

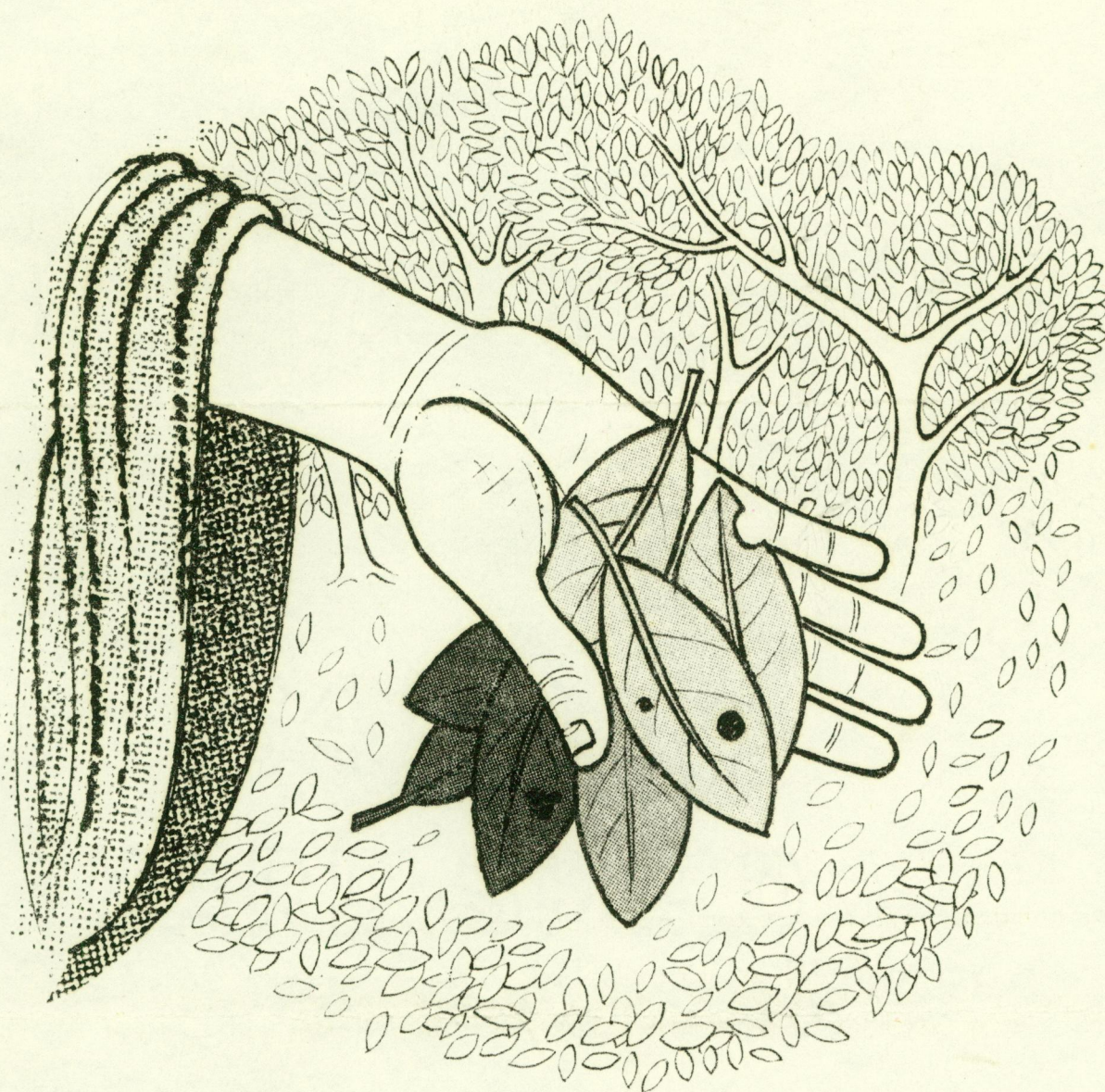
Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

NEWSLETTER 3.

Published by the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. Jan. 1969

President: Ven. Sthavira Sangharakshita

at 14 Monmouth Street, London W.C.2.



a handful of leaves

Just so brethren, the things that I
have revealed to you are few, very few,
in comparison with those things which
I have known and understand but not
revealed to you.

NEWSLETTER 3.



a handful of leaves

The Monmouth St. Phoenix!

