

Voice of Amida-shu, Amida-kai and The Amida Trust: Pureland Buddhism: Absolute Grace, Total Engagement: Issue 26, Spring 2012
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RUNNING TIDE



Running Tide

Running Tide offers a voice for faith and practice, as well as critical, existential and socially engaged enquiry within the broad framework of Pureland Buddhism.

We publish short articles, poetry, pictures, interviews, comment and Buddhist resource materials.

Opinions expressed are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Amida Trust, Amida-shu or Amida-kai.

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The Amida Association, an association for spirituality and its application. Amida-kai is the association for everybody interested in the Trust's work, for the application of spiritual principles to empirical world problems, and to the exploration of the meaning of spirituality irrespective of faith alignment.

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Membership Of Amida-Kai is open to anybody who supports Amida Trust and is interested in spirituality and its application. To join please send a donation (£20 per year suggested) to Amida Trust with a covering letter. Membership of the Kai does not imply membership of the Amida Order or School or any particular religious affiliation. For subscription queries contact: Sukhavati.

Editorial

Kaspalita



In the first noble truth the Buddha lists being separated from those that you love as an example of Dukkha. Sometimes *being with* those that you love can be just as challenging.

Being with other people can be one of the most challenging things about being human. Those that we love can push our buttons just as easily, if not more so, than those that we don't.

I have been trying to remember the sutra in which the Buddha describes the previous lives of two of his disciples and how they have been inextricably linked over time. Being reborn in various family constellations, first as mother and son, then father and daughter and so on. I think the message here is that the karmic connections we have with significant others runs deep. There is something which binds us together, for better or worse. To learn from each other and to support the faith of one another.

In his article *Intimate Relationship as Spiritual Path* Dharmavidya writes that the Buddhist idea of an intimate relationship is one way of practicing the spiritual life together, equally valid (and just as challenging, in different ways) as a celibate choice. He writes about the unconscious and irrational power of love - very much in line with his other writing (see *Love and Its Disappointment*, for example).

Gregg Krech from the Todo Institute recognises some of the challenges of living with another person, and writes about some of the conscious ways we might practice in these relationships.

Prajnatara, Katrien, Jnanamati write about being with people in much more personal ways. Parjnatara describes the journey towards her engagement, whilst Katrien writes about a different kind of engagement - the courage to 'come out' as a Buddhist - and Jnanamati is describing some of the encounters with people, and animals, during his recent time in India.

Returning to the first noble truth, Caroline Screen writes about the ending of relationships and the pain in leaving people behind (and how this can transform into gratitude).

I'm grateful for Anthony for writing about his experience of coming along to a Pureland service, with a history of practicing Zen. He wrote his article before Christmas and is still coming to our evening services. Perhaps I'll ask him to write for us again later in the year, letting us know how his relationship to the *nembustu* is developing.

I'm very pleased to share Rachel Barenelat's poem with you in this issue. Rachel is a Rabbi in the United States, but her poem reminds me very much of our own practice of calling to Amida.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as I enjoyed putting it together. For the colour edition go online to: <http://issuu.com/kaspalita>.

Namo Amida Bu



Intimate Relationship as Spiritual Path

By Dharmavidya David Brazier

The subject of intimate relationships is challenging and complex. In Buddhism, such relationships are not seen as a sacrament given by God, but they are seen as one manner of practising a spiritual life. To walk the path together requires overcoming selfishness and practising generosity, give and take, sharing, thoughtfulness, enthusiasm, patience, wisdom, calm and many other excellent qualities, which is, perhaps, why relationships so often do not come up to scratch. We are, after all, human. However, whether a relationship continues forever or not, it may still play an important part in the spiritual evolution of the person. Some steps forward are best mediated by solitude and some by encounter. The Buddhist sense of rebirth also adds a sense of relationships being something that continues not just for a part of this lifetime, but through many lives. From this perspective, the reason we are unaccountably drawn to this or that person is that there is a karmic bond from a previous life, and with it unfinished business and opportunity. The Buddha often told stories about people's past lives, showing how the constellation of relationships in this life was a natural consequence of past encounters. Whether one believes in past lives or not, this kind of account imparts a sense that the relationships that we are

living now each have a significance in the greater scheme of things that transcends this immediate situation and that there is a longer term spiritual goal being served by our encounter.

Some people see an antithesis between relationship and spiritual practice and this has given rise to the idea of celibacy as an ideal. My own belief is that celibacy is, indeed, one ideal, but not the only one. Both being celibate and being in a relationship can be excellent ways to advance one's spiritual life if one takes them on in a positive spirit.

At the core of all human activity is love and this is especially true of relationships. However, love is difficult. It challenges our ego. Love is not really about compatibility, nor is it a function of having common attitudes or habits. Commonalities do make cohabitation easier and more convenient, but they are not the making of love. Love is not a function of conditions. Love is not a dependent variable, it is an end in itself. However, love does not generally persist a long time when it is unrequited.

Many modern relationships come to grief because they are infiltrated by ideas that are essentially political or social rather than intimate. Love, for instance, has nothing to do with equality or any other political or economic ideal. Modern people live lives in which the intimate space is reduced to a



Der Kuss Gustav Klimt (1862–1918). Oil on canvas. Public domain image.

minimum, and public scrutiny intrudes more than ever before. The presence of the television and other mass media, the fact of both sexes working in careers, of families being smaller, more mobile and more isolated from kith and kin, and the widespread prevalence of democratic ideals are all good things in themselves, but they can all also erode the conditions that underpin good relationships. Thus, while ideas of equality are immensely important factors in politics, when a couple start discussing trying to achieve equality it can very quickly degenerate into a hopeless wrangle because there is no possible

standard of objectivity for weighing one person's feelings and standardising them against those of the other person. Looking from the Buddhist perspective, the reason that this kind of discussion often gets quickly bogged down is that it is based on each person trying to get what they want rather than thinking about the other person or about what they can contribute. Love is a generosity. It does not care whether it gets due recompense. For a relationship to function well, both partners have to put in more than they try to take out. The surplus thus generated keeps the relationship healthy and avoids the necessity to keep



count. Good relationships are not about measurement of relative benefit.

Of course, if the balance of benefits is persistently highly one sided, the relationship will probably fail or be dysfunctional, though, of course, there are many relationships in which one partner is handicapped in some way so that inequality is built in and this does not harm the relationship necessarily. The basic point, however, is that love is something quite different from profit.

There is a sutta in which Buddha delivers a discourse to Sujata, the daughter in law of Anāpindika. This discourse is, in some respects, a rebuke because it is prompted by the Buddha hearing Sujata up-braiding the family servants in a harsh manner. Buddha says that there are seven types of wives:

- 1) The trouble-maker, is neglectful and contemptuous of her husband.
- 2) The thievish wife squanders the family wealth, is dishonest and cannot be trusted.
- 3) The domineering wife is lazy, shrewish, rude and tyrannous.
- 4) The motherly wife treats her husband as if one of her children.
- 5) The deferential wife treats her husband as if he were an older sibling. She is bidable but does not take responsibility readily.
- 6) The intimate friend wife loves her husband as her best friend in the world and is devoted to him.
- 7) The submissive wife is calm, patient and obedient.

