

FWBO & TBMSG News

News and views from around the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO) and Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha Sahayaka Gana (TBMSG).

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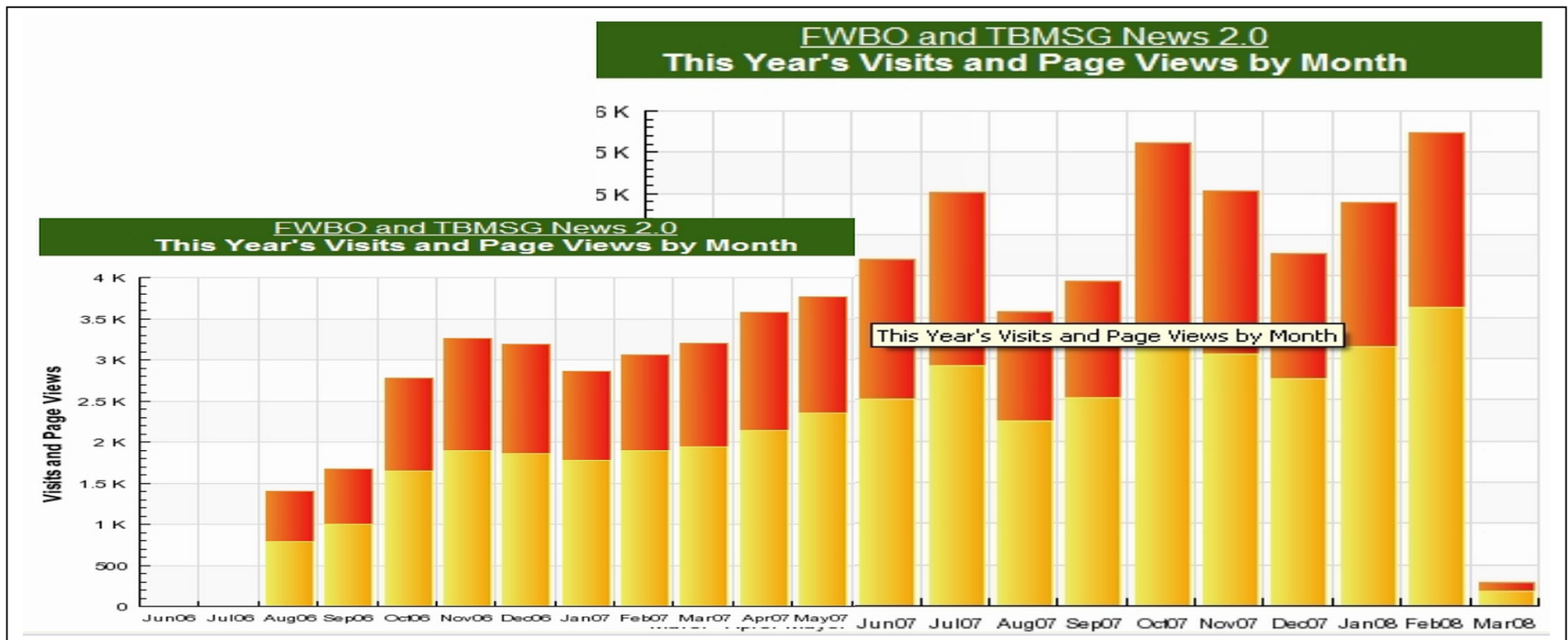
FWBO and TBMSG News:

Collected stories April-June 2008

on the web at: www.fwbo-news.org | news@fwbo-news.org

FWBO News' readership grows – and grows

Since the new FWBO News site was launched by Jayarava in June 2006, readership has climbed steadily. The graph shows just how, and the present level which is running at approx 5,000/month. In addition every story is emailed to approx 270 subscribers using the 'Feedblitz' service.



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April - June 2008

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Monday, June 30, 2008

Free Buddhist Audio News – RSS Updates, Podcast, New Sangharakshita, Top 10



Welcome to the news from [Free Buddhist Audio](#), the free download, podcast and streaming service from the Dharmachakra audio and text archives. To receive more regular updates on the site, you can always [subscribe](#) to our own blog.

This month, there's quite a lot to tell you about! We've been busy changing and improving the site, so here are a few of the things we've been up to...

Whenever you see either of these symbols in your web browser's address bar, it means you can subscribe to a special version of the page you're on (a bit like a blog) and get updates whenever we add new content for that particular section – without lifting a finger...

So, it'll work to keep track of titles from a specialised area of the site (eg. [meditation](#)), or for uploads from any individual centre in our new [community pages](#) (eg. [Taraloka](#)). And it's really simple!

All you have to do is click the symbol itself. When the page changes, add it as a 'bookmark' or 'favourite' in your web browser (usually typing 'command-D' will work). And that's it. When we upload a new talk or series, you'll get a little notification in your bookmarks list.

Podcast

If you haven't discovered our free monthly [podcast](#) yet, then this is a great time to start! Over 10,000 people now subscribe to this service (you can get it easily via [iTunes](#)), and we've already distributed over 350,000 Dharma talks by podcast since late 2005.

The latest episode has just appeared online, a great talk by Ratnaguna: '[The Early Teachings of the Buddha](#)' – a splendidly engaging evocation of the fundamentals of Buddhist thought and practice from the recent FWBO International retreat.

Come and give it a whirl!

Two talks by Sangharakshita

Over the last wee while, Sangharakshita has been steadily adding to his already considerable archive of recorded public talks. This week, we are delighted to bring to your attention two of his latest, which are well worth a listen...

['Growing the Spiritual Community'](#) was also given at the FWBO International retreat, and is a timely exploration of what it's going to take to maintain the Western Buddhist Order and the FWBO as a vibrant and spiritually prospering community.

['Forty Years On – The Six Emphases of the FWBO'](#) is a pleasing reprise of classic Sangharakshita, with some delightful reminiscences about the early days of the FWBO. The talk was given in Manchester, and marked the 40th anniversary of the founding of our spiritual community.

And finally...

Before we go, we thought it was high time we revisited with you our top 10 chart of most popular downloads. Try them - they're all

marvellous!

1. [The Mindfulness of Breathing: Introduction and Guidance](#) by Kamalashila
2. [Simplicity](#) by Kamalashila
3. [Buddhism and Quantum Physics](#) by Jnanavaca
4. [The Mindfulness of Breathing: Short Lead-through](#) by Kamalashila
5. [Mindfulness for Just About Everything](#) by Paramabandhu
6. [Tibetan Book of the Dead \(Talk 1\): The Six Bardo](#) by Padmavajra
7. [Cutting Away the Old](#) by Abhaya
8. [Breaking the Mould](#) by Dhammarati
9. [What Meditation Really Is](#) by Sangharakshita
10. [Entering the Mandala](#) by Garava

Buddhfield Festival 2008 - new site, new line-up - coming soon!



The FWBO's largest event outside India is the annual **Buddhfield Festival**, now in its 13th year and going strong. From 350 in 1996 it's grown to around 2,500 people – small enough to retain the intimacy that's one of its hallmarks, yet large enough to contain an extraordinary diversity of, well, everything!!!

This year they're moving to a beautiful new site just a few miles from the old one on the Devon-Somerset border.

They've written to FWBO News to say –“The new site is secluded and peaceful, away from roads, with

coppice woodland, and plenty of space. We've been hard at work preparing for this year's Festival – and it's coming up soon! We warmly invite you to join us – and please do tell your friends. It's a great way for them to meet a bunch of Buddhists and get a taste of what we're about".

Here is a sneak preview of some of this year's programme (all included in the ticket price!!):

Kids Area: AMAZING and varied range of activities for kids - trampolines, dressing up, carnival processing, crafts, bushcraft and nature awareness, storytelling, toddlers' space, daily theatre extravaganza; Teens Space.

Bands: Gadjo Club (superb Gypsy Balkan Jazz); Seize the Day (protest folk stalwarts); Green Angels (upbeat Breton dance); Vogue Gyratory (Brighton faves, 7 piece funk-reggae); Manjinga 7; Toggy Mess (upbeat Irish folk); Manos Puestas (super-spicy flamenco jazz); a variety of fantastic DJs, including Matt Black of Coldcut (Thurs pm), followed by Cinema

Poetry and art: Inter-Ference; open mike poetry evening; Poetry Slam; 'The Big Q' play written specially for Buddhafield!; The Buddhafield 'Artery'; carnival costume-making from found natural materials; creativity and poetry-writing; Mr Be, mime, clown and family show; Stilted butterfly walkabout; Marionettas giant puppets.

.Dharma Parlour and meditation: talks and discussions on Buddhism, speakers from the Western Buddhist Order and other traditions, including Christopher Titmuss. Meditation teaching from FWBO teachers and others. Ceremonies and devotional practice. Network of Engaged Buddhists; Amida Trust, and others.

Workshops: MASSES of all-day yoga, Tai Chi and Chi Gung. Healing Area, great range of alternative therapies, pay by donation. Dozens of workshops to die for, including Ecstatic Dance with Jewls;

5 Rhythms with Jo Hardy; Brazilian Forro; Indian Classical Dance with yoga/visualisation; Shamanic Trance Dance with Zilia; many more dance workshops; 'Soulful Singing' with Mahasukha; 'Voice as Sacred Instrument'; Tibetan singing bowls; tin whistle, bodhran, drumming; daily Buddhafield Community Rhythm event; 'Work that Reconnects'; Transition Towns; big debate on Climate; Palestine Peace Campaign; Non-violent Communication; Skilful Flirting; Heart-to-Heart tantric workshops; Green babycare on a budget; Shamanic Journeying from Northern Drum....

Special Spaces: the 12 Step Dome; Women's Space; Land and Permaculture; Radical Midwives Space for pregnant women and new



mothers; Queer Spirit Space; Crafts Area; Wildheart Medicine Wheel Space; Dzogchen and Big Mind teachings; bushcraft; tracking; fire making; sky-gazing meditation.

Saunas including Lost Horizon, featuring chillout space and cabaret; cafes including the Buddhafield Café with strolling musicians. And last but not least, wood-fired showers and compost toilets; all power on site from the sun and wind.

The 2008 Festival runs from **Weds 16th to Sun 20th July**. The site has good public transport links; nearest train and coach station is Taunton (direct trains from many towns); there are a couple of local buses each day from Taunton direct to the site. There's also special festival mini-buses going direct to the site and back from Bristol, Brighton and London. See the [Buddhafield Festival website](#) for details. Don't be put off by the rather severe website by the way - look at the pictures to get a sense of what it's really like!

But PS - don't forget to book soon! See you there! ;-)

The Buddhafield Team

Adventures of Rijumati - III



FWBO News is pleased to present part III of a series of excerpts from the travel diaries of Rijumati.

Six months ago Rijumati left his home town of 24 years and headed off on a freighter bound for Sri Lanka. These excerpts find him entering Kazakhstan en route for Russia.

He says "I now am on my way to Kyrgyzstan, which is probably the most unpronounceable sovereign state in the world. Try saying Keer-gish-stan but with a strong 'zzz' at the end of the 'gish' I hear you asking "How on earth have you ended up there, Rijumati...?" Click [here](#) to find out...

Two lesser-known FWBO journals...

FWBO News is pleased to be able to mention two lesser-known journals published by members of the Western Buddhist Order – Urthona and the Western Buddhist Review.

Urthona

Urthona (www.urthona.com) is the fruit of a small but dedicated band of lovers of the arts; for them, Urthona is “a magazine for rousing the imagination”. It’s been published since 1992 and issue 25 is just out: Celtic Connections.

They say – “It’s an exploration of the myths of the Celtic world, their enduring appeal and their continued relevance. This issue is for those

who are trying to make connections with the pagan roots of our culture, who want to make these wonderful old stories meaningful for their lives, and who want to make links with the pre-Christian ways of spirituality which existed in the British Isles before the Roman invasion”.

Back issues are available [here](#), and a generous selection of online articles cover such subjects as [The Five Storied Palace](#) (A journey around the symbolic cosmos in the company of Dante with some notes for twenty-first-century travellers); [A Fountain Sealed](#) (Reflecting on the tragic split in Coleridge’s poetic Imagination); and [Experiments and Values](#): Sangharakshita talking about the arts in the twentieth century, his likes among its artists and writers, and his new collection of poetry.

Urthona is available from FWBO bookshops or by [online ordering](#).

The Western Buddhist Review

Very different – but equally a product of the meeting of Buddhism and the West – is the FWBO’s ‘Western Buddhist Review’. The WBR takes a more academic approach, and in the latest issue, Issue 4, you’ll find Abhaya reflecting on [Letters of Gold: Imagery in the Dhammapada](#); [Was the Buddha Omniscient?](#) by Nagapriya, author of the well-known ‘[Karma and Rebirth](#)’; and the related article [Kamma in Context: The Mahakammavibhangasutta and the Culakammavibhangasutta](#) by Manishini (Alice Collett). Many other topics are covered, not least a thought-provoking inquiry into [Suicide as A Response to Suffering](#) and Jnanavira’s [Reflections on the Feminine in Japanese Buddhism](#)

Issue 5 is expected shortly and will be published on the [WBR website](#).

Other on-line FWBO publications include many past issues of [Dharma Life](#) and [Madhyamavani](#) – at one time the journal of the Preceptors College.

Thursday, June 26, 2008

India, Karuna, and advocacy work



The **Karuna Trust** is the FWBO's largest and most successful fundraising charity, sending well over UK £1,000,000/year to a wide variety of projects in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Tibet. In recent years their focus has shifted from the approach of 'Aid for India' (their original name!) to

encouraging projects that specialise in helping India's disadvantaged peoples effectively and peacefully access their legal entitlements.

These naturally include India's more than 200 million Dalits and Tribal people, from whom come the vast majority of India's Buddhists, including of course members of the TBMSG. While India as a whole has become increasingly prosperous over the last decade, discrimination of all sorts is still rife, and especially discrimination based on the age-old and scripturally-sanctioned caste system.

Two such projects which have been funded by Karuna are the 'Dalit Rights Initiative' (a part of India's '**Human Rights Law Network**') and '**Social Jurist**'. Both have hundreds, if not thousands, of stories to tell, and we have posted a few of these on the FWBO News **Features** page.

Ananta from Karuna comments "In spite of the harrowing content, the stories move towards a 'happy ending' which I found uplifting not least because our efforts are supporting this work. The full list of cases is available on their websites if you want to read more".

There is a growing trend of 'advocacy' work that often uses the internet – Karuna's attention was recently drawn to Meena Kandasamy's blog, a 24-year-old Tamil woman who is self-confessedly "obsessed with revolutionary Dr. Ambedkar's message of caste annihilation". Her **blog** describes the punishments meted out to 'dangerous Dalit women' seen as witches by caste Hindus.

She ends with words that could almost have been written of the 'witches' and witchcraft trials of Britain and the US in earlier centuries: "...in witch-hunting, the victims are also single (read widowed/ deserted/ divorced) women of a certain age who are no longer burdened with reproductive duties. The word 'witch' is thrust on these 'dangerous' women who asserted their entitlement to rights and thus challenged patriarchal and caste supremacist diktats. Dalit or Adivasi (Tribal) women who dared to contest elections and directly challenged the political power of the landed caste-Hindus have been labeled hags. They have been accused of exercising black magic when in fact they have only been exercising their fundamental rights. Witchcraft, when used by brutal caste-Hindus in the modern context, has come to signify women's resistance to oppression, and the price they have paid for it".

Click **here** to read some of the full stories from the '[Dalit Rights Initiative](#)' and '[Social Jurist](#)' projects.

You can donate to Karuna via their website, **www.karuna.org**.

Wednesday, June 25, 2008

TBMSG Amaravati: youth, Dhamma tours, and an appeal



FWBO News has received this report from Amitayus, a leading Order Member in TBMSG's Amaravati sangha, in central Maharashtra, India. The Buddhist community in Amaravati has long has a reputation for innovation and dynamism, it looks like they're not resting on their laurels! Their report concludes with an appeal, and we urge readers to log onto the Amaravati appeal website and also pass news of the appeal to their friends and others in the Sangha.

Amitayus says -

“The TBMSG-Bahujan Hitay Amaravati sangha (Maharashtra) has for many years been having regular dhamma and social activities including especially activities planned and designed for youths. We know well that youths should get attracted to the Dhamma as this is a very important part of forming the New Society. As well as this, we run many regular other activities which we feel should be known to the wider sangha, we request you to help us doing this effectively through publishing these events on FWBO TBMSG news.

Amaravati Youth Conference 2008

“At present we wish to inform you of two things. First is the Youth Conference 2008, organised by our Dr. Ambedkar Social and Youth Center in Amaravati. Our aim is to organise Indian youth for self development and to help them so that they can help their people, we have been working with the youth since 1993 and we have supported thousands of youth. Many are now regular practitioners of Dhamma

and have become effective social activists.

“Our Youth conference 2008 was held from 26th to 30th May, we accepted 125 participants including men and women especially from slum and rural backgrounds. Dhammachari Amoghasiddhi and Aniruddha explored the various areas of self-development including teachings of Dr Ambedkar, basic Dhamma, and ‘secrets of success’ using NVC. The organisers are accepting the wishes from the broader sangha worldwide for the success of the event.

‘Jumbo Retreat’ in October 2008

“Second we wish to inform you that in October 2008 we are planning a big programme of public talks all around Amaravati, followed by our largest retreat. There will be 15 public talks before the retreat, we estimate more than 400 people will be present in small towns and 1000 people at the bigger towns. Those who are inspired may come forwards to participate in our ‘Jumbo’ retreat which will run from 24 October to 30 October. It will be led by a team of 25 Order Members from the Amaravati area including Chairwoman Dhammucharini Jayamani, Chief Organiser Dhammachari Nagabhadra, and also Dhammachari Ashvajit from the UK. We will be including youths, rural, tribal, and nonbuddhist people: in this way we begin to create the true casteless society.

“This is a very big task for us and our first step is to fundraise for it. We need Indian Rs. 6 lakhs, or UK £8,000 approx. We are planning to raise these funds through door knocking, sponsoring the events, publication and looking for contributions from our international sangha.

“To know more about our work please visit www.bahujanhitaya.org, to donate to our appeal please visit www.justgiving.com/ashvajit. Thank you”.

Monday, June 23, 2008

'National Network of Buddhist Youth' Conference in India



[Ann Dennehy](#), a mitra from the FWBO's San Francisco Sangha sends us this report of TBMSG's 'National Network of Buddhist Youth' Conference in Dehra Dun, northern India, held June 1-7, 2008.

She writes -

"I have just returned from a week on retreat with India's National Network of Buddhist Youth ([NNBY](#)) in the hill station of Dehra Dun, in northern India. I worked as part of a team of 4 Trainers - the Indian Order members Kumarjeev and Kamalasri from Nagpur, and Maitriveer Nagarjuna from Delhi, alongside the NNBY Student Leadership Team.



