

# **New Writings**

Urgyen Sangharakshita

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## [Adhithana Writings](#)

Twelve pieces composed between August 2015 and March 2016 beginning with a letter to Sangharakshita's friend, Paramartha, who was suddenly called away to the other side of the world, and continuing in the form of reveries and reminiscences. The subjects to which he turns his mind include his parents, the sūtras, the supernormal, beauty and many others.

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## [Living With Carter](#)

Completed in April 2017. In this piece Sangharakshita tells how he met Carter, a young American hippy, and recalls their life together at the end of the 1960's.

## [Some Reflections on the \*Garava Sutta\*](#)

In the *Garava Sutta* the Buddha declares that it is painful to live without honouring and respecting anyone. In this important article Sangharakshita explores the implications for contemporary Buddhists.

## [The Good Friend, the False Friend, and the Spiritual Friend](#)

In this piece, written in May 2017, Sangharakshita's starting point is the *Upaḍḍha Sutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* and the Buddha's oft-quoted words to Ānanda about the place of *kalyāṇa mittatā* (Skt: *kalyāṇa mitratā* or spiritual friendship) in the spiritual life. From there he goes on to explore the nature of friendship from a whole number of different points of view.

## [Four Visits](#)

Written in June 2017, 'Four Visits' is a kind of story; a work of the Imagination, the mode of communication here is symbol, image, and archetype.

### [A Complex Personality: A Note](#)

Among the many thoughts condensed into Sangharakshita's 'Personal Statement' of 30 December 2016 was the reflection that 'Triratna sometimes bears the mark not of the Dharma but of my own particular personality. That personality is a complex one'. What Sangharakshita meant by that has been a topic of some discussion and some six months later he added this Note elucidating his meaning.

### [Hints to a Hypothetical Artist](#)

Completed on 12th August 2017, in this essay Sangharakshita writes about two of his literary heroes who, unusually, were not only great poets but also great artists. At the end of the piece he invites a 'Hypothetical Artist' to illustrate one of his own recent pieces of writing.

### [Evil in Myth and in Human Experience](#)

Completed in September 2017, in this piece Sangharakshita considers the origins of evil, both natural and moral, the value of confession, (as well as rejoicing in merits), and looks in turn at each of the four Māras of Buddhist tradition.

### [Blake and the Gates of Paradise](#)

Completed in October 2017, in this piece, taking William Blake for inspiration, Sangharakshita explores how mutual forgiveness would bring us nearer to the realisation of Blake's Jerusalem or, in Buddhist terms, to the creation of a Pure Land on earth.

### [News from Nowhere – and from India](#)

In 'News from Nowhere', William Morris, one of the great Victorians, compares the England of his day with the socialist England of the future, when privilege and inequality would be swept away in the fires of revolution. Taking this as his starting point, Sangharakshita contrasts Morris's conception of revolution with the Dhamma revolution started in India by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

### ['My Uncle Leonard' and 'A Brace of Uncles'](#)

Written over a couple of evenings in November 2017, here Sangharakshita remembers some of his uncles.

#### [My Uncle Leonard](#)

#### [A Brace of Uncles](#)

### [Evil Revisited – and Good](#)

In this piece Sangharakshita returns to the subject of evil which he had addressed in September, this time including references to Blake, Nietzsche and Avalokiteśvara / Kuan Yin.

### [Green Tārā and the Fourth Laksana](#)

Composed during the latter part of December and completed on New Year's Day 2018, the starting point here is the four sādhanas received from Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche:

Mañjuḥoṣa, Avalokiteśvara, Vajrapāṇi , and Green Tārā, and their ‘correspondence’ (in the hermetic sense) with the lakṣaṇas, the samādhis, and the vimokṣas leading to a series of reflections on the Path of Beauty in western spiritual tradition and its relevance for Buddhists of today.

### [‘The Bodhisattvas are also necessary’](#)

Written in early 2018, in this piece Sangharakshita commences with a story told to him by one of his teachers, and from there he goes on to reflect on the significance of Bodhisattvas in his life and that of all Buddhists.

### [Rainbows in the Sky](#)

In this piece completed on 22 January 2018, Sangharakshita recalls rainbows from his childhood days through to his Going Forth in 1947 and most recently as appeared over Adhithana on his ninetieth birthday. And he affirms the place of Padmasambhava – the Rainbow-bodied one – in the life of the Order from the very beginning, and explains that a remark he made in 2009 about a re-founding of the Order "can only be in the sense of making the original foundation stronger".

### [A Passage to America](#)

In this piece, written in March 2018, Sangharakshita recalls his first flight to America nearly fifty years ago, on his way to teach a term at Berkeley, with reflections set off by viewing the flight information screen above his window seat.

### [Disparities](#)

Writing in April 2018, Sangharakshita reflects here on disparities of power in various different relationships – and on how one can use whatever power one possesses either negatively or unskillfully, on the one hand, or positively and skilfully on the other.

### [Dreams Old and New](#)

In these two pieces, written April-May 2018, Sangharakshita recalls some of the dream worlds he has inhabited. They include ashrams, churches, woodlands, and outer space. Sometimes the scene seems contemporary; sometimes from Ages of the past.

#### [Dreams Old and New I](#)

#### [Dreams Old and New II](#)

### [Science and Poetry: a note](#)

In this short piece Sangharakshita marks the death of the eminent physicist Stephen Hawking by recalling his impressions of both Hawking’s *A Brief History of Time*, and Carlo Rovelli’s *Reality Is Not What It Seems*. He takes the opportunity to reflect on the relationship between science and Buddhism, and the beauty to be found in each.

### [Buddhism and Islam](#)

Starting in his teenage years by reading three translations of the Koran, Sangharakshita has long taken an interest in the cultural, philosophical and mystical sides of Islam, and in 1982 he led a seminar on Al-Ghazali's *The Duties of Brotherhood in Islam*. In this article, written in July 2018, he reflects on this earlier interest, with further thoughts about contact today between Buddhists and Muslims, post '9/11'.

### [Islam and the Buddha](#)

Following on from his previous piece, *Buddhism and Islam*, Sangharakshita discusses Shah-Kazemi's *Common Ground Between Islam and Buddhism*, with special reference to an article of his own published sixty or more years ago, *Religion as Revelation and Discovery*.

### [My Muslim Friend](#)

Here Sangharakshita writes for the first time about his friendship with Ramzan Ali whom he came to know towards the end of his years living in India. Both Ramzan's mother and his 'guru' also feature in the story.

### [Rebirth Revisited](#)

Sparked off by reading Bhikkhu Analayo's recent publication, *Rebirth in Early Buddhism and Current Research* (Wisdom Publications 2018), Sangharakshita reflects on the place of rebirth in both the śrāvakayāna and the bodhisattvayāna, these two main forms of Buddhism being based respectively on the ideal of the Arhant and the ideal of Supreme Perfect Buddhahood.

### [A Word on the Mantrayāna](#)

Writing in October 2018, Sangharakshita considers the significance of the Mantrayāna, also known as the Vajrayāna – through the practice of which it is said that with the help of mantras one may be able to achieve Supreme Perfect Enlightenment within a single human lifetime.

# Adhithana Writings

## 1. A Reverie-cum-Reminiscence in the form of a Letter to Paramartha

Dear Paramartha,

You left last Thursday, and that night I had a dream. I dreamed about my Auntie Kate. She was my mother's elder sister, and when I was very young I often stayed with her in the rather dark upstairs flat in Fulham where she lived with Uncle Dan. She was extremely fond of me even though I was very naughty, pulling out her long hairpins when she had her afternoon nap or even tying her to the back of her chair. Far from minding she would only laugh at my tricks. She was indeed extremely fond of me, and I was extremely fond of her. The dream was quite a short one. I was in my mother's room, waiting for the arrival of Auntie Kate. The room was small and comfortably furnished, like a small nest, and there were colourful rugs on the floor. It was not like any room that my mother had actually ever occupied. In the dream, as in many other dreams, I was of no particular age, and I was not doing anything. I was simply waiting for the arrival of Auntie Kate and listening for her step on the stairs. I eventually heard it, the door opened, and in walked Auntie Kate. She was no bigger than a very small child, and I had to go down on the floor so that we could embrace each other. It was an intensely emotional occasion for both of us. I then woke up. The dream was fled, but my heart was still filled with love for Auntie Kate.

You will agree that it was a strange dream, and I cannot think what might have occasioned it. Though I have dreamt of my mother a number of times, this was the first time I had dreamt of Auntie Kate. And why did she appear in the dream as a small child? The only connection I can make between the dream and a recent happening in my waking life is one that concerned Mallika, though admittedly it is a rather tenuous one. I had recently been told that eighty-five-year-old Mallika was planning to move from Bethnal Green to Aberdeen in order to be near her youngest daughter, even though the move would mean leaving behind all her sangha friends, some of whom had been helping her for years. The words that came to my mind when I heard of this were, 'the leaves return to the tree'. In other words, when we suspect that we may not have much longer to live we often feel a strong urge to return to our place of origin. Mallika was of Scottish origin and perhaps it is not surprising that she should want to go back to Scotland and be near her daughter. My own place of origin was South London, I having been born in Stockwell and brought up in Tooting. Though I am unaware of any urge to go and spend my last days in South London, in recent years I have often dreamt of standing and waiting for the Tooting Broadway bus or Underground train. Sometimes it would arrive, sometimes not, and I would be left waiting. I have also dreamt that I was sitting in the Tooting Broadway bus and looking out of the window as I waited for the bus to arrive at its destination, where I got out and started walking towards my old home. In some dreams

that home would be associated with my mother. In one such dream I was walking home with her and on the way we stopped at a pub, where she had a meal before we continued on our way. In a more recent dream I was with a group of friends and I was anxious because I had promised my mother to be back by eight o'clock and it was now nine-thirty. I would have to get a taxi, I said. Whereupon you stepped forward, saying, 'Don't worry, I'll drive you to your mother's place.' On this occasion, as so often in real life, you were there when I needed you.

I certainly needed you towards the end of 2012. I was to move from Madhyamaloka, where I had lived for sixteen years, to my new home at Adhithana; from a Birmingham suburb to the Herefordshire countryside. At the time I was quite ill. I was suffering from insomnia, which Temazepam sleeping tablets did little to relieve. Indeed, they made me feel worse. Moreover a doctor at the local surgery whom I had not seen before had prescribed a very high dose of Mirtazapine and this I was taking regularly with the Temazepam and my other medication. Thus during the last two weeks of February I was not at all in good shape. Yet the move still had to be made. In fact I felt that it had to be made as soon as possible. I had the strong conviction, whether rational or irrational I know not, that otherwise I could die before getting to Adhithana, and I wanted desperately to get there and spend my last days within its peaceful shades. A great deal of packing had to be done, and done quickly. Ill as I was I helped Vidyaruchi pack the images and books from my study. You, almost single-handedly, packed everything else that was in the flat and in the treasury next door. This included crockery, kitchen utensils, clothes, books, pictures, box files, thankas and more than ninety rupas of various kinds. You worked like a Trojan, if that is not too hackneyed an expression, or even like demon, but the term would be incompatible with what one of your friends calls your 'angelic disposition'. Eventually, everything was packed, and at 11.30 a.m. on Sunday, 24 February 2013, we set off for Adhithana. You were at the wheel, tired but determined. With us in the car was Vidyaruchi, while Ashvajit followed in his own vehicle. We had not gone very far when I started feeling nauseous, and we had to stop for a few minutes. As we entered the motorway you warned me that it would not be possible for you to drive as slowly as I might have wished. An hour and a half later we had reached our destination and were being welcomed by the Adhithana team.

Two and a half years have passed since that day. The rest of 2013 proved to be a difficult time for me. Adhithana was still a building site, with noisy heavy machinery operating each day of the week until August, when Adhithana had its official opening. I was still very ill, with only very small improvements in my condition from month to month. Fortunately, my new GP reduced my Mirtazapine from the highest to the lowest dose, which seemed to help. I continued to suffer from insomnia, and I often felt – and looked – exhausted. I also suffered from night sweats, which were often so heavy that I had to change my pyjamas and even my bedding in the course of the night. My first months in my new home were thus neither very peaceful nor very happy. Nonetheless, I saw visitors from time to time and kept up with my correspondence as best I could. Dictating letters, especially letters to old friends, was one of

my few sources of pleasure. It provided me with an outlet for creativity, albeit a limited one, and the more creative I could be the better I felt. My principal source of pleasure was the evenings in study and discussion I spent with a close friend. This friend, as you know, was you. You were not always at Adhithana. There were times when your professional work took you to London and other parts of England, but wherever you were you kept in touch with me and made sure that I was being looked after. I sometimes think that without you I would not have come through 2013 even as well as I did. Nothing was too much trouble for you, even when it meant sacrificing your own comfort and convenience. As I came to realize, there were times when you sacrificed even your health and well-being for my sake. More than once I tried to expostulate with you on this account, but you were always emphatic that there was no question of any sacrifice. You did what you did of your own free will and you would not have chosen to be in any other situation. Yet I know that 2013 was a difficult year for you, as it was for me. Even so, you never complained.

By the end of the year my health had improved sufficiently for you to be able spend a month in New Zealand with your mother, leaving me in the hands of Buddhadasa (who had arrived in April), of Suvajra (who had finally arrived in November), and of Ashvajit who had become my secretary in succession to Vidyaruchi. On your return at the end of January 2014, it did not take us long to get back into the previous year's routine. Indeed I had not departed from it very much while you were away. One of the things I had most missed during your absence, apart from your actual presence, was our evening study and discussion. This we did, as before, on those days when you were 'at home', though I cannot remember when we started. What I do remember is that having enjoyed a dip into Neoplatonism we immersed ourselves first in the *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*, then in the much longer *Śūraṅgamasamādhi Sūtra*. As we soon discovered, if we had not known it before, the two sutras are very different in character, and breathe as it were different atmospheres. The *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra* is of a more philosophical nature, while the *Śūraṅgamasamādhi Sūtra* is more mythical, though in their different ways both point to the transcendental dimension of existence. While the first called for more discussion, as well as for note taking, on your part, the second demanded a more imaginative response. Though I had long wanted to study the *Śūraṅgamasamādhi Sūtra*, I did not at first take to it, and it was only after we had spent two or three evenings on it that I began to feel at all at home in its radiant world. It was a world inhabited by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, by gods and goddesses of various kinds, and towards the end of the sutra there appears the cunning and malignant figure of Mara, the Evil One. As the weeks and months of study and discussion went by I felt that I was not merely a spectator of this world but living in it and breathing its unique atmosphere. Moreover, the sutra came to be increasingly dominated by the figure of the great and glorious Mañjuśrī, the Bodhisattva of wisdom, who appears as a supremely beautiful youth clad in princely garments and holding to his heart the scripture of Perfect Wisdom. With this figure I was already familiar, through my practice of the Mañjuḥṣa Stuti Sādhanā, but the *Śūraṅgamasamādhi Sūtra* gave me a much more vivid awareness of his presence and of his true nature. He was the veritable

embodiment of the *dharma niyāma* and to be worshipped and meditated upon as such. Whether I shared this insight with you at the time I cannot remember. Thus the *Śūraṅgamasamādhī Sūtra* became a permanent part of my spiritual life, as I believe it did yours.

Thus far had my recollections led me when I reminded myself that although my short-term memory was reliable as regards events, it was less reliable as regards the chronology of those events. I therefore decided that I had better consult you about the sequence of our studies, as I knew you had kept a diary at the time. I could not consult you face to face, as you are now in New Zealand, having left Adhithana a few days before I started writing this letter to you. I therefore had to consult you by telephone last night. This morning came a message with the desired information. According to your diary, we studied the two sutras not in 2014, as I had supposed, but during the last four months of 2013. The discrepancy does not affect my recollection of the two sutras themselves, especially that of the *Śūraṅgamasamādhī Sūtra*. The world of this sutra is as much beyond time as it is beyond space, and while I was in it I too was beyond time. Strictly speaking, I should not even be locating my experience of the sutra in the past. As I have already said, it remains a permanent part of my spiritual life.

Although we may not have studied the two sutras in 2014, we did study other things on the evenings when you were 'at home', or at least, we engaged in discussion. Sometimes the discussion was very personal, and went very deep. During the same year my health continued to improve, especially after I stopped taking Zopiclone sleeping tablets, and it has continued to improve this year. By the end of May you were able to take me away on holiday. We spent six days in north Somerset. This was the farthest I had been away from Adhithana since my arrival there nearly two years earlier, and at first I was concerned that I might not be able to make the journey. But my fears proved to be unfounded. I enjoyed the journey and enjoyed the holiday itself.

The bungalow we had taken was rather isolated and very quiet, and in the course of our stay we went out on only three of the six days we were there. Our first expedition was to Burnham-on-Sea and the coast, for you will remember that I very much wanted to see the sea, which I had not seen since we were in Felixstowe five years earlier. I did see the thin, dark blue line of the sea in the distance, but there was a strong wind blowing, and we stayed on the promenade only long enough for you to push me for a few dozen yards in the wheelchair we had brought with us. You did some shopping and we had a drink in a café in the smart little town. While I had not seen Burnham-on-Sea before, Glastonbury was a place with which we were both familiar. We did not attempt to climb the Tor but from below gazed up at the tower that crowns its summit, and a sociable fellow pilgrim was kind enough to take a photograph of us with the Tor and its tower in the background. This photo, together with a couple of others, you later put on my Facebook page. We also spent some time in the historic little town, where we explored the second-hand bookshops and had a drink in a rambling old café with rough wooden tables and benches. While you were getting our drinks, I became

aware that sitting at the next table there was a group of young people and that from them there drifted towards me an aroma with which I had been familiar in the sixties and seventies. Our last expedition was to Cheddar Gorge, which I had not seen before but which you had visited with Jinaraja. I had not realized that it was so big or so impressive, and as we drove through it I gazed up at the rocky cliffs on either side with feelings of wonder and awe. Having driven through the whole length of the gorge, which was much longer than I had expected, we turned round and drove back through it to the little town from which Cheddar Gorge takes its name. Here we could find not a single empty parking space and in any case there was no disabled parking. We therefore drove on, and after a few miles were so fortunate as to come upon a wayside tea-house.

All three outings took place in the morning. We left the bungalow soon after breakfast and returned in time for lunch, which tended to be a late one. During our stay you cooked not only all our lunches, dinners, and breakfasts but also did all the washing up, laundering and Hoovering, doing everything with your usual smoothness and efficiency. Our afternoons and evenings, and the whole day when we did not go anywhere, we spent quietly at the bungalow. When planning our holiday we had talked of the study we would do and the discussions we would have, but so far as I remember we had only one session of study and there was little discussion between us. In fact we talked very little. Our study was concerned, I think, with the *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*, which we had been studying during the previous two months for the second time. I was particularly struck by the fact that according to the sutra the Buddha's teaching was a *miśra dharma*, or a mixed, or mingled, or integrated *dharma*, drawing as it did upon the teachings of all three *yānas*, these being the *yānas* of the *śrāvaka*, the *pratyekabuddha*, and the Bodhisattva. As I had quickly perceived, Triratna teaches a *miśra dharma*, drawing as it does not only on these three *yānas* but drawing on, and integrating, teachings from all the major forms of Buddhism. When not cooking or cleaning, you spent much of your time reading and meditating or sitting outside in the sun, which I also did once or twice. I did virtually nothing apart from eating and sleeping. I felt no need to talk, or even to think. There seemed to be between us and all around us a great ocean of silence in which we were both content to live, move, and have our being. Later on, when we had returned to Adhithana, you in fact remarked that it had been more like a retreat than a holiday.

June and July and the first three weeks of August passed quickly, and soon our holiday was a beautiful dream. Nor was it long before you were back at work, travelling to London and other places, while I returned to seeing visitors and dealing with correspondence. Adhithana was then a hive of activity. Besides servicing the different retreats that were going on there, the resident sangha was busy making arrangements to celebrate my ninetieth birthday with a series of special events. Neither of us had much to do with these arrangements, though we could not help knowing what was going on. Whenever you were at home we continued spending our evenings in study and discussion. This time we started going through the papers that Subhuti had produced on the basis of his discussions with me five or six years ago. We had gone through three papers, and were going through a fourth, when you received the news

that your mother was seriously ill. For a couple of days you were quite perplexed, not knowing what to do. You wanted to be with me on my birthday, but you also wanted to do the best you could for your mother. In the end it was decided that you should leave for New Zealand immediately. You left Adhithana on Thursday, 20 August, having booked a flight that would leave Heathrow the following day. To an observer our parting might have seemed a very matter of fact affair, but each knew what the other felt and there was no need for words.

Three days later, on Sunday 23 August, you were in Christchurch from whence you sent me your first letter. It was a clear, crisp day, you wrote, with the mountains covered with snow. From Christchurch you flew to Invercargill where you found your mother in good spirits, all things considered. It was not long before you realized, however, that you might have to remain in New Zealand for quite a long time. Whether the time be long or short, your absence will surely be felt by those of whose lives you are an important part. Deji will feel it, as will the depleted Annexe Team, which now consists of Buddhadasa, Suvajra, and Sthanashraddha, my new secretary, assisted from time to time by Mahamati and Yashodeva. I, too, will feel your absence, of course. How much I will feel it, you only will know.

Two days after your departure, when you were still in the air, Adhithana saw the launching of my new book, *A Moseley Miscellany*. It was not clear whether or not I would be attending the event, but in the end I did attend it, and was deeply touched by the reception I received from the four hundred Order members who had gathered in the marquee. In the evening, after dinner, I wrote an account of the launch while it was fresh in my memory, and this account I now insert in the present letter.

‘Buddhadasa, Suvajra, and I left the Annexe for the big marquee a few minutes before five. As we did so, there were loud rumbles of thunder and the rain fell very heavily. We drove through ‘tent city’, which I had not seen before, and up to the back entrance of the marquee, where I was received by Yashodeva and Lokeshvara. Once inside I took my seat on my mother’s chair (transported to the marquee for the occasion) with Parami on my right and Buddhadasa on my left. All this time, everyone was chanting the Śākyamuni mantra. Parami then said a few words, after which Subhuti very capably introduced Kalyanaprabha at some length. While he was speaking the rain poured down heavily, so that he had to raise his voice above the uproar despite having the help of the microphone. Kalyanaprabha herself then spoke. She spoke very beautifully, and fortunately the rain stopped just as she began. Her voice was loud and clear, and she gave a résumé of the contents of *A Moseley Miscellany*. There must have been nearly four hundred Order members present and the marquee was full to capacity. I was then given a large birthday cake and presented with a beautifully bound birthday card from the thousand and more Order members who had contributed to the £110,000 for the *Complete Works* and for translations.<sup>1</sup> This was the signal for

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<sup>1</sup> More money came in after the 90th birthday celebrations so that the final count was around £135,000.

everyone to sing 'Happy Birthday'. Buddhadasa, Suvajra and I then returned to the Annexe, by which time the skies had cleared. The whole event had lasted for about 45 minutes. I was told that as I entered the marquee many people, both men and women, were in tears. One thing I forgot to mention was that after I had taken my seat I was garlanded by a young Dharmacharini with a flower garland that she and Sanghamani had made. Suvajra now tells me that several Order members who went outside the marquee while Subhuti was introducing Kalyanaprabha saw a rainbow over the Annexe!

My ninetieth birthday came four days after the book launch and I spent it quietly. Not much was happening at Adhithana, and after lunch Suvajra drove me round to the Library, where Saddhanandi and Danasamudra gave me a guided tour of the *Nine Decades* exhibition that had been set up there. Fortunately you were able to see the exhibition shortly before you left, so I shall not attempt to describe it. Suffice it to say that it showed both imagination and professionalism on the part of those who set it up and that it would have graced any museum. So far as I remember, the idea for the exhibition came either from you or was the outcome of a discussion between you and Saddhanandi. During the months preceding my birthday Saddhanandi and I met up every few weeks, or even every few days, depending on circumstances. We dealt with one decade at a time. Saddhanandi would describe the three objects representing the decade, then ask me about them and about my life at that time. She was an excellent interviewer, putting questions that enabled me to express myself fully and freely. By the time we reached the ninth decade we had produced what proved to be a highly popular overview of my life, and a friendship has sprung up between us.

I have now come to the end of this odd 'Reverie-cum-Reminiscence' of mine, cast in the form of a letter to you, and I must admit that I do not know how to proceed. Perhaps a reverie or a reminiscence simply goes on and on till it peters out and I think the time has now come for me to say finis. I have enjoyed writing it even if I've not always written about enjoyable things, and I hope that you will enjoy reading it.

Yours with much love, as ever,

Bhante

## 2. Old Mr Boutell

I never met my father's stepfather but he was an important influence on me in my early life. He had been in the merchant navy and it was he who had brought back from China and other countries the curios that so fascinated me whenever I visited my grandmother. A large photograph of him hung on the wall in her kitchen, opposite a smaller photograph of my own grandfather. He had a smooth round face with a heavy moustache, and his eyes looked out on the world with a calm, clear gaze. I do not know when the photograph was taken but he must have been about thirty at the time. Neither do I know when he married my grandmother or when he died. There were two children of the marriage, a girl and a boy. There was Dorothy who died before I was born, and Charles, who was ten years younger than my father and whom I knew quite well. My father always spoke of him either as 'Dad' or as 'the Old Man' and my mother used to refer to him as 'Old Mr Boutell'. He could be violent, and it seems that when he was really angry the only person who dared stand up to him was my mother. More than once did her intervention save Charles from a beating and it was therefore not surprising that he should always have been quite fond of her.

There were times when Old Mr Boutell was drunk. Not that he liked to drink alone. He liked to drink in the company of his male friends. Every two or three weeks the big front room of the flat would be the scene of a rather rowdy party. Crates upon crates of beer would arrive beforehand, my father once told me, and on some nights there might be as many as twenty or thirty revellers. There would be a lot of talking and laughing, shouting and singing. At such times my grandmother would keep out of the way. One of the revellers was Harry Lauder, the Scottish entertainer, who lived nearby, and who may well have entertained the company with a rendering of his well known *I Love a Lassie*. Where the money came from I do not know.

Old Mr Boutell had no regular occupation, and he spent the whole day at home. His hobby was breeding prize bulldogs. When a pup was old enough he would tease it with a piece of rag until it became angry and clamped its teeth on the offending object, whereupon he would whirl the pup round and round in the air. If it kept hold of the rag it was a good bulldog and he would rear it. He must have hated cats as much as he loved bulldogs. Whenever one strayed into the small back garden he would catch it and kill it, burying the body at the foot of a grapevine that he was trying to grow in a corner of the garden.

Besides the curios he had collected, the Old Man possessed a formidable array of live shells of various kinds, one of which exploded when he was handling it, blowing off a thumb. After his death, my grandmother directed my father to get rid of these dangerous toys. Very gingerly he packed them in a suitcase and took them to the nearest police station, but the police refused to have anything to do with them. Chuck them into the nearest pond they told him. The suitcase must have rotted away long ago, but it is not unlikely that the shells are still lying at the bottom of a pond on Tooting Bec Common.

My grandmother got rid of a lot of other things as well. She herself once told me that soon after her husband's death she had thrown away all the grass skirts with which the walls of the

front staircase were decorated. She was tired of having to dust them every day, she declared. She also got rid of some of the other curios. One of the ways in which she did this, to my great delight, was to give them to me, sometimes as a birthday or Christmas present. In this way I came into the possession of a pair of opium pipes with jade mouthpieces, a chopstick set, and a thunderbolt. He had acquired the thunderbolt, the Old Man had once told my father, when he was in South Africa. During a thunderstorm he had taken shelter in a bungalow with a corrugated iron roof and the thunderbolt had pierced through the roof and buried itself deep in the earth not far from his feet. He had dug it up, and it proved to be two inches in diameter and quite heavy.

Many of the curios he had collected were of Chinese provenance and in this connection, too, the Old Man had a story to tell. He was in Peking (this must have been around the turn of the century), and had acquired a number of ornate jugs, basins, and other vessels, all of solid gold. These he had packed in a strong wooden box and sent home by sea, but the box never arrived at its destination. Had it arrived, he had once told my father, he would have been a very rich man.

### **3. The Young Philip Lingwood**

When I was very young my great pleasure was to spend time with my father. One of the reasons I liked spending time with him was that he used to talk to me telling me the names of flowers and trees and the stars, for although he lived and worked in the city he was at heart a countryman. He did not talk much about himself or about his own early life, though he may well have told me much that I have forgotten. His father having died when he was a few years old, his mother had sent him to live with his grandmother in Besthorpe, a village near Attleborough in Norfolk, where she herself had been born and brought up. There my father attended the village school. I remember once seeing a group photo of the children of the school, perhaps two or three dozen in number, seated in rows in front of the school building. Boys and girls alike, they all wore white pinafores. In the middle of one of the rows sat the small figure of my father. I cannot remember whether I was able to recognize him or whether my father pointed him out to me. My father was very fond of his grandmother, and must have lived with her and her blind husband for much of his childhood. He more than once told me how he went scrumping with the village boys and how they used to be chased by the farmers whose fruit they stole.

How old my father was when his mother brought him back to London, to live with her and his younger sister and, later, with his stepfather, I do not know. She must have been living at 23 Sellincourt Road, Tooting, where I was to spend my own childhood, for I know that my father attended the Sellincourt Road School. He had little or nothing to say about his schooldays, except that he used to fight with other boys. Like them, he must have left school at fourteen and started looking for work.

It would appear that he was soon working for a jeweller. Whether he had been apprenticed in the traditional way, or was simply an employee, was never clear to me. The only reason I think he may have been apprenticed is that he 'lived in' and that with him there were other boys, whether apprentices or not. They were mischievous boys and played tricks on the establishment's elderly housekeeper. One of their tricks, my father once told me, was to catch cockroaches and string them at eye level across the passage where the short-sighted woman would, to her horror, bump into them. My father remembered the jeweller quite fondly, for he seems to have been a favourite of his. From time to time he would give him semi-precious stones, including several garnets, all of which in time came into my possession.

Then came the war, and it was not long before my father enlisted. 'Mum,' he told his mother, 'I've joined up.' She was not a woman of many words. 'Well,' she said, 'it's your decision, and you will have to live with it.' In what year my father enlisted I do not know, but at the time he could not have been more than sixteen or seventeen. Like many other young men at that time, he had given a false age and the authorities were naturally disinclined to question his word. I remember seeing a photograph taken of him shortly after he enlisted. The face that looked out from under the peak of the big army hat had an expression of shyness and self-consciousness, though at the same time it was evident that young Philip Lingwood was not

devoid of self-assurance. Soon he was in France and living in the mud and blood of the trenches with other young men, hearing the dull thud of the heavy artillery of both sides and the screaming of shells overhead. Fragments from one of these shells hit him, and when he regained consciousness he was lying in a field hospital tent with a badly damaged and very painful right arm and hand. My memory next finds him an inmate of St Benedict's Hospital, Tooting, and wearing, like the other inmates, the light blue suit and red tie of the convalescent soldier. As a young man he had a hot temper, and he once told me that while at St Benedict's he had fought with another soldier, despite his injured arm, and had been pulled off him by one of the nurses in a way he found excruciatingly painful. His only other anecdote from this period of his life related to my mother. She was then a member of the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) and her work sometimes took her to the hospital, which is how she and my father met. They used to go out together and sometimes, when he had stayed out after hours, she would help him climb back over the wall. From St Benedict's my father went to the Lord Roberts Workshops by which time he must have been discharged from the army. At the Lord Roberts Workshops, where disabled ex-servicemen were taught a trade, he opted for French polishing, and soon was able to earn a living. One day he said to his mother, 'Mum, I am going to get married.'

'Well,' she said laconically, in words she had once used before, 'It's your decision, and you will have to live with it.'

## 4. Some Bombay Friends

They ran down the slope holding hands, laughing like happy children. The scene was the garden of The Residence, Gangtok, where they were staying as guests of Apa Pant, the Political Officer, with whom I also sometimes stayed. It was my first sight of Maurice and Hilla. We soon became acquainted, and they invited me to visit them at their Bombay home the next time I was in the city. The time must have been the mid-1950s.

Maurice Frydman was Polish, had spent some time in a Jesuit seminary, had come to India before the war, and for some years had worked as a civil engineer in Aundh, the smallest of the princely states. The ruler of the state was known as the Chief of Aundh and in Maurice's time the chief minister happened to be Apa Pant, the ruler's son. The two men had become friends and they had kept up their friendship after Independence, which was how Maurice and Hilla came to be staying with Apa Pant in Gangtok. Maurice was a very small man, with a big head of the long, dolichocephalic type, and he had one shoulder higher than the other. He always wore a white Indian shirt, over white pyjama pants, both garments being of khadi or hand-loomed cloth, for in matters economic Maurice was a staunch Gandhian. The costume was completed by a shoulder bag, in which he carried his spectacles and various papers, and by a pair of large black army boots. His white hair was close-cropped, his light blue eyes had the innocence of a child, while his thin face generally wore a mildly beatific smile. At the time of our first meeting he must have been in his mid-sixties. Hilla Petit was a Parsi by birth. She was rather taller than Maurice, and wore her grey hair bobbed in European style. She was probably older than Maurice and I never knew how they had originally met.

Maurice and Hilla lived in Bombay, in the exclusive Malabar Hill district. Whenever I was in Bombay I used to visit them at their ground floor flat on the Nepean Sea Road. In the living room there was much old-fashioned black teak furniture, which evidently had once graced a much bigger room. I particularly remember an elaborately carved settee some ten or twelve feet in length which could have comfortably accommodated seven or eight persons. From the centre of the ceiling there was suspended a huge crystal chandelier, which hung so low that a moderately tall person had to take care not to pass beneath it. The dining room was dark. If I happened to visit them in the morning, Hilla would press me, very warmly, to stay for lunch, which I often did. Lunch was a strange meal for Hilla liked everything to be passed through a blender, so that it all had the same consistency. With us at table there would be Hilla's adopted daughter, then twelve or thirteen years old. Hilla doted on her, but Maurice had doubts about the wisdom of a middle-class, childless woman taking over the daughter of her servants, and in effect alienating her socially and culturally from her parents, who in this case were Goanese Catholics, as were many servants in Bombay. Despite his doubts, Maurice accepted the situation and liked to joke that theirs was what he called a synthetic family, rather than one made in the natural way

Once I stayed on so long after lunch that both Maurice and Hilla pressed me to stay the night, which in the end I did. Maurice insisted on giving up his room to me, saying he would sleep

on the floor in Hilla's room. His room was quite small and on three of its walls there hung huge framed portraits of Gandhi, Ramana Maharshi and Krishnamurti. So large were they that they dominated the room, which contained little more than a mattress and a few books. These three were Maurice's heroes. Gandhi had been assassinated in 1948, Ramana Maharshi had died peacefully in 1950, but Krishnamurti was still alive, as I was soon to be reminded. On going to see my two friends one morning I found them in a state of suppressed excitement. Krishna-ji was in Bombay, they hastened to tell me, and he would be giving a few talks. On no account should I miss hearing him. They had some influence with the organizers of the talks, they added, and they would make sure I had a good seat. I was touched by their eagerness that I should hear Krishnamurti, and gladly accepted their offer. The name of Krishnamurti was well known to me. I had read some of his talks, and knew something of his history. As a boy he had been 'discovered' by the Theosophist Charles Leadbeater, had been educated in England, and had been promoted by Leadbeater and Annie Besant as the new World Teacher, the Maitreya of the Buddhists, and the Messiah of the Christians, and a cult had developed around him. Krishnamurti had eventually broken free of the Theosophists, dramatically rejecting the claims they had made on his behalf, claims which it seems he had once accepted. Since then he had travelled the world denouncing every form of religious faith and had, paradoxically, again become the centre of a cult! It was therefore not surprising that I should have wanted to see Krishnamurti in the flesh, and hear him speak.

Maurice and Hilla having been as good as their word, I had a seat near the side of the platform. There were about three hundred people in the hall, representing the cultural elite of Bombay. They sat on chairs rather than on the floor in the traditional manner and there was an expectant hush in the air. When Krishnamurti entered I observed him closely. He was tall and thin, with long grey hair, and he was dressed in a kind of white robe. His face was deeply lined, and his expression, I thought, was one of intense suffering. He reminded me of a fallen archangel. He spoke in English, with a public school accent. The gist of his talk was that the unconditioned was to be found in the conditioned, though how it was to be found he did not say. As I knew from the talks I had read, he did not believe there was such a way. The path to reality was a pathless path, nor did it lead anyone anywhere. The talk was not all on this high level. At one point Krishnamurti exclaimed in tones of withering scorn, 'There you all are, rotting beneath your *Bhagavad Gītās*!' A sigh of satisfaction passed through the audience. This was what they wanted. This was what they had come to hear. They were like a Christian congregation responding with deep satisfaction to the denunciations of the hellfire preacher who told them they were all damned. After the talk there were questions from the audience.

'Sir, we have been following you and listening to you for forty years,' said a woman of western appearance, her voice quivering with emotion, 'but we have not got anywhere.'

I do not remember what Krishnamurti said in reply. What I do remember is that a number of people turned towards the woman with expressions of irritation and annoyance. How could

she be so obtuse, they seemed to be saying. After the meeting Maurice and Hilla were eager to know what I thought of Krishnamurti's talk. I had enjoyed it very much, I said, as indeed I had. Whereupon they offered to make arrangements for me to hear the rest of his talks, evidently assuming that having once had a taste of him I could not but want more. I declined the offer. Krishnamurti believed that one should not try to repeat an experience, I reminded them, and I had no intention of trying to repeat the experience I had been vouchsafed that evening. I also asked Maurice about his hero's condemnation of the study of the *Bhagavad Gītā* and other scriptures. If it was wrong to study them, why did he allow his talks to be published in book form? Krishna-ji's books, Maurice retorted, were not books but slices of experience. This by no means satisfied me. If his books were slices of experience, I wanted to know, were not the *Bhagavad Gītā* and other scriptures also slices of experience?

