

River Dhamma

News and Articles from Arrow River Forest Hermitage

Library Construction Update

—Ajahn Pnuudhammo

Like everything else, it started as an idea, a mental formation. Then it became a drawing, then a patch of cleared ground, then a carefully laid out set of foundation blocks, then a floor-deck and it is currently a complete set of framed walls. By the end of this summer, we plan to have the shell of the building complete, and to do the interior finishing and furnishing next year.

The Arrow River Learning Centre building has a total footprint of 36 feet by 20 feet, and this includes semi-detached living quarters intended for the occupancy of the monastic steward. The Learning Centre itself will have two rooms; a library for storage of



Above: The Arrow River Library, under construction

the books, and a sitting and reading area with a well-lit south-west corner.

It is hoped that this building, when completed, will serve for many years as a community gathering place and a haven for mindful study of the teachings. It is something I have felt for many years is needed to bring the Arrow River Forest Hermitage to the next level.

Much merit to all the people who have contributed to this project with their generosity and with their sweat. We could not have done it without you! Special mention should go to Ajahn Jotipalo who visited us and led a working retreat from June 28 - July 4, bringing some of our friends from Minnesota. Anumodana!

We still have a way to go, and we still need

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Issue

News & Articles
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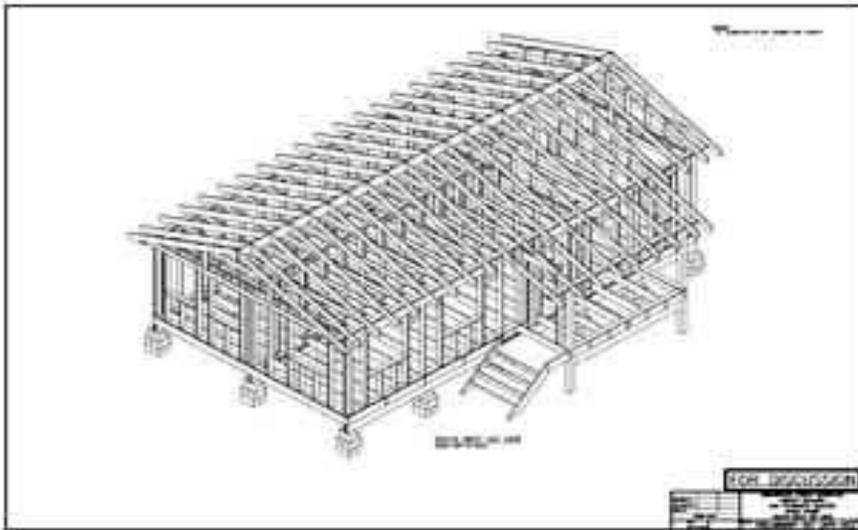
Ajahn Punnadhammo:	3-5
Anthea Kyle, Winter Book Study Review	6
Dhamma Talk Schedule Update	6
Lori Smetaniuk – Treasurer's Update	7
Stewardship at ARFH	8
Contact Information	9

your continued support. You can help either by making a donation earmarked for the building fund, or if possible, by coming by any day of the week and swinging a hammer for a few hours.

River Dhamma is edited by Hugh Mullally and Anthea Kyle.

Feel free to contact Hugh with any feedback or suggestions: riverdhamma@gmail.com

Libray Schematics and Photos—Building Blocks to Four Walls



Clockwise from top left: The original blueprint of the library; the Buddha looking over the progress; Ajahns Punnadhammo and Jotipalo with some helping hands; the Library as it stood mid-July; and the foundation blocks being leveled.

Many thanks go out to those who have contributed, both monetarily and physically to the realization of this project.

Your generosity is greatly appreciated!

About the Forthcoming Book

Ajahn Punnadhammo



In the spring of 2012 I taught a short workshop on Buddhist Cosmology at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies. Doing the research for the course, my interest in the topic deepened and I also discovered that there is very little secondary literature already written, especially covering the Theravada version. Not being able to find the book I wanted to read, I was left with no option but to write it myself.

