

GOLDEN DRUM

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Cover: At the start of his quest for liberation the Buddha leaves his wife and child and forsakes the palace dancing girls

Editor Nagabodhi Editorial Assistance Shantavira Design Dhammarati, Paramabodhi Printing Aldgate Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

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As I was recording these figures, I realized that I had no idea how readers would respond. Would you be shocked to learn how few of our Order members are living in a traditionally monastic manner? Or would you be pleasantly surprised to discover that so many members of what you had perhaps envisaged to be a 'lay' Order are prepared to take that particular bull by the horns? Or were you perhaps alarmed by that significant if low tally, or by Vessantara's review of *Sex is not Compulsory*, even afraid that there might be some pressure on its way to bring celibacy into fashion?

As I hope the rest of that issue made clear, the only pressure to which Order members—indeed all serious Buddhists—are very properly subject, is the 'inner pressure' of their own commitment to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha: their need to work out—and constantly review—a lifestyle that gives full expression to their spiritual commitment. It is this placing of commitment, rather than lifestyle, at the heart of things that has made of the WBO an Order which is neither monastic *nor* lay, but simply—and radically—Buddhist.

Even so, nobody can deny that celibacy, if not exactly coming into fashion, is at least enjoying something of a fresh image. The tragedy of the AIDS epidemic, and the media attention now being given to the AIDS threat, is causing millions of people to reassess their 'permissive' attitudes to sex, to modify their behaviour, and even to contemplate extended periods of celibacy—if only as a safe, hopefully temporary, refuge.

Commenting on this trend recently, Sangharakshita made the point that, terrible though the AIDS phenomenon may be, the public response does at least offer evidence that attitudes can change. And if attitudes can change, he added, people can change. This, if only this, gives a positive aspect to the AIDS affair

Sangharakshita passed this comment in the course of an extended interview I conducted with him at Padmaloka, on the

theme of 'Buddhism, Sex, and Spiritual Life', a condensed and edited version of which occupies the first half of this issue. A fuller version will eventually appear in booklet form.

When he first started teaching in the West, Sangharakshita discovered that he was having to spend a considerable amount of time helping his pupils to unravel the knots into which their sexual instincts and inclinations, and their emotional blindspots, had bound them. As the years passed, as some of those pupils grew in experience and maturity, and as Sangharakshita offered his advice—in private interviews, study seminars, and in open discussions—it steadily became clear that we were developing an increasingly coherent body of specifically Buddhist insight into this highly charged and often problematic area of life.

This interview is therefore something of an initial attempt to give just some elements of that 'coherent body of insight' some coherent literary expression. In the next issue of *Golden Drum* we will be examining a few topics for which we have no space this time. These will include marriage and marriage ceremonies, Tantric sex-yoga, sexual modes, feminism, the 'single-sex' lifestyle, and paganism and Christian guilt.

At one point, I asked Sangharakshita whether he believed that people in the West tended to be *particularly* unclear in their thinking in the area of sex and sexual relationships. His reply was that few people seem to be very clear in their thinking about anything; but since they devote so much thought to sex, their unclarity is perhaps disproportionately invested in that one area! He did however add that the sex urge, because of its powerful instinctual and emotional content, can overwhelm the clarity of even the wise.

The sex urge is without doubt a powerful and sometimes overwhelming force. It can have a profound bearing on many aspects of our lives, from the way we dress, to the way we spend our most creative years. It has a major influence on our relationships with other people. And it is something which, foolishly expressed, even for a few minutes, can have enormous, life-changing repercussions. If we are to develop more clarity in any area of our lives, then perhaps this is a good place to start.

Nagabodhi

At the start of his quest for liberation, the Buddha left his wife and child and forsook the palace dancing-girls. The monks of the Theravada Buddhist world are required to observe strict celibacy. Does this mean that there can be no place for sex and sexual relationships in the life of a serious Buddhist? In this frank interview, Sangharakshita discusses Buddhist tradition and Buddhist practice, and reveals some of the possibilities and challenges that lie at the heart of the matter.

The Five Precepts are the common 'minimal' ethical observance of Buddhists throughout the world. The third precept, Kamesu micchachara veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami, is translated: 'I undertake the training principle of refraining from sexual misconduct'. What is the essential

meaning of this precept?

There is a personal aspect and a social aspect. One must avoid sexual behaviour which is socially disruptive, and one

must at the very least avoid engaging in sexual behaviour of any kind to such an extent that one's ethical and spiritual progress is seriously impeded. In the Buddhist East this precept is often

taken to mean simply the avoidance of rape,

abduction, and adultery.

This is really quite a narrow view. The thought that immediately springs to mind is that of prostitution in Bangkok. Bangkok is almost the world capital of prostitution, so much of it goes on there. Yet Thailand is a Buddhist country, and the prostitutes in Thailand are all,

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presumably, good Buddhists. So those who engage in prostitution—assuming they are not married women doing it for a bit of extra house-keeping money—are







not committing rape, they're not committing adultery, and are therefore, according to the current, popular Buddhist understanding, not committing any breach of the third precept. But one certainly couldn't feel that by having recourse to prostitution they were really leading ethical lives from a Buddhist point of view!

Why has the precept come to be interpreted in such a narrow way?

I think people in the Buddhist East, including parts of India, don't really examine their sexual behaviour in any detail. At least until recently, you simply conformed to tradition and custom, rather than trying to work out what was ethical or non-ethical for yourself. More often than not, tradition and custom kept you on the right track—one has to acknowledge that—but perhaps not in a very intelligent way. People wouldn't usually examine their sexual conduct any more than they usually examined any other aspect of their behaviour. They'd be concerned only with social approval or disapproval. And, naturally, the group interprets the precept in a rather social sort of way.

Generally speaking, in the Buddhist East, they don't worry too much about what goes on between consenting adults in private, provided it does not amount to rape, adultery, or anything of that sort. Certainly, in Buddhism, there isn't that preoccupation with the minutiae of sexual behaviour that we have had in the West, as a subject for gossip and enquiry, nor even, perhaps, for ethical scrutiny.

Perhaps it should also be said that, in those countries, there is no very serious expectation that the lay person will lead a spiritual life. The monks or nuns, on the other hand, are expected to lead a spiritual life, and for them there is the *Vinaya*, in which the precept is explored in far greater detail, probably to make it clear that absolutely all forms of sexual behaviour are excluded.

To what extent can the rules of the Vinaya be taken as the Buddha's own words, or as representing a detailed working out of his views on the subject of sex?

Whether or not they are *Buddha vachana* in all their details can be debated; I am not at all sure that the *Vinaya* offers a fair representation of the Buddha's thoughts on the subject. It is very legalistic in tone, and I don't think the Buddha could have viewed anything in a purely legalistic way. But I think the *Vinaya* does give legalistic expression to an attitude, or a principle, which was the attitude of the Buddha himself.

There can be no serious doubt that the Buddha expected his monk disciples—those who had Gone Forth from their spouses and families—to be celibate. That

seems to have been understood, not only by the Buddha himself, but by others of his day. One who had Gone Forth from home into the homeless life did so probably because he or she wanted to be free from all entanglements. So even if one disregarded the personal aspect of sexual ethics-if one disregarded the effect of sex upon the mind—one would still have to avoid sexual activity if one wanted to be free from worldly (in the sense of household) entanglements. If one did engage in sex, a sexual relationship might develop, children might be produced, and you would be back where you had started.

From this point of view, such abstention from sexual activity would be the concomitant of a certain lifestyle, rather than of the spiritual life as such. The Buddha certainly wouldn't say that one who hadn't completely given up sexual activity couldn't make any spiritual progress, and it wasn't that you couldn't make spiritual progress without being a monk. The Buddha had householder disciples who were Stream Entrants, who appear not to have given up sexual activity. But, if you did follow the lifestyle of a monk, it would have been contradictory to engage in sexual activities in a society where there were no contraceptives.

When you were in the East, living as a monk, what part did chastity play in your own personal practice?

I'm not so sure that it played a very active part. I knew I was expected to be celibate, and so I was. I accepted it as part of the deal, part of the spiritual life; but looking back, I don't think I regarded chastity as a practice, something I should work on.

I was chaste for many, many years, in body, and I think in speech. Unchastity of speech always displeased me from a quite early age. But I don't think I made a particular effort to eliminate sexual thoughts. I was more concerned with eradicating unmindfulness, and was much more distressed by angry or violent thoughts than I was by sexual thoughts—which I tended to think of as being more 'natural'.

But, even when I was in the army, these feelings, though strong, were very much at the background of my mind. I was finding the East so interesting. I was reading whatever Buddhist books I could get hold of; I was writing—it was a very exciting time for me. So even sexual thoughts played a very minor part in my life. It was only when my thirst for such things as the Dharma, literature, poetry, and philosophy had been slaked to some extent that I started thinking about sex, towards the end of my stay in India. In your experience of the modern Theravada, did the monks seem to be spotless in their

practice of chastity?

Some of them did talk to me about these things, and from what they said I gained the impression that most Theravada monks had committed minor breaches of celibacy, at least from time to time. I even met and heard of a few Theravada monks who had wives and children—though they kept them as secret as they could—but who nonetheless continued to wear the yellow robe and expected to be treated as monks.

Minor breaches of celibacy were generally overlooked, as if it was almost too much to expect of ordinary human beings that they should be completely celibate in body, even though they were



Sangharakshita in interview with Nagabodhi monks. Among themselves, the attitude was fairly forgiving. After all, many of them had become monks purely for social reasons: because their parents wanted them to become monks, or because, by becoming monks, they could be sure of receiving a good education, or of achieving economic security. So there would be no question of any conflict between their breach of the precept and their spiritual aspiration. They were usually only concerned with what might happen if they were found out by the lay people.

Even so, in many traditional Buddhist countries, sex is the 'great divider', perhaps the major point of difference between the life of the monk and the life of the lay-person. The monk is chaste; the lay-person is not. Is this a fair observation?

It is certainly fair with regard to the Theravada countries and those Mahayana countries where they do have celibate monks. But it wouldn't be a fair observation with regard to Japan, where celibate monks ceased to exist centuries ago, or to some of the sects of Tibetan Buddhism who do not emphasize the monastic life, and therefore do not emphasize celibacy.

In the Theravada world, the monks and the laity seem to have very little in common. They certainly don't seem be following one and the same spiritual path. The Mahayana's main emphasis, though, is on the Bodhisattva Ideal, and therefore on the development of the Bodhichitta (or 'Will to Enlightenment').





'The sex drive is very powerful'



Marpa — 'Married lama'

In the early days of the Mahayana there was a very strong conviction that the Buddha had taught what was, essentially, one path for all: not only in the sense of his having taught one yana instead of three, but also in the sense of his having taught a spiritual path which could be followed regardless of lifestyle. The Bodhichitta can be developed both by the monk and by the layman; the emphasis was very much on following the path of the Paramitas (Perfections), and on becoming a Bodhisattva. Celibacy and non-celibacy thus became less important issues. One did not have to be a monkor a layman-to develop spiritually. In our FWBO terminology, we would say that commitment was primary and lifestyle was secondary.

A further development was of course that of the Vajrayana. There were great teachers, even in India, who were not monks. Chandragomin, who composed the 'Hymn to Tara', was a layman. We have the famous example of Vimalakirti, who was a Bodhisattva appearing as a layman. Marpa too is a famous example,-though his most celebrated disciple, Milarepa, led an extremely ascetic life and was certainly celibate. In this way, the ground was prepared for the 'married lamas' of the Vajrayana. Do you think the Theravada has placed too much emphasis on the importance of chastity, in the monk's life?

