GOLDEN DRUM

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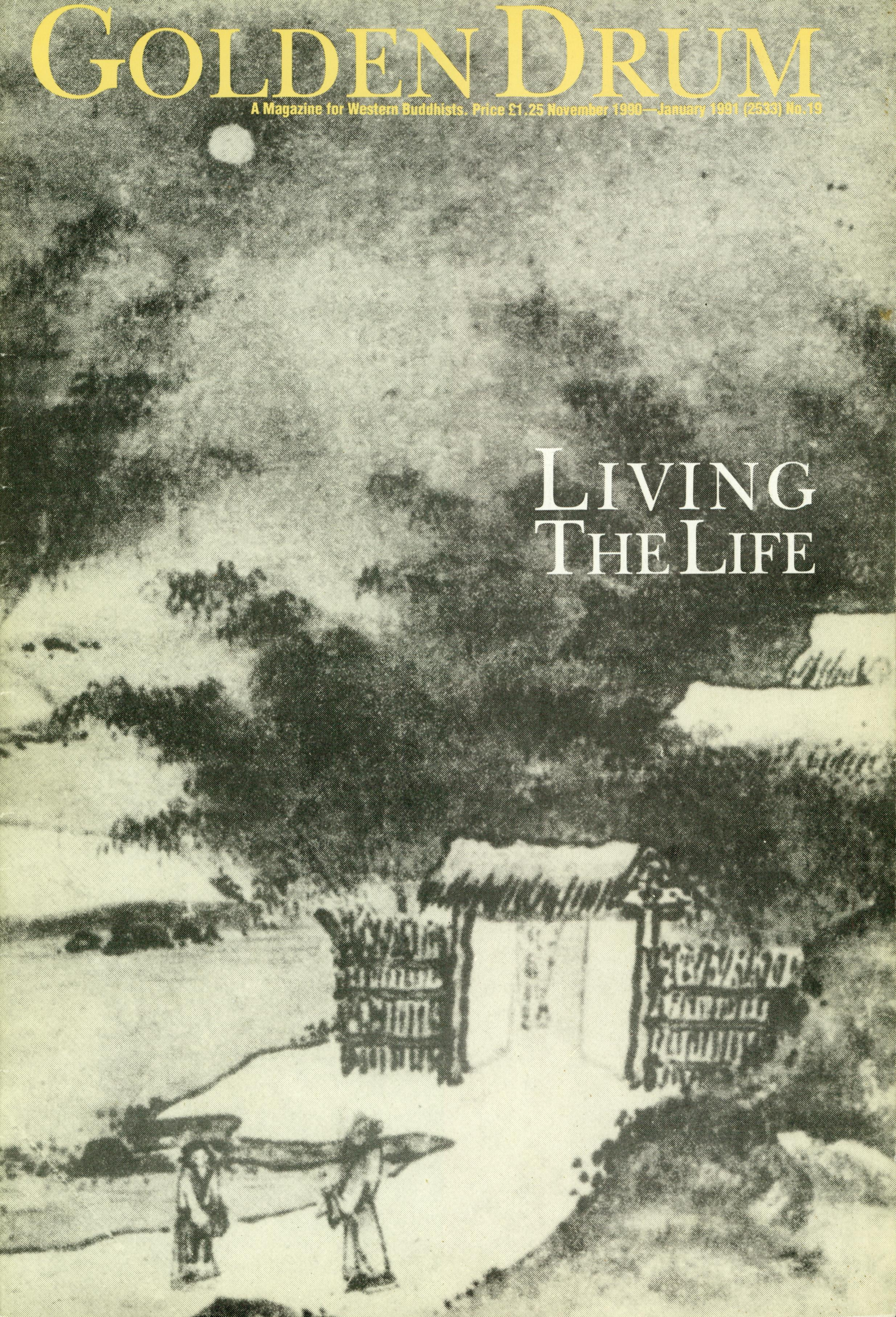

LIVING THE LIFE

GOLDEN DRUM

NOVEMBER 1990—JANUARY 1991 (2533)

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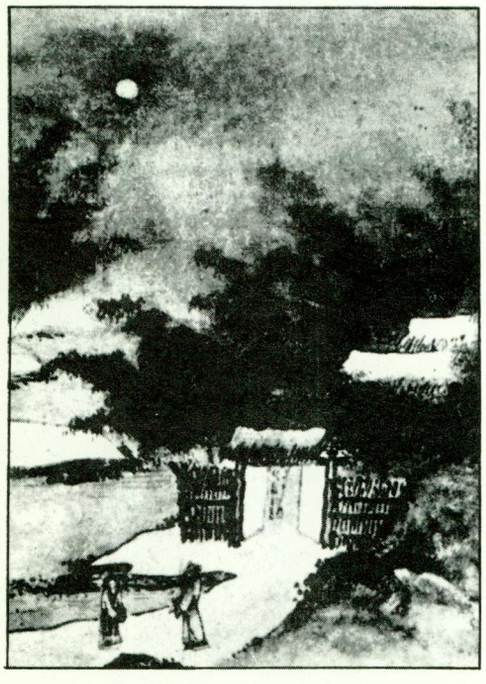


editorial

During the course of a talk he gave at the celebrations marking Sangharakshita's 65th birthday, Subhuti mentioned a visit he had recently paid on one of his cousins, someone who had been briefly involved with the 'Friends' in 1970. Although it was twenty years since he had moved in our circles the man could still remember a number of people he had come to know during the course of his visits to Sakura, the FWBO's first public centre. To his amazement, as he recalled first one of them then another, Subhuti was able to say—in almost every case—where they were now and what they were up to. What particularly impressed Subhuti's cousin was the fact that so many of them were still involved in the Movement. Although they had new names, and although many of them now lived not in north London but in various places around the globe, they were still actively committed to Buddhism and still very much a part of the FWBO.

That many of us have friends whom we have known for five, ten, fifteen, and even twenty years is a feature of FWBO life that we possibly take for granted, but it is actually a rare and precious thing. And we may not always realize how fortunate we are to enjoy, not just long-lasting friendships, but ones which go very much deeper than those we might have formed in almost any other set of circumstances. For, thanks to the activities and institutions that the FWBO makes available, those friendships are given extraordinary scope for development. Not only do we make and meet friends at weekly classes and study groups, but we are also able to go on retreats together, work together on short-term projects or in well established Right Livelihood businesses, and even live together in residential spiritual communities. All this can add up to a tremendous amount of shared experience, shared striving, and shared self-revelation, the stuff of which friendships are made. Through the FWBO's activities and institutions, and particularly in our communities, we can get to know each other—and ourselves—very well indeed.

If we care to admit it, these friendships may well constitute the crucial elements that have bound many of us, not only to the FWBO as an organization, but to our own first tentative glimpses of a life rooted in spiritual values and effort. Without such friendships, we might have simply moved on as another phase, mood, or passing interest grabbed our attention. Our spiritual friendships create the human, flesh and blood, environment in which the process of turning an initial glimpse of vision into a lived-out process of transformation becomes meaningful and approachable. Thus, in all but the most exceptionally single-minded or spiritually gifted people, friendship actually makes the spiritual life possible. Through our friendships we enjoy the support, companionship, example, inspiration, encouragement, and pleasure that it takes to keep ourselves motivated to pursue a goal and a way of life that is so different to the norm—not just here in the West but in any human culture or society.

As Mangala points out in the article he has written for this issue, there was no original blueprint according to which the FWBO has been carefully and methodically formed. And although Sangharakshita was fully aware of the monastic traditions of the East, he had no preconceived notion of the crucial part that our residential communities would play in the Movement's life and development. Like so many other aspects of the FWBO, they started almost by accident and for a variety of reasons—many of which were quite prosaic. And yet, as things have turned out, it is in and through our communities that we have come to appreciate and to realize something of the Buddhist ideal of spiritual friendship; it is in our communities that so many of us have gained the chance to live a truly Buddhist life. They are, without doubt, the living heart of the Movement.

It is eighteen years since the first FWBO communities were formed, and there are at present more than fifty communities in existence. This means that 300 or more Friends, mitras, and Order members are actively enjoying community life. Even though this may sound like a fair number, the birth of a new community, whether in east London—where there are already quite a few—or in Dapodi, India—where community life is still very much at the experimental stage—is always regarded as very good news. For although one can (and some of us must) practise Buddhism very fully in almost any kind of home situation, the residential spiritual community, where one can live and practise the Dharma in the company other Buddhists, cannot but make one's practice richer, more complete, and, frankly, easier.

Nagabodhi

COMMUNITY LIFE AS A BUDDHIST PRACTICE

Residential spiritual communities are almost as old as Buddhism itself. Mangala assesses their importance

Eighth century wall-painting (China)

When Sangharakshita started the FWBO in 1967, he didn't have a master plan outlining how it would unfold. In the beginning his only concern was to establish a movement in which people took Buddhism seriously and tried to practise it in their everyday lives; beyond that he could not forsee many of the developments which have since taken place. For example, he didn't know that by 1990 centres, co-operatives, and residential communities would have been established as the principle methods by which the FWBO tries to take Buddhism out into the world, and by which it hopes to create a 'New Society'.

The value and purpose of an FWBO public centre is fairly obvious, since through it people can come in contact with the Dharma, the 'philosophical' aspect of the Buddha's teaching, can learn to meditate, and generally become acquainted with Buddhism. In the same way, it is clear that in an FWBO business venture people are practising the Buddha's teaching on Right Livelihood amongst like-minded friends. However, when it comes to residential communities, then perhaps it is not quite so easy to see their relevance to a truly Buddhist life, especially in the context of the modern West, where communal living may seem to be simply an outdated legacy from the 'commune/ hippie era' of the late sixties and early seventies. I would therefore like to look more closely at these residential communities and suggest why they have come to occupy such an important place in the fabric of the FWBO.

Buddhist communities were not 'invented' by the FWBO. Communities of one kind or another have always been an important feature of Buddhism. In the very earliest days, the Buddha's closest associates were homeless wanderers (*parivrajakas*) who were exhorted to 'wander alone, even as the horn of the rhinoceros is single'. Even so, they formed a definite fraternity, meeting once every fortnight as well as for the rainy season—during which they would cease to wander, and lived together for three months. After the Buddha's death, for various reasons, the tendency towards 'settling down' became increasingly pronounced and eventually led to the founding of the great monastic institutions such as Nalanda, the Mahavihara, and Drepung. It is thus very largely in the shape of its monastic institutions that Buddhism has come down to us today.

Having seen that communal living in one form or another is an ancient Buddhist tradition, it is perhaps not so surprising that communities, especially single-sex ones, have come to occupy such an important place in the FWBO. Clearly there must be something in them.

When communities started to form in the early seventies, like many other aspects of the Movement they were part of an organic process. Having attended classes and retreats together, more and more people came to appreciate the value of communal spiritual activity. Naturally for some, the idea of living in, or returning to, a lonely flat, bedsit, or family home, seemed less and less satisfactory. It was out of this positive dissatisfaction that the idea of forming communities arose, and with a plethora of short-life housing available in north London, it wasn't long before communities of all kinds were mushrooming.

What was it about communal spiritual activity that people so much appreciated? First of all, communal living gives one the chance to meditate, study, and discuss the Dharma on a regular basis with other like-minded people, a factor whose importance can hardly be over-emphasized. So many times I have heard people say that, although they had been reading books on Buddhism, meditating, and so on for years, it was only when they actually met other practising Buddhists that their own practice really came alive, really started to change their lives. To keep up a regular practice of meditation and Dharma study, to try and follow the precepts in one's daily life, to be trying constantly to develop mindfulness and *metta*, is not easy. One needs a supportive environment: people who can understand and appreciate one's difficulties and joys, people who will encourage and affirm one's efforts to grow and develop. Without these, all too often, one is likely to have one's efforts

undermined, whether by 'well-meaning' friends and family members, the general social climate, or simply one's own inertia.

