

# CLEAR MIND



## Ajahn Sucitto to Lead May Retreat

Ajahn Sucitto, abbot of Cittaviveka, Chithurst Buddhist Monastery, will lead a 5-day residential meditation retreat May 8 to 13 at St. Anthony Spirituality Center in Marathon, Wisconsin. Cittaviveka, located in West Sussex, England, is a monastery in the lineage of the Thai Forest Tradition of Theravāda Buddhism. It was established in 1979 by Ajahn Chah and Ajahn Sumedho, who was the first abbot.

Ajahn Sucitto was born in London in 1949 and became a bhikkhu in Thailand in 1976. In 1978, he returned to Britain to train under Venerable Ajahn Sumedho. In 1979, Ajahn Sucitto was part of the group that established Cittaviveka. He has lived there for the greater part of his monastic life, but travels on teaching engagements throughout the world. He has written many books including *Meditation: A Way of Awakening*, *Turn-*

*ing the Wheel of Truth, Karma and the End of Karma*, and *Rude Awakenings*.

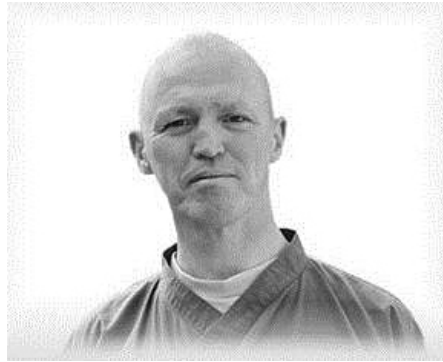
(For a sample of Ajahn Sucitto's teachings, see page 3 of this newsletter.)

The retreat will be held in noble silence and include morning and evening chanting, sitting and walking meditation, daily Dhamma instructions, and evening Dhamma talks. Retreatants will be provided a single room and two vegetarian meals each day. To inquire about options for families with children, contact Cindy at 608-220-4015. Childcare will not be provided.

Throughout the retreat participants will live as if at a Theravāda

monastery by following the Eight Precepts and reflecting on every activity as part of practice.

In keeping with Theravāda tradition, this retreat is being offered on a *dana* (freewill donation) basis. The *dana* offered by retreat participants will be used to



**Ajahn Sucitto** cover the cost for single rooms, vegetarian meals, use of the retreat facility, travel, and hosting Ajahn Sucitto. Funds remaining after retreat expenses are covered will go to the English Sangha Trust to support Ajahn Sucitto's monastery.

*(continued next page)*

## Visiting Teachers to Speak at MIMG

Mark your calendars for two valuable opportunities to learn from teachers visiting Madison Insight Meditation Group. On Tuesday, March 26, **Sister Sayalay Susila** ([www.dhammadownload.com/susila.html](http://www.dhammadownload.com/susila.html)) will be in Madison to offer the Dhamma talk at the regular 6:30 pm sitting. Sister Susila is a renowned Burmese nun and accomplished teacher who has studied and been trained by Sayadaw U Pandita and is a disciple of Pa-Auk Sayadaw. We are honored that the Sister will be stopping with us as part of her tour of the United States. (Directions and details can be found at [www.madisonmeditation.org/activities/weekly-meditation.html](http://www.madisonmeditation.org/activities/weekly-meditation.html).)

On Sunday, April 28, **Santikaro** will again lead a study group from 2 to 4 p.m. and offer the Dhamma talk at the regular Sunday night sitting at 6 pm. Santikaro was ordained as a Theravāda monk in 1985. He is a founding member of Think Sangha, a community of socially engaged Buddhists. In 2004 he retired from formal monastic life. He continues to teach in the Buddhist tradition with an emphasis on the early Pali sources. He is the founder of Liberation Park, a Buddhist retreat in Norwalk, Wisconsin. Check the website at [www.madisonmeditation.org](http://www.madisonmeditation.org) for details on the topic beginning about 1 month prior to the event.

*(continued from previous page)*

Here is how Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery describes the tradition of dana:

“During the past 2,500 years support for the monastic life has been entirely provided from lay supporters through daily acts of generosity. In this spirit, support in the form of work, money, foodstuffs, building materials or other help is both appreciated and needed. Your generosity allows the spiritual community to survive and to flourish.

