

# FWBO

# NEWSLETTER 2

PUBLISHED BY THE FRIENDS OF THE WESTERN BUDDHIST ORDER, 14 Nonmouth St, London WC  
President: The Ven Sthavira Sangharakshita

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## What price progress?

Progress is change, and before we talk proudly of 'progressing' in this or that direction as though by our own decisions it does no harm to remember that change - Anicca - is a fundamental doctrine of Buddhism which asserts the inevitability of change: nothing stays put, and this applies as much to groups of people and the ideas they hold as it does to things. From a seed to the solar system 'all is impermanent', and this only seems a sad or disturbing thing to say if one is trying to grasp at an illusory permanence. The FWBO is a group, which is only saying that it is a collection of people. As this, and other, NEWSLETTERS show, the FWBO changes in the more easily noticeable sense of increasing its membership, strengthening and improving its constitution and gaining new confidence in the tasks before it. But, just as a flower cannot exist independently of the cells which comprise its form, colour and species and cannot grow unless each and every cell is capable of change, so must the components of a group such as ours change as we develop.

For reasons such as these the FWBO has never adopted fixed views, inflexible rules and unchallengeable doctrines: to do so would be to deny Anicca. Of course there has to be organisation, just as the flower needs to have the right conditions to grow. Ultimately, however, it is we, the Friends, who must be ready to change if we are to progress usefully and constructively and become more useful to ourselves and to Buddhism in the West. Every class, seminar, retreat and lecture; every moment of meditation and every re-reading of a favourite Sutra is a challenge to MOVE - as move we must - from where we stand to where we are going. Teaching is a way of showing how such movement can be made less aimless.

The FWBO will gain and, maybe, lose friends by its determination to treat Anicca as a demonstrable reality, not an abstract doctrine: Anicca as a law of change which applies as much to thought and belief as to the more obvious idea of progress and development. New Friends become themselves part of this change, and those who will or cannot yield to it grow away in different directions. But they do not avoid it. The FWBO, then, is no haven for those who wish to cling tightly to ideas. The strength of the Dharma is in its power to change us - to provide the right conditions for growth. Are we ready for progress...and ready to pay the price of progress which may turn out to be the abandoning of some cherished view, or some neatly parcelled and labelled opinion?

## ZEN AND THE WESTERN BUDDHIST ORDER

The FWBO has always maintained a strictly non-sectarian approach to Buddhism, choosing to select and adapt that which it finds of importance and significance in the different schools. In the following article UPAYA UPASAKA discusses the special position of Zen studies and disciplines in relation to the activities of the Friends.

Many people who come to the Western Buddhist Order express an interest in Zen: in fact it is true to say that quite a few of our Members consider themselves to be Zennists. It may, therefore, be opportune to clarify the attitude of the Western Buddhist Order towards Zen.

In his book The Three Jewels Ven Sangharakshita writes of the proneness of the Indian mind to exaggeration, a tendency which was carried over into Buddhism and which could easily lead the Western student of the Dharma to imagine that exaggeration was a characteristic of Buddhism itself. He feels that this is by no means the case as is demonstrated by the history of Buddhism in China, where Ch'an or Dhyana school in particular, reacting not against Indian Buddhism so much as against distinctively Indian modes of expression, supplies the corrective by creating out of indigenous modes of expression a terser and more compact form for the same spiritual truths.

This last statement is very much related to what the Western Buddhist Order is all about. Zen was, in many ways, a revolt against the fossilisation of the Buddha Dharma and, in essence, an attempt to throw off the superfluities of custom and intellectual elaboration accumulated over the years which concealed rather than revealed its pristine brilliance. Now that Buddhism has come West we have to contend with similar 'essence searching' as the Chinese did when faced with the mass of formulae which, though admirably suited to the Indian mind, were irrelevant to the essentially practical Chinese mind.

In California today we are witnessing what must surely be the most ambitious Buddhist venture ever to be attempted outside the East - the Tassajara monastery in the Soto Zen tradition where, though existing within a single tradition, many of the problems of adapting purely Japanese forms to American needs are being met. Elsewhere, including Britain at the present time, the opportunities for such experiment and investigation are more limited. The ever-growing interest in Buddhism in the West is beset by the most frightful misconceptions as to what it is really about. These range from a belief that Tantric Buddhism is a form of new sexual experience to the notion that Zen is an easy method of achieving mind expansion through the observation of the outward trappings of Japanese tradition.

