

# FWBO NEWSLETTER 1

Published by THE FRIENDS OF THE WESTERN BUDDHIST ORDER 14 Monmouth Street London WC2

President: The Ven Sthavira Sangharakshita

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## Why a Newsletter?

The quick answer is 'For YOU so that you will get to know more about US'. With the first Ordinations on April 7 this year the Buddhist movement in Britain received a new impetus and gained new stature. The Ordinations followed a year in which the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order expanded their activities and increased in numbers. Future plans (as you will see in this NEWSLETTER) are many. All this is the more remarkable when it is recalled that the FWBO has not advertised extensively and that most of those who now attend classes, seminars, retreats, etc, do so from a wish to be associated with the Friends and because they find interest and value in what has been provided.

To have developed so rapidly has demanded much of the few whose time and energies have gone into meeting the growing demand for information and instruction about the Buddha Dharma. Because more people are involved there is a need for closer co-operation and better communication. The NEWSLETTER is a way of achieving at least part of this aim. As the title implies it will contain news - facts which might otherwise have had to be circulated in less convenient ways. The NEWSLETTER is also a challenge to those who receive it - an encouragement that we hope will result in a widening and deepening of your involvement with the exciting tasks ahead. The NEWSLETTER is not (and cannot, in its present format, be) a journal or magazine, though it is hoped that such a venture may grow from the present modest effort.

Up to the present the Friends have required no formal declaration of membership; there is no scale of subscriptions and no 'book of rules'; all have been welcomed, much given and little asked. This has seemed the best way, and it is desirable that such freedoms should continue. But growth brings maturity, and maturity responsibility. Our main responsibility to the FWBO is to ensure its continuing growth and vitality. The NEWSLETTER will stimulate this. It will be straightforward, informative, brief and unpompous. It will try to be persuasive. We hope you will read it, like it and respond to it. The present issue contains details of several new ventures. It also asks YOU to do something. Read on and find out what it is.



THERE ARE STILL SOME VACANCIES FOR THE JUNE RETREAT AT 'QUARTERMAINE' IN SURREY FROM 15TH TO 29TH. FOR DETAILS SEE NEXT PAGE OR WRITE TO THE RETREAT ORGANISER, FWBO, 14 MONMOUTH STREET, LONDON W C 2



# A letter from the President

FROM THE VEN STHAVIRA SANGHARAKSHITA

Dear Friends,

If you are reading this NEWSLETTER it means you are either attending classes or other activities of the Friends, or you are giving your support in some other way; possibly you have just expressed interest in what we are doing. Whatever the reason we are pleased that you want to know more about what is going on. Recent events have shown that it is possible for a community to come into being which is in harmony with both the nature and the spirit of Buddhism, and which meets at least some of the needs of those who wish to draw nearer to the teaching of the Buddha. A new and, indeed, crucial phase of Buddhism in the West was reached with the recent Ordinations; much remains to be done. Meanwhile, among the Friends, we have discovered that the traditional relationship between a spiritual teacher and those who are being taught, and relationships between those who are receiving the teaching, can have much power and vitality.

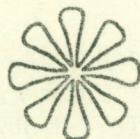
As President of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order I meet many people different in ages, backgrounds, aspirations and degrees of spiritual advancement. But all have one thing in common - a desire to know more about the incomparable Buddha Dharma.

Buddhists are not 'special' people; they are, as the Friends show, varied and differing people. Yet many will come to have a special view of life. Whatever understanding, insight and discovery is made in classes, in meditation, at retreats and other activities among the Friends, these are not, in essence, things provided by the teacher. They are the result of personal striving. Guidance, advice and information are there for the asking - and, of course, for the effort on the part of those who seek these things.

I welcome the opportunity which the NEWSLETTER gives us of reaching more of those who share our work, as I welcome the more limited personal contact which I have with many of you. We are doing something new and exciting together, yet as old and profound as man's search for enlightenment which received its impetus from the Buddha nearly two thousand years ago.

Yours in the Dharma

SABBA SATTA



SUKHI HONTU



# DIARY



R E T R E A T S   L E C T U R E S   C L A S S E S   S E M I N A R S   E V E N T S

## 28 JULY. SEMINAR

A seminar will be held on Sunday, July 28 at Centre House, Campden Hill Road, Kensington, London W 8 (Notting Hill Gate or Kensington High Street tube stations) from 11 am to 8 pm. The programme is as follows:

- 11.00 am Guided group meditation
- 12.00    Lecture: The Heart Sutra in Tibetan Buddhism and Zen
- 1.00 pm Lunch
- 2.30 pm Guided group discussion
- 4.00 pm Guided group meditation
- 5.00 pm Tea
- 5.30 pm Lecture: The Sevenfold Puja: Poetry and Devotion in Buddhism
- 7.00 pm Puja and meditation

The seminar will be under the direction of the Ven Sthavira Sangharakshita who will also deliver the lectures. Fee for the day, including vegetarian luncheon and afternoon tea is £1 (30s for married couples and 10s students and old age pensioners). Please complete the form on the last page of this NEWSLETTER and return it, not later than Monday, July 22, to FWBO, 14 Monmouth Street, London W C 2

