

# GOLDEN DRUM

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THE PRACTICE OF LOVING KINDNESS



# GOLDEN DRUM

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The cover shows the Bodhisattva Tara, the embodiment of compassion.



# THE PRACTICE OF LOVING KINDNESS

Anyone who has attended even a few meditation classes at an FWBO centre will have encountered the Mindfulness of Breathing and the Metta Bhavana. These are the two practices we teach to all newcomers. Although their 'technique' aspects are very easy to learn, they are—perhaps surprisingly—profound, and powerful enough to take us far beyond the nursery slopes of the spiritual life. As *samatha* practices, they help to calm, clarify, and harmonize the various forces and energies of the ordinary, everyday mind, enriching and purifying it in the process. The concentration and emotional openness they provide are essential to anyone hoping to experience, and absorb, the kind of insight (*vipassana*) that can transform us from our depths to our heights, and ultimately liberate us.

Of the two, the Mindfulness of Breathing is by the far the most straightforward. In it we use the ordinary process of breathing as a focus for a steadily deepening level of concentration and psychic integration. Although far more subtle and challenging than a bare outline of the technique might suggest, it is relatively easy to connect with. It also has the advantage of affording immediate 'results'. If we make an effort, then even after twenty minutes we will inevitably feel at least a little calmer, more concentrated, and more awake.

The Metta Bhavana is not so straightforward. It is an exercise in which we try to transform our emotional state—not just our present mood and not just for a few minutes or hours, but at a very deep level, and for a long time. The Pali word *metta*—for which there is no ideal translation—means something like loving-kindness. The word *bhavana* suggests 'development', 'cultivation', even 'bringing into existence'. So during the Metta Bhavana practice we try to encourage and strengthen feelings of universal loving-kindness. Although we may well experience some fruits of our efforts during the practice itself, the real point is to make a definite, if gradual, impact on our basic emotional nature. For this reason, the immediate results we achieve are perhaps less important or relevant than they are in the case of the Mindfulness of Breathing.

To many people, the idea of transforming or developing emotions may seem rather strange. Surely emotions arise naturally, in response to certain events and circumstances. We find some money, for example, and we feel happy; we lose it and we feel sad. Somebody is kind to us, so we like them; they say something hurtful, and we dislike them. And so on. Isn't it as simple as that?

This may be the way things seem to work most of the time, but if we accept this level of emotional experience as the inevitable rule, then we are virtually dismissing our emotions as chemical reactions, muscular spasms triggered by external

stimuli. This is a rather drab and materialistic view. It also happens to be very un-Buddhistic. Buddhism tells us that we can take responsibility for ourselves; our experience—and our destiny—is in our own hands. This applies to our thoughts, our words and deeds, and it applies just as much to our emotions.

Enlightenment is traditionally portrayed as consisting of the perfect unfoldment of wisdom and compassion. If wisdom is something that can and must be developed as we progress from the unenlightened to the Enlightened state, then surely it must also be possible, and necessary, to develop the emotions too. This is why Buddhism, despite its early reputation in the West for cool rationalism, involves so much devotional practice, why it places such a high value on friendship, and why it has such a rich mythic dimension. This too is why the conscious development of emotions such as loving-kindness (*metta*), sympathetic joy (*mudita*), compassion (*karuna*), and equanimity (*upekkha*) is so central to Buddhist practice in all branches of the tradition.

*Metta*, *mudita*, *karuna* and *upekkha* are known collectively as the *Brahma Viharas*, or 'sublime abodes'. This designation suggests that one whose nature is grounded in these emotions is effectively living like a god in heaven. He or she may still be far from Buddhahood, but by weakening the bonds of negative emotions such as greed, hatred, jealousy, and resentment, and by enjoying an underlying state of emotional richness, the upsets and difficulties of everyday life, as well as the trials of spiritual practice, become occasions for an energetic and unfailingly creative response. Of the four *brahma viharas*, the most important is *metta*; indeed, *mudita*, *karuna*, and *upekkha* are really 'specialized' manifestations of *metta* called forth in response to the living beings that we encounter.

The practice itself can be described very quickly and easily. It is divided into five stages, to each which we devote between five and ten minutes. Calling to mind first ourselves, then a close friend, then a 'neutral' person, and then an 'enemy', we try to contact and strengthen a feeling of intense but objective friendliness, one that is not dependent on our subjective and passing reactions. In the fifth stage we direct that feeling towards all four people simultaneously, without preference or prejudice, before encouraging it to expand and extend outwards towards all beings whatsoever, wherever they may be.

In the following articles five people will share some of the experiences and insights they have gained during years of Metta Bhavana practice. I hope their words will be of benefit not only to those who are practising Metta Bhavana, but to all who care about the quality of their emotional life.

Nagabodhi



In his commentary on the Metta Bhavana meditation practice, Buddhagosha tells the story of four monks who are walking through a forest one day when they are captured by bandits. 'Give us a monk!' demands the bandit chief, who wants a sacrificial victim. Which one is the senior monk to choose? Offering himself in preference to the others, Buddhagosha insists, is no way out of the dilemma. He uses the story to illustrate his point that the meditator should develop loving kindness just as much for himself as for the other three people he has chosen: friend, neutral person, and enemy. There should not be the slightest hint of a bias in favour of one rather than the others. If the monk thinks 'Let them take me but not these three,' he has not, as Buddhagosha puts it, broken down the barriers; he lacks *metta* towards his own self.

Developing *metta* towards oneself is the first stage of the practice as it has come down to us through the centuries. When I sit down to meditate I do not start by developing *metta* for my friend or the person next door. I start with myself. This is not because self is any more important than others. It points rather to something unfortunately common amongst us—the tendency to undervalue ourselves. Working against this, one puts oneself in the first stage and loving kindness for oneself becomes the foundation of genuine altruism. *Metta* for others flows out of self-*metta*. The aspiring Bodhisattva, who would devote all his energies to the growth and development of others, can only do so if he first feels

# PUTTING ONESELF FIRST

*Just as charity begins at home, so the Metta Bhavana begins with an attempt to develop love for ourselves. Abhaya examines the significance of this important stage.*

well disposed towards himself.

This shining of the light of goodwill on oneself is something that many find curious if not difficult when they first try the meditation. It goes against the bias of entrenched habit. I know from my own experience of introducing the meditation to others that the very idea of developing loving kindness towards oneself can come as a shock to the aspiring meditator. I have seen eyebrows raised at the very suggestion that one could possibly begin a serious religious practice by putting oneself before others. Surely it is a rather selfish thing to do! The Buddha himself challenges such doubts when he says, in the *Udana*:

*I visited all quarters with my mind,  
Nor found I any dearer than myself,  
Self is likewise to every other dear;  
Who loves himself will never harm another.*

It need hardly be said that what the Buddha means here is a very healthy self regard, a caring for oneself as no less or

## Self-portrait: Rembrandt

no more dear than any other living being. It is in no sense a putting of oneself first at the expense of others, and has nothing at all to do with what is commonly understood as selfishness or narcissistic obsession.

It is wonderful to hear the Enlightened One encouraging us so unequivocally to love ourselves. What better spur to get on with the Metta Bhavana? Yet, when one actually sits down to meditate, this first stage can be daunting. Faced at the start either with the opposite of love for self or, apparently, nothing at all, even seasoned meditators are tempted to do the mindfulness of breathing instead! Challenging though it is to keep the mind on the breathing, one's breath seems less elusive than an emotion.

For that is what *metta* essentially is: an emotion. It is not 'thinking about myself' as beginners sometimes put it. *Metta* is a very potent positive emotion, 'mightily powerful' as Buddhagosha calls it. It is so







powerful that the words at our disposal to translate it, such as 'friendliness', 'loving kindness', and 'goodwill' sound weak and inadequate. *Metta* is the first of the Sublime Abodes; if one succeeds in contacting and developing *metta*, one 'abides' or dwells in a god-like condition, a sublime state of being. *Metta* is frequently evoked in poetic terms. It is 'incandescent'; it 'shines, it glows, it blazes forth'. But here I sit, poised on my cushion, ready to begin, yet feeling far from sublime! How can I develop such an exalted state of being if I lack even a spark of it for myself? Or if there is a spark, how do I fan the flame?

The traditional method is gently to coax oneself into a feeling of well-being by repeating the wish: 'May I be well; may I be happy'. At first this might feel a bit wooden, and if there is no immediate response it is easy to slide into mechanical repetition. We have to give ourselves the chance to mean it by pausing

and letting the aspiration really sink in. **As we blow on the ashes, sooner or later the hard block of resistance starts to melt and our emotional state becomes more fluid.**

Another method of contacting goodwill towards oneself is through association. By recalling an occasion in the past, either recent or distant, when we were very well and happy, completely at ease with ourselves, we can re-contact the feeling itself in the present moment. Taking care not to be waylaid into discursive thinking about the past, we simply dwell on the memory and focus on the feeling we then had.

No doubt there are as many ways of kindling self-*metta* as there are individuals. If the traditional suggestion doesn't seem to work, we can experiment. Some people prefer a more visual approach. One might, for instance, visualize a bright ball of light at the heart centre which glows and steadily expands,

or a deep red lotus flower radiating its warmth in all directions.

We should always be able to find at least one positive element in our mental state when we sit down to meditate. It could be something very down to earth such as a feeling of satisfaction that a job has gone well or the physical sensation of sitting in a relaxed and easy posture. It may not be immediately evident because often, when we first sit to meditate we are, for one reason or another, a bit out of touch with ourselves. It is worth spending the first few minutes contacting that positive factor; we can then use it as a basis from which to develop self-*metta*.

It has to be admitted that sometimes whatever we try does not seem to work and we feel stuck with either the negative emotion we started with or a total lack of feeling. It is important to acknowledge this. Perhaps in such a situation the best one can do is just to sit quietly for a while and not pretend that things are otherwise. It may be that this relaxing of all effort is just what was needed and our mental state begins to change for the better.

*Metta* is the antidote to the poison of hatred or ill will. We may not go so far as to hate ourselves; our difficulty could be a lack of self confidence, what the self help books now pouring on to the market call 'poor self view' or 'negative self image'. Whatever we call it, its roots go deep and the process of transformation is not going to be experienced in a single session. The effects of working in the first stage are cumulative. We may not notice any dramatic change in the fifty minutes we are meditating but most people feel some of the benefits of regular practice within a relatively short time, certainly in weeks if not days.

Sometimes the effects are much more immediate. In a matter of minutes we can move out of the tight hole we have dug for ourselves—either of dullness or resentment, into a bright space of expansive goodwill. As we begin, in the first stage of our *metta* practice, to break up the hard crust of our negative self view, we gain access to deep reserves of positive emotion.

In the process, what was at first just an intellectual understanding gradually becomes a matter of living experience. We see that the source of our own well-being is deep within us, an inexhaustible treasure store to which the first stage of the *metta* is a key. It comes as a profound relief to realize that true contentment is not something that anyone else can take away, that we do not depend for our well-being and contentment on anyone or anything outside ourselves.

When we have our first glimpse of, even our first dip in the ocean of, *metta*, the cause of all malice and ill-will is removed, or at least temporarily suspended. We see that the refreshing waters are for others just as much as for ourselves and we begin genuinely to want to draw others in. In this way the *metta* we have generated begins, quite spontaneously, to overflow into the second stage of the practice.



# OPENING THE FLOODGATES

*We rarely allow ourselves to feel the full force of our positive emotions.  
According to Vidyashri, this is the challenge of the second stage.*



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In the second stage of the Metta Bhavana practice we contact and develop feelings of loving-kindness towards a good friend. Traditional guide-lines suggest that we choose someone who is alive, someone within a ten to fifteen year age-range of ourselves, and someone to whom we are not sexually attracted. These guide-lines allow for a relatively straightforward flow of emotion in the practice. It is not that any of these other relationships are wrong in themselves, but it is only realistic to acknowledge that our feelings and responses within them may be more complex, involving as they often do many of our more personal needs and desires.

Seeing our friend before us in our mind's eye as clearly and vividly as possible, we *feel* their presence and become aware of our response to them. The idea is not in any way to force or impose friendly, 'mettafull' feelings on ourselves, or to merely to 'think' them—but to allow our *actual* positive feelings for the person to surface. At first, these feelings may not be very strong—they may be little more than a trickle of well-wishing and warmth. But we focus on that trickle, stay with it, allow ourselves to feel it more strongly, trying to follow it back towards its source.

