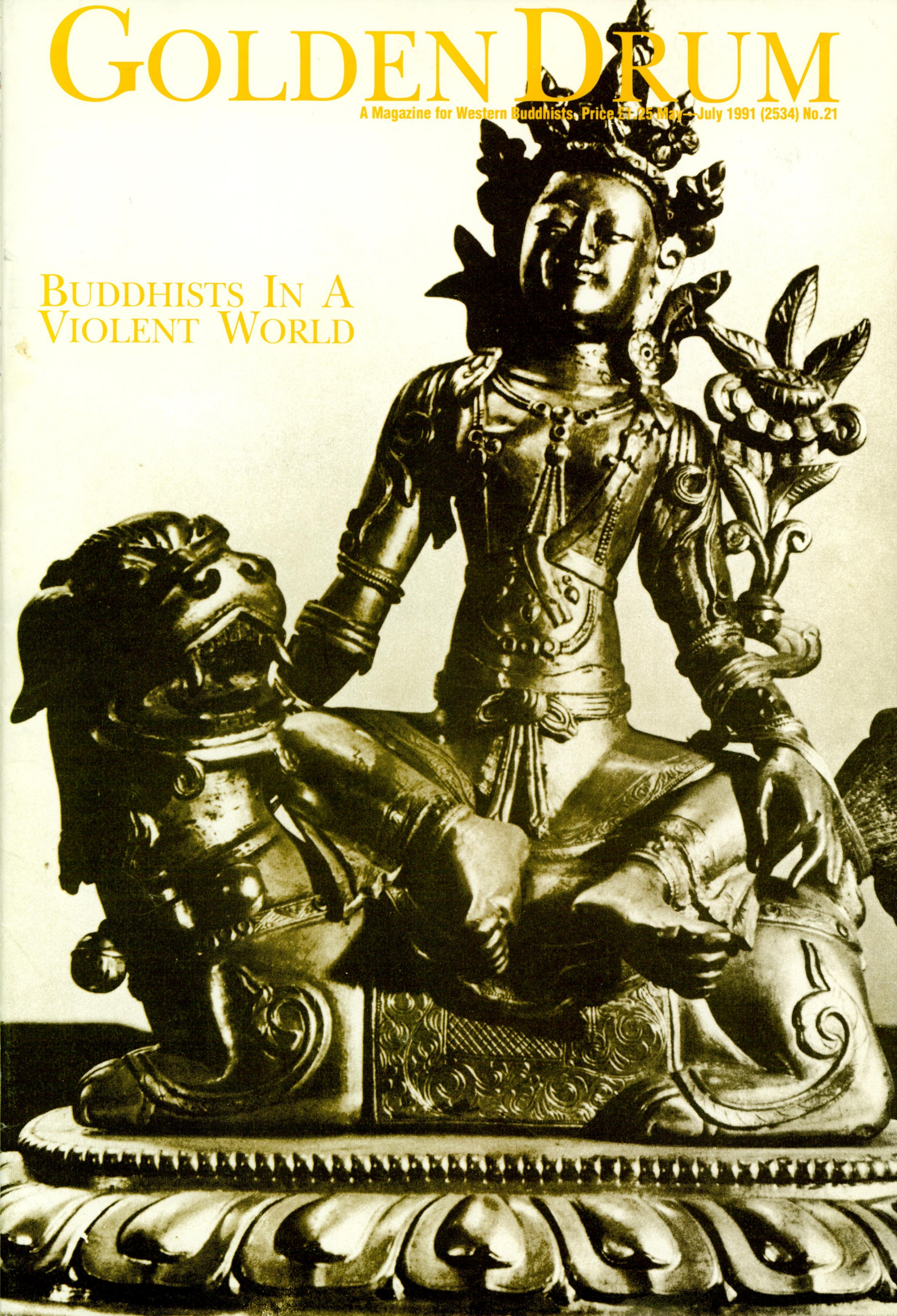


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BUDDHISTS IN A VIOLENT WORLD



GOLDEN DRUM

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The front cover shows the Sinhananda Avalokiteshvara, representing the insight aspect of compassion which bestows supreme fearlessness.

BUDDHISTS IN A VIOLENT WORLD

Bradford Dale is an idyllic limestone gorge in the heart of the English Peak District. Carved by a dancing stream of cold, clear water, it is a haven for trout, dippers, moorhens, a few ducks, and the occasional peace-loving walker. I was there just a week ago, having ventured out for a stroll during a short solitary retreat.

At one point my path reached a bend where grey-white cliffs rose almost vertically to enclose me in a world of bubbling water and deep, rich, greenness. For a few moments I seemed to be about as far away from everyday cares and worldly woe as it is possible to be.

That was when the universe gave a sudden, vicious thump and started to shake and vibrate around me. A heart-stopping yell of noise then ripped itself free from the swish of the nearby falls, growing louder by the second. Soon it was quite overwhelming and not a little frightening. I looked up. There, just a few hundred feet above me, was an aeroplane.

To be precise, it was a United States Airforce A-10 Thunderbolt, nick-named, I believe, the 'Warthog' and the 'Tankbuster'. It was making its first appearance, on a training run, over the hills of northern Europe after being deployed—to devastating effect—in the Gulf.

As quickly as it had come, it was gone, away to rain its noise on the cwms, fells, and glens of Britain's beauty spots before returning to its base on the Norfolk/Suffolk border. The woodland sounds returned; some crows settled back on the tree-tops, and a pair of ducks bobbed their way across a sheet of calm, dark water as if nothing had happened. They were used to the disturbance; it was just another part of life.

As I walked on, my media-bloated memory chattered away, feeding me with information about the plane, and with visions of shattered tanks and roadways strewn with burnt-out vehicles and charred bodies. Such thoughts seemed to have little to do with Bradford Dale or my solitary retreat; and yet there was no denying that just a few minutes ago I had been as close to the machinery—and perhaps some of the people—who had inflicted that devastation as I now was to the charming footbridge a little way off downstream. There was no denying that the plane, and its violence, was a part of my life too, and no quantity of country breaks, pleasant walks, blissful meditations, or scripture readings would make things otherwise. These days, we do not really get away from anything.

Some readers may have seen an irony in the fact that an issue of *Golden Drum* on 'The Practice of Loving Kindness' was going to press just as the Gulf War began. An irony, perhaps, but not a contradiction I hope. The world's violence will always be with us, and just as it would be foolish to expect it all to stop by virtue of our simply being good Buddhists (and somehow managing to convert everyone else to Buddhism), it would be foolish, and irresponsible, to think that, because there is no end to the *samsara*, then there can be no point in working as hard as we can to develop Wisdom and Compassion.

While on that solitary retreat I was studying Shantideva's *Bodhicharyavatara*, a concise and comprehensive guide for those who would seek Enlightenment in order to alleviate the world's suffering. At one point, the text's eighth century author says:

Unruly beings are as unlimited as space:

They cannot possibly all be overcome.

But if I overcome thoughts of anger alone

This will be equivalent to vanquishing all foes.

By practising the Dharma we cannot expect the world suddenly to become a better place, and we certainly cannot, should not, hope to win a state of pleasurable forgetfulness; if anything, our practice will make us more vividly aware of the madness and suffering that surrounds and conditions us. But by practising the Dharma, even in a violent world—especially in a violent world—we can expect to become better people, less prone to perpetuating that violence and more likely to avert some of its manifestations, at least in our own spheres of influence. We may be of some real use.

If I have ever met a man in whom 'thoughts of anger' appeared to be entirely absent, it was Dhardo Rimpoche, whose death anniversary we celebrated on 24 March. At our meeting, in 1982, I was rather alarmed by the number of times Rimpoche brought the subject of *hell* into our conversations. Eventually I asked him: 'Rimpoche, you keep talking about hell. Is it really *necessary* to believe in hell in order to be a Buddhist?'

A somewhat startled expression animated his face as he enunciated a very brief answer. I looked eagerly towards his secretary, awaiting the translation:

'Rimpoche says, "If you did not believe in hell, then why ever would you practise the Dharma?"'

Nagabodhi

VIOLENCE, POWER, AND LOVE

*Sometimes other people can give us a very hard time. Nagabodhi ponders
on the Buddhist's response*

*Moreover, brethren, though robbers, who
are highwaymen, should with a two-handed
saw carve you in pieces limb by limb, yet if
the mind of any one of you should be
offended thereat, such an one is no follower
of my gospel.*

*Kakacupamasutta, Majjhima-Nikaya I,
128–29, trans F.L. Woodward*

It must be more than twenty years since I first read these words, yet I can still recall the enormous force with which their unambiguous conviction hit me. The sentiment behind them was hardly new; I had grown up in a culture where the idea of 'loving your enemy' was a stock platitude. But there was, and is, something about the specific—and uncomfortably graphic—detail in which the Buddha chose to express himself that demanded an entirely new kind of attention, reflection, and response. Did the Buddha really mean what he was saying, or was he exaggerating a little to make a point—the nice familiar one about loving your enemies, and perhaps occasionally 'turning the other cheek'?

There seem to be two aspects to the problem. To put up with enemies, and even to meet their assaults with an attempt at positive thought, feeling, and action, is one thing. But to be able, in the heat—and perhaps the agony—of the moment, to feel nothing but love for them demands a state of such profound and complete *preparedness* that the mind staggers at the prospect of the work involved. Then there are the enemies themselves. Like countless people with whom I've spoken after their first attempt at the Metta Bhavana meditation practice (the development of loving-kindness), I have sometimes wondered whether there might not be a few 'enemies' who deserve to languish forever in that category: 'Should one really try to develop *metta* for someone like Hitler?' 'What about the South African government?' 'And what about Saddam Hussein?'

Regarding my first problem, there seemed to be no getting away from the fact that the Buddha really did mean what he was saying. Had he not confronted Devadatta, Angulimala, and other villains with tolerance and love? Had he not offered the full benefit of his teaching to Ajatasattu, a man who had taken the throne by killing his own father?

The preparatory work involved was of course nothing less than the spiritual path

he had discovered and shared. In offering this precept, therefore, he was not inviting us to pretend that we felt love when we did not, or to try to ignore the malice in the world—and our suffering—by an effort of sheer will; a two-handed saw, I fear, would cut its way as efficiently through to the truth of one's fundamental emotional state as it would to one's bones! But this is the very point of the Buddha's message. In choosing such a powerful image he was not only guarding against the possibility of a purely sentimental or superficial response: he was implicitly assuring us that a point is reached, somewhere along the spiritual path, where our identification with, and experience of, the universe, others, our bodies, and even our 'selves', will be dramatically different. As the Mahayana scholar/poet, Shantideva, says when talking of self-sacrifice:

*At the beginning, the Guide of the World
encourages*

The giving of such things as food.

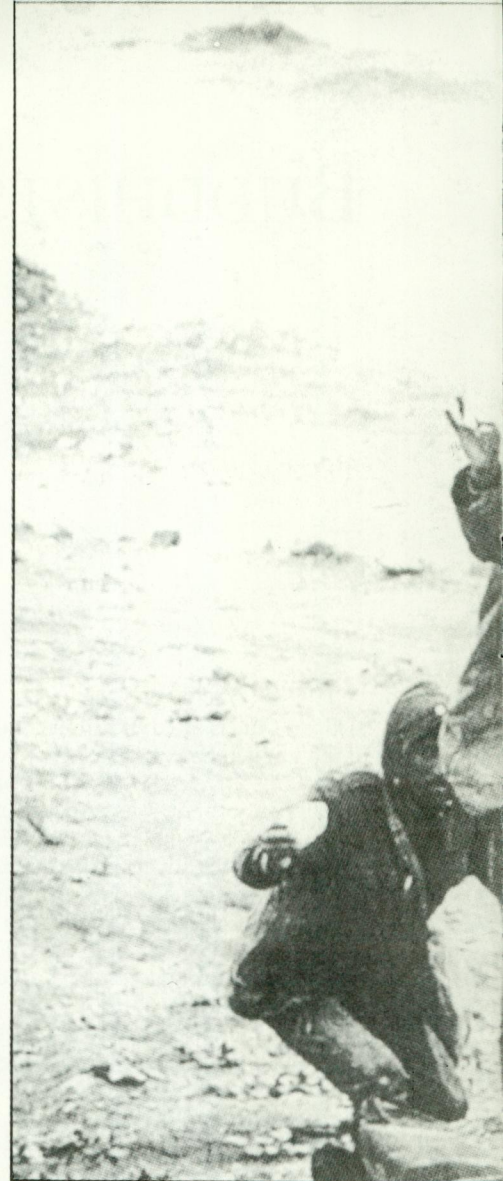
Later, when accustomed to this,

*One may progressively start to give away
even one's flesh.*

*At such a time when my mind is developed
To the point of regarding my body like food,
Then what hardships would there be
When it came to giving away my flesh?**

Kshanti, 'patient forbearance', is to be practised at all times, right from the beginning of our spiritual career, but it will only be 'perfected' when it is infused with the highest wisdom. And that wisdom is the fruit of all our practice. So practise we must.

