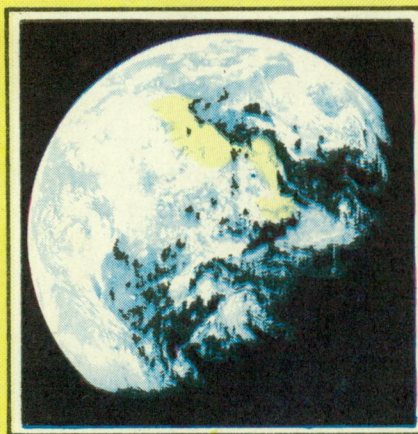


FRIENDS OF THE WESTERN BUDDHIST ORDER NEWSLETTER 34

**"To enable human beings to become
individuals, to enable individuals
to become enlightened,
to enable enlightened individuals
to work together for the
benefit of all—that
is the purpose of
the FWBO"**

Ven. Sangharakshita



10TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

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)
Sunday 6.30 Beginners' meditation class
8.00 Talk or recorded lecture

SUKHAVATI

Classes from June 11th at 119 Roman Road, Bethnal Green, E.2.
Tel: 01-981 1225

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

ARYATARA (SURREY)

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

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)

VAJRADHATU (NORWICH)

Tuesday 7.00 pm Mediation, puja (variable programme)
Thursday 5.15 Hatha Yoga
7.00 Beginners' meditation
8.20 Recorded lecture

TRURO

Although there are no 'open' classes being held in Truro at present, weekend retreats are being held once a month. For further information contact: David Austin at 3 Bedruthan Ave, Tregurra Parc, Truro.

HERUKA (GLASGOW)

see article inside

The 10th year

Contributors to this issue:-

Ananda, Vangissa, Subhuti, Mark Bowden, Devamitra, Tim Mc Nally, Mangala, Kamalasila, Lokamitra, Dhammarati, Vairocana, Hridaya, Purna, Megha.

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FWBO NEWSLETTER 34 SPRING 77

EDITORIAL

Ten years! Well, as for me, ten years ago today, as I write this, you would have found me snorkel diving in Eilat, in Israel; a short-term *kibbutznick* enjoying a week of relaxation and discovery. Before me stretched a narrowly missed war, three years of hedonism, heartbreak and work (in astonishingly unequal proportions) at university, and then several years of mixed feelings, working for, and leaving, the BBC. And at points during those years, mysticism and spiritual ideas, Buddhism and, at last, the 'Friends' began to take an increasingly active place in my heart and mind, and my life. Looking back it somehow seems clear that the experiences of those years, of my whole life, in fact, led me on a kind of collision course with my present. Yes, being a member of the Western Buddhist Order, and working within the FWBO, has been the obvious out come of it all. But what would have become of me had there been no FWBO in existence? What if, while I was exploring the beauties of a coral sea bed, nobody had been making arrangements for the first proper meeting of a group calling themselves The Friends of the Western Sangha?

By the time I *did* make contact with the FWBO my own experience of vision was well on its way to becoming little more than a sentimental memory, a source of some perverted pride, and some pretty confused feelings about life and myself. Through the medium of the 'Friends' I have learned that it is possible to work with, consolidate and build upon that vision. My life now has direction and a purpose of the most challenging and inspiring kind.

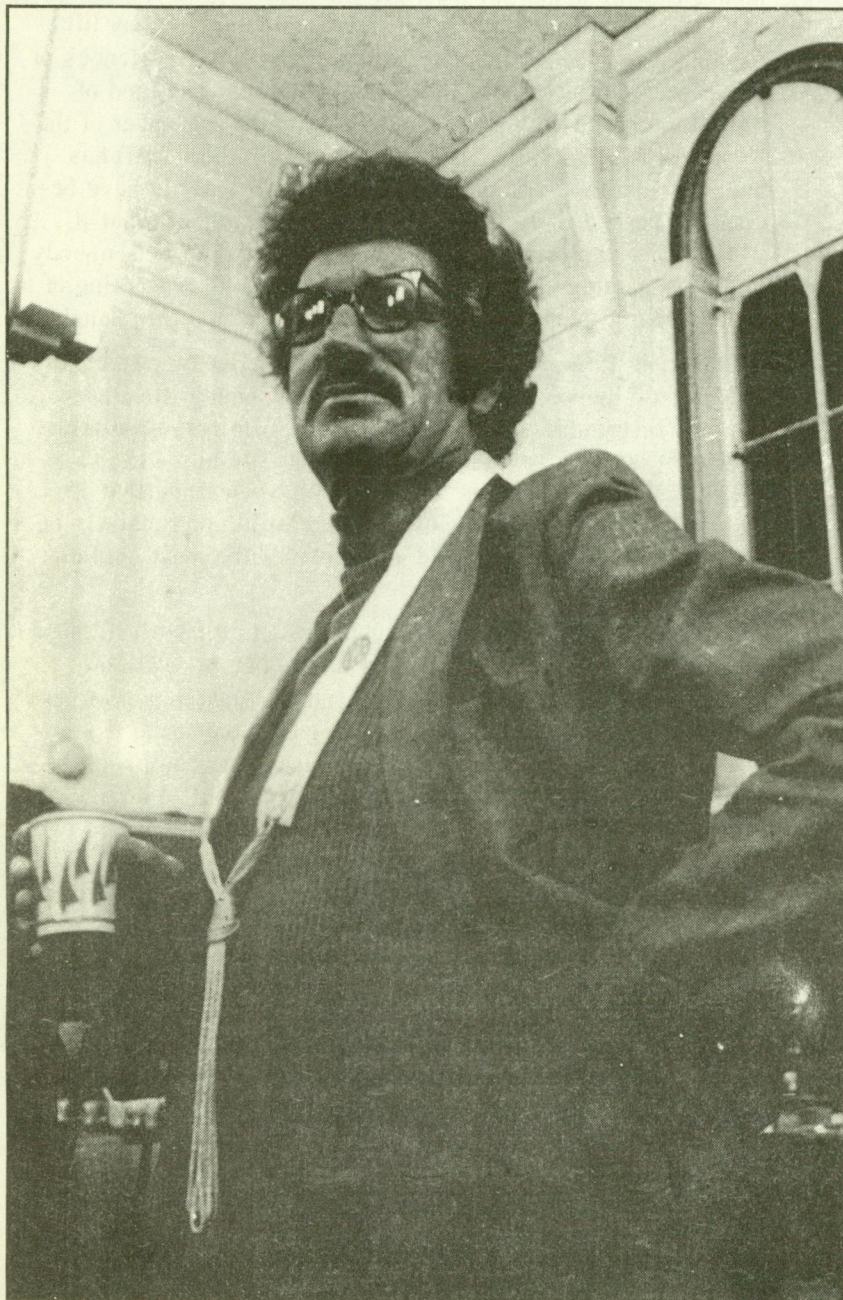
I have never 'shopped around' much, so it is difficult to imagine what might have happened had there been no FWBO for me to find; perhaps I would have found the Dharma somewhere else. But would I, would many westerners, have found it so 'well communicated...immediately apparent, perennial, of the nature of a *personal invitation*, and progressive'? I do not, for a moment, think that I could have, or would have, and I rejoice that I have.

We can celebrate the tenth year of the FWBO in terms of the more outward achievements; there are facilities now available that were only an awesome dream even four years ago. The FWBO is established, it is here to stay and reveal yet more wonders. But when we celebrate we should each of us look into ourselves to the real source of our joy. We should reflect, not just in tranquility, but with loud cheers of happiness and exhilaration, all that we have gained - and are going to gain - as the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order passes through its tenth year.

Nagabodhi

'Yes', they say, 'but what do you get out of it?'. Day in day out year after year - meditating, reading, working, going on retreats - being a Buddhist, being involved with the FWBO. I asked two people, Upasaka Vangisa, who has been involved since the very beginning, and Mark Bowden, a mitra living in Archway who is relatively new to the 'Friends', to write an account of what their involvement has done, and is doing for them.

Ten Years in the Golden Light



Upasaka Vangisa

What can one say about ten years of increasing exposure to the Golden Light?

When I was ordained an upasaka in the primitive days (April 1968), I didn't know where I was or where I was going. A sense of direction involves an awareness of a spiritual goal and an ability to apply this awareness to every aspect of your present situation. At that time none of us had any real sense of direction. Now, of course, it is the very essence of our Movement. Its development in my own particular case, and in the Movement in general, very largely coincided. I cannot think of myself, even sporadically, in isolation from the Western Buddhist Order; and I cannot speak about the Order without looking into myself.

At the time of my ordination, there was no means of knowing what it would involve or where it would lead me. Up to that point the Order had not existed. Nowadays newcomers can relate to a visible spiritual community; but the early Order members had no experience of functioning together as a community under a spiritual teacher. We had to help in the creation of something which we didn't really understand ourselves.

The story of my involvement, however, begins when I first met the Venerable Sangharakshita at the

Hampstead Buddhist Vihara in 1966. I was vaguely searching for some kind of instant enlightenment, and for many years the idea of the Buddha had been exerting a partly-conscious magnetic attraction (ever since, in fact, I had first heard the word, 'Buddha', in 1932 at the age of five). My life had been dominated by chaotic emotions. An introverted childhood, unable to relate to people, interested in poetry and solitude, hating the ugliness and futility of the life I saw around me - I was a fairly complicated kid; arrogant, aggressive and shy. Then the flamboyant student, poet and public speaker, graduating to professional actor determined to transform the theatre, alternating with the down-and-out, the drug addict, and the drunk.

Buddhism in England was not exactly inspiring or imaginative, being the spare-time activity of high-minded people. But I immediately began picking up vibrations from Bhante. He was *real*. I had met one or two remarkable people in my life, but nobody who was quite so incontrovertibly, ineluctably real. Meeting him brought me into more direct contact with myself and my hidden problems. It also activated positive emotions. The chaos was still there, but it was a happy and at times inspired chaos. The encounter provoked a response at various levels, and even caused regular vivid dreams in which the process of transformation really began.

When Bhante left in the autumn on his farewell visit to India, the dreams were encrusted with a foreboding that he would not return. These fears were nearly realised when it was revealed that the trustees of the Vihara had written telling him not to come back. He had

not conformed to their preconceived ideas of a bhikkhu, and they compared him unfavourably to a Church of England vicar, which was the kind of person they really wanted.

Having no understanding of the reactive mind (either my own or the trustees') I was merely disgusted by their hysterical pretentiousness. Horrified also by the prospect of a return to spiritual starvation, I became a fervent activist in the pro-Bhante faction'.

The first meeting of the Friends of the Western Sangha (as we originally called ourselves) was held in a flat in Coptic Street, near the British Museum, early in 1967. There were nine people present, including Bhante, who had just arrived back in England. Our first priority, obviously, was a meeting place of some kind. Emile Boin, one of our number, ran a shop in Monmouth Street, specializing in the sale of Buddhist objects. It was called Sakura. We decided to rent a small unoccupied room in the basement and convert it into a meditation centre.

What did we all want? Did we envisage anything remotely like the FWBO as we know it today? Only Bhante was capable of such a leap of imagination. In fact, the rest of us wanted quite different and incoherent things. We had not learned to communicate openly on the basis of a common commitment, and each of us brought his own conditioned approach to the situation. There was certainly no question of the transformation of life and world. In the manner of the period, we still thought of Buddhism as an optional extra, something added on to the rest of our lives. Personally, I just wanted to learn meditation from Bhante. I did not really care what happened to anybody else, and I had not thought about what might come next. Some of the others were uninterested in meditation, but had a general compulsion to do something practical. The prevailing attitude was one of political activism - a determination to get Bhante re-installed at Hampstead and to triumph over the



Bhante with two Tibetan teachers

enemies who were thwarting us. In the meantime we could get on with the thing going, as a means to an end. The early council meetings were more concerned with factional strategies than with spiritual development. Bhante, of course, was above all this turbulence. His only fear was that his eager disciples might succeed in their aim. The last thing he wanted was the millstone of conventional English Buddhism around his neck again. Exercising great skill in means, he gently tried to guide our energies in more positive directions.

At our second or third meeting he outlined the plan that had been in his mind for some time - the establishment of the Western Buddhist Order. It evoked a lot of incomprehension and little enthusiasm. Even now, when the Order is visibly flourishing, it is not easy to explain to people what it really is. A person who is ready to understand it is in it.

Emile put in a lot of work on the basement of Sakura, and the Tri-Ratna Meditation and Shrine Room was publicly dedicated on the evening of the 6th April. The simple ceremony, which we still use on such occasions, had been composed by Bhante that very morning. The small room was crowded out. Bhante compared it to the Catacombs. The pattern of the early years was established from the start - a growing number of weekly classes at Sakura, two annual series of public lectures and regular Sunday seminars at Centre House in Kensington, large open retreats twice a year in Haslemere: everything conducted by Bhante in person. In addition he had to cope with everybody's hang-ups, which must have been a monumental task.

My own contribution at this time was to run the only class which Bhante didn't take. It became

known as the Arts Group, but all we did was read poetry at my place once a week. Sometimes Bhante would turn up after a meditation class, perhaps bringing a couple of newcomers with him (that was how I first met Gotami), and join in. Most people knew nothing about poetry-reading, and I knew nothing about teaching, but we had some very good sessions. Bhante took part in our public performance at Wesak 1968.

There were also some pre-ordination classes for those of us who were about to become the original nucleus of the Order, but there wasn't much we were really ready to learn. Ordination had no personal meaning for us, and it seemed that the Western Buddhist Order was without any exact parallel, East or West. Bhante stressed the idea of lay ordination, as opposed to the monastic kind, but there was no way in which we could seriously consider the implications or a

commitment to the highest Ideal, or even realise the contradictions inherent in the compromise commitment which was all we were capable of making.

Most of the private ordinations took place at Sakura on the evening of Saturday 6th April 1968. There was no build-up to the occasion, no retreat in progress, no quiet departure one by one from the silence of the meditation-room just Monmouth Street in the long dusk of a Spring evening, discarded newspapers blowing in the breeze and taxis honking outside the window as we waited out turn in the shop. Finally I was alone with Bhante in the shrineroom, adding my offerings to those already on the 'altar', taking the Refuges and Precepts, given a mantra and a rosary and a name. Gradually the ceremony began to shape its own significance. Looking back, I can only say that a seed was planted that evening which later began to flower, and that at the time I knew it was happening, although I would not have recognised the flower if I had seen



The first WBO ordinations

it. The initiation experiences came later.

The following evening we had our public ordination at Centre House at the end of a Sunday seminar. In addition to Bhante, the Sangha was represented by two Thai bhikkhus, a Zen monk, and a member of the Arya Maitreya Mandala. People who have seen photographs of the ceremony have compared it to a church meeting or a school prize-day, and I will not dispute these comments. It was also perhaps the most significant occasion in the history of Buddhism for centuries. As in my own individual case, a seed had been planted – the first seed of the Sangha in the west.

A few weeks later, I was suddenly struck down by a serious illness, and for several days my survival was doubtful.

Such a combination of intense experiences was too much. I had been ready neither for ordination nor for death. Over the next couple of years I was engulfed by the tidal wave of deep conflicts and uncer-

tainties which had been released. First my physical life was threatened; then my psychological and spiritual life. A kind of disintegration had to precede reintegration.

My own drama was reflected in the Order itself. Unfortunately many of the original Order members were unable to keep up with the general development of the movement, and resigned as the light became too strong for them.

1972 was a turning point. At the beginning of the year we moved to the much larger Centre in Archway. The people ordained in that year were younger and less conditioned, and were at least beginning to understand commitment in terms of the transformation of life and world.

Bhante departed on retreat for the whole of 1973, and we discovered that the Order was now capable of

functioning as a spiritual community. There is no need to elaborate on our rapid and intensive expansion since then. We are all involved in it, in one way or another. It is the external manifestation of individual growth. We are still at the beginning of the Path but our sense of direction is also our stimulus.

At the beginning of the Order meeting at Pundarika last Sangha Day, I took the Refuge and Ten Precepts from Dharmadinna (apart from myself, the seniormost Order member present), and received a new kesa. It was a reinstatement of my original commitment, a declaration that I was beginning to understand what I had let myself in for in the first place. For a while I was the most junior of all, and the past had no relevance beyond the fact that it had brought me to that moment. I was starting a new life, as I hope to do at every moment for the next ten years, and the next, and the next....



Bhante with Order members at 'Four Winds'

Growing pains- and pleasures

Last August, over the course of a fortnight spent on the 'Four Winds' summer retreat, I found my perception of life completely transformed. Ideas I had before believed intellectually now became aspects of my actual experience of the world. I came to see that what I am is inseparable from what goes on outside me; that, paradoxically, this awareness is a step towards freedom from unthinking bondage to all the external world, and carries with it the ability to recognise others as individual human beings.. My communication with people improved immeasurably. And I realised that reality is always better than fantasy; which is to say that authentic continuous experience of the present is more satisfactory than the emotional cinema of the ego. Life is a process, or series of processes, to be lived, and is not to be seen as a series of goals or ends to be attained.

