

BUDDHIST LEADERSHIP: A HANDS - ON PERSPECTIVE

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When thinking about the main theme of this conference, 'Buddhist Approach to Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Sustainable Societies' I felt that the most useful and meaningful contribution I could make would be to describe two organisations that since their founding I have had some responsibility for and which, since they are both Buddhist organisations, are run according to Buddhist principles. I hope that the practical example and experience of both will be of use in demonstrating what could be and I believe should one day be a Buddhist Global initiative. Were our world run on Buddhist principles it would unquestionably be a better place and so I believe we have a responsibility to demonstrate and promote those principles for the good, the benefit and the welfare of all beings. I believe too that Buddhism has much to teach the world about skillful and meaningful leadership and I hope to show here by describing something of my experience in the UK over the last forty odd years how this could be a reality.

In this paper my focus is on the two organisations that I have helped found and that I have led since their inception. The first is Angulimala, the Buddhist Prison Chaplaincy which is active in the prisons of England, Wales and Scotland; and the second is TBSUK - the Theravada Buddhist Sangha in the UK. Angulimala was launched at Magha Puja in 1985 and TBSUK began at a gathering of the Sangha in September 2006. Angulimala was founded with the

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purpose of making Buddhism available in the prisons and to provide a reasonable and organised support for those prisoners who were already committed Buddhists or were in the process of developing an interest or were just curious. TBSUK arose out of my concern that as Buddhism was developing in the West it was increasingly lay led. I was concerned to see the Sangha being marginalised and devalued, and the Dhamma open to fragmentation and false interpretation. I also felt that it was time for the various Sanghas, whatever their Asian origins and the culture of their temples, to accept that as they are now becoming rooted in the UK it was time for the Sangha to be organised properly and legally acknowledged here. It was also obvious that by working together, we would have a better chance of finding solutions to various problems we have in common.

Before I left England at the beginning of September 1971, I paid a visit to the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara and had a chat with 'Kappy', the former Kapilavaddho, twice ordained and by then twice disrobed, who had founded the English Sangha Trust and been many years before the first European to be ordained in Thailand. I remember him telling me that a prison had phoned to ask if a Buddhist prisoner could be made to have his hair cut. So, well before I left England I knew of a contact between the Prison Service and the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara. What I didn't know was that the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara was the official address that the Prison Service had for matters Buddhist. This was where I had first discovered Buddhism and where I had first learnt meditation and where I returned to in 1977 with Ajahn Chah when he was invited to London. Also, at that interview Kappy asked me to promise to return. He made the point that young men going out to Asia to investigate Buddhism and perhaps ordain seldom returned to teach and propagate Buddhism in England. He of course had and his dream had been to establish a Sangha of English bhikkhus. It was a dream he never quite realised. I promised to return.

It wasn't that long after the arrival of Ajahn Chah, accompanied by Ajahn Sumedho and myself, at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara at the beginning of May 1977, that we had enquiries from three different prisons for someone to visit their Buddhist inmates. There was a letter from Parkhurst Prison on the Isle of Wight, another

from Pentonville in London and a phone call from the nearby Holloway Women's Prison in London. I was intrigued. There were only the three of us and this was obviously not something for Ajahn Chah, too much travelling and he didn't speak any English. Ajahn Sumedho was preoccupied with looking after and translating for Ajahn Chah and as an American was still new to the country. So it seemed to me this was something for me, especially as it looked like an ongoing commitment and Ajahn Chah had already told Sumedho and me that while he would have to return to Thailand before Vassa, we were to stay.

I thought about it, thought about whether I had anything to offer and considered that while I had never been in a prison or a prisoner I had, just like someone locked in a cell, spent a lot of time alone in small one-roomed huts in the forest. I, of course, had done that entirely voluntarily and with a purpose but I reasoned that the meditation techniques I had employed could also benefit prisoners who I imagined, alone for many hours, would inevitably be facing themselves, their thoughts and emotions, but without any means of doing so skillfully. So, I decided to give it a try. Alone one day on a train with Ajahn Chah somewhere near Guildford I told him of the requests and asked him what he thought of my responding. So far as I remember he just said, 'Go.' And that was it. That was the start of what will soon be forty-two years in Prison Chaplaincy.

