

FWBO & TBMSG News

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

[News](#)[Jobs](#)[Features](#)[Reviews](#)[Resources](#)[FWBO](#)[Links](#)

FWBO and TBMSG News:

Collected stories

December 2007 – early February 2008

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

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About us:

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO) www.fwbo.org 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'.

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.

Previous posts by topic:

Africa, Ambedkar, Arts, Aryaloka, Australia, BBC, Berlin, Birmingham, Bodh Gaya, Breathworks, Brighton, Bristol, Buddhafield, Cambridge, Canada, Cardiff, Carers retreats, Children, China, Clear Vision, Croydon, Death, Delhi, Dhammakranti, Dharmaduta, Dublin, Education, Engaged Buddhism, France, Fundraising, Germany, Health, Holland, Hungary, India, INEB, Interbuddhist, Interfaith, Ireland, Jobs, Johannesburg, Karuna, Kerala, LBC, Malaysia, Manchester, Meditation, Mumbai, Nagpur, Nepal, New Zealand, Newcastle, North London, Nottingham, NVC, Obituaries, Ordinations, Parents, Paris, Pilgrimage, Poland, Preceptors, Prisons, Radio, Right Livelihood, San Francisco, Sangharakshita, Schools, Scotland, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudarshanaloka, Sweden, Taraloka, TBMSG, Tiratanaloka, USA, Veganism, Vegetarianism, Video, Wildmind, Windhorse, Women, Yatras, Youth...

Also including:

FWBO Jobs, Feature articles, FWBO Resources, email subscriptions, search facilities, and extensive links.

FWBO & TBMSG News

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

Friday, February 08, 2008

Change to wording of Heart Sutra



Following some months of consultation, Mahamati, the International Order Convenor of the WBO, has announced a small change to the wording of the Heart Sutra as recited in the FWBO.

The new wording is

*All things are by nature void
They are not born or destroyed
Nor are they stained or pure
Nor do they wax or wane.*

These replace the well-known line "all things are the primal void" and the section immediately following. A full copy of the text of the new version can be downloaded from the Resources section of FWBO News [here](#).

The change was approved by Sangharakshita in order to avoid the danger of referring to "the void" i.e. making sunyata into a 'thing', while keeping the rhythm and flow of the original.

Windhorse Publications will be reprinting the English Language edition of the FWBO Puja book soon, with the new version of the Heart Sutra included.

Those of a nostalgic disposition are reminded that the 'primal void' lives on in Kavyasiddhi's beautiful rendition of the Heart Sutra – sung at last summer's International Order Convention and posted on [Videosangha](#).

Wednesday, February 06, 2008

New feature article - "Climate Change: towards a Buddhist Response"



FWBO News is pleased to present another article in its occasional series of Feature Articles. '[Climate Change: towards a Buddhist Response](#)' is by Akasati, a long-standing member of the Buddhafield team. Her long and thoughtful piece includes – among other things – the following sections

- climate change: causes, evidence and impacts
- some objections & arguments
- offsetting?
- sustainability: 'the third revolution'
- the great turning
- climate change in the context of traditional buddhist teachings (a detailed look at ethics, the notion of 'hidden dukkha', the teaching of 'no separate self', emptiness and compassion, and finally, revisiting the simple life)
- levels of action
- further reading
- other resources

Highly recommended!

NVC and Sociocracy in the FWBO



Shantigarbha is an Order Member living in Cambridge, UK, where he has founded a training business '[Seed of Peace](#)'. He specialises in '[Non-Violent Communication](#)', or NVC, and has recently returned from a six week trip running NVC trainings in India and Sri Lanka, including a live interview introducing it on Sri Lankan TV. Several Order Members have qualified in NVC and

are actively involved in training worldwide – [Aniruddha](#) and Kumarajiv in India, [Locana](#) in the UK, among others.

Next in his schedule is a weekend introduction to 'Sociocracy', which is a system for designing (or redesigning) organisations that he feels may be particularly suitable for groups such as the FWBO.

Shantigarbha writes -

"We've arranged for Philip Seligmann, a Sociocratic consultant from the Centre in the Netherlands, to come over to lead a weekend at the [Cambridge Buddhist Centre](#). Philip is on the Board of the Sociocratic Centre, and has brought Sociocracy into several organizations, including the Dutch Buddhist Broadcasting Corporation. The dates are: February 22-24; the Friday evening will be a free Introduction, open to all, and will form the first part of the training for those who stay on for the Saturday and Sunday (10am to 5pm both days)".

Sociocracy was first introduced to the Order last summer on the biannual Order Convention, after which this report appeared in the Order's journal 'Shabda':

"Sociocracy is a structured way for groups to make decisions & interact with other groups. As such it may be relevant to many situations in the F/WBO and we were interested to hear the NVC community are considering adopting it for much of their internal organisation. It is particularly suitable in situations where everyone needs to be taken into account and where each person needs to be valued equally. More specifically, it is suitable for groups which are interacting regularly and united in aim.

Sociocracy started with an attempt to bring Quaker principles into a Dutch engineering laboratory. Hence the language is technical and the procedures fairly precisely structured. It is something which needs some effort to learn but which, once learned, becomes more and more fluent and flexible. It was noteworthy that Sociocracy can

work alongside any conventional leadership system and can be introduced to only one part of an organization or for only one issue.

Some of the basic governing principles are –

- In meetings, some people are elected to temporary roles eg a facilitator
- All organizational processes are seen in terms of circles, with discussion proceeding in 'rounds' eg rounds for clarification/nominations/objections/consent
- All decision-making is by consent (with consent defined as the absence of 'paramount objections' ie no absolute "Nos", ie, a solution which is within everyone's "range of tolerance")
- Different levels of the organisation are 'double-linked' to ensure smooth information flows up & down & across.

There's lots more information available on the sociocracy website www.governancealive.com. Personally we were impressed with the clarity of the process and the care taken to ensure everyone has a chance to be heard. However everyone involved in a sociocratic meeting would need to make a significant investment to learn how it works, and while this is happening, meetings could seem slow or cumbersome. Since Shantigarbha wanted us to have some real experience of sociocracy in action, our session could be summarised, not unfairly, as nine Order Members taking an hour to discuss who was going to make a report into Shabda!

Anyone interested in the Cambridge weekend is asked to contact [Shantigarbha](#) as soon as possible.

Monday, February 04, 2008

FWBO International Retreat update



The FWBO's first International Retreat is taking place in May, at [Taraloka](#), in Shropshire, UK. Vajragupta is the overall organiser and recently sent FWBO News this update – including a request for help!

“The bookings are now starting to flow in - I'm optimistic it is going to be a big event. After some hitches, the [International Retreat website](#) can now take on-line bookings in no less than five languages – [English](#), [German](#), [Spanish](#), [French](#), and [Dutch](#). Of course people can also download the postal booking form or use the brochures which should be available at all FWBO Centres.

The programme is coming together, based round the themes of Wisdom, Absorption, and Compassion, with talks, pujas, and groups led by some of the FWBO's best teachers - [Padmavajra](#), [Ratnaguna](#), [Parami](#), [Ratnadharini](#), [Sona](#), [Vidyamala](#), [Maitreyi](#), [Kamalasila](#), [Vessantara](#) - with more to be arranged!

Capacity is 500 people, so book soon...

A team of volunteers is needed to set-up, run, and set-down the event. Volunteers will need to be available from Sunday 18th May and, after the event, until 28th May. Anyone interested would need to be willing to camp and work hard, including physical work – however work duties won't be so heavy as to stop you taking part and

enjoying it too. There will be a retreat-like programme and teaching during the set-up. See [FWBO Jobs](#) for more details.

Newcomers and children welcome

The programme and teaching for the adults will be aimed predominantly at those who have been meditating and attending an FWBO Centre for at least a few months. However, anyone who'd like to bring a family member who is new to the FWBO, or who does not meditate, is welcome to, and there will be some basic meditation instruction available.

Children are welcome on the retreat. There'll be a talented and experienced crew on hand to help parents make the most of the retreat. We are not providing a crèche, but there are a variety of facilities available for children - a toddler's tent where you can take your young one to play in a safe environment, with toys and games provided; for older children there'll be arts, craft, sports, bushcraft and other activities laid-on for a couple of two-hour slots each day (one slot in the morning and one in the afternoon). In the evenings there will be storytelling and ritual suitable for both children and adults.

The retreat is free for under-3's and 3–16 year olds can attend for half-price. Check the [children's page](#) on the website for updates.

Thursday, January 31, 2008

Karuna's success with new fundraising initiatives



The FWBO's [Karuna Trust](#) has teamed up with Global Giving, at www.globalgiving.com, a US-based website which describes itself as an 'eBay for international development', and is in fact run by the former '[eBay for Charity](#)' chief Sharath Jeevan.

Visitors to the site can choose to donate to a list of grassroots projects, some run by local NGOs and some by larger development charities: Karuna have already raised US \$7,000 from the scheme for two projects. A UK-based Global Giving website will be launching in Spring 2008.

