



FWBO and TBMSG News

January 2009

Inside this month:

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'The Essential Sangharakshita' reviewed;
plans take shape for 'International Urban
Retreat';
news from India, Denmark, Ipswich,
Worcester;
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in India, Youth Convention...**



FWBO News

presents a monthly or 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.

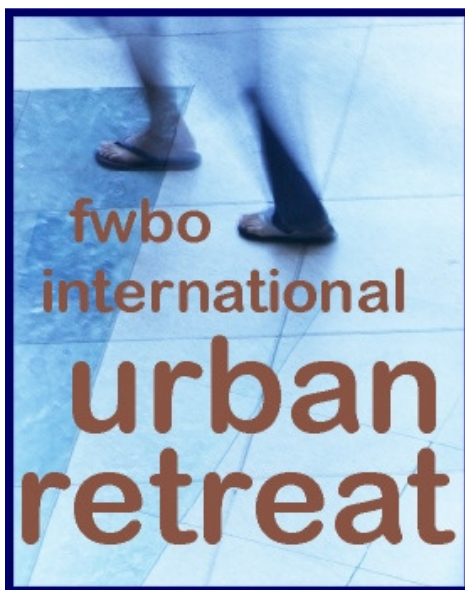
This month we have stories from India, UK, USA, Denmark, and cyber-space – covering topics as diverse as the WBO's Preceptors' College, the impact of the recession, ethical banking, art, Buddhism and clowning, new centres in Ipswich and Worcester, Sangharakshita in interview, Buddhism and recovery from addiction, and more.

Enjoy...

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!

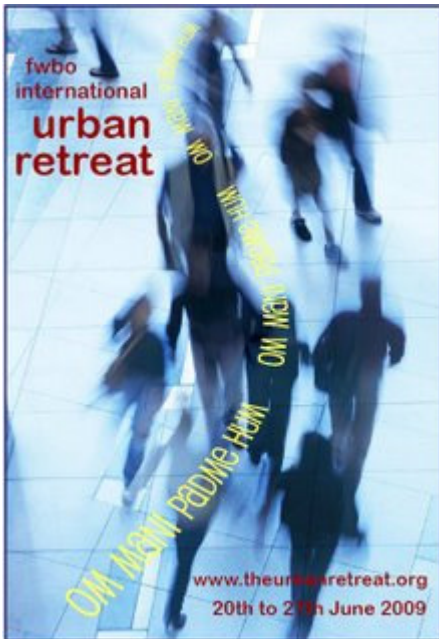
Since 1980 the FWBO's Karuna Trust has been funding social and Dhamma projects amongst India's poorest and most disadvantaged communities. The majority of its funds are raised by volunteer fundraisers, who live and work as a spiritual community during the five or so weeks of the door-knocking appeal. 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.

Monday, February 02, 2009

FWBO International Urban Retreat: plans take shape



Plans are taking shape for a major new FWBO event: the Movement's first 'International Urban Retreat'.

Vajragupta, who works for the FWBO's Development Team, says -

"This year we are running the first ever FWBO International Urban Retreat. All over the world, local FWBO Centres will run 'urban retreats', all during the same week in June.

"On an 'urban retreat' you carry on living and working in your normal circumstances, but with a difference...

"The week starts with a day retreat at your local FWBO Centre – this will be on Saturday 20th June. During that day you'll be helped and encouraged to set up the conditions to take your practice deeper.

To support you during the week, there will be talks, led meditations, and other resources available, both locally and on-line.

"The urban retreat ends with another day event at your Centre on 27th June – this will include the opportunity to reflect on how it went, and where you want to take your practice next...

It's simple enough but the benefits are many –

- * you can gain confidence in your practice... the urban **retreat** shows you how you can create positive states of mind in the midst of everyday life.
- * you can go deeper... link-up with other people at your Centre and help each other to practice more intensively for a week.
- * you can be inspired... you'll be part of an international event, practising with people from FWBO Centres all over the world.

"For those who can't attend an urban retreat at a FWBO Centre, there is the chance to do the retreat on-line - for details check the website www.theurbanretreat.org (coming soon) or via the [FWBO Page on Facebook](#).

"As part of the retreat we'll be collaborating with various FWBO projects – [Wildmind](#), [Free Buddhist Audio](#), [Videosangha](#), and hopefully [Breathworks](#). Watch this space - we'll be posting more details over the coming weeks".

Saturday, January 31, 2009

An interview with Sangharakshita



A new interview with Sangharakshita has recently been published, on the the subject of 'mindfulness'.

Originally published in the Dutch Buddhist magazine 'Vorm en Leegte' (in Dutch), it was part of an issue of the magazine devoted to mindfulness, and conducted by Dorine Esser, a mitra from Antwerp, in Belgium.

The interview is now available in English on the [**Features section of FWBO News**](#).

It covers a wide range of topics – from the importance of mindfulness to our participation in a planet-wide 'higher evolution' – to the

value of reading the Pali scriptures and the joy to be derived from classical music and art.

Friday, January 30, 2009

Letting out the Clowns in Manchester...



Economic news around the world continues to be grim, and times are tough for the FWBO's Right Livelihood businesses.

It's not all doom and gloom, however – Jayacitta and Red Noses Unlimited continue to find ways to help people "let out their clowns" around the country. Next up is a weekend at the FWBO's Manchester Buddhist Centre, "in search of the clown, exploring authenticity and contradictions", followed by another (in Edinburgh) in March.



