

# News from Vimutti Monastery

## **The Magical Mystery Tour**

By Ajahn Chandako

Thailand is still an extraordinary place. My recent trip there reconfirmed the wonders of the South-east Asian charm, warmth and strength. Surrounded by the joy and wisdom of the Sangha and the large hearts of lay friends, it was again clear that there is indeed something special about a culture steeped in Buddhist values.

The trip was scheduled at this time to coincide with the funeral ceremonies of my preceptor, Ven. Chao Khun Maha Amorn, and the annual memorial week of Dhamma practice that commemorates Luang Por Chah's passing away 19 years ago. This was also an occasion to gather items for the Vimutti Stupa project and then continue south to Kuala Lumpur to take part in the Ajahn Chah Remembrance Day event in Malaysia.

Well before I arrived, word had spread among old friends and supporters in Bangkok that Vimutti Monastery was building a stupa. To observe the wholesome excitement this project has generated brought much joy into my stream of consciousness. The morning after I arrived, an appointment had already been set up for me to visit a man in Bangkok who for the last seven years has had relics spontaneously appearing in his shrine room. He has since regularly donated these to monasteries who are building stupas. Khun Parama struck me as a person whose entire life revolved around helping others, living purely and practicing the Buddha's teachings. Seeing the manifestations of his generous projects at his home and meeting him face to face gave me added confidence in the purported spontaneous arisings.

We quickly had a positive connection, and there was a small crowd gathered to witness the meeting. I had expected maybe one small container of relics, and even that would have been a great boon.

However, I wasn't prepared for the quantity and variety of the relics he was about to bestow on our monastery. In fact, the longer I was there, the more relics, ancient Buddha statues and other psychically charged items he produced as gifts. The relics themselves had been regularly manifesting in front of his shrine, and he would then meticulously sort through them and store them with respect. I asked how he knew what relics were what, and he said the answers come to him when he meditates.

At this point I might want to pause for the uninitiated—those open-minded but rational people with a realistically mature sense of sceptical doubt. “You're not actually saying that they just appeared out of thin air, are you?” Well,.....

When living in Thailand there are certain things that are encountered where it is simply practical to suspend the urge to analytically comprehend something that seems to challenge rational explanation—and in that society this can often be the best approach. Don't think too much. But try getting away with that in a non-Asian context. People generally expect a bit more flesh of explanation on the bones.

OK, here goes. The whole reason we at Vimutti and the ATBA are undertaking this massive project of building a stupa is to house relics. But what the heck are they?

Relics are small, opaque, gem-like or granular substances that are purported to come from the bodies of the Buddha or his highly attained disciples.

“So you're trying to tell me that you actually have lots of real bits of Buddha bone that have come flying out of the cosmos?” No, of course not, silly. Bone is bone. But *relics* are *relics*.

Interesting things sometime happen in meditation. Because at a fundamental level, the difference between physical matter and mental energy becomes blurred or disappears altogether, when a person has mastered a great degree of control over their mind, he or she is correspondingly able to manifest a type of control over the physical realm that is normally referred to as a 'miracle'. This psychic power

can be exercised in various ways. People who have these abilities are quite rare in modern times, but they do still exist. Those who are true masters, however, almost never display these powers in public.

For people whose consciousness has been purified of greed, anger, lust and selfishness, that pure mental energy is constantly interacting with the physical matter of their bodies. When they die and their bodies are cremated on a wood fire, small bone fragments always remain. For average people these bones remain as bones. For highly developed people it is possible that their bones then gradually turn into hard substances of various colours that are known as relics. This can happen especially if, while they were still alive, they had determined it to happen. This phenomenon of transformation has been well documented in modern times as the Arahant disciples of Ajahn Mun gradually passed away in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. The relics of these masters are usually enshrined in glass viewing cases inside stupas dedicated to their lives.

However, there is not a one-to-one correspondence between enlightenment and relics. Some people with exceptionally refined Samadhi, but who have not yet realised the stages of enlightenment, have minds that are pure enough that their bones can turn into relics. And it also seems to be the case that not all truly enlightened masters' bones do turn into relics. So it's not a sure thing.

OK, so you might be able to bend your mind around the possibility of bone fragments physically transforming, but get this...then the relics multiply.

“Oh come on.”

Don't ask me to explain how it happens. But you have loads of Buddha relics and only so many verifiable Buddha bones to begin with, so what's the deal? They multiply on their own. No, they are not breeding, but stories of relics multiplying are heard so often that it becomes difficult to dismiss it all as the exaggerated tales of the overly faithful. It seems that if relics are treated with respect and the owner keeps good sila, it is possible that they will multiply. It's also possible that they will disappear if behaviour is not up to standard, and this can be quite embarrassing.

