



The Bede Griffiths Sangha Newsletter

Volume 4, Issue 4

December 2001

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

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Editorial

Thich Nhat Hanh is one of the most important spiritual teachers of our time. Thay, as he is known to his followers (Thay means teacher in Vietnamese) is a Buddhist monk whose teachings on the practice of mindfulness are a great force for peace in our divided world. Thay shows us how to heal conflict in ourselves, in relationships and in the world through the practice of mindful awareness of one's own anger and of mindful listening to the suffering of others. We felt that what Thich Nhat Hanh said in New York after the attacks of September 11th were so valuable that it was important to share it with all of you. I hope that you agree.

Before he died, Father Bede established a Trust to which he gave the task of inauguration an association which he called 'The Society for the Renewal of Contemplate Life'. The Trustees are

now looking for ways to take forward this important legacy through the establishment of contemplative prayer groups, making resources about Father Bede and his teachings available to such groups. This proposal is as at early stage. Now is the time to seek out ideas and see where people's enthusiasms lie. It would be wonderful if any of you could share in the newsletter any ideas about how Father Bede's vision of the renewal of contemplative life could be taken forward.

And finally, I intend to take a rest from producing this newsletter—much as Jill and I have enjoyed it—and would love to hear from anyone who would like to take this task on. If anyone is interested please get in contact and we can talk about it.

Namaste

Subscriptions 2002

This edition of the newsletter includes the 2002 subscription form. Please do send it back to Jane Saunderson, whether or not you are able to make a financial contribution. We really want to know who wants to receive the newsletter. We were going to mail this edition only to those who had replied to the earlier plea, but we know personally of several Sangha members who are active supporters but who

have not sent back a form. We don't want to remove anyone from the mailing list because of an oversight. So we are once again mailing to all 900 people on the list.

So please do return the form to Jane who also makes a plea for members with email to write their email addresses very clearly. They are easy to get wrong. Thank you everyone.

Unified Consciousness

Bede Griffiths

I believe humanity began with a unitary consciousness, and we all come out of it. When we were in the womb of our mothers, we were in that unitary consciousness, totally one with nature, one with humanity, one with the Supreme Spirit. Every night we go back into that consciousness, we return to the Source. The next stage is the dream consciousness of the myth and folklore and finally we come into the mental consciousness where we are all living.

The first millennium before Christ saw the awakening of mental consciousness. It came in India with the Upanishads and the Buddha, in China with Lao-Tsu, in Persia with Zoroaster, in Greece with the Greek philosophers Plato and Socrates, and it came with the Hebrew prophets. With the mental consciousness you begin to divide and it is a necessary stage. You have to awaken to discriminative consciousness, and all our science is simply and extreme development of this mental consciousness.

Today the mental consciousness has reached its absolute limits. Science has gone beyond anything anyone could imagine before and our whole rational society is divided at every level – in religion, in philosophy, in race and language and in personal self-consciousness. We now have to go beyond this mental consciousness: that is our calling today. But we have to realise how far it has taken us.

There is something in us which is urging us to return to the One, to the unity. In the Middle Ages there was an extraordinary growth of this unitive consciousness, not only in Christianity, but also in Islam, with the Sufis, in the Jewish tradition and in India and China. So everywhere the mental con-

sciousness evolved but it was preserved within a unitive consciousness. The great cultures of the world, the Indian, the Chinese, the Greek, the Medieval and the Islamic, all developed mental consciousness, great philosophical systems, unified in contemplative awareness, a spiritual awareness.

At the Renaissance in Europe there was a tremendous reaction. Of course many superstitions belonged to the consciousness of the Middle Ages, and there were tremendous problems. The whole thing was breaking down and humanity had to break out of that. We then began this scientific revolution, and that is the point at which mental consciousness finally took over.

All the great scientists were theists, they believed in God, whoever they were, Newton or Descartes. But they went on from that to study the physical universe around us in the light of mathematical law and they developed this wonderful system of mathematical science which we have inherited today. This is the mental consciousness taken to its limit. The great dividing point is with Descartes with whom the split between the conscious human being and the physical universe became final. It was present before, and people had learnt to distinguish themselves from the world around them, but there always had been a certain unity. But Descartes broke that up. For him the physical universe was 'extended matter' outside yourself, and science consists in the thinking mind examining this 'dead' matter. That is how science began. It is the extreme limit of this divisive consciousness, man separated from the physical world. And we have all inherited that.

