

The Bede Griffiths Sangha Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 2

September 1998

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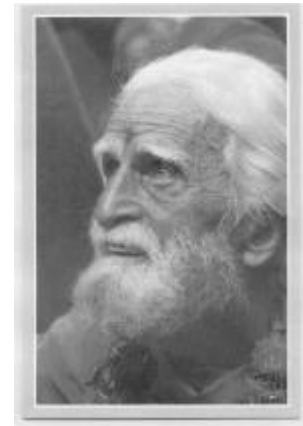
Editorial

As we go to press, the final arrangements are being made for the silent retreat at the Rowan Tree Centre, where 12 of us will spend a week in the beautiful Welsh countryside.

Our retreat at Park Place in July was a great success. Perhaps the most significant event for the Sangha this year has been Brother Martin's visit to the UK. Not only did he lead the Park Place retreat for about 40 members of the Sangha, he also visited, and gave talks in, London, Belfast, Canterbury, Oxford, Stratford-upon-Avon, Bristol, South Wales, and Guildford, where he gave a sermon to a large congregation in the cathedral. His visit was special because we were able to enjoy the benefits of his teaching and have the pleasure of his company in so many places. Our thanks must go to everyone who made this visit such a success. Brother Martin said afterwards that it exceeded all his expectations and that he finds nourishment and support in the life of the Sangha.

In response to many requests, the 1999 event at Park Place will take the form of a weekend seminar with Brother Martin rather than a silent retreat. This will mean more opportunity to discuss his teachings and for members of the Sangha to get to know each other.

Thanks must go to Caroline MacKenzie, who has designed the new logo for the Sangha. Many members of the Sangha will know Caroline for her leading the bhajan singing at our retreats. She is also an artist and kindly offered her skills and vision which resulted in our



Fr Bede Griffiths

new logo which reflects a trinity of body, mind and spirit, with the lotus flower growing from the five roots of the main religious traditions. Father Bede would surely have approved!

The Sangha continues to grow in numbers and, hopefully in spirit. The vision of Father Bede was one of contemplative renewal in a world characterised by conflict, including conflict between religions. We are committed to his vision which was to seek the truth that lies at the heart of all religion.

Please do contribute articles, letters, reflections or news items for this newsletter. The more material we have the more interesting the newsletter will be!

The deadline for copy for the next Newsletter is December 31st.
Namaste, *Adrian Rance*

The Bede Griffiths Trust

John Douglas, in the United States, who is secretary to the Trust, provided the following report on the Bede Griffiths Trust.

"On September 7, 1982, Father Bede established a Trust to provide for the care of his publications, tapes and personal papers after his death. In the Trust agreement he named eleven trustees. The Trust requires the trustees to ensure that Father Bede's papers are not misread or misinterpreted and that royalties are used for the support of Shantivanam and similar groups.

When Pope John Paul II addressed the Camaldolese monks at their General Chapter on September 17, 1993, he said, "to choose God means also - humbly and patiently according to God's timings - ecumenical dialogue and interreligious dialogue. The communities of your Order, especially those which have arisen in California and India, have engaged for years now in this spiritual quest, woven in prayer and respectful dialogue with Buddhist and Hindu monks." In the spirit of the Pope's statement, the Trust continues the vision of Father Bede.

From 1993 to 1997 the Board of Trustees has met four times. With the support of the Camaldolese monks at Big Sur, California, the Trust publishes a newsletter, The Golden String. The Trust has also established an archive of the papers and tapes of Father Bede and The Graduate Theological Union at Berkeley, California. A Bede Griffiths memorial Lecture is hosted each May at Osage monastery, Forest of Peace, in Sand Springs, Oklahoma. The Trust has sent funds to help support Shantivanam. Through the efforts of Russill and Asha Paul, Father Douglas Conlan, Brother Wayne Teasdale, Roland Ropers, Sister Pascaline Coff, O.S.B., and the Camaldolese monks, many retreats and lectures, based on the teachings of Bede, have been given. The Trust is a member of the Society for Hindu-Christian Studies.

