



VAJRA BELL

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Ethics in Buddhism

By Karunasara



Karunasara has been practicing Buddhism since the early 1990's. She was ordained into the WBO in 2003. After having been part of the Seattle Sangha for several years she moved to NH and practices as part of the Aryaloka Sangha. She is active in helping to plan the program, keeping the buildings clean, and leading and participating in study and devotion.

There is a threefold path of practice in Buddhism--Ethics, Meditation and Wisdom. Within these three paths there are many lists or ways to make our practice more specific. One of these important lists that we use as guides for our practice is that of the six paramitas consisting of generosity, ethics, patience, energy, meditation and wisdom. In our last issue of Vajra Bell we explored generosity. Now we will take a look at ethics, the second paramita.

Ethics is that part of our practice that we can touch and feel. It is our actions as they are influenced by our meditation and our understanding of the Dharma. It is caring for others and caring for ourselves.

Sangharakshita divides ethics into conventional morality and natural morality. Conventional ethics are roles or standards governing conduct re: what is good or bad as decided in our society. Moral ethics are based on Dharma principles. Both are useful. In our daily lives we use both conventional and moral ethics to guide our actions. Moral ethics also help us to progress spiritually. When we practice ethics based on morality, we are basing our actions on the Dharma principle of conditioned co-production. Conditioned co-production means that every event that happens causes conditions for another event to happen. In this way, we are entirely interdependent. Whatever we do will make a difference in our body, speech and mind and will affect our next action.

Whatever we do will also affect the external environment and the body, speech and mind of others. All actions have consequences. This is why ethics is a major underpinning of our Buddhist practice. Unskillful or negative actions bring negative results. Skillful or positive actions bring positive results. Since positive results are what we wish for, it is important to figure out how to act as ethically as possible.

Fortunately, in the Dharma teachings we are given a guideline for our ethical practice in the five precepts. These are not rules. The precepts are principles we practice to help us be more and more skillful in our actions. Our behavior is not classified as good or bad but as skillful or unskillful. Skillful highlights the fact that certain behavior brings positive results, not that we are good or bad. If we are unskillful we should look at what we have done, wish we had done differently, figure out what could have been a better action and aim to do that the next time the opportunity arises.

The precepts are stated in both a negative and positive manner. Each approach complements the other. As we begin our practice of the precepts we start in a way that relates them to conventional ethics as we understand them. As we continue and progress in our practice, we understand them in more depth based on Dharma principles. If we were enlightened, we would

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Sila

By Sandy Bonin

Buddhist sages tell us that *sila* - morality, ethics - is second only to wisdom as the primary concern of a Buddhist practitioner. Second, perhaps, but not far behind! For example, without *sila* we cannot be effective meditators. How can we sit on the cushion, focused on loving-kindness toward ourselves and others, if earlier that day, we swore at someone who cut us off in traffic or rolled our eyes when on the phone with someone with whom we have difficulties? As Sharon Salzberg says in Loving-kindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness, "The path may lead to many powerful and sublime experiences, but the path begins here with our daily interactions with each other... If we want to enjoy happiness, taking care to be ethical is a cardinal means for that aspiration."

The Buddha taught that we all - all sentient beings - are interconnected. If I harm you in any way, I harm myself. If I treat you with kindness and compassion, I am treating myself the same way, and vice-versa. The same is true of our relationship to the environment. In order to establish a world in which we can find happiness and practice the Dharma effectively, we have to act in ways that create harmony.

When I first began studying *sila*, I thought, *Well this can't be so hard. I don't go around hitting people or purposely saying things to hurt their feelings. I don't steal from other folks and I always bring it to the store clerk's attention if I've been undercharged. Of course, I do exaggerate from time to time. And I do tell a few white lies now and then to avoid hurting other people's feelings or spare myself some embarrassment. But, really, I think I do pretty well with this sila issue.* It didn't take long to discover how wrong I was!

While obvious ethical lapses like the ones described above are certainly important to address if I want to practice skillfully, I've discovered that I need to be especially mindful of and attentive to more subtle ethical practices as I go about my day. It's not enough to check my change to be sure I haven't been undercharged - I need to be aware that whoever is waiting on me is a fellow human being. Does she look tired? Did the previous customer treat her curtly? Is there a long line of customers behind me? I need to look her in the eyes and remember that a smile or a friendly comment could perhaps bring her a moment of happiness.

