



VAJRA BELL

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KSHANTI



By Paramashanti

Kshanti, the third of the Six Paramitas (Perfections) is not to be confused with shanti, the word that we chant at the conclusion of the puja. Shanti means peace, while kshanti generally is translated as "patience". However, as a spiritual quality it obviously means much more than this. It is not patience in the ordinary sense of the term. For example, waiting patiently in a long line at the supermarket checkout. Merely being patient is not practicing kshanti in a spiritual sense. Neither is stoical acceptance.

As Bhante points out kshanti comprises both patience and forbearance, underpinned by compassion, tolerance, acceptance and receptivity. There is an absence of anger or the desire to retaliate or for revenge. So to some extent, by this description, we can understand the breadth and depth of this Perfection. As the Six Perfections are the practices of Bodhisattvas, we can appreciate the effort and commitment required to develop them. This will give us an awareness of what we need to change in ourselves as well.

The Dhammapada states that forbearance is the greatest asceticism and the following stories from different sources illustrate this:

A story from the *Sutra of Forty Two Sections* illustrates the Buddha's teaching of forbearance. One day a brahmin was abusing the Buddha (this seemed to hap-

pen occasionally!). When the man had stopped, the Buddha asked him: "If someone refused to accept a gift, to whom would it belong?" The brahmin replied: "To the person who was giving it." The Buddha then said: "You have tried to give me a gift of abuse, but I decline to accept it. It belongs to you." How would we feel in similar circumstances and how would we react?

We do have to try to develop forbearance towards our own body, especially when we are sick or suffering. Obviously, we should try to alleviate suffering, both our own and others. But we also need to realize that there is a residue that cannot be relieved and simply must be borne with patience. Even if we stay healthy, old age and death will come. So forbearance applies to our attitude to the ageing process, as well. The largely superfluous cosmetic surgery 'industry' in the States is an example of people not accepting the fact that they are ageing and that this is inevitable. Unfortunately, this trend is developing in the UK, too. I remember an incident from many years ago when I was working as a hospital porter in the famous Harley Street in London. I had wheeled a woman out of the operating theatre who had had cosmetic surgery to her face. Her face appeared mid-forties, but her hands, lying outside on the sheets, looked like an old woman's hands. The incongruity of the sight really shocked me. It was a teaching. Having lived for many years in England,

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Paramashanti first made contact with the FWBO early in 1983. In December of that year he attended his first retreat for beginners. He then attended classes at the London Buddhist Centre three times a week traveling for a total of three hours. In July of 1984 he decided to move closer. He helped to start the bookshop and did the cleaning at the LBC. Next he began working for Windhorse Trading (a Right Livelihood gift business) as a warehouse manager. He became a mitra in February of 1985. He was ordained at Guhyaloka in June of 1988. He continued working for Windhorse Trading until he left to come to Aryaloka in March of 1993. He was a resident at Aryaloka until October of 1996 when he returned to England due to illness. He stayed for a year at the Nottingham Centre before moving back to Cambridge and working for Windhorse Trading again, this time as a customer service manager. He left the business in November of 2003 and now lives by himself in Cambridge. He usually visits the States once a year to see his son Stefan, but may come more often in the future.

From the Concord Sangha

From Rich Cormier

One of our most cherished Sangha members is departing the Concord Men's Prison. Jim Mosonyi is on his way out the door, leaving behind a vibrant Sangha that he was a major factor in developing. Some of you may know Jim as an enthusiastic participant who lets his Marine background shine through. Others know him as a driving force facilitating the growth of the Sangha behind the walls. We know Jim as a genuine friend whom we will always respect and treasure.

At our Sangha on February 8th, Jim bid farewell to the study group. He addressed us individually and described the qualities he admired most in each of us. He related that he drew strength from the group and commented upon the reasons he would miss the bond we formed. I'm not sure about anyone else, but I found it uncomfortable listening to him say nice things

about me. Paramashanti explained that this ethical practice was called "Rejoicing in Merits." It's done by our communicating an appreciation of the positive qualities we perceive in others, thus reinforcing those qualities.

The group took its turn and expressed to Jim what his presence had meant to us. He was described as the glue that held our Sangha together. Over and over, I heard how much everyone liked Jim. His knowledge of the Dharma, his kindness and honesty were the consistently positive qualities he exhibited. He will most definitely be missed. While Jim fought back a few tears, he maintained a grand smile.

When it was my turn, I found that the right words had abandoned me. How could I say goodbye to someone who has no idea of the impact he made in my life? A smile and a hug wouldn't cover it. So, I did what I always do. I lightened the

mood by relating a funny story about Jim explaining that I didn't want his head getting any bigger than it already was. And, although everyone got a brief chuckle, much more needed saying.

Over the years, Jim and I have challenged each other's growth in heated discussions, and we've leaned upon one another during times of struggle. Jim set an example which I followed and he always had an encouraging word to inspire me. I sort of felt like I was getting the benefit of twice the practice, knowledge and experience because Jim was so open and honest about his successes and failures. As our spiritual friendship grew, my guarded demeanor began to crack and Jim pushed me towards a more skillful outlook on life. Thank you Jim.

Aryaloka, you guys are truly lucky.

Practice - Musings from the Chair

As we practice to develop the Paramitas, the perfections of giving, morality, energy, meditation and wisdom we cannot overlook the important perfection of patience, kshanti. Without patience, or forbearance, we are at the mercy of our emotions and in danger of being caught up in anger, even hatred. Practicing with others in a sangha we are at risk of anger arising

from the actions of others. Perhaps an unkind word, a misunderstanding of a friend's intention, or a lack of mindfulness or awareness on the part of another could send us spinning into an unwholesome mental state. How quickly and easily upset can arise in our untrained minds.

In the Kakacupama Sutta (Majjhima Nikaya – The Middle Length Discourses of

the Buddha), the Buddha encourages us to train in forbearance, in patience, toward others no matter what they say or do. ".....our minds will remain unaffected, and we shall utter no evil words; we shall abide compassionate for their welfare, with a mind of loving kindness, without inner hate.....we shall abide pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind im-

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Contact Information

Aryaloka Buddhist Retreat Center 14 Heartwood Circle, Newmarket, NH 03857
603-659-5456 info@aryaloka.org www.aryaloka.org

Aryaloka Council

Dayalocana, Chair	dayalocana@comcast.net
Saddhamala	saddhamala@verizon.net
Amala	amala@metrocast.net
Viriyalila	raintomars@msn.com
Khemavassika	sueb1011@verizon.net
Buddy Vaughan	havaughan@comcast.net
Sandy Bonin	sbonin@earthlink.net
Leonie Luterman	leonieluterman1@mac.com

Vajra Bell Kula

Leonie Luterman, Chair	leonieluterman1@mac.com
Marilyn Dyer	pewedyer@worldpath.net
Candace Copp	hullcopp@verizon.net
Karunasara	karunasara6@verizon.net
Sandy Bonin	sbonin@earthlink.net
Stephen Sloan	sloan@comcast.net

Buddhaworks by Steve Cardwell

We would like to thank everyone in the Sangha who has helped make Buddhaworks one of the biggest sources of funding for Aryaloka for the last three years; since 2004 there has been \$27,843 in net income.

