

Today's Buddhists

The Buddhist Sangha in Britain

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Programme One Outline

Introduction to the Programme

2 minutes

Through a kaleidoscope of images and questions, the narrator introduces the series and Programme One.

Introduction to the Contributors

2 minutes

Brief personal histories introduce the five contributors:

Theravada

Most Venerable Vajiragnana, Head Monk, London Buddhist Vihara

Tibetan tradition

Venerable Lama Yeshe, Abbot, Samye Ling Monastery and Tibetan Centre

Soto Zen

Reverend Master Daishin Morgan, Abbot, Throssel Hole Abbey

Japanese Pure Land

Reverend Professor Sato, Founder and Head Priest, Three Wheels Temple

Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

Venerable Urygen Sangharakshita, Founder

Buddhists in Britain Today

22 minutes

Filmed in situ, each of the contributors talks about:

- the **origins** of their tradition
- its **key features** and
- its **encounter with the West**

Contributors

Theravada - Most Venerable Vajiragnana **Tibetan Tradition** - Venerable Lama Yeshe
Soto Zen - Reverend Daishin Morgan **Japanese Pure Land** - Reverend Professor Sato
Friends of the Western Buddhist Order - Venerable Urygen Sangharakshita

Background Information

Most Venerable Vajiragnana

Most Venerable Vajiragnana was only 13 when he became a monk in Sri Lanka. He is now one of the most senior monks of the Theravada tradition resident in Britain and is Head Monk of the London Buddhist Vihara.

The London Buddhist Vihara

The London Buddhist Vihara, is the oldest Buddhist establishment in Europe. It was opened in 1926 by Anagarika Dharmapala, a Sri Lankan monk in the Theravada tradition, who had been invited to the country by British scholars interested in Theravadin Buddhism. The Vihara has a number of resident monks who look after the spiritual needs of the Sri Lankan Buddhist community and run regular classes and retreats for others interested in Buddhism and meditation.

Venerable Lama Yeshe

Venerable Lama Yeshe fled Tibet as a young monk of 16 when the Chinese took power in 1959. Having tasted the delights of our 'Western paradise' and found them empty, he decided to enter a 21-year period of solitary retreat. However, after only five years he was called upon to become Abbot of Samye Ling Monastery in Dumfriesshire, Scotland, the first Tibetan Buddhist establishment in the West.

Samye Ling Monastery and Tibetan Centre

Samye Ling was established in 1976. It is named after the great monastery of Samye in Tibet, founded by Padmasambhava in the 7th century CE. Samye Ling is devoted to upholding the teaching of the Karma Kagyu school of Buddhism and preserving Tibetan culture. The Centre currently comprises a community of some 100 people (including monks, nuns and lay volunteers), a temple, retreat and study facilities, and the Tara College of Tibetan Medicine. Lama Yeshe is Abbot of Samye Ling and spiritual guide to the Samye Dzongs, Samye Ling's branch centres. He is also Director of the Holy Island Project.

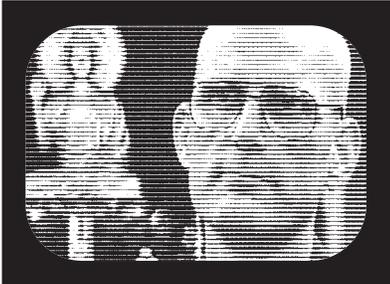
Theravada



Tibetan Tradition



Soto Zen



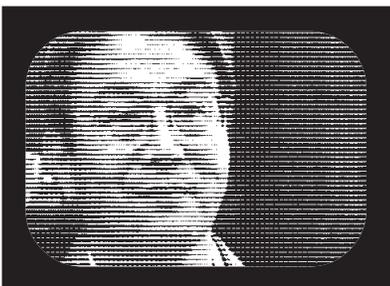
Reverend Master Daishin Morgan

Reverend Master Daishin Morgan became interested in Buddhism at the age of 19. Four years later he gave up his job as a tax officer to become a Zen monk. Now a Master in the Soto Zen tradition, he is Abbot of Throssel Hole Zen Buddhist Abbey and Head of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives in Britain.

Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey

Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey, Northumberland, was established in 1972. Its founder was the Reverend Master Jiyu Kennett, an Englishwoman who after many years training in the East was recognised as a *roshi*, or Zen master. When she returned to the West she established the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives, Throssel Hole Abbey, and Shasta Abbey in the USA. There are currently about 40 monks (men and women) at Throssel Hole.

Japanese Pure Land



Reverend Professor K.T. Sato

Reverend Sato was 14 years old when, at his father's temple, he met a woman who was said to be an Enlightened Master. He was so impressed by the way she lived her life that he decided to dedicate his own to the study and practice of Buddhism. He left Japan in 1996 to set up the Three Wheels Pure Land Temple in Acton, West London.

The Three Wheels Temple

The Three Wheels Temple was established in 1996 by Reverend Professor Sato, a priest in the Pure Land tradition. Its aim is to promote Anglo-Japanese relationships and to improve Westerners' understanding of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism. It is a branch of Shogyoji Temple in Kyoto, Japan, which is the centre of the Jodo Shin Shu (True Pure Land) school of Buddhism. The Three Wheels Temple is a result of links established in 1993 between Shogyoji Temple and University College, London.

Venerable Ugyen Sangharakshita

Venerable Ugyen Sangharakshita was 16 when he found an ancient Buddhist scripture in a second-hand bookshop in London and realised that he had always been a Buddhist. Pursuing his interest in Buddhism at the end of the Second World War, he became a Theravadin monk and lived in northern India for many years. Having studied there with Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist masters, he returned to London and established a new Buddhist movement, the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO), in 1967.

Madhyamaloka

Madhyamaloka, in Moseley, Birmingham, houses the administrative centre of the FWBO. It is also home to Sangharakshita, who has handed over his duties as Head of the Order and now devotes much of his time to writing and meeting with people.

FWBO



Theravada Buddhism



The Elders

The Theravada school of Buddhism traces its history back to the Great Council about 100 years after the time of the Buddha, when a split occurred between two schools of monks. While most monks asserted that they were following all the rules given to them by the Buddha, others, who identified themselves as the followers of the senior monks, insisted that there were further rules to be followed. Of these, the Theravada is the one school still in existence. The word *theravada* means the way of the elders.

Sri Lanka

Some 150 years later, Theravadin monks sailed to the island of Sri Lanka with Mahinda, son of the famous Indian emperor Ashoka. They took with them a cutting of the Bodhi Tree, under which the Buddha had gained Enlightenment at Bodhgaya, and the memorised teachings of the Buddha.

The Pali Canon

Over 100 years later, upheavals in Sri Lanka threatened the survival of the monastic sangha, and therefore of the 500 year-old oral transmission of the teaching. This threat prompted the writing down of the Buddha's teaching. The Pali Canon, the Theravada collection of scriptures, comprises these earliest texts, written down in Sri Lanka 30 years before the beginning of the Common Era, about 500 years after the death of the Buddha.

The Pali Canon is the oldest complete collection of Buddhist scriptures and is divided into three collections: The *Vinaya Pitaka* or collection of monastic rules, The *Sutta Pitaka* or collection of the Buddha's discourses, and the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, the collection of 'further teachings'. The Theravada school reveres its sacred texts as an accurate record of the original and true teaching of the Buddha.

The Arhat

Theravada Buddhism emphasises the quest to become a perfectly Enlightened One, or *arhat*. An arhat is one who has eradicated the poisons of greed, hatred and ignorance. The path to arhatship consists of the practice of ethics, meditation and wisdom. The Theravada tradition holds that it is through living as a monk or nun that one is most likely to achieve that goal.

Tibetan Buddhism

Vajrayana - the Diamond Way

Samye, the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet, was built in the 7th century. It was modelled on the great Indian university monasteries, but its construction met with so much opposition that the king had to send for the great Indian saint-magician Padmasambhava. He introduced into Tibet a magical-ritual form of Buddhism from India, known as Tantric Buddhism or the Vajrayana (the Diamond Way). Practitioners of this form of Buddhism believe that full engagement in ritual Tantric practices incorporates all their energies, helping them achieve their quest for Enlightenment. Tibetan Buddhism draws on all three *yanas*, or forms of Buddhism: Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana.

