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Cover A shrine with Dr Ambedkar
and Sangharakshita on tour.
Dharmachakra wheel
Below Sangharakshita on tour



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A VISION UNFOLDS

On 14 October 1956, on a vast open space in the Maharashtran town of Nagpur, 400,000 people came together to chant the three Refuges and five ethical precepts. Twenty-two vows which they also recited confirmed the fact that they were renouncing Hinduism—a religion that had brought them nothing but pain and humiliation—and espousing Buddhism. Over the following months and years millions more followed their example, thus bringing Buddhism as a living, popular tradition back to the land of its birth.

Most of these people belonged to the Mahar caste, and were thus included in the lowest stratum of Hindu society. There were several euphemisms and labels used by that society to describe them: 'Dalits', 'Harijans', and 'scheduled castes'. But the word which most concisely summed up their actual status was 'Untouchable'. Any member of an 'Untouchable' caste was thought to be inherently impure. His or her touch—and sometimes even sight or sound as well—was thought to be spiritually polluting. As an Untouchable, one's divinely apportioned lot was to suffer the most degrading work, to live out of sight of the rest of the community in abject material circumstances. An Untouchable could not own property, carry arms, enter the temple, or even learn or recite religious texts. Above all, one was on no account permitted to marry outside caste, and thus dilute the rigid boundaries of the hell in which one found oneself—presumably as a god-given punishment for evil actions committed in previous lives. Exploited, abused, and despised by all, it is true to say that the Untouchables were deemed to be of less worth than animals. It was an extraordinary system, and one which had persisted for thousands of years. Indeed, in the villages, where the vast majority of Indians still live, it is alive and effective even now. Every day Indian newspapers carry reports of horrific crimes committed against unfortunate 'Untouchables' who are deemed to have tried to rise above their proper station—even though the practice of Untouchability has been illegal since the passing of India's constitution.

The man responsible for that constitution was Dr B.R. Ambedkar. A Mahar himself, and therefore an 'Untouchable' by birth, Ambedkar lived a life which was from the earliest age a direct affront to the system which had squeezed thousands of millions, indeed *all*, of his forbears into the mud. He was the first Mahar ever to win a BA degree, and went on to win a Ph.D and to qualify as a barrister. His education, which took him to the heights of academic excellence, also took him to the USA and Europe, further freeing him from the mental shackles of Untouchability. He returned to India at a time when the struggle for independence was gathering force. Much of that struggle had to do with an attempt to gain the moral high ground, to shame the British out of the land whose wealth they had usurped and exploited. In such a climate Ambedkar played a brilliant game, awakening liberal Hindus to the plight of the

Untouchables, leading the Untouchables themselves in a search for their dignity and strength.

As he won increasing respect and political power, Ambedkar was invited to act, firstly, as a representative for the Untouchables and, in time, as a statesman in his own right. He was Nehru's choice as first Law Minister of independent India, and it was he who chaired the committee responsible for drafting India's constitution, the document that outlawed Untouchability.

The mere outlawing of Untouchability was not enough, however. Ambedkar knew that the roots of Untouchability went very deep, both in Indian society and in the minds of the now 'ex-Untouchables' themselves. What was needed was a spiritual change. The oppressed people of India had to learn to believe in themselves. They had to find a way of daring to aspire to be free individuals, with dignity and confidence. What they needed, he believed, was a new religion, the practice of which would give rise to new vision, new energy, and new inner strength.

After years of meticulous research, Ambedkar chose Buddhism, a religion that teaches that every human individual has the potential to become a Buddha, a completely liberated 'awakened one'. It is a religion that puts people, rather than a god, at the centre of things, and which accordingly serves the needs of people rather than the dictates of a god. That first mass-conversion ceremony in Nagpur took place, however, in a kind of vacuum. Buddhism had been dead in India for a thousand years. There were no temples, no teachers, no Buddhist schools or universities.

The worldwide Buddhist community, to its shame, hardly responded at all. Just a handful of monks, among them Sangharakshita, did what they could to nourish the new Buddhists with visits and talks. When Ambedkar died, just six weeks after the Nagpur ceremony, the movement almost foundered. Certainly it fell into chaos and confusion, and for twenty years produced little more than splinter groups, political intrigue, and a crude, hybrid brand of Buddhist social culture. But in 1978 all that began to change.

The story of the birth and astonishing growth of Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha Sahayaka Gana (TBMSG), the Indian wing of the FWBO, has been celebrated already in these pages. We also have Sangharakshita's *Ambedkar and Buddhism*, Padmashuri's *But Little Dust*, and my own *Jai Bhim!*. So apart from the paragraphs you have just read, this issue of *Golden Drum* will be relatively free of background material. Instead, we will be taking advantage of Sangharakshita's recent tour to reflect on just a few aspects of the Indian Buddhist movement as it is today, and the part that our own Movement is playing in bringing it truly to life.

I think Dr Ambedkar would find these pages deeply reassuring. □

Nagabodhi

Behind the Indian Buddhist revival stands the giant figure of Dr B.R. Ambedkar. Lokamitra assesses the parallels between his approach to Buddhism and our own

A Basic Concord

The long train journey from Calcutta to Poona was so daunting that I decided to break it in Nagpur, where I had been given introductions to three people including A.R. Kulkarni. The date was 21 October 1977. Travelling across the city was not easy because an obviously very popular festival was taking place, on a scale which I had never encountered before. On arriving at Mr Kulkarni's house I learned that the festivities were in celebration of the twenty-first anniversary of the event by which the Dharma was dramatically re-established in India: the conversion to Buddhism of Dr B.R. Ambedkar and 500,000 of his followers.

Being a Buddhist myself, and a 'new' Buddhist at that, I asked immediately to be taken to the centre of the celebrations at the Diksha Bhumi, the place where the original conversions had taken place. I had never seen so many people in my life! As an anagarika wearing the yellow robe I was escorted through the crowds and placed on the lower of the two stages which was covered in yellow-robed monks—the higher stage being reserved for the politicians! After the politicians finished their speeches we were led onto the main stage. I was expected to say a few words, but

was somewhat overawed by the numbers and the fact that I knew almost nothing about the situation. However, I managed to pass on the best wishes of Sangharakshita whom, going by the response, they obviously remembered with much feeling.

I had come to India in 1977 to study Hatha Yoga and visit the Buddhist holy places. Before leaving England I had asked Sangharakshita if I could do anything for him in India. He had not returned since leaving India ten years earlier. He asked me to meet some of his former

disciples, especially in Maharashtra. At that time I knew little of his connection with Dr Ambedkar and his followers. Almost fourteen years later, and still in India, it seems more than a coincidence that my first contact with Dr Ambedkar's movement should have been at the place where he converted to Buddhism and on the twenty-first anniversary of the very day!

In 1977 the FWBO was just beginning to expand. The seeds and the inspiration for the developments that



**Dr B.R.
Ambedkar**



were to take place could all be found in Sangharakshita's teaching even then. The previous year his lecture series, entitled 'Transformation of Life and World in the Sutra of Golden Light', had, for me, suddenly opened out a perspective which I realized I had been seeking for years. In the 1960s, like many others in the West, I had been stirred by social questions ranging from the bomb to racial prejudice. Since starting Buddhist practice I had been more concerned with my own mental development. In this teaching of Sangharakshita's the apparent contradiction between the demands of self and world were resolved. It gave new meaning to my life and practice. In England, with our young FWBO communities and Right Livelihood businesses, the beginnings of this twofold transformation were to be seen. But it would take many, many years to have a significant effect on English society.

In India the situation was different. Walking around the Diksha Bhumi on the day after the celebrations, seeing so many Buddhists with such obvious and genuine devotion, I realized quickly the significance of what Dr Ambedkar had done. As a result of his



guidance, millions of people were now receptive to the Dharma. Surely there could be no better situation for the practice of the transformation of self and world? Dr Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism had overwhelming implications. Not only could the lives of millions of ex-Untouchables be changed, but Buddhism would have been re-established in the land of its birth, and the course of Indian history changed. Furthermore, in an age when social questions were receiving more and more attention, oppressed people throughout the world would have before them the example of a 'Dharma revolution'.

Our Dharma activities in India started on a regular basis in August 1978, in Poona. Early classes were held in a garage of a Christian—whose car conveniently went to church on Sundays,—on the verandah of an unopened police station, and in a disused railway carriage. The response was such that the two of us were at one time managing fourteen classes and lectures a week. We could not meet the demand for the Dharma that we were confronted with.

Sangharakshita visited India in 1979. At that time we formally inaugurated the Trailokya Bauddha

Mahasangha Sahayak Gana (TBMSC), the Indian equivalent of the FWBO. On the same visit Sangharakshita also conducted the first ordinations in India into the Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha (the name by which the Western Buddhist Order is known in India). At that time he remarked how similar the Dharma needs of the local Buddhists seemed to the needs of Western Buddhists, and how appropriate the structure and practices we had developed in the West seemed in India. I had come to similar conclusions.

Despite the differences in culture, there seemed to be an extraordinary coincidence taking place between us. In India, as in the West, we were new Buddhists, and as such were concerned not to put on the ill-fitting clothes of another Buddhist culture but to apply the Dharma directly to our own cultural conditions. Being new Buddhists, all that we did in the name of the Dharma had to be meaningful and effective, otherwise what was the point in becoming Buddhists at all? As new Buddhists from quite different situations, we had a lot to give each other and learn from each other. Such communication could help Indian Buddhists more easily transcend the barriers of caste which, although

**Yashodeva's
appliqué triptych**

they had rejected them, were still there all around them, held in place by other people. They who were segregated from other Indians now found that they had brothers and sisters from different parts of the world for whom caste meant absolutely nothing. Western Buddhists, through contact with Indian Buddhists, could learn to transcend a psychological and self-oriented approach to the Dharma, and now had an opportunity to practise *dana* (generosity) in a very direct sense.

A large part of this 'coincidence' obviously centred upon the figure of Sangharakshita, who had strong connections with both situations. Although they only met three times, and despite their differences in personality, it is clear that Dr Ambedkar and Sangharakshita respected each other's deep concern for the Dharma. After Dr Ambedkar's tragically early death it was only natural that Sangharakshita responded to the cries of the newly converted Buddhists for understanding and guidance. Almost every winter he would come down to the plains from Kalimpong to spend up to eight months at a time with Dr Ambedkar's Buddhist followers.

I found many points of contact in the approaches to the Dharma of Dr Ambedkar and Sangharakshita. This is not surprising, in that both were radical and penetrating in their thoughts on the application of the Dharma to the situations they found themselves in.

Sangharakshita is non-sectarian in his approach to the Dharma. While being rooted in the basic teachings, such as the Noble Eightfold Path and the Three Trainings of *shila*, *samadhi*, and *prajna*, his approach embraces the universal and altruistic perspective of the Bodhisattva Ideal found in the Mahayana.

Although the fact is not usually appreciated, Dr Ambedkar's approach is not dissimilar. His book, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, consists largely of suttas from the Pali Canon, but with some sutras from the Mahayana. On the last page of the book he quotes the famous fourfold Bodhisattva Vow. In the twenty-two vows he gave to his followers at the time of conversion he included the Ten Paramitas, the virtues cultivated by the would-be Bodhisattva. After his conversion, when asked whether he was a follower of the Hinayana or the Mahayana, Dr Ambedkar said that he was neither, but rather a follower of the 'Buddhayana'!

individual and social damage: fear, exploitation, authoritarianism, war, and so on.

Dr Ambedkar drew a very important distinction between the founders of different religions. On the one hand there was the Buddha, born as a human being and Enlightened through his own efforts, thus setting an example to others of what they could become. On the other, there were those who claimed godly status or links with God which inevitably made them into authority figures. They, and by extension, their priests and holy books, could not be questioned. They had to be obeyed. All sorts of abuses resulted, the grossest of which in India was the caste system. It was not without reason, then, that Dr Ambedkar said in *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, 'Belief in god is the most dangerous thing.' What relief Dr Ambedkar must have found in Buddhism, where even the Buddha insisted that his teachings be tested 'as the goldsmith tests the gold', and where, the seeds of Enlightenment being in all, there was no question of sanctifying social differences through caste.

