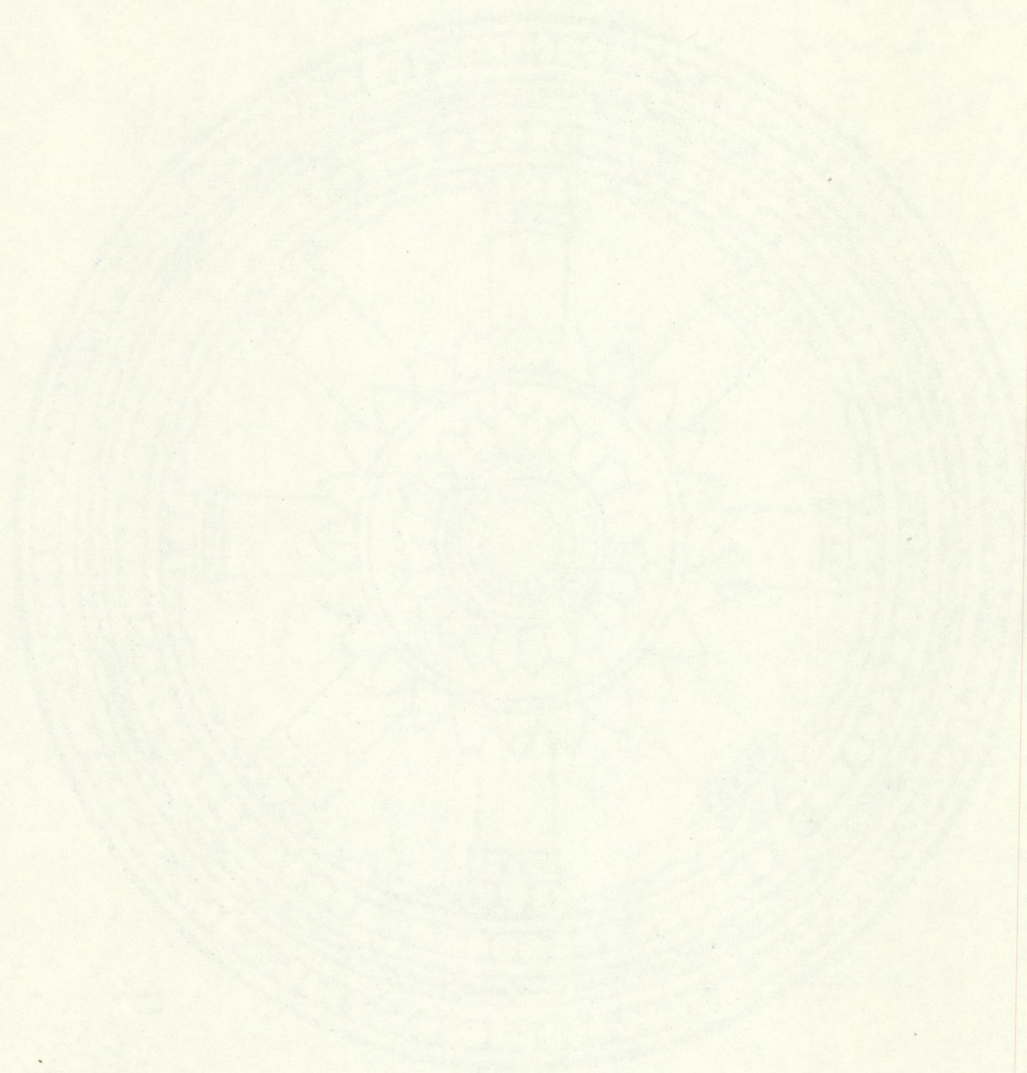


Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

Newsletter



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ABOUT THE FRIENDS OF THE WESTERN BUDDHIST ORDER

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order was formed in 1967 by the Venerable Maha Sthavira Sangharakshita. It is a charitable organisation whose aims are threefold:

1. To foster interest in, and understanding of, the teaching of the Buddha, and to propagate that teaching in a form and manner appropriate to the conditions of present day life in the West.
2. To provide facilities for the dissemination of that teaching, and for those wishing to practise it. To this end the FWBO holds retreats and seminars, public meditation classes and lectures, publishes literature on Buddhism, and undertakes other projects as considered necessary for the furtherance of these ends.
3. To act as the supporting organ and matrix of the Western Buddhist Order, and to help individuals in this Order in the furtherance of their work in any way considered necessary.

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order is governed by a Council which holds regular meetings to determine policies and organise events.

The Western Buddhist Order was founded by Venerable Sangharakshita in April 1968. It is a community of men and women who have, by taking the Upasaka Ordination, made a personal commitment to practising the teaching of the Buddha in their own lives. The Order now numbers over sixty members, most of whom work in or near London, yet it also has an increasing number of members living in the country and abroad, notably in Finland and New Zealand.