At the time I thought there were only a few prisons in England. I'd heard of the more well-known that occasionally figured in films and in the newspapers but I had no idea that there were something like 140 gaols spread across England and Wales, with another handful in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Nor did I know then how the prisons were organised into categories and how often prisoners could be moved as they progressed through the system. But I soon found out. Especially when men I was seeing in two of the Isle of Wight prisons, both of which were then Dispersal or High Security prisons, were downgraded and moved to prisons that were more relaxed. I also discovered that as they were moved they rather expected me to follow, which meant that I was soon collecting appointments to more and more prisons.

At this point I'd better try and explain roughly how the prisons

of the UK are organised. First of all you have to understand that the UK is composed of four countries and so the prisons of England and Wales are administered through HM Prison and Probation Service from Westminster by the Minister for Justice (in the past before the creation of the MOJ it was the Home Secretary) assisted by the Prisons Minister; those in Scotland are run by the Scottish Prison Service under the Scottish Government; and those in Northern Ireland by the N I Prison Service. I work mostly with HMPPS in England and Wales and to a lesser degree with the Scottish Prison Service. So far as this paper is concerned it will be the prisons and HMPPS of England and Wales that I will be referring to.

For the prisons of England and Wales there is an Act of Parliament that was passed in 1952 when England was a very different country from what it is now. Then there were hardly any black or Asian immigrants. That Prison Act of 1952 is still in force but its interpretation has been modified over the years, especially as the ethnic and religious composition and diversity of both the country and its prison population has changed and grown. Referring to religious observance, the Prison Act only mentions Christianity and particularly the established Church of England because back in the England of 1952, which I am old enough to remember, we knew little or nothing of faiths other than Christianity. That Prison Act states that every prison must have a Chaplain who shall be a clergyman of the Church of England and then it goes on to include provision for the appointment of Visiting Ministers of other denominations but actually says nothing about other faiths. The solution when I began in 1977 was to stretch the interpretation of other denominations to include other faiths and so it was that I used to be appointed as a Visiting Buddhist Minister. Over the years and as the country has changed so things have moved on considerably in terms of human rights and equality and thus, with the gradual establishment of a Multifaith Chaplaincy within the Prison Service, we are all now of whatever faith appointed as prison Chaplains.

The next thing to understand about how our prisons are run is that all male prisons and prisoners are designated as Category A, B, C or D. Category A is the highest security and such a prisoner is usually regarded as dangerous and the sort of person you wouldn't

want to escape under any circumstances. He will be watched and checked frequently, he will have to be accompanied by a dog and dog handler when being moved from one building within a prison to another and there will be a special vehicle and police escort when he is transferred from one prison to another. Category B is an obvious step down, although it is likely that such a prisoner will remain in a high security or long term prison. Category C is a further relaxation of security but still within an enclosed and secure environment and Category D is what is some times referred to as an Open Prison where there is no fence, few staff and where the prisoner will gradually be allowed to go out from the prison every day to work or study. Category D prisons are sometimes designated as resettlement centres and provide invaluable opportunities for men who have been in prison for a very long time to adapt gradually to a world outside that may have changed enormously in the twenty or more years that he has been a prisoner. There are far fewer women than men in prison in the UK and they are not categorised in the same way but still some of their prisons are very secure while others are more relaxed. Obviously, the degree of security usually reflects the length of the sentence and the years to be served and the sentence corresponds to the severity of the crime.