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## RETREATS

Retreats will be held from Saturday, June 17 to Saturday, June 29 at 'Quartermaine' Farnham Lane, Haselmere and from Saturday, August 17 to Monday, September 1 (Bank Holiday) at 'Keffolds', Bunch Lane, Haselmere. Priority will be given to Friends wishing to stay for the whole of either period but we hope to be able to accommodate those wishing to stay for shorter periods or a weekend only. Friends should arrive before lunchtime on the first day, or at other times by arrangement. The first few days of each week will be composite (i.e. lectures and discussion as well as guided group meditation) but the latter part of the Retreats will comprise a higher proportion of meditation. The inclusive fees are 36s per day (30s per day for students or pensioners). Full details of the Retreats have already been circulated to Friends on the regular mailing list, but are still available to anyone who wishes to see them on application to FWBO, 14 Monmouth Street, London W C 2. Use the appropriate section of the form enclosed with this NEWSLETTER to book. But do so as soon as possible, please.

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## REGULAR CLASSES

Regular classes at the FWBO Information Centre, 14 Monmouth Street, London W C 2 continue as follows: MONDAY Zen Class; TUESDAY Meditation; WEDNESDAY Beginners' Class; THURSDAY Meditation (advanced). Members of the Order will now be attending all classes and it is hoped that anyone who requires further information on any aspect of the Friends' activities will take the opportunity to meet with and discuss matters with any Ordinee on class nights.



# The Three Jewels \* \* \*

The Three Jewels, An Introduction to Buddhism by Sthavira Sangharakshita (Rider; 50s)

The following are extracts from an extended review of the above book by the Ven Lama Anagarika Govinda written specially for the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order and sent from India.

Bhikshu Sangharakshita is already well known to Indian readers and to Buddhists the world over through his many publications, and especially his book A Survey of Buddhism in which he traces the philosophical and historical development of Buddhism. His present book, The Three Jewels is concerned with the fundamentals of Buddhist life and thought: the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. This is a subject which, on the face of it, seems to be so well known that people might wonder whether anything new could be said about it. But Sangharakshita has not only succeeded in saying many new things, but saying them in a most fascinating and inspiring way. Even the most familiar subjects are handled with such originality and spontaneousness that one begins to see them with new eyes. Only a man who has made Buddhism his own way of life and who has experienced every phase of it could write in such a convincing and refreshing way. Indeed, in this book Buddhism comes to life, and even the most technical philosophical or psychological terms are made easy and lucid and supported by well chosen similes or parallels in modern thought.

The difficult subject of trikaya, the threefold body of the Buddha, for instance, has been illustrated in the following way: [The reviewer here quotes the illustration given of three people - a child, a botanist and a poet - looking at the same flower but seeing it in different ways]

In other words the trikaya doctrine does not proclaim three separate bodies, but three different aspects of the same reality in dependence of three categories of consciousness - that of the senses, that of the mind and that of intuitive spiritual experience. By keeping in mind these three levels of consciousness Sangharakshita avoids the pitfalls of previous writers on Buddhism who, obsessed with the idea of scientific rationalism, tried to separate historical facts from mythological and legendary elements by discarding all supernatural or miraculous events in the life of the Buddha as mere inventions or superstitions of credulous devotees.

Sangharakshita rightly points out the profound psychological significance and spiritual truth hidden in these apparently legendary passages.....By recognising and understanding the psychological and symbolical language of Buddhist texts in their organic development and in their different cultural settings, Sangharakshita succeeds in giving a convincing insight into the inner unity of Buddhist thought and life. It is due to this profound understanding that he is able to enter into the spirit of the Mahayana without abandoning his stand on the fundamental teachings of the Buddha. These, in fact, are wide and universal enough to accommodate a tremendous range of religious experience and philosophical interpretation, though they were hampered when the free life of the early parivrajakas hardened into the monastic institution of an organised Sangha with innumerable rules and regulations and a narrowly circumscribed body of canonical scriptures and commentaries. It was in revolt against this narrowing of Buddhist ideals and the splitting of the Buddhist community into monks and laymen, that the great vehicle of the Mahayana with its all-encompassing, universal Bodhisattva Ideal came into existence, an Ideal which eliminated the barrier between the monk and the householder, as well as the duality of nirvana and samsara. [The author is quoted as saying that, ultimately, there can be no question of escaping from the conditioned into the unconditioned as though these were distinct entities]

Out of this all-transcending realisation, in which enlightenment turns into infinite love for all sentient beings, arises the glorious conception of the Bodhisattvas who, out of compassion, take upon themselves the limitations of conditioned life. And with this a vision of infinite beauty is revealed which pervades all aspects of the Mahayana and percolates down into all forms of popular Buddhism, which are vividly described in the last, chapter of this most stimulating book.

