

could work quietly and meditatively, mostly isolated from the turmoil of the regular staff. I also did five hours of intensive meditation every day.

After managing the IMS Tape library for a year, the Board of Directors gave me a one year full meditation scholarship in 1984. It was a good time to be on retreat at IMS because four great Asian meditation masters taught there that year: Anagarika Munindra, Dipa Ma Barua, Tunpulu Sayadaw and Sayadaw U Pandita. I had heard endless stories about Munindra and Dipa Ma as they had been primary teachers of most of my Western teachers. Tunpulu Sayadaw was widely regarded as being fully enlightened. U Pandita was the successor to the late Mahasi Sayadaw, and was regarded as the leading authority on this method of practice. U Pandita turned out to be an incredibly powerful teacher, and has been the greatest influence in my developing an advanced meditation practice.

After the full IMS scholarship expired, I was able to continue my practice with a partial scholarship from IMS, grants from a private foundation and gifts from several friends. Finally, after being on retreat for almost five years, I decided to return to the *real world*. I spent eighteen months traveling all over the United States doing odd jobs and teaching meditation. During this period, my teacher Sayadaw U Pandita taught a ten-day retreat in California, which I attended.

I thought that I had learned the lesson that there is no particular time standard for how the practice unfolds. I expected that the purpose of a trifling ten-day retreat in 1986 was to renew old acquaintances and brush up on my meditation practice. I was surprised that this ten-day retreat turned out to be one of the pivotal experiences of my life. As soon as I could fulfill my teaching commitments after this retreat, I returned to IMS for another year and a half of intensive practice.

Peace Pilgrim

During this retreat, a Tibetan monk visiting IMS did a

reading from the *Peace Pilgrim* book. After reading the book, I became convinced that Peace Pilgrim was a rare case of spontaneous enlightenment that Buddhist texts refer to. She seemed to conform to the Buddhist concept about these cases: she was an inspiring teacher, but she lacked a complete methodology for guiding others to the same attainment she had made. Peace Pilgrim died in 1981, and some followers had compiled the *Peace Pilgrim* book from transcripts of her talks, newsletters, and letters.

What particularly inspires me about the Friends of Peace Pilgrim, the nonprofit organization distributing her book, was that they give books, audio and video tapes away free. Anyone writing to Friends of Peace Pilgrim, 43480 Cedar Ave., Hemet, CA 92544 and requesting the *Peace Pilgrim* book will receive a free copy. They rely only on unsolicited donations to continue the distribution of Peace Pilgrim's message. Peace Pilgrim believed that spiritual teachings should never be sold. This is an ideal in the Buddhist tradition followed in Asia, but no one had been successful with free distribution in the West. For years I had been trying, without success, to figure out how to distribute audio tapes for free.

At the end of my retreat in 1988, I went to Hemet, California to do one year of volunteer work for the Friends of Peace Pilgrim. I did this partly to support the teachings of Peace Pilgrim, but also to learn how to do free distribution of spiritual teachings. I learned that it could be done when free facilities are provided and the volunteers have independent incomes.

Insight Recordings

In 1989 I returned to teaching *vipassana* meditation in different parts of the United States. In 1990 I gave up teaching in order to found Insight Recordings that distributed audio tapes of Buddhist teachers. I took a one year sabbatical in 1993 to do volunteer work for the *Vipassana* Support Institute and to do a period of intensive practice with Sayadaw U Pandita in Burma. The retreat in Burma brought my total time spent in intensive meditation