Actually, underneath the red noses it's pretty serious stuff – all part of the glorious adventure of bringing Buddhism to the West. To quote from their website -

"In this personal and also very comical work, the participants discover their own clown. Not a character one takes on, but a state in which one consciously explores ones own naivety, imbalances and contradictions in order to transform them into the poetry of the ridiculous.

"The state of the clown is one of openness and deep listening to oneself. It allows one to see oneself, others and the whole world afresh and to experience a far wider way of being and greater range of emotion. Letting go of ideas of right & wrong, of shoulds and of control, in discovering the clown inside oneself, one can allow oneself to play again, to experience whatever arises and discover one's own individuality and folly both together.

"...In allowing the clown in some of the exercises to enter the everyday world and work of the participant, we see how he brings his new perspective and a very different way of interacting with colleagues, clients and the task in hand ... Interested? Contact them on info@rednoses-unlimited.co.uk

Wednesday, January 28, 2009

FWBO activities develop in Denmark

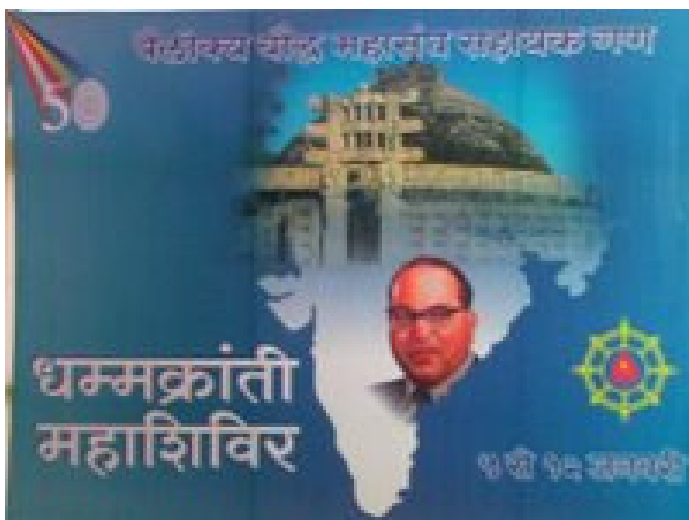
Advayasiddhi from the FWBO's Copenhagen group has written to FWBO News to say -

"I'm very happy to let you know that FWBO Denmark had it's first meditation day in Copenhagen this Saturday with 8 people attending. It has taken a lot of work to interest people in meditation and buddhism here in Denmark, so this event felt like a landmark, having people come and engage themselves and -most importantly- continue to practice what they learn.

"As in so many other places in the world, we did the mindfulness of breathing, walking meditation and the metta bhavana, and dedicated the merits of the day to the benefit of all beings.

"We are planning to have a day event in February and March as well, so please spread the word if you know anybody in Denmark. "We have a website at www.buddhistmeditation.dk and you'll find us on **Facebook** too - go looking for "Buddhistisk Meditation"!

"Yours in the Dharma, "Advayasiddhi.



Tuesday, January 27, 2009

News from India: Dhamma talks and tours with Subhuti

These days there are major changes afoot in India, and in our movement in India as well. Subhuti's been visiting for the past 20 years and is there now – we're delighted to be able to bring you this report of what he's up to, from Dharmashalin, his secretary and travelling

companion. Read on for news of Pune, Nagpur, Mumbai, NNBY, and North India...

In addition to the text-based report below, Dharmashalin has posted the [first of a series of video diaries](#) on YouTube.

Subhuti in India November and December 2008

Subhuti has been visiting India regularly since 1985. Initially he and Suvajra were overseeing the Men's Ordination Process, during that time he ordained well over a hundred men. Then as International Order Convenor he led retreats for Order Members, trying to bring a greater depth of understanding and experience to members of our Order. Many of them lead extremely busy lives due to work and family commitments. In the last few years he has been more involved in reaching out into new areas: geographically, in terms of new states; community-wise, in terms of different castes; and generationally, supporting initiatives to bring more young people into the Dhamma.

We are in a phase of exciting opportunities, with the socio-economic face of India changing, this has an impact on how and where the Dhamma can be communicated. What follows is a summary of his activities:

Pune



His first week was spent in Pune, heart-land of the TBMSG, where he gave a series of talks at the Mahavihara. The Mahavihara was the first big centre we had in India, it serves as a Dhamma centre, and also a base for a number of our charities and some educational activities. Over three nights he gave a very inspiring series of talks, drawing a lot from his experiences during his long solitary retreat. The overwhelming message coming from those talks was; take Karma seriously. What we say, do and think leaves an imprint on your mind which will stay there. This of course is a central application of Pratitya Samutpada, the implication of this is the importance of being

skilful and cultivating positive mental states. Over the following days Subhuti met with groups and individuals and the same theme kept returning. He was particularly keen to emphasis that whilst long retreats are of course immensely beneficial we can all practice effectively in our own situations. A particularly important message in India, where most people have responsibilities that mean long retreats are virtually impossible.

Nagpur

We then went to Nagpur, the city where Dr Ambedkar converted. Although TBMSG has more institutions in Pune, Nagpur is the actual centre of Ambedkarite Buddhism in India - and the home of



[Nagaloka](#), our largest centre in India. Some estimations place the percentage of Buddhists as high as 30%, of course many of them are 'Ethnic' Buddhists. Yet even that results in a greater sense of ethics and personal responsibility. This is particularly brought out by the huge level of social improvement the Buddhist community has achieved in the 50 years since conversion. At that time they were almost all bonded labourers and the vast majority were illiterate, today we regularly meet doctors, lawyers and engineers. No other community in India has improved so much since Independence.

