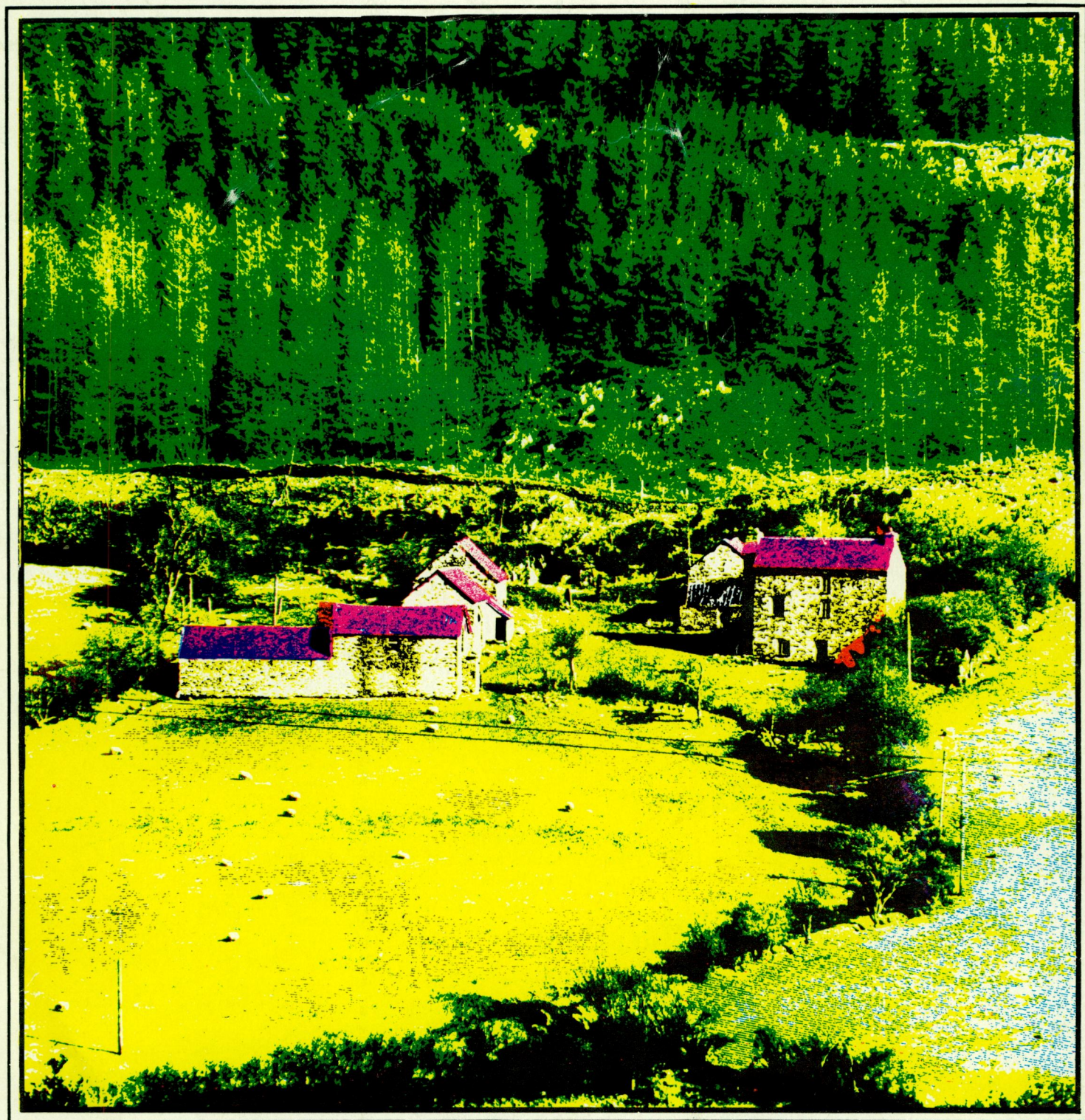


FWBO NEWSLETTER 42



HEAD FOR THE HILLS

**In this issue we look at Tyn-y-ddol,
our new meditation centre.**

Weekly Programmes

London Buddhist Centre

Monday	7.00pm	Dharma or meditation Course Yoga courses (at annexe)
Tuesday	7.00pm	Friend's Night: Meditation, study, talks, puja
Wednesday	7.00pm	Open Night: Beginner's meditation, Yoga, communication exercises, talk, discussion
Thursday	7.00pm	Taped lecture and discussion
Friday	6.00 and 7.30	Hatha Yoga (at the annexe)
Sunday	2.00pm	Beginner's meditation
(Many other courses and events - send for full programme)		

Mandala (West London)

Tuesday	6.00 pm	Hatha Yoga
Wednesday	7.00 pm	Beginners' meditation class
Thursday	7.00 pm	Meditation evening with puja

Brighton Buddhist Centre

Monday	7.15 pm	Introductory evening with meditation instruction
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 (Surrey)

Monday	6.00 pm & 7.45 pm	Hatha Yoga
Tuesday	7.30pm	Meditation and puja
Wednesday	7.30pm	Beginner's meditation class
Thursday	6.00 and 7.45pm	Hatha Yoga

Heruka (Glasgow)

Tuesday	7.30pm	Beginner's meditation
Wednesday	7.30pm	Friend's regular meditation and Dharma study
Thursday	7.00pm	Taped lecture

Norwich Buddhist Centre

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

Tuesday	7.00pm	Dharma course
Wednesday	7.00pm	Regular meditation and puja

EDITORIAL

As you can see, the Newsletter has grown. The acquisition of a bigger printing machine down the road at Windhorse Press now makes it possible for the Newsletter to enter the 'big league' – something we have been working towards for a long time now. You will also notice that we are introducing a new 'Facets' section to our content. As the FWBO grows bigger, and becomes increasingly active in diverse ways, it is beginning to make what can only be termed as 'news'. Certainly the amount of coverage given to our activities by the outside media reflects this fact, and it seems only right that we should recognise it ourselves.

With our activities happening in places as far apart, geographically and culturally as Glasgow, Pune and Auckland for example, keeping in touch with important and significant events as they happen, calls for a more conscious treatment of news. Hopefully the Facets section will grow into a suitable catalyst for this. The word Facets, which suggests the flashes of light that shine out from the many faces of a single jewel may also suggest to someone a new 'jewel-like' title for the Newsletter. Any suggestions?

Despite the improvements that we have been making, fairly constantly to the content and appearance of the Newsletter, and despite all our best efforts, we still seem to suffer from a disheartening surfeit of little slips. I refer to the spelling mistakes, broken letters, missing words, etc, that manage to get through to the printing press. There was one magnificent example in the last issue, in which a photograph which showed a scene of sawdust and empty desolation was captioned, 'the main shrine-room'. Half the caption, which read, 'with only two weeks to go', had fallen off the art-work. No doubt some people reacted with only mild confusion, but others, I suspect, felt that, whether the caption was right or wrong, they had had enough, anyway of seeing FWBO building sites. Well I'm sorry to say that you are in for more this time. The 'site' in question is a small Welsh farm-settlement that we are turning into a purpose built meditation centre, and in this issue we shall be looking at the project itself, and at some of the implications of such a centre.

Nobody who reads the Newsletter can have failed to notice the importance we attach to work and Right Livelihood as aspects of the spiritual life. We are certainly at a stage, as a Movement, at which the creation of an economic foundation, from which we can act with strength and integrity, is of very great importance, and we are, as individuals, ever in need of opportunities for developing and directing vigour, but this is not to say that we do not recognise the value of balance. It is possible to see all the activities of the FWBO in terms of the five Spiritual Faculties. Through puja and chanting we develop Faith, through study we develop wisdom, through our work we develop vigour and mindfulness, and through meditation we develop concentration and meditative absorption. Of course these correspondences are not absolute, but it is true that if we wish to perfect all of these faculties, and thus to find a balance on ever higher levels, then we need increasingly ideal conditions and facilities.

Work on the new centre is being supported by dana from individuals and centres throughout the Movement, and thus represents a united effort to create the best possible conditions for meditation practice. Meditation is certainly nothing new to us; to be a Friend means, if nothing else, that you give it a central place in your life, but the new facilities will give us the chance to go even deeper into it. And at a time when the Movement is expanding on all fronts, the energy, clarity, and inspiration that we gain from our meditation is more important than ever.

NAGABODHI

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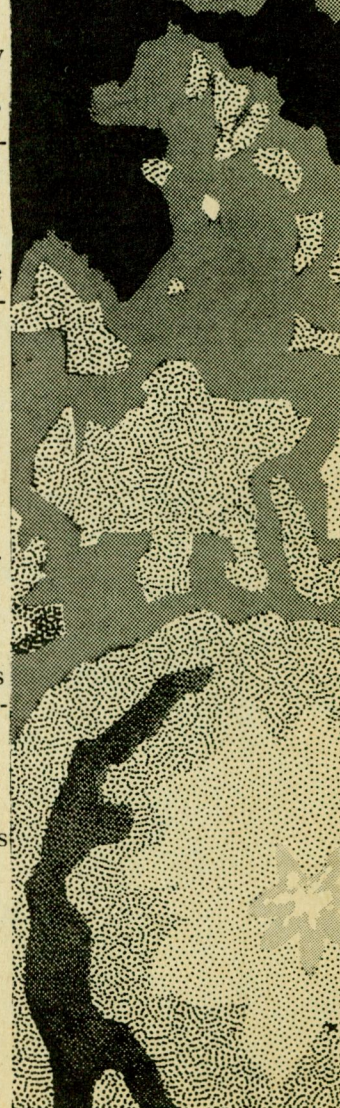
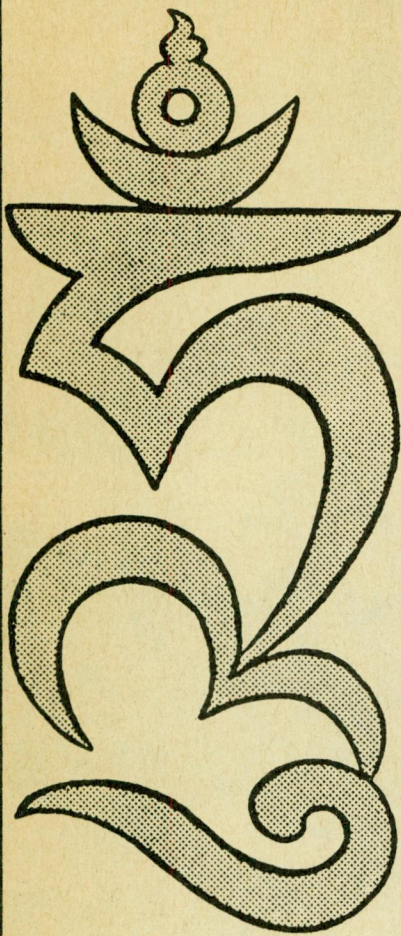
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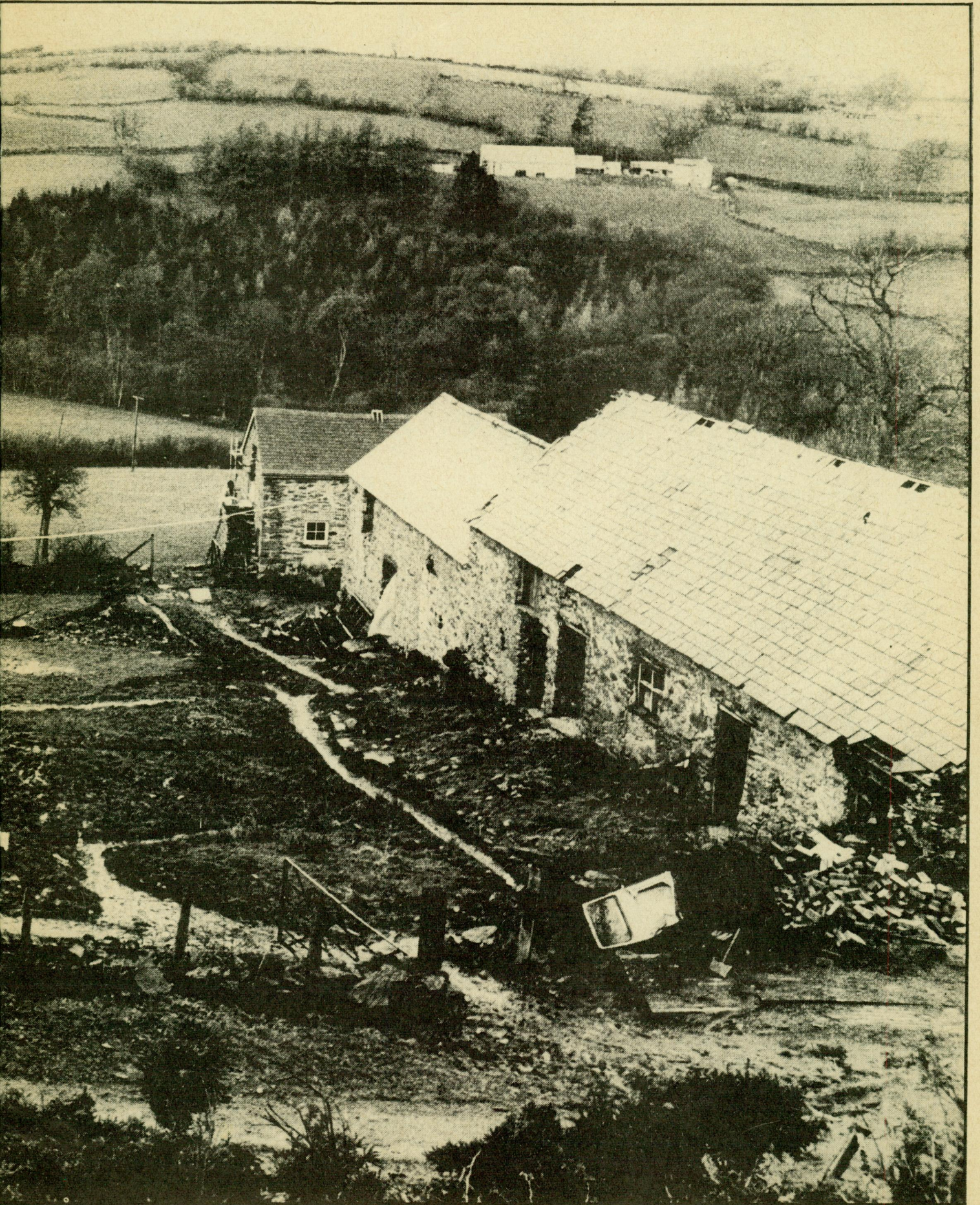
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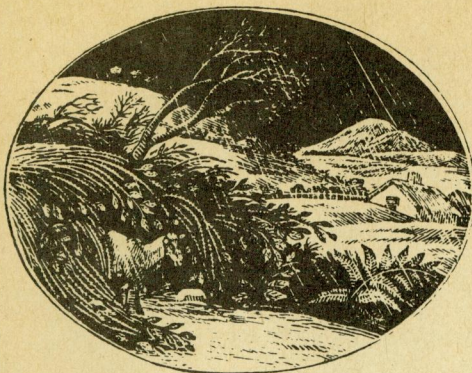


Tyn-y-Ddol



Tyn-y-ddol (pronounced: Tin-a-thol) is a small cluster of stone and slate farm buildings right on the edge of a North Welsh valley. This is where a small team of workers is creating the first FWBO centre able to offer ideal conditions for intensive meditation practice. Here, Prakasha, who bought the site, gives us an introduction to its charms.





It was during a heavy thunderstorm in April 1977 that I first arrived at the house called Tyn-y-ddol. I had spent a fortnight combing Snowdonia on my motor bike for a property to purchase that would be suitable for solitary retreats. However I had been unsuccessful in discovering a house that met my requirements for the capital that was available. Instead of riding back to London through the driving rain I decided to seek shelter in an empty house I had heard of, and consequently turned off from the main A5 road through North Wales and made my way upwards along the narrow winding track towards Tyn-y-ddol.

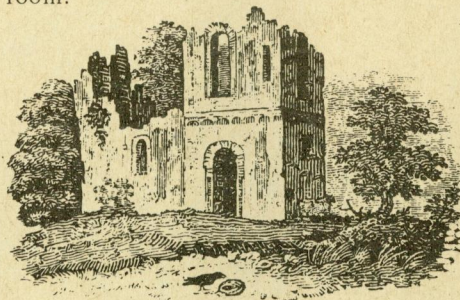
Dusk was falling fast as I drove by the small, scattered farm cottages and past the stone-walled fields sloping steeply downwards to the turbulent river flowing at the valley's foot. The high hills around me were shrouded darkly and mysteriously in gloomy mist, and gusts of windy rain blew strongly as I huddled over the handlebars peering into the dim distance. Tyn-y-ddol lay nestling beneath a steep and rocky crag, forested thickly with tall pine trees, at the end of a narrow disused wooden track. Eventually I arrived at the house, thrust open the wooden front door, threw down my sleeping bag on to the cold stone slab floor, and took grateful refuge from the wild storm that raged all night around me.

I awoke to find the storm gone and the early morning sunlight beaming in through the open windows of the farm house, dancing in the cobweb corners, beckoning me to explore the farm. Above the house Craig Arthbry rose steeply, swathed in pine forest, towards the open blue sky whilst, below, the fields sloped down to the Afon Alwen flowing swiftly through the intimate Alwen valley, a patchwork of small green fields, scattered houses, and woods of oak and pine, towards the river Dee. On the further side of the valley a narrow metalled road wound its way towards the nearest hamlet, Bettws, whilst on the near side of the valley no sound disturbed the stillness of the early morning as I wandered round the buildings and watched the sunlight sparkling on the grassy dew drops.

Tyn-y-ddol is a quadrangle of traditional Welsh farm buildings built of local stone and slate and set in three quarters of an acre of land. There is a three bed-roomed farmhouse, still equipped with an early Victorian wrought-iron range in the kitchen, oak beams, open fireplaces, and a large stone baking oven in the vaulted basement. The house has had mains elec-

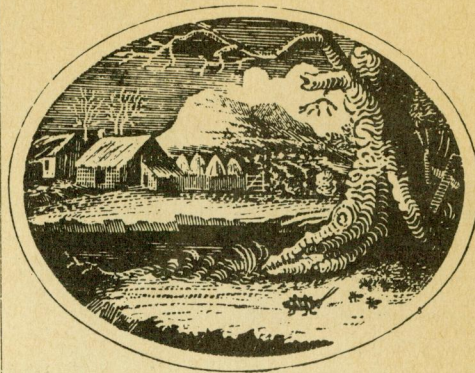
tricity but no modern sanitation, whilst water for the house is obtained from three springs close by. No doubt when these failed during the occasional parched summer, water would be brought laboriously from the nearby stream that flows into the Afon Alwen down the slopes of Craig Arthbry. There are also a number of large stone outbuildings and barns which were used both for animals and for the storage of hay when the farm was in use.

The house has been disused for nearly twenty years and is in a derelict condition. Some of the barn roofs are open to the sky, whilst windows and doors have fallen in, leaving the buildings open to the elements. Grass grows on the roof beams and an owl has taken up residence in the barn. Woodworm have been gnawing away quietly undisturbed over the years whilst sheep wander through the garden. Nevertheless even though the difficulties of restoration would be enormous I realised that here at last was a place that seemed to fulfil the criteria for a meditation centre. It was both accessible yet isolated, convenient yet remote. I felt a strong sense of both solitude and solidarity that morning amidst the rugged, wild yet beautiful and tranquil surroundings. There was an air of peacefulness, of silence and stillness, yet of vibrancy pervading the area, and I felt attracted by the simplicity and the austerity of the farm buildings and by the way of life I envisaged could be led there: a life based on meditation and study, in harmony with the surroundings. Yes! We will build a large stone stupa right there in the quadrangled courtyard to chant and circumambulate around, and convert the lower barn overlooking the river into a shrine-room!



The house had lain empty for so long because the previous owner had failed to pay his mortgage repayments and had left the country leaving the house empty and disused. As a result there were initial difficulties in deciding who exactly the owner of the property was, and protracted negotiations took place over the year, which eventually led to the house being purchased for £6250 – almost exactly a year after my initial visit. During the year it was realised that the buildings had a greater potential than that of a solitary retreat centre and could in fact be used for both a permanent resident community of meditators and for occasional retreats of up to ten people if all the outbuildings could be brought back into use and converted.