Communal living gives one the opportunity to develop spiritual friendships, the opportunity to relate to others on the basis of what is highest and best in them and in oneself. In a residential spiritual community one is consciously trying to improve one's communication with others, trying to open up just a little more all the time, to share one's darkest secrets as well as one's highest aspirations. Community living is therefore very much about other people, about becoming aware of them, seeing that they too have needs and desires which may not always be the same as our own. Almost inevitably there is going to be a certain amount of conflict, but if handled properly this should be creative and helpful to our spiritual growth, even if at times it may be a little uncomfortable.

A spiritual community is not a cosy nest where everything is very settled and predictable, but is, or should be, more in the nature of a spiritual workshop. This means that alongside the friendliness, the appreciation, and the encouragement there will also be challenge and exhortation. Usually we try to arrange our lives so as to avoid any conflict and confrontation, to have things just as we like them. The idea of living in a community can therefore seem rather threatening. All that is likely to be threatened, however, is our own selfishness, our old unskilful habits and tendencies, which we usually cling to with great tenacity! Spiritual friendship and real communication help us to overcome these habits, help us to become more altruistic, more other-regarding. In this way the narrow confines of our ego are expanded and we develop a more inclusive, welcoming attitude to other people, our spiritual life and practice ceases to be solely concerned with ourselves, and we begin to see that spiritual friendship is an intrinsic part of the spiritual life—that without at least some element of it there isn't really any spiritual life at all.

As indicated at the beginning, communities are one of the principle means by which the FWBO hopes to create a 'New Society'. However, communities are not just a means of *creating* a New Society; they are also an important feature *of* it, along with centres and Right Livelihood businesses. In the New Society, most if not all people would live in (preferably single-sex) residential communities; they would not of course be forced into such a situation—which would go fundamentally against everything Buddhism stands for—but would do so because they themselves could see the sense of it, at least in theory, and would be prepared to make the experiment. For those with children to raise, there is no reason why they could not form 'family communities' in which responsibilities could be shared and resources pooled so as to allow more time for retreats, meditation, study, and so on.

In this vision of the New Society, the community would replace the nuclear family as the basic social unit. Generally speaking, from a spiritual point of view, the nuclear family, the one-man-one-woman relationship, is not a healthy situation. Its very nature encourages exclusivity and the tendency for both partners to over-invest in, and become dependent on, each other, expecting the other to meet all their needs. This is surely unrealistic and often puts more strain on the relationship than it is able to bear, as the divorce statistics so clearly indicate. If this were not enough in itself, there is also the consideration of what must surely be the detrimental effect of such a situation on any children who are involved.

I have met many married people who have frankly admitted that, had they encountered the FWBO before they married, they would never have taken that step. In such cases, people have married simply because they couldn't see any viable alternative. It was as if they could either live a lonely life on their own, or get married; so they got married. The very idea of living in a community never occurred to them—not to speak of actually finding such a community!

Very often people feel trapped in society, trapped by its institutions and mores, and yet are unable to see any way out. This feeling, together with the widespread isolation and alienation of so many people, shows that radical alternatives are needed. This is why the FWBO is so important. It does provide some real, healthy alternatives, not least in the form of its residential communities, which for many people have provided a uniquely creative option. If society is to be healthy it needs, amongst other things, a creative alternative to the nuclear family, as well as to widespread isolation and loneliness. It is this alternative which the FWBO tries to provide through its spiritual communities.

A tea break during the creation of Sukhavati community and the London Buddhist Centre, 1976

BUILDING THE FIRST COMMUNITIES

Nagabodhi traces the early history of the FWBO's communities

The 1972 Summer Retreat was coming to an end. The sun was shining—it always seemed to shine at Keffolds. On the lawn, a little group was forming around a tray of tea things. This was an *ad hoc* gathering of people who had come to realize that they were not relishing the thought of going home. Some of them lived alone, some with parents or partners, and others in houses which they shared with non-Buddhist friends. This retreat had been so good, not least because of the opportunity it had given them to enjoy and deepen their friendships. So why should it end? Why shouldn't they set about finding somewhere where they could live together and bring at least some elements of the retreat experience into their everyday lives? Living together might also save money—no minor consideration for people who were contemplating a more full-time involvement with their Dharma practice—and perhaps make lighter work of the business of being vegetarian.

The result was the acquisition of a large house awaiting refurbishment in a street just half a mile from Pundarika, our new London Centre. Occupied on a short-term lease by twelve men and women, this was the FWBO's first residential spiritual community. Within a year, no less than nine FWBO households had sprung up in the same area.

Quite how a modern-day Friend would feel were he to step back in time and enter one of those pioneering settlements is hard to know. (On *my* first visit to the first community, I remember meeting Vajradaka in the kitchen, mindfully dismantling his moped among sacks of grains and pulses.) At first, all of them were 'mixed', catering for men and women—often in (shifting) sexual relationships with each other. Held on short-life leases, they were decorated and furnished, if at all, in the most basic of ways. Community life was an often anarchic blend of the semi-privatized flat-sharing to which most of us were

accustomed and the first groping attempts at something more genuinely co-operative and shared. But, gradually, systems and structures emerged: a common purse for household purchases, cooking rotas, regular house meetings, and, of course, sessions of communal Dharma practice.

In those days Sangharakshita was still very much at the active heart of things. Very few of us were ordained (by today's standards, few of us would have been considered ready to become mitras). Sangharakshita still led all the classes at Pundarika. We were used to his voice, his assurance, and his ways. It is hardly surprising then that our first attempts at performing *pujas* in our own front rooms were punctuated by fits of hysterical giggles, and often followed by well-intentioned but wounding sessions of criticism for the day's leader.

The first single-sex community was established, without any particular fanfare, by Lokamitra, Subhuti, and Devamitra in a house almost next-door to Pundarika. Over the following months and years, however, as other community members passed through—rarely untransformed, as the three founder members emerged as leading figures in the FWBO's development, and as the legends about the community's uncompromisingly challenging ethos proliferated, 'Number Five' became something of an inspiration to the rest of us. It seemed to be a bumptious playground of direct communication, engaged experiment and debate, and, occasionally, honest collision, yet always perfumed with a high degree of friendliness and mutual concern.

The message was pretty clear. One by one the surrounding mixed communities transformed themselves into 'single-sex' situations, and community life in the FWBO moved onto a new level. At around this time, the term 'semi-monastic', as a description for this style of community, gained a certain currency. To be sure, few of us were celibate or 'single', (and—as is the case today—each single-sex community tended to have its own rules about the possibility, the duration, or the timing, of visits from members of the opposite sex) but we were definitely trying to forge and enact a way of life centred on our shared ideals and shared Dharma practice.

At around this time too came the FWBO's first—and so far last—substantial experiment with a 'family community'. People with family commitments were unable to join any of the existing communities, so a few of them decided to try living together, along with their families. Although a noble effort was made, it seems that the stresses and strains of family life were, if anything, exacerbated by the attempt to share life with other families, and the experiment was abandoned after about a year. More recently, a women's community including a couple of mothers with children has been far more successful.

In summer 1975, Subhuti gathered a team of men to move over to East London with him and convert the shell of a fire station into Sukhavati Community and the London Buddhist Centre. The job took four years, and brought into existence the biggest community that the Movement has ever known. At one time there were no less than 35 men living in the building, some working on the conversion project, and others running the various business that had been established to raise funds to keep the conversion work going.

Here, almost unwittingly, we had stumbled upon another level—another dimension—of community living. That all the members of a community should be engaged on the same project, and fired by a specific, and common, vision, for months and years on end, was a powerful practice indeed. Out of it was born the idea of the 'mandala', or 'complex', as it was variously known: a nexus of centre activities and Right Livelihood ventures rooted in a single community, which was itself rooted in shared vision and shared practice. This vision was particularly seized at Aryatara community, in Purley, south of London, transforming a rather quiet situation into a thriving centre with ancillary communities and businesses in just two hectic years. At Sukhavati too was pioneered the attempt to develop a complete 'common purse', whereby everybody's income went into a central fund, from which people took back their weekly allowance on the basis of need, rather than earning power. Personal possessions too were made available to all, their original owners considering themselves to be 'stewards' rather than proprietors of the articles in question.

Almost as soon as the London Buddhist Centre opened its doors to the public, a few members of the conversion team shifted camp to North Wales where they were to turn a damp and derelict farmholding into Vajraloka, the FWBO's first meditation retreat centre and community.

The original vision for Vajraloka was that it should house a community of people whose lives were centred on meditation practice. There would be no radios or television sets, no newspapers, no literature excepts Dharma books, and the residents would observe strict celibacy. For some years, Vajraloka acted as a quiet beacon, a refuge from the frantic world, a place one could visit for a week, a month, or even a year or more, and simply tune in to the resident community's stillness, simplicity, and contentment. While it lasted in this form, Vajraloka was a unique facility and demonstrated that a community of people who did little but meditate and reflect could have a profound effect on the Movement worldwide.

Like Taraloka, the women's retreat centre and community, Vajraloka now acts as a venue for a very full programme of organized, and highly specialized retreats. Community life goes on of course, but as at Padmaloka and Aryaloka—our retreat centres in Norfolk, England, and New Hampshire, USA, community members will often admit that the constant ebb and flow of retreatants puts a certain strain on community life. At a talk which he recently gave in London, Subhuti shared his vision of a long-term monastic settlement at Guhyaloka, in Spain, a community of fifty or more people living in virtual isolation, free to get on with a simple life devoted to direct Dharma practice and Dharma study. Whether large or small, there is now a clear need for a repeat of, and a few variations on, the experiment that was originally pioneered at Vajraloka.

Residential spiritual communities are now an established part of FWBO life, one of the 'Three Cs' (centre, co-operative, and community), without which an FWBO presence in any corner of the world is deemed to be incomplete. Indeed, as our understanding of the importance of spiritual friendship deepens and develops, these communities and the 'ideological' debate that surrounds them are, if anything, gaining in importance all the time. Not only are there now a great number of communities, in places as far apart—geographically and culturally—as London, North Wales, and Poona, but there are many kinds of community, operating at varying levels of specialization and intensity. Every year a few more communities come into existence, sometimes in support of a common venture such as a public centre or business, and sometimes for the simple reason that a few people who have got to know each other through FWBO activities feel like living together. As the years go by, and as the FWBO becomes bigger and less clearly focused upon a geographical (and historical) centre somewhere in England, the spiritual health and vitality of our Movement may well come to depend upon the health and vitality of its many and varied communities.

The women's/single parent's community, London 1988

Chittapala flanked by fellow Padmalokans

As Milk And Water Blend

Chittapala explores some dos and don'ts of community life

As is true of our general approach to the practice of Buddhism, there are right and wrong reasons for living in a Buddhist community. The only possible right motive is the confidence that such a life will be part of the conditions by which Enlightenment may ultimately be attained. We mustn't underestimate the crucial importance of being clear about the attitudes and expectations we bring to our community lives.

We all have mixed motives. Consequently we have appropriate and inappropriate, reasonable and unreasonable expectations of what a Buddhist community life can be. Clarifying what they want and expect from community life is an essential prerequisite for those setting up a community for the first time, or for new members entering an existing community. In either case it is a matter of getting to know one another, and not assuming that what is abundantly obvious to one person will be so for another. The reasons for the agreed common practices, routines, and ways of running a particular community—why they are the optimum arrangements and supporting conditions for all those concerned—must be explored and understood.

