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anagarika • a step away from the world

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A RADICAL DIFFERENCE

In April 1968, shortly before conducting the (upasaka) ordinations of twelve men and women, Sangharakshita gave a talk about the future of the Western Buddhist Order—the spiritual community which those ordinations would bring into existence. Those who have never heard a recording of that talk may be surprised to learn that in those days Sangharakshita envisaged a fairly traditional, hierarchically tiered Order whose top level was to be occupied by monks and nuns.

The creation of a '*maha-upasika*' (f) and a '*maha-upasaka*' (m), in 1973 and 1975 respectively, brought the second rank of Order members projected by the original system into tentative existence. However, before long, Sangharakshita let it be known that he had decided to drop his early plan. The formal structure of the WBO would make no distinctions between the ordination status of those following 'lay' and 'monastic' lifestyles. There would be just one ordination for all, marking the disciple's decision to go for Refuge: to make an effective commitment to the Three Jewels (the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha).

In arranging things thus, Sangharakshita was not only bringing the Going for Refuge back to its rightful place at the heart of the ordination issue, but he was reminding us (warning us?) that, having committed ourselves to the ideals and practices of Buddhism, we were *all* committed to the active realization of those ideals. There was no question of anyone leaving the real work, the real struggle, to the monks or nuns. We were all 'full-timers'. All Order members were committed to the highest ideal, and it was therefore to be assumed that all of them would meditate regularly, would observe the ten precepts, would study and discuss the Dharma, would participate in the life of the Order, and so on. Many, if not most, Order members, it was also assumed (though not demanded), would also take an active, even full-time, part in the development of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, the outward-going Movement through which more individuals could be introduced to the Dharma-life and invited to consider making their own commitment. All this was summed up in a simple axiom: 'commitment is primary, life-style secondary.'

So why have the last few years seen the emergence of a sort of sangha within the sangha? Why are a growing number of people deciding to become anagarikas (literally 'city-less' or 'homeless' ones)? How does this trend tie in with the commitment/life-style principle? And why did Sangharakshita, in an interview published in issue 26 of *Golden Drum*, express such pleasure at the development of a growing assembly of anagarikas?

First things first. Becoming an anagarika has nothing to do with one's 'level' of ordination. There is still only one, fundamental, ordination within our Order: the formal witnessing of one's Going for Refuge. One becomes an anagarika simply by taking on a new precept, an undertaking to

practise *brahmacharya* ('the divine, or godly, life'), which can be minimally understood to imply strict chastity. Anagarikas in the WBO are therefore styled 'dharmachari(-ni) anagarikas'. While out of common interest and in pursuit of common support and inspiration these anagarikas may occasionally and informally gravitate towards each other to form a sort of sangha within the sangha, or *kula*, they are nevertheless equal members of one unified Order.

Some of our anagarikas live in rural, semi-monastic retreat centres, while others live busy lives around city Dharma centres. In either case they are superficially indistinguishable from their non-anagarika brothers and sisters in terms of the work they do and the responsibility they take. One important advantage enjoyed by the anagarika *vis a vis* the traditional blikshu/blikshuni (an advantage recognized and embraced by the great Buddhist missionary, Anagarika Dharmapala) is that an anagarika is not bound by the rules of formal Buddhist monasticism, some of which would make an active Dharma-teaching life difficult in the West. Moreover, there are many Order members currently observing vows of chastity who have not decided to become—or who have decided not to become—anagarikas. In such a fluid situation, one might wonder why anyone should need to become an anagarika at all.

If you were to take the question to an anagarika, the chances are he or she would speak of wanting to make a more definite and comprehensive statement than can be expressed by even a public vow of chastity, of wanting the support of a new sense of identity—and of a new band of brothers and sisters—in his or her aspiration towards a fuller realization of the ideals of stillness, simplicity, and contentment. Perhaps this issue of *Golden Drum* will provide further explanation.

The fact remains that a steadily growing number of people are deciding to make a more explicit commitment to a life rooted entirely in spiritual values and preoccupations. They are showing themselves willing to relinquish the option of sexual and emotional entanglement so as to be free to invest their energies in a new kind of freedom and fulfilment. Many people reading this issue of *Golden Drum* may not feel ready even to think about taking this step themselves. But the existence of even a few anagarikas in our Movement will perhaps remind us, when we need reminding, that the spiritual life asks us to question and overcome some of our deepest assumptions, conditionings, and even instincts. The spiritual life is a life divine; it is radically different from a 'normal' one, beckoning us away from the values, ties, and habits of the world. It is inviting us to change, radically.

If the anagarikas among us provoke us into thinking about the next truly radical steps we need to take in our own lives, and seem to provide us with some extra support and encouragement, then they are a powerful resource. May they be strong and may they thrive. □

Nagabodhi

A passion for purity

‘Come, lead the holy life, pure and polished like a conch-shell, for the complete ending of suffering.’ With a phrase such as this must the Buddha have exhorted many people to lead the brahmacharya, welcoming them into his spiritual community.

Many of the Buddha’s disciples, though thoroughly inspired by their meeting with him, had worldly responsibilities which they were unable to set aside; such people went for Refuge to the Buddha as fully as they could while still honouring those responsibilities. It seems clear, however, that the Buddha was especially happy when someone could relinquish their ties with ordinary life and dedicate themselves full-time to study, reflection, and meditation. Such people would be ‘ordained’ as shramaneras (male) or shramanerikas (female), and, after a period as novices, as bhikkhus and bhikkhunis. They would then be fully committed to leading a life of brahmacharya.

A growing number of men and women in the Western Buddhist Order are also committing themselves—as anagarikas—to the practice of brahmacharya, usually some time after their ordination. Although the observance of chastity might be the aspect involved in this step that first strikes our attention, it is far from being the whole of it.

Through the practice of meditation, one can progressively cultivate blissful states of being and consciousness, each clearer and more radiant with loving-kindness than the one before it. These stages of being, though actually experienced as a sort of continuous evolution, can be grouped under two headings insofar as they pertain to the *kama-loka* (world of sensuous desire) or the *brahma-loka* (world of Brahma).

The *kama-loka* includes those states of awareness in which we experience a world through our five senses ‘out there’, with ourselves ‘in here’. It is the realm of the five hindrances to meditation, and of a great deal of pain and suffering; it is the realm in which we feel existentially isolated as ‘subject’ from the rest of the world as ‘object’. A particularly intense form of this separation is experienced by way of sexual polarization, in which we find ourselves physically and psychically identified with one of two sexes. In many complex ways, with which we are probably all too familiar, we feel incomplete, and try to overcome that incompleteness by sexually appropriating someone else, who appears to possess those qualities which we think we need to make us complete.

The *brahma-loka* consists of those states of being not only beyond sexual polarization, but beyond all the cramped and painful mental states we are so used to. It comprises the *dhyanas* (meditative absorptions), which are states of increasing clarity, simplicity, and contentment, visionary realms from the basis of which one can cultivate profound insight into the nature of existence. One’s sense of isolation and incompleteness is at least temporarily overcome and one is free from the discontent inherent in sexual polarization. One is

profoundly at ease with oneself, and beyond the need to find satisfaction in someone or something else. One lives at such times like a mythic god or angel, finding one’s nourishment in all that is beautiful, both in oneself and in others.

Traditionally, these states of being are said to have an objective dimension: there are realms of light in which androgynous beings live with bodies of subtle form, born there because of meritorious actions in previous lives. The leader of one of these realms is called Brahma. The word *charya* means ‘faring like’, so the compound term, brahmacharya, means ‘faring like Brahma’ or, more poetically, ‘living like a god of the radiant realms’.

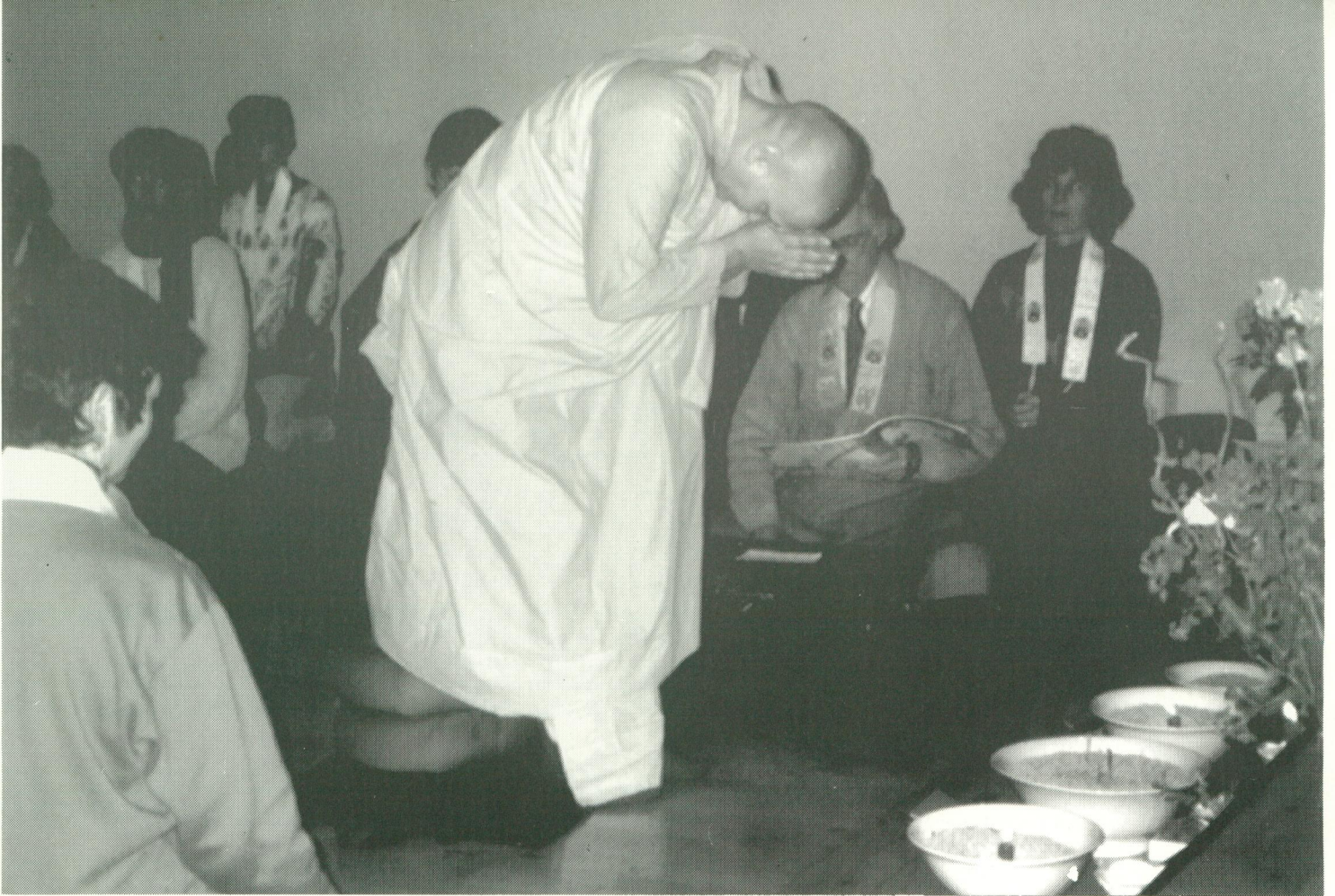
Brahmacharya represents a particular intensification of Buddhist practice in which one aims to dwell continually in the *brahma-loka*. As all Buddhists do, anagarikas meditate and study, practise ethics, and pursue friendships. But beyond this, anagarikas look to simplify their lives so that the worldly element is minimal. They aspire to live simply and aesthetically, freeing themselves from distractions and worldly responsibilities, relinquishing any possessions they do not strictly need. They will also, before formally becoming anagarikas, be free of any previous family ties. This simplicity and concentration is demanding, but it is beautiful too. It resonates with the *brahma-loka*, and encourages its arising.