And no, I don't go around purposely hurting people, but do I do my fair share of small kindnesses during the course of a day? Do I take the time to listen to a colleague who just needs to share what he is feeling right now, right this minute? Do I pick up a piece of paper that has fallen on the floor because someone missed the waste basket? Do I smile at strangers I pass on the street (whether they are smiling or not) or blow a mosquito off my arm instead of swatting it? Do I refrain from taking up someone's time who is obviously in a hurry and for whom it would be difficult to stop and chat with me just then? Am I mindful enough to do these things? Am I mindful enough to even be aware that the opportunity is there for me to be doing them?!

So, I still have a long way to go in my practice of *sila*. Sometimes I am skillful, sometimes I am not. Sometimes I remember to be alert to opportunities to be kind and generous and truthful, sometimes I am oblivious. But I'm working on it. To borrow more of Sharon Salzberg, "We find that we can continually refine our understanding of [sila] and can enjoy a deepening sense of radiance and happiness through our attention to [it]." Let's make it so!

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Sangha Notes

“What’s Happening?”

The Aryaloka **annual auction** raised **more than \$5400** this year! Many thanks to all of you who planned and worked on this important fundraising event, as well as all those who contributed items and services and who generously bid on the many donations! [Editor’s Note: It would not have happened without Sandy’s inspiration and very hard work. She took us to a whole new level!] ...Aryaloka president **Nagabodhi** was here in October to lead two retreats, give a talk at Friends’ Night, serve as auctioneer (and do a fantastic job!), and meet with many folks from our sangha...**Shantigarbha**, an Order member from the U.K., also came to Aryaloka this fall to lead a retreat and give a talk on nonviolent communication (to rave reviews!)...Many thanks to **Vidhuma** and **Bodhipaksa**, outgoing Aryaloka Council members, for their generous service to the center...Please welcome new Council members **Leonie Luterman** and **Sandy Bonin**...**Karunadevi**, an Order member from San Francisco, visited Aryaloka in November to lead a women’s retreat and meet with women from the sangha...The **work day** was very successful

despite the intermittent drizzle. A hardy band of folks finished painting the outside of the dome, cleared out the gardens, relocated the “wandering” bridge (a mighty effort by some very strong guys!), did a lot of painting as well as installing sheet-rock inside Aryaloka, replaced the light in the shrine room, vacuumed the floors and rugs in Akasaloka, cleaned out the barn (what a job!), rearranged some shelves, and finished up many other small tasks. **Many thanks** to all those who volunteered their time and energy and to **Khemavassika** for keeping everyone well-fed! A number of **other jobs remain** to be tackled at another time... **Paramashanti** is currently visiting Aryaloka from the U.K. for several months. For those who may not be aware, Paramashanti was among the first people to live and work here at Aryaloka after it was established as the first FWBO center in the U.S. Please take the opportunity to say hello and spend some time with him, if you haven’t already. We are lucky to have this kind and gracious man spend a bit of time with us...On November 3 and 4, the **Concord sangha at the NH State**

Prison for Men hosted a retreat which many Aryaloka folks attended (see articles). There are quite a few Buddhist mitras among the inmates, including two men who have asked for ordination. Sadhu!...The next day, November 5, Paramashanti led the annual **Sangha Day celebration** at Aryaloka...Finally, Anne Rugg, Leonie Luterman, and Sandy Bonin recently returned from a retreat at the **Taraloka Women’s Retreat Center in Wales** where they studied the Four Foundations of Mindfulness through the Satipatthana Sutta. All three agree that visiting a retreat center in the U.K. is a not-to-be-missed experience and encourage others to “cross the pond” if the opportunity comes up. (See article pg.10)

FRIDAY NIGHT PUJA

The rich devotional practice of puja is shared most Friday nights by those who find devotion an important part of their practice. We start with a period of meditation and follow this with puja. All who attend Sangha night on Tuesdays, mitras and order members are invited to participate. We start at 7 pm at either Aryaloka or Akasaloka - check the bulletin board for location.

Dates are as follows:

Jan 5 Jan 12 Jan 19 Jan 26

Feb 2 Feb 16

March 2 March 9 March 16 March 23

March 30

When we celebrate the Sevenfold Puja, which combines faith and devotion with poetry and sometimes an element of visual beauty, we find that our emotional energies are to some extent refined. When this happens, it becomes possible for the vision and insight of the higher thinking center to act through these refined, sublimated emotional centers directly on the moving center. In this way, the whole of life is completely transformed. *Sangharakshita—Ritual and Devotion*

Who Can Contribute to the Vajra Bell?

