



# LOTUS REALM

*a new voice for buddhist women*

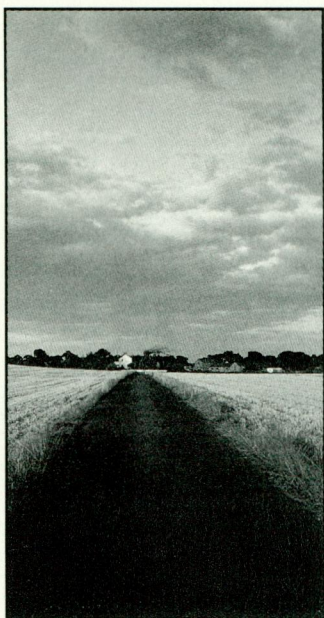
Winter 1997

£2/\$4

*t a r a l o k a*  
in the eye of the storm

8





Taraloka

**LOTUS REALM**  
**is produced by women members of**  
**the Western Buddhist Order and**  
**their friends. It appears twice a year in**  
**May and November**

**MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

Dharmacharinis Viryaprabha, Kalyanaprabha  
 Vajrapushpa, Dayanandi,  
 Sarvabhadri and Dharmottara

**EDITOR**

Kalyanaprabha

**PICTURE RESEARCH** Dharmottara

**DESIGN** Sue Purcell

**DISTRIBUTION AND ADMINISTRATION** Kay Stubbs

**ADVERTISING**

Full Page £50; half page £30  
 Quarter page £18; eighth page £10  
 Booking deadline for next issue: 1st March 1998  
 Contact Windhorse Publications  
 at the address below

**SUBSCRIPTIONS**

**1 YEAR (2 ISSUES)**

**US** \$10 **UK** £5

**EUROPE** £6.00 **ELSEWHERE** £7.00

*Copies also available from FWBO Centres*

**US: Checks payable to**  
**'FWBO'**

Send to: Susan Michael  
 San Francisco Buddhist Center 39 Bartlett Street  
 San Francisco CA 94110, USA

**UK/Europe/Elsewhere**

Cheques in £ sterling payable to 'Windhorse Publications'

11 Park Road, Moseley  
 Birmingham B13 8AB UK

Tel: +44 (0) 121 449 9191 Fax: +44 (0) 121 449 9191

E-Mail: 100331.3327@compuserve.com

Web: <http://www.fwbo.org/windhorse>

Editorial Office: 0161-861 9180

**LOTUS REALM** *A New Voice for Buddhist Women*

*"Just as in a pond of blue, red or white lotuses some lotuses grow in the water, some rest on the water's surface and some come right up out of the water..."*

So the ancient texts describe the Buddha's vision of humanity - individuals struggling to grow beyond the circumstances of their births towards that complete unfoldment which is Enlightenment.

A symbol of spiritual growth and development, the image of the lotus is known throughout Buddhist tradition. We think not only of the Buddha's great vision after his Enlightenment, but of Mahapajapati Gotami joyfully taking up the eight 'rules of training' 'like a wreath of blue lotus'; and we are reminded of the many Bodhisattva figures of the Mahayana tradition, young, beautiful, bedecked with jewels and seated on lotus thrones.

The realm of the lotus is the realm where spiritual values reign supreme: where all the circumstances of life, both individual and collective, conduce to spiritual development. Buddhist tradition depicts such a realm in a mythical way in its descriptions of the archetypal Pure Land, Sukhavati.

In 1967 Sangharakshita founded a new Buddhist Movement, the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO, or TBMSG as it is known in India). At its heart is the Western Buddhist Order, a spiritual community of men and women committed to furthering their own and others' spiritual development through traditional practices of meditation, devotion, study and the development of spiritual friendship, within the context of a germinal New Society which the movement seeks to bring into being. Order members, Mitras (those wishing to further their involvement with the movement and the Order) and Friends (those who participate in any way in the activities of the FWBO) often live together in residential men's or women's communities; work together in team-based Right Livelihood businesses and co-operate together to run rural retreat Centres and city-based Buddhist Centres where people can come into contact with the Dharma. Some of those involved in the movement are concerned with the development of the arts; whilst others – especially in India – are engaged in social work projects.

In living out Buddhist values in the midst of contemporary society, members of the Western Buddhist Order and their friends hope not only to bring about radical change within themselves, but also to effect a change in contemporary life through their efforts to bring into being a 'lotus realm'.

Since the time of the Buddha women have Gone for Refuge to the Three Jewels, living a life committed to the practice of the Dharma. However, their numbers have been few (in comparison to men) and records of their lives and realizations even fewer.

The technological and other changes in the modern world have made it more possible than ever before for women to take up the challenge of spiritual life. Dharmacharinis, women members of the Western Buddhist Order, who have participated fully with their Dharma-brothers in pioneering this new Buddhist Movement, have gained considerable experience in the leading of the spiritual life under modern conditions. It is this experience which they hope to share through the pages of this magazine – for the benefit and interest of all who may choose to read it.



# *In the eye of the storm*

**TARALOKA WAS NO MORE THAN** a handful of ruined barns and a rather dilapidated farmhouse when my mother and I passed by one autumn afternoon and stopped to catch a glimpse of the future Buddhist Retreat Centre for Women.

A few months later I was one of a party of women from the North of England that went down to help with the refurbishing - wielding sledge hammers to break up old concrete. (Later we used pneumatic drills.) Luise (now Ratnadevi), who was really a musician, a cellist and pianist, put her hands to use as a brick-layer. Elaine taught me how to lay slates on a roof without cracking too many as you banged a nail through the brittle stone to secure it to the rafters.

Taraloka was bought in 1985. It was already some years after the 'great divide' when the FWBO began experimenting with what became known as 'the single sex principle.' Men and women were trying out living separately, working in single sex teams, and developing deeper friendships with their own sex. The FWBO was growing, but mainly it seemed to be men who were initiating various projects. Sangharakshita encouraged women to get their own projects off the ground, not to be dependent upon men. Dependence upon men to initiate things, dependence upon men for encouragement, dependence upon men for emotional support was something women needed to overcome if they were to be free individuals.

I think it may be said that in the history of the world, the taking on of an entirely new project such as Taraloka by a group of women without looking to men for support has been rare. As such it is quite an achievement. These days, of course, the single sex principle is well established in the FWBO. There is already a second women's Retreat Centre in existence (running an ordination course for women) as well as other projects initiated by women and we could, perhaps, easily overlook the significance of the birth of Taraloka. When it opened, Taraloka had a tremendous impact on women in the FWBO, and indeed on the wider movement. It gave women the confidence that they could work together effectively, that they could develop their own vision. Today, twelve years on, women who come to Taraloka on their first retreat often find it an unexpected delight to be living and practising the Dharma with members of their own sex without the inevitable tensions and often the distractions that are inherent in mixed situations for all but the truly mature.

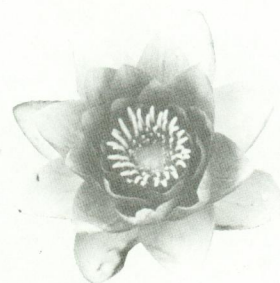
Life in a country retreat centre may seem an idyllic escape from the harsh realities of urban or conventional life; but for those who live and work at Taraloka, far

from being an escape, life is both challenging and demanding as they seek to put into operation the radical and transforming principles of the Dharma. Sharing one's life and work so closely with eight or nine other people is a challenge in itself. Can one maintain positive states of mind, creative communication, authentic individuality and so on in such an intensive situation? Of course it is essential that the community continually strive to do so if the retreats that they run are to be a success.

Taraloka, it could be said, seeks to be an eye in the midst of the storm of ordinary life: the eye of clear vision; the eye that sees the eternal possibilities for change and transformation even in the most difficult of circumstances. It seeks to create an environment in which women can come out of the storm and discover the eye within themselves that will lead to richer, happier, more creative, more compassionate living.

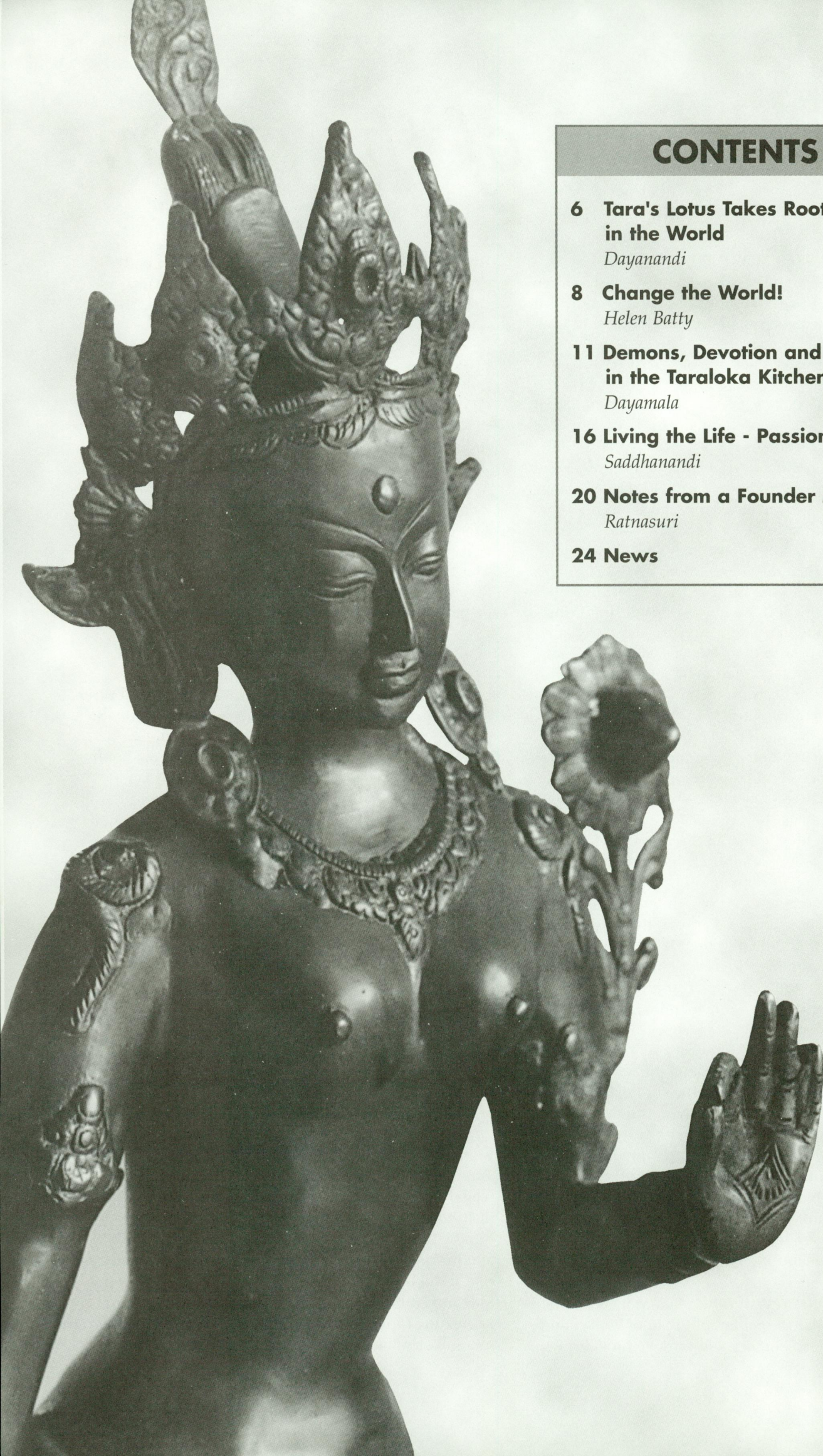
Over the twelve years since its inception, Taraloka has gone from strength to strength and now runs as many as 50 retreats in a single year for women with varying degrees of experience. Current retreats include the popular 'New Directions' retreats for Newcomers; Sesshins (intensive meditation retreats); Dharma Study retreats; and others. The retreats are attended by women from many different European countries, as well as from countries even further afield including Australia and New Zealand, Mexico, the US and India. This special issue of *Lotus Realm* celebrates the vision and practice that underpins that still unique institution.