Dogen, the founder of the Soto school, said 'It is better not to study Zen unless one can get the right Master'. In other words, there is more to 'direct transmission' than the mere wearing of a kessa. Our teacher, the Ven Sangharakshita, came to Buddhism through reading the <sup>PLATFORM</sup> and Diamond Sutras at the age of sixteen. The fact that he wears a yellow robe and not a black one, that he chants the Heart Sutra in Sanskrit and not in Japanese, and that he is known as a Sthavira and not a Roshi, in no way detracts from his capabilities as a teacher or his ability to transmit the essence of the Dharma. Apart from his not using the Kyosaku the meditation practices he teaches do not differ from those in the Zen tradition, and even within Zen such practices tend to differ from one Roshi to another. We of the Western Buddhist Order would seriously advise the casual enquirer on Zen that no progress is possible without a fully trained and reliable teacher, much less a self appointed one. Meditation is a serious business and not to be trifled with; it has nothing to do with any preference we may have for Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese, Japanese or Tibetan rituals. Zen is not theory, but practice - the essence of the Sutras, not the ( continued overleaf )

(Zen and the Western Buddhist Order, contd)

language in which they are chanted; it is the living of a way of life in which all the factors of the personality are developed through meditation, devotions, study and work, and all under the guidance of a genuine spiritual teacher. Insofar as the Western Buddhist Order's whole raison d'être rests on these principles, it embodies the essential characteristics of Zen: one might even go so far as to say that, for the present at least, it is the only true Zen body in this country for, not satisfied with the flesh, skin and bones of Bodhidharma, it will settle only for his marrow!

Upaya Upāsaka

The views expressed in the foregoing article are challenging. We do not suppose that everyone will agree with them, but it is important that these aspects of Buddhism in the West are discussed. We hope the discussion will continue fruitfully and widely: Ed.

# EMERGENCY

As the last pages of this NEWSLETTER were being completed came news that, on the morning of July 29, a fire had completely destroyed our shrine room at 14 Bonmouth Street together with most of its contents. This blow fell at a time when plans were being made for new activities and efforts directed towards raising funds for future expansion. Our shrine room was, for the Friends, a focus for devotion, study and communication one with another. Arrangements were made almost immediately to continue some classes at Centre House. But, inevitably, the fire will curtail some of the day-to-day contact we have with our teacher and with one another. The priority is now clear: a Dana appeal appears in this NEWSLETTER, written before our present problem arose. It is hardly necessary, now, to stress the emergency. If the FWBO is to continue, as it is determined to do, to meet the spiritual needs of our many members, and to be the support and nourishment of our Order, we must ask members and all well-wishers to help us materially so that we may quickly recreate a centre which has meant so much to the Friends - a new shrine room. Our loss is material, and can be replaced by hard cash and hard work. The Friends have shown that, in a short time, vitality and enthusiasm can create a great deal. It is on this vitality and enthusiasm we must rely to overcome the loss. Please do not wait to send what you can. A form headed Emergency Appeal comes with this NEWSLETTER and has No 1 priority. We shall, of course, continue with the activities announced in our 'Diary' page and keep all Friends posted with news of our progress in securing a new permanent shrine room and meeting place of our own. Your Dana, sent directly to 14 Bonmouth Street (the damage to Sakura was not so serious as that to the shrine room) and placed in the bowl after meetings, seminars, classes etc will be an expression of your personal wish for the continuing spread of Buddhism in the West through the work and devotion of the Friends and of our teacher, the Ven Sangharakshita. Meanwhile the FWBO will 'walk on', not look back.



**show that you care NOW!**

# Diary

## OCTOBER 8 TO

6 DECEMBER :::: A series of eight lectures will be given by the Ven Sangharakshita at Centre House, 10a Airlie Gardens, Campden Hill Road, Kensington, W 8 on Fridays, October 18 to December 6. They are planned to interest all, including beginners. The series is called AN INTRODUCTION TO TIBETAN BUDDHISM and comprises the following titles: October 18: How Buddhism came to Tibet; October 25: The Schools of Tibetan Buddhism; November 1: The Dalai Lama - His 'Reincarnations'; November 8: Monks and Laymen in Buddhist Tibet; November 15: Symbols of Tibetan Buddhist Art; November 22: The Four Foundation Yogas of the Tibetan Buddhist Tantra; November 29: Tibetan Buddhist Meditation; December 6: The Future of Tibetan Buddhism. Talks will last about an hour and will be followed by a short period for questions and discussion. Light refreshments will be on sale from 7 to 7.30 pm and after the talks. The meetings will conclude with a short puja and meditation. The fee for the complete course of lectures is 30s (£2 for married couples and £1 for students and pensioners). Individual lectures will cost 5s payable at the door. Please complete and return the booking form that comes with this NEWSLETTER.