This was the beginning of my regular contact with the FWBO. It brought to an end the confused ambitions, entanglements, and stale disillusionment of youth. Ten years previously, at the age of thirteen, I had experienced a deep shock of recognition, on coming across the *Four Noble Truths*. It seemed to me a clear and direct analysis and solution of the suffering I was beginning to see all around me. The succeeding decade was a path of irregular steps, a series of short-lived attempts to pursue this and other glimpses of clarity and detachment which interspersed the usual frustrations of 'growing up'. Like all but the very few, I lacked the continuing inner strength of

purpose to maintain my efforts. Yet, in true Western fashion, I convinced myself that the path was to be trodden alone. I read stacks of books on Buddhism. I consumed even more hours in discussing them with my friends. But I refused to consider joining a group or even to identify myself as a Buddhist. To admit that I was 'interested in Buddhism' was all that I could manage.

Due to this attitude, my involvement with the FWBO was nothing more than sporadic for over a year until, disheartened and unable to find any more excuses for my persistent failure to 'get it together', I decided to attend the retreat. I saw it as a sort of renunciation, an abandonment of the untidy, self-indulgent way of life I was leading at the time, as a profound but painless hibernation from which I would emerge bright and clean. In a word I viewed it as an experience.

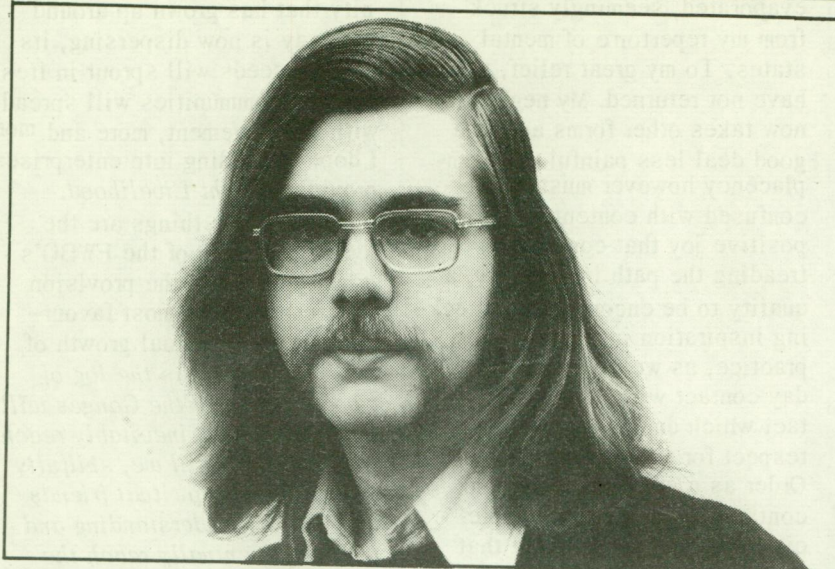
But the process of dying in order to be reborn takes a lot longer than three weeks and is not without its darker moments. However, there was nowhere left for me to go, nothing left to do but face them, and by doing so, I uncovered much that was positive also.

One does not have to look inward for very long before one begins to see how the sense of 'I' and 'mine' pervades our every thought and deed. At first, one is appalled - till one realises that this repulsion itself is just another manifestation of ego. The

only way out of this *impasse* is to dissolve it all in laughter - or simply watch it going on. Gradually I began to learn the joy of 'just seeing' things, a bird, a flower, a friend, alone in each moment, totally necessary, yet complete in themselves.

As one opens up in this way, one's energies begin to draw together, running more freely. The purpose of *puja* is the purification of these energies, directing them in devotion towards the *Three Jewels*.... But, while I could easily accept such intellectual justification for *puja*, some inner emotional barrier continued to hold me back from participation, as it had done since my initial contact with the Friends. That evening of the August full moon, however, the conflict disappeared, as if it had given up, and I was able to make my first offering, an emotional moment, an individual act of devotion carried out in the company of others.

Returning from the retreat to home and job, I found myself possessed of a sheer delight in everyday existence, and a buoyant resilience to city life that continued full-strength for several weeks. Each day the same things happened, yet all was fresh and new. All that I did was a pleasure in itself, not looking for results. I simply watched it unfold before my eyes, and, since I was no longer constantly anxious to reach goals or impress others, I achieved more than I had done before.



Mark Bowden



Four Winds shrine room



Baltimore Street

As I remained in touch with the FWBO, it became the base from which I could work to transform my life. Attending the Pundarika centre two or three evenings a week, meditating, doing yoga, and quaffing the inevitable tea, the difference between it and the groups I had shunned in the past began to emerge. As a group the Friends asks only for as much as one is prepared to give – yet in return it will give as much as one can properly make use of. And, as we grow, it becomes an opportunity for each one of us in our turn to give – of our money, time, and effort – of ourselves. The FWBO itself is an expression of *dana*.

It enables one to develop, not simply through the bare mechanics of instruction, but also through the very nature of the communication to be found within the Friends, which, because our lives are based on a shared set of transcendental values – the *Three Jewels* – is generally more open, honest, and helpful. There's no point in trying to impress, no room for deliberate game-playing, and, in these circumstances, one learns to see beyond personal likes and dislikes. In the spiritual community reciprocal positivity is more important.

At the beginning of December the opportunity arose for me to move into Baltimore Street, an opportunity which I gladly took. Practising alone, in surroundings that were, not actively but by their very nature, inimical to my aims, I had found myself tending to become alienated, too sensitive and too refined in the worst sense. Sustained, everyday participation in a Buddhist community has helped counteract this, by encouraging a more balanced spiritual development..

Even such a seemingly ideal sit-

uation can have its own, rather subtle, danger, that of complacency, which is, I find, linked with the problem of developing positive motivation. The elimination of various gross and undesirable emotions is one of the first results of sustained meditation practice. When one considers that the majority of people are moved to action chiefly through fear, in all its forms, and greed, one begins to see the revolutionary nature of this idea. It suggests a complete turning about of our mental lives.

Some months ago, I discovered that my guilt and boredom had

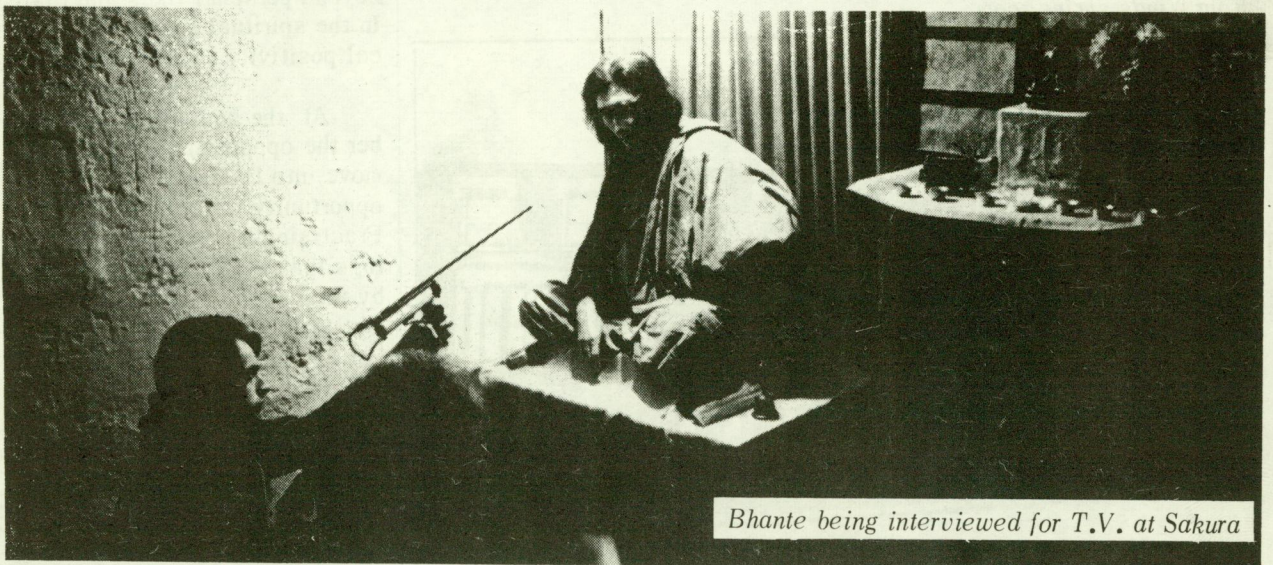
evaporated, seemingly struck from my repertoire of mental states. To my great relief, they have not returned. My negativity now takes other forms and is a good deal less painful Complacency however must not be confused with contentment, the positive joy that comes from treading the path in company, a quality to be encouraged by seeking inspiration in reading and practice, as well as from day-to-day contact with others, a contact which daily increases my respect for the Western Buddhist Order as a spiritual body, and continually deepens my appreciation of the commitment that the act of taking refuge involves.

Although the residential commu-

nity that has grown up around Archway is now dispersing, its several seeds will sprout in fresh ground. Communities will spread with the movement, more and more I hope expanding into enterprises providing *Right Livelihood*. For both these things are the logical outcome of the FWBO's primary object – the provision of circumstances most favourable for the spiritual growth of the individual. *“As the log of wood floating on the Ganges will if unobstructed, inevitably reach the ocean, so will we, skilfully guided by our spiritual friends and our own understanding and wisdom, eventually reach the ocean of Nibbana.”*

What was it like in the ‘early days’? It is remarkable how few people know very much about the first few years of the ‘Friends’ history. I asked Ananda, whom many of you will recall as a former editor of this Newsletter, to give an impression of how it felt to be around as the FWBO was coming into existence.

Looking Back (A personal impression)



Bhante being interviewed for T.V. at Sakura

An early morning in London at the beginning of spring; pale sunlight streaming down across the Thames, making its sluggish waters quicken with streaks of gold. 9 a.m., and a sharp chill in the air. The sun is still low over the river, and everywhere among the buildings deep shadows cling like blue mist. It is *the* day at last; the day of the Easter retreat; the *first* Easter Retreat, that is, ever to be held by the 'Friends'. While hoards of men and women plunge across Waterloo Bridge towards the shadowy office-blocks of Holborn, one person alone is plunging, against that heaving tide of brief-cases and grey overcoats, gaily in the opposite direction.

At Haslemere a half-hour walk among silver birch and dark green fir-trees at a large gateway where an unassuming notice board bears the single word 'Quartermain'. Everything is very still; wild spring flowers of all colours adorn the driveway to the red-brick building.

Inside thirty people seated at long, narrow tables, occasionally making shy glances at each other, each thinking of the person opposite: 'So this is what a Buddhist looks like!' At the head of the table, an Englishman in strange, very un-English attire, smiles warmly at the new arrivals, while drinking from an apparently bottomless pot of tea. In the evening, we go down to a small, low-ceilinged, wood-panelled room, with windows looking out onto trees in every direction, in which a small shrine has been set up at one end, and seat ourselves in rows of small, creaking wooden chairs. A tiny bell sounds, and an intense silence settles over the room, punctuated distantly by the sighing of the wind and the occasional crackle

of the shrine-candles. The realization gradually comes that the great event has finally arrived: we are on retreat, we have left London, and the gentle perfumes of branch, flower and soil have replaced the incessant noise of the traffic and the suffocating fumes of petrol engines. This is the miracle, this is the marvellous achievement, that something is really changing; people have come here together in the common belief that something *can* really change, and that it is worth working to bring about that change. Gradually, imperceptibly to us, the grey fogs of our collective past, the clouds of convention, habit and quiet boredom which have habitually surrounded us, part and recede, allowing sunlight and pure air to melt and loosen feelings which have grown stale and brittle through long neglect. Across the room we begin to see human beings where before had been mere featureless shapes; we see eyes light up and sparkle with a suddenly kindled interest: 'Oh yes, I met a very great teacher in India when I was there in...now when was it?...'

The next day, an innovation; we sit opposite each other and do communication exercises; great yawning chasms of embarrassed



Lunch at Quartermain

silence alternate with mind-shattering scree-slopes of hysterical laughter, great granite boulders of meaningless words rolling remorselessly down onto the unwary intellect. The effect is shattering, both physically and mentally: we creep back upstairs to afternoon tea, trying to preserve, at all costs, some semblance of routine and order, lest the torrent of floodwater overwhelms our fragile banks.

In the evening puja, candles are lit and a strange oriental fragrance fills the shadowed room. We sit on the creaking chairs and wait for something to happen, as if this were some celestial dentist's waiting room. But all that happens is we recite some incomprehensible words, very slowly, after the teacher, our hands raised with palms together, in the traditional salutation. After the recitation we sit again in silence and listen to the wind eddying around the eaves, very slightly disappointed, perhaps, that the expected experience, the anticipated revelation of truth did not arrive on schedule... but then, there are still thirteen more days.

Landmarks abound in the early history of the 'Friends', and yet no single event can be claimed to have pre-eminent significance: how do you tell when a piece of spiritual development occurs, or which word or gesture precipitated it? All you know is you feel warmer towards other people, you're able to look at them and recognise feeling, hopes and fears very similar to your own; you suddenly surprise yourself by going out of your way to help somebody in difficulty, without knowing why you did it. And somehow there has arisen somewhere within you a mysterious gaiety, a strange and un-



The first retreat

accustomed lightheartedness, a feeling of contact with the many-storied realms of human beings, plants, trees and stones.

The seeds of that first retreat germinated with astonishing rapidity. From initial doubt, hesitancy, reluctance and suspicion of any real change, there emerged an optimism and confidence which was greatly infectious. Wesak came, bringing music and chanting and a welcome absence of traditional speeches; the shrineroom at Sakura, the shop in Monmouth Street, where our first meditation classes were held, was dedicated to the Three Jewels; and rapidly acquired a youthful clientele of meditators and devotees. A newsletter was produced, cyclo-styled in a friend's office nearby during long, ink bespattered evenings of discomfort and despair, ameliorated at intervals by lukewarm cups of tea and old digestive biscuits. Gradually the Dharma began to take shape before bewildered English eyes, and it dawned upon several people quite suddenly that a new spiritual movement had been born out of the tepid ashes of quiet desperation and English middle-class institutional politics.

Within the following six months two things happened which were to prove a watershed in the affairs of the 'Friends'. The first was the ordination by Bhante of twelve men and women into the Western Buddhist Order, thus bringing about the essential transformation of the 'Friends' into a living spiritual community. The second event was the lecture series which Bhante gave at Centre House in west London, under the general title of *The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path*. This series attracted so many interested people that it soon became evident that the meeting room at Monmouth Street would very soon become seriously deficient in space. Soon a search was under way for a new home for the 'Friends'; London was scoured for accommodation suitable for a centre; old warehouses from Deptford to Acton Town were scrutinised eagerly for signs of large airy rooms with

'meditation potential'. At the same time that this was going on, a sudden efflorescence of new activities began: a new meditation class for beginners, Dharma study groups (conducted with great optimism amid the incessant roar of cars and taxis five feet above our heads!), arts and poetry groups, seminars and festivals, visits to neighbouring Buddhist groups, speakers classes, Yoga classes, and of course more retreats in the country, where all the prize blooms from these activities were cultivated together in an atmosphere of relaxation and beauty.

The 'Friends' and in particular the Order also underwent frequent changes of personnel during this period; several early members decided that the particular approach of the 'Friends' to the traditional teachings of Buddhism was not for them, and promptly marched, or crept, to greener and more attract-



ive pastures. At the same time, a more youthful, and definitely more energetic element entered the arena and proceeded to take up some long neglected tasks such as organising regular council meetings and the inglorious, if not exactly mute, task of fund-raising. Words like *efficiency* and *commitment* and *work* crept, crawled or thundered into the Western Buddhist's vocabulary, and seemed destined to stay there for some time.

Under Bhante's unfailing guidance a structure gradually arose which was both deeply rooted in Western soil and culture, and faithful to the timeless spirit of the Buddha's teaching. Classes for the study of the Dharma and the practice of meditation continued to take place every week, providing a solid bedrock of contact with the universal traditions of Buddhism and the great inspiration of the life of the Buddha. And increasingly, this inspiration found its expression in the contemporary western arts of poetry, painting and music.

By 1969 the shrineroom at Sakura had undergone the three trials of fire, flood and pestilence, and the following autumn brought the fourth: notice of closure and imminent demolition was served upon this unprepossessing birthplace of the 'Friends'. The shop was closed; Rupas, Thankas, carpets, chairs and scriptures were loaded without ceremony into cars and vans and found a resting-place at Sarum House (now Aryatara the FWBO Surrey centre). The 'Friends' were homeless, at least in material terms, yet to the quiet astonishment of some, the plant, having lost its physical roots, not only survived, but blossomed more brightly still. A new kind of intensity of energy and thought came into existence, born perhaps



Public ordination

out of a greater awareness of the need in the west for the Dharma, or perhaps out of a more immediate personal need to overcome one's limitations and contact something more authentic within oneself.

The 'Friends' short period of homelessness ended in January 1971 with the acquisition of the premises now known as Pundarika, in Archway. It was on a cold, windy and sunny morning that we finally obtained the keys to what was then a gloomy and draughty builder's offices and yard. I have an image indelibly printed on my mind of Bhante standing in the open doorway facing onto Balmore Street, and holding aloft a gleaming key-ring, an expression of mischievous satisfaction and delight on his face. Another milestone, or at least a fragment of one, had been reached.

