

FRIENDS  
OF THE  
WESTERN  
BUDDHIST  
ORDER

NEWSLETTER  
32

Studying the Dharma:  
At last the truth can be told



## Weekly Programmes

### PUNDARIKA (ARCHWAY)

Monday	6 - 9.0 pm	Hatha yoga (two sessions, by arrangement only)
Tuesday	7.00 pm	Meditation, puja (variable programme)
Wednesday	5.00	Hatha yoga (50p)
	7.00	(September 15th for 7 weeks): Introductory course in Buddhism (by enrolment)
	7.00	(November 3rd for 8 weeks): The Sutra of Golden Light - series of live lectures by Ven. Sangharakshita (60p)
Sunday	6.30	Beginners' meditation class
	8.00	Talk or recorded lecture

### SUKHAVATI

Wednesday	7.00 pm	Hatha yoga
Thursday	7.00	Hatha yoga (50p each session)

### ARYATARA (SURREY)

Monday	6.30 pm	Hatha yoga (50p)
Tuesday	7.30	Meditation, puja
Wednesday	7.30	Beginners' meditation class

### MANDALA (WEST LONDON)

Monday	7.00 pm	Beginners' meditation class (from mid September)
Tuesday	5.30	Hatha yoga (50p)
Wednesday	7.00	Beginners' class (until mid September), then Series of live talks (from mid September)
Thursday	7.00	Double meditation and puja

### HERUKA (GLASGOW)

Monday	7.30 pm	Beginners' class (at Bridges, 102 Byres Road, G11)
Tuesday	7.00	Meditation, lecture, puja. (Meal at 6.00) At 257 Nithsdale Road, G41.

### BRIGHTON

Monday	7.15 pm	Beginners' meditation
Wednesday	7.15	Meditation, study, puja
Thursday	7.15	Hatha yoga (by arrangement)
Saturday	10.00 am	Hatha yoga (by arrangement)

### TRURO

Wednesday	7.30 pm	Beginners' meditation class Regular meditation, discussion At People's Palace, Pyder Street, Truro.
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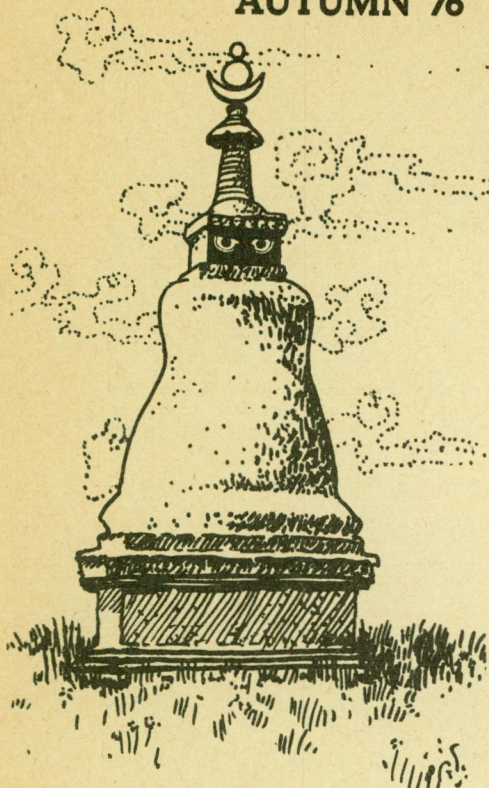
### NORWICH

Tuesday	7.30 pm	Beginners' meditation (all classes from September)
Thursday	7.00	Beginners' meditation
	8.30	Tape recorded lecture



# FWBO NEWSLETTER 32

## AUTUMN 76



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## EDITORIAL

In my last editorial I tried to express some of the gratitude I feel for being given the Dharma. On re-reading it I find myself wondering whether, despite my own enthusiasm, there were some readers left in doubt as to what I was going on about. "We could count ourselves lucky were we to be given nothing more than a couple of signposts, or even a few inspiring words to help us on our way," I said, and went on, "But we have so much more than that. We have the Dharma." So what is the Dharma? Is it the spiritual equivalent of a do-it-yourself plumbing booklet - a 'foolproof' step by step manual for the Enlightenment enthusiast? Actually, in the west it is possible to buy books which lure you into believing that it really is like that: 'Ten Ways to Raise Your Consciousness 'n' Feel Good' etc, etc. I hope at least I didn't give that kind of impression of the Dharma. So what is the Dharma? Dharma means Truth, it means norm, it means thing, it means phenomenon, it means all kinds of things. Yes, yes, we know that, you say, but what is this Dharma that is being revealed for us right now?

Well, what is being revealed to us is the Buddha's teaching; His communication... something of His experience, and it is being revealed to us in many different ways. We now have access to an ever increasing number of translations of scriptures and commentaries which we can read, absorb and put into practice. We can learn and use meditation techniques for overcoming the murk of our ignorance and maybe get to see flashes of what the Buddha saw. We can try to observe the precepts, bringing more and more awareness and purity to our everyday activity. We owe an incalculable debt of gratitude to the teachers of the past and present for their part in keeping the torch of the Buddha's communication alight. But the true revelation is taking place now, in the life of each individual who actually makes the effort to grow towards Enlightenment. When someone changes, when a person overcomes even the smallest part of his or her ignorance, and begins to manifest just a tiny spark of love and wisdom, then can it be said that the Dharma is being revealed. For that is the only revelation that really matters. The Dharma is still alive and 'coming to the west' not just because the words of the scriptures have been preserved and translated, but because of all those individuals who have chosen to 'live the life' and who have revealed the Dharma in and through their experience.

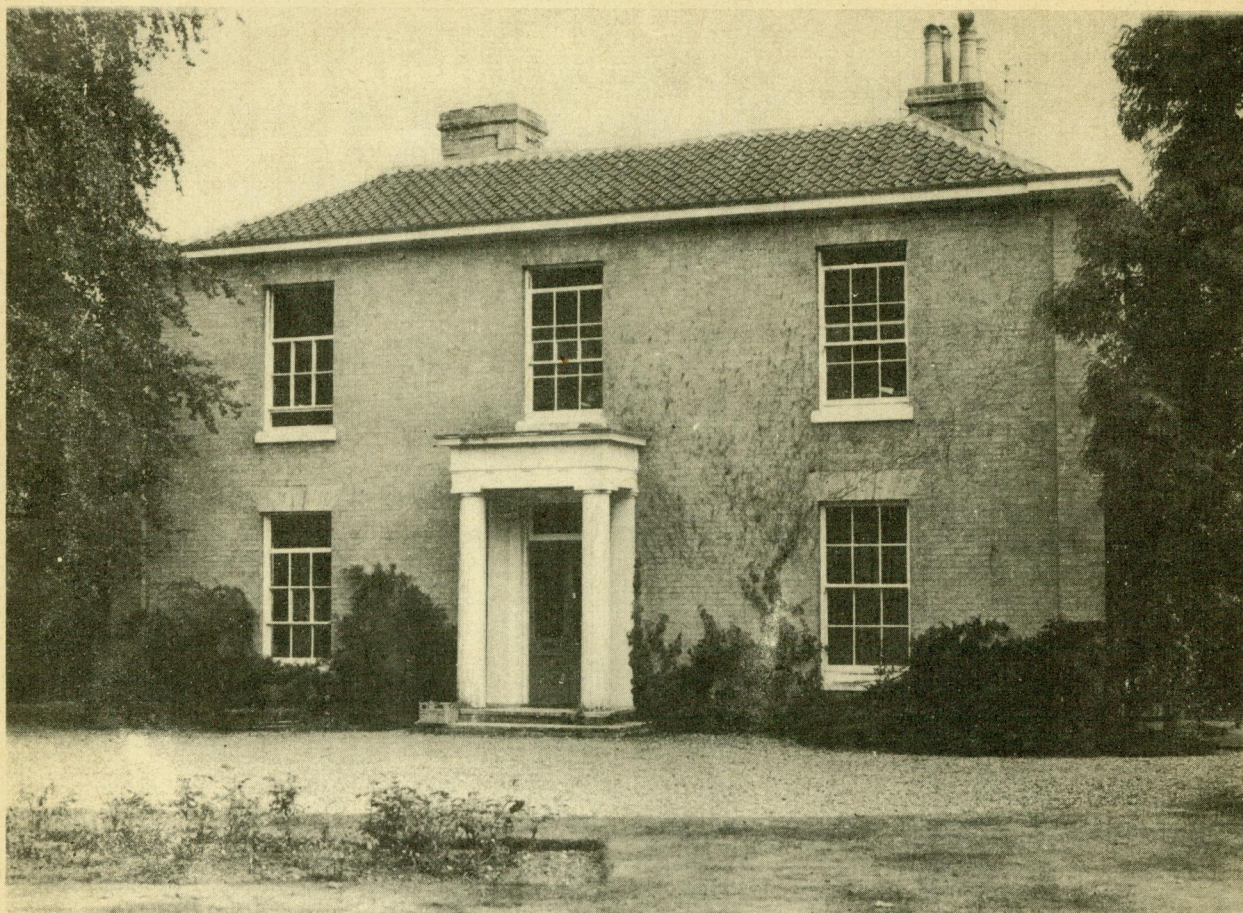
To 'study' the Dharma, then, can not mean to indulge in the acquisition of more and more knowledge about 'Buddhism'. Study groups conducted within the FWBO whether on seminars, retreats or at weekly classes, are seen as 'instruments of transformation' for each individual participating in them. They are catalysts for change and development. Back in July Ven. Sangharakshita led a seminar for women on some of the Songs of Milarepa, and almost upon arriving at Padmaloka became involved in a further four seminars and three hours of study each day on the men's mitra retreat. I hope that the various articles here, written by those who attended those study sessions, will give at least a kaleidoscopic impression of what we mean when we talk about studying the Dharma.

Nagabodhi





# PADMALOKA



The village of Surlingham is a somewhat spindly, inconsequential, affair set in Norfolk farmland, some six miles out of Norwich. Boasting no more than a post office, general shop, and garage, and sending forth each day its men into the office blocks of the nearby city, it seems to have little life of its own. On its very edge stands Lesingham House, an intriguing composite of architectural styles, which is soon to be given the new name of 'Padmaloka': 'Lotus-world', or, 'realm of the lotus'.



For some years now, while several different kinds of urban communities were being established by Friends, there have been hopes of creating a country





'vihara', a place where a community of people could live, in relatively peaceful surroundings while working on completely spiritual activities. Preliminary investigations were made in the Norfolk region, and at one point Upasaka Ratnapani was travelling about fifty miles each day, on his moped, scouring the skylines for suitable properties. It was only earlier this year, however, that the money to fund such a venture became available, and soon afterwards the right place appeared on the market.



Lesingham House was built as a farmstead in 1655, largely rebuilt in 1834, and finally extended and partly modernised in 1960. With about thirty rooms it is big enough to get lost in during the first days of your visit, and rambling enough to embrace you warmly as you walk in and around it. The eight to ten pints ordered each day while a retreat is being held look quite in character standing beside the massy doric columns of the main porch. There are five acres of paddock, rock garden, and kitchen garden; the model 'English country garden', bursting with its own tree, shrub, and bird life. Apart from a few minor leaks and damaged gutters, the house is in good condition, and complete with quite a useful selection of mod-cons which include fridges, telephone, central heating and an assortment of mechanical gardening aids.

First to move in, back in June, were Ven. Sangharakshita and Upasaka Vajrakumara, followed by Upasaka Ratnapani in September. The community will eventually consist of five or six permanent members, all men, joined at any one time by perhaps four to six semi long-term guests. They will aim to be self-supporting. Ratnapani plans to grow vegetables and perhaps a few cash crops in the kitchen garden, and in what is at present a paddock. Vajrakumara is hoping to establish a

small boatbuilding business and other projects in mind include incense making, lathe work, furniture making, and the sculpting of Buddha rupas. Few of these plans are definite as yet, but with the cellars, attics, empty rooms and about a thousand square feet of outhouses there is no shortage of space in which to carry them out. Meanwhile retreats and study seminars, of which there have been an uninterrupted succession throughout the summer, are helping to bring in the money to keep the place going.

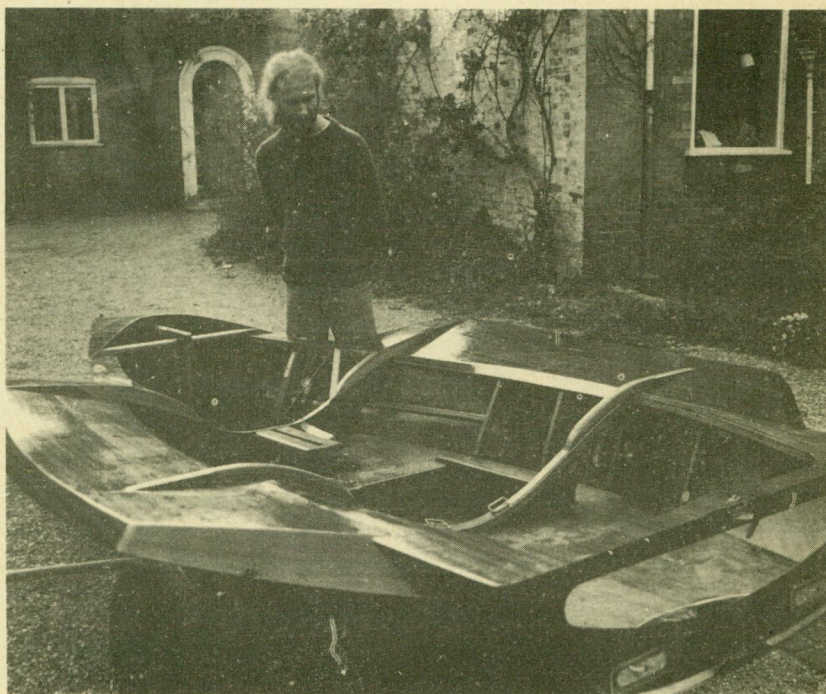
While not suited for an exclusively meditative community, 'Padmaloka' is an ideal place for semi-retreat and quiet activity. A complete set of recordings of Bhante's study seminars will be kept there so that the work of transcribing and editing can be carried out in a peaceful atmosphere.

Bhante feels that if he is going to be able to do all the things that he would like to do, then the time has come for him to find help in some of the more routine aspects of his work. He already regrets the little time he now finds to keep up with his correspondence, not to mention other literary work such as book reviews, essays



and further installments of his memoirs. At Padmaloka, and at Sukhavati where he will be spending up to half of each year, he will have his own permanent living quarters, office space and a secretary. The secretary at Padmaloka will probably also be responsible for the overall management of the house and grounds, but in time it is clear that Bhante will require a full-time secretary, and even a secretariat.

Padmaloka is going to be a community based on meditation, study, literary activity, craftwork and, of course, spiritual fellowship. As time goes by and the community becomes less dependent on retreats and seminars as a source of income, it is likely that the life of the community itself will take increasing precedence over other considerations. While Sukhavati takes form and substance as the first city-based community, those at Padmaloka will be exploring the challenges and possibilities of life in our first rural vihara.





Upasaka Vessantara attended the men's mitra retreat and the seminar on The Buddha by Trevor Ling. Here he gives a general account of what it is like to study the Dharma with a teacher.