YOU CAN!

Submit an article or a poem or a picture for consideration, or simply share some information and we’ll do the writing for you. Just contact any of the Vajra Bell staff – see “Contact Us” section in this issue.

A Sense of Place – An Artist's Tribute to the Continents

Have you seen the beautiful silk wall hangings in the Aryaloka bookstore? They are the work of our own Betsy Sterling Benjamin. Her seven kesa (Buddhist monastic robes), one for each continent, will be exhibited at the renowned Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, MA from December 16, 2006 to June 3, 2007. (For more information, go to www.pem.org).

Betsy will be present at the opening on Saturday, December 16 from 2 to 4 p.m. to greet guests and explain her work. On Sunday, January 7, she will do a demonstration in the Atrium of the museum from 12 to 1:45 p.m., and present a lecture on "Art of Peace and Healing" from 2:30-3:15 p.m. in the Morse Auditorium.

"Painting with 'hot wax on thirsty cloth and deep, rich dyes' is an apt way to describe the rozome work I do. My background includes university study as well as practical training and research in traditional Japanese arts, from scroll painting and tea ceremony to kimono design and resist-dyeing techniques.

"Working with applied dyes and hot wax on silk is a meditative process for me,

centering and ecstatic, planned and spontaneous. I work with color and pattern – mark-making with resist-dye techniques - using the materials of acid dye, ganryo pigment and occasionally silk thread, all researched as part of my early studies in the kimono industry of Kyoto. My work clearly reflects eighteen years of life in Japan as well as impressions from winter studios in Spain, Costa Rica and Indonesia.

"An interest in the spiritual qualities of cloth, transformation, and a global view led me to work on a series of seven kesa (Buddhist monastic robes) prepared at the time of the millennium and involving communities around the world. As cloths of healing and unity, one for each continent, they were on-site in Machu Picchu, Antarctica, Zimbabwe, Spain, Tasmania, Minnesota and Kyoto on January 1, 2000.

"More and more, my work is a meditation and a centering in this diverse world."

In addition, Betsy's art will go international when it is shown at the "Songs of the Buddha Heart" exhibition at the Manchester Buddhist Centre, 16 Turner Street,

Manchester, England from February 3 to March 2, 2007. She will also present a lecture at the Centre entitled "Buddhist Textiles: Inspiration for Contemporary Art" on Friday, February 2, 2007. The official opening for the exhibit will be held on Saturday, February 3 from 3 to 5 p.m.

Songs of the Buddha Heart features eighteen layered-silk images on the theme of transience and reflection. This work explores Buddhist sutras and poetry coupled with imagery from Betsy's eighteen years as a resident of Kyoto, Japan. The images were created over a two-year period and include six pieces inspired by the poetry of Sangharakshita, the founder of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. Large-scale pieces two meters in height and more intimate, narrow, scroll-type pieces were created with the rozome (Japanese batik), gold powder stencils and shibori (clamp resist) techniques. In addition, a number of collaborative works include photo images on silk with stitched text by Luanne Rimel. Part of this exhibition was presented in a two-person show at Honen-in Temple, Kyoto, Japan in 2005.

Betsy Sterling Benjamin is an internationally known textile artist, the author of [The World of Rozome: Wax-Resist Textiles of Japan](#) and teaches at the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston.



Sangha Night at Aryaloka

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

Typically, our Tuesday night activities are:

- ◆ 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!

FROM VIDHUMA

I first joined the Aryaloka council just after my ordination in July of 1997. The other members at that time were Silaratna, Thiradhamma, Vajramati and Dayalocana. Paramashanti had left us, as had Vidyavati. Aside from Punya and Suriyadamma in the Boston area, these were the only Order members associated with Aryaloka at that time. So much has changed in the nine and one half years since then. The Council had no Chair at that time, and so the agendas were long and included everything anyone thought of, and the time was always too short to address everything. No (or at best, little) preparation occurred before the meetings, and initially the meetings were sandwiched into whatever space was available before the Chapter meeting (at that time only one Chapter existed at Aryaloka).

Although all variety of items might be brought up, the focus of most of the meetings was money - or, more accurately, the lack of money. Although we all held each other in high respect, worry, tension and frustration (about the finances) usually were the predominant emotional tones. Still the council did what it had to do, and what it had to do was survive.