As well as being attracted to chastity, an anagarika will be reflecting on the limitations of sense-pleasures generally. One finds in experience that, when compared to the pleasures of meditation, sense-pleasures are rather inconsequential. They distract one’s attention from the path and, at worst, drain energy and scatter concentration. Through self-restraint, one’s inner life is able to become more rich and substantial, and one’s capacity to reflect upon the truths of the Dharma more continuous and ‘weighty’. One sees more clearly that it is actually desirable to give up sense-pleasures, because they are ultimately a source of so much anxiety and misery. This spiralling process of reflection, renunciation, and contentment can in the end break one’s bondage to suffering entirely, and one arrives at what the Buddha called an ‘unshakeable freedom of mind’.

Brahmacharya, then, is an intensification of Dharma practice, but one that does not entail living monastically in a formal way. The elements of brahmacharya I have outlined are certainly to be found in the lives of bhikkhus and bhikkhunis contemporary with the Buddha. But though we tend to refer to them as monks and nuns, even their life-styles did not become decidedly coenobitical until some time after the Buddha’s parinirvana. Although brahmacharya and the monastic life-style are two different things, the Buddha and his immediate disciples nevertheless lived very simple lives; the pure and noble spirit of brahmacharya shines from the pages of the Pali Canon, which records their lives.

That spirit is also enshrined, by contrast as it were, in the *Vinaya*, the list of ethical precepts and general rules





Sangharakshita
conducts an
anagarika
ceremony

of conduct which the Buddha's full-time followers undertook to observe, and which are predominantly prohibitive in character. The rules and precepts found in the *Vinaya* were originally proposed by the Buddha when his followers failed to act in accord with his greater awareness of the path to Enlightenment.

Quite understandably, the rigorousness of the *Vinaya* contributed to a division between the 'full-timers' and those who went for Refuge within their existing life-styles, the latter feeling—or being made to feel—increasingly 'second-class', and in time coming to see their main purpose as being to support the bhikshus and bhikshuni materially. As time passed, the formal bhikshuni sangha died out, while the bhikshu sangha became rather dry and scholastic in its approach to the letter of the *Vinaya*; indeed, at times it could seem deaf to the urgent spirit of brahmacharya within it.

The spiritual renaissance involved in the emergence of the Mahayana schools, however, reaffirmed that a person's desire to go for Refuge to the Three Jewels could be effective in any situation that was not inherently unethical, and that one did not have to live as a monk or nun in order to grow spiritually. In fact, implicit as a creative tension within the Mahayana ideal of the *bodhisattva*—one who seeks to bring Enlightenment to all beings—is the suggestion that the life-style of a bhikshu or bhikshuni could be, at times, inimical to the development and practice of compassion. Generosity in ordinary life, for example, could be a much more effective means of growth than mechanical monasticism or heartless chastity. At times in one's life, the brahmacharya might best be followed by concentrating on the needs of others, or on the broader situation in which one finds oneself—engaging from a spiritual basis with the ordinary world.

The practice of chastity is not a condition for ordination into the Western Buddhist Order, though an *aspiration* towards simplicity, stillness and contentment—and thus, ultimately, to brahmacharya—is. One can therefore be ordained while still sexually

active; one can certainly be ordained without living as monk or nun. What is a condition for ordination is that one is willing and able to put one's aspiration toward the Three Jewels into practice most of the time under all reasonable conditions.

Within the WBO, therefore, the practice of brahmacharya is not identified with the stage of ordination, or with the life-style of the bhikshu or bhikshuni, as it came to be in the Theravada tradition; it is rather seen as an intensification of something *already* effective. Because of this, practitioners of brahmacharya in the FWBO are styled 'anagarikas', meaning 'homeless ones'. The term dates back at least to the Buddha's time, and was sometimes used interchangeably with bhikshu/bhikshuni. Anagarikas take their place within the WBO as members of a community of Buddhists who, in a rich variety of ways, are expressing their common commitment to the Three Jewels.

One becomes an anagarika within the WBO in a simple ceremony conducted, at present, by Sangharakshita, within the context of a sevenfold puja. He leads the aspirant in chanting the Refuges and Precepts very much as usual, but with one change. The third precept, observing which most Buddhists undertake to abstain from 'sexual misconduct', is replaced by an undertaking to abstain from 'non-brahmacharya': *Abrahmacharya veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*. This commits one to brahmacharya in general, and minimally to the practice of chastity. Anagarikas then wear a yellow kesa instead of a white one and a set of (unpatched) robes in some situations. Many of those who have become anagarikas within the last few years have taken the precept for an indefinite period; but others have taken it for a period of just a year, with the possibility of continuing thereafter.

Even those who find the practice too demanding to continue beyond their first year will learn things that can be learned in no other way. But they may, during the experiment, develop a passion for purity that no mundane desire can extinguish. □

Sex, addiction, and freedom

Sex is a major factor in our lives—and looking at most of the people I know, it looks pretty much as though it is the main one. Whether we are talking about an uncontrollable urge, a tendency towards flirtation, or the nesting instinct in general, sexual desire can come on very strong—so strong that we'll sometimes risk everything for an opportunity to satisfy it. Our involvement in sex runs very deep, and often along some rather dark channels. Just look at the newspapers, talk to friends, recall your own obsessions. Sex can become the greatest distraction of them all, and we may be prepared to do anything—to anyone—to get it. The craving inherent in sex can tempt us to exploit others for the sake of gratification; indeed, it arouses all kinds of ethical dilemmas.

No doubt this is why the Buddha said that spiritual development would have been impossible were we to have to cope with another drive as strong as the sexual urge, and why some men and women practise what he called brahmacharya—a way of living aimed at completely transcending sexual desire. Brahmacharya involves cultivating happier, clearer states of consciousness, often through meditation in combination with chastity. The idea is that happiness and chastity reinforce one another: happier states of mind make us less obsessive about sex, and chastity

promotes a natural mental health and happiness which allows us access to higher sources of inspiration.

In Buddhism, brahmacharya is praised as the way of life most suited to developing inner harmony and insight into reality. In a passage from the Pali Canon, the Buddha portrays non-brahmacharya as the greatest of all distractions from a wholehearted spiritual life:

Monks, I know of no physical appearance which reduces a man's mind to slavery as does that of a woman; the minds of men are completely obsessed with women's physical appearance. Monks, I know of no sound which reduces a man's mind to slavery as the voice of a woman; the minds of men are completely obsessed with women's voices ... (and so on, for the other senses)

Nuns, I know of no physical appearance which reduces a woman's mind to slavery as does that of a man; the minds of women are completely obsessed with men's physical appearance. Nuns, I know of no sound which reduces a woman's mind to slavery as does that of a man; the minds of women are completely obsessed with men's voices ...

Anguttara Nikaya I.i-ii

But many of us won't easily be convinced that we are 'slaves'. To understand the Buddha's perspective we will need to go over some very old territory—territory that we probably feel we understand quite well. We need to review the significance of those old 'facts of

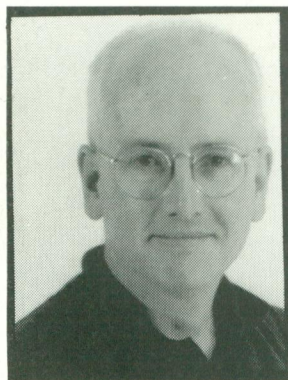
life', because the Buddha is implying that the strong emotions that we invest in sex—and everything that goes along with sex—obscure our understanding of its true nature.

According to his teaching of dependent origination, sexual desire is just a particular form of conditioning. We happen to have a physical body. The fact that this body has sense organs (including the mind, regarded here as a receptor for ideas) means that feelings of pleasure and pain automatically arise as we encounter sense-impressions in those organs. Then all the familiar emotional reactions arise in response to one or another of these feelings.

This is certainly the case with our reproductive organs, which as we know can give extremely intense sensual pleasure (that is, when we are getting what we want). The pleasure can be so intense that its mere anticipation arouses not only those specific organs, but the whole body and emotional dimension of the mind as well—all these parts of us demand satisfaction, very often in such an intense way that every other kind of desire is overridden. It is at this point that sexual desire can cause so much complication, because the experience of pleasure—any pleasure—is of its nature addictive. According to the Buddha, much that is unsatisfactory in our lives is the result of our craving for one or another kind of pleasure. There's nothing wrong with pleasure in itself, but addiction to pleasure is a kind of slavery that will tend to take up a proportion of our interest quite unrelated to its actual value. So overriding is this interest that we feel insecure if sexual desire is frustrated, and develop a whole complex of ideas relating to it. In fact we will tend to centre our life around it—most people end up with a life-style based, more or less, around their particular sexual preferences.

So the 'facts of life' from a Buddhist perspective are that sex is really about the natural drive towards reproduction, which offers great pleasure together with a very strong sense of security, both of which are highly addictive. Addiction, being a state of dependence, cannot lead to happiness. A way of life that centres around the gratification of an addiction will inevitably be uncondusive to the spiritual life, for the spiritual life consists in the cultivation of happiness (through ethical behaviour and meditation), as a basis for developing insight.

But can't sex be fulfilling, and make people happy? Don't we all know happy couples? If the truth be known, such happiness may have little to do with what people do in bed together. Once a sexual relationship is established, partners tend not to associate it with the sexual act so much as with the world that they start building around it—a world composed of all the



Kamalashila, and (right) when we practice brahmacharya, we are creating positive aloneness



external demands that their companionship places upon them. Through a sexual partnership, or a family, they become involved in financial, emotional, ethical, and social demands. Positive demands are placed upon on their intelligence, their cunning, and their generosity—it is often through demands like these, in fact, that many people grow up into responsible adulthood. The challenge involved in setting up a sexual relationship may eventually become the factor that makes a person feel, more than anything else, that they are a valid member of the human race.

It could be argued for these reasons that this kind of dependency is no bad thing for most 'ordinary' people—potentially it even provides a field for ethical development. But there is an important difference between potentiality and actuality. Those with the choice to remain single, and who want seriously to pursue the spiritual life, should bear in mind that the demands and distractions involved in maintaining a sexual relationship will impose a definite limitation—a limitation which may perhaps be crucial, bearing in mind how difficult the spiritual life can be. For in its own way, the spiritual life is even more challenging and demanding than the maintenance of a sexual relationship.

Though physical intercourse may seem less important in a deepening sexual partnership, the world that is being built up is still very much grounded upon it. Sex

provides the basic cement in a sexual relationship. If the original commitment to the sexual bond lapses, all that remains to hold it together are the demands and pressures—and these, very often, are unbearable in the face of sexual rejection. Normally, sexual access is a crucial factor. We won't usually want our partner 'bonding' with anyone else!—And, indeed, the slightest infidelity may cause the nicest, most refined and friendly, sexual relationship to go disastrously wrong. People hate. People kill. If the illusion of sexual security is shattered, people can bear the deepest grudges and wreak the most horrible revenge.