When I look at this list I can see that modern thought might well agree that this is a list in ascending scale of desirability up to but not including the last. This is interesting. The ideal in the text is complete submission and

in the modern context this then runs aground on the rocks of issues of women's equality. However, the ideal of complete submission can cut both ways. The ideal of unconditional love would actually make both partners slaves of the union with neither giving a thought to rights and interests. This, however, is a very high ideal and beyond the reach of most, so that the highest that we aspire to in practice is the state of husband and wife as intimate friends devoted to one another. Even this is rare. It is commonly pretended to, but seldom realised.

Relationships at the level of grades 3,4 and 5 all suffer from dynamics of varying severity around power and responsibility and many "games" get played out in couples around this with one or other partner domineering or avoiding responsibility or both. Broadly we can say that insofar as love is missing, to that extent power issues fill the gap and these are fuelled by and fuel selfishness. Attachment to power is a substitute for love and springs from fear, whereas love springs from faith and trust which is the antidote to fear.

It is commonly said these days that partners should settle their differences by talking to one another. Now there is some sense in this and it is certainly good to practise empathy toward one another, but there are also inherent pitfalls. We are used to talking as a form of negotiation, but the spirit of negotiation is not love and too frequent recourse to such negotiation can soon undermine the ethos of a relationship substituting contractual relations for ones rooted in open hearted generosity. Again, it is said that love grows out of understanding. This again is at best only half true. A growing understanding of the other does provide an increased range of ways in which love may be effectively expressed, but love itself is not dependent upon understanding



and may be a living force whether understanding is there or not. Love provides the motive for understanding rather than being a result of it, though, of course, when an act based on understanding demonstrates the attentive care of the other person this can touch the heart deeply. This is because in this case the understanding demonstrated gives evidence of the love behind it. What is most obstructive to love is non-reqital. When one's love is not received or is unwanted one experiences turmoil. One might then be patient and spend longer trying to win the heart of the beloved, but eventually the love may become exhausted. What makes all this complicated and difficult is that a great deal of our communication with one another about these matters is anything but straight-forward. Not only do we not tell the other person the truth, but we often do not know what it is ourselves. On top of which there are innumerable social conventions and personal fears that conspire to induce or coerce us into pretending to have feeling that we do not really have or to hide feelings that are actually burning holes in our heart. Nor does analysis and unscrambling of all this always work either, since there are good reasons for such self- and mutual deception. It is certainly not the case that the person who makes their wishes and objectives clear to all and sundry is the person most likely to obtain them, even if they do know what they are.

Life is a process of discovery. Sometimes we discover that we have loved somebody for some time without realising it. Sometimes we find that we have not loved somebody whom we are going through the motions of loving on a regular basis - or that they do not really love us. Again, in relation to the tokens of love, in terms of behaviour, different people speak very different

languages. "She must love me because she...." "She cannot possibly love me acting like that toward me," thoughts of this nature may be completely incongruent with processes going on in the heart or mind of the other and it may be very difficult to find out what the other person really does mean by what they do.

It follows that there is an essential element of mystery in every relationship and love, if it is to thrive, has to accept and transcend this. One has to proceed on faith in many situations. One has to respect the other as they are and love them for it, not require them to be something different that more closely approximates to one's personal profile of what one believes to be loveable.

Unfortunately, in many relationships, an initial attraction and early stage of shared bliss soon gives way to a more practical, less intoxicated phase in which characteristics in the other that were initially seen as curious and fascinating suddenly transform into irritating features that one longs to remove and reform. Just as in the life of groups, relationships tend to go through phases of forming, storming, norming, performing and mourning. The storming is clearly the most difficult and it requires a depth of true love to pass through this difficult time without either, on the one hand, doing so much emotional damage to one another that the relationship is eternally scarred or, on the other hand, suppressing so much of one's true feelings that trouble is stored up for a much later date.

Personally, I can claim to have quite a lot of experience and a modicum of learning but am still far from having mastered the art, yet I retain clarity that it is the fullness of love that matters, whether the relationship be long lasting or short, voluble or quiet, compatible and comfortable or exciting and challenging, and at every stage. ✱



Relationship as Spiritual Practice

Control and Acceptance

by Gregg Krech

Relationships with people, especially close and trusting ones, are our best way to grow. In them we can see what our mind, our body, our senses and our thoughts really are. There is no way that is superior to relationships in helping us to see where we are stuck and what we're holding onto. As long as our buttons are being pushed we have a great chance to learn and grow. So a relationship is a great gift not because it makes us happy - it often doesn't - but because any intimate relationship, if we view it as practice, is the clearest mirror we can find.

~ Charlotte Joko Beck, Roshi

Most of us have entered into our intimate relationships because they make us happy, or seem to have the potential to make us happy. It is the same type of motivation that leads us to buy a new car. But eventually we realize that our partner doesn't always make us happy. In fact, a great deal of the time they seem to make us angry, disappointed, frustrated, embarrassed, stuck and depressed (cars can have this effect, as well). So now our real journey begins. How do we sort out this whole mess called a "relationship?" The ways in which we attempt to understand and cope with the ups and downs of relationships are often chaotic and confusing. Some of us simply decide that we made a poor choice (the lemon theory) and we need to get a fresh start. Others spend their lives trying to "fix" the problem -- the problem usually being defined as the other person. Marriage counseling, affairs, celibacy, pornography, self-help books, temporary separation, open marriage all of these may be employed, at one point or another, to try to solve the "relationship koan."

A koan is a Zen riddle which cannot be understood or solved with the rational mind. So it may be that our intimate relationships are the perfect koans. After all, one of the leading marriage researchers, John Gottman, claims that 65% of all marital problems are irreconcilable.

Koan: How do you resolve differences that are unresolvable?

If we can really embrace our relationship struggles as koans, then we have taken our first steps down the path of "relationships as spiritual practice." Joko Beck has already laid out one piece of the paradigm puzzle: It's not about happiness.

That doesn't mean that you'll never be happy in your relationship. Chances are you will. You'll be happy, passionate, grateful, intimately connected, and content. There will be fun, and laughter and joy. But not all the time. Sometimes, not any of the time. Simply put, the marriage of your relationship and your spiritual practice means that you are willing to work with whatever comes up in your relationship as your practice. Anger, frustration, disappointment, criticism, hostility. It all goes in the soup. We're not trying to make the perfect soup. We're trying to work with whatever ingredients there are and come to the realization that the soup is perfect, as it is. This is a different kind of cooking class.

