

The Bede Griffiths Sangha Newsletter

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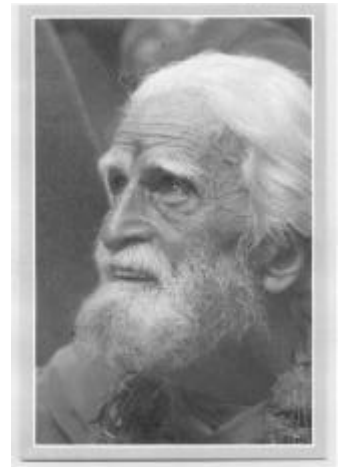
Editorial

As we send this newsletter to press the summer is drawing to a close and the colder mornings and evenings of autumn are upon us. Members of the Sangha have been experiencing the wonders of this transition as the energy of summer changes to the quiet of autumn, at the Forest Retreat in Wales. Of course during the summer there was a wonderful energy as we had Brother Martin with us at Park Place and many parts of England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. It was an exhausting trip for him and an inspirational visit for so many members of the Sangha, as well as for many others.

In putting this Newsletter together I became aware of a theme in all the contributions, that of the presence of the sacred in our world. Father Bede made this his theme in his talk in Australia which we reprint, and the same theme comes out in many of our other contributions. A strong sense of the sacred is what leads so many people both to search for the divine in their lives and to express it in ways that touches their hearts. If anything, the Sangha is here to say to people, "Yes we understand that search for the sacred, Father Bede understood it too and here is a commu-

nity of people who understand it". We hope that this newsletter contains some inspirations for you.

Jill and I have decided that we want to



Father Bede Griffiths

be closer to the rhythm of nature in the countryside and so we are moving to a small cottage outside Canterbury. Our new address and phone number is on the back page. We would love you to come and visit us there.

Namaste

Adrian Rance

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The Sangha trip to India: 2nd – 21st Jan 2001

The Sangha is going to India in January 2001 – a longstanding dream come true.

Plans are now being finalised with Soul of India Tours, a recognised travel agent. You will find details of the trip and a booking form enclosed with this mailing. We would like the trip to be an extension of our life as a commu-

we want to make sure you have a chance to get to know your travelling companions and fellow seekers before we actually leave for India. We would hope to get everyone together for a day some time in late summer to talk about the journey and to share expectations (and fears!). Do ring Adrian and Jill if you would like to talk about it before committing yourself to the expense. We hope it will be a wonderful experience for us all.

Return to the Centre

By Father Bede

The idea of returning to the centre related to Fr Bede's sense of the sacred. It was an important theme throughout his life and in 1978 he wrote a book entitled 'Return to the Centre'. This is the first part of a talk that he gave on this theme in Perth Australia in 1992. The talk was recorded and transcribed by Doug Conlan

I want to speak today on the subject of 'Return to the Centre'. From the very beginning of history Man has always sought for a centre of communion with God, communion with the spirit of the infinite. It goes back to Palaeolithic times, nearly 50,000 years before Christ, people were still making these centres. And I feel today what the world has lost is this spiritual centre; there is no spiritual centre in the world today. There are maybe individual centres - maybe we all create some kind of centre, but the world as a whole today has no spiritual centre. That is why we are so terribly divided. There is conflict and confusion - empires breaking up and so on - it is an urgent need for us all to find the spiritual centre which unites us with God and unites us with humanity. It has to be a bond between the whole of humanity.

Now in the course of human history there have been these various centres, and the first that is clear I think is the megalithic age. I don't know whether you know these huge stone circles that are found almost all over the world - vast pillars of stone erected in a circle. In England it's Stonehenge, near Salisbury where I used to live. Stonehenge is a magnificent example. It's about 3,000 years BC I think, a huge circle of stones which weigh about a hundred tonnes I think. How they got them into position nobody knows. Extraordinary achievement, but there they are. And everybody today recognises it was a centre; it was somewhere you could be in communion with the universal spirit. You mark off a horizon and that is called a *tenemos*, and it keeps out the profane world; you are trying to find a sacred centre. In the ancient world, the whole world was held to be sacred, the earth, the sky, the sea, but there were certain places where you could get in touch with the sacred in a special way, so these megaliths appear.