Venerable Maha Sthavira Sangharakshita is English by birth and was born in Stockwell, London, in 1925. At the age of sixteen he went to India, where he made contact with the living traditions of Buddhism, studying its philosophy, scriptures, and languages, practising meditation, and meeting many great teachers from India, Burma, China, Ceylon and Tibet. He has been initiated into the three major traditions of Buddhism, and his teachers include several eminent masters of meditation and doctrine.

In 1950 Venerable Sangharakshita settled in Kalimpong where he remained for fourteen years, studying, writing and practising meditation. In 1957 he founded there The Monastery of the Three Ways, and in the same year published A Survey of Buddhism, which has now become a standard and widely acclaimed textbook on Buddhism. In 1966 he returned to England and settled once more in London, where he founded the FWBO in the spring of the following year. His other published writings include Buddhism and Art (1956), The Three Jewels (1967), and Crossing the Stream (1972). He has also given over a hundred tape-recorded public lectures on Buddhism, and written numerous poems and essays.

Sangharakshita now lives in Norfolk, where he is continuing his writing and teaching activities.

THE FOUNDATION OF A NEW CHAPTER OF THE ORDER IN NEW ZEALAND

In 1969, a year after the inauguration of the Western Buddhist Order, Warren Atkins, then prominent in the Nottingham Buddhist Society, received his ordination as Upasaka Akshobhya from the Venerable Sangharakshita. Not long afterwards, Akshobhya left England for New Zealand, and having set up a home in Auckland, a group began to form itself around him there in what came to be called the Kalyana Mitra Buddhist Centre. This was in an area called Browns Bay, a fashionable suburb near the sea shore some ten miles north of Auckland city centre.

Despite his separation from Bhante and the inherent difficulty of organising a spiritual community, people began to gather in quite large numbers around Akshobhya, some of them, though perhaps somewhat prematurely, even expressing an interest in Ordination.

A parallel development was meanwhile taking place in Christchurch, where two friends, Lim Poi Cheng, a Chinese from Penang, and Philip Purves, a New Zealander, became interested in the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order by hearing Bhante's tape-recorded lectures. Starting with meetings at the University of Christchurch, they subsequently set up a shrine room and began to stimulate others to an interest in the Buddha's teaching, especially as expressed by Bhante and the FWBO. A visit by Lim Poi Cheng to Auckland confirmed his interest in Bhante and effected an even closer identification with the movement.

Such was the enthusiasm of the New Zealanders that late in 1972 sufficient money was raised to pay for a visit by Venerable Sangharakshita; however, so deeply involved had Bhante become with programmed activities of the expanding FWBO in England, that, it was realised, he had hardly had a day to himself for eight years, and accordingly a retreat was felt to be necessary. Upasika Gotami, one of the senior members of the Order, therefore went to New Zealand instead.

Gotami, borne along on a wave of advance publicity, was extremely active during her two month visit, and did much to strengthen the spiritual resources and confirm the enthusiasm of the core members, until, in 1974, the possibility again arose of a visit by Bhante himself.

During a visit to his retreat cottage in Cornwall, Bhante asked me if I would go to New Zealand six months or so before his intended arrival and help prepare those interested in Ordination; I readily agreed to his proposal - who, I wonder, would not? I therefore left in England in mid-June and arrived some two days later in Auckland, to be greeted by eight or so of the Auckland Friends - more or less the full complement of the group as it then stood.

It soon became apparent that the original Auckland group, or many of them, at least, had become dispirited, perhaps by waiting so long for Bhante's arrival, but with a visit once again imminent, attendance began to pick up again.

A considerably extended programme of weekly activities was established at the centre, the most significant being a small but enthusiastic class of people interested in ordination. We practised the Stupa visualisation, discussed the Ten Upasaka Precepts, and the nature of commitment to the Three Jewels. During this time I stayed with Akshobhya at his comfortable house, previously the Centre, in Browns Bay, which had once again become his home. The new FWBO Centre was now located in the city of Auckland, a more convenient spot from some points of view. It was situated on the fourth floor of a large and old-fashioned building consisting of sets of rooms opening onto an inner ring corridor looking into a rather gloomy light-well. One of the doors of these rooms opened to reveal a colourful and tastefully decorated little shrine with a miniscule lobby for hanging coats, leaving shoes, and preparing tea.

My impression of the Auckland group after some four weeks was of a rather mixed bunch of sincere and quite sane human beings who would need just a bit more practice before being really ready for ordination, those, that is, who had begun to realise that they wanted or needed to commit themselves.

Four weeks after my arrival I left by scenic railway for Christchurch, spending the night midway in Wellington, at the friendly Lotus Yoga Centre, and proceeding the next day by plane past the lovely snow-capped mountain of South Island.

Compared with the smart and precisely-organised Centre in the North, Christchurch was a great contrast, though a pleasing one; there the shrine room was situated in an ordinary house with four bedrooms, and a communal room and a small shed comprising workshop and bedroom/study stood in the back garden.