I think it would be difficult to attach too much importance to chastity. It is, however, possible to attach too much importance to being a monk, in whose life chastity occupies an important place. You could say that the Theravada places too much emphasis on monasticism, too much emphasis on chastity as an aspect of monasticism, and, therefore, too much emphasis on chastity of body: on chastity in a purely technical sense.

You see, it's not as if you've got the chaste as the sheep, as it were, and the rest as the goats. We shouldn't think of chastity and non-chastity as if they were white and black, and as though you were either one or the other. There are degrees. To begin with, there's chastity of body, chastity of speech, and chastity of mind. We can't divide Buddhists into those who are chaste and those who are not chaste. We can't even divide them

into those who are bodily chaste and those who are not. One certainly can't associate chastity exclusively with the monk and non-chastity exclusively with the layman. I would prefer to say that there are infinite gradations, and that everybody is chaste to some extent and everybody is non-chaste to some extent. I believe the Buddha once said, 'If there was another human passion as powerful as the sexual urge, there would be no hope of Enlightenment for human beings': What do you think he meant by that?

One could argue that the Buddha was simply trying to point out how powerful that passion is, so that his disciples would guard against it. But I take it quite

The sex drive is very powerful. From a common sense point of view, the sex drive is what enables the human race to perpetuate itself; it would seem to be nature's great con-trick. If there was no sex drive, and we were asked, on rational grounds, to do what the sex-drive impels us to do instinctively, most likely we wouldn't do it! If you didn't have any sex urge, or sex drive, would you really want to be responsible for bringing into the world, and supporting, and educating, children? You'd have to be quite altruistic to want to do that on purely rational grounds!

Then again, the sex drive can have a very destructive effect. It can be a source of very strong feelings of attachment and possessiveness, of jealousy, hatred, and despair. It can completely overwhelm



people, making it impossible for them to follow the spiritual life, or even think in terms of any higher human development.

I suppose the Buddha's view was that sexual desire is a form of craving. Craving is, of course, an unskilful mental state, and unskilful states hold us back from gaining Enlightenment. For Buddhism—certainly for early Buddhism, and certainly for the Theravada—sexual desire is thus axiomatically unskilful. I doubt very much whether it is anywhere considered that you can engage in sexual activity without, at least to some extent, that activity being an expression of an unskilful mental state.

Under no circumstances or conditions? It would seem so, yes.

The emphasis of Buddhism in this respect—its realization that sex is, or can be, an obstacle to spiritual life—is virtually unique. The theistic religions tend to believe that God created everything in the world: he created human beings, and he created their bodies—including the reproductive organs. So, in a way, God is behind sex, and approves of sex. In some religions, God even blesses sex (—though the Christian position is ambiguous, because the Fall has rather spoiled things).

In the case of Buddhism, however, there is no creator god, no god responsible for sex. So who *is* responsible for sex? *You* are. Your past desires—'past' in the sense of desires experienced in a previous existence—have brought you, in this life, into the gross material human body, equipped with sexual organs, by means of which you can give expression to the desires you have carried over from your previous existence.

People are not aware of how powerful this force is. You experience the strength of a force when you oppose it. Usually people tend to go along with their sexual drives, and so don't experience their strength—except, perhaps, when they come up against external obstacles, in the form of parental disapproval, or

something of that sort.

So, since Buddhism regards sexual desires (along with others) as binding you to the Wheel of Life and causing you to be reborn again and again, it therefore teaches that, if you are serious about not being reborn, if you are serious about following a spiritual path and attaining Nirvana, then you will need to avoid sex, not simply in the sense of abstaining from sexual activity, but in the sense of overcoming, eventually, those particular desires or cravings that find expression through sexual activity.

You have been using the words 'desire' and 'craving'. Craving is usually understood to imply a neurotic element, as distinct from 'desire'—which is sometimes understood to

suggest more of a healthy appetite. Is sexual desire always to be regarded as a form of 'craving'?

I think traditional Buddhism, especially Theravada Buddhism, would maintain that even a healthy appetite for sex is the expression of an unskilful mental state. It follows from Buddhist principles that one could be Enlightened and at the same time enjoy one's food, without any associated craving. But I doubt if that principle could be extended to cover sexual experience. Buddhists might well acknowledge that even an Enlightened person has to eat; but an Enlightened person does not have to engage in sexual activity, he does not have to procreate.

Then, of course, the sexual appetite usually involves other people. When one comes into close physical, or emotional, contact with another person within the context of a sexual relationship, usually all sorts of psychological projections take place, and sometimes a very complicated, even negative, situation develops—which doesn't happen with regard to food, say, or to sleep. Even the so-called 'healthy appetite' for sex, if satisfied, very quickly leads to the development of attachment. That attachment can lead to the arising of very strong emotions of possessiveness, jealousy, hatred, and so on.

It could of course be argued that it is possible for someone to enjoy sex without any of these things arising. But then there would very likely be present in the mind of that person the unskilful states, not so much of sexual craving, as of indifference, lack of positive emotion, and exploitiveness.

To return to the Five Precepts for a moment, you once composed a 'Tantric version', in which the third precept was rendered: 'Do not misuse energy.' Could you expand on that? The third precept represents an important form of ethical discipline. I discovered that a lot of young people in the West didn't take very kindly to the idea of discipline, so it wasn't very easy to talk about the importance of the precept in disciplinary terms.

What I had in mind was that sexual energy was a sort of paradigm of energy in general. I don't think there is, specifically, a special, separate, 'sexual energy'. The psycho-physical organism is itself an expression of energy, and sexual activity is simply one form in which that energy manifests itself. It's obviously important that energy should not be wasted, so if you can point out that sexual energy is a form of energy, then it becomes immediately obvious that that energy should not be wasted. Some people argue that sexual activity—and particularly the orgasm—bestows energy, and that its denial depletes. Could you comment on this?

I rather doubt whether sex does actually give people energy, as they maintain. At the time of orgasm there is an expenditure of energy; you experience yourself as spending energy, and therefore you experience yourself as being 'energy full'—as you might when you throw a cricket ball.

When people talk of sex and orgasm actually giving them energy, they are talking about something quite different. I think, especially in the case of men, that when they experience orgasm, there's a sort of sense of achievement, as if they've had their way: they've done something that they consider worthwhile. Their ego becomes a bit bloated and swollen, and

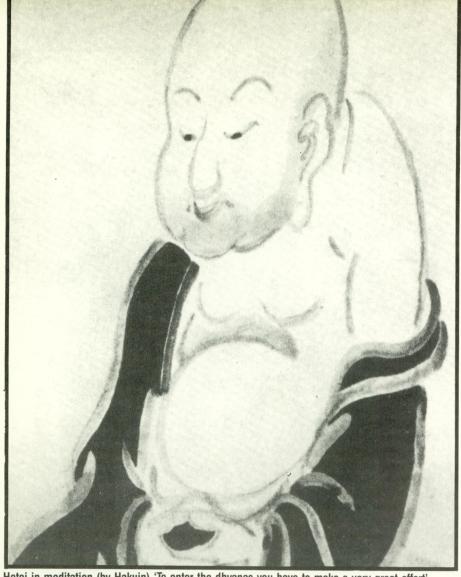


this they interpret as a sort of access of energy. It isn't at all a healthy or positive state.

When one has experienced orgasm, one is often left in a state of what could be called 'enervation'. Having made the effort that the approach to orgasm involves, your natural tendency is simply to rest. If you want to meditate, to overcome the hindrances, to concentrate the mind, and enter the dhyanas, you have to make a very great effort, and after an orgasm, you won't feel like making an effort. Some people may not feel like making an effort—especially that mental effort-for many hours afterwards; for others it might be quite a few days. They are just not able to get their mental energies together. It's not that they feel physically weak, or even mentally exhausted: they have lost a certain cutting edge, not only in relation to meditation, but to all sorts of other areas. They need to give their energies, and especially their mental energies, time to build up again and to want to express themselves. You sometimes hear it said that, at the moment of orgasm, one experiences a dissolution of ego and a sense of union with one's partner. .

There seems to be a confusion here between sinking below the ego and transcending it. Ego is lost in deep sleep; you are not self-conscious in all sorts of situations, not because you've transcended the ego, but because you've temporarily reverted to a state lower than that of the ego, or self-consciousness.





Hotei in meditation (by Hakuin) 'To enter the dhyanas you have to make a very great effort'



'Falling in love implies psychological projection'

As for 'union', the very idea is nonsensical. Often, those very people who feel this sense of union at the time of orgasm are fighting and quarrelling five minutes later! So where is the union? What has been achieved? If one really achieved unity in a spiritual sense, not just by way of mutual unconsciousness, then one's attitude to the other person would be completely transformed: one would be positive, affectionate, and caring,—which ordinary human sexual relationships rarely are.

Even so, sex is usually regarded as a vital route—even the vital route—to emotional fulfilment and satisfaction. . .

I wonder whether people really do get emotional satisfaction and fulfilment out of sex. Certainly there is a *measure* of satisfaction and fulfilment, but it's usually very short-lived.

Emotional satisfaction and fulfilment is quite a big thing. From a philosophical point of view, Buddhism sees man's predicament as stemming from the fact that he is looking for absolute happiness in something which is quite unable to give absolute happiness. He's looking for permanence in something which is quite unable to give him permanence, looking for the real in the midst of the unreal. No finite thing is capable of giving infinite and unlimited satisfaction and fulfilment-emotional or otherwise. But this is very often what people are looking for in sex. So sex may give them a measure of satisfaction, a measure of fulfilment; but it can't give satisfaction and fulfilment to the degree that people expect or hope.

But people look to sex at least for the enjoyment of emotional intimacy. . Well, there is certainly physical intimacy in sex. Whether there is emotional intimacy is quite another matter. It is well known that all sorts of misunderstandings and confusions occur between people who are involved in sexual relationships. When a sexual relationship comes to an end, it often does so in a very unfortunate and emotionally negative way: the two people separate, perhaps with fairly negative feelings towards each other; their socalled intimacy might never have been. So when people speak of their sexual partners as being their best friends, do you think they

are absolutely deluded?

Friendship and sexual infatuation are two very different things. Sexual infatuation can arise and reach its physical consummation very, very rapidly. Friendship is a plant of much slower growth; it takes much longer to develop. You become friends with someone as you really get to know them, as you develop confidence in them, as you come to feel that they really do know and understand you. This is very different from the process of sexual infatuation.

It may be that, when sexual infatuation subsides, if the two people are reasonably healthy, and if they have certain things in common, including the raising of a family, or if they have religious and spiritual ideals in common, they may be able to develop a friendship in the long run, especially as they get older. But, even so, a sexual relationship is a very different thing from a friendship. If anybody ever tells me that their wife is their best friend, or their girlfriend is their best friend, or their husband is their best friend, or their boyfriend is their best friend, I can't help feeling that they are using the word 'friendship' in a totally different sense from the sense in which I use it.

I believe you once said that the worst thing you can do to someone is to fall in love with them. Could you explain what you meant? Falling in love implies psychological projection, or seeing in the other person qualities and aspects which are in fact qualities and aspects of yourself, but of which you are unconscious. This means that you do not see the other person as they really are; in a way, you're not treating them as a human being; you are treating them as an object, a thing. Perhaps you're both treating each other in that way, and it may be that by that means you satisfy certain appetites. But there won't be any question of your development as a human being, much less still of any spiritual development. Presumably, you have had to spend a fair amount of time over the years discussing this aspect of your pupils' lives?