Often our minds are too scattered to rest for long on anything. This makes it impossible for us to contact the full extent of our feelings in response to things and people. But here we give ourselves the time and space to contact at least a stirring of the warmth that we feel. Gently we focus on that feeling, dwell on it, allowing ourselves to feel it more strongly and fully, allowing it to expand

and deepen.

We can help this process along by using memories. For instance, we can recollect a time when we were with our friend and felt filled with appreciation and good feelings for them, a time when they were really happy, fulfilled, and expansive. Or we can imagine them in a situation in which we know that they would feel happy and free from suffering. Perhaps we see them sitting on an expanse of golden sand with a sparkling blue sea lapping peacefully along the shore and a warm golden sun shining down on them, or in a lush garden surrounded by trees, flowers, and fragrant scents.

It is best to keep such fantasies fairly simple so that we don't find ourselves wandering off and getting lost in them. The important thing is that we should contact genuine feelings of well-wishing and allow them to deepen and expand until, ideally, our whole consciousness and being become saturated with the strength of our *metta*. Bearing this in mind we can be spontaneous and imaginative in our approach. Some people find that evoking colours can help focus and deepen their positive feelings. I often find myself giving my friend a beautiful deep red rose which exudes a fragrance that fills their whole being, permeating them with contentment and happiness.

As in other stages, words or phrases can be a good aid to focusing and generating feelings—so long as the words are *felt* and not just repeated mechanically: 'May you be truly well and happy; may you be free from suffering; may you experience happiness and its causes.'





Sometimes we simply need to remain aware of our friend clearly 'before us', staying with the positive feelings of well-wishing, appreciation, and encouragement that arise within us in response to them. Perhaps, as we become more familiar and experienced with the practice, this stage can be as simple as that. We just allow ourselves to see more and more deeply and fully into our friend, experiencing the warmth, care, openness, and love that are part of this 'seeing'.

In this stage of the practice we are trying to contact and involve whatever positive emotions and energies are already present in us. We are 'opening the flood-gates' to our free-flowing positive emotion, *allowing* it to flow by bringing it more into consciousness. For many this is the easiest stage in the practice, for the door to our *metta* is already partially open. (We can then bring these feelings into the other stages of the practice, and eventually feel as strongly for others as we do for our good friend.) We do not focus on what our friend can do or give to *us*, but on what we feel for *them*, in themselves.

Besides being an important stage in the process of contacting and generating an attitude of *metta* towards all sentient beings, this stage helps us to acknowledge more fully the positive feelings we *do* have for our friends and to strengthen them, thus helping us to develop our friendships. In my own practice I have sometimes suddenly felt the full force of my positive feelings for someone—and have thus realized that I am usually conscious of only a fraction of them. It is as if many of us almost fear the strength of our feelings. But in this

second stage we have the opportunity to expand the boundaries of our heart, to experience the full force of our positive emotion.

Of course it is not enough just to try to develop an *attitude of metta* towards all sentient beings. We also need to *act*, to live this *metta* out in the course of our interactions and relationships. It is only then that we will really begin to transform ourselves and the world. And although we can interact in a friendly way with a limitless number of people, it is only with a few that we can develop a close friendship and share ourselves and our lives in a more detailed and intimate way.

Sadly it seems that fulfilling friendships play little or no part in many people's lives in the West today, perhaps less than in any previous generation. Psychologists and counsellors are discovering that we need friendships to ensure a healthy mental state. Buddhism would go even further than this. According to Buddhism, while friendships are certainly necessary for our general health and happiness, they are, just as much as our meditation practice, a means of making progress in our spiritual development.

So why do we struggle so with our friendships—to maintain them over long periods of time, or even to create them? The truth is that many of us find it painfully difficult to trust others and hence, though longing for intimacy, we fear the exposure that intimacy involves. Thus we withhold our commitment to the task of building up a friendship. So often too we have a vested interest in who and what someone is and does; we desire them to be what *we* want them to be, to

compensate for, or to complement, what we are. Or we identify with and relate through roles—at work, at home, even at the Buddhist Centre. At times we feel superior, at others inferior. In short, we do not feel secure, whole, or content in ourselves. Thus our security and even identity can become entangled with and dependent on those around us, coloured by our deep biases of craving or aversion.

But present too in our relationships with others is usually a thread of genuine care and even love which may be more or less present at different times. It is this element that is the real basis of a friendship; this is the soil from which a friendship can grow and flourish. The more we can develop and cultivate this field of *metta* within us, both inside and outside our practice of the Metta Bhavana, the more happiness and benefit both we and our friend will experience in each other's company. Letting go of our expectations we can learn to feel for and empathize with our friend in their own right. We can gradually come to see them more and more as they truly are. Thus, as the intensity of our *metta* develops, so too does our awareness and understanding of our friend.

It is only through developing *metta* that we can build up our capacity to trust—to trust both ourselves and others. It is, of course, much easier to develop trust in another if they are also consciously attempting to relate on a basis of *metta*. With this 'security', we can gradually begin to trust each other's overall intentions, even if we still act selfishly at times. Gradually a sense of commitment and fidelity will arise which is integral to the health—or continuation—of any friendship. Friendships often suffer from a discontinuity not only of physical contact but also of awareness: out of sight, our friend can be 'out of mind'. This will result in a rather superficial or fragmented relationship. Regularly focusing on our friends during the Metta Bhavana practice will help us maintain a continuity of awareness of our friend in our heart and consciousness, keeping the channels of communication alive and open through the days, weeks, and even years when we are physically apart.

These days, many people suffer from intense loneliness. They feel a sense of isolation and separateness from the millions of people all around them. To have even a few good close friends can make a great difference. To connect deeply and openly with a few other people will help us to feel connected to the whole world. For it is our own minds and hearts that are shut off. As we begin to love and care for another as for ourself, gradually the sharp distinction between our 'self' and the 'other' will soften, leaving us to feel the fundamental non-difference between ourselves and our friend—which eventually we can experience between ourselves and all other beings.



# BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS OF PREJUDICE

*The 'neutral person' is someone for whom we have no particular feelings at all. This is why the third stage is so crucial. Dhammadinna explains ...*

Introducing a 'neutral' person into the Metta Bhavana brings about a crucial transition in the practice. It marks the beginning of the development of loving-kindness in its fullest sense.

*Metta*, in contrast with *pema* or attachment, has an unconditional, universal dimension to it. Most of us can care for ourselves and for our close family and friends. We may therefore find it comparatively easy to cultivate feelings of warmth and friendliness in the first and second stages of the practice. However, to develop feelings of genuine well-wishing towards a neutral person is obviously much more of a challenge. Here, we are attempting to move from disinterest at best—and boredom at worst—to warmth and concern for people we do not know and in whom we have no vested interest.

During this stage of the practice we may lose our momentum because we have such weak feelings as our basis. We have less emotional intensity to draw upon and are therefore more prone to distraction. As a result the mental image of the neutral person may soon fade.

We can work consciously with this tendency, but we also need to stimulate our interest, not only in the neutral person, but in the significance of this stage as a whole. We can do this by reflecting on some of the underlying attitudes which are challenged in this stage. Why are we uncaring for people just because we do not know them? Perhaps we take it for granted that there is no need to really care about such people. But, on reflection, we may turn the question around and wonder why *not* care for those we do not know?

Surely, we are only emotionally neutral towards some people because we prefer to remain within fixed boundaries, within the known

and the safe. To be unable to extend *metta* towards those we do not know implies not only a lack of interest, but also a failure to understand our connectedness with other people. It may also suggest that we are lazy and complacent about our emotional involvements.

However, before returning to ways of working with these underlying attitudes, we need to explore more fully who exactly these 'neutral' people are.

A neutral person can be anyone we do not know or have any feeling for. These are people we pass in the street or while travelling out and about. There are some who cross our path more regularly; we may see them at work, or travel with them regularly, without developing any particular feelings towards them. They may be local shopkeepers, the postman, or our neighbours. Then again, we may feel neutral towards people we meet very often. We may even find ourselves living and working with people towards whom, we must admit, we feel more or less neutral.

In our crowded society we are regularly brought into close proximity with strangers. In such circumstances our attitude can be to experience others as at least something of a nuisance. Paradoxically, it is often easier to feel emotionally caring towards the strangers we see—especially if they are suffering—on our television sets or in our newspapers than towards those we encounter every day. These feelings may be genuinely compassionate or they may provide an outlet for an emotion which is closer to sentimentality or pity. Again, we need to distinguish *metta* or loving kindness from compassion. Compassion is a response to the suffering of others and grows from a basis of loving kindness. Feeling *metta* towards the many neutral strangers in our lives involves systematically

cultivating feelings of friendliness on a day to day level towards people we come into actual contact with.

In the practice itself we therefore choose someone who crosses our path regularly but towards whom we have no particularly strong feelings. It definitely helps if we can picture that person in our mind's eye and get at least a sense of them.

If we reflect upon our relationship with such a neutral person, we may come to see that our lack of feeling is actually a reflection of our own emotional limitations and prejudices rather than a meaningful statement about their character. Only our own emotional laziness prevents us from fully experiencing and engaging with them. If we explore these limitations we may find them expressed in such thoughts as, 'Why should I like this person? They have done nothing for me! There is nothing in it for me!' Thus we discover that—on a gross or subtle level—we are really only interested in being involved with people who are going to give us something in return. This is why cultivating *metta* towards a neutral person works against selfishness and craving and begins to open our heart towards others simply in response to who they are.

These reflections on our basic attitudes and limitations will involve thinking quite deeply about the nature of *metta* and our purpose in engaging in the practice as a whole. Although *metta* may sometimes flow quite easily, giving us a pleasant feeling within the practice itself, in the longer term we are working towards transforming our entire emotional nature, from one based on the giving of conditional love to one rooted in unconditional love.

The expression of loving kindness is an aspect of the emotional nature of true individuality. A true individual cares for others on

the basis of a perceived common humanity. It is through the development of *metta* that we can emancipate ourselves from the group, group conditioning, and group identification. Then the stranger becomes our brother or sister; the neutral person becomes our friend. We would be prepared to stand by them even if everyone else we know retreated behind the barriers of kith and kin, nation and race. Perhaps we can now begin to see the significance of this stage of the practice. Such reflections may even give us a glimpse of insight, a realization, however faint, that all life is interconnected, and that the subject-object, self-other dichotomy can be transcended.

Of course, we also need to find ways of working in the practice itself. We have seen that we can easily lose our momentum and fall prey to distraction during this stage. To begin with, then, it will help us if we remember in detail the steps leading towards the cultivation of *metta* in any stage. First of all we need to be in touch with positive feelings towards ourself. Then we can introduce a mental impression of the neutral person. Next we acknowledge our present experience of them. We may discover for example—since we are rarely absolutely neutral about anything—whether we tend towards very weak attraction or repulsion. Then we begin to cultivate positive feelings towards the person, and allow those feelings to develop. If we become distracted at any point we need to return to the first step, becoming aware of ourself and then recontacting the image and cultivating *metta* for the neutral person.

Because we set out with little interest in the neutral person, we must find ways of engaging our interest and emotionality. So we can perhaps reflect that this person is another human being with joys and sorrows of their own. We may find our emotions are more stimulated if we give our imagination free rein. Perhaps we can imagine the person—who for us is just a face on the train—at home, with their family, actually living out their life. We can allow this imaginative fantasy to unfold and take on a life of its own





while keeping the mental image of the person in mind.

Because of our disinterest we will probably see the person rather one-dimensionally, more like a cardboard cut-out than a real

person. Our imagination allows us to flesh the person out, creating more dimensions to their life that we can emotionally engage with. Imagination itself is a creative, non-utilitarian faculty; through

it we can change an essentially utilitarian perception of, say, the local shop assistant who is fulfilling a role for us, so that they become alive and real for us.

