

Chapter 16: Saints, Monks, and Sages

Thomas Jost died in September 2000 from dengue fever caught during a personal retreat in a monastery in Burma. In a moving tribute in the Gaia House Newsletter, Christopher Titmuss referred to him as a “living saint.” He told how in 1991 following the retreat we were on in Bodh Gaya, Thomas and Christopher established the Prajner Vihar School for the children of the very poor. Thomas then managed that school of 380 pupils, as well as other projects around Bodh Gaya, while still organising Christopher’s annual retreat. Christopher quoted from a letter Thomas had written from that hut in Burma on his meditation experiences: “Out of stillness manifests the capacity to respond in accordance with the inexpressible Dharma. All my wrestling with distracted thoughts ends again and again in the unequivocal embrace of the futility of the search. It’s rather joyful and awesome.” Christopher had been hoping that after this retreat Thomas would finally agree to start teaching meditation with him. Several books have been published by Christopher Titmuss (see bibliography).

For an example of the teaching of Andrew Cohen see his *Autobiography of an Awakening* (1992), and for the other side of the story there are two books by disillusioned followers, Van der Braak (2003) and Tarle (1997). The second one is by his mother! Even saints can fall; in recent years there has been controversy for Christopher Titmuss, too. He was asked to stop teaching at some meditation centres because he had too many relationships with female disciples.

The talk given by Ajahn Sucitto in Bodh Gaya is sadly no longer available now that the wonderful Amaravati Cassettes service has been replaced by the modern but more limited www.dhammadreads.org, which sends out free CDs. The monastery web sites have talks for downloading (www.cittaviveka.org, www.amaravati.org).

References:

Cohen, Andrew. *Autobiography of an Awakening*. Corte Madera, California: Moksha Press, 1992.

Tarle, Luna. *The Mother of God*. Brooklyn, New York: Plover Press, 1997.

Titmuss, Christopher. *Freedom of Spirit*. London: Green Print, 1991.

Titmuss, Christopher. *The Green Buddha*. Totnes: Insight Books, 1995.

Van der Braak, Andre. *Enlightenment Blues: My Years with an American Guru*. Rhinebeck, New York: Monkfish, 2003.