This common understanding and vision, reached through discussion, constitutes an unwritten yet agreed community 'contract'. This common vision is by its very nature the consequence of an explicitly understood desire to practise the Buddha's teaching together. In particular this vision will be of *kalyana mitrata*, the 'lovely intimacy' or 'spiritual friendship' which the Buddha said was 'the whole of the spiritual life'.

On visiting the Anuruddha brothers in the Gosingha sal-wood grove, the Buddha asked:

'And how is that you Anuruddhas, are living altogether on friendly terms and harmonious, as milk and water blend, regarding one another with the eye of affection?'

'As to this, Lord,' Anuruddha replied, '... for these venerable ones friendliness as to acts of body, ... acts of speech, ... in acts of thought whether openly or in private, has risen up in me. Because of this, Lord, it occurred to me: Now suppose that I, having surrendered my mind, should live only according to the mind of these venerable ones? So I, Lord, having surrendered my own mind, am living only according to the mind of these venerable ones. Lord, we have diverse bodies, but assuredly only one mind.'

(*Majjhima Nikaya I pp 262*)

The depth of friendship between the Anuruddhas is a sublime ideal and example for us to attempt to emulate. To follow in their footsteps we have to undertake to live the spiritual life together, to relate to one another on the basis of our own confidence in and commitment to the Buddha's teaching. More particularly, we have to trust in our friends' best intentions.

This means learning to encourage and stimulate what is best and highest in one another rather than using the 'stick' of community codes which will inevitably be broken from time to time. We must not see each other as members of just another group with its prescribed norms of

acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. People blossom and thrive in the sunshine of appreciation of their good qualities rather than under the thunder-clouds of others' judgemental reactions to their misdemeanours. When aspects of community life begin to pall for some community members, as they inevitably do, the answer is to revivify one another's inspiration rather than read the riot act. Mutual enthusiasm for a shared vision of community life is best kept alive in an atmosphere of friendliness, care, and rejoicing in one another's merits.

In a community it is crucial to remember to empathize with others' experience, to see life from their point of view. All too often we experience difficulties in community life because of a lack of imagination, through not putting ourselves 'in the place of another', and being unwilling to let go of selfish preferences in the light of others' needs. In failing to trust others we can easily attribute the worst of motives to them on the slenderest of evidence. This is a highly potent corrosive of community life.

Necessarily I have emphasized the crucial importance of our attitudes and motives. That acknowledged, there are outlined below a number of practical guide-lines, gleaned from experience, which many successful and happy communities will generally follow.

(1) Community members share common hours. A community is only a community if people share their lives with each other. This means spending time together. The hall-mark of a happy community is the enjoyment, pleasure, and fulfilment that its members experience in being with one another.

Unfortunately, all too often other priorities and preferences take precedence to communal life. Taking an extreme example, community life is badly affected if half the community is going to bed when the other half is getting up. A more common complaint is that many community members are only at home on one or two evenings of the week, with those evenings rarely coinciding. Furthermore, even when people are home they are often too tired to want to communicate effectively.

Sharing common hours means ensuring that there are always enough people at home to constitute an ongoing community life. This is especially true of weekends when there is a particularly strong temptation to spend time with a sexual partner—to the extent that some households calling themselves communities are really only weekday boarding houses. Sharing our lives also means informing others of our whereabouts and anticipating the possible implications of our activities on the quality of community life. To lead a community life fully means eschewing a private life, secret and apart from one's fellows.

A related but frequently neglected and important practice is that of 'visiting' each others rooms. Spending time with one another will necessarily mean getting over the awkwardness of sharing each other's space. It is very easy to get isolated into a territorial stand-off where, afraid to 'intrude', one gets stuck in the habit of living in one's room, only meeting the others in the kitchen, on the stairs, or at formal communal gatherings. Although we may already know some people quite well on joining a community, inevitably there will be others who we must consciously set out to get to know. It is all too easy to avoid personal 'one-to-one' communication with particular community members, settling down into a mutual collusion of silence, and knowing about each other only through third parties. We must have the courage of our convictions whereby we take our commitment to living with each other as the 'excuse' for overcoming shyness and reticence. Moving into a community is only the first act in a series of small steps and courageous initiatives that each person must take in getting to know all those with whom they are sharing their life. A simple but effective practice is the making of drinks for one another, thereby giving an 'entrée' into another's world.

Another aspect of maintaining effective community life is having a consistent and conscious policy towards guests and the joining of new community members. Too many guests, arriving too often, can swamp the communication between those who are actually living together. It is also easy to allow a long-term guest to drift into effectively joining the community without the existing community really deciding that that is what they want. This *fait accompli* can dilute and undermine the original commitment between the formal community members. Difficult as it may be to arrange when a guest is currently staying in the house, it is certainly good policy to admit a new community member only when there has been a definite break of at least a month, during which the guest moves out of the house.

(2) Community members meet together regularly as a complete community. For instance, they will eat together, meditate, and do pujas together, regularly spend an evening together, they may study and 'report-in' together. They may even go away on holidays together. Some of our more successful communities also work for a livelihood together. Experience proves that the more the community members share their lives with one another the greater will be the common spiritual vitality and enjoyment. Our communities often fall down when there is an inability to translate the vision of community life into sharing the practical details of daily life, thereby indicating a deep-seated unwillingness actually to live life with one another.

(3) Community members will gladly share the chores of running their home. Ideally, community members will look on these practical details as being opportunities to look after one another, to demonstrate their affection and love. However, certainly in the case of men (or should I say 'boys'?), it is all too easy to look for a 'mother' or 'father' figure to take responsibility—for sorting out exorbitant telephone bills, cleaning up the kitchen, doing the shopping, cleaning the bath, etc., etc. Frequently, bad feeling can build up through irresponsible, selfish, and immature habits.

Each community will have to sort out the standards it wants to maintain. At the same time, despite the usefulness of allocating different responsibilities, it can be counter-productive to set up strong demarcation lines between 'job descriptions'. The whole point of community life is in learning how to break down barriers of a rigid insistence between 'mine and yours'. So here honesty, a willingness to give unconditionally, and to see things from another's point of view, is crucial. The important thing to bear in mind is not to let the inevitable feelings of frustration and resentment get bottled up. These are, after all, the stuff of spiritual life which we are trying to transform. Nobody said community life would be easy. It is far better to get differences out in the open. Frequently, just saying what is on one's mind goes more than half-way to resolving difficulties.

(4) Community members relate to one another as practising Buddhists. Discussing the Dharma, sharing the joys and difficulties of Buddhist practice, should not be a freak occurrence which somehow oppresses the atmosphere. This is not simply a matter of arguing the knottier points of Madhyamaka philosophy over the meal table; rather, community members should be closely familiar with the practical issues of one another's spiritual lives. Since speech is a primary medium of communication, we need to ensure that community life eschews all forms of unskilful speech and is perfumed by honest, open, warm, friendly, helpful, appropriate, and harmonious speech. We need to beware the exuberance of teasing, worldly witticisms, and even sarcasm that brings quick excitement but often presages a degeneration into competitiveness and hurtful barbed interchanges. It is easy to engage in superficial chatter, evading the challenge of engaging with more feeling and honesty.

To conclude, a community is not a hotel. It is not a surrogate mum or dad. It is not merely a mutual convenience, or 'support' group. It is not about escaping from the challenges and responsibilities of life. On the contrary, a community first and foremost is about people—people who are committed to living and sharing their spiritual life together to the fullest possible extent. A community is about friendship based in the Dharma. A community is an explicit spiritual practice. A community is for those intent on Enlightenment for the sake of all sentient life.

WHY SINGLE-SEX?

Most of our communities are for men or women only. Dhammadinna explains why

Dhammadinna

Single-sex communities—communities, that is, for men or for women only—are common to many spiritual traditions. In the Buddhist tradition an order of bhikkhus and an order of bhikkhunis were both formed during the Buddha's lifetime. Originally these were wandering communities but, later on, many of them became residential.

Until the early seventies, activities in the FWBO were mixed. The first experiments with single-sex activities involved a series of retreats. These proved successful and popular. A little while later a couple of communities were formed which happened to be single-sex. Since our early mixed communities had often been formed by people who had been on retreat together, later communities tended to form in the same way, and were thus single-sex. People were discovering for themselves that single-sex activities were helpful for their growth and chose to develop these situations further.

One of the clearest explanations of the rationale behind single-sex activities in the FWBO is to be found in Sangharakshita's account of the third precept in *The Ten Pillars of Buddhism*. Here he explains that in the *kamaloka*, or realm of sensuous desire (which includes the six realms of becoming), sexuality is polarized. In the *rupaloka*, the realm of archetypal form, on the other hand, sexual polarity does not exist, and the beings of these realms are androgynous. Since the *rupaloka* corresponds, on the subjective level, to meditative states of consciousness, it follows that while we are truly meditating we are androgynous and have transcended sexual polarity. True celibacy naturally flows from this state. He also points out that a state of sexual polarization leads to psychological projection, tension, and therefore to discontent. An integrated, androgynous state is one of contentment. Contentment therefore arises not merely from abstention from sexual activity, but from a transcendence of the polarity from which sexual desire and sexual activity arise.

Sangharakshita goes on to say 'Meditation and celibacy go together: they mutually reinforce each other. For the same reason, we encourage single-sex activities of every kind'. He explains that single-sex activities give men and woman an opportunity to transcend sexual polarity and experience themselves as truly human. He concludes with the words 'For those who wish to develop as individuals, and to progress on the path to Enlightenment, meditation and all kinds of single-sex situations are, in the absence of transcendental insight, absolutely indispensable.'

Of course, sexual polarity does not merely involve sexual attraction, but includes a whole range of projections, assumptions, stereotyping, needs, and dependencies

relating to the opposite sex. Immature men or women often look for approval from the opposite sex, or seek mother and father figures. In a single-sex situation we can become free from much of this, or at least come to see our tendencies much more clearly. We can feel more able to be really ourselves and communicate from that basis. We see perhaps that we project aspects of ourselves onto the other sex—and thus come to understand what it is that we may reject or find difficult about our own sexual identity. We become confident in ourselves as men or women. As we begin to own within ourselves the many different poles of our being we become more able to integrate previously projected aspects, so that eventually we are able to transcend identification with one or other sex and become spiritually androgynous. Single-sex activities are therefore appropriate for all men and women, regardless of age and sexual orientation, as a support for their spiritual development.

Single-sex communities are just one expression of a whole range of single-sex activities in the FWBO, a range which also includes study groups, retreats, and Right Livelihood businesses.

The fact that we encourage single-sex activities seems to be one of the FWBO's more controversial aspects. People are often wary of having something imposed upon them, feeling, perhaps, that they do not have a choice, or that they will be restricted in some way. This applies especially in the area of their sexuality. Unhappy memories of single-sex schools, the hang-over of guilt from a Christian background, modern political and social ideologies, may all contribute towards a certain distrust of the motivations behind single-sex activities. And perhaps the practice is not always too well explained in our classes. As we have seen from Sangharakshita's paper, single-sex activities are not arranged merely to curb sexuality in heterosexuals, but to enable all of us—regardless of sexual orientation—to practise more fully and deeply, and to feel more complete.

For most people, these initial fears and suspicions are usually overcome by actually taking part in a men's or women's study group, retreat, or by visiting a community.

Most people quickly find themselves enjoying such events. Feeling the benefits, they soon wish to continue and extend the experience.