# Studying the Dharma

"The retreat will include about three hours of study a day." To someone with a similar educational background to mine, this piece of information might well induce misgivings about attending the Retreat at all. At university and college I sat through many 'study seminars' and found them, almost without exception, alienating experiences. All discussion was kept strictly on an academic level. Studying English literature we dissected poems and plays with the cold eyes of botanists cutting up specimens. Our own feelings and experience were inadmissible evidence and the cool 'objective' atmosphere was only enlivened by the occasional violent academic argument. Now looking around the sitting room in Lesingham House the scene looks all too familiar. There are sixteen of us ranged in easy chairs, shuffling around the texts to be studied, and armed with heavy pads of file-paper for taking notes. A tape recorder and two microphones stand ready to record the proceedings. However there are some significant differences. We have spent a large part of morning in meditation, so the room looks somehow brighter and more cheerful than the surroundings which I viewed with a jaundiced eye at college. Also the leader of the study wears not the crumpled jacket of the Western academic, but the orange robe of a Buddhist monk. It is these differences which, as I hope we shall come to see, make all the difference....

But why should we study in this formal way at all? After all, nowadays you can buy the Songs of Milarepa in many bookshops, and read them on the bus. You can borrow The Perfection of

Wisdom from your local library. Indeed with the rise in interest in Eastern religions such books are becoming increasingly popular. There's gold in them that sutras, and the more esoteric they are the better they sell. To anyone who is well acquainted with the Buddhist tradition, this must seem a quite extraordinary situation. For traditionally nobody would study the text on their own, without first having been led through it and given permission to study it by a qualified teacher. Having studied the text with your teacher, you then meditate on it, turn it over in your mind and strive to practise and realise its teachings in your own experience.



So here at Lesingham House, we have to spend part of each day studying in the traditional manner with the Ven. Sangharakshita. In order to try to convey the difference between the modern and the traditional way of going about things, let us look at one of the texts we studied: the first two chapters of the 'Verse Summary of the Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines'. When I first read this on my own I found it very boring; it seemed a very abstract and almost perverse doctrine. It included passages like this:

No wisdom can we get hold of,  
no highest perfection  
No Bodhisattva, no thought of  
Enlightenment either.

When told of this, if not bewildered and in no way  
anxious,

A Bodhisattva courses in the  
Well-Gone's Wisdom.

Reading this on my own I was

quite definitely "bewildered", but I did not feel sufficiently involved in it to become "anxious". I just gave it up and moved on to the more exhilarating worlds of Zen and Tibetan yoga. At least I had not fallen into the trap of thinking I understood. To the average collector of Buddhist books, I suspect, this passage is all too easy to understand. After all, didn't the Buddha teach the doctrine of anatta - that there is no such thing as the ego? So, there can't be any Bodhisattva, can there? And doesn't Hakuin's Song of Meditation tell us that

all beings are from the very beginning Buddhas? So of course there is no wisdom to get hold of, we are already Enlightened! We don't need to do anything - not even practise meditation. I wish that such people could have attended the retreat, that they could have sat with Bhante and heard him begin by saying, "These teachings are a discouragement from thinking... If you are not shaken by the Perfection of Wisdom teachings you haven't understood them at all." For we all too easily think that, because we understand the words, we have realised the teaching. Even when we are told that Wisdom is 'atakkavacara' - beyond the reach of rational thought. We tend just to nod wisely and say, "Ah yes, of course."

In the course of the study, Bhante demonstrated to us the danger of taking concepts for reality. If one does this then wisdom appears as abstruse speculation, residing in some metaphysical void; some cold and empty counterpoint to the 'black holes' of astronomy. Rather the words used in the



texts to describe wisdom should be taken in a poetic sense, as pointers to a Reality which far transcends their literal meaning. Used this way they help us to recognise that wisdom is more like aesthetic appreciation, a seeing of the beauty of things, just as they are, from a basis of purified and profoundly positive emotions. So as Bhante talks about Transcendental Wisdom, we are brought more and more down to earth. And it is such a relief. A relief to walk out into the garden when the study is over and see that Wisdom sits amid the colours of the rock garden, in the spreading green skirts of the old lime tree, in the fierce breath of the horses in the paddock, and in the water-colour blue of the sky.

So the retreat goes on, over fifteen days, - fifteen days of "study" of the Dharma. People ask questions based on their own experience and receive practical answers, and all this within a framework of meditation, devotional exercises, yoga, and work.

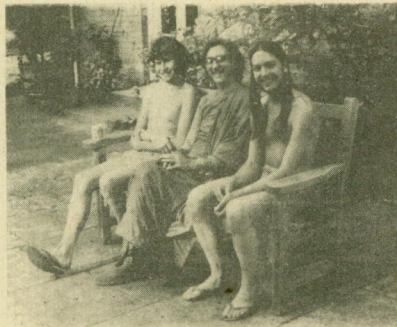
To study in this way is 'dangerous'. It makes you look at yourself in a new way. In meditation and in true study your safe picture of yourself becomes less and less secure, as if the ground were being gently but steadily pulled from beneath your feet.

What I learnt most clearly from



the retreat was the importance of being able to take just a few teachings and really apply them. Just as most of us accumulate more possessions than we really need, so we accumulate ideas about Buddhism that we cannot really use. We don't really need much theory. The Dharma after all is said to be like a raft for passing to the other shore. Now a raft is a very basic method of transport. All you need are a few planks tied together to keep you afloat and perhaps some kind of sail. Similarly, to practise the Dharma all you need are a few planks - the Refuges and Precepts, the Four Noble Truths, some simple methods of meditation - and perhaps some kind of devotional exercise for a sail. The important thing is to start. You must commit yourself to the journey and start paddling; you must then learn how to handle your raft, get to know its every trick in the difficult winds of samsara. Then once you have some practical experience and have maybe been washed overboard once or twice, you will evaluate each new teaching with the practical eye of a lone seaman whose very life may depend on the decision. Will it help me to sail faster? Does it really serve some useful function, or will it merely burden down the raft, making it sink lower in the water?

If we view Buddhist teachings in this practical, critical way we shall avoid the mirage of mistaking theory for practice. So often, instead of getting together and launching simple rafts, we build quinquereemes and galleons. We construct opulent gin-palace paddle steamers out of all the schools of Buddhism, and try to



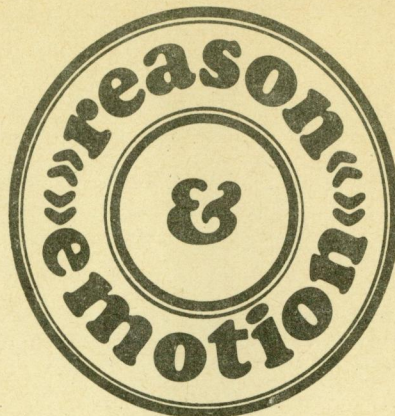
enlist learned men as crew to do our crossing for us. Then we recline on the sundeck, reading advanced teachings like travel brochures, and are lulled into thinking that we are really moving. But all the time we remain stuck firmly aground.

So let us not read reams of words on Buddhism when we have not even deeply considered the five Precepts. We need to concentrate, in Bhante's phrase, on doing "more and more of less and less". We should always bear in mind that the Dharma is a guide line for practical action, otherwise it is not the Dharma, it is merely dead dogma. So every verse, every sentence that we read has to be matched against our life situation. The pure ore of the Teaching must be hammered against our own experience and fashioned into precepts. Wherever possible we should try to study, not by ourselves in the comfort of our own wrong views, but with others who are also trying to put the teaching into practice, with whom we can share our experience. This is why in the FWBO we hold study groups at our centres and on retreats - not to accumulate and debate ideas about Buddhism - but to provide an opportunity for people to consider and radically change their lives, to build a simple raft and launch it towards the golden shore of Enlightenment.





One of the texts studied during the course of the mitra retreat was part of the Ratnagunasamcayagatha. Here, in transcript, is an extract from the proceedings which gives a very good idea of how even a more 'difficult' aspect of the Dharma can suddenly become accessible and relevant when approached in this manner.



"The wanderer Srenika, in his gnosis of the truth

Could find no basis, though the skandhas had not been undone.

Just so the Bodhisattva, when he comprehends the dharmas as he should

Does not retire into Blessed Rest. In wisdom then he dwells." (P. 10. I. 10)

Sangharakshita: Why is it that he doesn't retire into 'Blessed Rest' when he comprehends the dharmas as he should? What are these dharmas? These dharmas are the ultimate elements of existence according to the Abhidharma analysis. So the Bodhisattva sees them as he should; that is to say, he sees them as void; he does not take them as ultimate realities; he sees them only as operational concepts. And because he sees all dharmas as operational concepts, including even the idea of Nirvana, he does not take all this talk about attaining Nirvana or not attaining Nirvana, or possessing Nirvana, or not possessing Nirvana, literally, and in that way he does not retire into 'Blessed Rest' (taking it as an existent entity actually distinct from Samsara). Do you think that there is a less roundabout way of putting all this? Maybe a less metaphysical way - a less Indian way, if you like?

Graham: That he just keeps on striving.

S: That he just keeps on striving. Hm. It means rather more

than that. It means not being concept ridden but functioning freely and spontaneously without depending on concepts.

Making use of them, yes, but not really depending on them, not being limited by them.

'In wisdom then he dwells.' So this passage gives us some idea of what wisdom is. It's comprehending the dharmas as they are and not retiring into 'Blessed Rest'. Wisdom is the spontaneous life not dependent on intellectual support, the life which goes beyond the evidence, as it were - hence the need for faith. You can say that man cannot be guided entirely by reason because man is more than reason. Blake makes this point very strongly. The true life of man, he says, is in the Imagination, which he regards as a spiritual faculty, a sort of spiritual vision, - the Divine Vision, - or, we might even say, a sort of insight. After all, what is the nature of the reasoning process, and where is it derived from? Reasoning is derived from the senses. The senses give you your raw materials, the mind gets to work on these, you come to various conclusions - that's your reasoning. But you yourself are much more than that. You're not limited by the senses. You're not limited by the reasonings of the mind based on sense data. If you allow yourself to be limited in this way you detract from the fullness of your total being. You therefore have to go beyond such limitations and not take them as your basis.

Sagaramati: I don't know, but to me that contradicts a lot of what has been said on other occasions - certainly the way I've taken it. I always thought that you took reason as a basis, as it were, took the idea...

S: Ah, you can take reason as a basis in the sense of a starting point, but not (take reason) as a basis in the sense of having to find a reason for everything that you do before you can do it. You are bigger than your reason. You can certainly listen to the voice of reason but it isn't really possible for you to be guided by it absolutely. It's useful as a starting point, but not as a guide all along the way.

Padmapani: What's the difference between a person who thinks in concepts and has got a rational mind and a person who is not exactly dwelling in the Perfection of Wisdom, but who has got a rather irrational, erratic nature?

S: Well, that is the difference.

Padmapani: But that person is not dwelling in the Perfection of Wisdom, yet there is an irrational element or whatever in him, isn't there?

S: I don't believe that anybody is completely rational. Everybody is more or less guided by their emotions. It's simply that some people have a greater capacity to dress up their emotions and present them as reasons (laughter) - a greater



capacity for rationalisation. Some people just don't make any attempt to disguise their emotions and quite openly act out of their emotions. Others give you lots of reasons for what they do, but actually behind the reasons there's just emotion.

Mike: If you wanted something emotionally, say out of greed, you'd create reasons to present it in a more acceptable form - not just to other people but to yourself.

Padmapani: When a rational person thinks of another person as woolly-headed or woolly-thinking, or even just as a woolly person, might not the actual fact be that the 'woolly' person sometimes thinks rationally and sometimes irrationally?

S: People can of course sometimes think rationally - most people do think rationally sometimes - but I think there's far less rational thinking than we like to think, and that most of the time, or at least much of the time, we are in fact dominated by our emotions. Much of the time, we are in fact dominated by our emotions. Many years ago - it must have been in the early fifties - I started coming into contact with Buddhist scholars, that is to say, with scholars in Buddhism, some of them quite well known, even famous, and one of the things I was very, very surprised to notice was how extremely irrational they all were. If one of them published a book or an article dealing with some aspect of Buddhist history or Buddhist thought other scholars working in the same field would react to it in a violently emotional manner. They would not react objectively. They would not consider the book rationally. There'd be a violently emotional reaction, and then they'd proceed to do some research to refute whatever the author had said... But the violent emotional reaction would come first. Not only that, but they would often become involved in all sorts of academic intrigues and academic politickings. They'd try to arrange for the publication of reviews criticising that

particular book, or they'd pull strings to get the author dismissed from some academic post. All this was going on. There was intense competitiveness, intense jealousy, intense fear - all in this world of so called objective scholarship. You could see that they weren't objectively, impartially, carrying on research and trying to add to our scientific knowledge of Buddhism. They were motivated by the most violent emotions. This was really surprising to me in my innocence at that time. I thought that scholars were objective, impartial, very rational beings, but not a bit of it. Since then I've come to see that most people are like this - that we find reasons for doing things, but that it's really our emotions that are making us do them.

What is wrong is not that we are emotionally motivated but that the emotional motivation is unacknowledged, so that it remains subterranean and indirect and, therefore, to that extent a bit negative. The best thing we can do is to clarify the emotions, and have them more out in the open, and act much more openly and directly from them, if that is what we feel like doing, with less disguise. I think that if we allow the emotions a more free and open play, then they'll be more amenable to reason in those situations where reason is also called for.

Padmapani: Are you saying then, Bhante, that by letting these emotions into play the actual reasoning faculty in that person - which may be dormant - would arise?

S: Well, it isn't dormant, because it's constantly employed in rationalisation, but if it does not have to rationalise then maybe it will get a chance to be truly rational. I'm sure you've all encountered the sort of thing I'm referring to from time to time. For instance, you ask someone why they can't come, or why they can't do something. They very rarely give you the real reason. Usually it's for a deeply emotional reason, or a deeply emotional cause, that they can't come, that they can't do something; but they don't

give you that. Instead, they present you with some rationalisation or other, and this is what I sometimes call the 'x' factor, the factor which is always unacknowledged but which is very powerful and very operative.

Sagaramati: The 'x' factor is the emotion?

S: The unacknowledged emotion.

Padmapani: So it's unconscious in that person.

S: I won't say it's totally unconscious. Very often they do sort of know it, but they've got into the absolute habit of not acknowledging it under any circumstances whatsoever, and they hardly know that they do this.

Graham: But then, going back to what you said a day or two ago, if you do come out with exactly how you feel it's possibly quite a reactive thing and not a positive contribution to the situation.

S: But the more you allow it out into the open, the more you can see it for what it is and therefore can take steps either to bring it under control in an aware sort of way, or to purify it, or make it more translucent and more refined. I think that it's the unacknowledged emotions and the pseudo-rationality that do all the damage. Therefore I don't think we can really classify people into the highly rational people who do everything on account of certain reasons and the emotional people who are just emotional and who do things out of their emotionality. No! In most cases you find that the so-called more rational people are simply people who have a much greater capacity for rationalisation and whose emotions are very deeply buried. You're more likely to be able to be really rational, and do things taking into account the objective facts of the situation, if you are more freely emotional. Then there's a chance of the rationality and the emotionality coming much more together, as they should be in a healthy person.

Ian: So it's not that we aim to act purely on the basis of reason.



We decide intellectually to act, but in fact it's more like a total decision.