"When we're more able to refrain from indulging our self-centered motivations, we no longer look at our relationship in terms of what we will get. Instead, as we move toward the generosity of the heart, we naturally want to give."

~ Ezra Bayda, Zen Teacher

This Soup is Out of Control

I'm going to assume that before you were married or living together there was some period of time when you lived alone. Do you remember what that was like? You might come home from work and put your keys on the table by the door, and maybe later you would read a book and set it down on the sofa, and perhaps you would turn on your stereo to listen to the radio which was tuned to 92.5 on the dial. When you woke up the next morning your book was still on the sofa, the keys were still on the table and the same station



image by gwilmore Flickr/Creative Commons



was still on the stereo. At the time you didn't think much about this, but now, upon reflection, you realize this was AWESOME! You had control over your living space.

Now that you are with another person, you've not only lost control over your living space, but most other things, as well. You can't control when you leave for a social event, because the two of you need to leave together. In fact you've lost control of TIME, in general. You're constantly having to coordinate with the other person and their sense of time is very different from your sense of time.

If you and your partner combine your money, then you've also lost control of money. And kids are already uncontrollable, even if you're a single parent. If you're married, then you have to negotiate everything from parenting style to choice of musical instrument.

The bottom line is that almost everything that you used to be able to just “do something” about, you now have to work out with your partner. Negotiations. Problem solving. Boundaries. If it feels like things are out of control it's because they really are out of control at least out of *your* control.

Acceptance as The Way

But from a standpoint of spiritual practice this is wonderful. You run right into the realization that “You want things to be the way you want them to be.” We call this *willfulness* and it is one of the

major obstacles to spiritual practice, faith, and relationships. Rev. Taitetsu Unno, a Buddhist scholar and one of the leading proponents of Pure Land Buddhism in the U.S. has a wonderful story in his book, ***River of Fire, River of Water***.

He tells of a situation where they received a phone call and the family had to go someplace quickly. Rev. Unno's wife, Alice, put a jacket on their son so he wouldn't be cold. Rev. Unno felt their son would be too warm, so he replaced the jacket with a sweater. Seeing this, Alice took off the sweater and put the jacket back on him. So Rev. Unno made the switch again. It didn't take long for tempers to flare, voices to be raised and hurtful accusations to be made, ending with Rev. Unno yelling, “I should have married your sister.”

Control and willfulness are closely related to the Buddhist concept of attachment. Classically, in Buddhism, we would think of attachment as being attached to objects or other people. But in relationships, what often becomes crystal clear, is our attachment to *the way we want things to be*. We want the checkbook to be balanced. We want our partner to clean up the mess he made in the kitchen. We want our partner to avoid raising topics like politics and religion when our parents are visiting.

As we come to the realization that we don't have control, our natural reaction is to try to get more control. Of course, our partner has the same response. So we find ourselves frequently at odds because we each have a different idea of how to



proceed. You want to spend the holidays at your parents; I want to spend them at home. Western psychology tends to promote assertiveness. Therapists encourage clients to tell the other person what they want so they can “get their needs met.” But this battle for control results in a relationship battleground. Love disappears and regardless of who wins the relationship loses, because it leaves a residue of resentment and a sense that the other person is only interested in their own welfare.

But spiritual practice, particularly Buddhism, is more about letting go. It's about acceptance rather than control. It's about giving up attachment to our desires and preferences. “We can go out for Italian food or for Chinese food either way is fine with me.” When our relationship becomes spiritual practice, our challenge is to move from control to acceptance to accept life as it is, rather than try to make it the way we want it to be.

The first challenge we face is acceptance of our partner as he or she is, rather than trying to fix them. As we spend more and more time with our partner, we begin to see the things about them that aggravate us. We assume that these “deficiencies” are objective for example, sloppiness, a quick temper, never being on time, a lack of attention to exercise and diet. But what we really are experiencing is a situation where the other person's behavior is not meeting our expectations. By labeling the other person's characteristics as weaknesses, faults or problems, we are able to transfer responsibility for our relationship problems to them. And since they have a problem and we love them, our job is to help them fix their problem. As you probably know already, this is not the equation for a successful relationship. Nor is it a formula for our own spiritual development.

The very purpose of spirituality is self-discipline. Rather than criticizing others, we should evaluate and criticize ourselves. Ask yourself, what am I doing about my anger, my attachment, my pride, my jealousy? These are the things we should check in our day to day lives.

~ Dalai Lama

Spiritual practice asks us to examine ourselves. Rather than the other person becoming the object of our repair efforts, they become a mirror for us to view ourselves. The process of reflecting on our own conduct is known as **Naikan** in Japan. It is a structured method of self-reflection that

challenges us to step out of our own self-centered perspective to try and understand the perspective of the other person. And that includes understanding what it is like for the other person to be my partner. In my marriage it is common for me to think about what it's like for me to be married to my wife. But spiritual practice, in general, and Naikan, specifically, wants me to ask, “what is it like for my wife to be married to me?”

That's a scary question! But spiritual practice is not a safe, comfortable pursuit. The gift of a relationship as spiritual practice is that we are offered a mirror by which to see all the places where we are blind, stuck, selfish and unskillful. Doesn't this sound like fun?

Well, it's actually better than fun. It's heavenly. If you can let go of trying to control and fix your partner, you can relax into a place where you may be capable of loving them. And when you descend into the dark caverns of your own ego-centeredness and see the suffering you have caused these past years you may recognize that the love you are receiving from your partner is not love you've earned because of your intelligence, good looks or competence. As Victor Hugo said,

“The greatest happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved -- loved for ourselves, or rather, loved in spite of ourselves.”

Ultimately, the path of relationship as spiritual practice opens a doorway to the discovery of deep, religious faith. When we learn to accept rather than control, and when we learn to examine our self instead of placing blame on others, we open up a space in our hearts for a connection to some Power Beyond Self. The faith in ourselves, even in our relationship, is replaced by a faith in something timeless and without boundaries. ★

Gregg Krech is the Director of the ToDo Institute in Vermont (USA) which is a centre for the study and teaching of Japanese Psychology. He is also the author of numerous books, including Naikan: Gratitude, Grace and the Japanese Art of Self-reflection (Stone Bridge Press). He has studied Zen and Pure Land Buddhism under many teachers over the past 30 years and frequently lectures at Buddhist Centres in North America. You can find more of his writing at: www.thirtythousanddays.org



Poetry

This poem came to me when, with Fiona, I was guest editing an online literary journal. We had asked for submissions on the theme of 'worship' and received many wonderful poems. You can check them all out via the link at the bottom of this page. It would be impossible to pick a favourite, but I wanted to share Rachel's poem *Without Ceasing* with you because it spoke of a spiritual experience which I understand. I too can pray, "Help me to open my lips/ that I may sing your praise."