When he started teaching in the West, Sangharakshita found that many considered themselves both Buddhist and Christian. But to him the two were clearly irreconcilable. Christianity meant belief in God, which in Buddhism is a basic wrong view. It follows that such people could only make limited progress in their Buddhist practice. This was quite clear to Dr Ambedkar. The first ten of the twenty-two vows given at the time of conversion make it quite clear that the old religious practices have to be abandoned if one is to be able to practise the Dharma effectively. As he said in *The Annihilation of Caste*, 'the old must cease to exist before the new can begin to enliven and to pulsate.' This is not as straightforward as it may seem. Sangharakshita found it necessary to justify what he called 'rational' blasphemy in order to get rid of deep feelings of resentment brought about as a result of belief in an authoritarian god. Dr Ambedkar's burning of the *Manu Smriti* and the destruction, by his followers, of their village gods after conversion, could be seen in similar terms.

According to Dr Ambedkar in *The Buddha and the Future of His Religion*, 'In place of god (in Buddhism) there is morality.' In other words morality took prime place in Buddhism and could not be compromised by other considerations. So much importance did he

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From left: A doctor in the city hutments. Buddhist programme in a village. Health clinics were among our first projects. A hostel boy in class



Both Sangharakshita and Dr Ambedkar had come from cultures dominated by belief in God. Both found that this belief had disastrous effects, not only on believers, but on those who were trying to free themselves of their old religious bonds. Sangharakshita found many Western people crippled with irrational guilt and resentment when he started teaching the Dharma in the West. The source of these states was Christianity. This is not surprising. According to the Dharma, the source of all unskilful emotions is ignorance or confusion. Belief in God, being based on confusion, has resulted in much

attach to this that he stated, 'Morality is Dhamma and Dhamma is morality.' Sangharakshita in *The Ten Pillars of Buddhism* gives similar emphasis to morality. Going for Refuge, he says, 'must find expression in the observance of the Precepts. If it does not find such expression this means that as a Buddhist one is virtually dead.' The Precepts he refers to are the Ten Precepts (otherwise known as the ten *shikshapadas* and the ten *kusala-karma-pathas*). They consist of 'ten great ethical principles which in reality all practising Buddhists—and there is really no other kind—have in common.' They concern the transformation of body,



speech, and mind, transformation of mind being ultimately nothing less than Enlightenment. It is in this sense that morality can be equated with the Dharma.

The real meaning of the first precept, abstention from harming living beings, Sangharakshita says, is to be found in its positive counterpart, 'a cherishing, protecting, maturing love' which is 'a principle that finds expression in one way or another, and to a lesser or greater degree... in all the other precepts as well.' (*The Ten Pillars of Buddhism*). How close this is to Dr Ambedkar, who in the twenty-two vows re-phrases the first precept, usually found in negative form, to 'I will love/help all living beings'! In *The Buddha and His Dhamma* he says, 'Morality... arises from the direct necessity for man to love man.'

Later in the same book he equates morality with fraternity, which guarantees the principles of liberty and equality. These were his most cherished ideals, but they were much more than mere political principles, as he made clear in a broadcast on All India Radio in 1954, 'Positively, my social philosophy may be said to be enshrined in three words: liberty, equality, and fraternity. Let no one, however, say that I have borrowed my philosophy from the French Revolution. I have not. My philosophy has roots in religion and not in political science. I have derived them from the teachings of my master, the Buddha.' In his struggle to find an effective means of social change to eradicate untouchability and the caste system, Dr Ambedkar had come right to the portals of the Buddha Land.

For him the Dharma was especially concerned with relations between human beings, and as such was concerned with nothing less than the transformation of society. He said, 'The purpose of Dhamma is to reconstruct the world,' and that one of the functions of the Dharma was 'to make the world a kingdom of righteousness' (*The Buddha and His Dhamma*). He saw the Dharma bringing about a social revolution just as it had in the India of 2,500 years ago.

Sangharakshita, too, is concerned with nothing less than the transformation of society. The institutions started by the FWBO/TBMSG, such as Right Livelihood businesses, residential communities, Dharma centres, and social projects are, he has said, a blueprint for a new world. In these institutions the individual is free to grow to his or her fullest; indeed that is the very point of these institutions. The aim of individual growth is *vimukti*, or freedom from greed, hatred, and delusion. It is only when one has reached this state that one is quite free from all forms of exploitation, manipulation, and conditioning. In other words it is only at this point that one really achieves 'liberty' in the fullest sense of the word. It follows that there can be no 'authority' in these institutions, and they are

organized accordingly.

But without any authority, *metta* is indispensable, otherwise nothing would be accomplished. It is *metta* that enables people to work together and actualize their common vision. *Metta* is an essential aspect of individual growth, but in these institutions it is emphasized even more. In other words, the new society to which Sangharakshita has been helping give birth is based on the principles of liberty and fraternity (another word for *metta*). Equality is more open to misunderstanding; it should be understood in the sense that all who want to develop can do so through the practice of the Dharma, whether they are men or women, educated or uneducated, rich or poor.

Who was to lead the way in the creation of this New Society or Kingdom of Righteousness? To both Dr Ambedkar and Sangharakshita the answer was the Sangha. Sangharakshita referred to the Sangha as the 'nucleus of the New Society', while Dr Ambedkar called it the 'Ideal Society'.

Although Dr Ambedkar did not go so far as to suggest the sort of Sangha developed in the form of the WBO/TBM by Sangharakshita, he may well have done so had he had the time to nurse the Buddhist movement he had given birth to. He was highly critical of the Bhikshu Sangha, saying, 'The Bhikshu Sangha in its present condition can... be of no use for the spread of Buddhism,' (*The Buddha and the Future of His Religion*). He called for a new kind of Sangha, though what form it was to take was not clear. However he was convinced that the Dharma was the same for all Buddhists, monk or lay. Dharma teaching, he said, should not just be left to the *bhikshus*, and he suggested that appropriate lay Buddhists, even if they had families, should be supported to do this work. He showed through his own example that initiation into the Dharma by the giving of the Refuge and Precepts was not the exclusive domain of the Bhikshu Sangha.

Sangharakshita made it clear from the beginning that we could not ignore the living conditions of the majority of the people we were working with, and that as soon as possible we should start health and educational activities in India. His disciples in the West, inspired by Dr Ambedkar's Dharma Revolution, were only too pleased with the opportunity to help, and established the Karuna Trust (originally known as Aid For India), with the primary aim of raising funds for social projects among the socially deprived in India, especially those previously known as Untouchables.

Dr Ambedkar was quite categorical on this subject. 'When the idea of service to suffering humanity comes to one's mind, everyone thinks of the Ramakrishna Mission. No one thinks of the Buddhist Sangha. There can be no doubt about the answer. Yet the Sangha is a huge army of idlers. We want fewer bhikshus and we want bhikshus highly educated. The Bhikshu Sangha must borrow some of the features of the Christian priesthood, particularly the Jesuits. Christianity has spread in Asia through service—educational and medical,' (*The Buddha and the Future of His Religion*).

Despite such different backgrounds, and with such different initial approaches to the Dharma, there is clearly a basic concord between the ideas of Dr Ambedkar and those of Sangharakshita. Thus although Dr Ambedkar had no time to put his ideas into practice the TBMSG (FWBO) has been able to continue the Dharma revolution that he initiated. □

Sangharakshita is welcomed as warmly in 1991 as he was in 1979. For Lokamitra (right) the tour was the culmination of months of planning

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Millions are still receptive to the Dharma

Nucleus of a new

8 **T**he foundations of the Vihara will be the faith and ethical practice of all those involved. The cement will be the co-operation, the friendship, and the communication which enables them to work together. The walls will be the sustained determination to develop highly skilful mental states no matter what the objective difficulties are. The windows will be the eyes of compassion; the doors will be the openness to others who want to practise the Dharma, no matter who they are; and the roof will be the ideal of human perfection or Buddhahood, to which all those involved aspire.'

With these words, Lokamitra concluded his speech before a joyous audience, estimated at more than 20,000, gathered on 10 March 1990 from all over Maharashtra and beyond for the opening of the Dhammachakra Pravartana Mahavihara in Dapodi, Poona. I was present on that occasion, and recently returned to stay at the Mahavihara for a short while to meet old friends, to make new ones, and to see how the Wheel of the Dharma had been turning for the last two years in our very own 'Great Abode'.

I spoke first of all to Chandrashila, a senior Dharmachari with a special responsibility for overseeing the training of mitras in preparation for entry into the Order.

'Through the practice of Dharma it is possible to overcome all one's personal limitations. On the basis of commitment to the Three Jewels anything is possible. To take one example, on the whole the ex-"Mahar" community has never had the

confidence to run businesses. When it comes to marketing, people usually think, "No one is going to buy our goods." However, this attitude can be changed, like any other attitude, and this can happen when we are practising the Dharma.

'We try to see our work here as an expression of our Dharma practice. So the social work activities of Bahujan Hitay should not be separate from our Going for Refuge. We are expressing our commitment to the Three Jewels through compassionate activity.

'*Kalyana-mitrata* (spiritual friendship) is essential to our work here. The Order members try to help the mitras to take their Going for Refuge deeper; all of us, whether Order members or mitras, try to work as a team on the basis of our developing friendships.

'The residential community is at the centre of our activities at the Mahavihara. During the year-long ordination training course the community members experience a model living situation which provides the basis for setting up similar communities in the places they will go to after ordination. All our hostels are designed to include communities which will look after the students as well as develop other Dharma and social activities in the area.

'We hope that people who have developed friendships in the community here will form teams and go to new areas where they will start new activities. Last year Abhayaraja, Chandravira, and Padmavira left Poona for northern India (Hastinapur, near Delhi). They have managed very well in a completely new area for TBMSG because of the strength of their friendship. They live in harmony and give

each other the emotional support they need. This has inspired others to go together to new places. This year two of the new Order members will go to Goa.'

The first year-long ordination training course began in mid-1990, at the end of which eighteen men entered the Order. This year, on 19 March at our Saddhamapradip Retreat Centre, a further twenty-six men were ordained, twenty-three of whom had attended the second ordination training course at the Mahavihara.

They will spend a further six weeks at the Mahavihara before the course ends, after which some will return to their 'home' centres, some will travel to new ones, and a few will remain in Poona to teach and help in the management of our Movement there, and to welcome into the community a fresh group of men who will be preparing for ordination in 1993.

Lala Virapriya requested ordination in January 1991 and came to the Mahavihara in August. In the previous two years he had been warden first of the Bahujan Hitay boys' hostel in Wardha, and then of the hostel in Nagpur. He had also been leading karate classes in Nagpur for some years, for both boys and girls. On my visit he was preparing, with other members of the resident community, to go on the ordination retreat at Bhaja. I asked him how he had experienced his time at the Mahavihara:

'I feel that I have changed totally in my time here. I have broken a lot of my old conditioning. In order to come here I had to leave the locality where I had lived all my life and the friends I had



known since childhood. I was frightened when I came here. At first it seemed that all of us were a little uneasy in our relations with each other. We were so aware of each other's different behaviour and ideas. But now we have become good friends. This has given me a lot of confidence, and now I think that I could live in a community or start a centre anywhere.

'In my work training I have specialized in Bahujan Hitay's slum programmes. Above all I have learned how to involve the people in our programmes. If we need to start a *bahwadi* (kindergarten) in a new area, we have to involve the people. These ventures are always joint efforts, and that calls for a wide range of social skills.

In March Lala received the Dharmachari ordination, and now has the name Nagamitra.

Nagamitra came from Nagpur with one of his karate

as it is about transforming the self

society



students called Shekhar. Shekhar agrees with him that at first it was difficult to leave behind the familiarity of their situation in Nagpur but that the Dapodi community has developed a very special and friendly atmosphere.

'My primary interest when I go back to Nagpur will be income generation. Our activities there are developing very fast and I feel that we must make progress towards financial self-sufficiency without delay. Also, there are so many youngsters who are enthusiastic to work with us in Right Livelihood. They are mostly unemployed so they need jobs in any case. But up to now we have found it difficult to involve them.

'The year before I came on the course here I worked in our Bahujan Hitay shop in Nagpur. That was the first year of the shop's operations and we made 17,000 rupees profit. This was my first experience

of business but the success of the venture has given me the confidence that now I can do anything.'

'Whilst here I have been training in management with Bodhidhamma, learning how to manage my time and prioritize between different tasks. I shall be encouraging others to do likewise when I go back to Nagpur.'

