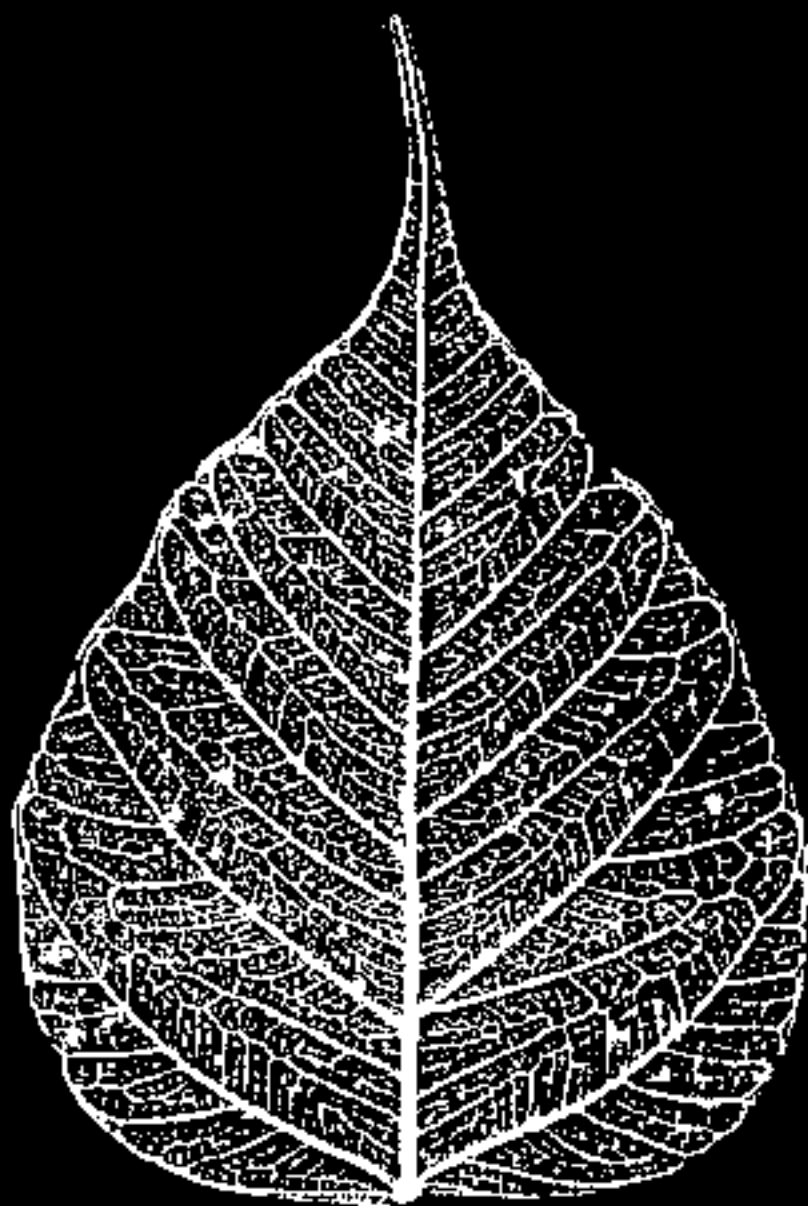


BODHI LEAF



**WAT
BUDDHA
DHAMMA**

**FOREST HERMITAGE
RETREAT CENTRE
VILLAGE**

NOV 1998 — 2541

VOL. 20 NO. 4



Speaking in Tongues

In spiritual practice a set of issues arises that is rarely explored in the literature despite their fundamental nature. These issues are how we speak and listen about the things that go deepest for us. They concern how we speak to ourselves — our self-talk — and how we speak to others, especially spiritual friends. And of course they concern how we *listen*, how we *receive* messages, and the *kinds* of messages we absorb. This two-way communication affects our relationship to *authority*, how we develop *authenticity* and how we shoulder the responsibility for *authorship* of our own lives. Many people may think of these three key words — authority, authenticity and authorship — as meaning completely different things. But they all derive from Latin variants of a Greek root meaning original, and in that sense genuine and warranted.

Authority

One of my favourite authors is Ursula Le Guin. She writes with such psychological and spiritual insight. Try, for instance *A Wizard of Earth-Sea*, the first part of her *Earth-Sea Quartet*, for an incisive allegory about meditation practice. In an essay in her *Dancing at the Edge of the World*, she says that all of us learn two languages or ‘tongues’ as we grow up. One is *the father tongue*, the language of power. It is a tongue that in its best uses objectively discusses questions of truth, justice and moral order. In these moments it is noble and indispensable; it speaks with *moral authority*.