Survival, bare and basic, continued to be the Council's worrisome responsibility and essential theme for my first five years or so. The membership went through a steady flow of change as new Order members joined the council and various Order members moved away. Suddhayu, and then Surakshita, were steady members for quite a few years. They were followed by Saddhamala and Amala who,

fortunately for the Council, have continued to give their experience, wisdom, guidance and hard work through to the present. Manapa and Aparajita, each for his time, came and left. Silaratna, Vajramati and Thiradhamma each for their own reasons left in due time. For a long stretch just finding a time to meet was a challenge. We often met in Manchester in the morning, and often we met weekly because critical decisions sometimes were that frequent.

Three significant evolutions occurred to lead the Council to its current stable, solid and sanguine place. Dayalocana became the Chair, and pulled the Council together. She organized. She prioritized. She infused more spiritual direction and

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The Council

From Sandy Bonin

A new "Council year" has begun with the annual election of officers and a slight change in membership. Officers for the coming year include Dayalocana, chair; Khemavassika, treasurer; Leonie Luteran, corresponding secretary; and Sandy Bonin, recording secretary. Outgoing members Vidhuma and Bodhipaksa were replaced by Sandy and Leonie. Dayalocana, on behalf of the Council, expressed thanks and gratitude for all that Vidhuma has contributed to the group over the last nine years, and much appreciation for his sound judgment and opinions. Bodhipaksa was also thanked for all that he has done to further the goals of the Council and the growth of Aryaloka.

The Council met with Aryaloka president Nagabodhi during his recent visit in order to review the Center's progress during the past year and discuss ideas for the future. His feedback and suggestions will help to guide the Council's work during the coming months.

Ideas are still being discussed for the out-

side, covered exit stairs that will be built from the second floor of the kitchen dome and the third floor of the shrine dome. In order to comply with current building codes, these structures will need to be regular staircases with landings rather than the circular staircases that were originally proposed.

Other maintenance work has also been ongoing. Leaks have been repaired in the bookstore, the mold in Shantiloka that resulted from the spring flooding has been removed, pipes have been moved in the downstairs barn space in order to make the heating of Akasaloka more efficient, and the installation of a vapor barrier for the basement of the kitchen dome is under discussion.

A new computer and related equipment has made the work of the office staff much easier and more efficient. The Council thanks the anonymous donor as well as Stephen Sloan for his setup and installation skills and his ongoing advice throughout the project.

U.K. Order member Paramashanti has arrived and will be visiting Aryaloka for several months. He has been helping the center in significant ways during his time here: he has been a supportive presence at Friends' Night on Tuesdays, hosted visiting church youth groups, traveled to the Boston sangha, led the Sangha Day celebration on November 5, met informally with sangha members, etc.

Amala has also announced that Karunamara and Vajrasuri, Order members who work in India, will be coming to Aryaloka for ten days in April. They will be available to meet with all women, perhaps give a talk to the sangha on a Tuesday night, and meet with women who have asked for ordination to explain how that process works in India.

Future Council meetings will be held on Feb. 11, Mar. 18, Apr. 15, May 6, and June 3 from 1-4 p.m. at the Center. Meetings are open to interested sangha members, although some discussion concerning personnel information may take place in executive session.

Good Question

By Sandy Bonin

A friend asked me recently, “So, what goes into keeping the Center going?” Our conversation went off in another direction, but later I began to think about it some more. Just what **does** go into keeping Aryaloka going?

At first I thought of the obvious: well, there’s dana – from retreats, Tuesday night study, mitra study, the Mandala of Supporting Friends, and other kinds of donations – that helps to pay for the phone, utilities, heat, snow plowing, salaries, regular maintenance and repairs, and a host of other ongoing and necessary expenses.

Then there are the kulas, groups working together for a common purpose, that spend many hours cleaning the three buildings, doing laundry, setting up for

retreats, mowing lawns, raking, shoveling, caring for the gardens and grounds, preparing beautiful shrines (including providing the flowers), doing infinite repair and maintenance work, preparing and publishing this newsletter, fundraising (e.g. the recent auction), planning programs and events, taking care of the trash and recycling, running the bookstore and the library, and on...and on... Without the generosity of these many volunteers, Aryaloka could never run as well or look so beautiful.

And of course, there is the Aryaloka Council whose members take on overall responsibility for the smooth operation and solvency of the Center.