Maurice had three heroes, but Hilla seemingly had only one, as I discovered when she showed me her room one day. Inside the door, to the right, there was a kind of sideboard on which stood, all in silver frames, twenty or more photographs of Krishnamurti at different stages of his life. A stick of incense was burning. There were other differences between the two friends. Hilla sometimes liked to talk, but she could not be described as talkative, whereas Maurice could be extremely talkative. He was very fond of giving advice, regardless of whether or not it was wanted. He gave it good-naturedly and seemed not to mind if it was not taken. I was a particular object of his solicitude. He appeared to think that I was young and inexperienced, and needed the guidance of those who were older and wiser. He was especially concerned to advise me on my work among the ex-Untouchables, as they were then called, who in 1956 had converted to Buddhism under the leadership of Dr Ambedkar. He gave me advice on this subject whenever we met, as well as sometimes advising me in writing. Not that Maurice ever wrote letters. He wrote only postcards. His handwriting was so big that on a postcard there was room only for a couple of short sentences and his signature. His advice was often too general to be useful, but once he said something that made a deep impression on me. 'Sangharakshita,' he once said, taking me by the arm, 'you are wasting your time teaching these people about Buddhism. They do not need a Buddha. What they need is a Manu.' As I knew, Manu was the legendary Indian Lawgiver, whose code governed every aspect of Hindu social life from the cradle to the grave, and I could not but acknowledge that there was truth in Maurice's words. More than once had I found, on meeting a group of newly converted Buddhists, that they did not ask about Buddhist philosophy, or about meditation, or even about ethics. Their first question was invariably, 'Now that we are Buddhists, how are we to perform the marriage ceremony?'

Although many of the new Buddhists were illiterate, especially in the rural areas, there had sprung up, even before 1956, a small educated elite. To this elite belonged Professor Shewalay. I do not remember how we first met, but it must have been in or near the Siddharth College of Arts and Science in Bombay, where he taught. He had brought with him in his tiffin box a little wad of chapattis, and it being lunchtime he offered me one. I took the chapatti and we continued our conversation. Afterwards he told me how impressed he had

been by the matter of fact way that I had taken the chapatti. He came from an ex-Untouchable community, he explained, and although untouchability had been outlawed in India there were many Caste Hindus who would not accept food from his hands or even touch him. The fact that I had accepted a chapatti from him meant that we were friends. He was a small man, even smaller than Maurice, and unlike Maurice he wore a Western style jacket and trousers, complete with collar and tie, and he had a mop of black hair. His eyes were unusually bright and his thin face at times wore a sweet smile. His voice was rather loud for such a small man, and his laugh was unpleasantly raucous. Even in ordinary conversation he tended to hold forth emphatically, as though he was lecturing a class of rather dull students. As I soon discovered, Shewalay was a very ambitious man. His ambition was to create a Buddhist university. In his own mind, indeed, the University already existed. He would say such things as, 'The University will be closed next week', or, 'Pali classes will be held at the University at eight o'clock every evening', and so it stood before him in all the glory of bricks and mortar. Pali classes were indeed held, but they were held in a room at Siddharth College and they were taken by Shewalay himself. Though his subject was history, Pali grammar was his passion. Unfortunately, my friend was not a good communicator. All he did was drill the thirty or more new Buddhists who came to his classes in declensions and conjugations. 'I love teaching Pali grammar', he told me enthusiastically, his eyes shining. But the students had come not for declensions and conjugations but for the Dhamma, and gradually they stopped coming.

It was around this time that I got to know Muriel Payne OBE. I was introduced to her by Maurice, who had known her for many years. She was a tall, well-built woman of about fifty, with well groomed white hair, and she wore a simple blue dress. Her manner was dignified but friendly, and her face wore a pleasant smile. She was an educationist and had been awarded her OBE for her work in the field of Indian education. She was also a trained nurse, and during the war she had lived with Krishnamurti for six months and nursed him through a mental breakdown. In the course of her work with schools in different parts of India she had noticed that there was no real communication between teachers and pupils, just as I had noticed that there was none between Shewalay and his Pali students, and that it was largely owing to this lack of communication that educational standards were so low. She had also noticed that there was little communication between the teachers themselves or even between some husbands and wives. In order to remedy this appalling situation she had devised what she called 'communication exercises'. Though she was no writer she had written a book with the title *Creative Education*, in which the exercises were described. I was fascinated by all this, for the exercises helped one to become more aware of the person with whom one was communicating, and mindfulness or awareness was an important Buddhist virtue. So fascinated was I that one day I told Miss Payne, as she was always called, that if she would agree to teach the exercises to a group of people, I would undertake to find both the people and a venue for the course. The result was that for three or four successive evenings she taught the 'communication exercises' to me and about twenty other people, all friends of

mine, including Professor Shewalay. I found the exercises not only useful in developing awareness but also exhilarating, and I have since taught them to others. Shewalay, not surprisingly, found the very idea of communication difficult to grasp, and insisted on arguing with Miss Payne instead of doing the exercises. She must have thought of him as being the embodiment of all that was worst in the Indian educational system. Miss Payne had other tricks up her sleeve, so to speak. Happening to notice that there was a slight squint in one of my eyes she asked if I would like her to 'run a process' on me, to which I readily agreed. She then told me to think of an eye, which I did. Could I see the eye? Yes. What was the expression of the eye? 'Oh, it is very angry,' I exclaimed. Next she asked me if I knew where I was, whereupon everything changed. I was a baby and lying on my mother's lap, my mother herself being seated on a low nursing chair. My father's sister, who was also my godmother, was looking down at my mother with an expression of anger that seemed to include me. I think the squint that Miss Payne had noticed disappeared, though it may return at times of stress.

I never met Miss Payne again, and never heard what became of her after I had left India in 1964. Shewalay had told me that one day he would follow in the footsteps of the Buddha quite literally. He would marry, would have a son, and then go forth from home into homelessness, and, as I learned a few years later, this he had actually done. He had married a prostitute (on principle), had had a son, and had been ordained as a *bhikkhu*, under the name of Sivalibodhi. After his ordination he had continued to live with his mother, his wife, and his son, supporting them out of his salary as a professor at the Siddharth College of Arts and Science. Whether he went to work each morning wearing his yellow robe I never knew. Knowing my old friend as I did, I think that he probably did just that.

## 5. Encounters on the Underground

I was born and brought up in South London, and it was therefore not long before I became acquainted with the extensive network that is the London Underground system. I made my first journey on the Tube, as it was popularly called, when I was six, and I made it in the company of my father. Most likely we were on our way to one of the South Kensington museums. My predominant impression, as we sat in the rapidly moving carriage, was one of stifling heat, and noise so loud that we could hardly hear each other speak. Thereafter I was to make regular use of the Underground both before my departure for India in 1944, and after my return in 1964. It was in the early years of this latter period that I had my four encounters. Two of them took place on the Northern Line and two on the Central Line.

It was eleven o'clock at night, and I was travelling on the Northern Line, heading for northwest London where I was then living. I must have been leading a meditation class or giving a lecture and had stayed on afterwards talking with friends until quite late. My mind still being preoccupied with our discussion, I did not at first take much notice of the person sitting opposite. Eventually I looked at him, or rather, I realized that he was looking at me. He was wearing cherry coloured corduroy trousers and a buttercup-yellow shirt open at the throat. I judged him to be seventeen or eighteen and his beautiful face was lit up with a smile. He was not only looking at me but looking at me with what could only be called love. In fact he seemed to be in love with me. I did not know what to think, especially as the angelic young man was evidently in a state of sexual arousal. Who was he? What did he want with me? Should I speak to him, or should I wait for him to make the first move? Such were the thoughts that passed through my mind. How long we sat gazing at each other, he with that look of adoration in his eyes, I do not know. It could not have been for more than five minutes for by this time I had reached my destination and had no choice but to alight.

The young man did not move. Over the years I have often reflected on the encounter. Had the young man taken LSD, in which case would he have looked at whoever came and sat opposite him with the same love with which he had looked at me? Alternatively, perhaps our paths had crossed in this way because we were meant to be friends and companions and I should not have allowed my habitual cautiousness to prevent me from asking him to go home with me regardless of what some of my friends might think. Whatever I should or should not have done, the vision of the beautiful young man in the cherry-red corduroy trousers and buttercup-yellow shirt remains with me to this day.

My second encounter took place on the Central Line. At the time I was living at Sukhavati, above the FWBO's centre in Bethnal Green, and every few months I would have a little holiday, taking the Tube from Bethnal Green to Tottenham Court Road, from whence I would explore the bookshops of Charing Cross Road. On one such occasion I was caught up in the morning rush, and found myself hemmed in by commuters. To my right was the back of a woman. She had a bag slung over her shoulder and the mouth of the bag was half open. Facing me and the woman's back stood a well dressed man in his thirties. We had not been

long on our way before he slid his hand into the woman's bag. I looked at him and slowly shook my head as if to say 'you shouldn't be doing that, you know'. The man smiled and withdrew his hand from the bag. A few minutes later the train stopped, the doors opened, and several people including the pickpocket got out, and the woman and I continued on our way with rather more elbow room than before. Reflecting on the incident afterwards, I concluded that the well dressed man was a professional pickpocket, taking systematic advantage of the cramped conditions that prevailed on the Underground during the morning and evening rush hours.

My next encounter also took place on the Central Line when I was returning from Tottenham Court Road to Bethnal Green. I was sitting at the end of the carriage. Opposite me, but a little nearer to the exit, there sat an elderly couple. The woman had a small closed basket on her lap, from which a faint mewling could be heard. From the other end of the carriage there came towards us a strange figure. He was tall and raw boned and his filthy, tightly fitting clothes clung to him like a second skin. His long hair was unkempt, and his expression was fierce and scowling. As he came he sang in a loud raucous voice accompanying himself with strident strummings on his guitar. As he neared the old couple the gentleman asked him, very politely, not to sing and play so loudly. They had a kitten in their basket, and the noise was frightening it. The man snarled a peremptory refusal and went on singing and playing more loudly than ever. Some people gave him money, others did not. I was one of those who did not give him anything. It was not that I disapproved of buskers, even though busking was illegal, but I was disgusted by his behaviour towards the old couple and their kitten. Far from disapproving of buskers I would generally give them a few coins. At Tottenham Court Road station near the exit from the southbound platform there was a corner in which a busker would be playing. More often than not he or she was an out of work classical musician, and as one stepped off the escalator one would hear in the distance the sound of a violin or a flute playing a beautiful Bach melody.

From out of work musicians to out of work actors is only a short step, and I am reminded of an encounter, if such it may be called, that took place not on the Underground but in a café. The café was the As You like It, which was situated next door to Sakura, the Buddhist shop, in Monmouth Street, in whose basement the FWBO's first meditation classes were held. After a class, my friend, Terry, and I would sometimes adjourn to As You Like It, where I would have a cup of tea and he his evening meal. Barrie, the owner of the café, was a very thin, very camp man of about thirty-five. He spent much of his time talking on the phone, for As You Like It doubled as a kind of theatrical agency, and there were usually two or three good-looking young actors lounging about. Just inside the entrance there invariably sat a very elderly woman. She was dressed entirely in black, and her black hat made her yellowish features look almost cadaverous. She never spoke to anyone, except for a word to Barrie or to the young actor who brought her meal. It was always a big meal, and probably her one square meal of the day, and I noticed that Barrie never charged her for it. With her she had a large handbag, stuffed full of newspaper cuttings, and when not eating she would take out some of

these and study them closely. I never saw her arrive, and I never saw her leave. She seemed to be a permanent fixture of the place.

My last encounter took place on the Northern Line, as I was travelling down to Tottenham Court Road. There were not many people in the carriage and looking along the gangway to the left I saw a man standing with his back towards me in front of the closed doors of the carriage. Of medium height and sturdily built, he wore a dark suit and was bare headed. He was obviously waiting for the next stop. The instant I set eyes on him I said to myself, 'That's not a human being, that's a little devil,' and I decided to keep him under observation. This I could do for only a few minutes, for the train soon came to a halt and the doors slid back. As they did so, the man turned round and very deliberately thumbed his nose at me. He then skipped onto the platform and ran laughing to the exit. It was as though he was saying, 'You haven't caught me yet.'

## 6. Colin Wilson Revisited

Colin Wilson's *The Outsider* was published in 1956, and a few years later a friend of mine lent me the book with the comment that I would find it interesting. This friend considered himself to be very much an Outsider, as he had more than once told me, and the consciousness that he was an Outsider deeply rankled with him, making him feel bitter and resentful.

That was fifty or more years ago. Though I found the book interesting, I did not follow up the idea of the Outsider until some years later, when I was concerned with the nature of the difference between the individual and the group member, and between the group and the spiritual community. Neither was I then concerned with the question of whether or not I was myself an Outsider in Colin Wilson's sense of the term. As I look back over my life it appears to me that even if I did not think of myself as an Outsider there were times when I was seen as one by others, at least in certain respects. For the first few years of my life the question of whether or not I was an Outsider did not arise. Indeed, it could not arise for I was born into a family of which I was a fully accepted member from the beginning. I belonged to it, and took the fact of my belonging to it for granted. This happy state of affairs came to an end, to an extent, when at the age of ten or eleven I went back to school after an absence of two or more years. I was absent because I had been confined first to bed and then to a wheelchair, and I was confined to them because I had been diagnosed as suffering from valvular disease of the heart. Even when I was back at school I was not allowed to play games or take part in PT, or even to walk fast, much less still to run. I was not allowed to stand during morning assembly, for it was thought that if I stood for too long it would put a strain on my heart. A classmate was therefore deputed to follow me into the hall carrying a chair, and on this chair I would sit during the hymns, prayers, and announcements. I sat on it even when the rest of the assembly sat on the floor, which made me a very conspicuous figure. In this way I came to be considered different from the other boys and perhaps even as something of an Outsider.

Being an Outsider, if such I was in those days, was not without its advantages. Because I could not run around in the playground with the other boys I stayed in the classroom during breaks and read. Sometimes I had a companion. This was a boy of my own age called Douglas Nicholas. He was fair-haired and green-eyed, with a yellowish complexion, and though he was quite a big boy he was very timid and was known as a cry baby. Since he was afraid of being set upon he did not go out into the playground during breaks and thus sometimes came and sat by me. Though he was timid, he had a vicious streak in his character and liked to pinch me in the leg quite hard so that I was not fond of his company. On leaving school one afternoon I found that Douglas Nicholas was being pinned against a wall by a group of eight or nine boys. They were punching, poking, and pushing him and he was blubbering. Without thinking I pushed my way through the boys, seized Douglas by the hand, and to jeers and catcalls led him away to safety, which meant taking him halfway home, though his home was in a different direction from mine. The incident made me realize that

being an Outsider gave me a certain immunity, even a certain status, so that I was able to do things that I could not otherwise have done.

A few years later there came the war, and with the war there came the great evacuation of school children from London to places of safety in the countryside, for it was expected that London would be bombed by the Luftwaffe. The bombing did not come at once, but it did come later, when in 1940 the Luftwaffe rained bombs on London for fifty-seven nights in succession killing 20,000 people and destroying much of the city, including sixteen Wren churches. I had been evacuated a few months earlier, travelling with my suitcase and my gas-mask to distant Devonshire in the company of several dozen classmates. At first I was made welcome, but in my second billet the landlady conceived an aversion to me eventually referring to me as a 'vacuee' in tones that suggested that for her an evacuee was among the lowest forms of human life. To her I was an Outsider, not only because I was an evacuee but because I spoke with a different accent and had interests that were beyond her ken. My younger sister, Joan, had a more positive experience of evacuation. She had been evacuated the previous year to Sussex, being billeted with a farmer and his wife not far from Chichester. When she had been with them for a couple of months my mother and I paid her a visit. Mr and Mrs Ayling were both in their late thirties. They were childless, and it was soon evident that they treated Joan as their own daughter. Mrs Ayling was like any other housewife, but in his corduroy britches and leather gaiters Mr Ayling was the very picture of a farmer. I do not remember how long the visit lasted, but we stayed long enough to accompany Joan and Mr Ayling to a livestock auction, Mr Ayling having a cow he wanted to sell. It fetched only £2 and I shall not easily forget the look of disappointment, almost of anguish, that passed over his bronzed, handsome face. Back at the farm my mother chatted with the Aylings, while Joan snuggled up to Mr Ayling, and I picked up a book that was lying around. It bore the title *My Life in Time*, and it had been written by Mr Ayling's aunt. As its title suggested, the authoress had a life outside time as well as in it, and I soon discovered that the work was of the occult or 'mystical' type, such as were soon to become known to me through the writings of Mme Blavatsky. This was not the first time that I had picked up and read a book while visiting with my mother.

Not long before our visit to the farm she had taken me to see Auntie Jessie, one of her elder sisters, who lived in a downstairs flat in Chiswick. The visit probably occupied the greater part of the day, for the two sisters had a lot to say to each other, and it was not long before I started looking around for something to read. There was nothing lying around, but in my aunt's living room there was a glass fronted bookcase and in the bookcase I could see several rows of books. Soon I had opened the bookcase and taken out three of the books. These were E. W. Hornung's *Raffles*, and Marie Corelli's *The Mighty Atom* and *Jane*, and by the time my mother and I had said goodbye to Auntie Jessie I had read all three. *Raffles*, the eponymous hero of the novel, is a gentleman crook and the book seemed to be an attempt to make crime look glamorous. Marie Corelli's books were shorter and much more moral. Indeed, I remember them as being full of moral indignation. In *The Mighty Atom* the indignation is

directed against those wicked people who thought that children should be brought up without being given any religious instruction. Here the eponymous hero is a dear little boy who hangs himself with his beautiful silk sash because he wants to find out whether or not there is a God. In *Jane* her indignation is directed against the frivolous, loose-living upper classes. The eponymous heroine inherits a fortune and decides to see what fashionable society is like. She buys a big house in London, entertains the highest aristocracy, including royalty, and one evening has the satisfaction of ordering everyone to leave her house at once. Young as I was, I well understood that in the person of her heroine, Marie Corelli was pronouncing the verdict of the virtuous middle-class on the doings of their profligate social superiors. Marie Corelli was a bad writer, according to the critics, but she was highly readable, which is probably why I remember those books to this day.

As my behaviour on these visits suggests, I was in the habit of picking up and reading any book that I found lying around. Whether young or old, at home or abroad, one of the first things I would do on finding myself in a new place was to see what books were there for me to read during my visit. One of the most memorable of such finds took place more than sixty years ago. I was in South India with a friend. We were wandering ascetics, having gone forth from home into the homeless life as the Buddha had done many centuries earlier. We had no identity papers, no possessions other than the gerua-dyed robes we wore and, in my case, a copy of the *Dhammapada*. We went barefoot, walking from place to place and relying for our food on the generosity of the people through whose villages we passed. We were Outsiders. We were in the world, but not of it, at least so far as externals went. We were celibate, had no family, and no worldly occupation. The occasion I am recalling finds my friend and me, footsore and weary, approaching an unpretentious building, being warmly welcomed, given food, and finally being settled in a bungalow nearby. We were in Anandashram, the abode of Swami Ramdas, and we stayed there for six weeks. We spent much of our time in meditation, but every now and then we went to the Bhajan Hall where we listened to the devotional songs and talked with Swami Ramdas. It was not long before we discovered that the ashram possessed a library, or rather a small, very miscellaneous collection of religious books. Among them, to my surprise and delight, was Suzuki's translation of *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*. I had seen a version of it before, but I had not read it, and I therefore proceeded to copy it out into my rather fat notebook. This notebook I still have, and together with twenty-six other items it formed part of the Nine Decade Exhibition that was held in connection with my ninetieth birthday celebrations.

From Anandashram my friend and I travelled to the ashram of the celebrated Ramana Maharshi. We stayed there for six weeks, occupying a cave at the foot of Mount Arunachala, the mountain of light. Every few days we would pay a visit to the ashram in order to have *darshan* of the Maharshi. One night I had a vision of Amitābha, the red Buddha, the Buddha of the West. I took the vision to mean that having spent two years as a freelance wandering ascetic I should now seek ordination as a *bhikkhu*. Not long afterwards, therefore, my friend and I were given the lower or *sāmaṇera* ordination by a senior Burmese monk, and more than

a year later, my friend having left for Ceylon, I received the higher or *bhikkhu* ordination from a sangha consisting of monks from Burma, Ceylon, India, and Nepal. The Buddha had reminded his *bhikkhu* disciples that upon entering the sangha they left behind them their former names and social identities and henceforth were reckoned simply as Sons of the Buddha, but I soon found that in modern times this was not always the case. A Sinhalese monk for example, was often Sinhalese first and a *bhikkhu* afterwards. Moreover, many monks were keenly interested in politics, even to the extent of supporting one political party rather than another, and some years later this involvement of monks in politics culminated in a Prime Minister of Ceylon being assassinated by a Sinhalese *bhikkhu*. Far from being Outsiders, as the Buddha and his *bhikkhu* disciples were, such political monks were as much Insiders as were the laity.

But it is time I went into reverse and reconnected with the war years. Since I suffered from valvular disease of the heart, and was still supposed not to run or even to walk quickly, I had assumed that I was quite unfit for military service. At my Medical Board, however, I was classed as B2, while the cardiologist to whom I was referred, at my request, told me that there was nothing wrong with my heart. Thus, from being an Outsider who could not even run quickly I was transformed, overnight, into an Insider who, with two or three dozen other men, was drilled, went on route marches, and learned to handle a variety of lethal weapons. In *The Rainbow Road* the chapter in which I describe my early days in the army is headed 'The Misfit'. In a sense we were all misfits, having been plunged into the army from various walks of life and at various ages from eighteen to forty-five. Though I did not realize it at the time we were comparatively lucky. We were lucky because on the strength of our knowledge of Morse code we had been posted to a semi-secret unit of the Royal Corps of Signals, and had to undergo only the most basic military training. Even so, after four or five months it became evident that the authorities wanted to get us off military training and into full-time technical training as quickly as possible. No more drill, no more guard duty, and no more route marches, and we were given as many weekend passes as we wanted!

In this more civilized atmosphere tensions relaxed, and we were able to take up the thread of interests that we had had to drop on entering the army. In my own case I had more time for walks in the countryside and for reading and writing poetry. Nor was this all. Living at close quarters with other men, especially those of my own age, I became more aware than ever that I was an Outsider. I was not an Outsider because I loved the poetry of Robert Herrick, or was exhilarated by Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, or even because I regarded myself as a Buddhist. I was an Outsider for deeper and darker reasons. I was an Outsider because I was sexually attracted to men, not to women, and I had been aware of this since the age of fourteen.

In subsequent years, thanks to my wide reading, I had become aware that there were, and always had been, men like me, among them being some of the brightest names in poetry, literature, music, and the visual arts. By the time I entered the army, therefore, I knew just

where I stood, sexually speaking. I also knew what the majority of people thought of sexuality such as mine. Homosexuality was unnatural. It was wicked, sinful, and perverse and a homosexual was a moral leper. This was not the worst. In my own country, as in other civilized countries, any kind of homosexual activity was a criminal offence, and there were countries in which it was punishable by death. It therefore behoved me to be very careful what I did or said, or even how I looked at other men. This was not without its consequences for my emotional life. Keeping my feelings to myself became a habit, especially when those feelings were very strong and directed to another man. Many years were to pass before I was able to give expression to such feelings even to a limited extent.

Though it was on account of my particular type of sexuality that I was an Outsider, one could be an Outsider for all sorts of other reasons, as Colin Wilson made clear. One could be an Outsider for reasons that were political, or religious, or cultural, or commercial, or for ones that were purely social. Whatever the reason, there were advantages as well as disadvantages to being an Outsider, as I had discovered when at school. One advantage was that as an Outsider one had a sharper sense of separation from the group to which one belonged. It gave one a heightened awareness of one's individuality and, therefore, of the possibility of a development that went beyond group values to the higher values of philosophy, religion, and the arts. Another advantage was that as an Outsider one was unusually sensitive to the subliminal signals coming from other people. In certain situations, the ability to read those signals might be a matter of life or death. A political dissident living under a totalitarian regime, or a homosexual living in a country where homosexuality was a criminal or even capital offence, needed to be constantly on the alert. Like some animals he would have to sleep with one eye open. Any talk of the advantages of being an Outsider is likely to have a hollow sound in the ears of one who is himself suffering from being an Outsider. Such suffering is of two kinds, external and internal. The former includes ostracism, torture, imprisonment, and death. The latter occurs when the Outsider introjects the values of the group and condemns himself because the group condemns him. If the Outsider is homosexual he will feel shame and guilt on account of his sexuality. He may even try to deny it. In extreme cases he may commit suicide. As George V famously said, 'I thought men like that shot themselves.'

Again I must go into reverse and reconnect with my time in India as a Buddhist monk. In 1956, 400,000 men and women renounced Hinduism and embraced Buddhism under the leadership of Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar. I was then living in Kalimpong, a small town in the foothills of the eastern Himalayas, and it was not long before I became involved in the movement of mass conversion that had been thus inaugurated. The converts were ex-Untouchables. They were Outsiders in that they were outside the Hindu caste system and were systematically treated in a humiliating and degrading manner by the caste Hindu majority. I met Dr Ambedkar several times, and after his untimely death spent much of my time travelling among the new Buddhists and teaching them the fundamentals of the Dhamma. This I did for seven or eight years, in this way winning their confidence so that

even after my departure for England in 1964 they did not forget me. Some of my non-Buddhist friends wondered how I could have so much influence with the new Buddhists. I was not an Indian. I was British, and as such an Outsider, a mere *mleccha* or barbarian. To this I replied that I was indeed an Outsider, not only because I was not a citizen of India but because I was a Buddhist monk, there being very few *bhikkhus* in India at that time. It was because I was an Outsider that the new Buddhists trusted me. Like them, I was outside the Hindu caste system. We were Outsiders together.

In 1962 I was invited by the English Sangha Trust to spend six months in England. As I wanted to finish the book on which I was working, and had moreover undertaken a nine-month tour among the new Buddhists, it was not until 1964 that I was able to leave India. At that time there were two Buddhist organizations in London, both of them quite small. There was the Buddhist Society of London and there was the English Sangha Association, the trustees of which had invited me to make the visit. Membership of the Buddhist Society was open to all. One did not even have to be a Buddhist to be a member, or even a practising Buddhist if one happened to be Buddhist at all. Membership of the English Sangha Association, on the other hand, was open only to those who wanted to see a branch of the Buddhist monastic order established in England and who were committed to its support when established. The Buddhist Society, which had originally been the Buddhist Lodge of the Theosophical Society, functioned as a common platform for different forms of Buddhism, though the dominant form was a Zen deriving mainly from the writings of D. T. Suzuki. Committed as it was to the establishment of an indigenous monastic order, the English Sangha Association naturally favoured Theravāda Buddhism. As I soon discovered, the four or five hundred English Buddhists were more or less evenly divided between the Society and the Association, though a handful belonged to both. Though I was based at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, which belonged to the English Sangha Trust, I gave lectures and led meditation classes for the members of both the Association and the Society. In this way I sought to bring the two Buddhist organizations together. This did not please everybody, and eventually I saw that a new form of Buddhism was needed in England, perhaps in the West. As was not the case with the Society, all the members of this new form of Buddhism would be committed Buddhists, though unlike the Association they would not be committed to any one form of Buddhism. Two years later, after I had paid a brief farewell visit to India, this new Buddhist movement came into existence in London as the Friends of the Western Sangha. Yet it did not emerge fully-formed all at once, like Pallas Athena from the head of Zeus. It was not a blueprint but a seed, and like a seed it needed time for its development.

This development has now been going on for forty-eight years and it will continue to develop and expand after my death. To begin with I gave all the talks, led all the meditation classes and country retreats, and conducted all the ordinations within the Triratna Buddhist Order, as the Western Buddhist Order eventually became. Soon the seed was quite a tree, a tree with several big branches, a number of twigs and innumerable leaves. So many twigs and leaves were there that sometimes it became difficult for people to see the structure of the tree. I

therefore started speaking in terms of the Six Distinctive Emphases of the Triratna Buddhist Order and Community and gave more than one talk on them. This is not the place for me to summarize those talks. I do, however, remember an interesting coincidence. The Triratna Buddhist Community was founded in 1967, membership being open to all, including homosexuals. It so happened that it was the same year, 1967, that homosexual acts between consenting adult men in private were decriminalized in England and Wales. A homosexual was no longer a complete Outsider, at least officially. When I started speaking in terms of the Six Distinctive Emphases of Triratna, senior members of the Order were already running most Triratna activities, and before many years had passed they were running them all.

At the time of writing I am living at Adhithana. It is autumn, the poet's 'season of mists and mellow fruitfulness', and there have been mists enough and much mellow fruitfulness in the form of the loads of apples that have been carted away from the neighbouring orchards. Though I have visitors, it is a long time since I paid any visits, and a long time, therefore, since I have had the experience of picking up a book that happened to be lying around and reading it on the spot. This does not mean that from time to time I do not come across a book of which I have never heard but on which I am willing to spend a few hours. I am a member of Calibre and of the Royal National Institute for the Blind, both of which supply talking books to blind and partially-sighted people. When I joined those organizations I asked for works on religion and on philosophy, but since hardly any works on these subjects were available I changed to biography and classic fiction. Thus it was that I came to be listening to novels by Anthony Trollope, and finding in two of them characters that were reminiscent of Colin Wilson's concept of the Outsider. Ferdinand Lopez, in *The Prime Minister*, is definitely an Outsider, being of Portuguese descent, probably Jewish, and not a gentleman in the English sense of the term. Having neither profession nor a regular income he speculates on the commodity market and the reader is not surprised that eventually his speculations fail and he commits suicide. Dr Thorne, the eponymous hero of the novel of the same name, is an Outsider in the eyes of other doctors, for he is his own apothecary. His niece Mary, who lives with him, is an Outsider of another kind, for she happens to be illegitimate. When Mary unexpectedly inherits a fortune the titled lady who has treated Mary with great cruelty and done her best to keep her away from her son is now happy to welcome her as a daughter-in-law despite her illegitimacy. Thus from being an Outsider Mary, overnight, becomes an Insider, a not unusual development where money is concerned.

Whether listening to Trollope or any other novelists I listen in the living room of the Urgyen Annexe where I have now lived for more than two and a half years with Paramartha. I usually listen sitting in a comfortable armchair that belonged to my mother and which I inherited when she died twenty-five years ago. All around me are mementos and memorabilia of my long and eventful life. There are paintings and photographs, images and artefacts, gifts from groups and gifts from individuals. Among the last are things that Paramartha has given me over the years. They include a wall plate from Morocco, a silver statuette of Milarepa, and a replica of an ancient Greek vase depicting Hercules. As I look at them or handle them I think

of my friend and remember the times we have spent together, whether on retreat at Guhyaloka, or travelling, or studying the Dharma together in the conservatory here at the Annexe. As I write these words Paramartha is in New Zealand, looking after his mother who has cancer. He left Adhithana more than two months ago, and does not know how long he will be away. We exchange emails every week and talk on the phone. I have been sending him my recent writings, and I will send this one too, as soon as I have a title for it.

## 7. Remembering Alaya

In my bedroom in the Urgyen Annexe there hangs a framed print of Dr Johnson, one of my five literary heroes. The print was a birthday present from Alaya. I do not remember which birthday this was, but I do remember Alaya giving me the print at Norwich Buddhist Centre in All Saint's Green, which I was then visiting. Alaya had framed the print himself, for he was a carpenter and had been a member of the team that created Sukhavati, our centre in Bethnal Green.<sup>2</sup> Though I did not have many meetings with Alaya over the years, three of 2 them stand out. The first was when we attended a retreat held at Court Lodge, the home of Subhuti's parents. I particularly remember his mass of ginger hair, which made a pleasing contrast with his dead white skin. Our second meeting took place when I visited him when he was living as a member of a kind of hippy commune. I used to go past the commune, which was situated not far from the road, whenever I drove from London to Padmaloka. It stood opposite a pub called, I think, the Angel (connoisseurs of Norfolk pubs will correct me if I am wrong). I remember Alaya proudly showing me the communal earth closet, where he said he often enjoyed friendly chats with other members of the commune. Our last meeting took place in Norwich, at his home, when I spent a pleasant evening with him, his wife, Ratnamala, and their son, Sam. He had long been suffering from epilepsy but was at that time in a reasonable state of health. Subsequent bulletins about his health made it clear that his condition was deteriorating and I was not surprised when I heard that he was in hospital. His death at fifty-five came as rather a shock, and my heart goes out to Ratnamala and Sam. He was a friendly person, fun-loving but serious, and he was concerned to keep up his connections with the Order. His practice was the Green Tārā *sādhana*, which I remember giving him. May she protect him on his way!

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<sup>2</sup> The Centre in Bethnal Green opened in 1978, and became known as the London Buddhist Centre. Sukhavati was adopted as the name for the men's community above the Centre.

## 8. What Might Have Been

‘What do you want to be when you grow up?’ I used to be asked when I was thirteen or fourteen. Sometimes it would be ‘What do you want to do when you grow up?’ Although I remember being asked these questions I cannot remember who asked them. I never thought about what I would be or do when I left school and went out into the world. What I did think about was what I wanted to do at the time. I wanted to write, especially to write poetry, and I wanted to draw and paint, as well as to read as much as I could about literature and the arts. At the time of which I am speaking I spent more time painting than writing. I liked to paint pictures of historical figures such as Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth, Catherine de' Medici and Marie Antoinette. I particularly liked painting pictures of women, for depicting their long, flowing draperies, with all their folds and creases, gave me a keen aesthetic pleasure. It also meant that I did not have to depict their bodies, especially their legs, which at this time was beyond my skill. The fact that I was spending much of my free time painting could hardly escape the notice of those around me, especially my parents and my sister and other members of the family. It was well known that Dennis painted and that he was, perhaps, going to be an artist when he grew up. There was even some talk about the possibility of my going to art school. But it was not my ambition to be an artist. I just wanted to paint and draw. But although it was well known that Dennis painted it was not so well known that he also wrote poetry. Indeed it was known only to the girl next door, a girl of my own age to whom I showed my first poems. ‘They are very good,’ she said. Despite this appreciation, I did not show her any more of my poems, nor did I show them to anyone else. It was as though writing, unlike painting, was something personal and private and it was some time before I showed anyone else anything that I had written. This does not mean that I wrote only for myself. I wrote for an audience, or at least for a potential one, but that audience did not include anyone around me. Eventually, when I was seventeen, it came to include Claire Cameron, editor of the *Middle Way*, who published not only a few of my poems but also my first articles on Buddhism. I was eighteen when these appeared.

By this time Britain had been at war with Nazi Germany for four years. During those years I had been evacuated, had worked for a year in a coal merchant's office, and for two years had been a clerical assistant in the LCC's Public Health Department at County Hall. Now I was conscripted into the army. I had not expected to be conscripted. I had assumed that with my long history of valvular disease of the heart I would be considered unfit for military service. This proved not to be the case and I have sometimes wondered how my life would have developed if I had not been conscripted at eighteen, had not experienced life in the army, had not been posted to India, had not become a Buddhist monk, had not written *A Survey of Buddhism*, and had not become the disciple of Tibetan lamas, all of which had followed from the simple fact of having been found fit for military service. Thus the fact that I had been found fit for military service had led to my having for the next twenty years a life very different from what I would otherwise have had.

But what would that other life have been like? Where would I have lived? What would I have done? I would not have lived at home, for I had no home, my parents having separated a year or so earlier. Perhaps I would have lived with my grandmother, occupying the room that Uncle Charles had occupied before his marriage. Probably I would have continued to be a clerical assistant at County Hall, though I would not have known how long my job would last. I was no more than a temporary clerical assistant, having been recruited during the war, and would probably have been replaced sooner or later by someone returning from having served his country in the armed forces. In some respects, therefore, my life would have been an uncertain one, even a precarious one. Not that it would have been uncertain in all respects. I would have kept on writing whatever the circumstances. I would have continued to write for the *Middle Way* and would have kept up my friendships with Clare Cameron and Arnold Price, the translator of the *Diamond Sutra*. I would also have attended lectures and meditation classes at the Buddhist Society's rooms above a tea shop in Great Russell Street, as I had been doing for some time, and I am sure that before long I would have been giving lectures there myself. I may even have succeeded Clare Cameron as editor of the *Middle Way*.

Not that all my activities would have revolved around the Buddhist Society. I would have sent off articles and poems to the editors of literary magazines, some of whom might have paid their contributors. Very likely I would have joined the PEN Club and met other writers, and I would certainly have continued to patronize the theatre and cinema, as well as to frequent museums and art galleries. Within ten or twelve years of my rejection by the army I would, I think, have published a slim volume of poems, have collected my Buddhist articles into a book, and have produced a substantial work on Buddhism. It would not have been *A Survey of Buddhism*, of course, but it would have been very much like it, for whether in England or in India, my understanding of the Buddha's Dharma would have developed along similar lines. Even if that crowning work had not been well received I would surely have written more books and would have planned to write even more. The truth is that throughout my life there have always been books that I planned to write but which, for one reason or another, I never got round to writing.

Thus during those ten or twelve years I may well have had a moderately successful career as a writer, at least as a writer of books and articles on Buddhism. But what would my emotional and spiritual life have been like? Some of it would have found expression in my poetry, but there would have been much going on that would have found no expression at all. This would have been especially the case with my sexual feelings, which, being a young man's feelings, would have been very strong. What, then, would I have done? I find it difficult to say. Perhaps I would have acted upon those feelings, perhaps not. In any case I would have been faced by a serious problem for my sexual feelings were directed towards other men and in England acting upon such feelings was a criminal offence punishable by imprisonment. Had I simply repressed my feelings I may not have fallen foul of the law, but my whole sexual and emotional life would have been stultified. On the other hand, had I ventured to act upon them, even to a limited extent, I would have had to do so furtively, even

secretly, with the consciousness that I was not only breaking the law but leading a double life. I would have been always anxious, afraid of being found out, and unable to be fully open even with those with whom I broke the law. But perhaps eventually I would have become careless, would have knowingly taken risks, or would have trusted the wrong person, with the result that one day I would have been caught and exposed, thus disgracing my family, alienating my friends, and losing whatever standing I then had in the world. Like others in the same position I would have had to decide between two alternatives. I would have had to decide between suicide and prison. But here my imagination falters and I return with relief from the possible fate of my hypothetical self to the subject of my unwritten books.

