



the many', was the Buddha's encouragement.

Following up on this I'd also accepted a few teaching engagements en route (in Bath, Stroud and Newent) and was open to meeting anyone who wanted to engage. This proved fruitful. My first spontaneous engagement came after a week when I arrived in Salisbury and through a flow of circumstances found myself giving meditation instructions to a small group of Dhamma-practitioners whom I hadn't been acquainted with before. So that was very pleasing. On another occasion, while I was standing in Gloucester Cathedral admiring the prolonged act of faith that it represented, a woman made a beeline for me – or more accurately, for the sign of the samana – in order to get some spiritual advice. She'd been meditating, she said, but found that notions of helping all other beings were contributing towards worry about her children and a general feeling of overwhelm and stress. With the waves of her anxiety washing over me, I found myself centring in the sensations in the soles of my feet and advised her to do the same. 'Right now, we're just standing here. There's the regret over the past, and anxiety over the future, but now we're OK just standing here. This is Buddhism.' It was very brief and subject to misinterpretation, but it worked as a place to begin. The next day, she came out to Newent to attend the day-long retreat I was teaching there.

As for my own meditation practice I found that hours of walking is quite a toll on the bodily energy, and there's justification in saying that a tudong like this doesn't offer great opportunities to develop samadhi. At the end of the day, I'd generally only have a couple of hours for formal practice, and it was the same for each day's beginning. Much of that time would be involved with relaxing, regenerating and steadying energy. Certainly I got better at distinguishing the mind's resistance to low energy and pain, and its wish to cave in from an actual need to rest. Which also means moderating the wilful attitude of 'stick with this no matter what', and other forms of Inner Tyrant, to one of 'This isn't pleasant, but right now, it's OK and I can be with that.' True enough though, I wouldn't recommend tudong for anything subtle or

precise.

A lot more of the cultivation took place on the move and in the scenarios that tudong brings up: the first being meeting and working with the organizing mind. When I conceived of such a trip, naturally that conceiving activated the organizing mind with its anxieties. 'Where to go, how to go, how much to carry? Will I be cold, hungry, exhausted? Will people feed me, or will I be received with jeers?' And more subtly 'What are you trying to prove?' But as soon as one hears that, it becomes clear that the walking is necessary: life is enriched by dismantling such triggers, and to enter insecurity and be freed by it is a primary aim of Going Forth. Let the unknown be the unknown and therefore bring forth one's faith. And yet, there is need for direction and decision making. So most of the planning was approximate and laced with 'it depends on what happens.'

Although I had a general direction, and a preference to walk on footpaths rather than busy roads, the route tended to unfold a day at a time. I had maps which made choices possible, but what established itself was the strategy of avoiding busy places whenever possible, and finding a quiet place to spend the night that was within three or four miles of a small town so that I could go for alms there the next day. To meet with specific invitations at an agreed time I carried a mobile phone so that the meeting could be arranged just a few hours in advance. Those parameters created enough structure within which to witness and work with the organizing mind.

That mind wants to know a lot: how far the next town is, which is the most agreeable route – and many times a day it asks for a progress report. I'd be walking along quite happily, then get an urge to look at the map. Then the organizing mind would come in with estimates of how long it was going to take, or what state I'd be in, or how I could lessen the weight of this backpack ... and so compound suffering out of a pleasantly mild day walking through the byways of rural England free from responsibilities. The response was about the same as I gave to the woman in Gloucester Cathedral: 'Right now, it's OK; the rest is unknown.' Or at least unplannable. Because the