During the first three years or so of the 'Friends' existence the Movement underwent some very significant changes; significant not only for itself, but also for the general social and cultural ethos

of that period. The small group of people who came together in the basement of Sakura a decade ago had had their fill of political machinations and petty empire building; all that most of them wanted was to meet their teacher regularly, study the Dharma and practise meditation. There was no Order to join, and very little awareness of what the great concept of Sangha really involved. Yet Bhante's quiet encouragement and ceaseless optimism in the face of equally ceaseless obstructions was a veritable lighthouse in the gloom; the fact that the Buddha existed, that he gained perfect Enlightenment, and that he left an infallible method behind Him whereby all men and women could do the same—these three indisputable pieces of knowledge were immovably present in all our minds, and they eloquently spoke through all the many activities we participated in.

If the 'Friends' had its genesis in our confusion and disillusionment, it had its metamorphosis in faith, and its apotheosis in devotion. These three states of being characterise a real spiritual transformation, both on the individual and social planes. Surrender of worldly values, in the knowledge that they do not bring peace to the individual or harmony to society; the gradual discovery of, and faith in the effectiveness of spiritual values; and the eventual unification of the two realms of the mundane and spiritual through selfless love and devotion to an ideal. These are surely what gives the Buddha's teaching its universal and perennial value, what makes it meaningful and essential to all men, regardless of circumstance, and what in turn has made the 'Friends' not merely the vehicle or another way among many ways, but the way which leads, unquestionably, to the abode of perfect peace.

Ananda.

The FWBO exists as a direct result of the inspiration and guidance of the Ven. Sangharakshita, our teacher and preceptor. It is ten years now since the shrine-room at Sakura was dedicated. The ten years since then have seen a rich and vital increase of activity; of classes, retreats and festivals, the emergence of several autonomous centres, as well as the communities and Right Livelihood projects, which, taken together, form a Movement known as the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. We decided that it would be interesting at this point, to hear what Bhante himself feels about the developments of the past decade, and what he would like to see happening during the next.

Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

You spent twenty years in India, Bhante. During this period did you ever think of returning to the West to teach?

No, quite definitely not. I took it for granted that I would spend the rest of my days out in the East, in India. It was only in 1963 that the idea of returning was put into my head at all. At that time there were difficulties in London within the English Buddhist movement - mainly conflict between the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara and the Buddhist Society - and some people began thinking that, if I came over, inasmuch as I was the seniormost bhikkhu of English origin, or of British origin, I might be able to reconcile the two factions and bring people together. This was why they thought of inviting me. When the suggestion was first made I rejected it out of hand, but I was gradually persuaded, and thought, 'Perhaps I do have some responsibility. Perhaps I could help.' Before that I had no plan of doing anything in the West, or of contributing to the development of Buddhism in the West in any way other than through my writings. There was another factor. I was under the impression, in India, that Buddhism in Britain was going very well. It did not occur to me that it might need my attention. For instance I used to get 'The Middle Way', and this gave me a totally wrong impression, because it contained so many good articles. I did not realize that this was all purely a facade. There was no Buddhist movement corresponding to 'The Middle Way', as it were. 'The Middle Way' featured articles from Buddhists all over the place, and it gave the impression, being the journal of the Buddhist Society, that there was a thriving Buddhist movement in Britain. Consequently I tended to think, 'Well, they're

getting on all right.' It was only when I got back, and had been here for some time, that I saw that though the field was very fertile hardly anything had been done to cultivate it.

This was when you returned in 1966?

No, when I first returned, in 1964. The reason I did not think of returning to the West was not that I did not care about the West, or did not care about Buddhism in Britain, but that I thought it was being adequately looked after by the Buddhist Society and the other smaller groups that sprang up later.

Did you think it was a more fertile situation than the situation you left in the East?

In a sense, yes. I felt that the emphasis in India was almost entirely on material improvement, material development - that that was now the dominant trend. But here, I felt, there were sufficient people who had become disillusioned with all that, and who were thinking much more in terms of other values.

Did you consult anybody in India about this? Did you talk to any of your own teachers?

Only when I returned to India for a farewell visit in 1967, having by that time made up my mind to settle permanently in the West. I consulted them then, especially in view of the efforts which were being made to prevent me coming back to England at the end of my visit as planned. They were all quite emphatic that I should come back and work in Britain. As for the difficulties that I was having with the Sangha Trust, and with some of the people at the Buddhist Society, I remember Dhardo Rimpoche, for instance, simply dismissing them and saying, 'That's nothing

at all. Ignore it. Just carry on with your own work.' He seemed to attach no importance whatever to the opposition I was encountering.

But when you first came back, in 1964, did you have any idea that you might be starting your own movement?

No. I originally agreed to come over on a four month visit. This gradually lengthened to two years, and towards the end of that period I saw that, quite clearly, a new Buddhist movement was needed. But I did not see how this was to be done, in the sense that I did not see how I could start up something independent, because even people who were quite friendly and well disposed to me said, 'Why have another movement?' I saw that the Buddhist Society could not be changed, that the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara could not be changed. At the time I saw that if the Buddhist movement in this country was really to develop, something new was definitely needed. But I also knew that the majority of English Buddhists, even those in contact with me, would say, 'Why start up something new? Why not work with the existing organisations?' I saw that it was not possible to work with the existing organisations, but they did not - probably because they had no real idea of what *was* needed. When some of those who considered themselves the leaders of British Buddhism decided that they did not want me back (the vast majority of ordinary Buddhists did want me back), and did their best to prevent my returning, they gave me the perfect excuse to start up something new. I was delighted. Despite the fact that, owing to their machinations, the situation was for a time rather unpleasant, it did make it possible for me to start up something completely new, which is what I wanted to do anyway. After I had come back some of my friends were still trying to get me back into the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara. My one prayer was that they would not succeed, and of course they didn't.

So you did establish the 'Friends' after that point?

Immediately after I came back. I was quite sure that we could, and should, and must, start a new Buddhist movement in this country - indeed, in the West generally. I had no doubt about it at all.

Well, 1977 is the 10th anniversary year of the FWBO. Are you satisfied with the way things have developed in the last ten years?

That's a very big question. I would say I am contented, but not satisfied. Things have certainly gone in the right direction - I'm quite satisfied on that score, but we still have quite a long way to go, and we have to broaden out quite a lot.

In retrospect are there many things that you would have done differently?

There has been only one really unforeseen development of any importance, and this has been a very positive one. When the 'Friends' was started I took it for granted that it would be a mixed movement. (the Order of course is mixed: it contains both Upasakas and Upasikas.) I tended to assume that, inasmuch as this was the West, this was the correct and proper way to do things. Experience has definitely shown otherwise, however. It has shown that, if those concerned are to progress beyond a certain point in their spiritual development, we need - even in the West - to separate the sexes in the traditional way. I don't think we can say that separation of the sexes, in connection with spiritual activities, is merely a part of Eastern culture. Actually, it is one of the necessities of the spiritual life. I think I tended to assume, in the early days of the Movement, that it was just a part of Indian culture, a part of Eastern culture, and that it wasn't necessary for us in the West. Here men and women could develop spiritually, together, as it were side by side, all along the way. But experience has shown that this is not possible. This is the one thing, I think, that I had not foreseen.



Women's retreat at Aryatara



Men's retreat at Court Lodge

It seems, actually, that none of the other Buddhist movements in the West have seen this either.

Well, they haven't come to the point that we have come to. They haven't got far enough spiritually. It's as simple as that. Some are even deluding themselves, especially the pseudo-Tantric ones. But the fact is that there has been no real spiritual development in the case of these groups. In the 'Friends' we've got where we have because both men and women have been working on themselves, and because they've come to the point when, in order to progress further, they've just got to see less of each other, especially on occasions like retreats, when one is trying to make a more intensive effort spiritually and needs to be as free from distractions as possible.

The next question ties in with the last one. What do you consider to be the main areas of difficulty in bringing the Dharma to the West?

I think the biggest area of difficulty is what one can only describe as false and muddled thinking. This is basically what one is up against - unclear thinking, confused thinking. In particular there is the ideology of what I call pseudo-liberalism, which one is supposed to take for granted and regard as The Truth, even though its pronouncements are not always very consistent with one another. For instance, there is the view that men and women must always do everything together, and that this represents the enjoyment of some kind of 'equality.'

Are there any others that you can think of?

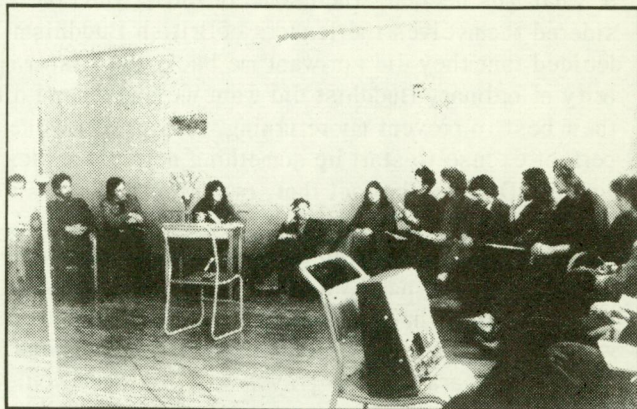
There is, of course, the fact of modern industrialization. Having to live in the 'big city' certainly doesn't help one spiritually. Whether this is a specifically Western difficulty now, I don't know. You encounter it in Japan, and even in India to some extent. Putting it bluntly, I'd say that the real obstacle in bringing the Dharma to the West was *michhaditti* - false views.

What would you like to see happening in the next ten years?

First, I'd like to see the Order grow. I would really like there to be, say by the end of the next ten years, upwards of a thousand Order members. Then we would be really getting somewhere. Obviously one isn't just thinking in terms of numbers, but of the more intense spiritual interaction that a larger number of Order members makes possible, as well as of the greater impact on society that it would have. Some people have warned that the bigger the Order, the greater the danger of a diminution of quality, but this has not happened so far. Numbers have increased over the last 10 years, and the quality of Order members has

increased steadily too. There's no doubt about this. I think it's going to be quite a long time, if ever, before we reach a point where increase of numbers will automatically mean decrease of quality. We have organised ourselves in such a way that you can't get into the 'Friends' simply by paying a subscription and becoming a 'member'. Moreover the Order itself has a certain kind of strength which, more and more, draws the right sort of people. Also, as the Order grows, and as the interaction within it becomes more and more intense, the Order becomes more and more demanding, and thus draws people of ever higher calibre. So I don't think we should allow ourselves to be scared by the bogey of, 'Be careful you don't get too big. Don't get the wrong kind of people.' I see no danger at all, at the moment, of this sort of thing happening. Consequently I'd like to see upwards of a thousand Order members by the end of another ten years. After all, the FWBO is directly dependent on the WBO - they are, indeed, the organs through which different teams of Order members carry on their work in the world - and the bigger and more spiritually alive the Order is the more widely and the more effectively it will be able to communicate the Dharma to people in the West.

Order Convention 1976



When you say that you would like to see upwards of a thousand Order members, does this mean Upasakas and Upasikas or are you thinking in terms of a new level of ordination?

I think that there will be, within the Order, people who, for want of a better word, will be called monks. But I'm not happy about these monks being like the bhikkhus. There's quite a lot of monastic formalism in the East. People accept rules, or make vows, which they know that they are not going to be observing, and this has a very undermining effect on the spiritual life. Some of these rules are not very relevant to us in the West anyway. Nevertheless I think we shall see the emergence in the Order - this is al-

ready happening to some extent - of people who are really committed to the spiritual life and devoted full-time to Dharma work. Such people will be free from family responsibilities, free from emotional ties. They will lead purely spiritual lives, being involved, at any given time, either with their own meditation and study, or with the work of an FWBO centre - or with a combination of both. These people will in fact be 'monks'. We can't prevent monks from arising within the Order, whether we have a separate ordination for them or not. The main thing, I think, is that we safeguard the unique importance of the Going for Refuge as the basic act of the Buddhist life. In many parts of the East, as we know, more importance is given to becoming a monk, with the result that the Going for Refuge is undervalued. This is because the ordinary lay follower, who more often than not is a merely nominal Buddhist, also chants the refuges, thus obscuring their real significance. Even if we do have a monastic ordination that will have to be seen as an extension of the going for Refuge - this will have to be made completely clear. How we shall do that I don't as yet know: I think the problem will resolve itself. Monks are emerging - monks in the real sense - and will continue to emerge. There will be this contingent of 'monks', as it were, within the Order. The unity of the Order will be maintained by stressing the common 'Going for Refuge', this means that those who are going for Refuge in the context of the household life will have to be quite certain that they are really going for Refuge, really keeping up with their commitment, and that they are not just becoming more or less nominal Buddhists. If they do, then obviously the gap between the 'monk' Buddhists and the others will widen. You therefore need to do two things. On the one hand, stress the fact that being a 'monk' is a fuller implementation of the original 'Going for Refuge' and on the other, that those who go for Refuge and remain householders must be absolutely certain that they are really Going for Refuge, and really implementing that, to the utmost, within their particular lives as householders.

As well as the Order, I'd like to see the FWBO itself expanding. So far as this country is concerned, we are virtually confined to the South-east and the East, and I'm not at all happy about that. I'd like to see us expanding into the Midlands and the Industrial North, as well as extending our activities in Scotland and planting ourselves quite firmly in Wales and the West Country. I'd also like to see us very definitely established on the Continent, especially in Sweden, where we have one Order member now. Also in Holland and Denmark - especially in Copenhagen. Then I'd like to see us stretching out across



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the Atlantic to the United States, perhaps starting up in Boston, which would seem to be a good place to begin And also to Australia. We have been talking about a party of Order members and Friends going out to Sydney. I think Sydney would be a very good place to have a centre.

There are other things. I'd like to see some Meditation Centres. Though meditation plays an extremely important part in all our centres and communities, we don't as yet have even one Meditation Centre as such - a place in a really secluded part of the country devoted exclusively to meditation.

I would also like to see more of our own businesses. At 'Sukhavati' we've been developing this scheme of Order members and others setting up businesses which will give them firstly an opportunity of working together, secondly a means of Right Livelihood, and thirdly a medium for making contact with people in the world so that our ideals can be put across. I'd like to see the Friends becoming a whole world within a world, and self-sufficient in every way.

Would this suggest schools and farms?

Yes, and even light industries - all in accordance with the principles of Right Livelihood. You would have people in the spiritual community working together and ploughing back all profits into the Movement and, perhaps, supporting the full time workers and meditators - the 'monks'. A start has been made, but it's mainly 'Sukhavati' -based. I'd like to see it spread throughout the Movement.

Another thing I would like to see in the next ten years is more publications. Especially the edited transcripts of the study seminars, as well as other things I shall be writing. We have a lot of work to do in this field.



Work period at 'Four Winds' retreat

Then I would like to see the FWBO projecting itself a little bit more. It is becoming increasingly clear that the FWBO is *the* British Buddhist movement - that there isn't really anything else worth mentioning. We have deliberately kept a low profile during our first ten years, but I don't think we need to do that so much during the coming ten. We have a lot to offer and we should not hesitate to make that clear. Neither should we hesitate to correct people who claim to speak in the name of Western Buddhists, or British Buddhists, when in fact they have very little contact with them.

You mean we should blow our own trumpet a bit more loudly?

You could put it that way. We haven't blown our trumpet at all yet. I'm not suggesting we should go to the other extreme and blow it just loudly, but certainly we should blow it sweetly and distinctly. We undoubtedly have the largest active membership of any Buddhist movement in the country. We have an Order of 82 committed people, about 150 Mitras, and several hundred Friends who are quite active and involved.

The Movement is still very dependent on you for guidance. Do you think that this will change very much in the next ten years?

I personally have more hope of, say, ten or twelve senior Order members being able to take over from me as it were collectively, rather than of any one person being able to take my place. One *may* emerge; there's plenty of time; but I'm quite confident that in ten or fifteen years time the ten or twelve most senior and experienced Order members could collectively - though that's not such a good word - take over my responsibilities quite easily and quite smoothly.

How significant do you think it was to leave us to

our own devices when you went away to Cornwall in 1973?

Well, clearly the consequences were very positive indeed, and the experiment - if one sees it in that way - a complete success! A very great deal happened immediately afterwards, culminating in 'Sukhavati.' When I went away we virtually had only one centre, the Archway Centre. All our other centres and branches started up afterwards - with the possible exception of Auckland, where Akshobhya was already holding meetings in his own home. So much has happened, all in the last four years! Let's see what happens while I'm away this time, in Scotland. Probably all sorts of developments will take place.

When there are more centres, in all parts of the world, do you think you will have to do a lot of travelling?

I don't know. At the moment I don't feel like doing a lot of travelling. I wouldn't feel obliged to travel just because we had a lot of centres.

Do you feel that people ought to be able to develop without your presence? In Helsinki a question constantly heard is 'When is Sangharakshita coming?'

As the Movement expands, obviously it will be more and more difficult for me to get around. I'm not even **sre** that that is the most useful thing I can do for the Movement. I feel more and more, nowadays, that the best thing I can do is to write - to give people material to read and to study. Most of the things I've written on Buddhism reflect, not so much an earlier point of view, but they are not intended specifically to meet the needs of the existing movement. I'm thinking mainly in terms of writing books and articles which would meet the intellectual and spiritual needs of people within the 'Friends' - especially Order members.

Does this include the next volume of your memoirs?

I hope to be able, within the next ten years, to do more than one volume - though I think the memoirs are of only secondary importance. What I would really like to produce is a systematic work on our own way of looking at Buddhism, but expressed not exclusively in traditional terms. It would be more like an exposition of our 'philosophy of life', as it were. I would also like to write some specifically 'Buddhist' things, like a book on *The Sutra of Golden Light*. These are some of the projects that I have in mind.