Newton brought that to perfection with his wonderful system of mathematical law governing the whole universe. But Newton was an extraordinary and interesting person. He left a lot of writing, I believe they are unpublished, mostly in the occult. He believed that God was the source of time and space. So there was something very profound behind Newton, but his followers left out God and simply concentrated on the physical universe and its mathematical laws, and that has gone on to the present day. But we cannot stop with that divisive, mental, abstract, scientific consciousness. It was to be transcended.

No human being can simply live on the scientific level. We have this inheritance now of a mental consciousness, developed to this absolute extreme. And when you reach an extreme, you are always on the way back. The Chinese were speaking of the yang and the yin; the yang is the masculine, analytical, light consciousness, and that's developed to the limit. The moment you reach that, the yin, which is the dark, intuitive, imaginative consciousness, begins to take over. And we are in that state now.

I know very little of science personally, except what I learnt from Capra's *Tao of Physics* which had a very deep impression on me, and more recently David Bohm's *Wholeness – The Implicate Order*. It strikes me as something immensely profound. What has happened is that scientists divided everything and got everything down to atoms, and atoms could not be split. Those are the building blocks of the universe and it is all mathematically ordered. Then came the splitting of the atom, the discovery of particles, electrons and protons, in the atom. And finally came the breakthrough with quantum physics where they discovered that the particles dissolved into waves. This is where we are now.

We now longer believe that there are simply solid particles of matter in space and time. The universe is a field of energies and within that field are all these different structures. David Bohm has this wonderful understanding that the universe we observe scientifically is the *explicate*, the unfolding, but behind the unfolding is the *implicate*, the original unity. We structure all these different aspects of the universe in our minds; we can no longer separate the human mind, the observer, from the matter that he is observing. We only see the nature of the universe, that which is accessible to our senses, our instruments and our mental consciousness.

I like to use this concept of a symbol. All human knowledge is symbolic. A symbol is a sign by which reality becomes present to human consciousness. We never know *the* reality, we know it through the symbols, through the signs. All scientific theories are symbolic structures by which we organise our experience of the universe. And it gets more and more elaborate

and more and more profound, but is always remains a symbolic structure; we never know the reality. The same applies to our art, our poetry; we create symbolic forms to interpret the universe around us. All our theological systems, and our religious beliefs are symbolic structures. No one can say what God is; God is beyond all our symbols and structures. These systems point towards reality and they open our minds to the reality, but God always remains beyond.

We are all dominated today by this mental understanding of the universe but it is very limited. We need to learn now how to go beyond. In our human nature there is a longing for that original unity, we are all longing to be back in Eden, in Paradise. People take short cuts with alcohol, drugs, sex, the occult, and all these are developing because people in this multiple universe, which is in conflict and confusion, want to get back to the unity. In the book of Genesis it says, "An angel with a flaming sword was placed at the Garden of Eden". You cannot get back there, you see, by any other means. You have to go forward. We have to find a way to transcend our divisive, mental, scientific, rational, logical and analytical consciousness.

Of course poetry, music, drama, dance are ways in which the intuitive mind begins to recover the unity. The right brain sees the whole but not the difference, the left brain sees the differences but not the whole, and the two have to work together. So we are being challenged today to go beyond the multiplicity of the universe. We have to recover the unitive consciousnesses, not in an undifferentiated state as before, but in a differentiated state.

We now have to go beyond the psyche to the pneuma, the spirit, the atman, and this is the challenge of the 20th century or the 21st century, to transcend the psychological ego consciousness. Once you get beyond your ego, something breaks through in your life and extraordinary things happen. It is what Jung called synchronicity. You meet people apparently accidentally and it's just the person you needed at the time and it changed your life. Or you read a book or you come to some place. Then the transformation takes place.

