

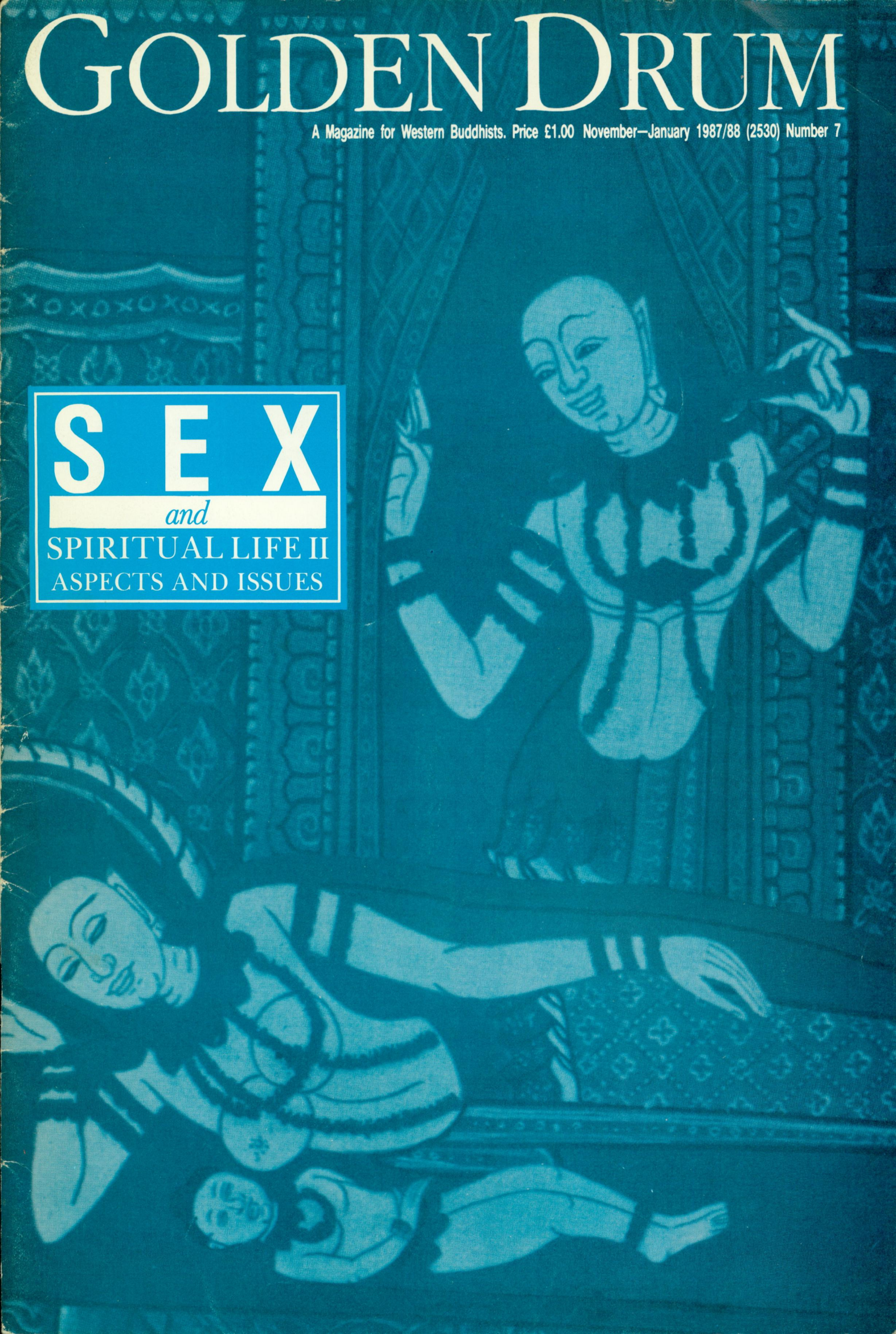
# GOLDEN DRUM

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# SEX

*and*

SPIRITUAL LIFE II  
ASPECTS AND ISSUES





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

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# ASPECTS AND ISSUES

So far as I've been able to gather from my correspondence and conversations over the past two months, the last issue of *Golden Drum*, on 'Buddhism, Sex and Spiritual Life', has been received with considerable — and generally favourable — interest. Whether they are involved with the FWBO or not, many people seem to have appreciated our attempt to tackle some complex and delicate issues, and to discuss an area of life hitherto overlooked by most modern Buddhist commentators.

In a way, it's rather surprising that so little should have yet been written in the West on the subject of Buddhism and sex. Sex and sexuality is clearly an important aspect of life. It is also very obviously an important issue for Buddhists.

As Sangharakshita pointed out in our last issue, the sex-urge often serves as a powerful source of craving—and craving is something that all Buddhists set out to transcend. Again, there are many people in the West as well as in the East who strongly believe that the only way to be a real Buddhist, or to live a truly Buddhist life, is to become a monk: and the monk's decision to forgo all kinds of sexual activity is, more than any other form of self-discipline or practice, generally held to be the most important qualification for his role. And then there is the confusing issue of Tantric Buddhism, still perceived by some as a path to Enlightenment which is based on a life of sexual indulgence.

Even when we set aside such specific topics as these, a number of important, general issues will sooner or later claim our attention and reflection. Our 'sexual life' is surely a major area of concern for anyone seeking to become more conscious and aware, since the processes of mental conditioning associated with it go very deep. On a very basic level, we are each powerfully conditioned: biologically, psychologically, emotionally, and culturally, according to whether we have been born as men or as women. Unless we have decided to practise strict physical celibacy we will have to think clearly about the place that we give to sexual relationships, and of course to marriage, in our lives. If we are trying to bring clarity and refinement into this area, how are we to relate with members of the opposite sex, the 'other half' of the world? There are any number of problems and issues associated with our theme.

In this issue of *Golden Drum* we will be addressing a few more of these issues. Unfortunately, we do not have the space to cover them all, nor, frankly, in the depth they deserve.

However, I do hope that our efforts will serve at least as a start, and stimulate you to further thought and reflection.

In the last issue I invited readers to write to us with their comments on our treatment of this theme. The invitation still holds, but since we would like to include some of those letters in our next issue, do make sure that your letters arrive before 5th December. Also, please try to keep your letters as short and to the point as possible so that we do not have to edit them too much.

Just as our last issue was going to press, I set out on a series of overseas visits: to Samu Sunim's conference on 'World Buddhism in North America', held at Ann Arbor, Michigan; to the inauguration of 'The Temple of a Thousand Buddhas', at Plaigne in central France; and finally to the European Buddhist Union's annual plenary session, held at Huizen in Holland. The 'Outlook' section of this issue is devoted to some brief accounts of those events.

Spending so many hours and days, over such a compact timespan, with Buddhists from America, France, Holland, Germany, Switzerland — in fact from almost every Western nation, I really was able to see quite vividly the extent to which Buddhism is now emerging as a living force (one hesitates to say 'becoming established') in our culture. There are some very serious and hard-working people in the Western Buddhist world; we have definitely left the eccentric, faddy dimension behind. Of course, not everyone is having an easy time of it: new issues and problems arise at every turn as we engage with the mysterious alchemy of transforming Western minds and Western lifestyles into Western Buddhist minds and lifestyles. Perhaps necessarily, there are some substantial differences in the way our many movements and groups approach their work and practice.

But so long as we continue to create situations in which we can meet each other and share experience, offer friendship, encouragement, advice, and, if necessary, disagree and debate, then there is no reason why we should not enjoy the delightful prospect of living as one harmonious sangha, doing a job that we all believe in, and offering to people in the West something that they surely need.

Nagabodhi

*Is the Tantra a sex-obsessed corruption of Buddhism? Padmavajra  
thinks not, and reveals the . . .*

# HIDDEN SECRETS OF TANTRIC SEX

The last great phase in the historical development of Indian Buddhism was known as the Vajrayana (literally, 'The Thunderbolt Way'). Its major contribution to Buddhism was a number of new and radical practices leading to Enlightenment.

The Vajrayana's aim was to bring the practitioner to Enlightenment as quickly as possible, and one of its central concerns was the liberalization and canalization of more and more of the practitioner's energy. Part of its way of effecting this was through sexual metaphor, sexual symbolism, and even through what have been called 'sexo-yogic' practices.

Because of its *apparent* use of sex as an aspect of spiritual practice, the Vajrayana has provoked two extreme responses in the West. In the early days of Buddhist studies, the Vajrayana was generally condemned as a corruption of the sublime ideals of Buddhism. More recent interest has tended to the other extreme. Some are attracted to the Vajrayana precisely because of its apparent sanctification of desire in general, and sexual desire in particular. In a recent exposition of the Vajrayana by a Tibetan teacher, we find the following, ' . . . if desire for a woman arises, it must be relied upon. . . .'<sup>1</sup> Such a presentation of the Vajrayana would seem to suggest that being a Buddhist does not involve changing ourselves. We can, apparently, keep hold of our desires as they will lead us to Enlightenment.

The truth behind the use of sexual themes in the Vajrayana is, as might be expected, far from either of the extremes mentioned. Though we are dealing with a vast and complex subject, it is possible to discern three distinct (though related) aspects of the place of sex in the Vajrayana.

Firstly, there is the shock value of sexual language. For example, in the canonical texts of the Vajrayana — the Tantras — which flourished in India roughly between the 4th and 10th centuries CE, we can find sexual intercourse with the *chandali* (outcaste girl) and prostitutes

being recommended. At that time, contact — what to speak of sexual congress — with an outcaste, according to Hindu society (back to which Buddhism had to some extent been drawn), would have been deemed spiritually polluting.

But, in making such recommendations, the Vajrayana was simply trying to shock people out of their mundane social conditioning. It was seeking to liberate the energy locked up in the convention and taboo of Hindu society. Whether or not these recommendations were enacted is an open question. Stephan Beyer enthusiastically describes the followers of the Vajrayana thus: 'They sang of wisdom as the great Whore, for she opens herself to every man who seeks her, . . . made love to the spontaneous maiden within them, and preached a world upside down, . . . and were altogether quite outrageous and shocking to all good and sober citizens.'<sup>2</sup>

It would be interesting to ponder how the Vajrayana would speak to our own age, where sexual license has become a kind of norm. If they wanted to shock people out of their conditioning today, the old followers of the Vajrayana might have to appear as rock bands singing about the ecstasies of celibacy!

In that passage quoted from Stephan Beyer, we read that the followers of the Vajrayana 'made love to the spontaneous maiden within them'. This brings us to the second aspect of sex in the Vajrayana, the so-called 'sexo-yogic' practices.

We have seen that the Tantras recommended sexual intercourse with the *chandali*. Now, as well as aiming to decondition, this sort of recommendation would sometimes also have been referring to certain forms of yogic practice. Here, the word *chandali* is not referring to a woman at all. In this context, *chandali* can be translated as 'the fiery one' and, simply stated, refers to the vital energy that must be contacted and incorporated into our practice. It parallels the better known *kundalini*.

The practices associated with the arousal of the *chandali* occur in the *anuttara-yoga tantra*, the highest level of Vajrayana

practice, and — traditionally — should be undertaken only after years of successful training in Hinayana, Mahayana, and lower Vajrayana disciplines. Indeed, in India and old Tibet, these practices would not have been known about, even in theory, by those not initiated into them. (This might be one of the reasons why these practices were 'hidden away' in sexual language — to keep them out of the reach of those not ready to undertake them.) Sangharakshita has recalled that in his own contact with Tibetan monks, lamas, and lay people, there was no special interest shown in these teachings, and definitely no unhealthy emphasis.

There also seems to be some doubt as to whether the 'sexo-yogic' practices were intended to describe anything physical at all. Herbert Guenther, a writer normally very sure of himself, says in commenting on one of these practices: 'We move in a world which probably is neither physical nor mental, but may partake of both (or be something completely different).'<sup>3</sup>

In some of the practices found in the Tantras and their related works we encounter elaborate visualization techniques where the practitioner is instructed to see himself as a Buddha in sexual union with a female consort, usually described as a *dakini*. Here the aspect of sexo-yogic practice merges with the third aspect, that of sexual symbolism.

Within the Mahayana, Enlightenment was principally seen as the insoluble union of wisdom and compassion. Mahayana artists were fond of depicting this union in paintings and images, in the form of the androgynous figure of the Bodhisattva — a beautiful sixteen-year-old: gentle, yet strong in appearance.

The Vajrayana sought to depict this union even more vividly, and so depicted the Buddha or Bodhisattva in sexual union with the *dakini*. We often come across such figures in Vajrayana art. The Buddha or Bodhisattva looks serene, contemplative, blissful; while the *dakini* — appearing like a goddess — embraces him tightly, and looks rapturously into his face. Here the male figure symbolizes



Tibetan 'yab-yum' image. (18th century CE)

Compassion, the female figure Wisdom.

Sangharakshita has commented on such depictions thus: 'One must observe that though there are two figures there are not two persons: there is only one Enlightened person, one Enlightened mind, within which are united reason and emotion, wisdom and compassion. These representations embody under the form of sexual symbolism (here of course one has nothing to do with sexuality in the ordinary sense) the ideal of Wisdom and Compassion united.'<sup>4</sup>

Traditionally, these images are considered highly sacred, inspiring profound reverence and devotion, not in any way stimulating a sexual response. However, they have suffered abuse. Some people go so far as to recommend that, during sexual intercourse, the man

should visualize himself as the Buddha: the woman should visualize herself as the *dakini*. Both should experience their lovemaking as an enactment of the uniting of Wisdom with Compassion. Such recommendations provide the deluded with a first class means of rationalizing away their mundane desires. For most of us, such a practice would be a purely mental activity making no significant difference to the basic urges involved. It would be no more than a fancy way of having sex. For those experienced enough to see and feel themselves to be a Buddha at such times, it is highly unlikely that they would want to involve themselves with sex at all! Being so content, complete, and rich within themselves, they would hardly need to reach beyond themselves for

their pleasures.

To conclude, within the Vajrayana, sex — as most of us understand and experience it — is not part of the path to Enlightenment at all. Sexual language within the Vajrayana is strictly metaphorical, strictly symbolic: not to be taken literally. Indeed, if taken literally, some Vajrayana writings will not lead us to Enlightenment, but will sink us more deeply in the mire of greed, hatred, and delusion■

1. Thinley Norbu, *The Small Golden Key*, p. 24
2. Stephan Beyer, *The Buddhist Experience*, p. 258
3. Herbert V. Guenther, *The Life and Teaching of Naropa*, pp. 161-162
4. Ven. Sangharakshita, 'Masculinity' and 'Femininity' in the *Spiritual Life*, p. 24

# MARRIAGE

— and the —

## SPIRITUAL LIFE

*Judith Sloboda, a mother, a mitra,  
and married, deals with a common  
question.*

‘**W**hat is the Buddhist attitude to marriage?’ some of my Christian friends have asked, with a touch of suspicion, knowing that many of my Buddhist friends are unmarried. This is an important question. Anyone who takes up the spiritual life will sooner or later be confronted by this issue, either because they are already married, or because they may come to contemplate marriage during their spiritual career, or because they will meet married people who want to lead the spiritual life. Marriage is, without doubt, very popular!

