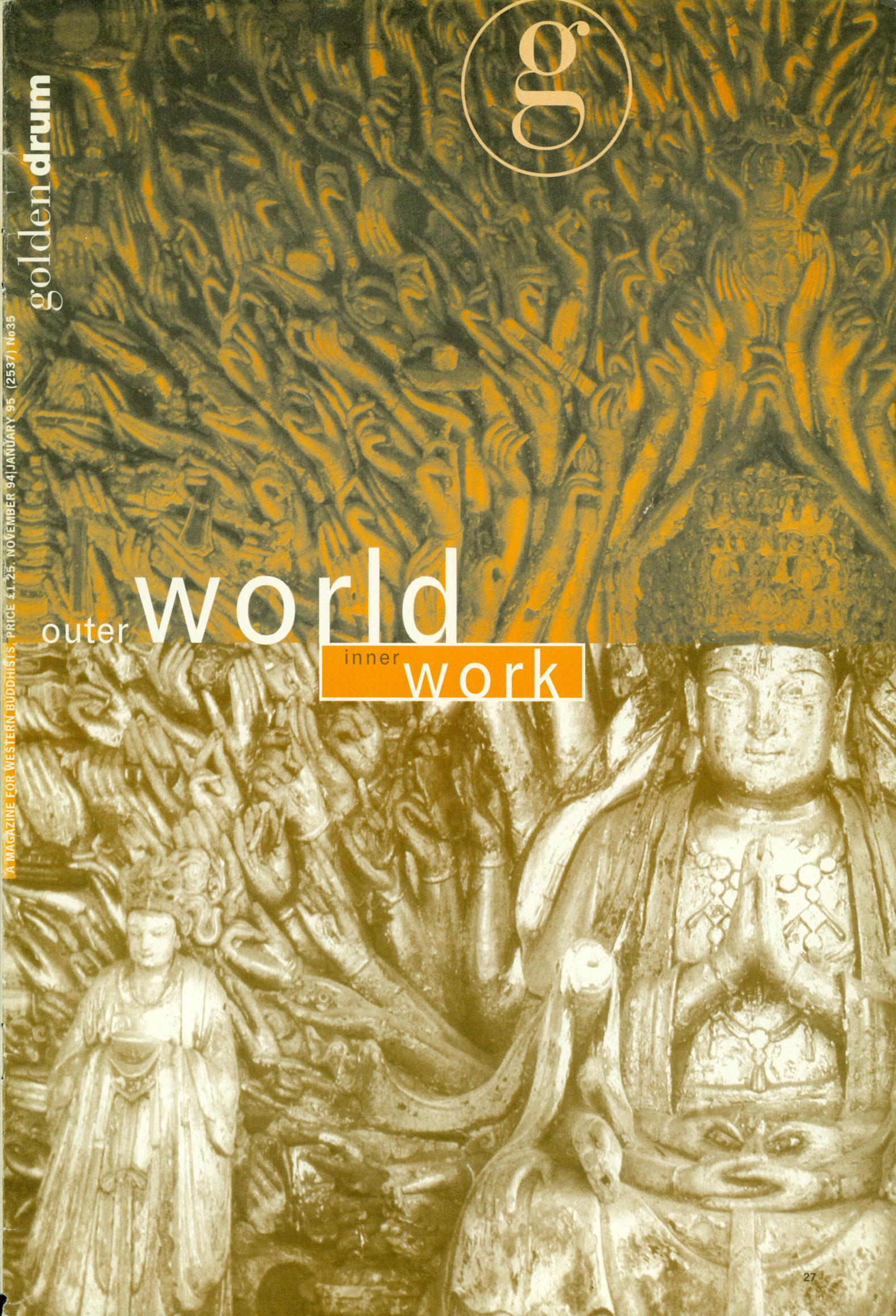




outer world
inner work



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Golden Drum 35

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Cover

**Thousand-armed
Avalokiteshvara from
Baodingshan, Dazu,
Northern China, carved out of
88 square metres of cliff.
Each hand brings an
implement to the service of
beings who suffer. In the
palm of each hand is an eye,
representing Wisdom.**

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Throughout its 2,500-year history the Dharma has taken root in many different cultures. While always remaining recognizable and never compromising its basic tenets, Buddhism has adapted itself to the societies in which it has flourished, giving rise to such seemingly diverse forms as the austere aestheticism of Zen and the colourful mysticism of Tibetan Buddhism. Western Buddhists are now faced with the fascinating and crucial question of how the Dharma will take root in our industrialized society. To ensure that this happens, and that Buddhism outlives its current fashionable profile, will require of its practitioners the simultaneous perfection of two modes of being, one centrifugal, one centripetal – a movement outward, and a movement inward.

In terms of Buddhist images these could be described by the Buddhas Ratnasambhava and Amitabha. The centrifugal, outward movement is well symbolized by the golden yellow Buddha Ratnasambhava, with his gesture of generosity, his giving of precious things, his abundance. Like the organic rise of sap in a healthy tree, our Dharma practice must express itself not only verbally but in appropriate, helpful, kindly action. This abundant generosity manifests in breadth of practice, in a moving out towards the world.

Like all of the figures in the Five Buddha Mandala, Ratnasambhava transforms a poison of the conditioned world into a transcendental Wisdom. In his case, the poison is pride, arrogance, thinking of oneself as special. His Wisdom is that of equality, which sees all beings as equally alive, equally valuable and worthy of his generosity. As in the third stage of the Metta Bhavana practice, his love and generosity transcend like and dislike, recognizing in all beings the potential for growth, and giving the necessary encouragement to foster it. His Wisdom is that of solidarity and interconnectedness.

Within the FWBO the growth of this sense of solidarity and interconnectedness is vital if we are going to move out from our Dharma centres into the community, especially if we are going to engage in any form of helpful activity. This is already happening to some extent, as Order members engage in prison visiting, as they work with people living with HIV and AIDS,



with the bereaved and the dying, with the Samaritans, and in establishing classes which make the meditation practices and the Dharma more accessible to people who would not necessarily consider attending a Buddhist Centre. Art centres and health centres are beginning to flourish in some of our urban mandalas, as are initiatives which involve Order members in helping set their local authorities' agenda for religious education.

This centrifugal movement needs to be balanced by a more centripetal tendency. Breadth needs to be informed by depth; Ratnasambhava's generous impulse to move outward is balanced by the stillness and calmness of Amitabha's posture of meditation, the still point achieved at the setting of the sun. While the Wisdom of equality sees the solidarity of all life, the discriminating Wisdom of Amitabha recognizes the uniqueness of every being. He transforms the poison of attachment, the desire to cling to 'that one special person', into the Wisdom which sees the distinct 'specialness' of all beings. Amitabha's emblem is the lotus, which reminds us of the Buddha's Enlightened vision of humanity as a pool of lotuses. All had the potential to grow from the mud, but some were more open than others. Likewise some human beings are more developed than others. The maturity of a spiritual movement grows out of the recognition of and receptivity to spiritual

hierarchy. We can become more open to the influence of those who genuinely have more depth in their practice than we do, but this openness must emerge from our own experience, through a process involving dialogue and creative debate.

This depth and reaching inward are manifesting in our Movement as our retreat centres become more established, as more meditative situations are encouraged, as the vihara at Guhyaloka creates a situation for at least some Order members to live a monastic life-style. Most importantly it will come about as we each take our individual practice deeper, gaining knowledge and experience of the Dharma. There can be no dialogue between our culture and Buddhism without an incisive and clear awareness of what exactly the Dharma is.

Both these trends, the centrifugal and the centripetal, need to be present and balanced in the life of each individual practitioner, in the activities of each Dharma centre, and indeed in any spiritual movement as a whole. One without the other is less than satisfactory. An outwardly-oriented emphasis without depth will result in shallow, frenetic social activity which will be much less effective than the world needs. It will lead to an immature response, putting social Elastoplast on a wound which desperately needs spiritual cleansing and healing. We will drown out the sound of the cries of the

the facts of life

One morning last year, I was woken by a ring on the doorbell. It was the milkman, who told me that the old lady across the road needed help. Jessie was 99, and clearly distressed. She had become very frightened in the night by the certainty that she was going to die. She's a tough old lady, a little deaf, but remarkably robust for her 100th year. I sat with her, holding her hand, taking in not least the quality of skin of such an old person – the smooth, fine coolness of it, like dry sand on the beach in the evening. No longer alone and with the chance to talk about her fear, Jessie soon seemed happier, even though nothing could change the facts of her situation.

In terms of the Metta Bhavana practice, my encounter with Jessie was a meeting with a 'neutral' person, an old lady I'd frequently seen sitting by her doorstep on sunny days, but with whom I'd not exchanged more than a few words. Suddenly one of the most important facts of her life, her death, had erupted into mine. Needless to say she's no longer a 'neutral' person to me.

This event set me thinking about the wider community in East London where I live, about people with whom, living and working in my Buddhist environment, I would never normally have much contact. It reminded me of Sangharakshita's comments about the need for a 'constant multiplication of our points of contact with the external world, a ceaseless enlargement and elaboration of that delicate network of sympathy and affection by which we are connected in a thousand ways not only with all other human beings, but with every other form of life'. This is important not only in order to develop compassion in ourselves, but so that the Dharma may take root in the West.

The fact is it's not always easy to respond. Even in this instance, I was as much aware of the fact that Jessie's deafness made a meeting which was essentially intimate not only difficult but at times embarrassing – I'm not used to having to shout to make myself heard. In the microcosm of our interaction, there was a tension for me between the desire to move out towards her, and the desire to be self contained. Such tensions abound in life, whether it's too much work to do and not enough time, or managing not to lose patience with an elderly parent or child who seems to push one too far. Tendencies to withdrawal and involvement can be painful, but they can also evoke both the salt and sea-spray of Hinayana rigorousness, and the warmth and balm of Mahayana inclusiveness. In the FWBO, we are in the process of learning about both, and trying to practise them in the most pragmatic ways because the working out of one's own capacity to grow is everyone's birthright and responsibility. Our actions of body, speech, and mind are vital because they create us and the world we live in: 'there are no passengers in the spiritual life.'

In a poem by E.E. Cummings called 'a man who had fallen among thieves', he presents a 'good Samaritan' story, showing

how often we choose indifference to the specific grubby or painful facts of people in need, and also what it can feel like if we do choose to respond. We may not always manage it elegantly but the point is, heart pounding with fear or not, to respond anyway and cross the boundaries of conditioning we struggle so hard to keep in place; who knows what other dimensions we may unexpectedly crash into?

The emphasis in this issue of *Golden Drum* is on the fact that we need both to meditate and to exercise the modes of daily life: to reach out and allow ourselves to be touched by what's around us; to reach in and develop the resources in ourselves to be able to meet the world in ways that will help. This, for most of us, is an ongoing process. We need breadth and depth, both inward attention and outward action, not so much in balance as in tension. We need to be aware of what working with this tension can give rise to.

For the Dharma to take root in the West we as practising Buddhists need to reach a point of no return in our commitment to the Buddhist path. The people who live in my street need to meet bodhisattvas: people born and bred in this culture, but in whom the split between self and other has begun to be decisively overcome. Those of us who are practising Buddhists have set ourselves, however tentatively, on the path to becoming those bodhisattvas.

Touchstones are needed to help us feel our way as we seek to integrate ourselves and our society into Buddhism. Personally, on the level of our own inner practice, there are the Buddha's words to Mahaprajapati Gotami – paraphrased by Sangharakshita: 'If [the teachings] lead to an expansion of consciousness, to an illumination of mind and purification of heart, to a higher degree of spiritual sharp-sightedness, to emancipation from the fetters of egoism, then they may be considered as the teaching of the Master Himself.'

To help us become more and more aware of what the Dharma is, and to be sure our outward action expresses it, we can look to the 'Tī Ratna Vandana', a popular devotional verse of Indian Buddhism. According to this description, the Dharma is communicated in ways appropriate to the listener; you see the results in your own experience; its truths are always relevant because they address the real facts of life; it's not something to be accepted with blind belief but tested in one's own experience; practice yields discernible progress towards more ethical and expansive states of being; and it is to be examined, reflected on, and made one's own, which, eventually, makes us 'wise'. The articles which follow express, each in their own way, some echo of these qualities. I hope that they will encourage deeper reflection and ever more effective ventures, so that the Dharma may take deeper root in our meditation, in our actions, and in the world.

Dhammadassini

Stillness^{and} Solidarity

Parami explains the need for both in an effective spiritual life

world with the clamour of our rush to help, often inappropriately, or by the howling wind of our fear and apparent impotence when faced by the very real suffering in the world around us. Our compassionate activity must originate in the deep well of meditative stillness.

A movement with no outward-going, altruistic dimension is not a spiritual movement. There is always the danger of spiritual individualism, of falling into the trap of mere 'personal development', or of creating an 'ivory tower' built from intellectual knowledge of the teachings but without the foundations of real spiritual experience and practice. In the model of the Tibetan Wheel of Life, this type of insular complacency is to be found in the realm of the gods. They lack commitment to the practice of generosity, and so they fall from apparent idyll to actual enervation: the lotuses on which the gods sit eventually begin to rot.

