

# LYLO NEWSLETTER 41

**The  
New Society.  
We step inside  
for a closer look**



**Price 40p**

With acknowledgements to Magritte for his 'VICTORY'.



# Weekly Programmes

## SUKHAVATI

Monday	7.00 pm	Dharma or meditation Course Yoga courses (at annexe)
Tuesday	7.00 pm	Regulars' meditation class
Wednesday	7.00 pm	Open Night: Beginners' meditation Yoga, communication exercises, discussion, talk.
Thursday	7.00 pm	Taped lecture Regulars' study groups
Friday	7.00 pm	Meditation and Buddhism courses

## MANDALA

Monday	7.00 pm	Dharma course until end of December next meditation course starts in January
Tuesday	6.00 pm	Hatha Yoga
Wednesday	7.00 pm	Beginners' meditation class
Thursday	7.00 pm	Meditation evening with puja

## AMITAYUS

Monday	7.15 pm	Introductory evening with meditation instruction ( at 19 George Street)
Tuesday	7.15 pm	Meditation evening with puja
Wednesday	7.15 pm	Meditation and Buddhism course (by arrangement)
Thursday	6.00 pm & 7.30 pm	Hatha Yoga

## ARYATARA

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

## HERUKA

Tuesday	7.30 pm	Beginners' meditation course
Wednesday	7.00 pm	Tape-recorded lecture series, and meditation
Thursday	7.00 pm	Meditation evening with puja

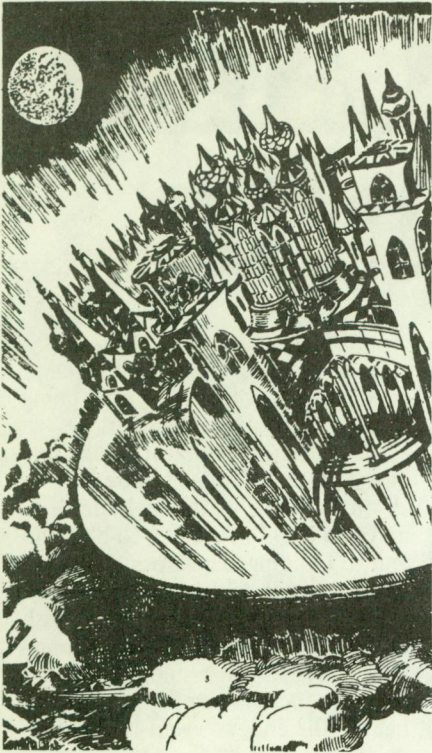
## VAJRADHATU

Monday	7.30 pm	Meditation course
Tuesday	7.00 pm	Varied programme including puja and meditation
Wednesday	7.30 pm	Meditation course
Thursday	7.00 pm	Introductory Buddhism (talk/meditation/taped lecture)

## MANCHESTER

Meditation classes and Dharma courses are being held  
Telephone 06-225 3372 for details.





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## FWBO NEWSLETTER 41 WINTER 79

### EDITORIAL

How often do you take a look at your most basic assumptions? Are you happy, or even proud to be British, American, or Swedish? Do you expect, being a woman, ever to have the control over your life that you think a man has? Do you think, being 'working class', that Mozart is even worth listening to? Do you really feel it is right, having been brought up in a good Christian family, that you should be trying to become a *Buddha*? Our actions, words, opinions and even our most private thoughts are all in some way conditioned by underlying expectations and attitudes of whose insidious influence we are probably quite unconscious. Certainly we did not arrive at them through deliberate thought or discussion. Somehow we have absorbed them, by a kind of osmosis, from the society in which we have been brought up.

The fact that our minds have been conditioned in this way, simply by being subjected to the background hum of a particular cultural environment, can make this aspect of our conditionedness particularly hard to recognise, not to say overcome. It also makes it very difficult for us to take full responsibility for ourselves, since we can so easily blame our short-comings on the society that 'created' us. Many people have some intuitive feeling of what they are capable of being, but feel that they have been cheated out of this birthright by the society that spawned them. In consequence they turn on their society, preaching bitter, destructive revolution, or seek release through a drug or a technique, that allows them to regress to a state of pre-socialised irresponsibility. These are the people who, if they have a mystical bent, will tell you that a new-born baby is a Buddha.

The fact is however, that, while much of our social and cultural conditioning may well be negative in terms of spiritual values, we cannot blame society for the fact that we are susceptible to conditioning in the first place. Sure, there are some pretty strong signals coming from our surroundings, but we are allowing ourselves, through our laziness, our lack of real integrity, and our basic confusion, to be so moulded and influenced by them.

We *are* weak. For a long time — until we have developed insight that cuts away our conditioning at its roots — we really need to be sure of one thing in particular: that the conditioning we *do* receive is positive, is conducive to spiritual growth. If we are going to be influenced and moulded then let's at least try to see that we are influenced and moulded in the direction of Enlightenment.

This Newsletter follows directly on from the last, and explores the term 'The New Society', a term which has found common use in connection with the opening of 'Sukhavati'. But it would be wrong to conclude that the New Society is to be found only in Bethnal Green, or in any particular *place* at all. Communities and co-ops are aspects of it, but the door to it is everywhere, and is always open. We enter it when we acknowledge that we are conditioned, when we decide to take responsibility for ourselves, and when, along with our spiritual friends we do our best to create a background hum that draws us, and everyone who hears it, towards Enlightenment.

NAGABODHI



# The Pure Land Goes Public

It is one o'clock in the morning. In the main shrine-room, four Glaswegians sit, bathed in a soft golden light, practising the *metta bhavana*. That's odd enough for a start. But what on earth is that noise outside in the reception room?

"Look out - it's coming up too fast in front!"

"Quick, team three... pull!"

"I can't! My hand's slipping."

"You've got to. Come on, one last effort."

"Ooh! my fingers..."

"That's it. It's there. Get the planks under it..."

Bringing up the new rupa from the basement, gilding it, and then installing it on its lotus throne on the morning of 26th November, 1978, was, in many ways, the symbolic, if not quite actual, finishing touch to the creation of the London Buddhist Centre. There was still quite a bit of work to be done to the standing rupa for the smaller shrine-room; the wrought-iron Nalanda crest had still to be completed and erected over the main entrance to the courtyard; the gents lavatory was still without a towel dispenser... but Amitabha Buddha had taken up residence in the Sukhavati prepared for him in the East End of London. The London Buddhist Centre was ready to receive the public.

**W**hen the FWBO was first awarded a lease on the Old Fire Station, a team of six men moved in thinking that they would be able to do the job in about a year, at a cost of around £5,000. Three years and £150,000 later, and with a team of

35 workers fully employed on the project, an actual opening date seemed still to be as elusive as ever. It would be wrong to think that this was because nobody knew what they were doing. It was precisely because the team was becoming more confident and competent, that their sights were being raised ever higher, and their plans for the Centre becoming more and more ambitious. In the end it was Bhante's plan to leave for India and New Zealand before the end of the year, and his desire to perform the dedication ceremony for the new shrines before leaving, that dictated dates in late November/early December for the opening.

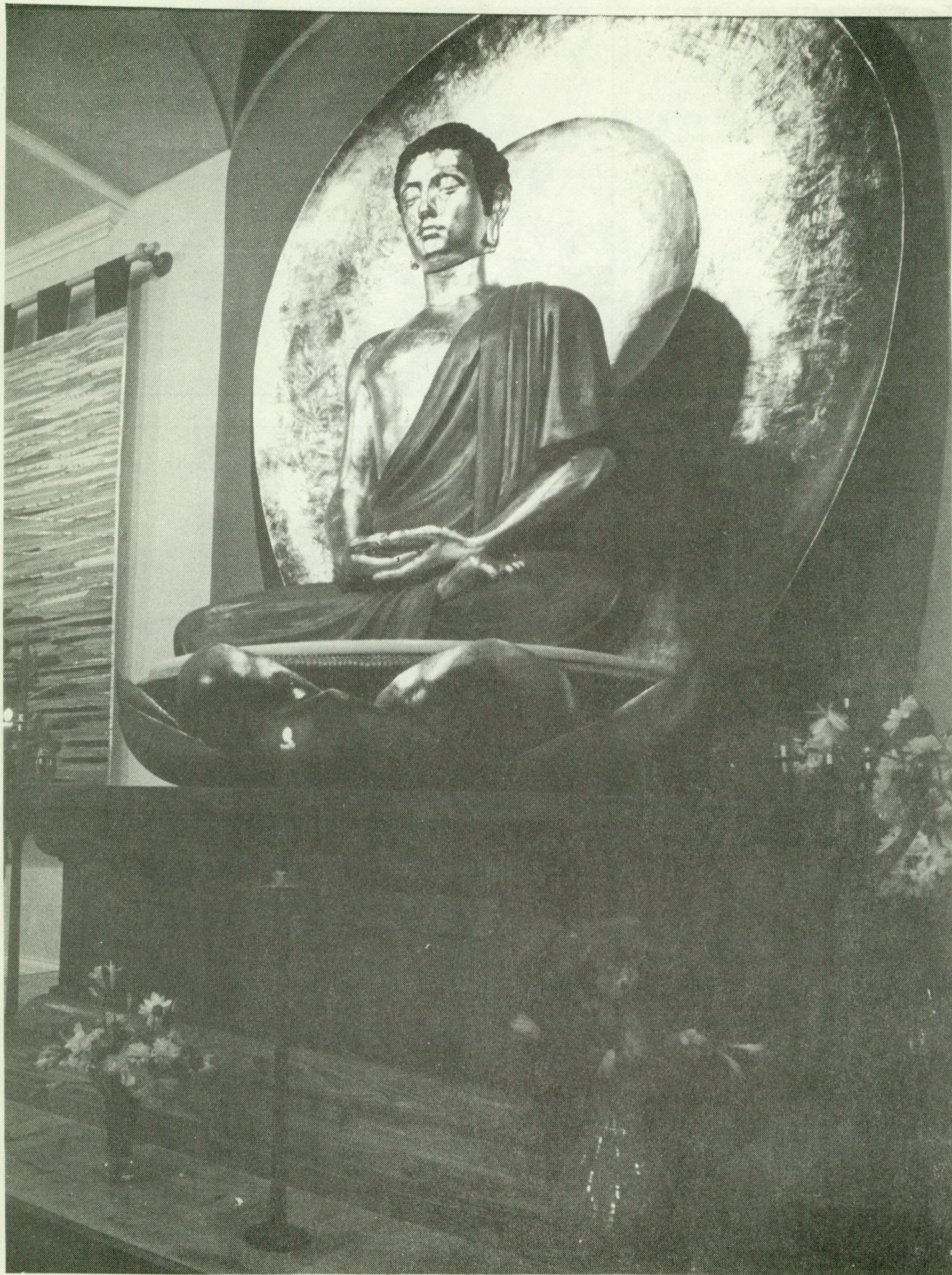
**T**he setting of an actual opening date signalled the start of what was probably the most intense spate of work yet seen on the site, as workers threw themselves into the task of finishing the job in time. There was in fact a great deal of work still to be done, from finishing-work like painting, to quite basic tasks such as laying the floors in the shrine-rooms. A regular feature of the opening week was a slide show of various FWBO centres and activities, part of which was devoted to Sukhavati. The shots of the new Centre had been taken about four weeks before the opening date, and sitting in a clean, carpeted, and centrally-heated reception room looking at those pictures of sand-heaps, scaffolding and concrete floors, one felt a tremendous sense of respect for those who had effected such a magical transformation in such a short space of time.

While all this work was going on,

plans were being drawn up for the opening itself. Clearly we were going to need much more than a single event to launch Sukhavati. The fame of the place had spread quite literally throughout the world, to Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike, to bhikkhus and to building inspectors. There was no way in which everybody who wanted to see the building, and wish the Centre well, could be accommodated, fed, shown round, and talked to - even in an entire day. And so we had, in the end, an event that began on the morning of the 24th November and lasted until the Ven. Sangharakshita gave his talk, "Authority and the Individual in the New Society" at Caxton Hall, Westminster, on the evening of Monday 4th December. During those ten days, receptions were held for Order members, mitras, local Friends, Buddhists connected with other groups and movements, local 'officials' and business contacts members of 'sympathetic groups' such as 'The Earth Exchange', 'Greenpeace', 'Friends of the Earth', and so on, friends and relatives of the Sukhavati community members, the Press, and the general public.

**T**he week began with a strong experience of spiritual community. Order members and mitras from every Centre in the Movement came together for an Order day on the Saturday, and an Order/mitra day on the Sunday. On both days the programmes allowed people plenty of time to get together, eat delicious food, look around, and generally gape in wonder at the beauty of it all. Each evening there was a symposium



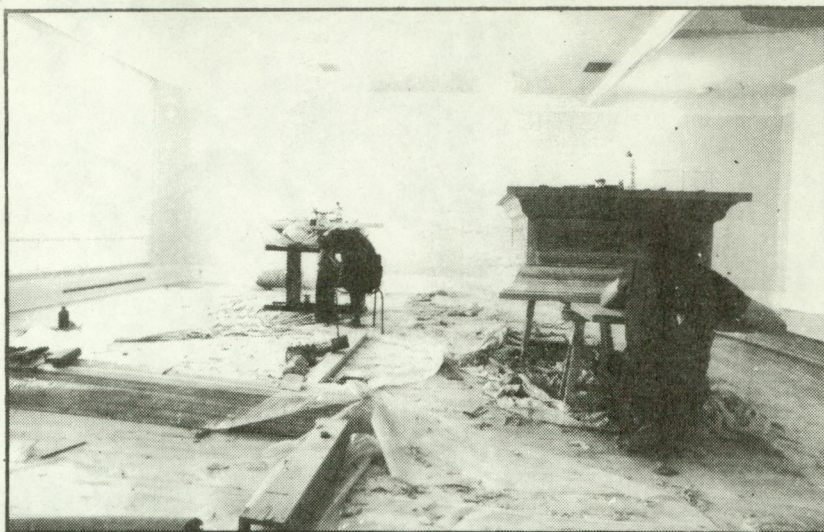


The image in the main shrine-room



in which Order members gave short talks on some aspects of the New Society: morality, leadership, work, and so on. All seven speakers stressed the point that the 'New Society' is not just an empty phrase or high-sounding piece of rhetoric. The New Society is fast becoming a concrete, tangible reality wherever we find FWBO centres, communities and co-ops. On Sunday afternoon, Subhuti and Vajradaka recounted the 'Amazing and Wondrous Saga of Sukhavati', taking it in turns to tell the story of the project - from the earliest searches for property, right up to the drama of the last big 'push' to get the work finished before we ran out of funds. As the story unfolded, witnesses from the audience were asked, often without forewarning, to offer their own recollections and anecdotes. Although there was a generally hilarious quality to the proceedings, what did emerge very clearly was that this project has made some tremendous, and sometimes painful, demands on a great number of people, and that Sukhavati is what it is because so many people have given so much to the project.

Each day of the opening seemed to have a very definite flavour of its own, but there were quite a few standard features. In the smaller shrine-room there was an exhibition of Buddhist art - the work of Order members Chintamani, Alok and Devaraja. This was the first time that any such exhibition had been mounted, and I certainly hope that it will not be the last. It was excellent. We really are fortunate, not just to have such fine artists working within our Movement, but to be able to witness, at first hand, the emergence of Western Buddhist art. Walking around the exhibition, it was fascinating to see how the subtlest of Western influences and nuances were creeping, quite spontaneously it seemed, into the traditional representations of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. There was nothing forced or willed about it. The images sparkled with life and spiritual energy, clearly evoking strong feelings of devotion among Buddhist guests, and at the very least, great interest among the non-Buddhist visitors. In fact the



