



DHAMMAPALA

BUDDHIST MONASTERY



2015

KLOSTER AM WALDRAND, BÜTSCHELSSTRASSE 74, CH-3718 KANDERSTEG, SWITZERLAND

Dhammadapala Monastery is open to visitors and guests for most of the year. However, during retreats (see retreat programme on pages 22-24) accommodation is reserved only for registered retreatants and, during January until March 31st, only for the resident community. Guests coming for the first time are normally required to attend one of the scheduled weekend retreats (please contact our secretary).

Prior notification for overnight stays is always necessary and guests are required to follow the monastic (or retreat) schedule and abide by the eight precepts. Our arrival days are now Monday and Friday and guests are requested to stay at the monastery for at least three days.



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With the exception of January and February our secretary Monica will answer the phone Wednesday to Saturday from 9 – 11 a.m.

During other times please send an email to:
info@dhammadapala.ch

Daily routine:

05:30	Communal meditation	08:45	Work period
06:30	Clean-up period	11:15	Main meal
07:00	Breakfast	17:00	Informal Tea
08:15	Morning meeting with Guest Monk	19:30	Communal meditation

Most evenings at 19:30 there is chanting and meditation. On Saturday evenings the meditation starts at 19:00 and is followed by a Dhamma Talk or a Dhamma dialogue.

Participation in the activities of the monastery is free of charge. The monastic community is, however, dependant for its support on free will donations. These may be made at the monastery or paid into the following account:

In Switzerland: Spar + Leihkasse, 3714 Frutigen, 30-38188-9

Verein Dhammadapala, IBAN CH65 0878 4016 2208 3700 7

In Germany: GLS Bank, Christstr. 9 D-44789 Bochum.

Verein Dhammadapala, Kt.-Nr. 4059345300; BLZ 430 609 67

For electronic transfer (also from other countries) on account of the GLS Bank

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Editorial



'Are You Enlightened Yet?'

A few years ago a fellow monk who teaches Buddhism from time to time at a Catholic college was asked by a female student: 'How many years have you been a monk now?' 'Twenty-five years', was his reply. 'And?' she probed further: 'Are you enlightened by now?' After a few moments of getting his breath, considering the directness of a very personal question, he replied equally directly: 'Ah ... no!' The young student hesitated for a moment and then burst

out: 'What? Twenty-five years as a monk and not enlightened? How can that be?'

With regard to the results of his spiritual practice, I don't know if this direct confrontation led him to feel embarrassed, or if he was simply amused by the innocence of the question. But when he related this incident to me he chuckled and shrugged his shoulders in mock despair, as if to say: 'Well, what can I do?'

One can only give one's best and stay closely connected to the Triple Refuge, and do that over a period of decades. One practises the Dhamma and lives within a wholesome environment during the entire time. One gives much of one's time and energy to all the people with whom one comes into regular contact on the basis of spiritual friendship – and that's more than a few during an extended period of time of monastic life. Nevertheless, such considerations shouldn't lead to complacency and smugness. In one of his shorter discourses – the Dasadhamma Sutta, which is toned in a kind of pep talk style – the Buddha required his monastic disciples to regularly question themselves as follows: 'Has practice borne fruit with freedom and insight, so that at the end of my life I need not feel ashamed when questioned by my spiritual companions?'

The inquiry after the fruits of our spiritual practice has its place, even though it's often downplayed or even ridiculed within the contemporary spiritual world. And a way of bypassing this inquiry is to philosophize it away with smart Zeitgeist statements like: 'The path is the goal' or even: 'There is no goal, because you are already enlightened, but just don't know it yet'. The objective of Buddhist mind and heart training is nothing less than complete liberation, and that does not normally occur without putting in some effort. Especially for a 'homeless one', there should be an intense commitment to take this training all the way. But who amongst us can claim such lofty levels of consciousness for him/herself without the slightest doubt and in full conviction?

So what is 'enlightenment' anyway, or maybe better: what constitutes an awakened heart? Is it a special state of consciousness in which all troubles and problems are miraculously dissolved? Or is it maybe a deep state of oneness and the feeling of being completely connected with the whole universe? Most people seem to use the not so ideal term 'enlightenment' by imagining a very special state, which of course they have never experienced before, and they therefore cannot assess what this state would be like. During longer meditation

retreats one often meets people who – more or less consciously – are expecting some special state to occur, or who try desperately to work towards such a state. That can be endlessly frustrating if it is not understood that the awakened heart is not a state of mind, but is rather a stage of consciousness beyond all states, and cannot be reduced to the level of arising and passing phenomena. Each state is by its very nature conditioned and therefore not reliable. It cannot be maintained



and, if once lost, cannot be recreated. All states of mind are liable to their own laws, and our control over them is very limited indeed. Emotionally we tend to hold on to pleasant states and demand that they stay with us forever. And when they are blissful or even sublime, then we're prone to overrate and misinterpret them. We are convinced that this temporary bliss must be enlightenment, because it feels so good!

