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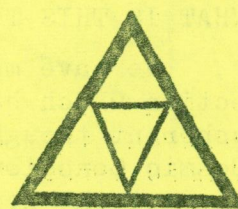
EVOLUTION



FWBO

Newslatter

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editorial

WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED MIND ?

We have many names in our languages for that universal ideal of perfection which has been with mankind ever since his first strivings towards coherent thought. Godhead, Union, Bliss, Divinity, Nirvana, Absolute, Cosmic Consciousness, Brahman - it seems that the more names we have for a concept the less it can be understood. The proliferation of linguistic determinants where higher states of consciousness are concerned seems to indicate pretty clearly that we are on unsure and unmapped ground. Silence seems to be the only safe way through the mire, yet silence without experience is just as fruitless as words in getting to the other shore.

It has been said that the fundamental question of all philosophy and true knowledge is, why should anything exist at all ? Why not just one great universal and cataclysmic blank? This question, under various disguises, often comes up at our meetings, just as it must have done again and again in the days of Socrates and Aristotle, and in the meetings and discourses of the great Indian sages even long before the Buddha's time. Often the question is answered by an equally mystifying silence, or a simple statement to the effect that the question cannot be answered at all. If this is true, does it not make nonsense of all spiritual effort and strivings, if even the great and enlightened gurus of history could not give even a hint of its answer?

In a recent Friday meeting, the question came up again in the form: 'where does the mind originally come from?' It may be of interest to see how it was dealt with on this occasion.

There are basically two approaches. One is to say that the universe began at a certain point in time, before which there existed nothing at all, not even the seed or potentiality of creation, nor the will to create, nor the possibility of such a will coming into existence. It doesn't matter when you set the date of creation: four thousand or 400 million years is all the same with this theory. This of course is the position taken up by the Christian theologian, and the propagators of the 'big bang' theory of universal creation. The second view is that, no matter how far you go back in time, you can never reach an absolute beginning. There is no starting point, and therefore no ending. The concept of a beginning is merely a result of Man's inability to conceive beginningless and endless time: it is an artificial construction of the intellect, with no place in reality.

The Buddhist approach is rather different from either of these views. It says that the mind, being a conditioned entity, cannot conceive the first conditions which arose dependent upon which mind itself arises. Mind, in other words, being a result of causes and conditions, operates on a different level than those causes, and therefore cannot ever apprehend them. The only way to go beyond this stalemate is to go beyond mind; go beyond the entity to which the situation itself is a problem. As long as there is a separation between conditioned and unconditioned, there will be a question. As long as there is a question there cannot be an answer, for this implies a duality based upon conditions. Only when there is no question can the answer come, and then it is not an answer because answer and question have merged and given birth to a super non-answer and non-question. This is the position from where Zen Buddhism - and the perfection of Wisdom schools - begin. If there is no conditioned mind, there is no ignorance; if there

if there is no ignorance, everything is Buddha nature, and no Buddhas - as different from all sentient beings - have ever existed.

This then is probably the nearest one can ever get to defining the state of enlightenment - as the Answer to no question, where the void and the entire contents of the universe have merged into a miraculous unity, about which nothing meaningful can ever be said. This is why Han Shan burst into maniacal laughter when approached by the monks at his hermitage; why Jyoshu walked away from his master with his sandals on his head, and why Nansen cut the cat in half when two disciples were arguing about its ownership. The Zen scriptures say, 'we are all perfect Buddhas just as we are'; but most of us have to struggle and suffer countless days of painful meditation to come to that joyful realization.

A NOTE ON THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE WESTERN BUDDHIST ORDER IN ENGLAND

The Friends of The Western Sangha (Later changed to the Friends of The Western Buddhist Order), was established in London in March 1967 by the Ven. Sthavira Sangharakshita, shortly after his permanent return to this country from India. (see Biographical Note in the following pages.) The movement was conceived in a tiny sitting room in Coptic Street, near the British Museum, and a few weeks later began its outward life in a small unobtrusive shop next to the old French Hospital in Monmouth Street about half a mile away.

These origins have been largely and inevitably obscured by the many developments of the last four years, but they are very significant when seen in the light of our overall aims: it has never become our intention to become a 'mass movement' under any connotation of that term; neither has it ever been felt necessary to form a large body of organisers beyond what minimal organisation is set down by the legal constitution. Yet we have moved people, or rather we have provided the conditions and the environment whereby people have been able to move themselves to new possibilities of growth, fulfilment, and self-realization.

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order was formed with the chief intention of providing a foundation, both socially and financially, for the Western Buddhist Order itself, which came into existence a year later, in April 1968, when twelve disciples were initiated into the Upasaka Sangha. In creating the FWBO in London, it was not intended to produce yet another school of Buddhism in the West, still less an addition to the already lengthy list of sects and religious organisations dedicated to spreading 'the One Truth'. For it was realised that if Buddhism was to find a lasting home in the west, it must have its roots in the ground where it is meant to grow, and not several thousand miles away in a culture based upon very different axioms to our own. This could only be achieved by allowing the movement to grow naturally in its own way, and fertilizing its soil well. The FWBO had to grow out of a real need, and not merely out of a noble idea in someone's head. The need did exist of course, but it was not until about the middle of the decade that it began to be defined: until that time, Buddhism, if it had been heard of at all, was little more than a secular institution which existed for social contact and study by people more interested in the oriental traditions of Buddhism than in the total practice of a spiritual life-style. But the growing need was for a living religion, which was not only lived, but seen to be lived. Out of this contingency was born the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, and its progeny, the Western Buddhist Order itself.

Thus, the basic conception of the FWBO is twofold. It exists to spread knowledge and true understanding as embodied in the Buddha's teaching. It also exists to make possible a life lived according to the Buddhist ideal of harmony, wisdom, and spiritual growth. It accepts the main tenet held by the Buddha that truth and real understanding can only be attained by living a pure life, free of attachments, free of the desire to be anything, or to make an impression on one's fellow beings; also to experience for oneself the reality of higher states of consciousness as the direct initiating force which brings about the life of the Bodhisattva. But the spiritual life cannot be lived in a void: it requires people who believe that it is worthwhile giving up one's attachments and ego desires to follow a discipline. And the spontaneous coming together of such people constitutes the real Sangha of Buddhism.