Sexual relationship is eulogized as the bedrock of our society, promoted as the ideal way of life by political and religious leaders. It would be unreasonable, and uncompassionate, for Buddhists not to support and encourage stability in family life. But, at the same time, if we ourselves want to grow and develop beyond mere natural, instinctive life—which is implicit in our commitment to the Buddhist path—we must avoid the trap of sex addiction. This is imperative whether we are practising the Dharma inside or out-

side a family (or potential family) context.

Since we are not Enlightened, we are very familiar with the nature of addictive syndromes. For example there is that typical result, the downward spiral into mediocrity. Many addictions, to a sexual infatuation for example, start off with a wonderful sense of exaltation and happiness—and end up on an endless dreary journey through the flatlands. We might say that addictions to milder pleasures are uninspiring even in the beginning; but all addictions, to whatever pleasures, end up as slavery to a decreasing quantum of the pleasure to which we originally became addicted. We develop a 'tolerance' to it. Once hooked, one must always have some of the thing that used to provide the

pleasure merely to feel normal. Without that thing, one feels anything from mild insecurity to raving madness, the DTs, pink elephants, paranoia, and sleepless nights. With it, there's just nothing particularly special about the experience any more. Of course one enjoys it to some degree—mainly because it helps to alleviate the awkward feeling of unsatisfied craving.

We can see addictive reactions and counter-reactions firing off in the less stable sexual relationships all around us (not to mention the goings-on behind the facade of apparently stable ones). Some people—the more passionate and less sophisticated perhaps—go right into the sexual game, fall violently in love, and get hurt. Then they try to dry out, go cold turkey, and purify themselves. Then it gets them again like a madness: they fall in love, and round they go again. Their perspective on life may undergo drastic changes as they go through these experiences. They may swing towards misogyny or misanthropy, or worse—and perhaps it's understandable, in a way, that they do. These are like the people who get into a serious mess on drugs. Others, no doubt the more emotionally cool and calculating, look for ways to run their relationship on the knife-edge between addiction and exploitation, the main idea being to get as much enjoyment as possible out of the relationship without getting too attached, and of course (they'll say—and mean) without hurting the other party. They see them as little as they can bear, so that when they do meet it will be pleasurable intense. In this way they contrive neither to lose interest, nor to get 'too involved'. These people are like the smarter addicts who are able to manage their habit, and even live relatively normal, though somewhat intoxicated (and perhaps rather unfeeling), lives.

There is a vague notion, not uncommon within the FWBO, of 'working with sexuality', which is taken to mean anything from improving one's sexual technique to men's, or women's, liberation. No doubt many of us are, most laudably, trying to develop a more skilful approach to the place of sex in our lives. But this in itself isn't practising brahmacharya. Maintaining a brahmacharya vow takes place outside the possibility of sexual gratification—a big difference. Yet, as Sangharakshita pointed out in an interview for *Golden Drum*, no one is having sex 100% of the time, and no one is 100% chaste (not even the great majority of those on brahmacharya vows, since the full practice involves chastity of mind and speech as well as of body). So if we are trying to deepen our mindfulness then each of us is forced to 'work with our sexuality' in some sense. Each of us, if sincere in our practice, will gradually become less addicted to sense pleasures generally. In fact if we are practising the Dharma we shall be moving, by degrees, towards brahmacharya.

Incidentally, the word brahmacharya has more inspiring connotations, I think, than the word 'celibate', and does in fact mean more. 'Celibate' means simply the unmarried state—a state of not having something. In brahmacharya (which means the 'divine life') we've got an expression for the positive state of freedom from sexual craving. Those who practise brahmacharya don't see it as a deprivation but as a better way of living, involving a constant cultivation of higher states of awareness as a basis for the development of insight. It implies a life-style that is not only independent of looking to sex for a source of inspiration, but which also tries to draw on higher, even 'divine', sources of inspiration. Those practising brahmacharya will be cultivating their meditation practice, developing a state of mind that is, overall, less rooted in the *kama-loka*, the realm of sense-desire, and

'The slightest infidelity may cause the nicest, most refined and friendly, sexual relationship to go disastrously wrong. People hate. People kill. If the illusion of sexual security is shattered, people can bear the deepest grudges and wreak the most horrible revenge.'

closer to the *rupa-loka* or realm of pure form—a state of consciousness that is more concerned with principles and essentials, with what aids human growth and development. They will be concerned to cultivate insight into the true nature of things; they will experience their lack of insight and more urgently see the need to develop it.

Sangharakshita once said that members of the Western Buddhist Order should definitely be moving towards brahmacharya by their forties. However, this does not mean that brahmacharya is only for Order members, or that it is necessarily only for the middle-aged and people generally past their prime. In youth, sexual desire is very intense, from which some people argue that brahmacharya is unsuitable for the young. But young people are more idealistic, have more energy and freedom to change—all of which is very much to their advantage. In middle age the physical drive may be (marginally) less urgent, but emotional attachment to sex may be far harder to uproot once the patterns are fixed and life is more complex. So there are advantages and disadvantages on both sides.

It is true that for most people the middle years are years of deeper reflection—and so, potentially, of deeper contact with reality. It is a time when we realize, far more clearly than ever before, that our life-span is limited. Some people say that 'mid-life crises' are essentially about accepting the fact of death. But, on the other hand, even though the potential of one's inner life can open up a little more, our forties and fifties can also turn out to be our most worldly years. Twenty years removed from the urgency and idealism of youth, we're often more realistic, more in touch with the world. And we're at the height of our worldly powers—we know the ropes, know what's to be had in the world, and know what we like. And, very often, we know exactly how to get it! The young and the old, however, are at the edges of life—they're much nearer to natural death, and nearer to the bardo, than we are. It's a long time since we were out in the 'intermediate state' between death and life, and it seems to us that it'll be a long time yet before we go there again. So even though in middle age we may have come to terms with death (in a certain sense), at the same time we're very much involved with life. We don't hold back from it, we're not shy. Moreover the world looks to us, the mature experienced men and women, for the real action. These are important years, and potentially dangerous ones, too, if we manage to get ourselves sidetracked on the spiritual path. For at this age we are most able to insist on getting what we want—which may not be what we truly need.

What *do* we want? Well, sexual relationships, of course! In our 'heart of hearts', we want sexual fulfilment. Our physical appearance may be increasingly against us, but we know that we can use our experience and know-how to make up for all that. We know that we can get what we want, more or less.

If the WBO/FWBO is to function as a spiritual community, then there must be a perceptible movement away from addiction of all kinds—we must be seen to be making spiritual progress, defined by the Buddha as freedom from addiction, craving, and

attachment. This really depends upon us laying down, individually, our own foundations of wisdom. As the Perfection of Wisdom sutras say, without wisdom the other perfections are blind. Giving, ethics, patience, vigour—even meditation, in the sense of shamatha—are all very great virtues, but they have no eyes. As the *Prajnaparamita* says, without a guide who can see? Even a million blind men—or women—will never, ever, find the way to the city of Enlightenment. And nor will we. We cannot expect to create wisdom out of ideas alone. Ideas, even the Buddha's ideas, are just *shruta-mayi prajna*—raw, undigested information, received opinion that we have heard or read about. We need to reflect on those ideas—and reflection must mean testing them out in practice, not just thinking about them in the mind. What's the use of reflecting, for example, on the principle of sangha, without any actual experience of what sangha is like? Even the idea of *shunyata*, of conditionality, of impermanence, needs to be tested in experience as well as in the crucible of thought. Still, that inner crucible, the realm of thoughtful reflection or *chinta-mayi prajna*, is just as vital as action. Indeed insight proper, in the sense of vipashyana meditation or *bhavana-mayi prajna*, can arise only if supported by this *chinta-mayi prajna*—supported by our intellectual understanding of the Dharma, constantly in process of clarification through reflection.

We also need the right conditions for this clarification

to take place. For example, we need a certain amount of solitude. Not only do we need to go away on highly disciplined solitary retreats, but we also need to provide a modicum of solitude in our day-to-day lives. A brahmacharya vow can help create such a breathing space, for when we practise brahmacharya we are creating aloneness—positive aloneness: we are learning to relate free of need-based responses to others. This kind of aloneness, or independence, can help us to form our ideas more clearly. In other words, there can be a connection between brahmacharya and intellectual clarity. To the extent that our body-based, instinctual drives are resolved—or on the way to being resolved—to that extent we can draw upon new reserves of clarity and flexibility of mind. And such an increased degree of shamatha will increase our propensity for vipashyana.

Finally, it is important to consider the way brahmacharya affects our energy. It is best if we don't see brahmacharya as being all about what we *can't* do, but as a positive outlet—as a channel through which we may test our understanding on

the plane of experience. Sexual conditioning is so central to us, and bound up psychologically with so much of our confidence, that to take a vow of brahmacharya requires a correspondingly large leap of the imagination. If we are to step down off the fence we are sitting on, we must also do something just as large with our energies. And to be that large, it's got to be the biggest, most worthwhile project we can think of. They say that sex and ambition are closely linked—and I feel sure that this applies to women as well as men, if in a different way. Whether men or women, people are generally not sufficiently spiritually ambitious. We need to change this—we need to allow our spiritual ambitions free-rein, so that they might take us all the way to Enlightenment. □



Why I became an

I am thirty-one years old, in what is considered to be the prime of life. Why then have I embarked upon the 'homeless life'?

'Going Forth' was the theme Sangharakshita gave to the Order Convention in 1991. Renunciation was not a theme I had heard too much about before, but during the ten days of the Convention we got a real feast of it. As I walked with friends around the acres of trimmed grass, I could be heard saying, 'I can't write a book about the Dharma but I think I could possibly give up sex!'

I've met with a certain degree of reserve with regard to celibacy and chastity among my friends in the Movement—perhaps predictably so, given a surrounding culture which so glorifies sex and romance. Although I didn't see sexual relationships bringing much happiness to people, I had heard

direction of brahmacharya in taking a vow to remain celibate—meaning not to have sexual relations with anyone—for the rest of that year. I got a playful dig in the ribs the next day, since I was spending most of the remainder of the year in India, where it was highly unlikely that I would meet an opportunity for romance! However, even though it was rather easy to do, it was good to make a public vow. My intention felt more real for being witnessed.

I had in fact already made the decision a few years ago, as chairman of the Brighton Centre, not to have a girlfriend who lived within fifty miles of me. My success in keeping this vow gave me confidence that I could exert some control over the apparently unfathomable sexual urge. I could walk along the streets of our busy seaside resort and not 'need' to look at every attractive person, or hope they were looking at me!

In September 1991 I went to India and the following January attended the Indian Order Convention. Working within our Movement in India is, for a Westerner, a 'total' situation in so far as one's direct relationships are all with Buddhist people in Buddhist institutions. This gave me, therefore, an experience of an even more full-time Dharma life. In this situation I felt happy and fulfilled. I experienced myself as more energetic and courageous, and was surprised to see how well I did in teaching the Dharma to people apparently so different from me.

I also met two very friendly young dharmachari anagarikas called Varaprabha and Ratnasagara. Varaprabha was finding his 'homeless life' quite difficult, but I encouraged him to continue to lead by example in this life-style, since I believed

that friendships of a really deep nature were unlikely to develop in the Order unless friends were living together. As Lokamitra had told me, in India there is only one form of non-celibate life: marriage. In speaking this way to Varaprabha, I was of course talking myself into it! If he could do it why couldn't I? Such stark simplicity was a relief from the permissive West with all its options and choices. It made me recognize how sex leads to a life of domestic responsibilities and settling down. And I knew to which 'family' I wanted to belong.