In the early days of the FWBO, especially, when people tended to bring their more everyday problems to me rather than to Order members, very roughly a third of my discussion time would be devoted to the subject of sex, and particularly to sexual relationships that had gone wrong or broken down.

Did you find that men and women have different problems and preoccupations in this area?

It's not easy to generalize, but it does seem that achieving a sexual *relationship* was more important for women than for men. In the case of men, it was perhaps more a matter of gaining sexual



satisfaction—not necessarily with one and the same woman.

In the case of women, sexual desire is very much bound up with the desire for children. At the back of the woman's mind all the time is the desire for a child, and there is therefore the desire to have someone to help her, and look after her, when she is having the child. That question doesn't arise in the case of the man—who has to be wary of adopting a purely self-indulgent and exploitative attitude with regard to sex. Men may want children, but rarely in the passionate sort of way that women very often do.

Over the years, I came very much to the conclusion that the reason why sexual relationships were so difficult, and sometimes ended so disastrously, was that people were investing far too much in them. Very often, they seemed to have built their lives around their sexual relationships, and had no other serious relationships: not with their parents, for example, and certainly not with their friends.

Is this a particularly Western syndrome? Or did you have to deal with similar problems in India?

I don't remember having to, partly because people—if they did have problems concerning sex-might well have considered it inappropriate to bring them to me, a celibate monk. But I also think that people did not have that sort of problem—certainly the non-Westernized people—because most Indians lived as members of a joint family; there was a good spread of relationships, even of important relationships, in their lives. Could there be a lesson in that for us? In the FWBO we sometimes talk in terms of the 'mandala' (or, 'magic circle'). The mandala is your whole life, and what is within your mandala represents the contents of your life. A mandala has a centre, so there will be, in the mandala of your life, something which occupies a central position: the interest, activity, idea, or ideal around which your life is centred. Then we include the other interests and activities of our lives, putting them nearer to the centre as they are more important, and nearer to the periphery as they are less important.

So, with regard to sex, I think we could say that, for most people, sex has a legitimate place somewhere near the periphery of the personal mandala. It certainly shouldn't be at the centre of the mandala; *there* we place the Buddha, representing the ideal of Enlightenment.

It is possible for a human being to develop spiritually while still engaging in a certain amount of sexual activity. But



that is provided that not too much importance is attached to that activity, that our emotions are not invested in that sexual activity to a very great extent, and provided especially that there is a strong spiritual ideal seated right at the centre of the mandala.

Obviously, we have here to be very careful that we don't engage in rationalization—which is why I am sometimes very reluctant to admit that sex has a place in the mandala at all! I've heard so many men and women say that they are not very deeply involved in their sexual relationships, but who nonetheless absolutely broke down and were completely demoralized when their sexual partner left them.

But how is one to know when one is overinvesting?

You should ask your spiritual friends to tell you. It is very difficult to tell yourself. Of course, if you want to spend as much time as you possibly can with your sexual partner, then you've probably put them in the centre of your mandala.

You may also notice—or your friends will notice—that if you have a sexual partner and are very attached to them, you tend to relate in a certain way, engage in almost meaningless communication simply to reassure yourself that the other is still there. You find that people who are involved in a sexual relationship often do this. This suggests quite deep attachment and emotional dependence, which is not at all desirable.

Then, if you want to make sure that your sexual relationship really is towards the periphery of your mandala, you should be very careful not to spend too much time with the person you're having the sexual relationship with, and preferably not live with them. And you should ensure that you have strong freely with members of your own

In the FWBO, as you know, people who are having sexual relationships often live in separate communities, the man living in a men's community, the woman living in a women's community. I would say that this not only helps to ensure that the sexual relationship occupies only a peripheral place in those two people's mandalas, but also ensures a happier, more truly human relationship between them, because they allow themselves space.

Would fidelity be an important factor in a 'successful' relationship?

Fidelity is faithfulness over a long period of time, especially in the absence of the friend or sexual partner. It implies not only time: it implies space. It implies the ability, or the capacity, to behave in the absence of a friend, or a sexual partner, as though they were present. And you can only behave as though they were present if you have a strong sense of their existence when they're not actually there with you.

For this to be possible you must dwell much more on the 'mental' level—using that term in the Buddhist sense—than on



■ Women's communities ▼



the physical. You must be less susceptible to every passing physical stimulation, be less carried away by the senses, and live less in the present in a forgetful sort of way. Fidelity is a very human, very individual quality, like friendship or 'impersonal' love in the sense of metta. You are able to look ahead, able to imagine—or to feel—the presence of another person who is not physically with you. This suggests that you don't just see the other person as a body: you have some consciousness of them as a mind, as a 'spirit' if you like, and you relate to them in that way and on that level.

Fidelity is of course different from attachment. Perhaps it isn't always easy to distinguish between the two. Fidelity is a positive quality, whereas attachment is not. When you practise fidelity towards someone, you are, as it were, valuing them for their own sake. But when you're attached to them, you are wanting something from them for your sake.

So I've observed that men and women can have very happy relationships, including sexual relationships, provided they live quite independent lives, and see each other just from time to time. When the man and the woman have each placed Enlightenment firmly at the centre of their mandala, they've got something to get on with; their lives don't centre around their sexual partners. Then, paradoxically, the relationship becomes more satisfactory, and they can relate more as human beings. You have to strike a sort of happy balance, where you see someone sufficiently often to keep up a continuity of contact, but not so often that you become attached, or become bored with each other's company.



Men's community

Then, if you are committed to a spiritual way of life, or if you are committed to your personal development, and if you do see your sexual partner infrequently, and if you do both live in single sex spiritual communities, and if you have strong friendships with members of your own sex, and if you are making a very determined effort to develop spiritually, with the help of meditation, with the help of Dharma study, altruistic activity, retreats, and so on, then the danger of over-investment in a sexual relationship will be far less. Obviously, many couples live together in order to bring up a family. They might argue that having and nurturing children is itself a spiritually challenging activity. Would you agree?

Well, every human activity can be regarded as having a spiritually demanding aspect. There is always the possibility of a skilful, positive response, and of an unskilful, negative response.

Supposing it rains. You can have a positive response to the fact that it is raining, but does that mean that rain is, as such, a spiritual experience? In the same way, if you have children, you can be patient, forbearing kindly,—and that can be a spiritual experience. But that does not mean that having children is, itself, a spiritual experience any more than the weather is.

Raising children and helping them to get on in the world can be a challenging and creative pursuit, but I would say that there are already far too many beings in

the world who have never had that help, and who need that help; it would probably be much better for us to direct our attention towards them.

Even so, as you mentioned a moment ago, bearing children is a major issue—and a major source of conflict—for some women. Is there any general advice that you would offer? Some years ago I wouldn't have ventured to give a piece of general advice. Now I very definitely do. Quite a few women in the FWBO have experienced tremendous conflict between the very genuine desire to lead a spiritual life, and the desire for a child. I have come to the conclusion, after discussing the matter with quite a number of women, and observing women in the Movement who have children, that, if a woman has a genuine desire for the spiritual life, then having a child will not in the long run get in the

Of course, for two or three years, she will be very tied down by the child. She won't be able to go on retreats; she may not even be able to attend classes at the Centre, or able to attend Order meetings. She will have to be patient. But that period of almost total dependence of the child on its mother does come to an end; the mother does become more free with the passing of every year. And, if the mother's original interest in, or commitment to, the spiritual life has been genuine or sincere, it will re-emerge, and be free to express itself again.

Of course, if her involvement isn't very strong, the likelihood is that, even if she doesn't have a child, she will drift away from the spiritual life. Men often drift away from the spiritual life without even thinking about having children! I believe you have said that heterosexual sexual activity and attitudes can have a polarizing effect on the individual, leading him or her to a one-sided kind of development. Could you say a bit more about this? If you're involved in a heterosexual relationship, you think of yourself as a man, the other person as a woman, or of vourself as a woman, the other person as a man. In other words, you don't relate to your partner so much as an individual, but as just a man or just a woman. So, within the relationship, only half your total 'nature' has an opportunity to express itself—because a human being is not 'just a man', or 'just a woman': there are other potentialities too.

Then, if one relates predominantly as a member of this sex or that sex, the qualities and characteristics associated with the opposite sex are not developed; one becomes one-sided in one's psychological, and possibly even in one's spiritual, development. Thus you get the very 'macho' man and the extravagantly



feminine woman, in whom the complementary qualities of the opposite sex have no opportunity to develop.

A human being should try to develop the whole range of human qualities: the so-called 'masculine' and the so-called 'feminine', and in this way become—to talk in these 'sexual' terms— androgynous. This doesn't necessarily mean that a man will become bisexual or a woman will become bisexual; they may continue to confine their sexual activities to partners of the opposite sex. But, nonetheless, they will have developed—if they're truly, psychologically androgynous—the psychological and spiritual qualities of, so to speak, both sexes.

Is there less risk of polarization, attachment, or psychological projection in homosexual relationships than in heterosexual ones? It's very difficult to generalize. I get the impression that, among men who might be described as 'professionally gay', sexual relationships can become quite turbulent. But where the men concerned are not actually gay, or not gay in an extremely one-sided way, it is possible for them to have a relationship in which sex may play a part, if not a very important part.

The case of women is rather different. So far as I've observed—and of course I am generalizing—sexual relationships between women can result in very powerful emotional attachments of a very 'heavy' kind. Sex, and the emotions associated with sex, play a much more important, and in a way constant, part in the life of a woman than in the life of a man. So when two women come together, you tend to get a much more emotionally charged relationship. But do you think that people who are looking for a clearer sexual mode might at least benefit from experimenting with homosexuality? I don't think one can experiment with homosexuality-or even with heterosexuality come to that—on purely rational grounds. It simply doesn't work. The essence of the matter is that there is a natural, spontaneous attraction, whether sexual or non-sexual. But is anybody 100% heterosexual or homosexual?

There are people who appear to be 100% heterosexual, and to have not even the slightest homosexual inclination; but it is very hard to be sure. The least one can say is that the majority of people, under certain conditions, would be able to find at least some sexual satisfaction with members of their own sex.

But, you see, we've made it all into such a big deal; we've classified and labelled people as 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual'. You can speak of certain actions as homosexual actions, or others as heterosexual, but can you speak of individuals as either 'homosexual' or 'heterosexual'?

I don't like people being spoken of as 'gay', or speaking of themselves as 'gay', as though their sexual identity is the most important thing about them. I don't blame them too much, because that attitude is a reaction against years—even centuries—of oppression of people engaged in homosexual activities by people who did not engage in homosexual activities, but it is nevertheless unfortunate.

This raises an issue which is, I think, quite a serious problem for Western men, and especially perhaps for those involved in Buddhism. Spiritual friendship is important, and it can only arise on a basis of ordinary friendship. Friendship implies closeness, mutual confidence, intimacy, and even physical contact.

For most people in the West it would seem that physical contact occurs in association with sex. We consequently seem to confuse the two, or to regard the two as being inseparable. Purely physical contact is therefore quite difficult for people to obtain, especially, I think, for men to obtain from other men. Normally, in the case of other men, there's no 'danger' of sexual involvement. Even so, men find it quite difficult to experience physical contact with other men because of their fear of homosexuality.

I've observed cases where men are even afraid to give each other a brotherly hug! It may take them years to get through that. And when they succeed in doing it, they are quite overwhelmed and overjoyed, as if they've had a real breakthrough! This illustrates the terrible mess we've got ourselves into; such a simple thing has become an enormous problem.