Altogether we were 35 people on the retreat, practicing in an old colonial school building, miraculously transformed for our use by the local Senior Dhammachari Bodhisagar (who had been ordained by Bhante in India in the 1980's) and his tireless wife Sumitra. They turned classrooms into dormitories, food pantries and shower facilities; hallways into kitchen prep stations and a dining area; and a meeting hall into a shrine room and central study space.

"Dehra Dun is green and peaceful, providing a cool break from city heat, and a chance to practice in a lush, serene environment. Our

team worked harmoniously, providing opportunities for students to learn meditation, practice English, study the legacy of Dr. Ambedkar, chant, and do pujas. Students established new friendships, shared tasks, played cricket, sang songs, and even danced. Our last night was a diksha, where two students became Buddhists, followed by a cultural evening, which included comedy and a kirtan.

"The primary goal of the NNBY is to establish a network of Buddhist friendships across India, and train up the next generation of young Buddhist leaders. I am satisfied that such connections were created on this retreat.

"Most of the retreatants were first-timers, and as the week came to a close they told me how much they had learned, how their meditation practice had deepened, how they'd made new friendships, and how much more confidence they felt after a week of supported practice.

"Myself, I leave feeling grateful for my deepening friendships with the team, and inspired by the energy, creativity, and curiosity of all the students. May this Sangha continue to thrive".



You can check the NNBY's new website on www.nnby.org.

They've also got an internet [fundraising appeal](#) going, seeking funds for their India-wide youth leaders training programme - you'll find full details on the appeal site.

Meanwhile, a thousand miles south, in Maharashtra, there's ambitious plans afoot among the Amaravati sangha for a major Dhamma tour of rural areas this autumn, building in part on their own recent successful Youth Conference - we hope to bring you news of this tomorrow.

Saturday, June 21, 2008

Going on retreat... for three years!



Vessantara was ordained into the Western Buddhist Order in 1974, and is well-known as the author of '[Meeting the Buddhas](#)' as well as a number of other books. He's led a long and active life in the Order, travelling and speaking widely – see for instance [his talks on Free Buddhist Audio](#) for a sample...

But later this month, he's off – on a three-year retreat! Most people involved in the FWBO have done at least some retreats – often planned using our website [GoingOnRetreat.com](#) – but not many have done one lasting three whole years – and it could be longer. Not surprisingly he's been asked many questions about it – and some of his answers have just been published as a short article in the [features section](#) of FWBO News.

FWBO News wishes him, and his partner Vijayamala, all good wishes as they embark on this major undertaking.

Vessantara says -

I'm planning to do a long retreat, starting at the end of June. Here are answers to some of the questions I've often been asked about it:

Where are you going to do your retreat?

In southern-central France in the Auvergne. It's about 2,000 feet (700 metres) up in the Massif Central. From near where we're staying you can see the range of mountains that includes the Puy de Dome. You can also see the golden roof of the temple of the Karma Kagyu Tibetan Buddhist centre founded by the late Gendun Rinpoche.

Why aren't you doing it at an FWBO place like Guhyaloka or Sudarshanaloka?

I would be very happy to do so, except for one factor: I really want regular access to someone experienced who can guide my retreat. I have done quite a bit of solitary retreat over the years, as well as living at Vajraloka and Guhyaloka. Whilst they've been very useful, I've come to the conclusion that I would make much better progress with regular access to someone to help me sharpen up my practice, point out my blind spots and bad habits, and generally help me to 'steer to the deep'. So when Lama Lhundrup offered to help Order members who wanted to do long meditation retreat, I decided to take him up on his offer.

[Check](#) FWBO News Features on-line to continue reading...

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Hearing The Cries Of The World: Engaged Buddhism at Taraloka

Coming up soon at Taraloka, the FWBO's retreat centre in Shropshire, is a new retreat 'Making A Difference'. It's based on 'The Work that Reconnects' - a powerful set of exercises that enable us to look clearly at the state of world around us and our emotional responses to it. Doing this opens the way to us, in turn, taking our part in creating an ethical and sustainable future. It was developed by the American Buddhist Joanna Macy and has been taken up by a number of Order Members, several of whom have attended Joanna's training retreats both in the US and Britain.

‘Making A Difference’ will be led by three of these: Parami, Akuppa and Maitrisara. It takes place on the 20th to 27th June and the following weekend, 27th to 29th June, will be specifically for people who may like to facilitate this work within the F/WBO, creating a working network within our movement.

Parami especially has had contact with Joanna Macy, and writes “What fires me and seems to be very inspiring to people is an increasing exploration and understanding of the links between the WTR and the Dharma and - perhaps especially - how the two can work together to form a community of people dedicated to working effectively in our troubled world but from a place of inner peace and meditative awareness. Applied Bodhisattva Ideal in other words. Conditionality in action”.

She goes on to say “In April I attended a weekend in Bath for people facilitating the WTR in the UK. Joanna and Fran Macy were there. Joanna had just been speaking in Findhorn and had asked a couple of the people that she has worked with for many years to organise a get-together of facilitators. I was able to go along and was able to catch up with Joanna and talk through a few things. She was, as always, very excited to hear about the developments of the WTR within the F/WBO. Although she is not coming on the retreat in June she wanted to reiterate her confidence in our working with the WTR and she wanted us to know that we have her “deepest blessings”. She would love to hear from me how the retreat goes and also wants me to keep in touch with her more generally.

“On the topic of the retreat itself, I feel excited about what we might do and inspired to have the chance to go more deeply into the dharmic base of our working with the WTR as a community. I have a strong interest in using systems theory to explore how open a community our community is. I would greatly enjoy co-creating ways of being a more effective force for good.

“I think, as a community, we have such a lot going for us. Of course,

there is much work to be done in the face of grave and dangerous challenges in the world today. I think forming community is a part of the creative response to those challenges and I hope this retreat can play a part in strengthening our community as a force for good in the world”.

Monday, June 16, 2008

Buddha Festival in India, 600 attending



Chandrabodhi has sent FWBO News this report of the first ‘Buddha Festival’ in India. Publishing it was delayed until we had received photographs of the day – however we are now pleased to present it to you. The event had an added significance in that it was the successful culmination of an ‘internet fundraising’ appeal by one of our Indian centres; they were delighted to be able to raise UK £733 for the event in little over a week! This was thanks to a new facility on the ‘justgiving’ website – see

www.justgiving.com/chandrabodhi for details of the appeal.

Chandrabodhi writes -

"On 19th May 2008 we held the first ‘Buddha Festival’ in India, at the Urgyen Sangharakshita Meditation Retreat Centre near Nanded. We started with chanting – the Tiratana Vandana, Shakyamuni



mantra, Metta Bhavana and Sabbe Satta Sukhi Hontu Mantra. Then we started to make the shrine, which was set up under the shade of a 'pandal', in this way we accommodated the 500 to 600 people who came.

"At 10am there was a 'Dhamma Dhawaja' (Flag Hoisting) by me. There were 100 people at that time, after it people began to arrive in larger numbers. As part of our welcome programme we garlanded local social workers who had done excellent work in our community. One, whose age is 78 years and who had been a freedom fighter working for the social movement since 40's, narrated to us some of the history of his work of the last 50 years.

"There was a full length talk, given by Dh. Surangam on the topic of "Buddhism and Buddhist Culture". He was describing the present situation of the so-called Buddhists and what they are supposed to do in future to practice Buddhism and create a Buddhist Culture. His talk was so impressive that many people put the figures in their mouths in astonishment and appreciated the suggestions given by him..

"In the afternoon was a very appealing and heart touching programme - the conversion programme of a family coming from the 'Matang community'. This is one of the Scheduled Castes, their traditional occupation is that of 'plastic bag scavenger', and they are very poor. During the ceremony I stressed that no one can become a real Buddhist until and unless he/she takes Diksha (conversion). Although the ceremony was organised just for one family other people joined it spontaneously – afterwards the 'Diksharthis' (the new Buddhists) said they felt as if they got a new birth by embracing Buddhism.

"Later there was a cultural programme presented by Amitayus and

the Ashvaghosa Cultural team from Amaravati. We provided food to each and every one who were present. There were about 500 people who took the food.

"In the evening there was again a cultural programme, this time of local singers who sang songs spontaneously, some girls presented a dance programme on celebrating Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and the Buddha. Throughout the night a singing party from the nearby village (Patnur) continued, this went up to 6:00 in the morning of 20th May.

"This way the first Buddha Festival organised by TBMSG Nanded at the Urgyen Sangharakshita Meditation Centre became successful in all respects. Afterwards I heard the people were murmuring that this type of Buddha Festival should be arranged every year. I feel that this was the receipt given by the people for our excellent programme. I am sure that this festival will become a regular feature of our activities. Thank you to all who supported us.

"With metta, Chandrabodhi"

Sunday, June 15, 2008

'Sangha without boundaries' in Scotland



Kevin McConnell from the Edinburgh Buddhist sangha has sent FWBO News this report of their inter-Buddhist activities - which have been quietly growing for the past four years...

“As the days get longer and the Scottish winter slides its way into spring, green shoots force their way through the warming earth, early lambs frisk in the strengthening sunshine - and the Buddhists of Edinburgh can be seen heading south to Wiston Lodge near Biggar (shown in photo). Why, we ask? - for their annual Inter-Sangha Weekend Retreats, is the reply.

“Inter-Buddhist events, where several of the local Buddhist groups come together on celebratory occasions such as Wesak, have long been a feature in Edinburgh. Usually, one group takes the lead with other members offering contributions from their own traditions.

“At first they were evening events rounded off by a shared meal. The popularity of these inspired the idea of an annual weekend retreat where groups could share and explore their various traditions’ differing perspectives on the Dharma. The initial idea, and the organisation of the inaugural gathering, was down to Kalyanavaca, chairwoman of the FWBO’s [Edinburgh Buddhist centre](#). However they’ve been such a success (this year being the fourth year in succession) that now the role of organisation is taken up by a different group each year.

“This year the overall theme was impermanence, and each group led those present in a practice from their own tradition based on that theme. This produces an eclectic mix where, if you attend all the sessions, you could be experiencing body scan techniques, zazen, NVC workshops, Pali chants and Tibetan puja. In between the set events there is of course the opportunity to sit and drink tea or walk in the woods and compare notes on your experience of the Dharma. This celebrating the ‘unity of variation’ of the Dharma is what most appeals to the participants.

“Over the four years the retreats have been held, groups from the Community of Buddhist Contemplatives (Soto Zen), the Community of Interbeing, the Forest Sangha (Theravadin), FWBO, Samye Dzong

(Kagyu) and Soka Gakkai have attended - but the invitation is open to any Buddhist groups in the Edinburgh area. Enthusiasm last year spilled over to a weekend visit to Samye Ling (the Kagyu centre and monastery in the Scottish Borders), and a tentative suggestion for future visits to other home centres has been made.

“Outside of these events the group collaborates on a newsletter ‘[Sangha Without Boundaries](#)’ and of course our [website](#). We rejoice in our good fortune in having access to the Dharma in its many manifestations and in our commitment to put the Dharma into practise.

“As the verse in the three-fold puja so succinctly says,

*We reverence the Sangha, and aspire to follow it:
The fellowship of those who tread the Way.
As, one by one, we make our own commitment,
An ever-widening circle, the Sangha grows.*

Saturday, June 14, 2008

New opportunities on FWBO Jobs...

Several new jobs have been posted recently on FWBO Jobs; readers are invited to visit the [FWBO Jobs site](#) to check. These include opportunities at Taraloka, the FWBO’s retreat centre for women - and the UK’s ‘Retreat Centre of the Year’ (for the second time in three years!); for a finance worker at the North London Buddhist Centre, and for some of the [Karuna Appeals](#) later in the year.



The London Buddhist Centre is appealing for “men and women of vision” to take it forwards into its second thirty years of life – there are a variety of openings both in the Centre itself and in the various Right Livelihoods that surround it – and last but by no means least – there’s an opening in Jvalamalini’s dental practice in Bristol! This may sound incongruous but actually, it isn’t – it’s ethical, team-based work and she would prefer to work with people who share her values.

Since FWBO Jobs was launched in November last year it has had some 2,800 visitors; it’s become the easiest ‘one-stop’ shop to see what opportunities are available across the FWBO.

Other changes

There have been significant changes recently to the [FWBO News website](#) itself; regular readers who use our Feedblitz news-feed service are invited to take time to visit the site and its several sections.

Among other things three separate search facilities have been added to make it possible to easily find any specific people or events across the FWBO’s extensive and somewhat sprawling network of websites. You’ll find these on the [Resources page](#) of the site; they search, respectively, the FWBO News archive; **or** all FWBO centre websites (over 100 to date); **or** the 170+ personal websites listed on [FWBO People](#). A rich and, now, very accessible resource! The Order itself - now well over 1,500 men and women - can be seen co-creating the image of Avalokitesvara on the [Order Mosaic](#) section of the site, each little tile is clickable to reveal the whole person...

A tag listing facility has also been added giving one-click access to all stories on particular themes: clicking (for instance) the [‘Engaged Buddhism’](#) tag brings up all previous FWBO News stories on that theme.

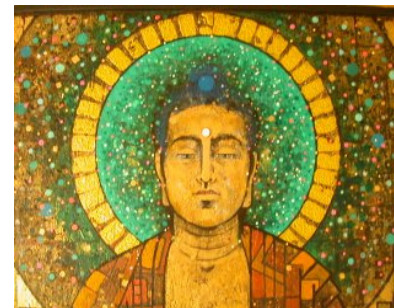
We’ve added four ‘volumes’ of previous stories from FWBO News, each covering a two-month period and available in an easily-printable PDF document form. These are ideal for Centre reception rooms - taken together they reflect the remarkable diversity of events and projects going on around the FWBO and TBMSG Sanghas. You can find these too on the [Resources](#) section of the site; we envisage adding further volumes every couple of months.

Finally, by visiting the site itself you’ll also be able to admire our visit counter, which shows the number of visitors and which country they come from – we have had over 33,000 visitors from nearly 150 countries since November last year...!

Suggestions for further enhancements are of course welcome.

Friday, June 13, 2008

Major exhibition of Western Buddhist art - June 27-29th



Coming up soon is the British Buddhist Landscape conference, already mentioned in FWBO News but now with more details confirmed – including a major exhibition of Western Buddhist artists.

Amitajyoti, who is organising the FWBO’s submissions, reports “We have a really good range of some excellent work to show - do let people know. The artists involved are really ‘giving it

something/'doing the business' so to speak! We'll have work by Aloka, Akasaka, Chintamani, Padmayogini and me."

Aloka and Chintamani have both been practicing as Buddhist artists for over 30 years, Chintamani is chair of FWBO Arts and probably best-known for his rupas which take centre-stage in both the London Buddhist Centre's shrine rooms. Aloka's large-scale paintings of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas grace many FWBO centre shrines – Brighton, Bristol, Nottingham, Norwich, Padmaloka, as well as dozens of personal shrines...

A rich line-up of speakers includes Sangharakshita, Stephen Batchelor, Dr John Peacock, Dr Helen Waterhouse, Ajahn Laow, Rev. Prof. Sato, Peggy Morgan, Colin Ash, Ven Sumana, Tony Kemmer, Phil Henry, Keith Munnings, Sharon Smith (aka Vijayatara), Yann Lovelock, and Munisha. It's a unique opportunity to see and interact first-hand with major figures across the extraordinary diversity of British Buddhism.

Full details of the conference are available from the conference organisers, the UK's **Network of Buddhist Organisations**, this gives details of **booking** and each days programme; it's possible though of course not ideal to attend only some of the events.

The dates are Friday-Sunday, June 27-29th.

The event is being generously hosted by the 'Institute of Oriental Philosophy', a branch of **SGI-UK**, at their headquarters, the very beautiful stately home of **Taplow Court**, set in 85 acres of grounds and overlooking the River Thames, between Slough and Maidenhead.

Transport is easy via regular trains from Paddington or Reading. Book soon as places are limited!

Thursday, June 12, 2008

Public Ordinations at Akashvana



On Tuesday 10th June the following women were ordained at the FWBO's **Akasavana** retreat centre in the Spanish mountains.

public preceptor Parami:

Sandy Lacey becomes Dharmamrita (long second and last 'a's), 'she who has the nectar of the Dharma' (private preceptor Maitreyi)

Sophia Young becomes Kuladharini (long last 'i'), 'she who supports or sustains the spiritual community' (private preceptor Viryadevi)

Tracy McLoughlin becomes Taradakini (all vowels long except first 'i'), 'she who is a Dakini of Tara' (private preceptor Kalyanavaca)

Thea Wiersma becomes Amritapurna (long 'u' and last 'a'), 'she who is full of nectar (of the Dharma)' (private preceptor Ratnadharini)

Nicky Edmonds becomes Satyajyoti (long 'i'), 'light of truth' (private preceptor Punyamala)

Hazel Baker becomes Maitrimala (long second 'i', and second and last 'a's), 'garland of metta' (private preceptor Vajragita)

public preceptor Dhammadinna:

Aida Fernandez becomes Rochani (long 'i'), 'she who is bright, shining, luminous' (private preceptor Parami)

public preceptor Maitreyi:

Teresa del Soldato becomes Lilamani (long 'i's and first 'a'), 'she who has a jewel of playfulness' (private preceptor Dhammadinna)

Mireille van der Plas becomes Mokshagandhi (long 'i'), 'she who's perfumed with liberation' or 'she who has the fragrance of emancipation' (private preceptor Akasasuri)

Jaine Daley becomes Ajayashraddha (long last 'a'), 'she who has invincible/unconquered faith' (private preceptor Kalyanasri)

public preceptor Padmasuri:

Sue Westbury becomes Viryajyoti (long 'i's and 'a'), 'she who has the light/radiance of energy in pursuit of the good' (private preceptor Kalyanasri)

Gail Abbott becomes Vilokini (long last 'i'), 'she who looks, sees, considers, reflects, is aware' (private preceptor Vajrapushpa)

public preceptor Ratnadharini:

Chris Zakorchemney becomes Amaladevi (long 'i'), 'pure, stainless devi' (private preceptor Maitreyi)

Julia Simnet becomes Karunavapi (long second and third 'a's and 'i'), 'she who is a lake of compassion' (private preceptor Padmasuri)

Hayley Morris becomes Karunavajri (long second 'a', and 'i'), 'she who has a vajra of compassion' (private preceptor Dharmottara)

SADHU! SADHU! SADHU!