But, you know, there’s a lot more that keeps Aryaloka going. It could be called “living the Dharma.” Living the Dharma happens when folks come together in

spiritual friendship and love for one another in order to support each other’s lives and practices; when someone shares a welcoming handshake or hug, reaches out to newcomers, and is truly attentive when others are speaking; when a person offers to make tea for someone else, or picks up a stray cup, or makes a helpful suggestion. It’s anticipating another’s needs and doing things to make people happy. Living the Dharma can be as big as spending the whole day at one of our Work Days or as small as sweeping a few crumbs off the floor. It transcends time and place. I believe that the Buddha’s large contingent of disciples lived together so harmoniously precisely because of their awareness of the importance of such thoughts, speech, and actions. Similarly, living the Dharma keeps Aryaloka going, too. May we all live the Dharma every day, wherever we may be!

Please

If you need to request Center space for a meeting, sign up for a retreat, or make other arrangements involving the facilities, please sign up through the office. This will help to avoid our double-booking the same space or inadvertently leaving someone’s name off a retreat signup list. E-mail is a great way to let us know what you need (info@aryaloka.org) and a phone message works fine, too (603-659-5456). Many thanks!

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energy. The second development was the constancy of the membership of the Council. Buddy Vaughan, Sue Bourne (now Khemavassika) and Michelle Racine (now Viriyalila) became the first mitras to be Council members, and brought their energy and ideas. The third

factor that developed was that of bringing financial stability to Aryaloka. I have been so very proud to have been part of the Council, to have worked over the years with so many good men and women. The Council now is flourishing, and I can see only bright times ahead under the guidance of those dedicated mem-

bers now on the Council.

Ed. Note: Although Vidhuma has mentioned the significant evolutions of the Council, they could not have happened without his wisdom and dedication to the growth and stability of Aryaloka. Sadhu, Vidhuma.

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act in completely moral, ethical ways without ever having to figure out what that meant. It would be a natural way of being. At this time in our lives, we have to aim to act ethically, meditate and study to learn more of what the dharma means as we live our daily lives.

As you read the positive and negative forms of the precepts, stop and think of one thing this means to you.

The Five Precepts

I undertake to abstain from taking life. With deeds of loving kindness, I purify my body.

Did this action harm someone or myself in any way? Did this action help someone or myself in any way?

I undertake to abstain from taking the not-given. With open-handed generosity, I purify my body.

Did I take anything from someone that was not given to me? Did I give something to someone with a generous heart?

I undertake to abstain from sexual misconduct.

With stillness, simplicity, and contentment, I purify my body.

Have I engaged in sexual activity that was harmful to another? Am I content with my sexual activity?

I undertake to abstain from false speech.

With truthful communication, I purify my speech.

Was I honest with myself about what I think or feel? Was my communication with another person honest?

I undertake to abstain from taking intoxicants.

With mindfulness clear and radiant, I purify my mind.

Did I intoxicate my mind with substances

or sense activities? Have I meditated to help keep my mind clear and aware?

As Dayalocana says in her article in this Vajra Bell, we are so fortunate to have our sangha, our community of spiritual friends to help us on our path as we grow in our practice of Buddhist ethics.

Changes at Wildmind

By Sunada

Do you know that you can now take Dharma classes on line through Wildmind? You've probably heard of the meditation classes we offer, but we have begun expanding our line of courses to include other interesting topics. Right now there are courses on Mindfulness in Daily Life, Mindfulness at Work, as well as a series on Introductory Buddhism, based on exploring The Wheel of Life. There are others coming in the near future. To find out more or to sign up, visit our website at www.wildmind.org.

There are also a few changes in progress at Wildmind that you may be interested to hear about. Wildmind has been very successful in the five years it's been in business, in fact, maybe too successful! Ear-

lier this year, Bodhipaska realized he was so busy running a growing non-profit, he no longer had the time to write or teach - the two main reasons he set up the business in the first place. So he decided it was time to refocus. Going forward, he and I will concentrate on writing, publishing CDs and online teaching, and have passed on all retail activities (i.e. selling meditation cushions, incense, etc.) to Bill McGuire. Bill will continue running it as a separate business.

By happy coincidence, Josh, who had managed the retail operations, decided he wanted to move on and return to college. At the same time, Wildmind's accountant was looking for a new office, so she took over the lease that they no longer needed. Everything worked out perfectly.