On the collective level of a Buddhist centre, or of the Movement, we need to find unity in diversity. Diversity, or breadth, can be found in the range of our activities. We must be broad enough to contain both Glastonbury and Guhyaloka; both a mixed camping retreat for newcomers and an intensive single-sex monastic situation. The unity or depth must come from our common practices, and from the harmonious acknowledgement and application of the principles of spiritual hierarchy. On the individual level we need to find a rhythm of balanced practice. Externally this might mean having a range of different activities balanced within an on-going life-style or it might mean periods of time when our main emphasis is on one particular kind of activity, such as work, meditation, or study. However we organize it, we need to strike a balance overall, with outward-going phases complemented by periods of more intensive meditation practice and Dharma study. Internally it means engaging with both trends intensively, and understanding the spiritual significance of the simultaneous development of these seemingly contradictory tendencies, one towards withdrawal, the other towards involvement.

Withdrawal from the world occurs as we develop more and more insight into the unsatisfactory nature of the Conditioned; as

we more and more deeply understand and experience impermanence and insubstantiality – the truth that not only does nothing last for ever but that there is no *thing*, in the sense of a fixed, unchanging entity or soul, which *can* last for ever. The world of the Conditioned can offer no ultimate satisfaction or happiness, and so with this realization we move away from, withdraw from, the world.

However, at the same time we realize the suffering caused by our inability to live at ease with this truth. We see the suffering of beings everywhere, as we all try to create permanent, fixed sources of happiness from things which are not capable of giving it to us. We see the very real suffering, so evident in the world around us, on an individual scale, but also worldwide, in war and genocide. When we see this we cannot but move towards the world to try to alleviate that suffering in whatever way possible.

These movements of withdrawal and involvement give rise to a tension within the individual. It is hard to hold these two together, hard to have a heart big enough and open enough to contain the inevitability of loss while still being able to love. Traditionally, we are told, it is in working creatively with this tension that

we create the conditions for the arising of the bodhichitta. 'Bodhichitta' is often translated as the thought of, or the will towards, Enlightenment. But it is much more than a thought, much more than ego-based volition. It is a spiritual experience with enough depth of practice and enough spiritual insight behind it to move one towards the ideal in a way that will not be obstructed. It is the desire to alleviate the suffering of the world so deeply felt, and balanced with so much individuality and integration, that every fibre of one's being is involved, dedicated to that most beautiful of human strivings: the Bodhisattva Ideal, the Ideal of Enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

When the Bodhichitta has arisen the apparent contradiction between the dynamism of Ratnasambhava and the stillness of Amitabha has been transcended. There is depth and there is breadth; there is calmness and there is compassionate activity; there is individual practice and there is kindness. When enough individuals are working creatively with this tension, perhaps most likely when there are enough collective situations giving them the opportunity and the encouragement to do so, the desire to embody the Ideal will become more and more real for more and more people. As this happens, we will create the conditions through which we will ensure the survival of the Dharma in the West, the conditions in which Buddhism will take root in our culture and society, giving birth to real Western Buddhism, and ensuring the necessary alleviation of the world's suffering.

We develop insight into the unsatisfactory nature of the conditioned





Learning to strike a delicate but fundamental balance between inward attention and outward action is what makes leading the spiritual life such an art. Different people will approach the attempt from very different starting-points, and over time the balance between the two poles will change, making it an eternally creative experiment and enterprise. For me the balance has been shifting over the past two years and it has led me into some new areas of work and practice.

For the last four years I have been wholeheartedly absorbed in the life and work of the London Buddhist Centre, first as Centre Manager but more recently as 'Outreach Worker'. I leapt into the role of Centre Manager very soon after returning from my ordination at Guhyaloka and it was a very busy, creative, satisfying time for me. I was not only working at the London Buddhist Centre but also completing a degree in business studies which I had started before going on my ordination retreat; not only working with others to reshape Sukhavati, the large community in which we lived, but also keeping up the relationship with my wife and two children; not only these but also following up a number of personal interests and research topics to do with meditation and the figure of Avalokiteshvara.

As time went by I realized more and more clearly that what sustained me in my work at the Centre was a strong personal myth. I saw myself as having one foot in the Order, in the spiritual community; and one foot in the world. I saw myself at work as living on the boundary between the Order and the world, facing both into the Order and into the world; working to introduce the Order to the world and the world to the Order. I loved being able, through my work, to help Order members set up new ventures and new ways of teaching the Dharma; and I loved watching people coming along to the Centre and gradually becoming involved more and more deeply in what we were doing. I

loved the variety of people that came to the LBC and considered themselves to be Buddhists. I knew that had I not become a Buddhist I would never have come into contact with such a wide range of people in such depth. In the Order I encouraged and worked with those Order members who wanted to teach – we researched ideas, followed up opportunities, tried things out, and learned by our mistakes. In the outside world I was always looking for opportunities for us to expand, and always trying to say 'yes!' to people asking us to initiate activities in their area. And, of course, there was always plenty of routine administration and 'desk work' to be done to keep the Centre in good order. A lot of my time was spent in one way or another typing away on my faithful laptop computer, preparing proposals, writing reports, updating our mailing list, and so on. It was a very busy life, and one of my mottos was 'be stretched, but not stressed'!

After working in this way for some three years I became dissatisfied: I came to feel more and more that I wanted to change the balance of my life. In particular I came to feel that I had, to some degree, been hiding behind my desk, talking too much to my computer, and I began to want to come more directly into relationship with the individual people coming to the Centre. Over a long retreat last autumn I formulated with Kevala, a friend in the Order, the idea of initiating a new project at the LBC, the 'Outreach Project', and freeing myself up from desk work to devote myself to this instead. I saw myself attracting like-minded people from around the Centre, bringing together an informal team dedicated to seeking out new possibilities for teaching outside the Centre itself, and actually making those possibilities happen. I visualized us as explorers, exploring new territory, pushing up into the mountains of Samsara, creating tributaries down through which new life would flow into the main body of the Centre and the Movement. I felt that we could go in almost any direction, and in many different directions at once, the directions emerging from our own interests, from seeing unexpected opportunities, and from direct requests which we would respond to. (I had other reasons too: I wanted to explore some of these tributaries myself! For a long time I have aspired to be wholly myself in every

SALLYING FORTH

To boldly go.... Lokabandhu explores teaching the Dharma beyond the Buddhist Centre

Above Glastonbury

Right Tomorrow the world:

Lokabandhu in the Outreach office at the LBC

situation, whether with bank manager or hippy raver, gay man or black woman. This too has been part of my personal myth.)

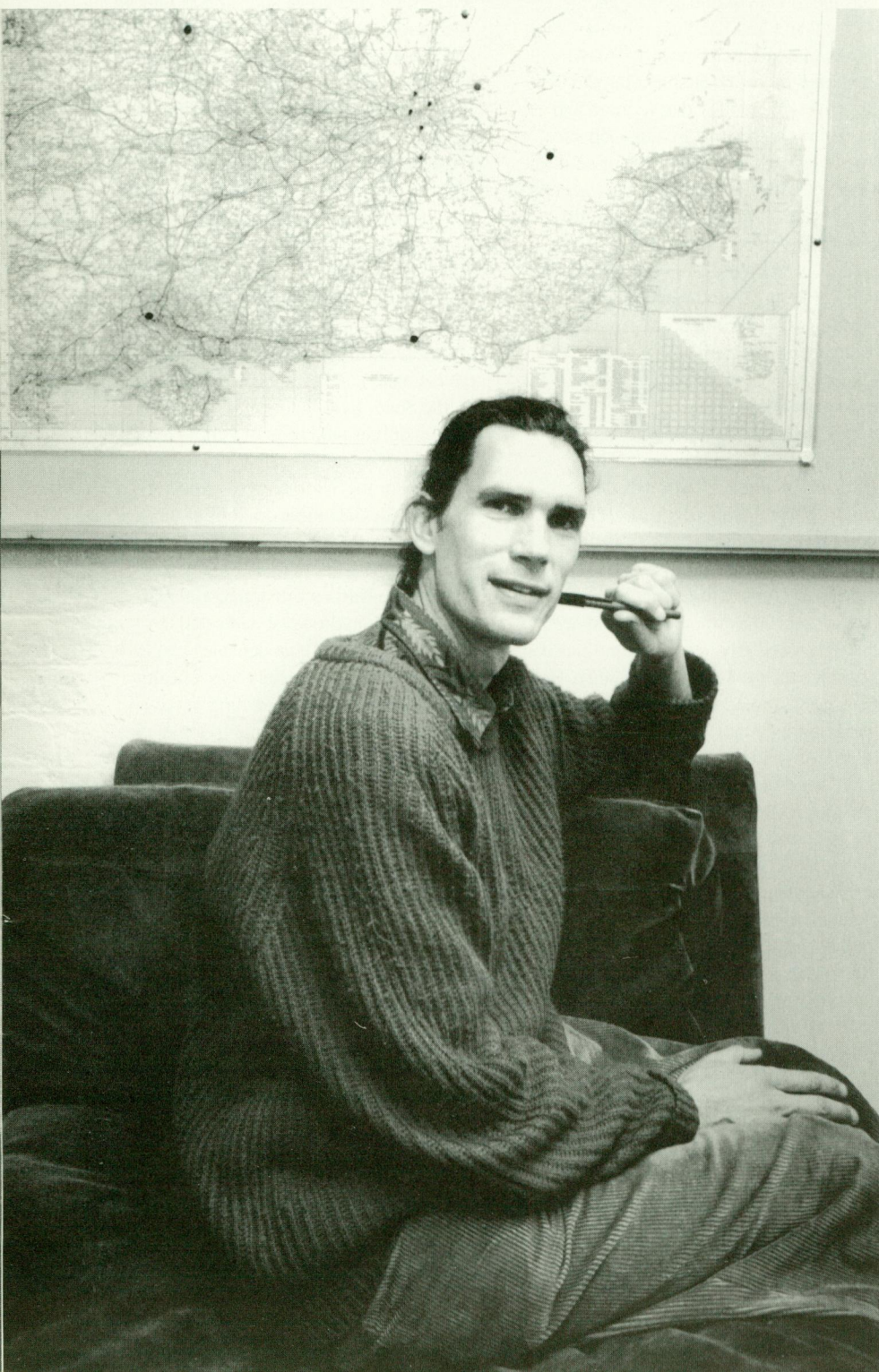
And so we did. My colleague Karmabandhu was delighted to step into the role of Centre Manager and I teamed up with Kevala to begin 'outreach' work. We quickly uncovered a rich vein of enthusiasm and ideas from within the LBC sangha: suddenly it seemed that everyone had their own ideas that they were keen to develop. We started classes in Kent, Romford, and Edmonton; classes for black people and in-service training for teachers; we investigated training in 'conflict resolution' and ancient techniques of story-telling. We leafleted clubs and gave a talk at Megatripolis, nightclub of the 'New Age'; we held a month-long marathon session of non-stop meditation classes at

the Covent Garden Meditation Centre before Christmas. With Kevala I went on the Glastonbury Meditation Retreat Camp this summer, a retreat for sixty people held entirely under canvas in a field close to Glastonbury Tor. With Nagaraja we started weekly lunchtime talks on Buddhism in Covent Garden and under Karmabandhu's guidance we began to look into the possibility of teaching meditation to the staffs of commercial companies.

Nearly a year on, it is perhaps time to ask ourselves what we have achieved, what we have learnt, and where we want to go next. There is no doubt that we are starting to attract many more black people to the Centre, and our schools and story-telling projects are getting off the ground. The Chatham group is thriving, though the classes in Edmonton and Romford didn't

take off. Whatever the environment, we have been teaching only basic Buddhism and our two meditations, the Mindfulness of Breathing and the Metta Bhavana. Whoever the audience, our primary asset was always ourselves, but we benefited greatly from the back-up of the LBC – its reputation, its impressive appearance, and its resources. We had to make an effective connection with each different audience before anything could be taught, and this meant that we ourselves had to become more fearless, open, friendly, and unprejudiced. In some cases we encountered strong views in opposition to our own, and this demanded that we really did develop confidence in the Dharma and our own tradition of the FWBO: and be willing to admit if we had something to learn or there were factors at work of which we were simply unaware. We learned the hard way that there were dangers in not sticking clearly to the Dharma and to the spiritual hierarchy that is embodied in the Order; that unintentionally presenting our own wrong views could lead to confusion, and result in misleading people about what the Dharma and the Movement actually are. We had to find ways of including new people's energy and enthusiasm, and our own, appropriately and not inappropriately. We learned that it was very important that the teaching should be done only by people deeply steeped in the principles of the spiritual community, for when we teach meditation we are really trying to communicate far more than the mere mechanics of the practices.

We also realized that we did need to have some focus for our efforts if we were to have any lasting effects, and that is where we stand at the moment. We have decided to concentrate on three areas: schools and teachers; activities in the local area; and 'fun', which includes of course responding to the unexpected! We hope by the end of the coming year to have created lasting projects that will continue to work with schools and in the local area of Bethnal Green. And then I hope, perhaps with Kevala, to be able to shift the balance of my own life some more and leave my desk at the LBC completely, to travel for a while beyond structures altogether, and explore the life-style of a traveller and wandering Dharma-farer, both in England and abroad. See you there!