*The main shrine-room*



*A harpsichord recital order-mitra day*

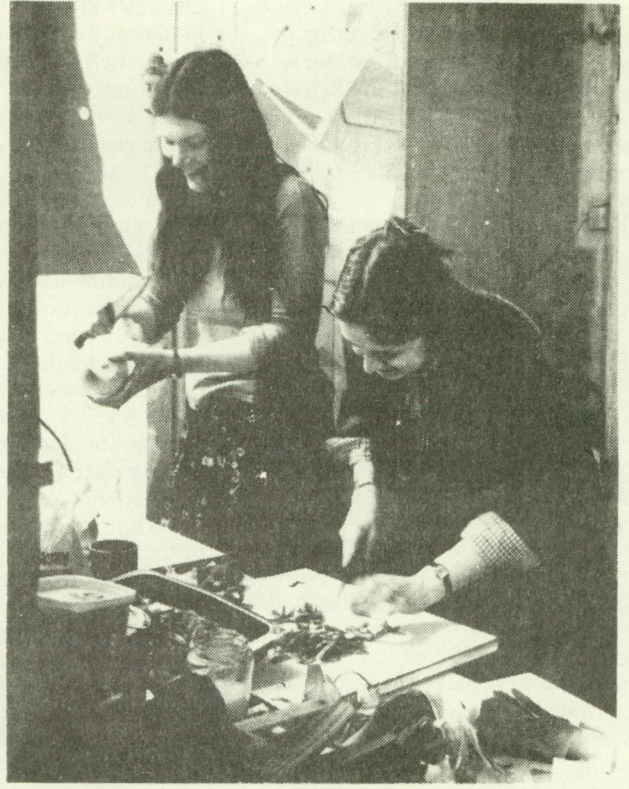


*The entrance to the courtyard*

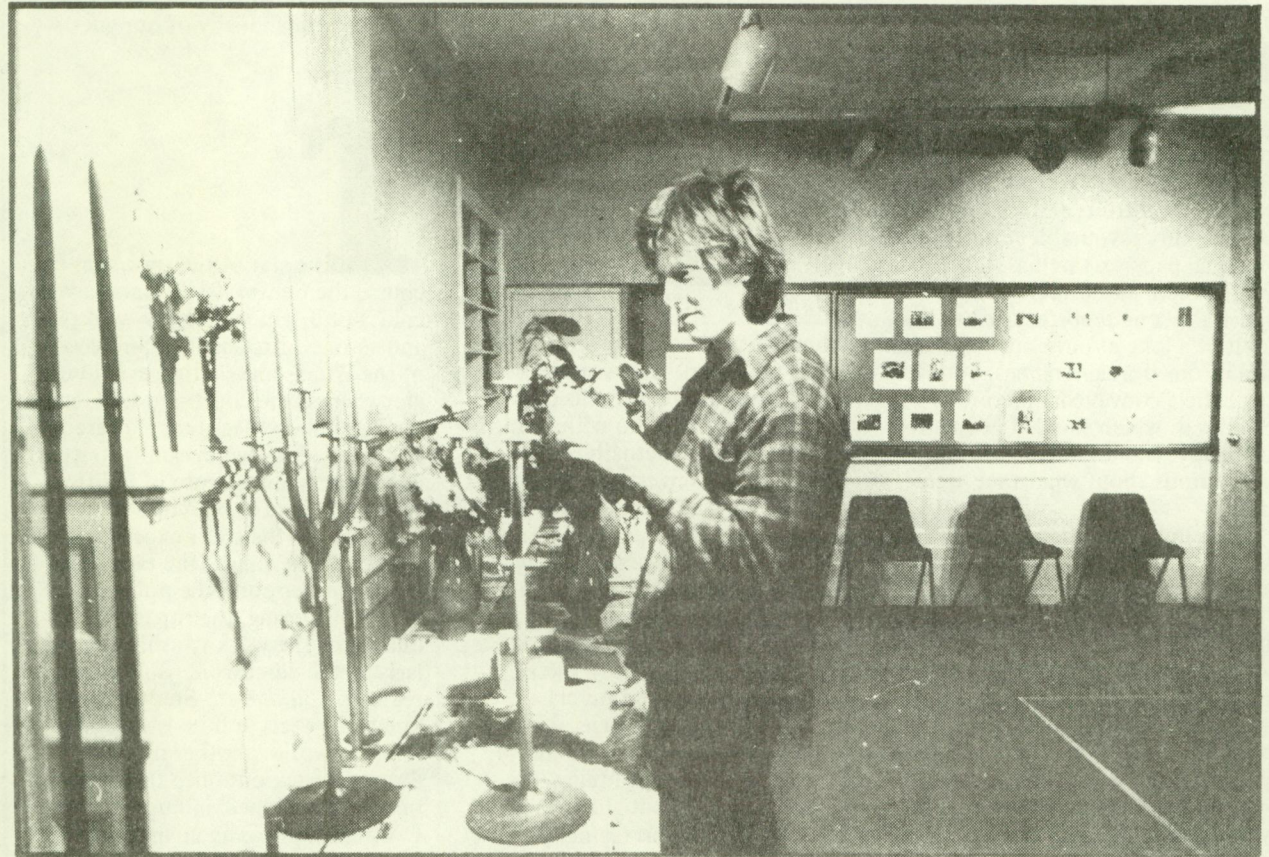




*Quality cooking for the masses*



*The 'field-kitchen'*



*Preparations for dedicating the Main Shrine-room*



exhibition provided an ideal context for getting some Dharma across to people, and some Order members seemed to get well into their stride, explaining why Tara has eyes in her palms, or why Amitabha is red. An extra dimension was added by the presence of Chintamani and Aloka in the room, both busy working on the finishing touches to the standing rupa - perhaps the most 'Western' rupa yet made in the 'Friends'.

**A**s I have already mentioned, there was a slide show. Roger Jones, a mitra from West London, who is a professional photographer, had provided about eighty slides which showed most of the centres, communities and Right Livelihood projects in England. These slides were shown continuously to about twenty people at a time in one of the reception rooms. The shows were an excellent medium for letting people know about the FWBO. The reporters who attended the reception on Wednesday afternoon seemed to be particularly stimulated by this part of the proceedings, and scribbled away busily while Subhuti talked them through the pictures. On the whole our approaches to the press seemed to bear good fruit, and we received some highly favourable notices in the national papers as well as in the locals, on the radio and on television. Inevitably one reporter tried to have a bit of a joke at our expense, making fun of our 'foreign' names, but even her article conveyed a picture of Sukhavati which showed people to be happy, friendly, hard-working, and serious about what they were doing.

I do not think that I am alone in finding that the more I talk to people about what is going on in the 'Friends', the more amazed I become myself by just how much is going on, and how well it all fits together. Every evening there was a talk in which a member of the Centre team would give some background information about Sukhavati, letting people know just what the Centre was for, and what the FWBO was all about. Each talk was tailored to the

particular interests of that night's audience. Addressing members of 'sympathetic' groups: people who have some concern for making the world a better, healthier place and whose general approach to life would seem to align them with the Spiritual Community, Subhuti used the symbolism of the lotus throne on the shrine as a jumping-off point for a talk on human growth and development. Addressing a gathering of Buddhists from Samye Ling, the Manjushri Institute, the British Buddhist Association, the Maha Bodhi Society, Jodo Shin Shu, Orgyen Cho Ling, and the Buddhist Society, Nagabodhi gave, first, a short account of the Sukhavati project, from its humble beginnings up to the present day, stressing the fact that, rather than being a distraction



*Bhante salutes the shrine*

from the spiritual life, we had come to discover that hard work, efficiency and coping with enormous difficulties had a lot to do with what the spiritual life was actually about. In the effort to convert an old fire station into Sukhavati, it was as if we had stumbled upon the spiritual life itself. After explaining how the three aspects of Sukhavati: the Centre, community and Co-op, would work together, he traced the progress of an imaginary Friend, from his first meditation class - through the various stages of going on retreats, joining a community, becoming a mitra, studying the Dharma, joining a Right-Livelihood project, etc. - to his Going for Refuge, and then perhaps himself

taking some responsibility for the development of a place like Sukhavati.

Paintings, slides, talks: certainly there was a great deal to take in (not to mention the impeccably delicious food), but there was also plenty for people to *do*. On most evenings, and during the public 'Open Day' on the final Saturday, members of the Centre team conducted introductory classes in meditation. The conditions were not exactly at their best - try doing the mindfulness of breathing while eighty people are wolfing down their stuffed peppers and getting to know each other in the room next door - but for many people this was an important first encounter with what is, after all, the most fundamental of all our activities. On the 'Open Day' itself no less than 150 people gave meditation a try for the first time. There were also free classes in Hatha Yoga being given down the road in the 'Annexe' (formerly the East End Meditation Centre), as well as some breath-taking demonstrations of the art by our Yoga teachers. And of course every day ended with a Seven-Fold-Puja, for which many of our guests stayed on.

**T**he star of the show was of course the Centre itself. It was a very cold, but bright and sunny week, and so one's first sight of Sukhavati - of the Windhorse soaring in colourful glory across the courtyard wall, and of the rainbow flags that fluttered and flapped in the icy sunlight, gave one an immediate sense of uplift. Inside the Centre everyone seemed to be struck by the sheer excellence and beauty of the finish: the tapestries in the shrine-room, the polished wooden flooring, the rupas, the quality of the workmanship particularly in the woodwork. Sukhavati really is a *Sukhavati*. Stepping inside one really feels as if he is entering another world, another dimension. Stepping back out onto the street one feels refreshed and uplifted; the Centre, simply as an environment, has that kind of effect.





*Dedication of the smaller shrine-room*

The culmination, not just the festivities, but - in a way - of three-and-a-half years of work, came on the evening of Sunday 3rd December, when the Ven. Sangharakshita officiated at the dedication ceremonies for the two shrine-rooms. As background to this occasion one of the less obtrusive events of the opening festival had been a marathon meditation session: 188 hours, I calculate, of *metta bhavana*. Teams from every centre in Britain took it in turns to sit in shifts, day and night throughout the week, thus ensuring a non-stop flow of metta into the Centre. This, by the way, explains the four Glaswegians whom we encountered earlier on. Say what you like about vibrations, atmosphere or whatever. Be cynical if you want to be, but I say that it worked. You could feel the place changing day by day: becoming warmer, brighter, more and more welcoming... Now, on this dedication evening there was Bhante, seated beside the shrine, looking out over a room that was filled to capacity. Next door, in the smaller shrine-room, more people

followed the events on a closed-circuit television. After one more session of metta bhavana Bhante spoke of his joy and delight in seeing the Centre finally ready to receive the public, and looking so beautiful. He then explained how the rupa contained a sizeable cavity into which had been placed an offering from every member of the Western Buddhist Order. Everyone, he said, had prepared at least a copy, written in his own hand, of the Refuges, Precepts, the Heart Sutra, and the mantras which we chant at the end of the puja. Some had gone a little further, adding a few touches of their own. Stones, jewels, painstaking pieces of calligraphy, drawings: these had all been offered. One Order member had even written out a (short) section of the Bodhicaryavatara in his own blood! Bhante also let us know that he had placed in the rupa a small Buddha image, a gift to him from Dhardo Rimpoche, thus creating a bond between Sukhavati and one of his own dearest friends and revered teachers.

It was now time for the dedication ceremony itself. Bhante had provided some special incense for the occasion which was no lit - 'Just in case there is any trace of unskillfulness left in the air that needs to be purified', and then, in strong voice and excellent spirits, we recited the verses of dedication together.

While those of us in the main shrine-room chanted the mantra of Avalokiteshvara, "Om mani padme hum", Bhante went through to conduct the dedication ceremony for the smaller shrine-room, and then returned to lead us all in the Seven-Fold Puja.

After the last "shanthi" had faded back into silence, we sat on for a while, enjoying the stillness and the richness of it all. It had been an amazing evening, a cosmic evening. Indeed, it had been an amazing week. Now at the end of it all, we were left with an amazing Centre.

**Nagabodhi**



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he words "the New Society" are still so fresh on our lips! We cannot dispense with the Old Society once and for all, as cleanly as a snake sloughs its old skin. If there is yet a hint of hollowness about the confidence with which we announce the New Society, we have to ask ourselves why this is. The answer surely is that we are not yet individuals; we are only aspiring, or at best, emergent individuals, inhabitants therefore, of both worlds — the Old and the New,

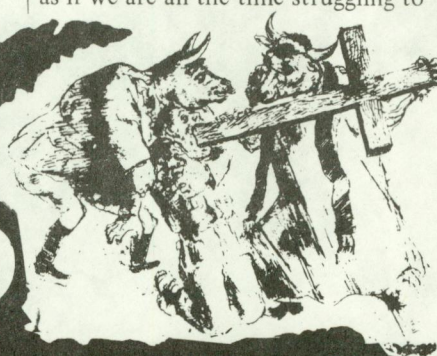
which we are evolving should exert a strong pull. What was a short while ago a vague nag which we were learning to live with, suddenly becomes an unpleasant tug; looking on the positive side, this is a spur to further growth.

Instead of trying to anaesthetise our beings against such pulls by seeking more of what it is we are trying to get away from, it might be good tactics to turn right round and take a bold gaze at the monster that's grabbing us. On closer scrutiny we might well discover that it's no monster out there that's holding us back; it's our own roots. The Old Society after all is still in us; we are its products and its conditionings still entangle us. It's as if we are all the time struggling to

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hese two facts, it might be thought, make my own personal experience of the strangulating effects of Christianity rather specialized. Perhaps so, but, though Roman Catholicism is only one form of Christianity, it is a very widespread and dominant brand, and seems to have mellowed hardly at all down the years. The atmosphere in seminaries and the disciplines exerted therein may well have mellowed somewhat since the Fifties, but there must be more than a handful of ex-Catholics coming into the orbit of Western Buddhism who have undergone similar conditionings of varying degrees of rigour and who need therefore to dig around those roots inhibiting their growth. It is to them especially that I offer these reflections on the response to my own Catholic conditioning.

From quite an early age, I had genuine spiritual interests and a vague but palpable sense of my nascent individuality. It was frustrating, to say the least, to find myself in a religious system which did so little to encourage and so much to stifle that potential. Being only dimly



# two heads of the monster

strange hybrids, like so many variations of those mythical creatures with dragons' heads and snakes' bodies. This experience of being neither here nor there, or of being both here and there, is a painful phase on the path of spiritual development which we all have to go through. When the Movement to which we belong, the FWBO, reaches a new level of growth, which I believe it just has with the completion of the building and the opening of the London Buddhist Centre, the demands on our individual commitment become correspondingly stronger. It is not surprising that at such times, the Old Society from

tear up from deep inside the complex ramifications of some age-old tumour. It can be quite a positive experiment and not necessarily an indulgence, to examine how the Old Society has shaped us. With this in mind, I am going to single out and inspect, in this article, just two of the tougher, more deeply-bedded roots which seriously interfere with our spiritual growth; namely, Christianity and the family.

I was born and brought up in a strong, 'practising' Roman Catholic family and spent my teenage years in a seminary, which is an institution for the training of Catholic priests.

aware of my own frustration, I was led to believe, no, forced to believe, that I had the privilege of belonging to the One True Church, to defect from which would be a heinous sin. It was a bit like being held within the confines of a narrow prison yard with high walls beyond which you knew that, somehow, somewhere, there was infinite growth and opportunity, yet at the same time being convinced by your warders that escape was punishable not merely by death but by eternal suffering in the fires of hell! Thus for years I forced myself to strive to achieve what with hindsight I see were higher states of consciousness leading to insight, but using methods which never did and



never could work, unless you happened to be a natural mystic, which I wasn't. True, a certain elevation of consciousness did sometimes occur in the course of colourful ceremonies such as High Mass, induced perhaps by the lighted candles, flowers, and thuribles smoking with frankincense. But such states were soon wiped out by the mechanics of prayer and the dryness of dogma.



What amazes me now, as I look back, is that there was no effective method of personal development, nothing equivalent to our own meditation practices. There was prayer, yes. But prayer was rarely of the contemplative kind. It so often degenerated into mere petition, asking God for this or that, but especially for forgiveness. One was continually having to placate God in order to ward off his possible heavy retributions. I remember, just before I left the seminary, making a bargain with God. I talked to Him urgently in my prayers, promising that if He allowed me to get out of the place, I would afterwards go to mass every day. It seemed to me at the time a small price to pay for freedom. It was not all that long before I came to realize that my daily attendance at mass was purely mechanical, devoid of any spiritual meaning. When I stopped going, I was relieved to discover that the axe didn't fall! In the years of adolescence, of course, a fair proportion of sins would be against the sixth commandment, sins of impurity as they were called. The spontaneous turning of my attentions to the emergence of my sexuality was thus thwarted and perverted, being condemned as a mortal sin, (that is, one punishable by hell for eternity if you have the misfortune to die in that state!) Pagan roots were definitely to be extirpated. The repressive force of the Church in this respect was worse than staggering, emasculating as it did the vigour of youth by injecting one with a deep fear of being one's sexual self. The crime of sexual repression is one that not only the Catholic Church has been guilty

of. It seems to have been widely practised in varying degrees in all forms of Christianity. It has penetrated into the make-up of the Old Society so deeply that Christians and non-Christians alike suffer its effects.

Another aspect of the Roman Catholic Church which keeps many doors in the mind firmly closed is its granite-like dogma. A dogma is a doctrine or article of faith which has to be believed by every Catholic under pain of excommunication. There are many of these that the poor mind has to try to bend itself around. I grappled in vain for several years with the impossible philosophical implications of the doctrine of



Pagan roots—Cerine Abbas Man

Transubstantiation, the belief that, during the consecration by the priest of the bread and wine at mass, they actually become the body and blood of Christ. One day, in the late Fifties if I remember aright, Pope Pius XII, exercising his rock-like Infallibility, proclaimed yet another dogma — the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven. From then on, we were to believe, whether we liked it or not, that Mary the mother of Christ did not, like any other mortal, become a corpse, corruptible, when she died, but was bodily assumed, taken up into heaven. Was she taken up, or did she rise of her own accord? How could this be taken anything but literally, no matter what fancy interpretation the theologians might try to put on it? However, I person-

ally was not entirely displeased with the proclamation at the time, since I was indulging in a fair amount of Mary-adoration as a sort of sublimation of my thwarted sexual instincts. But I remember the understandable indignant response of the Catholic intellectuals on being asked to rationalize their way out of yet another untenable position. What *had* it all got to do with one's individual spiritual growth? One of the enduring effects of constantly being told what to believe (apart from the fear of recrimination it induces, should one dare not to believe), is that, as far as spiritual matters are concerned, it has a deadening effect on the mind. It discourages people from thinking for themselves, choosing for themselves. To this extent, whether he is aware of it or not, every Catholic, if he is to be a 'good' Catholic, is saddled with the grim prospect of always being a sheep and not an individual. In a recent number of the *Spectator*, the writer Iris Murdoch is quoted as saying, with reference to priests who are beginning to see the light, or at least realize the darkness of their own religion: "If only they work fast enough, Christianity can become like Buddhism, before people forget entirely." I think it would be better if such priests became Buddhists and let people forget about Christianity altogether!

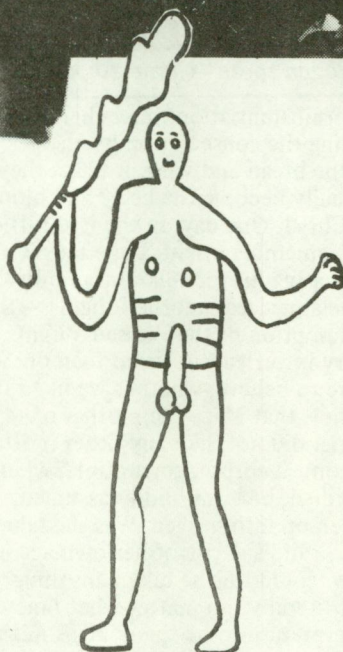


The other institution under consideration, which has left its roots deep in the soil of our being, threatening to entangle irredeemably the delicate fibrous roots of a sapling individuality, is the family. I refer to the nuclear family in the West. The psychological and spiritual effects of the extended family in other cultures might well be different. Family roots do run deep, even deeper than one's Christian roots. Blood, as they say, is thicker than holy water. It is not without some reluctance that I have come to the conclusion that the family is not normally a conducive environment for the growth of the individual. About eighteen months





ago I was campaigning in this News-letter for the forming of family communities, in the hope that a few families at any rate, three or even two, might pool their financial and other resources and live together in spiritual community. I did this with the experience behind me of living in two family-type communities, both of which had foundered. In some eyes, this might represent, in the words of Dr Johnson, "the triumph of hope over experience". Well, I thought there was a chance that it might work in cases where *all* the adults involved in the projected community shared the same spiritual ideals and practices. However, nothing has come of the initial short-lived enthusiasm. Such communities may still find their place in the Movement. Perhaps I should reserve



my judgement a while longer. It is my feeling, though, that it is something in the nature of the family itself which prevents such communities from forming, thereby limiting the growth of the people within them. The family has its own peculiar centre of gravity, a built-in tendency to be nuclear, which isolates it from the spiritual community. This is not to say that householders do not make progress in the spiritual life. They certainly do, but not beyond a certain point, because, unlike the Spiritual Community, the family is not open-ended; it is a closed circuit. Nuclear families are most definitely mundane-orientated. When aspiring individuals within them wish to develop beyond that certain point, they can only do so either apart from or in spite of the family. The





Penny Taylor & Siddhiratna

interesting conclusion to this is that if all children were spiritually farsighted enough, they would leave their families when they came of age and never form new ones.

