

Rainbows

Peace
on
Earth

Joy

NOTICEBOARD

SUMMER DHAMMA SCHOOL / CAMP
August 20-27, 1990

The "Summer Dhamma School" is a yearly opportunity for families to have an extended stay at Amaravati, and a special time of creation, recreation and spiritual companionship. This year it will take place from August 20-27.

As last year, participants will be limited to about 80, and helpers to 10. This is a very popular event, so please book early to avoid disappointment. Those who were unable to come last year due to the camp being full will be given priority this year - but they must re-book by the date below.

All bookings should be sent in by July 1st at the latest.

Bookings can only be accepted from those who are able to stay for the whole length of the camp. For further details, please contact:

PETER CAREY
Trinity College, Oxford OX1 3BH.

Can you help?

If you would like to help with teaching or running an activity or workshop (either Dhamma-oriented or general arts, crafts, etc.), then please contact:

MEDHINA

113, Waytemore Rd, Bishops Cleeve, Heris CM21 3RD.

If you would like to help in the kitchen (non-family people only please), either as an assistant cook or a general helper, then please contact:

SALLY ASH

Woodthorpe, Manor Crescent, Seer Green,
Beaconsfield, Bucks HP9 2AX

For those interested in helping in either of the above ways, or as part of the lay coordinating team, there will be a meeting at Amaravati:

22nd April, from 1-3 pm.

BUDDHIST SCHOOL PROJECT

In response to interest shown by various people in the possibility of a school run on Buddhist principles, there will be a meeting at Amaravati:

22nd April, from 3-5 pm.

Some preliminary meetings have already taken place. If you received this Rainbow in the post, there are further details on the enclosed notice sheet for parents.

Send something to RAINBOWS!

All going well, we hope to publish Rainbows either two or three times in 1990. To help keep Rainbows on the road, however, we would appreciate some extra help. It is especially useful to receive articles, drawings, stories, poems, etc. that are based on Buddhist principles. It is always particularly cheering to get pieces from children.

The theme for next issue is Wesak - the celebration of the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and final Nibbana. If you or your children would like to offer something, do not hesitate to sit down and put pen to paper! Any contributions should be sent to 'Rainbows', Amaravati, by 1st April.

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Front cover: Anagarika Paul MacRae and Sister Thanissara
Back cover: art work by Jannan

BONFIRE NIGHT

(Summer Camp, 1990)

*All jobs were done,
we were a merry bunch,
as we sat on the trailer,
all talking at once.*

*It was a gleaming day,
and the air was fresh,
and we sprung off the
trailer
to get wood and twigs.*

*We got tons in the end,
from high and from
low,
And set it ablaze
near the marquee.*

*We fried breadrolls and
marshmallows
on the ends of our sticks,
as the fire roared and
crackled.
The fire was like a beam,
shining in the darkness,
and the smoke smelt
strong and fantastic.*

*Someone played the
guitar,
and we sang happy
songs
as the fire danced in the
night.*

Anne Hills

The Bull and the Brahmin

At one time, the Buddha told a story about one of his previous lives, when he was a great snow-white bull owned by a poor Indian man who belonged to the brahmin caste.

THIS BULL WAS AS STRONG AS HE WAS BEAUTIFUL, and as in all the Buddha's previous lives he had a very noble heart. Having pity upon his master's poverty, the bull told the brahmin of a way whereby he could gain some wealth.

'You can put a bet on me, master,' said the bull. 'Tell the wealthy brahmins in the town that your bull can pull a hundred carts, completely full, up the nearby hill. Nobody will believe you, but you can bet whatever money you have, and tell them each to bet the same amount. I'll pull those carts up the hill and you will win a sum of money that will be many times more than all the wealth you have now.'

'Can you really pull all those carts?' asked the poor brahmin a little doubtfully.

'Have I ever let you down?' the bull replied. 'Have you ever seen me waver at a task or find any work too much for my strength? Trust me, master, I'm trying to help you.'

'What a noble beast you are!' exclaimed the poor brahmin. 'When I am wealthy, I will feed you on the best grain, and you will never have to work again!'

And so the challenge was made public; not only in the nearby town, but in villages and estates throughout the kingdom. Many wealthy brahmins, some out of interest to see the beautiful bull struggle against all odds, others wishing to see the pride of this upstart pauper humbled, bet their money against the bull.

On the day itself, the poor brahmin led his bull out to the train of one hundred fully laden carts and carefully yoked the Great Being to them. Carried away with the prospect of apparent wealth and success, the brahmin strutted in front of the crowd: 'Now you will see what kind of a man I am! Mighty creatures such as this bull are my slaves! Come slave, obey your master's wishes!' And he lashed the bull's glossy flanks with a whip.

The bull did not make the slightest attempt to move forward, but gently lowered his long-lashed eyelids.

'Get up there, you brute!' shouted the brahmin, whipping the bull more furiously. But there was no response from the bull, except to gently raise his long-lashed eyelids.

'You bag of bones! Move, I tell you, move or I'll have you fed to the dogs!' The brahmin had nearly spent all his strength on flogging the bull - who remained unmoved, with his great gentle eyes gazing into the distance.

Chuckles and laughter ran around the crowd to see the brahmin working himself into a frenzy, the bull remaining quite impassive and serene - and not even the slightest tightening of the ropes that bound the bull to the hundred carts.

As it became clear that the



bull was not going to move a muscle, let alone the hundred carts, the people became fed up at standing around in the sun to watch such a silly spectacle; and the brahmins demanded their money:

'Pay us your pittance, friend, small reward though it may be for wasting our time with this foolish display! We have to be going about our business.'

Well, the poor brahmin had to pay – and all his wealth too (not that it amounted to much, especially when it was divided up between all those wealthy brahmins). When they had all gone, he sank to the ground in tears, a broken man.

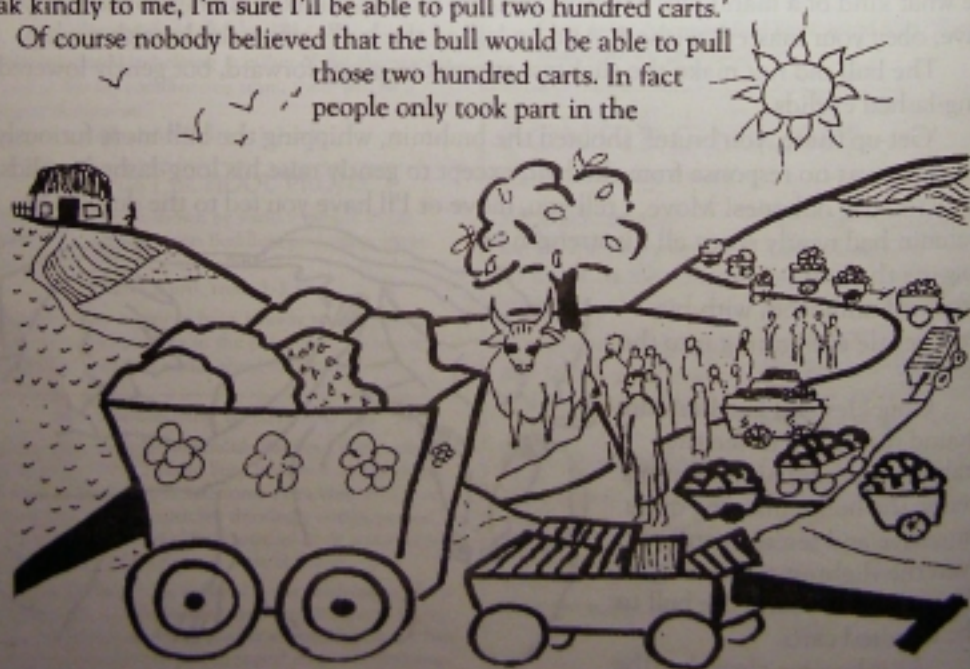
'Ruined!' he sobbed. He looked up at the bull. 'Why? Why did you trick me and cause humiliation to be heaped onto my poverty?'