Well set Free

Through her work in India, **Punyavati** sees the wider effects of the Dharma's invitation to grow



Dr Ambedkar

On 14 April 1994, in the early hours of the morning, in Poona, India, I was woken by the sounds of music transmitted through loudspeakers. As the songs slowly penetrated my waking consciousness, I became aware that they were paying tribute to Dr Ambedkar. It was the anniversary of his birth, and his followers, who are Buddhists, were praising his qualities and deeds. The celebration continued throughout the day and late into the night, in all the areas of Poona where Buddhists live. I had been staying in India for nearly six months, working with TBMSG (Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha Sahayak Gana), travelling extensively in Maharashtra and Gujarat, taking part in retreats, giving Dharma talks, and meeting many Buddhists, men and women of all ages. They have become Buddhists through the direct or indirect influence and unceasing efforts of Dr Ambedkar, once a politician and later a spiritual leader and philosopher.

Watching the colourful processions on the streets that day, adorned with banners of the Three Jewels, I was reminded of this great man, a champion of the poor, a spiritual revolutionary. He changed the course of history when, on 14 October 1956, he became a Buddhist and, along with 400,000 men and women, went for refuge to the Three Jewels – an unprecedented step towards freedom from social and spiritual oppression for millions of Untouchables in India. Sadly, Dr Ambedkar died soon afterwards, and

perhaps the spiritual current of transformation that was set in motion by him may not have continued to flow over India but for another hero. This man was Sangharakshita, the founder of the FWBO in the West. Sangharakshita had met Dr Ambedkar on three occasions, and they had discovered that their approach to the Dharma was similar. They both saw in the teachings of the Buddha a clear path leading all of humanity to freedom not just from social, economic, and religious oppression, but from whatever psychological and existential conditioning that keeps oppression in place.

For several years after the death of Dr Ambedkar, Sangharakshita travelled around Maharashtra and Gujerat, giving lectures on Buddhism to the newly converted people. In 1977 Dharmachari Lokamitra founded a new movement that was the direct continuation of Dr Ambedkar's and Sangharakshita's inspiration and steady effort. TBMSG continues the work of spreading the Dharma wider and wider, to more and more communities of ex-Untouchables. The deep faith, and the vision of an ideal society that Dr Ambedkar had awakened in people had, at last, begun to manifest in the concrete evidence of viharas, retreat centres, hostels, and communities in many parts of India. A new generation of Buddhists has sprung up who were not 'born' Hindu, and already they are making a strong impact on society in the religious and social fields.

Dr Ambedkar envisaged complete freedom from oppression when he embraced Buddhism, and urged other Untouchable people like himself to do the same. This freedom is necessary for the development and progress of the individual. As an eminent politician, lawyer, and educationalist, he realized through bitter experience that politics could not solve the problems of humanity. He realized that freedom lay in changing one's conditioning – cultural, social, and religious – and that this transformation lay at the heart of the central theme of Buddhism, Going for Refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. These Three Jewels represent the highest spiritual values. They represent a refuge from the unsatisfactoriness, the transitoriness, the cyclical nature of life. They point a way out of whatever conditioning we have that inhibits us from discovering and developing our individuality. The Untouchables had long recognized their suffering, and Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels provided their first step towards liberation from it. Their principal source of inspiration is the Buddha and his teachings, the idea of human development, and the ideal of

human Enlightenment. But without the actual practice of the Dharma, initial faith can degenerate into blind belief or even superstition, and the spiritual scope of the ideal can be lost. The practice of the precepts, regular meditation, and the development of self-awareness are indispensable to understanding and benefiting from the Dharma. One young man I came across was making this fundamental discovery. He was unemployed, homeless, and drank heavily. One day he heard, through a cloud of cheap alcohol, an Order member giving a Dharma talk out in the open air nearby. He became curious to hear more, and was strongly drawn to the speaker. What he heard was the Buddha's discourse on the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. It had a profound effect on him: he realized that he could change, and that there were people who would encourage and support him. In due course, he started to meditate regularly, and eventually he joined the Movement to help others in similar situations.

In India one cannot be a Buddhist in isolation, especially when striving to be effective in practising the Dharma. Anyone who has visited India will be aware of the poverty, overcrowding, and squalor of the slums seen everywhere in the towns and cities. In the West, we live in relatively well organized societies where the government can radically affect all aspects of our lives, from birth to death, and health, educational, and social provision is made by the State. In India one has to pay for all these facilities, and so poor people live in the most desolate conditions. Bahujan Hitay ('For the Welfare of the Many') seeks to alleviate these conditions through initiating social, educational, and health projects. The work is funded by a UK charity, the Karuna Trust, the principal organization in the West dedicated to helping the former Untouchables. An early initiative of Bahujan Hitay was a health project in Poona, now reaching out to a population of 15,000 people living in the slums. The major part of Bahujan Hitay's work, however, is in establishing educational hostels for school children: young boys and girls from deprived backgrounds are cared for in community-run hostels, giving them the opportunity to gain an education as well as providing supervision in their personal development. The social project also includes literacy classes, sewing classes, sports, and cultural activities. All these activities and projects aim to meet people's need to develop self-sufficiency skills in order to improve their environment and life-styles.

Dr Ambedkar extensively discussed the question of economic progress and realized that an Untouchable could not achieve it *because* he was an Untouchable. If he



opened a shop, nobody would buy from him! He realized 'that the problem of the depressed classes is a social problem, and that its solution lies elsewhere than in politics'. He found the solution in the Buddha's teaching, and in emphasizing the importance of anchoring social, economic, and cultural projects in spiritual values. Today, most of the Buddhists in TBMSG are involved in Right Livelihood projects, working in teams based on mutual understanding and encouragement, to develop the skills and abilities of each individual. Many of them live in communities attached to the viharas and the hostels.

During my last visit I stayed in the first women's community, 'Shakyaditha'. The eleven women who live there are all actively involved in social, educational, and spiritual activities in the different localities in Poona. All of them come from deprived backgrounds, and so are fully aware of the suffering and limitations of people living in similar conditions. I was deeply impressed by their enthusiasm, vigour, and kindness towards other people, despite the hardships they themselves had suffered. One woman in particular stood out for me. She was married at the age of seventeen and lived on the streets with her husband, selling fruit and vegetables by the roadside. They barely made a living and consequently their first child died while still a small baby. Her husband left her and she was practically a social outcast. But on hearing the Dharma her life changed completely. She trained as a nurse, and eventually joined the community to work in the girls' hostel. This year she has gone to Latur, where the huge earthquake took place last year, to open a hostel for girls. She has developed the strength and courage to break free from her previous conditioning, and to help others do the same. Many others have similar stories to tell.

Personally, I plan to work for the Movement in India for six months each year. India shows me that it is not enough to 'become' a Buddhist and think merely about our own spiritual development. We have to try to think in terms of the spiritual welfare of all living beings, and of the environment in which we live. Perhaps living in the West in comparative comfort, security, and ease we can too easily forget that there are other human beings, like the ex-Untouchables, who are deprived and oppressed by their conditioning, and that their sufferings and ours, at base, echo each other. If we can catch those echoes, if we can waken up to their sound, our practice of the Dharma will become deeper and wider, embracing and affecting not just ourselves, but our environment, and our fellow human beings throughout the world.

On changing society from within: **Lokapala**, an Order Member in the probation service

FROM PRISON TO PURELAND

I am a member of the Western Buddhist Order, but I am not a monk; I am a probation officer. As such I live very much in the world, even by worldly standards. I have been a probation officer for thirteen years, and have always worked in the heart of London. I have left the probation service twice: the first time was for eight months when I went travelling and lived in a meditation retreat centre, and the second was for five months to go to Spain to become ordained. After each absence I returned. Why? It is quite simple. I best express my Buddhism in the world. Living as a monk or nun is the traditional expression of commitment to Buddhism in the East, and in the West is often thought to be what Buddhists 'do' (even by Western Buddhists). This is to mistake life-style for commitment. It is possible to be a 'good' monk and a 'bad' Buddhist; it is also possible to be a 'good' Buddhist without being a monk. On rainy Mondays in my office my thoughts often turn to Vajraloka, the meditation retreat centre in North Wales, but I know that my talents, energies, and experience are best expressed outside a shrine-room. It is Shoreditch and not Sukhavati where I play out my Going for Refuge.

I have never been a Christian, except in the cultural sense, but in my pre-Buddhist days I used to think that the probation service received its spiritual underpinning

from St Jude, the patron saint of hopeless cases. As a Buddhist it seems to me that Vimalakirti is a much healthier choice. He is the bodhisattva who lived the life of the layman, the householder. He met people in all the places they frequented, and as this included brothels, drinking dives, and gambling dens he seems singularly well suited to the role. As a probation officer I have found myself in the same places (and, frankly, once upon a time, in two out of three for personal reasons!). The point about Vimalakirti is that he was able to be all things to all people. He could reach people in all their various states of being and communicate himself to them in ways that they could hear, and in ways that led to change. He could step down, as it were,

from his lofty spiritual heights and effect change in people, each according to their need. It is this to which I aspire.

Like many people I want to change the world, to transform it radically. Some express this desire through political activity, others through vocational work. I am lucky in that my vocation is informed by spiritual commitment, and a profound resonance with the Bodhisattva Ideal in all its vast and vaunting ambition. I do wish to bring all beings to Enlightenment. The name I received at ordination, Lokapala, reflects that – 'guardian of the universe', 'protector of humanity'. It is something I take very seriously, and it is both an affirmation and an immense challenge to even begin to live up to it. The probation





Manjushri visits Vimalakirti

service is one of the arenas for my attempt.

If to be truly Buddhist is to be truly human, then Buddhist virtues are natural, uncomplicated qualities. The best probation officers I have ever worked with, and the most effective, have displayed them – natural kindness, patience, and a real belief in the capacity of all people to change for the better. All these qualities boil down to compassion, which, these days, is often derided as being woolly, liberal, and even ‘socialist’. Compassion, if truly exercised, is challenging and demanding. It is not compassionate to ‘sympathize’ with an drug addict, and collude in their remaining addicted. It is not compassionate to ‘understand’ a thief and allow them to remain mean-spirited and selfish. Compassion demands change, and change for the better. Communicating the Dharma in accessible ways helps me to be effective. It would be useless to lecture Jonny Scroggins of Hackney in the finer points of Conditioned Co-production, but lead him to an understanding that ‘actions have consequences’ and we are on our way to making changes. Homilies on the endless round of cyclic existence to an addict in withdrawal are not likely to be received with equanimity, but a few well chosen words about the need for something to change for things to get better may begin the recovery process. Much of the work of probation officers is quite uncomplicated. It

involves raising people’s vision of themselves, their worth and their capabilities. It is just what the Buddha used to do 2,500 years ago, and it is just what Vimalakirti does in the sutra named after him, the *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa*. It is, in my own small way, what I do.

Away from the probation service, I teach meditation and Buddhism at the North London Buddhist Centre. I have taught two courses of meditation to colleagues in the probation service. I am soon to lead a weekend retreat on meditation specifically for people involved with Narcotics Anonymous, an organization which presents an effective path to recovery from addiction. I am on the Islington Education Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education (SACRE), and thus involved in bringing together a national network of Buddhists to make the Dharma available in forms that non-Buddhist teachers can use. I covenant a portion of my salary to various charities, and still indulge my lifelong passion for football by playing for a local club. I live a full, but engaged life. I would like to think that the energy came from a marriage of Wisdom and Compassion, but I suspect its fuel is idealism rather than any intimate contact with the transcendental – so far.

I see the propagation of Buddhist values as the best way of changing the society I happen to live in into the society I wish to

live in – as the best way I can express my citizenship. As a Buddhist I am not separate from the world. What the Government does and says affects me, sometimes financially and quite often emotionally. As Buddhists we are gaining an increasingly influential and respected voice in this country. In the FWBO there are Order members working as doctors, physiotherapists, journalists, graphic designers, stress management consultants, and so on. We are in the world as Buddhists and as citizens, and we influence those we have contact with, colleagues and clients. If we exemplify the values we espouse, we will continue to change things for the better. Steven Batchelor in his excellent book *The Awakening of the West* wrote ‘Engagement ... is not an option but a matter of degree and needs to be measured along a spectrum. At one end are acts of simple kindness, in the middle organizations providing social services, and at the far end visions of another kind of society altogether.’ (p.363) Ultimately we are not seeking to integrate Buddhism into the West, but, to quote Sangharakshita, ‘... what we really have to do is integrate Western society into Buddhism.’ That’s the challenge. It starts in everyday interactions, and could end up in a new society. It starts with compassion and vision and, for me as a Buddhist probation officer, a few well chosen words in the ear of Jonny Scroggins!

Most of us who are drawn to the teachings and practice of Buddhism have a dream. We imagine that we could be, perhaps even should or need to be, different. We also dream of a transformed world; a world without violence, war, or discrimination. Within the secret confines of our own heart this dream seems whole and perfect, yet often when we try to bring it into reality it seems to fracture into two conflicting parts: self and other. At times it might seem better to concentrate on sorting ourselves out, which can appear a big enough task. Maybe we should draw back from the hustle and bustle of the world in order to give this process a chance. On the other hand, there is so much that needs to be done in the world perhaps we should just roll up our sleeves and get stuck in.