So we are all open to this transformation, at any time

it can take you. I would like to mention that I had a stroke three years ago, in 1989. I was completely knocked out. I was sitting meditation, in the usual way, when something hit me on the head like a sledgehammer. I went absolutely dizzy, I crawled onto the bed and I thought I was dying. I think I was. After a week I began slowly to recover. It was an extraordinary experience. I found that this analytical mind had been knocked down, and a deeper intuitive, contemplative mind had emerged. It is still going on, it is not complete at all, but it is there. And I felt that an accident like that, a stroke, or cancer, or Aids, or a motor accident, or the death of a child or of a wife, all these that seem tragedies are a means for breakthrough, an opportunity to go beyond your limited human ego to a real consciousness.

Everybody in some way or other is called to go beyond this ego consciousness. It comes to all of us in some way, maybe simply through death. Death is a wonderful thing; you cannot take your ego beyond death. I think there is an intermediate state; you don't enter simply into the divine. You have got to be freed from attachments, and there are powers in the after-life which can set you free, then you enter into the divine life, the divine light, pure love.

The other experience I would like to share is that I thought I was going to die. I was quite prepared for it, which is very important. We should be prepared to die any day; it is going to come for all of us some time. But if we are ready for it, that makes all the difference. Well, I was ready to die but it didn't come! So I felt rather restless and something said to me, "Surrender to the Mother". It came out of the blue. I see now that it was the feminine. I'm like most intellectuals, I'm all in the mind, and the feminine, intuitive, feeling, anima had been pushed down. Now she came up and a flood of love came over me. It was the unconscious which opened and the whole feminine love and surrender absorbed me. It was amazing.

Today we are moving from a patriarchal consciousness to a feminine. It is going to be the meeting of the male and the female. But we cannot go on with this patriarchy. Israel and the whole of the Jewish culture was patriarchal, and the Muslim world is patriarchal, and

in the Christian world we have only got male gods: God the Father, God the Son and even the Holy Spirit is male. There is no female! It is extraordinary when you think of it. We've simply pushed the female down and we've let the male consciousness dominate. That is the rational, scientific consciousness. But the feminine consciousness, the intuitive, poetic, emotional, sympathetic, cooperative consciousness is latent in all of us.

Every human being is male and female. The marriage has to take place within. So we are being challenged to go beyond this masculine, male dominated consciousness and open ourselves to the feminine and become whole persons. Whole in mind, body and spirit. And the spirit integrates the physical and the psychological. We transcend the limits of the body and the soul and we become aware of this divine light, this divine life, this divine love. Beyond all pain, suffering and death there is this unconditional love. This is the ultimate.

We must always be aware of the transcendent, of this contemplative spirit which unified the whole. It's only in the death of the ego that the whole person can unify and that the person is unified with others. We are not separated individuals, we are persons and a person is a *being in relationship*. An individual is shut up in himself and divided. A person is being in relationship, being in love actually.

That is our real calling, to become fully human persons, beings in love. And the ultimate truth is that God himself, or whatever name you give the Supreme, is being in relationship, being in love, and that's the best way to describe God, or whatever name you give to the Ultimate. It is being in love, and that is what we are all being called to do. We must enter into that being in love, into that interpersonal relationship of love.

It's urgent. We must get beyond these terrible divisions which are destroying humanity. We are destroying the universe around us, the whole planet, and we're destroying it psychologically. We are killing one another. We can never get over it as long as we re-

(Continued on page 11)

Embracing Anger

Thich Nhat Hanh

Thich Nhat Hanh is a Vietnamese Buddhist monk. He was a peace activist in the Vietnam war and is one of the great spiritual teachers of our time. This article is part of a public talk by Thich Nhat Hanh at the Riverside Church, on New York - September 25th, 2001.

The full text is available on www.plumvillage.org to which acknowledgement is made.

My Dear friends, I would like to tell you how I practice when I get angry. During the war in Vietnam, there was a lot of injustice, and many thousands, including friends of mine, many disciples of mine, were killed. I got very angry. One time I learned that the city of Ben Tre was bombarded by American aviation. And the city was destroyed. The military man who was responsible for that declared later that he had to destroy the city of Ben Tre to save it. I was very angry.

But at that time, I was already a practitioner, a solid practitioner. I did not say anything, I did not act, because I knew that acting or saying things while you are angry is not wise. It may create a lot of destruction. I went back to myself, recognizing my anger, embracing it, and

looked deeply into the nature of my suffering.

