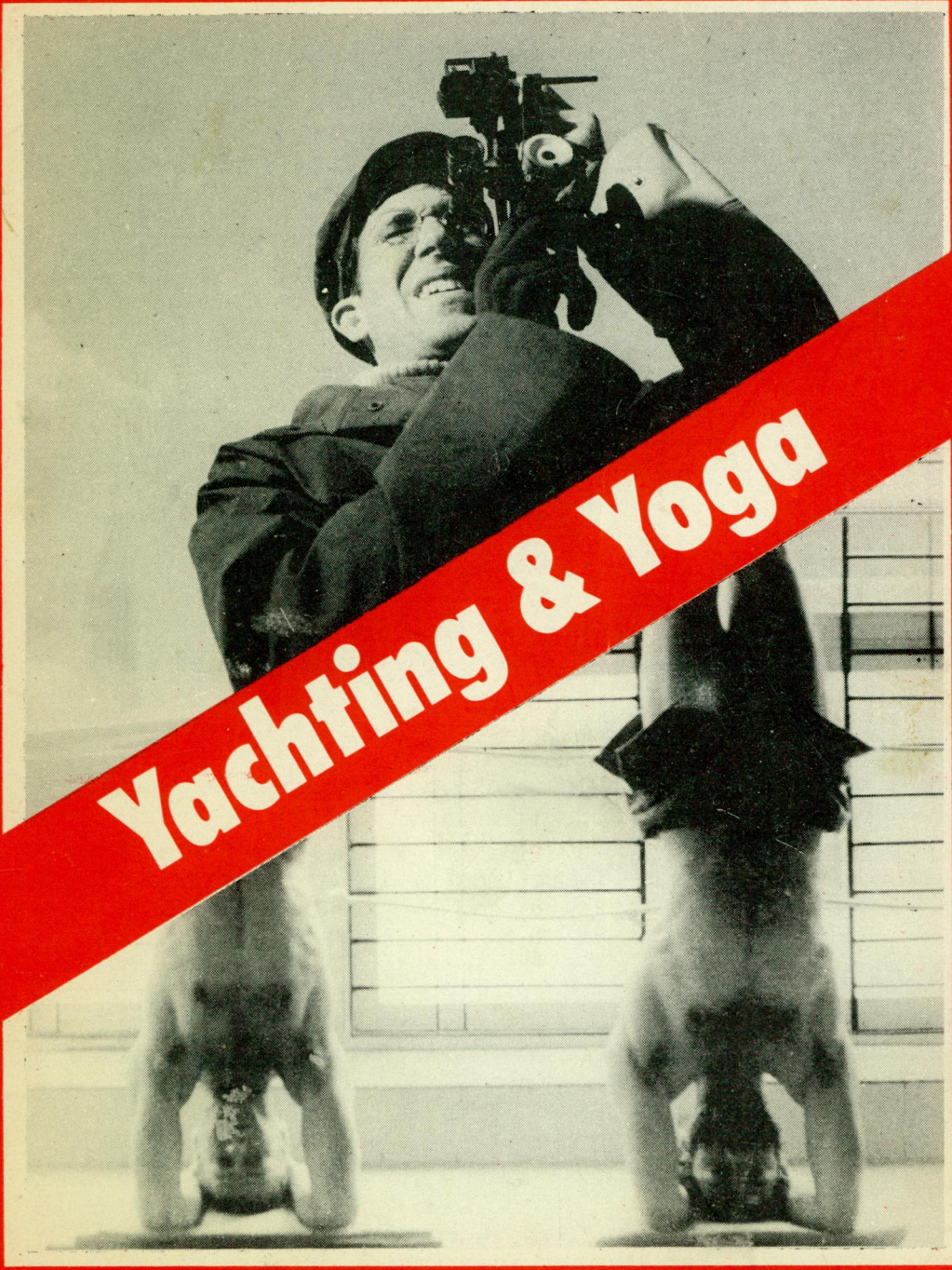


FWBO

Newsletter 37

price 40p



Yachting & Yoga

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Atlantic

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Where on Earth do they
get you?

Weekly Programmes

SUKHAVATI

Monday	7.00pm	Meditation and Dharma course
Tuesday	7.00pm	Regular meditation
Wednesday	7.30pm	Hatha yoga
Thursday	7.00pm	Beginners' meditation class

MANDALA (WEST LONDON)

Monday	7.00pm	Beginners' meditation class, occasional lecture
Tuesday	5.30pm	Hatha yoga
Thursday	7.00pm	Meditation and Puja

SWISS COTTAGE (Church Hall, Loudoun Road, NW8. C/o 272 4884)

Monday	7.00pm	Hatha yoga
Thursday	7.00pm	Meditation and Dharma course lasting 6 weeks (by arrangement, next course starts February 15th. New course every 6 weeks.)

ARYATA (SURREY)

Monday	6.00 & 7.45pm	Hatha yoga
Tuesday	10.30am	Hatha yoga
	7.30pm	Meditation and puja
Wednesday	7.30pm	Beginners' meditation class

BRIGHTON

Monday	7.15pm	Beginners' meditation class
Tuesday	7.15pm	Meditation, puja
Wednesday	6.00pm & 7.30 pm	Hatha yoga (by arrangement)
Thursday	7.15pm	Meditation and Buddhism course (arrangement)

VAJRADHATU (NORWICH)

Monday	6.30pm	Meditation course (6 weeks, by arrangement)
Tuesday	7.00pm	Regular meditation and puja
Wednesday	6.30pm	Meditation course (6 weeks, by arrangement)
Thursday	7.00pm	Introductory Buddhism (meditation/talk or taped lecture)

HERUKA (GLASGOW)

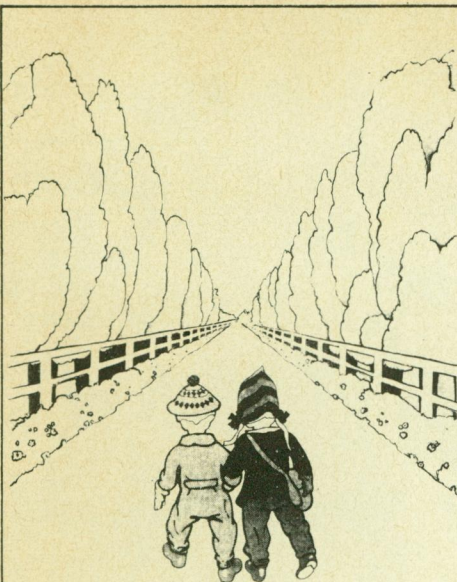
Tuesday	7.15pm	Meditation, puja, taped lecture series
Wednesday	7.30pm	Buddhism for Today and Tomorrow: lecture series and discussion for newcomers
Thursday	7.30pm	Beginners' meditation class
Sunday	7.30pm	Beginners' meditation class

CORNWALL

There are no public classes at present, but weekend retreats are held approximately every six weeks. For further information contact The Secretary, Selsey, St Stephen's Combe, St Austell, Cornwall. Tel: Grampound Rd 882401

MANCHESTER

Meditation Classes and Dharma Courses are being given here. Please ring for details (see back cover.)



Editor: Nagabodhi
Assistant Editor: Marichi

Layout and Design by
Windhorse Studios

Photographs by Roger Jones,
Jory Squibb, Siddhiratna,
Surata.

Published quarterly for the Friends
of the Western Buddhist Order,
51 Roman Road, Bethnal Green,
London, E.2. Tel: 01-981 1225
President:

Ven. Maha Sthavira Sangharakshita

Printed by Windhorse Press
at Sukhavati, 51 Roman Road, E.2.

© FWBO Publications 1978
Subscriptions: £2.00 per annum,
£2.50 overseas.
Cheques and postal orders should be
made payable to Windhorse
Publications at 3 Plough Lane,
Purley, Surrey, England.

EDITORIAL

*The call of the sea is a wild call
that cannot be denied.*

Whether it is heard in the sighs and gasps of the sea, or in the scream of an aeroplane engine, or somehow mixed up with the smoky tang of a hitchable road, the call of new lands, new faces, new sights and experiences, the call of the travel bug, is a wild and seductive call. Why settle? Why plunge into the drab treadmill of routine, the non-movement in movement of the drear daily round, when you could be slamming down on to the tarmac at Karachi, or high up in the cab of a Juggernaut bounding through Iran, or screaming down the Highway thru' Dakota — a bit of money in your pocket, a few clothes and a passport your only burden? To most of us travel has its own uniquely irresistible, romantic appeal. In the *Four Quartets* Eliot gives a clue to the secret of its allure when he says:

*You are not those who saw the harbour
Receding, or those who will disembark.
Here between the hither and the farther shore
while time is withdrawn, consider the future
And the past with equal mind.*

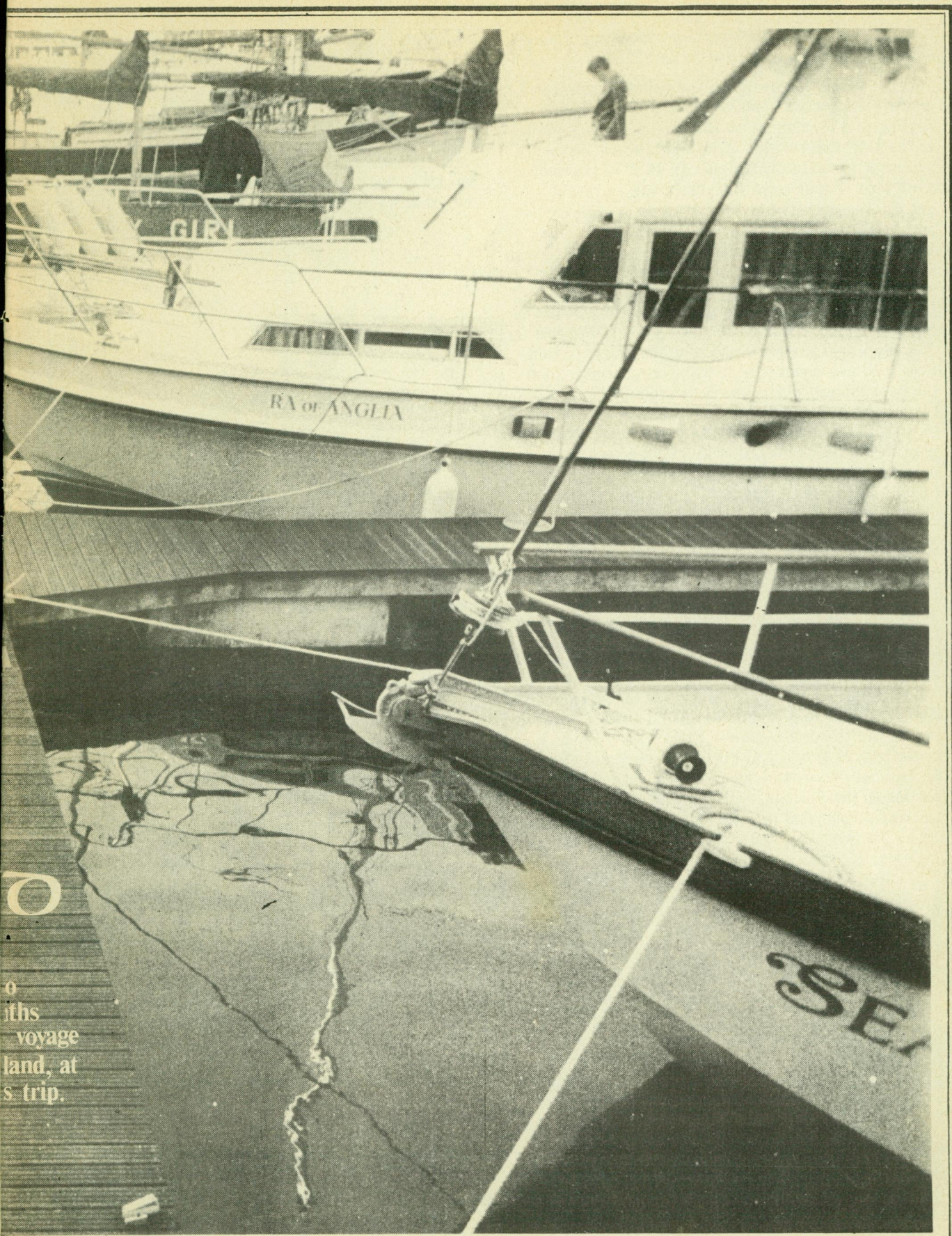
While time is withdrawn: by 'time' he does not mean the organic flow of continuous duration and experience, but the sealed up, factory set, tick-tock wheel time of the clock by which we teach ourselves to sleep, wake, eat, work and play. It is in the service of this kind of time that we have learned to tame and portion out our energies and possibilities, training and pruning our natural growth into a tightly controlled semblance of 'order'; the 'smaller mandala' of worldly concern. But *there*, where time is withdrawn, on a journey perhaps, on retreat, in meditation; every instant, could we but wake up to the fact, — there is no tick of time 'passing', nor any need to don the 'mind-made manacles' of fixed identity and fixed speciality. *There* we find the simple yet dignified and inspiring experience of ourselves as we really are, alive and growing, unlimited by name and notion, in tune with the 'greater mandala' of spiritual possibility. No wonder then that the journey is a universal symbol of the spiritual life. Even now as we tread the Path we are not those who took up position for our first meditation class, or those who will fight our last victorious battle against Mara's hoards. Here, between the hither and the farther shore, we are and will be travellers, restless for change, prepared to leave behind the more cumbersome burdens, and hopefully coming to consider ourselves from an ever wider, and ultimately transcendental, perspective.

Nagabodhi



Just a Leaf Blowing Downwind

In April last year Jory Squibb went down to Dartmouth to buy himself a boat. Two months later, on the 1st June, he set off on a 57 day voyage to Mystic, Conn, USA—alone. Back on dry land, he talked to Nagabodhi about his



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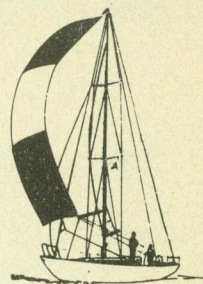
NAGABODHI: How much sailing experience did you have when you decided to make this trip?

JORY: I actually grew up on the Great Lakes. I had my first boat when I was eight, and it was actually sailing that brought me to Buddhism. In 1969, when in the U.S. the war was at its peak, when Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy were assassinated I felt that at that point I couldn't wait for society to get itself together. I had to get to grips with my own problems, and at that point bought an old sailboat and set sail with a few other people – around the world. And it was on that trip that I first ran into meditation. Sailing through the Carribean in the first year I met some hippy character who laid a book on me, and the book was called *The Three Pillars of Zen*, by Roshi Kapleau, and told about how to fold your legs and count to ten, that sort of thing. So at the next island, which was Martinique, I headed to the mountains with my blanket and was determined to give this thing a try – and I couldn't get anywhere with it. As I look back that gives me a measurement of where my mind was at at that time. I couldn't get beyond the count of three!

What made you decide to do this trip now?

It's tied up with the same kind of movement that brought me to the 'Friends' in the first place. Before I got into Buddhism I was content to lead a very scattered, outwardly adventurous kind of life. Through that trip I came to Zen, and basically sat facing a wall for five or six years with Kapleau Roshi, at the end of which I felt I had developed in some way. There were now two poles in my life that I wanted to find some middle ground between. I'd lived the adventurous life to some degree – packed as much as I could into 29 years, and I'd lived five years of a very disciplined, very structured, very beautiful life, and coming to the Friends, with the emphasis on positive emotions, emphasis on work, a lot of involvement in cities and what-all, and yet keeping alive the spirit-

ual life, this was a decision to try to integrate these two periods of my life. So here I had this love of sailing which had been with me all my life and which had brought me to Buddhism, and which I'd just dropped. Frankly it kind of rankled there too, it was always a sort of attraction, and I wanted to bring it under the umbrella of my Buddhist practice so they weren't at war so much. It seemed like the ideal way to do that was some kind of sailing solitary.

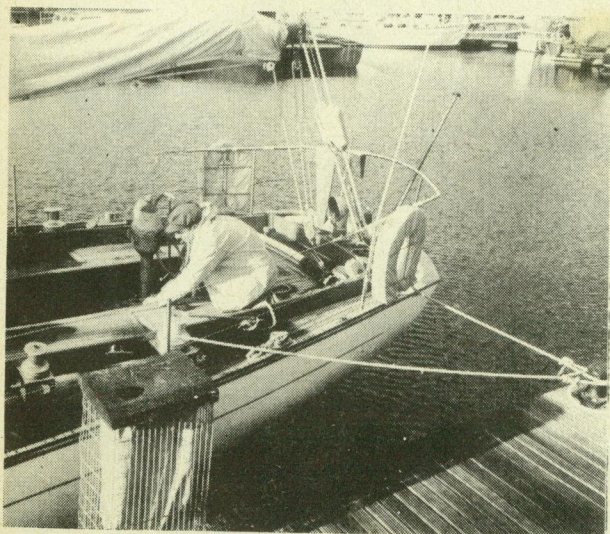


What kind of boat did you use for the voyage?

She was quite old. Aphelion was her given name and it's always bad luck to change the name of a boat – it alienates: her from her karma. She was a thirty-five foot sloop. Steel. By one of the great old British designers – a fellow by the name of Buchanan. Unfortunately a design which is known to be 'sea tender', which is a euphemism for a boat that'll really knock you around like a box of matches, but I just fell in love with that particular boat. It's got one mast and carries basically two sails. There's actually a whole bunch of sails that you can put on in front of the mast and they have to be changed continually according to certain conditions. It's a very simple rig. Not only that but this one had what's called 'roller reefing', which allows you to roll down the main like a window shade, and she also had a self-steering apparatus, so for single handed sailing she was beautiful.

