



RIVER DHAMMA

✿ Arrow River Forest Hermitage News ✿ Vol. 4 No. 2

Winter 2008/2550

Molecular Memory, Mind and the Moment

There is consciousness, objects arising to consciousness, and no third thing besides. Far be it for this practitioner to search for holes in the Dhamma, but since the wise must truly know for themselves, then it behooves us to investigate its truths personally. After all, the raising of further philosophical perspectives is what ensures the spontaneous vitality of The Dhamma.

When I hear this, I am compelled to ask, "What or who is it that is watching the process of thoughts arising and falling away in meditation?" Our endless and sometimes tiresome thoughts are inextricably linked to having gone out through the sense doors and therefore just as tightly linked to this physical body (five bodily senses, plus mind sense). The accumulation of these thoughts over the years of this particular life, as well our countless previous incarnations, can be called Karma, or, for the purposes of this inquiry, molecular memory. Molecular memory is all of the dense physicality that makes up the human body. Consciousness has wormed its way into the physical dimension in the form of this being. In actuality, we can find no dividing line between mind and matter; between subject and object.

As soon as the hand reaches for the smoke or the drink, a dynamic of action and result is set into motion at that precise moment. Addicts mostly go to the physical realm when speaking of their daily habit, but there is a decision being made, sublimated or embedded as it may be, in the molecules of the past. Patterns of thought and behavior have been set into place so often and so firmly that the mind subs them out to the body. The mind, however, still has the last say in the matter; literally.

There does seem to be some third "thing besides", though, which mediates between these two regions of our universe. I'll call this third thing intention. Intention is born of the creative realms and its job is to call the shots between mind and matter. The ability to observe intention in a given moment requires speed and skill. This combined speed and skill can also be called moral discernment. The moral nature of the universe is so simply and beautifully evident in the teachings of the Eight-fold Path. The very fabric of the universe is a moral dynamic played out in the here-and-now. Clarity of Intent is the very fruit of The Practice.

Intention, volition and will are simply different words for the same magic, creative spark between old habits of the past and new results for the future. (Of course past and future are mere illusions). We only ever have this present moment. We rarely wish to examine our intention in this moment and this unwillingness to go to the place of intention is commonly called denial. And I'm not suggesting we invest the energy required for the psycho-therapeutic approach of tracing problems to their roots. I'm speaking of the recognition that there is a will to be used for skillful result. The unknowable aspect in a moral universe is called freedom. That is: we can choose for repeated unskillful results or we can sharpen the tool and create a better carving in the end. When we

observe the carving, that is, our life lived well; peace and physical well being are their own rewards.

The freedom to acknowledge the moral nuance of intention can only be fully grasped and hence skillfully implemented into healthy and peaceful results in this moment and not in some mythical future when, one thinks, "I'm going to be better".

But, as the old Native saying goes, "If you're not happy today, you never will be".

Thank you for all your skillful intentions over this past year. You need only look to the collective results to know that all is as it should be. Scot Kyle

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Arrow River Forest Hermitage welcomes visitors. Prior notification is necessary if you would like overnight accommodations. Retreats must be scheduled in advance with Ajahn Punnadhammo. Retreatants are required to abide by the 8 precepts. Guests are required to abide by the 5 precepts.

Notice to Supporters of Arrow River Forest Hermitage

Currently ARFH is experiencing some administrative challenges. Due to late filing of our 2005 federal charity tax return, our charitable status has been revoked by Revenue Canada - Charities Directorate. The board of directors has been doing our utmost to correct this situation and have now sent in the necessary paper work to renew our charitable status. Until our charitable status is renewed, we are unable to issue receipts for income tax purposes. Once our charitable status is renewed we will be allowed to issue tax receipts retroactively.

This issue has not affected the day to day operations of ARFH, and it continues to be a place of residence for monastics, and a place of spiritual development for meditators and the lay community. As such, we continue to have day to day expenses. As always, ARFH relies on the generosity of its lay supporters and we hope that you will continue to support us, even through this time of uncertainty.