As the last issue of our NEWSLETTER was about to be produced came news that a fire had destroyed the Friends' shrine room at 14 Monmouth Street. There was just time to include a last-minute appeal. Before many weeks had passed Friends and members of the Order were able to meet in a new shrine room for a dedication ceremony by our President. What happened in those few weeks is a tribute to both the generosity and determination of those who responded, in different ways, to our call for help. The emergency fund was quickly and selflessly subscribed to, and hands which were not only willing but skilled and seemingly tireless recreated out of the ashes a room which, in many ways, is finer than the one which was destroyed. The story is short and simple: something happened....action was needed...help was given....something was accomplished. The Friends do not make a fuss about these things: they lean lightly on the past and look eagerly to the future. But, this time, it is appropriate to remember with gratitude those who saw what they could do to help, and did it - quickly, mindfully, efficiently and without fuss, and our deepest thanks to all our Friends all over the world who responded so speedily to the appeal.

The fire also damaged the showroom and stock of Sakura and it was clear that something had to be done there too. Sakura now has a new look, and visitors can once again buy and browse there as they have always done.

The Three Jewels

The publishers of The Three Jewels, the Ven. Sangharakshita's most recent book on Buddhism report good sales. The book was widely and favourably reviewed in Buddhist and non-Buddhist publications in this country and in many other parts of the world. The present edition is going so well that Friends who still wish to have a copy should not delay too long in going to Sakura and snapping up one of the ones that remain. The Sthavira is already working on a new book. This time it will have an autobiographical slant and tell of his years in India, the great Teachers he met there, his experiences as a wandering monk and the insight gained into this fascinating country, the cradle of Buddhism. -

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A place for creative work

The Ven. Sthavira Sangharakshita is actually working on several new books (see this Newsletter, previous page), but with his heavy commitments in London and his continued readiness to meet people, talk to them, take meditation classes and give lectures, as well as guiding the Friends in many different ways, progress in creative work is not easy for him. He is, therefore, seeking a secluded cottage in pleasant surroundings where he may, when commitments allow, retire from the strenuous life and devote himself to his work on the books. Friends do not need to be reminded of the value and importance of the literary side of the Ven. Sangharakshita's work on behalf of Buddhism in the West, and it is fitting that the Friends should recognize his need for peace and detachment necessary to further this side of his activities. Any Friend who knows of suitable accommodation is, therefore, asked to write to the Secretary of the FWBO, giving as many details as possible, so that we may follow up any possibility of finding a 'writer's cottage' for the Sthavira as a small return for the work, knowledge and teaching which he continues to provide for the many who read his books and gain so much from them.

DANA

At its present stage of development and level of activities, the FWBO needs to raise MUCH MORE income than it obtains at present. Friends who benefit from these activities can help to maintain present progress and consolidate that which has already been achieved by contributing to the Monthly Dana Appeal, preferably by Banker's Order, or by a seven-year Deed of Covenant. If you are not already contributing ask yourself whether you could spare, say, £1 a month. But, Dana is not only money: assistance in many forms, if willingly given, has the merit of Dana, so please let the Secretary or anyone at 14 Monmouth Street know if you can help with typing, duplicating, or as an advisor in matters of insurance, law and the professions, or as a lecturer, calligrapher, artist, etc.

Soon ?

The 'Aims and Objects' of the FWBO is at present being revised and updated, and will be published shortly. Further details will be available in the next issue of this NEWSLETTER.

DIARY & REPORTS

* Among distinguished visitors to London and to the FWBO recently have been three well-known Buddhist scholars. The Ven. Thien Chau of Vietnam, who is currently studying philosophical discipline at the Sorbonne University, Paris, paid a short visit to London and attended several FWBO meetings. The Friends were also visited by the Tibetan Lama Khangsar Tsultim Tenzing who is now studying in Holland. While he was here he discussed the possibilities of working together with the Ven. Sangharakshita when he completes his course in Holland. The Lama is from the Tantric College, Dalhousie. We are also very glad to welcome to this country Dr. Karel Werner, a famous Pali and Sanskrit Scholar from Czechoslovakia. He is an ordained member of the Arya Maitreya Mandala, Lama Govinda's group, and is already making a valuable contribution to Buddhist life in this country.

* At a recent meeting of the Order, there was a consensus in favour of further Ordinations including selected Buddhists residing outside London. There are now a number of centres which draw their inspiration from the FWBO and from personal contact with the Ven. Sangharakshita. Until recently it has been felt necessary that the close relationships which exist within the Order can best be maintained by confining new Ordinations to the London area where it is possible for members to come together easily and frequently for devotional, instructional and inter-personal communication. The success of our retreats has, however, expanded both the influence and deeper understanding of the Order and it is now considered likely that future Ordinations will include those who, in the opinion of the Sthavira, can fulfil the spiritual and practical needs which are recognized as necessary by the Order.