Honestly, I'm a sceptic by nature, but one of the most convincing stories I've heard is when Ven. Ajahn Pasanno, the Canadian abbot of Abhayagiri Monastery, gave some relics to his mother. He offered her a small number of them in a tiny clear container during the time his father was dying and instructed her on how to look after them properly. His mother is very down to earth and not Buddhist, but she did as he suggested. At a later time when speaking with her son she asked, "What's with these little things you gave me? There's a lot more of them now than there used to be." That's just what happens.

Look, I just try to keep an open mind. During my time in Thailand, my perception of what is possible was stretched far beyond its previous limits. Once you accept the possibility of inert physical matter multiplying on its own, it is not a far leap to contemplate them appearing spontaneously out of the blue. Apparently there is a bit of a science to it: certain chants and determinations can be done and a clean white piece of cloth can be laid out before the shrine or in front of you when you meditate to increase the possibility of it happening. Another explanation is that unseen beings from heavenly realms (devas) bring relics as gifts to those who they feel deserve them.

I would imagine that not all relics are the real McCoy. There are bound to be some fakes—either intentional or innocently mistaken. To know for sure what is what, you would have to have them checked by a highly attained meditation master with specific psychic gifts. Such a person can actually 'see' the energy being emitted from the substance and determine its origin. In the meantime, however, I figured it was prudent to error on the side of respect. Better to show reverence to all the relics offered, assuming that some were real, than to make the bad kamma of showing disrespect towards what is possibly very special. In the end, bringing up a mental state of respect and reverence is *always* good kamma. In the same way that we bow to a bronze or stone Buddha statue as a symbol of the Awakened mind that we aspire to, relics at the very least serve to focus our devotional energy and remind us of a higher purpose in life. They can motivate us to follow in the Buddha's footsteps.

The wisdom perspective is to take the standard that all external phenomena are not necessarily as they appear to be. None of it is

reliable enough for basing our long term happiness on. So from this perspective you can take the relics with a grain of salt, or a grain of sand as the case may be, and know that a belief in them is not essential for walking the path to enlightenment. In the end, nothing in conditioned reality is a sure thing. Our only reliable refuge is within.

Anyway, during the time we were visiting Khun Parama's home, I certainly wasn't about to indulge the western-trained judgemental mind. In many ways I am just a fortunate messenger, an impartial vehicle for encouraging goodness, joy and inspiration and transporting the opportunity for making wholesome kamma from country to country. From what I have observed, relics and stupas certainly tend to bring out pure-hearted qualities in people, and really, that's good enough for me.

So that was the first day.

The next day was also stupa-oriented but of a decidedly more earthly nature. Khun Nacha and Somkiet, Auckland residents and Vimutti supporters, took me to an area near the town of Chonburi to research stone sculptors and appropriate stone for carving Buddhas for the stupa. They and their family plan to sponsor four of the nine Buddha statues associated with our stupa. Four will go inside, four outside and one will be housed in an adjoining shrine. The four statues to be placed within the stupa have been ordered from Indonesia, to be carved from the same stone as the famous Borobudur stupa nearby.

The following day was full of connecting and reconnecting with new and old friends at the Sangha residence in Bangkok known as Dhammaram. For monks living in remote South Sea Islands, this Dhamma bonding is particularly nourishing. Ven. Ajahn Chandapalo, abbot of the Italian branch monastery, and Ven. Ajahn Nyanadhammo, abbot of Ratanawan monastery in Thailand and former abbot of Wat Pah Nanachat, both arrived. There were also many joyful meetings with lay friends whom I have known for years.

The next day I met with the head of the World Tipitaka Project, a massively meticulous, decade-long undertaking to produce the optimal version of the Pali Cannon in Roman script. We are hoping to enshrine this version inside the Vimutti Stupa. Nacha, Somkiet, other

friends and I then went to research sculptors in a different area near Pak Chong. On the way we visited Ven. Ajahn Jayasaro, also a former abbot of Wat Pah Nanachat. It was refreshing to have the opportunity to discuss meaningful matters with Sangha elders on a daily basis. Ajahn Jayasaro had just returned from Burma where he had been given relics of Sariputta and Moggallana. These he then offered for the Vimutti Stupa.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of January we were joined by Ven. Ajahn Amaro, the new abbot of Amaravati Monastery in England. Nacha and Somkiet then took me to visit Luang Por Piek, one of the most eminent of all the Luang Por Chah disciples. I had spent my first rains retreat as a monk with Luang Por Piek, so I have always felt a special sense of gratitude towards him. Furthermore, he is one of the most accomplished meditation masters alive in the world today—no exaggeration. *He* could tell you what relics were real and what were not. The main reason I went was to invite him to Vimutti. He said he was free. Nacha immediately spoke up to sponsor the plane ticket. Sadhu. We are currently trying to arrange a visit and Easter retreat in the second half of April. While Luang Por Piek and I were talking in private I tried to get some inside info on how relics spontaneously appear. ‘Come on, you can tell me, Ajahn, wink, wink, that sort of thing’. But he wouldn’t get any more specific than saying that they come from the atmosphere. He did speak about how some people have kammic connections with relics that carry on from life to life, based on similar determinations as Bodhisatta vows to become a Buddha.

