

Newsletter



March 2009

Manchester
Buddhist Centre

Recognising the Heroes

Vidyamala cuts a striking figure around the Centre - a dash of blond hair and radiant smiles from her wheelchair. Working as one of her carers for several months I would forget she has constant pain to deal with, so well does she just get on with her life. Just occasionally, say if I braked hard in her car, would I notice a wince from the corner of my eye.

Always creative in ideas on how to take her Breathworks pain management enterprise forward, she has a strong competitive side which serves her well in the Rummy Kub games that are becoming regular Friday evening activity at the Cliff community.

Very fair and wanting her employees to enjoy good pay, she is also clear and confident in her instructions. Just the odd time she gave me a little too much to do - she obviously thinks we lesser mortals can do as much as she can.

Vidyamala has a solid routine of meditation and exercise, body scans and swimming. She has inspired me with her good example. I had the option of having coffee and waiting for her in the health club cafe when I drove her for her swim. I'm glad though I followed her lead and swam a little before enjoying the sauna and even the cold-water plunge. I have to admit Vidyamala has been good for me.

Several of our journeys out and appointments became highlights and Vidyamala was quite patient

with my fumbling attempts to fold the wheelchair to go in the car. And my poor attempt at fixing her bird feeder in the garden was indulged, until Sona pointed out that I'd given the squirrels a way up to the food rather than an obstacle.

She seems to have a genuine interest in my life, work at the Centre, love-life etc. and I have come to appreciate her wisdom and encouragement. Although the day-a-week I worked as her carer was a job I came to just enjoy it as contact with, and a chance to serve, someone spiritually mature. I'd turn up at her door ready for whatever that particular day's activities would be. My gardening boots and swimming gear had never known such regular use. The garden is not yet the green swathe we imagined before I set to digging and seeding; there is work there for future carers.

Can I sum up Vidyamala's qualities? - well no, she is too big to be contained in a thumbnail sketch. She is brave and forthright and utterly devoted to Dharma practice. Being her driver I came to address her as 'M'am' or 'M'lady', with her eventually deciding I was Parker from TV's 'Thunderbirds'.

Hers is a remarkable story of overcoming difficulties and physical suffering and then offering the fruits of her efforts to others via the Breathworks pain management courses, CDs and now her book. She's a true hero and I'm glad to consider myself a friend.

metta, **Sanghaketu**

Bookshop News

Bringing together many of Sangharakshita's ideas and major themes *The Essential Sangharakshita* from Wisdom Publications is a serious addition, now in stock.

Two biographies of Tibetan teachers, who met and taught Sangharakshita, are also recent books to arrive. The lives of Dudjom Rinpoche and Dilgo Khyenste Rinpoche promise to be inspiring reads. I've promised myself both of them.

Please do consider buying from the bookshop even if a company with a South American jungle for a name can undercut us on price. **Sanghaketu**

Join Our Community?

The Blue Cliff Community is looking for someone to join them - an opportunity for a man with spiritual aspiration to live in very conducive conditions.

Our comfortable and spacious house is set

in a quiet road in the conservation area of the Cliff in Broughton. The community is mature and friendly and would suit someone serious about moving on their spiritual life. Though the guys in the community at present are very experienced Dharma practitioners someone relatively new would be made very welcome. Please phone 0161 708 0228 or contact Sona, Ratnaguna, Vilasavajra or me, Sanghaketu, for a chat or possibly come round for a meal and look round if you're interested.

Help Wanted

Churches in Manchester offer overnight shelter in turn to homeless. When Quakers open Friends Meeting House in Mount Street they do not always have enough helpers to spend the night there. What's needed is to welcome the few who turn up, give them supper, show them to the six comfy beds. Give them breakfast next morning then leave. Anyone able and willing to help, apply to Quakers. **Aryamati**

Manchester Mitra News

On Friday January 30th, six of us from Manchester - Ratnaguna, Adam Davis, Keith Green, Gary Schooler, Michal Procter and I - made our way to Padmaloka, the FWBO's retreat centre in Norfolk, for a weekend Men's Event on the theme of the Vimalakirti Nirdeśa, an important Mahayana text. It was, as always, an excellent weekend in which we listened to two very good dharma talks (one given by Ratnaguna), meditated together, participated in puja, discussed the dharma and relaxed in the company of men drawn from many FWBO centres across the UK.

The sense of Sangha was very strong, adding to the inspiration that I know many took away with them. Padmaloka is a wonderful asset to the FWBO and if you ever want a strong and supportive experience of Sangha and a clear exposition of the dharma, I recommend you attend one of its many retreats!