Obviously it is an individual choice how much time we spend in the company of our own sex. Because of family commitments we may only be able to get away on the occasional retreat. However, it seems a natural step for those of us who are single and free to live with members of our own sex if possible. In this way we can extend our involvement in single-sex activities and provide a firm basis for spiritual practice. It would be a mistake to think, however, that just by living in such a situation we will automatically mature into spiritually androgynous beings. By way of analogy, our meditation posture may help our mental state to become more meditative, but we still have to make a conscious effort to concentrate our minds. In the same way, we need consciously to develop our 'masculine' and 'feminine' aspects, as well as our friendships, while in single-sex communities. It is this conscious development, helped by our practice of meditation, awareness, and communication, which hopefully sets single-sex activities in the FWBO apart from single-sex arrangements in ordinary society, which often reinforce stereotyped differences.

Single-sex communities provide the deepest and most complete experience of single-sex activities. In them we create a spiritual alternative to living in a family, alone, or in a flat-share. We choose to live with, practise with, share our lives and develop friendships with others of our own sex. So often we look for completion, stimulation, excitement, and inspiration from members of the the opposite sex. Here we receive stimulation and inspiration from members of our own sex on a day to day basis. This enables us to have confidence in our *own* ability to be stimulating and inspiring. We are reflected back on ourselves positively through communication with other people of the same sex. We are able to accept who and what we are, and from there we are able to grow.

The task of becoming emotionally independent of the opposite sex and maturing to a point where we are whole in ourselves is obviously not an easy one. However, many Order members have now been practising in single-sex communities for many years and can provide a maturity and a sense of stability for others. Maturity in communities is sometimes provided by new members with families, children, and a certain degree of 'life experience'. The community is then less likely to be merely an escape from the opposite sex, less likely to fall into extremes. Sometimes, for example, men's communities can feel cold and uncared for, while women's communities can be emotionally self-indulgent.

On a more experiential level I can obviously only talk about my own many years of living in women's communities. I had previously been married and had also lived in mixed communities. While I have no regrets about any of those experiences, I know I have benefited most from living with other women who practise the Dharma. My strongest connections do tend to be with those women with whom I have shared all aspects of my life. Over the years I have changed from being a woman who was distinctly uncomfortable in the company of other women, who wanted to be 'one of the boys', who needed approval from men, and who was generally confused about gender, to someone who is happy being a woman and being with other women. Also I hope that I have developed a more all-round, more integrated psyche. My greater experience of contentment would point to this being a possibility. Whereas in the past I also went through a phase of complete dislike of men and feelings of insecurity in their presence, I now feel confident in both women's company and in mixed company, and can make the transition easily. However, if I spend too long in mixed company, especially if the men greatly outnumber the women, I begin to feel un-grounded, even under-nourished. My communication and friendships with other women definitely provide the basis for my practice and experience. I hope to be living in spiritual communities with other women for the rest of my life.

INSIDE *tārāloka*

Ten women live full-time at Taraloka, and the waiting list of those wishing to join the resident community grows longer every month.

Taraloka is the FWBO's first retreat centre for women, providing retreats at every level, from beginners' events to Going for Refuge retreats and Order retreats. Members of the resident community organize, administer, support, and usually lead the Centre's retreats.

This photo-essay on life in the community has been created by Prue Burch, who left her native Auckland for a long-term stay at Taraloka in January this year.

Anjali's birthday party

Luise walking in the fields close to the community house

Prue and Annie at work in the Taraloka office caravan

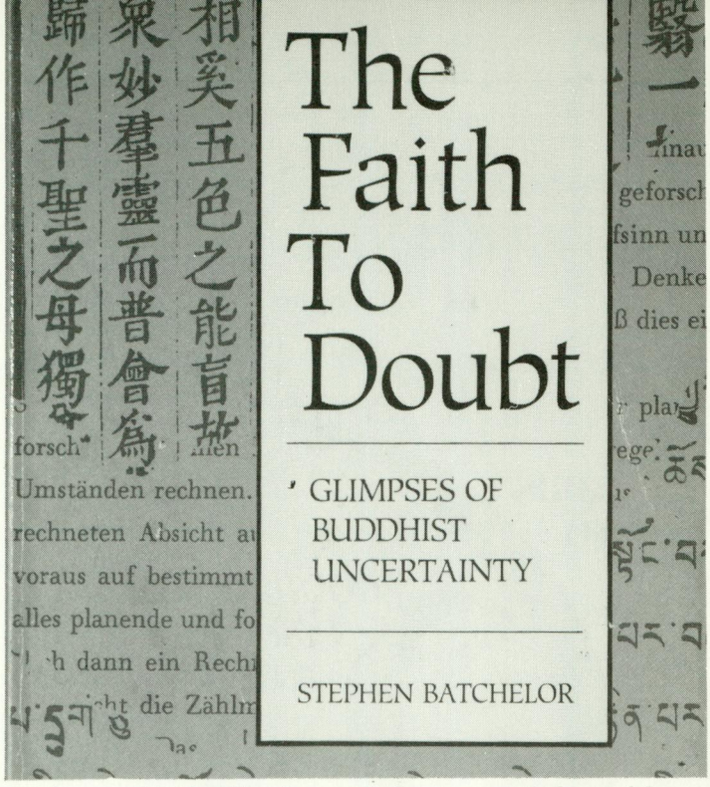
Sanghadevi prepares the community shrine

The community shrine-room

Ratnashuri in her room

Anjali and Sanghadevi relaxing on the lawn

CREATIVE DOUBT



The Faith to Doubt: Glimpses of Buddhist Uncertainty
by Stephen Batchelor
Published by Parallax Press
pp.138, paperback
price £7·95

The Buddhist tradition is rich and diverse. To some degree this is the product of a flexibility whereby, over twenty-five centuries and in various cultural contexts, the expression of the Dharma has utilised many different human faculties as vehicles of awakening. The Madhyamaka school utilizes the rational faculty to support the arising of Bodhi, whereas the Pure Land schools emphasize devotion. Stephen Batchelor's claim is that the Ch'an or Zen school of China and Japan utilizes man's capacity for doubt—hence the title of his latest book, *The Faith to Doubt*. To understand this we must realize that he uses the term 'doubt' in a very specific way —to denote an experience in which one questions the very nature of reality. Such questioning sometimes occurs spontaneously as one is confronted by the dazzling mystery of existence itself, but for most people it is a vision that becomes obscured by the banality of day to day life. In essence Zen practice seeks to cultivate this doubt, and by its wholehearted pursuit leads to an answer beyond mere rational exegesis, in fact to a direct, or 'sudden' awakening.

Describing the book as 'a collection of essays, quotations, journal entries and stories strung together in an attempt to create a picture of one person's encounter with Zen Buddhism', Mr Batchelor offers a compilation of diverse materials: amongst the most evocative passages, autobiographical episodes from his own time spent in a Korean Zen monastery; historical research, recounting, for example, the history of the question 'What is it?' as a teaching device in the early Zen tradition; short essays, including an illuminating 'Zen' interpretation of the *Heart Sutra*; and even fragments of a 'new' Mahayana sutra—though I found this part the least successful.

One of the most exciting sections explains the nature and function of the koan, or 'public case', as the original Chinese legal term signifies. Each koan represents the opportunity for the meditator to address this existential doubt afresh, and to contemplate the circumstances in which previous 'doubters' have experienced awakening under its impact. But, he warns, there can be no such thing as an 'answer' to a koan, as its purpose is purely to inculcate a state of existential doubt, and he rightly criticizes those who have degraded the koan to 'a spiritual riddle from the Far East' and so are 'largely responsible for obscuring its wider meaning.'(p.56)

Not surprisingly a book devoted to the exposition of radical questioning gives rise to a few questions of its own! —though I hasten to add that the provocative and challenging nature of the book is one of its most attractive qualities. The following remarks are therefore offered in a spirit of constructive and appreciative questioning, hopefully in keeping with the tone and intent of the book itself.

Mr Batchelor explores his subject by introducing us to a number of interesting polarities, which constitute some of the most thought-provoking aspects of the book. Primarily he contrasts 'meditative attitude' with 'meditative technique', the latter involving the technical mastery of a set mental of exercises (including, as far as I can tell, *dhyana*), the former the arising of a direct apprehension of existential doubt. In this context he tends towards presenting a rather critical view of those traditions which emphasize technique to the detriment of attitude—an appropriate point, especially if one assimilates the latter to Insight, as he seems to do.

However his identification of a preoccupation with meditative technique with the Gradual Path to Enlightenment (to the implicit advantage of the Zen tradition which pursues the Sudden Path) seems not a little unfair, in so far as all traditions ultimately address the need to gain Insight. One wonders if, in his enthusiasm for the Sudden Path, the author under-emphasizes the fact that the 'sudden' awakenings that the Zen tradition records have taken place within a highly structured and disciplined context of meditation and ritual—as the autobiographical passages of the book implicitly illustrate.

Nor must we forget that the experience of existential doubt is for some people shattering, and can cause intense suffering and anxiety. Hence meditative technique, in the sense of cultivating *dhyana* and its attendant positive, happy mental states, is an indispensable preparation for the practice of any kind of Insight meditation.

Finally, while still in a questioning vein of my own, I would like to draw attention to 'The Chinese Lesson', an appendix in which the author examines the introduction and growth of Buddhism in China and offers stimulating speculations regarding the future of the Dharma in the West. Amongst many interesting observations, I noted Mr Batchelor's critique of those who seek what he terms 'some kind of "essential Buddhism" stripped of all cultural packaging, as the only truly appropriate form of the religion for the West' (p.124). But very few people that I have met have been naïve enough to imagine that there is or ever was an absolutely pure or 'original' Buddhism divorced from all cultural context. Who is he criticizing, I wonder?

A little paradoxically he makes this criticism in a book devoted to the exposition of existential doubt, itself a relatively 'culturally naked' issue. As he suggests, it is only by the communication of such universal spiritual experience, rather than the 'smells and bells' of any particular tradition, that Buddhism could be communicated at all. It seems clear that Stephen Batchelor's successful attempt in this book to translate the spiritual quest from a Chinese Buddhist context to a Western Existentialist one, seems to be saying that cultural context is indeed secondary. One wonders whether he is really as far from those he criticizes as his critique suggests.

Despite, or perhaps because of, these and other questions, this is the most stimulating book to have come my way for some time, and one of the best introductions to the spirit of Zen Buddhism that I have read. I feel sure that it is itself a genuine contribution to 'a literature of spiritual conviction' which the author regards as an essential prerequisite 'for Buddhism to have a lasting impact on Western culture' (p.119–20). I wholeheartedly recommend it.

Sthiramati

CHALLENGING THE GROUP

New Currents in Western Buddhism: The Inner Meaning of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order
by Sangharakshita
Published by Windhorse
pp.93, paperback
price £3.50

This book is an edited version of a series of three talks originally given by Sangharakshita in New Zealand in 1979. There is nothing dated about them, however: the matters addressed are at least as pressing today as they were eleven years ago. The book is an exploration of the meaning and significance of the FWBO as a new, Western, Buddhist spiritual community. It is also about the creative tension that exists between the aspiring individual and the increasingly powerful group.

