



# THE FOREST HERMITAGE NEWSLETTER

April 2000 / 2543

**Hatred isn't ended by Hating  
Hatred is ended by not hating.**

## DIARY

**VESAKHA PUJA  
(BUDDHA DAY)**  
remembering the  
Buddha's Birth,  
Enlightenment and  
Parinibbana.

We will celebrate on  
May 14th from 10 a.m.

**ANGULIMALA  
WORKSHOPS**  
(mainly for Buddhist  
Prison Chaplains) on  
June 24th

**MONDAYS & FRIDAYS**  
at 8 p.m.  
**MEDITATION,  
A DHAMMA TALK  
& a reading from the texts**

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.

**NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO SAMMA-SAMBUDDHASSA**  
HONOUR TO THE BLESSED ONE, THE EXALTED ONE, THE FULLY-ENLIGHTENED ONE

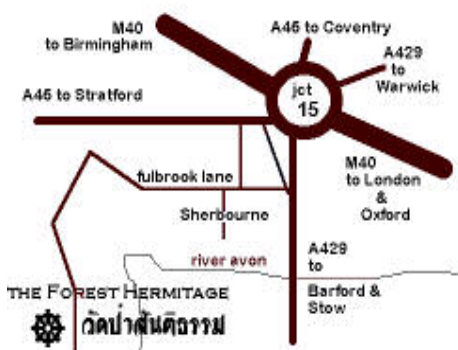
The picture at the top of this page shows more or less the view from my window with a new stone Buddha rupa, a recent present, seated at the foot of the weeping willow. This is in the private part of our grounds behind the 'No Entry' notice and the door that used to grace the little outdoor shrine-room on the Isle of Wight. It's where I retreat to with my collection of furred and feathered companions. The cockerel you can see is Osric and he's in the company of the two ornamental garden cranes left me by John Garrie.

A few weeks ago at a meeting of our local Warwickshire SACRE, which I attend as the Buddhist representative, the chairman led a short discussion on racism amongst children in school. The conversation ranged widely and it was soon clear that what we were really talking about was not so much racism as discrimination, prejudice and intolerance in general.

Regrettably, this world can be a not very kind or nice place and prejudice and abuse is a real living experience of *dukkha* for too many. The habit of picking on those who are smaller or weaker or different is endemic almost everywhere. If you're of a different race, religion, gender or whatever or went to the wrong school or have unusually big ears or red hair and glasses, watch out! However abhorrent it may be this is the harsh reality and we do no one any favours by pretending otherwise or by leading youngsters to expect a soft and easy life. There is an old saying that I like to keep in mind that goes something like, 'don't strive for any easy life, strive to be a strong person'. Of course I think that we should be utterly opposed to any form of

racism, but you can't control what is in the minds of others, although you might influence them through your own attitudes and actions and through how you react to their abuse. There's only so much we can do about how other people behave but a lot we can do about how we perform.

To be honest, before condemning racists I think we should admit that most of us are capable of being oppressors and as unenlightened beings, we all do to a more or less degree have our pet prejudices and attachments. And attachments always mean trouble. When you see someone behaving badly, you should reflect that you are seeing just what you could be doing. If you're not careful, that could be you. So as potential perpetrators of racism and discrimination we had better be on our guard and doing our best to check the spread of *kilesas* (defilements) and remove them. While developing the Insight that does away with greed and aversion, it is helpful to cultivate their opposites like for instance, developing generosity to counteract greed and attachment and practising loving-kindness to overcome hatred and aversion. You shouldn't neglect training with the precepts either for they put around you a boundary that protects both you and others. Then, remember everyone and anyone can be a victim of racism, prejudice and abuse. You don't have to be a foreigner in a strange land or of a different race and colour. For anyone, life can be a jungle and far from safe but if you're the victim, how you respond is your responsibility and your choice. You might choose to not retaliate, you might strike back with more of the same, or you might even respond with a smile and loving-kindness. The Buddha strongly



advised against meeting anger and hatred with even more anger and hatred. That cycle of revenge and counter revenge only prolongs the agony. There is so much merit and such strength in learning to smile when people mock you and being able to meet prejudice and abuse with kindness, patience, tolerance and wisdom. It's worth noting too that it is possible to disagree and still be friends.

Within prison chaplaincy there has always been some friendship and some co-operation between chaplains and ministers of different faiths but it frequently has been haphazard and more or less dependent on individual initiatives. Now it has begun to dawn on some that we have locked up in our prisons people of almost every faith and none and that it would therefore be more appropriate and just and may even enhance the Prison Service Chaplaincy's status for it to be restructured as a multi-faith chaplaincy. I think it would also be an interesting exercise in non-attachment, for there is no way out of it, to be able to get on and co-operate you have to set aside or keep to yourself some personal views, opinions and prejudices and let friendship be the overriding principle. Admittedly this is not easy but it is the way forward.