From there we went straight to the airport and due to Bangkok traffic I nearly missed my flight to Ubon, the spiritual home of the Ajahn Chah tradition. A vanload of monks from Wat Pah Nanachat was waiting to greet us—including the new abbot, Ajahn Kevali—and Ajahns Amaro, Vajiro, Chandapalo and I were all whisked off to Wat Pah Vivek, the monastery where I ordained.

Between the time that Luang Por Chah fell ill and Luang Por Liem became a preceptor, everyone who wanted to be a monk at Wat Pah Nanachat was taken to ordain at this monastery of Chao Khun Maha Amorn. Ven. Chao Khun was a long standing disciple of Luang Por Chah, and he passed away in late November of 2010. This evening’s

funeral ceremonies were being held to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> day since his passing, but the actual cremation would take place a year later. In typical rural North-east Thai style, it was hardly a sombre occasion. Half full-on Dhamma practice and half class reunion, the evening was marked by Dhamma talks and meditation throughout the night interspersed with joyous catching up with friends that had not been seen in years.

Luang Por Sumedho was there: radiant, relaxed and solid. Hundreds of Thai monastic disciples of Ajahn Chah were there. As the melodious roar of the evening chanting reverberated throughout the hall, I felt a deep appreciation for being in the midst of this extended spiritual family. The inlaid casket of Ven. Chao Khun presided over the dusk-til-dawn proceedings from an appropriately high vantage point off to one side. For me it was meaningful to be back at the place where my monk's life officially began. Memories of the samanera and bhikkhu ordinations were still clear. The gratitude towards the elders who made this life possible for me began to well up.

The next morning, as Luang Por Sumedho sat cross-legged on a bench in a nearby kuti, sipping coffee surrounded by the Western Elders, I asked him about the significance of a mural in Ven. Chao Khun's ordination hall. There, Luang Por Chah was depicted flanked by a young Ajahn Amorn and an equally youthful Ajahn Sumedho. Luang Por Sumedho recounted that the two of them were both there in the early days of Wat Pah Pong, Ajahn Chah's monastery. Ajahn Amorn had been the first well educated disciple of Ajahn Chah. Even when Ajahn Amorn was only in his 30's he was already an important figure in the Sangha hierarchy in the Ubon region. Because of his competence, it seemed clear that he was destined to rise to positions of great status and rank. Then he met Ajahn Chah. That changed everything. Ajahn Chah didn't live at all like the monks in the mainstream. His only priority was practicing for liberation and helping others. After some serious consideration, Ajahn Amorn then made the radical decision to give up all of his status, money, power and expected future to live the humble life of a forest monk. That was quite a renunciation at the time, nearly unheard of.

We then returned to the meditation hall for a rousing pre-meal Dhamma talk by Luang Por Liem, the current head of the Luang Por

Chah tradition. After the meal we drove to Wat Pah Nanachat to settle in. The International Forest Monastery now has an impressive new main hall. It was the brain child of Luang Por Liem himself. Beginning with the demolition of the old hall, Luang Por Liem was on site directing and fully participating in every step of the building process from start to finish. All the work was done by Thai and foreign monks. Rain or shine, Luang Por Liem was there working hard, climbing the tall scaffolding and supervising each detail of the construction.

The next day was filled with informal meetings with senior monks, and seeing some of the local Thai lay people whom I'd been to India with on pilgrimage. In the afternoon we all went over to Wat Pah Pong to take part in the memorial event there. Even though it has been 19 years since Luang Por Chah passed away, the week of practice commemorating his life and death draws more people than ever. Nearly 1000 monks came to take part, many living in the forest under their brown mosquito net umbrellas. Many 1000's of lay disciples also came to stay in the forest, pitching tents or hanging their own white mosquito net umbrellas. Each day there were numerous Dhamma talks from senior teachers, morning and evening chanting and meditation throughout the day. Many other people come to lend their support by giving away free food and drinks. Dozens of home-made stalls had suddenly sprung up near the entrance of the monastery with the sole purpose of offering bodily nourishment to those who were there to nourish their minds. Generosity and serving others is also Dhamma practice, so the amount of pure-hearted joy that was generated by all these thousands of people making good kamma was enormous.