Some of these unwritten books were to have formed part of a series called 'The Heritage of Buddhism'. There were to have been five volumes in all, but only *The Three Jewels* and *The Eternal Legacy*, the first and second volumes in the series, were actually written. Both were written in Kalimpong in the foothills of the eastern Himalayas where I was living at the time. Volume 4, on 'Meditation in the Three Yānas', and volume 5 on 'Forms and Functions of Buddhist Art' were never written. Of the 'Patterns of Development in Buddhism', the third volume in the series, I was able to write only the first three sections, also written in Kalimpong. All these volumes – the written, the unwritten, and the partly written – were the result of my having been invited to contribute the articles on Buddhism to the *Oriya Encyclopaedia*, one of the fourteen regional language encyclopaedias then being sponsored by the Government of India. I was more than happy to write the articles, and set to work on them immediately, putting aside *The Rainbow Road*, on which I had been working for some time. I wrote in the morning after breakfast and carried on until lunchtime. If I grew stiff, or if I came up against a doctrinal or a literary difficulty, I left my desk and walked up and down the veranda until the difficulty had been resolved. Within two years I had written, despite interruptions, up to 100,000 words, which was far more than the 14,000 for which I had been asked. Partly because my subject was Buddhism, and partly because the act of writing was so pleasurable, I enjoyed writing them and was sorry when I had to stop. The reason for my having to stop was that I had been invited to write the article on Buddhism for the new edition of the OUP's *The Legacy of India* and the article was needed at once. By the time I had written this article it was 1964 and high time I fulfilled my promise to the English Sangha Trust, namely, that I would spend six months in England. I was never able resume my work on the articles for the *Oriya Encyclopaedia* and 'The Heritage of Buddhism' therefore remains incomplete. *The Three Jewels* was eventually published by Rider in 1967 and *The Eternal Legacy* by Tharpa in 1985.

One of my favourite unwritten books was planned but unwritten not in India but in England, not in the foothills of the eastern Himalayas but amid the flat landscape of Norfolk. I was then living at Padmaloka, a men's community on the outskirts of the village of Surlingham, some seven miles from Norwich. During my time there I naturally developed an interest in the area, especially as I was living only twenty miles from the village of Besthorpe, near Attleborough, where my paternal grandmother had been born and where my father had spent

much of his childhood. Norfolk was one of the bigger English counties and in the Middle Ages Norwich was second in importance only to London as was testified by its forty-odd churches, including its twelfth-century cathedral. Where there is history there will be heroes and heroines, and as I thought about the ones who belonged to Norfolk, either by birth or domicile, five names not only stood out for me but seemed to form a constellation. These five I came to think of as my Five Norfolk Worthies, and before long I was planning a book about them. The five were Julian of Norwich, Sir Thomas Browne, Thomas Paine, Lord Nelson, and Edith Cavell. There was to be a chapter on each of them and these chapters would go to make a small book. Though the plan was clear enough in my mind, and though I liked thinking about my five worthies, my life at Padmaloka was a busy one and I was unable to write even a word about any of them. *Five Norfolk Worthies* thus became one of my unwritten books.

Though I never wrote about my five Norfolk worthies I did not forget them, and they continued to haunt the fringes of my consciousness. In the case of Julian of Norwich (1342–1416) I was able, during my stay at Padmaloka, to visit the cell where she had spent the greater part of her life. The cell was built up against the wall of the Church of St Julian in Norwich and it had two windows, one opening into the church, so that Julian could hear mass, the other opening onto the street, so that she could communicate with the people who came to her. I saw the place at the invitation of a friend. This friend belonged to a meditation group that met there regularly and he once invited me to join them. Seven or eight people were gathered there, including my friend. I do not know what kind of meditation they practised, but the atmosphere was very peaceful and I enjoyed my visit. Years later I learned that the original cell had been destroyed by a German bomb and that the one I had seen was a reconstruction. I had heard of Julian of Norwich long before my time at Padmaloka and had read a popular edition of her book, *Revelations of Divine Love*. In this book, the first English book to be written by a woman, Julian not only describes her sixteen visions of Jesus Christ but also comments on them at some length as though she was trying to understand their meaning. Had I written my chapter on her I would no doubt have read this work again and may well have compared it with the writings of other Christian mystics. I may also have thought it necessary to discuss the question of whether the mystical experience was entirely subjective or whether the mystic really did encounter a higher transpersonal reality.

Like Julian, Sir Thomas Browne (1605–1682) had a close connection with Norwich, but there the resemblance between them ends. She was an anchoress and a mystic, he a doctor, a scholar, an antiquarian, and a busy professional man. Above all he was the author of *Religio Medici*, a work remarkable for its beautiful, baroque style. I came across it when I was fourteen and was so fascinated by its style that I strove to imitate it in an essay of my own. So far as I remember, Sir Thomas Browne was the only writer whose style I ever wanted to imitate. Had my chapter about him been written, I would have discussed the question of literary style in detail and no doubt would have had something to say about the immense variety of English prose styles. Sir Thomas Browne lived through the Civil War, in which he

took the Royalist side, for which he was knighted by Charles II when the king visited Norwich after the Restoration. He lies buried in the Church of St Peter Mancroft in Norwich. Julian of Norwich is known only to students of mysticism, and Sir Thomas Browne is known mainly to lovers of English literature, but Thomas Paine (1737–1809) is much more widely known. He was involved in both the American and the French Revolutions and his *The Rights of Man* is a classic of political literature. I do not find him a sympathetic character and had I written about him I would probably have said little about his life and much more about the whole question of ‘rights’. As long ago as 1951 I wrote an article on ‘Rights and Duties’ in which I argued that the two were, in fact, not only complementary but inseparable, and that the emphasis should be on duties rather than rights. As I then put it, ‘But just as, in the case of a walking-stick, although its two ends are inseparable, so that one is unthinkable without the other, nevertheless it is the handle of the stick that must be grasped, not the tip, so in human relationships it is duties that must be performed, rather than rights demanded, even though the two in fact are inseparable so that the one necessarily follows from the other’. Since I wrote those rather uncompromising lines there has been in many parts of the world, including Britain, a disturbing change. Rights and duties are no longer seen as being inseparable and complementary. Rights are separated from duties, so that duties come to be neglected, and social and political discourse is dominated by the concept of rights. Rights are of many kinds and the number seems to be constantly on the increase. There can also be a conflict between different rights, as when the mother’s right to do what she pleases with her own body conflicts with the right of the foetus to live. The confusion that has been generated by the one-sided emphasis on rights can be resolved by a greater emphasis on duties. The Buddha spoke of duties, not of rights. According to him duties are complementary, parents have duties towards their children, and children have duties towards their parents, and so on through the whole gamut of human relationships. Members of a Buddhist community will therefore think in terms of duties rather than in terms of rights and act accordingly. They will take hold of the right end of the stick. In Thomas Paine’s time, in both England and France, the emphasis was on duties rather than rights, especially where the common people were concerned. It is therefore understandable that throughout his career Thomas Paine should have preached the gospel of human rights. His statue stands in the marketplace of Thetford where he was born.

Lord Nelson (1758–1805) belongs not just to history but to legend. Perhaps he belongs more to legend than to history, at least in the collective memory of his fellow countrymen. The principal facts of his life were known to me from an early age, but it was the legend that appealed to me, and had I written about Nelson it was probably on the legend that I would have dwelt. I would perhaps have begun by emphasizing the fact that his was an extremely attractive personality, and that as admiral he was as popular with his subordinates as he was unpopular with some of his superiors in the service. He did not hesitate to disobey orders, as when he put his telescope to his blind eye when he did not wish to see a signal with whose orders he disagreed. His relationship with Lady Hamilton, whom he met in the romantic

setting of Naples, is very much part of the legend. He is as much the Hero as Lover as he is the Hero as Victor, and although the legend speaks of one great love, the victories were many. Nelson's greatest victory was at Trafalgar when he destroyed Napoleon's Franco-Spanish fleet and established Britain's naval supremacy. The victory cost him his life. He was struck down by a bullet from a marksman stationed in the rigging of a French ship and died in the arms of his faithful Hardy. His last words were, 'Thank God I have done my duty.' Trafalgar Square and Nelson's Column were familiar sights from my boyhood, serving to remind me of the man and his legend. Had I, in fact, written about him, I think I would have had something to say about his connection with the sea. The land for which he gave his life is an island, as the BBC's shipping forecast reminds us every Saturday evening. One is never more than seventy miles from the sea and it has been said that the sea is in an Englishman's blood. I have not spent much time at sea and sometimes wish I could have spent more, especially as I have happy memories of short trips by ferry. One of these was from Harwich to Götheburg. It was a brilliantly sunny day and the sea, calm as a lake, reflected the cloudless cerulean sky. Another trip took me from Brindisi to Igoumenitsa. As I have written elsewhere, 'It was a fine, clear morning, the sea could not have been more calm, and we were sailing between the mainland and some four or five small, widely separated islands. Despite the muffled hum of the ship's engines, and the occasional muffled shout coming from the swimming pool, there was a breathless hush in the air, and as I gazed out over the dark blue waters it was as though time stood still, as though nothing had changed, and that I was seeing what Homer – had he not been blind – might have seen three thousand years ago.'

Edith Cavell (born 1865) was executed by a German firing squad on 12 October 1915. Her crime was that she had helped Allied prisoners-of-war and others to escape from occupied Belgium to Holland. I have often wondered what were the feelings of those young German soldiers as they shot a defenceless woman. They were, of course, obeying orders, and had they done otherwise out of pity for their victim they would in all likelihood have been court-martialed themselves and been shot by a firing squad of their own comrades. Edith Cavell was born in the village of Swardeston, where her father was vicar, and had her schooling in nearby Norwich. After five years as a governess, she trained as a nurse and worked in hospitals in different parts of England, including London. In 1907 she became matron of a newly established nursing school in Brussels and a pioneer of modern nursing in Belgium. When Germany occupied Belgium, Edith Cavell's clinic and nursing school were taken over by the Red Cross and she continued working as a nurse. This brought her into contact with wounded Allied soldiers and it was for helping many of these escape that she was sentenced to death by the German military. Her last words were, 'Patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone.' These words are inscribed on the pedestal of her statue in St Martins, near Trafalgar Square. I have often passed that statue and have wondered how many of the tourists and other passers-by know her story. Had I written about her, I would have had quite a lot to say about those famous last words, which reminds me of *Dhammapada* verse 5: 'Not by hatred (*vera*) are hatreds (*verani*) pacified. They are pacified

by love (*avera*).’ The remains of Edith Cavell were finally buried in the grounds of Norwich Cathedral.

As I think of my Five Norfolk Worthies, and try to imagine what I might have written about them, I regret that the book of which they were to be the subject should be one of my unwritten books. Other books that were planned but not written included one on the relationship between Neoplatonism and Buddhism. Neoplatonism had fascinated me since my teens, when I had dipped into the *Enneads* and read Dean Inge’s *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, to both of which I returned years later. Indeed, I had a small library of works on Neoplatonism and related subjects. At the centre of my book there would probably have been a comparison between the three hypostases of Neoplatonism and the three *svabhāvas* of Yogācāra Buddhism. I had also very much wanted to write a biography of the Buddha. Not that I planned it in any detail but from time to time I thought about it quite a lot. In particular I wanted to bring together the historical Buddha and the legendary or archetypal Buddha in such a way that the reader would see and feel them as the mundane and transcendental aspects of a single undivided personality. My approach would have been both philosophical and devotional. Another unwritten book was my autobiography. Friends might protest that I had in fact already written my autobiography, and written it not in one volume, but many. This is to confuse memoirs and autobiography. As the word itself suggests, memoirs are what one remembers of one’s life as one looks back on it. Some events and experiences will be remembered more clearly than others, and some may not be remembered at all. Thus in memoirs there will inevitably be gaps. Moreover, one may mis-remember certain events and experiences and one’s account of them may differ widely from that of others who were present at the time and who have different memories. An autobiography, on the other hand, is an auto-biography. It is an account of one’s life by oneself written in the first person, and it draws not only on one’s own memories, but on letters, diaries, and other documents. It also contextualizes one’s life with regard to other people and to the public events of one’s time. In my own case, for example, I have described in my memoirs my arrival in India in 1944 without reference to the political situation that existed there at the time. In my autobiography, had I written it, I would have given an account of that situation and perhaps of my own reaction to it. Be that as it may, I mourned my unwritten autobiography as I mourned all my unwritten books. It is too late in life for me to think of writing any of them now and they must remain unwritten for ever.

Though my autobiography must remain unwritten, I can at least look back over my life and reflect upon its vicissitudes. I can reflect on the establishing of a new Buddhist movement in London, on my work among the ex-Untouchable Buddhists of India, on the founding of the Triyana Vardhana Vihara in Kalimpong, on my ordination as a *bhikkhu*, on my life as a freelance wandering ascetic, on my life in the army, and so on back to the time when, as a teenager, all I wanted to do was to write, especially to write poetry, as well as to draw and paint, and to read widely. I did not want to be or do anything when I grew up, nor have I wanted to ‘be’ or ‘do’ anything since.

## 9. The Young Man in the Hut

On my reaching the years of puberty some of my female relations started teasing me about the sort of woman I would marry when I grew up. One of my mother's sisters, in particular, used to speculate in this way when we met. 'You will marry a short, fat little woman,' she would tell me, 'with short, fat little legs.' I have no idea why my aunt was so sure that I would marry a short and fat woman rather than a tall and thin one. At that time of life I had no thought of marrying anyone of whatever size and shape, and I may have told my aunt as much. Strange to say, even when I was very young I used to tell people I would never marry, even though I did not know what marriage meant. Many years later I was reminded of my aunt's prediction when I read about the so-called Palaeolithic Venus. This was the name given by archaeologists to the 150 or more female figurines of various sizes that have been discovered in many parts of the world. Most of them belong to the period 24–19,000 BCE. The typical Palaeolithic Venus was short and fat. She had exaggeratedly large hips, breasts and vulva, but her head was small and featureless and her legs tapered downwards. Opinions differ as to the significance of these figurines. According to some archaeologists they were amulets, while others believe that their significance was religious and that they had a place in ritual. Whatever the truth may be, it is evident that for the men (and perhaps for the women) who fashioned them women were essentially producers of children. The figurines were fertility symbols, and fertility was important in ensuring the survival of the group.

Centuries pass, hundreds of centuries pass. By the time of the Italian Renaissance woman is still seen as being essentially the producer of children, but there have been changes. Her primary and secondary sexual characteristics are now less exaggerated, and her body has grown a head, so to speak, and her face wears an expression. The Venus depicted in Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* is very different from her Palaeolithic ancestress. I first encountered the famous painting in the pages of the *Children's Encyclopaedia*, and years later I had the privilege of seeing the original in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. It was a dark December evening and the gallery was almost deserted, so that I was able to sit in front of the painting for as long as I wished. The goddess is standing on a huge shell, and her pearl-white body is naked. To the left two wind-gods with distended cheeks are blowing her towards her island home. With her right hand she covers her right breast while with her left she covers her vulva with the end of her blonde tresses. Her expression is one of wonder and delight. She is delighted to have escaped from the depths, delighted to look out on the world with its calm sea and tranquil sky. On the right a handmaid hastens forward holding a rich garment with which she is about to clothe the goddess. On the far right, just behind the handmaid rise three leafy trees.

Besides depicting Venus and other pagan deities, Botticelli also painted the Virgin Mary, and although her features are sometimes those of the goddess, again there are changes. Whereas his Venus is naked, save for the half-concealed breasts and vulva, in his *Madonna of the Magnificat* the Virgin is completely draped. Here woman is not only emancipated from her

sexuality but is seen as the embodiment of ideal beauty. Her expression, though, is very different from that of the goddess of the *Birth of Venus*. The latter is one of wonder and delight, whereas that of the Virgin Mary in the *Madonna of the Magnificat* is expressive of submission to the will of God. Perhaps it is only Leonardo Da Vinci who, among the artists of his day, is able to depict woman, in the person of the Virgin Mary, as a spiritual being. He does this in the *Virgin of the Rocks*, as well in his drawing of *The Virgin with St Anne* in the National Gallery in London. But Mary is Mother as well as Virgin, and in the works of Velázquez, Murillo, and El Greco, a century later, she breaks free of her child, so to speak, and is depicted in her own right. She is now a goddess as much as Venus ever was and her name is the Immaculate Conception. I painted her as such when I was thirteen or fourteen, depicting her standing on the crescent moon and wearing a white inner robe and a blue outer one. She has long black hair and her arms are crossed on her breasts. Above her head and to her left and right are small red roses. These were my own additions to the traditional depictions of her. Years later I noticed that in the *Birth of Venus* a few small red roses fall through the air.

Where there is a Palaeolithic Venus one might have expected to find a Palaeolithic Apollo. So far as I know, he has not been found and may never have existed. Something more interesting has been found. Three thousand years before Botticelli, sculptors in Ancient Greece created the Kouros, the so-called Archaic Apollo. The typical Kouros is a standing naked youth with broad shoulders and narrow hips and evident musculature. His arms hang down at his side and his face wears the famous archaic smile. He provides the pattern for an ideal of male beauty that culminates in the gods and athletes of the classical period, such as the *Apollo Belvedere* in the Vatican and the *Discobolos* in Athens. That model may be said to have persisted down to the present day. A man with narrow shoulders and broad hips would be regarded as unnatural, as would a woman with broad shoulders and narrow hips. The breadth of a man's shoulders and the narrowness of his hips may, of course, be greatly exaggerated so as to make him look more masculine. An example of this is the Phantom in the American comic strip. Similarly the size of a woman's breasts and hips may be greatly exaggerated too, so as to make her look more feminine in the sense of being sexually more attractive, as in the notorious 'Page Three Girl'. For the ancient Greeks the male body was more beautiful than the female body. This was because of the greater harmony that existed between its different parts and because of its less obvious connection to its biological function. The genitals were never emphasized in the depiction of gods and athletes, though the satyrs, the companions of Dionysus, were sometimes endowed with enormous phalluses. For the Greeks beauty was not merely physical, but also mental. One might go as far as to say that their ideal was not just a healthy mind in a healthy body but a beautiful mind in a beautiful (male) body.

Not everyone will agree that the male body is more beautiful than the female body. The idea that the male body is more beautiful than the female body will come as a surprise to many men and most women. The reason for this is that beauty is commonly identified with sexual attractiveness and men find women beautiful because they find them sexually attractive. This

is not to say that women have no share in beauty but that their beauty is in their face rather than in their body. Thus, if men have more beautiful bodies than women, women have more beautiful faces than men. But faces, whether of men or women, have expression, and the expression will depend on their mental and emotional state. The effect of a face that is formally beautiful can be entirely spoiled if its expression is one of hatred, or contempt, or greed. Conversely even a homely face is beautiful when it has an expression of sympathy, or understanding, or content. A striking example of the latter came within my experience many years ago, as I have related in *The Rainbow Road*. I was staying with a friend at Ramana Maharshi's ashram in South India. Happening to explore the area to the west of the ashram we came upon a wattle and daub gate and beyond it a tiny mud-walled hut, thatched with palm leaves. Opening the gate and crossing the tiny cow-dunged courtyard we quietly opened the door of the hut.

Inside was a single small room, completely bare, and inside the room, almost directly facing us, there sat, meditating, the most beautiful young man I had ever seen. Slim and fair-complexioned he sat there, with closed eyes, beautiful not only on account of his perfectly proportioned body, naked save for a small cloth but, even more so, on account of the beatific smile that irradiated his face. He was quite oblivious to our presence. Unable to take our eyes off him, we stood there for several minutes. Then, having closed the door behind us even more gently than we had opened it, we slowly made our way back to the Ashram.

The expression on the young man's face must have stayed with me, for some weeks later it resulted in the poem 'The Face of Silence' in which I changed the setting of my experience but not its nature. The last three verses were as follows:

O'er his still features breathed a calm

I had not seen before.

It drew me as some maiden's charm

A lover to her door.

The light he saw I could not see,

And yet it seemed to glow

Upon his face more beauteously

Than sunlight on the snow.

At last I turned away, and blessed

The womb that gave him birth,

Knowing that there in truth was rest

And peace for those on earth.

I have described the young man in the hut as beautiful even though in modern times men are

hardly ever described as such. At most they are ‘handsome’ or ‘good looking’. This is not to say that there are no exceptions. In the course of the last few months I have listened to talking books of some of Anthony Trollope’s so-called political novels, and was surprised to find that he does not hesitate to describe some of his male characters as beautiful, and even to insist on the fact. One young man is actually compared to Apollo, and it was probably the *Apollo Belvedere* that Trollope had in mind. I have also come across an article by the journalist and author Jilly Cooper in which she interviews two footballers, one of whom was George Best, and candidly admits she was surprised to see how beautiful they were. Trollope and Jilly Cooper were speaking of physical beauty, but the young man in the hut was not only physically beautiful but spiritually beautiful, and he was spiritually beautiful on account of his expression. This does not mean that there are only two kinds of beauty, the physical and the spiritual. Beauty is of many kinds, and it has many degrees, for there is a hierarchy of beauty, just as there is a hierarchy of being and a hierarchy of knowledge. Plotinus gives us a glimpse of this hierarchy in his tractate ‘On Beauty’ in the *Enneads*: ‘Beauty is mostly in sight, but it is to be found too in things we hear, in combinations of words and also in music, and in all music [not only in songs]; for tunes and rhythms are certainly beautiful: and for those who are advancing upwards from sense-perception ways of life and actions and characters and intellectual activities are beautiful, and there is the beauty of virtue. If there is any beauty prior to these, it itself will reveal it.’

But what *is* beauty? There are numerous definitions, but I have always liked that of St Thomas Aquinas, according to whom beauty is that which, when seen (or heard), delights, and that in which we take pleasure, or which we enjoy, or in which we delight, we will love. Thus there is a connection between beauty and love, the latter being our natural response to the former, and just as there are different degrees of beauty there will be different degrees of love. Where there is physical beauty, heavenly beauty, and spiritual beauty there will be, corresponding to these, earthly love, heavenly love, and spiritual love. Having seen heavenly beauty we may well look down upon earthly beauty, and so on, and there is a story in the Buddhist scriptures that illustrates this point. A young man named Sundarananda, or Handsome Nanda, is in love with a beautiful Sakya maiden with long hair. The Buddha happens to come for alms, and his bowl having been filled he hands it to Sundarananda and tells him to follow him back to the vihara. This the young man does rather unwillingly, all the time looking back over his shoulder to the maiden he has left behind. On their arrival at the vihara the Buddha directs Śāriputra and Mahamaudgalyāyana to ordain Nanda and the young man suffers himself to be made a monk. Though now a monk, he is unable to forget the Sakya maiden and finds it impossible to meditate. Knowing this, the Buddha by his magic power takes Sundarananda up to a higher, heavenly world and shows him the nymphs who live there. The nymphs are of extraordinary beauty, and on seeing them Sundarananda exclaims that in comparison with them the Sakya maiden is no better than a she-monkey with her nose and ears cut off. Back on earth he redoubles his efforts for the Buddha has assured him that if he meditates with sufficient intensity he will attain to that higher, heavenly world

and there see the beautiful nymphs again. The other monks ridicule him for having such a lowly objective, and feeling shamed and humiliated he redirects his efforts and attains Nirvana. In the story Sundarananda ungallantly declares that in comparison with the heavenly nymphs his former love is no better than a she-monkey with her nose and ears cut off. This is not to suggest that she has no beauty at all, for there are degrees of beauty. That the higher beauty is higher does not mean that the lower beauty is not beautiful, much less still that it is ugly. Another story in the Buddhist scriptures makes this clear. The Buddha tells the ascetic Bhaggava that, contrary to what some people say of him, he does not say that when one reaches up to the liberation called the Beautiful one sees the whole Universe as ugly; what he does say is that when one reaches up to the liberation called the Beautiful one knows indeed what Beauty is.

From the beautiful young man in the hut I passed on to my poem 'The Face of Silence', to the appreciation of male beauty by two very different writers, to Plotinus and the *Enneads*, to beauty and love, and so to the story of Sundarananda and to the liberation called the Beautiful. I now want to return to the young man in the hut. In particular I want to say something about his beatific smile. He was oblivious of the presence of me and my friend, and his eyes were closed. He was therefore not smiling on account of anything he saw with his physical eyes, but because of what he saw with his inner vision. Perhaps he saw one of the heavenly nymphs, or the god Shiva, or perhaps he contemplated the impersonal Absolute of the Advaita Vedanta. Whatever it was he saw, he evidently delighted in it, and since he delighted in it he would have loved it. The degree of that love would have corresponded to the degree of the beauty he saw and since he was oblivious to the outer world it may be assumed that the beauty he saw, and the love which that beauty inspired, were not of the earthly kind. The principal difference between earthly love and heavenly love is that the former wishes to acquire, possess, and dominate its object and is associated with emotions of jealousy, as well as with fear and hatred of possible rivals. Heavenly love, on the other hand, experiences these emotions in a subtle form. Only spiritual or supersensible love is entirely free from them. It is not possible for one to experience earthly love at the same time that one experiences heavenly or spiritual love. One may enjoy earthly beauty at the same time that one experiences heavenly or spiritual beauty, but one will enjoy it on its own level, so to speak, and will not make it an object of attachment, whether gross or subtle. Blake says much the same thing in his poem 'Eternity':

He who binds to himself a joy  
Does the wingèd life destroy;  
He who kisses the joy as it flies  
Lives in eternity's sunrise.

The face of the young man in the hut was radiant with a beatific smile, a smile that was expressive of his experience of inner bliss. But what of features cast in bronze or carved in

stone? Were *these* capable of communicating that experience? Over the centuries Buddhist artists have sought to depict the Buddha in such a way as to give the worshipper an idea of his spiritual greatness. Their object was nothing less than to depict perfect Enlightenment in a human form. Few succeeded in doing this, even to a small extent, but their works are nonetheless among the masterpieces of world art. But what of the sculptors and painters themselves? Were *they* in touch, at least to an extent, with the spiritual experience that they were trying to express in their depiction of the Buddha? It is difficult to say. We do know that a Tibetan *thangka* painter should ideally meditate on the Buddha or Bodhisattva he is painting and repeat their mantra as he works. Similarly, in the Eastern Orthodox Church the icon painter is exhorted to fast and pray. Besides Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, Buddhist artists have depicted the Arahants or those who, by following the teachings of the Buddha, have attained Nirvana. But not all these artists seek to represent, in the person of the Arahant Nirvana in a human form. In Chinese Buddhist art, Arahants are often depicted in a way that could be said to caricature them. Most are old, and some have crooked limbs and bulging eyes, while others are grimacing. Despite their common spiritual attainment the Arahants all have very individual characters, the artist seems to be telling us. In contrast to the Arahants, all of whom are monks, the great Bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī are beautiful young men wearing the garments and jewels of an Indian prince. Their expression is one of compassion, as in the unique wall painting of Padmapāṇi at Ajanta in central India. In Sino-Japanese Buddhism, Avalokiteśvara undergoes a transformation. From a beautiful young man he becomes a beautiful female figure known as Kuanyin. She wears a long white robe, her head is covered, and her expression is one of motherly kindness. In the West she is popularly known as the Goddess of Mercy and her likeness to the Madonna has often been remarked on. Perhaps the most extraordinary of Avalokiteśvara's transformations is the one in which he becomes the eleven-headed, thousand-armed Mahākāruṇika, or Greatly Compassionate One. The compassion of the Bodhisattva looks in every direction and he helps suffering sentient beings in every conceivable way. In the early days of the FWBO, now the Triratna Buddhist Community, I happened to be reading, or writing about, the myth in which Avalokiteśvara becomes the Greatly Compassionate One. As he contemplates the sufferings of sentient beings he is overwhelmed by compassion. So intense is the compassion his head splits into a thousand pieces. When I reached this point in the story I was very deeply affected. I started sobbing uncontrollably. In between my sobs I kept crying out to the friend who was with me, 'His head split into a thousand pieces! His head split into a thousand pieces!' This sobbing and crying out must have lasted for up to half an hour. I am not a person who sheds tears easily, and the experience has not been repeated, though the impression it made on me persists.

In these pages I have covered quite a lot of ground, but despite my aunt's prediction at no point did I discover in myself a predilection for short, fat little women with short, fat little legs.

## 10. Alternative Lives

In the summer of 1967 I moved with my friend Terry Delamare into a flat in Highgate West Hill. Though I did not know it at the time, it was to be my home for the next three years. 'Our new home', as I wrote many years later in an unpublished article,

was situated on the second floor of a Victorian terraced house; it consisted of two rooms and a kitchen, and from the back windows there was a view of Hampstead Heath. The landlady was a small, grey-haired woman of seventy who informed us, when we called in response to her advertisement in the *New Statesman*, that her name was Joy and that she was blind. That she was blind, or very nearly so, was evident from the condition of the hallway, the stairs and passages, and the vacant flat on the second floor, all of which were badly in need of redecoration. Landladies being a suspicious breed, Terry and I naturally had to give some account of ourselves. I do not remember if we told Joy that I was a Buddhist monk, but we certainly told her that I was a writer and that Terry was studying philosophy. No sooner was the word writer pronounced than the withered old face lit up with an expression of surprise and delight. A writer! Many of her friends had been writers, Joy assured us, and she liked to have writers as her tenants. In the days before the war a group of literary people who called themselves the Leopards had met at her house every week, and on one memorable occasion they had received a visit from Aldous Huxley. By this time Joy had led us into her sitting-room on the ground floor, the art nouveau furnishings of which had a shabby, dusty look. Here we paid our first month's rent and it was agreed that we should move into the flat as soon as we had decorated the two principal rooms.

The decorating took Terry only two days and within the week we were installed in our new abode. At the time there were only two other tenants, a room on the first floor being occupied by a buck-toothed woman in her thirties and the attic by a young man in his early twenties. Joy had expressed the hope that the four of us would have coffee with her in her sitting room at eleven o'clock every Thursday morning and engage in intelligent discussion about books as the Leopards had once done. Terry and I would not have minded doing this, but the other tenants declined the invitation. They had full time jobs, they said, a fact that Joy seemed to have overlooked.

Neither Terry nor I encouraged visitors. In recent months much had happened to us and we needed time for reflection. I also had lectures to prepare while Terry was still suffering from depression and did not feel like meeting people. Though we gave our new address only to a few close friends, our whereabouts could not be kept altogether secret and before long people came knocking at the big, black front door of the house.

One of my most colourful visitors was my old friend and enemy Jinaratana Thera, whom Terry and I had last seen in Calcutta a few months earlier, when we were packing up my

books and Buddhist artefacts for dispatch to the UK, and who was almost the last person I had expected to see in London. His robe was bright yellow and his bald pate shone with scented oil. He was on a world tour, he told me in his usual abrupt manner, and the Sinhalese monks in West London with whom he was staying had given him my address. In the India of those days no self-respecting guru could afford not to have a world tour, a tour that would win him more disciples and enhance his reputation, and Jinaratna had more than once told me that as soon as he had saved up 25,000 rupees he would have a world tour of his own. Now here he was in London and his next stop would be Washington DC where there were Sinhalese monks and a small Theravāda centre. He asked me what I was doing, though more as a matter of course than because he was really interested. I told him that I had started a meditation centre in central London and was giving lectures in different parts of the town. He stayed no more than half an hour and I think I gave him tea.

Whereas Jinaratana had been known to me for many years, another colourful visitor seemed to come from nowhere. I do not remember her name, or how she came to know of my existence. She was Burmese, wore the traditional sarong and little jacket, and her thick black hair was so short as to be almost cropped. My earliest recollection of her is of her coming up the stairs holding a large bowl of trifle, and this may well have been our first contact. Thereafter she came quite a number of times, always bringing with her a trifle or a cake or some other comestible. Once or twice she was accompanied by a lanky Englishman of her own age, which I judged to be about thirty-five. He was interested in Zen, he told me, but otherwise he was silent. The lady herself was not interested in Zen. She invariably wanted to talk about pain and suffering and seemed to be confused between Buddhism and Christianity. Was she, I wondered, a 'born Buddhist' who had been educated in a Christian institution? Whatever her background, it was evident that she had an emotional investment in pain and suffering, and we had some intense discussions around the subject. On one of her visits she looked at the books in my bookcase and pulled out one of them. The title of the book was *The Theology of the Pain of God* and I was not altogether surprised when she asked if she could borrow it. I had read the book or had at least dipped into it. It was written by a Japanese Christian and so far as I remember it attempted to show that Japan was not the aggressor in the Second World War but the victim, for it was on Japan that the first atom bomb had been dropped. Japan had suffered as Christ had suffered on the cross, and her sufferings had a sacrificial quality that redeemed not only Japan but the world. The author seemed to have forgotten, or at least had disregarded, Japan's invasion of Manchuria, the Nanking Atrocities, the attack on Pearl Harbor, the enslavement of the Korean 'Comfort Women', and the brutal treatment of Allied prisoners of war. Unlike Germany, which did its best to atone for its Nazi past, Japan seemed disinclined to admit that it had done anything wrong, and it was not until 1998 that the Prime Minister of Japan wrote an open apology for his country's wartime past. Even so, he did not use 'shazai', the key Japanese term for sorrow. As early as 1971, however, emperor Hirohito who had been Japan's head of state during the war, made a state visit to Britain at the invitation of the government. Like many others, I thought that he should

never have been invited. No doubt relations with Japan had to be normalized, but Hirohito was an old man and it would have been more seemly if the Government had waited for his death and invited his successor.

Another colourful visitor was Jiyu Roshi, though she was colourful only metaphorically, not literally. She was shaven headed and wore a voluminous black robe that made her look bigger and fatter than she really was. I had corresponded with her in my Kalimpong days. She was then plain Peggy Kennett and a member of the Buddhist Society in London, of which I had once been a member myself. I am not sure why she wrote to me, for she wrote only to tell me that she would be travelling to Japan, where she hoped to train in the Zen tradition. Her next letter was not from Japan but from Malaysia, and I gathered that she had been unexpectedly ordained there, though the nature of the ordination was by no means clear. Eventually I heard that she had arrived in Japan and been accepted into a Zen monastery. Now, having spent seven or eight years training in Zen, she was back in the UK and staying at Sarum House in Purley, Surrey, where there was a little FWBO community. I knew that she was coming since the proprietor of Sakura, the Japanese shop in whose basement I held my meditation classes, had been in correspondence with her. Emile was an aficionado of Zen, and he had urged Jiyu to settle in London and teach there instead of carrying on to the United States as was her plan. He had received a very strange reply. She could not possibly teach in London, she had told him. She had enemies there, and it would be dangerous for her to do so. In one of her aerogrammes she even wrote that she might be assassinated, and reading it I formed the distinct impression that she was suffering from paranoia. The supposed enemies, of course, were from the Buddhist Society where Zen was taught, though of a kind different from Jiyu's. I was therefore interested in meeting her and invited her to have lunch with me at the flat. She came accompanied by her shaven-headed, black-robed attendant and a casually dressed young American, and from the beginning she was very much on her dignity as a Roshi. I therefore decided to behave informally, which I did all the more easily as I was not wearing my robes. While I was serving up the meal, and while we were all eating, Jiyu and her attendant talked to each other in what I thought was a very artificial and stilted manner. They talked about various conflicts that were going on, within their own tradition back in Japan, at the same time nodding gravely at each other. They spoke slowly and deliberately, as though repeating words they had learned by heart, and I realized there was more in all this than met the eye. After the meal I asked Jiyu if it was true that she had decided to settle in the United States. She replied in the affirmative, adding that she would be establishing herself at a place called Mount Shasta, in California. I then asked her if she knew what the word *śāstā* meant in Sanskrit? It was a long time since she had done her Sanskrit, she replied rather haughtily, and I could see that I had offended her. I had certainly not intended to expose her ignorance of Sanskrit but only to point out the appropriateness of the name 'Shasta' for what she planned to establish there. It meant 'teacher', I explained, as in 'the teacher of gods and men', which was one of the titles of the Buddha. After Jiyu's departure with her entourage I reflected on the visit as I washed the dishes.

Later on I heard that some of the members of the Sarum House community had noticed that Jiyu's personal attendant was always hungry. At mealtimes, feeling sorry for him, they plied him with second and third helpings, but he was never satisfied. After a few days someone ventured to ask Jiyu if anything was wrong. Was he ill or undernourished, they wanted to know, and Jiyu was obliged to explain that he had been mirroring. They all overate, she declared, and her attendant was simply mirroring their behaviour in order to shame them out of it. So *that* was what the strange dialogue between Jiyu and her personal attendant had been all about! They had been mirroring, but what they had been mirroring and for whose benefit, I never knew. The famous mirroring technique seemed not to work in the West, from which I concluded that what worked in one culture could not easily be transplanted into a culture of a very different kind.

Like the Burmese lady, Kati seemed to come from nowhere. She was tall and dark haired, with a slightly swarthy complexion, and although only sixteen she was of an independent nature. I do not remember how we met, for she came neither to my meditation classes nor to my lectures. As I search my memory, I see in my mind's eye the saloon bar of the Prince of Wales in Highgate, where I used to go on a Saturday night when I was not away on retreat. I am sitting at the bar with my first or second vodka and lime and I am alone. At the other side of the room there sits a good-looking young man and he is accompanied by several women. Kati enters and joins the group but as soon as she sees me her face lights up with pleasure and she darts across the room and joins me at the bar. She is wearing her school uniform. We talk for a while, after which she goes back to the young man and his women. I know the story. The young man is married to one of the women, but his current girlfriend is also there, as well as his previous girlfriend. Though good-looking, he has a weak character and is very much under the thumb of his women. Kati is not in love with him as far as I know, but during the week she goes to see him in the evening and if his wife is away she spends the night with him. Otherwise, she comes and stays with me at the flat. By this time Terry has left me to live with his girlfriend Mafalda, and I have joined the two single beds together to make a double bed and Kati shares this bed with me. There is no question of sex nor is she very affectionate, but she likes me and we have become friends. She lives in Hampstead with her mother, who is a pianist I have heard on the radio, and it is too late for her to go home. The little rendezvous went on for five or six months, coming to an abrupt end when I moved from Highgate West Hill to Muswell Hill and ceased to frequent the Prince of Wales on Saturday night.