One of Karuna's Global Giving projects is helping [Dalit 'low-caste' village women combat exploitation](#); a second aims focuses upon [stopping Child-Labour in workhouses](#) where the children are forced to make cheap 'bidis' (the local word for cigarettes). Both provide direct assistance to Karuna's main partner community in India, the Dalits. Click either link for more information or to donate.

One of the features of the Globalgiving approach is that it enables supporters to direct money to a specific project that they can then follow, as donors get emailed updates on the project at regular intervals.

Globalgiving is part of a wider strategy at Karuna of broadening out their search for funds; over the past five years they have rapidly expanded the number of partner organisations in India (see previous FWBO News report on the [2007 Karuna partners conference](#) in India) while at the same time, it has been harder to find volunteers for door-to-door fundraising even as that approach has itself become increasingly competitive in the UK. This has put Karuna's finances under some strain, especially as most fundraising these days brings in what is known as 'restricted income', ie income that can only be used for one specific project.

Karuna were therefore delighted with their recent 'upgrade mailout', an appeal to most of their 5,000 regular donors in the UK to consider increasing their regular donations; this resulted in no less than UK £35,000/year additional income, almost all of which will be used to benefit TBMSG projects in India – these have traditionally been funded from Karuna's door-knocking appeals ie 'unrestricted income'.

Many of the TBMSG Trusts in India are currently shifting onto 'project-based financing', which will open the doors for them to raise funds in many more arenas – we hope to bring more news of this soon.

Karuna still have some vacancies for their appeals in 2008, please check the [Karuna Appeals website](#) or their [Appeals blog](#) for some first-hand accounts by volunteers on past appeals. They offer a generous support package and full training. You can also contact them direct on +44(0)207 700 3434 or [email the Karuna Appeals Team](#) for more information

Wildmind - new Newsletters on Parenting and Healing



Two new Wildmind newsletters have been published recently, with the February 2008 issue on the theme of "[Family Practice: Parenting with mindfulness](#)"; and the January 2008 issue on the theme of [Healing](#). Both include some excellent articles, their February one especially complements our January feature article '[The New Buddhist Parents](#)' by Karmabandhu.

In "[Family Practice: Parenting with mindfulness](#)"; Wildmind's Sunada asks "Is it possible to have children and a spiritual practice at the same time?" Read Mindful Moms, Dharma Dads for her answer. In '[Parenting and Practice](#)' Steve Bell, a Buddhist practitioner with the FWBO, currently a social worker from New York, uses his experience of meditating while parenting two young boys to explore the questions "How do we maintain an active practice while being immersed in the world of parenting and work?" and "Are children a hindrance to spiritual practice? Or can parenting also be a path?".

Tuesday, January 29, 2008

Developing the East-West Sanctuary - Budapest, Hungary



For the past 2 years Sinhagupta, a Dharmacharini from Cambridge UK, has been developing the East-West Sanctuary in Budapest, Hungary, in collaboration with the [Budapest Buddhist University](#). This is a major project, and one which will take many years in development.

She has sent us this news of recent developments there -

“Since the opening 18 months ago, we have been running a variety of meditation and psychotherapeutic workshops, and also seminars on business sustainability and developing a European Buddhist University. Many of these have run for Hungarians, but now we are hoping to expand internationally to a wider audience. The sanctuary is beginning to attract different people from many different areas - but all with a willingness and desire to communicate and relate within this globalising but fragmented world.

“Starting in March we are running the first of a three-week, year-long course in Buddhist theory and practice. This will be led in English by Paramananda, Tamas Agocs from the Budapest Buddhist

University, and myself. We are also starting a three-weekend course in contemplative psychotherapy, which will run in English with Hungarian translation. Finally, we are offering one other more specialised event: a series of short retreats called 'Javas' which are based in a Hungarian spiritual tradition that itself is founded in Ayurvedic medicine and healing, astrology, and Buddhist philosophy and healing”.

More information on all these can be downloaded from the internet - [2008 East-West Centre Programme](#) for the programme, [Javas retreats](#) for the retreats

If you are interested in attending or knowing more, please contact [Sinhagupta](#). If you know anyone else who may be interested, please would you forward this link.

And finally, if you wish to see more about the sanctuary, please visit the website at: www.eastwestsanctuary.com

Monday, January 28, 2008

Two new Spanish retreat venues

Two new retreat venues run by members of the Western Buddhist Order are emerging in the Spanish mountains.



Amitavati, which means 'full of boundless possibilities', is the home and rural retreat centre of Suratna and Vidyasri, two ordained members of the Western Buddhist Order. They 'retired' there from the UK a year ago and

now offer a range of retreats in their working smallholding up in the hills near the small town of Villar-del-Arzobispo in the hinterland of Valencia, Spain.

Reflecting the special interests of Suratna and Vidyasri, their retreats include meditation retreats, shamanic journeying, drumming, painting and sculpture and working retreats. Above all, however, their retreats are designed to bring visitors into intimate contact with the land and its resources.

December saw their first working retreat, which they were delighted with – and which is bearing fruit with others thinking of buying land nearby. In addition their newest urban FWBO Centre, in Valencia, use the facilities for some weekends and for Order gatherings, and links with local people are developing with plans made for teaching meditation classes in the village when their Spanish is good enough.

Check their very beautiful website at www.amitavati.com which contains full details of events and travel information.

Ecodharma retreat facilities in the mountains



More remote, in altogether more wild and mountainous country, Guhyapati has been developing an 'eco-Dharma retreat centre in the hills behind Isona, some three hours from Barcelona. His work as a professional mountain guide (see www.climbcatalunya.com) has given him an intimate knowledge of the mountains; he has used this as a base to develop facilities for an 'ecodharma' retreat centre, which now offers long solitary retreats and has for the past two years hosted the

'Redwoods', a group of Order Members who meet annually to practice together in the context of a shared commitment to and love of the environment .

The small whitish dot on the tip of the plateau beneath the middle mountain is the retreat venue...

Thursday, January 24, 2008

New Centre in Kerala plays host to visiting Order Members



Late last year Dhammacharinis Nagasuri and Sraddhajyoti were hosted by the new TBMSG Centre in Mynagappally, in the district of Kollam Kerala, in southern India. Click [here](#) to read FWBO News' report of its inauguration. They were the new centre's first visitors from outside the State and the small sangha there made the most of the opportunity - with some 40 people coming for the different functions through the day. The day featured two talks by the two visitors, one in English and one in Hindi, both translated into the local language Malayalam, both focusing on the theme of the "Importance of Five Precepts in Daily Life".



Nagasuri is from Australia, but currently living in India and working for the [Arya Tara Mahila Trust](#), – unique in that it is pioneering Dharma work in India entirely run by women for women. Sraddhajyoti is an Indian Dhammcharini from Mumbai and was ordained in 2002. They were touring South India as a follow-up to a more [high-profile tour](#) last year led by Subhuti.

The day was hosted by Binoj Babu and friends, who make up the group of mitras running the Centre (there are no Order Members in residence), all of whom are recent graduates of the TBMSG training institute at Nagaloka, in Nagpur, a thousand miles north in central India.

Wednesday, January 23, 2008

Glasgow's Buddhist Stress-Busting Make-Overs - and Stupid Cupid day...



The [Glasgow Buddhist Centre](#) have launched a new range of courses for the new year – ranging from a “Buddhist Stress-Busting Make-Over” to their new “Stupid Cupid” day retreat – or should that be day-long treat?

They’ve advertised them with characteristic pizzazz; we found this report in a [local Scottish newspaper](#): “If the stresses and strains of the festive season have left you feeling frazzled or your relationship with your nearest and dearest a bit frayed around the edges, make a new start in 2008 with the stress-busting techniques taught at the Glasgow Buddhist Centre. You can stretch your body and soothe your mind at the same time with a six week yoga and meditation course starting on Wednesday 9th January or delve straight into the clearer states of mind brought about by the two meditation practices taught by experienced practitioners on Tuesday evenings starting from the 22nd January. To discover how the teachings of the Buddha can help us deal with modern life, come along on Wednesdays from 23rd January.

And if your relationship needs a rethink before Valentine’s Day,

book yourself onto the Stupid Cupid Day on Sunday 3rd February and find out how you can stop getting in the way of romance".

The report goes on to point out that the Stupid Cupid day will be co-led by Nagaraja, well-known for being he who gives the Buddhist perspective on the [Pause for Thought](#) slot on Terry Wogan's BBC Radio Two show - Friday mornings at 9.15am UK time.

Sunday, January 20, 2008

Sangharakshita to speak at 'British Buddhist Landscape' conference



This summer Sangharakshita will be speaking at a major conference, entitled "The British Buddhist Landscape – Transplantation and Growth". Bookings have just opened and all are invited to attend.

The conference is being organised by the Institute of Oriental Philosophy (UK) and the [Network of Buddhist Organisations](#) (UK), of which the FWBO is an active member.

The dates are the 27th, 28th, 29th June 2008 and the venue is the Sokkai Gakkai headquarters at Taplow Court, near Maidenhead, Berkshire, where the Institute of Oriental Philosophy is based - shown in the photograph.

The aim of the conference is to look at the history and development of Buddhism in the UK from its early days up to the present. It will be suitable for anyone with an interest in Buddhism as well as other religions in the UK, the teaching of religion, as well as social action and ethnic social groups.