This is an important point, it shows that conversion to Buddhism has a direct effect on people's lives, because of its message of personal responsibility and transformation.

Mumbai

During our time here Subhuti has been meeting with his many friends and contacts, providing support and guidance. He of course has given several public talks, several responding to the terrible events in Mumbai. He has been particularly speaking on how we can respond to violence. Of course this boils down to practising the Dhamma ourselves and helping those who are in down-trodden states to improve themselves. Dr Ambedkar was a deep political thinker as well as a Buddhist and he foresaw the difficulties India would face. His analysis, which Subhuti drew upon, was the need to ensure Human dignity and opportunities to all. It is when people feel they have no other option that they turn to violence.

Manjushri

He has also led several retreats, one for Dhammacharis exploring the Manjushri Stuti Sadhana. There was an extremely good atmosphere with lots of silence and meditation, many of the participants said it



was the most significant retreat of their lives. In early December we went to Chhattisgarh where we had a general retreat with somewhere between one and two hundred participants. Here Subhuti went through the Tiratna Vandana, people responded well. A particular point of success was taking some of the more experienced students from the Nagarjuna Training Institute and using them as group leaders. This gave them an opportunity to test and develop their skills and meant there was enough of a Sangha present for the new-comers to get a direct experience of Sangha rather than simply having it explained to them. This seemed to be particularly

inspiring for the participants, so we hope they will start meeting in small groups and carry the inspiration of the retreat into their lives.

National Network of Buddhist Youth

On the 12th of December Subhuti started the NNBY Full Moon Meditation event with a talk about the importance of supporting Youth and possibility of communication and harmony that transcends words.



Between two and three hundred people attended and there was an extremely positive atmosphere in the shrine area.

For the next ten days Subhuti was engaged in a workshop looking at how training is conducted in India. The conversation soon broadened out to look at how we can make the TBMSG much more effective and spiritually alive, so that we can more adequately respond to the huge potential for spreading the Dhamma that exists here.

From the 25th til the 1st we attended the National Network of Buddhist Youth Conference. This was a very positive and enjoyable event. Subhuti gave a series of

talks about Dr Ambedkar's message for the youth of today. NNBY has been in the 'News' quite a bit recently, it certainly is an exciting new area of opportunity. Many young people are responding very positively to the combination of fun, friendship, meaning and autonomy. The convention itself was mainly run by the Youths, with guidance and teaching from Order members but a lot of the rest being led by the youths themselves. Of course in some cases the lines blur (for example I count as a Youth at the tender age of 30, whilst also being an Order member.)

North India

Over the next two months we will be travelling around North India. Leading retreats, giving talks and continuing to deepen connections with local people working to spread the Dhamma. It is a very different situation compared to the relatively well established Buddhists in Maharashtra, Casteism is stronger and people are generally still working to gain education and good livelihoods. Despite that, or even because of that, people are very keen to learn more about Buddhism.

Much metta, Dharmashalin (Subhuti's Secretary)

Sunday, January 25, 2009

Fifteen women ordained in India: a record



On January 11, 2009 the following 15 women were ordained at Bhaja, Maharashtra India. This is a record number for Indian women's ordinations at any one time, and takes the women's Order in India to a remarkable 88.

The new names are:-

Private preceptor Vajrasuri.

1. Nalini Chabukswar (Yerawada, Pune) becomes **Achalaraddha** -- she who has immovable faith.
2. Anita Gaikwad (Dapodi, Pune) becomes **Maitriratna** -- she who has a jewel of friendship.
3. Savita Gautam - (Modinager, Uttar Pradesh) **Sraddhavajri** -- she who has a vajra of confidence.

Private preceptor Jnanasuri (an Indian Dhammācharinī)

4. Vishakha Mane (Pimpri, Pune) becomes **Aryachandra** -- noble moon
5. Pratibha Shende (Amravati) becomes **Danapadma** -- Lotus of generosity
6. Shaila Ilamkar (Aurangabad) becomes **Kshantichitta** -- she whose heart is patience
7. Shushila Ingle (Aurangabad) becomes **Kshantimati** -- she whose mind is patience

8. Durga Devore (Amravati) becomes **Danamati** -- she whose mind is full of giving
9. Lata Patil (Nagpur) becomes **Jnanasakhi** -- friend of knowledge
10. Yashodhara Narvade (Aurangabad) becomes **Kshantikirti** -- she whose renowned for patience.
11. Shalu Meshram (Wardha) becomes **Dipavati** -- she who is full of light.

Private preceptor Karunamaya

12. Indubai Shardul (Ghatkoper ,Mumbai) becomes **Sanghaprabha** --Light of the sangha
13. Rajani Barate (Dapodi , Pune) becomes **Mettika** (Pali)-- She who has metta
14. Alka Manwatkar (Yerawada, Pune) becomes **Bodhisakhi** -- friend of awakening
15. Kamal Gaikwad (Dapodi , Pune) becomes **Shàntida** -- Giver or bestower of peace

The public preceptor was Karunamaya.
SADHU!