AUGUST 17 to SEPTEMBER 2 :::: There are still a few vacancies (at the time of going to press) for the August Retreat at Haselmere. Full details are available from the Retreat Organiser. The retreat provides an excellent opportunity for meditation and study and to get to know Friends and members of the Order. Come if you can, even if it's only a short stay.

SEPTEMBER 22 :::: A seminar will be held on Sunday, September 22 at Centre House, Campden Hill Road, Kensington, W 8 from 11 am to 8 pm. The seminar will be divided into periods of guided group meditation, lectures, discussion and breaks for meals and will conclude with puja and meditation. The theme of the seminar, which will be under the direction of the Ven Sangharakshita is expressed in the titles of the two main lectures: Dimensions of Awareness, and The Spiritual Significance of the Buddhist Community. The fee for the day (which includes a vegetarian luncheon arranged by Penelope Nield-Smith of the London Vegetarian Society and afternoon tea) is £1 (30s for married couples and 10s for students and pensioners). Please complete the booking form with this NEWSLETTER and return it not later than Monday, September 16.

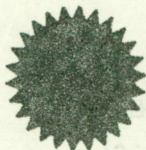
OCTOBER 6 :::: An Autumn Reception will be held at Centre House on Sunday, October 6 from 4 pm to 6 pm. The occasion will be an opportunity to meet and talk to other Friends and it is hoped that the Arts Group will be able to arrange a short programme. There will be a Full Moon Day puja at the end of the reception for those able to stay. Refreshments will be served. To help us with planning would those who wish to attend please return the slip at the end of this NEWSLETTER.

MEITATION CLASSES :::: In addition to our scheduled meditation classes, please note (and inform anyone who may be interested) that there will be a permanent Beginners' Class at 14 Monmouth Street, London W C 2 every Tuesday evening, starting promptly at 6.30 and lasting for half an hour.

## Dana

*\* SEE "EMERGENCY" IN THIS ISSUE \**

It is YOU the FWBO wants to see, not your donation only. But such events as are reported in this NEWSLETTER, and the plans for the future depend to a very great degree on the readiness of those who can give financial support to all we are aiming to do. Buddhists are not insulated against rising costs, and to develop our present wide range of activities still further - even to maintain them at the present level - the FWBO needs more income. One of the easiest and best ways to contribute is by a regular payment, however small. If you would like to go on a Monthly Dana Appeal Mailing list, or sign a Banker's Order or, best of all, make a Seven Year Deed of Covenant (which yields us 74% more than you actually pay) please complete the forms that comes with this NEWSLETTER. The FWBO was registered as a charity on June 20 of this year, which gives appreciable advantages. And Friends are urged, too, to leave as much as they can in the bowl which stands outside the shrine room. If you really can't afford to contribute we would still like to see you at classes. But if you can, don't forget to do so, please.