While forming the Trust, Father Bede also formally acknowledged his approval of the Society for the Renewal of Contemplative Life. The idea of such a society was often discussed by Bede from 1991 to 1993 with a number of friends. Since his death such organisations have formed in the United States, India, Germany, Australia and Italy. As Father Bede requested, the Trust is work-

co-operatively with the regional societies. In Germany, the Society has been instrumental in publishing many of Bede's papers. In the United States, the Society is planning to provide pilgrimages to India and is studying Bede as a model for breakthrough to the mystical after age 40. The Italian Society has assumed responsibility for Italian editions of Bede's literary works.

If you are on the internet you can access the Trust's Bede Griffiths archive at Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California at www.gtu.edu/library/archive.html

Solitude

When I walk alone with God
I experience total freedom.
To share inspiring and understanding
Company along the Way is a joy
From which I return to solitude
Blessed, grateful and more deeply at peace.

*Anna Corser
Park Place
July 1998*

The beauty of celebration

Many of the participants at Park Place have stayed in Shantivanam and were familiar with the liturgy of worship, which included beautiful renderings of a selection of Sanskrit bhajan chants much favoured by Bede. "May all the world be happy/From the unreal lead me to the real/From darkness lead me to light/From Death lead me to immortality." It is helpful for the pilgrim to have the translation, though, compared with the tonal beauties of chant it falls flat. These were sensitively recorded, by a BBC team on behalf of the "World Programme", as was the Shantivanam Mass, which concluded our week-end and which was celebrated by the Franciscan friar Fr Andrew McMahon who, amongst other attributes, is a very interesting carver, several of whose works grace the rooms at Park Place.

The above is an extract from an article written by Hugh Dinwiddy on the Park Place retreat.

The World Service programme on Father Bede and The Sangha will be broadcast in November. We hope to have advance warning of the transmission, so if you would like to hear it please phone us and we will try to let you know when it is on.

Brother Martin at Park Place

For the second year in succession, the Sangha invited Brother John Martin, to be with them in Park Place, in Hampshire, during his visit to the UK in July.

Just as Jesus provided his disciples with a message that was as powerful as it was simple, so Martin represents this message with a power and simplicity that opened the hearts and the minds of his listeners. The message of Jesus can be understood in its completeness in each of his statements. The whole of his message to humanity can be found in the statement - "Repent, the Kingdom of God is at hand". Repent means to stop of movement of becoming and to realise the truth of what is there already - the Kingdom - the realisation that we are already the sons and daughters of God. Martin talked of the original sin of Adam and Eve and their wanting to 'become' like God, whereas they had already been created as sons and daughters of God. Just as Jesus had a unique relationship with the Father, so each of us has that very same relationship, and each of us has the capacity to find it and experience it.

Martin's talks provided a liberating way of expressing the Christian experience of God. He showed how Jesus liberated men and women from the 'absolutising' of religion and religious tradition by allowing them to go beyond this to a direct experience of God. Not that religion should be rejected, but that it should be seen as a means rather than an end. Religion should be experienced as a nest in which one can grow and mature and from which one can eventually fly into the spaces of the infinite. For so many of us religion is a cage rather than a nest. Martin's discussion on the miracle of the paralytic who took up his pallet and walked, provided his listeners with a challenge. As Martin said to the congregation at Guildford Cathedral, "Jesus came to liberate human beings from the power of objective religion. He realised that the religion based on the law has paralysed human beings and carrying them on the pallet of religion. He looked at the paralytic man, who wanted to be healed, and said, 'Get up and take up your pallet and walk'. The man got up, took his pallet and walked. The man who is so far being carried in the pallet of religion, now carries the religion in his hands. This is the good news Jesus came to announce to the humanity. The Sabbath is made for man and not man for Sabbath. Religion as an institution is made for the sake of the human beings and not human beings for the sake of religion. The human being has the power over the Sabbath. This is another evolutionary statement of Jesus. Jesus came to awaken the potentiality of the human beings to walk on their own feet.