On 19 March Shekhar was ordained and became Nagaketu.

Dipankar Moon has recently taken on the task of caring for the Mahavihara's library, which includes literature on Dr Ambedkar and Buddhism, social development theory, and fictional material in English, Marathi, and Hindi.

'When I came here I thought of work as a burden, but I have experienced work here as an opportunity to give. I have felt very inspired by the Bodhisattva Ideal. Also, I have

seen my work as an opportunity to practise mindfulness throughout the day.

'We have had many lectures on Bahujan Hitay's social programmes, a series of talks by Lokamitra on "What is the Order?", and a series by Vimalakirti on the thought of Dr Ambedkar. The object of our work is to create a new society. This means that we must cultivate positive emotions towards ourselves and others, and must practise mindfulness.'

Dipankar is now Dharmachari Kumarajiva.

Yogesh comes from Ahmedabad in Gujarat, where his father has been a Dharmachari since 1982.

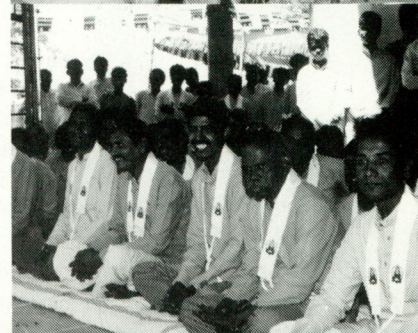
'Our home circumstances were very poor but nevertheless I did well at school. In 1984 when I was nineteen and still completing my higher secondary education I started coaching classes for children at our local vihara. I felt and still do feel a lot of concern for children who struggle with their education due to difficult home circumstances, and it was this kind of work rather than Dharma work which attracted me to our Movement. I went on to get an MBA qualification (business management) and I worked for a while with a marketing company. However, I then decided to take a Diploma in Health Management at Jaipur because my real feeling is for work which will be of clear benefit to others.

'During the time I was running tuition classes I got two of my friends to help me, and they went on to become Dharmacharis. But I still did not feel very attracted towards becoming a Dharmachari myself. In fact I was rather critical of Dharmacharis for spending too much time going on retreats when there was so much social work to be done.

'But after a lot of discussion and thought I have become attracted to Dharma activities as well as to our social work. Last year I asked to become a Dharmachari and I have joined the training course. I now feel that without the Dharma Bahujan Hitay will go

the way of other social work organizations which degenerate because of the lack of a common vision and even become overwhelmed by corruption. I also feel that in my own life I can never be personally fulfilled without Dharma practice which in fact is primary. Our social work is an expression of that.'

After two-and-a-half weeks at the Mahavihara I left the rising heat of the Indian spring and within hours was back in the chill of another English winter. I felt that Lokamitra's promise for the Mahavihara two years ago is already being honoured. The foundations, the cement, the walls, the windows, the doors, and the crowning roof are just as he said they would be. And what about the air? Lokamitra did not mention the air. If you go there I believe you will find, as I did, that the air is alive with a cool, calm breeze of self-confidence. □



Left: Subhuti conducts public ordinations in March.

Above (from top) Shenkar becomes Nagaketu.

New Order members in Bhaja. Karate demonstration in Nagpur

Impressions of

Is it your impression that the material condition of the Indian Buddhist community has improved since the late 1960s? If so, has this altered people's attitudes to the Dharma?

I noticed as a general feature that people do seem more prosperous in India, but the greater prosperity is not evenly distributed. This applies, on a smaller scale, among the Buddhists. Buddhists as a whole are more prosperous, in the sense that there's more money in the Buddhist community—this was apparent, among other things, in the kind of gifts I was given—but again, it's not very evenly distributed.

I have been a bit concerned lest Buddhists generally—not so much those involved with TBMSC—in the process of raising their standard of living, should just forget about the Dharma. In my lectures, in effect, I was warning against the 'bourgeoisification' of the Buddhist movement. I spoke about the importance of *quality* of life as well as standard of living. And I also urged the relatively better-off among the Buddhists not to forget the poorer and less privileged in the villages and in the slums in the cities.

I think that outside our own Movement there are quite a few followers of Dr Ambedkar, in government service and so on, who are quite satisfied with their middle class position, and in some cases do not want to acknowledge their connection with the ex-Untouchable community and therefore with Dr Ambedkar and Buddhism. This is what I had in mind. I wasn't referring to people within our own Movement, though there's always the possibility that they might eventually be affected by this trend. Certainly in the case of those I came into contact with their faith and devotion is greater than it ever was.

I was wondering about the atmosphere at the public programmes—compared with the atmosphere you used to experience in the old days...

Perhaps there was a certain edge before, but it was an edge of desperation, you could say. It is not a bad thing that that edge of desperation is no longer there. But there is no doubt about the level of devotion and commitment.

Given that Indian society is so very different to what we are familiar with in the West, particular approaches in terms of the Buddhist movement are required. Could I ask you about family life? When I first went to India at the time of your visit in 1979, I remember you commenting that certain aspects of Indian family life were very positive. You were even slightly concerned that a Western influence might be detrimental. You seemed quite concerned that our Buddhist movement in India shouldn't undermine the positive elements of Indian society such as the extended family, and even arranged marriages. Is that something that you would still maintain?

As regards the extended family, as compared with the nuclear family, I think my impressions or opinions have

been confirmed. It is quite noticeable that Order members—for instance—who belong to extended families in some respects have an easier time than those who belong to nuclear families, for the obvious reason that if they just have a nuclear family of wife plus two or three children, or perhaps in some cases no children at all, then if they go out very much, well, the wife is left alone. That isn't so in the case of the extended family, and it would seem that male Order members who are living in extended families are much less likely to experience tensions in their married life. That's not to say that there are never any problems in extended families. But I think that things are probably easier for an Order member living in an extended family.

It does seem, as people become better off, with a certain amount of mobility and more secure jobs, that the nuclear family is becoming more common.

I think there is a trend towards the nuclear family; also there's a definite trend towards family limitation, and of course within the Buddhist community there's no 'ideological bar' to that. But I continue to hold the view that, in the Indian situation at least, the extended family—perhaps I should say a moderately extended family—is more viable than a really *nuclear* nuclear family.

Would you extend that to the idea of arranged marriages?

Again, the trend is somewhat in the direction of 'love marriages'. It's a trend in the society, especially in middle class society. But I don't think it has as yet affected the majority of Indian people, especially those living in the villages. I think I can still say that, so far as I can see, and bearing in mind the conditions of Indian society, that, at the very least, the arranged marriage works as well as the 'love marriage'. Nowadays there's often a sort of compromise between the two. The 'boy' and the 'girl'—as they always call them, and which sometimes they are—do sometimes have at least the freedom to meet and exchange a few words before the actual marriage. Of course I'm well aware that within our Movement we've rather marginalized the marriage ceremony, but that may not have happened in the wider ex-Untouchable Buddhist community outside TBMSC.

When you say marginalized...

Well, immediately after the 1956 mass conversion the main Buddhist ceremony was the Buddhist wedding. At one time I used to get scores and scores of requests to perform the wedding ceremony. And they wanted it to be as lavish as possible, partly for positive social reasons, *vis-à-vis* caste Hindus, but it did come very much to occupy the centre of the stage. Two or three years after the conversion they were wanting to celebrate weddings on Wesak day [the anniversary of the Buddha's Enlightenment], and I had to refuse. Within the Movement that just doesn't happen. There are weddings, but they are smaller, quieter affairs. But there's still I



Hindu wedding

India

think pressure for a reasonably lavish wedding.

In the West you've put a lot of effort into campaigning against the romantic ideal and our tendency to make an undue emotional investment in our sexual relationships. Would it be a hazard for Indian Buddhist society if they were to move away from their traditions?

I think obviously so.

What feelings do you have about the place of women in the Buddhist movement at the moment?

I think they could do a lot more. I think there are some women who are very capable and potentially capable. But in the context of TBMSG the whole thing is held back by the lack of women Order members. They do have the facility at Vishrantwadi now. This is a girls' hostel, but there is also a women's community, some members of which run the hostel. It has already become a focal point for women. I opened their shrine-room while I was there. It's a magnificent room at the top of the building, and there were 250 women present, all quite comfortably seated. They hold study groups there, and so on. Clearly they now have a centre, so I want to push quite hard for four or five Indian women to be ordained next year. Lokamitra thinks they could be ready, but they need some help from this end [i.e. from England]. The male Order members can only do so much. Lokamitra already does quite a bit, but he can't do everything.

Would you envisage, in the very long term, taking into account the way the Order has developed in the West, a women's wing with separate retreat centres and a separate ordination process?

I think it's even more necessary in India than here. We can see that, here, having their own independent retreat centre has given a good boost to the women's self-confidence. That would be even more the case in India.

The Buddhist movement is, I think it's fair to say, to a large extent urban. Ambedkar himself encouraged people to leave the villages and saw the move to the city as a way of escaping the oppressions of village life. Do you see our Movement going back into the villages, or is it always going to be city-based?

Well, the whole trend is away from the villages and into the cities. I'm not quite sure what we can actually do, so to speak, in the villages, except on a very small scale. But there are a few Order members who go, perhaps even quite systematically, from village to village, and they do give talks and discuss things with people. I heard of one Order member who had actually covered about 500 villages!

That harks back to the traditional Buddhist style.

Right. I emphasized in one of my talks that we should not forget the villages. I certainly encouraged individual Order members to engage in that kind of work. I hadn't realized quite how much work had been

done particularly in the Konkan region in that way.

I guess one of the elements that would be in the mind of an ex-Untouchable considering conversion to Buddhism would be: 'Will I be able to marry my daughter to a Buddhist.' I get the impression that that's something the Muslims have always made a very strong feature of. When someone converts to Islam, they become part of that homogenous community, whereas clearly the Christians have maintained caste.

Yes, I read a very striking instance of that as regards Muslims in a magazine. I think it was in the Punjab, during the Partition period, that a Sikh was chased and captured by Muslims and tortured until he agreed to become a Muslim. So he was made a Muslim. He was even circumcised. They gave him a terrible time. But as soon as he became a Muslim he was their brother. And when one Muslim just happened to use a word of abuse to him another Muslim said, 'No, you can't do that—he's a Muslim.' Instantly, almost, there was that switch-over. This is a very strong feature of Islam. And, yes, he could marry any Muslim's daughter.

That way of fully recognizing that someone has really joined the Buddhist community—is that something we should perhaps be introducing into our Movement?

I think we should—not just on a communal basis, but as a recognition that someone else has decided to bring about certain changes in their life.

With regard to India's political life, you've lectured in the past on the importance of the secular state, and this was something Ambedkar felt very strongly about. Do you see the secular state as being a practical proposition in modern India?

I see it as more necessary than ever. I think if the Hindu political parties gain in strength, there's sure to be a reaction, at least from the Sikhs, possibly even the Christians.

People who criticize the notion of the secular state often tend to talk of it in terms of it being a grafted Western idea that is not naturally at home in Indian society. How would you respond to that?

Well, I would say it is a Western idea, but even assuming that it is, it is still indispensable to the survival of India as we know it.

What do you actually mean by the term 'secular state'? Do you mean an absence of religion?

I don't mean an absence of religion. There should be complete religious freedom. But the state, as such, would not support exclusively any one particular faith.

Should it support all faiths?

I think that it should not support at all, in the sense of financing—except to the extent to which it came under the heading of archaeology or something like that.

One of the areas in which religion and the state do overlap to a considerable extent is that of education. Do you feel that schools which have a particular religious flavour should be encouraged or discouraged? Obviously there are a lot of Christian missionary schools.

I think that, in the present climate in India, their



Kindergarten class

tendency cannot but be divisive.

But to take that into our own work: we have our hostels, and there are the beginnings of some schools. Would you extend those thoughts in that direction as well?

Well our hostels are open to all; they are not open only to Buddhist boys and girls. But clearly they have a Buddhist flavour. I would hope that the Buddhist flavour was not in any way comparable, in terms of divisive potential, to the religious element in other schools. That really follows from the very nature of Buddhism itself—though there is of course the unfortunate example of Sri Lanka, where the Buddhist majority has not been very kind to its Hindu minority, but in my view they departed from real Buddhist principles a long time ago. So even though our hostels may have a Buddhist flavour—because all our work is based upon Buddhist principles—I would hope that our hostels or schools would continue to be open to children from all communities, and that there was no compulsion to join in with the Buddhist activities.