Topics will include the History and Development of UK Buddhism, Ethnicity and Buddhism in Britain, Buddhist Scholarship (including areas such as teaching Buddhism in schools and universities and over the internet), Buddhism and Psychotherapy, and Engaging with Society.

The speakers will include Sangharakshita, Stephen Batchelor, Dr. John Peacock, Dr Helen Waterhouse, Ajahn Laow, Prof. Sato, Dr. Peggy Morgan, Colin Ash, Rev Saido, Dharma Shakya, Keith Munnings, and others.

The approximate fee will be £65.00 and attendance for part of the conference is possible, for a reduced fee. Concessionary rates are also available. Please enquire for further information. Latest details will be on the [IOP website](#).

Artists and performers are being invited to join us to present their work, please make contact if you would like to be considered.

For further information please contact the conference organiser Jamie Cresswell, Director, IOPUK, tel : UK 01628-591213, email : jc@iopec.org

Wednesday, January 16, 2008

Impressions from India – the second National Buddhist Youth Conference



Ann Dennehy is a mitra and English teacher from the FWBO's [San Francisco Buddhist Center](#). She sends us this report from India -

In December 2007 the National Network of Buddhist Youth (NNBY) held its second annual conference at TBMSG's Bor Dharan retreat center, just outside Nagpur in central India. It was a gathering of the next generation of Buddhists from all over India, and was entirely student-led and organized, with just a little help from my friend, Dhammachari Kumarjeev, a leader of the TBMSG's [Dhammakranti project](#). 130 people attended the first conference in 2006, and this year there were 600 people. Next year they hope for even more! I was invited by Kumarjeev to attend as part of a team of 5 trainers to work alongside him, Subhuti, and a team of student leaders.

Each day consisted of meditation, dharma talks, various sessions (or "offerings" as we called them), pujas, and oh yes, delicious Indian food. Since I teach English I was there to offer English; basic conversation practice, grammar review, pronunciation improvement. I also met spontaneously with students one-on-one and in small groups as they approached me, offering specific language advice and encouragement. The other trainers offered sessions in NVC, drama, team-building games, aikido, study skills, time management, and

many other activities.



As I spoke with students throughout the week I asked what they were enjoying - they spoke of the friendships they were making, how much they enjoyed Subhuti's playfulness and his serious commitment to the legacy of Dr. Ambedkar and abolishing casteism in India, and all the practical skills they were learning from the different sessions. Some told me how they struggled with self-confidence, others how much their self-confidence has grown since last year's conference. I was very impressed by their sensitivity, their emotional clarity, and their honesty. In my sessions I noticed how eager students were both to learn and to play, how direct they were in asking for what they did and did not want from our time together, how supportive they were of one another's learning, and how rapidly they were able to absorb and apply new information. It was the most fun I have had in my 17 years of English teaching.

On the retreat myself I had good company in my roommate Sucitta and we fell asleep each night talking of India, and woke up giggling. I enjoyed so much my own deepening friendship with Kumarjeev and his family, the other trainers, the Indian Order Members, the student leaders, and the many many students I met during the week. I was in awe of Subhuti's clarity in teaching the dharma, in explaining the legacy of Dr. Ambedkar, and conveying the urgency of abolishing casteism once and for all in India. The students were completely engaged as he spoke, scribbling in their notebooks, laughing at his Bollywood filmstar references, following his chanting with vigour. I was enchanted watching the kitchen staff prepare

lunch; the men stirring enormous pots of rice and vegetables, the women making chapattis for hours. I had fun dancing bhangra in the girls' dorm, polishing our nails, and painting our hands with henna. I was impressed by the concentration and mobile phone coordination of the student team and the way they built an extra dorm on site to house an unexpected 50 participants who arrived in the middle of the night. I was captivated by the art offerings that appeared each day; a multi-colored sand painting on the floor of the stupa of the Buddha, a detailed pencil drawing of Dr. Ambedkar, a relief made of mud, outdoor shrines that changed nightly.



I learned so much myself of Dr. Ambedkar's historic conversion 50 years ago, his commitment to ending the horrific caste system in Independent India, his devotion to his ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, and his inspiration from the Buddha. All the Indians present, the majority of whom were Dalits and from the community once labelled "untouchable", have known the oppression of the caste system personally, and expressed such heartfelt appreciation for Dr. Ambedkar – yet seemed so optimistic, so joyful, so motivated by his example. Understanding the impact of Dr. Ambedkar is essential in understanding Buddhism and the TBMSG in India, and hence to what unifies our world-wide movement. I left the retreat wondering how I might share his legacy with the North American sangha.

I have never before received such gracious hospitality as I did on this

retreat – it was continuous, from the red rose at the welcome ceremony, to the smiles and tiny flower buds offered throughout each day, to the songs, poems and garland at the New Year's puja on our last night, where about 50 people became mitras, and we all threw flower petals at midnight. It was all so gorgeous! The whole week was such an inspiration. I left feeling deeply moved by the spirit, creativity, and love of all the young people I met. They are so radiant, so dynamic, so energetic that I imagine them as beams of light shining out all across India, illuminating their own studies, illuminating their families, their peer groups, illuminating their sanghas, illuminating their entire community.

Jai Bhim!

Tuesday, January 15, 2008

Green Tara Trust wins funding for major social project in Nepal



The FWBO's [Karuna Trust](#) have succeeded in fundraising a donation of £32,819 for a project in rural Nepal run by Dharmacharini Karunamati. Her Green Tara Trust exists to help mothers, infants and young people in a region recently ravaged by civil war and where health conditions are amongst the worst in the world.



The project will be tackling some of the effects of the civil war - poverty, poor access to (and destruction of) health facilities, the death toll (over 13,000 lives have been lost since 1996) and the flight of medical professionals – all of which have contributed to high maternal and infant mortality, plus high incidences of sexual violence, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. There are now only 5 doctors for 100,000 people, compared to 216 in the UK. You can read more about some of the background and [Green Tara's involvement](#) here.

The project itself provides a long-term community-based response to the rural health crisis; educating and helping people to help themselves. In particular it aims to improve maternal and infant health and decrease mortality, and to improve young people's sexual health. It also encourages support and understanding for women and young people in a very patriarchal and hierarchal society, advocating changes to the health system, both locally and nationally, through links with the Nepali government and universities.

More specifically, the project will educate mothers about maternal and child health through group training, a mentoring system, and through providing clean delivery kits and post-natal checks. It will provide sexual health education to young people and encourage behaviour change through setting up peer-led groups and media campaigns. It will train health staff and local volunteers and guide and support the community in advocacy and also work with local

GPs, government officials and local NGOs to improve health services and re-write the national health education curriculum. In total it is estimated that the project will directly benefit 5,500 people, predominantly women and teenagers, and indirectly over 100,000 people.

Monday, January 14, 2008

Feature article - the new Buddhist parents



FWBO News is happy to present another in its occasional series of feature articles, this time looking at the intriguing topic of the new wave of Buddhist Parents. Karmabandhu, a new parent himself, looks at the whole area both from the point of view of the Buddha's own advice to avoid the 'dusty sphere' of the household life, and, more pertinently, at the real-life experience of a number of new parents, all members of the Western Buddhist Order living around the London Buddhist Centre, as they struggle to take their practice into their new circumstances.

Click [here](#) to read the article, or simply visit the 'Features' tab above.

By happy coincidence, Wildmind, in New Hampshire USA, have focussed their Febuary meditation newsletter on the theme of

"Family Practice: Parenting with mindfulness"; it includes two in-depth articles on parenting and practice. In the first, [Mindful Moms, Dharma Dads](#), Sunada asks "Is it possible to have children and a spiritual practice at the same time?" and talks with some friends who are managing to raise a family while staying committed to their spiritual lives. In [Parenting and practice](#) Steve Bell, Buddhist practitioner and social worker, speaks from his experience of meditating while parenting two young boys in answer to the questions "How do we maintain an active practice while being immersed in the world of parenting and work? Are children a hindrance to spiritual practice? Or can parenting also be a path?"

Friday, January 11, 2008

Bristol Buddhist Centre's new arts season



Bristol Buddhist Centre is delighted to be hosting an arts season, under the title of 'Awakening through Art'.

It will run from January to June 2008, and springs from the creative inspiration of Dharmachari Ananda. Ananda (Stephen Parr) is best known as a published poet, a leader of writing workshops (with '[Wolf at the Door](#)'), who also has the distinction of being the longest-standing member of the Western Buddhist Order. He is

particularly keen to explore the relevance of Western myths for today's Dharma practitioners, and there'll be explorations of Mozart's Magic Flute and the Western mystery tradition, Orpheus and the Underworld, and Tristan & Isolde.

Other scheduled activities include a play, written by Dharmachari Alobhin exploring the themes of climate change and peak oil, to be performed under the auspices of '[Transition Bristol](#)', a shrine photography workshop, an evening of poetry reading, and a workshop on Seeing & Drawing.