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In the East, marriages are usually arranged, so different problems tend to arise in that context. In general, one could say that whereas, in the West, the demands of the spiritual life may cause conflict between the two spouses, in the East the problem may extend to include the whole of the wider family, since in those cultures marriage has as much to do with relations between two families — and even villages — as it has to do with the married individuals themselves.

Western marriage is a different institution. In the first place, it usually begins with two people falling in love. Some psychiatrists have suggested that falling in love is a pathological state: people ‘suffer’ from it, they say, and exhibit recognizable symptoms such as sweating, shortness of breath, raised pulse, loss of appetite, and even the loss of certain mental faculties such as the ability to think clearly! The prevalent view of our society is less critical, though. As every TV watcher knows, as anyone who has browsed through the latest ‘best-sellers’ knows, falling in love is idealized, even idolized, as the most desirable of states, and the man-woman relationship is seen as the ideal and *only* truly fulfilling human relationship.

With the potency of a myth, this belief perpetuates itself, despite the high divorce rate in many Western countries, despite the growing number of ‘single-parent’ families, and despite the evident frustration experienced by men and women who find themselves ‘trapped’ in a marriage in which the early glow of

love has long since faded into the grey tension of miscommunication.

In the last issue of *Golden Drum*, Sangharakshita expressed the opinion that ‘love’ of this kind is really based on psychological projection: we see our lover as having all the strengths and qualities which we do not have, or which are only latent and undeveloped within ourselves. How well I remember sitting, aged fifteen, at the weekly Choral Society rehearsal, in open-mouthed admiration of my piano teacher’s excellent accompaniment to the choir, and how that admiration tinged every aspect of the way I saw him! In no time at all I was well and truly in love, and five years later I was married! All too easily we perceive our lover as our ‘other half’ without whom we are inadequate and insecure. It is often for this reason — in my case it was, unconsciously, the deciding reason — that a couple decide to marry, believing that in marriage they will be able to secure their partner ‘for life’.

I have sometimes wondered why marriage is so popular, and where began

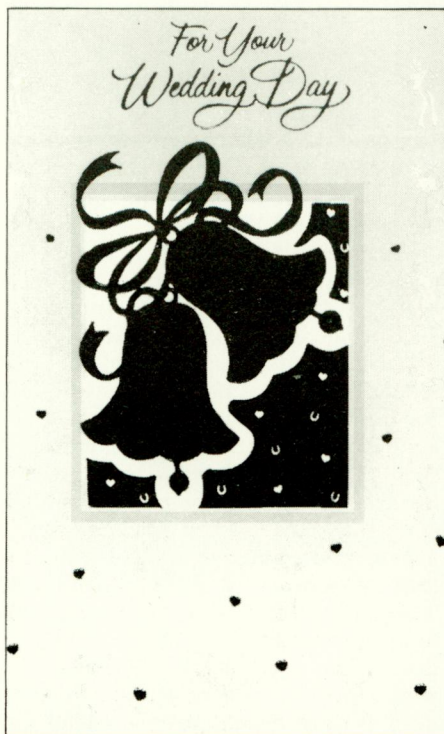


An Indian wedding—bringing communities together

the myth that the man-woman relationship is the ideal human relationship — a myth which has flourished in my mind with surprising tenacity. Its roots lie, I think, in our common Christian heritage. Christianity has long regarded marriage as a holy sacrament on a par with baptism, confirmation, and the rest: a holy state bestowing on those who partake of it God’s special grace. We find, therefore, that even those who do not regard themselves as Christian, but who have grown up with Western culture, still hold marriage to be something of a divine institution.

But what is the Buddhist attitude to marriage?

In traditionally Buddhist countries, marriage is a completely secular affair taking various forms: monogamy, polygamy, and polyandry. Although a monk may be invited to a marriage ceremony, his task will be to bless the newly married couple as they set out on a new stage of their lives, rather than to conduct the marriage itself. We may say





that from a Buddhist point of view there is nothing whatever spiritual about marriage *per se*, nor does it bear any direct relation to the spiritual life. For marriage is born of the needs of a social group to organize and perpetuate itself, or of the needs of individuals to provide some security for themselves.

The spiritual life emerges in quite a different context. It flowers out of the desire to nurture in oneself a mature, independent, and sensitive individuality, to develop those states of mind characterized by clarity, understanding, kindness, generosity, and so on.

How will taking up the spiritual life affect those of us who are married?

Its overall effect is to give the marriage relationship far less importance in our lives. In the first place, practising the Dharma will bring about changes in us which will make us happier, more complete, less psychologically dependent on our spouse. Unfortunately, it often happens that if the spouse is not also changing and becoming less dependent then he or she may find this

independence threatening, and may, perhaps unconsciously, try to tighten the dependencies which originally bound the couple together.

This can be a demanding and difficult time for the Dharma-farer whose vision and faith in the Dharma, as something more truly fulfilling than a marriage relationship, may yet be weak. That person can find themselves vulnerable to manipulation. It is not unusual for marriages to break up at this point — at which my Christian friends will no doubt wag their fingers. But in some cases it may be the most constructive thing to do. In other cases the tension created by the changes occurring in one or both spouses may mean that the marriage has to find a new, more mature level.

In my own case, I experienced considerable conflict between what I considered my spiritual ideals and my married situation. I wanted to put confusion and delusion behind me, go beyond a relationship based on projection and the need for security. But, at the same time, it was clear that there

was now another person to consider, our daughter Miriam, whose life would be so much shaped by the way I lived mine. In the end I made the decision to continue practising the Dharma as a married woman, which would mean allowing my practice to touch and transform my attitudes and feelings towards my husband as much as it touched and transformed other aspects of my life. I had to learn to regard him no longer as someone divinely bound to me — of whom I had certain expectations — but as an autonomous individual with quite different interests and world views to mine, as someone who shares with me the concern for our daughter and the commitment to creating a home for her.

What links us now is not the feeling that we cannot live without one another, but the shared responsibility in bringing up that small human being whom between us we have helped into this life. It is a slow, and sometimes painful, journey, this transformation of very deeply rooted attitudes, but one I do not regret having undertaken.

Perhaps the most radical changes in our attitudes to marriage occur when we begin to develop spiritual friendships, for here we discover the delights, the joys, of a truly human relationship in which there is no longer the aspect of two insecure people trying to prop each other up. Instead we find ourselves striving towards the same sublime ideal as our friend. We can face up to difficulties in our friendship by trying to bring more and more of our ideals into our communication with each other. We urge each other on to become more independent, to let our qualities shine out, to overcome weaknesses. The extent to which this can or cannot be done between individuals of opposite sex where the element of sexual attraction is ever lurking, each person must discover for themselves. But I have no doubt that anyone who wholeheartedly takes up the spiritual life, who cherishes and nurtures his or her spiritual friendships, will eventually become clear in his or her own mind, and in his or her own way, as to the proper place of marriage within the spiritual life.

# the SINGLE-SEX experience



*Single-sex activities and communities are an important feature of FWBO practice. But are they really necessary, or even 'healthy'? Tejananda answers the critics.*

‘People live in single-sex communities because they can’t face up to the world.’ ‘Single-sex institutions always produce one-sided people.’ These days we take it more or less for granted that single-sex institutions are a relic of repressive — maybe even barbaric — former times. Men and women *ought* to do everything together, without exception, distinction or, especially, discrimination. To think anything else would be blatant sexism!

And yet, for fifteen years, single-sex institutions been gaining prominence in the FWBO: single-sex retreats and events, single-sex study groups, and above all, single-sex communities. Is the FWBO perversely trying to put the clock back? *Is* it blatantly ‘sexist’? It may be difficult to persuade some people otherwise. However, from the point of view of the practice of Buddhism, many people involved with the FWBO find single-sex activities and living situations to be beneficial.

Of course, single-sex institutions are by no means new to Buddhism. From the time of the Buddha, male and female members of the monastic Sangha pursued their training with as little interaction with members of the opposite sex as possible. But, noting prevailing attitudes in the West, Sangharakshita assumed, when he founded the FWBO twenty years ago, that all its activities would be ‘mixed’. It was only after a number of years, as a few single-sex ‘experiments’ were made, that a number of Order members and Friends began to realize the attractions of such a lifestyle. What are these attractions?

Perhaps the most obvious is the simple absence of sexual distraction in its most blatant form: members of the opposite sex! Even after initial doubts, most people attending a single-sex retreat for the first time find the relative absence of sexual tension refreshing — even liberating. But a *full time* single-sex living situation may still seem a considerable step; even, perhaps, an extreme one. However, the FWBO’s single-sex communities are no monolithic institution: there is a wide spectrum, ranging from ‘open’ communities, where members of the opposite sex are welcome on the premises

(though obviously not to move in full time), through to completely ‘closed’ communities where no members of the opposite sex are ever permitted.

But whatever degree of ‘single-sexness’ is observed in a community, the point of living in one is unquestionably to *minimize* one’s contact with members of the opposite sex — over a considerable period of time. The effect of this goes much further than that of a relatively short single-sex retreat: deeper levels of sexual conditioning are laid bare, in particular, tendencies to sexual polarization.

From a certain point of view, the whole of Buddhist practice can be seen in terms of developing ever-increasing degrees of unification of consciousness and being. For human beings, the *basic* level of dis-unification is, precisely, sexual polarization — that is, the tendency to over-identify with one’s ‘male-ness’ or ‘female-ness’ to the exclusion of the psychologically complementary ‘opposite’ qualities. To become more ‘fully human’, then, one must develop the *whole range* of human qualities, not just those which appear to come naturally. It is all too easy *not* to do this if one is constantly in the company of members of the opposite sex who conveniently seem to embody the very qualities one lacks. In this situation, these qualities can, in a sense, be experienced ‘vicariously’, so obviating the need ever to *develop* them oneself.

Those who decide to live in single-sex communities in the FWBO do so very much as a means to an end: the end being to overcome this one-sidedness and sexual polarization, to stop depending on others, and to develop ‘complementary’ qualities in themselves.

However, for many people, this may still beg a few questions, such as those — of one-sidedness and escapism — with which I opened my article. Then, there are the questions of what people in single-sex communities do about sex, assuming they are not celibate, whether single-sex communities are a satisfactory alternative to family life and, finally, how single-sex communities work in practice.

I have stated that single-sex communities are an excellent





**Suvirya community, London**

*antidote* to sexual one-sidedness. But perhaps the opposite view is more current because many familiar kinds of single-sex institution in our society seem to promote one-sidedness: the army, for example, or single-sex public schools.

The great difference between these and single-sex communities in the FWBO lies in the fact that our communities work according to *Buddhist* principles: above all, the principle of *spiritual friendship*. Single-sex living is not simply a question of reducing contact with members of the opposite sex: much more important than this is the opportunity it grants us to develop strong, mutually

supportive friendships with members of our own sex. It is only in this context that a person can develop the 'complementary opposite' qualities I have discussed, there being in the single-sex situation no obvious sexual polarization to inhibit us from doing so.

This raises an important point: the benefits of a single-sex life-style *can* be enjoyed to a very large extent without actually undertaking complete celibacy. Celibacy is undoubtedly of great benefit, and is perhaps the most satisfactory lifestyle from the point of view of overcoming sexual polarities within oneself, but as Sangharakshita indicated in the last issue, celibacy not as

an 'absolute', either/or affair, but a matter of *degree*. Living in a single-sex community may not mean giving up sex altogether, but it *will* mean relegating sex and sexual relationships to a more peripheral position in one's life and scale of priorities, whilst one's practice of Buddhism takes an increasingly central position.

So, there is no necessary contradiction between living in a single-sex community and pursuing a sexual relationship. There may be *practical* difficulties, but this is another matter. It is not uncommon in the FWBO for the partners in a relationship to live in their own respective single-sex communities — an arrangement

which helps to ensure that the relationship does indeed remain 'on the side-lines' and not consume the time and energy needed for meditation, spiritual friendship, and other elements of Buddhist practice. Naturally, therefore, sexual relationships *within* a single-sex community are generally avoided, as there would then be nothing to restrain them from becoming central rather than peripheral elements in the lives of the individuals concerned. The degree of exclusivity involved in a sexual relationship has an inevitably detrimental effect on the life of a community — a factor which perhaps explains why no mixed communities in the FWBO have ever really succeeded.

Whether the single-sex community could ever be seen as a *substitute* for the family is doubtful. Families involve strong 'biological' ties and functions which a community cannot duplicate. However, the kinds of single-sex community which exist in the FWBO undoubtedly provide a highly workable *alternative* to family life, for those wishing to pursue it. We have learned a great deal, over fifteen years, about what makes a good community 'tick': a pleasant environment, shared activities such as meditation, meals, study and recreation, quietness and privacy when one needs them. . .

Above all, what characterizes a good community is the conscious cultivation of mutual care, concern, openness, and friendliness. This kind of support, in the light of shared spiritual ideals, is perhaps the strongest appeal which the single-sex community has. Obviously, individual communities in the FWBO fulfill this 'ideal profile' to different degrees at different times. It takes time to develop the trust, friendliness, and awareness which community life, at best, demands.

FWBO communities are still very much of an experimental nature. Doubtless much remains to be discovered about community life, and new forms will surely be developed in time. Even so, it is already clear that the FWBO's single-sex communities cannot but make a significant contribution to Buddhism as it develops in the West.

I remember being told once that if ever I found myself feeling guilty, then I must have done something wrong. Unfortunately, my propensity for guilt at the time overwhelmed my glimpse of the false assumption underlying the remark. It is true that if someone has done something wrong, he will — level of awareness permitting — naturally feel guilt as an appropriate consequence of his action. It is not necessarily true, however, that if someone feels guilty, he has done something wrong. Take, for instance, a man who has rejected Roman Catholicism. He has ceased to believe, yet every Sunday may find himself feeling guilty because he has not been to mass. It has been drummed into him for so many years that not to go to mass on Sunday is a sin; in spite of his conscious rejection of Catholicism and knowing with his reason that it is not wrong, he continues to feel guilty about his omission.