My brief and my interest has been simply to make Buddhist teaching and practice available in our prisons. I've long accepted that I can't do everything and so although I may take an interest in prison reform, be concerned at stories of injustice and wrongful conviction and be enthusiastic about developments such as Restorative Justice, I have to restrain myself and do my best to remain focused firmly on simply enabling prisoners to access and practice the Buddha Dhamma. That is what I am there for. My beginning in prison chaplaincy coincided with a rising interest in Buddhist Social Action and there were several attempts at the time to link me and what I do to that movement but I rejected them. I don't approve of compartmentalising bits and pieces of Buddhist practice as if other areas of what one does as a Buddhist don't matter as much or are unnecessary. In my view you should just practice the Dhamma. Which of course means that if it falls to you to help improve the lot of prisoners then naturally you will do it. Being helpful when you can should be part of what you do

as a Buddhist, just as daily chanting and meditation is part of what you do as a Buddhist. I often make the point that what I do in the prisons is pretty much what I do in the temple but, and this has become something of a watchword with me, as the prisoners can't come to the temple, we must take the temple to them!

My role first and foremost has been that of a Buddhist chaplain, which has meant leading prisoners, men and women, sometimes of various Buddhist interests and allegiances to be able to know, practise and develop the Buddha's teachings in their own lives. I have done this in the prisons much as I would anywhere else, including in my own temple. In fact, when people have sometimes expressed surprise at a forest monk like me leaving the seclusion of the forest to work in the prisons, I have explained that in the prison I do pretty much the same as I would do with visitors in a forest temple. Of course, the environment is different but then just as life in the forest exposes and challenges one's defilements, so does life in a prison, whether as a prisoner or as a Buddhist chaplain. Ajahn Chah, with whom I trained, once said that he had learnt more from sitting under his kuti receiving the almost constant procession of people who came to see him than he had during his years of solitude in the forest. I could almost say the same of my years in the prisons. Although, as I have said, I do pretty much the same in the prisons as in the temple, there are differences because I'm working in prisons where people can't come to the temple, can't attend different groups, can't come and go as they wish, don't have the same freedom to experiment and enquire as they would outside and have only a limited access to books, and no Internet. It's also true that most of those registering and attending the Buddhist groups in our prisons have developed their interest in Buddhism while in prison and therefore have had little or no contact with the Buddhist world and its various traditions and customs outside. All this means that the people who come to my Buddhist groups in prison are heavily reliant on me as their Buddhist chaplain for practically everything Buddhist. And they depend on me too to ensure and defend their right to practise Buddhism. Thus the leadership that is required of a Buddhist prison chaplain is not only one that inspires and instructs it has also to be one of provision. We become for them the source for practically all things Buddhist.

This is both a privilege and a challenge. To begin with I was pretty much acting alone with little or no support, very little guidance and practically no specific training for what I was doing or what was expected of me. Fortunately, I had the discipline and resolve that came from having been trained and practised as an actor, followed by several years of a fairly spartan existence as a forest monk under Ajahn Chah. Determination, discipline and persistence got me through a lot in those early days in the prisons when I wasn't in a very strong position at all. The Chaplaincy in each prison was then still run by a clergyman of the Church of England, the established church, and other faiths were hardly known and barely tolerated. Eventually I decided that I should try and make some contact with the Chaplaincy hierarchy and managed to arrange a meeting in London with the then Deputy Chaplain General. He was a very affable Welshman and I came out of that meeting feeling that I had begun to achieve some recognition, particularly as he had agreed that in future throughout the prisons one Buddhist holy day should be recognised every year. At about that time a tendency had begun amongst Western Buddhists to call Vesakha Puja or Vesak 'Buddha Day' and so we had agreed that Buddha Day would be recognised and could be celebrated by Buddhists every year in the prisons of England and Wales. This was an historic step forward.