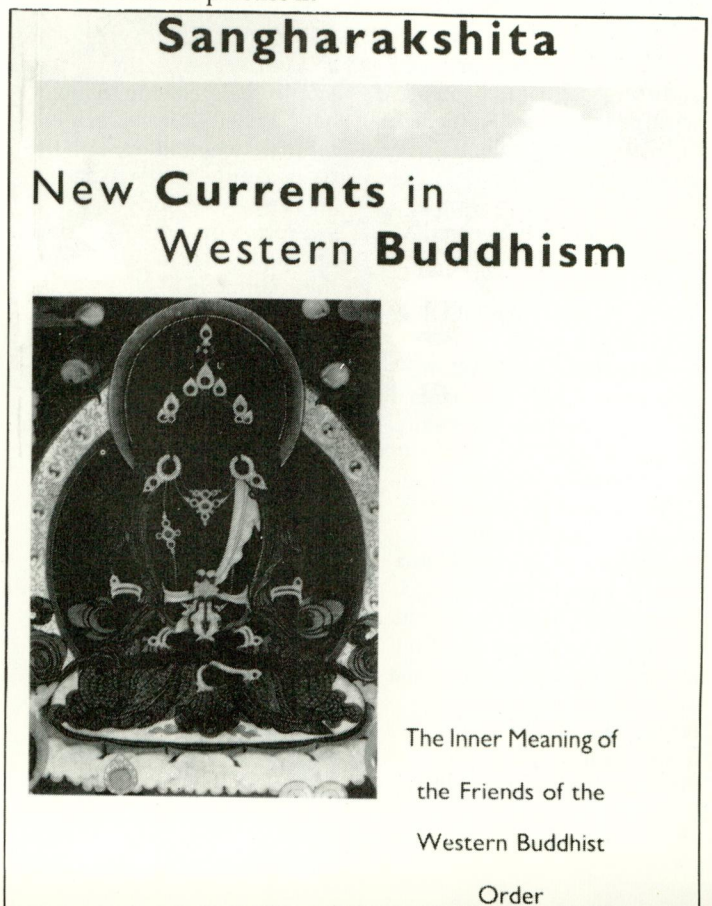
The specific meaning which he gives to the terms 'individual' and 'group' is outlined by Sangharakshita in the first talk, 'The Individual and the World Today'. He begins with an analysis of the twentieth century Westernized world in which we find ourselves: a world in which the group—exemplified *par excellence* by the corporate state—has grown in size and power, and where the existence of the 'true individual' is constantly threatened; a world dominated by the group to such an extent that the individual feels 'unable to influence [it] even in those matters which most closely concern his own life' (p.30). He goes on to explain how the FWBO seeks to redress the balance between the group and the individual, and why it takes as its method the teaching of the Buddha (and why *not* Christianity).

Sangharakshita begins the second talk by describing the nature of the Buddha's teaching, highlighting its emphasis on practices which bring about the development of the individual. He then discusses the relationship between 'Western Buddhists and Eastern Buddhism', giving a brief account of the four extant Eastern Buddhist schools and of the way in which Buddhism has had superimposed upon it aspects of the cultures into which it has been introduced. Finally he describes how the FWBO endeavours to separate the essence of the Buddha's teaching from the cultural accretions it has amassed throughout its history.

While the second talk addresses the question 'what is Buddhism?', the third, 'Commitment and Spiritual Community', discusses what it means to be a Buddhist. This is perhaps the most radical of the three talks. It gives expression to what may be regarded as Sangharakshita's most important contribution to the growth of Buddhism in the modern world: an unwavering emphasis on the centrality of the act of Going for Refuge, and the insistence that it is commitment and not life-style which distinguishes the true practitioner of the Buddha's teaching.

This is an excellent introduction to the FWBO, particularly because it goes beyond structures to look at inner meaning, and uses universal rather than specifically Buddhist terminology. Sangharakshita says in conclusion that he has given 'little more than a glimpse' of this vast subject, and I would have appreciated a fuller exploration of the nature and functioning of the group in its various guises. Though I did not find myself drawn immediately into the book, it was well worth persevering. Sangharakshita's approach to the subject is clear, concise, and relentlessly uncompromising. He penetrates to the heart of Buddhism and its practice in today's society, East and West. His analysis of the world in which we live contains truths which are hard to deny, and he offers to anyone concerned about that world a challenge which they ignore at their peril. He also extends a challenge to the Buddhist world, demanding the reassertion of essential Buddhist values, most particularly the individual's commitment to growth and development. In the words of the book's editor, Sangharakshita 'has set an agenda that will be ignored only at the risk of Buddhism's survival.'

Hannah Manasse



Psychological Perspectives

Space in Mind—East-West Psychology and Contemporary Buddhism
Edited by John Crook and David Fontana
Published by Element
pp. 231, paperback
price £9.99

Space in Mind is a collection of essays by a variety of authors, mainly psychologists. It is arranged into four sections: 'Psychological Perspectives in Eastern and Western Thought', 'Self, Mind and Meditation', 'Psychological and Spiritual Development', and 'Counselling and Therapeutic Practice'. Some essays are basic expositions of the theories of particular Buddhist schools. Some are more speculative interpretations of Buddhist ideas and practices in the light of Western psychological theories. Others outline the authors' application of Buddhism and psychology to therapy and human development.

There is a straightforward account of 'Mahayana Spirituality' by Stephen Batchelor, and of modern Burmese Vipassana theory by Kedar Dwivedi. On the other hand, several essays consider the question of the Buddhist doctrine of *anatta* (that we do not have an intrinsic or enduring 'self') and compare it with, or interpret it in the light of, Western psychology, especially cognitive psychology. Martin Skinner draws parallels between the doctrine of *anatta* with he work of G.H. Mead and his followers, who maintain that the 'self' is a social construction. Guy Claxton rather amusingly compares the 'self' to a computer program, the point being that we do not have to have a 'self' program.

Then there are interesting essays concerned with therapeutic practice: Richard Jones's 'Family Therapy and Dependent Origination', which compares 'systems' approach in family therapy to Buddhist doctrines of 'dependent origination', and Padmal De Silva's 'Self-Management Strategies in Early Buddhism', which draws close parallels between Buddhist practices and behavioural psychotherapy.

I found many of the essays interesting and at times offering useful insights. The book illustrates the fertility of the contact between Buddhism and Western psychology and opens up a variety of avenues to be explored further. However, as I read I began to experience a definite unease, and a desire to emphasize more the *differences* between Buddhism and modern psychology. The urge to draw parallels too readily, or to interpret Buddhism in Western theoretical terms, can lead to misunderstanding and confusion.

The interpretation of the *anatta* doctrine in cognitive terms is a case in point. To equate this doctrine with Western psychological theories that the 'self' is a social and cognitive construction can be to miss the essential point: the doctrine of *anatta* has much deeper implicatons. As Stephen Batchelor writes, according to *Madhyamaka* Buddhism, people labour under the illusion of intrinsic selfhood 'both intellectually and instinctively' (p.25). We do not just develop cognitive models of a self or ego, but are also born egotists; the intellectual delusion that we have a fixed, intrinsic self is intimately bound up with the roots of our emotional nature. A narrowly cognitive interpretation of the doctrine of *anatta* will bring confusion; the attainment of Transcendental Insight into our lack of intrinsic selfhood may then be erroneously equated with a merely intellectual understanding that one's 'self' is somehow an intellectual construct—a spiritually disastrous mistake.

It is well to note Stephen Batchelor's delineation of the Mahayana doctrine of the 'five paths' in his essay, especially the distinction between the third path, of 'seeing', when real Insight arises, and the two preliminary paths. Only with the path of seeing does the *instinctual* illusion of intrinsic selfhood begin to be eradicated. Merely intellectual understanding about this illusion, which nevertheless may well be accompanied by changes in our personality and perception of the world, is associated with the preliminary paths. In trying to understand Buddhism through Western theories we may easily overlook this enormous difference. Buddhism will then seem to be a sophisticated form of psychotherapy, but not what it is at its highest and most essential: a Transcendental path to liberation from the cycle of birth and death. It is no surprise to read, in the concluding chapter, the editors writing that '... both Buddhist and Hindu traditions ... freely acknowledge that all the major religions lead, albeit by different pathways, to the same mountain-top' (p.215). Such a statement represents a failure to comprehend the radical difference between the Transcendental path as understood by Buddhism, and all other human activities whatsoever, 'religious' or otherwise.

I was equally uneasy about other descriptions of practice which seemed to confuse preliminary practice with the higher, Transcendental path, for example, Ngakpa Chogyam's description of 'staring meditation' (p.195). It is not clear whether he is writing about the Dzogchen practice of Contemplation, which is dependent upon the prior arising of Insight, or about the more basic practice of developing a degree of mindfulness of emotion at the level of preliminary meditation, known as access concentration. Is he in fact confusing the two?

To conclude, I think that this book provides an interesting set of 'snapshots' of the developing interface between Buddhism and Western psychology. However, it does illustrate the pitfalls of trying to understand Buddhist doctrines through Western theories. Because of this it could be confusing and I would not recommend it to people who are relatively new to Buddhism, especially if they are not yet fully clear about the distinction between the preliminary and the Transcendental paths.

Advayachitta

ALSO RECEIVED

A Thousand Journeys
Ken Winkler
Element

Cutting Through Appearances: The Practice and Theory of Tibetan Buddhism
Geshe Lhundup Sopa and Jeffrey Hopkins
Snow Lion

The Modern Mystic
Alan Watts
Element

Teachings of a Buddhist Monk
Ajahn Sumedho
Buddhist Publishing Group

Against Therapy
Jeffrey Masson
Fontana

Guilt is the Teacher, Love is the Lesson
Joan Borysenko
Crucible

Tarot—the Handbook for the Journeyman
Eileen Connolly
Aquarian

What the Buddha Never Taught
Timothy Ward
Element

On the Way to Satori
Gerta Ital
Element

Life as a Siamese Monk
Richard Randall
Aukana

TURTLE CULTURE

Basic to Buddhism is the understanding that the actions we engage in, and the environment we live in, have an effect upon our mental state and character. This being so perhaps there is a glimmer of comfort to be gained in learning that between 1985 and 1989 the average number of hours of television viewing per day per person in Britain went down from 3·59 to 3·35, and that the average British household now only watches about 28 hours of television and video per week, rather than 30 (as reported by the Policy Studies Institute). Hopefully the decline will continue and accelerate. But what can one make of such recent innovations as *Teenage Mutant Hero (or Ninja) Turtles*, the latest role models presented by the media for the primary school child?

Of course it could be argued that such programmes are just 'fun' and not to be taken seriously. Perhaps such sugar-coated cartoon violence has no detrimental or long-lasting effects, especially as research on the influence of TV violence has not shown any unequivocal results. But the Buddhist, aware through personal spiritual practice of the sensitivity of the mind, must look askance at media violence, whether it be catering for adults or the very young, and wonder how much it contributes to a general distortion of human character.

And, of course, if people are watching so much television, when do they get the chance to realize even a small fraction of their full human potential?

EUROPEAN BUDDHIST UNION

This year's meeting of the European Buddhist Union took place at the FPMT's Lama Tsong Khapa Institute in Pomaia, not far from Pisa in Italy. Kulananda and Nagabodhi attended on behalf of the FWBO, joining delegates from Italy, Germany, Holland, and Czechoslovakia.

The main business of this year's meeting was the consideration of a new draft of the Union's constitution. Ratification of this document has been delayed for a number of years, in particular because of concerns expressed by the FWBO over the clauses relating to the Union's membership (see *Outlook*, issue 9). Our point has always been that the Union should be a union of *Buddhists*, and that only those groups or organizations whose governing bodies consist of clearly professed Buddhists should be permitted to join. (Initially we asked that the Union should only be open to those groups whose *membership* consisted of professed Buddhists, but it soon became clear that many groups are—out of legal necessity—so constituted as to require people to 'join' while they are still quite new to things.)

As things turned out, it was too much to ask even that the governing bodies should consist of professed Buddhists. Apparently, many sincere groups have one or more sympathetic (and often generous) non-Buddhists on their boards. Stalemate loomed until a closer investigation revealed that several of the groups in question have lamas or teachers who, while not formally belonging to the groups' governing bodies, have an absolute and final say in the groups' affairs. A formula of words was therefore worked out to the effect that 'membership will be open to those groups whose governing bodies are under the control of professed Buddhists', and the constitution was passed. The slight vagueness of this phrase does of course place considerable responsibility upon the shoulders of the Union's executive team which will 'vet' applications for membership and make recommendations.