The weekend was particularly significant in that Gary Schooler asked for ordination into the Western Buddhist Order by handing his request letter to one of the ordination team - Padmavajra - based at Padmaloka. Any man asking for ordination is a moving event for me, and Gary is no exception. It has been a privilege to witness Gary's deepening confidence in dharma practice. I think I taught on Gary's first Introductory Buddhism class and since then I have been on weekend retreats with him both local and at Padmaloka, witnessed his mitra ceremony and led several study groups Gary has been in. I am delighted that there is a new Going For Refuge group in Manchester made up of men who have recently asked for ordination, including Gary.

I stayed on at Padmaloka for a further six days for my final mitra convenors retreat. After nearly six years the time has come for me to

step down. It has been a great privilege to serve the men of Manchester as mitra convenor. My desire to encourage and support men to deepen their relationship with the Three Jewels and the Order is as clear and strong as ever. By resigning as mitra convenor I wish to work more closely with Padmaloka and men who have asked for ordination in Manchester. The process of finding a new men's mitra convenor in Manchester has begun and I will continue until my successor is fully in post.

On Sunday February 22, Nishpara, Saccacitta and I led a day for mitras with the theme of *Insight*. The morning was devoted to meditation with short readings and walking meditation. After a shared lunch we listened to a short talk on *Insight* from each order member followed by group discussions and finally the Stupa Visualisation Practice.

In the last Newsletter, I said that the mitra study groups led by Maniraja and me were going to visit Bhante on March 14. Unfortunately, this was cancelled due to Bhante's eye operation but, as all is well, we are now rescheduling for a date in April.

In the next two weeks, I am meeting with men who have expressed an interest in becoming mitras so do keep a look out for a mitra ceremony evening coming soon!

Finally, a reminder of events coming up for men:

Sunday April 26, 10.00 - 16.00: day for men who have asked for ordination

Wednesday May 27, 19.00 - 21.30: evening for men mitras

Friday June 12 - Sunday June 14: Men's Event at Padmaloka

For further information on any of these events, please email me at: bluecorn@mail.com

Mahasraddda

Small Ad

Anyone interested in occasional game of chess? Or playing duets on recorder or flute? If so, please contact Aryamati on telephone no. 0161 833 1984

Slender silver birch
frail outline against dull
clouds
battered by winter.

Next Newsletter:

The deadline for next month's edition of the newsletter is **20th March**. Please email items to address:

newsletter@manchesterbuddhistcentre.org.uk

Guideline: 150 to 400 words good, 500 - 800 words large and over 1000 a blockbuster.

To get newsletter by email contact:

Info@manchesterbuddhistcentre.org.uk

Bodywise

Christine is leading a workshop on **Saturday 7 March** entitled "Exploring Twists; Finding Support from the Internal Organs." From **10am to 1pm**, it is suitable for people with at least 3 months yoga experience.

On **Sunday 8 March, 10am to 4pm**, Jutika will run a one day massage course teaching basic techniques. From experience, I can assure you that they're both relaxing and fun. Not only do you spend a day giving and receiving massage (great) but you also learn a skill to try out on family and friends, who are invariably happy to be guinea pigs. Highly recommended!

Lucy will be leading an Alexander Technique workshop for women over-15-weeks pregnant on **Saturday 14 March, 10am to 4pm**, entitled "Do Less and Optimize your well-being and that of your baby. Find Space Within using the Alexander Technique."

Padmarashini's yoga workshop takes place on **Saturday 21 March, 10am to 4pm** – a practice to build energy, strength and stamina. Suitable for people with at least 3 months yoga experience.

The month ends with a weekend workshop led by Inner Yoga Trust Teacher Training on **Saturday 28 & Sunday 29 March**.

Bodywise are also running clinics for Shiatsu student practitioners. If you would to be treated by a supervised, third year Shiatsu student,

these will take place in the yoga studio on one or two Monday mornings per month until June this year. The cost is only £10 for a 50 minute session - these treatments are very popular, so book now to avoid disappointment.

Looking ahead to April, Alastair, our mindfulness-based psychotherapist will be leading a Hakomi workshop, "Therapy and the Limitless Mind". This is what he has to say about it:

"In the human face infinity becomes personal"
John O'Donohue.

We will explore the different ways we relate to ourselves and others. By recognising when we are starting to feel stuck and disinterested, we open up fresh avenues for dwelling in the present moment. This is very Hakomi: in our limits and so in our fullness we find perfection.

Hakomi is a Hopi word meaning 'how we stand in these many realms' and believe me, it really means many realms. If you are interested in exploring your mind, this is a very powerful tool. It has its roots in Buddhism and body psychotherapy. Founded by a friend of Chogyam Trungpa, a therapy often valued by teachers at the Naropa institute, Hakomi has been called active Buddhism. Come join me for a day of mindful healing and community building!