The solution to this first problem naturally goes some way towards providing a solution to the second. When we no longer see things in a deluded, ego-centred way: when we see the universe and all it contains, including our bodies, moods, thoughts, feelings, and 'selves'—and those of others—as a dynamic interplay of ephemeral conditions, then, naturally enough, we will no longer see enemies as enemies in quite the way we do now. To come down to earth a little, we may see them as helpless beings trapped in webs of their own conditioning, their own delusions, their own impulses—perhaps even causing themselves far more suffering than they are capable of inflicting upon others. And our spontaneous response



The power mode in action

towards them can only be *metta*, in the form of compassion.

But, meanwhile ... while we do not yet see them in that new way, and while their actions continue to cause very tangible suffering, what are we to make of them? And what are we to do? What *are* we to do about the Adolph Hitlers and the Saddam Husseins, or, for that matter, the noisy neighbour and the vindictive colleague?

If the emotional reflex of wisdom is a love born of selflessness, and its dynamic fruits are disinterested actions rooted in that love, then it is perhaps worth wondering what might be the emotional reflex, and what the fruits, of ignorance. The reflex, surely, is none other than the well-known triad of greed, hatred, and delusion born of self-centredness, while the dynamic fruits are ego-bolstering acts, rooted of course in greed, hatred, and delusion, but dependent on the *power* contained in those emotions, and in our bodies, for their accomplishment.

No matter how far we may be from Enlightenment, we would do well to try to see the difference between the exercise of love and of power, whether in others or in ourselves. Sangharakshita has spoken of a love *mode* and a power *mode*; in gaining some clarity over this distinction we can move towards a recipe for Buddhist action.

By and large, the world—both metaphorical and actual—is driven by



power. To get what they want, and to avoid what they do not want, people use physical force, moral blackmail, manipulation gross and subtle, economic pressure, political platforms, play seduction games, offer threats, make false promises, and so on. They deploy whatever power they have, either by exercising it or by withholding it. With such forces constantly at play, is it surprising that things sometimes get out of hand?

In such a world, a Buddhist has two major responsibilities. Firstly, he or she must practise the Dharma in its fullness so as to become, eventually, a beacon of wisdom and love in the midst of darkness. Secondly, by applying awareness and discrimination, every effort should be made to refrain from functioning in the power mode and to function instead in the love mode. This means, among other things, abandoning all forms of coercion for reasoned discussion and dialogue, abandoning manipulation for direct and truthful communication, abandoning resentment and grudges for honest self-examination, abandoning undermining gossip for constructive criticism and—when appropriate—a wholehearted rejoicing in merits.

Actions issuing from the love mode are creative, energetic, and far more effective than most people probably realize. Arguably, however, there might

be times, despite one's best efforts, when the love mode does not seem to be getting through, and when an excursion into the power mode might seem likely to avert great harm; with the best will in the world, we cannot always answer for the intransigence of others. Again arguably, at such a time one might, reluctantly, resort to the power mode—but only as a *last* resort. In taking such a step, we must above all be certain that we are not giving way to our own ignorance, greed, or hatred, and that we are using the power mode only in the *service* of the love mode. Thus, a caring parent might smack a child when reasoned discussion on the wisdom of pulling his sister's hair, or of placing his hand in the fire, has foundered. In a broader arena, it may be that the power mode can be most safely deployed by *withholding* one's power. Gandhi, actually a very shrewd and manipulative politician, made great, and often benign, use of non-violent, 'passive' resistance. This must be preferable to violence itself, but any resort to the power mode carries the seeds of danger, and should be forsaken as quickly as possible.

In recent weeks I have heard many an ironical remark about the United Nations Organization's willingness to act on behalf of Kuwait while leaving Tibet to its fate. During a meeting with a 'select' body of academics and religious dignitaries in London, the Dalai Lama was provocatively asked whether he

thought that a newly potent UNO might be good news for Tibet. His—initially reluctant—reply was a triumph of tact. The world, he said, is becoming increasingly interconnected, increasingly one system. Any organization, therefore, which encourages the development of unity and harmony in that one world can only be a good thing.

His audience murmured a knowing chuckle and I could not help wondering how many of them assumed that, behind his diplomatic restraint, the Dalai Lama was really hoping that the UNO *would* act, would resort to the power mode in relation to the China/Tibet issue. The situation is of course highly complex—as would be a war fought in the Himalayan heights rather than in a desert—and Tibet has no oil. (Indeed, its most precious asset, wisdom, has flowed around the world rather more freely *since* the Chinese invasion!)

Just or not, the liberation of Kuwait has cost a hundred thousand lives—so far. The liberation of Tibet, even were it militarily conceivable, could involve similar losses. The Dalai Lama is believed to be an emanation of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Supreme Compassion. Is that a price that he would be prepared to pay? What do you think? And what does your heart say?

**A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*



YOU'RE NOT DEAD, NOT FORGOTTEN

Kulaprabha explains how working with Amnesty International connects with her Buddhist practice

I first met members of Amnesty International (AI) when I attended a talk arranged by an Amnesty group in Edinburgh. The speaker was Donald Woods, who had just published his book about the death of Steve Biko in the custody of the South African police. There was also an exhibition of the group's work on behalf of prisoners of conscience held in countries other than South Africa. I did not join AI.

I was very moved by Woods's account of Steve Biko. I was also angered by his first-hand descriptions of the inhumanity of apartheid in action. But I did not believe that any worthwhile or lasting results would be achieved by an organization which fought against torture, illegal imprisonment, wide-scale government-backed killings, and disappearances merely by asking people to write polite letters to members of those same governments. AI of course does just that: to become an AI member is to become a prolific letter writer.

At the time I assumed that only action at government level could successfully effect a change in the way other governments treated their people, and only involvement at that level could help to dismantle the vast machinery of their oppressive internal security systems. It must be said that in holding to this view I was letting myself in for a great deal of frustration since there often seemed to be a pressing reason why my own government did not want to pursue any action: 'Sanctions would throw our people out of work', or 'If we don't supply them, someone else will', and even 'Well, it's not our business and, anyway, what about our balance of payments situation?' Years can go by and lives can be broken while such prevarication persists.

Some time later I decided to try AI's method, and so joined a local AI group in Glasgow. The group's main concern at that time was to work on behalf of a Russian who had been imprisoned for arranging exhibitions of modern artists' work in his Leningrad flat. The

artists did not have the 'approval' of the Soviet government. We wrote letters, to Georgy himself, to Soviet legal prosecutors, to the prison governor, to the Russian Republic's administrators, and to the Soviet Embassy in London. I think we received one reply. We organized exhibitions about Georgy and collected petitions for presentation to the Soviet President. Nothing happened. In those days Soviet prisoners of conscience were rarely released early and Georgy was freed only at the end of his five year sentence. At times I wondered if it had been worth the effort—even though I knew that, on average, each day saw the release of four prisoners whose cases had been taken up by AI; in other cases, torture was halted and the conditions of imprisonment improved.

AI's original vision was (and still is) to work by encouraging individuals to write letters on behalf of prisoners. However, in the process of gathering the information needed for these letters, AI has grown into a highly respected, world-wide human rights organization with consultative status at the United Nations. As such it can bring pressure directly to bear on governments, making them act to alleviate the conditions of prisoners of conscience and others. It does what I thought could only be done by another government, and it does it much more effectively. AI has no vested interests and always acts in the name of its thousands of individual members of all nationalities—using their individual actions as the basis for its overall call for change. Some of the best evidence for AI's impartiality is provided by the insults it receives from governments of all political shades! Take your pick: 'An instrument of communist terrorism' (Brazil); 'In a leading position among organizations which conduct anti-Soviet propaganda' (USSR); 'This imperialist body' (China); 'This espionage agency' (Iran).

There were personal consequences from working for AI, too. Imagine standing in

Glasgow Central railway station, collecting money for AI, and being accosted by an irate Irishman demanding to know why AI was betraying Northern Ireland by criticizing the British Army's handling of the situation there. Merely to state the facts of the situation and leave it at that seemed a weak and rather futile response, so I argued and defended vociferously—and, in the end, only gave my accuser an excuse to walk off even angrier than before, and not much better informed about AI. Looking back on the episode a little later I could see that, though it was difficult not to return the anger being aimed at me, it had become impossible to convey AI's perspective once I had given way to righteous indignation. The situation had demanded some attempt, at least, to maintain a non-partisan attitude which in turn required a non-attached attitude from me: non-attached to my views, to wanting other people to agree with AI, and to wanting other people to be convinced by me! In the heat of the moment I could not maintain any such attitude.

I think that that was the first time I realized that AI's overall impartiality depended in a very real way on *my* impartiality and *my* non-violent attitude. In this very real sense AI is a grassroots organization: if its members are not able to reflect at least something of its non-violent, humanitarian ideals—and to reflect them in practical, real-life situations—then AI will decline and its effectiveness will become impaired.

A similar state of mind was required when writing letters on behalf of prisoners of conscience. Some of my first attempts at writing to Russian officials had to be tactfully edited by the more experienced members of our group. And although I understood intellectually why they were suggesting more moderate language and deleting any hint of a haranguing tone, emotionally I found it difficult not to use the letters as an outlet for the very real anger I felt when learning more and more details about

the way in which human beings could abuse each other.

But if anger is not an effective basis from which to work for AI, what is? At about this time I started practising the Metta Bhavana meditation. I had also started reading some Buddhists texts and had been studying the transcript of a seminar on which the Buddha's teachings on non-violence has been discussed:

'He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me', the hatred of those who harbour such thoughts is not appeased.

'He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me', the hatred of those who do not harbour such thoughts is appeased.

Hatreds never cease by hatred in this world; by love alone they cease.

(Dhammapada, trans. Narada Thera)

My letter-writing for AI took on a new dimension when I started to see the practical connections between these teachings and my wish to help bring human rights abuse to an end. Universal loving-kindness is not universal unless I reach out to my enemy with as much goodwill as I give to my friend. Likewise, I began to see that to work effectively on behalf of prisoners of conscience I had to think about and communicate with their captors and torturers with as much feeling of human solidarity as I felt towards their prisoners. When writing to a prison governor it was only by appealing to our common humanity that I could hope to influence his attitude to his prisoners in any meaningful way. If I needed any reminder of that I had only to read some of the letters from released prisoners who had realized and, moreover, practised the same principle under far harsher conditions than those I enjoyed. I think the effectiveness of AI stems from just this foundation of common humanity expressed by one individual towards another and addressed directly to them over and above any nationalistic, religious, or political considerations.

By this time I was Scottish Co-ordinator for AI's Urgent

Action Scheme, a network of people who send telegrams on receipt of a case sheet. This meant that I saw details of every case of torture and oppression which came under the remit of the scheme. Looking back, I do not think I could have done the job for as long as I did without the support of my Metta Bhavana practice. As it was, there were times when I felt inclined to withdraw—gladdened to see abuse end in one country only to see it arise in another, sometimes with such ferocity that AI could not name individual prisoners for fear of precipitating their immediate execution. But encouragement came in the form of follow-up notes on urgent action cases telling of early release, the end of torture, or other improvements such as a better diet or access to writing materials. Sometimes released prisoners wrote describing how they had been helped merely by knowing that other human beings knew of their plight and had not forgotten them. One prisoner, ill-treated and held incommunicado, was lifted from the depths of suicidal despair by these words from a guard: 'You are not dead—too many people know you are alive.'

I am not now so immediately involved with AI. These days I am more likely to be heard giving a talk about Buddhism than about human rights abuse. However, trying to follow the Buddha's advice that the eradication of suffering comes about by embodying the ideal of human Enlightenment does not mean abandoning the rest of the world. I have not forgotten the lessons I learnt from AI. This world is *our* creation—whose else could it be? If we individuals do not try to eradicate its ills, then who else will? AI and the Metta Bhavana can both help to change the world. They have certainly helped me change myself—not as separate influences but intertwined, the one illuminating the knots of the other.



Mara's forces attack the Buddha

The victim lives unaware of the danger; the poison glistens on the arrow's point; the bow bends smoothly back as the string is drawn taut; there is a soft twang and the arrow whistles towards its unsuspecting mark; a sharp cry of agony pierces the air as the convulsing victim hits the ground; the poison is seeping into the wounded body....

