



The Bede Griffiths Sangha Newsletter

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The Bede Griffiths Sangha is committed to the search for truth at the heart of all religions

Inside this issue:

<i>The Silence of the Heart</i> Father Bede	2
<i>The Religion of Love</i> Ken Knight	3
<i>Reincarnation Part 2</i> Brother Martin	4
<i>A Yoga of the Heart</i> Karen Sussmann	6
<i>Father Bede on reincarnation</i>	7
<i>A Journey of Surprises</i> Annie Langford	10
<i>Br Martins 2001 visit</i>	11

Editorial

The publication of Father Bede's books and internet initiatives were only two of the subjects that gave rise to lively discussions at the second meeting of the Sangha Council held on March 10th.

The Sangha has 'joined forces' with the Bede Griffiths Trust to secure the re-publication in the UK of some of Father Bede's books including *The Golden String* and *The Marriage of East and West*. If all goes to plan a total of 6 books will be published in the UK with the first one coming out later this year.

More and more members are now on the internet and a Sangha member in Ramsgate has taken the initiative of setting up *Sahajananda Ashram* a web-site dedicated to internet discussions on the work and teaching of Father Bede and Brother Martin. We are also looking at ways of publishing this newsletter in an internet friendly way to reduce our overseas mailing costs

Sahajananda Ashram

We would like to invite all members and friends of the Sangha to join and participate in a new project to assist communication and unity in our world wide community.

Sahajananda Ashram has been established as a community message board accessible on the internet for the support and discussion of the words and work of Br .Martin Sahajananda and Fr .Bede. The web site also provides the

The Council also discussed ideas for extending the programme of activities including retreats and seminars led by teachers we have not yet had at our events. What do you think about this? If you have any ideas then please do let us know.

If you would like notes of the Council meetings and copies of the Sangha's statement of income and expenditure then please do let us know. And a big thank you to those who have sent in subscriptions already—that is wonderful, a great help.

Finally—we hear from Sangha members who are feeling isolated and would enjoy like-minded people to meet and talk with. If you are interested in activities in your area please phone the regional contacts listed on the last page.

Namaste
Adrian

facility for 'meeting' in the 'chat' room for real time interaction between members, and the capacity to store text files and photographs.

Joining is simple: just go to <http://communities.msn.co.uk/sahajanandaashram> or e-mail sahajanandaashram@hotmail.com for an invitation or further details. If you don't have a computer and want to contribute to the site please write to the 'Secretarial Assistant' 3 Stanley Road, Ramsgate, Kent, CT11 7RH.

The Silence and the solitude of the Heart.

by
Father Bede Griffiths

The goal of monastic life has always been seen in terms of seeking God. St. Benedict asks of the novice, does he truly seek God, and in India this search for God has gone on from the time of the Vedas giving birth to different forms of monastic life, Hindu, Buddhist and Jain. In our ashram we try to combine the tradition of ashram life in India with that of monastic life in the West, particularly as it has come down in the tradition of Camaldoli. St. Romuald in the eleventh century gave the monastic life this particular form combining community and solitary life but also evangelical life or the life of the wandering monk. We feel that each of these paths has its own special value.

The common life is, of course, basic both to the monastic and the Christian tradition in the West. The postels after Pentecost are described as remaining in the teaching of the apostles, the common life, the breaking of the bread and the prayers. This was always seen as a model of monastic life in later times. In India, on the other hand, the emphasis has always been on the solitary life. Hinduism itself is not so much a common religion as a way of life with many paths by which the individual can reach God. Of these the way of Sannyasa, of renunciation of marriage and property and all human attachments in order to give oneself to God alone, has always been seen as the highest ideal.

There is therefore a deep difference at the heart of each religion. Christianity has always been concerned with the common life, whether in the home or in a religious community and this naturally demands a certain organisation and structure. Hindu sannyasa, on the other hand, calls for the utmost freedom. The guru at the conclusion of his initiation says to the Sannyasi: go, my son, go over the wide spaces of the earth, go to the beyond. The only bond which binds a sannyasi is

the bond with the guru. The guru is God and it is in and through him that the sannyasi finds God.

This raises a problem for the Christian monk. For him Christ can be the only true guru - the sat-guru - and any other spiritual guide can only represent Christ. Moreover his discipleship of Christ calls for his membership in the body of Christ and the demands which the common life makes upon him. How can these opposite demands be met? Swami Abhishiktananda was faced with this problem all his life and in the end opted for pure sannyasa, renouncing all human ties while yet keeping a link with the church. But this does not seem to be an adequate answer and Abhishiktananda was never able finally to resolve the problem.