There is one in Malta I believe, and in Spain, and on the coast of France in Brittany, there is a very famous one, and then in Britain there is the famous one at Stonehenge, but there are others there also, and then it goes up to Norway and Sweden, and I think to Japan and the Pacific, Easter island I think is another famous one. So the whole world has these megaliths, and the one theory was that it all comes from Egypt and that prevailed for some time, but now they believe

that these are older than the Egyptian pyramids; they are 4,000 or 5,000 BC. There was some movement which spread all over the world, creating these centres. It may have had a commercial base. In England for instance Cornwall has always had tin mines, and they may have been in search of metals like that. So there may have been, as there often is in such things, a secular reason behind it. But whether they were commercial or whatever, and this is an important thing, they had to have a sacred centre.

Perhaps I should add at this point, this still remains in India, you know; that everything is sacred. This is the opposite of Australia or America where nothing is sacred. All is profane. But in India, still as I say, the earth is sacred. You never plough a field for rice without a ceremony. When the workers are going to plant the rice they ask me to come along and we have some ritual to bless this ploughing of the fields. Or if you are going to build a house they come along, and often they put up the doors and windows, but when the doors go in I have to come along and bless it. So it is always consecrated. Everything has to be consecrated. We must not complete any work without offering it to God. A particularly interesting one, is we have founded a co-operative society at our village. There are about 200 or 300 weavers there, and they were being exploited, so we formed a co-operative society and I used to go to their meetings and every meeting began with prayer to one of the Hindu gods, and then even the account books had to be consecrated, because nothing must be outside this sacred area. That is the idea. And so these - wherever people go, they form these sacred sites, and it begins at least 5,000 BC and then it continues of course through all these ages of the world.

Another centre is a mountain. The idea was the sky is always considered as the great source of the sacred. It always comes down from the sky. And a mountain is a place where you are nearer to the sky, nearer to the sacred, so mountains have always been considered sacred. Mount Olympus in Greece is an obvious one. In India Mount Mehru is considered the centre of the universe. This is another thing, these sacred places were the centres of the universe. You didn't know much about the outer world, you were in contact with the supreme holiness there, and therefore you were at the centre of the whole world. So mountains are sacred, and in our area for instance, our ashram is near the river, and there are two hills in the neighbourhood and one simply rises straight out of the plain and there is a temple to Siva on that, and then in the local village there is a temple to Siva, and then on another hill on the other side, there is another temple on the hill. So

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we are surrounded by these sacred places, the temple on the hill, and practically every village in India has its temple, and they become centres of spiritual awareness. It is very real, you are aware of the sacred character of these things all the time. So the mountain is one.

A temple of course is a sacred place always, but the palace of the kings is also sacred, because the kings in India are all sacred persons. It's very interesting, in one of the palaces there are three bedrooms. On the lower one was the King's ordinary bedroom, the second one he used when he was fasting and in the third one he celebrated his union with God. So there are three stages, the earth, the middle and the supreme. And of course we find even today in England, the kings or the queen are crowned in Westminster Abbey. It hasn't got much meaning today, but it is something very real. The king is not simply a human being you have chosen to rule over you; the king is someone who is consecrated by God. He has authority from God. This has its obvious dangers of course; that's why so often we get rid of the kings, but it is also a way of relating to people, to a central figure. That is the value of it.

And then Greece. The Greeks were not particularly religious, but you know whenever a city was founded - and the Greek world was made up of city states - whenever a city was founded, so sacred fire was always brought there, and was enshrined there and became a centre. I think even probably you know the Olympic Games when they carry the sacred fire to Athens, that is probably the same thing. Sports also are sacred. There is nothing outside the sacred in that world. So these examples from the ancient world.

Now in our own world there are still sacred places. Jerusalem - most people in the West, the Jews and Christians regard Jerusalem as a centre. It used to be, and still is of course, a place of pilgrimage for thousands of people. And then Rome, all through the Middle Ages, Rome was a sacred centre; it is extraordinary how everybody wanted to go to Rome, because St Peter was supposed to be buried there, and when a person is buried in a place, he is present there, he is not gone, he is always present. You go into the presence. I might have mentioned in India, you don't go to meet a holy man, you don't go so much to listen to him, or for any other purpose, but to have *darshan*, to be in his presence, and his presence is the presence of God in him. We have always had the sense that the holy man is the person in whom God is present. And I might mention - it is quite touching - I wear this *kavi*, it is a sacred colour in India, and it means you are a consecrated person and often Hindus will come and prostrate, because they see God in me. It is very touching really. They are not worshipping me, but it's God they see present there.