Planning permission was applied for to turn the farm into a retreat centre and plans were drawn up and presented. An appeal was launched within the movement for £10,000 to be raised jointly by the various FWBO centres around the world. Meanwhile, during the course of the summer, Tyn-y-ddol was used extensively for solitary retreats by a number of Friends within the movement and preparatory



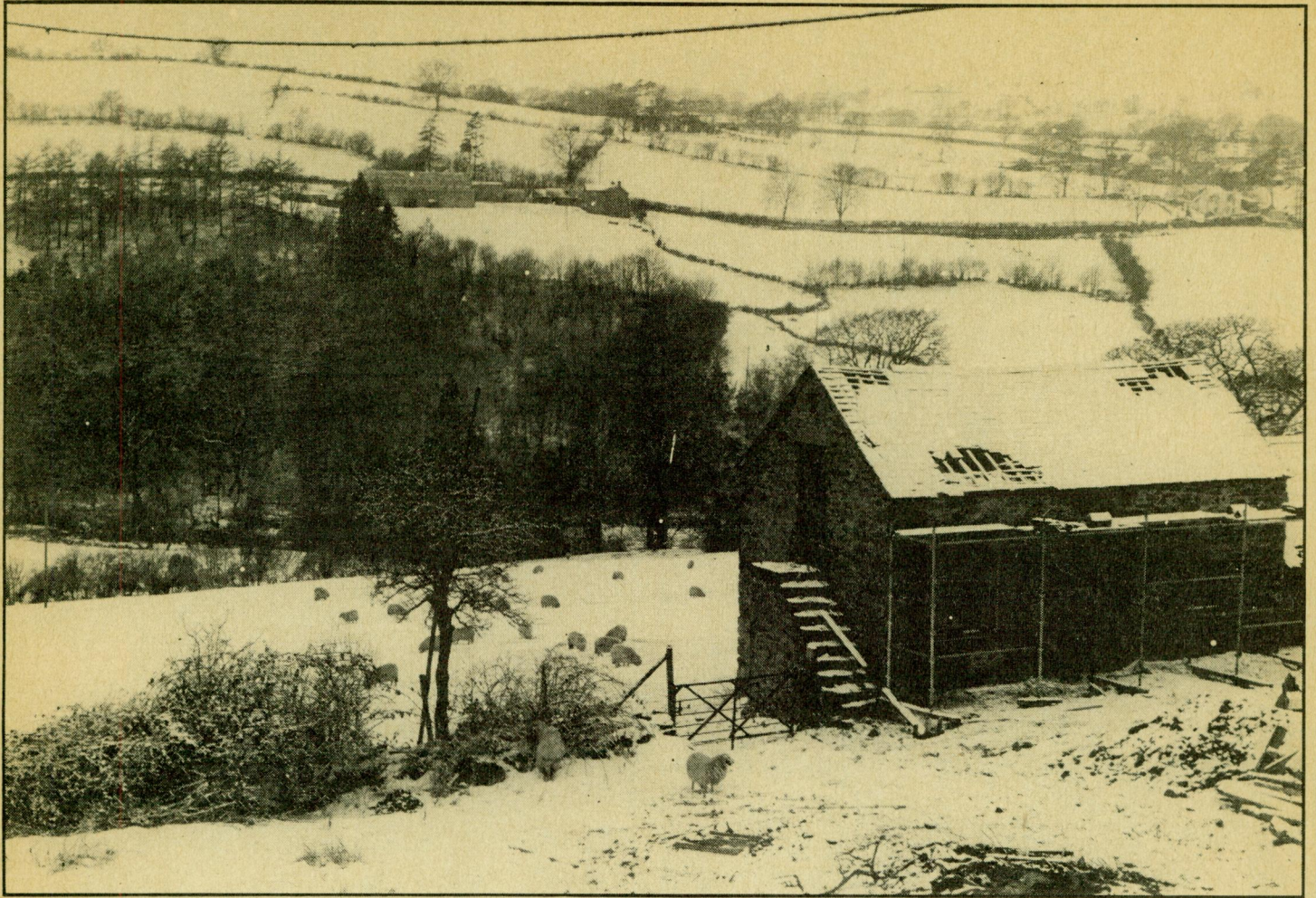
work on the main house was started. The slate roof was fixed, windows were glazed and painted, and the place was rendered habitable for those content with very basic requirements.

Besides visiting Tyn-y-ddol for a number of long weekends during the year, I also spent a two-week period on solitary at Tyn-y-ddol immediately after my ordination that summer at Padmaloka. A retreat alone provides an opportunity for both intensive meditation practice and study, whilst the aspect of complete solitude and silence provides a context of heightened self-awareness so that a deeper experience of meditation and insight may be attained.

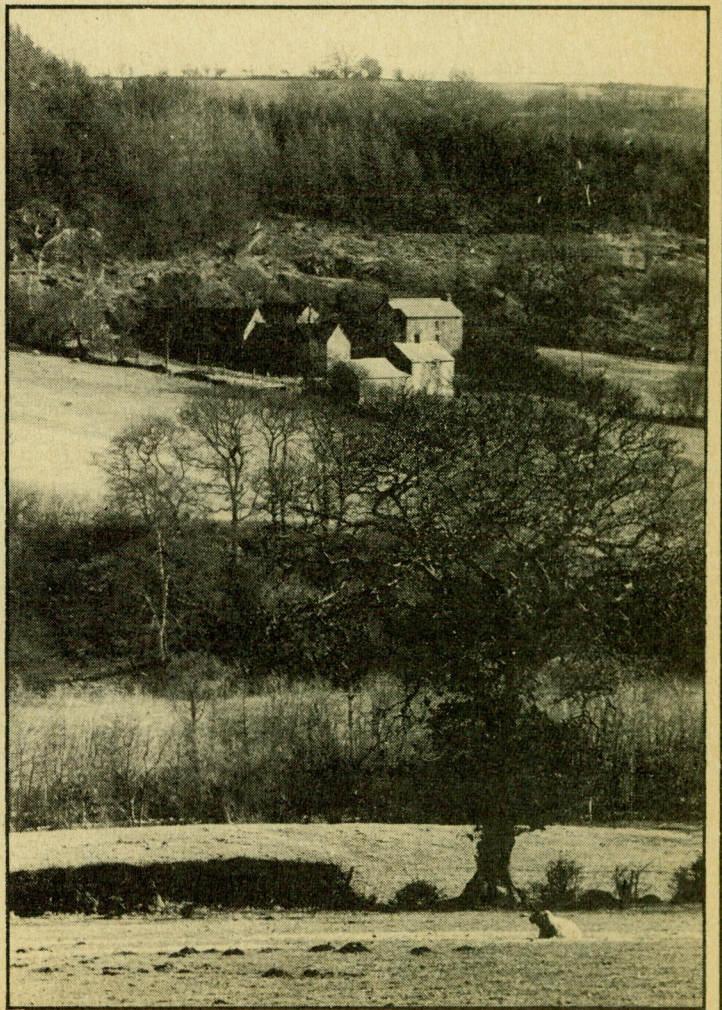
During the retreat I followed an uninterrupted daily programme of meditation, study and puja, and found the rugged natural beauty of the area an ideal environment for this activity. Mountain air has a definite freshness and clarity that is particularly conducive to visualisation practice. The basic tasks of chopping firewood for the range and carrying water from the stream provided an elemental lifestyle: profoundly simple, pure and satisfying. In the evening, before the final puja and meditation, I read the songs of Milarepa, the great Tibetan poet and yogi, and then wandered down through the fields towards the river for a walk, or up through the pine forest to the summit of Craig Arthbry for a panoramic view stretching over the immediate hills and valleys to where the clouds hung low over the high mountain peaks some six or seven miles away.

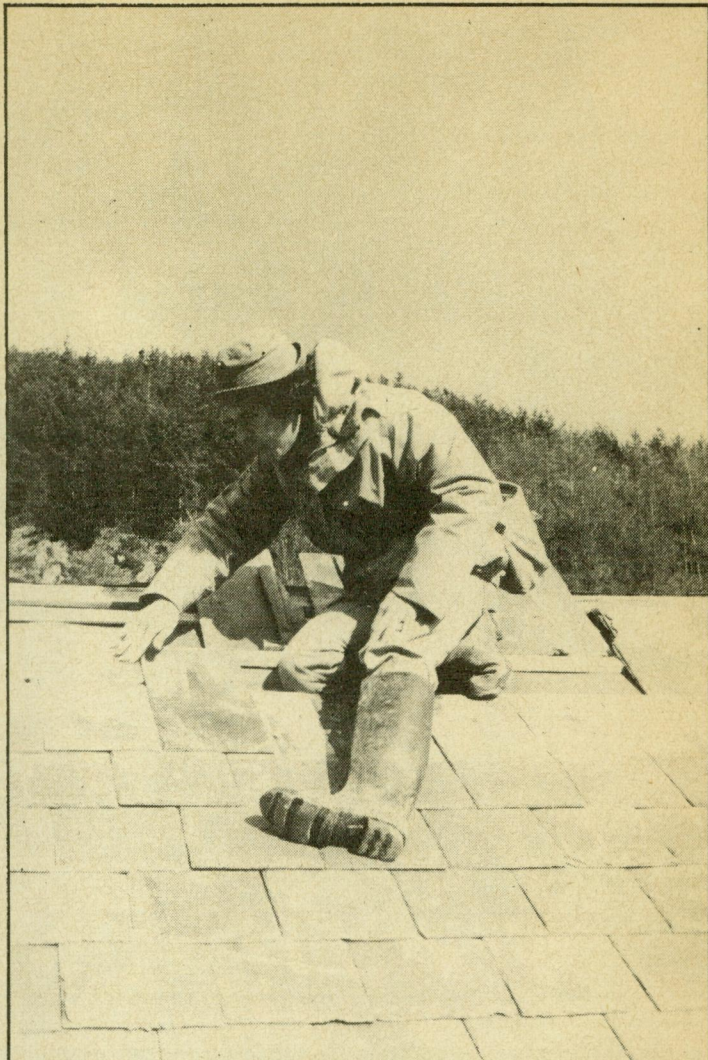
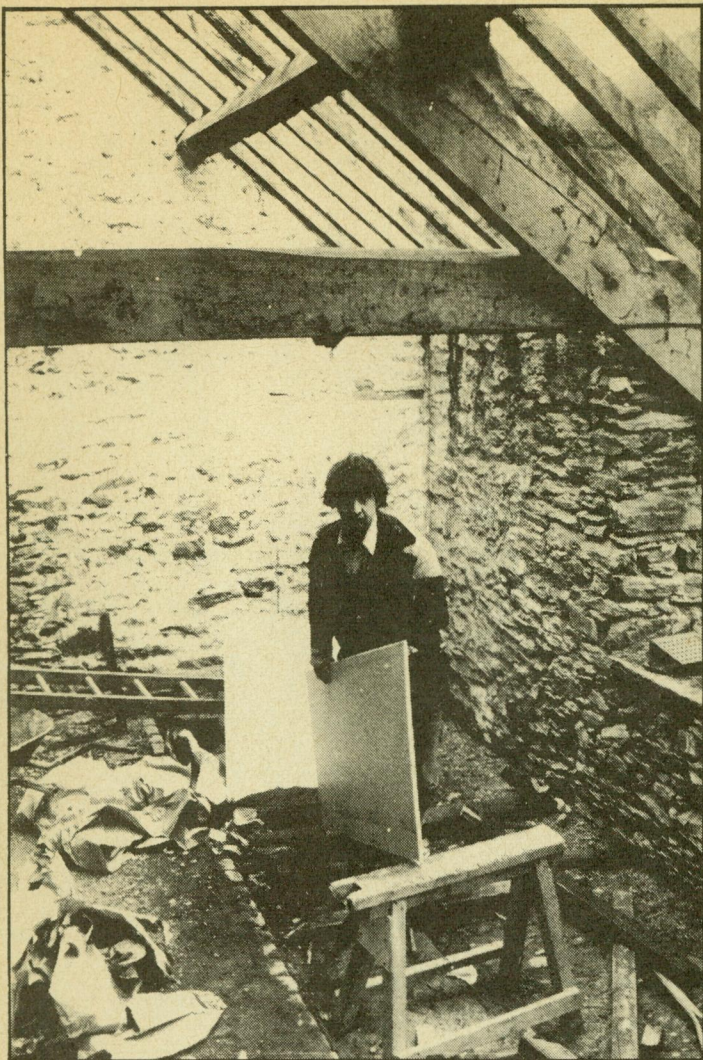
The application to convert Tyn-y-ddol into a retreat centre has in fact met substantial local opposition from the surrounding traditional, not to say conservative, village community; this has yet to be entirely resolved. When the initial application was made we entirely underestimated the strength of local feeling for the indigenous Welsh culture that felt threatened by the increasing encroachments from the modern world. There has been considerable feeling from some sections of the local population that a Buddhist centre would contribute towards the continued erosion of traditional Welsh values, besides more basic fears that a Buddhist centre would inevitably involve such disreputable elements as 'hippies' and 'drugs' with which the villagers have had previous bad experience.

An application for planning permission and change of use is – in objective planning terms – uninfluenced by such subjective factors as local opinion, although this is initially taken into consideration. Consequently planning permission will no



‘seek a delightful solitude’



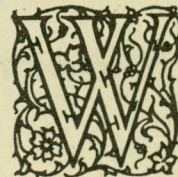


getting down to work





doubt be granted in due course, and work has already started on the restoration of those farmbuildings that do not require planning permission. This unforeseen opposition has in fact had its positive side and we have recognised that in the establishment of a Buddhist centre we cannot take the local community for granted. As a consequence a number of trips to Wales have been made with the express intention of contacting the local community and explaining exactly the nature of a Buddhist centre and what it involves, thereby overcoming possible prejudice against the scheme. During the course of doing this a number of very positive contacts have been made in the local area and a far greater understanding has been achieved on our part of the indigenous community and culture, which has been very rewarding.

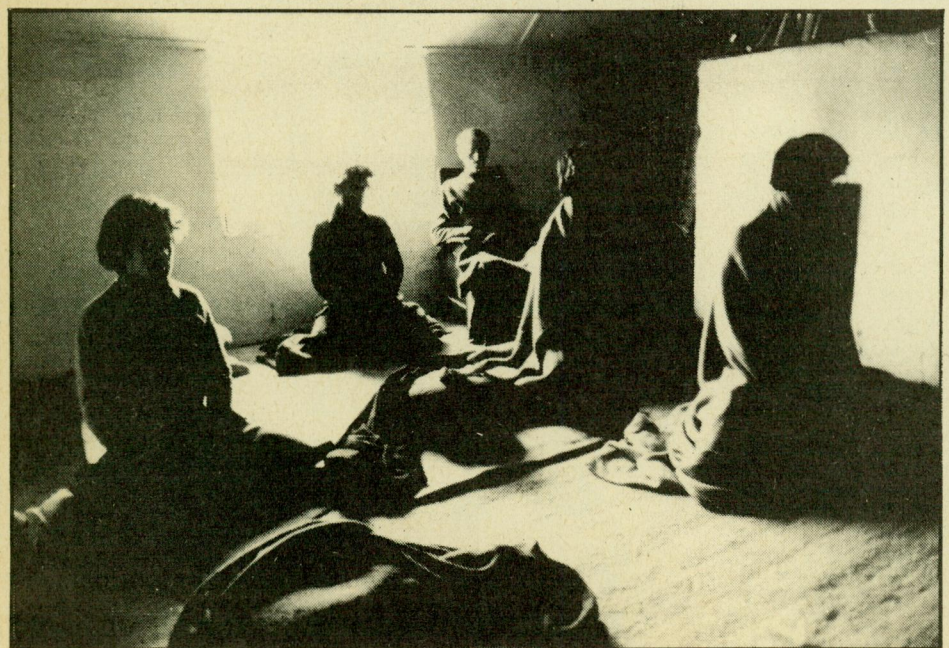
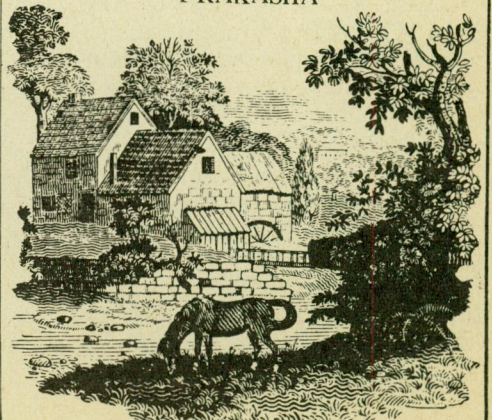


With the completion of the London Buddhist Centre in December 1978, and the availability of manpower and funds, work started at Tyn-y-ddol during early January

1979. A small building team led by Atula, the former foreman of the Sukhavati building project, was organised, and the team currently lives on site at Tyn-y-ddol, and at the nearby house 'Tyddyn Rhydderch'. Work was initially hampered by deep snow, and progress on the conversion so far has been slow. Because of the lack of both skilled and experienced manpower and of sufficient funds, the original scheme of converting all the outbuildings into extensive accommodation blocks and a large shrine-room will not be realised in its entirety unless further resources in terms of both manpower and funds become available. Nevertheless work is proceeding steadily, and two barns including the proposed shrine-room are nearing completion, whilst sufficient funds are available for the conversion of the house and the laying on of a mains water supply.

Work on the project will be completed during the summer and a community will be formed entirely oriented around the practice of meditation. Here lies the significance of the Tyn-y-ddol project for the movement as a whole, since it is only at Tyn-y-ddol that people will have the opportunity to practise intensive meditation undistractedly and fully in a situation and environment entirely conducive to it. As this opportunity becomes available to a greater number of individuals, whether through short retreats or through extended stays, the importance of Tyn-y-ddol will become increasingly apparent.

PRAKASHA



Just before he left England, the Ven Sangharakshita spoke to Nagabodhi about some of his ideas for the new Meditation Centre.

A Community with a difference

Very generally, Bhante, could you say how Tyn-y-ddol is going to operate?

Essentially, I think of it as a meditation centre — a meditation centre in the sense that there will be a meditating community, and also facilities for meditation for those who go there from time to time, — either for a special meditation retreat, such as I shall take myself, or for just a spell of very quiet meditative life.

Who, then, will be able to use the centre?

Anybody who is able to comply with the requirements of the place. It will definitely be a meditative centre, with a meditative residential community, and all the activities will centre upon that. We shall not be holding general retreats, or even study retreats there. And there will be no distractions permitted.

Could you say what you mean by this?

Not any worldly distractions. There will be no TV sets, which are not normally found in our communities anyway, no radios, and no secular literature: only carefully selected spiritual literature which is conducive to meditation. The atmosphere should be very quiet, and so there is going to be half a day of silence every day. There will be no talking within the community, within the centre, until after lunch, so whoever arrives will walk straight into that sort of atmosphere, and will immediately start complying with those requirements. I also have had in mind that everybody there should take a vow of chastity for the period of their stay. That is to say that those residing there will take it, so to speak, permanently, and those who come as visitors will take it at least for the duration of their stay. So when we chant the Refuges and Precepts, then the 'Kamesu Micchachara' (abstention from sexual misconduct) will invariably be substituted by 'Abrahmacharya veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami' (I undertake the training principle of abstention from unchastity).

For the resident community there will of course be the usual morning and evening meditations, in which visitors will definitely be expected to join. No one will be encouraged to spend their time not actually sitting for meditation, or not working. No one will be encouraged to spend their time in miscellaneous reading: not even Buddhist reading. They will be encouraged just to be quiet and mindful. In this way they will be brought up against themselves much more radically than would normally be the case, even on a good retreat. It won't be possible to go to Tyn-y-ddol just for a rest, or a quiet time. From the moment you arrive till the moment you depart, you will be expected to join in all the meditations and other activities of the community. The basic thing for those at the centre will be to maintain the meditative state of mind, free from distractions. Conditions there will be very simple, — quite basic in a way, — and much more like a traditional monastery, or hermitage, in the ancient East.