In loving kindness

ARFH Board of Directors
January 2008

To the ARFH Lay Community

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all supporters of Arrow River Forest Hermitage for your generosity in the past and hope that this will continue into the future. Keeping the Buddhist tradition, all teachings and meditation retreats are offered free of charge and the center is run solely on what is freely given. As mentioned in the above notice, ARFH still has need of funds to purchase necessary items such as food, general supplies, propane and gasoline.

I have personally experienced regular dhamma talks, have done several meditation retreats at ARFH and have completed a stewardship. Because of these opportunities, I have been able to achieve great strides in my own spiritual growth and development. I believe that such a treasure is something worth maintaining so that others will have the opportunity to share, visit, learn, grow or even serve the ARFH community.

Metta

Lori Smetaniuk
Treasurer - ARFH

Support for ARFH can be sent to: Arrow River Forest Hermitage
Treasurer
c/o Lori Smetaniuk
2-19 Skeen's Lane
Etobicoke ON M8W 4Z5

Comings and Goings

We have had the pleasure this year to enjoy the company of Samenera Paramito, an Amaravati novice originally from Slovakia. We would all like to thank him for his contributions to the community and wish him well in his further progress as he returns to Amaravati in the UK.

At the end of November, Venerable Jotipalo arrived from Abhayagiri in California with the intention to stay for at least a year. Jotipalo had his first contact with the monastic community right here at Arrow River when he served as steward and some of you may remember him by his lay name, Don Sperry. He took ordination at Abhayagiri and now has eight rains under his belt.



Making Firewood

*is a pleasant duty gives an opportunity to cultivate good qualities
encourages inner strength and community
does not support competitiveness?
coffee break is part of it does not lead to attachment*

Northern Ontario, Canada Fall 2007 Samenera Paramito

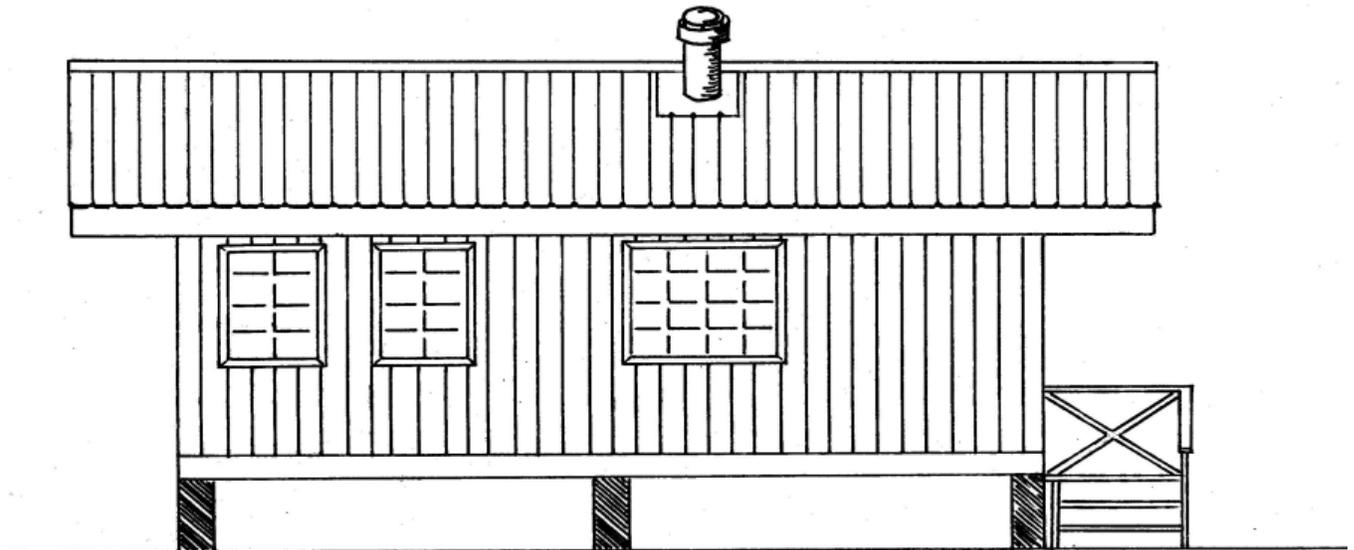
LIBRARY PROJECT

Over the years, we have seen considerable progress in the facilities at the Hermitage. We now have seven year-round dwellings, and the pavilion is finally finished inside and out. Looking ahead, we have decided that our next project should be a building to house the library and to provide some minimal office space.