According to Gampopa's

*Jewel Ornament of Liberation* another means of developing *metta* is the contemplation of benefits received. This suggests that *metta* grows from a feeling of genuine gratitude. If our relationship with the neutral person is essentially utilitarian—perhaps they do sell us vegetables every day—we can reflect that, without vegetables, we would not be able to sustain life. Thus we can feel gratitude towards the person, as well as towards a chain of people who help to put food on our plates. Such reflections may help us to cultivate feelings of *metta* at the beginning of the practice or in the third stage itself.

Obviously we can also cultivate loving kindness, awareness of others, and open communication, in everyday life. We can *choose* to interact more positively with those we meet. Even taking and showing a little interest in the people we meet in passing can make a difference to our lives—and theirs. Rather than being bored on the train or the bus we can at least take note of our fellow travellers and be open to them as other human beings. We can develop an imaginative involvement in their lives which opens the channels for feelings of warmth and well-wishing to flow through. We may also find that the people we put into our neutral stage become more interested in us! Deeper contact, even friendship, may develop just by virtue of our having become more emotionally open to someone in the *metta* practice.

Developing *metta* towards people we feel neutral about can have both subtle and far-reaching effects. We may find our life and communication in general more emotionally satisfying. We may make new friends. We are also tackling some deep underlying attitudes of selfishness and self-concern which block our growth and development. Put more positively, by working in this stage we begin to experience the dissolution of the barriers that we erect between ourselves and others. Our hearts open and we begin to experience that free flow of unconditional love which enables us to feel happy in ourselves and responsive to all we meet.





# THE ALCHEMY OF EMOTION

*To love one's enemy goes against nature—our unenlightened nature. Chris Pauling introduces the transmuting effect of the fourth stage.*

**T**he fourth stage of the Metta Bhavana could be likened to an alchemical experiment: two incompatible substances are forced together in a closed vessel, until eventually they unite to form a new compound, brighter and more precious than either. One of the ingredients—already bright and precious in its own right, but perhaps still soft and fragile—is the *metta* we have built up in the earlier stages of the practice. The other—dark, explosive, and as hostile to the first as hot oil to water—is our anger or ill-will. The closed vessel is our heart.

For the reaction to work we must start with the right ingredients. We need a strong current of *metta* carried over from

the first three stages. We also need a genuine source of ill-will—so we should be honest, and choose somebody we have real feelings about. But at the same time we must beware: anger is *very* explosive. If we choose someone we are still furious with, our ill-will may overwhelm us—the vessel may be blown to pieces. A sense of balance is needed.

We also need to supply the right conditions—we need to keep the ingredients together under pressure in our awareness. But keeping our attention on two quite different emotions can be difficult. Again it requires balance.

Sometimes the balance slips too far one way—our *metta* deserts us, and we become lost in ill-will. When this happens the best thing is to forget the 'enemy' for a while, and go back to an earlier stage of the practice to re-contact the warmth in our heart.

Sometimes the balance slips in the other direction—we gloss over our real feelings for our 'enemy', losing ourselves in a hazy, impersonal glow of pleasant emotions. Then we need to come down from our cloud, and bring the real-life person back to mind as clearly as possible.

*Metta* tends to transform the baser





personal point of view. This glimpse is dim and fleeting, but still powerful—under its influence our ill-will becomes lighter, more transparent, and less hostile to the *metta* in our heart. Then gradually, miraculously, the two begin to fuse. And in a flash the magic happens. When the smoke clears the dross has disappeared, and we are left with a jewel. Our love has combined with the energy of our anger. Our goodwill has been tempered by the realities of the world, and is fit to survive the rough and tumble of life in the human realm.

So far I have been talking about the fourth stage at its best and most potent. But it would be wrong to expect it to be like this always, or even often. For those of us who are habitually troubled by ill-will this part of the practice helps us to chip gradually away at our emotional habits. Many of the benefits come in unglamorous ways: from aspects of the practice that at first sight seem unimportant; from making the effort and taking the time to think about our feelings and relationships; and from trying to take the lessons we learn out into our everyday life.

Before we even start the meditation we have to choose our 'enemy'—and this in itself is a useful part of the practice. Many newcomers to the Metta Bhavana find it difficult to think of anyone to cast in this role. By contrast, most people who have practised for some time have many more candidates jostling for a place in their fourth stage than they had when they started.

These meditators have not become worse-tempered. But they have become more aware of their unspoken antagonism, anger, and resentment. This is partly because the regular practice of calling an 'enemy' to mind has helped them confront their comfortable assumptions about themselves and their relationships, and so bring their real feelings up into the light.

Having chosen someone to work with in our meditation, it is worth giving some thought to the nature of our feelings for this person, and to the reasons we feel as we do. At least three different types of 'enemy' make an appearance in our fourth stage.

Some are people who just seem to irritate us. They may not do or say anything against us, but their very presence seems to jar. In my own experience, whenever I have taken this sort of dislike to someone it has been because they have characteristics that I share, but have not acknowledged in myself. This is a common experience, and for this reason it is usually productive to honestly consider what it is about the other person that we dislike, and whether we might not sometimes behave—or want to behave—in exactly the same way. We can learn a lot about ourselves from thinking about our enemies.

The second class of people who belong in our fourth stage are those for whom we harbour lingering anger or resentment because of unfinished emotional business. Often these are people we are *supposed* to be close to—we must beware that we don't dismiss people from consideration as 'enemies' because we *should* like, respect, or even love them. Our closest relationships are often the most fertile breeding grounds for ill-will.

In such cases it is not enough to feel a few moments of warmth towards the person concerned, and leave it at that. This stage of the practice should be just one aspect of a constant process of uncovering and healing the rifts that cut us off from other people. The few minutes we spend each day in meditation can alert us to the fact that a rift exists, and give us the goodwill and positivity to do something creative to mend it. But the hard work starts when we leave our cushion.

This work consists in healing the wounds in our friendships by means of honest communication. What usually stands in the way of this healing is fear, masquerading as reserve and politeness. Overcoming our fear takes courage—including the courage needed to express our anger as skilfully as we know how. In the words of William Blake:

*I was angry with my friend:*

*I told my wrath, my wrath did end.*

*I was angry with my foe:*

*I told it not, my wrath did grow.*

One of the effects of this stage of the practice should be that we never allow our wrath to grow.

The last and least common inhabitants of our fourth stage are our true enemies: people who oppose our goals, or whose goals we oppose: people with whom we are in genuine conflict. Even when we have sorted out all our psychological quirks and communication difficulties, when we have extended the hand of friendship to all who will take it, a hard core of such antagonists may remain. Conflict is a feature of life—or at least of action—in the human realm.

Our usual response to conflict is either to avoid it—often by having no real goals of our own, but conforming to others' wishes—or to react with aggression. As Buddhists we should be seeking a more creative approach, one that allows us to act vigorously in the world, but with *metta* for those who oppose us.

To do this we need to rise above our unskilful emotional reactions, while still having access to the energy of our fear and aggression. This—at first sight impossible—refinement of our energies is the transmutation we are striving for in the fourth stage of the practice at its best. When we have achieved it we can bring the full power of our being to the fifth stage, and begin to genuinely feel—and act from—*metta* for all beings.

elements of our nature into gold. If we succeed in keeping our balance, this transmuting effect on its own may be enough to purify our resentments, and refine the energy locked up in our anger. But often this is not enough. Then we need to supply a catalyst to help the reaction along—everyone needs to develop their own techniques.

Personally I find it particularly helpful to use my imagination to give myself more empathy with my 'enemy's' point of view. I call to mind the circumstances of their life, and the sorrows and suffering these cause. I try to imagine myself inhabiting their body, and looking out from behind their eyes. I strive to make these imaginings as concrete as possible, by conjuring up real situations in all the detail I can muster: I imagine myself getting up in the morning as the other person, and seeing the sights they see; I imagine the situations they often experience; I recreate past occasions when the two of us have been together, but as my 'enemy' must have perceived them.

By using the imagination in this way we can begin to get a tiny glimpse of what it means to transcend our limited,





# OPENING OUR HEARTS TO THE WORLD

*According to Lokamitra, the first four stages of the Metta Bhavana are a preparation for the fifth, in which we direct our loving-kindness to all beings everywhere ...*

**T**he first four stages of the Metta Bhavana are really a preparation for the fifth and last stage when feelings of *metta* are radiated throughout the world. Metta is traditionally known as one of the *appamanna* states, meaning 'boundless', 'limitless'. In this connection Sangharakshita has made the point that the tendency of positive emotions is to expand, whereas that of negative emotions is to contract, to become more limited. So in this stage we try to develop *metta* in such a way as to include all human beings, all life. We aim at a state of mind that spontaneously responds with *metta* when meeting another person, whether in our imagination or in the flesh.

We begin by bringing together the four people we have been concentrating on in the previous stages, and direct our

*metta* to all of them at the same time. The emotional state we are trying to develop is one in which we feel a strong but absolutely equal love for all four. Were the bandits conjured up by Buddhaghosha in the *Vissuddhi Magga* (see p.4) to ask us for the life of one of them we would be unable to choose—not because of any lack of feeling, but because of the *fullness* of our feeling for each. Clearly this emotion is much more than just friendliness—it is a very strong, warm, caring, and cherishing love that we are trying to develop.

This is really the central part of the whole Metta Bhavana practice and is rather like bringing our positive feelings towards the different individuals together in a crucible. With the heat of our *metta* we try to melt down all the differences we may feel towards each of the

individuals, until our *metta* is flowing freely and without barriers between all four persons. The more successful we are here the more easily we will be able to radiate that heat steadily throughout the world.

We now proceed to do this by bringing to mind all the people we are meditating with, and then expand the feelings of *metta* out to the street, the locality, the town, the region, the country, the continent, and all the different continents of the world. Alternatively we can take the different directions of space one at a time, or we can just radiate out in ever increasing circles from where we are. But however we approach this stage of the practice we are trying (and if we have succeeded in bringing the four people together it will not be so much a question of trying as of a spontaneous flow of energy) to pervade and suffuse all beings everywhere, without exception, with feelings of *metta*. The words of the Buddha in the *Karaniya Metta Sutta* make this very clear:

*'Now may all living things, or weak or strong,  
Omitting none, tall, medium sized, or short,  
Subtle or gross of form, seen or unseen,  
Those dwelling near or far away,  
Born or unborn—may every living thing  
Abound in bliss. Let none deceive or think  
Scorn of another, in whatever way.  
But as a mother watches o'er her child,  
Her only child, so long as she doth breathe,*





*So let him practise unto all that live  
An all-embracing mind. And let a man  
Practise unbounded love for all the world,  
Above, below, across, in every way,  
Love unobstructed, void of enmity.'*

(*Karaniya Metta Sutta*, trans.

Sangharakshita 1949, published in *The Enchanted Heart*, Ola Leaves, London 1980.)

One is not of course bound to the words of the Buddha. Doing the practice regularly one will probably create images and phrases of one's own which help in developing these supreme emotions. I often find it helpful to conclude the practice by thinking of all men, all women, all young, all old, all middle-aged, all at present being born, all at present dying, all rich, all poor, all happy, all sad, all free, all oppressed, all ill, all healthy, people of all religions, all races, and all nationalities.

As we travel around the world in our imagination we may find it hard to reconcile the different life experiences of people—some are very happy and materially satisfied, while others are suffering through poverty, violence, war, famine, and exploitation. Doing the practice here in Poona one cannot ignore the poverty and the violence, not only on one's very doorstep and throughout India, but in all the surrounding countries—Tibet, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Burma, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Iraq, and so on. At

times it's very hard not to feel sad and depressed, so much so that our feelings of *metta* towards ourselves are affected. We end up in a state of despair. We are stuck. We can no longer develop skilful mental states towards ourselves or others. At the same time when we encounter people who are happy we may find it hard not to respond to them with resentment when we see so much suffering.

This could mean that we have been putting too much emphasis on the phrases we repeat, and not enough on opening our hearts to ourselves and the three others. We may not have acknowledged our own unhappiness or negativity when we started the practice. The words go round in our head without connecting up with our hearts and we cannot identify with others in any heartfelt way. The *metta* we develop will only therefore be an idea of *metta*, not a feeling, and therefore not able to respond easily to the differences we find among people.

