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NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO SAMMASAMBUDDHASSA

HONOUR TO THE BLESSED ONE, THE EXALTED ONE, THE FULLY-ENLIGHTENED ONE

No, before we go any further, just to set your minds at rest, the picture at the top of this page is not of a monk on a catwalk but a piece of equipment vital to a forest monk, the meditation path, up and down which he practises his walking meditation.

In Burntwood, just to the north of Birmingham, Dr Kyaw Myint and his wife have their very successful practice. Hearing that the well known and popular Venerable Sayadaw U Nyanissara from the Sagaing Hills in Upper Burma was in the country on a brief visit they decided to celebrate their daughter Katie's birthday by putting on a grand occasion for their friends and patients, many of whom they have introduced to meditation, at which Sayadaw U Nyanissara would be the guest of honour. When he lived closer and had more free time, Kyaw used to come here regularly for meditation and so he asked me to follow Sayadaw U Nyanissara's discourse and account of his activities in Burma with a few words about meditation and a little bit about what I do. On the last Sunday of July then, Burntwood Memorial Hall was taken for the day, a vast amount of food laid on, a car hired for us and by the time we arrived in the early afternoon after our commitments here, the hall was packed. The Burmese Ambassador had come, several of Kyaw's friends and colleagues and many of his patients and at the end one elderly local lady called out her thanks to Kyaw for a most interesting and enjoyable day. Never before have I even heard of a GP giving something like that to his patients. Absolutely wonderful!

Then the following weekend, on the first Saturday in August, Thai students at

Warwick University invited us to walk pindabaht (walk for alms) through their campus. Warwick University is of course nowhere near Warwick, and there was no question of our being able to stroll over, do the almsround and get back in time to eat. So we were driven to a new bit of this ever expanding site where a number of students were waiting for us with food and flowers in abundance and then we walked over to the other side of the campus where we were met by another group waiting to fill our bowls again and again. All this was of course an entirely new experience for the young monks here and a salutary reminder that we live dependent on the generosity, support and goodwill of others. Like most if not all other wats in the West we normally enjoy the luxury of live-in cooking from the lay people who stay with us but to sharpen our awareness of our dependency I have decreed that on Sundays we will do without that and rely solely on what people bring in on the day.

When Khun Laksana was here for the ordination of Ven. Manapo in May, she asked me if there were any books I would like printed. As it happened there were two that I thought could be usefully distributed amongst Buddhists in the prisons and for which I could have copyright clearance. In what seemed no time at all I had word from her in Bangkok that the printing of 5000 copies of the first book had been completed and they would soon be flown over. I had scarcely had time to brace myself for the almost inevitable trouble of getting them in the country and transported up here when out of the blue a lorry appeared at the gate and we had quickly to make room in the

garage for 5000 books. Khun Laksana had not only had them beautifully printed and bound but air freighted into Heathrow and brought to our door. In similar fashion, a few weeks later, another 4000 copies of the second book arrived.

Now we are in the throes of preparations for the eighth annual Springhill Buddha Grove celebration when to accompany the ceremonies and talks at the Buddha Grove members of the Thai community offer a Thai meal for the whole prison and guests and for a few in a similar short ceremony at the Buddhist shrine in Grendon, the more secure prison next door to Springhill.

In all these remarkable examples of the practice of the the first parami, the Perfection of Giving there is the giving of the gift and the giving of the act of giving itself which is so impressive. Anumodana!

The one unchanging element in all our lives is change itself and I must not forget to mention some changes amongst the people whose commitment and effort enables The Forest Hermitage and Angulimala, the Buddhist Prison Chaplaincy to do what they do.