Was there much cabin space?

Well, basically, it has a main saloon which is about six to eight feet long and seven feet wide. There are two bunks along the sides and the galley. I built a big plywood platform between those bunks so that I could sit. I found that if I sat cross-wise the motion of the ship didn't affect my sitting whatsoever because then I could shift from the waist up. I had all the space I needed. I could sleep cross-wise or on the diagonal; I could do whatever I wanted to. It was a very nice layout. I set up a really nice shrine in one of the side cupboards. I could open it up and I had a beautiful Kshitigarba. I screwed it down so it would sit there, and that figure and I really developed a long and beautiful rapport. Having that rupa on the trip was just life saving. And I had something like 42 Padmaloka candles, four boxes of incense, my sitting cushion and everything, so really I was



well equipped.

So what about the journey? Was it easy?

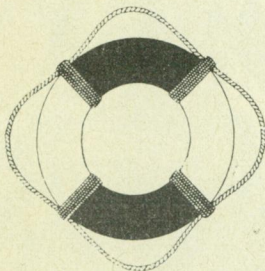
Well it really broke down into two sections. Leaving Dartmouth you're immediately in probably the toughest sailing area in the world. You've got the English Channel, the Bay of Biscay – the dreaded Bay of Biscay, and you've got an area that's constantly stormy. I'd heard this was so, but I'd sort of hoped that I'd escape. I'd never sailed that stretch before and of course I was getting used to being alone. It took sixteen days to do that stretch, and fourteen of them were storms. I'd never believed that weather could be that bad that consistently. I'd never been through fourteen days of storms like that – rain and roaring headwinds. It was just absolutely hellish.

Was it dangerous?

Well, I think if you can navigate well and you always know where you are, and if you know how to reduce sail well in advance, then sailing a boat is probably safer than driving on a motorway – if you're in a sound ship and you have a safety line on.

So you didn't get scared.

Yes. I was almost always scared! Because statistically it may be safe, but psychologically, being alone and facing those elements, you can keep telling yourself 'it's safe, it's safe, it's safe', but the way it feels to be in storms for instance, in the dead of night, alone on the ship with no one to whisper in your ear 'it's okay, you'll get through it', you begin to wonder whether you will get through it; whether the mast will stay up.

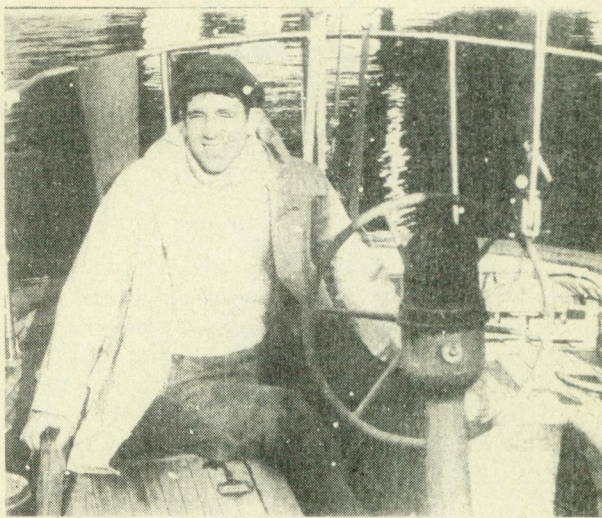


At a time like that, what kind of relationship do you find yourself in with the elements?

Well it almost feels like a sort of lovers' quarrel, because you have the feeling that nature is in some way kind of beneficent – but she's also trying to find your weakness, trying to get her finger into your side just when you're not ready for it. Any slip; anything you've left undone, anything you have not battened down, anything you've put off until tomorrow, any time you haven't noticed the barometer's fallen, or haven't noticed those squall clouds when you go to bed, any weakness like that she'll find out. It's consistent.

You say 'she'. You're personalising nature...

Oh yes. I admit that there's something sexual in sailing and in relating to nature. I have no bones about it. To me a ship is a woman and nature is a woman – Mother Nature, there she is. Chintamani can write an article about it as far as I'm concerned. You're relating to something that you could personify. There's this incredibly consistent inconsistency. I don't know how to put it. There's just a beautiful, fascinating irrational element there – that's addictive.



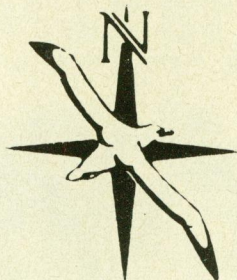
So on the journey down to Madeira you were busy just sailing?

Yeah. I found I went through the motions of sitting two or three times a day, but with the ship pounding into seas and pitching all the time, and with water pouring all over the deck, and constantly living in damp wool, frankly I found that I couldn't get into my practice. The one element of reassurance at that time was to listen to some classical guitar music on the radio. That is the only thing I could think of that kept me sane – being reminded of human society by way of that music just put me together again.

What was it like after Madeira?

I think that if there had been some way out of it in Madeira I would have done my best to escape, but there was no way out. There were the winds pushing me west. Here I own this boat; I have to unload it somehow...it's already been advertised in the States, so there it is, there's no way out. So, after three days of you might say wine women and song – that's traditional too – I set sail again. One day out of Madeira I picked up the Trade Winds – basically steady winds running at about force four which is a fairly strong wind, but it never really gets blowing

much faster than that. And it's very constant in direction. From the sailor's point of view it doesn't have much excitement. You've got this steady roll. You've got the main all the way out on one side and you've got the 'Genoa' on a spinnaker pole all the way out on the other, so you've got a big blank sail area out there, with nothing to do. You're just a little leaf blowing down wind.



So that's when being alone begins to bite?

Yes. Once you've passed Madeira you've got nothing. You've just got this very monstrous chunk of ocean there, about four thousand miles, about forty days. So then the fears and the real challenge of sailing alone really begins. It was those first weeks out of Madeira that were the toughest of the whole trip.

What did you do with yourself?

I proceeded to get pretty freaked in the first ten days. I was still practising rather perfunctorially and still trying to distract myself. I was just trying to keep it together and hope for the best: and things got worse and worse, and the fears began to build. I don't know why or how. I had never done anything like it before. Not without forty nine crutches of one kind or another. The only thing that I could think about it at the time was that it must be a little bit like the bardo state, where you're just thrown back on your very primordial hangups and habit patterns and weaknesses.

What was the fear about?

You can't get a hold of it. I would say to myself 'now Jory, you're a good sailor, you've got a good ship...no way you're going to be pumping your way across the Atlantic. You're watching the weather, you know how to sail. There's no reason to be so freaked.' — And it didn't do any good. The fears would still just take me over for periods of time, just paralyse me. I'm sorry to sound so feeble. I'm just reporting to you what happened in those weeks. So finally I came to the point when I remembered why I was on that trip. It wasn't just to vegetate my way across the Atlantic; there had been some kind of spiritual aspiration involved in it, and I had pretty much forgotten that by that time, to tell you the truth

I began to see that I wanted to make the most of it. I wanted to somehow deal with those fears; I wanted to see what was in them. I wanted to put them into some kind of usable form, and the only form that I really believe in in that situation is the retreat form. There's something in organising your daily pattern, having definite times for sitting and definite times for meals, and doing a lot of meditation, that allows you to accept your situation just as it is, without hiding from it, without larding it over with distractions. I began to make a daily schedule, modelled after the Padmaloka retreats pretty much. I sometimes imagined myself at Padmaloka, on retreat, to help me get into that mindstate.

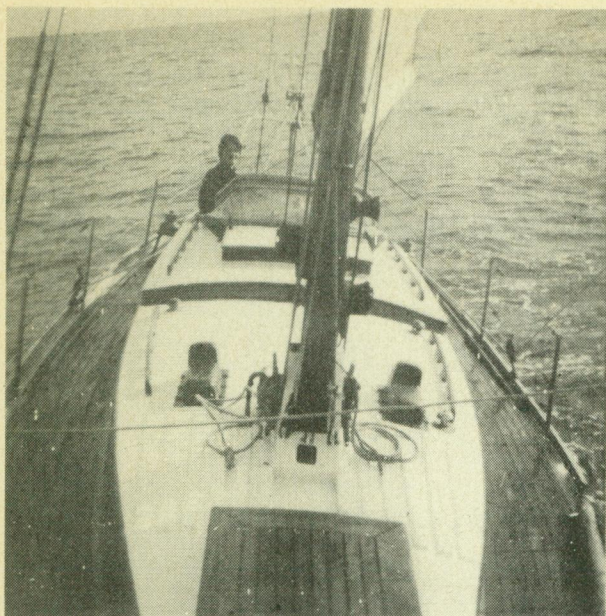
Once you had set up a routine, did you find yourself adapting to it naturally, or did you kick against it?

Frankly this was my lifeline, and once I'd set it up I held to it. About once every two weeks or so I would take a day off, and read a novel, and that helped too. But basically it was four periods of meditation a day. There was a three hour morning sitting there was about an hour and a half for prostrations and there was a noon-time sitting. Then there was study and prostrations in the afternoon. I had some pretty good Buddhist books with me and I went through *A Survey of Buddhism* a couple of times. There was a before dinner sitting, then dinner, then there was a set of prostrations later in the evening, and then there was an evening sitting.



Did you sleep well?

Oh yes, very well. I had very powerful dreams. Maybe you find the same thing, that when you're sensorily deprived, your dreams fill in what's missing. It was a rich time. Not rich externally, although as the fears began to diminish I began to love the trip more, particularly at the end of the day when the sails would light up pink as the sun set. I would sit in the cockpit at sundown and it really got beautiful. Particularly in that there was this fish that was my companion the whole way. A Pilot fish. I picked him up one day out of Madeira, and he left



me one day out of New York. That fish was a Bodhisattva. I don't know how the Bodhisattva got into that form, but that fish was a Bodhisattva, no question about it. Every day we would have long talks. Wherever I would go on the deck that fish would come round and swim alongside. He was about ten inches long with black vertical stripes on an iridescent blue body. We did everything in syncopation. When I was eating a meal, he would be eating a meal. Beautiful.

What did you talk about?

Well I have to confess that I did a fair amount of complaining to that fish. And sometimes we'd just delight in each other. You do so much of the *metta bhavana* and you have the power of radiating that love to people far off, like to friends back in England, but you have no beings out there that you can let those feelings out on. That fish was there, so I was really able to love that fish!

And there was also a bird, though he wasn't such a long companion. He was only with me for about a week, but right in the middle of the Atlantic where a bird should never be. I got up one morning and ran for about twenty minutes —

Ran?!

Just running in place in the cockpit. Well, I had to do some kind of exercise. So I was running away there, and all of a sudden I looked over on the deck and I saw this birdshit. I couldn't believe my eyes. I mean I'd been out about three weeks from Madeira so there was no reason there should be birds. I went over, I looked at it. I smelt it. By golly it was *birdshit*! And I was just amazed. And later in the day, sure enough, there was this yellow billed

Tropic Bird circling the boat, and jabbering away in his own language. So we had this good long conversation, and for the next week that bird spent the night sleeping on the winch over there, merrily shitting on the deck, and would leave in the day time to go fishing — and would come back two or three times in the day to have conversations. It was very very helpful. Very nice.

What meditation practices were you doing?

The basic two: 'mindfulness of breathing' and *metta bhavana*. Then the prostration practice, and I think that this became the central practice of the trip. As the fears came up it was only the prostration practice that could express the surrender that was the only antidote that I ever found. If I could really surrender, to refuges worthy of refuge, then whether you died or whether you lived, it didn't make any difference. You were ready to die; you were ready to live — you were ready for another day.

Of the various things that you have learned in the past, which were the most valuable to you on the voyage?

I think one of the crucial things was to be *there*. 'Be Here Now', you know, to be mindful, to be in the moment. The peculiar thing about a sailing trip you see, is that there are so few variables, especially when you are in the Trade Winds, that involve your daily mind-state, that you can trace cause and effect. You can see what gives you the blues, what turns you on, what does what. I found that in order to keep a positive mind-state, then the crucial thing was mindfulness; being there. If you are eating, just eat, don't fantasise, don't talk to yourself, just eat. And then you get energy from eating, you know, or prostrating, or doing whatever you're doing; changing sails, navigating. You feel sharp, you feel energetic. If you are in two places at once, you feel run down, you feel the blues right there. That was the biggest resource I'd say there was. Another thing that really helped was getting into some kind of work. In this case it was copying out poems. I had a paint set with me. I thought I'd never use it, but after a while I tried to paint a bit. I'd paint flowers and things that I wanted to see, but that gave me the blues even worse, so I gave it up. But then I started to print with this brush — using ink; just printing very carefully. I'd never done that before. Han Shan's poetry; the Cold Mountain poems. They were all very slowly undertaken and they have my guts in them, for what that's worth anyway. But I found that kind of activity, something that was physical, did show up my mindfulness. If you are mindful you can print very beautifully. I got a lot of energy out of copying and I think those monks who used to copy sutras were into the same kind of thing.

Did you have a strong feeling of contact with people back in England?

Well I certainly felt that a lot of people had me in their *metta bhavanas*, or whatever; that somehow I was getting some kind of telepathic support from Archway and what-all. I got into a couple of scrapes that I don't think I deserved the outcome of. I remember going to bed one evening without having a good scan for storm clouds on the horizon. The breeze was moderate so I had every shred of canvas set. Worse still, I closed the main hatch, which isolated me from what was happening on deck. Anyway, I woke up in the black of night with 'Aphelion' moving strangely. I looked at the speedometer, which usually reads about 4-5 knots, and with a start noticed it off the scale - beyond 10. I threw back the hatch to find 'Aphelion' virtually surfing downwind before a howling Norther. Once on deck I was simply paralysed with fear. It was so black you could hardly see a thing, and what you could see - sails billowing icy stiff in the shrieking wind, ropes wire tight - was no more reassuring; surely the mast would go any second. I sat in the cockpit and began to pray; Kwanyin! Kwanyin! Help! It was all I could do.... The storm passed. I guess some people look on prayer as a kind of superstition, yet in the situation it doesn't feel like that - it feels like an expression of relatedness. I also had the feeling that somebody was donating their good karma to the cause (*laughs*). As I said, the *metta bhavana* really is a connection. It reaffirms the vicarious connection that in a situation like this keeps you sane, keeps alive your positive emotions - which otherwise could just dry up in the alienation of being alone.

*I think of all the places I've been.
Chasing about from one famous spot to another.
Delighting in mountains, I scaled the mile high peaks;
Loving the water, I sailed a thousand rivers.
I held farewell parties with my friends in Lute Valley,
I brought my zither and played on Parrot Shoals.
Who would guess I'd end up under a pine tree,
Clasping my knees in the whispering cold?*

Now that the trip is over, what do you value most that you have gained from it?

Well, I would have to be rather crass and say in the first place, this very beautiful, frail human society that we live in. Frankly it was only as a result of being alone that I was able to accept how grateful I

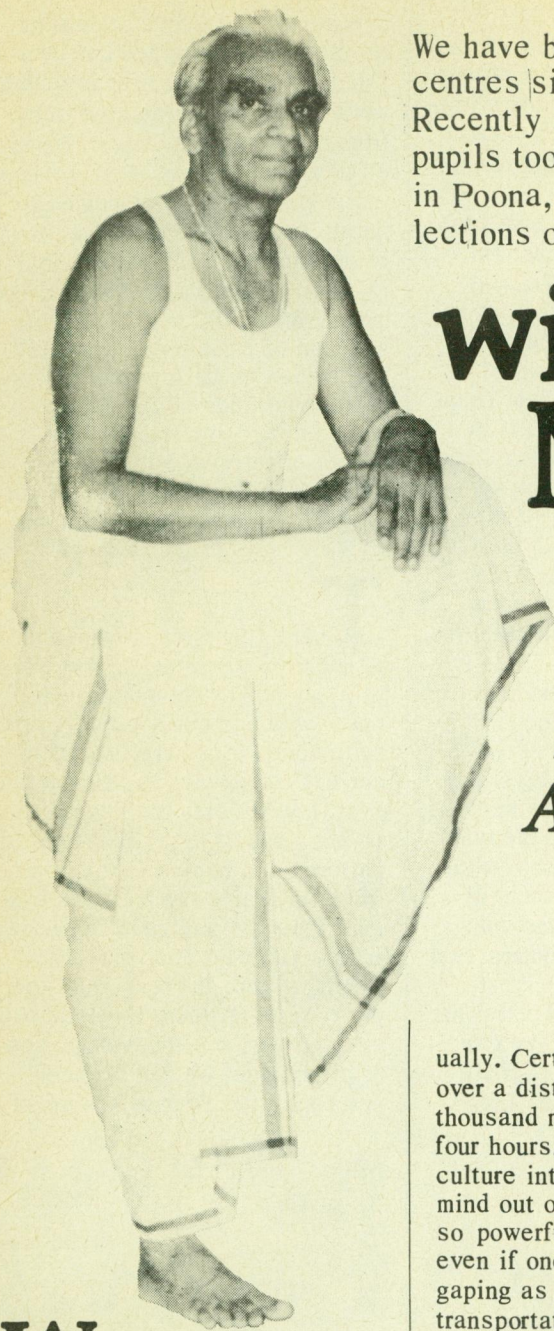
am, how much we help, and how lucky we are to live among our fellow beings. Sure it's got its negative side, and it's good to be alone periodically, but basically I feel very supported by society. I was just amazed at what took place in the first month after I arrived in the U.S. The friendships I made in those first weeks were just mind-boggling, and I know that in a way I was generating that situation because of my positivity. It really proved to me that we create our own environment. It was a wonderful experience, but frankly it dies down; it leaks away. You don't keep up your practice and - maybe you don't come back to square one exactly - frankly you've got to get to work all over again.

