

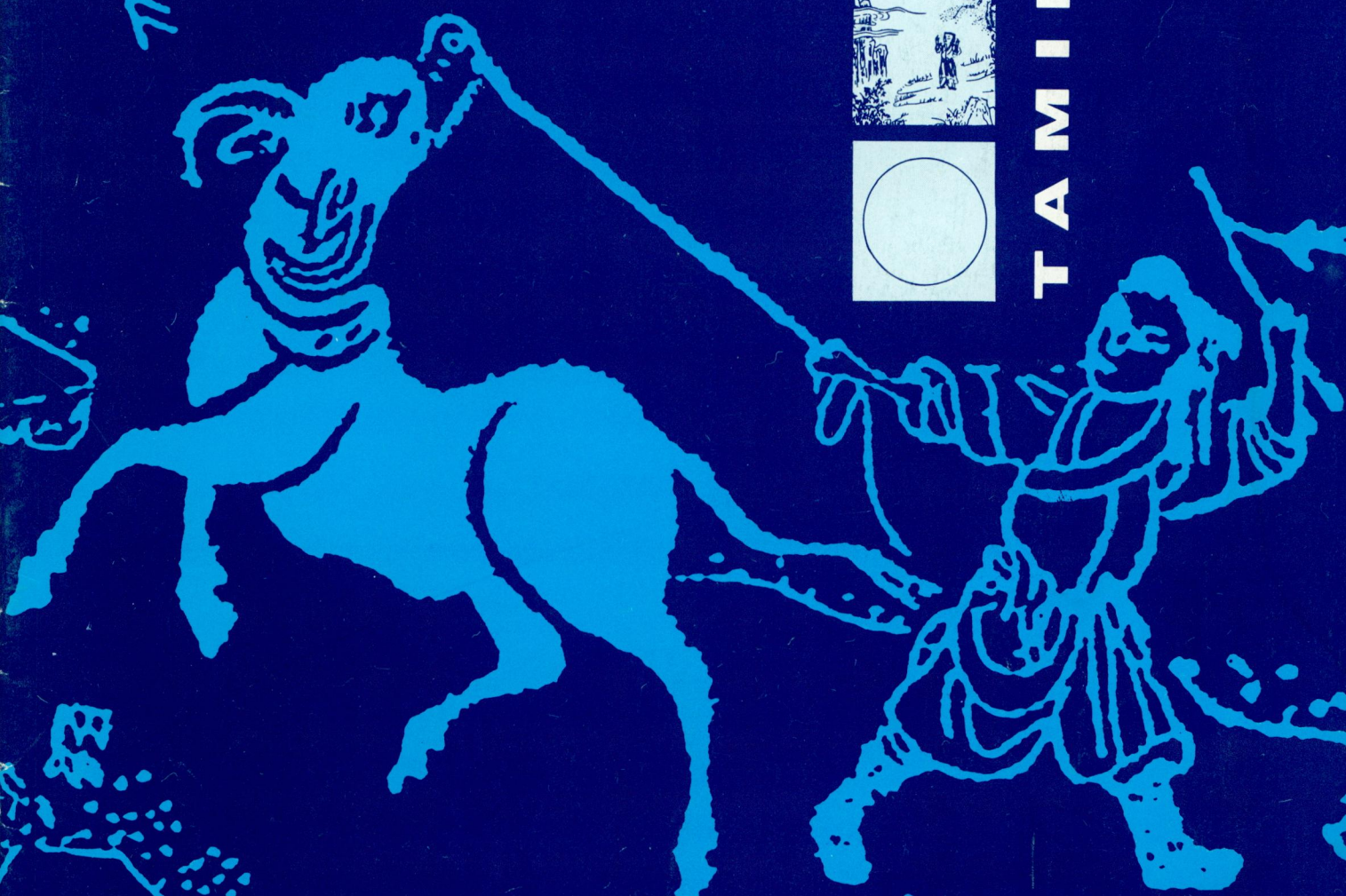
GOLDEN DRUM

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TAMING THE MIND



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from a traditional woodblock.



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I wonder how many people realize that Sangharakshita has never deliberately set out to make himself unpopular. This thought occurred to me a few weeks ago, while I was reading the manuscript of his forthcoming volume of memoirs, *Facing Mount Kanchenjunga*. Although he embarked on the life of a Buddhist monk with no other assumption than that he would be a loyal, devoted, and co-operative member of the sangha, the inner dynamics of remaining true to himself and to his understanding and experience of the Dharma seem to have compelled him, from time to time, to question and even publicly condemn such examples of hypocrisy, cant, half-heartedness, and ignorance as he has encountered in the Buddhist (and non-Buddhist) world.

Shortly after his return to the West in 1964, for example, he made himself particularly unpopular by speaking out against a form of meditation that was much in fashion at the time. This technique revolved around a rather extreme form of mindfulness. Its practitioners were encouraged to spend hours at a time developing an intense but detached (in the sense of 'watching' rather than 'experiencing') awareness of exactly what each limb in the body was doing and of what was going on in their minds. Well and sensitively taught to people who were ready for it, this technique was quite possibly a useful one. The trouble was, however, that Sangharakshita kept finding himself visiting some of the practitioners in mental hospitals. He even heard of one person who had committed suicide.

When he found himself teaching his own students in his own movement, he would therefore lay great stress on the crucial distinction between what he termed 'alienated awareness' and 'integrated awareness'. But he certainly did not understate the central importance of mindfulness itself. Mindfulness in general and the mindfulness of breathing meditation had, after all, been the main—and almost the sole—practices that he had observed during his own first decade as a Buddhist. It was a quality of which one simply could not have too much, the 'controlling faculty', the most powerful transforming agent to be found in the spiritual life.... On retreats at Keffolds he would increasingly manifest in wrathful form as he drew our attention to lapses of mindfulness. We took to eating meals in silence, savouring every mouthful, walking around the lawns at a snail's pace; on some retreats we used Gurdjieff's 'stop bell' technique; and any poor soul who dropped his knife in the dining room would instantly become the object of fifty disdainful glances. For several years mindfulness was *the big sine qua non*, the main practice.

But perhaps because we allowed a fear of generating the wrong kind of mindfulness to distract us, or simply because

other preoccupations rose into prominence, a time came when the practice of mindfulness seemed to lose its position at the top of the list. Sangharakshita's lectures and books—not to mention the advice of much of the Buddhist tradition—were as insistent as ever; the mindfulness of breathing was still one of the FWBO's key meditation practices; but the excitement to be found in creating a 'New Society', of setting up communities and Right Livelihood projects, focused our attention on such issues and qualities as communication, openness, criticism, friendship, reliability, commitment, dynamism, inspiration, co-operativeness, and so on, while, for some of us perhaps, the importance of mindfulness slipped a little from view.

To the extent that this was the case, then it was a symptom of our immaturity. Surely it is mindfulness, and the fruits of mindfulness, that make so many of those other qualities possible. Unless we are fully aware of ourselves, of other people, of the world around us, and trying to remain at all times in touch with our highest vision (to invoke the four 'dimensions' of mindfulness delineated by Sangharakshita in his lecture 'Perfect Mindfulness'), we will probably fail to experience very much communication, openness, criticism, friendship, reliability, commitment, dynamism, inspiration, or co-operativeness at all.

One reason why a busy Buddhist movement with a strong commitment to urban activities should encourage a few of its members to withdraw to the Welsh hills for a life of meditation is demonstrated by the fact that it was from the Vajraloka Meditation Centre that the first warning murmurs were heard. The retreat team there could not help noticing the somewhat frazzled state in which too many people seemed to be arriving on their doorstep. Their diagnosis was simple: there was not always enough mindfulness in the air. Their contribution to a remedy was to initiate a series of 'mindfulness retreats'—which have since been frequently duplicated elsewhere in the Movement.

More recently, Amritavajra, recently returned from a sojourn at Thich Nhat Hanh's Plum Village community, wrote to the Western Buddhist Order's unedited newsletter, *Shabda*, urging his fellow Order members to double, and redouble, their efforts in the practice of mindfulness. Immediately upon reading his excellent article I asked him to write something along similar lines for *Golden Drum*, and the result provides the starting point for this issue.

After reading the following pages, you may find yourself wondering why anybody should need to be reminded, let alone urged, to develop a quality that is as enjoyable, as enriching, and as fulfilling as is mindfulness. Well, let's hope that none of us needs to be reminded again. □

Nagabodhi

Only the present

The first meditation practice I ever learnt was the Mindfulness of Breathing. Even now I can still remember the time I tentatively set foot in an FWBO centre, following a friend who had assured me: 'It's going to be all right, you have nothing to worry about.' He had convinced me that I was not going to be brain-washed into giving away what little money I had, and it was mainly on his advice that I had come along to learn to meditate. I had been interested in meditation for some time and had even tried to meditate on my own but had failed miserably. It was on the basis of these enthusiastic but naïve experiments that I came to the conclusion that I hadn't the slightest clue what I was trying to achieve. If I really wanted to pursue the matter further I would have to seek the help of someone more experienced.

I was a little disappointed with the description we were given of the meditation practice. I was hoping for something a bit more exotic and profound than 'merely' watching the breath flowing in and out of my body. Nevertheless, despite this initial impression, I launched myself into the practice with the wholehearted zeal and earnestness of a keen beginner. Looking back now, I think I must have experienced the elusive 'beginner's mind', which I have sought ever since, but have unfortunately rarely found.

My early experiences with meditation were characterized by a deep sense of calm and joy, and of emerging from the shrine-room fresh and pure. Who would have thought that breathing could be so pleasurable? Who would have believed that the simple process of becoming aware of the breath could produce such feelings of wholeness and such clarity of mind? From the beginning I have been in love with the Mindfulness of Breathing practice, valuing its ability to bring me back to my centre when distracted and dispersed, to quieten my mind when it is roaring, and to nourish me when I feel drained and in

need of a 're-charge'.

Since then I have learnt many other forms of meditation, most notably the Metta Bhavana (the development of loving kindness) and the visualization practice which I was given at the time of my ordination. But the Mindfulness of Breathing practice has remained my favourite; I still find it the easiest, and often the most enjoyable, form of meditation. It is probably because I have found the Mindfulness of Breathing so easy to connect with, and to derive pleasure from, that I have become so interested in the practice of mindfulness in general.

I have often been struck by the numerous occasions, recorded in the Pali *nikayas* and the Sanskrit *agamas*, on which the Buddha urged his followers—monks, nuns, and lay people—to practise mindful awareness. The Pali Canon, which is the main surviving body of literature from the earliest stratum of Buddhist history, is replete with examples of the Buddha teaching the importance of mindfulness. In particular, examples can be found in the *Satipatthana Sutta* and the *Anapanasati Sutta*, in both of which the Buddha gives a discourse on the various ways in which mindfulness is to be practised. It can also be found in the Buddha's last words to his disciples: 'Work out your own salvation; with mindfulness strive on.'

There are many accounts of the Buddha and his followers living in the world 'with senses calmed and freed from worldly desires... with restraint of the senses, guarding the sense doors from evil... dwelling in mindfulness and clear awareness.' It was on the basis of encountering and reflecting on such descriptions that I began to notice a strong weakness in my own Buddhist practice. I was certainly sincere in my attempts to live a Buddhist life, but I knew that there was a huge difference between my own lifestyle and that of the Buddha and his disciples as described in those early accounts.

Obviously the Buddha and his monks lived in a very different age to

our own, one which was free from many of the distractions offered by the technological, consumerist society that we live in.

However, although it might have been easier for the early Buddhists to practise mindfully than it is for us, as Buddhist practitioners we need nevertheless to develop ways of practising mindfulness, for, as the Buddha said, there is no spiritual life without awareness.

We will deepen our understanding of the term 'mindfulness' if we examine its original meaning in Pali. The Pali word translated as 'mindfulness' is *sati* (*smṛti* in Sanskrit). It actually means 'remembering' or 'recollection'. When we are mindful it is as if we *recollect* ourselves, bringing all the different aspects of our being together. We experience ourselves as more whole, more centred, with a greater degree of harmony and unity, free from conflict and anxieties.