Although it's no longer necessary for the smaller charities to submit their accounts to a full audit, it's still nevertheless a requirement that someone suitably qualified and experienced but not involved with the charity's management should independently examine its books and verify that everything is as it should be. I'm sorry to say that I forgot to mention in the last newsletter that Geoff Brooker who had been in recent years the Independent Examiner of the accounts of both charities, the BDF and Angulimala, decided that for

personal reasons he could no longer continue to do this for us and stepped down, which is why we're going practically to the wire with both AGMs. He has been a very difficult person to replace. Geoff did a marvellous job and although it seemed to me sometimes that the two treasurers were a bit nervous of him, his sound advice and expertise helped them both to improve the financial management of both organisations and for that we are deeply grateful. Inevitably amongst Angulimala's team of Buddhist chaplains there is also some coming and going and while I am delighted to welcome several new faces there have, regrettably, been some losses too. Peter Pett, who took on Dartmoor years ago when Angulimala was in its infancy and who did a great job until age and declining health reduced and finally halted his involvement, died a few months ago. John Chapman who was often ably assisted by his wife and who for several years did Kingston and Winchester prisons for us and more lately, Haslar, was forced through ill-health to retire from all three establishments earlier this year. Then just the other day John Senior who was appointed to Bristol, Leyhill and Gloucester prisons and who had at one time done Erlestoke as well, announced that he was moving house and getting married and that was him gone too. And within the last few days the excellent Cliff Edwards will have paid his final visits to



With Lord Longford at this year's Prison Reform Trust lecture given by Sir David Ramsbotham, photo courtesy of PRT.

Lewes, Ford and the Isle of Wight prisons as he too is on the move. All these people have done good work for us and the inmates they've visited and they will be missed but we move on and although there are still some gaps, replacements have already been found for several of these prisons. Of course with so many gaols so widely spread all over the country there always seem to be gaps we can't fill and I'm always pleased to hear from people with an interest in what we're about, supportive of it and who might be suitable to serve as Buddhist prison chaplains. Despite the losses, our number is slightly up with forty-four chaplains now on Angulimala's Buddhist prison chaplaincy team.

There is also a steady increase in the number of prisons showing an interest in

acquiring a Buddhist shrine or Buddha Grove. One blazing hot day in early July, I rode up into the rain-packed cloud that had enveloped Dartmoor to its old and infamously bleak prison to have a look at where they were proposing to erect their outdoor Buddhist shrine. Then on the same afternoon we sped back down into the sunshine for a look at possible sites at Channings Wood prison. Now I've just heard that Lindholme is talking about one for there too. Arrangements have varied slightly but by and large, the prison provides the site, the labour and perhaps the material for the plinth and then Angulimala from its donated funds provides the Buddha Rupa and pays for whatever else has been necessary that the prison either can't or won't pay for. Clearly, this is quite a drain on our limited resources but something we're obviously keen to support.

As a contribution towards the cost of fulfilling its role as the Buddhist Consultancy Service to HM Prison Service, Angulimala has for the second year running received a grant from the Prison Service. It's a third down on last year and of course nothing like an operation such as ours really requires but it's much more than nothing - which is what we used to get - and we're grateful for that but it does still mean that we remain heavily dependent on volunteer help and donations. And the same is true of the Forest Hermitage or Wat Pah Santidhamma, to give it its Thai name.

DIARY:

ANGULIMALA WORKSHOPS

(mainly for Buddhist Prison Chaplains)

Sept 15th + the AGM, & Dec 8th.

SPRINGHILL BUDDHA GROVE

The annual celebration of the Buddha Grove at Springhill Prison will be on Sunday, September 16th at 6 pm.

END of VASSA - October 2nd

ALMSGIVING

From 10 a.m. On October 7th.

ANGULIMALA SCOTLAND

A Workshop mostly for chaplains at the FWBO Centre in Glasgow with Ven. Ajahn Khemadhammo on Oct 27th, 10.30 am - 4 pm.

THE LOTUS PATH

Pilgrimage to Buddhist India. November 16th - December 1st.

MEDITATION, A DHAMMA TALK,

a reading & a cup of tea, here on Mondays & Fridays at 8 p.m.

UPOSATHA OBSERVANCE DAYS

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September	2	10	17	24
October	2	10	16	24
	31			

If you are on our mailing list and/or a member of the BDF or ANGULIMALA, your name, address, phone number and membership details are on our computer files. If you object and you let us know, we'll remove you.

THIS IS THE NEWSLETTER OF VEN. AJAHN KHEMADHAMMO OF THE FOREST HERMITAGE AND ANGULIMALA, THE BUDDHIST PRISON CHAPLAINCY ORGANISATION

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THE BUDDHA-DHAMMA FELLOWSHIP, Reg. Charity No 289913

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