

Dharmagiri News & Forth Coming Retreats - May 2010

"Do everything with a mind that lets go." Ajahn Chah

Recent Events

The last few months at Dharmagiri have been full on. For three weeks over Easter we welcomed the Sangha Seva group from the UK and US which was facilitated by Kirsten Kratz from Mandala Trust and Chris Cullen from London Insight Meditation. They came to help initiate an important aspect of the food security programme within The Khuphuka Project which is the building of high density gardens. Each day, framed by meditations and dharma reflections, the team bundled into a local taxi to get to the project to start digging and planting. They were joined by youth from Mquatsheni headed by Skhumbhuzo Mlibeni, the Youth Coordinator of the Khuphuka Project. For further info, here is an article published in Digital Journal by Shaz Davis: [Blacks & Whites garden together, sewing seeds of hope in South Africa](#)

Soon after the Sangha Seva retreat we welcomed Sister Chandasara from Amaravati Buddhist Monastery who has returned to her beloved South Africa for an extended stay. The day after Sister Chandasara arrived she led a retreat on the nature of Nibbana. Dharmagiri went from garden digging to an inquiry into the most subtle aspect of the Buddha's teaching. And why not, it's all related! The offering of service lessens self grasping while the realization of nibbana releases us from the burden of labouring under the illusion of a self.

Comings and goings

Since JP left Dharmagiri we have been very fortunate to have help from

Kobus Erasmus, Sharon Cookham and Chantel Oosthuysen. Thank you all so much for pitching in, we deeply appreciate it! We are now very pleased to have Lien Gouws join Dharmagiri community and take up the role of housekeeper. We welcome back Jacqueline and Liam after their month home visit to Ireland. Liam, at not yet six months, is already proving to be a great traveller! Meanwhile his besotted dad Matt has been working hard developing Khuphuka. (www.khuphuka.org)

We are happy that both Matt and Skhumbhuzo are attending the next World AIDS Conference in Vienna along with Kalay Moodley from the board of Dharmagiri Outreach. Together they will be presenting The Khuphuka Project.

[Forth coming retreats \(see below for full description\)](#)

We are delighted to welcome back JP who will be spending a month at Dharmagiri while also leading a five day retreat on Art & Dharma. JP's exhibition 'Current Matters' has just finished at The Gallery in Grande Provence in Franschoek near Cape Town. Totally well done JP!

If you fancy skipping out of the whole world cup madness for a more relaxed time exploring the art of art, then join JP for his retreat here at Dharmagiri. Our two longer meditation retreats, one with Kittisaro, the other with Thanissara, Kittisaro and Ian Rees have wait lists, however people do drop out, so let us know if you are interested in case a place opens up.

In August Sister Chandasara is leading a weekend retreat which will enquire into the place of the feminine and women within Buddhism and in religious tradition. This isn't only an exploration for women but for everyone. The journey of Awakening matures and integrates both the masculine and feminine principles. What does that mean? You're welcome to attend the retreat and find out.

We look forward to welcoming Rev Peter Woods back to Dharmagiri in September. He will be leading a retreat with Sister Chandasara called 'The Road Home, Via Negativa, Via Positiva.' We are delighted to host a Christian / Buddhist retreat that draws from these great traditions, while understanding that ultimate truth transcends them both.

Life at Dharmagiri tends to be fairly intensive. Without times of retreat it would become unsustainable, so from time to time Dharmagiri needs to retreat from being a retreat centre. For the month of July we will be closed and will unfortunately not be able to host any guests or self retreatants. However, you are welcome to join us in June or August. If you want to look further ahead to the end of the year for scheduled retreats, please check out our web site: www.dharmagiri.org

Anniversary for the BRC & Woza Moya

This year is a time of celebration for the Buddhist Retreat Centre who remember their 30 year anniversary (www.brcixopo.co.za) Woza Moya remembers 10 years since it was launched in 2000 (www.wozamoya.org.za) Congratulations to both organizations for their service and support of both the alleviation of suffering and support of well being. May both organizations continue to flourish for the welfare of all of us in South Africa.