Would you do the voyage again?

Yes, but not now. Uh - uh. No. A trip like that ... well you might say it takes something out of you. You might say it puts something into you... I don't know how to express it, but it's not the kind of thing you'd want to do again seven months later. You've got to digest it and let it sit there for a while. It brings tears to my eyes to imagine setting out again.

Would you recommend it to others?

I can't think of anything I'd recommend more. If not that then there are a lot of situations very similar. I think that everybody has got their own retreat form, so they don't have to buy a boat and sail the Atlantic. What I really feel is that people should get it on with their practice in whatever way that has to be. My sailing trip was a joust with death - or a joust with Mara -, I don't know what you'd say, but it was dealing with the fact that, frankly, we haven't got very much time. Not that we should do anything frantically, but we really need to get it on - and if we look at our past efforts, they haven't been that great; at least mine haven't. If I kept up the same level of endeavour, then I wouldn't come to real vision in this lifetime - death would catch me quicker, maybe on this very trip. I had the feeling that I wasn't ready to die; I had not accomplished what I need to accomplish in this life. I know for some people this is not a particularly fruitful line of thinking; it freaks them out. It freaks me out. But I think that I needed to have the motivation caused by all the fears and all the things that came up so that I *needed* meditation. I needed to get in touch with myself. Now there is a residual feeling. It's like the first stage of the *metta bhavana*. It feels like a grounded sort of self-esteem. Not a heroic feeling of how great I am, but just an acceptance that a purity is already there, that there is already a ground for my own basic self-esteem, basic self-love. You don't have to earn that. You don't have to work for it, or get it from other people. It's there. It's given. I feel that, in some way, that realisation came out of my sailing trip.



We have been teaching Hatha Yoga at most of our centres since the earliest days of Pundarika. Recently several of our most advanced teachers and pupils took an intensive course with Mr.B.K.S.Iyengar in Poona, India. Here are some of Abhaya's recollections of India and the Yoga sessions

with Mr. Iyengar in India

by
Abhaya

Almost exactly twenty four hours after waiting in a London suburb for a Greenline bus to Heathrow, I sat jammed in a Bombay taxi with people and luggage, gazing out at Indians squatting along the river's edge and the roadside, men, women and children, squatting with impassive faces, nonchalantly defecating, some of them brushing their teeth at the same time! The early morning sunlight shed gentle gold on the trunks of tall palm trees, on to the decaying stucco facades of Imperial villas. We spilled out of the taxi into the warm ambience of this sunlight to savour a cup

Within seconds – to me, in perienced traveller as I am, an astonishing feat – the Boeing 707 transported us out of the thick grey mists of a London November morning into a fairytale world of blue suspended above dazzling cloudscapes. This was the first of several contrasts with which my consciousness was to be forcibly struck during the next day or so. They say travel broadens the mind. Perhaps it does, event-

ually. Certainly travelling by air over a distance of more than five thousand miles within twenty four hours, from one climate and culture into another, jolts the mind out of its customary runnels, so powerfully and swiftly that, even if one is not left physically gaping as a result of such sudden transportations, it is as if one's mental jaw has dropped and it becomes impossible for some time to close one's mouth. Seventeen hours later, after brief stops for refuelling at Paris, Kuwait and Abu Dhabi, the same aircraft that had afforded me such a shock of delight at the start, deposited us with a hefty bump of its under-carriage and a slightly unnerving scream of deceleration, on to the runway at Bombay. A huge full moon, low on the horizon, was there to greet us.



of hot sweet chai, served from a brass kettle by a ragged urchin, his wide dark eyes out only for 'paise', more money. We had missed the early fast train to Poona and were very tired. It didn't take the two Rajneesh sannyassins (on their second trip to India) long to persuade us that sharing the taxi all the way to Poona, though a more expensive venture than waiting for the next slow train, would in the long run be worth it. And after all, it was still early enough on in the trip to judge by English standards. The taxi fare for a journey of close on a hundred miles would be, for each of us, only £2.00!

The taxi wound its laborious but confident way into the hills, constantly overtaking lorries and bullock carts, even at the steepest and sharpest of hairpin bends. Women in striking coloured saris hitched up to their knees were harvesting small square patches of paddy. Men drove oxen pulling primitive one-furrow wooden ploughs. Turbaned beggars with painted foreheads and ancient faces sat on small mats by the roadside. My exhausted body screamed in vain for sleep; the excited senses would not, could not let up.

Arrived in Poona, we struggled out of the taxi and into a motorbike rickshaw, — much more common than taxis in this town, — and made for the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute, which was to be very much the centre of our lives for the next few weeks. The Institute has, as the handout puts it, "a unique architectural design, resembling a vertically sliced mandala semi-circular shaped pyramid". It is a landmark in the area, being such a contrast in design to the surrounding buildings and standing so high above them, with the red image of Hanuman at the apex, "son of Vayu (wind)... the embodiment of strength and stability, intellect and courage". There being little news of friends at the Institute, we set off once more by rickshaw for the centre of town. The way the rickshaw drivers in Poona usually manage to weave a skilful thread through the tangled tracks of the traffic — mainly cyclists — is reminiscent of dodgem cars on the fairgrounds, thankfully without the bumps. Suddenly, almost miraculously, it seemed, to our fatigued somewhat helpless state of being, we caught sight of the shaven pated, saffron-robed figure of Anagarika Lokamitra emerging from a restaurant,

the Roopali as it turned out, destined to be one of our haunts. How delightful to be ministered to by friends in a strange world. Ushered to a chair at one of the little tables outside, and introduced by Surata to two of the cherished items of our staple diet in Poona, that is, sweet Lassi, a delicious drink made from curds, and Rice Plate, a mound of puris on a silver tray, surrounded by little silver bowls of various kinds of curry, curds and chutney — to be followed sooner or later by a dish of rice —, I now felt truly arrived, if not yet fully initiated into life in Poona

These, the first impressions of my trip, are so much more vivid in my mind than subsequent ones, which become steadily more subliminal. It is surprising how quickly the novel can become familiar, how quickly the mind, if one is not careful, establishes certain patterns and begins to take the fresh for granted. Nine of us from the 'Friends' had gone to Poona in late October, two of us direct from England, the rest from other parts of India where they had been visiting various Buddhist places of pilgrimage. We had all been practising the Iyengar system of



Above: evening meal at the hotel

Far right: & continuing pages: working at the yoga institute



Anagarika Lokamitra and another yoga student, from Brighton

Hatha Yoga for some years, and the purpose of our stay in Poona was to take part in one of Mr Iyengar's intensive four week courses. Most of us established ourselves during that first week at a modest hotel called the Trimurti Lodge, conveniently situated within easy cycling distance of the Institute, and above the Diwar restaurant, one of our favourite eating places. Kumar, the kindly manager of the lodge, soon took us under his wing, supplying our every want, offering us his friendship, and making us feel very much at home, though I never did quite get used to the ceaseless kitchen clatter and the pungent culinary odours drifting up from the restaurant below.

Our course consisted of a two hour asana class in the morning, every day except Sunday, and a Pranayama (yogic breathing techniques) class in the evening on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. The Pranayama class would on average last for three quarters of an hour. Whenever I inform people of this programme, they tend to raise their eyebrows, their eyes full of an expression of "Is that all?". I hasten to assure them that it was quite enough, taking into consideration the energy level of Mr Iyengar's teaching! We soon got into a weekday routine of rising about five thirty, meditating together at six, then going down to the Diwar for a quickcup of tea before cycling off to the Institute, a ten minute leisurely ride away. We had all hired bicycles for the month, for just under £2.00, including free puncture repairs, a service it proved necessary to avail oneself of more than once!

The room set aside for practice, on the second floor of the building, is semi-circular in shape, the centre of its straight end dominated by a marble surfaced, five-

edged platform used for demonstrating purposes. The floor is lined with smooth shiny slab tiles on which the feet grip comfortably and never slip. There are windows all round the sweep of the room's circumference, affording plenty of light and air. Stout white ropes dangle singly and in pairs from the ceiling around the edge of the practice area. From a tiled wall to the right of the platform, as you look at it, shorter lengths of ropes hang in pairs at convenient heights, valuable stretching aids, but viewed in the course of some classes, by one pupil at least, as instruments of torture! Other pieces of equipment lie around the place, frames of various shapes and sizes across which one can lie in positions such that the body is 'worked'. Before classes began, people earnestly availed themselves of one or other of these aids, some lying across narrow benches with their heads and shoulders unsupported over the end, others swinging upside down like pendulums from the ceiling ropes, or puffing away at the wall ropes. Others simply relaxed, stretched full length on rubber mats. The feel of the place reminded me at first, its shape apart, of a cross between a modern gymnasium and an indoor swimming pool; an impression soon

corrected by the noticeable lack of echo.

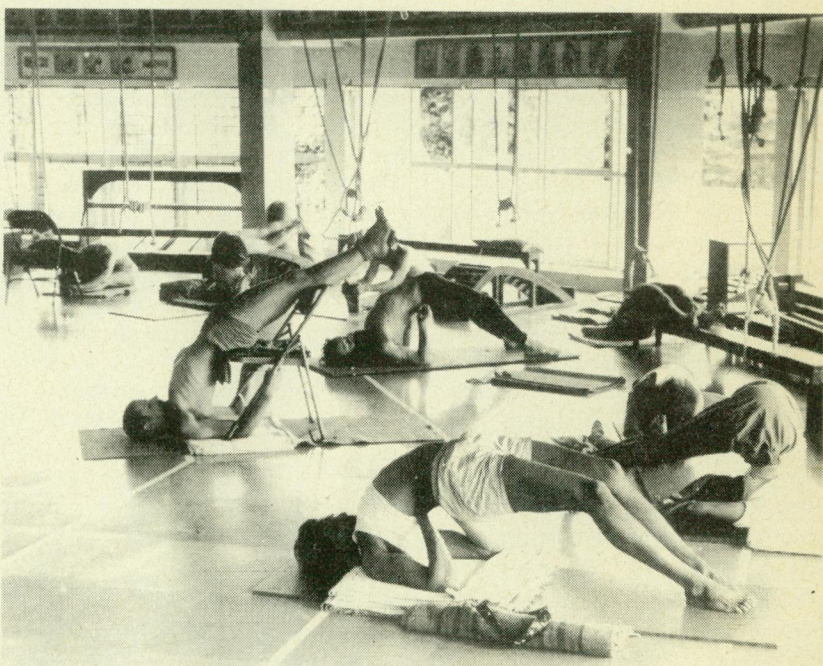
There was often an element of apprehension, if not trepidation, in the atmosphere of that room before the morning class began, people drifting together and apart between bursts of loosening up, hazarding guesses as to whether this particular morning we would be subjected to the rigours of balances or back bends. Such speculations were sooner or later brought to an end by the sudden command of the Master who had quietly entered the room. "Come on now. All of you. Full arm balance".

At first, when the asana class was in full swing, I quite often found it difficult to follow Mr Iyengar's directives, owing to the unusual features of the situation. Mr Iyengar was usually aided by his eldest daughter Geeta and his son Prashant, both very advanced practitioners of Hatha Yoga and very able teachers, and by one of his senior pupils, a stocky little Indian called Shah, who strutted among our ranks adjusting a posture here, giving a word of encour-



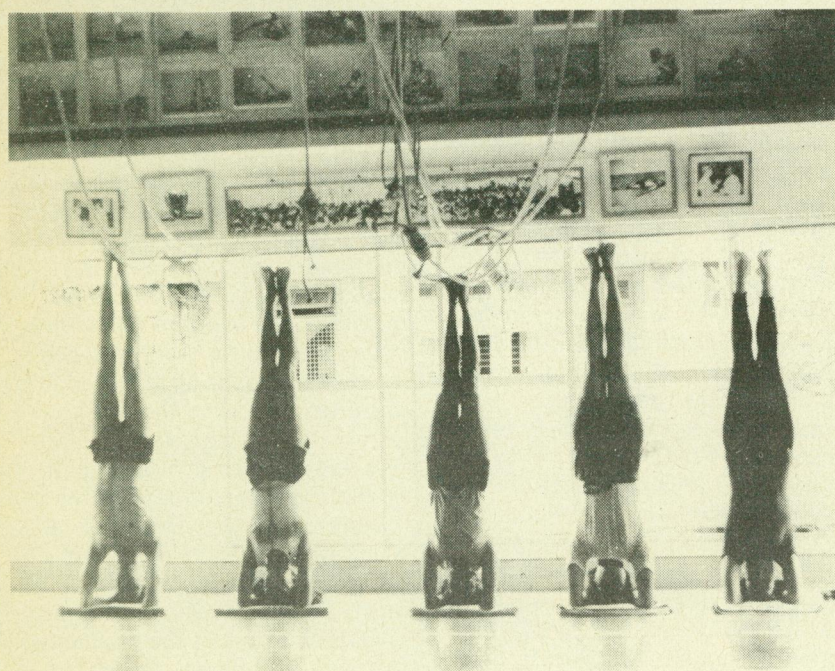
agement there. There were times when it seemed all four were issuing directives at once, either to the class at large or to individual pupils practising special asanas separately. It did seem a bit circus-like, as if the pupils, judging by the tactics of the teacher and his aids, were like so many dumb beasts unable to grasp the instructions repeatedly hurled at them. But one got used to this. In time with improved concentration, came the ability at least to register the instructions, even if one could not actually put them into practice.

It is difficult for me to convey in writing much of the total experience of being a pupil in one of Mr Iyengar's yoga classes, let alone a whole course of classes! Next year, B.K.S. Iyengar will be celebrating his sixtieth birthday. What strikes one immediately is how much more supple he is than the youngest and supplest of us. One feels the dynamism of his physical presence, the vitality and alertness. There was little opportunity before and during classes to see very much of himself in action, apart, that is, from his demonstrations of details of poses to illustrate points he was making in a class. We did, however, watch a film of one of his recent demonstrations, and it was there one could observe the beautiful effortless precision, the fluidity of his art. He had started practising Hatha Yoga as a sickly sixteen year old youth, on the advice of his guru, determined to overcome the condition of tuberculosis which threatened to be fatal. When he first arrived in Poona, intent on giving others the benefit of his experience, he had to travel around by bicycle in search of pupils. His story is a classic one of achievement from small, unpromising beginnings. He is a very creative teacher. Some of the basic standing poses we must have been called upon to do in at least ninety percent of the classes, yet never



did Mr Iyengar repeat himself. He would always introduce a different aspect of the pose, showing us how to work at a detail he had never brought to our notice before. In this way he shook our individual practice out of its old ruts, making us realise how stale and monotonous we can get without the creative guidance of a good teacher. "Everyone wants to teach like Iyengar", he taunted us, "but no

one wants to *do* like Iyengar". What he gave us on the course, what I personally found to be of greatest value, was a method of working in the poses, a way of extending oneself in a new direction and thus beyond one's previous limits. "You are advanced pupils", he announced one morning as we strained, for the fourth or fifth time in succession, to remain balanced for yet another few seconds



on head and palms of hands, with legs stretched taught at 90 degrees to the trunk (DID I SAY BEND THE KNEES ???)... "You are advanced pupils, so you must work hard", And we did! He worked us very hard, so hard, in fact, that there came a point, roughly halfway, when I began to doubt whether I might have the stamina to stay the course. But I live to tell the tale. He had decided that what we need-

ed to practise more than anything else was back-bending poses. It so happened that I was somewhat less practised at back-bending than most of the group. I had never before realised how stiff my back was — is. We were made to lie on our backs across one of those fold-up type tubular metal chairs, our legs inserted under the chair's back support, with head and chest suspended, feet press-

ing against wall, legs straight, knees pushing downwards — for one minute, two minutes, three minutes,... until I got to groaning pitch. How excruciating in the lumbar regions! Yet all that lumbar stiffness and tension was gradually being eroded. Suddenly, in a class towards the end of the second week, I experienced a minor breakthrough, overcoming a measure of fear that usually locked the muscles about my lumbar and forbade me to drop back into back arch, even though supported. There is no method of overcoming fear. One just has to do what one has always been afraid of doing. One of the beauties of having such a good teacher is that he creates situations in which you are forced to do what normally you are afraid to do and may not even dream of attempting. "In order to experience a pose, you have to die in the pose. You people don't want to die; that's why you don't live".

As my efforts in the direction of a perfect back arch collapse yet again and I am reduced to an exhausted heap on the floor, I fleetingly see the practice of Yoga as an objective correlative for one's faltering progress along the spiritual path. With the teacher's help and inspiration, one increases one's efforts, pushes a little beyond those comfortable frontiers, reclaiming a little bit more of the 'unknown', enjoying some small victory and yielding to the sweet lure of complacency, staggering back to the fray, experiencing simultaneously the realisation that though the goal may seem far distant, there's no turning back... In the changing room after a class, a large Indian asks me the usual questions: "What is the name of your country? At which hotel are you staying?" and so on. When I inform him that I am coming to the Institute daily for classes, his eyes dilate with a blend of sympathy and incredulity. "My goodness", he exclaims, "that must be very tiring!" On the whole, the

locals do not seem to be so enthusiastic about practising yoga as Mr Iyengar's Western pupils.