When it comes to considering guilt in relation to sex, it is essential to be able to distinguish between what could be called *rational* guilt and *irrational* guilt, and to appreciate the desirability of the former and the undesirability of the latter. There are two good reasons for this. Firstly, it is not at all uncommon for people — particularly those from a Christian background — to suffer feelings of irrational guilt in connection with sex. Secondly, it can be all too easy for practising Buddhists who happen to be ex-Christian to try to ignore the *rational* guilt they might be experiencing as a result of sexual misconduct, and attribute it to their Christian conditioning.

Rational guilt arises quite naturally from our grasp of the distinction between right

not arise from a consciousness of having acted unskillfully — in fact *consciously* we may be very clear that our action is skilful; it is rooted in fear of sinning against an ethical code we no longer accept, of offending — and thereby losing the approval of — an authority in which we no longer believe! Irrational guilt is inappropriate and unnecessary, a negative emotion to be dissolved by persistent spiritual practice.

It would be a trite form of reductionism to lay all our sexual problems at Christianity's door. The 'post-Christian' age of permissiveness and promiscuity, in which the biological urge has been given free rein, has perhaps caused as many problems as the repressive mode. However, the fact that the repressive attitude of some forms of Christianity can continue to affect some Westerners, long after they have ceased to be Christians, is a complicating factor when it comes to their observance of the third precept: 'I undertake the training principle of refraining from sexual misconduct'.

It is not easy to generalize about the extent to which a Christian upbringing can cause difficulties for people in their sex lives. Among ex-Christians, it seems that those brought up as Roman Catholics can be worst affected. It can be so easy for them to feel irrational guilt about their sexual activity, so deeply has it been impressed upon them that sex outside marriage, for example, or sex for any other reason than for procreation, is sinful. Even within marriage, it is possible for people to experience sexual activity as a sort of 'licensed sin'. The roots apparently go deep. Jerome, one of the most influential of the Church Fathers, was of the opinion that marriage is only

# CHRISTIANITY, SEX, AND GUILT

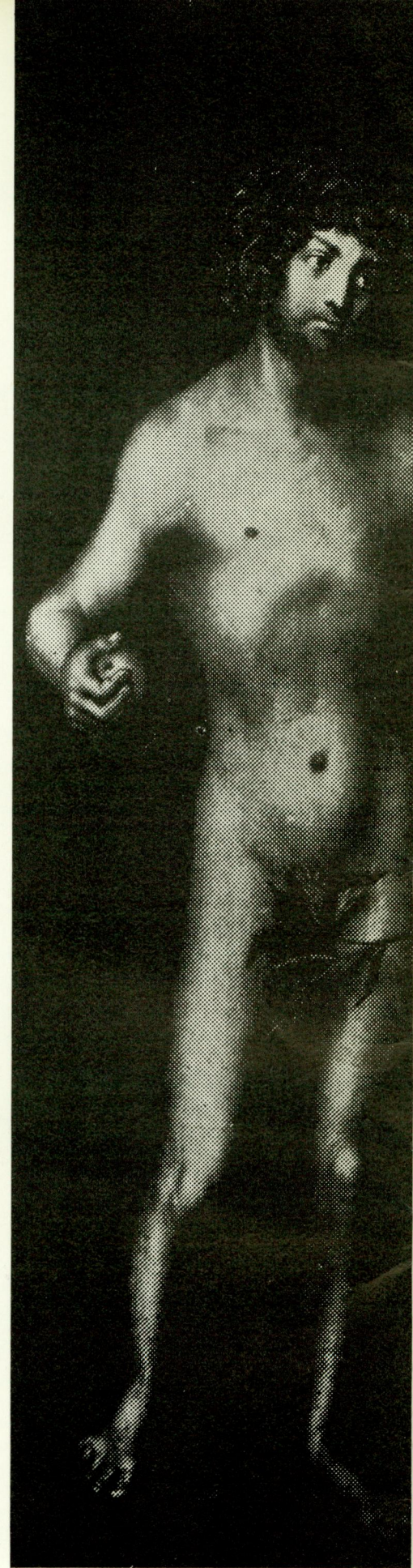
*Why do so many Westerners feel embarrassed, or even guilty, about sex? Abhaya investigates the pitfalls of a Christian heritage.*

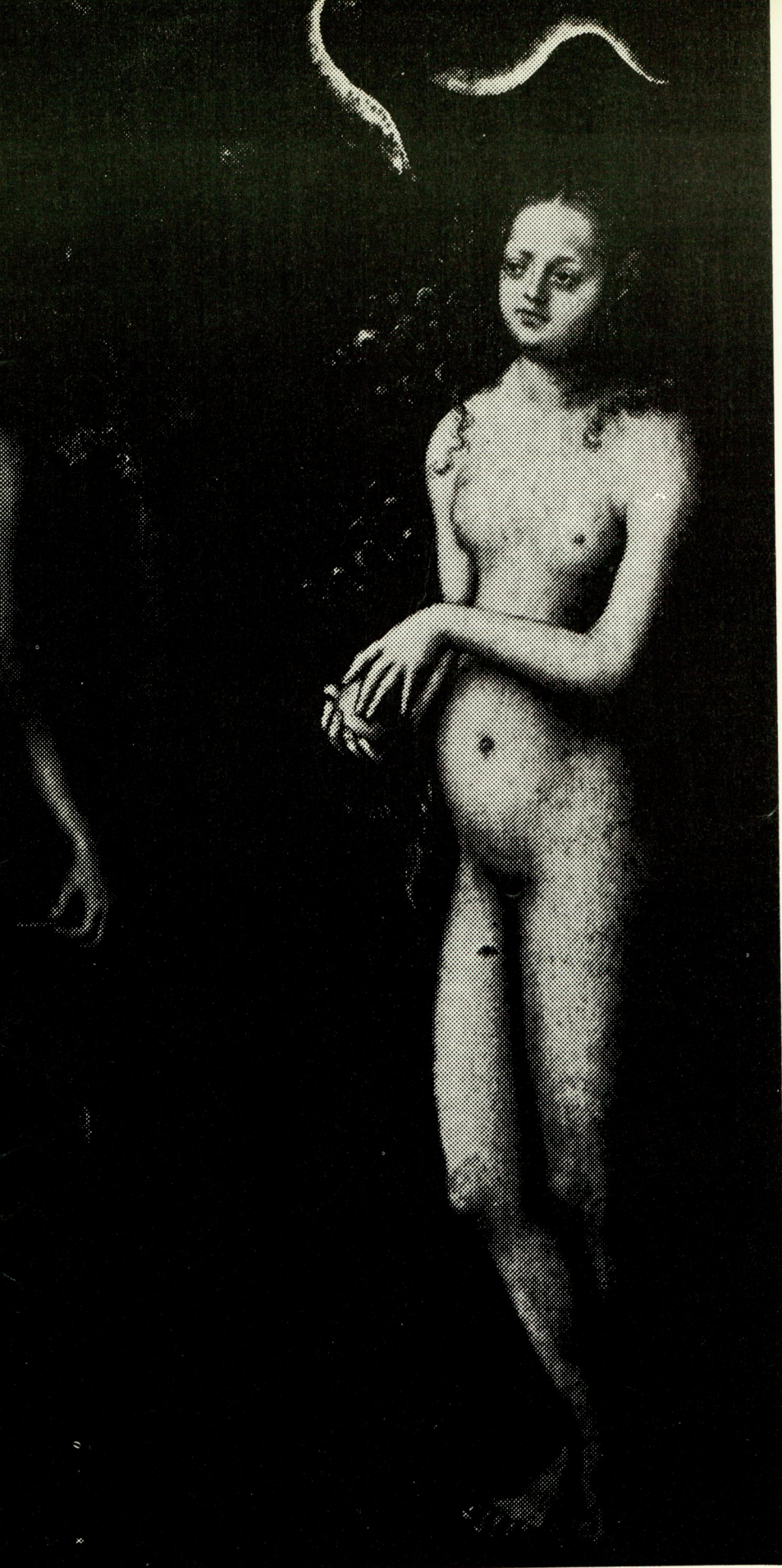
and wrong, or 'skilful' and 'unskilful' actions. It is that troubled feeling which arises when we are conscious of having broken the precepts, of having strayed from our ideals; it is appropriate and necessary. Though it is painful, it involves a degree of self-awareness and leads, hopefully, to a renewed determination to act skilfully in future. Irrational guilt, on the other hand, does

one degree less sinful than fornication.

In the West, it is not in fact necessary to have been a Christian at all to be psychologically affected by the Christian influence. There is a more widespread, puritanical strain of generalized Christian conditioning which seems to infect people's minds as they grow up, the kind which leaves the impression that sex is inherently dirty. In its more extreme

form, this can leave former believers questioning their desire for ordinary physical affection, an essential aspect of healthy human contact. They suffer an insidious constraint, feeling that any sort of bodily contact, being of the flesh and not the spirit, is tainted with evil. Another of the Church Fathers, Ambrose, related the spiritual and sexual purity of the virgin directly to physical cleanliness.





Virgins were spotlessly clean; non-virgins, by implication, were dirty.

It would be naive of course to blame all of the puritanical element in Christianity on the early Church Fathers. The historical roots of the matter are considerably more complex. In relation to the extent of the damage, it has also to be remembered that individual temperament plays its part. One person may be

seriously affected for years as a result of a repressive upbringing, whilst another may quickly shrug it off. Whatever its extent or specific causes — matters no doubt open to discussion — what one can be certain of is the unfortunate psychological effect Christian conditioning does sometimes have. A number of people coming into contact with the FWBO over the years have undoubtedly

suffered psychologically as a result of having been brought up as Christians. But again, we have to be constantly alert to the danger of the violent swing. It is so easy, in reaction against what one may see as the one-sidedness of Christianity, to go to the other extreme and start exalting sexual activity as something fine, pure, and glorious, to be indulged in at every possible opportunity!

People who come to Buddhism with an already healthy, positive attitude to sex, burdened with no legacy of irrational guilt, are, on the whole, going to find it easier to fit their sex life into some overall spiritual perspective. Those who have been to some degree deformed, either directly or indirectly, by the Christian heritage, will have some sorting out to do in this area.

There are methods of dealing with irrational guilt. The consistent practice of mindfulness, especially of the physical body and of feelings, and a regular meditation practice, have the inevitable effect of bringing the problem fully to mind, so that one can no longer pretend that it is not there. Seeing clearly that one *does* suffer from irrational guilt is an important first step.

In some cases, especially if the guilt is only slight, meditation and mindfulness are in themselves sufficient to wash it all away. But usually, a way of objectifying the guilt is needed. Confessing it, openly and honestly, to one's spiritual friends, is the obvious one. They may only have to laugh to show how ridiculous the notion of the so-called guilt is; or one may need to be convinced by their firm assurance that what one has done — or said, or thought — is not unskilful.

In more extreme cases, the victim can resort to therapeutic blasphemy,<sup>o</sup> which can be very liberating. What gives irrational guilt its power is fear of authority. By challenging, openly and vigorously, the authority in which one no longer rationally believes, one can successfully withdraw the crippling projection and thereby reclaim one's innate spiritual potency.

With irrational guilt dissolved and the confusion as to what is skilful and what is not cleared away, we will have a much better chance of doing what Sangharakshita recommended at the end of the interview published in the last issue of *Golden Drum*: that is, of keeping our sex life well to the periphery of our mandala, and striving to become a little more celibate every day.

<sup>o</sup>For a detailed explanation of this, see Sangharakshita's pamphlet, *Buddhism and Blasphemy*, Windhorse, 1978.

# ?

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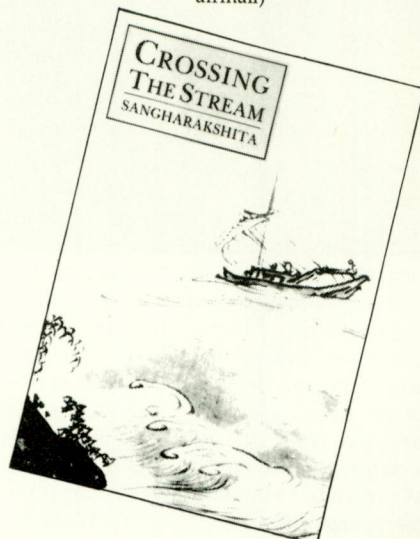
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## FEMINISM AND BUDDHISM

*Feminism is a powerful, significant force in Western society. Gunabhadri explores its links with the spiritual life.*

**T**he Feminist movement had its beginnings in the eighteenth century when, as a result of the Industrial Revolution, women lost their traditional place in Western society and became economically dependent on men. Since then it has tried to redress the balance between activities open to men and those open to women. Whereas possibilities for education were limited in the nineteenth century, now, in the twentieth, women in the West are in a position to be as well educated as men, they can vote, and they have achieved equal rights in terms of job opportunities.

More recently, feminism has become increasingly concerned with the issue of psychological and social conditioning, and the ways in which these vary for men and for women. 'From early childhood', says Kate Millett, a contemporary feminist, 'men and women are trained to accept a system which divides society into male and female spheres, with appropriate roles for each, and which allocates public power

exclusively to the male sphere.' Feminists try to redress this balance, and encourage women to develop qualities which in our society are labelled 'masculine', such as initiative, aggressiveness, responsibility, and so on. Feminists also explore the areas in which women are different from men and try to help women gain confidence in these areas and in their ways of expression.

Feminism, then, could be described as a movement that demands — or insists — that women should have access to all the facilities they require for their development as human beings; it asserts that they should not be confined or limited to any particular range of facilities or activities; and it encourages them to take more initiative, be more independent, and to function as individuals in their own right, rather than being mere extensions or supports to the men in their lives. Feminism of this sort is quite compatible with Buddhism and the spiritual life.

Unfortunately, some branches of feminism have gone to extremes. The activities and

ideologies of these branches are largely based on a hatred of men, and on a desire to eliminate them. Women involved in such movements argue that, having been excluded from certain activities and humiliated for so long, now, as a response, and as a means to lift themselves out of an enforcedly narrow existence, they need to express their anger. Thus they wish to humiliate men and exclude them from certain areas of human activity. This kind of feminism (which is the feminism that reaches the media most frequently) is certainly not compatible with Buddhism or with any other form of spiritual life. It is based on the negative emotion of hatred and, rather than helping to create a positive alternative for men and women, it serves to destroy any possibility of understanding between the sexes; it damages men and women.

Feminism is concerned with a limited reform of society and consciousness, aiming to achieve equal opportunities for men and women. Buddhism

takes a broader view and occupies itself with the human and spiritual development of all. Feminism looks at human beings primarily in terms of their sexual differences; Buddhism looks at them in terms of their highest potential, which is Buddhahood. Buddhism addresses itself to individuals, not to 'men' or 'women'.

At the hub of the FWBO we therefore find a unified Order of women and men; everything in the Order is open to women and to men; they take the same ordinations and vows; they exercise the same functions at public centres; they practise the same meditations, study the same texts, and so on. In the FWBO we feel that no one should be excluded from the process of higher human development, whether on grounds of sex, race, colour, level of education, or social position.