A friendly hand reaches down to pull out the deadly shaft, but the victim cries out: 'No! Stop! First, I want to know the name of the person who shot it, and what kind of arrow it is, and ...' Has shock confused the victim? Surely the arrow must be speedily drawn before death ends all questions. It is time for action, not enquiry.

We are all inextricably bound up with violence, immersed in a world where millions of animals are slaughtered daily for food or clothing, where gross acts of violence are depicted hourly in the mass media: war, murder, sexual abuse, muggings, vandalism, exploitation of the innocent—an endless and sickening catalogue of cruelty and destruction. And yet, in an escapism which effectively bars any efforts at escape from this round of suffering, we may not acknowledge that this is happening in our world.

For some, an awareness of the violence inherent in human life arises suddenly with a shock. An unexpected outrage may jolt anxiety and concern into a previously placid life, and innocence—and some ignorance—is lost. Others wake up to the violence in their lives more gradually, perhaps as they develop a more general awareness. For many, a grim hostile environment is a grinding reality accepted, semi-consciously, as a dull pain. Life rolls relentlessly on, and in the battle against the 'slings and arrows of outrageous fortune' harsh words and hateful thoughts may be so much the norm that their violent nature is not noticed for what it is.

Whilst spiritual practice enhances awareness and leads to greater joy and happiness, one of the burdens of a more developed consciousness may be a keener sense of pain and the ways in which it is caused: the extent of human involvement in violence may become clear. For, even if we have tamed nature *without* we have not tamed Nature *within*.

Our first response to violence is emotional—sometimes excitement or exhilaration, sometimes sadness and frustration, with maybe an angry impulse to lash out. Puzzling over these responses, and realizing that hatred hurts as much as does grabbing a burning coal

WHO SHOT THE ARROW?

How does one avoid adding to the world's violence? Ruchiraketu examines the work involved

to hurl at an enemy, we may start asking questions. Why is there violence in the world? What is its cause or source? Who, or what, started it? Who is to blame? Who shot the arrow?

But the only questions worth asking, or trying to answer, are those which lead to an ending of pain. The Buddhist path begins with a realization of the truth of suffering, and is defined by the extent to which it leads to freedom from that suffering. The Buddha, who told the poisoned-arrow story in response to philosophical questions about the nature of existence, tried to help others find the way to the liberation he had discovered. Rather than dealing in speculations about 'first causes' and the like, he pointed to suffering as a fact of experience and taught remedies for its alleviation. His teaching may be summarized as a teaching of conditionality: things arise in dependence upon conditions, and cease when those conditions cease. Applying this teaching to violence we may seek to understand the conditions leading to violence, and the conditions leading to its cessation.

Many today would accept that we are each a product of certain conditions. How we are and how we act are often seen to be influenced by such factors as our genetic inheritance and psychological conditioning, or environmental factors such as the political or social contexts we live in. To consider these influences may be useful, but it is important not to make the easy slide from conditionality into *determinism*, with a resulting loss of individual responsibility and initiative. Views like the following, for example, may lead us to feel unable to escape from our more destructive tendencies:

'...Our animal heritage is still carried in our genes so we will act viciously at times.... If our grandfather had a nasty streak in him—well it's no surprise that we have too.... As a child the drama of our life was 'scripted' into us by our parents, so we still unconsciously act out patterns beyond our control.... Conditioned to respond in various ways from birth onwards, our path through life is as determined as that of a rat in a maze.... We are only pawns in a game very difficult to understand—a complex play of social forces, at the mercy of governments and multinational companies....'

Whilst such views may throw light on some of the conditions which lead to violence in our world, they may also imply that there is little we can do about it. But many of them are just speculations as to 'who shot the arrow'. The Buddha's experiential and pragmatic approach was

an 'Art of the Soluble'. He was concerned with identifying the causes and conditions which we *can* do something about and distinguishing them from those in the face of which we are powerless. Dwelling on insoluble problems is depressing and saps the will to act. While being aware of the evil in violence it is vital that we passionately believe in peace and act vigorously to bring it about, otherwise we will repeatedly find ourselves in the situation portrayed by Yeats in which:

*Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood dimmed tide is loosed, and
everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.*

By distinguishing between what it is possible for us to achieve and what is not, we pave the way for meaningful solutions and generate the confidence to implement them. While the Buddha described how the world is burning with the fires of greed, hatred, and ignorance, he also showed the way to Liberation. Being unenlightened and ignorant we do not know things as they really are, but we can at least begin to tread the peaceful path towards Reality.

According to traditional Buddhism, it is Mara's attacks that we are prey to—the Evil One, with his sons and daughters, who heads a mighty army of malevolent forces. He represents the forces of greed, hatred, and ignorance at work in the world and in our minds. We can protect ourselves by repeatedly acting skilfully: ceasing to do evil, doing good, purifying the heart. Though on the path to Enlightenment we are beset by all sorts of confusions—egotistical motives, distractions, cravings, hatreds, and foolish doubts—through spiritual practice we gradually cause radiant qualities to bloom out of this unpromising soil:

*Mara does not find the path of those who are
virtuous,
Who live mindfully, and who are
Freed through Perfect Knowledge.*

*As pink lotuses, sweet scented and lovely,
Spring from a heap of rubbish thrown in the
highway,
So among rubbishy beings, among ignorant
worldlings,
The Disciple of the Perfectly Awakened One
Shines forth exceedingly in wisdom.*

(Dhammapada vv.57–9)

It is useful to distinguish between the violence which has its source in the world and that which begins in ourselves. We

cannot control the whole world but we can do something about our responses to it and our interactions with it. Walking through this world we will be cut and bruised by the harsh terrain, and though we cannot make the whole world smooth or cover it in some protective layer, we may achieve an equivalent effect by covering the soles of our feet. If we guard our own minds against Mara's destructive influence, there is a chance that some of our wounds will heal; we may then take steps to make the world a safer place for all. Practising 'wise attention' we take care to ensure that we are not stirring up further greed, hatred, or ignorance.

It is only as we become free of the influence of the poison in our own hearts that we can begin to see how best to respond to the violence in the world. As the candle flame of our awareness steadies we may more accurately discern the nature of the leaping, threatening shadows in the world around us. Distinguishing between our own violent tendencies projected out onto the screen of the world and the world itself, we can work to create a harmony between ourselves and the world which knows no limit—ultimately transcending the distinction between self and other. In the meantime, armed with an attitude of loving kindness, we can set about creating merit through skilful actions. As we make progress on the spiritual path we will develop an aura of positive emotion which will protect us from harmful forces. Dwelling in this aura we will be free to develop Insight—to see for ourselves things as they really are and wake up to the nature of Reality. Until then we will always be in danger of Mara's attacks.

Eventually we can be like the Buddha, as he is often depicted in Buddhist art, on the eve of his Enlightenment. With a peaceful smile on his face, he sits in meditation beneath the Bodhi tree surrounded by a glowing radiant light. All about are forces inimical to spiritual development—Mara with his armies. In their rage they fling weapons and boulders at the calm figure, rocks, trees, whole mountains, along with arrows, spears, javelins, and a multitude of other instruments of war. But the Buddha sits there firmly concentrating, immune from their attacks. As the weapons enter his aura they are transformed into flowers—beautiful symbols of spiritual growth and attainment—which rain gently down. The great being is unconcerned with the arrows or their malevolent source: he is bent on Enlightenment for the sake of all beings.

SOMETHING TO BE PRACTISED

Saddhaloka finds that everyday life provides a host of occasions for the practice of non-violence

For me, talk of non-violence evokes a scene from the film *Gandhi* in which demonstrators at a salt works allow themselves to be beaten down by the sticks of the police ... tales of Quaker stretcher-bearers risking their lives on the front line ... newsreel footage of young people standing in front of Soviet tanks and hanging flowers on the gun barrels....

All such scenes are marked by a courageous commitment to non-violence, and a readiness to put one's own life on the line. Contemplating them I find myself wondering whether I would have that same courage and commitment if I suddenly found myself in a similar position. Everyday life offers few opportunities to find out. It is all much less exciting, and it may not be at all obvious what non-violence in everyday life might involve.

My own commitment to non-violence began in my student days when I was involved in left-wing politics. There was much talk of revolution, of creating a fairer and more just society, and there were naturally those who insisted that the only way to achieve this would be through a violent upheaval. On a massive demonstration against the Vietnam war I remember seeing demonstrators battling with the police—whose horses charged into the crowd. A man lay bleeding in the gutter, and I felt the sordidness, nastiness, and smallness of it all; it was so far away from the brave new world we spoke of building. In that atmosphere of anger, hatred, and fear the contradiction inherent in using violence to build a world free of violence struck me very forcefully.

I began to look in other directions, becoming increasingly interested in

Eastern religion, and Buddhism in particular. Buddhism made me understand that to make real and lasting changes in the world I would have to overcome the violence in myself. It also made it clear that this is a *progressive* task. A declaration that 'I believe in non-violence' is not enough. Non-violence is something to be *practised*, all the time, in every aspect of one's life. I now recognize that it is only through this ongoing practice that I will develop the qualities that will enable me to meet more dramatic situations with real courage and non-violence.

My everyday attempts to practise non-violence are for the most part anything but dramatic. I don't have a propensity to get into brawls or to lash out with my fists, and whilst I do get angry once in a while I don't have a fierce temper that is liable to get out of hand. It therefore comes down to making an ongoing effort to be aware of the many small violences I do to others when I ignore them, don't listen to what they have to say, try to make them do what I want, or am harsh or unkind in my speech to them. The positive aspect of this lies in trying to empathize with, and cultivate feelings of *metta* for, all those I have dealings with, underpinned by a regular practice of the Metta Bhavana meditation. This perhaps sums up the real heart of my efforts with non-violence. I have still far to go, but I keep practising, and I slowly get better at it.

Another expression of my practice of non-violence is in my vegetarianism. Eating meat and fish obviously involves animals being killed, and it involves people in killing them. I am convinced that a healthy and balanced diet does not require this, certainly in the West, and probably in most parts of the world. I do still eat

some dairy produce, which is something of a compromise since the dairy and beef industries are closely connected: in supporting the one, one indirectly supports the other. There are good arguments for a vegan diet, free of all dairy and animal produce, but one does need to take considerable care to ensure that one is not deficient in important vitamins and trace elements. I have made moves towards a vegan diet, but out of a mixture of habit, laziness, and expediency I continue to eat a limited amount of dairy food, and acknowledge that in this respect my practice of non-violence is incomplete.

Anyone trying to be consistent in their efforts with non-violence is faced with a similar sort of dilemma when it comes to wearing leather shoes—which I do (though I don't wear a leather jacket!). The question seems to be *where* to draw the line. To take another example, wool comes from sheep, and those sheep are probably also kept for mutton, so should one avoid woollen jumpers and socks too? If one is going to take the implications of non-violence through to its ultimate conclusion one could end up

like the naked Jain ascetics wearing only a piece of gauze over their mouths to prevent them from accidentally swallowing insects.

Somewhere we have to take the principle of non-violence firmly on board, think through its implications, and apply it as fully and honestly as we can, whilst avoiding the extreme of a narrow, inhibiting inflexibility. We have to make decisions, and take full responsibility for our actions and their consequences.

Exactly the same sort of point needs to be made when it comes to looking at how to live non-violently in the context of modern society. Governments pour massive resources into the armed forces and the production of weapons of mass destruction whilst people starve. Consumerism stalks the earth and human greed prevails over reason when it comes to stemming the savage exploitation and rapid degradation of the environment. What we do in the face of all this can seem insignificant, but it is important that we do what we can. So I add my voice to the protest against nuclear weapons—and the vast amounts of money spent on them; in the community where I live, and in the local Buddhist centre, I encourage the use of household products that do not damage the environment; I have joined the boycott of the products of repressive regimes and avoid dealings with firms connected with abuses of the environment and of wildlife; I try to live simply and resist the advertising industry's attempts to proliferate my wants.

An active awareness of what is going on in the world,

'Eating meat and fish obviously involves animals being killed'



and a ready response to it, is very important. However, the modern world is so complex, everything so interconnected, that to be perfectly non-violent in terms of not having any economic connection with those who perpetrate violence is probably impossible. Again I realize I have to be pragmatic and do what I can. I am a member of CND and of Greenpeace, and am grateful that people are campaigning to help change the perceptions of public and politicians, but I am not active in campaigning myself. I only have a limited amount of time and energy, and I have decided that the best contribution I can make to a non-violent world is in teaching meditation, and in sharing my experience and understanding of *metta*, awareness, and the non-violent principles of the Dharma.