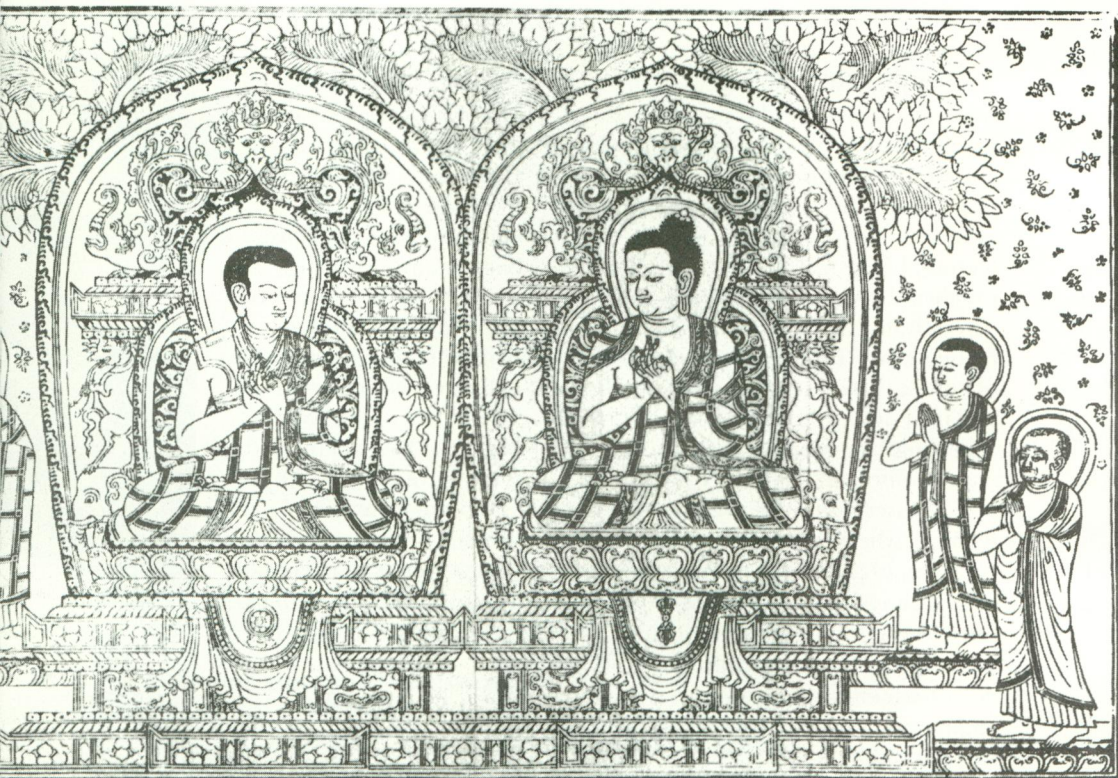
Very often we experience a kind of internal conflict, with one 'part' of ourself wanting to do one thing while another 'part' wants to do something completely different. The practice of mindfulness results in ever greater degrees of integration as all our 'energies' begin to flow in the same direction. Through the practice of mindfulness we become more fully ourselves, and experience ourselves as more vital and alive. Because our energies are unified we can achieve a greater continuity of purpose (Skt *samprajanya*) and are thus far more likely to achieve our goal and be free from distraction.

Another aspect of the practice of mindfulness, and one which I have found particularly valuable, is that it means living more fully in the present. The Vietnamese teacher Thich Nhat Hanh says of this tendency: 'If we live



What is mindfulness? Why is it so important? Amritavajra explains

moment exists



in forgetfulness, if we lose ourselves in the past or the future, if we allow ourselves to be tossed about by our desires, anger, and ignorance, we will not be able to live each moment of our life deeply. We will not be in contact with what is happening in the present moment, and our relations with others will become shallow and impoverished.'

In reality only the present moment exists, the past has gone and the future has not yet appeared. We can only be said to be truly alive if we are living fully in the present. This does not mean that we cannot think about the past or plan ahead, but that when we do look into the past or the future then we must be firmly grounded in the present, and not get carried away by any anxieties about the future, or by regrets or yearnings for the past.

The Buddha taught various methods and techniques for the development of mindfulness—and thus for dwelling more fully in the present moment. Perhaps the most basic practice, the starting point, even, for the development of mindfulness, is the

practice of mindful or conscious breathing.

As with the Mindfulness of Breathing meditation, this practice involves giving our attention to the breathing process. However, as we are often busy engaging with the world and with other people, it is not very practical to try to do this all the time. The advice here is not therefore that we should be aware of every breath as it enters and leaves our body, but that we should bring our attention to the breathing, for even a few breaths, at certain times during the day. I have found it helpful to practise in this way at the bus-stop for example, or before I eat, or whenever I have a few moments alone and particularly want to re-gather my energies.

I have found that the cumulative effect of periodically returning to the breath in this fashion aids me in developing my overall awareness. If I am in a stressful situation I have found that simply by returning to the breath I become more 'grounded' in myself and less easily thrown by painful thoughts and emotions or by external

events that I find difficult or that have a dissipating effect upon me.

From the initial practice of following the breath we have to try to extend our awareness to all our bodily movements. Whether we are sitting or lying, standing or walking, ideally we should be practising awareness of the body. As Sangharakshita has pointed out, there are different types of awareness.

In particular, he has distinguished between what he calls 'alienated awareness' and 'integrated awareness'. Alienated awareness, in this instance, would consist of being aware of our body but not really experiencing what it feels like. It is as if we are standing back from ourselves so that we don't really experience ourselves.

Integrated awareness consists of being aware of ourselves and experiencing ourselves. Thus our awareness is fully integrated into our experience. Integrated awareness comes about by practising in the way the Buddha suggested: developing awareness of the body in the body, developing

**The Buddha and his followers
'with senses calmed ...'**

awareness of the feelings in the feelings, and awareness of emotions in the emotions.

It is a good practice to set up what are sometimes known as 'triggers' to help us in the development of mindfulness. A trigger is something which we choose to help us to remember to practise. For example, we could choose the act of opening or closing a door as a trigger to remind us to be mindful. This means that each time we reach a door we remind ourselves to open the door mindfully. We make an effort to be conscious of all the different aspects of the act of opening the door: what the door-handle feels like, which arm we use, whether the door opens smoothly or with difficulty, and so on. When we are mindful, we give our full attention to what we are doing. Sangharakshita once said: 'To be able to do one thing at a time is the whole art of life,' and it is in this, essentially, that the art of mindfulness consists. We can choose all sorts of different triggers: doors, stairs, scratching ourselves, brushing our teeth, hearing bells, getting on

and off buses,... the list is endless.

Alternatively, we can use what are known as *gathas* to aid us in our practice. These are short verses which we recite to ourselves in much the same way as we would use a trigger. For instance each time we eat something we could recite a *gatha* reminding ourselves to pay attention to the taste of the food and to the act of eating. I use the following *gatha* to remind me that the food I eat is a product of the entire universe:

*This food comes from the earth and the sky.
It is the gift of the Universe
And the fruit of much hard work.
I vow to live a life worthy of receiving it.*

6 I also use *gathas* for the processes of urination and excretion to remind me that in the end I have to give everything back to the universe, including my body.

*I return the water element in me
To the water element in the universe.
I am aware that my body is not
independent
And that one day I will have to return it.*

Reciting *gathas* like these can help us in our mindfulness practice, making it easier to let go of all that we cling to and think of as ours. It is through awareness that we can fully appreciate all the good things in our life, such as our health and our good fortune to have come across the Dharma.

Unfortunately, only too often we are not really aware at all; we move around, eat, feel, talk, and think without being aware of how we are moving, how we are eating, what we are feeling, or even what we are thinking. There is no awareness, just the bare sensation.

By practising bodily awareness we can find out more about ourselves, about how we interact with others, and about the world we live in. By becoming more aware of the body generally, we will learn how to value ourselves and others more, we will possess more confidence and serenity, our movements will become more fluid, more graceful, while the pace of

life will become more even and rhythmical.

From practising awareness of the body we can start to develop a greater degree of awareness of our feelings and our emotions. For most of us, this practice begins by our simply trying to acknowledge what we are actually feeling. I have found it a very useful practice to ask myself periodically throughout the day, 'What am I feeling now?' In asking this question, of course, I have to be prepared to be receptive to the answer!

Feelings are subtle and occur in many different shades. By learning how to discriminate between different feelings, whether painful, neutral, or pleasant, I have begun to increase my overall range of emotional sensitivity. Also, I have found that by becoming aware of the more painful and negative feelings such as jealousy, anger and irritation, insecurity, and feelings of inadequacy, I have already begun to transform them into more positive feelings. As Sangharakshita has pointed out, 'Psychologically speaking, awareness is the most powerful transforming agent that we know. If we apply heat to water then the water is transformed into steam. In the same way, if we apply awareness to any psychic content, the content is refined and sublimated.' Simply by becoming aware of our feelings we are already having a transforming effect upon them.

However, before our emotional life is 'refined and sublimated' we need to come into real contact with our actual feelings. Sometimes this process of contacting our real feelings can be enormously liberating, whilst at other times it can be painful or confusing.

As we develop more awareness of our emotional life, we start to become more aware of the effect that our experience of certain feelings is having upon us. For example, if we find that we are becoming swamped by powerful negative feelings then we will need to concentrate and focus on what is positive and what helps us to grow. At all times we should be trying to

cultivate our emotional positivity, so that we can respond to ourselves, and to others, creatively and positively.

From my own experience I know that there have been times when I have not been ready, or strong enough, to deal with some of the deeper and more painful feelings that I have encountered in myself. At such times I have found it best quietly to acknowledge that I have these feelings and then, instead of focusing on them, to take my awareness to my breath or to my body, or even to talk with a close friend.

Who would have thought breathing could be so pleasurable?

In doing this, it is not that I am 'repressing' my feelings, but rather acknowledging my present limitations in being able to deal with them. After all, Right—or Perfect—Mindfulness (*samyak-smṛti*) contains a strong element of *metta* and care. It is important to foster an attitude of kindness and gentleness towards ourselves, and to work with our more 'negative' feelings sensitively.

At the same time as becoming aware of our bodies and our feelings and emotions, we can also develop an awareness of our thoughts and the generally habitual ways in which we think. We can begin by distinguishing between different types of thinking. There are, for example, the habitual patterns of thought which, being the expression of our limited emotional states, confirm our limitations, and there are our more creative thoughts, thoughts which contain vision and inspiration. We also need to discover what we ourselves actually think, as opposed to what we have picked up from the society around us and from the different conditioning factors that have affected us. We have to analyse the contents of our minds and see



what we actually do or do not believe. Whilst being open to the opinions of others, of course, we should try always to make sure that we know what we ourselves actually think and feel about a subject.

Through the process of developing a greater degree of awareness of the contents of our minds we begin, intellectually and spiritually, to mature. To borrow Sangharakshita's terms, it is through this kind of awareness that we move away from the 'group' and become 'true individuals'. Although it is impossible to develop without mindfulness, on its own mindfulness is not enough. Real transformation can only take place on the basis of insight.

Insight arises only on the basis of sustained awareness and an intense one-pointedness of mind, enquiring into things as they actually are. In terms of our own experience this means, for example, not just possessing an intellectual understanding that we do not possess a discrete separate or permanent 'self', but seeing directly, and experiencing directly, that our true nature is unfixed and ever changing. It is possible, but

unlikely, that we will fully experience a truth like this all at once. What is more likely is that, over a period of time, with sustained awareness and effort, we will have several glimpses into the way things are so that our insight and understanding will gradually be modified as we begin to see reality more and more clearly.

The successful development of mindful awareness inevitably leads to the gradual development of positive emotion. With awareness, negative actions and states of mind give way to calm, clarity, joy, and confidence. This can be seen as the calming or 'stopping' (*shamatha*) aspect of the practice of mindfulness. The insight (*vipashyana*) aspect tends to come later, after we have established a degree of peace and tranquillity in our minds. It is only through the sustained development of awareness that we can really begin to apprehend reality at all. Without awareness we are spiritually blind. Awareness is the light that guides us on the path.

One could go so far as to say that the spiritual life consists of ever-deepening levels of awareness. Through becoming fully aware of our bodies

and their actions, of our feelings and emotions, of our thoughts—of the totality of our being—we are already effecting important changes. We will be able to see how our actions affect and shape our future selves, and quite naturally we will begin to behave more creatively and more skilfully. As a result of this transformation in our beings, and consequently in the way in which we interact with the world, our awareness will correspondingly deepen, allowing even greater levels of understanding and insight into ourselves and into the nature of things around us to arise.