During the time I was living at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, I was quite celibate. Even so, I remember how bothered some people were by my close friendship with Terry Delamare. Actually, as they really ought to have taken for granted, that was a completely Platonic relationship—in fact it wasn't a relationship in the ordinary sense at all, and certainly not a sexual relationship. The crux of the matter seemed to be people's inability to believe that there could be a close friendship between two men without there being a sexual element

Women, generally, seem much less inhibited in this respect. They don't hesitate to put their arms round each other's waists or hug each other; they even kiss each other quite freely. Men normally would not dream of doing such things, and limit their contact. Because of that, they very often limit the possibilities

of friendship with other men. And so, because they don't develop friendship with other men, they don't develop spiritual friendship with other men. And because they don't develop spiritual friendship with other men, they're not able to develop what the Buddha declared to be the most important element in the spiritual life. So what can Western men do about this? They must break down their fear of homosexuality, by facing it, and by not being afraid of sexual contact with other men

This is not necessarily to say that they should have sexual contact with men, but at least that they should not be afraid of the idea. They have to realize that physical, and even sexual, contact between men is *just* physical or sexual contact between men. It is a quite ordinary thing, and one's fear of that should not be allowed to get in the way of one's friendships.

Some while ago, I believe you did engage in some sexual 'experimentation' yourself. Could you say something about that?

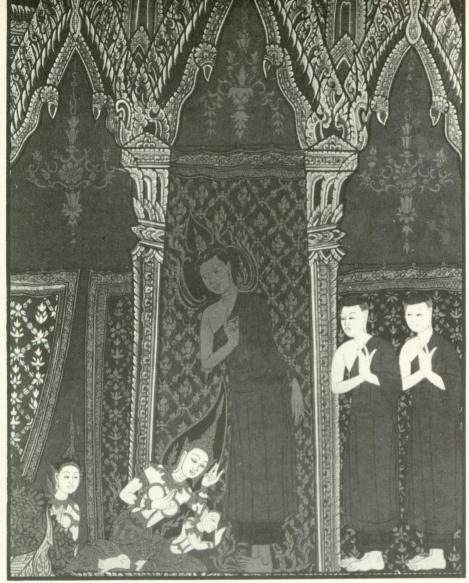
In 1967, when I returned from India to start the FWBO, there was a lot of talk about the place of sex in communication. I therefore thought I should perhaps experiment a little in this field.

În those days, everything seemed to be in the melting pot. I was, in a sense, free to do what I wanted, free to do whatever I felt was best. It was a very important period, a creative period: I was giving all those classes, all those lectures. This was also the period of my experimentation with psychedelic drugs, the period when I let my hair grow. . . You could say I was feeling my way, feeling my way around.

I think I've always been guided by instinct or intuition. I very much tend to do, and then worry about the implications afterwards. I'm sure that appetite did play some part in the 'experimentation', but it was all definitely more to do with intuition than appetite.

The ancient Greeks encouraged 'educative', erotically charged, friendships, especially between older and younger men. Did you have something like this in mind? No, I don't think it was from this point of view at all. I have had hundreds of pupils and disciples without there being any sexual element entering into the relationship. When I engaged in my period of 'experimentation', it wasn't so much within a pedagogic context, as just in a context of ordinary friendship. Of course one can learn from friends, but the experimentation wasn't part of the education of some other person. I was just exploring certain things for my own benefit, for the satisfaction of my own

But even now, I don't think I could



really explain what it was that I was intuitively reaching for—without setting myself to write about it seriously, when I can really 'dig around' and ask myself what I really felt about things. I do in fact intend to describe this period in a volume of memoirs, which I hope to write in the next few years.

Did you come away from that period of experimentation with any conclusions? One of my conclusions was that sex didn't really play much of a part in human communication. Bodily contact sometimes functioned as a means of breakthrough in communication, but it didn't result in a permanent breakthrough: it only gave one a certain opportunity, which one then had to develop. Sometimes the breakthrough came to an end and things were as they were before. In fact, that was almost always the case. So I came to the conclusion that sexual contact wasn't really much help in developing human communication, and again I ended up celibate.

At the same time, I can definitely say that, in the case of certain people, I found that having physical contact with them (and I'm speaking now of physical, not sexual, contact) certainly did release them from their fear of homosexuality, and enabled them to develop friendships-by which I mean non-sexual friendshipswith other men more easily.

In the early days of the FWBO you seemed to be very patient with our tendencies to sexual distraction and sexual indulgence. Were you as tolerant and patient as you seemed?

I had no choice but to be patient! I was starting out—in the 'permissive' sixtieswith people who were, on the whole, completely fresh to Buddhism. I was more concerned that people should develop some sympathy for Buddhist ideals, and gradually bring their conduct into line with those ideals. I didn't take the view that, 'Well, you've got to give up all your present unskilful actions and mental attitudes, and then we can start thinking about Buddhism.' That would simply not have worked. So I mainly followed what I afterwards called the 'path of irregular steps'.

Were you ever afraid that the FWBO might disappear in a cloud of sexual permissiveness? Well, sexual permissiveness is not the only danger. We mustn't dwell too much upon that, even though we are at present dealing with the subject of sex. The FWBO could dissolve for all sorts of reasons, and there will always be the danger of it dissolving so long as, within the FWBO, and within the Order especially, we don't have a sufficient number of Stream Entrants. If you're not a Stream Entrant you can resile from the spiritual life, you can resile from your commitment to the Three Jewels; you can become anything, do anything.

But do you think that we in the West need to work harder at our understanding of the third precept than those from a more traditional, Eastern culture?

I think we have to fight against a cultural message that overvalues sex and regards

sex as an unqualified good. A lot of people still think that so long as you don't actually harm people you can have—should have—as much sex as you please. Because of this attitude, there's no understanding of the fact that if you want to develop-spiritually, then sex has to take a peripheral place.

We're living in a transitional period. Formerly the great disincentive, particularly for the woman, was the fear of pregnancy. That fear has been largely removed, and people find themselves (or, at least until the advent of AIDS, found themselves) free to engage in sexual activity without the fear of consequences. This has certainly altered attitudes towards sex. But there have been sideeffects: the contraceptive pill does have certain physical dangers for some women; then, it may be doubted whether promiscuous sex is necessarily very psychologically satisfying, or even healthy. Perhaps the freedom with which people can now have sex has resulted in an altogether disproportionate amount of attention being given to it.

More recently, you have been encouraging us to think more seriously about, and to aim ourselves more decidedly towards, celibacy. Well, in the early days, most of our early members were in their twenties or even in their late teens. One could not really expect or demand celibacy of people of that age. But those who were twenty-five or even younger when they joined us are now in their forties. People of that age can certainly start thinking seriously about celibacy,—and I have asked people to do no more than that: just to think

about it seriously.

Though you do seem content that a few people are taking the Anagarika precepts—which include a 'vow' of celibacy.

I'm not only content: I'm very pleased that they are. They are really nailing their colours, their saffron colours if you like, to the mast. But I never urge anyone to take the vow of celibacy. When people tell me they want to take such a vow, I almost invariably ask them to think about it for a while longer.

One can be a member of the Western Buddhist Order without being celibate. One is only asked to keep one's sex life at the periphery, or towards the periphery, of one's personal mandala,—or at the very least not too near the centre. But if one can be celibate in a non-neurotic way, in a positive and healthy way. I'm sure that will enable one—other factors being equal-to develop spiritually more rapidly, and enable one to be more free to be of use to the Dharma and of use to other human beings.

What would be the distinction between a 'neurotic' and a healthy, 'non-neurotic celibacy?



You could be celibate because you were so absorbed by the beauty and attractiveness of the spiritual ideal that sex just didn't interest you. That would be a very healthy sexual mode. But then you could be celibate out of guilt, or for the sake of some material advantage. You could be celibate for all sorts of quite negative reasons, which would be neurotic.

It certainly isn't just a question of being celibate. Being physically celibate by itself probably has very little value. What is more valuable is being *relatively* celibate because the main object of one's emotional energies is something of a higher order. You can't be healthily and happily celibate unless you are celibate for the sake of a higher cultural, artistic, humanitarian, or spiritual interest. You could even say that sexual frustration takes place when you don't have at the centre of your mandala an interest or an ideal which absorbs your emotional

In the Udana, Sundarananda complains that his mind is always dwelling on the beautiful girl he left behind when he became a monk. The Buddha takes him to a heavenly realm, and shows him goddesses of even greater beauty. What is the teaching there for us? Sundarananda's experience represents an experience of beauty more refined than ordinary human beauty. So he becomes less attracted, less attached, to lower, human beauty.

I don't think that while still remaining on the level of ordinary human beauty you can simply put it all behind you. You only have a reason for doing that if you have a glimpse of a higher, heavenly beauty.

So what are we to do? Pay more visits to the art gallery?

A visit to the local art gallery is not to be despised. Then there is refined music, or engaging in a creative activity. This can certainly absorb one's energies.

Then of course there is meditation. So long as you haven't developed Insight you will be swaying between engaging in sex and experiencing sexual craving, and being free from that craving. So, in order to make spiritual progress while continuing to have sex, you have to ensure that the sex is peripheral, and that you are mentally free from the hindrance of sexual desire for sufficient periods, from time to time, to be able to achieve higher states of consciousness, and on that basis develop Insight. Once Insight starts being developed, then of course you are attacking the craving at the source. The more you do of that, then the weaker any craving will become. So there is a sort of gradual path to celibacy: taking some of these things on, developing Insight, adding these refined elements to our



lives?

Yes indeed!—Like a caterpillar passing from leaf to leaf. While with his rear legs he is still adhering to one leaf, with his front legs he is grasping hold of another. And he doesn't pull his rear legs forward onto the new leaf until he has planted his front legs very securely on that new leaf.

It is quite impossible to give up everything all at once, though some spiritual disciplines seem to demand that: 'Give up everything to God: give up everything to the Guru. .' I don't think that is humanly possible; you may have a nervous breakdown if you try. But at least seize hold of the spiritual, just like the caterpillar seizing hold of that leaf with his front legs. In a sense, it doesn't matter if you've got two front legs on that new leaf and twenty legs back on the old leaf: at least you've grasped hold of that new leaf. Then you can proceed to haul yourself slowly forward.

Psychologically and spiritually speaking, it's not so much a question of just giving up the old, but of seizing hold of the new while you are still, to some extent, involved with the old, even trapped in the old. Just make sure you do seize hold of the new, and try to seize hold of it more and more. Don't think there's no point in seizing hold of the new because you haven't yet completely relaxed your hold on the old. There are degrees of celibacy. Everybody is celibate to some extent, and everybody is noncelibate to some extent. No one is engaging in sexual activity all the time (I'm speaking here about physical celibacy), and nobody, except for Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, is celibate in body, speech, and mind all the time.

One should therefore understand the *principle* of celibacy, which in Buddhism is called *Brahmacharya*. This can be translated as the 'divine life', or even the 'angelic life'. It represents a transition from a lower to a higher sphere, from the *kamaloka* to the *rupaloka*, from the *rupaloka* to the *Brahmaloka*. Brahmacharya means, literally, walking with, or 'faring' with, Brahma—Brahma meaning a very lofty, spiritual state. When you are celibate in body, speech, and mind, well, you dwell in that state. But you're *trying* to dwell in

that state all the time. Some people make a nearer approach to it, others don't succeed in approaching so near. But everybody, one might say, is to some extent on their way—even if only by accident

Of course, If you're leading a specifically spiritual life, if you've taken up the Brahmacharya, you can try to be more and more celibate. If, for instance, you normally engage in sexual intercourse once a week, then try to make it once a fortnight, or once a month, or even once a year, as some of our friends do. In that way you gradually detach yourself from attachment to the material world, from the senses, from unskilful pleasures, and you experience skilful pleasures more and more intensely, and pursue them.

