weekend.

We are still looking for a Manager

We are seeking a mature, hardworking, dedicated individual to fill the position of Manager in the small resident community at Wat Buddha Dhamma. A key position within the organisation, the role of Manager covers responsibilities ranging from co-ordinating the retreat centre and courses, administration, facilitating community life and supervision of general maintenance. The diversity of the duties requires a balance between facilitation, delegation and leadership. For a Buddhist practitioner, (preferably with some experience within the Theravada tradition) this position provides a perfect

opportunity to integrate all aspects of your practice into daily life.

Essential: Excellent interpersonal skills and flexibility; organisational skills; physical, mental and spiritual stamina.

Desirable: Experience with communities; practical skills.

Enquiries and Applications:

Claudia Grab, Wat Buddha Dhamma, Ten Mile Hollow, Wisemans Ferry, NSW 2775. (02) 43 233 193.

Literary Liason

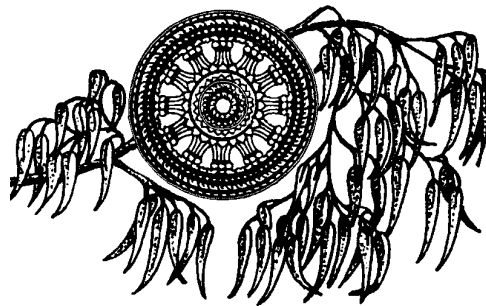
Set in the bush, at the end of the track beyond the Sala, beyond the Bodhi tree and stupa lies a little treasure house at the Wat. Many afternoons I walk this track, stopping to appreciate the Bodhi tree and continue on to this "Biblio Realm"; to light some incense, pay respects to the Triple Gem and read, research, relax or repair books in this wonderful building brimming with books, paintings, photographs and memorabilia.

Many newcomers to the Wat may not know about this asset and many that do may be interested in a project slowly taking shape in the afternoons. As an exercise in mindfulness, patience and with a huge dollop of metta, I've been going through the shelves repairing and cataloguing the contents. Putting books together in sections so that, say, Ajahn Sumedho's books, aren't scattered between 'pilgrimages' and 'Japanese architecture', but grouped together for easy access and reference.

Basically I'm using Phra Khantipalo's system that fell into disuse over the years. Being one with an inquisitive mind, I track and trace answers, clues, guidance, advice on subjects I have taken interest in: Why stupas? Who was Asoka? Origins of Zen? The 'ultimate' meditation book?

Springing out from the sticky tape, wrapping film and pencil case comes a coherent assemblage of the library's contents; a subject catalogue to find anything from anapanasati to

Avalokitesvara, mandalas to Ajahn Mun plus an author and title catalogue; and a shelf directory. This exercise, which may seem like a little overkill, has helped me get an idea of the depth and richness of the Dhamma. This depth comes from the Pali Canon interpreted through different cultures and times, as well as contemporary books from around the world.



Need inspiration developing the paramis? Try a jatāra or two. For inspiration in general, try a large book on Buddhist art; the life of the Buddha, poetry by Ryokan, Han-Shan or the Sutta Nipāta. There are many options and openings for access to the Dhamma.

In the community here we have our favourites, and it is interesting to see our preferences in the books we read. To sit and read for a while, to settle and concentrate, to inspire the mind; this is a wholesome activity. I didn't realize for years about the calming action of reading on myself, feeling the breath in the background.

As well as the Suttas and meditation guides, the Library has books on Zen, Ch'an, the feminine in Buddhism and socially engaged Buddhism. There are books about other Buddhist traditions and more books on psychology, philosophy and ecology. A large collection of Dhamma talks on audio tape cassette (with tape players) is available.

So — what is favoured by the boy in the blue singlet? Ah, well: the Dhammapada, Sutta Nipāta, Piyadassi Thera's The Buddha's Ancient Path, anything by Nyanaponika Thera, especially The Four Sublime States. A few new books I have enjoyed are: Snow in Summer by Sayadaw U. Jotika, Buddhism without Beliefs by Stephen Batchelor and River of Fire, River of Water by Taitetsu Unno (on Shin/Pure Land Buddhism). I encourage you to make good use of our Library here at Wat Buddha Dhamma. It has provided me (and many others in the past) with hours of pleasant reading and learning.