We should not forget the Buddha's exhortation to his monks in the closing section of the *Mahasatipatthana Sutta*, the discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness. Here he triumphantly exclaims that: "The path of mindfulness is the most wonderful path which helps beings realize purification, transcend grief and sorrow, destroy pain and anxiety, travel the right path and reach Nirvana." Thus spoke the Blessed One. The Bhikkhus were delighted with the teaching of the Buddha, took it to heart, and put it into practice.' □

We Are Each Other

Maitreyi celebrates the miracle of seeing another person

8

A few weeks ago I found myself sitting opposite a complete stranger looking into her eyes. I was at a class at the London Buddhist Centre taking part in a 'communication exercise'. Around me were other pairs of people similarly engaged, sitting opposite each other looking into each other's eyes. The first thing I noticed about Kate was that she was black, the second thing I became aware of was a calm beauty expressed in her features. We were doing the first part of the exercise—'just looking'—just that: just seeing the other person in front of us, taking them in. I began to notice more details. That the beauty of her face seemed to emanate from a softness, a lack of tension around her mouth and chin suggesting a gentleness within.

I allowed myself to relax more, to feel the weight of my body on the cushion, to let go of some of the tension in my own face and eyes, and realized in so doing that I was also letting go of a habitual 'reassurance mode' that I'm prone to adopt in this kind of situation; a way of being in control, of covering my own nervousness. Now, looking across at Kate, I'm relating from a deeper level in myself, less controlled, more fluid, spontaneous, more spacious. As if in response to this change in me the calmness of her features is broken by a smile which lights up her eyes. I find myself smiling in response.

We move on to the verbal part of the exercise. I repeat a phrase over and over, 'Do birds fly,' the meaning of which is insignificant. What is significant is that each time I repeat the phrase Kate responds to me in the affirmative. 'Yes,' she says. 'Do birds fly,' I say. There is a pause and still looking into my eyes Kate responds with a slight nod of her head. 'Yes,' she says. With each 'yes' there is a little leap

of pleasure, of joy in my heart as I take in the fact that this woman sitting opposite me, still almost a stranger, is consistently affirming my being, my existence.

Having reversed roles, in the final part of the exercise we both repeat our chosen phrases, creating a dialogue with no conceptual content, and follow this again with 'just looking'. This time, our energies aroused by the exchange, more emotion is brought into play. I find, looking into Kate's eyes, that the warmth of response in my heart is mixed with a welling-up of sadness as I notice the intermittent veils that still, on a more subtle level, separate me from this other human being, that hold her out, that keep me in, a mixture of fear, unconsciousness, and habit. We finish the exercise, thank each other. 'I feel that I've really met you,' Kate says.

Reflecting on the exercise, I was left with an impression of the simplicity of the process. On previous occasions I had been in search of a more intense or dramatic experience, or I had been trying to 'help' the other person. This time, looking, speaking, and responding without distraction, I was simply becoming more aware of Kate and, in allowing myself to be seen, letting her become aware of me. And in becoming more aware of each other our hearts responded. If we really give our attention undistractedly to another person, at the least, feelings of empathy will arise, and at the most, strong emotions of warmth, of affection, of *metta* (loving kindness).

Why then are other people so often just a blur on the periphery of our existence impinging only in such superficial categories as old or young, male or female, black or white? What stops us from practising mindfulness of others and enjoying the pleasurable experience it bestows of our hearts opening and responding?

We are conditioned by our existence as human beings to experience ourselves each as the centre of his or her world, even as the centre of the universe. This is a fact rather than a judgement of ourselves. As a result our relationship to others is self-referential. Our awareness of others, if we can call it that, is dependent on the degree to which they have, or appear to have, something that we want, and the promise they offer of satisfying our needs, or, conversely, the degree to which they seem to present an obstacle to that satisfaction. The former we regard as 'friends', the latter as 'foes'. In between are the 'neutral' people whom we register dimly. How often do you remember the face of the man in the railway station who sold you your ticket or the woman who cashed up your groceries at the supermarket—let alone whether each of them was sad or happy that day? In thus relating to people subjectively they become objects for us, we see others in terms of what they can give us, how they can fulfil our needs and desires.

To begin to recognize another's humanity, the fullness of another person's being, is a significant step away from this self-centred experience of existence. It is the step from treating others as objects who give or withhold satisfaction—our satisfaction—to treating them as persons with their own needs and desires, their own joys and sorrows. It is recognizing that their world with its struggles, disappointments, and victories is just as important to them as ours is to us.

Paradoxically, it is by relating to others *objectively* that they become subjects, beings in their own right. It calls from us an imaginative leap, an ability to put ourselves 'in their shoes', to try to experience life from their point of view, from the centre of their universe. It also calls for courage, for confidence, because to recognize the importance of someone else's existence as being equal to our own threatens us to the core, threatens the validity of our experience of life and of ourselves. It suggests an emotion as strong as that felt by a parent for their child. How can we feel this for someone to whom we are not even related? It goes altogether against the grain of our natural tendencies, and as such it takes effort. But the rewards are rich because it also gives rise to love.

In the romantic and consumer culture of the West, love is experienced as a visitor, an elusive visitor, which happens upon us from we know not where, delights us with its presence—a momentary magical transformation of our lives—and then is gone, often

leaving us bereft. It is like a butterfly which alights for a moment on the path before us, spreads its wings revealing for an instant its splendour, and then fluttering into the air is carried away by the wind. Whole industries are built on the need we feel to capture this experience of love, to make ourselves suitably dressed, successful, groomed, perfumed, erudite, creative—to become a suitable vehicle onto which it may be attracted to descend.

The Dharma teaches that love is a flower of practice, is something that can be developed by consistent application; through awareness of others and of ourselves. Although not a part of Buddhist tradition, the communication exercises found in the FWBO are a form of spiritual practice. Done repeatedly, it becomes clear that the feelings of warmth and empathy which arise are not just a response to the particular personality of the person sitting opposite us, but come from giving attention, being receptive to them, whoever they are. The practice of the Metta Bhavana, the development of loving kindness, involves giving attention first to ourselves, then to a good friend, then to a neutral person, consciously trying to bring to mind that man in the railway station, or that woman at the check-out in the supermarket, whose existence we have only fleetingly registered, and accord him or her full humanity. The fourth stage brings to mind the enemy, the foe, the person who does not gratify us, who appears to obstruct us in getting what we want. We make an effort to recognize the existence of that person as separate from our own reaction to them, allowing them to be subject in their world rather than object in ours. In consciously going against the grain of our habitual tendencies, opening out beyond our usual confines, we can begin to extend this awareness, and the *metta* engendered by it, to all beings known or unknown wherever they exist.

The development of *metta* leads into the practice of the *brahma viharas* or 'sublime states'. When loving kindness meets with the suffering of another, compassion, *karuna*, arises; in response to the happiness of another loving kindness becomes *mudita*, sympathetic joy. Recognition that every human being experiences both joy and suffering gives rise to *upeksha*, equanimity.

Mindfulness of others is inseparable from loving kindness. In the *Karaniya Metta Sutta*, the discourse on how to develop *metta*, the Buddha, at the end of the *sutta*, describes *metta* as a form of mindfulness: 'Standing or moving, sitting, lying down, in whatsoever way that we may be, let us found firmly this



Left: Maitreyi

Below: Communication exercises at Taraloka



mindfulness of boundless love, for this is what we call "the state sublime".

So Metta Bhavana is not something we practise only whilst sitting in meditation. If we are to attain the fullness of *metta* we need to maintain a constant loving awareness of others throughout all the activities of daily life. How can we do this?

We can look at others, simply take them in, acknowledge their existence. We can see the marks of joy and of pain reflected in their faces and in the gestures of their bodies, and respect the fullness of their life experience.

We can listen to others, really listen, not just to their words but to the way they use those words; their vocabulary which describes their own unique experience, the intonation which gives colour and meaning. And we can affirm their experience, their expression, trust their sincerity. Even if the expression is confused and lacks congruence, we can have the patience, allow the space, to let them unravel the meaning, to let clarity emerge.

We can allow people to change, not hold fixed views as to who they are or how we would like them to be. We can truly help other people not by imposing on them what we consider to

be good for them, but by being receptive to them, seeing what they really need. Sometimes this is simply our friendship.

In *Vision and Transformation* Sangharakshita equates love with awareness: 'Love means awareness of the being of another person. It is clear that the practice of mindfulness of others is not the cool and detached observation that it is sometimes mistaken for, but a warm and loving awareness which brings us closer to other people.'

Whenever we take a step away from our inherently self-centred experience of existence and make the effort to become more aware of the being of another person, we are taking a step in the direction of Reality, of Enlightenment, the state which goes beyond self and other altogether so that we apprehend our interconnectedness with all beings. As such, we transcend death also.

The *Karaniya Metta Sutta* concludes: 'And let us practise unbounded love for all the world.... So shall we, by leaving far behind all wrongful views, by walking righteously, attain to gnostic vision.... Such in truth shall come to birth no more in any womb.' □

removing THE FILTERS

Trees, rocks, cars, dustbins, roads, flowers....

Varachitta makes her peace with a world full of things

The world is filled with things. That is partly the trouble. It is hard to take everything in without introducing a sort of filter whereby we choose what to see and what not to see. Unfortunately these filters often become set in our minds as fixed views. 'Mindfulness of things' requires that we remove these filters, let loose our senses, and have a proper look. It is about *using* our senses to find out what is around us and how we relate to it.

10 The five senses are our windows on the world; it is through them that we most directly interact with it. To keep them hardly open, or wedged shut through indifference, laziness, or fear, is like living a half-life in the stale air of a dungeon. It also means remaining in a state of ignorance.

The first step is therefore to become aware that we are generally not aware: that our 'awareness' fluctuates wildly depending on whether we find something interesting or not. 'Interesting', of course, usually means that a thing is liked by us and a corresponding movement is made towards that thing in expectation of its giving us pleasure. Movement is made away from something which causes pain. This kind of behaviour takes place in the amoeba, and such an approach to the world outside ourselves is hardly helpful if one is trying to tread the path of the higher evolution as an individual human being.

To throw open the windows of the senses is to defy these filters, these conventions that limit the mind. To really *look* at a slimy

green pool, for example, to put your hand in and feel slithering mulch, is to throw off inherited attitudes of 'niceness' and 'nastiness' and simply experience what is there. It is in these moments of experience that we can intercept our fixed ideas and find out, purely on a sense level, what is *really* there.

All the time our five senses are telling us very directly and immediately about the world, but all too often our experience gets obscured by mental agitation. For example, when we see a slimy pool we might immediately remember that we once fell into such a pool and got dirty. We therefore no longer 'see' the new slimy pool at all; we just see something unpleasant. Thus all slimy pools are tarred with the same brush. Here a moving away from the 'unpleasant' is in action. This time it is memory that has been used as stimulus to move us away but, underneath that, the deeper 'ignorance process' is unfolding. Very often we allow our past experience of things to direct our behaviour and reactions. This is fatal as far as practising mindfulness of things is concerned. An essential condition—and aspect—of this kind of awareness being that we open ourselves to things around us and regard them with a fresh, unbiased eye.

A friend of mine, admittedly in a rather overwrought state of mind, once walked stark naked down the high street of a quiet Welsh village. I must confess a secret admiration for her. Opening up the senses can perhaps be compared to her act, there is



a fearlessness—if not slight madness—in sincerely practising mindfulness of things, discarding convention and responding to things absolutely directly, immediately, and nakedly.

On the outer rim of the Wheel of Life, a Buddhist symbol for conditioned existence, there is a picture of a man with an arrow stuck in his eye. Instead of pulling it out he stands there asking himself 'Who shot the arrow?' 'What is it made of?' 'How far did it come?' 'Is there another one coming?' This reflects our usual approach to things. Instead of simply seeing them we get caught up in all sorts of mental activity regarding the things' past and future. These

conceptualizations effectively blind us to the present, like an arrow in the eye.

In order to become more mindful mental activity needs to be quietened down. To still the mind is to open the mind. In the context of becoming more aware of 'things' it means that we allow what our senses perceive to penetrate the mind instead of being deflected by habitual reactions. Trying to be more mindful when the brain is buzzing with activity is like spitting into the wind. Our perceptions too are heightened and clarified through mental tranquillity.