Sangharakshita also attended the Indian Order Convention, and made some remarks which seemed to signify a new flexibility for Order members taking the



Yasodeva (right) with fellow community member before becoming an anagarika

about several people having 'backlash' reactions to over-ambitious, premature, vows of chastity. But whatever the conditions were, I was beginning to question whether I—and others—could not explore this area again. After all, I thought, chastity and monasticism have been praised throughout Buddhist history; are we unique today in not being able to do the same? As for caution, I thought, do we really know what would happen to us if we gave up sex? I didn't. I had been living in a single sex residential community for about ten years during which time I'd only been involved in sexual relationships for about three—and yet I had been happy for most of the decade.

On the Convention I made a tentative move in the

anagarika



anagarika precept. We could, he said, think in terms of just a year's commitment to the brahmacharya precept, and could if we wished wear either the yellow kesa instead of the white kesa which we received at our ordination, or take the robe to wear in India and at Order/mitra events in the West.

This news was in the air for a reason. Eight other men were also considering, or had decided, to take the plunge. Until then I had had the impression that one needed to be thinking in terms of at least five years commitment to the practice. I knew that my friend Varaprabha had taken the vow for just a year and I had imagined that this might have something to do with our cultural differences. As each person

**Yashodeva (right)
with friend and
inspiration
Varaprabha**

became more definite in his intentions it encouraged the rest of us to do the same. The fact that we were creating an anagarika *kula*, or sangha, within the Order at large was a great encouragement for me. Being something of a *deva* by temperament and, perhaps, by nature, I am moved by pleasure and beauty—that is, attracted to beauty, and particularly the spiritually beautiful. The prospect of this friendly and dynamic kula made me finally decide.

On the morning of the 28 January I met Suvajra. He was looking very serious, and said that Sangharakshita had agreed to witness the ceremonies that very evening. Gulp! I suddenly became very serious too—and very excited at the same time. If it had not already been done, we had our hair shaved or cut short during the day. Later, during a puja, led by Sangharakshita and witnessed by the other Order members, we chanted the *Abrahmacharya veramani* precept and took our robes and/or yellow kesas. I was pleased that there were Indian and Western Order members taking this step together; it seemed to demonstrate the unity and development of the Order.

On returning to England I had once again to dress in my civvies—and felt as though I was putting on the world again. However I also felt very confident as an anagarika and strode down the street like a king. Although I felt a little apprehensive about the response I might receive from my friends, in the event I met with a mixture of encouragement and rejoicing, and also, sometimes, an air of reticence. Some have said to me that they are inspired by my example since I demonstrate that one can live happily, fully dependent on the Dharma.

Of course many have wondered for what *positive* reasons I decided to become an anagarika. To tell the truth I didn't have many reasons worked out beforehand, and only since practising brahmacharya have I appreciated some of its benefits. One does not always need to know precisely which qualities one will gain from a practice. I feel able to undertake some spiritual activities on the basis of faith in the practice itself and the example of other people. The acts of 'going forth' and going for Refuge interlock. In the first we are compelled to leave behind the habitual and superficial; in the second we move towards an unknown goal.

What have I learnt so far? In particular I have found my attitude and behaviour changing in relation to my environment. Recently, on a busy pre-Christmas Saturday, I felt drawn into town. I am glad to say that I realized just in time that I was actually caught up in a mood of craving, and decided instead to go into the study and read my Dharma texts. A few hours later I felt uplifted and fulfilled. As I have no intention of entering into a sexual relationship or domestic life, there is no need for me to spend time and money along the High Street. I have also realized how much of me is still very attached to the idea of looking desirable—going for Refuge to external things rather than to the development of contentment and wisdom.

I am perhaps a little like Winnie the Pooh when he could not squeeze his way through Rabbit's window because he was so full of honey. From his useful back legs—which dangled inside Rabbit's house—Rabbit took to hanging tea cloths. I am fairly useful now that I have my head out of the honey, but I still need to purify myself and stop myself from going back to that honey. My *deva* nature is not enough; I need to keep pushing myself away from samsara by understanding its true nature, as well as reaching up towards the Ideal. □

Sailing into the

I was twenty-three when I qualified as an optometrist. I enjoyed my work and earned enough money to enjoy my leisure: in my free time I liked to travel and meet friends and, above all, to sail. I had learned to sail in my early teens and had practically lived for it until photography made a relatively short-lived bid for my interest through my A-level years. With my studies over and needing some strong medicine to get over a bad dose of love sickness, I had returned to sailing with a vengeance. It galvanized my energies and lent purpose to my life. Nothing else gave me such a sense of freedom and fulfilment. I was fully occupied; I was happy.

A year later I chanced to come into contact with the FWBO. I was introduced to a Buddhist who was willing to help me repair damage to my boat. In fact, I spent a number of weeks using a workshop at Padmaloka, the men's retreat centre near Norwich. I was impressed by the friendliness and generosity of the community members I met, but I didn't understand what they were doing, or why some had moved far from friends and family just to be there. My interest wasn't deep. Happy with my own life, I was content to leave them to theirs. But wondering whether meditation would be a means of improving my sailing skills, I went along to the Norwich Buddhist Centre to give it a try.

The first thing that meditation did for me was bring awareness to how chaotic and restless my mind was! Understanding that a regular practice of meditation would help to develop a calm, clear mind and

emotional positivity, I was quite willing to apply myself to it. Translating into my own language of the time, if I could cultivate these qualities I would get less flustered, make fewer mistakes and

take more opportunities—in short, my sailing would improve. I was not disappointed: after just a few months, it did. I won a few unexpected trophies to prove it! I had got what I hoped for, but I did not bargain for the consequences that were to follow!

In fine, windy weather on a smooth sea I had a particularly fine sail. I remember it clearly now: almost flying over the water, perfectly under control. I felt exhilarated but at the same time strangely calm, everything in perfect balance. Man and machine were one. As I enjoyed the thrill of it, thoughts went

through my mind ... 'This is what I have always been striving for; this is as good as sailing can get! The most I can hope for is to prolong this peak experience. I could devote my life to perfecting it, but where will it have got me?'

I'll never know the answer to that!

Something, I didn't know what, had shifted. In spite of having some of my most enjoyable experiences of sailing ever at this time, I began to lose interest and no longer wanted to sail. What had once been most important to me now seemed shallow and limited. It could give only short-term satisfaction. This could not satisfy my deepest needs.

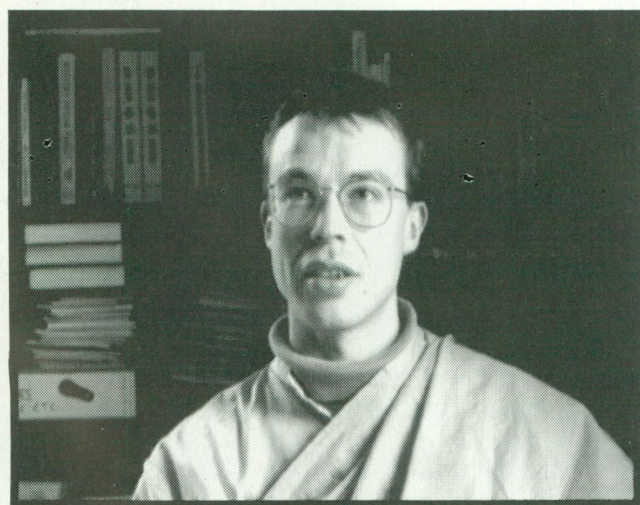
To find myself disillusioned with my old love was uncomfortable and confusing. Had it not been for my contact with Buddhists at the Centre (my respect for their views deepened as my sailing performance improved) I would probably have escaped from this predicament, temporarily at least, by falling in love again.

I had begun my spiritual quest. Realizing that there was no reason why I shouldn't I began to work only part-time, giving myself more opportunity to explore those deeper needs, so easily obscured by my habitual activity. I found it hard to explain to my family and friends what my true motives were in departing from the usual course of a career. Assuming that I wanted to devote more time to sailing they wished me well—that they could understand!

This was a time of discovery and broadening horizons; a time of being attracted towards a new life, moving away from the old. I learnt massage and discovered that I preferred to lock emotions in muscles rather than risk experiencing them. I also started to learn T'ai Chi and found that, internally, I was like a kid having a tantrum when confronted with something he couldn't do! I was not the man I thought I was, but I had far more potential than I had dreamed of!

Within the year I discovered that I *was* a Buddhist—my 'deeper needs' were in accord with the Buddha's vision. The Buddha's teaching on the impermanence of all conditioned things, for instance, struck me as being so clearly true when viewed at my best moments. In the course of my optics work I had spoken to a number of very elderly people who lamented that their bodies had worn out and their lives had passed them by. I wanted to live so as to have no cause for regret over missed opportunities to realize the truth of the Buddha's teaching should I look back on my life.

So this is how I came to go for Refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Placing my trust increasingly on these Three Jewels, my dependence on my old reliances inevitably diminished. I had 'gone forth' from them, at least to some extent. It had once meant a lot to me to be a professional with good prospects of being self



simple life



employed; now I have gone forth from my career as an optician. As you might have guessed I used to identify closely with being a dinghy sailing enthusiast; now I can enjoy a windy day miles from any water! It was once important to me to buy a home of my own; now I am an anagarika trying not to accumulate possessions. A few years back, had I been without either a car or a boat, I would not have been a happy man! In the past, whether I had a girlfriend or not, thoughts of a satisfying romance were never far from my pillow; now my mind is the happier for having stopped craving for

Nityajyoti, and (right) 'I could devote my life to perfecting [sailing], but where will it have got me?'

a partner.

All these changes were the natural outcome of following the call to a deeper satisfaction, but they were not all pain-free. This applied particularly to my decision to leave my girlfriend for a life of chastity. To leave was certainly going to be painful, but to stay was to prolong the conflict. Have you ever had a loose tooth that gives you no peace, but you fear the pain of pulling it out? Anticipation is the worst part—withdrawal symptoms too are inevitable—but the gum does heal. All in all, I have come through unscathed; my experience of life was satisfying before, and has become more so.

New lamps for old! I was working as an optometrist: examining eyes and providing spectacles and contact lenses. I still try to help people clarify their vision but now in a very different way—by helping to run Vajraloka Meditation Centre and Vajrakuta Study Centre! Whereas I used to share the house of a sailing friend, I now live in a Buddhist community. Whereas I used to centre my life around sailing, I now do so around meditation and other practices. Whereas I used to enjoy balancing the forces acting on my boat I now have hours of fun balancing the forces acting on my mind! The exhilaration and freedom that I got from sailing out to sea I now get by going beyond habits in meditation—or from being outside in a good Welsh storm! I used to enjoy meeting family and friends; I still do, but my 'family' is considerably larger now.

The more I disentangle myself from them, the more topsy-turvy society's views seem to be!