Many people might well be shocked at the thought of putting individual spiritual growth before the family, so holy has the family become, thanks to the strength of Christian conditioning. Yet such people are not shocked by the putting of job before family. The economic system requires that in so many cases the job has to come first in order for the family to survive. So why should there be such an emotional reaction to the order: spiritual development-job-family, or: spiritual development-family-job, which would represent a more wholesome sense of values?



Undoubtedly, one comes across plenty of mundane satisfactoriness, a kind of happiness, in some family circles; a happiness arising from material security and from a genuine human warmth and affection, care-free lightheartedness and humour between people, in fact a certain degree of positive emotion, the natural enjoyment of healthy humans. But behind this, one senses a spiritual vacuum, a spiritual anaesthesia willingly undertaken, a terrible inertia. In the chapter on Virya, that is, Spiritual Strength, Santideva writes, in his Bodhicaryavatara: "Because one is unconcerned with the sorrow of rebirth, sloth arises through inertia, relish for pleasure, torpor, an eagerness to be protected." This is just what one senses behind the happiness of much family living.



The relish for pleasure in the family environment is not so much the occasional all-out binge or soak-up, just for the hell of it, nor even the continual whole-hearted hedonic indulgence; it is rather a lame, on-going *distraction* from the endless round of death and rebirth. Perhaps when people did not have so many material comforts, when life was harder, in the old days our fathers (or is it grandfathers now) are fond of looking back on, perhaps then, this wasn't so much the case. As the family becomes more materially secure, more bourgeois in its values, it becomes more spiritually torpid.



Everything seems muffled, emotional life especially; all is wrapped in blanket of cotton wool, disinfected at that! — so people can no longer experience as easily, if at all, how or what they feel. Whatever share of real emotion is available to the individual members of a family group can so often be monopolized by other members of the family, so that they feel it is not right to have

communication of any depth or satisfaction with anyone outside the family circle. Such exclusiveness, according to which 'friends' are merely companions with whom one fills one's leisure hours, leads to a sort of emotional incest. It is hardly surprising that under such stifling conditions, where feelings have such limited outlets, husbands and wives, mothers and sons, fathers and daughters, and every other possible permutation of relations, become emotionally dependent on one another. However, the evils of emotional dependence have been aired quite a lot recently, so I shall forbear.

What then is the alternative to the nuclear family? There is a place, even a need, for healthy mixed communities in the Movement, in which men, women and children can live together positively and in harmony, allowing one another sufficient room for individual growth, and stimulating one another into creativity. I need hardly say that the children would benefit enormously. Most are adaptable and naturally gregarious. In my experience, the children are only unhappy and a source of trouble if the grown-ups are not at peace with themselves and one another. In view of the nuclear propensities of families, I propose we drop the word

'family' altogether and talk for the time being of mixed communities, until the new culture has spawned fitting ways of referring to the various constellations of individuals that gather together.

As I have tried to express, these two factors of the Old Society, Christianity and the nuclear family, are, in their essential respects, restrictive and inimical to the growth of the individual. They keep people in the dark. Buddhism, on the other hand, is for Enlightenment, is liberating, leading to expansion of consciousness. It is vital, therefore, that each of us looks deep within himself or herself to find out to what extent these two strong roots are still entangled with our nubile aspirations for true growth. How far is our view of Buddhism tinged with a Christian slant? How much do we tend to treat the spiritual community like the family, maybe seeking for a cosy institution and falling prey to emotional dependence on its members? Experiencing fully the extent to which we are still hybrids, and how dependent we still are on the old conditionings, is the first step towards becoming free of them.

**Abhaya**

## *Lines of Dedication*

Lines Written for the Dedication of the Shrine and the Opening of the London Buddhist Centre at 'Sukhavati'

Flanked by the lotus red  
The Buddha's golden head  
And golden body on the altar gleam.  
The white-robed worshippers  
And red-stoled servitors  
In through the open doorway joyful stream.  
A thousand days of labour done,  
Glad faces, as they sit there, catch the evening sun.

In through the windows wide  
The slanting sunbeams glide,  
Setting on each bowed head a crown of flame,  
As from a thousand throats

Chanted are sweetest notes  
Praising the Buddha's, Dharma's, Sangha's name.  
The sound of tinkling silver bells  
And long-reverberant gongs the mighty chorus swells.

On this triumphal day  
With gods and men we say:  
Long by the Buddha may the lotus red  
Bloom and rebloom! Oh long  
May we uplift our song,  
Bringing light to the blind, life to the dead!  
From this gold Presence, day and night,  
Long may there shine on all, undimmed, the Infinite Light!

SANGHARAKSHITA



On the evening of Monday 4th December about 400 people, Friends old and new, from Centres and branches of the Movement all over Britain, as well as newcomers attracted by our publicity, made their way to Caxton Hall, Westminster, to hear the Ven. Sangharakshita give a lecture entitled "Authority and the Individual in the New Society".

The lecture was being given at the end of a nine-day period of celebration to mark the opening of the new London Buddhist Centre. As readers of this Newsletter know, the LBC is the result of several years' very hard labour and planning by innumerable Friends. Throughout these celebrations the words the New Society had been heard repeatedly, and in his lecture the Ven. Sangharakshita gave us an exposition of what might lie behind this general term.

He began by talking about the LBC itself, and how it had grown out of the community living at Sukhavati. He said its basis was a spiritual community and it consisted of individuals — indeed without individuals it could not exist. He then defined individuals as those people who are truly human beings: self aware, emotionally positive, people whose energies flow freely and spontaneously, who accept responsibility for their own growth and development and act accordingly, thus committing themselves wholeheartedly to that process. In the Buddhist tradition these are the people who have Gone for Refuge to the Three Jewels.

The spiritual community tries to create for itself and others conditions more conducive to development, in particular by providing three things: firstly, a residential spiritual community; secondly, a co-operative Right Livelihood situation; and thirdly, a public centre offering classes, especially in meditation. These correspond to the three most important areas of ordinary worldly life, which are usually not conducive to growth. These are, firstly, the family: "the claustrophobic, neurotic, nuclear family . . . the monogamous couple with one or two children, car, television set, dog, cat, and budgerigar."

# Authority and the Individual

by Marichi



Secondly, work (in the ordinary workaday sense): "wage slavery, or salaried servitude, which amounts to earning money in ways which are harmful to one's development and which exploit others." Thirdly, leisure activities: "activities which enable us simply to pass the time, to forget about work, maybe forget about the family too, to forget about our own selves."

A community such as Sukhavati then, represents the transformation of these harmful elements into the nucleus of a New Society, providing facilities that help the development of human beings as individuals, rather than hindering them.

The transition from one mode of being to the other, he said, can happen only on an individual level, through changes in the individual consciousness, and it is this transformation which is the real miracle of the spiritual life, rather than the supernatural powers that some people hanker after. Attending meditation classes, retreats, talks

about the Dharma at a centre such as the LBC promotes this transition from statistical individual to true individual, from the group to the New Society. It was at this point that the Ven. Sangharakshita introduced the theme of authority, which was he declared "the crux of the whole lecture".

Authority, he said, can be defined as the power exercised by virtue of a man's office — his legal, social, economic, political position — not something which pertains to his individual qualities. He represents the group to which he belongs, he becomes its representative, so any power he wields is not his, but is delegated, and is in fact the power of the group. So authority in this sense is inevitably something separate and distinct from true individuality. In the New Society, however, which consists of individuals and aspiring individuals, it would go against the very principles of the spiritual community to treat anyone as anything less than an individual or as



'representing' anyone other than themselves. Therefore, within the New Society, within the spiritual community and its co-operative working situations, there can be no authority or use of authority.

In social terms, to have power is to have the ability to act, to exert force, to sway others, even to coerce. But, the Ven. Sangharakshita stressed, spiritual coercion is a contradiction in terms. As soon as one coerces, one is no longer treating others as individuals, but as members of a group, responding to power

**As soon as one coerces,  
one is no longer treat-  
ing them as individuals.**

relationships. "Power", he said, "is in fact necessary to the group — the group as such is based on power, cannot exist without power . . . Power is the principle that governs relationships between group members." But a spiritual community is based on different principles.

Using these insights into the nature of authority in society, the Ven. Sangharakshita then launched into a consideration of essential differences between theistic and non-theistic religions. He first distinguished between a universal religion and an ethnic religion (for a fuller discussion of this topic, hear the recorded lecture, "Religion: Ethnic and Universal", available from Dharmachakra Tapes — Ed.), and continued, "Ideally a religion, a universal religion, is a spiritual community, that is, a community of people sharing common spiritual ideals. So there's no place in it for power. But unfortunately this is not always the case . . . power does creep in." He went on, "Universal religions are of two kinds: they're theistic, or they're non-theistic. 'Theistic' means believing in a personal god, that is to say, a supreme being, the creator and governor of the universe . . . Now, if we look carefully at the history of religions, we find that it is the theistic religions which tend to be corrupted by authority and power, tend to change from spiritual communities into groups."

Theistic religions inevitably tend towards a group/authority/God-orientation, he said, with represen-

tatives of God (such as his Son, prophets, or priests) who not only tell the faithful what it is that God wants them to do, but who also carry God's authority on Earth. These representatives have the right to coerce people into doing what God wants them to do (if they're unwilling to do it of their own free will). Further, in most theistic religions the concept of God is very ambiguous or even self-contradictory; he often has to be seen as two different Gods in one — the God of Power and the God of Love, or the God of Nature and the God of Morality — and this creates many difficulties for the poor theist.

"For instance, suppose you're married, suppose you've a wife and children, and one day they're struck dead by lightning. This is what the law still calls an act of God — lightning is after all part of nature, behind nature there is God, so God is responsible for what happens in nature. But the God of Nature is also the God of Love, so how could the God of Love strike dead your wife and children? Well, he must have done it for your own good, not to say *their* good, so you have to accept, you have to thank God for striking your wife and children dead; God's striking your wife and children dead was an expression of his love. This is the kind of painful and difficult situation that you get into if you're a theist. You experience the effects of Power, but you have to *interpret* them, you have to convince yourself that they are the effects of Love, because the source of both is supposed to be the same. The God of Power, the God of Nature, is supposed to be the same as the God of Love."

**love can only be a  
quality of the individ-  
ual whereas power  
is not necessarily so.**

He then went on to demonstrate that in theistic religions, the representative of God can only represent the God of Power. He cannot represent the God of Love because love can only be a quality of the individual, whereas power is not necessarily so. We say for example, "Give so-and-so my love." Yet we cannot do this

without having love ourselves. No one can exercise love by virtue of his office or position in the way that he can exercise someone else's power. In this way religions can become power structures rather than spiritual communities. Christ, for instance, rejected temporal power, but owing to the contradictions between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament, the Christian Church was unable to follow his example.

Returning to the major theme of his talk, the Ven. Sangharakshita reaffirmed that the principle governing the spiritual community is love, or less ambiguously, he continued, the positive emotions: friendliness raised to the highest power — *mahamaitri*, which is *maitri*, or *metta* (loving kindness) with *prajna* (wisdom). This conjunction, which amounts to the *Bodhicitta*, introduces the transcendental dimension needed to permanently sustain the spiritual community. All of us aspire, at least part of the time, to live in a world in which it is easier to grow and develop. So to make the transition from the group, within which we are accustomed to functioning, to a community governed by the *Bodhicitta*, we must learn to relate *not* in terms of power politics, but of *maitri* (universal friendliness) and *karuna* (compassion), and even *mahamaitri* and *mahakaruna*. This is the meaning of Going for Refuge to the Sangha.

The Ven. Sangharakshita concluded his talk with the moving story of Vaidehi from the Amitayur Dhyana-Sutra, in which the Buddha describes the wonders of the Pure Lands and prophesies rebirth in Sukhavati, the Pure Land of Amitabha, where everything speaks to you of the Dharma. In order to be reborn there we must strive constantly to visualize this Pure Land; in order to make it as real as possible. So too it is necessary for us to create a *Sukhavati* here on Earth to the greatest possible extent. This is why the FWBO has created Sukhavati in London, a place for individuals to relate to other individuals, where the *Bodhicitta* can reign supreme, where the very idea of power and authority is absurd, and the transition from the Old Society to the New Society is achieved.



# The Middle Way

*Any Friends who have seen the last two issues of The Middle Way, the journal of the Buddhist Society, may have felt quite bewildered by some of the things they will have read there. Particularly confusing is the Society's claim to be the 'officially recognised representative of the Buddhist community in Britain'.*

*Here follows a letter, sent by Subhuti, chairman of the FWBO, to the editor of The Middle Way, for publication in his columns, in response to this and other examples of a similar tendency. The letter is published in these columns so that Friends can be quite clear why the Buddhist Society in no way does or can represent the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order.*

51 Roman Road  
Bethnal Green,  
London, E2 OHU.

Dear Sir,

A number of recent items in *The Middle Way* have caused concern to Buddhists in Britain who are not members of the Society and require clarification by the Buddhist Society.

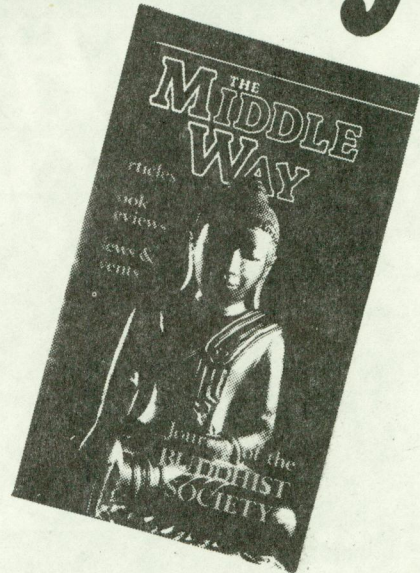
1. In the Summer 1978 issue, in an article by yourself entitled 'The Middle Way', you say, "It is worth remembering that *The Middle Way* is the oldest and largest Buddhist journal in the West, and we shall continue to give equal coverage to all the main schools of Buddhism. This is in fact an important policy of the Buddhist Society and it is because of this that the Government has recognised the Buddhist Society as the official representative of the Buddhist Community in Britain."

2. On the back page of both the Summer and Autumn 1978 issues you say "Founded in 1924, it is the oldest Buddhist Society in Europe, and in 1977 was officially recognised as the representative body of the Buddhist community in Britain."

3. In the Autumn 1978 issue you report that the Buddhist Society has been accepted as a member of the European Buddhist Union. The European Buddhist Union only accepts one organization as representing all groups in any one country. Presumably, therefore, the Buddhist Society has claimed and has accepted membership as the representative for Buddhists in Britain.

4. In the Summer 1978 issue you introduce Anne Bancroft's article 'Zen Master Seung Sahn visits London' by saying that Mrs. Bancroft is a member of the 'Buddhist Council'. I understand that this refers to the governing body of the Buddhist Society.

The full story behind each of these items is not clear; however, together they give a strong impression that the Society has for some reason started to present itself as a sort of umbrella organization representing the Buddhist Community in Britain.



This is quite clearly not the case nor, under present circumstances at least, can it ever be so. In the first place, representation requires the assent of those represented. At no time has anyone ever asked the FWBO if they wish to be represented by the Buddhist Society. Since those actively practising Buddhists who consider themselves to be among the 'Friends' must comprize something between a third and a half of the Buddhist Community in Britain today, anyone who has not consulted them can scarcely claim to represent the Buddhist Community in Britain. I would, moreover, be surprised if the FWBO is alone in suffering from this oversight.

In the second place, the Buddhist Society is a society. There is nothing in its constitution that limits its membership to practising Buddhists, neither is there any clause which dictates that its ruling Council should be composed of people actively committed to the Three Jewels. In other words, none of the members of the 'Buddhist Council' need be Buddhists. It is, after all, well known that some members of the Society are not only not Buddhists but belong to other religions. How then can a society which demands no spiritual commitment of its members claim to represent an organization which is composed only of spiritually committed individuals, as is the FWBO?

I therefore ask that, through your magazine, you clarify exactly what led to these items appearing in *The Middle Way*, and that you repudiate firmly and finally any claim that the Buddhist Society represents the Buddhist community of Britain until the unlikely event of its being asked to do so. To do any less than this is to act with grave injustice and in violation of the elementary principles of democracy.

Yours faithfully,

**Subhuti**



# *ENTERING THE NEW SOCIETY*



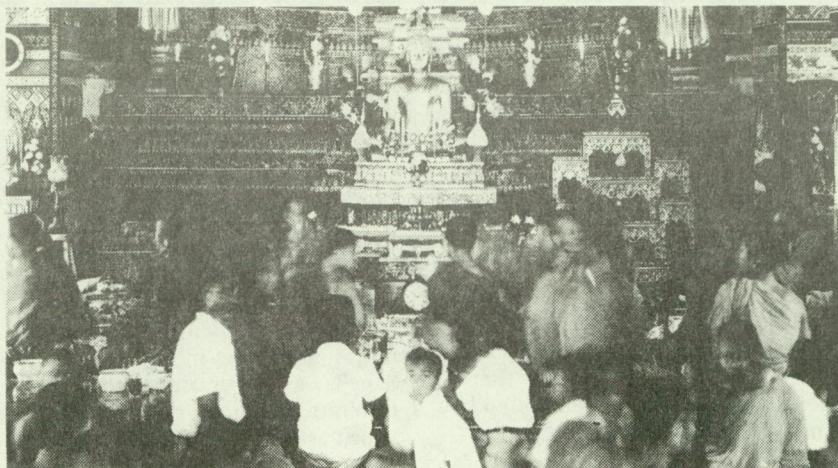


Much has already been said and written on the subject of the New Society, and no doubt more will be said as time goes by. But having realized that the New Society can be created as a feasible and indeed highly necessary alternative to the existing social structures, we naturally want to know how to become a part of it. Is entry into the New Society immediate and complete, or does it happen gradually, bit by bit? If we have entered the New Society, how much further can we go?



