



# RIVER DHAMMA

✿ Arrow River Forest Hermitage News ✿

*Fall/Winter 2010/2553*

## President's Address

Dear Friends on the Path,

Welcome to the latest edition of River Dhamma. Things at the hermitage have been quiet over the last winter, with fewer retreatants than in previous years. The lay community took advantage of this quiet time to have a weeklong residential retreat in February, and Ajahn led this group in the practice of the Brahma Viharas, the divine abodes of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.

Although the summer months were also quiet, lots was done around the hermitage, thanks to the efforts of Esko, and Scott Perky. Scott designed and built a system to bring running water into the kitchen, for the summer months. We had been pumping and carrying buckets of water previously. This is much appreciated by everyone, thank you Scott.

The duties of steward have often fallen on the shoulders of Esko this year, as we have had fewer people coming to volunteer as steward. Much gratitude to him, for all that he does for the hermitage. We are currently in need of a steward, please contact Ajahn if you, or someone you know could be of service.

In July, Ajahn led a weeklong retreat on the noble eight-fold path. Since there is lots of space for tenting at Arrow River in the summer months, we are considering making this an annual event.

We recently had our annual general meeting at the hermitage, where the membership elects new board members for the coming year. Barry Jeffery, who has served on the board for the last year, decided to step down. Barry brought focus and experience to our board, and continues to be an important part of the lay community.

For the first time ever, there were multiple candidates for positions of President, Secretary, and Director, resulting in our first ever elections. Although there were elections, there were no "losers". Everyone that expressed an interest in serving on the board was welcomed. The "winners" are all of us who are part of the Arrow River community. A warm welcome to new Director Darlene Barrett, and to Hugh Mullally. Welcome back to Scot Kyle, our VP for this year, who brings experience and energy to the board.

As I think of board members past and present, and members of our lay community, I am reminded of the importance of

community. Everyone brings different strengths to the group, and when we work together for a higher purpose, we are truly greater than the sum of our parts.

Wishing you and your community joy, peace and friendship.

Yours in the Dhamma,

Winston Loh

## Table of Contents

President's Address .....	1
Notes from the Treasurer.....	2
Dealing with Painful Sensation.....	3
Stewarding at Arrow River.....	4
The Online Pali Tutor.....	5
Support.....	6

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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.

## Notes from the Treasurer - Lori Smetaniuk

Fall is now upon us, with winter not far away. With each change in seasons nature gives us a visual reminder that all things are impermanent. As we walk along the trails of any park, or drive down any tree lined road, we will be able to see the leaves change from green to spectacular hues of oranges, reds, and browns before dropping to the ground. The trees will eventually stand bare over the cold winter months waiting for the warmth of spring to bud and flower to full foliage.

It's the very small or slow unseen changes that occur every minute of every day that gives us a sense of permanency. At Arrow River Forest Hermitage our manmade structures (mostly buildings) can take years before we perceive any changes. The past couple of years have required some maintenance to be done on buildings. Last year the shingles on the roof of the Abbot's cabin were replaced. This year his decking had to be replaced and work done on the eavestrough. The retreat cabins and kitchen also required some work this year: decking replaced, stairs replaced, firewood storage area received new roofs and the kitchen required painting and a new propane tank. The van is continuing to age and has required repairs over the year, often with little or no warning.

### Summary of Donations as of August 31, 2010

Source Percent

Canadian Registered Charities (includes CanadaHelps)	17%
Canadian Non Receipted	14%
Canadian Tax Receipted	26%
Non Canadian Public	18%
Non Canadian Dharma Centers (Teachings in US )	25%

The past year has seen many changes to our lives and those around the world; continued job losses and natural disasters. Everyone is feeling the pinch with only so much money to go around. Keeping in mind that many beings in the world are going without, we shall endeavour to keep expenses to a minimum, and practice simplicity in our needs. Even still, ARFH's operating funds may fall short of its budget for 2010 by \$2,200.

Donors have 2 options for sending donations. The preferred option is by cheque sent directly to the Treasurer. For those wishing to use a credit card, CanadaHelps.org is the alternate choice. Arrow River is charged a small fee for using this online donation portal. Check out their web site: <http://www.canadahelps.org>.

On behalf of Arrow River Forest Hermitage, I would like to thank the members of our lay community for your continued support. Donations continue to support the resident monk, Abbot - Ajahn Punnadhammo, and help ARFH to continue to offer meditation retreats, teachings, and talks in the Buddhist tradition.

May you be well    May you be happy    May you be free of suffering

## Dealing With Painful Sensations

### *Ajahn Punnadhammo*

In April of this year I seriously injured my left thumb in a freak accident. It was caught in the well mechanism when a pressure bolt slipped loose suddenly. My thumb was basically smashed, and almost severed just below the nail. The emergency room doctor thought it may have to be amputated, but the surgeon was able to put the pieces back together, more or less.