For women who have not yet come into contact with Buddhism, some contact with the feminist movement may be useful. It can help them prepare the ground for their further development, especially by urging them to look at their social conditioning and try to understand which aspects have taught them to be themselves, and which are a hindrance. The feminist movement can help women develop a sense of their identity as women, help them develop a sense of self-worth, self-respect, and self-confidence, which many women do not have. Inasmuch as it succeeds in doing this, the feminist movement can be seen as a movement that paves the way for further spiritual development, a definite stepping-stone towards Buddhism.

Valuable though it is, however, the feminist movement cannot be more than that. It consists of many different branches which do not share one clear, unified vision or ideal. It offers few clearly defined *methods* of personal development. And, compared with the all-embracing Buddhist ideal of human and spiritual development, it's goals are specialized, even limited. For some, feminism is a helpful tool on the way to Buddhism. But when we start practising Buddhism we can begin to leave feminism behind.

# A NASTY TALE

**Bhagwan: The God that Failed**  
by Hugh Milne,  
Published by Sphere,  
London, 1986, pp. 377.  
Paperback. price £3.50

**A**s evangelists and gurus compete in the religious market, we now find a confusing multitude of religious movements in the world, from the ancient and established, to the latest bizarre cult. Amongst this multitude of often mutually contradictory doctrines, there is a wide spectrum of 'genuineness'. There are movements led by sincere people with integrity, and others led by bogus teachers out to exploit their followers. The question for many people today is how to choose the one which embodies a genuine view of the spiritual life.

Hugh Milne's book will help many people make such a choice through its demonstration of how *not* to make it, for he has written about his involvement with one movement, the Sannyasis or 'Orange People', and with their leader 'Bhagwan Shree' Rajneesh, the self proclaimed 'enlightened master' whose bodyguard Milne became.

In an absorbing and disturbing book Milne offers an intensely personal account of how he became a disciple of Rajneesh, of his time with the sannyasis, his attempts to break free, and his difficulties after doing so; as such it appears to be an accurate and objective account of Rajneesh and his movement viewed from within.

Rajneesh's formula attracted many followers and a great deal of money; it was also the catalyst for an escalating process of immoral and criminal practice which claimed many victims, including Rajneesh himself. The formula was simple: a vague philosophy of peace and love based upon a pot-pourri of teachings derived from almost every major religious

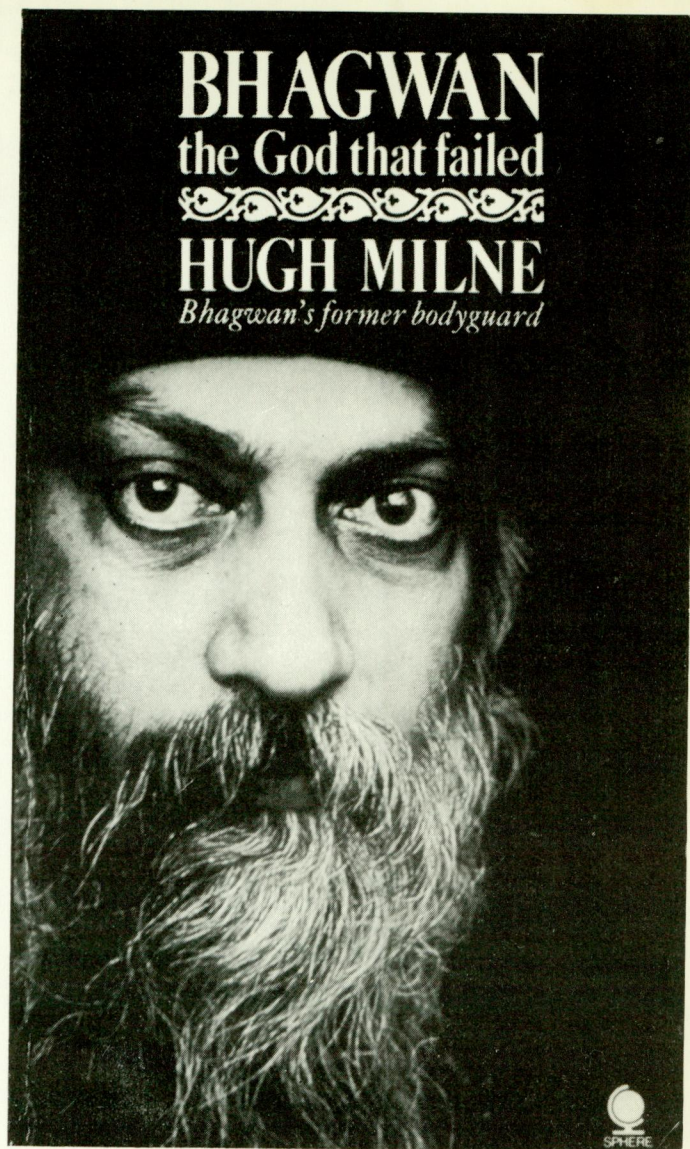
tradition, lots of unrestrained 'Tantric' sexual activity, a surrogate family with Rajneesh as father. . . Add the enticement of becoming 'enlightened' through various quasi-meditational practices and the formula becomes a potent brew, irresistible to the spiritually naive.

Rajneesh comes across as a hypochondriacal, obsessional man, able to manipulate people without concern. He seems to be a skilled hypnotist who can use his voice to highly persuasive effect. He mesmerizes a lot of people, not least Hugh Milne himself, who still seems (when writing his book) to be partly under Rajneesh's influence.

Although it is clear that all is not right even at the beginning, for a while the movement appears to have had a relatively benign effect on most of its adherents. Rajneesh's disciples mix together in an atmosphere of openness and mutual care, with their ideals much to the fore. However, the evil aspects of the movement gain prominence as, step by step, the leaders' actions begin to deviate from their ideals. In time, Rajneesh and a few of his closest disciples live a life of luxury whilst the followers are overworked and seriously undernourished.

Other facets of the movement evoke chilling parallels. Rajneesh's ranch in Oregon, USA, sports an arsenal of weapons, watchtowers, and checkpoints to keep people virtually imprisoned. Any complaint and dissent is denounced as 'negativity' — a label with the power to silence, scapegoat, and ostracize.

The movement falls apart in an atmosphere of paranoia and hostility. The American government steps in to halt criminal activities, which by now include prostitution, drug-trafficking, mass poisoning, tax evasion, harassment, and suspected murder. Rajneesh is caught trying to flee the country. By now, Milne himself



has left the movement, only to suffer harassment and a nervous breakdown as a result. His book seems to be a process of self-healing, but its value reaches far wider because of the lessons to be learned from it.

To those starting out on their spiritual quest it teaches the importance of learning to discriminate between the bogus and the genuinely spiritual — and the importance of not being taken in by charisma, psychic powers, and religious glamour. One should be very suspicious of a guru who claims to be 'enlightened'. It urges one to question the basis of one's emotional involvement with a movement, to know whether one is attracted because it exploits one's emotional weaknesses, or because it actually provides a means to pursue genuinely spiritual aspirations. There is also the importance of balancing one's emotional involvement with intellectual clarity, of learning to think, and applying this skill to one's spiritual development.

Perhaps the most important lesson to be learned from this book is the necessity of

retaining one's personal responsibility and integrity. Experience has taught Milne that 'It is vitally important never to give another person the power to make your decisions for you'. He learned this lesson the hard way, and one of the saddest aspects of this book is its description of the harmful results of the kind of 'surrender' Rajneesh demanded.

The urge to relinquish personal responsibility for one's life is not confined to Rajneesh's followers, but affects most of us to some degree. It can seem so much easier to forsake our integrity and give up responsibility to someone else. But, in a spiritual context, if too many disciples are affected by the same weakness, the result will not be a spiritual community but a group in which everyone colludes to stay in step with dubious, irrational group norms. This is a weakness of which we must all be wary, and which we must each overcome. I recommend this well written book as a means to help us with this task.

Advayachitta

# WATTS AMISS

## Genuine Fake: A Biography of Alan Watts

by Monica Furlong  
Published by Heinemann,  
London, 1986, pp. 198  
Hardback, price £12.95

In the late sixties an extraordinary phenomenon occurred: the so-called 'counter-culture'.

Beginning in San Francisco, this new movement quickly gathered momentum, and within a few years had captured the imaginations, and transformed the life-styles, of thousands of young people throughout the Western world. These were the days of flower-power, of the 'love generation' and the hippy movement, of experimentation with LSD and altered states of consciousness, and the awakening of widespread interest in meditation and Eastern religions. The counter-culture movement was, at its best, an assertion of the life of the spirit, and a rejection of the materialist values then, as now, predominant in Western society.

A leading figure in this movement, alongside figures such as Allen Ginsberg and Timothy Leary, was the charismatic Alan Watts: Zen Buddhist, public speaker, broadcaster, guru, and authority on 'how to live'. He was also revered as the author of *The Wisdom of Insecurity* and *The Way of Zen*.

Now, nearly fifteen years after Watts' death, Monica Furlong has produced a biography, *Genuine Fake*, in which she sets out in search of 'the man himself', and at the same time gives extracts from, and occasional commentaries on, his writings. Although very readable and entertaining, her efforts have unfortunately failed to produce a very penetrating book.

The book certainly provides a good overview of Watts' life and colourful career: his early interest in Buddhism while still a schoolboy in England, his flight to America to avoid the

war, his various marriages and divorces, his short, scandalous career as a Christian minister at an American university (which included 'competitions to see who could pee the highest'), his renewed interest in Buddhism, his involvement with the American Academy of Asian Studies, and his final emergence in the sixties from the still somewhat conventional Englishman into the full-scale 'flower-child' and revered public figure.

A picture of Watts does inevitably emerge — energetic, friendly, charismatic, full of ideas, alcoholic, egotistical, lonely (and definitely *not* an authority on 'how to live'). But it is a limited picture: the book affords no real insight into Watts' deeper motivations. Why, for instance, was he apparently so unsuccessful at putting his own teachings into

practice? Did he struggle but not succeed? Or was he never serious in the first place, but just content to be a popular success? What is missing from this biography is a depth of sympathy for, and hence imaginative identification with, the subject, which might enable such questions to be answered.

Such observations as Ms Furlong does make about Watts and others are not always satisfactory. Her judgements would be more convincing were they substantiated with more evidence; one cannot help feeling that more thought and research could have been put into them. Sometimes she seems to be off-target altogether. We read, for instance, that Watts' father 'had a way of thinking almost everything about Alan perfect'

and must therefore have been a 'marvellous listener'. A 'marvellous listener' does *not* assume that the other person is perfect; rather, he is acutely critical, and therefore able to appreciate what is of real value in what he hears.

Turning to Watts' writings, Ms Furlong quotes from and summarizes these extensively throughout the book, but to no purpose it seems, other than the purely informative. She neither uses the writings to any significant extent to reveal the man, nor does she attempt a critique of the subjects under discussion. Given Watts' leading position in the West as a popularizer of Buddhism and religious ideas in general, it would seem natural for a biographer to attempt some sort of assessment of his achievements in this area.

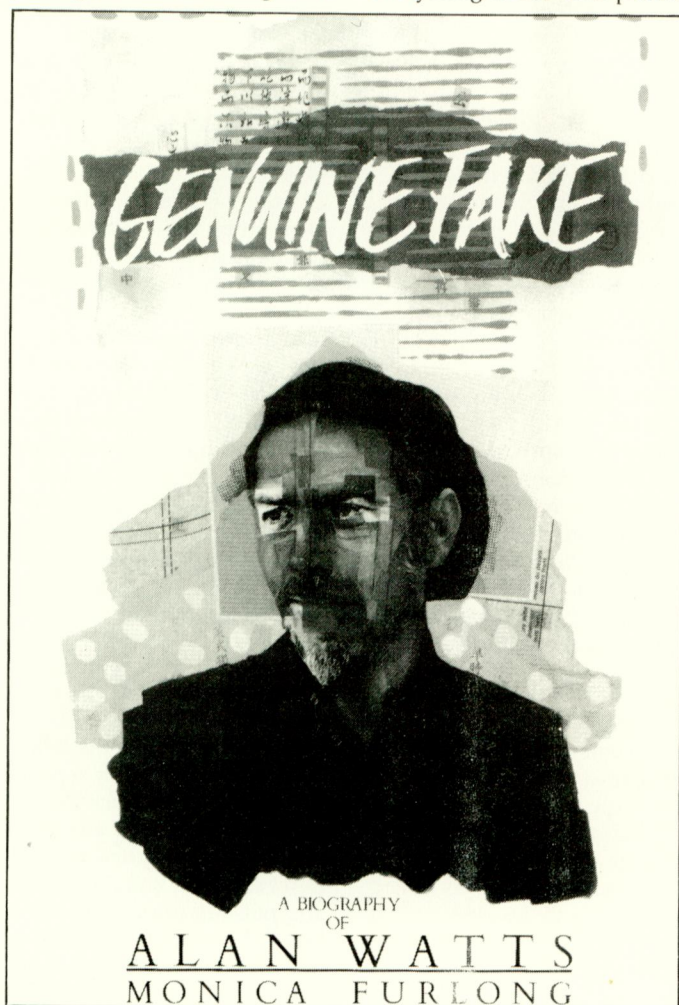
Watts' writings are, in fact, full of confusion. There is, for example, his central idea that we are 'already *there*' and that Enlightenment is not achieved by a lot of effort, but by just perceiving how things really are. This is a dangerous misinterpretation of traditional Buddhist teaching, but it passes without critical comment.

Alan Watts was a figure of major, if ambiguous, importance in the spread of Buddhism in the West. The nature of his achievement is perhaps best summed up by the late Dr Edward Conze, in his *Memoirs of a Modern Gnostic*:

'Most of my American students had first become interested in Buddhism through Alan Watts. It is true that they had to unlearn most of what they had learnt. It is equally true that he put out the net which caught them in the first place.'

As such, Alan Watts is certainly a figure of interest to modern Buddhists, and though it has its limitations, *Genuine Fake* does at least give a preliminary picture of the man and his works.