In addition to all these, the season's first week opens with three events:

19-20 Jan A Meeting of Minds - performance by Michael Lunts of his 'play with music' based on the life of Rachmaninov

21 Jan The Dharma Significance of an Empty Cosmos – a talk by Brian Johnson, with poetry and astronomical film footage

26 Jan Imagination & Spiritual Life – a talk by Ananda

For more details, see the [Awakening through Art](#) page on the Bristol Buddhist Centre website.

Tuesday, January 08, 2008

1,200 people on retreat at Bodh Gaya



FWBO News is delighted to be able to finally present reports on the three major retreats recently organised by the [Dhammakranti project](#). They estimate that around two thousand people have benefited from these events – all the more remarkable in that they were held in northern India, a thousand miles from TBMSG's 'homeland' in Maharashtra. This testifies to their increasing success in 'breaking out' and making effective contact with people from other castes and living in other States.

The retreats were held in Bodhgaya, Jalandhar and Haryana, and were followed by a north India Dhamma tour led by Subhuti. This report covers only the Bodh Gaya retreat – there's more to come...

First came the International Dhammakranti retreat at Bodhgaya, which had as its theme "The life of the Buddha". This was a five-day retreat attended by around 1200 people - men, women and children - from 16 states of India. Nagaketu, the retreat's organiser, told FWBO News "It was very pleasing and satisfying for the participants to know Buddha in the place of Enlightenment of the Buddha. They could relate directly to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, they could see history revived before them".

For four consecutive days special Pujas were arranged at the [Mahabodhi Temple](#), with two being held right under the sacred

Bodhi tree. The highlight and culmination of the retreat were the '[Mitra Ceremonies](#)', simple ceremonies of commitment performed all over the FWBO and TBMSG, where more than 100 participants from different parts of India became Dhammamitras under the Bodhi tree on 16th Nov 07. As Nagaketu put it "These new Mitras accepted Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha as their highest ideals in their lives".

Various cultural events adorned the retreat, such as 'Kawwali' songs (by a group from Lucknow), a mime show (by Varaprabha) and dramas and songs by children, plus special games & programs for the children. Finally, at the end of the retreat, a special pilgrimage tour was arranged to visit Sarnath, Varanasi, Nalanda, Rajgir, all places associated with life of Buddha and Buddhism.

The last word should go to Nagaketu, who told us "The participants were very positive & at their spiritual height. Thanks to the retreat they could experience a living example of a caste-free society and Buddhist community. Hence they gained more faith in the Three Jewels."

SADHU DHAMMAKRANTI

Thanks...



FWBO News was so delighted to get this unsolicited compliment from a satisfied reader, we couldn't resist

reproducing it here! "Hi FWBO News, just a very brief note to say thanks for all the effort you put into producing the FWBO TBMSG blog throughout the year. Before I start work each morning I check my mail for a new blog and feel inspired by the sheer volume and diversity of work being carried out world-wide by the movement I am part of. It is very easy to take on a narrow, parochial outlook, becoming mired in local events and difficulties. The blog you put so much effort into maintaining is the perfect antidote.

Sunday, January 06, 2008

Breathworks in 2007



[Breathworks](#) is an FWBO Right Livelihood based in Manchester, UK. They specialise in mindfulness-based pain management – specifically, in “offering strategies for living well to anyone suffering from chronic pain wishing to live a richer life and feel a greater sense of initiative and confidence”.

Sona, one of the Breathworks directors, has sent us a report on their activities in 2007 – a rich and expansive year for them. Read on for the highlights, or click [here](#) for the full report with pictures.

Over the course of 2007, four training retreats took the community of Breathworks trainers to 14 fully qualified trainers with 23 half way through their training by the end of the year. For the first time they led a training retreat outside the UK – specifically, for health professionals in New Zealand, on the spectacular Coromandel peninsula. Other international events included a weekend workshop in Stockholm, Sweden, and a conference on ‘Integrating Mindfulness-Based Interventions into Medicine, Health Care, and

Society’ at the Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts.

In the UK Breathworks trainers are now running courses in Cardiff, Brighton, Bristol, Stroud, Blackburn, East London and Leeds as well as Manchester. Narapa, representing Breathworks at the British Pain Society’s Pain Management Programme conference in Southampton in September, was expecting to run a short workshop for 20 or so people, but over a 100 turned up much to his surprise! Another important development was the introduction of distance learning courses. This makes the Breathworks’ approach available to people who want one to one coaching, as well as to those who are too ill to get to a class. We hope to expand this aspect of the business in the future.

Narapa's main focus is to develop Breathworks as a viable commercial enterprise (we are a Community Interest Company, known in the UK as a ‘3rd Sector’ or ‘not-for-profit’ organisation). He has been developing a proposal to run ‘Continuing Professional Development’ courses at Salford University. This will be a very important development as it will allow Breathworks’ trainers to offer training to many different types of health professionals as all, or most, health professionals working in the public sector have to maintain their level of competence by attending courses every year.

For the second year running, Breathworks met up with others who train trainers to deliver mindfulness in the fields of health and stress - a UK Network of Mindfulness Trainers. Apart from Breathworks all the other participants are connected with MBSR (‘Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction’) and/or MBCT (‘Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy’ – see FWBO News’ August 2007 [survey](#) of this complex field). The meeting was hosted by Mark Williams at the Warneford Hospital in Oxford. The purpose was to try to bring some kind of standards to how mindfulness is taught and practised by trainers, as well as sharing information about how the different groups and institutions are developing their work. Breathworks will

be hosting the next meeting in Manchester in November 2008.

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapists have a magazine called 'Frontline' and in November they featured a substantial article on Mindfulness and pain management, with Breathworks having the highest profile. The cover image was of a huge Buddha which seemed to symbolise how much interest there is in mindfulness as the Buddha's teaching within mainstream circles these days.

Vidyamala's Book



Probably the most exciting event for Breathworks in 2007 was when Piatkus (now an imprint of Little, Brown Publishers) signed a contract with Vidyamala to publish her book. She had been working on a book about the Breathworks' approach to mindfulness based pain management for two years, being helped substantially by Vishvapani for the past year. The manuscript will be with the publisher this January when it will go into the production process ready for delivery to bookshops in November 2008. Having her book available will not only make Breathworks and Vidyamala better known, but, more importantly, it will bring our work to those suffering long term pain and illness, as well as stress, in places where we have no trainers, as well as to those who are too ill to be able to attend a course. Jon Kabat-Zinn has kindly offered to have a very positive quote about Vidyamala and Breathworks on the front cover.

Given that Breathworks is run by a team of directors who only work part-time, Sona concludes by saying "We are very happy with what we managed to achieve in 2007".

All the above is just a summary, click [here](#) for the full report with pictures or visit [Breathworks](#).

Saturday, January 05, 2008

A Jewel appears in the Heart of Devon



For some years now a most beautiful and unexpected jewel has been emerging in the heart of Devon – a sanctuary to Prajnaparamita, the Buddhist 'Goddess' of Wisdom. Finding it isn't easy – it isn't marked on any map or signposted in any way – and Sagaravajra, its creator, doesn't expect it to be finished anytime soon. Indeed, he describes it as his "lifetime's work". Should you stumble across it, however, in the woods overlooking the quaint village of Broadhembury, you would be entranced.

Outside the village, around on the other side of the valley and up the slope, the tarmac ends and the road becomes a track – which in turn becomes a bridleway pressed in on either side by trees. At the far end of this, where it finally peters out, you would find yourself ducking under a young and lovely beech and emerging in a secret glade, to

look down at two ponds separated by a narrow pathway – which leads across and up to the shrine of the goddess herself. All around are strange and exotic plants, and looking beyond the shrine, deeper into the woods, you would begin to see the strange shapes of the guardians of the place – nagas, dragons, horned gods, even the beginnings of a labyrinth...

Sagaravajra has had the land for over seven years now, and Prajnaparamita has been there for nearly two. She – in her form at Broadhembury at least – is a larger-than-life sculpted figure, made by Sagaravajra many years ago in the basement of Rivendell Retreat Centre in Sussex. She then followed him to [Guhyaloka](#), the FWBO's mountain retreat centre in Spain, where Sagaravajra lived for several years in the Vihara, and then back to the UK and the Buddhafield Festival. From there they went together, at very short notice, to the 'Living Arts Festival' in Devon, whose centrepiece that year was a competition to design a shrine – with a prize of four acres of land donated by a local philanthropist. Buddhafield, who had been invited to provide plumbing for the festival, ended by winning the competition and the prize – but Sagaravajra and his sculpture so impressed the landowner that he was spontaneously given the two ponds and the surrounding land on which to create a sanctuary and home for the sculpture. The rest, as they say, is history - or at least, history in the making...

Sagaravajra has created a simple website explaining his [vision and plans](#), and you can also go on a virtual '[photo-journey](#)' on FWBO Photos - leading you from the road's end up to the shrine itself– click here to begin. [Buddhafield](#) use their land, adjacent, for a number of retreats each year, and are slowly implementing on it a permaculture design they have created.