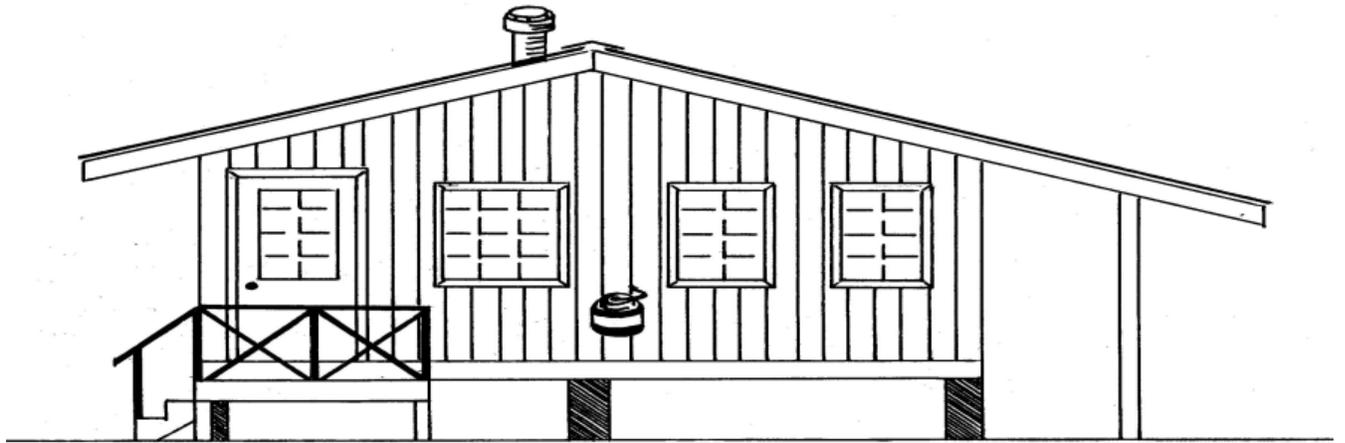
It has long been my thought that the most important function of the sangha is to provide a living vehicle for the preservation and manifestation of the authentic Buddhadhamma. Sometimes the role of the sangha is divided into patipatta and pariyatti, practise and study. We now have a good base for practise, and to mature as a monastery, and as a centre for Buddhism in North America, we need to have a good facility to make the written teachings accessible to residents and guests.

We do have a pretty good collection of texts, both canonical and modern, as well as an assortment of books outside the dispensation. However, these are not at present well stored nor easily accessible. The vision is to build a structure to stack the books properly, and to protect them from the elements, and to provide an inviting space for those who wish to pursue some study while they are here.