What is your impression of the Indian Order in terms of the sort of things that we try to engage with in our chapters here in the West, such as harmony, working through conflicts, developing our Going for Refuge, our sense of purpose?

They're concerned with exactly the same issues. I would say my general impression was that the Order in India has grown. It's grown of course in terms of numbers, but it's also grown in maturity, and more people are taking more responsibility.

How do you see that reflected?

Well, they take on more organizational responsibility. Lokamitra has been able to hand over quite a lot of his jobs and responsibilities, and I'm sure he'll be shedding more in the future.

One of the things I remember about India was the way in which anybody at all deeply involved with our Movement was expected to be involved in teaching the Dharma and organizing activities in localities. Obviously that was very appropriate at a time of getting established. But I wonder whether you think that this pressure to teach puts undue strain on people. In the West we have Order members who are not actively teaching the Dharma.

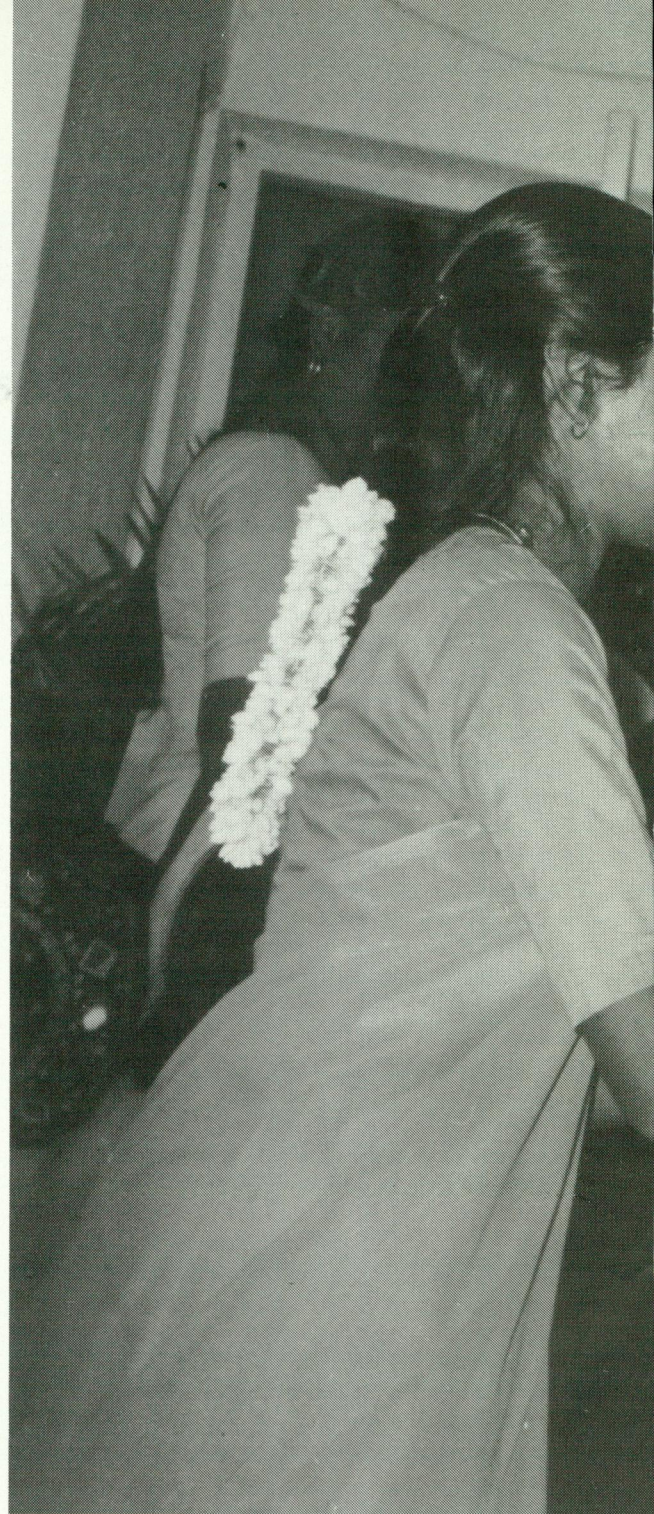
In India, of course, the teaching of the Dharma is more necessary even than it is here. There you have people who say that they are Buddhists but who don't know anything about Buddhism and who therefore need instruction on the very lowest level. So even the humblest mitra can do very useful work. Mitras have a kind of scope there which they do not have here. Order members obviously have even more scope.

Are we the poorer in the West for not having those demands and responsibilities?

I think it would be good for people in the West, especially Order members, and mitras even, if more demands were made of them and they were stretched. As I often say, we have a pretty easy time of it here.

What makes the average Indian Order member tick? Why have they become involved with our Movement. Why are they Going for Refuge?

I think they are still close enough to the oppressions of the past to experience a sense of liberation. And having given up Hinduism a great vacuum was created in their lives and they just had to fill it. Those who are taking their



Going for Refuge, or their conversion, seriously and are becoming more involved with TBMSG, are absolutely delighted that that void has been filled, and that they've got a real meaning and purpose in their lives—not that some of them don't sometimes have doubts and difficulties. But that is the overwhelming impression I get. And Dr Ambedkar is still very much alive among them. He is still very much a source of inspiration. There's no letting down on that that I could see.

Even though in effect we have a new generation?

Even though we have a new generation. Again, however, my experience is limited to TBMSG, to my direct experience. We do, as they would say, 'take the name' of Dr Ambedkar quite a lot, because in a way everything is still very much based on that, everything follows from that.

In one of your Nagpur lectures you referred to the fact that Dr Ambedkar is becoming better known in the West. Do you think this is something we still need to pursue?

I think it is very important that we see our Movement as one movement, that its Western and Eastern 'wings' interpenetrate, that there is quite a lot of contact



Arriving at the girls' hostel, Vishrantwadi, to a welcome (below) by Vimalashuri



between them, that Indian Order members come over here, Western Order members go over there. Obviously, one of the things that penetrates from the East to the West is the whole Ambedkarite side of things. I think it is quite important that we make Ambedkar's life and work far better known in the West. I think knowledge of his life and work has become a contribution, through the Indian wing, to the whole FWBO.

I'd like to finish by asking you where you would like to see the Movement in India in five years time.

Assuming that I'm still around in five years time, which no one can guarantee, I'd obviously like to see more of everything: more Order members, more mitras, more city centres, more country meditation retreat centres. I'd like to see more publications—in fact lots and lots more publications, more bookshops, a more vigorous distribution of our literature. I'd like to see many more social projects. I would like to see the women's side of things develop much more dramatically. I'd like to see more attention devoted to Buddhist arts and I'd like to see our buildings surrounded by beautiful gardens. Yes, I'd like to see us

spreading into all the different states in India, and to begin with, or at least as a beginning, drawing people into our ranks from all the scheduled caste communities. I'd like to see us have centres in all the major Buddhist holy places.

Those are the sort of developments that I would like to see becoming established over the next five years. I'd also like to see quite a few more Indian Order members visiting the West. And, oh yes, another wish: I'd like to see more anagarikas in India—as of course I'd like to see few more, at least, here in the West.

So there's really no question of a separate Order in India from that in the West?

Well, a unified Movement means a unified Order. It does seem that the structures which were originally established in the West are perfectly adapted to the situation in India. □



Garlands for Sangharakshita at Vishrantwadi. Below: Part of the hostel complex

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TANTRIC JOURNEY

Insights of a Himalayan Pilgrim
by Lama Govinda
Published by Dharma
Publications, \$11.95

Insights of a Himalayan Pilgrim, a collection of thirteen articles by Lama Govinda, is published by Dharma Publications as 'a gesture of appreciation for Lama Govinda and his pioneering efforts to communicate the value of Tibetan Buddhism to the West'. The title is well chosen; Lama Govinda's writing conjures glimpses of the glorious peaks of spiritual experience rather than describing the spiritual journey in a systematic manner. At one moment he and the reader travel a solid pathway talking in scholarly tones about the differences between Hinduism and Buddhism, or some aspect of Buddhist art. Then he seems to leave the path completely to fly into the brilliant and multidimensional world of the imagination. His writing invokes empathy and confidence rather than conceptual clarity; his is the language of the poet.

In these essays, as elsewhere in his writings, Lama Govinda emphasizes that the living Dharma is a communication of the spirit of the Enlightened mind. Words are crucial to that communication but they are not to be confused with the message itself.

In 'The Realm of Religion' he discusses some fundamental Buddhist ideas, and succeeds in following his own injunction to communicate the spirit of the doctrines rather than repeat dead words. He points out the flaws in translations that are philologically correct but lacking in spirit. He denounces the modern tendency to interpret the symbolic elements of Buddhist scriptures with a dry psychological analysis. He

reminds us that the scriptures were written in a time when '...understanding and comprehension were much more direct and unmediated, with access to the mythical and magical mode of thinking'.

In 'Pilgrims and Monasteries', the first essay in the book, Lama Govinda reflects on the power of the majestic Himalayan snow mountains to summon the spiritual forces dormant in the human mind. Once it has responded to the mountains, the eye of the imagination can be refined so that it is able to perceive more subtle influences. In 'Deities, Helpers and Saviours' he explores ritual as an act of the imagination through which the practitioner recreates, empowers, and connects with the essence of the deity, a symbol 'which was originally the spontaneous answer to a deeply felt emotion or insight'.

Scattered throughout the book are delightful insights into the meaning of mantras and the symbols of the Buddha, the Five 'Dhyani' Buddhas, and Padmasambhava, that will be appreciated by people who practise mantra chanting and visualization meditations. Lama Govinda's demystification of the methods of Tantric practice is achieved without destroying their magic. He knows his way through the confusing jungle of the Tantra and has the ability to guide others in the right direction.

In 'A Tibetan Buddhist looks at Christianity' and elsewhere in the book Lama Govinda addresses the idea of tolerance. It is refreshing to read that although he stresses that Buddhism is a supremely tolerant religion—he gives numerous examples—he clearly points out that tolerance does not deny difference, or criticism. In fact without a recognition of



Lama Govinda

difference and disagreement tolerance is a meaningless concept. The attitude that all religions are essentially the same as one's own is not tolerance but a dismissal, not only of the other's point of view, but of even the possibility of a view fundamentally different to one's own. Lama Govinda skilfully reveals this arrogance masquerading as tolerance, and praises the rich variety of religious experience that is possible only in a truly tolerant culture.

In an article on Hinduism and Buddhism Lama Govinda draws out some interesting distinctions, and dissociates the Buddha's teaching from the Hindu tradition. He says that the roots of the Buddha's doctrines 'can be traced back to the pre-Aryan period of Indian Culture'. However, although the Buddha used these doctrines to communicate his vision, his teaching had its source in his Enlightenment, which introduced an entirely new dimension.

In his enthusiasm to emphasize that dogmatic belief has no place in Buddhism Lama Govinda, like many other modern commentators, leaves out an important phrase in his quote (p.114) of the Buddha's famous discourse to the Kalamas. In Bhikkhu Nanamoli's translation of the passage in the *Anguttara Nikaya* the Buddha says:

'But Kalamas, when you know in yourselves: "These things (teachings) are wholesome, blameless, *commended by the wise*, being adopted and put into effect they lead to welfare and

happiness," then you should practise them and abide in them.'

The omission of *commended by the wise* side-steps an important issue. This passage is often used, and rightly so, to illustrate that the Buddha encouraged his disciples to make their own judgement of the various teachings they heard. The Buddha discouraged over-dependence on external authority but he also emphasized the importance of spiritual friends as guides, teachers, and sources of inspiration. The question of spiritual authority is a difficult one—should we trust ourselves, or a scripture, tradition, or teacher? The Buddha took a middle way between over-reliance either on the self, or others; he taught reliance on the wise. The wise are not the authoritative, the intelligent, the logical, the charismatic, the well-informed, or the familiar. We can distinguish the wise from the foolish through the faculty of faith (shraddha) which is a combination of confidence, clarity, and trust. Without it we cannot hope to free ourselves from foolish dependence or arrogant individualism. Sadly Lama Govinda only touches on the difficult but very important subject of faith.