The atmosphere here was quite different from the North, more relaxed, but just as conducive in its own way to Buddhism. Not having much contact with an Order member, however, there was as yet something of the feel of a Buddhist Society rather than the characteristic single-mindedness which I had begun to appreciate as the hallmark of the FWBO.

Life in Christchurch was so good, however, that I stayed for fourteen weeks, establishing a rather strict personal daily routine which must have stretched the nerves of the residents on more than one occasion. Numbers attending the meetings were very small at first, with, apart from one or two notable crowds at the beginning, only three or four in the shrine room. But gradually, as in Auckland, enthusiasm and regular attendance began to build up again, and numbers slightly increased. On Sangha Day we had a crowd of more than twenty happy faces, which made us feel that Buddhism had really begun to make an impression. More important even than this, there were now two or three people who were regularly attending the pre-ordination class and obviously coming to grips with, even overcoming, their previous difficulties.

Returning to Auckland shortly before Bhante's arrival, I was greeted with a new and larger Centre which a few Friends had got together by the expenditure of much money and devoted hard work. This time the Centre incorporated a bookshop/craftshop and lounge, and was very well suited to the needs of the movement as it expanded.

The long-awaited day eventually arrived and Bhante was at last with us, soon settling in with characteristic firmness, vigour and confidence, and working an almost magical transformation in the attitudes and behaviour of a number of the Friends. He was at the Centre every weekday afternoon and evening, engaged in free-flowing discussion with anyone who wished, and holding us all spell-bound with his expositions of the Dharma, showing it at once to be both a 'personal' and a universal teaching. He would come to grips almost immediately with what was of central concern to his interlocutors, however veiled or indirect or hazy their approach.

Study sessions of Bhante's book "The Three Jewels" were held over the weekends. These were eminently successful in removing layer upon layer of misunderstanding and misconception and establishing, in some cases at least, the beginnings of direct communication with Bhante. The book seemed perfectly suited to acquainting newcomers with the Teaching, while yet holding the interest of those more familiar with it. And, of course, Bhante's presence added a quality of richness, depth and authenticity which convinced even the most sceptical.

The second two weeks or so between Bhante's arrival and the ordination retreat were spent in Christchurch, the same, or a very similar full programme being followed as before. My impression was that things were going very happily indeed, and that compared with London, the New Zealanders were much less troubled with difficulties. In fact there were no difficulties at all. Those who were genuinely interested in Buddhism as the path of ethical commitment and spiritual development stayed, and those who were not, went. Perhaps the pleasant climate and relatively tiny population has to do with the remarkable lack of hang-ups.

For the retreat a scout camp was discovered an hour's drive north of Wellington, appropriately half-way between Auckland and Christchurch, amid forested hills and with a clear boulder-strewn stream flowing swiftly past. Thirty people attended the retreat, and immediately got down to a daily programme of meditation, study, meals, more meditation, supper (or Tea, as the New Zealanders call it), taped lectures, and finishing with the usual meditation and sevenfold Puja. A notable feature of the retreat was that study sessions were held in the open air, in glorious sunny weather, under shady trees, on suitable hillocks, or beside the chuckling river. Such a setting was most conducive to an easy and natural exposition of the Dharma; one became aware, on the other hand, how much organisation and the technology of civilisation tend nowadays to obscure the radiance of the truth.

The private ordinations of eight people took place half way through the retreat under a tree on a flat stretch of land near the river; sky, stars, hills, little insects, a possum and even a hedgehog all participated; Bhante said later that he felt much like an ascetic in the Buddha's day must have done.

Akshobhya and I led the ordinees out one by one from the shrine room down a pebbly slope and along the grassy candle-lit route to within sight of the tree, then bowing and returning to sit with the others during a remarkably quiet and warm three hour session before the youngest initiate returned, well after midnight, shortly to be followed by Bhante who concluded the meditation with gently reverberating strokes on the gong.

One of the big stones used for the shrine under the tree was brought to the meditation room for the public ordinations next morning, and as the bright sunlight streamed in through the windows the Order found itself with eight new members, acclaimed in the traditional manner with a threefold shout of 'Sadhu'.

Order and others divided for study during the remainder of the retreat, Bhante and myself alternating between the two groups. An earthquake occurred during one of our morning sessions, but the initial interest in seeing the mountains tremble quickly passed and we continued unperturbed.

All in all the retreat was a resounding success, being a truly happy and auspicious beginning for the New Zealand chapter of the Western Buddhist Order and Friends. The beauty of the setting, Bhante in his bright orange robes, and a really harmonious group of retreatants contrived to engender a most memorable occasion, and one which must surely set an ideal pattern for future activities of the New Zealand Friends.