Monastic universities

In Tibet's great monastic universities, monks and nuns spend many years studying Mahayana texts. As part of their training they undergo rigorous oral exams and debates. They also take the **Bodhisattva Vow** - a vow to pursue Enlightenment not just for themselves but for the sake of all beings. Many Tibetan Buddhists, monastic or lay, take the Bodhisattva Vow. The word *bodhisattva* means a being dedicated to Enlightenment.

Lineage

A key feature of Tibetan Buddhism is an emphasis on the transmission of the teaching from the master, or *guru*, to the disciple, as part of a carefully preserved lineage. The differences between the schools in Tibetan Buddhism are not primarily based on differences of rule or doctrine, but on lineage.

The four main Tibetan schools

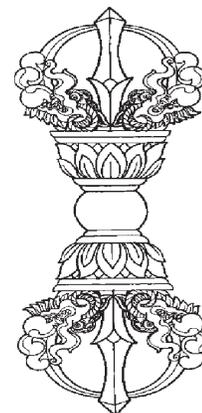
The **Nyingmapa** School ('the old ones') trace their origins back to Padmasambhava

The **Shakyapa** School is not so well established in Britain

The **Gelugpa** school is headed by the Dalai Lama

The **Kagyupa** school begins its lineage with Naropa, the Indian sage, followed by the Tibetan yogi and mystic poet Milarepa, and his follower, Gampopa. It was this school that introduced the practice of finding the reincarnations of deceased lineage holders to train from childhood. The **Karmapa Order**, based at Samye Ling Monastery and Tibetan Centre, is a particular lineage within the Kagyupa School.

One of the Tibetan schools most active in the West is the **The New Kadampa Tradition** (NKT), a Tibetan school devoted to promoting Mahayana Buddhism. Founded by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, it is based at The Manjushri Centre, Cumbria. The NKT has about 80 Centres in the UK.



Zen Buddhism



The Golden Flower

Zen Buddhism developed from Ch'an, which is the Chinese pronunciation of the Pali and Sanskrit word *dhyana*. Dhyana refers to states of deep concentration in meditation.

The Zen tradition tells how the Buddha, while seated before a large assembly of monks, silently held aloft a golden flower. The monk Mahakashyapa looked at the flower and smiled in understanding. The Buddha smiled too; he had communicated his teaching directly to Mahakashyapa, from mind to mind, beyond the use of words or concepts.

Ch'an

This, say the legends, was the start of the Ch'an, or Zen, lineage of teachers, a lineage which continued to be handed down personally from master to disciple. The records describe how the monk Bodhidharma took this form of Buddhism to China in the 5th century of the Common Era. Ch'an emphasises direct experience in sitting meditation, supported by the practice of mindfulness in daily life, as a means of breaking through to Enlightenment.

Zen

Ch'an combines the twin disciplines of meditation and challenging an over-reliance on conceptual thought. When Ch'an arrived in Japan the word *ch'an* became *zen* and two schools developed:

Rinzai Zen bases its practice on highly paradoxical dialogues with an Enlightened master as a means to gaining a sudden breakthrough to Enlightenment. The well known *koans*, such as "what is the sound of one hand clapping?", or "what was your face before you were born?", are records of these riddle-like exchanges between an Enlightened Ch'an or Zen master and disciples. (*Koan* means public record.)

Soto Zen pursues a gradual Awakening through the practice of the Precepts, *zazen* or 'Just Sitting' meditation, and the practice of mindfulness in daily life. Through these practices, one realizes one's true unlimited potential - one's Buddha Nature.

Pure Land Buddhism

The Pure Land Sutras

The sacred texts of Pure Land Buddhism describe how the Buddha taught his disciples about the existence of a Buddha called Amida, or Amitabha. Amida, the Buddha of Infinite Light, lives beyond time in a Pure Land.

Shinran

In the famine-struck, war-torn Japan of the 12th century, this highly devotional form of Buddhism came to full flowering as a separate school, known as True Pure Land, or Jodo Shin Shu. Its founder, Shinran, taught that reliance on simple faith, and recitation of the name of Amida leads to rebirth in his Pure Land, where Enlightenment is not only assured but easy to pursue. For Pure Land Buddhists, the key is to let go of the illusion of self and give oneself up to the saving power of Amida's vow.