On January 14 we had a full day of Sangha meetings for the abbots of the overseas branch monasteries. Nearly all the abbots were there at Wat Pah Nanachat, so it seemed a good opportunity to discuss some weighty issues. Meetings can sometimes be tedious, and the ten hours of them planned for the day could potentially have been excruciating. However, I found them to be anything but. Throughout the day I was repeatedly impressed with the level of skill, honesty and sensitivity with which the elders spoke. They seemed to be one of the wisest, most knowledgeable and mature group of Dhamma teachers to be found anywhere on the planet. As the Buddha recommended:

meeting in harmony, discussing matters openly and parting in harmony conduces to the long life of the Sangha.

I took the opportunity to offer relics to most of the senior Western monks for their monasteries. It was good to share the wealth of what Khun Parama had offered, and full sets of relics went to Ajahns Khemadhammo, Pasanno, Amaro and Chandapalo.

The culmination of Luang Por Chah's memorial event is the circumambulation of his stupa. However, organising a circumambulation is no simple affair when you have 20-30 thousand people who all want to come. The Sangha gathered at the main hall for chanting and then slowly made our way out the front door. The broad central road led to tables where innumerable sets of lotus flowers, candles and incense were waiting for us. Claspng the devotional offerings with hands held together at the chest, we silently proceeded down the long, wide avenues of the monastery. The river of brown robes was joined by a river of white clad devotees, all flowing with the same quiet power as a Ganges, Mississippi or Nile. It took nearly an hour before we ascended the steps of the stupa, laid our flowers, candles and incense at the foot of Luang Por Chah's shrine, bowed three times and departed. If I had died then and there, I don't think I would have minded.

But I didn't die. Actually I was taken to the airport instead. There, a local elderly woman came to see me off before I returned to Bangkok. She was one of the people on my first pilgrimage to India as a monk. On the 14<sup>th</sup> she had brought relics and a box of other Buddha images to offer for Vimutti Stupa, but as I was engaged in meetings all day, she had to leave them without seeing me. I got the box out and asked her to explain the background of the various items. As she took out the amulets, she exclaimed in shock that relics had appeared embedded in some of them. She swore they hadn't been there when she offered them a few days before. Who knows? All is uncertain.

Arriving in Bangkok I was taken to a kuti dwelling next to Tau See Buddhist School. This school was started from scratch more than a decade ago by a pair of sisters and their family. Since then, and especially under the regular guidance of Ajahn Jayasaro, it has grown

to be a model of high quality, creative and modern Buddhist education.

It was a joy to see their family and friends again. In the morning one woman offered three relics, one of which she said had recently changed colour while at the ancient capital of Ayutthaya. I then left to visit Ven. Ajahn Anan, another of the current great meditation masters of Thailand. It was a three-hour drive, and on the way we visited Nacha's aunt who had been eagerly waiting to offer us (you guessed it) relics—a large collection that she had been gathering for years. She and her mother had come to stay at Vimutti a few years earlier, and were so excited that they also offered Buddha statues and other supplies for the monastery.

We arrived at Ven. Ajahn Anan's monastery mid-afternoon. I had written to him about our stupa project, and he'd promised he would prepare something special for it. With great compassion, he proffered Buddha relics that had spontaneously appeared to him, Luang Por Chah relics, more relics, a box of psychically charged Buddha images, amulets, and power objects, Bodhi leaves from the Bodhi Tree at Bodh Gaya, and a good handful of his own hair. We had a chat, and he told us the story of when he was climbing Adam's peak in Sri Lanka. In his shoulder bag he had an empty relic container. During the climb there were visible flurries of unusual and bright, glowing lights, and when Ajahn Anan later checked his bag he found that the container was now full of relics.

On the way back to Bangkok we visited the couple who had sponsored the casting of the large bronze Buddha statue at Vimutti. They offered more items for the stupa.

However, it wasn't until the final day in Thailand that things *really* got rolling for the stupa. I mean we're talking **stupandous**. In the morning and afternoon we went in search of and subsequently found relic containers that were suitably distinguished for this increasingly impressive collection that was amassing. Upon return to the kuti, a group of long-standing Dhamma practitioners, supporters and friends awaited my return. One offered Buddha relics and 2,000 small Buddha images for the stupa. Another offered Buddha relics, Buddha images, books on relics and much more. Another offered Buddha

images and a new set of robes. By this time it was evening, and I went to visit Dhammaram where the other senior monks were staying. When I arrived, one of our Sangha's main supporters offered her relics for the stupa. Another friend offered Buddha images, reliquaries and other items for the stupa. I was then whisked off to visit another elderly Bangkok man who was well known for his relic and ancient Buddha collections. After finally finding his home through the dark maze of Bangkok's back streets, we were entertained with stories before being offered a small stupa of Buddha relics. When we returned to Dhammaram (now getting late), I went to pay respect to Luang Por Sumedho. After a brief chat, he said, "I've got some Arahant relics from a collapsed stupa in Burma that I can give you."