The task now facing the Union is to make itself far more representative of all the richness and diversity that now makes up Buddhism in Europe. (This year's meeting was probably the worst attended ever.) The Union's great potential strength is that it could serve as a valuable meeting place and discussion forum for all of us involved in the adventure of bringing the Dharma to the West. Even if we meet for just a few days each year, the exchange of stimulation, ideas, and friendship could bear wonderful fruit.

BUDDHIST NATIONS

With so much violence and turmoil in the world it would be good to point to nations which are at least nominally Buddhist as being havens of peace. Unfortunately neither Sri Lanka nor Burma can be considered that. The spread of Buddhism is hardly being helped by the pictures these two nations present to the world. The civil strife between Sinhalese and Tamil in Sri Lanka, although now the responsibility of both sides, has some of its roots at least in a Sinhalese nationalism which has used its peculiar version of Buddhism for its own ends. Burma, also a country with a penchant for a nationalistic reinterpretation of Buddhism, is groaning under what still amounts to a military dictatorship. Meanwhile Thailand, maintaining a tradition of proud independence in a troubled area of the world, seems to have bought that independence at the price of developing its own version of nationalist Buddhism, complete with bhikkhus presiding at all the appropriate military events.

To be fair, these nations' independence has been gained or grimly held onto, their Buddhism maintained, despite both a long history of Western colonialism in the area and also the ravages of communism. One only has to think of what has happened to other nations in the area which once had a strong Buddhist tradition, Vietnam and Cambodia, or slightly further afield, Tibet, to realize how fortunate the surviving 'Buddhist' nations are in comparison. Yet as a Buddhist one can but wish that on a political level their versions of Buddhism were more than just nominal and not mere adjuncts of nationalism, and could set positive examples for the world, rather than shameful ones.

SANGHARAKSHITA DIARY

At 11.35 on the morning of Tuesday 3 July, Sangharakshita left an unusually sun-blessed England for a three month semi-retreat in the hotter and more frequently sun-blessed climate of Spain.

The first two-and-a-half months of his stay in Spain were spent at Guhyaloka—'The Secret Valley'—a 200-acre retreat centre in the hills of the Province of Alicante. When he arrived the four month Ordination retreat was drawing to a close, and fifteen new Order Members waited eagerly to greet him. He quickly adopted a retreat-style programme, and got down to a period of concentrated literary work and correspondence. His first writing project was a three- thousand-word article on Anagarika Dharmapala, entitled *Dharmapala: The Spiritual Dimension*. This will be published later in the year by the Maha Bodhi Society—which was founded by Anagarika Dharmapala—to celebrate their one hundredth anniversary. Then he then began work on a letter to *Shabda*, the monthly newsletter of the Western Buddhist Order, detailing his activities over the previous eighteen months. The result was a thirty-seven page document which appeared in the October issue of *Shabda*. Sangharakshita hopes that this, along with two other long letters to *Shabda*, will eventually appear as a second volume of his *Travel Letters*, and therefore reach a much wider audience.

During his last two weeks in Spain, Sangharakshita, accompanied by Paramartha, set off on a tour of the country, travelling to Madrid, Toledo, Cordoba, Seville, Granada, Murcia, and Alicante. He spent most of his time visiting museums and art galleries, but in Granada he also visited the Alhambra—the richly ornamented palace of the Moorish kings, built during the 13th and 14th centuries—and in Cordoba he visited the famous Moorish Mosque.

On his return to England on 20 September, Sangharakshita drove straight to Padmaloka, where he spent the following two days dealing with the mound of correspondence that awaited him. He also gave several personal interviews to men attending the Going for Refuge retreat at Padmaloka, as well as seeing other people who had travelled to Padmaloka to speak with him.

On Saturday 22 September Sangharakshita gave a poetry reading on the theme of Friendship to a capacity audience at the Norwich Buddhist Centre. The following Monday he travelled to London, where he will remain until November, when he is due to fly to North America to visit Aryaloka, the FWBO retreat centre in New Hampshire.

Sangharakshita continues to read all letters sent to him, and is very happy to hear from people. However he would like to stress that all mail be sent to him at Padmaloka, and not directly to London.

Sangharakshita reads poetry at the Norwich Centre

Australasian Order members at the Convention

AUCKLAND CENTRE OPENS

In July the new Auckland Buddhist Centre was officially opened, following three months of building, furnishing, and decorating.

The shrine-room was decked for the occasion with a splendid display of Buddhist art from all over the world. A weekend of celebrations began on Saturday 29 July with a Dharma talk by Purna. After lunch a panel of Order members answered questions from the floor—the Centre was open to the public for the weekend, and the session was described as 'lively'—after which Priyananda presented a slide show of Buddhist art. In the evening sixty people attended a celebratory banquet, and Michael Franklin gave a classical guitar recital. Next day, after meditation and *puja*, Purna delved into the Auckland archives for a slide show of colourful scenes from what Dharmadhara describes as 'our somewhat hippie past.' This was followed by a baroque music recital—'a lovely way to spend Sunday afternoon.'

Arts events were a regular feature at Auckland's old Centre in Hobson Street, and a new programme began in July with a series of six videos on the late Joseph Campbell, the American scholar and writer on mythology. Shown over three Friday evenings, the series proved so popular—80–90 people per night—that the event will be repeated in November.

Recently Subhuti, the head of the men's ordination team at Padmaloka in Norfolk, visited New Zealand for the first time. During his month long visit he attended the nine-day Australasian Order Convention, led a twelve-day men's Going for Refuge retreat, and conducted a weekend seminar on the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. All these events were held in the Auckland region, but Subhuti also found time to lead a day seminar at the Wellington Buddhist Centre.

During the Going for Refuge retreat the shrine-room was struck by a sudden tornado while the retreatants were meditating. A large tree was blown over, and clipped the corner of the building as it fell. But fortunately damage was slight, and the retreatants carried on meditating—with renewed motivation. However the Christian camp just across the road lost a roof in the storm, evidence that God does indeed move in mysterious ways.

WOMEN'S ORDINATION COURSE

Navachitta

In the last few years *Golden Drum* has reported some major changes in the way men are prepared for ordination into the Western Buddhist Order, including the establishment of a permanent residential community devoted to nurturing potential Order members. This year some far-reaching changes have also been made to the women's ordination 'process', and the women's ordination team are seriously considering setting up a permanent community from which to run Going for Refuge retreats.

In 1989 some criticism of the women's ordination course was voiced by the mitras who attended. The result was a number of changes: a more experienced team was formed to run the course, an overall theme for the retreats was discussed well in advance, and an attitude of 'frank and friendly' exchange was encouraged at all times, so that any dissatisfactions could be aired and resolved as soon as possible. Members of the advisory committee visited Order chapters to explain and discuss the changes, and—since not everyone who wanted to attend could be accommodated—to discuss methods of selection.

The course which emerged from this process of consultation and discussion consisted of a one-week retreat for mothers, a month long retreat, and a two-week ordination retreat. All were held at Taraloka. The ordination team consisted of seven Order members plus retreat leader Ashokashri. Of the women preceptors, Ratnashuri attended the whole course, while Sanghadevi and Shrimala attended part of it.

The one-week retreat was based on study of Subhuti's lecture series entitled *What is the Order*, with additional talks on *Going Forth* and *Friendship*.

The month long retreat had a rather more elaborate structure based on aspects of Going for Refuge, and was divided into three stages: standing your ground, or building a base; standing alone, or going forth; and standing together, or spiritual community. Each section involved the study of relevant material plus talks by Order members. Each stage was also expressed in some form of ritual which marked the transition between the stages.

According to Dhammadinna the talks on the retreat were memorable for their originality, and for the fact that they directly addressed the needs of women, exploring women's particular strengths and problems in the spiritual quest through myth and symbol. It is hoped that the talks will be published in booklet form later this year.

As well as meditation, study, ritual, and talks, evening small-group discussions allowed both the team and potential new Order members to explore their Going For Refuge more deeply, and to be open to others' comments on their practice. These groups also provided an opportunity to discuss the retreat in progress and air any difficulties—of which happily there were few. This month long retreat was immediately followed by a weekend ordination retreat for Navachitta, who was to return to New Zealand.

The year's course concluded with a two-week ordination retreat. As is now the practice, ordinations were conducted by the Dharmacharini preceptors. Private ordinations took place in silence over a number of evenings in a much decorated tent, ordinands making their way from the main shrine-room along a path decorated with streamers and nightlights. After the ceremony those who chose to do so spent the night alone in individual tents on the grounds. Anagarika Ratnashuri conducted the public ordinations—the first time as many as ten women have been ordained together.

NEWS FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE

On the Going for Refuge retreat at Aryaloka

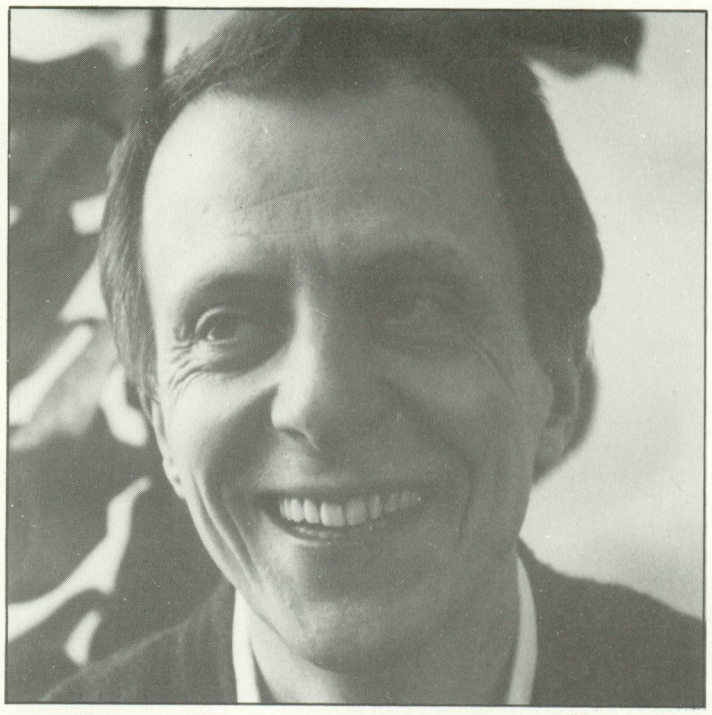
Writing from Aryaloka in New Hampshire, Vidyavati reports that the American retreat centre has been experiencing a new wave of enthusiasm over the last few months. Classes for the autumn are well subscribed—in some cases over-booked—and a fresh wave of new faces are to be seen at Aryaloka itself, and in classes in Concord and Portland. Regular sangha activities have been boosted by Nagabodhi's summer visit—he led a week long seminar on Shantideva's *Bodhicharyavatara*—as well as Aryaloka's first Going for Refuge retreat. To both events people came from as far afield as Montana and San Francisco.

There have been several celebrations recently—for Vidyavati's arrival, for Ratnapani's departure, and, in mid-August, for the retreat centre's fifth birthday. After half a decade of financial insecurity Aryaloka's position is at last beginning to look more stable, and a strong sangha of mitras and Friends has formed around the centre.

Vidyavati has quickly made her presence felt by launching a 'Right Livelihood' business—called *Window Artworks*—painting promotional designs on shop windows. This is to be a women's business, to fully support Vidyavati and two mitras, all working on a part-time basis. The business is off to a promising start, having already received commissions for several large jobs.

Another new departure is the Aryaloka 'Guest Programme'. Guests at the centre will stay in pleasant private rooms, and have the opportunity to soak up the atmosphere, unwind in the peace and quiet, and sample the simple life for a few days or weeks—meanwhile joining in the life of the community as much or as little as they like.