Acquisitiveness is the norm in society at large, and possessions are taken as signs of success. But 'a man's true life is not made up of the things he owns, no matter how rich he may be' (Luke 12.15). The transforming principle within the spiritual community is generosity, and the richer person is the one who can do with less (to borrow from Thoreau's *Walden*). Hedonism and distraction by 'entertainment' consumes so many lives; by practising stillness, simplicity, and contentment, choices can be made from clarity and with awareness:

we can become responsible for our own happiness. Society's materialistic views conceive of nothing after death; Buddhist experience gives meaning to living and dying. Society exerts a pull to conform to the group, whereas members of the

sangha support and encourage one another to become truly individual. In society time and energy are bargained for money; workers in FWBO team-based Right Livelihood businesses put the principle of generosity into practice—they give what they can, and take what they need. Society elevates the romantic relationship to the status of *the* relationship; Buddhism recognizes the necessity of other relationships for the health and growth of an individual.

Be warned! There is no knowing where meditation will lead you. □



meditation



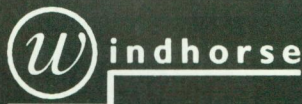
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PURE GOLD

The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying
by Sogyal Rinpoche
Published by Rider
pp.425, hardback, £16.99.

From the Tibetan Buddhist point of view, we can divide our entire existence into four continuously interlinked realities: life, dying and death, after death, and rebirth'. These are traditionally known as the four bardos, and were introduced to the West some time ago through the *Bardo Thodol*, which became more popularly known as the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. In the *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* Sogyal Rinpoche uses the framework of the four bardos to share the wisdom and experience he has gained through the Tibetan Buddhist tradition to 'inspire a quiet revolution in the whole way we look at death and care for the dying'.

In his own words, Sogyal Rinpoche seeks to 'explain and expand the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* to cover not only death but life as well'. The book, like its subject matter, is divided into four parts, each exploring the significance of one of the four bardos in some detail.

The author clearly feels that, on the whole, Westerners do not appreciate the importance of preparing for death—which after all is the one certainty in life—and consequently never really learn how to live. In fact, he argues, our modern technologically sophisticated society lives entirely 'in denial of death or in terror of it'. And it is from the forceful making of this point in the opening chapters that he begins to explore the meaning of the first bardo: life.

Impermanence and change feature centrally in the Buddha's teaching, but how many of us can honestly say that we understand or even

believe this elegantly simple teaching? Despite the strong evidence which surrounds us, many still believe—or want to believe—that we can find permanence in the things around us: in our friends, in our families and lovers, and ultimately in our sense of self. Death is the ultimate proof of impermanence, and consequently many of us live in terror of it. It is this very attitude of living in denial of the way things really are, explains the author, that is at the heart of the problem. It is only through developing the ability to 'work with the truth of impermanence in your life' that one can learn to let go of grasping and its attendant anxiety and fears, and begin to relax and open fully into life. In his fashionably poetic style, Sogyal Rinpoche explains that through opening to the truth of impermanence we can become less self-obsessed and fearful as the 'clouds of grasping part and disperse, and the sun of our true compassionate heart shines out'.

Such teachings are not new; many will have heard them before. However, we can never be exposed to these basic Dharma teachings often enough. Sogyal Rinpoche's book is an exercise in applied Dharma rather than just another book about Buddhism and Buddhist theory. It is a book about learning how to live well and how to die well, and how to help those who are dying and those who have recently died. He argues intelligently in favour of the case for rebirth and offers the reader the traditional Tibetan analysis of what happens to us as we are dying and in the following 'after death' experience. He illustrates his points with numerous experiences from his own life, which he recounts with clarity and warmth. He also writes quite extensively about



the lives and the deaths of his own main teachers: Jamyang Khyentse Chokyi Lodro, Dudjom Rinpoche, and Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (all of whom, incidentally, taught Sangharakshita while he was in India).

Throughout the book we are offered specific practices designed to help us realize for ourselves that 'the true nature of mind is beyond birth and death', as well as practices which can help others who are ill and suffering, or even actually dying. These include visualization and mantra recitations as well as direct reflections on the nature of reality. The only real criticism of an otherwise splendidly written and inspiring book would be to question the appropriateness of some of the practices which are offered to complete beginners. Without the guidance of a spiritually experienced teacher, one could imagine some people causing themselves psychological harm through misunderstanding the spiritual principles which lie behind some of the practices. In particular, the practice of *Tonglen*—which involves

Sogyal Rinpoche

imaginatively taking upon oneself the illnesses and suffering of others—could be mistakenly interpreted so as to increase the guilt and delusion of the practitioner, instead of encouraging compassion and the opening of the heart, which is its true purpose.

The overall message of the book, however, is pure gold, and one hopes that it will contribute towards the necessary shift in attitude that society has to make towards those who are sick and dying if we wish to live in a more humane world. Moreover, at a time when many books on death and dying are appearing on the market, it is refreshing to find one which is overtly Buddhist and not a mish-mash of New Age platitudes. By all means browse through this book, read it, and think deeply about the issues raised within it: but most importantly of all strive to realize its essential message, for then—and only then—can we really begin to find peace in ourselves and freedom from the tyranny of death. □

Amritavajra

QUESTIONS OF LIFE-STYLE

Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh

by Helena Norberg-Hodge
Published by Rider
pp.204, paperback, £8.99

Ancient Futures offers a fascinating account of the small traditional Buddhist society of Ladakh, a sad statement on the impact of Western values and 'development' on that community, and a proposed alternative to the path of development.

Helena Norberg-Hodge's deep involvement with Ladakh over a period of sixteen years has allowed her to gain a unique understanding of Ladakhi society. In the first part of her book she gives a detailed description of life in Ladakh as it was when she first arrived in 1975. At that time it was still a largely self-

16 contained, self-sufficient, rural Buddhist society, surviving in the harsh environment of the Tibetan plateau north of the Himalayas. This and the strong influence of Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism had given it the name of Little Tibet.

The picture the author paints of traditional Ladakhi life seems perhaps a little idealized, but even taking this into account, that life does appear to have had a lot of very attractive qualities when compared to modern Western life-styles; indeed, there is much here that will stimulate readers to question their own life-styles. Ladakhis, it emerges, were traditionally very much in contact with Buddhist principles, and their strong awareness of interdependence produced a spirit of personal responsibility, co-operation, and mutual support.

Ladakh was self-sufficient in everything but salt, which it traded with Tibet: 'They lived without waste or pollution and virtually without crime. Despite having relatively few material possessions, they

considered themselves rich.' It comes across very clearly that the strength of personal connections was the crucial factor in maintaining the highly principled and ethical nature of Ladakhi society: 'Whether in settling a disagreement or working in the field, life was conducted on a level where individual interests were concurrent with the interests of the whole community.'

Included in this first section is a clearly and accurately written chapter about Ladakhi Buddhism, which pervades Ladakhi life so much that Ladakhi people 'appear almost casual about it'—though the author points out that this view is a misconception by Westerners who, in contrast to traditional Ladakh, come 'from societies where religion and life are very divided'.

All in all, this section of the book gives ample evidence of a lack of insecurity and fear, a higher quality of life, a joyful mutual interdependence, and unconditional emotional support, which is generally all too lacking in Western—or Westernized—societies today.

However, as we learn in the second section of the book, since the 1970s development and tourism have brought many changes to Ladakh—most of them for the worse. The young have been particularly influenced by the pull and attraction of what the author refers to as the Western monoculture. The capital city of Ladakh, Leh, has grown greatly, and now for the first time has traffic congestion, pollution, cinemas, tourist hotels, slums, and industry. Many young people have left the villages for the city, where they learn to imitate movie and television stars, and look to the West for their values. The author makes the important



observation that traditional societies, when they first come into contact with the West, see only the glamour, power, and wealth, not the pollution, stress, greed, and unhappiness which go with it.

In the past, money was rarely used by Ladakhis, and 'for 2,000 years a kilo of barley was a kilo of barley; now its value depends on the vagaries of the Indian rupee.' Local agriculture is undermined as subsidized grain comes over the borders. New schools have been built where the education serves 'almost as a blindfold, preventing children from seeing the context in which they live' and encourages Ladakhi children to think of their own culture as inferior.

The third section looks at this 'development hoax' in more detail, and contains

An attractive way of life and (below) outside forces close in

perhaps the most important message of the book. 'Planned change (planned by Westerners, based on Western values and ideas), which is supposed to raise the standard of living through technological advance and economic growth, [seems] to be doing more harm than good.' This is an issue not restricted to Ladakh, but which is relevant to many—perhaps most—societies in the so-called Third World. As succinctly put by the author, 'the development of Ladakh required massive restructuring of society', but 'at no stage was it even questioned whether or not the results of these tremendous efforts constituted an improvement on what had existed before.'

There certainly is, as the author says, 'an information gap in the West about the realities of aid and development in the Third World', and she suggests a new direction, which she terms 'counter-development'. This amounts to re-educating both the givers and the recipients of 'aid' and 'development', in order to counter misleading images of the Western industrial monoculture. 'The primary goal of counter-development would be to provide people with the means to make fully informed choices about their own future—ultimately the aim would be to promote self-respect and self-reliance thereby protecting life-sustaining diversity and truly sustainable development.' The arguments the author gives for such a 'development revolution' are very strong. It very much depends on people in the West becoming aware of the crucial importance of these issues, and demanding that the need for such changes be recognized by voluntary and governmental development agencies alike.

In Ladakh itself, Helena Norberg-Hodge has put her ideas into practice by setting up the 'Ladakh Project', a model programme of small-scale appropriate development, run by local people using alternative technology and local resources, and including education relevant to their needs 'providing people with the means to make informed choices about their development'.

A great deal is imposed on the Third World by the West and justified in the name of development. This is often done with the sincere intent of benefiting societies which are perceived by Westerners as 'underdeveloped'—but, as this book clearly illustrates, the consequences can be disastrous. Development has become an end in itself, an uncontrollable steam-roller flattening the rich cultural diversity of the planet. This book is long overdue: it is perhaps time to start questioning 'aid', as well as giving it. □

Darryl Cowley

MAHAYANA PERSPECTIVE

Light of Liberation: A History of Buddhism in India

(Crystal mirror series vol. 8)
ed. Elizabeth Cook
Published by Dharma
pp.480, paperback, £15.60

For one not particularly well versed in the detail of Buddhist history in India, this book was an immense pleasure to read. In its 400 or so well-written and well-researched pages *Light of Liberation* successfully combines mythology, historical fact, and Buddhist tradition.

Light of Liberation starts with an account of the cosmological and historical circumstances surrounding the Buddha's birth, followed in Part Two by a short biography of the Buddha, based mainly on the *Lalitavistara Sutra*. For those whose knowledge of the Buddha's life is founded mainly on the Pali Canon, this book provides an excellent alternative 'Life' from the Mahayana tradition: one that is certain to encourage many to read the two volume *Lalitavistara* account in full. Here, in the characteristic manner of the Mahayana, the Buddha's life is presented in a much more poetic, expansive, and 'cosmological' form than that found in the Pali texts. This section closes with a brief account of the different phases or 'turnings' of the Wheel of the Dharma.

Part Three describes in detail the gradual emergence of Buddhism in India, including the lives of the Sixteen Great Arhats, and the first great Council of the Sangha, when the Buddha's principal teachings were recited and organized into a form suitable for oral transmission. We also learn how, following two centuries of rapid growth, differences arose in the monastic Sangha concerning the interpretation of the *Vinaya*

and how, in time, a distinction developed 'between [the] conservative and progressive elements of the sangha' which led to the first division of the monastic sangha into the *Sthaviras*, or elders, and the *Mahasanghikas*, 'those of the great sangha'. The consequences of this first division become clearer as the 'history' progresses. Under the patronage of the great king Ashoka and his successors the 'conservatives' and the 'progressives' often practised and studied side-by-side in the same monasteries. But gradually, as the *Sthaviras* became more geographically isolated (in southern India and Sri Lanka), there developed two quite distinct schools, with their own more or less independent histories.