We would also like to thank some very wonderful individuals who have shared their creative talents and supplied their works of art to Buddhaworks over the years. Some items have been donated to Buddhaworks without any cost whatsoever.

Leonie Luterman
Frank Gladu
Joan Rochette
Viriyalila
Dharmasuri
Betsy Sterling Benjamin
Lori Siebert

We are very excited to show off our new expanded book inventory. We have ordered over \$1,000 in books recently. Some of these are old favorites and some are completely new for us.

Check out these titles:

***Luminous Emptiness* by Francesca Fremantle**

This is a book about a very precious book, a guidebook to a guidebook if you will. I feel a deep sense of gratitude to Padmasambhava and Karma Lingpa for giving *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* to the world, and to Chogyam Trungpa and Francesca Fremantle for opening it up to the average English-speaker. *Luminous Emptiness* is a great help in digesting Padmasambhava's precious teaching on the in-betweens of being.

"Visualize as intense colors the positive, negative, or neutral feeling that accompanies each sensory experience. Sight is associated with white, hearing with green, smell with yellow, taste with red, and touch with blue. 'Feed' the energy of the feeling into color...With continued practice, feelings may grow fluid, no longer

arising in expected ways. You might want to give this a try and then dig into the book again." Comments from an Amazon book reviewer

***Essentials of Mahamudra: Looking Directly at the Mind* by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche**

The Tibetan Buddhist teachings on mahamudra are known for their ability to lead to profound realization. Peaceful and infinitely adaptable, these teachings are as useful for today's busy world as they have been for centuries.

"After reading 4 recent books on mahamudra by this precious and generous author, I believe that this is the most complete and therefore the most useful. You could spend years practicing the information in this instruction and profit greatly." Comments from an Amazon reviewer.

***What Makes You Not a Buddhist?* by Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse**

"Khyentse, wielding Manjushri's sword, clearly and precisely presents the essence of what it is to be a Buddhist by slicing and dicing what Buddhism is not, all in a pithy and engaging 130 pages. Yep, you can rip through this book. It can rip right through you too. Except for the truth, no subject is sacred in this book, not even Buddhism, and especially not our pained, transient, and deluded selves." Comments from an Amazon reviewer.

***Blue Jean Buddha : Voices of Young Buddhists* edited by Sumi Loundon**

"A bellwether anthology" *The New York Review of Books*.

"This book is the rarest of spiritual books: one of honesty, and problematic outcome. Even the self-absorbed essays, being almost ingenious in their expression, lend to the honesty of belief and expression. You know, even the best of spiritual books have to me that breezy tone of 'you too can have the perfect life in only five minutes a day...' And, if the author recounts some of their past troubles, some-

how they seem to have been effortlessly overcome with no residual effects." Comments from an Amazon reviewer.

***Mindful Politics* edited by Melvin McLeod**

Mindful Politics transcends right and left, progressive and conservative, to get to the heart of what matters: how we can all make a positive difference in our complex political world. This is not your typical political book. It's not written at a fever pitch, it doesn't use a good/bad binary, and it doesn't tout partisan policies. Instead, this timely collection addresses the less-discussed but more important questions about politics: what insight does religion have to offer politics? How can we as concerned citizens move beyond the particulars of legislation and party affiliation, and take direct action? In short, *Mindful Politics* offers the perspectives of thirty-four important authors and thinkers on how each of us, right now, can make the world a better place.

***Steps to Happiness: Traveling from Depression and Addiction to the Buddhist Path* by Taranatha**

Taranatha simply and quite movingly tells of his struggle through depression, alcoholism, over-identification with work as a general practitioner, and a sense of worthlessness, to then find and embrace Buddhism. His is an 'everyman' tale of a family man pursuing a caring profession yet losing care for himself in it all. Honest, sometimes sad, often entertaining, full of personal stories which resonate with many of us, Taranatha's story rings true and gives hope.

"Born in New Zealand, Taranatha trained as a doctor, primarily in London. Recovery from alcoholism loosed long-suppressed spiritual energy which eventually found a home with the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. Following retirement, he pursued full-time involvement with Buddhism." Comments from Amazon editorial review.

Sangha Notes

“What’s Happening?”

By Sandy Bonin

Sadhu to **Debby Cardwell** whose Kalyana Mitrata ceremony was held on February 27th! Debby’s close spiritual friends, or KMs, as they are called, are **Saddhamala and Anilasri** who will be supporting and guiding her as she continues to go deeper in her practice... Aryaloka hosted more than 70 people at the annual **Meditate for Peace Day** on January 1st. That’s a lot of positive energy going out into the world! Thank you to all those who participated...**Tom Stoddard** has moved back to New Hampshire from sunny (and warmer!) North Carolina. Welcome back, Tom!...We say good-bye to



Dalocana, Saddhamala, Debby and Anilasri
at Debby’s Kalyana Mitra Ceremony

Hospital Bed

by Bill Horton

You cried “Help me.”
The skin on your arm pocked and dying
as your delicate trembling hand pleading for assistance
in the cool medicinal air.
I tried to ignore you,
then ashamed,
I see that you have been ignored
too long alone.
Only wanting milk in your steaming coffee
that was beyond your reach as
your eyes flashed that final
animal existence.
The next morning, your bed was filled
with another pleading body.
You had left in the night
long before the sheet covered
your ancient feminine head.