~ Kaspalita

Without Ceasing

The wash of dawn across the sky
reveals your signature.

Cicadas drone your praise
through the honey-slow afternoon.

The angular windmills on the ridge
recite your name with every turn.

And I, who can barely focus on breath
without drifting into story:

what can I say to you,
author of wisteria and sorrel,

you who shaped these soft hills
with glaciers' slow passage?

You fashioned me as a gong:
your presence reverberates.

Help me to open my lips
that I may sing your praise.

Rachel Barenblat

Rabbi Rachel Barenblat, author of *70 faces* (Phoenicia, 2011), was ordained by ALEPH in 2011. She blogs as the Velveteen Rabbi (<http://velveteenrabbi.blogs.com>) and serves a small congregation in western Massachusetts.

Without Ceasing originally appeared in Qarrtsiluni online literary magazine:
www.qarrtsiluni.com



The Camino of Our Love

Prajnatara writes about walking along the compostella and her engagement to her (now husband) James



“... on the way to Finisterre” by Jule_Berlin: Flick/Creative Commons

The camino, meaning 'the way', of our love has literally been made by walking. Our foray into relationship began with hiking the dense woods of Ontario and later, as our love and commitment deepened, venturing onto new and more daring paths. One such pathway, hiked a mere five months before our wedding, was the Camino de Santiago. In love,

and yet wary of the pitfalls of a second marriage, we decided to go on pilgrimage, consciously putting one foot in front of the other and asking ourselves, “What is the camino of our love?”. It was the final testing ground before taking our vows.

Our camino began, as all journeys do, with an intention. Determined to walk 600km of well



worn ancient paths across northern Spain, we prepared daily by walking and increasing the weight of our back packs and the length of our walks. Finally, on April 25th 2005, we left Canada for Spain and officially began our journey to Santiago de Compostela on the steps of the Cathedral at Burgos. Together we read the pilgrims' prayer, took out our walking sticks and began following the yellow arrows which would indicate our direction for the next 25 days. Our determination had brought us this far.

The life of a pilgrim is wrought with challenges. Bent with determination, we trod up mountains through rain, sleet and bitter winds, and with the swollen sun on our faces crossed plains seemingly stretching for eternity. Often we longed for the respite of cafes, that were too often closed, and endured sleepless nights with the sounds and smells of fellow pilgrims, too close by for comfort. There were days when our back packs felt like potatoes sacks and our raw feet were no longer the fine trusted friends we thought they were. Sometimes even the best of intentions can grow tiresome and this weariness had an impact on our normal way of relating.

One day, tired and impatient we asked one another rather seriously, "Why did we decide to do this?" and "How is this pilgrimage helping us move more deeply into relationship?" It seemed a good day to take stock and assist tired muscles by forgetting for awhile. Unfortunately, our stimulating conversation came to a crashing halt when we realized we had veered from the path and had missed our intended refugio; stunned, we continued with the sour awareness that it would be another 15 kilometers before we would find rest. It was not our finest hour. Frustrated and angry at each other's

carelessness we shared some rather peppered words and then, feeling helpless and hurt, walked on in stoney silence.

Lessons on being a pilgrim include the realization that survival and enjoyment depend on the willingness to face obstructions and make the best of them, the ability to tolerate painful feelings whilst holding to a larger vision, and maintaining a hearty sense of humour.

With more than an hour of voluntary silence between us, there was a breakthrough when, for some unknown reason, a giggle broke the impasse. There was no mistaking it, we were in a pickle, but really what was there to do except to go forward. Soon with energy returning to our steps we revisited the initial questions of the day and told each other stories of survival, and love. We had several days such as this; days of disappointment and drudgery. Each day though was redeemed by the strength we felt when overcoming the 'insurmountable', by recalling the spark of inspiration that carried us and by holding hands and smiling.

The Camino of our love was made by much more than this of course. Many days, most days, were sheer joy. Daily we prayed for friends and family who had requested them. We learned that our relationship was one of relating to others. We shared meals, complaints, laughter and early morning walks by the light of the moon. Finally, three days after arriving in Santiago we set out for Finnister, home to the Atlantic shore. We sat on a huge rock gazing across the waves in the direction toward Canada, home to those we hold dear and where our married life would begin. It was on this rock that we were officially engaged. ★



The Courage to Be

by Katrien Sercu



Katrien and Sumaya, at the Bodhi retreat 2011. Photo by Caroline Screen.

A deeply supportive Amida Buddhist thought is that we are good just as we are, that it is good just as it is. But.... what are 'we' and what is 'it'? I realise that at certain points in life we need to make an existential

choice, and to be open to the expression of this choice, otherwise we begin to lie and to hide. May I say 'we' or must I just say 'I'?

We/I need some valor to dare to be just as



Just as we are

we are...

As human beings we encompass so many levels, facets, so many polarities, contradictions; we're often different people in different conditions, in different times and periods of our life; we meet so much diversity in friends, family, and colleagues, each with their own nature and with their own choices. In some way and to some degree we adapt ourselves to them in order to feel loved, to feel safe. We create habits out of this adaptation, depending on the other people, the situation, and on our own personality. What is right in one situation is wrong (or less right) in another. You can be the odd one out when you don't drink alcohol, while with other people you can feel you belong when you don't drink. I have to dress in 'work clothes' for work, but not in the Amida sangha. Talking about Amida Buddhism to my neighbours is/feels unsafe, but it's the way I connect with the Amida Trust.

As long as I want to feel loved by the people that I meet and by my friends, I cannot be congruent with my life choices, unless the other and I can accept differences and uniqueness. Do I have the courage to be different from the self-image I showed them and myself, to be different from the expectations of them and of myself? Dare I allow this difference to become visible? Can I accept that they're different from me?

Dare I be different, with the possibility of being derided, judged, disregarded? These questions only look at the selfish side of love, not the neutral, accepting, giving or even confronting side of love.

We all live on the endless see-saw of Spirit and Matter, love and hate, joy and suffering, selfishness and altruism... all polarities that are connected by ranges of colouring, some more in the light, some in the foreground or more in the shadow, the background... conscious or unconscious. Where do we have our seat, at which point of this balance, in which conditions? Writing about Shinjin, Dharmavidya wrote: 'When we have decidedly put something wholesome at the centre of our life and made it our refuge, then we can trust it to do its work without having to be monitoring it all the time'. I can feel and trust the deep truth in these words, but I also notice that we need enough good conditions to hold this pure and vivid, as in ordinary life we're surrounded by all sorts of forces and are influenced by our own habits, our social connections and our foolishness.

I don't trust myself in this...I'm too impressionable. I really need Amida to accept that fact and I need Amidist friends who embody spiritual choices! But how to trust them, as they're also foolish and imperfect....a question from the battle-chat between my mind and heart?

A sentence of Leonard Cohen emerges:



'There is a crack in everything... that's where the Light gets in'. Namo Amida Bu. How to encounter and open oneself to Light, as It is there?