Moving from head to heart is difficult for a lot of people at first. I found this myself, and as such I could not easily feel for other human beings, let alone myself. I found reflecting on nature useful. I remember, when trying to do a lot of Metta Bhavana practice on my first solitary retreat, being confronted by this difficulty. I was in a tent at the southern tip of the Cotswolds, surrounded by

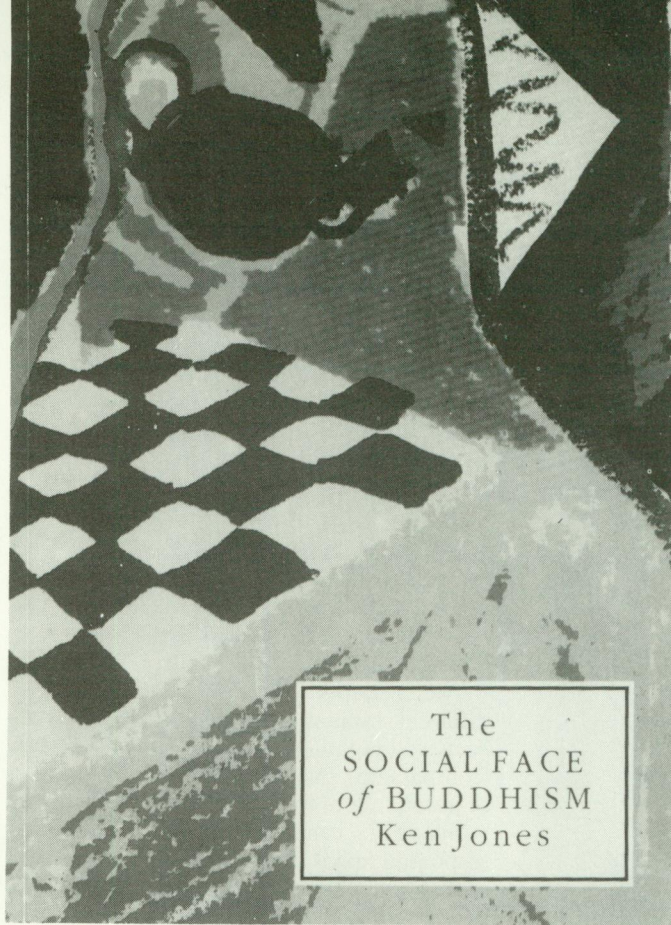
trees. Eating outside, I spent a lot of time looking at the trees. Each tree was quite different in shape. Some were tall, some short, some were wide spread, and some slender. Each had different branches broken. There was a uniqueness about each tree, and yet in this uniqueness there was a definite unity. I found it very easy to translate the trees into human beings, and when I did that I found that feelings of *metta* spontaneously arose. I could identify quite easily with others. We are all born, we are all going to die. We all experience varying degrees of happiness and suffering. And yet we are all unique. There has never been anyone the same as us and there never will be. This imaginative identification with others is really the key to the success of the Metta Bhavana practice.

Metta adapts to different people in different situations. It expands to include *mudita* (sympathetic joy) and *karuna* (compassion). Instead of being resentful or jealous about the happiness of others, with a strong basis of *metta* we learn to respond with joy. And instead of getting over-emotional and being brought down by the suffering of others we can learn to respond with a soft smile on our faces, more able to understand. In this way the Metta Bhavana helps us to face difficulties in life which inevitably come our way, whether they appear to come from within us or from outside. Instead of being discouraged and held back by them, we learn to approach them creatively, allowing them less and less to ensnare our positive emotions. Indeed we gradually learn to regard them as opportunities to cultivate and test these positive states of mind.

When the practice goes very well, *metta*, extended to all, and unassailable by any negative thoughts, becomes equanimity (*upekkha*). There is no reactivity in one's mind, but this is far from indifference. One's positivity to others is not compromised no matter how negative or unskilful they may be. Such experiences may be some way off for most, but even so, if one applies oneself to this practice, especially on retreat, one can soon get a glimpse of this state.

The sitting meditation practice is only the beginning of the Metta Bhavana practice. How often do we come out of a good session of Metta Bhavana meditation and immediately get annoyed at some petty occurrence? This is a rather salutary reminder that unless we consciously work to take what we have learned from meditation out into the rest of our lives, our behaviour will still be at the mercy of our old and deep reactive patterns. This means acknowledging, often again and again, that our emotions are far from what we would like them to be. But painful though it may be, this is the basis for the process of emotional transformation. Slowly maybe, but steadily, we will be able to take the Metta Bhavana practice out of the meditation room and find our hearts opening to the world.





The  
SOCIAL FACE  
of BUDDHISM  
Ken Jones

## BUDDHIST ACTIVISM

### The Social Face of Buddhism: An Approach to Political and Social Activism

by Ken Jones  
Published by Wisdom  
pp.415, paperback  
price £9.95

Are Buddhists selfish? The popular image of Asian Buddhists as seen from Western countries is of gentle but rather passive people, content to accept whatever life throws at them. Perhaps Western Buddhists might be accused of individualism and perceived to have a greater interest in personal spiritual development than in the welfare of others as reflected in the social or political issues of the day. Unlike the bishops of the Church of England, Buddhists are not heard delivering indictments of government policy at regular intervals.

Buddhist practice does, however, have consequences for the individual which affect both the internal world of perception and awareness and the external world of human relations and social life. The author of *The Social Face of Buddhism* wants us to know that there is a social dimension to Buddhism, even a dimension of political and social activism. To make the

case, the author covers a broad spectrum of issues, starting in Part One, entitled 'Understanding', with a description of the Buddhist view of reality and the human condition. Working outwards from this we are led into a critique of the 'global civilization' which is characterized by a central belief in material progress based on technology, environmental destruction, stimulation of consumer expectations, concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, militarized nation-states, and attempts to alleviate these ills solely through secular ideologies of social development.

Part Two, entitled 'Action', examines the elements of Buddhist practice which we bring into our social lives, most importantly the precepts. The author sees 'socially engaged Buddhism' as including efforts to live and work in alternative ways, such as communities and Right Livelihood businesses. A second aspect is humanitarian social welfare activity, and a third radical activism 'directed to fundamental institutional and social changes'. The FWBO is referred to as providing 'the outstanding examples' of Right Livelihood, but when it comes to activism the author has

clearly been very inspired by the example of the Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka. He is rightly cautious in his evaluation of the more aggressive neo-Buddhist social movements which have originated in Japan.

The book contains much useful material; however, there are some criticisms to be made. Mr Jones's rather breathless literary style is difficult to follow. He is sometimes inclined to jump on contemporary bandwagons, as when he states that 'it is in the loose, diverse, evolving and suggestive Green-libertarian tradition that Buddhists can work most fruitfully and influentially'.

In one passage which may distress those practising within the FWBO, Mr Jones writes: 'the FWBO relies on the low key "spiritual friendship" of its special brand of ordinands, at local level, in lieu of the traditional teacher and student roles,' (pp. 221-2). The notion that spiritual friendship (i.e. *kalyana mitrata*) can be 'low key' is very disturbing. The author has not appreciated the value of 'horizontal' *kalyana mitrata* with others practising the Dharma, not as a substitute for but complementing the 'vertical' relationship with a teacher.

In the world of political and social action, things are not always what they seem. Mr Jones presents Mahatma Gandhi's career as a model. Leading direct action to free India from colonial rule, Gandhi advocated passive resistance (*satyagraha*) and encouraged a return to traditional village social life. Curiously, the Indian Buddhist and 'Untouchable' leader of the period, Bhimrao Ambedkar, advocated nothing of the sort. Disillusioned with *satyagraha* as a means of social change in the temple entry campaigns of the 1920s, Ambedkar believed in the law as the agent of real social change. He fought for legal rights, education, and political access for Untouchables with the slogan '*Gao soda*': 'Leave the village'. He saw no future in a rural 'idyll' which in reality meant caste slavery. Ambedkar felt that the Untouchables needed the law and the power of the state behind them.

Gandhi's political victory over Ambedkar, known as the

'Poona Pact', was obtained by fasting almost to death—not so much a triumph of nonviolence as a sinister manifestation of moral blackmail. Ambedkar was forced to concede over the question of a separate electoral process for Untouchables. Later, Ambedkar led the movement of mass conversion to Buddhism. The decision to embrace Buddhism was based on his own confidence in the ability of the Dharma to change individual minds and to transform society. But this step was taken as the culmination of the struggle for political and legal rights, not as a substitute for it. Ambedkar's legacy is the modern Indian Buddhist movement—surely one of the most vital forces for change in an environment of extreme material deprivation.

Inexplicably, Bhimrao Ambedkar is not even mentioned in this book. It would seem that the author finds it difficult to accommodate within his concept of Buddhist social action the responsible and non-coercive use of conventional political methods to achieve equity. One must disagree.

What is the basis upon which Buddhists might engage in social or political action? The hazards of over-close involvement on the part of the Sangha with the wheels of power are painfully obvious, as in the case of modern Sri Lanka. The Sangha has to avoid becoming compromised by collective involvement with temporal power. The author of *The Social Face of Buddhism* has tried to avoid the corrupting tendency of political activity by emphasizing methods of activism and nonviolent direct action. As Gandhi's example shows, using this approach is no guarantee of purity. Perhaps we should put aside the grandiose terminology of 'changing society' and, as Buddhists, concentrate on the details of what needs to be done in the sphere of society at large. Right Livelihood needs to be propagated, suffering needs to be alleviated, education needs to be provided. Our real politics is perhaps the politics of constructive work. Having done the work we will be able to see what sort of society has been created.

Virabhadra



# MASTERLY SURVEY

## Mahayana Buddhism—The Doctrinal Foundations

by Paul Williams  
Published by Routledge  
pp.317, paperback  
price £9.95

Paul Williams's *Mahayana Buddhism* fills a crucial gap in the market of books on Buddhism. It is the first modern full length study of the history and doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism as a whole, and for this reason alone deserves the attention of all those interested in the history of the Buddhist tradition, or who wish to gain some appreciation of the interrelationship of present day Mahayana Buddhist schools.

The book is arranged into three sections, the first being a substantial Introduction. Most of the chapters are divided between the ubiquitous Mahayana principles of Wisdom and Compassion, which serve as a foundation by way of which Dr Williams reveals the entire edifice of Mahayana doctrine and history.

Part One, dealing with Wisdom, is more chronological in its arrangement, following the development of Mahayana doctrine from its earliest inception in the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras, through their exegesis by the Madhyamaka school, to the teachings of the Cittamatra, Tathagatagarbha, and Hua Yen schools—the latter introduced by a history of the Dharma in China. The author does not balk at investigating the often complex doctrinal concerns of these schools, and in that he always bases his discussion upon what the Mahayanists themselves had to say, he offers us a reliable source of reference for further reading, especially of the sutras and *shastras* themselves.

Appropriately, each chapter explores these teachings by initial reference to the sutras which formed the core interest of each school, such that the book also offers a history of

Mahayana literature—not least as the author includes within his survey many major *shastras* or commentarial works written by the great *acharyas*.

Part Two, 'Compassion', is less a chronological survey than an in-depth exploration of particular issues, having the feeling more of a group of essays. These take as their subject individual themes: the *Lotus Sutra* (including a survey of its influence in Eastern Asia, and an account of Nichirenism), the nature of the Buddha (a clear introduction to the complex teachings on the bodies of the Buddha), Faith and Devotion (with a description of major Buddhas and Bodhisattvas), and the Bodhisattva Path, the latter including the history of Buddhism in Tibet, as well as of the Bodhisattva *bhumis*, or 'stages'.

While delineating the Indian origins of the Mahayana, Dr Williams also devotes considerable space to East Asian developments, and in this way gives a comprehensive and balanced account of the total Mahayana phenomenon, the whole richly illustrated by quotations from the scriptures, often in the author's own translation. Finally, attention must be drawn to the Introduction, in which the author gives some account of what little is known of the historical origins of the Mahayana, synthesizing fascinating recent research, otherwise unavailable to the general reader, into this complex subject.

In this section he also stresses certain important principles to be observed in approaching Mahayana Buddhism, including the danger of Westerners trying to appropriate the Dharma to their own cultural pre-suppositions, and to discern substantial entities where there are none—a universal problem which the author points out as a major concern of the Mahayana itself!