*Kalyanaprabha*



From next Summer, *Lotus Realm* itself will be based at Taraloka. And there are other changes afoot for the magazine: Windhorse Publications has taken over its distribution which will, we hope, make it still more widely available to women (and men) both within the FWBO and further afield. Along with these changes, from next year it will resume twice-yearly publication, appearing in May and November. The May issue will be on that ever-fascinating topic: **Sex and Celibacy**. Don't forget to fill in a subscription form to ensure you receive a copy!





## CONTENTS

**6 Tara's Lotus Takes Root  
in the World**

*Dayanandi*

**8 Change the World!**

*Helen Batty*

**11 Demons, Devotion and Dogen  
in the Taraloka Kitchen**

*Dayamala*

**16 Living the Life - Passionately**

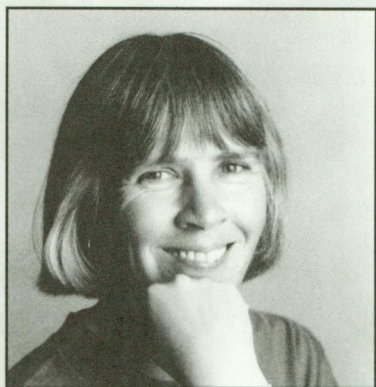
*Saddhanandi*

**20 Notes from a Founder Member**

*Ratnasuri*

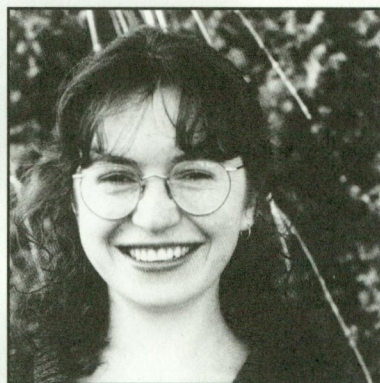
**24 News**





**Dayanandi** was born 1954, in Peterborough. She studied architecture and met the FWBO in London in 1979. She was ordained in 1986 and a few weeks later moved to Taraloka, where she has continued to live and work, leading and supporting many retreats - particularly large seasonal retreats, meditation retreats and those for newcomers. She has been Taraloka's Chairwoman for the past six years. Among other things, her architectural skills have been used for Taraloka's development; and she continues to maintain an interest in painting and the arts.

**Helen Batty** came into contact with the FWBO in Newcastle in 1993. She graduated from Newcastle University the following year with a degree in politics. After a period researching British environmental policy, and the concept of environmental rights and duties, she followed an MA course in Early Modern History, focusing on popular religion, and rituals of healing and death. She moved to Taraloka in 1996 and now works as Bookings Secretary.



**Dayamala** was born and brought up in the North of England. She worked for ten years as librarian for the Equal Opportunities Commission. She also trained as a yoga teacher; and was involved in a project to set up a vegetarian restaurant. She came across the FWBO in Manchester in 1986 and moved to London in 1988 to join a women's Right Livelihood business. She arrived at Taraloka in 1993 to work as retreat organizer. She was ordained in 1995. Earlier this year she became Taraloka's first resident cook.

**Saddhanandi**, after finishing a Degree in Textile Design at a London Art School, moved to Glasgow, where she became involved in the FWBO in 1983, aged 23. Since then she has lived in women's communities and worked for Right Livelihood businesses including Ink, Print & Design (otherwise a men's business!) and Windhorse Publications. She moved to Taraloka in 1994 and was ordained in 1995. She is particularly interested in Dharma study; and work as a form of Dharma practice. She is currently Taraloka's secretary and Centre Manager.



**Ratnasuri** was born 1923 in Norwich where she attended junior art college. After bringing up two sons, she came across the FWBO in 1976 in Norwich and was ordained in 1983. She moved to Taraloka two years later as a founder member. She became a Preceptor in 1987 and has continued to work with the ordination team helping women prepare for ordination into the Western Buddhist Order. Ratnasuri enjoys meditation retreats and has led and supported many at Taraloka. She also keeps up her interest in art particularly through photography.

# Contributors



# Tara's LOTUS TAKES ROOT IN THE WORLD

*Dayanandi*

**"On retreats  
we see the  
process of  
human  
transformation  
taking place  
before our  
very eyes. This  
gives ...  
confidence that  
practising the  
Dharma really  
does transform  
consciousness"**

TARALOKA WAS FOUNDED IN 1985, the first Buddhist Retreat Centre for Women in the western world. Since then it has had an enormously positive and transformative effect on many lives. More than just a bricks-and-mortar retreat centre, it has become a living symbol of the fact that women can create themselves as individuals; can grow; can transform themselves; and can even gain Enlightenment.

'Taraloka' means 'Realm of Tara', Tara being the Bodhisattva or archetypal being who embodies the quintessence of compassion. Sometimes we think of our work here as trying to bring into being a realm of Tara - a realm which we could imagine Tara inhabiting. It's an inspiring vision as well as a challenging one, helping to lift us out of purely pragmatic considerations as we develop the Retreat Centre. Of course, Taraloka is very much rooted in the mundane world. It is built out of ordinary bricks and mortar. It is dependent on sound financial planning. It is through sheer hard work that Taraloka grows, expands, changes and develops year by year. But it is also a place where people express their aesthetic sensibilities and loving

care through their work. Ultimately we are seeking to create conditions that will invite the qualities of Tara and all the Bodhisattvas to be present at Taraloka as much as possible.

But what do we really mean in talking about creating a realm of Tara? For me creating a Realm of Tara means helping make the truth of the Dharma accessible through kindness. It means exemplifying and showing the reality that change is possible. And I think that this is what Taraloka does. On retreats we see the process of human transformation taking place before our very eyes. This gives faith and confidence in the Path: confidence that practising the Dharma really does transform consciousness. This confidence is an aspect of fearlessness - one of Tara's main qualities.

**Tara sits lightly and confidently** on a beautiful lotus throne. With her left hand she holds up a spray of lotus blossoms that are in the process of unfoldment. It is as though she is saying to us that spiritual growth is like the growth of a plant: if we put ourselves in the right conditions for practice, spiritual progress is assured. Our tight petals will gradually unfurl, our blossoms shake out as our qualities expand and grow, until finally, fully open, the fragrance of our compassion and wisdom will permeate all around us.

You could say that those lotuses represent our faith and courage to make the effort to change ourselves; they represent our deepest aspiration to find meaning in our lives - an aspiration that keeps us moving forward; that protects and guides us through the difficulties and failures inherent in any great task. Part of the reason that Tara gives such confidence is her quality of steadiness: she sits firm and sure in the midst of continual motion. She is Stillness in Action, exemplifying the inner calm at the heart of the sometimes turbulent process of transformation.

So here we are trying to create a realm of Tara - an outer realm of beauty, light and spaciousness, and an inner realm of kindness. In

Lotus pond at Taraloka





the community, we try to be as friendly and straightforward with one another as possible. Our retreat team aims to make women who come on retreat feel welcome, confident and at ease so that they are able to relax, be themselves and enjoy the retreat as fully as possible. In this way an atmosphere is created which helps people open up more easily to new ways of being; it comes closer to ideal conditions for hearing and reflecting on the Dharma and for experiencing Sangha.

The atmosphere that builds up on many of our retreats seems to have some of the qualities of Tara, bringing confidence and strength. On many retreats we see how the best is invariably brought out of everyone; kindness overflows to create more kindness, generosity sparks off more generosity and so on. This sort of spiralling up in the atmosphere during the course of retreats is very inspiring.

**As members of the Taraloka Community** we know that we have a strong effect on retreats and this can help galvanise our individual and collective spiritual practice. We need to ensure that our effect is a beneficial one; that we embody the spirit of Sangha and exemplify the Dharma that we teach to a high degree. But we have to remind ourselves that we don't have to be perfect. In his lecture 'On Being all Things to all Men', Sangharakshita describes how the Bodhisattva creates Sangha through his or her practice of the Four Sangrahavastus or Means of Unification of the Spiritual Community. These four are the practices of generosity, loving and kindly speech, beneficial activity and exemplification. The aspiring Bodhisattva creates Sangha through exemplification simply by sharing his or her living experience of trying to put the Dharma into practice - with all its successes and failures. I find this way of practice both exciting and encouraging.

Over the years we have continued to look for better ways of living and practising together that will help us deepen our practice of the Dharma. We regularly discuss the structures of our lifestyle reviewing whether they are conducive to a happy, healthy transformative life. We discuss how we can make our work a practice and how we can make our practice work! The recent culmination of these discussions has led to the creation of two teams within the community, the Retreat Team and the Support Team.

Saddhanandi is Manager of the Support Team and talks in this issue of *Lotus Realm* about her vision for achieving 'Simplicity and Depth' in her work. The Support Team are responsible for the whole practical fabric which is Taraloka's outer realm, setting up conditions from the administrative to the aesthetic that allow a retreat to happen.

The Retreat Team are still in the process of coming together. By this time next year we should have a team consisting of myself and



Ratnasuri, both long-standing members of Taraloka, and Vajragita, Sarvabhadri and Kalyanaprabha who will be moving from Holland, London and Manchester to join us. The work of the Support Team will enable the Retreat Team to give most of its time and energy to preparation for and leading of retreats. When not on retreat we will be able to discuss and explore how to teach the Dharma more creatively and effectively. The creation of this team marks a big step forward for the women in the FWBO, providing five Dharmacharinis with the opportunity to apply themselves full time to study, practice and teaching of the Dharma. I think our approach will prove fruitful for the whole Movement, one of our ideas being to explore the connection between meditation and Dharma study, bringing them together more on some retreats, minimising the risk, if we can, of them being taken up as ends in themselves.

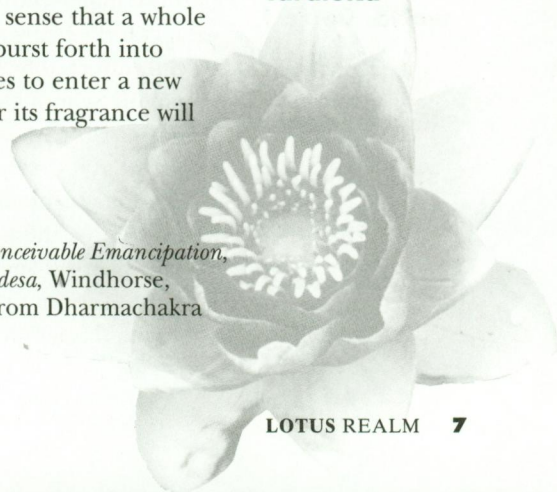
**Today Taraloka is still virtually unique** in the Buddhist world - as far as I know there is nothing else comparable to it in size and scope. Seeing the great benefits and advantages that the creation of Taraloka has brought to women practitioners within the FWBO, I'd like to encourage women in other Buddhist Movements to seriously consider setting up their own equivalent to Taraloka, perhaps taking advantage of the experience we've gained through our successes and failures along the way.

Tara's lotus is putting down more roots and perhaps they are going deeper into the mud than ever before. I have the sense that a whole new lotus bud is waiting to burst forth into blossom as Taraloka prepares to enter a new era - and who knows how far its fragrance will pervade the world!

#### **Note:**

1. In Sangharakshita, *The Inconceivable Emancipation, Themes from the Vimalakirti Nirdeśa*, Windhorse, 1975. Also available on tape from Dharmachakra Tapes.