Paramashanti who recently returned to the UK after a five-month visit to Aryaloka. He leaves with our grateful thanks for everything that he did here: teaching classes, meeting with sangha members, shoveling pathways and stairs after snowstorms, visiting the Concord prison sangha, working with our men’s mitra and GFR groups, sharing his wisdom and advice, and much, much more. We will miss you, Paramashanti!...During the last few months we have averaged **40-50 people at Sangha Night**. It’s wonderful to see the shrine room so full – “an ever-widening circle, the sangha grows!”...Thank you to the many people who attended the **Sangha Evening presentation by the Aryaloka Council** on February 23rd. This annual event provides an opportunity for sangha members to learn about what has been happening here at the center over the past year, to be updated on financial and building matters, and to ask questions and share ideas... Congratulations and very best wishes to three Aryaloka mitras who will be ordained into the Western Buddhist Order in the coming months (see additional article by Dayalocana): **Marilyn Dyer, Bill Horton, and Leonie Luterman**. We look forward to meeting the new beings that they will become... Our very best wishes go with **Anilasri** as she heads off to Akasavana in Spain for a post-ordination retreat. She will be there to see our Leonie ordained...A big thank you to **Sheila Groonell** who took and collected photographs of Aryaloka for the FWBO photo website at www.flickr.com/photos/fwbo/set (see additional article)! Check it out...**Since the beginning of the year**, Aryaloka has been the site of a concert of Dharma songs, a wedding, five rentals by outside groups, three Introduction to Meditation classes as well as a six-week evening intro series, two Order Members’ days, three retreats, a Council overnight meeting, five Friday practice evenings, an overnight weekend retreat for men who have asked for ordination, the annual Sangha Evening presentation by the Aryaloka Council, a Parinirvana festival day, a presentation to a visiting youth group from the Portsmouth Unitarian-Universalist Church, the Women’s Holistic Health Day (a fundraiser for women who have asked for ordination), fourteen retreat days in our solitary cabin, and many meetings for classes, study groups, and by folks coming together in spiritual friendship. Many, many thanks to all those who helped to prepare for all of these events – all of this couldn’t happen without your kind contributions of time and energy. Sadhu!

The Red Thread Ceremony

By Bill Horton

Two delightful Order members from India visited Aryaloka last month. Aniruddha and Kumarjeev joined a large number of us on a weekend retreat looking at the Bodhicharyavatara.

As our study group moved towards conclusion, Aniruddha's dark elegant fingers plucked a worn, faded red thread from his wallet.

"Other than myself, this red thread has been touched by no one for over 20 years. It was given to me knotted and blessed by

Chetul Sangye Dorge as I traveled in India. I think it is now time to share it with you."

Imagine an object, a linkage from one of Sangharakshita's main teachers, cherished and protected for over two decades, arriving at Aryaloka and spontaneously shared! Generosity and kindness coupled with a sense of lineage reverently passed from one to another in silence with many tears of gratitude and joy.

Reaching for a Kleenex Aniruddha softly whispered, "I think my mission here has been accomplished."

Later, while basking in the warm fellowship of sangha with Frank during the clean-up period I remarked, "Chetul Sangye Dorge seems to be a teacher that could zap you from across the universe with a lightning bolt,"

"Yes", Frank replied, "I think he just did."

I pay homage to all the teachers and those to whom respectful salutation is due. Oh, what unexpected gifts we receive at Aryaloka!

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Bhante noticed how often people complained about the weather: too hot, too cold, too wet, too humid etc. It seemingly was never ending! He, therefore, advises us to practice forbearance of the weather.

With regard to the Buddhist view of tolerance, I will give just a short explanation. It is not a pseudo-liberal universal attitude to other religions or beliefs. That is, all have the same values, same goals etc. The Dharma provides precise, well-developed theories and systems of practice that lead to Enlightenment. It is based on the Buddha's Insight. As far as I know, no other religion claims this. One should, therefore, feel confident in expressing one's beliefs and countering wrong views, but at the same time avoiding being dogmatic and closed to other views.

The last quality I want to mention is receptivity. This attitude is imperative if one wants to make progress spiritually. We have to try to remain open at all times. An incident from the *White Lotus Sutra* illustrates this. As the Bud-

dha was proclaiming a new, higher teaching that superceded previous ones, 5000 monks walked out. And why did they walk out? Bhante explains that learning something new might involve a change in attitude. Reaction probably means that we are resisting change.

In this short article we have looked at the Paramita of Kshanti and given examples of some aspects of it; namely, forbearance, patience, tolerance and receptivity. I do hope that having read this will provide an incentive to your practice.

Sangha Night at Aryaloka

- Date: Every Tuesday evening, 7:00-9:15 pm
- Led by: Amala, Saddhamala and Anilasri
- Level: Open to all who have attended an introductory class at Aryaloka
- Fee: Suggested donation of \$10 per class
- No registration necessary

Tuesday night activities include:

- ◆ 7:00 - Gathering, tea, and announcements
- ◆ 7:15 - Meditation and shrine room activity
- ◆ 8:00 - Study, discussion, or a talk on the evening's topic
- ◆ 9:15 - End

With all of the activities, you are free to participate or to just sit and listen. Nothing is compulsory. If you have any questions, please ask!

A Visit from India

What touched me most at Aryaloka is the warmth, care and the love I received from the Sangha. Before coming to the USA I was a bit scared because I had seen American movies in India and with all the shooting on the streets, and muggings, I always thought that was real. But to my surprise as soon as I landed at the Manchester airport, it was freezing cold, and I am told that it was the most coldest day of the season. There was Bodhipaksa who came to receive us at the airport, asking me; "Are you warm enough?". He took out a bag full of warm clothes and hand gloves. I was really touched by that kind gesture.

At Aryaloka, Paramashanti was ever present to take care of us. I won't forget the Indian food he cooked for us. The chili pickle which he took out from his magic basket made me feel at home instantly. I think that is the beauty of the sangha. Being in the other part of the world where you are total stranger and you know no one, and yet you feel at home the moment you arrive. I am grateful to Bhante Sangharakshita for giving this beautiful gift to all of us.

I remember the day when I first came in contact with the FWBO in India. Way back in 1979-80 I was 15 years old. I saw a Buddhist monk walking down the street very mindfully where I use to live. He was Anagarika Lokamitra, one of Bhante's senior disciples. I met him, went along to meditation classes and never looked back.

I was ordained in December 1985, that's it... I have been in the order for nearly 22 years now. I must say that the sangha has really enriched my life.

Besides being a corporate trainer, I am a certified non-violent communication trainer. This communication skill helps and supports me in my practise of the four speech precepts. I offer NVC workshops within and outside the movement, help people in conflict resolution and also do mediation.

Most of the Buddhists in India belong to the Dalit or the Ex-untouchable background and that is the pain they still carry with them because legally and on paper untouchability does not exist in India, but it still exists in the mind of the people. One of the ways we deal with this caste issue is that we organise huge retreats called Dhammakranti retreats where thousands of people from different castes come together and practise the Dhamma and meditation together. On these retreats people experience a feeling of casteless society. Two years back 4,500 people came on the retreat.