But the father tongue has drawbacks which leave it prone to abuse. It constantly seeks finality. And it creates distance between speaker and listener, and between subject and object. The father tongue lectures and says ‘Don’t answer back!’ It doesn’t accept dialogue, it doesn’t expect or listen for an answer. It silences its hearers. This is why people who want to dominate and manipulate resort to the father tongue so readily. By doing so they claim to represent Reason and Truth. When the father tongue does

this, Le Guin writes, ‘*it is playing God, and should be spanked and stood in the corner*’ (p. 148). Good advice!



The other language we learn, Le Guin writes, is ‘*the mother tongue*.’ We learn it first, it is our native tongue. It is an inferior language — ‘primitive: inaccurate, unclear, coarse, limited, trivial, banal’ (p. 149). But it is the language of closeness, of two way communication, of relationship. The mother tongue ‘flies from the mouth on the breath that is our life and is gone, like the outbreath, utterly gone and yet returning, repeated, the breath the same again always, everywhere, and we know it by heart’. (p. 149-50) The comparison with the breath is significant: the mother tongue is the language of direct experience.

Here are a few phrases Le Guin supplies so we’ll know the mother tongue when we hear it:

John have you got your umbrella I think it’s going to rain. Can you come play with me? If I told you once I told you a hundred times. Things here just aren’t the same without Mother, I will now sign your affectionate brother James. Oh what am I going to do? So I said to her I said if he thinks she’s

going to stand for that but there’s his arthritis poor thing and no work. I love you. I hate you. I hate liver. Joan dear did you feed the sheep, don’t just stand around mooning. Tell me what they said, tell me what you did. Oh how my feet do hurt. My heart is breaking. Touch me here, touch me again. Once bitten twice shy. You look like what the cat dragged in... There there don’t cry. Go to sleep now, go to sleep... Don’t go to sleep! (p. 150)

This is not the language of power. Or rather, it’s the language of a different kind of power — the power of articulation, of being with oneself and of being with others. It is the language of closeness and dialogue.

Both sexes have access to and use both tongues. But men have a greater tendency to fear the mother tongue, to fear coming too close — close to things, feelings and intimates that can get out of hand. So men have a corresponding tendency to hide behind the father tongue, which creates distance, simplifies complex things and shuts up the opposition. But its use brings with it the temptation to cultivate *dominating authority*, which often presumes to speak for a definitive tradition or ultimate truth. This is precisely when ‘it plays God and should be spanked and stood in the corner’. Not so incidentally, Le Guin first spoke the words I’ve been quoting to a group of women.

Real authority, moral authority — one that is warranted and original — does not dominate (p. 148). Its truth — to borrow another of Le Guin’s insights — is that of *experience directly encountered and expressed without the will to dominate*. For Buddhists that direct experience is everything, the essence of the three great practices of morality, meditation, and wisdom understood mainly as *receptivity*. *Religiosity* — especially theistic religiosity — habitually speaks the father tongue. *Spirituality* — especially the investigative spirituality of Buddhism — needs the mother tongue.

We westerners use a technology that can blind us to this distinction between religiosity and spirituality, father tongue and mother tongue, in our own Buddhist commitment. We use books filled with print, and we associate print with the father tongue. We especially read the father tongue into books that have canonical status, like the Pali Canon itself. Perhaps this is a hangover from Christian habits of mind, from the claim that Almighty God through his anointed scribes and secretaries sat down and wrote the Bible and said: ‘This is it, baby — Ultimate Truth, chapter and verse — and you better believe it!’ And there’s a certain narcotic comfort and security in accepting an invitation to believe in this way.

But the words in the Pali Canon were spoken by a human being in dialogue with other human beings, and they were all talking about direct experience. Above all, about the universal direct experience of suffering. When a few individuals wanted to talk to this human being about non-experience — about God, creation, the universe and so on — he gently suggested they were losing the plot and should come back to things they could experience directly, things they could know for themselves to be true. He probably never wrote a word in his life and had not the slightest interest in dominating anyone.

An aspect of the genius of living Buddhist teachers like Thich Nhat Hanh and Ajahn Sumedho is their vibrant re-rendering of central Buddhist texts and teachings into the mother tongue. They give us a little taste perhaps of what it must have been like for an inhabitant of northern India 2,500 years ago, taking a bit of time out from the daily grind to sit amid the dust, heat and flies and listen to a traveller called Gotama. He had a radical reputation and a tattered robe, and he said extraordinarily insightful things about everyday life in dialogue with the locals. Things that awoke some strange and wonderful energy deep within.

Times changed after Gotama’s death. Here and there institutions grew up, hierarchies developed, roles became fixed, not least monastic and gendered

ones. We need the tradition, traditions need institutions, and institutions need hierarchies. But that doesn’t mean they’re not a bit of a worry at times. Perhaps most of the time. As with any religion there were the usual tensions between what was alive and what was dead, between love and power. The father tongue crept in, often where it got in the way of spiritual practice, of spirituality. Religiosity sometimes crept in with it, including when there was no-one around with the presence of mind to spank it and stand it in the corner.