You will be leading retreats there yourself, I believe.

Yes. I shall be taking meditation retreats there from time to time. Those which I lead will, I think, be devoted mainly to visualisation practices, and these will be for Order members. Later on I may even take retreats for mitras, — though not for visualisation practices, but for other things, specifically connected with meditation. We may, for instance, go through *Dhyana for Beginners*. We would not be studying anything that did not directly relate to meditation.

Because you will still be using 'Padmaloka' as a centre for study retreats?

Yes.

Given the kind of place that Tyn-y-ddol will be, could you say something about the resident community that will be established there?

I envisage a small community. As far as I can see, to begin with it won't consist of more than three people, possibly four, eventually five, and that community will be responsible for running the place and creating the special atmosphere there. They will be meditative people, or people who are wanting to get on with their meditation, — wanting to deepen their meditation experience, — as well as being ready to run the centre. They will keep the place clean and tidy; cook for themselves and any visitors, carry out a certain amount of upkeep and even, maybe, do a small amount of gardening. Some members of the resident community will no doubt want to get on with extra meditation of their own.

I understand that as well as being used for men's and women's retreats, Tyn-y-ddol will also be open to visitors. Could you say something about this?

I haven't yet discussed this with those who will be living there, but what I envisage is that the daily routine will go like clockwork, so to speak, and that within that context men should be able to stay for longer or shorter periods. It should be possible to stay just for a weekend, or for a week, or for three weeks, by arrangement with the people running the centre.

When you say men, do you mean Order members, or any men?

As I have said, I would like it to be open to anyone who can comply with the requirements of the place. I haven't worked this out in detail, or finally, but I would like to have an arrangement whereby Upasakas could just turn up, and if it's speaking time, say, 'I've arrived and I'd like to spend a few days here'. It should not always be necessary to write. I do not envisage so many Order members turning up at any given time that there will be an accommodation problem. We shall just have to see whether that works. Others should certainly write and make arrangements.

But surely those who go there, who are not Order members, would have at least to be already in contact with the Movement?

Yes, they would have to be people who could get on with their own meditation. Later on we may arrange courses, whether conducted by the resident members of the community or myself, or by others, for those who have not done any meditation, and who want an experience of it in that situation, but for the present, people should go along only if they are able to get on with their own meditation, and that presupposes that they have been along to meditation classes at a Centre, and can do at least either the Mindfulness of Breathing, or the *metta bhavana*; preferably both. The resident members of the community would certainly be able to discuss meditation with the people who come along, and might well be able to give them advice, but there will be no actual meditation instruction for beginners.

Do you think that the establishment of this kind of a centre is going to give a new emphasis to the practice of meditation in the Movement?

The emphasis has always been there, but we haven't so far had a

centre devoted exclusively to meditation.

I'm thinking that many Newsletter readers will have seen that we have given a lot of energy, thought and resources to our work in cities: setting up communities, setting up right livelihood situations. We may not seem, outwardly at least, to have devoted so much energy to the more meditative side of the spiritual life. But it must be born in mind that, at all Centres, meditation classes have been held all the time and have, I think, always been the major activity there. Three quarters, if not more, of the people who have come along to us, and who have eventually been ordained, in many cases have been attracted primarily by the meditation. So that emphasis has always been there, but, in a way, it has become so much a part of the regular activities that perhaps it has not been necessary to draw particular attention to it. It's just like the ground-bass in music: it's going on all the time, and maybe the melody attracts a bit more attention, but that ground-bass is there constantly. It's somewhat like that.

I wonder, though, whether — were it not for the work, and the contact that gives with energy — the majority of people would be unable to make use of this kind of facility at all?

Probably not. But I think that actually there were some who were ready to do so, and who, perhaps, in some ways, have suffered from the fact that such facilities did not exist. Since we've been busy with 'Sukhavati', which has taken longer than we expected, this other kind of project has had to wait.

It seems to me that while there have been people in the Movement quite wholeheartedly involved in work, so far we have not had any people involving themselves so completely, or full-time, in meditation.

The meditation will not be quite full-time for the community at Tyn-y-ddol because, just as even those who are, so to speak, fully involved with work, nonetheless meditate morning and evening, in the same way those who are, as it were, full-time involved in meditation will also be doing quite a bit of work. But they will be, if necessary, sacrificing work to meditation if a conflict does arise, just as, say, when 'Sukhavati' was being created, meditation was, — at least in the case of a few people, — sacrificed to work. But it will probably be more easy to do a lot of meditation and some work in a meditative spirit, than to do a lot of work and, at the same time, to keep up with your regular meditation practice.

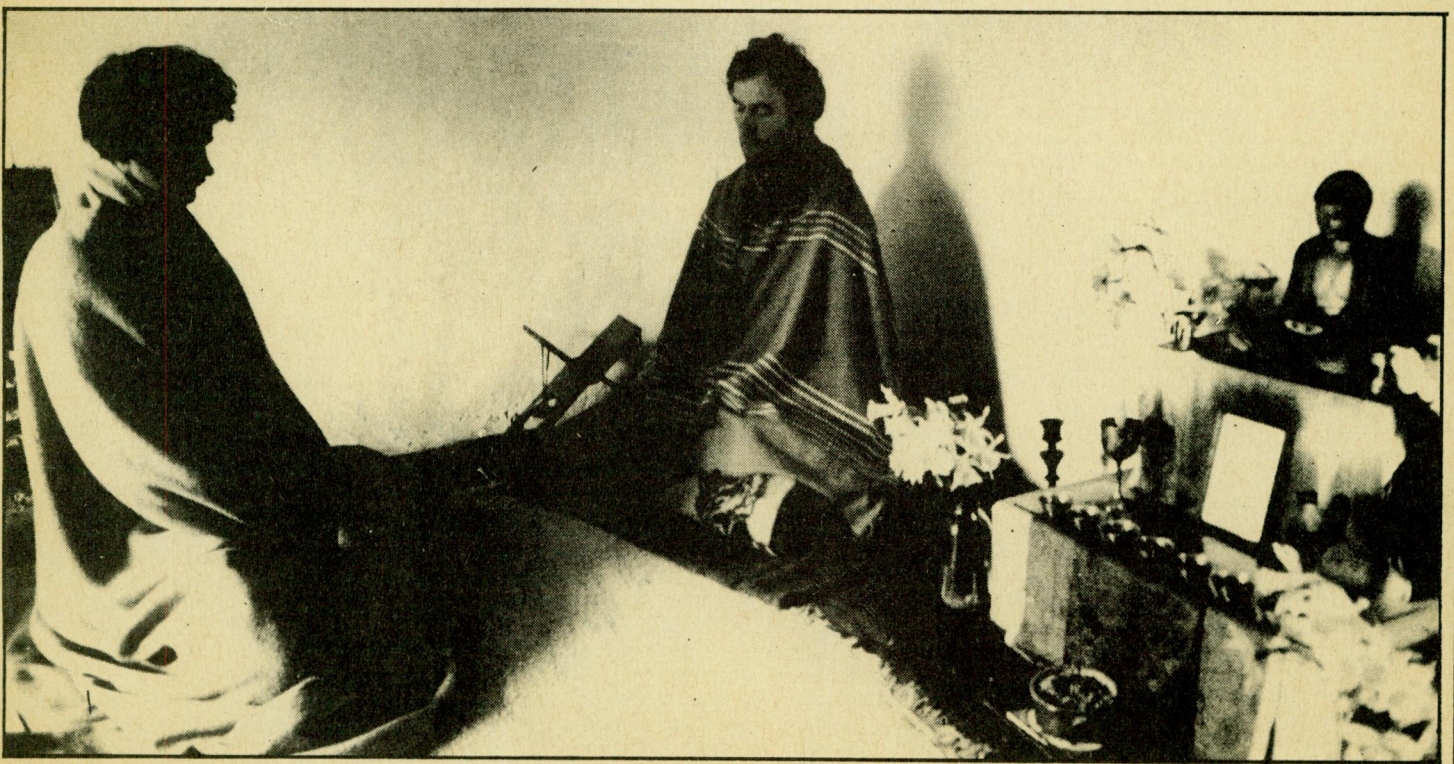
Would you say that the more meditative community might represent a movement towards, almost, a form of monasticism?

I don't think that it is, in principle, more monastic than running a city centre. I think that to suggest that such a situation is more monastic attaches, by implication, too much importance to externals. I think the Movement as a whole inclines, or prefers, not to do that, — prefers not to identify monasticism too much, maybe not at all, with a particular way of life, so that a monk becomes recognisable by the things he does, or the things he does not do.

So the underlying principle is that the commitment is the same, and that the method of applying that commitment is specific to the individual concerned.

And specific to the needs of the situation in which he finds himself, if he is with other people, and the extent to which he is in a position to provide for those needs. Those who are part of the resident community at Tyn-y-ddol will be providing facilities, and not only facilities but, through their own way of life, an atmosphere for the benefit of those who come there from elsewhere in the Movement. They will definitely be a part of the Movement. Also there is the fact that, they will be getting on with, among other things, their *metta bhavana*, and no doubt the greater part of that will be directed towards other Order members and so on. I'm quite sure that this has an effect on its own level. Also there is the fact that it will be known to the Movement at large that there are at least a few people who are deeply into their own meditation and also providing these facilities, and who are bearing the rest of the Movement in mind in the course of their *metta bhavana*, and this will have a sort of inspirational quality, or effect, for the Movement as a whole. I certainly don't see the project in terms of a few people going off into the foothills of North Wales to get away from it all, and just wanting to forget about other people in the Movement. It will be part and parcel of the Movement, and it will have its effect on the whole Movement.

I really do hope and expect that, when people turn up at the meditation centre, the minute they step inside — not to speak of the door — but the minute they come through the gate and step into the compound, they will feel a different atmosphere. From the minute that they are there they will be really on retreat, until the minute they go away. So they will have a refreshing dip into a particularly intense sort of situation — a situation which some of them who have come from the world, and who have been working in co-operatives and so on, may well need. It will be very much a facility provided by the members of the resident community, who I hope in the end will not really see any essential difference between what they are doing for themselves and what they are doing for other people.

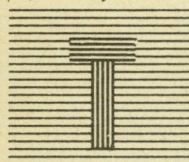


another day begins

A 'System' of Meditation

With the development of special facilities for intense meditation retreats, now would seem to be a good time to outline our approach towards what has been called the 'heart-beat of Buddhism'.

(1) Why Meditation?

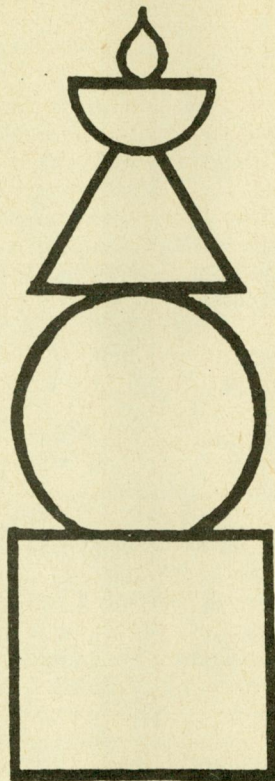


The object of meditation is to transform oneself, not to have good meditations.' This quotation from the Ven. Sangharakshita's *Poems, Sayings and Reflections*

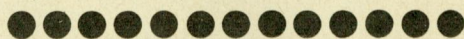
sums up the whole purpose of meditation within the FWBO. For us meditation is not an end in itself, not a flight into escapist fantasies, nor into a blank and vacant state, nor even into states of joy or bliss if these are viewed as ends in themselves. We see meditation as a tool for transformation. So meditation must be seen in the context of all our activities: community living, right livelihood projects, Hatha Yoga, study groups, artistic activities, and everything else which goes to make up what we have come to term the 'New Society' which is the FWBO. All these activities have been adopted by us as means of furthering people's growth as individuals — what the Ven. Sangharakshita, interpreting traditional Buddhist teaching into Western parlance, calls the 'Higher Evolution' of Man.

So what is the essence of this 'Higher Evolution', and why do we lay particular emphasis on meditation as a tool for promoting it? Whereas Man's evolution to date has been biological and psychological, his 'Higher Evolution' must be what, for want of a better term, we must call 'spiritual'; ie the process of self-transformation of which the Higher Evolution consists is a development of higher and higher levels of consciousness. These higher levels of consciousness are characterised by the presence of what Buddhism calls 'skilful mental states' and the absence of 'unskilful states'. Skilful states of mind are those based on contentment, loving-kindness, and clarity; unskilful states are rooted in their opposites: craving, aversion, and ignorance. So all the activities of the FWBO aim to promote these skilful mental states (which are naturally enjoyable and truly satisfying), and to root out unskilful mental states (which are unsatisfying and often painful). The word 'meditation' can be used to denote dwelling in skilful mental states, or the practice — especially in sitting meditation — of specific methods to achieve this. In this article we are mainly concerned with the latter of these connotations, but always bearing in mind that the practice of sitting meditation is not an end in itself, but is an attempt to generate and maintain skilful mental states in ideal conditions. Such states gradually 'overspill' into one's whole life, until one experiences them as an uninterrupted flow under all circumstances and at all times.

We lay particular stress on meditation practice in the FWBO because it is a *direct*

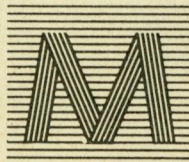


This stylised version of a stupa design can be used in a visualisation practice based on the six element theme. The cube represents earth, the sphere: water, the cone: fire, the saucer: air, and the flaming jewel: ether, or consciousness.



way of cultivating skilful mental states. In meditation one works directly 'on the mind with the mind'. All other methods, such as Hatha Yoga or artistic appreciation, are indirect — transmitted to the mind through the five senses — and thus, whilst they are very useful, and should find a place in any balanced programme of spiritual development, they do not have the power and immediacy of meditation. So all our Centres have meditation classes as an integral part of their programmes, and in all our communities the day begins with a period of meditation.

(2) The Process of Transformation



meditation, as we have seen, fosters a process of self-transformation. Whilst different individuals' experience in meditation may differ, because the basic 'structure' of the mind is the same in all human beings, we can chart common features of this process which may be found in anyone

who meditates consistently. The process falls broadly into three stages, which we call the stages of concentration, absorption, and insight.

When people begin the practice of meditation they soon become aware of difficulties in remaining aware of the object of their meditation. It is as if they are not one unified individual but more like a 'bundle of selves'. One 'self' has decided to meditate, another may want a cup of tea, another may want to think about a play it saw last night, and so on. Often, it seems, there is an endless parade of different selves, all pulling the mind in different directions. In consequence one's energy is scattered and dissipated among the conflicting demands of these competing selves. So the first stage of meditation is the development of concentration — which integrates all these energies into a harmonious flow, 'binds together' this 'bundle of selves' and produces one overall direction for them. When all the 'selves' or energies of which we are consciously aware have been harmonised and focussed on the object of our meditation, then we have achieved what we call 'horizontal integration'. This 'horizontal integration' of all the energies of our conscious mind is relatively easy to achieve — at least for short periods — even for a beginner. But the part of the mind which falls within conscious awareness is only the tip of the iceberg. The next task is to achieve 'vertical integration' by harmonising the energies of both the conscious and unconscious minds. This is much harder to achieve than 'horizontal integration'; it takes time for the process of meditation to 'filter through' and begin to affect the depths and heights of the mind. When this 'vertical integration' is achieved, we have started to go beyond the stage of concentration, and to embark on the stage of absorption.

The 'absorption' we refer to here is an absorption in higher states of consciousness than those which we usually experience. These higher states can be broadly schematized into four successively higher levels, although we must remember that each level develops out of the 'fullness' of its predecessor, and to talk of 'levels' at all is to impose a rigid structure on a natural and dynamic process. The first level we call the level of integration. Here one has achieved both horizontal and vertical integration of one's energies, one feels happy and buoyant emotionally, and there is a complete absence of neurotic mental chatter, although there may still be some discursive mental activity. This we could say is a truly human level. If one develops this level fully, one reaches the level of inspiration. One's mind at this level is likened to a pool of water in which there



bubbles up a subterranean spring which constantly refreshes the water in the pool. So one feels in contact with a fresh spring of creative energy. So this is a level of true artistic creativity. From this level onwards discursive mental activity has died away. This does not mean that the mind is blank or dead. Rather there is a state of tremendously heightened awareness, and what could be termed a 'thrilling peace', which is far more deeply satisfying than one's usual mental ticking-over.

Out of the plenitude of this level there arises the level of permeation. The traditional simile used to describe this level is that of a bed of lotuses growing in the water, totally soaked and permeated by water. So at this level you experience the creative energy not as bubbling up within you but as permeating your whole being. Your whole mind and your environment as well are transfigured by the higher level of consciousness. This we could term a level of mystical experience.

Lastly one can go even beyond this to the level of radiation. At this level your state of mind is so positive that you cannot be affected by anything negative whatsoever. Indeed so powerful is your concentration, and so strongly positive are your emotions that they can affect your environment, even acting at a distance in supra-normal ways. So this level is traditionally the one on which one can develop various so-called praeternatural powers. We could characterise it as a magical level.

By the time we achieve this level our process of self-transformation has been carried a long way. This level of experience is seen, by some religious traditions, as the goal of spiritual life, but it is the distinctive contribution of the Buddhist tradition to have

recognised that the process of self-transformation has not been taken far enough. Indeed, it sees that if someone who comes thus far makes no further effort he can gradually lose everything which he has gained, because the underlying causes of unhappy states of mind have not been removed. It is like cutting off tenacious weeds at ground level: their roots remain, and if one ceases being vigilant they will grow back, often with surprising speed. It is only with the development of insight into Reality that one finally uproots the causes of one's existential suffering or dissatisfaction for ever. So, with a mind refined, powerfully focussed and purified of all subjective distortion by one's previous practice, one turns to the contemplation of Reality itself, using one of the traditional formulations of the Buddha's teaching about the nature of Reality.

Usually when people try to answer existential questions such as 'Who am I?' they cannot get very far, because their thinking is scattered and unconcentrated. At best they come up with purely intellectual answers. But the mind of the meditator who has reached the stage of developing insight is really concentrated, like a powerful searchlight penetrating into darkness, and his emotional state is completely positive so he is prepared to welcome Truth whatever it may be. So the development of insight is no cosy settling-down in comforting ideas; it is an overpowering experience which transforms our whole being. At first insight comes as it were in flashes, but as the meditator continues practising, these flashes of insight become more prolonged, until finally the mind of the meditator dwells permanently in the radiant state of illumination, marked by the complete flowering of the qualities of Wisdom and Compassion, which is called Enlightenment, the goal of the spiritual life.

(3) The 'System' of Meditation

Having gained some understanding of the purpose of meditation, and of the main stages through which one can pass if one commits oneself to its practice, it is time to

turn to the discussion of specific methods. For meditation is not something vague and woolly, not a matter of closing your eyes and going into a dream. Rather, it is a systematic development of positive states of mind. So, when you take up meditation, you begin by learning a specific method or technique. Within the Buddhist tradition there are literally thousands of different meditation practices. All are designed to produce specific effects such as the eradication of a particular negative emotion and the cultivation of its opposite; some are recommended for people of particular personality-types; all have been tried and tested by meditators for centuries, in some cases for at least two thousand years, so we know they work! Within the FWBO and the Order there are certain methods which we have found particularly valuable, and these form the elements of what we could loosely describe as a 'system of meditation'.

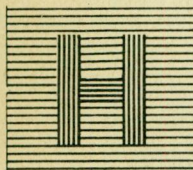
When someone comes along to an introductory class at one of our Centres, they begin by learning two basic methods: the Mindfulness of Breathing and the *metta bhavana*. The Mindfulness of Breathing is the most fundamental of all Buddhist meditations. It is a concentration exercise, and is traditionally the antidote to restlessness, anxiety and worry. As most of our Centres are in busy conurbations it is essential that people should begin by learning to calm and settle their minds to some extent. However, the main effect which this practice has is one of integration. It helps people to harmonize and bring together all their different energies, and to focus them; to bring from the chaos of different 'selves' one overriding 'self'. This is essential because the process of development which is initiated when one takes up meditation requires commitment: it requires every scrap of energy which we possess to bring about a radical change in our whole level of being and consciousness. So in learning to concentrate we learn to conserve energy, not to dissipate it, and we develop a sense of selfhood, of individuality, which provides the motivation to practise without being constantly side-tracked by other preoccupations.