Dharmaruchi



# SOUND ADVICE

## A Meditation Retreat

by Alan and Jacqui James  
Published by Aukana, 1986  
pp. 170. Paperback. price £5.50

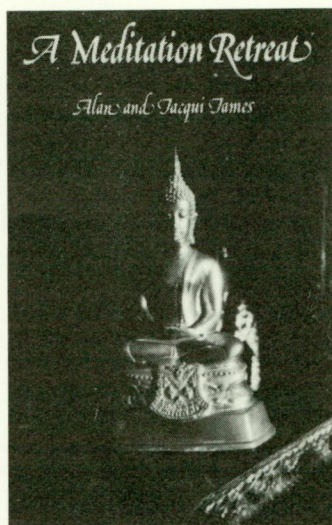
Alan and Jacqui James teach meditation and Buddhism at their own residential centre, 'The House of Inner Tranquillity', in Wiltshire. This book is a selection of talks given on their retreats, and its theme is meditation and the meditative life from a Theravadin standpoint. It also introduces the James' very individual approach to that tradition of Buddhism, and the activities at the Centre.

In 1986, the James' started their own Buddhist Order, 'the Order of Absolute Harmony'. One might expect a group like theirs to retain the established Theravadin ordination tradition, but, in a praiseworthy step, they have decided to start with a fresh approach for Westerners. For example, monks, who are celibate, may not stay in the Order more than five years, to avoid becoming spiritually 'stale'. They may rejoin after a minimum of one year of lay life.

The book's *tone* is striking: a friend called it 'puritanical'. But to me, the straightforward language demonstrates that the James' are sincere. They are dedicated to their work — they want their students to make efforts and achieve results.

Enlightenment, we read, is attainable here and now, 'In bed-sitters, mansion houses, and meditation centres.' Misconceived notions of the nature of Nirvana, such as the 'Golden Palace', and 'Puff of Blue Smoke' theories, are neatly exposed. The initial explanation given of the Buddhist goal, however, seems narrowly cognitive — it is seeing the truth, the eradication of ignorance. No mention is made of the Enlightened life, of compassion or loving-kindness.

I was surprised to read, a page or so later, that all



spiritual 'paths' are actually the same. In the final chapter we read: 'Journey's end . . . is called Nibbana. It is called God. It is called Godhead . . . the names frankly do not matter'. This attempt at 'skilful means' seems confusing. Did the James' feel it necessary to flatter their retreatants, who might nurse a wish to fit some Christianity in with the Dharma? Or do they actually believe that the goals of Christianity and Hinduism really are Enlightenment for the benefit of all beings?

In Buddhism, meditation methods are classified into *samatha*, the cultivation of calm concentration, and *vipassana*, the development of Insight. *Samatha* is the foundation: without *samatha* it is neither possible to sustain attention on the meditation object, nor to absorb any realizations gained. It is strange to find the James' calling these 'concentration' and 'mindfulness' meditations respectively. 'Concentration' is acceptable for *samatha*; 'mindfulness', though, is an odd rendering for *vipassana*. Mindfulness (*sati*) is the deliberate cultivation of awareness of every aspect of our experience. Though it provides excellent material for insight practice — once it has been established — its basic function is to develop concentration and psychological integration. If anything, it pertains to *samatha*. Yet even

this terminology is not used consistently. Later, two more kinds of meditation — Insight, and Loving-kindness — are referred to: but then, what is described as 'insight' is a simple concentration exercise.

But apart from these inconsistencies, the advice on meditation is generally very good indeed. Stress is placed upon the need for openness and patience. The hindrances to meditation are well described.

*Metta-bhavana* (the development of loving-kindness) is described inspiringly, in terms of breaking down the barriers between beings. In fact we find in this section on *metta* that Enlightenment is not mere cognition after all, but love: Enlightenment understands that there is no real separation into isolated units.

The James' give some interesting advice, clearly based upon experience, on the development of Insight — in the real sense this time. The Three Characteristics of Existence are explained well, and there is some in-depth explanation of how awareness can be used to counteract habitual negative states.

There is some important advice about preparing for retreats, which many of us in the FWBO could heed: ' . . . be particular about keeping your lifestyle simple and uncrowded for at least two weeks before a retreat. . . It is madness to stay up till the early hours before a course starts, and even crazier to have guests staying the week before or after your retreat.'

The points I have criticized do not badly mar the book, and some inconsistencies probably stem from the talks having been given on separate occasions. *A Meditation Retreat* contains many good and useful points for meditators, and deserves to be bought, read, and put into practice. I look forward to reading more fruits of the James' experience.

Kamalashila

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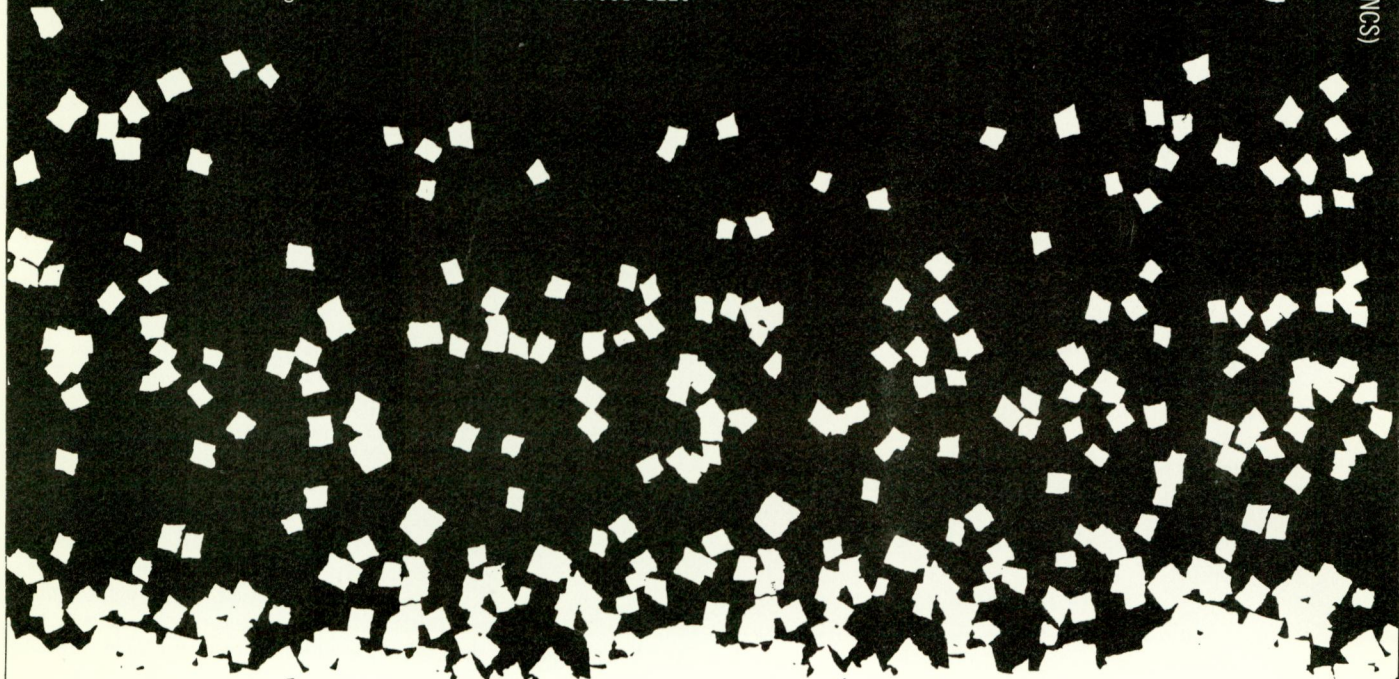


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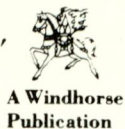
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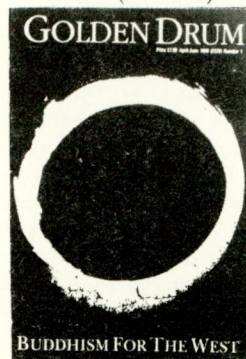


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## A MODEL CONFERENCE



Samu Sunim addresses the conference

18

The Korean Zen teacher, Samu Sunim, is a well-known figure in the Buddhist World. *Spring Wind* — *Buddhist Cultural Forum*, published in Toronto by his 'Zen Lotus Society', travels far and wide, and is probably the most stimulating Buddhist journal around. As the pages of *Spring Wind* demonstrate, Samu Sunim — a youthful, vigorous, and forthright man — takes a lively interest in Buddhist events and developments worldwide.

This July, his centre in Ann Arbor, Michigan, hosted an eight-day conference, headlined: 'World Buddhism in North America'. Around two hundred people attended: bhikkhus, nuns, priests, sramaneras, various kinds of 'in-betweeners', and lay people, from all over America, from Japan, Thailand, and other points East, and from England. I was invited along to give a talk about the FWBO's work in India, and Manjuvajra, chairman of the FWBO's New England Centre, was to give a general account of the FWBO.

A humid, punishing heatwave notwithstanding, the programme was severe:

meditation at 5.30am, breakfast at 6.30, and each day's first talk — in a colourfully striped, open-sided marquee on the lawn — at 7.30. Some coffee breaks and a longer lunch break just briefly punctuated a veritable avalanche of information and discussion which concluded with dinner at 6.00pm. Evenings were set aside for video presentations, a poetry reading, women's caucuses, and informal meetings.

In arranging the conference, Samu Sunim's intention was quite simple: to bring together representatives from the major Buddhist traditions and movements in the USA, to let them get to know each other, share their experiences, and learn such lessons as might emerge as the week progressed. Sadly, Karl Springer — the Director of External Affairs of Vajradhatu and the Nalanda Foundation — was the sole torch-bearer for the dynamic American Tibetan Buddhist movement, but otherwise, the conference was satisfyingly representative.

A couple of petitions appeared on the notice-board, inviting signatures, a lengthy, quasi-political resolution circulated — outside 'business

hours' — for delegates' consideration and comment, but there were, almost unbelievably, none of the self-conscious 'Buddhist Parliament' games which so often dominate — and mar — these inter-movement meets. In creating such a realistic, bombast-free, and useful event, Samu Sunim deserves the highest praise.

Some talks provided valuable — and often inspiring — historical background material to the Buddhist movements now working in America, from the oldest (The 'Buddhist Churches of America' — Jodo Sinshu) to some of the youngest. Others investigated the major issues raised by those movements' relative successes, failures, and even scandals. What is the role of an essentially ethnic Buddhist movement (and much Buddhism in America is predominantly ethnic) once its traditional followers begin to Americanize? How can a bhikkhu rise to the task of teaching the Dharma among Americans without compromising the Vinaya rules — and thus upsetting his ethnic lay supporters? Westerners seem to want the highest teachings: Abhi-

dhamma, Tantric initiation, Perfection of Wisdom teachings; how does one get them to appreciate the path of regular steps? What happens when the original teacher of a Buddhist movement, the universally revered — and obeyed — genius behind its success, hands over authority to a Western disciple, or dies?

A sprinkling of committed Buddhist scholars added an invigorating element to the event. Their talks opened new, and often broader, issues for consideration and debate, while their contributions to the regular open-discussion periods often challenged sloppy — or sectarian — thinking, and generally kept us on our toes.

The atmosphere became charged with sympathetic understanding and mutual warmth, the more so as each day passed, and as participants became more fully engaged, and more disarmingly honest. It was all fascinating, extremely rewarding, and often moving.

The FWBO is still very new to America. Manjuvajra's talk did however go some way to communicate the experience and substance we have gained over the past twenty years elsewhere on the globe. The FWBO's approach to Right Livelihood, community living, and its 'interdenominational approach to Buddhism' was appreciatively received; our emphasis on spiritual friendship, and our placing of commitment rather than lifestyle at the heart of things, though surprisingly hard to get across, seemed to strike a few listeners with the force of a revelation.

Many delegates knew at least something about Dr B. R. Ambedkar and his movement of mass conversion to Buddhism. Many were deeply moved to discover that our movement is now working so successfully among India's new Buddhists. My talk/slide-show resulted in a generous shower of invitations for Padmashuri, who, along with Ratnadakini and Manjuvajra, is starting a fundraising tour of some twenty-two US Buddhist centres at the time of writing.

A full account of the conference would merit a small book. I am very much looking forward to a future edition of *Spring Wind*, which will doubtless carry such a report.

# EBU: STILL FAR TO GO

If Samu Sunim's event in Ann Arbor provided a model for what a good Buddhist conference can be, the European Buddhist Union's annual Plenary Session, held at Naarden in Holland, this September, provided something of a disappointing contrast.

The food and accommodation were excellent; our meetings took place amidst the spacious, wooded grounds of a Theosophy Centre on the fringes of Amsterdam; it was good to see a number of old friends and to make new ones; the programme even provided for a half-day excursion into the city to visit the Rijksmuseum, the local Dharma-dhatu, and to make a round-trip of the canals. But such treats had increasingly to compensate for the acute and frustrating inadequacy of the meetings themselves.

On the face of it, the agenda looked simple enough: some applications for membership, a review of *Courier* — the Union's simply produced journal, the election of a small

committee to rewrite the Union's constitution, a discussion on proposals and plans for next year's General Meeting, and some thoughts on 'Future Activities'. How could twenty-five well-intentioned, sensible people, themselves 'representing' thousands of European Buddhists, have travelled so far — and at enormous combined expense — to make such heavy weather of it all? For after three days of occasionally heated debate very little had been achieved, and much that was achieved was either not to everyone's liking, or likely to prove impractical when put into operation.

There were several 'immediate' reasons for this. The official language of the meeting is, by tradition, English; by no means all the twenty-five delegates present (from Holland, Germany, France, Spain, Austria, Switzerland, and England) spoke it well, and a couple hardly at all. Few delegates had done much, if any, preparation for the meeting,

partly because there had been very little preparatory material circulated for prior consideration. And few of us were accustomed to the indispensable rules of communication required of a meeting that seeks to arrive at *consensus*, rather than majority decision.

But the root of the problem was a more fundamental one. From the earliest days of the Union there has been a rift: not, I should add, between the French and the Germans, or the English and the Spanish, or for that matter between the Theravadins and the Mahayanists. It lies between those who want the Union to do more 'institutional' business: to become a kind of super-movement in its own right, or even a quasi-political power-base, and those who want of it only that it should give Buddhists of different nationality and spiritual approach a chance to meet in friendship, get to know each other, and share experience, advice, and inspiration.

It is not that these latter seek

deliberately to sabotage the efforts of their more organizationally ambitious fellows: the fact is that until the Union really is truly representative of Europe's practising Buddhists, and until we all know and trust each other much better (for the brief history of Buddhism in European countries is not without its diplomatic gaffs and scandals) then we will lack the clarity, the vision — and the right — to do very much at all.

In Naarden we were barely able to achieve a few feats of internal 'housekeeping'. And yet, between sessions, we seemed to enjoy each other's company tremendously as we hurriedly exchanged information about our various movements' practices, ordination traditions, and attitudes to this, that, and the other — before rushing back into the conference room!

These conversations made the trip — and ultimately the Union itself — worthwhile. And they offered substantial grounds for hope.