Authenticity

A book I recommend to beginner meditators is Christina Feldman’s *Woman Awake*. It’s the best text I know on *authenticity*, the living core of spiritual practice. Every time I dip back into it, it acts as a powerful corrective to subtle and profound distortions of spiritual practice to which an unskilful relationship to authority can lead. The author of this book speaks pure mother tongue. This is another of those messages between



a woman and other women, so it is a special privilege for any man to read it. Chances are he’s the one who needs it most.

Christina Feldman tells how as a young woman she got fired up about the spiritual life and rushed off to

Where It Was At — India. Where she was groped on buses. She persevered and found her way to some Thai monasteries renowned for their openness and dedication to meditation practice. She deeply impressed one of her teachers in particular, who lamented her female body as an insuperable obstacle to her making any significant use in this lifetime of her obvious spiritual aptitude. But her practice was not in vain, he said, for it would assure her a higher rebirth as a male, and thus a shot at goal next time as a monk herself (p. 65). That was the best game plan he could come up with for her.

We should not trivialise the effect of these sorts of messages — they violate and subvert us. Faced with all this tawdriness and prejudice Feldman was forced back onto her own resources — the resources her book is about.

Her essential point is this. We often gravely misunderstand what spiritual practice is for and how it works. An authentic spirituality develops *connectedness* — in the first instance to oneself (in the spirit of the first stage of the metta practice) — mind, heart and body. If we genuinely work on that, then it is a sure-fire step to extend that connectedness to our fellow beings and to our environment. But so many spiritual authorities push the opposite view — the idea that spirituality consists in culling and rejecting great areas of our lives, like sexuality, everyday caring for people, social and environmental activism, and so on. This is a *defensive, estranging, disconnecting* ‘spirituality’.

To quote Feldman:

Whilst a spiritual quest is a *turning inwards* to nurture awareness and explore the depths of our consciousness, *it is not a turning away from anything*. The only valid spirituality is one that touches and illuminates every area of our lives (p. 52).

When we meet the spirituality of turning away, we often encounter the father tongue at its most insidious. That is, in its habit of establishing a series of supposed paired opposites (‘dichotomies’), in which the first-named in the pair is set up as superior

to the second. Common pairs are spiritual/worldly, inner/outer, reason/emotion, mind/body, humankind/nature, male/female.

Many authorities take a further step after they've constructed a list like this. They bundle all the 'superior' entities together, and likewise all the 'inferior' ones, and build a hierarchical picture of their respective value. So the masculine is linked to spirituality, the inner life, Reason and mind, and what is truly human and so above nature. The feminine can then be tied to what is worldly, bounded by inexorable natural processes, irrationally emotional and fleshly. In this way are laid the classic misogynist foundations we find beneath the degenerate forms of all religions, including Buddhism. No wonder the Buddha was at such pains to expose the distortions of dualistic thinking!

From Feldman's point of view our spiritual practice lives or dies according to whether we can establish a healthy relationship with tradition and authority. To grow we all have to surrender the ego — the delusion and practice of ego. But *to whom or what* should we surrender?

Many authorities say we should surrender to *them* — we should serve *them* without question, follow *their* rules without demur, accept *their* expressions of approval and their trophies as evidence of our spiritual progress. In their view our questioning them can only come from the ego fighting back. The approval and acceptance of spiritual authorities can be a real haven for us; they are very seductive. But, says Feldman, '[a]n authentic spiritual path will never call upon us to surrender our freedom to question, our inner direction or *inner trust*. This surrender belongs to a way of being that only demeans and undermines us' (p. 46).

On the other hand, we would also undermine our practice by turning our back on tradition which, she acknowledges, 'is rich in experience and has the power to inspire and guide us' (p. 10). Tradition can give us valid direction and confidence. It is an enormous help in overcoming self-indulgence and so accepting the

discipline in practice that personal development requires.

Fortunately, there is another kind of surrender of the ego that leaves our authenticity in growing condition and can allow us to take a balanced responsibility for our relationship to tradition and authority. Skilful use of the guidance and inspiration of tradition can lead to *an awareness and a presence — a mindfulness, a fullness of mind* that break down the holdings and alienation of the ego, and lead us to surrender the me's and mine's in our life. Here is a surrender that does not undermine and demean us, but rather establishes us with balance in the entire shifting of tapestry of our lives. *We turn inwards without turning away.*



As we surrender the ego in this way we start hearing the voice of what Feldman calls '*the mystic within*' — the voice of developing intuition born of practice, the voice of authenticity, 'the embryo of inner trust... nourished by our questioning' (p. 44). Two remarkable passages that talk about the mystic within come so close to what meditation and meditative life

come down to that I must quote them. When she introduces this vital element in our spiritual lives she writes:

The mystic within seeks the harmony and rapport of oneness, the end of division and falseness. It responds to a vision of life, of being, a way of living where there is an end to conflict, prejudice and superficiality, an end to hatred and resentment. Inwardly we hearken to a vision of being which is not coloured by defence and aggression, where separation ends in wholeness and freedom.

