



FWBO and TBMSG News

December 2008

Inside this month:

Two new series:
FWBO people and
FWBO websites; three
deaths in the Order;
the Prajnaparamita Sanctuary;
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2009 catalogue; the
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the FWBO in Denmark and Mongolia;
Delhi, Japan, New Zealand...



FWBO News

presents a bi-monthly anthology of stories illustrating some of what's going on across the FWBO – the worldwide network of Buddhist centres, businesses, communities, arts events, and individual projects that makes up the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order and Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha in India.

This month we have stories from India, UK, USA, Japan, Mongolia, Denmark, New Zealand, Canada, and cyber-space – covering topics as diverse as ethical banking, art, Buddhism and youth, Buddhism and old age, Sangharakshita, fundraising, Buddhism in prisons, and more.

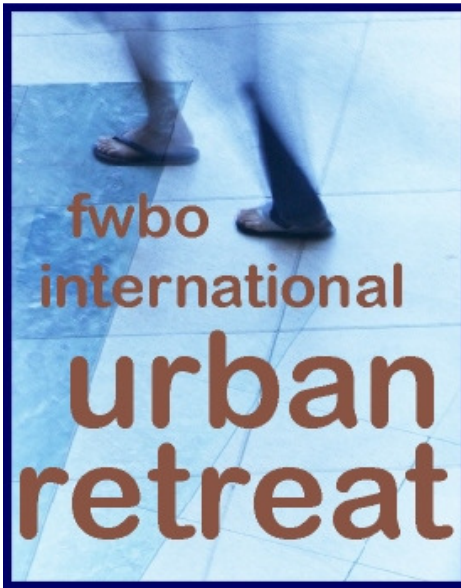
Enjoy...

[more inside»](#)

on the web at:

www.fwbo-news.org | news@fwbo-news.org

Three ideas for 2009...



June 2009 will see the FWBO's first ever International Urban retreat.

These have been pioneered at a few FWBO centres over the past few years, and have proven both popular and effective.

The dates are **20-27th June 2009**.

All readers of FWBO News world-wide are welcome to take part, whether or not they are near an FWBO Centre. Find it on Facebook – look for the **International Urban Retreat 2009!**

Ethical banking with Triodos

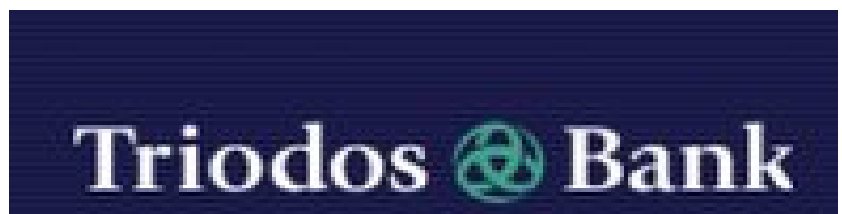
Could this be the year you switch to ethical banking? Following the recent wave of financial crisis and scandal, Triodos, the UK's most actively ethical bank, report - "61% of those interviewed who have a banking product, said that they now wanted to know more about how their bank invests their money".

FWBO members in the UK already have over £750,000 deposited with Triodos, and they have for many years been the lender of choice for new FWBO projects, financing many of the FWBO's communities and Right Livelihood businesses.

Triodos have recently launched a new range of **savings accounts** - and there's a free copy of the popular 'Go Slow England' book on offer to new customers. If you want to know more about where your savings are going, and to be more confident they're being used for the good; try looking into Triodos...

When you join there's an option to donate some of the interest payable to one or another charity - including the FWBO.

Although small compared to the high street giants, Triodos are a fully-fledged bank, describing themselves as "a fully independent bank and a pioneer of sustainable and transparent banking". They say "Our mission is to make money work for positive social, environmental and cultural change."



Got some time? Want to work on yourself? Do a Karuna appeal!

Since 1980 the FWBO's Karuna Trust has been funding social and Dhamma projects amongst India's poorest and most disadvantaged communities. The majority of its funds are raised by volunteer fundraisers, who live and work as a spiritual community during the five or so weeks of the door-knocking appeal. This form of fundraising was pioneered by Karuna in 1982: ever since, Karuna's been developing such fundraising as a context for engaged Buddhist practice.



Karuna are currently recruiting for their 2009 Appeals.

Wednesday, December 31, 2008

Appreciation



As 2008 draws to a close, we thought we'd end it with a very simple 'news item'. This was received recently from an unknown reader; she says -

"I recently came across your blog and have been reading along. I thought I would leave my first comment. I don't know what to say except that I have enjoyed reading. Nice blog. I will keep visiting this blog very often."

FWBO News says, "Thanks! – and Happy New Year to all".

Tuesday, December 30, 2008

FWBO News featured on alltop.com



FWBO News has been selected to feature in the Buddhist section of Alltop.com (<http://buddhism.alltop.com>). As the name suggests, Alltop is an "online magazine rack" of popular topics. They hand-pick sites offering exceptional content and aggregate articles into themed sections.

Their Buddhist section is just one of many: they have categories covering everything from [addiction](#) to [yoga](#) and [auto-racing](#) to [zoology](#).

In their **Buddhist section** (<http://buddhism.alltop.com>) you'll find (besides us of course) a series of glimpses into the extraordinary diversity of Western Buddhist voices: the joys of Zen Coffee, the Dalai Lama's blog, the Strawberry Koan, beer and Buddhism, Buddhist comments on the Pope's Christmas message, and lots more... The FWBO's **Wildmind** meditation teaching site is also featured (they're the one's writing about Zen Coffee!)

Enjoy...

Monday, December 29, 2008

Three Deaths in the Order



We are sad to report that December saw three deaths in the Western Buddhist Order - in America, India, and the UK.

Varada, from America, writes –

“Dharmachari Punya, died on December 11th around 2:45 eastern time at his home in Massachusetts, USA. He died peacefully and with Atula (one of his closest friends),

Sucharita and Alex (his son) by his side. His yidam was Amitabha so the chanting of his mantra would be a good way to send him off”. Punya was ordained over 30 years ago, and was one of the first Order Members to take the FWBO to America.

Amrideep, one of the 'Order Convening team in India, writes –

“On 12th December night at around 11.00 pm Dharmachari Shildhari passed away due to Heart problem. He had been under treatment for some time and had Angioplasty operation on same day on 12th, on which he died. The funeral took place next day on 13th at 12.00 p.m. Many OM's gathered for his funeral at Ambernath.

“Shildhari was aged 59, from Ulhasnagar centre, nearby Mumbai. He was ordained on 6th June 1999 in Mahavihar at Dapodi, Pune. He had deep shraddha towards Three Jewels, Dr.Ambedkar and Bhante Sangharakshita. He was most of the time Chairman of Bahujan Hitay Hostel and Social project and also Chairmen of TBMSG Ulhasnagar for a short period.

“Some of his good qualities are: he was always taking initiative in many activities and also very helpful in particular in chapter meetings. He was helping to create harmony within the chapter. He was outspoken, positive and well balanced in his spiritual life. Since his ordination he has been Kalyana Mitra for nearly all who were ordained thereafter. He was widely respected amongst Buddhists and centres nearby. His PUNYANUMODAN DAY was on Sunday 21st at his house in Ambarnatha”.

And Ashvajit writes -

"This is to inform you that Satyashri died on Saturday 20 December at about 9:00am in the Royal Sussex Hospital, Brighton. Her elder sister Susan and one of her sons were with her at the time of her death, and reported that her last breaths were taken gently, with dignity.

"Satyashri had been suffering for some months from a virulent cancer that spread from her womb to her lungs. She accepted the diagnosis with great fortitude about six weeks ago and the cancer spread rapidly. However she had time to write her will and make known her wishes for her funeral before she died. She had not long ago expressed a wish to take the Yellow kesa but her illness proceeded so rapidly that it was not possible to arrange for that.

"Amongst her excellent qualities were her readiness and willingness to help in practical ways, her extraordinary ability to empathise, her quick and bright intelligence, her truthfulness, outspokenness and lack of concern for mere convention, her loving nature, and her tendency to take more thought for others than for herself. When she heard the prognosis for her disease, she was immediately more concerned for her children and for her grandchildren than for her own predicament.

"Her close friends in the Brighton sangha attended a meditation session called at short notice at the Brighton Buddhist Centre the evening before she died. The Prajnaparamita and Amitabha mantras were chanted, as Satyashri had been particularly inspired by Amitabha in the months preceding her death, as well as by the golden radiance of her yidam the Prajnaparamita".

Sunday, December 28, 2008

FWBO Websites VII - Facebook



The FWBO has a growing presence on [Facebook](#), the social networking site, and for this week's featured FWBO website we'd like to introduce you to some of what's on offer there.