'Master,' said the bull calmly, 'You are the one who began by humiliating me! You didn't have to call me all those names, did you? Let alone beat me with a whip! Such behaviour is not worthy of an animal! If you had treated me kindly and with respect, I'd have pulled those carts up the hill, easy as blinking!' And he slowly blinked his beautiful eyes.

'Oh what a fool I've been! You are right, noble friend, I have behaved worse than any animal! My pride and greed got the better of me, and made me abuse the only real friend I have ever had! May I beg for your forgiveness; poverty of material things is nothing compared to having a mean heart!'

'Once one has seen and admitted a fault, it's forgiven,' said the bull. 'Let the past go. However ... you are in an even worse position than before, and as you're my master, I owe it to you to help you in whatever way I can. Look, cheer up – tell everybody that the challenge wasn't enough to interest your bull, so he didn't feel like pulling the carts. Then tell them to double the number of carts, double the bet – and you can also bet me and your plot of land. No doubts now,' he added. 'Trust me, and trust the noble heart – if you speak kindly to me, I'm sure I'll be able to pull two hundred carts.'

Of course nobody believed that the bull would be able to pull those two hundred carts. In fact people only took part in the



contest for the chance to win possession of the magnificent bull, which would be sold to the highest bidder after it had failed to pull the enormous load of two hundred fully laden carts up the hill.

It took quite a while to lash all those carts together and harness the bull to the load. But the bull stood patiently, flicking his tail and gleaming in the sunshine while people milled around speculating as to how much he would fetch in the auction.

When it was time for the attempt to be made, the poor brahmin bowed deeply to the bull. 'Noble friend and Great Being,' he said 'For all your work I am truly grateful, and for the lesson you have taught me about my own foolishness. Please accept these flowers.' And he wove a garland of flowers caringly around the bull's great horns. 'I will be honoured by whatever effort you make today, I who have given you so little. So please do not hurt yourself in trying to accomplish this task. Dear friend, let us see your brave attempt, just as an example of the nobility of selfless effort.' With these words, the brahmin gently stroked the bull's mighty head and adjusted the harness so that it would not rub against the Great Being's flanks.

The crowd went silent. Some of the silly ones giggled, but the more high-minded put their hands together in reverence at such fine words.

As for the bull ... at first he made hardly any movement, there was just the lowering of the beautiful long-lashed eyelids and the swelling of his mighty chest as he concentrated his will. Then, the muscles on his shoulders and legs gradually tightened and stood out, and the ropes on the harness twanged taut. Everyone held their breath as the bull leaned forward, drove his spreading hooves into the earth and ... PULLED! The ropes on those two hundred carts twanged like the strings of a lute, the wooden carts creaked ... and rocked ... and rolled forward! The crowd gasped, cried out and pressed forward to see, but the bull didn't so much as flicker an eyelid at the turmoil. Lowering his snow-white neck he took a deep breath and ... pulled! And as the cart wheels turned and the axles groaned under the weight, he pulled and strode forward; and as the crowd roared and cheered – even those who were losing the bet – the Great Being bellowed a great bellow and dragging two hundred carts behind him began to climb up the slope.

It was all over in a matter of minutes. The great bull stood at the peak of the hill as the two hundred carts were being untied by the milling crowd. People were patting his flanks, but the bull paid them no attention. Instead he calmly drank from the bucket of water that his master had brought for him. The poor brahmin (soon to be a rich brahmin) let the tears of gratitude flow down his cheeks and splash onto the bull's nose: 'Oh noble being, you did all that for me! Oh – please excuse my tears – how can I ever repay you!'

Taking his muzzle out of the bucket, the bull shook his head and licked his master's ear. 'Just remember, master, not every creature has my strength, but we can all make a noble effort if we are treated with kindness.'



A Tale from India

Rainbows received a lovely letter from India, written by our Israeli friend called Shai.



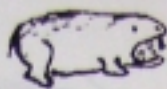
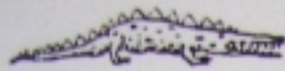
The monsoon time is coming to an end in northern India which means that every afternoon, clouds cover a clear sky and let go of the rain.

I live here in a small house on a forested hill among Tibetan people who have fled from their land. I would like to share with you a short story that happened to me yesterday.

Coming home after the rain, I saw an old lady resting on a rock by the side of the road. She motioned to me that she would like me to help her climb the winding road up the hill, and so we started climbing a road that was covered by many slugs that always appear after the rain.

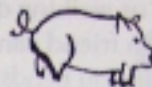
After a few feet, my Tibetan neighbour pulled my sleeve and asked me to stop. I saw her bend down and clear all the slugs from the road so that no car or bicycle would run over them. Then she bit many small pieces of her apple and put one piece beside each slug, so that it too may be happy!

artwork by Sister Satima



Taking Care of Animals

WE CAN BE KIND TO ANIMALS by helping them to be well and happy. Animals do not always have a very pleasant life. They often feel great fear or anger. They live in a world of instinct and cannot easily help themselves spiritually.



We show loving-kindness to animals by giving them food, shelter and medical treatment if they require it. Giving them shelter means keeping them clean and making (or preserving in the natural environment) a nice place for them to live – for example, keeping cages or kennels, etc. clean and hygienic. Dirty living areas can cause lice in birds, skin problems for furred animals, and foot problems for pigs, horses and so on. It is also important to learn carefully what each animal needs. For instance, one should not put goldfish directly into tap water.



We should also be careful about what kind of food we give animals. It is not kind to give pets the wrong kind of food, such as cakes, sweets and chocolate. (If in doubt you can always ask your vet).



If we have a dog, then it's good to train it well so that it does not annoy or threaten people, or make gardens and pavements dirty.

We can also be kind to animals by letting them be free, if we know they can live safely outside. We can avoid killing them unnecessarily, just because we don't like them. We can be enormously cruel to insects, for example, forgetting that they too have a right to live, just like us.

If we are kind to animals, the animals may become friendly to us.

BEING KIND is seeing all living beings as ourselves.

When others are hurt, I know what it is like,

because I too have been hurt.

When others are killed, a part of me dies.

When others are happy and do good things,

My heart is full of joy and I'm also happy.

LIVING BEINGS are: People, animals, birds, insects, plants, flowers, fish and sea creatures – all things having life force.



