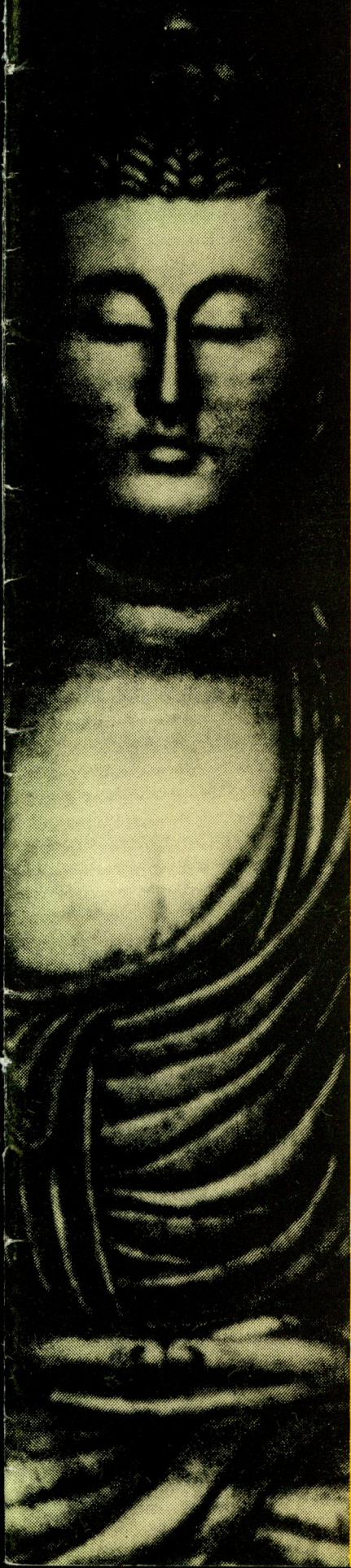


GOLDEN DRUM

A Magazine for Western Buddhists. Price £1.25 August—October 1992 (2535) No.26



the first twenty-five years

GOLDEN DRUM

AUGUST—OCTOBER 1992 (2535) No. 26

Published by Windhorse
Publications for the Friends of
the Western Buddhist Order

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Editor Nagabodhi

Editorial Assistance Shantavira

News Mary Healy

Book Reviews Tejananda

Outlook Advayachitta

Design Diane Quin

Printing Aldgate Press
84b Whitechapel High Street,
London E1

Subscription address
and advertisement enquiries
136 Renfield Street
Glasgow, G2 3AU

Subscriptions
£6.00 pa (UK & surface mail)
£9.50 pa (airmail) payable to
Windhorse Publications.
Subscriptions may be paid directly
into Girobank account 10 439 6105

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Advertising rates
Full page £80, 1/2-page £45
1/4-page £25, 1/8-page £15.
Booking deadline for issue 27
21 September. Artwork by
28 September. Discounts are
available for series bookings.
Inserts £40 per 1000.
Bookings and fuller details
136 Renfield Street,
Glasgow G2 3AU
☎ 041 332 6332

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SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE

Whether the root lies in Sangharakshita's strong sense of history, or in the disappointment he felt on encountering the rather dour world of British Buddhism back in the sixties, the FWBO has always made a point of celebrating festivals and anniversaries: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha Days, Parinirvana Day, Padmasambhava Day, annual FWBO and WBO Days, the FWBO's tenth, sixteenth, twenty-first birthdays, fifty issues of the *FWBO Newsletter*, ten years of TBMSG in India, Sangharakshita's twenty years in the West ... and now the FWBO's first twenty-five years.

When we were putting together a tenth anniversary issue of the *FWBO Newsletter*, I remember trying to counter the cynicism of a friend who wondered what the fuss was about. 'Ten years isn't that long,' he said. 'The Electric Cinema (a cheap and cheerful symbol of London in the sixties, specializing in "art" films) has been open ten years!'

Well, perhaps ten years wasn't so very long. But twenty-five? Yes, it does feel like a decent span: a quarter-century, the length of a human generation, one percent of Buddhist history. People are now getting involved with the FWBO who were not even born when it began.—And the old Electric Cinema closed its doors years ago. Surely we now have some cause to celebrate.

And to celebrate, to enjoy a series of strong, positive emotions in the context of a good cause, is in itself a good and wholesome thing. Nobody who was immersed in the ovation at the end of Bodhivajra's Oratorio on FWBO Day this year can have failed to have experienced the almost awesome power of collective joy. As much as anything we seemed to be celebrating ourselves with a rare kind of abandon. Bodhivajra is to be congratulated and thanked for creating such a potent catalyst.

To celebrate also bestows confidence. When we look at what the FWBO has become, take stock of what it has to offer, we should remember that none of it appeared by magic. Every brick had to be fund-raised for and set in place, every class and course devised more or less from scratch, every community established by individuals who actually saw and felt the need for them. None of it would have happened otherwise. So when we rejoice in the FWBO we are in fact rejoicing in a myriad of large and small individual achievements, without which the Movement would not be what it is today.

Some individuals may have played a particularly prominent and decisive role in one or more of those developments. One thinks of Sanghadevi and

Taraloka, Devaraja and Chintamani and the decor at the London Buddhist Centre, Kamalashila and Vajraloka, Lokamitra and TBMSG, Subhuti and goodness knows how many things, Sangharakshita and the FWBO itself.... But the FWBO isn't really a movement of individuals in that sense. Without the co-operation and shared effort of perhaps thousands of other people, nothing would have happened.

And I do mean co-operation, and not compliance. Edward Lorenz's increasingly favoured—and rather Buddhistic—hypothesis of 'sensitive dependence on initial conditions' states that forces as vast and powerful as the world's winds and ocean currents are decisively affected by the mere fluttering of a butterfly's wing. In a similar way, everything that has taken place in the FWBO's twenty-five year history, no matter how humble, has made who knows what contribution. A particularly good five minutes during a session of Metta Bhavana in a London basement bedroom in 1976 perhaps sealed someone's decision to go on the retreat that led to the breakthrough that culminated in the ordination which led to team that started the Centre in —. And so on. If one Order member had not realized that he needed to find a way of 'sublimating' his worldly ambition, we would not have 'Windhorse Trading'. If Lokamitra had not taken up yoga for the good of his health we might not yet have a wing of our Movement in India. And I can remember the casual chat in a coffee bar in which a mitra suggested that we opened a branch of Friends Foods in Croydon. Everything and everyone matters. We just don't know what conditions we are creating, all of us, all of the time, for our own future development, and for the further development of the Movement. When we celebrate the FWBO we are really and truly celebrating ourselves.

When we celebrate, of course, we are also reminding ourselves of all the things that we have created, all the facilities we have made available to ourselves and others. If by celebrating them we inspire ourselves to make fuller use of them, then that will be no bad thing. After all, a time of celebration is also a time of reflection (and this issue of *Golden Drum* is perhaps more reflective than celebratory). How the FWBO develops in the future will very much depend on the extent to which we take advantage of it now. □

Nagabodhi

Sangharakshita
and Nagabodhi at
Four Winds in 1976



To be involved with the FWBO is to be 'in at the beginning'. Nagabodhi points out that this has a number of important implications

Making History

Several years ago, when I was involved in activities at the London Buddhist Centre, somebody I met at a dinner party asked me what I did for a living. This was always a tricky question, since none of the things I did provided me with a 'living' in anything like the sense in which a normal person uses the term. I decided, anyway, to explain myself as a meditation teacher.

'Oh!' she said, 'That's interesting. I meditate.'

Apparently, she had been practising the Mindfulness of Breathing and Metta Bhavana every day for a couple of years, ever since she had learned them—at the London Buddhist Centre. When she told me that she had been to just two classes, had thoroughly enjoyed them, but had never seen any reason to return, I had something of a revelation.

Like most of my friends and colleagues, I tended to measure the success of a class, a course, a retreat—in fact any FWBO activity—in terms of people coming back for more—in the case of beginners—or getting more deeply involved in the Dharma—in the case of the more advanced. But that was just my 'insider's' way of looking at things. 'Out there', I suddenly saw, were quite probably thousands of people whose lives had been irrevocably changed by just a couple of visits to one of our centres, but whom we had never seen again. The realization was both uplifting and chastening. Whilst feeling delighted to be able to multiply my appreciation of the FWBO's effectiveness by a

considerable—if incalculable—factor, I couldn't help feeling that this was something I should have grasped years before.

I suppose it was only natural that I should have seen my work as an attempt to influence others into approaching life, the universe, and everything in the way I approached them, only natural that I should want, above all else, to encourage others to go for Refuge. But perhaps in my

enthusiasm to see beginners turn into regulars, regulars into mitras, and mitras into Order members—to see the Order and the Movement grow and thrive—I sometimes lost sight of another, simpler, aspect of the FWBO's bodhisattva activity. Whether through Dharma classes, bodywork activities, arts events, or social action, the FWBO existed to help people live healthier, happier, and richer lives, in whatever way, and at whatever level, seemed appropriate at the time.

Perhaps I shouldn't be too hard on myself. Fate had not directed my feet, nor those of any of my fellow



Order members, towards an established branch of the Buddhist sangha—one adorned with temples, teachers, traditions, and funds. Had that been the case we could have no doubt quietly benefited from whatever our teachers had to give us before, perhaps, making a tiny contribution of our own. Instead the very act of making contact with the FWBO in any meaningful sense had involved creating it. In such circumstances it was hardly surprising if our perception of the Movement as a *Movement* had become a little over-dominant. This was, and remains, just one of the 'historical problems' we were up against.

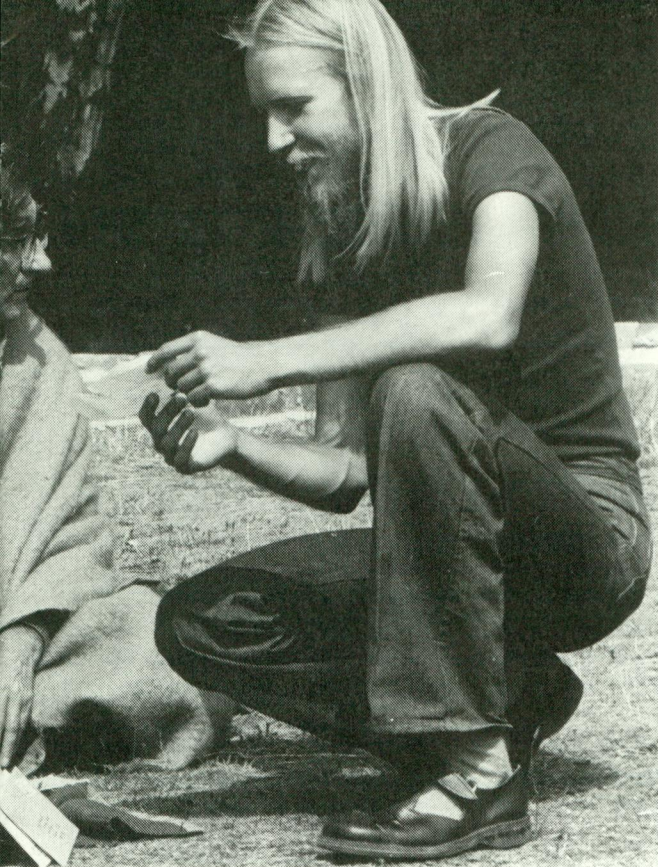
When I first encountered the FWBO, in November 1970, it consisted of one evening of meditation and discussion a week—held in a hired room and attended by about fifty people—two retreats a year, a quarterly newsletter, and special events to mark the three main Buddhist festivals. One heard rumours of a spiritually heterodox (and emotionally tangled) community down in Purley, and of an allied group meeting, amazingly, in Auckland, New Zealand. And that was that. Although there were Order members, it was quite a while before I became aware of the fact, so rarely did they wear their *kesas*, lead events, or use their Order names.

Presiding over this humble if far-flung domain was an extraordinary figure whose hair tumbled over shoulders that were concealed on one side by a woolly jumper and on the other by the orange robes of a Buddhist monk. His appearance was bizarre; the stories (and again rumours) one heard about him were both wonderful and weird, yet when you heard him speak, or received his full personal attention, you couldn't help feeling that here was the first real 'grown up' you'd ever met.

Today you can contact various manifestations of the FWBO in more than a hundred towns and cities in twelve countries on four continents. Within the FWBO it is possible to explore meditation, hatha yoga, massage, Ta'i Chi, karate, dance, drama, music, ritual, and more. You can of course learn about, practise, and teach Buddhism, and find supports for your attempts to carve out a Buddhist 'life-style'—retreat centres, right livelihood business ventures, and residential communities. You can help to run, fund-raise for, or benefit from social action projects. You can read, write, and publish books, magazines, and booklets on the



In the days when the WBO could fit into a living room



Dharma in any of nine languages. You can enjoy friendships with people from all over the world—to a depth that few people outside a spiritual community can even imagine. You can come along just a few times to learn some meditation techniques, or you can invest your entire life energies into something that has truly become a 'Movement'.