The Institute was closed for the two days of the Diwali festival, the most important, or certainly the most popular, Hindu festival of the year. With firecrackers going off almost every second, near and far, Poona began to sound like a town at war. At the colony where our Buddhist friends lived, people were painting their houses both inside and out, in readiness for the festival, with washes of distemper, in various shades of blue, from pale to cobalt. Some of us took advantage of the time off to visit the cave temples at Ellora and Ajanta, roughly eighty miles away. The six hour bus journey began with more than half the passengers of the crowded vehicle having to get off or exchange seats time and again, until the vociferous conductor, wearing a fez and very much in command, was satisfied that we were all sitting in the seats we had reserved in the first place. All this happened without the slightest trace of bad temper. Indians are very talkative, friendly travelling companions and the journey was punctuated by regular ten-minute stops at villages en route, long enough to get off for a cup of tea at one of the usual stalls or to buy yet another bunch of bananas.

The series of caves at Ellora, most of them Buddhist, dating from the sixth century A.D., are hewn out of the rocks of hillsides. Walking into their cool shade from the dazzling sunlight of an early afternoon towards the tranquil shadows of the central shrine, presided over by the massive sculptures of seated Buddhas, past squat pillars supporting the low ceiling, some of them intricately carved, one could not but be impressed by the fact that all this was of one piece, carved with patient slow care by the hand of man.

Here the feeling of peace was pervasive, little diluted, it seemed, by the presence of sightseers. The location of the Ajanta caves is even more impressive, tiered as they are in a wide crescent of rock at the end of a magnificent deep gorge. The level of art there is higher too, the walls of the principal temples being decorated with profusely detailed frescoes depicting scenes from the Jataka stories and the legendary lives of Bodhisattvas, sensuous figure paintings in faded creams and dark reds, sepias and umbers. But we were dependent here on the light from a guide's lamp, unable to pause and look at our leisure, and soon felt a bit overwhelmed by the attempt to take in too much too quickly.


Refreshed by this brief intermission, we returned to Poona and to the second half of our yoga course. Mr Iyengar's approach seemed to have mellowed somewhat in the interim. Was this because we were at last showing signs of responding to his satisfaction? Cycling back one afternoon from a fruitless attempt to exchange a torn ten rupee note, which had come to pieces in my hand at the Aurangabad bus depot—only the Head Cashier of the main branch of the State Bank of India in Bombay, I was solemnly informed, could authorise such an exchange —, I encounter for the first time the Indian way of death.

Straggily rows of mourners walked rather jauntily behind an open, van-type, rickshaw, at the back of which the corpse was laid. The chief mourners, two women, bent over the uncovered head of the deceased, giving vent quite freely to their grief with loud lamentations, all the while sprinkling the corpse with the heads of flowers. I got to the Pranayama class just in time, feeling rather sweaty and a bit flurried, but left feeling, as usual, calm and invigorated. Pranayama is a very good antidote for the overstimulated, over-excited mind. It is also a very complicated, difficult practice, and it soon be-

came clear to us that it would be dangerous to embark upon it without the guidance of a very experienced teacher.

As is the case with such experiences, time seemed to pass very quickly on our trip, and all too soon the time for departure drew near. It had not taken long at all to feel at home in Poona, with its pleasing climate, very hot but dry, standing as it does two thousand feet above sea level, and with its friendly people. Bombay, where I spend the last few days of my stay in India, seemed, by contrast somewhat alien, though it is true that I was not there long enough to become very familiar with the city. Friends walked with me to the Air India building where I was to board the airport bus. We had to walk through what might be called one of the most westernised parts of the city, where several mini skyscrapers already stood and others were in the process of being built. There was an uneasy quiet about those sparsely populated streets that evening. Under the shadow of those towering hulks, small groups of Indians, probably the families of the men who laboured for the developers, seemed almost to huddle together, as if to keep alive the sparks of a dying age. Two small children lay down to sleep on a heap of gravel, aggregate for tomorrow's concrete. One became aware of the yawning gap between the relative simplicity of the way of life of these people, and the material sophistications of the technological age looming on the horizon. In places like Bombay at least, it is already too late for Schumacher's intermediate technology. Such was the tone of my ruminations as I boarded the plane at Santa Cruz airport. At least London was kinder to me on my return than I would have dared hope. As I walked out of the centrally heated confines of Heathrow, the December evening was unexpectedly mild.

PURNA'S PROGRESS



We last heard from Upasaka Purna in the 10th Anniversary issue of the Newsletter – just after he had arrived in England. Shortly before his return to New Zealand I asked him how he had got on over here, and what he had learned from his stay.

NAGABODHI: Why did you decide to come over to England?

PURNA: I became increasingly aware of just how isolated we were. It appeared to me that there was a lot going on in England that we were just out of touch with. We were getting Newsletters, we were starting to get the minutes of council meetings and we were starting quite a bit of correspondence with Order members in the UK, but I still felt out of touch. I think this is the way a lot of Order members in New Zealand feel. I felt really frustrated, so the reason I came over was to make more contact with the Order over here – sort of deepen my experience of what the FWBO was getting into. Things have not been going long in New Zealand; the Order has been set up for two years as opposed to nearly ten years in England.

What have you been doing while you have been here?

Initially Udaya and myself moved around quite a bit; from London to Padmaloka and up to Glasgow. I wanted to make a balance between getting an in-depth appreciation of a community and also getting an overall coverage of the different centres and different types of community. 'Sukhavati' is where I've spent most of my time, but I've also included a trip to Holland, trips to Cornwall, Glasgow, Norwich, Man-

chester, Brighton, Edinburgh and Aryatara. In fact I will have seen all the centres, bar Helsinki, by the time I leave.

And what sort of general impression have you received from all this?

Very much a picture of a very alive, moving Movement. There's a lot happening. I've found the whole level of things over here very impressive; the way people get into things so wholeheartedly. People are living in a much more total situation over here.

Is it radically different to how things are in New Zealand?

Not radically. I think it's the sort of thing I'd hope we could be into in a year or two. I think it has to do with the length of time things have been going here, and the level of intensity it's reached. It's a difference of intensity rather than of kind in a lot of ways.

Let's begin with 'Sukhavati'. How have you been finding life there?

I haven't always found it that easy, but that, in a way has been one of its strong points. It's really brought me up against certain things, particularly the whole business of playing at being a Buddhist;



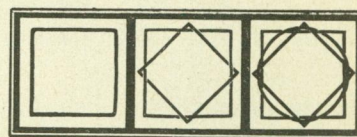
Udaya, Sagamati and Purna at the FWBO 10th Anniversary Celebrations.

taking on being an Order member as a certain role rather than seeing my responsibility as being to be myself in a positive sense. I found several people being quite good for me, you know, quite positive; poking fun at me, my idiosyncrasies – in a constructive way. People have pointed things out to me, say the way I've led study groups – playing 'mini-Bhante' – which I found was quite a pertinent point. And this is the sort of contact, the sort of criticism, even, that I just hadn't been getting before; you know, people recognising me going through things that they had gone through themselves, or had seen others going through. It was all territory that they'd covered but that I had not. I really appreciated that. I think that what I have most gained has been contact with more committed Order members, other than Bhante; you, know, people who are closer to me but to whom I can still look up and respect as being quite definitely more committed. In a way I feel that my own commitment has been strengthened a lot. I feel much more involved with the FWBO since I've been here.

What do you mean by 'more committed'?

I'm not equating this with some superficial criteria of what spiritually developed people are like. I think it's basically people being themselves and, within that being themselves, they are quite wholeheartedly putting themselves into something. One of the difficulties that I have been working on for some time has been getting rid of my superficial standards of what 'spirituality' is – in terms of certain types of behaviour – rather than seeing that genuine spirituality is more involved with commitment. The more I've got to know some people, the more I've realised how much of them is permeated with this thing, with

commitment. I was looking for signs of people floating around softly and speaking quietly and never losing their tempers! I feel I've changed a lot in the time I've been here and that it has all been really invaluable. In a way my ideas and appreciation of what was happening were pretty superficial when I first arrived.



When you go back to New Zealand which of the things that you have discovered and learned over here would you like to see being put into effect?

I think that my own perspective on what it is we're doing and where we're heading has changed a lot... you know, getting into the whole 'total situation' of being involved in communities that have their own means of support. It seems this is already happening in New Zealand. There is already a men's community in Auckland and they are trying to look into some form of team livelihood. I think that the impact that England had on Udaya, although he was only here for about six weeks, has already been felt. I think the community situation is the biggest thing we can give people in New Zealand at the moment. We should concentrate on establishing more and better and healthier communities, getting away from the 'Buddhists sharing a flat' mentality and getting into a real sense of community, because I think that this is where people are going to develop the most, and will get the most from the FWBO. I think that for people to come along to the centre one or two nights

*Order members meeting
visitors in one of the
reception rooms at the
EEMC.*



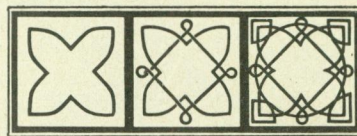
a week to get inspired by a bit of Dharma, a bit of meditation, going on retreats and so on, this is all very well for a while, but there is a sort of ceiling to what it can do to a person. I think that moving into a community is the next logical step for a person who really wants to start changing.

I've also learned a lot of quite practical things about co-operatives, which I'll be going back with. I don't know whether we are ripe for that progression immediately, but the knowledge will be there when needed. It may have taken a year or two of playing around with it in England, with people thinking about it and tentatively getting into it, but I think we ought to be able to get straight into it. The whole livelihood issue is the biggest thing.

Another thing: I've been really impressed watching the East London Meditation Centre coming to life. I mean, most centres take months and years to get off the ground. Within a month or two, in East London, there was a 'Grand Opening', and they've already got classes of twenty five, thirty or more. The key factor is 'Sukhavati' just down the road. Before each evening they have Order/mitra meetings for all those concerned with the class, and I think that's quite good, quite a fresh approach, and it's really having an effect. There's a complete avoidance of the 'dentist's waiting room' situation. Every newcomer gets individual attention from an Order member or a mitra. There's a whole team of them taking that class, a whole team approach which I think is quite new. Well, it was for me. I'd like to see more of this in New Zealand. At the moment we don't really have the resources, but once we do get stronger this is something I'd very much like to approach — making a conscious attempt to give every newcomer

contact. In East London they're making the assumption that when people walk through that door they want Dharmic contact — so you give it to them. They are not just coming to talk about the weather or the state of the economy.

I've also been getting into seminars quite a bit while I've been here and there's a lot of seminar material that I'm going to be taking back. That includes my own notes, transcripts, recordings of seminar extracts, and a couple of complete weekend seminars. Seminars just haven't hit New Zealand yet, and I think they're going to make quite an impact because there is so much in them.



Now that you can see how much groundwork has been done here, to what extent do you think it will be necessary for the FWBO in New Zealand to recapitulate that work? How do you think that your visit will influence this?

Hopefully it will shorten the recapitulation. I can see a lot of areas in which we seem to be duplicating what the Order went through over here in the early days, but I think that the more contact we have the more we will be able to build on what has been done here as a basis.

And that depends on people coming over here for a while and then returning?

Right — like the early colonial missionaries in the

Pacific! *(laughs)* People have got to see what is going on here – in its context –, and they've got to see a cross reference of committed people, I think, to start sorting out what it is they have, aside from their individual quirks. There are, in fact, a few people ready to come over quite soon. The twelve thousand miles is quite a big psychological barrier, particularly for a lot of the New Zealand born people who have never gone abroad, but I don't see it as that much of a physical barrier. In a way, certain resistances have to be overcome. I will definitely be encouraging people to come.

How do you think you'll get on when you get back?

I'm inclined to be critical, and in a not very helpful way sometimes. That is something that I'm going to have to be careful about. There is a lot of sensitivity around some areas, particularly about doing things in 'the New Zealand way'. There's a similar sort of thing in Glasgow and Holland, a sort of national pride almost. Maybe it's connected with a feeling of inadequacy in the light of what's been happening in England, coupled with the feeling that 'we've got to develop for ourselves; we don't have to imitate, each place finds its own way.'

Maybe, to a point, that's true.

Right, but there's a sort of balance that has to be found between adopting indiscriminately what's

been happening in England, and rejecting it – just because it's been happening in England, something that might just be common sense, or basic Dharma, which could get rejected just because people don't get on with it personally. Take single sex communities, for example. I know that when I left there was a feeling that this was an adaptation to a specifically English hangup – 'the English disease'. I think that this is something which is basically Dharmic. But 'basically Dharmic' or 'just English conditioning', these are phrases that are going to get used quite a bit according to your personal preferences. It's a tricky area to sort through.

Can you see a time when the Movement in New Zealand might 'overtake' what is going on in the UK?

Oh I hope so! *(laughs)*. Bhante came back from New Zealand talking about the positive conditions over there. I think that in a way – in a long term sense – things are really conducive there. But in the short term, in the next few years, we've got a lot to sort through. I can really see things being quite strong there, and I don't see it as always being the case that the focus of energy will be in Britain. It's like London. For a long time London has been the focus of energy, but it is quite possible that Norfolk is going to be a major focus for what's happening in the Movement. Just as that is happening in England, presumably it's going to start happening on a global scale.

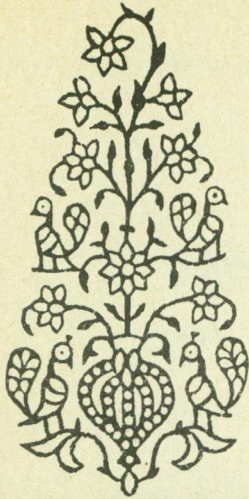
YOURS IN THE DHAMMA

It is not only people who do the travelling. This Newsletter goes out to Friends in every corner of the world, and sometimes attracts encouraging responses such as this letter from Ven. Dhammasiri, of the Buddhist Missionary Society in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Dear Friends of the Western Buddhist Order / Brothers, Sisters of the Buddha-Dhamma,

I wish to express my appreciation and joy in reading your publication from time to time, which always arrives here without fail. It not only gives an insight into the activities of Buddhists over at your end of the world (as viewed from this extreme end), but reviews an overall, inspirational Buddhist way of life, an insight of human understanding and tolerance. From reading your publication I almost sense or feel the printed words come to life. It is also admirable that a group of people without an organisational structure could remain so organised under the modern pressures of living, and dedicated to spiritual development of not only oneself, but towards others too. There is a saying that happiness is like perfume; you cannot give it to others unless you have a few drops on yourself. I have a deep sense of respect for Ven. Maha Shavira Sangharakshita for his indefatigable sense of missionary dedication in your part of the world.

Your publication is like a bridge that overcomes the distance, without which we here would feel like a frog in a well. But perhaps most important of all, your practical Buddhist way of living in a materialistic western society is like dew-drops in the cool early morning, so refreshing and pure.



sand-Petalled Lotus.

At Nalanda they had a very happy meeting with Bhikkhu Dharmajyoti who is living and studying in a small Chinese temple there. He showed them the ruins of the Nalanda Vihara, and later they went on to see the fabled Vulture's Peak. From Nalanda they went on to Kalimpong where they immediately visited Ven Dhardo Rinpoche, presenting him with a silk scarf, on Bhante's behalf, as well as an image of Vajrasattva made by Aloka and a selection of our publications. He was very happy to be meeting



Lokamitra with participants on the first FWBO retreat in India.

meanwhile...

Anagarika Lokamitra has been getting around. He spent some time in Delhi at the Singhalese Pilgrims' Rest House, meeting and talking with the bhikkhus there. Here, as in Sarnath he was struck by the warmth and friendliness that their simple life seems to inspire. Arriving at Bodh Gaya, he and Surata were disappointed to find the main temple a scene of "filth, noise and confusion". Their feeling was that very little seems to have changed in this respect, since Bhante's first visit there, twenty seven years ago — recorded in *The Thou-*

some of Bhante's western disciples, and to hear news of Bhante and the FWBO. They also met Ven. Prajna-aloka, a Tibetan monk who received his shramanera ordination from Bhante, and Bhaichand Praddhan who worked closely with Bhante while he was living in Kalimpong.

On the way to Poona, in Calcutta, they met Ven. Dhammaratna, editor of the *Maha Bodhi Journal*, who was very keen to hear about Dharmic activities in the U.K. In Nagpur Lokamitra suddenly found

himself addressing a crowd, estimated at 500,000, who had gathered to honour *Deeksha Bhoomi* — the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the first mass conversion of 'Untouchables' to Buddhism, by Dr Ambedkar, on 14th October, 1956.

Since completing his month of Hatha Yoga training with Mr Iyengar, Lokamitra has become increasingly involved in Dharma work. During December he was teaching three meditation classes a week, as well as conducting study groups on Bhante's essay: *Mind — Reactive and Creative*, and the *Mangala Sutta*. On 25th December he began a one week retreat for some of the people attending his classes. Writing of the contact he has made he says 'I think it very likely that once the FWBO gets going in India, among the ex-Untouchables, it will be the fastest growing area of our activities... 20 years ago a few million people changed their religion. They therefore want to know how to live, practise and develop as Buddhists. It's vitally important to them... As far as I can see there is no one, besides Bhante, and no other movement, capable of working with the situation...'



Lokamitra will be returning to the UK in March, and our Summer issue will be devoted to the FWBO and India.

BOOK REVIEW

HEDONISM AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

The Light at the Center: Context and Pretext of Modern Mysticism. Agehananda Bharati. Ross-Erikson/Santa Barbara, 1976. Pp.254. Price £4.25 (paperback).