Can the tradition of Camaldoli provide an answer to this problem? St. Romuald started life as a Benedictine monk, but he felt more and more drawn to solitary life and, though he never broke his bond with the Benedictine life, he devoted himself above all to solitary prayer and surrender to God alone. Is this perhaps a model for a monk today? Thomas Merton felt the same call to monastic life but sought more and more for solitude within the monastic calling. In the Eastern church also, which no doubt influenced St. Romuald, solitary life was seen as the highest expression of the monastic calling.

Behind this question of solitary or community life lies the still more profound question of the nature of prayer. St. Benedict organised the monastic life round the common prayer of the liturgy, and gave lectio divina, the meditative reading of the Scriptures, as the principal spiritual discipline. But beyond the prayer of the liturgy, the prayer of words and thoughts, there is in Christian tradition the pure prayer of Evagrius, where the mind goes beyond word and thought and enters into the immediate presence of God. It is here

that the monastic tradition of the West comes closest to the oriental tradition. In all oriental tradition, both Buddhist and Hindu, the aim is to transcend both the senses and the mind and enter into the deep self, the point of the spirit, where the human touches the divine.

It would seem that this is where we are being led as a Benedictine ashram. We can accept the basic structure of monastic life with its common prayer, study and work, but within this structure each monk is free to follow the inner call of the Spirit and enter into the silence and solitude of the heart, where God is immediately present. It is in this inner centre that we join with the Hindu, the Buddhist, the Jain and all who truly seek God. An ashram is not so much an exterior place as an interior space. It is this space of the heart - what the Upanishads call the space in the heart of the lotus - that an ashram has to provide. People today all over the world are in search of this inner space, this point of communion with God. Only where people are continually living in search of God, seeking him with all their heart can this space be found. That is the responsibility of an ashram, to provide this space of the heart, where each person can find the inner space, the ashram, in their own heart and the world can find a peace in the midst of confusion.

Shantivanam - 1991



Adrian Smith has written with details of a proposed meditation community south of and close to Birmingham. There will be a small resident nucleus of 4 people, practicing meditation and linking to a larger group of other people choosing to live nearby. Each member will live their own professional life and contribute to the work of the community in teaching meditation, counselling, healing etc. Each person would have their own accommodation, bought or rented. For details contact Adrian Smith, 8 Oakthorpe Road, London N13 5UH

The Religion of Love in the new Millennium (part 1) by Ken Knight

God is Love; Love is God.

I am not a prophet but this article will concentrate upon the understanding that the only true Reality is Love and I will use the words of the great teachers to show us the way. It is not my intention that those who promote the way of knowledge should now cease reading for *jnana marga* and *bhakti marga*, the ways of knowledge and love, are essential companions. Knowledge without love becomes dry, while love without knowledge stagnates:

'Love and knowledge are the same thing but the function of love is to join together and that of knowledge to tell, to illuminate.

In love, knowledge is helpful. For strengthening knowledge, love is essential. In the absence of love, knowledge would not be powerful enough to influence people. Knowledge only helps us to decide what is right and wrong, but it cannot alter things; love can alter them. Without love knowledge is incomplete and without knowledge love is incomplete because, in the absence of knowledge, love would go away. If there is knowledge, then love would be maintained. As love increases, knowledge goes on increasing. Without knowledge, love is not expansive; and without love, knowledge is not allowed to play its full part.'

'Good Company' by Shantanand Saraswati.

(Continued on page 8)

Reflections on reincarnation (Part 2)

Brother Martin Sahajananda

Continued from Part 1 published in the December 2000 newsletter

The statement of Jesus that 'Unless you are born again you cannot enter the Kingdom of God' does not refer to a belief in rebirth or reincarnation. In fact it is the opposite of it. It is saying one has to transcend the movement of reincarnation and enter the realm of eternity. Jesus did not believe in reincarnation but he saw it as a fact so that he could free himself from it. He experienced this freedom not only for himself but he also opened this possibility to every human being.