At the same time that we learn the Mindfulness of Breathing, we also learn the *metta bhavana* — a Pali term which can be roughly translated as the Development of Universal Friendliness, or Goodwill. This practice springs from the understanding that Man is not just a rational animal; indeed his thinking processes often merely provide rationalisations for feelings, so that if the process of self-transformation is to be more than an intellectual fantasy we must work to transform our whole emotional nature. Through this practice we gradually develop feelings of warmth, friendliness, and well-wishing for ourselves (for charity begins at home), for those who are close to us, and by degrees, to everything that lives. This feeling is not exclusive, not based on what people do for us, nor merely aimed towards particular personality-types which we happen to find agreeable. Metta, when fully developed, is a totally inclusive feeling, felt equally



Summer weather occasionally permits outdoor meditation

towards all, and springing from our own emotional fullness irrespective of external circumstances. Many people find it takes them some while really to generate strong feelings of Metta, but as one gradually succeeds it is no exaggeration to say that one's experience of oneself and the world is transformed. Many people in the modern world feel cut off from their feelings, or feel that their emotions are totally conditional upon the pleasant or unpleasant experiences which they have. Many religions are quite strong on moral exhortations, to love and good-neighbourliness, but these of themselves have little effect. But through the systematic practice of this meditation it is possible actually to transform one's feelings, to turn depression into joy, and hatred into love. These two practices form the foundation of all further growth. They complement and reinforce one another so that, gradually, both your awareness and concentration, and your positive feelings become stronger, and they more and more 'overspill' from your practice of sitting meditation into all your activities, so that your whole life becomes 'meditation' in the wider sense.



However, even when one has concentrated one's energy and developed powerful positive emotions, as we have already seen there is still further to go. For in doing this one has not yet developed insight into Reality, and consequently the causes of suffering and negative states have not been uprooted. So, at this stage one

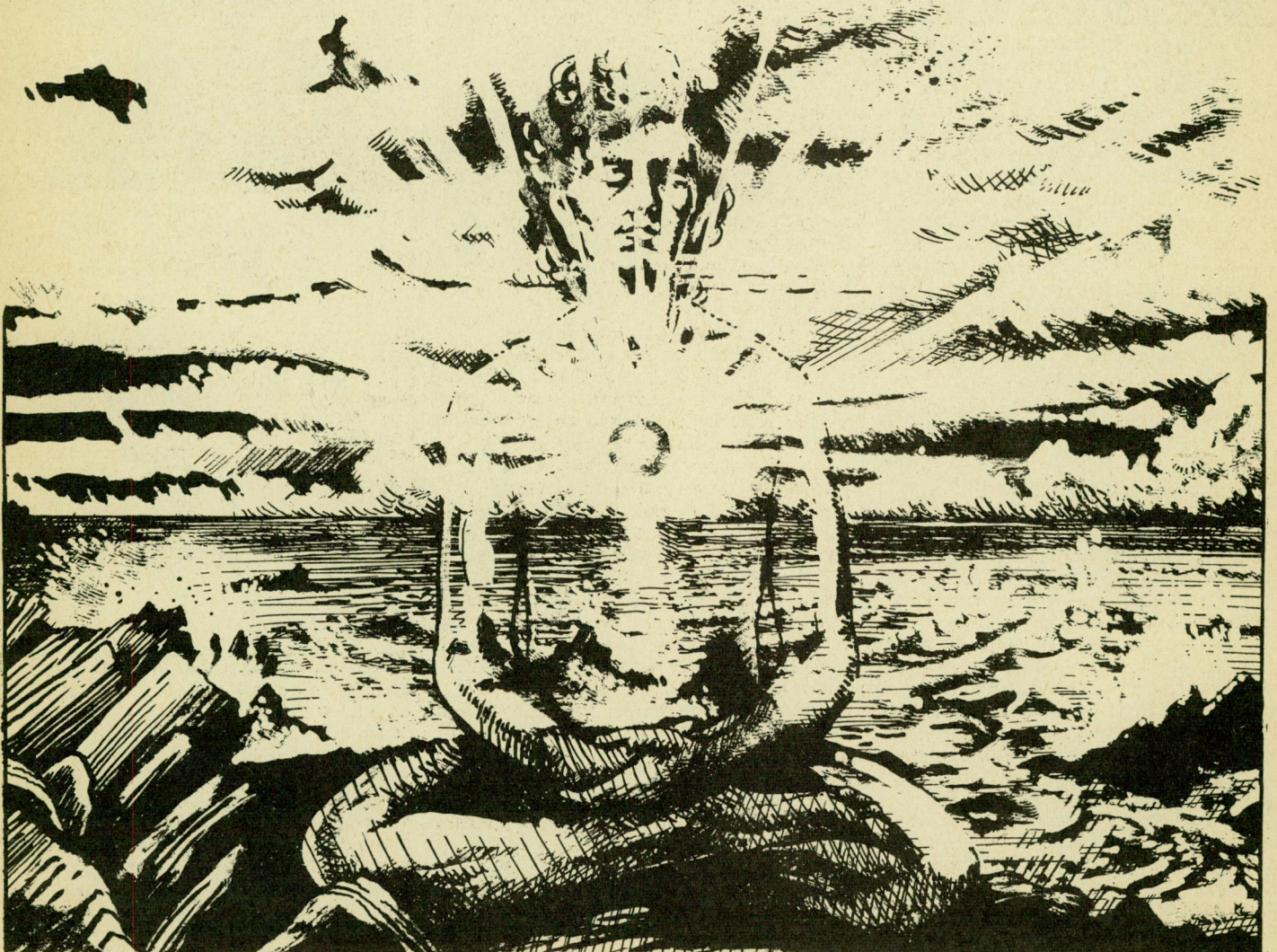
takes up one of a number of different practices designed to develop insight. The most commonly used of these practices within the Western Buddhist Order (for such practices are by and large confined to those who have made a definite commitment to their own growth and development) is called the Six Element Practice. Through this practice one analyses all the elements both physical and mental which go to make up what we think of as ourselves. In doing so we see that there is no part of us which we own as a 'personal possession', everything is in process of change. For example the physical elements which go to make up our bodies are only 'borrowed' from the physical Universe; our bodies are changing all the time, and one day we shall die and those elements will 'return' to the Universe. So this insight into Reality has the force of a kind of death, a 'spiritual death' in which the idea of oneself as an unchanging 'self', however positive and aware, is given up. But this 'spiritual death' is not the end, for one 'dies' in order to be 'reborn' transfigured into a shining being, an Enlightened being.

So the final main body of meditations practised within the Order itself is that of the visualisation of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. In these practices one customarily begins by visualising an infinite expanse of clear blue sky; this could be said to symbolize the boundless openness, the complete freedom and infinite possibility which the death of one's 'lower self', with all its limited conceptions, has permitted. Then in the midst of the blue sky one visualises the appearance of a shining

figure, radiant and colourful, with a smiling, serene countenance and holding emblems which represent different qualities of Enlightenment, such as Wisdom, Compassion, or Energy. As one contemplates this figure one gradually 'absorbs' more and more of its qualities, one becomes more and more identified with it, until one feels completely at one with it. Enlightenment is no longer a distant goal, it is a living experience.

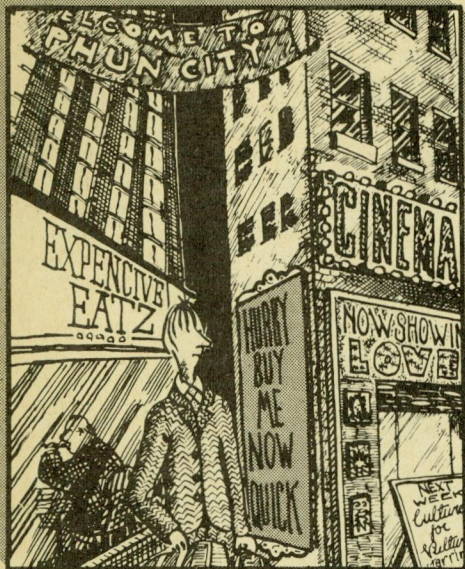
It is hard within a short article to do justice to so central a topic as meditation. But I hope the reader will have gathered that meditation within the FWBO is not vague and woolly, but dynamic and systematic, that it is not identified purely with sitting meditation as an end in itself, but aims at the constant experience of skilful mental states whatever one may be engaged in; and that it is above all a great adventure, the greatest possible adventure that Man can undertake, a process of self-transformation which leads from concentration through higher states of consciousness to Insight and culminates in Enlightenment. This can never be a selfish endeavour, and the more one progresses the greater is one's desire to *share* what one has experienced. So all our Centres run classes in meditation led by members of the Western Buddhist Order who are experienced in meditation. You can come along just to achieve some peace of mind, or you can come determined to gain Enlightenment. The main thing is that you come, and practise.

VESSANTARA



For example, the physical elements which go to make up our bodies are only 'borrowed'...

Invariably, for those on the threshold of adult life, the town, or the big city, is considered the place to be. It is seen as a place which offers exciting new possibilities; it's a centre of culture and entertainment, of fashion and sophistication: a place for youth, a place of radical ideas, a place of life, energy and stimulation, a place, even, of revolution. Above all, the city is a place of *Experience*. By contrast, the country seems dead, conservative, and behind the times; a place full of simpletons and churchgoers. It's the sort of place you may visit in search of good beer, and where you may spend the occasional weekend, but certainly not where you would choose to live.



Let us suppose that these have been our own attitudes. Town life invigorates and stimulates us; we wouldn't dream of living anywhere else, until one day, in our frantic pursuit of experience, we suddenly find ourselves attending a meditation class. Perhaps we have been living in the city for a few years now, and although we still enjoy the facilities which it has to offer, and have established ourselves in a moderately successful career, things are not quite so novel or so exciting as they used to be. We have become a bit bored, and rather blasé. Consequently we have been looking around for something that might restore the magic that seems to have faded somehow from our lives. We are even prepared to give meditation a try – and, lo and behold, it does the trick. As if by magic we find ourselves entering a whole new dimension of life. We may even have what we consider to be a spiritual experience, and this has quite a devastating effect. Quite quickly meditation becomes the centre of our life. It's *the* thing to do. We lose interest in everything else and pursue our practice with undivided enthusiasm. The effect on our social life is drastic. We no longer see much of our old friends, who are quite taken aback by this sudden turn of character. However, we are quite oblivious of their concern; everything now seems to run so much more smoothly and harmoniously than it did before, and we are very excited with our latest little toy.

Then something quite unexpected happens. As a result of our meditation practice we discover that we no longer like the city and begin to see it in a totally different light. We perceive it to be a noisy, polluted place, rife with corruption and violence, riddled with anxiety and madness, and inhabited by a restless population

TOWN OR COUNTRY

As with many other things, success depends on being in the right place at the right time.

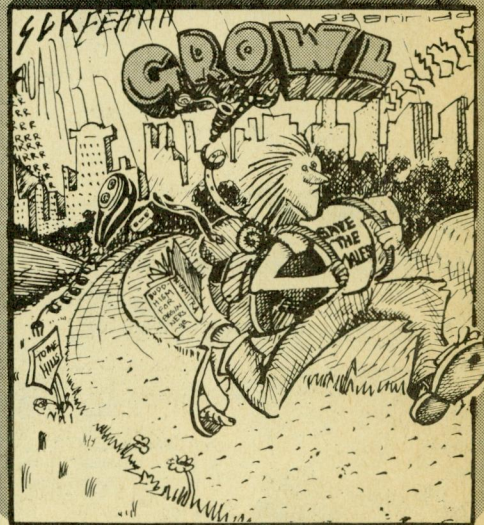
pursuing utterly meaningless and unnatural lives. In a word, we perceive the city as a wholly 'unspiritual' place. We begin to find the practice of meditation painful and difficult, and in this demoralised condition find that we can't even cope with our work. Perhaps one of the effects of our meditation has been to undermine a superficial level of confidence and we are left dazed and confused; or maybe we feel unable to put any energy into our work – which now strikes us as lacking any real purpose. The result is that we gradually drift out of our career and, by way of compensation, begin to dream of the country idyll. The country, of which we had been more or less oblivious, suddenly becomes very attractive. It casts a spell over our minds as we fantasise what it would be like to live there. We think the country is definitely the place to be. It's quiet, spacious, and clean; it's a place where you can have contact with nature and lead a sane life. We convince ourselves that the country is a 'spiritual' place, and feel that that is where we need to be so that we can grow spiritually. There is no doubt in our minds that it will be much easier to meditate there, and we envisage ourselves floating into the dhyana states as soon as we sit. At once we begin to search for a cottage somewhere, with of course an English country garden. If we are not careful, our romantic little day-dream could be the rock on which our spiritual life founders, as I hope I shall make clear, so let us examine it closely lest this siren-song of the country bring about our destruction.

One of the mechanical laws of conditioned existence is that we feel naturally *impelled* towards that which we find attractive, and away from that which we find unattractive. As a result of our practice of meditation we may find that our experience of things alters. What was previously attractive may now appear unattractive to us, and vice versa. Many people, therefore, who have come into contact with the FWBO, and who have taken up the practice of Buddhism and meditation, feel that they want to move away from the city and into the country. In other words, they fall victim to the view that the country is 'spiritual', and that the city is not only 'unspiritual', but 'anti-spiritual'. They move into the country, and in many cases will never be seen again. For all intents and purposes, such a move constitutes the end of their spiritual life before it has begun. The few who do realise that they have made a mistake eventually return reluctantly to the city and try to take things up where they left off.

So let us try and see exactly what it is that causes this revulsion against the city. The fact is that, inevitably, after meditation has been practised for some time it has the effect of loosening up the bits and pieces

of our mechanical, reactive mind. This can be quite a painful experience, although a positive and necessary one, and may make the practice of meditation difficult. But if we don't want to admit to ourselves that what we are experiencing are simply our own self-produced mental states, we seek a scapegoat on which to project the cause of our discomfort. If we live in the city, the most obvious scapegoat is the environment. In this way we rationalise ourselves out of taking responsibility for our own mental states, and convince ourselves that the city is not a good place for meditation, and that we should therefore move away from it. We conveniently forget that meditation is only one aspect of Dharma practice and avoid scrutinising our motives too closely. If we succumb to the projection, in all likelihood, we will either embark on a premature retirement to the country, or seek refuge in travel abroad – the most popular destination being India.

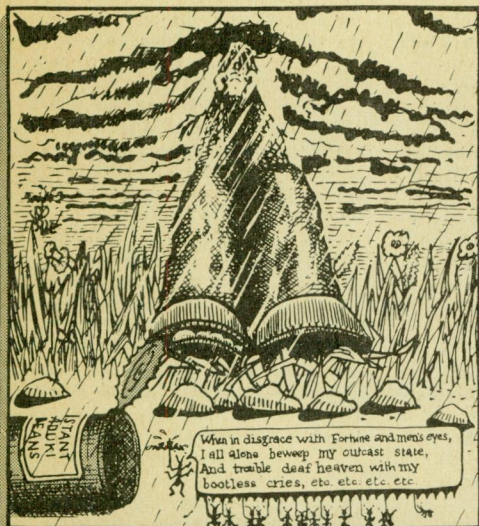
What happens, then, to those who do beat a retreat to the country? After the initial euphoria has died away, they simply stagnate. During the past five years many Order members and Friends have moved up to Norfolk in order to live in the country, but eventually most of them have either returned to London, or moved into Norfolk again. The answer is quite simple.



Apart from the fact that life in the town gives one an immediate, invigorating contact with life, it is very difficult to grow as an individual unless you have regular, vigorous, stimulating contact with others who are trying to do the same. This is particularly important during the early stages of growth. Without regular spiritual stimulus from others we will drift out of contact with the Dharma and may end up bored, alienated and dull – especially if we have no work to do. If we just allow ourselves to sit around all day over a long period of time, the effect is spiritually stultifying.

COUNTRY

ss in the spiritual life may often
t the right time. Devamitra explains.



If this is what happens to friends, who have an element of spiritual vision, what happens to those who are completely lacking in such a vision? Many people have dropped out of urban society during the last ten or fifteen years, and a colony of them is to be found in and around Norfolk. What have they managed to do with their lives? From my own personal contact with many of them it appears to me that they have achieved very little. The events which, for me, most typify the culture which they have created for themselves are the fairs which are organised throughout the summer months at various sites in North Suffolk. All the ageing hippies from miles around are drawn, as if by a magnet, to these festive gatherings. Many people camp for the duration of the fair — some even doing so in wig-wams and various kinds of primitive shelter. The fair itself consists of craft- and food-stalls, as well as a continuous entertainment of street theatre and a blending of folk and rock music. The level of talent among the performers, with one or two exceptions, is utterly appalling. Where genuine talent is in evidence the performances are often limited to the crude and the sick. The highlight of the whole event is usually the grand *ceilidh* (a sort of gathering for music, song and dance), where everyone hoots and shouts in rustic fashion, and dances various reels with great enthusiasm, but little finesse. Whatever finesse there might have been has been washed away by beer; or blurred by cannabis.

No doubt the impetus which impelled many of them to opt out of a more conventional life-style was based on some kind of idealism, but this is where it has left them. Some seem to have created an alternative livelihood for themselves by manufacturing crafts; a few have set up small-scale business ventures, while others laboriously work the land, and many drift in and out of casual jobs, or do absolutely

nothing. Apart from the establishment of one or two communes, there seems to have been very little experimentation with community living. They have not been able to create a real alternative for themselves. Utterly directionless, they have no vision of growth or true community. They have left one group simply to create another, and through the medium of fairs seem to be blindly groping to rediscover their lost ideals and dreams. Where this will lead them in the next ten years is anyone's guess. The logical outcome of this back-to-the-land philosophy seems to be the re-establishment of the English artisan/peasant class.

This, then, is what has happened to at least one group of people who were lacking any substantial vision. In spite of its more natural and agreeable surroundings, the country can have quite a coarsening effect. But let us now try to look at 'Town and Country' from a genuinely spiritual point of view, and try to see which attitudes we could most usefully adopt towards them.

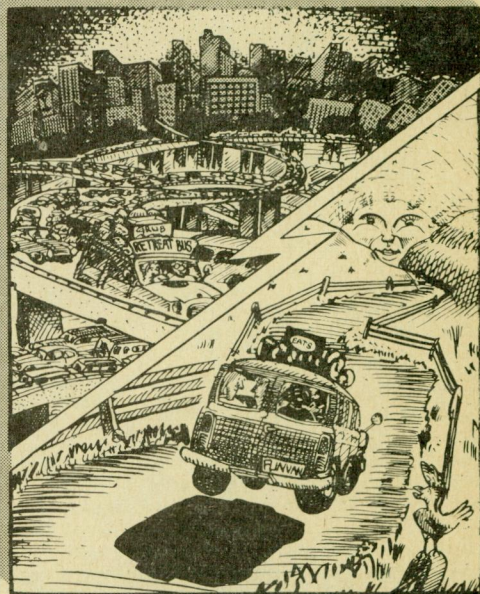
In its favour, we can see that the town tends to be a centre of culture. It's a place where we have access, especially through the facilities for making contacts with the fine arts, to higher values. In this respect we can receive very positive stimulation. More importantly, the towns are centres of population, and if we take the Bodhisattva ideal seriously, then we have to take the Dharma to the people. We have to establish a new society — not merely an alternative society, but a thoroughly radical, revolutionised society — in the midst of the people. Thus the town can become a place whose inhabitants can have access not only to the higher values expressed through the medium of the fine arts, but also to the transcendental values of the Dharma which are the life-blood of the spiritual community.

Now the main pillar of this new society will be the practice of meditation, and it has to be admitted that the town is not the most ideal environment for its practice. Not that it is impossible, but one has constantly to exert effort to counteract its negative influences. The town can be a very distracting place, and it is very easy to be over-stimulated in the wrong sort of way, especially when we are so constantly bombarded by the advertising media. If we spent all of our time in the town, without any respite, the effect would be quite wearing and tiring.