Heeding that inner voice we are grieved by the way of our world. Its alienation, conflicts and exploitations wound the very essence of our being. The mystic within knows that there is a way of living where there is compassion, love and joy, and the inner mystic reaches for a taste of that wholeness. A Native American shamaness recently stated, 'We live in a way most unnatural to our true selves, and our true selves know this'.

The mystic within is handicapped by our fictions and myths, our social and spiritual conditioning. The mystic within is diverted and distracted by the pressure of expectations, spoken and unspoken, imposed and absorbed. We are distracted by fear and primarily by not truly understanding ourselves, our possibilities and potential. In our pursuit of wholeness outside ourselves we devalue, deny and ignore the tools for awakening that lie within us. We overlook or invalidate the fertility of our own being as a vehicle for awakening. These diversions and distractions are the knots to be untangled if we are to free ourselves of the blinkers of our fictions. It is an unravelling that allows the mystic within to speak with the voice of freedom, that permits us to define ourselves by our own wholeness and direct our lives with love and truth (p. 35-6).

In a later passage she writes:

The mystic within withstands the detours in our lives that distract us from discovering an authentic

wholeness. The mystic within at times expresses herself in discontent, her unwillingness to settle for *pseudo-oneness or facades of freedom*. It is the voice of the mystic within that empowers us to discard the social and spiritual values that undermine and limit us. At times her voice is only a whisper we can hardly hear, at times she speaks clearly, at times she grieves. We continue, despite the detours and dead-ends, to attend to her voice, for hers is the voice that sings the song of the freedom that is our essence. We heed her voice for we are desolate without its presence (p. 43).

We often hear two voices — the sometimes tentative voice of inner trust and the firm voice of authority. Sometimes these voices harmonise and converse, and our way forward is then likely to be unambiguous. But sometimes these voices clash, with the voice of authority now seeking to dominate, speaking the father tongue, excluding dialogue and stigmatising the voice of inner trust as ego. Authorities will then hand us rules and recipes — what I call Recipe-Buddhism — with the whole radical, liberating and explosive Dharma reduced to a mechanical set of obeisances and turnings-away.

One thing that is sure to set my own mystic within grieving is to hear a spiritual friend tell me how exactly he is following some recipe or other, how many aspects of his life he has managed to turn his back on, and the spiritual milestones he is thus putting behind him. This is precisely what Christina Feldman calls ‘pseudo-oneness and facades of freedom’, for authenticity is excluded from this sort of spirituality, *and the heart of practice is excluded with it*. Here is only a recipe for a narrow proficiency in practice, not a path of self-transformation.

Authorship

Finally, let’s very briefly look at *authorship* to complete our round-up of authority, authenticity and authorship. There is an author’s author

called Natalie Goldberg, whom many amateur and professional writers celebrate for her invaluable how-to advice, among other places in her book *Writing Down the Bones*. Of course, we are all authors as soon as we start thinking or speaking in any tongue, and from the moment we start taking or ducking decisions that shape our own life stories.

As you may suspect from the title of Goldberg’s how-to book, she is a dedicated Zen practitioner, and thereby hangs a tale that she recounts in another book, a meditator’s memoir with another strikingly appropriate title, *Long Quiet Highway*. It too is written in the mother tongue.



Like so many of us in the west, Goldberg’s life was a fairly pampered and wilful one, with many possibilities to pursue and talents to develop. Eventually she stumbled upon Katagiri Roshi, an austere and traditional Soto Zen teacher from Japan with a little Zen centre in a suburb of an unlikely city — Minneapolis. So begins an equally unlikely discipleship. Goldberg keeps asking herself: what am I — a Jewish woman from New York, a feminist and a social rebel — doing sitting at the feet of a traditional male authority figure like this one?

Her discipleship begins where Feldman suggests it should — with questioning. The questioning never ceases, and Roshi never supplies any pat authoritative answers. Part of his genius, the reader gathers, is to constantly throw his disciples back on their own resources, their own questions. For instance, he invites them to sit with him at 4 a.m. every morning of the week in a city where the temperature in winter can at that hour have sunk to -30 degrees. If they make it they get no praise. If they don’t make it they get no blame. If none make it he sits alone without later comment. His is a baffling, non-dominating authority.

Roshi’s disciples have to take responsibility for themselves, take responsibility as the authors of their own life stories, each assessing how important her or his practice is and the relationship with the teacher. Under this kind of guidance Roshi’s disciples develop an authentic practice. The author of the book very much becomes the author of her own life in the same moment as she experiences profound love and gratitude towards her teacher. In the pages of the book Katagiri Roshi is a powerful presence, and yet the reader finds him hard to see. Hard to hear, too — he doesn’t waste words on the father tongue. He challenges her without undermining her inner trust.

