

# LOTUS REALM

*a new voice for buddhist women*

Sex and the Sangha

Spring/  
Summer 1998

£2/\$4

9







Untitled - Jean Metzinger

**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 Dayanandi, Dharmottara  
 Kalyanaprabha, Vajrapushpa and Viryaprabha

**EDITOR**

Kalyanaprabha

**DESIGN**

Sue Purcell

**EDITORIAL OFFICE**

Manchester Buddhist Centre  
 16-20 Turner Street  
 Manchester M4 1DZ UK  
 Tel: 0161-861 9180

E-mail: LotusRealm@compuserve.com

**ADVERTISING**

back cover (colour) £55  
 full page £50; half page £30  
 quarter page £18; eighth page £10  
*Booking deadline for next issue: 1st September 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>

\* Note to cover image: Crystal may be associated with the third ethical precept, to abstain from sexual misconduct. See Sangharakshita, *The Ten Pillars of Buddhism*.

**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.



# Sex and the Sangha

**IN THE BUDDHA'S DAY** it was probably all much more straight forward. If you wanted to join the Buddha's sangha of bhikkhus (men) or bhikkhunis (women), you 'went forth from the home life into homelessness' and it was understood by everybody that you had given up sex. To engage in sexual intercourse after entry into the sangha was one of five possible grounds for expulsion from it. Many of the Buddha's disciples, of course, continued to live as householders, with their husbands (or wives) and children, still dedicated to practising the Dharma taught by the Buddha.

Perhaps in the Buddha's day it was easier to give up the lower pleasures, easier to practise brahmacharya - that is, easier to dwell in higher states of consciousness where craving for sensual pleasure no longer dominates the mind; easier too, to achieve insight into the way things really are, when there is no longer the possibility of falling back into the ordinary longings of sexual desire, with - for women at least - the concomitant desires for protection and security.

But what about us, trying to practise the Buddha's teaching in the late twentieth century, surrounded by the consumerist and materialist values that saturate society, that insist that fulfilment comes through the gratification of desires, perhaps especially our sexual desires? It is not easy to experience stillness, simplicity and contentment in a modern city with its advertising bill-boards everywhere titillating the senses; and where even 'higher' culture all too often insists on highlighting a sexual theme.

And what about our legacy of Christian morality which has regarded sex as shameful and sinful, especially for women, an attitude which can - and undoubtedly has - led to a good deal of psychological suffering through repression of natural instincts. As Buddhists we may find ourselves drawn to the practice of celibacy, but we must, perhaps, beware that we are not merely trying to escape from facing up to ourselves as sexual beings. As those who have tried it will know, practising celibacy long-term before there is a reasonable level of psychological integration and maturity does not necessarily bring with it the taste of freedom.

We inherit, too, the mores of the sixties with its 'permissive' attitudes, when new forms of contraception gave rise to a new sort of freedom: you could now apparently have sex with whomsoever you pleased without there being any particular consequences - at least consequences of a practical nature. This has had its pros and cons. It gave people freedom to explore sex and sexuality without the fear of pregnancy, perhaps ridding themselves of some of the repressive attitudes of the past. It has also meant, I suspect, that some of us have missed the opportunity for taking up the normal responsibility that comes with sexual activity, the responsibility of parenthood, which can mark a person's entry into adulthood. Contraception enables us to prolong our naiveté where we seek pleasure without responsibility.

**Sex is seen as the culmination** and fulfilment of the romantic myth, that myth which perhaps more than any other currently dominates popular western culture. 'Pregnancy,' someone once said, 'is reality shattering the romantic myth!' It can be an opportunity for a man and woman to grow into greater maturity; or for human lives to go painfully awry. Pregnancy, you could also say, is reality breaking through the forgetfulness that when we engage in sex we are protagonists in nature's great drama of procreation. One way or another nature will try to use us for the purposes of reproduction. For men and women committed to leading a spiritual life, who wish to dedicate themselves perhaps full-time to working for the Dharma, this is food for thought indeed and something members of the Western Buddhist Order have struggled to deal with sensitively and intelligently.

Human sexuality is, of course, a very complex matter. Some people are drawn mainly or even exclusively to their own sex where the concerns of procreation do not apply. In the early days of the FWBO there was quite a bit of experimentation with same-sex partners - was this a way to fulfil healthy sexual needs without the risk of parenthood for people wishing to dedicate their lives to other things? Perhaps especially for women, sexual liaisons with people of either sex, bring with them strong emotional attachments. This, too, raises questions if you are trying to practice the Buddha's teaching of non-attachment, trying to develop the maturer kind of love which is not 'sticky' and exclusive, but based in genuine care and concern for others.

Members of a Buddhist sangha or spiritual community must necessarily ask themselves questions about how to deal with those forces skilfully, not least when they arise between those living, working and practising together. As we began discussing the articles for this issue of *Lotus Realm*, I became aware of how very complex and difficult an area it is, how sensitive too - for a person's sexuality is something so closely bound up with their sense of identity and therefore most difficult to look at objectively. Attitudes to sexuality are strongly conditioned by the cultural norms in which people grow up and it is by no means easy to reach a position of clarity and objectivity in this of all matters. Furthermore, those who define themselves as heterosexual may have different viewpoints from those who regard themselves as homosexual; and there are the sometimes very different viewpoints of men and women.

**The Buddha laid down principles** - eternal principles - applicable to any person at any time, in any place. As Buddhists it is part of our task to try and understand those principles and how to apply them in the circumstances in which we find ourselves. In this issue of *Lotus Realm* we are attempting to make a small contribution to the discussion of sex, sangha and leading a spiritual life today at the turn of the millenium.

Kalyanaprabha □



# Contributors



**Parami** was born in 1952 in Glasgow. After leaving school she tried politics, marriage and various jobs but found none of them satisfying and eventually came across the Dharma at the Glasgow Buddhist Centre in 1977. A year later she moved to London to live in a women's community and has continued to live in women's communities ever since. She was ordained in 1980 and spent many years working at the London Buddhist Centre as a teacher of meditation and Buddhism. She took a degree in English and Philosophy at the North London Polytechnic and then trained as a bereavement counsellor, as well as working with people living with AIDS. In 1992 she moved to Valencia where she is now chairwoman of the Valencia Buddhist Centre.

**Viryaprabha** was born and grew up in New Jersey, USA. She took a degree in English literature at the University of Hawaii and went on to do graduate work at the University of Massachusetts. In 1975 she met a British man, and moved with him to England where they married and had a son. She took up a career as editor of educational text books which she has continued up until the present day. She met the FWBO in 1986 in Harlow, Essex and was ordained in 1992. In 1998 she moved to Cambridge where she works full-time for the Cambridge Buddhist Centre.



**Kalyanavaca** grew up in Scotland. After taking a degree in French she went on to work in a press library in London where she came across the FWBO in 1974. In 1978 she travelled to the East and spent fifteen months living in India. On her return she joined a residential women's community in West London and worked for seven years in a wholefood business run by women associated with the West London Buddhist Centre. She went on to become secretary and press officer at Taraloka, the women's retreat Centre in Shropshire before moving to Glasgow. She currently spends her time working for a charity for homeless people; and writing. She lives in a women's community. Her book, *The Moon and Flowers: a woman's path to enlightenment*, a collection of essays by women Order members, was published in 1997.

## CONTENTS

### **5 Sex, Power and the Buddhist Community**

*Parami*

### **12 Longing for Kyo: Sex, Marriage and the Pursuit of Freedom**

*Viryaprabha*

### **16 Unexpected Treasures: On Becoming an Anagarika**

*Kalyanavaca*

### **20 News**

### **24 Review**



# Sex, Power and the Buddhist Community

*Parami*

**IN TERMS OF SEX**, in some ways it is easy being a member of the Western Buddhist Order, but in other ways it is very difficult. It is easy because there are no rules; and it is difficult for exactly the same reason. We are not a monastic order, nor are we a lay order. That has interesting implications for many areas of life, not least the sexual one. We don't take vows of celibacy at ordination, although some members of the order do take up a celibate lifestyle, and some become anagarikas, taking a public vow of celibacy - but this is not regarded as some kind of higher ordination.

Central in the life of an Order member is the act of Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels. Commitment to the Three Jewels of Buddhism (the Buddha, his teachings, and the Enlightened community) is the driving force in an Order member's life so that all other life decisions will be taken in accordance with and in the light of that commitment. No one particular lifestyle is demanded of any particular Order member. Instead, each person's chosen lifestyle will be the one that best supports his or her commitment to Going for Refuge. That Going for Refuge is worked out in practice through the living out of the Ten Ethical Precepts.

As one's ethical awareness deepens, so one finds oneself progressively moving from actions that derive from the 'power mode' to actions that are expressive of the 'love mode'.

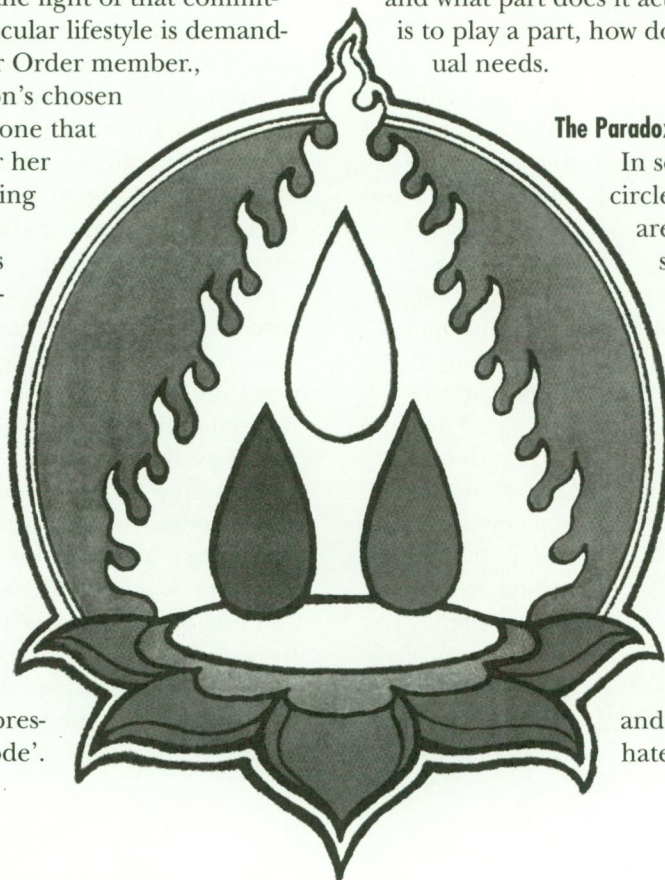
(Of course, even if one were that far developed, it is only possible to live fully in accordance with the love mode with others who are doing the same - that is, members of the spiritual community.) Every Order member is committed to eliminating as far as possible the use of power - in the sense of force and manipulation - from his or her life, and to making their lives more and more an expression of the Buddhist precepts of love and non-violence.