The New Society, of course, is not a place — it cannot be entered in the literal sense, as one can enter or leave a country or State. The New Society is ideally composed of individuals, spiritually committed, whose environment reflects and expresses their spiritual values. Specifically, in the context of the FWBO, these are the values embodied in the Three Jewels. Each member of this society is committed to his or her spiritual development, to attaining the highest, purest, noblest state possible for humanity: that of full, complete, Enlightenment. The motivating energy in the New Society is the desire felt by each individual to move ever nearer to the point of Enlightenment, and to do that alongside other similarly committed individuals. This spiritual motive can be clearly contrasted with that of the Old Society, where the aim is conformity with group values. There people relate to each other on the basis of mutual need and dependency, not out of spiritual fellowship. Such a society, consisting of statistical, rather than true individuals, is the society into which we were born — Western or Eastern; American or African.

But the New Society exists wherever spiritually committed individuals exist — potentially if not yet actually, anywhere and everywhere. We can perhaps see all the centres and branches of the FWBO throughout the world as embryonic New Societies. Some of these embryos, these seeds, are still at a germinal stage, emerging; these are leaves and buds: co-ops and communities.



*The interweaving of Dharma and culture*

The FWBO offers to us and to the public an increasing opportunity to enter the New Society: not just in imagination, but with our whole being — to spend all our time in the company of other individuals who have the same values as ourselves. The development of co-ops and communities makes this possible; places like Sukhavati make this possible.

So different, in fact, is the New Society from the Old Society that we cannot really live in both at the same time. We cannot start to enter the New Society unless we have started, emotionally at least, to leave the Old Society, the group. Otherwise, even though we may be in contact with the New Society, and may be putting some of our energy into it, we would still be operating on the basis of group consciousness: we would be getting involved because we saw the New Society as providing cosy, positive, group activities in which we could escape from ourselves.



Entry into the New Society, rather than being immediate and complete, happens gradually, and to the extent that we are self-aware in placing our commitment to the values expressed in the Three Jewels. With this in mind, we can examine the question of "Entering the New Society" in terms of Going for Refuge. The Ven. Sangharakshita gave a talk on the Order Convention in April last year, entitled "Going for

Refuge", in which he described the various levels at which this can take place.

The first level is the 'Cultural', or 'Formal', Going for Refuge. We find this, he said, in the Buddhist East, where people regard themselves as Buddhists by virtue of the fact that they were born in that part of the world where the Buddha lived and taught. They are influenced on the social and cultural level by Buddhism, but often do not take the spiritual path seriously as something actually to follow. But the whole emphasis in Buddhism is on individual commitment to spiritual development. The new-born baby is hardly in a position to decide consciously that he or she wants to evolve. To be 'born a Buddhist', in fact, is a contradiction in terms. This sort of attitude in the Buddhist East is parallel to that found in the West where infants are baptised into the Christian faith as a part of their cultural heritage. Nearer home still, perhaps, a situation analogous to the 'Cultural' Going for Refuge is when people are drawn towards the FWBO as a positive group. They come along to all the activities, even recite the Refuges, but with a group attitude. They want to fit in. The fact that they come at all is quite something, but they are still deeply entrenched in group values. Most people probably enter the New Society — or come in sight of it at least — at this group level, when they walk through the door of a centre, visit a community, go on a retreat, or maybe work in one of the co-operative businesses. This is hardly surprising: the concept of



developing into a healthy, happy human individual is unusual enough, let alone that of developing into an Enlightened individual. There is nothing wrong with this level of involvement in the Movement, this level of Going for Refuge. We are free to evolve or not just as we choose, and many Friends feel no desire to go any further than this into the New Society. However, this is clearly a limited approach; the concept of individuality holds no real meaning, the meaning of the Refuges has not been penetrated to any great degree.



But for a lot of Friends, things do not remain at this level. All these ideas about leaving the group, becoming an individual, taking up the path of the Higher Evolution, even becoming Enlightened, do start to mean something, at least intellectually. Meditation, pujas, retreats, contact with the Sangha, and study, are experienced in a new light. It is as if people start to do these things from a new basis, beginning to see that the values embodied in the Three Jewels, being made tangible in the New Society, are worthy of pursuit, and certainly more so than were their old values. Such Friends start to take their own spiritual development seriously, and move away from group values. They become aware of the possibility of taking that commitment even further. Such Friends decide to become mitras, thereby acknowledging their desire for a closer link with the Movement, with the Order, and the spiritual values they embody. They begin to enter more deeply into the New Society. The Refuges they chant start to mean much more to them. This level Bhante has called the 'Provisional' Going for Refuge.

In the same way that some Friends do not want to enter the New Society beyond a certain point, so some mitras may feel that they have taken things far enough by becoming mitras. Having left behind something of the Old Society, having broken through some of their group conditioning, and developed some degree of individuality, they do not

want to go any further. Of course no one will force them to go further, for this is a matter for individual decision. It would hardly be a New Society if they were forced.

But we can go further, should we so choose. Being a mitra should be a rich and rewarding experience, but it will only be so if we continue to open ourselves up to change, to the possibility of change. If we put ourselves in contact with other Friends, mitras, and Order members, with the Sangha, so that encouragement and inspiration abound, that part of us which asked to be a mitra, and wants to grow, is strengthened and increased.

For many mitras the time comes when they feel that being a mitra is not enough. They feel far more committed than before: they want to be ordained, they want to commit themselves totally to the Three Jewels. Such mitras are prepared to commit themselves to those ideals regardless of whether anyone else in the whole world feels similarly, or not. Such is the strength of their commitment. At the time of ordination, every part of us wants to grow, to evolve. Bhante has called this point the 'Effective' Going for Refuge.



When we are ordained, we Go for Refuge to the Three Jewels in two ways: in a general and in a specific way. In the general way, we Go for Refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha — to the historical Buddha as the ideal of Enlightenment, to the sum total of His teachings which lead to Buddhahood, and to the fellowship of those who have gone for Refuge.

But none of us has had experience of the Buddha, none of us has actually practised more than a fraction of the teachings, and none of us has experienced the whole of the Sangha. So, for practical purposes, we Go for Refuge specifically to those aspects of the Three Jewels which we have experienced. We take Refuge in the guru: in Bhante, as the most spiritually advanced person of whom we have direct experience. Similarly

we take Refuge in that part of the Dharma of which we have some experience — the Buddha or Bodhisattva form that we choose for our visualization practice. Finally, we Go for Refuge to those members of the spiritual community with whom we have direct contact: the Order. Thus we acknowledge these three Refuges: the guru, the Bodhisattva, and the close spiritual friend (sometimes referred to as the '*Dakini*'), although not separate, not distinct from the Three Jewels themselves, as being their most immediate and practical manifestations, the form in which they are most closely felt. In the Tibetan tradition, these are sometimes known as the 'esoteric Refuges'.



Those who Go for Refuge in this 'Effective' way, by becoming ordained, are taking a very firm step into the New Society. In a way, this is where the real work starts, where our commitment begins to deepen. We Go for Refuge again and again, on ever deeper levels of our being. We enter into — we become — the New Society, by creating it around us more and more.

At the time of ordination we have become sufficiently integrated to make such a decision with much of our being. But sooner or later some hitherto unsuspected, unintegrated part of ourself looms up. We must eventually Go for Refuge with these unknown parts too; otherwise we will stop growing, and will be able to enter the New Society no further. At this point we may remember the heroic aspect of Buddhism: the ideal of constant, unremitting effort towards the goal. At the end of the ordination ceremony Bhante chants those famous last words of the Buddha to his disciples: "... With mindfulness, strive on." And ultimately it is as simple as that. By making the effort, and by being mindful, we can arrive — at least at the point of Stream Entry. This is what Bhante has called the 'Real' Going for Refuge. Here, insight has been developed, the transcendental path entered, and there is no falling back. Up to this point we *can* always fall back: the Friend can stop coming



to classes, the mitra can decide to cease being a mitra, the Order member can choose to resign from the Order. Until Stream Entry has been attained we can always quit the New Society, and return to the Old Society, the old ways, the group. But after this crucial point we shall not leave the New Society because at last the Old Society will hold no attraction for us. We become able to function in any environment without risk of getting lost.



However, until such a time as we can achieve this state, we really need to create spiritual communities to live in, Right Livelihood businesses to work in: not just because they are positive situations in themselves, but because spiritual development will be very difficult, or at best slow, if we continue to live, work, and communicate only within the Old Society. Thus the external form of the New Society is something to be created, not only for its intrinsic worth, but also as a necessary means towards our spiritual progress. This necessity will fade away when we become Stream Entrants, although we shall continue to create, as a natural creative impulse, the New Society. When regression is impossible, then Enlightenment is guaranteed, although effort is still of course required.

In the 'Ultimate' Going for Refuge, of the Enlightened being, we do not Go for Refuge to anything outside ourselves — we are our own Refuge; nothing else is needed. The New Society is within us and we are within it. At this point all opposites have been transcended, all distinctions between samsara and nirvana, the Old Society and the New. Whereas the Stream Entrant, although free from the Old Society, is attached to the New Society, to nirvana, the Buddha, one at the stage of the 'Ultimate' Going for Refuge, has gone beyond even this. The New Society is no longer seen or experienced as something *here* as opposed to *there*. The Old Society and the New are seen as neither the same nor different.

Finally, Bhante has suggested what could be called a 'Cosmic' Going for



*The ultimate Going for Refuge*

Refuge: a poetic intuition, a vision of the self-transcendent, upward tendency of all life. The whole of existence could perhaps be seen as participating in a mystic process of unfoldment.

To summarise, then, we enter the New Society to the extent that we Go for Refuge as individuals. But we do not create the New Society simply for our own benefit, nor can we simply dispense with it as soon as we have overcome the forces inimical to

our development. This cannot be our attitude if we take the Bodhisattva ideal seriously. At this point we will want to help those who have not yet achieved Enlightenment. Hence, the New Society does not come to completion upon our own Enlightenment: we work on, or rather *play* on, until the whole world is transformed into a New Society, a pure Buddha-field, a real *Sukhavati*.

**Sanghadevi**



## BOOK REVIEW

# Patterns of Non-Violence

*AHIMSA: Non-Violence in Indian Tradition*  
Unto Tähtinen. Rider & Company, London 1976. Pp 148. £4.95p

by Ven. Sangharakshita

**T**he development of ethical ideas is inseparable from the development of consciousness. Nature is unconscious. Even at the level of organic existence life is, to begin with, sentient rather than conscious, and even when, with the emergence of animal life, sentience develops into consciousness, it is simple consciousness that develops, not the reflexive consciousness that is the distinctive characteristic of human beings. Since nature is unconscious it is either 'mechanical' or instinctual rather than intelligent, and in each of its forms operates without regard for, because without (real) awareness of, — any of its other forms. Nature is therefore the "Nature red in tooth and claw" of the poet and does not so much shriek against man's creed as remain blind to the possibility of any such achievement. As it is weight and mass that count on the level of inorganic existence, so it is size and strength that count on the level of organic life. Nature is governed by power and man, to the extent that he remains simply a part of nature, ie to the extent that he has not developed reflexive consciousness, — to the extent that he is not truly human, — is governed by power too. It is only when as a result of the development of reflexive consciousness, he begins to realize that others are capable of suffering just as he is, and that they would not like done to them what he would not like done to him, that ethical ideas develop. Human life then comes to be governed, to a limited extent at least, not by power, ie violence in the form of force or fraud, but by an entirely different principle. It comes to be governed by love, not in the

sentimental sense, but rather in the sense of the Confucian *shu*, 'reciprocity' or 'altruism', or the Godwinian 'benevolence'.

In Indian tradition this higher principle finds expression in the idea of ahimsa or non-violence, which although grammatically negative in form stands for an ethical ideal that is positive as well as negative in content. Non-violence is, in fact, a key concept of Indian ethics, and there are six comprehensive philosophies of non-violence in Indian thought. In *Ahimsa: Non-violence in Indian Tradition*, a work based on original Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit and Tamil sources, the Finnish Indologist Unto Tähtinen compares, for the first time, the different meanings of ahimsa in Buddhism and Jainism, in the Hindu Vedas, Dharmasastras and Puranas, and the thought of Mahatma Gandhi and his followers. We are thus given an extremely comprehensive and detailed study which in nine short chapters covers the definition, the roots, and the nature of ahimsa (I, III, IV), the nature of himsa or violence (II), the relation between ahimsa and other moral norms, ahimsa and war, ahimsa and crime, and ahimsa and sub-human beings (V-VIII), and ahimsa in contemporary Indian life and thought (IX).

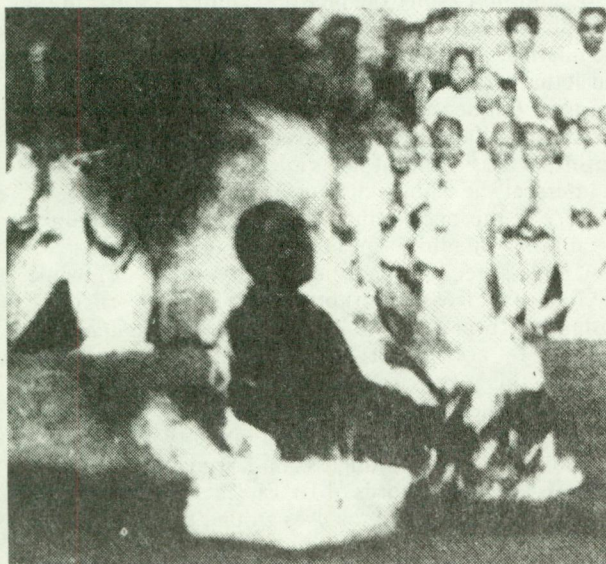
**O**ne does not have to read very far in this study before becoming aware of the extent to which the idea of ahimsa or non-violence permeates the Indian religious consciousness, especially in the post-Vedic period, and the thoroughness with which Buddhism and Jainism, in particular, discuss the subject. In their concern for the practice of absolute non-violence, without the slightest taint of violence, the Jains, in the person of Amitagati,

For a full discussion of simple consciousness and reflexive consciousness, listen to the Ven. Sangharakshita's lecture, "How Consciousness Evolves", available from Dharmachakra Tapes.





Avalokiteshvara – the Bodhisattva of Compassion



"... under specific conditions..." – Vietnam

enumerate 432 types of himsa, and there are other enumerations almost as elaborate. As Dr Tähtinen observes, however, such enumerations could be carried on *ad infinitum*: "The basic distinction appears to be that of violence in thought, word and deed, which, in addition, may be directly committed, commissioned or consented to. These classifications, are common to all schools of thought." (p. 16) Non-violence itself is no less thoroughly discussed. Here too there is a good deal of common ground. Though the word ahimsa is often popularly understood as 'non-killing', all the philosophical schools take it in the broader sense of 'non-injury', and most of them regard this as being mental and verbal as much as, or even more than, physical. Nevertheless there are two distinct traditions of non-violence in Indian thought, the Vedic or brahmanic and the ascetic or sramanic. According to the latter, which comprises mainly Buddhism and Jainism, non-violence is a universal principle and should be practised towards all living beings without exception. "The ascetic conception of *ahimsā*", says Dr Tähtinen, "differs from the Vedic conception by not including any form of justified violence into the idea of *ahimsā*. Nor does it imply that any type of *himsā* is morally good." (p. 8) "Thus the ascetic *ahimsā* is extended to every living being without exception. This implies that injury to an enemy, harm done to a criminal or to an attacking beast are to be termed as violence. It is this ascetic concept of non-violence which is applied universally." (p. 53) According to the Vedic or brahmanic tradition, on the other hand, non-violence is not a universal principle and should be practised only towards non-violent beings. "It is not applicable to enemies in war, to criminals, wicked people, offending beasts and animals to be sacrificed or killed for one's livelihood". (p. 52) Killing such beings as these, one commits no sin: such himsa is in fact ahimsa. Indeed, as Krishna reminds Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, by refusing to wage righteous war a kshatriya or member of the warrior caste incurs sin. War is an open door to heaven, or, as the *Varaha-Purana* says, "Those braves who die for the *brāhmaṇas*, the milk cows and their state go the city of Indra, or heaven". (p. 93)

**A**lthough ascetic non-violence is universal, ie to be extended to all living beings without exception, this does not mean that there will not be degrees in its application. On account of the very nature of his position the layman will not be able to practise non-violence to the same extent as the monk. Nonetheless both are practising one and the same principle, the universal principle of non-violence: there is not one principle for the monk and another for the layman. "According to the ascetic branch of thought a layman's ethics are the morality prescribed for a monk, though in a much diluted form." (p. 12) Collating various Pali Buddhist texts the author therefore says, "A definite distinction can be drawn between the non-violence of a monk and that of a householder. Household life is full of hindrances and it is difficult for