I cannot remember whether it was Dr Cooper who wanted to see me about Terry or whether it was I who wanted to see him about my friend. Whichever it was, we communicated through the medium of Terry who was seeing Cooper once a month and who was keen that I should meet the controversial psychiatrist. Once or twice he had turned up at the appointed time only to find Cooper too much under the influence of drink to be able to give him a consultation. His bill came at the end of the month as usual though, and I gathered this was all part of the treatment. At Cooper's suggestion we met at the Round House in Chalk Farm where he was

attending a session of the Congress of Dialectics of Liberation. We would have half an hour together after the session ended. I arrived on time but the session was still in progress. It was not only still in progress but had run over time and the last speaker was still on her feet. She was a Swedish feminist and was shrieking rather than speaking about the outrages and humiliations to which women were subject all over the world. On and on she went, shrieking and weeping, until one of the organizers went up to her and took away the microphone. By this time it was long past the time for our meeting and Cooper had another appointment. He therefore invited me to have lunch with him, and a few days later I was sitting opposite him in a crowded and noisy restaurant in Soho. So noisy was it that no serious conversation was possible and I therefore invited Cooper to have lunch with me at the flat. He did not come alone but with his girlfriend whom I had not met before. She was a rather ordinary looking woman of about thirty-five. Cooper himself was overweight and balding and I judged him (wrongly) to be some years older than me. He was at that time perhaps at the height of his career and he and his more famous colleague, R. D. Laing, were names to conjure with in the world of the alternative community. Terry had told me much about him. He had founded the famous *Villa 21* for the treatment of young schizophrenics and Terry had spent some time there after the breakup of his marriage, Cooper having diagnosed him as schizophrenic. Cooper had his own ideas about the genesis of schizophrenia and how it was to be treated and had developed what he called anti-psychiatry in opposition to orthodox psychiatry and its methods. So far as I remember, we did not discuss his theories and did not even discuss Terry very much. What I do remember is that in the course of the lunch I formed a very definite impression of Cooper as a man. He seemed to me to be like a big white mushroom, a mushroom that was thoroughly rotten within. I was therefore not surprised when I learned some years later that he had died of chronic alcoholism at the age of fifty-five.

In the course of my first year under Joy's roof the young man in the attic came to see me several times. His name was David and he had been born and brought up in Whitechapel. He was small in stature, fair haired, and he always dressed entirely in white. As I soon discovered, he was fond of metaphysical discussion, and tended to tie himself in knots that I could not unravel. I was therefore not sorry when he stopped visiting me. After he had visited me two or three times I thought I ought to pay him a return visit, so went up and knocked on his door. There being no response I pushed open the door, only to close it as quickly and quietly as I could. During the few seconds that it had been open I had caught a glimpse of two naked white bodies chasing each other round the room, one of them belonging to a girl who had been attending my retreats in the Surrey countryside. How the two had met I never knew, as David did not come either to my meditation classes or to my public lectures.

The attic did not remain long unoccupied after David's departure, his place being taken by a Nigerian student. I hardly ever saw him, for he kept to his room and seemed to spend all his time preparing for his examinations. One afternoon I answered the doorbell to find a neatly dressed young woman standing on the doorstep. She asked if the student lived there, mentioning his name. I replied that he did, and invited her to go straight up the stairs to the

attic. Thereafter she came once a week, always on the same day, at the same time, and each time it was I who answered the door when she rang, for Joy was almost as deaf as she was blind and often did not hear the bell. One afternoon, as it happened, she did hear the bell when the young woman rang and answered it herself. What passed between the two women I never knew, but Joy had somehow managed to discover that the young woman had not come to take dictation, as I had assumed, but for a very different purpose, and she had lost no time in confronting the student with her discovery. What do you think he said, she asked me shortly afterwards, still agitated and indignant. He said it was his bodily need. His bodily need indeed! She had given him a month's notice on the spot. She was not going to have *that* sort of thing going on in *her* house. I felt sorry for the poor student and hoped that his next landlady would be more tolerant.

A few days before I moved to Muswell Hill, Joy told me, with evident satisfaction, that a young married couple would be moving into the basement flat. They would be decorating it at their own expense, she added, and they had told her that they would regard it as a privilege to live there. A privilege to live there! This was the sort of thing Joy liked to hear, as it bolstered up her idea that her house was still a sort of cultural centre. I could forgive this little weakness, as I knew that she needed not only more tenants but ones on whom she could depend. In the course of the last three years she had more than once been ill in bed and unable to move and I had done her weekly shopping for her along with my own. The young couple would be no less helpful, I hoped. Perhaps they would even join her for coffee at eleven o'clock every Thursday morning.

## 11. On the Edge of the Etheric

He was tall and well built, with long back hair, and he wore buckskin leggings. The upper part of his reddish brown body was bare. He reminded me of the Red Indians about whom I had read in boys' weekly magazines when I was quite young. But he was not a Red Indian. He was an *āsura* or anti-god, a denizen of one of the six realms depicted in the wheel of life. We met in 1962 or thereabouts, when I was on a visit to Bombay. The two of us would have to fight, he told me. We would have to fight with rapiers, and whichever of us drew blood from the other would be the winner. He fought very well, but so too did I, and eventually I succeeded in drawing a thin red line diagonally across his chest with the point of my rapier. 'You have won,' he told me, 'and I shall have to give you something. In a few days time you will be in danger from fire and I will give you something that will protect you from it.' He then gave me the seed-syllable *rang*, which I knew to be the seed-syllable of the element of fire, whereupon he disappeared and I returned to my normal consciousness. It was not a dream, neither was it a vision. It was as though I had been with him in his own realm, the realm of the *āsuras*.

Two or three days later I happened to be giving a lecture on Buddhism. This was nothing new, as I always gave such lectures whenever I was in Bombay. What was new was the fact that on this occasion I was giving it in a building recently acquired by my friend Dinshaw Mehta, the founder of the Society of the Servants of God. He had acquired it for the activities of the Society and my lecture was part of the inaugural festivities. I was giving my lecture in a room on one of the upper floors, and there were between thirty and forty people present. Dinshaw presided, and sat next to me on the platform. I had been speaking for perhaps half an hour when I saw, out of the corner of my eye, someone enter the room and quietly hand my friend a slip of paper. The latter glanced at the paper, then quietly left the room. As I was well into my lecture I paid scant attention to what was going on and continued speaking. Twenty or more minutes later Dinshaw returned as quietly as he had left, resuming his seat beside me, and it was not long before my lecture came to an end. He afterwards told me what had happened. A room nearby had been turned into a meditation room, candles had been left burning there, and curtains had caught fire. He had been summoned and with the help of two other people he had been able to put out the blaze. It was most fortunate, he added, that I had been holding people's attention with my lecture. Had they known that a room was on fire only a few yards away they could have panicked and in the stampede for the exit people could have been injured or even trampled to death. I said nothing to my friend about the *āsura* or about what he had given me.

It took me only an hour to get from London to Brighton by train, and in the 1960s I used to visit the Brighton Buddhist Society every month. There was a meditation class, and from time to time I would give a talk on Buddhism in a hired room above a tea shop. The meditation class was held at the home of an elderly married couple, the Wraggs. Usually I returned to London the same evening, but on more than one occasion I stayed overnight at the

Wraggs occupying their comfortable guest room on the ground floor, next to the shrine room in which the meditation classes were held. In this way I got to know Carl and Violet quite well and even came to regard them as friends. They had been Spiritualists for many years, becoming interested in Buddhism quite late in life. As a bookcase in the guest room testified, they had read widely in the fields of comparative religion and mysticism, and I was in the habit of dipping into one of their books before going to bed. I particularly remember dipping into the *Sephar Zohar* or 'Book of Splendour', the fundamental text of the Kabbalah in five volumes, which I had not seen before. One day I heard that Violet had died, and I went down to Brighton for the funeral. Carl showed no sign of distress. For him, Violet was not dead, and when his two sons-in-law turned up in black he told them to go home and change into ordinary clothes. The funeral was almost a merry affair and we must have scandalized the solemn-faced undertaker's men with our lightheartedness.

On my next monthly visit to the Brighton Buddhist Society I stayed with Carl who was living alone, so to speak, on the upper floor of the house. He greeted me warmly, sat me down in the sitting room in my usual chair, and went off to prepare tea. I had not sat there for more than a few minutes when Violet entered the room and seated herself opposite me, as she usually did. We then talked for a while, as we always did, and she then left me. When Carl returned with the tea I told him that I had just seen Violet. 'Oh yes,' he replied, 'she's always around.' I have more than once told friends about my experience of seeing Violet and talking with her when, in the ordinary sense of the word, she was dead. Each time I have emphasized, as strongly as I could, that it was not Violet's ghost that I had seen and talked with. It was Violet herself.

'Would you mind taking over from me for a while?' Terry asked me, putting his hand over the mouthpiece of the telephone. He had been on the phone for more than three hours, talking to a friend and trying to persuade him not to commit suicide. On my agreeing to take over, Terry spoke again to the friend. He was with a Buddhist monk, he told him, and he was sure the monk could help him. Would he like to speak to the monk? The friend agreed to do so, and I took the phone from Terry. I already knew the man's history. His girlfriend had left him and he felt that as he could not live without her he had no alternative but to commit suicide. I must have spoken to him for about two hours, after which Terry took over from me and spoke to his friend again for an hour or more. By this time it was one o'clock in the morning and it seemed that between us, Terry and I had succeeded in persuading him not to commit suicide. Terry therefore went home and I went to bed. At five o'clock the man's mother phoned to say that her son had just committed suicide. I was not really surprised. While talking to him I had the distinct impression that I was talking not to a human being but to a demon, a demon who had taken possession of Terry's friend and driven him to commit suicide. I knew that should one allow oneself to be overwhelmed by a violent negative emotion such as craving, or hatred, or fear, one could eventually lay oneself open to possession by a negative psychic entity. In the case of Terry's friend he had been overwhelmed by grief for the loss of his girlfriend and felt he could not live without her. An 'evil' non-human entity had been able

taken charge of him and he had committed suicide.

Broom House Farm was located just within what may once have been a forest and was now a vast conifer plantation. It was conveniently near Thetford in Norfolk and in the early 1970s I used to run retreats there for a dozen or more people. One of these retreats was an ordination retreat, the ordination ceremony being held in the loft of the small barn that stood next to the farmhouse. I also once spent a few days at the farmhouse with a companion. One evening we happened to be sitting in the living room, he on one side of the fireplace, in which a log fire was burning, and I on the other. Suddenly my companion exclaimed, 'What's wrong? You look as though you were being attacked.' I replied, 'Yes, that is what I feel, I feel as though I was being attacked.' The attack was not physical but psychological, as though I was being attacked by invisible non-human entities. The attack did not last very long. I realized that I had in my hand and had just been reading some literature that a friend had sent me from Findhorn, an intentional community in north-east Scotland, and that this literature contained references to what it called *devas*. Clearly, these were the non-human entities that were attacking me. I threw the literature into the fire, whereupon the attack ceased. In a sense I had brought the attack upon myself. The friend in question had been to see me before his departure for Findhorn and I had asked him to send me some of its literature.

The following morning I had much to think about when I had my solitary walk along one of the broad, straight tracks that ran through the plantation. Why had the *devas* attacked me? Had I done anything to offend them? Such were my thoughts as the track took me further and further into the plantation. There was no sign of animal or bird life, and it was eerily quiet. I became aware that the trees were very angry. They were angry because they were all close together and forced to grow upwards to where they had a small crown of greenery which alone ever saw the light. Perhaps it was the tree spirits that were angry rather than the trees themselves, and perhaps the tree spirits were related to the Findhorn *devas*, though why the latter had attacked me that evening at Broom House Farm I never knew.

One Christmas in the late 1960s, finding myself alone in the Highgate flat, I decided to spend the holiday reading *The Lord of the Rings*, the three volumes of which a friend had just lent me. I read the first volume on Christmas Eve, the second on Christmas Day, and the third on Boxing Day, and thus for a while found myself living in the mythic world of the elves and the ents, of Sauron and Gandalf, the hobbits Frodo and Sam, Shelob and Gollum, and the other creations of the writer's fertile imagination. *The Lord of the Rings* and its cast of characters, both good and evil, soon became part of the counter-culture of the times and no one in the FWBO thought it strange that one of its country retreat centres should be called Rivendell, that being the name of the home of Elrond, one of the elves. The mythic Rivendell was hidden in a deep valley whereas the FWBO Rivendell was located in the flat Sussex countryside. In the 1980s I held there a ten day ordination retreat for women, occupying a separate wing of the building. Though I led the meditation and gave talks, I still had enough time to write a chapter of *Ambedkar and Buddhism*, the book on which I was working at the

time. One night I woke up at two o'clock in the morning and realized that there was somebody else in the room. As it was dark I could not see anything but I felt that quite near me there was a cold sinister presence that sent shivers up my spine. I recited a mantra and the presence slowly withdrew. It visited me on at least two more nights. I said nothing to the women about my nocturnal visitor, as I did not want to alarm them or spoil the atmosphere of the retreat. Later on I learned that a woman had committed suicide at Rivendell, it being then the rectory of the neighbouring church.

It was Tuesday, 30 January 1990. Paramartha and I were having breakfast in our flat above the London Buddhist Centre when I suddenly *knew* that I had to see my mother that very day. She was then in hospital in Southend-on-Sea and I had seen her only a few days before, and on leaving had promised to see her again in two weeks time. But now I had to see her that very day. Paramartha did not question my intuition, and we set out for Southend-on-Sea as soon as we could. Having arrived in the town before visiting hours, and wanting to get some exercise, we walked along the front in the direction of Leigh-on-Sea. The sky was overcast, a cold wind was blowing, and although it was midday one would have thought that it was already four o'clock.

On arriving at the hospital we went straight to the ward where I thought to find my mother, on the way passing through a room in which there were four beds. The bed in the corner was empty and the thought struck me that that bed may have been occupied by my mother. The ward sister of whom I enquired where I would find Mrs Wiltshire wanted to know who I was and I said, 'I'm her son.' For a moment or two she was silent, then she said, 'I am sorry to have to tell you that your mother died at two o'clock this morning.' I was stunned by the unexpected news, but all I said was, 'Is it possible to see her?' The ward sister said she would find out, then ushered us into a waiting room, gave us tea, and left. We talked a little about what had happened and I was glad that Paramartha was with me. An hour later the ward sister returned. 'You can see her now,' she said, whereupon we were taken through a series of rooms to the mortuary chapel. My mother's body lay covered with a white sheet except for her head, behind which was the altar. She looked very dead. Though there were the same sunken eyes, now closed, the same large, prominent nose, and the same small mouth, they looked as though were carved in wood and had never been made of flesh. Paramartha seated himself on the other side of the body while I seated myself on this side so that we faced each other across it. I took my *mālā* from my pocket and Paramartha, with a little smile, took out his. We then chanted the Vajrasattva mantra in unison for about half an hour. All this time we were aware that a foot or more above my mother's chest there was an area within which there was some kind of electrical or psychic vibration. We left the chapel quietly, closing the door behind us, and soon we were out of the hospital and on our way back to London.

There were three unusual things about our experience. While having breakfast that morning I had known that I had to go and see my mother that day. There were only two previous occasions in my life when I had been visited by a similar experience, both of them connected

with the death of someone I knew. Then, I had never before taken my *mālā* with me when I went out and neither had Paramartha, yet before we left the flat we had both slipped a *mālā* into our pocket without knowing that the other had done so. No wonder Paramartha had given me that little conspiratorial smile as he took his own *mālā* from his pocket. Finally, there was the strange phenomenon of the area above my mother's chest in which there was some kind of electrical or psychic vibration. Did this mean that my mother was not really as dead as she seemed to be? If what the ward sister had told me was correct, when we saw my mother she must have been dead for a little over twelve hours. But I knew that according to some Buddhist traditions it took rather longer than that for the consciousness to sever its connection with the body.

The sound of the voice did not wake me up, for I was already awake, listening to the faint sound of traffic on the Aslacton Road. It was a soft, warm, friendly voice, and it was quite near. 'Hello Bhante-ji,' the voice said. It was an Indian voice, as I knew from the intonation. And though it was dark in the bedroom and I could not see anything, I knew that there was someone with me. One of my Indian Buddhist friends must have died, I thought, and had come to pay me a final visit. The sound from the Aslacton Road grew fainter, and soon I was fast asleep.

## 12. The Young Florence Ketskemety

My mother's earliest memory was of being in a perambulator with her younger brother, Jack, and being pushed round Battersea Park by her eldest sister, Kate, who had brought her up, her mother having died when she was very young. Jack was connected with another early memory. On Sundays straight after Sunday school the brother and sister had to go and pay their respects to their aunts, Faith, Hope and Charity, who were unmarried and lived together. All three dressed in black, with buttons right up to the throat, but although they looked very severe they always treated their little visitors kindly. After they had made their little bobs to each of the aunts in turn, a rather formal conversation would ensue and Florence and Jack would each be given a glass of lemonade. As soon as they were out of the house, the two children would scamper down the street, laughing and shouting, glad that the constraints of the visit were over. My mother never spoke about her schooldays, but she did tell me how she used to help her Hungarian grandfather in his grocery shop in Vauxhall Bridge Road. Though he had lived in England for much of his life, her grandfather's command of English was far from perfect, and my mother had picked up from him a few words of Hungarian. The shop being situated in a working-class district many of its customers were quite poor. Mothers would send their children to buy a ha'p'orth of pickles and she remembered giving them the pickles in a paper cone. Her father was a clarinetist and had been in the army. She was his youngest daughter, and very much his favourite. He used to call her his little fairy, she once told my sister and me, and from the way she said it, it was clear she had been very fond of her father. He had once taken her with him when he had a professional engagement in France. The Channel crossing may very well have been a rough one for my mother more than once spoke of her fear of the sea. 'You won't catch me going on the water', she would say. After their father's death the brothers and sisters would gather on Saturday night at the family home, where some of them still lived, for a fish supper. George, the eldest brother, would preside, asking each of them in turn, 'haddock or kipper?'

At the time of her father's death the young Florence Ketskemety may already have been living not in Fulham, where she grew up, but in Merton with her sister Kate and Kate's husband, Dan. He was a tall, well-built Irishman with a loud voice and a crude sense of humour. At parties he would put three fingers up the chimney into the soot, then make three black stripes on the sleeves of the girls' white silk blouses, despite their protests. He called this 'making them sergeants'. He was also not above trying to take liberties with his young sister-in-law. Once he went so far that she threatened to tell Kate if he persisted. 'He was not a nice man,' she commented many years later when telling me about the incident. After leaving school, Florrie, as she was called, worked in a laundry. 'That's why I've got strong arms,' she once told me years later, not without a touch of pride. She also practised regularly with the India clubs, and was fond of playing diabolo. My father once told me and my sister, Joan, that when our mother was a girl she could throw the 'devil' up in the air in one street and then run round the block and catch it as it came down in the next street. Joan and I were then both quite young and could not always tell if our father was serious or pulling our leg.

When Florrie was sixteen the First World War began, and it was not long before she left the laundry to work as a waitress in the restaurant of the Army and Navy Stores in Victoria Street, where her elder brother Bert was manager of the catering department. At the time waitresses were a novelty, but the waiters having all joined up their places had to be filled up somehow. One day Florrie had a terrifying experience. She still lived with Kate and Dan in Merton, and was on her way home from work when she became aware of the silver shape of a Zeppelin high in the air above her, and it was going in the same direction as herself. On coming to a crossroads she turned left and the Zeppelin too turned left. Convinced that the silver monster was now following her she took to her heels and ran all the way home. Nearly seven hundred Londoners were killed by bombs dropped from Zeppelins, and nearly two thousand were seriously injured, and Florrie had good reason to be frightened. Florrie's elder brother Tom was in the army as was her younger brother Jack. Tom was better suited to military life than his more sensitive brother and it was not long before Jack deserted, taking refuge in the family home in Fulham. Looking out of the window one day Tom saw in the street below two policemen who were looking for Jack and called out to them, 'Come and get the bugger! He's here!' His sisters shrieked and did their best to drag Tom away from the window. What happened next I never learned. What I did learn, years later, was that Tom had died as a prisoner-of-war in Silesia and that after the war Jack had suffered a nervous breakdown.

As a young woman, my mother naturally had interests outside the family and her workplace. She once told me that there was a young man whose eye she seemed to have caught. He was in the army and was a regular visitor at Kate and Dan's place where he used to entertain them all by playing on the piano. This was the family piano on which all the brothers and sisters had practised and which had passed into Kate's keeping on the death of their father. I remember that piano very well, for from Kate it had eventually passed to my mother and I remember her playing on it occasionally when I was quite small as I sat on the floor near her feet. Besides working as a waitress, the young Florrie was an active member of the VAD or Voluntary Aid Detachment. A photo in my possession shows her wearing her VAD uniform. It was probably taken in a studio for she stands with her right hand resting lightly on the back of a chair and with her right foot slightly advanced. She wears a trench coat belted at the waist together with dark stockings and sensible shoes. The face beneath the dark beret is rather thin with a big nose, and she looks straight ahead. The impression I get as I look at the photo is of a young woman of some strength of character. Part of her work as a member of the VAD consisted in visiting wounded soldiers who were convalescing. One of the hospitals within her area was St Benedict's in Tooting and it was there that she met my father who was recovering from shrapnel wounds in his right arm. Neither of them ever spoke of their first meeting, or of their courtship, but a day came when the young Florence Ketskemety could display on the third finger of her left hand a diamond ring.

## Living With Carter

In the early days of the FWBO I was living on my own in a second floor flat on Highgate West Hill, NW London. Two or three times a week I would go down to Sakura, our Centre in St Martin's Lane, either to lead a meditation class in the basement shrine and meditation room or to attend a council meeting. Usually I walked down to Camden Town, took the Tube from there down to Tottenham Court Road, and then walked along Shaftesbury Avenue to St Martin's Lane, half way down which Sakura was situated. One fine summer evening in 1968 I arrived there to find a cluster of people waiting for me, some of them being in the shop and others on the pavement outside. One of them was a shabbily dressed young man who seemed to be the object of general disapproval. Clearly something was wrong. The proprietor of Sakura told me what had happened. A young American had turned up the previous evening, and as he had nowhere to stay, he, Upaya (Emile Boin), had allowed him to spend the night in the shrine and meditation room downstairs. The young traveller had fallen asleep while reading by the light of a candle, something had caught fire, and soon the whole place was ablaze. Fortunately he had managed to grope his way through the smoke to the narrow winding stairs and had emerged into the shop. He had had no time to dress and therefore emerged naked and the clothes he was now wearing were some of Upaya's old working clothes. Clearly there could be no class that evening, and for many evenings to come, and slowly the people who had gathered there went their several ways. What was to be done with the young American? No one wanted to accommodate him, and he could hardly occupy the shrine and meditation room a second night, it having been gutted by the fire and much of it was black with soot. I was not particularly keen to accommodate him myself but I felt sorry for him, and I therefore took him back with me to my flat.

Over a drink and a snack Carter, as the young American was called, told me a little about himself. Like millions of other young Americans of his generation he had heeded the call of Baba Ramdas (Richard Alpert) to drop out, tune in, and turn on. He had left his comfortable middle class home in California, had experimented with LSD and other psychedelic drugs, and for the last few weeks he had been hitching his way around Europe. He had been I think in Norway and had spent a few days there in prison, apparently on account of drugs. Now he was in London and with me. By this time we were in my bedroom and it was time to sleep. 'Shall I make you up a bed on the floor, or will you sleep with me?' I asked. 'I'll sleep with you', was Carter's prompt reply. I slipped into bed and he soon followed but not before he had divested himself of Upaya's paint-stained cast-offs. It was as though a beautiful butterfly had emerged from its chrysalis. Six feet or more in height, and twenty-one years old, he had tousled, sun-bleached hair and blue eyes, and his well proportioned body seemed made of gold rather than flesh. The words that came to me were, 'the gift of the gods'. I had been kind to Carter and perhaps my kindness was being rewarded. As soon as he was in bed, he snuggled up to me and I put my arm round him, saying 'Is it alright?' 'Yeah, sure, sure', he replied putting his arm around me, and although I could not see his face I knew that he was

grinning. Within minutes we were being swept up on a wave of sexual ecstasy such as I, at least, had not experienced before. How long we remained on it I do not know but when it subsided I was left feeling deeply satisfied and went straight to sleep. That wave was to sweep us away more than once during the months that followed and I shall remain ever grateful to Carter for the part he played in my initiation into the world of erotic bliss.

It was several weeks before the Triratna shrine and meditation room was again fit for purpose, but it took Carter only a matter of days to acquire some new clothes. His sartorial taste was by no means the same as mine. Among his purchases was a pair of what he called his 'bermudas'. I had not seen or heard of this garment before, which was too short for trousers and too long for shorts. Carter's culinary tastes were also very different from mine. He was fond of peanut butter and jam sandwiches, whereas I had discovered peanut butter only after my return to England. He also used expressions that were new to me, such as 'nitty-gritty', and he was fond of music that was not always to my liking. Like other west coast hippies he had dipped into Zen, but he was not seriously interested in either meditation or Buddhism, and during his stay with me he hardly ever accompanied me to my classes or lectures. Although he had turned up at Sakura, he was not really part of the FWBO. His relationship was with me. If he had any spiritual practise at all it consisted in his having dropped out, and his trying to tune in to something beyond ordinary experience with the help of drugs. Besides acquiring new clothes Carter soon found a way to supply himself with cannabis, of which he was a regular user. I had not tried it, though some of my friends were devotees of the weed; but it was not long before Carter persuaded me to share a joint with him. During the time that he was with me I must have smoked it every day. Our favourite place was Hampstead Heath, which lay immediately behind my flat and could be seen from the kitchen window. A corner of the Heath was covered with long grass, and there we would lie, flat on our backs in the sunshine and gazing up at the blue sky. Often I had the sensation that I was floating, as though on a magic carpet.

One afternoon, as we lay there, Carter confided to me that he had taken LSD not once but eight times and that every trip had been bad one. If he could have a trip with me, he said, he was sure he would have a good one at last. Despite initial reservations, I eventually agreed, and Carter went about making the necessary preparations, including choosing records for us to listen to during the trip. Rather than writing a second time about the trip I shall quote what I wrote when I was a little nearer to the experience than I am now. 'The trip lasted for about twelve hours. I had intended to record the effects of the LSD as it took hold, but this proved not to be feasible. All I could write was 'feel as though little fish were nibbling at my brain', followed by the single word 'laughter'. I was, in fact, laughing uncontrollably, and the laughter was releasing huge quantities of energy. After that, there were only squiggles on the paper. The entire trip is virtually a blank to me. All that I could remember of it, even immediately afterwards, was of my being present at the dawn of creation. 'First light on first water' were the words that came to me, accompanied by the visual image of a vast expanse of water upon which light was shining.' Carter did not have a good trip but he was relieved not

to have had a bad one, and for this he was grateful.

Carter was with me for two summers, that of 1968 and that of 1969. Both were fine English summers and both provided the setting of events that were significant to me. There was my holiday in the New Forest, which took place either in 1968 or 1969, and my visit to Glastonbury which took place in 1969. Joy Baines, my landlady, owned a caravan in the New Forest and she agreed to rent it to me for a week. Ananda would be staying with us in the caravan, which was quite a small one, and Mike (Abhaya) would be paying us a day-visit at some point. A couple of days before our departure Carter asked me if we could add a young woman called Samantha to our little party. He felt very sorry for her, he explained. She was being badly treated by her mother and elder sister and needed a break. I could not but agree as I could see that Carter was genuinely concerned for her. She could spend the previous night with me at the flat, he suggested, and he would spend the night with a friend nearby. He did not say who this friend was, and in retrospect I do not know whether it was a male friend or whether he had at last found a girlfriend. A few weeks after moving in with me he had complained that I did not go out and about with him very often. I spent much of my time at my desk, which was the truth. I had letters to answer and lectures to prepare. I therefore told Carter that he should find a girlfriend, and that she would probably go out and about with him as much as he wanted. To this he objected that he did not know how to get a girlfriend, and I had the impression that his experience of women was limited and that he was not altogether at ease with them. All you have to do, I insisted, is to go to parties and sooner or later you will find someone you like and who likes you. He must have followed my advice, for he did in the end find a girlfriend. Her name was Andrea and she was to play a decisive part in both our lives.

Samantha turned out to be about twenty and she had long amber-coloured hair, violet eyes and milk-white skin. After Carter had left, she seated herself on the edge of my bed without saying anything. When she did speak, it was in a tone that was one almost of defiance. 'Either I sleep in all my clothes' she said, 'or I take everything off.' 'Do as you please', I responded, as I got into bed, 'I don't mind either way'. She seemed to consider this, then, very slowly she took off her clothes and climbed into bed with her back towards me. I did not know what Carter had told her about me, but she seemed to expect that we would have sex. I had not had sex with a woman before and I wanted to find out what it was like. Before I could do so I heard, clear as a bell, an angelic voice. The voice said, 'Don't', so I didn't, for soft and gentle though the voice was it was utterly compelling and could not possibly be disobeyed. I have often wondered where that angelic voice came from and why it should have intervened when it did. Since then I have not had the slightest inclination to have sex with a woman, even to find out what it was like. For me women have always been friends, not sex partners.

Joy's caravan was situated on the edge of a piece of woodland and Carter, Samantha and I reached it after a long walk uphill. Ananda arrived soon afterwards from another direction. It was a wonderful day, with a sky of unclouded blue. We enjoyed the warmth of the sun and

the little breezes that fanned our cheeks from time to time. We enjoyed the size of the trees and of the tall purple foxgloves that grew among the fern. We enjoyed one another's company. We enjoyed watching the famous New Forest ponies which, unafraid of man but a little shy, grazed not far away. Mike came up from Bournemouth as promised. Thus for a day I enjoyed the company of two of my closest friends and for a while, at least, Samantha seemed to be drawn into our little circle. All this and much more is reflected in some of the poems that I wrote that summer. It was a time of light and colour, of harmony and peace. From time to time Carter and I wandered off on our own, just to get some exercise, and in the course of one of these excursions we came upon a magnificent oak, which, as the inscription informed us marked the spot where William Rufus died, slain by an arrow from an unknown hand. On another occasion we returned to find Ananda sitting with just a towel round his waist. I do not remember what Samantha was wearing, if indeed she was wearing anything at all. And I had the impression Ananda had just warded off an attack on his virginity.

A few days after my return to Highgate West Hill I received a visit from a troubled young man. He had been Samantha's boyfriend, he told me, and she had given him and others syphilis, for which he was receiving treatment. He had urged her to get treatment, but had met with denial and defiance and his purpose in coming to see me was to ask me to intervene. This I did as soon as I could but whether she did seek treatment or not I do not know. And I never saw her again.

My 1969 visit to Glastonbury was not planned in the way that the visit to the New Forest had been planned. It just happened, as one might say, and it involved not just Carter and me but quite a number of other people. So far as I remember, it grew out of one of the Buddhist festivals that the FWBO was celebrating at Aryatara. There was a bonfire in the garden and perhaps fireworks, though I may be confusing that year's celebrations with those of another year. Be that as it may, a dozen or so people stayed on after the rest had gone home. Among these were the three members of the English Mystical School of Painting and their respective girlfriends, all of whom I had got to know after seeing their end of year exhibition at the Goldsmith's College of Art. They were not so much members of the FWBO as personal friends who attended some of my lectures and visited me at the flat. There was a xylophone in the shrine-room and one of them started playing it. It was an improvisation that went on and on, hour after hour until some of us went into a sort of trance or fell asleep. In the morning we set out for Glastonbury though how we reached the decision to go there I do not know. Soon we were on the road. As we crossed London Bridge we saw thousands, perhaps tens of thousands of tightly packed people streaming towards the City. 'Where are all those people going?' asked Carter, his eyes goggling. 'They are all going to work', I explained. 'To work!' my friend exclaimed in tones of mingled shock, horror and disgust that people should be going to work on such a fine summer's day as this. They should all be on the beach. But of course this was not California. Before long we were heading west and I noticed that the big van in which we were travelling was being joined by other, smaller vans, and that we were all picking up hitchhikers. It was as though a wind was carrying us all in the same direction,

carrying us towards Glastonbury.

My long poem *On Glastonbury Tor* was written shortly after this visit, and I do not propose to describe for the second time, in prose, how we made the ascent of the Tor or what happened when we reached the top. The poem is the definitive account. I want simply to make the point that the events described in the poem did actually happen. I really did see, with my physical eyes, the three UFOs that suddenly appeared in the evening sky. They were UFOs in the literal sense of the term, being unidentified, at least by me; they flew, and they were objects in the sense that I saw them with my physical eyes, as did many others including some night watchmen, as was reported in the newspapers. Similarly, I actually did see a dark shape enter into the young man and speak from or through him words in a language that was unknown to me. In the poem I do not reproduce the actual words but only give an impression of their sound, which was harsh and guttural. The young man was a Canadian who was known to Carter but whom I had not met. The poem ends with the Tor expanding in all directions and soaring aloft. It was an image of Vairocana's Tower, which contains in a state of mutual interpenetration everything that exists. All this I actually experienced, though whether the experience was mundane or transcendental, or something in between, I cannot say. *On Glastonbury Tor* was not only one of my longer poems, but it was written in a style quite different from my usual one. It was not deliberately experimental but the style seems to be the natural expression of what I experienced. Indeed, the poem itself was an expression of much that was happening in the 1960s, especially among the younger generation.

By this time Carter had his girlfriend in the person of Andrea and I had met her once or twice. She was of medium height, had long fair hair, and was thin rather than slim. Her face was quite pale and drawn probably because she ate little and was on drugs. Whether she was estranged from her upper middle class family in the way that Samantha was I never knew, though I gathered that her grandfather was a dignitary in the Church of England. At times she seemed small, pathetic, and waif-like and I imagine that this was one of the things that had drawn kind-hearted Carter to her, for as the poet says 'Pity melts the mind to Love'. Andrea had an upstairs room in a house not far from where I lived, so that it was easy for Carter to come and go between us. Sometimes he spent the night with me, sometimes with Andrea. Although he had originally wanted a girlfriend who would go out and about with him, Andrea must have been a disappointment in this respect. She spent most of her time in her room smoking so that if Carter wanted to go out with someone he sometimes had to fall back on me. I would call on him at Andrea's place where more often than not I found both of them in bed despite the lateness of the hour. After the three of us had chatted for a while, Carter would dress and we would go out together. On one of my visits I found that Carter had covered a large sheet of paper with doodles executed by pencils or crayons of various colours. The effect was bright and positive and I thought it reflected the state of Carter's mind at the time. He was happy. He was happy because he had Andrea and he had me. On one of the rare occasions when the three of us went for a walk on Hampstead Heath together he put an arm round each of us and declared that it was the happiest time of his life, for he had with

him the two people whom he loved best in the world.

This idyllic state of affairs did not last. As the weeks went by, I noticed that, in Carter's case, just as pity had melted into love so love had developed into infatuation. With Andrea there was a similar transition. In her case, infatuation had developed into possessiveness and jealousy. Two of my memories at the time illustrate what was going on. We had booked seats for a play at the Aldwych and we were making our way to the tube station. We walked together, but every ten or fifteen yards Carter and Andrea would stop for prolonged smooching, as though they could hardly get enough of each other. This delayed our arrival at the theatre, where we found we had the wrong tickets. The scene of my other memory was the Highgate West Hill flat. Carter had come to see me with Andrea. He came upstairs as usual, but she remained obstinately down in the hallway so that Carter could spend only a few minutes with me, as no doubt was her intention. On his leaving me Carter put his arms round me and gave me a big hug and I noticed that he had an erection. He noticed it too, and we both laughed. Carter eventually realised that all was not well as regards Andrea's attitude to me. I was quite happy that he should sleep with Andrea, but Andrea was not happy that he should sleep with me or see very much of me. One day Carter suggested that the three of us should spend a week together on holiday. Though he did not say so, I knew that he hoped that this would bind the three of us more closely together and help Andrea develop a more positive attitude to me. I was sceptical, and told Carter that I did not think his scheme would work. I could see that Andrea was implacable in her dislike of me and that we would never be friends. Nonetheless, I allowed Carter to persuade me and agreed to take part in the experiment.

Mike was willing to lend us his car for a week. He had moved from Bournemouth to Millbrook in Cornwall, and it was therefore to Millbrook that we travelled to pick up the car. Behind the wheel Carter was a very different person. The carefree hippie had changed into a competent young American who had been driving all his life. We had no plan as to where we would go on our holiday and I left it to Carter to decide the route. Our first stop was in Laugharne. I had visited the little town the previous winter with Rick, one of the English Mystical painters, and we had visited Dylan Thomas's grave in the churchyard and seen the famous boathouse. I was not just sightseeing, but looking for a country centre for the FWBO. We found only one that might have been suitable, but at £4,000 it was beyond our means. The owner was an elderly woman and Rick and I spent some time talking with her in her kitchen. She seemed to have an animus against marriage. 'Don't you get married', she told Rick. 'First they marry you for your beauty, then they throw you away. So don't marry.' It was as though she was addressing a young woman rather than a young man. Neither Carter nor Andrea was interested in Dylan Thomas and we spent our time in Laugharne driving up and down the broad, flat sands where Sir Malcolm Campbell had broken the land speed record with his Bluebird. At one point Carter handed over the wheel to me and I drove round in circles for a while greatly enjoying myself. It was the only part of our holiday that I really enjoyed. The following day found us at Glastonbury Tor. Carter wanted to show Andrea the

place, and in fact we spent the night in the grim old tower.