* A shrine and meeting room was dedicated recently by the Ven. Sangharakshita in Brighton. The Brighton Buddhist Group has re-organised its activities and now receives a monthly visit from the Sthavira. A programme of talks, meditation and social activities takes place at the new shrine and meeting room at the home of Mr. C. Wragg, 23 Wilbury Avenue, Hove.

* The two and a half week retreat which took place at Keffolds and Quartermaine, Haslemere in August was the longest so far held by the Friends. It was under the guidance of the Ven. Sangharakshita who regards it, in many ways, as the most successful so far. A particularly pleasing aspect was the number of new Friends made there, also the amount of people who stayed throughout the whole retreat.

Diary & reports (contd)

* January 7 - April 1: HATHA YOGA. Mrs Penny Nield-Smith's first series of Yoga classes have proved popular and successful, and a new series begins on January 7, continuing until April 1. These will be held, as before, at Centre House, 10a Airlie Gardens, Campden Hill Road, W.8. There are still a few vacancies for anyone who wants to take part, and who can telephone Mrs Nield-Smith at 01-937-7739 (day) or 01-385-7341 (evening) or Sakura for details. There are two classes held each Tuesday, at 6.15 and 7.30 pm, and the cost is £2. 12s (payable in advance) for the whole course, or 5s for single classes. (Students and pensioners £2.2s and 4s respectively).

* January 19: NEW YEAR RECEPTION. Another reception, which, as before will be mainly a social occasion to enable visitors and friends to get to know one another better and exchange views and ideas, will be held on Sunday, January 19 at 4 pm at Centre House, 10a Airlie Gardens, Campden Hill Road, W.8. Refreshments will be provided and the reception will be followed by Puja and meditation.

* January 24 - March 14: LECTURES. The next series of lectures to be given by the Ven. Sangharakshita at Centre House, 10a Airlie Gardens, Campden Hill Road, W.8. will be on Fridays at 7.30 pm, and are aimed at interesting both beginners and more advanced students of Buddhism. The new series is called Aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal and the titles are as follows: Jan.24: Origin and development of the Bodhisattva Ideal; Jan.31: The Awakening of the Bodhi-Heart; Feb.7: The Bodhisattva Vow; Feb.14: Altruism and Individualism in the Spiritual Life; Feb.21: 'Masculinity' and 'Femininity' in the Spiritual Life; Feb.28: On the Threshold of Enlightenment; Mar.7: The Bodhisattva Hierarchy; Mar.14: The Buddha and the Bodhisattva: Eternity and Time.

Each talk will last about an hour and will be followed by a period of discussion and questions. Light refreshments will be on sale from 7 to 7.30 and following the talks. The meetings will end with a short Puja and meditation. The fee for the complete course of lectures is £1.10 (£2 for a married couple and £1 for students and pensioners). Individual lectures cost 5s (payable at the door). Please book on the form provided with this NEWSLETTER.

* April 4 - 13: EASTER RETREAT. The Easter retreat will be held (as last year) in the beautiful wooded setting of Keffolds, Bunch lane, Haslemere, Surrey (Tel: Haslemere 2038). A daily programme of lectures discussions, meditation, puja and Hatha Yoga has been arranged. Friends should arrive before lunch on the first day, or at other times by arrangement. Fees are £1.16s per day (30s for students and pensioners). Part-day fees are as follows: each meal - 6s (5s); bed - 18s (15s). Hire of bed linen, if required, - 6s. Priority of booking will be given to Friends wishing to stay for the whole period of the retreat, but it is

hoped to accomodate those who may wish to stay for shorter periods or for a weekend only. Those attending should bring sheets, towels, soap and walking shoes. Transport to and from the retreat will be arranged wherever possible, and trains and buses can usually be met by arrangement. Meals will be vegetarian and guests will be asked to assist wherever possible in the running of Keffolds during the retreat. Participation in retreats is a factor in the selection of candidates for Ordination. If you wish to attend, please complete the retreat application form enclosed with this NEWSLETTER.

Arts Group

By Upāsaka Vangisa

The Arts Group has now been reinforced by painters and musicians as well as new poets and poetry readers, but there is still room for more. Our main work at the moment is the Spring Festival of Poetry and Music, which we intend to present on a public and commercial basis; but our chief concern is communication - among ourselves and the rest of society. We hope to become a meeting-point for all Buddhists, semi-Buddhists and non-Buddhists who feel they have something to offer or something to receive. We would particularly like to hear from dancers (or people willing to learn simple movement), designers, lighting technicians, typists and administrators. We also need accomodation: a large basement or attic for use as a general studio-workshop would be valuable if available free or at a low rental. All enquiries and offers will be appreciated and can be made c/o Sakura.