Wednesday, June 11, 2008

A Right-Livelihood Land Project in the North East (UK)

A group is forming in the FWBO's Newcastle Sangha to explore the development of a new land-based community and work project informed by the Dharma. The instigator of this group, Andy Parkes, writes:

“What do I mean by ‘A Right-Livelihood Land Project’? And he answers –

“A group of people brought together by specific common ideals, particularly:

- Dharma (movement towards an integrated lifestyle with more harmony between livelihood, community and Buddhist practice)
- Environmental Ethics (movement towards increased ecological sustainability)
- A wish to develop the above, by living and/or working on some land together

“A project like this is group-led and for that reason it is not possible to be specific about its nature. For example, we might buy, borrow or rent land. We might set up a charity, a co-operative or many varying businesses on the land. We may or may not live on the land, and we may each have different levels of input into this project. Personally, I would like to give my attention to the Dharma, growing trees, organic food, greenwood working, music, teaching, building a low-impact dwelling for myself and others, and being part of a community I can give to and receive from. We have different skills and will each bring our own emphasis.

Why ‘A Right-Livelihood Land Project’

“Dharma is precious! It feeds us, and points the way to spiritual freedom. Spiritual development and ecological sustainability require a sustained commitment that is often not understood and resisted by our society. Keeping our ethical precepts, preparing ourselves for practice is more challenging when the way in which we support ourselves is replete with subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) contradictions to our beliefs. Land is precious in as much as, it feeds us and unobstructed access to it can lead to a high degree of practical freedom, resulting in less consumerism, more sharing and a responsible relationship to the earth. With practical freedom comes the ability to develop an integrated lifestyle, in which all of our activities can be conducive to spiritual development (Dharma), supporting ourselves in an ecologically sustainable way, and supporting our Buddhist (Sangha) and local community.

“Initially the group will be about getting to know each other and our interests in light of this project, and to see if and how we want to work together as a group. The timescale for developing this project is over months and years. Consolidating the group may take a long time, so don’t be immediately discouraged if you are interested but feel unprepared.”

If you are interested in the project but live outside Newcastle, please feel free to contact Andy at: andrew.parkes@sunderland.ac.uk

The photograph shows Buddhafield's new land at [Frog Mill](#), in the Dartmoor National Park.

Ordinations at Guhyaloka



The following men were privately ordained between 27th May and 9th June and publicly ordained at Guhyaloka on June 9th 2008:

Bob Harris becomes Akasamuni (Aakaashamuni):
'He who is a space/sky sage'.
(Private Preceptor: Khemadhamma, Public Preceptor: Mahamati).

Danus Blanchard becomes Jnanarakshita (Jnaanarakshita):
'He who protected by the highest knowledge/awareness'.
(Private Preceptor: Ashvajit, Public Preceptor: Saddhaloka).

David Vasey becomes Swadipa (Swadiipa):
'He who is (or has) his own Light (of Bodhi)'.
(Private Preceptor: Mahamati, Public Preceptor: Saddhaloka).

Edmund Hermes becomes Mokshasiddha (Mokshasiddha):
'He who is accomplished in liberation'.
(Private Preceptor: Ashvajit, Public Preceptor: Saddhaloka).

Geoffrey Newman becomes Aranyaka (Aranyaka):
'He who dwells in the forest'.
(Private Preceptor: Prakasha, Public Preceptor: Mahamati).

Hakan Hermundstad becomes Guhyaraja (Guhyaraaja):
'Mysterious King, Hidden King'.
(Private Preceptor: Satyaraja, Public Preceptor: Saddhaloka).

Jez Cox becomes Paraga (Paaraga):
'He who is crossing to the further shore'.
(Private Preceptor: Saddhaloka, Public Preceptor: Saddhaloka).

Joakim Eneroth becomes Maitrin (Maitrin):
'He who is full of love and kindness'.
(Private Preceptor: Satyaraja, Public Preceptor: Saddhaloka).

Juergen Titz becomes Pramodya (Praamodya):
'He who has joy and delight'.
(Private Preceptor: Bodhimitra, Public Preceptor: Saddhaloka).

Leo Zeef becomes Saccacitta (Sachachitta):
'He whose mind is concerned with reality'.
(Private Preceptor: Vajradaka, Public Preceptor: Saddhaloka).

Marcus Dakini becomes Padmapriya (Padmapriya):
'Lover of the Lotus'.
(Private Preceptor: Dhammavijaya, Public Preceptor: Saddhaloka).

Michael Lunts becomes Ratnadhyā (Ratnaadhyā):
'Abounding in Jewels'.
(Private Preceptor: Satyaraja, Public Preceptor: Saddhaloka).

Santosh Kamble becomes Sanghanatha (Sanghanaatha):
'Protector of the Sangha'.
(Private Preceptor: Arthapriya, Public Preceptor: Mahamati).

Sean Smith becomes Silapiya (Siilapiya):
'He for whom good conduct/ethics is beloved'.
(Private Preceptor: Vajradaka, Public Preceptor: Saddhaloka).

Tom Grant becomes Sthiramani (Sthiramaani):
'He who is an unwavering, resolute, trustworthy, steadfast jewel'.
(Private Preceptor: Saddhaloka, Public Preceptor: Saddhaloka).

Will Sullivan becomes Dharmashalin (Dharmashalin):
'He who abounds in the Dhamma'.
(Private Preceptor: Saddharaja, Public Preceptor: Mahamati).

Teaching meditation in Turkey - and in Turkish...

FWBO News is delighted to present this report from Vajracaksu, the WBO's only member teaching and practicing in Turkey.



"Greetings from Turkey, Istanbul to be more precise. Some of you will know that I've been living and working in Istanbul for a few years now, doing some meditation and Dharma teaching. In fact in August it will be 5 years! Time flies!

"Last November, for the first time ever I led a small meditation course in Turkish. Doing the course in Turkish was a very big thing for me, and successfully completing it gave me a big confidence boost. Actually, it went well - I gave practical homework each week and sent out 3 emails a week to remind and encourage us to practise, which I think worked well.

"At a small day event on meditation in January one woman showed great determination because she travelled from Bursa – by coach it was about a 10 hour round trip! Later in January and February I led a meditation and Buddhism course entitled, "Words are Powerful: Principles of Communication." It was based on the speech precepts, in fact we studied Ratnaghosa's excellent pamphlet, "[Just a Word...](#)" As usual, I gave 'home tasks' - for example, when studying 'harmonising speech' our daily practise was to be particularly mindful when people asked to have their greetings, their 'salaams', passed onto someone (this is a very common custom in Turkey). I also suggested we be particularly mindful when people speak well of others behind their backs and to make a special point of passing on these words to the person concerned.

"During the last class – this is something I typically do now – I got us all to reflect on what we've learnt during the course and to write ourselves a letter with our reflections; then one or two months after the end of the course I post these letters off to remind ourselves of some of the things we learnt. I think this is an appreciated and effective little exercise.

"In February after much resistance (and hard work actually), I managed to complete recording a meditation CD. I did this at home, it's not brilliant quality but it's OK, it's good enough. The CD includes six meditations in English and six in Turkish, some being sessions of guided Alexander Position. Already its proving to be useful and helpful.

"Last month (in May) I was invited back to [Bilgi University](#) to give 3 presentations on meditation to their students. Bilgi University is one of the most prestigious private universities in Turkey. I'd been there last year as well. I spoke on "Meditation: The Natural Medicine", and covered some of my own experiences of meditation plus summaries of some research into meditation providing evidence for the physiological and psychological benefits of meditation. We had time for questions and lastly an opportunity to practise a short meditation.

"And lastly - right now - I'm in the middle of leading a 5-Week Mindfulness Meditation Course in both English and Turkish. It the first time I've led something in both languages, it's quite challenging actually but I manage. Actually, I typically find it a privilege guiding people into a sense of stillness. This is the first course that I've made full use of the Meditation CD and people seem to be finding it very useful. The homework for this week is in two parts: to practise a short meditation every day (with one day off!) and perhaps more challengingly, to take one or two deep breaths whenever we notice that we're criticising ourselves or others in thought or word. An interesting exercise! I look forward to people's report back next week.

"I won't make any definite promises but now I've broken my silence in this website, I hope to write more regularly.

"Kind wishes to the reader.

"Vajracaksu (Istanbul) PS - you can contact me [here](#).

"...just like a beautiful flower which has colour and also has perfume are the beautiful fruitful words of the person who speaks and does what they say."
The Buddha

Sangharakshita on 'The Growth and Prosperity of the Sangha'



Upekshapriya from the FWBO's 'Videosangha' project has contacted FWBO News to say -

"You might want to let your readers know that Bhante's latest talk 'The Growth and Prosperity of the Sangha' given at the FWBO International Retreat is now available on www.videosangha.net. The direct link is [here](#)".

Since Videosangha was launched in 2007, it has grown rapidly to become an extensive video resource for the FWBO worldwide, with well over 100 videos spanning 24 'categories'. There's everything there from answers to those [awkward questions](#) ("are buddhists allowed to have sex...?") to many individuals recounting their first

meetings with [Sangharakshita](#) - to others reflecting on their own [ordinations](#)...

Adding new videos is easy - simply upload to YouTube or Google Video with an 'FWBO' tag...

Friday, June 06, 2008

de 3 juwelen.org: Dharma translations into Dutch



Bart Van den Berghe, from the FWBO's Dutch Sangha, has sent us this report on 'The 3 Jewels', their on-line Dharma translation project -

"The Three Jewels ([de 3 juwelen.org](#)) is a Dutch-Flemish translation project.

"Texts from Bhante Sangharakshita and other FWBO sources (and occasionally a non-FWBO text) are being translated into Dutch by language-loving members of the FWBO's lowland sanghas. The aim of the '3 Jewels project' is to make Dharma texts accessible to Dutch non-english speaking readers and inspire them to practice the Dharma.

"The texts can be freely downloaded from the website or bought in printed format at production cost from the different buddhist centres in the Lowlands. Of course we encourage people to support or work and consider a [donation](#) to enable us to do more and better.

"Right now 14 texts have been translated from English, including 'the ten pillars', 'what is the Dharma', 'change your mind' and 'vision and transformation'. In the pipeline are texts like 'the guide to the Buddhist path' and 'what is the sangha' that will soon be available for download on the website. "Recently all the texts have been restyled and look and read better than ever before. Enjoy..."

A PDF spreadsheet with [all existing translations of all FWBO texts into all languages](#) is available on the Resources tab of FWBO News.

Wednesday, June 04, 2008

Taraloka voted Retreat Centre of the Year - again!



The UK-based '[Good Retreat Guide](#)' has voted [Taraloka](#) their Retreat Centre of the Year - again! They were Retreat Centre of the Year in 2006 and are again for 2008.

They say - "Taraloka is one of our most favourite places and where we would happily send our sisters, mother, aunts and any woman we know for a retreat whether they were Buddhist or not. A wonderful place! Highly Recommended".

Sadhu Taraloka!

Tuesday, June 03, 2008

Buddhafield Festival in the news



The **Buddhafield Festival** has for some years been the FWBO's largest event outside India. It's been held every year since 1996 and has gone from strength to strength, quietly building a loyal following almost entirely by word of mouth. This year they plan to move to a new site – the third since the Festival began – and increase the size slightly, to 3,000.

By happy coincidence they've also hit the UK's Sunday papers in a way they

never have before, with top reviews in the Times' list of '**12 best boutique festivals**'; the Guardian's '**20 festivals you'll never have heard of**'; and the finally the Independent (not online so far as we know).

As the Times eloquently puts it, *"'Are you sure?' you cry. 'A festival without alcohol, or drugs, or even – whisper it – dogs?' But yes, as its name might suggest, Buddhafield isn't your normal bunch of loons, sorted for Es and whizz and standing in a field with 20,000 others."*

Or, as the Guardian says, *"This couldn't be more different from your run-of-the-mill festival."*

Each year Buddhafield aims to learn that little bit better how to create a genuine festival that occupies a respected place in the calendar of UK alternative festivals and which genuinely follows the Buddhist precepts. This year, on their **Festival Volunteers Page**, they say -

"Buddhafield 2008 is organised by practising Buddhists, attempting to exemplify the qualities of infinite Wisdom, Compassion and Positive Energy and to create an environment where others can experience a taste of these qualities. To help us we take on 5 training principles and as contributors to Buddhafield 2008 we ask you to join us in trying to make these training principles a way of life on the site.

"The 5 principles are -

"To Try Not to Take Life or Cause Harm

Cafes on the site are Vegetarian/Vegan. Buddhafield has a strong ecological thread.

"To Try Not to take the Not Given

We try to be aware of what we take from others in all its aspects, goods, time, energy...

"To Try Not to Indulge in Sexual Misconduct

We try not to use sexuality to exploit or coerce others.

"To Try Not to Lie

We try to be honest in our communication.

"To Try Not to Take Intoxicants

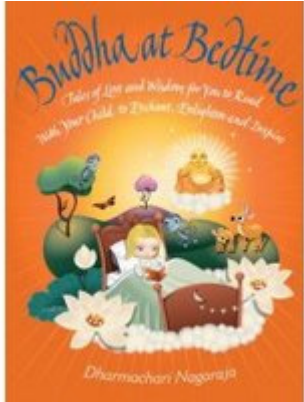
We have a policy of discouraging the consumption of intoxicants on the site. We need clear minds to put these principles into practice!



The Buddhafield Festival this year will be held near Taunton, from July 16-20th. Over 600 tickets are given away to the many crews and performers needed to run the Festival, if you're interested in volunteering or contributing in any way please visit the **Festival Volunteers Page** of the Buddhafield website where you'll find application forms and descriptions of what's needed.

Monday, June 02, 2008

The Buddha at Bedtime...



'Buddha at Bedtime' is a new book written by Nagaraja, a member of the Western Buddhist Order living in Glasgow, Scotland. It's sub-titled "Tales of Love and Wisdom for You to Read with Your Child to Enchant, Enlighten, and Inspire".

Nagaraja goes on to say "Growing up in the modern world, our children have to cope with an ever-increasing amount of stress, which can have a negative impact on their development. The ancient wisdom of Buddhism, with its emphasis on peace, mindfulness and compassion, is the ideal basis for helping any child to face these challenges with inner confidence and calm. Building on the age-old art of storytelling, this beautiful book re-tells 20 ancient Buddhist tales in a way that is thoroughly fun and accessible to children.

"Featuring superb, full-page illustrations the stories will transport children into an imaginary world of enlightenment and discovery where they will meet delightful characters and discover an easy-to-understand Buddhist message, which will help them think about how they can apply values such as patience, perseverance, honesty and generosity to their own lives. Designed to either be read aloud by parents or by children on their own, these compelling narratives focus the mind and provide a soothing transition into sleep."

This is Nagaraja's first book - he's probably better-known to FWBO News' readers for his long-standing appearances on Terry Wogan's **'Pause for Thought'** slots on BBC Radio Two.

Sunday, June 01, 2008

FWBO International Retreat over, feedback invited...



Over at Taraloka, site of the FWBO's **International Retreat** last week, the clear-up has just about finished and they are well into their next event, the UK Women's National Order Weekend. All 400 retreatants have gone their many ways - home to Belgium, Holland, Germany, France, Spain, all over the UK - and even further perhaps - there were people there from India, New York, Australia.

Sangharakshita came on Sunday morning, and spoke at length, choosing as his theme the Buddha's advice to his monks, the 'Conditions for the Stability of the Sangha' from the [Mahaparanibbana Sutta](#), no.16 in the Digha Nikaya. Thanks to Videosangha, you can catch his talk [here](#), look for 'The Growth and Prosperity of the Sangha' though it's also known as 'Growing the Spiritual Community'.

We'd like to invite any one who was there to add a comment to this post saying how it was for them - just click on 'have your say' below... In this way we'll build up a scrapbook of reflections and memories.

Meanwhile a slideshow of some images from the retreat is available on [FWBO Photos](#). They include quite a lot of Sangharakshita - many thanks to Dhammarati for these.

London Buddhist Centre begins major building work



The FWBO's [London Buddhist Centre](#) this week moved into top gear as the largest building project in its history really got underway. Over the next 8 months over UK £1,5 million will be spent transforming every floor of the building (all 6 of them!) into facilities worthy of the 21st century and the next 100 years.

Planning and preliminary works have been going on for well over a year and already 'Phase 0' has been completed – a major project in its own right. This entailed moving the offices out of the basement and up into 'Bhante's Flat', which had lain empty for several years. Sangharakshita's old bedroom, which he used for most of the 1990's while living at the LBC, has been transformed into the 'Sangharakshita Study Room' and is now a self-contained space available for study or hire. The rest of his old flat has become beautiful new light and airy offices for the LBC team – a welcome new home after many years in the relative darkness of the basement.

Work on the project is multi-faceted – as the builders smash up the old concrete flooring in the LBC basement, Aloka, in Norfolk, is working on a large new painting which will be the shrine backdrop in the new meditation room. And in far-away India, carvers are shaping a stone fountain that will bring a touch of natural beauty into the basement waiting area. This is scheduled to be shipped in July and installed in time for



their opening in mid-September.

The biggest challenge of the project is to convert the basement into



the new '[Breathing Space](#)', the LBC's flourishing programme for health and wellbeing.

An indication of the success of the Breathing Space project – even before its new premises are ready – is their waiting list, currently standing at 65 for their next MBCT

course. They are looking at ways to offer more courses in response to the demand. As well as MBCT, Breathing Space will offer programs for carers – 'Caring for the Carers'; also Relapse Prevention; Meditation for Depression, Meditation for Addiction, and Bereavement courses – plus training in all the above for future trainers and counsellors. Breathing Space looks set to add a valuable and much-appreciated dimension to the LBC's work.

You can read recent articles about the Breathing Space project here - in The Times about [addiction courses](#); in the Guardian about [carers retreats](#), and a short BBC film about the LBC's work with people suffering from [depression](#).

Finally there is a more general interview with [Futurebuilders England](#), a UK government investment agency which has provided some of the funding of the project.

FWBO News wishes the LBC well on what is likely to prove a busy and demanding time - and looks forward eagerly to seeing the new facilities!

Thursday, May 29, 2008

Nottingham Buddhist Centre hosts Dalai Lama students

The Dalai Lama has just finished five days of intensive teaching in Nottingham, UK, with up to 6,000 people attending his teachings and talks.



Although not directly involved in the event, the FWBO's **Nottingham Buddhist Centre** has been playing a part, offering accommodation and food to around 30 of the participants. The centre was opened to all wishing to use it, with sleeping spaces for women on the ground floor, men in the shrine room, and three Tibetan ladies on the top floors with the community. Interestingly, only one of those present knew members of the community in advance – it was a real 'instant community' open to all who needed it.

Jinaraja, the centre's chairman, said "as well as different nationalities we also had different types of Buddhist all living in harmony. Much intermingling and friendship, trust generosity and kindness abounding - and someone left us a beautiful brocade on the shrine room as a gift. So much dana given as well, though we asked for no money – we're planning to use some of what we were given to purchase a set of DVDs of the Dalai Lama's talks.