First is the FWBO Page www.facebook.com/pages/FWBO/27731048911 which now boasts some 850 'fans' (not our choice of label!) from around the world. The FWBO page is a one-stop stop to the main FWBO websites, photos, books – plus interactive features such as a 'Discussion Board' and a 'Wall' for chat. It's starting to list some worldwide FWBO events, such as the [**International Urban Retreat**](#), to be held in June next year.

Besides the FWBO's main Page on Facebook, there's a number of groups, all of which have sprung up pretty spontaneously over the past year. One's simply called "[**FWBO Friends of Western Buddhist Order**](#)" and is for any kind of general purpose networking among folk interested in the FWBO.

Others are more specialised – there's thriving communities based around the [Vajraloka Meditation Centre](#) and [Padmaloka](#) groups, which both now have over 200 members, plus smaller groups for FWBO Sanghas in Finland, Scotland, and elsewhere

[Buddhafield NZ](#) are taking the Buddhafield spirit to – guess where – New Zealand! It's a good time to check them out if you're anywhere nearby, with their summer season just starting. The [Buddhafield festival](#) group itself is surprisingly small, at just 90 members, outnumbered by the [Buddhafield Scotland](#) group – consisting of people who'd love to see Buddhafield up in Scotland! An example of the power of Facebook to connect people up and get something happening in the 'real world'.

In the same vein, [Karuna Appeals \(FWBO\)](#) exists to connect past and future volunteers with Karuna's fundraising appeals – a great place to start if you're thinking of a Karuna appeal.

A recent arrival is the [Young People in the FWBO](#) group, started after last month's weekend on the same theme. They're debating stuff like "What's it like to be a young person practising in the FWBO – what's attractive and what's off-putting?"; "What's a YOUNG person - what age limits, if any, should this group or activities for younger Buddhists have?" And "Communities and Team Based Right Livelihoods: Are these attractive to young Buddhists Today?" Answers on a postcard please – or join the group and get typing!

The FWBO presence on Facebook looks set to grow. But it's also got a presence on other sites around the web - the enthusiast will also find us on [MySpace](#) and [Orkut](#) – which has become TBMSG's 'social networking site of choice. And most recent of all is a Twitter feed – try following http://twitter.com/FWBO_Dharma.

The internet isn't for everyone, of course - if you're desperate for some real human contact, probably none of the above will 'do it' for you. In that case, just go to the [FWBO Centres' Address List](#) on our main site for a full listing of all FWBO Centres worldwide. Then log off, and go get on a bus!

Saturday, December 27, 2008

FWBO People: Karunamaya - womens ordinations in India, good news, and an appeal!



This week, in our Saturday 'People slot', FWBO News features Karunamaya, a Western Order Member who's worked in India for many years. Her name means 'Embodiment of Compassion'; she's a key figure in the Ordination process for Indian women.

Karunamaya's a naturally retiring person, so we don't actually have a 'big picture' of her. Fittingly, however, you'll find her embedded in the centre of the photograph opposite, or on the [Order Mosaic](#) (www.fwbo-news.org/resources/mosaic/thumbnail/index.html - five people to the right of Avalokitesvara's elbows!),

though there is a close-up [here](#), as part of the Order Mosaic.

We're especially pleased to feature her because she's written to FWBO News to say – **We need more Dhammacharinis in India. Can you help us?**

- In September 2008, 11 new women joined the Western Buddhist Order/TBM (in India). The largest number of women ordained in India ever!
- But in January there'll be even more – 15 women – being ordained. The ordinations will be held at the Bhaja retreat centre 29 December to 11 January. The public ordinations will be January 11, 2009. This is an historic occasion - such a large group of Indian women being ordained at one time. All their names are listed below.
- Also we will be welcoming the first new Dhammucharini from the state of Uttar Pradesh who is resident in the state.
- 700 Indian women + want to train as Dhammucharinis. That's more than in the whole of the rest of the world!
- There are thousands of women in India who need trained Dharma teachers (Dhammucharinis) to learn the dhamma.
- Our main difficulty is the absence of funds.
- We have just £600/1200 US\$ per year for our project. Enough for one team member and a few other expenses.
- We had serious difficulties finding the money to pay for women to attend the two-week ordination retreat.
- And have ongoing difficulties to fund women to come on retreats and to support team members to take the Dhamma out to women in the cities and villages.
- It costs 490 Rupees (£6, 12 US\$) for one Indian woman to go on a 1 week retreat.
- A woman in a low income job might earn 400-500 Rupees in a month!
- Or they are dependent on husbands who are not always ready or able to give them the fee.

Could you afford to give £6, (US\$12) a month? The cost of 4 cups of coffee? Or could all the members of your group make a 50p, (US\$1) donation each week when you meet? It would all help.

You can help Indian women to help themselves and other women by visiting www.justgiving.com/atmt

Regular donations by direct debit help us plan our work. For details see www.indiansisters.org or you can e-mail us at atmtrust@gmail.com Please state that your donation is for the Arya Tara Mahila Trust Ordination process. Thank you.

Women's Ordinations in India

We are pleased to announce the forthcoming ordinations of the following 15 women in India.

The women to be ordained are:-

[1] Rajani Barate - Pune, Dapodi [2] Anita Gaikwad - Pune, Dapodi [3] Kamal Gaikwad - Pune, Dapodi [4] Alka Manwatkar - Pune, Yerawada [5] Nalini Chabukswar - Pune, Yerawada [6] Vishakha Mane - Pune, Pimpri [7] Shaila Ilamkar - Aurangabad [8] Shushila Ingle - Aurangabad [9] Yashodhara Narvade - Aurangabad [10] Pratibha Shende - Amravati [11] Durga Devore - Amravati [12] Shalu Meshram - Wardha [13] Lata Patil - Nagpur [14] Indubai Shardul - Ghatkoper, Mumbai [15] Savita Gautam - Modinagar (Uttar Pradesh)

SADHU!

With Metta, Karunamaya



Tuesday, December 23, 2008

Sangharakshita's news: an update

Sangharakshita's diary last appeared in FWBO News in early October.

Dharmamati, his secretary, has sent us this update. He writes -

Bhante's health:

Bhante continues to be in quite good health since the last report. His eyesight has been stable and he is still able to read large print, with the aid of a illuminated magnifying glass. He is also able to draft his own correspondence by hand.



September:

The main event for September was Bhante's visit to Krakow, Poland, where he opened the small but beautiful Krakow Buddhist Centre. Nityabandhu and others had put much hard work into creating a very welcoming space for Buddhist activities. This was Bhante's second visit to Krakow.

His first took place six years ago, when he launched the publication of a Polish translation of 'The Survey'. Since then three more of his books have been translated into Polish and published. At the opening he cut the ribbon to the Shrine room. After everyone was seated Nityabandhu led a short meditation followed by an introduction. Bhante followed this with a short talk on 'Sanghaloka' the name Nityabandhu had given the centre. This was followed by the dedication ceremony led in Polish by Nityabandhu.

The opening ceremony concluded with a fanfare from a trumpeteer. This was inspired by the golden trumpet that resounds, every hour, from the municipal tower above Krakow's central square, originally signalling the approach of enemy forces. This was followed by light refreshments in the reception area.

October:

In October Bhante spent 12 days at Padmaloka, leading study for the Men Mitra Convenors, on his 1975 lecture 'Enlightenment as Experience - and as Non-Experience'. He also performed a Kalyana Mitra ceremony for Nityabandhu in the shrine room. Nityabandhu's Kalyana Mitra's are Satyaraja and Paramabandhu.



November:

On Sunday the 9th of November Bhante took part in the 30th anniversary celebrations of the London Buddhist Centre. In the morning he cut the ribbon, marking the Sunday opening of Friends Organic. The afternoon started in the main shrine room of the LBC where Maitreyabandhu publicly interviewed Bhante on his recollections of the early days of the LBC (this interview was filmed by clear vision). After this Bhante proceeded to unveil the

"magnificent" painting by Aloka in the new basement shrine room.

This painting is a triptych depicting the Buddha Shakyamuni with his two chief disciples in the central panel, flanked by the Bodhisattvas and the Arahants in the left and right hand panels respectively. Bhante spoke briefly about this painting.

A few days later Amitasuri came to interview Bhante at Madhyamaloka on the importance of the FWBO's land at Bodhgaya. He spoke about his own experience of Bodhgaya, why he wanted the FWBO/TBMSG to purchase some land there and the use that he thought this land should be put to. This was significant given that Bodhgaya is the location of the next International Order Convention.

During the above period Bhante continued to see individuals virtually every day both at Madhyamaloka and wherever he travelled. He also worked on the 'Precious Garland Seminar' with Samacitta and completed study on the Parayana Vagga of the Sutta-Nipata with a local Men's chapter. The Precious Garland is due to be released by Windhorse in 2009.