In the hurly-burly of the city, however, where there are myriads of different



Starry Night, Vincent Van Gogh

be seen as always being *in relationship* to one another through this constantly shifting element. If I stand up my relationship with the chair is radically altered, the shape of the space between me and the table is totally different; every movement I make affects space. I am *connected* with things around me, not divided from them, by this element. If you have ever tried to draw something you will know that if you move your position even slightly while drawing you have to start again, the shape of the space between you and the object having changed completely. Our physical bodies and other objects take up space; as we grow up from childhood the size of the space we occupy gets bigger, without space we would have no form. It is worth looking at things from the viewpoint not of the shape *they* are but the shape of the space around them—how they relate to everything else and how that relationship is in a constant state of flux. Refining our awareness of this element encourages a deeper understanding of our interconnectedness with things; becoming more aware of all the six elements in their gross and more subtle forms reveals the common ground we share with all other beings and ‘things’ in the world.

Mindfulness of things is about sharpening up the senses and using them to explore the world. It is also about throwing away preconceptions and limited ideas. Ultimately, it is simply about living in the present tense. □

‘things’ to interact with, one after another, mental tranquillity is a challenge to say the least. But is it all as complex and confusing as it first appears? One answer is a resounding yes! That, after all, is how we directly experience it; it is all so noisy and jangly, we don’t like it. However, it is possible to go beyond experiencing things in this way and to develop a fuller understanding.

The effect of relating to things in the world as objects ‘out there’ to be battled with every day is to reinforce our own sense of separateness and isolation. It also dulls our experience as sense after sense is shut down in order to ‘cope’.

The danger of this shut down is that the world no longer has the chance to be seen clearly or to be related to from a positive stance.

One way of cutting through this indifference and dullness towards things is to shift our mental perspective on them, to move a few paces away from where we usually stand and look at things from a new viewpoint.

We could, for example, look, hear, taste, touch, and smell while bearing in mind the traditional list of the five elements—earth, water, fire, air, and space. Material things are made of these elements and rely on them for their existence. At its simplest, mindfulness of

things consists of awareness of the constant interplay between these five: their interaction to create form, their dissolution as the form decays. The earth element manifests in the quality of hardness—wood, stone, bones; the water element in fluidity and wetness—rain, the sea, blood; fire manifests in warmth—the sun, fires, bodily processes which create heat; air manifests in wind—breezes, storms, breath. Finally, within the element space all the other elements manifest.

Space is an interesting element to reflect on; our general tendency is to see all objects as solid and separated from each other by space. Actually they could

For Prakasha, the practice of mindfulness is a path to the highest Insight

At some time in their lives, many people have a heightened experience of awareness in which for a few brief magical moments they discover and enter into a greater reality. It is as if time expands into eternity and all life seems unified and whole; for perhaps no apparent reason we are lifted up and borne on the wings of inspiration so that we seem to enter into another realm of reality. This may happen whilst looking across the ocean at a beautiful sunset or at a rainbow over the mountains. It may occur through a sudden deepening of intimacy between friends. It

we need look no further for reality than in the place where we find ourselves or in our own minds. As Hakuin's 'Song of Meditation' reminds us:

*'This very place the Pure Land,
This very body the Buddha.'*

Insight into reality manifests when we see things 'as they really are' with a purified mind and a consciousness stripped of illusion. It is as if our mind becomes like a clear, bright mirror in which everything is fully reflected and nothing gets stuck or distorted. Insight into reality is a direct seeing with the mind into the nature of mind.

In the Buddhist tradition the term 'insight' is reserved

basis for the development of *vipashyana*. In this way *vipashyana* naturally develops out of *shamatha* and completes it.

The practice of awareness or mindfulness involves bringing full attention and awareness to our body, emotions, and thoughts, and to the objects of our senses—which include other people and the world. A focus or thread of awareness is kept throughout all our activities. This helps to maintain continuity of purpose and gives us a consistent experience of ourselves on every level; body, emotions, and mind. Thereby we experience ourselves, other people, and the world more

Entering the Realm of Reality



may come as a result of the death of someone close, or through calamity. It may come during artistic creation or just through living a simple and ethical life. It may come in the innocence of youth or in the fullness of age.

Such an experience is often unforgettable. It can mark a transformation or an important turning point in our life. It may bring the conviction that there really are different levels of being and reality to be entered and initiate a spiritual quest. For many people, however, this experience and realization fades into a mere memory. They have no means to support or develop it. The beautiful vision that was once so inspiring turns into a distant dream. So how can we maintain and develop the glimpses and insights that we have had? Is there a way to develop insight and practise 'awareness of reality' systematically?

By 'reality' we do not mean some metaphysical 'ultimate' abstracted from experience, but the ordinary world as seen and experienced with purified consciousness and perceptions. Consequently

for a level of understanding that is radical, transformative, and irreversible. Unlike ordinary understanding it cannot be clouded or forgotten. It is, however, cumulative, and a first spark of insight can be developed, stage by stage, into the full illumination of Enlightenment or Buddhahood. Such an insight may come suddenly and spontaneously—as in the case of Hui Neng who gained insight as a youth whilst simply listening to a recitation of the *Diamond Sutra*. For others it may come gradually as the fruit of a lifetime of steadily maturing Dharma practice.

In order to reach this level of insight we need to practise the twin disciplines of *shamatha* and *vipashyana* on a firm foundation of ethics. *Shamatha* is the practice of calming or concentration, *vipashyana* is the practice of contemplation or reflection. We practise *shamatha* in the context of the four dimensions of awareness by bringing our full attention and awareness to our experience of the three different dimensions of self, others, and things, and then using this awareness as a

completely and continuously, and our experience becomes richer and more satisfying.

As the practice of mindfulness becomes established, instead of being caught up in the past and anxious about the future we are able to enter, and live much more fully in, the present. Often the present moment seems rather fleeting and unreal. There is never enough time and so we usually rush. With the practice of mindfulness, however, the present becomes spacious, relaxed, and complete in itself. Actually the present is the only time there is! As we begin to discover this we are able to engage fully in activity yet maintain our calmness and serenity. Our body becomes more relaxed and our movements graceful. We are aware of our thoughts and feelings—which become clear and bright. We take time to listen to other people and hear what they have to say. We are able to appreciate the world around us: a walk through the park, the evening sunset, a single flower. Our life simplifies and we gain satisfaction and enjoyment from simple



activities because each experience is fully lived and participated in. There is nothing left over. We become the still centre of the turning world.

When mindfulness and awareness are fully established they provide the basis for insight, as a story from the *Udana*, an early Buddhist text, illustrates. A man called Bahiya once approached the Buddha for a teaching. He had travelled right across India, and finally met the Buddha on his alms-round. The Buddha is described at that moment as 'attractive, good to look upon, with senses calmed, tranquil of mind, in full attainment of composure by masterly control, like a tamed, alert, perfectly trained elephant'. In response to Bahiya's repeated requests for instruction, the Buddha finally gave him a short, quintessential teaching, as a result of which Bahiya gained Insight:

'In the seen there will be just the seen, In the heard just the heard, In the imagined just the imagined, In the cognized just the cognized.'

In Bahiya's practice of mindfulness there was nothing excluded from his

awareness and no extraneous thoughts, judgements, or interpretations. He was fully alert, attentive, and aware. And as a result of this concise teaching he saw and experienced 'things as they really are'.

In the *Mahasatipatthana Sutta*, besides the practice of mindfulness, the Buddha also teaches contemplation and reflection as aids to the development of insight. For example, on the basis of an awareness of the body, the body's impermanence is reflected on. Besides impermanence, there are given many other subjects for reflection: the five hindrances, the five *skandhas*, the six sense spheres, and the seven factors of Enlightenment.

The mind itself is also an important object of reflection. In the Tibetan tradition, in a text entitled *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa* we find the story of 'The Shepherd's Search for Mind'. A young shepherd of exceptional abilities meets Milarepa who instructs him to meditate and reflect on the nature of his own mind. The next day the boy returns and Milarepa asks him what his mind is like.

'Well, it is limpid, lucid,

moving, unpredictable, and ungraspable; it has no colour or shape. When it associates with the eyes it sees; when with the ear, it hears, when with the nose, it smells; when with the tongue it tastes and talks; and when with the feet it walks. Normally the mind directs the body; when the body is in good condition, the mind can command it at will, but when the body becomes old, decayed, or bereft, the mind will leave it behind without a thought as one throws away a stone after cleaning oneself. The mind is very reasonable and adaptable.'

Milarepa instructs him in *mahamudra* meditation and the shepherd continues to practise with some remarkable results. Gradually he gains insight into the nature of mind. He realizes that the appearances of the world that are perceived are simply manifestations of the mind and do not have independent existence any more than do the waves in the ocean. He understands that the 'moving mind' that thinks and perceives all the time is an expression of the 'unmoving mind' that is clear, brilliant, empty, and self-aware. As Milarepa sings:

*'By constant practice and mindfulness thereon,
One feels radiant Self-awareness
shining like a brilliant lamp.
It is pure and bright as a flower,
It is like the feeling of staring
Into the vast and empty sky.
The Awareness of Voidness is
limpid and transparent,
yet vivid.'*

Besides the practice of reflection, another important approach to the awareness of reality is visualization and mantra recitation. Visualization is an important *vipashyana* method which reached its culmination in the Vajrayana form of Buddhism. In one visualization practice, the calm, serene, yellow-robed figure of the Buddha is imagined sitting beneath the bodhi-tree after his attainment of Enlightenment. He is seated on the edge of a

forest by a river with mountains in the distance. One then reflects upon his qualities of boundless compassion, penetrating wisdom, and inexhaustible energy, as well as upon significant incidents in his career; his Going Forth, his Enlightenment, the first teaching, and his Parinirvana.

The figure of the Buddha is usually visualized in the vastness of a clear, blue sky. This symbolizes the Emptiness (*shunyata*) or 'Open dimension of Being' which transcends all concepts whatsoever. The Great Void is open, boundless, mysterious, and ineffable, yet it is the dimension in which all phenomena manifest. It is reality in its nakedness: perfect, pure, and primordial.

While visualizing the Buddha, a mantra is recited. This puts us in touch with the qualities that the Buddha embodies, and helps us to maintain contact with them after our meditation in the midst of the responsibilities of everyday life. In this way the thread of contact with 'reality' can be maintained at all times. In Vajrayana practice we find the instruction to 'Hear all sounds as the Buddha's mantra, see all things as the Buddha's realm, and realize one's inseparability from the Buddha.' Gradually, through this practice, our ordinary experience is transfigured and transformed until we eventually enter the realm of reality and are able to maintain our awareness and connectedness with reality at all times and in all places. Then our practice of the awareness of reality is complete. As Milarepa sings at the conclusion of 'The Shepherd's Search for Mind':

*'Without arrival, he reaches
the place of the Buddha;
Without seeing,
he visions the Dharma-kaya:
Without effort,
he does all things naturally.
Dear son, the Virtue-seeker,
bear this instruction in your
mind.'* □

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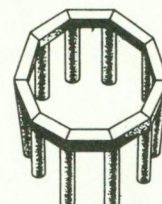
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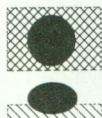
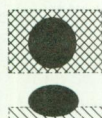
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PIONEER OF WESTERN BUDDHISM

**A Thousand Journeys:
The Biography of
Lama Anagarika Govinda**

by Ken Winkler
Published by Element, pp.182,
paperback price £8.95

Anyone who has ever read, and been delighted by, the eloquent descriptions of Lama Anagarika Govinda's pilgrimage to Tibet in *The Way of the White Clouds* will naturally be interested in this recently published biography of him by Ken Winkler. Indeed, even if one is not directly interested in Govinda's pilgrimages, this aptly named biography could still sustain interest on the merits of including frequent mention of Govinda's friendship with Sangharakshita, and hints as to how these two quite exceptional personalities influenced and shaped each other's thinking.

Winkler has drawn on a wealth of material to construct his biography, which includes conversations with Govinda himself, with his wife, Li Gotami, with Sangharakshita, and with many other people who knew Govinda personally. *A Thousand Journeys* traces Govinda's, or Ernst Lothar Hoffmann's, life back to his birth in Germany, sharing with us the information that Govinda's maternal grandfather was a soldier of fortune who, after a life of adventure and fighting somehow became the War Minister for Bolivia! The book continues to trace Govinda's childhood influences, his early ability to speak French and Spanish fluently, and his love of philosophy. He was training to be a mining engineer, but at the age of sixteen he turned away from the world of physics and mechanics to a more

absorbing field. In his own words: 'I discovered that I was not so much interested in the depths of the earth as in the depths of the mind. So, instead of engineering, I turned to philosophy,' (p.3).