Can you think of some ways that we can be helpful to living beings?
In which ways do you already help any living beings?



Make Your Own Pantomime Horse

A pantomime horse looks strangely real on stage or walking down the street.

You and a friend can be a horse together.

One of you bends over and holds onto the waist of the other one who is standing in front.

For the horse's body, you will need a large square of cloth.

Cut a slit in it long enough to go round the middle of the person standing in front.

Safety pins help you to get a perfect fit.

Two strong supermarket bags make the horse's head. Another bag makes ears, a mane and a tail.



← This bag goes on your head.



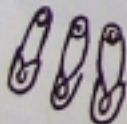
→ This bag makes the horse's nose.



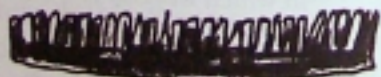
Tape the nose bag in place

↑ The lookout hole is under the chin.

Use some paints or dyes that nobody wants and paint it horse colours.

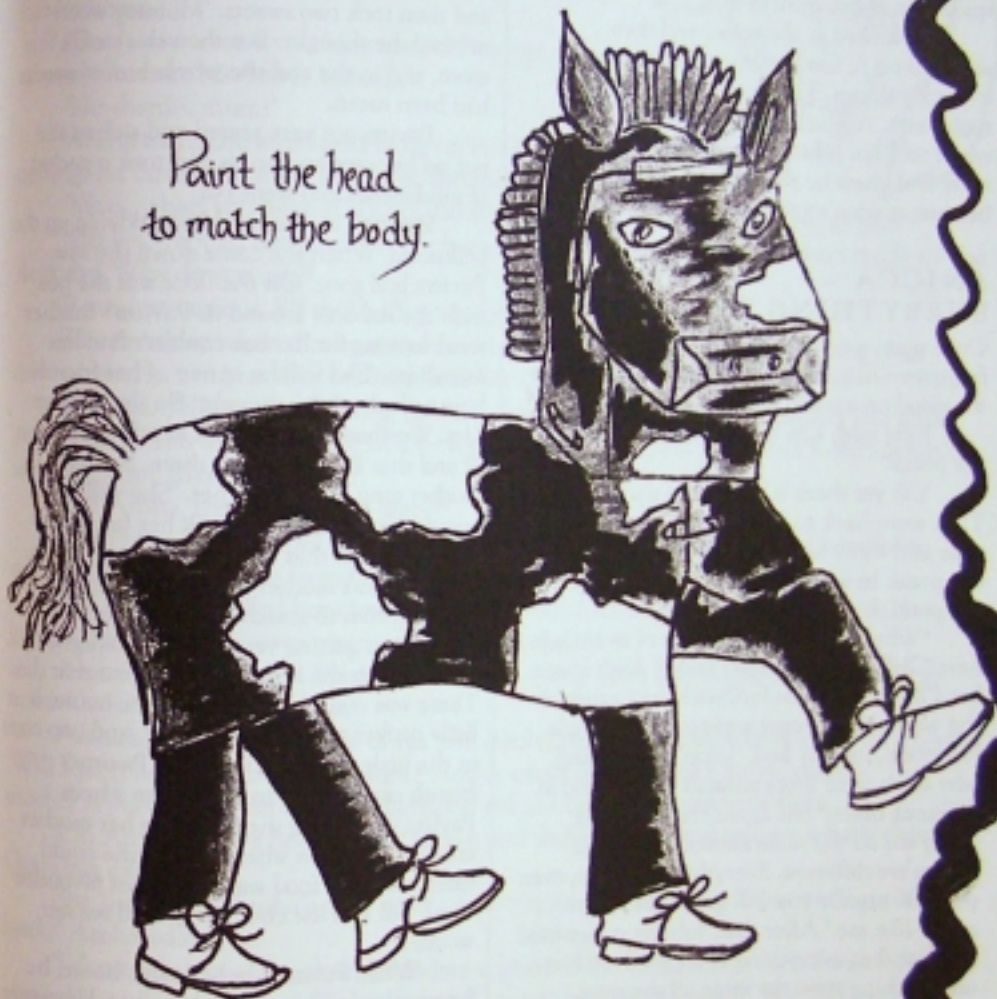


Lot of paper strips make a tail.



A paper fringe makes the mane.

Paint the head to match the body.



You should wear horse coloured trousers and shoes.

CHILDREN'S CONTRIBUTIONS

The following are contributions sent to 'Rainbows' by school children who have visited Amaravati.

HARMLESSNESS

One day John was walking in the park when a spider ran out in front of him.

He looked at the spider and then stamped on it. On he went with his usual everyday things. That night he had a nightmare. A black spider came along and stood on him. John woke up. He was very sorry and knew he should have left the spider because it wasn't going to hurt him.

Zoë Price

ANICCA - EVERYTHING CHANGES

Once upon a time, there was a pond with frogspawn in it. Billy and Johnny went to visit the pond on a warm Saturday afternoon.

Billy said, 'Oh look, there's frogspawn in the pond!'

'Oh yes there is,' said John excitedly. They went back to the pond in a few weeks' time and there were quite a lot of tadpoles in the pond. In a month's time they went back to the pond. It was full of frogs.

'Why are there three types of animals in here?' Billy asked. Johnny said, 'I don't know, but I'll ask my uncle Frederick, he's a man of the world.' So Johnny went to see his uncle Frederick. Johnny said, 'I don't understand why there were three animals in the pond at different times.' His uncle Frederick said, 'They are all the same animal, only their bodies are different. Everything changes, even you. Eventually you will grow up to be an adult like me.' After that, Johnny understood the fact that everything changes. Even him, and nothing stays the same all the time.

TRUTHFULNESS

One day a young girl called Pavitra was wondering what to do, as she was very bored and it was very wet outside. Her mother said that she couldn't go out. Her friend had got a very bad cold the day before so she couldn't play at her house. Her mother had brought a big box of sweets but she said that she could

only have them if it was another wet day.

Pavitra went to the cupboard and took out the box. She carefully took the bow off and then took two sweets. 'Mummy won't notice,' she thought. But then she took a few more, and in the end the whole box of sweets had been eaten.

Pavitra got very scared and sick so she put on her coat and boots and took a packet of sandwiches and went out.

Pavitra's mother had been tidying up the bedrooms. When she came down she saw Pavitra had gone. On the floor was the box with the red bow around it. Pavitra's mother went looking for her but couldn't find her anywhere. 'She will be at one of her friends house playing,' she thought. So she rang up Mrs. Westham, but she said her daughter was ill and that Pavitra wasn't there. So her mother rang Pavitra's father. 'She will be home for tea,' he said. 'Cook her favourite tea.' And with that he put the phone down.

Pavitra's mother did not notice that she had forgotten to search in the tree house. Pavitra was getting very cold and hungry, even though she had so much to eat that day. There was one window in the tree house, a little cooker with an old tea pot, and two cups in the little cupboard for when Pavitra's friends came round to play. From where Pavitra was sitting she could see her mother cooking and from where she sat she could smell what the food was, it was her favourite meal. But still she couldn't go and see her mother.