December:

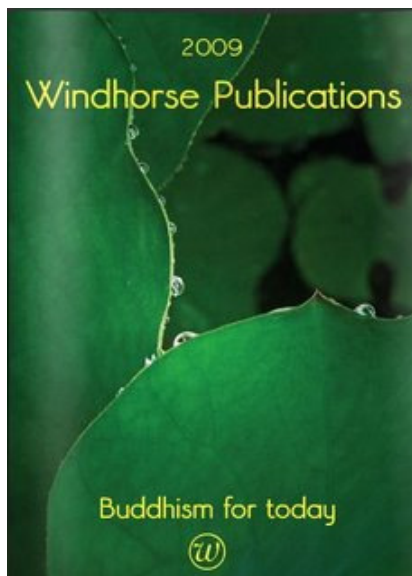
For the rest of November and December Bhante will be staying at Madhyamaloka and does not intend to do any travelling. He will, however, continue to meet people individually, do editing work on the 'Precious Garland Seminar' and, weather permitting, go for his daily walk in the large Madhyamaloka garden.

The next planned visit will be to the European Chairs Assembly at Taraloka in January, where he will give a talk and a question and answer session. In 2009 he'll be making a tour of a number of FWBO Centres to launch 'The Essential Sangharakshita' - a handsome 750-page compendium of his writings now available for advance orders from Windhorse Publications. FWBO News hopes to carry a review of this very soon.

Dharmamati

Monday, December 22, 2008

Windhorse Publications releases 2009 catalogue



Windhorse Publications, the FWBO's main publisher, have released their 2009 catalogue – and very handsome it is!

There's lots on Buddhist practice, for instance Paramananda's pocket guide to meditation focusing on '**The Body**' – the third book in Windhorse's best-selling series, which includes 'The Heart' and 'the Breath', both by Vessantara.

There's a new edition of Transforming Self and World, Sangharakshita's guide to the Sutra of Golden Light, and new edition of the Dhammapada.

Windhorse don't simply publish books – there's a growing collection of **multi-media introductions to meditation**.

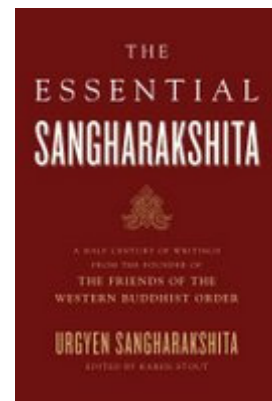
To be released are 'Life with Full Attention', an 8-week course on mindfulness by Maitreyabandhu; which will accompany the FWBO's first **International Urban Retreat** in June 2009, and Nagapriya's second book 'Visions of Mahayana Buddhism', which looks set to be as popular as his '**Exploring Karma and Rebirth**'.

Sangharakshita's 'Living Ethically – Advice from Nagarjuna's Precious Garland', also due for release during 2009, will join his existing books '[Living with Awareness](#)' and '[Living with Kindness](#)'.



The catalogue is available on-line or to download from Windhorse's very handsome new blog, which you'll find at windhorsepublications.blogspot.com.

They are also taking advance orders for 'The Essential Sangharakshita', just published by Wisdom. This eagerly awaited selection of Sangharakshita's writings, edited by Vidyadevi, is available for pre-order now through Windhorse Publications for the bargain price of £16.99.



Due for release in January 2009, The Essential Sangharakshita is the culmination of over fifty years of one man's study, practice, and personal experience of Buddhism.

Sunday, December 21, 2008

FWBO Websites VI: Red Noses Unlimited

Red Noses Unlimited (www.rednoses-unlimited.co.uk) is this week's featured FWBO website.



Created and run by Jayacitta, an Order Member living in East London, it invites one and all to enter the world of the clown. And there is, perhaps, more to clowns and clowning than meets the eye. As she says -

"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."

More seriously (if one can use the word in such a context!), Red Noses offer professional training in team-work, communication skills, leadership, public presentation, listening & engagement. Jayacitta's a regular trainer on street-fundraising appeals for the Karuna Trust – she's found clown training helps people working or living together to meet in deeper understanding and with more empathy for each other, therefore to create a deeper trust and a stronger sense of community and co-operation between them.

Red Noses have also appeared in Scotland – FWBO News reported in September on what was probably the first ever '[Clowning and Insight' retreat](#), held at the FWBO's [Dhanakosa retreat centre](#).

Red Noses Unlimited emerged after Jayacitta trained in physical theatre at KIKLOS SCUOLA INTERNAZIONALE DI CREAZIONE TEATRALE in Padova, Italy. And according to Giovanni Fusetti, director and main teacher at KIKLOS, part of the training – in fact the final point and highest art – is the development of one's own Clown, the "poetic transposition of the unique silliness of the actor".

Discover and enjoy...!

Friday, December 19, 2008

1000 meditators in India, fundraising for NNBY



Last Friday and Saturday nights saw the full moon appearing at its biggest and brightest for 15 years, according to [astronomers](#).

It also saw over 1,000 people in India meditating – many all night – as a fundraiser for NNBY, the ‘National Network of Buddhist Youth’ created by members of the Order some three years ago. They were joined by many others around the world, in the UK, France, the US, Mexico, Australia, and elsewhere, where meditators met singly or in groups for a night of practice.



Well over UK £1,000 was raised (figures are still coming in, especially from India and the US), and the reports from India sounded almost ecstatic the morning after – “we did it!”. According to reports from Kumarajiv, one of the founder members of NNBY, the event seems to have been something of a collective milestone, a significant step forwards in their organising ability - and confidence in the power of collective practice!



Publicity for the event was almost entirely internet-based, with word being spread via [Facebook](#) and ‘Orkut’ (a Google-based social networking site much used by NNBY members). This hiccupped when Facebook deleted the ‘FWBO Buddhists’ profile and the associated event – it was revived but lost some momentum in the process!

As a result, NNBY are still fundraising for their annual budget – they receive no statutory funding of any sort, or from any FWBO institutions. Their three priorities for the year are -

1. Training Buddhist youth as leaders
2. Supporting their leaders to teach and organize
3. Sponsoring the NNBY National Annual Conference

The next [NNBY annual conference](#) begins very soon – on December 25th at TBMSG’s Bor Dharan retreat centre outside Nagpur. As in previous years, some 500 youth are expected to attend.

Contributions from readers of FWBO/TBMSG News are still very welcome – and two separate internet donations sites are active, for readers in the [USA](#) (via the FWBO’s New York Centre) and [UK](#) (via Justgiving) respectively.

Wednesday, December 17, 2008

New painting unveiled at the LBC;



Sangharakshita interviewed

Readers of FWBO News will know the LBC recently suffered a major flood in its basement on the eve of its 30th anniversary.

Very shortly before that, they had welcomed Sangharakahita, who on November 8th had unveiled a new shrine painting by Aloka to celebrate the opening of Breathing Space, a third shrine room at the FWBO's London Buddhist Centre.

As part of the opening and unveiling ceremonies, Sangharakahita was interviewed by Maitreyabandhu about his time at the LBC, and a video of this and the unveiling itself can be found on the 'talks' section of the LBC website. The beautiful triptych painting of the Buddha, his immediate disciples, and the Arya Sangha, includes figures from the Refuge Tree of the Western Buddhist Order.

It is designed to be closable to allow the space to be used for MBCT courses as part of the LBC's new Breathing Space project. The photograph shows Aloka, the painter, at work in his studio in Norwich. A photo of the finished painting as installed in the LBC can be seen under the report for December 23rd.

Tuesday, December 16, 2008

Buddhism in Mongolia: the FWBO meets



Lamaism – and Christianity

Following yesterday's report on the new FWBO classes in Denmark, today we have news of another new Buddhist Centre linked to the FWBO, also started by a woman – this one in Mongolia!

The Centre is in Erdenet, some 300 kilometres from the capital city Ulaan Bataar, and was founded by a mitra, Oyuna Tgr, who still runs it. Oyuna contacted the FWBO via the West London Buddhist Centre.

Karunamaya, who recently visited en route to the biannual Sakyadhita International Buddhist women's conference (which happened to be held this year in Ulaan Bataar!), sends this report -

“Oyuna has done amazingly well to set up her small centre. When she returned from the UK, she bought a one-bedroom flat which she has converted and decorated into a Buddhist Centre, even down to the details of having dimmer switches for the lights.

“It costs something like 20 US dollars/month (I think) to keep the centre running. Often she pays this from her own money - my impression is that it's not always easy to fund oneself in Mongolia. Oyuna earns a living by tutoring students in Russian. But Russian is less in demand these days than English. So she has just started a one-year English course in Ulaan Bataar - this will cost her 500 US dollars for the year; it will also of course limit her ability to earn an income and to keep the Buddhist Centre going.