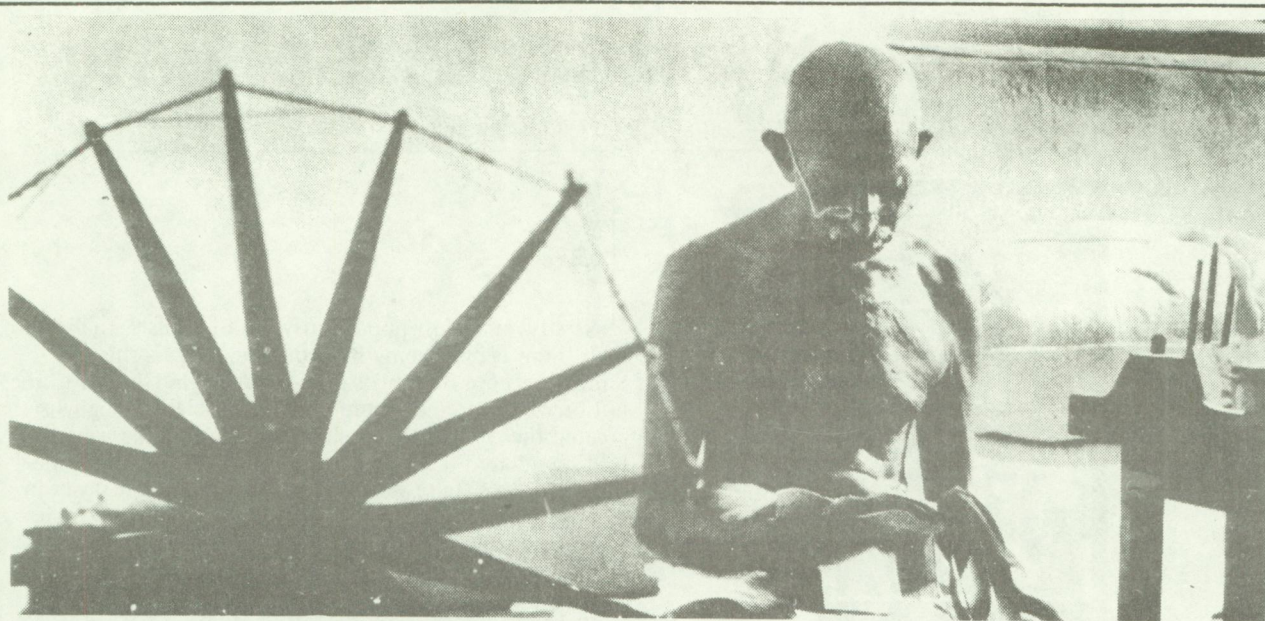
a man who dwells at home to live the higher life in full. As free as the air, so is the life of him who has renounced all worldly things. A householder is bound to destroy other living beings, but a monk practising self-restraint protects living beings. A [lay] Buddhist should at any rate avoid the practice of tormenting others (*para-paritāpana*) and not earn his livelihood as a cattle-butcher, a pig-killer, fowler, deer-stalker, hunter, fisherman, thief, executioner, jailer or through any other cruel occupation (*kukurakammanta*).” (p. 29) According to Jaina sources, “When one is engaged in complete abstention [from violence], one becomes a saint. He who is engaged in partial restraint (*ekadeśa-virati*) is only a disciple (*upāsaka*).” (p.61) In Vedic or brahmanic non-violence there are also degrees of application, as of the monk and the layman, but with a vitally important difference. If the general duty of ahimsa, which according to Manu is applicable to all the four castes, comes into conflict with caste-duties or specific duties, eg the warrior’s duty to fight or the king’s duty to inflict punishment, then the caste-duties have preference. (p. 56) Above all, if it comes into conflict with the Vedic injunction to kill animals in sacrifice, then non-violence must give way to violence. (p. 5) In the words of the Mimamsa principle as stated by Khandadeva: “The specific rule of killing at sacrifices is stronger than the general rule prohibiting killing.” (p. 35) Animal sacrifices are, in fact, good for all, including the animals slaughtered. (p. 35) Indeed Samkara, the celebrated exponent of non-dualist (*advaita*) Vedanta, declared that such sacrifice “purifies the heart of a truth-seeker and ultimately awakens the desire to know the highest truth (*brahman*).” (p. 22) According to another source, however, the killing of animals in sacrifice having been enjoined on man by the divinely authoritative Vedas, whatever merit or demerit may accrue from the performance of such sacrifices goes to God. (p. 5)

Since for the ascetic schools non-violence was a universal principle they refused to agree that it must give way to caste duties or to the Vedic injunction to kill animals in sacrifice, and this led them to deny the authority of the Vedas. To them violence was violence, and any attempt to argue that killing is justified because enjoined by the infallible Vedas only made matters worse by adding to the sin of violence the no less serious sin of ignorance (*avidyā*). They therefore attacked the authority of the Vedas vigorously. In fact, it is difficult to say whether the opposition of the ascetic schools to the slaughter of animals in sacrifice, and with it their rejection of the Vedas, was the cause or the effect of their belief in non-violence. As Unto Tähtinen puts it, “The vehement opposition against killing at sacrifices was a good cause for the protagonists of *ahimsā*. The extreme care of animal life might have originated in view of the fact that *ahimsā* flourished as a reaction against the ritual slaughter of animals. Non-violence did not come to be generally recognised so much as a reaction against injury done to

men (eg in war) rather than as a profound opposition to the institutionalized killing of animals. The heterodox schools lived and prospered on this reaction, and their position was buttressed by the simultaneous denial of the authority of the Vedas.” (pp. 37-38) This reaction against killing animals was, like the reaction against meat-eating, more the work of Jainism than Buddhism possibly because Jainism was older than Buddhism and because at the time of Parshva (8th century B.C.E.) animal sacrifice was more widespread than in the Buddha’s day. “The Buddha emphatically and persistently fought against such social maladies as robbery, strife, fear of violence and the use of intoxicants. He paid more attention to these social evils than the Jains, who were more concerned about the slaughter of animals at sacrifices. This seems to have provided a good reason for the spread of Buddha’s doctrine.” (p. 48) But if the Buddha’s opposition to animal sacrifice and meat-eating was less emphatic than that of the Jains He was more concerned than they were about violence against oneself. They approved of self-mortification, whereas He regarded it as an extreme to be avoided. They maintained “That man, under specific conditions, will be morally advised to kill himself” (p. 26), whereas He did not maintain any such thing. “According to Pali Buddhism,” says Dr Tähtinen, “suicide is not to be approved.” (p. 24) There is, however, the curious case of the monk Godhika, whose suicide — committed after he had gained ‘temporary release’ for the seventh time — was apparently not disapproved of by the Buddha (*Samyutta-Nikaya* i. 123). Moreover, in the *Sadharma-pundarika Sutra*, XXII, also not mentioned by Dr Tähtinen, the Bodhisattva Sarvasattvapriyadarsana burns his own body with the object of worshipping the Buddha and His teaching of the Dharma and this heroic act is applauded by innumerable Buddhas.

Important as the idea of non-violence undoubtedly is, it is not the only form in which the principle of love, — the higher principle that emerges when man ceases to be governed solely by the principle of power, — finds expression in Indian tradition. This is particularly so in the case of Buddhism. Despite the fact that ahimsa is listed in the Abhidharma as one of the positive mental events, ie one of the dharmas present in all wholesome/skilful mental states, the actual term ahimsa, or non-violence does not occur nearly so frequently in Buddhism as it does in Jainism, for example. Jainism regards even sexual abstinence and truthfulness as forms of non-violence, and in fact tends to interpret the whole religious life in terms of the practice of this one all-important virtue. Buddhism does not do this. Buddhism speaks not only of non-violence but also, no less frequently, of non-cruelty (*avihiṃsā*), while the first of its five (or ten) precepts takes the form of abstention from injury to living beings (*pāṇātipātā veramaṇī*) — not abstention from killing, as Unto Tähtinen seems to think. (p. 79) So far as Buddhism in fact is concerned, the higher principle of love finds its richest and most characteristic expression in the twin concepts of metta or universal friendliness and Karuna or universal compassion. In the words of Dr Tähtinen’s summary, “In Jainism the whole ethic revolves around the concept of *ahimsa*, in Buddhism other terms are stressed. *Metta* or universal friendliness is of central ethical importance in





"A practical idealist" — Mahatma Gandhi

Pali Buddhism, whereas *karuṇā* acquires this position in Sanskrit Buddhism. We may say that both *mettā* and *karuṇā* imply *ahiṃsā*." (p. 79) Both *mettā* and *karuṇā* also imply, needless to say, — as does the concept of *ahiṃsa* itself, — that vivid awareness of the existence of other people, that keen sensitivity to their joys and sorrows, which arises from the development of reflexive consciousness and in which true humanity consists. *Mettā* and *karuṇā* find their highest expression in the life of the *Bodhisattva*. "A *bodhisattva* will, by his every bodily, verbal and mental action, regard only his fellow creatures.

**T**he mighty compassion (*mahā-karuṇā*) has as its object the good of all living beings. The mighty compassion is the antidote to *hiṃsā*. The *bodhisattva* helps all living beings to enter the city of *nirvāṇa*. This can be facilitated by the transference of merit in the sense of eternal happiness radiated by all the *buddhas*. Compassion is extended to the limits of speculation. Non-violence assimilates and submerges into the notion of compassion." (p. 78) Since the principle of love finds its most characteristic expression in friendliness and compassion, we are not surprised that "For the Buddha non-violence seems to have been mainly mental" (p. 68) and that He "wished to cut violence at its root rather than tackle its manifestations." (p. 69) Such an emphasis is fully in accordance with the general nature of Buddhism which, in the words of one of the contemporary interpreters cited by Dr Tähtinen, is "essentially a mind-culture".

In modern times the concept of non-violence is for many people associated with the name of Mahatma Gandhi. Within the context of contemporary Indian thought Gandhi represents the ascetic tradition of non-violence which, says Dr Tähtinen, "has survived to the

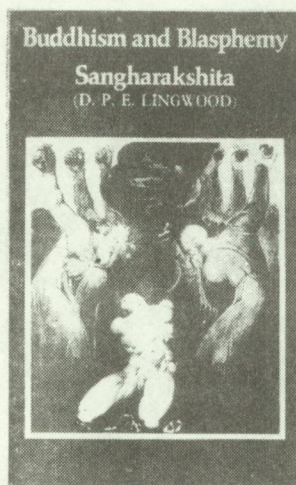
present day, and may appeal even now to the large majority of Indians and particularly politicians." (p. 116) Gandhi, who sometimes called himself 'a practical idealist', understands non-violence as essentially mental behaviour and regards it as involving dissociation of oneself from evil activities such as economic exploitation. (p. 119) For him non-violence is a common duty, not a specific one. As Dr Tähtinen says, "Gandhi's idea of *ahiṃsā* was not based on the Vedic conception of *ahiṃsā*. He ruled out all exceptions in the application of *ahiṃsā*. He derived his *ahiṃsā* from the ascetic sources, and it was this ascetic or *śramaṇic* concept which he applied, for the first time, to politics and economics." (p. 121) More specifically, "Gandhi pleaded to adopt non-violence in the practical life of social groups and nations. He tried to apply non-violence in every walk of life, domestic, institutional, economic and political. He knew of no case in which non-violence would not have provided a good guiding principle of action." (p. 123) This more extended application of the concept of non-violence, — of the principle of love, — is of great significance today. As Dr Tähtinen reminds us in the Preface to his study, the need for non-violence has become more pressing than ever before because of its manifold applications. Non-violence can be applied to the settling of colonial, racial and other social problems, to the need for making a choice between world peace and total destruction, to the need for the control of pollution created by industrial processes and products, and to the conservation of natural resources and the non-exploitation of subhuman life. Before we can apply the principle of non-violence, however, we must understand it, and how better shall we be able to understand it than by thoroughly acquainting ourselves with the six comprehensive philosophies of non-violence that have appeared in the history of Indian thought, particularly those connected with the ascetic schools? It is this which Unto Tähtinen's systematically organized and richly informative study enables us to do.

SANGHARAKSHITA



# Catharsis through Blasphemy

*Buddhism and Blasphemy. Sangharakshita. Windhorse Publications, 1978. Pp. 24. Price 60p.*



In concluding his review of *The Great Heresy* (Newsletter 38, page 21) Sangharakshita wrote "... it would be well for English Buddhists at least to remind themselves that the ghosts of Pope Innocent III and the Inquisitors are still very much abroad and that it is still possible for a religion to be destroyed."

At the time I thought to myself, "That's all very well but it will never happen here." Then, that very month (March 1978), the result of the "Gay News" blasphemy trial appeal was announced, and it looked as if both Pope Innocent III and the Inquisitors were beginning to heat up their irons once again.

As the defeat of the appeal shows, Christians are still very much able to force their beliefs onto others, and have the consent of the courts to do so. It is this intolerable infringement of freedom of expression and belief that Sangharakshita, in his booklet *Buddhism and Blasphemy*, shows as the true ramification of the law of blasphemy.

The booklet begins with a synopsis of the trial of "Gay News" and its editor Denis Lemon for blasphemous libel (written blasphemy), and continues with a true appraisal of the law of blasphemy as it now stands. "The current interpretation of the law of blasphemy therefore seems to be that blasphemy consists in the publishing of anything that can be proved to have shocked and outraged a *single* Christian or sympathizer with Christianity" (page 7, *italics my own*). Exploring the legal situation further, he points out its thoroughly unobjective and stifling nature, and ends with the rather ominous summation: "The truth of the matter is that so long as the blasphemy laws remain unrepealed they can be used, and so long as they can be used the Buddhist does not enjoy full freedom of expression: he is not free to propagate his beliefs." (page 8)

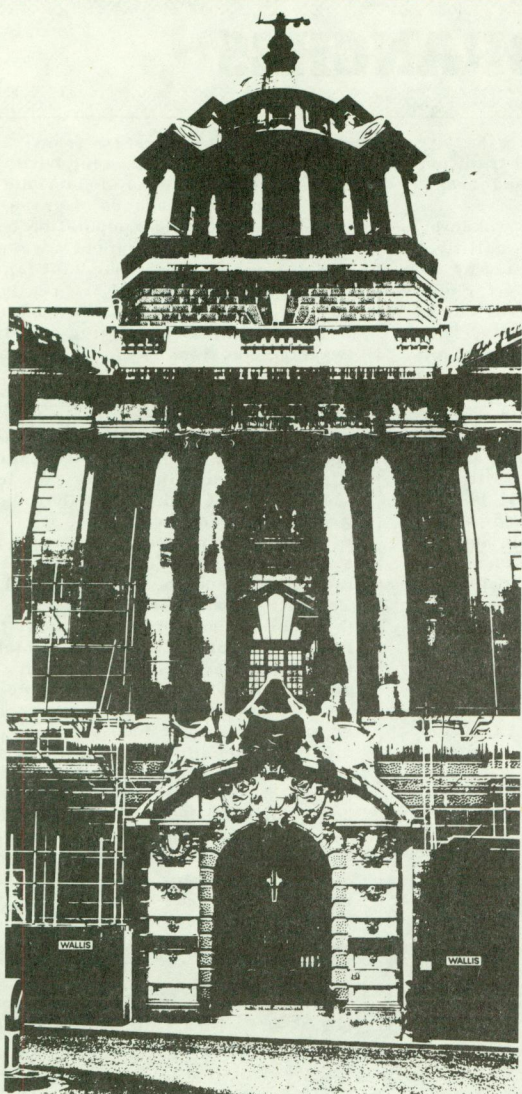
Having dealt with the extremely onesided scales of 'justice', he continues to explore the wider issues raised by this insidious law.

Firstly, and most importantly for Buddhists, there is no such thing as blasphemy in Buddhism. Why is this so? Simply because Buddhists do not believe in God, or in the notion of a supreme omnipotent, omniscient being who created the world and all mankind. The Buddha we are told repudiated this view, along with a further sixty-one *miccha-ditthis* (false views) as being part of a great net in which "... flounder as they may, they (the believers in these false views) are included and caught." (*Digha Nikaya*, I 45).

Secondly, although Buddhism has the Three Jewels as its highest values it does not follow that insulting these involves the same attitude of mind as does insulting the Christian ultimate ie God. Before explaining this difference in attitude between Christianity and Buddhism, he explores the Buddhist attitude to dispraise and praise offered to the Three Jewels by quoting words of the Buddha which come, as he says, "like a breath of clean sweet air" after the suffocating intolerance shown in the blasphemy laws. The Buddha was a man of great reasonableness, and we are clearly shown that we should not simply react to what others say about Him, but calmly consider the truth or falsity of their assertions.

Having inspired us with a breath of the Buddha's clean fresh air, Sangharakshita goes on to lead us step by step through some of the logical (and illogical) ramifications of Christian belief, in an attempt to clarify the differences between Buddhism and Christianity. He starts with the belief in God, and compares this god to "a sort of cosmic Louis XIV or Ivan the Terrible" (page 13) and it is the fear of this 'king writ large', this king in the sky, that shackles Christians to their mind-constraining beliefs. This being the case it is no wonder that "Good Christians are therefore not only shocked and outraged by blasphemy but also *frightened*" (page 13, *italics my own*). It is this fear of being punished by divine retribution that makes the sin of blasphemy so horrific to all Christians: they are terrified of the very god they worship. Having discovered this, we are surprised to learn that even when Christianity was the sole religion in the West this tendency to blaspheme did not disappear but was always inherent even in some of the Church's greatest saints. Why was this so? Sangharakshita shows why by distinguishing two types of blasphemy: rational blasphemy, ie "blasphemy committed as a logical consequence of one's own beliefs" (page 15), and irrational blasphemy, which he defines as "blasphemy committed as the psychological result of the Christian's own largely unconscious resistance to, and reaction against, the very religion in which he believes" (page 15). He strengthens this definition with some examples of the constraints put upon Christians by their





*The Central Criminal Court*

religion, showing it to be, not the great religion that leads man to the true fulfillment of his potentiality, but rather a cruel and inhibiting power structure that extracts obedience from its followers by fear and the threat of punishment by the king in the sky, ie God.

This castrating effect of Christianity accounts for all the horrors perpetrated by it, from the Spanish Inquisition to the "Gay News" trial. Christians terrified of falling foul of their god and horrified at the blasphemous thoughts that pass through their heads project these thoughts onto innocent bystanders, making them the scapegoat for their own internal conflicts and their hatred of the very religion they believe in.

So, having arrived at this untenable position, how do we go on? Sangharakshita, in the most important aspect of the whole article, shows us that rather than being the great horror that it is made out to be blasphemy is a 'safety valve', a means of ridding oneself of the internal conflicts that Christianity sets up. He suggests that to rid oneself of these and shake off the dust of Christianity one

has to learn to blaspheme. Blasphemy is the way out. It is through open defiance of this 'king writ large' that one purges oneself of him. Blasphemy is the path one must tread on the way from being a Christian to becoming an ex-Christian, and possibly a Western Buddhist.

**T**he most effective way to blaspheme is to ridicule, as this makes blasphemy accessible to the ordinary man, who is otherwise unable to express his true feelings on this score by such restrictions as the blasphemy law. Sangharakshita even goes so far as to declare, "But were the ordinary man ever to rise up and proclaim in his own vivid vernacular his abhorrence of God and his utter detestation of Christianity and all its ways, the result might be not only a religious but also a social and political revolution" (page 22). And certainly we in the West who are aspiring towards Buddhism will be continually hampered along the path until we too commit blasphemy, and rid ourselves once and for all of this insidious crime that passes for a religion. But this is not all. Though we have been shown the way, it still remains illegal for us to bring about such a change, and in the concluding paragraph Sangharakshita suggests some very important reforms that will have to be introduced before we as Buddhists will be free to be Buddhists.

All in all this is the most important work to come from the pen of Sangharakshita for a long time, and should certainly be read by all aspiring Buddhists and many aspiring Christians too. It represents a great wedge driven into the already cracked and badly smeared (or should I say blood-stained) edifice of Christianity, and we should be eager to seize every opportunity we can to drive this wedge further home. Not because we wish to blindly advocate Buddhism, but because we genuinely wish to free Christians from the pain, doubt, and guilt from which they needlessly suffer.

**Kovida**

## ALSO RECEIVED

*THE HIDDEN HARMONY: Reflections on Heraclitus.*  
Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh.  
Sheldon Press, London. £4.95.