Thus, I have been plugging away since then on what I hope will be a comprehensive overview of Theravada cosmology. This will, I think, be a useful book in several ways. First, there is the sheer fascination of a complex mythological structure, making the study a joy in itself. Second, there is the possibility of entering into the world-view of the original, ancient Indian followers of the Buddha. Third, the information contained will fill a gap in the knowledge of many western practitioners. And fourth, understanding the mythological matrix in which the teachings are imbedded can only enhance and enrich our understanding of the Dhamma itself.

My plan for the book is for it to have four sections:

I - An overview of the various realms and their inhabitants;

II - A description of the physical world-system as pictured by the early Buddhists;

III - A look at cosmological time; the arising, evolution and passing away of the world-system in repeated cycles;

IV - A summary chapter putting it all together and in context.

We are including in this newsletter a short selection from the chapters already written. Your comments and suggestions are welcome.

(book selection on following page)

Selection From Ajahn Punnadhammo's Forthcoming Book

KINNARAS

Before leaving the topic of earth-bound devas, mention may be made of the odd little beings known as *kinnara*. *Strictly speaking, they are not classed as devas, but it is hard to say just what they are, as their name implies. The word kinnara is probably a contraction for kimpurisa, which they are sometimes also called, and which means literally "Is it human?"*

The kinnaras are small beings of the woods, mostly found in the Himavant forest in the far north of Jampudipa. In traditional artistic representations, they are depicted as half-human and half-bird; a human head or sometimes a head and torso, on the lower half of a bird. But this image does not agree very well with the stories about them.

Two kinnara, husband and wife, named Canda and Candā, lived together in the wooded slopes of the Mountain of the Moon in the Himavant. They dressed themselves in the gauze of flowers and fed on pollen. Once while they were amusing themselves in a forest glade, the husband playing a tune on a bamboo lute while his lovely wife danced and sang a pretty song, a king of men, out hunting for deer, spied them there. He fell at once in love with Candā, intoxicated by her beauty, and determined to slay her husband and seize her for himself [Candakinnara Jātaka no. 485].

It seems unlikely that the king would desire a half-bird creature in this way! On the other hand, in another Jātaka [Takkāriya no. 481] when two captured kinnaras refuse to sing for the king's amusement, he orders them cooked for his breakfast, which is unlikely if they were of human form.

They are mostly known for two things – their

beautiful singing voices and their deep affection for their mates.

Once upon a time the king of Benares was hunting high up in the northern mountains when he came across two kinnaras who sat embracing one another and from time to time falling into the most pitiful weeping. He asked them kindly what might be the reason for their distress, and they told him that seven hundred years ago they had been separated for one night. They had been gathering flowers when a sudden mountain torrent had flooded the stream that lay between them. The memory of that night apart seven hundred years ago, was what kept them weeping ever after [Bhallāṭiya Jātaka no. 504].

The verses that accompany this story highlight the ambiguous nature of the kinnara. The female kinnara tells the king that the wild animals take them for human, but the savage huntsmen call them *kimpurisa*, "are they human?"

GANDHABBAS

The word *gandhabba* is used in three different ways; it refers to a class of earth-bound deva, to the heavenly musicians in the lower heavens, and to an entity seeking rebirth. The heavenly musicians we shall meet later, in the chapter on the terrestrial heavens. The "entity seeking rebirth" is one of the three factors needed for conception, the other two of course being the mother and the father in union [MN 38, 26]. The commentary says: "The *gandhabba* is the being to be reborn. It is not someone (i.e. a disembodied spirit) standing nearby watching the future parents having intercourse, but a being driven on by the

mechanism of kamma, due to be reborn on that occasion." [Bhikkhu Bodhi trans., "Middle Length Discourses" footnote 411 on page 1232] To discuss this type of gandhabba further would be to delve into the controversy over an "intermediate state" in Theravada and beyond the scope of this book [See Peter Harvey, "The Selfless Mind" pp. 89-105].

The earth-bound type of gandhabba is also somewhat mysterious. In the Saṃyutta Nikāya there is a short chapter devoted to them [SN X. 31 Gandhabbasaṃyutta] and there we learn that they dwell in fragrant roots, fragrant flowers, fragrant sap and so forth. (*Gandha* is the Pali word for "scent") They are long-lived, beautiful and abounding in happiness. Some humans desire rebirth in that realm, which may be had by making merit with body, speech and mind and having an aspiration for such rebirth, or particularly by making gifts of fragrant roots, flowers and so on. The *Ātānātiya Sutta* of the *Digha Nikāya* includes the gandhabbas among those beings who may "with hostile intent" disturb solitary bhikkhus in their meditation.