By the time I got back to the kuti at the school, it was 11pm. I was leaving the next day on an early morning flight, and now had a small mountain of relics, holy objects, Buddha images, reliquaries and offerings for the monastery that I needed to sort, record, label and carefully pack that night. By 2:30 am, after hours of meticulous work, the numerous bags and boxes were packed, tied, readied and stored. After a few hour's power sleep it was time to hit the air. In the pre-dawn darkness one of the two Dhamma school sisters came to see me off, and in the perfect culmination of an extraordinary day, she said she had some Buddha relics to offer. All of the relics from the previous day had come from very reliable sources, but the ones she wished to offer had been in her royal family lineage for a long time, and were thus very special.

My carry-on bag was absolutely stuffed chockablock with relics, amulets, power objects and Buddha images. I knew this plane ain't gonna crash.

I arrived in Kuala Lumpur for the second annual Ajahn Chah Remembrance Day. This was a full day of Dhamma teachings from various teachers of the Ajahn Chah lineage. In the days leading up to and following the event, we had an opportunity to visit various Buddhist centres in the city.

Buddhism in Malaysia is experiencing an inspiring revitalisation. Although a Buddhist minority has long existed in this officially Muslim country, their traditional practices had lost most of what we normally

consider to be 'Buddhist'. However, in the last decade, inspired by the forest tradition in Thailand and Burma, there has been a great blooming of interest in 'real' Buddhism. The sincerity, enthusiasm, devotion, knowledge and dedication to practice shown by these people made a deep impression on me. A couple of the new meditation centres that have sprung up are testaments to their strong spirit and competence. Enthusiastic to develop their dana parami (the perfection of generosity) as well, people made donations for our stupa and offered to send us the Tipitaka books in English that we needed to complete our set. On the final day, the organiser of the main event offered Buddha relics for the Vimutti Stupa.

**Relic Display**  
and  
**Ceremony to Honour the Physical Manifestations  
of Awakened Consciousness**  
at  
**Vimutti Buddhist Monastery**  
750 Paparata Road  
Bombay, South Auckland  
**Saturday and Sunday February 19 & 20**

The full moon of February, Magha Puja, will serve as the occasion for a formal public exhibition of the Vimutti relic collection. We have extended the display and ceremonies another day to allow for greater numbers of people to attend.

Please join us for this exceptional display of relics of the Buddha, many of his direct disciples and other meditation masters. This is one the most extensive collections ever seen outside of Asia. Gathered over many years from reliable sources, these relics are destined to be enshrined in the Vimutti stupa. The days will be complete with explanation and discussion of what relics are, how they are formed and their benefits.

The display will be held at this time to celebrate Magha Puja, a major Buddhist holiday that commemorates the spontaneous assembly of

1,250 Arahants in the Buddha's presence. On that occasion, the Buddha delivered the Ovada Patimokkha Gatha, a succinct teaching summarising the main points of the Dhamma. Please join us for this auspicious gathering, either Saturday, Sunday or both days.

**Schedule for both Saturday and Sunday:**

- 9:00 General viewing
- 10:30 Meal preparations
- 11:00 Shared meal (lay guests are requested to bring a plate of food to share)
- 12:30 Paritta chanting and chanting from other traditions
- 1:15 Explanation of relics by Sangha members  
Ovada Patimokkha Gatha explained  
Signing of the sacred central pole for the stupa
- 2:15 Meditation in the presence of the relics
- 3:00 Saturday: General viewing  
Sunday: Enshrining personal items for the Vimutti Stupa

Everyone is invited to bring an item of personal significance to be enshrined in the stupa.

Sangha members should bring their almsbowls, and if they would like to stay Saturday night, please contact [vimutti.atba@gmail.com](mailto:vimutti.atba@gmail.com)

**Ceremony for Enshrining Personal Items  
Sunday 3:00 pm, February 20**

On Sunday afternoon we will hold a ceremonial celebration to enshrine the personal items that people have offered for the stupa. These will then be sealed in a solid, waterproof and airtight container before being placed in the base, directly underneath the stupa. The box will then be surrounded by concrete slabs to ensure durability.

**Personal Items**

People are still welcome to bring items for the stupa up until the ceremony on February 20. So far we have received a wonderful array of items and personal messages. Thinking about what to include has been an opportunity for people to contemplate their lives, their loved ones and what is truly meaningful to them. We have received many

touching bits of people's lives, alive with much history and sentimental value.