Even to this day, when it is official policy that chaplaincy should be multi faith with reasonably equal provision for all faiths the facilities nevertheless can and do vary from prison to prison but still, everywhere groups are encouraged and able to meet. Thirty and forty years ago, it was a different story with so much depending on the personality and attitude of the Christian chaplains and sometimes other members of staff as well. It was not unusual for us to be refused the chapel, the only available meeting space, although it could be used for staff meetings and film shows. In my early days therefore, I mostly met with prisoners individually. I used to walk around the prisons and sit with prisoners in their cells, mostly just talking to them. In some prisons I had to be escorted, which usually meant quite a bit of waiting around for the escort: patience and determination again and again!

In around 1984, when we were talking about organising

ourselves properly to make sure there was a Buddhist visiting minister available and appointed to every prison in the land, a couple of prisoners told me about Lord Avebury. One prisoner who had been in correspondence with him for some time told me that Lord Avebury was a Buddhist and another showed me an impressive collection of Buddhist books the prison had found for him after he had complained to Lord Avebury that there were no Buddhist books in the prison library. I decided that I had better get to know Lord Avebury and so I wrote to him and asked for a meeting. And that was the beginning of a long and very fruitful friendship. Lord Avebury was of course a member of the House of Lords and was very well known and active in the field of Human Rights. He and I used to meet whenever I was in London and two or three times a week we'd have long, late night telephone calls. As well as Buddhist matters and other things, we discussed the state of the prisons and especially prison chaplaincy. He listened and passed on some of my suggestions and through his influence the then Chaplain General was required to set up a consultation with other faiths. This became a regular meeting, though one that was heavily weighted in favour of Christianity. Eventually it morphed into the Prison Service Chaplaincy Council that we have today. Lord Avebury was a great man and a tremendous help to me in securing for Buddhists better conditions and opportunities to study and practise Buddhism.

As time went on and interest amongst prisoners in Buddhism began steadily to increase the responsibility for taking the temple to the prisoners became more than I could manage. By then I was spending many hours every week travelling all over the country, mostly by train, but then, as I carry no money, still having to walk long distances between stations or from the station to the prison and back. This was not something that could continue for long and nor was it right that the prisons should do nothing and only start looking for a Buddhist minister when a prisoner demanded it. I and one or two supporters decided that we really needed to be better organised and so in about 1984 the idea of a Buddhist Prison Chaplaincy was born. For it to commence and for it to succeed we saw that it needed to have a broad and widespread support. That meant persuading Buddhist groups and individuals of all the

main Buddhist schools to cooperate and help us make the Buddha Dhamma available in this unpopular and neglected area of our society. It must be remembered that Buddhism at that time wasn't that well established in the UK. Yes, all the main schools were represented but they didn't get on that well and nothing quite like what we were proposing had ever before been attempted.

We launched our Buddhist Prison Chaplaincy Organisation at Magha Puja in 1985 and named it after Angulimala, that remarkable and unusual disciple of the Buddha, whose story is an inspiration and reminder that even in the most extreme and desperate of circumstances people can and do change. Yes, they can and do embrace Buddhism and practise to improve themselves and deal with their suffering. I have told that story of Angulimala countless times and many times to prison staff when I have been called on to explain Buddhism to them. And I always make the point that, like Angulimala, those who have offended and who are in prison and have done wrong, even terrible things, can and do change, and I point out that that change in Angulimala, a mass murderer, the reawakening of his latent and dormant good qualities, was brought about not by force but by persuasion and above all, example.

When we began Angulimala, first we had to convince the Prison Service Chaplaincy of our proposal, they were sceptical at first but when they realised it wasn't going to cost them anything they immediately warmed to the idea. Then there were two immediate demands on us: one was to be representative of the entire Buddhist movement in the UK and the other was to provide Buddhist visiting ministers for every prison in the country. The two were linked. Unless all the major schools and groups supported us, we couldn't fulfil the first, and without the help and support of various groups all over the country, irrespective of their allegiance or style, we couldn't hope to fulfill the second. We made it clear from the outset that Angulimala doesn't favour any one school of Buddhism over another and that what we would offer were the essential teachings found in all the great and legitimate schools of Buddhism. Our aim as we have developed and learnt to express it has been and is 'To make available facilities for the teaching and practice of Buddhism in Her Majesty's Prisons and other places