In the Buddhist tradition, we have the practice of mindful breathing, of mindful walking, to generate the energy of mindfulness. It is exactly with that energy of mindfulness that we can recognize, embrace, and transform our anger. Mindfulness is the kind of energy that helps us to be aware of what is going on inside of us and around us, and anybody can be mindful. If you drink a cup of tea and you know that you are drinking a cup of tea, that is mindful drinking. When you breathe in and you know that you are breathing in, and you focus your attention on your in-breath, that is mindfulness of breathing. When you make a step and you are aware you are making a step, that is called mindfulness of walking. The basic practice in Zen meditation centres, is the practice of generating

mindfulness every moment of your daily life. When you are angry, you are aware that you are angry. Because you already have the energy of mindfulness in you created by the practice, that is why you have enough of it in order to recognize, embrace, look deeply, and understand the nature of your suffering.

I was able to understand the nature of the suffering in Vietnam. I saw that not only Vietnamese suffered, but Americans suffered as well during the war in Vietnam. The young American man who was sent to Vietnam in order to kill and be killed underwent a lot of suffering, and the suffering continues today. The family, the nation also suffers. I could see that the cause of our suffering in Vietnam is not American soldiers. It is a kind of policy that is not wise. It is a misunderstanding. It is fear that lies at the foundation of the policy.

Many in Vietnam had burned themselves in order to call for a cessation of the destruction. They did not want to inflict pain on other people, they wanted to take the pain on themselves in order to get the message across. But the sounds of planes and bombs was too loud. The people in the world, not many of them were capable of hearing us. So I decided to go to America and call for a cessation of the violence. That was in 1966, and because of that I was prevented from going home. And I have lived in exile since that time, 1966.

I was able to see that the real enemy of man is not man. The real enemy is our ignorance, discrimination, fear, craving, and violence. I did not have hate the American people, the American nation. I came to America in order to plead for a kind of looking deeply so that your government could revise that kind of policy. I remember I met with Secretary of Defence Robert MacNamara. I told him the truth about the suffering. He kept me with him for a long time and he listened deeply to me, and I was very grateful for his quality of listening. Three months later, when the war intensified, I heard that he

resigned from his post.

Hatred and anger was not in my heart. That is why I was listened to by many young people in my country, advocating them to follow the path of reconciliation, and together we helped to bring about the new organizations for peace in Paris. I hope my friends here in New York are able to practice the same. I understood, I understand suffering and injustice, and I feel that I understand deeply the suffering of New York, of America. I feel I am a New Yorker. I feel I am an American.

You want to be there for you, to be with you, not to act, not to say things when you are not calm. There are ways that we can go back to ourselves and practice so that we rediscover our calmness, our tranquillity, our lucidity. There are ways that we can practice so that we understand the real causes of the suffering. And that understanding will help us to do what needs to be done, and not do what could be harmful to us and to other people. Let us practice mindful breathing for half a minute before we continue.

In Buddhist psychology, we speak of consciousness in terms of seeds. We have the seed of anger in our consciousness. We have the seed of despair, of fear. But we also have the seed of understanding, wisdom, compassion, and forgiveness. If we know how to water the seed of wisdom and compassion in us, that seed, these seeds will manifest themselves as powerful sorts of energy helping us to perform an act of forgiveness and compassion. It will be able to bring relief right away to our nation, to our world. That is my conviction.

I believe very strongly that the American people have a lot of wisdom and compassion within themselves. I want you to be your best when you begin to act, for the sake of America and for the sake of the world. With lucidity, with understanding and compassion, you will turn to the people who have caused a lot of damage and suffering to you and ask them a lot of questions.

"We do not understand enough of your suffering, could you tell us? We have not done anything to you, we have not tried to destroy you, to discriminate against you, and we do not understand why you have done this to us. There must be a lot of suffering within you. We want to

listen to you. We may be able to help you. And together we can help build peace in the world." And if you are solid, if you are compassionate when you make this statement, they will tell you about their suffering.