## SAMYE LING — IN FRANCE



The Temple of One Thousand Buddhas

Cymbals, trumpets, and resonant, chanting voices, hosts of lamas from Tibet and Bhutan, an adventure-book temple and a fairy-tale castle, a hot-air balloon, a multi-media slide extravaganza, a couple of celebrated musicians, a world-class novelist, and a living saint. . . No wonder the press took such an interest; no wonder the public turned up in their thousands.

The inauguration and consecration of the 'Temple of a Thousand Buddhas' at Kagyu Ling, Plaige, in central France, was a spectacular and successful event.

'Lama Sherab has a way of making some pretty big things happen.' I was told by a disciple. The evidence was all

before me: a beautiful estate, complete with chateau, in the rolling, wooded pastures of Burgundy, a newly completed, and magnificent, three-tiered temple, modelled on the original, Tibetan, 'Samye Ling', a considerable Buddhist academy — 'The Marpa Institute' — still under construction, and a copy-book public relations campaign to bring it all to the world's notice.

The inspiration behind the Centre — whose idea the temple and its neighbouring stupa was — has been Kalu Rimpoché, the revered meditation teacher who maintains, at the age of 85, a constant child-like smile and a punishing, worldwide itinerary. The man whose business it has

been to make the dream a reality is Lama Sherab, a robust figure with tremendous — and apparently infectious — vigour, and tangible human warmth.

The Centre is an active place, with thirty permanent residents and hundreds of (predominantly youthful) regular visitors and associates. Now in its thirteenth year, it offers a lively programme of retreats and weekend events, ranging from basic Dharma teachings to Tibetan Tantric practices, from 'Energy Yoga' to astrology. But its roots lie firmly in Karma Kagyu soil. Along with all manner of *rupas* and ritual objects, the Centre's shop is replete with postcards of great masters from that lineage — many of whom pay regular visits. Tucked away in the surrounding woods, some twenty to thirty people are currently completing the 'three year retreat' under the benign supervision of Tibetan mentors. Kagyu Ling is set to become a major ordination centre.

The Temple has taken the community's thirty residents five years to create. With very little outside, professional help, they have done a remarkable

job. The ornately embellished building, with its three colossal central images — of Shakyamuni, Padmasambhava, and Aryatara — its carvings, frescoes, and ranks of miniature golden Buddhas in the ceiling's alcoves and recesses (there really are a thousand of them!) stagger the eye and the mind. The Centre's founders are in no doubt that Kagyu Ling has a major role to play in the future of Western Buddhism, and Kalu Rimpoché himself conducted the consecration ceremony for the temple which is an unambiguous clarion call in concrete and plaster.

What will come of this encounter between strict Tibetan tradition and the Western mind — in a region which has long been a nest of European conservatism — remains to be seen. Tibetan Buddhism exerts a powerful fascination, and Kagyu Ling, with its 'Temple of a Thousand Buddhas', will act as a magnet for many years to come, adding its own rich threads of blue, yellow, red, and gold to the emerging — but still unwoven — fabric of Western Buddhism.



## ORDINATION COURSE AT GUHYALOKA

From Guhyaloka, where he is currently leading the 1987 Men's Ordination Course, Vessantara writes:

'The report in the last issue of *Golden Drum* left us around the beginning of the course, waiting for the Order team and sixteen mitras to arrive.

'Building work on the Centre came to a good end, and we started our Course with adequate accommodation, a very pleasant shrine-room, and a serviceable kitchen. We also redecorated Sangharakshita's bungalow, put up shelves in his library, and converted the garage into a study. We hope eventually to erect a "purpose-built" shrine-room, allowing the present one to become a dining room. This year we have been eating outside, under an awning close to the kitchen.

'Altogether there are twenty-three people taking part in the Course. They live at the top of the valley. Sangharakshita and Prasannasiddhi occupy the bungalow halfway down, and three more mitras are living in a house at the bottom of the property. They are the 'support team', and it is their job to get provisions, run errands, and haul a capacious mobile water tank from the springs, lower down, to the places where water is needed.

'The valley's final inhabitant is Kulananda, from the "Windhorse Trading" community, in Cambridge. He

is doing a three-month solitary retreat in a cabin at the lower end of the valley. This is something of a pilot venture. In time we hope to have facilities for two men to be on solitary retreat here at any one time. This will be another way in which Guhyaloka will be able to "give" to the Movement, and it should also add an additional — and much needed — source of finance to support the residential community.

'The Ordination Course itself has been going very well. During the early stages, the programme was very full. We studied the *Mitrata Omnibus*, Sangharakshita's lecture, "Authority and the Individual in the New Society", and his review of Keith Sagar's book on D. H. Lawrence which appears in *Alternative Traditions*. We have also held speakers classes, talks on different Buddha and Bodhisattva figures, life stories, and a round of intimate, unrecorded, question-and-answer sessions with Sangharakshita.

'During the period when the ordinations were taking place, we spent most of our days in silence. Each evening, two people received their "private" ordinations, leaving the shrine-room to walk the hundred yards to where Sangharakshita was waiting for them beside a simple shrine in a little hut.

The public ordination

ceremony was the usual happy occasion; the shouts of "Sadhu!" at the end echoed and re-echoed of the cliffs and rocks of the valley, and far off into the blue sky towards Alicante.

'Since the ordinations we have had some days of briefings for the new Order members which will go some way towards equipping them to be fully effective in whatever situations they may be returning to. We are presently studying *The Ten Pillars of Buddhism*. The new Dharmacharis are now leading our meditations and pujas.

'Subhuti will arrive in a week or two, after a solitary retreat at "Osle Ling" and leading a retreat at "El Bloque". Early in October, he and Sangharakshita will start out on a short lecture tour. Later, Mokshananda and I will be leading a course, and hopefully a retreat, in Valencia, as a follow-up for people inspired by Sangharakshita's talks.

'For the new Order members, there are now four weeks in which to get used to their new names, etc., before they have to think about the world beyond. However, at least now that we have our own place, nobody necessarily has to leave on the last day of the Course. There have already been a few requests from people wanting to tarry here a little longer.'

## SANGHARAKSHITA DIARY

Nowadays, the 'Order Convention' is not one event but three, spread over three weeks: one for the women, one for the men, and one for both. It is therefore impossible for any one Order member to attend all three Conventions — unless of course he happens to be the founder and head of the Order! Sangharakshita, being in this unique position, was recently able to attend the entire Eighth Order Convention.

First, however, he attended a women's two-week ordination retreat at Rivendell. Here, on 5 July, he led the public ordinations of three women, who now share the Indian word *Megha*, meaning 'cloud', as part of their new Buddhist names. There is *Punyamegha*, — 'Cloud of Merit', *Ratnamegha*, — 'Cloud of Jewels', and *Dayamegha* — 'Cloud of Kindness'.

*En route* to this he had spent three days at the London Buddhist Centre, where he had private interviews with sixteen people. During the Ordination retreat itself he gave a further twelve full-length interviews. (See separate account of this retreat elsewhere)

Leaving Rivendell, Sangharakshita took a roundabout route to Taraloka, calling in again at the LBC and the Manchester Centre. In London he was invited for tea at 'Samayatarā' — two houses 'joined together' which shelter the largest women's community in the FWBO. The conversation ranged from Catholicism, literature, and art, around to a couple of Sangharakshita's recent dreams.

Sangharakshita often refers to Dr Johnson's skills as a conversationalist; but anyone who has sat at a table with Sangharakshita will attest to his own skills in this area.

Sangharakshita spent two days in Manchester, and visited the City Art Gallery — where he admired an ancient Chinese statue of Manjushri, finely carved in wood — and the Lady Lever Gallery. He then moved on to Taraloka, in Shropshire, to join the Women's Order Convention which had just started. Thirty-one Dharmacharinis were present, and all requested personal interviews with their spiritual teacher. In addition, Sangharakshita answered

questions on such topics as: Right Livelihood, the unity of the Order, ceremony and ritual, sex and relationships, and more. On one evening he recited a chapter from his unfinished second volume of memoirs, entitled 'A Big Setback', which described the end, in 1952, of the magazine *Stepping Stones*, which he had published from Kalimpong. The chapter even included a brief account of how he came to write an epitaph for the tomb of a squirrel which had been the pet of a Princess!

The combined (men's and women's) Order Convention began at Padmaloka straight afterwards. This was immediately followed by the Men's Convention. Over the next two weeks, Sangharakshita had personal interviews with twenty more Order members, and attended most of the evening talks. He read more from his memoirs, and later answered questions from discussion groups, which had been looking at themes similar to those considered earlier by the women. He also enjoyed the premiere of a documentary video on the building of Guhyaloka, our Spanish Retreat Centre.

Indeed, straight after the Convention, he flew to Spain, bound for the first ordination retreat to be held at the new Centre. In the previous six weeks he had given individual interviews to almost a hundred Order members, as well as attending the full Order Convention cycle. Now there was some time for him to relax — and to get back to his literary work. In a recent letter, he wrote: 'My time here has passed very pleasantly indeed, and I am already looking forward to returning next year for a longer stay'. On 7 September, after Sangharakshita had been at Guhyaloka a full month, came the ordinations of sixteen men. These were the first ordinations in our new Retreat Centre, but they will be the first of many.

Dharmadhara



Sangharakshita with new Dharmacharinis

## ORDINATION COURSE FOR WOMEN

1987 has seen the second Ordination Course for women, which culminated in July when three women joined the Western Buddhist Order.

The course began in January with a ten-day retreat at Taraloka to which nine mitras from London, Glasgow, Croydon, and Taraloka were invited. Sanghadevi led this and subsequent retreats, the rest of the team comprising Vidya-shri, Shridevi, Anoma, and Vimala. During the Order team's own 'pre-retreat retreat' we realized that we all had very long-standing connections with each other: we had all contacted the FWBO more than ten years ago at 'Pundarik', the FWBO's old North London Centre; we had all lived at 'Amaravati', the FWBO's first large, women's community.

After the January retreat, seven mitras were invited to participate in the rest of the course, which took the form of a month's retreat in April, also at Taraloka, and a two-week ordination retreat at Rivendell. For the April retreat, Vidya-vati, from New Zealand, and Vajragita, from Holland, joined the team for the rest of the course, in place of Anoma and Vimala. Taraloka proved to be an ideal situation for these retreats: spacious, fairly isolated, and quiet, with generous back-up on organizational matters from the resident community.

During the April retreat, Sanghadevi and Vajragita led study on *The Ten Pillars of Buddhism*, Sangharakshita's book on the Ten Precepts. Each night the shrine was transformed into an evocation of another 'pillar' as we devoted our attention to it. Indeed, we seemed to get increasingly involved in ritualistic pujas, spending a lot of time, particularly in the last week, creating magnificent puja offerings. On the last evening, we even created Amitabha's Pure Land on the shrine itself, complete with jewel-trees, waterfalls and lakes, brightly coloured birds, and beautiful parasols.

The Rivendell retreat took place during the last week of June and the first week of July, and for this we were honoured with Sangharakshita's presence.

For the first three days we

contemplated the chapter on 'Enthusiasm' (*Virya*), from Stephen Batchelor's translation of the *Bodhicharyavatara*. Each evening, Sangharakshita answered questions that had arisen in our study.

We then entered a few days of silence and intensified meditation practice, which culminated in the private ordination ceremonies on Saturday 4 July. Then, on the following morning, at the public ceremony, Viv Bartlett, Trish Mander, and Karola Adamczyk — all from the London area — entered the Order, as Punyamegha, Dayamegha, and Ratnamegha (see *'Sangharakshita Diary'*). Ratnamegha and Dayamegha both work in The Cherry Orchard vegetarian restaurant, and Ratnamegha also works at Bodywise, giving and teaching massage.

During the last few days of the retreat we studied some cantos from *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava* on Mandarava's Going Forth.

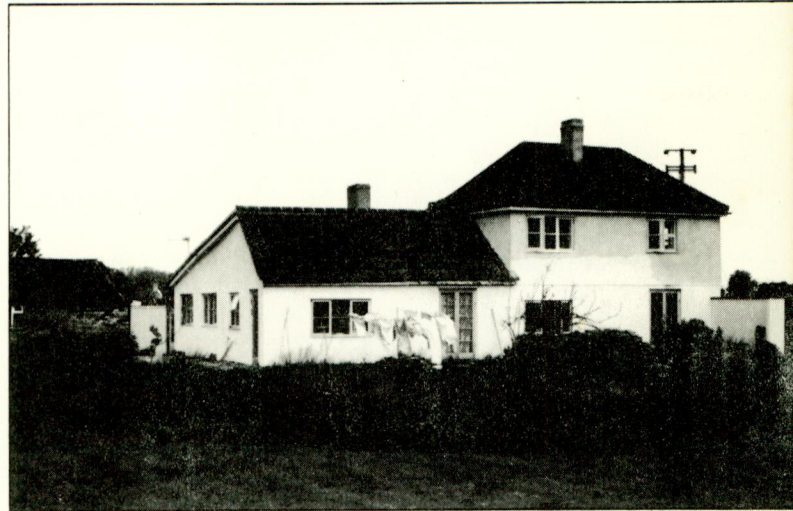
Again, there were question and answer sessions on this with Sangharakshita in the evenings:

As yet, the women's Course is shorter than the men's, primarily because there is not yet a team of Dharmacharinis able to extricate themselves for three months at a time from their existing responsibilities. Even so, the Course has now emerged as an extremely valuable series of events for all concerned. For the Order team, this course offered an opportunity to practise and work together consistently in simple and intensive conditions; the mitras were able to deepen their understanding of Going for Refuge and receive a stronger experience of the Order than could be provided in any other situation. It was without doubt the most supportive situation in which any woman has been ordained in our Movement.

I for one very much look forward to the 1988 Course, which will be held a little later next year, beginning with the Ordination Request Retreat in April, again at Taraloka.

Vidyashri

## RETREAT CENTRE FOR THE LBC



Eighty-six people attended the London Buddhist Centre's Open Summer Retreat at Battle this August, making it the biggest 'Battle Retreat' yet.

Although retreats of this size will probably take place in hired venues for some time yet, the LBC seems to be on the brink of acquiring its own retreat centre, in the county of Suffolk. Khemavira, the LBC's secretary, reports that a suitable property has now been found, finance has been organized, and planning permission has just been granted. 'All that is left is for

us actually to sign the contract.'

The property is not far from the village where followers of 'Bhagwan' Rajneesh once had their main English centre, and there was some local consternation when villagers learned that a group of Buddhists were about to move into their area. Their fears were 'largely assuaged', however, by a visit from the LBC's administrative team, and by a favourable report from the local vicar, who once visited Sangharakshita at Padmaloka.