Obituary

It is with sorrow that we record the death, on November 11, of Mrs Violet H. Wragg, who was Hon. Secretary of the Brighton Buddhist Group. She was for a long time an active, leading and well-loved personality in her group, and contributed substantially to the work of the FWBO, and will be greatly missed by all who knew her. The Friends send Metta to Mr Wragg and his family. The funeral ceremony was conducted by the Ven. Sangharakshita in Hove, on November 19, and was attended by a number of Buddhists including several members of the Order.

Mailing

Despite drastic pruning of our mailing list, our circulatation remains at a four figure level. While we are happy to continue sending you circulars, NEWSLETTERS, etc., as long as you wish, we would be grateful if anyone who does not want to remain on the list would let us know on the slip provided. Equally if you do wish to continue receiving our publications, please let us know if you have not already done so.

Study Groups

From the beginning, the FWBO has placed a strong emphasis on the teacher-pupil relationship, but this has always been linked with the realization that the finest teacher cannot impart anything to people who are not willing to help themselves. Last year, Mr Eric Cheetham travelled regularly all the way from Wales in order to instigate and demonstrate one of the ways in which self-help and the development of self-reliance could be practised. This took the form of a Sutra Study class. A Sutra Study class is more than an academic swotting over a text: it is an attempt, as it were, to get under the skin of a Sutra with the object of experiencing a taste of the superconscious state of which the Sutra is an expression. As a result of Mr Cheetham's efforts, two new Sutra Study classes have begun. They operate independently but parallelly, one dealing specifically with Pali Suttas, the other with Mahayana Sutras.

Apologies

We regret that owing to the pressures of time, sickness and other incidents, we have unfortunately been able to include neither a personal message from our President, the Ven. Sangharakshita nor any article of spiritual or practical Buddhist content. We hope you will not therefore conclude that we are spending too much time on mundane matters to the detriment of spiritual ones. We feel you would rather know we are still alive than put up with an even longer lack of communication!

More of Mara !

We recently heard from Rev. Philip Kapleau, author of the book The Three Pillars of Zen. He has his own group, the Zen Meditation Center of Rochester (7, Arnold Park, Rochester, N.Y.14607) in the U.S.A. We learnt that just after they had moved into new premises, these were very badly damaged by fire. They are now busy re-establishing themselves, and our sympathy, good wishes and encouragement are with them. We know what it's like!

Heart Sutra

Rev. Kapleau's group have made a new translation of the Prajna Paramita Hridaya, The Heart Sutra, an English version specially adapted for chanting. This is reproduced on the next page of this NEWSLETTER with the kind permission of, and with acknowledgements to The Zen Meditation Center of Rochester. As Friends will know, this Sutra is usually chanted in Sanskrit at our meetings, but it has for some time been considered that an English version for chanting would benefit those who need the familiarity of English meanings derived from the original text. This new version of the Heart Sutra is now used at the Monday Zazen sittings of the FWBO.

Prajna Paramita Hridaya

The Bodhisattva of Compassion
when he meditated deeply
saw the emptiness of all five skandhas
and sundered the bonds
that caused him suff'ring.
Hear then!

Form is no other than emptiness,
emptiness no other than form.
Form is only emptiness;
emptiness, only form.

Feeling, thought and choice,
consciousness itself,
are the same as this.

All things are the primal void,
which is not born or destroyed,
nor is it stained or pure,
nor does it wax or wane.

So, in emptiness, no form:
no feeling, thought or choice;
nor is there consciousness;

no eye, ear, nose,
tongue, body, mind;
no colour, sound, smell,
taste, touch or what the mind
takes hold of;
nor even act of sensing:

no ignorance or end of it,
nor all that comes of ignorance;
no withering, no death,
no end of them.

Nor is there pain or cause of pain
or cease in pain or four-fold path
to lead from pain;

not even wisdom to attain!
Attainment, too, is emptiness.

So know that the Bodhisattva
holding to nothing whatever
but dwelling in prajna wisdom
is freed of delusive hindrance,
rid of the fear bred by it;
and reaches clearest nirvana.

All Buddhas of past and present,
Buddhas of future time
using this prajna wisdom
come to full and perfect vision.

Hear, then, the great dharani,
the radiant peerless mantra,
the Prajnaparamita
whose words allay all pain
— hear and believe its truth!

Gate, gate
paragate
parasangate
bodhi, svaha!

Gone, gone
to the other shore
gone beyond.
Awake: rejoice!