Any real spiritual movement is the reflection in this world of the eternal action of supra-mundane values which form the universal fabric against which phenomena take place. It represents the means whereby the laws of the higher evolution of consciousness are made manifest to those who wish to develop their own higher natures. The Sangha is therefore essentially the embodiment of these laws, just as a musical harmony may be embodied in sound in the throat of an organ pipe. By joining the Sangha we are expressing our total commitment to these principles as the central pivot of our life.

However the act of joining the Sangha does not automatically make one different than before. One cannot suddenly be invested with wisdom and compassion by joining a movement, no matter how elevated its aims may be. What is of prime importance is what takes place within the mind, not how the external appearance is altered. Enlightenment does not come by reading or hearing about someone else's experience, no matter how profound. We must climb out of the mire by our own blood and tears, no matter how weak we may imagine ourselves to be, for there is no one 'up there' to reach down and pull us out like a half strangled fish.

The relationship between the teacher and those who are taught is thus of vital importance in Buddhism. The Buddhist Sangha or fellowship of aspirants is rightly one of the most sacred aspects of all traditions. Without this, the teaching cannot be felt as a living force in daily life, except by very exceptional individuals. For the vast majority, the Sangha is central to the entire teaching.

This is why, in the course of the last four years, our main energies have gone into bringing people together to study and practise Buddhism. The spirit of Sangha has been the unifying thread underlying all our retreats, meditation groups, seminars, festivals, ceremonies and public meetings of all kinds. And it will be our continuing aim to foster this spirit, in whatever form seems appropriate to the time and place.

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The Bodhicitta is like a seed because from it grows all the truths of Buddhism. It is like a farm because here are produced all things of purity for the world.

(Bodhisattva Maitreya)

Ven Sthavira Sangharakshita - a Biographical Sketch

Ven. Sthavira Sangharakshita was born in London in 1925 and spent much of his early life as a chronic invalid. When he was sixteen he read 'The Diamond Sutra' and 'The Sutra of Wei Lang' (Hui Neng), and discovered himself to be a Buddhist. Conscripted in 1943, after two years with the LCC, he spent more than three years in the Royal Corps of Signals, serving in India, Ceylon and Singapore. During this period he came in personal contact with a number of prominent spiritual figures, both Buddhist and Hindu, began writing and lecturing on Buddhism, became a vegetarian, and took up the practice of meditation.

Leaving the army in January, 1946, while still in the East, he adopted the name of Dharmapriya ('Lover of the Doctrine') and spent more than two years as a wandering ascetic, mainly in South India. Besides sitting at the feet of such well known Hindu gurus as Anandamayi Ma, Swami Ramdas, and Ramana Maharshi, he passed his time meditating in isolated hermitages and remote mountain caves.

Coming north at the beginning of 1949, he walked from Sarnath, where the Buddha delivered His first discourse, up to Kusinara, where He died, and from there as far as Lumbini, the place of the Buddha's birth - a distance of altogether three hundred miles. On May 1st, while at Kusinara, he received the lower ordination (pravrajya) from U Chandramani Maha Thera, the seniormost Theravada monk in India, and was given the name of Sangharakshita (Protector of the Order'). From Lumbini, still on foot, and begging his way from village to village in the traditional manner, he penetrated deep into the Himalayan kingdom of Nepal, then under Rana rule and virtually closed to the outside world. Crossing the first range of foothills from the border town of Butaol, he arrived at Tansen in Central Nepal. Here, despite the suspicions of the authorities, he spent a month in Newari Buddhist monasteries and saw for himself how Buddhism was being persecuted under the orthodox Hindu regime.

At this point, his health having broken down, Ven. Sangharakshita was forced to retrace his steps to Benares, where he spent a year studying Pali, Abhidhamma and Logic with Ven. Jagdish Kashyap. During this period he also made his first pilgrimage to Buddha Gaya, where the Buddha gained perfect enlightenment. In Buddha Gaya he saw Tibetan Buddhists for the first time, and was greatly impressed by their simple devotion. At the beginning of 1950 he accompanied Ven. Jagdish Kashyap on a pilgrimage to the Buddhist sacred places of Bihar. After visiting Rajgir and climbing to the top of the Vulture's Peak, where the Buddha revealed 'The White Lotus Sutra' they proceeded to Nalanda, site of the most celebrated Buddhist university of ancient times. Travelling from Bihar to West Bengal, they finally made their way up to the Himalayan township of Kalimpong, on the Indo-Tibet border, where they arrived in March. Here Ven. Jagdish Kashyap left Ven. Sangharakshita, advising him to make the place his headquarters and work there for Buddhism. In May 1950, Ven. Sangharakshita accordingly founded the Young Men's Buddhist Association, Kalimpong, and conducted under its auspices a variety of social, religious, and educational activities for the benefit of the young men of the locality. He also founded and edited a monthly magazine of Himalayan Buddhism entitled 'Stepping Stones'. Through this magazine, which printed articles by Lama Govinda, Dr. George Roerich, H.R.H. Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark, Marco Pallis, Mme. Alexandra David-Neel, and Dr. Herbert V. Guenther, as well as by the editor himself, he established contact with many Buddhist organisations and made friends with Buddhists all over the world.

On November 24th, having returned to the plains for a brief visit, Ven Sangharakshita received his higher ordination (upasampada) at Sarnath from a Sangha of fourteen monks from Burma, Ceylon India and Nepal. His 'upadhyaya' was U Kaweinda of Rangoon, a noted preacher, and his 'acharya' U Zagara, Secretary-General of the Maha Sanghas of Burma. Returning to Kalimpong by the end of the year, he organised the public reception and exposition of the Sacred Relics of the Arahants Sariputra and Maudgalyayana, the two chief disciples of the Buddha, which had recently been returned to the Government of India from the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, where they had been kept for ninety years. He also accompanied the Sacred Relics to Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim, as well as to Khatmandu, where he stayed for ten days as guest of H.M. the King of Nepal.

