



The Sacred Thread

Weaving together the strands of individual and community spiritual practice in a celebration of Good friendship and Community as a foundation for integrating meditation practice in life.

Once the Ven. Ananda said to the Blessed One, "It wonderful I have realised that having admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues is half of the spiritual life."

The Buddha replied, "Don't say that, Ananda. Don't say that. Having admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues is actually the whole of the spiritual life. When you have admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues, you can be expected to naturally follow and grow in the noble eightfold path of awakening."

The Buddha's Ancient Path has always promoted personal and social healing and transformation. The Buddha taught that community is one of the three precious things in the world. He also taught that true and inspiring friendship is absolutely indispensable for a spiritual life. By spiritual we mean a life with healing, creative transformation and the wholeness of Awakening as its aim.

If the truths of the teaching are only read about in books, the spirit of the teaching dies. When we practice the teachings and "read the book of the heart", we light up with that same spirit of freedom and compassion that the Buddha discovered.

Every time we clearly see the actions and attitudes that harm or heal oneself and others, we learn another word of the language of the heart. Every time we choose to act in ways that free and heal others and ourselves, we open another page of the book of the heart.

The Buddha left simple and direct instructions to help us learn to read and master 'the book of the heart', and an unbroken thread of Friends from the time of the Buddha to now has verified the truth of these instructions through practice leading to increasing levels of freedom. The lessons of the book of the heart are everywhere: in our lives, in our families, in our communities and institutions and in the natural world.

Having this retreat and dharma gathering at Wat Buddhalavarn is a great opportunity. We will practice meditation and explore the teachings through discussion and creative activities in a tranquil bush camp.

John Allan, Dharma teacher

John Allan is a Dharma teacher and practitioner with 30 of experience. The path of his engaged Buddhist practice has led him through community arts, professional psychotherapeutic practice, leadership in the Men's Movement, local and national support of refugees and cross cultural bridge building with indigenous Australians.

In 2001, in full ceremony, John was empowered as the first non Aboriginal Custodian of the Rainbow Serpent or Witij Dreaming by Elders of the Galpu Clan of Eastern Arnhem Land. This Law is the most ancient continuous tradition, symbol and teaching of compassion, healing and peace on the planet.

At the Waking Up in the Bush retreat conducted at Wat Buddhalavarn in September 2003, John skilfully integrated Rainbow Serpent Dreaming and Dharma teaching, a first in this ancient land, and was dubbed 'Acharn Witij' by the retreat participants.

About Wat Buddhalavarn

Wat Buddhalavarn is a Buddhist forest monastery supported by the Lao community of Sydney. It adjoins the sandstone bushland of the Georges River Reserve, near Campbelltown, 60 km south west of Sydney.

The Retreat will be conducted as a camp in the bush, outdoors, under stars and by open fires. Participants are asked to carry in the shelter and sleeping gear that they need. Also sit cushions and camp chairs if needed.

For the duration of the retreat, participants will be asked to take the five Buddhist precepts (mind of kindness, contentment, truthfulness, simplicity, clarity) and join the routine of the Wat, rising early and refraining from eating noon to midnight.

Teaching will be in English. Translation into Lao will be available if needed.

About Dana

Both John Allan and the monks of Wat Buddhalavarn are supported to teach the Dharma by the generosity (Dana) of those who hear the teaching. Generosity is one of the foundations of Sangha building.

Through the practice of Dana by the retreat participants, the Retreat organisers will be seeking to recover production costs associated with publicity, John's airfares, catering and other expenses.

**An Easter long weekend bush
Dharma retreat guided by
Acharn John 'Witij' Allan in
companionship with the
Venerable Santithito, Phra
Khamphaeng and fellow monks.**

*Calming the
mind, building
friendships*



**From sunset Thursday 8 through to
sunset Monday 12 April 2004
at Wat Buddhalavarn Forest Monastery
12 Minerva Road Wedderburn NSW**

Telephone bookings and inquiries:
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Dana supported. No charge.