We have places like Jerusalem and Rome, and in India of course, Benares, which is also known as Varanasi.

The devout Hindu wants to bathe in the river there and to be cremated there. And another aspect of that is that when you bathe, first of all the waters are sacred, but also bathing is a kind of death. You go to the waters of the Ganges there, the sacred river, and then you are cremated, your ashes are thrown into the river. So Benares is still a centre of that kind, you see.

And then Mecca is an obvious example. The Ka'bah, the sacred stone, has been there for ages and then the mosque was built round it. All Moslem devotion centres on the Ka'bah. And of course once in their lives every Moslem is supposed to make the pilgrimage to the sacred place, from which Islam comes. It is all deeply meaningful, it is deep in the psyche, it is not just a journey you make, it is responding to a deep need in your nature to find God, to find the place of God. In the Bible it says that Jacob laid down and had a vision, and the angels were going up and down, and when he woke up he said, 'God must be in this place'. So he called it Bethel, the House of God and he put up a pillar. That is typical, for it became a sacred place where he had his vision. I believe that every Hindu temple springs from some incident of that kind; some event took place to make it a holy place, and then the temple was built around it.

So people are in search of the sacred all the time, and for Roman Catholics I would mention Lourdes, where there was this vision of the Virgin Mary, and millions of people go there year after year. Extraordinary events take place and for many people it quite often is a sacred place. It is a centre. And for Catholics today of course, Rome still has this sacred character, though perhaps not to the extent that it had in the past.

First then our centre is a place, any place can become sacred, and that is why, again in India, when you build a house, you never finish it without consecrating it. And also you normally relate it to the four sections of space, north, south, east, and west. You relate it to the Cosmos. And this is so important.

Ancient man always wanted to be related to the cosmos. God the supreme was there and God was present in all the parts of space and so you centred yourself in the presence of God and the whole creation. We have lost all that. We have lost all this sense of solidarity, with the whole of creation. We are members of this whole. And of course today we are very conscious of the ecological problems; how we are destroying the world because we are not seeing it as sacred. We think we can do anything we like with it. You can burn it and destroy it, cut down the forests and so on. It is a neutral matter, you can just get on with it, but that is totally contrary to all the ancient world. You couldn't cut down a tree without worshipping, and the spirit of the tree remained. When you cut it down, you worshipped, and asked him to forgive you for cutting down his tree. You were in touch with the sacred.

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But our condition all springs from the Renaissance in the 16th century. Until the 16th century practically the whole world lived in the state of knowledge of the sacred. It is obvious in India and in China, and in Africa it is obvious too, and in Europe right up to the 15th century there were all these holy places, holy wells, there were many sacred wells and holy trees. In a district where I lived for some time in the Cotswolds, all the rivers were named after a saint. The river was called the Coln and you had Coln St Rogers, Coln St Dennis and so on.

And so everything was in that sacred world. And the Renaissance broke that. Mind you, the sacred has its problems and one of them is it is both good and evil. It is not just good. Nature is both good and evil. It is very lovely, but it also gives you thunder and lightning and earthquakes. So the sacred is dangerous. You have to be aware of that negative side. And many of the Hindu Gods - Brahma is the God of Creation, Vishnu is the God of Preservation, Siva of Destruction, and very dangerous. But he is also God of re-creation, the God of grace. You go through death, and you are renewed, and Shiva is the one who renews you. Siva is the God of Creation and Destruction, so also is Kali and Ramakrishna, the holy man of modern India. He was totally devoted to Kali, not in her destructive form, but as the loving mother.

So the opposite is there. Siva is both creation and destruction. The Siva, the Nataraja, has four arms, and one arm holds the light, and that is creation, and the other holds the flame, and that is destruction, and another points to his foot as a source of grace, and the fourth one holds up his hand in blessing. So he is creator, destroyer and renewer of life. These are symbols which draw millions of people and rule their hearts. So that is an example of how the sacred works in that context.