Retreat Schedule - June - September

June 4th - 9th
Dharma & Art
JP

Joseph Beuys was a very influential twentieth century artist and he wouldn't lie. He said: "Everyone is an artist and living itself is the most creative art form of all." This means that the only obstacle between you and your innate creativity, and it is a big one, is your view or your belief that you are not creative! This retreat invites you to explore your unique potential and to hopefully come to a

fresh understanding of what art, talent and creativity is. Over the few days we will do a little of a lot of things. Together we will think, scribble, talk, cut, paste, write, draw and smudge. Periods of meditation will be a great opportunity to get to know and maybe even befriend the inner (art) critic which prohibits your creative expression. I think you will be inspired. Please contact JP at jjourney@gmail.com for a short list of materials to bring along. p.s. No art or meditation experience necessary.

June 18th - 26th

Return to Original Brightness

Kittisaro

The Buddha revealed three supreme sources of inspiration for those beings interested in the pathway out of suffering. Measureless in their transformative power, the triple refuge offers a trustworthy way home. Have we explored where we place our trust? This retreat will investigate these themes, and is suitable for anyone who is willing to work with an intensification of their inner process. Drawing from classical Buddhist teachings and practices, Kittisaro will encourage the retreatants to cultivate skill in presence, mindfulness and insight which enable the realization of the Original Brightness, that timeless "suchness" that is always here and now. The retreat, held in Noble Silence, will include meditation, chanting, instruction, and an early morning bowing practice.

July - Closed

August 13th - 15th

Women in Buddhism & the Feminine in Spiritual Life

Sister Chandasara

This retreat will explore different images of women in Buddhist scriptures. It will look at how the Buddha saw women with potential for enlightenment and as strong practitioners, while the conservative forces at the time also sought to control the "new religion" by undermining the status the Buddha conferred on his female disciples. The consequences are still felt today. Women have mostly been sidelined in all institutional religions consequently finding themselves trying to fit into the masculine conceptions of religious form. But are women different? What could an appropriate placement of the feminine look like spiritually, psychologically and in religious forms and how would that be for both women and men. All genders are invited to participate in this inquiry!

August 20th - 28th

The Way of the Heart - The Kuan Yin Dharmas

Kittisaro, Ian Rees, Thanissara

This silent retreat focuses on an integrated approach of meditation teachings and practices which deepen the embodiment of wisdom and compassion. While including calm and insight meditation, the retreat will also use practices associated with Kwan Yin Bodhisattva which generate a strong blessing energy that taps the mysterious connection with the Bodhisattvas heart intention. In this process, as self structures are released from grasping and aversion, the heart recognises the emptiness and peace of its original nature. This recognition facilitates authentic response and intuitive understanding of the non dual nature of emptiness and appearance. The retreat is in silence and includes ceremony, prayerful practice and use of mantra as well as Chan or Zen.

Sept 28th - Oct 3rd

The Road Home - A Christian/Buddhist Retreat

Sister Chandasara & Rev Peter Woods

A Christian-Buddhist exploration of these two currents in our approach to the transcendent: The Via Positiva - expanding inclusion and union with more and more of the manifest world (Everything, Fullness, the All) and progressive withdrawal from and emptying out of all identification and attachment with the manifest world: The Via Negativa (Nothing, Emptiness, the Void) With some readings from the mystics. This retreat will be held in silence.

Retreat Facilitators

Sister Chandasara

Sister Chandasara (Louise Stack) was born in 1954 in Johannesburg, South Africa, and grew up in a Christian family. She was involved in revolutionary politics in exile in her twenties and later worked as a political researcher and analyst at the Centre for Policy Studies in Johannesburg for 14 years before coming to Amaravati in 2002, and ordaining as a siladhara in 2006. She has a BA (Hons) in African Politics and an MA in Linguistics (Semantics). Her lifelong quest has been, and continues to be, liberation and learning how to love unconditionally.

Ian Rees

Ian originally trained in the contemplative tradition of the Kabbalah in

1970 and has been working with Buddhist tradition for the last 15 years. He is a Psychotherapist and founder member of the Isthmus project which is dedicated to working with the healing and creative energies of the imagination. He runs groups in UK and Israel and draws from Shammanic practice and insight.