An important part of anyone's life is the whole area of personal relationships, including sexual relationships and the question naturally arises, how do we actually practice the third precept, which is to abstain from sexual misconduct and to practise contentment? What, when it comes down to it, is sexual misconduct? All of us need to bring clarity to that area of our lives asking ourselves what part do we want sex to play in our lives - and what part does it actually play? And if it is to play a part, how do we meet those sexual needs.

## The Paradox of Sex

In some contemporary circles sex is seen as an area where people should be able to act as they wish; where people feel they have a 'right' to exert their own individual will in their choice of sexual partners. It is seen as private territory where we cherish secret longings and unutterable desires, where we are free to dream and plot and love and hate. It is the area where

**Every Order member is committed to eliminating as far as possible the use of power - in the sense of force and manipulation - from his or her life, and to making their lives more and more an expression of the Buddhist precepts of love and non-violence**





**In the acting  
out of our  
sexual desires  
we are often  
confronted  
by great  
paradoxes -  
we can find  
ourselves at  
our apparently  
most liberated  
and yet feel  
most trapped.**

so many unconscious forces come into play, where some of our deepest hopes and fears are aroused.

In the acting out of our sexual desires we are often confronted by great paradoxes - we can find ourselves at our apparently most liberated and yet feel most trapped. We can be capable of great sacrifices and great gestures; and at the same time capable of acts of immense selfishness and become prone to petty gestures. We can write poetry, notice sunsets and see the world in bright new colours; and yet still find ourselves at times at our most repressed and fearful. We can feel a sense of apparent freedom and joy whilst all the while weaving the threads of attachment and pain.

Given all that, it is not surprising that for people trying to lead a spiritual life, sex is an area that needs consideration and thought. Given the potential to cause hurt and damage to another human being and to ourselves, as

aspiring practitioners who champion a path which leads to more and more clarity and kindness, it is imperative to bring into the light of day our personal beliefs and practices, hopes and fears in the sexual arena. This exploration must of course be individual first and foremost, but it can be facilitated by communication with friends; and by debate and discussion in a wider arena. While I would reject the rigid application of rules or norms (which, as we shall see, cannot really be part of a spiritual community,) I do feel there is a need to be aware of the potency and dangers often found in specific situations and a willingness to be

open about our sexual practices and their effect on ourselves and others.

### **Sex, Power and the Teacher**

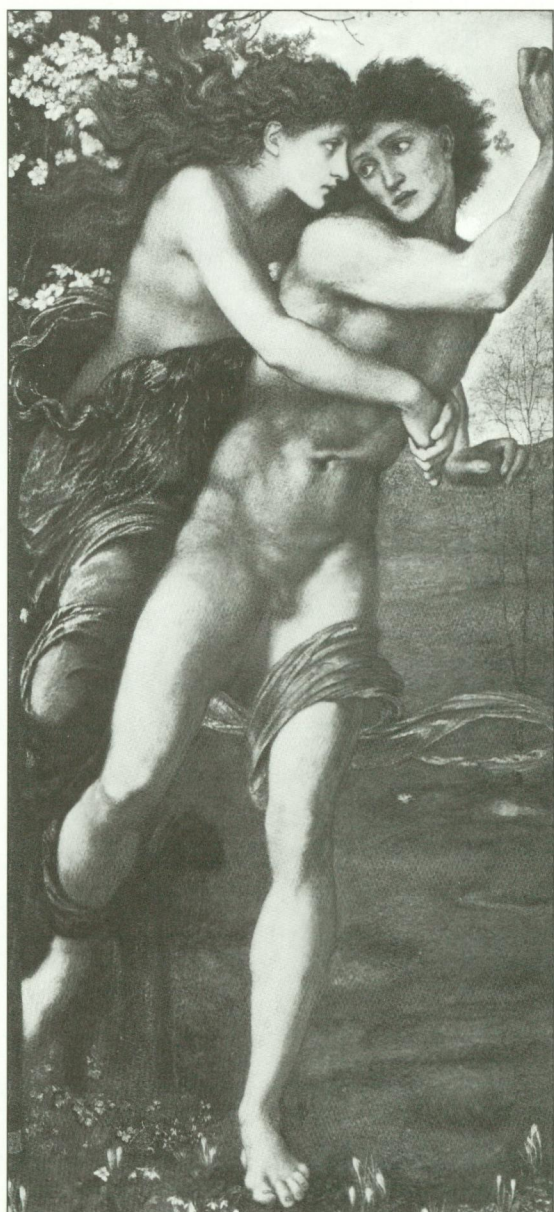
Many, although by no means all, Order members take up responsibilities as Dharma teachers at public FWBO Centres. Inevitably from time to time attractions arise between those teaching and those being taught. For those not leading a celibate life-style, and who may be looking for ways of satisfying their sexual needs, the question arises as to the appropriateness of pursuing a sexual relationship with someone who has become newly interested in the Dharma or involved in the sangha.

Over the years more experience has accumulated of the possible pitfalls and dangers in this area. There is generally a more sophisticated understanding within the Order of the heady combination of sexual attraction and power.

Power is the capacity to coerce another person to do what you want them to do - either directly or indirectly, physically or psychologically. A person is able to coerce another person either because of his or her superior physical strength; or because one person fears the other and is afraid of the physical, practical or emotional repercussions of not doing what the person who has the power wants them to do. Institutional power is usually invested in a person or a body of people, enabling certain persons to make decisions affecting others' lives. Such institutionalised power is maintained through the application of various sanctions, or, in extremity, through the use of violence - thus political power with its police forces and armies to maintain law and order. These forms of power are familiar to us all and are the hallmark of ordinary 'samsaric' life. They have no place in the spiritual community - although no doubt at times members of the spiritual community do fall into unconscious use of power.

However, there is also another kind of situation where power becomes an issue. A person may be invested with power by someone who believes that person to have greater understanding, knowledge and so on than they have themselves and they are willing to give up their own discernment and judgement, abdicating responsibility for making their own decisions. This we could call 'naive faith' and it is a 'near enemy' of the mature and healthy faith, respect and regard for those more spiritually developed.

So power here arises out of the simple fact that as a teacher one has a level of influence on people who are receptive and open, and



**Phyllis and Demophoon by Edward Burne-Jones**



perhaps in some cases unable to take full responsibility for their actions - perhaps not yet able to because not yet aware enough to do so - and thus vulnerable to being used by others for their own ends. This is the area which needs to be taken into account by members of the sangha who are teachers, if they are thinking of embarking on a sexual liaison with those whom they teach.

### Sex in the Forbidden Zone

This area is sometimes referred to as '*sex in the forbidden zone*' after the book of the same title. The author, Peter Rutter, defines this as: "*sexual behaviour between a man and a woman who have a professional relationship based on trust, specifically when the man is the woman's doctor, psychotherapist, pastor, lawyer, teacher or workplace mentor.*" (p.22).<sup>1</sup>

While I found this an interesting book with some useful psychological insights, this definition begs various questions, especially when applying it to people teaching the Dharma in their interactions with people coming to a public Buddhist Centre.

Here I want to discuss some of the questions Rutter's definition raises in relation to members of the Western Buddhist Order teaching at public FWBO Buddhist Centres - but I think these reflections may be relevant to any Dharma teachers.

### 'Professional Relationships'

Firstly, are Order members at public Centres in a 'professional relationship' to the people they are teaching? To some extent, of course, the answer is yes, they are. Generally people coming along to their first classes pay to learn about Buddhism and how to meditate. If payment is involved then a professional relationship is suggested. Even if payment is not involved, the fact that someone is teaching suggests there is something to be imparted or given and someone else there to receive it. This implies a disparity in the positions of those people. In some sense the person who has something to impart has more power than the person who is receiving.

I would not want to suggest that the relationship between someone teaching the Dharma and those receiving the teaching is one of pure professionalism. But it is probably fair to say that at least in the early stages of someone's participation in the activities of a Buddhist movement, he or she may well see their relationship with those who are teaching in that way. Teachers need to take that into account. We are responsible for our own behaviour and the effect it has on others, and that responsibility must be taken in the light



Dharma class: tea-break

of all the factors at play including how others see us. Taking responsibility for the way in which others may perceive us does not mean adapting our behaviour to conform to what others may want us to be, but a serious and adult admission of the effect of our behaviour both on those directly affected, and on the witnesses to our actions.

### Based on Trust

The next part of Rutter's definition is that the relationship is not only professional but is based on trust. So do people coming along to a public Centre place trust in the Order members they meet? To a certain extent they will and we must be aware that some people will be more vulnerable in that respect than others, for reasons connected with their own particular history, their temperament and background as well as for reasons connected with what they are actually looking for, both consciously and unconsciously, in entering a Buddhist Centre in the first place. So Dharma teachers must take that seriously and be wor-

**We are responsible for our own behaviour and the effect it has on others... that responsibility must be taken in the light of all the factors at play including how others see us.**





**Meditation can often open people up emotionally, leaving them more exposed and vulnerable than they are used to being, putting them in touch with powerful emotions and allowing blocked energy to become freed and available.**

thy of that trust. However, I think we must also be very careful not to assume too much gullibility and lack of individuality on the part of people who enter our Centre doors. One of the things I disliked about *Sex in the Forbidden Zone* was what I felt was a patronising attitude towards women on the part of the author. I felt that women were being too readily assigned the role of victim. Although I accept that in society that has been and is often the case, such a view is just too simplistic - and can even be insulting.

#### *Just Women?*

This brings me to another question. Are we only concerned, as is the author, with men in positions of trust abusing the trust of women? He explains why he has chosen to talk in those terms:

*"Because 96 percent (a consensus figure based on studies that have been done) of sexual exploitation by professionals occurs between a man in power and a woman under his care, and because the male-female power imbalance is reflective of the balance that exists in the culture at large, the forbidden zone defined in this book concerns men in power who exploit women. Although women in power can also exploit men and although both men and women engage in homosexual exploitation, such situations represent a small percentage of professional abuse."*

It might well represent a small percentage of professional abuse but that does not mean that there are not other areas to watch out for. Do I as a teacher, a lesbian, and chair-woman of a Buddhist Centre, not also have to be vigilant?