The journey from a hired room to a worldwide Movement has been exciting, demanding, occasionally perilous, full of surprises, and dotted here and there with tensions and disappointments. Above all, perhaps, it has been a journey, and those of us who have been along for part of the ride have watched our surroundings change with occasionally frightening speed.

Unlike the monks, nuns, or lay folk in traditional Buddhist countries, we have never been able to take our institutions, principles, and practices for granted and just get on with the business of 'working out our own salvation with diligence'. To enjoy city centres and retreat centres we have had to build them. To read books that speak our language we have had to write and publish them. And so on. Even those who have taken Sangharakshita at his word when he said, years ago, that an Order member doesn't have to *do* anything for the world or for the Movement, no one has been free from the pressures of history.

Anyone who lives outside the UK (except in India) still has to contemplate moving, at least temporarily, to the UK, and perhaps learning English, if they want to make a real connection with the Order and the Movement. Anyone getting ordained these days soon finds him- or herself having at least to consider a number of urgent requests to teach, to 'take on' a mitra or two, or to help run a new business venture. Where have been the role models, or the centuries of experience of living with the Dharma in a particular set of cultural circumstances, that our Eastern brothers and sisters could take advantage of? Where, even, are the Buddha-images that might help us feel—in our blood and in our bones—that Enlightenment could happen to *us, here, now?*

Even someone who decides to live a life of permanent retreat, concentrating entirely on their meditation and study, does so knowing that many of their spiritual friends are putting their energies into the development of the 'external dimension' of the Movement.

Experience suggests that such an awareness inevitably exerts a tension, becomes a kind of koan, fueling a level of practice and insight that can add immeasurably to their—and thus the Movement's—inner life. Again and again, in one way and another, we are all being challenged by history, all affected by the fact that we are here at a beginning.

This has been both a curse and an opportunity. And so far we have done pretty well. In these worldly times, and with all our handicaps, we have not only survived, but we have survived as a spiritual community and as a spiritual Movement. What's more, it's been great fun!

But history hasn't finished with us yet. The first convention of the Western Buddhist Order took place in the sitting room of an ordinary suburban house; we were all social as well as spiritual friends. Suddenly, it seems, with more than 500 men and women in the Order, most of us do not know all the others, even by sight. Once upon a time most of us were in our teens and early twenties. Now there is a very wide age spread. For a little while longer the Movement's centre of gravity will lie in Britain; soon it will probably lie in India. How will we deal with these demographic shifts? How will we maintain our integrity? What will be the meaning of our 'unity' when people are being ordained all over the world on the basis of no more contact with the wider Movement than is presently enjoyed by most English Order members today? And how will we support our 'old folk'?

When the Movement was intimately small, a new batch of thoughts and insights from Sangharakshita, voiced, perhaps, during a study seminar—the importance of openness, the fact that working for others is a way of working on yourself (and *vice versa*), the idea of work as a tantric guru—could stop everyone in their tracks and herald months of discussion, debate, and assimilation throughout the Movement. Now, despite *Golden Drum*, *Dakini*, *Shabda* (the Order's unedited newsletter), Windhorse Publications, Triratna Grantha Mala, and Padmaloka Books, there is no easy ideological coherence; the FWBO may be one Movement, but it is no longer 'one mind'. All those 'old chestnuts' like 'Reliability is a symptom of psychological integration,' or 'There is no such thing as a private life within the Order,' or 'You are in most danger of losing your mindfulness when you are enjoying yourself,' will have to be brushed down and re-presented, again and again, to new generations who have not taken them in by osmosis as, perhaps, did we.

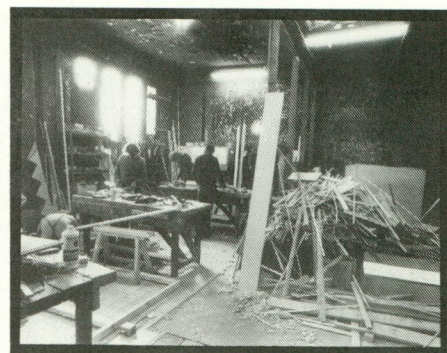
The success, and therefore the size and spread, of the FWBO, means that we will have to identify and drop all kinds of assumptions we have about ourselves and our work. We may have to create, for example, new institutions—exoteric ways of transmitting ideas, principles, and practices that were once transmitted 'esoterically'. We are entering, in other words, the kind of terrain upon which many a spiritual tradition has come to grief.

We will therefore need to find new ways of ensuring that the FWBO really is one Movement, and, above all, that it remains a truly spiritual Movement. In this work we will be aided by the insights of inspired, articulate individuals with new ideas and new genius, and by courageous people prepared to put themselves on the line to test the ideas and principles in practice.

Most of those individuals have yet to appear even at our beginners' classes. The rest have just finished

By 1976 the hair was getting shorter

5



'To enjoy Centres we have to build them'—the LBC's shrine room six months before opening in 1978

Working with the

Bhante, were there ever any times when you didn't think the FWBO would last twenty-five years, when you despaired?

I certainly never despaired. But I can't say I thought we were definitely going to last twenty-five years or not last twenty-five years. I simply thought in terms of carrying on from day to day, week to week, class to class, retreat to retreat, confident that we would survive.

Because you were determined that we would?

Not in any 'wilful' sense. It was more that I saw it as being 'inevitable'—almost in the nature of things—that there should be a movement like the FWBO. This was the intuitive feeling on the basis of which I carried on working.

Have you been surprised or disappointed by the Movement's development so far?

If I look back to those very small beginnings, then I am definitely somewhat surprised that we could have expanded to such an extent and in such a variety of ways in just twenty-five years. But if I consider all the needs that the FWBO is not in a position to meet—when I think of the vast number of people who could benefit from the FWBO but to whom we haven't as yet been able to make ourselves available—then I feel rather disappointed.

Would you single out any particular groups of people, or are you thinking of the general mass of humanity?

I'm thinking of the general mass of humanity. But when there's an accident you give your attention first of all to the most seriously wounded. So in India we are more concerned with the ex-Untouchables, the more seriously wounded in a social sense. In the West we often have to give more immediate attention to those who are wounded psychologically. They are often the ones who come to us, because they feel in need of some kind of spiritual healing.

Should we be doing more to contact those who do not particularly experience life as something painful but who would benefit from the Dharma?

I'm sure there's a lot more we could be doing in this way. Perhaps we should target specific groups more accurately than we do at present. One recent development that has pleased me has been that one or two Order members have been going out specifically to

black women and to gay people, people who might have been shy of approaching us. But there is the question of human resources: our centres are kept busy by the people who are already making their own way to them.

Of all the developments that have taken place in the last twenty-five years, which have especially pleased you?

I am particularly pleased that the FWBO has taken root in India. This is partly for personal reasons. I myself spent so much time in India. Those twenty years constituted a central part of my life. But that development also pleases me because it has taken place mainly among the ex-Untouchable followers of

Dr Ambedkar. If anybody on the face of this Earth needed something like Buddhism to lift them out of their condition of social deprivation and give them some faith in themselves and an ethical and spiritual path to follow, it was them. I am also aware that this involvement is a two-way process. The interaction between the Eastern and Western wings of the FWBO has been, and will continue to be, very fruitful indeed.

Another surprise was the development of our team-based Right Livelihood businesses. Even in the very early days I used to speak about of Right Livelihood, but I was thinking of it in the traditional terms of an individual's Right Livelihood in the midst of a non-Buddhist secular society. When, some years later, our Right Livelihood businesses began to emerge and to reveal the extent of their spiritual implications, it all happened on the initiative of certain Order members; I couldn't have been responsible for more than one per cent of it. This was quite unanticipated—and all the more of a pleasant surprise because of its being unanticipated. It showed that the Movement had its own independent life and growth.

Very recently I have been pleased—and a little surprised—by a sudden 'interest' in celibacy and in becoming an anagarika. In the past months fifteen men in India and England have become anagarikas, and I believe that some more might be on their way. The life of the anagarika represents a freedom to follow the spiritual life and respond to the needs of others which one doesn't have to the same extent if one is either married or in a regular sexual relationship.

Though I've always strongly recommended celibacy I have never pushed it: it must be an entirely voluntary decision which one takes in the interest of one's own spiritual development, and something which is not annexed to any sort of post or position. I have therefore been all the more pleased because this development has been so spontaneous. It is the result of the reflection, the momentum, the spiritual experience and life of those particular people, and not a result of any instigation of mine.

In 1967 the FWBO was virtually unique in offering Westerners an opportunity to encounter Buddhism on the basis of practice and commitment. In the last twenty-five years a number of active Buddhist movements have emerged with some highly committed people in their ranks. As Western Buddhism evolves, what distinctive contribution do you think the FWBO has been making?

Twenty-five years is a very short time. We won't really be able to say much about our contribution for quite a few more years. I suspect, though, that our main contribution will be seen to be our emphasis on the central importance of Going for Refuge.

I just don't know to what extent we have yet had an effect on the Western Buddhist movement generally. I have become aware over the past couple of years that a number of groups in the United States have begun to take some of our more typical ideas, institutions, and practices seriously, but it remains to be seen to what

Sona gives a talk in Stockholm.



'It gives me great joy when I listen to talks by Order members,' says Sangharakshita

twenty-five years ago

Inevitable



extent they, or Buddhist groups elsewhere in the West, will be influenced by them.

Which of its features do you think particularly justify the FWBO's continued existence and appeal?

It's the FWBO as a whole. One can't single out the single-sex 'principle', or its Right Livelihood businesses, or its emphasis on spiritual friendship.... All these things hang together as part of a unified system. So we justify our existence, and our appeal—if they need justification at all—by what we are totally, and not by any specific features.

With so many serious Buddhist organizations around these days, do you feel less alone as a Dharma teacher?

I can't say that I do. If there was no FWBO I think I would be as alone as ever. I'm not alone any more simply because I've been able to convince at least some people that the way in which I perceive Buddhism is—so far as one can see at present anyway—the best and

(Top) Six more anagarikas—a spontaneous development.

(Below) Festive Flair—one of the surprises

truest way in which too see it.

I don't really think people make contact with the same thing through other Buddhist groups as they make contact with through us. Sometimes the Dharma is presented elsewhere in such a way as to *obscure* it.

Could you be more specific?

It is often a question of confusing life-style with spiritual commitment. Very often the Dharma is presented in more or less exclusively monastic terms, so that one is left with the feeling that if one does not become a monk it's not really worth one's while to practise Buddhism at all.

Again, sometimes the Dharma is disguised by Eastern culture. This happens most of all in the case of Tibetan Buddhism. Those involved with Tibetan Buddhist groups are sometimes quite confused by the Tibetan culture, and find it very difficult to discern the Dharma—the spirit of Buddhism as it were—in the midst of this very rich and elaborate—and to us alien—culture.

I meet quite a lot of people who are new to the FWBO. Many of them seem to have 'shopped around' other Buddhist groups before making contact with the FWBO. They've certainly nothing against the other Buddhist groups, but when I ask them why they have opted for the FWBO, they usually say first of all that the FWBO presents the Dharma in a more *accessible* manner. They also say that some of the teachers—especially some of the monk-teachers—in some of the other groups, communicate from behind a barrier which cannot be crossed, and which makes communication difficult. They do not find this to be the case with our Order members.

It has sometimes been suggested that the FWBO is a new school. I once even heard somebody claim that we are a new yana! How would you respond?

Traditionally, especially in Tibetan Buddhism, the yanas are regarded as being successive. The Mahayana is believed to go somewhat beyond the Hinayana, and the Vajrayana is believed to go beyond the Mahayana. So if we were a new yana we would have to be claiming to go beyond the Vajrayana. I certainly don't think we are a new yana in that sense.

Nowadays, anyway, I tend to question the Tibetan *triyana* conception itself. According to that conception, the Going for Refuge is said to be representative of the Hinayana, the arising of the bodhichitta of the Mahayana, and so on—which suggests that you can go beyond the Going for Refuge. That is something I do not recognize.

I would therefore prefer to think of the FWBO as going back to what is central from what is peripheral, inasmuch as we stress the centrality of the Going for Refuge in the Buddhist life, and inasmuch as we see the arising of the bodhichitta not as a going *beyond* the Going for Refuge, but as the positive, altruistic dimension of the Going for Refuge itself. So if we *are* eventually to be seen by ourselves and others as a new development, or as a new school, it will be in the sense that we represent a distinctive assemblage of *emphases* from within the Buddhist tradition.

Twenty-five years is about one per cent of Buddhist history. Have we yet made any contribution to the total Buddhist tradition? Are we even on our way to making such a contribution?

I hope we are. Whether we will make a contribution, as distinct from being an 'independent development', I don't know. The mere fact that we have existed represents a contribution to Buddhist history. But to what extent it is significant, useful, or valuable remains to be seen. I would hope that others in the Buddhist

world—whether individuals or groups—will avail themselves of such insights and experience as we have managed to achieve or acquire, just as I hope we will avail ourselves of whatever insights and experiences are available within the wider Buddhist world.