VALĀHAKA-DEVAS

The *valāhaka-devas*, cloud-devas, dwell in the clouds and have some control over the weather. They are divided into cold-cloud devas, warm-cloud devas, storm-cloud devas, wind devas and rain devas. When a storm-cloud deva, for instance, causes a storm it is due to his "revelling in his own kind of delight" [SN XI. 32]. These devas, however, are not the sole cause of the weather; the commentary lists seven. These are the power of *nāgas*, the power of *supaṇṇas* (garudas), the power of devas, the power of an asservation of truth, natural weather (*utusamuttthana* - lit. caused by tem-

perature), the workings of *Māra* and by supernatural power [SNA]. The sub-commentary explains that normal seasonal changes are simply the work of natural processes, but unusual weather is caused by action of these devas [Connected Discourses of the Buddha, Bhikkhu Bodhi, p. 1102, footnote 293].

It is also said that the morality of human beings has an indirect effect on the weather, by causing the sky devas to become either pleased or annoyed. When human morality is good, then the devas are pleased and the rain falls regularly in due season; when human morality is bad, the devas are displeased and withhold the rains [AN IV, 70]. However, it may also happen that the cloud-devas are simply distracted by play and become heedless [AN V, 197 & Commentary] because they are, after all, beings of the sensual-desire realm. This is said to be among the causes of failure of the rains, which the prognosticators (*nemitta*) do not know, and cannot see. It may explain why weather forecasts are sometimes wrong!

Your input on this selection is welcome as Ajahn continues writing Contact
A j a h n P u n n a d h a m m o
at: arfh@xplornet.com



Advisory: Dhamma Talk Times

This is a kind reminder to those who visit the Arrow River Forest Hermitage for weekly Dhamma Talks of our upcoming schedule:

- *Dhamma Talks are now being held on Saturday evenings at 7 pm. Please arrive by 6:50 so as to ensure an orderly commencement. This meet time will continue until later in the fall when days get shorter.*
- *For directions and future schedule adjustments, see our website, www.arrowriver.ca/contact.html*
- *Sharing a ride is encouraged and carpooling from Thunder Bay can be arranged, if enough notice is given.*

Please drive carefully to and from the hermitage, as the roads can get tricky in the winter season, along with wildlife in the area all year long.

Winter Book Study Review, 2012

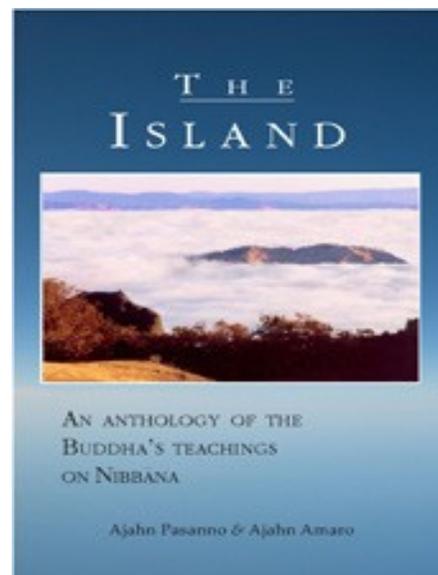
Anthea Kyle

For eight weeks in February and March, the Arrow River Book Study group met in the Brodie Street Library to discuss Ajahn Passano and Ajahn Amaro's *The Island: An Anthology of the Buddha's Teachings on Nibbana*.

Ten dedicated group members worked with Ajahn Punnadhammo as we studied the book chapter by chapter. Participants took turns explicating the chapters and lively discussion ensued. While we sometimes struggled to understand the ineffable nature of Nibbana, those who attended found this session to be a valuable contribution to our understanding of this key concept.

The group discussed topics for next winter's book study and have come up with two main options: Ajahn Chah's *Food for the Heart* and *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* by Sogyal Rinpoche.