#### *Attraction and Fascination*

Meditation can often open people up emotionally, leaving them more exposed and

vulnerable than they are used to being, putting them in touch with powerful emotions and allowing blocked energy to become freed and available. This is a potent mixture and I have often seen how, as that emotion and energy is released, it can all too easily flow along the old and well-used channels of sexual attraction or romantic fascination. This can happen in many different situations. It may happen in a single-sex environment, on a retreat or in a residential community for example. I have seen women, who have always considered themselves heterosexual, fall in love or experience themselves as sexually attracted to other women. It can happen when a woman new to meditation finds herself strongly drawn to someone more experienced, someone who represents the living out of an ideal to which the newer person aspires. It can happen when the more experienced person sees the beauty of unfolding potential in the newer person. Two friends who consider themselves peers may suddenly find a new and unexpected element arising in their communication as they share the excitement of discovery and the joy of new horizons opening up.

Such attraction and fascination need not necessarily be a bad thing, especially where those newly-released energies can be gently steered into new and more creative channels. It certainly doesn't help to react to those energies out of fear - the fear of being smitten or the fear of someone else becoming attracted to you. Nor does it help to just follow such feelings unconsciously or blindly - and here I think is the importance of creating an environment of trust, clarity and kindness in which these things can be talked about and understood without guilt or repression and without shame. This of course requires a high level of self-awareness and concern for others - but after all isn't that what we are aiming for in the creation of spiritual community, in the living of an authentic spiritual life? Isn't that to some extent why we meditate anyway? We have practices which can help us specifically to develop along those lines. The mindfulness of breathing is a wonderful tool for developing clarity and awareness; and the *metta bhavana* is just the ticket in helping us to recognise the difference between real, genuine care and solidarity with other human beings on the one hand, and self-satisfaction and ego-fulfilment on the other. So if we want to develop clarity and the ability to empathise and understand what is happening to us and to our companions in the spiritual life, and to those who are setting out on this great journey, we have the means to help us create the

Dharma class





conditions for this kind of exploration. We have clearly stated Buddhist precepts to guide us through such tangled knots as falling in love and sexual desire and help us understand how to act in the face of such events. I mean here the ethical precepts which can be applied to all acts of body, speech and mind. We could say that the third precept, which directly addresses sexual conduct, is to be practised in the light of all the other precepts.

To return to the forbidden zone, other questions remain to be asked. What is an Order member in relation to people who want to learn the Dharma and/or in relation to people who have made the decision that they are Buddhist and that they want to live their life as a Buddhist within the framework of the FWBO and particularly as a member of the Western Buddhist Order? Is he or she a teacher, a mentor, a pastor? Probably all that and more. I think it would be naive to deny that as a member of the Order I do have a degree of power which I could invoke, and certainly a degree of influence over the lives of the people who participate in our movement and it could be argued that the more deeply someone wants to participate, the more power, for want of a better word, I carry.

### **Codes of Conduct?**

So how do we deal with all that? Do we need a code of sexual conduct agreed to by all members of the Western Buddhist Order, or at least agreed to by those who are teaching in public Centres? In some FWBO Centres there is an agreement that Order members will not get sexually involved with newcomers. While I appreciate and admire the genuine desire behind that agreement I am left with the question of what exactly does it mean? How is it put into practice? Within a spiritual community there is no way to legislate or ensure that such a code of conduct is adhered to except through trust, Order members trusting one another to take their responsibilities in that area seriously; and willingness to enter into communication with those who seem not to be doing so - which brings us back to personal responsibility. So rather than trying to impose a code of conduct on members of any spiritual community, I believe what is crucial is creating an ambience of openness, questioning and debate; a culture in which members of the spiritual community are ready and willing to look at their own behaviour, to acknowledge where it falls short of the ideals they are trying to live up to, and are willing to change their lives accordingly.

I suppose in the final analysis a sexual relationship between members of a sangha will depend on the individuals involved, their level of self-awareness (not easy in the area of sex at the best of times), their ability to communicate openly and honestly and a host of other factors.

There seem to be two extremes to be avoided here. One extreme is to think you are just going to develop a friendship and getting involved sexually will help deepen that friendship. Our experience over the 30 years of the FWBO's existence has led to the conclusion that sex in itself is not generally a facilitator of friendship and real communication. On the other hand some people may want to adopt a position of saying no sex between members of the sangha come what may. I think a middle way must be steered between assuming, on the one hand, that sex can automatically facilitate friendship and on the other assuming that if sex is involved there is necessarily no possibility of spiritual friendship. Both positions lack respect for the people involved and, in my opinion, show a tendency to allow genuine concern for correct behaviour to harden into dogmatic rigidity. When applied in particular instances, either to justify our own behaviour or to judge that of others, the first position is at best naive and at worse manipulative and the other shows at least a lack of kindness and a willingness to look at each case on its own merits.

An interesting point must be made at this juncture. Even if there were a consensus or general agreement about something within the Order such as not getting sexually involved with newcomers to a Centre, there is no power structure that would ensure its being adhered to. By the very nature of what it is, there can be no rules in a real spiritual community, for rules imply power, and, a spiritual community when it is really functioning as such, does not and indeed cannot invoke power of any kind. Certain Order members obviously have more influence and their voices carry more weight than those of others due to the general respect in which they are held. But ultimately there is no way that they or any other Order member or the Order as a whole could legislate for particular behaviour in the sexual or any other field of human life. If they could there would be something seriously wrong with how the Order functioned. The Order is seeking to be a spiritual community, a collection of individuals each of whom is fully personally responsible for his or her own actions. Not only must there be no possibility of legisla-

**I believe what is crucial is creating an ambience of openness, questioning and debate; a culture in which members of the spiritual community are ready and willing to look at their own behaviour, to acknowledge where it falls short of the ideals they are trying to live up to, and are willing to change their lives accordingly.**



**The true individual - taking the term in the sense of a person who is self-aware and emotionally positive, who can accept and exercise responsibility and whose energies are liberated - does not put pressure on people. At the same time, of course, the true individual cannot be pressurised.**

tion, there should be no possibility of coercion. Sangharakshita states this very clearly in a number of places. In *Wisdom Beyond Words* we find a number of interesting statements around this area:

*...within the spiritual context, there is no circumstance in which you can hand over your responsibility to someone else. (p212)*

*As a Buddhist you make your own individual decisions. If someone else were to make them for you, they wouldn't be a Buddhist; and if you accepted their decisions on your behalf, you wouldn't be a Buddhist either. (p.214)*

Perhaps even more interestingly:

*The true individual - taking the term in the sense of a person who is self-aware and emotionally positive, who can accept and exercise responsibility and whose energies are liberated - does not put pressure on people. At the same time, of course, the true individual cannot be pressurised. ... It is actually impossible for one member of the spiritual community to pressurise or bully or manipulate another. (pp249-50)<sup>2</sup>*

Of course it would be hopelessly naive to suggest that the entire Western Buddhist Order consists of people acting as true individuals all of the time and under any and all circumstances, but it is to this that all its members aspire.

The spiritual community is contrasted with the group. A group has norms and rules - whether explicit or implicit - and all sorts of ways and means of ensuring that its members follow those rules. Until he or she has become a true individual, there is always the

danger that an Order member may fall into being a group member, either blindly following and /or blindly trying to force others to follow group norms.

We are not left with easy answers. Sex is a very powerful force, one which cannot be ignored; and for people leading a Buddhist life, including those teaching the Dharma, dealing skilfully with that aspect of life is going to present an on-going challenge.

I think in the end it is a matter of referring back to our starting point of Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels whose expression is the abdication of the power mode in favour of the love mode. When the power mode is abdicated, with all its subtle manipulation that seeks to use another person for its own ends, and the love mode invoked with its genuine care and concern for another's well-being, the relationship that comes into being is one of kalyana mitrata or spiritual friendship. So long as those who teach the Dharma are genuinely concerned to give expression to kalyana mitrata in their relations with others, then the problems of sex and power in the sangha can be overcome and the integrity of the spiritual community will be maintained.

#### Notes:

1. Peter Rutter, M.D., *Sex in the Forbidden Zone*, Unwin Paperbacks, 1990
2. Sangharakshita, *Wisdom Beyond Words*, Windhorse, Glasgow 1993





# *An Ode to Friendship*

*Friendship! Peculiar boon of heaven,  
The noble mind's delight and pride,  
To Men\* and Angels only given,  
To all the lower world deny'd*

*While love, a stranger to the blest,  
Parent of thousand wild desires,  
The human and the savage breast  
Inflames alike with raging fires*

*With bright, but oft destructive gleam,  
Alike o'er all his lightnings fly;  
Thy lambent glories only beam  
Around the fav'rites of the sky.*

*Directress of the brave and just,  
O guide me through life's darksome way,  
And let the tortures of mistrust  
On selfish bosoms only prey.*

*Thy gentle flows of guiltless joys  
On fools and villains ne'er descend;  
In vain for thee the monarch sighs  
And hugs a flatterer for a friend.*

*When Virtues kindred Virtues meet  
And sister souls together join,  
Thy pleasures, permanent as great,  
Are all transporting, all divine.*

*Oh, must their ardours cease to glow  
When souls to blissful climes remove?  
What rais'd our Virtues here below,  
Shall aid our Happiness above.*

*Samuel Johnson*

\* 'Men' here, of course, denotes a truly human being.





# Longing for Kyo: *Sex, Marriage and the Pursuit of Freedom*

Viryaprabha

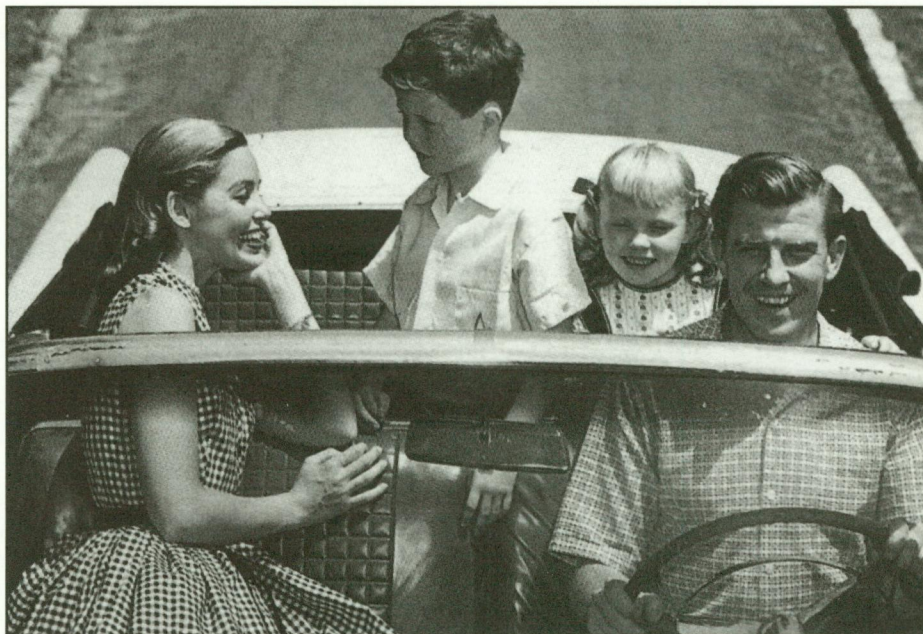
**I grew up in  
white, small-  
town America  
where, in the  
1950s and  
early 1960s,  
sex was  
a guilty  
secret unless  
you were  
heterosexual  
and married**

I WAS BORN IN 1946, part of the post-war baby boom. I grew up in white, small-town America where, in the 1950s and early 1960s, sex was a guilty secret unless you were heterosexual and married. It's hard to imagine now what those conditions were like. I look at my twenty-year old son, coming of age in the late 1990's, and see a completely different set of conditions. He's been brought up in a society with a much more open and tolerant attitude to sex and sexuality. But still, I know he will suffer - simply because he's a sexual being.