“She has nearly completed the Mongolian translation of “What is the Dharma?” by Sangharakshita, and hopes to publish it soon.

“Tarahrdaya (an Indian Dhammacharini travelling with me to the Sakyadhita conference) and I visited Erdenet twice, both times staying with Oyuna and her daughter. The two of us, with Oyuna's support and translation, offered a regular twice-daily programme of meditation instruction and small dharma talks/discussion; also on the second visit we held a day retreat.

“At the time of our arrival, the Buddhist group had shrunk to a very few people attending. The enthusiasm and impetus generated by Shuddhabha's visit last year had decreased. My impression was that if I or others visited again a public talk might help generate interest. In fact I recommended this to Mahananda who was due to visit in September. (He subsequently did this)”

The story continues with Oyuna's next visit, by Mahananda and his friends David and Joanna from the London Buddhist Centre.

David writes -



“We arrived with our wonderful host Oyuna who looked after us so well despite study and work commitments. We were assured that the talk on 'Buddhism in England' which we had agreed to give at Oyuna's request would be a small affair - maybe ten people. However, as the taxi took us past the town hall we gaped in disbelief at a twenty-foot high poster outlining our rosy cheeks with names transcribed into Mongolian. Oyuna had left the local Gelugpa monastery in charge of publicity and they had ramped the affair up by hiring the Palace of Culture! The next day we were whisked to a TV studio for a half-hour live interview. We came on in-between re-runs of Nu Pagadzi - Joanna's favourite Soviet era cartoon! We ended up giving a talk in a University as well and Mahananda kept everyone amused leading some idiosyncratic stretching exercises and simple meditation”.

Karunamaya concludes –



“There's a long history of Mongolian society and Buddhism. In 1921 the Russians helped the Mongolians free the country from Chinese occupation. Around that time it became the Mongolian People's Republic. In the 1930s Stalin told the Mongolians that they had two masters, Buddhism and communism. He said that until they only had one master it would never truly be a Communist state. Subsequently, the Mongolians themselves destroyed Buddhism. Monasteries were ransacked, monks/nuns were disrobed, forced to marry or killed. Buddhism was very much

equated with superstition. From what I can understand, there was some truth in this. The Buddhist monastic system did promote superstitious belief and was the source of some corruption and moral laxity.

“Currently, there is still some suspicion about Buddhism in areas that I mentioned above, superstition, that it's incompatible with modern science and immoral behaviour on the part of the monastics. Interestingly, on the Sakyadhita conference there was a talk entitled ‘Democratic changes and the conversion to Christianity’ by Narantuya Danzan, exploring a lot of the background and suggesting reasons why some modern Mongols have become Christians. It’s posted on the Web [here](#).

We are exploring the possibility of setting up a Translation Fund to help with the publication of basic Dharma materials in Mongolian – and of course other languages. Please [contact FWBO News](#) if you are interested.

Monday, December 15, 2008

FWBO classes in Denmark



Advayasiddhi, one of the Order's only Danish members, has recently returned to Denmark and begun classes in Copenhagen. She's running what looks like a pretty full programme of meditation and Dharma classes.

To advertise these she, and members of the small Danish Sangha, have created the FWBO's first Danish website -

www.buddhistmeditation.dk

This gives full details of the classes, short introductions to the Mindfulness of Breathing and Metta Bhavana (Development of Loving-Kindness) meditations, an interactive map for finding their small centre in the centre of Copenhagen, and finally their 'Dharma Calendar' at www.dharmakalender.dk, which she describes as " a common calendar for the Buddhist community in Denmark".

Advayasiddhi's classes in Denmark are in addition to the existing FWBO presence in neighbouring [Finland](#), [Norway](#), [Germany](#), [Estonia](#), and [Russia](#).

Sunday, December 14, 2008

FWBO Websites V: Buddhist Pictures

This week's featured website on FWBO News is Buddhist Pictures, www.buddhist-pics.com. It's the showcase for artwork created by Visuddhimati, Chairwoman of the FWBO's North London Buddhist Centre.

The site includes several collections of beautiful and evocative female Buddhist figures – [Tara](#), the ‘[Prajnas](#)’ (the consorts of the Five-Buddha Mandala); [Mamaki](#); [Dakinis](#); and [Prajnaparamita](#).

There's finished work and work-in-progress - which Visuddhimati calls ‘Buddha Jottings’. Among these is the enigmatic African Tara, drawn in



1999, of which she writes “the idea for an African Tara hinted at in the above sketch has yet to work its way into a more developed painting...”

Alongside Visuddhimati’s Buddhist images there’s more personal work – the ‘Bestiary’ and ‘Handmade Books’. Of these she writes “To fully appreciate these works the viewer needs to hold them and carefully turn the pages of the exquisite papers. What lies within is gradually revealed. That may include carefully constructed sculptural elements. The time it takes to discover the contents is part of the experience of the work, as is touching and enjoying the texture of each page. There is an inherent contradiction in engaging with this work in glimpsing it on your computer screen!”

Finally, there’s links to a Commissions page and places to buy or download her work – ClearVision have a special page for this at www.clear-vision.org/Pictures/Visuddhimati.aspx

Saturday, December 13, 2008

FWBO People II: Aniruddha



This week’s profile in our new series of ‘FWBO People’ features Aniruddha, an Indian Order Member working in the field of **NVC** (Non-Violent Communication).

His professional training in this and other areas has allowed him to make a crucial contribution to TBMSG’s work in India, especially in the areas of ‘capacity building’ and change management. He’s now moving away from this training work to focus on his NVC work – and we’re delighted to be able to celebrate him as he makes this move.

Aniruddha’s website is called ‘Connect to Life, you’ll find it at www.connect-2-life.com.

His final report, detailing some of the successes (and challenges) in his work with TBMSG and other movement trusts can be found on FWBO Features [here](#). The report focuses especially on what he calls ‘Social Change through Mind Change’, an area where Buddhism and NVC find themselves in especial harmony, able to offer something of great value to the world. He leaves behind a well-established ‘Capacity-Building Team’ to take his work with TBMSG forwards. The team is called ‘Sekho’, a Pali term meaning “One who facilitates learning”.

Coming next for Aniruddha is a major seminar in January up in the Himalayan foothills at Rishikesh. It’s for a wide spectrum of Indian NGOs and will explore ‘NVC and Social Change’. The [conference flyer](#) is also on FWBO Features, more details are on the [NVC India website](#), also run by Aniruddha.

Aniruddha is especially keen to be able to offer bursaries to workers for grassroots and less-well-off NGOs, and we’ve set up a donations page to assist in this. He writes –

“I was going to make this request to you some time back but was feeling bit hesitant, may be now I have the courage to do so, as you might be aware that we are inviting NGO’s working for social change from all over india for this seminar at Rishikesh. There will be some NGO’s who cannot afford to pay the seminar fees which is around £30 GBP for 5 days, I would really like to see these NGO’s coming and benefiting from this conference; if you could help me do that, that will be such a great support for me, so that I can put more of my energy in making this conference a success..

£30 will allow someone to attend this conference, which, as Aniruddha says, may bring “about extraordinary transformation in thinking, speaking and acting around the world” If you’d like to donate please visit www.justgiving.com/aniruddha

We wish Aniruddha all the best in his future plans and work.

Thursday, December 11, 2008

Inspiring Young People with the Dharma

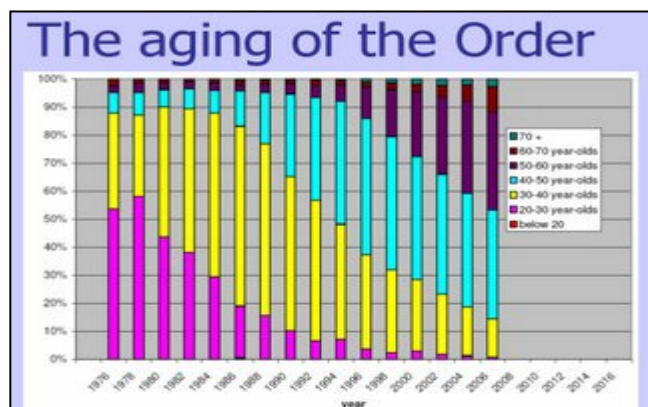


November saw a weekend gathering of 24 people from a range of FWBO Centres in the UK and beyond. They had met in Birmingham UK to explore the topic “How can we Inspire more Young People with the Dharma?”.

The meeting had been called because of what can only be described as the aging of the Order.