Throughout, the book is replete with reference to modern research—though in

the areas of Madhyamaka and Cittamatra thought the author contributes substantial research of his own. The value of the book is also enhanced both by the author's conviction that, however diverse the developments of Mahayana Buddhism, they are always explicable within its own terms of reference, and by his open acknowledgement of his own Buddhist affiliation, with his consequent acceptance of the reality of such things as meditational experience, and the sublime aspirations that have informed the origins and growth of the Mahayana.

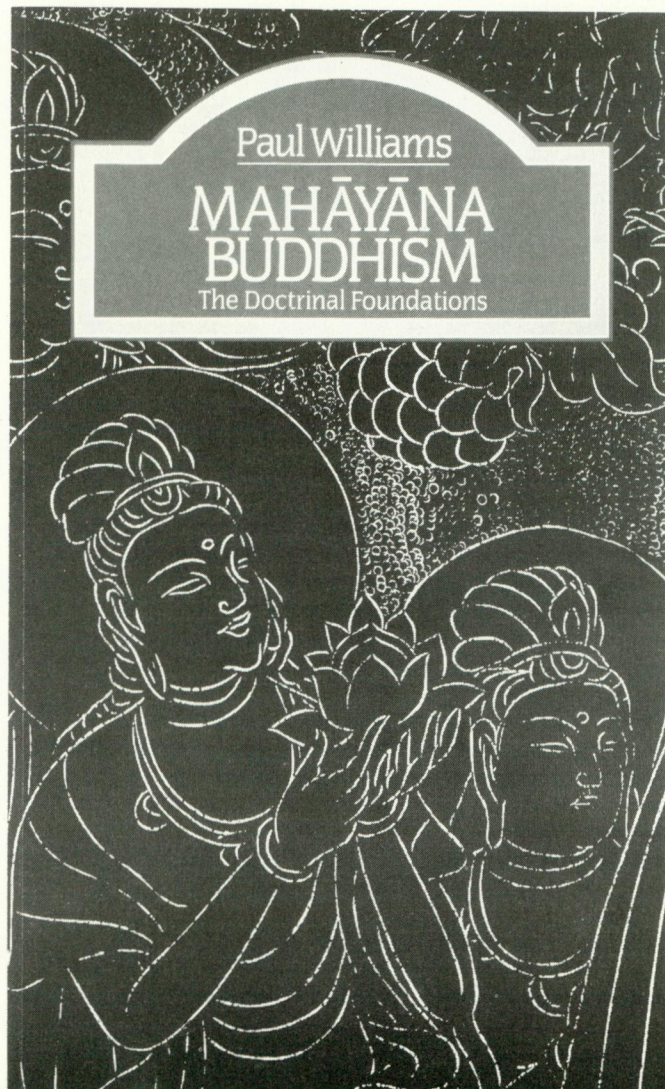
Each of these help free the book from the unnecessary reductionism which so spoils much of Buddhist scholarship, whereby, on the one hand, doctrinal development has to be seen as the result of external influence or decline, and on the other, spiritual experience is assimilated to rationalist 'explanations', and aspirations

often cynically reduced to a lowest common denominator. That said, the author does not avoid describing external influences, nor the mutual criticism that took place between various Mahayana schools; for students of Sangharakshita's *A Survey of Buddhism*, this may be found a useful counterpoint or complement to the latter's synthesizing approach. The result is an intelligent blend of the insights of the practitioner with those of critical scholarship, the whole enlivened on occasion with a light-hearted wit.

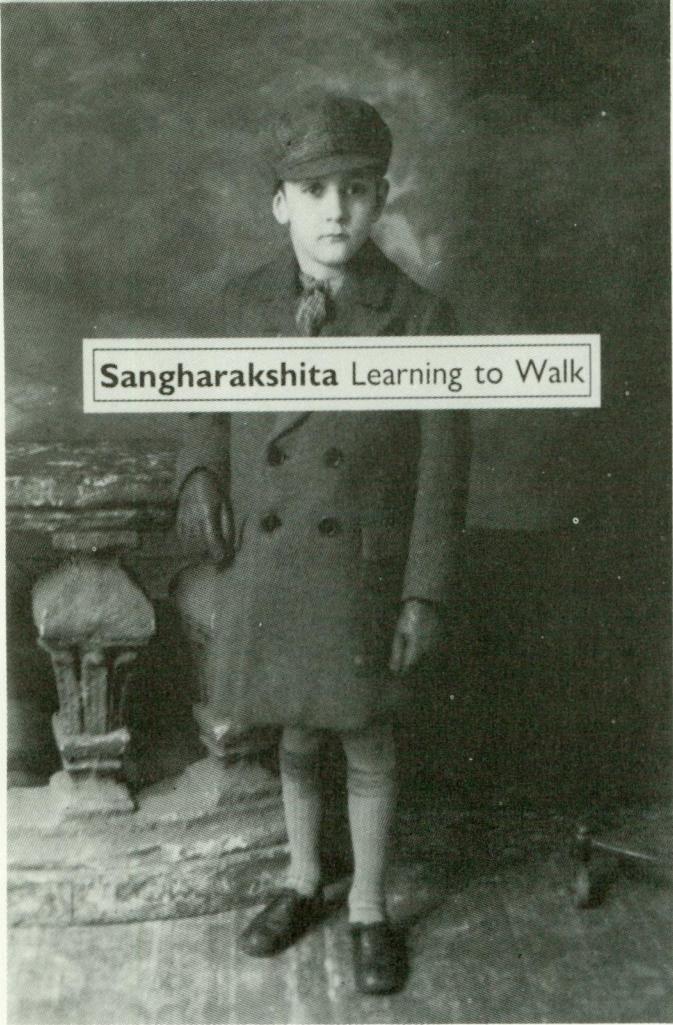
One has no doubt that *Mahayana Buddhism* will be the standard work upon its subject for many years to come, and anyone who has an interest in Mahayana Buddhism, or the history of the Dharma as a whole, will be well advised to read, and re-read it.

Sthiramati

15







**Sangharakshita Learning to Walk**

## EARLY STEPS

### Learning to Walk

by Sangharakshita  
Published by Windhorse  
pp.191, paperback  
price £5.95

**L**earning to Walk comprises the first ten chapters of Sangharakshita's memoirs which were excised, at the publisher's request, from the version published by Heinemann under the title *The Thousand Petalled Lotus* in 1976. As a result, the first nineteen years of the author's life have remained inaccessible to the general reader until now, a fact which, to my mind, greatly impoverished the resolution of the image presented in the 'official' version.

In his introduction to the book, the author writes, 'I also realized that I was not writing my autobiography at all ... I was writing my memoirs ... less a collection of facts than an evocation of memories, from the degree of whose distinctness the more delicately perceptive may gauge both the relative intensity of the experiences whose impressions they are and the nature and ultimate

extent of the influence exerted by those experiences on the development of character and formation of opinion in the narrator'. Thankfully, this paragraph from the unrevised version is not at all typical of the style of the book as a whole! On the contrary, its hundred and fifty pages are crammed with pithy, vivid, intimate close-focus detail which makes us see not only one man's perspective, but an entire milieu: that of 'working-class' southern England between the wars. Far from being 'less well written' than the later work, as its author tentatively suggests, I found the pages of *Learning to Walk* illuminated by quick imagery and a homely sense of humour which are only occasionally and distantly present in the Heinemann account.

For me, the burning question was, how did the sickly, introverted Wizard reader of the thirties discover the path that would lead to art and literature, to mystical experience, to India and Buddhism? The answer is both complex and bizarre. Discovering it, we are led through a convoluted

landscape of familiar images and events reminiscent of the scenario of a latter-day Sherlock Holmes mystery: pavement grottoes, Derby Day, Roman Candles, the *Daily Herald* strip cartoon, Jack the Ripper, the *Hotspur*, the Boys' Brigade, the Mystical Order of Druids, the Tooting Public Library, Perseus and the Gorgon, Anubis the Black-headed, the London County Council Public Health Department, Parkes' Coal Company in Torquay, and the Army Signals Corps. Who could guess that all these were key icons in the mind of a man who would found, two decades and a world war later, a spiritual movement that would revolutionize and renew the lives of many thousands of people from quite disparate walks of life and very different cultures?

In the process of traversing this landscape, we encounter characters as vivid and grotesque, and just as believable, as anything in Dickens: the Rechabites (peace be upon them!) who 'sat gloomily around a table in a small room in Balham while an elderly man read aloud from a black Bible, after which they drank cups of strong tea'. The Congregational minister, who 'was a fat yellow man who looked as though he had a good deal of train oil in his system'. Mrs Smith, the Vicar's wife with half a lung, who 'in a moment of abandon, once suggested that we might play croquet with her on the lawn'. Mrs Baker, the Torquay landlady, who had a 'habit of refusing to allow the electric light to be switched on until at least an hour after dark ... even though she knew her husband was itching to read the newspaper, and that I was impatient to write down the poems I had composed in the bus coming home', and who 'would sit chuckling in her chair, exclaiming over and over again how pleasant it was to sit in the dark and what a pity that her electricity would have to be switched on so soon!'

The stupefying inanity of army life is well evoked in numerous vignettes, some so bizarre that it is hard to believe they were not invented by the author deliberately to send up the military mentality. 'Batty Tatty—or Tat—undersized, weedy and pimply—had a

loud voice and the music hall type of Lancashire accent. He spent the whole of every evening deeply absorbed in a large album which contained only photographs of himself from the age of two months upwards'. And: 'The smallest recruit asked the RSM if he could have a shorter weapon. It would be hard to say whose astonishment was the greater, the RSM's at this strange request, or the little recruit's on learning that rifles were all the same size'.

George Steiner has remarked that 'Language is the main instrument of a man's refusal to accept the world as it is'. In the pages of this small jewel of a book, we are given an intimate and compelling glimpse of the tuning of the instrument in the hands of a man who has, above all else, refused to accept the world as it is.

Ananda

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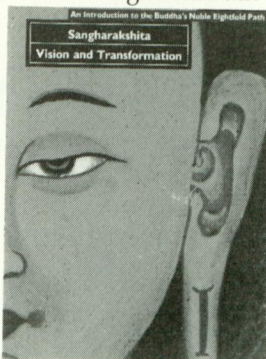
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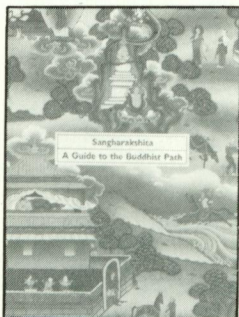


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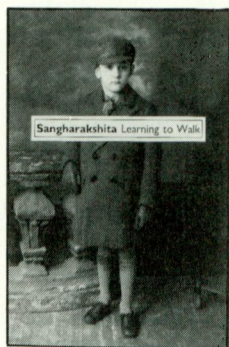


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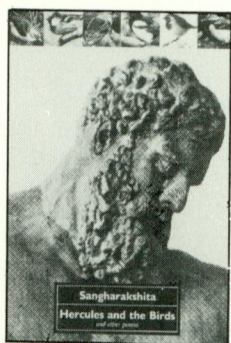
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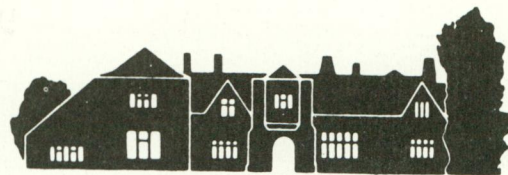
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# TURMOIL IN PARADISE

A government which finds itself having to counter armed separatists and armed nationalists, both at the same time, might normally expect a little sympathy from the rest of the world. This is not the case in Sri Lanka where it is the government counter-insurgency policy against both groups which has resulted in thousands dead, tortured, and 'disappeared'. Such is the extent of fear and violence on this once tranquil island that 830,000 people have been forced to flee their homes.

74% of the population is Buddhist, with 18% Tamil (mainly Hindu), and 8% Muslim. The violence began with the fight for independence by Tamil separatists and their ruthless

suppression by the government. Violence continued when the Indian peace keeping force (IPKF) took over control of the Tamil regions—with the IPKF itself responsible for many of the atrocities. This accord with the Indian government brought even more violence in its wake as nationalist groups in the south resorted to armed opposition to the Sri Lankan government and were themselves violently suppressed.