Do you think we should be communicating our own insights and experience more energetically?

We have a duty to communicate, full stop. We have a duty to communicate the Dharma to those who wish to hear the Dharma or who would benefit from hearing it and putting it into practice.

At present our constituency is with the 'unchurched'—with ex-Christians, ex-Hindus, ex-Jews, and even a few ex-Muslims. But I would like that constituency to expand. I would like people who already consider themselves Buddhists to harken to what we have to say, and to consider whether it might not be applicable to their own situation. Some of our Buddhist friends, especially in the East, are very set in their ways. But if they do not address some of the problems we have addressed their form of Buddhism may well not survive.

What sort of problems are you thinking of?

There is the problem of the monk-laity divide, and there is the problem essentially of 'restating' the fundamental truths of Buddhism in such a way as to be intelligible and appealing to people in our modern, secular world. Young people particularly, even in the Buddhist East, often do not heed the message of Buddhism when it is couched in traditional terms.

Do you see yourself as a reformer of the Buddhist tradition?

I have put forward certain ideas and insights. The FWBO acts upon those ideas and insights. If others in the Buddhist world were to act upon them I'd be very pleased. But it's not my 'job' to reform them. You can't reform people by force. It's for them to take advantage of what you offer—or not. I would expect that some groups around the world will be somewhat influenced by our example, and may make little changes—though they may not always recognize where those particular ideas came from.

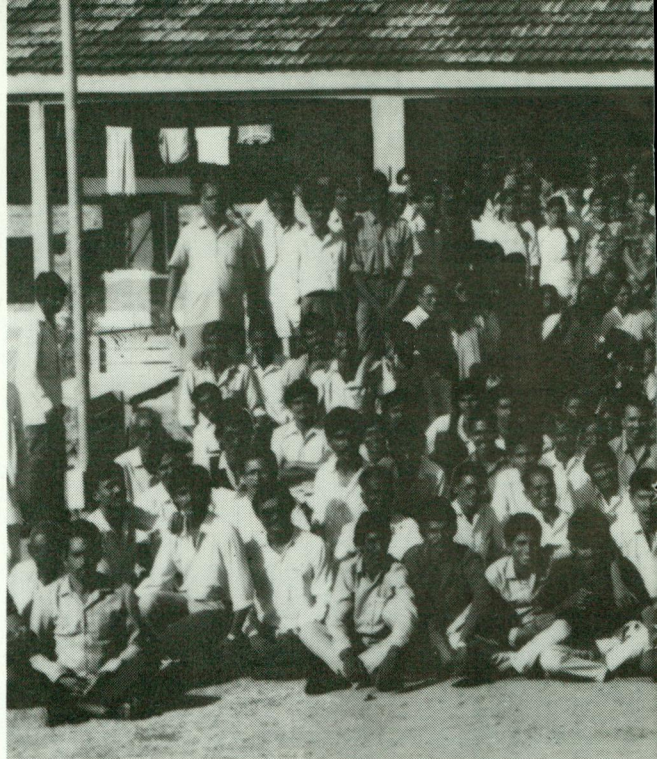
Although you are not an old man, for at least ten years you have been attending to the issue of 'succession'. Did any development—within the FWBO or elsewhere—spark that process off?

I certainly heard about disagreements arising within particular Buddhist groups after the deaths of their founders, but nothing like that really sparked me off. I was just aware that I was growing older, and I was aware of the issue of succession as a part of the whole question of the continued survival and development of the FWBO.

In some ways it is more difficult to be the successor to something already established than it is to start something completely new. I therefore want to make things as easy for my successors as possible. Ideally, I would like to live long enough to see my own successor, or successors, handing things over, after a period of ten or fifteen years, to their successor or successors. I don't see myself as simply handing things over to a successor or successors and then disappearing from the scene, but as 'supervising' at least two stages of succession. I would then feel that the FWBO, and the Order, had been really firmly established. That is why I've started thinking about the question of succession earlier than people might have expected. It's not the sort of thing one should be thinking about on one's deathbed!

But have there been times in recent years when you have felt that you were the only person who could see something that needed urgent attention?

That is certainly the case, and it's still the case to



some extent. But it is less and less the case as the years go by. That is why I'm always very pleased when I hear of Order members tackling issues in a way that I might have tackled them myself, or tackling them in a way that gives me complete satisfaction. It gives me great joy when I listen to talks by Order members, when I can tell that their grasp of the Dharma is really very sound, and that they can be relied upon to sort out even philosophical problems without any help from me.

But do you ever fear that without your guidance we might still lose our bearings?

As far as I can see, there's no question of the Movement losing its bearings in any very general or radical sort of way. I don't see that as a possibility, really, in view of the quite experienced and insightful people that we now have within the Movement—and also when I see the confidence that some of them enjoy on the part of the Movement as a whole.

I once heard it suggested that the FWBO is heavily dependent upon you for its philosophical, scholarly input, that our knowledge of the Dharma is perhaps over-reliant on you....

Well you don't need to be a scholar to comb the scriptures. I am not a scholar in the academic sense; I am merely well read. So, yes, I would certainly encourage at least some Order members to be well read and to comb the scriptures for teachings and insights that may have particular value and relevance for us.

I would also be quite pleased if there were—as in fact there now are—a few real scholars within the Movement to act as a sort of liaison between ourselves and traditional Buddhism. They will not only help us to draw upon the various treasures of Buddhist teachings in Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan, and so on, but will help us explain ourselves in traditional terms to those who are Buddhists—whether in the East or the West—and who are perhaps unable to see the value of our features on their own merits. For our part we need to know when we are deviating from tradition, so that we deviate from it knowingly, and knowing why we deviate from it.

What do you think will be the ultimate guarantees of the Movement's integrity, survival, and success?

Obviously it's important that Order members keep up the practice of the Dharma. That is obvious, I know, but I had better say it anyway because Buddhist history shows that it has sometimes been overlooked. So, yes, Order members must keep alive and deepen their Going for Refuge. They must be scrupulous in their



observance of the precepts, keep up their practice of meditation, and so on.

The Movement's survival will depend too on a willingness to share the Dharma, to communicate it because you realize that other people could benefit from it, and you want them to benefit; you don't just want to keep what you've discovered to yourself.

Then, of course, the Movement must be permeated on all levels by spiritual friendship. That is an absolute essential.

There is something else which may come as a surprise. There is what I would tentatively call 'respect for elders'. This is not very much in accordance with contemporary ideology, I know, but it is important for the integrity and survival of the Movement that Order members, mitras, and others feel a genuine respect for those who are older in the sense of being more experienced, more insightful, and so on. It would be difficult for the Movement to survive or maintain its integrity without that. This respect is of course something that you yourself must feel—and must be willing and open to feel—for other people. If people are not ready and willing to recognize a greater degree of experience and insight than their own when they encounter it, then one cannot entertain very great hopes for the continued integrity, survival, and success of the Movement.

Having started what people sometimes refer to as a 'withdrawal', do you ever feel a conflict between the pull of your writing, say, and a desire, or need, to stay in touch with the day-to-day life of the Movement?

Objectively, of course, there is a conflict, if only in terms of my time. But I don't feel ambivalent. I am quite happy to do my best in both respects so long as that is necessary. But I have been able to devote more time to my writing and study and reflection over the last few years than was possible before. That does seem to be the way things are moving.

Has twenty-five years given us—given you—a chance to appreciate more fully the sort of forces that we are up against?

There is, of course, human weakness. That is always with us! The five poisons are always with us, so we're always up against those. But we are also up against contemporary ideologies such as egalitarianism and the intellectual 'left-overs' of a discredited Marxism. We're up against pseudo-liberalism, and I would say we're up against some of the more extreme developments in Feminism—by which I don't mean that I am not in favour of all avenues being open to women which they

'I am particularly pleased that the Movement has taken root in India'



Dhammadinna gives a talk at Taraloka

are capable of following and willing to follow. We are up against all sorts of ideologies and attitudes that are inimical and contradictory to the Dharma—as well as our own greed, hatred, and delusion. Very often, of course, those ideologies represent a rationalization of those particular poisons.

Which elements of 'discredited Marxism' do you have in mind? Would you not say, for instance, that the maxim 'Take what you need, give what you can' is as relevant as ever?

Yes indeed, though the question would be how to make it *operative*, how to make people *willing* to take only what they needed, and to give what they could. This is a psychological and spiritual question. The mechanics of it may be a matter of economics, but mechanics alone are not going to solve our problems in this area.

Just to make myself clear, what has been discredited is, perhaps more correctly, socialism in the sense of centralized planning, the idea that you can direct an economy from a single command centre. The more general, 'free-floating' view that has arisen in its wake is that any kind of difficulty or problem is other people's fault. You are the *victim*, so you've got to change the system, you've got to change society: *you* haven't got to change, you don't even think in those terms. All you have to do—if you don't actually instigate the revolution—is take advantage of it and participate in its goodies.

But what about the other end of the spectrum, the kind of heightened economic individualism that has been such a feature of the past decade in many countries?

Well, the whole idea of private vices as public benefits is an old one, isn't it. But even if private vices *are* public benefits, we're not in favour of the cultivation of private vices, are we? We would rather cultivate private virtues and try to see in what way *they* can be made to work out in the form of public benefits. That I think has not yet been tried.

Perhaps our team-based Right Livelihood businesses are a step in this direction. But there's infinitely more to do. Although they provide a Buddhist working environment and spiritual friendships for those who work in them, although they donate money to the Movement, and although they function ethically, by and large they are part of the old structure, the old financial system.

In this connection I would like to see some people taking a thorough look at that financial system, seeing what it is, how it works, how it relates or doesn't relate to the Dharma, asking, for example, what is the function—even the meaning—of money. Money is a bit like electricity, in the sense that we all make use of it without really knowing what it actually is. This is an area we haven't even begun to explore. We need to understand the old structures and try to see whether they might not be replaceable by structures which would be more beneficial to us and to society at large.

Are there any ways in which Western society has become more supportive to what we are doing over the last twenty-five years?

I wouldn't say more supportive, but more open in the sense of being more permeable. There's less resistance. People are more willing and ready to consider, say, doing yoga, or meditating, or being vegetarian.

Or being a Buddhist?

Or even being a Buddhist. Yes, it no longer raises eyebrows. When I returned to Britain in 1964 there were people coming along to the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara who were *proud* of the fact that even their best friends didn't know that they were Buddhists! □

New developments usually arise out of a sudden inspiration, an accident, or even irritation. There is no master plan for the FWBO. Dhammadinna's account of the emergence of a 'women's wing' provides a good illustration

Women take Wing

I have been a member of the Western Buddhist Order for nineteen years, having first come along in the spring of 1970. In those days all classes and retreats were open to men and women.

Although we didn't begin to talk in terms of the women's and men's wings of the Order until the mid-eighties, we experimented with our first single-sex retreats as early as 1972. 'Official' accounts describe the first such retreat as a men's weekend. Do I have a better memory, or am I displaying female chauvinism, if I confess that I have always thought our women's weekend came first?

Although that weekend went well, it was made slightly strange by our uncertainty as to whether or not Sangharakshita was going to attend. In the event he didn't, presumably thinking that we could only have a real women's retreat without him.

Our second attempt, a week in Norfolk the following year, was more focused—although we were sharing a house with three large teenage boys! From these tentative beginnings the move towards single-sex retreats and living situations gathered momentum.

This may seem an unusual experiment to have arisen amongst young people in the liberal early seventies. However, it arose out of our direct experience of Buddhist practice, from our attempts to become more independent—and to find situations which supported this.

Although we enjoyed our women's retreats, we could sometimes feel threatened by the gathering momentum among the men to spend more time among themselves. Old fears of being left out, of not being taken seriously, or of being thought 'inferior', surfaced.

I recently came across a quote: 'The way a woman thinks of other women is the test of her nature.' Many women who spend a lot of time with men or who see themselves as 'one of the boys', can sometimes be quite contemptuous of other women. Women also often tend to think that men know all the answers, and are conditioned to defer to men and male opinion. On our early women's retreats such attitudes, which are masked in mixed situations, began to arise and demand attention. We also discovered that issues of competitiveness and leadership emerged, once there were no men present to take the lead.

Since there were less women Order members than men, and since we were beginning to experience tension in mixed Order situations, we decided to meet separately—as well as continuing to meet with the men. Disengaging

from individual or collective dependency on the opposite sex is not an easy venture, and as we began to become more aware of our dependencies, mixed situations often felt either overtly or covertly tense.

However, we were not yet entirely comfortable in the company only of women, neither were we close or natural friends. We met because we believed that to do so would be beneficial, but some of these early meetings were less than enjoyable. We felt, to some extent, that the men were probably having a better time of it: there were more of them, they had a greater diversity, and probably had more fun! Some of the initiative behind single-sex events had come from the men, and there were feelings of resentment and abandonment to be dealt with. At the same time we were determined to continue to meet and make something of our connections.