On the other hand, the country, which is generally quiet and peaceful, and which provides a more aesthetically pleasing environment, is a more conducive place for the practice of meditation. However, as we have already seen, if we live all the time in the country, we will be prone to dullness and stagnation. What, then, are

we to do? Quite simply we need to spend periods in both. We need the stimulation which the town offers, but we also need the peace and quiet of the country to enable us to deepen our experience of meditation. I would suggest that we can achieve this by alternating periods of retreat — especially solitary retreat — with periods of activity, such as working on a right-livelihood project, or working in an FWBO centre, or both. Retreats give us a break from the frantic atmosphere of the town and serve to revitalise us, but having been revitalised we may find it necessary to engage our energies in creative activity. Hence the co-operatives and centres. Moreover, by working in the co-operatives we are not only practising right-livelihood, but are helping to generate funds for the furtherance of the Dharma. By assisting in the administrative and teaching activities of a centre we are directly helping the propagation of the Dharma. In both cases the energy generated by our meditation practice will be finding a creative outlet. It will only be people who are exceptionally gifted at meditation who are able to engage their energy on a full-time basis in its practice.

In more traditionally Dharmic terms, what we are seeking to do is to establish a balance between two of the five Spiritual Faculties: concentration and vigour. We know from this teaching that an excess of concentration over vigour leads to states of indolence and inertia, which is the country syndrome. An excess of vigour over concentration results in restlessness and aimless activity, which is the town syndrome. By alternating country retreats with creative activity we are enabled to harmonise these two faculties. Eventually — perhaps after many years or, even, many lifetimes — we may no longer feel the need to withdraw in



order to strengthen our feeble powers of concentration. The higher meditative experience will express itself through all our actions. We will no longer fall victim to the grossest unmindfulness shortly after leaving the shrine-room. When we meditate we will do so with our total being; it will be a total act with all our energies engaged. Whether we are meditating or performing actions we will not lose contact with that inner dynamic tranquillity and, for us, the question of town or country will have ceased to be an issue.

DEVAMITRA

CENTRES and BRANCHES

SUKHAVATI BETHNAL GREEN

Report from Subhuti

The last vestiges of the 'war economy', which prevailed round here during the building of the Centre, have been thrown off, and a new mood of expansiveness and activity pervades the FWBO in the East End of London.

The London Buddhist Centre, with its two shrine rooms at Sukhavati and the hall at Colgonooza, is fully used most nights of the week. Our Wednesday 'Open Night' offers the beginner a taste of the FWBO - meditation, communication exercises, Yoga, talks and discussion, and a chance to meet Order members and mitras. Already the class is overflowing and has a lively atmosphere. We have now had to start an 'advanced' beginner's meditation session on the same night in a different room. There are also weekly meditation and Dharma courses, plus a taped lecture night. We have renamed the 'regular's class' Friends Night, to emphasise the importance of positive contact. Moving from Open Night to Friends Night is not simply a matter of doing more meditation, hearing more about Buddhism, and doing puja; it is mainly a matter of beginning to participate more in the extended community that surrounds the Centre. Yoga fills an important place in the programme, with six classes taking place each week.

Every week-end there are retreats in the country - in Kent - and Day retreats, seminars, Yoga days, or Massage workshops at the Centre.

All of this activity is organised, conducted, supported, and inspired by the thriving network of communities in Bethnal Green: Sukhavati, Beulah, Golgonooza, and two other small groups living together round about. Sukhavati community has experienced a new lease of life now that the major push to finish the building work is over and the numbers have reduced to the more sane level of 25. Almost everyone in the community has been on solitary retreat, or on an organised retreat in the last three months, and there is an air of freshness and enthusiasm. Beulah women's community has also taken a leap

forward. There are now three Order members living there, and four mitras, most of whom are involved full-time in the co-operative and the Centre.

The Co-operative now employs some 25 people, in the press, hardware shop, whole-food shop, second-hand shop, silk-screen press, and the editorial service. Members of the Co-op are starting to meet for study now, so that new workers, who may have no other experience of the Movement, will have the opportunity to discuss the basic principles of Right Livelihood.

We have recently borrowed £5,000 from our bank in order to do some conversion work on the four shops next door to the Centre. In the first two of these there will be a cafe. The second hand shop and Friends Trading will move across the road to new premises, and the shop it now occupies will be converted into a bulk wholefood store. This work is being carried out by a revived Friends Building Service team of five who are gradually working their way through a year's worth of work.

For the future, we are looking into the purchase of a large disused school building nearby. In its 25,000' of space we hope to establish workshops for the Co-op: the printing press, forge, furniture-making shop, and a studio for Chintamani's rupa-making work. There is also a large hall which could be used for lectures and other such activities. It would certainly be good to see the businesses being brought together under one roof, here or elsewhere.

In this area the FWBO is consolidating more and more. The network of people coming to classes, working in the Co-op, and living in communities is becoming more and more apparent to the observant eye. One local resident, having newly moved to the area, quickly noticed that there were some people he passed in the street, or met in shops, who had a light in their eye and a spring in their step. There was, he thought, something going on. One day he asked the man behind the counter in the hardware shop what it was all about. He was not surprised to learn that the shop was run by Buddhists.

ARYATARA SURREY

Aryatara Report from John Wakeman

Spiritual communities are characterised by growth; if we allow things just to stand still, to remain comfortably as they are for a while, then we are no longer functioning as a spiritual community. Fortunately, there is no fear of this at Aryatara; far from it, the rate of growth in all our activities is distinctly accelerating into what promises to be an exciting and invigorating future.

Our main project at the moment is the conversion work on No. 2 St. Michael's Road, which was started in late February after a lengthy delay in getting the lease through. Within a month or so this will become a new home for our wholefood shop. This will not only give the shop much-needed room to expand; it will also leave its present site in No. 3 free for us to set up a vegetarian take-away business, which in an office-town like Croydon should be highly successful.

This will also enable an important development in the general upgrading of the co-op as a training situation. Some co-op workers - the four-man building team - are already experiencing the value of a single-sex working situation, and now this is going to be extended to all the businesses, so that the new take-away will be run by an all-woman team, and the other businesses by men.

Another recent and valuable addition to the co-op is a well-established architectural design and structural surveying business, which Mike Chivers has brought in, upon moving into Kalpadruma community. The combination of Mike's professional expertise in this field and our building team's developing skills is sure to give rise to a number of interesting developments, including the possibility of setting up a building renovation scheme.

So the major right livelihood situation here is developing well, but this is only one aspect, though a major one, of our activities. We can only begin to be satisfied that our centre is fulfilling its function properly when it is able to provide opportunities for growth appropriate to all stages of involvement, from interested beginner to Order member. Perhaps for the first time, Aryatara is really doing this: the beginnings of the co-op have nurtured a number of people who are now looking towards Ordination in the coming months. In the meantime, a new wave of beginners is ripe for active involvement, so we have operating in the centre a continuous cycle of growth. Moreover, this movement is not simply going to be contained within our centre, but

like a fountain, will overflow into new creative situations, one especially exciting proposal being that in two or three years, a team of Aryatara Order members and mitras should go out to set up a new centre in India.

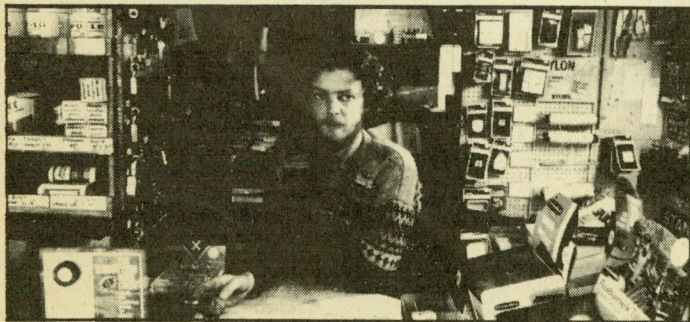
Providing opportunities for growth and deepening involvement for beginners is the vital well-spring of this whole process and so we have been giving it special attention. To this end, at the centre we have started a course in basic Buddhism, which fills the gap between the beginners' class and the more specifically Buddhist regular class - a much-needed innovation. To enable further involvement in our work to take place has not been so simple. The co-op, with its ever more professional attitude to work and strengthening of commitment could well now overburden the enthusiasm of such people. To allow this to flourish, at an ideal level, we are once again introducing jumble-sales and bazaars. These will be run mainly by people from our beginners' class, and should provide an enjoyable introduction to working with the Friends. With opportunities for growth such as these, and the rate of growth of the FWBO in Surrey as a whole, there can surely be no limit to the potential sphere of influence here of the Dharma, and of the New Society.

AMITAYUS BRIGHTON

Report from Dharmananda

The community at Amitayus has expanded this year, now having seven members. Establishing a strong community, working cohesively as a nucleus of the Movement's activities, is not always easy. But by application of the right resolve we are moving ever forwards. Classes at the Brighton Buddhist Centre continue to be well-attended, largely owing to diligent maintenance of fly-poster advertising. Our 'centre-piece', a course in Meditation and Buddhism, continues to gather in strength; evenings are positive and attendance is high to the end. All merit to Mangala for his leadership of these classes. Two new features of our programme are a weekly women's study group, led by Punyavati, and a monthly speakers' class, both of which greatly enrich the pursuit of the Dharma by our Friends.

Our two principal businesses; Sunrise Restaurant and Windhorse Bookshop, continue to be successful; they provide our support and the surplus with which we fund the centre. Both are continuously making alterations, up-grading the standards all round. The bookshop in particular has burst its former seams, expanding into the



Your friendly neighbourhood Buddhist

adjoining house on the ground floor, and opening up a second-hand department on the first floor. Once a rather gloomy, drab little shop, Windhorse is now a colourful and exciting place, a hub of joyful activity.

Friends' Decorating has ceased to function, whilst Friends' Gardening re-emerges, and will undoubtedly be a successful venture this year.

Our George Street properties are coming up for auction, and we have taken up the opportunity to consolidate our security by joining the bidding. Negotiations are under way to obtain a necessary mortgage and bank loan. This will be a big commitment, the very thing upon which we surely thrive.

AMARAVATI WANSTEAD

Amaravati Report from Anoma

The Amaravati community is planning to move to West London, so that we can be involved with the centre there. The community at Ratnadvipa, who are themselves moving very soon, are also trying to get a place nearer the centre, so this seems a good time for us to move into the area too. Mandala is a small centre at present, with plenty of room for us to get involved in a creative way. For the last couple of months we've been attending West London's classes, particularly on beginners' night, on Wednesdays, and I will shortly be taking over leading this class. Anjali and I are now on the council of West London, and will be attending regular meetings there.

So what we're concentrating on at the moment is looking for a large house, preferably in the Fulham/West Kensington area, and making as much money as possible towards this. We feel it's important to maintain a large women's community in London, both for the sake of current community members, and for future members and visitors.

As for money, Kusa Cushions is piling up meditation cushions and mats ready for the Festival for Mind-Body-Spirit, and for the shops. They're also making a lot of curtains. Besides this there is the possibility of obtaining a contract for making car-seat covers. Unfortunately, painting and decorating jobs have not been too consistent. This has been due in part to the time of year and also, to some extent, to prejudice towards us when the prospective customer discovers that the team consists entirely of women. Still, several jobs have been completed successfully. Once we get to West London, we plan to start a catering business providing vegetarian food for dinners, functions, etc. Teresa Fisher, who managed the Rainbow Restaurant in Norwich for some time, will be starting the business. Incidentally, the house here will not be reverting to the Department of Transport

when we leave; plans are already afoot for its use within the Friends

Mandarava, the country retreat centre in Norfolk, remains a branch of FWBO Wanstead, and Vimala has moved there, shortly to be joined by Diana. Vimala's first priorities are to buy a car and to bring in money for the work that needs to be done on the place. Diana may be getting a part-time job, and will be working on the green-houses.

Between them they will look after the place and get things ready for the regular women's retreats that are held there. Annie Leigh has her studio there, and there is a possibility of one or two others moving in over the next few months.

Something that I've particularly enjoyed recently has been leading two short study retreats at White Row, our retreat cottage near Seaford in Sussex, for the community. There were just six or seven of us each time; the first group studied the Eleven Positive Mental Events, from a recent Mitrata, and the second, the Perfection of Wisdom from the Bodhicaryavatara. We studied in the morning and had most of the afternoon free for walking and relaxing. The Downs are right behind the cottage, and the sea is about 25 minutes' walk away. The combination of the surroundings with study and the small number of people was excellent. If there's time between house-hunting and cushion-making, we'll be going again soon.

MANDALA WEST LONDON

West London
Report from Ratnavira

This spring there is definitely news to report from West London. In fact, by the time you read this, the face of FWBO West London will have changed substantially from that which has become familiar over the past year or so. Change has been precipitated by the news that the community here, which is mainly responsible for running the centre, will have to leave Ratnadvipa very soon. It is a short-life property, and the council want it back. This news has forced all those concerned to ask themselves the question, 'Do I want to be part of a new community in West London?' The outcome is that a smaller community, consisting of Anand-ajyoti, Ratnavira, and Malcolm Webb, will be looking for somewhere to live much nearer to the centre than the present Ratnadvipa, a move which should help the fortunes of the centre considerably. The most notable absence will be that of Kamalashila, who is going to Tyn y ddol, and who has been involved as Chairman in West London since its inception. We all wish him well.

To add to the changes, there will be the moving of the Amara-

vati community to West London, as soon as they have found a suitable place to live. This should mean a lot more energy round our centre in the near future. All in all the situation is

very open-ended; anything could happen. There is a feeling of anticipation, freshness, and expansion amongst those who are staying. The future is ours to make. May it be a good one.



The Mandala team, as it was

GRDHRAKUTA MANCHESTER

Grdhrakuta
Report from Suvajra

At the time of writing spring seems to have sprung, warmth is in the air and colour is bursting into what were, only a few weeks ago, snow-clad gardens. The atmosphere gives one the feeling of change and of better things to come.

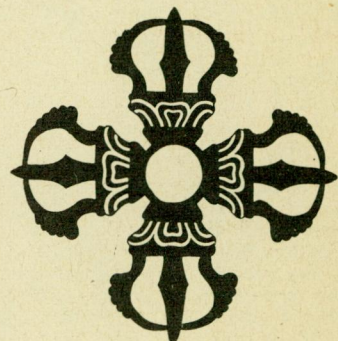
Our hopes though are not entirely based on climatic changes but on the probable products of the hard work and efforts that have been given to the situation here in Manchester. After spending months of searching for suitable premises for a new centre/community we seem to have found one for which we can obtain a mortgage, and though presently all the financial wheelings and dealings are incomplete it looks as though we should secure it within a matter of weeks. The eight-roomed house is semi-detached and situated in the southern half of the city, in a quiet residential area, near a busy shopping area. There will be quite a lot of work to be done on the house, such as damp-proofing, reflooring, rebuilding, decorating etc, but in spite of this we hope that we could move in and be holding classes sometime in the summer.

The winter Beginners and Meditation and Dharma courses are almost finished and in a few weeks we should find forthcoming a new 'regulars' class. The present lively 'regulars' class is already too large to accommodate the influx and so any merging of classes will have to wait 'til we move to our new premises. Working on the new house could be a common meeting ground for the two, and should provide a good positive basis for improved communication between Order members, mitras and Friends.

Our contact with the surrounding community is also spreading. Sagaramati has given talks to two local vegetarian societies and to High School religious studies classes. We have also been holding some meditation classes for an alternative community in Colne, a small town not far from Manchester.

On a different level Rainbow Cleaning, our carpet cleaning service, is also providing contact with the community and, despite the fact that business is slow, it does look as though new business will build up from the reputation that at present it is earning. There does seem to be room to expand the business to provide a wider service of decorating and general handiwork. These are however projects for the future which, at the moment, are only a few castles we are building in the air; great things have small beginnings!

HERUKA GLASGOW



Report from Ajita

Heruka right now feels a bit like Vajrapani, because on all fronts simultaneously we are pushing hard for breakthroughs, and the momentum seems to be gathering force by the day.

Generally, things at the centre have been very strong. The classes this winter have been well attended, and Friends

seem to be putting more and more into things. Fund-raising over the past two months has been very good, with W. A. M., benefit dinners, sponsored walks, appeals, and a flag-day which raised £450.

Also at this moment we are trying to find and buy another house, which will be used as a second community, due to the mounting number of Friends who have asked to join a Friends' community.

On the livelihood scene, 'Caring Friends' seem to be expanding at a frightening rate - frightening because we have only one skilled gardener, Joss, with Susidhi as assistant-pruner. So we are on the lookout for green-fingered gentlemen or women who want a job with the co-op. Our other project, INK screen-printing and design service, is slowly but surely expanding by the week. Until now, Dhammarati and Derek have been the 'workers'; with the help of an experienced layout artist and printer who has joined INK, a more professionally competent business is evolving. They are also considering expanding into offset-litho printing. And meanwhile we are still looking for somewhere to set up a wholefood shop. We are still waiting to hear whether our offer for premises in Sauchiehall Street will be accepted; if it is, it could mean a whole new Centre for the Glasgow chapter.

HELSINKI FINLAND

Report from Vajrabodhi

Activity in Helsinki is very much centred around the Centre. Various classes and meetings are the backbone of the whole movement here. Publishing is a substantial part of our activity; we publish our Buddhist magazine: the AMRYM, in xeroxed form, as well as various Buddhist texts, and translations of the Ven. Sangharakshita's writings. This work is hampered by the fact that everything must be translated, and we are in chronically short supply of competent translators and editors.

During the now ending winter - the last snows are slowly melting here in Helsinki - the FWBO has finally gone 'legal'. This means that the Ministry of Justice has approved our application to register as a 'registered society promoting an ideology'. The official name is 'lansimaisen buddhalaisen veljeskunnan ystävät, FWBO ry', which - not surprisingly - means 'Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, FWBO, registered society'.

The organisation had its first Annual General Meeting in March. According to the Constitution all full members with the right to vote in the meetings must be committed Buddhists, and of course approved by the Council.

Thus we can't expect a very extensive membership list to materialise. The Movement is expanding, however, and we expect the number of Order members to grow in the not too distant future.

VAJRADHATU NORWICH

Report from Devamitra

"The recital was all too short for one member of the audience." Thus the local music critic concluded his review of Paul Simmonds' harpsichord recital given in the music room at the Assembly House, Norwich on March 17th and organised by the Friends. Perhaps our critic was not the only one to cherish this sentiment; the audience responded warmly and would, perchance, agree further that during this "recital of clarity and charm" Mr. Simmonds demonstrated that, "He was clearly in love with the instrument and able to bring out its sparkling luminous tones." The programme included works by Bach, Handel and Scarlatti. We are hoping to bring Paul back to Norwich later in the year for further performances.

From the art of music we move on to the art of conjuring: "There were at least fifty of 'em in Gentleman's Walk". Actually there were three. "There must be about fifty of you lot about town." Still an exaggeration, yet nearer the truth: at no time were there more than fourteen of us beaded in sandwich boards, handing out windhorse stickers and shaking our collecting tins within the city of Norwich. The illusion was created by neither mass hypnosis nor mass hysteria, but by a combination of bold publicity and astute organisation. "There's plenty in this country what wants collectin' for", complained a haggard old woman. We were collecting for the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Cultural Institute School which is run by Dhardo Rinpoche in Kalimpong. "How magnificently obscure!", responded one hearty gentleman as he drew a pound note out of his wallet and placed it in the tin. March 3rd is a chilly date in the calendar, but we were blessed with an abnormally mild day and raised £268. We will be conjuring again on September 15th.

Fundraising is a necessary preoccupation within the FWBO - we are always short of money. At the turn of the year we were negotiating to purchase a large property in the centre of Norwich, but this finally fell through because of lack of funds and insufficient fundraising potential. However, we have committed ourselves instead to raising money for FWBO India. Our main thrust in this direction will be the operation of our mobile kitchen at various venues from May until September. This year we may be travelling as far afield as Bristol, Swansea and



Flag-day in Norwich

Billingham. Elsewhere on the catering front we have changed the name of our vegetarian restaurant from 'Rainbow' to 'Oranges' in compliance with the wish of the owner of the 'Rainbow Wholefood Shop' who did not wish to be mistakenly associated with the FWBO. We are also investigating larger premises more worthy of our catering skills and are intending to establish an outside catering company. Another enterprise currently planned is a furniture-making business.