Last summer in Amida France, a hidden seed received light, warmth and water: the seed of devotion. I could experience the force of devotion and it felt like the missing link between my speech, body and mind, without which it's impossible to deeply meet the other/Other. Earlier, I experienced devotion in nature, far away from mankind, but I never trusted it in humans, texts, prayers... they were all dreams, illusions, misuses of power, the effects of drugs or a psychotic mind. Unconsciously, I threw the force of devotion away, with all I hated

reading 'The Life of No Regret' in the way of Lectio Divina, suddenly my heart jumped open for what 'The vows of Buddha' can mean. Never-ending tears came as response. From childhood I was so angry at God, as he made life too difficult for humanity; he let us lose our way in materialism; the whole world and I felt abandoned by God... This was my embodied conviction. But the earthen Amida statue was there near me, looking at me and showing Amida's vows... to all sentient beings, without regret. Namo Amida Bu. I rediscovered what I had lost in life, maybe just by being born: trust and faith. Every day I read 'The Life of No Regret' and it does his work... not knowing where it will go.

Devotion gives me a big mind and an open heart

through the disappointments of Catholicism and general misuse of power. It was a treasure that I threw away. Apparently, the virtue of devotion seems to have a connection with a relaxed solar plexus (as I feel, maybe subjectively). Devotion gives me a grounding, a pure and honest feeling, a big mind and an open heart; it's as a bridge to the Other, without too much Self-colouring; a door to a longing for practice, to enter sometimes into the space between Amida, the world and me. Rapture can be a present there (not only a danger). Maybe this is all evident for you; it wasn't for me. It is new and it opens essential facets of the Path, which were previously hidden.

Back home, experiencing deep devotion by

As a result, I feel that I've reached a point where it is right to express that I'm an Amidabuddhist, accepting step by step the consequences on my old habits and the boundaries in social adaptation to ordinary life. I don't want to become the stranger, but I may be different. This can bring another, more intense, colour in the spaces between me and the other, by the presence of The Other.

This will require some valiance, to dare to be just as I am, a learning Amidabuddhist in an ordinary life. And when it is right to hide, then I may hide! ★

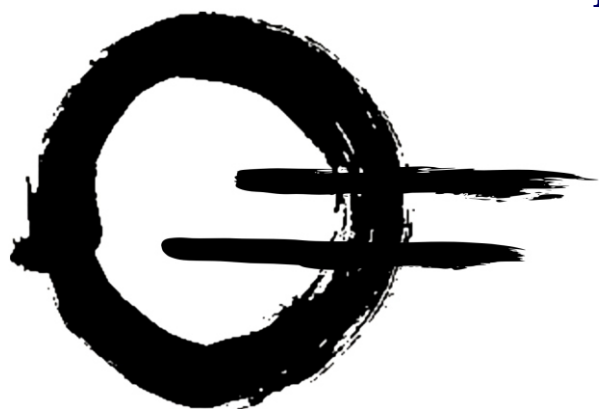
Find out more about Amida in Belgium here: <http://amidatrust.ning.com/group/benelux>



Institute for Zen Therapy

in association with **AMIDA Trust**

www.instituteforzenththerapy.com



We're pleased to announce the formation of The Institute for Zen Therapy. This is the section of Amida Trust concerned with Buddhist psychology practice and training. It is a new development, but inherits a training with an unbroken history reaching back to a first programme established in 1981.

- ✿ IZT offers Psychotherapy, Counselling, Analysis & Guidance
- ✿ Training in counselling and psychotherapy
- ✿ Short & longer courses in Buddhist psychology topics Groupwork & Pandramatics
- ✿ Support & supervision for counsellors & therapists
- ✿ Access to the wider world of Amida Trust

With a team that includes David Brazier, Manu Bazzano and other experienced therapists the group has a richness of personal experience to draw on, alongside the theories of Buddhist psychology.

IZT courses lead to qualifications which enable students to accredit with BACP. The courses are suitable for people beginning training or looking to develop their skills and experience. The workshops are available mostly in London, and at other locations in the UK and overseas.

Whereas many other integrations of Buddhism and psychotherapy adopt Buddhist methods to apply essentially Western thinking, IZT's work is grounded in Buddhist thought and principles. Within this paradigm it uses a wide range of therapeutic methods, eastern and western. It is the deep grounding in the Buddhist theory of the mind that makes these courses special and the fact that it is taught within the context of a practice community that gives it a vibrant atmosphere. However, it is not necessary to be a Buddhist practitioner in order to benefit from the programme.

Stay in touch with IZT news and developments.

Sign up for e-newsletter here: <http://eepurl.com/jtw4P>

www.instituteforzenththerapy.com

info@amidatrust.com

Pureland, Beginners Mind

by Anthony Pilling

When I recently moved to Malvern one of my first tasks was to locate a Buddhist Sangha that I could be part of.

Previously living in Devon I attended a temple in Exeter, a one hundred mile round trip, and sangha meetings in Hartland, a forty mile round trip.

In Malvern I discovered a sangha that was almost within walking distance of my new home. Imagine my delight, tinged with a little uncertainty as the Malvern Sangha is of the Pureland Buddhist tradition.

As a long standing member of the Buddhist

boarding school!).

Regardless of all this I welcomed the opportunity to give it a try and I contacted Kasper and Fiona who were of course most welcoming when I attended my first Pureland Buddhist service. With every intention not to compare, question, or make judgements, which inevitably I did, I found the first meeting interesting and friendly and I left with a feeling of gratitude that the sangha existed here in Malvern.

Fast forward several weeks and several meetings on from that first service and where am I now in the Pureland practice? The short answer is I don't know. I

Doing zazen with our mouths...

Society in London I had occasionally met individuals who practised in the Pureland tradition but I had never become involved. In fact the observation attributed to DT Suzuki that Pureland Buddhism is the best school for westerners to follow may have even acted as something of a deterrent.

I have always practised in various Zen schools, Rinzai, Soto, and with Thich Nhat Hanh's Community of Interbeing. I have felt most at home in the disciplined and formal zazen of the Rinzai and Soto traditions, which my son who also practises, claims has something to do with my age and upbringing (prewar and

certainly hope to attend the Wednesday service whenever possible and I feel comfortable with the proceedings. But I have spent years 'just sitting' and I still find silent meditation to be a central part of my life including during my daily practice at home.

I have tried not to enquire too deeply into Pureland Buddhism but rather to just go with the practice and to see what happens. I did however recently reread an item from the writings of Japanese Zen master and teacher Kosho Uchiyama. For some reason a particular section had settled in the recesses of my mind and on rereading it



Yuzu Nembutsu Engi (Account of the origins of the Yuzu Nembutsu Buddhist sect) 14th century. Japanese Kamakura period. Ink, color, and gold on paper.

seemed to have a relevance to my present situation.