You are welcome to call in at Bodywise to discuss treatments or book classes or ring us on 0161 833 2528. We regret we are unable to take card bookings – cash or cheque only please.

Breathworks

Vidyamala's book *Living Well with Pain and Illness* has now been accepted for publication in the USA, Germany and Holland, with more publishers in negotiation. It has recently been very well reviewed in the journal of the British Pain Society (an alliance of health professionals): "It would be unwise to skim this valuable contribution to the self-help literature on chronic pain ... Ms Burch succeeds in an area notoriously difficult to explain well. She does so with a lightness of touch and kindly compassion which invite the reader to trust and commit to the endeavour of mindfulness as a new way of responding, rather than reacting, to their pain."

Retreats for Breathworks trainers continue to book up fast, events for Level 1 trainers are now booked until November, so do plan ahead! There are still places available on the popular "Graduates retreat" at Taraloka over July 12-17. This is a 5 day residential retreat for anyone who has attended a Breathworks course, and is a chance to take the practice of mindfulness deeper in beautiful surroundings.

The next Living Well with Pain and Illness course starts on Wed 6th May. And the next Living Well with Stress course (with free places) is planned to start on Sun 3rd May.

March	Sun	01	Focusing in a Buddhist Context with Jutika	10:30am - 4:30pm
	Mon	02	Sangha Night: Hinayana – The <i>Kalama Sutta</i>	7 - 9:30pm
	Sat	07	Bodywise: Yoga Workshop with Christine	10am - 1pm
	Sun	08	Bodywise: One Day Massage Course with Jutika	10am - 4pm
	Sun	08	Breathworks: <i>Living Well with Stress</i> course starts at MBC	11am - 5pm
	Mon	09	Sangha Night: Mahayana – Precepts Gathered from Here and There	7 - 9:30pm
	Wed	11	Full Moon Puja dedicated to Akshobya	5:45pm
	Fri-Sun	13-15	Weekend Sangha Retreat in Castleton - <i>What Makes You Not a Buddhist</i>	
	Sat	14	Bodywise: Alexander Technique for Pregnancy with Lucy	10am - 4pm
	Mon	16	Sangha Night: Mahayana – Precepts Gathered from Here and There	7 - 9:30pm
	Sat	21	Bodywise: Yoga Workshop with Padmarashini	10am - 1pm
	Sat	21	Introduction to Meditation Day	10:30am - 4:30pm
	Mon	23	Sangha Night: Vajrayana – The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava	7 - 9:30pm
	Sat-Sun	28-29	Bodywise: Inner Yoga Trust Teacher Training	10am - 4pm both days
	Sun	29	Day for Order Members: The Development of the Bodhicitta with Dayanandi	9:45am - 4:30pm
	Mon	30	Sangha Night: Vajrayana – The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava	7 - 9:30pm
April	Sat-Sun	04-05	Bodywise: Focusing with Manjudeva & Jutika	10am - 5pm both days
	Sun	05	Taking It Further - Buddhism and Meditation Day	10:30am - 4:40pm
	Mon	06	Sangha Night:	7 - 9:30pm
	Thu	09	Full Moon Puja dedicated to Vajrapani	5:45pm
	Mon	13	Sangha Night:	7 - 9:30pm
	Tue	14	Buddhism & Meditation Six-week courses start at Level 1,2 and 3	all 7 - 9:30pm
	Wed	15	Meditation Six-week courses start	Introductory and Going Deeper all 7 - 9:30pm
	Sat	18	Bodywise: Yoga workshop with Christine	10am - 1pm
	Sun	19	Mindfulness Sattipatthana Day with Vidyamala	10am - 5pm
	Mon	20	Sangha Night:	7 - 9:30pm
	Sat	25	Day for Women who have asked for Ordination	10am - 4pm
	Sat	25	Bodywise: Hakomi workshop led by Alastair	10am - 5pm
	Sun	26	Day for Men who have asked for Ordination	10am - 4:30pm
Sun	26	Introducing Buddhism and Meditation - Day Event	10:30 am - 4:30pm	
Mon	27	Sangha Night:	7 - 9:30pm	

Please note the views and opinions expressed in the Newsletter are those of the individual contributors and are not necessarily those held by the trustees of the Manchester Buddhist Centre or by the FWBO/WBO in general.

Manchester Buddhist Centre

16-20 Turner Street

Northern Quarter

t 0161 834 9232

f 0870 134 7356

e info@manchesterbuddhistcentre.org.uk

w www.manchesterbuddhistcentre.org.uk

The Manchester Buddhist Centre is run by the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO) Manchester, charity registration number 514937