As the chart below makes clear, in the 1970s, when the Order was first founded, over half its members were in their 20s (the purple bars to the left of the chart). Although the Order has grown enormously over the intervening 40 years, both 20- and 30-year-old Order Members are now largely extinct! (30-year-olds being represented by the yellow bars)

If we follow a trend of 'like-attracts-like' it's hard to see how the FWBO (as a Sangha) will do other than grow older and older – and older. Hence this weekend. Interestingly, despite Buddhism's positive reputation, this seems to be a problem across the whole Buddhist world, not just with us - the **NBO** (<http://nbo.org.uk>, the UK's main inter-Buddhist forum) is dedicating it's next AGM conference to the same theme.



Over the course of the weekend the participants – who ranged in age from 17-60 - generated a rich collection of ideas for how we might move forwards.

A summary is available on **FWBO Resources**; they're summarised in the mindmap...

Two talks from the weekend are available on the Community section of **Free Buddhist Audio** – one actually being three short talks, two highly autobiographical.

Lindsay's, the third, was especially clear and practical, giving a three-point plan for how FWBO Centres could inspire more young people with the Dharma. She is currently living and working at Taraloka Retreat Centre. Her's is available [here](#).

Also, Munisha used the opportunity to conduct video interviews with many of the younger people present, they were asked to answer in just one or two minutes one or another of the most popular (and tricky!) questions that Buddhists get asked again and again. They're available on ClearVision's excellent '[VideoSangha](#)' site.

A **Facebook group** 'Young People in the FWBO' has been created, for any and all younger people who are Buddhists or are exploring Buddhism in the FWBO (Friends of the Western Buddhist Order). It's a forum to get to know each other, discuss ideas and advertise events and retreats.

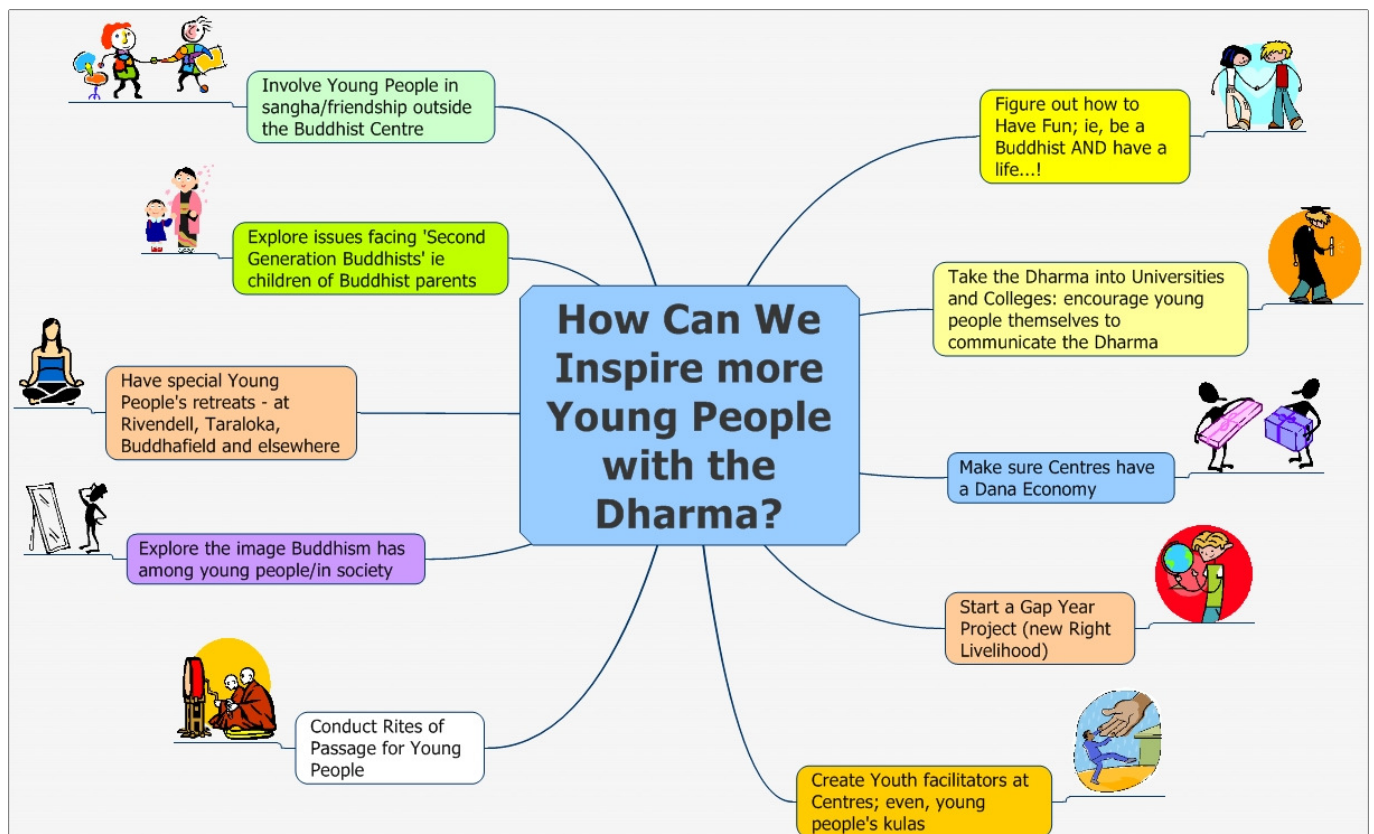
What comes next? There's no current plans for any big 'central' initiatives, we'd welcome comments and ideas – just leave a comment here or write to FWBO News.

Postscript:

Other Western Buddhist groups are also looking at ways to involve more young people:

- * Shambhala have a special website www.youth.shambhala.info, an annual Buddhist Youth Festival (focussing on the three themes of Discussion, Art, and Socialising); plus a 'Vajra Dawn' study programme for youth.
- * Plum Village have a youth project called "Wake Up", subtitled "Young Buddhists and non-Buddhists for a Healthy and Compassionate Society" – see www.wkup.org.
- * Soka Gakkai are reported to have a thriving youth wing but we have no information on it.
- * In Germany there's a BuddhaTeens website, in German - see www.buddhateens.de
- * In Australia there's a Tibetan initiative "Loving Kindness Peaceful Youth" (LKPYP) at www.lkpy.org
- * Books about/by/for Buddhist Youth have been published, especially 'Blue Jean Buddha', 'Buddha's Apprentices', and 'Dharma Punk'.

And - as mentioned several times on FWBO News - TBMSG in India have created the very successful NNBY, the National Network of Buddhist Youth – see www.justgiving.com/indianbuddhistyouth or their website www.nnby.org.



Wednesday, December 10, 2008

First retreat for NNBY Youth in Delhi



Maitriveer Nagarjun, a young India Order Member studying at the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi, has sent us this report of NNBY's first big retreat in the Indian capital. NNBY is India's National Network of Buddhist Youth, started a couple of years ago by Order Members from TBMSG's Dhammakranti 'outreach' project.

Maitriveer writes –

“For the first time, in the capital of the country – Delhi, we organised a gathering of the youth for four days. It was an energetic and inspired retreat, organised successfully by the National Network of

Buddhist Youth (NNBY) and **Dhammachakra Buddhist Centre** (<http://dhammachakra.livejournal.com>); our newly opened TBMSG Centre in Delhi.

Approximately 120 Youths attended, coming from eight different states in North India (Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and even Ladakh). The Theme for the event was ‘Ambedkar and Buddhism for the Youth’, we met in the Ladakh Buddhist Monastery.

“Even though people came from all over North India and were from different regions, cultures and Castes, they were able to form a common vision for the Casteless society based on the teaching of the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and the Buddha.

“The goal of the event was to infuse a new confidence and energy among the youths present; to make them sensitive to the spiritual life and to encourage them in their careers for the betterment of the fractured Indian society based on Caste. Most of the youths were from the so-called ‘Untouchable community’, so trying to understand the relevance of Buddhism in modern society in the light of Dr. Ambedkar's Buddhist vision is of vital importance to them.

“NNBY and Dhammachakra Buddhist Centre is thankful for the Lama Londang Damchoe, Secretary of the Ladakh Buddhist Vihara, to the NNBY Nagpur team and the core team of the Prabuddha Bharat Vichar Manch, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

“With Maitri, Maitriveer Nagarjun”

NNBY is currently appealing for funds for their 2009 budget. They have created an **on-line fundraising page** introducing themselves, and are holding a world-wide sponsored meditation this coming Saturday night, the Full-Moon.

Over 500 people are expected to take part in India, plus others in 7 countries.

Please see their special fundraising page at **www.justgiving.com/fullmoonmeditation** - all readers of FWBO News are invited to join us or to contribute! For the benefit of American readers, the FWBO's New York Sangha have created a dollar-based donations page at **www.fwbo-nyc.org/byindia.php**

Tuesday, December 09, 2008

Where have all your savings gone - and where could they go?