Kosho Uchiyama wrote about the purpose of zazen being to realise the nature of True Self and to achieve a state of living within the Universal Self. In comparing the Pureland school with Zen he concluded that chanting the nembutsu is putting faith in Amitabha Buddha and that is the 'Immeasurable Life' which connects all things. He stated that when individuals chant the nembutsu they are expressing gratitude and faith in the Immeasurable Amitabha and are in fact doing zazen with their mouths in the same way that zen practitioners sitting in meditation are doing zazen with their whole bodies.

At one level this seemed to make sense although I recognise the pitfalls of having a

nice neat intellectual rationale to fall back on. As a beginner it is easy to follow a path and to get lost along The Way.

I hope to continue attending the Malvern Sangha meetings and perhaps find out where this way leads me. Presently my feelings are of gratitude that the sangha exists and that my mind has been opened to other aspects of the Buddhadharma.

These are just early personal thoughts which I offer in the hope that they are not too egocentric. ★

Light of Amida

For details of all Amida local groups and services see the light of Amida website:
<http://light.amidatrust.com>

Extracts from an Indian Dairy

Jnanamati Williams kept a blog of his travels and encounters in India, where he was practicing the Dharma and supporting Buddhist communities, including our own Amida Delhi Sangha. We're pleased to be able to share some of his story with you.



Jnanamati with Archana Gautam and Kushal Jyoti at Sonia Vihar, Mongal Bazar

14th January 2012

It is just before six p.m. the light is fading and I am writing this now because the power is off and I am getting to the point of not being able to see to read. This reminds me of being in Assam last year except then through the wonders of technology I was able to stay on line even with no electricity – and it was far more

frequent there – since the mobile dongle was powered by the netbook battery. Here we have a wireless connection dependent on the power supply. So writing is one of activities I can do as the light of the screen illuminates the keyboard enough for me to type. This really is a long way of saying I am doing this because I can, whilst scratching around for ideas of what to write. Of course it's like this sometimes even if the day



has been full – which today hasn't – that it can just be difficult to know what to reflect on.

Tommy the family dog is laying just behind my chair. In the last few days my friendship with him seems to have blossomed, not that he is a dog habituated to affection or particularly demanding of it, but he seems to be just loving the attention I give when I see him. Of course such moments are common place for most of us in the UK who have owned a pet, particularly of the canine variety. I am talking about the moment of recognition that lights up a dogs face when you greet them with an open heart. Most dogs in Delhi I suspect only see duplicity in a human being's approach. You can read this in the suspicion that somehow becomes a glaze over their eyes. On the other hand building such a relationship of trust takes no time with a dog and soon leads to those special moments when you are surprised whilst doing something else to be nudged by a wet nose or a lick on the hand. Often ever so gently and for no other reason than to say 'I'm still here and grateful for our friendship'. All of this, I have no doubt many would say, is fanciful nonsense but if it is an illusion then I consider it one worth cultivating. If nothing else it does no harm. It certainly has perked Tommy up no end and whilst I don't imagine there is a direct causal connection the bare patches that previously took up a good quarter of his back are now all but covered by a new growth of hair.

Sunday 15th January

Yesterday was a busy day. I am up at 7.00 a.m. a little later than usual and discover a message to say that the meeting in Sonia Vihar planned for the morning – to discuss arrangements for

children's classes – has been re-arranged for five this evening. This changes things since I had not considered going to the temple in Ashok Nagar to join the Sunday morning worship this week because of the said arrangement. I notice a reluctance to make a decision but reflecting on the importance of retaining this connection soon sort out what I need to and make the five minute walk, arriving just before eight thirty when service starts. As in previous weeks the congregation is small to begin with but soon there are about twenty people present. Today I hand out a flyer afterwards about the English class starting. There is no Vipassanna meditation this morning since there is a 'programme' starting at 10.00 a.m. (programme is a catch all adjective to describe any sort of organised group activity). Today Buddhist families are attending a march to mark Mayawati's birthday. Mayawati is the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, and also an Ambedkarite. Later I notice Mayawati posters on all the lampposts and men on motorbikes on the highway carrying blue BSP flags. Given the upcoming elections in UP no occasion is ruled out as an opportunity for bringing people's attention to Mayawati's image.

Mid morning I go to see Suvidya and Sunita in Ashok Nagar. When I arrive Suvidya is in bed. He is soon roused by Sunita and in five minutes has shaken off his waking grogginess. I feel somewhat guilty to have disturbed him since, as I soon learn, not only is he back at work after his period of illness but his working day means leaving at 7.30 in the morning and returning home at 10.30 at night. This is his schedule for six days a week. To say I am affected by this is an understatement, in fact as I write and reflect on



my opening statement I do wonder at how our cultural perspective determines the experience of aspects of life such as describes a 'busy day'. Subjectively I had a tiring day but how much more freedom I had to chose my activity. I find myself feeling grateful that my life has afforded me this.

Despite Suvidya's fatigue he is brighter and less troubled than I have seen him these last few weeks. I have no doubt that the weight of worrying about providing for his family has lifted. Added to that he is now symptom free after ten days taking the typhoid medication and thus feels physically much stronger.

This morning with Sunita we spend about an hour and a half going through the precepts in preparation for the Gankonin ordination ceremony later in the month. The process is a rich one for me as I really have to enter into the meaning of each precept in order to frame it in a way that Suvidya can understand and so that he can translate it for Sunita. We also need to explore together how these relate to living a committed Buddhist life in a context very different from the one that most people on the ministry track are working in.

Suvidya and I then walk to Saraswati's for 2.00 p.m. to teach the Buddhist class. Today there are about forty children in total. This afternoon I introduce the Shakyamuni mantra, which is new to the children. They seem to enjoy this enormously. We then dance to chanting the name of Dr Ambedkar, Namohimburo Bosat. In the class I tell the story of Siddhartha's secretive departure from his family home; leaving behind the sleeping Yasodhara and their son Rahula, and thence to starting a journey to seek the 'truth'

and the way to end all suffering. This week the story closes with his encounter with Sujata as she gives him the rice milk that revives him. This as the legend tells us comes after months pursuing austerities that have brought him almost to the point of death.

The group has been lively today but nonetheless have listened attentively to the story.

I leave Saraswati's at 4.30 walking alone towards the main Loni Road. This week I see some children that I encountered on a visit last week. The children recognise me and start asking questions or direct comments in broken English as they accompany me along the road. This is all good natured even if their questions - fired at me one after the other - taken out of context might seem intrusive to a western ear, 'where you going' or 'what is your fathers name', and so on. I hop on an auto-rickshaw to Golshakar. The road is quite clear of hold ups today and so the journey takes little more than ten minutes. I nip back to Rajaram to drop off the heavier bag containing all the teaching equipment, and then head back to where I am due to meet Kushaljiyoti. He is there waiting at the junction as I arrive. Squeezed into the front of one of the small buses we head down the highway in the direction of Waziabad getting off at the junction close to Sonia Vihar, our destination. The peddle rickshaw driver that takes us from the junction to the edge of the main street of Sonia Vihar says he can take us no further because of the market that is on today. He doesn't charge us gesturing to our robes and making anjali.