When Pavitra's father came home, he knew exactly where to look for her. He came walking across the garden, climbed up the stairs and opened the door. He looked at her and sat down in the tree house. He explained to her what she had done wrong. She then went back into the house and said sorry to them both for being silly. From that time on, she always waited until her mother said she can have a sweet, but only ONE!

Victoria Rombach

Lost Friends

'YOU'RE LOOKING A BIT DOWN TODAY, Aroha. Is anything wrong?' asked Aroha's mother when she arrived home from school one day.

'Nothing much,' Aroha replied as she walked to her bedroom.

'Don't you want something to eat? I've just made a batch of your favourite sunflower biscuits.'

'No thanks, mum!'

Aroha spent the afternoon lying on her bed looking up at the ceiling. At dinner time she picked at the food on her plate.

'Mum, when you were at school did your best friend ever stop talking to you?'

'Oh yes,' replied her mother. 'We had our disagreements. But we always made up the next day. Why do you ask?'

'I was just curious, I'll think I'll go to bed now.'

The next day when Aroha arrived home from school, she burst out crying. Her mother put her arms around her and held her tightly.

'Oh mum, Karen's not talking to me any more! Every time I go near her she walks away. She spends all her time with a new girl called Tohu, and Tohu says Karen doesn't want to be my friend any more!'

'Oh Aroha, that is sad. I am sorry!'

'And Miss Hoheoa told me off twice for day-dreaming when I should have been working. Oh mum! Life's so awful!'

Her mother cuddled her closely until her tears had subsided. 'Grandma is in the garden. Shall we take some afternoon tea out to her?'

Aroha wiped her eyes. 'Okay. Grandma is pretty wise. She might know how I can make Karen be my friend again.'

Aroha's mother made a pot of tea and Aroha put some sunflower biscuits on a plate. 'Will Karen be my friend again Mum?' Aroha asked sadly. 'I don't know, darling,' her mother replied. They carried the afternoon tea out to Aroha's grandmother.

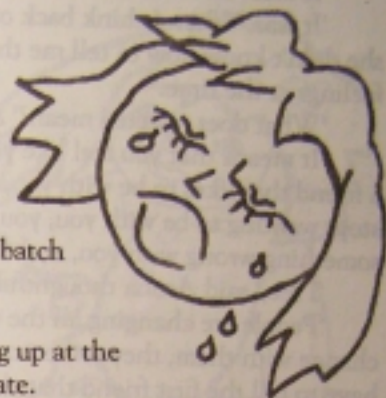
'Oh Aroha, you've been crying! Come and sit beside me and tell me what's wrong!' Grandma exclaimed.

She listened to Aroha's story with a far-away look in her eyes. 'How can I get Karen back?' Aroha asked her.

'I don't think you can, dear' Grandma replied sadly. 'You know, when I was a girl, the same thing happened to me. Emmaline and I were the best of friends. We had such fun together, she and I, though we were a bit naughty at times! Anyway, one day I ran to greet her, expecting her to look as pleased to see me as I always was to see her, and she just walked away! She never talked to me again.'

'Poor Grandma! You must have been very unhappy!' Aroha put her arms around her grandmother comfortingly.

'I was for a while and then I found another friend. But I never understood why Emmaline told such awful stories about me to the other girls, including my new friend. That really hurt.'



'It must have been terrible,' agreed Aroha.

'It was. When I think back on it now, I guess Emmaline just wanted a new friend, but she didn't know how to tell me that. I felt so rejected, though I didn't understand my feelings at the time.'

'What does rejected mean?' Aroha asked curiously.

'It means that you feel like you're not wanted and not good enough. When you have a friend that likes to be with you, it makes you feel good about yourself. But if that friend stops wanting to be with you, you feel bad about yourself. You think there must be something wrong with you, and that's why your friend doesn't like you any more.'

'I see,' said Aroha thoughtfully.

'People are changing all the time,' Grandma continued, 'and if their friends don't change with them, they sometimes want new friends who are more like them. Then they have to tell the first friend that they don't want to be with them any more, and that's not so easy, because people take it personally – like I did.'

'But Emmaline didn't tell you, Grandma!' Aroha pointed out.

'No she didn't, it was just too difficult for her. So she ran away from the problem. That made it so much worse for her as well as for me.'

Aroha looked at her grandmother disbelievingly. 'Why was it worse for her?'

'Because', replied Grandma slowly, 'she must have felt guilty about hurting me, especially around the other girls. So she told them bad stories about me to get them onto her side. That must have made her feel even worse! Poor Emmaline!'

Aroha paused, 'I never thought of it like that.'

'Nor did I at the time, but we should always look for reasons for people's behaviour. The reasons are always there, you know, even if we can't see them at first.'

Grandma stood up. 'Now I have to go home.'

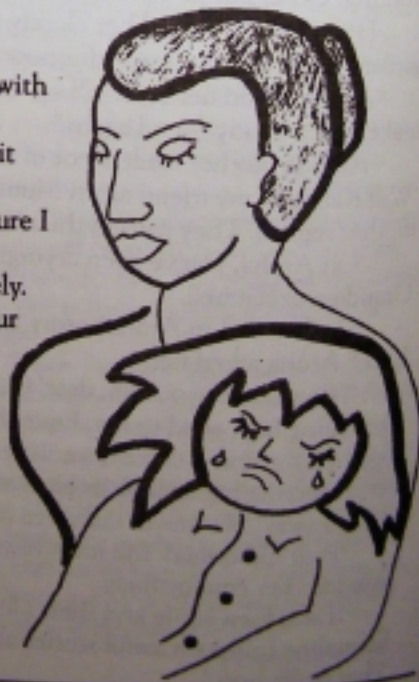
Thanks for the afternoon tea.'

The next day when Aroha arrived home from school, her mother asked her how things had been with Karen. 'She still won't talk to me mum,' Aroha said sadly. 'I feel so rejected, like Grandma said, though it helps to know why. I told Tohu to tell Karen not to worry, that I'll soon find a new friend. But I'm not sure I will!'

She burst into tears. Her mother held her closely.

'You cry Aroha, cry it all out. It's very sad to lose your friend, but remember things will get better in time, and you will find a new friend. You're right about Grandma – she is wise, but I think you're wise too.'

As human beings, our minds are always changing. We get interested in one thing or person, then we lose interest and go on to get interested in something or someone else. That's just the way people are; there's no need to feel that our world has come to an end.



The Buddha realised how quickly our minds change. As long as we can accept this as part of nature then it will be easier to see that the way of things and people is to change and to be uncertain. When we accept this, then instead of feeling hurt we can understand life as it is, and develop a heart of loving-kindness and equanimity. In this way we can be kind to people whether they are friendly towards us or not.



So if someone stops being your friend, and you start feeling bad about them or yourself, remember not to take it personally. It's just that people's minds keep changing. You may feel rejected and sad – that's natural – but if you can recognise the feeling and accept it, then it will go away more quickly. When you don't hold onto any bad feelings, you will feel only goodwill towards others, then like Aroha you can find a new friend.

LONELINESS

This poem was written by Melanie, at the age of 13.
Perhaps you would like to send in a poem too!