The word 'sex' was never mentioned in my family when I was growing up. My brother, sister and I had obviously sprung from somewhere, but the 'facts of life', of how we had come into being, were not discussed - neither in our family nor at school. My sex education consisted of reading forbidden books (*Lady Chatterley's Lover* was a particular favourite)

and whispered conversations in school hallways. My girlfriends and I spent vast amounts of time speculating about what went where.

There was enormous group pressure to conform to a certain standard of sexual behaviour, and awful feelings of guilt if you didn't. Most of this pressure came from the Christian church where homosexuality was forbidden and there was an ambivalent attitude towards women. There was strong group pressure for women to remain virgins until they married. Women, more so than men, were described by their sexuality. 'Good' girls were virgins and 'bad' girls were sexually promiscuous. Before the widespread use of birth-control pills, 'bad' girls who got caught (became pregnant) were sent away from home to have their babies, and there was strong pressure for them to have their babies adopted.



1950s family life

## First Impressions

When I was sixteen I read Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. Hawthorne wrote this in 1850 but the scene of the story is Puritan New England in the seventeenth century. Hester Prynne, the heroine, is married but she commits adultery, has a baby and refuses to name her lover. For this sin she must wear for the remainder of her days the scarlet letter 'A' upon her bosom. It was not so much the depressing nature of the story that bothered me, but the realisation that not much had changed since Hawthorne had written it over a hundred years ago! Women, and many men, were still being branded for their sexuality, particularly if it deviated in any way from what was



considered the norm.

Of course, people were deviating then as always, and the stifling conformity of this time exploded in the mid-1960s. Suddenly (for the younger generation at least) it was all right to be sexually active, to be homosexual and to enjoy sex. By the late 1960s there were love-ins, be-ins, people living in alternative 'family' groups and people living outside conventional family life altogether. With the widespread use of the birth-control pill, sex was suddenly free, free of consequences (and responsibility), or so one was led to believe. As Woodie Guthrie sang, 'The times they are a-changing.' It was a time of great creativity and of opening up to new ideas.

But, of course, it's not that easy to shake off strong sexual and social conditioning. I applauded the old order being overturned, but in hindsight I can see that one set of group values was simply being replaced by another. All the complications that can arise because of sexual activity - jealousy, competitiveness, anxiety, possessiveness - didn't disappear just because sex was suddenly more in the open. Many people, myself included, got hurt in the name of 'openness' and 'sexual freedom'. By the mid-1970s I was ready for a change. I got married in 1975 and two years later we had a baby. This was the beginning of a period of over twenty years of living together as a family and being in a monogamous relationship. It was an important time for me. I wanted, and during most of this time I definitely needed, the psychological security of a steady and committed relationship.

### Deepening Reflections

At the beginning of my marriage, as in earlier periods in my life, I didn't have much perspective on why I behaved as I did. I could feel madly in love with my husband one day, and hate him the next. I knew my own happiness and suffering were bound up with his, but I didn't know why. I didn't begin to understand this until I became a Buddhist.

In *Vision and Transformation*, Sangharakshita describes various ways that people begin to get a glimpse of Perfect Vision. 'It may arise,' he says, 'out of their whole experience of life - especially as they grow older and it is to be hoped more mature. When all the different threads seemingly come together, and the pattern of their lives seems to make some kind of sense, to reflect some glimmer of meaning, then out of the depths of their simple human maturity Perfect Vision may arise.'<sup>1</sup>

I've reflected on these words whilst writing this article. I'm not claiming that Perfect Vision has arisen for me. But I am 51 years old and a lot has happened in that half a century! At 51 I think you can begin to get



1978: Jesse's birthday

some sense of the pattern of your life, of the many different threads that have been woven together to create the fabric. I can see how sex has been a strong thread in that intricate weave, an important part of my life, of how I see myself, judge myself, feel about myself. The sex drive is very powerful. Evidently the Buddha once said that if there was another human passion as powerful as the sexual urge, there would be no hope of Enlightenment for human beings! It was only when I started practising as a Buddhist that I began to have some real awareness of this powerful force, and the many other strong forces that were at work within my psyche.

Like everybody who seriously commit themselves to a spiritual path, I have had to consider how to deal with this urge appropriately. When I first came across the FWBO in 1985 I'd been married for ten years and had an eight year old son. Early on in my involvement I attended a retreat at Taraloka women's Retreat Centre. I certainly felt I was in a minority being married! I picked up the message that being part of a family or involved in a long-term relationship was not encouraged. This came over through some



**"The sex drive can be a source of very strong feelings of attachment and possessiveness."**

**"When one comes into close physical or emotional contact with another person within the context of a sexual relationship usually all sorts of psychological projections take place."**

**"Fidelity is a very positive quality, whereas attachment is not. When you practise fidelity towards someone, you are valuing them for their own sake."**

of the literature I read where the emphasis seemed to be on the importance of living in single-sex communities if you wanted to make spiritual progress! But, luckily for me, individual Order members that I met exerted no pressure on me whatsoever to change my living situation. I found them both kind and encouraging and it did not seem that my marital status need stand in the way of my committing myself to the Three Jewels!

In 1987 the FWBO Newsletter *Golden Drum* published two issues on Sex and Sexuality. By now I had some awareness of the Buddhist ethical precepts but I had rather naively assumed that I didn't need to reflect that much on the third precept because I was married. (The third precept is to undertake to abstain from sexual misconduct; and to practise stillness, simplicity and contentment. Sexual misconduct is traditionally defined as rape, adultery and abduction, but it can be taken to refer to any kind of sexual behaviour that causes harm to others or to oneself - whether physical or psychological.)

I was particularly impressed by three statements that Sangharakshita made in an interview in the October issue which made me think more deeply about sex:

*'The sex drive can be a source of very strong feelings of attachment and possessiveness.'*

*'When one comes into close physical or emotional contact with another person within the context of a sexual relationship usually all sorts of psychological projections take place.'*

*'Fidelity is a very positive quality, whereas attachment is not. When you practise fidelity towards someone, you are valuing them for their own sake.'*

I began to have a lot more general awareness of my relationship with my husband. I could see that I did want to 'possess' him. I wanted him to be mine; in a way I wanted to own him. Not only did I want to own him,

I also wanted him to be the way 'I' wanted him to be, not the way he actually was. I could see that I suffered because this was impossible. I suffered because I was not aligning myself with reality, with the way things actually were. I also began to see the real value of single-sex activities, particularly retreats. They gave me the chance to see who I was outside of a sexual relationship. I started to get a sense of the qualities that I projected onto my husband that I was afraid to acknowledge in myself. I found I could relax and be myself with other women in a way that was not possible for me when men were around.

Sex seems to be one of the main areas of our lives where we are in real danger of getting caught up in strong craving. In the sexual act we are exposing ourselves, physically and emotionally to the arousing of those forces. So much of our self-view is caught up in the sexual act, particularly our views about whether we are attractive (therefore loved) or unattractive (rejected). So we desire from the object of our love this constant reassurance of self-worth. Ultimately, as in other forms of craving, we want the desired object to be permanent, unchanging, something that by its very nature it cannot be.

In terms of sexual ethics, there can be benefits to being married or in a long-term steady sexual relationship. It can affirm you, provide a base from which to grow. Because you are settled in a sexual relationship, hopefully content with this, at least you aren't constantly on the lookout for the next sexual experience, the next falling in love. The positive aspects of the third precept, developing stillness, simplicity and contentment, can be given a chance to grow. Within marriage, if you do begin to see and care for

each other as individuals, the positive quality of fidelity can develop.

In 1990 my husband went to Spain on a four month-long ordination retreat. He returned a member of the Western Buddhist Order. Two years later I was ordained. We remained married even though our







paths to ordination were very different. I think our marriage has actually improved because we are Buddhists, in particular because, as we have become more aware, we have become much more realistic in our expectations of one another.

### Letting Go

In the last few years I've had other reflections about sex and marriage. Shantinayaka decided a few years ago that he wanted to move to Seattle to help his friend, Aryadaka, with FWBO activities there. I decided to stay in England. Our decision to live apart has certainly been the most challenging thing we have done within our marriage. For the first time in over twenty years I'm not living with my sexual partner. I've had to reflect on something else that Sangharakshita said about sex: *'You experience the force of a drive when you oppose it. Usually, people tend to go along with their sexual drives, and so don't experience their strength.'*

The force of this drive is indeed tremendous. Sometimes I long for a lover, for intimacy, being touched, being special to someone even if only temporarily. But I have to ask myself: what more could I wring out of a sexual experience that I haven't already had? What am I really after? Would a new erotic experience really help me to be happy? And of course, there are always those consequences for that other human being.

There is a very beautiful poem by

Basho, a seventeenth century Japanese monk and poet:

In Kyo I am  
and still I long for Kyo -  
oh, bird of time!<sup>2</sup>

Basho very elegantly evokes the dilemma of our humanness. This longing was with me as a child. It was there in adolescence. I couldn't satisfy it when I got married or had a child myself. Sangharakshita writes of this dilemma in *A Survey of Buddhism*:

*'Happiness can be attained either when existence accords with our desires, or when our desires are in harmony with existence. The second alternative is difficult; but the first is impossible.'*<sup>5</sup>

### Notes:

1. Sangharakshita, *Vision and Transformation*, Windhorse, Glasgow 1990, p20
2. *Golden Drum* Oct. 1987, pp4-14
3. *ibid.*, p8
4. *An Introduction to Haiku*, transl. and commentary by Harold G. Henderson, Doubleday, New York 1958
5. Sangharakshita, *A Survey of Buddhism*, Tharpa, London 1987, p196

For the first  
time in  
twenty years  
I am not  
living with  
my sexual  
partner. I  
have had to  
reflect on  
something  
else ...  
"You experi-  
ence the  
force of the  
drive when  
you oppose  
it. Usually,  
people tend  
to go along  
with their  
sexual drives,  
and so don't  
experience  
their  
strength."  
The force of  
this drive is  
indeed  
tremendous -  
but I have to  
ask myself:  
what am I  
really after?