As part of the altruistic expression of our spiritual practise we have many social projects. Some of them are kindergartens, hostels for boys and girls from socially and economically deprived classes who can't afford to have an education. We provide them with living facilities and schools in which to study. Medical projects for women and children. HIV aware-

ness project in the slums. Sewing classes for the women from the shanty town so that they can learn the sewing skill and support themselves and their families financially, etc.

I was so happy to make the connection with the Aryaloka sangha. It has broadened my own perspective. It has given me a feeling of deeper connection with the global sangha and it deepened my faith and commitment in going for refuge because this connection has given me the awareness that I am not alone. There are brothers and sisters on the other side of the globe who are also going to refuge to the same ideal.

I will always cherish the happy memories and the warmth I received at the Aryaloka Sangha.

Much metta
Aniruddha



Our Indian visitors gave an inspiring talk at a Tuesday night sangha meeting.

From the The Council

By Sandy Bonin

During the last several months, the Council has been working hard on a number of important issues...Compensation for work at Aryaloka as well as the donation of time by our hardworking volunteers has been reviewed and discussed... Several job descriptions have been developed and reviewed...It was decided to ask for non-refundable deposits to be paid in advance for retreats and classes, to raise the suggested donation at sangha night to \$10, and to raise the mitra class fee to \$8 per session...Current and future building

plans continued to be discussed and revised. The next building project will be the construction of outside staircases off the yoga room and the dining area. Vents have been installed in the shrine room to help heat that area...The position of overall coordinator of all the kulas was revived and discussed. This person would keep track of kula participants, maintain a kula bulletin board, publish a kula newsletter, and publicize kula tasks, among other responsibilities. ...Khemavassika reports that the center is in good shape financially. It was decided not to accept credit card charges for less than \$30 in

order to avoid having to pay bank fees on small amounts...Several old policies were reviewed and modified.

Everyone is welcome to come to observe Council meetings. If you would like to address the Council about an issue, please contact Dayalocana (Dayalocana@comcast.net) a week or more in advance so that you can be put on the agenda. Council meetings begin at 12:30 at either Aryaloka or Akasaloka and will be held on March 18, April 15, May 6, and June 3.

Interview with Paramashanti

VB: How did you come to the Dharma?
Paramashanti: I was staying with a girlfriend in London, probably around 1983. We were looking after an apartment of a friend of hers who was on vacation. I came across a book there on Buddhism by a Thai monk (Dhiravamsa). What he said had a great effect on me – it just made sense. So, shortly afterwards I went along to the London Buddhist Centre to learn to meditate.

VB: How have you seen Aryaloka change?

Paramashanti: I was here from 1993 to 1996. The most obvious thing I noticed is

how the facility has been improved and how it has also become busier with more classes and rentals. As regards sangha, it seems to have grown and strengthened, although I regret the demise of the men's community.

VB: What has been your work here? (Don't be shy)

Paramashanti: I am generally around most of the time. I help with the Sangha Night Tuesday class and also with study on Monday evening with Suddhaya and some of the men mitras. I've supported Intro courses with Amala, done an Intro day in Boston with Bill Horton and I am

now a regular visitor to the Concord prison. I spend time with some of the men, particularly Tom, and I help around the Centre.

VB: What are your favourite Dharma books?

Paramashanti: I don't think that I've got favourite Dharma books – it depends on my mood! But I would recommend that people read Bhante's autobiographies, especially *The Thousand Petal Lotus*. I find this book particularly inspiring.

HOW TO SIGN UP FOR RETREATS AND CLASSES

With the beginning of a new year, we have slightly revised our sign-up policy for retreats and classes. Please sign up through the office by phone (659-5456) or e-mail: info@aryaloka.org. We always appreciate a non-refundable deposit ahead of time: \$15 for a day event, \$30 for a weekend, or \$50 for a week-long retreat. We do accept charge cards for amounts of \$30 or more, but are even happier to receive checks or (in person) cash since this means we don't have to pay a transaction fee to the bank for credit card charges. Many thanks, and we hope to see you on retreat or in a class soon!

WELCOME RATNAGUNA! By Sandy Bonin

This April we will welcome Ratnaguna, an Order member from the UK, who will visit Aryaloka to conduct two retreats:

The Way to the Beyond, an examination of the Sutta Nipata, and *Breathworks*, a technique for relieving human suffering through mindfulness.

Ratnaguna was ordained into the Western Buddhist Order in 1979 and went on to help set up the Manchester Buddhist Centre in the UK. In 1984 he moved to North Wales to live and work at Dharmavastu, a Centre for Buddhist Inquiry. He is the author of a booklet titled "Reason and Reflection in the Spiritual Life" and served for a time on the edito-

rial board of the *Western Buddhist Review*, a journal of Buddhist studies.

Three years ago, Ratnaguna moved back to Manchester to work with Vidyamala and Sona in Breathworks. As well as co-leading courses for people with consistent pain and other chronic conditions, he trains others to deliver the Breathworks program and runs workshops for health professionals who are interested in using mindfulness in their work. In April he presented the results of Breathworks' research to the British Pain Society's Annual Scientific Meeting. In March he will also present the same research at the

Mindfulness-Based Stress Management Conference in Worcester, MA as well as leading a workshop with Vidyamala and Sona.

In the last ten years, Ratnaguna has become very interested in and inspired by Pure Land Buddhism, first through the writings of Shinran, the 12th century Japanese teacher, but more recently through the early Pure Land Sutras themselves. During 2007 he plans to write a commentary on these sutras.

We are looking forward to Ratnaguna's visit to Aryaloka!

Akashavana

By Leonie Luterman

For many years the FWBO has rented retreat centers in Italy and in Scotland, for women's ordination retreats. However, it has been a dream and a vision to one day own their own property where women could come to be ordained during a three month retreat. In 2004, after years of fundraising and searching in France, Italy, Spain and Portugal, a large property (108 hectares, 270 acres) in northeast Spain was found and purchased. The region is remote and isolated and the land itself is wild and beautiful: perfect for our purposes." Originally the property was named Aranya, but as that means spider in Spanish (and Aranyaloka means mad spider) the name was changed to Akashavana, meaning "forest retreat of luminous space."

One small building has been restored for

the use of a community, and the ramshackle traditional farm buildings are being converted into the retreat center itself. They have built a yurt on the property and have plans for a separate building for the shrine room. It is impossible to give a sense of this wild and remote place, truly a place of "going forth from worldly life." Please visit the web site (www.akashavana.org) and see for yourself. There is a slideshow of photos that offers a hint of the vision that is creating this "forest retreat of luminous space", and of the work of those women who have given so much of their lives to bring it into being.