This is one of those entertaining and instructive essays in cultural anthropology that, over the last two or three decades, we have learned to expect from the campuses of North America. In his preface the author tells us that the book aims at showing up the common base of 'the trimmings of transcendental meditation, the Hare Krishna gymnastics, the dilated smiles of Jesus freaks, and the now defunct hippydom of the sixties' through their common errors, and that 'as such it aims to be a perennial critique of mystical movements and of utopia in general.' (p.10) Agehananda Bharati is well equipped for the task. Born and brought up in Vienna, where he began studying Sanskrit and other Indian languages when still a boy, he served during World War II as an interpreter in Hitler's 'Free India' Legion and then, after two years of Indology and philosophy, in 1949 made his way to India. In India he stayed for seven years, dur-

ing which time he became a Hindu monk, taught at universities, and upset orthodox Hindus with his 'cultural criticism.' He left India rather under a cloud, as I remember from the newspaper reports published at the time. After surfacing in Thailand and in Japan, he eventually reappeared in the New World, where from the late fifties onwards he has taught class, criticized and copulated on the spacious campuses of North America. In 1961 he published *The Ochre Robe*, a provocative melange of autobiography and cultural criticism. This was followed by *A Functional Analysis of Indian Thought and its Social Margins* (1964), which I have not seen, and *The Tantric Tradition* (1965), an important study mainly from Hindu Sanskrit sources.

According to the publishers *Light at the Center*, his latest book, is an investigation of mysticism in the tradition of Butler, Underhill and Zaehner. This it certainly is not. The author's approach is synchronistic rather than historical, and despite much preliminary flourishing of ethnoscientific and ethnosemantic tools -- now *de rigueur* in the religious field, it



would seem – the work is on the whole belletristic rather than scholarly. *Time Magazine* goes so far as to say ‘....Bharati unscrews the inscrutable with the precision tools of language, philosophy, and behavioral sciences.’ He does not quite do that, but evidently it is what he sees himself as doing. Despite his efforts the inscrutable is *not* unscrewed, and though light is thrown on a variety of topics no generally acceptable definition of mysticism emerges. This is hardly surprizing. ‘Mysticism’ is one of those protean words that elude precise definition, and for this reason I personally prefer not to use it. Instead of arguing whether Agha Hananda Bharati’s definition is correct, and whether mysticism is ‘really’ what he says it is, I shall therefore take his definition at its face value and try to see whether what he calls mysticism corresponds to anything with which we are familiar within the context of Buddhism.

As defined by him, mysticism is the ‘*intuition of numerical oneness with the cosmic absolute, with the universal matrix, or with any essence stipulated by the various theological and speculative systems of the world.*’ (p.25. Author’s italics.) A mystic is a person who has experienced this numerical oneness, or seeks to experience it, and who, when questioned about his most important pursuit, consistently says ‘*I am a mystic*’ in the *etic* sense rather than in an *emic* sense (i.e. in the generally accepted meaning of the term, not in the meaning which it has for a particular coterie). Agha Hananda Bharati himself is a mystic, as are the Buddha, Ramakrishna, Ramana Maharshi, Arthur Koestler, Timothy Leary, Alan Watts, Allen Ginsberg, and Aldous Huxley. All have had the zero-experience, as Bharati also terms the intuition of numerical oneness with the absolute, although in Huxley’s case there seems to be some doubt about it. A mystic is also a person who, in seeking numerical unity with the absolute, does so by espousing psycho-experimental methods which are hedonic rather than non-hedonic. Among these methods are sexual and aesthetic experience and the use of psychedelic drugs. For Bharati the achievement of pleasure, euphoria, ecstasy, is central to the mystic quest, and with this we come to the real crux of his whole discussion of the subject-matter of the book – whether called mysticism or by any other name. As he sees it, mysticism is that form of religious life or religious experience in which the pleasure-principle reigns supreme. This is not to say that he denies that the zero-experience can be triggered off with the help of non-hedonic, ascetic psycho-experimental methods: it is simply that the possibility does not interest him, and he therefore does not concern himself with it. In his own words, ‘Rejection of euphoria does not disqualify a person from the mystic title: but he falls into a somewhat marginal category’

(p.27) Yet despite its supremacy in its own sphere, the pleasure-principle affords us no access to the domain of the reality-principle. Bharati makes it clear that while mysticism is the intuition of numerical oneness with the absolute it does not follow from this that the absolute actually exists. The zero-experience does not confer ontological status on its own content. What really happens is that a thought-chain occurs which is *felt* by the mystic as meaning that he has achieved oneness with the absolute.

(p.113) From this it follows that the zero-experience does not entail a specific theology or ideology, or any specific type of action or inaction. (p.69) Similarly, the zero-experience does not change the mystic in any respect, though it may alter his self-image and in this way, bring about a change in his environment by changing people’s attitudes towards him. In particular, the zero-experience does not make the mystic a better man. The stinker remains a stinker. Indeed, as if rubbing it in, Bharati assures us that ‘some of the best mystics were the greatest stinkers among men’ (p.91) and that ‘mystics can be saints, they can be vicious tyrants, or anything else.’ (p.124) He does, however, concede that the mystic arranges his deeds and thoughts in a hierarchy, with the zero-experience at the top and the rest in a descending scale of importance below (p.102) – a concession which has the effect of undermining his whole position. Bharati also believes that it is unimportant how the mystic comes by the experience (p.112) – a view that separates means and end, that it is ‘in one category perhaps with totally consummated erotic experiences, or with artistic and similar peak sensations,’ (p.75) and that, if a person who has had the experience ‘dislikes’ it, he can ‘of course’ have it analyzed – i.e. psychoanalyzed – out of him.

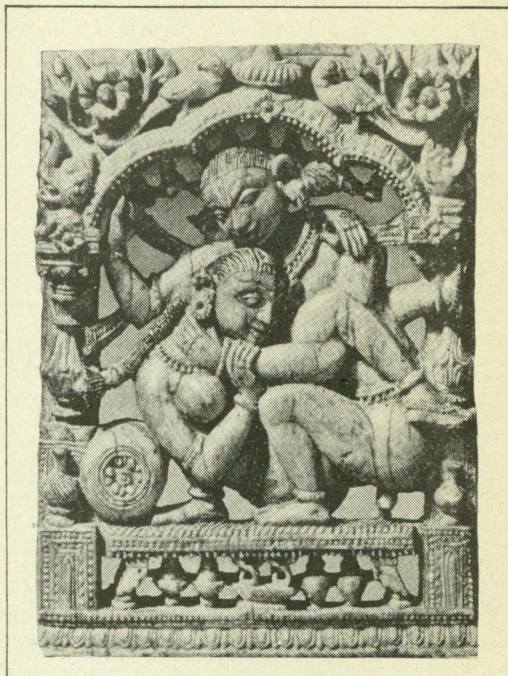
(p.143) The mystical experience is what it is. It is to be sought not because it is noble, but simply because it is a skill which confers delight, and because it ‘inures the practitioner against the vicissitudes of life, against boredom and despair.’ (p.78) This is an arid message, Agha Hananda Bharati admits, to ‘those who have expected to find the ultimate panacea of the religious and secular life in the mystical’ (p.75), but there’s nothing he can do about it: the zero-experience itself is really all there is.

Arid though the message may be, there is nothing arid about the way the author delivers it. He delivers it, in fact, not only with refreshing candour but with panache. Not that his candour is likely to be appreciated in the quarters where it is most needed. Some of his harsher strictures may indeed be found deeply offensive by the ‘sanctimonious little men who impress the gullible by their accent, their smell, their robe,’ (p.174) i.e. by the urban, middle-class, English-educated swamis of the Hindu Renaissance who, in this book as in *The Ochre Robe*, are the

favourite targets of Bharati's cultural criticism. To the extent that they have the wit to perceive that it applies to them too, it will also be found deeply offensive by the swami's opposite numbers in Buddhism, i.e. the globe-trotting bhikkhus of South-East Asia who flit from capital to capital purveying the corresponding brand of 'pietistic talk.' (p.35) Those who are genuinely interested in the 'Wisdom of the East', and who are tired, perhaps, of the pseudo-spiritual claptrap of the pompous gurus and the 'stink of occidental adulation' that surrounds them, will welcome Agha Bharati's straightforwardness. They will be glad to hear him denouncing the 'glib and quite dangerous guru mania', (p.200), as well as warning against the 'pathological eclecticism' that permeates the entire counter-culture (p.37) and the 'latent Hindu fascism which, fortunately for the world, has no power except in India.' (p.199) Swami Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna Mission come in for especially severe handling. Bharati is 'certain that Vivekananda has done more harm than good to the seekers of mystical knowledge.' (p.154) As for the Ramakrishna Mission its dozen or so centres in Europe and America are well established and stagnant, and their clientele has not changed in twenty years. The swamis in charge as well as their flock are against experimentation of any sort; the 'patently mystical directive' of their official monism is watered down to a respectable Sunday sermon, and the swamis 'vie with each other in giving establishmentarian, ecclesiastic advice, very much like most average Protestant ministers in the cities until thirty years ago' (p.34) Once again, Bharati's criticism applies beyond its immediate context: we have our Ramakrishna Missions in Buddhism too.

Among the things for which Bharati most strongly criticizes both the swamis of the Hindu Renaissance and their 'grassroots' Indian counterparts is what he regards as their 'puritanical' attitude towards pleasure. Puritanism is in fact his *bête noire*, and although the word does not appear as often in *The Light at the Center* as it does in *The Ochre Robe*, and is not listed in the index, the earlier anathemas are clearly still in force. Whether a term of such distinctly Anglo-American provenance as 'puritanism' can really be applied in this naively uncritical fashion to Indian religious life is more than doubtful, but perhaps we should not be over-rigorous. By puritanism Bharati appears to mean any disposition to check the totally uninhibited enjoyment of the fullest possible (hetero-) sexual pleasure. As an example of modern Hindu puritanism he cites the attitude of scholars and others to the ananda-mimamsa or 'pleasure-scale' of the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, which according to him they reject. 'Prof. J.L. Mehta, for instance, 'got furious' when he quoted it.' (p.63) To the best of my own recollection, far from rejecting the ananda-

mimamsa, or 'beatific calculus' as some of them call it, modern Hindu scholars and swamis, — even the etiolated swamis of the Ramakrishna Mission, — refer to it and expatiate on it *ad nauseam*. Indeed I too sometimes used to think that there was far too much 'bliss talk' in Hindu religious circles. Bharati's discussion of the subject is not very clear.



According to the ananda-mimamsa, a hundred measures of human bliss, i.e. the bliss experienced by a healthy, well-educated young man in possession of the riches of the whole world, equals one measure of bliss on the scale of the human gandharvas; a hundred measures of bliss on the scale of the human gandharvas equals one measure of bliss on the scale of the divine gandharvas, and so on from the divine gandharvas to the ancestors, and the ancestors to the gods by birth, etc., right up to a hundred measures of bliss on Prajapati's scale, which equals one measure of bliss on the scale of Brahman or 100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 times the measure of human bliss. (*Taittiriya Upanishad* 1.8). The general principle involved, that of the existence of a whole hierarchy of blissful experiences, from the grossest bodily to the most refined spiritual, is perfectly clear, and is accepted not only by all Hindus but also by all Buddhists and, probably, by all Christians as well. They also accept, as the practical corollary of all this, that in order to pass from a lower to a higher degree of bliss it is necessary to detach oneself from, or grow out of, or transcend — the vocabularies vary — the lower degree of bliss. This is why the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, as it enumerates each level of bliss, declares it to be equal not only to a hundred measures on the preceding scale but also to the measure of bliss 'of the man well versed in scripture who is not smitten by desire,' i.e. desire for the lower

degree of bliss. As the *Dhammapada* says, 'If by renouncing limited bliss (*mattasukha*) one can experience abundant bliss (*vipulam sukham*), let the wise man renounce the limited bliss for the sake of the abundant bliss.' (*Dhammapada* 209) Herein hedonism and asceticism coincide. What Mehta and others who think like him reject is – so it appears – not the euphoric content of the mystical experience, as Bharati alleges, but the suggestion that a lower degree of bliss (eg. sexual pleasure) is *qua* bliss identical with a higher degree of bliss (eg. the bliss of Brahman), so that there is no question of one being better or nobler than the other and no question, therefore, of detaching oneself from the lower degree of bliss in order to experience the higher degree, i.e. no question of asceticism. Bharati himself – in *The Ochre Robe*, at least – takes the quantitative language of the *Taittiriya Upanishad* quite literally, denying that the quantitative changes of the pleasure scale ever change into qualitative ones. But in a sense he does not take it literally enough. So concerned is he to insist that sex and Brahman are equally bliss that he forgets that they are not equally blissful, thus depriving himself of all motivation for passing from one to the other. But it is time to see whether what Bharati calls mysticism corresponds to anything with which we are familiar within the context of Buddhism – and to take a look at his references to Buddhism.

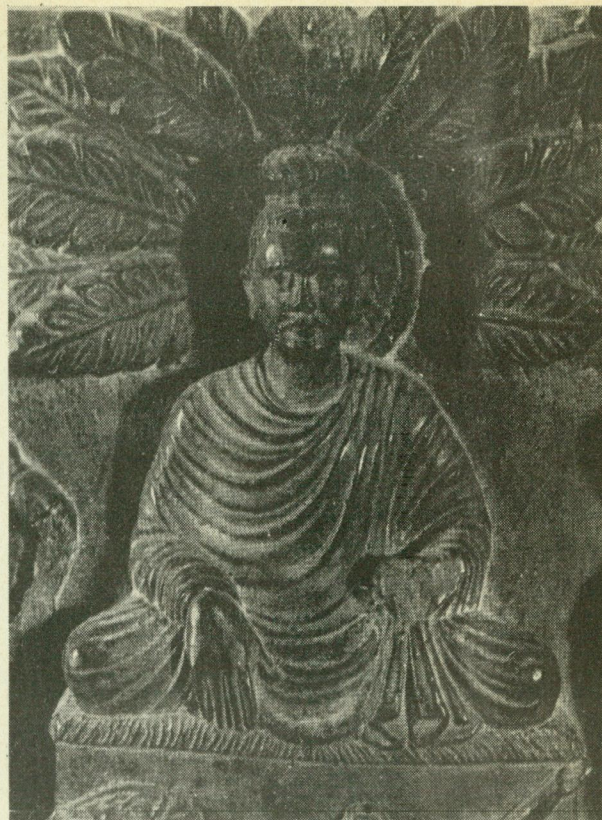
One of the most basic distinctions in all Buddhism – basic to thought and spiritual practice alike – is the distinction between samatha or 'calm' and vipasyana or 'insight', the one representing the entire range of dhyanic or superconscious experience, from the lowest discursive to the highest non-discursive, the other the direct, intuitive, wordless, and conceptless, confrontation with the ultimate reality of things. It does not take much reflection to see that the type of religious experience that Aghananda Bharati terms mystical coincides roughly with the lower levels of samatha experience, which are hedonic and non-sensuous, plus the more intensely hedonic forms of sensuous experience. (On the higher levels of samatha experience bliss is not present as a separate, distinguishable factor.) In terms of Buddhist psychology, the range of the mystical extends from the higher reaches of desire-world consciousness (*kamavacaracitta*) through all the levels of form-world consciousness (*rupavacaracitta*) up to, and not including, the formless-world consciousness (*arupavacaracitta*), while in 'mythological' terms it extends from the heaven of the Four Great Kings and the heavens of the other gods of the desire-world up through the heavens of the Brahma gods, of the gods of limited, unlimited and sonant light, of the gods of limited, unlimited and wondrous beauty, and of the 'unconscious' gods, as far as the gods of the 'pure abodes' (*suddhavasa*). In terms of

the stages of the Path the mystical extends from the satisfaction and delight (*pramodya*) that arises in dependence on faith (*sraddha*), through interest, enthusiasm, joy, rapture (*priti*) and calmness, repose, tranquillity, serenity (*prasrabdhi*), up to bliss (*sukha*) and total psychical integration (*samadhi*) – these being, of course, the third of the seventh of the series of 'positive' *nidan*as. All these levels of samatha – whether interpreted as states of consciousness, heavens, or stages of the Path – are characterized by euphoria, which gradually increases in intensity, though inasmuch as it is the concomitant of psychical integration the more intense it becomes the less it is possible to speak of it as a separate mental factor. Samatha-bhavana, the cultivation or development (lit. 'making to become') of 'calm', – one of the two most basic forms of Buddhist meditation, – is therefore a cultivation or development of bliss. The meditative life is the blissful life. As the Buddha exclaims in the *Dhammapada* (verse 200): 'Blissfully indeed we live, we that regard nothing as our own. Enjoyers of ecstasy shall we be, like the Gods of Sonant Light.' But although bliss, – mysticism, – is almost the whole of samatha it is not the whole of the spiritual life – taking the spiritual to include the transcendental. It is not the whole of Buddhism. Samatha has its limitations – limitations which make clearer still the extent to which mysticism in general, and zero-experience in particular, coincides with samatha. (i) Samatha experiences are mundane (*laukika*), not transcendental (*lokuttara*, lit. 'world-transcending'): they belong to the realm of the compounded or conditioned (*samskrita-dhatu*), not to the realm of the un compounded or absolute (*asamskrita-dhatu*). In dependence on conditions they arise, and in the absence of those conditions cease. Pictorially speaking, they form part of the Wheel of Life, and revolve as it revolves – even though, towards the outermost edge of the wheel, each revolution may take – or seem to take – hundreds of aeons. All samatha experiences being equally mundane, regardless of whether they are 'lower' or 'higher', Bharati is from the Buddhist point of view technically right in refusing to recognize any more than a quantitative difference between the successive degrees of mystical euphoria. (ii) Samatha experiences have no ontological content, that is to say, they do not in themselves constitute an experience of ultimate reality, and it is not possible for us to draw from them any conclusions about the nature of ultimate reality. The nature of ultimate reality is only revealed to insight (*vipasyana*) or 'wisdom' (*prajna*). Although samatha experiences, as such, are devoid of ontological content, they are important – even necessary – from the spiritual point of view in that they provide a basis for the development of vipasyana and thereby contribute, indirectly, to the attainment of Enlightenment. Samatha as transfigured by, and inseparably united with, the insight for whose development it provided the basis, is what is known as Samadhi in the more Mahayanistic usage of

the term. (iii) In the absence of vipasyana, samatha experiences can – and often do – become the basis for the construction of various pseudo-ontologies or ‘views’ (*drishti*) which, though they may purport to reveal the nature of ultimate reality have, in fact, no genuine ontological content. Buddhism traditionally regards all forms of theism, for example, as originating in this way. (iv) Samatha experiences do not, of themselves, bring about any permanent or radical change in the person enjoying them. Temporary and superficial changes may, indeed, occur, but these are doomed to pass away as soon as the samatha state itself comes to an end. Like a stretched-out piece of elastic, the mind reverts to its original position as soon as the expanding agency is removed. Only insight into the nature of ultimate reality is able to bring about permanent and radical change, by exposing the baselessness of the assumption that there exists, as the subject of samatha or any other experiences, a separate, unchanging, independent ego-identity. Yes, samatha does have its limitations, and these limitations do indeed make clear the extent to which samatha coincides with mysticism or zero-experience as defined by Bharati. Both are blissful, both are unable to confer ontological status on their own content, and both are powerless to bring about any change in the meditator/mystic. Whether *both* can be analysed away remains to be seen.