In her unpretentious prose and very personal account of her own ‘long quiet highway’, Natalie Goldberg demonstrates how authority, authenticity and authorship came together for her. It can happen for each of us as well!

Winton Higgins

A talk given on an experimental self-managing retreat at Wat Buddha Dhamma on 31 July 1998. Books quoted from:

Christina Feldman, *Woman Awake — A Celebration of Women’s Wisdom* (London: Arkana, 1989)

Natalie Goldberg, *Long Quiet Highway — Waking Up in America* (NY: Bantam, 1993)

Ursula Le Guin, *Dancing at the Edge of the World — Thoughts on Words, Women, Places* (NY: Harper & Row, 1986)



Courses and Events

26 Dec 1998
to
3 Jan 1999

Nine-Day New Year Retreat with Ajahn Ariyasilo

Ajahn Ariyasilo, from Amaravati Monastery in England, will be holding a nine-day retreat over the New Year period. This will be a good opportunity to start your year in quiet contemplation.

Cost for course accommodation and meals: \$270.

The course starts on Saturday 26th December (Boxing Day) 5 p.m. and finishes Sunday 3rd January after lunch.

15 Jan 1999
to
17 Jan 1999

Beginners' Meditation Weekend with Chris MacLachlan

This course is specifically designed for people with very little or no experience of Buddhist meditation. The course includes an introduction to meditation techniques and proper meditation postures. There will also be a basic introduction to Buddhist teachings.

Cost for course accommodation and meals: \$60.

This course starts Friday 5 p.m. and finishes after lunch on Sunday.

30 Jan 1999
to
31 Jan 1999

Good Karma 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 free.

12 Feb 1999
to
14 Feb 1999

Weekend Retreat with Judith Lai

'My life is the sum of the choices I make' Buddhist Ethics – Buddhist Faith

Judith Lai has been practicing Buddhist teachings and meditation since 1988. "This weekend we will explore the conditions that influence the choices we make. We will do this in order to broaden our options and actions."

Cost for course accommodation and meals: \$60.

This course starts Friday 5 p.m. and finishes after lunch on Sunday.

19 Feb 1999
to
21 Feb 1999

Family Weekend

This weekend will provide special activities for children. Parents will be encouraged to participate. We had great fun during our last family weekend which was a resounding success according to the feedback received.

Please ring the Wat for more details and to express an interest in bringing your children along.

Bookings *must* be received by Friday 12th February.



**12 Mar 1999
to
14 Mar 1999**

Silent Weekend Meditation Retreat

For experienced meditators only.

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 Karma Weekend

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

**2 Apr 1999
to
4 Apr 1999**

Weekend Meditation Retreat with John Barter

This meditation weekend is primarily for those with some experience in meditation practice. John Barter brings to his work seventeen years of personal meditation practice, for eleven of which he was a Buddhist monk, practising in Australia, Thailand, Britain and Europe. Having completed his post-graduate studies in psychology at the University of Sydney, where he has also taught meditation for the last four years, John is now a psychologist-intern, working in pain management at R.P.A. hospital.

Cost for course accommodation and meals: \$60.

This course starts Friday 5 p.m. and finishes after lunch on Sunday.

**8 Apr 1999
to
17 Apr 1999**

Easter Ten-Day Meditation Retreat with Rosemary & 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. Cost for course accommodation and meals: \$340. The course starts on Thursday at 5 p.m. and finishes on the following Saturday week.

**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.

Cost for course accommodation and meals is: \$60.

This course starts Friday 5 p.m. and finishes after lunch on Sunday.

**Mid-June
to
Mid-July
1999**

Month-Long Intensive Meditation / Study Retreat

This retreat is offered to experienced meditators only.

Preference is given to retreatants staying for the whole month. However a limited number of part-time places are available.

Part-timers have to stay for a minimum of one week.

This retreat deliberately has no designated teacher.

The theme for the study group is yet to be decided.



Please phone the Wat for further information about any of the listed events. Booking for courses and Good Karma 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 the course. Office hours: Mon-Sat, 9-12 noon: **(02) 4323 3193.**



Wat's Happening

The never-ending saga of comings and goings at the Wat continues: Lorella Ricci, our manager since March, and Jane Castle, community member since April, left us towards the end of September. Both expressed how much they have learnt during their time at the Wat. We farewelled them with our best wishes but also with a heavy heart as we enjoyed their company a great deal. We particularly want to express our gratitude to Lorella for the contribution she has made as manager. This can be a challenging task at times (take it from one who knows that well!) but brings also many rewards.