Part of the restructuring has involved winding up Wildmind as a non-profit and re-establishing it as a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC). What this means in practical terms is that Bodhipaksa has much more financial freedom to write and teach. The other nice thing is that he gets to play Santa Claus. Winding up a non-profit requires giving away all assets to other non-profits. So things like computers and furniture have gone to Aryaloka, the Missoula FWBO center, Aids Response Seacoast and the Millford Christian School. Bodhipaksa says it's been really satisfying to give stuff away to such worthy causes!

Retreat at the New Hampshire State Prison

From Rich Cormier:

The Dhamma Vicaya Gana Sangha held a retreat on November 3rd and 4th at the New Hampshire State Prison. The theme of the event was Spiritual Friendship/Sangha – an appropriate choice considering November is traditional Sangha Month. Order Members and Mitras from near and far were in attendance: Vidhuma, Paramashanti, Thiradhamma, Bodhipaksa, Vajramati, Steve Bell, Marilyn Dyer, Steve and Debby Cardwell, Josh Nute, Dave Carr, Candace Copp, Venera Gattonini, Stephen Sloan, and Frank Gladu. (I hope none were forgotten.) This was by far the largest turnout we've had from outside guests and we are eternally grateful.

On Friday night we welcomed three additional members into our Sangha. Robert Boyd, Charles Rawlings, and Robert Jerome took their 'Refuges and Precepts' in a ceremony led by Dave Carr. We had plenty of time to greet our guests and set a friendly tone for the next day.

Saturday continued right where the evening meeting left off; we got to know and deepen our connections with the other members of the Sangha. With a full schedule ahead, we eagerly began with the Shrine dedication. This was followed by what I can only describe as a very powerful Metta Bhavana meditation. The energy of peace and friendship could be felt and it was carried by the group throughout the day.

Bodhipaksa gave an inspiring talk on the Four Means of Unification for Sangha: Generosity, Kindly or Affectionate Speech, Beneficial Activity, and Exemplification. What a gift it was to have such a gifted presentation.

After lunch we regrouped for the afternoon sessions. A panel discussion was organized by Thiradhamma. Steve Bell, Debbie Cardwell, James Mosonyi, and Richard Cormier each expressed their personal understandings and experiences with Spiritual Friendship/Sangha. Then we broke up into smaller groups of six,

where everyone shared their feelings and thoughts about the topic.

Thank you to the Men's GFR Group for their gift of the singing bowl. We use it every time we meet. Thank you!

What a wonderful experience this retreat created. I left truly inspired to develop my practice and cultivate Sangha. Thank you to everyone present at the retreat and to those in the background who could not attend. There is always an open invitation to any who may want to attend future retreats or weekly meetings. Simply contact Dave Carr or Bodhipaksa for info. Be well and at peace.

From Bodhipaksa:

...What an amazing retreat we had at the prison in Concord on Saturday. [Fifteen Aryaloka folks] attended along with a similar number of inmates (nine mitras and a few guests who were interested in checking out Buddhism and the FWBO.

All of our visitors went away inspired by the level of practice shown by the inmates, and the inmates - especially the mitras and the two men who have asked for ordination - were incredibly appreciative to have more contact with the wider Aryaloka sangha than is normally possible. The atmosphere was celebratory, friendly, welcoming, and appreciative. It's really impossible to communicate in words just how satisfying and uplifting this event was. You really had to be there, and I hope that the next time we do an event like this we'll have even more "civilians" present.

Sangharakshita has been very supportive of Aryaloka's outreach efforts at the prison. He's written to virtually all (if not all) of the mitras there, and he asks about the progress of the prison sangha on a regular basis. I do hope that even more people will support activities there in the future.

From Marilyn Dyer:

When Bodhipaksa asked me to write a short article on the retreat, I readily assented. It has been difficult, however, to write my thoughts and impressions. I can't seem to adequately express the intensity of the positive feelings and the spiritual inspiration I experienced. My expectation was that I would meet men who were practicing the Dharma seriously in a very difficult environment. Nothing prepared me, however, for the depth of practice so palpable in the meditation, one of the stillest I have ever experienced. Our commonality of practice seemed to transcend many other differences. We truly experienced sangha even though many of us had never met before.

The sangha at the prison were welcoming, gracious, straightforward and generous. Their direct and honest communication was the very essence of spiritual friendship. I would strongly encourage the wider sangha to seize any opportunity to volunteer or attend a retreat at the prison. Meeting these wonderful dharma practitioners will bring a mutual enrichment and inspiration.