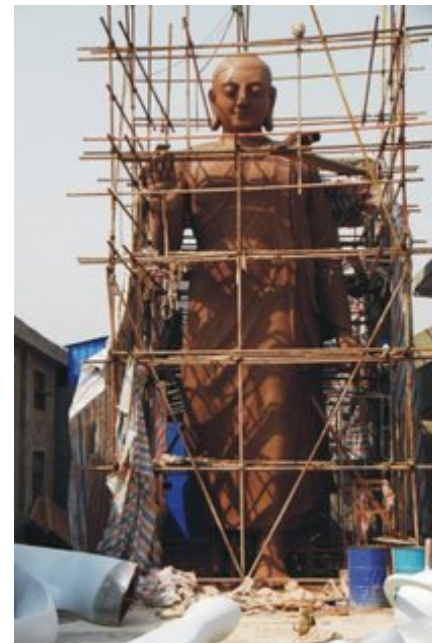
"It was a little stressful for the community, being responsible for security among other things, but our guests became very sensitive and considerate of us, we all ate breakfast in our kitchen together and all used the bathrooms and showers. Nothing broken! And a mild smell of socks the only unpleasant after-effect! Actually, it was like

being on retreat together – we were only five minutes from the Nottingham Arena where the teachings were taking place, so people were able to come and go as they needed to.

"Several of us were able to meet the Dalai Lama personally, some at an inter-faith event and others at a reception with civic dignitaries. I was pleased to be able to remind him of the Western Buddhist Order and the work we are doing in the West – of course he has seen a lot more of us in India at some of our TBMSG centres".

Nottingham is having a bumper year for visiting Buddhists this year, with Thich Nhat Hanh due to visit in **August**.

Wednesday, May 28, 2008



Buddha statue for Nagaloka nears completion

Last year FWBO News reported TBMSG's **Nagarjuna Training Institute** in Nagpur, India, had decided to commission and install a giant walking Buddha figure as centrepiece for the 15-acre site. At the time the completion date was announced as being **December 2007** ; this

has, perhaps not surprisingly, been delayed. However work on the statue has been proceeding steadily and we are pleased to bring you this photograph showing it nearing completion. An idea of the scale can be seen from the man working on the statue's shoulder, also from the two-storey buildings that surround it...!

Unveiling is now scheduled for February 2009, which will be shortly before the WBO's International Order Convention, which next year is being held in India – in fact in Bodh Gaya itself.

The statue is being created by Wen Kwei, one of Taiwan's leading Buddhist sculptors. He is famous for an equally large ten-headed Samantabhadra. Wen Kwei is also managing the difficult process of transportation and erection of the statue, and even some of the fundraising, which is all being done in Taiwan. Vivekaratna, chairman of NTI, told FWBO & TBMSG News that Wen Kwei has said he wants this to be the best of all his works, and famous throughout the world.

Sunday, May 25, 2008

FWBO International Retreat in full swing; 400 attending



The FWBO's first **International Retreat** is in full swing at Taraloka, with over 400 people attending, many camping in the bumpy fields surrounding the Retreat Centre. It is a rich and diverse Sangha gathering - those present are of many nationalities and countries, many ages (83 to just

6 months), and many levels of experience, not least of camping!

Lokabandhu reports from the retreat- "The theme is 'Beating the Drum of the Dharma', and we're exploring it from many different angles – meditation, talks, story-telling (in the evenings, with the children present), ritual, and study – and, of course, in the many meetings happening between people every moment. In the mornings there have been talks – on the first day the theme was 'Wisdom', and Ratnaguna explored with us some of the Buddha's very earliest teachings, the 'pre-Buddhist Buddhism' from chapters four and five of the Sutta Nipata. Yesterday's theme was 'Absorption'; Kamalashila led us through what may have happened in the Buddha's mind immediately after his Enlightenment, as he sat beneath the trees around Bodh Gaya. Today the theme is 'Compassion'; Sangharakshita is expected to arrive shortly, and will be giving a short talk and no doubt meeting people.

"It's going very well indeed, it's real meeting between people and a real coming-together of our Sangha. In the evenings we have chanting and puja; circumambulating a rather wonderful papier-mache stupa as we go. For those who can receive it, there's a video clip of this on [Youtube](#) or embedded below".

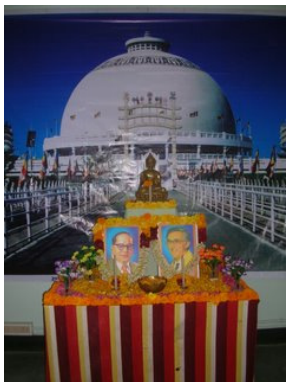
Meanwhile FWBO News has heard that the Buddha Festival in India also went very well, with some 500 attending. We will be publishing a full report once we have some photos of the event – expected shortly.

Saturday, May 24, 2008

Dhamma tour in South India

Vivekaratna, the Director of the Nagarjuna Training Institute, TBMSG's training facility in Nagpur, India, has recently returned from a trip to southern India. South India is very very different culturally and linguistically to Maharashtra, TBMSG's heartland, and until recently, has had few Buddhists and little contact with TBMSG. However over the past two years there have been Kerala students at NTI and the first of these have now returned home and begun work in their local areas. Last year the FWBO Growth Fund funded three of them so they would be able to focus their efforts on establishing Dhamma activities there. Vivekaratna sends this report -

"I toured to South India from 22nd April to 4th May. The purpose of my tour was to interview the candidates for the 7th Batch of students at the NTI. In addition to that I met with number of institutions as well as individuals. It was very inspiring tour as people are thirsty for dhamma. Padmavir was accompanying me.



"The highlight of my tour was a day retreat at Kottayam in Kerala. We reached Kottayam at 6.30 am, Subhash met us and took us to the Kerala Social Service Center, where Binojbabu had organized a day retreat. This started at 11.30 as participants were coming from different parts of Kerala (Trivendrum, Kollam, Iduki, Trishur & Kannur). The organisers had made a beautiful shrine. There were 150 participants, a very good audience. They came to understand just Buddhism and

stayed through out the day. We were able to interview 9 candidates (7 male & 2 female) for 7th batch of NTI students. After the retreat Rejimon escorted us to Thengana. Four persons were waiting for us

till 9pm to conduct Puja at their center. But we could not do the Puja as it was too late and also we were tired by travelling. We took rest in Lodge.

"The next day Rejimon introduced us to his work at Thengana. He had raised local donations for deposit to have accomodation for regular TBMSG activities and also for monthly rent. He has now started regular TBMSG activities at Thengana. In the morning we visited his center and did Puja and appreciated his dedication for dhamma work without any financial support from us. Local few



Buddhists look after his needs. We left Thengana in the afternoon for Mynagapally – this is our first TBMSG Center in Kerala started by NTI alumni at their own initiative. After three hours train & bus journey, we reached to TBMSG Mynagapally Center at 4pm.

A conversion ceremony was organised at the center at 7.00 pm. The christian family who wanted to convert reached at about 8.30pm. They were coming from 60 kms away and had lost the way too. Mr. Johnson who was at one time an NTI trainee, and his wife Sharika, daughter of Sukumaran who was strong supporter of Buddhism for many years and helping in many ways to Rejimon for spread of Buddhism; were the converts. Padmavir gave lecture on the importance of conversion to Buddhism and Going for Refuge and I led the conversion ceremony that concluded at 10 pm. About 25 local Buddhist witnessed the conversion. We six enjoyed the the dinner supplied to us at the center by three Buddhist families and took rest at Center.

Finally the next day we had meeting with Binojbabu, Subhash, Rejimon, Arun & Rajanikant. We rejoiced in their merits for spreading Buddhism. I assured Binojbabu to support for one more year from the left out of growth fund and suggested him not to find

out work outside. Subhash may get scholarship and he is trying for lecturership too. There is a need to support to Rejimon too. We left at 12am to catch a train at Karunangapally railway stn for Bangalore.

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

New Feature article on FWBO News: NVC in the FWBO

A new article has been posted to [FWBO News' Features](#). Entitled 'NVC in the FWBO: Heart-to-Heart Communication', it explores Shantigarbha's discovery of NVC, or 'Nonviolent Communication', and the many parallels he found between NVC and the Dharma. As he puts it himself, "for me this is the deepest connection with the Dharma – this compassionate intention to connect, with a view to enriching the lives of all beings". And he goes on to say "I've found that when people are connected at this heart level, whether they live in a Buddhist community in the UK, the slums of India, war-torn Sri Lanka, or a US prison, they are only a short distance from finding a solution that honours the needs on both sides, where no-one gives in or gives up."

A growing number of Order Members and others involved in the FWBO have trained in NVC, and Shantigarbha's article concludes with a directory of those currently offering it in Britain, India, and elsewhere. [Click here to read it on FWBO Features](#).

Two new FWBO groups in Germany



Sraddhabandhu, co-founder of the FWBO's new centre in Düsseldorf, Germany, has told FWBO News -

"Success has come quickly for our new group. Just one year after its opening [FWBO Düsseldorf](#) has

celebrated its first Mitra ceremony.

"Sven Fischer, aged 45, father of three (photo shown), decided to take refuge in the context of the FWBO. This was on the first anniversary of the Düsseldorf centre. For this 20 people came, four of them from the Zen group with which we share the rooms. Dayanidhi from Essen led the Mitra ceremony and the Puja, Sraddhabandhu did the rejoicing in Sven's merits. A special treat was the reciting of the Heart Sutra in old Japanese, carried out by the Zen group.

"The sangha in Düsseldorf is thriving, next on our list of things we want to do is start a regular Dharma study group".

Meanwhile FWBO activities have also begun in South Germany, in the town of Freiburg, where two Dharmacharinis, Suchimansa and Padumachitta, have begun weekly activities in a rented room. There's an interesting story behind this, which we hope to bring you soon...

Monday, May 19, 2008

FWBO International Retreat setup under way at Taraloka

In two days time the first **FWBO International Retreat** begins at Taraloka, the FWBO's women's retreat centre in Shropshire, UK. Setup is well under way, with over 50 people on site and new marquees, tents, and domes springing up by the hour. FWBO News went to have a look, and brings you this small videoclip that hopes to bring a little of the magic of the situation to you, wherever you may be... If it's not visible below, it's also available on [Youtube](#).

The setup is itself a mini-retreat, with walking and sitting meditations in the morning, short meditations before lunch and supper, and pujas and other ceremony in the evenings. And yesterday, two birthdays were added to the mix! This may sound a bit of a luxury given the amount of work to be done, but actually it's crucial – it creates the atmosphere into which newcomers arrive. And Buddhafield has discovered that if this embodies a sense of Sangha, an event can grow and grow and grow to an almost unlimited size while preserving the same friendliness and sense of welcome as there was when only half a dozen people first showed up in an empty field in a couple of vans...



Over 400 people are expected from across Europe and beyond; there will be simultaneous translation into four languages for the main talks, a children's area, a selection of accommodation (including bedrooms, dormitories, camping, and even the local village hall), and food provided by the Buddhafield café. Multiple meditation spaces include meditation outdoors in Taraloka's grounds around their very beautiful Prajna-Paramita rupa. In a few days time, Taraloka and Buddhafield will play host to four hundred retreatants - for now though, there's much to be done – from filling in the rabbit holes in the carpark to setting up the compost toilets to digging down to discover and tee off the deeply-buried water main. Who said it was simple leading the simple life...?!

Sunday, May 18, 2008

Kavyasiddhi writes to say -

“Just to let you know I'm writing and recording another set of five 'Pause for Thoughts' on BBC Radio 2 for the week of Wesak.

“They'll be broadcast on the nights of Monday May 19 - Friday May 23rd at 1.30 and 3.30am, in the Night Time slot of the Janice Long Show.

“So if you want to hear two-minute Dharma thoughts aimed at non-Buddhist shift workers and insomniacs, tune in to Radio 2 on Monday-Friday a.m. (that's very, very early a.m!)

“Hope you're well, Kavyasiddhi”

If you don't get up in time you can listen to her again by clicking [here](#) and then selecting the day of the week.

Successful internet fundraising campaign for first ‘Buddha Festival’ in India.



Chandrabodhi in India is about to hold the first ‘Buddha Festival’ in India. This has been a dream of his since his time in the UK when, while living at Vajraloka Meditation Retreat Centre, he attended an early Buddhafield Festival and

conceived the idea of creating something similar back in India. His dream is now coming true, and the Festival itself is coming up soon. In fact it's timed for Wesak, the full moon of May – which this year

falls on May 19th.

In the run-up to the festival he's been busy fundraising, and, with the help of Lokabandhu, the FWBO's ‘Development Coordinator’, has run what's probably the FWBO's first internet fundraising campaign. In fact, in just over three days he reached his target of UK £700 – and he's delighted!

This was achieved using ‘justgiving’, a UK-based internet fundraising website which allows fundraisers to create simple webpages advertising their project. Each page then provides a simple and secure facility for supporters world-wide to make donations on-line. Although Chandrabodhi's reached his target for international contributions he'd very much welcome further donations; his page is www.justgiving.com/chandrabodhi.

Do have a look – and look out for more justgiving appeals in the future!

Chandrabodhi writes -

“I am Chandrabodhi, living in India. Many of you will know me; for many years I have been part of Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha (as our Order is known in India). I am developing the Ugyen Sangharakshita Meditation Centre at Warakwadi, in the very beautiful countryside near Nanded in Maharashtra.

“This year, we are holding a Buddha Festival at Warakwadi to attract the Buddhist and non Buddhist people. This way we want to establish the Buddhist culture, it is a very important part of our vision to attract people in India to the Dhamma. Actually, the inspiration for this came from the Buddhafield Festival in UK; we want to create a ‘Buddha Mela’ here in India.

“But this is the first year we have done this, and I am appealing for your support. Please sponsor me and help me reach my target of UK

£700- this is what we need to guarantee the event is a success.

“The festival will be inaugurated by the Cultural Minister of Maharashtra; there will be meditation Workshops led by me, and talks by many distinguished visitors – plus an all-night Cultural Programme. This festival will be on the lines of the Buddhafield Festival in the UK; I want that this Buddha Festival should become the regular feature of our Meditation Centre. This is our first year but already we are hoping for 1,000 people to attend”.

Friday, May 16, 2008

Connecting with Buddhist youth – in India, and beyond...



Kumarajiv from India sends us this report of the links TBMSG are building with Buddhist youth in India – and beyond... He concludes with a fundraising appeal – please do respond if you are able to...

“India’s National Network of Buddhist Youth (NNBY) is one of several projects that **Dhammakranti** have started. So far two national gatherings have been successfully organized. The groups of young men and women known as Task Groups are formed

in various parts of India; these task groups organize trainings and events for the benefit of youth. Besides Dhamma teaching events they organise many activities that address the life concerns of youth. As well as this, leadership trainings are organized for leaders amongst the youth. Regional and national gatherings bring many of them together and keep the inspiration alive.

“I have been trying to get this Youth Network connected to other Buddhist youth organizations both East and West. Getting involved with the **World Fellowship of Buddhist Youth** (WFBY) has been a great step forwards for us; it is one of the important ways to reach out to the Far Eastern Buddhist world.

“Recently I was made a vice-president of the WFBY. In April its Executive Board meeting was held in Singapore and I visited along with one of our youth leaders. We are able to participate in a session on youth leadership training; I was amongst the teachers along with Dr. Ong See Yew and others. My special responsibility in the WFBY is as chairman of the Buddhist Education wing of WFBY; I am trying to bring in the approach of Sangharakshita and Dr. Ambedkar to Dhamma work as well as Information Technology and other things presently popular with youth.

“This visit was very successful in terms of meeting Dhamma teachers working amongst youth and young people from 9 different countries. Through such connections the NNBY back in India will be creating strong bonds with traditional Buddhist countries and will be able to share the essence of the Dhamma with the unique approach of Sangharakshita and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

“Back in India we have great plans for 2008; we were recently fortunate to obtain a grant from the FWBO Growth Fund in UK. This will help us do most though not all of what we are hoping in 2008. However they have told us they will not be able to give anything in 2009 so we have an urgent need to fundraise – both to fulfill our vision for 2008 and for stability in the future.

"Please see our fundraising page www.justgiving.com/indianbuddhistyouth; this gives more details on our five-point program for 2008 and also allows you to donate immediately. It is so important that we engage the youth of today in the Dhamma Revolution. You can help us in this. We are appealing for just over UK 4,000 pounds.

"Thank you. Dh. Kumarajiv

Thursday, May 15, 2008

Dublin Buddhist Centre's proud new premises...



The FWBO's **Dublin Buddhist Centre** has moved - to some great new premises!

Vajrashura has sent us a copy of a letter that's gone out to the Dublin Sangha on behalf of the Centre Team, we reproduce it here to give you a glimpse of what's going on over there... He says -

Dear Friends,

I hope you're well and happy. Much has happened in the past few months in the Dublin Buddhist Centre and there has been lots of change!

The main event, of which I'm sure you're already aware, is that we are now in our new home of Liberty Corner on James Joyce Street. Our courses kicked off on Monday 31st March with Pavara leading the first yoga class and two days later I handed back the keys of our old centre on Leeson Street to the landlords there. I felt sad at leaving it one last time - it's been a place of much growth for me personally and for the Sangha generally, and I'm sure we all have fond memories of it. But at the same time I'm quite excited about the new place, it's a really lovely Centre and I feel it will provide us with much more potential and scope for our community to grow and develop.

If you haven't seen the new place, do feel free to call in at any time to check it out. And just to say thanks to all of you who helped out in whatever way with the new Centre project, whether it was in the fundraise, the move itself or just your general support. It is much appreciated.

I'd also like to say a particular thank you to Dayananda, Aksobhin, Karunadaka and Prajnagita. Dayananda was our architect, and as well as running his own full-time architectural business, he designed and guided the building work free of charge. Without him, this whole project and the way it happened would not have been possible. He was very ably aided by Aksobhin, whose contribution to the project has also been immense. Prajnagita organised the fundraise, doing a great job to make the funds available to purchase the centre and helped in many other ways too. The ways in which Karunadaka has contributed are too numerous to mention... But suffice it to say that it was his vision which has led the new Centre project from the beginning, and he continues to play a valuable part in where the centre is going. And on Friday 9th May we'll be having a special rejoicing in merits for Karunadaka, celebrating all the work he's done in the Centre over the past ten years, in particular his work as Chairman.

So what's next for the Centre? We're now entering what feels like a 'phase 2', where the more immediate concerns of finance and building work are over, and it's more a case of tweaking both how we run things and finalising smaller things like signage, furniture, etc. Courses are underway, and generally they seem to be going well. Our meditation courses are full and while the yoga has taken small dip (which is to be expected when you move premises), there's much potential for yoga classes in the area. We're still getting to know the area, which is certainly more colourful than Leeson Street! But I feel there's a liveliness here that wasn't present there, and that's definitely a positive thing.

In terms of what we've planned for the near future: on Friday 6th June we'll be having the official Sangha opening for the new Centre - a night where we'll be both looking back over the history of the DBC, as well as throwing an eye to the future and where we're headed. As well as this evening, we'll be in contact with local community groups, introducing ourselves and building links with the local community. And we'll be looking at how best to utilise our new Centre, exploring what new courses we can run, and in particular how to use having a second shrine room to the best effect.