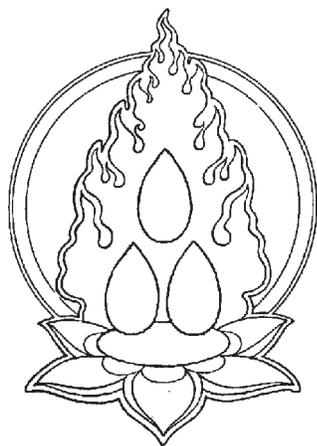
Amida's Vow

The whole of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism rests on the vow of Amida. The texts describe how, as a monk countless ages ago, Amida took the Bodhisattva Vow and promised not to enter Enlightenment and become a Buddha until he had established a Pure Land. Merely calling his name in great faith and devotion assures entry into this Pure Land at the moment of death. All that is needed is to abandon an egocentric reliance on self and to rely instead on the power of Amida.

True Pure Land Buddhism has been handed down through a hereditary married priesthood.



FWBO



Venerable Uryen Sangharakshita

Venerable Uryen Sangharakshita became a Buddhist in his teens. After the Second World War he spent twenty years in India, where he was ordained as a Theravadin monk in 1950 and studied with eminent Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist teachers. Returning to Britain in 1966, and recognising a growing interest in Buddhism, he sought to communicate the essence of the Buddha's teachings in a manner relevant to life in the modern industrialised West.

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

Sangharakshita founded the FWBO in 1967, drawing on the whole of the Buddhist tradition rather than just one school. He also sought to draw on positive aspects of modern Western culture, such as art, poetry and literature, to support and inspire Buddhist practice.

The Western Buddhist Order

The Western Buddhist Order itself was founded the following year, in 1968. Members of the WBO are neither monastic nor lay; in being ordained, these women and men commit themselves to following the teachings of the Buddha. Whatever their lifestyle - whether celibate, single or married, living alone, with a family, a partner or in a Buddhist residential community - their commitment to Go for Refuge to the Three Jewels - the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha - is primary.

FWBO Centres

There are about 30 FWBO centres in the UK, engaged in teaching meditation and Buddhism as well as providing a focus for other Sangha activities. They are run by members of the Western Buddhist Order.

Communities

Close by many of the FWBO's centres there are also communities for men and women. These single-sex communities offer a supportive environment for spiritual practice and the chance to deepen friendships with others who share the same ideals and interests.

Team-Based Right Livelihood Businesses

These Buddhist Right Livelihood businesses provide an opportunity for members of the Sangha to practise with fellow Buddhists whilst working and earning a living.

Interview Transcript

Origins

Theravada means the acceptance of the elders; *thera* means elders. Three months after the demise of the Buddha there was a council attended by 500 monks who were elders. They decided what the Buddha had taught, and that acceptance was unanimous and became known as Theravada.

The teachings of the Buddha continued by oral tradition for several hundred years. They were first committed to writing in Pali in Sri Lanka in the first century BCE. The language of the Theravada Buddhist tradition is Pali and Theravada Buddhism first came to the West through scholars who got interested in studying Pali language.

The London Buddhist Vihara is the oldest Buddhist monastery in the West: it was started by a gentleman named Anagarika Dharmapala in 1926.

Key Features

In the Theravada tradition we have monks, nuns and lay people and the monks' role is to look after people's religious needs, especially by teaching the Dhamma. In return, lay people provide the monks with food, clothing, dwelling and medicine - these are the four main traditional requisites.

In the Theravada tradition we say Buddhist life consists of three main things: practising morality, practising generosity and practising meditation. Without moral practice no meditation can be done. Meditation is the main interest of many people but meditation cannot be successfully done without moral purity. And generosity is also part of Buddhist life, to be generous in heart and mind.

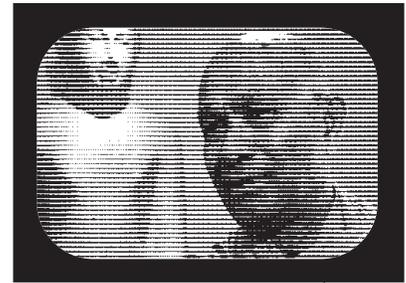
If there is any particular emphasis, it is on 'arhatship'. Arhatship means the perfection of life: eradicating all defilements such as selfish attachment, hatred and ignorance. When these things are completely eradicated we say that person is an *arhat*.