This week's Economist magazine carries the headline "Where have all your savings gone?" If any UK or European readers of FWBO News are wondering the same, they might like to consider joining the '[Dana Partnership](#)' the FWBO has had for many years now with the [Triodos Bank](#), www.triodos.co.uk.



Triodos describe themselves as "the UK's most actively ethical bank", and FWBO members in the UK have over three-quarters of a million pounds deposited with them. They pride themselves on their transparency, and it's a delight to read their annual reports - which largely feature project after project in fields as diverse as nature, the environment, culture, social business, the arts, housing, and much more.

You can see their current list of borrowers at [www.triodos.co.uk/uk/who we finance](http://www.triodos.co.uk/uk/who_we_finance). They have for many years been the lender of choice for new FWBO projects, financing many of the FWBO's communities and Right Livelihood businesses.



Triodos has been conducting research among members of the UK public, asking how the recent banking crises have affected their relationship with their money. They report: "Following the Northern Rock crisis, 61% of those interviewed who have a banking product, said that they now wanted to know more about how their bank invests their money".

Triodos have recently launched a new range of [savings accounts](#) - and there's a free copy of the popular 'Go Slow England' book on offer to new customers. If you'd like to know where your savings are going, try looking into Triodos...! When you join there's an option to donate some of the interest payable to one or another charity - including the FWBO.

Although small compared to the high street giants, Triodos are a fully-fledged bank, describing themselves as "a fully independent bank and a pioneer of sustainable and transparent banking". They say "Our mission is to make money work for positive social, environmental and cultural change. For Triodos Bank, banking has always been a matter of trust, transparency and a long-term relationship with our savers and borrowers..."

Anyone interested to read more around the mysterious topic of money is invited to read the fascinating '[Mindfulness and Money](#)', written by two Order Members, Kulananda and Mahaprabha. Kulananda founded Windhorse Trading, the FWBO's largest and most successful Right Livelihood business, and is now an honorary research fellow at Bangor University, where he teaches a module on [Buddhist Psychology](#), while Mahaprabha lectures in Strategic and International Management at Britain's prestigious [London Business School](#).



Monday, December 08, 2008

What Buddhists do at Christmas - on the BBC

Dharmacharinis Munisha and Vajramudita, Vajramudita's family and the FWBO's [Manchester Buddhist Centre](#) all appeared on BBC1

TV last Sunday morning (7th December).

Their short series 'Christmas Voices' is taking a very short look each week at how people of other faiths celebrate Christmas. This week it was the Buddhists' turn.

Munisha says: "The interviewers asked me what Buddhists think about Jesus. I was sorry they didn't use the bit where I said most Buddhists worldwide have probably never heard of him! But it was very good that they featured Manchester's [Chinese Buddhist temple](#) as well as us. After all, minority ethnic groups account for about 60% of UK Buddhists but are very marginalised. (In case you wonder, the Chinese Buddhists were invited to be interviewed but none was willing.)"

Sunday, December 07, 2008

FWBO Websites IV: the Sanctuary of Prajnaparamita

This week's featured website was created by Sagaravajra, an Order Member from Bristol UK. It is dedicated to Prajna-Paramita, a beautiful female Buddha figure embodying the qualities of the Perfection of Wisdom.

More specifically, his site is devoted to the 'Sanctuary' he has created to her.

He writes -

"The Prajnaparamita sanctuary is the culmination of a personal spiritual odyssey. On my ordination into the Western Buddhist Order I received a visualisation practice of Prajnaparamita, who embodies the qualities of the Perfection of Wisdom.



"Basing my own work on a stunning Javanese rendition of her, I began working on a sculptural representation as part of my own exploration. After completing the figure, I felt the need to come into closer relation to her essence, and I was fortunate enough to be involved in founding a small contemplative community nestled in a limestone valley in Spain, the Guhyaloka vihara.

"Realising the importance of the surrounding context of the sculpture, I became interested in the idea of sacred space, and the possibility of creating a sanctuary or landscape for the sculpture to inhabit".

His dream came true, and the Sanctuary appeared, located in a remote woodland in the Blackdown Hills in Devon. The website covers the story of his relationship with the figure, the labyrinth and mandala being created around the central shrine, the sculptures adorning the surrounding land, and a little more about Sagaravajra himself. It's no substitute for the real thing, of course – but if you're not fortunate enough to be passing Devon, it may serve as a taster... As Sagaravajra writes -

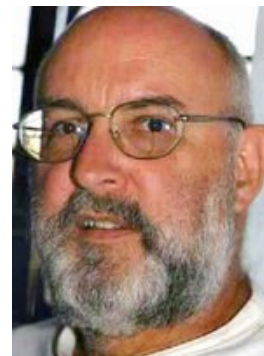
"On entering this fertile landscape populated with springs, ferns, owls, deer and archetypal sculptures, one steps into a realm of heightened significance, of metaphor and imagination".

You'll find the Sanctuary on-line at www.geocities.com/perfection_of_wisdom_sanctuary.

Saturday, December 06, 2008

FWBO People I: Dayamati - a 'Clearness Process' in Albuquerque

This is the first in a new series on FWBO News: every Saturday starting now we hope to feature a profile of one or another of the many wonderful and diverse people who make up the Buddhist 'Sangha', or community, of the FWBO and Western Buddhist Order. There's over 1,600 members of the Western Buddhist Order, so it may take us some time to get through them all - especially as it's growing all the time!



We start with Dayamati, an Order Member from Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA. He's perhaps best-known for his book, '[Land of No Buddha](#)' published by Windhorse Publications, the FWBO's publishing wing. Anyone familiar with the book will know him as "a sceptical Buddhist" (quoting here Windhorse's description of him on their website, where he is known by his secular name of Richard Hayes) – but one who nonetheless proposes the radical path of the Buddha to those seeking genuine wisdom, "not just slogans to stick on the bumpers of their cars".

His explorations have now led him to what is perhaps an unexpected place. He writes –

"Dear friends, earlier this month I formally became a member of the Albuquerque Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). The request for membership came after attending the meeting regularly for three years, and after about five years of experience attending Quaker meetings in Canada from 1968 through 1975.

"The step of being what is called a convinced Quaker involves a number of steps, including meeting with a committee of Quaker elders and discussing one's intentions. In my case I also consulted with my kalyanamitras in the FWBO and sought their opinion on whether being a Quaker was in their eyes in any way incompatible with being a dharmachari in the WBO. No objections were voiced by my kalyanamitras. On the Quaker side there was no objection to my being a Buddhist going for refuge in the WBO context and being a Quaker.

"Now that the step has been taken, I am feeling that making an announcement to the wider FWBO community is in order. I have written something about my motivations and experiences on my blog site, the address of which is under my signature below. I am curious what the range of opinion within the FWBO is on membership in more than one religious organization, especially when one of them does not have Buddhist roots.

"Something to bear in mind in my case is that I live about 1000 miles from the nearest FWBO chapter. Attending dharmachari chapter meetings regularly is out of the question. The closest thing I have found to a WBO chapter meeting is a Quaker meeting. The ways that Quakers make corporate decisions, and the way they meet for spiritual practice, is very similar to the way things are done in the (F)WBO. That said, I am sure I would attend Quaker meetings regularly even if there were a nearby chapter of the WBO..."

"Dayamati

Comments welcome! Dayamati's article is also available on the [Order page](#) of [FWBO Discussion](#) - a website full of thoughtful perspectives on the FWBO and its approach to the Dharma. Or check his blogs - <http://dayamati.home.comcast.net> and <http://dayamati.blogspot.com>.

Thursday, December 04, 2008

Buddhafiield New Zealand up and running, plans festival...



Akasadaka, an Order Member from the FWBO's Sudarshanaloka retreat centre, high in the Coromandel Mountains of New Zealand, writes to say -

“Buddhafiield is manifesting deep in the South Pacific in the land of the Kiwi.

Our mission is to build up a community of like-minded Dharma practitioners and create the first ever Buddhafiield Festival down under. It's going to be an organic process thing!

“We are currently based at Sudarshanaloka in the Coromandel Ranges. Every year we attend

Prana Festival so plan if you can to come, it's 5 days of good people, good food and good vibes.

“Recent News? Well, preparation for Prana is well under way, Jayaghosa has been working hard along with the help of Matt and Rosie. We have a full program of workshops planned, as well as Dharmamudra coming to lead Taiji. There'll be space for Dharmavaca (Dharma Discussion) in the evenings”.

He ends by saying “If you are coming do not forget to bring a costume for New Years Eve, theme is masquerade but don't let that stop you from going a bit mental...”