The unpleasant impressions and experiences in our life, we don't even want to let near us, and we invest a lot of mental-emotional energy to suppress them or to try to get rid of them in the most effective way. And yet it is exactly this strategy of either holding on to or resisting that is responsible for the fact that we are being trapped in the dualistic tension between our likes and dislikes. Thus the awakening heart cannot manifest.

If one tries to implement the goal orientations which the Buddha left us in his legacy, it is much more helpful to proceed on the assumption that the development of the heart-mind (bhāvanā) is a long-term process. But paradoxically, it has to be applied continuously within the timeless, present moment. On the basis of increasing mental clarity and presence one can then begin to see things as



they really are, instead of wanting them to be in a way which corresponds with our deluded beliefs, ideas and perceptions. Those 'things' are what flit almost uninterruptedly through

our field of perception, in the form of mental objects, impressions and activities. The ignorant mind has the inbuilt tendency to identify blindly with these impressions, and to take them for real. This usually results at some point in frustration and disappointment, and can even culminate in agitated compulsiveness and despair. The aspect of the knowing mind, which is always ready to be aware, cannot be deceived by the endless procession of mental objects. Within each moment it is acutely aware that this is only a matter of impersonal goings-on. But as soon as one interferes by wanting something or trying to get rid of something, the whole affair becomes very personal. Impersonal processes turn into 'my feelings and emotions', 'my thoughts and memories' and 'my perceptions and sense impressions'. We become possessed by our own creations. We literally take ownership of all these fleeting mental events, and are genuinely convinced that this is who we are: either each impression in itself or all of them together. The Buddha spoke in this context of the me- and mine-making habit – an inconspicuous and continuous activity of the mind, but with fatal consequences for ourselves.

Once we have observed these inner processes accurately, and also felt them with an intimate detachment, we may arrive at a very important step of

insight. Maybe for the first time in our life, we have recognized that we are not the mental objects or activities, but rather that which is aware of them all. And that which is aware of it has no



form, no colour, no voice, and in itself is completely empty, open and vast, but in a completely vibrant, alive way. It is a place of quiet receptivity and a consistent, reliable refuge. With this newly acquired perspective we will no longer classify our experiences blindly, because we have looked through the limitations inherent to all states and experiences. We are no longer fascinated by their instability and conditionality, which previously led us into various forms of dependency.

Luang Por Sumedho has often spoken about the importance of being awake or enlightened in the present moment, instead of projecting enlightenment as a huge event into the future. He noticed that many people practise the Dhamma, and even live their whole lives, as if the

present moment were an obstacle one has to overcome. They unconsciously tend to hurry all the time towards the next moment, onto which the final fulfilment we all long for is projected. Curiously enough, our fundamental belief, our conviction, lies in the expectation that reliable happiness will always be in the future, even if that future is only a moment away. But if we miss each moment or step on the way, we might in fact be letting our whole life pass by. So the decisive question is not: 'How do I get enlightened quickly in the future?' but: 'How is my connection with the present moment?' Is there a quality of consciousness present, in which each impression can be received as it is? If that is the case, then, on the basis of a firm ethical integrity, we have freedom to choose which impulses of



Walking meditation in Ségriès

speech or action to follow – namely, the wholesome, the good, the wise and compassionate – and which ones to let go back to where they came from. If such an attitude pervades our whole life, we can really speak of the fact that the awakened heart is manifesting. Whether the level of that awakening corresponds with the traditional Theravadin four-stage system is less important here. Instead of wanting to become a stream-enterer, once-returner, non-returner or even arahant in the future, it is far more effective to mobilize the highest degree of presence of mind from moment to moment, in order to be awake, present and compassionate right now, instead of projecting oneself time and time again into the future.