At the Norwich Meditation Centre attendance at our classes dwindled with the increasing severity of the winter and the onslaught of minor illnesses, but as the spring approached there was a renewal of enthusiasm and a rise in the level of inspiration. Visits by Vajradaka and Dhammadinna were greatly appreciated by the mitras with whom they had contact; Nagabodhi came up from London to give a talk on 'conditioning' which was both well received and well attended; a number of short term guests and visitors stayed with the community at Vajrakula; the question of blaspheming in public was hotly discussed and plans for the formation of a women's community later in the year were made.

O thou with dewy locks, who
lookest down
Thro' the clear windows of the
morning, turn
Thine angel eyes upon our
western isle,
Which in full choir hails thy
approach, O Spring!
(Wm. Blake)

Over the summer, the mobile kitchen that is a notable part of Vajrakula's business enterprises will be present and functioning at a number of country fairs. For the information of patrons, these events are here listed:
FAIR DATES
MOBILE KITCHEN

27 May: Oaksme May Fair
8-10 June: Bristol Fair
21-23 June: Clastonbury Fair
14-15 July: Norwich Ling Fair
5-6 August: Stour Valley Fire Fair
10-12 August: Polgooth Fair
17-19 August: Penzance Fair
21-23 August: Torrington Fair
25-27 August: Exeter

Anyone wishing to help on any of these occasions will be welcome. For further details, contact John Roche at Vajrakula. (0603-27034)

GOLGONOOZA PUBLICATIONS

Since the report from Windhorse Publications in the last issue of the Newsletter, building and decorating work has been in train here at our Roman Road offices. The Design Studio on the top floor of the building has been re-designed. There is now a dark-room, and a film-editing room, as well as the existing layout and design room proper. But whereas the carpentry and plastering is almost complete, the painting is not yet begun. This has meant that the team of workers who have so assiduous-

ly produced this magazine have for the most part been operating from a few square feet of unruddled floor in Golgonooza's common room, and one half of the editor's bedroom. We all look forward eagerly to an alleviation of the scarcely imaginable difficulties this has caused. When the Studio does become habitable again, if not before, it is hoped that a co-operative can be formed around the design and photographic enterprises. The establishment of Windhorse Design as an efficient, professionally organised business structure, when it happens, will be a wonderful thing.

Within about a month of our going to press, Bhante's new book, *Peace is a Fire*, should be on sale. It is, needless to say, highly recommended reading, containing a generous selection of his sayings, together with brief extracts from his lectures, seminars, and books, all in a portable anthology. Also included are photographs of Bhante's Indian and Tibetan teachers. Production costs are being met by FWBO Surrey.

Other forth-coming projects, as mentioned in the last Newsletter, include the new Puja book, an omnibus edition of the early Mitratas, and a book version of Bhante's New Zealand lectures. These too will have to be paid for, as will many other ideas we have in mind. All we need is as much co-operation and assistance as possible. You can help not only by a financial contribution, but also by joining in with some of the work, whether it be typing, collating, or distributing our publications. And of course you can always help by subscribing to the Newsletter. One year's subscription costs £2 if you live in the UK, and £2.50 if you live overseas.

Nigel Seller

NEW ZEALAND

It has been nine months since Auckland made a report in the Newsletter, and in that time a great change has taken place. To those here over this period, the changes were imperceptible, but your correspondent, returning recently to these shores after a year away, has seen a very real development. What is that development? Well, the Auckland FWBO has grown up, blossomed from what was, at its inception over four years ago, a small public city Centre into the recognizable trinity of Centre, Community, and Co-operative, the form which all FWBOs are assuming throughout Britain.

In June of last year a co-operative men's community was formed at Hakanoa Street in central Auckland; this was the basis for several fund-raising projects over 1978: money was required for the further renovation of the Centre, for Bhante's airfare, and for on-going expenses, as well as the pledge of £1000 for Tyn y ddol, for Dhardo Rimpoche's school, and for Poona. An enormous

challenge! - for the small community and for all the active Friends. But it was met vigorously, firstly through house painting, decorating, joinery (restaurant tables and bookshop fixtures), and secondly through 'The Great Jack-in-the-Box Job'. This one project in October was to make 8000 Jack-in-the-Boxes to be used as a promotion to retailers by a manufacturer of fibreglass insulation 'batts' for houses, and proved very successful. Most importantly it galvanized the energy of all those attending the Centre. A number of people would come to the Centre for the first time to a talk or class; then the following day or weekend they would be in on the assembly line with such a wide array of other types of people that one could only wonder what could bring them all together to work, often very long intensive hours, on jack-in-the-boxes. On several occasions we had over twenty people working: young men, young ladies, kids and their friends, toddlers, babies and pensioners, and virtually every type of person conceivable in between. It really was an amazing situation for personal contact which under 'normal' circumstances could take weeks or months.

We made approximately \$6000 (£3000 plus) from the jack-in-the-boxes but in many ways this was secondary to other benefits in terms of inspiration, confidence to achieve goals, and spiritual contact in working with other people. Energy bent on the good. The need for money is not our greatest disadvantage, it is our greatest advantage.

The confidence and skills gained in this and the other projects helped in the tackling of a more complex project - the extensive renovation of the house at 46 Sarsfield Street where the Community moved last January. This and the overhaul of a Rover for Bhante's travels in New Zealand have occupied the Community fully over the last three months.



The great jack-in-the-box job

Also the national ten-day Order-and-Mitra Retreat was held in January at Camp Sladdin near Auckland with people attending from all three New Zealand Centres. The immediate goal for the work team over the next two months is further renovation of the Centre in time for Wesak and the courses after Bhante's lectures.

The firm foundation of the Centre, the Community, and the Co-operative has necessitated names for all three: the Centre is *Suvarnadhatu* (literally 'Realm of Gold' or, by extension, 'Realm of Golden Light'); the Community is *Suvarnaketu* ('Golden Comet'); ... and the Co-operative? Well, of course, 'The Golden Light Co-operative'!

At the time of writing, Bhante has just completed a two-week stay in Auckland, at *Suvarnaketu*, seeing mostly Order members

and Mitras, leading one discussion evening and a weekend seminar (on *The Sutra of Forty-Two Sections*). After a week in Wellington he will return to Auckland for the Ordination Retreat in mid-April. Then, after the retreat he and Purna will spend two weeks in the South Island, staying at the Christchurch Centre and visiting friends in Dunedin. They will spend a few days on the West Coast and in the Marlborough area before returning to Auckland. There, on May 8th, 15th, and 22nd Bhante will give a series of public talks entitled *A New Buddhist Movement: The Meaning of the FWBO - (1) The Individual and the World Today, (2) Western Buddhists and Eastern Buddhism, and (3) Commitment and Spiritual Community*.

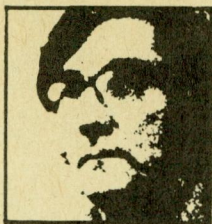
Bhante's visit will conclude with an Order study retreat and he will depart from these shores for India and Hong Kong on May 24th.



National retreat: December '78

Bhanté Goes East

India
●●●●



The two months leading up to Bhante's visit were spent on the one hand working intensely with the mitras here, and on the other trying desperately to wake people up from the deadness of their Buddhist practice over the past 12-15 years. In Pune there are supposed to be approximately 300,000 Buddhists, just under a third of the total population. If that was really the case then Pune would be a Pure Land for Buddhists. But it's not. So we wanted to stir people so that they would at least be a bit more alive when Bhante came. And then there was the organisation - a newsletter to get out, publicity, lectures, and so many other things. Learning to work together is rarely easy, and in Pune it is certainly not easy. The Maharashtrians are known for their divisiveness and, as Buddhists, this is one of the largest hurdles they have to overcome.

Several days before Bhante's arrival I spent a day and a half walking round Bombay trying to find a hotel for him, eventually finding one for him with a room overlooking the harbour. However one cannot expect everything; it would have been hard to get a better view of Bombay, but there was no running water!

At last, after several delays, Bhante arrived, and after spending two days in Bombay, adjusting and meeting old friends, we went to Pune, where a full programme had been planned for the next two weeks. We were joined for the taxi-ride to Pune by Upasaka Virabhadra, who was over from England working in a hospital in Delhi. He had been there for six weeks, and was now to do similar work in Pune. Eventually we would like to have a medical mission operating in Maharashtra, and Virabhadra, being very interested in this, chose India for the optional part of his medical studies. Pune is 2000 feet high, and for much of the journey from Bombay one is climbing through what are known as the Western Ghats: very rugged and steep hills, with excellent views.

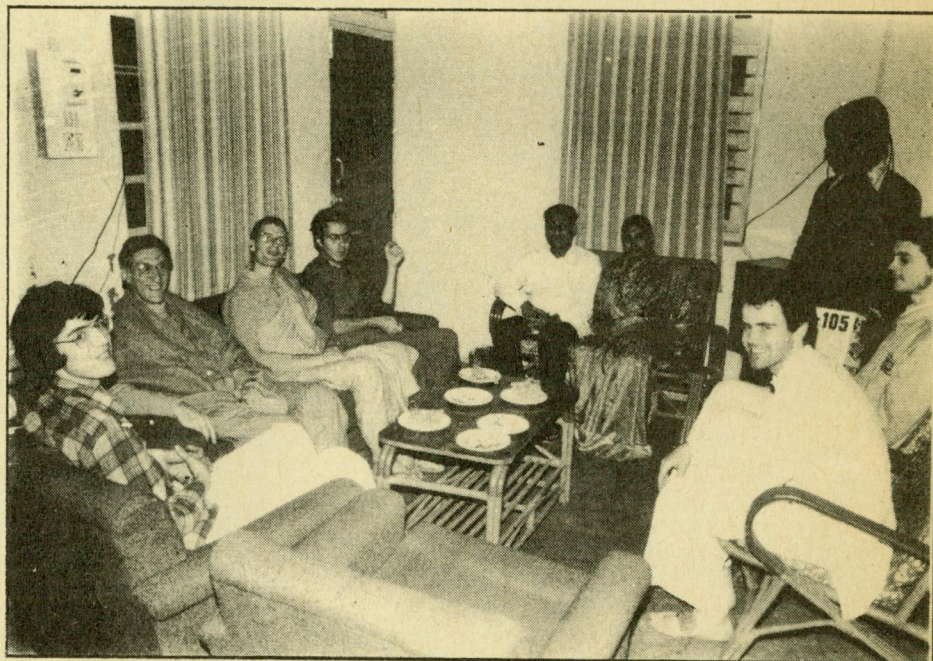
During the first week in Pune there were three mitra groups, two full-length lectures, visits to five different localities, and one Punyanamodana ceremony. With the mitras, Bhante introduced himself and talked about our work in England. We discussed conditions in India, and how we should approach them. Finally, Bhante went into the meaning of several key words that we use in the

Movement in the West, such as 'individual', and 'commitment'. It is often very difficult to find really suitable Marathi words to translate such terms. Bhante went into the different levels at which people go for Refuge. Commitment, he said, meant the 'effective' going for Refuge (see Sanghadevi's article in Newsletter 41). Most Buddhists in India have only gone for Refuge on the cultural level. There is nothing wrong in this, but one can go so much deeper and it is this sort of commitment that

and the offering of numerous garlands, he gave his talk, which was always on a topic of immediate significance. At the first meeting he talked about our centres in the UK, especially Sukhavati, and said that it was possible because of metta.

If there is no metta, then there is no work for the Dharma, indeed, no Dharma. After describing the Metta Bhavana practice he said that this was the basis for the development of Prajna, and then touched briefly on the three levels of Prajna. It is not enough, he said, to call oneself a Buddhist; one has to be a New Man, a Buddha.

The second meeting, immediately following this, was quite different. It was held at Range Hills, a very large 'Budd-



Bhante, Order members, and Friends gather in Pune

the FWBO is trying to foster.

In three evenings we visited five different localities. Most were outside, in the centre of large Buddhist communities. There would be a special, brightly coloured stage with a shrine - all very well lit. The crowds stretched off into the distance. Because it was dark it was hard to see how far back it went, but there were probably between 500 and 1000 at each meeting. Something a Westerner cannot help but notice is the way the men and the women always sit separately in such meetings. And one can't but contrast the colourful clothes and the general positivity of people at these meetings with the drabness, not only in dress but also in emotions, that one is used to in the UK. I couldn't help thinking what a wonderful thing it was that, through the Dharma, people from such different cultural backgrounds could come together and communicate. I look forward to many more friends from the West coming out here and having this experience.

Bhante and I were seated on the platform, and after the recitation of the Refuges and Precepts, an introduction,

hist' locality, and an area he used often to visit. Our car was stopped a few hundred yards before the venue, under a decorated arch of welcome, and some ladies welcomed Bhante in the traditional manner. When we arrived at the venue we were escorted to the platform down a corridor of young men, all holding candles and chanting over and over again, 'Gautam Buddha, Jai! Bodhisattva Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, Jai! Maha Sthavira Sangharakshita, Jai!' This was repeated when we left, which helped our departure considerably as at the previous meetings we had been held up by so many people coming forward and paying their respects to Bhante in the traditional manner, by touching his feet.

In Range Hills there are so many Buddhists, but there is nothing of a Dharmic nature going on because of conflicts between the various groups. Bhante picked up on the situation immediately and gave a talk on virya. He started by talking about Sukhavati, and the Windhorse, and went into the symbolism of the Windhorse and other animals, used traditionally to describe the qualities of the Buddha. People particularly apprec-

iated the image of the elephant who walks steadily through the village while dogs bark and then quickly run away. In Indian Buddhist circles today, he said, people find it very easy to act like dogs, but very few can act like elephants.

In other localities he talked about things that attract us in the West to Buddhism, and the practices that we find most beneficial, like meditation, work, study, communication and Kalyana Mitrata. All the talks were interwoven with stories from the Buddha's life, and all were, needless to say, very much appreciated. Although nominally Buddhists, many people feel that real Buddhism is not for them, but only for the bhikshus. Bhante always spoke in a way that was meaningful to all of those who were listening.

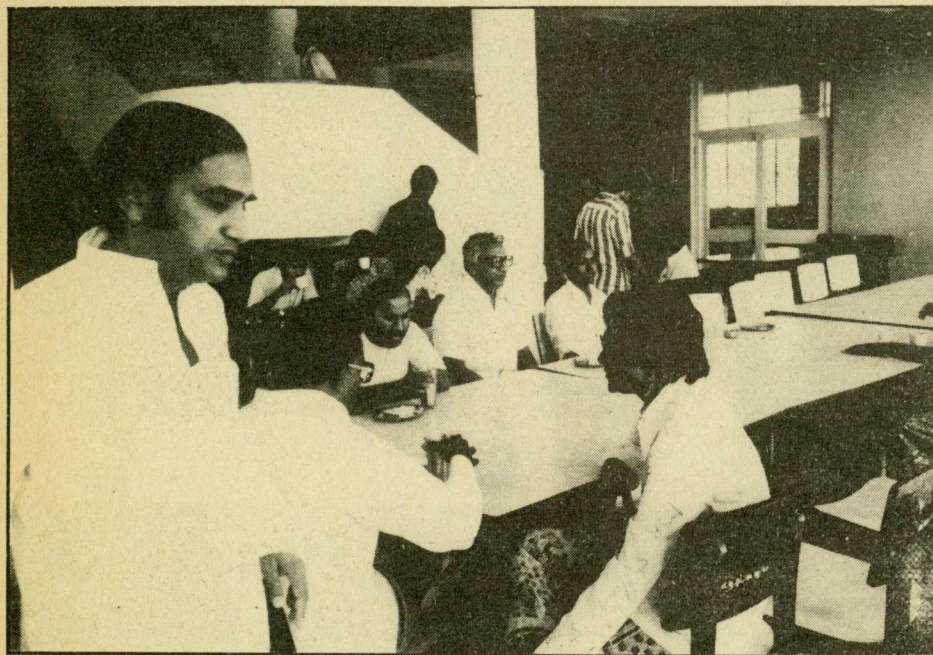
One evening was taken up with a

one at Mr Waghmaré's house, inside which the women were wailing loudly, while outside the men just sat speechless with tears in their eyes. Everything around, oneself included, seemed so insubstantial. We were in touch, existentially and spiritually, at least for a little while, with a completely different dimension. But although there was anguish, pain of separation, and confusion, there was not the slightest trace of morbidity which is so common on such occasions in the West. We joined the procession down to the burning ground. The men were at the front, the women behind. The body was carried on a trolley in a glass box. The burning ground was next to the river; a beautiful situation, spoiled only by the tin roof built over the official burning pits. The body was placed on wood, and covered with dung cakes, ghee, and kerosine. A

seeing the cub with them, eating grass and so on, was horrified. He went up to him and asked him the meaning of his behaviour. The cub replied, 'baa-aa, but I am a sheep, baa-aa'. This was too much for the tiger, who took the cub by the scruff of the neck to a jungle pool and made him look at his reflection in the water. The cub then realised that he was not a sheep; he did not have to spend the rest of his life following blindly and eating grass, but could become like the fully-grown tiger. The sheep represents, he said, how most people live their lives, while the tiger represents the Buddha. The cub represents us as potential and growing individuals, and the jungle pool the Dharma. Then he said that there hasn't been only one tiger; there have been others. There was one in India not so long ago: Dr Ambedkar, who also took people to the Dharma, who also showed people what they could become. In thanking Bhante for the lecture, the Chairman said that there was yet another tiger, and that was Bhante.

In 'The Path of the Dharma', Bhante went into, among other things, the Dhamma Vandana, and the seven stages of Purification. He showed how the Dharma was open to all, whoever and wherever they may be, that it was progressive, and that it enabled one to lead a truly human life.

The next day we went off for a short retreat with the mitras and a few invited friends. There were 33 of us, including five from Ahmedabad, and one young and very open Indian Bhikshu. There were, then, people from New Zealand, England, Scotland, Maharashtra and Gujarat, which was quite appropriate since during the retreat two Indian friends, one from Pune, and one from Ahmedabad, became members of the Order (see separate report - ed). Mr Maheshkar always used to translate for Bhante in Pune (where he gave over 200 lectures), and many other parts of Maharashtra, and he once spent two weeks with Bhante in Kalimpong. Since we started our activities here he has been doing much of the translation work, for which he has a very rare gift. He has been of invaluable help, and without him we would have been able to accomplish very little. Although almost fifty, he is one of those people who do not seem to age, but remain young, in both body and heart. Bakul Vakil had been keeping in touch with Bhante's activities, and with those of the FWBO through the Newsletter, and when he heard that I was coming out in 1977, he wrote to Bhante, asking him to encourage me to visit Ahmedabad. I spent a few days there in January 1978, and three weeks last October, with Padmavajra, when Bakul became a mitra. Bhante infected people in such a way, when he was here, and it was clear to me that Bakul was one of those who would never 'recover', - he would just have to go on and on in the Dharma life. He has been the secretary of the Gujarat Buddhist Society for a number of years, and has edited their Newsletter 'Dhammachakra'. These two ordinations seemed to me to be the beginnings of the integration between Bhante's work in India, and his work in the West.



On retreat

Punyanamodana ceremony: a ceremony usually held a week or two after a death. This was held for Mr Waghmaré, a mitra who had died two weeks earlier. He was not more than 45, and left a wife and three children - none of them working. I don't think I have ever experienced such anguish as I saw in the members of his family at the funeral.

Not only was the emotional pillar of the family lost, but the only earning member - and earning very little at that. Life becomes very difficult with little or no money. Children have to leave school and get work, any work, however poorly paid. If one does that there is very little hope of improvement in life.

His death was so sudden and unexpected. Life seems so much more tenuous and precarious here. He was himself a very sincere man, and one of those rare people who are free from any kind of maliciousness. He was very regular in his practice, and a great loss to the germinating spiritual community here. Padmavajra and I attended the funeral. We joined every-

short ceremony was held, after which the fire was lit. While the body was burning, a number of us gave short talks about Mr Waghmaré. And then home.