**"Seeing the great benefits and advantages that the creation of Taraloka has brought to women practitioners within the FWBO, I'd like to encourage women in other Buddhist Movements to seriously consider setting up their own equivalent to Taraloka"**





# CHANGE THE WORLD!

*Helen Batty*

**13TH MARCH 1996:** Gunman shoots dead sixteen young children and their teacher in Scottish primary school

*14th March:* Sitting alone in the shrine room of the Newcastle Buddhist Centre, I was unable to meditate, my heart and mind overwhelmed with the thought of the massacre of those children and their teacher. I could not comprehend the enormity of suffering that was both the cause and the consequence of that tragic event. I reflected upon the suffering of those who had died; the suffering of those who knew and loved them; the suffering of those who had survived; and the suffering of the man behind the gun. Faced with such acute suffering, I was forced to ask myself the question *why had it happened? Why so much suffering?* And also: why was I sitting here in the Newcastle Buddhist Centre? Why was I sitting quietly each day, eyes closed and turning to a world within, when I knew that an hour later I would open my eyes to be confronted with the suffering of the world without? How was I benefiting the world by sitting in this shrine room each day meditating? Was there not something more I could be doing? Was there not some way in which I could be of service to those people who were experiencing such acute distress? How *should* I be leading my life?

I wondered if I should be out there, working in a social, welfare or political capacity, offering some tangible aid to the suffering world. Could I not at least help to apply sticky plaster to some of those many wounds? And yet, I reflected, what could I really offer to those who were directly affected by the massacre of the Dunblane school children? Sticky plaster serves its purpose, but only if it is appropriate to the wound that it dresses. The wound that I saw before me was not a superficial one. It was deep and festering; the wound of greed, hatred and delusion; of old age, sickness, and death. No amount of social or political action could eradicate this suffering. It could not touch the

fundamental reality of the human condition. The remedy required was something far more radical. And that remedy, I was convinced, was the Dharma.

So what could I, as a practitioner of the Dharma, offer those affected by the shooting of those young children? What can I offer anyone in their suffering? I can, at best, simply offer a genuine human response of metta, of loving kindness. I have been strongly affected myself when my own experience of suffering has been met in such a way. Sometimes I have been met with pity, with embarrassment, with anger, or with platitudes. But I have also been met with metta, and when this has occurred, I have been deeply touched. When metta meets suffering it flowers into compassion. If, in my meditation practice and my daily life, I can truly cultivate metta, I can ultimately meet the suffering of anyone with a response of compassion. This is my aspiration. It is such a simple and human response, yet so rare, and so radical in its effect. It is a response that could transform the world.

At the time of the Dunblane tragedy, I already knew that six months later I would be leaving Newcastle to live and work at Taraloka. During the months prior to my move, I was met with a wide range of responses as I told people of my plans: enthusiasm, delight and interest; astonishment, disbelief, and disappointment. Some perceived that there was meaning and worth in the path that I had chosen. For others it was clearly indicative of escape, and was seen as a wasteful employment of the resources that I had to offer. I was turning my back on the possibility of a respectable academic career. In particular, I had, a year previously, withdrawn from research into environmental politics, through which I could have made some concrete and positive impact on the world. And now I had

**"I wondered if I should be out there, working in a social, welfare or political capacity, offering some tangible aid to the suffering world. Could I not at least help to apply sticky plaster to some of those many wounds?"**



chosen to move to a quiet corner of the Shropshire countryside, to work in a Buddhist retreat centre for women. What could have brought about such a departure?

Six years ago I embarked upon a degree in Politics at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, because I had a desire to change the world. Today, as I sit here and write these words in a Buddhist retreat centre, that desire to change the world is in no way diminished. It is not my vision that has changed so much as my belief in the means by which that vision can be achieved. I do not deny the significance of social and political conditions in affecting ordinary human lives. Nor do I deny the importance of working to improve those conditions where necessary. But social and political change is not in itself enough. It does not touch the root cause of human suffering. It does not address the fundamental questions of existence. Politics, furthermore, is about the distribution of power. The world of politics is pervaded by the use (and abuse) of that power. As a practitioner of the Dharma, I seek to act not from a basis of power, but from a basis of love. In my political research, this was the fundamental disparity that I had to address; and ultimately, that disparity was for me too great. To seek to change the world through political means alone would mean to go against those values I hold to be true. I do believe there is great potential in the bringing of a dharmic perspective to bear on political theory, and in particular, and more immediately, on environmental issues. The remarkable achievements of the late Dr Ambedkar are perhaps testimony to the radical social and political changes that can be achieved within a dharmic framework. But in the end it is the Dharma, and not politics, that I believe has the potential to fundamentally transform the world.

During the first eighteen months of my degree course in Newcastle, I was involved with various student societies that were, in one way or another, seeking to implement social or political change. To what degree these societies were effective in their aims is debatable. Yet it was not doubt as to their efficacy that resulted in my gradual withdrawal from these groups. It was, rather, a discomfort at the frequent discrepancy between social or political ideals and personal conduct. These groups sought to implement constructive change at a social or political level, yet a sense of positive and ethical conduct on a personal level was often sadly lacking. Similarly, in the department of Politics, those who held high ideals regarding social and political action, did not necessarily embody personal attributes or attitudes consistent with their vision. All too often, negativity and cynicism seemed to under-

mine the aspiration towards social and political transformation. I felt ill-at-ease: something simply did not add up. I did not know what I was seeking, but I knew that it was not this.

In *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey makes a distinction between our Circle of Concern and our Circle of Influence<sup>1</sup>. Within our Circle of Concern lie those things which we cannot really do anything about. Within our Circle of Influence, on the other hand, lie those things which we *can* do something about. If the former circle is the focus of most of our time and energy, Covey suggests, our attitude is one of blame and accusation, and our language reactive. As a consequence of this negative energy, our Circle of Influence shrinks. However, if the Circle of Influence is our focus, the nature of our energy is positive, enlarging and magnifying, causing this Circle of Influence to increase. Considered in these terms, it is apparent that the student societies I was involved with were strongly focused on the Circle of Concern, and they were indeed often expressive of negativity and reactivity, even if in quite subtle ways. As a consequence, their Circle of Influence was restricted. When I came into contact with the FWBO, I encountered people whose focus was very much their Circle of Influence. They were people whose time and energy was focused upon that which they really could do something about. They were people whose communication was generally positive and whose energy was expansive. They were people whose vision was reflected in their personal qualities and conduct. And simply through being who they were, these people were showing others the way to transforming their lives.

I believe that in order to really transform the world we need to transform ourselves. The words may be clichéd but they are nevertheless true. It is because of this belief that I have chosen to live at Taraloka. I am here because I want to devote my life to my spiritual practice. I am here because I want to lead a radical life. I am here because I desire to change the world. And I believe that it is through focusing on my Circle of Influence rather than my Circle of Concern that I can effect greater and more positive change on the world: that is, quite simply, through practising the Dharma.

**"No amount of social or political action could eradicate this suffering. It could not touch the fundamental reality of the human condition. The remedy required was something far more radical. And that remedy, I was convinced, was the Dharma."**







Helen (L) at work in the Taraloka office

**"Women  
arrive here  
and they step  
into a realm  
that is  
beautiful,  
spacious,  
and kind.  
They step into  
a realm  
where they  
are free to be  
themselves.  
They step into  
a realm  
where they  
can change.  
And when  
they step out  
of this realm,  
they know  
they have  
experienced  
something  
special."**

My work at Taraloka is in the office. I may speak to twenty or more people on the telephone in a single day. I am increasingly aware of the ways in which my actions, however small, have consequences. I know that how I respond to someone in the course of a telephone conversation will have an effect on that person. If they are making an enquiry for the first time, their conversation with me may determine whether or not they choose to come on a retreat, whether or not they learn to meditate, and whether or not they come into contact with the Dharma. Whoever they are and whatever their need, I can simply seek to respond with metta, interest and awareness to the person that I find at the end of the telephone. I can, at the very least, offer a few moments of warm and friendly human contact in another person's day. I delight in this communication that I have with other human beings. I have confidence that such small acts, such few words, do have a positive effect in the world. In the words of *The Dhammapada*: 'Hold not a deed of little worth, thinking "this is little to me". The falling of drops of water will in time fill a water-jar. Even so the wise man becomes full of good, although he gather it little by little'<sup>2</sup>

Here at Taraloka, ten women live together in an old farmhouse amid the green fields of Shropshire. They are aged between twenty-five and seventy-four years old, and they differ from one another in many respects. It is hard to conceive of many other circumstances in which such a group of women would live and work together so closely. These women are united by their practice of the Dharma, and their vision of providing the conditions for other women to practise the Dharma. It is a life that requires both faith and commitment. It is, in many ways, a life that is radical. The Taraloka community exemplifies an alternative to the world. And it is part of a New Society that is the vision of the Western Buddhist Order.

Each year hundreds of women come on retreat to Taraloka. Some never return. Many

others return regularly. But none remain untouched by their time here. Women arrive here and they step into a realm that is beautiful, spacious, and kind. They step into a realm where they are free to be themselves. They step into a realm where they can change. And when they step out of this realm, they know they have experienced something special. 'Taraloka' means the realm of Tara, the compassionate Bodhisattva in female form. At Taraloka we aspire to bring into being a faint reflection of that spirit which moves the Bodhisattva to make the Great Vow:

*As long as the existence of space and as long as the existence of the world,*

*that long may my existence be devoted to the world's sorrows.*

*Whatever the sorrows of the world, may all that ripen in me;*

*and may the world be comforted by all the glorious Bodhisattvas.*

*Only medicine for the world's sorrow, cause of all happiness,*

*may the teaching [of the Buddha], endure for a long time.<sup>3</sup>*



Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion

#### Notes:

1. Stephen R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Simon and Schuster Ltd., London 1992
2. Juan Mascaro (trans.) *The Dhammapada*, Penguin Classics, London 1973, p52
3. Marion L. Matics (trans.) *Entering the Path of Enlightenment: The Bodhicaryavatara of the Buddhist Poet Santideva*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1971, p232



# Demons, Devotion and Dogen in the *Taraloka* Kitchen

Dayamala

EIGHTEEN MONTHS AGO I began contemplating the idea of becoming resident cook at Taraloka. I had had an interesting but 'bitty' job for three and a half years, and now I wanted to do something more focused. I was interested in looking at the economic side of our food purchasing and cooking, with the idea that I might be able to save money on purchases, and prevent some of the food wastage that occurred. I was also interested in looking at the nutritional aspects of the meals we produced on retreats. I wanted those who had to follow special medicinal diets to have equally nutritious food as other guests, instead of the rather raw deal I felt they sometimes got. I wanted more contact with retreatants. I also wanted to remove some of the stress that work in the kitchen produces when people are unused to catering for large numbers - numbers on retreat can range from 8 to 45! The cooking jobs, I had noticed, were usually the last ones for which people would sign up on the work rota. I had even heard of retreatants who signed up for cooking worrying the day beforehand about what they were going to cook! And it was not unusual for someone to have to leave the afternoon puja in order to turn on the oven or check how something was cooking. So for all these reasons, and because I saw working in the kitchen as a great opportunity for experiencing 'work as practice', I approached the Taraloka Council with the proposal that I become resident cook. And in April this year I began!

One of my ideas was that on a number of retreats I would be the main cook, with retreatants helping to chop vegetables etc. during the work period. The first retreat, however, was quite small, and I decided I could manage happily on my own. It was a study retreat for Order members and I was surprised by a sense of privilege I felt in cooking for fellow members of the Order. I was more than happy to serve them whilst they got on with studying! At times it truly felt a devotional practice. I heard it said that the

retreatants could taste the care that had gone into both the preparation and presentation of the food.

Dogen says, *'The true bond established between ourselves and the Buddha is born of the smallest offering made with sincerity rather than some grandiose donation made without it. This is our practice as human beings.'*<sup>1</sup>

I noticed something else during that retreat, reflected in the comment of one person: she said she wanted to give something back so that when her turn to wash-up came round, she would leave an exceptionally clean and tidy kitchen. (Alas, not always the case!)