of lawful detention or custody. Specifically: To recruit and advise a team of Buddhist visiting chaplains to be available as soon as there is a call for their services; To act in an advisory capacity, and to liaise with the Ministry of Justice chaplaincy officials, with individual chaplains within Her Majesty's Prisons, and with any other relevant bodies or officials; and to provide an aftercare and advisory service for prisoners after release.' We set about canvassing support from the major Buddhist groups and then recruiting people to serve as Buddhist visiting chaplains. We preferred to use the term 'chaplain' from the start, although we weren't allowed to use it in the prisons. It was a Christian term and so could only be used by Christians, we were told. Inevitably in those early days we encountered some prejudice and suspicion and I accepted that it would have to be a part of our mission to deal with that and overcome it. We eventually achieved a team of about fifty Buddhist chaplains from a range of traditions and over the years, with a certain amount of coming and going as some have retired and some have joined, we have maintained a fairly constant number of around forty-five to fifty Buddhist chaplains, some of whom, it must be said, have stayed with us for twenty or thirty years. And since the founding of Angulimala I have been its Spiritual Director and I am now also the Buddhist Adviser to HM Prison and Probation Service.

Training in security and matters that concern it from its side is offered and even required by the Prison Service but there's no easy way to learn how to be a Buddhist prison chaplain other than to take advice and support from us and to learn by doing. From the beginning we have held quarterly workshops for our chaplains and we have made regular attendance a requirement. At first these were held in different venues in various parts of the country but eventually we decided that it was easiest and best to centralise them at the Forest Hermitage where I could always organise for a lunch to be provided and where we keep a stock of books, mala beads and small Buddha Rupas for distribution amongst the Buddhist prisoners. As a Thai forest monk, I am particularly fussed about things to do with the Buddha and the Dhamma not being sold and I have always insisted that the books, mala beads and Buddha Rupas should be freely given. Fortunately, many generous people have

made this possible by donating the items or the money to buy them. Also the point has to be made that prisoners have had a lot taken away from them – their freedom for a start – and it means a lot when something as special as a book or Buddha Rupa is given to them. It also demonstrates that we mean what we say, that it isn't just words and theory that we're offering but a practice, something that is there to be lived and done. As well as attendance at our workshops I also insist that all our chaplains maintain good sila by observing at least the Five Precepts. And I am particularly insistent on a proper regard for the fifth precept. Unfortunately, here in the West and amongst certain groups there has been a tendency to redefine the fifth precept. Basically, it is sometimes thought that to observe the fifth precept it's enough to simply avoid getting drunk, so having what is usually described as an occasional drink is all right. But if you drink alcohol, where is the point when you fall under its influence? Not only is the consumption of alcohol a breach of the fifth precept but it's a bad example to others. This is especially and importantly the case in a prison where a large proportion of the prisoners are there for alcohol and drug related offences and struggle with addiction. For them there is only one way of dealing with it and that is to stop and the Buddhist chaplain who doesn't use alcohol and drugs and who in many cases has but has stopped and now abstains can be a powerful and important example. I hold that Buddhist chaplains must set a good example and walk the walk not just talk the talk.

A tremendous example of dana in action that has taken place annually for over twenty years is the Springhill Buddha Grove celebration. In 1992 a prisoner at Springhill Open Prison came up with the idea of establishing what he called a Buddha Grove. We had no dedicated room or space inside for the Buddhists so he suggested that outside there was plenty of room and in particular a small grove of trees that was an ideal site for a small Buddhist shrine. We got the backing of the Governor, I said that I'd get them a big Buddha Rupa from Thailand and the men set to work. It turned out to be a bigger and more ambitious undertaking than we'd expected but very beautiful. An opening ceremony was arranged and on a bitterly cold evening in October an impressive crowd of the great and the good gathered to witness the chanting and take part in a

candlelit circumambulation. Afterwards some members of the Thai community asked if next year they could offer the food, and so they did and thereafter every year but one in September we have had a celebration at the Buddha Grove with a vegetarian Thai meal given to all the prisoners in the prison. To witness dozens of Thai people joyfully giving of their time and their expertise and the food to provide that meal makes an enormous impact, especially, as I've said, when as a prisoner you've been used to having things taken from you.

