



# Insight Meditation Society

## Sangha News - Spring 2008

*From Bob Agolia, Executive Director: **Welcome!*** Many of you have expressed a wish to hear more frequently about various IMS developments. We've taken this to heart and would like to offer you Sangha News, our first quarterly e-news bulletin. If you do not wish to receive this in the future, you may unsubscribe below.



Also, at the end of these e-bulletins, we will be providing a link to a quick online Sangha Survey. If you have a few minutes, we would greatly appreciate your responses to our questions, each time on a different topic - results will be published in the next issue. Your views will help us consistently refine and improve the quality of the spiritual refuge that is IMS.

May this communication help deepen our collective sense of sangha, of community, as we share this journey together towards freedom.

## Vision and Aspirations

Throughout the last year, IMS has been involved in a Visioning process. Our teachers, board members, staff, as well as some of you, our yogis and friends, have participated in shaping aspirations and plans for IMS's future. I'd like to tell you a little about two such aspirations - one aims to provide financial assistance for anyone who wishes to attend any of our retreats; the other aims to offer all single rooms at both our facilities.

**No Financial Barriers** - IMS has long been committed to helping those who might not otherwise afford the cost to practice at either the Retreat Center or the Forest Refuge. Thanks to your generosity, we administer various scholarship funds and provide many 'You Choose' fee spaces at both centers, such that a third of all who come to IMS receive some form of financial assistance.

Our latest aspiration seeks to remove all financial barriers to retreat practice at IMS. Eventually, with your help, we hope that our sliding scale fee structure will include an option that allows every course participant to establish her or his own course fee, based on individual financial means. We'll be keeping you updated about plans for this in future issues.

**Single Rooms** - At the Forest Refuge, all accommodations are singles. At the Retreat Center, however, 20 rooms currently operate as doubles. I'm sure many of you have had to share with others during your retreats. While this can be an invaluable practice in letting go, we also recognize that single accommodations provide the gift of solitude and allow a sense of ease and a spirit of investigation deeply conducive to silent retreat life. It is our aspiration to provide all single rooms at the Retreat Center. Once again, as plans unfold to make this vision a reality, we will keep you informed.



News Worth Noting

**Retreat Center Facelift** - Over the last few months, the Retreat Center foyer and dining room have received some much-needed care and attention. Light and warmth from new wallpaper and paint, in addition to new dining room tables, chairs and cabinets have welcomed our yogis this year. And in the Annex, new beds have replaced the 'foamies' and metal frames of yore. The hallways and bathrooms in this dormitory wing have also received a fresh coat of paint. Thank you for generously supporting us in our endeavors to upgrade our facilities.

*These photos show the refreshed Retreat Center foyer and dining room:*





Later this year, we intend to move ahead with improving the area below the Retreat Center meditation hall, including the lower walking room and the 'Bowling Alley' corridor. We hope you will help us with this project; it is the focus of our Fund Drive this Spring. We plan to renovate the lower walking room and construct a new yoga room there. A ventilation system will be added to circulate the air and reduce moisture. All walls will be freshly painted and cork flooring, designed to minimize noise, will be installed throughout. Bathrooms, corridors and the stairways at each end will be refurbished. The only aspect that will remain untouched is the 'bowling lane' itself; as far as we know, the last person to bowl at IMS was His Holiness the Dalai Lama during his 1979 visit!

When renovations are completed, in time for the 2009 retreat season, participants will have access to lighter, roomier and healthier areas for walking meditation and other forms of mindful movement.

**Forest Refuge Cork Flooring** - Despite our best efforts, some of the original cork flooring installed at the Forest Refuge has not withstood the test of time so well. Those of you who have sat a recent personal retreat there may have noticed tile corners repeatedly poking up, instead of staying smoothly flat and sealed. After trying all sorts of unsuccessful fixes, we are going ahead and replacing certain affected areas with a better cork material, allowing yogis to walk with greater ease! This work is scheduled to take place during May.

We are committed to thoughtful, ongoing improvement of all the buildings at IMS, recognizing how our facilities enhance the power of retreat life.



**Sacred Relics** - The altar in the Retreat Center meditation hall is now the home of relics of the Buddha's two foremost disciples, Sariputta and Maha Moggallana.

By way of background, bone relics of Sariputta were discovered, with inscriptions, by a British archaeologist, Sir Alexander Cunningham, in India's Bhopal province during excavations of an ancient site in 1851. After being removed to England - as was the British Empire custom - they languished in the basement of England's Victoria and Albert Museum until 1939, when the Maha Bodhi Society of India approached the British government with a request that they be returned to India. The request was granted.

That venerable organization then decided to distribute the relics to various places. In their wisdom, IMS was deemed to be a worthy recipient. And so, some years ago, we received a small clear perspex stupa containing two tiny relics of Sariputta.