I am reminded of Dogen again: *'How fortunate we are to have been born as human beings and given the opportunity to prepare meals for the Three Treasures. Our attitude should truly be one of joy and gratefulness.'*<sup>2</sup>

I do not always experience quite the same sense of devotion, especially when I am working with other people. Maybe I become too distracted by other bodies in the kitchen, rather different from the quietude of working on my own; maybe I am still getting used to it. It was particularly enjoyable on one retreat, however, working with others during the silent period. I felt the harmony between us and the mindfulness in the kitchen was quite tangible.

When I first had the idea of becoming Cook, a friend lent me a copy of *From the Zen Kitchen to Enlightenment: Refining your Life*. This comprises Dogen's *Instructions for the Zen Cook* and Uchiyama's *How to Cook your Life*, a commentary on Dogen's text. I immediately felt that I would like to make it a basis for spiritual practice.

Dogen lived in Japan

**"you should prepare food with all the ardour of your life and with wholehearted sincerity."**

Dogen





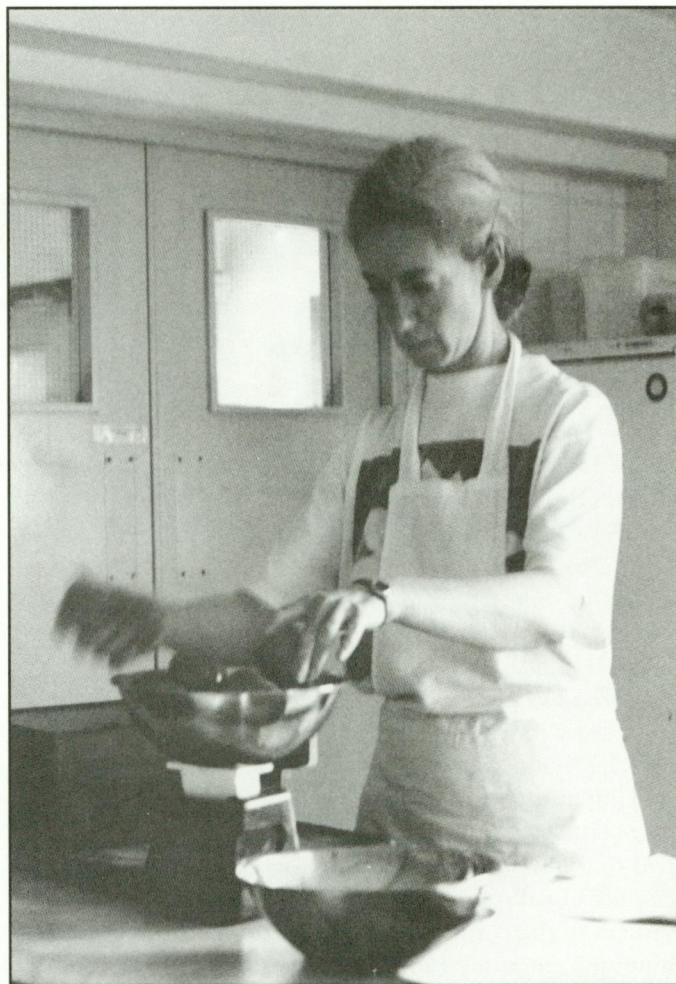
from 1200-1253. He completed the Tenzo Kyokun, the *Instructions for the Zen Cook*, in 1237. It was written for his own disciples living with him in his monastery. Uchiyama was born in 1912 and was tenzo at Antai-ji monastery for sixteen years from 1949-1965. He wrote his commentary having asked the question, 'what possible connexion could a text written for a group of monks some 750 years ago have for present day Europeans and Americans neither living in a monastery nor particularly familiar with a society or way of looking at life which differs totally from our Western societies?....The answer to that question, of course, depends upon the universal nature of the subject that is being addressed.' (pvii)

*Instructions for the Zen Cook*, rather than just being a guide to conduct in the kitchen, is a manual for living one's life, and it is for this reason that it has relevance for us today.

#### Movement and Mindfulness

Balanced effort can be applied to everything - from the way in which I hold the knife to chop the vegetables to the size of the flame I light under the pot. Do I grip the knife too tightly - so tightly that my shoulder is tense? I need to have the right tool for the job: a slicing knife for slicing; a chopping knife for chopping. I need to use the correct part of the blade, so that I am using the weight near the handle to maximum effect, keeping the tip stationary. With regard to the flame, does the pan really

**"In other words, when we live out our lives to the fullest, there is no such thing as superior or inferior, good circumstance or bad, fortune or misfortune. There is only one taste of the great ocean of life."**



At work in the Taraloka kitchen

need to be boiling vigorously when a gentle simmering would do the job?

Practising mindfulness, I become aware of the speed with which I move from the kitchen to the dining room to fetch boiled water, and usually I realize I could slow down! I become aware of the vigour with which I am stirring the pan. If I continue like this, what state am I going to be in at the end of the day! And so I adjust my speed, my posture, or my grip. I want to use my energy appropriately so that I have some left at the end of the day!

I can apply the notion of appropriateness to the amount of food that is cooked. Dogen cites the Chanyuan Qinggui,<sup>3</sup> *'Prepare each meal with meticulous care, making sure there is enough.'* (p12) But it is not just a matter of getting the numbers right. I need to bear in mind what kind of retreat it is. For example, since in general people eat less as they get older, a retreat for older



At work in the Zen kitchen



women will need smaller portions - and I need to adapt accordingly so that there are not a lot of leftovers. Similarly, women on our Gardening and Maintenance days will probably need larger portions, or something a bit more nourishing than a biscuit with their teabreak because of the physical, sometimes heavy work that they are doing. This kind of adjustment, responding to whom you have in front of you is what Dogen is referring to when he says, *For every grain of rice to be eaten, supply one grain. In dividing one grain, the result may be two half-grains, or possibly three or four...You must be able to see clearly how much of a surplus will be created if you add one unit of rice, or whether there will be enough if you take away one unit.*' (p8)

Uchiyama tells us that although it is natural to think that if the number of people in the monastery does not fluctuate too greatly, you can work out how much to cook by multiplying the amount that one person will eat by the total number of people, in fact such rough estimates are not good enough! You have to allow for the kind of examples I have given above; allow for the fact that people's appetites vary with the seasons, and so on. I have yet to discover the adjustments that will be necessary for other retreats such as meditation and study retreats: the effect that more meditation or more talk and discussion may have on people's appetites, and conversely, the effect the food they eat might have on their meditations or talkativeness!

Uchiyama says, *'Generally speaking, the amount a person eats in one day is fairly well fixed; so if a big meal is served at noon then people are not likely to eat so much at the evening meal.'* (p71)

Mindfulness is something about which I am passionate and in becoming full-time cook, it was something I wanted to make more of - and what an opportunity it is to be in the kitchen to do it. I have already cited

some examples of how I can become more mindful (the knife, the flame). Uchiyama says, *'When you put a pot down roughly, banging it around on concrete or a tiled sink, it cries out in pain. If you still are unable to hear that cry, then you can hardly be said to be a person living out zazen in your daily life.'* (p.53)

I have become aware that if my mind wanders, I almost always cut myself, sometimes not even noticing until my nail prevents the knife from going any further! Sometimes I burn myself. Uchiyama writes, *'You might conclude...that to take up the problem of the meaning of zazen while working in the role of tenzo, or vice versa, to ponder the significance of the tenzo's work whilst sitting in zazen, would be the perfect way to*

*carry on your work. Such is not the case. When you sit in zazen, just sit, and when you work as a tenzo, just do that. It is the spirit of just sitting or just working that is common to both zazen and to the work of a tenzo. This idea of concentrating wholly on one thing is the cornerstone of the teachings of Dogen.'* (p.24)

On the occasions that I have cut myself, I do not know to where my mind has wandered, only that at some point, I become uncomfortably aware of it having wandered! I am certainly not 'just chopping'! How easy it is to think about a recent conversation, or the next activity whilst chopping; or the vegetable order whilst meditating!

In working with others, it is easy to fall into the habit of regarding time spent in the kitchen as an opportunity of getting to know one another through conversation, rather than as an opportunity of getting to know one another in other ways: how we chop, how we throw the compost in the bin, how we stir the pan, how we clear-up after ourselves. I have particularly enjoyed and appreciated on a recent retreat a quieter work period, when we have all got on with our tasks, quietly, mindfully, harmoniously, and chatted only when everything was under way.

I said recently that I wanted the common ingredient for people working in the kitchen to be mindfulness. I had a strong feeling that

***"When you put a pot down roughly, banging it around on concrete or a tiled sink, it cries out in pain. If you still are unable to hear that cry, then you can hardly be said to be a person living out zazen in your daily life."***





**"In preparing food for the community, it is crucial not to grumble about the quality of the ingredients, but rather cultivate a temper which sees and respects them fully for what they are."**



**"A dish is not necessarily superior because you have prepared it with choice ingredients, nor is a soup inferior because you have made it with ordinary greens."**

if that were the case, it would have an effect, and a much greater effect than I can at the moment imagine, and that if people were imbuing their actions with mindfulness, I need not be too concerned with 'externals' like the size of pieces they were chopping! If we are wholehearted, if we are mindful, if we do something to the best of our ability, it will have a positive effect.

Uchiyama again: *'The tendency of ordinary cooks is to handle plain food carelessly and rich food carefully. As one practising the buddhadharma in the role of tenzo, you should prepare food with all the ardour of your life and with wholehearted sincerity.'* (p.49) I can apply this not only to myself, but encourage those who cook with me to work like this as well.

### Reflections on Impermanence

What an opportunity to reflect on impermanence working in the kitchen is! We start off with beautiful, fresh vegetables, which, when consumed, end up as our own excrement; or which, if left on the shelf too long, or without sufficient air circulating around them, rot. We spend a lot of time preparing and cooking the food, yet within minutes, probably at the most half an hour, it has vanished without trace! Thursday morning: the shelves are full of fresh fruit and vegetables. Wednesday evening: they are almost bare. There is the constant round of buying bread, milk, the 'Cash and Carry' supermarket trip, the wholefood order. The freezers and stockroom are full, are depleted, are replenished and then bare once more. Sometimes I get frustrated with the speed with which the need to do yet another vegetable order comes around. Time to reflect more deeply on the nature of existence!

### Dealing with Demons

What a fertile working ground is the kitchen for dealing with one's mental states, and what a field day the plethora of demons which are constantly descending upon me could have if I let them! I have been shocked at times by the strength of my irritability if someone is working, as I see it, particularly slowly. I have been ashamed of my response. What does it matter? If we have time for her to work at her own pace, why do I get irritable? Just because she is not working at my pace? I need to see her as another human being not just a chopper! I need to work with my own mental states, with my irritability! I am confronted with the fact that there isn't only my way of doing something - my speed, my efficiency! And if she does need to speed up a bit because we're running out of time,

then I need to be able to say that to her from a positive basis - not out of impatience. I could definitely benefit from Dogen when he quotes from the Chanyuan Qinggui: *'Whether a person be stupid or wise, to the extent he is a monk, he is a treasure to all people and to all the various worlds.'* I paraphrase this for myself, *'Whether a person is quick or slow, to the extent that she is in the kitchen helping - chopping or contributing in whatever way, she is indeed a treasure, to myself and to all retreatants who are going to benefit, or be nourished, by her actions.'* I need to stand back, get a bigger perspective, value and appreciate this woman who has volunteered to help cook this meal.

I am confronted in the kitchen with my mind's reactions to pleasure and pain, its habits of craving and aversion; and see this in others too: retreatants struggle with some reluctance to make an attractive and nourishing meal with what is left on the shelves on the last afternoon before the fresh delivery arrives: they struggle with feelings of aversion; but next day the cooks will pounce on the newly delivered fresh vegetables often using inappropriate amounts - there manifests craving.