To return to my practice of non-violence in the details of everyday life, a few more specific areas are worth mentioning. One is in dealing with so called 'pests': mice and rats, flies in the kitchen, insects on plants. There was a time when I didn't really give it a second thought: they were pests, to be killed as quickly as possible. Now I think things through much more carefully. I look at what preventive measures can be taken, and at what really needs to be done. If it is clear that a plant will die if it is not sprayed, then I spray it. If it is clear that the mice will get out of hand if they are not dealt with, then I trap them. I make a reasoned decision, accepting that sometimes one has to take life in this way, and with a certain feeling of regret. [The important thing is to act with awareness, and with the sense of taking full responsibility for one's actions.]

Another area worth mentioning is driving. In a car we have tremendous power at our fingertips. It is so easy to get taken over by the demon in the machine, caught up in aggression and competitiveness. I find it important to remain aware of this danger, and to keep reminding myself that my own and other people's lives are at stake.

We can easily underestimate the effect that the media have on our mental and emotional states. A few years ago I went to see the film *Apocalypse Now*. Coming out of



'It is easy to get taken over by the demon in the machine'

the cinema I suddenly found very strong violent feelings welling up in me, and I had a strong urge to smash a window! I got myself home as quickly as possible before anything happened. I don't know quite what was going on, but the experience taught me that one must selective with regards to the influences to which one subjects oneself if one is to maintain the clear and positive awareness that is the foundation of non-violence.

When I visit the local prison in response to requests for a Buddhist chaplain, I usually teach the Mindfulness of Breathing and Metta Bhavana meditations. There can be an underlying atmosphere of violence in prisons, with strict hierarchies and pecking orders, and some prisoners

have told me of their fear that, in developing *metta*, they might lose the hard 'front' that protects them and enables them to hold their own in that harsh and difficult world. Here, words alone are of little use. Unless people can see in me a real faith and confidence in the transforming power of *metta* and non-violence, they are not going to be convinced that it is anything more than just a nice idea—nothing to do with real life. Reflecting on this, I know that the attitude of these prisoners is just an extreme version, due to their circumstances, of that shared by many people: that *metta* and non-violence are all very well in theory, but not all that helpful when it comes down to the nitty-gritty nastiness of 'the real world'.

But then I think of the Buddha, and his encounter with Angulimāla, the mass-murderer whom he went into the countryside to confront. Where a king and his army had failed, the Buddha, alone, tamed and converted him with love. I think too of the time when the Buddha placed himself between two warring armies and persuaded them to make peace.

Non-violence is the only real answer to all the hatred and fear, greed and aggression in the world. But I realize that I must deepen and intensify my own experience and understanding of non-violence in all the details of my everyday existence, so that I can give expression to its transforming power through my own life.



A GREAT OPPORTUNITY

Three Dhammacharis face up to the violence endemic in India's poorest localities

THE PROBLEM:

Once violence starts, it takes over everything. After violence there remain only ashes and a destroyed mind.

An event that remains engraved on my memory took place in a village called Chincholi, in Maharashtra, during April, 1987. It was a very bad day for the ex-Untouchable Buddhists. The cause of the trouble was a marriage procession.

Casteism is deeply rooted in the minds of so-called 'touchables'. They have always felt superior to the Untouchables, refusing to recognize any moral or intellectual worth in them.

Being seen as a caste issue, the marriage procession of an ex-Untouchable young man that was to take place in the village was intolerable to the caste-Hindus and they tried to have it stopped.

At around this time, the Buddhist people of the village celebrated Dr Ambedkar's birthday by organizing a lively procession. This was a challenge to the caste Hindus who were already unhappy about the marriage procession. Now their minds became explosive and, all together, they attacked the procession. They also threw stones at Dr Ambedkar's photograph and spat on it. It was a night-time procession, so they cut off the electricity. People, including children and women, became scared. Somehow the procession managed to reach the Buddhist locality, but thugs came and started beating people with sticks. Two youths were beaten until they lost consciousness. Women were also beaten. People were screaming everywhere. This continued all through the night.

There was no medical assistance of any kind in the village, so we wanted to take our injured to the district town. But thugs blocked the roads. We were also prevented from going to the police station. All means of communication were blocked off.

In the face of such inhuman treatment, the poor Buddhists asked for help and for justice. What offence had they committed? All they had done was organize a couple of processions.

The trouble did not stop there. All of the Buddhists' sources of finance were removed. The Buddhists depend on caste-Hindus for a living, often as bonded labourers, but they were given no work. They were also prevented from getting

into the flour mills. People in nearby villages were asked to stop the wages of Buddhist people. All this, in the latter part of twentieth century!

Buddhism stands for equality, liberty, and brotherhood. All these qualities are engraved in Buddhism, and that is why the Untouchables left Hinduism and came to the Buddhist fold. Has their aim been achieved?

Gaganachitta

A PERSONAL VICTORY:

Violence is the outward sign of a mind defiled by hatred. It is to be found in many forms, and far too often.

I had a recent experience of a terrible form of violence when, in January 1990, I lost my fourteen-year-old niece. One dark night she was the victim of a gang rape by four men. Afterwards she was killed with an axe and thrown onto the railway tracks. The courts classified her death as 'suicide'.

When I heard the whole story from the girl's mother I was stunned. Strong hatred for the culprits, and a desire for revenge, boiled through my entire being, and I started master-planning their deaths. But my practice of Buddhism, and great confidence in it, came to my rescue in this terrible situation. When I regained my lost awareness, I thought hard about the effects of my contemplated revengeful actions. More particularly, my practice of the Six Elements meditation, and deep communication with my friends in Order, helped me to come out of my negative state of mind. As this transformation took place, I found that I was able to help my sister and her husband to come out of their grief a little by communicating the Buddha's great principle of impermanence.

From my own experience I now know that Buddhism works effectively in this violent world.

Anomadassi

NO HATRED, NO VIOLENCE:

In order to get away from violence, injustice, exploitation, and corruption, and to create happiness for others, everyone should be aware of themselves and of their actions. If one is full of hatred, jealousy, and enmity then one will turn oneself into a negative person. As a consequence one will suffer and create suffering for the world.

Inspired by the high ideals of the Dhamma, I believe that a non-violent struggle for justice may sometimes be worthwhile. But never should we choose the path of violence.

After many years of Dhamma-practice I can say that Buddhism has been helpful in eradicating violence, wrong actions, injustice, and exploitation. For this I consider myself very fortunate. Naturally, I have had to face many ups and downs in my mental states, and much unskillfulness. This can be deeply discouraging, sapping one's enthusiasm,

but thanks to constant Dhamma practice—practice of morality, mindfulness, and meditation—I lead a dynamic and meritorious life of service to others, guiding people onto the right and noble path, even in difficult conditions.

Where there are violence, injustice, exploitation, cruelty, and feelings of hatred, Dhamma-practice is rather difficult. But such a situation provides a great opportunity to practise the Dhamma! I take much inspiration from the Buddha's words. On one occasion he talked about loving-kindness. He asked the brothers: 'Suppose a man is digging a well. Does earth get angry?' 'No, Lord,' said the monks. 'Similarly,' said the Buddha, 'a man wants to paint in the air with numerous colours. Can he paint a picture in the air?' 'No, Lord,' said the monks. On being asked why a man could not paint in the air, the monks said that there was nothing to paint *on*. The Buddha therefore said to the brothers that there should be no black deeds in their minds, because black deeds are the reflection of evil. Just as earth does not get angry, and just as air cannot support any trace of paint, then they should learn to tolerate insult and avoid violence.

In recent years violence has been on the increase in the social and national life of India. An example of this was provided by the caste riots in Worli, Bombay, in 1974–5. This was a 'war' between members of the Hindu Shivsena and a group of Dalit Panthers (militant ex-Untouchables). The riots, the violent attitudes of the Hindus, and the high-handedness of the police, created an atmosphere of great fear among Untouchables. People who wanted peace were scared, and there was great uncertainty. For many days people stopped visiting each other; some were arrested in their homes.

At this juncture, some followers of Dr Ambedkar carried out a silent procession in Worli in an attempt to create love and fearlessness among the down-trodden people. We organized this procession for peace, even though there was a curfew and a prohibition on public assembly. But the procession brought energy, fearlessness, and peace in people, and there were good signs of peace on the basis of equality, liberty, justice, *metta*, and *karuna*. I feel happy about this.

After this incident, much stress was laid on Dhamma-practice, which gives rise to virtues like love, tolerance, generosity, and fearlessness in us. It has become apparent to me that whatever changes took place in us came about through our commitment to the Three Jewels.

In 1979, Sangharakshita paid a visit to Bombay, and we made contact with TBMSG and the FWBO. Since then our practice of Dhamma has become more serious. Through retreats, lectures, and classes, through meditation and community life, life has become increasingly pure and stainless.

In the year 1983–4 another caste war

started in Bombay. During this time I was living in a slum in the Govandi Devanar area—which is quite famous for its rowdiness. The violence here was unabated. It troubled us and created a lot of mental tension. Death seemed imminent. Nevertheless, many a time would I go alone through the dangerous streets at one or two o'clock in the morning, on my way back from a Dhamma talk in one of the slum localities. At that time there were also Hindu-Muslim riots. Thugs from both sides—and the police—made trouble for us. But we bore it all with fearlessness and *metta*, and freed our minds from the surrounding atmosphere of violence. Our Order meetings, Order days, and Dhamma programmes carried on as usual, with great success. In that frame of mind we were able to build friendships—based on personal contact—with Hindus and Muslims, as well as the police personnel.

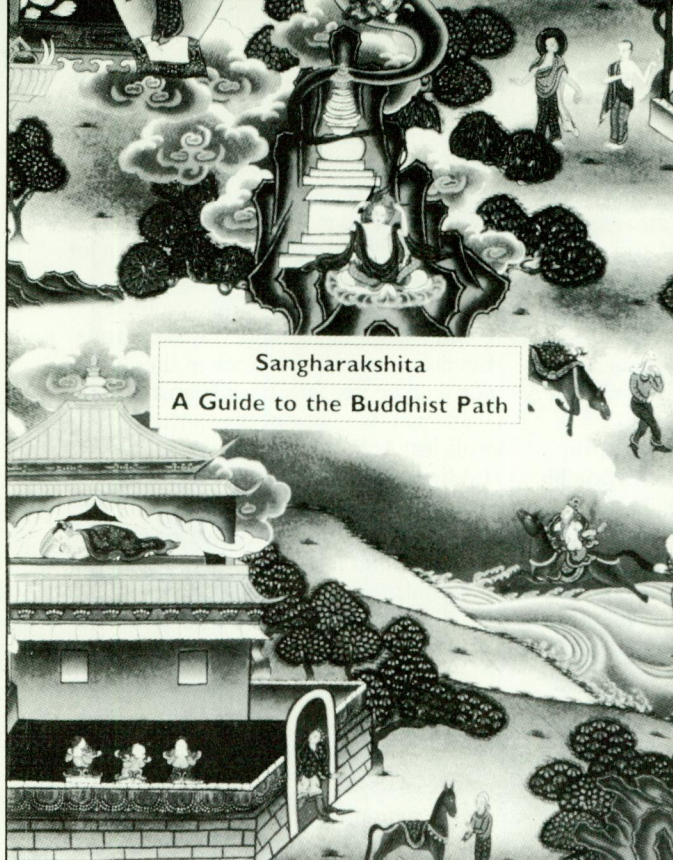
This was a real victory for the Dhamma. The Dhamma protects those who practise and follow a regular path. One who is fearless and without hatred is dear to everyone. My friend Gambhiranand lives in the slums of Ghatkopar. Riots have been going on there for the past three months, but Gambhiranand attends Order meetings, classes, and lectures, and comes out of that violent place full of positivity. This gives me great inspiration.

While leading a Dhamma-life and working in TBMSG, I sometimes have to visit countryside villages. On one occasion, two of our Sahayakas (Friends) in Sindhudurg arranged a public talk at Kankawali village. Here, half of the Buddhist people were actually officially registered as Hindu owing to pressure from the Hindus in the village. This being the case, it had been difficult to organize our programme. Because they so much wanted a Dhamma talk in their village, our organizers had not warned us about all this, and there was a lot of tension in the air until the lecture actually began.

In order to avoid any untoward incident, the village chief had been invited to our programme. But he was a caste-minded man, and would not come to sit on the chair that had been prepared for him. Instead, he watched from a distance while his place, right next to the chairman's, was left vacant.