Thursday, January 03, 2008

FWBO Poland holds first retreat



Nityabandhu, a Polish Order Member currently living in Birmingham UK, has send this update on FWBO Poland -

"In September we held a retreat in southern Poland amidst captivating scenery. Small scale but longer (6 days) and slightly bigger than before. Poles being very reliable for not turning up we got fewer people than expected. This was just as well as we held the retreat in a befriended Dzogchen Buddhist retreat centre (read: a small country house) which would have burst at the seams otherwise. Ratnamegha's spontaneous first comment was that this was like going back 20 years in terms of retreat experience; however, those who came were very engaged and we generated a strong retreat environment.

"Apart from sharing the Dharma with people from Poland, those of us who are already practicing with the FWBO were able to get to know each other better. I was joined by Mahananda and Joanna (both LBC), Katarzyna (Paris), Ratnamegha (Birmingham) and Martin and Ania (both Norwich). Having a strong core of practicing Buddhists made for stronger pujas and mantra chanting, and generally the best retreat so far.

"To move on from the retreat: all being well, there may be three Order members living in Krakow next year. Santaka, a Polish dharmacari, is already there; I will be moving in March; and

Sassirika in September 2008.

"Karunabandhu (currently based in Birmingham) will join me in April for a few months and we will begin remodelling the empty shop space we already own into a shrine room and a café. The proposed centre has already galvanised interest from several people who are either friends, have Polish links or just like the idea of building something together for the FWBO. Click [here](#) for some photos.

"Hopefully we will be able to make this oasis of the Dharma available to the public by late summer 2008.

Other developments in Poland are proceeding in parallel with the actual building project - we have two FWBO Polish-language websites [here](#) and [Wildmind in Polish](#), and you can contact Nityabandhu [here](#).

Tuesday, January 01, 2008

Carer's Retreat at Aryaloka, USA



Anastra Madden, from the FWBO's [Aryaloka Buddhist Retreat Center](#) in New Hampshire, USA, has sent FWBO News this report of their recent 'Caregivers' Retreat'. There are a number of similar FWBO projects in the UK, some details

follow after the Aryaloka report. This is clearly an area where Buddhist meditation techniques - and friendliness - can provide great benefit to many people.

"Members of the Aryaloka community, in collaboration with Seacoast Hospice staff and other healing practitioners from New Hampshire, recently provided a weekend retreat for family and professional caregivers. These individuals were in need of respite from their ongoing work of providing care for individuals living with chronic, life-threatening, or life-limiting illness.

"Aryaloka's comfortable residential setting surrounded by the quiet of 13 wooded acres provided ideal conditions for the caregivers to be cared for by staff and retreat leaders. Nutritious vegetarian meals plus a "High Tea" topped off the educational/experiential activities that were facilitated by the retreat team and ten volunteer massage, reiki, and yoga practitioners. The weekend was threaded with meditation for relaxation; massage and reiki bodywork; restorative body movement; group processing through art, music, and journaling; exploring the importance of humor; and sharing personal stories with other caregivers. Participants were also given personal binders containing "take home" skills and strategies for self-care and stress management.

"In the short space between Friday evening to Sunday afternoon, the transformation in each participant was breathtaking. They became animated and vibrant, as if new life were poured into them. The feeling throughout the weekend was one of openness and joy, with multiple expressions of kindness, and laughter - much laughter ! As one participant expressed it , "This weekend has been phenomenal....the only word I can think of is seamless...." Participant evaluations confirmed that our goals for the retreat were fulfilled far beyond our original expectations. Also, an unexpected benefit also emerged : the atmosphere of total, unconditional care created for the participants spread back to the team, and facilitators also became participants!"

In the UK, several centres have been running weekends and other events for carers for some years. The Brighton Buddhist Centre runs the [‘Carer’s Breaks’ project](#); the London Buddhist Centre are converting their basement to house their major [‘Breathing Space’ project](#); which will host events for carers, plus mediation for depression, addiction, and stress. Manchester is home to the FWBO’s popular and successful pain management programme [‘Breathworks’](#), and earlier this month the UK’s Guardian newspaper ran an article exploring the LBC’s retreats for carers – click [here](#) to read it.

Monday, December 31, 2007

FWBO News in 2007 - the best and the rest...

During 2007, FWBO News published a total of 204 news pieces covering a wide range of events across the FWBO and TBMSG (as we’re known in India). On this, the last day of the year, it seemed appropriate to celebrate that – well done us! We also wanted to mention just some of the best stories we never managed to cover over the year. Sometimes these simply didn’t get a mention at all, and sometimes they did, but not the emphasis they deserved. It was a rich year for us in many ways. Read on...!



July saw nine women being ordained at our Hsuan Tsang retreat centre in India, five by Jnanasuri, an Indian woman Dharmacharini. It was reported at the time, but its proper significance hardly drawn out - we believe this marks the first ordination of Indian women by Indian women in India for very many years, possibly the first time ever. Sadhu Jnanasuri!

There are thriving FWBO centres in Mexico, Finland, Australia, New Zealand, and San Francisco – among other places – but we were unable to extract any actual ‘news’ from any of them. Perhaps we’ll be more lucky in 2008! Likewise our smaller centres in Estonia and Norway. We’d have included FWBO Poland as well, but we now have a report from them that’s planned to be the first or second news pieces of the new year. Watch this space! And check our [links page](#) for all their websites.

As well as running our city centres and retreat centres, the 1,500 members of the Western Buddhist Order are active in a great many different fields. Most, if not all, have chosen livelihoods that directly express their ideals in one way or another. We’d have liked to present more features on Order Members doing prison work, also those working with NVC (non-violent communication), mediation, and the very successful carers’ retreats, plus recent developments in the areas of meditation and chronic pain, depression, addiction, and relapse prevention. Also, a number of Order Members are on, or are preparing to undertake, long retreats – and a far larger number are

getting married and having children. Both very fertile areas for Dharma practice, of course! Perhaps related to the latter is a renewed interest in community living, but specifically in exploring new patterns to the traditional FWBO single-sex community. Ty Brethyn in Wales, a family community founded by Order Members from Buddhafield North, is the first to actually come into existence, but several others are on the drawing board – the most advanced probably being the [Bodhi Eco-Project](#) in Scotland.

2007 also saw the first major survey of the Order for many years, something which illustrated very graphically the increasing diversity of the Order. Results are still being digested, but we hope to present some of them here in due course. Among many other things the survey showed the continued move away from communal living and cooperative working, which were both such a feature of the early FWBO. Indeed, the survey estimated that today only some 20% of the Order are employed by FWBO institutions and only about 30% living in FWBO communities. Both Windhorse Publications and Windhorse:Evolution have undergone major changes over the past year, we'd have liked to tell you more about these too. Happily, the Order as a whole continues to grow almost exponentially, with some 1,500 members and well over 1,000 men and women preparing for ordination in many countries.



Sangharakshita, founder of the FWBO, also seemed underrepresented during the year, although he was

mentioned in six stories. 2007 was his most active year for some years, and sadly we were unable to report on many of his travels – for instance, his first visit to the Buddhafield Festival.

Looking ahead to 2008, high on the list must be the FWBO's International Retreat, to be held at Taraloka in late May. Check the [latest details](#) or in [other languages](#). We're also developing plans for a 'virtual buddhist centre', an on-line version of what you'd hope to find at a 'real' Buddhist centre. In fact, we'd like to hear from people who'd be interested in helping us develop this – please [email us](#) if you're interested. Readership of FWBO News also seemed to go up and up, though there's still plenty of people across the F/WBO who don't read it regularly. Spread the word! In the past two months it has attracted visitors from 77 countries – welcome to you all.

And finally - best wishes for the New Year, may it be happy and peaceful for you all.

Sunday, December 30, 2007

Year-End celebrations in Berlin



On 22nd December 20 people celebrated the winter solstice with a Dana-Day festival in 'Buddhistisches Tor', as the FWBO's centre in Berlin is known.

Amogharatna, the Centre's chairman, said "It was the first time, as far as I know, that we have had a decorated "Year's End tree" (as christmas trees were officially renamed in former East Germany) in the centre. The idea behind the celebration was to take some of the pre-Christian elements of Christmas, as well as positive ingredients of the Christian festival such as generosity, and set them in a Buddhist context. As well as meditation and puja the celebration included acknowledging our gratitude to others for what they have given us, a chance to express our hopes for the coming year and sharing presents around the tree. At the end we had a small feast of gingerbread and (non-alcoholic) punch. We hope the event will become a regular feature of our programme in the future."

Saturday, December 29, 2007

Retreat in Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu



Ashvajit, currently on a Dharma-teaching tour of South India, led a day retreat in Pondicherry on 25 December. Most of the thirty retreatants worked for [ADECOM](#), an organisation that co-ordinates the activities of various Dalit NGOs in Tamil Nadu, and which has for some years been one of Karuna's partners in India. All were from Dalit (ex-untouchable or other low-caste) backgrounds, most of them young and thirsty to find out more about

how Buddhism might relate to their plight – caste discrimination is still very strong in southern India, as was graphically illustrated in the caste-based rescue operation after the 2004 Tsunami.

As is customary, the retreat began with songs expressing devotion to Dr Ambedkar, the universally acknowledged hero of the Dalit peoples, and the chanting of the Refugees and Precepts in Tamil, followed by an introduction to meditation and meditation sessions led by Ashvajit. During the question-and-answers following there were also pointed remarks made about the unfavourable impression given by Sri Lankan bhikkhus in the ongoing difficulties between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamils in the North and East of Sri Lanka.