Keeping the Library fresh and updated, we have purchased some new titles. If you want to donate a book please contact me here at Wat Buddha Dhamma, this is to avoid duplicating books. Good books are always welcome for the review panel of the 'WBD Literary Appreciation Society'.

Now where was I, ah yes, page 55 "All the things that happened to me in the past..."

Kenneth Marsdon

A Day in the Life of the Wat!

I was a community member at Wat Buddha Dhamma from November '97 to February '98, almost four months. I'd visited several other centres before in different countries as well as in Australia, but this was the longest stay in one of them. Life at the Wat is mostly peaceful, pleasant and stable, at least outwardly(!); the inner condition can vary from day to day!

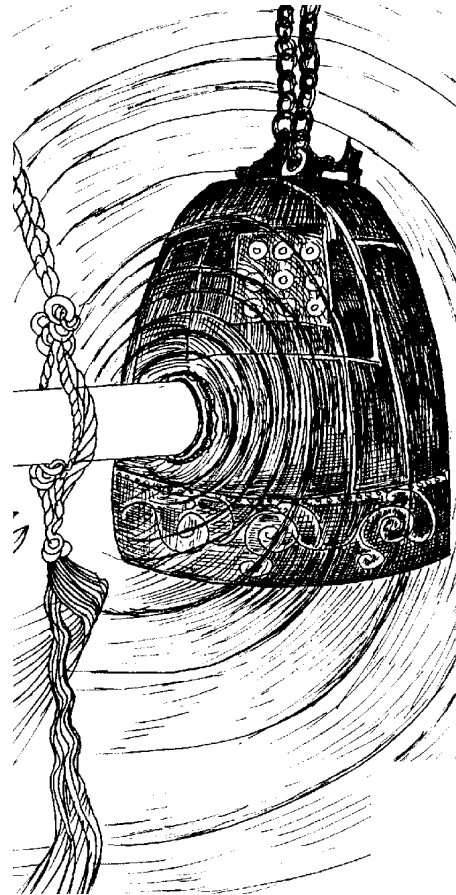
I'm forty this year, and I decided at the end of last year that what I wanted was to live in a community of like-minded people and yet also retain my own space. So for me the combination of community and solitude seemed perfect and timely. Moreover, I wished to dedicate more time to my spiritual practice, and there wasn't much I missed from the city excepting my husband. Oh yes, I was leaving my friend and partner in Sydney, which naturally surprised a few, but I don't believe that marriage (or long-term stable relationships) should preclude opportunities in self-development, including periods of solitude. If the relationship is solid, such personal growth can only enhance it.

Fortunately I have a partner who understands my spiritual needs and longings. (Would I have got married someone who didn't? I think not!) In fact, by the time this article gets to print I should hopefully be ensconced at another community in the USA, with Steven a half hour away on a six-month work exchange. We have only to decide what we wish or need to do with our life, and then just do it!

But back at the Wat... This has been the regular schedule:

| | | |
|------|-------|---------------------------------------|
| a.m. | | |
| 6.00 | -7.00 | Sitting meditation |
| 7.15 | -8.00 | Breakfast (self-serve) |
| | 8.00 | Morning reading and community matters |
| | 8.30 | Work period |
| p.m. | | |
| | 12.30 | Lunch |
| | | Rest/free time |
| 6.00 | -7.00 | Sitting meditation |
| | 7.15 | Optional (self-serve) dinner |

There's also now an obligatory (but hopefully beneficial) weekly Dhamma community meeting and a fortnightly general business community meeting. We have one day off per week, as a rule. Going back to Sydney for a day or two after a stint at the Wat, one becomes even more sensitive and aware of the level of noise, restlessness, and aggression that city dwellers put up with.



Drawing by Liz Oski

In this way my four months at the Wat flew by. Maybe the fact that I was also editing a Buddhist manuscript made the time go by more quickly. One of the unexpected outcomes of my stay has been a flurry of ink to paper! Meditation reflection jottings, as I call them, which is developing into a year's journal (and possibly later publication; I have already published *An Australian Directory of Spiritual Retreat Centres*).