# Unexpected Treasures: On Becoming an Anagarika

*Kalyanavaca*

NO FUN, NO SEX, no mate, no marriage, no kids; extreme, cranky, unnatural, misanthropic, lonely, friendless, poor, dried-up, shrivelled, prudish, strait-laced - such are popular notions surrounding celibacy. Those surrounding chastity are even worse, conjuring up visions of maiden aunts cut off in Ivory Towers, or virgins (usually female) with eyes cast heavenward.

Convent Thoughts  
by Charles Allston Collins

It has to be said straight away that celibacy

does not seem to be a popular option within the Western Buddhist Order, if we are to judge by the percentage of the Order (around 5%) who have become anagarikas (people who have publicly taken a long-term vow of chastity as a means of deepening their spiritual practice).

Perhaps most of us hold some of the above notions about what it means to give up sex, in which case it is not surprising that celibacy is unpopular. Nevertheless, since becoming an anagarika myself, a frequent comment people make to me about the celibate life is that they do aspire to it, but (echoing St Augustine) 'not just yet'! This indicates that many people hold the practice of chastity as an ideal. Certainly throughout the ages people from diverse religious traditions have chosen the life of chastity, which has been closely linked with monasticism, and have seen it as an ideal way of life for the spiritual aspirant. Buddhism is no exception.

I'd like to share with you my own slow road towards taking up the practice of chastity as an anagarika. Before continuing, however, I want to clear up any confusion that may exist around the words 'celibacy' and 'chastity'. Both come from Latin: 'celibacy' from *caelebs*, unmarried; and 'chastity' from *castus*, clean, pure, chaste, innocent, holy, pious. So the original meaning of celibacy was simply the state of not being married, and in a traditional society this would automatically mean not engaging in sexual activity with a partner. Nowadays, celibacy means 'a commitment to abstention from marriage, especially by a person who has taken a religious vow of chastity', and chaste means 'not having experienced sexual intercourse, virginal; abstaining from unlawful sexual intercourse; abstaining from all sexual intercourse'. It is interesting that this word is rooted in a word meaning clean, pure, and holy, because this indicates an underlying view that having sex is somehow unclean, impure, and not holy. So where does this view originate?





It does seem that those who try to follow a spiritual path in the West often think that sex is somehow 'dirty', and that to be 'holy' one has to give it up. These attitudes come from orthodox Christian teaching on sex, and is linked with the ideas of Original Sin and the Fall of Man. Even if we consciously reject these teachings, they can continue to have a strong unconscious influence on us for many years, and can colour our understanding of any other religion we choose to embrace. This was my own experience. I grew up with the notion firmly rooted that sex was sinful unless it took place within the holy sacrament of marriage, and even there should only be engaged in for purposes of procreation. Any other form of sexual activity - were it within marriage or outside of marriage, whether masturbation, or of course sexual activity with members of one's own sex or with animals - was seen as immoral. (Those not brought up as Christians probably also imbibed these notions surrounding sex.) Even today, public standards surrounding correct sexual behaviour are still centred on orthodox Christian values, as can be witnessed any day of the week in tabloid head-lines, whose stories often adopt a tone of outraged virtue whilst imparting the most salacious details about the sexual failings of our fellow humans. For better or worse, sexual activity is expected to be confined within a long-term partnership, usually in a monogamous form.

For me as I reached adulthood - as for many people from my generation - marriage didn't make sense, especially not the idea of monogamy. It seemed an unlikely recipe for happiness, with people having to make exclusive, life-long vows to each other before they were really old enough to take on such a commitment. Even when a marriage was happy, I had witnessed the awful heart-break which followed the early death of a spouse, when my father died suddenly. I was just sixteen, and, confronted with the truth of impermanence in a big way, I dealt with it by deciding that I would never marry. This decision coloured my life. The choices that remained to me, were to be a sinner, indulging in unlawful sex and risking eternal damnation, or to remain chaste all my life. This seemed a stark choice.

Two years later I rejected Christianity, which seemed so full of prohibitions and restrictions. The era of 'free love' was dawning, the 'Swinging Sixties'. But although I had consciously rejected Christianity, I did not find it easy to free myself from its emotional grip, and sex continued to be linked in my mind with feelings of unease and guilt. In trying to free myself from this guilt, and in pur-



suit of happiness, I went to extremes, taking many sexual partners, and experiencing for myself the suffering of attachment many times over. The prevailing myth told me that in order to be happy I needed only to find the right partner, and all would be well. In this new culture, marriage itself was no longer necessary, but, it seemed, a sexual relationship was. I hoped against hope that such a sexual relationship could be healthy, but try as I might I did not experience this. I wanted to love fully and passionately, but there were always complications, caused, as I later saw, by my, or my lover's, unrealistic expectations, attachments and neurotic projections. And I found that sex was addictive, even when I did not enjoy it.

I was intrigued by chastity. At that time I had a Christian view of it, which was that it meant freedom from sin, purity and holiness, and being nearer to God. Christian nuns are referred to as 'brides of Christ', implying that for them chastity is some kind of union with God. Perhaps it is even seen by some as a gift from God. The Buddhist view of chastity, often referred to as brahmachariya (faring in god-like states of mind), is different. Sex is not demonised, and there is therefore no

The Sixties

**The prevailing myth told me that in order to be happy I needed only to find the right partner, and all would be well... marriage itself was no longer necessary - but a sexual relationship was.**





Kalyanavaca 1975

**I wanted to  
love fully and  
passionately,  
but there  
were always  
complications,  
caused, as I  
later saw,  
by my, or  
my lover's,  
unrealistic  
expectations,  
attachments  
and neurotic  
projections.**

need to sanctify it within marriage. Abstinence from sex is seen more as moving towards stillness, simplicity and contentment in one's life than moving away from something 'sinful' or 'dirty'. The Buddha recognised that the sex drive was one of the most powerful known to humanity, and as such is likely to ensnare us in strong bonds of attachment and neurotic desire, which he had identified as the source of all suffering. So it made practical sense to abstain from sex, as an aid to overcoming the tendency towards strong attachments, and to help one move away from the kama-loka (the world of sensuous desire) to the rupa-loka (the realm of archetypal form), the arupa-loka (the still more refined realm which surpasses even that of archetypal form), and beyond, into the transcendental freedom of Nirvana. The Buddha recommended the chaste life of a homeless wanderer as the best conditions for spiritual practice. This view of chastity made sense to me, so after I was ordained in 1992, moving towards chastity seemed the next step. I wanted to commit myself as fully to the spiritual life as I could, to move the basis of my trust more to reliance on the Buddha.

I took a 6-month vow of chastity, with all these notions about dwelling in the brahma-realms firmly in place. I felt gloriously free at first. But a few months later I began to feel restricted and constricted by the practice, locked-in, and when the term of the vow ran out I did not renew it. Where were the realms of beauty I had expected to find? The rupa-loka, the blissful meditations, the god-like states of mind? Instead, I had felt depleted and depressed, out of touch with myself. I couldn't understand it. I thought perhaps the

problem lay in my view of what a vow meant. I had faith in the Buddha's recommendation, so I continued to practise without a vow for a few years, experimenting now and again with shorter vows, just to see how they felt. Gradually I realised that vows no longer felt restrictive, but had become an aid and reminder of my purpose, so I began to think in terms of becoming an anagarika, so that I could commit myself as fully as possible to the life of beauty and freedom. I still had a few reservations in my mind around my motives. Was I still just running away from pain, not willing to face up to the realities of existence? Perhaps I should try out another sexual relationship, just to see if I could have one in which I would not suffer through attachment. Gradually I came to understand that I would not solve this conundrum through engaging again in sex itself. As long as I was thinking along these lines I was going to be defined by sexual parameters, and I wanted to be free from these, to free myself from the kama-loka.

My path to becoming an anagarika was greatly helped by talking to other practitioners. We formed a *brahmachariya kula*, or group of people who were practising chastity within the Western Buddhist Order. We studied, discussed, and shared our experiences. I became more and more convinced that the life of the anagarika was the one for me, and that I need not worry too much about my motivation. I stopped looking for my meditation practice to improve, and began to notice that other areas of my life were blossoming, and in fact had been for some time - I was experiencing the unexpected treasures of my title.

Friendship has always been important to me, and has become even more of a focus in my life. I find myself with more of a genuine interest in others, and a wish to be of service to them in whatever way I can. Perhaps I'm becoming a better friend.

Another area which has been a great source of conflict for me has gradually become clearer. For years I have wished to write, and put aside my wish, thinking it conflicted with my spiritual practice. The life of chastity has freed up my energy and given me the impetus to take up the challenge of creative writing, and I am deliberately centring my life around this now. I can feel that my spiritual practice and writing are linked. The combination of meditation, chastity and writing is powerful indeed, and I am at my happiest when on meditation and writing retreats. Am I less attached in life? It's too early yet to say - but I am becoming more generous and giving away things to which I was attached



even though they were no longer of use to me. This has been surprisingly difficult, and I can only think that, coming from a poor background, much of my psychological security used to be tied up in material things. Giving them away leads me to rely more on the Three Refuges.