Thursday, January 22, 2009

Public Preceptors' meeting - report now out

The College of Public Preceptors is the body of senior members of the Western Buddhist Order charged with overseeing ordinations into the Order. It currently has about 30 members, most of whom meet twice a year to discuss everything connected with their work – in practice, a wide range of topics indeed!

They are keen to communicate what they can of their discussions to a wider audience, and have recently posted an account of November's meeting on their [blog](#). They say "We'd like our thinking to be more widely and easily available in the movement. At present our main way of communicating our thoughts and discussions is through retreats, talks and seminars and we'd like to make some of this material more widely available. For the time being we plan to do this through the college website and blog and will hopefully be adding more material over the coming months".

Among other things, the discussions addressed the appointment of Parami as a second International Order Convenor; Order Members and mitras going to other Buddhist teachers; the structure of the Preceptors' College; training for Preceptors; [fundraising for the College](#); and issues surrounding the topic of domestic violence. Finally some time was spent with Padmavajra in study of some teachings of Geshe Drom, Atisha's main disciple, from 'The Door of Liberation'.

A major topic, in addition to the above, was coherence in the Order and movement. they say -

"A regular topic of discussion in the College is that of maintaining the balance between diversity and unity in our work together, and how we can help the movement and Order to do likewise. This time we particularly focused on the aspect of coherence and wanted to look at the college's role in contributing to coherence and unity in the movement as a whole. Bhante has said recently that he thinks coherence in the movement is threefold: doctrinal, practice based and social...."

Their main website is at www.preceptorscollege.org , which gives a broad outline to their work - plus a ['who's who' of the College](#).

Tuesday, January 20, 2009

New Centre for FWBO Ipswich



The FWBO's **Ipswich Buddhist Centre** is moving to new premises.

For years they've been in rented premises; they have for some time been seeking permanent premises and contacted their Facebook supporters last week to say "we completed on Friday 16th January. So we have finally taken possession of our new "Centre to be", and stepped across the threshold. Now there is just the building and alteration work to be done to fit it to our needs, and then some decoration and furnishing, and "hey presto", we have our own beautiful Centre.

"The work we are embarking on is; to strip out some cement sheeting boards containing asbestos, and renewing the ceiling; to fit a disabled toilet and lift, and improve access; and to fit out a servery. So we hope those works will be commencing in the next week or so. If anyone would like to look around the building do email or speak to a member of the Council and we can arrange it, and I am sure there will be more organised visits arranged from time to time.

"We have a certain amount of money allocated for this work, but it will certainly cost more than we have to create the sort of Centre we really want, so we are going to have to embark on a Fundraising project to bring in the funds. To this end, a first step has been to set up a "Just Giving" site, which you can view on www.justgiving.com/fwboipswich".

Actually, they did more than simply announce their news - there's a series of three videos posted on YouTube giving a sense of the new Centre and the sort of work that'll be needed to turn the old light-industrial premises into a Buddhist Centre.

New FWBO premises in Worcester, UK



The FWBO's **Worcester Centre** - formally known as the 'Worcester Buddhism and Meditation Group' - has celebrated the new year in style by establishing themselves in their first full-time centre premises. They've been able to rent a house on the outskirts of town that will serve as the focal point for their

substantial sangha, and double up as a small community for some of those most involved.

First established by Vajragupta, Vipulakirti, and others in 2003, it's one of a number of 'satellite' groups started over the past few years by the large Birmingham Buddhist Centre- and the first to find its own full-time premises.

So, for them at least, no more Buddhas travelling to the weekly class strapped to the back seat of the car!

FWBO News wishes them well in their new home – you'll find more photos of this on [Facebook](#).

The [Birmingham Buddhist Centre](#) also runs classes in [Sutton Coldfield](#) and [Shrewsbury](#), and has just begun a class in Warwick.

Sunday, January 18, 2009

Introducing the Buddhist Recovery Network

This week's featured website is www.buddhistrecovery.org.

Created by the Buddhist Recovery Network, it exists to “support the use of Buddhist teachings, traditions and practices to help people recover from the suffering caused by addictive behaviors”.

It's not an exclusively FWBO site or project; we chose it because of its intrinsic interest and because a number of FWBO members and Order Members have been involved with it since its founding. In particular Lokapala (from New Zealand), Kuladitya (from the UK), and Guy Holden (from Australia) serve on its Advisory Council and Amara (from the US) and Dridhamati (UK) serve as its accountant and webmaster respectively.

The Buddhist Recovery Network describes itself, in its [Mission Statement](#), as “Open to people of all backgrounds, and respectful of all recovery paths”, while being firmly grounded in Buddhist principles and practices.

As they themselves say “the organization promotes mindfulness and meditation, and is grounded in Buddhist principles of non-harming, compassion and interdependence.” And – as should be obvious – it's international.

In fact, over the past year or so its taken off, with there new website playing a central role in their ability to provide resources for all those able to make use of them. There's a substantial [download library](#), including guidelines for setting up and facilitating recovery groups. Besides this, and outside of cyberspace, they seek to “serve an international audience through teaching, training, treatment, research, publication, advocacy and community-building initiatives.”

May their work be of benefit to beings...

To quote the great Buddhist poet Shantideva –

*“As long as the existence of space
And as long as the existence of the world,
That long may my life
Be devoted to the world's sorrows.*

*“Only medicine for this suffering world,
May the teaching of the Buddha,
With all honour and glory,
Endure till the end of time.*

Saturday, January 17, 2009

FWBO People: 'Hen's Solitary Retreat'

use the Labels below to start the diary from the beginning.