*There was a hut by a rolling sea,
Where the billows curved as smooth as glass,
And the seagulls wheeled in glittering arcs,
And the sea breeze flattened the salty grass.*

*And an old, old man in a torn brown coat,
Lived by himself where the wind blew loud,
And he loved the sea and whirling sand,
And the empty sky and the moving cloud.*

*And he walked on the beach where the
waves came in
At his tattered shoes with an icy rush,
And hissed like champagne in a creamy
froth,
While the low wind crooned with a
lullaby hush.*



*And the children that played with the
whispering shells,
In the warm green sea and the
mirrored sky,
Ran from the man as he watched the
world,
And the wheeling clouds go by.*

Melanie

SUMMER AT AMARAVATI

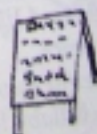
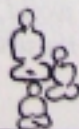
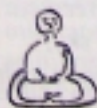
Poems from Summer Camp '89

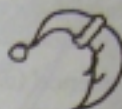
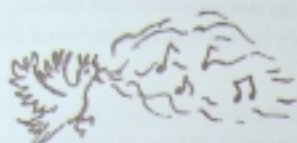
*My dear Wat Amaravati, brings my heart to clarity,
peace, happiness, coolness all abound,
nowhere else in England to be found.
Summer camp goes ten days,
we come from varied ways,
together here we become so close.*

*We get up at six fifteen, the bell had such a clear sound,
quickly carry out the work with haste,
doing our duty, clearing up the waste.
Meals of vegetables, beans and rice,
and the blackberries are so nice,
full tummy, clean up hastily, then off to separate activity.
Woodwork, drama and ecology, yoga, tai chi, calligraphy,
we did choose and make effort
to learn more of the Buddha's Dhamma.
Monks, nuns, Western, Thai, their chanting sends me so high,
filled me with goose bumps, shivers of joy,
these blessed jewels for each girl and boy.*

*Ten days passing like a dream, it seems,
I just don't want to leave.
Dhamma friends, training the heart, born and die,
do try and awaken the Dhamma eye.
With sincere thanks to the monks and nuns, so fine,
their path and its fruit sublime.
The blessings of the Triple Gem, everlasting protection.
Reach the highest, complete peace and Nibbana.*

Pestakozzi Children





Silence (Cisza)

*Sky has been sleeping, wrapped in blue
pyjamas*

(Niebo nadal spi owiniete btekitno pizama)

*Suddenly a sharp, pure whistle cuts across
the air*

(Nagle ostry, czysty swist przecina poietize)

*The first bird gives the tune for other ones
(To pierwszy ptak podaje nute innym)*

*Everything is overflowing with music
(Wkrotce wszystho przepelnia sie muzyka)*

*Music of life, music of nature
(Muzyka zycia, muzgka przyrody)*

*Music of harmony, music of ...
(Muzyka harmoni, muzyka ...)*

*You want to see it, touch it,
(Choesz ja zobaczyc, dothnac)*

*You are an element of it
(Jestes jednym z jej elementow)*

*But you don't notice it – you are MAN!
(Ale jej nie dostragasz – jestes
CZKOWIEKIEM!)*

*You want to change something, make
efforts ...*

(Choesz cos zmienic, starasz sie ...)

*You've got it, success! – AMARAVATI
(Jest, udalo sie! – AMARAVATI)*

Maga



ANICCA, DUKKHA, ANATTA: The three faces of Nature

When the Buddha taught, he used these three words very often: they describe three important kinds of experience we have in our life as a human being. In order to understand our life, he said, we must understand these three basic things. If we do this, we won't be fooled or confused by the many different situations we all have to go through.

Anicca: 'impermanence' (this is pronounced 'UH-NEE-CHUH')

Everything is changing, all the time. Something (this includes people) might change quickly or slowly, but it never really stays still. Just look at a thought in your mind and see how it changes (this is fast); or at a tree throughout the four seasons, seeing the new spring buds turn into green leaves, then into golden autumn leaves, then into brown-black leaves lying on the ground (this is slower).

Dukkha: 'unsatisfactoriness'

It is easy to see that some things are not satisfactory – like having the flu! But the Buddha said that even pleasant things have an unsatisfying nature.

Because nothing lasts (remember *anicca*), therefore even nice things and people don't bring us perfect happiness. Something we like very much can break, or the family of our best friend might move away ... and then we experience 'dukkha'. It's okay to feel sad or unhappy at these times, but we should not be surprised, either, when such things happen. The Buddha said that perfect joy cannot come to us from outside ourselves; it is something we find within ourselves, when we understand and appreciate life just as it is – warts and strawberries and all!

Anatta: this word is hard to explain!

A simple translation is 'non-self'. Here's an example of this quality. When we look at a wooden table, we can ask: 'Is this thing really a table? It was pieces of wood before it became furniture. It was a tree before that. The acorn (if it's oak) that the tree grew from had to take its food from the ground and use lots of water to produce the tree. Good, nutritious soil used to be other plants – and animals! – as well as probably having been hard stone at one time. And the water has been mist and cloud before. Maybe this "table" is really just mist and stone and very very old rabbits?

Well, you could go on and on, all the way back to when the earth was just millions of bits of star-dust floating around in space, before it became a planet. The Buddha said that this kind of question has no answer; there is no final 'self' belonging to any material item or living being. It might look pretty final for a moment, or even for a long time, but if you look closely enough (with a microscope, for instance) or for long enough, or from a completely different point of view (like a fly sitting on the table's edge), you just have to come up with a new name for what you're looking at.

However, it doesn't mean we have to call a table 'old rabbits'. We can still have breakfast at our 'table', while at the same time realising that the table is also somehow related to everything else in the universe.

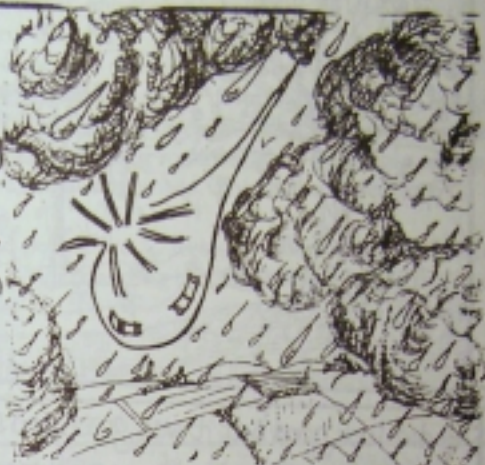
THE BUDDHA LEFT US THESE TEACHINGS to help us with our life in this world. Of course, understanding what the Buddha taught, and learning to remember his wise words in our daily life, is not always easy. It means we have to look very closely at our lives, at what our mind is thinking and our heart is feeling, and pay attention to what is happening for other people too. Within ourselves and all around us we will be able to see these laws of Nature – the Dhamma – operating all the time.

*The following stories are about the three faces of nature.
Venerable Amaro wrote the stories and Sister Sattima did the illustrations.*

ANICCA ... everything is changing all the time

To give you an example, imagine the life of a raindrop ...

Falling, falling from my high wide home, my great blue bedroom; falling with my million, my thousand million raindrop friends: brothers and sisters. Falling on the grassy hills, I drop upon a leaf and slowly run, trickling with my friends into the earth.