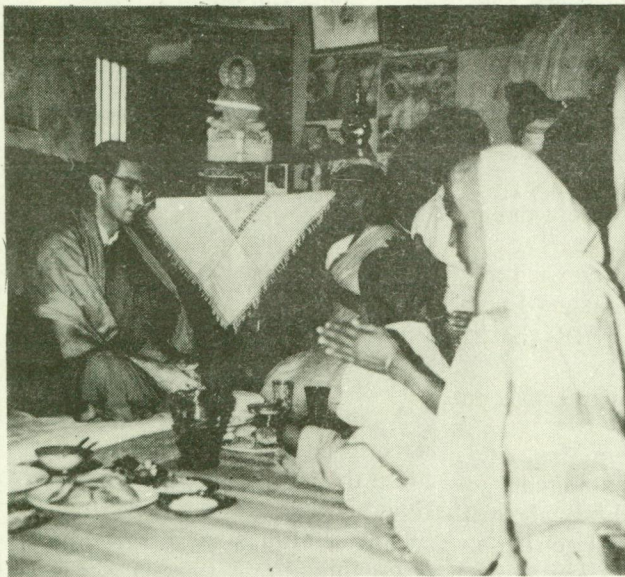
So you won't be appearing so much in the various centres of the movement?

Not during the coming year, at least. After that I don't know. I may feel quite different then. But at

the moment I feel I can most usefully spend my time in relative seclusion, corresponding with people certainly, but devoting most of my time to literary work related to the needs of the movements. There is a lot that hasn't been expressed clearly and fully yet, that people need to know about and to understand.

Do you ever miss India?

Frankly, I can't say that I do. Not even the sunshine! I don't even know that I'd like to go back. Probably I shall one day, just to see old friends, and see what's happened. Possibly when Order members get something started out there I shall pay visits every now and then. I'd like us to do something in India, and have centres in some of the Buddhist holy places - you know, to serve Order members and Friends who were in India on pilgrimage. I'd also like us to do something for the Indian Buddhists, especially the ex-Untouchables. I'm sure we could do a lot of work among them and that our approach to the Dharma would be a very good and positive one for them. In fact, I think they would welcome it.



And this would be a continuation of the work that you were doing in India?

Well, yes. I'm quite sorry I had to stop that, but I felt that my time and energy could be more creatively put into the Buddhist movement in the West. But I certainly haven't forgotten India, and I would very much like some Order members to go there, eventually, and continue my work.

Is India conducive to the spiritual life these days, or do we have a better chance over here?

You definitely have a better chance here. I don't



Buddhagaya

think that, as regards teaching, there is available over there what is available here, now. Quite a lot of the tradition has to be reassessed and recreated, I'm not suggesting changes in the Dharma itself, but the Dharma that has come down to us is not so much the principal Dharma as the Dharma as presented in a certain way, at a certain time, for the benefit of a certain kind of people.

England does have some advantages. It's much easier to work for Buddhism here. People are more reliable. Working in India can be very frustrating, because there people can be very lackadaisical. I've certainly succeeded in doing much more here in ten years than I did in twenty over there - leaving aside the fact that I am more experienced now. Eventually, though, I think the 'Friends' could have quite an effect on Buddhists in the East.

Probably not many people, even in the Order, realize exactly what they are involved with, and what is really happening. Maybe they do in a way, but not very vividly or concretely. I think that this will dawn on them only after some years. You can't see it when you are so close to it, so much a part of it. Our main objective should be to make the whole Movement a world within a world, a culture within a culture, a community within a community, where everything is as it should be, or at any rate as near to it as we can get. And this world, this culture, should grow and extend until it is virtually conterminous with society itself. That is the ideal. We are certainly achieving it in a very small way already, and I hope that during the next ten years we will achieve it on an even larger scale. I am sure we can do it.

Nagabodhi, Buddhadasa and Devamitra.

The following is a record of a conversation held at 'Heruka', the Glasgow centre, between upsakas Vairocana (V), Ajita (A), Dhammarati (D), and mitras Pat Dunlop (P), and Duncan Skinner (Dunc). They are talking about themselves and about Glasgow, but they are also saying a great deal about just how the FWBO works.

The Dharma belongs in Glasgow

V: The FWBO have been in existence for ten years, but we haven't been in existence in Glasgow for that long. It might be interesting to look back to see what we were doing ten years ago, if anything.

As far as I'm aware the Samye-Ling Tibetan Centre opened up in 1966, just about the same time as the FWBO in London opened up. Chogyam Trungpa gave a talk in Glasgow in 1968, and, inspired by what he had to say, one or two people set up a Buddhist group. My own personal experience begins in 1971, when meetings were held at the home of Kay Turpie, later ordained as Upasika Mallika. After a couple of years had passed, in 1973, we decided to get a Buddhist Centre together.

Dunc: Why did you decide to get a centre together?

V: The number of people coming along increased, and it wasn't all that convenient at Mallika's home. Also she was selling her house, so for a while we left her home and had meetings at the Glasgow Arts Centre.

Dunc: Were they good?

V: No, they were not very good at all.

A: Oh...they were a real drag.

Dh: There must have been something there, right enough, if you thought it was important enough to get a centre.

V: Yes, I think there were a number of people coming along,

and the contact we were getting out of it was good, but we realized we had our limitations.

A: Yeah, when you think how things are now, and how they were then... The class used to consist of just sitting in armchairs; even people meditating in armchairs. Some people just sat there snoring. *(laughter)*

Pat: And what have we got now?

A: Well, when the 'Friends' were formed, one or two people left. They were not in favour of becoming 'part of the Friends'.

V: They felt it would be a threat to their individuality. The Glasgow Buddhist Group had to remain simply the Glasgow Buddhist Group, not the FWBO Glasgow.

Dh: That's interesting. That's politics getting into it.

A: It was really interesting. At that time there was a dream going around. We would talk about it in cafes, this dream of getting a centre together, you know, a place where people could go all through the day, and at various times all through the week. It all seemed like a dream, but the dream came true.

Dunc: How did Gotami come to get invited up?

V: I remember her paying a few visits. It was more or less Mallika who invited her up. I did not know her very well; none of us did. We realized that we needed someone to lead the classes, and there was also talk going around

of our becoming affiliated to the FWBO.

A: It was quite obvious at the time that none of the people in Glasgow had any real awareness of the spirit of the Dharma, so we needed someone up here to lead the group.

Dh: The renegade G.B.G. just died the death, didn't it?

V: Most people stayed.

A: Yeah... John Angus, John Kerr.

V: Edward Easton.

A: Edward Easton. *(laughter)*

And Kay Turpie. I think it was really the four diehards who stayed. **PAUSE**

Dunc: Well, have you changed much since the G.B.G. was around?

A: DEFINITELY.

Dunc: In what way?

A: Ah well, When I look back to then, I was quite a withdrawn and frightened sort of person. I feel things like that are just fading into a sort of mist, just like a dream. I always knew there was something in the Dharma, something which inspired me. In those days there was a chance that I was tying myself up in knots, you know what I mean? Then the Friends came along.

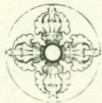
Dunc: This was because you had no teacher?

A: There's always a chance you can tie yourself up in knots. You can read books on Zen, books on the Tantra, you can take what you want and have your own home-made Buddhism, a bit like a patchwork quilt; wee bits here and wee

bits there. So the main reason I've changed is because there is a systematic path laid out by Bhante which is practical to follow, you know, for the modern man's needs.

A: My needs.

V: It was the end, November I think, of 1971, when Bhante paid us a visit. I remember being really inspired by the things he said. It was the first time I had met a Buddhist who actually knew what he was talking about. Later I discovered the Friends. So there was no question of not wanting them to come up. I think it's unfortunate that some people never met Bhante; they might have stayed. The ones, that is, who wanted to retain their individuality. I think those people just didn't know any better. They just wanted to be into their own thing. I think some of them did not want to practise Buddhism at all - but just to sit and talk about it. And the FWBO coming up was going to alter all that. It might have been too much for them.



A: The distinct feeling that I get from the Friends, through being involved over the past few years, is that I'm coming home. Although I'm 'leaving home', I also feel I'm coming home. It's not like it's anything apart from me. I'm becoming more aware that my innermost desires correlate to the teachings of Buddhism. They're showing me how to leave home, but at the same time get in touch with my real home. My own real feelings. When I first got into contact with the Friends I felt a bit frightened by what they had to say. But when one starts to practise the teachings and meditations one gets used to it. I think you realize it's nothing outside yourself.

LONG PAUSE

Pat: It would be interesting to

see some of those punters who didn't come to the Friends. It would be interesting for a comparison, to see if they're still doing the same old things.

A: Hmm, yeah, hmm.

Pat: I still have a slight bad taste of the early days in Bath St. A kind of dark phase. Probably a lot of it's me...a kind of heavy air at times. But I kept on coming

A: That was the first attack. It was the first real contact with Buddhism; Buddhism's first real attack on the Glaswegian conditioning.

Dunc: I think one of the reasons why the Bath St. Centre could seem dull was that any effort that was put into making the place alive had to be *given*. I think that some people are only now learning to give. A centre will be dead and dull unless people give to it. It's not like a factory or a rich church where everything can be bought. Everything that goes into a centre has to be given. People were more suspicious of giving then than they are now. Heruka is not so dark.

Dh: It's a good word that 'attack'. I've had the idea of that dark feeling as well. It's not just that Heruka has more windows. It's

all an unknown quantity. You're really going to change. You realize you've not just got another hobby, that there's actually something expected of you; *change* expected of you. There's a lot more joy about now. People enjoy changing a bit more. They find it's alright. In those days it was quite a traumatic thing, actually changing.

A: Although there was a feeling of something attacking you it was really your own self. You are the only one who can change you.

Pat: Recent things in the Newsletter, you know, about positive conflict...it's not as if we are not taking part in that. The



Order members and mitras in Glasgow

same things are happening in Glasgow, and it's good to see that it's happening a lot more. There's a lot more people in the South, and they're writing about it.

A: One thing that I feel is a growing awareness that London is not the holy city. There's no Friends 'HQ' in London. Glasgow is autonomous. Glasgow has its own inspiration. We don't have to look outside for it.

PAUSE

Pat: I wasn't consciously looking for a religion when I came in contact - through Yoga. Other people seem to have been searching for something.



Dh: I came to the meditation class just like a Yoga class. I was not consciously seeking, looking for a philosophy or religion. It was just coincidence that I came here.

A: Ah, but was it coincidence?

Dh: Ah, well. Now we're getting metaphysical. It's interesting that the people here didn't know where they were going. So you don't have to see very clearly where you're going. As long as you're going, you're going to arrive somewhere. (laughter).

Pat: Maybe that's the key: that we don't know where we're going.

Ah. I've got a point to make. Just to speculate. How long do you think that you'll be here in Glasgow? Actually working in this particular area? I was thinking at least three years. It's an interesting point because we're not just 'Glaswegian Buddhists'. It's not as if we alone are going to build something that will last for fifty years.

V: But at the same time, people living in Glasgow tend to understand - or relate to - Glaswegians better than to others. So there is an advantage in

Glaswegians staying here.

Pat: Hopefully there would be people coming up behind us and they will want to take over.

V: Yeah, sure, but it seems to be quite a slow process.

Pat: In another three years I'll be thirty. I don't think that any of us will be here in another ten years. I mean, I'd like to go to Paris.

A: There's other places as well that you have to consider, like Aberdeen or maybe Dundee. If you're going to blossom out you have to consider whether you're going to places like that, or maybe leave Scotland altogether.

Dh: I think sometimes that when it comes to the crunch you haven't so many options. It becomes more clear what the right thing to do is. Whether to stay or go.

A: That seems to be what commitment is. You think more of what needs to be done, rather than your own narrow, selfish needs. Not that I'm saying that going to Paris is a narrow selfish need.

Pat: I was just thinking of the different culture. I feel that everybody has to leave Glasgow, for a while anyway. It's probably not good to stay in one city.



Dunc: There's 'national' conditioning, and the way to become aware of it is to leave the country.

A: It looks like, in the past, people have offered the Dharma through their own language and through their own conditioning. I think the only way Glasgow will get the spirit of the Dharma is to have Glaswegians giving it out, because Glaswegians understand Glaswegians more distinctly than a Londoner can.

V: Also the whole point that

Buddism is a universal religion becomes obvious when it is someone from your own culture teaching it. I think that people could get attracted to someone like a Tibetan Lama, or a Thai monk, for the wrong reasons.



Dunc: It takes away the *pseudo spiritual exoticism* when you've got someone talking in very plain language to you. The language you know: Glaswegian.

Dh: I think it's an important stage we're at right now. In the past we've always had English people, no offence to them, and now we have a core that's Glaswegian.

A: That point about duty. A few thoughts just flashed through me. Sometimes you really want to go to some other country, but something says *you've grown up in this soil*. I see a lot of things in Glasgow that I disagree with, but I feel myself responsible for doing something to change it. I feel that if I were to walk out of this situation just now I'd feel a bit sad; that I didn't help to alleviate a certain amount of suffering. I'd like to provide a basis from which people can grow.

Dunc: I think regular contact with Buddhists from as far away as possible; Buddhist who are as different as possible, is also quite necessary. When you meet a Buddhist whose background and conditioning is quite different, the thing you have in common goes far beyond the national differences.. It's more than the rapport between people who were born and brought up in the same place.

A: Maybe it's better to think that we happen to occupy a certain part of this round planet, and that the best place to start from is home, but not to identify with it particularly. LONG PAUSE

A: I think the next thing along the road in establishing a new centre is 'team-based right livelihood.'

Dh: Right on.

A: The communities have been established. The next thing is

right livelihood.

D: And it's also there to transform the world.

V: We seem to have reached the point now of 'where are we going?' Has anybody got anything particular to say about it?

A: Well, I suppose our immediate plans are to establish team-based right livelihood and find a new centre - more in the West End, and get the Dharma moving.

D: Yes... That's enough to be getting on with.

While he was in New Zealand during the summer of 1974/5 Ven. Sangharakshita ordained twelve people into the Western Buddhist Order. Finding themselves in a 'new' order, half-way round the world from Bhante and other members of the Order, they were placed in a position that has never been faced by the Order in the U.K. How have they got on? What discoveries have they made? At the end of March upasaka Purna, from Auckland, arrived in England for a five month visit. He talked with Marichi and Siddhiratna about the beginnings of the Order and the Mitra System over there.

The Order grows up 'down under'

I think the last two years have seen quite an in-turning and a sifting out of things in a general sense, until particularly this last national retreat at New Year, when people came from all over New Zealand. Since then we've become more outward looking and I think there will be more courses this year and more retreats being held.

I think this inturned period was a necessary part of the Order learning to be an Order, which is not something that just comes naturally. Bhante ordained quite a large number of people in a comparatively short time and left them to it. The Order in New Zealand went from one (Akshobhya) to roughly ten (Dharmajyoti went abroad, Mudita resigned) all in a space of two months. So you've got the situation where all of a sudden this group of people (who had only been working together to a small extent)



were almost thrown together. I think it was quite a human problem, of learning to function as an Order.

When I was ordained I found that my whole sense of responsibility and concern for what was happening at the Centre and the way things were being run, quite drama-

ically changed. I had been extremely dubious about the whole movement until I met the Ven. Sangharakshita, but it was my personal contact with Bhante in fact that consolidated all my attitudes and commitment to the Friends. After this I identified a lot more with what was happening. This is a sort of double edged sword, because it immediately brings you up into confrontation with other people who are getting emotionally involved, and if you don't quite agree on something there is going to be inevitable conflict. I think there had not been conflict in the past because there hadn't been this commitment, not just in an intellectual but in an emotional sense. It was the emotional commitment that brought the conflict. About six months after Bhante left New Zealand we went through very turbulent times, with most of us wondering how we were going to hang on

WE REVERENCE THE BUDDHA THE PERFECT
 WE REVERENCE THE DHARMA THE TEACHING OF THE
 WE REVERENCE THE SANGHA THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE

REVERENCE TO THE THREE JEWELS

WE REVERENCE THE BUDDHA AND ASPIRE TO FOLLOW HIM.
 THE BUDDHA WAS A MAN, AS WE ARE MEN.

WHAT THE BUDDHA OVERCAME, WE TOO CAN OVERCOME;
 WHAT THE BUDDHA ATTAINED, WE TOO CAN ATTAIN.

WE REVERENCE THE DHARMA AND ASPIRE TO FOLLOW IT,
 WITH BODY, SPEECH AND MIND UNTIL THE END.

THE TRUTH IN ALL ITS ASPECTS, THE PATH IN ALL ITS STAGES,
 WE ASPIRE TO STUDY, PRACTISE, REALISE.

WE REVERENCE THE SANGHA AND ASPIRE TO FOLLOW IT,
 THE FELLOWSHIP OF THOSE WHO TREAD THE WAY.

AS ONE BY ONE WE MAKE OUR OWN COMMITMENT,
 AN EVER-WIDENING CIRCLE, THE SANGHA GROWS.