It is an extremely rare opportunity to be able to enshrine something personal in a stupa. The intention to include an object that has special relevance and meaning makes a kammic connection between your stream of consciousness and the relics. If it is done with the proper intention and devotional motivation, it will reduce the number and severity of any obstacles to practicing the Dhamma and increase the likelihood of you coming in contact with the teachings of the Buddha in future lifetimes. When you visit and circumambulate the completed stupa you will know that part of your life is enshrined there as well.

It is best if the items are not larger than a rugby ball. For example: photos, jewelry, artifacts, stone carvings, items which have a powerful symbolic value, special stones, common everyday items that reflect your life, things made of glass, earth from sacred sites, crystals, gems, greenstone, or cards written with your individual aspirations or hopes for our planet. Another recommended item is Kiwiana: symbols and souvenirs of New Zealand... koru art, glass kiwi coasters, a carved kiwi bird, a rugby ball, a sheep doll, etc.

You can bring items to Vimutti Monastery or to the Auckland Buddhist Vihara, and the Sangha will look after them until the ceremony of placing them inside the base.

### **Hierarchy of the items to be enshrined within the stupa**

The items enshrined will be ordered with a clear reverence for height and level of significance. The relics themselves will be placed in the square section, known as the harmika, near the top of the stupa. Directly below them, in the bell shaped section known as the anda, will be the Pali canon, the Tipitaka. In this area there will also be four large Buddha statues, numerous smaller ones, and many sacred objects and items of psychic potency. All these would still be above the waist level of the people circumambulating. In the square base, below foot level, but directly underneath the stupa, would be the box containing personal items. In this way, no one would actually be circumambulating the personal items, but they would be respectfully

tucked into a protected space below the level where people are worshipping or paying respect.

## **Ceremony for Enshrining the Tipitaka and Buddha Images Saturday May 21, 2011**

Just after the full moon of May, Wesak or Visakha Puja, we will have the ceremony for enshrining the Tipitaka in the Stupa. These are the teachings of the Buddha that have been preserved in the Pali Canon, the oldest and most historically reliable account of what the Buddha taught. Both Pali and English versions will be included. On that day we will also be enshrining Buddha statues, the sacred central pole, holy amulets, and other sacred scripts.

**For complete details, background and architectural sketches,  
please see  
[The Vimutti Stupa](#)**

### **Other Developments**

At this time we are also currently building a garage and planning to upgrade our water collection system. In this way we plan to be able to store enough water to comfortably provide for future retreats.

### **Venerable Ajahn Maha Boowa Passes Away**

It feels like the end of an era as the last major disciple of Ajahn Mun passed away on January 31 at age 97. 'Old Grandad' Maha Boowa as he was known, has been a pillar of Thailand. First he practiced with great determination as a disciple of Ajahn Mun and realized the stages of liberation. Then he became one of the foremost teachers and monastic trainers of his generation. Many of his books have been translated into English. Most of the donations given to him were used to build hospitals and schools. Then in his late eighties he decided to launch a nation-wide program to collect gold for the public treasury to save Thailand from economic difficulties. Traveling and teaching nearly constantly for the next few years, he collected 12 tonnes of gold and \$10 million in cash that he then offered as reserves to the bank of Thailand.

## **Upcoming Meditation Retreats**

### **Day of Peace**

**Saturday, February 26, 8:30am--4:00pm  
Led by Ajahn Chandako and Ven. Chang Shean**

This is a valuable opportunity for beginners and experienced meditators alike. This full day of meditation, instruction and silence is an excellent way to keep up with your dedication to inner peace. Meditation is a vital skill for developing calm and insight on the path to enlightenment. It has also been shown to reduce stress, strengthen the immune system and keep the left prefrontal cortex from deteriorating with age. It is a practical way to recharge your batteries and to train mindful awareness for integration into daily life. It is good to bring loose fitting clothing, a sun hat and some food for a shared lunch. Ven. Chang Shean is a Taiwanese bhikkhuni who leads the group in Chi Kung.

**Held at: Vimutti Buddhist Monastery, Bombay  
Registration: no need to register beforehand**

### **Shazam**

**Saturday, Sunday March 26, 27  
Taught by Ajahn Chandako and Dr. Bruce Lipton**

This unique and rare collaboration between Dr. Bruce H. Lipton, an internationally renowned cellular biologist, author and speaker, and the Venerable Ajahn Chandako, a revered Buddhist meditation monk and abbot, highlights their unique paths as they explore the common ground for transforming human consciousness in this critical period of our history.