Part Four describes the 'Rise of the Mahayana' with its foundation in the *Mulasarvastivadin Pitaka* (the canon of one of the original eighteen Buddhist schools). An account is given of the life and teachings of several great Mahayana masters, including Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Asanga, and Vasubandhu, outlining their role in the development of Buddhist philosophy. A particularly interesting aspect of this section is the large amount of historical detail given on the growth and importance of the great Buddhist universities, such as Nalanda and Valabhi, and of the significant role of the Pala kings in facilitating the growth and practice of the Dharma. It was with the eventual decline of that great dynasty that Buddhism began to disappear from India.

This book contains much that is interesting and important to one's understanding of the history of Buddhism and provides a valuable starting point for further study. My main criticism concerns the illustrations, which are often overly complicated and dull,

falling well short of Dharma Publishing's normal high standards of visual presentation.

Perhaps I was also a little disappointed that this 'history' did not come full circle and describe Buddhism in India in the present century. My satisfaction in reading the book would have been complete if the account had included some mention of the work of great people like Anagarika Dharmapala, Dr Ambedkar, and (dare I say) Sangharakshita—people who have contributed so much to the revival of Buddhism in India today. □

Satyapala

ALSO RECEIVED

**Walking Through Walls:
A Presentation of Tibetan
Meditation**
Geshe Gedun Lodro
Snow Lion

The Two Truths
Guy Newland
Snow Lion

A Passage From Solitude
B. Alan Wallace
Snow Lion

Footsteps on the Diamond Path
ed. Tarchang Tulku
Dharma

Middle Land, Middle Way
S Dhammika
Buddhist Publication Society

Tibetan Arts of Love
Gedün Chöpel
Snow Lion

Being Peace
Thich Nhat Hanh
Rider

Old Path White Clouds
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Thich Nhat Hanh
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Simon Wiggins and Manjusvara will be visiting the following FWBO Centres in February and March.

They will be giving an evening presentation on the Dharma Revolution In India and how Karuna Fundraising Appeals in the UK supports it

Manchester Thursday 18 February

Sheffield Tuesday 23 February

Lancashire Wednesday 24 February

Leeds Thursday 25 February

Padmaloka Men's Event Friday 26 February –

Sunday 28 February

Norwich Tuesday 2 March

Ipswich Thursday 4 March

Edinburgh Monday 8 March

Glasgow Thursday 11 March

Bristol Monday 15 March

Birmingham Tuesday 16 March

London Buddhist Centre Saturday 20 March

(workshop 10am – 4pm)

Cambridge Tuesday 23 March

Croydon Thursday 25 March

West London Friday 26 March

Brighton Tuesday 30 March

Religious Conflict

The destruction of the Ayodhya Mosque by 200,000 militant Hindus seems to have worsened the internal political problems of India. The mosque had been built 460 years ago on a site sacred to Hinduism, associated with the birth of the god Rama. In recent years Hinduism has been enjoying something of a revival as a political force, with the Bharatiya Janata Party, which wants India to become a Hindu state, in the forefront. The television serialization of a Hindu sacred text, the *Ramayana*, has also contributed to increased Hindu fervour. Two actors from the series, with no political experience, have even been successful in parliamentary elections.

Since gaining independence from Britain India has been a secular state with a workable parliamentary democracy. The present worry is whether this system can continue to hold under the conditions of growing inter-religious strife. Hindu-Muslim conflict is probably the main danger, but India also contains other sizeable communities: Sikh, Christian, Jain, and Buddhist. Sikh militancy is a growing problem, and there are some difficulties between Tamil Hindus and ex-untouchable Buddhists in southern India, a spill-over from the civil war in Sri Lanka. Religion has played a significant role in India's recent political crises— notably in the assassinations of both Indira and Rajiv Gandhi. As India becomes an increasingly industrialized country, with all the social strains which this process generates, religious fundamentalist reaction is liable to intensify (a reaction that is by no means unique to India). Will such religious turbulence be outweighed by the secularizing tendencies of industrialism, so that toleration grows stronger?

India's problems offer distinct examples of a world-wide phenomenon. The old political and economic order is in a poor state. The decay of

state communism in many countries has revealed a vacuum. The triumphalist Western claims of a few years ago now seem hollow, with a severe, worldwide economic depression highlighting the poor understanding of economists and politicians. Ethnic and inter-religious conflicts loom large. There is a spirit of despondency and fear abroad. The old order is passing away, but greed, hatred, and delusion continue. The importance of some genuine and fruitful practice of the Dharma—to eradicate these 'unskilful roots' and cultivate their opposites—not just for oneself, but for the world at large, is becoming increasingly marked. □

Hindu militants attack the Ayodhya Mosque



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No More Church of England

For the first time in a century the status of the Church of England as an established religion has become a matter of public controversy. This is not before time: being the product of centuries of custom and tradition, Britain's constitutional affairs tend to go unexamined—a situation which suits the beneficiaries of the status quo. And as the *Independent* recently commented, 'the Church dreads disestablishment because it has no very good arguments against it.' The disarray within the Church following its decision to ordain women and the problematic position of the Prince of Wales following his marital separation have finally brought about a general awareness that the

established Church is an anomaly.

The British attachment to the Church is soaked in sentimentality, but this does not mean that the issue is unimportant. Twenty-six Anglican bishops sit in the House of Lords (a vestige of the time when bishops were powerful baronial land-owners); the Church anoints the Monarch who is also Supreme Governor of the Church of England and takes a coronation oath to be the Defender of the Faith. He or she must be a Protestant and may not marry a Roman Catholic. When the Church acts it does so with the authority of the state, because Church Law is also the law of England; in exchange, the Prime Minister has the right to appoint bishops and other senior clergy. Over and above these formal privileges, many areas of institutional and cultural life in Britain, from the blasphemy laws to the National Anthem, bear the imprint of Anglicanism.

Although the Church's position is based on

historical accident, it is usually justified by claims that it symbolizes the fact that England is a Christian country and that the Church provides moral leadership. But these claims look increasingly threadbare. At no time since the Church became independent of Rome has it represented the whole religious life of the country. In the nineteenth century, when non-conformist Christianity was a political force, disestablishment emerged as a possibility for the first time. The issue receded and was forgotten, but the case against establishment has grown in strength.

In 1993 Britain is a multi-faith society containing many non-Anglican Christians, many followers of other religions (including Buddhists), and many who are positively irreligious. The truth is that Britain is not a Christian country any more, and it is certainly not an Anglican country. Only a tiny proportion of the population are regular church-goers and the number of people attending Anglican services is

even exceeded by the number attending Roman Catholic ones.

The claim to moral leadership has also been fatally undermined. The Church is currently riven by ideological differences between conservative, 'progressive', and evangelical factions which have been brought to the point of schism by the controversy over the ordination of women. The Church has been unable to find a way forward which is true both to its traditions and to the conditions of modern life.

Although the case for disestablishment is overwhelming and unanswerable it should not be expected that the Church of England will voluntarily relinquish its privileges (although there is a minority of Anglicans who believe the Church would benefit by doing so). It is up to those who do not follow its teachings to protest at its privileges and to argue for the only constitutional settlement which can ensure full religious freedom: a secular state. □

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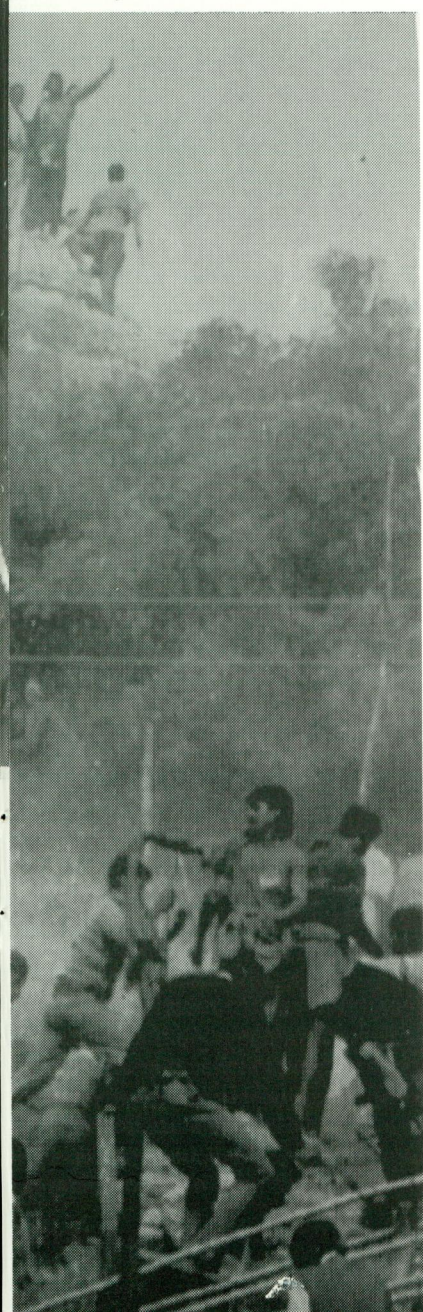
GENETIC QUESTIONS

Can there be such a thing as a Buddhist position on genetic engineering? Not so long ago the subject was confined to science fiction, but it is now becoming reality. The subject is one of great complexity; the potential of genetic engineering is only just beginning to be realized, and it has very many possible effects, both helpful and harmful. Genetic engineering could eradicate genetically transmitted diseases and lead to greatly improved food supplies. On the other hand it is not too difficult to envisage rather more sinister avenues of genetic engineering, motivated by financial or political considerations.

From a Buddhist perspective even the genetic engineering of animals for increased meat production may be of concern. Apart from the slaughter of animals for meat conflicting with the precept of not killing, there is the question of the suffering caused when consciousness is, in effect, trapped within an animal body genetically distorted to become little more than a sentient food factory. Could

human psychology be affected by genetic engineering? Could people be engineered to possess certain traits, and could this interfere with the human capacity to engage in *karma*—volitional acts? Could our ability to strive for spiritual development be compromised by engineered changes in the genes that affect the nature of the brain?

Perhaps one of the most extraordinary possibilities, which some experts now consider a probability within the next decade or so, is the technology to halt the process of physical ageing (which is now believed to be genetically controlled). The elixir of life, or its modern equivalent, may soon be with us. But what will be its consequences? How will it affect the growth and evolution of the human population? Will it provoke murderous resentment in those without access to it—or without access to the inherited wealth of their seniors? How will it affect our experience of the consequences of our actions? Is science about to let another major ill out of its Pandora's box? □



WOMEN'S ORDINATION RETREAT TEAM

31 October 1992 saw the public ordination of thirteen women into the Western Buddhist Order. So far this is the largest number of women ordained at any one time.

The focus of the retreat was a week of silence and intensive meditation (concentrating on the Six Element practice) with two or three private ordinations taking place each evening. As the retreatants performed the Metta Bhavana the ordinand left the main shrine-room to make her way, guided by night-lights, to a second shrine-room for the private ordination ceremony.

The week culminated in the public ordination ceremony, which was conducted by Shrimala. For those of us on the ordination team, it was particularly satisfying to welcome thirteen new dharmacharinis into the Order at the end of our first year's work.

us to keep up.