Theravāda Buddhism has managed to keep intact over the centuries the rich and vital interrelationship between lay and monastic communities set forth by the Buddha. Theravāda monastics, although renunciants, are not permitted to be recluses. To ensure this the Buddha required that they be totally dependent upon the lay community for their physical support. Monks and nuns cannot handle money and they can only eat or drink that which is offered to them. At the same time, the monastic community provides an important function for the lay community by caring for their spiritual needs, and by providing moral and spiritual teachings and examples. The two communities, each essential to a balanced society, support and enrich one another.”

You can read how Ajahn Sucitto’s monastery is supported at: [www.cittaviveka.org/index.php/support/helping-out](http://www.cittaviveka.org/index.php/support/helping-out).

And if you would like to learn more about dana and how it is not

simply an economic exchange, these articles by Ajahn Thanissaro may be of interest:

The Economy of Gifts:

[www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/economy.html](http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/economy.html)

No Strings Attached:

[www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/nostringsattached.html](http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/nostringsattached.html)

Before registering for the retreat, please read the Eight Precepts below and be certain you are willing and able to comply with them.

### The Eight Precepts

**1. Non-harming:** Not taking the life of any sentient being (including insects), and not acting out of hatred or aversion in such a way as to cause harm to any living being.

**2. Non-stealing:** Not taking that which is not freely given, respecting the property of all beings.

**3. Refraining from false speech:** Speaking only what is true and useful, speaking wisely, responsibly, and appropriately. In the context of this retreat this involves keeping noble silence.

**4. Refraining from sexual activity:** Refraining from all sexual activity.

**5. Refraining from the use of intoxicants and drugs that lead to carelessness:** Abstaining from the use of alcohol or other non-prescription drugs. This does not apply to medically required drugs. Please DO continue to take any prescription medications you normally use.

**6. Refraining from eating at the wrong times.** Not eating from noon until dawn the next day. There will be a light morning meal and a main meal that is completed by noon. Around 5 p.m., tea and clear fruit juices will be

available. Those with medical conditions that make it impossible to abide by this precept should discuss their situation with the registrar.

**7. Refraining from entertainment, beautification, and adornment.** Not indulging in entertainment, or adorning the body with jewelry, makeup, or other distractions that draw the attention of others or distract from turning inward.

**8. Refraining from lying on a high or luxurious sleeping place.** Not overly indulging in sleep or using sleep as a means of distraction.

Out of respect for others who wish to attend, please register only if you can make a clear and whole-hearted commitment to attend. To register, please send the registration form and a \$100 (refundable upon request) deposit to secure a space. There will be an opportunity to offer dana at the end of the retreat.

Registration will open around March 1. Those on our email list will receive notification when registration opens; others should check [www.madisonmeditation.org/retreats](http://www.madisonmeditation.org/retreats) regularly around this time.

Registrations will be handled on a first-received, space-available basis. If the number of registrations received during the first 10 days exceeds the number of available spots, reservation priority will be given to those registrants who have attended one of our previous retreats or who live locally (Dane County, WI). Registrants who do not get a spot will be notified they have been placed on a waiting list. Deposit checks from individuals who do not get a spot in the retreat, or who cancel by April 15, 2013, can be refunded upon request. The deposit cannot be refunded to those who cancel after April 15.

# Ajahn Sucitto: On “Great Heart”

The following passage is excerpted from *Meditation: A Way of Awakening*, by Ajahn Sucitto, from *Amaravati Publications*. This book, as well as many other books and Dhamma talks by Ajahn Sucitto, can be downloaded for free at [www.forestsanghapublications.org](http://www.forestsanghapublications.org).

Do you ever feel that you're on your own? That you're the odd one out, the flawed or failed one, the one who's getting a bad deal? Or that you really messed up in your life? Maybe as you're reading this, you're ill, or experiencing bereavement...maybe you're serving time in prison, maybe you're just feeling depressed or isolated. When you're feeling small or under pressure, what's needed is great heart.