Slowly we formed more women's communities and spent more time together on women's retreats. Eventually in the late seventies we leased premises for a women's retreat centre in Norfolk, which we named 'Mandarava', and we renovated a large burnt-out house to create the first large closed women's community in the Movement, 'Amaravati'.

These two ventures were of great interest and inspiration to FWBO women around the world. Our activities and retreats were well attended and gained in confidence. We also started an unedited newsletter, which circulated among women Order members and mitras worldwide. Apart from containing news, stories, poems, book reviews, and diary extracts, women in the Movement hotly debated the pros and cons of single-sex activities in relation to spiritual development in its pages.

Although we were growing more confident in our ability to be self-sufficient and more potent there were still difficulties. Looking back I realize how very few role models there were for us—of women as individuals, or of women as members of a spiritual community. Leading women seemed to exist only in the political arena, usually working through the power mode and ignoring their less successful sisters. Leadership in the 'women's movement', on the other hand, was often frowned upon, being seen as a male activity. One women's collective only published material under a collective's name, thus expunging individuality.

In our own communities, retreats, and meetings, we were struggling to be self-determining and confident and to work in co-operation with one another. Building work, for example, confronted us with tasks for which few of us were prepared. However, we persevered, and thanks particularly to Mandarava and Amaravati more women were able to join the Order.

The momentum towards single-sex activities, retreats, communities, and businesses had grown so that by the early eighties we decided, by consensus, that weekly Order meetings and Order weekends would also become single-sex. Our biennial conventions, however, remained mixed, offering an opportunity for the entire Order to meet together.

Our friendships had developed and our small wing of

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Mandarava in 1977 and (below) at Amaravati in 1978 'Building work confronted us with tasks for which few of us were prepared'



from individual or collective dependency on the



the Order expanded and gained in confidence. In fact the women's side of the Movement grew so fast that the still small number of women Order members was hard pressed to provide facilities for them all. At one women's Order weekend in 1982 we realized that we were all exhausted. We spent most of our time in outgoing activities for others and needed more time together to deepen our friendships and to gain inspiration for the future.

In what was then a revolutionary move we therefore decided to go away for a month's retreat on a remote Scottish island. This decision caused some discussion in the wider Movement since it involved delaying the large women's Order-mitra event due that summer. Some male Order members, feeling the event should go ahead, offered to lead it for us. However, we maintained our direction, and the event, which took place the following year, after our retreat, is still remembered for its depth and inspiration.

Our month away was a turning point. We studied, meditated, talked, and endlessly discussed our future aims and objectives. We played games, went for walks, told each other our life stories and gave each other positive feedback. We returned with renewed vigour and inspiration, which affected our practice and the retreats we provided for quite some time. We had developed our friendships and tested ourselves out as a more effective wing of the Order.

Our next task was to fund-raise and find somewhere suitable for a women's retreat centre. This project was taken on by a few dedicated women Order members and mitras. Taraloka Retreat Centre for Women opened in 1985.

Earlier the same year we met on our first international women's Order convention. Sangharakshita attended this event, and some of the question-and-answer sessions he gave, on record and available in transcript, dealt quite fully with the 'issue' of women and the spiritual life (with Vidyashri courageously asking a long list of questions relating to the recommended book, *Ball Breaking*). We left this convention clearer and more confident in our practice.

I cannot speak for other women Order members, but I know that in the past I have sometimes felt confused and upset by perceived attitudes to women in the Movement. On the one hand we were encouraged to spend time together and not look to the men for

'Our friendships had developed'

the last two years. Not only had Taraloka opened, but women preceptors had ordained women into the Order in India and were to undertake this responsibility in Britain in the following years.

Since then development has taken place in leaps and bounds. Over the last two years we have been planning to form a women's ordination team, with a separate retreat centre for 'Going for Refuge' and ordination process retreats. At the present time four of us are living together, running these retreats and fund-raising for a new retreat centre. We have already received a great deal of support from both men and women in the Movement. The women's wing of the Order has grown consistently over the last few years and this is beginning to have an effect on the Movement as a whole with more women living and working together. There are many women coming along to our city centres and to newcomers' events at Taraloka. There is no lack of interest amongst women, it seems, in spiritual development. Now they can find, if not at their local centre, then at least on women's retreats, a strong women's sangha to practise within. I am also convinced that they can now find role models among women Order members.

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Taraloka and (below) Ratnashuri conducts an ordination in Taraloka's shrine room



leadership or inspiration, whilst on the other hand it could seem to be being said, by some men, that only they had the vision, inspiration, and capacity for leadership, or even for spiritual development. It is only by spending time practising with other women and gaining confidence in myself, that I have resolved these confusions and the conditioning they fed into.

A year after the opening of Taraloka we started our ordination course for women, led by Sanghadevi, Ashokashri, and Vidyashri. Sangharakshita attended several of these courses and our women's wing of the Order grew both in numbers and confidence. When we arrived on the 1987 convention with fifteen new Order members joining us, we felt we had taken enormous steps in confidence and maturity, both individually and collectively during

Many changes and developments have taken place among the women in the Movement since our early experiments. Difficulties, obstacles, and aspects of conditioning have been overcome or considerably weakened. I would like to express my gratitude to Sangharakshita for encouraging us to become more independent, while being there for us as a teacher and spiritual friend. My own experience is one of great joy that we have created such a positive and strong sangha of women. Although I am an 'elder' within it, my practice and future development is now supported by it and indeed dependent upon it. I have no doubts that we can, through individual and collective

practice, break the fetters and enter the Stream. □

A view from the

Back in 1972 I found myself in a thriving new custom-built FWBO centre. It was just around the corner from my parents' house. But I was not in London. I was in a cabbage-tree lined street in a middle class suburb of north Auckland. Amazingly, when the FWBO was no more than a toddler, there was already a centre on the other side of the world. It was founded by Akshobya, an Englishman who had settled in New Zealand in 1970. With charisma, kaftan, and beard he soon attracted a regular group of young people and built a two-storey Buddhist centre in his back yard.

Memories of my first puja there revolve around the concluding mantras. Long-hair and flower-power were in abundance. Naturally the mantras were spontaneous and free-form too. When the previous mantra had faded, anyone could choose the next. The most popular mantra that evening, judging by the gusto which several of us—myself included—put into it for quite a few minutes was the Hare Krishna mantra!

While the story may be amusing it does at least demonstrate the old-age and pedigree of the Auckland FWBO. Auckland is not only one of the most remote, but also one of the oldest centres in the Movement. As chairman of that centre I have been asked to write some reflections on what it means to me, from the perspective of the antipodes, to be celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the FWBO.

The number twenty-five has no major associations for Buddhism—aside from the decimal system itself originating in Buddhist India. It is however the length of a human generation, and is thus a good time-frame

firmly somewhere at Padmaloka or the London Buddhist Centre. Rather each centre is an autonomous organism acting as a channel for 'something' beyond space and time, i.e. the Dharma. Even so, walk into any FWBO centre in the world, whether in Auckland or Aurangabad, and you will encounter a recognizably FWBO flavour and approach. So by talking here specifically about Auckland and the experiences of a distant centre I am nevertheless still talking about the FWBO in general. The whole is reflected in each part, and there are many other centres sharing similar experiences.

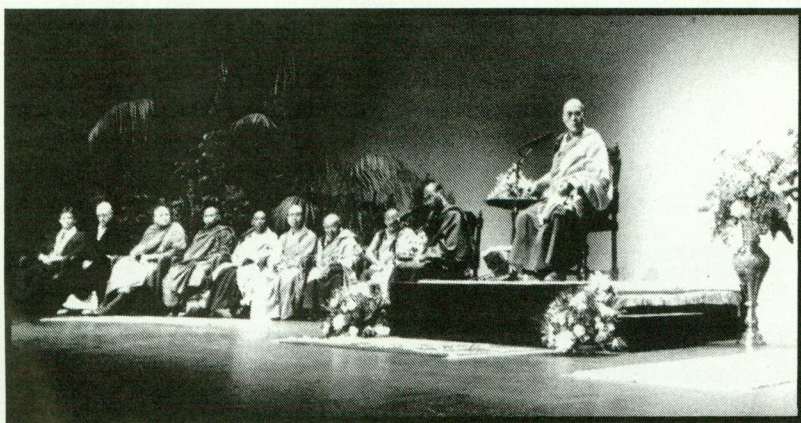
The main difficulties for an outlying centre stem largely from its remoteness and smallness. Everything seems to take longer and look more tentative. There is no wider Movement to readily plug into; there are no other centres nearby to call on, and no national facilities like retreat centres to recharge at. From a distance the Movement in Europe sounds robust and enormous in comparison, and assumes even mythic proportions. Having heard so much about the London Buddhist Centre I finally had the chance to see it on a visit to the UK for an Order Convention in 1982. I excitedly walked along Roman Road, searching for something the size of a palace, and completely missed the LBC, large though it is.

In comparison to the UK, growth in Auckland has been slow. After a variety of six rented premises were lost in succession, a decision was made in 1984 to finally buy a centre. Fund-raising projects were launched and a search began for a suitable building. Though this was expected to take no more than one or two years, the process eventually took the small team of volunteers over six years. During the long search, rooms were hired one night a week for classes and things carried on remarkably well, considering the scaled down nature of the Centre. Of course the exhausted team was most relieved when the long search ended, with the purchase of our beautiful premises in Grey Lynn two years ago. An immense amount of time and energy, not available for expanding activities, went into the search—though the vision of a new centre was immensely galvanizing too.

Another handicap inherent in our remoteness and small size has been the undue influence of individualism on the Centre. Buddhism places great emphasis on everyone being listened to. However, in an isolated place like Auckland, one person's strongly held opinions can dominate to a greater extent than would be the case where there is the challenging context of a wider Movement, from which flexibility comes. This isolation has led to some damaging power struggles. Nevertheless out of these has emerged an Order stronger and more harmonious than ever before. One of the things we have also learned in recent years is the importance of receiving regular visits from senior and experienced Order members from the UK. During the difficult years of the centre search, there were unfortunately no such visits. In

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Dharmadhara (extreme left) shares a platform with the Dalai Lama



in which to review trends which may have emerged. I will therefore look at the collective experience of a long-running and remote FWBO centre, referring to some of the difficulties, benefits, and lessons learned.

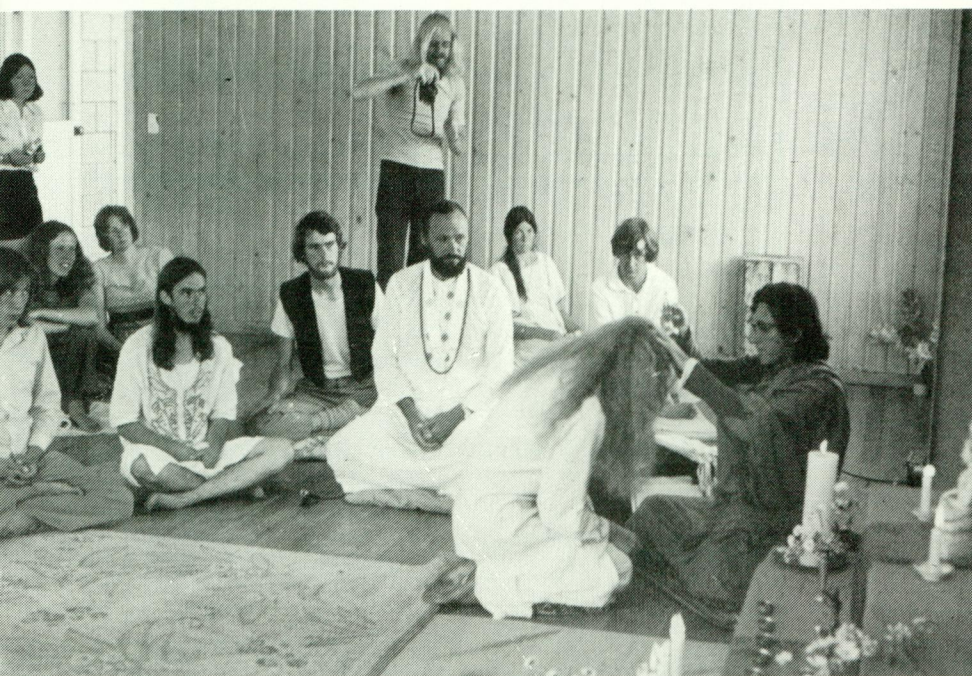
Though the FWBO began in London, and its resources are still largely Eurocentric, it has no one spiritual centre. Wherever there are active Order members, there is to be found the Order and hence the Movement. Auckland is a centre, rather than a branch, of the FWBO. This means that each centre is not so much an offshoot of a main trunk, itself rooted

world's end

retrospect, it would have been that much easier for us to overcome the personal differences existing in the Auckland Order by bringing in the clarity of experienced and mature visitors like Subhuti or Nagabodhi.