We cannot do everything all at once. Many of us may have a vocation, and a training that enables us to help others in all sorts of ways. I hear and read with interest and respect about my brothers and sisters in the Dharma engaged in outreach work, prison visiting, working with the dying and people with HIV, nurses, teachers, doctors, social workers, probation officers, advocacy workers, and the social projects in India. Some of us may wonder just what we can do. The important thing to realize is that we can all do something. It is crucial that we understand that Buddhism primarily works on and with the mind. This is expressed very clearly by Shantideva, the eighth century Indian poet and philosopher, in his *Bodhicaryavatara* ('Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life'). He asks

In a sense we are cultivating the attitude of a warrior – an attitude, schooled by training, of readiness.

A powerful means of 'readying' ourselves, even if we do not yet know what we can do to transform the world, is to practise the Metta Bhavana, or 'development of loving kindness'. Whatever our aptitudes or tendencies, this will have a steady effect on our positivity and our ability to respond effectively to others. Daily practice of Metta Bhavana begins to open our hearts, helping us to realize that we always have a choice about how we meet our experience, a choice between a more or a less creative response.

The practice has five stages. We begin by developing an attitude of loving kindness towards ourselves, putting time

Proceed from the dream outward

Dhammadinna shows how everyone can lay the inner foundations for outer transformation

A strong altruistic directive has always been given by Sangharakshita to the effect that if you do not want to change the world this is not the Movement for you! One of his teachers, Dhardo Rimpoche, is often quoted as saying 'if you don't know what to do, do something for others' – an approach which counteracts the tendencies we all have to selfishness, complacency, and a lack of willingness to take responsibility.

It is important, however, that our outgoingness flows from skilful motivation; if not, we may be escaping into busyness in order to avoid our own experience, or to show people that Buddhism is not just 'selfish'. We may be outgoing towards others in a general sense, or in our work, but irritable and even unkind at home. We may just be getting the balance wrong. A friend of mine once told me about his brother, who is a priest. This man's pastoral duties were so heavy that he often did not have time to perform the daily office, and he felt frustrated that his outward-going work was not flowing from a higher, or deeper, source. We all need to help others, for its own sake and in order to counteract self-centredness. We all need to work on ourselves, to create a depth of self-awareness and connection with that which is most meaningful for us, and allow our actions and motivations to flow out from the resources created by this inner work.

*If the Perfection of Generosity
Were the alleviation of the world's poverty,
Then since beings are still starving now,
In what manner did the previous Buddhas
perfect it?*

*The Perfection of Generosity is said to be
The thought to give all beings everything,
Together with the fruit of such a thought
Hence it is simply a state of mind.*

*Where would I possibly find enough leather
With which to cover the surface of the earth?
But (wearing) leather just on the soles of my
shoes*

*Is equivalent to covering the earth with it.
Likewise it is not possible for me
To restrain the external course of things;
But should I restrain this mind of mine
What would be the need to restrain all else?
(V, vv.9,10,13,14 – Batchelor's translation)*

We may be deeply inspired by the Bodhisattva Vow to save all beings, but how to start? We can begin by committing ourselves more deeply, here and now, to working in the arena of our own minds and hearts. A suggestion of Sangharakshita's, that we view the Vow as mythical, may help, for how can we, or I, save all beings? He has suggested reformulating it as follows: 'I place no limits on what I am prepared to do for others, when the time is ripe and I am ready.' We need to create a mind or heart that responds, when the time is right and the opportunity arises, with genuine loving kindness and compassion.



and energy into building up a sustained sense of abundance in ourselves, without which our outward-going activities often come adrift. Secondly, we cultivate feelings of loving kindness towards a dear friend. Sometimes this stage is rather easier to do than the first, but it can also show us the complexity of motivations and feelings in our friendships and help us to clarify them. Thirdly, we extend the feeling we have now developed towards a neutral person, someone we do not know very well and towards whom we do not have any strong feelings. From here we cultivate *metta*

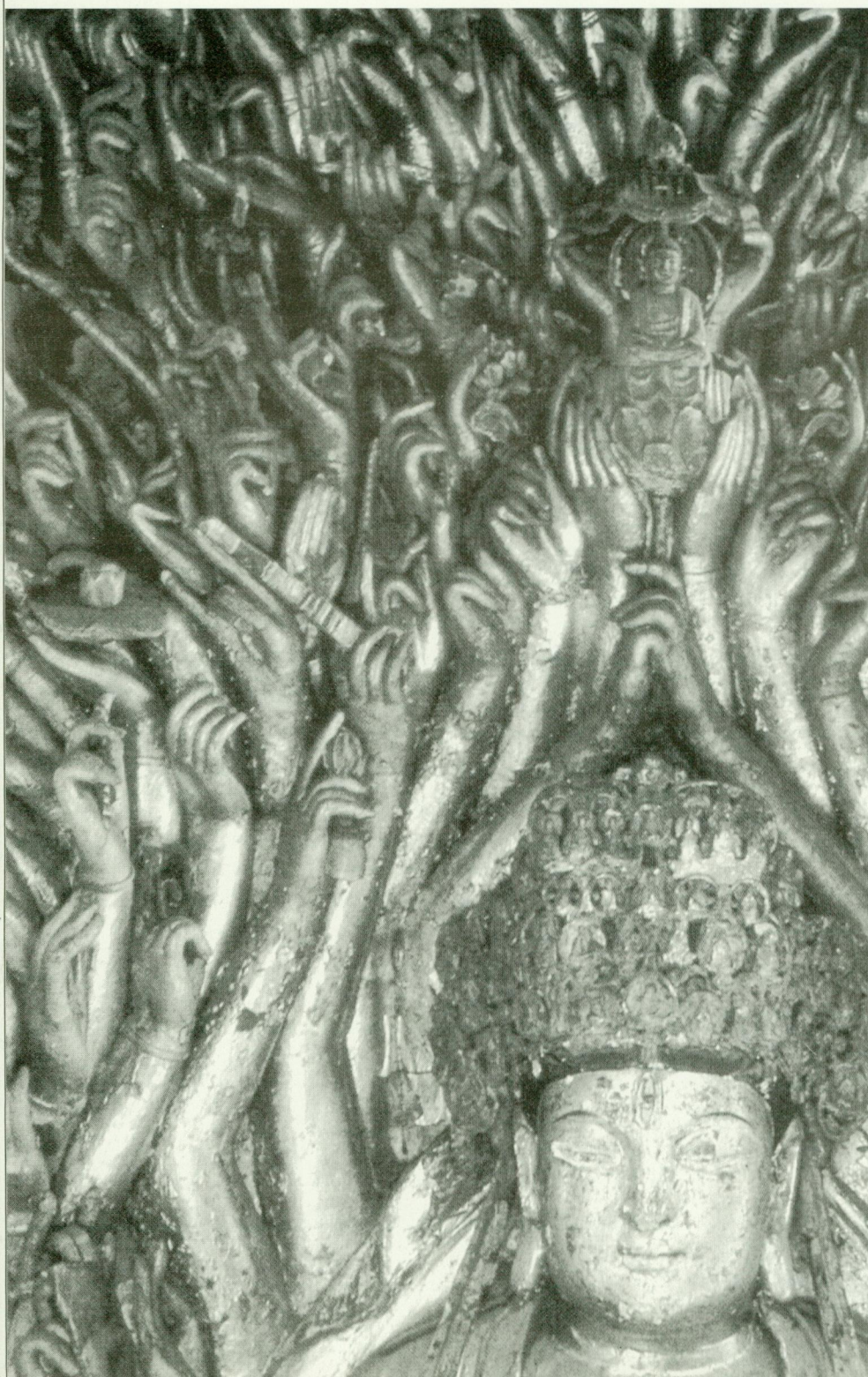
towards someone whom we find difficult, or with whom we are not in good communication (traditionally, an 'enemy'). The scope of this stage ranges from someone we have ongoing difficulties with, through to a friend or family member with whom harmony has temporarily been lost. The 'enemy' of *metta* is hatred: feelings of ill will, resentment, or grudge-bearing need to be honestly looked at and worked with if we genuinely want our resources of *metta* to grow. In the final stage we extend loving kindness to all beings in all the directions of space and time, not theoretically but by

developing the willingness and intention to respond ethically, warmly, and without prejudice, to any sentient being we meet. The Metta Bhavana is a simple practice in form; effective if practised regularly, but of course not necessarily always easy to do!

Although every stage is crucial, the pivotal point in the Metta Bhavana is the development of loving kindness towards a familiar stranger. The neutral person may be someone we see regularly every day within a rather utilitarian framework, one of the nameless thousands we pass in the street, or even someone we have close contact with but, if we are honest, have no real depth of feeling towards. In this stage of the practice we move away from our own immediate concerns, since most of us can care for ourselves and our circle of friends and family to some extent, to developing an interest in people whom we do not know and have no vested interest in. We begin, in this stage, to challenge many of our attitudes: 'What is in it for me?'. We may discover that our feelings of disinterest reflect our own emotional limitations, lack of imagination, and prejudices, far more than they make a meaningful statement about the character of the 'neutral' person. When we are presented by the media with images of those in extreme suffering, our response is so often the deceptive 'lookalikes' of compassion, sentimental pity and horrified anxiety, rather than interest and loving kindness. We can feel powerless when we think of all that needs to be done in the world. Through continuing to practise we begin to feel a connection based on our common humanity. We can begin to move beyond a preoccupation with our own discomfort at suffering (the source of much of our apparent disinterest) and learn to develop that *metta*-full response to it which Buddhism knows as Compassion. Then, the stranger can become our brother or sister; the neutral person can become our friend. We would then be prepared to stand by them fearlessly, even if everyone else we know retreats behind the barriers of kith and kin, nation and race.

Through practising the Metta Bhavana, and in particular the third stage, we can glimpse, however faintly, that all life is interconnected, and that the subject-object dichotomy can be transcended. Perhaps we can also see that continued *metta* practice can create in us that warrior heart, that state of being ready to respond effectively to the needs of all beings. Whether or not at the present moment we can 'take on the world', we can all engage in this 'inner' work. Then, when the time is right and we are ready, there will be no hesitation. Our inner dream will become an outer reality. See Dhammadinna's article in *Metta*, pub. Windhorse, £1.95.

I place no limits on what I am prepared to do
for others, when the time is ripe and I am ready





Sandhya (right), a student at Vishrantwadi hostel, with her family

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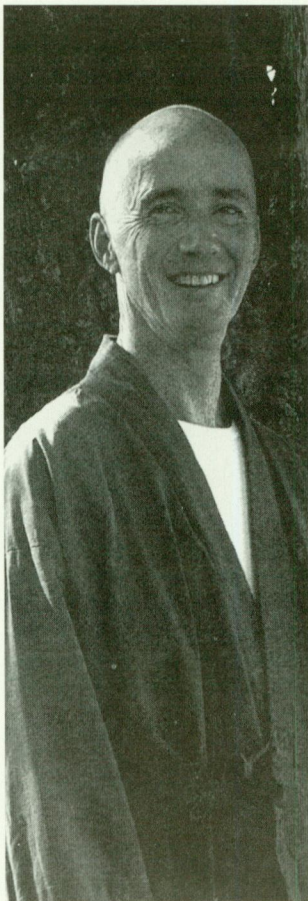
Street Zen

Street Zen: The Life and Work of Issan Dorsey
by David Schneider
Shambhala
pp.239, paperback £10.95

What extraordinary lives we lead, we ordinary Buddhists. I have heard a good number of life stories recounting paths to the Dharma. For those of a certain age the paths can include hash-laden hikes through Afghanistan or explorations of paperback esoterica in drug-strewn squats. But I have come across few contemporary Buddhists whose biographies have the *louche grandeur* or the extravagant unlikeliness of Issan Dorsey's progress from drag queen to roshi to death from aids: If the Buddhist press had tabloid supplements, Issan Dorsey would have made the front page.

He was born plain Tommy Dorsey in 1933 in Santa Barbara, California. His parents were God-fearing Irish Catholics and they were at a loss to know what to make of their 'sissy' son. It took Tommy himself a good sixteen years before he figured it out: 'Oh, I'm a homosexual, there are other homosexuals in the world, they actually meet and have conversations and have friends.'

This was 1950 and the Korean War was being fought so Tommy signed up for the navy and found himself in a thriving gay world until the authorities cottoned on. The navy discharged him, tipping him out into gay San Francisco where, cut off from social and family ties, the party began in earnest.... From this point the story becomes every right-thinking parent's nightmare of a descent into drink, drugs, and lots and lots of sex. There is sex in bars, at parties, and in prison; sex with men, with women, with men dressed as women, with men while dressed as a woman; sex with prostitutes, as a prostitute.... Anything. Anyone. When I first read *On The Road* as a teenager I was amazed that people had been living such a wild life back in the McCarthyite, Doris Day 1950s. Well they were. And by the sound of it they were probably living them with Tommy Dorsey. *Street Zen* should come with a dharmic health warning: 'This book contains language and behaviour which may cause offence. Not for those who are



Above: Issan Dorsey, 1989 and right Tommy Dee, drag queen

trying to forget the kamaloka altogether.'

Tommy Dorsey transmuted into Tommy Dee, drag queen of San Francisco's North Beach, working the bars, dealing drugs, doing cabaret, picking up tricks. He moved to Chicago which was 'a bad queen city. They were BAD. Hustling, running with whores, working for the mafiosi.' He moved in with a prostitute called Bang Bang Latour and pretty soon Tommy was as bad as the worst.