There are, at the moment, ten of us going there for this first ordination retreat, from April 19th to July 12th. We will be leaving all the old familiars and truly going forth, but together. It will be a time out of time, in conditions I can only dream about

and open to. We will not have a lot of water, so bathing and laundry (all by hand) will be minimal and bottled water will need to come from town, about an hour away on dirt roads, and in a 4X4. There are solar panels for electricity. Yet of all the directions I have received, it is the one about going through a hole in the fence in Tortosa, to find a kiosk where we can buy a bus ticket to Valderrobres that brings me up short. A hole in the fence? With a bag packed with three months worth of things? This is serious business! And not done lightly. And so we are back to the sangha: the whole of the spiritual life. I go forth as we all do, in so many different ways, with the kindness and support and inspiration of the sangha. I know I go alone. And still I can sense all those who have gone before and will come after also. With a full heart, thank you.

Ordination

By Dh. Dayalocana

At the heart of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order there is a spiritual community of men and women who have made a commitment to living their lives in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha. They have made going for refuge to the Three Jewels: the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, central in their lives. Having been ordained into the Western Buddhist Order they have made a decision to follow a path that emphasizes ethical conduct and the development of compassion, clarity and insight. They choose this for the sake of all beings for this path has a strong emphasis on altruistic behavior. Sangharakshita, the founder of the Western Buddhist Order, uses the image of the thousand armed Avalokitesvara to symbolize the intention of the Order to help all beings.

The Order is open to any man or woman who is sincerely and effectively committed to the Buddhist path. After ordination men are known as Dharmacharis and women as Dharmacharinis, wayfarers in the Dharma, leading the life of a Dharma practitioner. They make a commitment to

follow 10 precepts, develop harmony, friendship and support of one another. Order Members work to develop mindfulness, loving kindness, generosity, contentment and realization of the Buddha's teaching.

At Aryaloka we have the good fortune this spring to send our good wishes with three mitras as they go forth to be ordained into the WBO. Bill Horton from Maine will be leaving in late March for a 4 month ordination retreat in Spain, at Guhyaloka, an ordination retreat center

for men. Leonie Luterman from Massachusetts follows a few weeks later to attend a three-month retreat, also in Spain, at Akashavana, the ordination retreat center for women. Marilyn Dyer from Maine, will be ordained in June at Aryaloka where the first ordinations in America were conducted by Sangharakshita in 1993.

Our good wishes go with all of them as they dedicate their lives to the Three Jewels.



Leonie, Bill, and Marilyn will be ordained soon.

Stepping up to Change the World

Dh. Viriyalila

Following a recent retreat in California, I picked up one of those local free papers while at a coffee shop in Santa Cruz. The main article was titled "Children of Hope" – an exposition of humanitarian efforts in Africa shedding light on tragic circumstances told through the stories of two local community members. The first, Braden Coolidge, went to Zimbabwe for the first time in 1993 when he completed a UC Santa Cruz Community Studies internship. He has continued to travel there every year and in 2006 he decided to randomly select a community at which he was going to drop off a bag of clothing. What he found (by chance when dropping off a man needing a ride) was a small one-story building that housed a school for parentless children who resided in the surrounding community with charitable host families. With just four classrooms and 13 teachers, the Maulana School for Orphans served 1,600 children, many of whom were orphaned by AIDS. With no government resources, expanding the school seemed impossible, let alone providing the supplies needed in the current facilities. Coolidge resolved to help out in every way that he could. As he had been working as an art promoter, he arranged for a tour of two sculptors from Africa around the United States, raising in excess of \$10,000 in just two months.

World problems have been with us since the dawn of history. What is new about the problems of today is that we hear about them – newspapers, television, and now the internet place world events in our homes, cars and work places, and even at our fingertips almost as quickly as they are occurring. In "A Buddhist View of Current World Problems," Sangharakshita writes, "It really is as though we live in a global village, and although this is a matter of common knowledge, it perhaps does not sink in as decisively and deeply into our awareness as it should."

A few years ago at Harvard University, a symposium was held on Engaged Buddhism. Christopher Queen, lecturer on the Study of Religion, was moderator.

"There's been a sea-change in the Buddhist tradition," said Queen. "Buddhists have gotten up off their cushions, recognizing that collective sources of suffering in the world must be addressed by collective action."

To some, "Engaged Buddhism" may seem like a contradiction in terms. Traditionally, Buddhists have sought to avoid suffering by detaching from the world of the senses, from greed, hatred and delusion. Throughout the centuries, Buddhists have trained themselves through meditation to see past the world of illusion to the spiritual reality beneath. "But during the past few decades Buddhists have been re-examining the teachings of their religion and finding a basis for social action, for confronting war, racism, exploitation, commercialism, and the destruction of the environment." (www.news.harvard.edu/gazette)

It's as though we hold a greater responsibility to respond in today's world of high technology because we are so much more aware of the mass suffering in the world. We have access to detailed information - audio, video, photographs, and even firsthand accounts from all over the world. Not only do we have exponentially greater access to information, we also have greater resources at our fingertips to respond creatively to the forces of oppression, poverty, destruction of the environment, and violence against others, among many other unfortunate actions.

By most accounts, 'Engaged Buddhism' is a term originally coined by Vietnamese Zen Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh. During the Vietnam War, he and his local sangha made efforts to respond to the suffering they saw around them. They saw this work as part of their meditation and mindfulness practice, not apart from it. Since then, the term continues to apply to Buddhists who are seeking ways to apply the insights from meditation practice and dharma teachings to situations of social, political, environmental, and economic suffering.

In Thich Nhat Hanh's, *Peace Is Every Step*, he says, "When I was in Vietnam, so

many of our villages were being bombed. Along with my monastic brothers and sisters, I had to decide what to do. Should we continue to practice in our monasteries or should we leave the meditation halls in order to help the people who were suffering under the bombs? After careful reflection, we decided to do both - to go out and help people and to do so in mindfulness. We called it Engaged Buddhism. Mindfulness must be engaged. Once there is seeing, there must be acting. Otherwise, what is the sense of seeing?"

One of Sangharakshita's founding principles in creating a Buddhist movement was based in the impulse to create a "New Society" which acknowledges that the old society does not function well. Far from helping the spiritual aspirant, "society at large makes it difficult for us to develop, even if we want to." Present in our society are counter-evolutionary forces; influences abound that are oppressive, coercive and crushing of the human spirit.