In Buddhism we speak of the practice of deep listening, compassionate listening, a wonderful method by which we can restore communication -- communication between partners, communication between father and son, communication between mother and daughter, communication between nations. The practice of deep listening should be taken up by parents, by partners, so that they can understand the suffering of the other person. That person might be our wife, our husband, our son, or our daughter. We may have enough good will to listen, but many of us have lost our capacity to listen because we have a lot of anger and violence in us. The other people do not know how to use kind speech; they always blame and judge. And language is very often sour, bitter. That kind of speech will always touch off the irritation and the anger in us and prevent us from listening deeply and with compassion. That is why good will to listen is not enough. We need some training in order to listen deeply with compassion. I think, I believe, I have the conviction, that a father, if he knows how to listen to his son deeply and with compassion, he will be able to open the door of his son's heart and restore communication.

People in our Congress and our Senate should also train themselves in the art of deep listening, of compassionate listening. There is a lot of suffering within the country, and many people feel their suffering is not understood. That is why politicians, members of the Parliament, members of the Congress have to train themselves in the art of deep listening -- listening to their own people, listening to the suffering in the country, because there is injustice in the country, there is discrimination in the country. There is a lot of anger in the country. If we can listen to each other, we can also listen to the people outside of the country. Many of them are in a situation of despair, many suffer because of injustice and discrimination. The amount of violence and despair in them is very huge. And if we know how to listen as a nation to their suffering, we can already bring a lot of relief. They will feel that they are being

understood. That can diffuse the bomb already.

I always advise a couple that when they are angry with each other, they should go back to their breathing, their mindful walking, embrace their anger, and look deeply into the nature of their anger. And they may be able to transform that anger in just fifteen minutes or a few hours. If they cannot do that, then they will have to tell the other person that they suffer, that they are angry, and that they want the other person to know it. They will try to say it in a calm way. **"Darling, I suffer, and I want you to know it."** And in Plum Village, where I live and practice, we advise our friends not to keep their anger for more than twenty-four hours without telling the other person. "Darling, I suffer, and I want you to know it. I do not know why you have done such a thing to me. I do not know why you have said such a thing to me." That is the first thing they should tell the other person. And if they are not calm enough to say it, they can write it down on a piece of paper.

The second thing they can say or write down is, **"I am doing my best." It means "I am practicing not to say anything, not to do anything with anger, because I know that in doing so I will create more suffering. So I am embracing my anger, I am looking deeply into the nature of my anger."** You tell the other person that you are practicing holding your anger, understanding your anger, in order to find out whether that anger has come from your own misunderstanding, wrong perception, your lack of mindfulness and your lack of skilfulness.

And the third thing you might like to say to him or her is, **"I need your help."** Usually when we get angry with someone, we want to do the opposite. We want to say, "I don't need you. I can survive by myself alone." "I need your help" means "I need your practice, I need your deep looking, I need you to help me to overcome this anger because I suffer." And if I suffer, there is no way that you can be happy, because happiness is not an individual matter. If the other person suffers, there is no way that you can be truly happy alone.

So helping the other person to suffer less, to smile, will make you happy also.

The Buddha said, "This is like this, because that is like that. This is because that is." The three sentences I propose are the language of true love. It will inspire the other person to practice, to look deeply, and together you will bring about understanding and reconciliation. I propose to my friends to write down these sentences on a piece of paper and slip it into their wallet. Every time they get angry at their partner or their son or daughter, they can practice mindful breathing, take it out, and read. It will be a bell of mindfulness telling them what to do and what not to do. **These are the three sentences: "I suffer and I want you to know it." "I am doing my best." "Please help."**

I believe that in an international conflict, the same kind of practice is possible also. That is why I propose to America as a nation to do the same. You tell the people you believe to be the cause of your suffering that you suffer, that you want them to know it, that you want to know why they have done such a thing to you, and you practice listening deeply and with compassion.

The quality of our being is very important, because that question, that statement is not a condemnation, but a willingness to create true communication. "We are ready to listen to you. We know that you must have suffered a lot in order to have done such a thing to us. You may have thought that we are the cause of your suffering. So please tell us whether we have tried to destroy you, whether we have tried to discriminate against you, so that we can understand. And we know that when we understand your suffering, we may be able to help you." That is what we call in Buddhism "loving speech" or "kind language," and it has the purpose of creating communication, restoring communication. And with communication restored, peace will be possible.