Time and again Dogen exhorts us to work with these tendencies:

*'In preparing food for the community, it is crucial not to grumble about the quality of the ingredients, but rather cultivate a temper which sees and respects them fully for what they are.'*

*'A dish is not necessarily superior because you have prepared it with choice ingredients, nor is a soup inferior because you have made it with ordinary greens.'*

*'Never feel aversion towards plain ingredients.'* (p.13).

He goes on to say how we should also have this attitude towards the taste of food. He cites the old saying *'The mouth of a monk is like an oven.'* (p.13). This comes from a story in which someone is invited to eat with a certain king who offers him both delicacies and plain food. The guest eats both with equanimity, showing no special delight at the delicacies nor aversion to the more common dishes. The king can take it no longer and asks why he responds in this way, to which the guest replies, *'The mouth of a monk is like an oven. Just as an oven burns both sandalwood (incense) and cow dung (for cooking) without distinction, our mouths should be the same. There should be no distinction between delicious food and food which is plain and simple. We should be satisfied with whatever we receive.'* (p.103)

*Instructions for the Zen Cook* is not only a guide for conduct in the kitchen, but also a manual for living one's life, as I have already



said. This is nowhere more apparent than with what Dogen has to say about our attitude to others: *'Do not judge monks as deserving of respect or as being worthless, nor pay attention to whether a person has been practising for only a short time or for many years... There may well be differences between those who have been practising over many years and those who have just begun, or between those gifted with great intelligence, and those not so gifted. Even so, all are treasures of the Sangha.'* (p.14) Uchiyama comments, *'There seems to be a very strong tendency in human beings, either conscious or unconscious, to humble themselves before people they think might be beneficial to them, and to speak condescendingly to those they consider below themselves.'* (p.50) Later, he says, *'In other words, when we live out our lives to the fullest, there is no such thing as superior or inferior, good circumstance or bad, fortune or misfortune. There is only one taste of the great ocean of life.'* (p.50) So, reflecting on these words I can appreciate my choppers, whoever they may be and value their contribution.

One demon that lurks in the Taraloka kitchen is a tendency to want to rule, to be boss, to see these four walls as my kitchen, my domain. I need to be aware of not tapping into that traditional view of a woman's place is in the home, and where better to exert her authority and power than in the kitchen! I need to develop flexibility so I can encourage people to take initiative and responsibility for some of the things they do, without me always telling them what to do and how to do it. Yet what mixed messages I am giving if I am being quite specific in my instructions one minute, yet wanting them to make their own decisions the next! I need to be clear, communicate where something is important and where it is not. I do want some things to be done in a particular way, I am opinionated, I do have specific ideas, and I do want the kitchen left clean and tidy. Dogen says, *'Clean the chopsticks, ladles, and all other utensils; handle them with equal care and awareness, putting everything back where it naturally belongs. Keep your mind on the work and do not throw things around carelessly.'* (p5-6) However, I do not want to be autocratic or inflexible. Maybe my vision of mindfulness is what I need to communicate, and everything will come from that!

Uchiyama's commentary on the above quotation says, *'Of course, this applies not only to utensils and things, it applies equally to situations and people. A person can hardly be said to have a religious attitude who treats a teacup carefully, almost piously, simply because it is expensive, yet who feels nothing in treating people roughly. We should always strive to treat objects, affairs, and particularly people, with good care.'* (p.53) It is in

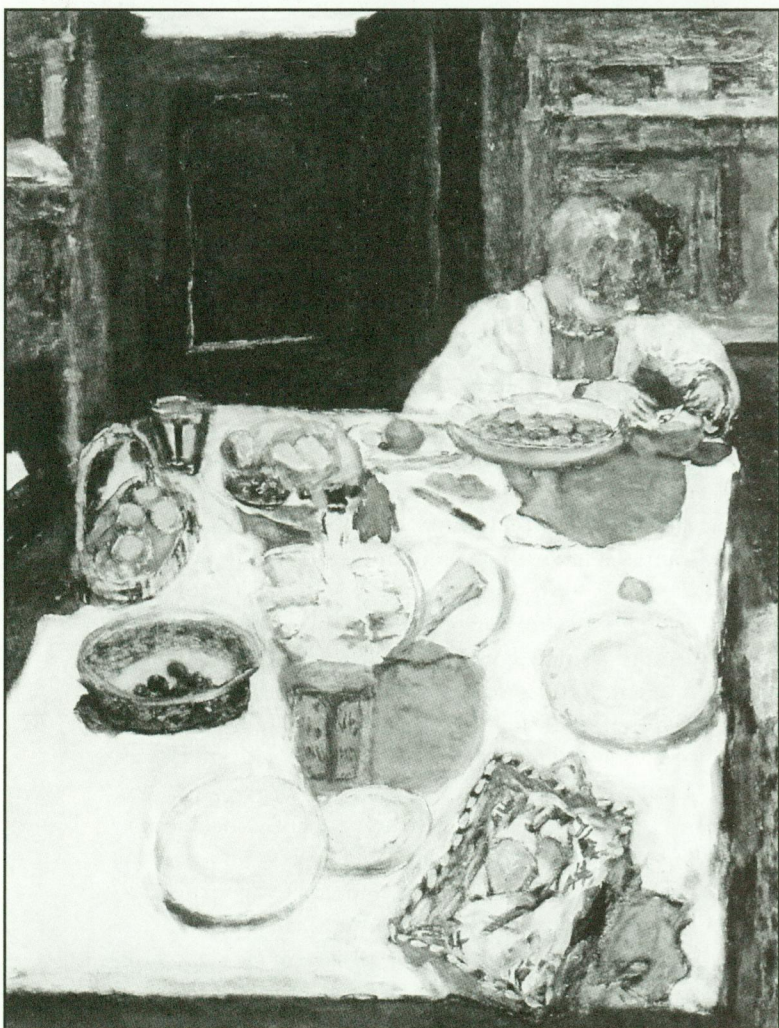
teachings such as these that the Tenzo Kyokan is indeed a cookbook for life!

My time as a cook at Taraloka has hardly begun. Developing mindfulness, transforming demons, gaining insight into the real nature of existence through my work - all these may take many years. In the meantime I welcome the retreatants who join me in the kitchen to take up Dogen's exhortation to make work our practice, devoting ourselves to our practice no less in the kitchen than we do on our cushions in the shrine room.

#### Notes:

1. Wright, Thomas, (translator), *From the Zen Kitchen to Enlightenment: Refining your Life*. Weatherhill, 1983, p13
2. *ibid.* p17
3. *Chanyuan Qinggui*: (Regulations for Zen monasteries): comprises 10 volumes of the oldest existing regulations for running a monastery. Written by Zongze of Mount Zhanglu in 1102.
4. *Zazen*: literally, sitting meditation. In the Tenzo Kyokan, it also refers to living our lives with the attitude of a Buddha.

"A Woman's Realm"





# LIVING THE LIFE - Passionately

Saddhanandi



Van Gogh, A cornfield with cypresses

AS A YOUNG WOMAN I was inspired by the life of Van Gogh. I resonated to the passion and dedication of his life. I wanted to live a life as committed as his - a life lived 'close to the edge'. I wanted a life in which I knew from the moment I woke up in the morning to the moment I went to sleep why I was doing what I was doing - and to love it; and to experience the simplicity that comes with that knowledge. Nor did I want a life that accommodated itself to a whole variety of interests. I wanted a life with just one interest, a life in which there was 'only one thing on the list'. It was this strong desire for focus, for my life to be centred around a single concern, this wish to be single-minded, to be a woman with a 'one-track mind' that eventually led me from Van Gogh and the art of my student days to the Buddha and to Taraloka.

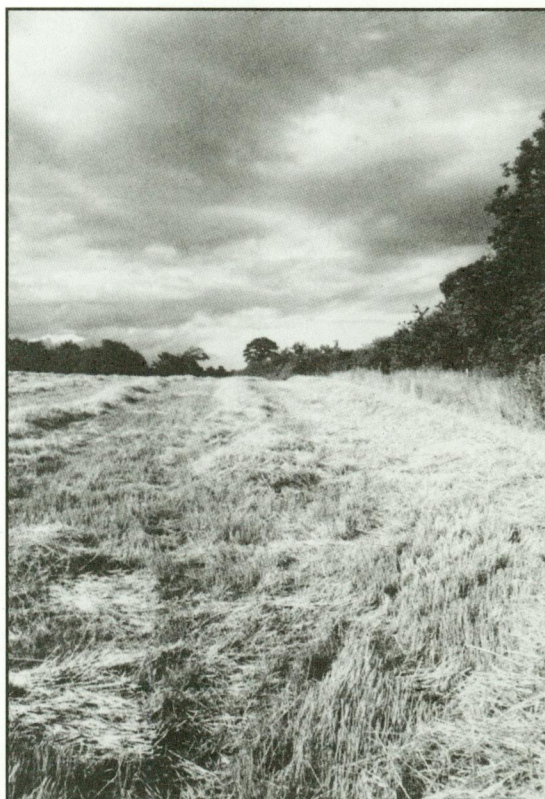
I believe everyone has such a vision. I believe this passionately! Sangharakshita speaks about it in *The Journey to Il Convento*. He says our journey is 'directed not so much by logic as by what may be described as a sort of irrational wisdom, in the sense of an obscure awareness of an inner need, and it is because [we are] so directed that [our] journey ... is

*'The Buddha had an 'inner flame' burning, driving him on towards the truth - a restless flame. I do not have a flame, I have a kiss, a restless kiss. My lips brush the side of a face, a brief encounter, but I do not stand and face my lover - giving in. I do not live my desire and therefore I do not live. I do not live my life, I do not live close to the edge - I do not live.'*

*Everything I own and yet I spend a penny at a time - why economise on life when you have no need? Many elements in my life are worth a fortune, they are rare and I could greet them as I choose, why do I carefully place a penny in the hand of life when I have so much more to spend and the penny buys me nothing but mediocrity and possibly a smoother ride?*

*Domesticated is my life. Dusty is my life, and yet, when I look at all the elements not one of them stands out as household, all of them have magic and colour. I do not live close enough to the edge. I do not live.'*

Diary extract



Cornfield at Taraloka



*not straight but crooked in both the literal and the metaphysical sense, for as Yeats tells us: Wisdom is a butterfly And not a gloomy bird of prey.*<sup>1</sup>

After I had been practising meditation and Buddhism for several years, following the promptings of my own inner 'irrational wisdom', I had to ask myself: why am I doing this?

'Because it is the only thing that gives my life meaning', came the reply.

Through practising the Dharma, I had at last discovered a purer, deeper motivation in myself which was entirely my own and which I could trust. I had discovered my own reference point, I had discovered for myself the one thing that I wanted on my list: Meaning!

*'To discover that within myself which I must obey, ...to feel this internal world as an organic whole working out its whole destiny according to some secret vital principle, to know which acts and utterances are a liberation from obstacles and an accession of strength, to acknowledge secret loyalties which one cannot deny without impoverishment and starvation, - this is to possess one's soul indeed, and it is not easy either to do or to explain.'*<sup>2</sup>

These beautiful lines by Middleton Murry describe the whole basis of a visionary life, or, as we might say, a spiritual life. In contacting my desire for meaning, I had at last discovered 'that within myself which I must obey, ... according to some secret vital principle.' To obey it required I give my whole life to it.

'Secret loyalties which one cannot deny without impoverishment and starvation'. Loyalties remain secret not only because we do not act upon them or communicate them to anyone else but because we do not even make them conscious. They lie undiscovered and unacknowledged - a secret even from ourselves! It is through the long and gradual process of unfolding awareness that we can uncover them.