To return to our training workshops that all our Buddhist chaplains have to attend. The day begins with meditation and then that's usually followed with an update from me on Prison Service matters that are likely to affect us. A superb lunch provided by some of my Thai supporters is then served and there is time during the long lunch break for informal conversations and a chance to browse the shelves in the Angulimala resource centre and stock up on books and Buddha rupas to distribute amongst the prisoners. Then we may have a guest speaker, and we have had some very impressive ones down the years: all the recent Chief Inspectors have spoken to us, some prison governors, the previous two heads of Prison Service chaplaincy - the list goes on and on. Their function is to tell us more about the world of criminal justice and imprisonment in which we work. Some former prisoners have also featured amongst our guest speakers and told us about their experience of imprisonment. Whatever the demands on our programme for the day, which stretches from 10am until 5pm and sometimes later, we usually find time for a session on anti-corruption training as well as time to address and advise on specific concerns that chaplains may have. Anti-corruption is aimed principally at preventing staff, including chaplains, from inadvertently becoming conditioned or compromised and then doing things they shouldn't, like smuggling into a prison drugs or mobile phones. When advising chaplains, I am frequently reminding them of the Buddhist practice of non-attachment. As you might expect, we hear some dreadful stories, stories of a prisoner's past and sometimes too of his current difficulties with family or other problems outside of the prison about which he can do very little, but which can be very painful: marital breakups, for example, are not uncommon. There are

also those who claim, sometimes very convincingly, that they are innocent and have been wrongly convicted, and some have after many years in prison been acquitted and their sentences quashed. If chaplains are not careful, these painful and heart-rending stories can lead them to an involvement that is emotional and sometimes active, with then unhealthy and sometimes disastrous, even illegal, consequences. They may feel that they are being compassionate and indeed might have the best interests of the prisoner or prisoners in mind but by becoming involved wisdom and common sense fly out of the window and either it all becomes too much, and they burn out and resign or they act inappropriately. To survive and to be really helpful, to be that good friend, you have to be able to maintain a gap between you and your clients. You must be able to let go of what you have heard when you leave the prison after a visit and you have to be able to let go too when a prisoner moves on, either to another prison or on release. Non-attachment, however hard and unkind it might sometimes appear, does not equal aversion, dislike or hatred – on the contrary, it is a wise and considered response that enables proper and appropriate help to be given as and when needed.

While my original and principal role in the prisons has been that of a chaplain, nevertheless, since the founding of Angulimala in 1985 I have as its Spiritual Director had to lead a team of chaplains of various schools in their leadership of their various equally complex prison congregations. Of course many of them hold views and interpretations that I don't agree with but all that I've put aside and long ago decided that their personal practice should be theirs and their teachers' affair and not mine, except insofar as they maintain certain standards and are capable of delivering core Buddhist teachings. This is a balance that has not always been appreciated but which I've had to be very careful of.

Now we come to TBSUK. Since my return to the UK in 1977 I have watched the number of temples and the number of Theravada monks here gradually increase. Back in the late seventies and early eighties we all knew each other and were invited to each other's temples for various celebrations but by the beginning years of this century all that had changed and we no longer knew each other or visited each other's temples. By then too there had been a steady