In this context it may be useful to reflect on the story of Abraham and Isaac. Abraham was a man of desire; not of carnal desire, not of material desire, but of desire for his continuity, continuity of his name and of his posterity. He asked for a son. God listened to Abraham and gave him a son who would continue his posterity. Abraham had asked for a son not for God, not for eternity, but for himself, for his own continuity. When he realised this he wanted to sacrifice his son to God. God had told him to sacrifice his only son for him. God certainly did not mean his physical son. What God meant was this: "Abraham, by asking your son Isaac for your continuity, you have stolen his life. Give back life to Isaac. Kill your son or renounce your son and so doing kill and renounce your desire for continuity". Offer your son Isaac to me, to eternity. He is not for you, for your continuity. Abraham was ready to kill his physical son who was a symbol of his desire for continuity but God did not want his physical son. What God wanted him to do was to kill his own desire for continuity and to liberate his son, give his son life. When Abraham chose to live for eternity and to renounce his desire for continuity he also chose Isaac for eternity and gave Isaac his life.

So it is by dying to our desire for continuity that we enter eternal life. It is not through rebirth that we enter into eternity but through death. Death is not only

physical, it is psychological and spiritual. Jesus said, 'Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies it remains alone but when it dies it gives a mighty harvest'. Living for continuity is like cultivating a barren land. Living for eternity is harvesting a hundred fold. It is very important to understand the nature of internal death, more important than believing in reincarnation, because belief in reincarnation gives life to the movement of continuity.

Mary was the symbol of Jewish tradition. Jewish people were born to give continuity to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They cannot choose eternity because they were chosen for continuity. Mary was called by God to stop this movement of continuity and to give birth to eternity. She was called, like Abraham, to renounce her desire for continuity and to choose her son for eternity. . The call to become a virgin is basically a call to renounce the desire for continuity and to be open to eternity. Her son will not be called a son of Mary, or a son of Abraham, or a son of continuity, but Son of God, Son of Eternity. Mary gave birth to a son who would not be her continuity, but who lives for eternity.

Jesus was born into the Jewish tradition. He gave continuity to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He was one hundred per cent Jew. But he was also called by God, like Mary, to stop this movement of continuity and to be open to the manifestation of eternity. This brought him to the moment of baptism when he stopped the movement of continuity and allowed eternity to enter him. He freed himself from the movement of continuity and reincarnation. He became an original and creative person, so that was able to say boldly that 'I am the way, the truth and the light'. Like Abraham and Mary he also made a choice for eternity. Just as Abraham died to his continuity and gave life to Isaac, so Mary died to her continuity and gave life to Jesus. In the same way Jesus, dying to his continuity, gave life to the whole of humanity. The

real death and sacrifice of Jesus was not his death on the cross, but his death to continuity, and it was by this death that Jesus saved humanity from the burden of continuity. He opened the gates of eternity to everyone. Jesus was a life-giver and henceforth no person would be born to give continuity to him but everyone would be born for eternity and will be able to say, like him, 'I am the way, the truth and the light'.

However the Christian tradition has transformed Jesus into someone who wants his continuity and wants his followers for his continuity. In fact what Jesus wanted was just the opposite. God is eternal life, Jesus lived eternal life and he invited everyone to eternal life. 'Just as the Father has life in himself he has granted the son to have life in himself'. 'I have come to give life and to give it abundantly'. How did Jesus give life to humanity? It is only by dying to his continuity for if he desires continuity he cannot be a life giver. It is only by reflecting on the nature of continuity and discontinuity that we understand the experience and message of Christ.

A Summary

For me reincarnation or rebirth is not a belief, it is a fact. It is the movement of continuity from the past to the present and to the future at various levels. It is a mechanical movement. There is nothing original in it although there may be reformations here and there. The reincarnations of the lamas and other spiritual figures are possible but it also belongs to that mechanical movement.

Believing in reincarnation has given many people peace of mind and serenity of heart. I will not discourage people in this belief as long as they find spiritual solace and consolation from it. But we are all ultimately called to live an original and creative life. For this we need to free ourselves from the movement of continuity.

Believing in reincarnation, without seeing it, as a fact does not help us to free ourselves from the movement of continuity, rather it binds us. Disbelieving in reincarnation is as much a hindrance and believing in it because it closes our minds to reality.

The Vedic sages did not propagate belief in reincarnation but rather how to free oneself from it. This belief appears to be reasonable and consoling but it is not a very liberating belief for it strengthens the movement of continuity. The solution does not lie in believing or disbelieving in reincarnation but seeing it as a fact alone gives us the possibility of being free from it.