S: Right, it's a total thing. If your emotions are hidden here, and your reason is there, well, it's a question of being guided either by your reason or your emotions, which means that you are not an integrated person.

Ian: So we can't do things if our heart isn't in them even though we think we ought to do them.

S: Right. We can see rationally that we ought to do them, but unless our emotions are integrated with that, well, we'll hardly ever get anything done. On the other hand, we have to have a certain amount of clarity of thought and see in which direction we ought to be going,

otherwise the emotions remain turbulent and just circling round and round - swirling round and round - without ever really getting anywhere. But when we are totally integrated, and our reason is our emotion and our emotion is our reason, then it is quite difficult for us to say, sometimes, whether we do things on account of certain reasons or simply because we feel like doing them. The two have become as it were one - one whole. In the case of the split and divided person, on the surface there is this very sophisticated rationalisation going on, but underneath, quite cut off from it, are these very powerful emotions that are pulling all the rational strings. You could even go so far as to say that the very rational person is almost sure to be a split and

divided person. The more 'rational' you are the more emotional you are, really, in that split and divided way. It's the person who is less high powered when it comes to intellect and reasoning who is, in fact, more reasonable - less under the influence of his emotions. His intellect, his reasoning power, is much less of a separate thing from the rest of him. When functioning at your best you would be unable to say whether you were reasoning or emoting or whatever. You're doing something. You're aware of certain reasons for doing it, and at the same time, you're fully into it emotionally. You can't split and divide the different aspects. They're all integrated - all one. This is the more ideal state.

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The Selections from the Songs of Milarepa seminar took place back in the heatwave of July at Aryatara. Among those present was Upasika Dhammadinna, who herself leads several regular study groups.

## *a woman's place....*

The most striking thing for me about the seminar is the length of time it has taken me to assimilate the experience. It is now several months since it took place but I still find it difficult to recall much in terms of detail of what happened or what was said. We may read that the Enlightened Mind is, as it were, behind the words of the Buddha, but we are only reading this. Can we imagine what it was like to be face to face with the Buddha, or a real teacher of the Dharma? We may well try to imagine but it in no way actually prepares us for the experience of, say, a seminar. In the seminar situation, which is quite small and intimate and intense, Bhante breathes life into the written word of the Dharma, making it alive, relevant, dynamic and unavoidable. The text, whatever it is, begins to sparkle and dance, even crackle and explode. We cease to study it, in the sense of standing back from it. We become involved, stirred up, and changed. The small, intimate

and intense situation allows Bhante's energy to come through in a particularly indiluted form. It is not so much the facts supplied that are important but the exchange or the reception of energy and inspiration. This was my overwhelming feeling after the seminar: a feeling of having been inspired and energised. I couldn't tell you much more about the Mahamudra teachings of Tibetan Buddhism at the end than I could before, although this is part of what we studied, but I felt very different.

We studied, among other songs, three which concerned women disciples of Milarepa. Firstly in 'A Woman's Role in the Dharma' we are faced with a contrast between an old woman who has made no attempt in life to evolve, and her young granddaughter, who according to the text has all the qualifications of an Angel of Wisdom (Dakini). According to Bhante this meant she had a youthful, unspoiled energy, she was able to inspire, was intelligent, kind, willing

and independent. Milarepa is badly treated by the old woman and sings her a very direct song which reveals to her what she has become:

In the morning you get up from bed,  
In the evening you go to sleep,  
In between, you do the endless housework;  
You are engrossed in these three things.  
Grandmother, you are the unpaid maid.  
Question your own thought and your mind examine.  
You should practice Buddha's teaching,  
You need a qualified and dependable Guru,  
And then things may be different for you.

Even though she is old, and has obviously become bad tempered, crotchety and mean as the years have gone by, she is moved by his words to relax her rage and weep tears of remorse. She encourages the young girl to ask Milarepa for teachings and instruction. Bardabom, the Dakini-like girl, seems already



to have a good knowledge of the Dharma, and asks Milarepa about his lineage and teachings. She begins by being rather conceited and 'knowing', but through her discussion with the Jetsun becomes humble and devoted. She is given meditation practices and eventually achieves perfect realisation in one life, and at her death flies to the Dakini Pure Land.

One of the main points which emerged from this chapter was the importance of meeting the Dharma early when one is still young and unspoiled. The old grandmother may herself have been like a dakini when she was young, but quickly got caught up in the endless cycle of worldly life and became coarser and coarser as time passed. She was able to respond to Milarepa and his honesty, directness and compassion, but the young girl could take his teachings so much further and attain Enlightenment in this life.

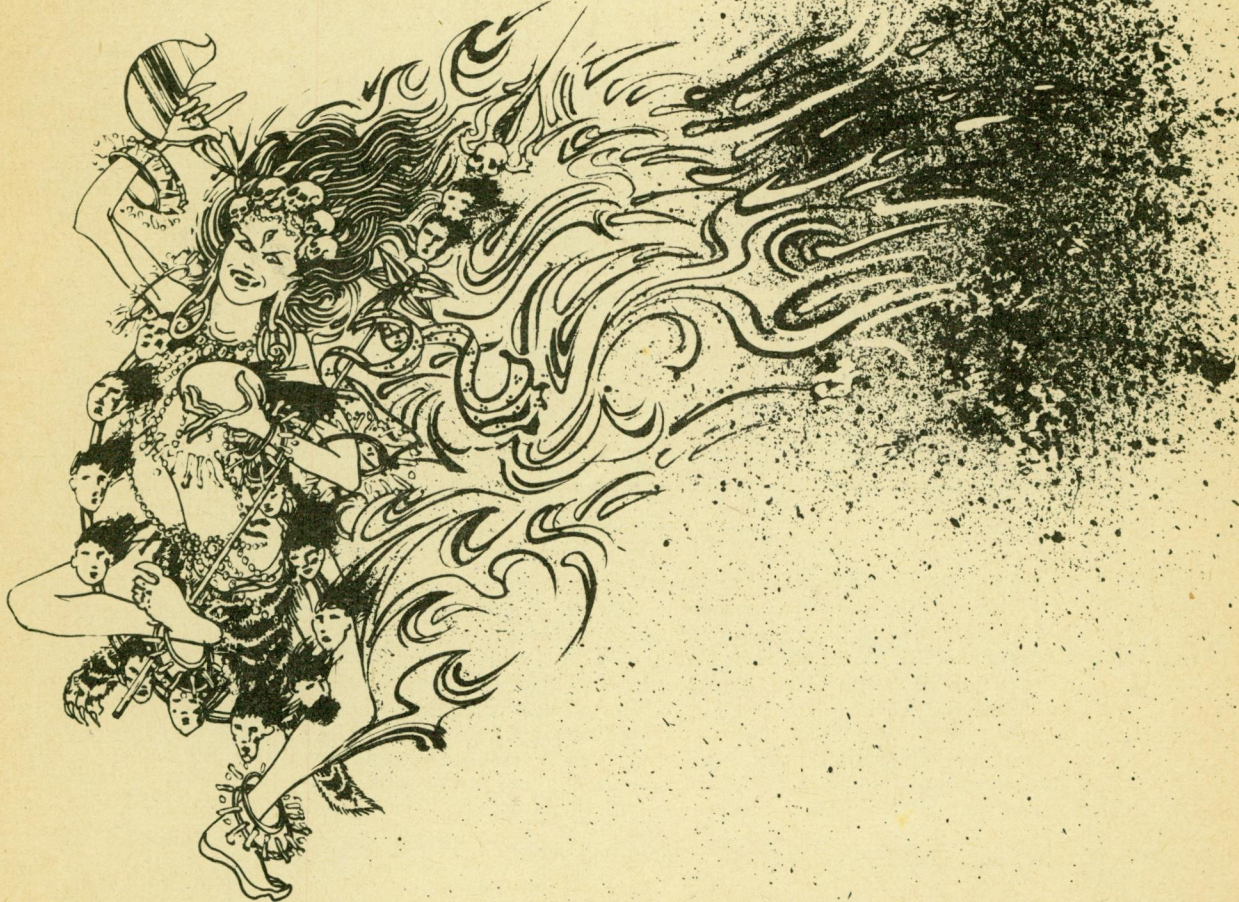
The second song we studied concerning women disciples was

the 'Challenge from a Clever Maiden'. The Clever Maiden, Rechungma, was intelligent, compassionate, and had great faith in the Dharma. She was actually a Dakini, incarnated in human form. Again this means that she was born with Dakini qualities, was naturally well endowed and gifted. She has heard of Milarepa and has faith in him but she comes with four young girl friends and, to verify his reputation, she challenges him with a song. Milarepa of course answers the challenge, and Rechungma, confirmed in her faith, makes offerings and begs for instruction. In his usual uncompromising way Milarepa refuses the offerings and says they could not follow his way of life, nor endure want of food and clothing. After another song concerning his life story he dismisses them. However their faith is strengthened anew and they now ask to become servants. He then sings the

song of Self Examination telling them to ask themselves:

Have I the persistence to endure the hardships of the ascetic life,  
Have I a will strong and dominant enough to renounce all Samsaric desires  
And follow the instructions of my Guru?

and goes on to ask them if they can live alone in rugged places, can they renounce their families and rely on their guru, can they live in destitution and hardship, can they live the simple life, see the transiency of life, and persevere in the Dharma? So Milarepa tests and challenges them. He will not give them the teachings unless he is sure of their faith, commitment and ability. They reply, "Though we were born in a female form, which is considered to be inferior, nevertheless, so far as the





Alaya (Store) Consciousness is concerned, there is no discrimination between men and women. We are convinced of the faults of Samsara and shall try to follow our Guru's instructions." They become humble and say they are unable to practice the Dharma in a perfect way and ask to become servants rather than disciples. They then sing a song expressing their confidence in being able to practice the teachings.

Rechungma goes on to practice with Milarepa. She spends time in meditation and becomes a qualified female yogi. She spends time with Rechungpa, one of Milarepa's foremost male disciples, as a companion in devotion, and then goes into solitary retreat observing silence for eight years, achieves Enlightenment "and in this life goes to the Pure Land of the Dakinis."

Rechungma begins by being rather 'clever' and 'superior' but becomes humble and reverent, though now she has really attained understanding and realisation. It is also interesting that she spends some time with Rechungpa as a companion in devotion before going off into a long solitary retreat. Bhante explained that sometimes one's practice can become dry and one may need stimulation, and that the dakini-daka relationship is based on this. It is stimulation on a psychophysical level. If one cuts things off too quickly one may simply dry up. Bhante said we must be very careful not to equate this relationship with an ordinary friendship or sexual

relationship. He said that energy was the raw material for the spiritual life and needs refining and sublimating. Usually our energy is going into worldly things, and if we cut off these outlets we can lose our energy. It is important to stay fresh and lively without worldliness, so Rechungma for example first has this spiritually stimulating relationship with Rechungpa before going off alone into solitude.

The third song concerning women disciples was 'Sahle Aui and her Understanding'. Again she is a sixteen year old girl when Milarepa meets her. Milarepa sees her potential though she refuses him alms. That night she has an auspicious dream, and goes in search of Milarepa the next day. Faith arises in her and she asks to become a servant. She is unlike the previous women disciples in that she does not talk of higher teachings or lineages or anything of this sort; her song shows that though she is very young she has thought about life very deeply, has been affected existentially, and has pondered on Impermanence as it has been revealed to her in her everyday life. She is very simple and straightforward. Milarepa tests her saying she is too young to renounce the world completely and refuses her offering. She sings him another song about her experience of impermanence:

Life is precarious and fleeting  
Like dew upon the grass,  
Time flies unnoticed, and  
then life is o'er.

I have never seen or heard of  
an immortal man.

I am certain beyond doubt that

I shall die one day.  
I have no freedom of choice  
Of where to go when I am dead,  
I am sad and fearful  
When I think of the pains that I  
In Lower Regions might bear.

Milarepa, convinced by her song, accepts her offerings and ordains her as a lay follower observing the five basic precepts, initiates her into the esoteric Tantric Order and instructs her. First she remains with him, and then goes into solitude. Eventually she "enters the path of the Omniscient Ones" but remains in solitude and becomes one of Milarepa's four foremost female yoginis.

I personally found these stories of women disciples very inspiring. So often in Buddhist scriptures the stories are about men, and women are often said to be unable to attain high spiritual realisation. These stories proved otherwise.

Also, in the course of the seminar Milarepa came alive as someone indeed Enlightened, totally uncompromising about his simple and austere lifestyle, and yet so simple and childlike, with a sense of humour, compassion, and friendliness, and a freedom of thought and behaviour which is really delightful. Although he lived some thousand years ago in the snowy wastes of a medieval Tibet his message and his humanity shine through the page, and with the help of Bhante's elucidation, became immediately relevant to eight women living and practising in contemporary urban society.

Dhammadinna

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When you attend a study group or a seminar you don't just learn a few new things about Buddhism. At the Order Convention in 1975 Bhante said "A study group is an instrument, a means of development for all those participating in it, at their particular level." So when you study the Dharma, ideally you should feel yourself changing. You will feel your ideas and views changing, and you will feel the whole purpose and direction of your life changing as your relationship to the Dharma grows in strength and depth. Chintamani, an artist who lives at Sukhavati, took part in the seminar on the Great Chapter of the Sutta Nipata...

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The Great Chapter of the Sutta Nipata consists of twelve suttas, or discourses of the Buddha, of varying lengths, covering practically His entire career: His Going Forth, ascetic strivings, defeat of Mara and final Enlightenment, right up to His last days, when we see Him presenting the essential principles of the Dharma to a well established, fully committed and receptive community of disciples. The Sutta Nipata itself is a very old work indeed perhaps as close as it is possible to get to the Buddha's own words, and, like such other collections of teachings as the Udana, comes from what has come to be known as the "Archaisic" period of Buddhism. As many of us have seen from previous study of such texts, they are characterized by a directness, freshness and vitality, and an innocent simplicity which is sometimes lacking in later works. Bhante chose this text for study on the first of the four seminars that he recently led at Lesingham House in Norfolk, and nine men, all but one of us being residents of Sukhavati, immersed ourselves in its exploration over a period of ten days.

The first thing that occurs to me to say about this seminar, is that it was the most practical that I've ever attended. The previous seminars that I went on all had their distinctive qualities and high points of inspiration, and they were all undoubtedly landmarks for me in my own development, as no doubt they were for everyone else concerned. This one, though, more than any other, made absolutely no concessions to the infantile bleatings and spurious rationalizations of one's own weaknesses, or so it seemed to me. The Great Chapter itself, together with Bhante's exhaustive commentaries, provided serious, fully committed and systematic treading of the path of regular steps, and seemed to say, in very direct terms: "If you want to grow then this is what you have to do - nobody is going to do it for you". As one of the many wonderful quotes that I took down during the course of the study says: "When the Buddha gives the Dharma he doesn't give an intellectual doct-

## IF YOU WANT TO GROW

rine, he tells you how to face up to life." Realising the implications of this, I think that some of us at least began to see that a full-time living of the Spiritual Life, with all the depth of meaning that that implies, and without any compromise was now a definite reality. Just as in the Buddha's own day, men went forth "from home to homelessness", without any domestic or worldly ties, responsibilities or obligations, in order to strive for the perfections for which their hearts yearned, some too would be in a position to do the same, but within, and growing out of, a modern western society. As it says in the first of the twelve suttas, The Going Forth:

"Cramped is this life at home,  
Dusty indeed its sphere,  
Open the going forth.  
Gone forth He wholly shunned  
In body evil deeds,  
And rid of wrongful talk,  
He cleansed his way of Life".