The real problem for us is how do we ourselves, individually and collectively respond to whatever we perceive as the world's problems? How do we ensure that every citizen in the world grows up healthy in mind and body? How do we ensure that people are not discriminated against, or abused, due to their race, class, sexual orientation, gender or age? How do we reconcile the conflicting interests of sovereign nations? How can we all just get along with one another?

Engaged Buddhism combines the cultivation of inner peace with active social compassion in a mutually supportive and enriching practice environment. In our spiritual community, we can come together to work collectively to create a positive force in the world, one that helps to create conditions for all beings to have opportunities to develop into healthy human beings.

Sangharakshita concludes his essay and this article well: "World problems are essentially group problems, which they have always been. What is different today

(Continued on page 12)

GUIDANCE ON PATIENCE

Chapter Six from *A GUIDE TO THE BODHISATTVA WAY OF LIFE*,

by Shantideva;

Translated by Vesna A Wallace and Alan Wallace,

Published by Snow Lion Publications (www.snowlionpub.com), used with permission.

Verse 2

There is no vice like hatred, and there is no austerity like patience. Therefore, one should earnestly cultivate patience in various ways.

Verse 102

It is wrong to feel anger toward someone, thinking that person impedes my merit. As there is no austerity equal to patience, shall I not abide in that?

Verse 103

If on account of my own fault I do not practice patience here, then I myself have created an obstacle when grounds for merit have been presented.

FWBO CENTERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

You may not have the time or money to visit other FWBO centers around the world, but you do have an opportunity to take a virtual tour on the web. At www.flickr.com/photos/fwbo/sets you will find beautiful photographs of FWBO centers from the US (including Aryaloka—see example on right showing our own shrine), Australia, New Zealand, Europe (including the UK) and India, with more being added all the time. Check it out – the photography is truly amazing!



(Continued from page 2)

bued with loving-kindness, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will. That is how you should train, bhikkhus.”

If we are tuned into our own mind and emotional state we can experience the instant upset that occurs when our needs

are not met, when someone does not do things our way, when we are disappointed, frustrated, feel threatened or hurt. We can build a loving caring supportive sangha by taking responsibility for our own reactions and by developing kshanti, the opposite of anger. Sangharakshita writes us in The Bodhisattva Ideal that kshanti has overtones of love, compas-

sion, tolerance, acceptance and receptivity. May we all practice with determination and joy at the possibility of developing patience.

Dharmacharini Dayalocana,
Chair, Aryaloka Buddhist Center

POETRY

Sitting does not create truth,
meditation does not create insight,
just as smelling a flower
does not make it fragrant.

The perfume of the rose is there.
We slow down to attend the unfolding
and flowering of its nature.
Slowing down and attending
to just this breath allows
the reality of Now to reveal its nature.

Sitting still gives us the opportunity
to witness the revealing of the truth.

The moon appears only when the water is still.

The Moon Appears When the Water is Still by Ian McCrorie

(Used with permission from Pariyatti Press
www.pariyatti.com)



New Year's Day Meditation for Peace

FREE BUDDHIST AUDIO

Have you visited www.freebuddhistaudio.com yet? As its name suggests, this site makes it possible to access "over 500 talks on Buddhism and meditation" as well as "hundreds of seminar and lecture transcripts" from the Dharmachakra Archive. You can download the information directly or listen and read online. Because this is a free site, donations for its upkeep are gratefully accepted.

Guhyaloka

From Bill Horton

I have been drawn to Guhyaloka, the secret realm, since I first saw the FWBO newsreel in 1994. Simple, austere and secluded in the mountains of southern Spain, away from the distractions of everyday existence, a place to deepen one's meditation practice and understanding of the Dharma. And now after fourteen years of practice, an invitation to go! All relationships from house plants to children to auto insurance are held up to the brilliant light of going forth. What is needed?

Very little. What will remain upon return, I know not.

From my elderly mother's reaction of disbelief, to being able to ask for help, and to accept the generous offers of friends; all things become new and challenging. My family responsibilities allow for long term travel. Do they really? My health is still good and probably not getting better in the long run. My practice is on the upswing. Can I stand the rigors of a monastic life for four months? No rational sane person would attempt such an endeavor. What about work, family, who will mind

the house? All excuses dissolve under the scrutiny of going forth on this path following many that have gone before. A simple set of questions remain, as in the six element practice. Is this me, is this mine, is this who I am? This trip is the mythic journey for me. Separation from the known, transformation in the wilderness, and return to the community to give back that which is gained. The last factor, the essential aspect, is to pass on what I have learned so that others may continue to benefit from the Dharma.

(Continued from page 9)

is the size of the groups involved and the destructive power available to them. But whatever their size, the problems arising from these groups cannot be solved on the group level. The only hope for humanity is therefore necessarily a long-term solution, involving more people becoming clearer about how they need to develop as individuals and cooperating in the context of spiritual communities in order to make, in their various ways, a significant impact on the world, or on 'the group'. The alternatives before us are evolution or extinction."

So, what are we doing? How are we stepping up to change the world?

Below is a sampling of organized collective efforts to engage Buddhist practice in addressing some of the world's problems ethically and creatively:

Earth Sangha [U.S.] - Founded in 1998 as a nonsectarian, nonprofit Buddhist environmental organization, its mission is to encourage the practice of Buddhism as an answer to the global environmental crisis, and to do practical conservation work of a kind that expresses the Buddhist ideal of compassion for all beings.

Buddhist AIDS Project [US] - Provides free, current HIV/AIDS information, with links to local, national, and international resources; Buddhist teachings, practice centers and events; complementary alternative medicine services. BAP hopes to weave together communities of socially engaged Buddhists who wish to lend a hand.

Buddhist Peace Fellowship [U.S.] Oldest socially engaged Buddhist nonprofit organization in the US. Networking, activism, publications, international and domestic human rights work, volunteer

program, and prison advocacy and ministry.

Prison Dharma Network [US] - Supports prisoners in the practice of contemplative disciplines, with emphasis on the meditation practices of the various Buddhist traditions. PDN also promotes the Buddhist path of wakefulness and non-aggression as an ideal means of self-rehabilitation and transformation.

Karuna Trust [India] - Multiple projects including education, health, literacy, housing for converted--now Buddhist--former untouchables in India.

World Artists for Tibet - Raising awareness of human rights abuse of the Tibetan people through all forms of art.