Labels

- Causality (1)
- Conditionality (1)
- Day 1 - Arriving (1)
- Day 10 - Butterflies Bees and Webs (1)
- Day 2 - Second Dayitius (1)
- Day 3 - Harebell (1)
- Day 4 - The Reality of Pain (1)
- Day 5 - BoooOOohrring (1)
- Day 6 - Ping (1)
- Day 7 - Cold wind blows (1)
- Day 8a - First week summary (1)
- Day 9 - Well that was interesting (1)
- Dependant origination (1)
- Indra's Net (1)
- Metta Bhavana (1)
- Six Element Practice (1)
- Solitary Retreat Schedule (1)
- Spiritual background (1)

This Saturday's 'FWBO People' post features a lady known only (on-line at least) as 'Hen'. She's a "Singer, permaculture designer, basket maker, aspiring children's story writer and illustrator, bivouac-er, hill walker - and Buddhist".

Hen lives and practices somewhere between the Cotswolds and Exmoor, in England – and last Autumn went on her first two-week solitary retreat, having been to a number of FWBO retreats and centres over the years. On retreat she kept a journal and afterwards turned it into a blog, which we're delighted to feature here.

She writes –

"Many people have said to me that they wish they could do a solitary retreat, because 'they really need one'. That's why I decided to share my experience, to hopefully make going on retreat alone, a bit less mysterious and a bit more 'doable'. "Offered with much love for your continued happiness!"

Hen's blog is at solitaryretreat-hen.blogspot.com

Just to whet your appetite, she begins –

"The journey here was long, but totally uneventful and when I pulled into the last bit of track to take me up the hill to the cottage I was relieved not to feel stressed out from driving.

"Well, that was until my car broke down half way up a very steep stony bit of the track. The little computer on my dashboard told me that it was the alternator and that I should take it to a workshop. EEEEEK!"

Enjoy...



Thursday, January 15, 2009

Youth of India Roars in 2nd National Convention of NNBY

The FWBO/TBMSG is an international Buddhist Sangha, with Buddhist Centres in over 20 countries. This internationality is never more evident than when people from opposite sides of the world come together for our big sangha events.

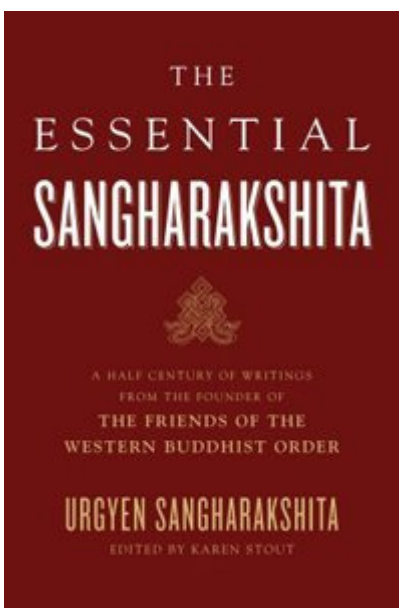
NNBY's recent annual conference was an example, bringing together people from many communities across India (a major achievement in itself) – and beyond. NNBY is India's 'National Network of Buddhist Youth', a major initiative started some five years ago under the auspices of TBMSG, as the FWBO is known in India.

We're proud to bring you two reports from the Conference, one from two Indian participants – a colourful and moving photo-journal – and one from Ann Dennehy, a mitra from San Francisco who's founded '[Jai Bhim International](#)', an American not-for-profit. Her aim is to "Connect spiritual communities, social change groups, and educators worldwide with Buddhist youth projects in India".

You can read Deepa and Amrita's account here, boldly entitled "[YOUTH OF INDIA ROARS IN 2nd NATIONAL CONVENTION OF NNBY](#)"

and Ann's wide-ranging account of her travels [here](#).

NNBY is still fundraising for its 2009 budget, contributions are invited and can be made online on their Justgiving page www.justgiving.com/indianbuddhistyouth.



The Essential Sangharakshita launched – and reviewed

'The Essential Sangharakshita', a major new title showcasing 50 years of Sangharakshita's writings, has just been published by Wisdom Publications. It is available via Windhorse Publications.

At 792 pages, it's a substantial work, aiming to present, under a single cover, something of the breadth and depth of Sangharakshita's writings. Included is material from 38 of Sangharakshita's books, including his poetry, early writings, sutra commentaries, spoken word, and autobiography. There's therefore a great range of writing styles represented, and often the same broad topic is addressed from several points of view – making for a very multi-faceted reading experience.

Vidyadevi, or Karen Stout as Wisdom preferred to refer to her, is an Order Member of many years' standing and the book's editor. She's been working on it for the past 5 years and has clearly lived and breathed it for much of that time – starting by re-reading all Sangharakshita's books and marking passages for possible inclusion with little sticky notes. That produced a vast amount of material which, after first presentation to Wisdom, had to be reduced by almost half – and which still left the problem of how to organise it all! In her Preface she writes of how she tackled the problems of selection and organisation – and her masterstroke of using the Mandala of the Five Buddhas as the organising principle for the book.