Encountering the West

No change has taken place in our tradition since coming to the West - we follow the same traditional pattern that we have in all traditional Theravada countries.

As Theravadins our contribution to the West is to help people to understand the teachings of the Buddha and help them practise the teachings of the Buddha, to eradicate *dukkha*, or unsatisfactoriness.

This transcript from the video interview has been edited, retaining the key points.



Theravada

Most Venerable
Vajiragnana

Head Monk
London Buddhist Vihara

Interview Transcript



Tibetan Tradition

Venerable Lama Yeshe
Abbot
Samye Ling Monastery
and Tibetan Centre

Origins

Samye Ling has been here now almost thirty years.

Lineage is very important in Tibet. Our lineage started with Naropa, who was a chancellor of Nalanda University, one of the biggest Buddhist universities in India. His foremost disciple in Tibet was called Milarepa, who is in some places more famous than the Buddha himself.

Our founder, Gampopa, studied under Milarepa. The first Karmapa [the spiritual head of the tradition] was a disciple of Gampopa and the lineage has continued unbroken through the lives of seventeen Karmapas, transmitting all these precious teachings which we have received from great teachers. Almost 800 years of history is still practised inside and outside Tibet. It is very fresh and alive. Having absolute faith in our lineage, we dedicate our lives to achieving their teachings; not by learning word for word but by changing our thinking.

Key Features

We emphasise Mahamudra meditation. This is to sharpen our awareness. The Buddha said every life has the potential for goodness; the only thing is that some people do not have the inner wisdom to know that they have this potential. Having recognised that we can become Buddhas, the only way to achieve it is through meditation, in order to gain stability, clarity, wisdom and loving compassion.

You don't have to be a monk or nun to practise this. You could be a lay person. All we emphasise is: first, acceptance of our potential; secondly, awareness: physical discipline, speech discipline and mental discipline. We want to use mindfulness and wisdom to bring change for the benefit of all sentient beings.

When young people come here seeking my help, I first lay out my conditions: I can make you better if you take my medicine.

This transcript from the video interview has been edited, retaining the key points.

Buddhists Respond
Today's Buddhists

Interview Transcript

Origins

The Zen tradition began with the story of how the Buddha held up a flower as a way of expressing his teaching. This was intuitively understood by Mahakashyapa and then the lineage of transmission from Master to disciple spread northwards into China, across into Japan and to the West - altogether in about 86 generations to the present time.

The immediate source of our tradition was Master Jiyu Kennett, who was my teacher. She went to study in Japan although she was ordained first of all in Malaysia in a Chinese tradition of Soto Zen. Soto Zen is one of the main schools of the Zen tradition and it emphasises seated meditation of a particular kind known as 'serene reflection' meditation.

Key Features

The unaltered essentials of the tradition are the emphasis on meditation; the fact that the root of our being is Buddha Nature; and that that Buddha Nature is expressed in the world through the practice of the Precepts.

Buddha Nature is the essence of compassion, love and wisdom that is at the heart of our being. It's intrinsic to all people, all of life, and meditation is about uncovering that Buddha Nature that's obscured by our greed, anger and delusion.

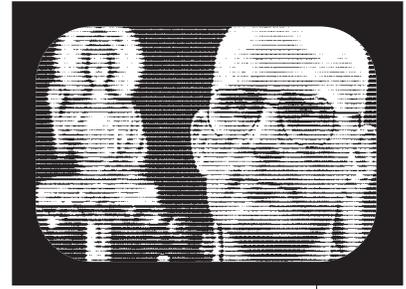
Encountering the West

The encounter with the West has been one of two very different cultures; the tradition was mainly rooted in Japanese culture but we've translated all the scripture, recitations and ceremonies into English and set many of the recitations to English plainsong.

One of the essential changes has been the way in which the Master-disciple relationship has altered: today it's much more a case of Master and disciple walking along side by side, with less of an authority structure. This tends to happen in Japan too. As things develop in the West, we're needing to explore different ways of expressing the monastic life. Very importantly, the increase in the depth of practice in lay people is leading to a different kind of relationship between monks and lay people.