This summer, a group of Palestinians came to Plum Village and practiced together with a group of Israelis, a few dozen of them. We sponsored their coming and practicing together. In two weeks, they learned

to sit together, walk mindfully together, enjoy silent meals together, and sit quietly in order to listen to each other. The practice taken up was very successful. At the end of the two weeks practice, they gave us a wonderful, wonderful report. One lady said, "Thay, this is the first time in my life that I see that peace in the Middle East is possible." Another young person said, "Thay, when I first arrived in Plum Village, I did not believe that Plum Village was something real because in the situation of my country, you live in constant fear and anger. When your children get onto the bus, you are not sure that they will be coming home. When you go to the market, you are not sure that you will survive to go home to your family. When you come to Plum Village, you see people looking at each other with loving kindness, talking with other kindly, walking peacefully, and doing everything mindfully. We did not believe that it was possible. It did not look real to me."

I think that if nations like America can organize that kind of setting where people can come together and spend their time practicing peace, then they will be able to calm down their feelings, their fears, and peaceful negotiation will be much easier.

Practice in relationships

Fr Bede encouraged lay people to lead contemplative lives. As a single person I found this relatively easy – I could do my practices when I chose. But living as a couple seems to present considerable difficulties. This was a major topic of concern at a recent retreat led by Elizabeth West at Ammerdown, Somerset, UK over New Year. How can couples enjoy living together and yet follow a spiritual journey – essentially a path one has to do alone? Any ideas – any models?

Jill Hemmings

SPRING RETREAT May 3-6 2002

Quieting of Mind and Body.

We had such a large response following the information about this retreat in the last Newsletter that it is now full. If you would like to be put on the waiting list, in case a place does become available, please contact Jane Saunderson on 01285-651381. Unfortunately it is only possible to accommodate a small number of people at the Skreen.



A meditation

Jesus was not a Christian.
 Buddha was not a Buddhist.
 I am not a Catholic, an Atheist or a Jew.
 I am just me you know,
 and that's the same as you.
 But as I look deeply Buddha
 into your upturned palm.
 Ignorance is diminished
 and wisdom is still and calm.
 The beauty I receive from you,
 I know within myself resides.
 You, do not possess it as a statuette,
 And my scattered mind I do not understand
 as yet.
 So inspire me to seek clarity, refuge and
 grace,
 in this special, sacred, and between us, mind-
 ful space.

Steve Woodward, Glasgow

Isa Upanishad

an interpretative translation

Br Martin

Brother Martin, long time friend and disciple of Father Bede, and anam cara to the Sangha, writes:

I am sending this interpretative translation of the Isa Upanishad. Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the nation of India seems to have said, if all the scriptures of India are lost but only the Isa Upanishad remains, that would be sufficient for the spiritual life of the people. Even if that is lost but only the first verse remains that would be sufficient. It reveals the importance of this Upanishad.

Isa (God), the Divine Intelligence permeates or envelops the whole of universe and everything that is living and moving in it. In fact God and Creation are like water and ice. Just as the ice moves and lives in the water so also the whole of the Universe moves and lives in God and they are not two independent realities but two aspects of the same reality: one is the manifested state and the other is un-manifested state. But they are essentially one. Therefore renounce the ignorance that you are ontologically different from God or separate from God or independent of God then your life in this world will be a life of joy in the Truth. Just as the nature of God is unfolding so also your nature consists in unfolding. Unfolding is an activity, which comes out of fullness of being, by which one does not get anything and does not lose anything. It is the opposite of becoming in which one tries to become something, which one is not. Live the life of unfolding and do not fall into the snare of spiritual or psychological becoming or acquiring, which is not be confused with becoming or acquiring in a functional sense.

The life of unfolding is the action of God in and through you, and is free from the bondage of action (karma). Since you are the unique manifestation of God just as all other human beings are, do not compare yourself with the others, and do not have the relationship of infatuation, dependency and posses-

siveness, but relate with others with equality, freedom, independency and love. For comparing oneself with other people is the source of misery and suffering.

If you live the life of unfolding, as God's essence is unfolding, then each moment your life is eternal life and you live eternally, though your physical body may appear and disappear. The actions of becoming and acquiring bind you as they are against your nature, and make you feel that you are nothing, and that you need to be filled with the acquired things and find security in them. But the life of unfolding makes you realize that you are a fullness of being and frees you from the bondage of action, which is rebirth.