In the next issue we print the rest of this talk in which Fr Bede talks of the centre as a person and how Jesus is the fulfilment of the sacred in humanity.

The Dancing Siva Kim Nataraja

At our retreats the shrine usually has upon it a figure of Nataraja as well as other Hindu and Christian symbols. We thought that it would be helpful to have an explanation of Nataraja and in this article Kim Nataraja, a member of the Sangha in London, explains the symbolism and its relevance for Christian seekers.

Fr Bede thought highly of Fritjof Capra's book *The Tao of Physics* and used to often refer to it and quote from it. It was the coming together of the new physics and the ancient philosophies of the East that struck such a chord with him.

In this book the Universe is described as an infinite ocean of energy, as an interconnected web of relations, patterns within patterns of which we are one. This view of the universe is based on the findings of quantum physics - the research into the sub-atomic world, where an endless variety of forms come spontaneously into being, disintegrate again and transform one into the other. In essence it is a dynamic universe of movement, in constant flux, ever changing.

This for the West is a revolutionary new view of the universe but it has been for thousands of years the foundation of the world vision of both Hinduism and Buddhism. The cosmos in Hinduism is organic, fluid, growing and in rhythmic motion. Buddhism stresses the impermanence of all forms. *Samsara* in fact means 'incessantly in motion'.

Siva Nataraja - the Cosmic Dancer - has become for many people of different backgrounds, ages and cultures the most perfect personification, the universal symbol of this Creative Energy, in and beyond all phenomena.

"In the night of Brahma, Nature is inert and cannot dance till Siva wills it. He rises from his rapture, and dancing sends through inert matter pulsing waves of awakening sound, and lo! Matter also dances appearing as a glory around Him. Dancing he sustains its manifold phenomena. In the fullness of time, still dancing, he destroys all forms and names by fire and gives new rest." (*The Dance of Shiva* by Ananda K Coomaraswamy)

The meaning of Nataraja's Dance is expressed symbolically by his posture and attributes.

Siva dances on the Demon of Ignorance - *Apasmarapuruṣa*: Human beings can only reach true wisdom by conquering the ignorance/illusion, which takes the phenomenal world as real, instead of seeing all as a reflection or manifestation of the Ultimate Reality underlying everything.

He dances within the flamed arch: The arch represents nature, Prakriti, the processes of the Universe and the Transcendental Light sustaining it. Siva dancing within and touching the arch with head, hands, and feet is the universal omnipresent Spirit - Purusha.

In one ear he wears a female earring, and in the other a male one: signifying that He represents both the masculine and the feminine energy in the Cosmos.

He has four arms: the upper right arm carries a drum signifying Creation, the Creative Energy of Sound - Evolution and I the palm of His upper left arm he bears a tongue of flame, which symbolises Destruction, but also purification.

The balance of the hands gives equal weight to both creation and destruction, as necessary for purification, evolution and transformation.

The lower right arm is the abhaya mudra, the 'fear not' gesture and the lower left arm is pointing to the lifted foot, indicating release from ignorance - Grace.

All activities happen simultaneously - creation, destruction and the granting of Grace.

"The essential significance of Siva's dance is three fold: first it is the image of His Rhythmic Play as the course of all movement within the Cosmos which is represented by the arch; secondly, the Purpose of his Dance is to release the countless souls of men from the snare of illusion; thirdly. The Place of the Dance, Chidambaram, the Centre of the Universe is within the Heart." (Ananda K Coomaraswamy)

"The supreme Intelligence dances in the soul...for the purpose of removing our sin. By these means, our Father scatters the darkness of illusion (maya), burns the thread of causality (karma), stamps down evil (avidya: ignorance), showers grace, and lovingly plunges the soul in the ocean of bliss (ananda). They never see rebirths, who behold this mystic dance." (*Unmai Vilakkam - Tamil text*)

When Fr Bede visited Sr. Pascaline, a member of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration at the Osage Monastery, Forest of Peace, in Oklahoma in 1978. He presented them with a statue of Nataraja, saying that Christians must begin to see Nataraja as the symbol of the risen Christ. It is easy to see why he felt this to be so.

The Gayatri Mantra

The Gayatri Mantra is chanted at the start of morning, midday and evening prayers both at Shantivanam and at our retreats.

John Ryder offers a reflection on the meaning of this ancient prayer.