Of course we'll also be running all our usual courses, retreats and events. Just to draw particular attention to a couple of these - the Summer Retreat will run in early July and will be lead by Sinhaketu and myself, and should be well worth coming on. Also, I'd like to mention the [International FWBO Retreat](#) which will take place over a long weekend in May - this will be a great opportunity to have an experience of the wider FWBO mandala and there will be a few of heading over to it if you'd like to travel with us.

Much metta, Vajrashura (on behalf of the Centre team)

[Dublin Buddhist Centre](#) (FWBO)

Liberty Corner, 5 James Joyce Street, Dublin 1

Tuesday, May 13, 2008



Gunaketu, chairman of the FWBO's small centre in [Oslo](#), Norway, has for long been active in the field of environmentally and socially engaged Buddhism. He is soon off to Hanoi in Vietnam to participate in a United Nations' sponsored conference called "[The Buddhist Contribution to building a Just, Democratic and Civil Society: War, Conflict and Healing-A Buddhist perspective](#)".

It is to take place in Hanoi starting May 13th and FWBO News hopes to present a review of it in due course.

Meanwhile Rijumati continues his "round-the-world-more-or-less-without-flying" travels – and has had a variety of adventures both in the world of TBMSG and on the Buddhist pilgrimage circuit of India. The second collection of excerpts from his letters home has been posted on [FWBO News' Features](#).

Monday, May 12, 2008

How we can respond to the situation in Burma...

FWBO News readers will be aware of the recent terrible floods in Burma – and of the appallingly inadequate response to them by the country's military Government.

We are very grateful to Jan McHarry, a mitra from the London

Buddhist Centre, for suggesting a very practical and appropriate way we can all respond – donating via the **International Burmese Monks Organization**, who have linked with internet activists **Avaaz** to respond to the present crisis. She says “Avaaz is a credible organisation linked to many social justice and environmental campaigns”. Avaaz themselves say -

“Humanitarian relief is urgently needed, but Burma's government could easily delay, divert or misuse any aid. Today (May 7th) the International Burmese Monks Organization, including many leaders of the democracy protests last autumn, launched a new effort to provide relief through Burma's powerful grass roots network of monasteries--the most trusted institutions in the country and currently the only source of housing and support in many devastated communities.

"Click below to help the Burmese people with a donation and see a video appeal to Avaaz from a leader of the monks:
https://secure.avaaz.org/en/burma_cyclone/7.php?cl=86627405

“Giving to the monks is a smart, fast way to get aid directly to Burma's people. Governments and international aid organizations are important, but face challenges--they may not be allowed into Burma, or they may be forced to provide aid according to the junta's rules. And most will have to spend large amounts of money just setting up operations in the country. The monks are already on the front lines of the aid effort--housing, feeding, and supporting the victims of the cyclone since the day it struck. The International Burmese Monks Organization will send money directly to each monastery through their own networks, bypassing regime controls.

“The monks are unlikely to receive aid from governments or large humanitarian organizations, but they have a stronger presence and trust among the Burmese people than both. If we all chip in a little bit, we can help them to make a big difference.

"Click here to donate:

https://secure.avaaz.org/en/burma_cyclone/7.php?cl=86627405

“With hope, Ricken, Ben, Graziela, Paul, Iain, Veronique, Pascal, Galit and the whole Avaaz team”

PS: Here are some links to more information: To learn more about Avaaz's work to support the Burmese people, click here: http://www.avaaz.org/en/burma_report_back/. For more information about the cyclone, the humanitarian crisis, and the political dimension, see these articles: New York Times: ["A Challenge Getting Relief to Myanmar's Remote Areas."](#) 7 May 2008. BBC: ["Will Burma's leaders let aid in?"](#) 6 May 2008. India's Economic Times: ["Indian meteorological department advised junta 48 hours in advance,"](#) 6 May 2008. BBC: ["Disaster tests Burma's junta."](#) 5 May 2008. Times Online: ["Aid workers fear Burma cyclone deaths will top 50,000."](#) 6 May 2008.

Saturday, May 10, 2008

In search of a meaningful way of life...

EARTH RISING  **HEAVEN DESCENDING**

‘**Earth Rising, Heaven Descending**’ is the name given by Order Member Suryaprabha to his latest series of five films charting the evolution of the FWBO – and, more generally, of Sangha in the West - over the past 40 years. His ‘Lights in the Sky’ imprint has already given the FWBO some of its evocative images of its’ past, especially

through the much-loved '[History](#)' series - or click here for some [trailers](#).

Suryaprabha sees his films as a “search for a meaningful way of life” and, on the eve of the release of the third in the series, he has sent FWBO News this summary of what he's trying to do in the present series. He says –

“THE IDEA was to collect stories from around the world of people who have some connection to the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order and, with some reflection, to come to appreciate this hard to describe ‘spirit’. A five part series has evolved, with Part 5 becoming that original film with four preceding films setting the scene. So the



series, after a statement of the ideals and principles goes, in the middle films, fairly deeply into messy worldly existence and (it is predicted) end calmly and contemplatively. People were chosen for

variety of lifestyle and environment and only secondarily for their level of ‘practice’. In parts 2 to 4 the social context of their lives is explored, including the balance between personal and public concerns. In the words of Vishvapani, the series maintains a



‘sideways look’ by ‘sitting in’ on conversations rather than employing an ‘authoritarian’ narrator-interviewer approach.

"**Part 1 BACKGROUND** (42 mins, August '08 release) recalls an earlier era of the Buddhist transmission to the West when FWBO founder [Sangharakshita](#) was befriended and taught in Kalimpong by Indian and Tibetan Buddhist teachers. Now, three of his disciples undertake a pilgrimage to the Himalayas to connect with their and his spiritual roots.

"**Part 2 ONCE FREE** (63 mins, now released) is an ironic, tender portrait set in a place (USA) where the ratio of personal persona to

public persona is perhaps 9:1. And in a place where bounty or impoverishment are seen as just rewards for an individual's effort, a handful of Buddhists find ways of ameliorating institutional harshness through work in health, education and prisons: an example of quiet, hopeful lives within a dominant culture.

"**Part 3 RECURRING DREAM** (64 mins) Set in India, where the ratio of personal persona to public concern is perhaps 1:9. The iconic Dr Ambedkar ensured the Constitution outlawed caste-based discrimination and dreamt of further changes coming through the adoption of Buddhism. 50 years after he and millions of his caste-



based followers converted, Hindus still see ‘Old Untouchables’ rather than ‘New Buddhists’. Why? The gains in social welfare and self confidence are indisputable. But prejudice and distrust

flare up easily on all sides, amongst even Buddhists. And caste-based marriage, Subhuti argues, ensures the scope of the Dhamma Revolution remains limited. Amongst the many stories, dreams come true at one inter-caste wedding. (June 08 release)

"**Part 4 UNTITLED** - Set in the middle ground, in societies with a social contract. Here the FWBO is involved in many aspects of mundane life involving a range of folk. But how well can it combine going ‘outwards’ to work with culture / environment / society with the ‘inner’ work on the self? Is it easier or harder to reconcile these given that a cushy life may be spiritually impoverished one?? Stories are set in UK, Finland, Australia, New Zealand, Spain, Catalonia, Ukraine, Germany and France – many filmed in the speakers' native languages. (Dec. 08 release)

"**Part 5 UNTITLED** - an open-minded focus, which hopes to capture that elusive quality of 'spiritual communication'. It's not yet been made; watch this space..."



Any of the above, including the original 'History' movies, are available from Suryaprabha's [shop](#) in DVD format.

Thursday, May 08, 2008

Amoghavajra returns to China - and the Paralympics



Amoghavajra, new chairman of the FWBO's [Ipswich Buddhist Centre](#), has for many years been an enthusiastic practitioner of wheelchair basketball. Besides playing, he is also an 'international classifier', or grader, of wheelchair basketball players and an adjudicator on the sensitive questions of how to classify players with varying degrees of disability.

As a result of this he has been invited to China to classify players in the [Basketball Paralympics](#) - an event that has, for the hopeful competitors, been many years in [the planning](#). Amoghavajra is especially excited to be going to China because of her ancient connections with his namesake, the Indian Buddhist monk [Amoghavajra](#). "At last Amoghavajra is returning to China", he says...! He goes on to say -

"I'm at Manchester at the moment classifying for the Paralympic World Cup - it's going very well although a huge culture shift from last week at Padmaloka on sadhana retreat!!

"I did consider the possibility of not taking up the invite but bringing to mind the hugely positive impact on disabled people in China I decided that I would definitely accept. China has not devoted many financial resources to assisting its disabled people but by hosting the

Olympics part of the deal is to also host the Paralympics. This means that they have to back their disabled athlete programmes and provide them with direct support but maybe more importantly with wheelchair accessible social infrastructure that benefit a much wider range of disabled people - thereby benefiting many people".

After the Paralympics he hopes to spend some time visiting China's ancient Buddhist sites - a personal journey that will undoubtedly be a test of China's disability-friendliness away from the Olympic spotlights.

Wednesday, May 07, 2008

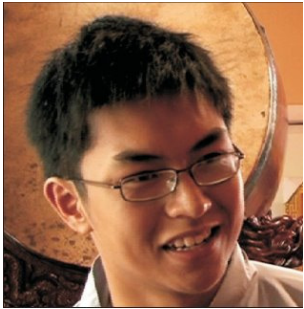
Youth Dharma: upcoming event



In common with other Buddhist sanghas in the West, the FWBO attracted a lot of young people in the 60's and 70's, fewer in the 80's and 90's, and even fewer today. Why? Who knows - but we'd like to

find out!

Sometimes the spiritual path is spoken of as starting with the experience of Dukkha, or unsatisfactoriness: we are sure that



everyone experiences this and finds this painful, the young often more than the old. And sometimes the Goal is spoken of as ‘the Taste of Freedom’, again we are sure that all desire this, the young no less than their elders.

As a first step, in November this year, there’s going to be a weekend gathering of all those with an interest in this area. The weekend is open to everyone – of all levels of involvement and all ages. We’d especially like to get young people from centres along and hear what they have to say and encourage them to get involved. Please tell people at your centre about this event, and also come along yourself, even if you are no longer young! But just for the sake of clarity, the focus will be on folk in their teens through to the end of their twenties.

The aim is to create energy, confidence, inspiration, and ideas. Among other things we’ll be using ‘[Open Space Technology](#)’ to maximise everyone’s opportunities for contributions and learning. We hope to encourage centres, retreat centres, teachers, and preceptors to have this as part of their perspective on their work.

There are big questions to be addressed: how can we create a vibrant FWBO culture that inspires young people with the Dharma? What are young people looking for? How can the Dharma touch them? And how can we create a sense of community in which teenage offspring of Buddhist parents will want to get involved?

The weekend is from Friday 7th to Sunday 9th November; the venue is ‘Bilberry Hill’, a little way outside Birmingham, UK. And the cost is £50, including food and accommodation. (If you can’t afford to

pay that, please pay less.) Full details will be sent upon booking.

To book, please send a cheque for £50, payable to “FWBO” to: Lokabandhu, 25 St. Edmunds Road, Glastonbury, Somerset, BA6 9HX, UK; or contact him on lokabandhu@fwbo.org for more details.

Finally just to mention there’s a poster promoting the event, you can [download it here](#). Please print and promote!

Tuesday, May 06, 2008

Wildmind's 'Open Circle' launched; practical mysticism explored

Two new offerings from the FWBO’s Wildmind online meditation teaching site have recently come to FWBO News’ attention.

Their new venture, the ‘[Open Circle](#)’ aims to offer participants – who may live anywhere in the world – the opportunity to participate in an ongoing online discussion forum exploring key Buddhist teachings and applying them to everyday life. Shrijnana, the Open Circle’s full-time facilitator, describes it as “part on-line book club, part Buddhism course”. What this means in practice is that each week discussions and activities are based on sections of Vajragupta’s book [Buddhism: Tools for Living Your Life](#); besides simply reading the text there’s wide-ranging discussions, weekly exercises; opportunities to ask questions and share experience, and of course the guidance and feedback of a resident facilitator. The Open Circle

doesn't assume that you are a Buddhist or that you want to be a Buddhist, but it does assume that you wish to learn something from the Buddhist tradition.

More details of the [Open Circle](#) are available on the Wildmind website and we should add that Wildmind have a policy that no one ever is ever turned away for purely financial reasons – so if their suggested contribution is not possible for you, [contact them](#) to see what they can do.

Alongside this, Wildmind's latest newsletter is on the theme of '[Practical Mysticism](#)' with, among other delights, their guest contributor, Zen teacher and author [David Brazier](#) asking the question "Are meditative experience and engagement with the world mutually contradictory?" and examining the false dichotomy of [mysticism and engagement](#).

Wildmind, it's worth pointing out, is far more than simply online meditation teaching: they offer courses on pain management, anger management, basic Buddhism, host extensive archives covering topics as diverse as book reviews, celebrity Buddhists, and meditation in prisons across the US. Explore the [Wildmind website](#) at your leisure...



Monday, May 05, 2008

West London emerges from the Flood – and Edinburgh says “thank you”

Last summer the [West London Buddhist Centre](#) experienced serious flooding on two separate and entirely unrelated occasions –



one causing the ceiling of their shrine room to collapse and one covering the floor with water.

Undeterred, they embarked upon the necessary repairs and are now scheduled to be fully up and running again in time to celebrate Buddha Day on Sunday the 18th of

May. There will be a free open day from 12 to 5, with talks, meditation, and an exhibition of Buddhist art works, followed by celebrations for the Sangha in the evening.

Among the artwork is a piece by local Buddhist artist Jason Etienne, titled “Basic Buddhism 2” – clearly inspired by the twin sources of British graffiti artist [Banksy](#) and the legendary biographies of the Buddha, which speak of lotuses springing up behind each step of the Buddha as he roared his lion's roar..

Meanwhile, up in Scotland, the Edinburgh Buddhist Centre, who last year experienced major floods of their own, are just celebrating the second anniversary of their new Centre. Their new Director, Vajrahridaya, has written an open letter to all who have ever contributed to the FWBO in Edinburgh. Since those many people are now scattered around the world, we have pleasure in reproducing part of it here on FWBO News. Vajrahridaya writes -

“I, along with the Trustees on the Edinburgh Buddhist Council would like to take this opportunity to thank you and express our gratitude for all the support and help you have contributed towards the stability and growth of our local Sangha in Edinburgh.

“We would like to acknowledge that your help and generosity, in the form of either Donations, Standing Orders, Gift Aid, your practical help, your encouraging presence and words or even just coming along to the centre to support us, has contributed towards the creation of this new centre and thus our Sangha.

“It is due to our collective effort and enthusiasm that we have managed to buy our own new premises and establish our Sangha, the spiritual community in Edinburgh. So Sadhu! Sadhu!! Sadhu!!!

“We hope that you will continue to offer your valuable support and help towards the growth and development of our Sangha and we very much value and welcome your ideas, thoughts and vision for spreading the Buddha’s Dharma in this modern world.

“Yours in the Dharma, Vajrahridaya”

Sadhu Edinburgh!

Saturday, May 03, 2008

International Retreat: last update, Sangharakshita attending

Vajragupta writes with the latest news of the FWBO International Retreat, due to start in just over three weeks. He says -



“There is now just three and a half weeks to go to the FWBO International Retreat and it’s getting exciting. In fact it looks set to be the largest FWBO retreat we’ve ever held outside India. Over 250 people have already booked, including a busload coming from Germany and Northern Europe, and another from Spain. The family-friendly facilities mean that quite a few people are bringing their children along and more are welcome of course.

Sangharakshita attending

“Many details of the program have been settled since my last update, and there has been one major new development: Sangharakshita is planning to attend, and will be giving a talk on the Sunday morning. It’s not often that he speaks in public these days; this is therefore a rare opportunity for contact with him.

“The overall theme for the retreat is of course ‘Beating the Drum of the Dharma’. Other speakers include Ratnaguna talking on ‘the Early Teachings of the Buddha’, Kamalasila on ‘the Meditating Buddha’, Parami on ‘Ethics in the 21st Century’ – plus lots more workshops

and groups led by some the FWBO's best teachers. Click here for a full list of the [speakers and teachers](#).

For visitors from outside UK there will be simultaneous translation into Spanish, French, German, and Dutch. And many of the facilities are being provided by [Buddhafield](#), so things should have that extra flavour of 'Buddhafield magic'...

"The Buddha said that if the sangha met in large numbers it was sure to prosper. I think this retreat will give many people a wonderful sense of being part of a big, international community of Dharma practitioners. That sense of connection can be so inspiring and important to people at Centres.

"See you there!"

Friday, May 02, 2008

Free Buddhist Audio – New Community Site



Welcome to the news from [Free Buddhist Audio](#), the free download, podcast and streaming service from the Dharmachakra audio and text archives. To receive more regular updates on the site, you can always [subscribe](#) to our own blog.

We're absolutely thrilled today to be able to announce the full launch of our new [community site](#)! This represents a very big shift for our

service: now any Fwbo centre or institution – anywhere in the world – can upload its own talks, and have its own pages on the site. We've already got quite a few signed up, and the first talks are appearing – in English, French and German! [Come and take a look...](#)

What's very exciting for us is that the amount of material on the website will increase greatly over the next months, and is likely to be much more up-to-date and representative of what's going on in our international community. It will also allow us at the [archives](#) to concentrate on getting a lot more of the older talks and special recordings online.

Watch this space for more news of new features as we roll them out in the coming months. And if your centre or Fwbo project would like to get involved, we'd be delighted if you [get in touch](#)!

One other piece of news: in April, Free Buddhist Audio had its first 20,000 visitor month! We've come a long way since the days of selling scratchy old cassette tapes to about 200 people a year... [Thank you](#) to everyone for their tremendous support!

Wednesday, April 30, 2008

The FWBO 'Legacy Fund' - new projects for 2008

Vajragupta has sent FWBO News a report on how the [Sangharakshita Legacy Fund](#) allocated its money in 2008. The Legacy Fund is perhaps one of the less-well-known funds within the

FWBO mandala, but one that's doing important work.

Vajragupta, it's secretary, writes -

“The fund exists to help projects that are doing the following:

- 1) Preserving Sangharakshita's legacy: physically preserving and protecting archive materials, such as correspondence, personal effects, photos, videos, and seminars.
- 2) Dissemination: making accessible Sangharakshita's books, lectures, seminars, poetry, etc. to an ever-broadening audience
- 3) Translation: funding translations of Sangharakshita's Dharma teaching into many languages. See [FWBO Translations](#) for the current list.