A third consequence of Auckland's relative isolation is that men and women who become more deeply involved in the Dharma are encouraged to further things by going to the UK for ordination and wider experience. The last ordinations in New Zealand took place in 1979 when I was ordained. Since then the ordination process has evolved into a series of long retreats based in Europe. This allows the focusing of resources into a more intense preparation than could be currently managed anywhere else in the West. In a small centre like Auckland's the contribution of the keener mitras is substantial, so their departure for overseas training can leave a large and long-term hole

**Sangharakshita
conducts an
ordination in
New Zealand,
1975 and (below)
New Zealand
Order Convention
1980**



to fill. For example two members of my community and another close friend left Auckland last year for the Croydon Buddhist Centre. I was very happy that they decided to take this step, and am delighted that as a result all three have now joined the Order. At the same time the immediate effects of three of the most deeply involved mitras leaving the Centre was immense and personally hard to bear: my community ceased to exist just when I was enjoying it, and three good friends were suddenly leaving the country for an indefinite period of time. Also many practical jobs at the Centre were no longer being done. In addition the men's side of things at the Centre virtually collapsed when the Men's Mitra Convenor also left for Britain last year. This has taken over a year to get going again.

It is worth pointing out here that New Zealand has had a significant effect on the rest of the Movement too. About 10% of Order members (about 50) have come from New Zealand. Most of them have moved on to other centres, where they often hold key positions. The longer term gains to Auckland will be immense, of course, as experienced Order members start returning.

I am not arguing against any of this of course. How could I? Here we are, after all, and that is that. We have gained greatly in terms of self-reliance. Despite things happening slowly, they are nonetheless

happening. We finally have a fantastic centre, and now a right livelihood café and shop just down the road. There are one or two single-sex communities around, and a growing circle of dedicated people. We will eventually have our own ordination process in this country again—in fact we are currently looking for a large block of land suitable for a remote Guhyaloka-style retreat centre. I believe the potential here is limitless. After his first visit to New Zealand, Sangharakshita said: 'You could have a new civilization and a new culture. A few thousand (real) Buddhists could make a difference to the whole country ... not an impossibility within the next fifteen or twenty years.' (*Mitrata* no.48, p.21).

What we have found is that it is all taking longer than we first thought it would. In many ways we have only now arrived at the starting-line. There are currently some exciting developments. Last month for example I spoke on the same stage as the Dalai Lama to three thousand people; this month we started teaching meditation to staff at Television New Zealand headquarters.

A favourite image of mine from the Zen tradition, about establishing the Dharma in a new country, is that of 'holding the lotus to the rock'. The lotus plant needs to be held carefully and patiently while it puts out delicate hair-roots into the crevices. Let go of it too soon and it will slip away. Eventually, though, it will be strong enough to hang on by itself. I now feel that I am part of a team of good friends which is holding a Western lotus—that looks well suited to the beautiful environment of New Zealand. We have been holding it for quite a while but at last it is starting to take root. I am confident that in another twenty-five years there will be a flourishing lotus in this country. □

BUDDHISM IN SCOTLAND

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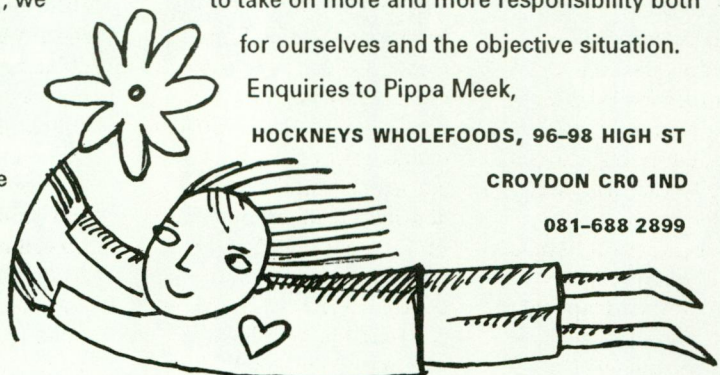
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CONSCIOUSNESS EVADED

Consciousness Explained

by Daniel C. Dennett
Published by Alan
Lane/Penguin
pp. 512, £20

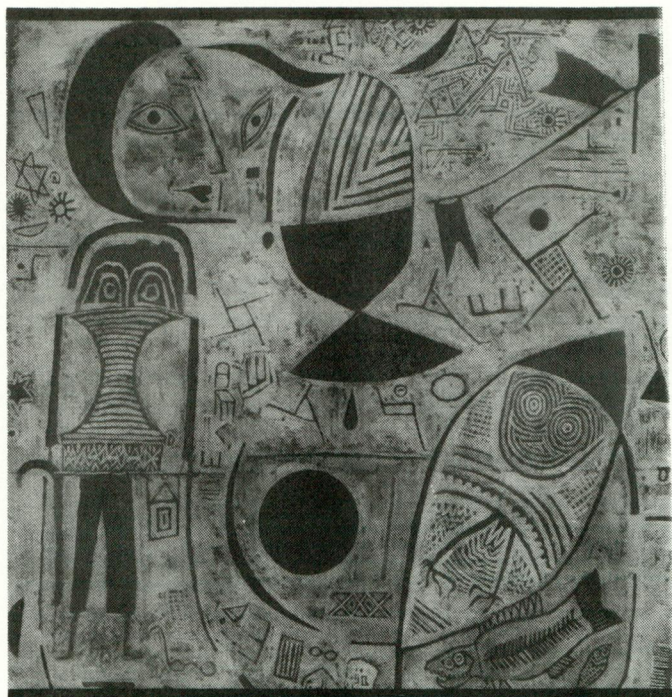
'Materialism' is any philosophical position characterized by the belief that there is only matter, and that consciousness either does not exist, or is reducible in some way to the movement of physical matter in the brain. Although not all scientists are materialists, no one could deny the powerful influence exerted by materialism upon the scientific world.

The arguments of materialists are, however, notable for logical errors. Take this analogy, often used to argue a materialist view known as 'identity theory': Just as the movement of charged particles through the air is 'identified' by an outside observer as a flash of lightning, so certain physical activities in the brain are identified as the phenomena of 'consciousness' (sounds, thoughts, pains etc). Are you confused? Well, the analogy, if applied strictly, implies that there is an observer *external* to the physical activity in the brain, who experiences that activity in one way and not another. The analogy tacitly assumes the separate existence of consciousness in order to argue against any such thing! Other varieties of fallacious reasoning abound in materialist argument: 'begging the question' is common (the materialist case being assumed to be true at the outset but never proven); emotive gibes are frequent (e.g. to believe in consciousness is to believe in an 'occult' entity, a 'ghost in the machine'); and 'appeal to authority' not infrequent (e.g. an assertion by Wittgenstein being quoted in support of a point, when Wittgenstein's assertion is

itself unproven.

Daniel Dennett's book is a materialist's attempt to explain consciousness in terms of the workings of the brain. It has received some glowing reviews. A philosopher, whose hero is Wittgenstein, he draws extensively on scientific research in neuroscience, psychology, and artificial intelligence to argue that consciousness is but the activity of a 'virtual machine' installed, as it were, in a brain that otherwise functions as a set of parallel computers—rather like the virtual machines, known as 'software', that are installed in an ordinary computer.

The book is in many ways a vast improvement on standard materialist essays. Dennett can write clearly and interestingly, and usually does so, making many insightful points. However—crucially—the book does not escape the types of error I have mentioned. To begin with, Dennett begs the very question at issue. Fundamental to his argument is his dauntingly entitled method of 'heterophenomenology'. This is the stance whereby one accepts what someone says about their conscious experience, without committing oneself to believing whether they have such conscious experience or not. Dennett claims this is 'neutral'. But he smuggles in (on page 85) the following assumption: if one finds through research that the characteristics of brain activity parallel the reported characteristics of consciousness, then brain activity is really all that exists; on the other hand, if the characteristics of brain activity conflict with people's reports then people are wrong in their beliefs about consciousness: it doesn't exist in this case either. Heads materialists win, tails others



The cover shows Paul Klee's
Picture Album

lose. In other words, whatever evidence there might be can be used by Dennett to support his theory. This renders the theory unfalsifiable and unscientific, and the remaining 370 pages of Dennett's book do not prove or disprove the existence of consciousness.

However, those pages are certainly not without value. Something Dennett does well is expose the problems and contradictions in the assumption that there is a central 'self', whether in the 'mind' or in the brain. His arguments here are very interesting, but he confuses this question with that of the existence of consciousness. It is one thing to argue against the existence of a central mind watching, for example, visual imagery in a 'Cartesian Theatre', but quite another to argue that visual images do not exist except as 'dispositions' in parts of the brain. Dennett sees the absurdity in assuming that sensory phenomena are objects experienced by a separate subject, but concludes that this means that there are no sensory phenomena either. But consciousness is not, according to Buddhism, really divided into subject and object. In dependence upon activity in the nervous system, there can arise the phenomena of sense consciousness, but these are not observed by a separate

subject. Thus, in Buddhism, we are seen as psycho-physical processes, whereas Dennett sees us as merely physical processes.

Underlying Dennett's and other materialists' views is the assumption that to exist, a phenomenon must somehow be made up of physical matter. This is, indeed, just an assumption, which materialists never prove. One should not be so overawed by the successes of science in understanding the material world that one comes to accept this assumption 'on the nod'. Indeed, one should question the whole assumption that phenomena, whether of consciousness of matter, are 'made up' of any substance whatsoever. From a Buddhist point of view, matter is no more substantial than consciousness. Ironically, even modern physics seems to point to the insubstantiality of matter, so perhaps the materialists are having the rug pulled from under their feet. Nevertheless, materialism is an influential belief, and Buddhists need to be aware of its limitations. Reading Dennett's book can give one an introduction to the arguments, but one needs to be able to think clearly in order not to be blinded by science. □

Advayachitta

A DEFINITIVE WORK

The Group of Discourses (Sutta-Nipata) Volume II

Revised translation with introduction and notes by K.R. Norman
Published by The Pali Text Society
pp.452, hardback

The *Sutta-Nipata* is a fascinating text. Like the *Dhammapada*, *Udana*, *Thera-* and *Therigathas*, and the *Jataka* book it belongs to the Khuddaka Nikaya, or 'The Minor Anthologies'. Modern Buddhists and scholars alike find these texts, and the *Sutta-Nipata* in particular, of the greatest interest, since they contain some of the oldest surviving passages of Buddhist scripture. In some instances they are thought to preserve the very dialect of eastern Magadha spoken by

the Buddha.

The *Sutta-Nipata* is a collection of seventy-two poems, with some prose passages, divided into five chapters. A token of its great antiquity is that the two final chapters are named and quoted in other parts of the Pali Canon. Some of the poems of the *Sutta-Nipata* are amongst the most widely known, and have been widely anthologized, e.g. the *Metta*, *Ratana*, and *Mangala Suttas*. There is a refreshing absence of the repetitions that characterize the other Nikayas, as also of the more formulaic expositions of the Dharma. Some scholars suggest that this is another indicator of its antiquity.

Apart from the straightforwardly didactic poems, we read accounts of confrontations between the

Buddha and his contemporaries—e.g. Dhaniya (I.2), Kasibharadvaja (I.4), and Sundarikabharadvaja (III.4); or of famous disciples—e.g. Vangisa (II.12) and Rahula (II.11). The fifth chapter, the 'Parayanavagga', is unusual in that it recounts as a single story the questions put to the Buddha by the sixteen disciples of the brahmin Bavari of Andhra. The first two poems of the third chapter, or 'Mahavagga', are simple yet moving accounts of Siddhartha's Going-Forth (III.1) and Striving (III.2) prior to his Enlightenment. The fourth chapter, the 'Athakavagga', emphasizes that 'views' are the source of suffering, and consequently need eradication—a teaching echoed by Nagarjuna, the founder of the Madhyamaka school, some 600 years later.

This new translation by K.R. Norman is a revision of that first published as *The Group of Discourses—Vol. I* in 1984. In that volume, which appeared one year later in economical paperback format under the title *The Rhinoceros Horn*, a second volume containing the translator's notes was promised. This is that second volume, containing not just notes, but an introduction, three indices, and a translation revised in the light of feedback from the first version.

The translator's concern is to offer a scrupulously literal translation of the Pali, eschewing any attempt to render the material into metre—'My aim ... was ... to translate the Suttanipata into simple English prose, trying to give the meaning of the text as it was intended to be understood by the original speakers, or as it was accepted by the first hearers.' (p.ix) Similarly, his notes, filling over 280 pages, concentrate on linguistic and metrical matters, leaving doctrinal interpretation to others. This is fair treatment by a translator who makes no claim to be an authority on the Buddhist religion, but is among the greatest Western authorities on the Pali language.

