

THE WESTERN BUDDHIST REVIEW

THE JOURNAL OF THE WESTERN BUDDHIST ORDER

NO. 1 DECEMBER 1994

AIMS

WRITING PUBLISHED in the Western Buddhist Review is intended to reflect the Dharma as practised in the modern world by members and Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. The Editorial Board wish to publish only material that accords with Buddhist principles.

MATERIAL

SCHOLARLY MATERIAL is peer-reviewed by qualified readers. The majority of material will be about Buddhism, though relevant literary, historical, scientific, scholarly or cultural material may be included. Among other things we intend to publish new translations, in-depth book reviews, commentary on Buddhist scripture, interpretations or clarifications of Buddhist doctrines, and elucidations of the ideas of our founder, Sagarakshita.

SUBMISSIONS AND COPYRIGHT

POST SUBMISSIONS on disk or by Email to the address below, both in wordprocessor format *and* in ASCII, DOS or RTF text. COPYRIGHT remains with the author. Articles subsequently published elsewhere must acknowledge their first publication in the Review.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Kamalashila, current Editor

Kalyanaprabha (Judith Sloboda, BA., Hons.)

Ratnaguna

Sagaramati (Robert Morrison, PhD.)

Sinhadevi (Catherine O'Rourke, BA., Hons.)

Sthiramati, outside reader, (Andrew Skilton, BA., Hons.)

VAJRAKUTA BUDDHIST STUDY CENTRE,

BLAENDDÔL HOUSE, TREDDÔL, CORWEN, CLWYD, UK. LL21 0EN.

TELEPHONE: 0490 460 406. EMAIL: COMPUSERVE 100103,722

THE WESTERN BUDDHIST REVIEW

No. 1

DECEMBER 1994

CONTENTS

Editorial	3
Buddhism and the New Age	9
Mañjuśrī—Origins, Rôle and Significance	23
God Is Dead: What Next? A Buddhist Response to Nietzsche	51
Conditionality and the Two Truths	81
Going Forth and Citizenship	111
Green Buddhism and the Hierarchy of Compassion	133

EDITORIAL

The Western Buddhist Review is, certainly for the FWBO, a new kind of publication—a journal presenting the writings of practising Buddhists on matters about which they care deeply, and have taken the time to consider carefully. This is a ‘Journal’ rather than a magazine: the papers and articles that follow have not been specially commissioned but have arisen out of each writer’s particular concerns. The nature of such material makes it difficult to predict how soon we shall have gathered enough material for another edition, but it seems realistic to aim, at first, at an annual publication. Perhaps it will not be too long before the Review appears more frequently.

There is a great need for this Buddhist Journal. Practitioners of our tradition can use the new medium to communicate, in more depth than usual, the ideas developing amongst us. This should facilitate more effective dialogue between Buddhists throughout the world, since little material of this kind is published. Despite the large numbers of westerners who have been practising various forms of the Dharma over the last quarter century, few of the many books they publish offer much consideration of the issues that must be faced if we are to evolve a truly western form of Buddhism. I would expect writers for the Western Buddhist Review to raise such issues: and they do. In the following pages Viśvapāṇi gives a Dharmic perspective on the clutter of popular views collectively called ‘New Age’, Subhūti reminds us that we, as Buddhists, must acknowledge that we are citizens in relationship to the State, and Sāramati offers a critique of some features of ‘Green’ Buddhism, in particular its aversion to the notion of spiritual hierarchy. Sāgaramati’s examination of Nietzsche’s fears about the coming popularity of Buddhism in relation to the collapse of moral values he witnessed also touches on urgent contemporary issues. We also have articles on more traditionally Bud-

dhist topics: on *pratitya samutpāda* by Kulananda and, from Ānandajyoti, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, Mañjuśrī. I hope these pages will be read not only within the FWBO but also by followers of other Buddhist traditions and Buddhist academics.

As the first edition rumbled slowly into life, involving as it did the formation of an editorial board and settling the Western Buddhist Review's basic aims and procedures, we found ourselves asking whether or not our model ought to be that of an academic Journal. There are some similarities: Dharma study is greatly emphasised in our movement, so we can aim for a reasonable standard of scholarship and writing; again a number of the Order members likely to make contributions are involved in academic work, so a proportion of the articles will accord with the accepted norm in any case. However, it was argued that this did not go far enough—if we want our material definitely to be taken seriously by educated people, the editorial board must ensure it accords with academic criteria.

We realised, though, that as a general rule we cannot adopt such a model, for these criteria are not those of the Dharma. The primary concern of Buddhist writers will be to promote the actual practice of Buddhism; and the criteria for valid knowledge, for at least some academics, are from a Buddhist point of view unacceptably limited. Because for Buddhism actually to be what it says it is—the Path to Enlightenment—it must ultimately base its teachings on forms of understanding that derive from sources beyond reason alone, and which constitute a superior level of truth.

