



Cittaviveka

Newsletter – Summer 2023

Dear Friends of Cittaviveka, warm greetings,

Amongst other translations, the word sangha means to ‘bring together into a group’ or ‘a unified assembly’, and it is the general word used for ‘community’ in both the Pali and Sanskrit languages. In Buddhism, it is primarily used to refer to the Buddhist monastic community. I mention sangha here because during these last few months, Cittaviveka has been delighted to host a number of visiting monks and nuns. As we’re all aware, the Covid pandemic, with all of the restrictions that came with it, created a situation whereby travelling and mixing was either not allowed, risky or simply difficult. Now, with the absence of restrictions, the pre-pandemic flow of monks and nuns visiting various communities has returned. People coming together with shared aspirations and the understanding of the Dhamma enrich our lives and our personal spiritual practice. Having contact with other monks and nuns reminds us of the global expanse of people – both those living the monastic life or in the broader community – who are living their lives in a way that leads to the realization of the liberated heart and mind.

Recent Events

Since our last newsletter, Cittaviveka has hosted three festival days. In mid-April, hundreds of Dhamma friends gathered here to mark the Asian New Year, in Thai known as *Songkran*. On 28 May, we celebrated Vesak, commemorating the birth, full awakening and final passing away of the Buddha. Lastly, on 25 June the lay community associated with Cittaviveka organized the annual *Tort Pha Pa* or almsgiving ceremony. Each of these three different events was dominated by warm-hearted friendliness and generosity.

Monastic Visitors

As mentioned above, Cittaviveka was very happy to host a number of monks and nuns over the last months. At the *Tort Pha Pa* in June, several members of the Amaravati monastic community joined us for the day. For nearly two months, Ajahn Sangvorn and Venerable Porsche stayed with us, sharing their skills in hand sewing, broom making, crocheting and other practical crafts that are useful for monks and nuns. Both of these Thai monks are closely related to Wat Pah Pong in Thailand, and they have both returned to their home country for the upcoming Vassa. In late June into early July, Ajahn Kondaño paid a visit to Cittaviveka, the monastery where he began his monastic life sixteen years ago. Originally from Poland, Ajahn Kondaño has been living in Thailand for several years. From 8-10 July, Luang Por Chalee and Ajahn Meng visited Cittaviveka. Both are senior Thai monks in the Luang Por Chah lineage, and have been in the UK visiting our monasteries and hermitages. Lastly, Ajahn Sudhīro, also from Thailand and a long-time friend of our sangha, spent three days with us, and kindly accepted the invitation to offer a Dhamma reflection. These visits, along with day visits by Ajahn Amaro and Ajahn Ñāṇarato, have been greatly appreciated and uplifting to our community.

Community

Since the end of the Winter Retreat, which ended on 31 March, several members of the monastic community have taken the opportunity to travel. For more senior members, this usually includes teaching events, such as leading retreats. Luang Por Sucitto has fulfilled several invitations to lead retreats in Europe and the UK, as well as taken the opportunity to spend some days at Amaravati and Hartridge monasteries. Ajahn Kāruṇiko recently spent a month in Asia, which included leading two retreats, one in Malaysia and one in Singapore. Several monks have undertaken walking pilgrimages or *tudongs*. Venerable Sabbajayanto and Venerable Sudhammo spent approximately three weeks walking in Scotland. One week later, Venerable Sudhammo joined Venerable Saṃvaro for a three-week walk from

Cittaviveka to Dover and back. Further afield, Venerable Anejo spent time walking in his native country, Sweden. This ancient practice of wandering is firmly embedded in the Thai Forest Tradition that we are part of. Walking without money or food (we're allowed to carry neither), we go out with tents and sleeping bags and, most important of all, faith in the kindness, generosity and overall goodness of other human beings. Hearing the various accounts of these different *tudongs*, the common thread has been how the residents of the many towns and villages (most of which would perhaps never have seen a Buddhist monk or nun in their midst) have been so open to receiving and supporting the monks on their daily alms round.

Precept Ceremony

On 17 June, Ajahn Chah's birthday, an Anagārika Precept Ceremony was held here for Fergus, who over the last ten years or so has spent significant amounts of time at Cittaviveka and other monasteries. Anagārika Fergus, originally from Scotland, took this step in order to deepen his commitment to Dhamma practice within a monastic framework.

Forest Work

From 5-11 July, Venerable Cāgadhammo and Forest Manager Chris Matthews led a sizeable team of volunteers in forest-related tasks, caring for our very large area of woodland. Creating a basecamp in the monastery forest, the team spent most of their days and nights there, mostly only coming to the main monastery site for the midday meal, bathing and the Dhamma talk on the lunar observance night. The atmosphere around this weeklong event of hard work was harmonious and joyful, and the monastery is grateful to everyone involved. Apart from our regular weekly forest work on most Sunday mornings, the next event on the horizon is the Autumn Forest Work Month, from the latter part of November into the first half of December.

Vassa – the traditional Rains Retreat

This year, Āsalhā Puja falls on 1 August. Historically, this full moon day commemorates when the Buddha offered his first teaching after his enlightenment. By tradition, the monastic community enters the three-month Rains Retreat or Vassa, which continues through 29 October. During these three months, the monastic community formally determines to live in one place, and is limited to how long and why we travel elsewhere. There is also more emphasis on the formal study of the monastic rules (*Vinaya*), as well as formal meditation practice, including periods of personal retreat. Although referred to as 'retreat', the basic routines of the monastery remain the same, and guests and visitors are welcome every day.

Upcoming Events

The lunar month following the Vassa is often referred to as Kathina season, when lay supporters of Buddhist monastic communities can sponsor and organize a festival day. A Kathina centres around the offering of robe cloth but also includes a vast array of other requisites. Cittaviveka's Kathina Festival is scheduled to take place on Sunday 19 November, with Khun Muditā's 'End of Suffering Group' being this year's sponsors. Khun Muditā sadly passed away a couple of years ago. She herself had planned for this year's Kathina sponsorship, so we're delighted to see that the remaining members of the group are following through with this wholesome intention.

Gratitude

It's with heartfelt sincerity that the Cittaviveka community wishes to express our gratitude for all of the thoughtful and generous support we receive from the broader community.
Anumodana!

With very good wishes,

Ajahn Ahimsako
Abbot — Cittaviveka, Chithurst Buddhist Monastery