Eventually in his search for truth and meaning he found Buddhism, and he founded the International Buddhist Union, of which 'he was the sole member'. In 1928 he sold up everything he possessed and moved to Ceylon, in order to join the Buddhasangha. In his gentle and easily accessible literary style Winkler tells us how Govinda first became a Theravadin *bhikkhu* (it was then that he was given the name Govinda) and how he later came to meet the great Tibetan lama, Tomo Geshe Rimpoche. It was a meeting which would change his life.

The rest, as they say, is history. In the years that followed, Govinda carried on writing, studying, practising, and conducting many pilgrimages to Tibet, to research Tibetan sacred art, and to deepen his understanding of the importance of particular forms, colours, and sounds in Tibetan Buddhism. *A Thousand Journeys* tells us also of his marriage to Li Gotami, and his growing fame in the West. It tells of the many members of the so-called beat generation who came to visit him in the house which was rented to



him by Dr Evans Wentz, and it tells how he eventually came to the decision to set up an Order, the Arya Maitreya Mandala, which in a number of ways resembles our own Western Buddhist Order. Of particular interest to those involved with the FWBO is a chapter devoted to Govinda's friendship with Sangharakshita, which includes some delightful descriptions of Govinda by Sangharakshita.

Most of all, though, the book describes Govinda's many journeys, and chronicles the story of one of the great Buddhist pioneers who played a large part in the introduction of Buddhism to the West. Throughout the book, Govinda is presented as a warm, humorous, intelligent human being, who above all was formidably dedicated to his practice of Buddhism. In

the last letter he wrote, which interestingly enough was addressed to Sangharakshita (he died four days after writing it), he stated that it was up to the next generation of Western Buddhists to 'take Buddhism out of the merely academic atmosphere and make it a living experience'. It is ironic that he should have written this, for it is people like him and Sangharakshita who have done precisely that, who have made Buddhism into a living experience, and by doing so have influenced the lives of thousands of others. It is an inspiring testament to Govinda that even though he had done so much, he still knew that the work had only just begun, and he has passed on his charge to his many students to carry on making Buddhism a living experience.

Being an avid reader of biographies, I found this a deeply enjoyable and inspiring book, as it charts and explores the life of a Western man who gave his life to developing his understanding of the Buddha's teaching. □

Amritavajra



**Top: Lama Govinda teaching
Far left: The Govindas
Near left: At Evans-Wentz stupa
at Kasar Devi**

VIEWS OF ULTIMATE REALITY

**The Buddha Within:
Tathagatagarbha Doctrine
According to the Shentong
Interpretation of the
Ratnagotravibhaga**

by S.K. Hookham

Published by State University
of New York Press, pp.421,
paperback price \$19.95

In the Introduction, the author states her purpose 'to pose a challenge to those Westerners who are in danger of adopting... a one-sided view of the Buddhist tradition' by ignoring the 'vital role of the faculty of "faith" in the process of realization and enlightenment' and who, relying upon the 'intellectual faculty' as supreme, deny 'even the existence of intuitive wisdom beyond the dualism of knower and known,' (p.1).

16 Although many who read this book may indeed find parts of it a little demanding on their 'intellectual faculty', its overall purpose is stated to lie in its *practical* implications for the Buddhist practitioner. And, although the author relies almost entirely upon the Tibetan tradition, both textual and oral, it is claimed that the issues raised reflect certain implicit trends whose roots go back to the earliest Buddhist traditions. This being the case, all Buddhists will have something to gain from the issues raised, once some unfamiliar terminology has been mastered.

The book is divided into three sections. The first introduces the reader to the main issues, which centre around the Tibetan Shentong ('other-empty') and Rangtong ('self-empty') interpretations of the nature of Ultimate Reality. This provides the necessary doctrinal background for what follows. The second section presents the historical background of the

traditions supporting the Shentong point of view and the Shentong interpretation of the *Ratnagotravibhaga* and its prose commentary, the central texts of the book, both of which concern themselves with the Tathagatagarbha doctrine. The final section provides 'A Paraphrase With Comments' on these texts, as well as a translation of the introduction from a commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhaga* by the nineteenth century Tibetan teacher, Jamgon Kongtrul. There are also six useful appendices.

The Shentong/Rangtong distinction is concerned with the interpretation of 'emptiness' (*shunyata*). Most Rangtongpas treat the statement 'All dharmas are empty of self-nature' as a 'non-implicative negative' truth statement. In other words, there is no implication of any other reality that is *not* empty of self-nature in the sense that all dharmas *are* empty of self-nature. Therefore, there is no noumenal reality beyond the realm of phenomena, and the reality of those phenomena is that they are empty of inherent existence: this is the sole reality.

For Shentongpas this is tantamount to nihilism and completely ignores the positive statements concerning a Reality beyond conditioned phenomena, 'found in all Sutras'. For Shentongpas the statement 'all dharmas are empty of self-nature' is an 'implicative state of negation' implying 'something which is not nothing, but something in which something else is absent,' (p.31). In other words the statement implies an experienceable 'something' which is empty of the emptiness of self-nature, called by the Shentongpa Dolpopa 'the remainder that is primordially present,' (p.31). That 'remainder' is a positive Ultimate Reality variously called 'Nirvana', 'Dharmakaya', 'Tathagatagarbha', etc.

And so we have two kinds of 'emptiness'. As Maitreya's *Madhyantavibhaga*, claimed by Kongtrul as a source of Shentong, puts it: 'Here the non-existence of person and dharmas is emptiness. The existence associated with that non-existence—that is another emptiness....' (p.147).

Put in other terms, conditioned co-production (*pratitya samutpada*) is one kind of emptiness whilst there is another kind of emptiness corresponding to the Unconditioned which is, as the author translates it, 'the existence (*bhava*) associated with that non-existence' (the Sanskrit text here actually has *sad-bhava*, 'true/real being', rather than *bhava*). That second kind of emptiness is synonymous with Nirvana, etc. However, as Sthiramati's commentary on this verse makes clear (this is not mentioned by the author) the first kind of emptiness avoids the extreme of eternalism, whilst the second avoids the extreme of nihilism. Thus, as both are complementary, neither can be said to be 'ultimate truth'. The Rangtong/Shentong distinction is therefore more a matter of methodology than ontology. In fact, the author does mention such a position when she relates that 'some teachers choose to expound a certain scripture from a Rangtong point of view for some pupils and the same scripture from a Shentong point for others,' (p.14).

There are 'exclusive Rangtongpas', (e.g. the Gelugpas) who completely reject Shentong as non-Buddhist. There also seem to be 'exclusive Shentongpas' who, relying on a literal interpretation of the Tathagatagarbha doctrine,—that Buddhahood is *quite literally* within one right here and now—can, with special instruction from a teacher, dispense with the gradual purification of the defiled mind and catch a glimpse of Buddhahood. This then becomes the focus of their meditation practice.

Apparently, in time, the defilements just fall away! However, although this must always remain a possibility, even though for the very few, I do not see any need for a literal interpretation of the Tathagatagarbha doctrine in order to explain it. Indeed, to me, a literal interpretation of this doctrine can be said to be quite literally un-Buddhist as it becomes indistinguishable from the Brahman/Atman of Hinduism. At best it is a piece of crude thinking.

This, briefly, is the theme of the book. Doctrinally, I found it very stimulating and although I would take issue with many points the author raises, it does help one attempt to clarify one's own thinking (or lack of it!) in numerous areas of Buddhist doctrine. For example, is this Rangtong/Shentong distinction not based on a one-sided notion of 'conditioned co-production', taking into consideration only the twelve 'negative' links? If this is all there is, it is hardly surprising that some have felt the need for something a little more encouraging. But what about the 'positive' links, leading to 'knowledge of the destruction of the *asravas*', which is synonymous with complete Buddhahood? Here we have Buddhahood arising in dependence on conditions. Yet Dolpopa says that if 'the Dharmata [a synonym of Buddhahood] was dependently arising... [this would imply that] it was false, non-existent, non-dependable,' (p.82). Thus, Dharmata must be outside of all dependent arising and so we need the Shentong emptiness. But if this Shentong/Rangtong distinction rests upon a one-sided notion of conditioned co-production, does not a complete notion of it make that very distinction redundant? For those interested in following this issue through for themselves, I refer you to Sangharakshita's *Survey of Buddhism* pps.135–142 as a starting point. □ Sagaramati

PERSPECTIVES ON THE BUDDHA

The Buddha's Victory

by Sangharakshita
Published by Windhorse,
pp.95, paperback price £4.95

For many, *The Buddha's Victory* will be seen as a good companion volume to Sangharakshita's excellent *Vision and Transformation* (reviewed in *Golden Drum* no. 22) which gives a clear introduction to the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path. This new book, based on five talks given over the past decade, covers certain key events in the Buddha's life.

As the introduction informs us, these talks 'were given on home ground' in the context of gatherings organized either by the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, or the Western Buddhist Order itself. This context perhaps gives us a clue as to for whom the book is most suited. In contrast with *Vision and Transformation*, which presents its material in a form accessible to the complete newcomer to Buddhism, *The Buddha's Victory* is perhaps more appropriate to those with some knowledge of Buddhism and even some understanding of the FWBO. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, some of the ideas introduced are quite complex and may need clarification and explanation through preliminary reading and discussion; secondly, in one chapter at least, the subject matter—the ordination of women—is potentially quite contentious.

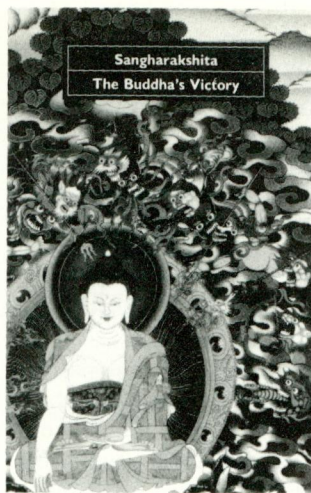
The first talk celebrates the process leading up to the Buddha's Enlightenment, and his great victory over the four Maras, preceded by several lesser victories 'without which the great victory could hardly have taken place,' (p.16).

Sangharakshita describes the Bodhisattva's going forth from home to the homeless life as the victory of overcoming group attitudes, conditioning, and attachments. He also speaks of Siddhartha's victory over complacency and ambition making the telling point that 'if you are spiritually ambitious, in the sense of seeking a position of spiritual leadership, you are likely to become spiritually complacent. Similarly, if you are spiritually complacent, you will tend to seek a position of spiritual leadership by way of compensation for your lack of real spiritual effort,' (p.19).

This is followed by 'The New Man Speaks', dealing with the months after the Buddha's Enlightenment and the spiritual experiences which led to his finding the means to 'speak'—to communicate his enlightenment experience to others.

In the third talk Sangharakshita gives an account of the story of Mahaprajapati, the first woman to seek to go forth into the spiritual community. This was at first firmly refused by the Buddha and only after the intervention of Ananda did he permit her ordination, although not without imposing eight special rules. Sangharakshita admits that these rules seem 'quite severe, even quite harsh ... Indeed, the Buddha seems to be being quite unjust to women in general,' (p.53)—although, as he later explains, the rules are more concerned with social than spiritual factors.

Reflecting upon the significance of this incident, Sangharakshita (in contrast to some Western commentators who have seen this as evidence that the Buddha 'oppressed women')



points out that the Buddha's refusal to ordain Mahaprajapati arose not from the fact that she was a woman, but because her approach to demanding ordination was wilful and manipulative.

The last chapter is based on a moving account from the *Vinaya Pitaka* of the Pali Canon. It describes how the Buddha and Ananda once came across a very sick monk who was suffering with dysentery and 'lay where he had fallen down in his own excrement,' (p.62). On enquiry, the Buddha was told that this monk was 'useless to the brethren Lord. That is why [we] do not take care of him.' The Buddha's immediate response to this was, along with Ananda, to clean up and care for the monk himself.

Commenting on the shocking nature of this monk's story Sangharakshita points to the special role of mutual kindness within the spiritual community, and in this connection draws certain parallels between the early Buddhist sangha and our own Western Buddhist Order.