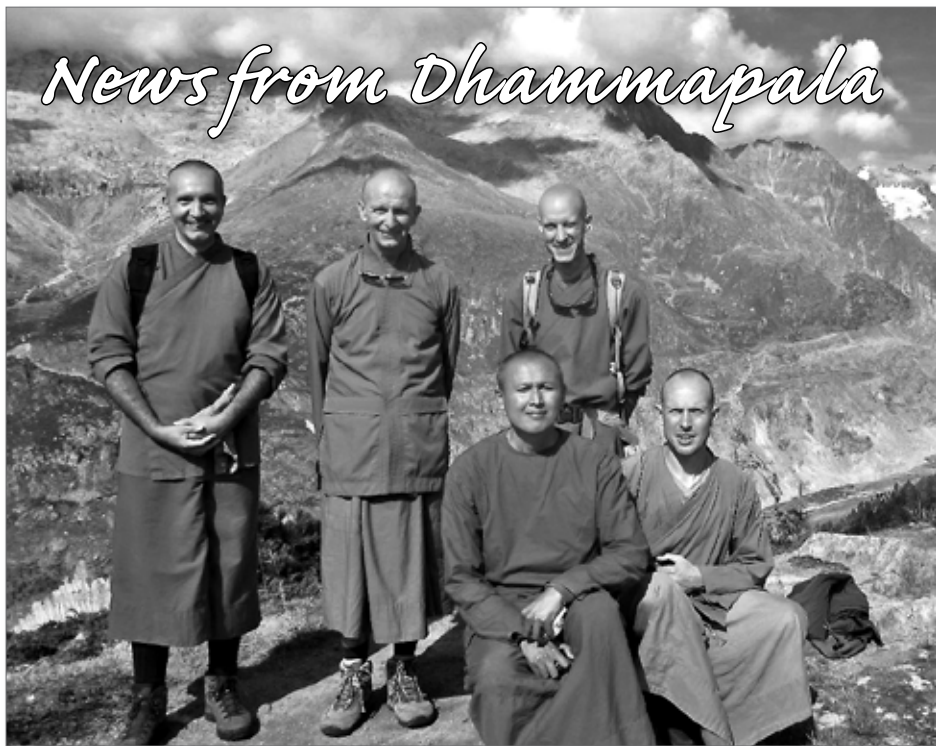
Seen in this light, the question of monks' years or years of spiritual practice in general with regard to their final results becomes irrelevant, except if they are useful as information. In the history of Buddhism there have often been people who only needed a little encouragement and a few pointers to realize the essence of the practice and to also apply it directly. The majority, though, needed years or maybe even decades. But it is an expression of conceit (*māna*) to be always comparing oneself with others, whether figures from the vast Buddhist past or spiritual geniuses of the present, in order to assess one's progress.

Rather than considering the length of time factor in relationship to the spiritual path and practice, it is much more reliable and useful in the long run to turn one's attention again and again to the heart of awareness, which is always with us. If this becomes a wholesome new habit and steady refuge in the course of our life, our trust in the awakening capacity of our own heart becomes increasingly deeper. Thus we live 'enlightenment' constantly, rather than being overly concerned with becoming enlightened within a certain time span.

Ajahn Khemasiri



News from Dhammapala



End of Vassa outing 2014

Community life

In contrast to previous years, the year 2014 provided the monastic community at Dhammapala with more stability, despite the inevitable comings and goings that punctuate life in such a context. Ajahn Dto Pesalo left us after the winter retreat to go back to Thailand. He was almost immediately replaced in April by an old acquaintance: Tan Nandiyo returned to Dhammapala and joined our local community after having spent two years in various monasteries

in France and Germany. At the beginning of the formal Rains Retreat period (Vassa) the Thai monk Ajahn Thanissaro found his way back to the Swiss mountains; he had already spent a Vassa with us in 2012. So during the 'Rains' the community at Dhammapala consisted of five Bhikkhus. However, we were without a postulant during this time, who normally would have taken care of the kitchen responsibilities. In order to compensate for this absence, the extended lay community felt the urge to become very engaged in this



Venerable Punnabhāsa and Vietnamese friends

area. And it was particularly impressive to witness the active commitment of our supporters' network, when we were without a cooking stove for a whole week during a kitchen renovation project. We had initially settled for sandwiches and fruit during that time. But then, positive surprise: Each single day without a stove our Thai friends came to the monastery – some of them from quite a distance - to provide us with a warm meal. A not only stomach warming but especially heart-warming gesture to benefit from.

This kind of unreserved generosity we are also privileged to experience regularly during our two large annual festival events: at Vesakha Puja in May and on the occasion of the Kathina ceremony following the end of the rainy

season. In May we greeted as temporary Sangha members Ajahn Piyadhammo from Wat Sacca in Berlin, and Bhikkhuni Visuddhi from Czech Republic, as well as two novice nuns from the Anenja Vihara in southern Germany. For the Kathina ceremony we welcomed the vice abbot of Amaravati Monastery - the Japanese monk Ajahn Nyanarato – who was accompanied by the Czech monk Bhikkhu Akaliko. We were especially grateful to them for playing a very active part in the collective sewing process of a new monk's robe on the same day of the ceremony. It was well after midnight when the garment was completely stitched up and ready for use; it was then formally offered, just before dawn of the following day, to the newly fledged Ajahn Kancano. Besides the visits on special