*RELIGION Vol Eight Number Two*  
Routledge & Kegan Paul, Henley. £3.00

*THE TM TECHNIQUE: The TM Book for Sceptics.*  
Peter Russell  
Routledge & Kegan Paul, Henley. £1.95 Paper.

*GLIMPSES OF ABHIDHARMA*  
Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche  
Prajna Press, Dist' Routledge & Kegan Paul.  
£2.50.



# CENTRES and BRANCHES

## INDIA

Report from Lokamitra

At the time of writing the report for the last Newsletter, Kularatna, Padmavajra and I were in Lucknow, on our way to Sravasti for a few days spiritual refreshment before going on to Ahmedabad. Kularatna left us for Kalimpong, and since then has spent most of his time travelling. I had been looking forward to renewing contact with the Gujarat Buddhist Society. Although there are only 25 Gujarati Buddhist families in Ahmedabad, they are all very sincere, and on the whole much clearer in their approach to the Dharma than other recently converted Buddhists I have met in India. After travelling for 2½ days from Sravasti, we arrived in Ahmedabad, to be met by Bakul Vakil, the secretary of the Society, and a disciple of the Ven. Sangharakshita. In fact it was the Ven. Sangharakshita who gave him the name "Bakul" on his conversion, 16 years ago.

We were immediately taken to the Vihara which was to be our home for the next two and a half weeks. It was the same Vihara that I had visited the previous January, but since then it had been almost totally rebuilt and transformed so that it served its purpose much better. It had been re-

named "Triyana Vardhana Vihara" to keep alive the name and tradition established by the Ven. Sangharakshita in Kalimpong.

Every morning we were woken by the tape-recorded Muslim call to prayer, and soon after joined by a few members of the Society for meditation. We were taken to various people's homes for our meals. These visits almost always involved chanting the Refuges and Precepts, and a traditional blessing, as well as giving a Dharma talk, which is a practice not conducive to good digestion. During the day we would prepare for the evening's classes, do a little study, and receive visitors. In the evening we would hold a meditation class, or study the Mangala Sutta.

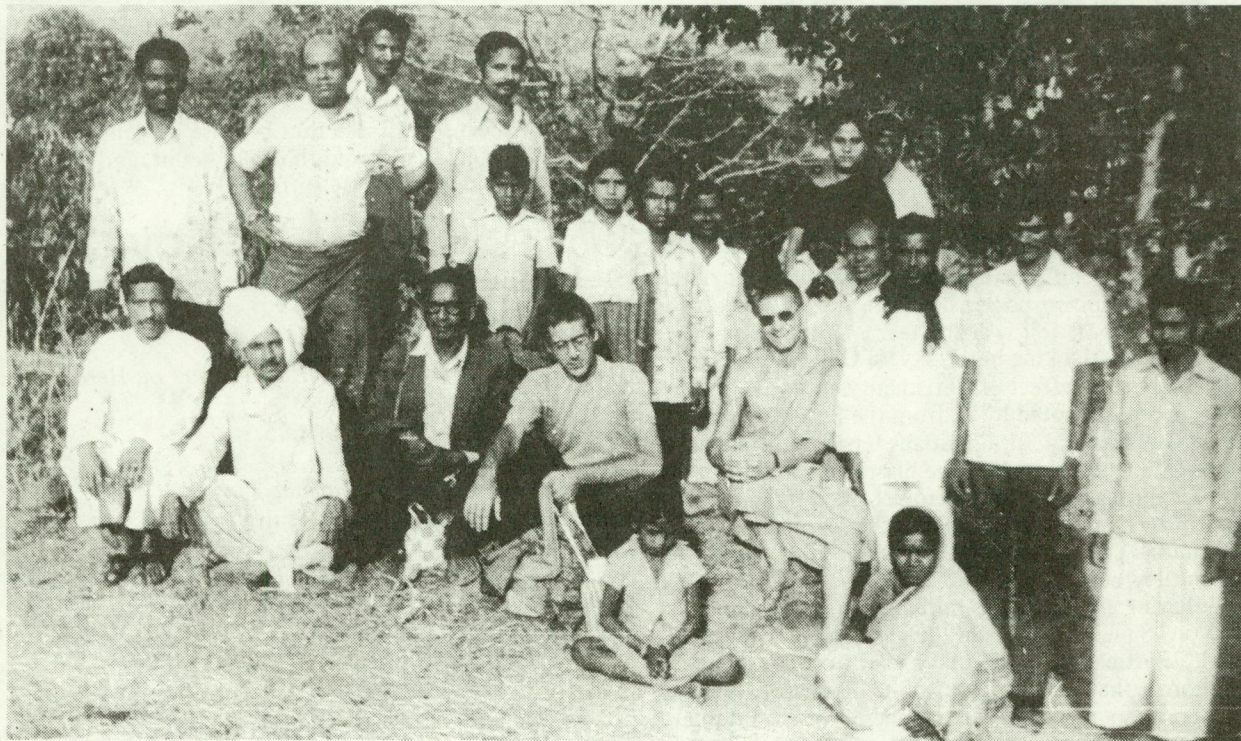
The day after we arrived we attended the 'Asoka Vijaya Day' celebrations. This marks the day when both Asoka and Dr Ambedkar converted to Buddhism, and they must surely be two of the most influential conversions in the history of Buddhism in India. The celebrations were held just outside Ahmedabad, at the side of a lotus-filled lake, under the shade of massive Banyan trees. With a clear blue sky, and the colourful clothes of the participants, it made a really appropriate setting for a Buddhist festival.

One weekend we spent at Gandhinagar, the new state capital of Guj-

erat, about 30 kilometers from Ahmedabad. It is still being built, and consists of blocks of flats and offices, with vast spaces of grassland in-between. The population consists largely of government servants. There are about eight Buddhist families living there, and all are really thirsty for the Dharma. We took a weekend seminar consisting of four two-hour sessions of study, and four periods of metta bhavana practice. We studied Mind - Reactive and Creative. Everyone there really appreciated the Ven. Sangharakshita's direct application of the Buddha's teaching to life in the twentieth century. We left feeling that we had spent a thoroughly worthwhile weekend.

We were to return to Gandhinagar a week later for a five-day retreat at the new and spacious Youth Hostel. The retreat was held over Diwali (a major Hindu festival in honour of the goddess of wealth: - Ed), which has perhaps even more hold over people than does Christmas in the West. Although people have converted to Buddhism, it does seem very difficult indeed for them to break down some of their socio-religious conditioning. So we were very pleased when 25 people attended this retreat. All seemed to think that it marked a really important breakthrough, and in order not to fall back, want to hold a retreat every year over Diwali.

Holding the retreat at this time did,



On retreat



however, have its disadvantages. Despite our being in a rather secluded spot, we could still not get away from the horrible blare of film music, and the deafening noise of fireworks, which are like bombs compared with the rather mild things we use in the West.

We studied the *Karinya Metta Sutta* and introduced the practice of *metta bhavana*, which we sometimes did three times a day. We also introduced communication exercises, which they all took to like ducks to water. They were the first that I have led in India, and were therefore something of an experiment. Every day there was time for those who could understand English to listen to tapes of the Ven. Sangharakshita's lectures, and each day concluded with the chanting of the *Avalokiteshvara* mantra, which was quite new to them, as well as the chanting of the *puja* and *Suttas* in Pali. On the last night we brought a very warm and successful retreat to an end with the *Mitra* ceremonies for three Friends.

The next day we returned to Ahmedabad to give the finishing touches to a shrine we had been asked to design for the *Vihara*. Because of its name, we decided on a three-tiered shrine with cloths of colours which represent the three *Yanas*: yellow, red and blue. That evening, the *Vihara* overflowed with people as we dedicated the shrine. After a talk on the significance of a shrine, and a reading of a translation of Bhante's verses of dedication, those who could speak English recited the lines of the verses after me. We then held a *puja*. Despite the fact that not all knew English, that there were many children present, that everyone was squeezed up against one another, and that the film music was blaring away as loud as ever outside, it was one of the most moving dedication ceremonies that I have ever attended. As soon as it was over, we were taken to the station where we caught the overnight train for Bombay, and then on to Pune.

Back here, our first job was to find a Centre, so for two weeks we did only a little Dharma work. Eventually, we found temporary accommodation in a small two-roomed bungalow, in a 'Buddhist Housing Society' on the edge of Pune. Although its position is not ideal for our work, it has meant that we really can get down to a full programme of classes, most of which we hold away from the bungalow. Every day we are taken to a different home in the area for lunch, which enables us to give more time to Dharma work.

Perhaps the most prominent aspects of our programme are the talks I am giving twice a week in different 'Buddhist' localities. These allow me to contact as many people as possible, and let them know firstly what we are doing, and secondly of the Ven. Sangharakshita's expected visit towards the end of January. They all seem



*Lokamitra and Padmavajra*

to go down well, with attendances varying from 50 to 1000. The most successful was held on December 6th, the anniversary of Dr Ambedkar's death. Over 1000 people came together beneath his statue, in a small garden-cum-park in Pune. Despite the fact that it was surrounded on all sides by major roads and was in the open air, it was the most attentive audience that I have spoken to.

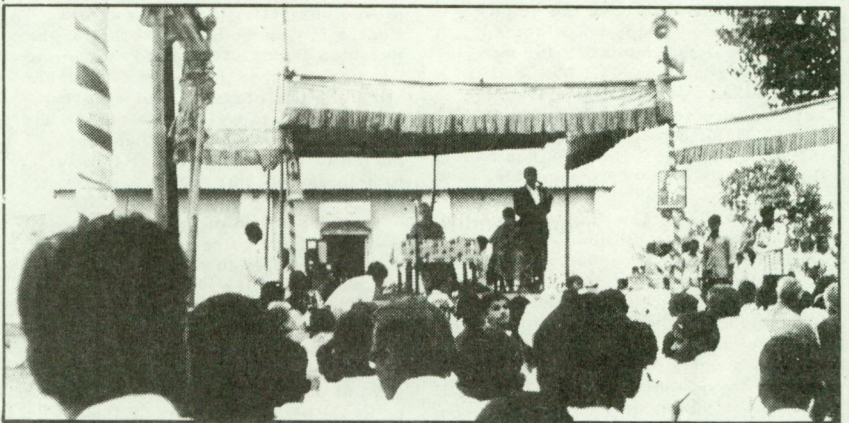
On the 25th December I spoke at Dehu Road, a village outside Pune where Dr Ambedkar founded the first *Buddha Vihara* in recent times, on the same day 24 years ago. This was two years before his conversion and so was of great significance. The title of the talk was, "Buddha or God",

and again it went down very well. Unfortunately the power was cut off ten minutes before the end of the talk; but I had by then said most of what I had intended to say.

Most of my talks centre around the implications of conversion, the meaning of the Three Refuges, and how we can put the Buddha's teachings into practice. Dr Ambedkar died just a few weeks after his conversion, and this movement which has affected perhaps one tenth of the population of India (reckoned at 630 million) was left without a guide. In some ways it has been disintegrating ever since (see Newsletter 39). Very few Indian monks seem really to be practising the Dharma, or able to communicate it in a way that means something to the lives of the people. The Ven. Sangharakshita used to visit Maharashtra, Pune especially, for a few months every year until he finally returned to England in 1966. His work was very much appreciated, and people remember him very well to-day. But since his return to England, little of any real value, if anything, has been done in Pune at least.

As a result, although many people call themselves Buddhists, all too often this means no more than a change in name. Their attitude towards Buddhism is all too often the same as it was towards Hinduism, and an outsider would find it hard to distinguish any real difference. However this would seem to be more the result of a lack of understanding of the Buddha's teaching than anything else.

We have recently held two weekend retreats. We now have 13 *mitras* in Pune, so the first one was a *Mitra* Retreat. The second was an open retreat, attended by 31 people. It took place in the guest house of the old retreat palace of the Raja of Bhor, which now belongs to the Boy Scouts. It is situated in a beautiful valley, surrounded on all sides by mountains, 30 miles from Pune. Next week we are bringing out the first issue of our *Marathi* quarterly



*An outdoor meeting*



journal; Buddhayana. In the issue is a translation of Nagabodhi's article, "The birth of a Movement" (from Newsletter 39), three articles by our own mitras, on different aspects of our work, and an editorial by myself. We have planned it so that it comes out just before the Ven. Sangharakshita arrives. He is expected out here in just a few weeks, and of course we shall give you a full report of his stay in a future Newsletter.

## SUKHAVATI BETHNAL GREEN

By Nigel Seller

As you may have gathered, unless you're one of those people who start a magazine at the back, and proceed backwards, Sukhavati has already hogged its patch in this issue of the Newsletter; so I'll be brief.

Following the dramatic and enthusiastic opening of the London Buddhist Centre, most Sukhavatins departed for well-earned and much-needed retreats. Some went to Padmaloka, others to White Row near Seaford, or to Loch Lomond, and some to more solitary places. All have now returned, with fantastic tales of 'trees' and 'birds' - such things as every Londoner knows exist only in legend.

We are now down to the task of transforming the community itself into an environment as aesthetic and conducive to positive mental states as is the Centre. This will mean extensive redecoration, and in particular a re-designing of the shrine-room on the north coll of the third floor. The trend towards tidiness (= mindfulness), thanks especially to Ratnapani, the new Community House Manager, is beginning to bear fruit.

As Sukhavati begins to infiltrate the surrounding properties, we will soon see the dwellings above the neighbouring row of shops transformed into office accommodation for our burgeoning businesses. We've already taken over the shops themselves; here you can buy anything from a tin of Duraglit to a History of the Indian Mutiny. Harrods has had things all its own way for too long.

Kulamitra, Secretary of the Pure Land Co-operative, has hit upon a scheme which he hopes will prove very lucrative - damp-proofing. Apparently it's quite simple, profitable, and helpful to the public at large. It could be what we've been looking for - money. It takes about £700 a week to run Sukhavati and the LBC, so we really need more businesses that can be relied upon to raise large sums.

Meanwhile a contingent of builders now seasoned and expert craftsmen, have departed to begin their next big project, at Tyn-y-ddol. They may not subdue and convert the Welsh, but they're bound to impress them. They have certainly impressed the East End of London.

## AMITAYUS BRIGHTON

Report from Mangala

Brighton, like the rest of Britain, is now deep in the icy grip of winter, and the droves of beautiful young foreign students who descend every summer with their clomping Swedish clogs and scarlet SIS shoulderbags are only a colourful memory. But Brighton is very much more than a seaside resort in a beautiful setting - it is rich in a wide range of cultural activities with many alternative groups and projects, and a lively university, all of which gives Brighton a very attractive and stimulating atmosphere whatever the season.

The FWBO too contributes to this richness, playing a growing part in people's lives. Contact is made indirectly through our businesses - 'Sunrise', the vegetarian restaurant in North Road, and the 'Windhorse Bookshop' in George Street (a colourful Bookshop-cum-Indian bazaar), which are now well-established and flourishing; and contact is also made directly through the meditation classes in Park Crescent at our newly-named Brighton Buddhist Centre. However while the FWBO undoubtedly adds to the general richness of the Brighton scene, its aim is not merely to supplement or be part of it. Rather we can say its aim is to turn people away from the transient pleasures which Brighton offers in abundance to the more lasting ones of spiritual development. It's a measure of our success that we have moved our activities from our old Centre in George Street to the larger Brighton Buddhist Centre to accommodate the growing numbers of people attending our classes, and we are very pleased to welcome a new Order member, Punyavati, who has just moved to Brighton with her family, to help us with our classes.

During the coming year, much energy will be going into raising money, not only to run and expand our own activities, but also to provide funds for Lokamitra in India, Windhorse Publications, and the support of the Convenor of Mitras. All this will force us to stretch ourselves beyond the present boundaries. These projects help us remember that we are not just one Centre in isolation

(though legally and financially autonomous) but that we are also part of a larger whole.

As part of our fundraising efforts, Paul Simmonds, one of our Friends and a professional harpsichordist, will be giving several recitals of baroque music. This follows from a very successful solo recital which Paul gave in November last year at the Friends' Meeting House in Brighton, where we not only made a good profit but also had the pleasure of hearing a beautiful performance of music by Bach, Handel, Couperin, and others. Evenings like this provide a perfect complement to one's more day-to-day activities, and an effective addition to the more formal FWBO practices for developing positive emotions.

Making money is important and necessary, and we hope to make more this year than ever before, but it's also important that one doesn't in the process, become a machine. To counteract this danger we plan to have more 'cultural evenings', where people will have an opportunity to read or listen to poetry, to give talks, play music, and so on, besides social outings, retreats, and festivals. We're looking forward to 1979 very much.

## VAJRADHATU NORWICH

News from Mahamati

We are an effective presence in a city only in so far as we can make our presence felt: only if we can communicate our friendliness and awareness, our deeply-held aspirations and our positive direction in life. Looking back over this past year, I have to say that we have not been particularly successful in achieving this communication. Things are very good in the

Friends in Norwich, for when we feel the presence of the Friends, we feel the Dharma. But as a public Centre it is our function and our desire to give this contact with the Dharma to other people who will delight in it also. Over two hundred people have begun six-week meditation courses with us this year, perhaps fifty have completed their course, yet only a few of these people have gone on to further courses and to closer contact with us. We are happy that probably a significant number of course attendees are still meditating on a fairly regular basis and feeling much better for it; we can expect that some of them will return to discover what we have to offer, whether in the coming months or perhaps in a matter of years - but we do hope that in this coming year, if not during this past



year, we will meet people who will be immediately greatly stimulated and challenged by the ideas and practices of the Friends, and who will happily contribute to the vitality and quality of the Friends in Norwich.

Even now centre activities extend far beyond the four walls of Vajradhātu, increasing the effectiveness of our communication and expanding the horizons of all our Friends, and during 1979 we may hope to see an explosion of Dharma activity in Norwich. We are negotiating the purchase of a property in the centre of Norwich which would serve as a tremendously challenging work project for us over a number of years (it is, as is usual with any building that the FWBO is interested in, in appalling condition!). It would be a functionally excellent and aesthetically delightful place for a spacious and high-quality vegetarian restaurant, two shopfronts, a bigger and better Meditation Centre, and a community.

Even if we are unable to buy this building, there is no doubt that the available enthusiastic energy and commitment will find practical ways of expressing itself. For example, it took us only the three final months of this last year to raise £1,000 for the Tyn-y-ddol Meditation Centre in Wales, with sponsored walking, individuals contributing through working a month, and a Winter Vegetarian Feast in December which attracted over one hundred people, and at a very reasonable £2.50 a head ensured a successful evening for the gourmet and the fundraiser alike (some of us enjoyed it on both counts!).