The final talk deals with the period leading up to the Buddha's death. In it we are told that 'perhaps all the [Buddhist] teachings could be reduced to one teaching, in fact to just one magic, meaningful word ... impermanence,' (p.78). This chapter focuses on impermanence, and particularly on the subject of death. Three meditations are described which can help us

to connect with the reality of our own approaching death. There follows a description of four incidents in the period leading up to the Buddha's final passing away. Here, Sangharakshita makes several important points including the assertion that 'Stream-entry is well within the reach of serious-minded practising Buddhists,' (p.85), and that there is a need to reconcile the subjective and objective refuge within the spiritual life: that of personal spiritual development (subjective) and that of devotion to a supremely worthwhile object,' (p.86). □

Satyapala

ALSO RECEIVED

The Goddess Changes

Felicity Wombwell
Mandala

Kitezh: The Russian Grail Legends

Munin Nederlander
Aquarian

The Book of Lieh-Tzu

Trans. A.C. Graham
Mandala

Chuang-Tzu: The Inner Chapters

Trans. A.C. Graham
Mandala

What Are People For?

Wendell Berry
Rider

Beyond Psychology

Nona Coxhead
Mandala

The Spirit of Zen

Alan W. Watts
Mandala

Higher Consciousness in Thirty Days

Keith Harary and Pamela
Weintraub
Aquarian

THE EUROPEAN BUDDHIST UNION – A PROMISE OR A THREAT?

Eight hundred and fifty metres up in the densely forested foothills of the French Alps, L'Institut Karma Ling provided a delightful venue for this year's plenary session of the European Buddhist Union (EBU).

It seemed significant that our three-day meeting took place in a thriving retreat centre. Sharing the main building of the restored twelfth century abbey with us were some eighty people participating in a Zen retreat—under the guidance of an Italian master; just a little way from the house, hidden by the trees, were a number of people engaged in a three-year retreat (The Institute was established under the inspiration of Kalu Rimpoché), while the Institute's own (French) spiritual director, Lama Denis Teunroup, was in the middle of a year's solitary retreat. This was clearly a centre of living Buddhism.

The participants at our session, from France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Holland, and the UK (no one from Eastern Europe this year) represented a reasonably broad spread of Buddhist schools, and were all clearly serious about their personal Buddhist practice. Relatively small and occasionally chaotic though our gathering was, it did somehow suggest that the Union is evolving into a real union of real Buddhists.

This is both a blessing and a potential curse. It is a blessing because it is always good to meet fellow Buddhists, and if the Union continues to provide a regular forum for such meetings then it will be making itself very worthwhile. Why the Union's success could also be a curse can perhaps be discerned from its recent acceptance as a 'Category 3 Non-Governmental Agency' by UNESCO. It seems to be in the nature of things that, whether all European

Buddhists like it or not, the Union is set to be considered by all kinds of agencies and institutions as a body capable of representing all of Europe's Buddhists.

Envisaging such an eventuality, the FWBO's delegates have risked their popularity over the past five years by insisting that the Union's constitution should ensure among other things that (a) only groups under the explicit direction of committed Buddhists should be allowed into the Union, and (b) that Union decisions should be reached by consensus rather than by majority vote.

A constitution which includes those provisions was agreed and passed last year and thus provides some kind of guarantee that the Union will continue to

represent *Buddhism*—and, indeed, a Buddhism to which all of the Union's member organizations are happy to subscribe. But that, necessary though it might be, is only a form of last-resort insurance. What is really required is that the Union should now become truly representative.

There are still a great many European Buddhist movements—indeed, some of the biggest and oldest—which show no inclination to join the EBU at all. While they refrain from involvement, the Union will not only be in the potentially dangerous position of being seen to be representative when it is in fact not so, but will also be missing out on the considerable contribution that these movements could be making to its life and

work. The absent movements, of course, as well as missing an opportunity for some stimulating contact, run the risk of being misrepresented.

Perhaps next year's meeting—the planning of which took up much of our time this year—will give a major boost to the Union's membership. Organized on behalf of the EBU by the German Buddhist Union, the congress will be held in Berlin and is expected to attract thousands of visitors—not least because of its impressive list of invited speakers: the Dalai Lama, Shamar Rimpoché, Ayya Khema, Thich Nhat Hanh, Dr Rewata Dhamma, Daishin Morgan, Prabhava Dharma Rishi, Sogyal Rimpoché, and the FWBO's founder, Sangharakshita □

Nagabodhi

FAMILIES OR COMMUNITIES?

With divorce rates increasing and many people opting not to marry when they have children, there have been renewed calls for a return to 'traditional' family values in order to encourage parental responsibility and to counter selfish individualism.

But is the family viable under the pressures of industrial society? Is it a healthy institution? With just a few people living together in what is often emotional isolation from others, the family rarely provides for the fuller emotional needs of its members. Many men lose their old friendships when they get married, and many women with young children spend much of the week with no adult company and support.

A number of alternatives have been tried as one will discover on reading *Diggers and Dreamers*, the 'Guide to Communal Living' (Published by Communes Network), which contains a directory of many British communities (including some FWBO ones), situations in which people intentionally live together communally. The book also contains several articles about the history and practice of communal living.

There have been a wide variety of communities over the years, ranging from loose collections of people united only by a common desire 'to do their own thing without interference', to those motivated by particular religious or political philosophies. These can be anything from Tolstoyan anarchists to New Age monks. Communities can contain from three to a hundred or so

people, occupy one building or several, be found in the city or at the far end of a remote Scottish peninsula. They can be single-sex or mixed, have adults only or children too. Often they do not last very long, but some have lasted decades.

Slowly and painfully an understanding of the issues and practicalities of communal living seems to have developed. This comes through in articles such as 'New Communities' by Simon Poulter and Jonathon How, and in the community 'rules' suggested at one point in the book. Overall, *Diggers and Dreamers* is of interest and use whether one lives communally already, in a nuclear family, or alone.

Successful communities are very rare. Even within the FWBO, community living has perhaps only been successful amongst some of the most committed who have been able to live in single-sex communities with other adults. The community principle involves two different issues: the establishment of a community as a *network of relationships*, and the development of a suitable *living situation* shared with at least some members of that wider community. The former is most probably of primary importance, and needs to be based upon a collective ideal. As such a wider community develops, a variety of communal living situations can crystallize from it, themselves then contributing to the development of that wider community. Perhaps there is still a long way to go before we will see widespread alternatives to the nuclear family. □



Since its foundation in 1981 Octagon has had a particular interest in social and environmental projects. For example:

Housing:
Octagon has always undertaken refurbishment and extension work on houses for private clients. This includes work to listed buildings, interior design and furniture design.

Offices and Light Industrial Buildings:
Experience in the layout and design of offices and light industrial buildings has been gained over the years, and includes:

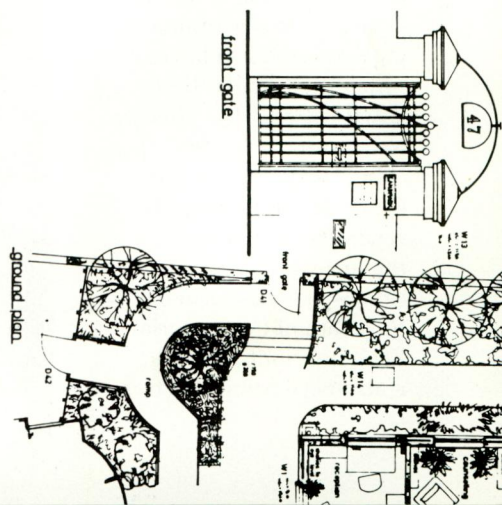
Offices for charities
Offices for a computer maintenance and courier company.

Bindman and Partners
new offices and refurbishment of existing offices for a firm of solicitors who specialise in Human Rights

Shops and Restaurants:
Octagon has also been involved in the design and layout of shops and restaurants:

The Cherry Orchard
vegetarian restaurant, London
Friends Foods
healthfood shop, London
Jambala
gift shop, London

Hockneys
We are currently engaged in the refurbishment and rearrangement of the wholefood shop, restaurant and meeting facilities within the Croydon Buddhist Centre complex. This work also includes the design of a new gift shop.



Globe Town Community Centre,
London E2

HIV / AIDS Charities: Body Positive Ltd.

A Drop In Centre in a converted lower church hall in Earls Court, London SW5

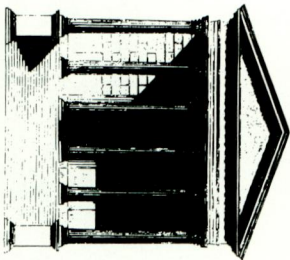
Lambeth Landmark
A Day Support and Education Centre in South London. Initial Design Architect.

The Globe Centre
A Feasibility Study for a large HIV / AIDS Day Care Centre in London's East End. Approx Contract value £1.2 million.

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order:

Designing the exterior and some internal elements of the following buildings:

The London Buddhist Centre,
London E2
Vajraloka Meditation Centre,
Corwen, North Wales
First design for a **Buddhist Centre** and **Welfare Facilities,**
Poona, India.



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ORDER CONVENTIONS

'In Going Forth one relinquishes a social identity and takes up a quest. One becomes an individual, living a life based on universal values.' In such terms did Subhuti's keynote address proclaim 'Going Forth' as the theme of the 1991 convention of the Western Buddhist Order.

The convention, a biennial gathering of the whole Order, took place in August at Sibford School in the village of Sibford Ferris near Banbury. Since the swelling numbers of the Order have made the convention too big an affair for any of the FWBO's retreat centres it has had to seek more spacious accommodation. By general consent, Sibford—a large Quaker school in the Oxfordshire countryside—proved a more congenial venue than the rather gloomy Jesuit college which had housed the 1989 convention. There was time, space, and perfect weather for walks, and the sports hall (richly decorated for the occasion) provided a lofty and reverberant shrine-room in which up to two hundred Order members could perform puja and meditate daily.

The event at Sibford Ferris in fact comprised firstly the combined convention (for men and women) and then the men's convention. Subhuti's talk launched the combined convention and it was followed the next evening by Dhammadinna's guide to the figures on the Order's new 'refuge tree'—a visualized array of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. During the subsequent men's convention the theme of Going Forth was resumed and explored in a fascinating series of talks. Within the space available it is possible to mention only a few.

In 'The Economics of Going Forth' Kulananda reminded the convention that the world had recently witnessed what was in effect the death of Communism. Economic individualism, consumerism, and the free

market were now likely to be unrivalled as value systems. However, at this crucial moment, the FWBO was holding before the world (in institutions such as its residential communities and Right Livelihood enterprises) a model for a radically different lifestyle. *Communalism*, the term coined by Kulananda as a convenient term for this lifestyle, was not just a theoretical alternative but was being tried and proven within the FWBO and might well be imitated by others.

In 'Going Forth and Citizenship' Subhuti again took the rostrum to challenge the notion that membership of the *sangha* should or indeed could stand wholly outside the state. Adducing evidence that such a position was not sustainable in practice, he argued that one must go forth *within* citizenship rather than *from* it. Inspired partly by moral dilemmas presented by the Gulf War, Subhuti's reflections on this subject raised the fascinating, and potentially controversial, subject of how Buddhists should conduct

themselves within the political sphere.

Dharmaghosha, speaking on the subject of 'Going Forth from the Family and Sexual Relationships' offered the convention what might justly be called a hymn in praise to Brahmacharya, the 'divine life' of chastity. After the talk Dharmaghosha, putting his avowed principles into practice, received the brahmacharya precept from Sangharakshita in the course of the evening's puja, donning the yellow robes of an *anagarika* or homeless one.