The whole experience was certainly not pleasant, nor would I care to repeat it. But like many of life's little surprises, it did offer some opportunity for learning. There are Dhamma lessons everywhere, if you take the trouble to look for them.

My wrecked thumb certainly gave me lots of dukkha to work with. The Buddha's teaching about the two arrows really came into focus. Our suffering is like being struck by two arrows. One is the physical pain itself, which is a given determined by our karma and other causes. The second arrow is optional, and that is the mental or emotional aspect of pain. The whining factor that says "poor me." There is no reason we need to endure this arrow, with which we shoot ourselves.

Having a tender thumb also proved to be an on-going teacher of mindfulness. I have had to perform every mundane daily task with extra care and attention because any small knock on my thumb was intensely painful.

Pain in the body is a common problem for meditators too. It is a difficulty almost everyone faces from time to time, especially on retreats where the yogi spends many hours sitting motionless; something the body is not accustomed to. What follows are some notes about dealing with pain while trying to meditate.

1. First, one should do everything reasonable to lessen the stress on the body on a physical level. Maintaining good posture is critical. The spine should be erect but not stiff. The Vissudhimagga says that the vertabrae should be like a pile of coins; that is the centre of gravity should run through the middle of the backbone so that the pile of coins do not topple over.

Some stretching exercises during the day can help keep the body limber. Two hatha yoga postures especially useful for sitting easily are the cobra's pose and the seated hero's posture. You can find detailed descriptions in any good book on yoga. These will help the hips and the knees. We tend to feel it in our knees, but usually the problem is actually that the hips are not open enough, having been ruined by a life-time of sitting in chairs. Forward, backward and side-ways stretches of the spine are also helpful. There are specific hatha yoga postures for these as well.

A special note should be made about knees. The knee joint is very tricky and delicate. Unless there is a physical injury, pains in the back during meditation are usually nothing to be concerned about. But pains in the knees may be warning that something is being pulled that shouldn't be. Do not sit long in full lotus unless you can do so with ease.

2. Dealing with pain with samatha. There are two main kinds of meditation in Buddhist theory; samatha and vipassana, tranquillity and insight. Samatha is meditation upon a fixed object such as the in and out breath. The deeper one gets into the meditation, the more samadhi one has, the less the sense organs impinge on consciousness. This includes the body-sense of touch and therefore pain. Deep in samadhi, painful sensations fade into insignificance. In the Buddha's later years he suffered a lot with the physical effects of age, particularly back-ache. He reported in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta that the only time he was free of pain was when he was immersed in jhana (deep meditative absorption.)

You might think that it would be difficult to attain deep samadhi when faced with intense pain. This is one very good reason to develop those skills while one is still in good health. But there is another side to it, which I discovered when my own pain was at its worst, right after the surgery on my thumb. Pain can actually make concentrating easier. Sometimes I could almost feel my mind fleeing from the sensations in the body and taking refuge in the peacefulness of the object. It had a way of focussing things. The mind did not want to waste time dealing with the usual day-dreams and thoughts about the day's activity. You might say the priorities were clarified.

3. Dealing with pain with vipassana. Vipassana is the meditation of clear-seeing; looking at the phenomena which present themselves to the mind with clarity and objectivity. Pain can be noticed as an object. It is simply a sensation, an occurrence at the sense doors like anything else. If an emotional reaction occurs, that is just another mental object. None of this is any problem at all unless we make it so by identifying with it, building a self around it.

It is a useful exercise in meditation sometimes to focus the mind deliberately on a painful sensation in the body. This should be done without any agenda about wanting to make it go away. Just be aware of it. See it simply as an example of sense-contact. If the mental quality of "unpleasant" occurs, as it probably will, be aware of that also but do not confuse the two. This exercise can be difficult at first, and takes some courage and determination, but you can learn a lot from it.

4. Finally, the most important advice about pain in meditation concerns a change in attitude. You need to accept on a deep level that this is an imperfect human body and it's always going to hurt. Dukkha is an integral part of the package, not an unwanted option.

Dukkha is always present at every moment to a lesser or greater degree. In normal daily activity we move about and fidget to avoid looking at it. When we sit still in meditation, the inherent dukkha of having a body comes to the fore and we cannot easily evade it. Overcoming pain in meditation is not a matter of finding the perfect ergonomic seat or some special combination of cushions. It is not even learning some special technique. It is overcome not by making it stop, but by ceasing to let it matter. Just being with the way things are, rough bits and all.

## Stewarding at Arrow River



Householders & the homeless  
 in mutual dependence  
 both reach the true Dhamma:  
     the unsurpassed safety from bondage.  
 From householders, the homeless  
 receive requisites: robes, lodgings,  
 protection from inclemencies.

While in dependence on those well-gone,  
 home-loving householders  
 have conviction in arahants  
     of noble discernment,  
     absorbed in jhana.