I can anticipate two criticisms here. Firstly, it may be objected that no one lacking a sympathetic understanding of the practice of Buddhism can make a translation of a Buddhist text that is faithful *in spirit* to the original. There is much to be said for translations of Buddhist texts made by practising, rather than nominal or non-, Buddhists. I also think it ingenious to maintain that it is possible to translate a text (especially a religious text), even literally, without engaging in a process of interpretation. That said, I think it reasonable to take the translator's intention in good faith, and merely rue the fact that the Western Buddhist community has not yet produced Pali scholarship of this high standard. If Buddhists want high quality translations of Buddhist texts made by Buddhists they can only look to themselves to meet this demand.

A second objection might argue that Pali poetry should be rendered into English poetry. This was the view of two previous translators of the *Sutta-Nipata*, Chalmers and Hare, whose work is now sadly out of print. I have argued this position before (see review of *The Tibetan Dhammapada—Golden Drum* no.14), but admit that this does beg the question of the quality of the poetry, both the original and the translation. Is it reasonable to expect a translator to be a poet too? For this is the only way that the end product will bear any poetic value. Nor should we forget that forging one's material into verse inevitably results in compressions, expansions, and new emphases foreign to the original, and at worst downright distortions—all of these of great import to Buddhists if the translator cannot speak with a spiritual insight similar to that of the author! It remains beyond dispute that the words which bear the closest relation to the intent of the author are the author's own—in this case in Pali—and that, short of learning this language for oneself (a not unreasonable suggestion), the reader of the

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the fwbo and 'protestant buddhism': an affirmation and a protest

In recent decades thousands of Westerners have become Buddhists.

Or have they?

Is it possible that their Buddhism is so mixed with Christian attitudes that they are not really Buddhists at all? Are they playing out the latest act in a drama that began, not in ancient India, but in sixteenth century Europe? Could they be children of the Reformation? Are they really Protestants?

In their attitudes to such issues as culture, ritual, tradition, morality and the 'self', one English academic believes he has found evidence that they are, and that the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order provides a perfect case-study.

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IN A NUTSHELL

Sutta-Nipata is necessarily dependent upon the varied skills of translators.

Reference to a range of translations, encompassing the spectrum from literalness and scholarly exactitude to poetic form and diction, must therefore be the ideal solution for the English-reading public, and I would suggest that in the volume reviewed here we have the ideal for the former. Noting that we already have at least two 'poetic' renderings, and, further, that E.M. Hare's *Woven Cadences* (2nd edition, PTS 1947), despite liberties of the sort described, has been of considerable inspiration both to me and many others over the years, it would surely behove the Pali Text Society to publish, as they have with the *Theri-gatha*, a low-cost paperback edition that combines a new literal translation of the *Sutta-Nipata* with an older poetic rendition.

This new version gives much invaluable linguistic information without which it would be difficult to understand fully either the language of the text itself (if one wishes to follow the Pali) or the occasional differences in meaning between this translation and that of its predecessors. As such it is an important aid to any serious study of the *Sutta-Nipata*. The introduction is informative, if rather brief, and the translated text lacks the confusing system of brackets used in the first edition to synthesize Norman's translation with the more traditional approach preferred by Horner and Rahula. Overall this volume offers a considered translation, twenty years in the making, by an outstanding authority on the Pali language, and, within the parameters set by the translator himself, is surely definitive. □

Sthiramati

The Elements of Buddhism

by John Snelling
Published by Element Books
pp.136, paperback, £4.99

This little book by the late John Snelling is a clear and comprehensive introduction to that vast polymorph of cultural, social, historical, and spiritual tradition commonly known as Buddhism. Though nowadays thousands of books about Buddhism are in print, few are really suitable for the complete beginner in presenting a concise, objective, and inspiring account of the main elements of the tradition.

I believe that Snelling's book makes a valuable contribution to this gap in the market. In little more than 130 pages the author manages to communicate the history and spirit of Buddhism from the time of its founder right down to the present day. He often writes from his own experience, and one cannot help but be impressed by the honesty and sincerity which emerges from these passages.

The book begins with an outline of the life of the Buddha and the development of Buddhism both in terms of its different schools and its principal geographical transmissions. It is interesting to note that as well as outlining the traditional 'Northern' and 'Southern' transmissions, the author includes a 'Western' transmission. Clearly, he sees the development of Buddhism on Western soil as a continuing part of the great expansion of the Buddha's vision: after two-and-a-half millennia, the Wheel of the Dharma is still turning.

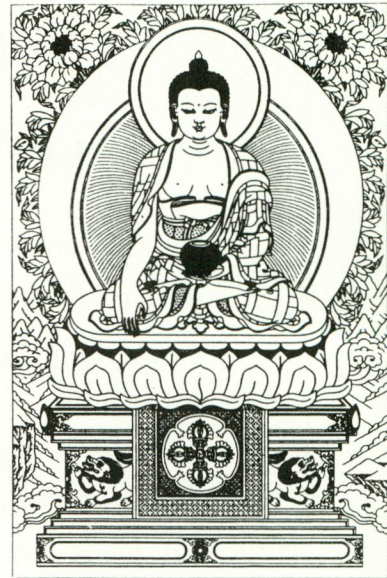
The central section of the book explores the teaching of the Buddha in terms of the Threefold Way. Starting with Wisdom, Snelling ranges from basic teachings such as the Three Marks, to later

Mahayana developments such as Absolute Mind, Tathagatagarbha, and the Avatamsaka teachings on inter-connectedness. On all of these potentially difficult teachings, Snelling writes clearly and simply.

While the discussion of morality turns intelligently and compassionately around the ethical implications of the Five Precepts, the section on meditation is a little disappointing. Snelling skims over his subject matter all too briefly, without really providing the beginner with any clear idea of its practice. Perhaps this was deliberate—to encourage anyone interested in learning how to meditate to seek out a teacher. As is well known, it is almost impossible to learn to meditate from a book.

The final section deals with the development of the most important schools of Buddhism, the last chapter being directed towards the 'Western Buddhist Spiritual Quest'. It is here, perhaps, that the author writes most passionately, in raising issues which he sees as facing Westerners as they begin to commit themselves to spiritual development. It is clear from this last chapter that Snelling had thought long and hard about Buddhism and its integration into Western culture. There is also some salutary advice to beginners as they start to explore the many different Buddhist schools and approaches that are on offer today. His final words are ones of encouragement, including a plea that readers should have confidence in their own abilities and decide for themselves what is best. The friendly and encouraging tone of these comments is characteristic of the book as a whole. I would have no trouble in recommending this book to anyone seeking a concise and sympathetic introduction to Buddhism. □

Amritavajra



Shakyamuni Buddha from
Elements of Buddhism

ALSO RECEIVED

STEP BY STEP

Maha Ghosananda
Parallax Press

DEBATE IN TIBETAN BUDDHISM

Daniel E. Perdue
Snow Lion

FROM THE ROOF OF THE WORLD— REFUGEES OF TIBET

[no author given]
Dharma Publishing

SHARPHAM MISCELLANY—ESSAYS IN SPIRITUALITY AND ECOLOGY

ed. John Snelling
The Sharpham Trust

JESUS AND THE ESSENES

Dolores Cannon
Gateway Books

Science Versus Religion

In intellectual life in Britain has been enlivened by some robust debates between Christians and atheists. Some scientists, led by the biologist Richard Dawkins, have been tilting lances at theism, decrying especially the idea of a creator god. Bishops have been fighting back.

Recently Dr George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, claimed that 'Without God, our capacity to understand goodness will decay, and our ability to do justice will disintegrate.' Carey apparently conceded that atheists could live sober, honest, and truthful lives, but added that they were unlikely to go beyond these bounds into truly selfless behaviour as exemplified, so he said, by Mother Teresa. This provoked a cutting retort from Dawkins. Conceding that 'Religious people can behave well,' he continued: 'Some have been known to live honest, sober, and truthful lives.... It is not actually compulsory for Christians to torture to death those with whom they have minor theological disagreements.... Individual Muslims have been known to dissent from the principle that novelists whose books one dislikes should be murdered on sight.'

A glaring omission from these debates is any mention of non-theistic religions like Buddhism. Perhaps it is too much to ask of educated Westerners that they should have adequate knowledge of the world's religions before engaging in public debates on theism-versus-secular humanism—as if these were the only alternatives.

It is also interesting to see the Archbishop using the old 'Mother Theresa gambit'. If one is debating with a Christian, who at some point uses this form of argument, one is faced with a dilemma. If one accepts Mother Teresa's goodness, then that goodness can be used to 'prove' the superiority of Christianity. But how can one tell whether Mother Theresa's motivation

is more selfless than that of the atheist humanists of Streehitakarini, who work in the slums of Bombay, of members of the WBO working in the slums of Poona, of bhikkhus in the USA working with the poor, or of any number of unsung nurses working in the world's hospitals and hospices. The amount of publicity is certainly no guide. □

Mother Teresa

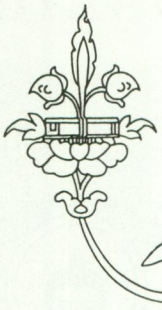


Ethical Banking

In Britain the Co-operative Bank has been advertising its commitment to ethical practice. Perhaps this should remind those of us who have not already done so of the need to investigate the ethical foundations of the banks and institutions we have dealings with in our everyday lives.

What sort of industries, for example, do they invest in?

Moving one's business to institutions that are more ethical means that one's money is much less likely to be used to support harmful industries such as brewing or the arms trade—which are definitely not forms of Buddhist Right Livelihood. □



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Promise of Free Elections for Thais

Last year Thailand underwent a bloodless military coup which ousted a civilian government believed by many to be corrupt. At the time there was no undue concern about the return of military rule.

This year the Thai people's growing disaffection with the military government led to demonstrations that were crushed brutally by the army, resulting in about 1,000 dead. The intervention of Thailand's widely respected constitutional monarch, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, led to the restoration of peace and the eventual resignation of the Prime Minister, General Suchinda. Now there is a new interim Prime Minister, Anand Panyarachun, and the promise of free elections within a few months.

Thailand, a traditionally Buddhist country with a proud history of independence, has effectively been ruled by the military for much of this century. A fast-growing economy has put increasing strain on this system, with the development of a large middle class without corresponding political power. Hopefully the Thais will be able to work out new constitutional forms that bring both prosperity and peace.

In doing this, perhaps they ought to question the role of Buddhism within the constitution. Theravada Buddhism is the 'established church' in Thailand. This does the practice of Buddhism no good, since it opens the way for political control of spiritual matters. Nor does it appear to have stopped bloodshed or corruption. It is time to divorce the 'church' from the state in Thailand. □



A demonstrator is taken away by police in Bangkok

Film on the Life of the Buddha

The life of the Buddha is an extraordinary story that, told well, could make an excellent film. Indeed, such a film is soon to be made, a collaborative effort between Indian and Hollywood film-makers, headed by Mira Nair, who directed *Salaam Bombay!*. The screenplay has been written by Robert Bolt and approved by the Dalai Lama. Hopefully, in a couple of years time, we will be able to give the film an excellent review.

A slight cause for concern is Ms Nair's expressed desire to emphasize that the Buddha was a human being and not a god. Sometimes when people make this distinction they can forget

'... they can forget that the Buddha became an Enlightened human being—certainly not a god, but not an ordinary human being either'

that the Buddha became an Enlightened human being—certainly not a god, but not an ordinary human being either.

Greater concern must however be felt over a statement, made by one of the executive producers, that the film will demonstrate that

the Buddha was part of 'greater Hinduism'. Such a view, although quite commonly held by Hindus, is of course nonsense. The Buddha certainly sometimes borrowed the language of Brahmanism, but there is no question of his having been a teacher within the Hindu tradition (unless one is perhaps prepared to concede that some of the more refined, mystical aspects of Hinduism are part of the greater Buddhist tradition). It will be a great shame if a film reaching a wide audience contains misrepresentations that will influence many people's subsequent understanding of the Buddha and Buddhism.

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ANGULIMALA CALLS FOR AN ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGION IN PRISONS

Angulimala is the Buddhist prison chaplaincy organization in Britain, under the spiritual directorship of the Venerable Khemmadhammo Maha Thera.

As we have already reported in these columns, its members have been concerned for some time about the law regarding the provision of religious guidance in British prisons. This contravenes European prison rules which state that 'access to a qualified representative of any religion shall not be refused to any prisoner'.

After a great deal of pressure, the Home Office recently issued an instruction to prison governors that allowed such access. However the provisions of the 1952 Prison Act are still in place,

and a new White Paper on 'Custody, Care and Justice' has been issued, which ignores the questions of religion and religious freedom in prisons.

Angulimala has now published a response, calling for the establishment of an advisory council on religion in prisons. The Venerable Khemmadhammo invites people to support this issue through writing to the Home Secretary or to the Secretary of the Prisons Board. For more information one could contact him, at The Forest Hermitage, Lower Fulbrook, Warwick, CV35 8AS, or one of the members of the WBO who are prison chaplains with Angulimala. □

SADHU TO THE SILVER JUBILEE

This year saw the biggest ever celebrations of the anniversaries of the founding of the FWBO and the WBO. Dulwich College, a large and beautiful building set in extensive grounds in south London provided a grand space for the 7-800 people who attended over the two days.