Om Bhur Bhuva Svaha
Tat Savitur Varenyam
Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi
dhiyo yo nah prachodayat

This most ancient and profound Sanskrit mantra, known as the mother of the Vedas, provides a bridge between the silence of meditation and the activity of the liturgy. While its sound alone is beautiful and potent, its complex and deeply layered meaning give much light to its use in our contemplation and celebration. I hope these few simple reflections will help.

Om the great Cosmic "Yes!" is the Word which expresses the inexpressible Reality beyond space and time, experienced as pure Being, Consciousness and Bliss.

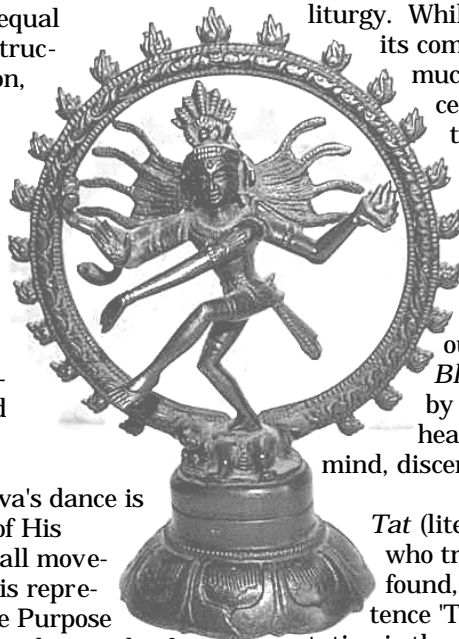
Bhur is the earthly realm which maintains our body, perceptible through the senses. *Bhuva* is the heavens (the sky), apprehended by thought and imagination. *Svaha* is the heavenly realm beyond the reach of sense and mind, discerned through intuition.

Tat (literally 'That') designates the Supreme Self, who transcends name, form and concept. It is found, for instance, in the great Upanishadic sentence 'Tat Tvam Asi' (Thou art That). Its manifestation is through *Savitur*, the spiritual Sun, source of all life and power, of which the visible sun is a sacramental sign. By contemplating on this Being as *Varenyam* (adorable), the desire to worship unfolds spontaneously as we open to the outpouring of divine love.

By *Bhargo* is conveyed the energy which streams forth as light, dispelling the darkness of ignorance and sin, filling our nature with vitality. *Devasya* means the Glory of God, radiating from the heart to pervade the whole of creation. So - *Dhimahi* - 'we meditate', and in this prayer of union, partake of the divine life.

Our response is through *Dhiyo*, the Buddi, the intelligence of both heart and intellect, and *Prachodayat* implies illumination, invigoration and guidance. That complete final line 'May he enlighten our understanding' implies that in this work the doership is His alone and our task is simple one of letting go.

Future Sangha



A Pilgrim on the move. Christa-Maria Herrmann

Christa-Maria Herrmann reflects on the Sangha retreat held at Park Place this summer and raises the important question of the symbols and liturgy used in our common prayer and the need to find universal symbols that cross cultural barriers. This subject has been discussed in previous newsletters and we would welcome an on-going debate about it. Please do let us have your views:

A pilgrim is on the move towards a chosen goal. This goal gives him his identity. He /she can only move to that 'Attractor', if she has not too much baggage. A pilgrim has constantly to leave things behind - not just material things or emotional security, but also expectations and cultural and intellectual concepts.

The image came to me on the way home from the retreat at Park Place Pastoral Centre with the Bede Griffiths Sangha. As a pilgrim I am aware that such letting go is a constant companion. Growing up amongst Protestants and trained to be a Pastor put me close to Bede Griffiths's mother saying, that her worst fears would be if one of her dear ones would become a Catholic. For most of my life Catholics were definitely the "others". Later, after two decades of involvement with Zen, years of association with Tibetan Buddhism and Indian philosophy under several highly honoured spiritual masters, I stood at the gate of this "group of others", asking myself - what am I doing here?

To my surprise, what I found in the English countryside were Franciscan sisters from India, wearing saris; a Benedictine monk talking about Vedanta on four different levels of consciousness; early morning chanting of one of the oldest prayers in the world; long periods of silent meditation and readings and prayers from Celtic traditions, the Upanishads and the Bible. Finally I partook in celebrating mass, by a wonderfully calm, focused priest with a mixture of chants from the community of Taize and Sanskrit bhajans.