REVERENCE

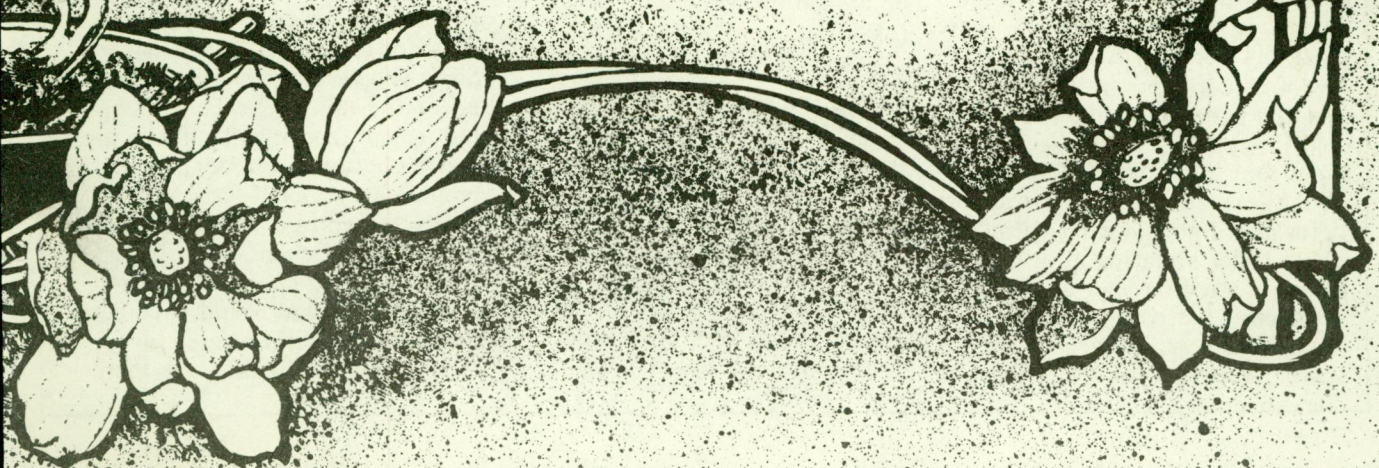
THE ENLIGHTENED ONE, THE SHOWER OF THE WAY,
THE BUDDHA, WHICH LEADS FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT,
THE BUDDHA'S DISCIPLES, THAT INSPIRES AND GUIDES.

OFFERINGS TO THE BUDDHA

REVERENCING THE BUDDHA, WE OFFER FLOWERS—
FLOWERS THAT TODAY ARE FRESH AND SWEETLY BLOOMING,
FLOWERS THAT TOMORROW ARE FADED AND FALLEN.
OUR BODIES TOO LIKE FLOWERS WILL PASS AWAY.

REVERENCING THE BUDDHA, WE OFFER CANDLES,
TO HIM WHO IS THE LIGHT, WE OFFER LIGHT.
FROM HIS GREATER LAMP A LESSER LAMP WE LIGHT WITHIN US,
THE LAMP OF BODHI SHINING WITHIN OUR HEARTS.

REVERENCING THE BUDDHA, WE OFFER INCENSE,
INCENSE WHOSE FRAGRANCE PERVADES THE AIR.
THE FRAGRANCE OF THE PERFECT LIFE, SWEETER THAN INCENSE,
SPREADS IN ALL DIRECTIONS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.



– as though we were right on the edge, clinging by our fingernails.

It has all worked out very well in the end. It has really driven home to me the whole thing of growth through positive conflict. Superficially it was quite negative at the time: there was a lot of bickering, a lot of inability to get on with one another. My own relationship with Akshobhya was quite bad but I think behind it all – I can only speak for myself – has been a recognition that “that’s an Order member, we’re going to eventually work through this.”

The whole thing of being an Order member often suggests the analogy of being married to someone, “for better or for worse”. You might not even get on with that person for quite long periods, but at the back of it you’ve got that sense of commitment and that in the long term it’s going to be something you’re both going to work through.

I see the Order situation very much in this light and I think most of us have learned to see it in this way. Specifically it is a commitment to the principle of the Sangha, which means it is in your own self interest,

“One should try to avoid close association only with those with whom one feels close affinities: one should attempt to go beyond this level - this affords great opportunities to see one’s own reactions at work.”

Sangharakshita

est, developmentwise, to resolve these personal relationship difficulties with other members of the Sangha; it means that that is where growth is going to come, that very few of us can grow in isolation, that you need the contact, even the conflict-contact. Because of that I now feel it has been quite a strong period for us all, particularly for me: I gained a lot out of the whole Order situation as it was, having worked through it. For instance, I feel very close to Akshobhya now. There is a deep seated, quite positive relationship

between us now, and it’s all the deeper for having been worked to from a more negative basis.

This last National Retreat (held over the New Year) marked quite an important turning point in lots of ways. We resolved a lot (particularly Indrajala, Akshobhya and myself – we had a lot of quite close personal sessions). The retreat started off with quite a big issue over the question of whether or not children should be there. A lot of heat was raised in argument. In a way the issue of children was irrelevant to what was going on – they were being used. But we managed to sort out quite a bit and we came out of that retreat feeling very close, really warm and positive. There were about 50 people there but we are thinking of holding rather smaller retreats in the future since they are so much easier to make arrangements for. What was really positive was that although for the first retreat after Bhante left I was a bit worried – could we attract people, could we keep it together without Bhante – we had a bigger retreat than when Bhante was there, and we’ve just kept growing since. It was extremely reassuring from our point of view to discover that Bhante wasn’t the main drawpower, that we were strong enough in our own right to draw people and keep them coming in, and that we didn’t need Bhante like that. I think that was quite important. We began to appreciate that we have an Order and it’s an Order that’s starting to be appreciated by others. It’s not just a group of people gathered around the Venerable Sangharakshita.

I think the main difficulty at the moment is that nobody is likely to be ordained for quite a while, until Bhante goes to New Zealand again. I certainly feel we are going to have to move in the direction of doing something for ourselves in some way. At the moment we’ve got very committed mitras who functionally you

could almost say are Order members; they are often involved with the bulk of the administrative work of a centre, and, commitmentwise, could be regarded very much as an Order member. Such people often show a lot more commitment than the first batch of Order members have ever showed. This is going to be an inevitable thing, that more and more’s expected of the people who enter an established situation: the level of commitment is always going to be increasing.

“In what does the extension of the FWBO consist? Not in the publicizing of a personality, not in the popularization of an idea, but in the growth of a new society and a new world.”

Sangharakshita

You get to expect more from an Order member now than was expected in the late 60s and early 70s. Some mitras find this a bit frustrating. It’s something to do with feeling you have more equal rights in a situation, more of a say in what’s going on. We try and make it quite clear that the final say is the Order’s. Having mitras on the Council, we’ve gone to some pains to make the mitras, particularly the senior mitras, quite familiar with the whole set up, that we are not running a democracy for the majority. Order members cannot be outvoted on the Council. But one’s commitment is the thing, recognition of that commitment by Bhante is what we are working with, and they are the people who have the responsibility to find exactly what that is. Some people have had trouble in accepting this; most have accepted it, and functionally things are getting better and better. The problem is we have some very committed mitras, who in the normal course of events, say in London, would have had recognition of this and would have been ordained. Now it’s coming on for 2½ years since Bhante was there

and there have been no ordinations since then, and it looks as though it will be least another year and a half before he gets out there again, and so at least four years since his first visit. This is going to present us with the situation of having a lot of mitras and a very small Order. Things are essentially going to be run by mitras. In some ways it's very positive, because it lets the mitras sort out the critical, new-Order-member, phase while they are still mitras. There is pressure on mitras now – the pressure that used to be on the Order – and that pressure has moved down a stage. And as I understand it, one of the functions of mitraship is this sorting out period. It's a preparation for ordination and places almost more 'sanctity' on the ordination as something really meaningful, not something you've gone into any-

how. Mitraship is very much in this situation in New Zealand. And the incongruity between the comparative lack of commitment of an Order member in New Zealand and that of a senior mitra will also take a few years to sort itself out. The Order that is first established at a centre in a situation like ours may have been virtually shanghai'd into it, just for the sake of setting up the Order to get something going – I can't see any other way of approaching it. But this overlap between Order members and mitras can be difficult. A lot of Order members still have to work out what their commitment is. For instance there's a lot of pressure to be directly involved in a Centre, to support that centre in some way, particularly with classes, which is very unfortunate. It puts pressures on people in many ways who are not

necessarily inclined to lead classes. But the survival of the centre depends on it. We haven't the luxury of sufficient Order members for them to be choosy about what they do or the way they express their commitment.

But being an Order member is not a static thing. What being an Order member means to me has changed quite dramatically over the two years I've been ordained. And I would hope that this is the experience of most Order members.

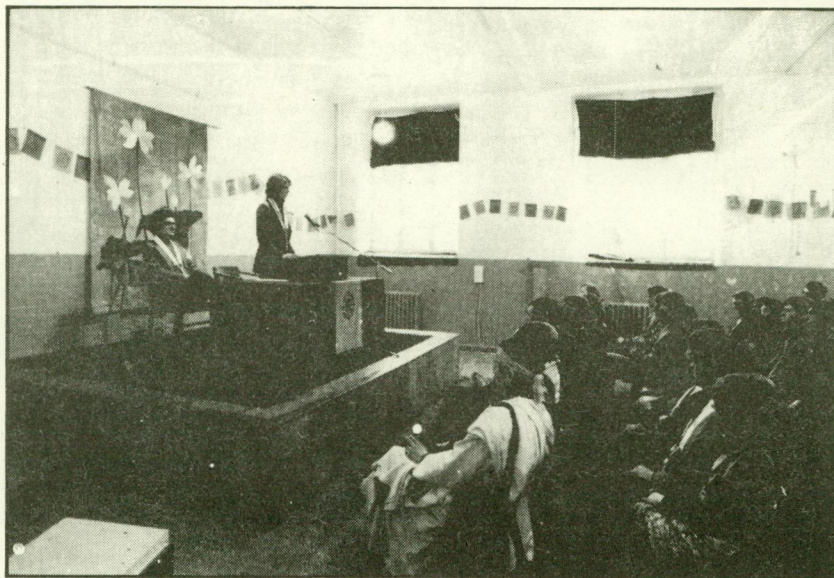
Editorial note:

There is now one more Order member in New Zealand. Dennis Iverson, who had been a mitra in Auckland since Bhante's visit in 74/75, came to England with Purna, and has now returned as 'Udaya'.

FRIENDS OF THE WESTERN BUDDHIST ORDER

10th Anniversary 1967/1977

The FWBO was founded on April 6th 1967, so on the same day this year about 120 of us, Order members, mitras and Friends gathered at the 'East West' Centre in East London for the Anniversary celebrations. In a talk, which followed the opening meditation, Subhuti gave an unashamedly eulogistic appraisal of what the 'Friends' has to offer, reminding



Subhuti's talk at the 'East West' centre

us all of our extreme good luck in having made contact with it. The chance of human life is rare – how much more so, then, that of finding the spiritual community.

After seeing slides of the FWBO in the UK, Finland and New Zealand, and eating a delicious meal, we went upstairs for the puja. A definitely 'western' rupa

surmounted a truly magnificent shrine. Seemingly suspended in a blaze of colour and light it must have been on loan from the Pure Land itself. To begin the puja we circumambulated it, chanting and making our offerings – while the whole building resounded to our joy.

Unity and Diversity

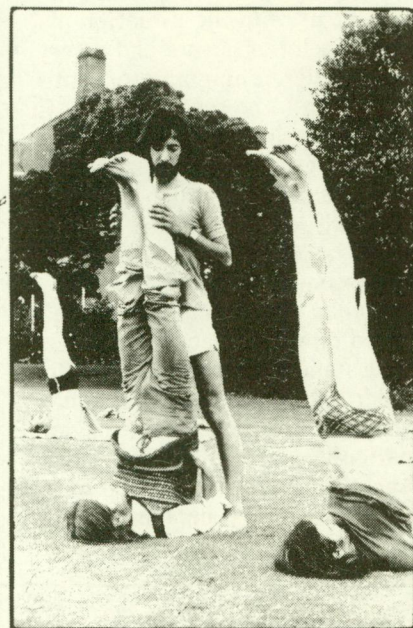
The most striking feature of the FWBO as a movement, at the present time, is its diversity. Until quite recently in the history of its development, the letters 'FWBO' referred to a single building and collection of people. Any new development, any new Order members, came from that one centre: the Archway centre. Now, ten years after the first founding, not only are there four centres in the London area, two elsewhere in England, one in Scotland (and another starting soon), but there are three centres in New Zealand, one in Finland and a very active group in Sweden, as well as Friends meeting regularly in Holland and elsewhere. There are also Order members in Germany, Wales and the United States.

From the outset the constitution of the FWBO has recognised that the Spiritual Community consists of individuals working in harmony together, and not a hierarchy taking directives from a central authority. No centre is a 'head office' or 'cathedral'. Each centre is legally and financially independent of all the others. Each is autonomous, making its own decisions and growing out of its own resources. The consequence is that each centre has its own style and flavour, the product of its local background and the people who run it. In this way it is possible to allow the spirit of the Dharma to express itself in a manner appropriate to varying conditions. This diversity is one of the Movement's most treasured virtues. It provides richness and fertility, and means that individuals can gravitate towards centres that best suit their own way of operat-

ing. There should therefore be none of the alienation to which large organisations are prone, since centres themselves will be, on the whole, relatively small groupings in which each individual can make him or herself felt as he or she likes.

So this is the pattern revealing itself at present. A number of autonomous centres, each with its own approach and atmosphere, responding in its own way to local conditions. However, there is obviously a very strong unity underlying this diversity. Above all, the centres are initiated, organised and the bulk of the work is done by Order members; all members, by virtue of a common commitment, of a purely spiritual community. Increasingly there is a flow of Order members between different centres and it is not uncommon for an Order member to finish a particular job in one place and simply move around until he finds himself fitting in somewhere new. This intercommunication means that a meditation course developed in Helsinki is adopted in London, a fund-raising technique evolved in London is adopted in Glasgow, a magazine produced in New Zealand is circulated in England.

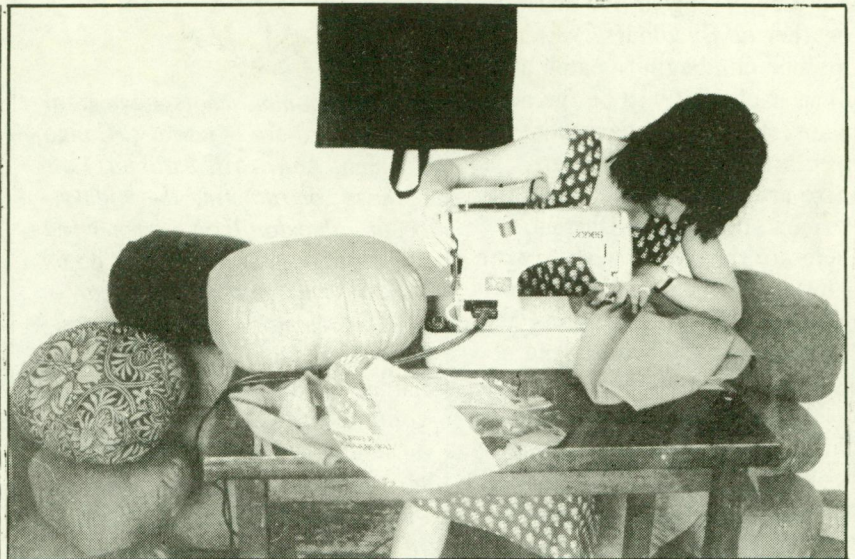
Besides this diversity of style there has recently come about a diversity of activity. Most centres are 'teaching' centres. That is, they carry out public classes



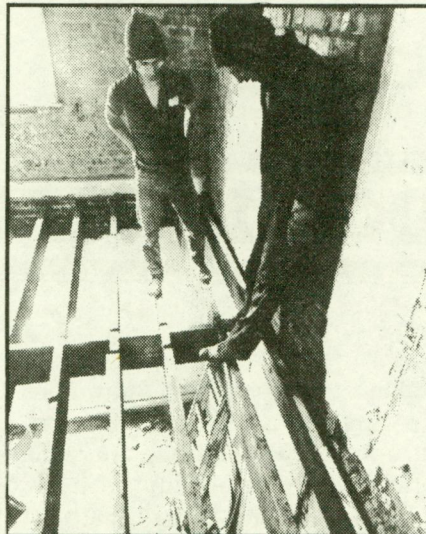
Outdoor yoga class on a retreat
in meditation, yoga and Dharma study. They organise retreats and lectures, festivals and courses. In this way they provide a first 'contact'. Until fairly recently this has been the principle and only function of the FWBO. Now, however, to cater for the increasing involvement of more and more people, a new layer of activities is beginning to develop. First of all, many people wish to live with other Friends in communities based on the practice of the Dharma. These communities vary from the first few urban communities of four or five people in short-life housing to the community of twenty-eight at 'Sukhavati' in London. Padmaloka is the first rural community. These communities are, in many ways, the basis of the Movement at present. They provide a situation in which enthusiasm and energy are generated and shared. Usually the first step for any centre, beyond

the regular round of classes, is the setting up of a community of Order members, mitras and Friends. This then creates an atmosphere of regular commitment which feeds back into the centre. Naturally, very soon in the life of any centre, the question of finance is raised, as it is in the life of anyone wishing to devote themselves further to spiritual growth. At first there is a round of jumble sales, benefit dinners, work-a-months, etc. But sooner or later it is realized that not only is the cost-effectiveness of such activities low, but that some more permanent and profitable means of collecting money must be found which can support both the centre and activities - and some individuals. Restaurants and building firms, removal businesses and cushion making are among the ventures being undertaken at present. None seem to bring in a great deal of money, although, by and large, they support their workers and produce a surplus to be invested in future expansion. There is still a lot to be worked out in this field and we are very much at the stage of 'gaining experience'. We are all the time re-shuffling, trying new ideas and approaches, but in the long run, when the businesses are established, and work is generally accepted as an aspect of spiritual development, then we can feel confident that another few roots have been put down.