occasions, the number of visiting monks and nuns was rather limited this past year. Short but sweet were nevertheless the spontaneous visits by an impressive Vietnamese senior monk of 50 Vassa – Bhikkhu Punnabhasa – as well as a flying one of both Ajahn Dtun and Ajahn Tejapannyo from Wat Punnyaawaht in Thailand. Ajahn Siripannyo from Wat Pah Nanachat recited the Patimokkha (monastic code of conduct) during his brief visit in June. In September a larger group from a Mahayana monastery in Waldbröl/Germany – the EIAB centre in the lineage of Thich Nhat Hanh – spent a whole day engaged in friendly talks with our community.

Enriching talks and dialogues weren't just limited to Dhammapala itself, but also took place in other monasteries of our extended community and during events organized by other traditions. Most prominent for me was an international meeting of monastic

Elders (IEM) at Amaravati Monastery - presided over by Luang Por Liam from Wat Nong Pah Pong and attended by up to 110 mostly Western monastics – and an event with the Dalai Lama in Hamburg with 8000 participants under the theme: 'Mastering life by training the mind'.

In contrast to this pinpointed theme, those of the IEM were multifaceted and covered areas in relationship with very specific aspects of monastic life within the contemporary Western world. We aimed at focusing on things more from a birds' eye view, i.e.: the balancing act between the adaptation of our tradition to Western culture and the preservation of the tried and trusted; leadership roles within a spiritual community; the taking of a formal position (abbot) and the processes of transmission from one leader to the next; consequences of a leader's numerous duties and responsibilities for his or her own



Monks and nuns from three traditions

spiritual practice; influence of modern technological gadgets on life and training within a lifestyle of renunciation; effects of modern trends of mindfulness meditation on the Buddhist world as well as on the secular world; care and integration of elderly monks and nuns within a still fairly young monastic community and the specific aspects of communal cohesion within a global community.

All these themes and many more were intensively discussed within formal and informal group settings. The whole point of these interactive reflections was not to arrive at any decisions, but to

open up and be receptive to the diverse views and opinions of all participants. This spirit of openness was clearly noticeable, which made this meeting a genuinely enriching experience for all. The monastic community at Amaravati deserves a round of applause for the fact that they had organized this weeklong event in such a well-choreographed, sensitive and relaxed manner.

Two months after the IEM Tan Nandiyo participated in a five-day convivial-contemplative event at Amaravati in connection with Luang Por Sumedho's 80th birthday. On the said day hundreds of people took the opportunity to pay respect to their beloved teacher and spiritual friend. Even though Luang Por Sumedho seemed to enjoy good health at the time, there is now always an acute awareness of the possibility, that this could have been the last time to meet him face to face. Later in the year, Luang Por Sumedho undertook even a third journey from Thailand to England to participate as guest of honor during the Kathina ceremony at Amaravati. Before coming over he had launched an initiative in Thailand for people to contribute donations to Amaravati's long term building plans. Some of the donors had come with him from Thailand to offer the collected funds to the monastery. Dhammapala was represented on this occasion by Ajahn Kancano.



On Tudong in Liguria



Siladhara nuns Cittapala, Metta and Upekkha

After the end of this year's Vassa period Tan Bodhinando and I were invited to participate at two Kathina ceremonies of the Sri Lankan communities in Switzerland - the Geneva International Buddhist Foundation and the Zurich Buddhist Vihara in Lenzburg.

Ajahn Thiradhammo, the former abbot of Dhammapala, had made the generous offer a while ago, that I could temporarily withdraw from the various abbot duties at Dhammapala whilst he would hold the fort in the meantime. I took him up on his offer with delight and spent the whole month of June in Northern Italy. The first two were spent in the

company of two Ex-monks (Natthiko & Khantiko) on a long distance walk in the Ligurian mountains. The last two weeks I spent on a solitary retreat in a lonely hut at 2100m altitude – called Santaloka hermitage – at the far end of the Valle del Lys, a side valley of the Valle d'Aosta. My survival up there was organized by a group of Italian supporters, who had invited me on a daily 'alpine' almsround. With a large pack on my back every morning I walked down the mountain for about twenty minutes until I came upon an asphalt road. There I was received by various members of the group, who offered the almsfood. With a heavy pack full of food and drink for the whole day I was sent up again on the mountain path. Not an easy task on an empty stomach! The duration of the return journey therefore: 45 minutes.