It was clear that this pilgrim has to leave some more baggage behind! I have to let go of yet another layer of conditioning: prejudice against "the Catholics". For having been given the chance to unlearn I give thanks to all involved. And I realise that this is, in the smallest way, similar to the pilgrimage Fr Bede Griffiths undertook. He left behind the ancient, structural ways and expectations and entered fully into a new culture; finding there forms which expressed the experience of the eternal, universal truth new, but equally profound. He took these new forms for his Indian community.

Forever trying to learn and assimilate. I ask myself, what does it mean for me, living in England in a western industrialised society with many cultures, subculture and purest materialism. What is 'expressing eternal truth' in our culture? What forms can we use to worship? To follow in Fr Bede's footsteps is more than just choosing new hymns or exchanging the un-understandable Latin rites with equally un-understandable Sanskrit rites. He taught to leave the baggage of calcified religious habits behind and express ourselves from within, a new freedom. The forum gone - truth remains: but how to express, how to communicate that truth.

Surely Vedic chants, Indian cultural forms are most beautiful and personally very dear to my heart - but it is using yet another 'foreign form' just as certainly as the Roman Catholic forms were foreign in India. Are we then repeating an experience with changed prefixes, by using the Indian customs and chants? Can't we find our own new forms?

Br Martin said this weekend, that contemplation of nature started insight into metaphysical truth, and that is universally acknowledged. Fr Bede too experienced his metaphysical roots there. Can we re-discover truth and forms of worship through discovering sacred nature; sacred nature in a sacred universe? As Fr Bede said: In India water is sacred, earth is sacred, air is sacred, fire is sacred. These elements are a universally recognised turning point between material and subtle energies. Can they act as a door to rediscover sacred existence?

Can the form to express our relationship with God be re-discovered in their sacredness? If we go back to these basics wouldn't that bring us back to the Celtic wisdom, or roots? That too has to be recognised as being 'stuck in memory' as Br Martin phrased it. Is the form we choose to communicate with the divine irrelevant, as long as it is pursued with the right heart, the right intention and with love?

Are all forms equally valid - as long as the intentions are pure and come from love. Is love all that counts? As the Sufi poet Kabir says:

'You will not find me in stupas, nor in Indian shrine rooms, nor in synagogues, nor in cathedrals. Not in masses, nor kirtans, not in legs winding around your own neck, nor in eating nothing but vegetables. When you look for me, you will see me instantly - You will find me in the tiniest house of time'.

Might I add: You will find him in the love of the pure heart and there worship takes place - whatever external form we choose.

Your letters

The Indian mass in Wales

On the weekend that the Sangha retreat was held at the Rowan Tree Centre in May, I was unable to attend because I was organising a Maypole festival in my village. Inspired by the festivals I had seen in India, a group of us in 'Friends of the Earth' have been developing a festival, based on the traditional Maypole dancing, but with other elements that are meaningful to us. It is now in the sixth year

I had written to John to say I couldn't come to the retreat but would love to be involved if there was an Indian mass. He agreed to this. The following is an extract from a letter I wrote following the experience.

"...like you I was a bit anxious about 'parachuting' in to the retreat and moving from the imaginative ex-troverted world of the Maypole to the silent, introverted atmosphere of the retreat. It turned out to be a really healing experience. I have always felt a tension in myself between the artist and contemplative. I feel western monastic traditions have demonised the body, the imagination, the feminine. One of the attractions for me in Hinduism was the continuity between what I'd call popular devotion - festivals, rituals, colour, music, drama and the great contemplative teachings of the Upanishads and Vedas.

On Sunday I experienced this sense of continuity within a western Christian context. For me the cosmic dimension of the Indian mass, with the eight direction flowers, etc was the culmination of our celebration the day before around the Maypole.

The people who come to the Maypole are all seekers, people who have a commitment to ecological values and oppose the dominant consumer values. Interestingly no Christians bother to come. I guess they think we are a bunch of New Age pagans...although in fact we are all very ordinary people. I do feel it as a lack that I can't openly express my natural instinct for Christian devotion in this context. It would fit very well if people were not so traumatised by the western Church images of Jesus as a terrifying, bad tempered English man!