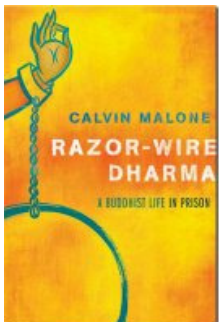
You can [contact Buddhafiield New Zealand](#) here - or find them on Facebook – go look for [Buddhafiield NZ](#).



The Buddhafiield ‘family’ now includes [Buddhafiield](#) itself; [Buddhafiield North](#), [Buddhafiield East](#), and more – on the web there's distant fond memories of a [Buddhafiield Ireland](#)... All share a love of Buddhist practice in the natural world; all delight in the magic that happens when like-minded people come together – and all are willing to put in the hard work it takes to make something happen out-of-doors...

Tuesday, December 02, 2008

Razor-Wire Dharma: in prison in America



Priyamitra, an Order Member from Spokane, Washington, USA, has written to FWBO News to say –

“One of the prisoners I've had the pleasure of practicing with for a number of years has just had a book published.

“Calvin Malone practiced for more than a dozen years with the "Gateless Sangha", a Buddhist practice group at Airway Heights Corrections Center, the largest prison in the Washington penitentiary system. Razor-Wire Dharma recounts Calvin's life in prison,

his turning to the Buddha-Dharma, and ways that his life, and the lives of those around him, have changed through his going for refuge to the Three Jewels.

“Each chapter tells of an event common to life in prison life; each illustrates how his practice has been challenged and grown through living out the Buddha's teaching. These are very personal tales he tells, full of real suffering, real people, and real transformation.

“Until this past June Calvin was a cornerstone of the Gateless Sangha. He was then transferred to another prison, initially leaving the Sangha somewhat at a loss - over the years he had encouraged, guided, coaxed, and supported a huge number of inmates as they struggled to find some peace in the hell-realm that prison can seem.

“Prison is a fearful place. Shakyamuni's exclamation that 'Friendship is the whole of the spiritual life' rings true in Razor-Wire Dharma. Calvin learned the power of friendship from his teachers, one of whom was Aryadaka – another Order Member, who died five years ago. My entry into prison Dharma teaching was similarly through a friendship with Aryadaka.

“Both Calvin and Aryadaka have gone; I'm left to practice with the Gateless Sangha in their absence, and every week I practice with them I experience this friendship with my razor-wire Dharma brothers. As the Gateless Sangha continues without Calvin, its members are finding that they are able to pass on to newcomers the guidance and friendship that they received from him”.

Razor-Wire Dharma has just been released by Wisdom Publications.

Monday, December 01, 2008

TBMSG in Japan: presenting Indian Buddhist Youth work



Five members of TBMSG, the FWBO's Indian wing, are just back (in India) from attending the annual World Fellowship of Buddhist Youth conference, which this year was held in Japan. This is a major step onto the international Buddhist

stage for them, and Yashosagar, one of the delegates and chairman of TBMSG, has sent us this report –

“The 24th General Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists (**WFB**) and the 15th General Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhist Youth (WFBY) was devoted to the subject of “The Buddhist Contribution to Resolving Social Problems”; it was held from 14th to 17th November 2008 at the Asakusa View hotel, in Asakusa Japan.

“370 people from all over the world attended the conference of WFB and WFBY (WFBY is the youth section of the WFB). Nearly twelve countries' regional centers were present.

“The WFBY’s purpose is to promote and strengthen understanding and practice of the teaching of the Lord Buddha among youth and increase respect and piety towards the Triple Gem, our parents, elders and to each other. It aims to promote unite, solidarity and networking among young Buddhists around the world.

“TBMSG is one of the Regional Centres of WFB and WFBY in India, and Priyadarshi and I made a special presentation of our work and especially our youth work. We presented Dr. Ambedkar’s contribution to Buddhism and also what we are doing in India, our activities in India, particularly the new situation which is arising in India for the growth of Buddhism. We were able to show the great influence of our work is having in India on people’s minds. People felt very happy to see our slideshow, the living Buddhism in India.

After the presentation were Symposiums – Dhammamitra Mangesh Dahiwalé was also invited to speak on ‘Buddhism Past Present and Future’, particularly on the youth’s situation. One of the panelists from Japan expressed his concern over the isolation of youths in Japan from Buddhism. He expressed the need for youth’s participation in Buddhism and the social action.

“Interaction with many people from the different parts of the world is the most important part of this conference in our view. To share with each other what we are doing and what we can do together. Actually it was a great occasion to meet many Buddhist people throughout the world - making contact with them gives you an idea of their situation and work they do.



“Later on a Prayer and Procession for world peace was arranged; all 370 of us silently walked to **Senso-ji Temple** where we held peace prayers and then a Traditional Tea Ceremony. All the people were served the green Japanese tea by the Japanese Sisters in their traditional dresses.

“The WFBY youth conference concluded by organizing a two year action

plan. We in India are having a special youth program in January 2009 - Dr. Ong See Yew, the new Vice-President of WFBY, is coming with Young Buddhists from Malaysia to our centre in India (Bhaja, Pune) to do workshops on youth leadership. Most likely youths from other WFBY regional centres like Nepal, Sri-Lanka and Bangladesh will also take part in this program.

We are currently **fundraising for this** and other youth work in India, please do contribute if you wish to assist us – just visit **www.justgiving.com/indianbuddhistyouth** .

“Now we are looking forward to our Youth leadership development program in January 2009. The connection we make during the conference help us to be in touch with each other and share what we do and cooperate with each other to help the youth from the world and youth from India.

“Yours in the Dhamma, Yashosagar

Sunday, November 30, 2008

FWBO Websites III: Buddhist Images



No 3 in our weekly series showcasing websites created by members of the Western Buddhist Order features [Buddhist Images](http://www.buddhistimages.co.uk) - www.buddhistimages.co.uk

Buddhist Images is an on-line shop run by Dhiramati, an Order Member from Manchester UK – but a regular traveller to Nepal where he buys his fine quality Buddhist statues (rupas), Buddhist paintings (thangkas) and Buddhist ritual items of all sorts.

Dhiramati takes particular pride in his relationships with the local craftspeople and their families - most of whom run fairly small scale family operations that have been handed down generation to generation.

On the website (besides the shopping opportunity it affords!) there's a video showing how the thangka paintings are made; and step-by-step guides to the making of the metal or wooden statues (rupas) – the raw copper being poured into clay moulds, and then worked on until the figure is finally painted carefully by hand; the wood slowly moving through stages from tree trunk to Buddha....

Due to the close relationship with the artisans themselves, Dhiramati is able to say “If you don't see what you are looking for please contact us on dhiramati@buddhistimages.co.uk and we can advise - we have many happy customers who have used us to source something special or have something made to order.”

The photograph shows some of Dhiramati's stock on display at an Order Convention.

Saturday, November 29, 2008

Events in Mumbai: reflections by Vishvapani

Events in Mumbai have dominated international headlines this week. In India, Buddhists are in a tiny minority compared to the Hindus and Muslims. But what might their say, following such an outrage?

Readers of FWBO/TBMSG News may be interested in Order Member Vishvapani's calm reflections, broadcast on the UK's Radio Four “[Thought for the Day](#)”, to an audience of many millions. You can [listen](#) to, or [read](#) his words on the BBC website.

He concludes - “Compassion requires the courage to face suffering steadily with an open, kindly heart. That brings understanding, and that rouses us to action. The intended product of terrorism, by contrast, is 'terror'. Declaring a 'war' on that terror won't show the way out of cycles of violence and reprisal. We can only find a path beyond terror by facing it directly.”

To all afflicted by suffering we would add, in the words of Shantideva –

*“May all sentient beings possess happiness
And the causes of happiness;
May they be separated from suffering,
And the causes of suffering;*

*May they never be separated
From the happiness that knows no suffering;
May they abide in equanimity,
Free from attachment and aversion”.*

Friday, November 28, 2008

Thanksgiving Appeal for a 'caste-free generation'



Ann Dennehy, a mitra from the FWBO's San Francisco center, is launching an appeal for Jai Bhim International. All readers of FWBO News are invited to respond. She says -

"Dear Buddhist Friends - I would like to tell you about a project I have been working on for the past few months. It is a non-profit I have created, Jai Bhim International, registered in the US, to support the social justice work of Dalit (ex-untouchable) Buddhist youth in India. There is detailed information about this community, and about the caste system as an urgent human rights issue, on our website:

www.jaibhiminternational.org.