This workshop will feature lectures, meditation and discussion and provide a serious avenue for having fun whilst awakening to new possibilities. As Bruce Lipton refers to nuclei and mitochondria, and Ajahn Chandako refers to liberation of the mind, one comes to realize that they are not speaking different languages, but that from their different perspectives they are both addressing the same

reality....heightened consciousness. An understanding of the interface between consciousness and biology enables participants to take back creative control over their own lives and contribute to humanity's evolution.

*Shazam* will cultivate your spirit, engage your mind and challenge your creativity, as you comprehend the enormous potential for applying this information in your life.

**Held at:** Wellpark Wellness Retreat Centre at Kawai Purpura

**Registration:** Go to [www.rockyourlifeevents.com/shazam](http://www.rockyourlifeevents.com/shazam)

Make sure you type in the discount code 'METTA' when you register to get a substantial discount.

## **Easter Retreat with Ven. Ajahn Piek**

**Friday April 22-Monday April 25**

**We are currently trying to finalise the details of a visit from this very special Thai meditation master.**

**Held at: Vimutti Buddhist Monastery, Bombay**

**Registration: pending**

## **One World, One Truth**

**Saturday May 7- Saturday May 14**

**Taught by Ajahn Chandako and Ven. Lhatso**

In this rare and uniquely collaborative meditation retreat, these two Sangha members from the Theravada and Vajrayana traditions will spend a week exploring and discussing the common ground and differences between these two ancient ways of practice and how they manifest in the melting pot of contemporary Western Buddhism. As with previous retreats, it will be conducted in silence with thorough meditation instruction and guidance. Ven. Lhatso is a New Zealand born nun who ordained in the Tibetan tradition in 2008. The setting for the retreat will be the beautiful hills and lush bush of Te Moata.

**Held at: Te Moata Retreat Centre**

**Registration: contact Te Moata**

[http://temoata.org/Te\\_Moata/Registration.html](http://temoata.org/Te_Moata/Registration.html)

## **Dana**

All retreats and teachings held at Vimutti Buddhist Monastery are offered on a 'dana' basis. Dana is Pali for 'generosity'. Offering teachings freely is a vital principle to uphold. This system of mutual generosity means that there are no registration fees: no charge for the facilities, the food, the management, caretaking, accommodation or the teaching. To engage wisely with a system of dana means that instead of an attitude of paying for goods and services, a retreatant makes good kamma (merit or *punna*) by donating whatever amount feels right: neither too much nor too little. The natural result of generosity is an internal brightness and joy that creates a wholesome and fertile mental environment for developing meditation.

## **Need a Ride to the monastery?**

If you are looking for a ride to Vimutti Monastery, you can post your request on our ride sharing calendar. If you are planning to drive to the monastery and have room for another person, check the calendar to see if someone needs a ride.

Click here to see [the carpooling calendar](#)

## **Free Firewood**

Free pine firewood is available from the monastery land for anyone who would like to have it. Some is already prepared and some would need to be cut with a chainsaw.

## **Upcoming Events**

**Vimutti Buddhist Monastery and the Auckland Buddhist Vihara**

**Click on these links to find out more:**

[Good Kamma Day](#), [Open Day](#), [Day of Peace](#)

**Saturday, February 12, all day**

Good Kamma Day, our monthly working bee  
Vimutti Buddhist Monastery, Bombay

**Saturday, February 19, 9:00am-4:00pm**

Relic Display and Ceremony  
Vimutti Buddhist Monastery, Bombay

**Sunday, February 20, 9:00am-4:00pm**

Relic Display and Ceremony for Enshrining Personal Items  
Vimutti Buddhist Monastery, Bombay

**Saturday, February 26, 8:30am-4:00pm**

Day of Peace, a one-day meditation workshop with Ajahn Chandako  
Vimutti Buddhist Monastery, Bombay

**Sunday, February 27, 10:30 am**

Open Day, with Ajahn Chandako  
An opportunity to meet the ATBA community  
The Auckland Buddhist Vihara, 29 Harris Rd., Mt. Wellington

**Sunday, February 27, 7:30 pm**

Dhamma talk, Ajahn Chandako  
The Auckland Buddhist Vihara, 29 Harris Rd., Mt. Wellington

**Saturday and Sunday, March 26, 27**

Shazam Workshop, with Ajahn Chandako, Bruce Lipton  
Wellpark Wellness Retreat Centre, Kawai Purapura, Albany

**May 7-14**

Meditation Retreat: One World, One Truth, with Ajahn Chandako  
Te Moata Retreat Centre, Tairua, Coromandel

**Sunday, May 15**

Wesak Celebration

The Auckland Buddhist Vihara, 29 Harris Rd., Mt. Wellington

## **Saturday, May 21**

Ceremony for enshrining Tipitaka, Buddhas and sacred items in the Vimutti Stupa

Vimutti Buddhist Monastery, Bombay

## **Every Sunday 10:00-11:00am** (except Open Day)

Chi Kung lessons with Venerable Chang Shean

The Auckland Buddhist Vihara, 29 Harris Rd., Mt. Wellington

This meditation in movement is an outstanding way to relieve stress, balance energy and develop mindfulness.