If the building project goes ahead we will be raising money for that; otherwise there are a hundred and one other projects on the look-out for ready cash and we will see how much of this we can raise in Norwich. Two events that we have already planned for the new year are a flag day for Dharpo Rinpoche's school for Tibetan refugee children in Northern India on February 24th, and a Harpsichord Recital at the Assembly House in Norwich on March 17th.

## PADMALOKA NORFOLK

Report from Kulananda

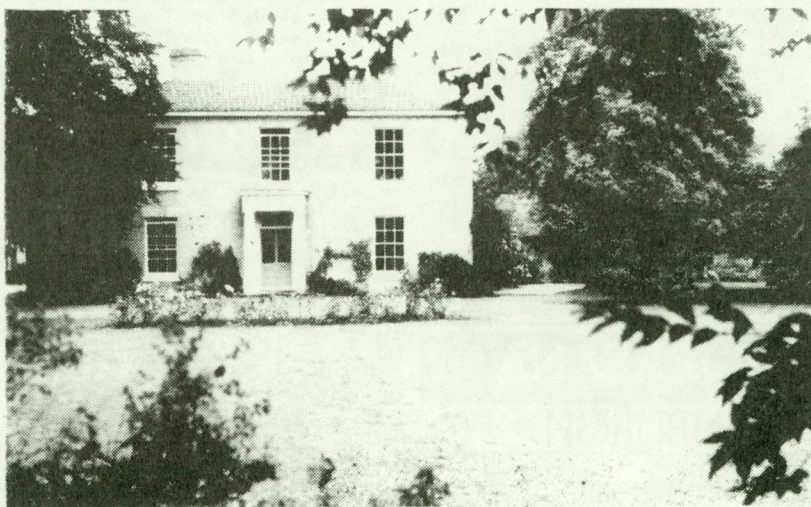
Since the last report Padmaloka has been the venue for three retreats. A seven-day retreat in October culminated in the ordination of Susiddhi and Suvajra; the three-week winter retreat provided a welcome alternative for some to the "round of TV, relatives and endless food", but perhaps the most noteworthy occasion

was the 'Men's Order and Mitra Weekend' in October which saw us playing host to about seventy mitras and Order members.

Each day of the weekend included three periods of meditation led by Bhante as well as two periods of study when we would break up into groups of about ten and study a chosen text under the guidance of an experienced Order member. One of the highlights of the weekend was the symposium each evening during which Devamitra, Mangala, Manjuvajra, Sagaramati, Luvah and Mahamati gave talks on different aspects of the creative mind. The quality of these talks set new standards within the Order and all

were evidence that their authors had not merely read about the Dharma - they all rang with the resonance of experience! The sheer size of the gathering seemed to generate an intensity of its own, and harnessed to the study, symposia, meditations and pujas this occasioned a steady increase in the level of positivity of those present. Such events will now be a regular part of the Padmaloka programme.

The Padmaloka Cooperative has been formed - its main business being Padmaloka Candles, whose enlarged workshop, new equipment and expanded product range should see us in a very favourable position for the year to come.



Padmaloka

## HERUKA GLASGOW

From Danavira

At the moment up here in Glasgow we're discovering the 'waiting game'. Factors wait, solicitors seem to slumber, and everything costs money, either waiting-time or moving. A while back we put in an offer for a city-centre place in world famous Sauchiehall Street. As our regular readers will be aware this particularly well-sited place has been in our orbit for over eighteen months. We offered to rent, they offered to sell. Sell?? How much? Ten thousand, they said. ... "Well, we'll offer eight." So that's the state of play, we hope to buy our city Centre. Cash, money, how do we get it? Apart from dana, we'll have to earn it.

Now we mean Business, or I should say, Businesses. The gardening busi-

ness is one which as the year goes on we hope to expand. We'll need a van, new tools, new men to learn gardening skills from our resident expert. We're going to do landscaping, to lay down concrete and put up walls, shift recalcitrant trees and eradicate fungi from nasty places - and more, much more, as the year goes on.

Further, we'll have to expand in the printing trade. Our screen-print business, (quote: "a powerful and effective propaganda machine") aim to flood the streets of Britain with inexpensive colour, capturing the public's eyes and hearts in the service of meditation, yoga, communication, secret cafes up side streets, etc. So here's another money earner. Watch the walls!

As for our prospective shop, the owners hang fire on us, saying nothing. It seems we cannot force their hand so we have to wait. Meanwhile the shop lies empty. Our hopes, however, are sinking.

And now, a new annual event: the



second Scottish Winter Retreat at Rowerdennan on Loch Lomond has recently taken place. If you like vast perspectives, the sense of immense space, perhaps a loch (lake) thirty-two miles long and a mere stone's throw from your centrally-heated bunk; if you're the kind of man who fancies scaling mountains, we have one, right out the back, it's three thousand feet high and growls - do you like "a wee bit o' danger" (because it can be dangerous) - then here's the place for you. Now perhaps your mouth's watering, and your toes damp at the thought of these hikes across lonely places. Now perhaps your fingers sting and sing for the chance to grasp some time-worn rock and through it make the climb?

It's all there: the house, the loch and the hills, the sky and the ever-moving clouds, the mountains standing like giants - wonderful surroundings for meditation, pushing you, dancing, to glimpses of transcendental dimensions.

So remember, book now, save up, break open your piggy-bank, because it only comes but once a year. Meanwhile, back at Heruka things continue; we're definite about eventual success, the waiting will pay off, more news next issue.

## VAJRASANA EDINBURGH

Report from Vairocana

Although Uttara has now left Edinburgh to sow new seeds in London at Ratnadvipa, here at 'Vajrasana', the Buddha's Diamond Throne, there is for the first time a functioning Sangha. Aryamitra, Guhyananda, Mitra Derek and I are working together as a team to put forth the Buddha's teaching in a manner understandable to the Edinburghers. Having recently moved here from Glasgow, I feel I'm only just emerging from a decompression chamber into the Edinburgh atmosphere. So far I still seem to be breathing and I hope the fumes don't get to me too quickly. Our last meditation course attracted few people probably owing to insufficient advertising, so twice the number of posters and newspaper ads. will be assaulting the unsuspecting public for our next course which will hopefully attract more. And we have Guhyananda, fresh from Sukhavati, backing myself and Aryamitra in running classes. The weather in Edinburgh now is extremely cold but we all look forward to warming things up with plenty of Metta Bhavana and positive emotion. Our activities will increase steadily over the next few months and I feel it's just a matter of time till we start to make an impression.

Ever-hardworking Derek is Vajrasana's main source of dana, his effort being unrelenting in this field of human endeavour, a true inspiration to us all. Aryamitra and I are working on a new fundraising project in the manufacture of Stonecrafts, which we hope to make a major means of Right Livelihood for Vajrasana.

Our main plan for the future will be the creation of a new Centre more centrally placed and naturally bigger than our present abode. I don't know if the Corporation will let us have the Castle or not, but if they don't I'm sure some other well-positioned building will do. We are all looking forward with anticipation, eagerness, and excitement; one of the most beautiful things about the future is that no one knows what it will bring. We have to create it ourselves.

## ARYATARA SURREY



By Simon Waite

This past year at Aryatara has been a partial opening of the bud to reveal the outermost petals of a dazzling flower. The vast amount of work in the renovation of two derelict buildings has released the energy to feed the plant, apex cells dividing end on end on end to thrust open the flower's petals.

A story comes to my mind of how Robert Louis Stevenson, when he was ill with pneumonia, one night had a vision which so obsessed him that he had to get up and write it down as the first draft of his book 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde'. Stevenson sent it to his publishers with a note saying that he considered it to be his greatest work. They however, returned his draft with a reply to say that on the contrary the book was his worst. But

Stevenson had enough faith in his vision to be undeterred by this rebuff and, flinging his original manuscript in the fire so that he could not copy from it, proceeded to re-write the whole book and re-submit it. It became, I think, his best-selling work.

Like Stevenson, we too had a vision which we remained in contact with throughout a year of trying to prise one derelict building out of the council's hands. Because we had faith and persevered we succeeded. This last year saw the actualising of that vision with the establishment of two businesses (Friends' Foods and The Secret Garden Cafe), the Rainbow Co-operative, and the founding of a women's community in Leatherhead.

With the solid base we have thus created we can go forward and fulfill the plans for completely renovating yet another derelict building: an ambitious scheme that just over a year ago we could not have coped with. However, this is just a lesser summit to be surmounted on the way to a higher peak - that of establishing a centre, on 'Sukhavati' lines, hopefully right in the middle of Old Croydon in the market place. This is not just a pipe-dream! The fact that we raised £200 for Dhardo Rimpoche in just two evenings - at a poetry evening for Friends on December 21st and at a ticket-only special Christmas meal in the cafe on the following night - shows that Croydon is ready for the Dharma to be planted in its heart; and the work involved in the new Croydon centre scheme will release energy in such a flood as to burst the flower into bloom.

## AMARAVATI WANSTEAD

From Anoma

If you're not extending yourself, you're probably stagnating. If you haven't got something to work towards - not just the ultimate goal of Enlightenment, but other smaller goals along the way - you're probably going to slide back. These things have been said before, I know, but recently I've been more painfully aware of them. At Amaravati, the women's community in Wanstead, we've been spending a year and a half doing up a decaying house, setting up an industrial co-operative with two businesses (Kusa Cushions and Spectrum Decorating), opening our doors for women's Mitra Days and retreats, etc. But these are outward manifestations of what's been going on inside. We've been discovering ourselves, extending ourselves, learning to be more



independent, particularly of men. We are six miles away from the nearest Centre, the LBC, and although some of us do go to classes there and appreciate the Centre, we are not directly involved with it. The community has evolved organically in its own way, according to the growth of its members. The personnel has changed quite a bit over the 18 months but I feel that something which started poking up its head in Balmore Street (where the founding members of this community used to live) has been growing and flourishing here in Wanstead. OK, there've been the occasional slow periods caused by attacks of cold, lethargy and so on, but nothing can stop this flower eventually blossoming. To enable this to happen and as a natural expression of the growth of the community, we want to get involved in a public Centre situation. This would mean moving to another part of London. I can't give any more details at present as these have still to be worked out. It's also not clear yet if everyone currently living here (13 of us) will be involved. It's possible that there will still be a community here in Wanstead as we will probably have this house for several more years. But the ball's started rolling in the direction of a Centre and details of where it's going and how will probably appear in the next Newsletter.

Marichi and I used to be involved with classes at Pundarika and Anjali at Brighton, but none of us has been directly involved with a Centre for some time. I've quite missed this aspect of spiritual life but before getting into a Centre-situation again, we needed to strengthen ourselves, become more independent, become ourselves in fact. Now I think we shall have no real problem. We have Order members and some strong Mitras who've had the opportunity of living and practising in a total situation, at least one yoga teacher and two businesses. What we're most short of is money. I'm writing this report the day after a community evening, during which there was quite a fierce discussion about money. I think we're all feeling a bit stirred up this morning, but it's necessary to be clear on our feelings on this subject, particularly as we are going to need to make more money than we have been doing if we are to get a Centre going. Our businesses do make money but improvements need to be made in our management, our pricing and efforts (more consistency, etc.) if we are going to succeed.

We have three new community members this month: Karola from London, Faith from Devon, and Rosie from Glasgow. It's the fullest it's ever been and in many ways, the most exciting. Perhaps it's seemed as though we've been quite quiet here over the past 18 months, but actually a great deal has

been going on and I think you'll be hearing a lot more of us in the months to come!

## GOLGONOOZA EAST LONDON

News from Siddhiratna

As the continuing saga of Golgonooza unfolds we see new developments in the shape of Nagabodhi moving in and a new alignment of Publications, Studio and Community taking place. With this new structure the whole edifice of 119 Roman Road begins to find that focus of energy



of which Rintrah spoke in the last newsletter.

Luvah has moved out to sunnier climes. He is visiting India for a few months, and judging by his correspondence is finding much of interest both culturally and gastronomically.

On the more Dharmic plane Golgonooza now has its own shrine-room, rather beautifully decorated by Devaraja, and with the most expensive puja bowls in the whole of the FWBO (hand-turned rosewood bowls with silver rings on the tops and bottoms). This new room has replaced the old television room.

Progress is made! The puja bowls are in fact for sale at £40 as we need money to replace the lead recently stolen from our roof.

*Luvah's leaving party*

## MANDALA WEST LONDON

Report from Kamalashila

We still need a new Centre, and are still without a shop. The few months since you last received the Newsletter have been rather frustrating ones for the Jewel Islanders, the inhabitants of Ratnadvipa, and from the point of view of expansion at least, little has changed around the West London Centre. The search, however, goes on, and currently we have our eyes on one or two possibilities.

In spite of our apparent bad luck, there has been some positive consolidation, especially among those members of the Order (all four of us now that Uttara has joined us from Scotland) concerned with classes at the Centre. After a good session in the Autumn with a successful Dharma course, we are working together well now as a team. We also decided recently, following the example of Sukhavati, to change the name of the Centre. Perhaps it wasn't very obvious from the previous name that we are Buddhists - rather than some other, probably Eastern, religious movement. So from now on it's the West London Buddhist Centre, for the time being at Telephone Place, SW6.

## NEW ZEALAND

News from Achala

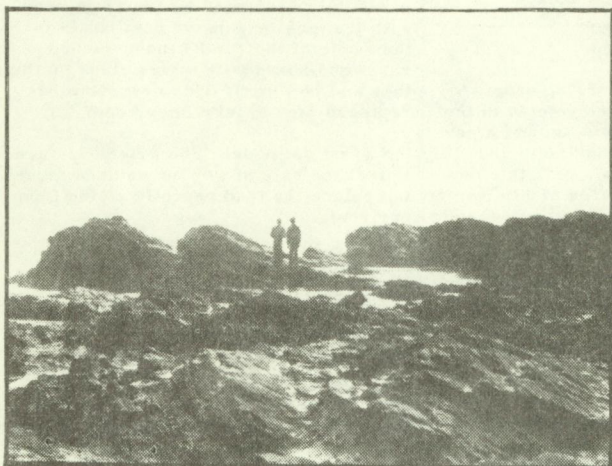
When I sit down to write about recent Wellington FWBO activities my first impression is of an action-packed three months, - by our standards at least. The recent retreat, Sangha Day celebrations, the two mitra ceremonies, the jumble sale and various other ventures such as cushion-making and producing Puja books come to mind. Some new types of activity have been introduced too, such as Order/Mitra days, and Chinese brush painting classes. The last three months have had their difficult moments, but really it has all been good fun.

Anyone who has visited the community in Tinakori Road will know that the shrine-room is a small one, adequate for the community itself, but not for the numbers now attending beginners' meditation classes and Puja evenings. Because of the low ceiling the atmosphere is prone to become stuffy. Walking-and-chanting often starts with a few heads bumping the ceiling before moving off into a short-stepped shuffle. Hence, we need to find larger premises for classes. So the next major change will be public meetings in a city centre as soon as suitable premises can be found.



# RETREATS

## Cornwall



*Round the ragged rocks*

Prussia Cove lies just east of Cudden Point, which juts out into Mounts Bay, the instep between Lands End and the Lizard, the toe and heel of Western Cornwall. It looks innocent enough now; deserted apart from one or two upturned boats, their paintwork blistered by the seasons, and the odd fisherman's hut; but not so long ago it formed the centre of activities of John Carter, one of Cornwall's most famous Fair-traders. Styled 'The King of Prussia', after the inn he kept there, he used the fish cellars deep in the cliffs below to store the 'blessings' as the contraband was known.

In a house set into the cliffs close by, the eight-day retreat was to be held. On Boxing Day afternoon as the light faded Nagabodhi, who was to lead the retreat, Ratnavira the organizer, and myself the yoga teacher and driver, eventually found and started to explore the building. It seemed more the setting for a Gothic romance than a retreat. The corridors were lined with heavy wooden panelling and ancient prints; the wooden staircase groaned, and each door promised some wonder within: four-poster beds, elaborately embossed and upholstered chairs, huge open fireplaces with the wind howling down the flues, stone casements that gave view onto the sea that thundered on the rocks not thirty yards below.

The following day, after a required visit to Lands End, we cleared out one of the rooms, set up a shrine, bought some vegetables, dealt with sleeping arrangements and the retreat was ready to go.

For the first few days people gradually adapted to being in the new situation, being on retreat with its particular pace and programme. There was a loosening up, as people began to be happy to be just themselves whether alone or with others. During the afternoons the cliff paths and coves surrounding us were keenly explored and we

became aware of the rise and fall of the tide and of the never-ceasing and ever fascinating movements of the sea.

Quite soon we imperceptibly moved into that period on a retreat when you feel almost out of time. Each day seems endless and yet passes in an instant. With the same programme there is little outwardly to distinguish one day from the next, yet it is just this that allows one to become so much more aware of inner life and its constant modulations.

This period coincided with a heavy fall of snow which isolated us from the outside world for three days. Food supplies were low. The water was cut off and we survived on that remaining in a tank in the loft. Instead of working against the retreat the conditions intensified it. We lived in a world of almost archetypal brightness and clarity. The wind had fallen, the snow lay thick on the clifftops, and the sun shone out of a clear blue sky onto a quiet and gleaming sea. The snow sparkled and shone in the sunlight and with it came that characteristic hush and quiet that snow brings to the land, where one's own footfall and breath strangely disturb an otherwise silent world. Inside we sat around a log fire with the sun streaming through the windows to give a double warmth.

Two days before the end of the retreat the sky covered and the wind returned, redoubled in strength, tearing at the windows and doors. The shrine-room at the top of the house seemed at one moment a quiet haven amidst a turbulent world, at the next a vulnerable and precarious ledge from which one could be torn and hurled into the abyss. Blizzards were forecast and thoughts turned outwards, many hoping for another snowfall and enforced continuation of our stay. As it was, on the last morning the wind dropped and the sun shone on our departure.

It is difficult to say very much about how good or bad a retreat has been and what it has done for people who come from many different situations with different levels of experience and involvement in meditation and Buddhism. It was a fairly small retreat, averaging at about 15 people each day, with not that much coming and going; not enough to disturb the momentum of the retreat as a whole. The general feeling of the retreat was one of warmth and friendliness with an air of lightness and joy rather than weighty introspective intensity. The physical surroundings exerted such a strong presence that simply the change in environment for many had a powerful, refreshing effect. At the same time there was some solid meditation and a strong feeling was built up in the shrine-room over the eight days. I felt that many used the sense of emotional ease and mental clarity engendered by the situation to examine their own habitual patterns of living, to do some assessing and reassessing, and perhaps reach some decisions about their future direction. For myself, as is so often the case I didn't realize what a strong retreat it had been until after I had left.