The market is heaving, the noise deafening and smells overpowering as we wend our way through the narrow streets to the small temple.



The last part of the walk is relatively clear however as we move beyond the hotch potch of stalls. This is an obviously poor area dominated by Muslim families and my attention is taken by the amount of meat being sold here as well as the manner in which it is being offered – cut and handled, wrenched apart with hands and piled up on dirty wooden benches as the customer gazes on.

The meeting with the local temple committee takes a while to get set up, largely because it has been a day of celebration - as indicated above – to mark Mayawati's birthday, and some of the men are still caught up in activities related to this. We sit for a while in the family home of Veersingh Gautam, who Kushaljyoti and I visited last time we came, and take some tea, chat a little. The family business is in the rag trade, making garments, household items and so on. The scene in front of me is of Veersingh surrounded by patches of white fabric strewn about the floor, working with amazing speed and alacrity around what appears like just a bundle of gathered cloth on the machine table before him.

I discover on arrival that Veersingh's youngest child and only son, Gurpreet, has just this morning fractured his arm. This accounts then for the padded left arm he is holding to his chest and the wince his face makes as he brushes the door frame entering the room. I find myself wondering what sort of treatment he has received and suspect that someone has just strapped on a homemade splint and wrapped the arm in cloth. Gurpreet is a lovely boy, bright and sociable – about six years old I would say – and we spend a good half an hour interacting playfully despite there only being a

few words understood between us. Much of this of course can be enacted through gestures once you have made a connection of this sort.

We then go to the temple to discover that the electricity isn't working and so there is no light to illuminate the dark interior of the building. I then witness a collection of men standing around and watching one brave individual untangling wires from the mains supply. The main box is at the top of a post just outside the shop that the man owns. I gaze on with the expectation of disaster as the man reaches from a bamboo ladder, pulling out wires and twisting the ends of new ones to attach them to the supply. There is much laughter and joking as this goes on, particularly when a bang leads to the streetlights down one side of the road going out. Amazingly after this and only a blown bulb inside the temple the road is illuminated again and one end of the temple is bathed in light.

There are five committee men present for the gathering none of whom speak any English and one young woman who speaks some and thus offers translation. Luckily I have brought a brief introduction about Amida and the Delhi project written in Hindi which aids communication and thus we are soon able to make an initial arrangement to commence an English class on Friday 27th January.

I arrive back in Ashok Nagar at about nine, a sense of satisfaction with how the day has unfolded, and glad that I have less of an active schedule tomorrow. ★

You can read more of Jnanamati's blog here:
<http://jnanamati.typepad.com>

Find out more about our work in India, and volunteer possibilities here:
<http://www.amidatrust.com/social.html>



Endings

The painful gift of gratitude

by Caroline Screen

I have just got on the plane after spending 3 exhausting weeks in Adelaide, Australia, having waded through and packed up years of accumulated stuff. I've decided what to ship to the UK and have given most things away. I have said goodbye to this place that was home for 12 years, and goodbye to dear friends until I don't know when. I have decided to move back to England permanently (well, as permanently as plans can be!)

I am enrolled in the Buddhist Psychotherapy training with Amida Trust and I need to keep up with course work. I have printed out a Distance Learning unit for the plane journey and raise my eyebrows as I read the title of this month's unit - Endings!

I snooze a bit and wake up just as we fly over the North West coast and out across the sea. "Goodbye Australia!" What a chunk of life I lived here. So many life-changing experiences in the 12 years! I think about impermanence and how nothing lasts forever. I deeply feel this now.

I am pleased that I have left 'properly' this time. Last time I left for "I don't know how long"; maybe 6 weeks or 6 months I told my friends. It turned out to be 18 months! I had successfully avoided an ending, but there was a cost. My friends were left with no closure, regularly asking, "So, when are you coming back?" and I was unsettled; feeling

divided between two lives.

On the plane, I am aware of my thoughts; "Maybe I'll be back soon to do the trip I never did, overland from Perth to Darwin". This idea of having something left to come back for is comforting, it keeps the relationship with the place alive. I am also aware that I said goodbye to my friends with an attitude I am familiar with; "I'll see you later". I know that this is a strategy I have clearly developed to make the goodbye softer. These ideas of coming back and of seeing each other again is an avoidance of an ending. I want to keep one foot here, to not fully part from this beloved country. I want to believe that I will see my friends again soon! The hard reality is **I may never be back here and I may never see my friends again!** Ouch! ...and there's the grief, just tucked safely away under thoughts (delusions) about my future return here. This is the painful truth that comes with really saying goodbye, maybe forever.

All this talk of ending inevitably brings up memories of my partner, Matt, dying in 2006. At the funeral, I didn't want to face the farewell. I remember repeating like a mantra, "He is not his body, he is not his body...." as a way to try to ease the loss, somehow trying to believe that he (spiritual Matt) hadn't really died. I had managed to shape a spiritual notion into a means of avoiding dukkha! Even faced with the reality



of death at a funeral, there's a way, even there, of keeping the reality of death at arm's length., How creative we are when it comes to avoiding pain and how strong our avoidance habits.

“He's not really gone”. “I'll be back soon“. These thoughts soften the endings. What's the cost of doing this? It seems okay on the surface, even perhaps a good strategy if it means that the pain of loss is lessened. With my partner's death, the attempt to keep the pain at bay ultimately didn't work because the reality was that he was gone and no creative thinking was going to change that reality in the long term. Eventually, I had to

avoiding dukkha. It is the creation of a fixed “I”, and the habits that support it, that causes suffering. If I can be more aware of the temptation to slip into habits that soften the ending, and instead face the reality of the ending, I could perhaps move beyond the familiar self that I and my friends know. It would mean opening up and relating in new ways; ways that are not about supporting my 'strong' or 'spiritual' sense of self.

Now back and settling in England in my new home, I can reflect on leaving Australia and I feel all the responses to this reality. It's a new thing to move beyond the, “I'll be back



face and feel this loss. I do think it is okay to face reality gently and in manageable doses so as not to feel overwhelmed. I have sometimes thought of 'ego defenses' as kind, protecting a person from the flood of pain that might be overwhelming. Maybe there's a place for denial or delusion. But there is a cost.