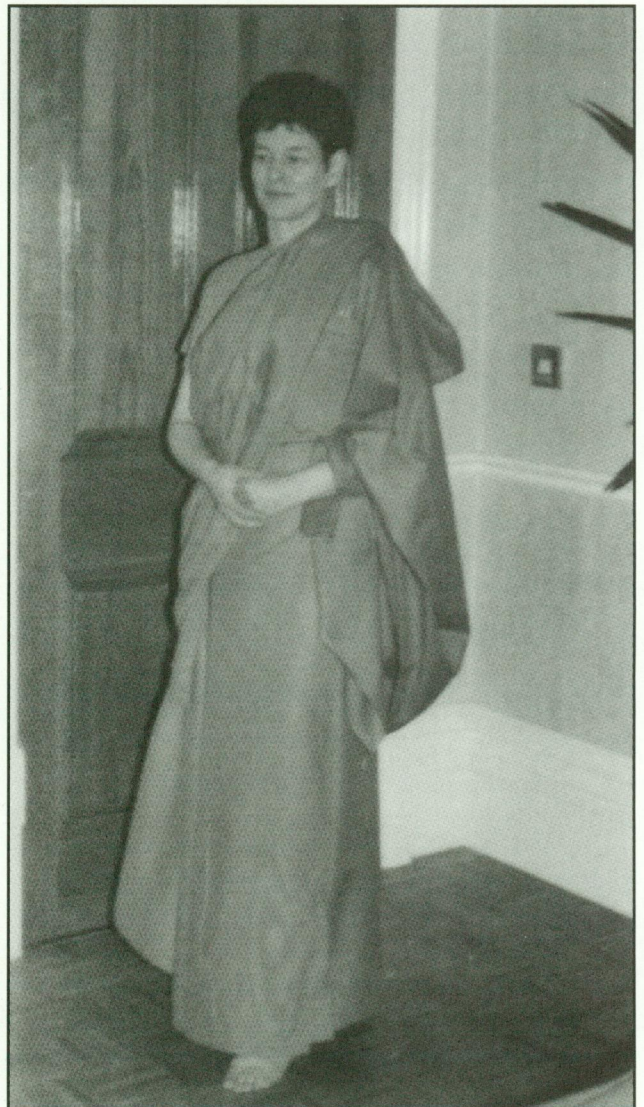
The Buddha spoke no less than the truth when he said that less attachment leads to more joy. My dream to be able to love more fully is also coming true. I now feel free to do so without complications creeping in. It's not that I am now suddenly immune to sexual attraction, and that I never fall in love: I do, and it feels great and enlivening, and my heart sings and opens just as it used to, but because sex is no longer a possibility between us, I'm able to communicate with my beloved freely in a way I never could before, tongue-tied in all my fears. These are just a few of the fruits of my practice. I feel more content and less prone to depression. Friends say that I am lighter, and easier to be with.

So how has it been practising within a Sangha only 5% of whom are celibate? Women friends say that they feel inspired by my taking the step of becoming an anagarika, but I have yet to hear in any detail why. One friend said recently that she found it challenging, not due to anything I've said about it, but just by my living it. I am becoming more of an individual, but I do experience it as difficult to be perceived as a challenge just by being the way I am! Men friends in the Sangha feel more relaxed in my company. I suppose I am no longer a threat, or a challenge. I feel more relaxed in their company. I no longer have to go through the agonies that accompany sexual attraction: the wondering if it's mutual, the worrying over whether to say anything or not, the fear of rejection, misery, loneliness; the fear of making a mistake, of not being sure if it's love or lust, or maybe both; and even if it is mutual, wondering if they really do love you and aren't just using you for their own relief, using you as a safety valve, becoming their insurance against the lonely bed, against growing old alone with nobody to look after them. Wondering if that's all I'm doing too: do I really care about them, or am I looking for that insurance policy? I am thankful that this is all a thing of the past. Communication is simply more enjoyable and straight-forward.

It hasn't all been plain sailing, though. Some people are a little unsure how to relate to me. From little comments and jokes I hear around me, I pick up the kinds of distorted ideas that people have of chastity. For example, people think they can't talk to me about

sex, or their love affairs, but that's nonsense. I haven't suddenly turned into a prudish, repressed old maid just because I'm an anagarika. I still want to hear about what's important in other people's lives, and that often includes sexual relationships. I don't really feel like an ascetic, and still have my little indulgences. I still enjoy going to the cinema, though I admit that the so-called 'love-interest' parts tend to pass me by; they rarely seem to explore what really goes on between sexual partners in terms of deep relationship, and just reinforce my opinion that what I'm being told is a fairy-tale: the myth that another person can fill up that aching void within, can somehow complete us, can give meaning to our lives. It's fine to long for fulfilment and completeness, but I think we mistake the means and become trapped in a lesser goal, ensnared by our attachment and need. Perhaps it is eccentric to be celibate in this day and age, but I have to say that my experience of it so far has exceeded my expectations. I have changed, and I have deepened my spiritual practice. By becoming an anagarika I feel free to love others fully; I'm not restricted to just one person, and the more I love, the freer I feel, and the bigger my heart can grow. The distance between self and other diminishes, the ego becomes less important, and true freedom seems ever more attainable.

**The Buddha recommended the chaste life of a homeless wanderer as the best conditions for spiritual practice. This view of chastity made sense to me.**



Kalyanavaca in anagarika robes



# Under the Eiffel Tower

Varadakini

## Last Summer Varadakini left her community in Cambridge, UK, to establish the first FWBO Centre in France.

IT IS NOT EASY for me to speak of the first steps of the FWBO in Paris. It is not easy to speak of what is most intimate, precious and at the same time unknown and unknowable. It is like trying to describe a meditation on a Buddha or Bodhisattva.. To a certain extent of course I know what I am doing: I am creating the conditions for the Unconditioned to permeate my life, so that I can live more and more in harmony with Reality. But beyond a certain point I know I do not know, and have to allow myself to be guided by unknown ways of being, I have to trust in 'the new.'

I arrived in Paris six months ago with my suitcase, an open heart and my sleeves rolled up! I came because there was no FWBO in France; and because I felt I needed a big project to which I could surrender my self. The fact that I am French provided the link.

The Windhorse Trading Company offered me a post as their representative in France. My vision for my headquarters in Paris was of a small showroom-cum-office-

cum-Buddhist Centre - the Centre made up of a reception room with a shrine room next to it and a little cell for me to live in at the back. I found a premises to meet these requirements within a month, and with the valued help of friends from both sides of the Channel, I redecorated them. During the first couple of months I had to concern myself a great deal with practical matters - not just opening premises, but opening bank accounts, dealing with legal matters and so on. I find it increasingly demanding

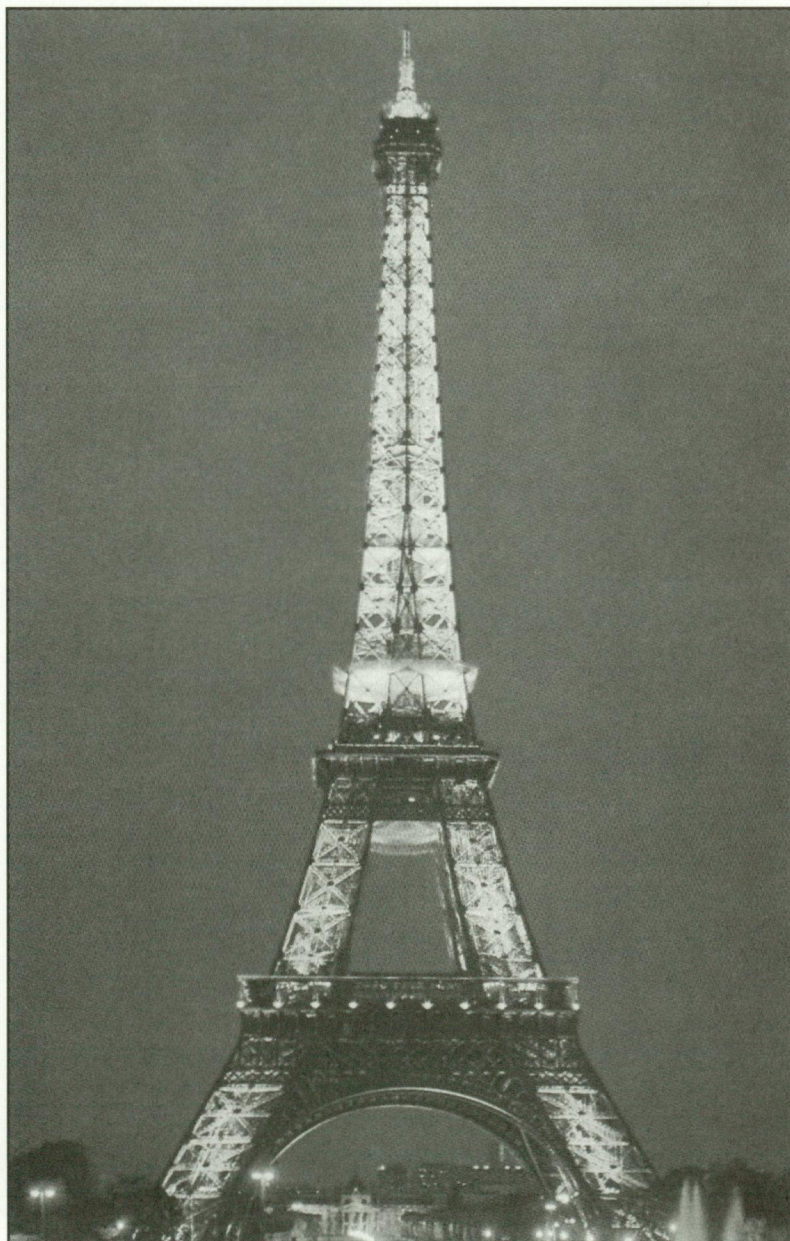
to function in that kind of way but of course it was necessary if our activities were to take off.

On 29th October 1997 I was able to hold the first class of *Les Amis de l'Ordre Bouddhiste Occidental à Paris*, during which I invited our friends to say what they themselves wanted from our Centre; and I spoke about my vision: I spoke not just of our public Buddhist Centre in the city, but of rural retreat Centres; Buddhist businesses; and residential communities. I spoke of festivals and ordinations - for I

could imagine that in time some of our friends would become members of the Western Buddhist Order.

The retreat Centre I imagined situated to the north-east of the Massif Central. It would not only hold retreats for those coming along to our city Centres, but house various permanent communities - groups of people coming together around a common interest in art, meditation, illuminating Dharma texts, or translating the Dharma. It would be in some way under the influence of Padmasambhava, and its influence would extend all through Europe. The city establishments would be just as grand, with libraries, shrine rooms that were like temples, open all day to the public, vegetarian cookery classes, martial arts and yoga classes....

I felt as if I were on fire as I described this vision of the future of our







The new premises

activities. Nor do I think it far-fetched. It will just take time, people, and the Three Jewels. I will not see it coming into flower during this life-time. I see my task as creating the foundations of something that will last. Such foundations will arise, I think, out of a meeting between the timeless and universal Dharma and the people and conditions in France today. If my actions are to be sound, they need to arise out of a two-fold receptivity: receptivity to the Three Jewels on the one hand, and to people and circumstances on the other. In practice this means I need to think through and understand for myself, in the light of my understanding and experience of Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels, all the models I have received from Sangharakshita and the FWBO so far about how to practise the Dharma and how to create Sangha. I need to be in communication with and receptive to the wealth of experience which has accumulated within the Western Buddhist Order; and to listen, really listen, to people who come along to our classes, so I can feel the mood of the times; and to really listen to the experience of other Buddhist teachers in France. Right now my task of learning seems endless. I have only just begun.