ASHVAJIT

ORDINATIONS

Since the last Newsletter there have been fifteen ordinations; in November at Brandon in Suffolk, five (two members from Scotland, one from Archway, one now resident in Norfolk, and one from Rotterdam). Two more ordinations were performed at Archway on the eve of Ven. Sangharakshita's departure for New Zealand, and a further eight ordinations have been performed in Wellington, New Zealand, including that of Lim Poi Cheng, now Dharmajyoti, who has been ordained as a Sramanera (novice monk).

CENTRES and BRANCHES

ACTIVITIES AT THE ARCHWAY CENTRE

In the last few months, the numbers of those attending the Archway Centre have swelled considerably. ~~There~~ are now twelve active Order members in the Archway area, and there is a full programme of activities which provides a pattern for a systematically developing involvement with the FWBO.

There are three main classes through which people are introduced to meditation and Buddhism in general. Contact is made first through advertisements in papers and magazines, information books on London, shops and restaurants, and by word of mouth. Those interested in meditation or in 'tasting' the Friends without too much commitment may come to the Wednesday or Sunday beginners' classes which provide instruction in two basic techniques of meditation, one of which develops concentration and awareness, the other a positive emotional attitude. The two together encourage a harmonious growth and integration, both psychological and spiritual. Sunday night continues with a period of two meditations separated by walking-and-chanting and ending with a puja. Surprisingly, many beginners stay for this and benefit greatly. On Wednesdays the meditation instruction is followed by a recorded lecture by the Venerable Sangharakshita, or occasional discussion periods, and concludes with a puja. On Mondays a course is held of from ten to twelve weeks duration. After a period of meditation a talk is given on an aspect of basic Buddhist teaching followed by a short talk on Buddhist symbolism, and a puja.

Those who, after a period of perhaps six months' involvement with one or other of these classes, wish to find out more, come to the class held on a Tuesday. The evening begins with a period of meditation, after which those attending divide into five study groups consisting of about two Order members and eight Friends. The texts studied provide a medium through which much about Buddhism is learned and discussed in the light of personal experience. All then regather in the shrine room for the concluding puja.

Weekend retreats are held regularly for the members of these various classes and prove a valuable way of supplementing and intensifying the work done in the evenings.

Hereafter any who are seriously considering ordination are encouraged to seek Kalyana Mitras (see article elsewhere), and to become involved in the activities organised specifically for Mitras.

Such a heavy programme of classes could not be kept up throughout the year since we need also to maintain a regular programme of week and two-week long retreats. In these the regular weekly activities are confirmed and consolidated. We have therefore instituted a system of three 'sessions' of approximately twelve weeks duration, during which the full weekly programme outlined above will be in operation, separated by three breaks of varying lengths in which retreats will be held; the Wednesday and Sunday classes will continue as usual at the Centre, and the Tuesday class will become a double meditation and puja. At the beginning of each new session the study groups will usually be changed around and new texts chosen. Already, in the months this system has been functioning it has shown its worth, and removes something of the relentless and mechanical feeling that any regular programme can impart when it has been operating for some time.

FWBO SALES

There are a large number of tape-recorded lectures by the Venerable Sangharakshita available for sale on either tape or cassette from our tapes department, Dharmachakra Tapes, 55 St James Lane, Muswell Hill, London N.10, who will send a list of tapes on request.

The Bookshop at the Archway Centre stocks a wide range of Buddhist literature, including FWBO publications, and incense, and runs a mail order service. Booklists are available on request.

The Printing Press, housed at Aryatara, now has a full-time printer, and is available for outside work. Enquirers are addressed to the Manager of the Printing Press, Aryatara. (Telephone: 01-660 2542).

COOKERY BOOK

Khema is compiling a 'Friends Cookbook', and would very much appreciate all and any recipes you may have. Please send them to her at the Archway Centre.

NEW LONDON CENTRE APPEAL

With the vagaries of the current economic situation it is very difficult to say when the London Borough of Camden will be able to commence the redevelopment scheme which will deprive us of our present Centre. Originally we expected to be out by September 1974, however it now seems that we could be here for as long as a year more. But we aim to have found and settled into a new Centre by the end of 1975.

At present it seems likely that we will take a lease on a property for about five to ten years. During that time we will continue to raise funds for the eventual purchase of a Centre suited to our requirements. To this end we have launched an appeal for £50,000. In the six months since the appeal began we have raised £2,500, through the usual fund raising activities and donations. Though not inconsiderable, this is merely a beginning and we expect the rate of increase to escalate over the next year. We have now published an appeal pamphlet giving an account of our aims and ideals, a copy of which is enclosed with this Newsletter. With this we hope to reach all individuals and organisations throughout the world who might be interested in giving money to assist the spread of Buddhism in the West.

We would very much appreciate your help, both financially and by either giving us the names of people you think might be interested in making a donation, or better still by approaching people personally, if need be with the help of more pamphlets obtainable from the Archway Centre. If you make a personal approach, it would save a possible duplication of effort and prevent unnecessary inconvenience to the person asked, if you let us know.