Teaching activities

In 2014, inside and outside the monastery, a wide variety of courses, seminars and talks were on offer. To fulfill all our promises we had to rely on the active support given by some well-known monks and nuns of our extended community. Ajahn Thiradhammo offered a Thai retreat in April and visited some of the meditation groups - to him still very familiar - during his two months stay in Switzerland. Another Thai language weekend was organized



Meditation chapel in Ségriès

on short notice for Ajahn Thanissaro in November, to the special delight of our Thai community. The English Siladhara nun Ajahn Kovida led a well-received retreat during Pentecost in her mother tongue, and the two German Siladhara Ajahns Metta and Cittapala offered two much appreciated meditation weekends.

During the Provencale spring Ajahn Kovida and I had been invited into an Ex-Christian monastery (Ségriès) in Southern France, in order to co-create a contemplative week within a very conducive environment. The former monastery church even served as our meditation hall. Though the ancient monastery buildings are now mainly serving other purposes (language courses), we could sense, that the deep stillness pervading the monastery walls provided a palpable background, so that the retreatants could focus without delay on the exploration of their hearts and minds. In addition, it was generally perceived as a successful experiment within the French Theravada world, that a monk and nun should offer reflections and instructions each in turn, favourably complementing each other.



Besides the regular introductory courses and two longer retreats in the German language at the monastery, my external teaching activities led me to other weekend seminars to the Lotos Vihara in Berlin, the Centro Incontri Umani in the Italian part of Switzerland (Ascona) and to the Association Mudita in Lausanne.

Material alterations

The Dhammapala Verein (monastery trust) decided during its annual general meeting to grant a generous budget in order to renovate the monastery kitchen. The plan was put into practice during the two quiet weeks in September, which considerably impaired the external stillness of our 'retreat', but provided us at the end with a new kitchen floor, a cupboard and a cooking stove. Unanimous comment of all the monastery cooks since then: A long wished for and welcomed improvement in the basement area of Dhammapala.



Procession to the almsgiving ceremony



Participants of the almsgiving ceremony

In this context it should be noted that Vandee Meyer from Zurich had organized a grand almsgiving ceremony for the 31st of August at the monastery. She had announced in advance to her fellow Thai friends, that donations for the new monastery kitchen were very welcome. The result was, that on the day - within a festive open-air ceremony in the monastery garden - more than half of the renovation costs had already been offered. The collective “sadhū” of the monastic community as an expression of appreciation for this act of generosity could be heard on this day far and wide beyond the monastery grounds.

Earlier in the year also the reception room (Sala) of the monastery received a slight facelift. The dark wooden wall panels were turned white and our local carpenter provided us with a custom designed, beautifully crafted new

bookshelf and Dana box. The need for the new shelf arose on the basis of the tremendously generous free distribution book offerings during the past five years by the Katannyuta group in Malaysia. To honour their generosity appropriately we decided to enlarge the narrow spectrum of Dhamma books in the Sala to make more free books available for our guests.

Changes within the administration and community

A change of a larger magnitude happened within the monastery administration last year. Sabrina Müller, who had been our most competent secretary within the monastery office for the past three years, passed on her secretarial duties to Monica Malek from Bern. Monica will be our new secretary for at least the next two years. Besides having to deal with



Monica Malek

all the inquiries of guests and visitors she will also try to grapple with the rather complex monastery administration. We are very glad that we have

found such a trustworthy successor for Sabrina and look forward with great confidence to a new episode of fruitful cooperation.

For the first quarter of the year 2015 we have decided to offer two new monastic aspirants a practical entry way into the monastery life. It is commonly known as the life form of an Anagarika – someone who has moved from home into homelessness.

Our physical situation within our Swiss chalet is rather limited - with six community members we are already complete – but the start into monastic life at Dhammapala doesn't automatically mean, that one is only bound to this one particular place. If anything such ideas should be dropped right from the start, as the basic ethos of a homeless life consists of flexibility, non-attachment and the willingness, to engage with new external conditions even on short notice. The single most crucial connection on

the human level – besides the formal connection to the triple refuge, ethical integrity and the Buddha's teachings – is a trusting relationship with a wise and compassionate mentor, who supervises attentively the first steps of a monastic newcomer. If increasing trust and mutual benevolence between mentor and disciple are established during this early phase of monastic life, then the basic necessities are fulfilled so that a spiritual training within a Theravada monastery can bear fruit. How and where future steps along the way are going to be taken by the aspirant will have to be decided within an atmosphere of cooperation from teacher and student alike.

The changes in self-perception of Dhammapala have gradually happened in a subtle way over the past few years. From being a 'senior monks only' monastery during the nineties and first ten years of the new millennium, it is becoming a place, where not only younger monks can live and practice, but where even entry into the holy life is offered in a modest way. If this fairly new assessment is realistic and useful in the long run, only time will tell. But as a spiritual community we are ready to take this risk of uncertainty.