In 1952, having been forced to discontinue publication of 'Stepping-Stones', he was invited to join the editorial board of 'The Maha Bodhi Journal', monthly organ of the Maha Bodhi Society of India, which he edited for twelve years. His strongly worded editorials, which not only defended Buddhist interests but attacked abuses in the Buddhist movement itself, aroused considerable interest throughout the Buddhist world. At the end of 1952, Ven. Sangharakshita attended the re-enshrinement of the Sacred Relics of Sariputra and Maudgalyayana at Sanchi, and was present at the proclamation of the western branch of the Order Arya Maitreya Mandala by Lama Govinda.

In June 1954, under the auspices of the Indian Institute of World Culture, Bangalore, Ven Sangharakshita delivered four lectures under the general title of 'A Survey of Buddhism'. At the request of Shri B.P. Wadia President of the Institute, he subsequently wrote them out for publication in book form. On its publication by the Institute in 1957, the year of the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha's death, 'A Survey of Buddhism' was immediately acclaimed by students of Buddhism all over the world, one scholarly reviewer in Ceylon going so far as to hail it as the principal event of the anniversary year. Towards the end of 1956, Ven Sangharakshita was one of a party of fifty-seven distinguished Buddhists from the Border Areas who, having toured the Buddhist sacred places of North India as guests of the Government of India, attended the 2500th anniversary celebrations held in New Delhi. It was on this occasion that Ven Sangharakshita first met the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama.

Breaking his journey back to Kalimpong at Nagpur, in Central India, on December 6th, 1956, Ven Sangharakshita was welcomed on his arrival at the station by a crowd of two thousand people. Only hours after his arrival came news of the sudden death in New Delhi of his friend Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, former Law Minister in the Government of India, under whose leadership half a million ex-Untouchables had embraced Buddhism at Nagpur only six weeks earlier, in the biggest mass conversion of modern times. In order to rally Dr. Ambedkar's grief-stricken followers, and prevent the movement of conversion from collapsing, in the course of the next four days Ven. Sangharakshita addressed thirty-five public meetings, one of them numbering a hundred thousand people. This done, he returned to Kalimpong via Calcutta in time to receive the Dalai Lama, then on his way back to Tibet.

Having functioned for seven years in a variety of rented premises, Ven Sangharakshita felt the need for a permanent headquarters in Kalimpong. In 1957 he therefore purchased a building and five acres of land on the outskirts of the town, funds being provided mainly by Marco Pallis and H.H. the Maharaj Kumar (later Maharaja) of Sikkim. The latter, indeed, had long

been one of his staunchest supporters, and had frequently invited him to Gangtok and arranged for him to give lectures there. The new headquarters, known as the Triyana Vardhana Vihara, soon became well known as a living centre of interdenominational Buddhism, and Ven Sangharakshita was visited by Buddhists from all over the world. Monks from Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, India, Tibet and England came to study with him and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere of the place. Other visitors included Christmas Humphreys, John Blofeld, and Alan Ginsburg. Being by this time a Sthavira, or Elder, Ven. Sangharakshita also started accepting disciples and granting ordination.

The years that followed were a period of intense activity, both inner and outer. A number of prominent incarnate Lamas having left Tibet and settled in Kalimpong, Ven. Sangharakshita took up the study and practise of Tibetan Buddhism. Among the great spiritual masters from whom he received different Tantric initiations were Ven Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche, Ven Dudjom Rimpoche, Ven Chetulsangye Dorje, Ven Khachu Rimpoche, (by whom he was given the name of Urgyen Sangharakshita), Ven Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche, and Ven Dhardo Rimpoche. Most of these masters were followers of the Nyingmapa tradition. In 1962, Ven Sangharakshita received the Bodhisattva Samvara from Dhardo Rimpoche, thus formally adding Mahayana ordination to his existing Theravada ordination. Through the hermit C.M.Chen, whom he frequently visited, he moreover had valuable experience of Ch'an or Zen in its original Chinese form. During the same period, Ven Sangharakshita was much occupied with literary work, as well as with teaching. At the suggestion of a friend he started writing his Autobiography, but had to put it aside half finished in order to concentrate on 'The Three Jewels' and 'The Word of The Buddha'. With the assistance of Ven Dhardo Rimpoche and other friends, he also produced English versions of several important Tibetan religious texts, mainly ones dealing with meditation.

Busy as he was in Kalimpong, Ven Sangharakshita did not forget his responsibilities in the plains. For several years he spent the whole of every winter working amongst the ex-Untouchable Buddhists of Central and Western India, sometimes not returning to the hills until May. With Bombay, Poona, Nagpur and Ahmedabad as his principal headquarters, he visited many scores of towns and villages. Besides initiating about a hundred thousand persons into Buddhism, he performed name-giving ceremonies, conducted training courses in Buddhism, and delivered upwards of a thousand public lectures. In Poona, where he gave more than two hundred lectures, he founded the Poona District Buddhist Women's Association, which under his guidance worked for the social, religious and educational advancement of the Buddhist women of the locality.

In August 1964 Ven Sangharakshita extended the area of his concern even more widely. At the invitation of the English Sangha Trust he paid an extended visit to England, his first for twenty years. Serious differences having arisen in the London Buddhist movement, it was felt that the presence of the Ven Sthavira, as the seniormost Buddhist monk of British origin, would help restore harmony. Though he had agreed to stay for only four months, in the end, Ven Sangharakshita stayed for two years. During this period he came into personal contact with practically all the Buddhist groups in the country, delivered about two hundred lectures, and conducted an even greater number of meditation classes. Though frankly disappointed by the state of the existing Buddhist movement in England, Ven Sangharakshita saw that the potential appeal of Buddhism, as the Path of the Higher Evolution, was immense. He therefore decided to take up permanent residence in the west. After a farewell tour of India, in the course of which he addressed gathering of more than a quarter of a million people in Nagpur, he returned to England on February 24th, 1967. On April 6th. he dedicated the Triratna Shrine and Meditation Centre in central London, thus inaugurating a vigorous new spiritual movement known as The Friends of The Western Buddhist Order, with which his biography has since been inseparably connected.

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* Not at present available.

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"The assumption that anyone of worth can explain himself fully and lucidly in the time allotted to him by those who want to learn what he knows, is either a joke or a stupidity."

(Shab-Parak)

" True wisdom manifests the perfect justice, for it cannot be given to the undeserving, and it cannot be withheld from the deserving."