The stupa was safely stored, awaiting a decision on where to eventually house it and its precious contents. Then, late last year, we found out more about the tradition of relics - primarily that they thrive and can actually multiply in an environment of strong practice and faith.

The Retreat Center meditation hall altar seemed a fitting space, and so Sariputta's relics were moved there. Shortly afterwards, we received a gift of relics of Maha Moggallana as well. So now Sariputta and Moggallana reside together on our Retreat Center altar, at the feet of the Buddha (*see photo below*).



You can read more about the excavation, authenticity and journey of Sariputta's relics

at <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/nyanaponika/wheel090.html#app>.

### Program Highlights

**Single Rooms for the Three-Month Retreat** - Once again, as we did in 2007, IMS will limit the number of registrations for this year's [Three-Month Retreat](#), September 20-December 13. This is to offer all participants single room accommodations.

**Upcoming Retreats** - At the **Retreat Center**, space is still available in the [Metta](#) (Loving Friendliness) and [Insight Meditation](#) courses taught by Michele McDonald and others, May 30-June 6 and June 6-15 respectively. An optional period of mindful qigong will take place each day.

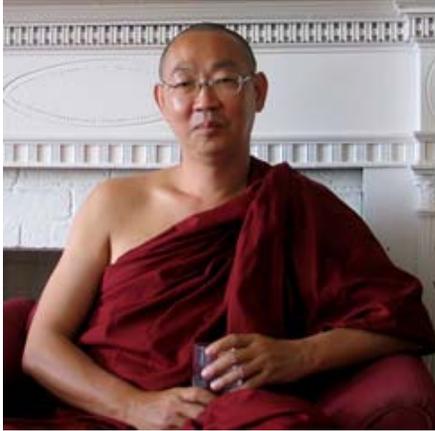
These retreats are followed by an [Insight Meditation Retreat for Experienced Students](#), led by Larry Rosenberg, June 20-27. This course includes an optional daily Mindfulness Yoga session.



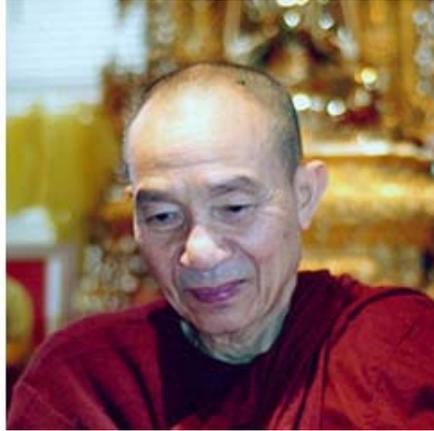
In 2009, the **Forest Refuge** will have the honor of hosting two senior Asian monks who will each offer retreats in the practice tradition of Shwe Oo Min Sayadaw, a revered Burmese monastic who passed away in 2002.

From May 24-June 14 next year, [Sayadaw U Tejaniya](#) will be in residence. This will be a lottery course with applications due by September 30, 2008. Twelve years ago, following life as a householder with a business career, Sayadaw U Tejaniya ordained as a monk. His earlier householder experience has given him a rare insight into the challenges faced by lay practitioners.

From July 1-31, 2009, [Bhante Khippapanno](#) will teach with special emphasis on *Citta* (Mind), the third of the Buddha's Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipatthāna* in Pali).



*Sayadaw U Tejaniya*



*Bhante Khippapanno*

### Sangha Stories

We frequently hear from so many of you how valuable your retreat experience at IMS has been. As you can imagine, we take great joy in this. But now, we would love to hear more - particularly how such experiences have rippled out into the world and transformed your lives. Perhaps your time at IMS has inspired you to offer something that helps others in return, or maybe it gave birth to new creativity. Perhaps those closest to you have noticed positive changes in your temperament or outlook. Whatever the circumstances, we welcome your story! Please send any contributions (just a few paragraphs, please) to [sanghastories@dharma.org](mailto:sanghastories@dharma.org).

### Sangha Survey

IMS values your feedback. Help us to better support your practice here by taking a few moments to complete this anonymous and brief survey. We are using an internet service called Survey Monkey that ensures we will not be able to identify respondents' names.

- If you have sat more than one retreat at IMS, we would like to learn more about your room preference. Please click [here](#).
- If you have sat just once at IMS, we are seeking to understand why you haven't as yet returned. Please click [here](#).

Thank you for taking the time to help us. All of us at IMS wish you good health and ease of heart.



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*IMS is a spiritual refuge for all who seek freedom from the suffering of mind and heart. We offer meditation retreats rooted in the Theravada Buddhist teachings of ethics, concentration and wisdom. These practices help develop awareness and compassion, giving rise to greater peace and happiness in the world.*

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