I see the FWBO—and the Order especially—as never standing still. I would like too see everybody involved with the Movement, everybody involved with the Order, becoming more and more celibate, every day if you like.

I'm not asking anyone to give up sex all at once; I'm not expecting them to do that. But inasmuch as I expect people to progress a little every day, then I expect them, in a way, to give up a little bit of sex every day, so that over the years there is an appreciable difference—so that overt sexual activity plays a smaller and smaller part in their lives.

You've said from time to time that, so far as you can see, the monk's life is the happiest life you can imagine. To what extent is their celibacy a factor in that?

Well, I must first define what I mean by 'the monk's life'. I don't mean a formally monastic life; I don't mean simply wearing yellow robes and shaving one's head; and I certainly don't mean being celibate in a neurotic way. By the monk's life I mean a life totally devoted to the Dharma, in one way or another, a life which is, so to speak, wedded to the Dharma. I certainly see that as the happiest life, and I've certainly seen many, many very happy monks-in the formal sense—in the East. Very often they did seem to be much happier than the lay people who were presumably indulging in the enjoyment of all the worldly pleasures. I won't say that the monks were always strictly celibate; sometimes they weren't. But they were certainly much more celibate than the lay people! And, at the very least, they were to that extent happier.

LETTERS PLEASE

If you would like to comment on any of the points made in the course of this interview, please write direct to the Editor, Nagabodhi, at Padmaloka. The most interesting and relevant letters received will be considered for publication.

DIVERSITY AND UNITY

The Meaning of Orthodoxy in Buddhism

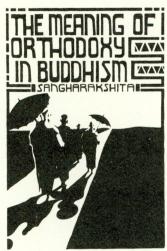
by Sangharakshita published by Windhorse pp. 39. Paperback. Price £2.25

t first encounter many people find the **Buddhist tradition** bewilderingly diverse: dozens of major schools, hundreds of sub-schools, Theravada, Zen, Tibetan Vajrayana. . . How is one to know what is truly and essentially Buddhist in this colourful but confusing panorama? Is there, in fact, such a thing as an 'orthodoxy' in Buddhism.

In The Meaning of Orthodoxy in Buddhism (originally published in 1957), Sangharakshita clearly demonstrates not only that there is, but why an awareness of the significance of 'orthodoxy' in Buddhism is vital for practising Buddhists.

The essay (or 'Protest') is primarily a vigorous exposure of the assumptions underlying a remark, made by the late I. B. Horner, to the effect that the Theravada school 'is certainly the most orthodox school of Buddhism'. Sangharakshita posits a logical corollary of such thinking: 'Does she realize that . . . she has in effect asserted . . . that the non-Theravadin schools are less orthodox, or unorthodox, or even positively heretical?

He then proceeds to clarify exactly what the term 'orthodox' might mean in Buddhism, pointing out that Miss Horner's initial error has been to apply the word 'orthodoxy', with its Christian connotations, to Buddhism, where such connotations are meaningless. Sangharakshita prefers to speak in terms of sammadhitti, (or 'Right Views'), and distinguishes between 'doctrinal', 'scriptural', and 'conventional' forms of orthodoxy in the Buddhist context. This enables him at last to examine Miss Horner's claim with regard to the Theravada and to deal with a number of other dismissive claims made with regard to the Mahayana by some modern Theravadins.



His conclusion is that the Mahayana not only embodies Right Views to as great an extent as the Pali canon of the Theravada, but that, in practice, the Theravada itself embodies a number of distinctly 'unorthodox' views (i.e. micchaditthi). Perhaps the most serious of these, and the most deeply rooted, is the view, implicit in the Theravada (and the Sarvastivada) Abidhamma, 'that since the 172 or 75 dharmah into which they had respectively resolved the so-called person (pudgala) represented the limit of analysis, they constituted absolute realities (paramarthikadharmah)' (p. 30). This amounts, in effect, to a repudiation of the doctrine of anatman—in other words, to the micchaditthi of eternalism (sashvatavada).

At times, the essay may seem a little dated. The 'average general popular book about Buddhism' (p. 6) is of a higher standard thirty years on. And perhaps the Mahayana no longer requires quite the sort of vindication it receives here, at least in the West, where it is now better known, understood, and, indeed, practised. However, the situation may still be very different in the East. For the Western Buddhist this is, in any case, a thought-provoking example of Sangharakshita's own singular approach to the Dharma.

Tejananda

PROTECTING THE UNBORN

A Circle of Protection for the Unborn

by David Stott Published by Ganesha Press, Bristol, 1986 pp. 19. Paperback. Price £1.95

n this brief and neatly argued essay, David Stott, an English Buddhist scholar and spiritual representative of Karma Thinley Rimpoche, sets out to clarify moral issues arising from the principle of nonkilling, especially relating to abortion and modern methods of fertilization and contraception. The essay is clear and surprisingly comprehensive, considering its mere thirteen pages (some of which are taken up by line

The basis of Stott's argument-and indeed a fundamental Buddhist view-is established firmly at the beginning of the essay: the principle of non-violence, of non-killing, includes the unborn child. Life begins at conception, where there is a conjunction of semen, ovum, and the consciousness of a being in the intermediate stage. Therefore 'to sever the life process at any moment from conception onwards until death is to destroy sentient life'.

Apart from discussing abortion, Stott draws attention to some contraceptive methods and to in vitro fertilization, which involves the fertilization of several ova in a laboratory dish. Those with some 'defect' are thrown away and the 'best' implanted in the mother's womb. It is also worth realizing that such contraceptive methods as the coil and lowdosage oestrogen pill in fact 'abort' the embryo, as they only prevent the already fertilized embryo from implanting in the womb.

The issues tackled in Stott's essay are being widely discussed and debated in the media, within the churches, and within the medical profession itself. The issues are emotive. They have become a battleground for those who defend the woman's 'right' to decide what happens to her life and body, for those who

defend the 'rights' of the unborn children, for medical scientists who want to pursue their research work, and for some representatives of the Christian churches who regard human life as intrinsically sacred because it is part of God's creation.

Stott's essay is an excellent example of how the Buddhist principle of non-killing can cut through both muddled and evasive thinking and sentimentality. It is possible to discuss seemingly complex moral issues with clarity and

with compassion.

In order to take seriously the principle of non-killing, with all its implications, one would have to understand its context, that is, the spiritual and even transcendental potential of every human life, extending beyond this particular life and identity. Stott argues concisely and convincingly against theism and materialism-the two main doctrines denying the possibility of rebirth. The arguments are neat, but a lot more could be said about the spiritual significance of rebirth, or the importance of spiritual development, to put the principle of non-killing in its full context.

All in all, Stott manages to convey the need to develop greater awareness of, and sensitivity to, human life, so much needed in a society in which abortion has become such an accepted form of killing.

The message of the essay, and the way in which it has been put across, has a certain sense of urgency about it. And yet the tone of the essay remains calm and, in spite of its strong statements, nonjudgemental. It is valuable reading to all practising Buddhists, and it can only be hoped that it will make a lot of other people think about the issues involved from a fresh point of view.

Vajrapushpa

16

WORDS AND MUSIC

In Praise of Tara—Songs of the Saviouress

by Martin Willson Published by Wisdom, London, 1986 pp. 491. Paperback. price £13.95

f all the facets of Enlightenment, Infinite Compassion, embodied in the form of Tara,—'The Saviouress'—is perhaps the most beautiful and approachable. So it is not surprising that in recent years the literature relating to Tara in Western languages has steadily grown. Now, Western devotees have been given further riches in Martin Willson's collection of hymns to Tara from Sanskrit and Tibetan sources.

The book ranges over a thousand years of devotion to Tara, from a translation of 'Tara's tantra, the Origin of All Rites', to a nineteenth century song by Lozang Tanpa Gyaltsan. Its heart is a selection of translations of Indian praises to Tara, the most poetically satisfying being Sarvajnamitra's 'Sragdhara Praise'. Beautiful as they are, many of the songs focus on Tara's function as rescuer from mundane perils: lions, elephants, and so forth, so it is something of a relief to come upon Akshobyavajra's praise, which views Tara uncompromisingly from the viewpoint of the Perfection of Wisdom, or Gedun Drup's, which explains the eight Great Terrors as symbols of inner hindrances (so that Tara rescues from the lion of pride, the wild elephant of delusion, and so on).

The book is produced to Wisdom Publications' usual high standards, and illustrated with colour plates and line drawings of Tara performing her functions as rescuer.

Martin Willson has taken care over his translations, and

In Praise of Tara

Songs to the Saviouress Martin Willson



makes a number of corrections to previously translated material.

Whilst admiring the hard work and thoughtfulness which have gone into the book, for my taste it is not a completely happy marriage of the devotional and the scholarly. Over a quarter of it is taken up with what Willson rather wearily calls the 'trappings required of modern scholars': appendices, glossary, bibliography, and index. Indeed, in reading the book, one suspects a certain tension between the scholar and the practitioner in Willson himself. Part 5 ends with a small quotation from Lama Yeshe which one feels is almost an admonition to the scholar by the practitioner: 'Don't worry, they just words you know'.

In his introduction Willson,

tries to enlist Tara to the feminist cause, at times rather overstating his case. His view that 'Tara is female . . . by deliberate choice in order to show that a woman's body is at least as good as a man's for benefiting sentient beings and attaining Enlightenment' assumes a motivation for Tara's vow which is certainly not the only way one could read the passage in Taranatha's 'Golden Treasury'.

Despite these minor criticisms, Martin Willson is to be congratulated for producing a book in which Tara practitioners will find many new springs of inspiration on which to draw, and which will lead more Westerners to fall under Tara's beautiful spell and be led happily along the path to Transcendental Compassion.

ALSO RECEIVED:

The Life and Teaching of Naropa Trans. Herbert V. Guenther Element Books pp. 292. £7.95

Concentration and Meditation by Christmas Humphreys Element Books. pp. 243. £6.95

Secret Wisdomby David Conway
Aquarian Press. £6.99

The Science of the Paranormal by Lawrence Le Shan Aquarian Press £6.99

The Alternative I ChingReconstructed and Translated by Derek Walters
Aquarian Press pp. 224. £5.99

Life Linesby Peter West
Aquarian Press pp. 127. £2.50

Moon Signsby Sasha Fenton
Aquarian Press pp. 317. £3.99

Rene Guenon by Robin Waterfield Crucible pp. 159. £6.99

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HUMAN ENLIGHTENMENT



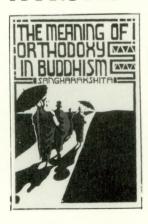
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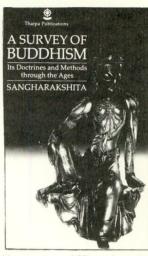


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A VISIONARY PROJECT COMPASSION AND WISDOM

une 17 saw the official launch of The Meridian Trust, 'the first comprehensive film and video service in Europe devoted to Buddhism and its related scientific, creative, and spiritual disciplines'. Through the media of film and television, the charitable trust's founders hope to 'provide both the Buddhist and general audience with a wider access to teachings from all traditions of Buddhism as practised in the world today, while at the same time to assist in the assimilation of its underlying principles in a manner that is relevant to our own cultural background'.

This invaluable project was born in 1982, when Geoff lukes, with the active encouragement of Lama Thubten Yeshe, set out to create a video archive of Dharma teachings given by

prominent Tibetan masters. Now, as well as extendingand sophisticating—the scope of material available, the people at Meridian are decidedly aiming their productions at a wider audience, notably to schools, and hope to play an active role in the 'dialogue between East and West . . . between ancient wisdom and modern knowledge'.