Bharati, Koestler & Co. are indeed mystics – as are some, at least, of the swamis of the Hindu Renaissance. We need not, as Buddhists, dispute the fact. By one means or another, – or by no means, – they have indeed enjoyed what in Buddhism are known as samatha experiences – experiences which were euphoric, without ontological significance, and which left them exactly as they were. But beyond samatha there is vipasyana. Beyond euphoria there is ultimate reality. Beyond Bharati, Koestler & Co., – beyond the swamis, – there is the Buddha.

That Bharati brackets himself and his fellow modern mystics with the Buddha almost as a matter of course is due neither to simple effrontery nor to megalomania, but to the fact he is unable to distinguish between samatha and vipasyana, ‘calm’ and ‘insight’. Because he is unable to distinguish between calm and insight he has no means of telling a mystic from a spiritually enlightened being. He has, also, no means of access to the ‘ontological dimension’: no means of access to ultimate reality. (The mystic’s intuition of numerical oneness is only a *feeling*.) Brahmin teachers like Vasistha, Patanjali, and Sriharsa, he tells us, taught that the sources of information about ‘the ontological status of divinity, or reality, of the cosmos,’ is ‘the infallible word of the Veda’, (p.85) a view which he as a Hindu apparently accepts. More than once, however, he refers to the rishis, the ‘seers’ of the mantra, the Vedic word, as



mystics, and to ‘canonical passages’ as being ‘statements made by people who have had the zero-experience.’ (p.77) If the rishis are mystics the Vedas cannot be sources of ontological information, i.e. information about ultimate reality. Or is ontological status conferred on the content of the rishis’ experience by some means extraneous to the experience itself? Bharati does not say. Buddhism does not, of course, accept the Vedas as sources of ontological information, i.e. does not accept their ‘infallibility’. For Buddhism too the rishis are mystics. That is why the Buddha – or rather the Bodhisattva – left Alada Kalama and Rudraka Ramaputra: they could teach him samatha, but not vipasyana; they could not show him the way of Supreme Enlightenment. Bharati’s references to ontology are not, in fact, very clear, and seem to be based on metaphysical assumptions of the ‘common sense’ order. According to Buddhist teaching, in ultimate reality there is no distinction of subject and object, and vipasyana or insight ‘intuits’ or ‘reflects’ this non-distinction. For Buddhism, therefore, there is no question, in the ultimate sense, of an ontology as distinct from an epistemology: vipasyana does not reveal an object – even a transcendental object – as distinct from a subject, but it ‘reveals’ an ultimate reality which, when made the object of thought and speech, – when brought within the dualistic framework of the subject-object relation, – can be regarded only as object as opposed to subject. In the Mahayana this ultimate reality is known as Sunyata.

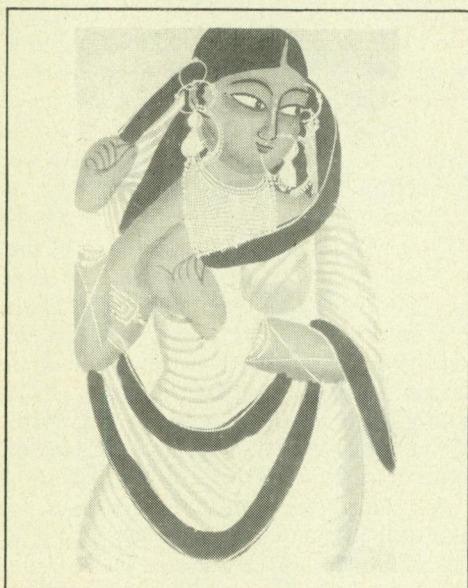
'Sunyata' is not an object but a pseudo-object. As a term in spiritual discourse, — in spiritual communion, — it 'points out' or 'indicates' not a real ontological object but an ultimate reality that transcends the duality of subject and object, ontology and epistemology. In the same way, Buddhist ontology is a pseudo-ontology, or rather, a symbolical ontology — in the mathematical rather than in the Jungian sense. Just as 'Sunyata' does not indicate a real ontological object, even though the exigencies of language compel us to say of it that it is neither existent nor non-existent, so the conceptual constructions of Buddhist 'ontology' (a term I use only because Bharati uses it) does not purport to mediate a world of really existing metaphysical objects to a really existing epistemological subject but have, instead, the function of 'pointing out' a condition of ultimate reality in which the distinction of subject and object does not obtain and of providing, moreover, a practical support for the development of insight or wisdom (*prajna*). Bharati does not, it seems, understand this. Though he correctly says that Nagarjuna, as a Buddhist, 'denied ontological status to any experience', i.e. to any mystical (= samatha) experience, and that 'he did not feel that the zero-experience could add anything to the experiencing person's knowledge about the world,' (pp.82-83) this does not mean, as he seems to think it does, that for Nagarjuna there is no ultimate reality beyond the zero-experience. As a Buddhist, Nagarjuna affirmed the 'existence' of such an ultimate reality, which he termed Sunyata, and which was to be realized by wisdom, or rather, by the perfection of wisdom (*prajna-paramita*).

Though Buddhism plays only a very minor part in Bharati's book (Zen does not interest him — p.185), it is apparent from his occasional references to it that his knowledge of it is neither wide nor deep. He shows no acquaintance with primary sources, on the importance of which he places great emphasis in the case of Yoga and Vedanta, and seems, in fact, to rely for much of his information on the Buddhist equivalent of the Hindu Renaissance type of pamphlet literature which he so heartily despises. In one place he gives us, (p.135) without references, a greatly expanded, — not to say 'spiced up', — and entirely apocryphal version of the Buddha's well known reply to Ananda's question as to how monks are to comport themselves with regard to women (*Digha-Nikaya ii.141*). In another, he tells us that 'every single one' of the Buddha's speeches 'starts with *bhikkhave*, "ye begging monks"; he never addressed anyone who wanted to stay out' (p.133). Such slovenliness in someone who makes such a parade of scholarship as Agchananda Bharati does is quite breathtaking. Even a quick look at the middle fifty discourses of the *Majjhima-Nikaya*, the 'Collection of

Middle Length Discourses', for example, would have shown him, out of a total of fifty discourses, ten addressed to householders (*gahapati*), ten to non-Buddhist wanderers (*paribbajaka*), ten mainly to or about royalty, ten to brahmins, and only ten to the bhikkhus or begging monks. In any case, did not the Buddha exhort his first sixty spiritually enlightened disciples to journey forth for the welfare and happiness of many people (*bahujana*) and proclaim the Dharma? (*Vinaya-Pitaka i,21*). There is no question of his message being addressed only to monks, even though these might have formed the largest and most important section of his community. Bharati's most serious misunderstanding, however, is in connection with Buddhist meditation, about which he has some quite odd ideas. 'In the Pure Land School of Northern Buddhism,' he says, 'the Buddha is the giver of grace to those who worship him faithfully, with very little attention to the highly individualistic, speculative, and affect-less meditations which go with the Theravada and with many Mahayana schools.' (p.123) What these 'speculative' meditations are we can only guess, while as for them being 'affect-less', this is surely almost a contradiction in terms. As we have already seen, samatha involves elements of delight, rapture, ecstasy, and bliss: the meditative life is the blissful life. There is also the example of the four Brahma Viharas, one of the most popular meditations with the Theravada and the Mahayana schools alike. Surely Bharati does not seriously mean to describe the meditative development of friendliness (*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), sympathetic joy (*pramudita*), and equanimity (*upeksha*), as being 'highly individualistic, speculative, and affect-less'. Some of the more extreme representatives of the modern so-called 'vipassana meditation' (not to be confused with the traditional vipasyana-bhavana common to practically all forms of Buddhism) do, of course, believe that it is possible to develop sukkha-vipassana or 'dry insight' i.e. insight that has not been 'moistened' by the blissful experiences of the dhyana states, and of this some rumour may have reached Bharati, but in general meditation teachers do not see the development of 'dry insight' as a practicable possibility. The whole notion of sukkha-vipassana would appear to rest on a confusion between two radically different things: (i) actual insight into ultimate reality, and (ii) recollection of the doctrinal categories of the Abhidhamma. What may be termed the standard or classical formulation of the Buddhist spiritual path, — the Buddhist spiritual life, — sees it as progressing from ethical observance through ever higher levels of psychical integration and euphoria to insight and wisdom and, from these, eventually to Enlightenment. The experience of dhyanic bliss, though itself mundane, is the means of transition from the mundane to the transcendental. Hedonism — the higher hedonism that coincides with asceticism, — is an integral part of spiritual life. Enlightenment itself, indeed, can be thought of not in exclusively

noetic terms but, rather, as the inseparable unity of ineffable Bliss and transcendent Awareness.

Despite its title, *The Light at the Center* conveys no inkling of this unity. On the contrary, there runs through the book a psychological cleavage that affects not only the author's whole approach to his subject but also the style in which he writes, eg. mysticism is 'a highly structured pursuit of experiential maximization'. (p.91) Bharati is not unaware of the cleavage. 'I have long maintained,' he says, 'that the mystic who happens to be a scholar must live and think in a manner which psychiatrists call schizophrenic.' (p.82) This is to understate the matter. Bharati's 'schizophrenia' does not consist just in



his being a mystic who 'happens' also to be a scholar. After all, what makes one a mystic - apart, of course, from saying that one is a mystic - is the zero-experience, and this, as he makes quite clear, is of very rare occurrence. The schizophrenia consists in the fact that, in the absence of vipasyana, - and in the absence of any form of asceticism, - Bharati is left not with mysticism and scholarship but with sexual and aesthetic euphoria and scholarship. Indeed, he is left with rather less than that. The gap between sense and intellect, the emotions and reason, can be bridged with the help of the fine arts, and the enjoyment of natural beauty, all of which have a unifying effect on the psyche. With the exception of classical and baroque music (played as he drives to work and while copulating) Bharati seems to be no more interested in these things, however, than he is in Zen. At any rate, there is no mention anywhere in his book of poetry, or of the visual arts, or of nature, nor anything to show that he is so much as aware of their existence. In the absence

of the fine arts, therefore, and the enjoyment of natural beauty, he is left not with sexual and aesthetic euphoria and scholarship, even, but simply with sex and scholarship, or sex and academic research. If Gerald Scarfe was ever to caricature Agehananda Bharati, it would probably be as a pair of outsize genital organs hanging from an enormously overdeveloped brain - an image that might do equally well for some of his counterparts in the field of Buddhist studies.

Bharati's greatest mistake, perhaps, has been to ignore the part played by asceticism in the religious life and in religious experience. He knows that there is such a thing as asceticism, of course, but he brushes it aside or tries to forget about it - or confuses it with puritanism. Occasionally, however, the truth will out. 'The professional mystics in India', he has to admit, 'are almost all monastics - they have obtained ordination in orders which enjoin celibacy.' (p.171) That seems clear enough. Later on, however, he says, 'The fact that most methods now taught for supreme religious consummation are of the ascetic order, is a complex series of historical accidents which I cannot go into.' (p.209) What these accidents are it would be interesting to know. Perhaps Bharati will be able to particularize them in another book. Meanwhile, we have this book, which despite serious limitations does do a number of useful things. It provides us with a highly individual critique - not to say an expose - of the India-originated religious movements, insists on the dysfunctional nature of eclecticism, and stresses the need for the would-be mystic to follow a genuine tradition. Above all, perhaps, it reminds us that pleasure is not something to be feared, and that the hedonistic element is an essential part of the quest of seekers in the west. Even though we still have to remember that hedonism, - ecstasy, - mysticism, - samatha, - is only part of the spiritual life, not the whole of it, for ex-Christian Hindus and ex-Christian Buddhists alike the reminder is still, no doubt, a salutary one.

SANGHARAKSHITA

ALSO RECEIVED

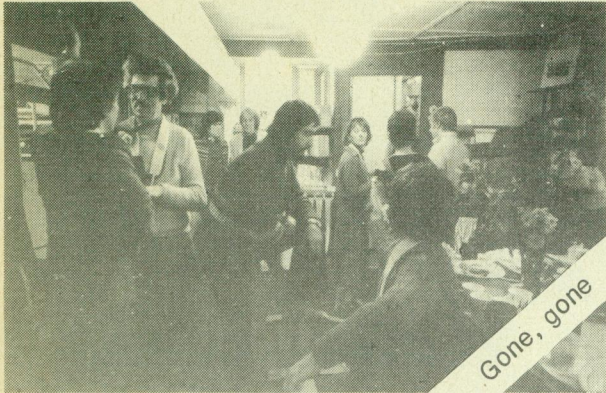
Creative Meditation and Multi-Dimensional Consciousness by Lama Anagarika Govinda. A Mandala Book published by George Allen & Unwin, London. Price £1.95 (paperback).

The Chapter of the Self by Trevor Leggett. Published by Routledge & Kegan Paul. Price £3.95.

Order: Maitreya 6 Edited by Vincent C. Stuart. Published by Shambala. Price £3.25 (paperback)

CENTRES and BRANCHES

PUNDARIKA ARCHWAY & MANDALA WEST LONDON



Gone, gone



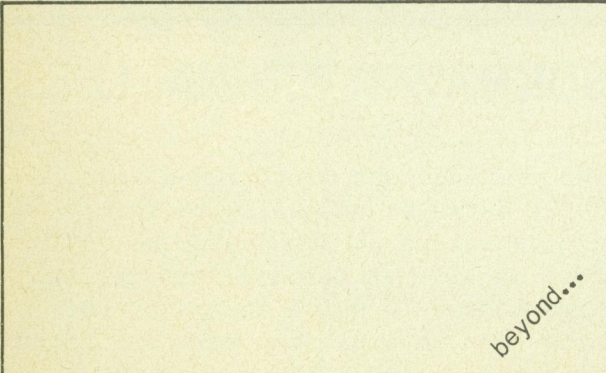
Rejoice!



gone beyond



gone altogether



beyond...

News from Kamalasila

About 70 people attended Pundarika's pre-demolition puja on 29 November. The atmosphere was one of celebration rather than nostalgia. After giving an outline of the history of Pundarika and its position in the history of the FWBO, Subhuti's talk made the point that everything begun will inevitably have an end, including those things begun by the Friends.

In fact Pundarika was crucial in the development of a great many people now associated with the FWBO: out of Pundarika came most of the new developments in the Movement in this country and Centres elsewhere have also inevitably been influenced by what happened here. It was very good to celebrate, with quite a few of the people involved with it, this past, its passing, and the growth of its offspring: a good funeral wake. And there was also the inheritance - not for the first time there was a great deal of speculation from various existing and potential centres as to whether the famous supporting RSJ (large iron girder) running along the ceiling could be salvaged from tomorrow's ruin, and if so how many people it would take to carry it, etc,

The next day was spent stripping the

building of everything conceivably recyclable and relaying loads to Mandala. The day after that was spent trying to find space to put everything in the tiny basement, now the centre.

Yoga and meditation classes started again a week later in a north London church hall. We dechristianize the atmosphere by rolling out our own carpet, putting out cushions, candles, incense, flowers. The room we have is very quiet for meditation.

The currently forming "Friends Housing Association" is looking for somewhere for a community of about ten in Kensington & Chelsea borough, and we hope a new centre will come out of the project too.