Martin gave many illustrations of the message of Jesus recalling people to what or who they actually are already. The attraction of this message to the sinners, publicans and prostitutes who had been classified as sinners and with no hope of salvation in the law, is clear. The message today touches those who seek reality and but who find the authority of institutional religion an obstacle. Martin said, "Jesus said two most important statements: I am the light of the world and you are the light of the world. His experience of the Kingdom of God made him to realise that in the highest level of his being he is the light of the world. In this experience he also realised that in every human being there is this light of the world, which is God, the treasure of the kingdom of God is hidden and buried, and he wanted everyone to discover it. Jesus did not say 'you must become the light of the world'. He said, 'You are the light of the world'. You are not aware of your greatness and I want you to discover it. These two statements are two wheels of the cart of Christianity. Unfortunately we have emphasised one wheel is such a way, we make our journey with one wheel and the whole burden falls on the wheel-less side, humanity. We have listened from the letter of Paul to the Colossians. What St Paul has written is one hundred percent true of Jesus. But he elevated Jesus in such a way, reducing human being to the level of adopted sons and daughters of God, thus second grade children of God. He created an unbridgeable gulf between Christ and Christians and God and Christians. Christ who came to break down the walls between God and human beings has been made another wall to separate God and human beings. Jesus saw that humanity has been carrying a tremendous burden in the same of God, in the same of religion. He came to free people from this burden. He said, 'Come to me all you labour and burdened of heart. I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and the burden is light'.

A Reflection

The Singer or the song

Since late adolescence this question has been with me. On my path I have met many singers and heard many songs. Much has stayed with me for which I am grateful. Last week I heard a song and I was inspired by the singer. The next day I heard the same singer and I was inspired by the same song. Thank you Brother Martin. – Keith Cattell, Canterbury

NEWS AND SNIPPETS

The Sangha is getting to be a truly international organisation. We have just had an email from a reader in Namibia who is interested in Fr Bede.

Fr Doug Conlan from Australia has kindly provided a large number of coloured postcards of Fr Bede which he had printed. If you would like some please let us know and we will send them for whatever donation you can afford

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- ◆ Advent retreat at Prinknash Abbey December, 4th-6th December 1998. **See application form with this Newsletter**
- ◆ Spring Retreat at the Rowan Tree Centre, Builth Wells, Wales, 30th April – May 3rd
- ◆ Weekend seminar with Brother Martin. Park Place Pastoral Centre, 2nd – 4th July 1999

Readers might like to know that Brother Martin will be resident at Shantivanam Ashram from July of this year until the beginning of January 1999. He will be happy to see Sangha members there and will be very welcoming.

Shantivanam Ashram supports a number of community projects in the neighbouring village of Tannirpalli. The Sangha has for sale greetings cards featuring woven designs made by women in the village. For details please contact Jane Saunderson, 27 Leighton Gardens, London NW10 3PX

Many thanks to all of you who have donated a subscription to the Sangha. We appreciate this and it does pay for the publication of this newsletter, and for subsidised places on retreats for people on low incomes, and for a subscription to The Tablet for Shantivanam. If you haven't yet subscribed please do think about it. We suggest £10 waged, £5 unwaged.

SANGHA ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

November 14th 1998. 2.00 – 4.00

The annual business meeting of the Sangha will be held at the home of Kim Nataraja, conveniently located in central London. We will use the meeting to review, to look at our finances and to plan for the future. Please try and come. If you would like to come please contact Kim. **Flat 3, 24 Linden Gardens, Bayswater, London, W2 4ES. Tel: 0171 727 6779**

Publication of Father Bede's biography

Beyond the Darkness - a biography of Bede Griffiths, by Shirley du Boulay, is published on September 17th 1998 by Rider. It will cost £18.99.

Shirley du Boulay is an enthusiastic friend and supporter of the Sangha, and we look forward to the publication of her authoritative biography of Father Bede. The following tributes to the book give us an idea of what it is we can look forward to:

Professor Dr Hans Kung, Professor Emeritus of ecumenical theology at Tübingen University, writes, 'Having had the chance to meet personally Fr Bede Griffiths in his Indian Ashram, I read Shirley du Boulay's subtle, sympathetic and comprehensive biography with utmost attention, empathy and approval. The book demonstrates chapter by chapter what a great ecumenical visionary and catholic reformed Fr Griffiths was'.

Andrew Harvey, author of *Journey to Ladakh*, and other books, wrote, '*Beyond the Darkness* is a magnificently clear, finely written and ultimately ex-

tremely inspiring biography of one of the twentieth century's great spiritual pioneers. This is essential reading for all serious seekers'.

Father Lawrence Freeman O.S.B., Director of the World Community for Christian Meditation, said of the biography, 'This life of Bede Griffiths communicates his great importance for today with honesty, insight and a balanced understanding of his unique spirit'.

So don't forget to order your copy now!!

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