I seep down in amongst the rocks and roots. Down, seeping, seeping into tiny cracks and spaces. Down, I find more friends and, gaining strength, all drawing together we make a tiny stream which springs ... out from the hill and starts to run gently down to the sea.

It is Autumn, and a water-vole steps down the frosty bank and laps me up. What a shock!! Gone from the stream and now into a stream of a different sort - racing round the dark red tunnels. His pounding heart pumps me around and around and around. He scampers, now here, now there, up the bank and away.





- Oh no! Oh no!! A cat attacks, my water-vole home is killed in a flash, and I spill back onto the earth. Once again I soak into the ground, and now get pulled by the roots of a tree. Drawn up by an apple's trunk, put along a branch and a twig to a fruit that's hanging there. - Oh bright sun, soft wind; a rest for days, until we are picked by little Susie, who eats us..

It did look good but it was green and so soon after we all went down, we all came up again. Oh dear. Down the drain to get cleaned again; through great pipes and pumps and channels and at last to a mighty river. - Out we burst to join the flow, strong and swirling, slow and huge, down we go to the sea...



- We mix and merge with our salty cousins. The waves and the tide pull me fast, way out, far from the shore. For months I wander, travelling in currents, now on the surface, now in the deeps. A whale gulps and oh!... up we go together. One fine blast and I am sprayed out, to be droplets, mist and then air. - Time passes, pressure changes, clouds form and gather again; winds blow and take us to land, to the hills and the cities again...

Things are forever changing into other things, so, when we notice anicca, we see that the good things won't last forever, but neither will the bad things! There are always nice and nasty things happening but they are all a part of Nature's flow.

DUKKHA unsatisfactoriness, pain, imperfection ...

'I don't want this! I want that.'

The Buddha saw that, whether it's pleasant or painful, anyone's life involves an awful lot of struggle. This struggling quality is what he called 'dukkha'.

This does not mean that everything is hopeless, and that there isn't any joy in life. The Buddha was just trying to help us be wise and understand the true nature of things. All things change, and all things have at least a little bit of uncertainty in them. When we don't remember this - and expect to receive perfect and lasting pleasure from something, or to be able to live without any pain or sadness - sooner or later we are disappointed. This is the experience of 'dukkha'.

Living in harmony with how the world and people are ... living in harmony with Nature, with the Dhamma ... is the way out of *dukkha*. Understanding this and remembering this, we learn to respect Dhamma - and not try to 'cheat' it....

Did you ever hear the story of 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin'?

Long ago and far away there was a town called 'Hamelin'. Life was quite easy there, and the people were well off. A bit too well off actually; for, because of their greed, the people grew and stored away far more food than they could eat. Because of all this food the town became filled with rats - absolutely everywhere. The towns-people tried everything to get rid of them, but nothing worked - until one day...



a strange man appeared. Dressed in clothing of black and white diamonds and carrying a small knapsack, he strode right up to the city councillor's office (stepping over a few rats on the way) and announced: 'If you will pay my price, I will rid this town of rats and mice.' At first the councillors looked bored, everything had been tried, what was this joker going to do? But he insisted he could do the job - and fast, - so they began to listen.

"How much do you charge?" They asked
"One thousand gold crowns, and not a penny less."
"OUTRAGEOUS!!!"
"That's a king's ransom!"
"That's more than the duke owns."
"Not a penny less" - he said again, "but if there is as much as one rat left, I will ask for nothing."
The duke and the councillors discussed this for a long time and at last they said, "A-RI-GHT."



From his knapsack the strange man produced a small pipe, raised it to his lips and began to play. The sweetest, strangest melody appeared and filled the air. He left the council chambers, and the rats began to follow - all of them. From every house and shop - every nook and cranny - they all appeared. Dozens, hundreds, thousands, hundreds of thousands, rumbling, tumbling after him... to the river. The sweet music filled the town, the people hushed, and as the piper reached the river all the rats plunged over the edge into the swirling waters.

But when the piper went to claim his fee the duke refused to pay. The rats had all died so why should they part with all that gold?? The piper claimed his dues three times but was dismissed, even though he warned them that to cheat him might have terrible consequences. "So be it", he said, and left. The duke and the councillors were delighted to get away with things so easily, and were just beginning to break out the wine to celebrate when they heard the piper's music again - but the melody was different...





They saw the piper walking away; behind him a few children were dancing and laughing. Soon more children joined them, and more and more. All through the town he went and every child came and followed. The grown-ups looked on not knowing what to do. Out of the town he led them, in one great, joyous band, until he reached a distant hill. A huge door opened up and in they all went. Some said he took them to a beautiful land where they would be happy forever, but no-one really knew, for they were never ever seen again.

We can think of the piper as the spirit of Truth as seen in Nature. Nature has so many opposites – summer and winter, day and night, birth and death – and it works according to the law of balance. We have just seen a good example: if something is received, then something should be given, as in the case of the piper and the people. The piper's clothes of black and white are a reminder of Nature's balance.

If we understand the principle of balance, we work with Nature, and don't try to get something for nothing. Being greedy or foolish brings bad results – as the people of Hamelin saw when they tried to cheat the piper.

THE BUDDHA GAVE US many teachings to help us understand the world of Nature we live in. He especially had a lot to say about *dukkha*, how the world is never perfect for us (and is sometimes even quite awful!). The most famous of these teachings is called the Four Noble Truths.

The first truth is about *dukkha* itself, the sense of struggle we find throughout life.

The second truth shows how desire causes *dukkha*, in three ways. Firstly, we can struggle by wanting lasting happiness from something which changes. (A quick example: think of a young person who is happy to be good-looking. Will they still be just as happy when they are older, and no longer so beautiful?)

Another cause of *dukkha* is needing to get away from things we don't like. For instance, if we don't like someone and we would rather they go away – and they don't ... that's not satisfactory! Of course, it's natural to like certain people and things, but we should also learn to accept who and what we're not so fond of. Remember, everything in balance; otherwise, it's *dukkha*.

The third cause of *dukkha*: wanting to stay with only people and things we like. With liking and disliking, you can see that it's good to balance our feelings with wisdom.

The next Noble Truth (number three) reminds us that it is possible to live without this sense of struggle and suffering. It isn't exactly easy – but it is very simple. It is called 'non-attachment'. You might also say, 'Don't grab.'

Life has joyful and sad times, delightful and difficult people. With non-attachment, we learn to accept and appreciate each moment of life exactly for what it is.

We don't hang onto the parts we think are really great, hoping that they will stay forever – we let them stay for as long as they will, and let them leave when they're ready (even if we don't want them to go). And we don't 'grab' for something or someone that can't be here right now – we let them come in their own proper time.

This is the flow of life. The more we can see life like this, in a clear way, then the more peaceful we are. We don't grab onto the three causes of *dukkha*, and we don't suffer.

The Fourth Noble Truth of the Buddha is called 'The Eightfold Path'. This 'path' is a group of teachings we can follow, which helps us live more and more in tune with the Dhamma. When we follow the Buddha's path, we are more careful about the way we speak and act, and about the way we earn our living.

When we are attentive in this way, we understand the first three Truths more clearly, and so it is easier to notice the causes of *dukkha*. And finally, it also becomes easier not to be pushed around by the three different kinds of desire.