According to the human rights organization Amnesty International, thousands 'disappeared' after their arrest, thousands more were killed by security forces, and still more were detained without charge or trial. Many were tortured. Death squads drawn from the

military and armed bodyguards of politicians proliferated. A climate of fear has set in. Many human rights workers and peaceful opponents of the government have been killed.

This one time jewel in the Indian Ocean is now aptly called a teardrop, and the counter terror policies of the Sri Lankan government seem largely to blame.

Now Amnesty International is campaigning for a return to internationally accepted standards of law, including the removal of laws which carry powers of arrest without official charge or trial and which allow the disposal of bodies of detainees without post-mortem, the investigation of human rights abuses, and the protection of witnesses to

alleged human rights violations by the security forces.

Any government having to deal with the situation in Sri Lanka deserves our sympathy and our hopes for a peaceful solution. It is a temptation to take up the tactics of the terrorist in pursuit of a return to normality and the democratic process. But, however tempting, violence cannot be answered with violence, anger cannot be countered with more anger. With their long heritage of the Buddha's teachings to draw on let us hope that the Sri Lankan people find a lasting and peaceful solution to their present torture.

## 18 EVANGELICAL UPSURGE

In Britain there has been a change to the laws concerning religious broadcasting. Now religious advertising is permitted on TV and radio (with certain restrictions about the nature of the advertisements), and religious bodies may own cable TV stations or sponsor programmes on them.

This change has its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand it might just succeed in widening out religious broadcasting from the orthodox and established Christianity which currently dominates it. On the other hand it is clear that money will become a major factor, and that financially powerful evangelical Christian groups will come to the fore.

There is, in any case, a growing Christian evangelical influence within British social

life. The latest Education Act's requirement for mainly Christian worship in schools does not make life easy for the non-Christian child or parent, or the teacher with a multi-faith class. Evangelical priests and their congregations are also making their presence felt in schools in a nationwide campaign which demands that various topics—from Hallowe'en to T'ai Chi—should not be mentioned. This campaign is also worrying broadcasters, publishers, and authors of children's books, many of whom have received upsetting and highly abusive letters for productions which have fallen foul of fundamentalist Christian sensibilities. Given that a Christian 'decade of evangelism' is currently underway, non-Christians need to be increasingly wary with regard to evangelical influences on their children.

## PEACE FOR KAMPUCHEA?

At the time of going to press there seems to be hope that there will finally be a peaceful agreement between the various factions in Kampuchea. If this comes about, then this once Buddhist country will be ending a twelve year period of civil war. There was something poignant about seeing in the Western press pictures of Khieu Sampan, the Khmer Rouge rebel leader, being 'blessed' by Buddhist monks as he arrived

at the peace talks in Paris—given that the Khmer Rouge killed the vast majority of the monastic sangha in Cambodia, along with a million or more of their compatriots. Indeed, fear that the Khmer Rouge might use any peace to its own future military advantage is the principle factor inhibiting agreement. One can only hope, however, that the Kampuchians achieve a real and lasting peace settlement aided by the proposed UN peace keeping force.

## GOOD WORK

Rohpa is a charity established by Samye Dzong, the Kagyu Tibetan Buddhist Centre in Glasgow. With sister organizations in other parts of the world, Rohpa has been helping Tibetan refugees and sponsoring clinics for some time.

More recently, however, Rohpa has been turning its attention to the West. For five years now, its volunteers have

been collecting ingredients and distributing soup and sandwiches to the growing number of homeless people who live on the streets of Glasgow, London, Barcelona, Brussels, and New York City. The charity is also distributing food in Nepal, in Buddhanath, and Bodh Gaya. Rohpa is looking for help, and welcomes donations of dried foods for making soup (as well as money, no doubt).





A wayside stupa

## PILGRIMAGE AND CLIMB FOR DHARDO RIMPOCHE

Just before he died in March this year, Dhardo Rimpoche, Sangharakshita's principal Tibetan teacher, made a pilgrimage to holy places in northern India. He covered a wide area and some rough terrain. Last autumn Darryl Cowley, who works for the Karuna Trust, retraced his footsteps.

"A three hour walk over a rough track followed by a steep climb brought me to the monastery and shrine of Namo-Buddha where the Buddha is said to have offered his body to a starving lioness. From the village of Sakhu, and after another climb through the paddy fields, I reached a small cave where Milarepa once lived. It is said that during his visit, Rimpoche often strode energetically ahead of his attendants. Climbing slowly in the heat, I could only be amazed by this. On a hillside north of Kathmandu I stooped into a large cavern associated with Nagarjuna. It contains a beautifully simple stone rupa

said to have been formed spontaneously from the rock. More easily accessible were the huge stupas and the associated monasteries at Swayambhu and Baudhanath and the Buddhist Temples of Patan which Rimpoche had visited.

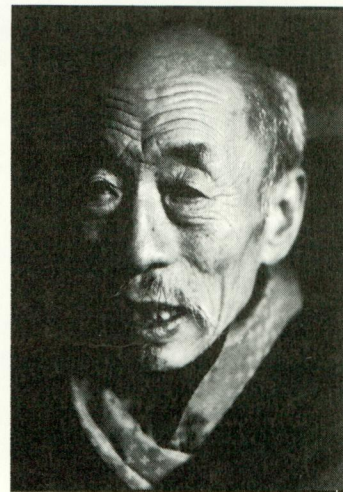
"Before making this pilgrimage, I had trekked around Annapurna, through the Tibetan region of northern Nepal, and I attempted to climb the Himalayan peak of Chulu East with the aim of raising money for Rimpoche's stupa appeal. This ended less than 2,000 feet from the summit. With two friends I climbed for nine hours to our high camp at 18,000 feet, but bad snow, a heavily crevassed glacier, and altitude sickness combined to force a retreat. Disappointment was tempered by knowledge of the huge effort we had put in over four days, and by a final night bivvying among rock and ice in the mountain solitude broken, at last, by a spectacular sunrise over the Annapurna mountains."

## DHARDO RIMPOCHE'S DEATH ANNIVERSARY

On Sunday 24 March there will be a major FWBO festival to commemorate the first anniversary of the death of Dhardo Rimpoche, Sangharakshita's principal Tibetan teacher. The festival, which will be held at York Hall in London, will be a celebration of Dhardo Rimpoche, including videos and recollections of Rimpoche. Sangharakshita will give a talk, dedicate the shrine, and lead a puja. He will also be launching a new biography of Dhardo Rimpoche by Suvajra, entitled *The Wheel and the Diamond*.

Contrary to his custom in recent years, Sangharakshita has been closely involved in instigating and organizing the day and is clearly treating it as

a vital event in the life of the FWBO. Further details are available from the Office of the Western Buddhist Order at Padmaloka.



Dhardo Rimpoche

## DHARDO RIMPOCHE'S DEATH ANNIVERSARY

### 24th MARCH 1991

will be celebrated at YORK HALL  
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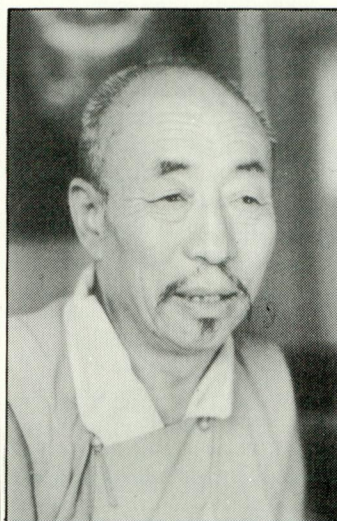
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OLD  
FORD  
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HALL

CAMBRIDGE HEATH ROAD

### PROGRAMME

- 2.15 pm Dedication of Hall (led by Sangharakshita)
- 2.35 pm Suvajra reading from his book on Rimpoche (chaired by Sangharakshita)
- 3.05 pm Video on Rimpoche in interview, doing puja and his funeral
- 3.50 pm Tea
- 4.10 pm Personal tributes from people who met Rimpoche
- 5.30 pm Supper (food will be on sale at the hall)
- 6.45 pm Talk by Sangharakshita 'The Message of Dhardo Rimpoche'
- 7.45 pm Special Puja (led by Sangharakshita)







Sangharakshita with US Order members at Aryaloka

## SANGHARAKSHITA DIARY

On 25 August Sangharakshita quietly celebrated his sixty-fifth birthday while on retreat in Spain. A month later, on 30 September, following his return to England, about 400 people gathered for a much noisier 'surprise' birthday party in a hall of the University of London. Several Order members delivered tributes to Sangharakshita, but the picture that emerged suggested less an

idealized saint than a hard-working, responsible, and caring man with a devilish sense of humour.

The occasion also saw the launch of three new publications: *A Guide to the Buddhist Path*, *Learning to Walk*, Sangharakshita's memoirs of his upbringing in South London; and *Hercules and the Birds*, a selection of some of his more recent poems.

Sangharakshita spent October quietly in his flat in London where he saw a steady stream of people who wanted to meet him personally. Most of his time was spent engaged in literary work and, in particular, he completed an account of his recent travels entitled *Letter from Spain*, which was printed in *Shabda*, the Western Buddhist Order's newsletter. In early November Sangharakshita attended the quarterly UK National Men's Order Weekend at Padmaloka, where he chaired a talk by Subhuti entitled *Have we Ethics in the Order?* (a subject of Sangharakshita's choosing). A morning was spent making recordings for Dharmachakra Tapes of the selections of his poetry, *Conquering New Worlds* and *Hercules and the Birds*.

On 11 November Sangharakshita set off again, this time for the United States. In 1970 he conducted a seminar at Yale University, but this was his first visit since the establishment of FWBO activities in America. The three week visit centred around a ten day retreat at Aryaloka, the FWBO's retreat centre in New

Hampshire. In the course of this retreat and over the following week he conducted personal interviews with some fifty or sixty people. Sangharakshita also led two sessions of questions-and-answers, gave two poetry readings, and finally, on 24 November, gave a talk on his eight principal teachers to mark the fortieth anniversary of his Bhikkhu ordination.

American Order members report that Sangharakshita's visit was a great boost to FWBO activities in the United States. In particular, many people gained confidence in the FWBO through finding the man behind it to be so approachable, intelligent, and self-effacing. For his part, Sangharakshita was pleased to have at last seen the situation and met many of the people about whom he has heard so much over the years. He expressed a wish to return for a longer visit in a few years time.

In early December, Sangharakshita was once again settled into his flat at the London Buddhist Centre and engaged in his literary work.

## SANGHARAKSHITA VISITS USA

There is a strong emphasis in American life on the importance of a career, financial security, and family life. This can present difficulties and force compromises among those who want to devote themselves more fully to Buddhism. For those wishing to engage deeply in the practice of meditation, study, and the development of spiritual friendships, an alternative to mainstream society is urgently needed. Aryaloka, in New England, and the other FWBO groups which are gradually emerging across the USA, are trying to create such an alternative.

An important factor in this development was the visit, last November, of Sangharakshita (reported in *Sangharakshita Diary*). Everyone who met him enjoyed their contact.

Manjuvajra reports that people were surprised how accessible and 'ordinary' he was—and yet how extraordinary in what he has done with his life. 'In particular, people appreciated his mindfulness, warmth, and

clarity, as well as the breadth of his vision. Since his visit, the Movement here is noticeably stronger and more mature.'

The Order team, comprising Vidyavati, Vajramati, and Manjuvajra, is feeling enthusiastic about the future. Aryaloka was very lively in the last few months of 1990, and the regular programme of classes, courses, and weekend retreats is to be expanded in 1991. As well as weekends devoted to introductions to meditation and Buddhism, there will be study seminars, sesshins, Going for Refuge groups, and so on. In fact, there is only one free weekend all year!

On the cultural front, Aryaloka recently inaugurated a series of poetry and music evenings at the 'Friday Night Café'. Sitting at small tables and drinking coffee by candlelight, about fifteen people enjoyed an evening of poetry and song. It was an auspicious start to what is hoped to be a regular event.

The most striking feature of the 1991 programme is a three

month series of week-long events in June, July, and August. The series will broadly follow the theme of the three *yanas*. In June there will be events focusing on mindfulness, the Noble Eightfold Path, and Buddhist psychology. In July there will be retreats on the practice of the Brahma Viharas, the Bodhisattva Ideal, and the *Bodhicharyavatara*. In August there will be two meditation intensives, an introduction to the creative symbols of the Vajrayana, and a study of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. This three month period will end with a week-long 'Going For Refuge' retreat.