Buddhism has beyond doubt arrived in the West and will stay for some considerable time. The crucial question is whether Buddhism will remain a curiosity, espoused by a few orientally-inclined Westerners or whether it will capture the heart and spirit of our time and culture, speaking the timeless truths in yet a new language thereby transforming Western society so that it begins to reflect these truths. This is the ideal that the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order is dedicated to, and we ask all who are friends of such an ideal to help us now.

GLASGOW CENTRE - RETREAT

Over the Christmas and New Year period, the Glasgow centre had a ten day retreat programme. It had been intended to be a period where people would come and go throughout that time, but in fact we had a hard core of people who were there all of the time, and an intensive retreat situation developed despite the fact that we were in the city and that quite a few people were coming in for certain activities and then leaving again.

One of the main factors of the retreat was communication with each other, as most of those who stayed had never lived in a community situation before, and suddenly they were confronted with living with others in a small building in the city with no place in which to be alone. Not surprisingly a lot of negative emotions soon came to the surface, but by the end of the retreat a far more positive atmosphere had been created.

To keep up the Scottish tradition of seeing in the New Year, we had an all-night meditation from 9 pm on New Year's Eve till 6 am on New Year's Day. We had an elaborate puja during this period, and on the stroke of midnight the ships on the River Clyde auspiciously sounded their horns just as the last person gave his offerings to the shrine.

Although holding a retreat in the city may not be so easily conducive to meditation as a country retreat might, I think many of us found it a very useful and beneficial experience as the city is the environment we are all living in and a place therefore where we have to learn to put into practice what we have gained from our meditation and study.

FINLAND

Bodhishri and Vajrabodhi continue to conduct two classes a week at their Centre in Helsinki, with meditation, recorded lectures (with a little assistance many Finns find Bhante's English very clear and easy to understand), and puja.

CORNWALL

Regular classes are held three times a week under the guidance of Upasakas Manjuvajra and Dhruva. New premises in or around Truro are being sought at present, so for details of times and places please write to the address given on the back cover.

FWBO BRIGHTON BRANCH

Since January 13 a full programme of activities has been underway at 18-19 George Street, the recently established home of the FWBO Brighton branch. We are ideally placed being only two hundred yards east of the Royal Pavilion and, as has been remarked more than once, only four or five minutes from the sea (depending on whether the tide is in or out).

The premises consist of two adjacent cottage shops with their upper floors, and combined they make a very suitable centre for the new branch. No. 18 is in use as an office and accommodation for the community of two, and No. 19 consists of the shrine room, shop, and Dharma Study room. A great deal of hard work has gone into converting No. 19 from a derelict shop which had been empty for over seven years to the cheerful and fully functioning building which it is today. Thanks are due to all those new friends who have given so much of their time and energy to make this possible.

Judi Fewell has done amazing things in establishing what will no doubt be a thriving and well run business, and we take this opportunity to mention that we are selling a wide range of Buddhist literature, incense, cards, posters, handicrafts etc., and announce that we have a mail order service which operates on the "if we haven't got it, we can get it, plus P & P," principle.

We have been well received in the locality and there are many cautious enquiries about what we are doing from those who visit the shop. Considering we have been going for so short a time the meditation classes are well attended and a Dharma Study group had its first meeting last week in which we have begun to penetrate into the depths of the Refuges and Precepts and the Ti-Ratana Vandana.

In short a good start has been made, and we all look forward to the day when Bhante will be able to visit Brighton for the formal dedication of the shrine.

(Full programme printed at end pages)

NEWS FROM ARYATARA, FWBO SURREY

Retreats On December 13-15 last year, Aryatara held a weekend retreat under the guidance of Padmaraja. Seven people attended, not including Community members, and a stimulating and lively atmosphere was generated. One of the themes to emerge from the retreat was the question of training in Buddhism. On the Saturday Ananda led a group discussion which centred around this question. Training was considered under three aspects: firstly, as monastic discipline, or conscious acceptance of the authority of a spiritual teacher and the monastic code; secondly, as a formal study situation, where the student still remains in the world, but attends such things as study groups and retreats, and thirdly, completely unstructured training, with no formally accepted discipline, where the student tries to regard every situation in life as a form of teaching. This was generally felt to be the most difficult way, but it was also pointed out that all three methods were applicable to the student as he progressed through the different phases of his career, the important thing being not to 'get stuck' in any one approach.

Open Day This will be held on Saturday April 5th. Everybody is welcome; the full programme is yet to be arranged.

FWBO EALING

Since November we have been meeting twice a week at the Quaker Meeting House (7.30 pm). On Mondays we have a beginners' meditation class, followed by a tape recording of one of Ven. Sangharakshita's lectures: 'The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path' series; currently second time around. Thursdays are more formal: chanting the Refuges, Precepts, Ti-Ratana Vandana (Salutation to the Three Jewels), meditation, walking and chanting, Sevenfold Puja, mantras - all straight through without a break. Usually we include a period of Just Sitting within the puja.