There are many more quotes from the text, which, if put together with some of Bhante's comments would make a more than adequate article in themselves. These seven lines, however, in many ways sum up the central theme of the seminar, which is also, I suppose, the central theme of the whole spiritual life - namely the development of an awareness of what is negative and what is positive, both within ourselves and in the world at large, the "shunning" of the negative, and the vigorous cultivation of the positive. In more suggestive terms, this is the choice we have between living a cyclical mode of existence, the React-

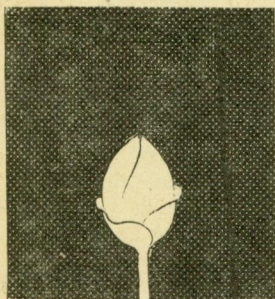
ive, and living a spiral mode, the Creative. Throughout the seminar we were brought back many times to this fundamental principle: namely the choice between endlessly repeating our old, blind and meaningless patterns of reaction, or taking a stand, stopping, and striking out into unexplored and ever higher realms of light, colour, Insight and Compassion. Although it is some years since Bhante first gave his lecture on the subject, it wasn't until this seminar that, for me at least, it truly came alive. I think that this firm establishing of a basic principle, in whose light the whole of Life can be assessed, and thus dealt with, was the main revelation of the ten days.

Throughout many of the suttas we found the Buddha describing in a great wealth of detail and imagery all the qualities of the Enlightened and eternally Creative man. Much of this takes the form of the re-defining of epithets pertaining to the religious Life of His day - namely that of the Brahmanas. (There is, in fact, much in the early Pali texts which is of great historical interest). We find Him directing the energy and attention of the Brahmanas and ascetics that came to Him, away from the ethnic (and from a spiritual point of view, reactive) practices of the day, such as sacrifice, ritual bathing and so on, practices mainly concerned with maintaining a well-endowed home life, or at best, union with some mundane ethnic deity, towards the truly Creative path of the Transcendental.

Although today we don't have an existing religious language to be redefined, the principle of Mind Reactive and Creative is as fundamentally valid as it ever was. All the different aspects of our being, all the energy that arises within us have their potentially reactive or creative aspects. The choice is ours. When energy is released and comes bubbling up, we can either channel it into our spiritual Life or dissipate it in some meaningless, aimless "pleasure". It is as if Mara, or our own innate resistance to the Higher Evolution is lying in wait to usurp any spark of new-born



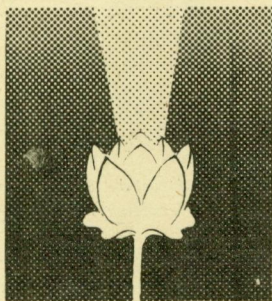
energy that springs into our Life. We have to be quick or we react blindly, and find that yet another opportunity to start ascending the spiral of creativity has been lost, and instead we become drained, wallowing once more in the grey, lethargic and basically resentful swamps of dull inertia. So we listen to and derive our inspiration from the Dharma in order to clarify what is reactive and what is creative. Then we are exhorted by the Buddha to leave the reactive in order to embrace the Creative: various attitudes and practices are suggested by which we can do this.



Of the great wealth of these attitudes and practices that came from the whole of the seminar, three in particular, stand out for me. As with the rest they interrelate with each other. The first is the importance of Virya, or energy in pursuit of the good. Looking through the quotes that I took down, one that stands out is: "There is no progress without Virya. Your Virya shows itself in the overcoming of unskillful mental states". One of the first main emphasis of the study was on the energetic, heroic, and determined attitudes needed to do this. In the second sutta we see the Buddha being tempted by Mara to ease up on His ascetism, and to return to a safe, 'good', and domestically religious life, as He seems to be being rather too hard on Himself. The Buddha's reply needs no further comment: "Better to fight and die than to lose and live!" In fact throughout the Great Chapter we find many references to such heroic, noble, self-sufficient, and yet un-selfconscious and un-arrogant qualities - qualities that in this age of the anti-hero are sadly unfashionable. The Buddha is compared at different times to noble, fearless, even dangerous ani-

mals: the bull, the tiger, the 'lone-faring lion', and the thoroughbred stallion who refuses to be bound or chained down.

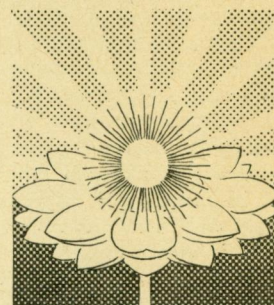
However, as anyone who has listened to Bhante's lectures on the Bodhisattva Ideal will remember, of equal importance to such dynamic, active qualities is that of spiritual openness and receptivity. In fact you can't have one without the other. In order to take firm and decisive action in treading the Spiritual Path, inspiration is needed from the Dharma, and that will only come if there is a basic openness and receptivity to it. Otherwise all our efforts will be self willed, self motivated, and therefore fundamentally impotent. In sutta six the Buddha defines what a savaka is, in response to one of the many questions of Sabhiya the wanderer. Looking through my notes I find that 'savaka' which is the word used for a disciple literally means 'one who listens and hears'. This suggests that the disciple is one who is receptive. So, the Buddha says to Sabhiya that the one who listens and is receptive, understands all things. If one can be totally receptive, one eventually arrives at the Truth. Furthermore, as Bhante pointed out, a disciple is receptive to the Truth of the Buddha, whilst a Buddha is receptive to



the suffering of samsara. So, whether we are being outward going and active, or passive and receptive, we should, eventually, have the ability to be as spiritually passive as we are active, and vice versa.

Finally Bhante stressed the vital importance of positive emotions. As he pointed out towards the end of the seminar, if the creat-

ive mind is not being nourished then the reactive mind will nourish itself - and nothing nourishes the creative mind like positive emotions. It is one's emotional state that determines one's view of the world. If one is full of warmth and friendliness then



this very world appears as paradise; being full of hate, jealousy, resentment or whatever, transforms it into hell. Again it is entirely up to us which of the two we choose. Having fully seen and accepted that negativity and reactivity are present within us and that they are holding us down, we should then make a determined effort not to perpetuate them any longer, and to nurture and encourage the seeds of all that is positive both within ourselves, and those around us. Thus we will "starve out the reactive mind and feed the creative". To attempt to "explore our negativity", which is almost a modern psychological cult, is as eternal a task, and as basically futile as endlessly scratching and playing with a wound and then wondering why it doesn't heal.

So it does seem that we have to start thinking in a definitely dualistic way: we must learn to distinguish between what is reactive and 'worldly', and what is creative and 'spiritual'. It is from the creative mind that we will reach the state transcending all dualism. Unfortunately it is all too easy to use the more ultimate teachings of Buddhism - sunyata, the Void, or the tantra for instance - to rationalise, even to spiritualise one's reactive processes. For most, if not all of us, we have a very definite choice facing us: whether to be reactive or to be creative, to wallow in untruth or to guide our lives towards the Truth. In fact, contrary to the current fashionable ideology of much of the modern world, there is, if



we are to make any progress at all, a very definite right and wrong in the first stages of the path.

As far as I am concerned studying the Sutta Nipata provided

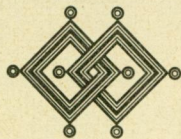
me with a complete plan of action so full, so comprehensive and above all so practical, that I come back to all that I gained from it again and again and no doubt will continue to for a very long time.

Editor's note:

Ven. Sangharakshita's lecture 'Mind Reactive and Creative' is available on tape or cassette from Dharmachakra Tapes, or in booklet form from FWBO Publications, price 30p & p&p.

It came as quite a surprise when Bhante announced his intention to hold a seminar on The Buddha, a modern historical/social approach to Buddhism by Professor Trevor Ling of the University of Manchester. Tim McNally, who lives and works at Sukhavati, (as readers of the last issue will remember) suddenly found himself being lured away from his paintbrush and plasterboards by an invitation to attend.

## BEWARE the PRINTED WORD



I took up my station beside the All in a state dangerously close to euphoria. One doesn't dwell lightly on one's first study seminar and on the strength of all the glowing reports I'd heard it promised to be an eventful twelve days. I had thought to steal a march on my fellow disciples by reading in advance as much of the set text as I could manage. I was determined that my ignorance of the Dharma should be as inconspicuous as possible. And at the very least it promised to be a restorative, a summer vacation almost, officially sanctioned leave from the building site, the first for many months. I waited only five minutes for a lift, the first one off the mark. My benefactor was going only a short distance though, to Harlow before the pubs closed. Would I like a drink? No thanks... I have an appointment in Norwich and I can't afford to impair my awareness. We parted company at a likely spot; old Sol, breaking through the fickle clouds at last smiled on my good fortune.

Soon, however, I have to do

some walking - a good opportunity to inspect a part of Essex. I am aware of an ambivalent relationship with the motor car: at once disdainful of their intrusion, at the same time dependent on them, I cross the road and forget about hitching for a while. An hour and a half later necessity intervenes and it's back to the serious work of getting from A to B. Finally, late in the afternoon I am delivered to the door of Lesingham House.

Next morning, after a dream in which I am climbing without ropes out of a sandstone quarry there is a meditation at seven o'clock with some impassioned chanting. Then at ten the seminar opens. Passages from the text are read in turn and deliberated upon. The evidence is sifted, evaluated... Bhante has even at this early stage isolated one vital clue which points to Professor Ling's overriding thematic concern in the book (and by extension its acceptability, or unacceptability, as a whole). It is that in chapter one Professor Ling chooses to speak in terms of 'Buddhism' rather

than 'Dharma', and in failing to draw a distinction between the two prejudices the whole issue...

It becomes clear that one can follow a Buddhist way of life in this sense without being in tune with the Dharma. Professor Ling makes his point further on page 16: "It is clear that in entering the world of the Buddha we are confronted by something more than a religion, if by religion is meant a system of personal salvation." In so doing he effectively moves the study squarely into the socio-political sphere and as far as some people are concerned it is alien, unfamiliar ground. By the time we arrive at this point, hums and hahs are being spontaneously emitted; a note of restiveness pervades the air. Obviously Professor Ling's assumptions do not receive a wide, uncritical endorsement. Bhante deftly anticipates (and encourages) the mood of inquiry. For some reason his perspicacity reminds me vaguely of Sherlock Holmes; perhaps it is the way he opens the discussion, "Well, what do you make of that?"... Thoughtful and del-



iberate Dr. Watsons like myself are swept aside by the instantaneous response; it's articulate, germane, and full of conviction. I'm still trying to log information received a few paragraphs back and desperately trying to keep up with the flux of claim and counter-claim; I can't assimilate or even field all the new concepts thrown up. It slowly dawns on me that there is a good deal of the tendentious in Trevor Ling, something that never occurred to me as I glided through his pleasingly fluent prose. I feel rather naïve, that I haven't been reading the same book. It seemed so refreshingly lucid and balanced ... reasoned ... What is Bhante doing? Demolishing it? ... But I have to admire the way he does it, breathtaking in his logic. At close quarters it's a bit overwhelming ... (thinks) ... "this man is good, he's very good". Now I'm forced to admit that all that reading was done at a very superficial level, that I got sucked into a few celebrated

micchadhittis. Now I have to start all over again, think anew. Never an easy task. I feel out-classed among my fellow tyros, left behind as the field sprints the first mile of an intellectual marathon. I resolve to try more meditation.



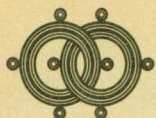
By the third session I'm beginning to acquire a degree of critical insight (on the cheap, secondhand from Bhante). Mind you it's not that I swallowed everything in the book; sometimes he goes too far, even for the credulous. For example, on page 143, in a passage headed "Early Buddhism as a Psycho-Social Philosophy", "The city with its royal court was the characteristic locus for his teaching activities. When he died we are told that he was honoured and his mortal remains disposed of after the manner of a king. If one asked whether the

Buddha had the greater affinity with the priest or with the king and whether it was to religion or to secular affairs that his characteristic concerns were closer, there can be no doubt about the answers which would have been given."

Unless you have been hopelessly beguiled this finally gives the game away; it's such an obvious slant. But before you arrive here (and this is half way through the book) you are likely to follow a sequence of specious arguments culminating in assertions such as the above, that is if you are not one hundred percent aware of facile assumptions. The seminar was an opportunity for a guided reassessment of these wherever and whenever they occurred. Professor Ling seems bent on regarding Buddhism as a group phenomenon and it is in shaping it to fit this prescribed socio-political frame work that most of the cracks in the facade appear. Thus, Bhante leads us to question Professor Ling's use of the term 'individualism'. After





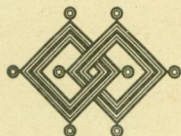


asserting that the time of the Buddha was a period "characterised by increasingly marked individualism" (p. 72) - without actually producing satisfactory evidence of the fact - Professor Ling gives his view of an 'individual' as defined by the specialisation of his function. He goes on to suggest that the Buddha, by way of the anatta doctrine and certain ethical directives, sought to 'remedy the evil of individualism' not so much by offering the principle of truly creative individuality, as by establishing the Sangha which, according to this version at least, is a kind of group in and through which the individual consciousness can be gradually dissolved into a quiescent, obedient oblivion. This thesis seems to arise on the one hand out of a spirited desire to make 'Buddhism' acceptable to the more socialistically minded reader, and on the other, from what is still a common misinterpretation of the anatta doctrine. Bhante again asserts that what the Buddha is saying by way of the anatta teaching is that any fixed idea we may have of ourselves which prevents us from accepting the possibility of change has to be overcome. We must realise that we are free to change, free to grow and evolve. It is not our 'ego' that we have to reject; it is our belief in one.



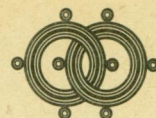
Professor Ling's apparent ignorance of the true nature of the individual in Buddhist teaching is one of the basic weakness of the book and is constantly under attack throughout the seminar. Having dealt with it at length at this stage however we can afford to be a little more constructive in discussing the related issue of self awareness. This is one of the more rewarding parts of the seminar, when you begin to feel expansive (or

Bhante does, and you follow in his footsteps) and leave the narrow confines of the text. Professor Ling begins Part Two with a very clear description of the physical, economic and social environment of north India in the sixth century B. C. There is no controversy here; it's a coherent summary of historical fact for which Professor Ling has an admirable gift. An interesting, easily understood discussion ensues touching on contemporary issues. I don't seem to be as aware of their inter-relationships nor even able to identify them as Bhante is, so I pay close attention in the hope of learning something. A little learning may be a dangerous thing but regardless of that I begin to formulate openings to try out on motorists on the ride back. For exam-



ple, with regard to the decline of the Middle Kingdom cities as a lesson for today... "It seems to me that the trouble with this country is that we've come to expect a constantly rising standard of living when really we ought to resign ourselves to a steady decline". That could support an interesting dialogue at least as far as Thetford. Or, with regard to crime, punishment and the king's justice in the Middle Kingdom... "You know, there would be much less lawlessness and disorder in society if the penalties weren't so inequitable. I mean if the sentence is the same for murder as it is for robbery with violence, then what kind of deterrent is that?" Now that would take you all the way to Epping.