Just as the lecture began, a dog walked through the audience and sat itself down in the village chief's chair. Seeing this, everyone was quite startled. But I felt very happy. In my lecture I said, 'We are very fortunate, we must have great merit, we must have the Dhamma on our side! A high-caste person could not come to our meeting but a dumb animal has come instead. This is really wonderful; it is a victory for humanism and loving kindness. It proves that the Dhamma revolution started by Dr Ambedkar is not only for human beings, but even for the welfare of animals as well!'

Bodhisen



Sangharakshita
A Guide to the Buddhist Path

WORTH WAITING FOR

A Guide to the Buddhist Path

by Sangharakshita
Published by Windhorse
pp.252, paperback
price £10.95

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Rumours of this book have been circulating in the FWBO for a long time, but this long-awaited *Guide to the Buddhist Path* has at last appeared. The rumours said that it was going to be based on the old *Mitrata Omnibus*; although in places it is obvious that this is where the idea for the book came from, it has grown into something much more than that.

The initial sight is pleasing. The cover is bright—taken from a large Nepalese thangka illustration of scenes from the Buddha's life. The layout is spacious and unforbidding, important in a book of these large dimensions. It is also lavishly illustrated with line drawings, though for my taste the wrathful figures and the incidental drawings worked better than the rather massive-looking peaceful Buddha figures.

The real treat, though, comes from the text. Based on carefully selected and edited extracts from Sangharakshita's lectures (of which there are around two hundred), this is a fine introduction not only to Sangharakshita and the FWBO, but also to Buddhism itself. The whole of the Buddhist

Path is covered. This starts with the Buddha (who else?) and explores the significance of the historical Buddha, as well as the symbolic and archetypal aspects of the Buddha's biography and of the *mandala* of the Five Buddhas. For Westerners, brought up in a predominantly rationalistic culture, this is a good introduction to the use of symbols and imagery in Buddhism. A link is made between Eastern and Western approaches by means of Jung's ideas on archetypes.

The text continues with sections on the Dharma (utilizing the Wheel of Life as a schema—complete with a particularly fine illustration by Aloka) and the Sangha. Having thus covered the Three Jewels, the heart of any understanding of the Buddhist life, the nitty-gritty of how to put that life into practice is covered by sections dealing with Morality, Meditation, and Wisdom.

This book comes highly recommended. It is one of the few books available which gives a comprehensive overview of the Buddhist path and how to follow it. It presents Buddhism from a highly practical and pragmatic point of view, which would be useful for any Buddhist, no matter what tradition they are following.

Virachitta

CLARITY ON EMPTINESS

Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness

by Ven. Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche
Translated and arranged by Shenpen Hookham
Published by Longchen Foundation
pp.93, paperback
price £4.95

According to the preface, Shenpen Hookham had already studied and practised under the direction of Kagyupa lamas for ten years before she met the author of this short book, Ven. Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche. She then studied under him for eleven years before publishing this translation. The impression given is that she has given a great deal of careful thought to this presentation of Khenpo Tsultrim's teaching, a course which he has given many times to Westerners.

This text presents, from the Kagyupa point of view, the central subject of Emptiness, arranged in progressive stages of subtlety and depth. The stages, in order, are the *Shravaka* (Hinayana), *Chittamatra*, *Madhyamaka-Svatantrika*, *Madhyamaka-Prasangika*, and *Madhyamaka-Yogachara*. Sequences of this kind are fairly common in works on Tibetan Buddhism, their usual purpose being to distinguish the teachings of one of the main schools from the rest. In this book we are being given the Kagyupa view of Emptiness—and much, much more. For this is no mere explanation of a philosophical position: it is an excellent guide to the reflection and meditation involved at each level of understanding. The approach throughout is never scholastic, but practical, personal, entertaining, and above all extremely clear. It is certainly the clearest writing I have encountered on the subject.

Since it seemed so accessible, we recently studied

and reflected upon the first two parts (the *Shravaka* or Hinayana and *Chittamatra/Yogachara*) on a short retreat at Vajrakuta. We began with a basic reflection upon the way in which one tends to create and then identify with a vague and undefined sense of self. We found this cropping up in particular with respect to negative emotions, and then also, more subtly, in consciousness itself. Having tried to understand this and reflect upon it as deeply as possible, we felt able to move on to the stage of actual meditation. In other words, the text takes us through the three traditional levels of wisdom or insight.

The initial stage of *shrutamayaprajna*, 'listening' or taking in the teaching, is made easy by the clarity and approachability of the text. Once there is no doubt about what one has heard, about what the words are actually saying, it is possible to take things deeper, to the stage of 'reflection' or *chintamayaprajna*. Reflection means turning that initial understanding over and over in our mind, checking it with our experience, getting to know it backwards and forwards and upside down, until we have complete trust and confidence in it. We can then progress to the final stage, *bhavanamayaprajna* or 'meditation'. This kind of *vipashyana* or insight meditation consists simply of sitting in this state of trust and confidence which we have generated through our very thorough reflection, and allowing its meaning to penetrate to those depths which words and ideas alone cannot reach.

I found this an interesting and very useful introduction to the world of insight meditation, embodying an approach which I hope to continue in future study groups, meditation retreats, and workshops.

Kamalashila

WOMEN IN THE DHAMMA REVOLUTION

But Little Dust—Life Amongst the Ex-Untouchables of Maharashtra

by Hilary Blakiston
(Dharmacharini Padmashuri)
Published by Allborough Press
pp.180, paperback
price £4.99

The title of this book alludes to Brahma Sahampati's words to the newly

Enlightened Buddha, urging him not to retire into solitude but to teach, '...because there are men and women with but little dust on their eyes who are wasting their lives through not hearing the Dharma'. The present book is a personal account of how, among the dispossessed inheritors of Dr Ambedkar's 'Dharma Revolution', women in particular came to hear the Dharma. It is a personal account because its author had a singular role to play in the process.

Readers of *Golden Drum* are no doubt already familiar with the very readable *Jai Bhim* by Terry Pilchick (Dharmachari Nagabodhi), which describes the re-emergence of Buddhism in India through the work of Ambedkar, and gives an account of the development of TBMSG (as the FWBO is called in India) and its social work wing Bahujan Hitay. Padmashuri's book is more specifically about the Buddhist women she first encountered in her work as a nurse and midwife while helping to set up the medical and social project which became Bahujan Hitay (funded by the then nascent Aid For India). The heart of the book is her description of the full-time Dharma work she took up later, once the medical project had been safely 'delivered'. There are also descriptions of a pilgrimage and solitary retreat in northern India.

It is difficult to write badly about India because any account of daily life there amounts already to an astonishing traveller's tale. Padmashuri starts with that

advantage, but she writes well and ironically anyway, so the book as a whole is very moving, not just because of the scenes she depicts but also because of the perspective she brings to bear upon them. A further striking fact is that because she is a woman and a fellow Buddhist she is often made privy to aspects of the social and cultural life of the community she worked with that are little known outside.

The book begins with a charming autobiographical sketch of her days at a girls' boarding school: '...pleated shorts ... bleak games pitch ... an agonising hour of hockey' and the first intimations of how her life would unfold when her form-mistress treats the second form to her slides of Africa. Later we hear how, after several false starts with VSO, she finally reaches Dapodi, a slum area of Poona, where there is nothing romantic about huts made from 'beaten out cans, polythene sheeting, broken wooden boxes, sackcloth....'

One very much gets the impression that her early medical and social work, and especially what it revealed to her of the plight of the women she cared for or worked with, was the real inspiration behind her decision to undertake the more radically maieutic activity of Dharma-work later, an activity which helped the women to begin to deliver themselves from their own oppression.

Her observation is shrewd and the sympathy of her identification with these women is palpable. At one point Padmashuri switches for twenty pages or so into fictional mode and relates the tale of Shobha, an imaginary young woman who came for a while to dominate her mind. The switch to fiction does not jar but rather offers a resumé of what has gone previously, Shobha's story might have been that of any young woman coming with her husband from a rural area, looking for work

and finding the slums. The book does not evade the realities of hardship and human misery—there are harrowing moments—but, on the other hand, we also hear stories of courage, heroism, fortitude, determination, and selflessness. There are striking portraits of some at least who seem to have but little dust on their eyes.

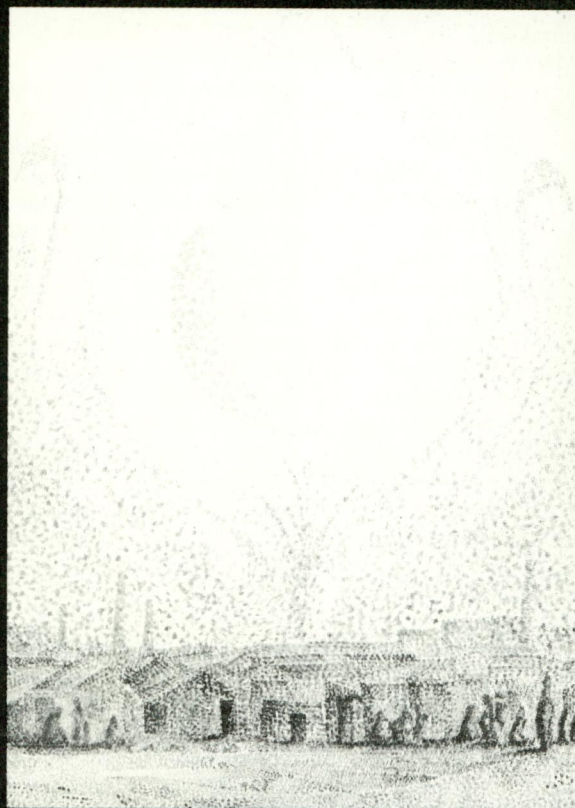
Padmashuri's Dharma-work included the predictable round of lectures, study-classes, and retreats. For many of the women, simply to go on a retreat was an impressive, even courageous, act. The account of the transforming effects of these occasions is moving and inspiring. There

are numerous memorable anecdotes too long to mention here, but the reader may be struck by the story of the woman who turned up at a retreat at the right time and right place on the basis of information provided by a dream the previous night!

A little more editing could have removed a couple of stray infelicities, and the odd theological solecism might have been better avoided, but what emerges at the same time as the wonderful portrait of her women is a picture of the tough but unobtrusive midwife of what has been born among them.

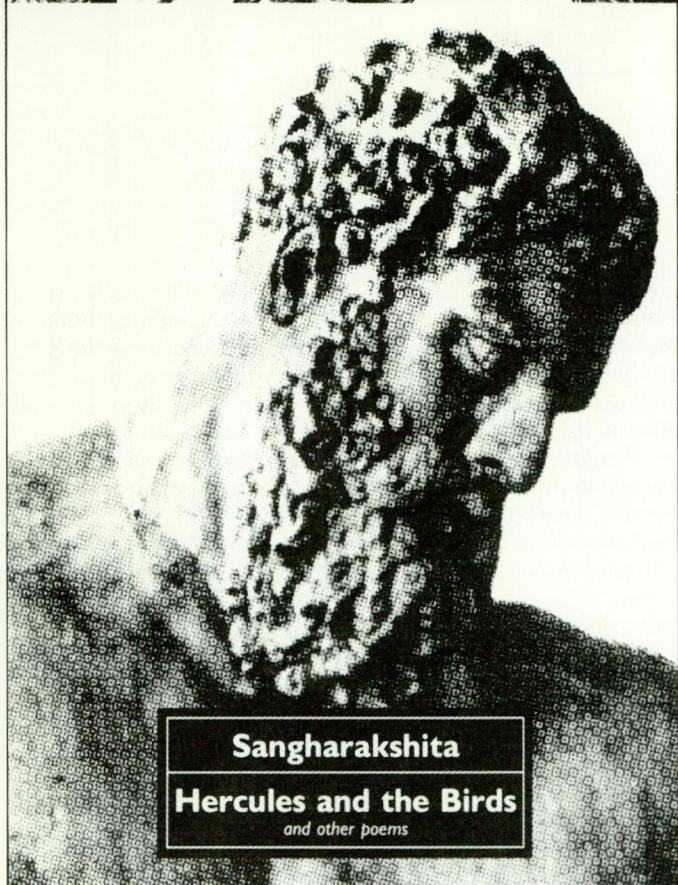
Vipassi

BUT LITTLE DUST



HILARY BLAKISTON

Life amongst the ex-Untouchables of Maharashtra



Sangharakshita
Hercules and the Birds
and other poems

PRIVILEGED GLIMPSE

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Hercules and the Birds and Other Poems

by Sangharakshita
Published by Windhorse
pp.61, paperback
price £3.95

With the possible exception of his friendships, the poet reveals—indeed realizes—himself more deeply and completely in his poetry than anywhere else. It is therefore with the keenest anticipation that one turns to Sangharakshita's new volume *Hercules and the Birds*, for in its pages we behold not the mere execution of some pleasant literary sideline, but the heart of the man himself.