Perhaps this is and, one hopes, always will be the state of the Movement, but at present there seems to be an unusually potent set of situations. We are, and have been teaching meditation and yoga, giving lectures etc, for some time, but now peop-



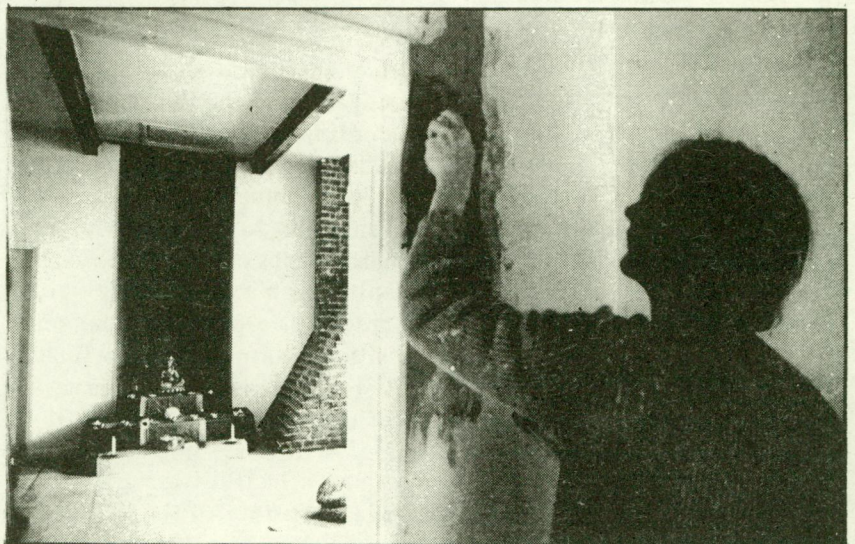
The 'cushion factory'



Work at Sukhavati



Just as, monks, the mighty ocean flows down, slides and tends downward gradually, and there is no abrupt precipice, so also in this dhamma-discipline the training is gradual, the action is gradual, the procedure is gradual; there is no abrupt penetration of knowledge.



le are beginning to live and work together *as Buddhists*. Within this one can begin to catch a glimmer of what will be the next phase. There are a few artists specialising in Buddhist art, there are a few people drawn to serious study of the Dharma, there are those who wish to spend a lot of time meditating. There is talk of a meditation centre, Padmaloka has already been talked of as a centre for study seminars, there is also a country retreat centre, for women, in the air. Many people now try to get away for a month's solitary retreat every year. A lot of people consider themselves to be 'full-timers'. There is generally a sense of increased seriousness and a deeper understanding of what being a Buddhist really means.



Just as, monks, whatsoever great rivers there are – namely, Ganga, Yamuna, Aciravati, Sarabhu, Mahi – these, on reaching the mighty ocean, abandon their former names and lineage, and henceforth go by the name of just 'mighty ocean', even so, monks, the four castes – namely, the nobles, the brahmins, the merchants and the serfs – on going forth from home to the homeless in the dhamma-discipline proclaimed by the Wayfarer, abandon their former names and lineage and go by the name of just 'recluses who are Sakya sons.'



We could say, then, that there are two principle related trends within the movement. Firstly there is a broadening out to reach new cities, countries and even continents, to encompass increasing varieties of temperaments and backgrounds, to enter new fields of activity. This broadening out also involves establishing Buddhism in 'every-day life' - in lifestyles and in work. At the same time there is a deepening. People are beginning to be capable of, and are motivated to, more intensive practice of meditation, a more penetrating study of the Dharma, as well as to express in words and form the Truths of Buddhism.

Subhuti

BOOK REVIEW

THE WHITE LOTUS SUTRA IN THE WEST

The Essentials of the Dharma Blossom Sutra, Volume 1, Tripitaka Master Tu Lun. Translated by Bhikshu Heng Ch'ien.

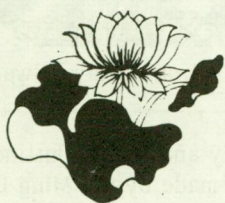
Buddhist Text Translation Society, San Francisco, 1974. Pp. 451-xx.

The *Saddharma-pundarika* or 'White Lotus-flower of the True Doctrine' Sutra is one of the oldest and most important of the Mahayana sutras. Cited by the Indian master Nagarjuna, who flourished towards the end of the first century C.E., as a literary composition it belongs essentially to the first century BCE and thus is contemporaneous with the Pali Tipitaka, which was also committed to writing at

about this time. The Sutra is important for a number of reasons. Doctrinally speaking, it is important mainly on account of its two fundamental teachings, both of which, after being distinctly enunciated for the first time in this Sutra, became an integral part of the basic structure of Mahayana thought and practice. According to the first of these teachings, there is ultimately only one yana, the Buddhayana, which leads to Buddhahood. The Buddha speaks of two or three yanas, simply as an expedient device in order to help those of lesser spiritual attainments who, for the time being at least, are aiming at inferior goals. Eventually, all beings will come into the One Way and all will attain Buddhahood. According to the second of

the two teachings, the Buddha's span of life is infinite. He is in truth neither born nor passes away into final Nirvana, both of these acts being only appearances, only expedient devices for the benefit of the less spiritually-developed. The Sutra is also important for its literary form. Unlike some Mahayana sutras, it has a definite structure, almost dramatic in character, which remains more or less intact despite the apparent incorporation, at a later date, of extraneous, or at least not very directly related, material. But the great glory of the *White Lotus Sutra* are its parables. These include the parables of the Burning House, the Raincloud, the 'Prodigal Son', the Magic City, and many others. Closely connected with the Sutra's import-

ance as literature is its importance for art. In China and Japan particularly, scenes from the Sutra like that in which Sakyamuni, having opened the miraculously-appearing Stupa and revealed the 'extinct' Buddha Prabhutaratna, takes his seat on one half of the latter's lion-throne, were frequently depicted in both painting and sculpture, as a result of which the message of the Sutra became more and more widely known, even outside Buddhist circles. Historically speaking, the *White Lotus Sutra* is important because of the high esteem in which it was held by the eclectic and philosophical T'ien-t'ai School, which with the possible exception of the Hua-yen or Avatamsaka School, is probably the most representative and influential school of Chinese Buddhism. According to this school, the *White Lotus Sutra* is the Buddha's ultimate teaching, delivered during the last phase of his earthly career, and it has been the subject of profound and systematic study by the third patriarch and virtual founder of the school, Chih-i (or Chih-ke), as well as by numerous other masters of the T'ien-t'ai lineage

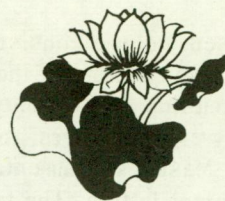


In modern times, the *Saddharma-pundarika* was one of the first Buddhist scriptures to be translated into a European language. The Sanskrit text having been bought from Nepal earlier in the century, it was translated into French by Eugene Burnouf as early as 1852. Some years later, in 1884, came the first English translation. This appeared as Vol. xxi in the famous 'Sacred Books of the

the East/ series, edited by F. Max Muller, and was the work of the Dutch orientalist Hendrik Kern. Bearing in mind that in those days there was little sympathy in the world of oriental scholarship for Buddhism as a spiritual teaching, and that its technical vocabulary was hardly understood at all, Kern's translation is a good pioneer attempt, even though its pages are frequently marred by footnotes in which he tries to prove that the Buddha was a solar myth. Perhaps unfortunately, Kern's translation is even now the one in which the *White Lotus Sutra* is most widely known in the English-speaking world, it having been reprinted several times. After Kern came W.E. Soothill, who, in collaboration with the Japanese scholar Bunno Kato, produced an English version of the Sutra based on Kumarajiva's Chinese translation, made in 406 C.E. Soothill's version, which was published in an abridged form in 1930 as *The Sutra of the Lotus of the Wonderful Law*, is much easier reading than Kern's, being in fact altogether more poetic and inspiring. Though an ex-missionary, and a professor at Oxford, Soothill was highly appreciative of the religious and 'apocalyptic' elements in the Sutra, and did his best to do full justice to these, though the profounder, more 'philosophical' content of the Sutra tends to escape him. After Soothill little happened for forty years to make the *White Lotus Sutra* more accessible to the English-speaking world. In 1962 there appeared Conze's translation of the Sanskrit text of Chapter V, 'On Plants', and that was all. English and American Buddhists and students of Buddhism, who meanwhile had greatly increased in number,—especially since the end of the war,—remained dependent for their knowledge of one of the greatest and most important of all Buddhist scriptures either on Kern's unattractive and sometimes misleading

translation or on Soothill's more readable but incomplete version. Since the beginning of the present decade the situation has changed, and due to the efforts of Chinese, Japanese and American Buddhists it is now possible for us to have a better understanding of the Sutra in the West. In 1970 the Kosei Publishing Company, Tokyo, brought out a revised version of the complete Soothill/Kato translation, while in 1975 this version re-appeared under

the Weatherill/Kosei imprint together with translations of 'The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings' and 'The Sutra of Meditation on the Bodhisattva Universal Virtue' as *The Threefold Lotus Sutra*. Both volumes were meticulously edited and beautifully produced. A year earlier, in 1974, the Buddhist Text Translation Society, San Francisco, had bought out *The Essentials of the Dharma Blossom Sutra, Vol. 1*, by the Chinese Tripitaka Master Tu Lun, and it is with this that we are now concerned.



According to the Short Biography of the Master which is appended to the volume, Ven. Tu Lun was born in Northeastern China in 1908. Becoming a shramanera or novice monk at the age of 19, after his mother's death he lived in solitude for a while and practiced meditation. After the Second World War he was ordained as a bhikshu or full monk, and travelled south to pay his respects to the Venerable Master Hsu Yun, then 109 years old. In 1950 he left for Hong Kong where for the benefit of refugee monks from the mainland he helped establish monasteries and temples throughout the island. In

1962 he arrived in San Francisco, and there from 1968 to 1970 delivered the lectures on which *The Essentials of the Dharma Blossom Sutra* is based. This work, which has been edited and translated by the Master's American disciple Bhikshu Heng Ch'ien (David Fox), will be complete in three volumes, the second and third of which are yet to come. The work is of special importance for three reasons; (1) It is the first English translation of the *White Lotus Sutra* to be made entirely by believing and practising Buddhists working in the traditional manner; (2) It is the first English translation of the Sutra to be accompanied by a commentary in which the Sutra is explained according to the traditional interpretation of the text, in this case that of the T'ien-t'ai School, and (3) It is the first English translation of the Sutra to be made as a result of close collaboration between Eastern and Western Buddhists, especially Tripitaka Master Tu Lun and his disciple Bhikshu Heng Ch'ien.

The present volume consists of the first two chapters of the Sutra, which contains in all twenty-seven or twenty-eight chapters, together with the Master's commentary on each chapter in turn. The text of the Sutra has been translated from Kumarajiva's Chinese version, which is the one generally used in China, and for the convenience of the reader each chapter is printed twice, first in its entirety before the commentary, and again in sections in the body of the commentary. Text and commentary are preceded by a lengthy introduction, as well as by a biography of Kumarajiva. The introduction, which serves to introduce the commentary to the entire Sutra, takes the form of an exposition of the T'ien-t'ai School's five-fold discussion of the recondite principles of the Sutra, viz., explanation of the title, clarification of the sub-



'The Magical City'

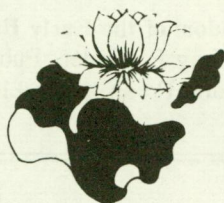
Illustration Penny Edwards

stance, elucidation of the doctrine, discussion of the function, and determination of the teaching. This part of the work gives us a better insight into the teachings of the T'ien-t'ai School, and its approach to the *White Lotus Sutra*, than anything that has yet appeared in English. One stands amazed at the profundity of thought of Chi-i and the other T'ien-t'ai masters, and feels deeply grateful to Ven. Tu Lun and Bhikshu Heng Ch'ien for making this thought accessible to us. The commentary itself follows the detailed

and highly analytical Outline of the Sutra made by the Ming Dynasty Dharma Master No-i. Like the introduction, the commentary is rich and varied in content, giving us not only treasures of T'ien-t'ai thought but expositions of standard Buddhist teachings, biographies of eminent disciples of the Buddha, pithy sayings, poems, anecdotes from the Master's own experience, and even specimens of Chinese Buddhist folklore. Particularly noteworthy are the Master's exposition of the portent of shaking the earth (pp.199-201),

his discussion of the eight vimokshas or 'liberations', here called the eight renunciations (pp.337-340), as well as the whole of the introduction to Chapter 1, 'Expedient Devices', in which the Master explains the interdependency of the provisional and actual teachings and points out how, in the context of this chapter, 'expedient device' has the specific meaning of opening up the provisional teaching to reveal the actual. On a somewhat different level, there is an interesting reference to the Buddha's age on leaving home and on gaining Enlightenment. Following a well-known Pali verse, in which the Buddha himself is represented as speaking, one usually says that the Buddha left home at the age of twenty-nine and gained Enlightenment six years later at the age of thirty-five. Ven.Tu Lun, however, presumably following ancient Indian traditions translated from Sanskrit into Chinese, says of the Buddha, 'He left the palace and all its pleasures at the age of nineteen to cultivate the Way and realized Buddhahood at the age of thirty.' (p. 108) This would seem to agree with texts like the Pabbajja-sutta of the *Sutta-nipata*, one of the more ancient 'books' of the Pali Cannon, which give the definite impression that the future Buddha must have left home at a considerably earlier age than twenty-nine. There is also the curious story of the delayed birth of the Buddha's son Rahula. Again, presumably following ancient Indian traditions, Ven.Tu Lun tells us that on his father's demanding a grandson from him before he would permit him to leave the home-life, 'Sakyamuni Buddha merely pointed a finger at the belly of his wife, Yasodhara, and told her that in six years time she would bear a son.' (p.154) The Master goes on to remark that this may seem rather incredible, but that in the Buddha-

dharma there are a great many mysteries more profound. No doubt there are, but is it not possible that the story of Rahula's delayed birth arose in order to reconcile the fact that he had been born after the Buddha's departure from home with the 'fact' that, according to the accepted account, the Buddha's departure had taken place some years later than it actually had done? The whole question awaits further investigation, and the key to its solution may well be found in the traditions on which Ven.Tu Lun has drawn. Meanwhile, we had best keep an open mind on the subject, and perhaps accustom ourselves to the idea of a quite youthful Buddha.

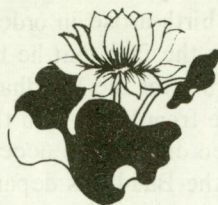


Though there is much else in this invaluable work that invites comment, in a short review it is hardly possible to do justice to the wealth of material that the Ven. Tu Lun and Bhikshu Heng Ch'ien have placed at our disposal. Enough has been said, I hope, to show that the publication of *The Essentials of the Dharma Blossom Sutra* marks the beginning of a new era in the study and appreciation of this sutra in the West. Even when the two remaining volumes have been brought out, however, much will still remain to be done. The *White Lotus Sutra* will be fully known and appreciated in the West only when four conditions have been fulfilled. (1) There must be a new English translation of the Sanskrit text of the Sutra. This should be both accurate and inspiring, doing full justice to doctrinal terminology and poetic imagery alike. Dr.

Conze's rendering of Chapter V, 'On Plants', is a step in the right direction, and it is to be hoped that either Dr. Conze himself or a scholar of equal ability will soon provide us with a comparable version of the remainder of the Sutra. Bhikshu Heng Ch'ien's version of the gatha portion of the Sutra is in the same short, breathless lines as Soothill's, only more regularly stressed, and though on the whole admirably clear, direct and vigorous its language is not only less polished than Soothill's but even, at times, quite rough and clumsy. (2) We must have at our disposal all the traditional interpretations of the *White Lotus Sutra*. Though the Indian master Vasubandhu is said to have written a commentary on the Sutra, this appears to have been lost, and we therefore have to rely mainly on the expositions of the Chinese and Japanese masters, especially those of the T'ien-t'ai School. (3) The Sutra must be studied directly, in the light of what we know about the historical development of Buddhism, as well as studied in the light of the traditional expositions, and the real nature of its teaching ascertained. It will also be necessary to examine the relation between that teaching and (a) the total Buddhist tradition, and (b) Western thought. Ven Tu Lun's approach to the Sutra is 'fundamentalist', but for the Western Buddhist, aware as he usually is that the tradition represented by Ven Tu Lun is not the only one in the Buddhist world, such an attitude is not possible—or possible only at the sacrifice of some of the very qualities on which the pursuit of the spiritual life itself depends. But not to be fundamentalist is not to be untraditional, much less still unBuddhist. We have to adopt towards the vast mass of material that has

poured into the West from all over the Buddhist world the same approach that Chih-i, in the fifth century C.E., adopted towards the material that flooded into China from India and central Asia. What we need is a new, updated T'ien-t'ai School! (4) The teaching of the Sutra must be related to the concrete spiritual needs of Western Buddhists. However sublime a teaching may be, it is

virtually meaningless unless it is able to bring about a radical trans-



formation in the lives of individual human beings.