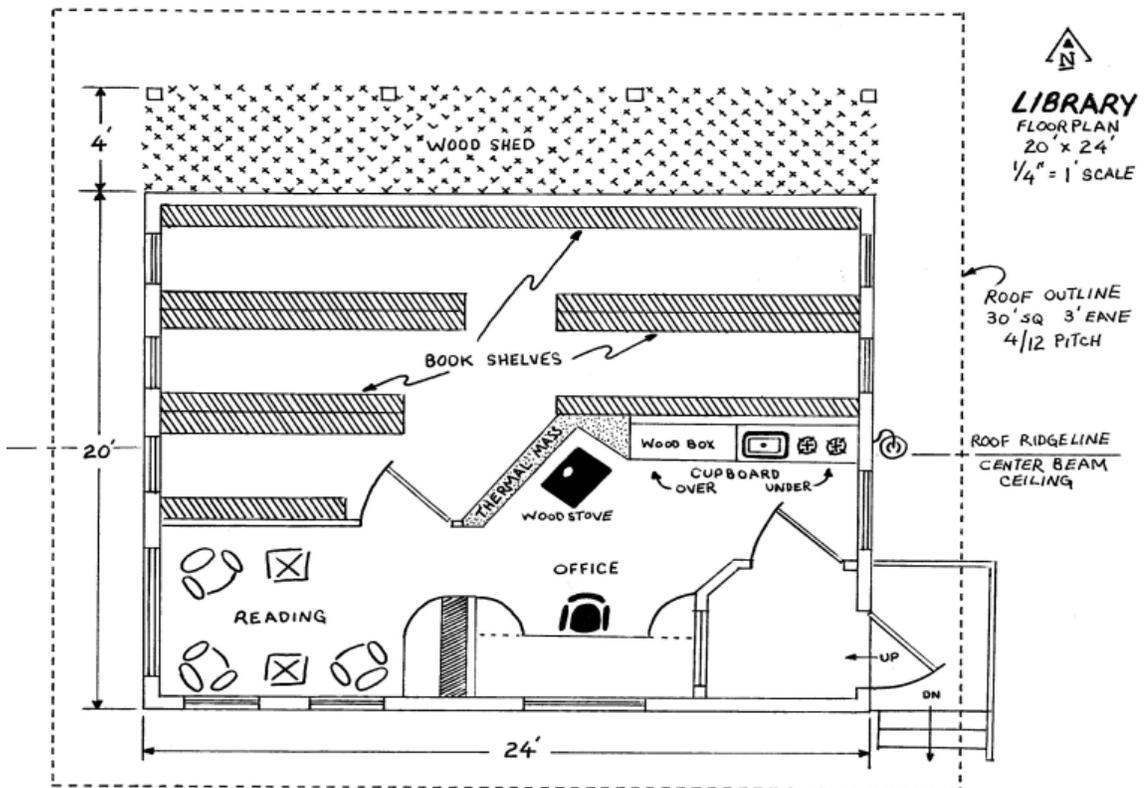
The building (see the drawing in this newsletter) will have an area for the stacks, a well-lit sitting area for reading, and a small space for office-work. To build this structure, on a twenty foot by twenty-four foot footprint, we estimate a cost of \$9800. As soon as the funds are in hand, and the ground thaws, we can begin construction. We think this facility will be a great service towards the Dhamma, providing a pleasant community space for those wishing to enrich their knowledge. I hope you are as excited about this project as we are.



LIBRARY ELEVATION SOUTH SIDE VIEW



LIBRARY ELEVATION EAST SIDE VIEW



First Annual Arrow River Canoe Trip by Winston Loh

This past September the Arrow River community went on a 4 day canoe trip. The route was picked by Scot Kyle, and started just 20km up the road from the hermitage.

This was a really nice opportunity to explore some of the beautiful natural environment around Arrow River Forest Hermitage. We are blessed to be close to nature. I won't say that the environment here is completely pristine, because there is logging and some clear-cut areas of forest, but this is also an opportunity for us to reflect on the ways that we want to use the environment.

As our route wound along the waters of the US/Canadian border, it was interesting to reflect that the south shore and north shore of these waters represented 2 different countries. But when paddling a canoe on the lake, nature made no distinction between these two.

This was my first experience doing a canoe-trek. Paddling a canoe on calm and peaceful water is quite meditative. Being surrounded by nature is good for the spirit. I also had the feeling that traveling by canoe is a quintessentially Canadian experience. Actually the route that we were on was one of the original routes that the voyageurs used in the fur trading days, and before that, the native peoples used these routes. So there was also a sense of history, especially when walking along the portages.

On this particular trip, we had a full variety of weather. On our first and last day we had beautiful warm sunshine. The 2 days in the middle had rain, cold, strong wind, and even a little snow! On the windy day, there were 1 foot waves on the lake, this didn't make for safe paddling, so we had a quiet day in camp.

Thank you Scot, for guiding us along the route, and to Lucas, for preparing the most delicious meals. As always thank you Ajahn for your wisdom, guidance, and energy. Thank you Paramito for your presence and your energy at Arrow River over the past year. We have really enjoyed having you.

I hope that we can look forward to more annual Arrow River canoe-tudongs together.

Be well,

Winston