After the day, Ashvajit commented that there is evidently a burgeoning of interest in Dr Ambedkar and the Buddha-dharma in Tamil Nadu, where one can see ample architectural, archaeological and literary evidence bearing witness to the fact that Buddhism once flourished in the area. He concluded by saying "If there is to be an early renaissance of Buddhism here, however, many more properly-qualified Buddhist teachers are needed in this southern Indian state of 70 million people". By happy coincidence, January sees a week-long India-wide Convention of our Order in India that will be devoted to exploring ways of providing more training to respond to the vast need for Dhamma teachers across the length and breadth of India.

Friday, December 28, 2007

Dharma classes in Beijing



Dhammaloka has been travelling and teaching in China for some weeks now; he sends us this report from Beijing -

“Its cold in Beijing, but luckily the people here are very warm-hearted and welcoming. Like those in other Asian countries, the Chinese are very hospitable, friendly, and generous. Many have a lovely sense of humour and curiosity, and wish nothing more than to live a meaningful life of relative safety and prosperity in peace and harmony with the rest of the world. How saddening it is that so many people in the West have an entirely misguided view of China and the Chinese!

Sure, there is a lot of materialism and consumerism as well, probably no less than in the West. And, perhaps, Chinese people can even match Westerners in terms of pride and conviction that their culture is the greatest of all. It is about 15 months ago I was last in Beijing, and once again the city is difficult to recognize – apart from anything else, there are so many new and spectacular buildings.

I have been here for a little more than a week now, and it has been a busy and truly interesting time. It has been wonderful to be with my friends again. Our first public event was in the "Purple Spring Heart Wisdom Centre," a newly opened, rather posh and somewhat club-

like centre for all sorts of spiritual events. They were keen to have me (a Westerner) there, probably as a boost to their publicity, but as they were willing to host our events ‘by donation’ I didn't mind. Some 20 or more people joined us for an introductory evening class on awareness and meditation. As in Malaysia some three weeks ago, we followed this up with an 'Urban Retreat.' With the help of my friend Yinhua, I was able to offer them daily support by email. My Chinese not being quite up to scratch, it's been difficult for me to see in detail how they have been getting on, but Yinhua tells me of grateful comments and occasional questions—so I take it they are gaining something.

A highlight has been a series of morning meetings with cancer patients at one of the most famous hospitals for traditional Chinese medicine, many of whom had been ill for many years. While the doctors are using Western medicine for diagnostic purposes, they treat the disease using traditional means, complemented by Chi Gong, breathing exercises, and working with support groups. We'd been asked to introduce meditation and mindfulness practice - I was happy to respond, but did so with some hesitation as I've never before worked with such severely ill people. Our meetings included some wonderful and touching encounters. Beautiful in particular to see how these people responded to the metta bhavana - they obviously felt they'd been given a precious gift, very well suited to complement their approach of living with, rather than against, the cancer.

Only a few days are left before I'll be returning to the West. I'll be sad to leave. More than ever have I felt that the time is ripe for a modern form of Buddhism to be presented in Beijing and China.

Interestingly, whilst still in Malaysia, I had a long conversation with a monk friend who has a lot of first-hand experience of China and the resurgence of Chinese Buddhism. He very strongly expressed his conviction that, for Buddhism to again take root in China, it will have to be introduced largely by bypassing the existing Buddhist

organisations. Like me, he too felt that NOW is the time for that to happen.

Here you are—and Beijing and China are waiting for you. Please [contact me](#), and we'll figure out how you can help making the new age really become a NEW AGE.

Saturday, December 22, 2007

Dhamma teaching tour in Northern India



Subhuti and the Dhammakranti 'outreach' team have just finished a long and packed Dhamma teaching tour of Northern India. This followed immediately from the massive 'Jumbo' retreat at Bodh Gaya, which we hope to report on shortly – we are waiting for photos and some more eye-witness reports.

The tour began in Kusinagar, site of the Buddha's Mahaparinirvana, with a public talk by Subhuti in the Shrine Hall of the monastery. Maitriveer Nagarjun, one of the organizers of the Dhammakranti project, commented "The programme was especially wonderful due to the presence of 80 participants of the Dhammakranti Retreat, which had just finished". Subhuti spoke here on the importance of ethics, or shila, in the creation of a just society. He commented that these days many people are aware of the name Buddha, but unaware

of his teachings.

The following day saw a public talk in a small remote village near Kusinagar, where most of the local Buddhists were 'Dalit' followers of Dr. Ambedkar and, as such, leading lives typical of the millions of agricultural laborers in India – hand-to-mouth daily wages, illiterate, and poor. Subhuti spoke here of the disease of inequality and its roots in the Indian idea of Caste, which he described as being deeply rooted in the mind – meaning that liberation would come from training the mind to reach, instead, a state of equality and freedom. He explained also Dr. Ambedkar's dream of a casteless society based on the Buddhist values of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.



From there the party traveled for three days 1,000 miles West, where the first ever Dhammakranti retreat was held in the Punjab, in a school run by some Mitras in the town of Phulpur. Some 90 people attended, the school was surrounded by green fields and silence, making it easy to deepen into the atmosphere of retreat. At the end a local school principal and others became Mitras in a ceremony to deepen their links with the Dhamma and our community. The retreat was specifically for new Buddhists, exploring ways they could effectively deepen their sense of Dhamma practice and spiritual community despite problems of isolation and remoteness.

From there to the neighboring state of Rajasthan, another first for Dhammakranti. Subhuti gave a public talk at Alwar, to an audience of Buddhists – many 'born Buddhists' whose communities had followed Dr. Ambedkar into Buddhism in the great conversions of

1956 – but who had had no instruction since, and who lived, tragically, in a state which topped the list of Indian caste-based atrocities. Subhuti exhorted his audience to bring into being the Buddhist ideal of a ‘Casteless People’ - to set the path for a casteless, peaceful, and just society for all, and celebrated the life of Dr. Ambedkar, whose life was devoted to just that.

After an evening meeting in Delhi, the party moved on to yet another first, the state of Haryana, 70 km east of Delhi, and another retreat, this time with over 150 people attending, both men and women. This retreat especially benefitted from there being people from many different States present - from Punjab, Rajasthan and U.P. (Uttar Pradesh). This retreat focused especially on meditation, as a system training bringing peace, and also as a potent agent for social transformation.

You can [read a fuller account of the tour here](#). For the Dhammakranti team, life continues busy - preparations are beginning for their second All-India Buddhist Youth Conference at Bor Dharan, our retreat centre near Nagpur, where more than 500 are expected.

Click here for a [map of TBMSG groups in India](#).

Friday, December 21, 2007

Buddhafield celebrates an ordination



On Wednesday a special Buddhafield women’s retreat culminated with the public ordination of Jackie Willson, who became Vishvadakini, meaning Universal Dakini.

Maitreyi conducted the ceremony, and Kalyanasri acted as Vishvadakini’s private preceptor. She gave a very beautiful explanation of the name, which we are happy to reproduce in full.

‘Vishva’ means “pervades, all, every, entire or universal”. And ‘dakini’ has many levels of meaning: it can mean messenger, protectress, inspirer. It can mean a helper, or ally - a sky traveller: the sky dancer, one who protects and serves the truth. Therefore a dakini is a spiritual friend to others, someone who stimulates others to practise the Dharma, who attracts/fascinates others to practise. Or even a trickster: one who pokes us when needed.

And I think Vishvadakini is a trusted spiritual companion who is sincere, open and has an aspiration to be free from all disguises: trustworthy. She is skilled in communication, inspiring one to practise - hence she’s a trusted spiritual friend in her friendships. A dakini too can be the embodiment of our upsurging energies from our depths. She represents our own passionate energies that we can integrate and use for the benefit of the Dharma and Sangha.

Vishvadakini embodied this passion in the early days of Buddhafield, doing her circus course, in looking after her little son Keir and now in her yoga training. But there is a teaching in this too: trying to transform her sometimes rather 'driven' energy into more centred energy whilst keeping it free and spontaneous, and to remind her to keep faith in her knowledge that the Dharma is big enough and deep enough to contain all of her in the present, open, moment, as well as to inform all her actions. To remind her that she needs nothing else.

To do that one needs wisdom. So the dakini can be the supreme embodiment of the highest wisdom: the Enlightenment principle: a Buddha in female form. So she can also be a shock therapist: one who shows us Reality, directly. The dakini symbolises freedom. Freedom from everything that binds her to samsara: she tramples on ignorance and conquers all unskillfulness, all ego-clinging.

I wanted to emphasise the Universal aspect of her name, the 'vishva', as well as the dakini. Vishvadakini has had to call on all her resources to face very difficult circumstances in the last few years: finding out she had a long-term illness just after she'd completed her circus training and started getting her trapeze act together; finding out there were very likely difficulties when she was pregnant; and then, of course, calling on all her dakini energies to wholeheartedly and lovingly care for little Keir since his birth nearly 3 years ago - and his story is still unfolding. And more difficult news has come recently. So there have been many times Vishvadakini has had to dig deep to take in more truths, more reality into her life.