What gives my life meaning is the knowledge that my life is based around a vision, like the life of Van Gogh, of Michelangelo and of the Buddha. It is a vision of simplicity and depth, a vision of creativity and beauty, a vision of heroism, a vision of passion, these are the loyalties which I 'cannot deny without impoverishment and starvation'. But how do I obey them?

Here at Taraloka, I am part of the Support Team, a team of seven women involved with the day-to-day running of the retreat centre. Our daily programme is simple: meditation is followed by breakfast; then a team meeting and we turn to our work. After lunch and further hours of work, our day ends with supper and an evening activity. Each week we try to take a day off, although that isn't always possible. Some weeks we are on retreat and sometimes we are away - on retreat or visiting friends or family, or

even taking a holiday. That is the general framework of my life. My work as secretary to the Taraloka charity includes attending Council meetings and carrying out the work that arises from them; as well as doing some of the secretarial work in the retreat centre office and answering the phone. I am also manager of the Support Team, which involves chairing meetings, discussing different areas of work, and developing the team according to the principles of Right Livelihood. As a member of the team I also do general work such as cleaning the retreat centre after a retreat has finished. I attend Order weekends once a month; prepare and lead study (almost every week), write and give talks for the various retreats I attend, and keep up with a growing correspondence. So this is my life! I have confidence in this life I have set up for myself: not only do I believe in the possibility of leading a spiritual life but I actually believe that I myself am living it! Looking at the various aspects of my life and work at Taraloka, I can see reflected those secret loyalties I mentioned - which continually takes me by surprise, for it means I have at last created for myself a life of inspiration.

### **Simplicity and Depth**

*'You only simplify your life when you want to get on with something which is very important to you. You have to have the motivation first, and then preoccupy yourself with those basic and fundamental issues.'*<sup>3</sup>

We create simplicity by keeping our attention on what is most important to us, by developing a strong continuity of purpose, and by centring our lives around our vision. Then, no matter how busy we become, life still remains simple and the lines in it remain bold and clear. The motivation comes first, but then, as our life gets simpler, the motivation, the vision, also becomes clearer. Being a member of the Western Buddhist Order, being in a busy situation, and being naturally inclined towards activity, I find myself responding to more and more demands and taking up greater responsibilities. The concentration and clarity of my life begins to wear thin, and the simplicity begins to feel very complicated! I have lost my focus. Sangharakshita comments that in such a situation, you must reflect on impermanence:

*'Not impermanence for its own sake but as a reminder of what your life is really all about and what you are really trying to do. You have got a lot to do in quite a short time, you have no time to waste on inessentials. You want to simplify everything, make it as business-like as possible. When you get up in the morning you should reflect: - How am I going to spend this day, what part does this day play in my overall plan, my overall scheme? - What contribution*

***"To discover that within myself which I must obey, ...to feel this internal world as an organic whole working out its whole destiny according to some secret vital principle, to know which acts and utterances are a liberation from obstacles and an accession of strength, to acknowledge secret loyalties which one cannot deny without impoverishment and starvation, - this is to possess one's soul indeed, and it is not easy either to do or to explain."***





*is this day going to make? - Am I going to waste it or am I going to make the best use of it?'<sup>4</sup>*

**"Communication demands honesty, it demands we speak the truth, it demands creativity in a situation. To work with other people, to really work with them, requires engagement and co-operation. It means putting your cards on the table - all of them! This can be a very difficult thing to do, a humiliating thing even, but it can also be a great relief."**

Reflecting in this way we develop a strong sense of purpose about what we are doing with our lives and a depth of understanding about ourselves and the way we are living. This depth is important if we are to maintain a vision. I have discovered that as my awareness increases, as the external demands increase, and as I take on more areas of responsibility through the development of the Support Team, then depth is what I need to hold it all together. I require a deep centre around which everything else can be organised, and as the manager of the Support Team, I am required to hold a vision not only for myself but also for the team as a whole. At the heart of my vision for the Support Team is the belief that it is possible to create a lifestyle that will give us everything we need spiritually, not because we are occupied with 'spiritual' things but because the ordinary things with which we are occupied have a place in our spiritual life. The psychologist William James was of the view that *'a religious person is not one who has religious experiences - anybody can have those - but one who makes religious experiences the centre of their existence. It is not important where we visit; what is important is where we permanently live, or at least where we live most of the time - in other words, where our real centre of interest lies.'*<sup>5</sup>

#### **A Creative Life - Communication**

*'I have a vision that wants to express itself. A vision of harmony, of people working together - sensitively, quietly...A place where people can feel themselves opening out, amongst others. A sense of confidence, adventure, comradeship, not having to hold back or hold themselves in, or keep out various external difficulties... a situation that we can really trust, that can then affect us on deeper and deeper levels.'*

*Diary Extract*

Building a team requires individuals to commit themselves to the team. This doesn't just mean a commitment of time, or a commitment

of energy, it means a commitment to a level of communication that can be very challenging. Communication demands honesty, it demands we speak the truth, it demands creativity in a situation - like work - where often our habits are formed very quickly. To work with other people, to *really* work with them, requires engagement and co-operation. It means putting your cards on the table - all of them! This can be a very difficult thing to do, a humiliating thing even, but it can also be a great relief. If we do not hold back, our energy becomes free-flowing, more available to engage with the situation. Co-operation is based on this openness, on a willingness to enter into a dialogue about something, a willingness to express your own views and to take an interest in other people's. It requires flexibility and it requires effort. It is an act of individuality and it can only take place within the 'Love Mode', an entirely ethical mode of being. It requires we drop our resistance to other people, we let go of our defensive tendencies, and we take responsibility for the effect we can have on a situation: are we helping to build a team or are we holding it back?

#### **An Heroic Life - No Concessions**

I'm interested in creating the right conditions for myself and for others systematically - creating a context that each one of us can trust. This is not about setting up the conditions so that we always get what we want, or making life so comfortable that we hardly know we are alive! What I am really interested in is creating the conditions for an heroic life! We are heroic every time we go beyond ourselves, beyond our limitations, beyond our views, beyond our habits. For me, going beyond myself means maintaining a positive, creative state of mind under pressure and without concessions! Creating the right conditions means consciously and systematically looking at what is needed by an individual to help them grow - but it is not about trying to remove all the potential disasters, even if one could. Most of us need an objective edge to our lives, such as meeting a deadline or organising a big event or earning a living, as a way of bringing intensity into our lives - those things provide a challenge which make a positive demand upon us.

*'If your life becomes too insecure you cannot function at all, if it becomes too safe you don't want to function at all.'*<sup>6</sup>

#### **A Passionate life - The Need For Engagement**

For many years I struggled with what I felt was a rather unproductive meditation practice. Feeling I was not very 'successful' in my practice, I regarded myself as not very good at lead-



ing a spiritual life in general. Gradually I came to broaden my horizons and to see other methods - indirect methods of working on the mind - as important means for transformation. In particular I found it in the area of work. I found I was often both happy and absorbed when working. I found my awareness had both focus and breadth. Work was like a mantra, it protected the mind from negativity. There are other 'indirect methods' of working on the mind - yoga, dance, art, the practice of ethics, the development of friendship and so on.

When I came to Taraloka, I came to work. I was fascinated by a phrase which I had often heard from friends and teachers: 'work is like a Tantric Guru'. I had already experienced this 'tantric' aspect of work through having to meet objective deadlines and external demands on my time and capabilities, realising that a deadline will push you beyond yourself just as surely as a Tantric Guru, and then demand more! Work is also like a Tantric Guru because it calls up our energy, and then channels it:

*'Work puts you in contact with a cruder, wilder energy! Wildness cannot be domesticated! Don't discourage something because it doesn't fit into a neat domestic pattern, it can't be house-trained! Wildness isn't respectable! An office is difficult to run in a wild sort of way, it has to be organised and efficient, but that doesn't mean that you yourself become just an efficient well organised person. Don't end up staid and respectable. Be energetic, interested and lively'.<sup>7</sup>*

I am someone who likes to achieve things, I like to see myself having an effect in concrete ways and it has taken me many years to have confidence in this way of operating. I used to think it too 'worldly' and too 'busy'. Now I see it as creative energy expressing itself in the external world. But to keep it creative is not easy, 'we need to be passionate, but not entangled - able to see things objectively, even whilst putting all our energy into something - this is not easy to achieve'.<sup>8</sup>

One way in which I have worked with this particular difficulty is to let go of inappropriate perfectionism. Trying to produce something which is perfect is unrealistic, in fact it is impossible and not in line with the way things really are! It leads to continual frustration. But this does not mean you shouldn't aim to go beyond yourself, to transcend yourself - in fact you must, otherwise you slip into complacency. So aim for excellence, aim to do your best, but aiming for perfection is self-defeating and demoralising, and is an expression of energy being rather misplaced. Once, whilst stepping into the shower, a thought came to me: 'Enlightenment is easier than I think!' Further reflection made me realise that the Buddhist goal of Enlightenment was to 'see things the way they really are', and this was a much simpler goal than trying to cre-

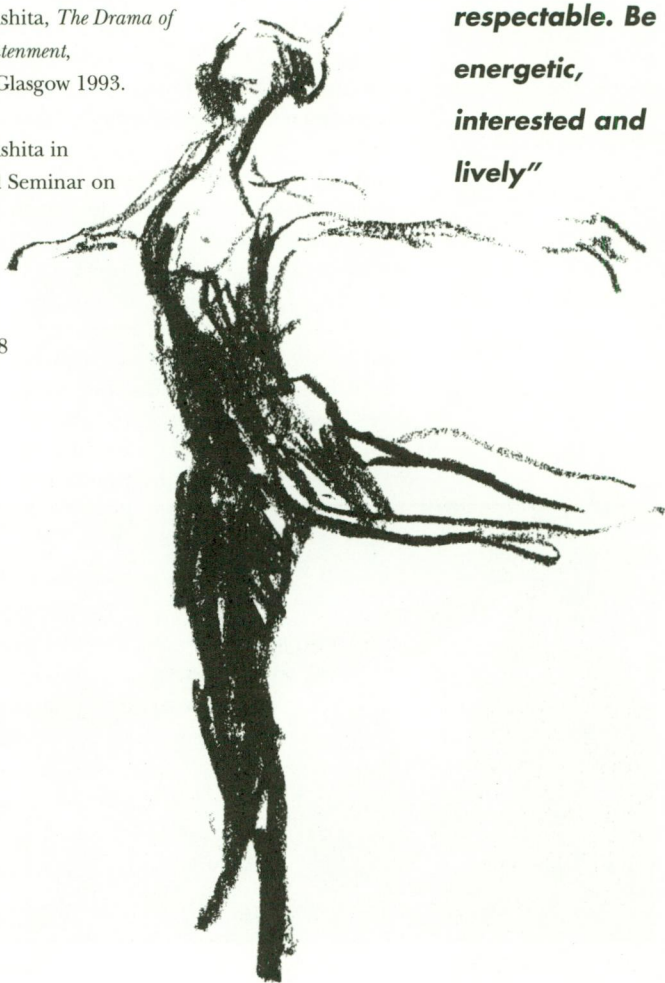
ate perfection in an imperfect world! Letting go of mis-placed perfectionism allows my ordinary work to be more of a channel for my creativity. I can really throw myself into it without becoming too entangled. It has become the lover in my life and it is where I mostly express my passion.

I picture myself walking along a pathway through a landscape painted by Van Gogh: agricultural and flat, bright, intense - like the countryside that surrounds Taraloka. I imagine the Buddha amidst this agricultural scene. Even more than Van Gogh he symbolises the intensity of a life with a single focus, uncompromising, a life lived according to a complete vision of meaning. This surely is my myth: to wake up in the morning and to throw myself into that vision. To stand on the path, chanting a mantra, is to stand on the path that leads to that ultimate significance. In doing so I become a woman with a 'one-track mind'.