There are many benefits to spending time in a community such as this one. First and foremost, one has few outer distractions, excepting nature, which can be surprisingly noisy at times, and this of course makes it easier to establish a stable and disciplined practice, which was certainly one of my main objectives for my stay at the Wat.

Secondly, I recognised my need for a very peaceful and quiet environment at the time. I felt like I was at a crossroads in my life and I needed the right location to reassess my situation and future. Although my trip to the USA was already in the offing, my stay at the Wat helped to clarify matters further for me.

In terms of the outer 'rustic' conditions at the Wat, for those who haven't been here before, I've enjoyed the outdoor toilets with no flush!! and the long walks to and from the kitchen and sala (meditation hall). It's about a kilometre from the one to the other, enough to get one's daily exercise, and I even managed to lose weight, despite the fantastic vegetarian nosh we devise! I've learnt heaps of new recipes to take away with me, just one of the many additional gifts that this place offers. I even overcame my original angst about cooking for large groups!

The weather's a real variable here; the mozzies are alive and well; the goannas are very cheeky; and of course there are poisonous snakes and spiders. So you see, altogether it's not a bad place to hang out, if you have at least three months to spare; and there could definitely be worse places to hang out at! Give it a go, if you dare.

N.B. I'd like to thank Trevor and Phil who first gave me the idea and encouragement to contact the Wat; as well as to Bruce, Patrick, Mia, Peter, Claudia, Kenneth, Lorella and Karyn for being good Dhamma chums; and I'd like to make a special mention to Ajahn Vāyāma who gave me wise and compassionate counsel during my stay.

Barbara Hasslacher

Wat's Happening

It seems like I have only just written 'Wat's Happening' for the November issue of the Bodhi Leaf. I did hope then that I would not have to write another column, and that instead the new manager could introduce her/himself. Well, this has not happened. The 'new manager' seems to be an elusive breed! So we are still searching... However, I am no longer in a position to remain at the Wat full time and have offered to become a part-time manager, staying at the Wat from Friday to Monday morning. This is naturally an interim solution only — in the absence of a better one. It is not a particularly desirable situation either for the Wat community nor the organisation at large. So we keep on hoping for that potential manager to contact us...

Kurt Kuhl, who joined the community a year ago left just before Christmas. He intends to go travelling on his bike for a while. He returned to the Wat for 10 days during late January to give a

welcome helping hand when the building activities for the new kitchen resumed for a while. Kate Connors also left at the end of January to take up post-graduate studies at the University of Wollongong during 1999. To both of them a hearty 'farewell' and many thanks for their contribution to the Wat and its community life.

Ingrid Niewerth came all the way from Germany to join us in December for four months. Ingrid spent six weeks as a volunteer at the Wat three years ago. She liked it so much, that she requested to rejoin the community and already we are thinking of ways to make her stay longer! Daniel Looman has also returned to the Wat. He spent a year as an anagarika at the Bodhinyana Monastery near Perth, under the guidance of the Abbot, Ajahn Brahmavamso. At the end of January the community was further bolstered by Tim Denoon who intends to remain here at least four months.

John Barter held another well attended weekend retreat in December. We also all enjoyed the return of Ajahn Ariyasilo to teach the New Year retreat. Ajahn Vāyāma who taught a weekend retreat at the end of January, was a welcome visitor from Western Australia. Chris MacLachlan returned to teach another Beginner's meditation weekend as did Judith Lai, who led our weekend retreat in February. At the time of writing this article we are preparing for our annual Family weekend. I am confident that it will be as much fun for all as it was last year, more news about that in the next Bodhi Leaf.

Gavin Scott, our builder, returned for a week of intensive activity, resulting in the new kitchen being that much closer to completion. The Wat still need funds for its completion. So if you can help in that way, your cheque (which is tax deductible) made out to 'Wat Buddha Dhamma' will be gratefully received.

Claudia Grab

WBD 1999 Committee Members

Back Row: from left to right

Kenneth Marsdon, Trevor Slaven,
Philippa Gallagher, Eleanor Chevor,
Helen Brennan.

Front Row: from left to right

Winton Higgins, Claudia Grab,
Lorella Ricci.