As well as the prisons I visit regularly, I also occasionally make the odd 'one-off' trip to establishments served by other members of Angulimala's chaplaincy team or where there is no Buddhist chaplain. So, for example, over the last few months I have been over to Albany on the Isle of Wight, up to Full Sutton in Yorkshire and down to Haslar, a holding centre for Immigration detainees, on the South coast. Which brings me to a serious problem facing all establishments where foreign nationals are held who speak little or no English and where there's not much for them to do.

The language barrier effectively isolates many foreign national prisoners and immigration detainees. Despite the best efforts of staff and county librarians, there are real difficulties in providing foreign prisoners and detainees with sufficient books, periodicals and journals in their native tongues. It has apparently been known for one establishment to be holding people of up to thirty different nationalities at the same time. The Penal Lexicon ([www.penlex.org.uk/](http://www.penlex.org.uk/)), by far the best of the websites about penal matters, has launched an appeal for foreign

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## ANGULIMALA in SCOTLAND

There will be a Workshop led by  
Ven. Ajahn Khemadhammo on  
Saturday, April 29th  
10 am till 4.30 pm  
the Portobello Buddhist Priory,  
27 Brighton Place, Portobello,  
EDINBURGH, EH15 1LL.  
Telephone 0131 669 9622

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language books to help those detained or in custody who might need them. Books can be sent to The Penal Lexicon Book Appeal, PO Box 2000, Gosport, Hants. PO12 3TA. And foreign language Buddhist books can be sent to me at The Forest Hermitage for Angulimala's Buddhist prison chaplains to pass on.

Angulimala has just been sent another enormous consignment of Dhamma books by the Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation in Taiwan which included as well as books in English many volumes in Chinese, Vietnamese and Spanish. I am sure these will be much appreciated by inmates and I am very grateful for this tremendous support. We do also get occasional parcels of literature from private individuals which all helps. Anumodana!

More help for Angulimala has been an unexpected grant from the Prison Service to support the work we undertake as the Religious Consultative Service to the Prison Service for the Buddhist faith. There was some concern in case this could compromise Angulimala's independence but we have been reassured that it should not and that we remain free to criticise the Prison Service. We look forward to improving our support for Buddhism in the prisons and for Buddhist prisoners. An important benefit will be the funding available to enable Angulimala's chaplains to attend training workshops.

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## UPOSATHA OBSERVANCE DAYS

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<b>MAY</b>	2	10	17	25
<b>JUNE</b>	1	9	16	24
<b>JULY</b>	1	9	16	24

VESAKHA PUJA falls on May 17th but we'll celebrate on Sunday, 14th May.

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In case of any misunderstanding, I would like to explain that I see criticism as essential to the maturing and improvement of almost anything and I see no reason to apply adjectives like positive or negative to the process. When things are held up to scrutiny and their strengths and weaknesses assessed then what is at fault will be remedied and what is good will be appreciated and strengthened and so it should be.

It is for this reason that prison inspections and the opportunity for prisoners to complain are so important. At our March Angulimala Workshop we were honoured with a visit and talk by Dr Stephen Shaw, formerly Director of the Prison Reform Trust and now the Prisons Ombudsman. This was not only very informative but jolly entertaining.

When in 1977 I first began visiting the prisons there was little opposition to prisoners being allowed to burn incense. But attitudes hardened and up and down the country, establishments began to disallow it. It was usually permitted at group meetings taken by the Buddhist chaplain but not to the individual in his or her cell. For many years, I have argued that it should be allowed for private, in-cell practice and at last, it has happened. I am so pleased and very grateful.

I had hoped this newsletter would have been out before Songkrah, the South-East Asian New Year Water Festival but the weeks flew by and I never made it. For us the celebrations began on April 13th with an invitation to a beautiful Thai restaurant in Mansfield, then on the Sunday, we hosted a colourful turnout of Thais, Brits, Burmese and Laotians here. After bathing the Buddha Rupa, myself and the novices, proceedings slipped for a few minutes into a traditional water free-for-all and a memory that will linger for a long time is of an elegantly dressed Thai lady whipping out from within the folds of her traditional Thai costume an enormous futuristic water pistol, fully loaded! Things quickly calmed down and at the *tort pah pah* all sorts of supplies were offered together with well in excess of a thousand pounds. Anumodana!

The next big day in our calendar will be Vesakha Puja, celebrating the Birth, Enlightenment and Passing of the Buddha. I have agreed to go up to give a Dhamma-desana at Harnham Buddhist Monastery near Newcastle on the 21st and so our celebration here will be on May 14th.

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

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