There is a region of unfulfilled desires (demons), born of ignorance, which plunges one into the region of darkness, creating clouds around oneself, thus separating oneself from the light of Sun of Truth. Those who deny the life of unfolding and take up the life of becoming may fall into that region which makes one to circle in the darkness without seeing the light.

The nature of God or Reality does not move but travels swifter than the mind. One cannot reach God through the senses and the mind, since they move in time and space and God is beyond time and space. For this reason God is always beyond the senses and the mind. Without effort God wins those who make efforts. God cannot be attained through efforts but only in the silence of all the efforts of the senses and the mind God's indwelling and the universal presence is realized. Only an action that comes out of silence is effortless and motiveless and is free from the bondage of action.

The mind can speak of the Spirit or God only in the language of paradox. The mind can only say that God moves and does not move; God is far and God is near; it is within all and outside all; it is personal and impersonal. But God transcends the categories of the mind. When the mind realizes it's incapacity to define God and stops its projections unto God, then it becomes silent, a sage. Only in that silence it receives the intimations from God. All our mental con-

cepts of God are like pebbles that we throw into the sky. They come down and fall on our heads.

God and Creation are not two independent Realities. God is the only Absolute Reality and Creation is only the manifested aspect of God. Thus Creation is neither Real as God nor Illusion as a barren woman's child. It is Maya or Unreal. God and Creation are one in essence but two in appearances. The water and the ice are not two independent realities and at the same time they are not one in appearance. The ice is solid and has the beginning and the end but water is liquid and it has no beginning and the end; but they are essentially one. The sea and the wave is another example. Since the Creation has the beginning and the end, appearance and disappearance, it is called Maya (not illusion). Maya is that which can be measured. Since it is essentially one with God in the un-manifested state we can also say that it is also eternal.

He who sees all beings as various manifestations of the same one Reality sees oneself in all and all in oneself and thus frees oneself from the ignorance of ontological duality, not functional duality. Duality creates separation and separation creates fear. Non-duality removes separation and frees one from fear.

A sage is one who has this universal vision of all beings in oneself and one self in all beings. Thus freed from duality one becomes free from delusion and sorrow. A sage does not hurt himself / herself by hurting others. To hurt others is to hurt himself / herself as he/she is in all.

God fills all created beings with his radiance. God is formless, invulnerable, pure and absolute Good beyond relative good and evil. It is the supreme seer and universal Man, immanent and transcendent (Immanent as creation and transcendent as God). It is fully present in every created manifestation; thus every created manifestation is a pathless path to eternity as eternity is everywhere. Only those who renounce all paths (religions or psychological time) find eternity in time and time in eternity. For paths or ways imply distance between God and human beings but there is no distance between God and human beings. God is everywhere like an infinite ocean and human beings are like

fish in the ocean, living and moving in God. Religions create this distance and promise people that they take them to God.

Those who try to attain God through the path of ritualistic action, fall into deep darkness or ignorance. Rituals imply distance between God and human beings and distance implies time. Eternity, or timelessness, cannot be reached through time. Ritual can establish certain relationship with God but they always keep people separate from God as a yoke keeps the bulls together, but apart. Meanwhile rituals are performed with motives and the motives bind the persons to their actions. And those who follow the path of intellectual knowledge of God fall into deeper darkness or ignorance. For the idealization of God creates a gulf between God and human beings. It creates philosophical or theological systems of truth which become like clouds and separate people from the light of the Sun. They establish certain relationship with God but they also keep people separate from God just as the yoke keeps the bulls apart.

This gulf creates ways and means to reach the ideal; the ways create time and time, cut off from eternity, creates suffering. People are attached to the ideas of God rather than to God. Thus the knowledge of God is as much obstacle as the rituals to have union with God. But those who follow the path of wisdom and the path of motiveless action, with wisdom, that is, the realization that ultimately I and God are one, remove the gulf and the duality between the subject (oneself) and the object (God) and are freed from the burden of knowledge and time. And the ritualistic action that comes out of wisdom is motiveless and free and liberates one from the bondage of action (rebirth).