Ajahn Khemasiri

The Unified Path to Freedom

Ajahn Sucitto



Monastic aspirants receiving alms

Everything we do has an effect

It is important to remember that the Buddhist path unifies in ethics, meditation and discerning wisdom: *sīla*, *saṃādhi*, and *pañña*. *Sīla*, or ethics, includes virtue, integrity, intentions, attitudes and inclinations of the mind that are skilful – and it excludes ones that are unskilful. *Samādhi* is the deepening stillness that we experience in meditation; it is a focus that is steady and firm. *Pañña* is wisdom, or discernment: the action of clearly understanding things in line with suffering and the cessation of suffering.

So Buddhist wisdom is something you do. It's about applying the mind to find out how stress or suffering is caused, how the roots of it are laid down, and how suffering continues if these roots are not looked into. Even if the stress is not agonizing, and the suffering is just manageable discontent, we can either lay down the foundation to continue in the future suffering, refrain from doing that, or clear the premises and habits that trigger unskilful mental action. Sometimes clearing takes work: it isn't always comfortable working with dullness or resistance, or holding back the craving mind. So we have to recognize that the intention to clear is for our welfare;

then we acknowledge and bear with unpleasant feelings – if that’s what it takes to release ourselves from unskilful reactions. What becomes clear with discernment is that filling up, holding on, or trying to be something in the future is stressful. Bear this in mind as it helps us establish a template for how to live and what to do in our hearts and minds.

What we do, how we act, and what intentions we carry out: this has results on our lives and the lives of others. Whatever we incline towards, whatever we think or do and how we act has effects. This is the principle of cause and effect, or kamma. It includes obvious external ethics, such as the way we physically act in the world, the way we speak to other people; and also it concerns attitudes we have towards our own bodies and minds. Doing something with a joyful intention has a joyful effect, doing something with a negative or restless intention has a negative or agitated effect. This principle of kamma extends to the most refined levels and subtle forms of activity that occur in meditation, in which we experience the results of inclinations – say of kindness, spaciousness or firmness. We can shift our attention to these subtle forms of activity, or to refraining from their opposites: ill-will, rigidity and pressure, and dithering. In general then, this principle of cause and effect, of inclining one’s intentions and inclinations, is a foundation you can always rely on. It is a thread of practice that links ethics, meditation and wise discernment.



Confession time



Luang Por Sumedho offering robes

What am I doing?

We start by looking at whether what we are doing is skilful or unskilful – trying not to overlook anything. How do we get up in the morning? How do we attend to our duties and requisites? Basically, this is what monastic life is about. It brings forth a lot of attention to things like robes, food and shelter, and to how we relate with monks, nuns, and lay people. All this is included as practice. Full attention is expected. It's not just about looking nice or being polite. We train in this way because the way we act and incline our minds affects ourselves and others. Commitment to this understanding helps us to gradually work our way out of greed, hatred and delusion.

Delusion is most difficult because we can't really see it. That is why one of our main trainings is to continually deepen and strengthen the power and quality of attention and intention. In this way we can penetrate into the places in the mind that are often misted over, and where blind habits, casualness, impulsiveness, or recklessness take over. We start becoming more attentive to what is happening. Nothing is inconsequential. It's all worth attending to. We can do this, it's really good to know that we can do it, and it has good effects on the mind.

Seeing the stress and suffering from a mind that is craving or restless can be uncomfortable. Still, pausing, widening attention and being with what is happening is a simpler process than getting into a panic, analysing yourself, or trying to manipulate it. It's even more straightforward just to be with what is arising when we use this monastic way of life, as it emphasizes that refinement of attention and it cuts off some of the alternatives. When we can't act on the distracting mind, we have to observe craving or restlessness, and really see the stress and suffering they cause. Then you don't want to follow them. And to bear with this process, not adding more complexities or emotional reactions to it – just that much has good results. Moods and energies change, the mind comes out clearer, and we see that things can move along in a good way.

We get a clear sense of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* when we get what we are doing in our lives down to the very specific, finite, here-and-now perspective. We know what we are doing; we can contemplate it and check the results out for ourselves. From this we start to see the bigger picture of how what we do affects our lives. So we incline towards actions that are skilful, virtuous, and generous; good *kamma* that gives us a sense of satisfaction, or leaves no regret, and that leads the mind



Listening to the Dhamma in the Amaravati temple

to stillness and reflection. It doesn't mean life is going to be all pure and trouble-free, but we are beginning to notice more clearly the grudges, worries, anxieties, impatience, etc. for what they are. We are developing the Path. At the end of the day we feel clearer and stronger in ourselves because of developing skilful kamma. The mind isn't in doubt or speculation or drifting. We know what we are doing and how we are being. This begins to form us; it becomes who we are.