In 2008 we had £32K worth of applications and £15K available to allocate, all given to us by [Windhorse:Evolution](#). Our funds were less than last year because Windhorse:Evolution are undertaking a period of substantial re-investment in their business, in the hope of increasing profit (and therefore dana) in years to come. So, although we would have liked to fund all the applications we received to the full, it obviously wasn't possible.

We were able to give grants as follows:

- * [AOBO Paris](#): £500 towards the cost of publishing software for producing translations of Sangharakshita's books.
- * [Clear Vision](#): £2000 towards filming Sangharakshita, making the archive of Sangharakshita photos available on the web, and preserving DVD footage of Sangharakshita and the FWBO on hard-drives.
- * [FreeBuddhistAudio](#): £3000 towards running costs and specific projects in connection with Sangharakshita material on the website.

- * Lokamitra: £400 towards a translation of the TBMSG puja book.
- * Manidhamma: £1100 towards the translation and publication of three Sangharakshita books (The Three Jewels, Religion of Art, and Selected Poetry) into Marathi.
- * Shantavira: £1000 towards office and other costs to make pdf files of Sangharakshita's books available on the web. See the [Bookshelf](#) on Sangharakshita's website for titles already available.
- * Vidyadevi: £2000 towards supporting her to do editorial and Spoken Word work for Sangharakshita.
- * [Windhorse Publications](#): £5000 towards converting Sangharakshita's books into pdf's and also reprinting some titles.

"Many thanks to Windhorse:Evolution for their generosity in funding these projects and making them possible. Like the [FWBO Growth Fund](#), to date the Legacy Fund has been funded entirely by dana from Windhorse:Evolution - SADHU! once again to Windhorse!"

Tuesday, April 29, 2008

FWBO News in Spanish - and the Dharma in translation...

Visitors to the [FWBO News website](#) can scroll down below the latest story to see – among many other things – an ongoing list of where the site’s visitors have come from. This currently stands at a little over 23,000 since November 2007 – from no less than 134 countries. That’s not surprising, given the international nature of the internet and the fact the FWBO/TBMSG have centres or groups in some 25 countries.



However, of course many people who are part of our Sangha don’t speak English – including many from the Spanish-speaking world. And so [Moksananda](#), an English Order Member who has lived for many years in Spain, has begun translating selected stories from FWBO News into Spanish. Recent posts include [Arte Dalit](#); [Hacer que el Dharma trabaje](#); and [En Krakow - polvo, ruido, sudor y alegría...](#)

FWBO News would be very happy to hear of any other translation initiatives going on at FWBO/TBMSG centres.

FWBO News maintains a substantial database which attempts to list all existing translations of all FWBO Dharma of all sorts into all languages world-wide. This is available on the Resources tab of the site - see [FWBO Translations](#) here. This can be downloaded for ease of reference, and again, updates are welcome.

Monday, April 28, 2008



Fundraising successes and job opportunities at Karuna

It’s nearly the end of April and 2008 is soon to be 1/3rd gone - and over at the [Karuna Trust](#) they’ve been counting their pennies.

Karuna is the FWBO’s most successful fundraising charity: it raises over UK £1.5 million every year for a wide range of Dhamma and social projects in India and elsewhere in South Asia – both inside and outside the FWBO and TBMSG. And they have good news to report – Ādarsha, their Trust fundraiser, tells FWBO News -

“Karuna has raised over £118,000 to date this year from Trusts and Foundations. This money is for a number of specific projects working to tackle caste discrimination, enable women's empowerment and provide educational access for disadvantaged children.

“We were going ask FWBO News to run this story when we crossed the £100,000 mark – then the most recent donation, of £13,000, came in. This is for our women's empowerment project tackling incidents of caste-based violence in a particularly poor region of rural Maharashtra. It’s run by our partner [SPMM](#) who do great work with Dalits and Tribal people in India, helping them combat atrocities and discrimination through accessing legal provisions and protecting their statutory entitlements to education and legal protection. You can read some of the latest – and quite shocking - [news from this project](#) on Global Giving , an American internet fundraising site that

Karuna use. And click here for a fuller list of [Karuna's Global Giving projects](#).

“This money is of course in addition to the regular donations from Karuna's network of more than 5,000 donors from all over the UK”.

Karuna Job opportunities

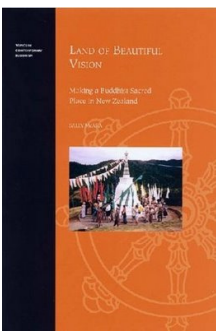
Karuna has grown substantially in recent years, and the Karuna team in London have a number of [job opportunities coming up](#). Check our sister site [FWBO.Jobs](#) for the details: they represent a great opportunity to get involved if you want to give real practical help to the ‘Dhamma Revolution’ in India.

Labels: [engaged buddhism](#), [India](#), [Karuna](#), [Maharastra](#), [women](#)



Saturday, April 26, 2008

Land of Beautiful Vision: Making a Buddhist Sacred Space in New Zealand



[Sudarshanaloka](#) is the FWBO's retreat centre in New Zealand – a most beautiful spot, set in 200 acres of native bush looking down the valley and out over the sea. It appeared most recently on FWBO News in February, when it hosted the ordination of Dridhamati.

The story of Sudarshanaloka's creation is a rich and complex one – and is now the subject of a

book-length study. [Land of Beautiful Vision: Making a Buddhist Sacred Space in New Zealand](#), by Sally McAra. The book (available from Amazon or elsewhere) is an academic work, and not cheap – but you can read a review [here](#), by Jayarava, who was himself involved in its creation and is a friend of the author.

And for those who'd like to visit, but don't plan on flying – you can take a ‘virtual journey’ from Thames, the local town, all the way up the valley to the retreat centre, and on up through the site to the Stupa itself – and then look out over the bay... Just click [here](#) to begin...

Friday, April 25, 2008

Windhorse:Evolution launch 'Friends' network



Windhorse:Evolution are by far the largest of the FWBO's various Right Livelihood businesses. With a turnover in excess of UK £10 million/year, they are able to contribute generously to many Dharma and social projects around the world of the FWBO and TBMSG. Headquartered in Cambridge, their warehouse, ‘Uddiyana’, employs over 100 people from XX countries, many either ordained or training for ordination. They must be the only warehouse in the UK with a

7m high stupa at its centre!

They've already been the subject of a book by Padmasuri, ['Transforming Work: An Experiment in Right Livelihood'](#), which details some of the many twists and turns they've encountered along the way as they experimented with practicing 'Team-Based Right Livelihood' in the modern Western world.

At the same time it's been hard for people outside the business to really share in that sense of ongoing discovery: what DOES it mean to practice Right Livelihood, especially team-based right livelihood, in the modern Western world?

With this in mind – and to make it easier for potential new workers to contact them – they've launched the new 'windhorse:evolution friends network'. Anyone who'd like to stay in touch is invited to write to [Dharmasiddhi](#); you'll then be kept informed of developments in the business. It's a two-way thing – they'd ask you if help be an ambassador for Windhorse, even to look out for people who might be interested in joining them.

After a period of consolidation and restructuring, Windhorse has ambitious plans for the future: it's a good time to get on board. Increasingly, their 'dana', or generosity, extends beyond the Buddhist world to include working with their suppliers on local projects – see FWBO News' recent feature on their [social dana projects](#). And you can see some more photos of the warehouse on FWBO Photos [here](#).

Tuesday, April 22, 2008

Dalit art in Delhi



Maitriveer Nagarjun (shown left) is an Indian Order Member, studying at the prestigious JNU university in Delhi. Besides leading Dhamma classes at the university and travelling all over northern India to visit Buddhist local groups, he's recently been helping organise 'Eyes Re-Cast' – possibly the first ever exhibition of contemporary art based on the philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar and the Buddha.

The painter, Savi Sawarkar, is India's most eminent Dalit painter and print-maker. His art is angry, outspoken, and direct - causing Gary Tartakov, a professor at JNU, to comment "He doesn't sell real well [in India]. He sells internationally".

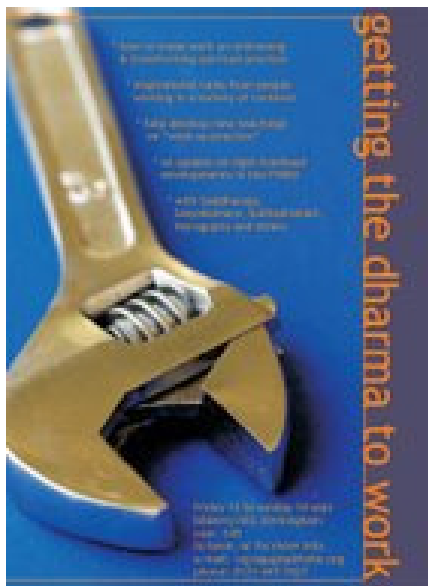
As if to bear this out, a simple Google search reveals an exhibition review from the [Iowa State Daily](#) in far-away America. They quote Eleanor Zelliot, a sympathetic academic who has for many years specialised in Dalit studies, and author of '[Untouchable Saints: An Indian Phenomenon](#)'. She comments "His art work targets Brahman orthodoxy. One painting which I find very touching is one of an untouchable carrying a dead cow across his shoulders, a comment on the traditional duty of the untouchable to carry carcasses from the village."

One painting that demonstrates Sawarkar's willingness to provoke is his interpretation of Manu, the great law-giver of India. Sawarkar portrays him as a monster because it was Manu who gave the laws that included the caste system that made Savarkar a Dalit. These laws made crimes against an untouchable insignificant, but crimes against Brahmins, the highest class, to be the worst thing a person could do. The Brahman view of Manu, by contrast, portrays him as prestigious and god-like.

You can see a small slideshow of Sawarkar's paintings on FWBO

Photos [here](#) – or see below. And if you happen to be in Delhi, go visit the Lalit Kala Academy Gallery, where the exhibition runs up to 30th April.

Getting the Dharma to Work...



Last year some 45 people from around the FWBO came together and held an exploratory weekend looking very broadly at “how to make ‘Team-Based Right Livelihood’ more attractive”. Team-Based Right Livelihood (TBRL for short) has always been a core component of the FWBO’s system of practice, being part of its practice of Right Livelihood, which is of course central in the Buddha’s own Noble Eightfold Path.

Vajragupta has recently written to

FWBO News to give us an update -

"We considered all sorts of topics: support, training, spiritual practice, and possible new ventures. All sorts of people came, from old-timers who’d always worked in TBRL, to new people who’d never done so. It was a unique, enjoyable, and effective combination of sangha. It seemed to touch on something people were interested in and wanted to explore more deeply.

“At the same time, one issue that became apparent – for people in all forms of work, not just TBRL – was that “work as a spiritual practice” seemed to have gone somewhat off the boil. In the past we’ve been very strong on the general idea that spiritual transformation will only work if you keep practising all day, and it won’t if your practice only means an hour on the cushion. But perhaps we’ve not developed more specific teachings and practice in this area as much as we might. This is surprising, especially given there are some really talented people involved in our Sangha and working in all sorts of areas (both in Buddhist and non-Buddhist contexts).

“So, this year, in September, we will have another weekend. This time we will look more specifically on “getting the Dharma to work”, and it is open to anyone – Order member or mitra, those working in “traditional” TBRL, those in new Buddhist projects, those working in non-Buddhist contexts. The weekend will include talks and workshops led by a variety of talented and inspired folk, including Saddharaja, Shakyakumara, Subhadramati, and myself. If you know of someone who might be fired-up by this topic, please pass this information onto them”.

The dates are Friday 12 to Sunday 14 September; the venue is just outside Birmingham (UK); the cost is £45; and to book, or for more information, contact [Vajragupta](#) or phone him on +44 (0)121-447-7427.

Monday, April 21, 2008

In Krakow - dust, noise, sweat and joy...



Over in Krakow, Poland, the FWBO's newest Buddhist centre is taking shape – with a good deal of sweat and hard work. Nityabandhu, who is leading the project, sends FWBO News a brief dispatch from the front line:

“Hi, sorry this is very laconic but not much time at the moment. We were promised dust, noise, sweat and tears and that's what we are getting apart from the latter. It is a joy however to work on this project knowing that the end result will be a Buddhist centre. At the moment we are doing the hardest work with Karunabandhu ie demolition, this creates a lot of noise and enormous amount of dust, I feel like we are in the war. But the spirits are high and next week our first helper/visitor is coming for a week”. Nityabandhu is from Poland and is returning home after several years in the UK preparing for just this move. He is being helped in the building work by his good friend Karunabandhu, originally from Germany but most recently also from Birmingham, UK. Both are shown in the photograph - enjoying a well-deserved lunch!

Photos of their work can be seen on their [Flickr site](#) and – this being the age of YouTube – we are promised a series of action movies, the first being viewable [here](#)...

Nityabandhu's careful preparation means that they already have a substantial web presence and several books already translated into Polish. Their main website is buddyzm.info.pl, where you can read

about the ‘Przyjaciele Zachodniej Wspólnoty Buddyjskiej’ – as the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order is known in Polish! Or try polski.wildmind.org to learn meditation online in Polish, courtesy of Wildmind...

Fundraising for the work is going on, and they would welcome offers of help, especially financial – please contact them at kontakt@buddyzm.info.pl if you are interested.

Saturday, April 19, 2008

Sangharakshita's Diary for March and April



Dharmamati has sent us this report on Sangharakshita's diary for the last two months.

"The last report concluded by noting that Sangharakshita was about to visit [Tiratanaloka](#), the FWBO's retreat centre in Wales, specialising in retreats for women preparing for ordination, where he was to lead study on the

Ratnagunasamcayagatha. The first day of the study went well. However, Sangharakshita awoke the next morning feeling very ill and was taken to hospital. He was found to be suffering from increased blood pressure and upper heart arrhythmia, which although not life-threatening meant his current medication had to be increased. The consequences were that even after a short exertion he became very tired. He needed some weeks to recuperate and due to this had to cancel a visit to Cambridge and the Windhorse Managers' meeting. His energy levels have now improved but he has to be very

careful not to over-exert himself as this can leave him very tired.

March

"Despite the setback in Sangharakshita's health he continued to meet people nearly every day: in fact during this month there were only 3 days when he didn't see visitors and even then he saw Samacitta to continue working on the Spoken Word book, Nagarjuna's Precious Garland, mentioned in last month's report.

"An important event in March was that Sangharakshita's companion Nityabandhu returned to Krakow to start FWBO [Dharma activities in Poland](#). There was a farewell dinner for Nityabandhu here at Madhyamaloka, which Sangharakshita attended and during it, expressed his appreciation. He specifically mentioned that one of the main things he had learned was that Nityabandhu, being Polish, saw things very differently! Nityabandhu's leaving is a great personal loss to Sangharakshita, however, he is very glad that Nityabandhu will be devoting himself to spreading the Dharma in Poland.

"Sangharakshita also visited Vidyadevi, a long-time editor of his work, in her new home in Herefordshire. She has been working on a compendium of Sangharakshita's teachings that is going to be published by [Wisdom Publications](#) under the title, The Essential Sangharakshita.

"At the end of March Sangharakshita stayed at [Padmaloka Retreat Centre](#), from where he made two visits to the European Order Weekend at Wymondham College – a major gathering of the Order celebrating 40 years of the Western Buddhist Order. He attended some of the talks and had meals with "old friends", Order members who were some of the first to be ordained by him. He thought the weekend a great success.

April

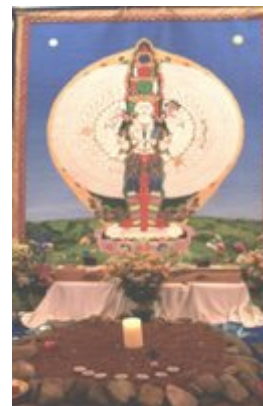
"In the second week of April Sangharakshita visited the [Manchester Buddhist Centre](#) and stayed at the Men's community in Salford. He

gave a 40 minute talk on Sangha night at the Manchester Buddhist Centre about the 'Six Distinctive Emphases' of the FWBO. He also gave a question-and-answer session for Manchester Order Members. He thought that the centre was very much alive with a lot of positive things happening. On the return to Birmingham he stopped at Hebden Bridge in the Pennines and visited a Mitra who is housebound due to illness".

Next up is a visit to Holland and the [FWBO Centre in Amsterdam](#) - but more about that in the next report.

Friday, April 18, 2008

Hridayavani - the Song or Voice of the Heart - calling all women...



FWBO News is happy to pass on an announcement and request from Helen, Siobhan, & Sue, three women who've requested ordination into the Western Buddhist Order and who together produce one of the FWBO's lesser-known publications – Hridayavani, meaning the Song or Voice of the Heart. They're looking to make it more widely known and also for new contributors. They say -

"Hridayavani is a monthly e-mail magazine for women who have requested ordination into the Western Buddhist

Order. Members can report in, express views and generally get to know other women who are similarly seeking to deepen the effectiveness of their Going for Refuge. It helps them get a wider perspective of the movement and keep in touch with women who might never normally meet, except perhaps on retreat.

"If you want to get involved, its easy – just write something for us. It could be just a brief introduction about you and your local situation, or about how you got involved and what inspired you to ask for ordination. You could report-in on anything you'd like to share with. Then send your document preferably as an email with an attached Word document to hridayavani@hotmail.co.uk

"As soon as your first contribution has been received you'll start to receive Hridayavani each month and become part of the e-sangha. Apart from contributors, the only people who receive the journal currently are Sangharakshita and the Retreat Team at Tiratanaloka. In order to do what we can to maintain confidentiality, we ask that members don't circulate their copy. Finally, receipt of the journal is conditional on active participation; please aim to write in at least every 3 months. – you'll continue to receive the journal for as long as you continue to write in. And if you're writing for the first time, please let us know your postal address, email address + date you asked for ordination.

"We look forward to hearing from you and hope that you'll join us".

Thursday, April 17, 2008

Wheels Turning in Sarnath



Each of the **pilgrimage places** associated with the life of the Buddha has its own atmosphere. Bodh Gaya, where the Buddha gained enlightenment, is a vibrant focus for practice and devotion for Buddhists from around the world; Vultures Peak, the site of many important discourses,

remains a remote and beautiful spot; and Sarnath, where he first shared his teaching, has an atmosphere of quiet concentration. Several ancient stupas mark the spots where his former disciples first saw him approaching; where he gave his first discourse; and where he later taught others who had come from the nearby Hindu holy city of Varanasi.

Across the road from the main site and set back a little is land belonging to the FWBO/TBMSG. To date, only a small building has been erected on here, but it hasn't been unused and plans are afoot to create an international study centre. There's another, separately administered, plot of land in Bodh Gaya.

On February 3rd Vishvapani gave a talk on the land on 'The Unity of Buddhism', which was attended by around fifty people. Most were dalit followers of Dr Ambedkar, tens of thousand of whom became Buddhists in the 1960s. However, there has been little follow-up in the following years, despite the presence of many Buddhist teachers in Sarnath. Two years ago Dhammachari Shantighosha moved from Pune (in the TBMSG heartland, many miles to the south) to look after the land and work with local Buddhists. The people attending Vishvapani's talk had gathered as a result of Shantighosha's work, and over the next three days Vishvapani and Kamalagita led a retreat for ten local dhamma-mitras.