This allowed Vidyadevi to separate the enormous amount of material at her disposal into five great divisions, corresponding to the qualities of the five Buddhas of the Mandala. First, in the realm of Vairocana, come Sangharakshita's writings on the central concerns of Buddhism: who the Buddha was, what he taught; what makes one a Buddhist and what one might lead anyone to become one; what unifies the Buddhist tradition. These naturally feature prominently his teachings on Going for Refuge

Next comes Aksobhya and a section on 'Buddhism and the Mind': the nature of knowledge and of the mind; the teachings of karma and conditionality, the need for clear thinking – and also some fascinating reflections on how Buddhism stands in relation to other religions and philosophies of the world.

In the south, Ratnasambhava presides over a section dealing with 'Art, Beauty, and Myth in the Buddhist Tradition': the relationship between Buddhism and art, the aesthetic aspect of the Buddhist life, and the place of myth and symbol in the Buddhist tradition.

The fourth section, in the Western direction, is where we find Amitabha and Sangharakshita's writings on 'Buddhism and the Heart': the place of faith and devotion, the importance of friendship in general and spiritual friendship in particular, and the nature of the relationship between teacher and disciple. Also included here is meditation, and, somewhat arbitrarily, our relationship to the natural world.

Finally, some 550 pages into the book, in the northern realm of Amoghasiddhi, we come to a lengthy final section on 'Buddhism and the World': Sangharakshita's teachings on compassion and the spirit of the Bodhisattva, the ethical life, vegetarianism (and its absence in much of the Buddhist world), confession, discipline, effort, the Buddhist relationship to society as a whole, the heroic and active aspects of the Buddhist life, the Buddhist approach to world peace – and much more... It includes such treasures as his early teachings on the need to go beyond 'Buddhist respectability' and the dangers of confusing natural and conventional morality.

One thing may puzzle the attentive reader. The book is sub-titled 'A half-century of writings from the founder of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order' – but neither the Western Buddhist Order (WBO) nor the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO) get more than a cursory mention throughout the entire work. Indeed the Western Buddhist Order is not even mentioned in the index, and the FWBO is only referred to in the introduction and in a simple blurb on the very last page, outside the text of the book itself and not written by Sangharakshita.

Why might this be? Two things may help explain it – first, much of the material in the book was produced by Sangharakshita as, or even before, the WBO and FWBO were coming into existence: he was, almost literally, talking them into reality. They were therefore hardly there to be referred to when he wrote. Vidyadevi reports that she was conscious of the relative absence of the FWBO and Order while choosing her material, but had resolved to focus firmly on selecting Sangharakshita's most relevant and best expressed writings – and simply didn't find very much that seemed to her suitable.

And second, in the same way that there is a 'hidden pattern', or mandala, behind the book's structure; there is another pattern in front of it, as it were – namely the manifestation, in the real world, by real people, of Sangharakshita's vision. It is here we will find the WBO and FWBO – we can see in them reflections of the Five-Buddha Mandala: for Vairocana, the Order, based so uncompromisingly on the centrality of Going for Refuge; for Aksobhya, ; the FWBO's ecumenical approach and clear study syllabi; for Ratnasambhava, its emphasis on art, poetry, beauty and myth – embodied not least in places such as the London Buddhist Arts Centre or the paintings of Aloka and Chintamani; for Amitabha, the Order's great emphasis on spiritual friendship and Kalyana mitrata, and finally, manifesting in some way the realm of Amoghasiddhi, the FWBO's outward-going nature – its Right Livelihoods, its fundraising and work in India, its emphasis on the Four Right Efforts and regular and disciplined practice.

The book ends, movingly, with a 'double-whammy': Sangharakshita's reflections on 'the miracle of spiritual development' and his uncompromising four-point action list for any Buddhist concerned with world problems. Between its covers there is a treasure-trove of Dharma that will satisfy the reader for many hours, a heap of jewels far too many to list. Many will of course already be familiar to Sangharakshita's students, but it will be a rare person who does not discover something new. If you are familiar with 'Sangharakshita I and Sangharakshita II', his teachings on beauty may be new; if you are

familiar with the distinction between ‘religion-as revelation’ and ‘religion-as-discovery’ then the four levels of Perfect Speech may be new – and so on.

Asked if she had any regrets now that the book is complete, Vidyadevi says it’d be that she didn’t manage to include anything from ‘Ambedkar and Buddhism’, reportedly Sangharakshita’s own favourite among his many books. And asked what she had learned from her labours, she says how struck she was by the way Sangharakshita always seemed to refer his teachings back to the Pali Canon, that most ancient of all Buddhist texts.

For some, ‘The Essential Sangharakshita’ will suffice, and may even be the only book of his they ever need. Certainly it is a more-than-adequate introduction to Sangharakshita’s thought and teaching – if not to the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order itself. For others, it will be a gateway, a taster, to the 38 works from which it is drawn, even to those not represented, and they will be led through it deeper into Sangharakshita’s thought – and perhaps into the spiritual community he has founded and nurtured for he past 40 years.

‘The Essential Sangharakshita’, ISBN 0-86171-585-3, is available from Windhorse Publications (www.windhorsepublications.com) in the UK or Wisdom Publications (www.wisdompubs.org) in the US, and Windhorse Books (www.windhorse.com.au) in Australia and New Zealand . For other countries please contact your nearest bookstore.

Saturday, January 10, 2009

Windhorse: Evolution faces the credit crunch; challenges ahead but morale high



Windhorse:Evolution is the FWBO’s largest Right Livelihood, indeed the largest in the Western Buddhist world, with annual sales of UK £9million, an impressively ethical approach to business, and a wonderful record of giving dana to many many FWBO and TBMSG centres around the world.