What do I want to become?

Sīla, samādhi, paññā, and kamma pertain to the most intimate and refined details of our minds as well as through the larger perspectives of what we are doing in our lives. We can ask ourselves, 'What do I want to become? More restless, frantic, uptight, judgemental, worried, confused, conceited or more generous, steady, mellow, gentle, kind and clear?' When we consider what to do it's pretty up-close and immediate: What do we want to think about? How do we want to be with other people? This is the way we practise; and as we do, the close-up picture of moment-to-moment attention starts to blend with the bigger picture of our lives.

The Buddhist path is thoroughly and fundamentally relational. The Buddha taught to do things that are for our welfare, the welfare of others, and that lead to nibbāna. If we can say 'yes' to all three of those, then it's the right thing to do. The process refers to a relational intelligence: How does this action work in relationship with me? How does this mind-set work in relationship with other people? What are my attitudes and perceptions of other people and what do I do with those? The fundamental relational axis for being with other people is one of kindness, respect, compassion, appreciation of their goodness, and equanimity.

Equanimity, or upekkhā, means we trust people to go through their ups and downs; not getting excited when they have a good day and not getting depressed when they lose it. Equanimity offers the trust that they can work through whatever is arising. We can also have appreciation, mudita, for being in the presence of people who are skilful. We start to appreciate how good it is to be with good-hearted and fine people. These are aspects of our fundamental relational axis. If we're not experiencing others in this way, we have to question how we are relating: 'Am I comparing: You're greater or lesser than me? Am I intimidated? Is there attraction or aversion?' Or more specifically: 'How does it feel when I complain that "he's slow, she's lazy, he's this, she's that, she's always in the way, he's always telling me what to do, he's taking

over the kitchen, she's always late, she's doing her own thing!" Eventually you think, 'Wait a minute...What's this doing to my mind? This isn't skilful.'

By contemplating perceptions and the effect they have on the mind, we see which ones need to be investigated and released, and which ones need to be developed and strengthened. We start to put it together, realizing that it is better to be blamed than to be blaming other people. If I have to have one or the other, it is better to be criticized than to be criticizing someone else. It's better to be forgiving rather than expect people to forgive me. It's better to appreciate others than expect to be appreciated. Just look at the results: when other people appreciate me, that's fine. But if I'm wanting that, or continuously asking for it, or needing it – it leads to suffering. I don't like being blamed, but there is not much I can do about that. I can however avoid blaming, criticizing, or being negative to other people. So we start to piece it together. First *sīla*, then *samādhi*: stay focused on ethics and see how that gives us a firm ground; then with that kind of *samādhi*, see how that supports *pañña*, discernment: knowing the different ways the mind can go, and which are the skilful paths that lead to *nibbāna*. This is the way we train ourselves.

The pictures used here are from the IEM in May 2014 at Amaravati.



Luang Por Liam & Ajahn Kevali

Dhammapala Calendar 2015

Meditation weekends will be held at Dhammapala Monastery. Meetings of Swiss meditation groups with Ajahn Khemasiri will take place on the designated dates with city names only. For addresses check page 25.

January 2nd – March 31st

Monastic retreat*

April

- 1 Ajahn Abhinando visits Geneva
- 3 – 6 Meditation weekend (Easter) with Ajahn Khemasiri (in English)
- 15 Bern
(www.zentrumfuerbuddhismus.ch)
- 24 – 26 Meditation weekend with Ajahn Nuanjan (in Thai)

May

- 17 Vesakha-Festival in Hinterkappelen near Bern
- 20 Geneva
- 29 – 31 Meditation weekend with Ajahn Cittapala (in German)

June

- 1 – 7 Quiet week at the monastery*
- 11 Basel (www.kalyanamitta.ch)

July

- 3 – 5 Meditation weekend with Ajahn Khemasiri (in German)
- 30 Asalha Puja
- 31 First day of the monastic Rains retreat (Vassa)

August

- 14 – 16 Meditation weekend with Ajahn Metta (in German)
- 30 Thai almsgiving ceremony at Dhammapala

September

- 2 Geneva
- 14 – 27 Two quiet weeks at the monastery*
- 28 Zürich

October

- 21 Bern
(www.zentrumfuerbuddhismus.ch)
- 23 – 25 Meditation weekend with Ajahn Khemasiri (in German)
- 26 Pavarana day – end of Rains retreat

November

- 13 – 15 Meditation weekend with Ajahn Khemasiri (in German)
- 22 Kathina-Festival in Hinterkappelen near Bern
- 23 – 29 Quiet week at the monastery*