From the Editor

From Leonie Luterman

We have been exploring the Six Paramitas in the Vajra Bell recently, and are now focusing on kshanti, patience. It seems propitious to do that now while we are still blanketed in snow, and awaiting the first signs of spring. Paramashanti, however, takes us way beyond this kind of

ordinary patience, to a deep sense of receptivity and tolerance and compassion. There seems to be an ease in kshanti, a release of the agenda, the expectations, the projections we tend to carry around. It is a profound spiritual practice that manages to integrate insight into the ephemeral nature of all things and the compassion that arises from that insight, as all

craving drops away and receptivity has a chance. And I thought it was about being patient in the security lines at airports!

The June issue of The Vajra Bell will be brought into being by Marilyn Dyer and Karunasara and promises to be a lovely one. Sadhu and many thanks to both of them.

FRIDAY NIGHT MEDITATION AND PUJA

The rich devotional practice of meditation and puja is shared most Friday nights by those who find devotion an important part of their practice.

Dates: Friday evenings as scheduled; see the Aryaloka web site for specific dates and locations.
Schedule: 7:00 p.m. meditation, followed by puja

NAGALOKA BUDDHIST CENTER

Our sangha is growing here in Portland. On Wednesdays we are studying the book Karma and Rebirth by Nagapriya. While Dharmasuri is in Georgia for two months, Nancy Lorraine, Linda Umbel and Karun-

asara are sharing leadership and teaching as a team. There is meditation on Fridays at 6pm and Sundays at 9am. We have had a few opportunities to talk with other spiritual groups about Buddhism when

they have visited us or we have gone to them. We also have Introduction to Meditation and Buddhism classes. You can find these on the web at www.nagalakabuddhistcenter.org.

The History of the San Francisco Buddhist Center

By Karunadevi

The seeds of the San Francisco Buddhist Center were planted and cultivated through a sequence of three serendipitous meetings. In the summer of 1987 Alan Sponberg (now Saramati) met Manjuvajra and Nagabodhi at a conference in Michigan. Then in January of 1988 Forest (now Karunadevi) met Alan at a meeting of the Buddhist Council of Northern California in Berkeley; they discovered that they were neighbors in Menlo Park. In March that year Alan, who was a Buddhist studies professor, introduced Forest to Manjuvajra who had come from New Hampshire to Stanford University to give a lecture and lead a meditation workshop. That was the meeting that led to the beginning of a weekly meditation and study group in Menlo Park, comprised initially of people who had attended the Stanford workshop. Different combinations of people have been meeting together ever since then under the auspices of the FWBO Bay Area, first in Menlo Park, then Palo Alto, and now in San Francisco.

In August of 1988 Forest went to Aryaloka Retreat Center in NH to get a close up look at the FWBO in action. During that time she and Manjuvajra planned the first retreat to be held in November at Vajrapani Institute near San Francisco. Manjuvajra made a couple of visits a year over the next five years to the Bay Area to lead retreats and sometimes teach introductory classes. Other Order Members came as well from England to meet us and some led retreats: Vajradaka made an annual visit and led meditation retreats. We also had visits from Kamalashila, Devamitra, Nagabodhi, Dhammadinna, Subhuti, Vessantara, Sanghadevi, and others. This led to a greater understanding of the Order and movement and to significant friendships with people in the Order.

In April of 1989 Manjuvajra conducted our first mitra ceremonies in Forest's living room in Palo Alto for Forest, Alan, and Jean (now Varasuri). In the summer of 1990 Alan and Jean moved to Missoula where they started FWBO activities.

Forest continued holding the weekly meetings in Palo Alto. For a small group of people, including David (now Viradhamma) and John (now Khajit), it was more convenient to meet in San Francisco; so a group started there in someone's apartment every other week. This meeting eventually became weekly and met in various locations in the city until we rented space at the Unitarian Church.

In the summer of 1991 we decided to put more energy in developing the San Francisco sangha. So Forest led the first introduction to meditation class at the Unitarian Church. One could say that this was yet another serendipitous meeting, as a number of people from that class became good friends and are still involved, and some are now ordained.

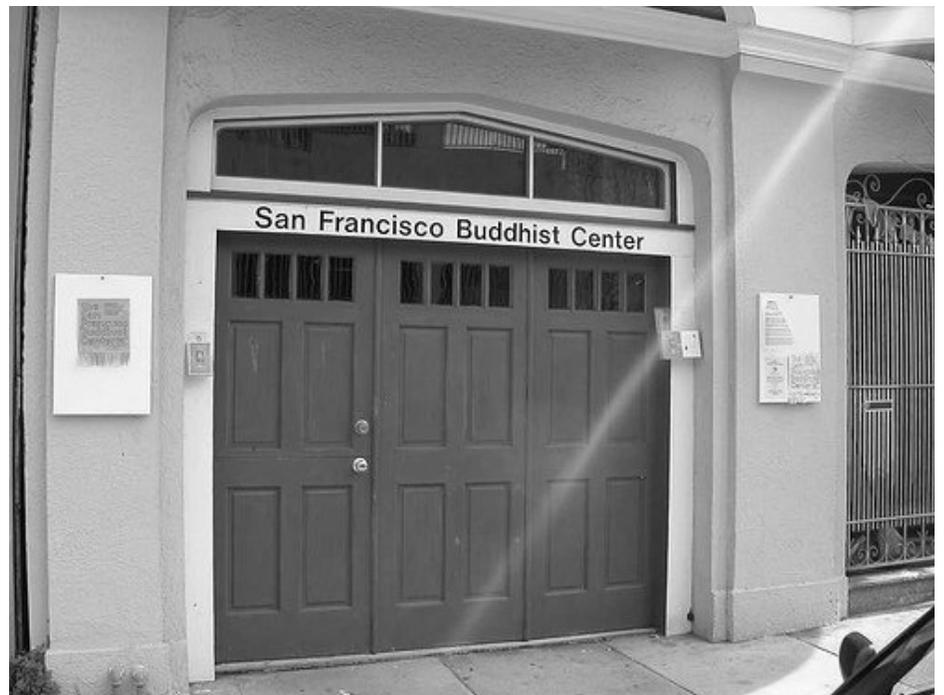
Sometime in 1992 the Unitarian Church wanted to raise our rates. We found a storefront on Balboa Street, and the sangha decided to make a commitment to covering the rent for it. Now we could for the first time put San Francisco Buddhist Center on our window.

In May of 1993 Forest was ordained and became Karunadevi. Also two order

members from England came out to live and work with us, Paramananda and Paramabodhi. After the ordination, which was in NH, several mitra ceremonies were conducted at a big retreat with Sangharakshita at Vajrapani and over the next year a few more became mitras at the Balboa center.