I leave off this fit of abstraction and come back to the here and now. Three sounds fill the room: Bhante's modulated voice, the subdued crackling of the fire and the hum of the tape-recorder; the odd sparrow outside seems raucous by comparison. A seminar with Bhante is not altogether dissimilar to Professor Ling's description of a gathering of the Buddha and his disciples:



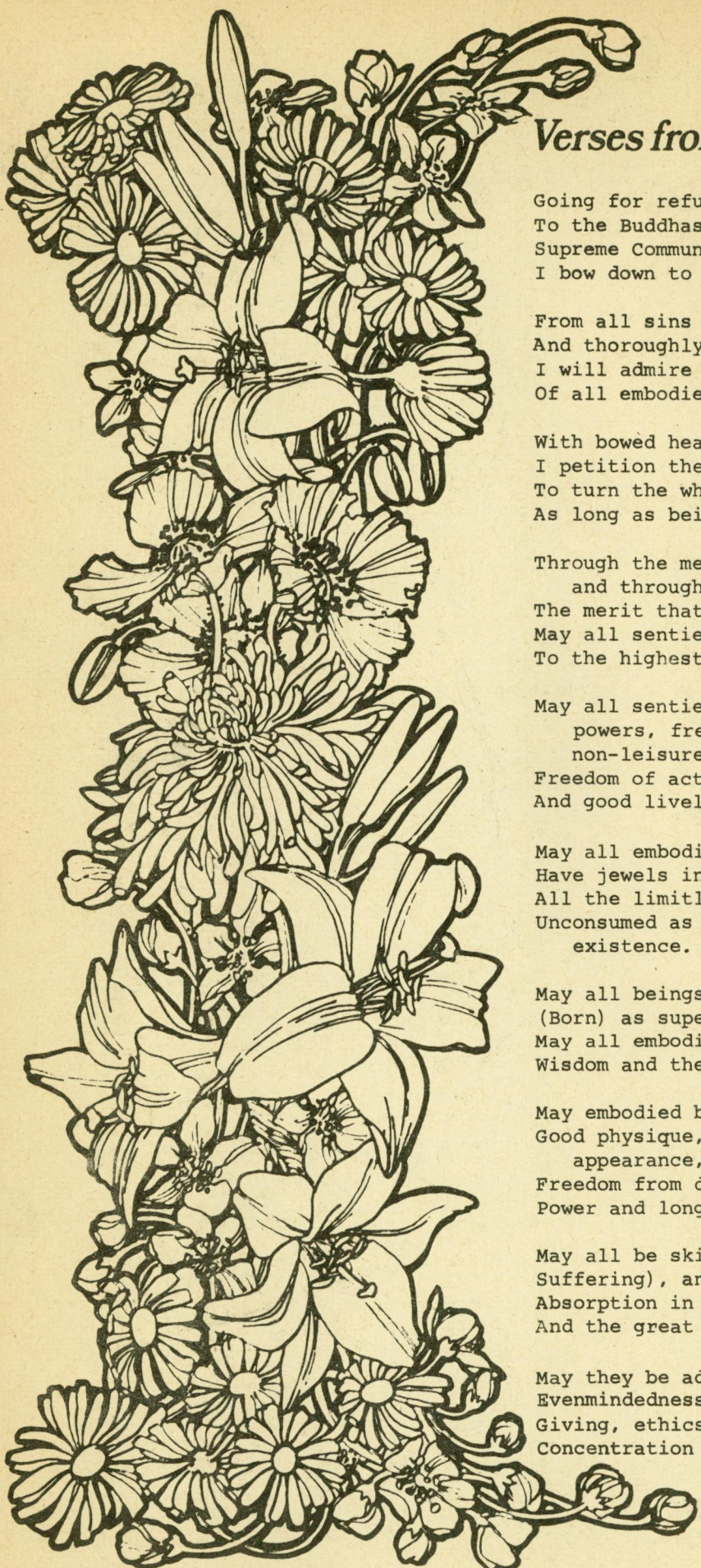
"A session of teaching... with the Buddha taking advantage of incidents occurring at the time, adapting himself to the mood or condition of the hearers and allowing them to take a good deal of the initiative." Except that some of us do not take as much of the initiative as we could. It's often an effort keeping up with Bhante. He anticipates my thoughts way ahead and I am left literally dumbfounded. I am not infrequently visited by torpor, however, and find myself making a mental note of every detail in the guest's sitting room at Lesingham House, and the peculiar airbrush texture of the mist rolling off Surlingham Broad. Oddly enough, it's when Bhante makes a reference to the familiar or even the mundane that I rejoin the seminar. So I prick up my ears to hear about the state of the Western Buddhist Order, the matter of Bhante's being misquoted and misrepresented, our mis-use of words in communicating the Dharma to people, the odd anecdote. In retrospect I think the chapter dealing with the religious and ideological environment at the time of the Buddha was the most rewarding it gave us a chance to be positive about Trevor Ling who presents a very good survey of the mendicant philosophers, by which we arrive tangentially at some very creative discussion of twentieth century social phenomena.

Tim McNally

The Buddha, by Trevor Ling is published by Pelican Books.

There are no articles, essays or transcripts from the seminar on The Precious Garland ('The Precious Garland and the Song of the Four Mindfulnesses' by Nagarjuna and the Seventh Dalai Lama, published by George Allen & Unwin), but this short extract from the text, a "prayer" to be recited three times a day, speaks eloquently for itself:





## Verses from the Precious Garland

Going for refuge with all forms of respect  
To the Buddhas, excellent Doctrine,  
Supreme Community and Bodhisattvas,  
I bow down to all that is worthy of honour.

From all sins I will turn away  
And thoroughly maintain all virtues,  
I will admire all the merits  
Of all embodied beings.

With bowed head and clasped hands  
I petition the perfect Buddhas  
To turn the wheel of doctrine and remain  
As long as beings transmigrate.

Through the merit of having done all this  
and through  
The merit that I have done and that I will do  
May all sentient beings aspire  
To the highest enlightenment.

May all sentient beings have all the stainless  
powers, freedom from all conditions of  
non-leisure  
Freedom of action  
And good livelihood.

May all embodied beings  
Have jewels in their hands and may  
All the limitless necessities of life remain  
Unconsumed as long as there is cyclic  
existence.

May all beings always be  
(Born) as superior humans,  
May all embodied beings have  
Wisdom and the support (of ethics).

May embodied beings have a good complexion,  
Good physique, great beauty, a pleasant  
appearance,  
Freedom from disease,  
Power and long life.

May all be skilled in the means (to extinguish  
Suffering), and have liberation from it,  
Absorption in the Three Jewels,  
And the great wealth of the Buddha's doctrine.

May they be adorned with love, compassion, joy,  
Evenmindedness (devoid of) the afflictions,  
Giving, ethics, patience, effort,  
Concentration and wisdom.



May they have the brilliant major and  
minor marks (of a Buddha)  
From having finally completed the two  
collections (of merit and wisdom)  
And may they cross without interruption  
The ten inconceivable stages.

May I also be adorned completely  
With those and all other good qualities,  
Be freed from all defects and possess  
Superior love for all sentient beings.

May I perfect all the virtues  
For which all embodied beings hope  
And may I always relieve  
The sufferings of all sentient beings.

May those beings in all the worlds  
Who are distressed through fear  
Become entirely fearless  
Through merely hearing my name.

Through seeing or thinking of me  
Or only hearing my name may beings attain great joy,  
Naturalness free from error,  
Definiteness toward complete enlightenment.

And the five clairvoyances  
Throughout their continuum of lives.  
May I ever in all ways bring  
Help and happiness to sentient beings.

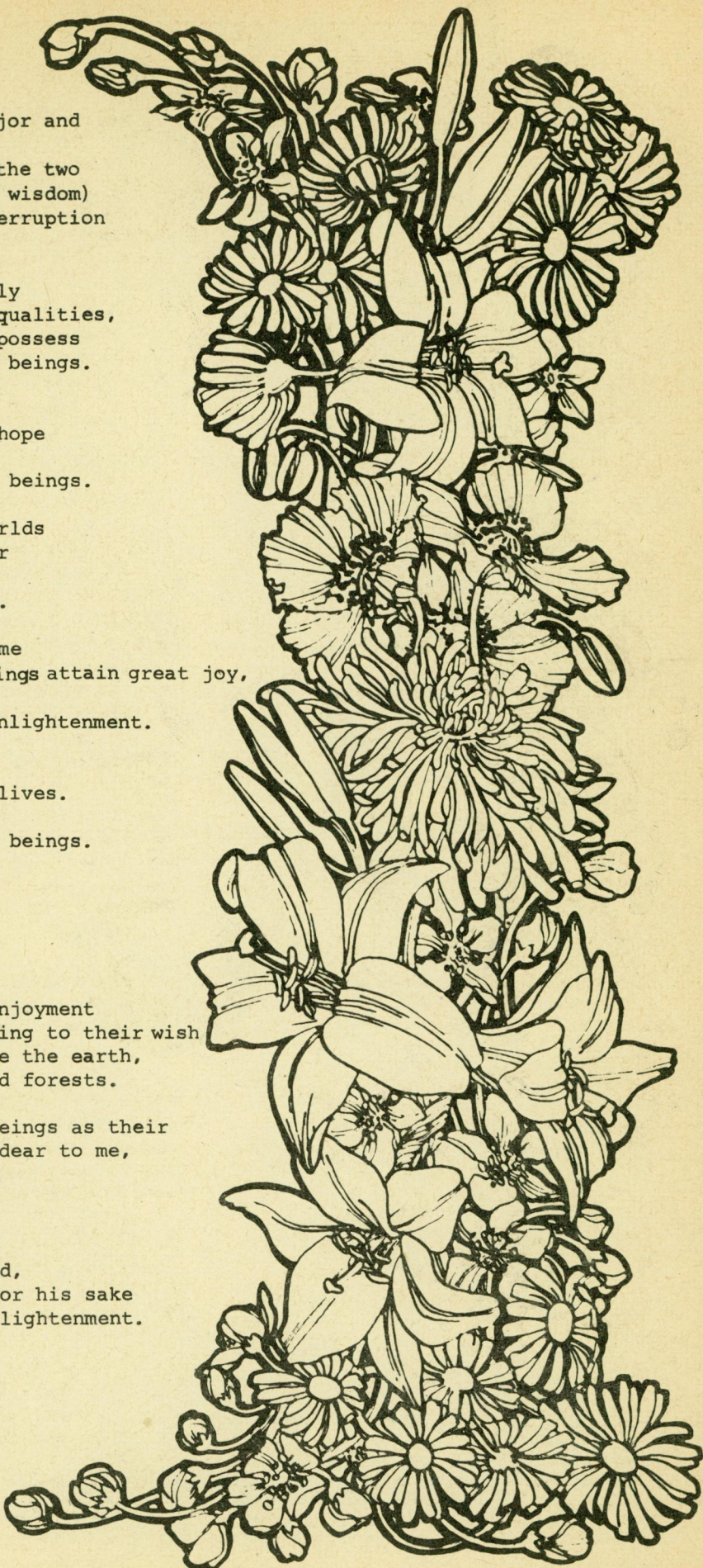
May I always without harm  
Simultaneously stop  
All beings on all worlds  
Who wish to commit sins.

May I always be an object of enjoyment  
For all sentient beings according to their wish  
And without interference as are the earth,  
Water, fire, wind, medicine and forests.

May I be as dear to sentient beings as their  
Own life and may they be very dear to me,  
May their sins fructify for me  
And all my virtues for them.

As long as any sentient being  
Anywhere has not been liberated,  
May I remain (in the world) for his sake  
Even though I have attained enlightenment.

If the merit of this prayer  
Had form, it would never fit  
Into worlds as numerous  
As sand grains in the Ganges.



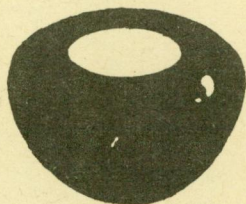


# SELF & OTHERS

I recently had the good fortune to attend one of Bhante's study seminars held in Norfolk, the text for study being Mind in Buddhist Psychology, translated from the Tibetan by Herbert V. Guenther and Leslie S. Kawamura (Dharma Publishing). The material from these seminars will eventually be available for all of us to read in the form of complete edited transcripts. Meanwhile, we are treated, from time to time, with excerpts from the transcribed texts in the pages of the Newsletter and Mitrata. In the case of this particular seminar, I would like to offer a short digest of some of my notes and my reflections on them. No prizes awarded, of course, for guessing who contributes by far the most to seminars. It should therefore go without saying that the basic inspiration of the following is Bhante and many of the ideas and even details of phraseology are attributable to him. Let's hope my own formulation of the material has not introduced any distortion or misrepresentation.

The text Mind in Buddhist Psychology, which is mainly based upon the Yogachara tradition of the Abhidharma, is an investigation of what are referred to as mind and mental events, both positive and negative. Our image of the Abhidharma might be of a huge heap of dry bones of doctrinal analysis, endlessly picked over by lifeless Buddhist scholars, and I did go to the seminar rather gritting my intellectual teeth. However, a hearing of the lecture, "The Analytical Psychology of the Abhidharma" on the first evening and a few days of intensive study brought relief and the refreshing point was established, namely, that the Abhidharma can be inspiring, and has a bearing on our own spiritual

growth. Its analytical psychological approach does help us to sort out our own mental states, to distinguish the skillful, so that we know what to cultivate and what to eradicate. Also, such discriminating activity helps towards a clearer, less theoretical understanding of the truth that what we usually think of as the 'self' is nothing more than a flow of changing mental states, and "impersonal procession of dharmas". Two other points emerged from our study which it is worth looking at in some detail. The first is that Buddhism is not just psychology and therefore not to be placed on the same footing as the various forms of psychotherapy in vogue. The second is the difference between the psychological and the ethical approach to our efforts to evolve and the weight given to the former at the expense of the latter.



People do seem to want to see Buddhism in exclusively psychological terms, as simply and solely a method of gaining a greater degree of mental health, thus losing sight completely of the Goal-Enlightenment. In his introduction to the text, the translator states: "the Buddhist 'way' is thus most comprehensive in being a growth and health psychology". This is misleading, because growth in the true Buddhist sense goes beyond the limits of psychology, embracing as it does the spiritual and, even beyond the spiritual, the Transcendental. The distinction has therefore to be made between the denotation of the two words psychological and spiritual. The

dictionary defines psychology as 'the science of the nature, functions and phenomena of the human mind'. In the Western conception of the human mind or psyche, the superconscious states of mind or dhyana states are not included, therefore the word psychological falls short of denoting such states. Hence the need for the extra word, that is, spiritual, which specifically denotes experiences of higher than normal consciousness. As Buddhists, we need to make sure that people are not left with the idea that meditation has a merely psychological effect, that meditation and spiritual practices do not just bring peace of mind on one's present level, but lead to a level of Being considerably beyond the average human level. Because Buddhism means the permanent growth of the human race to a higher level conducted by each individual, we adopt the concept of the Higher Evolution. For this reason the ultimate aim of any spiritual practice we use goes beyond survival in the twentieth century.

One of the purposes of celebrating festivals in honour of the Buddha, Padmasambhava, Milarepa and other outstanding spiritual figures, is to remind us of levels of spiritual development much higher than our own.