In the unit on 'Endings', Prasada refers to 'habitual bravado' and I can relate to this. Faced with the reality of a loss, I cling to something. It is an identity. I am okay. I have it together. I can cope. I am strong. Even, I am not my body (read “I am therefore something else, something that does not die!” Phew! Well that's a relief!) From a Buddhist perspective, this is the cost of

soon“ attitude. There is the grief of what has gone, and some fear around starting again, but there's also relief that the big move is now done. I can put my energy into being here in the UK rather than divide it between two continents and I feel the excitement at how full of possibilities this 'new' life feels right now.

It helps to notice these patterns of avoiding or softening endings. It helps me face the reality, a little bit more, that all things do indeed end! It is this knowledge that offers a different way of seeing the things that are in my life now. There's nothing like the awareness of an ending, hard as that is, that opens the heart to appreciation and gratitude.★



What's on guide

Spring events in the Amida world

THE REAL MEANING OF MINDFULNESS

March 3rd 9.30am to 4.30pm

Sukhavati, Finsbury Park, London

Mindfulness has become a popular concept that is increasingly widely used. However the essence of Buddhism is not a technique, but rather an attitude to life, an attitude that encompasses more than the present moment, more than oneself and more than what presents itself to consciousness. Mindfulness is a deeper and broader matter than we are often led to think. The mind that Buddha has in mind is something very big indeed. Suggested donation £15

POETRY READING WITH DAVID BRAZIER

March 3rd 7.30pm to 9pm

Sukhavati, Finsbury Park, London

David Brazier will read from his poetry and invite others to join in and share their work too. A pleasant social evening with verse. We might even include one or two spots for impromptu group composition.

THE SPIRIT THAT CREATES

March 4th 9.30am to 4.30pm

Sukhavati, Finsbury Park, London

Spirituality is often framed within traditional lines. A living tradition, however, is also a spring board for creativity. The creative impulse and spiritual inspiration are closely related phenomena. Appreciation of beauty opens the eyes of the spirit and spiritual awakening makes the world beautiful. Nowadays, however, many people are not tied into to any particular spiritual or aesthetic tradition and must search for meaning upon an emptier canvass. In this day workshop we will explore the relationship between spirit, liberation and creativity. Suggested donation £15

LIKE A CIRCLE IN A SPIRAL....AN INTRODUCTION TO THE LABYRINTH

March 11th 3pm to 6:30pm

Amida Newcastle Newcastle upon Tyne

Come and join us for an afternoon where you will be introduced to the spiritual journey of walking, or dancing, the labyrinth. The afternoon will be led by Jackie, who has trained as a facilitator with Veriditas and is a tribal dancer, and Sujatin, who has had a short training in using the labyrinth for therapeutic purposes.

Cost: by donation. Suggested amount - £10 waged, £4 unwaged



VERNAL EQUINOX RETREAT WALK - GILLESPIE PARK NATURE RESERVE

Sunday 18th March 2pm 4pm

Gillespie Park, London

A guided walk just prior to the Vernal Equinox, through a beautiful nature reserve in the heart of London. With wildflowers and bird-life as our main focus we will be taking a leisurely stroll around the reserve so don't worry if you're not as fit as you once were! *Meet at the main entrance to the park just before 2.00 - turn right upon leaving Arsenal Underground Station - metal gates 100 yards on the right.*

Free event led by Richard Meyers

EQUINOX GATHERING AT AVEBURY: A SHAMANIC CIRCLE

21st - 23rd March

Avebury, Wiltshire

We will meet for a gathering involving meditation, chanting and ritual at the ancient site of Avebury. This will be the first event of this group established within Amida Trust to develop the shamanic approach to spiritual practice within the frame of Amida Buddhism. Participants to arrange accommodation. Plus an organisation fee of £20 per day.

Further detail can be found here: http://lotusinthemud.typepad.com/sacred_places_and_ancient/

Led by Rev. Sujatin, a senior Minister and Acharya with the Amida Order.

ZEN THERAPY: PUNCTUATING DYSFUNCTIONAL EQUILIBRIUM

March 24th 25th 10am 4pm both days

Sukhavati, Finsbury Park, London

This workshop introduces key principles of Buddhist psychology from the point of view of the therapeutic process. Buddhism teaches that all mental states depend upon conditions and all mental change is a function of changes in those conditions. Psychological change thus generally has the characteristic of a collision with reality. Led by David Brazier & Jnanamati

To find out more about this and other Institute of Zen Therapy courses, see

<http://www.instituteforzentherapy.com>.

SILA SESSHIN

Sahishnu's House in Bolsover, Derbyshire, UK

18th 22nd of June (starting 8am and finishing 4pm)

This intensive five day retreat is focussed upon the, nature, application and meaning of Buddhist ethics. In this approach to Buddhism ethical guidelines are considered as expressions of and supports to faith and the mind of awakening; as such they are "koans" or "hwadu" - foci for spiritual practice to be worked with on-going through life.

This retreat forms part of the series of five sesshin recommended to all Amida Buddhists who wish to seriously deepen their practice.

£250 fully residential or £65 per day, concessions available

Contact Amida

UNITED KINGDOM

Amida London is the office of the head of the Amida Order. It hosts regular day retreats and other events.

Sukhavati
21 Sussex Way
London N7 6RT

Telephone: 0207 263 2183
modgala@amidatrust.com
www.amidalondon.org.uk

Amida Newcastle has regular weekly meetings in Gosforth.

sujatin@gmail.com
http://lotusinthemud.typepad.com/amida_newcastle/

Amida Sheffield have weekly meetings

Telephone: 0114 272 4290
amidasheffield@blueyonder.co.uk
<http://pureland.wordpress.com>

Amida Malvern have weekly & mothly meetings in Malvern.

Telephone: 01684 572 444
kaspalita@amidatrust.com
www.malvernsangha.co.uk

EUROPE

Amida Belgium has regular meetings, with a retreat open to newcomers once a year.

<http://www.namoamidabu.be/>

WORLDWIDE

Amida USA & Amida Hawai'i

The Amida USA is a non-profit church based in Hawai'i created to further the spread and practice of Amida-shu Pureland Buddhism.

<http://www.amidausa.org/>

Amida Mosaic (Ontario, Canada)

The Amida Mosaic Sangha is a community of spiritual friends. Amida Mosaic Sangha activities are held in London Ontario under the leadership of Prajnatarā T. Bryant, a Gankonin with the Amida Order.

amidamosaic@gmail.com
<http://amidamosaic.com>

Amida Israel

Amida Israel Sangha meets on the 3rd Sunday each month, 20:30 - 22:30 for practice & sharing.

ymatri@gmail.com

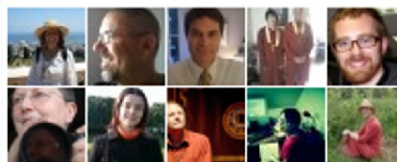
Online Sangha



Friends of Amida

Blogs, discussion, groups,
photographs, video & audio
teachings - come talk about
Culturally Engaged Buddhism

Over 900 members



<http://amidatrust.ning.com>