Vishvapani reports: 'I was very impressed by their appreciation of Shantighosha and by their enthusiasm for the Dharma. Asit, one of the mitras on the retreat, collects scrap metal, and whenever he visits a locality he gathers people around and he tells them whatever he has just learned about Dr Ambedkar and Buddhism.'

The retreat came at the end of a pilgrimage in which Vishvapani, Kamalagita, Vidyadaka and Phil Daley were taken around the Buddhist holy places by Manidhamma and his wife, Samantha. Manidhamma has recently returned to India after six years study and training in the UK, and the pilgrimage benefited from his deep knowledge of the Buddha's life and considerable experience of pilgrimages. He plans to lead many more in the coming years.

Manidhamma is working with Manidhamma is working with [the Dhammaloka Trust](#), which intends to develop the Sarnath study centre. Their ambitious plans include a pilgrim's guest house, a shrine room and an library and study centre that will host courses and retreats for people around the world. He also hopes to develop contacts between Sarnath's cosmopolitan Buddhist community and the local Ambedkarite Buddhists.



The project has Sangharakshita's blessing, but it will depend on donations from outside India. If you would like to learn more about the project or help support it, contact The Dhammaloka Trust.

Text by Vishvapani

New Indian websites from TBMSG



According to a recent estimate, FWBO and TBMSG centres and individuals worldwide are responsible for nearly 350 different websites. Amazing – but that total is only going to grow. Despite that, TBMSG, the Indian 'wing' of our

movement, who run a multiplicity of Dhamma and social projects all across India, have been relatively invisible in cyber-space. That is changing with three recent launches of Indian-designed and operated TBMSG websites. All three are for projects currently being funded by the FWBO's [Karuna Trust](#) in the UK, but all are looking to develop their international presence and open up other funding relationships: these websites should play a significant role in that.

BH Amaravati, at www.bahujanhitaya.org is perhaps the smallest project of the three, but with (dare we say it) the smartest website. They are a dynamic team based in Amaravati, a town some 150km west of Nagpur in the central Maharashtra. Besides their Dhamma activities, they operate a hostel enabling boys from poor rural families to access proper education; 'Sukhavati', their Women and Children's Empowerment programme, a slum Education Development Project, and the Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Youth and Social Center.

The parent trust, BH Trust, based in Pune, has also launched its own website, www.bhtrust.org, where they describe the many social programs they are responsible for - hostels for children, a Child Development Centre, after-school classes and libraries, HIV/AIDS awareness programs, a de-addiction centre, community, sports & cultural activities, and more recently, work with Tribal people who

are in many ways even more disenfranchised than the ‘Scheduled Castes’ who make up the bulk of India’s Buddhists. The site contains introductions to their work, an extensive photo library, and – most importantly – details on how to make donations directly to them via Paypal.

Lastly, the Aryatara Mahila Trust, a TBMSG women’s project, also based in Pune, have a new and very beautiful website at www.indiansisters.org. If the difficulties of reviving Buddhism in India are great, those faced by Indian women are even greater. As they say, “Because of poverty and very challenging past conditioning which reinforced feelings of inferiority, many women who have converted to Buddhism face personal and social difficulties - lack of confidence, low self-esteem, inability to take initiative. Through the Arya Tara Mahila Trust, we are building on 25 years of experience of humanitarian work to alleviate poverty in the social, medical, educational and economic fields for women and their families. Also, currently, nearly 50 women members of our orde, along with several hundred other actively involved women, are engaged in teaching and supporting meditation and Buddhist study in many parts of India”.

They’re asking for financial support; they say “To help us to support a child in a hostel for one month costs 800 Indian Rupees (US\$18); a three-month course in basic computer skills for a woman or child from the slums costs 1400 Indian Rs (US\$32); and the monthly payment of one health worker costs 5000 Indian Rs (US\$112)”. Contact them on atmt@vsnl.net if you’d like to get involved.

You can find a map of all TBMSG groups in India (and there are many!) on the FWBO Photos website [here](#)

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Wildmind on Purification



Wildmind has recently released their latest Newsletter, on the theme of **Purification**. Highly recommended – but so is the rest of **the Wildmind site**. Although they are basically in the business of teaching meditation on-line to all who wish to learn, their site has, over the years, grown to include contributins on many subjects from many people.

Dear Auntie,

Is it possible to become
Enlightened while taking
anti-depressants, or does
it just feel more possible?

Yours, Ms Informed

While researching this article, FWBO News’ eye was caught by their recently revamped guest column ‘**Ask Auntie Suvanna**’ – a unique, on-line, opportuniity to put your burning questions to a wise and kindly Buddhist auntie... In her own words, she says, “Ever despair at how to cultivate lovingkindness for Dick Cheney, or ponder the effect of anti-depressants on Buddha Nature? If so, check out Auntie Suvanna, who applies her unique wisdom and wit to your queries about life, meditation, Dharma, family and relationship issues, or anything else that comes up...” Just in case you’re wondering, she goes on to say “They don’t have to be Buddhist troubles - any kind will do!”.

They’re also pretty good at keeping up with meditation in the **news**.

If you are pretty new to Buddhism and want to learn basic Buddhist meditations as practiced in the FWBO, and if you're not near a Buddhist Centre, Wildmind is the place for you. It's all here – [mindfulness](#), [loving-kindness](#), [posture](#), [mantra](#), and [walking meditations](#).

Getting even more interactive, their new [Open Circle](#) is a discussion forum, currently looking at Buddhism: Tools for Living Your Life, by Vajragupta. To quote Wildmind's own introduction, "Open Circle is part on-line book club, part Buddhism course. It provides an opportunity to explore key Buddhist concepts and be guided through reflections and activities designed to integrate them into your life. The emphasis of Open Circle goes beyond understanding Buddhist principles, and we do much more than just discussing the concepts presented. Each week the facilitator suggests specific reflections and activities to make the material for the week relevant and applicable. There is ample opportunity to ask questions, receive guidance, and share your ideas and experiences".

Enjoy!

Moving Sounds annual report



Being a world-wide community, the FWBO is full of diverse people and projects, all more – or less – closely affiliated with "The FWBO", and, as a result, all more or less well-known among the wider FWBO sangha.

[Moving Sounds](#) is an example - they're a small but innovative 'Community Interest Company' run by Keith,

Ed, Caspar, and Jo, four mitras from the UK's Buddhafield and Brighton sanghas. They specialise in music and drama workshops for schools, everything they do carrying a skilfully-delivered social message but also being a lot of fun - a certain Head of Geography is on record as saying "The only way the students could have enjoyed it more is if they had been stuffing their faces with chocolate at the same time!"



Their recently published [annual report](#) is full of gems such as the RECYCLED ORCHESTRA, which combines the experience of playing recycled percussion as a group with performance, video, discussion and group activities about waste and climate-change; the ECO SHOW, which presents broader ecological

issues in a fun and entertaining way using theatre, clowning, plenty of music and different characters to explore topics including energy use, global foot printing, oil consumption, and alternative energy sources. They've just commissioned a local artist to make a pair of giant feet (for the USA, we wonder why!) and performed music and storytelling workshops about 'How to Make the Best World Imaginable' at the World Environment Day

Alongside that, they have a strong link to Africa – Ed and Caspar recently returning from an extended trip there with '[THE GREAT EMBAIRE](#)' in their hand luggage. The Embaire is the biggest xylophone in the world, originating in Uganda and played by 10 people simultaneously for several hours – usually accompanied by plenty of dancing and celebration.

In Africa they made a promotional DVD for XPERA UGANDA - Africa's first opera company. The idea is that this will enable XPERA to apply for funding to run community opera projects in Uganda, there will then be many possible links to Moving Sounds'

own community opera projects in the UK through the UK's [Knowledge Transfer](#) funding programmes.

As part of their trip Ed and Caspar made many links with people and organisations in Uganda, Tanzania, South Africa, Zanzibar, Malawi and Mozambique – all of which could potentially become projects that integrate creative workshops with cultural sharing, documentation and training trainers for capacity building. Moving Sounds plan to focus on funding for these projects in 2008. They're a great example of how Buddhist principles can make a real difference in the world without ever calling themselves 'Buddhist'. We wish them well...

Sunday, April 13, 2008

Retreats of all shapes and sizes on offer in 2008

Following Friday's post on the [FWBO International Retreat](#), FWBO News is pleased to present a short roundup of some of the more unusual retreats on offer this year around the FWBO and TBMSG. If you want to highlight others, send us a comment on this post....!

First to catch our eye was [Dhanakosa](#)'s 'Clowning and Insight' retreat, led by Tejananda (chairman of Vajraloka meditation centre) and Jayacitta, founder of [Red Noses Unlimited](#). The connection between clowning and insight, once explained, is surprisingly obvious. As the Red Noses website puts it:

"A Clown is a being that steps into the world afresh. He or she is

open to new experiences, meeting things, people, events with wonder, curiosity and a sense of pleasure. Quite different from our pragmatic and often routine way of being, a clown is forever discovering the new. She enjoys being just herself however she is - so being shy, awkward, grumpy, afraid, bossy, falling in love or falling over - all those have a place and can be experienced, seen and celebrated..."

Dhanakosa, in Scotland, have in many ways led the way in developing 'Buddhism and...' themes – this year they are offering Photography & Meditation, Hillwalking & Meditation, and Dance and Meditation, plus the more predictable yoga and shiatsu...

[Buddhafield](#), in the South-West of England, focus more on Buddhism and the natural world: their retreats include Tree-Planting, the much-loved and very child-friendly "Germinal Eco-Arts Dharma School" on their land in Devon, and a green retreat where retreatants will "cook with fire, harvest food from the land and eat and drink only local produce". A taste of things to come? They have also developed retreats on the 'Work that Reconnects', using practices and exercises from the American Buddhist teacher Joanna Macy. A close connection is developing between Buddhafield and Guhyapati's new [Eco-Dharma](#) mountain retreat centre in Spain, where, they say, towards the end of the year, "Immersed in the teachings of wild nature, we will explore interconnectedness..."

[Rivendell](#), the Croydon Buddhist centre's well-loved retreat centre, runs a wide range of arts and creativity retreats, including the 'Magic Heart Crucible' and 'Wolf at the Door Creative Writing retreats'. And if hill-walking on a Scottish mountain is too much, they offer Rambling - with Taravajra and Dharmavasita!

In Spain, [Amitavati](#), another small and privately-owned retreat centre run by Suratna and Vidyasri, is also focussing on the elements with their 'Deep Peace of the Quiet Earth: Meditating with the Elements' retreat at the end of May. Over in the US, at Aryaloka Retreat Centre there's a retreat coming up that "explores major world

issues and how we might engage with them in ways that are informed by Buddhist wisdom and practice”, and if you’re in Australia, check [Vijayaloka](#) for its intensive meditation or Qi Gong retreats.

All these retreats are open to newcomers; but there are many more intensive retreats on offer as well. In the UK [Padmaloka](#) and [Tiratanaloka](#) specialise in retreats for either men or women who have requested Ordination into the Western Buddhist Order. Both have resident communities who worked for many years with candidates for ordination, and many of the Order’s Public Preceptors live at either one or the other. Back in Spain, [Guhyaloka](#) and [Akasavana](#) host annual long Ordination retreats; these have just started for the men and will begin soon for the women. Once they are complete, more open retreats are generally on offer.

If this seems a bit bewildering, it’s not surprising – the FWBO is a large and diverse community. In the UK the [Going on Retreat](#) will hopefully help cut through the many options and help you find the one you want.

Friday, April 11, 2008

FWBO International Retreat update



The FWBO's first International Retreat is now just six weeks away, and to date we have 200 bookings from people in 9 countries. It looks set to be an inspiring and important date in the FWBO year. The dates are 22nd to 26th May, it will be held at Taraloka, the FWBO's beautiful retreat centre in Shropshire UK (a panorama of the grounds is shown in the photo).

The programme is shaping up: so far we have talks from Ratnaguna, Kamalasila, and Parami, meditation workshops with Vessantara, Tejananda, Kamalasila, Vidyamala and Sona, study groups with Padmavajra, Ratnadharini, Dhammarati, and Maitreyi, and ritual and storytelling with Ratnaprabha, Padmavajra, Dhiramati, and Parami. More to be announced in a few weeks time!

Centres are being asked to make special offerings for the puja on the Sunday evening. If you’re reading this and you go to an FWBO Centre – go ask them what they’re doing and if you can help! We’re assuming most offerings will be a physical object that someone has made, but if you want to do something different – like a musical or dramatic offering – do [let us know](#), so we can incorporate it into the ritual.

The organisers have asked FWBO News to say they are looking for a few more team members to help run the event. You’d need to be available from around Sunday 18th to help with the set-up and you’d get a free place on the event. Interested? - contact [Vajragupta](#), the event's main organiser. More [details of volunteering](#) are on FWBO Jobs.

You can book until the deadline of Thursday 15th May, but please note that there are now only camping spaces available, plus a few spaces in simple "canvas dormitories" (about 6 people sharing a big tent that we provide if you don't have your own tent).

Please book by using the brochure available at FWBO Centres, or by downloading the postal booking form (in five languages) on the

website <http://www.internationalretreat.org.uk>. You can also book on-line, but we've been having some technical problems with this. It should be fixed by mid-April; in the meantime book by post if you can. The website contains full details of the retreat - transport, childcare, translation facilities, and much more...

And if you've not already done so, please think about arranging collective transport to the event, so that a group from your sangha can travel together. To make it easier for lifts offered and needed to find each other, we've created a [special page](#) on the Freewheelers international lift-sharing site.

See you there!

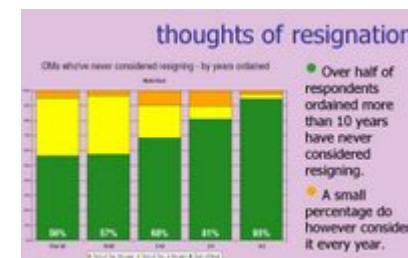
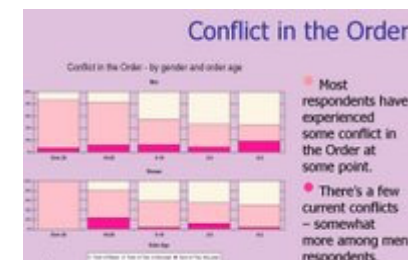
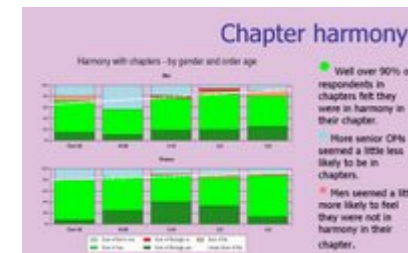
Thursday, April 10, 2008

The Western Buddhist Order at 40, part VII: harmony, conflict, and thoughts of resignation in the Order.

In the last instalment of this week's theme, looking at some of the key features and characteristics of the Western Buddhist Order, today looks at the more difficult issues of harmony, conflict, and thoughts of resignation in the Order.

The three charts display very clearly Order Members' answers to three key questions for any spiritual community – “Do you feel you are in harmony in your chapter?”, “Do you consider yourself to be in

conflict with any other Order Member?”, and “Have you ever considered resigning from the Order?”, the answers being separated out in each case by both gender and order age for ease of comparison.



It's much easier, perhaps, to ask questions than to draw conclusions, but the degree of harmony in Order chapters seems striking – also that among those ordained over 10 or even 20 years, over half have never considered resignation. This despite the almost inevitable conflicts most reported experiencing at one time or another.

The data comes from a major survey of the WBO conducted last year, which asked many other questions – the practices Order Members do or don't do (and whether or not they found them satisfying), the state of their friendships and relationships, their ethical observances, their wealth and health – and hopes and fears and anxieties for the future – and much more, including even people's levels of confidence and inspiration to teach the Dharma.

Summaries of all these and more have been posted as a series of slides on a special page at [Free Buddhist Audio](#); anyone interested in the vital statistics of a modern Western Buddhist sangha is invited to browse. Everything there is downloadable in two formats - simple PDFs and as PowerPoint presentations with built-in audio commentaries which give additional information and also offer some

reflections on the material.

Comments on the survey material are welcome and can be left on this page. Bringing Buddhism to the West – or into the modern world – is one of the great adventures of our time; and in accordance with the Buddha's insight into Pratitya Samutpada, or Dependent Co-Arising, we would be wise to understand as deeply as possible those causes and conditions that will give rise to what we seek; and this the 2007 Order Survey attempted to do for the Western Buddhist Order. To quote the words of the Buddha:

*This being, that becomes;
from the arising of this, that arises;
this not being, that does not become;
from the ceasing of this, that ceases.*

[Majjhima-Nikaya ii.32; Samyutta-Nikaya ii.28; etc.]

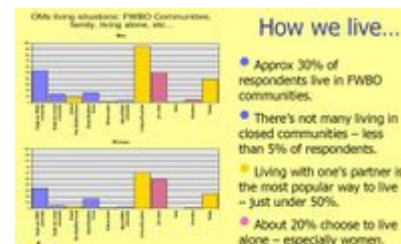
Somewhat closer to our own times, Thomas Carlyle, in his work 'Signs of the Times', published in 1829, writes -

"We were wise indeed, could we discern truly the signs of our own time; and by knowledge of its wants and advantages, wisely adjust our own position in it. "Let us, instead of gazing wildly into the obscure distance, look calmly around us, for a while, on the perplexed scene where we stand.

"Perhaps, on a more serious inspection, something of its perplexity will disappear, something of its distinctive characters and deeper tendencies more clearly reveal themselves; whereby our own relations to it, our own true aims and endeavours in it, may also become clearer."

The Western Buddhist Order at 40, part VI: Patterns of life and work

In the penultimate instalment of this week's theme - celebrating the



40th anniversary of the Western Buddhist Order by looking at some of its features and characteristics – today looks at the patterns of life and work in the Order. Following Sangharakshita, the Order has always emphasised 'Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels' as the primary and definitive act of a Buddhist, and has therefore not seen itself as either a lay or a monastic Order – hence, it has always contained a great diversity of people, all of whom have been able to move freely between a wide variety of different lifestyles, based on their spiritual needs of the moment.

Nevertheless, within this it is possible to discern some significant trends over time, and the four charts show how two of the major institutions of the FWBO, namely single-sex communities and team-based right livelihood businesses, or TBRLs, are faring. It is difficult to

be precise, but there are about 55 communities and some 35 businesses around the FWBO world-wide, not including Buddhist Centres.

The first two charts show how the Order currently chooses to live and work; the second two, whether or not Order Members have ever had experience of living in community or working in a TBRL.