We spent rather more time discussing the difference between the psychological versus the ethical approach and establishing the importance of the latter. While psychology investigates the nature and function of the various states of mind, ethics investigates rather what we should do in order to change them for the better; ethics is, in fact, the directing of energy. Thus psychology focuses on what is, while ethics focuses on what to do. 'Psychological' has reference to self; 'ethical' has reference to other. It has already been pointed out that one



of the functions of the Abhidharma is to help us discriminate between skilful and unskilful states of mind and its approach is psychological to that extent. What follows should not be taken as a contradiction of this. In the context of our discussions on the seminar, in our consideration of psychological versus ethical, 'psychological' definitely had connotations of excluding the ethical, of concentrating on one's own states of mind as an end in itself, to the exclusion of consideration of others, of being pre-occupied with one's own states of mind, especially the negative, even to the extent of what can only be called morbid self-engrossment. These connotations have arisen, I think, through the enormous popularisation of psycho-analysis and myriad forms of psychotherapeutics over the past two decades. This popularising of sciences and methods which have undeniably contributed to human development and the reduction of suffering, has unfortunately led to a pre-occupation with self; in other words to the devaluation of ethics. To argue as if from within the Buddhist camp, that there can be no ethical determinism on any level is to be guilty of what has been described as 'beat Zen'. The Enlightened Ones can see what

course of action is suitable for their disciples, even They Themselves have transcended the difference between skilful and unskilful. Those who are on a higher level looking down at a lower level see that lower level and everything that pertains to it, including the relevance, the operational value of the concepts skilful and unskilful.

Ethics, then, is giving a certain direction to energy, towards others to be precise, and the precepts can be described as 'ways of skilful intentionality', channels through which skilful karmas flow. In the words of the Dhammapada:

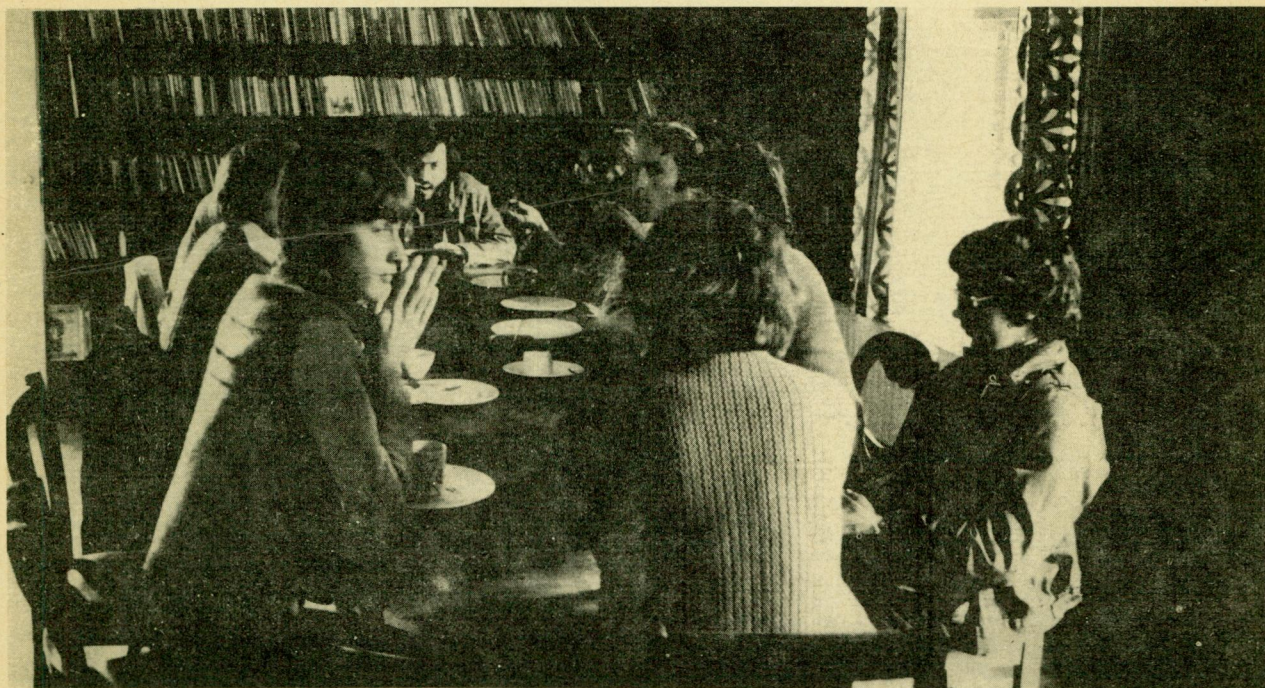
The wise man guides his mind  
Just as the irrigator guides  
the flow of water.

Yet all the while it is important to channel well away from the backwaters of ethical formalism (which abides only by the letter) and the 'do-gooder' mentality. There is in fact an aesthetic quality in the positive ethical faculty, because it means being intrinsically aware of the object of the other, for its own sake, not wanting to manipulate it, in no way seeing it in terms of its possible usefulness to self, as food for the ego. The Metta Bhavana is an ethical practice, its purpose being to develop a positive feeling of goodwill towards others, actually to wish

them well for their own sakes, not using them for the sake of our own enjoyable state of mind. If movement towards Being (ultimate reality) is solely from self, there is no breaking down of the dichotomy between subject and object. In order to be truly unselfish, the other has to be treated as self. So, to offset the innate tendency to achieve Being for oneself, the best way to approach Reality is via the object, the other. If we try to achieve Being for the other, then we are making a two-pronged attack on Being with Prajna (Wisdom) ultimately representing our own attainment, and Karuna (Compassion) representing the other's attainment. The two of course finally coalesce into One.

To refuse to recognise oneself as an ethical being and to refuse to act in an ethical manner, that is with responsibility towards others, is another micchadhammi to be added to the list. Therefore we are responsible, for instance, to children in this respect, in that their ethical sensitivity needs to be encouraged and developed. Relevant here too is the traditional Buddhist custom of dedication or transference of merits after performing a spiritual practice.

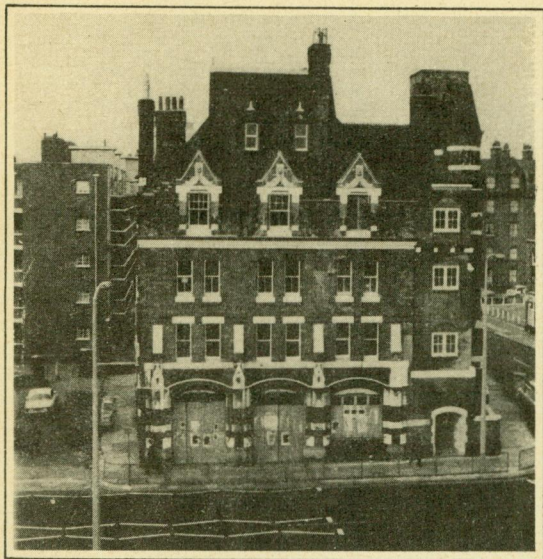
Abhaya





## CENTRES and BRANCHES

### SUKHAVATI



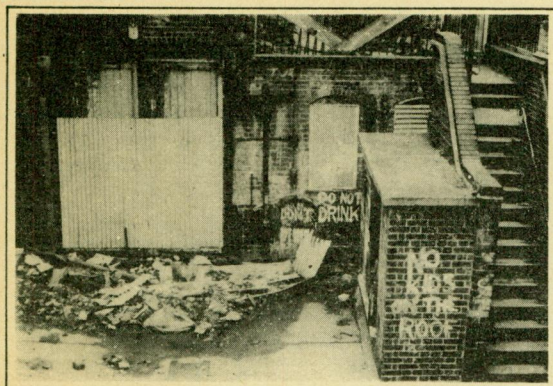
The work at Sukhavati has been going on now for more than a year, and the original opening date approaches. A very great deal has changed since the day when six of us began to clear away enough dirt to be able to lay down our sleeping bags. We now know that it is going to take at least another year to complete the project. Original estimates were based very much on guesswork and took insufficient account of the slowness of workers who have had to learn their building skills from scratch. We have also had to comply with strict fire control regulations which have necessitated much additional work. However, all is going well. The top three floors and the attic are more or less finished, the basement is already in use by the printers and an extension is being constructed to the ground floor. It is on the ground floor that we have most work to do since we are adding a small office and a toilet block, and since the interior is being completely reconstructed. We will be installing a central heating system and a ventilation unit, work in which we have no previous experience. Naturally the completion of the ground floor, particularly of the shrine room is what those of us working here see

as the culmination of the work. At the same time as the bricks are being laid, doors fitted, pipes run, wires installed and walls plastered, Chintamani and Aloka, the two resident artists are working on models for the statue of the Buddha which will eventually be placed in the main shrine room and, with others, working out the overall design of the building.

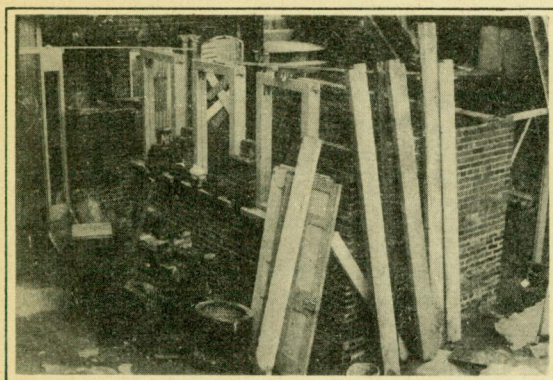
It has become clear recently that we are going to have to raise the bulk of the money required to finish the work ourselves, here at Sukhavati. People at Pundarika have worked extremely hard for more than a year to keep money flowing in, but now need to put their energy into finding a new North London centre. We initially resolved to raise £100 per week to cover the running expenses of the resident community, so first of all community members were throwing in their savings and then people were doing occasional odd jobs and we found very quickly that we were exceeding our target without much effort. We then resolved to try and cover our total weekly expenses of something like £400. This proves more difficult - though we have had two or three people out to work each week. We shall probably soon be undertaking a conversion job on a terraced house not far from here, and we are doing small building jobs all the time. We hope shortly to start a removals business and possibly an 'odd-job' agency. One member of the community who is an experienced masseur has re-started his massage practice. The resident Yoga teachers have started classes in the neighbourhood and 'Friends Foods' and the 'Windhorse Press' are, of course, based here. In this way we are gradually making the community self supporting. While this has the disadvantage of slowing us down yet further, it has considerable positive benefits. We are now developing the kind of small businesses that we have always intended to start when the work here is complete, and which can provide people with a means of earning a living in



a positive situation, and can bring in some money for other projects. Through these businesses and through our work outside Sukhavati we are getting into contact with many people who otherwise might never think of Buddhism having any relevance to them.



Courtyard then



now with extension

It was originally planned that Sukhavati would house both men and women. The work team, however, consisted only of men, since it was men who had the necessary skills. We found once again that the atmosphere generated by single-sex situations is so positive and problem free that we decided that Sukhavati should remain a single-sex community. Our own experience of communities over the past few years has borne out the traditional Buddhist view that single sex communities are more stimulating to spiritual development than mixed ones. Although the public centre will be open both to men and to women, the community now consists of twenty-

eight men living two to a room in the top three floors. We have a shrine room in the attic where each day there is meditation at 6.30 in the morning and a meditation and puja in the evening. Everyone works Monday to Friday and some work at the weekends as well. Most people cook one day every three weeks and everyone washes up and cleans up once a fortnight. We have a weekly 'house meeting' to discuss any matters, domestic, social or spiritual, which anyone cares to bring up. Aside from weekly study groups on Buddhist texts and themes, and visits to lectures at other centres, cultural life at Sukhavati is quite extensive. People make regular visits, often en-masse to the cinema, theatre and to concerts. A monthly magazine 'Padma' is produced for internal circulation and has contained some literary gems. A number of residents make music together quite regularly and perform for the rest at the soirees that we hold from time to time. In this way the community has become quite well rounded. We still have room in the community for men with developed building skills, for driver/mechanic, for a cook and for anyone with experience of offset-litho printing. If you are interested please contact Sukhavati.

There is at present no space within the building in which to hold classes, so we are hiring a hall two nights a week for public Yoga classes and hope soon to rent a room where we can open temporary centre for meditation classes, courses etc etc. We have begun to make contact with a number of people who are interested in what we are doing and why we are doing it.

We still need about £1500 and would be grateful for financial help. We need skilled workers interested in the overall aims of the place. We need well paid work by which money to continue the project can be earned. While we are increasingly able to rely on our own resources, the more we have to do the longer it will be before the centre is opened. If you would like to see the building you are most welcome to come and visit.



It is best if you can write or ring beforehand so that someone is available to show you round. The next few months will offer the last opportunity to see the building half completed and half derelict as increasingly the finished shape emerges from the dirt and decay.

Subhuti

## PUNDARIKA (ARCHWAY)

Among all the activities that have taken place, or that Pundarika has organised, one thing has stuck in our minds; this summer we learned that by next March or April we shall have to leave our present premises at 1a Balmore Street. In many ways this is the end of an era. We have been here for about five years, and from here the movement has grown considerably. Most of the other FWBO centres and branches were started by people who lived and worked in and around this centre. We have decided that we want to continue having a centre in this area, preferably in the Borough of Camden, because of our good contacts here. So the search is now on. The new Pundarika may be in a different style to the present one. But who knows?

Since the last Newsletter quite a lot of things have happened. We organised a highly successful residential 'Introduction to Western Buddhism', followed by a three week open retreat (see separate articles: ed). Many people attended these, and it is good to see them attending our classes at Pundarika. At the centre it was very quiet during the summer. Most Order members, mitras and Friends were on retreats.

But with the start of the new session things became very lively. Two Order members are leading an introductory course in Buddhism on Wednesday evenings. In its structure it is somewhat similar to the meditation course which we held last summer, but with a bit more instruction in Buddhism. As well as the course there are the usual beginners' and regular med-

itation classes, both of which are being well attended. And on top of all this we are now looking forward to an eight week lecture series that the Ven. Sangharakshita is to give on The Sutra of Golden Light. During September many of the Order members who live around Pundarika attended seminars with the Ven. Sangharakshita. At the end of the seminar on Mind in Buddhist Psychology, Mark Barret who is the caretaker at Pundarika received Upasaka Ordination. He was given the name Ratnajyoti, which means 'Jewel-light', or, the 'Light of the Jewel'.

## FUND RAISING

Since we are now searching for a new centre in north London, we cannot devote all the time and energy that we would like to raising money for Sukhavati. What we are doing at present is organising a 'work a month' scheme in November and a bazaar in December, and the income from these will be shared between Sukhavati and Pundarika. We are asking all those who are associated with Pundarika to donate what they can from their earnings for the month of November, stressing that every penny counts. Even if a Friend can only donate 25p a week for that month, that is something. Nothing is too little.

On 18th December, at Hampstead Town Hall, we are holding a grand bazaar. We are now busy collecting things to sell, making crafts on special 'craft days' held at Pundarika, and encouraging Friends to donate things for the auction; anything from Micky Mouse books to antique dinner services. A quick £90 was made by Lokamitra who got himself sponsored to stand on his head for fifty minutes (not recommended as a general practice).

So far we have raised £28,850, and have a further £3,250 committed in terms of covenants and standing-orders...so only another £11,900 to go!

