

## Introduction

Occasionally I have shown a poem I had written to a friend and was surprised by the enthusiasm with which it was received. Sometimes I have come across a poem in the Forest Sangha Newsletter or elsewhere that I found particularly moving. Slowly I discovered other poets in and around the Sangha who became good friends; their poems inspiring and nurturing my practice and my own writing in turn. Friendships evolved around our poems; exchanging verses and comments, encouragement and constructive criticism.

Out of this naturally arose the aspiration to one day offer an anthology of some of these poems – many as yet unpublished – making them available to a wider public. Finally the project took shape. I asked my friends whether they would be interested to contribute and all of them were. I selected my favourites from the texts they offered and tried bringing them together in a way that they would communicate with each other. To my delight it worked. The very different voices of the individuals seemed to enter a poetic dialogue which created a whole that is not only more than the sum of its parts, but in which also all the particulars enhance each other by resonance and contrast: eight solo voices creating an ensemble of possibilities for meaning that the reader may feel invited to explore or invent.

This anthology then, is a very personal selection and is not trying to be representative of anything. It seems a lucky coincidence though that the group of writers included in the collection reflects the idea of the fourfold Buddhist Sangha of monastics and laypeople.

I would like to thank the many friends who have helped to make this book possible with their encouragement, work and donations. Special thanks go to Soph Moeng who did the layout and typesetting. I feel also particularly grateful to Ajahn Munindo, who supported the work on this book with unwavering encouragement. It was his suggestion that got the project started. He then helped with the design of the book and the arrangement of the poems.

After much pondering, proposing and dismissing of candidates by both of us, as well as other friends that got infected by our search, he also provided the title. It is a variation on a line in one of Ajahn Sucitto's contributions. We both immediately liked it, looking for its justification only afterwards. We came up with various, but perhaps it is more generous to withstand the temptation to spell out any of them, leaving freedom of movement to your own imagination. Instead, I added *Sitting by the Open Window*, which was formed in response to the title, hoping that some of the voices of the following colloquium may stimulate your own creative responses...

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