(Sufi Saying)

"The words 'you have a chance' from the lips of a wise man are worth more than a hundred times 'you are the greatest man in the world' from the mouth of the fool."

(Nuri Falaki)

The Parable of the Talking Buddha

BY VENERABLE STHAVIRA SANGHARAKSHITA

ONCE upon a time the people of a certain village built a temple. But they had no Buddha to sit in the temple and be worshipped. So they asked one of the village elders, who was a trader in rice, and accustomed to dealing with the outside world, to order a Buddha for them on his next visit to the big city, where there was a place that made Buddhas.

Six months later the Buddha arrived in a bullock-cart, wrapped in straw mats and none the worse for his journey. When the villagers saw him they were delighted; he really was beautiful. They had not been able to afford marble, but he was made of the best plaster-of-paris, and his curls were glossy black and his gently smiling lips bright red, while his robe shone with gold paint that looked just like real gold.

Without delay the villagers installed him in his temple, into which he fitted so perfectly that it seemed to have been built specially for him. Every day they brought him flowers and incense, and lighted candles, and every day they asked him to cure them when they were ill, or give them rain for the crops, or grant them relief from the pangs of childbirth, or for help in passing their examinations, or for success in love, and a hundred other things. Unlike some Buddhas of whom they had heard, he granted all their requests, so that on the whole, they were very pleased with him. In the course of time indeed, they became quite fond of him, and not a little proud, and used to tell people from other villages that he was a very good Buddha. Whenever they passed the temple, the door of which always stood open, they could see him sitting sedately within, on his beautiful lotus-throne, inhaling the incense fumes with half closed eyes, and it gave them a nice comfortable feeling to think that he was sitting there all the time, always available, and always ready to listen to their requests.

For his part, the Buddha became quite fond of the villagers, did whatever he could for them, and liked to see them happy.

One day, however, after an old lady had burned an unusually large bundle of incense under his nose, he could not help feeling just a little bit tired, and stiff in the joints. "I think I'll go for a little stroll," he said to himself, "The villagers wont mind."

So, very slowly and carefully, he got down from his lotus-throne, crossed the threshold of the temple, and descended the steps to the road, taking good care not to let his golden robe trail in the dust. Ah! It was good to breathe the fresh air. He had never really liked the smell of incense, especially the cheap kind the villagers brought. And how beautiful the trees were! He could not help looking at them admiringly as he walked at a slow, dignified pace along the road. The temple was situated on the outskirts of the village, and it was his intention to spend half an hour or so in the fields before returning to his duties.

Only a minute or two after his departure the old woman returned. She had forgotten her umbrella. To her astonishment, she saw that the lotus-throne was empty; the Buddha was no longer there. Without waiting a moment, she rushed out of the temple shrieking aloud to all the other villagers that the Buddha had gone, that he had been stolen, that he had abandoned them, that the people of the next village had offered him a bigger temple, and a dozen other things.

On hearing her outcries the women and children came to the doors of their huts, the men hurried back to the village from the fields, and the village elders hastily gathered beneath the spreading branches of the council-tree. When the old woman had related her story, and told them how, with her own eyes she had seen the Buddha stamping angrily out of the temple shouting "I've had enough of those damned villagers!", they decided to go in a body to the temple and see for themselves. Some believed her story, some did not. Others just did not know what to think.

Within a few minutes they had all surrounded the temple. The elders, slowly and cautiously, ascended the steps. The Buddha was nowhere to be seen. They looked in the cupboard where they kept the decorations that were put up every year on his birthday, they lifted up the cloth and looked under the offering table, they even stared up into the hollow dome. But there was no trace of the Buddha.

Meanwhile, strange reports were circulating among the crowd outside. Someone had seen the Buddha resting under a tree. Someone had seen him strolling in the fields. Someone had seen him plucking a flower. Someone had seen him talking about Buddhism with a young man.

The last report in particular enraged quite a number of villagers. "How can he be talking about Buddhism?" they demanded angrily. "Buddhas dont talk. They just sit and sniff incense and answer prayers. If he's talking about Buddhism he's not a real Buddha."

"He's not a real Buddha!" repeated a portion of the crowd, who had never really liked him, but had been afraid of saying so until now. "Why, his robes arent even made of real gold!"

"He's not a real Buddha!" shouted a villager who had once offered the Buddha some damaged fruit. "Lets stop him coming back! We dont want a Buddha who can talk. Its uncanny."

Some of the villagers accordingly proceeded to bar the temple door. As it had not been made to be closed, they had some difficulty, but eventually it was done, and great planks of wood nailed across. "Lets get a new Buddha!" they shouted.

Many of the villagers were not satisfied with these high-handed proceedings but they did not like to oppose the others by force. In their heart of hearts they did not think the Buddha had really left the temple, or that he was tired of them, neither did they mind him talking sometimes if he wanted to. So they decided to send two or three of the elders to tell him what had happened, and offer to build him a new temple.

The elders found him sitting cross-legged underneath a tree, and could not help thinking that he looked more beautiful there than in the temple. When they told him what had happened, he laughed and said, "I know, a little bird told me. But I have been thinking I dont think I want to go back to the temple anyway. I think I've spent enough time there inhaling incense and listening to prayers. I dont even want you to build me a new temple. (The little bird told me about that too.) I like it out here in the fields. I like being able to see the blue sky and the trees, and being able to smell the flowers. But dont think I want to leave you," he added quickly, seeing the tears gathering in their eyes, "I really dont." So I'll tell you what you can do for me; those who still love me can build me an ordinary hut - not a temple, but a hut. I shall live in the hut, and whenever I feel like it, I shall walk

out into the fields and breathe the fresh air. And whenever you feel like it, you can come and see me, and we shall talk about Buddhism. You know, talking about Buddhism is much more interesting than offering incense and lighted candles - both for me and for you."

So an understanding was reached. The villagers who still loved the Buddha built him a hut in the mango grove, halfway between the village and a nearby mountain. Every day, in the morning, he went out for a stroll through the countryside. Every day, in the evening, his friends came to see him. And as the light waned, and the stars came out, and the moon rose, they talked about Buddhism. Sometimes the villagers brought incense and lighted candles, just for old times' sake, but what the Buddha had said was true: talking about Buddhism was really far more interesting.