Lokamitra



## BRIGHTON

The summer months saw the old pattern of the FWBO Brighton branch broken up, like shaking a kaleidoscope, as people scattered off on retreats, seminars and other activities. Now, as the pieces begin to settle once more, we can see that they have formed a larger pattern, whose outline is sharper and clearer. Firstly, we are now an independent centre of the FWBO, having taken that decisive step at a meeting on 1st August. We have a strength of four resident Order members - three of whom have now established an Order community in George Street. The fourth, and most welcome addition, is Peter Cowan, who became Jyotipala (which means 'Protector of the Light') during the Mitra retreat at Padmaloka. He is the first Brighton resident to be ordained, and we hope he will blaze a trail for many others. With three women mitras having moved down from Pundarika, we now have fourteen mitras in Brighton altogether.

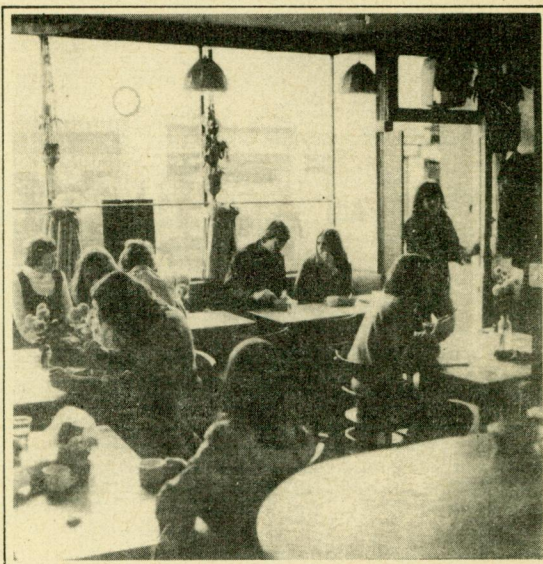
We have also recently been entertaining the Ven. Sangharakshita, who was down here to give a series of four lectures on 'Buddhism for Today - and Tomorrow' (subtitled 'What the FWBO has to offer modern man and woman'). A full report of the content of these lectures will appear in the next issue of the Newsletter. We were very pleased that so many people in Brighton had the chance for some more sustained contact with Bhante during his stay.

Last, but by no means least, our new wholefood restaurant is now open in North Road. Run by a team of mitras, it serves lunches and afternoon teas, and is already attracting a regular clientele. We have called the restaurant 'Sunrise', and it is on this note of promise and new beginnings that I shall end.

### Sunrise

As our commitment to the spiritual life grows we usually have to face

a number of practical difficulties. For instance we may go on a retreat and find that our meditation has really deepened and that we are feeling really close to people, but then most of us have to return to our jobs in order to earn a living. So once more we have to squeeze in a quick meditation before rushing off to work, and in comparison with the smiling faces on the retreat, our workmates may well seem rather grey, energyless, and unsympathetic to our interests. In this situation we may well dream of being able to work with other members of the spiritual community; to work at an occupation which is useful and creative, which gives us enough money to support a simple and uncluttered lifestyle, and which also leaves us time for our spiritual practice. A good example of the way in which the FWBO is turning these dreams into reality is 'Sunrise' - a new wholefood restaurant which we have opened in Brighton.



We had talked about the possibility of such a venture for some time. Then a suitable place was found at No 16 North Road, and loans of £1500 were generously offered by Friends to pay for the renovation and decoration. As is typical of such FWBO projects, the premises which we rented from the Council were cheap



but in a state of bad repair, requiring much hard work. But, again typically, other centres gave us their help and support, with people coming down from Sukhavati, Pundarika, and Aryatara. So the building was transformed, slowly at first but then more surely, into a small bright restaurant with seating for about two dozen people.

The restaurant opened on 23 September and is already attracting regular customers. At the moment it is open five days a week, for lunches and afternoon teas, but we hope to open in the evenings before too long. Three mitras (Dawn Ingster, Ian Anderson and Sue Krieger) are collectively responsible for all the day to day running of the restaurant (which is a branch of the Brighton centre). They are currently working for nothing, but in the new year, once the greater part of the loan has been paid off, they will receive financial support from the centre.

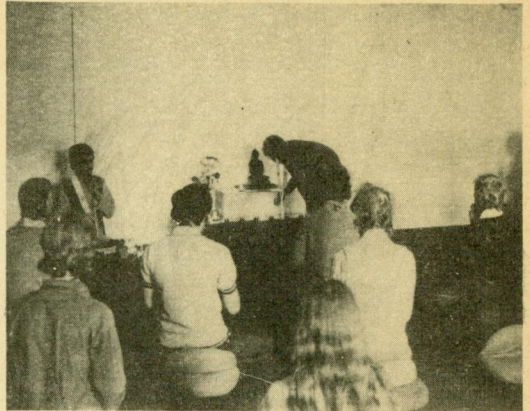
Sunrise will be a situation which has many advantages. Firstly several Friends will be given a means of right livelihood, working together creatively in a positive environment. Secondly any surplus that we accrue will go to the FWBO and can be used to finance further projects. Thirdly we shall have provided the people of Brighton not only with good, nourishing food, but also with a further way of contacting the growing circle of the FWBO.

## VAJRADHATU-NORWICH

On the 12th September the Norwich centre of FWBO (Norfolk) - 'Vajradhatu' - opened. Order members and mitras representing most of the UK centres attended the dedication ceremony in the afternoon, so that by the time the centre opened in the evening Vajradhatu had been well and truly brought into existence. After about a month in operation classes are beginning to build, and interest in the Dharma aroused, as our presence in the city is registered.

We opened our programme with two

beginners' meditation classes each week, and a series of lectures on Western Buddhism. These were well attended and in consequence another series has been arranged for the new



Vajradhatu shrine room.

year. Under the general title 'The Path of the Higher Evolution - A Western Approach to Buddhism' six Order members will speak at fortnightly intervals, beginning on Sunday 9th January at 7.30 pm and finishing on 20th March. We continue to hold regular weekend retreats but are often unable to finalise our arrangements until after the copy date for the Newsletter, so anyone interested should contact the centre for further information.

The most noteworthy event to have taken place since the opening of our centre was our celebration of Sangha Day on 10th October during the course of which four Norfolk Friends became mitras.

## ARYATARA (SURREY)

For one person to give a clear and objective picture of what has happened at our centre is not always easy, for so often we are caught up in our own little worlds of ideas and projections, our own likes and dislikes, and we don't really see the overall picture of the situation. At Aryatara, for the past months or so, we have been trying hard to find a more objective attitude towards the place, not that we have been trying to rule out altogether the



personal likes and dislikes, but trying to see them as part of the overall picture. Those of us in the community (if I can speak for the community) are seeing more and more that the needs of the centre are not always the same as our own, and that if we are truly relating to the centre, giving our time and energy to it, then some of our own personal preferences get somehow forgotten. For instance if the shrine room has to be cleaned out we can't stand round telling each other that we don't like cleaning, for things like this have to be done; otherwise there would be no centre. So we are having to become more selfless, and less and less selfish. I for one get great satisfaction when this way of functioning is around - to see that we human beings can be, and have proved to be, not always as bad as we may like to think we are.

There has been so much happening here in the past months to bring about this attitude. On 11th July we celebrated Dharmachakra Day, along with our friends from Brighton, and for me it was one of the most inspiring festivals that I have ever been to. Each time that we celebrate something like this it is like coming closer to the source which makes Buddhism what it has been and what it is going to be like in the future. There have also been a lot of retreats here over the past few months, all of which went very well, and all the people who came on them benefitted in some way or another, taking back with them to their every-day lives a deeper experience of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. All our classes seem to be becoming more popular. Our Monday Yoga class seems to be the most popular at the moment, probably owing to the great medium called Television!

## HERUKA (GLASGOW)

This being the season of change and bared trees, the windows of Heruka look out onto a lot more sky, and the windblown autumn sky is ever-changing. Spring and autumn - par-

cels of action - swift movement, death and birth, large and small, in passing cycles, constant death and birth. In line with this process, movement, physical and otherwise, seems to have been the keynote of the last few months. Movement in the mitra system, which banged off Tibetan-style with a weekend spent studying some songs of Milarepa. Movement too on a physical level with mitras and Order members attending their various retreats and seminars at Padmaloka, whilst others joined in the opening of the new Norwich centre, giving themselves a chance to shake hands with Friends from other centres. Movement brings contact, with others and with ourselves. In contact we have exchange, and from exchange comes energy. Energy then has come flowing back from each exchange within the Sangha.

This energy is, in turn, given new direction as it is put into the running of the centre, and to the growth of each individual. The beginners' meditation class and our other classes profit by this, and they for their part add kick to the wheel - especially the vibrant spirit of the new arrivals. Heruka is the place of energy. For each of us the centre is as free a place as we allow ourselves to be, and just what we allow is tied to movement, contact, energy-exchange!

## MANDALA (WEST LONDON)

What is a Mandala? We don't seem to talk about them much these days in the FWBO. From the outside, the mandala is a conveniently non-linear way of looking at every aspect of a thing, or an idea, at the same time. This is why they are sometimes used in meditation; the various aspects of an object are separated and specially arranged within a circle so that you can watch and absorb how they relate to, and interpenetrate each other. You can also experience a mandala from within. Here you are closer to the interplay of forces between the components in the mandala - you are rec-



## RESIDENTIAL COURSE IN BASIC BUDDHISM

Towards the end of July we held our first residential course in basic Buddhism. Sixteen of us took part in this at the beautiful 'Four Winds' in Hampshire, not far from Farnham. 'Four Winds' is a large country house with beautiful wooded grounds and gardens looking out over the Surrey countryside and having all the peace and quiet you could wish or hope to find.

The course lasted for seven days and perhaps one of the most interesting features of it was that with one exception those who came along had never met before. Never met each other or anyone in the Friends. All prior arrangements had been made by post, so when on Friday 23rd July we met on Farnham station for the first time all some of us had known before were each others' names. Yet I would guess that within a couple of hours anyone coming across us at 'Four Winds' would not have known this. The atmosphere and spirit generated so quickly and easily was a real joy, and this same goodwill and friendliness continued right through the following week.

As this was the first residential course, all the basic Buddhism

courses up to then had been ten or twelve week courses with meetings held one evening a week. We did not have any fixed or pre-determined programme - only a basic outline of what was to be covered. For the first two days we discussed meditation and the two fundamental practices of 'mindfulness of breathing' and the 'metta bhavana' and practised them in short sessions. After that the main area of study and discussion was the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path. We went through this step by step with some of the main features of the Buddha's teaching such as mindfulness and the importance of positive emotion and good communication between people being discussed in some detail. Most afternoons we had at least one hour of communication exercises and followed these with a Yoga session outside in the sun.

I think there will be many more of these 'full-time' residential courses because in this one we saw that in a retreat atmosphere we had the opportunity to look at and learn quite thoroughly, and as far as possible quite undistractedly, the teaching of the Buddha.

Hridaya

## SUMMER RETREAT

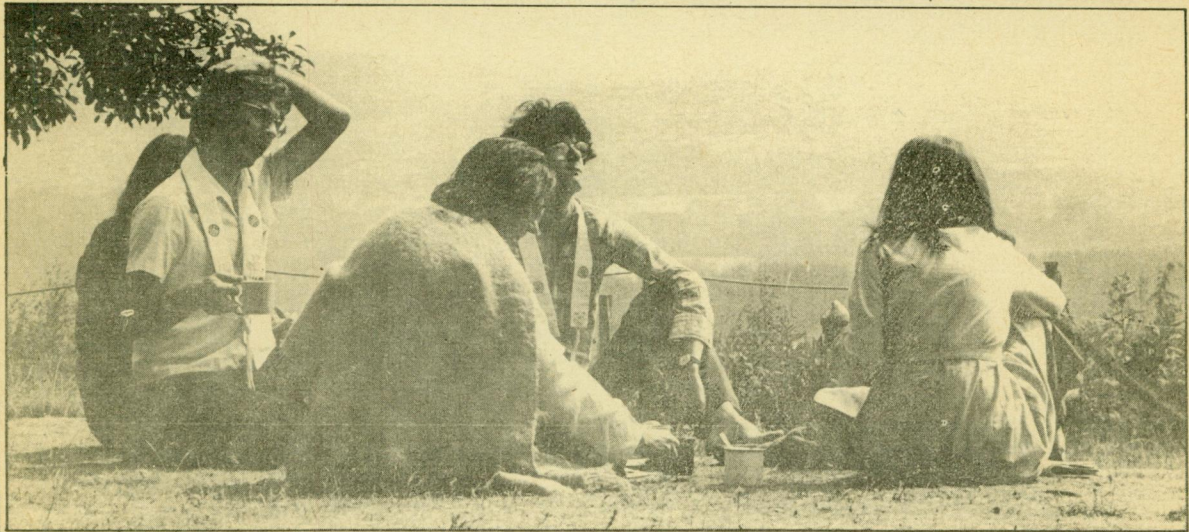
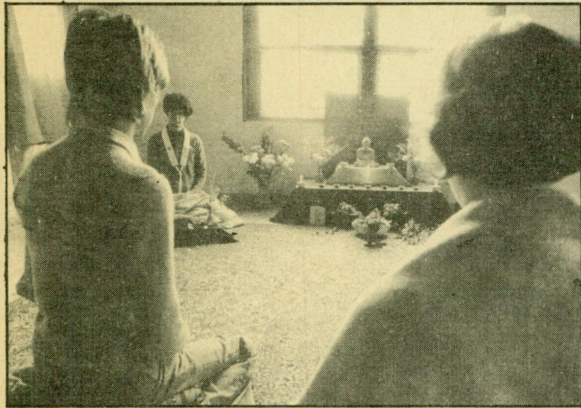
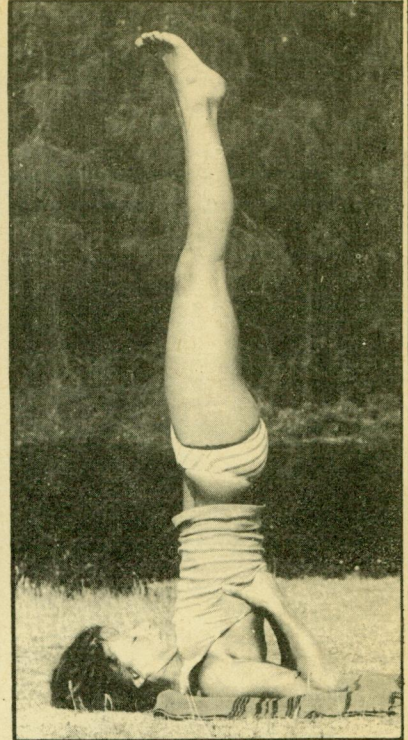
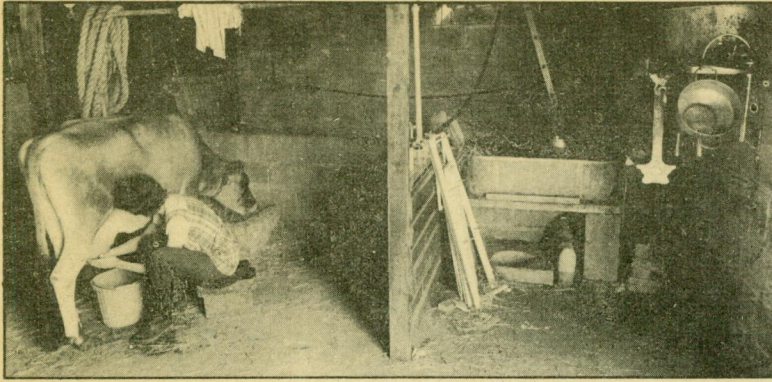
Just as those who had been attending this course were leaving Four Winds, the first arrivals for the three week 'open retreat' were coming through the gates. This retreat was open to anyone, whether they were new Friends mitras or Order members. You could come for just a couple of days, or for the whole three weeks, and altogether sixty or more people passed through Four Winds during those weeks. One of those who stayed for the whole retreat was Mike McGhee, a university philosophy lecturer - and one of the first Norfolk mitras. Here are some of his impressions of the retreat...