Jesus certainly would not have taught the belief in reincarnation. His message was to enter the Kingdom of God, which is to be free from continuity or reincarnation. Believing in only one life might help us to take our lives seriously, but it can also make our lives miserable. We have to make it in this life otherwise we will go to hell. So there is a fear of hell and a greed for heaven. Believing in many lives might give us some relaxation but it can make us lazy and postpone our salvation indefinitely. Both have their positive and their negative aspects.

For me the solution is neither believing in one life, nor many lives but eternal life. Eternal is not life after death. It is living now, free from the movement of continuity. Each moment is equal to one life so in one life we can live millions of lives. In eternal life there is no fear of hell or greediness for heaven. There is no misery of one life and there is no laziness of many lives. There is the seriousness of one life and there is the relaxation of many lives. In fact it is not our life but it is the life of God in us. Jesus said, 'The works which I do are not my own but the father who dwells in me does his work'.

brothermartin111@hotmail.com

A Yoga of the Heart

by

Karen Sussmann

In 1992 I went to India and seemingly “by chance” came across Shantivanam ashram. I had already visited other ashrams and was attracted to the philosophy and practices of Hinduism, as well as to Yoga. At Shantivanam however I was touched in a new way. Perhaps the thing that struck me the most about Father Bede was his absolute sincerity. To talk to him was like talking to an old and intimate friend, and the interpretations he gave of the gospel readings in chapel seemed to be spoken from first hand knowledge and directed at me personally. It was the first time for me that religious teachings had been so alive and so meaningful.

Whilst I was staying at the ashram I attended the Yoga classes given by some German Yoga teachers, students of the spiritual teacher Heinz Grill. These classes too felt special - there was something sacred about the way the postures were done. The Yoga was less disciplined than in some of the approaches I had experienced in India and seemed to fit in with the general philosophy at Shantivanam of doing something because you love it rather than merely to achieve results.

I subsequently went to train with Heinz Grill who at that time ran a Yoga school in Austria, and have continued to visit him and to teach Yoga since 1993. Through studying the teachings of both Heinz Grill and Father Bede, it became clearer why this particular form of Yoga felt so appropriate at Shantivanam.

The term “Yoga” means to unite oneself with the spirit of God. Traditional Hindu practices have aimed to achieve this union through meditation and asceticism. Christianity also contains a mystical element but has generally placed more emphasis on social integration

and service to others. Father Bede was committed to uniting these two aspects and this was evident in him as a person. He carried the peace and wisdom of meditation in his heart and at the same time was there for thousands of people in a very tangible and personal way. Heinz Grill describes the Yoga he teaches as a Christian Yoga. He too teaches about a union of the Eastern sense for a spiritual realm with the Western ability to think in a practical, down to earth and individual way.

The Christian way to God has sometimes been described as a way of the heart. The heart is the centre through which we love, give, open ourselves and relate to others. Particularly in the West, as life becomes ever more regulated, standardised, pressurised and competitive, this opening of the heart and warm connection to others is what we need to cultivate. In the East on the other hand, this high level of systematisation with its associated spiritual alienation has not yet reached the same degree. There is still some spiritual awareness and softness in people’s hearts. The lack of organisation however is also clearly evident at large in India and perhaps what they need in their spiritual practice is something to help provide a little more discipline and order! Hence Yoga as it is traditionally practised in India tends to be quite disciplined and demanding. For the Westerner however who already has perfectionist tendencies, this approach could lead to a greater feeling of power and a hardening of the heart.

Any spiritual practice that is done with love will open the heart. Heinz Grill emphasises the importance of relationship in the practice of Yoga. We build a relationship to each Yoga asana, learning to feel and experience it not merely as a physical exercise, but as a gesture that has beauty and meaning. So, for example, the posture “Yoga Mudra” in which we kneel down and bow our heads to the floor is a gesture of humbleness and devotion. When we fold our hands in front of our hearts this symbolises a unity in the heart that lies beyond life’s outer conflicts. Or when we root our feet in the ground and reach out widely into space with our arms in the triangle we unite earth with heaven, or matter with spirit.

Although correct physical practice of the postures is

important, it is not the technical perfection that takes the forefront, but rather the attitude with which the exercises are done. The asanas are a form of devotion. Each gives rise to a particular inner experience and the more these experiences become conscious through repeated practice, the more the subtle world of the soul opens. Gradually we develop a sense for the spiritual dimension and learn to carry this sense in our hearts so that it enriches our lives in the world.