As for the other villagers, after a while, they ordered a new Buddha and installed him in the temple. Actually, he had been rejected by the manufacturers as he was cracked right down the middle, but as they had got him cheap the other villagers did not mind. Though their prayers did not seem to be answered as often as before, he never moved from his lotus-throne, and he never spoke, - and after all, that was the main thing.

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THE WAY OF TRUTH

A new translation of the DHAMMAPADA by the Ven. Sthavira Sangharakshita

The Pali Dhammapada is a collection of 423 verse aphorisms arranged according to subject in twenty-six sections. Most of these verses are found elsewhere in the Pali Tipitaka; some are original to the Dhammapada. However, all represent according to tradition, the Buddha's teaching to his disciples on various occasions. The present version is an attempt to reproduce, in modern English, something of the terseness and directness of the original, avoiding the stilted diction and obsolete expressions that have sometimes characterised previous translations.

VIII THE SECTION OF THE THOUSANDS

- 100 Better than a thousand meaningless words collected together (in the Vedic oral tradition) is a single meaningful word on hearing which one becomes tranquil.
- 101 Better than a thousand meaningless verses collected together (in the Vedic oral tradition) is one (meaningful) half line of a verse on hearing which one becomes tranquil.
- 102 Though one should recite a hundred meaningless verses collected together (in the Vedic oral tradition), better is one half line of the Truth (dhammapada) on hearing which one becomes tranquil.
- 103 Though one should conquer in battle thousands upon thousands of men, yet he who conquers himself is (truly) the greatest in battle.
- 104 It is indeed better to conquer oneself than to conquer other people.

- 105 Neither god nor heavenly musician (gandhabba), nor yet Mara together with Brahma, can undo the conquest of that person who lives ever self-mastered and ever self-restrained.
- 106 If month after month for a hundred years one should offer sacrifices by the thousand, and if for a single moment one should venerate a (spiritually) developed person, better is that (act of) veneration than the hundred years (of sacrifice)
- 107 Though one should tend the (sacred) fire in the forest for a hundred years, yet if he venerates a (spiritually) developed person even for a moment, better is that (act of) veneration than the hundred years (spent tending the sacred fire.)
- 108 Whatever oblations and sacrifices one might offer here on earth in the course of the whole (Vedic religious) year, seeking to gain merit thereby, all that is not a quarter (as meritorious) as paying respect to those who live uprightly, which is (indeed) excellent.
- 109 For him who is of a reverential disposition, four things constantly increase: life, beauty, happiness, and power.
- 110 Better than a hundred years lived unprincipled and unintegrated is one single day lived (well-) principled and experiencing higher states of consciousness.
- 111 Though one should live a hundred years of evil understanding and unintegrated, better is one single day lived wisely and experiencing higher states of consciousness.
- 112 Better than a hundred years lived lazily and with inferior energy is one single day lived with energy aroused and fortified.
- 113 Better than a hundred years lived unaware of the rise and fall (of conditioned things) is one single day lived aware of the rise and fall (of conditioned things.)
- 114 Better than a hundred years lived unaware of the Deathless State is one single day lived aware of the Deathless State.
- 115 Better than a hundred years lived unaware of the Supreme Truth (dhamma) is one single day lived aware of the Supreme Truth.

(Words in brackets represent explanatory additions by the translator.)

* * * * *

SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP DAY

SANGHA DAY, also known as Spiritual Fellowship Day, was celebrated at Centre House on November 2nd. last year with a talk by Ven. Sangharakshita on 'The Individual, the Group, and the Community', as well as with puja, meditation, readings from the scriptures, and chanting. After a few remarks on the historical origins of Sangha Day, Ven Sthavira plunged into the heart of his subject with two aphorisms:

1. A spiritual community consists of individuals
2. A group does not consist of individuals

The greater part of his talk was devoted to the elucidation of these aphorisms. Traditionally speaking, he said, an individual was an Arya, one who was prepared to change, prepared to die; who had unified all his selves and who was therefore able to commit himself to the Higher Evolution. In more contemporary terms, an individual was one who was self-conscious and aware, and psychologically independent, as well as sensitive, sympathetic, kind, intelligent, objective, and creative. Buddhism was concerned with the production of true individuals. Meditation, devotional observances, etc, were all means to that end. The true individual, however, was not individualistic.

Sangha Day is the third and last of the three major festivals of the Buddhist year, the other two being Buddha Day, the anniversary of the Buddha's supreme enlightenment (celebrated on the full moon day of the month Vaishakha April/May), and Dharma Chakra Day, the anniversary of the Buddha's initial proclamation of the Truth, (celebrated on the full moon day of Ashalha, June/July). In the course of 1971 the FWBO celebrated all three festivals. It also plans to observe in future, in addition to these festivals, the anniversaries of the Birth and Parinirvana of the Buddha according to the Far Eastern Buddhist calendar, as well as other occasions of importance in the Buddhist year. (This paragraph should be read as correcting the statement contained in the concluding sentence of the report on Dharma Chakra Day in NL 13.)

WEEKEND RETREAT

Since the publication of NL 13 two more weekend retreats have been held at Quartermaine, Haslemere. Both of them were even more 'streamlined' than the first such retreat, and little if no time was lost in getting down to the usual well balanced round of meditation, lectures and discussion, communication exercises, etc. Indeed, the majority of participants seemed to adjust almost immediately. Only one circumstance marred, or at least limited, the success of these retreats - or rather of the second of them. This was the fact that several Friends who had put down their names for it cancelled their bookings at the very last minute, when it was too late for their places to be filled by others on the waiting list. There were therefore six empty places on this retreat. This was all the more unfortunate inasmuch as according to its agreement with 'Quartermaine', the FWBO guarantees an attendance of twenty-four people at each retreat and has to pay a fine in respect of every unfilled place. In future, therefore, it will be necessary to insist on prepayment in respect of all bookings for weekend retreats.

MEETINGS OF THE ORDER

Members of the Western Buddhist Order, as well as three candidates for ordination, have been meeting every Thursday under the guidance of Ven. Sthavira Sangharakshita, for group meditation, scriptural study, and discussion. These meetings, which replace the old Thursday meditation class, have been held each week since the end of November and will continue throughout 1972. Friends who wish to commit themselves to fuller and deeper participation in the spiritual life of the movement, but who may not be sure what ordination involves, are advised to consult Ven. Sangharakshita, either personally or in writing.