Those who follow the manifested or revealed aspect of God (the immanent) fall into deep darkness or ignorance (for they say that they know the Truth and limit God to their particular scriptures and want to give continuity to the past, to the God of the memory or scriptures. They live a mechanical life. And those who follow the un-manifested aspect of God (the transcendent) also fall into deeper darkness for they say that they cannot know the Truth and fall into agnosticism. But those who follow the revealed aspect of God and at

the same time acknowledge that God is greater than what is revealed in the scriptures, know the Eternal who has manifested in the human history (immanent) and at the same time remains unknown (transcendent). Only in the state of known-unknown the nature of Truth is perceived. We know how Truth has manifested so far, as the scriptures bear witness, but we do not know how it will manifest in the future for Truth is not static but dynamic. It is this known-unknown state which frees one from religious dogmatism, fundamentalism, fanaticism and also from agnosticism.

The whole of universe is the manifestation of God. The substratum of the universe is God. God is hidden in the appearance of creation. Since the Creation is the manifestation of God, it is a golden veil (Maya or ignorance), which hides God. In order to realize that God and Creation are two aspects of the same Reality one has to remove this golden veil of ignorance. But no one can remove this golden veil by one's own effort. It is only the grace of God that comes as the light of wisdom and frees one from the darkness of ignorance. In order to receive this grace one has to surrender to God. This surrender is possible only when one first explores with the intellect until one realizes it's incapacity to unite one with God and comes to the heart and surrenders it to God asking for the grace to remove this veil of ignorance. Just as a boat brings one from one shore to the other so also the intellect brings one to the end of the mind. But it is the heart that comes out of the boat and enters the land. For the intellect brings one to the understanding of non-duality but it is the heart that enters the heart of God.

(Continued from page 4)

main in the physical or the psychological level, but when we open ourselves to the transcendent, to the spirit, then the healing process begins and humanity can be healed.

This talk was given by Father Bede at the Scientists and Mystics Conference held at Winchester, UK, in April 1992



The message of the Bhagavad-Gita

A weekend retreat led by Sister Ishlata, an Indian sister of the Congregation of Franciscan Sisters at Park Place.

5th–7th April 2002

Sr. Ishlata has experience of ashram life and has made a special study of the Bhagavad-Gita. The weekend will be in the style of a retreat with talks, times for meditation, eucharistic celebration and times of prayer with Christian Indian liturgies, hymns and dances.

Details from The Secretary, Park Place Pastoral Centre, Winchester Road, Wickham, Fareham, Hants PO17 5HA

Poetry Corner

feel the rain wash away all your pain
 every drop that falls is a caress from the universe
 it brings relief but it can also bring
 disaster, so then you have to work faster
 at becoming the being
 you were designed to be
 so pure and clean like
 all eternity the universe the galaxy
 oh what a remedy.

Marcelle Nebiker, Canterbury

IF not delivered please return to:

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ME13 9RH**

For further information contact
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http://uk.msnusers.com/sahajanandaashram



In the Light

We are sad to report the death of Fr Tom Curtis Hayward who celebrated the Eucharist at several Sangha retreats at Prinknash and Park Place. Also the death of Julia Humphreys, a Canterbury Sangha member who helped mail this newsletter on many occasions who died suddenly last month.

We shall miss you both.

And welcome to baby Emily May Stolton whose mother, Simone, helps post this newsletter to you.

Sangha Retreats

Spring Retreat at the Rowan Tree Centre, The Skreen, nr Bulth Wells. May 3rd—6th 2002. *This retreat is now fully booked. For details of waiting list see p. 9*

Seminar with Br Martin Sahajananda at Park Place Pastoral Centre, Wickham, Hants. May 31st—June 2nd 2002. *Please use the enclosed application form.*

Brother Martin's visit to the United Kingdom and Ireland. *May-July 2002. Please see the enclosed sheet for details.*

The Sangha Advent Retreat, St Peters Grange, Prinknash Abbey November 29th—December 1st 2002

Regional Contacts

A bow to all of you who have agreed to act as contacts for the Sangha in your area. Thank you.

England

Beds: Bedford Peter Forrest 01234 831361

Bucks: Marlow Michael Day 01628 474034

Devon: Exeter Joan Uzzells 01392 276825

Essex: Chris Collingwood 0181 504 4476

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Kent: Canterbury Jill Hemmings & Adrian Rance 01227 752871

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Dear Regional Contacts,

If any of you would like a list of Sangha members in your local area please contact me and I will send you or email it to you.

Best Wishes Jane Saunderson 01285-651381.