However they, like the rest of the Western economy, have been hard-hit by the recent economic downturn. This report aims to bring readers of FWBO News up-to-date with what’s happened and what they’re doing. It is based on material from Ratnaghosa and Vajraketu.

Final figures are still coming in, but sales for the 2008 Christmas period look to be down some 20% on last year, both in their shops and wholesale division. As a result their best-case projection for 2008 is a loss of £150,000 – their worst-case projection is £450,000. Nonetheless, they are confident they have the resources to ‘weather the storm’ for a year – though, like most of the retail industry, it is presently a case of fighting for survival. The collapse of the pound has also hit them hard, with the cost of many of their goods rising by 25%.

The main measures they are taking are cost-cutting – specifically looking for savings in their wage and rent bills. These are in the spotlight because they are the ‘levers’ actually available to them. Out of

annual sales of £9m, they have a wage bill of £3m and a rent bill of £2m. They have instituted a ‘hiring freeze’ and, with great reluctance, made their first-ever redundancies in the business. This has been especially painful for a business that prides itself on looking after its employees. Sadly, they cannot guarantee there won’t be more over the coming months.

A major consideration in the minds of the Windhorse directors has been their suppliers’ livelihoods. Due to Windhorse’s ethical trading policy, they often know exactly who they are buying from, and have had long-term relationships with them for many years. They know, for instance, that if they disappear the livelihoods of 200 people in Bali would vanish – and many in Kenya, Guatemala, and China as well. This is a strong incentive to them to survive, and even if the very worst happens and they go under, they are determined not to close owing their suppliers money.

This seems pretty unlikely though - morale in the business is actually very good: Ratnaghosa says its as though the crisis has brought out the best in everyone. A couple of unprofitable shops have been closed (in Shrewsbury and Norwich) – but they are still looking to open 3 new shops during 2009. This is down from their original ambitious plans to open 5, and the openings have been deferred to be nearer Christmas so they will move into profitability quicker – but its still a mark of their confidence.

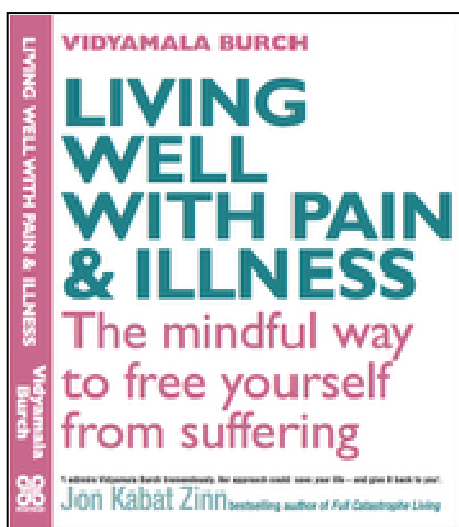
Notwithstanding the difficult climate, and the very real challenges they face, Windhorse are looking to the future and are determined to come out of the recession both stronger and in an expansionist mood. Exactly how this will manifest is not easy to predict – forecasting the future, says Ratnaghosa, has effectively become almost impossible.

The photographs show Uddiyana, the Windhorse warehouse in Cambridge, and the great stupa in its centre.



Friday, January 09, 2009

Breathworks on the BBC: research vindicates mindfulness approaches to depression



News has just reached us that last month the ethical and religious news show on BBC Radio 4 ran an interview with members of the Breathworks team at the Manchester Buddhist Centre and Professor Willem Kuyken of Exeter University.

Breathworks is the FWBO’s very successful right livelihood practice, based in Manchester, UK, pioneers of mindfulness-based pain management and stress management courses for anyone wishing to live a richer life and feel a greater sense of initiative and confidence

The program focussed on some new research by Professor Kuyken indicating that systematic

mindfulness practice is just as effective as drugs or 'talking' therapy for treating depression, and that it was actually more effective for their secondary measures such as improving quality of life.

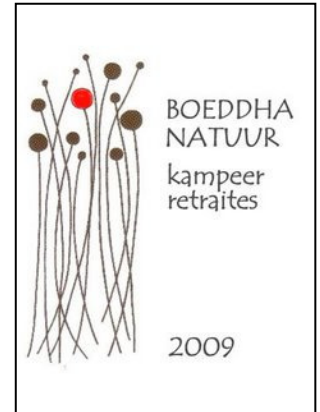
The BBC contacted the Breathworks team to have someone leading a meditation, and had Diane Kaylor (a mitra at the Manchester Buddhist Centre) speaking about the benefits of practice.

A fuller report of the research is available on-line, for instance on the [e!science news](http://www.es-science.com) site.

BoeddhaNatuur releases programme for 2009

Mokshagandhi, a Dharmacharini living in Amsterdam, has sent us the 2009 program for the FWBO's BoeddhaNatuur project - BoeddhaNatuur being the Dutch Sangha's version of Buddhafield, running camping retreats in the Dutch or Belgian countryside.

If the retreats are anything like as beautiful as the programme, they should be a treat - though long-standing readers of FWBO News may remember their [retreats in 2007](#) suffered from the water and wind elements!