However, there were not just 'goings' but also some 'comings' — just to even up the score again. Kate Connors joined the community at the beginning of September. Some of you would have met Kate at courses or during Good Karma Weekends over the last couple of years. Kate is a yoga teacher in the Iyengar tradition. She wants to further her practice and understanding of the Dhamma while living in a community of like minded people. Hans joined us for five weeks as a volunteer, which was much appreciated. He offered to return soon to put together the cool room for the new kitchen. I also returned to the Wat at the beginning of September. It just so 'happened' that for personal reasons I cut my overseas trip short and was therefore in a position to make a further commitment as Wat manager until next January. We hope that this will give one of you out there enough time to decide to apply for the manager's position! (In other words — yes, we are still looking for that person to materialize! I am very keen to chat to anybody who wants to find out more about this position. Just ring me, please.) I do enjoy being back and

having the opportunity to be part of the current community, which is a good team.

A fair number of courses and events have occurred during the last three months. In September, Chris MacLachlan gave an introductory meditation weekend. He kindly agreed to teach another beginners' course in January. Khanh Le Van led a weekend course in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh. This course had an extraordinarily strong response from people and was attended by 48 participants!

Judith Lai gave her first retreat over the October long weekend. It is most gratifying to see that such a staunch long time supporter of the Wat is now in a position to teach and we are happy that we were able to include Judith again in our calendar for next year. Pip Ransome returned to the Wat to teach another ten day retreat. While it was a small course it nevertheless created a special atmosphere at the Wat, which is always appreciated by the resident community. Further, we had Zen Master Hogen Yamahata returning in November to teach another seven day sesshin and Geoff Dawson led a 'Zen style' weekend retreat at the end of that month.

Two Vietnamese Buddhist groups visited us in September. One group, the United Vietnamese Buddhist congregation, came with Venerable nun Tam Lac from the Lien Hoa temple in Marrickville. This was their first visit to the Wat. The other group were from the Buddha Relics Vihara in Cabramatta and were accompanied by several Sangha members, who have visited us in the past.

Also we hosted members of the Windsor Rotary club for a day. They were interested in finding out what we were all about and Kenneth gave them the grand tour and also a talk about our centre, as well as a brief introduction to meditation.

The big event of this year though was our 20th Anniversary weekend in October, (see the report about it on page 10 in this newsletter). It was a great event and the feedback from participants was most positive.

Gavin Scott, our builder and Ian MacFarlane, our electrician installed the new solar power system which will service the new kitchen, common room and the office. Gavin was able to broker very good second hand solar panels and batteries for an excellent price. Both have received training in solar power installations through the Rainbow Power Company and offered to install the system without charging for labour cost. A very big thanks to Gavin and Ian for their generosity. The first time I switched on the new light in the office I thought I needed sun-glasses. Ah, how wonderful it is to be able to see at night in that office. The set up will also allow us eventually to run a fax and computer with bubble-jet printer in the office, as well as use a blender in the kitchen.

The fundraising appeal during the 20th Anniversary celebration brought in nearly \$5,000. We still hope to start using the new kitchen by the end of the year. Now we have to raise the remaining \$20,000. Remember, donations are tax deductible. Why not end the year with a donation to this fund?

Claudia Grab

'Friends of the Wat' — Please note:

Membership fees of \$20 for 1999 are due now.

If you have a coloured dot on your address label, it means: that you have not paid your

membership for 1998 and this will be the last Bodhi Leaf sent to your address.

N.B. 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 top of the last page for details.

20th Anniversary Celebrations

The weekend of the 17th and 18th of October saw us celebrate 20 years of Wat Buddha Dhamma. We were particularly thrilled that Laurence Khantipalo Mills and his wife Dammika were able to share this weekend with us as our guests of honour. Laurence, as Phra Khantipalo, was instrumental in creating Wat Buddha Dhamma and has brought the Dhamma to many hundreds of people. As abbot he inspired the Wat for 14 years, together with many dedicated lay people who lived for various periods as community members at Wat Buddha Dhamma. Some of these were also guests during the weekend. Many memories were uncovered, old friendships renewed and current news (of what old 'Waties' are up to now) exchanged. The weekend was attended by about 100 adults and children; and the numbers were further swelled on Sunday with about 60 day visitors.

Saturday morning started off with our usual morning meditation at 6 a.m. Most visitors arrived during the morning. Laurence entertained a large group of eager children with Jataka

tales. We met for a big communal lunch, which I had great fun cooking for (with considerable help from visitors). Laurence led a bush walk in the afternoon. The evening celebration was held in the Sala. We started up with a meditation session, followed by a Dhamma talk by Laurence. Chanting concluded the session in the Sala. Laurence led us through many of the old Wat favourites out of the *NAMO* chanting book, also he and Dammika chanted the Heart Sutra for us.

One of my visions for the evening was to have the traditional circum-ambulation path of the Sala, the Stupa and the Bodhi tree beautified with lots of candle lights. Since the beginning of the year I have encouraged the community to save every suitable glass jar for that purpose. So we were able to light hundreds of candles, circling the Sala, illuminating the path up to the Stupa, creating a sea of light on the Stupa and surrounding the Bodhi tree as well. The weather was just perfect for this, windless and very dark (as it was near new moon) with the stars twinkling high above. These

lights created a very special atmosphere and were conducive to opening the heart while taking part in the circumambulation led by Laurence.