At present there are Yoga teachers trained by Heinz Grill in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium and England. Heinz Grill now lives in northern Italy where he conducts lectures and seminars as well as informal teaching sessions in small groups and one to one consultations. His aim is that each person should learn to integrate a spiritual awareness into life in his own free and individual way and his teaching, as well as his many books, include not only the practice of Yoga, but all areas of life such as healing, education and nature.

One of Heinz Grill's books on Yoga, "Harmony in Breathing", is available in English translation in book shops in the UK.

For more information on Yoga classes and the teaching of Heinz Grill please contact:

Karen Sussmann, Tithe House, Thurlbear, Taunton TA3 5BW. UK. Tel: 01823 444 779

Dear Friends,

Lately I read somewhere, maybe the Tablet, that Fr Bede is the forerunner of a world religion. As I was reading again the introduction to Fr Bede's Universal Wisdom, he explains so well our world situation of many religions. It is quite true that Fr Bede had a true vision of one cosmic human religion for all humanity. He says it is only rituals and dogmas that keep us separate and, of course, the hierarchies.

Maybe you could remind the friends of the Sangha through the Bede Griffiths Newsletter.

With love

Sr Jeanne Mechtildes

Sr Jeanne lived at Shantivanam for many years and now lives in Belgium

Father Bede on Re-incarnation

Extracts from Letters to a Friend

Winifred Dearden writes:

After reading the splendid article by Brother Martin on reincarnation in the December 2000 newsletter I wonder whether members would be interested in extracts from a letter Father Bede wrote to me in October 1992 on the same subject. I found them particularly helpful as I had become very concerned about trying to reconcile the teaching of the Christian church with those of Eastern philosophies which I had been studying for many years.

Father Bede seems to be saying that by meditation one can find the reality behind all religions, and he sums the whole question up by that last short but profound sentence.

"You ask about reincarnation: I find it misleading. It focuses on the soul – the psyche – and it's past and present, and future. But our real self is not in the soul but in the spirit, the atman. Body and soul both pass away, but the spirit is eternal, and at death we pass into the life of the spirit and union with God.

We have to learn to detach ourselves from the soul with all its problems and open ourselves to the presence of God, the spirit in the depths of our being. Feelings of fear, of loneliness and hopelessness all come from the psyche which is conditioned by our past life. I think one must learn to detach oneself from the psyche altogether; that is why dwelling on reincarnation is a mistake. In meditation we can let all such thoughts go...every attachment to the ego which rules the psyche, and allow the presence of God, the eternal to penetrate our lives. The sufferings of the soul are the clouds and the mists which obscure the sun, but the sun is always shining and we can open ourselves to it. This means a radical detachment from the self, the whole psychic being with all its attachments and opening to the real Self, the spirit within which is always in the presence of God. Forget about reincarnation: you are that Eternal Spirit: you have only to realise it!"

It is necessary to hear both their songs as they entertain us on our journey. Although many writers will be used in this article, the voices of the *advaitic Vedantin* and the *Sufi* will be mostly represented for they, sometimes erroneously, are often seen as emphasising, respectively, the two ways. However, from the above quotation by a modern *advaitin*, it is clear that it is an error to separate the 'mind' and the 'heart' into two separate arenas of our lives. The legacy of empirical science is to lock us into the 'head bound' world of theory. As useful as this may be to gain some understanding of the physical and mental worlds, it is of no help in understanding the true emotional and spiritual realms. 'Mind' spreads far beyond the limits of the 'head' and in harmonious union with the 'heart' it will introduce us to a consciousness beyond measurement.

Religious and Spiritual Experience

In the testimonies of thousands of ordinary people, testimonies that are held in the archives of the Alister Hardy, Religious Experience Research Centre, we read of the experience that comes unannounced, as it were, and which unites knowledge and love. The following brief extracts are taken from those archives and are part of my research of these experiences in relation to the *advaitin* teachings of Shankara.

'I was then aware of a curious light which seemed to grow up within me, and became stronger and more defined as the minutes passed...the ecstasy lasted over roughly three weeks. The main sensation was of being loved, a flood of sweetness of great strength, without any element of sentimentality or anything but itself. The description is quite inadequate. I also felt a unification of myself with the external world; I did not lose my own identity, yet all things and I somehow entered into each other; all things seemed to 'speak' to me.....'

The real point is that this is not a matter of adopting a set of intellectual pursuits, but of becoming simply a different person in essential nature, of being born again as if a deep well had opened up within the depths of the self, and within these depths and in the external world there is 'something' encountered with which a

relationship is established, and this is not based on thought, although the intellect is satisfied, but upon emotion or love, as a child reacts to a parent.'

