

Jane Lomas of the Samatha Group in the UK said, "There's a Thai Buddhist monk coming to Manchester. Would you like to offer 'dana' to him?" and completely unfamiliar with what this even meant, I replied, "Yes, I would."

When I met Phra Ajahn Sudhiro, after listening to my worries, he very gently said, "There's a pilgrimage in January 2011. Please come and live in Dhamma."

So I did. I've been back in January every year since and I decided this year to explain a little why.

One of the chants I was introduced to includes the line :

Svākkhāto Bhagavatā dhammo sandiṭṭhiko akāliko ehipassiko opanayiko paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhī ti

Translated states that the Buddha's teaching, the 'Dhamma', is : 'visible' (sandiṭṭhiko), 'timeless' (akāliko), 'inviting to come and see' (ehipassiko), 'leading to the goal' (opanayiko), 'individually to be known by the wise' (paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhī)

It seems to me that Luangpor Sudhiro 'invited me to come and see'. And in my head here in the West now and again, I hear that gentle voice, "Come. Please come." and I wonder why I am not there.

I'd read that suffering according to Buddhism has 3 'roots' : greed, hatred and delusion.

What I experienced in Thailand were the qualities that fight against these roots.

Every day I was there, I went on Bindabat (alms round) and every day I cried. But the tears were of happiness and a result of witnessing the 'generosity' of the Thai villagers as they gave food to the monks, counteracting 'greed'.

Every smiling beautiful face and every interaction I had with these people was steeped in 'loving kindness', counteracting 'hatred'.

And every moment I spent 'living' in this way allowed me to realise what was important and what was not; where happiness and contentment were to be found and where they were not. In some small way, I believe my 'wisdom' increased, counteracting 'delusion'.

I think these results of 'living in Dhamma', were very much 'visible' in the happiness of those living in it. Lacking all the things I had back in the UK, their happiness didn't appear to depend on having things; their happiness depended on 'having enough' but more importantly 'not wanting any more than they needed'.

In 2011, whilst we visited Luangpoo Chah's temple 'Wat Nong Pah Pong' for his memorial service, I was at the agreed meeting place at what I thought was the right time; but later found out that my watch had slowed down by 1/2 hour. So I was in fact late and I missed the group moving on to Wat Pah Nanachat.

Then after meeting up again later, overnight my alarm clock stopped.

In our lives, there are many opportunities to realise ('to see') our attachment to things. Westerners are often preoccupied with time, "We need to be there by this time, what time is it now ?"

But the Dhamma is 'timeless'. Maybe 'living in Dhamma' is timeless too. Certainly, the teachings apply now just as much as they applied 2500 years ago and will undoubtedly apply long after we've all gone. Maybe everything that happens is also 'present now' when we live this way. 'Letting go' of the need to be someone, somewhere at some time is another step 'leading to the goal' and the 'release from suffering' in my opinion.

So, in January 2018, I went again to 'live in Dhamma' with Luangpor and the rest of my increasing Thai family and I would like to do the same again in 2019.

Why not join us ?

Listen to the gentle words of, "Come. Please come."