SMOKING

The smoking of tobacco is well known to be injurious to health and detrimental to the pocket. For some time past, Ven Sangharakshita has been quietly discouraging this dirty, unnecessary and offensive habit. As was reported in NL 13, the first of our recent weekend retreats was made, as an experiment, a strictly 'no smoking' retreat. The response was excellent. Even habitual smokers afterwards reported that they hardly noticed the absence of cigarettes. Better still, smokers attending the next two such retreats spontaneously gave up smoking for the weekend, even though nothing had been said about the matter beforehand.

The FWBO does not believe in making unnecessary rules, but Ven Sangharakshita would like it to be known that he would prefer people not to smoke at meetings held under the auspices of the Friends. According to the Tantric tradition, smoking is definitely prohibited to all serious meditators.

VEN SANGHARAKSHITA'S MEMOIRS

Readers will be interested to learn that in the course of the last three months, Ven Sangharakshita has been making good progress with the writing of his memoirs. The chapter entitled 'The Haunted Ashram' dealing with his experiences in the then Travancore State (now part of Kerala) in 1948, grew to such proportions that eventually he had to distribute the material among four different chapters instead of trying to put it all into one.

The last two chapters he has finished deal respectively with his visits to two of the most famous Indian Gurus of modern times - Swami Ramdas of Anandashram, Kanhangad, and Ramana Maharshi of Tiruvannamalai. It was at Tiruvannamalai, while staying in the Virupaksha Cave, on the slopes of Arunachala, that after living for two years as a wandering ascetic, Ven Sangharakshita finally decided to seek formal monastic ordination.

SPEAKER'S CLASS

Meetings of this active and useful group continue to be held every month. At the November meeting of the group, Geoffrey Webster (Sumedha) spoke on 'Buddhism and Reason' and Vera Jackson on 'The Middle Way', while in December Michael Thompson and Seppo Palosaari gave talks on, respectively, 'Right Livelihood' and 'Buddhism in the West'. Most of these talks lasted for half an hour or more, and all were followed by intense and lively discussion. Besides giving its members the experience of expressing their thoughts in public, these meetings provide a medium for the further clarification of ideas through mutual criticism and personal exchange.

MIND - REACTIVE AND CREATIVE

On the 19th of March, 1967, shortly after returning from his farewell trip to India, Ven Sangharakshita gave a lecture on 'Mind - Reactive and Creative' under the auspices of the Reading University Buddhist Society. In the course of the next few years this lecture was repeated, at various places, and on a number of occasions. Indeed, it has claims to be considered one of the most popular lectures the Ven Sthavira has ever given - if not the most popular. There has also been a steady demand for copies of the tape.

At the request of a number of Friends, Ven Sangharakshita therefore agreed to produce an expanded version of the lecture in literary form. This has now been done, and the new 7000 word version of 'Mind - Reactive and Creative' is now available as a booklet, copies of which may be ordered from the Secretary, FWBO, Sarum House, 3 Plough Lane, Purley, Surrey, price 25p each, post free. (please order these on the order sheet in this newsletter, and include remittance by postal order.)

VEN ANANDA MANGALO THERA

It is always a pleasure to Ven Sangharakshita to meet members of the Monastic Order with whom he was on terms of friendship during his years in India. He was therefore delighted to receive, in the month of November, an unexpected visit from Ven Ananda Mangalo Thera of Singapore. When the Ven Sthavira first met him, which was in the early fifties in New Delhi, Ven Ananda Mangalo was still a layman, and practising as a naturopathic physician. Now, after many years in the Order, he plays a prominent part in the Buddhist life of Singapore and Malaysia. Though a Theravadin, and a Sinhalese by birth, he is a man of broad and liberal outlook, and is closely connected with a number of Buddhist youth movements. In the course of his meeting with Ven Sangharakshita, he gave him a first account of the state of Buddhism, not only in Singapore and Malaysia, but also in Ceylon.

DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY

Regular meetings of our Depth Psychology groups have been taking place in London over the past few months. They are limited to about half a dozen people in each group, both to help preserve the unity of the group, and to allow each member to fully explore the symbols and implications of his dream situations. It has been found that the dream analysis, carried out along the lines of C.G.Jung's writings on the subject, functions most effectively in the context of regular meditation, and so these groups form an integral part of the meditation practises and study of the FWBO. Energy released in the course of meditation practice can be utilised in bringing up into full consciousness the transforming symbols and significant situations previously buried deeply in unapproachable regions of the mind.

Anyone interested in the possibility of joining such a group may write to us at Sarum House, and we will pass on information to the appropriate group organisers.

REV DAIJI

Rev Daiji (better known to some of you as Mark Strathern) is once again in this country to make arrangements for the visit of Jiyu Kennett Roshi in April. While he has stated that he is not here to teach Zen, he will no doubt be pleased to meet friends informally. He intends to get a job in London in order to raise money for a further stay at Mount Shastra later in the year.

EASTER RETREAT

The Easter Retreat will once more be held at Keffolds, Haslemere, Surrey, from Good Friday, March 31st to Sunday April 9th. Full information and a booking form are included in this Newsletter. As these retreats are invariably fully booked in advance, please send off the booking form at the end of this Newsletter as soon as possible, to avoid disappointment.

ZENGO

Ven Zengo is now returned to Sarum House, where he is staying to hold regular classes in Zazen. These are open to anyone who is seriously interested in Zen Meditation. The classes usually last about two hours, and consist of two forty minute periods of sitting, with a break of ten minutes for walking meditation. Ven Zengo is also pleased to give private interviews to anyone wishing to talk over a problem.

CHRISTMAS SESSHIN

A Christmas Sesshin (intensive meditation course) was held at Sarum House, under the direction of Ven Zengo, from Christmas Eve to New Year's Eve. The numbers were small, but the programme was all the more effective for that. Rising at 4.30am, two hours Zazen before breakfast, which was taken ceremonially in the shrine room, cross-legged and in total silence, then cleaning, working, and preparing lunch, constituted the first half of the day. The rest of the daily programme consisted of more Zazen, a talk by Zengo, question period, dinner at 5.30, and another period of Zazen before lights out at 9.30pm. Everyone agreed that the week had been a most successful one, particularly from the point of view of the garden, which afterwards was looking quite transformed. Another week's sesshin is now being planned for Easter.