In this testimony there are elements of the teachings of all religions. All the extracts given here are from people who had no firm allegiance to any particular religion at the time of the experience. They may have taken up a religious life afterwards but this is by no means an inevitable outcome even though the quality of their lives becomes significantly more positive. Notice how in the above the writer says how the description of the experience is 'inadequate'. This is because this kind of knowledge is beyond the level of words in the lower intellect; this is an experience of the higher intellect which is conjoined with love. This higher intellect is ever satisfied with such an experience for certainty arises from it, whereas the lower intellect is always searching for proof and definition. This higher knowledge comes in a flash, as it were, because it transcends the level of languages.

'Something happened suddenly and quite out of the blue, which I did not understand and still don't understand, but the sheer wonder and ecstasy of it has never left me over the years...the feeling was as if I suddenly, that very moment, became aware of the answer to the mystery of life, and the knowledge of it made me want to shout with joy, it seemed at that moment, so simple that I wondered why everyone did not see it, and feel it and be bursting with joy. It was as if I had been dead until that moment and suddenly I was alive. Of course the experience did not last long, I could not have borne to live at such intensity for too long, but the memory has never faded.'

Time, as we know it in its linear form, is somehow transcended in these 'flashes'. In the following extract we note how the experience seems to have taken much longer than the 'earth-time':

'My watch said 7:20 am. I then looked up at the snows, but immediately lost all normal consciousness and became engulfed, as it were, in a great cloud of light and an ecstasy of Knowing and Understanding all the secrets of the universe, and a sense of the utmost bliss in the absolute Certainty of goodness and being in whom it seemed all were finally enclosed and yet in that enclosure, utterly liberated.....Gradually this sense of ecstasy faded and slowly I came to my ordinary

senses and perceived that I was sitting as usual and the mountains were as usual in daily beauty. I glanced at my watch and found that the minute hand had barely moved...my experience had taken seconds in earthly time but I seemed to have moved in eternity.'

This feeling of a 'flash' or of 'direct experience' of unity, knowledge and bliss, is commonly reported by the mystics of all traditions and brings the 'certainty' described above, it signals the change from the 'tuition' of the lower intellect to the 'intuition' of the higher; we may also describe this as going from 'sight' to 'insight'. In the Bhagavad Gita this is described as going from *jnana* to *vijnana*. There are many other words used such as *pratibha* which has been described as follows:

'Pratibha otherwise known as para sam-vit or citi sakti in the agama, is the power of self-revelation or self illumination of the Supreme Spirit, with which it is essentially and eternally identical..'

Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj

Notice that here it is claimed that the 'flash' not only reveals the Supreme Spirit but is identical with it. It is self-revelatory as indeed it must be, for in this day and age some person would soon take out a patent if it could be discovered how to create a process that would lead unerringly to the experience. What action can we take that, at least, may prepare the way for such an awakening? That which we can do is described by Arjuna who, in his moment of confusion about the right course of action, offers himself to Krishna and becomes silent, waiting for direction from the universal guru. Up until that point Krishna has been rather forceful with him, telling him to go and fight, but at Arjuna's prostration and silence, Krishna suspends the activity of the battlefield and 'smiles'. In that smile is the abundance of grace that then flows through the medium of the teaching of the *Bhagavad Gita*; the teaching of knowledge, action and devotion. With this in mind we can turn to the next experience:

'I sat down among the waving grasses on the turf and suddenly I was received into the embrace of some powerful force. This force seemed to welcome and enfold me and give me strength. It also seemed to smile invisibly.'

This person experienced this 'subtle smile' again later and the flavour of it seems to recall, in my own interpretation of the experience, the smile of Krishna. The smile would have about it the touch of sweetness and this is a key word for us to understand in the combination of knowledge and love. In Sanskrit it is '*madhur*'. Herbert, the mystic English poet writes of it in his poem 'The Flower', which describes his own spiritual experience aroused by the natural world:

'How fresh O Lord how sweet and clean are Thy returns!

E'en as the flower in Spring.'

It would be interesting then to see if the word 'sweetness' appears in any of the testimonies. If you look back to the first experience you will read:

'The main sensation was of being loved, a flood of sweetness of great strength, without any element of sentimentality or anything but itself.'