Anyhow, it was healing to join the Sangha, to sing those wonderfully simple bhajans as a prayer. It all went together perfectly and has shown me a new way of both doing my type of art/celebration and being involved in the Sangha."

Caroline Mackenzie
Wales,

Brother Martin in Oxford

I promised to let you know about Oxford. It was a 'Day of Reflection on Religious Experience and Spiritual Growth' organised by the Alistair Hardy Society and Religious Experience Research Centre.

Br. Martin gave us a very frank account of his life. From 14 to 18 he worked in a groundnut factory and thought he would never get the chance to study. Then he had the opportunity to go to college and decided that he must live meaningfully. He wanted to become a priest but was not accepted at the Seminary because he had not gone to church regularly! After graduation he was accepted, but then began to have doubts about the existence of God. Philosophy cannot prove the existence of God, and to study theology you need faith in God first! He felt alone and questioned his need of God, but at the same time felt attracted to God. Then he read an article by Bede Griffiths in which he said it was not true to think of God as separate from us. We are like the tree that depends on the earth; we cannot exist without God and God is everywhere - Martin found this quite frightening.

In the evenings Martin used to share his doubts with Jesus. He felt he had to ask if God wanted anything from him as he had been given so much. He asked how could he know the will of God. One day he was out walking with others from the community. A little girl begged from him. Suddenly he felt she was showing him his reality - he compared himself with her and somehow felt he was secure because of her insecurity. Again he asked Jesus. "What can I do?" and this time received the answer, "allow me to work in you".

He felt he had no choice. God was surrounding him. The spirit of God coming into him gave him great joy. He saw clearly that his life was changed. Prayer life and love are the same thing; we receive the Spirit of God and transform it and give it to others. He felt connected to God and to others. He had this time of mystical experiences. He found that God was coming to meet him, that God draws every individual to himself.

However, there comes a time when the experiences stop. We cannot hold on to these experiences. They still belong to the ego and we have to go beyond them. It could be likened to a dream - we wake up and see it was a dream. It gives us security but we must not cling to it. When the experiences stopped Martin found it very humiliating. He felt he had been to the heights then come down to ordinariness. So he took the name Sahajanda - the bliss of ordinariness.

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Annual Business Meeting

The Sangha meets once a year to look at the past year and how we can develop the Sangha in the future. It is an important occasion as we try to ensure that the Sangha is open to the ideas and hopes of people who are interested in its future.

The meeting will be held in London on November 6th, starting at 2.00 p.m.

Kim has kindly agreed that it can be held at her home, Flat 3, 24 Linden Gardens, Bayswater, W2 4ES. (nearest tube is Notting Hill). Phone 0171 727 6779 if you are coming.

Do come. We look forward to seeing you.

Events

1999 Advent Retreat Prinknash Abbey December 10th – 12th. Our annual Bede Griffiths Retreat in the monastery where Fr Bede started his monastic life.

PLEASE USE THE ENCLOSED BOOKING FORM

Spring Retreat 2000 – The Rowan Tree Centre. May 12th – 15th 2000. Booking forms will be sent in the December mailing.

Weekend with Brother Martin: Park Place Pastoral Centre, Fareham, Hants, June 30th – July 2nd 2000.

Please do send us details of any local events you are planning so we can include them in the Future Events Section.

The poetry corner

Pathway

- Intuitively follow your own path
And find that all over,
 people have followed
 that same intuitive path
- Since the opening of the wisdom eye

There are no to-morrows or yesterdays

- It all becomes the Now,
 the is-ness, the I Am -

I walk slowly on the path
on which the lotus feet
of many have passed
- it is very beautiful.

Chelca Thurlow
Margate

Notice Board

◇ The Sangha has a range of books and tapes by Father Bede and Brother Martin. These can be obtained from Kim Nataraja, Flat 3, 24 Linden Gardens, London, London W2 4ES. Some of the books are free but we do welcome contributions to assist in the publication of further books by Brother Martin.

◇ The Canterbury Thich Nhat Hanh Zen meditation group meets every Friday evening at the Friends Meeting House at 7.30, Canterbury. Phone Wendy Mullane on 01227 450841 or Noreen Read 01227 451886.

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