These four conditions will probably not be fulfilled for some time to come. Meanwhile, in *The Essentials of the Dharma Blossom Sutra* we have a major contribution to the fulfillment of at least the second of them, and the appearance of the second and third volumes of the work will therefore be eagerly awaited.

SANGHARAKSHITA

ALSO RECEIVED

The Eye of Love by Richard Lannoy & Harry Baines. Published by Hutchinson, price £2.95.

The Zen Way by Irmgard Schloegl. Published by Sheldon Press, price £2.95

The Blue Cliff Record Vol One Trans: Thomas and J.C. Cleary. Published by Routledge & Kegan Paul, price £3.00

No Water No Moon by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Published by Sheldon Press, price £2.95

The Wisdom of the Early Buddhists by Geoffrey Parrinder. Published by Sheldon Press, price £1.50

The Tantric Way, published by Thames and Hudson, price £8.50 (cloth) and £4.25 (paper).

Books by the Venerable Maha Sthavira Sanghakshita

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CENTRES and BRANCHES

HELSINKI FINLAND

Report from Hridaya

Three months ago I came to Helsinki for the first time. I left the community at Sukhavati in London where I'd been living and working for a year and came to Helsinki to join the four Order members living and working here. I arrived just before midwinter at the coldest time of the year. The experience of the cold and snow and long dark days was, at the least, interesting. On the whole I found the winter much easier than I had anticipated. To begin with the cold here is at least dry, there is no dampness, and having spent most of my life in Wales and Devon, I know what it is to be damp. There was something too that made the winter even enjoyable and that was the sunshine. Perhaps only a couple of hours a day but looking back over the winter there seem to have been many days of clear blue sky and golden sunlight. During the middle part of the winter when the sun does shine, the light resembles that at sunset, pale and golden and here it was reflected very brightly in the snow.



Anyway, leaving the weather report (I'm more English than I'd thought) there are other things to tell. As is inevitable things have changed over the last three months and perhaps, singularly, the most important change is that we

now have a New Centre. On the first of March we left the third floor flat which had been used for classes since 1973 and moved to larger premises nearer the centre of the city. The new centre provides much more space, especially for people to relax together before and after classes without being in the shrine room.



The move has meant that we have to find much more money at the end of each month than we did before, but what is encouraging is that so many people have come forward to commit themselves to paying something towards the rent for a certain length of time, so financially all seems well.

Our weekly programme has remained unchanged so far this year. There are classes on Sundays and Mondays for people who have been coming along for some time. On Tuesdays the translators' group meets to discuss and translate texts from English into Finnish. Wednesdays is the evening for newcomers and Thursdays for our courses in basic Buddhism. Also on Mondays and Fridays there are yoga classes.

Approximately every five weeks we have a weekend retreat out in the country. The programme for the weekend is similar, I think, to what you'd find at most FWBO retreats held in the U.K. with the exception of the Saturday evening sauna. Perhaps no Finnish retreat would be complete without one. For a longer period of retreat this year, some of us from Helsinki will be travelling to Sweden this summer to join the ten day European

Retreat to be held in Vaxjo.

The summer is on the whole the quietest time in Helsinki, many people take the opportunity of being able to leave the city for the countryside and do not return until September. So the winter is the most active period for us at the Helsinki Centre. Certainly this winter has been active, we feel, with both changes and improvements.

PUNDARIKA (ARCHWAY)

by Lokamitra

One of the most important developments of the last several months has been a closer working relationship with Mandala. With Dhammadinna and Anoma due to establish a women's community in Wanstead. Sagaramati and Ratnajyoti planning to start activities in Manchester we shall be rather thin on the ground soon in North London. and so this closer association has been necessary. I myself am planning to go to India in October and that will leave the running of the two centres mainly in the hands of Vangisa. Kamilasila, Padmavajra and Ratnaguna.

So far we have not actually moved into a new North London centre but we have made a firm offer on a house in Archway, and so not far from our present premises. It will be smaller than our present centre but our limited finances do not give us much choice in the matter. If we do get this place (it is dependent on whether or not we are granted planning permission) then the intention is to establish a men's community either in Archway or in between Mandala and the new Pundarika. The community will consist of those Order members most involved in classes and administration and several Mitras. We are also hoping to rent one or two shops in north west London which will sell whole foods and provide a Right Livelihood for Friends and also feed funds into the Movement.

Other than that our classes are going well with as many people coming along as ever before. Despite the fact that so many Order Members are leaving Pundarika and we shall be moving, our

programme of classes and retreats should not be adversely affected in the least.

Activities will definitely continue at Balmore Street until September this year and so we will be celebrating Wesak (May 3rd) and Dharmacakra Day (July 1st) here and possibly Sangha Day (Sept. 27th) too. Please come along on these days if you are in the area.

New Friends

Report from Lokamitra

On March 17 Padmavajra and I left London for a lightening trip to the Isle of Wight, Exeter and Cheltenham. We were invited to Ventnor by Dennis Sibley, a member of the I.O.W.'s Buddhist Society, who is very concerned along with others there, to create conditions whereby they and others can more effectively put the Teachings of the Buddha into practice. From the start they realised that these conditions must relate to our culture here in the West and not deny it. We were invited down to discuss their ideas.

We drove down to Lymington and took the ferry across to Yarmouth where we were met by Dennis and also Eric Gould, the leader of the Isle of Wight Buddhist Society. I was immediately struck by how suitable the island was for a retreat centre in that by having to take the ferry, one was forced to slow down to a different pace of life. One had no choice but to leave one's city mind on the mainland. That evening we had a very profitable discussion. The group members wanted to know what we felt about their ideas of forming an "English Buddhist Community" and how they could have more contact with other Buddhists. We concluded the evening with the Metta Bhavana practice which they all did for the first time, and all seemed to appreciate.

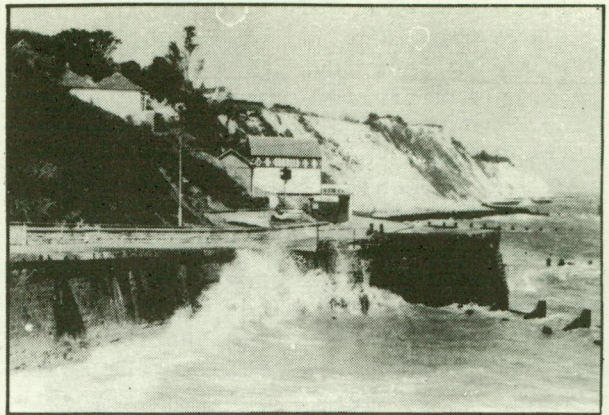
The next day we left for Exeter to make contact with several old Friends from the early days of the Movement. From there we went to Cheltenham, stopping in Glastonbury overnight. At Cheltenham we were put up by Sandy Ewing who has been very energetic in forging links between the FWBO and the Cheltenham Buddhist Society. On the

evening of the 19th March he invited all the regular members of the group round so that we could meet. I was very happy for the opportunity to renew contacts made on my previous visit in October last year. For the following day, Sandy had arranged a public introduction to meditation which we were to lead. Although not very successful in bringing in newcomers, it did provide a very good opportunity to go quite thoroughly over the two basic practices we teach, the Mindfulness of Breathing and the Metta Bhavana, and then to go into some of the difficulties and confusions that arise in running a group like theirs.

We left Cheltenham, very happy to have found such a response and keen to extend FWBO activities in that area as soon as possible. We are hoping to arrange an open retreat in that area sometime in the summer for a week or two. If anyone is interested in attending, they should contact me at Pundarika.

As a result of our visit to the Isle of Wight, we were invited back there on the weekend of 23rd and 24th April to take a retreat. We were very pleased with this invitation as it is in this situation that people can best appreciate what we really have to offer and therefore benefit most from contact with us. It was also encouraging because it showed the determination of the people there. They are not held back by sectarianism as is sometimes the case in smaller Buddhist groups. They just want to get on with putting the Buddha's teaching in practice in the situation in which they find themselves, in a very straightforward manner. They have no time for building a little Tibet or a little Japan in England.

The retreat was held just outside Ventnor a few yards from the sea under a cliff, and quite isolated - a very good setting. There were two points I wanted to make on the weekend, and they were: the place of devotion in Buddhism here in the West, and also, what Spiritual community really means. The first we did by means of puja and chanting.



We did the basic puja and the Seven-fold puja. The basic puja was especially appreciated because it is so straight forward and direct. On this occasion Padmavajra and myself were joined by Padmapani. Having three members of the Order there really meant that something came across through the chanting and puja. One person who attended the retreat said that when he made an offering of incense, Buddhism suddenly for him dropped from his head to his heart.

In view of their appreciation of the need for spiritual community one of the two tapes of Bhante's we played was "The Individual and the Spiritual Community" (the seventh in the series "The Higher Evolution of the Individual")



This tape makes very clear the difference between a group and a spiritual community which is sometimes so difficult to grasp if one does not have much contact with an already existing spiritual community. It emphasises

that one cannot join a spiritual community unless one is, or truly aspires to be, an individual. This led on to a very fruitful discussion in the evening. The next day we played the tape "The Path of Regular Steps and the Path of Irregular Steps". This was also very much appreciated because of Bhante's "no-nonsense" approach. If one really wants to evolve, then one has to put the teachings of the Buddha into practice in every situation one finds oneself in, especially the most basic and ordinary situations. Bhante finishes the lecture with an explanation of what Going for Refuge and Ordination mean. Ordination means Going for Refuge, not just the number and form of precepts taken. Going for Refuge should be the central act of a Buddhist's life, and the precepts one takes are secondary to this.

Altogether it was a very successful and happy weekend. Padmapani, Padmavajra and myself left refreshed not only by the sea air, but especially by contact with others who are really doing what they can to evolve.

BRIGHTON

Report from Mangala

1976 has seen the emergence, almost, of a whole new movement here in Brighton, as a new "second wave" of interested, enthusiastic people turn up regularly at our various meditation and yoga classes, retreats and so on. To encourage and help cater for this interest and enthusiasm, we decided to run, besides our Introductory and Regulars classes, an eight week course on meditation and Buddhism, which is proving to be very useful since it introduces people to Buddhism as well as meditation. In this way the course forms a sort of bridge between our introductory evening where only meditation is taught, and our Regulars' class. The course, which is by arrangement only, will be repeated every eight weeks.

All this isn't to say that the "old wave" aren't doing all right as well, but rather now seem to be coming to a point



where they no longer wait for Order members to instigate things, and are taking the initiative themselves. The mitras for example have just recently formed a weekly study group, which by all accounts is very successful and of course, Sunrise, our wholefood restaurant is completely run by mitras and Friends. Other mitra-organised events planned for the near future include a sponsored walk and a poetry evening.

The importance of events of this kind, plus working and living situations, cannot be overstressed, I think. While classes are very important and necessary, they are only a beginning, and we really need to start creating more, practical situations where people can work and live together, so that Buddhism isn't just something you do once a week in a class, but something at work in your life all the time.

Our present circumstances in Brighton don't help very much in this way, so we are looking for a new Centre, somewhere large enough for people to come together in various practical ways, and if possible to house a fairly large resident community.

A Centre should be more than classes once or twice a week; it should manifest a way of life, and be seeking to expand outwards in many diverse ways, transforming the social environment, becoming as Bhante put it "the nucleus of a new society". This I feel is slowly happening here in Brighton as people come more and more together through their involvement in the Centre.

ARYATARA SURREY

REPORT by Nagabodhi

It is hard to believe that this time last year our financial situation was so dismal that at one point I was reading over our lease to see what length of notice we would have to give should we have to close down. Hard to believe because FWBO Surrey is more secure and active now than at any other time in its history. Our bank balance is healthy, and our classes are popular, friendly and full.

This session we have added a Mitra Study Group to our list of weekly activities, during which we have been discussing the text of Breaking through into Buddhahood. With our plans and fund-raising well under way for our wholefood shop venture - and with an application for an excellent site in Croydon under consideration - it really feels as if, after eight years, Sarum House / Aryatara / FWBO Surrey has really established itself as an outward-looking centre of the FWBO.

AUCKLAND NEW ZEALAND

from Peter Joseph

To try to see a year in the life of a centre - the Auckland centre - can be difficult. What is this centre? Is it really possible to describe its life as separate from the lives of the individuals who make it? We may perhaps find that the answer is 'No'. Part of living the Dharma is eroding the walls of separateness that divide not only one person from another, but also an individual's daily activities, as we find that 'taking part' is not just attending a class or two a week, but really sharing the rest of our daily life more and more with others who share our desire for growth.

One thing that has characterised the centre in the past has been regular changes of address - this was no less true for 1976 - but we hope that now the shifting has stopped, at least for a brief pause, in which we can consoli-

date and grow at Hilton House. Early last year the move began from 19 Oxton Road, a residential centre where two Order members and a mitra had been living. For about a year we had the valuable experience of finding out what a residential centre is like, its advantages and its disadvantages. But then the landlord wanted to use the house; a new search began. For about a month we had no fixed abode until alighting in a suite of office rooms on Upper Queen Street in the city centre. However a city centre demands more financial commitment, unlike a residential centre, so since moving in we have placed more emphasis on fund raising than before.

The evening classes have seen greater expansion and development - in particular the 8-week courses in Basic Buddhism, two of which were held in May-June and July-August; and Thursday night's 'intermediate class' which has now evolved into a mitra workshop. This latter was put on its original course by Maha Upasaka Akshobhya, who began with a series about methods of teaching Buddhism. This turned into a more free-form series of simple evenings of communication. Following this Paddmasiddhi led a speaker's class and then Purna took study groups on the White Lotus Sutra - these two getting very good responses. The overall emphasis here is on communication - whether as topic-speakers or participating in a study, we are trying to develop openness, clarity and sincerity.

Perhaps an unusual feature emerging from our growth here in the last year has been the number of Friends who became mitras - now making a total of eleven in Auckland. Without realising it we have seen a 'mitra consciousness' springing up, and this has expressed itself in greater involvement. This involvement need not, indeed cannot, be necessarily expressed through the organization of classes and retreats. This is a matter of individual temperament, but an individual's commitment can be expressed quietly; a good example being the experience of living in the same house together, really joining our lives in quite mundane things -

like washing dishes and gardening. Thus one of our growing points over the year has been the fact of more Order members and mitras living together. This is only a beginning: already several people are involved in building a community on Waiheke Island not far from the city. Gradually, in many different ways, we are learning about spiritual community.



Bhante taking a N.Z. study group

WELLINGTON N.Z.

from Megha and Achala

The FWBO in Wellington is now just over one year old. It is much smaller than the Auckland and Christchurch FWBO's and officially it is not a centre but a branch of the Christchurch centre. Achala and Megha are the only Order members involved.

Looking back over the past twelve months, there has been a slow but steady growth of both commitment and fellowship amongst the regular Friends. This has led us to the idea of getting together and forming a community centre with six people living there and using the house for meetings. So we are now in the process of searching for a large centrally located house to rent. Meanwhile meetings continue to be held at Achala's flat.

Regular meetings are held three nights a week. It is also planned to have weekend retreats every second month. The first ever Wellington FWBO newsletter will be produced shortly.

VAJRADHATU NORWICH

Report from Devamitra

Activities at Vajradhatu during the last few months have been highlighted by a series of five lectures given by different members of the Order, perhaps the most noteworthy being that given by Dhammadinna whose inspiring talk, *The Road to Freedom*, aroused considerable interest. Meditation classes continue on Tuesdays and Thursdays, while fortnightly on Wednesdays Devamitra visits the "Buddhist inmates" of Blundeston Prison, Lowestoft, acting as "Visiting Buddhist Minister". The prison chapel is made available each visit for meditation and discussion.

During recent weeks much of the time & energy of some of us has been given over to thinking and talking about communities.... and setting them up. A women's community-and-country-retreat centre is projected and a transaction is already under way for a property for it fifteen miles south of Norwich. Meanwhile in the very heart of Norwich Vajrakula, the inevitable offspring of Vajradhatu, has sprung into existence. Vajrakula (Vajric family or brotherhood) is the name taken by the men's community occupying premises at 41b All Saints Green, Norwich. We have taken a seven year lease on this property which is right in the centre of the city, barely a stone's throw away from the castle and also from Vajradhatu. The house is quite spacious and has been occupied since the end of February by the community of six, although there is sufficient space to expand to eight. No women are allowed on the premises as we wish to maintain the intensity and clarity afforded by the single sex situation at all times. As is the case at Sukhavati, the community lives out of a common purse. The building needs completely redecorating and has to have a number of fire doors installed and together with the daily meditations and pujas: this work will be the major preoccupation of the community for several weeks. The first room to be completed was the shrine room.