For more information, contact The Meridian Trust, 330 Harrow Road, London W9 2HP, England. Meanwhile, our own video resource, 'Clear Vision' continues its work of covering important FWBO events with a record of Sangharakshita's Buddha Day talk: 'The Buddha's Victory'. Clear Vision can be contacted via our Manchester Centre.



riends at our Leeds Centre recently received an invitation from Amnesty International to support their five-month campaign against the use of the death penalty in the USA.

Although one wonders why the campaign should be limited to the USA alone, this would seem, at least at first glance, to be a good cause (and anyone wanting to help Amnesty should contact Dee Ellis on Leeds 671591).

However, as issue 3 of Golden Drum sought to point out, it is not necessarily the best ideaor even a good one-to leap into political, or quasi-political, action at the merest superficial hint of a good cause. Even if the issues at stake are as simple as they seem, the paths leading to their solution may be highly complex, and fraught with opportunities for unskilful action, or moral compromise.

Buddhist social activism has been attracting an exceptional amount of media attention just lately. Members of the Japan Buddha Sangha have been photographed beating their drums in South Africa and East Germany; monks in South Korea have been involved in violent civil rights demonstrations in Seoul; and in Sri Lanka, entrenched 'Buddhist nationalism', and the political intervention of the native Sangha-even if superficially well intended—has played its part in creating a situation in which monksalong with thousands of laypeople—are now the tragic victims.

To be sure, Compassion gives birth to Compassionate action. But we must always remember that, for Buddhists, Compassion must be a reflex of Wisdom. Unless we are prepared to work on our level of Wisdom until we are certain that we form part of the solution, we may simply find ourselves adding to the world's problems.



Buddhist peace activist

THE BIG BANG PTING

he near-certainty of making some easy money for their centres tempted a few Friends to consider participating in the highly publicized Rolls Royce share flotation, which took place on the London Stock Exchange this May.

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A cursory inspection of the company's literature, however, confirmed that almost half its huge turnover comes from the sale of military ordnance. Rolls Royce engines power fighter aircraft, warships, and

submarines in 87 countries around the world.

The Buddha's teachings on Right-and wrong-Livelihood are quite clear in this area; we do not even have to delve for an updated interpretation. He specifically singled out arms manufacture—along with slaughterhouse work, slavetrading, and the brewing of poisons—as a highly unskilful occupation. Clearly there could be no ethical argument for buying Rolls Royce shares.

Of course, those wishing to take their ethical practice a step further may wish to consider making out a 'covenanted banker's order' to their chosen cause. In Britain, and probably elsewhere too, the beneficiary of such a covenanted donation receives not only the sum given by the donor, but a third as much again from the Inland Revenue—that figure coming from the donor's income tax payments. With a little imagination one could make out a good case for supposing that this money would otherwise have gone into the national defence budget.

CIENTIFIC

uring the 1970's, a number of scientific and environmentalist groups began to focus attention on the fact that the whale was being hunted to extinction.

So successful was the campaign conducted by these groups that in 1982 the International Whaling Commission ordered a ban on commercial whaling until 1990, when the situation is to be reviewed.

Until May this year, Russia, Norway, and Japan were the major renegades from this

global rescue mission, continuing to hunt the Earth's oldest mammal in the Antarctic and Pacific Oceans. The Japanese, though once dependent on whalemeat as an important source of protein, now treat it as a delicacy particularly associated with funerals and weddings. The Russians and Norwegians sell the major portion of their annual catch to the Japanese.

In May, the Russians finally bowed to international pressure and called in their fleet. The Japanese, who are now by far the world's greatest

hunters and consumers of whalemeat, have so far indicated no intention of doing likewise, rather cynically claiming that their annual catch of 875 whales is part of a scientific monitoring process.

How sad it is that, despite her strong Buddhist tradition, Japan seems set on remaining the 'villain' of this gory tale. Whaling is still big businessand big politics-in Japan; few commentators are hopeful that the IWC will manage to bring her into line.

CHOGYAM TRUNGPA RIMPOCHE



t four o'clock on the morning of 26 May a dozen Friends, mitras, and Order members left Aryaloka and travelled through the mist covered White Mountains to Karme-Choling in Vermont where the remains of The Vidyadhara, The Venerable Chogyam Trungpa were to be cremated.

Trungpa Rimpoche died—at the age of 47—on 4 April 1987 in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He had been seriously ill for a number of months and an assortment of complications finally led to respiratory failure.

Turning off Interstate 91 we were directed north by a state trooper and a khaki uniformed member of the Dorje Kalsang, the Vajra Guards, a disciplined body of men and women who provide security for Vajradhatu. Eventually, we joined a steady stream of people climbing along a winding path through the trees to emerge in the pasture where Trungpa Rimpoche was to be cremated. As we walked beneath a Japanese-style wooden gate on the brow of a hill, the funeral site came into view. To the left, on top of a small rise, was the white purkhang-a stupa in which the body would be burnedsurrounded on four sides by platforms, on each of which different groups were to perform fire offerings. Ahead and to the right, some three thousand students and well wishers sat or stood on the grassy slope of the mountain.

Shortly after eight o'clock, a procession of Tibetan and Western monks with trumpets and horns came into view, moving slowly before a contingent of Vajra Guards, some of whom carried the body in a palanquin. All three thousand people stood and watched respectfully as the body was placed in the stupa. After a long line of people had

filed past the stupa to make their last offerings, and the last of the morning mist had evaporated, the monks and Vajradhatu practitioners started their ceremonies under the direction of Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, Shamar Rimpoche, Jamgon Kongtrul Rimpoche, and the Vajra Regent, Osel Tendzin. The Sadhana completed, the cremation fire was lit. Black smoke rose through the top of the stupa into the brilliant clear blue sky.

For the next few hours, offerings of grains and ghee were thrown into the fire to the accompaniment of chanting, bells, cymbals, hand drums, and oboes. Then, one by one, the groups of lamas concluded their puja. Packing up, they paid their respects to each side of the stupa, and to the leaders of the remaining groups before leaving. Finally, only Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche and his group of Nyingma lamas were left. Khyentse Rimpoche had been sitting on his cushion without a break for eight hours, and it was not surprising that he had to be helped by two lamas to make his—the lastcircumnambulation of the

Chogyam Trungpa was born in Kham in 1940. He left Tibet after the uprising in 1959, and spent some time in Delhi under the protection of Freda Bedi-later Sister Palmo. During this time he had his first meeting with Sangharakshita, who was then living in Kalimpong. In 1963, Trungpa Rimpoche and Akong Rimpoche travelled to England where they established Samya-Ling Meditation Centre in Scotland. In 1970 the young lama was on the move again, this time with his new wife Diana, first to Canada, and then to Karme-Choling, or 'Tail of the Tiger' as it was then

called.

This new figure on the American Buddhist scene was a most unconventional one. He smoked, and consumed liberal quantities of alcohol, ate 'junk' food and meat. His sexual attitudes also reflected the spirit of the early seventies. He was attractive, fascinating, and magical; and within three short years his students had established centres in Boston, New

York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Boulder. Another country centre was established in the mountains of Colorado-the Rocky Mountain Dharma Centre. In 1973 the activities of these various centres were consolidated under a national organization -'Vajradhatu'. This was also the year in which Trungpa published Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism. In 1974 the first of the Naropa summer programmes were held. This eventually led to the founding of what is now the Naropa Institute—a liberal arts college which presents BA and MA programmes on Buddhist subjects as well as the arts. In 1977 the Shambala training programme was introduced in Boulder. This takes as its goal the establishment of a culture in which the positive qualities of the warrior are developed within the normal social structures of business, social service, and education.

The achievements of Chogyam Trungpa Rimpoche are formidable. His charisma, his magic, and, as Allen Ginsberg said, 'his great heart', attracted some brilliant and dynamic students. To those familiar with the approach of the FWBO, there may seem to be some crucial omissions from his teaching. In particular we see very little of Kalyana Mitrata (spiritual friendship), nor do we see an Order of spiritually committed men and women. We may have a number of questions about the way he lived his life, and although his goal was to introduce an 'American' Buddhism, we may wonder if he created an Americanized Tibetan Buddhism rather than facilitating the transformation of American culture with the fire of the Dharma.

But whatever questions we have, there remains the undeniable evidence of the life of a remarkable man.

Chogyam Trungpa Rimpoche has died. His funeral rites were conducted in a bright, mindful, even happy, atmosphere, and his students are coming to terms with the fact that their teacher is gone. They know that it is now up to them. The absence of one's teacher can lead to heightened vigour. May they find vigour.

H.H. DUDJOM RIMPOCHE

is Holiness Dudjom Rimpoche, the head of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism, died in France on 17 January.

Born in 1904, in southeastern Tibet, he was recognized as the eighteenth incarnation in a line which included a number of great Indian and Tibetan masters. As his career developed in Tibet, Dudjom Rimpoche became a renowned scholar, author, and exponent of the Dzogchen teaching, and highly respected for his spiritual attainments.

After the Chinese invasion of Tibet, he moved first to Kalimpong, in West Bengal. Sangharakshita, who also lived in Kalimpong at that time, visited him on a number of occasions, and vividly remembers the ever-present encampment of Rimpoche's Sherpa followers in the grounds of 'Madhav Nikunj'. Sangharakshita received a number of Vajrayana initiations and teachings from him.

Towards the end of his life, Dudjom Rimpoche worked enthusiastically for the spread of the Dharma in the West. Moving to the Dordogne region of France, he was instrumental in establishing several Nyingma centres in that country, as well as in the USA. He also visited London several times, where his former translator, Sogyal Rimpoche, was engaged in the establishment of 'Rigpa'.



Dudjom Rimpoche

In late May came the interview with Nagabodhi which forms the feature element in this issue of *Golden Drum*. Nagabodhi, who lives at Padmaloka with Sangharakshita, is of course the magazine's editor.

Then came an interview with Ken Winkler, from California, who is writing a biography of Lama Govinda. Sangharakshita was well acquainted with the German-born Lama, having met him a number of times in India, and having subsequently maintained a regular correspondence with him. He was therefore able to fill in some important gaps for Ken-who knew Govinda only during the last ten years of his life. Ken's previous book is a biography of another famous

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Western Buddhist—Dr Evans-Wentz, the man who popularized the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* in the West.

Sangharakshita was also interviewed by Philip Mellor, from Manchester University. Phil is specializing in 'British Buddhism in the 1960s' and was particularly interested to know about Sangharakshita's attempts to heal the rifts which split 'established' Buddhism in Britain in the middle of that decade.

The day after Phil's visit brought something completely different: the garden outside Sangharakshita's study was temporarily transformed into an open-air art gallery. Maggie Jamieson, a mitra from London, brought a van-full of her larger paintings to show her spiritual teacher. With the large canvases propped amongst the fruit trees, Sangharakshita wandered around the paintings with the artist. For an hour or two, the scene was more reminiscent of an Italian film-set than a Buddhist retreat centre—which

is not as incongruous as it may sound, for to separate art from the spiritual life is to risk an imbalance.

Returning now to Sangharakshita's interviews, two of the more recent ones were video-taped, and will publicize two FWBO retreat centres. Firstly, Mokshapriya asked Sangharakshita about the role to be played in the FWBO by Guhyaloka, our new retreat centre in Spain. Then came an interview, conducted by Kamalashila, on the significance of our meditation centre in North Wales. The two films will be especially useful to people overseas, who may otherwise not get the chance to see these Centres for some

Another video made this quarter covered Sangharakshita's lecture in London on Buddha Day: 'The Buddha's Victory'. This is available from 'Clear Vision Films' at the Manchester Centre.