# NEWSBRIEFS

- **YOGA** A series of classes is planned for September (see article on Yoga in this NEWSLETTER). The system followed will be that of Shri B.K.S. Iyengar, former Matha Yoga teacher to Jiddu Krishnamurti and author of Light on Yoga. The classes will be led by one of his pupils who is a member of our Order, Penelope Nield-Smith, and will be held at Centre House, 10a Airlie Gardens, Campden Hill Road, Kensington, London W 8, starting Tuesday, September 10 at 6.30 pm. Classes will last about one hour. The charge will be 5s for single lessons or £3 for the series of 15 weekly classes. Clothing for classes should be light, leotards or slacks should not cover the feet and students are advised to bring an old blanket or towel to sit upon and for some of the postures which will be taught. They are advised not to take anything substantial to eat or drink before a class. Please let us know of your intention to attend as much in advance of the first class as possible.
- **TAPES** High fidelity recorded tapes of the Ven Sangharakshita's last lecture series on the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path given at Centre House between January and March, 1968, are now available complete on four long-play reels. The lectures, most over an hour long, are recorded twin-track at  $3\frac{3}{4}$  i p s (a standard tape recorder speed). The subjects are The Nature of Existence (Right Understanding); Reason and Emotion (Right Resolve); The Ideal Society (Right Livelihood); The Conscious Evolution of Man (Right Effort); Lords of Awareness (Right Mindfulness) and Samadhi - the Higher Consciousness (Right Meditation). The cost per set of four reels is £6. Single reels are £2 each (18 dollars or 7 dollars U S A equivalents). Please use the order form which comes with this NEWSLETTER.
- **HULL** The Hull Buddhist Society offers every facility for Buddhists of the Theravada and Mahayana schools and holds public meetings, meditation classes, discussions and devotional meetings as well as providing a lecture service for many organisations. Membership is invited, not only from local people but from all in the East Riding and nearby towns such as Beverley, Driffield, Selby, Scarborough, Bridlington, etc. Enquiries should be addressed to the Secretary, Mrs Judith Jackson, 50, Jalland Street, Holderness Road, Hull.
- **HOLLAND** A new organisation called Stichting Nederlands Buddhistische Centrum (Foundation Netherlands Buddhist Centre) has been formed. It is independent of sects and schools and seeks to promote the study of Buddhism in all its aspects. If you wish to contact Buddhists in Holland the address is Roggeveenstraat 161, The Hague, Holland.
- **RESIGNATION** It is announced with regret that the Rev Jack Austin has resigned as Vice President of the FWBO. His resignation was accepted by the Council at its last meeting. The FWBO offers him thanks for his services and good wishes for a speedy and complete recovery from his present bout of back trouble.
- **MAILING** Not everyone who wants our NEWSLETTER and other circulated material completed the request form included with NEWSLETTER 1. Those who wish to remain on the FWBO mailing list are reminded that the list will shortly be reviewed with a view to reducing mailing costs. If, at no cost, you wish to receive FWBO material please complete the form which again appears with this NEWSLETTER.
- **APPEAL** To date 12 people have pledged money for our proposed retreat and meditation centre and these contributions would provide £1,754 gross over seven years. Further contributions to this worthwhile object are welcome, and full details are available to anyone wishing to know more about the appeal. Remember that, under a seven year covenant, the government will refund 74% of the amount you give as a rebate of tax paid by you. We express warm thanks to those who have already contributed. An account has been opened for this appeal and will be confined entirely to the object of the appeal. News of the appeal's progress will be given regularly in NEWSLETTER.
- **INCREASE** The Ockenden Venture has announced that increased costs have forced an increase in the charges they make for the use of Keffolds and Quartermaine as retreat centres. The increase has meant a withdrawal of the concessions formerly made to those staying a week or longer. The charges, therefore, are now 36s per day (or 30s for students or pensioners) irrespectively of length of stay.
- **SEMINAR** The second seminar ever to be held as a full day event outside London was conducted by the Ven Sangharakshita at 23 Wilbury Crescent, Hove in July. The seminar comprised lectures, meditation, discussion and puja. The Ven Sangharakshita was the guest of Mr and Mrs Wrigg.

NEWSBRIEFS ( continued)

The Ven Sangharakshita addressed divinity students of Borough Road College, Isleworth recently on the subject, 'How can Man reach Fulfilment in his life on Earth?' He was introduced by Dr Howard Marrott, Head of the Department, whom many will have seen as interviewer of the Sthavira during his television appearance.

The Ven Sangharakshita spoke to a sixth form Conference organised by the Ockenden Venture at Haslemere on 'The Nature and Purpose of Man'. A lively discussion followed the talk. The Sthavira was accompanied by two Members of the Order, Michael Rogers and Stephen Parr.

During May The Friends were visited at 14 Monmouth Street by Dom Aelred Graham, the Benedictine monk and well-known author of Zen Catholicism. Don Aelred, who had previously had a long private conversation with the Ven Sangharakshita, attended the meditation class and afterwards met Members of the Order and Friends in an informal discussion.

The Ven Sangharakshita represented the Buddhist religion at the Spiritual Unity of Nations Conference held at Hove in May last. The Conference was attended by more than three hundred delegates from many parts of the world. On the opening day the Sthavira addressed the Conference on 'Buddhist Meditation'.

STARTING YOGA by Penelope Nield-Smith

There are several reasons why the FWBO has decided to hold Yoga classes (details of which appear elsewhere in this Newsletter). A demand arose among some of our Members who attended early morning classes at the Easter retreat this year, when a number of people decided that it would be worthwhile learning, at least, how to sit cross legged on the floor. Is Hatha Yoga relevant to what we know of Buddhism? We believe so. Its more important aspects may be summarised, from the point of view of Buddhists, as (1) an aid to meditation, which helps us to sit in the correct meditation posture comfortably. This position helps to calm the mind and reminds us that a body which 'complains' when sitting motionless for an hour and defies our attempts to ignore it hinders concentration. (2) Hatha Yoga helps to promote physical well-being: part of a healthy body and an alert mind. The practice of Yoga helps towards mindfulness and vigour (one of the Perfections) which may be used to help others, not only at the mundane level, but in working for one's own enlightenment. Even if the aim is no higher than to stay healthy and active Yoga will achieve much. Its practice can be a pleasure and, eventually, an act of devotion. (3) Yoga assists in maintaining physical control so that one is in a kindly command of the body, rather than the body being in charge. The end is a joyous physical realisation that form-in this case one's own body - is void!