JP Meyer

JP is an artist and director of Dharmagiri. Shortly after his first meditation retreat in 1994 he swapped the corporate life for that of a full-time art student, graduating with distinction in 1999, since then he has been widely exhibited and travelled. JP spent many months in the ashrams, meditation centres and monasteries of India, Sri Lanka and the U.S. and was Dharmagiri manager for three years.

Rev Peter Woods

Peter has been a Methodist minister for 29 years. For 5 years he taught Christian Spirituality at the John Wesley Seminary. He is also a registered Conflict Mediator at the Unit for the Study Resolution of Conflict at the Nelson Mandela Metropole University, Port Elizabeth, where he was heavily involved in S.Africa's transition to Democracy in the 1990's. A mystic at heart, Peter is fed from the wells of John of the Cross, Thomas Merton, Julian of Norwich and the Cloud of unknowing. He is also nourished by Buddhist and Hindu teachings and experiences of practice. Peter is a regular retreatant and friend of Dharmagiri. He currently serves in Port Alfred, Eastern Cape.

For the bios of Kittisaro & Thanissara please and Dharmagiri's full retreat schedule/ information and for booking:
<http://www.dharmagiri.org/7.html>

**Dharma Talks on The Four Noble Truths - given by
Kittisaro & Thanissara - Insight Meditation Society, Barre
MA, USA - March 2010**

[A Handful of Leaves: Thanissara](#)

[A Handful of Leaves: Kittisaro](#)

Further dharma talks available on line at:

<http://www.dharmagiri.org/3.html>

Sacred Mountain Sangha Study-Practice Program

The third SMS course is due to launch on June 6th. This is a support program for those interested in furthering their study and practice of the Dharma from their own home. It consists of three modules, each of 12 weeks long. For further details: <http://www.dharmagiri.org/13.html>

Dharmagiri runs entirely on an Ethos of Dana (free will offering)

Since Dharmagiri's first three month retreat in 2000, the hermitage has run entirely on an ethos of Dana which has subsidized many retreats for hundreds of people. We have encouraged the principle of Dana in accord with the ancient monastic tradition of giving which has enabled the transmission of Buddhist practice and teachings over thousands of years.

Throughout our time at Dharmagiri we have never charged any fees. This is because we believe this is a beautiful way to run a dharma centre that encourages a shared spirit of offering and service. Your support of Dharmagiri, its retreats and outreach programmes is greatly appreciated. We most sincerely thank all those who support Dharmagiri through financial contributions, your well wishing and your practice at the hermitage.

The Practice of Dana

"Generosity cures greed, if you are unable to let go then practice giving. Through giving you gain, if you don't give you can't gain anything. You need to give to be able to receive. In terms of giving skilfully, there are three areas of giving: the giving of wealth, of Dharma and of fearlessness.

Giving of wealth: means giving money, goods and resources, including the sharing of your blessings and virtue. When you give you should empty the three aspects of giving: there is no giver, no receiver and nothing that is given or received.

Giving of Dharma: means bestowing the Buddha dharma upon living beings should it be requested. Speak the Dharma to help those who are hungry and thirsty for it.

Giving of fearlessness: means that when living beings are in fear you comfort them and help them not to be afraid. In fearlessly standing by others, you protect and support them."

Master Huan Hua

"Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared."

The Buddha

To make a dana offering:

From South Africa
Standard Bank (Pietermaritzburg Branch)
Name of Account: Dharmagiri
Account Number: 052117391
Branch Code: 05752500

For Pay Pal please follow the link below:

<http://www.dharmagiri.org/12.html>

To make a Standing Order please follow this link:

[From South Africa](#)

[From the UK](#)

Thank You for support which we value and appreciate.
Standing orders allow us to translate your support into sustainability of Dharmagiri, its retreats and its Outreach Programmes.

For further details of self retreats, Dharma talks on line and general information regards Dharmagiri. please go to:

<http://www.dharmagiri.org>

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