This is the kind of programme which was originally envisaged for Aryaloka, and the community is eagerly waiting for it to get under way, undaunted by the financial risks it involves. It is hoped that all our American Friends and mitras will come for at least a week of the programme and that they will be joined by others from the rest of the Movement.

Hopefully, some people will come for the full three months.

Vidyavati, who arrived in

the USA in August, has already made a big impact on women's activities. She is living in Taravyuha, the women's community, along with three others. This community has recently relocated to a house within a stone's throw of the beach at Rye, New Hampshire. All the community members are actively involved in all aspects of the Centre's work, but the community is also the base for Window Art Works, a window display business which is proving highly successful.

The men's community is planning to convert a large barn in the grounds of Aryaloka into its future home and also to build a solitary retreat hut. In other parts of the country FWBO activities are thriving. In New England, activities in Concord, New Hampshire, and Portland, Maine are growing. New groups have started in Delaware Valley and Montana. There are rumours of a men's community starting up in San Francisco; activities in Seattle and New York continue to develop. Slowly, but surely, the FWBO is gaining a foothold in America.





## DHARMACHARI SUBHAKAR

On 27 September 1990, Dharmachari Subhakar, Mitra Convenor at the Ulhasnagar Centre in Maharashtra, India, died of a heart attack. He was forty-seven years old. Like most of those involved in TBMSG (the name by which the FWBO is known in India) he was a member of the ex-Untouchable Buddhist community and he contacted the movement in Ulhasnagar, a semi-industrial town outside Bombay.

He was a quiet, self-effacing man, but, as Mitra Convenor, he was highly popular and renowned in the local Buddhist community for his friendliness, positivity, integrity, and his commitment to the Dharma. His death was quite unexpected and he will be greatly missed by his family, his many friends, and by everyone involved in TBMSG. After his death, Padmavajra wrote an

appreciation of his friend, Dharmachari Subhakar, of which the following is a part.

"I first met Subhakar on my visit to India in 1986-87 when he was a mitra at the Ulhasnagar Centre. Uday Wankhede, as he then was, made an immediate impression. He was well-built with strong features, a confident though friendly man of a quiet and gentle nature. I was always impressed by how well dressed he was. He was ordained during Suvajra and Kamalashila's visit in 1988. Subhakar means 'one who embodies *subha*', *subha* meaning beauty, goodness, and purity. That was certainly his nature.

"After Subhakar's ordination I had more contact with him and got to know him better. I learned he was from Nagpur, the son of a very poor family. His mother and father had had very little education,

but Subhakar had done very well. He went to university and eventually got a job with the Indian railways and had quite an important post in charge of the computer department. Unlike some who get good government jobs, he was not at all arrogant or condescending. I often visited

his office and it was clear that he treated his subordinates with friendliness. It was also clear that he got on well with the other officers, most of whom were caste Hindus.

"It was because of his friendliness (as well, I think, as his organizational ability) that he became Mitra Convenor at Ulhasnagar. He took these duties very seriously and would spend much of his spare time with mitras. His job meant that he had to spend three hours a day on the crowded *Bombay Local*, but even so, most evenings were devoted to some sort of Dharma work—a mitra study group, an Order chapter meeting, a class, and so on. Any spare time would be devoted to his family. His wife, who is a mitra, was very supportive of his Dharma practice and work, and he was certainly very supportive of hers. His two teenage sons and two teenage daughters were also very supportive. Subhakar's house always had a very harmonious feeling and it was always a pleasure to visit the house for a meal, a cup of tea, or a chat.

"My fondest memories of Subhakar are of him on retreats for study leaders at Bhaja. I remember his laughing; laughing as he cleaned the kerosene lamp; laughing as he spoke with his friends; laughing during evening badminton sessions.

"Writing this has made me sad. Sad at the fact of a man cut down in his prime; sad that the Order has lost a jewel.... I salute Dharmachari Subhakar. Wherever you may be, may you be happy and well and in contact with the Dhamma. One day may we meet again, united in the Dhamma Revolution."

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## SEEING CLEARLY IN MANCHESTER

During two weekends in December and January, Sangharakshita and a number of senior Order members visited Manchester to take part in a series of programmes introducing Buddhism. The series consists of six interviews with Sangharakshita on such topics as 'What is Buddhism?', 'Buddhist Morality', and 'Buddhism and the modern world'.

This is the first project to be

directed from the FWBO's new video studios which are housed in the cellars of the Manchester Buddhist Centre, the premises of *Clear Vision* video productions. The videos will be available at all centres and are intended particularly for use at introductory classes where they will not only give newcomers a good introduction to the topics they cover, they will also introduce people to Sangharakshita.





Nagabodhi leads a discussion on the *Bodhicharyavatara* in Leningrad

## CLOSER LINKS WITH THE USSR

Although perestroika is passing through a traumatic (and some fear terminal) phase, its cultural vanguard, glasnost, is very much alive. This is particularly apparent in the religious domain.

Churches which were until recently pensioned off as 'museums of religion and atheism' are being handed back to the clergy and are thronging with devoted life; a TV documentary takes a reverential look behind the walls of a Leningrad monastery; on city pavements, Christian evangelists rub shoulders with Hare Krishna booksellers. Sixty years of colourless materialism seem to have culminated in chaos and food queues. Religion offers an attractive antidote: colour, magic, ritual, and a glimpse of the transcendental dimension. Soviet citizens are rising to the bait.

On the Buddhist front, most Soviet practitioners and sympathizers are drawn to Tibetan (Gelug) Buddhism. After all, there are lamas and monasteries in Buriatriya, and Tibetan Buddhism—with its temples, demons, and dharmapalas—provides all the richness that many people crave.

Nevertheless, for a couple of years now, Sarvamitra and Ratnapriya have been paying regular visits to Tallinn and Leningrad, the Soviet cities

closest to their native Helsinki. There they have found a number of people strongly interested what the FWBO has to offer. One fruit of these contacts has been a Russian translation of Sangharakshita's *The Three Jewels*, now into its second draft.

This November, after leading a seminar on the *Bodhicharyavatara* and giving some talks in Helsinki, Nagabodhi joined Sarvamitra for a ten day trip to Estonia and Russia.

In Tallinn, Nagabodhi gave a public talk about the Three Jewels which drew a hundred people (and, for some reason, a number of questions about Transcendental Meditation). Visiting the local 'Buddhist Union'—which meets every week in a wooden cabin in a pleasant, semi-rural suburb—he participated in a discussion on the *anatta* doctrine. More informally, he met a number of Buddhists in their homes.

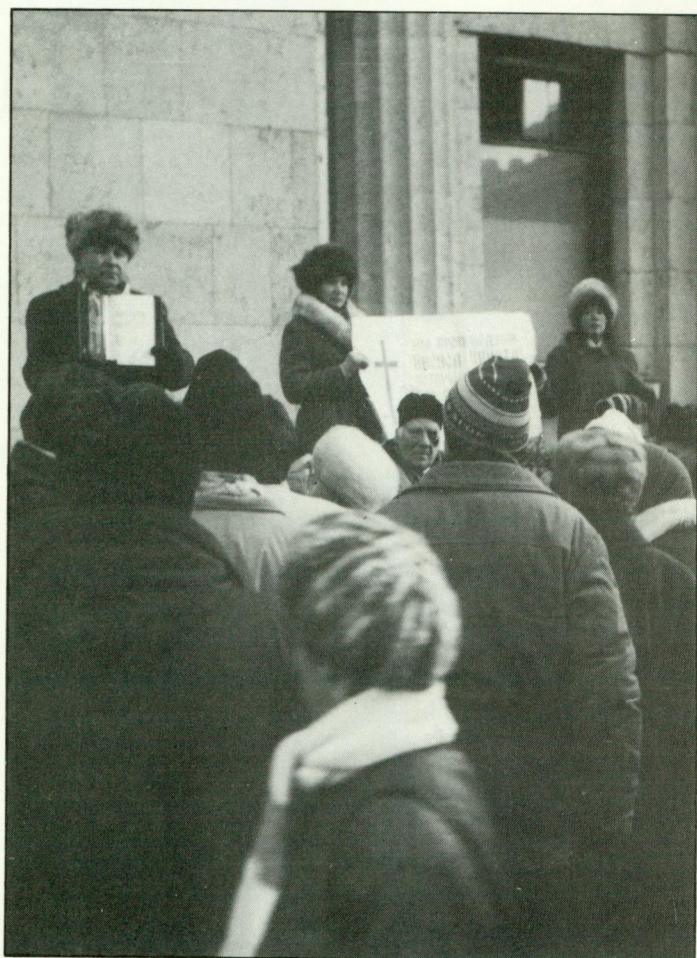
In Leningrad, he gave a public talk on the Bodhisattva Path—just one week after the passing of reforms which made such a talk legal. Despite minimal publicity, the hall was full; about half of those present were completely new to Buddhism. His talk over, Nagabodhi fielded questions about Buddhism and the FWBO for an hour and a half.

The interest generated by this talk led to some

meditation classes—one at the Tibetan temple (now given back to the Buddhists at last) and one at an experimental dance and movement centre close to the Winter Palace.

Although an Estonian edition of the *Bodhicharyavatara* has sold more than 20,000

copies, Shantideva's extraordinary work is not yet available in Russian. Towards the end of his stay, Nagabodhi gave a brief commentary on the text to a group of people who are preparing to translate it in the near future.



Christian evangelists on a Leningrad street



# DEVAMITRA IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Central Europe has seen tremendous political changes over the last eighteen months, and with the demise of Communism people have started looking for new ways of organizing society and a new basis for their values. This has led to a significant growth of interest in Buddhism and the time seemed right for the FWBO to establish contact with Buddhists in Eastern Europe. So, in November, Devamitra (a senior member of the Order) spent three weeks as the guest of Buddhists in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary.

In Poland, Buddhist activities have been permitted since 1975 and are now quite well established. The *Kwan Um* Zen Centres of Warsaw and Crakow were able to organize a series of talks, public lectures, and meetings with the press. Communist economics have been discredited while the introduction of a free market is currently causing considerable hardship. As a consequence, perhaps, there was much interest in FWBO Right Livelihood businesses and what is perceived as a non-hierarchical approach to

Sangha. Money may be a universal preoccupation, but it is one that is keenly felt in Poland where, last year, inflation was running as high as 500%. One meeting was devoted entirely to fund-raising methods.

Another lively issue among Polish Buddhists in this strongly Roman Catholic country is the relationship between Buddhism and Christianity. This issue cropped up during a phone-in show on Solidarity Radio. Many people clearly feel uncomfortable with a non-universalist approach to religion and seem to assume that an insistence upon difference is indicative of intolerance.

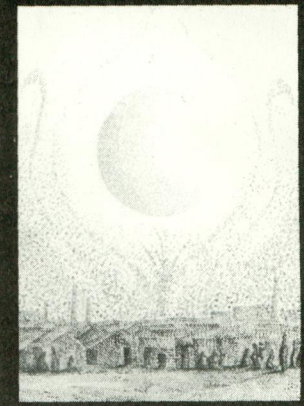
In Budapest, Devamitra was the personal guest of Laszlo Becsik, a member of a Ch'an Order whose founders are members of the Chinese community in Ankara. The group has around fifty members in Budapest, most of whom are in their early twenties. Devamitra observed one of their training sessions and gave a talk. Under the auspices of the Maitri Yoga

Society he gave two public lectures which were attended by about thirty people. One of the most encouraging developments was a meeting with Dr Joseph Hovarth, the new head of the Arya Maitreya Mandala in Hungary, who expressed great interest in publishing Sangharakshita's writings.

The Buddhist Society of Czechoslovakia, founded only in January 1990, hosted Devamitra's visit to Prague. Until last year's political changes it was not possible to form a public Society, and Buddhists had to practise clandestinely. Many of those whom Devamitra met were therefore, in effect, former Buddhist dissidents. Devamitra gave a slide-show on the FWBO at the Unitarian Hall, and he was interviewed for the Society's magazine. He was particularly impressed by the receptivity and enthusiasm which the Czechs showed for the Dharma and he commented on the tremendous scope which could exist for FWBO activities in Czechoslovakia.