rise in the West and the English speaking world in the number of lay teachers and amongst Western Buddhists respect for the Sangha was in decline. My concerns around this came to a head when I was asked to attend a meeting in Birmingham to discuss the founding of a Buddhist Hospital and Healthcare Chaplaincy. At that meeting I was asked how I decided who was suitable to be a prison chaplain and I described the form and questionnaire that applicants are required to complete. I explained that it includes a question on the five precepts and to my amazement this was greeted with an impassioned outburst that included someone shouting that there are plenty of Buddhists who eat meat and drink alcohol! All I'd done was mention the five precepts. The commotion subsided and I was allowed to carry on until someone asked me what I did if someone drank alcohol, to which I replied that I didn't appoint them. This was greeted by an even greater outburst that included one chap wittering on about a famous Zen poet who wrote the most wonderful verse and was always drunk! I was really shocked by all this. After all Buddhism hasn't long been in the West and here are people already reinventing it and discarding the bits that are inconvenient or that they don't like. Ajahn Chah once said that you must bend yourselves to the Dhamma, don't try to bend the Dhamma to suit you! After I thought about it, I really marvelled at how the Sangha has for two and a half thousand years protected and maintained the Buddha-Dhamma and I decided that I must do something to try and help strengthen and support the growth and stability of the Sangha in the UK.

The first thing to do, I thought, was to try to bring Sangha members together and for us to at least know each other again. So, a meeting was arranged with representatives from various temples and at that meeting it was agreed to found an association. After some discussion we decided to call it Theravada Buddhist Sangha in the UK (TBSUK) and I became its Chairman with a committee composed of Thai, Burmese, Sri Lankan and British monks. Since then we've met twice a year, every year and at different temples, although those near or in Birmingham, Oxford and London have been the most convenient. At those meetings we have had a variety of presentations and discussed problems such as those posed by the UK's restrictions on Immigration. An early example of the

advantage of working together was when my friend and supporter, Lord Avebury, arranged a meeting for me with the Government Minister for Immigration and when I sat down with him to discuss the difficulties we have bringing monks in from abroad, I was able to announce that I was representing fifty temples. Had I been representing only one it would have had little or no impact, but fifty, that meant something, and I was listened to sympathetically and although I didn't get all that I wanted nevertheless some help was offered. Most recently we have decided to organise a one-day conference in June with Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi as the principal speaker. I want to emphasise that TBSUK is there to support and care for the Sangha and its members. It's almost inevitable that in a country that is not traditionally Buddhist monks and nuns will run into difficulties and for a monk or nun from overseas, far from home, with poor English and little knowledge of the laws and customs of this country it could be a very lonely and painful experience. TBSUK is there to help. Here in England we believe in a community caring for its members and that is what I hope TBSUK will do for Theravada monks and nuns in the UK.

So what have we to learn, both from what we know of what the Buddha taught and from practical, personal leadership experience? First of all, may I rework a line from Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night': some are born leaders, some become leaders, and some have leadership thrust upon them. Few of us are likely to inherit positions of trust and leadership but some of us might have leadership thrust upon us, as in an emergency. More likely, we may find that as we get older and more experienced, we grow into and acquire positions of trust and leadership. It's a gradual and organic evolution born of our experience. If we take the case of the Buddha, or that of Ajahn Chah, or of many other great leaders and teachers, what we find is that they didn't set out to be leaders but that their leadership evolved, unsought after, through their dedication and commitment to an ideal. When the Buddha told the monks that after his passing they were to take the Dhamma-Vinaya as their lead he was making an important point. Principle, true principle, always trumps personalities. And importantly, the Buddha was trying to ensure that the leadership of the Sangha did not fall into corrupt and unsuitable hands.

In my own case, I didn't at first set out to found a Buddhist Prison Chaplaincy and then run it. To begin with I accepted invitations to offer guidance and care to prisoners who identified as Buddhists. The idea of a Buddhist chaplaincy was one that in the course of time evolved in response to a need and as the most experienced chaplain it was natural that I should be its driving force and so I emerged as its Spiritual Director and de facto leader. With TBSUK it was rather different. That was something I initiated in response to what wasn't quite an emergency but nevertheless was something that alarmed me.