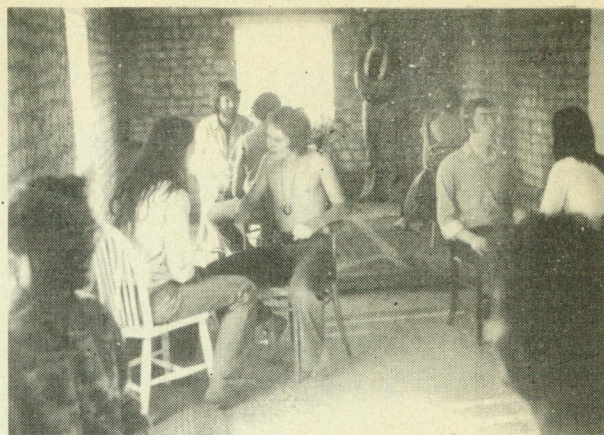
Our removals business should be on the road by the time you read this. We hope this will help not only the Centre and the community attached to it, but also be useful to people coming along to the Centre who want to earn their living working with others also into the Friends; the Centre would employ them and pay them a wage.

We're trying to get 'Four Winds' (near Farnham, Surrey) again this year for a three week summer retreat. If you are interested contact the centre for latest news and dates.

EEMC EAST END MEDITATION CENTRE

by Subhuti

East London is now the home of four communities: Sukhavati. Golgonooza, Beulah and Amaravati. The East End Meditation Centre (EEMC for short) is the 'home' centre for all four communities. Since all the communities have been heavily involved with building work over the last six months, there has not been much opportunity to develop the meditation centre. Now that Golgonooza have



Communication exercises at weekend retreat

finished rebuilding work which prevented us from completing work at the Centre, a new phase of building and decoration has begun. A committee has been formed of all involved in the running of the Centre and we look forward to a new and active phase in its life.

Apart from a beginners and a regulars class, we are running an eight week course in meditation and Buddhism which includes a weekend retreat. Yoga classes have been taken by Anne Farnham from Amaravati and are now under Surata's instruction, fresh from an intensive month with his yoga teacher in India.

Future events are a family day on Saturday January 21st for Friends, Mitras and Order members with families, weekend retreats for beginners and regulars, probably a day retreat at the Centre and another introductory course.

SUKHAVATI BETHNAL GREEN

Report by Subhuti

The commencement of this new year, 1978, marks an unusually radical change for us at Sukhavati. We look back on 1977 as being a very testing time indeed in which we ran out of money for the building work and found

ourselves out in the 'market place'. After eighteen months of working at Sukhavati, the demands of launching a number of businesses made a strong impact on us all. It has really taken us the whole of 1977 to adjust: personally, organisationally and technically.

The last contract which our building service undertook was the conversion of a terraced house in south London including the construction of a two storey extension, the total value of the contract being £8000. After the muddles and confusions to which we had been prone in previous jobs, this time everything went with extreme smoothness. The workers would now return in the evenings and talk of the job with enthusiasm and, I'm told, the standard of singing on site had improved! Our client was delighted with the standard of the work and the manner in which it was carried out and has asked us to place a plaque in his living room recording that the work was done by us.

Windhorse Transport too has greatly developed its service. By the end of last year, most weeks saw the vans more often on the M1 to Huddersfield and Manchester than in London. We now have a contract to deliver clothes to Yorkshire once a week and hope to build up a series of regular runs between London and other parts of Britain.

So for a year the working direction of the community has been determined by the need to raise money. This has meant that we have had to resolve many of the practical difficulties of developing means of Right Livelihood. Most importantly, we have all had to appreciate that work is an essential aspect of the spiritual life and that, when performed in the right spirit, is enjoyable and productive. We have had to learn to deal clearly, reliably and positively with

customers, who are sometimes vague, distracted or touchy. We have had to overcome our economic disadvantages of being undercapitalised and low on skills. By the end of the year we are just about in a position to start making money without detriment to the atmosphere of the community.

We have, however, now determined that our major effort must go back into finishing the building work on the ground floor of Sukhavati which will be the public centre. Windhorse Transport, hopefully with a new van, Windhorse Press, soon with a bigger printing machine, and Friends Foods, operating from the wholefood shop fronting onto Roman Road which is now being prepared, will all continue to raise money to support the community. We have been donated £10,000 and a house near Norwich in Norfolk which we're hoping to sell for about £8000. And we have made preliminary steps towards setting up a Job Creation Programme scheme. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets are acting as sponsors and will provide some money towards materials. The Government's Manpower Services Commission will provide wages for 16 unemployed men: one foreman, 5 skilled men, 5 unskilled and 5 under 18 years of age. Of these 16, probably six or seven will be members of the community who will act as supervisors. We are present waiting for confirmation with some apprehension especially as rumour has reached us that MSC has run out of money. If this scheme does not come off, we will have to act quite drastically, perhaps sending half the community out to work again. If it does then we should easily have finished work later this year.

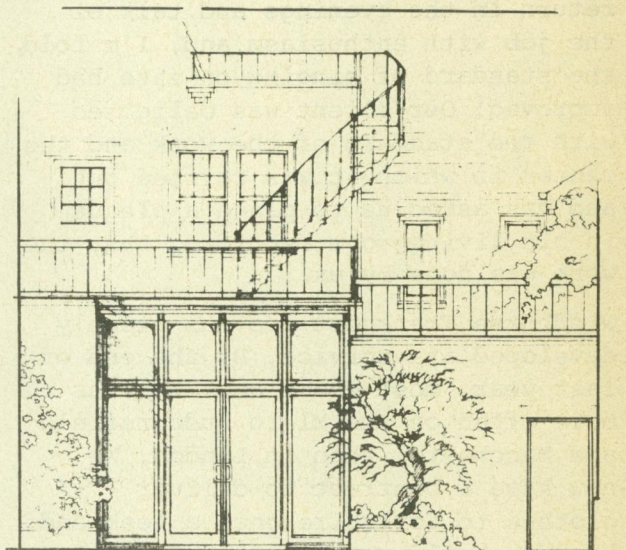
With this reorientation in work has come quite a development of the community. We now have 35 residents and have consequently had to reorganise our administration. There is now a

all aspects of the residential community and which is gradually upgrading the living standards. When we first moved in, we were virtually camping in the building; we have therefore tended to retain a campers' mentality. Well, now the old furniture has been thrown out, the walls are being painted and absolute cleanliness being insisted upon. There seems to be a much more general sense of responsibility. Even though things are much more organised than before, people are more prepared to step in, say, to wash up if the system breaks down.

These days our shrine room is full for most periods of meditation. Living as we do on a main through-route, noise is quite a problem, and everybody comments on the difference between meditating here and on retreat. (Consequently we are going to double glaze the shrine room.) We now have a period of meditation at the end of work for half an hour. This is always a 'just-sitting' period in which one simply lets go of the working day and doesn't try to do any particular practice. It has already become something to look forward to for many people. It has certainly made a difference to our evening meal which used to be, in a way, still under the influence of the work. Everybody will be going away for a weekend retreat at least once in the next three months and all participate in one or other of four study groups which we hold. Once a fortnight, we are going to be holding a 'community evening' at which we will have a meal together, a house-meeting, and an 'event' of some kind - poetry, music, drama or a talk or some such - followed by a puja. There is thus developing a much greater sense of well rounded community life.

Over the Christmas period, 16 members of the community went up to Loch Lomond for a retreat in conjunction with the Glasgow Centre. They all

came back singing the praises of Scotland's beauties and of the lively energy of the Glasgow Order members. Four of us spent the period in solitary retreat in various places - Vajradaka in a small caravan on the bleak side of a Welsh mountain overlooking the sea, Subhuti in a deserted farmhouse in a silent Welsh valley, and Atula and Dave Living in Norfolk. Four people went to the men's Mitra retreat at Padmaloka. The community in this way is experiencing quite an access of enthusiasm and vision. A number of others will be taking a period away for solitary retreat or to stay at Padmaloka.



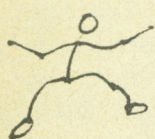
Elevation of proposed glazed porch for back yard

We have a number of other projects on hand at present. Application has been made for the registration of 'The Pure Land Cooperative Ltd.'. Once this has been accepted, all our businesses will operate under the cooperative which should have quite a strong influence on the internal structure of the community.

An Order member at Sukhavati has purchased a Welsh farmhouse with several outbuildings. This is to be converted into a Meditation Centre.

Work will hopefully be beginning in April and should be completed within a year. Plans are also afoot to provide a retreat centre in the London area at which both weekend and longer retreats could be held. We are on the lookout for a suitable property.

Although the community is full, we are still short of various skills. A plumber and an electrician are needed for the project at Sukhavati, the Meditation Centre at Tyn-y-ddol in Wales will need 2 or 3 enthusiastic and experienced builders, the house-keeping team needs one more member, the transport business needs a driver and the Press needs a manager. If any men are interested in living in this increasingly many-sided community and could fulfil any of the above tasks, somehow or other, we will fit them in.



Yippee!
Our Job Creation
Programme Scheme
has been approved!

GOLGONOOZA

Nooze from Luvah

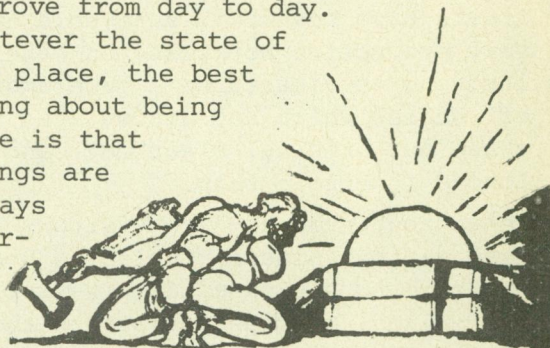
Since last Newsletter Golgonooza has seen a magical transformation; a kitchen has appeared complete with cooker, fridge, hot and cold water, likewise a bathroom where there used to be a windy abyss, a working toilet and many other novelties. The roof still leaks of course but apart from that the outside building work is largely finished, just in time for the snow by the look of it. Much thanks due to the aptly named Jory Squibb who exploded on us a few weeks ago and has been rushing around ever since with bits of copper pipe bent into weird shapes recirculating energy and rekindling enthusiasm in times of need.

Of course there is still plenty of

work to do before the place is really fit for human habitation, but we are distinctly moving into the second phase, now that most of the structural work is done on the community floor. Having a properly functioning kitchen provides the community with a much needed focus to grow around, as well as an altogether more stimulating and satisfactory environment. Now we are beginning to feel that there is energy available for other activities that we have so far neglected. Our first new enterprise is a household study group on the 'Jewel Ornament Of Liberation'. As time permits other things will no doubt follow.

We are feeling more integrated, more organized, more relaxed. There is much to be said for building one's own living space. One learns to appreciate and become more aware of the the immediate environment, and to experience the pleasure of seeing things change and improve from day to day.

Whatever the state of the place, the best thing about being here is that things are always improving.



AMARAVATI WANSTEAD & MANDARAVA NORFOLK

Report from Anoma

It's coming up to six months since we moved into Amaravati. A lot of work has been done on the house, although it'll probably be another six months before everything is finished. To keep us financially stable, Kusa Cushions has been working hard doing some big cushion and curtain jobs.

Two of us have been alternately typing the whole transcript of the Bodhicaryavatara Seminar, and there is quite a lot of administrative work to be done, so it hasn't been possible for all of us to be working on the house full time. However, quite a bit more has been done since the last report. Two basement rooms are nearly finished, which will be people's rooms. This has involved a lot of preparation due to dampness and fire damage. One of these rooms, when completed will be for Anjali, who will be joining the community from Brighton in the new year. We've also decorated two other rooms and done quite a bit on the Kitchen: the most damaged room in the house (plastering walls, putting in a back door and a completely new window). Repointing of some of the outside walls of the house has been done, some new guttering put up and most of the windows have now been put in. The garden has also been cleared and tidied. Two working weekend retreats have been both enjoyable and very productive workwise. On the last one we cleared up a huge amount of rubbish which had accumulated since our original clear out, and loaded it onto a skip.

We've continued to have visitors from various places, including Bhante who came to see us after his visit to Finland. He came for supper and stayed to lead the puja. He brought with him a new rupa made for us by Chintamani. It is finished in gold leaf, with painted robes and hair, and it's made a great difference to our shrineroom.

We are at present studying the Bodhicaryavatara (working with the transcript). At first this was just once a week but we were getting such a lot out of it that we decided to do two evenings a week, plus a long reading from the text on Sundays in the puja. As you might imagine, this, together

with typing the transcript of the seminar, is having quite an inspiring effect on the community.

The newsletter 'Dakini', which is produced from Amaravati, now goes out to over 80 women Order members, Mitras and Friends. It comes out bi-monthly and the next issue will be the first anniversary edition. It contains contributions from any women involved in the Movement who care to send something in. Response has been building up with each issue and it seems to be a very good form of communication between women involved in the Friends.

At the beginning of November the whole community went up to Mandarava for a week's retreat with the Mandarava community. Marichi came too, and Anjali for a few days. It was an excellent retreat - quite intense, with some of the most dynamic communication exercises I've ever experienced. One evening near the end of the retreat, we spent four and a half hours in the shrineroom, meditating, walking and chanting, listening to a long reading about the Buddha's Enlightenment from "The Light of Asia" (during which there were howling winds outside which literally shook the shrineroom), a tea ceremony, offerings, chanting and puja. There was another women's retreat at Mandarava over Christmas, for Mitras. It's very good to be able to start holding regular retreats for women again. In 1978 there will be more retreats at Mandarava and weekend retreats at Amaravati. We'll probably be holding some Order/Mitra days too.

At Mandarava work is going on to prepare for retreats. Two railway wagons have been done up and stoves put in. They're quite warm and comfortable now. There is now a caravan on the land too. Helen from Amaravati has just finished plumbing in

a Rayburn, which seems to make the whole house warmer and cosier and keep out the winter winds. Six fruit trees have been planted and green-houses prepared for the winter. The community itself has changed in that Teresa has moved into Norwich to manage the Rainbow Restaurant and Lois will be leaving in the new year to go to America to do a course in music therapy. However Beryl Dewain and Susie Marshall, two Mitras from Norwich have now moved in and another Friend is seriously considering this. Next summer work can start on converting some of the barns. So, as you can see, we won't be hanging up our dungarees at either community for some time to come! Help is always welcome - or if you just wish to visit, please do. Phone first though; telephone numbers are on the back page of this Newsletter.

VAJRADHATU NORWICH

Report from Devamitra

During the three months from mid-September until mid-December we have probably been in contact with more people in Norfolk than during the previous twelve months of our existence. This is partly because a little effort has been made to go out to people and meet them away from our own premises.

I have recently given various talks outside the Centre. I was particularly interested in visiting schools and so contacted about a dozen schools in the city. Consequently I was invited along to three of them. My first talk was to about 24 'emotionally disturbed' children of about 13 to 14 years old at Eaton Hall School and I was particularly struck by their brightness and interest. A couple of weeks later I visited Earlham School and talked to a third form group who were studying Buddhism as part of their

'religious education' course. Towards the end of November I spoke to a sixth form liberal studies group at Bowthorpe School on the subject of individuality. On each of these occasions good contact was established with the likelihood of further invitations to speak forthcoming. I was also asked to take part in a 'field course in religious education' to be held jointly on behalf of Acle High School and Claydon Secondary School (Gorleston) for 15/16 year old CSE students. I spoke along the theme 'Beyond the Gods' and talked about the Buddha's early life and attainment of Enlightenment. My young audience seemed particularly gripped by the story of the Buddha. As a follow up, the group visited the Centre two days later for a first class in meditation given by Ratnapani and a further talk by Kulamitra about 'the Friends'. One of the girls booked for our next meditation course. I hope to be invited to visit both schools next year.

As a result of my talk at Eaton Hall School, on the basis of a recommendation from one of the staff, I was invited to address 'The Young Clergy of Norfolk' towards the end of November. On this occasion I spoke about the Buddha and God, Buddhist ethics and meditation. My remarks provoked considerable interest and a lively discussion followed which was pursued over lunch. The following day Vessantara travelled up from Surrey to speak at the Assembly House in his imaginative style using the title 'Visions of Change: Evolution and Revolution'. Earlier in the previous month I had spoken at the same venue on the subject 'The Art of Communication', which was followed up a few days later by a communications course attended by about 20 people also at the Assembly House. In December I gave two further - one to a group of welders at the City College around

the theme of 'Why I am a Buddhist' and one at the Norwich Community Arts Centre entitled 'Meditation for Free'. This latter talk attracted about 20 newcomers of whom over half have booked for our forthcoming meditation courses.

In addition to all this, the Ven. Sangharakshita has been holding a speakers class for members of the Norfolk chapter of the Order on Saturday evenings at the Assembly House. At the Centre we have held three six-week meditation courses and a follow up course all led by Buddhadasa, while at the University of East Anglia I led a similar six week course. About 20 people took part in each of these introductory courses and we hope that some at least will become regular Friends. Sona led a ten week yoga course attended by about 15 people and immediately on his return from India in December Abhaya led a day long yoga class to pass on some of his experience gained in tuition from B.K.S.Iyengar. Other regular activities have included a weekly evening of double meditation, two mitra study groups, and full moon pujas for men Order members at Padmaloka, while the frequency of my visits to Blundeston Prison has increased from fortnightly to weekly.

For the new year I hope that our recent expansion of activities will continue to grow with our broadening attitude and approach so that we are able to contact more and more open-minded people of whatever background and begin to firmly establish the practice of the Dharma in East Anglia.

ARYATARA SURREY

Report by Vessantara

Nos 2, 3 and 4 St Michael's Road are three shops, each with two floors above, near the centre of Croydon.