Among the many things laypeople, even the most diligent of practitioners of the Dhamma, take for granted is the freedom to purchase, plan or prepare meals whenever their appetites dictate. Rarely do we experience real hunger, or for that matter, real dependence on the work of another to sustain us. In contrast, a monk of the Theravada tradition must be offered nourishment between the hours of dawn and noon, keeping the ancient custom that was established by the Buddha of alms giving. This daily sharing of food allows laypeople the opportunity to gain merit by their generous giving while nourishing the monastic community so that monks may devote as much of their attention to meditation and practice.

At Arrow River, it is not possible for Ajahn Punnadhammo and residents to perform daily alms round, and so sustenance is provided by a steward who prepares and serves a mid-morning meal every day. If you have visited the Hermitage, you will know that the meal is a time for fellowship as well as nourishment. The importance of a steward in the daily lives of Arrow River residents cannot be overstated.

Normally, at this point in the article, I would include a pitch about how much Arrow River Forest Hermitage appreciates and needs volunteers who are willing to come out and perform the main functions of the steward: meal planning, preparation and clean up, shopping, laundry and basic Sala, kitchen and kuti housekeeping. And we do appreciate the efforts of the many residents, volunteer stewards and laypeople who continue to contribute to this vital activity.

However, lately, I've begun to realize the important opportunity this gives to the individual who volunteers as a steward. Providing a balanced daily meal and keeping a well-ordered Sala and kitchen are tasks that cultivate both discipline and mindfulness. If you would like to improve your own practice through the giving of your energy in the role of steward at the Hermitage, please email your statement of interest to [arrowriverforest@gmail.com](mailto:arrowriverforest@gmail.com).

Dana, like mercy is, therefore (to paraphrase Shakespeare), an outward display of devotion that is twice blessed, benefiting both the giver and receiver.

# The Online Pali Tutor

If you are interested in learning Pali, we have developed a web application that will be of use to you. The Pali Driller is a tool to help the student memorize vocabulary and noun declensions. To check it out, use Firefox to open <http://www.arrowriver.ca/pali/palidrill1.html>, or go to the Arrow River main page at <http://www.arrowriver.ca> and follow the link. Let us know if you find this useful.

### Pali Declension Driller

#### Declension Table

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
NOM	dhamm-	dhamm-
ACC	dhamm-	dhamm-
GEN	dhamm-	dhamm-
DAT	dhamm-	dhamm-
INST	dhamm-	dhamm-
ABL	dhamm-	dhamm-
LOC	dhamm-	dhamm-
VOC	dhamm-	dhamm-

Masculine Nouns with "A" Stem  
dhamma; noun masc.; "the teaching"

#### Pali Keyboard

a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	e	o
k	c	ṭ	t	p			
kh	ch	ṭh	th	ph			
g	j	ḍ	d	b			
gh	jh	ḍh	dh	bh			
m	ñ	ṇ	n	m			
y	r	l	v	s	h	ḷ	ḷh

Masc. -a stem	Neut. -a stem	Fem. -ā stem	1st Person	Pro. 3rd Masc.
Masc. -u stem	Neut. -u stem	Fem. -i stem	2nd Person	Pro. 3rd Fem.
		Fem. -ī stem		Pro. 3rd Neut.

## Ways to Support Arrow River Forest Hermitage

[www.arrowriver.ca](http://www.arrowriver.ca)

<p><b>Donate by cheque</b> (preferred method)</p> <p><b>Make payable to:</b> "ARFH" or Arrow River Forest Hermitage</p>	<p><b>Mail to:</b> ARFH - Treasurer c/o Lori Smetaniuk 272 Townsend Drive SS2 Breslau ON N0B 1M0 Canada</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Donate on Line</b></p>	<p>Use the CanadaHelps.org button on our website: <a href="http://www.arrowriver.ca">www.arrowriver.ca</a> <b>Note:</b> There is a fee charged to us for using this service. Credit cards are accepted and receipts are sent direct from CanadaHelps.org.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Donate Goods</b></p>	<p>Check out the wish list on the ARFH website. To receive a tax receipt, proof of market value must accompany goods. To confirm items you wish to donate email Ajahn Punnadhammo: <a href="mailto:arfh@xplornet.com">arfh@xplornet.com</a></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Donate Time/Labour</b></p>	<p>Everyone is welcome to come to the hermitage to help with the many jobs that need to be done. Before coming, contact Ajahn Punnadhammo.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A charitable tax receipt will be sent to Canadian residents making a donation of \$10.00 or more.</li> <li>➤ All unused donated funds received for specific projects will be re-allocate to other charitable activities.</li> <li>➤ Any questions regarding donations and tax receipts for ARFH can be emailed to: <a href="mailto:treasurer@arrowriver.ca">treasurer@arrowriver.ca</a></li> <li>➤ Canada Revenue Agency's - "Charities and Giving": <a href="http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/charities/">http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/charities/</a></li> <li>➤ CanadaHelps.org web site: <a href="http://www.canadahelps.org">www.canadahelps.org</a>.</li> </ul>	