If you would like to join the group this February or have an idea of a text to study, feel free to contact Anthea Kyle at arrowriverforest@gmail.com. The December newsletter will give more information about the dates and text for the 2013 Winter Book Study.



Please get in touch with Anthea Kyle to reserve your place in the book study group. Space is limited!

A PDF of this book can also be downloaded at:

<http://www.abhayagiri.org/main/book/1788/>

Treasurer's Report

Lori Smetaniuk

Since the Buddha's time, monasteries have been supported by the lay community. This tradition is still alive and well, over 2500 years later. The generosity of our community continues to support ARFH in its daily operation, and enough funds have been received to complete the exterior of the new learning center with attached steward's quarters by the end of this summer. Donations are still being accepted towards the completion the interior finish and furnishings in 2013.

The ARFH lay community extends worldwide; from all parts of Canada, the United States and communities from overseas, (ex. Great Britain, Sri Lanka). Donations from North America are received by cheque, while others like the convenience of using CanadaHelps.ca donate now link on our webpage. Donations given by cheque – 100% of the funds are received and used by ARFH, while CanadaHelps takes a 3.9% processing fee before distributing any funds. This fee covers their cost of accepting credit cards and issuing of tax receipts.

As of July 31, 2012 the donation sources are as follows:

20 % CanadaHelps.ca and other Canadian Charities ;

15 % Non - Canadian Donations ;

20 % Non - Receipted Canadian Donations;

45 % Tax Receipted Donations (available only to Canadian donors)

Did you know that ARFH pays no wages? Not only do we rely on donations for our operations, but also volunteers to run all aspects of the hermitage; shopping, meal preparation, lawn mowing, firewood preparation, building maintenance and even our building project.

It is great to be back in Thunder Bay and directly involved in the happenings at Arrow River Forest Hermitage. The Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha have been my refuge. I would like to extend my personal heart felt gratitude for everyone's continued support and belief in the programming that Arrow River Forest has to offer.

May you all be well, happy and at peace.

Lori Smetaniuk



Your donations to ARFH are greatly appreciated. See donation information on the following page if you are interested in contributing to our Buddhist community here in Northwestern Ontario.

Inquiries regarding donations: treasurer@arrowriver.ca



Stewardship at Arrow River

In small hermitages like Arrow River where traditional alms-round is not possible, this daily practice is replaced by the work of a monastic steward. This is not entirely an innovation; provision is made for such in the Vinaya under Nissaggiya Pñācittiya 10. The steward (Pali-veyyāvacacaro) is a lay-person who lives at the monastery and takes care of doing those duties which are not allowed for the bhikkhus themselves. In practice, this amounts to being the cook and kitchen manager.

The Arrow River Forest Hermitage has an on-going need for a steward to reside here. As everything in the Theravada Buddhist tradition is freely given, this is a volunteer position but the steward's room and board is provided. It is a wonderful opportunity for someone who wants to live close to nature and study the Dhamma for an extended period of time.

We usually ask for a minimum of three months commitment, to provide continuity. Men or women are accepted. It is helpful, but not essential, for the person to have a valid driver's license. The steward's principal duty is to plan and prepare and serve the one meal a day for the residents, usually less than half a dozen people. In addition, the steward does the weekly shopping, the kitchen laundry and ensures the kitchen and Sala are clean and tidy.

If you are interested, you can find out more by visiting the Arrow River website: www.arrowriver.ca and following the link to the Visitor's Page.



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Donation Information

The Arrow River Forest Hermitage community greatly appreciates the generosity of all of our supporters throughout the years and in the future.

In order to continue offering the teachings of the Buddha to those who seek them, we do rely entirely on the generosity of our supporters, along with the funds generated by Ajahn Punnadhammo's various talks and speaking engagements in Canada and the United States.

All donations towards our annual budget of \$35,000 are received with gratitude, and Canadian residents who donate \$10.00 or more will receive a charitable tax receipt. Your contribution can be sent to:

Arrow River Forest Hermitage - Treasurer
c/o 634 Hartland Street
Thunder Bay ON P7B 2E6

Please make cheques payable to "Arrow River Forest Hermitage"

See also: <http://arrowriver.ca/danapage.html> for more info

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