Indeed, it is the intellectual probity and passion of Sangharakshita's poetry which call out to corresponding qualities in the reader, who must respond, if it is to be enjoyed to the full, with a commensurate honesty and receptivity. Thus, the classically lyrical 'Wondering Heart':

*'What can it do, when friends
avert
Their eyes, or choose to dwell
apart?*

*...when looks grow cold
...when there are none
To whom it may its griefs
impart? ...
What can it do, the lonely heart?*

If the experience is common it is nonetheless bitter, which is doubtless why, rather than ponder its causes, we mostly prefer to despatch the pain to oblivion as soon as possible. But though time may heal, it can also deaden, and it is the purpose and nature of a true poem such as 'The Wondering Heart' to transform dimly-perceived truths and half-experienced emotions, however painful, into objects of meditation that lead us toward a profounder understanding. True poetry is thus the gateway to ever-greater fulfilment. It also leads through the land of 'The Gods'. In his poem titled thus, Sangharakshita introduces us to those spiritual giants dormant within our own hearts. They emerge from the underworld in images of sombre beauty:

*'Some have raised arms. Some
Bear on their heads
Sun, Moon, horns
A wide-open lotus flower.'*

But this is no academic exercise in paganism—nor is it an optional encounter; for:

*'Slowly, gravely, they walk,
Descending into the
Underworld,
Into the darkness ...
And we must follow.'*

Again, in the dedicatorily-titled 'I.M.J. and K.', we walk with the gods—more—we are the gods: as we identify this time with Blake's Zoas. Really, to read this poem is to lament the tragic panorama of human frailty and the prospect of suffering as man turns his back on the noblest part of himself. Warily leaving Golgonooza (the citadel of Arts and sciences), Los (Imagination) lays his sad head down upon his consort Enitharmon's lap:

*'...She smiled.
Ages passed. The giant forms,
covered with snow,
Harden and petrify. The wind
howls in the waste.'*

At its best this volume connects us with Sangharakshita's passion for the beautiful mystery of life—a vital current regulated by the deep and tender confidence that characterizes the true poet. For there is no such thing as a partially-committed poet. Just as you cannot have 'half-a-mind' to write poetry, neither can you read it with half-an-eye, in a half-hearted fashion. The very fact that Sangharakshita devotes some of his time to poetry demands that we attend to it, enjoy it, scrutinize it, criticize it, but above all, *respond* to it! The failure to do so is dangerously to neglect a crucial aspect not only of Sangharakshita's genius, but also of our own.

James Murphy

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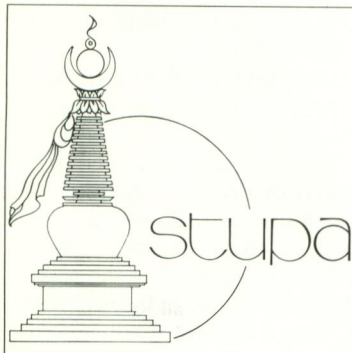
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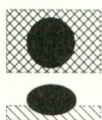
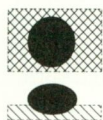
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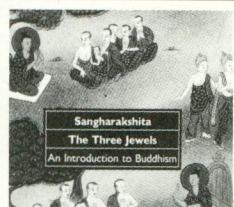
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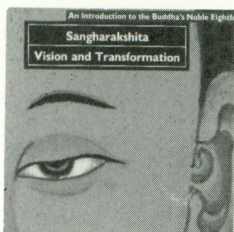
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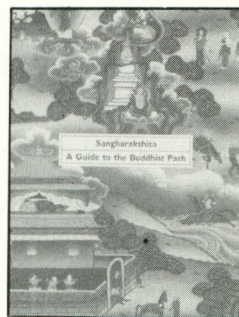


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Wanted, a new image of manhood

MEN AT RISK

A disturbing phenomenon has arisen in the Western world over the last ten to fifteen years: a growing number of suicides amongst young men. In Britain, for example, there has been an ever-increasing suicide rate in this group since the mid-seventies. This has occurred despite the rates amongst other groups remaining stable or even declining.

As yet, no one seems to have a viable explanation for the increase. There is no obvious correlation with demographic variables such as unemployment rates. But, somehow, more and more young men are reaching extremes of hopelessness and killing themselves. One can of course only speculate about reasons, but perhaps it is worth looking at aspects of men's lives that may point to

reasons. Three aspects stand out: fathering, male friendships, and images of masculinity.

As members of the WBO are aware through their contacts with many men, the lack of a close relationship between a man and his father seems very common. Indeed, this trend seems to be on the increase, especially as over three-quarters of a million children in Britain now have little or no

contact at all with their fathers, their parents having 'broken up'. There also appears to be a common lack of close friendship between men. Typically, men lose contact with each other when they move to another location, or change jobs. Then, the 'image' of masculinity itself is in a perilous state. Where can young men in Western societies find positive ideals of masculinity to emulate? Not in superficial relationships with other men, not in the often extremely violent stereotypes of the media, nor in the images of masculinity presented by many feminists.

Notwithstanding the undeniable justice of some feminist arguments, there is a marked tendency within feminism to denigrate men and masculinity—an inverted sexism. A general effect of this seems to be the lack of a *positive* ideal of masculinity, and at times a strongly negative evaluation of manhood—often accompanied in men themselves by guilt and self-loathing.

So do these three factors provide the context in which more and more young men are killing themselves? Whether they do or not, in the USA there are now those in the 'New Male Consciousness Movement', such as the poet Robert Bly, who have begun to recognize the psychological importance for men of developing a strong, 'positive masculinity' through participation in all-male groups.

This need has long been recognized within the FWBO, confronted very often by men who experience a deep uncertainty and guilt about their masculinity, along with difficulties in making the male friendships so vital to their spiritual development—and psychological health.

DOUBLE STANDARDS IN THE GULF

Since our last edition, the Gulf War has come and gone. It is difficult to add much to the sustained barrage of comment and analysis that this war has engendered. But perhaps the immorality and stupidity of the arms trade must be

underscored.

Dealing in arms is of course an explicitly wrong means of livelihood from a Buddhist point of view, and is seen as being directly conducive to violence.

Hardly a year ago the West was still selling arms to

Saddam Hussein. Then the West discovered that he could use his purchases for ends which were not in its own interests: invading Kuwait, subjecting its people to a reign of terror, and threatening the world's oil supplies. Much comment was then made about the psychopathic character of Saddam Hussein, the extent of his military

ambition, and what he and his agents did to people. It is strange that it took Western governments so long to acknowledge these facts—which have been evident to others for years. Their actions in selling arms to the Iraqis were directly contributory to the invasion of Kuwait, and betray a double standard.

MUSLIM RESOLUTION

The careless intolerance of certain sections of the Muslim world continues. The international 'Organization of Islamic Conferences' and the 'Islam in Africa Organization' have issued a communiqué with stated aims that include the eradication of all non-Muslim religions in member nations, the replacement of all Western forms of legal and judicial systems by Islamic law, and the attempt to ensure that only Muslims are elected to political posts in member nations. The Islamic Council in London is a signatory to this document, and so presumably the United Kingdom is considered a 'member nation'.

Clearly, such aims are not going to promote the peacefulness and well-being of either Muslims or non-Muslims. It is time that Muslims generally gave a clear and unequivocal assent to the principle of multi-faith societies, in which they have a recognized right to practise Islam and a corresponding duty to respect the rights of non-Muslims to practise *their* religions. Or is the practice of Islam inherently inimical to tolerance, to the extent that such an assent will never come?

DECLINE OF THE CHURCH

A further half a million people in England have stopped going to church in the last ten years, as Christian worship continues to decline in popularity. Attendance figures among charismatic and fundamentalist evangelical Protestant groups alone seem to go against this trend. Less than four million people now attend church in England, and less than a third of them are Anglicans. The disestablishment of the Church of England would appear to be long overdue on the grounds of general lack of interest—if for no other reason.

The Dalai Lama—a problematic figure



INVASIONS OLD AND NEW

The Kuwaitis were perhaps fortunate in being invaded by a country that had not yet manufactured nuclear weapons. Had that country instead been China their liberation would not have come so quickly, if ever at all.

Over forty years ago the communist Chinese invaded Tibet, and have carried out genocidal policies ever since. The Tibetans are still the victims of brutal repression, with torture and murder routine, yet their suffering

seems to be as invisible to Western governments as was Iraqi malevolence.

Once again the British government has ignored the Dalai Lama, with neither the Prime Minister nor Foreign Minister meeting him during his recent visit to Britain—even though the Prime Minister *was* prepared to meet politicians from Baltic states. Admittedly the situation is complicated under international law: China has a tenuous but longstanding claim on Tibet, and the Tibetans failed to join

the UN prior to the invasion. Cares over the fate of Hong Kong must also urge the British government to tread softly. Meanwhile China enjoys 'most favoured nation' status with the USA.

Whatever the legal complexities about the Chinese government's claim on Tibet, their behaviour towards the Tibetans is indefensible and needs to be brought into more prominence on the international agenda. Whether Tibet should be completely independent, or a more or less autonomous region within China, its people ought to have a democratically elected government, as of course ought the Chinese citizens of China.

If you would like to do something towards changing your government's attitude towards Tibet then write to your representative, expressing your views. You could also see whether you could help Amnesty International. One other small step might be a boycott of imports from communist China.

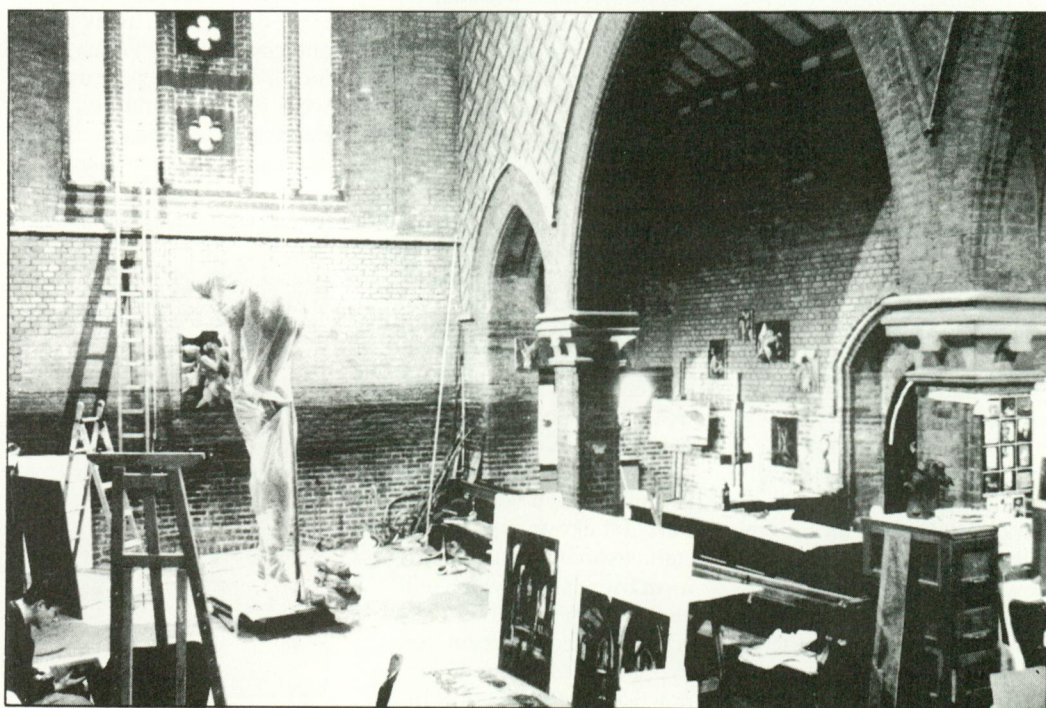
THAILAND'S MILITARY COUP

Thailand has undergone its first successful military coup in over a decade. Its leaders have claimed that they ejected the democratically elected

government because of its corruption. One alternative explanation is that they themselves were about to be sacked by the government.

One of the stated aims of the new military government

is to uphold 'Buddhist morality'. It could start to do this by resigning and calling a democratic election. A further step towards Buddhist morality in Thailand would be the disestablishment of Buddhism so that it is no longer the state religion and becomes free of political control.



A church under new management—now an artists' workshop



THE MAHAVIHARA: A YEAR ON

The Mahavihara rises from the Dapodi slums in Poona rather like a cathedral must have emerged from the huts in medieval England. It is built on a quiet, sunny slope stretching down to a river and, since its opening a year ago, has become a well-known landmark.