In this collection of essays Lama Govinda conveys the spirit of Tibetan Buddhism—particularly the Nyingmapa tradition. He takes us with him on a journey through the mountains of spiritual awareness; we are never quite clear where we actually are, but as he points out the landmarks we are confident that we are with a man who knows this territory well, who loves it deeply, and who is happy to be a good friend to others who would journey with him. □

Manjuvajra

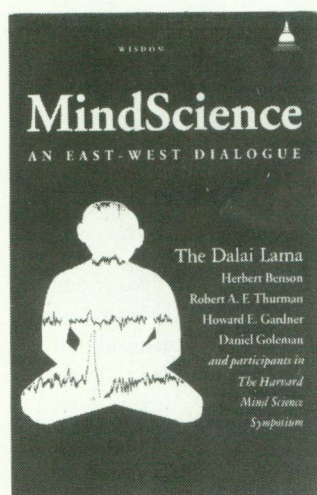
CONTINUING THE DIALOGUE

Mind Science: An East-West Dialogue

ed. Daniel Goleman and Robert A.F. Thurman
Published by Wisdom
pp.140, paperback, £9.95

This book contains talks and dialogues from a symposium held at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in March 1991 to celebrate more than a decade of collaborative research between the Tibetan Buddhist community and Harvard Medical School. The symposium brought together the Dalai Lama and several academics and scientists, including the two editors of this book, Daniel Goleman, a psychologist and journalist, and Robert Thurman, a professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies, well-known for his translations from Tibetan. Other participants came from disciplines associated with psychology, biology, and medicine.

The talks are all quite short, being for the most part brief expositions of some aspects of Buddhism or modern psychological science. The Dalai Lama talks about 'The Buddhist Concept of Mind'. Outlining basic Buddhist principles, he makes the point that Buddhism usually recognizes 'two main categories of



causation'—external physical events and internal mental events—and emphasizes the close link between mind and body. Then Herbert Benson talks about his research, including that on the physiological effects of *gTum-mo* meditation. This 'inner heat' meditation is traditionally reputed to have the effect of increasing body heat quite markedly, and Benson reports finding this to be so.

Next, Robert Thurman criticizes dogmatic 'scientific materialism', pointing out that the Western emphasis on external, physical science has brought the human race to the brink of extinction. He contrasts this with the wisdom of the Buddhist emphasis on the inner science of the mind. He also suggests that

neuroscience's emphasis on understanding the 'hardware' (or 'wetware') of the nervous system needs to be complemented by the development of 'software' for using that nervous system well, proposing that Tibetan Buddhist spiritual practices are, in fact, 'sophisticated software' for reprogramming the brain.

After a brief overview of Western perspectives on cognition, by Howard Gardner, the final talk is by Daniel Goleman, who discusses mental health in terms of the Abhidharma analysis of skilful or wholesome mental qualities: 'what you get is an operational definition of mental health that says simply that the healthiest person is the person in whose mind none of the unhealthy, unwholesome factors arise.' This is an important point which many people coming to Buddhism from the world of psychotherapy miss, especially when psychotherapy is crudely seen as 'getting in touch with' one's emotions, whether wholesome or unwholesome.

In general I found these talks, although interesting, too short as chapters of a book. It was rather tantalizing to read some of the material in each of them, but there

was usually little development beyond the basic exposition. The dialogues were similarly tantalizing at times, with some crucial issues touched upon, but, as is the tendency with dialogues at such symposia, often going rapidly from topic to topic before discussion about a particular issue could get very deep.

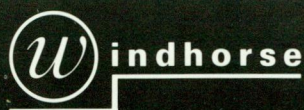
The talks and dialogue were, however, refreshingly free of woolly-mindedness, and often revealed people's personalities as much as their ideas. I was most struck by the exchange between David Potter, a neurobiologist and avowed 'notorious radical materialist', and the Dalai Lama. Potter questions the Dalai Lama on whether 'one should invoke a non-material mind in order to understand brain-science, or increase our understanding of human behaviour'. Using the example of cocaine and crack acting upon a system of nerve cells, a part of the brain whose activation he strongly believes, on what appears to be slender evidence, to lead to the 'conscious experience' of 'euphoria', he argues that we do not need to invoke a non-material mind to understand human psychology: 'Current neuroscientists are working very hard and taxpayers money is being spent in large

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amounts to investigate this system. Their understanding is that we will understand euphoria and compelled behaviour in terms of cellular neuroscience.... There is very little motivation under such circumstances to assume that what crack is really doing is acting on a non-material, clear and formless mind. We think that it is working on nerve cells, and our judgement about the way to proceed is to continue on this line.'

The Dalai Lama replies to Potter's forthright assertions by stating, in effect, that Buddhists would agree that physiology affects gross levels of the mind, but that meditation can neutralize physiological effects. After a question by the Dalai Lama which Potter answers with another strong assertion based on inadequate evidence, the dialogue then moves on. The Dalai Lama was being kind. I doubt whether Potter's poor logic (in effect the *non-sequitur* that physiology affects conscious experience, therefore the mind either does not exist or is merely an epiphenomenon), and his over-emphatic assertions based on insufficient evidence, would have survived the rigours of a full-blown Gelugpa debate.

To conclude, I am not sure to whom I can recommend this book. People who know their Buddhism and their Western psychology will be familiar with the material in the talks anyway. Other people might find their appetite for Buddhism whetted, and their interest in its interface with Western science stimulated, but neither perhaps adequately satisfied in such a short book. It is a pity that the symposium and the book were not twice as long, so that the issues raised could have been dealt with in more depth. □

Advayachitta

Lust for Enlightenment: Buddhism and Sex

by John Stevens
Published by Shambala
pp.188, paperback, £6.99

Knowing how sex has been used by advertising agencies for decades to sell inferior products, it was with a wary eye that I picked up John Stevens's book *Lust for Enlightenment*. In his preface he claims that the book is a 'journey through the vast vistas of the Buddhist experience, created over thousands of years in countless lands among all manner of human beings, in order to plumb the depths and scale the heights of human sexuality'.

Unfortunately the journey that he embarks upon is not as he intends it to be, 'the first comprehensive survey of sexuality' within Buddhism, but a sadly biased jaunt towards the glorification of sex for its own sake, which sometimes barely falls short of being plain bawdy. Not of course that there is anything wrong with sexual pleasure in itself, but much danger lies in confusing it with genuine spiritual aspiration. Too often we have seen baser desires rationalized and cloaked within the language of genuine spiritual experience. The Buddhist experience is, if nothing else, about weakening the chains of false selfhood which are, the Buddha has explained, the cause of all our sorrow. Sexual desire by its very nature is selfish, and, unless one is highly aware, the capacity to delude oneself that one's intention is pure is enormous.

Stevens's book falls into five main sections dealing with sexuality from different viewpoints. The first chapter deals with the sex life of the Buddha, the second deals with the celibate's attitude towards sex, which tellingly

he has called 'The Puritan Elders'. The third and fourth chapters deal with sex in the Tantric and Zen traditions respectively, whilst the fifth deals with 'Buddhist Love, Marriage, and Sexual Morality'.

In the first chapter Stevens vividly discusses the sex life of Prince Siddhartha before he leaves home for the great quest. The largest drawback here is his failure to distinguish between canonical and non-canonical sources for his material. Surely he must know that so little is known about the Buddha's early life that much of what is said is purely speculative? Stevens presents his case with such gusto that we are left in no doubt about what he himself would like to believe. Untold in the traditional sources, he has taken it upon himself to 'flesh out the romantic legend of Gotama in loving detail'.

The second chapter is by far the worst in the book. At times his case against celibacy is so distorted and biased that it seems unrecognizable as Buddhism. Even his choice of language, as with the term 'Puritan Elders', has strong pejorative connotations of meanness and repression, and indeed he does state that these 'Puritan Buddhists' have attempted to 'ruthlessly suppress their sexuality in order to attain release'. At no time does he write of the need to integrate sexual energy into one's being and to use it for the benefit of all beings, as is the purpose of the *bramacharya* training, in which one strives to dwell in the *rupaloka* instead of the *kamaloka*—the realm of sensuous desire. This is essentially what the celibate Sangha tries to achieve, even if few can practise it all the time.

There is a similar lack of understanding demonstrated in his treatment of the

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Tantra. He fails to mention that the Tantric Path starts with renunciation, as was stated by all the great Tantric yogis such as Padmasambhava, Milarepa, and Tsongkapa. To call those practitioners of the Tantra who ostensibly engaged in sexual-yogic practices 'Tantric lover-saints' is painting somewhat of a distorted picture.

In my view the rest of the book contains similar distortions of the Buddhist teachings which could be used to rationalize desires which have nothing or little to do with real spiritual development, and it would be difficult for me to recommend it as a useful guide.

The one strength of the book, if one can call it a strength, is that it does manage to erode the attitude that sex is in itself sinful or wrong that one might have inherited from a Christian-based culture. In this sense the book may have succeeded in opening a much larger debate on the place of sex in the spiritual life, but in itself it appears to be of small value. □

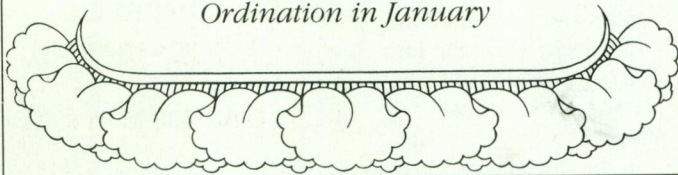
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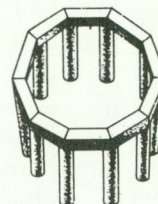
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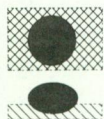
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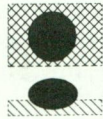


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Conference on Buddhist Women

The First International Conference on Buddhist Women took place in Bangkok, last October. It was organized by Dr Chatsumarn Kabilisinh, now president of Sakyadhita (the international organization for bringing together women from various Buddhist traditions), in collaboration with others. Two hundred people

attended from twenty-seven countries, including two members of the Western Buddhist Order, Dharmacharinis Sanghadevi and Ratnadharini.

The conference had various stated aims: 'to strengthen Sakyadhita; to heighten our awareness of the diversity of Buddhist traditions; to learn how tradition affects our understanding of the problems and prospects of Buddhist women; to provide a venue for concerned Buddhist women from all over the world; to discover new and effective means to deal with the existing problems that Buddhist women face in their practice; to make Buddhist education more easily available to women.'

After early morning chanting and meditation the main part of each day was given to the delivery of papers on a variety of topics, followed by group discussion of those papers. There was then a plenary session where the main points from each group were relayed back to the conference as a whole. In the evening, and during other periods of free time, various optional events took place, including two video-presentations on ordination and meditation in the Korean tradition, and a slide show

about Taraloka, the FWBO's women's retreat centre in Britain. There was also a meeting of Sakyadhita and a day outing to various temples and stupas around Bangkok.

traditional order of nuns in Thailand who are struggling for recognition and support from the existing monastic order and the Thai government (the old order of



Sanghadevi (third from right) with other delegates at the First International Conference on Buddhist Women in Bangkok last October

Sanghadevi reports being pleased to make contact with women from other traditions, and happy to spend time in the company of so many women who were happily celibate. She was particularly impressed by the seriousness of commitment to spiritual life of women ordained in the Korean tradition, and pleased that the conference did give encouragement and support to the women from Asian countries. However she was disappointed that despite the stated aims of the conference there was a definite bias towards the issue of *bhikkhuni* ordination. This centred upon taking up the cause of the Thai Maejis, a non-

nuns having died out in Theravadin Buddhist countries such as Thailand).

The Western Buddhist Order's lack of monks and nuns left some delegates bemused. The WBO emphasizes the importance of 'effective Going for Refuge', of which an individual's ordination is a recognition. Order members can take a precept of celibacy, but this is not regarded as the occasion for a further ordination. □

Holy Island

The Samye Ling community in Scotland, which follows the Tibetan Buddhist Karma Kagyu tradition, has made national news in Britain with its intention to buy Holy Island, a small island just off the coast in the Firth of Clyde. A major fundraising effort has been launched to raise a generously reduced price. The plan is to build two Buddhist retreat centres—one for monks and one for nuns—as well as an ecumenical retreat centre for the use of a variety of religious groups, which has stimulated a warm response from Scottish Christians.

