



Cittaviveka

Newsletter – Winter 2022-23

Dear Friends of Cittaviveka, warm greetings,

As Ajahn Chah wisely reflected, ‘We will come to understand that everything in the world is a teacher. Trees and vines, for example, can all reveal the true nature of reality.’ With that reflection in mind, the changing seasons are a reminder of the transiency of all things. Things come into being, linger and then fade away. Some things we’re glad to see disappear, and others we grieve over. Similarly, some things we’re glad to receive, and others we resent when they arrive. It’s often when we battle against change that we get unnecessarily stressed and suffer. The Buddha-Dhamma points the way to developing the heart that can receive changing experiences in a spacious and accepting way.

Recent Events

Cittaviveka’s Kathina Ceremony took place on Sunday 30 October, with many hundreds of people in attendance, including fifty-four monks, nuns, novices and anagarikas from Amaravati, Hartridge and of course Cittaviveka. Also joining us were some of the abbots and Elders from our monasteries in Europe and North America. It was a joyous gathering, centring around the offering of robe-cloth and other much needed requisites. Ajahn Amaro, abbot of Amaravati, kindly offered the Dhamma talk in the afternoon. We are very grateful for the immense generosity and support of the lay community, in particular this year’s sponsors Pern, Steve and Aor.

Just a couple of days after Kathina, the biannual Elders Council Meeting (ECM) took place here. Elders from the monasteries mentioned above met for two days of meetings, addressing communal topics and fostering cooperation and harmony amongst our associated communities. This is the first in-person ECM to take place since the pandemic developed. It was a joy to be meeting again in person, in part because of the incidental meetings that can take place in between official gatherings; the cups of tea or walks together that simply can’t happen online!

One recent event to mention is the tree planting and ash scattering in memory of George Sharp, who peacefully passed away on Saturday 6 August aged 89. From 1972 to 1995 he served as Chairman of The English Sangha Trust, and since then had remained a close friend and supporter of our sangha. Many members of George’s family joined us here at Cittaviveka, along with members of the Amaravati community, including Luang Por Sumedho, Ajahn Amaro and Ajahn Sundarā. Luang Por Sumedho kindly offered reflections on George before we moved outside for the tree planting and ash scattering ceremonies.

Community

Since the end of the Vassa and the Kathina that followed, many members of the monastic community are currently away travelling. Members of the male community who left us are Ajahn Kāruṇadhammo (Abhayagiri Monastery, USA), Sāmaṇera Viriyo (Sumedharama Monastery, Portugal), Sāmaṇera Nibbuto (Aruna Ratanagiri Monastery, Northumberland) and Anagārika Aurelien (now known as Sāmaṇera Samāhito, back to Amaravati). On the female side, Anagārikā Noriko decided to continue her spiritual journey in lay life, so she has laid aside monastic training and is spending some months on retreat in the USA. We greatly appreciated the presence and contributions that these fellow beings brought to life here at Cittaviveka.

Several members of the community are taking the opportunity to visit other monasteries or their family, or to accept invitations to teach in various parts of the world. Luang Por Sucitto has offered teachings in France, Switzerland and the USA this autumn, with plans to spend a few months in New Zealand and Malaysia during this winter into spring. Ajahn Kāruṇiko is spending three or four months in Asia, offering teachings, connecting with a broad variety of people and taking time for personal retreat before his scheduled return to Cittaviveka in mid-February.

The Passing of Ajahn Gandhasīlo

It is with sadness that we announce that Ajahn Gandhasīlo passed away in Thailand on 28 October 2022 aged 62, after experiencing lung illness during the last few years. Born in 1959, he was ordained as a bhikkhu in 1990 and spent his monastic life living at all four of our monasteries in England, as well as at a number of places in Thailand. Ajahn Gandhasīlo is the first of Luang Por Sumedho's *saddhivihārika* disciples (those directly ordained by him) to have died as a monk.

Precept Ceremonies

A Bhikkhu Upasampadā ('Full Acceptance') and Sāmaṇera Pabbajjā (novice 'Going Forth') was held at Amaravati Monastery on 16 November. On that day, Cittaviveka residents Sāmaṇeras Ñāṇatejo and Kataññuto were accepted into the Bhikkhu Sangha. Amaravati resident Anagārika Aurelien (mentioned above), received the Sāmaṇera Pabbajjā along with the Pāli name Sāmaṇera Samāhito. Ajahn Amaro acted as Preceptor for both of those ceremonies. Venerable Ñāṇatejo has moved to Sumedharama to continue his training there. Venerable Kataññuto will spend the winter at Cittaviveka before also moving to Sumedharama to continue his training.

On Thursday 8 December, Kelly Nagasawa formally requested the Eight Precepts and undertook the training as an anagārikā or white-robed postulant, with Ajahn (Sister) Cittapāla acting as preceptor. Similarly, on Saturday 17 December, Jason Yetman also requested the Eight Precepts of the anagārika training, with Ajahn Ahimsako as his preceptor. As with Anagārikā Kelly, this commitment is for one year. We warmly welcome these two new members into the community, and wish them all the best as they explore monastic life.

Forest Work

From 9 through 29 November, a three-week period of work in our forest, Hammer Wood, took place. A team of volunteers, comprised of monastery residents, guests and day visitors, performed a variety of tasks that help maintain the health of the forest. The work was led by our Forest Manager, Chris Matthews, along with Venerable Anejo. We are grateful for everyone's contribution.

Winter Retreat

Our upcoming annual Winter Retreat is scheduled to commence on 6 January, and continue through until the end of March. We will have a one-week period of group practice from 7 through 13 January. Along with periods of group practice, evening pujas, Sunday guided meditations and the weekly lunar observance Dhamma talks are intended to be a constant feature. Please feel free to join us.

Upcoming Events 2023

On Sunday 1 January, Cittaviveka plans to once again offer the lay community the opportunity to participate in a Precept Renewal Ceremony, formally requesting the Three Refuges and Five Precepts commencing at 3:00pm in the Dhamma Hall. People planning to participate may wish to bring a small bundle of candles (one or two), incense and flowers. Tea with a senior monastic follows at 5.00pm in the main house.

On Sunday 4 June, a Wesak Celebration will take place at Cittaviveka, commemorating the birth, full awakening and final passing away of the Buddha. Details will follow.

Gratitude

The Cittaviveka community wishes to express our gratitude for the kindness and generous support that we continue to receive from so many people. To each and every one of you we give our thanks.

With very good wishes,

Ajahn Ahimsako
Abbot — Chithurst Buddhist Monastery