From Steve Cardwell:

I agree with Bodhipaksa that this was a very special retreat and a big thank you to Bodhipaksa, Dave Carr, Thiradhamma, Paramashanti, Vajramati and Vidhuma for their participation and organizational activities.

A large amount of participation by volunteers is important to the men of the Concord Sangha to help them see that there are many sangha members on the outside who really care about their Dharma practice. This support from Aryaloka will provide them with increased confidence and connection.

It's quite possible that the benefits just from last Saturday's retreat could give these men enough positive energy to strengthen their chances for success on the outside.....

YES to the UK!

By Anne Rugg

For years I've resisted the suggestion to do a retreat in the U.K. I would stubbornly whine, "But my sangha is HERE, I don't CARE about what goes on in England..."

Well, all that has changed! Along with Leonie and Sandy, I recently attended a 10 day meditation retreat (based on the Satipatthana Sutta) at Taraloka, in Wales. The experience was beyond fantastic and I must admit that this is the first retreat in which I experienced great sadness in leaving.

What struck me was the depth of practice

of many of the retreatants, some over 30 years! Their deep devotion and integration of the Dharma was so evident in how they conducted themselves and related to others. I believe one of the women leading the retreat is a stream-entrant. Mind-blowing.

I had the great pleasure of visiting an FWBO woman's community and gained more of a sense of what the Order is like in England - BIG, vibrant, with so much going on in terms of classes, retreats, and talks by well-known FWBO authors.

I also had the opportunity to visit the Manchester Buddhist Center (would you believe four stories, and packed with

classrooms, coffee/tea bar, restaurant, office space, yoga rooms, meditation rooms, gift shop, etc.?!). The collection of contemporary Buddhist art was awe-inspiring. Our own Betsy will have a show there in February!

But don't take my word for it...go see for yourself! I'm already fantasizing about my next trip across the pond to Dhana-kosa, a spectacular FWBO retreat center in the wilds of Scotland.

From the Editor

From Leonie Luterman

Sometimes it seems to me that the cultures clash around this time of year. Our family has just celebrated an early Chanukah, even as I prepare the Christmas lists. I see the Christmas, Chanukah and Kwanza celebrations as a sort of culturally-sanctioned time of full-blown generosity. Not a bad impulse. And one clearly founded on the practice of ethics, in what we give and how and to whom and with

what motivation. The precepts can come alive in all we do, but especially as we head into a season that can seem fertile ground for chaos, inner and outer.

What is a seasonally appropriate Buddhist practice? There will be the annual winter retreat for those who can get away for a few days to this quiet place. For those who cannot manage that, we will again offer a full day of Meditating for Peace on January first, and that seems a lovely annual re-alignment of priorities.

Perhaps Vessantara* said it best when he wrote about the meaning of the vajra and the bell: "...the vajra stands for the practice of generosity, ethics, patience, effort and meditation; the bell stands for the wisdom with which these first five perfections are imbued."

May we practice with delight!

*[The Vajra and the Bell](#)

NAGALOKA BUDDHIST CENTER

Nagaloka, the FWBO center in Portland, has an active schedule (visit www.nagalokabuddhistcenter.org).

Sunday mornings at 9am there is meditation with Mindfulness of Breathing

Friday evenings at 7pm meditation is with Metta Bhavana.

Wednesday evenings at 7 pm is Sangha Night. Each member of the sangha is preparing and leading an evening during December and January.

Dec 9th from 2-4:30pm Nancy Lorraine lead a family fun afternoon creating the 5 colorful Jina Buddhas. This was great fun.

Vajra Bell's Interview with Nagabodhi, President of Aryaloka

VB: How did you come to the Dharma?

NB: I came to the Dharma after having somewhat of a spontaneous mystical experience while on a camping holiday in Portugal in 1968. Soon afterwards, friends of my father lent me a collection of their books on religion and mysticism. Once I read a few of the Buddhist texts, I knew I had found my home.

VB: How did you come to be president of a number of FWBO centers around the world?

NB: Around 1989 I visited Aryaloka to lead a study retreat on Shantideva's Bodhicaryavatara. I think I must have made a good impression because when Sangharakshita introduced the 'Presidential System' a few months later, the folks at Aryaloka asked me to oblige.

VB: What centers do you visit and where are they?

NB: I am president of Aryaloka and NYC in the US; Auckland, Wellington and Sudarshanaloka in New Zealand; Windhorse Publications and Sheffield in the UK.

VB: How are they similar/different from our center?