Bhante was very happy to take this ceremony, and it was attended by many mitras and Friends. I will say no more, since there is a separate report on this.

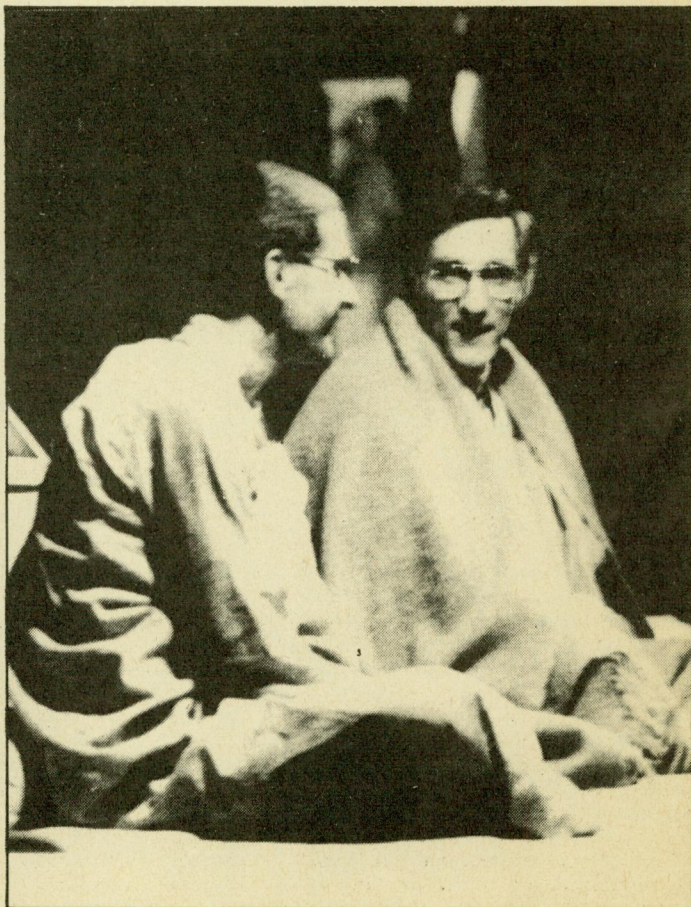
The two public lectures that Bhante gave that week were entitled: 'Buddha - Man or God', and, 'The Path of the Dharma'. Both were very appropriate to the situation. Buddhists in India have some problems that are similar to those of Buddhists in the West. They have converted from a religion that talks in terms of man, and 'God', and it is in these terms that people tend to try to see the Buddha. Bhante concluded his first lecture with a story about a flock of sheep who happened to come across a tiger cub that had lost its parents. Sheep, as we know, will always stick together, and eat grass all day, and so the cub was brought up to do likewise, and to say, 'baa-aa'. One day a fully-grown tiger came across the sheep, and



Bhante interpreted in Pune



Jayawardene, a mitra from Ahmedabad



Lokamitra with the Ven..Sangharakshita

Back in Pune we had a full programme to complete. We had the inaugural meeting of our charity, 'Trailokya Bauddha Maha Sangha, Sahayak Gana, Pune' (FWBO Pune).

We gave a showing of slides of Sukhavati, and other centres in the UK, and a few of Sravasti. All were very impressed and inspired by the work we are doing, and cannot wait for that sort of thing to be done here.

Then there was Bhante's last lecture, 'The Future of the Sangha'. In this he explained how we have managed to be successful in the West by putting the emphasis on 'Going for Refuge'. He showed that Buddhism could only make progress through the Sangha; and

Sangha means not Bhikshus, but all who are fully going for Refuge. He quoted from the Buddhist scriptures, and from Dr Ambedkar's writings. Dr Ambedkar saw and said - he was a man who said what he thought - that the Bhikshu Sangha as it existed at that time was useless for the propagation of the Dharma. Bhante concluded by going over some of the points which are essential for the Sangha to function successfully.

So ended Bhante's first visit here for 12 years. During those two weeks I was very busy, and hardly had any time to stop and reflect. People now realise that Bhante has not forgotten them. In fact he has returned to India, and is now in a better position to help the situation than he was before. And the fact that he has returned, that he has reaffirmed his commitment to help these people has led to a great sigh of relief in the hearts of many. As I have said before, he is the one person who, many feel, can help the situation. And now he has returned.

Besides having Bhante with us, Padma-vajra and I were joined by Priyananda, Virabhadra, Padmapani, and Yuvaraj, all out from the UK. Besides being very spiritually nourishing for Padmavajra and myself, it meant that people could actually see and talk to fully committed upasakas (usually regarded as a contradiction in terms) instead of just hearing about them. Here, many old people come along to meetings, and not so many young people. Buddhism, as practised in Maharashtra does not satisfy their thirst for change and development. Bhante said that in the West he had concentrated on young people, saying, 'Lokamitra is young, Priyananda is younger, Virabhadra is younger still, and Padmavajra is even younger.' And this really impressed people; if you can attract the young - and keep them - then you must really be successful.

So now we have to build on the foundations laid by Bhante. There are so many areas we have to work in, but for the time being we have to concentrate on work with the mitras, and on finding a centre. Without mitras developing into Order members we will not really accomplish anything here. And without a proper centre here we will not be able to function properly. At present we have been given the use of a two-roomed bungalow in a suburb of Pune which has served us very well, albeit only temporary, and really not big enough. Bhante wants us to get a large bungalow with

some land around it, so we can have a good training centre in congenial surroundings. The difficulties are, firstly, the scarcity and price of land and buildings in Pune. I thought London was bad, but relatively speaking, Pune is much worse. Secondly we are dependent for all our funds, and will be for the next few years, on our centres and well-wishers outside India. Most of the people we are working with are very poor, and some cannot afford £1.00 for a weekend retreat, so that we have to support them. (If you would like to help the work being done out in India, please do so. There is an account, called, 'FWBO India', based at Sukhavati to which you can send contributions - ed).

After Bhante left Bombay, I went straight to Aurangabad, where I was to attend a presentation of certificates to students of Milind College. The certificates were given to those who had successfully completed a course on Dr Ambedkar's book, *The Buddha and his Dharma*. Milind college was started by Dr Ambedkar in the 1940's for students from the 'backward classes'. Now there are over 9,000 students there, most of them Buddhists, at least in name, and so I was very keen to take this opportunity to meet a lot of young people. In the afternoon I gave a talk to about 400 students and lecturers, and in the evening gave a talk in the town, under a statue of Dr Ambedkar, at a road junction. I thought there were about 600 people there (although others said that there were 3,000!) Both talks were very well received, and I felt, in fact, that we could start work there immediately; people seemed to welcome us with open arms. The town has 40,000 Buddhists, and is excellently situated in Maharashtra, being half-way between Bombay and Nagpur, and only six hours from Pune. It is the nearest main town to the world-famous Buddhist caves at Ajanta and Ellora, and accommodation would, it seems, be no problem at all; nor would venues for classes, lectures and retreats. However, a 'bird in the hand being worth two in the bush', and there being so few hands out here anyway, we do really have to concentrate our efforts in Pune.

I met up with Padmapani, also out from England, in Aurangabad, and he accompanied me to Ahmedabad, where I spent three weeks preparing for Bhante's visit in June. There are some people there who seem to be very much in touch with the spirit of the Dharma, and are definitely developing as individuals. Of course there have been the usual personality and policy clashes, but these have not had the disintegrating effect that they can have because of the deep commitment to, and enthusiasm for, the Dharma that some of them do seem to have.

I held a study group for some who had been on our last retreat there, on Bhante's lecture 'A Method of Personal Development', which took five nights. There were a few talks in different localities, a weekend seminar on 'spiritual community' at Gandhinagar, and a weekend retreat. All were successful, but especially the retreat, which was attended by 46 including Padmapani and myself.

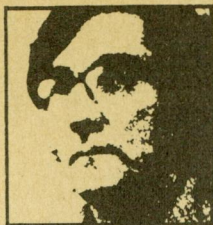
On it we held three mitra ceremonies, so there are now, in Ahmedabad, one Order member, five mitras, and several Friends who are interested in becoming mitras.

Ahmedabad, as I have said before, is a very positive and colourful town. The colours of the clothes are very bright, and the dress styles varied. Until recent times, each side-street was a dead-end, and would be inhabited by the members of only one community. There were often gates closing them off from the main street, protecting them from disturbances. These streets remain, although the communal pattern of living has to a large extent started to break up. Ahmedabad is a textile centre, and is sometimes called the 'Manchester' of India. Walking around the streets one has to be careful not to walk on cloth that has been laid out to dry. One sees dyeing, hand-printing, and folding, all going on in the street. This is the place where Gandhi started his 'Freedom' movement. Although most Buddhists in India disagree, quite understandably, with some of his views, his presence is still felt in quite a positive way in the town. Above all else, there is quite a high level of culture. People take initiative and can organise. So Ahmedabad is fast becoming my favourite town in India, and it's certainly an excellent place for the development of the Dharma because there is so much in the culture, and in the social environment that can be drawn upon.

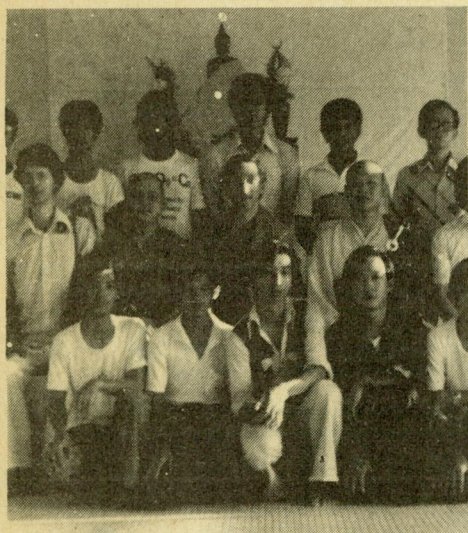
On my way back to Pune I spent one night in Bombay, where I gave a lecture and two short talks - this being the first work I have done in Bombay. When I was there with Bhante we met two keen young Buddhist lads, and as a result had agreed to give the talks. The first was at the Japanese Buddhist temple in Worli, well-known for its beautiful frescoes. After that we went into the Chawl area of Worli, where live about 35,000 Buddhists. It's one of the most densely populated areas of Bombay, and quite often three (Indian size) families will live in one room - one in each corner, with the water outlet in the fourth corner. I gave my lecture at a vihara, built at the edge of a large area of open ground - surrounded by a number of these chawls. This ground seemed large enough for four or five football pitches. After the talk we walked the length of it, and it was covered with bodies. There is just no room in the chawls for them all; I meant to ask what happens in the rainy season. The talks went down very well indeed, and one day we are going to have to approach Bombay. Because of the poverty, the terrible living conditions, and the association of Buddhism with politics, it's not going to be easy. But, on the other hand, it's a very large town, bursting with life, and I have a feeling that we will come across people, more positive and ready to commit themselves to the Three Jewels than elsewhere in Maharashtra.

Now I'm back in Pune where Padmavajra has been keeping up a programme of five classes a week. We have now to work towards Bhante's second visit here, which we expect will be some time towards the end of May. ○

Malaysia



Bhante and I left Bombay in the early morning of Wednesday 7th March, bound for Penang. In the air we had time to reflect on the last three weeks in India, time which had passed very quickly with the short, yet vivid impressions of the country, and the warm hospitality of the Indian people. On to Malaysia Stepping out of the aircraft in the early afternoon we were enveloped by the humid atmosphere. Three Malaysian friends were there to greet us, and to drive us to the Malaysian Buddhist Association Institute near the centre of George Town, the city of Penang Island. During our four-day visit we were hosted by the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia. Founded in 1970, and affiliated to the MBA, this organisation co-ordinates the activities of Buddhist youths in Malaysia through a number of member organisations.



Bhante with members of the Kedah Buddhist Association

One activity associated with the YBAM is the Young Buddhist Cultural Service, situated in offices in downtown George Town. Here, on the evening of our arrival, we were formally introduced to the members of the YBAM Council. This particular service is interesting in how it in some ways resembles a small FWBO centre - with facilities for study and meditation, and involvement in right livelihood through a typing business. That night we stayed in the MBA Institute in Burmah Road. This is a complex of buildings, being mainly a large, modern hall with a library, classrooms, and dormitories for the Institute's courses of Buddhist study. Attached is an older temple, the Triple Wisdom Hall, and a small monastery for the Chinese monks.

The Malaysian population is made up principally of native Malays and Chinese. The majority of the Chinese are Buddhist and there are large communities of them

in all the Malaysian cities. On each of the three nights of our stay in Malaysia, Bhante gave talks to three of these communities - in Alor Star, in Penang, and in Ipoh.

The day following our arrival, in the late afternoon, upasaka Shin Yung drove us on the car ferry to the mainland, and then north along the coast, through the rice fields and rubber plantations to Alor Star, in Kedah state. Here we were hosted by the Kedah Buddhist Association Youth Circle, and that evening, in the hall attached to the Thai temple, Bhante gave a talk on his own life, and the origin and meaning of the WBO.

We left Alor Star the next morning, early so as to avoid travelling in the noon-day heat. That evening, in the Institute Hall of the MBA, Bhante gave an outline of the development of Buddhism in India from the Buddha's day to the time of its disappearance there and its re-emergence in the last 100 years. Particularly Bhante told our Malaysian friends about the new Poona centre and the need which the Indian Buddhists feel for contact with other Buddhists throughout the world. This talk and that of the previous night were translated very capably by Shin Yung - into the Mandarin dialect at Alor Star and into the Hokkien dialect in Penang.

On the Saturday we travelled once again across the channel separating Penang from the mainland and drove up away from the sea, again through lush plantation and forest into the Highland area to the city of Ipoh in Perak state. This city is one of the largest in Malaysia, with a population of 200 000, and is wealthy from the cultivation of groundnuts and rubber and from tin mining. Bhante gave his talk to the Ipoh Buddhist Youth Circle; the intelligent questions and discussion that followed showed that some interest in the FWBO and our approach had been stimulated. We slept that night in a temple the name of which translates as 'The Dwelling Place of Kwan Yin', and left early the next morning for Penang.

The Sunday was our last day in Malaysia, and we were able to do a little sightseeing. There are several large and beautiful Buddhist temples in the city, most dating back to the turn of the century, but perhaps the most impressive is the one that we visited that day - the Kek Lok Si Temple with its towering 'Pagoda of Ten Thousand Buddhas'. We flew out of Penang that afternoon, both very happy to have made this brief yet rewarding contact with our Malaysian friends.

On to Australia, arriving after an eight-hour flight at Sydney Airport, there to be greeted by old friends of Bhante's, the von Krusen-stiernas, and Mark Lane, a Friend from London. In comparison to our stay in Penang, in Sydney Bhante had a fairly quiet time, having just one formal meeting - with members of the New South Wales Buddhist Society in Walker Street - a question and answer session attended by about twenty people. On Thursday 15th March we completed the last lap of our journey - a short flight over the Tasman Sea - to Auckland.

INDIA- First Ordinations

Sinhagad ('The Lion-fort') is on the top of one of the Western ghats (steps), the mountain range that climbs out of the dust of Maharashtra. Sinhagad is the name of a fort of Shivaji, the famous Maratha king and soldier who waged perpetual war against the Muslims invading his country.

Sinhagad is now a popular picnic spot. The ruins of the old fort are still there, but, as time goes on they merge more and more into the even surface of the mountains and rocks they were built on. At the very top of Sinhagad there are a few bungalows owned either by wealthy individuals or by various government departments. Interspersed with the bungalows are well-kept flower beds. It's a bright colourful place, and cool as well because a stiff breeze blows, especially in the morning and evening; so refreshing with the hot sun beating down.

A familiar sight on the top are the 'dahi wallahs' (curd vendors). Old peasant women, their single-colour Maharashtran saris hitched up, carrying on their heads wicker trays filled with clay pots that are full of thick and creamy curds, walk around looking for tourists. They are eager to sell their curd and lassi, which the hot and thirsty tourist is equally eager to buy after his long climb to Sinhagad.

Perhaps the most memorable thing about Sinhagad though, is its magnificent views. Looking East one sees a flat tableland. A brown plain, desolate save for the occasional straggling huts of a village, stunted trees and bushes and a solitary bus on the grey road. Beyond that a vast expanse of slate-grey water. At night looking in this direction I could see a million fairy-lights twinkling in the distance, as if a rain of stars had fallen - it was Pune 15 miles away.

To the South and West one has an even more impressive view. Across the valley rise the khaki slopes of the ghats, their slopes not menacing, but at the same time not inviting - completely indifferent. As old as time they seemed. When, at dawn the sun rising in the East was just a deep red disc climbing out of the steamy mist in the valleys it seemed as if we were being given a glimpse into the most distant past. There was something primordial about it all.

It was here with this view of the mountains from our back garden in a Public Works Department bungalow that history was made. During a three-day retreat, the Western Buddhist Order increased its number to 108 and in so doing found itself with two Indian upasakas. Now we really have arrived in India. The spiritual community has actually been born in India.

The FWBO has been here for seven months. But it's not like any other

Buddhist organisation. It's here to establish the spiritual community and allow that to work for the whole of India: a spiritual community of course of those changing themselves wholeheartedly, in the light of the Three Jewels.

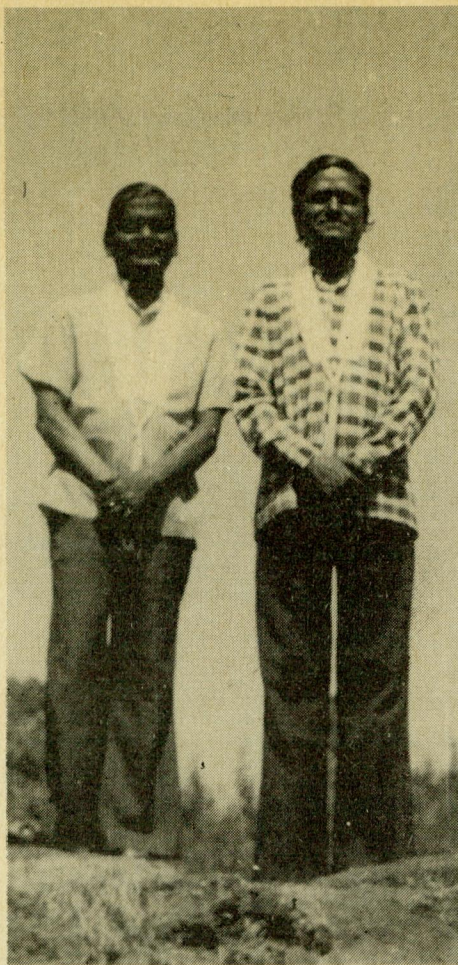
The two people ordained were Mr. D.R. Maheshkar and Mr. Bakul Vakil. Mr. Maheshkar is from Pune and Bakul from Ahmedabad in Gujarat. Both are old friends and disciples of Bhante. They worked with him back in the '50s and '60s. Since our arrival in India both of them have worked alongside us, helping us in all our activities. In fact without them we would have accomplished very little.

Before the ordinations our retreat followed a full programme. Lokamitra led us in triple and double meditations, and silence was observed a great deal. Bhante was around as well, and before the retreat began he told us what it meant to be on retreat, and more importantly, what it meant to be on an ordination retreat. He also conducted a very good question and answer session, going into detail on such questions as the Buddha's Four Sights, the reasons for chanting in Pali, why we bow to the shrine, the role of women in the Dharma, and what is the modern equivalent of the Bhikshu. Bhante's answers were as clear and sharp as usual, and went deep into the points raised, exploring numerous implications and ramifications. And, of course, they were not without a touch of humour. But all activities on the retreat paved the way for the ordinations.

Although all ordinations follow the same procedure and ritual, there is in each one of them a different quality. There's an excitement in all of them, but each one has its own particular magic. Their atmosphere is always bright, light and carefree. Joy and happiness flow spontaneously.