There was plenty to do. On FWBO Day (4 April) there were slide-shows, videos, dozens of stalls, three talks on the theme of generosity, a play, a further talk on the history of the Movement, the relaunch of Sangharakshita's *The Essence of Zen*, and an oratorio.

Dhammadinna, who was ordained in 1973, spoke of her experience of the first twenty years in the Movement, and highlighted some more recent developments.

Kovida's play, *A Face Revealed*, recounted the parable of the return journey from the *White Lotus Sutra*. Prasannaraja writes: 'The set was simple and uncluttered, as were the costumes. The same could be said of the performers, who played with directness and enthusiasm and, considering the very short rehearsal time, must be commended for their work. Other highlights of the play included some vibrant and spectacular dance sequences and a whole array of very

striking masks.'

Bodhivajra's oratorio, 'Carpe Diem', is now being hummed, whistled, and sung at centres all over the country. Dayachitta writes: 'It was magic from its opening bars. A lone, impassioned contralto voice invoked the central message of the oratorio. "All that lives one day, will die, and so we must seize the day, make the most of the present moment: Carpe Diem".'

The music was set to texts drawn from such sources as Walt Whitman, the Odes of Horace, and Jung's description of the Greek god Telesphoros, presenting us with the *koan* of how to live our lives with joy and fearlessness in the face of loss and its attendant despair. Both text and music led to the resolution of this *koan*, to an

experience of joy and freedom.

Dayachitta writes: 'Bodhivajra's inventiveness was marvellous. The music swept and soared, weaving and stamping, changing between peaceful reflection, sombre intensity, and joyous celebration.'

The day ended with a sevenfold puja, in which representatives from different centres offered fabulous flower sculptures to the shrine.

About 140 Order members attended WBO Day and heard a talk by Kamalashila entitled 'Brahmacharya and the Future of the FWBO' and, later, a symposium of four talks under the general heading 'Overcoming Conditioning' (that is, social, sexual, cultural, and religious). □

SANGHARAKSHITA DIARY

After returning from his five-week visit to India on 7 February, Sangharakshita's first major excursion was to the Royal Academy of Arts to view the etchings and paintings of the fifteenth century Italian artist, Andrea Mantegna.

Two of Sangharakshita's March activities were reported in the last issue of *Golden Drum*: an interview with Virabhadra about his visit to India, and the celebrations of our Croydon Centre's tenth anniversary.

On 4 April he attended FWBO Day at Dulwich College in London, where he was interviewed for BBC Radio 4 (broadcast the following morning). On 5 April, WBO Day, he chaired a symposium of four talks under the general heading 'Overcoming Conditioning'; he himself had chosen the subject and speakers. Later that day he led the concluding sevenfold puja before returning to the Cherry Orchard restaurant, where a farewell banquet was being held to mark Subhuti's departure for the ordination retreat at Guhyaloka and thence to an extended period of writing. During the evening several guests rejoiced in Subhuti's merits. Sangharakshita made his own contribution in the form of a specially composed (and by all accounts very witty) poem.

On 18 April Sangharakshita met three members of the Nottingham group who talked of the work that they had been doing and their plans and hopes for the future development of the FWBO in Nottingham.

Between 30 April and 4 May Sangharakshita attended the men's national Order-mitra

event at Padmaloka, where he gave personal interviews and, on the afternoon of Sunday 3 May, led a sevenfold puja during which six dharmacharis took the anagarika precept. This brought the total number of men and women in the Order who have taken this precept to twenty-five, which Sangharakshita considers to be a 'spectacular development'.

On 12 May he met with Nagabodhi for the interview which appears elsewhere in this edition of *Golden Drum*.

On 20 May, he recorded two talks at Broadcasting House for BBC Radio 4's 'Prayer for the Day' programme. These were broadcast on 15 and 22 June.

On 27 May he went to Padmaloka to meet a long-standing friend, Olle Mallender, an art critic from Helsinki, who hopes to make two one-hour programmes for Finnish television on Sangharakshita's experience of, and views on, the arts (particularly the visual arts). This project involved twelve hours of filming. Sangharakshita returned to London again on 1 June.

Throughout the whole of this period, Sangharakshita has given many personal interviews, including some with Order members and mitras from New Zealand, India, and the USA. He has also been working on a book entitled *The FWBO and Protestant Buddhism: An Affirmation and a Protest*. This is a reply to an article, published by an academic journal, that severely misrepresented the FWBO. The book is to be published by Windhorse Publications on 25 August. □

'Hatred' portrayed by Jo Chandler in Kovida's play (photo by Tony Nandi)





Patrick makes an offering at a women and children's event held to create a 'calm, positive retreat atmosphere' for both

AN EVER-WIDENING CIRCLE

Initiatives are being taken to set up classes and retreats for specific groups of people. We have already reported on events for gay men and black women. Two more examples of the application of this principle are given here:

RETREATS WITH CHILDREN

When I began to organize retreats at Water Hall which could include young children, it became clear that there were two needs: retreats that would allow the mothers plenty of time to meditate and study, and retreats which would give more emphasis to children's activities, enabling them to experience a calm, positive retreat atmosphere and to learn more about Buddhism.

Two meditation retreats with children have now taken place, the more successful being the one attended by more women without children—who were able to play a supporting role. The mothers could concentrate on their practice and just the basic needs of their children, while the retreat work and general childcare was shared by others.

On the other retreat the children could participate more actively. They would join meditation sessions for fifteen minutes, after being given suggestions on basic mindfulness, join the puja, and participate in activities leading to a performance based on a Jataka tale. It was quite moving to see how devotional they were.

All the women felt they experienced a real retreat which deepened their practice—and

the children loved it. □ Marilyn Therza

PEOPLE AFFECTED BY HIV/AIDS

A free lunchtime meditation class for all people directly or indirectly affected by HIV and AIDS was started by Parami at the London Buddhist Centre over a year ago. It has now become a regular event.

The format includes instruction in the two basic meditation practices and time for discussion over a cup of tea. There is particular emphasis on relaxation, creative visualization, and meditation as a healing influence.

Many people have attended the class—each of whom have had their own way of connecting with meditation. Some establish a regular practice, while others only meditate at the class. A few regulars have gone on to other FWBO retreats and courses.

An HIV/AIDS drop-in centre is scheduled to open in the locality later this year. Samavahita, who took over the LBC class when Parami left for Spain, hopes to teach meditation there also.

Parami had also been running meditation and relaxation day workshops on a regular basis at the London Lighthouse, a residential and drop-in facility in West London for people with HIV/AIDS. These workshops will continue to be co-ordinated by Samavahita with a team of Order members and mitras.

A regular meditation class, organized by Nandavajra and Meg Girdlestone, has recently started at an HIV/AIDS drop-in centre in Croydon. □

ANOTHER VISION

Subhuti's *The Buddhist Vision*, first published by Rider in 1985, was reprinted earlier this year. This autumn it is due to be published for the first time in Spanish, having been translated by Shuddavajra.

Also due for publication in Spanish this autumn is Sangharakshita's *Human Enlightenment* and, if all goes well, *A Guide to the Buddhist Path* should be available in Spanish next year. □

TOWARDS BERLIN

Friends at the Essen Centre in Germany have been preparing for the European Buddhist Union Congress to be held in Berlin 24–27 September.

Prominent speakers include Ayya Khema, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Sogyal Rimpoche, along with Sangharakshita who will talk on 'The Integration of Buddhism into Western Society'.

On the eve of the Congress he will also speak—under the auspices of the FWBO—on 'The Meaning of Friendship in Buddhism' at the UFA Fabrik.

Sangharakshita will also attend a six-day retreat before the Congress, organized by the FWBO in Germany. This will be aimed at citizens of the former Eastern bloc countries.

For information about the Congress write to Kongress-buro der EBU, Hasenheide 9, 1000 Berlin 61. □

FULL MOON OVER MANCHESTER

Full moon day on 17 April saw the launch of the '25 Years of the FWBO' celebrations in Manchester. A whole range of events has been planned, from full moon pujas at the Centre to a display of Buddhist art at the Manchester City Art Gallery early next year.

Festivities began with the inauguration of a new shrine, and rupa (right), and a newly-decorated shrine room at a special ceremony which

was attended by the Mayor, a city councillor, two local Sri Lankan Buddhists, and one or two members of other Manchester-based Buddhist groups—as well as up to a hundred Order members, mitras, and Friends.

The shrine had been specially commissioned by the Centre. It had been hand-turned and carved by Achalabodhi, who explained its significance to those gathered at the ceremony.

The new shrine is crowned by a beautiful new Buddha rupa. This was made by Aloka, and during the dedication ceremony it was filled with offerings brought by the sangha.

The new shrine, rupa, and shrine-room decor have brought a new heart to the Centre. The beauty and stillness of the room will communicate to the many who use it something of the nature of the Dharma. □



NEW CHAIRMAN FOR GLASGOW CENTRE

22 In January Vimalavajra was welcomed as the new chairman of the Glasgow Buddhist Centre, following Susiddhi's decision to move to Sheffield after ten years as chairman in Glasgow. Having a firm foundation in Glasgow, 'FWBO Scotland' is now looking to expand its activities to other Scottish cities, and an appeal to raise funds for this purpose is now under way.

The new centre team of five is creating ways to maximize the use of the Centre—which is now occupied from 8am to 10pm, every day, in some form of practice. There is even a 'prostrations kula' that meets daily at 5pm—so far as we know it is the only one of its kind in the Movement.

The summer programme included '329 Arts', with exhibits of art by Buddhists, the first being a show of masks made by Chintamani. A monthly cultural evening has provided concerts, poetry readings, and story-telling. Some of Scotland's best novelists and musicians have expressed an interest in performing here. This will put us firmly on the map of the Scottish arts scene.

Another development is the establishment of the first women's community for several years. On 15 May six women moved into a large Victorian house. Three of them work with Windhorse Publications; the others will be working in the Evolution shop when it opens in the autumn.

The shop project has a team of six and is looking for premises. These projects represent a real focus for women in Glasgow. They no longer need to quit Scotland in order to deepen their Going for Refuge or to experience team-based Right Livelihood. □



Right (above) The new Glasgow Centre team and (below) the women's community



WANTED: ORDER MEMBER FOR NOTTINGHAM

Had you been attending the Nottingham Friends' group early this year you would have been able to meditate to the scintillating rhythm of fifties dance band music with happy feet tapping out in unison, encouraged to even dizzier heights of Terpsichorean achievement by their enthusiastic—and vocal—tutor.

Tap dancing is only one of the problems you have to accept from time to time when you practise Buddhism in a busy city. Try wrestling with the Metta Bhavana to a background of thumps, stamps, grunts, and cries from the nearby karate class.

We meet weekly at the Nottingham International Community Centre, and have done so for almost two years since moving from our previous base on the other side of the city.

Despite the less than ideal conditions, our group has stayed together without the benefit of a resident Order member since the departure of Guhyaratna early last year.

In recent months we have had several talks from visiting Order members, including a short series on 'Studying the Dharma', and another on 'Going for Refuge'. Our group is committed to studying together until our first goal, a resident Order member or two, has been achieved. □ Bruce Waite

BREAKTHROUGHS IN BRIGHTON

In August 1990 Amitayus community moved out of the Centre building to form a now six-strong Going for Refuge community in a newly purchased house around the corner. Two months building work provided the Centre with a greatly improved shrine room, complete with a polished floor and double glazing. The next step was to expand the reception room and renovate the basement.

After the building work came the opening of an Evolution shop for the Christmas season. Since July last year a permanent Evolution shop has been running successfully in the same city centre premises with a team of five full-timers, including three Order members. The shop

takes £3,000–£4,000 per week, rising to up to £20,000 in the week before Christmas.

Another development has been the creation of a four-member women's community, the first in the city for over five years.

This May the Centre took a higher profile in the International Brighton Festival, which had as its theme 'Saints and Sinners'. The festival included an exhibition by local Buddhist artists, workshops, and talks. The FWBO's Centre was one of the festival venues, and two free meditation evenings were held. Vessantara also gave a talk entitled 'Beyond Good and Evil: a Guide to Buddhist Ethics'. These events attracted 200 newcomers to the Centre. □

NEW ZEALAND'S CAFE SOCIETY

An FWBO team now owns Greens Vegetarian Café and Organic Produce Shop close to the Auckland FWBO Centre. This Right Livelihood venture is run by three mitras and one Friend.

Departing somewhat from FWBO tradition, the team members bought an existing business (shown below) with their own personal capital. Their preference for the ideals of team-based Right Livelihood over the lure of career security is reflected in the name of the new company: Virya Enterprises Ltd.