The only other part of our holiday that I remember was finding myself in Bath. In particular, I remember the three of us being in a small park. Carter and I felt like stretching our legs for a while. Andrea wanted to sit down and we left her sitting in a little arbour. When we returned fifteen or twenty minutes later Andrea was nowhere to be seen and Carter panicked. We at once set about searching the neighbouring streets, he frantic with anxiety and I scarcely less worried. Eventually we found her more or less by accident. She was sullen and silent and would not say where she had been or what she had been doing. It seemed to me that she was playing on Carter's fear of losing her. If she was, it worked. For the next day or two he would not allow her out of his sight and the situation became rather strained. In the end I told Carter that the holiday was not proving a success and that we should separate, and to this he unwillingly agreed. There was an emotional parting and even Andrea seemed a little moved. He would return the car to Mike at the end of the week, then take the train back to London and me.

I never saw him again.

From friends of friends I learned that he had sent home for his best suit and that shortly afterwards he had married Andrea and taken her back to America with him. Before leaving he sent me a message. It was scribbled on a postcard with various coloured pencils and it read 'I know I am hurting you. Give me two years, and I will be back'. I was indeed hurt. Carter had been an important part of my life for just over a year, and it took me a long time to recover from the loss. Recover I did, and was soon finding consolation elsewhere.

Two years later I had news of Andrea. She had been attacked while alone on the beach one night and had returned to England. She had been injured but how badly I did not hear.

Many years later I was in San Francisco, and one day I found myself in the centre of the city being driven through heavy traffic. Suddenly, I saw a shabby figure, clad in black, standing between the streams of traffic, panhandling. He was in profile, and I knew that profile. It was surely Carter! There was no time to check whether I was mistaken or not. The traffic moved on and me with it and in an instant the black-clad figure was out of sight. I have never been sure whether or not the figure I had glimpsed was really the Carter whom I had known and loved.

*Adhithana, 2nd April 2017*

## Some Reflections on the *Garava Sutta*

One is never too old to learn. It is only relatively late in my Dharma life that I have become more aware of or have focused on the *Garava Sutta* of the Pali Canon. This is not to say that I did not know of its existence but that it started having a significance for me that it had not had before. What struck me was that the Buddha was giving the hearer a glimpse of the workings of the Buddha-mind. But who was the original hearer? According to tradition, it was Ananda, the Buddha's companion in the last years of his life. But now the 'hearer' is the person who reads or hears this section of the Samyutta Nikaya, whether in Pali or in a translation. Hearing those words myself, and doing my best to absorb them, it occurs to me that we need to reflect deeply on them in order to bring out, as best we can, their full significance. On the surface, they are easy enough to understand. The Buddha says "What if I were to dwell in dependence on this very *dhamma* to which I have fully awakened, honouring and respecting it?" But what is that *dhamma*? It is surely not the sum total of the Buddha's teachings, for it would be absurd to think of him as honouring and respecting something of which he himself was the source. Before saying more about the *dhamma* to which the Buddha had awoken, I want to say something about his honouring and respecting that *dhamma*.

In a preceding section of the Sutta the Buddha declared unequivocally that it is painful to live without honouring and respecting anyone, from which it followed that he himself needed to live in such a manner. To modern, egalitarian, 'politically correct' ears the first part of this statement will seem incredible. Are we not all equal so that there is no question of having to look up to anyone? Moreover, no one is more spiritually developed than anyone else. They are just *differently* developed. In the Buddha's teaching, however, there are steps and stages such as the eight stages, both mundane and transcendental, of the eightfold path, the six paramitas, and so on, and there are individuals who are on these steps or at these stages, so as to form a hierarchy of levels and of practitioners. According to the Buddha it is actually painful not 'to live honouring and respecting' someone, and this, too, will sound incredible to modern ears. They will deny that they feel any such discomfort, protesting that they can live quite happily without honouring and respecting anyone. If they honour or respect anyone at all, it will be the politicians or media celebrities of the day, but this will not be the kind of honour and respect of which the Buddha speaks, any more than the politicians and celebrities in question will be truly worthy of such honour and respect. The word *garava* has a richer connotation than is suggested by the English words used to translate it. It includes such emotions as admiration, wonder, and delight in the fact that there exists, or existed, others superior to oneself in creative ability or spiritual attainment. It is akin to such terms as vandana or salutation and *pūja* or worship, all of which acts are expressive of positive emotion. To live without looking up to anyone represents an impoverishment of one's emotional life and, indeed, an impairment of one's very humanity.

I have never found it difficult to look up. As a boy I looked up to such heroes as Alfred the

Great, Robin Hood and Sir Walter Raleigh, as well as to the gods and heroes of Ancient Greece and Scandinavia. Later on, I was to enjoy Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship*, though not all his heroes were mine. In my teen years I discovered the painters, sculptors, and architects of the Italian Renaissance, some of whom seemed to tower above ordinary humanity. I also discovered the great poets and playwrights of my own country, as well as its great prose writers of both sexes. To all of these I looked up with admiration, wonder, and delight, rejoicing that such individuals had lived and worked among us and that the products of their genius were still available to us. It was in my teen years, too, that I extended my horizon beyond Europe to take in the wise men of Asia, and especially the Buddha, whom I came to see not just as a historical figure but as the embodiment of ultimate reality. I came to look up not only to the Buddha and to his Dharma and his enlightened disciples, but also to those religious geniuses who in India, China, and Tibet had helped to bring out the significance of certain aspects of his teaching. Nearer home, I looked up to and still look up to my personal teachers, honouring and respecting them as best I can in my own life and teaching. I look up to Jagdish Kashyap, who taught me Pali and Abhidharma. I look up to Chattrul Sangye Dorje, who gave me the Green Tara initiation. I look up to Kachu Rimpoche, who gave me the Padmasambhava sadhana. I look up to Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche, who initiated me into the sadhanas of Manjughosa, Avalokitesvara, Vajrapani, and Green Tara. I look up to Dudjom Rimpoche, who initiated me into the Vajrasattva sadhana. I look up to Dhardo Rimpoche, who initiated me into the White Tara sadhana and gave me the Bodhisattva precepts. I look up to Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche, who introduced me to the Yellow Jambhala, to White Tara, and to Kurukulle. To Yogi Chen, too, I look up, who shared with me the treasures of Vajrayana and Ch'an. I look up to all these compassionate teachers, whose influence has entered into my life and has through me entered into the life of the Triratna Buddhist Order. To them do I look up with devotion and endless gratitude.

The fact that I find it easy to look up, especially to my spiritual teachers, does not mean that I am able to do this simply because I am of the devotional rather than of the intellectual type. One's personal type has little to do with it. The capacity to look up to something or someone higher than oneself is inherent in human nature and reaches across religions and cultures. In his or her spiritual life the Buddhist seeks to balance faith and wisdom, meditation and vigour, all with the help of the central faculty of mindfulness or awareness. This does not mean that on certain important occasions, whether in one's individual life or in the life of a whole community, there may not be a special outpouring of devotion and gratitude towards a certain person or persons. In the Triratna Buddhist Order this may occur in connection with one's private and public preceptors at the time of ordination. I have witnessed it on a much larger scale in the case of the attitude of the new Buddhists of India, who feel an unbounded devotion to Dr Ambedkar, who led them from bondage to freedom, from darkness to light, and from despair to hope. Any attempt to minimise the importance of devotion in the spiritual life, or to limit it to a particular personality type, is a betrayal of the Buddha's teaching and does less than justice to human nature.

In the *Garava Sutta* the Buddha declares that it is painful to live without honouring and respecting anyone. He also says that he cannot see, among the Brahmins and ascetics of his time, anyone who is superior to himself and whom, therefore, he could live honouring and respecting. This too will sound incredible to modern ears, though not necessarily for the same reasons. Some will maintain that the Buddha's statement displays arrogance, while according to others the Buddha could not be superior because it is their own teacher or prophet or saviour who is superior to all others, along with his gospel or revelation. Comparisons between the different religions of the world are inevitable. At the same time the fact that each religion claims not only that it is true but that it is in exclusive possession of the truth makes comparison difficult, even impossible, for there is no common standard of comparison on which all are agreed. Each religion lives in a self-contained world of its own. To describe one religion in the terms of another is to do it an injustice. Religions are mutually incommensurable. Any scholarly or objective comparison of one religion with another by someone standing as it were outside them all cannot but misrepresent them. The same is true of any attempt to describe individual religions in those terms.

Where does this leave the individual Buddhist? In the case of an Eastern Buddhist there is no problem. He or she lives within the self-contained world of their own form of Buddhism. For the Western Buddhist, however, there is a problem. A Western Buddhist can, of course, join a branch of an Eastern Buddhist Sangha, but this may involve an alienation from his or her own culture, with subsequent psychological problems. It may involve trying to be a *Thai* Buddhist or a *Japanese* Buddhist rather than a practitioner of the Dharma, especially if the religion adopted is tainted with what I have called religio-nationalism. What Western Buddhists need is a self-contained Buddhist world of their own that is faithful to the Dharma and at the same time draws for inspiration on the best of Western culture, whether that of Ancient Greece, the Italian Renaissance, or the Romantic movement. I believe that the Triratna Buddhist Order can be the model for such a self-contained 'Western' Buddhist world, extending as it does from Europe to India, Australasia, and the Americas.

To believe that one is in exclusive possession of the truth can cause one to see others as heretics or unbelievers. It can even lead one to prosecute, torture, and even kill such people in the name of one's god or one's religion. Such an attitude is foreign to the spirit of Buddhism. A true Buddhist of whatever provenance, though firmly believing in the truth of the Dharma, will behave with courtesy and goodwill towards those of another faith. This will not always be easy, for one's natural assertiveness and competitiveness may well smuggle themselves into one's adherence to the Dharma. Thus one hears of Japanese warrior monks doing battle with one another or Sinhalese monks exhorting soldiers to kill Hindu Tamils. Many years ago during my early days in India I often told people in my lectures that Buddhism was a religion of peace and that no blood had ever been shed in its name. Now I would be ashamed to make such a claim, for my words would be belied by what is going on in many parts of the Buddhist world. One cannot but lament that in some quarters Buddhism should have degenerated to such an extent, though it is of course Buddhists who have degenerated, not

their religion. *Corruptio optimi pessima*. (The corruption of the best is the worst.) Or, as the poet has it, 'Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds'.

The Buddha certainly believed that he was in possession of the truth, though in his case 'possession' would not have meant what possession means to ordinary, unenlightened mortals. He spoke of his having wondered whether he should dwell depending on that *dhamma* to which he had fully awoken, thus giving us an insight into what I have called the workings of the Buddha-mind. But what is that *dhamma*? If it is not the sum total of the Buddha's verbal teachings, then what is it? We should not assume that because the Buddha has spoken of it, and about his living in accordance with it, that we really do understand what he is talking about. To my mind, the Buddha is speaking about what it is that makes a Buddha a Buddha, whatever that may be. In other words he is implying that we live in a universe of such a nature that, provided certain moral and spiritual conditions have been met, it is possible for a human being to attain Buddhahood. It is probably no accident that although he speaks of that *dhamma* and that his attainment of his Buddhahood was dependent on the fact of its existence, he does not describe or define it. In the course of Buddhist history that *dhamma* has been spoken of in various ways, but to the unenlightened mind it remains a mystery. This is of more than theoretical interest as there are practical consequences. It is not that there is an 'X' by virtue of which the Buddha becomes an Awakened One and lives in dependence on that 'X', honouring and revering it. What the Buddha is doing is giving us an example at the very highest level of how one should live. Like other Buddhists, members of the Triratna Buddhist Order should 'look up'. We should look up to the Buddha, to our spiritual teachers, and to all those who, in the words of one of the finest poems of the twentieth century, were truly great.

*Born of the sun, they travelled a short while toward the sun  
And left the vivid air signed with their honour.*

*Adhithana, 8/4/2017 – 18/4/2017*

# The Good Friend, the False Friend, and the Spiritual Friend

According to the *Upaddha Sutta*, there was a time when the Buddha was staying in the territory of the Śākyaans, the tribe to which he belonged by birth, and Ānanda was living in seclusion nearby. While in seclusion Ānanda reflected that the successful practice of asceticism depended on the cultivation of two factors: spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*) and manly vigour (*virīya*). Having thus reflected, Ānanda went to see the Buddha, and after saluting him told the Buddha what he had thought, namely, that spiritual friendship was half of the holy life (*brahmacariya*). The Buddha flatly disagreed. Spiritual friendship, companionship, or comradeship was not half of the holy life, he told Ānanda. It was the whole of it! He then proceeded to explain that when a monk (*bhikkhu*) had a spiritual friend it was to be expected that he would develop and cultivate the Perfect Eightfold Path. He further explained how the Eightfold Path was to be cultivated, the Eightfold Path of Perfect Vision, Perfect Emotion, Perfect Speech, Perfect Action, Perfect Means of Livelihood, Perfect Effort, Perfect Awareness, and Perfect *Samādhi*.

In denying Ānanda's idea that there was a manly striving separate from spiritual friendship, the Buddha was in fact denying that there was any such thing as a purely individual spiritual life. Man was a social being, and this applied as much to his spiritual life as to his worldly life. In the oft quoted words of the poet-preacher John Donne, 'No man is an island entire of itself.' From the moment of birth to the moment of death the individual human being, like other animals, is able to survive only because he or she belongs to a group and is dependent on it in all sorts of ways, from the most basic to the most refined. We depend upon other human beings for our education, for the food we eat, and for the amenities we enjoy. We depend upon them for our ideas and for the institutions and social structures that make the development of friendship possible. These structures exist on various levels and make possible friendships on various levels. In the Pāli scriptures there is the more worldly friendship of the *Sīgālovāda Sutta* and the more spiritual friendship of the *Upaddha Sutta* of which the Buddha speaks to Ānanda. These may be distinguished, in English, as good friendship and spiritual friendship, the Pāli word *mittatā* being used in both senses.

At another time the Buddha was staying at the Bamboo Grove in Rājagaha. Here he met Sīgāla, a young Brahmin, and explained to him how good friendship is one of the six basic relationships of human life, the others being the relations to parents, to teachers, to wife and child, to workers and servants, and to Brahmins and ascetics. There is an important difference between good friendship and the five other kinds of relationship. In the latter the relationship in each case is between those who are unequal, whereas the relationship between friends is one of equality. Friendship is thus an area of freedom. With a friend one does not have to act a part, or be guarded, or conceal what one really thinks. One can say to a friend what one cannot say to one's wife, or to one's parents, or to one's employers. There are five ways, the

Buddha told Sīgāla, in which a man should be of service to his friends: by giving gifts, by speaking kindly, by looking after their welfare, by treating them like himself, and by keeping his word to them. The friends, for their part, reciprocate by looking after him when he is inattentive, by looking after his property when he is inattentive, by being a refuge when he is afraid, by not deserting him when he is in trouble, and by showing concern for his children.

The false friend is described no less graphically. He is a great talker, a flatterer, a spendthrift, one who takes everything and wants a lot for very little, one who does his duty to you out of fear, who seeks his own ends, who talks of past and future favours, but in the present pleads his inability due to some misfortune. What is worse, he assents to bad actions and dissents from good ones, he praises you to your face and disparages you behind your back. He is your companion when you indulge in strong drink, when you haunt the streets at untimely hours, when you frequent places of entertainment, and when you indulge in gambling.

The good friend, the Buddha further told Sīgāla, is loyal in various ways. Among other things, he is a helper, he is the same in happy and unhappy times, he points out what is good for you, he is sympathetic, in business he lets you have twice what you ask for, he tells you his secrets and keeps yours, he does not let you down in misfortune, he would even sacrifice his life for you, he keeps you from wrongdoing, and he points out the path to heaven. Thus the good friend does a lot for you. He will even sacrifice his life for you, even show you the path to heaven; but that is all he can do. Only the spiritual friend can help you to go further, beyond the worlds of the *devas* and the *brahmās*, beyond all that is conditioned, to Nirvana. For, as the Buddha told Ānanda, if a man had a spiritual friend it was to be expected that he would develop and cultivate the Perfect Eightfold Path. Thus it could be seen that spiritual friendship is the whole of the holy life (*brahmacariya*). With him for spiritual friend, beings subject to birth are freed from birth; beings subject to ageing are freed from ageing; beings subject to death are freed from death; beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair are freed from sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair. Thus the Buddha was the original spiritual friend. He was the spiritual friend of Ānanda and Mahākassapa, Sāriputta and Moggallāna, who in their turn were the spiritual friends of their own disciples and so on down to the present day.

Not all Buddhists have as vivid a sense of the Buddha as spiritual friend as their predecessors had. Such a sense is an important element in the Buddhist spiritual life and one that can be cultivated. Before describing some of the ways in which this may be done I want to touch on the meaning of the term *brahmacariya*. It would seem that the 'holy life' has come to be accepted as the translation of *brahmacariya*, and so far I have followed this usage. The term 'holy' has, however, Judaeo-Christian connotations and little or nothing to do with Buddhism. I would therefore prefer to render *brahmacariya* as the 'divine life', which is theologically more neutral. In Buddhist and pre-Buddhist parlance, Brahmā is a divine being higher in rank than human beings and *brahmacariya* thus means following after Brahmā or in other words following a way of life that is conducive to spiritual liberation. In the Pāli scriptures we come

across Brahmā, the ruler of ten thousand worlds, and the radiant brahmās who are occupants of the various levels beyond the levels of the devas. All are disciples of the Buddha, who is represented as visiting them on occasion and being visited by them. Thus following the Perfect/Noble Eightfold Path and being a brahmacari are practically synonymous.

*Brahmacariya* can also mean chastity or celibacy, so that a brahmacari is one who is celibate, though this is a more limited usage of the term.

One way in which the modern Buddhist can develop a more vivid sense of Śākyamuni, the historical Buddha, as their spiritual friend, is by reading the Pāli scriptures, in which there are passages descriptive of many of the events of his long life. We learn how he left home, how he practised extreme asceticism to no avail, how he gained supreme Enlightenment while meditating under the Bodhi tree, how he gained his first five disciples, and how he spent the rest of his life wandering from place to place teaching all kinds of people the way to liberation that he had discovered. One should read such passages slowly and mindfully, imagining oneself to be actually present at the event described and being affected by it. In this way, one can feel the future Buddha's exhilaration as he leaves home, his utter determination as he practises extreme asceticism, his sense of selfless triumph as he gains supreme Enlightenment, and his joy as he shares the fruits of his attainment with other beings, whether rich or poor, high or low, happy or unhappy, Brahmins or ascetics, doers of good or evil doers. There are also passages dealing with incidents of a less dramatic character, as when the Buddha and Ānanda nurse a sick monk who has been neglected by his companions or when he advises Soṇa to practise in a balanced way, being neither too taut or too slack, as when one plays a stringed instrument. Some of these events have been illustrated by artists both ancient and modern, the latter often being more representational than iconic. I particularly remember Nandalal Bose's *Buddha as Ascetic*. This does not relate to the Buddha's period of extreme asceticism but to his old age. He wears a simple robe, carries a small bowl, and he is standing just outside the door of a hut. His scant hair is white and his expression is one of resignation. Whether or not it was because I myself was old when I first encountered this painting, it touched me deeply. I felt that the Buddha could have indeed looked like that during the last years of his life, and I could imagine myself walking with him just as Ānanda had done centuries ago.

We can also read biographies of the Buddha. One of the most popular of these is *The Light of Asia* by Sir Edwin Arnold. It was first published in 1879 and is still in print, having been translated into many languages and illustrated by many artists. Written in fluent blank verse, the story of Śākyamuni's life has been put into the mouth of an imaginary devotee. One of the reasons for the book's popularity is the fact that Arnold is able to draw on his own experience of the sights and sounds of India, in some respects not so very different from what they were in the Buddha's day. This brings the biography to life in a very special way, so that one can read it and reflect on it in the same spirit that one reads and reflects on the biographical passages in the Pāli scriptures. Another popular biography is the *Lalitavistara*, a Mahayāna work that tells the story of the Buddha's life from a docetic point of view in which he only

appears to pass through the different stages of his earthly existence, being in a sense already Enlightened. Some years ago a friend read the work to me and I could not but be caught up in the current of intense devotion that runs through the work. For the author, the Buddha is always 'that pure being', regardless of what he happens to be doing.

One can also develop a sense of the Buddha's presence and of his being our spiritual friend by reciting the traditional formula by which he is described in the Pāli scriptures and elsewhere. He is indeed the Richly Endowed One (*itipiso bhagavā*), the Foe-Destroyer (*araham*), the Perfectly Enlightened One (*sammā-sambuddho*), Fully Endowed with Knowledge and Conduct (*vijjācaraṇasampanno*), The Well-Gone One (*sugato*), Knower of the Worlds (*lokavidū*), Unsurpassed Charioteer of Men to be Tamed (*anuttaro purisadammasārathi*), Teacher of Gods and Men (*satthā devamanussānam*). Thus he is the Richly Endowed Enlightened One (*buddho bhagavā ti*). This formula one repeats like a mantra, at the same time reflecting on the meaning of each of the Buddha's epithets. Alternatively one may recite the Śākyamuni mantra *Oṃ Muni Muni Mahāmuni Śākyamuni Svāhā*, which by referring to the Buddha as Śākyamuni connects him with the tribe into which he was born and thus with the fact of his historicity. Going a step further, one may visualize him as the central figure of a *sādhana*, but this will have to be the subject of another paper.

While working on the above, I was listening to Vera Brittain's *A Testament of Friendship*, in which she describes the friendship between herself and the writer Winifred Holtby, whose novels *Mandoa*, *Mandoa!* and *Poor Caroline* I had enjoyed some time previously. At the beginning of her work Vera raises the question of whether there can be friendship between women in the same way as there is friendship between men. This question she answers very much in the affirmative, and in her sprawling and very lengthy memoir she gives ample evidence of how Winifred was a good friend to her and she a good friend to Winifred. Both women exemplify the Buddha's idea of what a good friend should be. Winifred is in fact a good friend to quite a large number of people, from struggling writers to black South Africans stranded in London. Neither Winifred nor Vera seem to have had any false friends, with the possible exception of Winifred's unreliable lover, who pops in and out of the narrative from time to time, usually at long intervals. Winifred died in 1935, at the age of 37. At that time there was little or no Buddhism in England, but had she lived as long as her friend, who died in 1970, she might well have encountered it. Indeed it is pleasant to think that she might have encountered the young FWBO and to come to see the Buddha as spiritual friend.

*Adhithana*, 3/5/2017

## Four Visits

“You didn’t expect to see me,” said the angel, seating himself on the arm of my chair. I knew it was an angel because I had seen paintings of them, and there was Milton’s wonderful description of the Archangel Raphael in *Paradise Lost*. Like them, my celestial visitor was young and beautiful with aureoled golden hair and a pair of iridescent wings and was clad in a loosely flowing robe of dazzling whiteness.

“No, I was not expecting you,” I replied. “After all, I am a Buddhist, not a Christian. If I had been expecting anyone, it would have been a bodhisattva.”

“You used to be quite fond of me and my brethren,” responded the angel. “You may not have been aware of it, but we used to visit you from time to time, and though you could not see us you used to draw pictures of us.”

“That was a long time ago,” I protested. “I could not have been more than thirteen or fourteen, and since then I have been more concerned with bodhisattvas than with angels.”

“That may well be so,” was the beautiful being’s response. “But has it not occurred to you that your bodhisattvas may have been angels in disguise? May not one of us have been your own guardian angel, watching over you and protecting you from harm?”

“I was never conscious of the presence of any such being,” I said, “though some Buddhists have the idea of a *punya devata*, which I suppose is a little bit like the Christian guardian angel.”

“Have you forgotten you once heard a warning voice? And did you not describe it as an angelic voice?”

“I remember it very well,” I admitted, “and I remember thinking how strange it was that I should have described that voice as angelic rather than describing it in Buddhist terms.”

“Well, now you know. It was the voice of your guardian angel.”

“But I heard that voice only once in my whole life, and it spoke no more than one word. Surely my guardian angel, if I have one, should have been more active than that?”

“Your guardian angel takes on many forms, even Buddhist ones, and in the course of your life he has helped and protected you more often than you knew. You have been in quite a few tight corners, and you have always thought that it was your good luck or your good karma that extricated you from them. In fact, it was your guardian angel, working behind the scenes, who did so every time.”

“But why should my guardian angel – if he exists – have intervened on that particular occasion? Surely there must have been a reason for his doing so?”

“There indeed was a reason, and a very good one. He saw that you were about to do something that was not in the line of your natural development, and he wanted to stop you. Had he not done so, the consequences could have been quite serious, not only for you but for

a lot of other people.”

“What other people?”

“I mean people whose line of natural development was the same as yours and who were attracted to the Dharma but were not made welcome in other Buddhist groups. You are the founder of an order and a movement in which people of that nature were made welcome and who could not only practise the Dharma but be open about who they were.”

At this point there came from somewhere to my left the sound of a once-known voice.

“Excuse me, gentlemen,” said the voice, “but I couldn’t help overhearing your conversation. We have met once or twice before,” the voice continued suavely, addressing me, “but perhaps you have forgotten your old friend.”

“I have not forgotten you,” I retorted. “You are Mara the Evil One, and you are not my friend and never will be. On our first meeting you tried to convince me that there existed nothing except matter, and I gave you a proper reply.”

“Yes, you did,” sighed Mara. “You are always ready with a reply. That is one of your little weaknesses. But I haven’t come to chop logic with you. This is just a friendly visit. I want to tell you something.”

“What might that be?” I enquired, even though I knew that Mara could not possibly wish me any good.

“I want to tell you that things are getting worse, or rather that they are getting better, and that you ought to consider your position.”

“What do you mean?”

“You are aware that I once swore ‘Evil, be thou my Good.’ Since then I have done what you call evil and what I call good.”

“Yes, I know, and you are still doing what I call evil and you call good.”

“Indeed I am,” said Mara complacently. “Just tune into Radio 4 and hear what is going on all over this world of yours. Nothing but violence in one form or another. Dip into the social media and what will you find? Nothing but hatred spreading from mind to mind like a poisonous fog. All this is my work, operating through my chosen human agents. But that is nothing. Think of what happened in your twentieth century. Two world wars. Nazism and Communism. Hundreds of millions of people enslaved, tortured, killed, and imprisoned, and all this at the hands of their fellow countrymen and their own government or party. Your twentieth Christian century was productive of more human suffering than all the previous centuries of human history put together. This is why I told you that things are getting better, which from your point of view means that they are getting worse. I liked the way you stood up to me at that first meeting. I thought you had the making of a really good devil, and that is why I have come to see you.”

At that moment, a tiny red rose fell through the air and landed on Mara’s chest, and I noticed

that he turned pale. "Forgive me, gentlemen," he stammered, "but I must leave you. Someone is about to arrive whom I am anxious not to meet. We had a little difference of opinion some time ago and I do not want to have to disagree with a lady again. As you know, 'the Prince of Darkness is a gentleman'." With these words Mara disappeared.

"Who is this lady?" I asked the angel. "And why is Mara so afraid of her?"

"She has many names," responded the angel, smiling, "but we call her the Queen of the Angels. She and Mara, as you call him, indeed did have a little difference of opinion a long time ago. It ended when one of her roses gave him a nasty bruise that kept him out of action for quite a while. There is more in those little red roses than one might think."

These words were hardly out of his mouth when I felt something land on my chest just opposite my heart. It was a little red rose, and at its touch I felt a sensation of ineffable bliss pervade my entire being. I closed my eyes to experience it the better, and when I opened them again I saw standing before me a tall figure. She wore a pure white under-robe and over it a mantle of deepest blue. She had long black hair and her arms were crossed on her breast.

"It is a long time since you thought of me," she said, in a low, sweet voice, "but I have not forgotten you. You were only twelve or thirteen years old and you painted me just as you see me now. You copied paintings of me that you had seen but you added a touch of your own: three red roses, one to each side of me and one above my head. Do you remember?"

"I do," I said, "but I cannot remember why I added those three red roses. I just gave them to you. For me you will always be not so much the Queen of the Angels as the Lady of the Three Red Roses."

"But what about the Lady of the White Roses?" came another low sweet voice. And I saw that another tall, stately figure had appeared beside the first. She was clad in a milk-white robe, one corner of which was modestly draped over her chignon. In one hand she held a flask from which she dispensed ambrosia, while in the other she held a bunch of white roses.

"It's the Goddess of Mercy," whispered the angel to me, "whom you Buddhists call Guanyin. She is one of the many forms in which the Lady of the Three Red Roses appears to Buddhists."

Though the angel had whispered, the second lady heard what he had said. "No, young angel," she said mildly. "Your Lady of the Three Red Roses is one of the many forms in which I appear to Christians."

"No, you are one of the forms in which I appear," said the other lady politely.

"This happens whenever they meet," said the angel, smiling, "but it always comes right in the end." As if to confirm his words, the two figures moved towards each other as though they were about to embrace, but instead, each melted into the other, so that Guanyin wore the red roses and the Queen of the Angels carried the white. The united figures then dissolved into a brilliant white light, tinged with pink and blue, which was soon lost in the deep blue of the

sky.

The angel and I were now alone and I saw that his iridescent wings had begun to quiver, as though he was preparing for flight. “Tell me,” I said, “before you go. Which of those two ladies was only one of the forms of the other lady?”

“I don’t really know,” he replied. “I am only an angel. To get an answer to that, you would have to go right up to the top of the celestial hierarchy, to the cherubim, who are filled with wisdom, and the seraphim, who are on fire with love.”

“Just one more question before you go,” I begged, for I could see that his wings were now half spread.

“Just one,” he agreed, “but no more.”

“This is my question,” I said, hoping that I was not being too personal. “Are angels masculine or are they feminine?”

“They are neither. They are spiritually androgynous, though they generally appear as beautiful young men with iridescent wings like mine.”

“And you? Was it you who said “No” to me at that critical moment? Are you my guardian angel?” But he had already disappeared, and I was once more alone.

*Adhithana, 4/6/2017 – 16/6/2017*

## **A Complex Personality: A Note**

In the personal statement that I issued on December 30th 2016 I said, among other things, 1) that the FWBO/Triratna sometimes bore the marks not of the Dharma but of my own particular personality and 2) that that personality was a complex one. These words have been the subject of much discussion within the Order and in some quarters they have been seriously misunderstood. The fact that I spoke of the FWBO/Triratna sometimes bearing the marks not of the Dharma but of my own particular personality has been taken to mean that those marks were always negative. Far from this being the case, I believe that those marks were almost entirely positive, as will be seen if we take a look at some of the strands that go to make up the complexity to which I refer.

I do not know if phrenologists still exist, but I am confident that if one of them was to examine the bones of my skull he would say that I had an especially large bump of veneration. In other words, he would say that I had a natural tendency to look up to and to revere what was above me in any way, whether in human life or thought or culture. This bump of veneration developed at an early age, and may indeed be congenital.

The fact that I had a natural tendency to look up to and to revere what was above me meant that I had an affinity with Buddhism inasmuch as the path taught by the Buddha led to higher and ever higher states of being and consciousness. In a sense, I was a born Buddhist. This strand of my personality is closely connected with another strand, that of my being drawn much more to the arts than to science. It is therefore not surprising that the majority of Order members should resemble me in this respect. In the Order we have writers of every kind, from poets to playwrights, besides painters, sculptors, and musicians. One of the six distinctive features of the FWBO/Triratna is that it encourages the appreciation and practice of the arts as an aid to the spiritual life. This is not to say that an interest in science is discouraged. I have more than once expressed a wish that we had in the Order more people who were drawn to science, a knowledge or understanding of which can be for some people an aid to the spiritual life. In recent years I have myself been greatly struck by the vistas opened up by recent advances in the exploration of the universe in which we live, from the infinitely small to the infinitely great. These vistas cannot but induce a sense of wonder and awe in anyone with a little imagination.

Closely connected with my natural affinity with Buddhism is my preference to think in terms of what is to be cultivated, such as equanimity and compassion, rather than what is to be rooted out, such as greed and delusion. This is not to say that there is nothing in us that needs to be rooted out but my natural tendency is to emphasize the positive aspects of spiritual life, an emphasis which most people find helpful. There is also a practical side to my nature. As friends both old and new have remarked, I am a good organizer, which is probably the reason why we have an Order rather than an organization of a looser structure. I am also cosmopolitan, and have always delighted in meeting people of different nationalities, cultures, and religions. It is therefore hardly surprising that the Order should be an

international one and bear this mark of my personality. Neither is it surprising that one of the distinctive features of Triratna is that it is open to all, irrespective of nationality, gender, race, social position or sexual orientation.

Thus my nature is a complex one. I have a natural affinity with Buddhism, prefer the positive to the negative, am drawn to the arts rather than to science, am a good organizer, and am cosmopolitan. Moreover, friends have always been important to me, and recognizing the spiritual significance of friendship to the spiritual life is another of the distinctive features of Triratna. The nature of this friendship is still a matter of discussion in Triratna, and I suspect that it will be a long time before the last word on the subject will have been spoken.

Meanwhile, personal experience has shown me that it is better to keep one's sexual relations and one's spiritual friendships separate.

One would have thought that this was quite enough complexity for one person, but there are still more strands to be teased out, some less obvious than others. The first of these is that I am by nature conservative. I have always loved what is old, whether old churches, old books, or old manners and customs. Being conservative, I do not welcome change, especially sudden change, which tends to make me socially and politically a gradualist. Nonetheless, this natural conservatism has not prevented me from being what has been called 'a new voice in the Buddhist tradition' or from founding a new Buddhist movement. As befits a conservative, I am a collector of what used to be called curios and are now called collectibles. As a boy I collected cigarette cards, postage stamps, and old coins, while later in life I have collected Buddhist artefacts and semiprecious stones, many of them being given to me by friends. 'Collecting', being akin to acquisitiveness, is hardly a Buddhist virtue, and I have sometimes had to curb this tendency of mine. I am also critical, especially of wrong views, which makes me a critic of 'scientific Buddhism', of mindfulness without the Dharma, of 'Buddhism without belief', and of so-called 'secular Buddhism'.

I need hardly say that I am also a writer. Indeed, I have sometimes found it difficult to say whether I was a Buddhist who writes or a writer who was a Buddhist. Be that as it may, I have always enjoyed the process of writing, down to the feel of the pen in my hand and the pressure of the nib on the paper. As such, the act of writing was almost a sensuous experience. Whether writing about the Dharma or the arts, I have always sought to give expression to what I genuinely thought and felt. This has often meant asking myself what I really thought and what I really felt and then finding the exactly appropriate word or phrase. It has also meant going carefully through what I have written and doing my best to eliminate hackneyed similes and clumsily constructed sentences. This has always been the case, even though my literary style has changed considerably over the years, from the youthful eloquence of the *Survey* and other early writings to the more succinct style of *The Three Jewels*. There is also the straightforward narrative style of the many volumes of memoirs, as well as the rather magisterial style of some of the book reviews.

The American poet and activist Alan Ginsberg once told me that he was surprised that

someone so radical in his Buddhism as I was should write such traditional poetry. He was only partly right. Much of my poetry, especially my early poetry, is indeed traditional, but more than a handful of later poems are experimental. By this I do not mean that I experimented deliberately, but that what might appear to be experimental was the natural expression of what I was trying to say. Probably the most notable example of this more 'experimental' style is the long poem 'On Glastonbury Tor', written shortly after my first visit to that ancient site of pagan and Christian pilgrimage. In it I run words together, for example, as though I was writing in Anglo-Saxon or German rather than in modern English. Whether traditional or not, my poetry could be described as 'occasional' in the sense that each poem expresses what I was thinking or feeling at the time. Some of the poems are about the Buddha, some about the natural world, and some about places and people. Written as they were over seven decades, the poems between them add up to a sort of autobiography, in some cases including insights that are not to be found in my prose memoirs.

On the whole, I have written for a comparatively small audience consisting mainly of Western and Western-educated Buddhists and lovers of poetry and the fine arts. Only rarely have I ventured into the arena of public debate. One such occasion was when I gave a public lecture on 'Buddhism, World Peace, and Nuclear War'. Another was when I spoke on 'Buddhism and Blasphemy', in which I put forward the idea of what I called 'therapeutic blasphemy'. Both lectures were published as booklets and a passage from the latter was quoted in Parliament in the course of a debate. Though I have rarely intervened in a public debate I am not in principle opposed to doing so, either as a Buddhist or as a writer. It has been a question of what, in the circumstances, was the best use of my time and energy. It could be argued that a Buddhist teacher, especially a monk, should not become involved in worldly affairs in this way (perhaps I thought so myself at one time), but there is no doubt that a writer, both as a writer and a citizen, should be so involved. In modern times there have been a number of writers who, in the interest of truth and justice, have dared to criticise an oppressive or tyrannous regime, sometimes paying for their temerity with their lives. Now that I have retired from active participation in the work of Triratna, I may feel like involving myself in matters of public debate. Some of my friends may consider this a better way of using my time and energy than writing about my complex personality, which may seem rather self-indulgent.

*Adhithana, 17/07/2017 – 27/07/2017*

## Hints to a Hypothetical Artist

William Blake (1757 – 1827) is one of my literary heroes, and I was therefore pleased when a seminar on his life and work was held at Adhithana under the title 'Energy is Eternal Delight'. The retreat was accompanied by an exhibition of Blake's illustrations to *The Book of Job*, organised by Satyalila. There was also a reproduction of his engraving 'Death's Door', which shows an old man wearing shepherd's garments and with a lantern in his hand about to enter the darkness of a crypt. I greatly enjoyed being wheelchaired round the exhibition by Paramartha, who explained to me the illustrations from *The Book of Job*, some of which I remembered quite well and could almost see in my mind's eye. We had entered the Library atrium in which the exhibition was held by the front door, and we left by the back door, which leads into the grassy area in which paths have been laid down by Sanghadeva, who is planning further developments in the shape of flower beds and a water garden. Paramartha pushed me along these paths, pointing out as he did so the spot where I am sooner or later to be buried, so that I felt that I was standing, like Blake's old man, at my own 'death's door'. There was nothing morbid about this. It was a fine summer morning and I was out in the open, enjoying the fresh air and the sight of the adjacent fields.