It seems that the combination of knowledge and love of the unity behind all apparent differences, of its essential Reality, produces a feeling of sweetness, almost a smile of beloved understanding. The following comes from a conversation with Papa Ramdas who founded Anandashram in Kerala. He is talking about the continual repetition of the Name of God:

'Sugar is sweet. By nature it is sweet. It can never be bitter. So the Name is by nature sweet. It can never be bitter. But when this sweet sugar is put in the mouth of a man who is having some kind of fever, he finds it not sweet but bitter. He throws it away. That shows the man is diseased. Sugar is sweet. So when we are diseased with low desires, the Name does not taste sweet to us. We must go to the doctor who can cure us of that disease. That doctor is guru, who by his presence removes our disease of desires and gives us this nectarine Name and you find in that instant that it is sweet and sweetness comes to you as long as you are repeating the Name, until at last you become sweetness itself, not merely the taster of sweetness but sweetness itself. So you drink and drink and drink the Name until the drinker and the drink become one.'

Papa Ramdass

To be continued

A Journey of Surprises The Sangha trip to India

Annie Langford

During the two weeks leading up to our departure for Southern India I had quite profound misgivings about so readily agreeing to become a member of the Bede Griffiths Sangha, and roar across the world with a collection of people without more exploratory investigation. Here I was, jumping off the top diving board, and plunging neck deep into a company of pilgrims for almost three weeks in which I only count one tried and tested friend. How imprudent and reckless could one be?!

I had written this mammoth cheque to spend the longest and potentially most enthralling journey of my life thus far, in close proximity constantly within a gaggle of variegated, possibly marginally eccentric, spiritual seekers!

I had convinced myself that at least of the time would be spent either in meditation, yoga, saintly prayer, reflective silence (what happened to that during our four to five day Saccidananda retreat) Hindu and other religious studies, spiritual dialogues and deep scrutiny of temples, Churches, and other places of worship! I wasn't at all certain that I was fully prepared to associate my already active internal quest with this battering onslaught...

All the above did feature in our excursion. However, having resolved not to allow my imaginative assumptions to dominate, I found them all in such well balanced and measured proportions that the experience became a joy of sparkling fascination, and stimulating intrigue. My acquaintance with this motley gathering, became the unravelling of a banded group of interesting, lively, human, fun and searching fellow travellers. Our routes at this point in all our journeys crossed and intermingled so that we could share what we chose of the route thus far. This for me, became an enriching reward for responding (with what I had feared was inappropriate haste) to the promptings of my 'inner

(Continued on page 11)

The Fintry Trust

Julie Parker

“Stand ye together, assist one another, and strengthen each other's efforts...”

On 15th June Brother Martin will be speaking in Broadstairs, Kent, as part of a programme of talks arranged by The Fintry Trust. The Fintry Trust is an educational charity which aims to encourage every soul seeking to serve the Ideal, and it promotes the study of ideal philosophy by organising a range of activities of a philosophical and spiritual nature.

Each individual has a distinct place and purpose in the world, and as individual human souls we each serve in some measure the ideals of Truth, Goodness and Beauty. Each soul has a unique relationship with God, and its own path to make. The Fintry Trust therefore co-operates freely with all movements for the upliftment of mankind.

*At the heart of its activities is **The Universal Order**, a graduated system of training in the ancient and universal wisdom, which was developed during the first half of the 20th century for those who wish to understand the unity and coherence behind all religions and philosophies. It is of particular value now, when people have access to so many alternative systems, and where the unity that undoubtedly underlies them all still eludes them, or where other systems of explanation appear difficult and complex. The Order's path is essentially simple, and is one of loving aspiration, exalted thought and purposive action. For further details, please contact The Secretary, Fintry, Brook, nr Godalming, Surrey GU8 5UQ.*

The extract from Father Bede reproduced in the last newsletter referred to the carrying over of Greek philosophy into the Christian mystic tradition, and specifically the Purgative, Illuminative and Contemplative Way. The Spring programme of Fintry Trust talks includes "The Celestial Hierarchies of Dionysius the Areopagite". Dionysius, venerated by early Christian mystics, was the vehicle whereby much of Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophy entered into Christian thought, and his arrangement of the ninefold Hierarchies of Angels corresponds to the Three Ways described by Father Bede. For details of talks see www.shrineofwisdom.org.uk

"Be like unto brothers: one in love, one in holiness, and one in your zeal for the Truth."

Brother Martin's visit 2001

During his visit this year, Brother Martin will be giving talks and leading retreats at various places in the UK and Ireland. For information about these events please phone the contact people listed below.