Membership fees of \$20 for 1999 are overdue! If you have a coloured dot on your address label, it means that you have not yet paid your membership for 1999.

The Bodhi Leaf is issued free of charge but is only regularly sent to your mailing address if you are a

'Friend of the Wat'.

Please refer to the last page for sub-scription details. Your renewal of membership is appreciated and is one way of showing your interest and expressing your support for the Wat.

*'Friends of
the Wat'
please note*

New Administrative Structure for Wat Buddha Dhamma

In 1996 and 1997 a number of problems cropped up at the Wat that pointed to lack of clarity about its direction. It was felt that the Wat's organisational culture needed serious reassessing and could benefit from restructuring. During 1997 and early 1998 the management committee and the trustees attempted to produce a revised strategic plan to define and resolve the issues thus brought to light. However, these attempts did not assist in finding a solution to which the majority of the management committee and trustees could agree.

During that time, the trustees also initiated an independent process to incorporate the Wat in order to shield themselves from personal liability for public risk.

The Wat has now been incorporated under the name Wat Buddha Dhamma Foundation Limited. The former trustees — Tan Chao Khun Maha Samai, Claudia Grab, Graeme Lyall, Trevor Slaven and Brian Stansfield — now constitute the board of directors of this company. While the trust deed in its essence remains unchanged there are some changes which facilitated the setting up of a new administrative structure for the Wat. Thanks to the skilful intervention of Kay Hannaford, a Friend of the Wat freely offering her considerable negotiation expertise, an agreement in the form of a new

'charter' for the Wat was hammered out when she chaired two joint meetings of the committee and the directors in late 1998. The charter defines the Wat as a Theravadin Dhamma centre that addresses the spiritual needs and aspirations of its largely lay membership while still leaving open the possibility of greater involvement by monastics in the future. Hopefully it will thus make a greater claim on its members' loyalty and enthusiasm than it would if they saw it merely as a sort of facility that one could use from time to time but not otherwise identify with.

As one result of the incorporation the directors can devolve their powers to selected members of the organisation. Thus we were able to establish a new administrative structure that stands a good chance of preventing the problems that arose in 1996 and 1997. Basically, the Abbot and the directors have delegated their authority to a new committee which has sole charge of the development and administration of the Wat, except that the Abbot retains a traditional authority over monastic Theravadin self-retreatants, and the directors retain sole authority over the real assets of the Wat. As before, the Abbot also acts as a spiritual adviser to the Wat community as a whole.

The committee will appoint the manager, resident teacher (if any) and members of the resident community. Apart from the manager and resident teacher, who sit on the committee *ex officio*, the seven other members of the committee are elected for twelve months at the Annual General Meeting. All Friends of the Wat who have paid their \$20 annual subscription and have been to the Wat on at least three occasions in the preceding twelve months will be able to vote at the AGM.

At the AGM in December, Helen Brennan, Eleanor Chevor, Phillipa Gallagher, Winton Higgins, Kenneth Marsdon, Lorella Ricci and Trevor Slaven were elected to the committee, and Claudia Grab joined it as the current Wat manager.

We hope that a single, accountable source of authority and far more transparent decisionmaking will in turn lead to the development of the coherent organisational culture which the Wat needs to consolidate the wider following it has attracted in recent years. We believe these organisational virtues are essential if the Wat is to offer its community an harmonious spiritual home.

Winton Higgins

PS: If you would like further information on these changes or a copy of the new charter please contact the manager at the Wat.



Geoff Dawson Biography

Geoff Dawson is a teacher in the Ordinary Mind Zen School. He has practiced Zen for over twenty years. Geoff also works as a psychologist in private practice in Sydney and the Blue Mountains where he lives.

The Ordinary Mind Zen School was founded by Charlotte Joko Beck, teacher of the Zen Center of San Diego, California.

The school maintains a strong commitment to sitting practice that is typical of the Zen tradition, however it also has a strong emphasis on making the practice relevant to the lives of students in 20th century Western cultures. Emphasis is placed on making the practice relevant to being in a relationship and family life and the everyday world of work and play.