The only solution is to have our own Going for Refuge retreat centre. We have been working steadily towards achieving this: fundraising continues and we hope to have a centre in operation by 1994. From then on we will be able to hold more retreats and move away from the pressurized 'selection' retreats which can breed an inappropriate form of anxiety.

We are making some moves towards this in 1993. Apart from Going for Refuge retreats there will be a one-week and a one-month retreat, by invitation only, for those who are approaching readiness for ordination. The ordination retreat itself will come several months later, which means that the team will not have to come to a decision regarding people's readiness on the retreat itself. We would also like to extend



As well as helping these women to get to the point where they were ready to go for Refuge, we have also met many other women who have asked for ordination in the course of sixteen weeks of retreats. We hope that by the end of the year we will have met all the women in the UK who have asked for ordination. But, of course, more and more people are asking, so it is quite hard for

the ordination retreat so that there will be more time for people to prepare for their ordination and subsequently to establish themselves in their sadhana practice and in their new identity as a member of the Order.

So far, we have raised £59,000 towards our capital fund. This is a not inconsiderable achievement given our commitments to running retreats, and we have



The ordination team (left), and with the new dharmacharinis

been supported strongly by men and women who can see the importance of our project for the whole Movement. We are currently negotiating a mortgage, but still need at least another £50,000 before we can think of buying. We are also looking at financial projections in order to assess the kind of property we can

afford and the number of retreatants we will be able to cater for.

Once we have established the centre we will have a base for the women's ordination process in the UK. But we also want to visit women in other countries who have asked for ordination. Sanghadevi visited the USA in 1992, she and Shrimala will be going to India in 1993, and members of the team hope to visit



Australasia before too long.

Meanwhile, the Going for Refuge community, still situated in a rented house eleven miles from Taraloka, has renamed itself Samaya-vajra. We have been living together now for nine months under demanding conditions. Each of us spends half her time on retreat, and when we are back in the community we find ourselves catching up with administrative work,

fundraising, and preparation for the next retreat. Living and working together under these conditions and in a small space has been demanding but has enabled us to get to know each other. The community is now well established and we are looking forward to its being considerably strengthened when we are joined by Sanghadevi early this year. □
Dhammadinna

NORTH LONDON SKILLS AUCTION

The North London Buddhist Centre held one of the most successful fundraising events the Movement has seen when it held a *skills auction* in December which raised around £1,200 in one evening.

People from around the Centre donated skills ranging from a reflexology session to a 'Guided Tour of the Hidden Delights of Crouch End with Dharmachari Kulananda'.

Thirty-five people attended the auction in which bidding was carefully encouraged by Nagabodhi, the consummate auctioneer. □

SANGHARAKSHITA DIARY

Sangharakshita's autumn began with his return to London from his visit to the European Buddhist Union Congress in Berlin.

On 6 October he was interviewed by Suryaprabha for a film he is making on the early history of the FWBO. Two days later he travelled to the new North London Buddhist Centre where he led a dedication ceremony and a puja for around seventy people to mark the Centre's official inauguration. At the end of the month he visited an exhibition of paintings of St Jerome at the National Gallery. Jerome, the translator of the Vulgate, has long fascinated Sangharakshita—ten years ago he wrote two papers in which he reflected upon the figure's significance, *The Journey to Il Convento* and *St Jerome Revisited*.

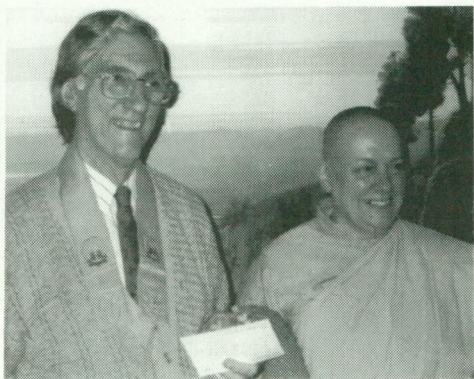
22 Sangharakshita was at Padmaloka at the time of the November National Order Weekend. There he saw a number of Order members for personal interviews, and also attended to some of the work of the Order Office. On 17 November Stephen Batchelor came to see him in connection with a book he is writing which is tantalizingly entitled *The Arising of Dharma: Buddhism in Europe 531BCE–1992*. One chapter of the book will concern Sangharakshita, but on this occasion Stephen Batchelor's questions ranged widely, and the conversation included reminiscences of Sangharakshita's Tibetan teachers.

On 6 December Sangharakshita conducted Ratnavandana's anagarika ceremony in the shrine-room of the London Buddhist Centre during a puja attended by more than fifty dharmacharinis. After this he was able to start work on the

next volume of his memoirs which continue the story of his years in Kalimpong. By mid-December two chapters had been completed, and after writing a few more he intends to put this work aside in order to write a short, polemical paper on the subject of ordination.

Sangharakshita received a steady stream of visitors throughout this period, including Order members and others from Estonia, New Zealand, Australia, India, Spain, Singapore, Germany, USA, and Holland as well as from the UK. Finally, he has steadily been catching up with his correspondence. □

Sangharakshita with
Ratnavandana and (right)
Ratnavandana with friends



NEW GROWTH IN THE NORTH

SHEFFIELD

Some FWBO centres start with a bang when a team of Order members moves to a new city to start activities. Others grow up gradually and almost unnoticed, until they represent a substantial presence. Such is the case in Sheffield, and in December 1992 three mitra ceremonies marked the start of a new phase for FWBO activities in the city.

There has been an FWBO presence in Sheffield since 1988 when Nagabodhi acquired a house there on behalf of Windhorse Publications. There have been some Dharma activities ever since, led in the main by

Punyamala, Advayachitta, and mitra Chris Pauling, who also live and work in the city. Last autumn, however, Susiddhi, the former chairman of our Glasgow centre, moved there to get FWBO activities more fully under way. Amoghavamsa will be moving to Sheffield later this year, and others are considering joining what will soon be a full centre team.

LIVERPOOL

Mangala arrived in Liverpool in late 1991 to start FWBO activities in the city. After a year running classes, courses, and weekend retreats his efforts bore fruit with the first mitra ceremony in early

January. Ten or twelve regulars now meet each week in rented premises, but Mangala is currently negotiating the lease on large but inexpensive premises in the centre of town to accommodate a permanent centre.

NORTH WALES

For the last three years Order members from Vajraloka meditation centre in North Wales have been running classes in Llangollen, the nearest town to the centre. Now Chittadhara, who was involved in running these classes during the two years he spent at Vajraloka, has



rights in Tibet.

Virachitta led a short ceremony during which participants offered candles in front of a shrine in memory of one million-plus people who have died in Tibet as a direct result of the People's Republic of China's invasion and occupation.

After a short meditation came a candle-lit procession, under a 'Don't Forget Tibet' banner, to the University chaplaincy. A couple of talks were now given—one by a representative of Amnesty International—to a larger throng. The evening ended with a screening of Mike Lemle's documentary on the Dalai Lama, 'Compassion in Exile'.

For more information on either the Tibet Support Group, or Amnesty International, please contact Sunanda or Virachitta at the Birmingham Buddhist Centre. □



moved to Wrexham to carry on this work in the local towns. As well as supporting the class in Llangollen he leads a group in Llanfyllen, a course in Chester, and has been invited to visit an independent Buddhist meditation group in

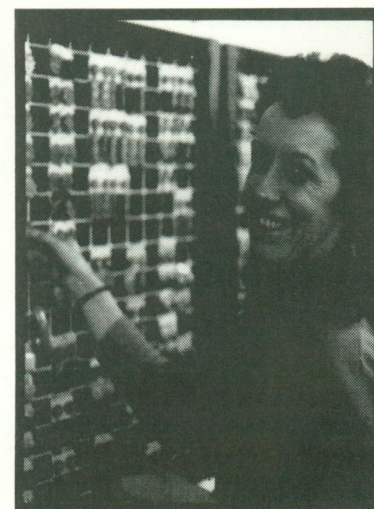


Prestatyn. So far the response has been very positive and he intends to expand activities in 1993.

REMEMBERING TIBET

About twenty people gathered at the Birmingham

Buddhist Centre on Thursday 10 December to mark the United Nations Human Rights Day. The evening, organized jointly by the Centre team and the Birmingham University branch of the Tibet Support Group, focused on human



Woo Brown (far left) festooned with streamers after her mitra ceremony in Sheffield, and with new mitras (from left) Mike Daniels and Guy Merchant. Remembering Tibet at Birmingham Centre (top) and Ruth Rees in Birmingham's Christmas Evolution shop

VAJRAKUTA – A NEW KIND OF FWBO CENTRE

Vajrakuta is the first FWBO centre for men that is exclusively dedicated to Dharma study and reflection. Apart from ethics and spiritual friendship, the traditional means for developing insight—the true goal of Buddhism—are ‘listening’ (or studying), reflecting, and meditating. Reflection on the Dharma is a necessary basis for insight—but such reflection depends upon correct understanding of the Dharma.

We know that the FWBO has important ideas to contribute to the evolution of the Dharma in the West. Most of these ideas originate with

other centre is doing, will help to develop the connection between Dharma study and meditation in all the activities of Vajrakuta.

At present Vajrakuta is run by a residential community of six men, all of them dedicated to Dharma study as a spiritual practice. Three of them spend part of their time working for Vajraloka; the others make up the study team which is responsible for formulating the overall vision for the study centre, drawing up programmes, and leading and supporting many of the events. Two of these are long-standing members of the

Western Buddhist Order: Sagaramati, celebrated for his broad Dharma knowledge and his lively style of teaching, and Kamalashila, well known for his

our teacher, Sangharakshita. If we want to communicate them clearly to a highly diversified Buddhist scene, we will need to broaden our knowledge and deepen our understanding of Sangharakshita’s Dharma teaching. Vajrakuta has been set up to help this process.

What kind of a place will it be? Study at Vajrakuta will not be just an academic pursuit, or a substitute for real Dharma practice. All the events will be linked to the development of insight through meditation, reflection, ritual, and spiritual friendship. Vajrakuta’s proximity to Vajraloka, the men’s meditation retreat centre—just half a mile further up the valley—will doubtless foster a special link with meditation practice. Well established friendships between members of both the communities, and a mutual interest in what the

excellent meditation teaching as well as his qualities as a study leader.

Each member of the community is working to clarify his understanding of the Dharma by exploring whatever he, personally, finds inspiring. There is also a collective dimension to their study—community members all try, as often as possible, to study together every day. They expect some interesting Dharma research to develop out of their communication.

What can Vajrakuta offer at present? Firstly, there is an ongoing programme with different types of events for Order members, mitras, and Friends. Many of these are study seminars based on Sangharakshita’s lecture series, or on texts upon which he has led study in the past. These events aim particularly at men Order members who want to qualify as mitra study group leaders, but they are

also open to other dharmacharis. Vajrakuta also holds study seminars which break new ground—for example by exploring connections between the Dharma and Western philosophy. Some events tackle the problem of how to make study effective—and how to lead study groups. Finally, the community would like to offer facilities for small conferences, conventions, and get-togethers (like the brahmacharya conference in January).

Vajrakuta has always encouraged guests to come and stay for long or short periods. Unfortunately there are restrictions at present on the number of guests Vajrakuta can cater for—especially while events are on. But there is always an opportunity to book the caravan just behind the house, either for a solitary retreat or for a period of personal study.