Tommy got back to San Francisco and found things were different. This was the sixties, and barbiturates and heroin were giving way to LSD and cannabis. The air was thick with unsorted spirituality and one day Tommy walked into Suzuki-Roshi's zendo. Something changed. The outrageous personality Tommy had constructed had been mellowing and now it cracked. Overnight Tommy quit hard drugs. Walking down Haight Street one day he stooped to pick up a sweet wrapper. 'I bent down and picked it up and right as I did I said to myself "Does this mean I am responsible for everything I see?" I told myself it didn't, but actually I knew that it did.'

Schneider says little to explain this transformation beyond mentioning Dorsey's



TOMMY DEE

sense at this time that he was shaking off life-long shame and guilt at being a homosexual. A psychoanalyst might have based a book around this hint, but Schneider leaves it alone. He writes in a lively vernacular, full of short sentences and verbatim anecdotes. He is less a writer than a reporter, and less a reporter than a friend. He does not so much describe or explain Dorsey as introduce him to us.

Tommy had got the Dharma. He started to rise at 4am to practise zazen and he plunged into the project that was to become San Francisco Zen Center which, with its many affiliates – Green Gulch Farm, Tassajara Monastery, Greens Restaurant – have had a central place in the recent history of American Buddhism. What emerges is Dorsey's great humanity: his unassuming kindness, his generosity, his humour, and – in this biographical perspective – the human depth of his involvement. Dharma became his life and the sangha his long-sought family.

A sense of these depths is necessary to understand the crisis that hit Zen Center when its abbot, Suzuki's heir, Richard Baker-roshi, was found to be having an extra-marital affair. This scandal focused grievances against Baker-Roshi's style of leadership and provoked a profound sense of betrayal. 'Baker-Roshi's real crime' says Schneider 'was that he seemed to have strayed from his deeper love affair with the body of students in the community.'

Dorsey stayed loyal to Baker throughout. Perhaps he had seen too much in his life to be caught up in such swirling emotions; his heartfelt devotion was simpler than the arguments which surrounded him. He just got on with his work and practice. In his final years Dorsey became something of a bodhisattva in the gay community blighted by aids. He established an aids hospice and then contracted hiv himself, suffering a long, painful illness before his death in 1990. Dorsey grows in stature throughout, but there is no easy apotheosis in suffering – he ached and moaned his way towards death. But Schneider is an honest writer and Dorsey's seems to have been an honest death. By this book's testimony he also seems to have lived an honest life and perhaps there is no greater tribute than that.

Vishvapani

Challenging patterns of work

Mastering Successful Work

by Tarthang Tulku

Dharma

£10.95, paperback

The high quality of Dharma Publishing's output over the years has been impressive. They have brought us such beautifully produced books as *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava* and *The Voice of the Buddha* (a translation of the *Lalitavistara*). Equally impressive by all accounts is the way that Dharma Publishing, as a business, approach Right Livelihood. Under the guidance of its founder, Tarthang Tulku, Dharma Publishing and its sister organizations have become well known for their application of Buddhist principles to collective work. With this reputation in mind, it was with high expectations that I approached this book.

Mastering Successful Work does not, however, go into the application of Buddhist principles to collective work, such as the managing of a Right Livelihood business. Rather, as the back cover tells us, it addresses the needs of the individual who wants to live his or her working life in a manner which provides 'practical results, deep enjoyment, and inner fulfillment'.

Focusing on the individual's relationship with his or her work, the main thrust of the book is an exploration of how to manage one's work time with increasing efficiency and effectiveness, through the development of awareness, concentration, and energy. To help the reader gain a practical understanding of what these terms mean, the text includes some eighty exercises. These range from simple body-awareness meditation to much more complex exercises involving visualization and techniques to promote empathetic awareness.

The book has four parts. In the first, the author sets the scene by detailing the ideas on which the rest of the book is based. He lays great stress on how most people squander their time, unaware that they may have only a limited amount left, and counsels the reader to take positive steps to use time better in the future. Work, the author points out, 'does not have to be a painful necessity or a dirty word.



Working with 'deadline energy': Mary Healey in the Cherry Orchard

If we use work to challenge our limits, to perfect awareness and deepen concentration, then work can open into knowledge that makes us more successful while also nourishing us at the deepest levels.'

Of particular interest in this opening part of the book is Tarthang Tulku's counter-intuitive notion of working with 'deadline energy'. Common sense might suggest that a very busy person who wants to be happier and more effective in their work should seek ways of having to work less hard. Yet Tarthang Tulku encourages one to work even harder, to learn how to plan and structure one's time better and set tighter deadlines. Only when time and energy is effectively focused in this way should we 'freely invite time into our being ... [and] relax deeply within the pressure of our work'.

The stress on using time more effectively, through awareness, concentration, and energy, continues as a theme throughout the book. The second part introduces the beginner in management technique to a number of themes which will aid effective time management, including sections on the 'four stages of accomplishment', the 'four steps in problem solving', and, more generally, on decision-making and good communication. The remainder of the book deals in greater detail with the development of the qualities of awareness, concentration, and energy in one's work.

Exploring the patterns of negativity which hold us back from taking creative action, the author describes how lack of confidence, worry, and guilt make us unable to concentrate on simply doing the job. Instead, we create a current of excuses which 'lulls our awareness into an uneasy sleep'. An important step in the process of becoming more successful at work, therefore, is to recognize and challenge these

negative patterns. To help us do this, Tarthang Tulku describes nine different negative role models with such imaginative names as 'the fighter', 'the duchess', and 'the pretender'. Challenging these negative patterns is, of course, only a start. The author stresses the need to build up positivity and, towards the end of the book, provides some excellent exercises to help us do this. We are, as he says, 'the playwright of our own [emotional] dramas [and] we could write the play differently'.

As an active Buddhist with an interest and involvement in business, it has always been something of a disappointment to me that although Right Livelihood was specifically mentioned by the Buddha as an aspect of his Noble Eightfold Path, Buddhist tradition up to the present century has had very little to say on the subject. The contemporary world is, of course, very different to that of the Buddha's time, when commerce was a relatively simple affair. Today, business is infinitely more complex, dominated as it is by international finance, 'instant' communication, and the ubiquitous computer. So it behoves the interested Western Buddhist (whether of Eastern or Western origin) to interpret the Buddha's teaching in a way which is relevant to the context of modern work. This interesting and accessible book certainly makes a start at doing this, even though it is limited to the perspective of the individual. Perhaps in a later book we could learn what Tarthang Tulku has to say about important collective Right Livelihood issues, such as the identification and setting of corporate objectives appropriate to a company espousing Buddhist values, the creation of an ethically sound product-market strategy, and the choice of suitable selling methods.

Satyapala



Nichiren under the microscope

A Time to Chant – The Soka Gakkai Buddhists in Britain
by Bryan Wilson and Karel Dobbelaere
Clarendon Press, Oxford
£25.00, paperback

This is a sociological study of the Nichiren Shoshu form of Japanese Buddhism, as practised by members of Soka Gakkai International in the United Kingdom (SGI-UK). Covering the history and practices of the movement, social and demographic profiles of its membership, reasons for members' involvement, their value systems, and many other elements, it gives what appears to be a thorough, objective, and yet sympathetic outsiders' view of a popular present day Western Buddhist movement.

The basis of the research was a questionnaire which was sent to a representative sample of one thousand SGI-UK members, from which 626 'usable returns' were received. From this, a clear and reasonably up-to-date picture of SGI-UK emerges, largely from the words of members at the time the research took place (1990).

In common with all Nichiren schools, the main practice of SGI-UK members is the chanting of an invocation devised – or discovered – by Nichiren, which he taught as embodying the essence and even the whole of Buddhist practice and teaching: *nam myōhō renge kyo* ('Homage to the Lotus of the True Law Sutra', i.e. the *Saddharma Pundarika Sutra*). To members of Soka Gakkai, chanting this invocation in front of a shrine containing an authorized copy of

the *Gohonzon* (a calligraphic mandala inscribed by Nichiren himself) is tantamount to Buddhahood. No other practice is needed. As this may suggest, Nichiren Buddhism in general and Soka Gakkai in particular are specifically Japanese developments of the Buddhist faith schools. Whether they are strictly Buddhist, is a moot point. Nichiren became increasingly intolerant of other sects of Buddhism in 13th century Japan, and perhaps especially of the Shin School founded by his contemporary, Shinran. Shin, in terms of being a Buddhism of pure faith, came closest to Nichiren's own position, but without ever developing the exclusivism which some Buddhists see as taking Nichirenism beyond the pale of 'mainstream Buddhism'.

Be this as it may, Soka Gakkai has been extremely successful in Japan, attracting millions of members. What is perhaps more surprising is that it has become one of the most effective sects of Buddhism in proselytizing worldwide, and has attracted a large Western membership, particularly in the United States but also in other Western countries, including Britain. Indeed, according to the authors, 'Soka Gakkai is almost certainly the school of Buddhism with the largest body of support in Britain, and the one experiencing the fastest rate of growth.' What is the attraction of this apparently very Japanese form of Buddhism to Westerners? And what sorts of Westerners does it attract? This book provides some interesting perspectives on such questions and perhaps, incidentally, on some of the more general factors that are likely to attract

Westerners to other forms of Buddhism as well.

After a chapter dealing with the statistics of SGI-UK – the places that members tend to live (mostly London and the Home Counties), age distribution (mostly 20-34), gender distribution (60% female, 40% male) – and so forth, the authors outline the information they received from members on what had attracted them to SGI-UK. The vast majority of members in the sample were introduced to Soka Gakkai through personal acquaintances – friends, family members, and colleagues. Of these, a significant proportion were attracted, initially, not so much by the practices or teachings of SGI, but by the personal qualities of the members themselves: 'people were very understanding, caring, and compassionate,' said one member, while another was attracted by the fact that 'people [were] full of hope and joy, challenging their life in an honest way, which I hadn't done.' Another noted 'I was not attracted to Nichiren Shoshu as an organization – I was attracted to the practice because of the incredible changes a long-term friend of mine achieved in her life.' Though not perhaps surprising, it is significant that many people are attracted to a religious movement which engenders a completely new direction in their lives by the purely human qualities of the people involved. The initial strangeness of the organization and its practices can clearly be obviated by this. It would seem that human warmth and honesty is more likely to impress newcomers to Buddhism than any number of technically perfect expositions of the Dharma!

One of the most prominent – and to other Buddhists, perhaps, one of the most provocative – claims that Soka Gakkai makes is that the practice of *gongyo* (chanting) will bring not only spiritual but material benefits as well. While Soka Gakkai has been characterized in the popular media as the sect which encourages its members to 'chant for a Porsche' (an easy basis for other Buddhists to be rather dismissive), the comments quoted by the authors suggest that purely material gain is not the primary motivation in very many cases. Many interviewees seemed to hope that chanting would help them in the resolution of personal problems, mainly to

do with health, lack of confidence, and other, mainly psychological, difficulties. Such motivations are probably equally prominent among members of other religious groups, Buddhist and otherwise. Few Soka Gakkai members interviewed for this survey seem to have been disappointed by the results of their practice, though, as the authors observe, most of those who took part were, by definition, loyal members rather than disillusioned ex-members.

Another major attraction of Soka Gakkai among members interviewed was the apparently rather free and easy nature of its ethical teaching. One member summed this up as '... apart from accepting the *Gohonzon*, you don't have to change your life-style (although many may do so if they would like to). This means that our leaders aren't haughty or "saintly"; they go to the pub, watch *Neighbours*, etc., in other words they are ordinary – Buddhas are ordinary people.' This approach derives from Nichiren's teaching that, living as we do in the degenerate age of *mappo*, individuals must take responsibility for themselves rather than undertake formal moral rules. However, from the evidence presented here, this seemingly *laissez faire* approach may not be, in practice, as far from 'mainstream' Buddhist teaching as it appears at first sight. Another member asserts: '... the philosophy was very much cause and effect. From this moment you can change your destiny no matter what you've done in the past.' The effect of this approach, which seems to have attracted a lot of the members interviewed, is a perceived lack of moralizing, and freedom from guilt: 'The members appeared happy and caring. I liked the idea of taking responsibility for my own life.' – Sentiments that other Buddhists would find it difficult to disagree with.

Although the authors have clearly aimed this work primarily at an academic readership, there is a great deal more material in it that Buddhists of any persuasion are likely to find stimulating as well as providing food for thought. It has certainly made me revise some of my views on the Soka Gakkai. The book is well researched, gives a clear and unbiased view of the movement under scrutiny, and, not least, is very readable.