Samye Ling, under the guidance of Dr Akong Tulku Rinpoche, is also active through the charity Rokpa, which we mentioned last year (unfortunately misprinted as Rohpa). Rokpa means 'help' or 'assistance', and the charity is involved with various projects: giving aid to sick and destitute Tibetan refugees, helping orphaned Nepalese street children, running soup kitchens in London, Glasgow, Brussels, and Kathmandu, setting up schools, health clinics, and Tibetan medical colleges, encouraging the preservation of Tibetan culture Inside Tibet, and, in Scotland, setting up a therapy centre for people recovering from mental stress. □

MILITANT MONKS

It is saddening to read in the world's press about the continued activities of ostensibly 'Buddhist' monks in Sri Lanka. Many of them have been very vocal in their calls for an escalating war with Tamils, and in opposing peace proposals that make concessions to Tamil autonomy. The Venerable Walpola Rahula is quoted in one newspaper as saying that 'Until this war is successfully concluded, no peace talks should be held.'

Before the European colonial period in Ceylon the island had not been a unitary state. There had been a Hindu-Tamil kingdom and two Buddhist, Sinhalese states. These were taken over and administered during the earlier European colonial period by the Dutch and Portuguese, but only united under British rule. The British also set Tamil immigrants from India to work on the tea

plantations. On independence ascendant Sinhalese nationalism led to the establishment of a unitary state, Sri Lanka, in which Tamils were from the beginning discriminated against. Amongst the most vociferous advocates of Sinhalese nationalism have been many so-called Buddhist monks. One of them even murdered the Prime Minister of the time, Solomon Bandaranaike. Now they bless the troops and are amongst the most intransigent opponents of peace.

It is difficult to conceive of anything as far removed from the non-violent teachings of the Buddha as the activity of these deluded people, who have effectively dyed the saffron robe in blood, and who bring Buddhism into great disrepute by distorting and misusing it so. It is time for Buddhists around the world to give a categorical and clear repudiation of such violent Sinhalese pseudo-Buddhism. □

SANGHARAKSHITA TOURS INDIA

On 1 January Sangharakshita and Paramartha flew from London to Bombay. They were met at the airport by Lokamitra, Chandrashila, and Bodhisena. Sangharakshita spent a couple of days acclimatizing in Bombay and then made his way by train to Poona.

A crowd of us were waiting for him at Poona Junction with garlands and flags: a sea of pale blue shirts and saris. The train drew in and the crowd chanted Sangharakshita's name along with the names of Dr Ambedkar and 'Gautam Buddh' and I caught sight of Sangharakshita walking through a corridor of happy faces. The sky had now darkened and Sangharakshita climbed into a car which set off towards Dapodi accompanied by flag-adorned scooters, motor bikes, and cars. Our convoy claimed the centre of the road and, next to me on another scooter, mitra Shakti blew his whistle and waved his arm at the oncoming lorries and cars, getting them to move over. As we approached Dapodi we made several stops to garland statues of Dr Ambedkar. Large banners and cloth-clad arches over the road welcomed Sangharakshita to India.

This was Sangharakshita's first visit since 1988, so he had not yet seen the completed Mahavihara at Dapodi. For some months people had been busy planning the tour, improving the garden at the Vihara, redecorating, and giving talks to advertise

Sangharakshita's forthcoming lecture. I had worked with a team of enthusiastic young men and boys to make three twenty-foot-high appliqué *thangkas* depicting Dr Ambedkar, the Buddha, and Sangharakshita himself. They were now hanging on the exterior wall of the Mahavihara, and the building was draped with thousands of fairy lights illuminating its beautiful contours. When the convoy arrived Sangharakshita made an offering to the main shrine, and headed for his room.

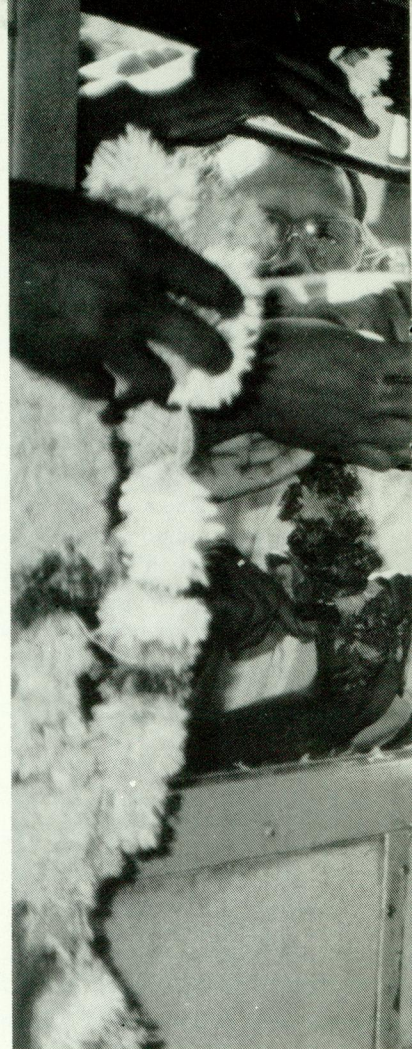
The next evening Buddhahumi community (the community located within the Mahavihara) hosted a welcome programme. There were speeches rejoicing in Sangharakshita's merits, accounts of the ways in which people had benefited from his work, and accounts of life in the community. On being asked to say a few words Sangharakshita described the Movement's public centres, communities, and co-operative businesses. He said that he was not surprised to hear that experiences of community living in Poona were similar to those he had heard of in other FWBO communities. All communities develop under the same conditions, they all consist of human beings trying to deepen their Going for Refuge together. He concluded by expressing his hope that all members of the community would soon be effectively Going for Refuge

as members of the Order.

The next evening Sangharakshita gave his first public talk. He congratulated the architect, Christopher Beninger (an American who lives in Poona), on the beauty of the building. He described the Mahavihara as a work of art which revived the beauty of the ancient Buddhist viharas and said that all who use it should ensure that it is kept clean and tidy: without beauty human life in its fullness is not possible.

On the morning of 7 January a party of twelve set off for Ajanta caves. We stopped briefly in Ahmednagar for a short 'High Street Programme', during which Sangharakshita garlanded Dr Ambedkar's statue, and we went on to see a plot of land outside the town which has been donated to the Movement for use as a retreat centre. Arriving at Aurangabad, we were met by the local chapter of the Order. Together, we went on to Dharmacharini Jnanashuri's house where we spent an evening which satisfied stomach, heart, and mind. The next morning we all left for Ajanta and enjoyed some stimulating hours at the ancient caves.

The next morning we caught the Maharashtra Express to Nagpur and embarked on the most important stage of the tour. Sangharakshita had not been to Nagpur for twenty-six years but the city is an important centre of the ex-Untouchable Buddhist Movement. It was



here that Sangharakshita had addressed a vast crowd shortly after Dr Ambedkar's death, encouraging the new converts to continue the Dharma Revolution which their leader had started. It is sometimes said in the city that 'Sangharakshita saved Nagpur for Buddhism'.

As we pulled into various railway stations along the way we were greeted by chants of Sangharakshita's name and a flurry of colourful flags. His coach was besieged by enthusiastic people wishing to see him, offer garlands, or just shake his hand. As we left each station we collected the garlands and tied them to the windows of our coach so that the crowd at the next stop





would easily recognize where we were.

At dusk we arrived at Nagpur. As we emerged onto the forecourt of the station a great crowd was there to meet us. Sangharakshita responded with a rousing speech reminding the Buddhists of Nagpur that they were the Buddhists of the future. From the station to the hotel, and for several more journeys in the city, Sangharakshita was given a full police escort, complete with flashing lights atop a jeep, a privilege usually afforded only to heads of state.

On the evening of Sunday 12 January Sangharakshita gave the main talk of the tour at Kasturchand Park in the

centre of Nagpur. Later on Lokamitra remarked that no religious group had dared use this huge open space since no one could be sure of attracting a reasonable crowd; only political rallies could do so. An estimated 75,000 people attended the meeting, making it the largest event in the Movement's history. Sangharakshita said that he was very happy to have fulfilled his long-standing promise to revisit Nagpur, adding that were he to die the next day he would die happy. He spoke about the gathering of the Nagpur Buddhists after the death of Dr Ambedkar, which had taken place in that very same park. He recalled that the

Gifts and garlands are thrust through the carriage window. Below (from left): People gather at the Mahavihara, Dapodi. Crowds gather at the stations for a sight of Sangharakshita. The convoy claims the centre of the road. Making an offering to the shrine. Visiting the caves at Ajanta

atmosphere at that time had been absolutely indescribable, not even the greatest poet or artist could have portrayed it, so great was the loss felt by those present.

On Tuesday 14 January Sangharakshita left for Bor Dharan, sixty kilometres away, between Nagpur and Wardha, where he was to open the first stage of a new retreat centre. Many thousands of people arrived the next day and, sitting under a beautiful striped canvas, watched a colourful programme. Also present were six or more nuns, a monk, and more than a dozen lay followers from the Long Fong Temple in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. The Temple had provided most of the funding for the retreat centre and its representatives had come to India specially

for the opening. In honour of the Chinese connection, the centre was named Huan Tsang Retreat Centre after the famous Chinese pilgrim to India, the author of a fascinating account of early Indian Buddhism. Enough money has now been raised to complete the entire centre which will eventually be able to accommodate 350 people.

Sangharakshita had started to suffer a bad cough caused by the dry dust of the city, but he was still able to speak on the next Saturday and Sunday evenings. The first of these meetings was held in North Nagpur which is the home of many new Buddhists, many of whom are supporters of the work of TBMSC. Billboards throughout the area and possibly a hundred city buses were plastered with thousands of posters, advertising the programmes. The talk was held on a plot of land which was donated 'for ever' to TBMSC by a local Buddhist organization whose energetic chairman M.D. Panchbhai (an old friend of Sangharakshita's) had worked hard to have it donated to us. Sangharakshita spoke about how and why he had set up a new Buddhist movement, and encouraged all the thousands present to give their fullest support to, and have the greatest confidence in, the six Dharmacharis who live and work in Nagpur.

Together these Order members make up a newly formed chapter which Sangharakshita later named the Amoghachakra chapter, that is, 'the wheel of the Dharma which never stops or turns back'. He emphasized the centrality of Going for

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Refuge in the Buddhist life, and stressed that even the New Buddhists of Nagpur needed to beware of laying too much importance on material wealth; instead they should keep inspired by the fact that we can progress spiritually.

The next evening we were in South Nagpur, in another predominantly Buddhist area. An estimated 50,000 people attended a talk at which Sangharakshita gave a teaching of particular relevance to Indian Buddhists and which, he said, they could add to the Three Refuges, Five Precepts, and Dr Ambedkar's Twenty-Two Vows. This was a list of 'the Ten Ornaments of Buddhism', namely meditation, Dharma study, spiritual friendship, kindly speech, abstinence from taking intoxicants and drugs, simplicity of life, working for the Dharma, pilgrimage, co-operation, and forgiveness.

On 21 January Sangharakshita left Nagpur to fly to Bombay, and from there he took a boat down the coast to meet a car which would take him to Dapoli. This is where Dr Ambedkar lived as a boy and it was fitting that Sangharakshita should open there a new boys' educational hostel and unveil a memorial stone to mark the spot. Back in Poona the following day Sangharakshita inaugurated the new shrine at Veshwantwadi girls' hostel and women's community. The shrine will be used only for women's activities, and he named it Shakyadhita, 'The Daughters of the Shakyas' (i.e. the Buddha).

Sangharakshita's last public engagement was the opening of the new shrine room at Bhaja. The ancient Bhaja

caves can be seen directly across the valley from the new shrine which evoked from Sangharakshita the comment that the present was looking at the past and the past was looking at the present.

After the public opening a four day Order convention started, attended by approximately one hundred Dharmacharis and Dharmacharinis nine of whom were visitors from the West. The climax of the convention came with a ceremony in which nine Dharmacharis took the *anagarika* precept with Sangharakshita as their witness. He commented that this development represented a much needed balancing of life-styles in the Order. He also said that he thought example was contagious!