In late April, Sangharakshita had to return to hospital for a small operation to clear up an infection which followed his prostate operation three months earlier. Fortunately, everything seems to be sorted out now, and he has 'signed off' with his consultant. Despite these operations, Sangharakshita has been able to complete more than 25,000 words on his second volume of memoirs, as well as continuing with the editing work required by Mitrata.

During this period also, a translation of Sangharakshita's book on the Ten Precepts, *The Ten Pillars of Buddhism*,

appeared in Marathi. Lectures given by Sangharakshita continue to appear monthly, of course, in our Marathi magazine *Buddhayana* (or 'The Way of the Buddha'). Soon, a translation of his talks on the Noble Eightfold Path will appear in paperback in Spain, and 4000 copies of the same book, in English, have been recently produced by the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia, for free distribution.

On 7 May, Sangharakshita travelled to the village of Castle Acre, where a women's Order retreat was taking place in the small Youth Hostel. There, he conducted the private ordinations of two women: Marion Feasey from New Zealand, and Allison O'Brien from Norwich. Forty Order members, mitras, and Friends attended the public ceremony at the Norwich Centre next day. The entry of Punyashri and Punyamala into the Western Buddhist Order raises its numbers to three hundred

When I was ordained, in 1979, the Order was only a third that size, but it seemed enormous to me. Today, however, it does not seem large enough to do everything that needs doing and I often wonder how much progress, individual and collective, would be made if we all worked as hard as Sangharakshita—not that we should 'clone' him and become 'desktop Sangharakshitas' ourselves! Better that we should each find our life's work within the Dharma, as he has, and express this more and more fully for ourselves.



Sangharakshita and Maggie Jamieson

NEW CENTRE FOR BRISTOL

After six years spent on the fringes of Bristol, the FWBO is about to move into the populous heart of town. Tejananda, the Centre's chairman, reports that contracts on a two-storey premises were exchanged on 19 June, and the community moved into its home, above the new Centre, in July.

At present, builders are carrying out major conversion work on the building, after which community members and local Friends will be preparing the Centre for a well-publicized opening on 1 October.

The community has space for seven men, while the centre area is in fact very slightly smaller than those in the old Long Ashton Centre. However, Tejananda is confident that the extra energy generated by the Centre's new location will soon lead to the acquisition of a far larger city base.



Bristol's new centre

LITERARY FEAST FOR CROYDON

Earlier this year, the Arts
Centre in Croydon changed it's
name to 'Independent Arts'.
The purpose of the Centre has
always been to communicate
human and spiritual values
through the arts—to put on
arts events that are expressive
of the values upheld by
Buddhism. So far as we know,
this is unique among arts
venues, whose programmes
often tend to reflect the sterile
values of a secular, materialist
culture.

The Centre's summer season came to an end on 21 July and was, in many respects, the most exciting to date.

It was primarily a literary season, and seems to have amply justified Independent Arts' growing reputation as one of the world's leading literary venues. Many of the lecturers were the most



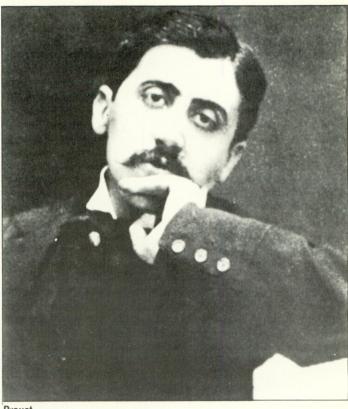
Richard Holmes

distinguished figures in their fields: Michael Meyer, who lectured on Strindberg, is the foremost translator and scholar of the works of both Strindberg and Ibsen; Richard Holmes, who spoke on Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, has an international reputation as a scholar of the writers of that period. The season also included appearances by two of Britain's leading novelists, Margaret Drabble and A. S. Byatt, who both gave talks to launch new

The summer season comprised two seasons of lectures—called 'Lives and Letters', and 'Values in Literature'—and a film season called 'Biography in the Cinema', selected by John Russell Taylor, the art critic (and former film critic) of *The Times*.

The events were very well attended, and in some cases the talks were sold out some time in advance.

A highlight of the season was a talk by Dr Edmund Jeplicott, a writer and translator, who has published a book called *Proust and Rilke:* The Literature of Expanded Consciousness, and who gave the same title to his talk at Independent Arts. Dr Jeplicott discussed those 'moments when consciousness seems to



Proust

expand', and argued that those moments are the source of the impulse to create a work of art.

This talk was part of the 'Values in Literature' season, in which the relationship between Buddhism and the arts was particularly obvious. This season also included a lecture by the poet and critic, Kathleen Raine, who set out to answer the question, 'What is the use

of Poetry?', and a talk by Patrick Garland on what he sees as a 'spiritual eagerness' in the work of Philip Larkin.

Altogether, this summer season was not only highly enjoyable and stimulating—and successful purely as a literary festival—but also added up to a quite emphatic affirmation of higher values.

Satyadeva

GRANT HELPS NEW BUSINESS

A year ago Pramodana, Heather Jones, and Peter Rostron, from the Lancashire Buddhist Centre, left their regular jobs and with some generous loans from a few friends set up a part-time window cleaning business which they hoped would allow them more time to run the Centre.

Despite falling victim to some accidents, including a plunge from a ladder, and the bottom falling out of their car, they worked hard and made some headway. The big breakthrough occurred recently when, after a few weeks negotiations, they were able to secure over £8000 as a grant

from their local Co-operative Development Agency. This will enable them to pay off their loans, and to provide enough work for five people. They now hope to expand the business and look for more lucrative contracts in industrial and commercial window cleaning.

Pramodana is optimistic that the business will eventually finance the acquiring of a property for a new, expanded, Lancashire Buddhist Centre. It also seems likely that Heather will form a women's cooperative with the aid of a further grant. If anyone is interested in joining either of these businesses, they are most welcome to make contact.



The Lancashire centre team

RETREAT CENTRE FOR SCOTLAND



It is a typically quiet, scenic road which leads north from Edinburgh through Fife and into the hilly greenness of Perthshire. Ten miles north of Perth is the town of Blairgowrie, just a few miles to the north of which is found the district known as Cloquhat (pronounced as in 'so what'), occupying the north side of a small glen. The Glasgow Centre has often held retreats here, in a house appropriately

known as 'The Braes'.

A little while ago, the owner of this house offered the Glasgow Centre one of his properties as a permanent base for Scottish retreats. This is 'Middlepark' of Cloquhat, which is, Susiddhi writes, 'Similar to Vajraloka—lying at the end of a track and facing south over a green valley of farms, grazing sheep, and occasional squares of dark fir trees. The house is half way up

the hillside, where it is protected from the north winds while it gathers the sun'.

On 19 June a six month lease—with an option to buy—was signed by Susiddhi, the Glasgow Centre's chairman, and work is now underway (as is the fundraising required by the work) to transform 'Middlepark' into 'Uttarakuru'. According to Susiddhi, the house can quickly be made ideal for study and meditation

retreats for eight to ten people, and there is a thirty metre barn available for conversion.

Susiddhi concludes:
'Solitude, beauty, and silence, seventy minutes drive from Edinburgh, with visual delights all along the way. We hope to have the pleasure of welcoming you there some time in the future.'

GUHYALOKA – READY FOR ACTION

Under a bluer than blue June sky, the race was on to complete the first stage of the Guhyaloka building project in time for the start of the Men's Ordination Course in mid-July.

In June, Vessantara—who had recently moved to Guhyaloka to lead the first, and subsequent, courses—reported that Sangharakshita's bungalow was ready, and accommodation for sixteen people had been completed. By the time the course began, the kitchen and shrineroom would have been complete, a couple of capacious water tanks sunk, and the Centre

ready to house 28 men in 'earth-sack structures' and wooden shacks.

Vessantara writes, 'One of the best things about Guhyaloka is that we can live outdoors so much. It's very elemental; we are in the midst of nature. Not only do we eat "al fresco", in specially built shaded areas (which will be used for study groups once the course begins), but people are able to do Yoga, T'ai Chi, prostrations, and meditation at different spots in the valley. At this time of the year, the valley is like a natural rock garden; Terry Williams has so-far

identified more than fifty species of wild-flower.

There are many kinds of birds and butterflies: nightingales spend hours singing each day, and cuckoos play games bouncing their echoes off the great sandstone-and-limestone cliffs.

'The community is very friendly—though we are so cut off up here that things are bound to become a bit "intense" at times. We have been having special pujas dedicated to the different Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and a very special Buddha-Day celebration, in which we

processed up the valley, from the bottom house (the old shrineroom) to the new shrineroom, carrying a Buddha-image on a palanquin, chanting the Shakyamuni mantra.'

Subhuti, who retains overall responsibility for the construction project, left Spain in May. Just before his departure, though, he teamed up with Mokshananda to lead a retreat for Spaniards, not far from Valencia. The retreat was a success, and more are bound to follow. In October, Sangharakshita will be making a two-week lecture tour of eastern Spain, from Alicante to Barcelona, which will be followed by a beginners' retreat.

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TARALOKA 'FIRSTS'

With the arrival of Vidyavati and Aniketa from New Zealand, the community at Taraloka now comprises nine women: five Order members and four mitras. Such a good basis of commitment and depth of experience means that visiting retreatants find themselves entering an increasingly 'substantial' atmosphere.

Since March, Taraloka has moved into a progressively busier period, with retreats taking place most weekends, along with an increased number of longer retreats.

In April, the one-month retreat which forms part of the women's pre-ordination course took place at Taraloka for the first time. Seven mitras attended the retreat, which was led by Sanghadevi.

Sanghadevi also led Taraloka's first women's national Order/Mitra event in May, which was devoted to the theme of 'Beholding the Face of the Sun: Sraddha'.

For the past nine years, these-usually nonresidential-women's weekends have been held at the London Buddhist Centre, so the fortytwo Order members and mitras who made the journey to Taraloka very much appreciated the retreat atmosphere that a residential weekend allowed.

The programme included meditation and puja, a talk, Dharma study, a slide show of the women's ordinations in India, and a video of the women's retreat in New Zealand. Sanghadevi writes: Through these two "visual aids" events, we were able to link our own faith in the Three Jewels with that of women practising the Dharma in other parts of the FWBO, worldwide.

Women on retreat at Taraloka

MEDITATION IN ACTION

Most of us spend a great deal of our time working, so it is then that we need to apply our Dharma practice. It was with this in mind that the Vajraloka team organized a 'Meditation in Action' retreat this May, the idea being to 'recreate' a working environment, but within the retreat context.

Although there was a great deal of work to be done, extending and improving the Vajraloka complex (using money raised on the fundraising tour) the event was very much conceived as a mindfulness retreat, an attempt to treat hard, physical work as a mindfulness practice.

Apart from the work itself, there were several sessions of meditation each day, private interviews, talks on various aspects of mindfulness, and

evening study sessions on the Satipatthana Sutta.

Although it was a happy retreat, enjoyed by all-for the meditation experience as much as anything else—Kamalashila suspects he failed this time to create the kind of retreat he really wanted.

Work arouses a lot of energy,' he writes, 'and there were times when we were not able to contain it within a framework of mindfulness. People then get tired, and are unable to meditate.

'But as we become more experienced at leading these retreats-and so long as we have enough money to continue working on the place—they can only get better. We will definitely be seeing more "Meditation in Action" retreats at Vajraloka.