Even though her life is totally dedicated to Keir's care, her motivation is more global. She is a wise lady: who always seems to be able to come back to a wider perspective (as a sky dancer can) even though often totally exhausted and depleted in energy through lack of sleep and hardly any space to herself. And that is quite something. She is an inspiring woman, with a big heart. She does respond to 'all'. She is a good and loyal friend, she cares deeply for the environment and all life; she is very ethical, she has an innate

intelligence and wisdom. So Jackie becomes Vishvadakini: Universal Dakini (spelt with a dot under the 'd', long 'a's and last 'i').

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

The [Buddhafield 2008 retreats programme](#) is now available.

Wednesday, December 19, 2007

FWBO Fundraisers Kula created



Saturday saw eighteen people from across the UK gather in Birmingham for the first meeting of what will become the FWBO Fundraisers Kula. Many are already involved in FWBO fundraising and others have plans to do so. Planned projects included new premises for the Leeds Buddhist Centre, a schools outreach project in Norwich, the development of the Theatre attached to the Cambridge Buddhist Centre, the creation of a major land-based community by Buddhafield, and a proposed FWBO-wide Legacies appeal – watch this space! Besides introductions, the day included an intensive training offered by Samayasri, an Order Member who is also a professional fundraiser with WSPA, the [World Society for the Protection of Animals](#), plus a 'surgery' where people presented their real-life issues and dilemmas around fundraising – many, not

surprisingly, being around the area of 'how do we fundraise as a Buddhist?' More meetings are planned, and will offer more focussed training to meet specific needs.

Lokabandhu and Siddhisambhava were also there, from the FWBO's 'Development Team'. Lokabandhu commented afterwards, "For me, one of the most inspiring parts of the day was a definition of fundraising offered by Samayasri – she described it as a 'conversation about unfulfilled ambition', with the fundraiser as the link between someone's aspirations for the world and the means of making it come true." I found those few words extraordinary, they completely shifted my image of what fundraising is about. I want to know more!"

Tuesday, December 18, 2007

Karuna Appeals Report 2007



FWBO News is delighted to present this detailed report from Jo, from the FWBO's [Karuna Trust](#), on some of their fundraising successes this year. Karuna raises and sends over £1m every year to many different projects in India, it is one of the Movement's greatest success stories.

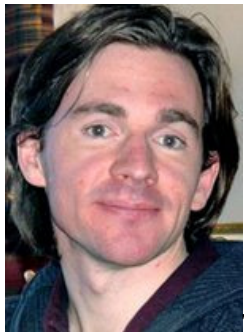
Jo writes -

"We would like to tell you how the Karuna door-knocking Appeals have been doing over this last year. A lot has happened for us in the last twelve months, which isn't unusual here on the Appeals Team!"



Jo and Santavajri started the year with a visit to India, where they saw quite a range of Karuna-funded projects and attended the first ever Karuna Partners Conference at Nagaloka in Nagpur (see photo, which shows Santavajri and Jo role-play door-knocking at Karuna's Partners' Conference in February).

Back at the Karuna office in London, Jo, Manjuka and Santavajri were joined in February by two new team members, Khemajala and Peter Hunt. The new team then went on to run six appeals, which was one less than planned... Recruitment of volunteers is proving more difficult these days. So if you think you may be interested in doing an Appeal then find out more at www.karunaappeals.org.uk/ and look out for posters, postcards and booklets giving you lots more information at a Buddhist Centre near you. Then get in touch! OK – end of advert.



The Appeals Team has continued to evolve over the year, with Manjuka leaving as Team Leader in October, and Santavajri stepping into his shoes. Manjuka has been fundraising and leading appeals since 1998, has made many thousands of pounds for Karuna's projects in India, led dozens of appeals, and skilfully supported innumerable men and women through the ups and downs of fundraising. At times, he has been virtually the only person on the Appeals Team, and on more than once occasion has led two Appeals simultaneously! He has been a real stalwart, displaying so much courage, commitment and determination during some challenging times, as well as keeping his playful, soft and kindly side very much alive. We in the FWBO and TBMSG owe him a great deal, so if you see Manjuka, do congratulate him on all he has done over the last 9 years, and don't let him get away with being Scottish and diffident – make sure he takes it on the chin!!

Other changes on the Team: once the Appeals season got under way, Peter realised that door-knocking wasn't for him, and he has since left the Appeals Team. So we are looking to replace him with a male fundraiser/trainer in 2008. Please see the jobs section on FWBO News for more information. Another advert! How did that slip in??

Jo led an Appeal for the first time in 2007, and proved to be a competent and able leader. Indeed, the Bristol Women's Appeal was the highest-earner this year, coming in 6% over target. Sadhu to Jo, and to the women on the Appeal!



We continue to have excellent input on the Appeals from Jayachitta (famous for her Red Noesies Unlimited clowning workshops) and Manjusvara, and Manjuka will stay involved as a visiting trainer in 2008. Manjudeva and Vandanaajyoti also offered valuable sessions in Focussing and Dharma Study respectively in 2007.

More about the Appeals themselves: We raised a total of £87,968 annually, which was slightly less than 2006, but more than 2004 and 2005. The Appeals did quite well, with 4 coming in comfortably on target, and two slightly below. 30 people fundraised on the Appeals, comprising a total of 171 fundraising weeks. We in the Appeals Team accounted for 25% of the fundraising weeks, which is on average 5% more than over the past five years... so we are working hard!!

We ran two mixed Appeals in 2007: one for the team of Dharmaduta students, and another in London. We also had a range of nationalities involved, including one German, a Dutch woman, and two Indians.

Here are the names of people who did the Appeals in 2007 and the amount each Appeal raised. Again, if you know any of these people, do congratulate them for giving of their time, energy and effort so generously. We couldn't have done it without them... as Manjusvara says, our volunteer fundraisers are Karuna's Secret Weapon, and our most precious resource!

Appeal Results:

Leeds Women

Main Trainer: Santavajri. Fundraisers: Jo Goldsmid, Jo Robinson, Santavajri. Visiting Trainers: Manjuka, Manjusvara, Jayachitta, Manjudeva. Amount raised: £8,729 (annual standing order value)

Edinburgh Men

Main Trainer: Manjuka. Fundraisers: Khemajala, Peter Hunt, Sasanajyoti, David Vasey, Karunajala. Visiting Trainers: Santavajri, Jo Goldsmid, Manjusvara, Manjudeva, Jayachitta. Amount raised: £16,624.

London Dharmaduta Students

Main Trainer: Manjuka. Fundraisers: Manidhamma, Will Sullivan, Thea Wiersma, Sunayaka, Matt Burgess. Visiting Trainers: Jayachitta, Manjusvara, Manjudeva, Jo Goldsmid, Peter Hunt, Khemajala, Santavajri. Amount raised: £14,346.

London Mixed

Main Trainer: Santavajri. Fundraisers: Khemajala, Santosh Kamble, Jo Goldsmid, Vicki Clarke, Peter Hunt, Sraddhagita. Visiting Trainers: Manjusvara, Jayachitta, Manjuka, Vandanaajyoti, Jayaraja, Abhilasa. Amount raised: £18,609

Bristol Women

Main Trainer: Jo Goldsmid. Fundraisers: Subhadramati, Katannuta, Julia Simnett, Amitasuri, Vishvantara, Rachel Caddick. Visiting Trainers: Santavajri, Manjuka, Jayachitta, Manjusvara. Amount raised: £17,411.

S. E. London Men

Main Trainer: Manjuka. Fundraisers: Kevin Moore, Karunavajra, Peter Hannah, James Corre. Visiting Trainers: Jayachitta, Manjusvara, Santavajri, Manjudeva. Amount raised: £12,251.

Sadhu Karuna! If you're interested in doing an appeal next year, [contact them](#) or phone +44 (0)20 7700 3434. See also their current jobs advert on [FWBO Jobs](#).

Monday, December 17, 2007

Women in India create new Trust for women's projects



Arya Tara Mahila Trust The Arya Tara Mahila Trust is a new Trust helping to support and fund projects for women in India. Its main function is to allow women working in FWBO/TBMSG projects in India to receive funding from outside India without needing to rely on our existing organisations, all of which are mainly run by men. This brings much greater freedom, and of course responsibility - which they welcome.

It is the first organisation in our movement set up by women for Indian women. They have launched a newsletter, Varada, and produced its first issue. Click [here](#) to read it. Among other things it contains reports on their program to combat domestic violence in India (outlawed for the first time only in 2006) and the Karuna Computer Education Centre, their new computer training institute.

They also have ambitious fundraising plans, and say -

"In the next four to five years, we want to develop a retreat centre for Indian women run by a community of Indian women. At the present time, there are three main retreat centres in TBMSG, all run by teams of men.

"We want our retreat centre to be somewhere in central India, accessible to women both from the north and south. This is increasingly important as the Dhamma spreads and grows more and more in other Indian states. We intend in the next year to focus on fundraising in other countries as well as in India.

"For the next year, we aim to raise a minimum of US \$150,000".

We would be very happy to hear from you, and you can contact us via [email](mailto:indiansisters.org) or looking at our website www.indiansisters.org.