Future plans include an evening of Poetry and Music to celebrate the Buddha's Parinirvana (26 February), and a series of public lectures by Order members, in March, on Morality, Meditation, and Wisdom.

OPEN LETTER FROM ALL AT THE OLD RECTORY, TITTLESHALL, NORFOLK

Many of you who read the Newsletter probably know of the Old Rectory either through contact with Sulochana or because you have attended a retreat here. But there must also be many of you who have just about heard of the place or who are getting you first news of it as you read this. Whichever category you come in, we thought it about time we gave you all a little news of us.

'We', the resident community here at present, are Sulochana and her son Fionn, her mother (Mrs Doran), John Hunter, Abhaya and his wife Val, daughter Lousise aged six, and son Daniel, three, and Sona and his wife Jane and daughter Shanti aged a little more than a year old. Other sentient beings in residence are two cats, a dog, three geese, two doves, and four goats, which give us a daily supply of milk.

As well as doing 'our own thing', we meet regularly for meditation and puja. Sona leads yoga sessions. We've just begun experiementing with day retreats, in which so far only residents have taken part. There are a lot of maintenance and repair jobs to be done on the house and we've begun working through these.

For those of you who don't know, the Old Rectory is a large Georgian house, built about 1720. To give you some idea how rural its situation is, Tittleshall is a mini village with just one shop. The nearest town is Fakenham, six miles away. The closest you can get to Tittleshall by public transport is to King's Lynn by train or coach, or possibly to Swaffham (nine miles) by coach. Local buses to and from these places run as infrequently as once or twice a week.

FWBO study seminars and retreats are held here from time to time. Except during periods set aside for these, there is room for one or more temporary guests, any of you who might feel like making a more private retreat or doing your practice in completely different surroundings for a change. Any such guests would be very welcome, but we would like to ask them to bring a sleeping bag and tell them that, even in spite of the relatively mild winter we've been having here to date, they might find it a little colder here than at their own place, if they're used to living in smaller houses or have the luxury of central heating.

ON METTA AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

The Metta Bhavana is one of the two basic meditation practices which is taught by the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. Metta is a feeling of warmth, love and positive friendliness, but a love without any of the clinging and possessiveness which characterise so many of our relationships. Bhavana means development. So the practice aims to help us develop warm and positive feelings, firstly towards ourselves, then outwards and outwards until the feeling radiates to the entire Universe.

Many beginners seem to have difficulty with this practice, more so than with the Mindfulness of Breathing. Very often they fail to identify more than the smallest scrap of positive feeling within themselves and they can become very disheartened. Two suggestions are often made to help people with the practice. The first is that you should recall a situation in the past where you have felt warm towards someone, to remember, say, being with a friend on a beautiful summer's day when you felt happy to be together, and use that memory of the past to put you in touch with positive feeling in the present. The second suggestion is that, if you cannot feel metta towards yourself and others, then you can at least encourage yourself with such phrases as "may I be well", or "may she be happy".

These two suggestions, whilst helpful for some people, still seem to leave others unmoved. It seems that, bogged down as many of us are most of the time in negative or apathetic feelings, we need stronger measures to help us fan the flickering spark of loving kindness into a flame. So I should like to suggest two other methods of practice which I have found helpful in strengthening positive feelings. They are connected with the two suggestions previously outlined, but they have a rather more optimistic viewpoint.

So firstly, rather than looking back to past situations which are unlikely to have been more than a sad amalgam of positive and negative, perhaps the best thing most of us can do is to look forward. If we cannot love people for what they are, we can at least recognise their potential - their possibilities of growth. Let us see others not as rigid entities whom we cannot love, but rather as treasure-houses of beautiful potential.

By visualising ourselves and others in the way that we would wish them to develop, we achieve three things:

1. we learn to see and appreciate the positive sides of ourselves and others, rejoicing in these merits
2. we are reminded that according to Buddhism, life is a process, a process hopefully of tremendous spiritual growth and development.
3. we may realise how much we limit ourselves: "I could never be that."

This leads us on to the second suggestion. Many of us limit ourselves by often hardly believing that we can feel even a little positive. So we settle for a "May I be well", "May he be successful". This has all the attractiveness of a cup of weak tea to an alcoholic. What we need to do is not to accept the false and tyrannical restrictions which we impose on ourselves but to take a risk - the risk to "dream the impossible dream".

Rather than "may he be well", we can conjure up powerful images, for instance "may his Mind be clear and radiant", or even, with the Avatamsaka Sutra:

"May he reign in great multitudes
And have nothing to check
The unimpeded progress of truth."

Our apathy runs deep within us. In order to affect it, it may be that we need the depth charge of a truly beautiful vision rather than the damp squib of conventional good wishes.