BUDDHISM IN BUSINESS



Dhammaloka

The Buddha is often recorded as saying that there is no point in having power in the world if you have no power over yourself. More than two millennia later we can hardly be accused of having learned this lesson. In our Western societies we give a great deal of attention to managing *things*, and even to managing *other* people. But on the whole we give little attention to managing *ourselves*. And even within a materialist value system this one-sidedness can have disagreeable results—it costs money. Anyone who is not skilled in managing themselves will often not be really effective, have difficulty co-operating with others, and be prone to the debilitating effects of stress, poor health, low energy, addictions, and so on.

In the last few decades industry and commerce have begun to wake up to these facts. Today management training in fields like stress control, leadership skills, and personal effectiveness is big—and lucrative—business. Buddhists surely have something unique to contribute in these fields—our practice of meditation and mindfulness should lead us to be more aware than most, and we can draw on a rich tradition of expertise about mental and emotional states.

One man who has managed to apply his Buddhism in the field of management training is Dhammaloka, a German Order member whose varied client companies include one of the largest industrial concerns in Germany. Dhammaloka normally runs two- to four-day hotel-based residential courses, which are attended by middle and higher managers of all ages. Courses are tailored to the needs of the clients, but often centre around what Dhammaloka appropriately calls *self-management*. As well as dealing with topics like time-management, health, and stress control, course members are encouraged to sit down and take a clear-eyed look at their life. This can raise some important and even painful questions—*Am I doing what* I *want, or what other people expect of me? Am I the boss or the victim in my life? Am I too obsessed with status and possessions?* It can also point the way to some new directions.

But what do the companies that pay for Dhammaloka's services think of this approach? For some of their managers increased awareness must bring the realization that they do not want to be doing their present job, and their 'new direction' will be to leave. Most of Dhammaloka's client firms do not see this as a problem. All sign an agreement before a course starts to the effect that an employee's decision to resign will be viewed as a favourable outcome. And this makes good sense: someone who does not want to do their job—even if they are not aware of the fact—is not likely to be effective.

Dhammaloka aims to help those attending his courses find out what they *really* want from life, and achieve a balance that offers fulfilment, but that still takes account of the rightful demands of their work and of other people. He also hopes to guide people towards a realistic assessment of their strengths and weaknesses, and to show how weak points can be strengthened, and strengths made to pay off. His courses often include short sessions of meditation or relaxation, as well as periods of reflection. They may also cover communication skills, group facilitation, team building, and techniques to improve the fruitfulness of meetings.

Dhammaloka's work no doubt improves the effectiveness of managers, and therefore of firms. But profit-seeking companies are not noted for their altruism—is it ethical to help them? Dhammaloka admits that some of the companies he works for may contribute to activities that are ethically unsound. He would not work for an armaments manufacturer. But the electricity supply company he *does* work for gives power to arms-makers and armies, as well as to schools and hospitals. Dhammaloka takes the view that all activities in a modern economy are so interlinked that he has no choice—the only way to be ethically whiter-than-white would be to become a hermit. Rather than cutting himself off entirely from mainstream society he prefers to work to increase the awareness of individuals, and so help them to make their own ethical decisions.

Dhammaloka believes that to make a living by helping others become more aware and more in control of themselves is Right Livelihood in the best sense. He is also convinced that many other people involved with the FWBO could be effective in his area of work. The most important qualifications include awareness of oneself and others, empathy, a willingness to listen and give time, and an ability to look beyond the problems to the positive side of people and situations. These are qualities that all Buddhists should be trying to develop, and Dhammaloka believes that his experience as a Buddhist is what underlies his success as a trainer.

SWEDISH RETREAT

Stockholm's FWBO group recently held a two-week retreat at Stenfors in the deep forests of Småland in the south of Sweden. A large wooden country house owned by Order member Aryavamsa welcomed the participants, who came from as far afield as the USA, Germany, Holland, and England, as well as from Sweden itself.

The retreat was led by Vajradaka, a meditation teacher normally resident at Vajraloka, the men's meditation centre in North Wales. Order members Rupachitta, Ratnabandhu, and Dhirananda helped out with meditation interviews and other tasks, while Ulrika Fricker—who had travelled from Norwich for the occasion—made sure that the practical side of the retreat ran smoothly.

Set in the absolute stillness of deep green pine forests, and with a pitch black lake near the house, Stenfors is close to being the ideal setting for a retreat. No disturbances from the outside world reached the participants, and the conditions were perfect for making progress in meditation practice. Excellent food and weather completed the picture, adding up to a summer retreat that certainly calls for repetition.

Swedish retreatants at Stenfors

Mr Athawale presents a plaque to the architect at the opening of the Ahmedabad hostel

INDIAN SUMMER

On 3 July Bahujan Hitay's tenth hostel for school-children was opened in Ahmedabad, in the western state of Gujerat. Such hostels allow children from ex-Untouchable families to attend schools where they are not the victims of poor home environments or of caste prejudice, and are a major feature of the work of the social welfare wing of TBMSG. So far most of Bahujan Hitay's work has been concentrated in the state of Maharashtra. This is the first purpose-built hostel to be opened in Gujerat—the state immediately to the north of Maharashtra—and its opening therefore represents an important extension of Bahujan Hitay's activities.

Chief guest at the opening was Ramdas Athawale, head of the Dalit Panthers—a militant wing of the Scheduled Caste movement—who is Minister of Social Welfare for Maharashtra. Mr Athawale spoke in glowing terms of TBMSG and Bahujan Hitay's activities in Maharashtra, and expressed his happiness to see these extended to the state of Gujerat. Also present at the opening was the Director of Social Welfare for Gujerat, who promised all possible government help for the hostel. Lokamitra directed the ceremonies, which were attended by a large crowd despite heavy rain—a rare event in Ahmedabad even in the wet season. An open-air event had been planned, but the unexpected downpour forced the function into the hostel premises, despite which the event was an unqualified success.

For two years Bahujan Hitay had been running a hostel in Ahmedabad in cramped rented premises, which had also been used to hold two kindergarten classes. The more spacious new building will allow the number of boys lodging at the hostel to be increased from forty to sixty, and will also allow the kindergarten work to be extended. The land for the hostel was sold to Bahujan Hitay at a very favourable price by a Scheduled Caste housing society, as a gesture of support for its activities. This year building work has commenced on two more Bahujan Hitay hostels at Dapoli and Sholapur.

In Dapodi a training course has been launched to help mitras and new Order members to be more effective in both social and Dharmic work. Fifteen people are participating in the course, all of whom are working in social projects in Poona or in the administration of Bahujan Hitay.

On 14 July, Dadasaheb Rupawate gave a talk at the Dapodi Mahavihara under the auspices of the Dr Ambedkar Jnanamandir, as part of a series entitled *Remembering Dr Ambedkar*. Despite illness Mr Rupawate discharged himself from hospital and travelled to Poona from Bombay for the occasion. The day after his lecture he answered questions arising from the talk before an invited audience of fifty. Mr Rupawate is a member of the Government of Maharashtra and Vice-President of the Asian Buddhist Congress. He has been trying to forge links between Buddhists of all shades in India, with some success. During his talk he spoke with obvious emotion of his experiences in accompanying Sangharakshita on a lecture tour of Ahmednagar District in 1960, travelling between towns and villages by train, bus, bullock cart, and on foot. 'No one could imagine that a foreigner, and a monk at that, would come to our homes, eat and live with us, we who were discarded by the rest of Indian society.'

Also under the auspices of the Dr Ambedkar Jnanamandir, a seminar was held this August on *The Significance of Dr Ambedkar's Writing on Buddhism*. Speakers were Vessant Moon, compiler and editor of *The Writings and Speeches of Dr Ambedkar*, being produced by the Government of Maharashtra, Bhagwan Das, a distinguished writer on Dr Ambedkar from Delhi, and Lokamitra. All three papers were much appreciated, and it is hoped that they will be published in the near future.

The boys' hostel, Ahmedabad

KARUNA FUNDRAISING

Fifteen Karuna Trust volunteers have been knocking on the public's doors this year in four separate fund-raising appeals. So far they have generated promises of £300,000 for some very worthy causes. They have also done a lot to help themselves.

Being part of a Karuna appeal is a great opportunity to take part in a short but intense period of team based 'Right Livelihood' working and community living. As well as knocking on people's doors in the evening, daytime activities include voice workshops, communication exercises, meditation, and study—guaranteeing a useful and interesting programme that enhances the evening's work.

Comments from fund-raisers attest to the fact that a Karuna appeal can be a valuable experience: 'an opportunity to get rid of self-inhibitions and fears'; 'an unusual experience of feeling very, very positive'; 'inexhaustible interest and curiosity in the people I meet'. Fund-raising is certainly a challenge, and this is part of the fun: 'like a war, waiting all day to go over the top'; 'like being on stage every evening'; 'like a big game'.

But fund-raising is not just about generating money or learning from the experience. Through their communication on the doorstep, fund-raisers help to raise the public awareness of Karuna, of the FWBO, and of Buddhism in general. By the end of this year fund-raisers will have come in contact with 25,000 people. This means 25,000 people will have heard the name Karuna. Many of these will have read the appeal booklet, and learnt of the plight of India's ex-'Untouchables', and of their conversion to Buddhism under the leadership of Dr Ambedkar. Some will have felt inspired and concerned enough to make a long term financial commitment to Karuna's work. Some will taken an interest in the fund-raiser's own connection with Buddhism, and perhaps been encouraged to visit their local Buddhist centre.

A fund-raising appeal is a unique opportunity—hard work, fun, a chance to make new friends, to work on yourself, to give to the Movement, and to help others to give. Some people come back again and again.

GROWING PAINS: IN BRIGHTON ...

Classes at the Brighton Buddhist Centre have become more and more popular over the last two years, and the Centre's facilities have begun to feel the strain. Expansion was the natural next step, and the logical way to expand seemed to be to move the resident men's community out of the Centre building to make more room.

As usual money was the stumbling block. Community rents were the Centre's main source of income. Who would pay the large mortgage? This problem was solved by the generosity of the wider FWBO sangha in Brighton. A scheme was set up to allow the town's Buddhists to make regular weekly payments towards the cost of the Centre: £4 a week was suggested, but some pay more, and some less. The response to the scheme has been excellent.

So on 23 August the men's community moved out of the Centre building into a very fine Victorian house just around the corner. This has meant a flurry of activity. Some decoration and building work was needed on the new house. But, more important, major work was needed on the Centre.

Internal structural walls had to be removed: this involved hiring a crane and removing part of the roof, so that large ceiling joists could be installed. Now that the demolition work is over the team are busy creating a new, larger shrine-room.

Much help has been forthcoming. The wider sangha has provided not only labour, but also money for a beautiful new set of curtains and a central heating system. So the Brighton Centre will not only provide bigger and more beautiful facilities this winter —it will also be warm!

... AND NORWICH

With ever-increasing numbers attending the Norwich Buddhist Centre, and the existing building often full to capacity, the Centre has now expanded into a new area of the next-door building.

The new rooms—in a building which already houses a men's community—were officially opened on the evening of Friday 21 September. Flowers, lights, and incense were taken from the Centre shrine and carried, with chanting of the Avalokiteshvara mantra, to be offered on a shrine in the new rooms, where Centre chairman Saddhaloka led the dedication ceremony. After the ceremony Bodhivajra, a musician involved with the FWBO Performing Arts Group, helped warm up the rooms by leading everyone in a lively and enjoyable session of singing rounds.