In February of 1994 we purchased the Bartlett Street building in the heart of the Mission District – a three story Queen Anne style building circa 1905. This has been our thriving center for the last 13 years. The center occupies the ground floor and up until July of 2005 there were two communities on the second and third floors. Now the center has expanded into part of the second floor space to house our office, a small shrine room and a library/meeting room/guest room. A women's community is still on the third floor.

Nearly 19 years after that first Menlo Park gathering, the San Francisco Buddhist Center is going strong with nine homegrown Order Members, 31 mitras, and a continual stream of Friends.



On Solitary

From Leonie Luterman

This week I discovered an eraser. A little white Staedtler eraser. I suppose I've owned it for years; it's not quite snow white anymore, rather more like a warm latte colour. It sat around on various shelves, even in various houses, until it got thrown into a satchel and lugged up to this little cabin in the northern reaches of Vermont - a cabin heated by a fierce Jotul wood stove, and with a surprisingly lovely outhouse near by. And here it happened. After years of drawing from eye to ink to paper, I have discovered pencil drawing, a preliminary step I somehow managed to miss. And so, the eraser. I can fudge, change angles, re-

move things altogether, all with this little marvel of latte coloured gum. I can try a thousand ideas before committing them to ink. I can change my mind and try hatching and squiggles and dots. What delight! What freedom!

I have not often appreciated the viability of erasers in my life. My choices have been in ink - no fudging allowed, perfect at the get-go or revealed to the world as skewed, unacceptable, off kilter. I've fallen on my face a lot. Hidden in shame a lot. Felt miserable a lot. All for want of an eraser - the permission to make a sketch, to learn, to change, and not be caught in a freeze frame of insufficiency. Perfection not an option, only wholehearted effort required.

Once the yoke of perfectionism and stasis is broken, I am free to explore, to frolic, to rise and fall and rise again.

My life isn't about being etched in permanent, waterproof, fade proof ink, but about sketches in an HB pencil, subject to revision, to starting over without reprimand, to tweaking without condemnation. All along I thought perfection was the goal, the end product, and never realized it was about the wholeheartedness of the effort of becoming.

My life won't be in ink any time soon; perhaps only when it is over. Meanwhile, I am going wild with the delight of being a work in progress.

MEN'S GOING FOR REFUGE RETREAT



Participants in the February Retreat:
Standing from left - Vajramati, Dave Carr, Steve Cardwell, Dino Papavasiliou, Steve Bell, Tony Paine.

Seated - Paramashanti, Tom Stoddard, Stephen Sloan, Vidhuma.

Missing from the photo are Amaradeva, Bill Horton and Buddy Vaughn.

Upcoming Events

(All events at Aryaloka unless noted 'Akasaloka' and all retreats are Friday evening at 7 pm through Sunday at 4pm unless otherwise indicated)

APRIL

- 5-8 *Non-Violent Communication Retreat* - Advanced, Thursday through Sunday
- 6-8 *The Way to the Beyond (Sutta Nipata) Retreat* led by Ratnaguna, Friday eve. through Sunday mid-day (Akasaloka)
- 13-15 *Breath Works Retreat* led by Ratnaguna, times same as above
- 15 Aryaloka Council Meeting, 12:30-3:30
- 25 Introductory Evening Series, six Wednesdays, 7-9
- 28-29 Work Days, Saturday and Sunday

MAY

- 2 Introductory Evening Series , 7-9
- 3-6 *Yoga and Meditation Retreat* with Saddhamala and Michele McComb
- 4 Introductory Meditation Day on the Mindfulness of Breathing, Saturday, 10-4 Akasaloka)
- 5 Aryaloka Council Meeting (Akasaloka) 12:30 to 3:30
- 9 Introductory Evening Series , 7-9
- 12 Wesak , Festival Day, Saturday (Akasaloka)
- 16 Introductory Evening Series , 7-9
- 23 Introductory Evening Series , 7-9
- 30 Introductory Evening Series , 7-9

JUNE

- 3 Aryaloka Council Meeting (Akasaloka) 12:30 to 3:30
- 9 Introductory Meditation Day on the Metta Bhavana, Saturday, 10-4
- 16-17 Work Days, Saturday and Sunday
- 24 **Public Ordination**

Exploring Housing Alternatives for Mature Sangha Members

Who me? Mature?
My friends? Mature?

Many of us have come to love the idea of meeting up with sangha members... and some of us, as we get a bit older, think about ways to continue with

sangha as we age. There have been many discussions over tea at Aryaloka in the past few years. Well, we are not getting younger, so it is time to find out how much interest there **really** is in banding together resources and exploring housing alternatives. Watch for a **Housing Survey** coming in the next Vajra Bell. We hope, once the data is analyzed, to begin group meetings in early

summer for those with interest in housing alternatives.

Dh. Khemavassika

Contact Khemavassika (sueb1011@verizon.net) or Stephen Sloan (sloan@comcast.net) if you'd like to be part of this project.



For Your Information..

FWBO CENTERS IN THE U.S.

Newmarket, NH; Portland, ME; Belfast, ME; Lubec, ME; Somerville, MA; New York City, NY; Missoula, MT; San Francisco, CA; Seattle, WA; Richland, WA.

RECOMMENDED

From Tom Stoddard

[Life of Buddha](#) is a wonderful movie that I recently rented from Netflix. It runs 1 hr 30 min. The Netflix introduction to the film is: "The birth and life of one of religion's most important icons, the Buddha, is chronicled in this incisive documentary. Director Martin Meissonnier charts the transformation of Prince Siddhartha into the Buddha, a man who transformed the world with his powerful teachings. Illuminating for religious historians, the documentary also serves as an inspirational tale for people of all races and religions." Filmed in India and other locations, it traces many important events in the life of the Buddha. The photography of people and places is quite beautiful. The film is interspersed with comments by several monks and archaeologists. Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh addresses a number of Buddhist concepts in the bonus tracks which are excellent.

WEBSITES OF INTEREST

www.aryaloka.org
www.nagaloka.org
www.wildmind.org
www.sfbuddhistcenter.org
www.fwbomissoula.org
www.taraloka.org
www.buddhfield.com

www.dhanakosa.com
www.accesstoinsight.org
www.urbandharma.org
www.beliefnet.org
www.fwbo-news.com
www.freebuddhistaudio.com
www.flickr.com/photos/fwbo/sets

www.padmalo.org.uk
www.guhyaloka.com
www.vajraloka.org
www.akashavana.org
www.rivendellretreatcentre.com
www.tiratanaloka.org.uk