On the final morning Sangharakshita blessed a beautiful banner symbolizing the victory of the Dharma over the whole world. The banner was made in London by Ratnaketu and Vajramala, while many Friends, mitras, and Order members donated pieces of rich fabric. It will eventually be erected either at Ghoom monastery or at the ITBCI School in Kalimpong to commemorate the life of Dharmo Rimpoché, who was one of Sangharakshita's principal teachers. Lokamitra gave an inspirational talk encouraging all present to consider moving to new places to expand the Movement. He pointed out that Sangharakshita had not been idle when sitting in his hotel but had been thinking

where he would like to see TBMSG going next. Lokamitra then recited a list which included Agra, Delhi, and Kalimpong. He rejoiced in the Movement's success so far and said that the tour had been a tour of victory, but reflected that what we had achieved was really only a good foundation.

It was then Sangharakshita's turn to speak. He opened by saying that he had been requested, as was often the case in India, to give a few words of advice. However he did not think that he had any more to give; he must have already given millions of words of advice! He re-emphasized that our spiritual life should take precedence over our material lives and that Dharmacharis and Dharmacharinis needed to

BIGGER TEAM FOR SPAIN

'Establishing the Movement in a new country has never been easy and Spain really is no exception, with the need to bridge cultural differences and to formulate the Dharma in another language. Nonetheless things are steadily moving forward.' So writes Mokshananda, who has been living in Valencia and running FWBO activities there for four years.

At the beginning of March he was joined by Shuddhavajra. Mexican, and therefore a native Spanish-speaker, Shuddhavajra intends to translate a number of Sangharakshita's books into Spanish. He has recently begun work on *A Guide to the Buddhist Path*.

The coming months will see two more Order members based in Valencia, with Parami and Paramachitta planning to arrive in June. Mitra Terry Williams, who has been helping Mokshananda to establish classes over the last couple of years, will be attending the ordination retreat at Guhyaloka this year and will hopefully be returning to Valencia as an Order member. Two mitra ceremonies, due to take place during the spring retreat in April,

will double the number of mitras in Valencia.

That retreat will be held at 'La Jarra', the Valencia sangha's own retreat centre, set in the hills amidst pools and waterfalls some thirty-five kilometres from Valencia.

With so many changes in the air, Mokshananda and his colleagues are now hoping to secure some more substantial premises in which to hold classes in the city. They are presently negotiating the rent on a very large place in the heart of town which could serve both as a residential community and as a centre. □





Top (from left): An Ambedkar shrine ... and Sangharakshita. Members of the Long Fong Temple at Bor Dharan. Anagarika ceremony at Bhaja. Sangharakshita speaks, Vimalakirti translates. Parts of the Bor Dharan retreat centre are still under construction. Below (from left): The Spanish sangha grows. Mokshananda (left) and Shuddhavajra. The Auckland Centre. Celebrating the NZ Order's seventeenth birthday.

NEWS FROM NEW ZEALAND

set an example in following a simple life. He also warned us to clear up any misunderstandings or disharmonies immediately and not to leave them for months, or even days. He also said that our Dharma workers must not forget the villages, since seventy-five percent of the population of India still live in them.

After the convention, Sangharakshita travelled back to Poona from where he returned to England. In the course of the tour, he had said how pleased he had been to see how much TBMSG had grown since his previous visit in 1988. No doubt all those who had waited for him to come this time will be hoping that this was not his final Indian tour and that he will return soon. □

Yashodeva

The new year period is the summer retreat season in New Zealand. This year began with an Order retreat.

On 2 January 1975 a simple shrine was created beneath a sycamore tree that stood beside the rushing waters of a small river in the foothills of the Tararua Ranges, about thirty miles north of Wellington. The tree is still standing, and a high point of this year's New Zealand Order retreat was the seventeenth-anniversary celebration of the eight ordinations that Sangharakshita conducted at that shrine—the first to be conducted in New Zealand.

Otherwise, some unseasonably cold, wet, and windy weather ensured little chance of distraction from a retreat programme that was strongly centred on meditation practice.

The open retreat was smaller than previous ones and more intimate. Then came the women's and men's retreats, both well attended. Nagabodhi, who is the president of both New Zealand centres, arrived from the UK in time to attend the men's retreat. Nagabodhi intends to visit every couple

of years in order to stay closely in touch with people and developments here. Since his last visit, three years ago, there have been a number of big changes in the Auckland FWBO, the main one being the purchase two years ago of a beautiful building in Grey Lynn to house the Auckland Buddhist Centre. Classes there are now thriving.

During his six weeks here Nagabodhi had a significant effect on the Auckland and Wellington Centres, mainly through one-to-one contact with the Order members and mitras involved. As well as bringing greater clarity and confidence to our situations, he helped us to face a number of key issues constructively. This visit has shown that, particularly for isolated centres like Auckland and Wellington, a president (a senior, experienced Order member based elsewhere) is essential for a centre's future direction.

Another significant visitor from the UK was Anoma, who worked primarily with the women at the Centre. She led workshops on the symbolism of the mandala and the stupa. Anoma was the first woman

Order member to come and teach in New Zealand since Dhammadinna's warmly remembered visit ten years ago.

Up to now a missing piece of the FWBO 'package' in Auckland has been team-based Right Livelihood—the opportunity for some committed Buddhists to run a business and support themselves ethically as well as raising funds for the Movement. However a team of mitras and a Friend are currently negotiating to buy an established wholefood shop and restaurant business just down the road from the Centre.

Last but not least, four New Zealanders are attending this year's ordination course for men in Spain. Three of them left Auckland a year ago for a more intensive experience of the Movement in the UK. They moved to Croydon and joined the fourth for a close association with the Right Livelihood businesses and Buddhist Centre there. We wish them and the two dozen others on the course a very enjoyable and worthwhile stay. □

Dharmadhara



WOMEN AT WINDHORSE

A team of four women has been formed in Cambridge to run the financial administration of Windhorse Trading. The team works in an environment of whirring computers and ringing telephones in an office above the Cambridge 'Evolution' shop. The shop is now run by five women, so, although the work of the two teams is very different, they have developed a strong sense of working together. Together they form one of the largest workplaces for women in the Movement.

Until recently all aspects of Windhorse Trading were run from the firm's warehouse outside Cambridge, but in the last two years the business has grown dramatically. It now employs sixty people and in the lead-up to Christmas it was running nine shops including four seasonal ones. In addition, there was a shop in Great Yarmouth in summer 1991, and Windhorse helped with the establishment of Hockney's gift shop in Croydon. The business has been expanding at over fifty percent a year, an astonishingly high figure considering the recessionary climate and the vulnerability of the gift trade to economic changes. Turnover for the year to March 1992 is projected to be approaching two million pounds.

However, this scale of

operation has meant that all areas of the business have had to expand to accommodate the extra work. Previously, a single accountant could look after most aspects of the finances, but when Rachel Goody, a trained accountant, took over the post in early 1991, it became apparent that several people were needed. When the Cambridge gift shop was opened in April 1991 it turned out to have a whole floor above the shop which was free for use as an office. An administrative team gradually formed to work from the new office and that team is now responsible for the business's accounts, for credit control, for paying employees, and so on.

There are currently five permanent Windhorse ('Evolution') shops in Norwich, Cambridge, Brighton, and Ipswich plus Jambala in East London. Half the profits from each shop go back into Windhorse (which itself dispenses very large donations to various areas of the Movement each year) while the shops are free to dispose of the other half themselves. Proceeds from the Manchester and Glasgow Christmas shops will go to the Women's Going For Refuge Community, while Glasgow, Leeds, and Birmingham will contribute towards the costs of their local FWBO Centres. □



GROUPS FOR BLACK WOMEN

A group of black women has been meeting at the London Buddhist Centre over the last two years. During this time they have held six retreats at Water Hall, the LBC's retreat centre, and more recently they have been meeting together every month.

The group grew out of a course on conflict resolution run by Gabriella Pearce, then a Friend. She invited Paramachitta to teach meditation on the course and the first retreat followed naturally enough.

Quite soon, though, it became apparent that there were quite tangible benefits in holding activities specifically for black women. Black faces have tended to be relatively uncommon at FWBO centres and Paramachitta herself wondered if black people somehow received the impression that Buddhism was irrelevant to their experience. By meeting with other black women it was possible for these issues to be explored in depth on the retreats. For example, in practising the Metta Bhavana some of the women experienced difficulty in overcoming negative emotions arising out of their experience of racism. Although the group included Indian, Chinese, South-East Asian, and Caribbean women it seemed that many common issues arose between them. Paramachitta herself found that she gained far greater confidence that 'there is no reason at all why black women should not embrace Buddhism'.

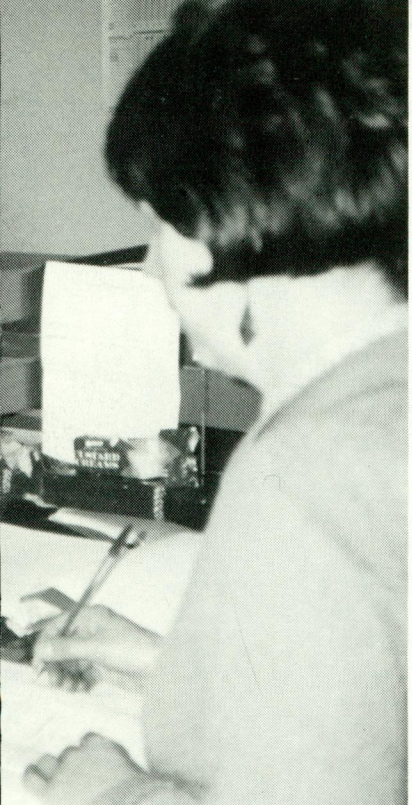
As the retreats continued, Paramachitta and Gabriella gradually introduced Buddhism and the FWBO, and encouraged people to attend classes at the LBC. The retreats developed a distinctive atmosphere and it was noticeable that the women took to ritual with particular ease.

Slowly the number of black faces at the LBC increased and the women began to develop the confidence to challenge assumptions that everyone's experience was the same. Over the last year three of the women have become mitras, including one involved with the West London Centre.

Paramachitta now feels confident that the aims of the group have, to some extent, been achieved, and with her impending departure to Spain it is not certain that it will continue to meet. Black women can now integrate much more easily with life at the LBC. However, this experience is a testament to the invisible reasons why people from certain groups tend not to become involved with the FWBO; it also suggests that such patterns can be changed. The groups at the LBC for gay men and men who are HIV positive are parallel applications of the same principle. □



EXPLORING TECHNIQUES FOR GROWTH



Above: Windhorse Trading's accounts office

Opposite: Windhorse's Cambridge 'Evolution' team

There has always been an interest within the FWBO in learning how to use techniques from the world of psychology in the service of a Buddhist spiritual life. In recent months, to cite just a couple of examples, Vasumitra has run workshops in Covent Garden and Croydon based on the work of Robert Bly, the exponent of a distinctive approach to male psychology. Atula, meanwhile, regularly runs a workshop entitled 'Connections' which explores the dynamics of communication using techniques from psychosynthesis.

In a similar vein, fifteen Order members and two mitras met for five days in

early January at the Old Red Lion, an inn now converted to a hostel which stands almost in the shadow of the medieval castle at Castle Acre in Norfolk. They were there for a training course for people interested in leading assertiveness training and meditation courses at FWBO centres.

These courses are based on material gleaned by Achalavajra during his years as a trainer in the Health Service, working with social workers and nurses but since developed by himself and Maitripada in the light of their understanding as Buddhists. Thus games, exercises, and ideas from the world of 'group-work' are

placed firmly in a Dharmic context and used to help in the development of qualities such as awareness and *metta*. These techniques can enable one to get to grips with the process of meeting, seeing, and overcoming one's limitations and to learn how to take a stand on the basis of states such as confidence, friendliness, and quiet strength.

The five day course led by Achalavajra and Maitripada was very intensive and those who attended found it both challenging and fruitful. Everyone left inspired to work further with the material to which they had been introduced and, in time, many of them hope to find ways of using the techniques in the course of their work in FWBO centres. □

Left: Assertiveness trainers at Castle Acre

Right: Edinburgh's five new mitras with Tejamitra (right)



EDINBURGH FESTIVITIES

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The FWBO group in Edinburgh passed a significant milestone on 18 February when it celebrated Parinirvana Day (which marks the death of the Buddha). This was the first time that the group had independently held a festival, and the final puja saw the mitra ceremonies of Edinburgh's first five 'home-grown' mitras.

