

A Visit to Sati Saraniya Hermitage

A Training Monastery for Theravada Buddhist Bhikkhunis

by Lyne Rivest



*From right to left : Anagārikā Acalā,
Sāmaneri Ahimsā, Ayyā Medhānandī
(resident monastics)
Sayalay Kusalānandī and Sayalay
Khemānandī (visiting monastics)*

This last May, I had the opportunity to stay at the Buddhist nuns' community close to Perth, Ontario. After landing at the Ottawa airport, I was greeted by a cheerful Anagarikā named Acalā . Accompanying her was a visiting American 8-precept nun by the name of Khemanandī who drove us to the Hermitage which is located 1.5 hours southwest of Ottawa in rural Lanark County. The hermitage is home to the Canadian Bhikkhuni Sangha.

At present, there are three resident monastics and, at the time of my visit, there were also two visiting nuns: a 10-precept nun from Germany and an 8-precept nun from the United States.

Life at the Hermitage is both quiet and busy. The day started and ended with meditation in the newly built

meditation hall. This was followed by light chores and breakfast. Meal time is an occasion for the community to get together, chant and share a Dhamma reading which is offered by Ayyā Medhānandī for our contemplation, especially in the mornings. It is also the time when the activities of the day are planned.

Among other monastery activities in which I participated, I had the chance to volunteer for the "mulching crew". This involved spreading a layer of mulch around the nuns' meditation cabins. As I worked alongside the monastics, I came to appreciate the simplicity of their lifestyle in both its beauty and challenges. I remember the unstartled snowshoe hare who kept grazing peacefully along the path in the meadow as I came by with my wheelbarrow.



After lunch and clean-up, there is a period of quiet time. I could go for a walk on the rural lanes or in the monastery woodlands, sit on the front porch reading or watching the hummingbirds flying back and forth to the nectar feeder, or simply keep company with Belle, the monastery cat.

The friendliness of the monastic community extends to all visitors, from the children of the lawn-mower repairman to supporters who come to offer food and help out, as well as to laypeople and monastics who are in need of an understanding ear to lighten their difficulties. All are embraced with compassion and gratitude, a gift that lingers in one's heart and mind after visiting.

To find out more about Sati Saraniya Hermitage and the work of our spiritual sisters, please visit: www.satisaraniya.ca.