Their website is www.boeddhanatuur.nl or you can contact them by email at info@boeddhanatuur.nl

Monday, January 05, 2009

Sangha flourishes in Sarnath, its birthplace



Manidhamma, an Indian Order Member writes –

“The FWBO’s Dhammaloka International Buddhist Study Centre in Sarnath, India, has been busy of late. First came ‘Sangha Day’, on the ‘Kartika’ full-moon day of 13th of November. This was celebrated by Buddhists all over Sarnath in a spectacular, devotional and grand 3-day festival.

“The highlight was the display of sacred Buddha relics, for which there was an all-night special puja and recitation of Buddhist texts. The whole village of Sarnath was decorated by thousands of lamps, flowers, incense and Buddhist prayer flags. There

were several devotional and cultural programmes taking place in numerous Buddhist monasteries near the Deer Park.

“The most magnificent event was a procession carrying the sacred relics of the Buddha on 4 decorated elephants by chief guests Madam Nancy Lim from Singapore and Madam Ratsyog of France, which paraded through the main roads of Sarnath. They were followed by Venerable Sumedha Thero, the Bhikkhu-in-charge of the Mahabodhi Society Sarnath, monks, nuns, Dharmacharis, Mitras and thousands of Buddhists from many nationalities.

“As part of the celebrations, I and others organised a special puja for Mitras on our land at Sarnath.

Dharmachari Bodhisagar led a special puja and I gave a talk about the importance of commitment in spiritual life.

"The event took place in the newly-built shrine room which you can see under construction in the photo opposite. The shrine room was built by Bodhisagar and myself with the help of the local Sangha. The building work is ongoing – so far the total expenditure of construction has reached up to INR 75,000/- (approx UK 1,000 pounds). Still some work is going on and for the remaining work we will require 40,000 rupees (UK 500 pounds) more for finishing. At present I am back in UK but Bodhisagar has written to me to say 'Please manage this from any source.'



"We have plans to install a Buddha statue on the land and develop washing facilities for visitors and the resident community. So, generous donations and financial contributions are most welcome. You can give online by visiting www.justgiving.com/sarnath."

"Yours in the Dhamma, Manidhamma

If you would like more information about Dhammaloka publications and activities, please contact Manidhamma by emailing manidhamma@hotmail.com or by calling Bodhisagar in India on +919411109061.



Wildmind on spiritual rebirth, materialism, solitude, warriorhood,

and more...

Wildmind is the FWBO's US-based website dedicated to teaching meditation.

Besides offering an easy and free way to **learn meditation on-line**, their site hosts a vast library of meditation-related articles from a wide range of sources.

Every month they issue their meditation newsletter, each one dedicated to one or another theme connected in some way to meditation.

We've neglected to keep you up to date with these as they've come out, but here they are now -

- [January 2009: Spiritual rebirth](#)
- [December 2008: Spiritual materialism](#)
- [November: Solitude](#)
- [October: Warriorhood](#)

You can either browse these on their enormous website or subscribe at www.wildmind.org/newsletter .

Saturday, January 03, 2009

FWBO People: Shashi Kumar



This week's 'FWBO Person' features Shashi Kumar, a mitra from Bodh Gaya, India. Nearly ten years ago he was sponsored by two Dutch friends to begin a seven-year course in traditional Thangka painting, with a Tibetan monastery in Nepal. He graduated some two years ago and two weeks ago, after a long struggle, opened his first School of Thangka Painting. He's very recently written to FWBO News to say -

“This is a very pleasant occasion for me - to give news to all my friends who have been encouraging me since I took admission at Shechen monastery to study thangka painting.

“Now I have opened a thangka painting school called BODHICHITRA, the Bodhichitra School of Thangka Painting. It's in Bodhgaya, my home town, on the way to the Root Institute.

“As most of my friends know, I have had this dream from the time I first learned that thangka art originally came from Magadha, the area where Buddha was enlightened and spent most of his time in teaching and meditation. These days Magadha has disappeared and we know the area as Bodhgaya, Rajgir, Nalanda, Patna and Varanasi.

We're offering a comprehensive 4-year program in the skills to create thangka in the Karma Gadri tradition, including theory, iconography, composition, and painting. We're especially looking for local students, male or female, with the following qualifications:

- * At least 15 years of age
- * In Good health and of sound mind
- * Secondary Education
- * A strong sense of commitment to sacred painting

Of course we also offer short courses ranging in length from weekend to week-long – these will be of more interest to visiting Westerners. They will focus on specific content, such as painting a particular deity or mandala

Shashi ends by saying –

“Our students come to us with tremendous interest but few resources. The state of Bihar, in which Bodhgaya is located, is India's poorest. But because the area is so underdeveloped, even a small amount of money can go a long way.

“For less than the cost of a cup of coffee per day, you can support a student at the Bodhichitra school of Thangka Painting for one year. Prayers are said daily for the sponsor and all of the sacred art work the student produces is spiritually dedicated to the



sponsor. Once a year the student will send a thangka painted specifically for the health and long-life of his or her sponsor. We are currently operating out of rented facilities and are seeking friends to help us move into a more permanent home. If you are interested in helping seed great merit, please mail me or see our website for more details on sponsorship and other ways offering support.”

They have a beautiful new website, www.bodhithangka.com, and you can also contact him by phone on +91 99319 33838 or email bodhichitra@gmail.com

Sadhu, Shashi!



More News Inside.....

Full review of ‘The Essential Sangharakshita’; records broken for women’s ordinations in India; more...



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**.