# THE RIVENDELL SUMMER SCHOOL



Rivendell

In the autumn of 1986 the Croydon Buddhist Centre began to investigate the possibility of holding a Buddhist Summer School at its retreat centre, Rivendell, in Sussex. Many readers will be familiar with the long tradition of Summer Schools held by the London Buddhist Society.

For many years it has been suggested that the FWBO might perhaps offer a Summer School of its own, modelled, with due modifications, upon the Buddhist Society's example.

These were some of the ideas forming the background to Padmaraja's decision to ask Sagaramati and Sthiramati to come to Rivendell and teach at a seven-day event in July. Thirteen people booked for the full period, not including the team of six Order members and mitras who were there to teach, cook, and organize. There was an international flavour, with guests from Sweden, West Germany, Holland, and even Zambia. As people who have visited Rivendell will know, the environment there is quite delightful, and participants

found themselves treated to a high quality service.

Each day started at 7.30 with instruction in basic meditation practice. Then, for the rest of each morning, Sagaramati led a series of sessions which added up to a full survey of basic Buddhist instruction, looking at the background and life of the Buddha, the Four Noble Truths, the Five *Skandhas*, the Wheel of Life, *sila* — *samadhi* — *prajna*, the twenty-four *nidanans*, etc. . .

The afternoon study sessions were taken by Sthiramati, who presented a series of talks under the general theme of 'Aspects of the origin and development of the Mahayana'. Here some attempt was made to understand, firstly, how it was that the Buddhist tradition changed and diversified at all and, secondly,

some of the major ways in which it did so. Attention was concentrated largely upon the Indian Buddhist tradition.

Evenings saw a more varied programme, the first three being taken up with two discussion sessions based around video-taped TV programmes of Sangharakshita and other Buddhists, and an introduction to Buddhist devotional practice from Sthiramati. On later evenings guest speakers arrived from the Croydon Buddhist Centre: Chakkhupala speaking on 'Rebirth and the Western Buddhist', and Padmavajra on 'The Vajrayana'. The final evening involved a visit to the CBC itself, for a celebratory meal, and to hear Keith Sagar talk on 'The Letters of D. H. Lawrence'.

## AUCKLAND'S CENTRE SEARCH ENDS



The meditation retreat

After a long search for suitable premises, and a concentrated fundraising drive that has lasted a couple of years, Auckland is soon to have a new permanent Centre. The combined house and shop sits right beside the women's community in Ariki Street, Grey Lynn. Anjali reports: 'We

have vacant possession on 16 October, and at the moment we are still raising the last necessary finance to complete the purchase.'

An exciting feature of this period in the Auckland sangha's history is the extraordinary variety of fundraising schemes that have

been used to raise the \$60,000 needed to secure an appropriate property. These include jumble sales, print workshops, benefit dinners, dream workshops, shop decoration, a homeopathic first-aid course, monthly standing donations, and food stalls at public events.

Even so, nobody seems to have forgotten that the spiritual life involves a balance of activities and qualities. Meditation has been strongly featured this winter too.

Meditation was the theme of a weekend Order/mitra event led by Ratnaketu, Udaya, and Satyananda during a public holiday in June. Satyananda, who has lived for some time at Vajraloka, was in a good position to deal with the large number of questions aimed his way during discussion periods. As a consequence, he may soon be leading regular, monthly question-and-answer sessions at the Centre.

Malini, herself fresh from a Vajraloka meditation teachers' retreat, was also able to pass on a number of guidelines currently being taught at Vajraloka during a week-long women's meditation retreat in July. Anjali, who led the retreat, writes, 'Our meditation practice focussed particularly on the Mindfulness of Breathing. Besides Malini's seminar sessions, we spent each evening reporting-in from our meditation diaries.'

At the on-going meditation class in Auckland, Siddhiratna — currently touring the world's FWBO centres — passed on an innovation that seems to have worked well in Sydney. The meditation session is now preceded by a 20-minute session of simple Yoga exercises and relaxation. The class's participants have clearly enjoyed this departure — and numbers have risen noticeably.

## PHILOSOPHY FIRST

In mid-September, fourteen mitras and Order members attended a weekend 'Philosophy Retreat' at Padmaloka. Mitra Mike McGhee, a lecturer in Philosophy at Liverpool University, led the event, which he saw as something of a 'pilot project' for the future. Vajranatha attended the weekend, and writes:

'On the first evening we were reminded of the extent to which we have unconsciously imbibed outdated metaphysical ideas, primarily from Descartes, as an aspect of our cultural conditioning. And yet, these ideas and assumptions do not accord either with the way we actually experience things, or, indeed, with Buddhist ideals.

'The next morning we began to explore the field of ethics in the light of this discovery. What is the *real* basis for ethical action: a moral system imposed from 'outside', or a universal human response to others? The ensuing discussion concerned the relationship between thoughts and feelings. Again we felt ourselves challenged by the realization that we might have taken on assumptions without really

knowing we had done so.

'On Sunday, we considered a text by Heidegger, *Poetically Man Dwells*. . . Here, our discussion led to an examination of the nature of language. Can there be 'private' language? What makes a language 'rich'? In particular, what is the role of poetry and the poetic use of language in shaping the thoughts of mankind?

# WINTER

PADMALOKA MEN'S RETREAT CENTRE

# RETREAT

Led by RATNAGUNA –  
on the theme of  
*The Three  
Yanas*

## WHAT DEVELOPS A DEEPER ATMOSPHERE ON RETREAT?

The amount of experience that people have. Padmaloka's Men's Winter Retreat is for you if you have previous experience of FWBO retreats and a fairly regular meditation practice.

Week 1: 18–25 December

*The Hinayana – 'Basic Buddhism'*

Week 2: 25 December–1 January

*The Mahayana – The Great Vehicle*

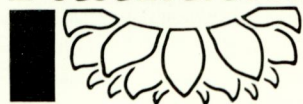
Week 3: 1–8 January

*The Vajrayana – The Diamond Vehicle*

Bookings are for whole weeks only.  
You can arrive on the Friday, Saturday  
or Sunday at the start of each week.  
Cost £105 per week or £70 for low  
income groups.

Padmaloka is the largest public Retreat  
Centre run by the Friends of the  
Western Buddhist Order.  
If you would like our full programme of  
events for 1988 please contact the  
Retreat Organiser at the address below.

## Padmaloka



The Retreat Organiser  
Padmaloka, Lesingham House,  
Surlingham, Norfolk NR14 7AL  
☎ 050 88 8112

PADMALOKA  
MEN'S RETREAT CENTRE  
1988 PROGRAMME  
OUT SHORTLY

## VAJRALOKA 1988

### MEDITATION RETREATS

#### General Meditation Retreats

2nd–30th Jan  
1st Aug–2nd Sept  
22nd Sept–6th Oct  
10th–20th Dec  
MEDITATION RETREAT (Vajraloka)  
SUMMER MEDITATION RETREATS (Vajraloka)  
MEDITATION RETREAT (Vajraloka)  
MEDITATION RETREAT (Vajraloka)

#### Foundation Courses in Meditation

9th–23rd April  
20th Oct–3rd Nov  
FOUNDATION COURSE IN MEDITATION (Vajraloka)  
FOUNDATION COURSE IN MEDITATION (Vajraloka)

#### Mindfulness Retreats

16th–1st March  
25th April–10th June  
16th–30th July  
8th–22nd Nov  
MINDFULNESS RETREAT (Vajraloka)  
MEDITATION AND ACTION RETREAT (Vajraloka)  
MINDFULNESS RETREAT (Vajraloka)  
MINDFULNESS RETREAT (Vajraloka)

#### Sesshins

3rd–13th Feb  
WINTER SESSHIN (Vajraloka)

#### Brahmaviharas Retreats

8th–19th Oct  
BRAHMAVIHARAS RETREAT (Vajraloka)

#### Mitra Retreats

19th Dec–2nd Jan  
23rd Dec–6th Jan  
1987 MITRA RETREAT (Vajraloka)  
1988 MITRA RETREAT (Vajraloka)

#### Order Retreats

19th Dec–2nd Jan  
2nd–12th March  
14th June–12th July  
25th July–4th Aug  
9th–19th Aug  
23rd–2nd Sept  
6th–20th Sept  
13th–27th Sept  
24th Nov–8th Dec  
23rd Dec–6th Jan  
1987 ORDER RETREAT (Vajrakuta)  
VISUALISATION RETREAT (Vajraloka)  
ORDER MEDITATION COURSE (Vajraloka)  
POST ORDINATION RETREAT (Vajrakuta)  
PADMASAMBHAVA RETREAT (Vajrakuta)  
TARA RETREAT (Vajrakuta)  
WOMEN TEACHERS (Vajraloka)  
MEDITATION TEACHERS LEVEL 1 (Vajrakuta)  
MEDITATION TEACHERS LEVEL 2 (Vajraloka)  
ORDER RETREAT (Vajrakuta)

#### Working Retreats

9th April–7th May  
25th April–10th June  
2nd–19th Dec  
WORKING RETREAT (Vajrakuta)  
MEDITATION AND ACTION RETREAT (Vajraloka)  
MEDITATION RETREAT (Vajraloka)

### STUDY RETREATS

8th–16th Feb  
2nd–13th March  
13th–24th March  
25th March–1st April  
14th–24th May  
31st May–10th June  
SATIPATTHANA SUTTA SEMINAR (Vajrakuta)  
TAPE STUDY COURSE 1 (Vajrakuta)  
The Higher Evolution of Man  
TAPE STUDY COURSE 2 (Vajrakuta)  
Aspects of the Higher Evolution of the Individual  
BASICS OF STUDY COURSE (Vajrakuta)  
SUTTA NIPATA SEMINAR (Vajrakuta)  
DOOR OF LIBERATION SEMINAR (Vajrakuta)

### SPECIAL EVENTS

13th March–8th April  
11th June  
CLOSED  
OPEN DAY



### MITRA RETREAT FOR MEN

19th Dec–2nd Jan 1987 at VAJRALOKA

Over this Christmas period Vajraloka is holding a retreat tailored to the special needs of mitras. Over the last two years, the Vajraloka team have developed a teaching approach which gives people the tools to develop their own meditation, and this is particularly applicable to mitras, who have decided to take spiritual practice more seriously.

A major aspect of this retreat will be 'Mitra Sangha' – being on retreat with others who have as their aim spiritual development within the F.W.B.O.

The leader, Vajradaka, says of the retreat, 'we are excited about the possibility of communicating our ideas to as many mitras as possible ... a clear, creative and enjoyable approach to meditation'.

Costs: Full employment rate £15 per night  
F.W.B.O. Co-op workers £10 per night  
Unemployed £6 per night

All enquiries to: Vajraloka, Tyn-y-Ddol, Treddol, CORWEN, Clwyd U.K. LL21 0EN  
Telephone 0490 81 406



## AN IMPORTANT ANNIVERSARY

23 July was something of an historic occasion for the Indian branch of our Movement, marking as it did the fifth anniversary of the founding of our first *balwadi*, or 'kindergarten', in Dapodi, Maharashtra.

As Lokamitra, chairman of Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha Sahayaka Gana (the FWBO's Indian name) said in his address, that first kindergarten, erected in a temporary shed in the middle of the slums, represented our first step into the domain of direct social welfare activity. There are now ten kindergartens, four student hostels, a medical centre, a range of literacy and sewing classes, and several Right Livelihood ventures spread throughout Maharashtra and out into neighbouring states; more projects are in preparation, and even more are at the planning stage.

As 'Bahujan Hitay' — the social wing of TBMSG —

becomes more widely known, and respected, it is constantly striving to upgrade the quality of its work. All kindergarten teachers, together with sports and study organizers, gathered recently in Dapodi for a 'Teachers Day', where they were able to share their experiences and listen to talks about the details and — just as important — the spirit of their work.

Later on in July, a team of representatives from Bahujan Hitay made a two-day visit to the Comprehensive Rural Health Project at Jamkhed. There they were able to visit a couple of villages where the project is active, and to discuss areas of mutual concern with the Project's workers.

Maitreyanatha says that the visit was extremely helpful and educative. 'With the help of some of the guidelines we picked up, we should be able to do more and more work for Dapodi, and all over Maharashtra.'

## PIMPRI: A BODHISATTVA'S PLAYGROUND

'Our Movement can be described as a great bodhisattva,' writes Chandrabodhi. 'A bodhisattva tries to develop himself and also helps others to develop up to the level he has reached. This is what Compassion is about. If we put the loving-kindness we have developed into action, then it manifests as Compassion. In this way we see our own social and educational programme here as being the work of the bodhisattva.'

Without doubt, a great many qualities are being put into action in Pimpri, Maharashtra. With the help of a grant from 'Bahujan Hitay' a large shed has recently been erected close to the vihara, which is to serve as a centre for social activities. June saw the opening of the 'Rahul Balwadi' — a kindergarten for more than fifty children. Next came a sewing class for twenty-five local women. Now there is a literacy class for young girls who were too busy helping to raise younger brothers and sisters, or forced by poverty to spend their childhood as scavengers, to receive an education.

The Pimpri Centre itself is fast expanding its activities, in Pimpri itself, in neighbouring Chinchwad, and in the Dehu Road area. Dehu Road is a very important place for Buddhists in India, since it was in the Vihara there that Dr B. R. Ambedkar first installed an image of the Buddha.

## COMPUTER BUSINESS GIVES £50,000

In 1985 the computer company Midland Orion was formed by Virachitta and Satyapala with the express purpose of funding a new Buddhist centre in the English Midlands. These two Order members were soon joined by a mitra (now ordained and known as Sunanda), and the company very quickly moved into profit. Now, at the end of the first two years trading, the business has donated over £50,000 to the charity 'FWBO Midlands'.

Midland Orion's success has been largely due to Virachitta's and Sunanda's expertise in the areas of business systems and design, and computer programming. Sunanda is an expert in the area of inventory management; Virachitta has a wide knowledge of areas such as banking and the manufacturing industry. Between them, these two Dharmacharis have spent more than twenty years in the computer business.

Satyapala believes that the business could expand during the coming year if additional skilled personnel can be found who want to help finance new Buddhist centres. But if no new people come forward, the business will probably close once the target of a £100,000 donation to FWBO Midlands has been achieved at the end of 1988.

Anyone with the appropriate skills who would like to join this project should contact Virachitta in Birmingham, on 021-449 5279.

## PARADISE IN LEEDS



Aryamitra and Bodhivajra

This year has seen the establishment of 'Paradise Gardening', the FWBO's first substantial Right Livelihood venture in Leeds. Since its inception in February, the domestic garden landscaping

and maintenance business has been flourishing, and now supports five workers.