The Metta Bhavana, it seems to me, should be a happy practice. If we find difficulty in doing it, it is only too easy for us to use this as further proof of how bad, useless, etc., we think we are. By looking forward in the practice, we can learn gradually to let our positive feelings flow. If we can feel love and optimism towards ourselves and our practice, then there will be far less difficulty in radiating it to all sentient beings throughout all time and all space.

May all beings be happy.

VESSANTARA

ON KALYANA MITRATA

"Lord, I think that Kalyana Mitrata (spiritual fellowship) is half of the holy life."

"Say not so, Ananda: Kalyana Mitrata is not half of the holy life; it is all of it."

In the last issue of this Newsletter there was an article on the Western Buddhist Order. It explained that until the end of 1972 Bhante (the Ven. Sangharakshita) used to devote much of his time and energy to public teaching at the Archway Centre. Those preparing to join the Order had the opportunity of frequent personal contact with him both in public and in private and could obtain guidance from him in the period, sometimes fraught and beset with doubts, leading up to their ordination. Since the end of 1972 however he has preferred to pass on the Dharma on a personal level to the Order members (numbering now more than fifty strong) who in their turn take all meditation classes, study groups, retreats, etc. in his place. As Friends of even a few weeks standing will have realised these tasks are being carried out with almost unfailing vigour, confidence and good humour. (This eulogy is not being written by an Order member, by the way!)

The beginning of 1974 saw a new development in the history of the FWBO: the establishment of the Kalyana Mitra system. To replace the loss of personal contact with Bhante, those considering ordination now choose two experienced Order members to be their Kalyana Mitras, or spiritual friends - the choice is, of course, mutual and those involved are usually already friends in the mundane sense. The relationship is recognised formally (and, I may say, strengthened and enriched) by a short private ceremony in which Bhante (or in his absence a senior Order member) explains the significance of the system and chants blessings on the friendship. The prospective Order member is now a Mitra, a friend, and has formed a relationship not only with his or her Kalyana Mitras but also, through them with the Order itself.

In theory the Mitra has not committed him or herself; there's no time limit to how long one can remain a Mitra before asking, through the Kalyana Mitras, for ordination, and of course there's nothing preventing one from dropping out of the

system at any time (though this hasn't happened yet). In practice however it is becoming clear that those who become Mitras already feel, or soon begin to feel, their own inner commitment stirring - the feeling which, when fully developed, leads to the formal Taking of Refuge in the Three Jewels of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha: the Upasaka Ordination.



The two Kalyana Mitras undertake to keep in touch with their Mitra, to answer questions, encourage, advise, sometimes just be friendly, to be a truant officer too if necessary. The system can work the other way round too. Order members have their problems as well and it may be that at times the Mitra can help the Kalyana Mitra. A mountaineering metaphor suggests itself: the one at the top of the rope may have more responsibility than the others in picking out the route up the mountain, but the others lower down, even the tail-ender, have a lot of responsibility too - they can't just let themselves be hauled up by the others - scaling the peaks of Enlightenment just doesn't work that way.

The first six Mitras have now been ordained after having been Mitras for only a few months. This period will not be typical of later Mitras as each of the six were involved with the movement well before they were Mitras. Mitraships lasting in the region of a year or two will probably be the norm. The relationship between the Mitra and the Kalyana Mitras does not cease upon ordination, but grows into a bond between brothers and sisters closely treading the same path. Since the time of these

ordinations the number of Mitras has risen sharply - to date there are approximately twenty five. This is close to saturation point as Order members do not take on more than four Mitras at once, some taking on fewer or none because they have too many other commitments, or are inexperienced, etc. It's interesting to note that of the existing number of Order members the proportion of men to women is about three to one; for the Mitras, on the other hand, the numbers are roughly equal. It seems that changes have taken place in the last few years but I hesitate to speculate further.

As outlined above Bhante explains the Kalyana Mitra system in terms of a personal relationship between three people and basically this is just how it works; it's very much what is made of it by the three involved. However an as-yet largely unknown factor is creeping in. In keeping with Bhante's teaching of 'Regular Steps' it is felt by all concerned that Mitras should have a solid common grounding in the Dharma. In order to accomplish this, meetings for Order members and Mitras are held at Aryatara every month, there has recently been held the first of a series of retreats for Mitras and Klayana Mitras, Mitra study groups have been started this year, and a publication for Mitras and Kalyana Mitras is being produced every month. To edit this and to co-ordinate activities Padmaraja has been appointed Mitra Convener.

In learning Dharma however one can hardly neglect Sangha; Mitras coming together with a common objective are beginning to find, some for the first time, just what Sangha means. As well as the awareness that it is oneself, as an individual, who is considering ordination, there comes the awareness that there are others who are preparing to make that commitment also. This awareness was perhaps the most significant feature of the recent retreat at Court Lodge, attended by eleven Mitras and six Kalyana Mitras. There's nothing to be gained in trying to explain it to those who weren't there, but I can say that hopes of progress have been replaced by knowledge that work has started to achieve that progress.