Sister Chang Shean is a Taiwanese Bhikkhuni who offers these lessons freely on a donation basis. All proceeds go to the ATBA.

## **Every Sunday 3:00-4:30pm**

Dhamma School

The Auckland Buddhist Vihara, 29 Harris Rd., Mt. Wellington

Give your children a good start in life with the ATBA Dhamma School. Available for any child or teenager from the ages of 5-18. Contact Benita 09 520-1392

## **Every Sunday, 7:30 pm**

Meditation, chanting and listening to a Dhamma talk

The Auckland Buddhist Vihara, 29 Harris Rd., Mt. Wellington

## **Anumodana**

We rejoice in the good kamma made by the following people:

Luang Por Sumdho for offering relics from Burma

Tan Ajahn Jayasaro for offering relics of Sariputta and

Moggallana from Burma

Khun Parama for offering Buddha relics and Buddha images

Khun Usa for offering Buddha relics, Buddha images, books for the library and administrative assistance

**Khun Jung for offering Buddha relics, items for the stupa and requisites for the monastery**  
**Khun Add for offering relics for the stupa**  
**Khun Kay for offering a new set of robes and Buddha images**  
**Khun Ae for offering Buddha relics and Buddha images**  
**Khun Plern for offering Buddha relics and administrative assistance**  
**Khun Nacha and Somkiet for offering marble stupas and much all around help**  
**Khun Upin for offering Buddha relics, Buddha images and other requisites**  
**Khun Donyah for offering Buddha images, monk requisites and much general assistance**  
**Khun Boonteung for offering Buddha relics**  
**Khun Oom for offering bones of Luang Pu Tate**  
**Sian for offering relics**  
**Khun Moo for offering a suitcase to carry all the relics**  
**Yoke Leen, Soh Hua and Siew Swan for offering English volumes of the Tipitaka for the stupa**  
**Khun Virot for making new monk's jackets**  
**Khun Wichian for offering cloth for monk's requisites**  
**Tan Moshe for much general assistance**  
**Nacha's mother for offering a Buddha statue**  
**Irene and family for supervising the Buddha carving in Indonesia**  
**George for computer and website assistance**  
**Mrs. Wong Choo Mooi for offering a stupa donation**  
**Catherine Lai for offering a stupa donation**  
**Khun Jung's mother and family for offering stupa donations**  
**Ganga and Gamini DeSilva for offering a stupa donation**  
**Lin Ong for offering a stupa donation**  
**Mae Rangsii for a stupa donation and crocheting a picture of Ajahn Chah**  
**Mau Lamai for a stupa donation**  
**John H and Cliff for work done at the Vihara**  
**Gamini for offering a hand dryer for the Vihara**  
**Martin for doing electrical work at the Vihara**

**By the power of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha,  
may these offerings be a cause for you to realise  
the freedom and peace of Nibbana.**

## **Download the ATBA Chanting**

[Evening Chanting](#)

[The Buddha's Words on Loving-kindness, the Metta Sutta](#)

## **Basic Introduction to Buddhism**

For a simple, straightforward and easy to read introduction to the teachings of the Buddha, click on the following link

[What is Buddhism?](#)

## **Carpooling**

To make it easier for people to visit the monastery and to reduce your carbon footprint, we have now set up a ridesharing system. If you would like to come to Vimutti but do not have a vehicle, or you would like to share a ride and petrol costs with others, please have a look at the carpooling page of our website. Both people looking for a ride and people who wish to offer a ride can post information on the site. Ridesharing is environmentally friendly, economical and brings people together.

Click here to see [the carpooling calendar](#)

## **Definition**

**Vimutti:** [Pali] Release, liberation, emancipation; freedom from the fabrications and conventions of the mind. The suttas distinguish between two kinds of liberation. Liberation through wisdom (*pañña-vimutti*) describes the fully enlightened mind of a Buddha or an Arahant. Liberation through awareness (*ceto-vimutti*) is used to describe either the unbounded but temporary liberation of mind in deep samadhi (*jhana*) or the supramundane state of samadhi in the completely purified mind of a Buddha or an Arahant.

**Visit our Website**

**For complete information on Vimutti Buddhist  
Monastery and the ATBA, including maps, please  
see our website**

**[www.vimutti.org.nz](http://www.vimutti.org.nz)**

**We wish you all much benefit and happiness  
from practicing meditation and leading a  
good life.**