The evening concluded with another one of the famous huge Wat bonfires. Many a marshmallow was eaten while people relaxed around the fire.

On Sunday we had a traditional Dana day. Our abbot Tan Chao Khun Maha Samai joined us for this part of the celebration (to his regret he was unable to participate on Saturday as he had obligations which took him interstate). We were joined by members of the Thai-Australia Association, who made their annual visit to the Wat.

In my view, this weekend was a great success as it brought together people who have not seen each other for a long time and who all have been cogs in the great wheel which keeps the Wat running and flourishing as a place where the Dhamma is taught and practiced. Thank you all for your contributions. Let's all meet again for the 30th Anniversary!

Claudia Grab

Honoured Guest at W.B.D. Celebrations



Honoured guest, Laurence Khantipalo Mills, (2nd from left) in the Pavilion with other 'Friends of the Wat'.

New W.B.D. Environmental Plan

Over the past few years several Wat supporters have suggested that we should have an overall environmental plan incorporating aspects of bush management, regeneration, culling trees, fire protection; and taking into account future building and development.

To ensure that support for this is broadly based it was felt that it would be appropriate to ask all interested supporters of the Wat, to express their ideas. This should be done in writing and sent to Brian Stansfield:

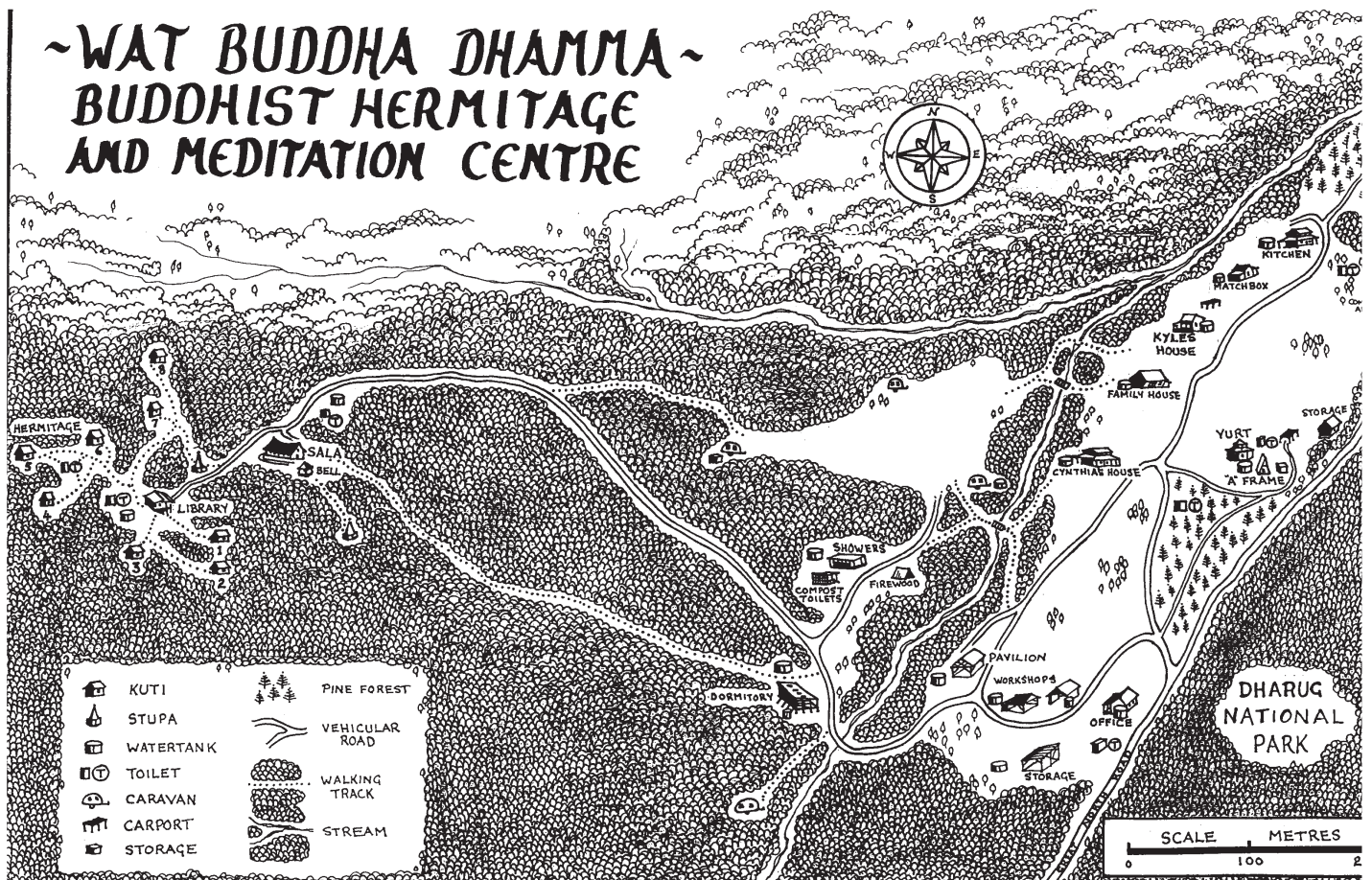
Brian Stansfield (E. Plan)
 c/- Wat Buddha Dhamma
 Ten Mile Hollow
 Wisemans Ferry NSW 2775