"The Dalits, considered "untouchable" in the Hindu caste system (now officially called "ex-untouchable" but still considered low-caste in practice) have faced oppression in India for centuries. Things have been slowly changing for the past 50 years, thanks to the work and inspiration of the great Human Rights Leader Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, the chief architect of Independent India's constitution. Our organization is named in his honor. JAI BHIM, means "Long live Bhim/Dr. Ambedkar", and is a common greeting between Dalit Indians. Dr. Ambedkar converted to Buddhism 52 years ago in October, as a way of stepping out of the oppressive caste system. His conversion, or "diksha", set off a mass conversion movement which continues to this day, and which has been supported by Bhante Sangharakshita.

"In the past year I have been to India twice, and will return in December for a month to work on JBI projects. I have been so inspired by the Dalit students I have met, their open-heartedness, their creativity, their motivation, and their commitment to justice for their community. It is because of them that I have created our non-profit, in order to encourage and support the projects they are creating themselves. In December we will be providing scholarships for 20 students to attend a national youth conference in Bor Dharan, central India. I will also be leading a teacher training workshop in the city of Nagpur for Indian English teachers, which is the beginning of a long-term ESL teacher mentoring project.

"Sadly, I have just received an email from our Board Member in India saying that recently university students from a Dalit background have been violently attacked in cities across India, and that their communities have been prevented by the police from peacefully protesting. There is more on our blog: <http://jaibhim.livejournal.org>. This news makes the work I am doing in India feel all the more urgent and important, and is a reminder of how caste oppression is a serious, and overlooked, human rights issue.

"I am appealing for your support of our projects. We are currently accepting donations on our [website](#), and your donation of \$25 will allow a Dalit student to travel across India and be on retreat at the upcoming National Buddhist Youth conference in Bor Dharan in December. Please consider sponsoring a young member of our sangha in this way, investing in the next generation of Buddhists, a caste-free generation.

"It is the Thanksgiving holiday here in the U.S., and this Thanksgiving I am reflecting on how thankful I am for Buddhism and for all of you in the sangha, bringing the dharma out into the world.

"Happy Thanksgiving to you, wherever you might be.

"Jai Bhim , Ann Dennehy,

Creative Director Jai Bhim International San Francisco Buddhist Center

Thursday, November 27, 2008

Abhayaratna Trust - relieving hardship in the Western Buddhist Order



The Abhayaratna Trust is a new and rather different FWBO charity. Instead of focussing on spreading the Dharma, its objects are “To relieve financial hardship among members of the Western Buddhist Order, particularly in the face of sickness, old age or disability”.

They say –

“The scope of this new Charity is to help members of our Order who find themselves in hardship due to poverty, particularly in old age, sickness or disability. The need may be particularly acute for those who have worked for a large part of their lives to bring the Dharma to others, either directly or indirectly, through the structures of the F/WBO, living on incomes which have not allowed for savings or pension.

“The vision is of Order Members helping each other through the transitions of life, in sickness and old age, eventually preparing for death supported by their friends in the Sangha.

“Donations to the Abhayaratna Trust will go directly towards helping individual Order Members in need, or to support relevant new projects or research. Through grants we hope to bring ease to the lives of Order Members in need, helping them to continue leading an active spiritual life within the Sangha for as long as they want to. Help might be given with cost of mobility aids or attendance on retreats, for items of practical or spiritual benefit – where other funding bodies are unable to help. We hope the providing of grants towards projects or research might encourage the initiation of projects of benefit to Order Members in need such as a Buddhist hospice or specially adapted community facilities”.

Sadhu Abhayaratna!

And they’ve just been granted Charitable status! They are delighted as this opens the door for them to receive donations, whether one-off, regular, or in someone’s Will. If you are interested in contributing, contact details are available here: www.fwbo-news.org/resources/Abhayaratna_launch_08n.pdf.

They hope to make the first of many annual Disbursements towards the end of 2009.

The photograph shows the Abhayaratna Trust’s Founding Trustees:- Dayanandi (Chair), Jnanamitra (Secretary), Shantiprabha (Treasurer), Cittapala, Dharmottara, and Padmadhara (absent).

Wednesday, November 26, 2008

Jumbo Retreat in India – report and photos



Ashvajit was in India from late September to early November this year. The visit began to take shape when Amitayus asked him, at the Indian Order Convention early this year, if he would lead a ‘Jumbo’ retreat in Amaravati, a town in the Vidarbha area of central India.

Knowing that there were a considerable number of Order members in the area who would be keen to help, and following the age-old Buddhist tradition of accepting all invitations to teach the Dharma, Ashvajit said yes, he would. Thus began eight months of preparation involving more or less continuous communication with Amitayus and quite

a few other Order members both Eastern and Western.

One of the first tasks was to raise funds, and so, with a few hints from Lokabandhu, a [JustGiving Appeal](#) was set up on the Web under the auspices of [FWBO Dhammaloka](#), and an email sent to all non-Indian Order Members inviting them to take a look at it. Within a few days, funds started pouring in. It was a very heartening experience to witness such generosity, but there was a long way to go.

And then one day a donation came in for £3,000 from a donor who wished to remain anonymous! Ashvajit wondered for a moment if he was dreaming, but no, it was real. Such generosity was deeply affirming, and from that point on, all involved in the preparation for the Jumbo Retreat shared an even greater sense of enthusiasm and possibilities than that with which they’d begun.

Once in India, in early September, Ashvajit began a whistle-stop tour around Vidarbha. Each day for about 14 days leading up to the Jumbo retreat he and his team travelled to one or another outlying place, giving about 20 public talks, including one to a crowd of 100,000 people in Chandrapur, and many much smaller ones – which, he says, he preferred.

Then came the Jumbo Retreat itself, which 1,200 people attended. It was held under canvas in pleasant countryside outside Amaravati and very well-organised by the team of local Order members. Mornings saw double meditations, which, Ashvajit said, went deep considering the number of people present, followed by a Dhamma talk, translated of course. This was followed by study groups which were very much appreciated, and question-and-answer sessions in the afternoon. These proved especially popular, the answers often attracting applause.

The pre-retreat tour had managed to attract hundreds of people who were experiencing the Dharma for the first time, and at the end of the retreat some of them were weeping, they had enjoyed themselves so much.

Ashvajit commented afterwards he felt that he’d gained quite as much from the tour and retreat as he had given, and expressed his deep gratitude to the Amaravati Order members and to all those in the West who had contributed so generously and made the whole thing possible.

Photos of the event and some of the tours are available on [Flickr](#) and [Picasa](#).

In early March there’s the 7th International Dhammakranti retreat; this will be held at Buddhagaya from 1st March evening to 6th March evening 2009, straight after the International Order Convention. They too are seeking sponsors – please see their [website](#) for more details.

Tuesday, November 25, 2008

First FWBO retreat in Ontario, Canada



as Goderich and Toronto.

Harshaprabha, an Order Member who has a long-standing connection with Canada, has contacted FWBO News to tell us -

"The FWBO held its first ever residential weekend retreat in Ontario, Canada from the 7th till 9th November. It was held at the [Glen Tara Retreat Centre](#), Mount Forest.

"There were 12 of us on the retreat, most coming from in or around Guelph but some from as far away

"It was great having two Mitras on the retreat to support me - Joe Kosofsky from Toronto and Chris Petts from Colchester. Chris is a good friend and had always wanted to come to visit Canada and meet my friends who he had seen in photos and heard so much about.

"The theme of the retreat was Kindness and like many FWBO retreats, kindness was felt by all who came. I really appreciated being in the company of friends old and new. Their willingness to engage in meditation, study and puja, as well as their openness and humor was fantastic to be around.

"The reporting out at the end was very heartfelt and moving. I hope that this is the first of many retreats in a Province of Canada that is over twice the size of Great Britain.

"If you would like to support my activities there please visit my fundraising page www.justgiving.com/harshaprabha. This is a simple, secure, and tax-efficient way to contribute to spreading the Dharma in Canada.

Funds will be used to supply books, CDs, DVDs, meditation cushions and shrine gear. Monies would also assist in setting up a FWBO Ontario website and help those interested go on FWBO retreats in Canada and America.

There is also a small FWBO Center in [Vancouver](#).



More News inside.....

LBC celebrates 30th anniversary, Sangharakshita unveils new painting

“In November the LBC celebrated its 30th anniversary, and Sangharakshita was present to unveil Aloka’s magnificent new painting – shown here in process of creation! See the finished painting inside...



Indian Ordinations Record numbers of women are being ordained in India, with 15 scheduled for early January. But the Indian women’s ordination team are appealing for funds - details inside.

Date for your diary: FWBO International Urban Retreat

June 2009 will see the FWBO’s first ever
International Urban retreat.

These have been pioneered at a few FWBO centres
over the past few years, and have proven both
popular and effective.

The dates are **20-27th June 2009**.

All readers of FWBO News world-wide are welcome
to take part, whether or not they are near an FWBO
Centre. Find it on Facebook – look for the

International Urban Retreat 2009!