*May all beings be happy;
may all beings be free from dukkha!*

ANATTA ... 'no-self'.

This quality applies to things as well as people. Regarding people, if someone understands *anatta*, they treat others as they would treat themselves. They know that it is foolish to be selfish, to think that one person can benefit by another person losing. Although we look different and have separate bodies, all that is just window-dressing – it is not what we really are.

And concerning physical things, modern science has some very clear examples for us. It has been discovered, for instance, that even the atom, that very very very small part of matter, is not exactly a solid bit after all. Inside, it is full of space, and if you look at it with the right equipment, it behaves more like a vibration. Even the most brilliant scientists can't tell us what is really there!

So although things can appear to be solid, they are also energy, vibrating and changing. Therefore *anicca* (impermanence) and *anatta* go hand in hand. The Buddha pointed out that because of the uncertainty and changeability of everything, we are foolish to believe that anything belongs to us in a permanent way, or that we are permanently one way or another. Even our thoughts and feelings are *anatta*, and not a true self.

Because so much of this quality is invisible, it is not as easy to understand as change or pain. Here is one way of looking at it.

Imagine you are setting out on your journey through life. You feel good, and set off with lots of energy. Soon you find you have to cross a desert, but this does not bother you. Life presents difficulties but you are happy to face them.



As time goes by you begin to run low on food and water. The sun is very hot and you begin to get worn out. Life's troubles begin to weigh heavily, it is all becoming a bit of a struggle – but you keep going. The ground is sandy and the pathway has disappeared, it is very hot.



You feel like you have had it — completely done in by the heat, thirst and tiredness. "What am I doing here anyway?!" you begin to ask. "Is there no way out of here?" "What have I done to deserve this?!" But you realize you can't remember why you even began the trip!



Just when you have given up in despair, your eye catches sight of a flash of green in the distance. Hope! Maybe the end of the desert!! You see that peace, security and coolness might be possible after all. There might be some way through life that ends its problems completely. So you head in the direction where you see that hope. This is like finding a spiritual path in life. There is a long way to go, and it might be a mirage but...

Despite all the heat and thirst and so on, you press on with new strength. You are ready to live with the discomfort because you know release will come soon, at least you hope so. As you get nearer and nearer you become more and more certain it is not a mirage. It seems so firm and steady. This is like finding Truth and goodness within yourself — you find you can depend on it, so you feel great comfort and relief.





However, just as you make those last steps to the oasis, and you still fear it might just be an illusion, something very strange happens. It turns out that it was not the oasis that was the mirage - but you were!!!

This means that peace and goodness were there all the time and it was the person struggling in despair through the desert that was the illusion!

In this story, the man thought that all of life's problems, troubles and difficulties were truly his, and that everything he was feeling was very real. Of course, in one way his suffering and struggle was true - but in another way, it was *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*. Not solid, not permanent ... how could this REALLY be his 'true self'?

When he understood this, the heaviness of the pain and struggle evaporated, and he found the Dhamma - the secure refuge of peace, goodness and truth.

We could say that the Dhamma and our true self are the same thing. The Dhamma is beyond death, and always 'here-and-now'. Therefore, when Buddhists take refuge in Dhamma, they are taking refuge in peace and goodness and complete Truth. To do otherwise, to look for safety and happiness in what impermanent and uncertain, is indeed *dukkha*.

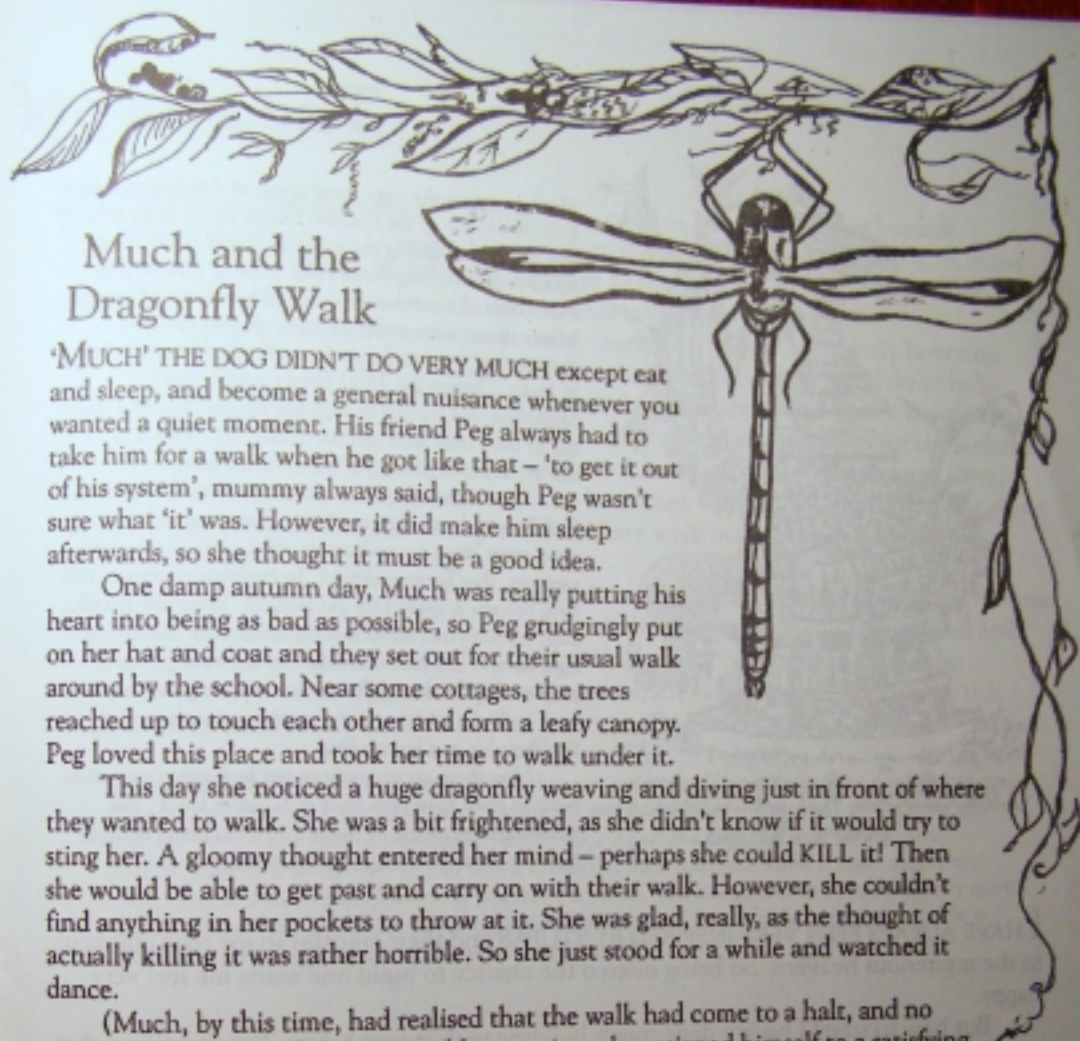
Sometimes we think about our life only when we are already lost and alone ... in a desert of unhappiness, cut off and separated from everyone else. In this story, 'ourselves in the desert' is a picture of the way that life does sometimes seem. The oasis is Truth, Reality, or what Buddhists call the Dhamma. The Dhamma is all that which is good, noble, kind and wise in life.