Blake was not only a great artist but a great poet, a very rare combination, especially at his level of achievement. The only other example of this combination of which I am aware is Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1830 – 1894), another of my literary heroes. I was familiar with Rossetti's work well before I was aware of Blake's. In the passage that led from my room to my parent's bedroom there was a small reproduction of 'Dante's Dream', one of Rossetti's major works, the original of which I was to see in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, many years later. I remember sitting in front of it with a friend, while another friend filmed me as I talked about the work. One night Dante had dreamed that Beatrice, the unattainable object of his youthful passion, was dying, and the painting depicts his dream. Clad in his customary black, the tall figure of Dante stands looking at the dying, half-risen Beatrice, who is garmented in white, with golden hair hanging down. Two handmaidens in raiment of soft green hold a canopy over her. An angel dressed in red, with red wings, holds Dante's hand and leans down to Beatrice, his lips almost touching hers, as if love could bring her back to life.

Dante was the subject not only of Rossetti's art but also of his poetry, especially of his long poem 'Dante in Verona'. The subject of the poem is Dante's years of exile in Verona, and Rossetti prefaced it with a quotation from *The Divine Comedy*. Though born and bred in Florence, the internal politics of his native city forced Dante into exile, and the lines quoted by Rossetti express all the bitterness of his soul:

Yea, thou shalt learn how salt his food who fares  
Upon another's bread, – how steep his path  
Who treadeth up and down another's stairs.

It is the cry of exiles everywhere and at all times, including our own.

I have visited both Verona and Ravenna, with its umbrella pines, where Dante died and where he is buried. The city is also associated with Shelley and Byron, two other exiles, though they were exiles for social rather than political reasons. Their stay in Ravenna and their evening rides together along the seashore are commemorated in Shelley's long poem 'Julian and Maddalo: A Conversation'. In the poem Julian stands for Shelley and Maddalo is Byron, and we are given a vivid portrait of the relationship between the two poets, so different from each other in character and personality, as they ride and talk together in the fading light.

Rossetti naturally had a closer connection with Dante than did Blake. He was himself of Italian descent, though born and brought up in London, where he became one of the founder members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a group of English painters, poets, and critics who rebelled not only against the Mannerism that succeeded Michelangelo and Raphael but also against the materialism and philistinism of the age. Blake, too, was a rebel in his own way and aspired to build Jerusalem 'In England's green and pleasant Land'. This was an aspiration that was shared by some of the later Pre-Raphaelites, especially by William Morris, who was an active socialist and author of *News from Nowhere*, a utopian vision of a future socialist England. Though much less close to Dante than was Rossetti, Blake towards the end of his life produced a series of illustrations to *The Divine Comedy*. It is interesting to note that the manuscript of some of Blake's poems came into Rossetti's hands and has become known as 'The Rossetti Manuscript'. Rossetti appears to have appreciated Blake's poetry, different as it was from his own, for he was a man of catholic tastes. He was also the first to appreciate Fitzgerald's *Rubâ'iyât of Omar Khayyâm*, copies of which he gave to his friends.

The poetry and art of both Rossetti and Blake were an essential part of the world of my imagination in my early teen years. These were the years in which I wrote my first poems and devoted much of my spare time to drawing and painting. It then seemed to my elders that I was more likely to become an artist than a writer. These were also the days when I attended the Sellingcourt Rd Senior School and was a pupil of Mr Smoker. On the walls of Mr Smoker's classroom there hung three pictures, all of which I remember and even see in my mind's eye as I write. There was a painting called 'Napoleon on Board the Bellerophon', in which the ex-emperor is seen standing on the deck of the ship. He is being taken into exile and is gazing at the receding shores of France. At some distance behind him there is a small group of English officers, one of whom is surveying Napoleon with an expression of mingled curiosity and satisfaction. On the other side of the door hung 'The Golden Stairs', by the Pre-Raphaelite painter Edward Burne-Jones. It showed a number of beautiful young women, all clad in white and with fair hair, making their way down a spiral staircase. At the back of the classroom there was a print of William Caxton in his Westminster workshop, showing his printing press to Edward the Fourth and his Queen. I do not know whether Mr Smoker had chosen the pictures or whether they had been supplied by the LCC's Education Department. Whatever it may have been, they were part of my regular environment for a year or more, and

it is not surprising that I should remember them.

Though I wrote poetry and drew and painted various figures, both historical and imaginary, there was no crossover between the two. I neither illustrated my poems nor wrote poems about what I had painted. It is only very recently that I have seen the possibility of illustrating something I have written, whether poetry or prose. I am thinking in particular of my story 'Four Visits', which I think lends itself to illustration, especially as there are five figures in it. If I possessed the requisite talent, I would have tried to do the illustrations myself, but since this is not possible I would appeal to those of my friends who are artists to carry out the work in my stead. In order to help them, I would like to make a few suggestions.

The figure of the Virgin Mary, clad in her traditional white and blue, should be in the middle of the picture. On her left, clad entirely in white, there should stand the figure of Kuanyin. Since I have not described the latter in much detail, the artist should feel free to depict the figure in his or her own way, provided only that it is recognisably the Buddhist Bodhisattva. I would also like the two figures to be depicted at the point at which they start merging. Below the two ladies there should come the decidedly masculine figure of Māra. When I wrote about him in 'Four Visits' I did not see him as the rather ineffective Māra of the Pāli scriptures. I saw him as the much more dangerous Māra of the *Śūraṃgamasamādhisūtra*, which I studied some time ago with Paramartha. Māra is bulky and brown in colour and he occupies more than twice the space occupied by the two ladies. His expression is one of extreme cunning. I sit to Māra's left and should be depicted sitting in my armchair with my back to the viewer, so that only the back of my head is visible. The Angel sits on the right arm of my chair and should be depicted just as I described him – young and beautiful and with multicoloured wings. Thus I am between Māra and the Angel and our three heads are in alignment, so that Māra speaks into my left ear and the Angel into my right. Red roses should naturally feature, and I leave the artist free to place them wherever he or she thinks fit. Above the two ladies is the blue sky, perhaps studded with stars. At the bottom of the picture I suggest that the artist should depict the Adhithana skyline, including the Library where I saw the Blake exhibition with which this article starts.

*Adhithana, 12/8/2017*

## Evil in Myth and in Human Experience

In the Tibetan Wheel of Life, between the human realm and the realm of the *pretas* or hungry ghosts, there lies the world of the gods and the *asuras*. They are fighting for possession of the Wish-fulfilling Tree, which grants all desires. In some modern versions of the Wheel the *asuras* are depicted as being equipped with rifles. Yet the gods and *asuras* were not always at war. According to an ancient Indian myth, they once co-operated on an enterprise of cosmic significance – nothing less than the churning of the Great Ocean of Milk. Taking Mount Sumeru for their churning stick and the cosmic serpent for their churning rope, they pulled and pulled, the *asuras* holding the cosmic serpent's head and pulling one way, the gods holding its tail and pulling the other way. Thus did they churn the Ocean of Milk. After a while, there rose like butter to the surface a series of treasures of various kinds, including the Goddess of Wealth, a Pot of Nectar, the Cow of Plenty, and various gems. Both the gods and the *asuras* were delighted with these and other treasures they had churned up. But their delight was short-lived. Suddenly there rose to the surface the Pot of Poison, a poison so powerful that it was capable of destroying everything, and at the sight of it the gods and the *asuras* alike recoiled in fear and horror.

Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva of compassion, was then in attendance on the Buddha Amitābha in the latter's Pure Land, Sukhāvati. On happening to 'look down' to the lower realm of the gods and *asuras*, he saw the Pot of Poison that had been churned up and the fear and horror that this had aroused. Instantly he descended, caught up the pot, and drank the poison it contained to the last drop. Such was the virulence of the poison that his throat turned blue, on which account he came to be known as Nilakaṇṭha or Bluethroat. (In the Hindu version of the myth it is the great god Shiva who drinks the poison and whose throat turns blue.)

Exchanging the language of myth for the language of human experience, we may say that the poison drunk by Avalokiteśvara stands for the suffering that results from evil, whether natural or moral. Natural evil is what we experience from the fact of our having a human body with a nervous system, a body that is subject to old age, disease, and death, as well as to such collective ills as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, floods, epidemics, forest fires, and tsunamis. Some of these calamities used to be called acts of God in that no human agency was responsible for them. Moral evil consists of those actions of body, speech, and mind committed by the individual under the influence of the three poisons of greed, hatred, and delusion. Sooner or later the fruits of those actions will be experienced in the form of suffering, whether in the present lifetime or in a future one. In terms of the Four Noble Truths, there will be freedom from suffering only when there is freedom from craving as a result of following the Noble Eightfold Path (in both its mundane and Transcendental stages). The Buddha once compared moral evil, or the defilements, to a stain on a pure white cloth. The stain is indeed a stain, but it need not be permanent. It can be removed by washing the cloth in water. Washing the cloth represents our efforts to purify the mind by means of ethics,

meditation, and wisdom. It is no accident that in a famous verse of the *Dhammapada*, abstention from all evil (*pāpa*) is followed by undertaking what is skilful (*kusala*), and by the complete purification (*sacittapariyodapanam*) of one's mind.

Before the process of purification can begin, however, one has to recognise the fact that the mind is 'stained' and that one has acted in an unskilful (*akusala*) way. In a word, we have to confess the evil that we have done (*pāpa deśanā*). Confession of the unskilful actions that one has committed has been an important part of the Buddhist spiritual life from the beginning. Monks or nuns who had acted unskilfully confessed to their spiritual superiors or to one another. The practice gradually fell into desuetude, and by the time I was ordained as a bhikkhu it had degenerated into a purely formal ritual that was to be got over as quickly as possible. Readers of my memoirs will remember how disappointed I was the first time I took part in a 'confession' of this kind. When I founded the FWBO/Triratna, I was therefore determined that members of the Order should take the practice of confession seriously. Thus, confession has become an integral part of every chapter of the Order. Meetings of the chapter are held, ideally once a week, and the warmth and intimacy of the meeting makes it easier for the individual member to confess any unskilful behaviour and to receive help from their fellow members. Moreover, Order members, Mitras, and friends regularly take part in the collective recitation of what has become known as 'The Sevenfold Puja', the fourth part of which is devoted to the Confession of Evil. In the Bennett translation of verses from the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, as arranged by me for liturgical purposes, we say:

'The evil that I have heaped up  
Through my ignorance and foolishness –  
Evil in the world of everyday experience,  
As well as evil in understanding and intelligence –  
All that I acknowledge to the Protectors.'

Here we confess not to our fellow Buddhists but to the Buddha, having conjured up an image of him in our minds. It is as though we owe the Buddha an apology, so to speak, for having failed to live up to the teaching he has so generously given. Continuing, we say:

'Standing before them  
With hands raised in reverence,  
And terrified of suffering,  
I pay salutations again and again.'

In other words, the confession takes place within an overall context of devotion in which we not only stand face to face with the Buddha but also recognise the immense gulf that exists between the Buddha and ourselves. We are also keenly aware of the fact that our unskilful actions will lead to suffering. But though we stand before the Buddha, he is not a judge (that

is the work of karma, or rather *karma-vipāka*), and we therefore conclude with the words:

'May the Leaders receive this kindly,  
Just as it is, with its many faults!  
What is not good, O Protectors,  
I shall not do again.'

We are thereby assured that the Buddha will accept our confession and we promise him not to do evil again.

Important, even essential, though confession is, it is not the whole of the spiritual life. In the Sevenfold Puja, therefore, just as Confession is preceded by Going for Refuge, so it is followed by Rejoicing in Merit. There is a change of mood, as it were, from remorse to jubilation, and we say:

'I rejoice with delight  
In the good done by all beings,  
Through which they obtain rest  
With the end of suffering.  
May those who have suffered be happy!'

Before rejoicing in the good done by others, we have to recognize that what they have done is good. We have to be free from carping criticism, competitiveness, and jealousy. Moreover, we have positively to delight in the good that they have done. In particular, we rejoice in all manner of spiritual attainments, up to and including that of Buddhahood itself. We should also rejoice, in my view, in humanity's achievements in the fields of literature, the arts, and music, the enjoyment of which can raise us to spiritual heights, as can the contemplation of the beauty of the natural world, which human beings have done so much to destroy.

The good in which we take delight here in the fifth section of the Sevenfold Puja is moral good, and moral good is productive of merit (Pali *puñña*, Sanskrit *puṇya*). In the popular Buddhism of the East, the accumulation of merit is a major preoccupation of the serious-minded Buddhist, for it is the merit that has been accumulated by one's skilful actions of body, speech, and mind that will ensure a good rebirth in this world or in a higher heavenly world. Certain good actions are regarded as particularly meritorious. These include releasing birds and fish from captivity, offering food to monks, and building temples and stupas. Such actions can indeed be performed with a pure intention, but only too often they are a simple 'going through the motions' for the sake of social prestige. This is not to underestimate the importance of accumulating merit for all Buddhists, Eastern or Western. The merit generated by the regular performance of acts of generosity, by the observance of the precepts of morality, and by the practice of concentration-meditation, is the indispensable foundation for

the development of the wisdom or insight that leads to liberation.

The traditional teaching of the four Māras is one that does justice to both the mythic and the human aspects of evil. The four Māras are Māra the son of a god (*devaputta-māra*), the Māra of death (*maccu-māra*), the Māra of the defilements (*kilesa-māra*), and the Māra of conditioned existence (*khanda-māra*). The first of these is also known as Māra the Evil One (Māra Pāpiyān). He is the Māra who, according to the Pali scriptures, constantly dogs the Buddha, seeking to find entrance into him and miserably failing. He also troubles the Buddha's disciples in various ways, and has even been known to appear to Buddhist practitioners in modern times.

The Māra of death is part of natural evil because unless we are in extreme pain or are utterly disillusioned with life, we do not want to die. I have been close to death more than once in my life, the last time being nearly a year ago, when I was in hospital with pneumonia, the old man's friend. One night, when it was completely dark, I felt that I was very close to death. Strange to say, it was a comfortable feeling, as though death was lying down beside me in a companionable sort of way. At the same time, I knew that I was not going to die just then. Whether I shall have that comfortable feeling when I actually die, I do not know.

The Māra of the defilements is the equivalent to moral evil. Traditionally these defilements are greed, hatred, and delusion, which at the hub of the Wheel of Life are depicted by a rooster, a snake, and a pig, each of them holding in its mouth or beak the tail of the one in front. Alternatively, moral evil is represented by the formula of the five poisons of craving (Pali *taṇhā*, Sanskrit *trṣṇa*), hatred (Pali *dosa*, Sanskrit *dveṣa*), delusion (*moha*), conceit (*māna*), and envy (Sanskrit *īrṣyā*). They are rightly termed poisons, for whether in their gross or their subtle form, they affect our mental and spiritual health. For these poisons, whether three or five in number, the Buddha's teaching is the medicine, for which reason he is often described as the Great Physician.

In Buddhist thought a distinction is made between that which is conditioned (*sankhata*) and that which is unconditioned (*asankhata*), and the Buddhist life consists, in the simplest terms, in making the transition from the one to the other. This does not mean that Buddhism is a metaphysical dualism any more than that it is a metaphysical monism. The Māra of conditioned existence is all that which is marked by suffering (*dukkha*), impermanence (*anicca*), and insubstantiality (*anatta*). He is the grim figure that holds the Wheel of Life in his grasp. Beyond the Wheel of Life, standing on a little cloud, a saffron-robed Buddha points out the Way.

*Adhithana, 3/9/2017 – 14/9/2017*

## Blake and the Gates of Paradise

For the last few days the word forgiveness has been hovering about in my mind. As it hovers it is joined by such sentences as 'The cut worm forgives the plow' and 'Drive your cart and your plow over the bones of the dead', both of which are from 'The Proverbs of Hell' in William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. In my mind's eye, the word forgiveness is written in a cursive, flowing hand against a background of white clouds and rainbows.

For Blake the plough has a very positive significance. It stands not just for the cultivation of the earth, important as that is, but for the cultivation of the soul. The ploughshare digs deep, reaching down into the rich, accumulated humus. There the worm lives, and the plough cannot help cutting it in two. But the worm forgives the plough, for it knows that the work of the plough is necessary to human wellbeing, even to human existence. The worm does not think of itself or its own life. It is content to be part of a wider productive and creative endeavour. If you cannot paint, you can at least grind the artist's colours for him. If you cannot write, you can at least type the author's manuscript for him. For Blake the humble worm has a positive significance, and he surely loved the worm no less than he loved the plough.

The worm is a living being and it feels pain when cut by the plough. The bones of the dead feel no such pain, however rudely you drive your cart and your plough over them. Eventually they will crumble and become part of the soil, and we should have no compunction about driving over them. The bones are the remains of animals and human beings that once were alive. They are the remains of dead cultures, dead civilisations, and dead religions and Blake exhorts us to drive our cart and plough over them for they are dead and we are alive, and the living should not be sacrificed to the dead. This makes Blake a revolutionary. He was a revolutionary in politics, in religion, and in morals. He was a revolutionary because he was an idealist, and wanted to build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land.

When I was a child, one of the first things I learnt by heart was the Lord's Prayer. At that time I did not think about its meaning, but in later years I reflected on it, especially on the fact that in the prayer we asked for forgiveness on the grounds that we had already forgiven those who had trespassed against us. I find it interesting that we have, it seems, to forgive others their trespasses against us before we can ask for forgiveness for our trespasses against them. Only too often nowadays people want to be forgiven before they forgive. Blake goes much further than this. In a famous verse he speaks of a 'Mutual Forgiveness of each vice', and declares that 'such are the Gates of Paradise'. We have all been guilty of indulging in this or that vice, great or small, and we all have to forgive those who have trespassed against us before asking for forgiveness for ourselves.

Alexander Pope (1688–1744) was a very different kind of poet from Blake (1757–1827), but he too had something to say on the subject of forgiveness. In an oft-quoted line, he says, 'To err is human, to forgive divine.' Here he lifts the whole subject of forgiveness onto a higher

level, from the ethical to the spiritual. When we forgive another who has trespassed against us we become ourselves divine, at least for the time being. Pope speaks of human error rather than of vice, but the meaning is much the same. We all commit errors, and those errors only too often bring us into conflict with other human beings. But if we suffer as a result of someone else's error, instead of reacting with anger, we should do our best to forgive.

What Blake, the Lord's Prayer and Pope are all, in essence, saying is that true forgiveness is unconditional. There should be no question of our laying down terms and conditions, such as that we will forgive the person their trespasses against us only if he or she repent and apologise for what they have done. Otherwise our so-called forgiveness is no more than a sort of bargaining. The granting of forgiveness is a free act of the true individual, and it has nothing to do with the reactive mind.

When I was in hospital last year, and close to death, I not only confessed my unskilful actions but asked for the forgiveness of those I had harmed. Reflecting on this recently, I realised that I had been wrong to ask for forgiveness. It was enough that I had confessed and that I had also forgiven all those who had offended me. My confession covered a wide field, as my unskilfulness had done, from being disrespectful to my father as a teenager to some of my sexual activity with Order members and Mitras.

There is a sutta in the Pali scriptures in which the Buddha describes himself as ploughing. It is sowing time and he has come to the place where the wealthy brahmin Kasibharadvaja is ploughing with a team of oxen, and he stands to one side with his begging bowl for alms. On seeing this, the brahmin tells the Buddha that he, Kasibharadvaja, ploughs and sows, and then eats, adding that the Buddha should do likewise, for brahmins do not love homeless, wandering ascetics who live on others. To this the Buddha replies that he too ploughs and sows and having ploughed and sown, he eats. Kasibharadvaja is taken aback and tells the Buddha, perhaps sarcastically, that he does not see the Buddha ploughing and would like to know what sort of ploughing he does. The Buddha thereupon explains (Andrew Olendzki's translation):

'Faith is the seed, practice the rain,  
And wisdom is my yoke and plow.  
Modesty's the pole, mind the strap,  
Mindfulness my plowshare and goad.  
  
Body and speech are guarded well,  
And food and drink have been restrained.  
  
Truthfulness I use for weeding,  
And gentleness urges me on.  
  
Effort is my beast of burden,

Pulling me onward to safety.  
On it goes without returning,  
Where, having gone, one does not grieve.

This is how I plow my plowing —  
The crop it yields is deathlessness!  
And when one has plowed this plowing,  
One is released from all suffering.'

Deeply moved by these words, Kasibharadvaja throws himself at the Buddha's feet and goes for refuge to him, as well as to his teaching and his community. Afterwards he becomes a monk and eventually attains liberation.

Faith (*saddhā*) is one of the five spiritual faculties (*indriyas*) and the first of the positive 'links' (*nidānas*), and it is therefore not surprising that in his response to Kasibharadvaja, the Buddha should speak of it first. Without seed there is no crop, and without faith there is no true spiritual life. From the golden germ of faith there spring all spiritual flowers and fruits, including the sweetly scented flowers of confession and forgiveness. Like each of the other *indriyas*, faith has the support of the other four. Having the support of wisdom (*pañña*), it is clear-sighted, not blind. Having the support of energy (*viriya*), it is active, not passive. Having the support of mindfulness (*sati*) it does not get distracted. Having the support of concentration (*samādhi*) it has both depth and focus.

Over the years I have often turned to Blake for inspiration, and have found some of his utterances as very much in accordance with the Dharma. In particular, I have found what he says on the subject of forgiveness helpful both to the individual and to the spiritual community. What he says about mutual forgiveness could hardly be more suitable as a motto for a spiritual community like Triratna. If we could all forgive one another our trespasses, it would bring us nearer to the realisation of Blake's Jerusalem or, in Buddhist terms, to the creation of a Pure Land on earth.

*Adhithana, 30/9/2017 – 7/10/2017*

## ***News from Nowhere* – and from India**

William Morris was one of the great Victorians. Born in 1834 and dying in 1896, the greater part of his life was passed during the reign of Queen Victoria. At the same time, he was not in the least Victorian in his attitudes. By his own admission, he hated the world in which he lived and Victorian England, industrialised and philistine, was in the forefront of that world. In *News from Nowhere*, his utopian novel, he compares the England of his day with the socialist England of the future, when privilege and inequality would be swept away in the fires of revolution.

Morris was a socialist but it is difficult to say what kind of socialist he was. He was equally critical of state socialism on the one hand and anarchism on the other. Nor was he a Fabian. He was also critical of the intentional community which, like the monasteries of the Middle Ages, separated itself from the wider society and had as little to do with it as possible. FWBO/Triratna has been described as an intentional community but it is certainly not one in Morris's pejorative use of the term. Whether or not the monasteries of the Middle Ages separated themselves from the wider society, Triratna certainly does not. Through its urban centres, its country retreat centres and team-based Right Livelihood businesses, it seeks to make the Buddha's teaching available to as many people as possible. As I went through *News from Nowhere* recently, I was not only struck by what Morris says about work but also reminded of what I had said about livelihood in *Vision and Transformation* and elsewhere. It should do no harm to other living beings, nor should it be boring or repetitive or injure one physically or mentally. Morris goes much further than this. In his ideal society everybody works, both men and women, and they enjoy their work and it does not take up the whole of their time. Unpleasant or dirty work that cannot be done by machines is shared among them.

For Morris, work is a human need, and if the inhabitants of his ideal society are afraid of anything, they are afraid of there being a shortage of work – not because they are afraid of starving, as they would have been in the England of Morris's day, but because they would not be realizing their full potential. In Morris's ideal society, some men and women work with their hands, producing beautiful objects for everyday use, and we are reminded not only of Morris's critique of the economy of 'planned obsolescence' but also that he was associated with the Arts and Crafts movement of the late 19th century.

In *News from Nowhere* Morris paints an attractive picture of the England of the future. People are healthy and happy. They wear simple, colourful clothes, and live in attractive houses surrounded by gardens. Children are free to move from one social group to another, for Morris does not believe in the nuclear family, and everybody is friends with everybody else, addressing one another as either 'neighbour' or 'friend'. There is no army, and no police force and any differences are settled by friendly discussion. Yet Morris is no facile optimist regarding human nature, admitting that even in an ideal society sexual jealousy may lead to homicide.

The picture that Morris paints is indeed an attractive one. But how does the transition from the old unequal and unjust society of Morris's day to his happy, socialist England take place? It takes place neither gradually nor peacefully. It takes place as the result of a revolution, and that revolution involves violence and bloodshed, for Morris believed that, human nature being what it is, a non-violent revolution is not possible. He puts his account of that revolution into the mouth of Hammond, an old man who lives in what remains of the British museum and is interested in history. Hammond, who is imagined to be living two centuries after Morris's own time, describes the revolution which he says took place in 1952 in response to a question from Guest, a man from Morris's day, who has somehow found his way into the England of the future. Guest has already questioned others about this strange new society, so different from that from which he has come, and this is the most important of his questions. Hammond's lengthy account of the revolution is the most powerfully written part of *News from Nowhere*, and one feels that Morris's heart is very much in what he writes. He believes in revolution and he believes that revolution must be violent.

But must it? The answer comes not from Morris in England but from Ambedkar in India.

On October 14th 1956 (four years after Morris's imaginary revolution), Ambedkar, took the Three Refuges and Five Precepts from a Buddhist monk, thereby fulfilling his vow that though he had been born a Hindu he would not die one. Having become a Buddhist, he at once administered the Refuges and Precepts to some half a million of his followers, who had flocked to Nagpur, central India, at his call. In this way were they too converted from Hinduism to Buddhism. Thus began what was to become known as the Dhamma Revolution. It was an entirely non-violent revolution, and one that by the end of the decade had touched, and transformed, the lives of millions all over India.

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956) grew up in a society dominated by the system of hereditary caste, and he and his community were at the very bottom of the heap.

Untouchables, as the Dalits were then called, lived in separate quarters outside the village, often in unhygienic conditions, and were subject to a wide variety of restrictions and prohibitions. Despised and exploited by members of the higher castes, they did the dirtiest and most demeaning work, typical occupations being the removal of dead cows and the disposal of human excrement. There was no question, of course, of marriage between an untouchable and a caste Hindu, and social contact was minimal. The young Ambedkar was a brilliant student and with the help of a liberal-minded maharaja he became a highly educated man, devoting himself not to his personal advancement but to the uplift of his people.

Realizing that there was no hope for them as long as they remained within the Hindu fold, he decided that they would have to change their religion – a radical and revolutionary step. For years he studied and compared the different religions, rejecting the Communist option, for he believed that religion was the basis of society. Though he admired the Jesuits for their educational work, Christianity was after all a foreign religion with no roots in Indian culture. The same was true of Islam, with the additional consideration that if his people converted to

Islam it would seriously upset the demographic basis of India and could well lead to conflict and violence. He therefore opted for Buddhism, which was of Indian origin and not in conflict with modern knowledge. Though Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity were Ambedkar's ideals, and though he often spoke of them, he always insisted that he had taken them not from the French Revolution but from the teachings of his master the Buddha.

After Ambedkar's untimely death, I spent much of my time travelling from one group of converts to another, teaching them the Dhamma and encouraging them in its practice. The biggest of such groups were in Nagpur, Bombay, and Poona, each of which I visited a number of times and where I made a number of friends, with some of whom I remained in contact with even after I returned to England in 1964. I had not forgotten them and they had certainly not forgotten me. Years later, Order members visiting India made contact with some of these friends, and this eventually led to the formation of a wing of the Order in India.

*News from Nowhere* is still read, and there is much that we can learn from it. Morris has an honoured place in the history of English socialism. But those who would bring about radical social change without violence will turn for a model not to Morris but to Ambedkar and his Dhamma Revolution.

*Adhithana, 16/10/2017 – 24/10/2017*

# 'My Uncle Leonard' and 'A Brace of Uncles'

## My Uncle Leonard

Uncle Leonard was the only uncle I had from my father's side of the family. One of his father's brothers had been the first husband of my grandmother, who was still 'Aunt Anna' to him. My grandmother, now widowed for the second time, lived in Elborough Street, Southfields and Uncle Leonard lived round the corner in Replingham Road. Whenever I stayed with Nana, as I called my grandmother, I would go and pay a visit to Uncle Leonard, whom I always found working at the bench in his shoe repair shop, a cigarette in the corner of his mouth and sometimes unshaven. He was always glad to see me, and when I left he would give me a few coppers from the till. Besides having his shoe repair business, Uncle Leonard bred Sealyham dogs. They lived under the counter in the shop and if I was lucky there would be puppies to see. After talking with Uncle Leonard and playing with the dogs I would wander into the living quarters behind the shop to say hello to Auntie Louie.

All this was before I was eight years old, and before I was confined to bed with valvular disease of the heart. As I look back I can still see in my mind's eye Uncle Leonard's kindly smiling face, and it occurs to me that as a young man he must have been quite handsome. It also strikes me that there was a strong resemblance between him and my father and that the resemblance was not only facial but extended to their characters. Both were good-natured, generous, unambitious men, who were devoted to simple pursuits, which in my father's case was his garden and in Uncle Leonard's his Sealyhams. Although Uncle Leonard was about the same age as my father, as far as I know he had not fought in the First World War as my father had done. The eldest of his three sons did, however, fight in the Second World War and was awarded the Military Cross. I never met either him or the next eldest brother, but I did know John, the youngest of the three, who used to visit me when I was staying with Nana after my convalescence. I remember a photograph of the two of us. I am sitting in my wheelchair in Nana's porch and John, who was of about my own age, is standing beside me. He is still in short trousers and already beginning to look like his father.

Soon after my return to England in 1964, a friend drove me through Elborough Street and into Replingham Road. Nana's house, with its white porch and well-kept front garden, was still there, but Nana was not, having died some years earlier, and when we turned into Replingham Road, I scanned it for Uncle Leonard's shoe repair shop in vain. The name of Lingwood was no longer to be seen.

*Adhithana, 11 November 2017*

## **A Brace of Uncles**

Uncle Dan and Uncle Charlie were my uncles by marriage, each of them having married one of my mother's sisters. Uncle Dan was Irish, and on marrying him, Auntie Kate, who was my mother's eldest sister, had converted to Catholicism, which she took more seriously than he seemed to do. I remember him as a tall, well-built man, with a loud voice and a red face, part of which was disfigured by a kind of carbuncle. He always dressed in black, down to the very boots, which were big, black, and shiny, as if to proclaim his proletarian status, he being the only man in the family who wore boots instead of shoes. For similar reasons, no doubt, he wore a flat workman's cap.

Uncle Charlie, who had married my mother's sister Jessie, was of medium height, and always wore a three-piece brown suit, with brown shoes and a collar and tie, and of course he wore a trilby. His face was pink rather than red, and it had none of Uncle Dan's corrugations. Uncle Dan worked as a stoker at Lotts Road Power Station in Fulham, and he was an active member of his Union. I never saw him when I stayed with Auntie Kate, for he would be on the night shift, and I remember her making up his bottle of cold tea, as well as laying out his dress clothes when he had a Union meeting. Uncle Charlie was in the butchery line of business, and he and Auntie Jessie lived in Chiswick above the butcher's shop of which he was manager. I never knew the details, but I gathered that Uncle Charlie had once got into serious trouble for levying an unauthorized tax on the contents of the till. This did not surprise me, as he was a betting man and may well have been losing money on the gee-gees.

It was only at Christmas and the New Year that I saw both uncles at the same time, when with their two wives they visited my parents at our Tooting home. The three men would talk politics, which my father otherwise hardly ever did, though he was a supporter of the Labour Party, or at least always voted for it. (His mother, being a property owner, always voted Conservative.) Much to the disgust of my mother and her sisters, Uncle Dan had a lavatorial sense of humour, which their protests could not always silence. Decades later, when the name of Uncle Dan happened to come up between us, my mother remarked with some feeling: 'He was not a nice man.'

*Adhithana, 13 November 2017*

## Evil Revisited – and Good

‘The roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword, are portions of eternity too great for the eye of man.’ Thus William Blake in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. To Blake’s examples one might add the crash of the tsunami as it hits land, the crack of thunder, and the havoc wrought by volcanoes and earthquakes. All these are manifestations of non-human energy, of the tremendous power of nature. All are forms of natural evil, in that they may be causes of pain and suffering to human beings. What of Blake’s destructive sword? In one sense it belongs to nature, for the materials of which it is made are of natural origin. It is destructive only in the hands of man, who has made the sword.

Man, the individual man, is himself an embodiment of energy. He embodies it in more highly developed forms than the lion or the wolf, and like them enjoys using his energy and expressing it. He too ‘roars’ and ‘howls’. We may call this expression ‘human culture’.

Not only does man enjoy expressing his energy, he can enjoy seeing the expression of energy by the natural world. He can delight in the storm, for he can feel in it an energy akin to the energy of which he is an embodiment. Similarly, he can enjoy the sight of a forest fire, when the golden flames shoot up hundreds of feet into the air, even though he can, at the same time, feel sorry for those who lose their homes or even their lives in the conflagration.

He can even delight in killing other human beings and in seeing them killed. Worse still, he can enjoy inflicting pain and suffering. He can enjoy torturing them, using his more developed intelligence to devise more sophisticated forms of torture, from the rack and the iron maiden to waterboarding and prolonged solitary confinement. In all this he is guilty of committing moral evil. The mind and emotions can also be made to suffer unbearably, as when a child is tortured in front of his parents, or a friend in front of a friend. This is perhaps the worst form of human suffering, from which it follows that delight in inflicting such suffering is the worst form of moral evil.

But moral evil does not exist in a vacuum. It is something done by human beings to other human beings, as well as to animals. It is an individual human being like ourselves who is cruel, malicious, and sadistic, whether in act or in speech. He or she can actually enjoy inflicting pain and suffering. But why is this? Why does one human being delight in inflicting pain on another human being? To some it has seemed that the answer to this question lies at the bottom of a very black hole. In the case of a small boy who torments small creatures, it is due to a lack of empathy which normally he develops as he grows up and is socialised. Adult human beings may give reasons for their behaviour, which they do not necessarily see as being evil. Some may believe that they are acting in the interest of their religion, as when heretics are burned at the stake or tortured to death. Others see it as necessary for the maintenance of the existing social and political order.

According to Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, ‘Man is the cruelest animal.’ This does not mean that

every human being commits actions of conscious, deliberate cruelty, but the potential for doing so, and even for delighting in so doing, is in us all. Usually we do not like to think of ourselves in this way. We like to think that we are basically good and kind, and incapable of doing anything really evil. At the same time we do not find it difficult to see the evil in others, or even to project onto others the evil that is in ourselves. Thus it is possible for us to demonise the enemy or the opponent, whether in war or any other situation of conflict or disagreement. To 'demonise' means to see the other person as a demon, that is, to see them not as another human being but as a devil. This can be done not only by the individual but by whole societies, especially those of a religious or quasi-religious nature. Thus the terms heresy, sorcery, witchcraft, and sexual perversion come to be conflated.

A boy is able to torture small creatures because he is bigger and stronger than them. He, in his turn, may be made to suffer by a bigger and stronger boy, and the latter may suffer painful chastisement at the hands of an adult who has authority over him. In all these cases there is a disparity of power, whether real or perceived, and it is this disparity that makes it possible for one person to torture another, as well as to delight in so doing. There is a similar disparity of power between employer and employee, which is why in a democracy employees band together in trade unions in order to reduce the disparity, even though it cannot be abolished completely. Beyond both employer and employee is the government, whether democratic or totalitarian in structure. In the latter case, the imbalance of power is extreme, or even absolute, with the government possessing virtually all the power and individual citizens hardly any or none at all. In these circumstances the government, through its various agencies, can do whatever it likes with the individual. It can imprison him or her, it can determine what kind of work they do, how and where they live, and it can physically and mentally torture them without any possibility of appeal. Such a government can persecute, even massacre, whole communities of its own subjects, as did Stalin in Russia, Mao Tse Tung in China, Pol Pot in Cambodia and Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe. Hitler's systematic extermination of six million or more European Jews had a complex background, involving as it did religious, ethnic and pseudo-scientific factors.

Disparity of power makes it possible for the stronger to oppress and abuse the weaker and even to torture them and to delight in torturing them. Thus there is an immense amount of suffering in the world, suffering that is due not to natural power but to human agency. So much suffering is there, indeed, that some have thought that moral evil was not just a part of human nature but that there existed a principle of evil outside humanity. Beside this principle, however, there was a principle of good, and human beings were urged to fight on its side. Be that as it may, the disparity in power does also make it possible for the stronger to help the weaker, and to delight in helping them, whether materially or in other ways. For many Buddhists this spirit of unbounded altruism is embodied in the figure of Avalokiteśvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Avalokiteśvara has many forms, in one of which he appears with eleven heads and a thousand arms and hands. Some serious-minded Buddhists, whether within Triratna or outside it, aspire to be a hand of Avalokiteśvara or even a finger.

In the course of the transmission of the Dharma from India to China, Avalokiteśvara underwent a change of sex, becoming Kuan Yin, known in the west as the Goddess of Mercy. She is clad in a milk- white robe, one corner of which is modestly draped over her chignon, and her face wears an expression of maternal concern. Sometimes she is depicted sitting on a rock, for compassion is based upon wisdom and is not separate from it.

Here we are not so far from Blake as one might have thought. ‘The most sublime act is to set another before you’, he says in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. It is of this ‘sublime act’, performed constantly and in an infinite variety of circumstances, of which Avalokiteśvara / Kuan Yin is the radiant embodiment.

The figure of the sex-changing Avalokiteśvara may be of particular interest to those people who are making or who have made the difficult journey from one gender to the other.

*Adhithana, 22/11/2017 – 18/12/2017*

## Green Tārā and the Fourth Lakṣaṇa

Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche was an old man at the time, and did not have much longer to live, but on 24 October 1957, despite failing health, he initiated me into the Mañjughoṣa Stuti *sādhana*. As his name indicated, he was an embodiment of Mañjughoṣa (Jamyang), the Bodhisattva of Transcendental Wisdom, and friends had urged me to ask him to initiate me into the *sādhana* of the bodhisattva. It would be a source of great blessing to me and my disciples, they assured me. I accordingly made the request, which the guru granted. He would not only give me the *sādhana* of Mañjughoṣa, he told me, but also the *sādhanas* of Avalokiteśvara, Vajrapāṇi, and Green Tārā. I have described the initiation in *Precious Teachers* and I do not propose to repeat what I said there.