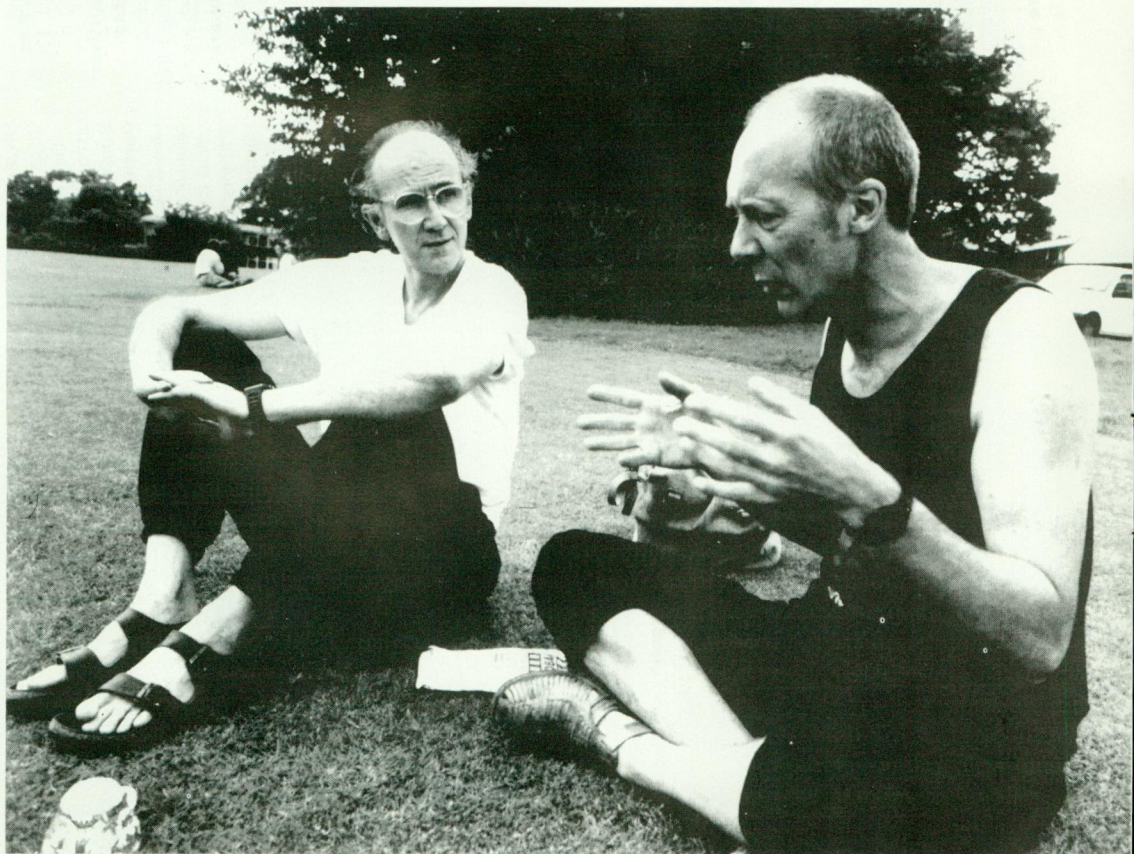
Both sections of the convention were enlivened by a wide spectrum of other events. The morning was given over to various group meetings—for the purpose of reporting-in and study, or to enable those practising the same *sadhana* (visualization practice) to share their experience and practice.

Yet the real meaning, and the greatest pleasure, of the convention was not to be found in any particular item on the programme but in the nature of the event itself. This was simply the coming together in friendship of some two hundred Order



members who, in one another's presence, could directly and vividly experience the spiritual community which they comprise. □ Subhumati

Above: Dharmacharinis at Taraloka. Right: Dhammadinna Below: Sagaramati and Siddhiratna catch up at the men's convention





WOMEN'S CONVENTION

Immediately before the combined convention, women Order members held a ten-day convention at Taraloka retreat centre. Around sixty Dharmacharinis attended, and two marquees were hired to provide a dining area and to extend

the shrine-room so that it could accommodate everyone. This was the fourth such convention and most of those who were in a position to make comparisons said that it was the best. Twenty-two women have been ordained since the last such



event, marking a very significant expansion of the women's Order. What is more, they have been ordained by women preceptors, a development which seems to have brought a noticeable deepening of maturity and confidence.

The theme of the week was 'the opening of the Dharma eye' and this provided a focus for the morning study sessions and for the talks and pujas which took place in the evenings. Within this theme there was an emphasis on the development of a pioneering spirit such as was described by Shrimala, Ratnashuri, and Sanghadevi in their talks on the experience of being a preceptor. On another evening three chairwomen (Vajragita from Holland, Vidyavati from the USA, and Varadevi from Wellington) spoke about the challenge of taking a spiritual and organizational lead.

Dhammadinna, who led the retreat, conducted several long and highly ritualistic pujas including a *yidam* puja devoted to the figures who feature in visualization practices undertaken within the Order. Such activities lent a depth of practice to a stirring week. □

JOINING THE ORDER

Over the summer thirty-five men and women became members of the Western Buddhist Order. Five women were ordained at Taraloka, fifteen men at Bhaja in India, one at Padmaloka, and fourteen at Guhyaloka in Spain. Padmakara (formerly Roger Bygott) from the Bristol Buddhist Centre, who was ordained at Guhyaloka, describes something of the experience.

'In the first week we performed a robing ceremony—the symbolic *Going Forth* and donning of the blue robe: blue for the Dharma jewel and the open blue sky which symbolizes *Shunyata*. This, along with study of spiritual friendship and confession, quickly led to a sense of harmony which was to grow stronger and stronger over the months.

'Then there was the natural beauty of the valley: elemental, grand, and immediate (only one step through a rickety *yesso* hut door). On occasions one could see and hear blue-robed bodies dispersed around the valley chanting the Shakyamuni or the Vajrasattva mantras and experience a sense of mythic timelessness.

'A four week silent phase led up to and

through the private ordinations, with one person *Going Forth* each night. This part of the retreat developed its own momentum of generosity and spontaneity as each ordinand became "King for the day" and we looked after their needs, presenting cakes and gifts in preparation for each other's "spiritual death". The ordination nights saw a new tradition of rejoicing in merits, reflections, and poems, and these provided some of the most moving moments of the retreat. This was followed by a period of Metta Bhavana during which the person to be ordained left the shrine-room and made the walk down to the *stupa* where Suvajra was waiting. Once the ceremony was complete, Suvajra returned to the shrine-room leaving them to spend a night and a day in the *stupa* to absorb the experience.

'The public ordinations were held on 28 May and were conducted by Subhuti. A handful of guests witnessed a beautiful and joyous ceremony, the new names bringing forth *sadhus* loud enough to be heard throughout the Movement and even beyond. Fourteen Dharmacharis had been born!' □

INTERNATIONAL CHAIRMEN'S EVENT

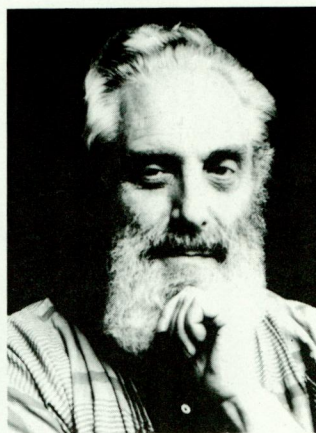
The biennial meeting of chairmen and chairwomen from FWBO centres around the world is one of the most important factors ensuring the unity of the Movement. No decisions are made, but friendships are established or consolidated, experiences compared, and issues discussed. This year the event was held at Padmaloka for two weeks immediately prior to the Order convention.

In order to address issues in some depth, the chairmen heard reports from a few particular centres taken, for one reason or another, as being representative of the wider spread of our centres; the differences and the similarities between the issues in each case were very revealing. In London, Dhammarati saw his task as being to create a sense of collective purpose and effective organizational structures within a very large and diverse context. Dapodi, by contrast, has a very highly motivated body of Dharmacharis but an overwhelming demand for their work. In the USA, the values placed on work, the family, and personal independence create antipathies to collective structures, such as communities, which are unfamiliar in Europe.

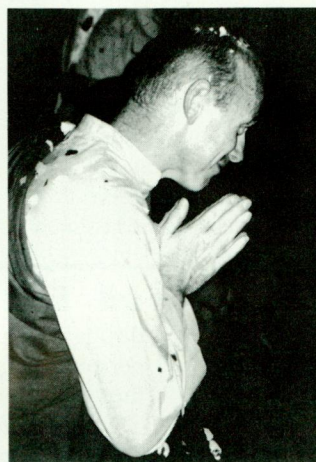
Consideration was given to the development of a strategy for the growth of the FWBO and there was general agreement that Order members should be encouraged to start activities away from the current concentrations. A list of 'target' cities in the UK and across Europe was drawn up, and there was a strong feeling that Eastern Europe should be a particular priority. It was suggested that a central start-up fund might be established to help with the initial costs of creating a centre. This was seen in the context of a pattern of development in which there were centralized resources based at regional centres at the heart of a network of activities.

As well as work there was study on the theme of *kalyana mitrata*, the encouragement and giving of which is seen as the crucial function of a chairman. In the course of a soir   there was, among other things, entertainment from Paramananda as a Buddhist stand-up comedian and singing from Vidyavati. On the final night Ananda Dalenberg, an elder of the San Francisco Zen Centre, and one of Jack Kerouac's original 'Dharma Bum' companions paid a visit. His frank account of some of the successes and difficulties

which his centre has faced over the years made for a fascinating and thought provoking evening. Finally, he initiated the chairmen into the Dharma Bums' song/chant—the full implications of which are anyone's guess. □



Above: Ananda Dalenberg
Right: Bhante ordains Dharmghosha as an anagarika
Below: Anagarika Dharmaghosha
Bottom: Chairmen's event 1991



SANGHARAKSHITA DIARY

Sangharakshita spent July in Spain, at his bungalow in the Guhyaloka valley, accompanied by Paramartha and engaged in writing his memoirs. The latest part has now been completed and will be published in November. He also found time to write an essay, 'A Note on "The Burial of Count Orgaz"', and to start catching up with his correspondence. Meanwhile, the annual ordination retreat was continuing at the retreat centre further up the valley and Sangharakshita was very happy to conduct the *anagarika* ceremony of Sadhujivin, one of the recently ordained Dharmacharis.

On his return to London, Sangharakshita spent several sessions working with Dr Denis Aleksandrovich who is currently living at Sukhavati while translating *A Guide to the Buddhist Path* into Russian. Next, almost a week





was spent at Padmaloka where the Chairmen's Retreat was in progress. Whilst there Sangharakshita attended to Order Office affairs and gave a number of personal interviews.

On 6 August Sangharakshita left London for the biennial Order convention at Sibford School, arriving in time for the combined convention

and staying on for the ten days of the men's convention.

Sangharakshita chaired Subhuti's talk on the theme of Going Forth and held a question-and-answer meeting with all the Dharmacharinis present. He spoke most fully on the subject of old age and on the attitude which may be adopted towards its onset and its effects.

During the men's convention Sangharakshita chaired Sthiramati's talk, while Padmavajra's (on the subject of Going Forth as a theme in Sangharakshita's poetry) provided the context for Sangharakshita to read some of that poetry. Literary interests featured elsewhere in his programme; during the combined convention he met with Jinananda and other editors of his lectures and seminars, and later held a meeting with prose writers. Generally, this was a very full and busy time. Sangharakshita led a puja, conducted the *anagarika* ceremony of Dharmaghoshia, and attended a showing of the first FWBO newsreel. He was glad to see people individually, especially those who had come from overseas; every day he ate lunch and dinner with a different group of Order

members from a particular chapter, centre, or community.

The convention finished a few days before Sangharakshita's birthday, so on the evening of the final talk he was given two *thangkas* as birthday presents. The Dharmacharis gave him a *thangka* of a golden Vajrasattva on a beautiful red background. The other present was an enlarged photo of a *thangka* that Jamyang Khentse Chokye Lodro had painted for Sangharakshita and which Suvajra had photographed and mounted in traditional *thangka* style.

On the way back to London Sangharakshita and Paramartha stopped at the Ashmolean Museum in

Oxford and spent a very pleasant few hours there, taking a special interest in the Oriental section. □



Above: Going for Refuge group at Aryaloka during the summer, Vidyavati third from right
Below (from top): Mask making for Kovida's *Game of Death* retreat at Aryaloka
A band of wrathful deities and a pair of asuras on the same retreat



REBORN IN THE USA

This summer, as part of its busy retreat programme, Aryaloka in New Hampshire staged a retreat entitled *The Game of Death* led by Kovida. Rose Mary Denman lived to tell the tale:

'Little did any of us who had come for this week suspect. Most of us had been on retreat at Aryaloka before. We had experienced the peaceful atmosphere that can be found through the gentle turning of the retreat schedule and that's what we thought we would experience this time. After all, the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* is pretty heady stuff, right? And its all rather serious, especially considering the subject matter, right? Any Order member leading this particular retreat is probably going to be a pretty sombre character, right?