Each month has brought something new. I have experienced shock at the violence of the world; anxiety and panic at the amount there is to do; vulnerability when it seemed I could not rely on anything around me. Buddhism is high fashion here. Sects and their

murky doings have a high profile too. I have felt myself standing alone, naked in front of others' opinions. At first I felt I needed to protect or explain myself, but then realised that there is a general mood of suspicion and anxiety and little open-mindedness - I didn't need to take it too personally.

Our Centre is small, like a little tent pitched on the pavement of the great city. Yet when behind flimsy bamboo blinds and a bright Buddhist banner we sit practising meditation just a few feet away from the ever-agitated street world, we often find our concentration is strong.

I hold two classes a week, one for Regulars, and one for Newcomers. There is a practice evening on full-moon nights. We have had our first day retreat and we will soon have our first weekend retreat in a friend's country house. Then there are special events planned such as a picnic (as well as other practices) in the Bois de Boulogne when members of the Cambridge Sangha come to visit us.

Have I noticed anything

particularly French in the way we do things? Well, we greet each other by exchanging kisses on both cheeks and part in the same way! I particularly delight in this custom. It can be accompanied by a hug or a squeeze of the shoulder. It can welcome, encourage, or appease after a heated conversation. It is a good physical way to express one's awareness of somebody, and one's metta. Other than that I cannot say I have noticed anything particularly French about us. I am more aware of how the forces of greed, hatred and delusion, generosity, kindness and knowledge pull the human heart in so many directions on both sides of the Channel equally.

In the end it is the people who make my heart feel so wonderfully new and my face beam with happiness, whether they are our friends who come along to the Centre, or the millions who live in this huge city with whom I share my life. It is they who make me love Paris. It is not the Seine, nor the museums (which I have not visited), nor the cafes (which I do not frequent), nor the culture, nor even the Eiffel Tower that keep me here. It is to the people of Paris that I bow with deepest gratitude. It is they who play so keenly in my heart the chords of happiness and pain to teach me the tunes of compassion and equanimity.

Varadakini with friends at the new Centre





# Tribute to Ayya Khema

*Kalyanaprabha*

IT WAS WITH SOME sadness that I learnt of the death of Ayya Khema who passed away on the 2nd November 1997 at her German headquarters, Buddha-Haus, in Uttenbühl. The news brought to mind memories of our meeting at the European Buddhist Union congress in Berlin back in 1992 when we had tried to continue a discussion that we had been conducting by letter. The congress turned out to be too busy a place to take things further, and Ayya Khema was in any case too much in demand by the public and the press for us to have more than a brief exchange. It was enough, however, to leave me with a strong impression of a woman, who, though of diminutive size, had a forceful personality, and was not afraid to speak her own mind.

Ayya Khema led a somewhat extraordinary life. Her recently published autobiography, *Ich Schenke Euch Mein Leben*, (I Give To You My Life) follows her progress from Berlin, where she was born in 1923, and grew up, to her return to her native country after half a century's absence. In the meantime life took her to Scotland, China, California, Mexico, South America, India, Pakistan and Australia in most of which she spent substantial periods of time. Her early life was brutally disrupted by the rise of Nazism and the Second World War. She escaped from Berlin on the last train that took Jewish children out of the country. After spending a year in Glasgow, she managed to travel to Shanghai on a Japanese steamer to join her parents. This happy event was short-lived when the Japanese invaded, rounded up the Jews into a ghetto and began bombing the city. In a memorable scene the young 'Ilse', as she was called, was standing in front of their apartment when the ground literally opened and swallowed up a neighbour who happened to be standing near her.

Eventually she escaped and, along with other Jews, settled in the USA, and for several years led a rather ordinary suburban life in

California. However, from this too she had to escape and her life continues as a series of adventures in foreign parts. Some of the most fascinating anecdotes in her autobiography describe the tours she and her second husband, Gerd, and small son, Jeffrey, made through Amazonian forests and Indian plains.

It was in India at the ashram of Sri Aurobindo that she first discovered meditation. She took to it immediately and realised this was just what she had been looking for as a means to personal change. But it was still some years before she eventually came across the teaching of the Buddha when the English Buddhist monk, Phra Khantipalo, visited the Australian farm where she and her family had settled. As soon as she heard the Dharma, she felt yes, this I can understand and put into practise - which she did.

The rest of her life was dedicated to the practise and propagation of the Dharma. Her personal practice of meditation and her work for the Dharma seem, in fact, remarkable. She was a natural meditator, able to experience some of the highest meditative absorptions, or 'jhanas', and yet she stayed faithful to the Buddha's

exhortation not to be side-tracked by the pleasures of meditation but to realise the truth of impermanence, a theme on which she reflected throughout her life, and on which she exhorted others to reflect.

In 1979 she was ordained as a nun and given the name Ayya Khema (ayya being a title or form of address.) For the next two decades she worked tirelessly to spread the Dharma, first with Khantipalo in Australia at Wat Buddha-Dharma; and subsequently founding Nuns Island off the coast of Sri Lanka where women could come and experience intensive Dharma practice. Eventually life there became too hazardous and she responded to invitations to return to her native Germany to continue her work there. 'As someone who had been forced to flee the Nazis, losing all family belongings, and who had lost most of her family in the holocaust, [I] wanted to be able to show the German people it is possible to forgive completely.'<sup>1</sup>

During these years she published some two dozen books, many of which have been translated into English and other languages. Among her most well known publications are *Being Nobody*, *Going Nowhere*, and *When the Iron Eagle flies* (reviewed in issue 8 of *Dakini - Lotus Realm's* predecessor) She led many retreats, and taught many people to meditate.

A week before her death, Ayya Khema ordained one of her own disciples, giving her the name Sanghamitta; and in the course of the ceremony created a new Order, the 'Order of the Western Forest Monastery Tradition', which has been called 'her last major task.'

At this time of change and challenge following Ayya Khema's departure, we wish our friends at Buddha-Haus the very best in continuing the work of their dedicated teacher.

## Note:

1. "Dedicated to the Dharma: The Life and Work of Ayya Khema", *Lotus Realm* 4, Summer 1996

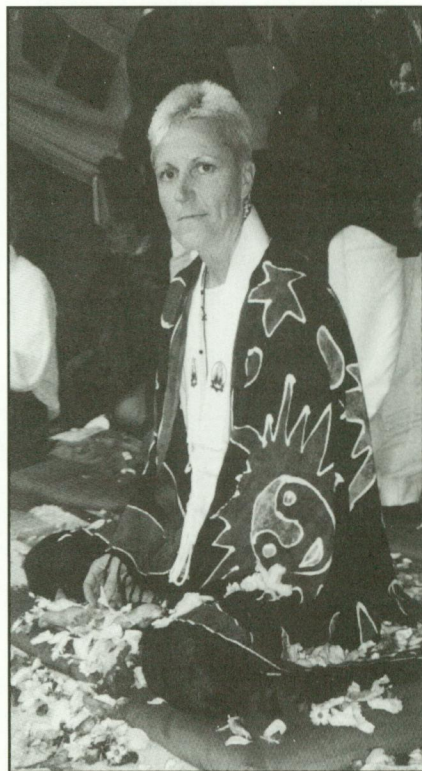




# News from 'Down Under'

## Ordinations in New Zealand

IN THE PAST FEW months two women have been ordained into the Western Buddhist Order: **Vimokshalehi** was ordained by Sanghadevi during a retreat for women preparing for ordination held at Sudarshanaloka Retreat Centre in New Zealand. It was the first time a woman preceptor had visited New Zealand,



Vimokshalehi

and the first time a Dharmacharini ordination had taken place there for some years.

Vimokshalehi lives in Townsville, Australia, hundreds of miles from her nearest FWBO Centre in Sydney. Despite her isolation, she managed to pursue her Dharma practice, and to prepare herself for ordination. The retreat, which was attended by 45 women was an especially happy occasion. Vimokshalehi's name means: 'She Who Tastes Freedom'.

**SUBHAVAJRI** returned to Auckland unexpectedly after learning that she had cancer, with perhaps not very long to live. Her private ordination was conducted by Aniketa who gave her the name *Subhavajri* which means 'She Who is the Beauty of the Diamond Thunderbolt.' Her public ordination was conducted by Sona who happened to be visiting Auckland.

After her ordination she was interviewed on videotape by Nagabodhi about her thoughts on her illness and approaching death. Subhavajri was keen that

the subject of death should be talked about more openly. Her own example of fearlessness and joy in her practice of the Dharma has been an inspiration to many.

A videotape of the interview is now available from Windhorse Publications. The cost to individual purchasers is £12.00 plus £2.00 p+p.



Subhavajri

## Biking for funds

**ONE COLD MORNING LATE** last year, Marilyn Bulloch and Carol Baillie from the Melbourne FWBO Centre set off on a 40-mile bike-ride through rain, wind, hail - and some sunshine - on a money-raising venture to help bring more women Order members from overseas to visit their Centre. Their efforts were well supported by the local sangha. A\$800 were raised which will go towards travel and accommodation costs of visitors.





# Curves in the Mirror

**The Mirror Within:  
A New Look at Sexuality**  
Anne Dickson  
Quartet Books, 1985,  
reprinted 1995  
pp185, 5.95

**FOR A DECADE** Anne Dickson's 'Mirror' has moved around with me (along with its predecessor, *A Woman in Your Own Right*.) I have benefited from re-reading it. I still don't know of any book on sexuality which could beat this one in clarity, intelligence, positivity and suitability for a spiritual aspirant.

Not all of what Anne Dickson writes accords with the Dharma. Her perspective is not to see human life in terms of the evolution of consciousness towards the state of perfection Buddhists call Enlightenment. She does not see the element of craving that is present in sexual desire so that, ultimately, though it may bring us pleasure, it also leads to pain. Nor does she explore how desire for sexual pleasure may be transformed eventually into the desire for higher, more refined, more satisfying pleasures. But she is interested in women coming to terms with the basic sexual forces within them in a healthy way, with creating positive relationships with others and with the world around.

For many of us embarking on the spiritual path there is much work to be done in coming to terms with our own sexuality and developing a positive view of ourselves as sexual beings. *The Mirror Within* challenges us to take a new and deep look at our sexual experience and behaviour, our whole life in fact. It challenges us to recognise not just how we look, but who we are - and to change.