The charts are drawn from a major survey of the Order conducted in summer and autumn 2007; about 35% of the Order outside India responded.

What is perhaps most striking is how the pattern is changing among newer Order Members, ie those ordained for two years or less: they are dramatically less likely to ever have had experience of either single-sex community or TBRL business.

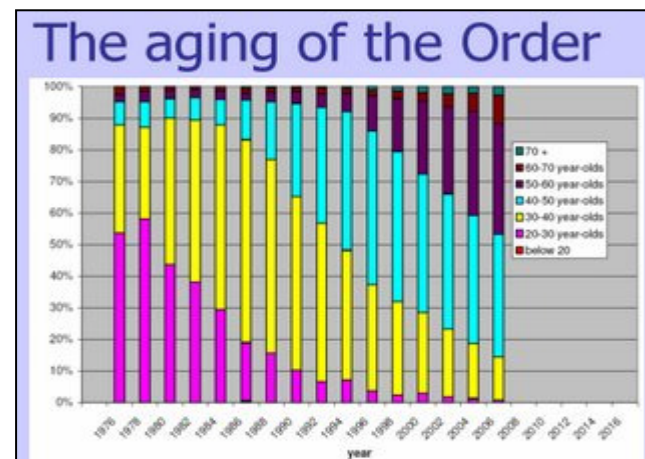
If the survey is representative of the Order as a whole, the most popular choices were much more on the 'lay' end of the spectrum, ie professional work and family life – plus living alone. Nevertheless some 20% said they were supported by FWBO businesses and some 30% said they lived in communities.

For those interested in these areas, a conference 'Getting the Dharma to Work', is planned for September in Birmingham, UK, which will be looking at ways to develop new, enlivening & transforming teachings on "work as spiritual practice". For those wanting immediate 'tips' we are happy to recommend Vajragupta's new book **Buddhism: tools for living your life** which has recently become the focus for

'Open Circle', a new on-line Dharma course hosted by the FWBO's Wildmind teaching website. They describe the Open Circle as an "ongoing online discussion forum in which you can explore Buddhist teachings and apply them in your life. Part on-line book club, part course in Buddhism, it provides an opportunity to explore key Buddhist concepts and be guided through reflections and activities

designed to integrate them into your life." Moving accounts of the FWBO's 30-year-long experiments in both Team-Based Right Livelihood and community living can be found in two excellent books, **'Transforming Work: An Experiment in Right Livelihood'** by Padmasuri and **'Living Together'** by Sanghadevi.

The Western Buddhist Order at 40, part V: Changing age profiles in the Order



Continuing this week's theme of celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Western Buddhist Order by looking at some of its features and characteristics, part V looks at the Order's changing age

profile and the way this has changed over the years. The different colours on the chart opposite show the different 'age bands' in the Order; the different columns plot how this has changed over the past thirty years.

As the chart makes very clear, in the early days of the Order, it was rare to find anyone over 40 (colours blue and above). Now, it is equally clear that it is somewhat rare to find anyone under 40! (colours yellow and below).

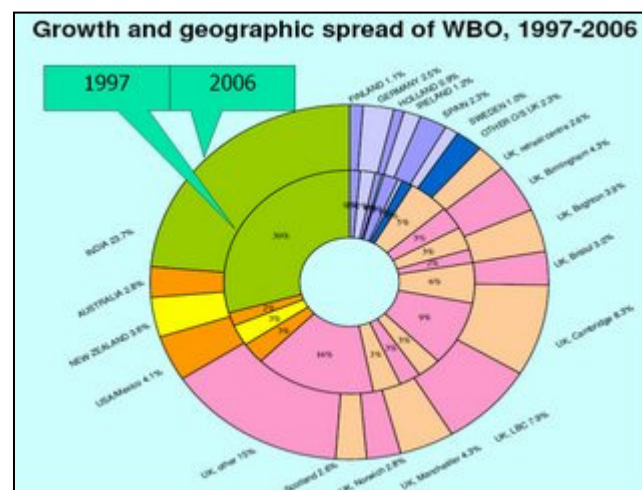
As the Order has matured, it is of course natural that its age profile should have filled out, and it is perhaps also natural that people entering the Order were older as it gradually took longer to enter as clearer and more systematic processes evolved for 'Ordination training'. Nonetheless a significant shift seems to have happened.

Interestingly, this trend seems to have been noticed in other groups, prompting for instance a somewhat controversial piece last November in the Wall Street Journal entitled '[Buddhist Boomers - A meditation on how to stave off decline](#)' by Clark Strand – you can see some replies to this on the [Tricycle blog](#) and an earlier article by Clark entitled '[Dharma Family Values or, Why American Buddhism must change or die](#)' on the Tricycle website.

However the recent and authoritative '[Religious Landscape Survey](#)', organised by the Pew Forum, offers a portrait of Buddhists in the US and reports a more balanced picture, with only some 37% of Buddhists in the US over 50 – compared to 46% in the Order. Be that as it may, it is clear that 'the times they are a' changing...'.

The WBO is perhaps most successfully working among youth in India, where Order Members have been involved in helping create the Indian 'National Network of Buddhist Youth', a division of the "World Fellowship of Buddhist Youth". This organises large [annual retreats](#) and is currently planning a major program of training a generation of youth leaders across India. In the UK a small FWBO conference is planned for November 2008, this hopes to bring together both those interested and skilled in working with younger people, and younger people themselves in an 'Open Space' style event. Please contact [FWBO News](#) if you are interested to attend.

The Western Buddhist Order at 40, part IV: The Order's geographical spread



Continuing this week's theme of celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Western Buddhist Order by looking at some of its features and characteristics, part IV looks at the Order's geographical spread and the

way this has changed over the past ten years.

The Western Buddhist Order is an international Order with members in 27 countries: Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Turkey, UK, USA, and Venezuela at the last count. It is still, however, based primarily in Britain and India; the chart shows the approximate geographical distribution of the Order both in 2006 and ten years ago in 1997.

Since 1997 the Order has doubled in size, but not all regions have increased at the same rate. It can be seen from the piechart that Europe, the USA, and Australasia have all increased their share of the Order overall. India, however, has seen the least increase,

shrinking as a consequence from 30% to 24% of the Order. Strikingly, it is clear that more Order Members still live in each of the British cities of Cambridge, Manchester, London, and Birmingham than any other country except India...

Photographs of many FWBO Centres and groups are on-line on the [FWBO Photos](#) website, this hosts some 2,300 photos from all around the FWBO and TBMSG.

A Milestone - 1500 Order Members



Fittingly, on the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Western Buddhist Order, 7th April 2008, news has just reached us of the ordinations of thirty-two men in India. These were held on 30th March at TBMSG's Bhaja Retreat Centre outside Pune, but have only just been announced.

They have brought the total number of Order Members to 1511 world-wide – and the total number of men in the Order to just over 1,000. The women's wing reached 500 with the recent batch of Dhammacharini ordinations, also held in India.

The Public Preceptors were Sudarshan, Chandrasheel and Suvajra. Private Preceptors were the above plus Adityabodhi, Jutindhara and Amoghasiddhi

Madav K. Jagtap of Thane becomes **Tejovajra**, meaning Brilliant, Burning Vajra

Prakash C. Fulmali of Ulhasnagar becomes **Sanghavajra** (Samghavajra), Vajra of the Sangha

Ravi V. Kamble of Panvel becomes **Vajrasambhava**, Born of the

Vajra

Indrajit S. Gayakwad of Ulhasnagar becomes **Ratnavajra**, Jewel Vajra

Keshav Ganvir of Nagpur becomes **Karunasagar** (Karunaasaagara, Ocean of Compassion

Madhukar Aate of Nagpur becomes **Karunasena** (Karunaasena, Having a Compassionate Army

Shivaji P. Awasarmal of Thane becomes **Bodhikarma**, One who has the Action of Bodhi

Shraddhadhar (Hiwarkar) Siddharth Uttamrao of Wardha becomes **Udarasattva** (Udaarasattva), Of noble character, generous minded

S.W.Nandeshvar of Nagpur becomes **Kshantiwardhan** (Ksantiwardhana), Strength of Patience

Kamlesh Tembhekar of Nagpur becomes **Tejawardhan** (Tejawardhana), Increasing Brilliance

D.J.Jambhulkar of Nagpur becomes **Sheelawardhan** (Siilawardhana), Prosperity of Ethics

Shivpal L. Panchabai of Nasik becomes **Amogha**, Infallible

Kisan B. Tambe of Mumbai becomes **Manjucitta** (Manjucitta), Gentle Heart or Mind

Arun P.Meshram of Wardha becomes **Manjukirti** (Manjukiirti), Renowned for Gentleness

Suresh S. Meshram of Yewatmal becomes **Alokadarshin** (Aalokadarsina), Insight of knowledge (light as accepted metaphor for knowledge)

Jinendra H. Gondane of Yewatmal becomes **Manjudeep** (Manjudiipa), Gentle Lamp

Karunakar Prasenajit of Amaravati becomes **Amoghapriya**, One who loves the 'infallible' (i.e. Enlightenment)

Eknath Bansode of Amaravati becomes **Amritpriya**, (Amrtapriya) One who loves the Deathless (i.e. Nirvana)

Bhiku S. Narwade of Amaravati becomes **Vimalsiddhi** (Vimalasiddhi), Attainment of Purity

Manik H. Gaikwad of Amaravati becomes **Vimalratna** (Vimalaratna), Pure Jewel

Narendra N. Nagrale of Wardha becomes **Vajramani** (Vajramani),

Jewel Vajra

Kapil A. Shinde of Bhusawal/Dapodi becomes **Buddhavajra**, The Vajra of the Buddha and the name of one of Sangharakshita's teachers, Chatral Sangye Dorje

Mahendra V. Kamble of Panvel becomes **Amoghamuni**, Infallible Sage

Prashant S. Kamble of Panvel becomes **Maitrisheel** (Maitrisiila), Virtue of Friendliness

Praful M. More of Thane becomes **Vasitkumar** (Vaasitakumaaara), The Prince who lives (the holy life)

Gyaniwant R. Ramteke of Nasik becomes **Ratnashur** (Ratnasuura), Jewel-like Hero

Chandrakant S. Jadhao of Ulhasnagar becomes **Abhayaditya** (Abhayaaditya), The Fearless Sun

Dhaibhai C. Parmar of Gandhinagar, Gujarat becomes **Dhairyasheel** (Dhairyasiila), Virtue of Firmness

Devachand T. Ahire of Nasik becomes **Ratnarakshit** (Ratnaraksita), Protected by the Jewel

Sumedh V. Kausalyan of Goa becomes **Jnanadarshin** (Jnaanadarsina), Insight into Knowledge
Prakash D. Parsekar of Goa becomes **Anandadarshin** (Aanandadarsina), Knowledge of Happiness

Kunkerkar Mahadeo Rama of Goa becomes **Jinadarshin** (Jinadarsina), Knowledge of the Conqueror

(Note: There is already a Ratnavajra in India and, if the two meet, the first one, from Latur, now becomes Maharatnavajra.)

All names have been checked by Prof. M. Deokar Head of Dept. of Pali and Buddhist Language, Pune University (and former Acting Head of Sanskrit Dept, Pune Univ.) and Dr L. Deokar of the Sanskrit/Tibetan Dictionary Project, Institute for Higher Buddhist Studies, Sarnath.

SADHU! SADHU! SADHU!

The Western Buddhist Order at 40 part III: Men and women in the Order



Continuing this week's theme of celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Western Buddhist Order by looking at some of its features and characteristics, today focuses on the balance

between men and women in the Order. Today there are just over 500 women Order Members, or Dharmacharinis, and just under 1,000 men, or Dharmacharis, a ratio of just under 1:2, or 1:1.8 outside India, where men still predominate - though even there there are now 57 Dhammacharinis.

The chart shows how this gender ratio has shifted over the past 30 years – and it demonstrates very strikingly how it has moved towards parity every year without fail for the last 20 years – from a very imbalanced state of over 1:5 women:men in 1987.

This ratio looks set to equalise further over the coming years – one ingredient that will likely help ensure this is the fact that among the Preceptors (senior members of the Order authorised to conduct ordinations), there are currently 51 women compared to 71 men, a significantly higher proportion than would be expected simply from the relative sizes of the two 'wings' of the Order. Among the

Chairmen and Chairwomen of the main FWBO centres worldwide, however, there are approximately 35 men and 20 women Chairs - this time showing an almost exactly proportionate number of women taking leading roles.

The Western Buddhist Order has always been unusual amongst Buddhist sanghas in that it has from its inception insisted upon a single and equal ordination for men and women - who are themselves ordained by members of their own gender – a practice whose implications have been fascinatingly analysed in '[Androgyny Among Friends](#)' by Professor Richard Hayes, himself a member of the Order, in an essay written to provide an alternative theoretical framework to the one articulated by Rita Gross in her well-known [Buddhism After Patriarchy](#).

Also likely to assist the continuing move towards parity, last year a new FWBO women's retreat centre opened in Spain, dedicated to providing ideal conditions for women embarking on their long ordination retreats. [Akasavana](#), the new centre, joins [Tiratanaloka](#), dedicated to training women for ordination, and [Taraloka](#), our 'general' retreat centre for women.

Thursday, April 03, 2008

The Western Buddhist Order at 40 part II: the growth of the Order



Continuing yesterday's theme of celebrating the Western Buddhist Order as it stands at its 40th birthday, today looks at the growth of the Order over the years.

The first 'batch' of Order Members were ordained in

London on 7th April 1968, on which day 12 men and women were ordained by Sangharakshita. Today the Order numbers just under 1,500, not including some 45 who have died at some point during the past 40 years. For the technically minded, rates of growth are running at approximately 6% for the men's wing and 9% for the women's – see tomorrow's report for more details.

The chart illustrates the growth of the Order from approximately 1976 to the present; it only shows Order Members outside India as we do not have such comprehensive data for the 400 members of the Order resident in India.

Not shown are the large numbers of people around the world who have asked for ordination and are preparing to enter the Order: again it is hard to produce exact numbers, but they total at least the same again. Following the request for ordination it typically takes someone between three and five years to enter the Order, a slow process but thorough process of preparation which hopefully ensures that by the time of ordination people are well-grounded in the Dharma and the fundamental principles of the Order – and are well knitted-in to the

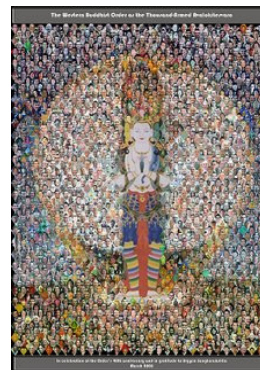
network of friendships that makes up the Order. The Mitra sangha, those who have declared a more provisional allegiance to our Sangha, is considerably larger again.

Again it is difficult to be exact, but over the 40 years of the Order we estimate that there have been around 140 resignations, a small percentage of the total and something of a tribute to inclusivity, diversity, and flexibility of lifestyle that is possible within the Order. In the words of the 'Threefold Puja' used at FWBO Centres,

*"We reverence the Sangha, and aspire to follow it:
The fellowship of those who tread the Way.
As, one by one, we make our own commitment,
An ever-widening circle, the Sangha grows".*

Sadhu!

The Order's 40th birthday: April 7th 2008



7th April 2008 will mark the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the Western Buddhist Order. In that time it has grown from the original dozen men and women to the present total, just short of 1,500. To celebrate this, FWBO News will be running a series of short articles presenting some statistical snapshots illustrating the breadth and diversity of the Order – which is now, of course, far too large for any one person to know everyone

personally.

These will be based on a major survey of the Order which was undertaken during the summer and autumn of 2007; the first systematic survey of the Order since the 'Illustrated Order Register' was produced in 1985 – when the Order numbered barely 300!

Facts and figures, while interesting, do not do justice to the human dimension, so we begin this short series by presenting the '[Order Mosaic](#)', a single image containing the face of almost every Order Member, both living and dead, who come together in the image to make up the well-known Buddhist figure of the 'Thousand Armed Avalokitesvara', who has for many years been taken as a symbol for the Order at its highest and best.

The image can be downloaded as a [high-resolution JPG](#) or viewed as a [full-screen 'clickable' webpage](#), in this version there is a search box at the bottom which can be used to find websites created by each individual.

The simple beginnings of the Order are well illustrated by an excerpt from Sangharakshita's diary, published in his short book 'The History of My Going for Refuge: Reflections on the Occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Western Buddhist Order' and available on the [FreeBuddhistAudio website](http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com).

Sangharakshita says -

"On Sunday, 7 April 1968, in the course of a ceremony held at Centre House, London, nine men and three women committed themselves to the path of the Buddha by publicly 'taking' the Three Refuges and Ten Precepts from me in the traditional manner. In the terse phrases of the diary which I kept for the first three and a half months of that year, and which has only recently come to light:

'Arrived at Centre House at 10.15. Found nothing ready. Cleared and arranged room, set up shrine etc. People started coming, including bhikkhus. Started at 11.15. Welcome by Jack [Austin]. Had lunch with bhikkhus and Jack while Mike Rogers conducted first meditation. Emile [Boin] very worried, as Indians who had undertaken to provide lunch did not turn up until very late. At 12 o'clock spoke on 'The Idea of the Western Buddhist Order and the Upasaka Ordination'. Then, while others were having lunch, spoke to the press. Many photographs taken. Guided group discussion. Meditation. Tea. More press people and more photographs. At 5.30 spoke on 'The Bodhisattva Vow'. At 7 o'clock conducted ordination ceremony, which lasted till 8.15. Mike Ricketts, Mike Rogers, Sara [Boin], Emile [Boin], Terry O'Regan, Stephen [Parr], Marghareta [Kahn], Geoffrey [Webster], John Hipkin, Roy Brewer, Penny [Neild-Smith], and David Waddell received their [public] ordinations. Everything went off very smoothly and successfully. All most pleased'".

ABOUT US

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO) was founded in 1967 by Sangharakshita.

It is now an international movement with activities in more than 20 countries, including India, where it is known as the TBMSG, the 'Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha Sahayaka Gana'.

The FWBO/TBMSG is a non-sectarian Buddhist movement which seeks promote the practice of Buddhism in a form appropriate to the modern world.

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[email: news@fwbo-news.org](mailto:news@fwbo-news.org)

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It is now an international movement with activities in more than 20 countries, including India, where it is known as the TBMSG, the 'Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha Sahayaka Gana'.

At its heart is the Western Buddhist Order, a community of over 1,500 ordained men and women of all ages and from all walks of life, united by their common commitment to the Three Jewels of Buddhism.

The FWBO/TBMSG is a non-sectarian Buddhist movement which seeks promote the practice of Buddhism in a form appropriate to the modern world.

FWBO News

FWBO News aims to present a selection of stories illustrating some of what is going on across our network of centres, businesses, communities, arts events, and individual projects.

Many stories are linked to other websites, to access these please visit www.fwbo-news.org and connect from there.

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