Great heart is something that will develop for you through meditation. The simple practice of being mindful of sitting still or steady walking brings you to a firmer place in yourself, your still centre. This is because 'mind' is a mixture of heart and brain functions, in which the heart is predominantly involved with the steady receptivity we call mindfulness and clear comprehension. The heart is not just a metaphor for emotions and intuitions: the physical heart is an organ of perception that a) emits electromagnetic impulses that check out what's happening and b) is in continual, neurological dialogue with the brain. So when we 'tune in' to a still body or the rhythm of breathing, the message we receive is that things are fine and the brain quietsens down. This is the often overlooked function of the heart: it is a major contributor to direct experience (rather than figured out, learned or abstract knowledge).

This calm offers the space within which another major heart attribute can come forth. Heart-knowing is to

do with feeling and it inclines to coherence and ease.

So through meditation, the warm emotional intelligence that we all have can open up and come forth. Also, the skills that you develop in

“Through meditation, the warm emotional intelligence we all have can open up and come forth. The skills you develop in referring to that inner ground will strengthen your sense of balance and confidence, and that means you don't tend to get caught in burdened or speedy states of mind.”

referring to that inner ground will greatly strengthen your sense of balance and confidence, and that means you don't tend to get caught in burdened or speedy states of mind.

Meditation on the body, the direct experience of its feelings, energies and rhythms, brings the receptive heart into play. From there we can cultivate the heart as a centre of attitude and inclination by picking up the heart's natural inclination towards empathy (*anukampa*). Then, when we

consciously attune our thinking to empathy with others, this heart-knowing is given a major boost and role in our lives. Empathy brings us out of the isolation within which we get tight, defensive or jealous, and it begins with the simple but often overlooked reflection that whatever state we're in, other people have been there, are there right now, will also come the same way – and get through it.

It may seem like small comfort, but when you develop this reflection it transforms that sense of being stuck in your predicament into the sense that 'we're in this together.' This sense provides a ground from which the mind can lift out of its downward spiral – because to have others there in the same struggle is an experience of solidarity. (That's one aspect of what 'Sangha,' the community of disciples, means.) Empathy gives you a place to stand. If we develop that sense of widening out of the narrow and trapped 'me' sense, we can get through what life is bringing us at this time, instead of plummeting down into despair, or churning up with bitterness. Because others have come through challenges, we can. This is the courage and confidence of the great heart – and it's in all of us.

As long as we keep in touch with this capacity, the great heart stays with us. It can bear with what's passing through us, and bring forth compassion for others. It mirrors and senses many changing states, but its reflective and empathic nature isn't in any particular state. Properly trained, it can sense a mental or physical state, reflect on it and also widen out of the limitations of that state. We don't have to deny a feeling, or get lost in the stories our emotions evoke.

# Half-Day Meditation Dates

This winter and spring, Madison Insight Meditation Group will host half-day sittings from 9 a.m. to noon on March 16 and June 29 in the Gabler Living Room, First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive., Madison.

The half-day sittings will consist of 45-minute periods of sitting meditation alternating with 20 minutes of walking meditation. If you can't attend for the entire session, feel free to come for a portion of it. Plan your arrival just a little before the hour so you can join the last few minutes of walking and stay for the next sitting meditation period. Meditation is followed by a potluck lunch in the same location. If you are able, please bring a food item to share; if you can't, please come anyway!

No fee or registration is required, and all are welcome. If you have questions about these sessions, call Dave or Lori at 608-238-1234.

## CLEAR MIND

The Newsletter of Madison Vipassana, Inc.  
Madison, WI

This newsletter is published periodically as a service to our meditation community. It is also available on our website at:  
[www.madisonmeditation.org](http://www.madisonmeditation.org)

Judy Woodburn: Editor  
Cathy Loeb: Proofreader, duplication and distribution  
Peter Kaufman: Mailing list

To subscribe,  
send an empty message to:  
[mimg-subscribe@yahogroups.com](mailto:mimg-subscribe@yahogroups.com)

Folding and address labeling provided  
by

Chrysalis 

MADISON VIPASSANA, INC.  
2522 Chamberlain Ave.  
Madison, WI 53705