Rooms were hired for the day in the Theosophical Society where it is rumoured that Sangharakshita gave a talk some twenty years ago. The shrine focused on a rupa which was once owned by a past Prince of Wales (circa 1911) and which he liked to stroke for luck when gambling!

The FWBO has had a continuous presence in Edinburgh since Tejamitra moved there in 1986, and it now runs a wide variety of activities in the town. Meanwhile fundraising is continuing in order to buy the FWBO's own premises. □

CENTRES LAUNCH THE DANA ECONOMY

Buddhist centres have to navigate a difficult course between the ideal of wanting to be able to give the Dharma to everyone free of charge and the realities of having to pay their way. In practice, centres tend to make a small charge for classes to cover their overheads, but the disadvantage is that the charges have a tendency to creep up and the relationship between those running the centre and those coming to classes becomes an economic one. The alternative is a relationship based on *dana*, or mutual generosity, and the idea of the Dana Economy has been around for as long as the FWBO itself.

Now, in a bold initiative, the London Buddhist Centre and the Brighton Buddhist Centre have instituted schemes which they call 'The Dana Economy'. Lokabandhu, the secretary of the London Buddhist Centre, outlined the scheme.

'Once someone asks, we will simply give them a pass so they can come freely to all events at the LBC, and *then* we'll ask them what they are able to give. We hope that most people will be willing to add up whatever they currently pay in class charges and weekend charges and so on and make out a covenant for this amount. That way people only pay what they are already paying, but it is given freely as a gift and the person is then able to come freely to whatever they wish at the Centre. However, if someone doesn't want to give a covenant, that's fine. The principle is simply "Give what you can", and it is this that we are trying to make real.'

After two months, around fifty people have joined the London Dana Economy while many others have continued simply to pay the class charges. Lokabandhu is confident that the scheme can continue to grow without imperiling the Centre's finances. □

■ TOWARDS FWBO FRANCE

A group of people interested in establishing the FWBO in France has begun meeting regularly. They held a weekend retreat at Water Hall in February, part of which was conducted in French. The group was initiated by Sanghaketu and Naravira from Cambridge and Varashri from London. Varashri has translated the 'Short Puja' into French and is starting translation work on introductory literature. No Order members currently have any plans to move to France and it may be several years before a centre can be started, but there are plans for the group to hold a retreat in France as a forerunner to holding retreats for French people. □



Kalyanavacha's ordination is greeted with a shower of rose petals

■ BOOKS FOR THE BLIND

During his recent visit to India, Sangharakshita was asked to launch a rather special book. The book in question was an edition of his own *Human Enlightenment*.

26 What made this publication so different was that it had been translated not only into Marathi, but into *Braille*. This is the first book to be published in Braille anywhere in the Movement, and Triratna Grantha Mala, the Movement's Indian publishing wing, intends to do more of this sort of work. In English, *Human Enlightenment* is a rather thin volume, but the Marathi Braille edition runs to two ledger-sized volumes. □

■ KARUNA REPRESENTATIVES

The Karuna Trust has inaugurated a new system of representatives at local centres who will aim to maintain an awareness around the Movement of the charity's work in India. On 8-9 February the representatives had their inaugural meeting with the team that runs the Trust at a weekend retreat in Oxfordshire when they learned more about what happens in India and discussed their role at centres. The representatives will be organizing fundraising events and encouraging others to get involved. One of their priorities will be raising the funds required to send preceptors to India to perform ordinations there. □



Above (left) Sangharakshita launches the Braille edition of *Human Enlightenment*, (right) Mahamati (seated right) with Karuna representatives
Below (left) Sangharakshita cuts Croydon's 10th birthday cake, watched (right) by the Chairman, Dharmaruchi (centre front), and friends



Further details from The Secretary, *tārāloka*

Cornhill Farm,

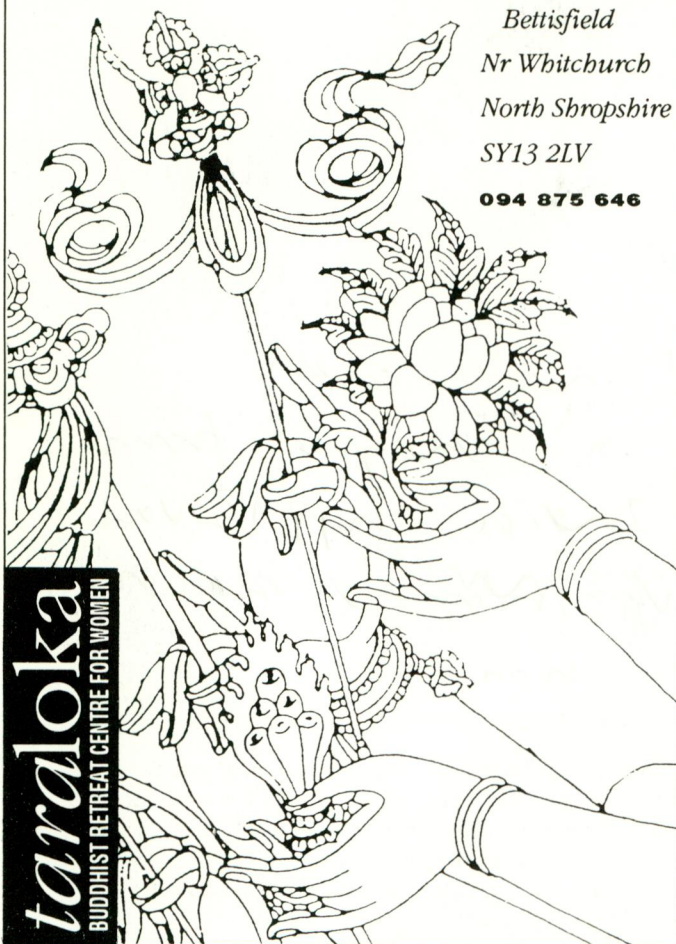
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May 16th-May 30th **Mindfulness Retreat**

May 31st **Open Day**

Jun 2nd-Jul 3rd **Building Project '92**

Jul 6th-Jul 17th **'Beginners' Mind' Retreat**

Jul 17th-Jul 31st **Meditation and Insight Retreat**

Aug 4th-Aug 15th **Teachers' Retreat**

For men Order Members

Aug 15th-Aug 29th **Order/Mitra Retreat**

For men Mitras and Order Members

Sep 7th-Sep 18th **Meditation Refresher Retreat**

Sep 18th-Oct 1st **Women's Vipassana Retreat**

For women Order Members

Oct 9th-Oct 23rd **Brahmaviharas Retreat**

Oct 23rd-Nov 6th **Mindfulness Retreat**

Nov 10th-Nov 21st **Meditation and Insight Retreat**

Nov 21st-Dec 5th **Men's Vipassana Retreat**

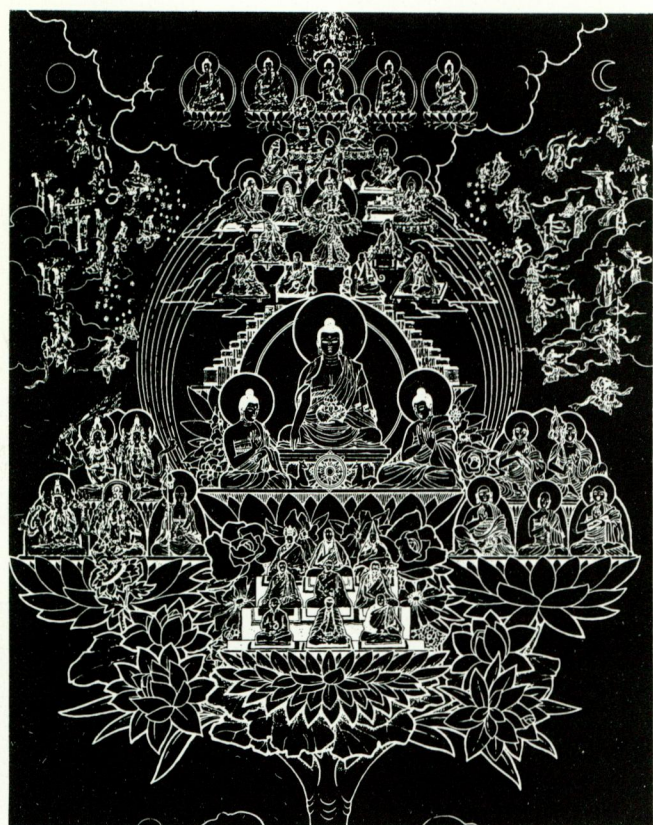
For men Order Members

Dec 8th-Dec 19th **Sesshin**

Dec 19th-Jan 2nd **Mitra Winter Retreat**

92

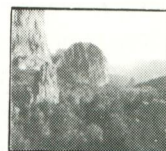
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Birmingham Buddhist Centre , 135 Salisbury Road, Moseley, Birmingham, B13 8LA. Tel: 021-449 5279
Brighton Buddhist Centre , 15 Park Crescent Place, Brighton, Sussex, BN2 3HF. Tel: 0273 698420
Bristol Buddhist Centre , 9 Cromwell Road, St Andrews, Bristol, BS6 5HD. Tel: 0272 249991
Cambridge Buddhist Centre , 19 Newmarket Road, Cambridge, CB5 8EG. Tel: 0223 460252
Croydon Buddhist Centre , 96-98 High Street, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 1ND. Tel: 081-688 8624
Glasgow Buddhist Centre , 329 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, G2 3HW. Tel: 041-333 0524
Lancashire Buddhist Centre , 301-303, Union Road, Oswaldtwistle, Accrington, Lancs, BB5 3HS. Tel: 0254 392605
Leeds Buddhist Centre , 148 Harehills Avenue, Leeds, LS8 4EU. Tel: 0532 405880
Manchester Buddhist Centre , 538 Wilbraham Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester M21 1LD. Tel: 061-860 4267
Norwich Buddhist Centre , 41a All Saints Green, Norwich, NR1 3LY. Tel: 0603 627034
West London Buddhist Centre , 7 Colville Houses, London W11 1JB. Tel: 071-727 9382
Centro Budhista de Valencia , c/o Maluquer 1, pta.5, 46007 Valencia. Tel: 380 93 51
FWBO Germany , Buddhistisches Zentrum Essen, Herkulesstr. 13, 4300 Essen 1, West Germany. Tel: 0201 230155
Helsingin Buddhalainen Keskus , PL 288, SF-00121, Helsinki 12, Finland
FWBO Netherlands , P.O. Box 1559, 3500 BN Utrecht, Netherlands
Västerländska Buddhistordens Vänner , Södermannagatan 58, S-116 65 Stockholm, Sweden. Tel: 08 418849
TBMSG Ahmedabad , Triyana Vardhana Vihara, Vijayanagar Society, Kankaria Road, Ahmedabad 380002, India. Tel: 0272 50580
TBMSG Aurangabad , Bhim Nagar, Bhausingpura, Aurangabad 431001, India
Bhaja Retreat Centre , c/o Dhammachakra Pravartan Mahavihar, Raja Harishchandra Road, Dapodi, Poona 411012, India
TBMSG Bombay , 25 Bhimprerna, Tapodhan Nagar, Bandra (E), Bombay 400051, India. Tel: 022 6441156
TBMSG Pimpri , Maitreya Vihar, Gautam Nagar, Pimpri, Poona 411018, India
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Wellington Buddhist Centre , P.O. Box 12-311, Wellington North, New Zealand. Tel: 04 787940
Melbourne Buddhist Centre , c/o 23 Gray Street, Brunswick, Victoria 3056, Australia
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Aryaloka Retreat Centre , Heartwood Circle, Newmarket, New Hampshire 03857, USA Tel: 603-659 5456
FWBO Seattle , 2410 E.Interlaken Blvd, Seattle, WA 98112, USA
Kathmandu Buddhist Centre (October-April) , PO Box 4429, Hotel Asia, Thamel, Kathmandu, Nepal
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The Office of the Western Buddhist Order , Padmaloka, Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norwich, NR14 7AL. Tel: 05088 310
Karuna Trust , 186 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 1UE. Tel: 0865 728794
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Activities are also conducted in many other towns. Please contact your nearest centre for details.