For Buddhists, understanding is graded into three levels. At the initial stage we take in new ideas by listening or reading. (Hence the traditional term: 'listening'.) Doing this also involves clarifying what exactly has been said. The process such clarification entails causes the 'listening' stage eventually to overlap that of the second. This second stage is known as 'reflecting': having understood the basic idea, we start fitting it in with what we already know. We note implications, arrive at new conclusions, and see new avenues of questioning. Though 'reflecting' may appear at first glance to be a purely intellectual endeavour, full understanding of an idea must also involve testing its implications in practice—something which may take a long time. We ourselves probably find our reflections on important themes

continuing (and hopefully deepening) over many years. At times we may realise that after all we did not understand what actually was said—or that we have insufficient information—making necessary a step back to the previous stage of ‘listening’ before we can effectively incorporate or reject particular ideas. ‘Listening’ and ‘reflecting’ thus complement and mature one another, and constitute the familiar field of intellectual activity. Buddhist thought, however, considers superior to these a third level called ‘cultivating’ or ‘meditating’, so called since it is initially induced by specific meditation techniques which are to be practised over many years until one has continuous access to it. At this level one sees things directly as they really are, unmediated by the rationalising process pertaining at the lower levels.

Not that we should necessarily expect articles written in the Western Buddhist Review to emanate from this high perspective. But since this kind of truth is the source of Buddhist doctrines of liberation, it is naturally the reference point for Buddhist writers. Buddhists will not, therefore, derive their interpretations of Buddhism solely from their knowledge of scriptural language and Buddhist history—however good that knowledge might be—but will refer also to insights derived from the practice of Buddhism, unacceptable as evidence though these may be to some academic readers.

It is unfortunate that the (age-old) tension between these points of view sometimes overflows in an acrimonious fashion, academics dismissing what appear to them to be the empty enthusiasms of historically and linguistically naïve Buddhists, and Buddhists finding repellent the seemingly arid, spiritually uninformed, and arrogant pronouncements of scholars. The caricatures probably make fair portraits at times, for scholars can sometimes be arrogant, and naïve Buddhists really do exist. Yet both scholars and practising Buddhists have enough in common to appreciate one another’s merits without evading due criticism or ascribing a meaningless equality.

From a broader standpoint the aims of each, in a way, are not really so different: both, probably more than any other institutions in the world, are concerned with the isolation and practice of truth. At least, they both ought to be concerned with it. If there really are higher forms of truth, surely we can expect the philosophers at least amongst academics to wish to explore

and experience those truths for themselves. No doubt some of them are; yet many are not. Indeed we may suggest that the academic world at large is suffering from a loss of sense of purpose in its pursuit of truth:

To the ancient Greeks and Romans, philosophy was not merely an opinion, but a passion; it meant not only loftier thinking, but nobler living. A philosopher was expected to leave his hair and beard untrimmed, to wear but one long simple garment, to sleep on the bare ground, and to eat sparingly. With the irruption of Christianity into the Graeco-Roman world, the old classic ideals of moderation, balance, and harmony were destroyed. Wisdom was replaced by faith, while for the harmless and helpful philosophic life was substituted one of aggressive good works...

The modern scientific attitude of mind developed in part as a protest against the unverifiable dogmas of medieval Christianity ... Western thought came more and more under the influence of science and developed with increasing freedom from religious preconceptions. The introduction of psychological and epistemological interests strengthened still further the theoretical and speculative tendencies in modern thought, and, by the time Schopenhauer arose to challenge the academic and professorial conception of philosophy, despite artificial attempts at reconciliation the divorce between religion and philosophy had been made absolute.

A division between concrete living and abstract thinking continues to characterise modern Western culture. Philosophy is taught at universities as a purely theoretical subject; it does not demand from its votaries the adoption of a distinctive mode of life, neither does it have as a whole any bearing upon practical affairs. For the philosophic life, as it was understood by the Greeks and Romans in even their most degenerate days - the passionate pursuit of beauty, truth, and goodness, and the endeavour to reflect them in one's own life - has been substituted the detached and barren study of the history of philosophical opinions.¹

This decline, as it redounds to us nowadays at least, amounts to a great loss for humanity. If more scholars were to take aboard the message that Buddhism is not a religion of faith in the Christian sense, but a complex of principles and attendant practices that facilitate the perception of truth (at all levels), new ways of thinking and imagining would become available to them. This could bring forth the kind of renaissance that modern civilisation really needs, the kind Schopenhauer had in mind, the renaissance he said would arise from the discovery of the treasures of oriental literature—one that would be incomparably more glorious, even, than the renaissance which issued from the recovery of the classics of Greece and Rome. Our movement—and our Western Buddhist Review—is intended very much to encourage such a renaissance.

Our heartfelt thanks to Dharmachari Sthiramati, who brought three issues of the Western Buddhist Review's predecessor, 'the Order Journal' into being (back copies are available). Sthiramati is now devoting his whole time to study and translation work. We wish him every success, and look forward to enjoying many of the fruits of his labours on these pages.

KAMALAŚILA

1 *The Religion of Art*, Sangharakshita, Windhorse, Glasgow, 1988