What significance this new awareness of Sangha amongst Mitras will have to the movement as a whole is no doubt still a little ahead of us. Presumably there'll be nothing like the solidarity of the Order itself, partly because of the still only partially committed nature of the Mitra, partly because of a lower degree of spiritual attainment, and also in no small measure, because of the transient nature of Mitraship. All the same the presence of

so many people who are seriously moved towards the spiritual life, even though not yet formally committed, can only have (and is already beginning to have) a positive effect on the atmosphere of the FWBO and can only be for the good of the movement as a whole, Order members, Friends, and Mitras alike.

ROGER CAWKWELL

YOGA WEEKENDS

Two weekends of Hatha Yoga have been held at Aryatara in combination with meditation and the usual retreat activities. At the first, Angela Farmer, one of B.K.S. Iyengar's most experienced pupils in Britain, led the yoga. The second was directed by two members of the Order, both pupils of Iyengar. The combination of Hatha Yoga and meditation produced a strong and relaxed atmosphere. Following the success of these weekend retreats more will be held for small groups of advanced students. There are now five Order members teaching and another two learning to teach Hatha Yoga.

EASTER RETREAT

It is expected to hold a Beginners' Retreat over Easter for 10-14 days, but no details have yet been finalised. For further information please write to the Retreat Organiser at the Archway Centre.

Retreat Accommodation

WE ARE LOOKING FOR SUITABLE ACCOMMODATION IN WHICH TO HOLD OUR EASTER AND SUMMER RETREATS. WE NEED A HOUSE LARGE ENOUGH TO COMFORTABLY ACCOMMODATE 25-50 PEOPLE, WITH A LARGE ROOM FOR A SHRINE ROOM, SITTING-ROOM FACILITIES, AND FACILITIES FOR SELF-CATERING. OUR RETREATS ARE ONE OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT ACTIVITIES AND WE ARE DESPERATE FOR PLACES FOR THE COMING YEAR. IF YOU KNOW OF ANY PLACES WHICH MIGHT BE SUITABLE TO HIRE PLEASE CONTACT THE SECRETARY, FWBO, 1A BALMORE STREET, LONDON N.19.

WEEKLY PROGRAMMES

ARCHWAY

Monday	7.0 pm	Basic Buddhist Course (by enrolment)
Tuesday	7.0	Meditation, study, puja (by arrangement)
Wednesday	5.0	Hatha Yoga (50p charge)
	7.0	Beginners' meditation class
	8.30	Recorded lecture by Ven. Sangharakshita, Puja
Sunday	5.30	Beginners' meditation class
	8.0	Double meditation, Puja

Communication exercises, and day retreats are held monthly.

ARYATARA

Monday	7.30pm	Hatha Yoga (50p charge)
Tuesday	7.30	Hatha Yoga (50p charge)
Wednesday	7.30	Beginners' meditation
Thursday	7.30	Study group for Mitras

GLASGOW

Tuesday	7.30pm	Meditation, taped lecture, puja
Wednesday	7.30	Preordination class (by request only)
Thursday	7.30	Beginners' meditation class

First Saturday of each month: Communication Exercises,
first Sunday: Day Retreat

BRIGHTON

Monday	7.0 pm	Beginners' meditation, taped lecture
Tuesday	7.0	Hatha Yoga (50p charge)
Wednesday	7.0	Meditation, taped lecture, puja
Thursday	7.0	Double meditation, puja.

EALING

Monday	7.30pm	Beginners' meditation, taped lecture,
Thursday	7.30	Meditation, puja.



CENTRES AND BRANCHES OF THE FRIENDS OF THE WESTERN BUDDHIST ORDER

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Tel: 041-332 7837

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Surrey CR2 3QB. Tel: 01-660 2542

EALING FWBO BRANCH, Upasaka Vangisa, 91 Kingsley Avenue,
London, W.13. Tel: 01-997 4109

BRIGHTON FWBO BRANCH, Upasaka Buddhadasa, 18-19 George Street,
Brighton, Sussex, BN2 1RH Tel: 0273-693 971

CORNWALL, FWBO Representative, Upasaka Manjuvajra, c/o
W.H. Thomas, Lower Carthew, Wendron, near Helston, Cornwall.

NORFOLK, FWBO Representative, Upasika Sulocana, The Old Rectory,
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NEW ZEALAND, FWBO CHRISTCHURCH, 52 Hewitts Road, Merivale,
Christchurch 1, New Zealand.

If you would like to contact other Buddhists in your area,
write to us and we will send you any other addresses we
receive in this way.

We are very glad to give any assistance we can to individuals
or groups who are trying to practise or study Buddhism.