They are owned by Croydon Council, and have stood empty for some time. A quick walk around them is enough to explain why. No.2 is so badly fire-damaged that, if you take your life in your hands and go upstairs, you are rewarded with a fine view of Croydon through the missing part of the roof. Nos 3 and 4 also have some unusual features - for instance direct access to the cellar of No.4 is afforded by the almost total collapse of the shop floor due to dry rot. Most of its upper floor is devoted to an unusual collection of old cardboard boxes, hundreds of them, packed to the ceiling. The businessmen of Croydon had been unimpressed by these features and so the shops stood empty.

Then Nagabodhi and Steve Pedder from Aryatara were shown over them, and, in the light of their vision of a new Centre for F.W.B.O. (Surrey) these ugly ducklings were transformed into swans. Centrally situated, there was enough room to accommodate a whole-food shop, a vegetarian cafe, a large shrine room and reception rooms, and a community of about six. The scheme could provide work for all our Friends who were in need of Right Livelihood. Nonetheless it was a vary large project indeed. We estimated that the work would take 18 months to complete, and would cost about £28,000. We checked and double checked our figures; it would stretch us to our limits and beyond, but it could be done, if all our Friends responded. Which they did, magnificently. It was as if people in the area had been waiting for a project to inspire them, something to really get their teeth into. It was uplifting to see the offers of help, both practical and financial, coming in so readily. It was also inspiring to see how our enthusiasm transmitted itself to officials and businessmen. Our bank manager was more than happy

to loan us more than we asked for, the man from the Council was quickly convinced that we could do it.

But then, when we were geared up to go, came a setback. The buildings are in an area scheduled for redevelopment, and our interest had forced the Council to consider how soon they could redevelop. The estimate which they finally came up with did not give us enough guaranteed tenure to justify so much time and investment. So we have to go back to the drawing-board, and we have come up with a modified scheme, which we are in the process of agreeing with the Council. We plan to use just two of the buildings, for a wholefood shop and cafe, with the possibility of a small residential community. This will enable us to support a good number of people, and the shop should be open by late Spring.

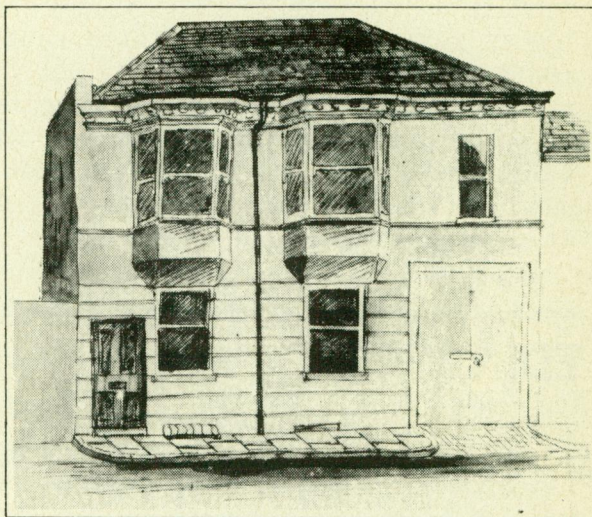
Whilst we are sorry that we shall not have a Centre in Croydon just yet, we have allowed ourselves one or two sighs of relief that we shall be undertaking a more manageable project, which will not require quite such a commitment of time and energy, but will allow the Centre and its activities to grow in a more organic way. Once the shops are open we can look elsewhere in Croydon for premises for a Centre and Community.

Meanwhile, our classes have continued as usual in Purley. In the last few months we have performed Mitra ceremonies for four of our Friends: Anni Norman, Nick Nixon, Vanda Chivers and Andree Ratzer; and we have brought out the first two issues of an Aryatara Newsletter, which as the Centre is associated with Tara, we have called KARUNA, which means compassion.

BRIGHTON

From Anjali

We have found a name for our new centre-in-the-making - Amitayus, which means the Buddha of Eternal Life. There has been a regular team of four people, one of whom is skilled, working at Amitayus - plumbing, wiring and plastering are almost complete, so that the decoration stage can begin early in the new year. There is no immediate deadline



by which the centre must be ready, as classes are continuing at George Street, so the pace of work is relaxed but steady - a thorough job being made.

Fundraising for Amitayus so far has included a sponsored walk and a bazaar. Fifteen of us walked from the village of Glynde, over the Downs to Rottingdean, on one of the last bright days before the November rains. We were briefly accompanied by an enormous flock of birds who filled the air with the beating of wings and disappeared out to sea. The theme of the bazaar was medieval English and a band of merrie minstrels did play outside the hall; while one of our Friends busked 'All Along Ye Watch-tower' at the back door in the Lanes. We raised £200.

All the classes have been well attended during the autumn and at a recent weekend retreat, mitra ceremonies were held for Anne Rowlands and Dianna MacEwen. Both our businesses, Sunrise Restaurant and Windhorse Bookshop, have done brisk pre-Christmas trade. It's interesting to note that two new vegetarian restaurants have opened recently, which would seem to indicate an increasing demand for vegetarian food in Brighton.

SUNRISE POSTSCRIPT

"COOKS WANTED" ...Sunrise Restaurant is looking for full time cooks, to replace losses and to allow expansion of opening times. NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED (training given), 3 day working week, help with accommodation. Contact Dick at Sunrise (16 North Rd, Brighton telephone 63188).

EDINBURGH

Uttara's report -
The First Missionaries

"Go forth brethren on your journey, for the profit of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the profit, the bliss of devas and mankind. Go not any two together; proclaim brethren the norm, goodly in its beginning, goodly in its middle, goodly in its end. Both in spirit and in the letter do ye make known the all perfected, utterly pure righteous life. There are beings with but little dust of passion on their eyes. They are perishing through not hearing the norm. There will be some who will understand. I myself, brethren, will go ...to proclaim the norm." (Vinaya).

When I left London the day after the tenth anniversary celebration of the founding of the FWBO, last April, I had this feeling that after 2500 years of Buddhism it hadn't really changed at all in the sense of the spirit:

you can look right down through the history of Buddhism and you can see that there was always some one going forth to spread the Buddha's teachings to make known what he had discovered and to help others do likewise. In the short history of the FWBO you can see it happening too. Ven. Sangharakshita came over from India to bring the Dharma to the west and since then after only ten years, the FWBO has spread as far afield as New Zealand and Finland after starting in the basement of a little shop in Covent Garden. As more and more individuals commit themselves to the Three Jewels and to the Movement, we see not the stagnation of the Dharma, but the growth and expansion of each individual and the Movement. We may see the closing of one centre but on the same day we may see the dedication of another. So, on the seventh of April, the day after the anniversary of the FWBO, I left to go to Edinburgh, with the eventual intention of helping to set up an FWBO centre in Edinburgh, to help make known what the Buddha and the FWBO has to offer each individual. For most of the Order members who go off to try and establish the FWBO in different parts of the country, the first problem that they come up against is not a Dharmic one but a practical one, that is, trying to find a centre or a suitable place to start from, but I am glad to say that this was not mine, for I was lucky to have a place to go to. The place that I was to be based at belonged to a Friend who had been involved with the Glasgow FWBO since it was first established. Andrew Galloway, who had been staying on his own for some time in a fairly large flat, was crying out for someone from the FWBO to move into his place and use it as a base where the FWBO could hold their activities and so help bring the Dharma to Edinburgh. Since then I have been making

contact with the people who live here and finding out just what interest there is. For the past nine months there have been people coming and going in the flat and we have had a few Day Retreats here. The place has also been redecorated. We have had many a flying visit from the Order in Glasgow and also Order members, mitras and some Friends from other Centres. And also Bhante stayed for a few days. We have just finished a six week meditation course, which was inspiring and stimulating not only for those who came to it but also for those who took it. The enthusiasm from everybody was so good that I personally can't wait to get another course underway. We will soon be starting to play the series of lectures which were given by the Ven. Sangharakshita down in Brighton, on what the FWBO has to offer the modern man and woman, for those people on the course who want to know more about the FWBO, and the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. So as the Lion's Roar begins to be heard in North East Scotland, so I think that we shall see in the near future more individuals who come into contact with the FWBO, go forth and commit themselves also to the growth of Buddhism in the west and to the ideal of Enlightenment.

HERUKA GLASGOW

By Danavira

THE CENTRE IS A HOMECOMING

A while ago it frightened me to feel the city filled with ghosts, now it does not. It frightened me, I think, because they blew upon a bitter wind of death and dissolution. It was a cold wind blown over the hill from Heaven. Men raised their heads to be crushed, their faces blown away, life was the long winter in a brief year. The vision of the wind was such that men cowered as if naked beneath the sky, as if clothed with rain, their

eyes boiling at the sight of the mud about their feet and what lay beneath, for beneath the earth played devils, roamed fires and tortures like screams. We scurried, dressed in black and everything was plagued by times gone beyond the vision that made them. But the earth must be touched and the devils, if they're down there, faced, not only faced - released. Smoke drifts in the wind from Heaven and the smell of burning. So now I'm happier with ghosts.

Cities are built of flesh and stone. And the ghosts were once flesh to stone and built the city I grew up in. They moulded the streets and roads but their labours left them.

I see Heruka as being both flesh and stone, people and building. We have a new Centre now, a flat among many (overlooking a river) put up about seventy odd years ago. But this flat is different from the rest for it is not a place where people come to die in families, which it was previously, but is instead the place of opportunity where we can come away from the graveyard view of the world and learn to live with our full potentiality of life released. We are in the midst of painting Heruka and who knows how many times this has happened to the house's walls, but cycles are not death knells (bells in the sea). If we are taking the opportunity of our lives, cycles, then, become steps and we climb them.

The Bhodi-Dharma is essentially no more 'Indian' than me, and the centre is the situation where we can see this demonstrated for ourselves - and demonstrate it to others. The Dharma does belong in Glasgow - in fact its always been here. Wherever the Dharma settles we discover its always been there, its never been away. Some people come to this Centre (or any Centre) and you see it in their face; relief, relaxation, in fact a home-

coming, so in fact they've never been away. Perhaps this is what I've been trying to get at, kneading the flesh, and rubbing the stone - Heruka, the Dharma in Glasgow, the Dharma in me and other people - it's a Home-coming - in fact we've never been away.

FWBO CORNWALL

From David Austin

The regular Monday meeting, now being held at Selsey, is going well... we have a small but regular attendance. The evening continues to follow our regular pattern of meditation and study.

We are in the process of looking for a room in St. Austell where we can hold a regular beginners meditation class. But suitable rooms are few and far between. By the time this is printed we should have had some success.

The community at Selsey House is strengthening, although we have had one setback: Hilary has left. If there anyone out there who would like to try a family type community in a very beautiful part of Cornwall, we are looking for you. One or two people, either sex. Anyone interested please write to us.

WELLINGTON N.Z.

By Achala

Two weeks ago we moved into new premises at 238 Tinakori Road, which is in one of the oldest parts of Wellington and is very close to the city centre. Although the house is not as palatial as the previous one, overall it is probably more suitable for holding meetings.

Over the year several courses have been run. Previously these were either exclusively on meditation or on Basic Buddhism. Recently, however, we ran a fairly successful eight week course on Saturday mornings on 'Buddhism & Meditation', as an experiment. In the course detailed meditation instruction was given, but within a definitely Buddhist framework, and Buddhist teachings were explained and discussed, but these were related to the theme of meditation and self-development.

Meetings have now temporarily stopped until the end of the national summer retreat, which is an annual affair being held this year for the first time at a different camp (near Auckland). After the retreat, meetings start again at a reduced rate until more people come back from their holidays.

FAMILY DAY

On Saturday 21 January the first Family Day was held at the London East End Meditation Centre. The Day was specifically devised for Friends, mitras and Order members who live in family situations.

Only half of the families contacted were able to attend which, from a practical point of view, was just as well because the twelve families that did attend amounted to 24 adults and 19 children. The East End Meditation Centre was fairly bulging at the seams and pulsating with energy.

The day started with the traditional FWBO Tea and

Biscuit Ceremony, allowing time for far-flung visitors from Brighton, Norfolk and Hertfordshire to catch their breath while the kids made speedy work of getting to know each other. Those stalwarts of 'child guidance' - Padmavajra and Alaya, wiped noses, buttoned coats and tied hats in preparation for the children's trip to the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood. Friend John Andrews was given charge of an eleven-month old baby and the museum party set off. The - somewhat shy - parents were invited into the shrine room and the Family Day had begun.

Upasaka Abhaya started the programme with an

introduction to the Metta Bhavana meditation practice. This was followed by a talk in which Abhaya alluded to the importance of a Family Sangha and painted a glowing picture of his vision for the Family settlement occupying a village in Norfolk. He explained that as the Family Sangha grows stronger there will be a predictable coming together of like-minded families who will live in close proximity to one another and start to form Right Livelihood enterprises. I followed this with a short talk on the three types of interest represented at the Family Day; firstly the complete newcomer — perhaps a spouse of someone already attending classes; secondly the Friend who regularly attends classes but has no specific aspirations for a family sangha and thirdly the Colonials, those who aspire to move into Norfolk and set up a FWBO Family Colony. We looked at the possible ways in which the Family Day might help those in each of these categories. We were just about to start a discussion arising from these two short talks when the door burst open. Maudauding children rushed about the room insisting that parents listen to the extraordinary encounters experienced on the museum visit. The discussion was discreetly abandoned and 'lunch' was declared.

A meal, prepared in the Sukhavati kitchens under the individual care of Aryamitra, was served and demolished. The side dishes and sweets provided by the families turned the meal into a feast. There was a momentary scare as one little girl was scalded on the leg with boiling water. But the intrepid Alaya and Padmavajra were on hand with a homeopathic remedy and soothing linaments so that comfort and calm were quickly restored. No sooner had they closed the first-aid tin than they were gathering their flock for a visit to Victoria Park. With John Andrews, who was fast becoming the specialist in baby and infant care, they set off for football and swings.

Mums and Dads remained behind to hear an extract from Bhante's taped lecture *Blueprint for a New World* — the fourth in the Brighton lecture series. This inspired a discussion covering many of the particular problems that family people encounter when embarking on the spiritual path. The discussion was warm if hesitant and illustrated how young and inexperienced the Family Sangha is. It seemed that we need time to interact on a social level first, that we have to learn to relate to each other as individuals as well as members of a family group, after which more open and spiritual relationships could be developed. This is obviously going to take more time than was available on this first Family Day.

The discussion was followed by a Puja during which one of the more demonstrative members of the gathering was moved enough to light no less than twelve incense offerings — without burning himself. The concluding afternoon tea and biscuits were served

and many relaxed, smiling, grateful faces were seen gleaming around the tea urn.

The consensus of opinion at the end of the day was that a significant start had been made; that families in the FWBO ought to relate to each other as much and as often as is possible. Contact with like-minded in similar situations, is as crucial for families as it would appear to be for single people. The formation of the single-sex communities need not be seen as an exclusion of the Family Sangha but rather as a profound indication that a coming together of those with similar circumstances is desirable and helpful. If the single people have found this the most satisfactory way to practise the spiritual life, why shouldn't the families?

There was an optimism that the family situation, healthily developed, could be a conducive and supportive environment in which to practise the Dharma. The first step is to ensure that our own family environment is 'healthily developed' and that great assistance in achieving this would come from the contact with the Family Sangha.

We resolved to hold another Family Day in the Spring and bi-monthly thereafter. The idea of a long Summer Family Retreat was mooted and efforts will be made to test its feasibility.

In short — an excellently constructive day.



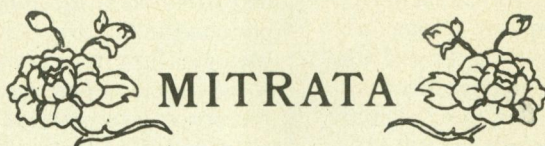
Publications

I am happy to announce that *The Three Jewels* is now available once again. You can get a copy from FWBO centres, bookshops, or direct from me at Aryatara. You can also order your copy of the edited transcript of the seminar on the Bodhicaryavatara from me. This will cost £4.50, and will be available in a

few weeks.

Owing to the ever rising costs of production, this **Newsletter** will cost 40p per copy from now on. A year's subscription will cost £2.00 (UK), or £2.50 (overseas).

Nagabodhi



MITRATA

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 be concerned with the theme of 'individuality'.

Mitrata costs 50p per copy and appears every two months. A year's subscription costs £3.00. Please send cheques/P.O to Vessantara at Aryatara.

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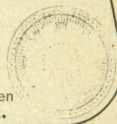
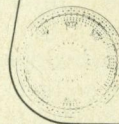
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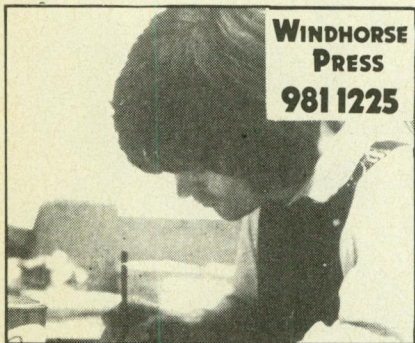
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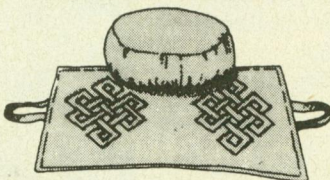
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About the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

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

The Office of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order: *Sukhavati*, 51 Roman Road, Bethnal Green,
London E2. Tel 01-981 1225

The Office of the Western Buddhist Order: *Padmaloka*, Lesingham House, Surlingham, Nr Norwich,
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