1-7 June	Belfast	Sighle Mary O'Donoghue	02890 287471
7 - 13	Rep of Ireland	Michael Woods	00353 502 48696
13-14	London	Kim Nataraja	020 7727 6779
14-18	Canterbury	Adrian & Jill	01227 752871
18-21	Colchester	Chris Collingwood	020 8504 4476
21-24	London	Kim Nataraja	020 7727 6779
24-26	Guildford	Jean Hopwood	01483 568669
26-28	Chichester	Ann Beazer	01243 512393
28-1 July	Exeter	Val Cherry	01392 873367
1-3	Omega (Bristol)	James Fahey	01275 472262
3-7	Milford Haven	Joan Walters	01646 692496
7-9	Salisbury	Peter Tyler	01722 424801
9-12	Oxford	John Osborne	01235 528701
12-15	Park Place	Sangha retreat	01646 692496
15-18	Manchester	Ian Steedman	01614 455822
18-21	Dumfries	Michael Giddins	01644 450689
21-27	Glasgow	Steve Woodward	01355 224937

(Continued from page 10)

voice' and 'ultimate guide' who had initiated my inclusion. The purpose, I felt, was to ruffle complacency and nudge me towards stretching the boundaries of my limited experiences. This quest evolved into a time of star-studded variety – of fun, colour, movement, noise, laughter, consideration and friendship!

Thank you Philippa for giving me this opportunity. Thank you Jill and Adrian for your greeting, welcome and leadership. Thank you everyone for warmth, empathy, humour, smiles and spiritual maturity. I look forward to hearing more of our reunion.

Changes

We, as a group of sisters and brothers, were invited to write a few words about our pilgrimage to India. To speak of the change that happened for me—and, I daresay, most if not all of us—and as the visit to Brother Martin, in his own environment, was so very special, I would like to quote him:

"The search for the kingdom is an individual search, but this individual search becomes universal. Just as a river at its birth is a small stream, but grows bigger as it moves towards the sea, so also the individual search becomes universal. Individual discovery becomes universal. Individual discovery becomes universal. Individual salvation becomes universal salvation. One individual grows into the whole of creation."

Chelça Thurlow

IF not delivered please return to:

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arance@msn.com
www.bede.griffiths.com



Please let us know if there is anyone you would like to add to our prayer list for Sangha members and their friends.

There will be a service of celebration for the life of Susanna Tieze on 28th April in London. If you would like to attend please phone Jane Saunderson on 01285 651381

Future Sangha Events

Spring Retreat 2001, The Rowan Tree Centre, The Skreen, Bulth Wells, Powys.
4th—7th May 2001. **Fully booked**

Summer Seminar with Br Martin Sahajanda at Park Place Pastoral Centre, Wickham, Hants. July 13th—15th 2001. **Phone Joan Walters 01646 692496**

The annual silent 'desert' retreat at The Skreen will take place 2nd—8th September 2001. **For details contact Kim Nataraja 0207 727 6779**

The Sangha Winter Retreat, St Peters Grange, Prinknash Abbey Nov 2nd—4th 2001 **Booking form will be sent out with the July newsletter.**

Regional Contacts

Belfast Sighle Mary O'Donoghue 01232 287471

Bristol David Patterson 01823 444779

Dumfries Michael Giddins 01644 450689

East Kent Jill Hemmings & Adrian Rance 01227 752871

East Scotland Angelika Montoux 01224 867251

Essex Chris Collingwood 0181 504 4476

Exeter Joan Uzzells 01392 276825

Glasgow Steve Woodward 01355 224937

Gosport, Hants Sue Howse 01795 528601

Guildford, Surrey Therese O'Neill 01730 814879

Marlow, Bucks. Michael Day 01628 474034

Nottingham Dorothy Plater 0115 9100 361

Oxford Shirley du Boulay 01865 310332
N London/Herts. Edgar Holroyd-Doveton 0208 953 0727

London N4. Ann O'Donoghue 0207 359 1929

SE London Hilary Knight 0168 986 1004

Taunton, Somerset Valeria Ives 01823 432468

W Sussex Gillian Maher 01444 455334

Overseas contacts

Denmark Vicky Lasheras: email: lasheras@mail.tele.dk

We realise how important local Sangha groups are and the Sangha Council has suggested a pack of resources for people who would like to run local activities. Do contact us with any ideas of what would be helpful to you.