*'A common denominator among women in many parts of the world is a lack of inner self-esteem based on the lack of physical self-esteem. We are often slow to confront verbal abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse*

*because we lack this fundamental sense of beauty and worth in our own right. And, try as we may, we cannot earn it from anyone on the outside. It has to come from the inside. ... We have to re-acquaint ourselves with our bodies, see the truth instead of a distorted image. We have to look at the mirror within, not the external mirror which is warped by our own dependence on the reflection. ... Seeing is the first step towards loving.'* (p40)

The introduction looks at the ways we are conditioned, eroded by demands, either real or imagined, to be someone other than we are. We have learnt to conform and to compete, to compare and to achieve, to pretend and to adapt. We have lost touch with spontaneity because of our continuous attempts to win acceptance and love. Anne Dickson warns us, *'The challenge is enormous. Trying to extricate ourselves from the sexual norms, pressures and mayhem of the culture around us and restoring a sense of our own powerful and integrated sexuality takes a long time. For most women the resistance is enormous as well.'*

The first twelve chapters are concerned with re-appraising our sexuality as individuals. The six chapters after that discuss our interactions with others. In between is a short unnumbered passage called Bridges. *'Starting from a point of self-acceptance can help us to be intimate without being swamped or swamping. It can help us to find a balance. Moving across the bridge from a position of clarity and strength is very different from rushing over to the other side in loneliness and desperation! A clearer personal definition of sexuality allows us to look with a different perspective at the way we interact with the others in our lives.'* (p122)

I find Anne Dickson's treatment of the basic question in our spiritual lives, that of the tension between self and other, refreshingly practical and intelligent.

So how do we gain, first of all, an understanding and an accep-

tance of ourselves as sexual beings? There are historical and biological facts to be realised, psychological patterns to be recognised. Hilarious drawings by Kate Charlesworth help to soften the confrontative nature of what is being said. The images which have been unconscious or dimly felt, are depicted as caricatures in front of us. There are the stereotypes which offer different aspects of women as basically non-sexual: the virgin, the romantic heroine, the Madonna and 'think of England.' (The last one should perhaps be translated as 'dutiful wife'.) There are the stereotypes which depict woman as basically sexual: the whore, the prostitute, the nymphomaniac, Eve, the slave, the super-lay, the black widow, the marauding dyke, the tragic misfit, and the superdyke.

As a psychologist and counsellor Anne Dickson has a lot of experience of observing women. She has conducted numerous workshops, both mixed and just with women. She has trained, she has looked, she has reflected and meditated. I find her writing mature and open-minded, her attitude to sexuality refreshingly free from prejudice. she does not shy away from being frank about her own development. The reader also benefits from her experience in the form of suggested practical exercises: we can't remain passive if we do want to get to know our bodies and to learn to understand our behaviour.

The latter part of the book is concerned with communication between women and men and between women. It discloses the power games and common deceptions and poses the question: how can we make a fresh start after colluding for so long?

The answer is encouraging: it can be done with honesty and joint responsibility - although it does take time and care. It is



possible to learn assertiveness: how to communicate strongly and clearly and with warmth, how to take responsibility for our feelings and our thoughts without guilt. It is essential that we do make the effort to break the conspiracy of silence.

Women find it very difficult to get in touch with healthy 'root anger'; to be honest with this most basic energy:

*'Sometimes we reach out to another in distress, not out of a genuine recognition of the other's need but out of guilt. When we are motivated by guilt, it is useful to remember the guilt is often a sign of unexpressed anger: anger held back and turned inwards with the result that we find it difficult to ask or receive something for ourselves. It has almost become second nature to deny our own needs.'* (p173)

The last three chapters widen the discussion further to consider woman's life phases as she ages, women's friendships and our attitudes to ecology. Anne Dickson recommends breaking free from the circle of dependence: being dependent on others and having others dependent on us. *'Our dependency makes us more and more vulnerable and helpless. Our sexuality no longer belongs to us. Imagine how different it would be if a woman believed her sexuality and her body were her own.'* (p167) She urges us not to be content to simply play out the three roles assigned to us by society; to realise that we are - or can be - far more than just daughters, mothers and grandmothers.

It is essential that we reconnect with nature and develop ecological awareness. *'As women we have become alienated from our bodies, as a race we have become alienated from the natural environment...the earth has been treated without awareness or care of the consequences. It is when we stop looking towards future progress and look around instead, and above and underneath...that we begin to understand the meaning of the word "connection".'* (p179)

In the chapter *Women as Friends*, Anne Dickson tells us of celebrating twenty years of a particular friendship and noticing how little acknowledgement there is in this society of the importance and value of friendship. Since that was written we have ten more years experience of practising spiritual friendship in the FWBO - but I still find her observations very useful.

Last year Finnish film director Kiti Luostarinen made a documentary called *Gracious Curves*. It explores Finnish women's attitude to their bodies and to ageing, herself included. Many of the issues discussed in Anne Dickson's book appeared again in this film, still as relevant as ever - perhaps even more so. Displeasure with our bodies because they don't come up to expectations from the outside starts when we are little girls and continues into old age. That this is as prevalent as ever, or more so is born out by the alarming increase in eating disorders and in the amount of surgery performed for reasons of appearance.

*Gracious Curves* has caught the attention of judges at film festivals and of TV viewers not only in Finland but in other European countries - and even further afield. I take this as an indication that the important task which Anne Dickson began to address in *The Mirror Within* needs to be continued. For those practising the Dharma, her book is a useful guide in helping to 'getting the conditions right,' that is, for creating a healthy and positive basis for higher spiritual journeys.

Sridevi □

## Dhanakosa Retreat Centre

### Mixed and Women's Retreats in Summer /Autumn 1998

#### May

- 1 - 8 Tai Chi
- 8 - 15 Massage
- 15 - 22 Yoga
- 23 - 29 Working Retreat

#### June

- 12 - 19 Writing Retreat
- 19 - 26 Hillwalking\*
- 26 - 3 July Women's Summer Retreat

#### July

- 3 - 10 Summer Open Week 1
- 10 - 17 Summer Open Week 2
- 24 - 31 Women's Hillwalking Retreat

#### August

- 7 - 14 'Creating the Freedom to Choose'
- 14 - 21 Hillwalking\*
- 21 - 28 Women's Yoga, Meditation and Massage
- 28 - 4 Sept Women's Intensive Retreat

#### September

- 11 - 18 Hillwalking\*
- 18 - 23 Reflexology
- 25 - 2 Oct DHARMA FESTIVAL (Women)

#### October

- 2 - 4 DHARMA FESTIVAL (Mixed)
- 9 - 16 Yoga and Meditation\*
- 16 - 23 Autumn Open Retreat\*

*\*it may be possible to come for the weekend only on these retreats.*

To book on any of these retreats or for more information please contact :  
Dhanakosa, Ledcreich House, Balquhidder,  
LOCHEARNHEAD FK19 8PQ

-or phone 01877 384213 (office hours)  
-E-mail at dhanakosa@compuserve.com



## **DHARMACHAKRA**

**STOP**

**LOOK**

**LISTEN...**

✻ ***Change Your Mind 1: Body Awareness and Relaxation***

The first in a new series of guided meditation tapes led by Paramanada, based on his best selling book. Cassette and Booklet Pack, £9.95

✻ ***Mitra Study Tapes***

Any term for only £30\* (Please include 10% for P&P if ordering from outside the UK). Offer ends 1st August 1998.

✻ ***New Dharmachakra Catalogue*** out now. Write to us for your free copy.

Cheques payable to Dharmachakra at:  
PO Box 50 (LR)  
Cambridge  
CB1 3BG UK

## Evolution Shop

Dublin needs

new team member(s)

We are a strong committed team of three mitras, (Elena, Nuala, Pauline); and a friend, (Suzanne) working with Padmavasini who has many years experience of team-work. Subhdramati from the Cherry Orchard Restaurant in London will join us at the beginning of '99. We work well together, have lots of fun and work hard too!

The shop is a thriving, profitable business in a small, central and friendly shopping arcade in Dublin. Situated on the coast, Dublin has easy access to countryside, mountains and forest.

**We are looking for women to join our team, ideally in September '98, although we are open to discussion.**

If you are interested please phone us soon on  
**00353-1-8720337**

**or write to: Evolution,  
Unit 6, G.P.O. Arcade, Henry St., Dublin 1.**

# Tariki

May 22 - 29  
**New Directions**  
*for Newcomers*

May 31 - June 7  
**Delighting in the Present:**  
*a mindfulness retreat*  
*for Mitras*

June 21  
**TARA FESTIVAL**  
*all women welcome*

June 26 - July 3  
**Metta, Karuna, Mudita:**  
*a meditation retreat*  
*for Friends and Mitras*

July 5 - 12  
**The True Individual:**  
*a study retreat*  
*for Friends*

July 23 - 26  
**THE GREAT GATHERING**  
*a national event*  
*for Friends and Mitras*



**Buddhist  
Retreat  
Centre  
for  
Women**

July 26 - August 3  
**The Bodhicaryavatara:**  
*Study School*  
*for Mitras*

August 7 - 14  
**Symbols of Growth:**  
*Summer Open retreat*  
*for Friends and Mitras*

August 15 - 22  
**Symbols of Growth:**  
*Summer Intensive*  
*Meditation*  
*for Friends and Mitras*

Bettisfield, Whitchurch, Shropshire SY13 2LD  
Tel: 01948 710646



# RIVENDELL

Retreat Centre East Sussex



## Calendar of Events

### May

- 4-8 Mid Week Meditation Retreat  
(Not suitable for Beginners)
- 29-31 Introductory Weekend

### June

- 12-19 Creativity Retreat
- 29-3 Jul Tai' Chi' (Experienced practitioners only)

### July

- 10-17 Black Peoples Retreat  
(Suitable for Beginners)
- 24-31 Summer Retreat, Open to Beginners

### August

- 3-7 Croydon Family Retreat
- 7-9 Introductory Weekend
- 14-21 Yoga Retreat One
- 21-28 Yoga Retreat Two
- 28-4 Sept Friends Summer Retreat  
(Not suitable for Beginners)

### September

- 11-18 Creative Writing Retreat  
Led by Ananda and Manjusvara
- 18-20 Croydon Womens Weekend  
(Not suitable for Beginners)
- 28-2 Oct Mid Week Meditation Retreat  
(Not suitable for Beginners)

### October

- 9-11 Introductory Weekend
- 23-30 Creativity Retreat
- 30-1 Nov Voice Workshop  
Led by Juliet Cox using Alexander Technique  
to free up the voice. Suitable for those with no  
experience of using the singing voice.

### November

- 13-15 Introductory Weekend
- 27-29 Yoga and Alexander Weekend  
(Concurrent events)

### December

- 19-28 Winter Retreat One
- 28-2 Jan Winter Retreat Two

Bookings and enquiries to:  
Croydon Buddhist Centre  
Tel: 0181-688-8624



# Taraloka

Buddhist Retreat Centre for Women



July 23 - 26

**THE  
GREAT  
GATHERING**

a national event on a dana basis  
for friends and mitras

...potentially the largest ever event  
held at Taraloka!

Tel: 01948 710640