Vajrakuta has a good reference library of Dharma texts and books on Buddhism (which is about to expand significantly, thanks to a substantial donation from Sangharakshita). There is a definite need to expand the library with more source material, commentaries, important extracts from scholarly journals, new books on Buddhism, and so on.

The buildings also offer

much potential for expansion which the community wants to realize step by step. Vajrakuta is an attractive old Welsh farmhouse (built around 1600). It is large and comfortable, with ample grounds and beautiful surrounding countryside. The general plan is to convert the entire complex into a place that provides retreatants, guests, and community members with personal space and comfort, without losing the charm of the existing buildings. □

REBUILDING

The start of 1993 saw the completion of a major reorganization and expansion of the communities in the London Buddhist Centre complex.

The London Buddhist Centre occupies the ground floor of a large converted fire station in Bethnal Green, and for the last sixteen years the four floors above the Centre have been occupied by Sukhavati community.

During the building project of the late 1970s numbers swelled to thirty or forty, while over the last few years a community of between ten and twenty men, many of them working at the Centre,



INDIAN UPDATE

AMARAVATI

TBMSG activities (Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha Sahayaka Gana is the Indian name for the FWBO) have been started in Amaravati, a large city in central India. There are no Order members living in the city yet, but Ratnasiddhi from the Wardha Centre travels there each week for a class attended by over 300 people. A Friend has donated accommodation which provides the focus for a community very enthusiastic about the Movement's work.

Many of those involved are young and educated and they include people from the Brahmin and Kunbi communities as well as ex-Untouchables. In October Chandrashila led a retreat at the time of the Hindu festival of Diwali which was attended by 274 people. Vivekaprabha describes the Amaravati Buddhists as 'devoted and generous' with 'great faith in the Dhamma life and our Sangha'.

In all there were thirteen TBMSG retreats across western India over Diwali, attended by 1,800 people. □

GANDHINAGAR

TBMSG has been working in Gandhinagar, the capital of Gujarat State, for eighteen months. In October, seventy people from the city held their first festival on Ashoka Vijaya Dashmi which celebrates Ashoka, the great Buddhist emperor of India. Festivities included songs and Gujarati circle dances, or *gurbas*. □

YEOTMAL

Although the great majority of Indians live in rural areas, TBMSG activities have been concentrated in the cities. But this pattern is

gradually changing as is suggested by the experience of Sarul village in Yeotmal district in eastern Maharashtra. A Friend has donated a large plot of land, and although the villagers are all labourers they have raised the money to build a place for meditation. The building is calm and quiet and the villagers come together regularly for meditation and Dharma classes. □

CONVERSIONS IN DEHRADUN

Recent years have seen a wave of mass conversions to Buddhism among the Indian ex-Untouchables. In a recent ceremony seventy families, comprising over two hundred people, became Buddhists. Jyotipala gave a talk on the meaning of conversion, a bhikshu from Agra led the converts in the chanting of the Refuges and Precepts, and Abhayaraja administered the twenty-two vows, expressing the rejection of Hinduism and the embracing of Buddhism, devised by the ex-Untouchables' leader, Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar. □

FUNDRAISING IN INDIA

The TBMSG Centre in Ulhasnagar has taken a lead in fundraising among members of the local population who are sympathetic to its work. Anomadassi has established a fundraising structure consisting of ten committees, each with five members and led by a mitra. Each member of the committee goes from door-to-door each day to ask for contributions to the Centre. In general they have met with a very positive response, raising 48,000 rupees (about £1,100) in two months. Just as important, the fundraisers have gained tremendously in confidence and the Centre has taken an important step towards financial self-sufficiency. □

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A regulars class in India.
Chittadhara (right) at Vajrakuta
Retreat Centre (above)

SUKHAVATI

has occupied the cavernous premises.

In late 1992, Sukhavati community embarked upon its first major reorganization since it was established. The living space has now been divided so as to provide accommodation for two quite separate communities. In January the seven men who work in Friends Foods wholefood shop moved into the top two floors of the building. A new bathroom, kitchen, and lounge have been constructed so that they will occupy a self-contained unit entirely separate from Sukhavati community—now accommodated on the

revamped first and second floors. The Friends Foods community is now planning to turn the attic into their shrine-room.

These changes have come at the end of a long period in which the members of Sukhavati have been clarifying their aims. Sukhavati is now a 'Going for Refuge' community, which means that all those living there are either Order members or men who have asked for ordination; its collective aim is to help those who have asked for ordination to become ready to be ordained. The key to this is the development of friendships

and the deepening of communication between members of the community.

In the past, the size of the community has meant that things could be rather disparate, and intimate connections have not always grown up between its members. The reorganization has proceeded on the basis that living in greater proximity to one another can mean greater interaction.

Just across the LBC courtyard is Padmakalika, a community which was established a year ago for men who are new to community life. People there have found themselves living

at close quarters and the result has been a friendly and harmonious community. Indeed, all six have asked to join Sukhavati community and, if all goes according to plan, they should move in during the summer, thus increasing the size of Sukhavati to around seventeen.

Meanwhile, another six men have already asked to become members of the next Padmakalika community, so by the autumn there will be up to thirty-five people living in the LBC complex. They will comprise a substantial hub to the far larger LBC mandala. □

EVOLUTION CHRISTMAS

For each of the last few years Windhorse Trading (the FWBO's Right Livelihood gift trade business) has opened Evolution gift shops for the Christmas period in collaboration with teams of people from local FWBO centres. In spite of the recession, the 1992 Evolution Christmas operation was very considerable indeed, twice the size of the previous year's. Seven new shops were opened to complement the six permanent shops run by Windhorse Trading. There were Christmas shops in Peterborough, Norwich (pictured right), Birmingham, Glasgow, and West London, and two in Manchester. These alone employed over forty people full-time as well as a large number of part-timers; they were located in busier sites than in 1991, and at the time of writing their projected turnover is over £450,000.

The total projected profit from the shops is around £70,000, which will be divided between causes sponsored by Windhorse Trading and causes sponsored by the local shop teams. For instance, the Peterborough and West London shops were raising money for the new centre premises in Cambridge and West London. A women's team in Manchester raised money for the women's ordination retreat centre, and a men's team there raised money for Clear Vision video.

Satyaloka from Windhorse Trading is now employed full-time in order to liaise with the shop teams. His job is to encourage team development and help the teams find ways of making their work a spiritual practice. One measure of the success of this approach is that two or three of the Christmas shops are hoping to continue in 1994 as members of the permanent Evolution chain. □



26 ETHICAL FINANCE

For some years the FWBO in the UK has had links with an ethical investment company called Mercury Provident, a bank connected with the anthroposophy movement founded by Rudolph Steiner. The links have strengthened this year with further loans which have helped with the purchase of FWBO centres in West London and Cambridge.

Mercury Provident lends only to projects which have a strong ethical element, including Steiner schools, organic farms, co-operative businesses, environmental projects etc. Investors in Mercury Provident are free to specify which projects they wish to back, or they can leave the decision up to the trustees. News about the various projects is made available through a regular newsletter distributed free to investors.

For more information about investments or loans, contact Mercury Provident direct at Orlingbury House, Lewes Road, Forest Row, East Sussex, RH18 5AA (Tel 0342 823739). □

BUDDHIST ART ON SHOW

From 27 February to 25 April 'Expressions of Enlightenment', an exhibition of Buddhist art, will be on show at the Manchester City Art Gallery. The exhibition is organized jointly by the Gallery and the Manchester Buddhist Centre, having been conceived as a culminating event in the FWBO's jubilee year. It will combine some very fine exhibits from the Buddhist East with pieces by Western Buddhist artists to suggest that the Dharma is a living spiritual tradition inspiring Western artists today. □

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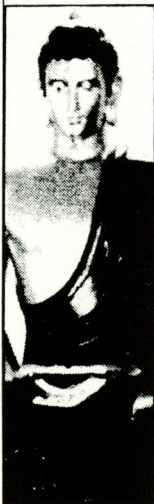
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BUDDHIST MEDITATION
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For men Order members

19 Mar – 2 Apr **Brahmaviharas Retreat**

9 Apr – 16 Apr **Spring Retreat**

16 Apr – 30 Apr **Mindfulness Retreat**

7 May – 21 May **Meditation and Insight Retreat**

23 May **Open Day**

29 May – 1 Jul **Building Project**

9 Jul – 23 Jul **'Mandala of Enlightenment'**

24 Jul – 3 Aug **Five Spiritual Faculties**

6 Aug – 19 Aug **Hot Season Retreat**

21 Aug – 4 Sep **Brahmaviharas Retreat**

7 Sep – 17 Sep **Meditation Refresher Retreat**

17 Sep – 30 Sep **Women's Insight Retreat**

For women Order members

8 Oct – 22 Oct **Men's Insight Retreat**

For men Order members

22 Oct – 5 Nov **Meditation and Insight Retreat**

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29 Nov – 10 Dec **Teachers' Retreat**

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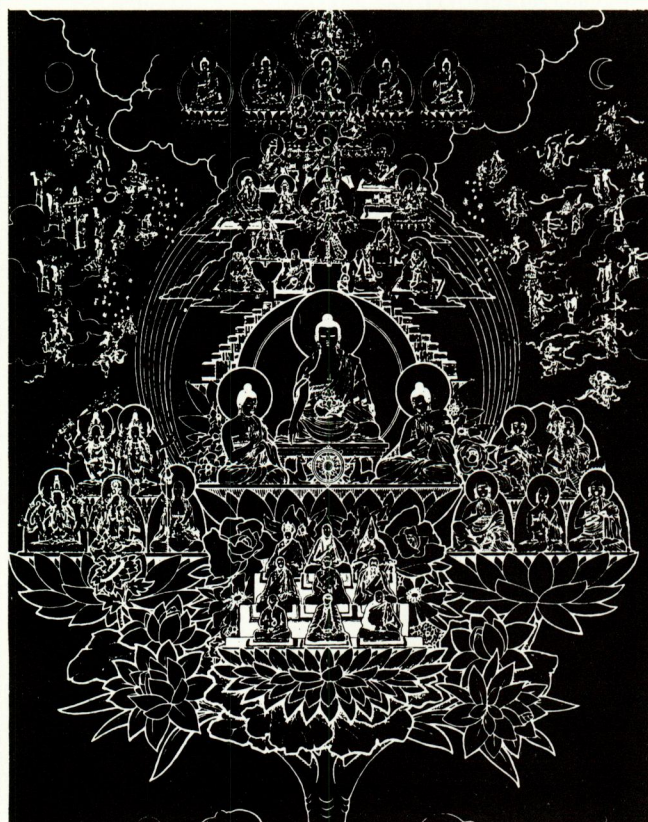
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Cambridge Buddhist Centre , 19 Newmarket Road, Cambridge, CB5 8EG. Tel: 0223-460252
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West London Buddhist Centre , 112 Westbourne Park Road, London W2 5PL. Tel: 071-727 9382
Centro Budista de Valencia , Calle Ciscar 5, pta 3, 46005 Valencia. Tel: 06-374 0564
FWBO Germany , Buddhistisches Zentrum Essen, Herkulesstr. 13, 4300 Essen 1, Germany. Tel: 0201-230155
Helsingin Buddhalainen Keskus , PL 288, SF-00121, Helsinki 12, Finland
FWBO Netherlands , P.O. Box 1559, 3500 BN Utrecht, Netherlands
Västerländska Buddhistordens Vänner , Södermannagatan 58, S-116 65 Stockholm, Sweden. Tel: 08-418849
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