Bodhivajra's recent arrival in Leeds, after a spell with Windhorse Trading in Cambridge, means that Aryamitra is no longer the sole Order member leading FWBO activities in the city. Now, with two Order members and three mitras, all living on the Centre/community premises and acting as a strong core, a powerful sense of Sangha is building up among Friends in Leeds. This would all seem to be pretty well timed. With public interest on the rise, the team will now be able to extend the scope of classes and courses on offer.



## BUSY SUMMER FOR TARALOKA

This has been a busy summer for Taraloka, the women's retreat centre. Two weeks of Order Convention — which gave Sangharakshita his first chance to visit the Centre — was followed by a study seminar for mitras, on Shantideva's *Bodhicharyavatara*. Then came three weeks of summer retreats: a week-long event, enjoyed by forty-three mitras, based around the theme of 'Entering the Stream', and a two-week Friends' retreat where talks and discussion periods focussed on the Five Spiritual Faculties. Many newer women attended this last event — many gaining their first taste of a longer retreat.

From early September, the resident community, which has now risen to ten, were able to enjoy a month's lull in retreat activities before starting another six-week round of study seminars and intensive meditation retreats in October. During the quiet period, Sanghadevi, Vidyavati, and Aniketa (the latter two having recently joined the community from New Zealand) were able to attend a meditation teacher's course at Vajraloka.

After travelling half-way round the world to join Taraloka, Vidyavati seems to have landed in familiar territory.

Having made such a success as a fundraising organizer in Auckland, she has now instigated a fundraising project for the next phase in Taraloka's development. A team-based scheme that she organized to great effect in Auckland will soon be under way in Manchester and Sheffield: spray-painting 'Christmas designs' on shop windows!

One might imagine that a 'retreat centre' would be a rather introspective, even inward-turned sort of place. Not so with Taraloka. The community are determined that the Centre should become well-known and well used. Seventy-four people, some from FWBO centres and some from the surrounding towns and villages, braved cold, wet weather to attend the Centre's first 'Open Day'. Community members have themselves taken part in a number of events around the FWBO and in the wider world, running information stalls, teaching meditation, and showing slides. As part of 'Shropshire Green Week', Taraloka was visited by a BBC film crew, the outcome of which was a short but favourable film showing the community's work and spiritual activities.



Order/mitra retreat at Taraloka

## AGE IMMATERIAL

Chandrashila, chairman of our Centre in Ulhasnagar, Maharashtra, was recently obliged to spend three months away from base. He had no need to worry about Dharma activities though. Silendrabodhi, also from Ulhasnagar and aged seventy, was quite happy to take over running the Centre's three mitra groups, (the Centre now has twenty-four mitras associated with it) one general class, and two women's classes — each week — as well as

overseeing the running of a grain store and the student's hostel.

The hostel is now in its third year, and fast acquiring a good reputation in the area; its twenty-seven resident boys are doing well in their studies. Construction work is soon to start on a newly acquired plot of land adjacent to the hostel. The new facility will act as an extension of the hostel, and provide some extra space for Dharma activities.

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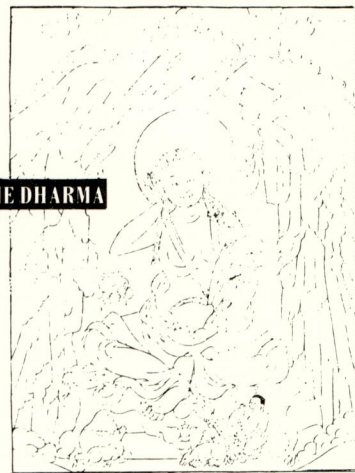
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## A HERO FOR ART



Charles Laughton as Rembrandt

The autumn season at Independent Arts, Croydon, began with a celebration of the work of the great English actor Charles Laughton. First came a talk on Laughton by Simon Callow, coinciding with the publication of his biography, *Charles Laughton: A Difficult Actor*. Simon Callow, who has performed twice at Independent Arts in play-readings, is himself becoming an internationally noted actor, and his stylish, eloquent talk was as impressive as his acting performances.

Laughton conceived of acting as an art: he consciously intended with his acting to create great works of art using, instead of paint and canvas, or words on a page, his own body and voice. His approach was to try to achieve an intense imaginative identification with the character, not just building up a convincing imitation, but actually becoming the character. This perhaps accounts for his extraordinary vitality, and huge screen presence, in films such as *Rembrandt*, *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, or *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, all of which were seen at Independent Arts in the film season that followed

Callow's talk. Laughton passed on his approach to students when he started teaching. According to Callow, these students said that Laughton could drive them to tears in his insistence that they dig deeper and deeper until they touched something real in themselves.

Laughton was a man of deep feeling. This also came across in his staggeringly successful reading tours, for which he travelled America reading from books before an audience, his material ranging from Plato to Jack Kerouac, and including the King James Bible, which he loved for the poetic qualities of its language; the readings would be interspersed with anecdotes. As Callow put it, Laughton would gently and generously invite the audience into a world of beauty they had never previously known. Laughton himself said that 'it was a matter of making the effort to communicate something you love to people you love.' The readings were a sort of introduction to culture for audiences that 'had a common shy hunger for knowledge'; and they were overwhelmingly popular.

Callow asserted that we should have heroes of art, just as we have heroes of, say, athletics or engineering, for the encouragement of others who are trying to practise an art. Laughton is just such a hero, he concluded: 'There is something very moving about this great lumbering creature Charles Laughton, trying to somehow convey some of his sense of the beauty of life to his fellow human beings.'

## NEW DEPARTURES FOR GERMANY

Four Order members and twenty-two mitras and Friends — some of whom were quite new to the FWBO — attended the annual German summer retreat, which was held during August in a small village in the Westerwald region.

Meditation practice was very definitely the focal point of the retreat. Earlier this year, Vajradaka and Dharmananda had offered an introduction to the new Vajraloka meditation teaching 'methods' in Germany, and during the retreat some of this material was passed on to those who missed the earlier workshops.

Soon after the retreat, Germany's first 'proper Regulars' Class' began in Essen. Dhammaloka envisages that this class will become an important weekly event, complemented by regular day-retreats in Essen and Cologne.

The era of centre-less, travelling Order members in Germany definitely seems to be coming to an end. Dhammaloka reports that a hunt is now on for a property to serve as a public centre, and big enough to house a community of six or seven people.

## A CHALLENGING LECTURE SERIES

Public lectures have long been an integral part of each season's programme of events at the Croydon Centre. In planning these lectures the Centre team have been keen to experiment with new vehicles for presenting the Dharma, be they book reviews, social issues, or autobiography. This spring, for instance, the lecture series was entitled 'A Good Book Guide', and members of the WBO offered critiques of books with themes relevant to practising Buddhists. This summer's lectures had the title 'Values in Literature', and made apparent the strong connection between Buddhism and much Western literature, both of which clearly affirm what may be termed 'higher human values'.

This autumn's series of six public lectures offered yet another departure. Entitled 'The Rise of the Mahayana: Aspects of its Origin and Development', the series was delivered to consistently large audiences by Sthiramati, who has been studying Buddhism at the University of Bristol. The significance of these lectures was twofold. Firstly, they brought a rapidly developing aspect of the FWBO, that of modern Buddhist scholarship, into the public eye. Secondly, being of a scholarly nature, the lectures attracted people of a more academic temperament, thus widening in scope the Centre's public appeal.

These lectures contained much new and fascinating information about the

historical development of Buddhism, information that is not yet to be found in popular expositions of the subject. They presented a challenge to Buddhists in the FWBO to reconsider their ideas about traditional Buddhism. Sthiramati suggested, for instance, that we need to re-evaluate quite radically our notions of the development of the three *yanas* in India, from the chronological, institutional, and doctrinal viewpoints. The idea of the Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana as successively dominating Indian Buddhism for periods of approximately 500 years each was, Sthiramati maintained, much too simplistic: it seems, from certain epigraphic evidence, that there was no extensive lay patronage of 'something calling itself the Mahayana' until at least the 4th century CE.

Another potential fruit of the scholarly approach to Buddhism, Sthiramati feels, is that we may come to a fuller understanding of how certain distinctive FWBO teachings, such as the emphases on the twelve positive *nidanas* or 'spiral path' and on the development of *metta*, fit in with Buddhist tradition as a whole. Such a task has already been performed by Sangharakshita, in *The Ten Pillars of Buddhism*, with regard to the Ten Precepts observed by Order members.

These, and other lectures given at the Croydon Buddhist Centre, are available on tape.

## NORWICH OPEN DAY

An eight-foot photographic display in a city-centre shop window, and colourful banners around the Centre itself, ensured that nobody in Norwich could fail to notice that our Centre was holding an 'Open Day' on 19 September.

The entire Centre, and three rooms in neighbouring Vajrakula community, were put to use, allowing a full and varied programme of activities. In the Centre's shrine-room, an exhibition of Buddhist art had been thoughtfully assembled, drawing on *rupas* and *thangkas* owned by local Friends, and augmented by three fine Thai statues loaned by a local shop. Captions offered a brief introduction to Buddhist art and to the place

and purpose of the Buddhist shrine, which many people were meeting for the first time.

In the reception room, where visitors were kept supplied with cups of tea and snacks, there were photographic exhibitions introducing Tara-loka, Vajraloka, Padmaloka, the London Buddhist Centre, and the work of Aid For India. A full selection of FWBO publications and other Buddhist literature was on sale.

In the 'annexe', videos of Sangharakshita's TV interviews were played, and there were some well-packed classes in meditation, Yoga, T'ai Chi, and massage. In the community shrine-room, there were lively discussions on Buddhism in relation to 'Life-styles', 'Escapism or Activism', and 'Vegetarianism'.



# RETREAT CENTRES DON'T GROW ON TREES

Windhorse Trading is a Right Livelihood business set up to fund FWBO projects around the world. Starting with market stalls, in six years we have grown into a sizeable importer and distributor of gifts and jewellery. We carry a wide range of goods, with an increasing emphasis on stylish non-leather products.

This year we expect to turnover more than £630,000, with a trading profit of around £80,000. A lot of this is being re-invested in the business, to finance further growth. Even so, this year we are giving away £24,000 in dana, double what we gave away last year. If we reach our sales targets for next year, we will give away £40,000. If we exceed targets, we will be able to give away more.

Most of this year's dana went to the Guhyaloka Retreat Centre, the Order Office (Sangharakshita's secretariat) and TBMSG in India. We also gave smaller sums to a variety of individuals and organisations within the FWBO. The business supports two Order Members to work full-time for the spread of the Dharma in Cambridge.

*The amount of money we give away is small when compared to the needs of a growing Movement. We intend to build a business that will play a useful part in funding that growth.*

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**If you are interested in finding out more, call Vajraketu or Kuladitya on (0223) 314533, or write to: Windhorse Trading, 10A Auckland Road, Cambridge, CB5 8DW.**



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- London Buddhist Centre**, 51 Roman Road, London E2 0HU. Tel: 01-981 1225
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- Brighton Buddhist Centre**, 15 Park Crescent Place, Brighton, Sussex, BN2 3HF. Tel: 0273 698420
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- Bristol Buddhist Centre**, 9 Cromwell Road, St Andrews, Bristol, BS6 5HD. Tel: 0272 49991
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- Cambridge Buddhist Centre**, c/o 17 Newmarket Road, Cambridge, CB5 8EG. Tel: 0223 329756
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- Croydon Buddhist Centre**, 96-98 High Street, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 1ND. Tel: 01-688 8624
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- Glasgow Buddhist Centre**, 329 Sauciehall Street, Glasgow, G2 3HW. Tel: 041-333 0524
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- West London Buddhist Centre**, 7 Colville Houses, London W11 1JB. Tel: 01-727 9382
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- Padmaloka Retreat Centre**, Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norwich, NR14 7AL. Tel: 050-88 8112
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- Vajraloka Meditation Centre**, Tyn-y-Ddol, Treddol, Nr Corwen, Clwyd, LL21 0EN. Tel: 0490-81 406
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- Rivendell Retreat Centre**, Chillies Lane, High Hurstwood, Nr Uckfield, Sussex, TN22 4AA. Tel: 01-688 8624
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- Taraloka Women's Retreat Centre**, Cornhill Farm, Bettisfield, Nr Whitchurch, Shropshire, SY13 2LV. Tel: 094875 646
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- Birmingham Buddhist Centre**, 135 Salisbury Road, Moseley, Birmingham, B13 8LA. Tel: 021-449 5279
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- The Office of the Western Buddhist Order**, Padmaloka, Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norwich, NR14 7AL. Tel: 050 88 310
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- Aid For India**, 186 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 1EU. Tel: 0865 728794
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- Helsingin Buddhalainen Keskus**, PL 288, SF-00121, Helsinki 12, Finland
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- FWBO Germany**, Klopstockstr. 19, D 43 Essen 11, W. Germany. Tel: 0201 668299
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- FWBO Netherlands**, P.O. Box 1559, 3500 BN Utrecht, Netherlands
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- Vasterlandska Buddhistordens Vanner**, Hillbersvagen 5, S-126 54 Hagersten, Sweden. Tel: (Stockholm) 97 59 92
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- TBMSG Ahmedabad**, c/o Bakul Bhavan, Behind Gujerat Vaishya Sabha, Jalampur, Ahmedabad 380001, India
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- TBMSG Aurangabad**, c/o P G Kambe Guruji, Bhim Nagar, Bhausingpura, Aurangabad 431001, India
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- Bhaja Retreat Centre**, c/o Raja Harishchandra Road, Dapodi, Poona 411012, India.
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- TBMSG Bombay**, 25 Bhim Perena, Tapodhan Nagar, Bandra (E), Bombay 400051, India
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- TBMSG Pimpri**, Plot 294, Ishwarlal Chawl, Lal Bhabadur Shastri Road, Pimpri, Poona 411017, India
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- TBMSG Ulhasnagar**, Block A, 410/819 Subhash Hill, Ulhasnagar, Thane, 421004, India
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- Bahujan Hitay**, Raja Harishchandra Road, Dapodi, Pune 411012, India. Tel: (Poona) 58403
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- FWBO Malaysia**, c/o Dharmacharini Jayapushpa, 29 Medan Mahsuri Satu, Off Jalan Tengah, 11950, Bayan Lepas, Penang
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- Auckland Buddhist Centre**, P.O. Box 68-453, Newton, Auckland, New Zealand. Tel: (Auckland) 789 320/775 735
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- Wellington Buddhist Centre**, P.O. Box 12-311, Wellington North, New Zealand. Tel: 04-787 940
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- Sydney Buddhist Centre**, 806 George Street, Sydney, Australia
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- Aryaloka Retreat Centre**, Heartwood Circle, Newmarket, New Hampshire 03857, U.S.A. Tel: 603-659 5456
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- FWBO Seattle**, 2410 E. Interlaken Blvd., Seattle, WA 98112, USA.
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