NB: Well, the months of November thru' March tend to be warmer in some of those places! Some, like Auckland, Wellington, and Sheffield, are urban centers with no retreat facilities. And Windhorse Publications is a whole other thing entirely. But I would say that all the teaching centers have a common flavor. Anyone attending any of them would feel at home in any of the others. You'd be able to meditate together, do puja, discuss the Dharma with a common understanding of terms and underlying principles, in particular as translated into a western idiom for us by Sangharakshita. And I think you'd feel a very common bond with the people practising there, and trying to apply Dharma principles in their lives.

VB: What are the most rewarding/challenging aspects of your role?

NB: I enjoy meeting people, and love watching their potential unfold as they deepen their practice and try to live a Dharma life, especially when they place a high value on sharing their discovery of the Dharma with others. I enjoy helping and making a difference with my visits, which is often quite easy. Simply bringing an outsider's perspective and asking the obvious questions can sometimes work wonders.

VB: What changes in Aryaloka have you seen since you have started coming here?

NB: I've seen Aryaloka become fully American. When I first came along, most of the residents, the teachers, and people 'in charge' were Brits. The facility has become more beautiful and the center more financially secure, which is great. I have seen the sangha pass thru a number of phases with several highs and a few very worrying lows. Right now Aryaloka seems to be in

the grip of a very encouraging high, with more people attending and getting more deeply involved than at any time I can remember.

VB: What is your vision for Aryaloka?

NB: My vision for Aryaloka? Well, I'm more interested in your vision! But, okay, I look forward to seeing the place financially and physically strong and secure. I'd like to see another twenty to thirty Order members--certainly within the next five to ten years--all getting on well with each other and making huge leaps in their practice. I'd like to see several of them teaching at Aryaloka, of course, while also initiating more outreach programs in the neighboring towns - as Dharmasuri has so successfully done in Portland. I would like to see a good number of Order members in their twenties and thirties. The sangha's survival will depend on that. I would love to hear of more mitras and Order members finding the time to take some longer solitary retreats (as well as retreats in general).

VB: What are you favourite Dharma books?

NB: My favourite Dharma books remain, I think, the Dhammapada and the Bodhicaryavatara. They are so compact, and yet between them they say everything.



Upcoming Events

(all events at Aryaloka unless noted 'Akasaloka')

JANUARY

Monday, **Jan. 1**, 6am-6pm: *Meditate for Peace Day*
 Saturday, **Jan. 20**, 10am-4pm : *Introductory Meditation Day on Metta, Loving-kindness*
 Friday 7pm-Sunday 4pm, **Jan. 26-28**: *Bodhicaryavatara Retreat*, open to practitioners with some experience

FEBRUARY

Thursday 7pm-Sunday 2pm, **Feb. 1-4**: *Yoga and Meditation Retreat*, open to new participants
 Saturday, **Feb. 3**, 10am-4pm: *Introductory Meditation Day on Mindfulness*, (Akasaloka}
 Friday 7pm-Sunday 4pm, **Feb. 9-11**: Weekend retreat for men who have requested ordination

MARCH

Sunday-Friday, **March 4-9**: Times TBA *Meditation Residency Retreat*, 5 days of intensive meditation, option for sangha to join the silent retreat for morning and evening meditations, (Akasaloka)
 Saturday, **March 10**, 9am-4pm: *Women's Cabin Fever Holistic Health Day*

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.

FWBO women now have two private preceptors (for women who have asked for ordination) in North America: Karunadevi on the west coast, and our own Dayalocana on the east coast.

DEFINITIONS OF PLACE NAMES

Aryaloka = Noble Realm

Akasaloka (the annex) = A place for finding the feeling of spaciousness in your life

Shantiloka (the solitary cabin) = A place of peace

Nagaloka (Portland) = A place of deep wisdom which resonates with the ocean of the Dharma

WEBSITES OF INTEREST

www.aryaloka.org
www.nagaloka.org
www.wildmind.org
www.sfbuddhistcenter.org
www.fwbomissoula.org

www.taraloka.org
www.buddhafiield.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

RECOMMENDED

From Marilyn Dyer

Stranger than Fiction – Having not read any reviews prior to attending this movie, I was very pleasantly surprised. I expected a reasonably good comedy, but the movie is more thought-provoking and much deeper than I anticipated, raising questions such as; Who is writing the script of our lives? To what ends do we sacrifice ourselves or other individuals? What role does compassion play in the arena of art?