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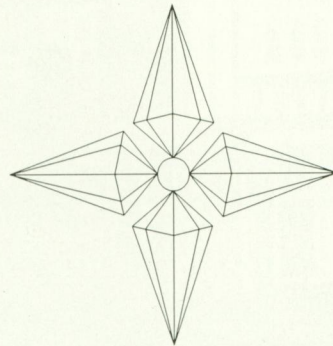
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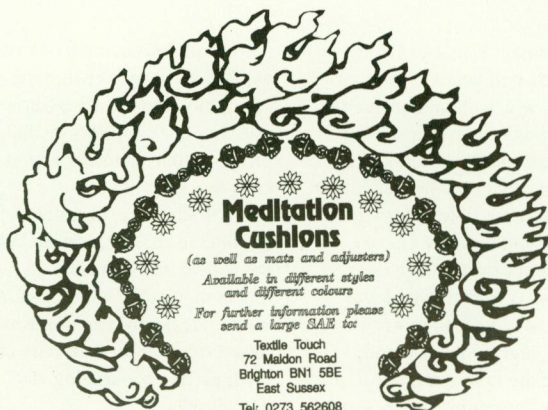


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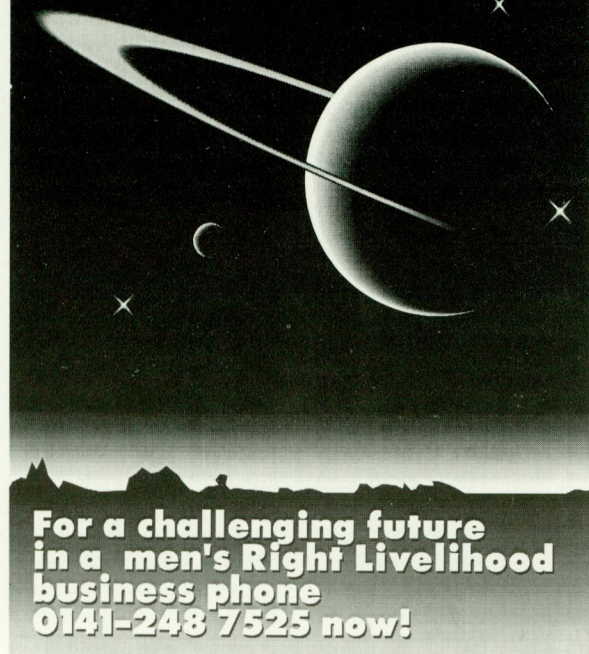
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The preceptors' college appeal

Once upon a time, it is said, not only did Sangharakshita lead all the meditation classes and give all the Dharma talks in Sakura (the very first FWBO centre, in Monmouth Street, central London): he cut all the sandwiches and did the washing up too. Even if asked to help, very few of those who benefited from his instruction were prepared to perform such low-status functions – they had come to learn about Buddhism, about Zen and Tantra, after all. In the Swinging Sixties even Sangharakshita's disciples were sometimes slow to see that responsibility is a spiritual quality. Since then, of course, Dharmacharis and Dharmacharinis the world over have taken the point to heart by assuming increasing amounts of responsibility for running the FWBO. Sangharakshita sees responsibility as an important means of personal growth, involving as it does initiative and ethical sensibility. He has always encouraged us to take responsibility for the situation we happen to be in and, once that situation has expanded to include many more people, to relinquish those responsibilities (assuming greater ones) so that others can grow by taking over. He once said that passing on a responsibility is an even greater responsibility than the initial responsibility itself.

Over the past decade we have

seen Sangharakshita passing on a large number of his responsibilities for the FWBO to members of the Order. But now he is getting older – his seventieth birthday is on 25 August next – he has been thinking about how best to pass on the remainder. His idea is to set up a new body, central to the whole movement, to be known as the Preceptors' College. The Public Preceptors confer ordination into the Western Buddhist Order, something only

and Suvajra. Sangharakshita has also asked a number of trusted Order members: Devamitra, Kamalashila, Kovida, Kulananda, Lokamitra, Nagabodhi, Ratnaguna, and Vessantara, to join with the Public Preceptors and work as a council. Sangharakshita's idea is not only that these men and women work together, but that they actually live together, in nearby men's and women's communities, centrally in the UK. The most likely result of such



Subhuti, Suvajra, Sanghadevi, Shrimala

Sangharakshita did until 1985. But why choose the Preceptors, in particular? Ordination is the main factor in the continuance of the spiritual vitality of the FWBO, so it is appropriate that these men and women form the core of the new College. Of the women Preceptors, Sanghadevi and Shrimala will be part of the College (Ratnashuri has decided her age and health prevent her involvement). The men Public Preceptors are Sona, Subhuti,

close contact is that College members will become familiar friends, which should ensure the best possible 'core team' for a future without Sangharakshita. Living fairly centrally will allow the easiest possible access to our centres within the UK (most members of the College are Presidents). Birmingham was chosen as closest to most UK centres, and we have already secured the first of the two College community houses in

Moseley (see photo), very close to the Birmingham Buddhist Centre, which will house Sangharakshita, the other male College members, and an office. The grounds are large enough to accommodate, one day, a purpose-built library and study complex which Sangharakshita wants to institute as his own memorial.

No doubt there will be many other memorials to Sangharakshita, but those who know him will realize that a library is particularly apposite. Sangharakshita has a great love of books and since his early years has been an avid reader and collector. He would like to see this aspect of his work – a facet often overlooked – passed on for posterity. He wants a reference library to be built up to include all Buddhist texts, especially those in the original language, as well as the myriad books published in English. The library will provide study facilities and be fully equipped with the photocopiers, faxes, and computers necessary for the staff to respond to queries or requests for quotations and articles.

The appeal that has been launched to raise funds for the Preceptors' College is in two phases: phase one is an appeal for £400,000 to buy and complete the building work on the two community houses. (We will seek funding for the Sangharakshita Memorial Library in phase two.) We are looking for personal pledges of £400 or above (£250 for those

not in full employment). If you would like to help ensure the spiritual vitality of the FWBO after Sangharakshita's death, please pledge as much as you can. Ask Pramudita at Padmaloka Retreat Centre (tel: 01508 538112) for a form. When the appeal was launched at recent men's and women's Order weekends nearly £50,000 was raised from Order members in pledges: an encouraging start! **Kamalashila**

The London Buddhist Centre

On 14 July Dhammarati formally handed on responsibility as chairman of the London Buddhist Centre to Ratnaghosha, in the context of a ritual led by the LBC's president, Subhuti. Dhammarati had been chairman for eight years, during which time he steered the Centre successfully through severe financial difficulties, and was effective in clarifying its direction and purpose, emphasizing the need for consolidation of its thriving team-based Right Livelihood businesses and communities. For the first time, the Centre itself is being run as a team-based Right Livelihood business by people who all live and work together.

Ratnaghosha first came to the LBC in 1984. Until his ordination in 1988 he worked at the Centre, undertaking mainly administrative work. Since then he has managed Friends Foods, the neighbourhood's wholefood shop, and has overseen its growth into a model Right Livelihood business. He will bring to his new position both his considerable administrative skill and his great capacity for friendship. In his inaugural address the main emphasis was on friendship; particularly its effects on cooperation and the practice of ethics.

Dhammarati, and Ratnaghosha at the handover ceremony



Clear Vision

Clear Vision, the video production facility of the FWBO, has just finished its most ambitious project to date. Known throughout the Movement for 'FWBO Newsreel' and video coverage of Sangharakshita's talks, Mokshapriya and the Clear Vision team in Manchester have just released a video resource pack for use in primary schools. With the medium of video playing an increasing part in religious education, there was clearly a need to make reliable and comprehensive material available to teachers. With the help of two mitras, Marty Casey and Meg St Pierre, both parents and experienced teachers, Mokshapriya set to work.

Multi-faith syllabuses recommend that children should have an introduction to the six principal religions represented in Britain, and as such many teachers will be introducing Buddhism in the classroom for the first time. The four videos in the pack, each of which explore a separate theme, including the Three Jewels, Meditation, and Worship, give an account of Buddhism in both its traditional and modern forms. The pack provides a valuable resource, combining lively video material with follow-up activities, making Buddhism both interesting and relevant to primary school children.

Aloka's Angulimala from the Clear Vision video



All change in Sydney

The Sydney Buddhist Centre moved to its first city premises in 1986, but by 1992 increasing costs and the difficulties of renting led to a decision to buy a suitable building. A fundraising appeal was launched in March 1993, and with \$50,000 pledged or donated a search for property began.

A suitable building proved difficult to obtain. Then premises previously rented as a retreat centre were put up for sale. This old Salvation Army youth camp out in the bush at Minto, an hour's drive from Sydney, was seen as an opportunity not to be missed by the Centre management committee, and in May 1994 'Camp Haveta' became the property of FWBO Sydney.

Since then, with the combined efforts of the men's community who live there and monthly weekend working retreats, much has been done to fulfil the vision that the sangha have for their new retreat centre.

Meanwhile, back in the city, a property was purchased to serve both as a women's community and centre premises at Coogee, a beautiful southern beach suburb of Sydney. The first community

members took up residence in August, and after extensive renovations the Centre will move at the beginning of 1995.

Chittaprabha, the chairwoman, comments on the fruits of their labour: 'We have stretched our energies and resources to the limit, but FWBO Sydney is now in a position to forge ahead. This time last year we were in interim premises in the city, seemingly hitting our heads against a number of financial and bureaucratic brick walls. Now we have a new retreat centre, new men's and women's communities, and by the new year we will have a new Buddhist centre. We also have substantial mortgage, but the process of creating new Buddhist pure lands at Minto and Coogee proves energizing and inspiring.'

Fundraising Swimathon, Sydney '93
Below: Dharma Day, Minto '94



Sangharakshita Diary

New centre in Edinburgh

In 1986, Tejmitra and Agracitta moved to Edinburgh from Glasgow. Eight years on, FWBO Edinburgh has recently moved to its second property.

Fostered by classes held through the local authority, at the University, and at the premises of the Theosophical Society, a small sangha began to grow. Regular events were then established at the homes of Friends and mitras, and last year a centre building was found. To accommodate further growth, the Centre has moved once again. The first week in September saw the official opening celebrations, with free classes in yoga and meditation, and a talk by Tejmitra.

17 July was the thirtieth anniversary of Sangharakshita's return to the West, and the day was marked by a celebration at the Bishopsgate Institute in London which Sangharakshita attended. Sangharakshita's thirty years in the West have been closely associated with the development of the FWBO, and one of his major preoccupations this summer was the process of handing over his remaining responsibilities to the group of senior Order members who have formed the College of Preceptors. Sangharakshita gave much thought to issues associated with the establishment of the College and on 1 July he travelled to Birmingham to take his first look at Brackley Dene, the house where the College will be based. Sangharakshita liked what he saw. He said he was very impressed by the building, the layout of the rooms seemed appropriate for its various intended functions, and – even though the house is in a city – it is surprisingly quiet.

On 18 July Sangharakshita gave a public lecture entitled 'The Disappearing Buddha' at St James's Church, Piccadilly. St James's is a beautiful Wren church in the centre of London which has developed a reputation as the most radical establishment

in the Church of England. William Blake was baptized there and more recently it has been associated with Desmond Tutu and Trevor Huddleston. Between three and four hundred people attended the talk which was a commentary on a passage in the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*.

For two weeks from 19 July Sangharakshita attended to Order business at Padmaloka. On 25 June the stay was interrupted by a trip to London with Kulananda to attend a reception at St James's Palace hosted by the Duke of Edinburgh for the launch of a new publishing venture called the Sacred Literature Trust. At the reception he was pleased to meet a number of old Buddhist friends including Sogyal Rimpoche.

On August 5 Sangharakshita was interviewed by Graham Turner, a journalist writing a series of articles on Buddhism in Britain for the *Daily Mail*, and two days later he travelled to Guhyaloka for his annual summer sojourn at the Spanish retreat centre, where he stayed for a month. While there he prepared lectures for his imminent visit to the USA. 26 August was Sangharakshita's sixty-ninth birthday and he spent the day with Paramartha at Altea, a coastal town near Benidorm.

Back in England Sangharakshita continued his contacts with Buddhists from other traditions with a trip, on 6 September, to Amaravati, accompanied by Kulananda. This was Sangharakshita's first visit to this large Theravadin monastery just north of London. He enjoyed a cordial meeting with Ajahn Sumedho and Ajahn Amaro – who conducted the visitors on a guided tour. Discussion ranged over a variety of topics including the recent attempts to revive the bhikkhuni ordination and the development of a more monastic wing of the Western Buddhist Order.

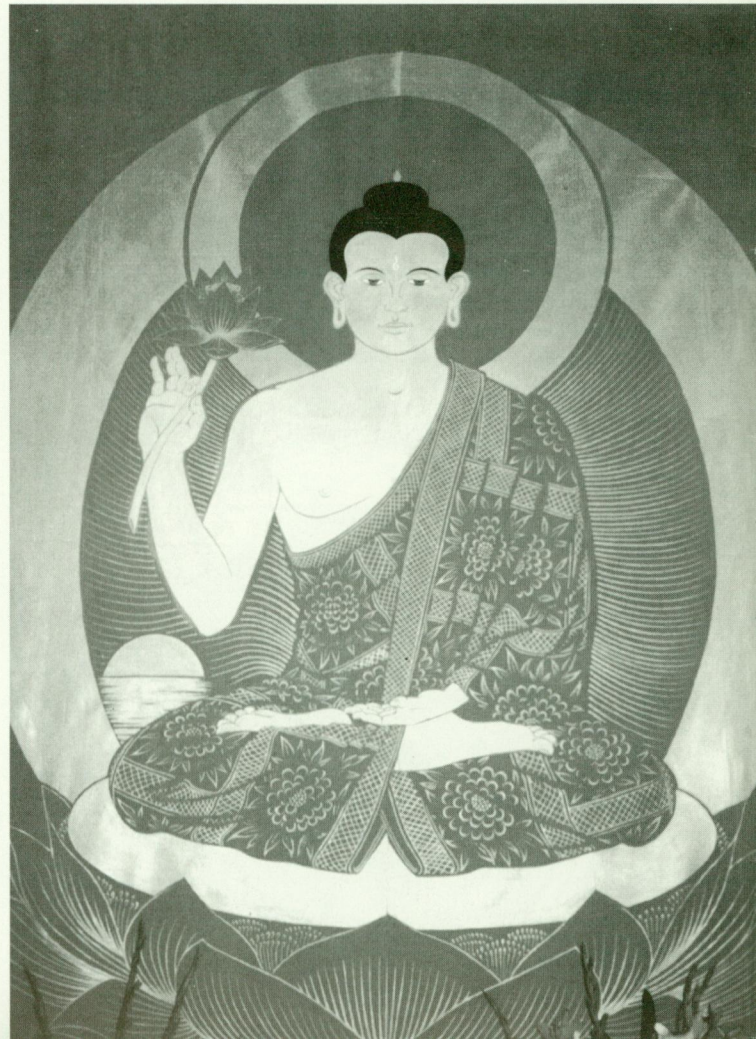
Such issues have been much in Sangharakshita's mind recently. Last year he wrote *Forty-Three Years Ago: Reflections on my Bhikkhu Ordination*, a forceful critique of Theravadin monasticism. A rejoinder was written by an Australian bhikkhu and in June this year Sangharakshita wrote a reply entitled *Was the Buddha a Bhikkhu?* which is now available from Windhorse Publications.