When we find this oasis of Truth and goodness, we start to think of others as much as we think of ourselves. Our own troubles don't have to be the most important thing any more. When we really see the truth of *anatta*, we could even say that other people aren't really that separate from us.

This is because we all share the same ways of thinking and feeling ... and suffering. If someone kicks you and then you feel angry, the pain and anger are the same as a person in Sweden or Bolivia or China would have if he was also kicked. So it follows, that when we help another person, we share in their gladness.

The Buddha realised that this is not easy to remember, and so he gave instructions on how we can clear our hearts and minds of greed, hatred and false ideas - which are what keep us from seeing things as they truly are. With a clear heart and mind, we see all life joined together, and we desire peace and goodness for all of it. All things are a part of Dhamma, not 'mine' or 'yours'.

Seeing this, we know how to avoid wasting time struggling with things that cannot give happiness to us or others, and we are free for true joy to enter our lives.



Much and the Dragonfly Walk

'MUCH' THE DOG DIDN'T DO VERY MUCH except eat and sleep, and become a general nuisance whenever you wanted a quiet moment. His friend Peg always had to take him for a walk when he got like that – 'to get it out of his system', mummy always said, though Peg wasn't sure what 'it' was. However, it did make him sleep afterwards, so she thought it must be a good idea.

One damp autumn day, Much was really putting his heart into being as bad as possible, so Peg grudgingly put on her hat and coat and they set out for their usual walk around by the school. Near some cottages, the trees reached up to touch each other and form a leafy canopy. Peg loved this place and took her time to walk under it.

This day she noticed a huge dragonfly weaving and diving just in front of where they wanted to walk. She was a bit frightened, as she didn't know if it would try to sting her. A gloomy thought entered her mind – perhaps she could KILL it! Then she would be able to get past and carry on with their walk. However, she couldn't find anything in her pockets to throw at it. She was glad, really, as the thought of actually killing it was rather horrible. So she just stood for a while and watched it dance.

(Much, by this time, had realised that the walk had come to a halt, and no amount of pulling and panting could restart it, so he resigned himself to a satisfying scratch and a close examination of his coat).

Ah yes, it was dancing ... and a very pretty dance at that. It also had a lovely colour – vibrant blue. 'Well,' thought Peg, 'at least it has two things in its favour: it can dance and it has the most beautiful colour.' Really, it was a most unusual fly.

Then a marvellous thing happened. The dragonfly came and landed right beside Peg. It just hung there, giving her a really close look at it. Peg thought it was just beautiful. She could look right through its wings. It was just like looking through old glass as the sun ripples on it slightly, or through the very thinnest ice.

As for the ideas of killing it, Peg blushed at the thought, and she resolved never to take the life of any creature ever again. She decided that in future, if she was ever afraid, she could always walk a different way or just accept the right of the insect to be there.

Peg and Much ran home to tell mummy. She was glad that she had decided to take Much for a walk.

The Story of



The Stupa for Siripañña
from Kaga

Have you seen the new stone stupa at Amaravati which is in the middle of the Buddha Grove in the large field? If you remember during the summer school of 1988, we asked people visiting Amaravati to bring a stone from their home to contribute towards the building of a stupa. Many stones were collected from all over Britain, Europe and even as far away as the Buddhist holy sites in India. During the 1989 family camp, Sister Siripañña was invited to organise the building of a stupa out of the stones that had been collected. This was started at the beginning of the summer camp.

Stupas are holy places. Long ago, before even the Buddha was born, they used to be burial mounds for holy men, great kings or good people. However, as the years went on, they became shrines. In Buddhist countries, they have become a symbol for the Buddha. When the Buddha died, his body was burnt and the ashes were divided into eight parts. Each part was taken by different groups of people and placed on different sites, where great stupas were built. So when we see a stupa it reminds us of the Buddha's life and his teaching.

Now there are not only stupas in Eastern countries, but also some have been built in Western lands. The following is an article by Sister Siripañña about how she built the small stone stupa at Amaravati.

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN VERY INSPIRED BY STUPAS and their graceful shape that points up to the mysterious heavens. So being offered the chance to build one made me feel very happy.

But how to start? I hadn't done much building with stones before, but I've found that you can do almost anything if you set your mind to it.

And what shape to make it? An image of the finished stupa popped into my mind. (From where, who knows!). I drew a picture of it and showed it to our abbot: 'That looks very nice - now build it!'

I thought: 'It's only a small stupa (3 metres high); I should manage to build it during the two-week Family Summer Camp.' Little did I know (In fact it took almost three months.)

I enjoyed most of it though. I liked working with the stones; many of them were very beautiful; and it was very peaceful, building up the sides of the stupa so carefully and slowly, stone by stone, under the luminous summer sun. Sometimes, though, I would become impatient and wish things would go faster - that was a sure signal that everything would shortly start to go wrong, with stones slipping out of place or falling over. So I would have to stop and remind myself: 'Just concentrate on what you're doing - NOW!'. When I remembered to keep my mind on the work, it was amazing how quickly everything would be all right again.

the Stone Stupa

I also tried to keep positive thoughts in my mind as I worked. This is because thoughts create energy and I wanted this stupa to have a good energy around it. A monk suggested that I say 'Namo Buddhaya' ('Homage to the Buddha') as I put every stone in place; I tried to, but I must confess I didn't always remember!

I think everyone must like stupas because there were people constantly hovering around the building site, asking hopefully if there was anything they could do to help. Many people cheerfully scrubbed the flints needed for the dome, and I got a lot of help from Agatha and Maga, two Polish sisters who were staying at Amaravati for the summer. And strangely enough, every time some problem arose that I wasn't sure how to solve, someone would turn up at the monastery who knew just what to do. I felt that throughout the time that I was working on the stupa, that there were many blessings from the universe that were helping it along!

For me, there is something really joyous about helping to build a holy shrine. It is not just the building in itself, but rather what it symbolises. It points to all that is good and noble; all that rises above the small-minded, selfish side of our existence. It is also important for us to have stupas and other shrines where we can make offerings as this helps us to remember the Buddha and his great teachings.

You too can make your own shrine, either indoors or outdoors. If it's indoors, you need to find a corner of a room that is neat and tidy. If possible, you should always have your shrine fairly high up. The monks and nuns at Amaravati usually have a Buddha image on their shrine, some flowers, candles and incense. If your shrine is outside, then you could make a small stupa from stones and decorate it with flowers. If you make a shrine, you can go and sit by it, being very quiet and mindful of how you feel – your thoughts and your breath. In this way, your shrine will be a reminder to be mindful and a help to you in everyday life.





RAINBOWS is published by Amaravati Publications,
at Amaravati Buddhist Centre, Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire
HP1 3BZ. It is printed for free distribution, and is funded by donations. If you enjoy
reading *Rainbows* and would like to contribute towards producing and distributing it,
then please send a donation made payable to 'The English Sangha Trust'.
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