NOT GATHERING DUST

## BUT LITTLE DUST



*But Little Dust* is a new book by Dharmacharini Padmashuri about her time as a nurse working among the ex-Untouchable Buddhists of Poona in western India. It is an engaging mixture of biography, travelogue, and fiction, and is an addition to the small collection of books about the ex-Untouchables.

Padmashuri launched the book in November with a tour of FWBO centres. In Norwich she was greeted with a resounding chorus of Hindi chants and garlands of flowers. The story of her progress from a Buckinghamshire vicarage to the Indian slums, and from practising medicine to performing ordinations, has proved immediately popular within the FWBO and beyond.

23

# WITH THE GULF PEACE TEAM

Richard Crump, a regular Friend of the Croydon Buddhist Centre, has gone to Iraq as a member of an international team of seven pioneers who are setting up a peace-camp on the Iraqi side of its border with Saudi Arabia and five miles west of Kuwait.

Richard, a sixty-seven-year-old retired psychiatric nurse, has been a staunch member of ex-Servicemen's CND for many years and found that his commitment to peace was strengthened by his discovery of Buddhism. Volunteers at the London office which is co-ordinating efforts to support the camp said that Richard is becoming well known for his cheerfulness, enthusiasm, and determination: he has committed himself to staying in Iraq 'until all hostilities, or the likelihood of hostilities, have ceased'.







'Bodies' on the Game of Death retreat

## PLAYING DEAD AT PADMALOKA

There is a verse in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, or *Bardo Thodol*, which reads, 'O now, when the Bardo of death upon me is dawning ...' It is an odd notion that death may be a dawn, but the text purports to guide consciousness through death, through the visionary experience which follows it, and into rebirth. Last October, at Padmaloka, the Game of Death Retreat explored the text with the intention of reaching an 'experiential understanding' of what it describes.

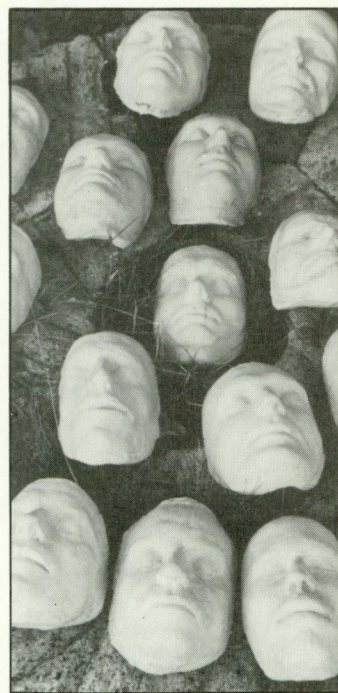
In a series of talks, Subhuti provided some factual and conceptual background, while Kovida and other members of the Performing Arts Group explored the themes he discussed in a series of workshops in mime, voice,

music, and theatre games. Meanwhile, in the shrine-room, the carpet was rolled back, the floor was painted white, and two huge white sheets were stretched from the roof-beams to the floor. With the addition of a theatre-lighting system mounted in the rafters, a 'white box' was created where, each day, a kind of 'ritual performance' was enacted.

In the first week each retreatant created a full-scale model of their body complete with a chillingly life-like death-mask cast from their own face. When they were complete their creators, inevitably, tended to identify with these models as representations of themselves. The 'bodies' were arranged around a stupa and taken, in ritual procession, to

be burnt on a bonfire.

Having passed, figuratively, through death, the retreat focused on each of the six realms depicted in the Wheel of Life. According to the *Bardo Thodol*, consciousness is attracted to each of these states in turn during the intermediate state between life and death. Evoking the six realms involved such well-known Tantric practices as a ritualized custard-pie fight and a gangland war based around a chessboard. But alive or dead, the show must go on, and rebirth finally ensued. The retreat was both hilarious and serious and, for some, it was the strongest and most engaging they had ever experienced.



## EARTHWORKS

A recent FWBO venture into the arena of Right Livelihood has come in the form of a three-man landscape gardening team based at the Manchester Centre. The team is trading under the name of 'Earthworks', and aims to provide a regular garden maintenance service as well as more substantial work such as paving, turfing, and fencing. Emphasis is being placed on a concern for the environment.

As far as possible Earthworks will aim to minimize its use of harmful chemicals and materials. The Earthworks people are not being shy about the fact that they are Buddhists. While they imagine that this may alienate some members of the public the general response has been very positive so far.

The enterprise has got off to a very good start, in large part thanks to a grant awarded by

the Prince's Youth Business Trust. To achieve this, the team members put together a comprehensive business plan and made a strong application on that basis. Although it is early days yet, they are all very optimistic about the year ahead and are keen to expand the business to allow as many men as possible to take advantage of a positive situation.

Although such businesses

in the Movement have had a somewhat chequered past, there is a strong feeling of enthusiasm for Earthworks. Gardening work seems to be particularly suitable for Buddhists, encouraging such positive qualities as vigour and mindfulness, and putting us strongly into contact with the natural world.





Sthirachitta in the Croydon bookshop

## UPS AND DOWNS IN LONDON AND CROYDON

A pure land is not built in a day. In the course of 1990, the British economy slid gently towards recession; inflation is over ten percent, unemployment is rising fast, and interest rates have shot up. Many small businesses, unable to cope with the higher costs and lower trade, have collapsed in unprecedented numbers. Buddhist Centres and the Right Livelihood businesses associated with them have found themselves facing similar problems at a time when grants and other sources of funding for charities have become much harder to come by. In the past year, the Centres in both London and

Croydon reached points of crisis as they contemplated very substantial losses.

The LBC is a large centre run by a relatively small team. In the past year it has had to cope with higher interest repayments and vertiginous rents. Previous losses have used up financial reserves and previous rounds of economizing appear to have made all the cuts that are possible without substantially reducing what the centre can do. There are a number of Right Livelihood businesses around the Centre, and they have engaged in strenuous efforts to donate more. Their efforts to do so will bear fruit

in the long term, but in the short term the Centre has turned to the generosity of the people who use it, launching an appeal for donations. The financial health of the LBC now has to be seen as the joint responsibility of all those who are involved with it.

In Croydon the problems have been of a similar magnitude, but the underlying strength of its co-operative has meant that the means of redress are more readily to hand. Its businesses include Hockney's Restaurant and a wholefood shop which have been highly profitable in the past and have the potential to remain so. But the economic

downturn came hard on the heels of the departure in 1988 of some of those most fully involved in the management of the businesses. The Arts Centre, which had attracted many people into the restaurant, had to close; trade started to fall as standards slipped, and losses mounted.

By June this year a new management structure was in place, headed by Dharmaruchi and Vimalaraja, with outside assistance from Kulananda. The co-op started to find effective ways of resolving the conflicting claims of participation and decisiveness in its organization. There was a rapid improvement in standards, and trade has started to follow suit.

Meanwhile, morale in the co-op has soared. Work is seen much more directly as a spiritual practice and people have been attracted to the co-op through the centre and from FWBO centres around the world. As more people have arrived, the businesses have been able to expand to cover costs. The restaurant is open for more hours each day; the shop is newly refurbished and has expanded its profitable takeaway trade. The Buddhist Centre, too, has an expanded programme to cope with an upsurge of interest, and there is even a modest Arts season. The Croydon Buddhist Centre is looking forward to 1991 with optimism.

25

## EVOLUTION CHRISTMAS SHOPS

Windhorse Trading, which is based in Cambridge, is one of the FWBO's largest Right Livelihood businesses and has established itself as a leading wholesaler to the gift trade. Last Christmas, it launched itself as a nationwide retailer with a remarkable form of business partnership.

'Evolution' gift shops were opened on a short-term lease in Bristol, Brighton, Cambridge, and Ipswich, in addition to the permanent shops in Bethnal Green and Norwich. The unique feature was that they were run co-operatively, as a joint venture by Windhorse and the local Buddhist Centre.

In each case, the Centre approached Windhorse with a team of workers and premises for the shop. Windhorse

provided the capital and much of the stock, and attempted, in a few days, to train the workers to be busy retail managers. In late October or early November the teams moved in and, in five days flat, they turned an empty shop into a branch of 'Evolution'. In two months, the Brighton shop took over £50,000 and the total projected takings were £175,000. Profits are split equally between Windhorse and the Centre.

Each shop proved a financial success and created a remarkably harmonious working environment. And there were other benefits too. For example, in Ipswich, where there is no public centre, the 'Evolution' shop has brought the FWBO into the public eye for the first time

and excited considerable interest in the local media. What is more, the people working there have had a deeper experience of Sangha than has hitherto been

available. Saddharaja hopes that the shop will be established permanently and that it will provide the basis for future FWBO activities in the town.

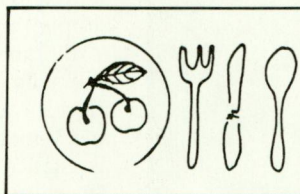


Brighton's Evolution Christmas shop



# CHERRY ORCHARD

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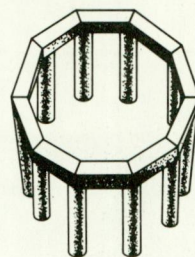


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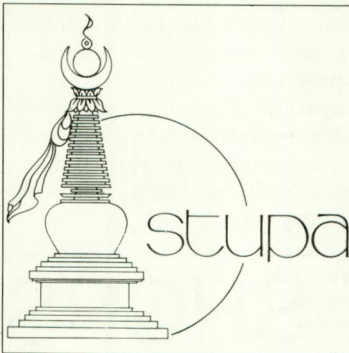
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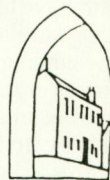
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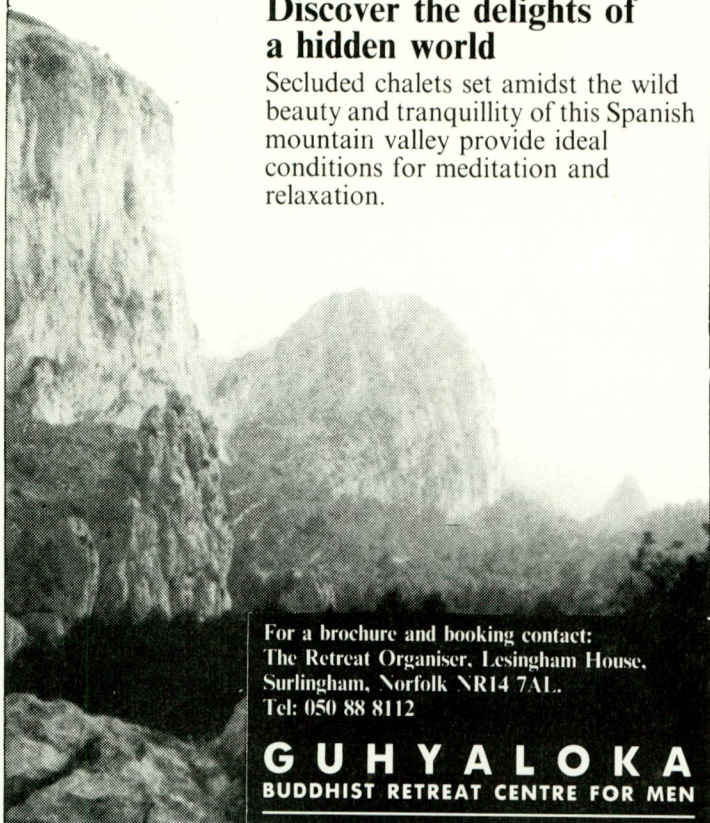
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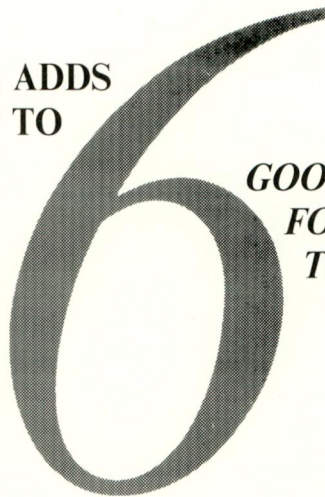


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