In May the Dalai Lama visited New Zealand for the first time. He took the country by surprise with his simple, peaceful Dharma message and his informality. Large audiences attended his five talks, including 3,000 in Auckland on Buddha day. Dharmadhara, chairman of the Auckland Centre, also spoke at this celebration. During his talk, on Going

for Refuge, Dharmadhara pointed out that, with all the main forms of Buddhism living in close proximity in virtually every large city in the West, the opportunity for 'cross-fertilization' and synthesis is unprecedented. No one knows what Western schools will emerge to enrich the Buddhist tradition over coming centuries. An Australian Theravadin monk recently wrote, 'The future of Western Buddhism probably lies in Sangharakshita's direction'. History, and all our efforts, will show if he is right or not. □



COLCHESTER BUILDS A SANGHA

Our group started in 1988, when Harshaprabha travelled up from the London Buddhist Centre once a week to lead classes here. At our first hired venue we were not allowed to burn incense and we found the noisy debates in the next room disturbing. Our second place, while quieter, was dirty and uncomfortable, an environment that made it difficult to convey the richness of the Dharma, or of the Movement. People came and went and sometimes Harshaprabha made the two-hour train journey for just two of us. However, an LBC mitra began to support Harshaprabha and two of us became mitras.

New Year in 1990 saw our classes move to the town centre and a much better venue. Attendance grew. We were becoming an established group with shared commitment and friendship. Then Harshaprabha decided to make a firm commitment to Colchester by moving here in 1991. Our weekly class now runs late into the evening, offering study as well as meditation. We also have a men's and a women's group, and run day and weekend events. □ Rosemary Denys

STORY-TELLING IN INDIA

This was my first trip to India; I had no knowledge of Indian society and culture; and I could not speak a word of the local language. But I was there to teach creative expression, and to see whether I couldn't revive something known as the 'Ashvagoshā' performance team.

Soon after I arrived, someone asked me how I planned to make 'dramas' out of the issues that preoccupy local Buddhists. As he told me one story after another, I realized it was not necessary to dramatize them. What he wanted to communicate could best be communicated by simply telling the stories.

A group of ten Order members, mitras, and Friends gathered and we started work. We had hit on a magnificent medium. Story-telling enabled us to create immediate 'dramas' about issues that we wanted to address. No need to find a playwright: we could simply make up a story that would convey our message. Story-telling is a very flexible medium. If one speaks in the first person, it is drama; if one speaks in the third person, it is narrative.

The members of the group created their own stories, and with the help of improvisation exercises the group learned how to communicate their stories effectively. It was fascinating to see how a story was always best communicated when the story-teller was being truthful and genuine. The motto for our work became 'Truthful communication through creative imagination'.

The first village we visited was Shuni, about an hour's journey from Poona. Since the arrangements had gone awry, we were not actually expected that night. However, an audience soon gathered, and with the help of one hastily erected floodlight we played our stories. These ranged from the 'Tragedy of a Drinking Man' to 'The Benefits of Adult Literacy' to 'Moving from Reliance on the Old Hindu Gods to the Great

Benefits of Taking Responsibility for Oneself'. The audience loved them, and the story-tellers were amazed that something so simple could be so effective.

In the eight weeks that followed we played many more localities. It was a great way of spreading Dr Ambedkar's teaching and the Buddha's Dharma. It was also an excellent way of introducing our Movement to villages and localities that had not already been contacted.

One night we returned very late, and the husbands and children of the women in our group were quite distressed. In India women do not usually go out in the evening and their absence from the home had caused considerable upset. We therefore decided to split the group so that the women could go out in the afternoons and address their stories specifically to women. It was a revelation to see how effective these women-only gatherings were. The men, meanwhile, went out to the villages in the evenings and addressed general village audiences. As a six-foot-four-inch white man, I was a great curiosity, and was expected to



do a turn. My story, which involved a mime of the arrival of a merchant on horseback, became very popular in all the villages we visited!

I have left the work in the hands of Siddhartha, my right-hand man throughout the project and a great friend

Jayamati gets the truth out of his 'cast'

and source of inspiration. He will start new teams in Kolaphur, Aurangabad, and Nagpur. I hope to return soon to help him develop the work further. □

KARUNA RECEPTION FOR V.P. SINGH

On 22 May the Karuna Trust hosted a reception at the London Buddhist Centre for former Indian Prime Minister, Mr V.P. Singh, and for Mr Ram Vilas Paswan, who was Labour and Welfare Minister in Mr Singh's government.

As Prime Minister, Mr Singh attempted to introduce important measures to help the 'scheduled castes' in gaining better access to jobs and education, unleashing strong and often violent protests from the higher castes. In view of this it was perhaps no great surprise that his government lasted only eleven months, from December 1989 to November 1990.

He continues as leader of the Janata Dal party. Mr Paswan, Vice-President of that party, is widely regarded in India as the spokesman for scheduled caste interests, especially as he himself comes from that background.

Mr Singh commended the work of Karuna in promoting hostels and vocational training for the backward communities. These, he said, were the

two social welfare programmes that required the highest priority in India today. He emphasized the need to bring effective health programmes to urban slums, where disease was often more widespread than in rural areas, adding that caste interests were the greatest barrier to progress towards a more equitable society in India.

As an independent voluntary organization, Bahujan Hitay, the Karuna Trust's partner in India, does not align with any political party. However, dialogue with political figures and government officials is important for making its work known and creating the best conditions for co-operation with government agencies wherever possible.

The reception was attended by Lokamitra, Karuna's field representative in India, who was at that time on a brief visit to Britain, as well as by Virabhadra and Mahamati, Karuna's chairman and director, and Dhammarati, chairman of the London Buddhist Centre. □

PEAK PERFORMERS CLAIM SUCCESS

To mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the FWBO, Pramodana organized a mountain climb of the three highest peaks in Britain: Ben Nevis, Snowdon, and Sca Fell. The climb took place on the

weekend of 23–25 May, with about thirty people making the ascent of each mountain.

Pramodana tells of the excursion, starting with Ben Nevis and the beauty of Buddhist flags against the

snow, as well as the bemusement these—and the chanting of the Padmasambhava mantra—drew from other climbers. Then came the drive to Sca Fell which was climbed the next day amid winds so strong that they bent the flag pole. Snowdon was climbed

the day after. Flags were left at the top, and a little stupa was built in the valley. Once back down, the group dedicated the merit of all they had done to the benefit of all living beings.

The climbers had taken advantage of the trip to be sponsored to raise money for the women's ordination team, Amnesty International, and the Karuna Trust, raising (so far) £4,200, £400, and £172 respectively. □

Below (from top): Pramodana and friends set off to climb Ben Nevis. Samata and Thea secure flags on the top of Scar Fell



WINDHORSE HITS TOP 100

Windhorse Trading was one of the top hundred fastest growing private companies in the UK over the past four years, according to a survey carried out by the *Independent on Sunday*, a major British newspaper. Despite the UK recession, Windhorse Trading averaged 31% growth per annum over the period surveyed. Growth in the past year has accelerated to 60% as more Evolution shops have opened. The business now employs nearly sixty Buddhists and provides substantial dana to different areas of the FWBO. □

KARUNA WINS EC GRANT

The Karuna Trust has become probably the first Buddhist aid agency to be awarded a grant by the European Community. The grant of £65,000 is for the construction of Bahujan Hitay's Aurangabad hostel, which will house sixty boys.

The hostel stands on the edge of the city, surrounded by a large area of land, some of which will be cultivated. Construction started in October 1991 and is due for completion later this year. A temporary hostel for thirty boys has stood on this site since 1986. Bahujan Hitay now runs fifteen hostels, catering in total for 600 students.

The EC grant was given as part of the Commission's development fund, under which they are co-funding 50% of the Aurangabad project's costs, the balance coming from regular donations from over 5,000 Karuna supporters. The money also allows for running costs for the first five years, decreasing each year as the hostel becomes self-sufficient.

The grant is a significant stamp of approval from an important body and is a further indication of how far Karuna has come as a development agency. Karuna hopes to apply to the EC for funding for other projects in the future. □

SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL

Flag days work—as was proved in Birmingham city centre on Saturday 25 April. Seventeen collectors raised £450 for the Karuna Trust in just five hours.

This was the first Karuna street collection for quite a while and its success will no doubt encourage many more. Friends in Birmingham were delighted with the result, and are planning more fund-raising schemes for the future. □

Karuna collection organizer Vicky Raden spots a potential donor

ROOM FOR ANOTHER?

Because an increasing number of people are wanting to visit the FWBO in Britain, Pramodana has recently established an accommodation scheme.

Anyone who wants to visit the UK to find out more about the FWBO should contact Pramodana at 1 Gayle Way, Accrington, Lancs BB5 0JX. If you can offer any kind of accommodation, whether for one night or for several months, contact your local centre or the address above. You could be helping someone who would otherwise have little chance to practise the Dharma. □

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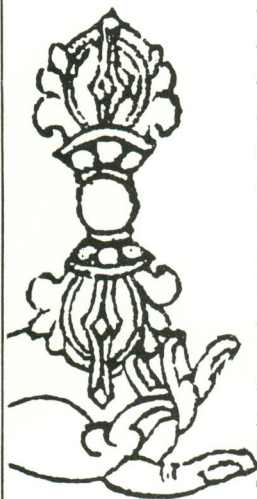
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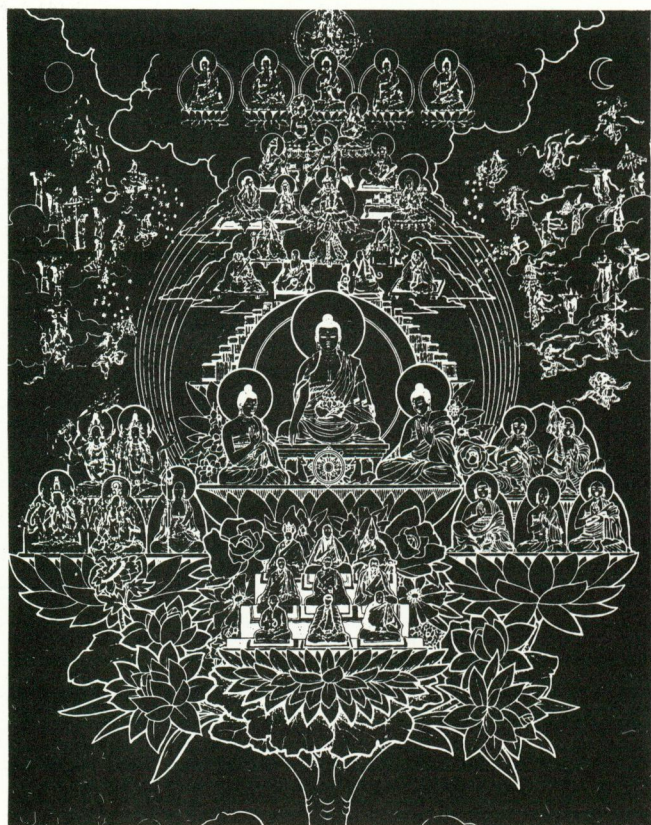
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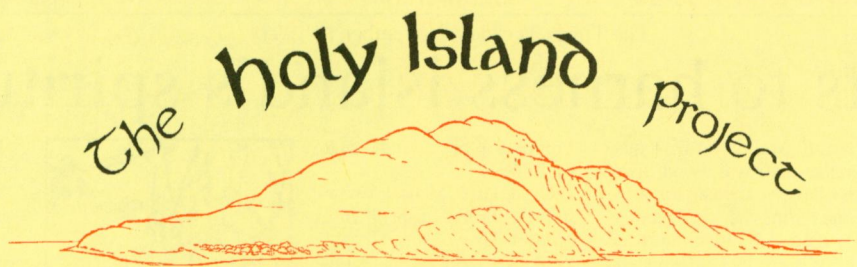
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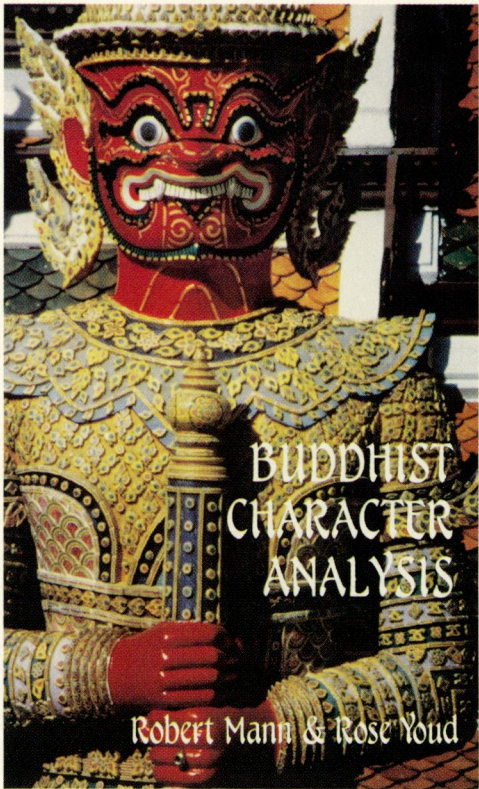
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