The following day colourful flags fluttered over the footpath leading to the Centre as its doors were opened to the public for the annual Open Day. This featured meditation, videos, discussion groups, as well as Yoga and massage demonstrations, and brought many complete newcomers into the Centre.

A full weekend culminated on Saturday evening when Sangharakshita read a selection of poems on friendship to a capacity audience. For some this was their first opportunity to see and hear the founder of the FWBO in the flesh, and the event was a fitting and auspicious climax to the celebrations marking the expansion of the Centre. All involved with FWBO Norwich were very grateful that Sangharakshita had been able to come to help launch the expanded Centre into a new era.

VAJRAKUTA: A DHARMA-STUDY COMMUNITY

Vajrakuta, North Wales

After several difficult years there are now signs that Vajrakuta in North Wales is at last becoming more firmly established as a men's study community. For some time the community members have been supporting themselves through outside work while they generate a reputation. A number of guests have made extended visits to study or to write, the library has been considerably extended, and facilities have been upgraded, so that the building is now comfortable and aesthetically pleasing, and can accommodate up to a dozen people on retreat.

But why does the FWBO need a men's study centre? There are excellent reasons. 'Right View' is fundamental to traditional Buddhist practice. But in our attempt to create a naturalized Western form of Buddhism, a clear and correct understanding of the Dharma is—if possible—even more important than in traditional schools.

There are so many different cultural approaches to the Dharma. We need to find—and practise—those that really work for modern Western people, in modern Western societies. But to be able to pick and distil what is relevant to us from the vast body of the Buddhist tradition we need a precise and wide understanding—we need to do our homework. And this task—the re-interpretation of the Buddha-Dharma for our time—is vital for the survival of Buddhism. The pressures of modern materialist society are destroying the cultures which preserve traditional forms of the Dharma. And Buddhism will never take deep root in the West unless it takes advantage of the particular psychology, myth, and mode of thought of Western people.

Unless we pay vigorous attention to studying the Buddhist tradition we will never establish the living Dharma in the West. But on the level of the individual Buddhist, Dharma study is also an important spiritual practice. Dharma study is not the same as scholarship or academic exploration. It is about transforming our views. At base, views are not so much rationally derived conclusions as complexes of emotional responses—*samskaras*—which express themselves in opinions, ideas, and reasoning. Our views constantly motivate us, whether we know it or not, and they either help or hinder our spiritual practice.

Dharma study is a way of finding out what our views really are—we are usually only dimly aware of them, if at all—and clarifying them in the light of the Dharma. This is an essential element in the creation of 'Right View', part of the threefold path of wisdom. Firstly we need to clarify, for ourselves, what the Buddha actually taught. Then we must reflect upon these teachings, over weeks, months, and even years, until we understand them thoroughly, with all their implications. Finally in deep *vipassana* meditation we can open ourselves to the whole truth of what we have previously understood intellectually, so that we are transformed, and experience the 'turning about in the deepest seat of consciousness'.

Sangharakshita has always strongly encouraged study as a spiritual practice. He has given many lectures and seminars with the clear aim of communicating principles for studying. He very much wants people to think for themselves, to read the traditional texts critically yet with an open mind, and to continually ask the question, 'Why did the Buddha teach this?'.

But despite this encouragement study events in the FWBO have tended to be less popular than other retreats. Perhaps people associate Dharma study with academic study—with school, with exams, with stress and boredom. But it is vital that we all realize that Dharma study is very different: that it is fundamental to our ability to go for Refuge to the Buddha's teaching, and essential for any serious practice of meditation. Dharma study is different because its aim is not knowledge, but insight.

Perhaps some of these problems now lie in the past. Certainly there has been a resurgence of interest in Dharma study, to which activities at Vajrakuta have perhaps contributed, by encouraging a new, more creative approach to study.

This approach has two aspects. Firstly it involves clarifying the connections between study and meditation. Secondly it involves the development of more effective study and teaching skills. With regard to the first, it is a great advantage that Vajraloka, the men's meditation centre, lies just a mile away, and that several of the Vajrakuta community have lived and taught at Vajraloka, and are well qualified to draw out the connections between the material under study and meditation practice. With regard to teaching skills, several Order members are interested in new approaches to learning, whether applied to the individual 'student' or to study group leaders. There has been much recent research in these areas, and the Vajrakuta community plans to experiment with new ideas in a series of creative Dharma study events for men to be held in the coming year.

SOVIETS VISIT VAJRALOKA

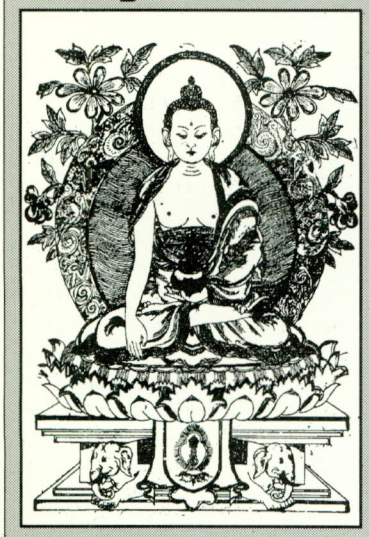
The Republic of Buryatria, which lies to the east of Lake Baikal and to the north of the high plateau of Mongolia, is in any practical sense the centre of Buddhism in the Soviet Union. Buryatria had a strong Buddhist culture until the time of Stalin's regime, when the Dharma in the Soviet Union was forcibly suppressed. Now, with liberalization, Buryatria is experiencing a surge of interest in Buddhism—as evidenced by the visit this summer of two representatives of the republic to Vajraloka and Vajrakuta, the FWBO's meditation and study centres is North Wales.

Irina Urbanaeva, an ecologist, and Sergei Gerasimovich, a USSR People's Deputy for Buryatria, visited the twin Centres as part of an official tour of Britain. They were accompanied by a translator and an official from the Welsh Office. Chittadhara and Vajradaka showed them round the grounds and answered their questions about the FWBO, general Buddhist history, and related topics. Ms Urbanaeva was clearly moved by the peace of Vajraloka and its surroundings, and exclaimed, 'If I had the opportunity, I would come hear to live.'

In conversation Mr Gerasimovich said he thought that religion and ecological issues were closely linked. He also said that while there was great interest in in Buddhism in Buryatria, the younger people were especially interested in a modern type of Buddhism, such as exists in the West—for which reason both he and Ms Urbanaeva found their visit to Vajraloka and Vajrakuta extremely stimulating. Before leaving they presented the retreat centre with a Russian calendar depicting Palden Lhamo, or Shridevi.

Hopefully there will be many more such opportunities for contact with Buddhists in the Soviet Union in years to come.

Hymalayan Buddhist Posters



Our Hymalayan Buddhist Posters are made in Nepal with paper made from the Daphnea plant. This shrub grows in the Hymalayas at altitudes over 7,000 feet.

When the Daphnea is about 7-10 years old the bark is stripped and used to produce paper. It then regenerates and can be harvested again the following year.

The Daphnea needs the shade of a forest canopy. This gives the whole forest an economic value and helps ensure its survival.

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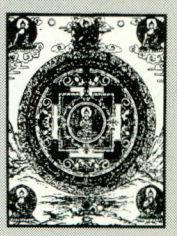
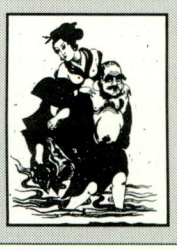
Chris Evans, a trained forester, is helping the Nepalese to develop permaculture methods. These aim to develop permanent, sustainable agricultural and related living systems. Chris has been instumental in setting up the export of this range of posters to us.





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Brighton Buddhist Centre, 15 Park Crescent Place, Brighton, Sussex, BN2 3HF. Tel: 0273 698420

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Norwich Buddhist Centre, 41a All Saints Green, Norwich, NR1 3LY. Tel: 0603 627034

West London Buddhist Centre, 7 Colville Houses, London W11 1JB. Tel: 071-727 9382

Padmaloka Retreat Centre, Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norwich, NR14 7AL. Tel: 05088 8112

Rivendell Retreat Centre, Chillies Lane, High Hurstwood, Nr Uckfield, Sussex, TN22 4AA. Tel: 01-688 8624

Taraloka Women's Retreat Centre, Cornhill Farm, Bettisfield, Nr Whitchurch, Shropshire, SY13 2LV. Tel: 094875 646

Water Hall Retreat Centre, Great Ashfield, Bury St.Edmunds, Suffolk, IP31 3HP. Tel: 0359 42130

Vajraloka Meditation Centre, Tyn-y-Ddol, Trerddol, Nr Corwen, Clwyd, LL21 0EN. Tel: 0490-81 406

Guhyaloka Retreat Centre (Spain), c/o Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norwich, NR14 7AL. Tel: 050-88 8112

The Office of the Western Buddhist Order, Padmaloka, Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norwich, NR14 7AL. Tel: 05088 310

Karuna Trust, 186 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 1UE. Tel: 0865 728794

Dharmachakra Tapes, P.O. Box 50, Cambridge, CB1 3BG

FWBO Germany, Postfach 110263, 4300 Essen 11, W. Germany. Tel: 0201 668299

Helsingin Buddhalainen Keskus, PL 288, SF-00121, Helsinki 12, Finland

FWBO Netherlands, P.O. Box 1559, 3500 BN Utrecht, Netherlands

Västerländska Buddhistordens Vänner, Södermannagatan 58, S-116 65 Stockholm, Sweden. Tel: 08 418849

TBMSG Ahmedabad, Triyana Vardhana Vihara, Vijayanagar Society, Kankaria Road, Ahmedabad 380002, India. Tel: 0272 50580

TBMSG Aurangabad, Bhim Nagar, Bhausingpura, Aurangabad 431001, India

Bhaja Retreat Centre, c/o Dhammachakra Pravartan Mahavihar, Raja Harishchandra Road, Dapodi, Poona 411012, India

TBMSG Bombay, 25 Bhimprerna, Tapodhan Nagar, Bandra (E), Bombay 400051, India. Tel: 022 6441156

TBMSG Pimpri, Maitreya Vihar, Gautam Nagar, Pimpri, Poona 411018, India

TBMSG Poona, Dhammachakra Pravartan Mahavihar, Raja Harishchandra Road, Dapodi, Poona 411012, India. Tel: 0212 58403

TBMSG Ulhasnagar, Block A, 410/819 Subhash Hill, Ulhasnagar, Thane, 421004, India

Bahujan Hitay, Dhammachakra Pravartan Mahavihar, Raja Harishchandra Road, Dapodi, Poona 411012, India. Tel: 0212 58403

TBMSG Wardha, Bhim Nagar, Wardha 442001, India. Tel: 07152 2178

FWBO Malaysia, c/o Dharmacharini Jayapushpa, 2 Jalan Tan Jit Seng, Hillside, Tanjong Bungah, 11200 Penang, Malaysia

TBMSS Sri Lanka, 10 Somananda Road, Nikepe, Dehiwala, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Auckland Buddhist Centre, P.O. Box 68-453, Newton, Auckland, New Zealand. Tel: 09 789320/892412

Wellington Buddhist Centre, P.O. Box 12-311, Wellington North, New Zealand. Tel: 04 787940

Melbourne Buddhist Centre, 34 Bishop Street, Brunswick, Victoria 3056, Australia

Sydney Buddhist Centre, 806 George Street, Sydney, Australia

Aryaloka Retreat Centre, Heartwood Circle, Newmarket, New Hampshire 03857, U.S.A. Tel: 603-659 5456

FWBO Seattle, 2410 E. Interlaken Blvd., Seattle, WA 98112, USA

Kathmandu Buddhist Centre (October–April), PO Box 4429, Hotel Asia, Thamel, Kathmandu, Nepal

Activities are also conducted in many other towns. Please contact your nearest centre for details.