Saturday, December 15, 2007

Dhammaloka in Malaysia II



Last week we reported that Dhammaloka is currently travelling in Malaysia and China. He sends us this report from Penang, Malaysia:

"For the past three days I've been a guest at the [Than Hsiang Temple](#), in Penang in Northern Malaysia. It's my fourth or fifth visit here, and I have never regretted visiting so often. For me, the Temple is one of the most inspiring places of 'engaged' Buddhism I've ever been to. It comes very close to what I imagine to be FWBO to be at its best ... and in certain ways more.

"To call Than Hsiang a 'temple' may be slightly misleading since, besides some of the meditation halls images that one would expect to find in a temple from the Chinese Mahayana tradition, it includes a number of welfare and right livelihood projects as well, all integrated into one large building. Among other things there's a kindergarten, an old folks home, a centre for counselling, and a vegetarian canteen. The Than Hsiang foundation is headed by the Venerable Wei Wu who, as a student in New Zealand, had some contact with the FWBO – and later, when Ugyen Sangharakshita visited Malaysia, translated for him.

"Over the last few years, the foundation has expanded rapidly. It now includes a number of Buddhist student hostels (which they call Kalyana Mitra homes), urban and retreat centres in various parts of Malaysia, and even a Buddhist College across the border in Thailand – across the border because Malaysia is a constitutionally Muslim country, and so no permission would be given to establish a Buddhist college in Malaysia itself. The approach to studies at the college is clearly ecumenical, with one major objective being to train monks and lay people from mainland China and other countries to work as Dharmadutas, or messengers of the Dharma.

"People here are very interested in the FWBO approach - they feel they can learn from us, in particular from our experience in building Sangha and our approach to Team Based Right Livelihood. Not surprisingly, I was invited to meet various groups of volunteers for some input followed by lively discussions. For our part, there is a lot we can learn from Than Hsiang and the people working there — not the least in the area of communication with the wider society and hence finding support for our work.

"I'm here for another three days, including a weekend seminar on psychological type and Dharma practice, and then I'll be off to Beijing. It's been very hot, with tremendous rain – but now there's a lovely breeze with drizzle drifting in the air and mist hanging at the mountain slopes".

Thursday, December 13, 2007

Charlie Chaplin impressions in India



Varaprabha is an Indian Order Member who has recently begun a new career as a mime artist. It looks like he specialises in Charlie Chaplin impressions – and it looks like he’s very good at it! He writes –

“I am glad to inform you that since last twenty-four years I am performing cultural activities as a cultural activist. Recently I completed Mime Arts course at Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar University, Aurangabad. I am thinking to make short Mime films, through which such messages will be delivered as, “be educated, be kind, be harmonious, be generous...” and so on.

“Already I have been able to offer a Charlie Chaplin Mime on the theme of addiction for the children at the Mahavihara and also the Destitute Children’s Home in Pune, another, called ‘Charlie and the Thief’ at Latur, teaching the children the importance of earning their living by honest means, and finally an active part in the Film ‘Bodhisattva’, which among other things was advertising for TBMSG. Another Charlie Chaplin piece is in preparation, on the theme of ‘Charlie and the Dictator’.”

Watch this space!

Wednesday, December 12, 2007

Travels in Sri Lanka...



A few days ago we posted what will hopefully be the first of several stories from Dhammaloka’s tour of Malaysia and China. We are hoping to do the same for Ashvajit, an Order Member of many years standing, who is spending the next several months visiting many FWBO/TBMSG groups in Sri Lanka and India.

He has just arrived in Sri Lanka where he sent us this short report as a sort of prelude to his main travels.

“I have spent my first day in south Sri Lanka staying with my old friend Jinasena at Unawatuna Beach. He manages a very pleasant guest house called Zimmer Rest, and he set me to work yesterday opening an exhibition of Sri Lankan paintings by an artist going by the name of Lionel Weerasinghe and giving a short talk on Art.

I have also taught one Manchester tourist to meditate - he was very receptive and easily got absorbed - said he felt stoned. I said I couldn't remember what that was like!

More to come...”

Monday, December 10, 2007

Thanka painting workshops, and more, at Bodh Gaya



For some years now the FWBO/TBMSG has owned land at Bodh Gaya, site of the Buddha's Enlightenment. Development on our land has been slow, partly due to its distance from all our other centres, including TBMSG's Indian centres, plus the difficulty of operating in Bihar – one of India's most backward and lawless states. Things are now starting to move – over the past two years two very spacious 'huts' have been constructed, offering accommodation for visitors and the small residential community, trees have been planted, and activities are beginning.

Thanks to the Nagarjuna Training Institute in Nagpur, there are now ten Bihari mitras in and around Bodh Gaya, plus several who contacted us through Nissoka or Lalitavajra's Dharma classes there. One of these is Shashi Kumar, recently returned to Bodh Gaya after six years in Nepal, where he studied traditional Thanka painting at the Shechen Monastery, Kathmandu. His father is a well-known carver of Buddhist rupas, with a small shop in the centre of town.

Shashi is planning to set up a Thanka painting studio and tuition centre in Bodh Gaya, and recently conducted a painting workshop on our land. Any visitors are invited to contact him and he is able to accept commissions. Check his [website](#) or [slideshow](#) for a taste of his work, or email him [here](#).



Also living in Bodh Gaya is Sachin Bhongade, a mitra from Nagpur in Central India – over 1,000 miles away, where the customs and even the language is different. He recently led the local mitras to the big TBMSG retreat centre at Bor Dharan, near Nagpur, for a retreat on the life of Dr. Ambedkar. On his return he sent FWBO News this report -

"I am in Buddhagaya and I was thinking to write you all about the retreat. I took seven youths from Buddhagaya to Bordharan for the retreat. They all are very good friends of mine, and four are from the Siddharth Nagar area – a very poor part of town where the local Buddhists live. I would like to appreciate Dhammachari Ratnaketu who sponsored for the retreat for them all.

"The subject of the retreat was Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's great qualities. It was a great time for my friend – the first time ever they experienced a different life to their usual life in Bihar. It was so inspiring for them and enjoyable for us all.

"In the beginning the retreat started in Marathi language (the local language of Maharashtra) and that was a big problem for my friends from Bihar so the leader of the retreat decided to arrange a separate class for them. That class was led by Dhammachari Ansulkumar and me. After this was arranged, they mixed very inspiringly and enjoyably in the retreat.

"Then everybody came back to Buddhagaya. In the beginning it was really great for all they were all finding they were different in

themselves. And now some of us are getting together everyday in the evening under the Bodhi Tree in Mahabodhi Temple - we do Pali puja and meditation, and every Sunday we have long time class and some interesting discussions about basic Buddhism.”

Editor’s note - It is sad to note that since this retreat, Ansulkumar died unexpectedly in a bad motorcycle accident, and Ratnaketu struck down by a stroke – he is now recovering in New Zealand.

Sabbe Sankhara Dukkha...

Sunday, December 09, 2007

Big changes for two Dakas



Vajradaka may well hold the record for the longest resident in any FWBO Centre or retreat centre. But now all that has changed...

After twenty one years living and leading retreats at [Vajraloka retreat centre](#) in Wales Vajradaka had a years 'sabbatical' to have unstructured time and do some writing.

While staying in southern Italy for six months he decided to leave the

retreat centre. He is now living in London and offering workshops to help people communicate the essential spirit and principles of meditation.

Information about these is available on his new website [Communicating Meditation](#).



Big changes also for Karunadaka, until recently the Chair of the FWBO’s [Dublin Buddhist Centre](#) and a big part of their ongoing new Centre project. He has been offered and has accepted the post of Fund-raising Coordinator for Oxfam in Ireland.

He writes –

“It’s a kind of dream job for me. I will be in charge of the Fund-raising team of six here in Dublin; I feel incredibly fortunate to have found a job like this.

“I’ll be handing the Buddhist centre over to a team of three, the centre is in good shape and is run pretty collectively, so it all feels very smooth. Despite the new job I’ll be carrying on the building project with Dayananda, and hope to hand over the keys to a fab place to a new team in the Spring. I feel I have learned so much from working together. I only wish we had more money and I could have

moved on to an FWBO position in Ireland. Maybe one day in the future...

“In the meantime, if you'd like to log on to <http://www.oxfam.ie/> you'll be able to make a real difference in halting the global arms trade, ensuring primary education for all, and helping sustainable long-term development for some of the most marginalised of our global citizens: just click to donate to the campaign of your choice.....! Go an ya good thing! ;-)”

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.

Contact FWBO and TBMSG News

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

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FWBO Bloggers - individuals

David Beard	Jayarava	Parami
Stephen Parks	Jayasiddhi	Ratnaketu
Bell	Kulaprabha	Sadara
Bodhipaksa	Manidhamma	Suryaprabha
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- [College of Public Preceptors](#) - Ordination training across the F/WBO
 - [Karuna Appeal volunteers](#) - Fundraisers raising money for social and dhamma work in India
 - [Free Buddhist Audio](#) - FWBO audio/text archive
 - [Mitras from the Manchester Buddhist Centre](#)
 - [Dharmadhuta course students blog](#)
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