The summer retreat? At Four Winds? Well, the food was pretty good. So was the cooking, come to think of it; on special days there were comfrey leaves, fried in batter seasoned with coriander...No austerities, then thank God: a full stomach is a comfort serves in a whirlwind...and there were whirlwinds, with a sea

serpent thrown in.

The fixed points of the routine, not too fixed, but routine still, were things to hold on to, like the six o'clock news, against the steady underminings of meditation, the loosening from what one knew one clung to, and the awful undreamt of clings gladly forgotten again; Oh







the mind...! But peace settles, the wild wood dove... and Muni the cow grazes in the meadow. There are blackberries in the woods, the queer barking of deer in the evening, the angelus bell in the distance, and such a distance of wooded hills to see.

Bursts of energy at last released, effortless weightless movements, movements accomplished without the burden of thoughts before and after Affection, the lightness of a touch, a smile exchanged, not pleaded for, not needed, free. Gaiety and laughter...laughter bubbling merrily up in the shrine room one hot and weary afternoon, striking no false notes, not nervous or strained, a sudden grateful relief from the torpor of the fat relentless ego, a movement, raised by mirth, of unaccustomed love. In the garden the men play frisby, sometimes slow and unsuccessful, now fast and exciting, a delight - an exercise in communication. The joy of unselfconscious action, not motivated by the habit of seeking the approval of others, or oneself: thus a girl walks, graceful, across the lawn. The pity of needing to please.

The house slowly becomes a home, where we have always been, where we all start from. We are pliable as children in the hands of the meditation which though we initiate it now initiates us... Habits of perception break; one sees a flower with a child's pleasure, the clarity of the poplar's rustling leaves, then, in a moment, the bilious attack of hatred, baleful, making no distinctions, ugly and cruel. How can my hate be so ferocious towards this one I just now loved? What one must see, endure, how one is left weak and fragile, convalescent... But how exciting too, how wonderful it all is!

In the garden people weeding and talking, weeding or talking, just weeding or just talking, while dishwashers lounge in the sun or hang out their smalls... Pumpkins plump enough to catch the eye of a fairy

godmother are borne into the kitchen from the garden. Outside the kitchen the howl of a vacuum cleaner is a jarring echo of the world outside: no newspapers for so long, and not missed. The look of the outside on the faces of newcomers quickly fades.

Four Winds is a beautiful place, the men and women who have come seem so remarkably independent of each other, men and women whose ability to be alone helps others also to be themselves. The shrine-room is across the lawn from the house in a sturdy barn of a building, light and airy, resonant every night with the silence that rich Pujas start up. In this place, in the midst of many flowers, the smell of incense and the radiance of our pleasure, Karen Maury from Finland was ordained by Bhante, and given the name Gunavati which means 'she who abounds in positive qualities'.

After the first few gentle days there were suddenly triple meditations, something vulgarly known as brunch, work, then double meditations. We are reassured by the more experienced that all this meditation is pleasant. Ratnaguna appears pleased at the prospect - and he is right, it soon seems the only way to spend one's time. We did Yoga, some of us, some of the time, which sorted out the civilised from the enthusiasts. Knees began to give. Slow agonised efforts to rise from a sitting, sore bottom, sore knees, sore ankles and sundry other stiffnesses occasioned by Yoga. At the day's end sleep was sore labour's bath indeed.

I rejoice with delight in the good done by all those who conducted and organised this retreat!



## EUROPEAN RETREAT

### Retreat in the Netherlands

The 'European' retreat was held in early August this year in a village near Nijmegen not far from the Dutch-German border. The setting was a typically Dutch one: a converted 'hoeve' or farmhouse on a straight country road lined with similar buildings, then behind, fields of sugar beet and woods, all very flat and very neat. The house itself is a Dominican convent run by two Sisters, one still a nun and one who had been. However, since this was the Dutch Catholic Church, they had both rather strayed from the paths of conventional Catholicism into Soto Zen. The building was used for a number of retreats, sesshins, 'workshops' and so forth run by a variety of different groups. The chapel was quite easily converted into a shrine room, slightly menaced by the presence of two rows of pews at the back. The house was very clean and bright, full of the paintings and handicrafts which the Sisters had made. Up to sixteen people attended the retreat; two Order members, Mangala and Subhuti, came from England, Jinamata, who led the retreat, came from Germany. Otherwise those attending were Dutch with the exception of four Swedes and an American. For most of the retreat there were ten people attending, though at weekends a number of others came, including one woman who had been at the retreat the previous year, and who travelled all the way from Sweden for the last twenty four

hours. Apart from three people, all had been on at least one retreat before. Almost all those attending had some connection with social work, psychology or academic study.

For one reason or another it was quite a light retreat, happening very slowly and without much pressure of intensity. There was the usual kind of routine of meditation, yoga, work (in the beet fields), puja and lectures, including talks given by the Order members present. There was a longish period of silence. Most people seemed to want to take things at their own pace and in their own way, remaining quiet and even introverted. In the last two days the retreat seemed to flower particularly with the ceremony of offerings by which Giordano Renard, a Friend from Sweden, became a Mitra.

Perhaps the most tangible sign that it was a good retreat was that at the end the question was asked, "Where do we go from here?" Those who live in the Nijmegen area are now meeting once a month. Giordano returned to the groups he already leads in Sweden and will keep in touch with the other Swedes. Of those in other areas, one at least has set up a shrine in his house and meditates regularly with his wife. On November 12th there will be another weekend retreat at the same place.

This surely must be the sign of a successful retreat, that people feel encouraged by it to try to apply what they have learned to the rest of their lives.

Subhuti





## Publications

We still need a lot of help to print our own edition of The Three Jewels. It is now three years since this excellent and essential book by Ven. Sangharakshita has been available in the UK. Now that the FWBO have the rights to publish it we really do need your help to see the project through. If you would like to give something then please send your contribution to FWBO Publications at 1a Balmore St, Archway, London N.19.

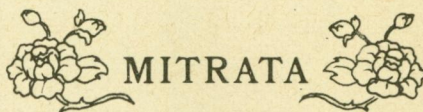
We are happy to announce that The Essence of Zen is now available again in a completely new edition, price 95p.

### This Newsletter

.... costs us about £500p.a. to produce and post. We receive about £100p.a. in subscriptions. This difference is covered by the account from which we hope to pay for our publications.

Please, please subscribe if you possibly can.

Perhaps you have simply forgotten that your subscription has expired. And of course, if you no longer wish to receive the Newsletter, please let us know.



Based on the Ven. Sangharakshita's lectures, writings and study seminars, Mitrata is a comprehensive, down to earth 'manual' for people who are trying to practice Buddhism. Until now the circulation of this magazine has been restricted to Mitras, who are those considering ordination into the Western Buddhist Order. So encouraging has been their response that we have decided to try making it available to a wider readership. The sort of topics covered include morality and meditation, the hindrances encountered along the path, spiritual community, and so on. The latest issue comprises an edited version of Bhante's lecture, 'Breaking Through into Buddhahood'.

If you think that you would like to receive this magazine please write to me. Mitrata costs 50p. Mitrata appears every two months and a year's subscription costs £3.00.

Nagabodhi

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### BOOKS RECEIVED

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By now you will realise that, what with giving seminars and preparing lectures, Bhante has had very little time to prepare book reviews for the Newsletter. He does very much want to continue writing these, and hopes to finish one or two in time for the next Newsletter. We have recently been sent:-

'Practice and Theory of Tibetan Buddhism' by Sopa and Hopkins, published by Hutchinson, £2.95.

'Ahimsa. Non-Violence in the Indian Tradition' by Unto Tahtinen. Published by Hutchinson, price £4.95.

'Treasures on the Tibetan Middle Way' by Herbert v. Guenther. Published by Routledge and Kegan Paul, price £2.95.

'Further Buddhist Studies' by Edward Conze. Published by Bruno Cassirer, price £5.00.



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## RETREATS

There will be a retreat for woman at Aryatara, starting on Monday 27th December and finishing on Sunday 9th January. It will cost £3.00 per day. For more information contact Pundarika 01-263-2339.

There will be a three week long retreat for men at Padmaloka. This will be an 'open retreat', which means that you may come for the whole three weeks, or just for a couple of days. Bookings can be made with Upasaka Vajrakumara at Padmaloka. The cost is £3.00 per day. The retreat begins on the 18th December and ends on the 8th January.

PADMALOKA COMMUNITY, Lesingham House, Surlingham, Nr. Norwich, Norfolk.

Over the coming months all of our centres will no doubt be organising weekend retreats. If you would like to attend one of these, then contact the centre nearest to you for further details.

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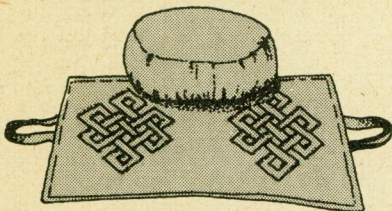
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## INSURANCE

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All classes of insurance can be arranged: household, motor, life, commercial, etc. The Sun Alliance also operate a mortgage service and receive favourable terms and facilities from most leading Building Societies.

Whilst there is no financial advantage to you - the Sun Alliance is a large reputable company which charges at standard rates - this is a way you can give to the FWBO at no disadvantage to yourself. For further details please contact Subhuti at Sukhavati, 51 Roman Road, London E2 OHU (01 981 1933).

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eiving and radiating the energies yourself. You are affecting the mandala yourself. But what are you doing inside a mandala? Being inside the mandala is experiencing the Sangha. The Sangha, the ideal spiritual community, has well been described as "a lively harmonious interplay of energies".

We are not at this stage yet in the West London centre, but certainly energies are quickening now; the beginnings of a feeling of Sangha

are being sensed. In the coming months we hope to have a Dharma course, and to start a men's community. In December the Ven. Sangharakshita is paying us a visit, and also in December we are holding a bazaar to raise funds.

Please note our correct address. We have been misleadingly reported elsewhere. If you are passing through, or living in the area, you are welcome to visit the centre at any time.

## The Sutra of Golden Light

This is a series of lectures being given by the Ven Sangharakshita at Hampstead Town Hall on Wednesdays at 7.30 pm. Charge 60p

The titles are:

- Nov 3rd The Growth of a Mahayana Sutra
- 10th The Bodhisattva's Dream
- 17th The Spiritual Significance of Confession
- 24th The 'Protectors' of the Dharma
- Dec 1st Buddhism and Culture
- 8th Nature, Man and Enlightenment
- 15th Buddhist Economics
- 22nd The Moral Order and its Upholders

### Dharmachakra Tapes

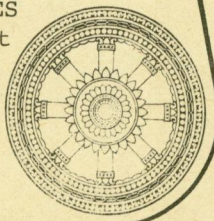
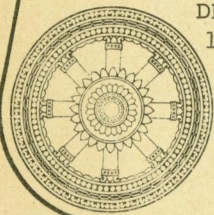
Ven. Sangharakshita's lectures are available on cassette at £1.75 per lecture. P and P 10p for the first lecture, and 5p for each subsequent one, (airmail 20p each cassette). For catalogue, write or telephone:

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### Buddhism for Today and Tomorrow

If you would like to hear the lectures that Bhante has just given in Brighton, they are now available on tape or cassette

The titles are:

- 1) A Method of Personal Development.
- 2) A Vision of Human Existence.
- 3) The Nucleus of a New Society.
- 4) A Blueprint for a New World.



## About the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order was founded in 1967 by the Venerable Maha Sthavira Sangharakshita, an Englishman who has spent twenty years in India as a Buddhist monk. He returned to England in the early Sixties, and saw the potential for disseminating the Teachings of the Buddha in the West. He felt the need, along with others, for a more spiritually active and authentic type of Buddhist movement in this country and therefore founded the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. A year later, in 1968, he founded the Western Buddhist Order itself, in order to provide a full experience of Spiritual Community, and full opportunities for complete commitment to the Buddhist way of life.

The Western Buddhist Order is a Spiritual Community of voluntarily associated individuals who have come together through their common commitment to the Three Jewels: that is, to the Buddha, or the Ideal of Enlightenment; to the Dharma, the Path of the Higher Evolution of the Individual; and to the Sangha, the community of all those with the same ideal. All members have formally Gone for Refuge to the Three Jewels in public and private ceremonies with the Ven. Sangharakshita, and are thus dedicated to their own development and to working, along with other Order members, in spreading the Dharma in the West.

The Order is neither lay or monastic. The Going for Refuge is the central act in the life of a Buddhist and the lifestyle one leads is secondary. The exact number and form of precepts taken is simply a working out of this commitment in one's life. Order members are of all ages, of both sexes and of different nationalities. Some live alone, others with their families and some in communities. All are committed to the Three Jewels and to the following of the ten basic precepts which cover all aspects of natural morality. That is, morality which naturally springs from a skilful state of mind, rather than morality of a merely conventional kind.

Through the medium of the Friends, the organisational matrix of the Order, members of the Order aim to create conditions whereby others can come into direct contact with the teachings of Buddhism, in a practical, dynamic, and living way and eventually, if they wish, commit themselves also. To this end, in our Centres and Branches, we hold classes and courses in meditation and yoga, courses in basic Buddhism, lecture series, seminars, courses in communication, and retreats. We publish a quarterly newsletter, and celebrate all the major Buddhist festivals. We are also increasingly trying to create situations within the movement whereby people can work and live together. We have our own printing press and publications department, and have plans to run a bulk wholefood business and start a vegetarian restaurant. We are very much aware that people develop faster in surroundings which are encouraging and helpful and are therefore concerned to create ideal conditions whenever and wherever we can. All our activities have one purpose and one purpose only, that is to help the growth of the individual.

All those who wish to participate in our activities at whatever level are very welcome to do so; we have no formal membership as we are not an organisation or a society. We wish to offer unlimited possibilities for involvement and growth, and the possibility of re-orientating one's whole life in the direction of the Three Jewels; of being eventually transformed into the Three Jewels.



FRIENDS OF THE WESTERN BUDDHIST ORDER  
CENTRES AND BRANCHES

- LONDON FWBO: Pundarika, 1a Balmore Street, Archway,  
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Mandala (West London Branch), 86d Telephone Place,  
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- GLASGOW FWBO: Heruka, 257 Nithsdale Road,  
Glasgow G41. Tel: 041 427 4558
- SURREY FWBO: Aryatara Community, 3 Plough Lane, Purley,  
Surrey. Tel: 01-660 2542
- BRIGHTON FWBO: 19 George Street, Brighton, Sussex  
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- NORWICH FWBO: Vajradhatu, 226 Queens Road  
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and, 19 Oxtan Road, Sandringham, Tel: 860 909  
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