#### Notes:

1. 'Journey to Il Convento' in Sangharakshita, *The Priceless Jewel*, Windhorse, Glasgow 1993, p51
2. cited in Sangharakshita, *The History of My Going for Refuge*, Windhorse, Glasgow 1988, p13
3. Sangharakshita, Unpublished Seminar on Gampopa's *The Door of Liberation*, pp346-7
4. *ibid*
5. Sangharakshita, *The Drama of Cosmic Enlightenment*, Windhorse, Glasgow 1993, p101
6. Sangharakshita in Unpublished Seminar on *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, p95
7. *ibid*, p385-8
8. *ibid*

**"Work puts you in contact with a cruder, wilder energy! Wildness cannot be domesticated! Don't discourage something because it doesn't fit into a neat domestic pattern, it can't be house-trained! Wildness isn't respectable! Don't end up staid and respectable. Be energetic, interested and lively"**





# Notes from a Founder Member

*Ratnasuri*

**LOOKING BACK TO WHEN WE** first arrived at Taraloka - only it was not Taraloka then, it was 'Cornhill' as the locals called it: Cornhill Farm, tucked into a corner of Wales with England on three sides - I remember how we left London one dark November morning in 1985: Sanghadevi and myself, Kulanandi (who was then Kathryn), Karunasri (who was then Tessa); and last but not least a small black cat called Tansy.

There was much work to be done on the farmhouse to get it ready in time for retreats in December - the barns were unusable. The other three prepared the house for painting and decorating, got busy with woodworming and so on. Being much older than the others, I opted to cook - which was popular with everyone!

I cooked on camping gas burners which tested my ingenuity. I even managed to make pizzas! We were more or less camping in the house anyway. We moved from room to room as each was decorated.

Thinking back it all seems light years away - the present day Taraloka seems light years away from the dilapidated barns and the house badly in need of redecoration. Today Taraloka is a beautiful space full of light. I am remembering back twelve years. I was sixty-two. And now I am an old lady of seventy-four. Having retreats in the house was a crush - twenty people squeezed into the small shrine room. To me it was an adventure. I was inspired by the reality of starting a retreat centre for women, and the realization of the tremendous

difference it would make to the women in our movement. I think that is what kept the four of us going through those difficult times.

I love the canal that passes by Taraloka. I always loved watching the colourful boats apparently floating on the hedges as they chugged along. I loved the wide skies and the incredible sunsets. After a year living amidst the noise and bustle of Croydon, I loved the peace and quiet of the countryside, living at the end of a track away from a road with just the disused railway on one side and the canal on the other. And above all I loved seeing the retreatants arrive and then leave again refreshed and inspired - I still do.

It was very exciting thinking about our new Retreat Shrine Room. We had just the place for it: the granary. It was a beautiful space and big enough. However, the ground floor was open at one side, and the ceiling was very low with iron stanchions running through the middle. They would most certainly be in the way. Had we better have our shrine room on the first floor? None of us were keen about that. No, we would have dormitories on the first floor. And we would have sliding windows on the open side of the shrine room. So working retreats were the order of the day. Many women came to give us a hand with that very hard work, digging out the floor, removing the stanchions, putting in a new ceiling and laying a floor for the dorms. Like my cat Tansy, I just watched it all going on - giving encouragement when I could.

I remember leading meditation retreats while work was in process. At times the noise of the work got in the way of our meditation. I was aware that Dayanandi would have loved to be doing meditation retreats, but she needed to deal with the building work. Her architectural skills were a great help.

I think it was about that time I decided to stop cooking for the community. I realized I had been cooking for around thirty years, first of all for my family and then in a small wholefood restaurant. Now I would take my turn with everyone else. And this is what I have done ever since.

A community takes time to evolve. At first we were very disparate people but what helped us all to stay was our faith in the Three Jewels. Council meetings were often fraught! The office team found each other difficult. The community was not really a community. Many a time I found myself washing up or on a walk with one or another community member telling me their problems. But for all the difficulties that arose, the friendship between people is now deep.

There have been many changes in the community over the twelve years that I have lived here: so many different people, so very different from each other; each one changes the dynamic. When one of our number is ordained - I may well ordain them myself - we notice a change in the dynamic of the community.

I suppose apart from my own impermanence (my body in its seventies is more obviously wearing



Cornhill Farmhouse





Public ordination ceremony

out) I am faced in this situation with so many changes. I have had to learn to be very flexible to deal with it. Even though in so many ways I am conscious of the impermanence of all composite things, there are times when I wish those changes were not so swift. Of the many changes I have lived through, Sanghadevi's departure made a big difference. She had been Chairwoman since the beginning. In a way Taraloka had been her baby. The other founder members had left. Which now meant there was only my cat Tansy and me who had been around from the beginning.

During a meditation retreat in the Autumn of 1987, I had a phone call from Srimala asking me if I would go to India and ordain two Indian women. Srimala, and Padmasuri who was working with the women in India at that time, would be ordaining them privately and I publicly. What, me? I thought. Ordaining people in India? But Sangharakshita, who normally performed ordinations, was unable to go himself. Well, I would think about it. As you might imagine, it affected my meditation! After a few days I rang Srimala back and said yes, I would go. Since then I have performed the private ordinations of thirty-one women as well as being public preceptor for quite a few.

Over the last few years, the community has grown to become a real community - the core of the community is well established and it is a kind and caring community. In the time I have been here I have been ill and had to have a couple of operations, one of which was tricky. I was looked after with care and kindness by members of the

community. There was a time when I shared a room with my friend Aniketa who paid a two year visit to Taraloka from her home in New Zealand. We shared a room for about eighteen months. At that time I was doing woodcuts of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and I printed them in my room. Paper used to be lying all over the floor, and Aniketa used to happily watch my efforts.

Last November Tansy died in her bed in the kitchen. We performed a Puja for her and cremated her the next day. As I did not want to put her down, I was pleased that she died naturally in her own place. I wrote a poem for her after she died. Of course I missed her. After Ratnavandana left, and her cat died soon afterwards, we decided to have a policy of no cats at Taraloka. They can be a distraction. However, right now a rather timid young cat seems to have adopted us, and is appearing in the garden.

As I sit at my desk in my room, not so long after finishing a community-run retreat, beautifully led by Dayanandi, with some very good talks by other community members, I think what a worthwhile project this has been, and feel great gratitude to Sanghadevi, Kulanandi and Karunasri for their great attention to detail in setting this project up so carefully, and to Dayanandi for taking on the responsibility of leading Taraloka into a new vision of itself.

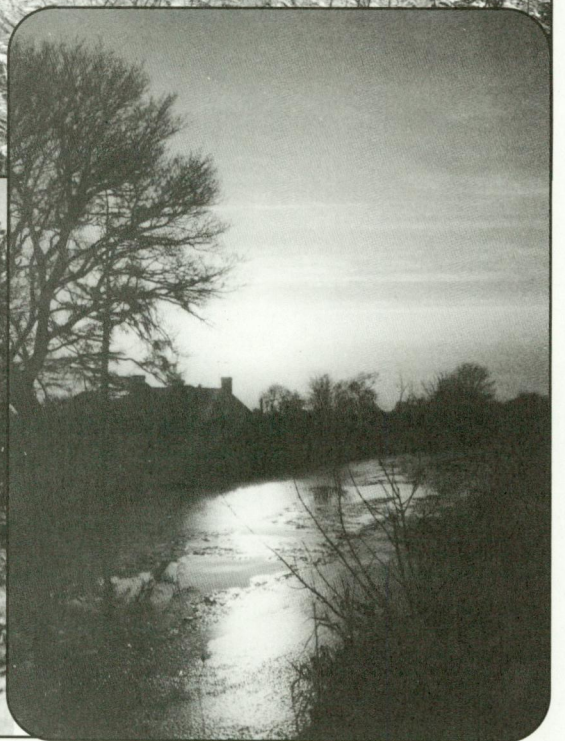
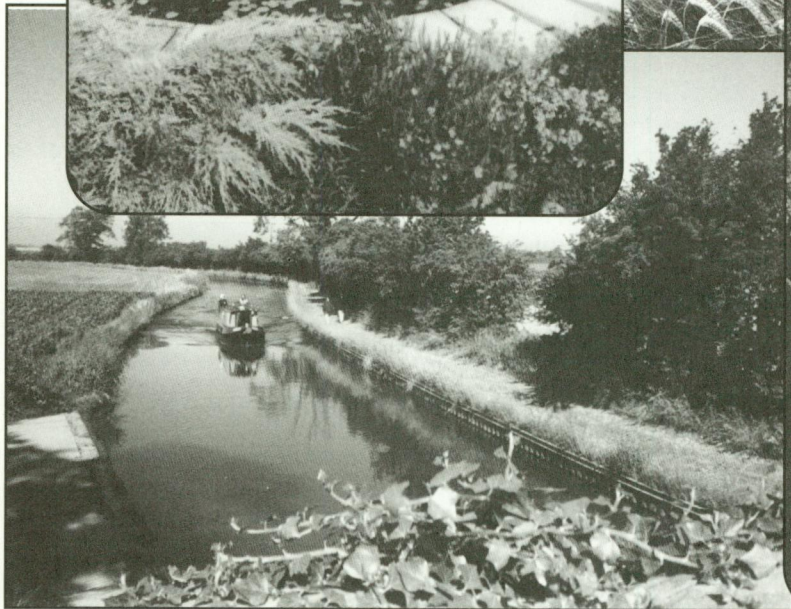
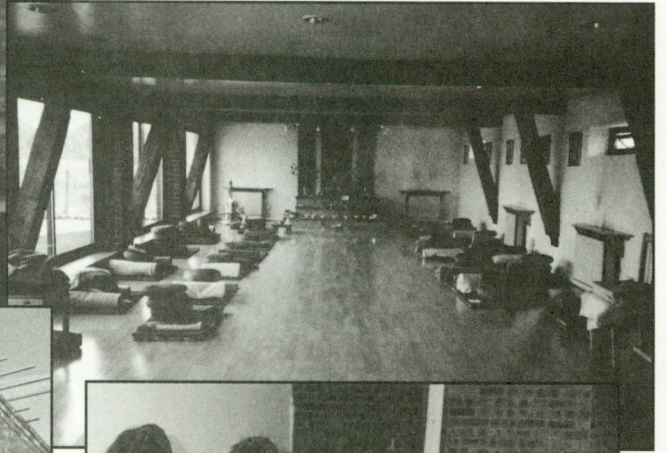
## *A lucky black cat*

*black cats are lucky  
it is said  
if you pass by one  
you have good luck  
but this black cat  
by name of tansy  
was a lucky black cat  
tansy lived at taraloka  
for much of her life  
she was a founder member  
a zen master  
a test in mindfulness  
to stroke her  
without being aware  
without noticing  
the turn of her head was to invite  
at the very least  
the marks of her teeth  
the sharpness of her claws  
retreatants who assumed  
because they liked cats  
could stroke her  
with impunity  
had both their pride  
and their skin punctured  
tansy kept watch  
and grew to old age  
watching the barns  
become shrine rooms, dormitories  
kitchens, sitting room  
and more  
watched the drilling,  
sawing, hammering, painting  
grew to old age  
seeing the gardens expand  
went to meetings of council  
there might be a biscuit  
grew to old age  
slept in the kitchen  
surrounded by friends  
friends watching her needs  
friends who loved her  
this lucky black cat  
died in her bed  
spent the night in the shrine room  
cremated next day  
this lucky black cat.*





# TARALOKA





## Changing Communities



*On Retreat*



*Arts Retreats*



*On Tour*





# Buddhist Centre in Minden

**Minden is a small German town of some 80,000 inhabitants situated on the banks of the river Weser not far from Hanover. It is not, perhaps, the first town you would consider as a location for a new Buddhist Centre. But earlier this year the Buddhistsches Zentrum Minden was opened to the public: Prasadavati reports:**

FIRST AS MITRAS AND NOW as Order members, Sarathi and I, full of enthusiasm for sharing the Dharma, began holding meditation and Dharma classes at a local Adult Education Centre. Our courses were amongst a whole host of others available at the Centre from belly dancing to African drumming; along with all kinds of self-development and healing therapies! We seemed to slot in quite nicely in a way! I was well known from the yoga classes I had been teaching for the previous ten years. Five years on, however, we found that a Sangha was emerging from the groups attending our classes. It became clear we needed a place of our own: somewhere people could identify as a Dharma Centre.