December

- 12 & 13 Lausanne; evening talk and meditation day on Sunday – (www.mudita.ch)
- 16th Geneva

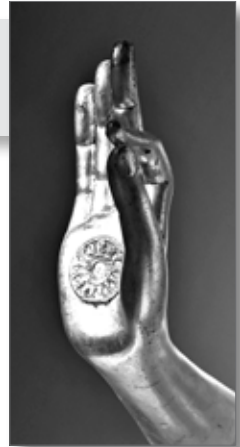
January – March 2015

Monastic three months winter retreat*



*During these time periods the monastic community reduces its activities considerably, and accepts only a limited number of guests as supporters.

Meditation Weekends 2015



Retreats are taught in (G) = German (T) = Thai (E) English

April 3rd – 6th (E) *Ajahn Khemasiri (long Easter weekend)*

April 24th – 26th (T) *Ajahn Nuanjan*

May 29th – 31st (D) *Siladhara nun Ajahn Cittapala*

July 3rd – 5th (D) *Ajahn Khemasiri*

August 14th – 16th (D) *Siladhara nun Ajahn Metta*

October 23th – 25th (D) *Ajahn Khemasiri*

November 13th – 15th (D) *Ajahn Khemasiri*

The weekends usually start on Friday evening at 19:30h. In order to be appropriately oriented and acclimatised to the monastic environment, we ask participants to arrive at the monastery between 17:00h and 18:00h. It is expected that one considers the eight ethical precepts of the monastery as mandatory, including the practice of noble silence. The practical instructions and teachings are generally held in German unless otherwise specified. To be admitted as a participant, a fax, e-mail or telephone booking is necessary (Wed. – Sat. / 9:00 – 11:00h).

As courses are often fully booked, we kindly ask to only register if one plans to participate for the whole weekend. The monastery is entirely supported by donations (Dana = generosity), and we recommend to make a food contribution towards the meals of the weekend at the beginning of the course. Also a monetary donation at the end of the course will be greatly appreciated. Please also bring along a whole set of bedding (sheet, duvet cover & pillow case; no more sleeping bags please).



OUR GRATITUDE

We would like to express our appreciation for the many contributions to create this newsletter. The layout was done by Ron Lumsden with the photo-technical support by Tavaró. The proofreading of the written material was done by Ajahn Ahimsako, Patricia Rollier and Sash Lewis. The photographic material was provided by various good friends of the monastery. Special thanks goes to Sabrina Müller for the cover photograph.

Long & external Retreats 2015

- All retreats are given in **German** unless otherwise specified.
- Registrations for the following retreats are accepted from March 2015 onwards.
- **Voluntary cooks are most welcome for all the monastery retreats.**

May 7th – 10th	"Mindfulness and beyond – an exploration of reality" Meditation course in Southern Norway with Ajahn Khemasiri – in English. Contact: post@skogskloster.no
August 20th – 23th	"The space of stillness" – Meditation retreat with Ajahn Khemasiri in Buddha Haus in Southern Germany (Allgäu) Contact: info@buddha-haus.de
September 5th – 12th	"The power of presence" with Ajahn Khemasiri This meditation course on mindfulness shall be enriched by contemplative group inquiry. Only for people with prior retreat experience.
October 2nd – 4th	Weekend meditation workshop with Ajahn Khemasiri in Czech Republic – in English. Contact: buddha.mangala@gmail.com
December 26th – January 1st 2016	New Year Retreat with Ajahn Khemasiri Course with noble silence, open to experienced meditators only.



Meditation group contacts

Switzerland (+41)

Basel	Rainer Künzi – www.kalyanamitta.ch	061 331 13 04
Beatenberg	Meditationszentrum – www.karuna.ch	033 841 21 31
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Nürnberg	Wolfgang Kaiser	0911 660 42 42
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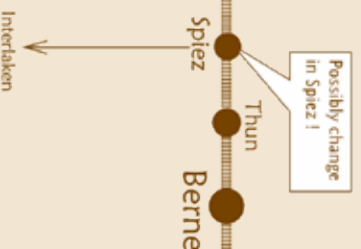
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	F-13390 Auriol	+33 (0)6 95 85 83 87

Austria (+43)

Wien	Christoph Köck, Gfrornergasse 3/1/39,	
	A-1060 Wien	01 595 50 18



The connection by train:

Trains leave Bern in the direction of Brig at 39 minutes past each hour and arrive in Kandersteg about 1 hour later. For some connections you may have to change in Spiez.

From Kandersteg station to Dhammapala it is approximately 15 – 20 minutes on foot.