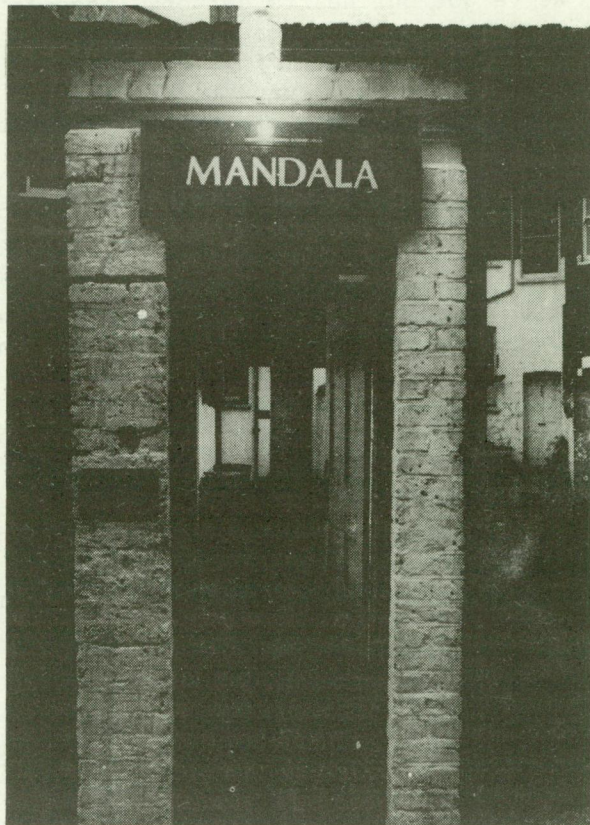
MANDALA WEST LONDON

by Kamalasila

Classes at Mandala have been getting better and better. More people are coming along, and those who are come more regularly and contribute more. People seemed to have realised that for, say a discussion to be useful and enjoyable, you have to make some positive contribution to it, perhaps a nonverbal one, but there has to be something. Now a few people have started participating, it is easier for everything to flow more freely, people become more alive and receptive to the Dharma. The last report could have said that a yellow cube, representing Earth, the element of solidity and gravity, in our case as the basis for all future developments, had appeared from out of the bright blue sky of possibilities for West London. Recently it has been noticed that there is a white sphere balanced quietly on top of it, which symbolises the moving, more open quality of Water.

In February we had a retreat at Aryatara which twenty people attended, only four from West London... More recently there was a very good Day Retreat at the Centre, and a small Beginners' Retreat at Court Lodge taken by Vajradaka, who's been teaching the Beginners' Meditation Class for the last two months. A massive publicity drive at the beginning of the year has helped to draw West Londoners to Mandala, and Vajradaka's influence - he has been letting it be clearly known what the FWBO has to offer - has done quite a lot to keep some of them coming. Hopefully more, various, posters will be designed and printed for coming months: West London Friends, that is, Jenny Mastin, Anthony Tribe, Roger Jones, - have been cycling around West London streets with the latest publicity, getting them into shop windows and on to noticeboards. Jenny, Tony and Roger in fact have been doing almost everything around Mandala - keeping the centre tidy, arranging and organising fund raising such as our sponsored walk in February which raised £75, organising retreats and classes. We

are financially in rather bad shape, and plenty of funds still have to be raised: the next event is to be a jumble sale in early May. (If you have any jumble, or anything else that might help, please let us know. We can collect).



During the Anniversary Celebrations Week there will be a Metta Bhavana Day-Retreat at the Centre led by Kamalasila, which as its name suggests will be especially to do with the Metta Bhavana practice, and we will also be having our own Open Day with an Exhibition and a discussion on Western Buddhism led by Vangisa.

HERUKA GLASGOW

Report from Dhammarati

On March 21 Glasgow District Council wrote to us instructing us to leave the building which houses Heruka, by April 28. It seems that the basement is damaged, so, because it is a short-life property, rather than repair it, they are going to knock it down.

Before March 21 we were giving a lot of thought to a new centre - it was clearly the next step. Now an impatient universe is dropping some big hints. We are going to have to find a new centre and quick.

We've got our hearts set on Glasgow's west end. It's a beautiful part of the city, fine buildings with many trees and enough space to let in the sunlight. The university and the cheap bed-sits mean there's a young and intelligent population. It's a good place for a centre. All we have to do now is find a suitable building and raise enough money to pay for it.

This piece is being written March 28th. There's a number of possibilities open to us, including one very interesting building, a big ex-warehouse, in the west end. Our course of action depends on whether we can raise money to pay for that or another suitable place. In any event our regular programme will stop mid-April.

After April 28 you can get information about what we're doing from the community at 36 Hamilton Park Avenue, Glasgow, G12 8DT. We intend to hold one class a week there, if we're not rehoused. All correspondence to Heruka should be addressed to Hamilton Park Avenue.

Ordination Retreat

Friday April 1st to Sunday April 3rd
By Duncan Skinner

Cold winds, a wild choppy sea and a rough ferry crossing heralded the start of this retreat.

Bhante came out of his retreat, Denis came from New Zealand and a company of seven (including Purna, also from New Zealand) travelled up from Sukhavati to the island of Cumbrae in the Firth of Clyde. The retreat was called at such short notice that only sixteen people could be accommodated. The concentrated goodwill so characteristic and necessary in the birth of new Order members blossomed in the Scottish air. On Saturday Bhante, brighter than ever and bristling with new ideas, led us in two question-and-answer sessions cover-

ing the precepts and ordination.

Bright skies and silence reigned from Saturday afternoon till after the public ordinations. On Saturday evening during the special metta-bhavana the four Ordainees received their private ordinations. Then the delicious suspense till the public ordinations: nature makes her presence known, white horses leap off the waves onto the dark shore, scurrying winds chase rain round the building, a few stars twinkle suggestively, clouds flirt with the almost full moon, we sleep...

The private ordination expresses one's individual commitment - even if no one else goes for refuge, you go; to you it is the only life worth leading, the only true human life, and you are resolved to strive on, on your own if necessary. In the public ordination you 'discover' that in fact you are not alone, that others are making that effort too, that you are a 'member' (strictly speaking you can't be a member, rather a 'fellow') of the Spiritual Community.

The public ordinations took place on Sunday in bright sunshine. Bhante spoke with emphasis on purification as the Ordainees made offerings to the shrine: white shrine cloth, white candles, white flowers, white kesas, and a little water rubbed on the scalp, symbolising purity. And of course a new individual, spiritually reborn, needs a new name.

Roy Campbell became Sangharatna - jewel of the Sangha.

Dave McNally became Dipankara - one who lights the lamp of the Dharma for the sake of all beings (maybe eventually in Australia?)

Pat Dunlop became Danavira - hero of generosity.

Dennis Iverson became Udaya - spiritually up and coming, dawn.

The international nature of this ordination retreat indicates the supra-nationality of the Spiritual Community in which all worldly differences are set aside, transcended. Just as the waters of the great rivers enter the ocean, shedding their identities to become water of the great ocean, so

all who go for refuge become sons of the Buddha.

SUKHAVATI BETHNAL GREEN

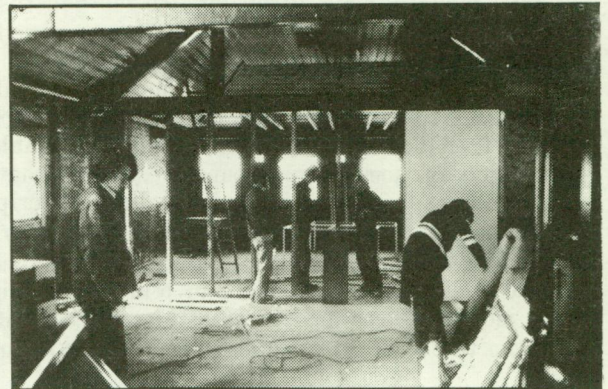
by Tim McNally

There are two contrasting pictures of Sukhavati juxtaposed at present. On the one hand Friends Building Service is by now a robust and well and truly going concern (at the moment sitting a trifle uneasily perhaps atop a veritable glut of booked-up jobs), and the decorators' van is currently a familiar sight around houseproud Clapham assisting, like an overworked midwife, at the multiple deliveries of bathrooms, dining rooms and kitchettes. On the other hand bank balance inspection will reveal that we are just managing to break even. It is a paradoxical state of affairs caused by higher costs of running a community as well as substantial reinvestment in timber and other expensive materials. FBS continues to make money at a very agreeable rate considering the hard times in the building industry, and is still hot on the trail of the elusive five-figure contract, though Windhorse Press, Windhorse Transport and Friends' Foods are rather more marginally profitable. It remains to be seen if they will yet fulfil their early promise; it may be that there will be a shake-out at Sukhavati in the not too distant future. This is not to be taken as a sign of instability or weakness. Far from it, this is a manifestation of the dynamism and resilience for which Sukhavati is known and respected. As a matter of historical fact the minor setbacks and disappointments we have experienced over the past twelve months have been only so much grist for the growth mill (and I am being only mildly positive).

Sukhavati needs room to manoeuvre. So there is about to be created, at 199-21 Roman Road, just a few doors away, "Son of Sukhavati" - a spacious property to be leased from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and comprising five levels: the bottom two to be leased to another tenant and the top



'Golgonoza'



Windhorse Studio

three to accommodate, respectively, a "temporary centre", a community of four or five, and a studio for Windhorse Designs. The "temporary centre" will be open to the public and offer meditation and yoga classes: in this way it will of course anticipate by several months that particular function of Sukhavati (though on a much smaller scale). This has eased some of the pressure for the completion of the work on the old time-scale and the "cavalry charge" approach has been quietly dropped: the pace is a bit more congenial for most, although truth to tell there are a few empty saddles. Valuable time and energy has therefore been devoted to the needs of the community. Study groups have been more efficiently organised so that there is now a wider choice of "field". "Mitra Consciousness" has been discovered at Sukhavati with the inauguration of a

Mitra Council (chaired by Phil Shrivell) and regular mitra meetings and study groups. The upheaval has already blasted two individuals up and out of the Mitra Sangha and into the Order. I refer to David McNally (Upasaka Dipankara) and Roy Campbell (Upasaka Sangharatna), both valuable office bearers of the Mitra Council whose depleted ranks will nevertheless regroup, sorry, re-form, at the first of the Mitra Days, on April 7th.

We are also fortunate to have as guests two New Zealand Order members, Upasakas Purna and Udaya (the former Dennis

Iverson, recently ordained). There is now a healthy crossfertilisation of ideas, energies, cultures and intonation patterns at Sukhavati, and communication and spiritual fellowship, have never been better. But, needless to say, skilled, positive people (or those aspiring to be) are still needed. Delay not your decision. It may be that there will be roving bands of Sukhavatins abroad this summer, perhaps visiting your centre, with or without a four ton van.

Of course, you can always pay the Danegeld.

Publications

We have recently been given, through the generosity of a single benefactor, enough money to produce our own edition of *The Three Jewels*. The paper has now been bought, the printers and binders booked, so within the next two months we hope to have five thousand copies of the book available at a price of somewhere around £1.50 per copy.

Bhante has just finished editing the transcript of the seminar on Shantideva's *Bodhicaryavatara* which was held some three years ago. He tells me that he would like to see this in print too within three months! Some people have already benefited from attending study groups on this text, and

can bear witness to the vitality, immediacy and up to date relevance of the seminar transcript. It will indeed be a wonderful thing to see this being more widely available - which means that, to do the project justice, we are going to have to find about £3,000. Can any of you help us with this venture?

Many of you will remember reading Bhante's poem 'The Song of the Windhorse', which appeared in issue 29 of the Newsletter. This is now being produced as a colourful illustrated poster, and will cost £1.00. You will be able to get a copy from your nearest centre, or direct from me at Aryatara.

Nagabodhi

This Newsletter

...costs us about £800 p.a. to print and post. We receive about £150 in subscriptions. The difference is covered by the account from which we hope to pay for our future publications.

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Based on Ven. Sangharakshita's lectures, writings and study-seminars, *Mitrata* is a comprehensive, down-to-earth manual of the spiritual life for people who are trying to practise Buddhism. The sort of topics that are covered include meditation, morality, hindrances; encountered along the path, and so on. The next issue will have the title: *The Spiral Path*, and will be based on Bhante's lecture - 'The Stages of the Spiritual Path', with a 'running commentary' extracted from a study-seminar on *The Three Jewels*.

If you would like to receive this magazine please write to Upasaka Vessantara at Aryatara. *Mitrata* costs 50p per copy and appears every two months. A year's subscription costs £3.00.

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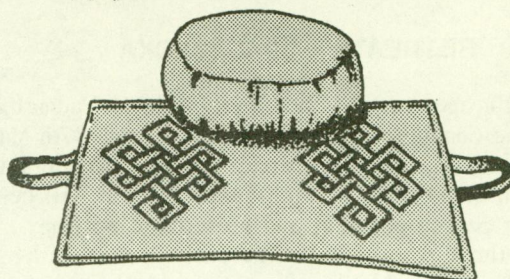
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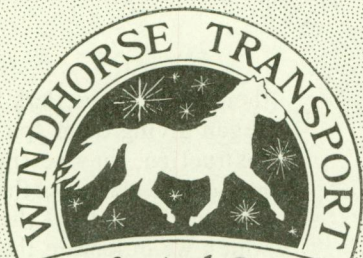
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RETREATS



RETREATS AT PADMALOKA



Two men's open retreats are being held at Padmaloka during the coming months. The first is from 27th May until 11th June, and the second is from 27th August until 10th September. In each case the cost will be £3.00 per person per day, and preference will be given to those who book for the entire period of a retreat. If you would like to go, contact Upasaka Vajrakumara at Padmaloka.



EUROPEAN RETREAT

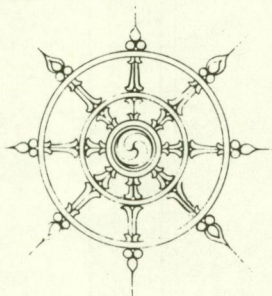
A retreat is being held near Vaxjo in

Sweden from 29 July - 7th August. This retreat, which is being organised by Upasaka Aryavamsa, our first Swedish Order member, in collaboration with Upasaka Hridaya at the Helsinki centre, will be open to Friends from all parts of Europe. The cost will be 400 Swedish crowns. If you would like to go please contact Hridaya in Helsinki (note new address on back cover). A map and directions on how to get to the retreat will be sent along with confirmation of booking. Aryavamsa says that people will be most welcome to arrive a few days (up to a week) early for a 'working retreat' - getting the house ready for the main retreat.

FESTIVALS

DHARMACHAKRA DAY

After gaining Enlightenment, the Buddha realised that he had a tremendous discovery to share. He knew that there were others who would be able to benefit from what he had to say. Walking to Benares he sought out five former spiritual companions, and finding



them in the Deer Park there, began giving them spiritual instruction, thus setting in motion the 'Wheel of the Dharma'. Dharmachakra Day- the day on which we celebrate the anniversary of this first discourse- falls on Friday 1st July this year. Contact your nearest centre for details of their plans.

STOP PRESS

EAST LONDON CENTRE

Sukhavati opens for meditation and Hatha Yoga classes on 11th June, *not* at Sukhavati community but down the road at 119-121 Roman Road, Bethnal Green, London E2.

THE THOUSAND PETALLED LOTUS

The Windhorse Bookshop, at our Brighton centre, say that they are able to offer this book, the first volume of Ven. Sangharakshita's memoirs, at the special price of £3.50 (plus 30p post and package) to readers of the Newsletter. Hurry while stocks last...

DHARMACHAKRA TAPES

New address for Dharmachakra Tapes: send your orders, or medium sized SAE for catalogue, to Vajrakula, 14a All Saints Green, Norwich, Norfolk.

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: *Pundarika:* 1a Balmore Street, Archway, London N.19.
Tel: 01-263 2339
Sukhavati: 51 Roman Road, Bethnal Green, London E2.
Tel: 01-981 1933.
Mandala: 86d Telephone Place, Fulham, London SW6.
Tel: 01-385 8637.
Golgonooza: 119 Roman Road, Bethnal Green, London E2.
Tel: 01-981 5157

NORWICH: *Vajradhatu:* 226 Queens Road, Norwich, Norfolk.
Padmaloka Community: Lesingham House, Surlingham,
Nr Norwich, Norfolk. (Visitors by arrangement only)

BRIGHTON: 19 George Street, Brighton Sussex. Tel: 0273-693 971.

SURREY: *Aryatara:* 3 Plough Lane, Purley, Surrey. Tel: 01-6602542.

GLASGOW: 36 Hamilton Park Ave, Glasgow G12 8DT.

EDINBURGH: FWBO Representative: Upasaka Uttara, 12 Bruntsfield
Gardens, Edinburgh EH10 4EH.

CORNWALL: c/o David Austen, 3 Bedruthan Ave, Tregurra Parc, Truro.
Tel: Truro 79467.

SWEDEN: FWBO Representative: Upasaka Aryavamsa, Elleholmsvagen 11,
S-35243, Vaxjo, Sweden.

NETHERLANDS: FWBO Representative: Upasika Vajrayogini, Ringdijk 90,
Postgiro 16 2586, Rotterdam. Tel: 010-3110 180863

FINLAND: Albertinkatu 21c12, 00120 Helsinki 12, Finland.
Tel: Helsinki 669 820.

NEW ZEALAND: *Auckland:* PO Box 68-453, Newton, Auckland. Meetings
in Room 18, Hilton House, 430 Queens Street, Auckland 1.
Wellington: 24 Plunket Street, Kelburn, Wellington 5.
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Christchurch: PO Box 21-657, Christchurch. Meetings at
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