That was sixty years ago, and for many years the Mañjughoṣa Stuti *sādhana* was my main spiritual practice, together with the *sādhana* of Green Tārā which I had received earlier from Chatrul Sangye Dorje. For a short while I practised the Avalokiteśvara *sādhana* that I had received from Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche, though I must confess that for one reason or another I never got around to practising the Vajrapāṇi *sādhana*. Recently a Mañjughoṣa Stuti *sādhana* retreat led by Subhuti, Mahamati, Sanghadevi, and Paramabandhu was held at Adhithana, and I was delighted that what I had received from Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche was being passed on within the Triratna Buddhist Order. Fifty or more people took part in the retreat, some of whom had received the *sādhana* from me and had been practising it regularly for many years. Similar retreats devoted to the *sādhanas* of Avalokiteśvara and Green Tārā have also been held at Adhithana, and I very much hope that retreats of this kind will continue to be held here.

After my initiation by Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche a friend procured for me a copy of the four *sādhanas* I had received from him, and I perceived that the four formed a set. I also saw that the four bodhisattvas were in a relationship of ‘correspondence’ (in the hermetic sense) with the *lakṣaṇas*, the *samādhis*, and the *vimokṣas*. Concentrating on the insubstantiality of things, one enters into the *śūnyatā samādhi* and ‘sees’ the bodhisattva Mañjughoṣa. He is golden yellow in colour and wears the jewels and silks of a prince. Concentrating on the unsatisfactoriness of things, one enters into the wishless (*apraṇihita*) *samādhi* and ‘sees’ the figure of Avalokiteśvara, pure white in colour. Concentrating on the impermanence of things, one enters into the signless (*animitta*) *samādhi* and ‘sees’ Vajrapāṇi. He is dark blue in colour, like indigo or lapis lazuli. Concentrating on the repulsiveness of conditioned things, one enters into the *samādhi* of pure beauty, and ‘sees’ Green Tārā, who has the colour of emeralds or jade. All four bodhisattvas are young and beautiful and radiate light. Meeting them, one, in a sense, meets the Buddha, for they are all embodiments of this or that aspect of the Buddha’s enlightened nature.

The connection between a particular bodhisattva and a particular *samādhi* is not arbitrary. As I have said, they are in correspondence. In other words, the Unconditioned is to be found or encountered in the depths of the conditioned. In Mañjughoṣa’s *śūnyatā samādhi*, what is true

of the individual becomes through wisdom true of all things. In Avalokiteśvara's wishless *samādhi*, there is no will of one's own, no preferences, one simply responds with compassion to the needs of others, especially those who are in distress. That compassion may be likened to a perfect sphere, which the lightest touch can set rolling in any direction. In Vajrapāṇi's signless *samādhi*, there are no ideas or concepts, all of which have been eliminated by the power of insight. In Green Tārā's *samādhi* of pure beauty, the perception of the repulsive (*aśubha*) has been transformed into the perception of pure beauty.

The *samādhis* are also known as 'doors of liberation' (*vimokṣa-mukhas*), for it is through them that one passes to the liberation that is Enlightenment. They thus mark the passage from the conditioned to the Unconditioned, although just where the one ends and the other begins it is difficult to say. The door is a universal symbol, marking as it does the passing from a lower to a higher state of existence. Thus William Blake speaks of the golden string which, when wound into a ball, 'will lead you in at Heaven's gate, Built in Jerusalem's wall ...' Using Blake's language, we may say that the *samādhis* are the golden string of which he speaks, while the winding of the string into a ball represents the spiritual discipline that eventually takes one to the end of the conditioned and the beginning of the Unconditioned.

Though I have spoken of four *samādhis* or *vimokṣas*, Buddhist tradition speaks of only three. There are, however, reasons for reckoning the *samādhis* as four in number, not the least of which is that Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche seemed to put the Green Tārā *sādhana* on the same level as the three other *sādhana*s, the four in fact forming a set. Another reason is that besides *duḥkha*, *anitya* (Pali *anicca*), and *anātman* (Pali *anattā*), there is a fourth *lakṣaṇa* i.e. the ugly or repulsive (*aśubha*). Moreover, there is the reflection on the ten stages in the decomposition of a body, a standard Buddhist practice which not only helps free one from the attachment to the body but also opens one up to the perception of the pure or beautiful (*śubha*). This opening up may go through several stages, as we learn from the well-known story of Nanda and the heavenly nymphs. After seeing the divine beauty of the heavenly nymphs Nanda compares his earthly beloved to a monkey with ears and nose cut off. Not that his beloved is really ugly but only that she is less beautiful than the heavenly nymphs. Thus there are degrees of beauty from the sensuous to the spiritual, and from the spiritual to the Transcendental.

Historically speaking, Buddhism has not developed a spiritual path in which the goal is envisaged in terms of ideal beauty and the path in terms of increasing love for that beauty. There is no reason, however, why such a path should not be developed within the general framework of Buddhist practice, especially as we have models for such an approach within the Western spiritual tradition. The *locus classicus* of such an approach is to be found in the *Symposium* of Plato (427-347 BCE), one of the most sublime works of Western literature. In this celebrated dialogue, known to me since my teens, Socrates represents himself as being instructed in the art of love by Diotima. In her instruction, the object of love is beauty, both human and divine. A similar approach is to be found in the writings of Plotinus (204/5 – 270

CE). In his tractate 'On Beauty', he says, 'Beauty is mostly in sight, but it is to be found too in things we hear, in combinations of words and also in music, and in all music [not only in songs]; for tunes and rhythms are certainly beautiful: and for those who are advancing upwards from sense perception, ways of life and actions and characters and intellectual activities are beautiful, and there is beauty of virtue. If there is any beauty prior to these, it itself will reveal it.'

Over the centuries poets and mystics have been inspired by Plato and Plotinus and their influence can be seen in some forms of Christian and Islamic mysticism. It would be surprising therefore if that influence was not to extend, sooner or later, to Western Buddhism. Indeed, such an influence is already being felt in some quarters. As I wrote in 1950:

It is not love that seeks to bind  
Two bodies in a fierce embrace;  
Nor love, true love, that dreams to find,  
The highest beauty in a face.  
  
Love soars beyond the scathe of hands,  
Outstrips a face, and is employed  
Where it both sees and understands  
A Beauty without form and void.

*Adhithana, 18/12/2017-1/1/2018*

## ‘The Bodhisattvas are also necessary’

I have told this story before, but never mind, I will tell it again. It was told me by my teacher, the venerable Jagdish Kashyap, and it was about himself. Born into a Hindu family in Bihar, he had converted to Buddhism and had been ordained as a bhikkhu in Sri Lanka. Though a scholar in Sanskrit and Pāli, he was a gentle, unassuming man who did not mind telling a story against himself. Soon after his ordination he was invited to Penang by a group of Chinese Buddhists, he once told me. They were excellent hosts, looking after his every need and showing him around their temples, in which there were images of both Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Being a Theravādin, Kashyap-ji related, he had saluted the Buddhas but he had not saluted the bodhisattvas. The following day he was served a lunch consisting only of rice, which had surprised him a little, and this happened for a few more days. Eventually, without actually complaining, he drew his hosts' attention to the fact, saying ‘No doubt rice is the main thing, but the vegetables are also necessary.’ ‘Yes,’ agreed his hosts, ‘that is very true. Similarly, the Buddha is the main thing, but the bodhisattvas are also necessary.’ ‘Thereafter,’ concluded Kashyap-ji, with a smile, ‘I was careful to salute the bodhisattvas as well as the Buddhas.’ The fact that Kashyap-ji, as a Theravādin, did not salute the bodhisattvas did not mean that the bodhisattva, in the Pāli form of bodhisatta, was not known to the Theravādin tradition. In the tradition, however, bodhisatta referred to Gotama up to the time of his attainment of supreme, perfect Enlightenment, though it was also applied to him in his many previous lives. The bodhisattvas of Chinese Buddhism, as well as the bodhisattvas of the Mahāyāna generally, are purely ideal figures and have no historical existence. As I have written elsewhere, they are represented as beautiful young princes. ‘Gem-studded tiaras sparkle on their brows, while their nobly proportioned limbs are clad in light diaphanous garments of coloured silk. They wear gold bracelets and strings of jewels, and around their necks hang garlands of fragrant flowers.’ [This is from chapter 16, ‘The Glorious Company of Bodhisattvas’, in *The Three Jewels*.]

In recent years there has been a good deal of discussion among Buddhist academics about the historical origin of the bodhisattva ideal. Originally it was thought that it arose among the Buddhist laity, who were looking for a simpler and easier way of practising the Buddha's teaching. More recently, however, it has been claimed that the ideal arose among a group of more serious practitioners who lived near stupas containing body relics of the Buddha. To my mind, the two positions are not contradictory. The bodhisattva ideal has, in fact, a double aspect, neither of which precludes the other. On the one hand we have those who actually try to live the life of the bodhisattva and practise the *pāramitās* or perfections for the benefit of all beings, while on the other there are those who worship the bodhisattvas in the hope of obtaining worldly blessings. In the Theravāda, broadly speaking, neither monks nor lay people worship the Buddha for the sake of worldly benefits, and in the absence of bodhisattvas such as those found in the Mahāyāna, the Theravāda laity have tended to appeal for help to a variety of lesser divinities. In Sri Lanka for instance they worship the Hindu god

Vishnu, who is in fact seen as a follower of the Buddha and a protector of his Dhamma. Similarly, Burmese Buddhists worship the Nats, the spirits of wood and water, which is not seen as incompatible with the practice of Buddhism. In the Mahāyāna the number of bodhisattvas is incalculable, but in the course of centuries certain bodhisattvas assumed a more and more individual character. By some they were worshipped as embodiments of the ideal, while others depended upon them for worldly benefits.

Once I too, like Kashyap-ji, was invited by a group of Chinese Buddhists to visit Penang, whence I visited Buddhists in other parts of Malaysia. Once I found myself spending the night at an Avalokiteśvara temple run by a community of nuns. In the morning I saw that women were arriving with offerings and I asked one of the nuns what they wanted from the bodhisattva. 'They want babies,' she replied. This was not the kind of thing I associated with the practice of the Avalokiteśvara sādhana that had been given to me by Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche. Neither was it associated with any of the other sādhanas that I had received, beginning with the Green Tārā sādhana, which had been given me by Chatrul Sangye Dorje, the first of my Tibetan teachers.

Well do I remember receiving that sādhana and what the receiving of it meant to me at the time, now sixty years ago. I was then thirty-two, had been a monk for nine years and since even before that time I had been practising the mindfulness of breathing and the mettā bhāvanā. I practised them according to the Theravādin tradition, so that by accepting the Green Tārā initiation from Chatrul Sangye Dorje I had passed from the practice of the Theravāda to the practice of the Mahāyāna and even the Vajrayāna. Not that I had left the Theravāda behind or that I was unfamiliar with the teachings of the Mahāyāna. I had, however, reached something of an impasse in my personal spiritual development. For some time I had been preoccupied with the question of 'getting beyond the ego', and had even written an article on the subject, but how could the ego get beyond the ego? That was the question. As it happened, I had, at around this time, become acquainted with Dinshaw Mehta, a Parsee mystic who believed that while he was in a state of trance, he received a direct guidance from God. 'Guidance' was the keynote of his teaching. There were three kinds of guidance, he told me. There was guidance received direct from God in a state of trance, such as he himself experienced, and there was guidance received from the person guided by God, which was the guidance received by his disciples from him. There was also what he called 'guidance by circumstances'. I had no desire to be 'guided' by Dinshaw Mehta, much as he would have liked to guide me, but I could see that he had a point. One could get beyond the ego only with the help of something or someone that was itself beyond the ego. What was that something? Perhaps it was one's *ishta devata* or *yidam*.

When I met Chatrul Sangye Dorje I therefore asked him to tell me who my *ishta devata* was, for his very presence had inspired me with confidence. He thereupon told me that my *yidam* was Green Tārā, adding that she had been the yidam of many of the great pandits of India and Tibet. One of these, as I knew, was Atiśa (CE 980 – 1054). On his being invited to Tibet he

had consulted Tārā, who told him that if he accepted the invitation his life would be shortened by several years but that his visit would be of great benefit to the Dharma. He therefore accepted the invitation, and became the founder of the Kadampa school of Tibetan Buddhism.

It was at about this time, too, that I came to see that the act of Going for Refuge to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha was central to the Buddhist life. It was what made one a Buddhist and it was naturally followed by the practice of five, or eight, or ten moral precepts.

This was the path that underlay all forms of Buddhism, whether Theravāda or Mahāyāna. It was a path of self-effort and self-development, in which one relied on self-power to attain liberation from suffering. It should also be noted that although each precept is observed by the individual for his or her own benefit, each has an other-referential or even altruistic dimension. Observing the first precept, one abstains from injuring other living beings and especially from killing them. This refers, in my view, not only to the killing of other human beings but to the killing of animals, whether for sport or food. The precept could also refer more generally to the protection and preservation of all forms of life and even cover concerns of an environmentalist nature. Observing the second precept, one abstains not only from stealing but from taking from others what has not been freely given. This implies abstaining from all sorts of economic exploitation. Observing the third precept, one behaves mindfully and sensitively in one's sexual relations. Neither does one traffic in sex. Observing the fourth precept, one abstains from false, harsh, useless or slanderous speech, and neither does one sponsor misleading advertising or help to spread fake news. Observing the fifth precept, one abstains from drinks and drugs that cloud the mind and from dealing in any of them, including so-called recreational drugs, whether indulged in on one's own or with others. Besides the outward observance, there is the inner attitude. One therefore also abstains from covetousness and hatred, as well as from wrong views. Thus there is an altruistic dimension to the whole path of self-effort and self-development, from the act of Going for Refuge onwards. This aspect finds its fullest expression in the bodhisattva ideal, which I see as the altruistic dimension of the act of Going for Refuge.

I cannot claim that Tārā ever spoke to me in the way that she spoke to Atiśa, but doing her sādhana must have made me kinder and more considerate than I naturally was. Be that as it may, there were certainly times when I felt that a higher power was acting through me. This usually happened when I was communicating the Dharma. The words that came from my lips were not really mine and I listened to them as though someone else was speaking. In later years there was a certain amount of discussion in the Order about the nature of this supra-personal force, as it was sometimes called; and as far as I know, the discussion continues.

*Adhithana, 2 – 10 January 2018*

# Rainbows in the Sky

My heart leaps up when I behold

A rainbow in the sky:

So was it when my life began;

So is it now I am a man;

So be it when I shall grow old,

Or let me die!

So wrote Wordsworth in 1802. More than two hundred years later my heart, too, leaps up when I see a rainbow, as does the heart of anyone who is capable of responding to the beauties of the natural world, and especially to its various colours. Indeed, rainbows have marked some of the most important events of my life, which is why I gave the first volume of my memoirs the title *The Rainbow Road from Tooting Broadway to Kalimpong*. I must admit, though, that I saw my first rainbows not in the sky but in two works of art. One of these was Millais's *The Blind Girl*, and the other was one of the two versions of Holman Hunt's *The Scapegoat*, both of which have been familiar to me since my childhood. I saw my next rainbow in the film *Fantasia*, which I had the opportunity of seeing in Singapore towards the end of the war. In this pioneering film, Walt Disney blended animated imagery with well-known pieces of classical music. I remember in particular the images that accompanied Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony*. The storm is over, the sky clears, and across the screen there shoots the goddess Iris, trailing behind her a brilliant rainbow.

Many years later, when I took up the practice of the Green Tārā sādhanā, I remembered Iris and her rainbow as I visualized the offering goddesses emerging from the crown of my head and making offerings to the bodhisattvas in the sky. There were seven such goddesses, each of whom trailed a rainbow behind her as she rose into the air holding her offering. Pleased with the offerings, the bodhisattvas sent down blessings. The offering goddesses and their rainbows were not always easy to imagine, and I was glad to be able to see a real rainbow from time to time to refresh my memory. They were of varying degrees of proximity and brilliance. The most memorable in this respect was a rainbow I saw in Auckland in 1997. Auckland is a city well known for its variable weather. Standing in front of the men's community one afternoon after a passing shower, I saw the biggest and brightest rainbow I had ever seen. It rose majestically from immediately behind the houses on the other side of the road, its arc seeming to enclose half the sky. The colours of its unusually broad bands were particularly vivid and looked both solid and diaphanous.

Big and bright as was the rainbow I saw in Auckland, this was not the rainbow after which my first volume of memoirs was named. It was named after a whole series of rainbows I had encountered more than fifty years earlier. I was then staying in a hill station in east Punjab and it was there that I decided to go forth from the world as a homeless wanderer as the

Buddha and his disciples had done. With me was my friend Satyapriya, whom I had met in Singapore. On the morning of 18 August 1947, therefore, we changed our civilian clothes for the traditional saffron of the ascetic and set out on foot for the plains. In the words of *The Rainbow Road*: 'As we left Kausali it was raining, but as in the course of our descent we emerged from the clouds into the bright sunshine below, we saw arching the road, at intervals of a few dozen yards, not only a single but double and triple rainbows. Every time we turned a bend we found more rainbows waiting for us. We passed through them as though through the multi-coloured arcades of some celestial palace. Against the background of bright sunshine, jewel-like glittering drops, and hills of the freshest and most vivid green, this plethora of delicate seven-hued bows seemed like the epiphany of another world.' Thus the rainbow became for me a symbol of the spiritual path, the track of which I have followed, in one way or another, all my life.

The symbolism of the rainbow, and of its individual colours, of course varies from culture to culture and religion to religion. Green, for example, is the colour of Islam, and I remember that the little village mosques I passed in the course of my visit to Malaysia were all painted bright green. Similarly, I have seen Muslim fakirs who wore green in much the same way that the Hindu sadhus wore saffron. When *The Rainbow Road* came to be translated into Spanish, I was told that the title would have to be changed, because the rainbow, in the United States and elsewhere, was the symbol of the gay rights movement. I was able to verify this when I visited San Francisco. One day a friend took me for a walk from the Mission district, where I was staying, through the Castro, and I saw scores of small rainbow flags fluttering from windows and balconies. The flags indicated, so my friend explained, that a gay household lived there.

Gaily they fluttered in the sunshine, those little flags, and it was good that they should do so. The gay rights movement had made some progress in the US though in other parts of the world homosexuals were being persecuted and even killed. I had not aligned myself with the gay rights movement, but I sympathized with its aims and in my own way had done my best to promote them. When I founded the FWBO in 1967 I made it clear that it was open to all, irrespective of gender, race, nationality and sexual orientation, and I rejoiced that in that same year consensual sex between adult men was decriminalized in the UK. Much as I sympathized with the gay rights movement, however, I was far from identifying the rainbow with any socio-political movement. For me the rainbow symbolized not just the spiritual path but spirituality itself, especially when that spirituality reflected or was touched by something even higher. Thus, in the Buddhist art of Tibet rainbows emanate from saints and yogis as well as from stupas. Some highly spiritual beings, indeed, are made entirely of rainbows. This is especially the case with Padmasambhava, who is known as the Rainbow-Bodied One. Padmasambhava came into my life the first time I visited the Tamang Buddhist Gumpa in Darjeeling. This must have been in the early 1950s, shortly after I settled in Kalimpong. But great as was the impression made on me by the lifelike image in the gumpa, it was not until

October 1962 that my relationship with the Precious Guru was ritually confirmed, when I received in Kalimpong the Padmasambhava initiation from Kachu Rinpoche, the abbot of Pema Yangtse Gompa in western Sikkim. In the course of the two-day initiation he explained to me how I was to meditate on Padmasambhava and gave me the name of Urgyen, this being the Tibetan form of Uddiyana, a part of north-west India associated with the early life of the Great Guru. Kachu Rinpoche also explained how I was to do the Going for Refuge and Prostration Practice with Padmasambhava as the object of refuge. This practice I did regularly until my departure to the UK in 1964, by which time I had done it a total of 20,000 times – not a lot by Tibetan Buddhist standards. After the founding of the FWBO/Triratna in 1967 I taught the practice to a number of Order members, some of whom have in turn taught it to others. Thus, Padmasambhava has been present in the life of the Order from the very beginning and he continues to be in it and part of it to the present day.

Recently I have been pained and surprised to learn that some Order members believe that Padmasambhava has been sidelined, and this some of them connect with a narrowing of the movement, and in particular, with my remark about the re-founding of the Order. On the contrary, Padmasambhava is still very much alive in my own life and in the life of the Order, and his Day is still widely celebrated at our centres. His image stands on my shrine, together with the four-armed Avalokiteśvara and the photo of Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche, at whose behest Kachu Rinpoche gave me the Padmasambhava initiation. As for the alleged narrowing, when I spoke of a re-founding of the Order, what I had in mind was a reaffirmation of the principles and ideals for which we stand and for which we have stood from the beginning. If one can speak of a re-founding at all it can only be in the sense of making the original foundation stronger.

Shortly after my return to the UK, I gave a talk at the invitation of the then Brighton Buddhist Society. What I spoke about I no longer remember, but it must have been one or another aspect of the Dharma. After the talk an elderly woman approached me. She had seen a strange figure standing behind me while I spoke, she said, and she wanted to know who the figure was. I naturally asked her to describe the figure. He was wearing a kind of red cloak, she said, and a strangely shaped hat. What was more, he was neither Chinese nor Indian but something in between. From what the woman told me, it was evident that the figure that she had seen standing behind me was none other than the one I had seen in the Tamang Buddhist Gompa in Darjeeling all those years before. Since I visited Brighton regularly, Violet, as she was called, became a friend and a few years later I was able to see her and chat with her after her death, as I have related in detail elsewhere.

The last rainbow of significance in my life appeared on my ninetieth birthday, which was celebrated at Adhithana and throughout the movement. In the afternoon I was driven from the Annexe where I lived to the marquee in which four hundred or more Order members were waiting to receive me. It was raining heavily at the time, and there was a deep rumble of thunder. I was later told that at that time a rainbow of particular brightness had appeared over

Adhithana, including the Annexe. I did not see the rainbow myself as I was inside the marquee listening to the speeches, but even hearing about it made my heart leap up.

*Adhithana, 15/1/2018 – 22/1/2018*

## A Passage to America

It was my first visit to the United States. In previous years I had made several long-distance flights, but this was the first time I had crossed the Atlantic. The reason for my journey was that I had been invited by the Philosophy Department of Berkeley College, a residential college at Yale University, to give a series of lectures on Buddhist Philosophy. Although I had no academic qualifications, I had been invited on the recommendation of two very distinguished scholars, Dr Edward Conze and Professor F. N. Findlay, both of whom thought highly of *A Survey of Buddhism*, which had been published some years earlier. Thus it was that one day in the winter of 1969/1970, I found myself bidding goodbye to London (Heathrow) and heading for New York (Kennedy).

I remember little of the five or six hour flight. In some respects it was like a dream, or even a nightmare. I had a window seat in the right-hand aisle from which I had a view of the information screen which flickered and danced with the vibrations of the aircraft. From time to time we encountered an air pocket, suddenly dropping hundreds of feet before regaining height. On these occasions my heart seemed to come up into my mouth and for a few seconds I felt that I would go on falling for ever. Each time it happened I felt a little more disoriented and did not know quite where I was, and whether I was sitting or falling. Moreover, the information screen seemed to be talking to me and even sending me messages. 'Calvary,' it flashed, which I took to be an ill omen for my journey. 'Calvary,' it repeated. 'Death. Death. Death.' I was heading for Calvary, not New York. I was heading for death. In ordinary parlance, a Calvary is a period of intense mental suffering, but this was not the Calvary of which the information screen spoke. It was speaking of the Agony in the Garden, the night that Jesus spent, alone, before being crucified. He knew he was going to die a hideous death, and prayed that the cup might pass from him. As I sat with my eyes on the screen, I recalled disjointedly the words of the Gospel account, as well as recalling paintings of the Agony in the Garden that I had seen – in particular, a small one by El Greco in the National Gallery. Jesus kneels on a kind of promontory while his disciples sleep below, and an angel bends down from heaven and offers him a kind of chalice. As every Christian knows, Jesus drained the cup, thereby signifying his acceptance of God's will for him, and the next day he was crucified on a hill outside Jerusalem.

Crucifixion was a common form of execution among the Romans of the time. Jesus was not crucified alone, but between two thieves. The victim's hands would be nailed to the arms of the cross and his feet nailed to the upright with a single nail. He would die of asphyxiation, or exhaustion. It was a painful and ignominious death, and over the centuries Christian artists have depicted the sufferings of Jesus on the cross in increasingly realistic detail. It is some years since I saw the Isenheim Altarpiece, but its horrifying depiction of the crucified Jesus still haunts me. Jesus was put to death in the reign of the Emperor Tiberius, when Roman civilization was at its height, and cultured Romans who enjoyed the poetry of Virgil, Ovid, and Horace would have seen nothing shocking in the crucifixion of common criminals. Nor

would they have been shocked by the fact that a generation or two earlier six thousand survivors of the revolt of the slaves under Spartacus had been crucified by a victorious Roman general, the crosses with their ghastly burden lining the Appian Way from Rome to Capua. I had not read Howard Fast's novel *Spartacus* nor seen the film that was based on it, but somehow the fate of the former gladiator and his followers had made a strong impression on me, and as I sat there in the aircraft the crucified slaves passed before my inner vision in wave after wave. Suddenly I was jolted back to the present reality by the grinding sound of the lowering of the undercarriage and by the bump by which it was immediately succeeded as the aircraft hit the runway. Once more the information screen flashed. 'Calgary! Calgary!' it said.

I still do not know why I kept seeing 'Calvary' instead of 'Calgary'. Was it a case of hallucination? But if it was, why should I have hallucinated just then, and why should the hallucination have taken the form it did? There were several elements to it, and, hallucination or not, they must all have had some significance for me, perhaps on a level deeper than that of my conscious mind. For one thing, I was on my own and was not sure how I would get on at Berkeley College away from all my friends. Then there was Calvary and Christianity. Calvary and the Crucifixion were part of the Christian myth, as to me the story was. I was a Buddhist, not a Christian, and did not take the myth literally. Why, then, did it play such a prominent part in my hallucination, or whatever it was that I experienced? There was also Tiberius and the Roman Empire and the fact that culture was not incompatible with cruelty; there was Spartacus and the six thousand crucified slaves lining the Appian Way, as well as the horrors of the Isenheim Altarpiece. Where did it all come from? What did it all mean?

Despite my earlier misgivings, I got on well at Berkeley College. It was my first experience of university life, as well as my last, and I quite enjoyed the experience. I joined an inter-college poetry reading group, ate my first pizza, travelled up to Cape Cod to see a total solar eclipse, visited the Mongolian Lama Geshe Wangyal, and of course lectured my dozen or so students on Buddhist philosophy, basing myself on *A Survey of Buddhism*. I also led a weekly meditation class, which was attended by about eighty people. It was held in the dining hall of the college under the watchful eye of Bishop Berkeley, whose portrait hung there. In later years I visited the United States a number of times, accompanied by a friend or two, but I never saw Yale again, though Berkeley College and the friends I had made there remained a pleasant memory. On these later visits I saw the Grand Canyon, crossed the Rockies from West to East, drove through Death Valley, and spent a day and a night, with two friends, among the crazy and colourful architectures of Las Vegas. There was the Moab desert, Yellowstone Park, and Monument Valley with its striking contrast between the cathedral-like rocks and the surrounding sands. There was New Mexico and the Kiowa Ranch where D. H. Lawrence had lived for two years and where his ashes are buried in a kind of chapel surmounted by a phoenix, his symbol. In the course of these travels I always spent time at the FWBO centres that had been established by pioneering Order members in New England, San Francisco, Missoula, and Seattle.

Underlying all this were preoccupations that had manifested themselves in the hallucinations I had experienced during the first part of my journey. Of these, some became the subject of conscious reflection. Remembering those cultured Romans, I was reminded of what 'Samurai' William Adams (1564–1620) had said of the no less cultured Japanese. They were very cultured, he had observed, and also very cruel. Cultured or not, the modern Japanese often treated Allied prisoners of war with extreme cruelty, working them to death on the building of the Burma Railway. Earlier, there had been the Nanking Massacre and during the Second World War the Japanese troops had enslaved half a million Korean 'comfort women'. Remembering those cultured Romans, I also remembered how the educated and cultured Germans had, under Nazism, exterminated Jews, homosexuals, and Roma.

In recent years, my main object of reflection has been suffering, especially suffering as inflicted by human beings on one another, as well as on other animals. In particular, I have asked myself why human beings should not only deliberately inflict suffering on other human beings but also delight in so doing. Indeed, there has seemed to me to be something devilish in the enjoyment of another being's suffering, whether or not inflicted by one's own hand. Some have attempted to explain the phenomenon as an inheritance from our animal ancestry, but though animals may kill and eat their prey, they do not, as far as we know, enjoy the infliction of pain as such. Only too often, human beings' enjoyment of the infliction of pain on other human beings is associated with a definite ideology, whether that of Nazism, nationalism, dogmatic religion, Communism, or the Hindu system of hereditary caste. Suffering can be inflicted not only by bodily action, whether direct or indirect, but also by means of speech or writing, which can be harsh, abusive or defamatory. It may pour ridicule or find expression in a supposed 'joke'.

To the extent that one deliberately inflicts suffering, and especially when one enjoys inflicting it, one is to that extent morally evil. This is not, of course, the whole story. One is also morally good and can enjoy making other people happy even to the extent of devoting one's whole life to their welfare. Though there is a great deal of suffering in the world, much of it is due not to natural evil but to the morally evil behaviour of other people, especially as supported by this or that ideology. It is not enough, therefore, that we should seek to popularize mindfulness and metta, desirable as this may be. We have also to demolish the wrong views that undergird morally evil behaviour, and I suspect that work of demolishing them will be one of Triratna's main tasks for a long time to come.

*Adhithana, 4/3/2018 – 13/3/2018*

## Disparities

‘You cruel little devil!’ shouted our neighbour over the wire netting that separated her back garden from ours. The reason for her wrath was that I had just ‘shot’ a cat with my water pistol. It was not that I wanted to hurt the cat but only to stop it scratching up my father’s bulbs, and in any case, a few drops of water would do it no harm.

Recollecting this incident years later, it occurred to me that the good woman was right in assuming that only a devil would wish to inflict suffering. I had certainly no wish to hurt the cat, whether because of instinct or education, but I did have the ability to hurt it. I could have thrown a stone at it or, if I had met it in the street, I could have given it a kick or pulled its tail. I could have done any of these things because I was stronger than the cat, just as the cat was stronger than the mouse. In other words there was between me and the cat an imbalance of power. Such an imbalance is found both within the natural world and throughout human society. The state has more power than the individual citizen, the millionaire more than the pauper, the employer more than the employee, the teacher more than the student, the master (or mistress) more than the slave, and the parent more than the child. The last is especially the case when the child is a baby. The balance of power between them is then virtually absolute. The parent can beat the child, starve it, confine it, abuse it sexually or emotionally. All this the parents can do, unless they live in a country in which there is a law against such behaviour, and even where there is such a law it may well be broken. During the last few decades there have come to light horrifying stories of parental cruelty, as well as of abuse of children by other adults, including in institutions meant for their protection. Some years ago there was even a case in which two small boys tortured and killed an even smaller boy.

Whatever the form parental abuse may take, it will almost certainly have a traumatic effect on the development of the child, so that as adults they may be still struggling to deal with the psychological problems to which the abuse has given rise. In some cases the damage may be irreparable, even with the help of a whole army of therapists and psychoanalysts, and in the end the unfortunate sufferer may feel that the only solution is suicide.

But why should any parent torture their own child? Why should one human being, indeed, want to inflict pain on another? In some cases, it may be that they themselves have suffered at the hands of their parents or other adults. They may also be unduly influenced by one false ideology or another, perhaps even against their own better instincts. Be that as it may, there is only one other imbalance of power that parallels the imbalance between the parent and the child, especially when the child is an infant. This is the imbalance that exists between master and slave, whether sanctioned by law, as in Ancient Rome or pre-Abolition America, or with the sanction of society. The slave, no more than the infant, has no will of his own, and his owner may do with him as he will.

To the extent that one human being deliberately inflicts pain on another, or on an animal, he or she is evil. They are under the influence, so to speak, of the Māra of Defilement (*kleśa*

*māra*), as they are when they are acting under the influence of intense craving, hatred, or delusion. They have become, at least for the time being, a devil. If they are often possessed in this way, or if such possession becomes habitual, they will become a devil in human form, and on death they may be reborn in one of the lower heavens as a Māra Son of a God (*devaputra māra*). So far as I know, only once in my life have I encountered a devil in human form, as I have related elsewhere. Fortunately such devils are extremely rare, though occasionally we may see a person working himself or herself up into a state of such intense craving, hatred, or delusion that they are in danger of allowing themselves to be possessed by *kleśa māra*.

Most people are subject to one or other of the *kleśas* from time to time, and an angry mood or a feeling of frustrated craving may last for quite a while, sometimes for days or weeks together. At the same time, the intervals between these states may be filled with experiences of love, joy, and peace. This will be especially the case when one deliberately cultivates such emotions through the regular practice of meditations like the *mettā bhāvanā* or respiration-mindfulness (*ānāpānasati*). It is amazing, however, how quickly a positive mental state may be followed by a negative one, and *vice versa*. It is a practice in itself to observe how fickle the mind is and how easily it is distracted. The more the mind is filled with skilful mental states the more the individual is transformed into an angel, so to speak, or into a *brahmacārī* or *brahma*-farer in the sense of one who has their being in a higher plane of existence and who at the time of death will already be on that plane, so that there is little or no sense of transition, apart from the fact that the physical body is no longer there. Violent negative emotion will distort the features and may even lead to bodily convulsions, conversely strong positive emotion will transfigure the features, however ordinary, and make one attractive to others.

Exercise of power is pleasurable. One can enjoy the feeling of strength that one experiences in playing a game of tennis, one can enjoy influencing an audience through one's oratory, and one can enjoy the mental capacity that enables one to solve a crossword puzzle. More importantly, one can use whatever power one possesses either negatively or unskilfully, on the one hand, or positively and skilfully on the other. One can harm other living beings or help them. In the case of a child the parents may treat it in the horrifying ways I have described or bring it up in such a way that it grows into a happy and healthy member of society with no childhood traumas to resolve. Education is thus of extreme importance. For the Buddhist parent it is not so much a question of teaching a child Buddhist doctrines as of bringing it up in a loving, peaceful, and supportive atmosphere. Not that there should not be a degree of moral guidance, if only by example.

There is an imbalance of power not only between the parent and the child but also between a younger and a much older person. The disparity can sometimes be very great, as when the older person is bed-ridden or suffering from dementia. In such cases, the older person is at the mercy of the younger generation and he or she may be badly treated by members of their own

family or by workers in care homes. Stories have come to light that parallel the horrifying behaviour of parents towards their own offspring.

The 'cruel little devil' is now an old man of 92, and although I am neither bedridden nor suffering from dementia there is still a disparity of power between me and the people with whom I live. In practice this disparity works to my advantage, one might say, as my carers now do for me many of the things that I no longer have the strength to do myself. They do them willingly, even joyfully, which has helped to make the last year or more one of the happiest periods of my life. Nor am I alone in this respect. One hears of sick or aged members of the Triratna Order being cared for by fellow community members or friends in the same way. Indeed, not a few have been lovingly cared for, month after month, even year after year, up to the time of death. It would seem that my talk, 'A Case of Dysentery', has been taken to heart by members of the Triratna Buddhist Order and become an integral part of the way we do things.

*Adhithana, 9th April – 17th April 2018*

# Dreams Old and New

## Dreams Old and New 1

Dreams are part of human experience, and they have certainly been part of mine. I vividly remember a dream I had when I was eight years old and in hospital with scarlet fever and chickenpox. In my dream I saw a boy of fourteen lying full length on a bed. He was brown skinned, naked, and dead, and I was looking down on him. Reflecting on the dream in my maturer years I have wondered whether the boy was me in a previous life and that I was taking my last look at the body I was leaving.

There is only one dream from my years in India that I remember. I had this dream more than once and I used to call it 'the dream of the two ashrams'. The first ashram was situated at the base of a mountain and was open to all. Various religious activities went on there. At the back there was a small door, and this door led to a flight of what seemed to be hundreds of steps. At the top of the steps was the secret ashram, the existence of which was known to a very few. Standing before the ashram there was a stout, middle-aged man, clad in brahminical white, whom I knew to be the rishi Agastya, who had led the Aryans from the Himalayas down into South India. Immediately behind him there was a kind of showcase in which were many golden figures of the Buddha. To the rear there was a courtyard on the right hand side of which ran a low wall. Looking over this wall one saw in the distance, silhouetted against the sky, a row of factories, some of which had chimneys.

I had the dream about the dead boy only once, but about the two ashrams I dreamed many times, including once or twice when I was back in England. Another dream that came to me more than once I called the dream of the deserted church. Just around the corner from one of our Triratna centres there stood a large church, seemingly built in the Victorian age. No one seemed to go there, and one day noticing that there was no lock on the back door, I went in. The interior was quite spacious and bare and there were no pews or chairs. Looking round, it occurred to me that it was a good place for a meditation centre and I started holding classes there. People came to the classes and soon I had a little congregation. I also gave lectures from time to time. These lectures attracted a group of young men, and with their help I built a shrine at the far end of the church. On special occasions the young men decorated the shrine, at the apex of which stood a figure of the Buddha. What with all the flowers, lighted candles, and other offerings it was an inspiring sight. One day when I had been using the church for several months, I arrived to find a clergyman there. The church was his, he explained. He did not mind my using it, even telling me that it had been deconsecrated, so that it was no longer a church but just a big building. In the course of the next few months we met several times and became good friends, and we kept up our friendship even after he moved to another town. There were also dreams in which I told different people about the deserted church and how I had turned it into a kind of Buddhist centre. I also told them about my friendship with the clergyman. So vivid were all these dreams that the church seemed actually to have an

objective existence on another plane.