Not long after my ordination in June 1995, I remember experiencing an intense awareness of the suffering around me. Even looking at my children, playing happily in the garden on a beautiful sunny day, I was painfully aware of all the hardship and suffering they would inevitably have to go through in the course of growing up. Whoever I looked at, whoever I thought of, I became aware of their existential suffering as human beings. Amidst this awareness of suffering, I also felt a very strong desire to help Sangharakshita's work in making the Dharma available to whoever might be willing to receive it. But

how? What would be the best way for me to do this? Should I concentrate on translating? Should I continue teaching? Should I 'withdraw' and lead a quiet studious life? Or should I go for opening a Dharma Centre in this relatively small town where I happen to live? In the course of the following year I pursued these questions and started discussing the consequences and implications of the various possibilities with friends and fellow Order members. Given there was already an existing core of people who had been consistently coming to classes and going on retreats; as well as personally feeling propelled by the urge to engage actively and wholeheartedly with the Dharma and the growing Sangha in Minden, it fairly soon became clear that establishing a Dharma Centre was the way forward.

The Centre opened in April and has already had an impact on the town. Situated in the pedestrian precinct, passers-by can't help but notice the signs. Local newspapers and radio stations have also been interested in our activities. Visits from school classes are becoming a regular feature. The general public seems to have welcomed this additional feature to the town. In his speech on the occasion of the official opening of the Centre, the town Director enthusiastically praised the contribution that Buddhism has to make in spreading kindness, friendliness and peace in a time characterized by intolerance, aggression and

distraction. He welcomed the Centre as a positive presence in the town to further the development of basic human communication and understanding.

With just two Order members in Minden, Sarathi and myself, (Sarathi has now moved to Berlin) and without another Dharmacharini, I did and still do often feel quite alone and lonely. This calls forth my heroic side: determination to give myself even more completely to the situation; to encourage a deeper level of commitment in our Sangha. I am also discovering the indispensable practice of patience - allowing the situation to grow and develop with our current possibilities and resources being taken fully into consideration. This, I suspect, will remain a constant challenge. I need to maintain a driving force, remaining alert, watching out for the next step and being ready to leap; while at the same time acting according to the needs and resources of the situation itself. On a practical level, this means relying on Mitras and Friends to do the bulk of the administration and see to the day-to-day running of the Centre, guiding and advising and encouraging them to act responsibly and independently. Ambitious German standards of perfection can and do cause endless complicated discussions, resulting in many of us coming up against our conditioning and limitations. These are the tensions we work with in many areas of our spiritual practice, and which will hopefully be food for growth.

Looking back now after the first few months of life in and with the Minden Buddhist Centre, I feel confident and happy that we are on our way to creating a jewel in the heart of the town centre. A refuge in a pedestrian shopping precinct. A Buddhist Centre which doesn't fit in to any 'scene', but which glows on the strength of its own riches.



Prasadavati (L) with Dharmapriya outside Minden Buddhist Centre



# Seventeen women join the Western Buddhist Order

17 women were ordained during a month's retreat at Tiratanaloka earlier this Summer. The retreat was led by public preceptor Srimala, and was memorable - among other things - for the number of days it rained! The rain, however, only served to intensify the atmosphere of practice and devotion as the 17 women took the step of committing themselves to Going for Refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and to practising the Ten Ethical Precepts. Among those ordained were Viveka, a woman of Chinese origin from San Francisco; and Ratnajyoti, (who featured in *Lotus Realm* 5) a German woman now living in South Africa, the first resident member of the Western Buddhist Order on the African continent.



**1997 Ordination Retreat:** newly ordained Order members pictured here with their private preceptors: front row L-R Ratnasuri (3rd L), Dhammadinna, Srimala, Sanghadevi, Anjali. Srimala conferred the public ordinations.

## Indian Dharmacharinis in England

**FOR THE FIRST TIME** ever, three Indian Dharmacharinis attended the Order conventions: Prajnamata from Bombay, Alokasri from Pune and Jnanasuri from Aurangabad (see *Lotus Realm* 6.) Prajnamata had visited the UK before, but for Alokasri and Jnanasuri it was the first visit. During a two month tour, they stayed in several women's communities; visited FWBO Centres and attended a number of retreats. Highlights were a visit to Manchester where 'we were given a tremendously warm welcome' and where, with Prajnamata's help in translation, each Dharmacharini talked about her life and work in India. In Cambridge, however, it was local women who entertained the visitors - an excellent programme enjoyed by all. The three spent a few days with Srimala in Birmingham, and spent an hour

with Sangharakshita, with whom they enjoyed conversation covering a range of topics - including the meaning of *sunyata*!

Their presence on the conventions was much appreciated. Jnanasuri had fun dressing up some of her Dharma sisters in brightly coloured saris. And on one occasion the entire assembly chanted the Refuges and Precepts 'Indian style' led by Alokasri. In future years it is hoped even more Dharmacharinis

will visit the West from India. Meanwhile several English Dharmacharinis are continuing their regular visits to India.



L-R: Jnanasuri, Prajnamata and Alokasri



# Public Preceptors Resident in Birmingham

In 1995 Sangharakshita appointed three men and two women public preceptors to form the Preceptors College. It has been to these five, along with the eight other senior Order members who make up the Preceptors College Council, that he has handed on his responsibilities for the WBO and FWBO. He asked the members of the College Council to live together. His brief was 'to strengthen [their] friendships and learn to work harmoniously together...everything would flow from that.'

Birmingham was elected as a suitably central location for the College Council to take up residence. Not all members of the College Council have been able to move permanently having duties and responsibilities elsewhere. Others have had to bide their time in order to hand on existing responsibilities. Srimala and Sanghadevi, the two women Public Preceptors, have now moved into a large community house near the main College house in the leafy suburb of Moseley. They have been joined by Ratnavandana, the UK convenor for women Mitras; and Sinhadevi, a close friend of Srimala's, who, when not visiting Dharma Centres, is devoting her time to writing. Vajradevi will be joining the newly-formed Community and will be working in a secretarial capacity for the women Preceptors.

When not attending meetings with the Preceptors College and its Council, both Srimala and Sanghadevi will be spending a good deal of time travelling round the world visiting FWBO/TBMSG Centres. Currently Srimala is visiting India, and Sanghadevi America.

## Order Convention

The biannual convention of the Western Buddhist Order took place this Summer at Wymondham College, Norfolk. It began with a ten day women's convention, which was followed by a four day convention of the whole Order, and a ten day men's convention. The theme for all the conventions was the arising of the Bodhichitta, the Will to Enlightenment for the sake of all living beings which lies at the heart of the Mahayana perspective on spiritual life. This was explored through meditation, devotional practice and talks - including, during the women's convention, talks on three of the great Mahayana masters, Atisa, Hsuan Tsang and Hui Neng; as well as concentrated study of Santideva's great text, *The Bodhicaryavatara*. 405 Order members were present for the combined Convention out of a possible 730 (in particular most Indian Order members were unable to attend.) 145 women attended the women's convention out of a possible 172 Dharmacharinis world-wide from countries as diverse as India and the US, Finland and Malaysia.

### Mixed and Women's Retreats at **DHANAKOSA**



*The Scottish Retreat  
Centre  
in 1998*

**27TH DECEMBER TO  
4TH JANUARY**

**Women's Winter Retreat** (for those with experience of meditation).

#### **FEBRUARY:**

**Moon, Magic and Mystery, Creative Writing Retreat 13-20**

**Women's Weekend 27- 1 March**

#### **MARCH:**

**Singing Retreat 6 - 13\***

**Working Retreat 13 - 20\***

**Yoga and Meditation Retreat 20-27\***

**Study Retreat 27 - 3**

#### **APRIL:**

**Spring Open Retreat 3 - 10\***

**Families Retreat 10 -17**

**Towards Becoming a Mitra  
(Retreat for Women) 17 - 24**

#### **MAY:**

**Tai Chi Retreat 1 - 8**

**Meditation and Massage Retreat 8-15\***

**Yoga and Meditation  
Retreat 15 - 22\***



\* It is possible to come for the weekend of these Retreats.

For more details or to book, contact

**Dhanakosa on  
01877 384213**

E Mail 100731.2301@compuserve.com



# New Year New Beginnings...

## 1998 at Taraloka

### NEWCOMERS' EVENTS

Meditation Weekend: Mindfulness  
20 - 22 March  
£75/£50

New Directions  
22 - 29 May  
£175/£133

Introduction to Buddhist Ethics  
12 - 14 June  
£75/£50

### TARA FESTIVAL

21 June, 11am - 5pm  
Open to all women  
Free of charge

### MEDITATION RETREATS

The Spacious Heart: Sesshin  
14 - 21 February  
(for friends and mitras)  
(£175/£133)

The Boundless Heart: Metta  
6 - 11 April  
(for friends)  
(£125/£95)

Meditation and Reflection  
20 - 30 April  
(for mitras)  
(£250/£190)

For further details,  
telephone: 01948 710646

# *Taraloka*

Buddhist Retreat Centre for Women







Taraloka Buddhist Retreat Centre for Women  
Cornhill Farm, Bettisfield, Nr. Whitchurch, Shropshire SY13 2LD  
Tel: 01948 710646



# LOTUS REALM

a new voice for Buddhist women

Do you want...

- **direct contact with women strongly committed to spiritual life?**
- **a magazine reflecting the ins and outs, highs and lows of women practising Buddhism?**
- **first hand information about the world-wide activities of women in a thriving Buddhist movement?**
- **to hear the new voice of Buddhist women?**

Then subscribe to **LOTUS REALM** magazine, which is now available from Windhorse Publications!

---

One year's subscription, including post and packing (2 issues) costs:

UK: £5.00    Rest of Europe: £6.00    Elsewhere: £7.00

Send your cheque or money order (in pounds sterling only, please) made payable to *Windhorse Publications* to:

**Windhorse Publications**  
11 Park Road, Moseley, Birmingham, B13 8AB, UK

or in America, send US\$10 (checks payable to *Susan Michael*) to:

**Lotus Realm**  
San Francisco Buddhist Center, 39 Bartlett Street,  
San Francisco, CA 94110, USA



# Sangharakshita in interview

## Women and the Spiritual Life



In order to establish a new Buddhist movement in the West Sangharakshita has deeply considered many aspects of the modern world including how women can most effectively follow the spiritual path. In August 1996 Vidyamala talked to him about his ideas on this topic.

This interview offers a rare glimpse of Sangharakshita's revolutionary approach on issues including the ordination of women, the place of motherhood in the spiritual life, the value of single-sex activities and spiritual friendship.

# video





**Clear Vision**

Women and the Spiritual Life (55 mins) is available on video from Clear Vision at the home-use price of £15 plus postage. To order your copy simply fill in this form and return it to us or give us a call.

This video will be followed by further interviews and documentaries in 1998 on the general topic of women practising the spiritual life within the FWBO. Proceeds of the sales will go to Clear Vision who have provided equipment free of charge for the project.

**Name**

**Address**

**Phone**

(add postage £1.50 UK/£2.50 Europe/£6 World)

(add £5 for NTSC copies)

**The Clear Vision Trust, 16-20 Turner Street, Manchester, M4 1DZ, UK**  
**t 0161 839 9579 f 0161 839 4815 e [clearvision@c-vision.demon.co.uk](mailto:clearvision@c-vision.demon.co.uk)**