'Wrong! Kovida came among us with enough energy to exhaust an Olympic athlete and more laughter and giggles than most TV comedy hours. If the Bardo is experienced as

chaos, then Kovida did everything in his power to create a Bardo experience for us. We played games in the 101 degree sun until we thought we would drop from exhaustion and laughter. We created art which communicated our greatest dreams and fears; and then we burned them in ceremony as we entered the Bardo, the unknown. We wrote stories that brought ripples of laughter and at other times moved us to tears. We role-played, danced, sang, chanted, created dramatic interpretations, made masks on one another and wrote to those we love who had died or who were in the dying process.

'And through it all Kovida was with us: as our inspiration when we felt uninspired; as our source of energy when we were tired; as our stand-up comic when the atmosphere got a bit too heavy; and as testimony that there is life after the death of schedule! I don't think any of us will be quite the same again.' □



NEW GROUND IN INDIA

The last year has been an exciting time of expansion and breakthrough for TBMSC, the FWBO's Indian wing, but it has also been marred by inter-caste violence. In many places Buddha Day celebrations were affected by the political violence which followed the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, but the momentum of the Buddhist movement is starting to make it a force in its own right.



24

AMBEDKAR CENTENARY

1991 marks the centenary of the birth of Dr Ambedkar, the revered former leader of the ex-Untouchable community. His birthday, 14 April, saw celebrations up and down the sub-continent and throughout the TBMSC centres. At the Poona Mahavihara, however, celebrations had started in March 1990 taking the form of a monthly programme of activities which has continued ever since. These activities have included talks, seminars, and cultural programmes and over the months many prominent figures in the ex-Untouchable community (and many of Ambedkar's former colleagues) have visited.

CONVERSIONS TO BUDDHISM

Although Dr Ambedkar chose Buddhism as the path for himself and his immediate followers, the majority of ex-Untouchables

remained as Hindus. As such they were entitled to considerable benefits in the shape of reserved places in government service and Higher Education—forefeited by those who became Buddhists. Up to now only Maharashtra State, with by far the greatest concentration of Buddhists, has extended the reserved places to all ex-Untouchables. But in 1990 the populist government of V.P. Singh changed the law so that throughout India there would no longer be any penalty attached to conversion.

The consequences of this have been dramatic and are potentially revolutionary. Firstly, those who have considered themselves Buddhist for a number of years are now happy to declare themselves as such and TBMSC awaits with great interest the results of the 1991 census which may show a substantial increase in their number.

Secondly, there has already been a wave of mass conversions in which TBMSC has been involved. Lokamitra, for instance, conducted the conversion ceremony of 500 people in Goa and 250 at Kolahapur.

TBMSC SPREADS THROUGH INDIA

TBMSC policy has always been that Order members will conduct conversion ceremonies only if it is possible for them to provide some follow-up Buddhist activities; otherwise conversions will be in name alone. This means taking many more activities to areas outside Maharashtra—where the Movement is strongest—but as TBMSC expands it is increasingly able to do this.

Activities in Kolahapur in southern Maharashtra were started by Shakyanda who (although he is now sixty-five) has spent the last five years in the district travelling from village to village taking classes, leading retreats, and establishing a movement



which includes people from many different castes. The conversions represent the first fruit of the decision of an entire community, the Matangs, to embrace Buddhism. The story in Goa, where activities were initiated by Dharmacharis from Bombay, is very similar and it now has a thriving level of activities. Meanwhile, in Hyderabad, the largest city in Andhra Pradesh in south-eastern India, activities were initiated by Ashvajit and consolidated by the establishment of an educational hostel in nearby Secundabad. Chandrabodhi is now a frequent visitor to a

large and growing group of Hyderabad Buddhists.

HASTINAPUR

Perhaps the most striking new development is the start of a centre in the historic town of Hastinapur near Delhi in Uttar Pradesh State and over a thousand miles north of Poona. Last year the town of Agra near Delhi was the scene of a huge mass conversion to Buddhism and there were similar scenes across northern India. Meanwhile, Abhayaraja was developing a strong connection with two mitras in a community in Poona. This friendship was consolidated on the



Ordination course from which the mitras emerged as Dharmacharis Chandravira and Padmavira. The three were joined by Bodhisagar, and decided to set up a branch of TBMSG in Hastinapur establishing both a Dharma centre and a hostel for school children. There is a potentially vast interest in Buddhism in Uttar Pradesh and the new centre is an early indication that the new ordination process can act as a springboard for the development of TBMSG.

VISIT OF INDIAN DHARMACHARIS

Sudharshan, Maitreyanatha, and Bodhisen, three senior members of the Indian wing of the Western Buddhist Order, flew to England for the summer to join the Chairmen's meeting and the Order convention. In the course of their visit they were able to visit most of the UK centres, where they were both warmly received and highly appreciative.

Maitreyanatha, chairman of Bahujan Hitay (the social welfare organization) commented that he was particularly impressed by the level of organization at centres and in businesses. He spoke especially highly of Windhorse Trading in Cambridge and was moved by how much some (but only some) of the people he met were giving to the Movement.

Before returning to India, Maitreyanatha was sponsored by the Karuna Trust to attend a three-week course on 'Urban Health in Developing Countries' at the London School of Tropical Medicine.

Maitreyanatha found the course extremely valuable as a basis for planning future Bahujan Hitay health projects, while it seems that his wealth of practical 'grass-roots' experience enabled him to make a significant contribution to the course—which was attended in the main by doctors and other specialists. □

Far left: The Pimpri shrine
Left: The bookshop at Nagpur

Above (from left): Bodhisen,
Maitreyanath and Sudharsan at the
Norwich centre

P A D M A S A M B H A V A F E S T I V A L

Lights down; cue sound: 'Somewhere in Tibet, land of white snows and dark mystery...' Music. Lights up. Enter five bizarrely made-up peasants, faces distorted. This is the mime of the building of Samye Temple starting the dramatic component of the London Buddhist Centre's Padmasambhava Festival.

Padmasambhava is a semi-historical figure from the very beginnings of Tibetan Buddhism who, over the centuries, has become the focus for a vast quantity of profound and sometimes bizarre mythology and symbolism. People often call him *magical* and he seems to hold a particular fascination for those involved in the arts. Thus it is that over the last three years the Padmasambhava Festival has released a flood of creative energy around the LBC. It has grown to fill a weekend of ritual, celebration, and an expanding repertoire of performance which is produced to a spectacularly high level. Up to forty people were involved in staging this year's festival and for some it has become a principal focus in their lives. Fundraising started in April; rehearsals took place over several

months and up to two hundred people attended some part of the weekend when it was finally held in September.

Saturday was devoted to puja, readings, and invocation; by Sunday morning an atmosphere of enjoyment and concentration had been established. In the afternoon the mime (whose cast were mostly professional mime-artists and dancers) was performed to an uproarious reception. It was followed by a new feature: a dramatized version of the story of the



guru's conquest of the demons of Tibet which was acted using mime and mudra. Kovida's text was very faithful to the original, but it was written in a delightful rag-bag of styles whose inspirations ranged from 'The Lady of Shallot' to Shakespeare's crowd scenes.

Taken alongside the play performed on FWBO Day it is already possible to detect the development of a distinctive FWBO dramatic style characterized by a vigorous, imaginative, and unportentous use of ritual. The ritual reached its culmination on Sunday night with the now traditional dance of the eight manifestations of Padmasambhava and his two female disciples. The dancers appeared in stunning masks and costumes and visualized Padmasambhava while performing an elaborate gestural dance; after a weekend of invocation, the guru had manifested.

To my mind this was the most richly satisfying Buddhist festival I have attended, a revelation of what a festival can be. There is talk of making it a national celebration next year, and of opening festivities out to the far wider audience it surely deserves. □

Simon Blomfield

SANGHAPALA IN DUBLIN

There is a strong contingent of Irish Dharmacharis who became involved in the FWBO while living in the UK, but up until now they have not chosen to go back. In December 1990, however, Glaswegian-Irish Sanghapala moved to Dublin and in March he started teaching activities with a public talk attended by forty people on the theme of 'Buddhist Ethics'.

Three meditation courses have followed and have led to the establishment of a regular friends group who are currently engaged in a Dharma course. The same people also enjoyed a weekend meditation retreat led by Sanghapala set in the lakeland idyll of County Cavan. □

Top: Sanghapala (second from left) flanked by Dublin friends
Right: No news from New Zealand this time but Sue Thompson became a mitra on Dharma Day



CHANGES IN CROYDON

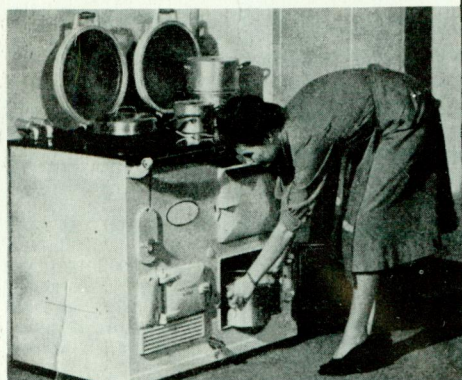
Ten years after its opening, Hockneys restaurant has closed as an evening restaurant and shifted its location within the Croydon co-op, as part of a major restructuring which affects virtually all of the FWBO's activities in Croydon. While the new café occupies the space which formerly housed the centre, the new centre has moved upstairs to occupy the old restaurant floor. The advantage of this is threefold; firstly it frees up space for the establishment of a Windhorse 'Evolution' shop; secondly it enables the business to employ eight fewer people; and thirdly it should result in a much more profitable and efficient business.

As reported last spring, both the London Buddhist Centre and the Croydon Centre have been experiencing severe financial difficulties, but while the LBC's position has stabilized thanks to vigorous cost-cutting and fund-raising measures, Croydon has continued to lose very large amounts of money. But those who work in Croydon see the changes as an opportunity to move forward. In the next issue of *Golden Drum*, Dharmaruchi, who is chairman of the Croydon centre, will examine some of the causes of the change-round and the difficulties which they seek to address. □

COVENT GARDEN GROWS

The FWBO started in 1967 in rather cramped premises in Monmouth Street, Covent Garden. Since then the Movement has grown dramatically, while that part of London has moved considerably up-market to become the home of cafés, clubs, boutiques, and galleries; the hunting ground of the young, the fashionable, and the alternative.

At the heart of all this is the London Ecology Centre, which has already housed a number of courses run by both the London and West London Buddhist Centres. So when a floor became vacant at a very low rent the two centres jumped at the chance to have a long-overdue Central London venue for classes. The Covent Garden Meditation Centre opened on 6 September as a jointly run venture with a programme of three classes a day, five days a week plus special weekend events. So far the response has been tremendous with a hundred people attending in the first week and the weekends booked until the new year. At present the lease runs until Christmas, but it is hoped that it will be extended. □



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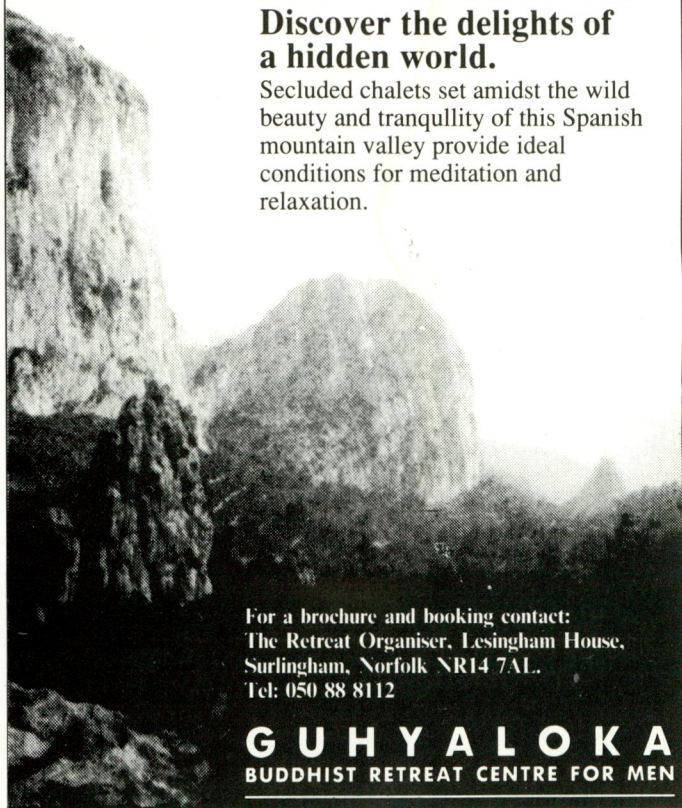
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