In yet another of my deserted church dreams I arrived to find a small group of clergymen there. They had been meditating in a tiny room in one corner of the church that I had not noticed and we got into a friendly discussion. One of the clergymen had his wife with him, and she was so medieval in her views that I told her husband that he ought to have a word with her about it. At the time I happened to be listening to John Robinson's *Honest to God* and a recollection of this may have found its way into my dream. There was also a dream in which a neighbour took me to see a church to which there was direct access from the street. Supporting the roof there were two rows of red marble pillars the capitals of which were carved and gilded. It was a magnificent sight but it left me cold.

Around the time of my deserted church dreams I was having many dreams about London, where I was born and grew up. More than once I had dreams that I was standing on the southbound platform of the Tube, waiting for the train that would take me to Tooting Broadway. The train came at last, the name of its destination brightly lit on the front. Once, having arrived at the Broadway, I set out for my old home, perhaps expecting to find my parents there. Instead of my parents I found my grandmother, who in actual life had never lived there, at least not when I did. Indeed, that particular house had never been lived in by me and existed only in that dream. In another dream I was waiting for the Tooting Broadway bus at a bus stop somewhere in North London. It arrived at last and I took a window seat from which I looked out at the shops and other buildings we passed. They were all familiar to me though they did not correspond to anything in my actual life. There were also times when I wandered round central London with a friend. Once we walked right through Westminster Abbey entering through the front door and leaving it by the back door. The vast interior differed in all sorts of ways from the real thing. We also visited the National Gallery, which had a very different layout from the one in Trafalgar Square, and was filled with very different pictures. Once we came upon a tower which was several hundred miles high, and for the cost of a ticket one could go to the top and enjoy the panoramic view. My sister happened to be there and I offered to treat her to a trip. But she declined and I went on my own. In a matter of minutes I had reached the top of the tower which was circular and surrounded by a balustrade. I looked down expecting to see the whole of London spread out far below me, but I saw nothing as we were high above the clouds. On the way down we stopped half-way and I was told that Princess Margaret had recently stopped there and been presented with a bouquet. These dreams were all relatively clear and I did not find it difficult to remember them when I woke up. There were other dreams about London that were confused and unsettling. In them I wandered, sometimes with a friend, among the foundations of the buildings above. Some of these foundations were very complex and for various reasons difficult and unpleasant to negotiate. Once I was being driven through them by a colleague, but eventually the obstacles were such that we had to abandon the car and proceed on foot.

There was a dream in which I saw the tower from somewhere out in space. At that distance it looked no bigger than a needle. At times the needle rose out of London and at times it rose from the summit of a great mountain, such as I often saw in my dreams. The mountain was irregular in shape, with deep valleys and steep pathways. Sometimes I trod those pathways myself, and sometimes, from above, I watched the tiny figures of others negotiating them. One side of the mountain swept down to the sea where there were yellow beaches with which I was familiar. Beyond the beaches there was the dark blue sea, and beyond the sea a vast expanse of brilliant blue sky. This hearkened back to a much earlier dream in which I was high above the earth. The blue of the sky was not only above me but all around me and beneath me. The sea was far below and on the sea, its intense whiteness contrasting with the surrounding dark blue, there was a cruise ship, and I was about to allow myself to drop straight down onto its deck.

*Adhithana, 28 April – 1 May 2018*

## Dreams Old and New II

I've always loved second-hand bookshops, and some of the happiest hours of my life have been spent in them whether looking for a particular book or simply browsing. It is not surprising, therefore, that there should be bookshops in the world of my dreams or that I should visit them. As in actual life, they were usually situated down obscure side streets and more often than not consisted of no more than a single room crammed with books. There would also be an elderly, overalled proprietor, who in the course of my visits I would get to know. During the last few years I have dreamed of huge leather-bound volumes as well as of daintily produced volumes of more recent date. On waking up in the morning, I had sometimes even remembered the titles of books bought in my dreams. There was one dream in which I bought so many books that I had to ask friends to help carry them home. Besides bookshops there were also teashops in my dreams, where I sometimes had a cup of tea and a piece of cake. These dreams were more frequent during the years I was having acupuncture, first twice a week and eventually once a month. I had dreams of children and small animals, especially white kittens, which my acupuncturist took to mean that I was getting better. There was also a big, angry, black bull and I had to run fast to shut the gate and prevent him from getting out.

The American Indians are said to distinguish between 'big dreams' and 'little dreams', and perhaps my bookshop and teashop dreams were of the latter kind. There were also dreams, especially after I moved from Madhyamaloka to Adhithana, which could be considered as being more like 'big dreams'. These began with a series in which I lived in dark, gloomy, caves sometimes on my own and sometimes with others, the others being either Tibetan monks, or yogis, or even yellow clad *bhikkhus*. Once or twice I was myself a *bhikkhu*, living with other *bhikkhus* in India or Thailand. In these dreams I had friends among the *bhikkhus*, though they were all dream friends, some of whom I had known for a long time, and not any of the *bhikkhu* friends I had known in actual life. Alternating with these dreams there were dreams of an initiatory nature. What I was being initiated into I do not know but the atmosphere of the place was solemn, mysterious. And in one dream the initiation was also an ordination. I very much wanted this ordination and I received it thanks to the intervention of someone I knew, who approached the giver of the initiation on my behalf. At one point the latter was standing beside me and squeezed my arm as a sign that he would be giving me the initiation, whereupon I burst into tears. In actual life I am unable to shed tears whether of joy or sorrow, as my current medication makes me feel 'detached', as my GP warned me it could do. It was a relief to know that the medication did not operate in the world of my dreams.

Not all my dreams at this period were of a religious or spiritual nature. Some were very mundane, not to say worldly, and in at least two of them I was myself being quite worldly. In such dreams I was in my late teens or early twenties, and in one of them I had come to know an extremely rich man, probably an American. This man, who was about the same age as my father, gave me a million pounds, (or was it a million dollars?), at the same time telling me

that if within three years I could double the amount by my own efforts he would take me into partnership in his business. I did not succeed in doubling the amount, so was not taken into partnership; but I did not mind this, as I was having other interesting dream experiences. In one dream I was exploring the extent of a vast American university, in another I was buying a new suit, while in another I was travelling about in space on some business of my own. The craft in which I travelled was white, and I was surrounded by the same blue sky as in other dreams. Sometimes I experienced a sense of expansion, of unknown possibilities, and even of freedom from cares.

The London of the seventeenth century was not the London I knew. In several dreams I looked at it from above. It was busy and bustling and more like an anthill than a truly human habitation. At times I looked down, not at the city itself but at a great map in which every single building and every single person was distinctly depicted. In later dreams this London was overwhelmed by tribes coming from the north, and there seemed to be a pattern. People of various kinds moved not only from north to south but also from south to north, the latter being more widespread and more diverse. I saw little bands from Nepal moving up into Tibet as well as individuals making their solitary way from south to north in a variety of geographical contexts. Sometimes there would be fighting between individuals as well as between groups, and this would sometimes take place on the upper slopes of the great mountain that was often the focus of my dreams. In dreams of this kind there was darkness rather than light and the sense of everything human being at an early stage of development.

In some dreams I visited places of which I had dreamed before so that it seemed that the place possessed a kind of existence in the dream world. Such was the hill with which I became very familiar. It was covered with trees and bushes and there was a deserted stone cottage from which I had a view down the hillside, as well as having a glimpse of white houses below. With the stone cottage as my base, I wandered about on my own. The ground was very uneven, and I had to be careful where I trod. Only rarely did I meet anybody. Once it was an old woman gathering sticks, while on another occasion it was a young French couple, tourists, who had lost their way and whom I directed to the nearest road.

Though there were places which I have visited more than once in my dreams there was at least one place which I visited only once and which had, moreover, a unique conclusion. This place was a tract of English woodland far from any habitation. It was not only quiet and peaceful but had an atmosphere that could only be described as spiritual. As I wandered about I became aware that I was not alone for there were *arahants* living in the woodland, and though I could not see them I could feel their presence. I do not know how long I wandered there whether for hours or days and whether as reckoned by earth time or dream time, but suddenly there was a great change. The dream woodland vanished and was replaced by a memory that had been submerged for decades.

When I was seven my father took me to see a work friend called Arthur Govey. He lived in Morden at the southernmost end of the Northern Line and on leaving the Tube I noticed that

the houses were all newly built. Arthur lived in one of these with his wife Elise and son Roy, a boy of my own age, but all I remember of the visit was that the house had a billiard table and that Arthur and my father spent the evening playing billiards. It was not long before our two families were meeting on Wimbledon Common on Sundays. We had a favourite spot and while our elders talked, Roy and I would wander off into a stretch of woodland, where the trees made a pleasant shade and where the green fern grew breast high. Roy and I made a clearing in the fern which we regarded as our headquarters, and we investigated the rotted underside of a great log where there was to be seen tiny snails of various colours. When my dream of a tract of English woodland ended, it was the memory of the time I had spent with Roy that succeeded it. I had not thought of Arthur Govey for years nor of Roy nor of the part of Wimbledon Common in which Roy and I had wandered more than eighty years ago. Now I remembered them clearly, the memory having been nudged into existence by my dream of that tract of English countryside where *arahants* dwelt.

*Adhithana, 2 May – 7 May 2018*

## Science and Poetry: a note

On 15 March I woke up to the news that Stephen Hawking had died the previous day. In the course of the following days and weeks tributes to him poured in from all over the world. I then knew very little about him. My interests were confined largely to religion and philosophy and the fine arts, whereas Stephen Hawking was a theoretical physicist and cosmologist of whose discoveries in connection with black holes I had heard but vaguely. In my teens, when I had read so much, the only book of popular science with which I was acquainted was Sir James Jeans' *The Mysterious Universe*, which touched my imagination more than my intellect. This did not mean that I was 'against' science, but as I came to know more about Buddhism I became aware that some modern Buddhists, in their eagerness to propagate the Dharma, were taking the name of science in vain. Buddhism was scientific, and the fact that it was scientific proved that it was true. Indeed some went so far as to claim Buddhism had in its own way anticipated important scientific discoveries. My own view was that Buddhism could be described as scientific only in the sense that it was based, like science, on reason and observation, rather than on authority, whether that of the Bible or Vedas.

Besides tributes to his achievements as a theoretical physicist and cosmologist there were also tributes to the courage and determination with which he had overcome extreme physical disabilities. He had even written books. One of these was frequently mentioned in the tributes paid him. This was the best selling *A Brief History of Time*, which had been translated into many languages and of which even I had heard. I therefore decided that I ought to read it and ordered an audiobook version. Having gone through it once, I decided that I ought to go through it a second time, for though the book was clearly – even beautifully – written the territory it covered was strange to me and called for more reflection. Indeed, I was about to go through it a for a third time, when a friend reminded me that *A Brief History of Time* had been published in 1988, more than thirty years ago, and that it was not the last word on its subject. He therefore recommended that I read Carlo Rovelli's *Reality Is Not What It Seems*, published in 2014.

This was even better written than *A Brief History of Time*. Moreover, in his preface Rovelli more than once speaks of the beauty of the world in a way that suggests he sees it aesthetically as well as scientifically. Later on, in the body of the work, he brings poetry and science closer together doing this by referring to Einstein's idea of the 3-sphere and a passage in Dante's *Paradiso*. 'I believe', Rovelli writes, 'that this example demonstrates how great science and great poetry are both visionary, and may even arrive at the same intuitions. Our culture is foolish to keep science and poetry separated: they are two tools to open our eyes to the complexity and beauty of the world. Dante's 3-sphere is only an intuition within a dream. Einstein's 3-sphere has mathematical form and follows from the theory's equations. The effect of each is different. Dante moves us deeply, touching the sources of our emotions. Einstein opens a road towards the unsolved mysteries of our universe. But both count among the most

beautiful and significant flights that the mind can achieve'. This could hardly be better put, especially as he describes 'the flights of the mind' as beautiful. Nor is that all. When he comes to describe Faraday's discovery of the electromagnetic field he does so with the help of such terms as insight, intuition, inspiration, and imagination, all of which are as applicable to a poem, a painting, a musical composition, as they are to a scientific discovery. The Buddhist may well wonder whether the insight or intuition of which Rovelli speaks in connection with Faraday's discovery is the same as the insight developed by the Buddhist in meditation. In other words, is it an insight that liberates from greed, hatred, and delusion? Perhaps time alone will tell, as Buddhists study science and scientists practise meditation.

*Adhithana, 26/6/2018 – 28/6/2018*

## Buddhism and Islam

‘As a Buddhist, I am utterly opposed to the encouragement of violence and discrimination against Muslims in Burma and elsewhere in the name of Buddhism.’ Such was the opening sentence of a statement which, in my personal capacity, I signed on 19 September 2017. The statement went on to declare that there could be no Buddhist justification for such violence. ‘To engage in or incite violence motivated by hatred and prejudice goes against the teachings of the Buddha and is a fundamental breach of Buddhist ethical principles, including Buddhist monastic vows.’

What had particularly shocked me was the fact that Buddhist monks had encouraged the violence and even taken part in it themselves. They had, of course, their apologists some of whom had created a history according to which Islam, having been responsible for the disappearance of Buddhism from India, was now threatening the Buddhist countries of South-East Asia.

My awareness of the existence of Islam went back to my early years. Madame Blavatsky’s *Isis Unveiled* having opened my eyes to the existence of religions other than Christianity, I set myself to investigate as many of them as I could; and Islam, one of the world’s major religions, naturally attracted my attention. As my custom was, I went straight to the source, reading three different translations of the Koran (Sale’s, Rodwell’s and Palmer’s). The reading left me with a rather confused impression. Islam was clearly monotheistic but it was also preoccupied with such subjects as divorce, which was of no interest to me. Yet it also contained short, poetic passages of extreme beauty which appealed to me. Later on I came across the works of Hafiz, Attar, and Rumi, much of whose poetry was saturated with Sufism and therefore with Islam. When I was eighteen the army took me to India where I saw some of the great monuments of Islamic architecture in Delhi, Agra, and Lucknow. This contact with the cultural side of Islam continued many years later when, with a friend, I visited Córdoba, Granada, and Seville.

It was at about this time that I came across the writings of Henri Corbin, beginning with *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, and going on to *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabi*, and *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*. These works made a deep impression on me, revealing as they did that there was a philosophical and mystical side to Islam of which the Western world was largely ignorant. In 1982 I therefore led a seminar on Al-Ghazali’s *The Duties of Brotherhood in Islam*, a translation of which was readily available. We soon discovered similarities between the Buddhist ideal of spiritual friendship and Islam’s ideal of brotherhood. We also learned that according to Al-Ghazali there were three degrees of brotherhood. The first being when you gave your friend whatever you could, the second when you shared with him equally, and the third when you were delighted when he took something of yours without even asking. For Islam, as for Buddhism, friendship was part of the spiritual life. Twenty years later, however, the Western world was destined to see another side of Islam. The Jihadists were seen beheading their captives on video and on 11 September 2001

there came the unexpected and horrific attack on the Twin Towers in New York. I had seen those towers from Central Park and a day or two after the attack I wrote these lines:

Proudly they stood, those towers, twin monuments  
To money, and the power that money brings.  
But hate proved stronger. Now they lie in dust,  
And impotent hands a mighty nation wrings.

Like millions of other people I felt deeply for the nearly three thousand who had lost their lives in the attack and images of men and women throwing themselves from upper storey windows have haunted me ever since. I also realized that what came to be called simply '9/11' would affect the attitude of the Western world towards Islam for years to come.

A few days ago a friend drew my attention to a book that presaged a more hopeful relation between Buddhism and Islam than what at present exists in Burma and Thailand. The book was *Common Ground between Islam and Buddhism* by Reza Shah-Kazemi, a specialist in comparative mysticism, Islamic Studies, Sufism, and Shi'ism. According to the publishers, 'this ground breaking book explores the scriptural and spiritual tenets of Islam and Buddhism in relation to one another, creating a basis for comparison and analysis of the two traditions.' It 'discusses metaphysical traditions and philosophical studies born of Islam and Buddhism, places them in context with each other, thus encouraging understanding, and providing a point of reference for continued learning and cooperation.' I have not read the book, but I have ordered a copy, and look forward to getting a friend to read me extracts from it.

In the UK we have 2.7 million Muslims, the vast majority of whom live at peace with their non-Muslim fellow-citizens. There are Muslims in almost every walk of life and it is difficult for us to avoid contact with them, even if we had wanted to do so; and the more that contact is informed by a knowledge of Islam and its culture the better it will be for us all.

*Adhithana, 27-30 July 2018*

## Islam and the Buddha

Shah-Kazemi's *Common Ground Between Islam and Buddhism* having arrived, I lost no time in dipping into it with the help of friends.<sup>3</sup> In particular I looked into the section on Qur'ānic premises of dialogue between Islam and Buddhism. Before following this up, however, I want to recount two memories that came to me after I had written my article 'Buddhism and Islam'. These related not to Islam but to the Prophet Muhammad. As readers of *The Rainbow Road* will be aware, from the age of eight I was well acquainted with the pages of the multi-part *Children's Encyclopaedia*. In one issue there were pictures of the founders of the various world religions. One of these showed Muhammad. He was depicted wearing a turban and with a sword in his hand. The other memory was of a picture postcard that represented Muhammad in a very different way. He wears a green coat and a turban and is sitting astride Buraq, the mule with the head and face of a woman, and I particularly remember her expression of extreme intelligence. She is guided through the air by the archangel Gabriel, and angelic figures holding censers and other objects hover around the Prophet. Years later I learned that this representation of Muhammad depicted his famous 'Night Journey' from Mecca to Jerusalem and back.

With the help of quotations from the Qur'ān Shah-Kazemi establishes that like the Jews and the Christians the Buddhists have a Book (*Kitāb*) in the form of the Buddhist scriptures, as well as a messenger in the form of the Buddha. He therefore believes that it should be possible to say that the Buddha was a Messenger, inspired by God with a message that was destined to become the basis of a global religious community. Though not specifically mentioned by name in the Islamic revelation, like Noah, Abraham, and Ishmael, the Buddha was nonetheless a prophet in the Islamic sense. This argument is strengthened, he believes, in view of the fact that ten percent of the world is Buddhist and that according to the Qur'ān a messenger has been sent to every community. Moreover, the messenger will speak the language of that community.

Sixty or more years ago, I published an article with the title 'Religion as Revelation and Discovery'.<sup>4</sup> In this article I described both religion as revelation and religion as discovery in what I called their 'chemically pure' state. Christianity and Islam were examples of religion as revelation whereas Buddhism was an example of religion as discovery. At the conclusion of the article I attempted to mitigate the absoluteness of the difference between the two forms of religion by declaring that in the case of the Buddha, religion as discovery ultimately contained religion as revelation. By this I meant that the Buddha having discovered the truth proceeded to reveal it to humanity. Shah-Kazemi sees things differently. He believes that the Buddha, like Muhammad, was the recipient of a revelation from on high and he therefore does not see the Buddha as discovering the truth at a deeper level of his own being. Indeed,

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<sup>3</sup> Reza Shah-Kazemi, *Common Ground Between Islam and Buddhism*, Fons Vitae, Louisville 2010

<sup>4</sup> 'Religion as Revelation and Discovery' in *Crossing the Stream*, second edition, Windhorse Publications, Birmingham 1996. Also at: [https://www.sangharakshita.org/\\_books/crossing-the-stream.pdf](https://www.sangharakshita.org/_books/crossing-the-stream.pdf)

he sees the fact that the Buddha is called the Tathāgata as supporting his position. According to Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, whom he quotes, Tathāgata means,

“thus come” (*tathā āgata*) and “thus gone” (*tathā gata*), that is, the one who *comes* into our midst bearing the message of deathlessness to which he has *gone* by his own practice of the path.

Thus Shah-Kazemi sees the Buddha as being like Muhammad, a messenger from God, and his message as being a true religion or *dīn*.

Besides seeing the Buddha as a prophet like Muhammad, Shah-Kazemi also sees him as both messenger (*rasūl*) and saint (*walī*). As he explains,

the Buddha’s enlightenment comprises two aspects, one of which was proper to him alone, the other which is universally accessible. The first aspect can indeed be regarded as the source of his ‘prophecy’, to use Islamic terms, the ‘message’ or *sāsana* which formed the basis of the Buddhist tradition; in this respect, no other sage or ‘prophet’ is conceivable in the Buddhist tradition, and none can attain to his status, as regards what in Islam would be called his *risāla*, his message.

Like other books of an ecumenical nature, *Common Ground Between Islam and Buddhism*, contains a foreword by the Dalai Lama. ‘This is an important and pioneering book, which seeks to find common ground between the teachings of Islam and of Buddhism’, the Tibetan leader writes. ‘It is my hope that on the basis of this common ground, followers of each tradition may come to appreciate the spiritual truths their different paths entail and from this develop a basis for respect for each others’ practice and beliefs.’

As Shah-Kazemi looks for common ground between Islam and Buddhism, the government and army of Buddhist Myanmar continue to persecute the Rohingya Islamic minority. ‘Last week I returned from refugee camps in Bangladesh,’ writes Hozan Alan Senauke in the May-August *Seeds of Peace*, ‘where 700,000 people have fled Myanmar – a country where Buddhism is the state religion – crossing into precarious exile in southern Bangladesh.’ He continues:

The Rohingyas are a Muslim ethnic minority who have lived in Myanmar’s western Rakhine state for many generations. The roots of this conflict are complex and arguable. But the sheer scale of Rohingya suffering goes beyond all argument and justification.

What I saw of the camps was a seemingly endless, sprawling, dusty tangle of tents fashioned from bamboo strips and plastic sheets. There are open sewers running in thick streams beside the dirt pathways. The refugees, among them huge numbers of children, are everywhere.

I heard stories of their villages burning just miles away in Myanmar. I was told of unimaginable violence, of mass rape and murder, of soldiers throwing babies into the flames. Satellite imagery shows the devastation of villages in Myanmar, but nothing can convey the realities of frightened and broken people, bereft of families, land and livelihood. The Rohingya people I met speak of this as the ‘Buddhist terror,’ an unholy alliance of the Myanmar army, monks and Rakhine Buddhists.

The terrible irony is that a decade ago, the world’s Buddhists witnessed Myanmar’s ‘Saffron Revolution.’ Monks and nuns courageously faced down the military’s guns and bayonets, chanting the Metta Sutta, the Buddha’s ancient verse of lovingkindness, which includes this verse: ‘...as a mother at the risk of her life watches over and protects her only child, so with a boundless mind should one cherish all living things, suffusing love over the entire world...’

*Adhithana, 5/8/2018 – 9/8/2018*

## My Muslim Friend

During my years in India I made many friends. Most of these friends were either Hindu or Buddhist, but I also had Christian and Jewish friends, as well as friends who were Zoroastrians or followers of the Baha'i faith. It was only in 1964, towards the end of my stay, that I acquired a Muslim friend. I was paying a farewell visit to Bombay and giving lectures in various parts of the city. Bombay was a cosmopolitan place, and as usual people of all faiths and none came to hear me. After one of these lectures I was approached by a tall, handsome young man in western dress. His name was Ramzam Ali, he told me, and in the course of the next few weeks he became my first Muslim friend. Besides coming to other lectures he visited me at the flat in Malabar Hill where I was staying and as he was rather communicative I soon knew quite a lot about him. He lived with his widowed mother who wanted him to take over the running of the family business, marry, and beget children, but he wanted to do none of these things. He was an innocent child of God, he declared, and he wanted to lead a spiritual life. He had no desire for worldly prosperity or for sex, and had his mother not insisted on stuffing him with mutton he would have been a vegetarian long ago.

In the course of our friendship he often spoke of himself as being an innocent child of God, and I came to associate the phrase with him. What he meant by it was not always clear and its connotation seemed more negative than positive. By birth he belonged to the Ismaili branch of Shiite Islam and he had a great devotion to its leader, the Aga Khan. The present holder of the office was a young man like himself, he once told me, and a few years earlier he had written to him about some doubts he was experiencing and had received a sympathetic reply signed by the Aga Khan himself. Though devoted to the Aga Khan, Ramzam Ali was hardly an orthodox follower of his branch of the Shiite tradition. He believed that the Aga Khan was identical with the Kalki avatar of Hinduism. It would seem that in some quarters there was a partial overlap between popular Hinduism and popular Islam. According to Hindu tradition Kalki was the tenth and last avatar of the god Vishnu and riding a white horse he would purge the earth of unbelievers and establish the reign of righteousness.

One day Ramzam Ali brought his mother to see me. She did not wear a veil and her corpulent person was swathed in layer upon layer of white chikan work. She was not in the least shy and at once came straight to the point. Her husband had died some years ago, she told me, leaving her to run the family business and to bring up their only son. That son was now of age and it was time he took the running of the family business off her hands and married, yet whenever she spoke to him about his responsibilities he would only laugh and say that he wanted to lead a spiritual life. Could he not run a business, and raise a family, and lead a spiritual life, she wanted to know. All this she said at great length and with many repetitions and since she spoke in Gujarati, Ramzam Ali was obliged to translate. This he did rather

ungraciously, laughing whenever his mother spoke of his responsibilities in a way that showed no respect for her feelings. I was left wondering why she had been willing to see me. Perhaps she had hoped that, as an older man, I would agree with her and try to persuade her son to change his mind and accept his responsibilities.

A few days later I paid a farewell visit to Poona where as usual I stayed with friends and gave talks on Buddhism. Ramzam Ali went with me, and in Poona, as in Bombay, he attended my talks. By this time he knew something about Buddhism, due partly to his attending my talks and partly to our spending much of our time together discussing the Dharma. He particularly liked hearing about my experiences as a freelance wandering ascetic. One day a local guru of whom I had not heard before invited me to visit his ashram. He was a very modern guru and his ashram was situated in the most fashionable part of Poona. It consisted of a large bungalow furnished and decorated mainly in modern western style. The guru was a youngish man clad in the traditional gerua and except for his long black hair he could have passed for a monk of the Ramakrishna Mission. He was not a follower of Ramakrishna, however, but of Sri Aurobindo and of Ananda Mayi whose silver-framed portraits decorated his comfortable sitting room. Ramzam Ali was fascinated by the guru and the fascination must have been mutual, for a few days later the guru invited Ramzam Ali to stay with him and I had to return to Bombay without my young Muslim friend.

*Adhithana, 19 – 23 August 2018*

# Rebirth Revisited

Buddhism has assumed a variety of forms over the centuries, but basically there are two forms, the *śrāvakayāna* and the *bodhisattvayāna*, otherwise known as the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna. Each has its own ideal, that of the *śrāvakayāna* being the *muni* or *arhant*, while the ideal of the *bodhisattvayāna* is that of Supreme Perfect Buddhahood. Both ideals, together with the spiritual practices associated with them, are undergirded by a basic common principle without which they would be meaningless. This principle is that of karma and rebirth. Christianity and Islam teach that a man or woman has only one life, after which he or she goes to heaven or hell, or spends some time in purgatory prior to admission to heaven. Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and post-Vedic Hinduism teach that a man is born and dies and is reborn again and again, the process having no perceptible beginning and ending only when, in the case of the *śrāvaka*, Nirvāṇa is attained or when, in the case of the bodhisattva, Supreme Perfect Buddhahood is attained.

In recent times doubts have arisen regarding karma and rebirth. It has even been questioned whether the Buddha himself taught the doctrine to his disciples. In a recent publication, *Rebirth in Early Buddhism and Current Research* (Wisdom Publications 2018), Bhikkhu Analayo seems to have settled the matter once and for all. ‘The doctrine of rebirth is an integral and essential component of early Buddhist thought,’ he writes, ‘and cannot be reduced to a taking over of popular notions from ancient Indian background. Tradition considers rebirth and its working mechanics to have been verified by the Buddha himself on the night of his awakening. Rebirth is also intrinsically intertwined with the different levels of awakening recognised in early Buddhist thought.’ (Analayo p. 35) He further writes, ‘The early Buddhist doctrine of rebirth does not involve a simple mind-body duality, nor does it posit an unchanging entity to be reborn. Instead, continuity during life and beyond is conceived of as a changing process of a plurality of interrelated mental and physical phenomena that operate under the overarching influence of a complex set of causes and conditions. Centrally important conditions here are one’s own intentional actions (karma) at the bodily, verbal and mental level. Operating within a wider network of conditions, karma and its fruit are not deterministic, and the time period for a deed to produce its fruit can vary greatly, such that karmic fruition can take place at a time far removed from the original deed.’ (Analayo p. 163)

By its very definition the *bodhisattvayāna* implies the existence of rebirth. Whatever his level of attainment may be, the bodhisattva sees himself as working towards the attainment of Buddhahood not simply in his present existence, but for aeons upon aeons of lives. One cannot, therefore, claim to follow the bodhisattva path or even to be a follower of the

Mahāyāna and at the same time be unwilling to accept the reality of rebirth. Similarly, by its very nature the *śrāvakayāna*, too, implies the existence of rebirth. As Analayo points out ‘Rebirth is also intrinsically intertwined with the different levels of awakening recognised in early Buddhist thought.’ Thus, the stream-entrant, who destroys the first three fetters, will be reborn no more than seven times; the once-returner, having weakened two more fetters, will be reborn only once more; and the non-returner, having destroyed those two fetters, is reborn in one of the ‘pure abodes’. As for the *muni* or *arhant*, having destroyed all ten fetters, he has attained Nirvāṇa and is reborn no more. Thus the path of the *śrāvaka*, like that of the bodhisattva, is unthinkable without the doctrine of rebirth.

It should not be thought, however, that the *śrāvakayāna* and the *bodhisattvayāna* are mutually exclusive in every respect. In the Ten Pāramīs the *śrāvakayāna* has its own version of the bodhisattva path, while many of the Mahāyāna *sūtras* are replete with the doctrinal formulas of the *śrāvakayāna*. Moreover, the *śrāvakayāna*’s path of generosity, ethics, meditation, and wisdom can be seen as corresponding to the six *pāramitās* of the bodhisattvayāna, it being necessary only to add energy and patience, both of which are, in any case, to be found within the *śrāvakayāna* tradition.

The two *yānas* can also be seen as complementary. This became obvious as Buddhism spread and developed, and as the two *yānas* sought to embody their respective spiritual ideals in human form. Thus, there appear statues and paintings of *arhants* and bodhisattvas. The *arhants* are generally depicted as elderly monks. They are shaven-headed and carry a staff, and their bearing is mindful and austere. It is evident that they have spent many years meditating in caves and jungles and that they are true individuals. Indeed, in Chinese and Tibetan art their individuality is often greatly exaggerated, even to the point of caricature. Thus we have the laughing *arhant*, the grimacing *arhant* and even the ‘mad’ *arhant*. The bodhisattvas, on the other hand, are generally represented as beautiful young men. They are clad in diaphanous silken garments of various colours, have jewelled diadems on their heads, and are hung about with strings of jewels, as are their no less beautiful female counterparts. A gentle smile hovers about their lips and their expression is one of compassion. It is evident that they feel for the sufferings of sentient beings and are prepared to give whatever help they can. Perhaps the best-known depiction of a bodhisattva is the painting of Padmapāṇi in one of the Ajanta caves. He holds an open blue lotus and his graceful body is bent as though he is listening to the cries that come from the world below. The more we tread this or that spiritual path, the more vivid does its spiritual ideal become, especially if we practise one of the traditional *sādhanas* and repeat the corresponding mantra.

Besides statues of *arhants* and bodhisattvas there are statues of the Buddha, some of them a hundred feet or more in height. Whether followers of the Hīnayāna or the Mahāyāna,

Buddhists alike believe that ages ago the ascetic Sumedha, in the world period of the Buddha Dīpaṅkara, vowed to attain Supreme Perfect Enlightenment for the sake of all beings. This vow he eventually fulfilled in the present world period when, as the historical Siddhārtha Gautama, he achieved Supreme Perfect Enlightenment seated under the *bodhi* tree at what became Bodh Gaya. Thereafter he taught the way to Nirvāṇa and hundreds of men and women became *arhants*. He did not teach the bodhisattva path, or at least there is no record of his having done so in the scriptures of early Buddhism, the Pāramīs being a later accretion. When talking about the goal of Buddhism, we should be careful to make it clear whether we are talking about Nirvāṇa or Supreme Perfect Enlightenment, the Buddha himself being, of course, both *arhant* and *samyak-sambuddha*, as the traditional salutation to the Three Jewels makes clear. Otherwise, people may be talking at cross-purposes.

*Adhithana, 9–14 September 2018*

## A Word on the Mantrayāna

There are two principal forms of Buddhism, the Śrāvakayāna and the Bodhisattvayāna, otherwise known as the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna. The Mahāyāna has two divisions, the Pāramitāyāna and the Mantrayāna. The Pāramitāyāna consists in the practice of the six *pāramitās* over a huge number of successive lives and for an inconceivable period of time. Its goal is Supreme Perfect Enlightenment. The follower of the Mantrayāna, also known as the Vajrayāna, may practise the *pāramitās* and even the ethics and meditation of the Śrāvakayāna but what really propels him or her along his or her chosen path is the fact that he or she practises with the help of mantras. It is the mantras that do the work, so to speak. Not only do they do the work, but mantras have the effect of shortening the time in which the Bodhisattva or Mantrin takes to achieve his or her goal. Indeed, with the help of mantras one may be able to achieve Supreme Perfect Enlightenment within the compass of a single human lifetime, as Milarepa is believed to have done.

But what is a mantra? In the Vajrayāna or Mantrayāna it is a group of words or sounds imbued with a certain spiritual power. A mantra may also consist of a single word, or even a single sound, and it may or may not possess a meaning in the ordinary sense of the term. A western scholar has therefore suggested that the Mantrayāna should be known in English as the Path of Magic. A mantra ‘works’ by virtue of the fact that it is the locus of a power or energy which is unknown to science and cannot be measured by ordinary means. To the non-Buddhist observer and even to the follower of the Śrāvakayāna, the Mantrayāna may seem to be little more than a web of fantasies and delusions and even a means of exploiting the credulous and gullible. It may also be charged that the Mantrayāna represents, sociologically speaking, a regression to the old pre-Buddhist, Vedic way of thinking. However, there are people who find this ‘magical’ Buddhism very attractive, especially when the mantra is experienced within a context of light and colour and in association with an archetypal Buddha or Bodhisattva.

With the help of a mantra or mantras one passes through the various stages of the Vajrayāna path. These stages correspond to the stages of the Bodhisattva path, to which they are in fact equivalent. What would take a Bodhisattva hundreds or thousands of lives to achieve is achieved by the Mantrin within a comparatively short period, and it is for this reason that the path of the mantra is said to be the short path. Thus, between the path of Mantra and the Bodhisattva path there is a correlation similar to that between the stages of the Śrāvakayāna and the number of lives remaining to the practitioner, except that for the Arahant who attains Nirvana there are no further lives. One therefore sees that, from a certain point of view, the Mantrayāna path parallels the Śrāvakayāna. At the same time, there is an important difference, and that difference gives rise to a difficulty. The goal of the Mantrayāna is Supreme Perfect Enlightenment. This is also the goal of the Bodhisattvayāna, but the Mantrin achieves it much more quickly than the Bodhisattva, which is probably one of the reasons for the popularity of this path. But what is a Samyaksambuddha?

A Samyaksambuddha is a Bodhisattva who, after traversing the entire Bodhisattva path, achieves Samyaksambuddhahood in his last existence and thereafter teaches the Dharma in a world where all trace of it has been lost. Thus, there can be only one Buddha at a time in the world. There can no more be two Buddhas at once than there can be two suns in the sky or two universal rulers on earth. But where does this leave Milarepa? He is believed to have achieved the highest goal of the Vajrayāna, which of course is Samyaksambuddhahood, and this would appear to contradict the general Buddhist teaching about the nature of Samyaksambuddhahood. So far as I am aware, no Vajrayāna teacher has addressed this problem, but there may well be a solution to it hidden away in the esoteric depths of the tradition.

There is also Maitreya Buddha i.e. Maitreya Samyaksambuddha who is thus styled proleptically, he not having yet attained to the end of the Bodhisattva path. Nonetheless, many Buddhists worship and meditate upon him. Indeed, it has been pointed out that the worship of Maitreya is common to both the Theravāda and the Mahāyāna, so that his worship could be a means of union for all Buddhists.

A mantra does not come to one by accident. It comes to one from a qualified guru who has received it from their own teacher and so on, back along a line that may begin with an archetypal Buddha or Bodhisattva. The transmission of the mantra from guru to disciple generally takes place within a ritual context and creates between them a *samaya* or bond which binds the disciple to the guru for life and even beyond. It pledges the disciple to accept whatever treatment they receive at the hands of the guru, however contrary the treatment may be to the usages of society. A breach of *samaya* on the part of the disciple entails serious, even terrible consequences. According to some authorities it entails rebirth in the Vajra Hell and a stay there for a very long time, but I find it difficult to believe how a teaching of this kind could have arisen within the Vajrayāna, however serious some teachers may have considered any breach of *samaya* by the disciple to be.

There is also the question of whether the occult energy or ‘power’ generated by the practice of the Mantrayāna could be used for the furtherance of mundane interests or for the protection of Buddhism. In the early 1950s I was living in Kalimpong, a small town in the foothills of the eastern Himalayas. The Chinese troops had crossed the border with Tibet and were on their way to Lhasa, the capital. Kalimpong was then full of Tibetans, some of whom told me that the Dalai Lama had ordered the lamas of the Tantric College, who were advanced practitioners of the Mantrayāna, to employ ritual magic to prevent the Chinese troops from reaching the holy city. On 9 September 1951, however, the first contingent of Chinese troops reached Lhasa. For me, this did not mean that the ritual magic of the Tantric College had necessarily failed or was a fantasy. White or black, magic depended upon the power of thought which undoubtedly could be either positive and beneficial or negative and destructive. The practice of the metta bhavana, in which metta or loving kindness is directed first to oneself and finally to all living beings, is a positive example of the power of thought, which can transform for the better relations between individuals and between groups.