All ideas will be collated and then the Wat committee and trustees will publish an environmental plan. According to the original ideal expressed by one of the W. B. D. founders, Laurence Khantipalo Mills, this will encompass the next 480 years — there being only those remaining of his 500 year plan!

To facilitate this a map is printed below and should be marked to show areas that you feel need specific or special attention, i.e. bush regeneration — definitely no development — cleared for fire safety — ideal for future building, etc.

In accordance with the Buddha's teaching we have no wish to unnecessarily cut down trees or harm living beings, so future development should have this in mind.

Brian Stansfield



Beginner's Pond

by Trevor Slaven



Awareness / A thought jumps in / PLOP!

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, Monday to Saturday. **The Bodhi Leaf is issued four times yearly at no charge. Through an annual payment of \$20 for 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 (made out to: Wat Buddha Dhamma) to: 'Friends of the Wat', Wat Buddha Dhamma, Ten Mile Hollow, Wisemans Ferry, NSW 2775.**

Full Name:

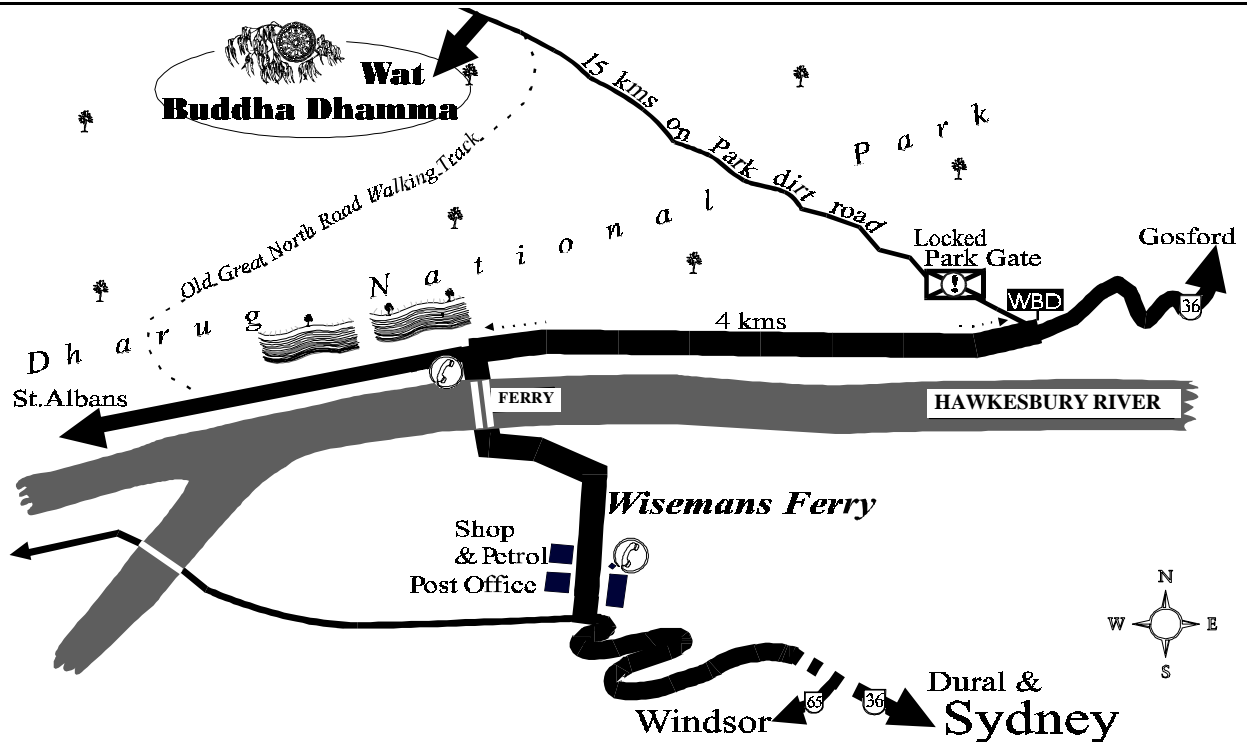
Phone:

Address:

Town/City:

State:

Postcode:



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.

Sender:
WAT BUDDHA DHAMMA
Ten Mile Hollow
Wisemans Ferry NSW 2775

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