20 It is the headquarters of the Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha Sahayaka Gana (TBMSG), as the FWBO is known in India, and of Bahujan Hitay, the social welfare movement which it runs. The dual aspect of the Movement's work in India is aptly embodied in the building itself. There is a huge and beautiful meditation hall from which a colonnade leads to two buildings. One houses the Bahujan Hitay offices, a library, and guest rooms; the other houses the residential community for trainee social workers and Lokamitra's offices.

A constant succession of visitors from all over India comes to visit the Mahavihara and many have offered land on which similar projects could be built. Through their work over the last ten years TBMSG and Bahujan Hitay have become known throughout Maharashtra. Other social work organizations send their workers to Dapodi for training in Bahujan Hitay's methods. Now influence is spreading further afield. In Lokamitra's words, 'The opening of the Mahavihara has put us on the map and drawn attention to

our work. This is very valuable. In India you can be working in a very good way but if people don't know about you, you don't have the influence you otherwise could have.'

But the Mahavihara is certainly not just a showpiece, and the office, in particular, is a hive of activity. Bahujan Hitay's work is expanding rapidly throughout Maharashtra and into states beyond. This creates a lot of pressure on the department. The office runs all the educational hostels, health-care projects, literacy classes, and so on which make up Bahujan Hitay's work. It liaises with field workers and it accounts to the Karuna Trust, the British Buddhist charity which funds much of the work. A high degree of competence is required from the staff, many of whom are very inexperienced; but while some find it very difficult, the atmosphere is light and friendly.

Most of the men who work at the Mahavihara live in the men's community across the way and many are students on the new training course. The students on this course are all ex-Untouchables and committed Buddhists who have asked for ordination. The community is a very important part of the course, giving trainees an opportunity to form friendships which will enable them to function effectively as they form teams to put their training into practice in other areas of India.

The course is being taught by Lokamitra, Bodhidhamma, and Maitreyanatha and consists of lectures and tutorials in which trainees specialize either in administration or in social work in slums and hostels. Buddhist principles such as Right Livelihood and ethical communication are also covered.

The social and Buddhist work of the Mahavihara are intimately bound together—in a sense the social work is Buddhist work, and vice versa. But Buddhist practice and teaching informs everything that is done. There are classes in the shrine-room most nights of the week, as well as study groups and meditation sessions. And the Mahavihara is the base for the many talks and classes in the Poona localities and for 'pastoral' work in the community. Order members are often asked to conduct birth ceremonies,

weddings, and funerals, and these events, usually followed by a Dhamma talk, are an important point of contact with the wider community.

The Mahavihara is now a focus for Buddhists throughout the region. This year marks the centenary of the birth of Dr Ambedkar, the great Untouchable leader who led the conversions to Buddhism, and the Mahavihara has organized a series of seminars exploring his life's work and teaching. But it is also a focus for the local community. The library is stocked with a surprisingly eclectic range of books, and display boards show photographs of the Movement's work. In the daytime it is a haven for those needing to research or study; in the evening local children gather to do their homework. A quiet place with precious electric light is enough to make the library a valuable resource for the whole community.

At the foot of the stairs leading to the community is a busy open air bookshop and just below the shrine is an amphitheatre which has been the venue for open-air performances—whilst being used every day for a karate class. Amid all the bustle, members of the local Buddhist community gather every evening after work to meet and talk. And around the building people are to be seen walking together, deep in conversation. This is a familiar sight in the streets of Surlingham and Bethnal Green, but here they walk by Dapodi's river, and in the long shadow of the beautiful, white Mahavihara.



GIRLS' HOSTEL

Bahujan Hitay, the social work wing of the FWBO in India, runs a network of hostels for children from ex-Untouchable and other disadvantaged groups. These provide a place where children stand a chance to get away from the pressures of poor home backgrounds and make use of the educational system. There are now nine boys' hostels, housing 310 boys, which have gained a very high reputation.

Girls from the villages and slums usually go without an education; there is a traditional reluctance to taking girls away from the home. So it was a big step forward when, on 8 February 1991, a girls' hostel was opened at Vishrantwadi in Poona. The Chief Minister of Maharashtra, who opened the hostel, was greeted by an avenue of women holding trays of rice and candles—the traditional welcome for an honoured guest. More than a thousand people attended the ceremony which was reported in the Indian National newspapers, on television, and on radio.

The buildings are remarkably beautiful. There are two simple walled structures with cool spacious rooms overlooking a central courtyard. One of the buildings is the hostel; there are bedrooms on the two

upper floors and a hall on the ground floor where the girls eat, study, and play. The other building houses a community of women, including the two hostel wardens (see Karen Stout's account elsewhere).

Fifty-three girls have been living in the hostel since last July. Until its completion a girls' hostel had been housed in rented accommodation since 1988, so for some of the girls this is their third year of hostel life, but for others it is a new experience. Most are from rural areas and find the higher standards of the city schools very demanding. If a pupil fails the end of year exams for two consecutive years she has to leave the school. This means that she would have to leave the hostel too, so there is a good deal of pressure to succeed and the girls have a very exacting timetable. From 5.30a.m., when they get up, until 10.00p.m., when they go to bed, there is a constant round of homework, school, helping the cook to prepare meals, cleaning the hostel, washing clothes, and playing. Even so the atmosphere in the hostel is boisterous, co-operative, and friendly. For these girls the hostel represents a path to a far better life than they could otherwise have imagined.



FIRST TBMSG WOMEN'S COMMUNITY

For Western women, moving into a women's community can be a big step in their spiritual career and one not easy to take in a society geared to the nuclear family. In India there are no socially acceptable alternatives to the traditional pattern of marriage and family life. The opposite extreme, the monastic life, is understood but rarely practised. Against this background, TBMSG's first women's community is starting to take shape.

Finding suitable premises can be a problem, but this at least is not among the worries of the founder-members of the new community in Poona. The girls' hostel complex there which was recently opened by Bahujan Hitay (the social work wing of activities in India) includes a purpose-built community. Like the hostel itself, it is spacious, cool, and beautiful.

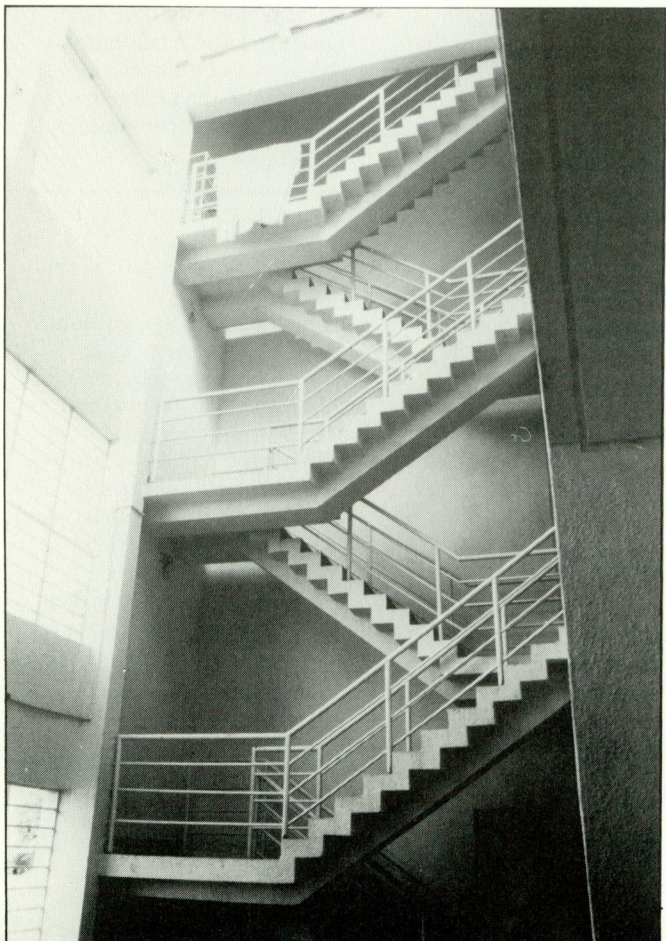
The problem for most of the community members is simply finding the freedom to live there at all. Even if a young woman can persuade her parents to let her live in the community for the time being, their minds inevitably turn to the arrangement of a marriage sooner or later. It is difficult for the woman to make a choice between married life—husband, children, living as part of her mother-in-law's household—and childless celibacy. And yet marriage puts many obstacles in the

way of Dharma practice and some women are determined to find an alternative life-style.

It is early days and there are plans to cater for the special conditions which obtain in India. For example, married women may be able to live there for short periods at a time. The trustees of Bahujan Hitay intend the community to be a focus for social work in India, like the men's community in Dapodi. For the present, the women who are already in residence (after heroic struggle in some cases) are getting to grips with aspects of community life familiar to those involved in the FWBO in the West: communal meditation (can everyone manage 5.30a.m.?) developing friendships, and organizing domestic arrangements.

I stayed in the community for a few weeks early this year and was there on the day when the gleaming new pots and pans arrived to stock the kitchen. It was quite moving to watch the community members setting up home. Kitchen equipment is the standard wedding present at Indian marriages. This might even have been the first time that a group of Indian women found themselves preparing a kitchen, not for a domestic life, but for a new spiritual life with one another.

Karen Stout





Mass conversion meeting

VIDARBHA INITIATIVE

Order members in the Naga-Vidarbha region recently introduced a five-point programme as part of the celebrations marking the birth-centenary of Dr B.R. Ambedkar. The plan is: (1) To take the Dharma to as many people as possible. (2) To encourage people to abandon

the abuse of alcohol. (3) To eradicate the 'sub-caste' system among Buddhists. (4) To give people new names, thus ridding them of their traditionally derogatory surnames. (5) To encourage people to embrace Buddhism consciously, in public ceremonies, rather than

leaving them to assume that they are Buddhists simply by virtue of birth into a Buddhist family.

The response has been so enthusiastic that no less than two thousand people attended a meeting in Wardha recently to make a public declaration of their Buddhist beliefs. After a

strong talk from Vimalakirti, Sanghasena and Sanghapalita led the chanting of the Refugees and five precepts.

Now the team of Dharmacharis is being invited to towns and villages throughout the region to conduct similar ceremonies.

TBMSG GOES SOUTH

Pipal Tree is an organization of people interested in exploring the spiritual dimensions of social work and social activism. They are based in Bangalore, the capital of Karnataka state in south India.

Siddharth, a leading member of Pipal Tree, made contact with the FWBO/TBMSG during a visit to England where he chanced upon the London Buddhist Centre. Since his own interest in exploring the spiritual dimension of social work coincided in many ways with what he discovered of the vision and activities of the FWBO/TBMSG, with its

Bahujan Hitay social work activities in India and the Karuna Trust in Britain, he invited Lokamitra to come to Bangalore and lead a retreat there.

In February Lokamitra, Padmavajra, and Kulananda spent a week in Bangalore at the invitation of Pipal Tree, leading a two day retreat for members of Pipal Tree and associated organizations. This was followed by a two day seminar on the theme of Buddhism, world peace, and social change, where the three Dharmacharis, together with Mr Rajan Chandry of Pipal

Tree and the Ven. Sanghasena of the Maha Bodhi Society of Bangalore, were the principal speakers.

Whilst in Bangalore, Lokamitra, Padmavajra, and Kulananda (who were later joined by Maitreyanatha from Poona) stayed as guests of the Maha Bodhi Society in Bangalore at their very pleasant vihara near the city centre. This was a rather special occasion since the founder of the Maha Bodhi Society is the Ven. Buddhakarita, an old friend and ordination companion of Sangharakshita. That link

seemed to lend an additional warmth to the very kind hospitality shown by the Ven. Sanghasena to his guests from the Western Buddhist Order, who were invited to address both the pupils of the school associated with the Society and the members of the weekly meditation class there.

During the course of their stay the Dharmacharis made a number of friends and contacts in Bangalore and all sincerely hope that this will prove to be the first chapter of a growing link with the city.

SANGHARAKSHITA DIARY

At the end of last year, Sangharakshita settled back into his London flat after his trip to the USA. In December and January he paid two visits to the Clear Vision studios in Manchester for the filming of a series of interviews with Order members. But for most of January and February he was engaged in writing a substantial account of his tour of Spain, last summer, entitled 'Fourth Letter from London'. The piece was printed in *Shabda*, the newsletter of the Western Buddhist Order, but it may be made more widely available (along with some companion pieces) in due course.

During this period, Sangharakshita received a steady stream of visitors including Manjuvajra, chairman of the Aryaloka Retreat Centre, and a number of others from America, while Lokamitra visited from India. More people saw him while he was at Padmaloka during the February National Order Weekend.