We apologise to the distinguished reviewer for shortening his profound and sympathetic contribution due to limitations in the format of this first NEWSLETTER. Only quotations directly from the author have been omitted and the whole of Lama Anagarika Govinda's penetrating analysis has been left intact. Rather than deprive readers of this review we decided to omit the quotations. We look forward to further contributions from this eloquent contributor. EDITOR



# Ordinations

'A HISTORIC STAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHISM IN BRITAIN'. This was how the Ven Sthavira Sangharakshita described the first Ordinations within the FWBO which took place in April. After only a year in existence the Friends were able to meet in London for the ceremonies appropriate to upāsaka Ordination following an all-day Seminar at which the Sthavira had spoken of the significance of the upāsaka and Bodhisattva vows.

The new Order aims to make wide contacts internationally with other Buddhist organisations and will become the focus for committed Buddhists in Britain. The Ordination ceremony was attended by an invited audience which included members of the Sangha from Ceylon and Thailand and a visiting Zen Master, the Ven Taisen Deshimaru.

It is planned that further Ordinations will take place, and the Sthavira has expressed the hope that, eventually, Buddhist communities will be established in Britain and a monastic Order will come into being. The first aim of the FWBO - to establish an Order so that those who choose to follow a committed Buddhist way of life may do so in brotherhood and sisterhood - has, therefore, been achieved more quickly than would have seemed possible a year ago.

The Japanese Kesa has been adopted as the most appropriate symbol of Ordination, and the Western Buddhist Order Kesa is of white moire material with two embroidered crests in gold.

In his talk on the meaning of the Order the Sthavira said that there were two extreme views regarding what constituted a Buddhist: one maintained that only ordained monks were 'real Buddhists' and the other that being born in a Buddhist country automatically made one a Buddhist. The Friends took a middle view, avoiding the exclusiveness of the one extreme and the all-embracing character of the other.

The following Friends received Ordination: Emile Boin, Sara Boin, Roy Brewer, John Hipkin, Margaretta Khan, Penny Nield-Smith, Terence O'Reagan, Stephen Parr, Michael Ricketts, Michael Rogers, David Waddell and Geoffrey Webster.

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## IMPORTANT TO YOU!

You have been receiving regular mailings from the FWBO. Now you have the first of our NEWSLETTERS. One thousand copies were produced and mailed: that's a lot of time, effort and money. We want you to share in the growth of the FWBO. But we need ACTIVE supporters. So that we may limit expenses and maintain effective mailing lists we are asking you to complete the form on the reverse of this sheet and return it to us. It will ensure that you receive further copies of the NEWSLETTER and that you are willing to play a part in the continuing development of Buddhism in the West. DO IT NOW.....cut and send the form on the back of this item.



# ANNIVERSARY APPEAL

FOR A F W B O RETREAT AND MEDITATION CENTRE

If you believe in something it's worth making an effort. The effort we are asking you to make is a practical contribution to achieve an ideal - a retreat and meditation centre. This is our next priority, applauded and agreed by most Friends. You will already know how valuable such a centre could be to all of us in providing a focus and haven for the practice of meditation. The actual centre is now more than a mere ideal; it is available - a large, rambling, solid, grey-stone house built around 1880 with parts dating from Tudor times and more recent additions. It has some 90 rooms, oiled-fired central heating and could accommodate at least 50 people in single rooms, with further provision for lecture-rooms, dining rooms etc. The house has nine acres of old walled gardens, lawns and shrubberies and is situated in quiet, undulating farmland a mile from the nearest busy road, the A3. Liphook (Hampshire) is two miles away and is the nearest village. The house has been used as a monastery and needs hardly any conversion for the purposes for which we would use it. It is 1½ hour's journey by rail from Waterloo, making it an ideal centre for weekend retreats. In short it is just what we are seeking, and to secure it would be a triumph.

Will you share in the thrill of acquiring our own retreat centre? It is available for rather less than two thirds of the original asking price, but the Friends would need at least £19,000 to buy it outright and equip the house as a meditation centre. A sum of £10,000 would enable us to secure a mortgage.

Does it sound a lot? Of course it does. But we are no longer surprised at what the Friends can achieve when they set their minds and hearts on something. We believe (as we are taught to believe) that Dana - the gift freely given - is part of what we know and understand of the Buddha's teachings, and part too of the very real responsibility we have one to another. Even the smallest contribution helps - and the larger contribution helps even more!

In responding to our Anniversary Appeal you will be showing, in a most practical way, that you support what can be done to advance the Buddha Dharma in the West. And (need we say) you will be among those who will find a haven of rest, meditation and contemplation which is hard to come by in the rush and worry of the everyday world. WE ARE ASKING FOR A PLEDGE OF SUPPORT - the promise either of a lump sum or a covenant for at least seven years (with tax benefits) agreeing to a fixed contribution every year. You will receive news of the progress of our appeal, and full information on the final outcome. PLEASE USE THE ATTACHED FORM

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NEWLETTER REQUEST FORM (See over) To: Friends of the Western Buddhist Order  
14 Monmouth Street, London W C 2

- \* Please retain my name on your mailing list - I am interested in the activities of the FWBO

Name.....

Address.....

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- \* Friends who are regular subscribers to the FWBO, or who have responded to our Anniversary Appeal need not return this form - they will automatically receive all mailings. Others please complete if you wish to stay on the mailing list.