So, there we sat on the hot, sunny morning, the air fragrant with incense, the shrine heaped with the bright mountain flowers — some deep red, shaped like angels' trumpets. The night before we had sat in *metta bhavana* while our two friends had each gone alone to Bhante for the private ordination. There is always something more serious about the private ordination. It belongs to the night and to silence. In the private ordination, in the dark silence, you die, and are reborn; the next day in clear sunlight you see and are seen afresh.

So, with the sunlight streaming in, the birds singing and a light wind blowing, we waited for the ordinations to begin. Before the public ordination, six of our friends from Pune became mitras. They made the three offerings to the shrine, thus establishing a stronger link with the Order. Then came the ordinations. Bhante explained slowly and carefully each stage of the ceremony (which was translated into Marathi). The offerings were made, the verses of intention said, the formal request made and the Refuges, ten precepts and ten 'positive' precepts given. Then from a waterpot decorated with orange thread and green leaves, the mountain water in it brimming with rose petals, Bhante poured drops of water onto the crowns of the heads of our two friends. He explained that this illustrated the fact that the upasaka's life was a life of continual purification of the whole being — from the heights to the depths. To further emphasise this the pure white Kesas were given.



*Dharmarakshita and Bakula,
the first Indian Order members*

Then, of course, it was time for Bhante to announce the new names. For most people the name-giving is the most fascinating and exciting part of the ceremony. Ordination is like being reborn, so the old name will no longer do.

In this ordination there was a slight departure from the way we usually do things. Bhante announced that he had given both ordines new names long ago. One of them, Bakul, had been using his ever since receiving it. So Bhante said Bakul should keep his name. But he would no longer be known as Mr. Bakul Vakil, but as Upasaka Bakul. Bakul, incidentally, is the name of one of the Buddha's greatest disciples. As for Mr. Maheshkar, Bhante had already given him the name Dharmarakshita ('Protector of the Truth'), and it was high time the name was revived. Bhante humourously related how when he received his sramanera ordination from U Chandramani Maha Thera, he had at first been given the name Dharmarakshita. But another monk to whom U Chandramani had already given the same name, on hearing this, came rushing into the shrine-room and said that having two Dharmarakshitas would cause endless confusion. So U Chandramani a little impatiently said, 'All right then, he can be Sangharakshita'. The Dharmarakshita who didn't want two Dharmarakshitas in the world has now passed away, so there won't be any confusion this time with our Dharmarakshita.

After the giving of the names, Bhante chanted the traditional Blessing, and then all present raised their voices in the three-fold shout of Sadhu.

The WBO has arrived in India and is here to stay!

PADMAVAJRA

PUNYANAMODANA

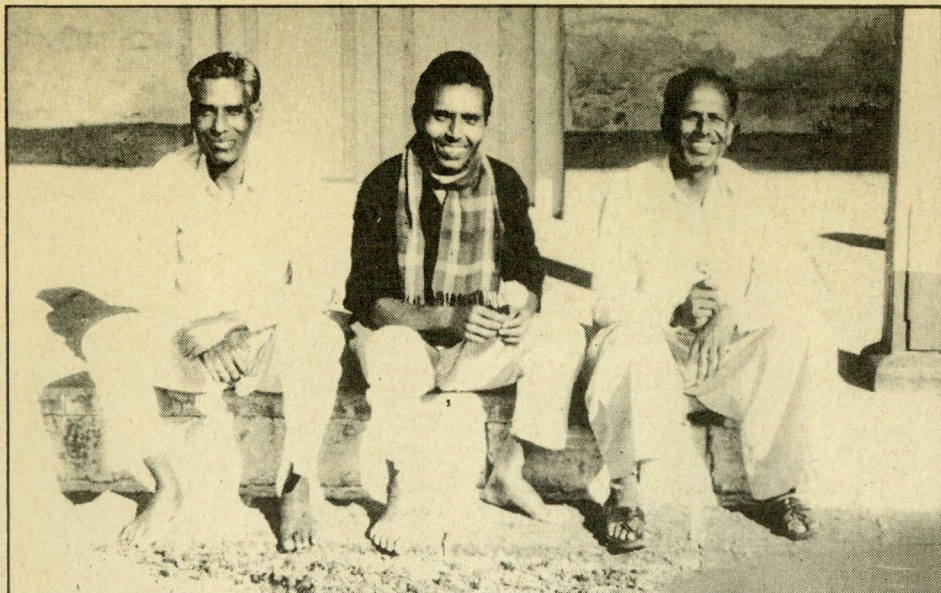
Learning from a death

If you see in Pune some people sitting in front of a house, and against the wall of the house a shrine is set up with an image of the Buddha, a photo of Dr. Ambedkar, as well as the photo of somebody you don't recognize; and you see further that the people assembled are a bit serious, some of them with tears rolling down their faces, others even beating their cheeks and moaning aloud, then you become aware quite quickly that somebody has died. Further investigation will reveal that the person died a few weeks ago, that it is their photograph that is on the shrine, and that the people are assembled for his *Punyanamodana* Ceremony: the ceremony to transfer merits to the deceased person. *Punyanamodanas* are a common sight throughout the year in Buddhist localities. During Ven. Sangharakshita's visit to Pune, in spite of a very busy programme, he managed to conduct one of these ceremonies.

But he didn't attend just any *punyanamodana* ceremony; the one that he went to was the *punyanamodana* of one of the first mitras in Pune, Mr. T.D.

Waghmare, who died suddenly just before Bhante's visit to Pune.

After giving the Refuges and precepts Bhante spoke on the importance of the occasion. He spoke first of all of his relationship with Pune and also about his activities in England and the West. He said that when Lokamitra had come to Pune and started up activities Lokamitra had kept him fully informed, especially about the activities of the mitras, and among them he mentioned Mr. Waghmare. Bhante said that he had been looking forward to meeting all the mitras including Mr. Waghmare, but just before he arrived in Pune he had passed away. Bhante was very sorry that Mr. Waghmare had died, especially as he had not had the chance of meeting him. But, he thought, there is some consolation. He said there is some consolation in as much that before his death Mr. Waghmare was making an effort to practise the Dharma, was making an effort to be a real upasaka and get on the real Buddhist path. Bhante said further, 'People are always postponing the practice of the Dharma, putting it off. Very often



Mr Waghmare is seated on the left

people think that when you are young that is not the time to practise the Dharma. But this is not the Buddhist point of view. The Buddhist point of view is to practise the Dharma as early in life as you possibly can. Practise it when you are young, practise it when you have got full health and strength. If you postpone it it may be too late.' Mr. Waghmare, luckily did not postpone it. As soon as Lokamitra arrived in Pune he made contact with him and in the days before his death he made good progress with his Dharma life and work. Bhante further said that even though he died and even though we are sorry to lose him, there is still some consolation in the fact that he could be such a good Buddhist before his death.

A punyanamodana ceremony makes us think a bit more seriously. This being the case Bhante commented upon a verse from the Dhammapada. The verse is 'Some people do not realise that we are all heading for death. But those who realise this, they bring their quarrels to an end.' Bhante said that you might think that everybody knows that they are going to die. If you ask somebody whether or not they are going to live forever, of course they will reply that they will not. But even though they know it, in a way they don't because they don't take it seriously. They don't take it seriously like the Buddha took it seriously when he saw an old man, a sick man and a dead man. These things gave him a terrible shock and that shock changed his whole life, and he asked himself, 'What is the meaning of life if it ends in death?' We see people dying around us all the time, both the young and the old, but we don't really think that we will die. So our life doesn't change, it doesn't change like the Buddha's life changed. But those people who do realise that they are going to die, their life will change. So how will their life change? It will change in many ways, but this verse mentions only one way: that they will bring their quarrels to an end.

Supposing you have a friend and you have a quarrel with him, and for months you don't see that person, so you don't bring the quarrel to an end, and one day you hear that your friend is dead. Then you think, 'What a pity! If only I had known he was going to die, I would have gone to see him and made friends with him

again.' Bhante said further that in the world we see lots of fighting and quarrelling; even among Buddhists we see lots of fighting and quarrelling. This means that even though they are Buddhists they do not realise that they are going to die. If they did realise it they would bring their

quarrelling to an end. Bhante exhorted us to make up any quarrels that we are involved in. He told us that we should go straight from the meeting and make up any quarrels we had with people. If we do that and we realise that we are going to die then the punyanamodana ceremony will have been a real punyanamodana ceremony, because we will have learnt some Dharma from it.

Bhante concluded his talk by saying that a punyanamodana ceremony is a very strange ceremony. First of all it is a very sad occasion because we are sad to lose a good friend and a good Buddhist, but at the same time it is a happy occasion because we learn some useful thing about the Dharma.

When Bhante concluded his talk by appealing to us to take the verse from the Dhammapada seriously many were moved to the point of tears. One of those present confessed that compared with what he had just heard, the last twenty-three years since he had converted to Buddhism had been a complete waste. He had learnt nothing about the Dharma in that time. For the first time in his life he had thought seriously about the Dharma and now knew the true significance of the Punyanamodana Ceremony.

B.K. Gangawane

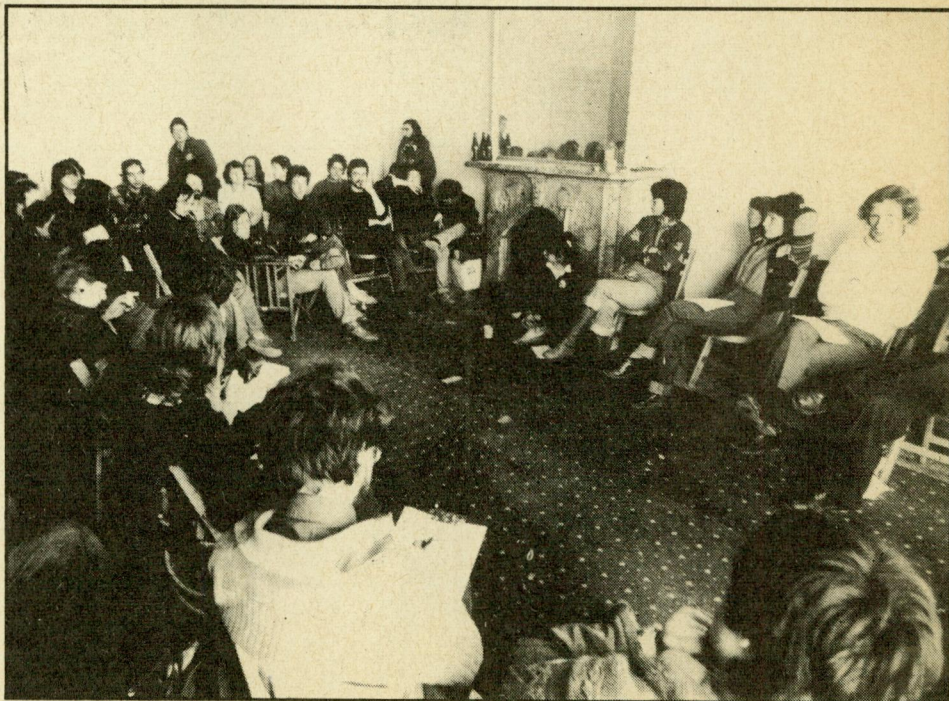
ICOM

Co-operatives Conference

Industrial Common Ownership Movement Conference



Members of Sukhavati's 'Pure Land Co-operative' (PLC) have been attending for some months the branch meetings of ICOM, the Industrial Common Ownership Movement, making use of these opportunities to exchange views and information on alternative methods of working and management with members of other co-operative businesses. Therefore, when a weekend conference was held recently at the ICOM Centre, on the outskirts of Leeds, for 'Left Wing Presses', representatives from Windhorse Press and Windhorse Design went along to continue this worthwhile contact. For although the Pure Land Co-operative is not politically left-



the conference: day two

wing — its non-alignment was made clear at the outset — it is run on ICOM model rules, and has much in common with the aims of that Movement.

About 80 people participated in the discussions and workshops under a rather spontaneous agenda. There emerged some useful information on printing techniques, health and safety, and finance. But most interesting of all was the variety of opinions and points of view, political and otherwise, expressed by those present. Nearly half of the delegates were Trades Unionists, while the rest consisted of small independent presses, including two groups of feminist printers, whose work supported the aims of the Women's Liberation Movement.

Despite the fact that ICOM policy is aimed at liberating workers from the oppression engendered by the usual bosses-vs-workers dichotomy, it would seem that conditioned attitudes in some other areas are not so easily broken. In the past, the PLC contingent has felt discriminated against because they were a co-operative based on a spiritual motive. Most of the politicos suffered from the popular delusion that spirituality was synonymous with ineffectuality or pie-in-the-sky, if not actually sheer crankiness. The presence of Order members and mitras at the conference, demonstrating their customary positivity and pragmatic idealism, was thus very valuable in helping to disabuse at least a few people of these false views.

There was some contentious debate on the issue of 'real wages'. The Left Wing Presses generally felt that the kind of 'wage'-structure we use in the PLC, whereby we receive the basic support amount of £19.40 per week, thus remaining just below the taxable threshold, constituted self-exploitation. It was pointed out that this 'voluntary poverty' in fact excluded those involved from eligibility to various sources of outside funding. The Governmental logic here is that a business that provides average-to-high wages is more economically viable, and hence more deserving of capital support, than one which does not.

At the moment we need idealistic people, prepared to work for minimum sums, while our businesses attempt their initial capitalisation. However, we must decide whether the impecuniosity this involves is merely an expedient in our tight circumstances, or whether such very low wages are intrinsic to our ideals of right livelihood and the simple life. There are clearly problems involved in trying to expand our co-operatives and interact professionally with society at large if we persist in operating with a 'poverty mentality'. On the other hand, the FWBO itself aims to be an autonomous society, not dependent on state or any other external aid for its success. These are questions we will need to discuss and decide upon in due course.

As to whether the PLC's own criteria of right livelihood and the assumption of responsibility according to the capabilities of the individual made a successful impact on the Left Wing Presses, only time and perhaps the next conference will tell.

Nigel Seller

FWBO at the Mind & Body

Yes folks! This is Olympia, London, where the New Age dawned — for ten days anyway. Once again the irrepressible cohorts of Quakers, dowsers, swamis, UFO freaks, and Alpha-wave watchers: sublime, ridiculous, and downright suspect, came together in the cause of conversion and capitalism.

Was the '79 Festival for Mind-Body-Spirit a resounding affirmation of the Universal Oneness of Everything? Was the LBC stand an oasis of sanity? Don't hesitate! Place your order for the next Newsletter, and find out.



ORDER & MITRA RETREAT

Nagabodhi offers the chance for instant Enlightenment to the 75 Order members and mitras at the Vine Hall 'event' back in April. For many this was one of the most enjoyable and rewarding events they had ever experienced: ten days of meditation, study, talks and symposia, basket-ball, yoga, and swimming, set in the sculptured curves of the Sussex Downs. Read all about it in the next issue



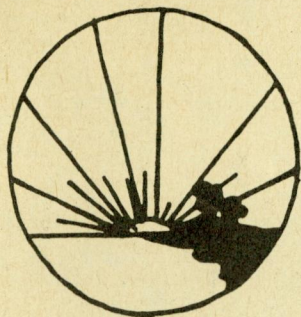
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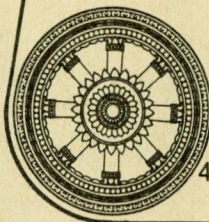
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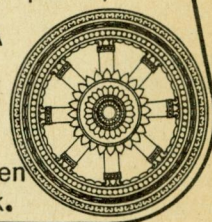
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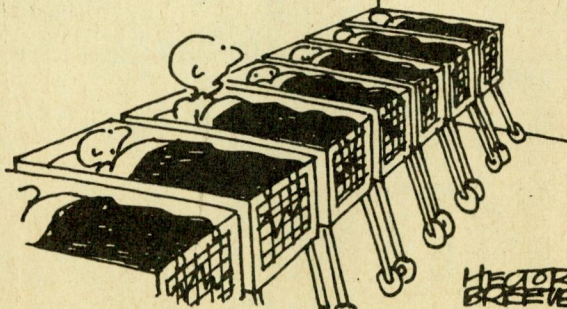
1 - 20 August: Mixed retreat
(Gloucestershire)

3 - 24 August: Women's re-
treat (Mandarava)

3 - 31 August: Men's retreat

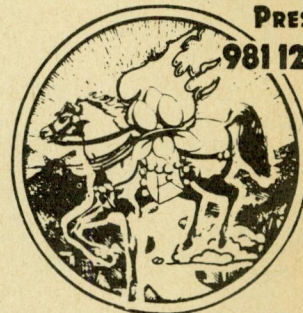
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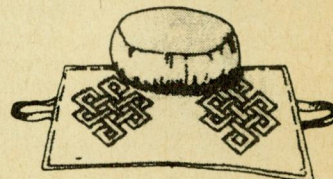


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About the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

None of us is complete; more or less by chance, we are tossed up by our conditioning — biological, psychological, social, and cultural — as partial beings. Our future lies in each one of us making something of him or herself: making of that miscellaneous bundle of conditionings a happy, free, clear-minded, and emotionally radiant individual.

The conscious growth of a truly human being is the ultimate heroic act left to us. If we so choose, we can develop within ourselves a vivid awareness of existence, a powerful positivity towards all that lives, and an inexhaustible dynamism. Ultimately, we can become 'Buddhas', enlightened or fully awakened individuals who have totally liberated themselves from the bondage of subjective conditioning and who have a direct and intuitive understanding of reality.

One who commits himself or herself to this ideal of individual growth is a Buddhist. So the Western Buddhist Order is a fellowship of men and women who have explicitly committed themselves, in a simple ceremony, to furthering their own and others' development.

The Order forms the nucleus of a new society or culture in which the values of human growth are paramount. As a result of Order members taking responsibility each for their own lives and attempting to communicate honestly and openly with others, that new society is becoming a living reality. In those areas where Order members have gathered together there are found three things: Communities, Co-operatives, and Centres.

In communities, Order members and Mitras (literally 'Friends': people who, after some initial contact with Order members, have decided they wish to deepen their communication) live together in numbers varying between four and thirty. In these, a new and radical way of life is being forged, which encourages and inspires community members to grow. They are usually either for men or for women so as to break down the habitual psychological and social patterns usually found in our relationships with members of the opposite sex which so much inhibit growth. Often, community members will pool all their earnings in a 'common purse' from which all expenses, communal and individual, will be met. The flavour of the communities is as varied as the people within them.

In the Co-operatives, groups of Order members, Mitras, and Friends (those who are in contact with the Movement and participate in any of its activities) work together in businesses which financially support the workers and which fund the further expansion of this New Society. Present businesses either running or being set up in the Movement include a printing press, wholefood shops, a silkscreen press, a hardware store, cafes, a second-hand shop, bookshop, editorial service, metalwork forge, and graphic-design, photographic and film studio. Members of the Co-operatives are hammering out a way of working which is 'Right Livelihood': team-based so that each person has the opportunity to take responsibility for the work, and ethically sound: exploiting neither other people nor the earth's resource resources. Work is done not for remuneration, but for its value as a means of development (in what other situation might your workmates suggest that you go for a walk or do some meditation when you seem run down?) and from a spirit of generosity. Each worker either works voluntarily or is given what he or she needs to live.

The most direct and effective means to the evolution of consciousness is the practice of meditation. At the Centres, members of the Order teach meditation and conduct courses, study groups, talks, and discussions on the principles and practice of Buddhism. There are also ceremonies, festivals, and arts activities. Yoga, massage, and other practices are taught as valuable, though less central, methods of development. Centres are places where you can make contact with Order members and others already in touch with this burgeoning New Society. Above all, through the Centres, a bridge is formed over which those who wish may cross to a new and total way of life based upon the growth and development of individuals.

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order ('the Friends') is, then, a movement, always deepening and expanding, of people who wish to be authentic, integrated and dynamic. It was initiated in 1967 by the Ven. Maha Sthavira Sangharakshita, who spent 20 years in India as a Buddhist monk. He there studied, practised, or had contact with all the main traditional schools of Buddhism and returned to the West with a clear awareness that, though its essence remains the same, Buddhism always expresses itself anew in each new age and climate. The 'Friends' is the response of the Buddhist tradition of insight and experience to the circumstances of the modern West. It is an increasingly widespread movement with some twenty Centres and Branches throughout the world.

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