At the start of March, Sangharakshita resumed work on the first part of the next volume of his memoirs, which covers the period 1950 to 1953. This had been laid aside for nearly two-and-a-half years,

but he hopes to finish it by the end of this year. Sangharakshita was in Croydon for the launch of the second FWBO poetry anthology. He had a meal with the Croydon Order members in Hockneys Restaurant, and although not a contributor himself, read two of his own poems during the launch festivities.

Finally, Sangharakshita chaired the celebration of the first anniversary of the death of Dhardo Rimpoche. He started the day by dedicating the shrine and installing several small statues in a beautiful wooden stupa at its centre. These were Rimpoche's *tsa-tsas*, statues made of ashes from his funeral stupa mixed with clay. Ratnapani was handed the *tsa-tsas* by Jampel Khalden (Rimpoche's assistant) during a visit to Kalimpong, for presentation to Sangharakshita on his return to England. Sangharakshita was involved in all the events of the day and, before leading the concluding *puja*, delivered a talk on 'The Message of Dhardo Rimpoche'. This was a rousing restatement of the essence of Rimpoche's teachings, of his own, and of those of Buddhism.



FWBO NEWSREEL Subhuti interviews Sangharakshita for Clear Vision

Televisions are not popular items within the FWBO, but they have their uses. Clear Vision, the video production company based at the Manchester Buddhist Centre, is planning an innovative venture—the 'FWBO Newsreel'. Mokshapriya and Andy Gilbert, who run Clear Vision, are inviting every centre worldwide to send them VHS footage of their activities and particularly of any special events. The material will then be edited into a 'newsreel' which will be seen throughout the FWBO.

The aim is to promote a sense of the diversity and the unity of the Movement. It will allow people to keep in touch, to see the FWBO as a single Movement, and enable newcomers to have a sense of what they have come across. The first newsreel is to be

launched in August, and material should reach Clear Vision by 1 July.

The newsreel is just part of a busy schedule for Clear Vision productions. Other projects recently completed or in production include a video of Bahujan Hitay activities, the death ritual of Dhardo Rimpoche, an interview with Dhardo Rimpoche, and a series of six interviews with Sangharakshita. And there are many others. Mokshapriya is convinced of the importance of video as a means of communicating the Dharma and of keeping a record of Sangharakshita and the Movement. There are also plans to extend Clear Vision activities into the production of audio tapes, prints, and the establishment of a video and audio archive.

23

CELEBRATION OF DHARDO RIMPOCHE

As Sangharakshita said, marking the anniversary of someone's death is a way of celebrating their life. On 23 March about five hundred people gathered at York Hall in Bethnal Green for a day dedicated to Dhardo Rimpoche, Sangharakshita's teacher and friend, who died exactly one year previously.

It was a busy day. Suvajra read from his new biography of Rimpoche, *The Wheel and the Diamond*, which was launched by Sangharakshita. The latest Clear Vision video was also premièred, an evocative record of the ceremonies surrounding Rimpoche's funeral. Eight people who had met Rimpoche offered moving accounts of him; all of them had come away from the experience with a deep impression. In the

course of the day a vivid portrait emerged of a man who can seem almost mythical to many in the West.

Sangharakshita presided,

led the concluding *puja*, and gave a talk on 'The Message of Dhardo Rimpoche'. This was based on an exposition of the motto Rimpoche chose for his

school: 'Cherish the Doctrine, live united, radiate love.' The message was like the man: both simple and remarkable.





Manjunatha

STARTING OUT IN VENEZUELA

Manjunatha is the mitra convenor at the Croydon Buddhist Centre and he is a familiar figure around the FWBO in England where he has lived since 1978. But he grew up in Venezuela in a poor rural family where he was one of seventeen brothers and sisters.

In January and February this year he returned to Venezuela with Vajranatha and Sue Barnicle to visit family and friends and to look into the prospects of starting FWBO activities. While he was there he led a retreat in the small town of Humocaro Bajo. It was attended by six Venezuelans including two of Manjunatha's nephews who have become interested in Buddhism under his influence. At the end of the weekend the group was descended upon—in the Venezuelan manner—by various members of Manjunatha's vast extended family.

The country is nominally Catholic, but the Vatican seems a long way away and there is a very relaxed attitude to religion. Among the ordinary people Christianity has never fully replaced the animistic religions and its influence has gradually declined. Among educated people there is a common sense that something is missing. Manjunatha commented that such people seem to respond to Buddhism with interest and enthusiasm. He was very encouraged by the visit and is hoping to return to establish FWBO activities in 1992.



Manjunatha's family

MELBOURNE LIVES

FWBO Melbourne was set up several years ago—and that was the last that many people heard of it. But the centre has slowly been establishing itself, and the recent arrival of Dayamegha and Vidyaratna brought the number of local Order members to five. Mitras and Friends are very active in the Centre, a men's community has been established, and a house is earmarked for a women's community. To the rear of the men's house a large shrine-room has recently been built which will be used by the

community and for regulars' activities. It operates in conjunction with the Warr Rock community centre, just a block away, in running a range of classes and day retreats.

Deep in the bush, Gunapala and Mike Crooks have leased, financed, and furnished a solitary retreat facility on a forty-acre reserve. Meanwhile, the Centre rents a 'rustic' building for other retreats. Guhyavajra, our correspondent, comments that it is 'good for study; but watch out for tiger-snakes in the wood pile.'

WHY PRESIDENTS?

In recent years Sangharakshita, the founder and teacher of the FWBO, has handed over the responsibility for many aspects of the Movement's work to members of the Order. Two years ago, for example, he resigned the position of President of each FWBO Council—the body at each centre which has responsibility for its activities. The FWBO is a single, unified movement but each Council is legally distinct and effectively independent from the others; the President, who is not directly involved in the local centre, is thus an important figure in maintaining its connections with the wider Movement.

In recent months each Council has chosen or started to seek out a senior member of the Order from another centre to act as President. The

Presidents will take an interest in the functioning of the centres and will be consulted when important issues arise. Above all they should be in good contact with Sangharakshita, in good communication with the local Council, and have the respect of all concerned.

All of those who have become Presidents so far have had a strong prior connection with the centres in question. For instance, Kulananda has been made President at Cambridge, where he was previously Chairman, and at Croydon where he has acted as an adviser. Subhuti is the President of the London Buddhist Centre, with which he has been connected since supervising its construction twelve years ago.

FWBO POETRY ANTHOLOGY

On 8 March several of the contributors to the recently published FWBO poetry anthology joined Sangharakshita at the Croydon Buddhist Centre to launch the book. The anthology is entitled *Letting the Silence Speak* and is edited by Ananda, himself an experienced poet. The anthology marks an important stage in the maturation of literary activities within the FWBO. Many readers commented on the high standard of the contributions and the strong character of the anthology as a whole.

The launch was part of an imaginative arts programme at the Croydon Buddhist Centre

which goes by the name of Mandala Arts. The season also included a talk exploring the Buddhist elements in Japanese Noh drama, a recital by the Brighton Buddhist baroque group, and a performance by Satyadaka of Shelley's dramatic monologue, *Julian and Madallo*. Subhamati and Simon Blomfield who run Mandala Arts stress the participatory character of its events and the Buddhist context within which they take place. They hope to continue to expand its activities and are scouting for talks, plays, recitals, and so on which are being produced by people involved in the FWBO.

FRIENDS FOODS EXPANDS

Friends Foods, the wholefood shop in Bethnal Green, has moved to new premises which are four times as large as its old ones. The business, which started as a market stall in 1978, had outgrown its site adjoining the London Buddhist Centre; it now employs seven men and has established a strong local reputation. Takings have risen by twenty-five percent since the move.



Friends Foods' new premises

Marcus Mendes

TYPE SETS VANCOUVER

Windhorse Typesetters, a women's Right Livelihood business in East London, has ceased to operate. The business had been in existence for over ten years, but had been unable to sustain the level of capital investment the industry requires. A buyer was found and the four team members are to move on to other Right Livelihood ventures.

BACK FROM THE GULF

Richard Crump, a regular at the Croydon Buddhist Centre who was a pioneer at the Gulf Peace Camp (as reported in the previous issue of *Golden Drum*) returned home safely in late February. The camp on the Iraqi-Saudi border attracted considerable international attention, but was evacuated by the Iraqi authorities shortly before the start of the land war.

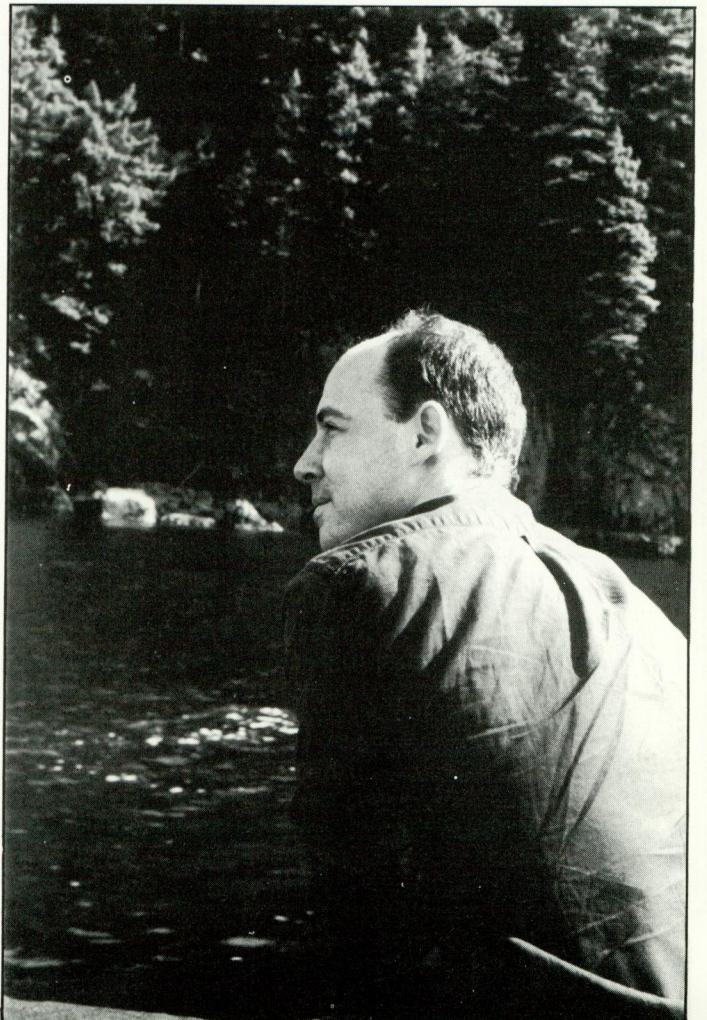
Baladitya's classes in Vancouver took a step forward when Marcus Mendes became the city's first mitra. The classes represent the FWBO's only activities in Canada.

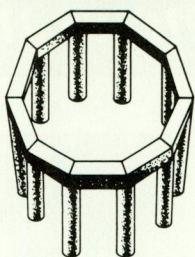
WINDHORSE SHOPS

After some highly successful business over the Christmas period two more of Windhorse Trading's shops—in Cambridge and Ipswich—are to become permanent. This brings the total to four gift shops in addition to the wholesaling business.

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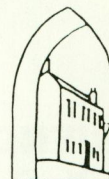
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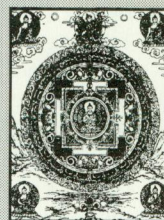
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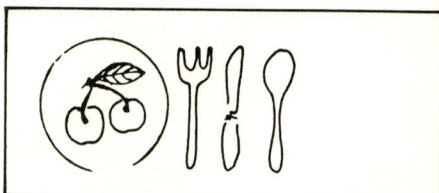
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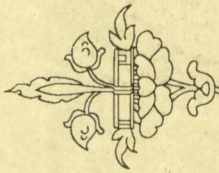
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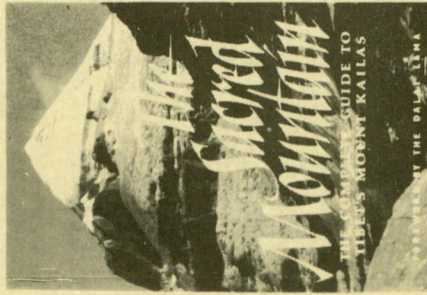
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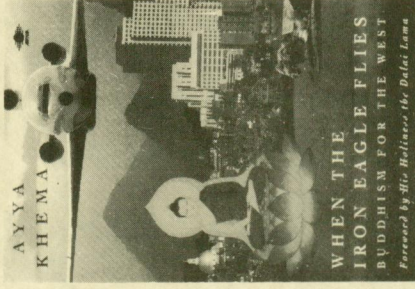
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