**Anandajyoti**



## The FWBO in Berlin

Somewhere over Holland on November 23rd 1978, sitting in glorious sunshine looking down at the clouds, I ate my first aeroplane lunch. Soon after this historic event the previously smooth flight was slightly ruffled as the plane descended through the clouds to reveal a patchwork of small gardens, each sporting a small cabin. These cabins provide retreat from the towers and five-storey blocks where most citizens live, and it is these features that first strike the visitor as he comes into Berlin's Tegel Airport.

This trip was to attend an international conference on "Models of Society in the Future and the Consequences for Education" organised by the Society for Future Studies and the Technical University of Berlin. I was going to read a paper, "A Blueprint for the New Society — A Buddhist view" and Upasika Jinamata, who lives in Berlin, was going to read a paper on "The evolution of the Individual".

Jinamata met me at the airport and guided me through the city, pointing out the U-Bahn, (the part of West Berlin's transport system run by the East), the Charlottenburg and the canals. She guided me past the distractions of

the cake-shops of the Kurfurstendamm and the more serious distractions of the Potsdamerstrasse, to the flat which she shares with her daughter and which was to be my home for the next ten days.

The conference started the next day and dealt mainly with theories of how society should or could develop, and what has and is being done to implement these theories. I read my paper on the second day in a section devoted to the response to the challenge of the future by religious groups. The approach of the FWBO, its communities, its co-operatives and its centres, which I presented with the aid of some slides taken by Roger Jones, was well received. Marxists, socialists, anarchists, Jews and Christians all seemed to find within the practical application of the Buddha's teaching something that they could relate to and appreciate if only from the academic point of view. On the third day we heard about alternative technologies and small scale agriculture in the United States, and then turned to education. Jinamata presented her paper in which she stressed that not only was it necessary to have good ideas for the future but that it was centrally important that the individual should be given the opportunity and actively encouraged to develop the positive emotions, especially metta. She explained the importance of meditation in the practical fulfilment of this aim and inspired a number of people to ask for an evening meditation session, which was duly arranged and attended by about 20 people.

The last day of the conference was devoted to general themes, a discussion and summing-up.

My overall impression was one of confusion. Many people seemed to be lacking a positive direction, an ideal to which they were committed, and those who claimed to hold a philosophy seemed unable to act upon it. I realized how rare and valuable the FWBO is, how much there is that we have to offer, and how fortunate I am to be in contact with the Movement.

The week following the conference I spent sight-seeing on both sides of the Wall. One evening I gave a short talk at Jinamata's weekly meditation class which she holds in a small flat near the centre of the city.

It can only be a matter of time before a full-scale FWBO Centre, is established to follow Jinamata's pioneering work. Berlin is the cultural centre of the German-speaking people, its people are lively and serious, its political position is unique and stimulates an awareness of the directions in which society can develop, and it boasts a greater proportion of forests and lakes than any other city. Perhaps one day we will hear an announcement of a Birth in Berlin.

**Manjuvajra**



*Upasika Jinmata with Berliners*



# Meeting the Press

"You've got the Maharishi's mob buying Mentmore Hall, a mass-suicide in Jonestown — fringe religions are just *bad news* at the moment." Thus did one reporter sum up the country's ongoing current media situation during opening week at the LBC. Nevertheless, an important aspect of the event was the hitherto unprecedented amount of media coverage that was given to the FWBO. There was a full-page article in the London *Evening Standard*, another in the *Daily Express*, photos in the *Guardian*, and several short pieces in other papers, several features, including interviews, on BBC Radio, a mention on Thames TV's *Thames at Six* programme, and an eight-minute film on BBC TV's *Nationwide*.

No doubt some reporters came with their pre-

conceptions: SCANDAL OF TOWN HALL & THE HIPPIES sort of thing, but it was encouraging to see how quickly and genuinely they all seemed to grasp that the FWBO was no irrelevant piece of exotica, and that what was going on at Sukhavati represented an uncommonly well thought-out, viable alternative way of life.

It is likely that by the end of the week nobody, in the South of England at least, could have missed hearing about the FWBO, and the success of our first real encounter with the mass-media bodes well for the future.

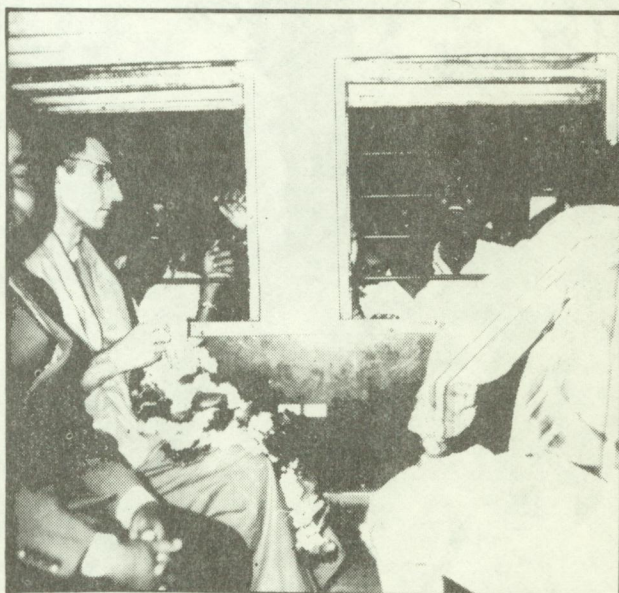
Our next major step in the direction of mass-exposure will be, of course, our presence at the 1979 *Festival for Mind, Body, and Spirit*.

## The Ven. Sangharakshita's Travels

By the time you read this Newsletter, the Ven. Sangharakshita will be back in the East for the first time in more than ten years. He left a bleak sleety London in the middle of February, bound for Bombay and Pune, with Priyananda who is returning to Auckland after being here since his ordination last April. They expect to spend a good two weeks in Pune, and Bhante will be meeting old friends, giving lectures, conducting ceremonies, visiting the Buddhists there. He was last in Pune during the winter of 1966-7. Then they will fly from Bombay to Penang for a brief visit to the Malaysian Buddhist Association there, and on to Sydney to stay with old friends from the Ven. Sangharakshita's days in Singapore - meeting them again for the first time in 30 years! While in Sydney they will also meet members of the Buddhist Society of New South Wales, at the invitation of Mr Malcolm Pearce. Then on to Auckland and a couple of months in New Zealand. During his time in New Zealand, Bhante will be visiting all three Centres (Auckland, Christchurch, and Wellington), taking study retreats, giving public lectures; there may be some ordinations too. As the New Zealand winter approaches, Bhante will follow the sun back to the northern hemisphere, first making a second visit to India, this time stopping in Delhi and with the Gujarat Buddhists in Ahmedabad, as well as visiting Pune again for a week or two.

During the time the Ven. Sangharakshita is abroad, various members of the Order will also be travelling in India - Virabhadra has been working in a hospital

in Delhi as part of his medical studies, Luvah is also already in India; Marichi will be in India for three months from the beginning of March, and Padmapani and Yuvaraj left for India a few days after Bhante for an extended visit. They all hope to spend some time with Lokamitra and the Buddhists in Pune and Ahmedabad.



*The Venerable Sangharakshita back in the '70s*



# Co-operatives

On Sunday the 4th of February this year the first day seminar of those people working in business within the orbit of the FWBO took place at the annexe of the London Buddhist Centre. It was perhaps not so historic and grand an occasion as the opening of Sukhavati but its significance should not be overlooked. Few of the seven co-operatives and two companies represented by the thirty or so people present existed a year ago but already a wealth of experience has gathered in this tough and demanding area of our activities. As Keats said 'Nothing becomes real until it is experienced.'

The intention in calling this meeting was to allow us to exchange ideas, and discuss the difficulties of working co-operatively in the light of our personal experience of Right-Livelihood in the FWBO. In order to do this effectively we started with a brief report from each co-op or company explaining how they operate, what business activities they engage in, and why; after this we split up into three discussion groups to study our subjects more deeply.

One group circled around the topic of 'internal communication', that is to say the relationship among the members of a co-op, and the relationship of that co-op to its local FWBO centre and the communities in which its members live. They talked about the effect on work of differing degrees of commitment in a co-op, and they discussed the practise of giving what you can to your work in return for monetary support of your simple lifestyle, opposing this to the concept of wage slavery.

In a co-operative, the amount of responsibility one assumes, the level of one's

commitment, determines one's position within the business structure. However, the assumption of a managerial position should not bring with it a 'bossy' attitude — one should at all times treat people as individuals, rather than as representatives of the jobs they happen to do. Some people may need to be told what to do, but this should be done in a spirit of co-operation and helpfulness.

It is above all necessary to retain a vision of Right Livelihood, especially when the work itself becomes hard, or monotonous.

Another group of hard-headed treasurers and accountants was led by Prakasha through the complexities of loans, grants, tax and VAT as well as basic accounting. They explored the harsh realities of making money in a free market economy as well as the problem of how to keep it in a bureaucratic welfare state.

The third of these working parties looked at the possibilities of 'external communication', with each other, with other non-FWBO co-ops, and with society at large. We can share our experience of Buddhism in a practical and secular way with our work contacts by participating in the Industrial Common Ownership Movement,

by personal contact with the members of other co-ops, and by good communication with our customers and business acquaintances.

The working situation can be used as a means of inspiring people to grow and develop as individuals, without necessarily using traditional Buddhist terminology. The co-operatives represent our economic, social, and political impact on society at large. By our very presence, and by our action in the business world, we can bring about beneficial change in these spheres.

For this reason it is important that we clarify our own definitions of politics, profit, work-sharing, etc. We need to establish a well-thought-out and coherent position on these issues, so that our external communication can be confident, thorough, and effective.

When we met again for a brief final session together it was obvious that the occasion had been much appreciated by those who attended, and I hope that the lessons learnt in discussion will be applied at the roots of our work. We will meet again when there's more to discuss. Perhaps I'll see you then.

**Kulamitra**

## FRIENDS OF THE WESTERN BUDDHIST ORDER CO-OPERATIVES

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*Friends Rainbow Restaurants (Norwich) Ltd.* 16 Dove Street, Norwich

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## Publications

As you will have already seen, we have recently issued Bhante's Buddhism and Blasphemy. This is selling so well in fact that we have already had to print a second batch, so there are plenty of copies if you don't yet have one.

It is now some months since we produced Aspects of Buddhist Morality, another booklet by Bhante, an off-print in fact of an essay he wrote for a Catholic magazine, published in Rome, entitled Studia Missionalia. The booklet provides a very straightforward and helpful introduction to the Buddhist approach to ethics.

Peace is a Fire is the challenging title to a new collection of Bhante's poems, sayings and reflections. You may remember the first little collection, published some 3½ years ago. The present one runs to 128 pages of pictures, poems and a galaxy of formidable quotes. Production is well under way, and the book should be on sale in the Spring.

An exciting piece of news is the fact that we are working with Shambhala

Publications Inc, the American firm, on a new edition of Bhante's A Survey of Buddhism. The new edition, complete with a new introduction, revised bibliography and index, will be available in the Autumn.

The community at Golgonooza is in the process of defining itself around the Windhorse Publications and Design projects. A co-operative is being formed, and space in the community is reserved for people who want to work at these activities. This move will do something to give our publishing division the physical and financial roots that it has so far lacked, but in order to function really well, to be able to make still more books and booklets available, we still need a great deal of money. As well as Peace is a Fire, and A Survey of Buddhism, we are currently planning an omnibus edition of Mitrata, a new and completely revised Puja book, and a small book based on the three lectures that Bhante gave in New Zealand, which would comprise an excellent introductory booklet on the

Three Jewels. Publishing is a very expensive business. The only thing that holds us back is the shortage of funds, so if you can help at all, please don't hesitate!

If, by the way, you are interested in working within an FWBO co-op, you may be interested in the idea of helping us set up a type-setting business. Before we can think of buying the kind of equipment that we would like, we really need to be sure that there are people who would be interested in learning to operate it. So if you can see yourself getting into something like that, get in touch with me at Golgonooza.

Nagabodhi

There is, of course, another way in which you can help out, and that is by taking out a subscription to this Newsletter, or by ensuring that you keep up to date with your payments if you do already subscribe. One year's subscription costs £2.00 if you live in the UK, and £2.50 if you live overseas.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### RETREAT DATES

Women's retreat at Mandarava:  
7 - 17th May. Bookings accepted only for full length of retreat.  
Cost £3.00 per day. Contact the Retreat Organiser, Amaravati.

Mens Mitra Event: 6 - 17th April.  
At Vine Hall, Nr Battle, Sussex.  
Cost £40.00. Contact Sona at Padmaloka.

Contact your nearest centre for details of regular weekend retreat events.

### Dharmachakra Tapes

Ven. Sangharakshita's lectures are available on cassette at £1.95 per lecture. P and P 120, for the first lecture, and 60 for each subsequent one (for annual prices please apply). For more extended catalogue send 100 plus postage to:

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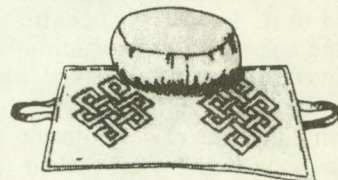
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## About the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

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. 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.

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order is the legal body and organisational matrix, through which Order Members work. Order Members wish to create conditions whereby others can come into direct contact with the teachings of the Buddha in a practical, dynamic and living way. In our public centres and Branches we hold classes and courses in meditation and basic Buddhist teachings, yoga classes, lectures, seminars, courses in communication and retreats. We publish a quarterly newsletter and celebrate all the major Buddhist festivals. We are aware how difficult it is to develop spiritually in unco-operative surroundings and are therefore creating situations where people can live, work and practise together. We run two wholefood restaurants and a wholefood business, have our own printing press, publications department and design studio and many other businesses. Each centre and community aims to be as self sufficient as possible and new businesses and ventures are springing into life continually. In the main each centre and community is autonomous and has its own flavour through the ideal underlying all is the same. Thus we try to provide both unity and diversity and many different situations so that all those who come into contact with us can find a channel into which they can direct their energy.

The Friends is not an organisation, society or club and has no formal membership. Anyone who comes along, or who is in contact in any way, is a Friend.



## 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, Norfolk Tel: 050 88 310

### CENTRES AND BRANCHES

#### U.K.

<i>London Buddhist Centre</i> 51 Roman Road Bethnal Green London E2 Tel: 01-981 1225	<i>Aryatara</i> 3 Plough Lane Purley, Surrey Tel: 01-660 2542	<i>Heruka</i> 13 Kelvinside Terrace South Glasgow G.20 Tel: 041-946 2035	<i>Vajradhatu</i> 41a All Saints Green Norwich, Norfolk Tel: 0603 27034	<i>Vajrasana</i> 12 Bruntsfield Gardens Edinburgh Scotland Tel: 031-229 7940
<i>Amitayus</i> 15 Park Crescent Place Brighton, Sussex Tel: 0273 698 420	<i>Grdhrakuta</i> 9 Aylcliffe Grove Longsight Manchester Tel: 061-225 3372	<i>Mandala</i> 86d Telephone Place Fulham London SW6 Tel: 01-960 3515		

#### OVERSEAS

<i>FWBO Helsinki</i> Albertinkatu 21c12 00120 Helsinki 12 Finland Tel: Helsinki 669 820	<i>FWBO Auckland</i> P.O.Box 68-453 Newton Auckland Auckland New Zealand Tel: 768 360	<i>FWBO Christchurch</i> P.O.Box 22-657 Christchurch New Zealand Tel: 795 728	<i>FWBO Wellington</i> P.O.Box 12311 Wellington North New Zealand Tel: 725 493
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#### COMMUNITIES (Visitors by arrangement only)

<i>Amaravati</i> 30 Cambridge Park Wanstead London E11 2PR Tel: 01-989 5083	<i>Beulah</i> 95 Bishops Way Bethnal Green London E2 <i>Golgonboza</i> 119 Roman Road London E2 0HU Tel: 01-980 2507	<i>Grdhrakuta</i> 9 Aylcliffe Grove Longsight Manchester Tel: 061-225 3372	<i>Padmaloka</i> Lesingham House Surlingham Norwich, Norfolk Tel: 050 88 310	<i>Vajrakula</i> 41b All Saints Green Norwich, Norfolk Tel: 0603 27034 <i>Vajrasana</i> 12 Bruntsfield Gardens Edinburgh Tel: 031-229 7940 <i>Ratnaloka</i> 91 Carlton Road Christchurch 1 New Zealand 238 Tinakori Road Wellington 1 New Zealand <i>Suvarnaketu</i> 46 Sarsfield Street Herne Bay Auckland, N.Z.
<i>Amitayus</i> 15 Park Crescent Place Brighton, Sussex Tel: 0273 698 420	<i>Khadiravani</i> Greengates Oxshott Road Leatherhead Surrey. Tel: L'head 77526	<i>Heruka</i> 13 Kelvinside Terrace South Glasgow G.20 Tel: 041-946 2035	<i>Ratnadvipa</i> 22 Macroom Road West Kilburn London W9 Tel: 01-960 3515	
<i>Aryatara</i> 3 Plough Lane Purley, Surrey Tel: 01-660 2542	<i>Kalpadruma</i> 3 St Michael's Road Croydon, Surrey Tel: 01-688 2899	<i>Mandarava</i> Street Farm Aslacton Norwich, Norfolk Tel: 037-977 344	<i>Sukhavati</i> 51 Roman Road Bethnal Green London E2 Tel: 01-981 1225	

#### REPRESENTATIVES

<i>Upasika Jinamata</i> Gleditschstr. 44 1000 Berlin 30 Germany	<i>Upasika Aryavamsa</i> Elleholmesvagen 11 5-35243 Vaxjo Sweden	<i>Upasika Vajrayogini</i> Ringdijk 90 Postgiro 16 2586 Rotterdam Netherlands	<i>Upasika Lokamitra</i> c/o Mr Maheshkar 2050 Sk. Jan Mohammed Street Camp Pune 411001 India
<i>Upasika Kamalashila</i> c/o Sandy Ewing 28 Three Sisters Lane Prestbury Cheltenham, Glos. Tel: 0242 38653	<i>Upasika Manjuvajra</i> c/o 2 Valley View Trescowe, Germoe, Penzance Cornwall		



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