Over the summer Sangharakshita gave interviews to people from many countries including the UK, USA, Germany, Australia, Spain, Holland, and Japan.

On 17 July at the Bishopsgate Institute in London, a celebration was held to mark the thirtieth anniversary of Sangharakshita's return from India to the West.

Ananda, Sanghadevi, and Devamitra gave personal talks paying tribute to Sangharakshita; they were delivered against the backdrop of a large thangka painted specially for the occasion by Amarajyoti and Chintamani. It depicts the vision that Sangharakshita had whilst in India of the Buddha Amitabha, his right hand raised and holding a red lotus.

In the evening Subhuti launched his new book, *Sangharakshita: A New Voice in the Buddhist Tradition*, an account of Sangharakshita's evolution as a thinker and teacher. As the first book about Sangharakshita's ideas to be written by one of his disciples, it marks a significant stage in the development of the FWBO.



Glastonbury Retreat Camp



In July, sixty people came together for the first retreat camp, held in a field near Glastonbury Tor. Some had learned to meditate in the FWBO tent at the Glastonbury Rock Festival earlier this summer, others came from London, Brighton, and the West Country. The retreatants voted the venture a great success, especially as it opened some of their eyes to the benefits of retreat life, not least the fact that they could 'have a good time without drugs or alcohol'. The team of seven Order members, led this year by Karunavira, are keen to develop this style of retreat further, seeing its potential for attracting people who would not otherwise have gone on a retreat or to an FWBO centre, and are planning another retreat camp for next summer. The price was kept low, and the level of collective involvement high, by using tents and constructing facilities on site, including a beautiful shrine-room, using natural materials found nearby. This made a most appropriate environment for the theme 'The Elements', which were explored in a programme including meditation, talks, and ritual. The sound of a conch-shell being blown to herald activities, the excellent cuisine, masterminded by ex-Hockneys chef Vimalaraja, and the pleasure of a soak in the hot tub under the stars at the end of a long day, added considerably to the experience.

Gay Men's Retreat

July also saw the largest yet gay men's retreat, initiated and led by Maitreyabandhu, organized by the London Buddhist Centre, and held at Padmaloka. An international event, with retreatants from Germany, Ireland, and Belgium as well as the UK, sixty-five men spent seven days exploring the theme 'Gay Men, Individuality, and the Group' in a programme of meditation, talks, and discussion groups with a team of gay men Order members. Maitreyabandhu's aim was to make it clear that 'Buddhism is for everyone, and everyone includes gay men – you don't have to be someone else', whilst also presenting a context in which retreatants were 'able to be openly gay, and to be more than that – to practise the spiritual life'. Highlights included powerful pujas, combining a strong sense of community and shared experience, and the challenge of a series of talks on themes including friendship, sex, and the group.

On the Road

Just twenty four hours after he arrived in the United States, Subhuti, still recovering from jet lag, gave a talk at the Cambridge Insight Meditation Society, Boston. It was the first of fifteen talks that he was to give during late July and August, while touring the US and Canada to promote his recently published book *Sangharakshita: A New Voice in the Buddhist Tradition*. He spoke at a number of Buddhist centres and bookstores both on the East Coast and in the Western States.

On the East Coast we had particularly interesting and friendly visits to the Zen Mountain Monastery and Rochester Zen Center in upstate New York, where we were very fortunate to meet Kapleau Roshi. He was clearly pleased to meet us, telling his students of his appreciation for Sangharakshita and the work of the FWBO.

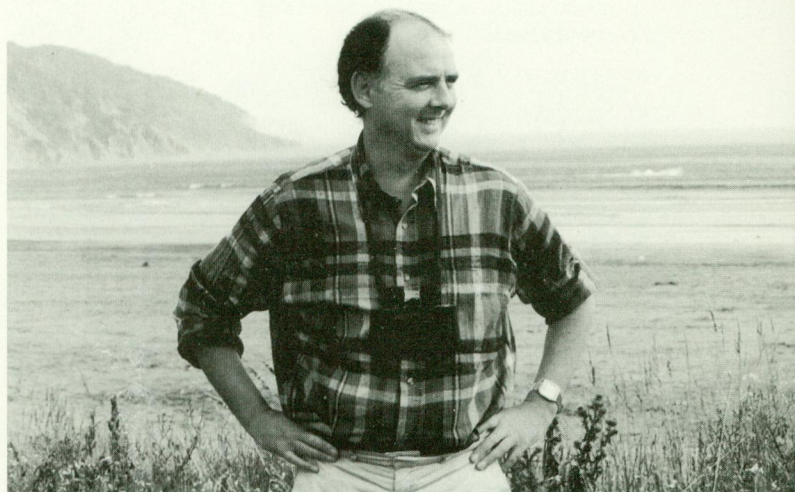
Nagabodhi joined us for the Western leg of the tour, when we visited Aryadaka and friends at their new centre in Seattle, and the growing community at the new San Francisco Center. We also visited other groups of Friends in Missoula, Montana, and Vancouver in British Columbia. Subhuti's talk was well received at the San Francisco Zen Center, and in Los Angeles he spoke at the Bodhi Tree Bookstore – one of the most well known bookstores in the USA.

Driving across the deserts of the South-West we visited Tucson to talk to a group of Buddhists of various schools, gathered by the organizers of the Arizona Teachings Conference

(where Sangharakshita will teach in October this year). Saramati joined us in Phoenix for the drive north to Boulder, where Subhuti gave his talk at the Naropa Institute and the following day we ran a workshop for fifteen very enthusiastic students. The final stop was Missoula; from there Subhuti flew to Aryaloka to lead a men's retreat, while Nagabodhi and I drove back to Seattle.

In all these places, Subhuti spoke about Going for Refuge, the central act of the Buddhist life, as the unifying factor for all Buddhist schools and the essence of the Buddhist spiritual life – at whatever level. He explored the difficulties of introducing Buddhism to the West, in particular outlining the dangers of either blindly adopting Eastern manners and culture, or of allowing Buddhism to be assimilated by Western culture and values. Finally he described the positive spiritual effect of the development of centres, communities, and team based right-livelihood businesses within the FWBO.

Subhuti's talks were well received everywhere we visited: their clarity and depth, combined with his personal energy, were appreciated by a very wide-ranging audience, including students of Zen and Tibetan Vajrayana, academics, and 'New-Agers'. After a road trip of almost seven thousand miles, I was left with three strong impressions: America is beautiful, Sangharakshita's teaching is a miracle of clarity and penetration, and good friends are of incalculable value. **Manjuvajra**



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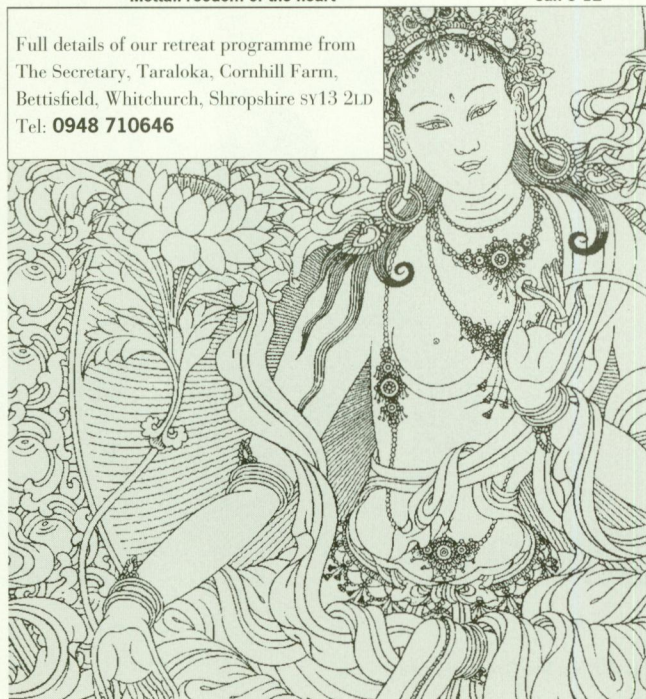
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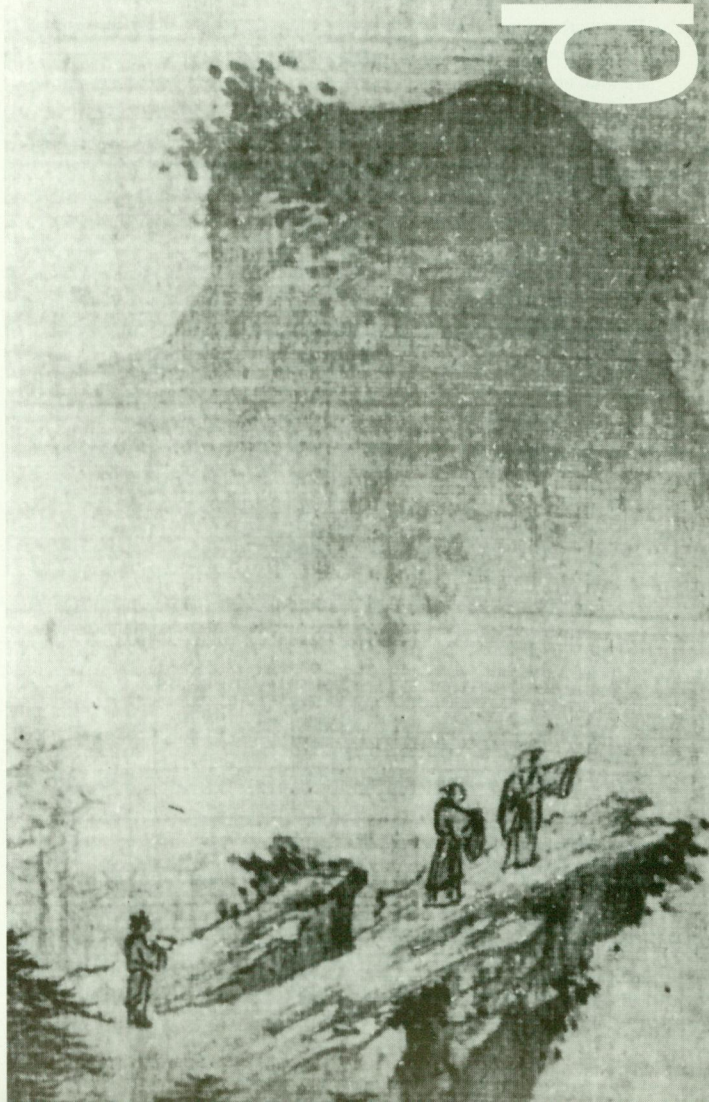
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Dialogue at Karma Ling

A meeting of European Buddhist teachers was hosted by the Karma Ling Institute in the French Alps in July. The meeting followed on from the similar meetings which have been held in Dharamsala with the involvement of the Dalai Lama over the last two years and, as at the first of those meetings, the FWBO was represented by Kulananda.

Two aspects of the meeting were particularly welcome. Firstly there was an emphasis on the fundamental principles of Buddhism as the basis for dialogue. Delegates were able, quite easily, to arrive at a definition of Buddhism which refers to the Four Noble Truths, Threefold Way, and other basic formulae. It describes Buddhism as a path to awakening and paraphrases the *Dhammapada*: 'the essential practices are encapsulated in the formula: Doing no harm; accomplishing the good; perfectly taming one's heart/mind; this is the Buddha's teaching.' Such fundamental principles are what Buddhists from different traditions have most deeply in common and focusing on them – rather than on the culturally and doctrinally divergent aspects of the traditions – provides a basis for starting to share in a consideration of issues of common concern from a genuinely Buddhist point of view.

In a similar vein, within a discussion on the transmission of the Dharma there was a strong emphasis on sharing experiences and learning from one another. There was an awareness of the contrary dangers of a woolly

pluralism – which assumes that divergent traditions are all the same – and intolerance. The teachers agreed that traditional claims for the superiority of one tradition over the others (and the views of the Buddhist tradition which have given rise to such ideas) are out of place and should be abandoned.