Then in these two leadership roles what has been expected of me, what resources have I had to draw upon and what have I learnt? I claim no particular capabilities, other than determination and, when it comes to the long haul, patience. Both roles have had their share of complex issues to deal with, but central to both have been clear objectives that I have been determined to not lose sight of and to do that, I believe, has been my principal responsibility. In order to maintain those objectives, in both cases I have had to be conscious of differences of view and opinion within the membership and to be careful to keep those various individuals and groups onside. That means I have had to learn diplomacy and remember a duty of care towards the membership. What resources have I had to draw on? Well, I'm a Buddhist monk and a forest monk and I had the good fortune to receive my early training under the guidance of the great Ajahn Chah. That wasn't an easy time. When I first arrived at his monastery I was leaving behind a very different life, although my training and experience as an actor had already taught me discipline. Still, I had to deal with a culture and climate completely alien to me, and a language I couldn't speak, a diet that was unfamiliar, and a lifestyle that unlike what I'd done before I had little talent and aptitude for. For example, hot and uncomfortable, I had to sit through hours and hours of Dhamma desanas and conversations that I couldn't understand a word of. In those first few months, I heard later, it was the opinion of other monks – including some who themselves eventually gave up and disrobed – that I wouldn't last. But I did, determination and patience pulled me through. And what had I to learn? For both, but particularly for Angulimala, I've had to become practically a Jack of all trades. In both cases, I've

learnt that it's been up to me to care for and support everyone involved. And in Angulimala that means supporting its chaplains and being there for them as well as caring for any prisoners who are Buddhist or interested in Buddhism or who come to me for help and support. One of the greatest compliments ever paid to me was by a prisoner of many years, I think he'd been inside about thirty years, and he said of me, 'What's different about you is you love us!'

Obviously I have been inspired by the Buddha and his teaching and by various teachers and others whose example has affected me. I think inspiration, to be able to inspire others is very important and goes a long way in the leadership of others. If you can inspire them then they will naturally want to follow. I don't believe that to inspire one needs to be charismatic but you do need to have an unwavering commitment to what you're doing with the determination to succeed and the patience to keep at it. In other words you need to be devoted to your subject and its purpose and to the cultivation of both *adhithana* and *khanti parami*. And to do all this you have to have clear in your mind what it is that you are trying to do. You must be clear about what is your super-objective, that is your main and over riding objective, which is supported by lesser actions and by and large by the way that you approach even mundane and everyday matters.

Then next, it's important to lead by example. Do as I say but not do as I do is rubbish. I can't recollect whether the Buddha ever had anything to say about leading by example but he certainly demonstrated it. He after all was then and remains for us today the example, inspiration and embodiment of what we as his followers and disciples are aiming for. Remember the extraordinary impact meeting the Buddha had on Angulimala. Imagine that scenario, a fit and ferocious serial killer with a terrifying reputation meets in a remote place far from anyone who might help him a lone, defenceless and unarmed holy man. And what happened? The ferocious killer who was well used to violence and to people hating him and being afraid of him just couldn't handle this someone who didn't fear or hate him and who spoke kindly and pleasantly to him. If I am to expect a commitment from members of my team, I have to show that I have that commitment myself. If I'm

to expect members of my team to be understanding and tolerant of each other, I have to show that I too can be careful and tolerant of their views and interpretations. In my life I have noticed that it has been what people have done and how they've done it that has most affected me. I have had the good fortune to have known some remarkable people and it's as if in some cases I have without realising it absorbed their example.

If Buddhism is ever to assume a Global Leadership, and I believe it should and hope it will, it will be by the impressive example of Buddhist countries and communities. If we can show, as at this conference and with the production of Common Buddhist Texts - that excellent anthology from across the traditions, that the different strands of Buddhism can come together and cooperate; if we can persuade our lay people to live by the five precepts and demonstrate that by simply applying Buddhist standards of morality people can be safe and communities can live in peace and harmony: then we can change the world.