Wat Buddha Dhamma, Ten Mile Hollow, Wisemans Ferry NSW 2775, Australia Ph: (02) 4323 3193

Wat Buddha Dhamma is a Buddhist Hermitage and Retreat Centre. It provides an unique setting for the development and cultivation of a simple spiritual lifestyle; while following the Theravada Tradition, it is open to other Buddhist teachings. The Wat provides opportunities for individuals and groups to practise the Dhamma in a beautiful bush setting. A variety of retreats and meditation courses, for beginners and experienced practitioners, is offered during the year; and information about these courses is contained in this newsletter. Facilities are also available for people wishing to undertake solitary retreats or participate in our village life as guests. For information please ring the Wat office: 9:00 a.m. and 12 noon, Mon. to Sat. The Bodhi Leaf is issued four times yearly at no charge. By annual payment of \$20 membership you can be a 'Friend of the Wat'; in return we will send the Bodhi Leaf to you. Please send this slip with cheque to: (made out to: Wat Buddha Dhamma) 'Friends of the Wat', Wat Buddha Dhamma, Ten Mile Hollow, Wisemans Ferry, NSW 2775.

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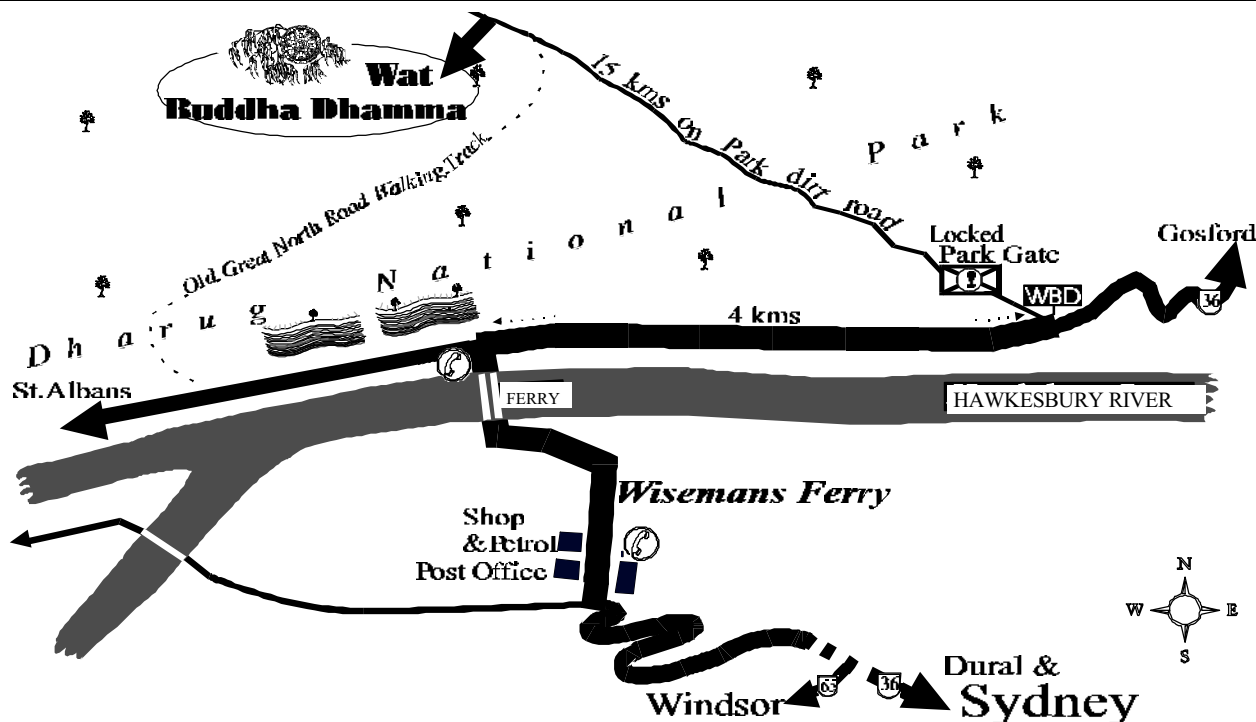
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Before visiting, be sure to contact the Wat Office (details inside) to obtain the current Dharug National Park gate's lock-number and for information.

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