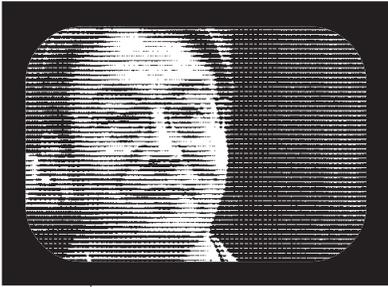
I see our role as primarily helping individuals come to an understanding of the truth directly for themselves; and as they become more compassionate, loving, and able to see clearly what is good to do, that makes a huge contribution to society.

This transcript from the video interview has been edited, retaining the key points.



Soto Zen

Reverend Daishin Morgan
Order of
Buddhist Contemplatives
Abbot
Throssel Hole Abbey



Pure Land

Reverend Professor
K.T. Sato

Head Priest
Three Wheels Temple

Interview Transcript

Origins

Our Buddhist centre is a branch of Shogyoji's Temple in Japan, a Shin Buddhist temple. Shin Buddhism is a type of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism. Shin Buddhism is the flower of Mahayana Buddhism, the culmination of Pure Land Buddhism which took place in Japan in the 13th century. The tradition of Pure Land Buddhism can be traced back to India. It is based on particular Sanskrit sutras.

Key features

Although Shin Buddhism seems very different from other traditions, it includes the essentials of Mahayana Buddhism and the central teaching of Gautama Buddha, from which Mahayana Buddhism is believed to have developed. We believe one can become a Buddha only through pure faith in Amida [Amitabha] Buddha. Amida Buddha doesn't discriminate between men or women, lay people or those in holy orders, young or old, rich or poor. Our tradition is called a school for lay people: priests and lay people can learn from and enlighten one another.

Based on his pure faith in Amida Buddha, the founder of our tradition, Shinran, got married. Shin Buddhist priests are allowed to marry.

Encountering the West

Inspired by the wonderful spiritual exchanges between our temple in Japan and University College, London, my master Venerable Chimyo Takehara decided to establish a Buddhist centre here in London.

The encounter with the West made us far more aware of just how crucial it is to have respect for other traditions and of how humble and tolerant and courageous we must be in this context. Nothing has changed as to the essentials of our tradition. We are, if anything, rather more aware of how important they are. We are now more open to the Western way of thinking and to different faiths.

By introducing people to Buddhist philosophy and culture we would like to help people live in the best way possible. What we introduce should inspire both wisdom and love: wisdom, or Enlightenment, so that people should be awakened to themselves as they are; love or compassion so that they may love others as *they* are.

This transcript from the video interview has been edited, retaining the key points.

Buddhists Respond
Today's Buddhists

Origins

The origins of the FWBO lie in the whole Buddhist tradition. We draw on all the major sects and schools; especially from the Theravada, from Tibetan Buddhism (especially in its Nyingma form) and from Ch'an Buddhism. More specifically, our origins were in London back in 1967 when I started a meditation group in a basement in central London.

Key Features

The FWBO, including the Western Buddhist Order, has six distinctive features; six things on which we place particular emphasis: we emphasise the central importance of Going for Refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha; we draw inspiration and guidance from the whole Buddhist tradition, not just from one sect or school; we are a unified tradition, neither exclusively monastic nor lay, and including both men and women on equal terms; we emphasise the importance of Right Livelihood - applying ethical principles to our means of earning a living; we emphasise the importance of the arts - painting, poetry and so on - in the spiritual life; and we also emphasise the great importance of spiritual friendship in the spiritual life.

Encountering the West

The FWBO's distinctive contribution, apart from its contribution as part of Buddhism itself, lies in the area of friendship. We consider friendship important not only within the spiritual life itself but within the broader social, and even international, life. We emphasise the importance of friendship between individuals, between people of different religions, different nationalities, different ethnic backgrounds and so on. I think this is something that the FWBO could contribute to the West.

The Order has quite a substantial presence in India; in fact by far the greater part of our purely social, educational and medical work is in India.

This transcript from the video interview has been edited, retaining the key points.



FWBO

Venerable Urgyen
Sangharakshita
Founder
FWBO