ZEN AT AMITABHA

The community at 64 Marney Road, known as 'Amitabha', are holding public meditation evenings taken by Ven Zengo. These classes are suitable for anyone, and consist of two periods of meditation with walking meditation (kinhin) in between. At the end of the session will be a short talk, followed by a ceremonial meal in the shrine room. Transport: Clapham Junction (SR) or Clapham Common Northern Line station. These classes begin promptly at 7pm.

NEW ZEALAND GROUP

Upasaka Akshobhya (Warren Atkins) has sent us a full report of his society's development and current activities, which we quote below. We feel this is a very great and admirable achievement - to start a group from nothing in a country on the other side of the world, and we send him our very best possible wishes for great success in 1972.

Akshobhya says: "Work started at the beginning of 1971 really, and meetings were held once a week on Mondays - Bhante's tapes and meditation; often no one came, but gradually the numbers grew to five or six. Then we had a bit of a decline, so two of the members and myself dug out under the house and built a proper shrine room and library. We bought a new tape recorder, and with a new series of Bhante's lectures, advertised 'The Higher Evolution of The Individual', and no one came! So it was held back a few weeks, until slowly, by recommendation, a few started to come along, and we introduced the 'Sevenfold Puja'. This seemed to sort out what people wanted, so now we have classes on two nights, and we also have silence! We have been very fortunate in that a Yoga teacher has come to live with us, and so we now also have classes in Yoga. Monday is 'beginners' night, with Yoga, lecture, discussion, and meditation; Tuesday is a creative evening, with poetry, discussion, art, and music; Wednesday is a silence night, with Yoga, Mindfulness of Breathing, walking meditation, tea ceremony, Puja, and Metta Bhavana Meditation.

"We are currently collecting material for our first Newsletter, and hope to have it ready by the end of January. There are now six to eight attending most evenings, for which the still small numbers are of greater value, and have about fifty names in our visitors' book! All activities are as taught and practised by the FWBO (London), and it's hoped to have the same system here. The beginnings of the first community have started. All aims and objects are the same. We are hopeful of having established within five years a true Sangha and to have a farm offering all year round retreat facilities."

Akshobhya also sent us three very beautiful slides in colour of his new shrine room, which is decorated in modern Japanese fashion, and we are sorry not to be able to reproduce them here.

SPRING FESTIVAL OF POETRY AND MUSIC

AT THE FWBO LONDON CENTRE,

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ON

MONDAY MARCH 20th. 1972

6pm - 10 pm.



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UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE FRIENDS OF THE WESTERN BUDDHIST ORDER.

POETRY AND MUSIC FESTIVAL

As part of our annual programme this year we are intending to hold an evening of poetry and live music on the night of the Spring Equinox, Monday March 20th. We invite anyone interested in reading his own work to submit a copy to us, typed if possible, as soon as possible. Also anyone who can play an instrument with some degree of profession is invited to write to us, saying what instrument and what sort of music he prefers to play. We are hoping to invite some well known poets to this event, so it should be of great interest to everybody. If you are interested in coming along, put the date in your diary now, and we would appreciate a line to say you're coming, to help with the catering. Details of the programme will be circulated to those interested when arranged.

COVER DESIGN

Our cover this issue has been designed for us by Kevin Brooks. It represents the Buddha seated in the lotus posture of meditation. The 'Higher Evolution' motif refers to the path of creative development followed by aspirants of the spiritual path to enlightenment. The Buddha is seated on a pink lotus signifying the purity of the fully awakened mind. The mudra is that of meditation and transcendental wisdom. This design is the basis of a badge which is being made specifically for the FWBO. It is printed on metal disk two inches in diameter, and in three colours. The badges are available direct from Sarum House, price 10p each. (please see special pull out sheet to order.)

BRIGHTON GROUP

If you live in or near Brighton you are cordially invited to attend the regular meetings of the Buddhist Society of Brighton, which is a small but very enthusiastic group of people who meet at 23 Wilbury Avenue, Hove, BN3 6HS (two minutes walk from Hove station) every Wednesday at 7.30pm. They also publish a newsletter which may be obtained on application to the secretary, Jim Martin, 1 Knoyle Road, Brighton. (Phone Brighton 507644.)

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JIYU ROSHI'S BOOK

The long awaited book by Jiyu Kennett Roshi, "Selling Water By The River": A Manual For Zen Trainees" is to be published in America by Pantheon Books in the summer. This unique book contains material not published previously, and includes translations from Dogen Zenji and Keizan. The price in America will be about twelve dollars.

BOOKLETS AVAILABLE

By the Ven. Sthavira Sangharakshita

'On Glastonbury Tor', a beautiful book with a hand printed cover in several colours. 55p by post from Sarum House, or 50p if collected personally.

'Mind - Reactive and Creative'. Printed version of a very popular lecture given in 1967. Price 25p.

'A Survey of Buddhism'. Copies of this well known textbook on Buddhism are being ordered from India and should be in regular supply soon. Required reading for any serious student of Buddhism.

Please order all the above by using the form at the end of this Newsletter.

NEW TAPE LECTURES

Two new tape lectures are now available. The titles are:

'The New Man Speaks' (1970)

'The Individual, the Group, and the Community.' (1971)

Both are on one 7" reel, price £2.00 only, from Sarum House.