THE VAJRALOKA ROADSHOW

The FWBO has had a permanent Meditation Centre at Vajraloka, in Wales, for several years now, and the resident team have gained considerable experience in teaching meditation. This spring, Vajradaka, Dharmananda, and Simon Wiggins toured FWBO centres in Britain and Germany to take meditation workshops and courses, and to raise funds for the Vajraloka expansion programme.

When we first learn meditation,' writes Vajradaka, 'the techniques have an obvious structure and style, which help us to develop more expansive states of consciousness. After a while, however, it can become important to have some more guidance to help us continue working creatively and appropriately with our practice.' It was at this level that the Vajraloka team were able to help the more experienced meditators.

În Germany, Dharmananda and Vajradaka were joined by Vimalajyoti. The main activity here was a ten-day meditation workshop in Ifel. By now, the team had built up a lot of experience in teaching, so this workshop was very stimulating. Everyone on the retreat was enthusiastic to learn about and practise meditation.

The fundraising activities varied. A slide show, which included hilarious portrayals of some of the mental states that can occur during meditationand how to deal with themalso demonstrated the financial needs of Vajraloka. More elaborate fundraising events included live music and a dramatic recitation of Tam O'Shanter in Glasgow on Burns Night. Vajradaka surprised everyone at the London Buddhist Centre with a sponsored juggle, and Paul Filipiak delighted the audience with a gripping mime portrayal of 'tackling the Five Hindrances during meditation'.



Vajradaka

In Malaysia, Jayapushpa holds a weekend retreat once a month for working people who are interested in experiencing the Buddhist way of life, and practising together with friends



The weekend retreat on Penang Hill

of a similar background and inclination.

Thirteen people attended the fourth weekend retreat, which was held on Penang Hill during the last weekend in February. This was held in a luxurious bungalow near the top of the hill, accessed by cable car. The amenities included a small swimming pool fed by water from a hill stream, and surrounding the bungalow, on terraced hill slopes, were fruit trees, mainly of the delicious durian, and beyond them secondary forest. The retreatants enjoyed warm,



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clear weather, and a view of the whole of Georgetown and Butterworth spread out before them across the channel on the mainland, which at night lay twinkling in the distance.

Not far from the bungalow, some of the participants were delighted to come upon a small rock cavern in which stone seats had been erected by the hill residents for the use of those who were interested in meditation. It was named 'Xiuchandong' (Cultivating Dhyana Cavern).

The retreat comprised the usual meditation and pujas, as

well as Hatha Yoga, and concluded with each of the participants sharing their experience of the weekend, when they agreed that the seclusion and spaciousness of the environment and its cool, clean atmosphere were all contributive to a good retreat, though short.

Besides these monthly weekends, Jayapushpa, working in the premises of the Bayan Baru Buddhist Association, is conducting a meditation class for the general public on Wednesday evenings, and has recently started a Dharma study class on Thursday evenings. This class is currently exploring the Bodhisattva Ideal.

Jayapushpa has also started a fellowship and general study session in Penang on Sunday evenings. The inaugural meeting was held on 1 March and attended by Dharmamati from Sydney, Jayaprabha from London, Vidyavati from New Zealand, and Gelong Thubten Jampa from Dharmsala, India, all of whom happened to be visiting the Bayan Baru Buddhist Association at the time

TV DEBUT FOR BOMBAY

Buddhists all over India have recently been celebrating the anniversary of the birth of Dr Ambedkar. On the evening before the celebrations, TBMSG Bombay organized a chanting, candle-lit procession from Rajagriha to Chaitya Bhumi in which nearly 300 people took part. Apparently, the police praised this event, saying they had never seen such an orderly procession!

At Dardar Chowpatty, the site of Dr Ambedkar's stupa, Padmavajra gave a talk on 'Dr Ambedkar—a Modern Bodhisattva', during which he launched Sangharakshita's new book *Ambedkar and Buddhism*. The event was filmed by Maharashtra TV and the following day transmitted throughout Maharashtra in the evening news broadcast.

Another important new publication for the Movement in India has been a Marathi translation of *The Ten Pillars of Buddhism*.

This is very much the lecture tour season in India, and the next day Padmavajra gave three lectures in different parts of Bombay and many more over the following days on tours of Satava and Nasik. In Manmad nearly a thousand people

watched as Padmavajra was given no less than thirty garlands, before giving a talk on the importance of harmony between Buddhists, which was very well received. On another occasion, before giving a talk in a village, Padmavajra was taken round the village on a bullock cart. ('The only way to travel', he says.) Meanwhile Bodhisen completed a lecture tour of Sindhudurg, the second tour TBMSG has done there.

In Ulhasnagar, a semi-rural suburb of Bombay, a new building has now been completed to house the Centre.

JYOTIPALA ON TOUR

From Aurangabad, Jyotipala reports a successful tour of his local region, during which he led a retreat in a cotton field which attracted 93 people.

On last two days of his tour he gave seven talks, going from place to place on scooter with a P.A. system strapped on the back. At one place his welcome included having his feet washed by, he claims, a hundred ladies at one time.

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CONTINUING EDUCATION

In April 1982, Jayashri, Priyananda, and Buddhadasa ran a two-day 'Introduction to Buddhism' at Auckland University. As a faculty member, Jayashri was able to pioneer the event because the University's Continuing Education Department encourages faculty members and graduates to run courses related their field, as adult education classes.

Sixty-nine people attended that course, which was followed a year later by a series of lectures entitled, Buddhism—A Means to Growth'. Over the years, attendances—for lecture courses and for meditation workshops—have remained high, and more than fifteen Order members, mitras, and

friends have co-operated in this context to make contact with people who might never think of approaching a Buddhist Centre, and yet who are extremely responsive to Buddhist ideas and practices.

This year, attendances, while still healthy, have been a little lower for the course on Mahayana Buddhism: Transformation of Self and World'. Privananda and Purna, the course's leaders, are not unduly worried, however. The current course involves a little more meditation than usual, and the smaller group allows for more intimate discussion to take place after the lectures. A number of people from this course have subsequently made direct contact with the FWBO.

FUTURE DHARMACHARINIS | WELLINGTON ON RETREAT

For the ten days leading up to Buddha Day, Dharmanandi led a 'Going for Refuge' retreat for women mitras in New Zealand who have asked for ordination.

Javashri and Anjali were also there, to lead study, give talks, and to offer feedback to the mitras—who themselves had a chance lead meditation sessions and pujas, and give

Evenings were devoted to life stories and to short talks on the theme of 'Spiritual Friendship', though on the final night—the night of Buddha Day itself—the retreatants climbed to the summit of a nearby mountain for a special outdoor puja.

The women returned to Auckland on 17 May, where they celebrated Buddha Day again, this time with the local

Friends in Wellington, New Zealand, have just opened a new bank account specifically to receive the money they intend to raise to buy a new Centre. With \$3,000 so far raised, Silaratna is confident, but admits that there is still a long way to go!

Silaratna and the mitras in Wellington will be running classes at the existing Centre while Achala, the chairman, is away in Britain attending the Order Convention at Padmaloka this July.

Once the Convention and the subsequent Chairman's Convention are over, Achala hopes to spend time at Vajraloka, catching up on the latest methods of meditation instruction.

BRIGHTON DRAWS ARTISTS

In early May, Yashopala and Yashodeva conducted a weekend workshop at the Brighton Centre on 'Art and Meditation'.

Deploying some of the meditation-teaching techniques currently being pioneered at Vajraloka, Yashodeva and Yashopala supplemented periods of 'Mindfulness of Breathing' and 'Walking Meditation' with a variety of drawing and painting techniques.

'A major emphasis of the weekend,' writes Yashodeva, 'was to break down our conditioned way of looking and drawing—by using such techniques as drawing with the "wrong" hand, or drawing with both hands at once. In the walking meditations we tried to let our bodies and minds relax and just be themselves—while watching them in as direct a way as

'I am sure that we have an approach to drawing and painting which could be of interest to many artists. Few people seem to realize that by preparing our state of mind, allowing it to become enriched and tranquil, we become far more receptive, and therefore see objects differently. A major benefit of mindfulness is a heightened capacity to appreciate beauty!'

GOING BEYOND STRESS

Up in Edinburgh, Tejamitra continues to break fresh ground with his Stress Management business, 'Clear Mind'. However, the 'Catch 22', as he puts it, 'is that the people who most need our courses are too busy to come

The latest development has been the start of some classes for the Strathclyde Region Social Workers and School Teachers. Ironically, these classes take place just around the corner from the Glasgow

Buddhist Centre.

Tejamitra writes, 'Our approach is to introduce some simple relaxation techniques, and then lead into the subject of meditation, explaining its benefits in terms of the development of positive emotions and greater awareness. At the end of the course we were able to give the Glasgow Centre a mention.

From these, and from their more local Lothian Region courses, a small number of people are filtering through

and visiting the Glasgow Centre—or Tejamitra's flat in Edinburgh, where beginners' meditation classes and a weekly Dharma class have recently started.

On 13 June, eleven Edinburgh Friends held their first ever day retreat. The programme was relatively light: a mix of meditation and study on the Wheel of Life. In the evening, more people arrived for some classical music, provided by two mitras from Glasgow.



Day retreat in Edinburgh

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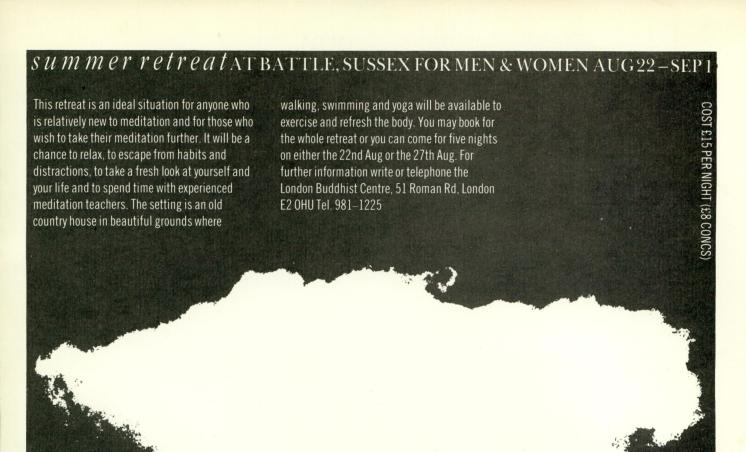
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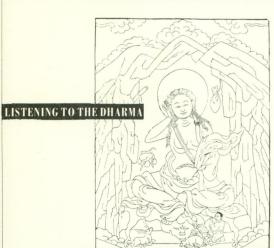
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Cambridge Buddhist Centre, c/o 17 Newmarket Road, Cambridge, CB5 8EG. Tel: 0223 329756

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Padmaloka Retreat Centre, Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norwich, NR14 7AL. Tel: 050-88 8112

Vajraloka Meditation Centre, Tyn-y-Ddol, Trerddol, Nr Corwen, Clwyd, LL21 0EN. Tel: 0490-81 406

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Taraloka Women's Retreat Centre, Cornhill Farm, Bettisfield, Nr Whitchurch, Shropshire, SY13 2LV. Tel: 094875 646

FWBO Midlands, 135 Salisbury Road, Moseley, Birmingham, B13 8LA. Tel: 021-449 5279

The Office of the Western Buddhist Order, Padmaloka, Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norwich, NR14 7AL. Tel: 050 88 310

Aid For India, 186 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 1EU. Tel: 0865 728794

Helsingin Buddhalainen Keskus, PL 288, SF-00121, Helsinki 12, Finland

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