Secondly there was an emphasis on the ways Buddhism is actually developing in the West rather than a preoccupation with historically derived forms of practice. On the subject of 'Sangha in the West' there was a recognition that the traditional lay-monastic model does not describe what is actually happening, particularly in consideration of the growing number of non-monastic orders – such as the Western Buddhist Order. Such a recognition opens the door to a shared consideration of the conditions within our shared Western culture which affect us all, and of the best ways of addressing our genuine spiritual needs.

Many of the questions which Buddhists in the West are starting to ask are precisely those which Sangharakshita and the FWBO have been addressing for the last thirty years. In the past, without an awareness of such questions, many other Buddhists have found it difficult to understand the distinctive philosophy of the FWBO or the form it has taken. There are still many misunderstandings, there is much talking to do, but a network of genuine friendships does seem to be developing. Perhaps things are starting to change

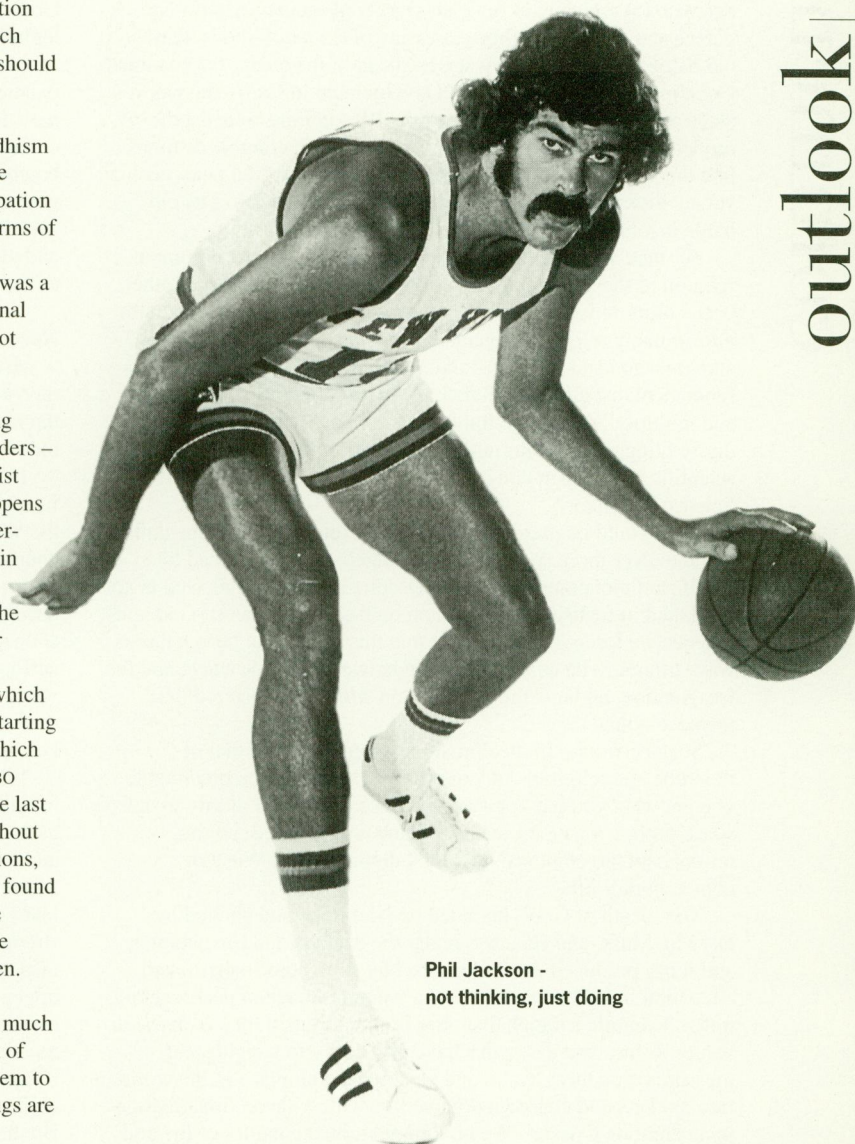
Dharma Sport

Could Buddhism be the answer for the world's floundering sportsmen and demoralized teams? Such, at any rate, is the belief of Phil Jackson, who has coached the Chicago Bulls basketball team to three successive NBA championships with the help of twenty years experience of Buddhist practice. He switched the team's focus from individual star performances to teamwork 'not letting the I get in the way of the we' and awareness. 'We try to clear the minds of our players so that they are not playing with an agenda. The player is not thinking how he can score.... The best thing he can do to make the play come to him is to have a clear mind – not thinking, just doing.' Having convinced the team's star player, Michael Jordan, of his philosophy, Jackson was ready to introduce still more esoteric insights: 'The basketball is a

circle,' he says, 'The hoop is a circle. These are symbols or reminders that the circle is one.'

Meanwhile, Roberto Baggio, the European Footballer of the Year, is a Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist. He inspires Juventus fans to the chant 'Baggio, Baggio, non e un miragio' and his captain's armband is adorned by the blue, yellow, and red of Soka Gakkai and the motto in Japanese ideograms: 'We win, we must win.' He ascribes his footballing success to the tranquillity he derives from his practice and the awareness that 'everyone must be responsible for his life'.

However, Baggio's conversion has upset his mother. 'My boy is pure gold. I don't want to make judgements about anything he does, but I would be much happier if he was a Catholic. Yes, I pray to God every evening to re-convert our Roberto to Catholicism.'



Phil Jackson -
not thinking, just doing

God, Science, and the Imagination

A long battle has been waged within Western culture between God – represented by the Churches of orthodox theistic religion – and Science, for which read the many facets of secular materialism. A glance at a newspaper almost any day of the week shows that the old battle continues to be waged. Ahead of the recent International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, the world's press was filled with Pope John Paul II's attempts to resist the implementation of artificial techniques of birth control. At times like this scientists reach delightedly for their editorial pens, seeing yet another nail in the coffin of irrational superstition. The old battle is joined.

For nearly two millennia Christianity has been the dominant religion of the West. But the monotheism it represents has either been compromised or entirely abandoned. As theism degenerates into so many religio-nationalisms – from Belfast to Bosnia, God and guns go hand in hand – and as an intransigent Papacy forges fundamentalist alliances in defence of the imperative to 'go forth and multiply', one might think we were now witnessing the final discrediting of authoritarian monotheism. In the old battle between scientific rationalism and belief-based faith, is it time to call Science the victor?

That would be premature. Increasing religious fundamentalism allied to ever more sophisticated evangelism may yet lead to a significant monotheistic revival. Despite all his wounds God is not dead, and in focusing our attention on the clash between God and Science we lose sight of the fact that this has in fact been a three-way struggle. The contest has been between God, Science, and the Imagination, and it is the Imagination which has suffered the greatest wounds.

Science works. In the domain of science, unlike that of monotheistic religion, outcomes always appear to be predictable – you get what you pay for – and because of its clear ability to deliver space probes, vaccines, air-travel, and computers, scientific rationalism has achieved near total dominance of Western contemporary life.

The 'death of God', heralded by Nietzsche and abetted by Darwin, Marx, and Freud, is really the death of the Imagination, and it has produced a world marked by stark consumerism and alienation foreshadowed by Blake's potent image of dark, satanic mills. Scientific triumphalism has brought in its train a collapse in values. Ethics and aesthetics have given way to weights and measures: goodness, truth, and beauty have no place in the world of free markets and consequently we live with withered imaginations in an emotional desert. We no longer know the names of the gods, those deeper, dark or bright forces which shape our minds and lend

dimension to the world we inhabit.

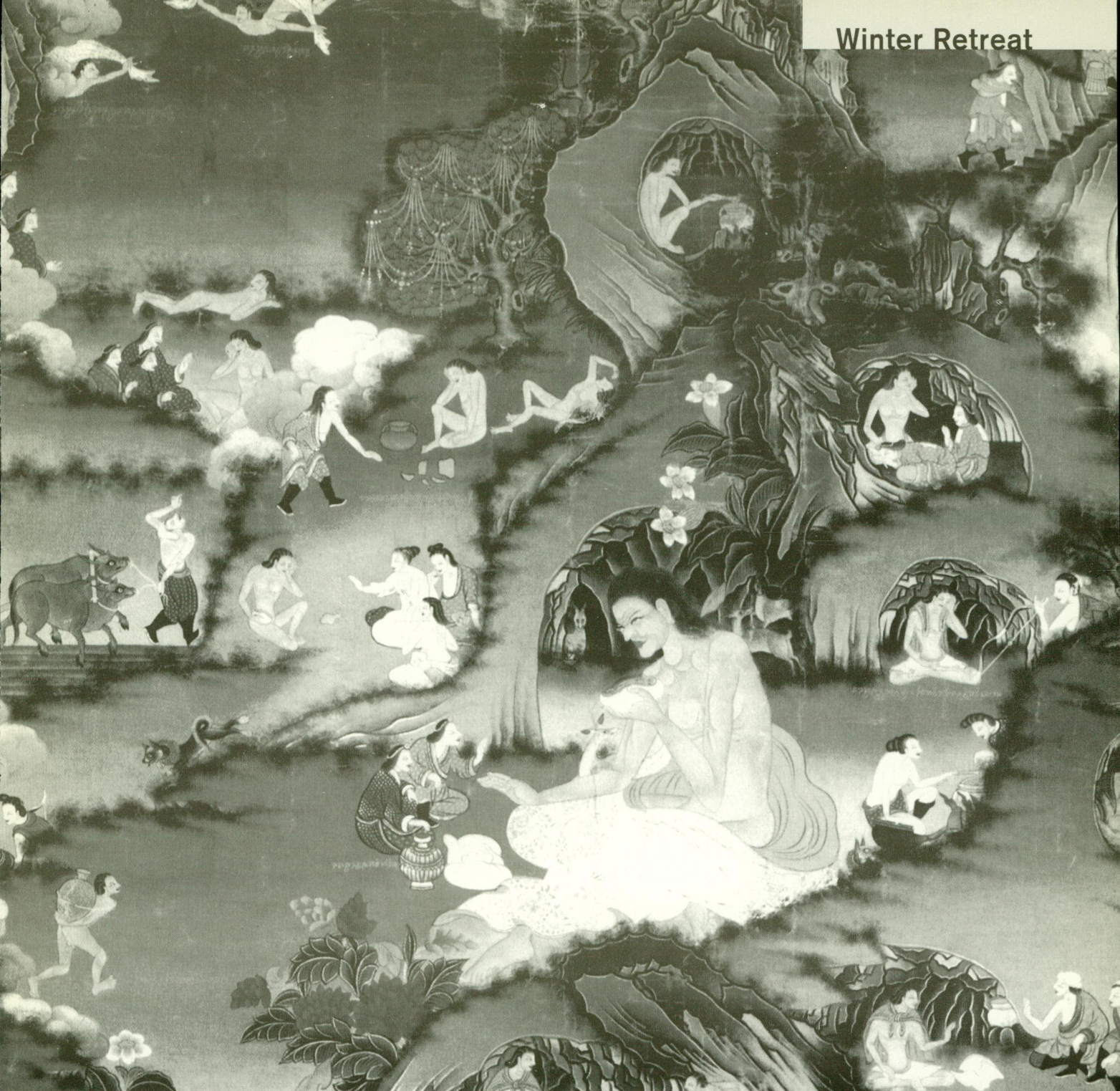
The Imagination has not been undermined by Science alone. God too had a part to play. Ever since the Emperor Constantine legitimized the monotheistic dominance of the Western world, Jehovah and his acolytes have waged unremitting war with the pantheon of the ancient gods. 'Thou shalt have no other gods but me!' How infantile that divine rage can seem. And yet it has been catastrophically effective. Jehovah has almost entirely swept the board, making peace, perhaps, with Mammon but driving the other gods underground. Mars has gone incognito to Bosnia, Eros has sold out to the advertising industry, and Ceres, drunk on nitrates and phosphates, reels out of hand in our man-made 'natural' environment.

As Jehovah gives way to Science – to the Blakean demigod Newton, who knows the size of everything and the value of nothing – we are left facing a blank, denuded cosmic stage. Where once men knew the names of the gods and understood their attributes, the modern, impoverished human imagination understands only materiality, getting, and spending.

In the face of this psychic catastrophe one of the first tasks facing anyone concerned with the realm of values is to re-people the Western imagination. If Buddhism, which is pre-eminently about values, is to take hold in the West, it must first sink its roots deep into the soil of Western culture – a Western culture which needs to be founded in its own unique myth and imagery. But the soil is increasingly barren. Once the Church loosened its suffocating grip, technology and commerce took over. The final vestiges of the expression of the deeper Western imagination are now only to be found in the tenuous custody of the increasingly beleaguered, bewildered, and fragmented world of the secular arts.

Like survivors in the aftermath of a natural disaster, our task is to build again. We look around the wreckage and see here and there usable fragments of once coherent cultures which we can preserve and build upon. Aeschylus, Euripedes, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Botticelli, Mozart, Goethe, Shelley, and Rilke – we must learn to hear the messages they speak and allow them to re-people, strengthen, and refine our imaginations. We must firmly resist any idea that their works are somehow exclusively the preserve of an upper-class élite, or that they speak only of the past, not of the eternal present. Recognizing our own imaginative bankruptcy, we must take responsibility for our own higher education. If, and only if, we do that, the encounter between Buddhism and Western civilization will, in time, produce a rich, supportive, Western Buddhist culture where the exiled Imagination can find a home.

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