A complete list of recorded lectures is available free on application.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Prints of the photograph of Shakyamuni Buddha opposite are available from Miss Dorothy Bailey, whose address is:

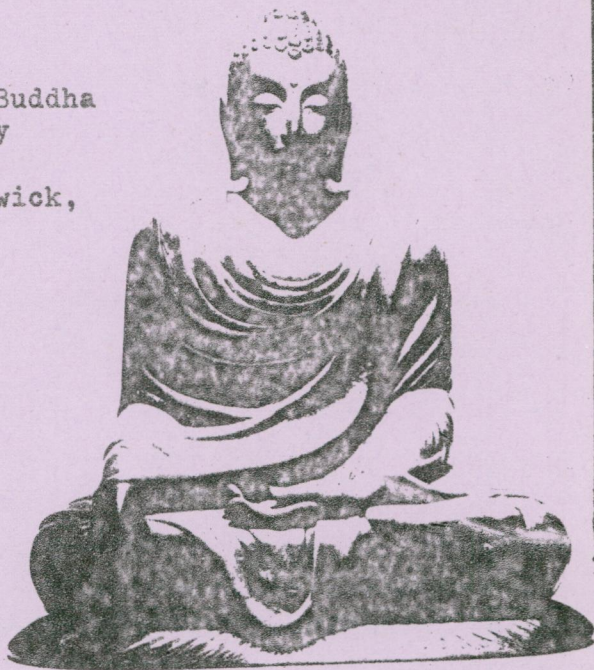
'Ratnasambhava', 41 Barclay Road, Smethwick, Warley, Worcs.

The sizes and prices are as follows:

10" X 8" 30p half-plate, 20p

post card size: 15p.

The prints are in black and white, and are mounted on thick white card for easy framing. Please enclose a suitable SAE when sending your order.



THE FRIENDS OF THE WESTERN BUDDHIST ORDER

* PROGRAMME FOR 1972 *

February	Tues. 15th	Celebration of Parinirvana.
	Sat. 19th/Sun 20th	Weekend Retreat at 'Quartermaine', Farnham Lane, Haslemere, Surrey. Arrive Friday Evening 8pm. Prebooking and payment (£4.00) essential.
March	Monday 20th.	Poetry and Music Festival. Organiser: Stephen Parr. (Ananda.)
	Thursday 30th.	Advance party to 'Keffolds'.
	Friday 31st.	Easter Retreat begins 12.00 hrs. (for lunch.)
April	Friday 7th.	Anniversary of the Order.
	Sat. 8th.	Buddha's birthday.
	Sunday 9th.	Retreat Ends.
	Sat. 22nd/23rd.	Quartermaine: weekend retreat. Arr. Fri. 8pm.
May	Thurs. 18th.	Padmasambhava Day. Meeting and Lecture.
	Sunday 28th.	Buddha Day (Wesak.)
June	Sat 24th/25th	Quartermaine: weekend retreat.
July	Sat 22nd/23rd.	Quartermaine: weekend retreat.
	Wed 26th.	Dharmachakra Day
August	Fri 11th.	Advance party to 'Keffolds'. ^{Retreat Begins.}
	Sat. 12th.	Retreat Begins.
	Mon. 28th.	Retreat Ends.
September	Sat. 23rd/24th.	Quartermaine: weekend retreat.
October	Friday 20th.	First lecture in a series of eight.
	Friday 27th.	Second lecture
	Sat. 28th/29th.	Quartermaine: weekend retreat.
November	Friday 3rd.	Third lecture
	Friday 10th.	Fourth Lecture
	Friday 17th.	Fifth Lecture
	Monday 20th.	Sangha Day. (Kartic Purnima.)
	Friday 24th.	Sixth Lecture.
	Sat. 25th/26th.	Quartermaine: weekend retreat.
December	Friday 1st.	Seventh Lecture.
	Friday 8th.	Eighth Lecture.
	Sat. 30th/31st.	Quartermaine: weekend retreat.

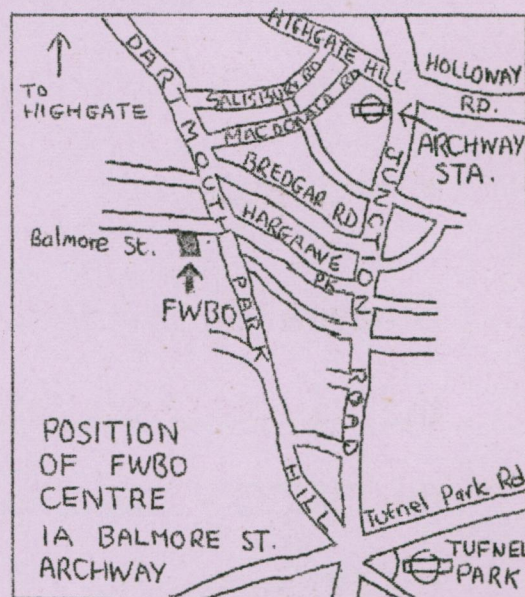
All dates subject to alteration at short notice. Dates may be confirmed by telephoning Sarum House: 01-660-2542.

STOP PRESS

STOP PRESS

THE NEW SAKURA : A REALITY

IN the last days before this Newsletter want to press we found that the London FWBO Headquarters and meditation centre, which had almost acquired the elusive quality of a legend, had in fact quite suddenly become a reality. Now only a week later, work on the building is well under way, the walls have been prepared for painting, electricity has been connected, and already we have had two very well attended meditation classes there. We hope it will become a Centre in the true sense of the word, the physical centre in fact of your spiritual life. Many activities are currently being planned for the Centre to house, and it only requires your interest and attendance to bring them to life. It is hoped to arrange a regular daily programme of meditation, lectures, yoga, karate, as well as the celebration of the major Buddhist festivals on the appropriate dates. Meanwhile, the 'New Sakura Fund' is being used for the furnishing and redecoration of the new premises, and is still open for further contributions.



NEWSLETTER INFORMATION

Breakdown of Expenses on Issue 14 (January 1972):

Offset printing:	5.70
stencils:	4.95
23 reams A4 paper:	18.40
Postage charges:	16.85
Ink & envelopes:	5.87
TOTAL:	<u>51.77</u>

Income from subscriptions during the year ended Dec. 1971:

£11.50

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Subscriptions may be sent by Postal Order or cheque payable to the FWBO to the Newsletter Editor at the above address.

Editorial contributions are also welcome, especially news of other Buddhist centres and connected activities. Please limit articles to 500 words and submit in typescript if possible.

Current advertising rates (subject to alteration):

£2.00 full page £1.00 half page 50p per 12 lines. (Photo extra.)

NEXT ISSUE: Publication April 30th. Contributions in by April 12th.

STOP PRESS:
NEW CENTRE NOW ACQUIRED:
1A Balmore Street, Archway, N.19

in this issue:

Sthavira Sangharakshita - biographical sketch

the Parable of the Talking Buddha

the FWBO - its origin and history.

the Dhammapada

News

future events

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