

FWBO NEWSLETTER 44



FWBO Communities
A radical breakthrough?

UK 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	6.00pm and 7.30pm	Hatha Yoga (at the annexe)
Sunday	2.00pm	Beginner's meditation

(Many other courses and events – send for full programme)

Mandala (West London)

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

Brighton Buddhist Centre

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

Aryatara (Surrey)

Tuesday	10.00am	Beginners' Yoga
	7.30pm	Meditation and puja
Wednesday	7.00pm	Yoga course
	8.15pm	Intermediate Yoga
	7.15pm	Beginners' meditation

Heruka (Glasgow)

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

Norwich Meditation Centre

Tuesday	7.00pm	Friend's Night: Varied programme including live talks puja and meditation
Wednesday	7.30pm	Open Night: Meditation, talks, communication exercises

Manchester

Wednesday	7.00pm	Regular meditation and study
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Editorial

Back in the summer of 1971, towards the end of a retreat at 'Keffolds', several people got together over a cup of tea on the lawn to discuss the possibility of setting up a community. They certainly didn't see themselves as a close-knit cadre of pioneers or social philosophers; indeed, most of them had met each other only a week or two before. Simply, the retreat was coming to an end, and the prospect of returning to their family homes, their bedsits, and their shared flats did not excite them nearly so much as the idea of protracting some of the joy and contentment they had found in being together on retreat. But pioneers they were, for the peeling hulk of a building in Archway, London, was soon to resonate with sounds of hammering and sawing as, in perennially characteristic fashion, the first Friends' community came to life.

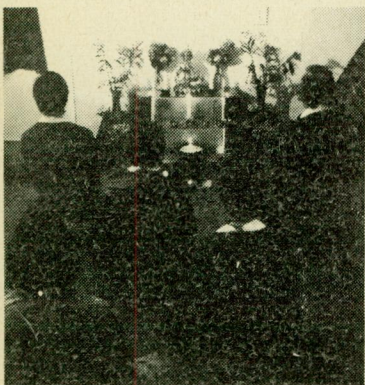
As a Friends' community it bore little resemblance to those which exist at the moment. It was mixed - composed of men and women, some of whom were living as couples; there was no regular house meditation practice; there was a 'kitty' for food, but no common purse; each day the members went their separate ways to work, or waited at home for a cheque from the State. But one would be wrong in thinking that later developments on the community front have relegated the memory of that first effort to a quirky irrelevance.

It is now three and a half years since the subject of communities was given a full treatment in the *Newsletter*. Although there are now more than 150 Friends living in communities around the world; although some of those communities manifest pretty high levels of spiritual, economic and social clarity and purpose; and although our community dwellers have quite a lot to say about their experiences, and quite a lot of thinking to share, it has been interesting to realise, while putting this issue together, that there is still no such thing as a comprehensive FWBO philosophy on communities to announce. Vessantara, in his article, has attempted to give a general idea of how and why our communities work - although he makes it clear that there is no such thing as an *average* FWBO community, while Dhammadinna and Subhuti shed light on the question that so many people outside the Movement ask: Why do so many Friends choose to live only with members of their own sex? But this issue of the Newsletter will not, and cannot, add up to a definitive statement of FWBO community 'policy'. Because there is no such thing.

Those ten or so people who ripped corrugated iron from the windows of a house in Archway had an essential factor in common with the man moving into Vajrakula, or the woman moving into Beulah, today. True, they had not contemplated the idea of working together, or of sharing all their wealth; true they thought that it would just be 'nice' to sit together occasionally - and fell into gusts of embarrassed laughter when they tried their first puja; true, they had not yet wondered how their in-house sexual relationships, or simply their constant contact with members of the opposite sex, would affect their practice, but, essentially each one of them felt that, so far as they could see at that time, they were moving into the best possible situation they could create, in which to be happy and free to grow.

For every individual to be happy and free to grow calls, and will continue to call, for a tremendous variety of living situations. What this issue of the Newsletter can do, at least, is to offer a glimpse of some of those situations, and some insights into the thinking behind them.

Nagabodhi



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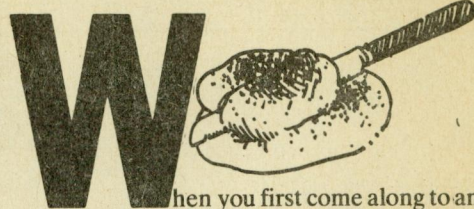
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How & why we live together

COMMUNITIES IN THE FWBO

by Vessantara



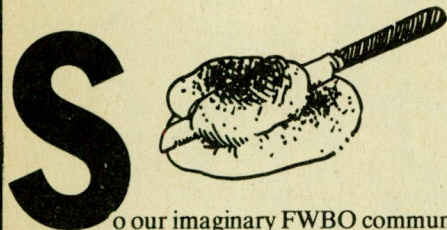
When you first come along to an FWBO centre, on getting into conversation with one of the 'old hands', you often discover that they live in a community, either in the same building as the centre, or somewhere in the locality. But what is conjured up for you by the words 'I live in a community'? I think they may provoke very different ideas in different people. What you imagine may be conditioned by many possible models. Some people, drawing their fantasy from Christian or other religious models, may imagine a very austere situation, in which people live highly-structured lives of meditation and study, cloistered from the world. Others, at the opposite extreme, may derive their picture from lurid tales of hippy communes - completely unstructured - their inhabitants living lives of lotus-eating laziness in squalor and disarray. Others still, may simply imagine a situation akin to many flats and houses shared by young working people or students, which are to be found in any large city in the West. So the very word 'community' covers a vast range of different social organisms. It may simply refer to a body of people living in different geographical locations who are united by a common profession or belief. But in this article we are concerned only with residential communities, of which there are an infinite variety. Some have intense religious convictions, some have none; some have political aspirations, seeing communal living as a way of changing or challenging capitalist society, others have none. Some are rural - 'back to the land', or never having left it; others are urban. Some have men, women, children and animals, others are all-male or all-female.

There have been communities throughout recorded history. A very good account of some of the most important and influential of them is given by an American poet, Kenneth Rexroth, in an excellent book called *Communalism* which was reviewed by the Ven. Sangharakshita in an earlier edition of this Newsletter. In recent times the '60s saw the appearance of many communities in the West, many of which have since disappeared, although a few, such as the Findhorn Community in Scotland, or The Farm (a community founded by Steve Gaskin and 200 others on a large area of land in Tennessee) have flourished.

Given such a multiplicity of possible models, it is perhaps not surprising that people's expectations of what an FWBO community would be like should differ so widely. It must be said that, within the FWBO itself, we encounter communities of many different types. Indeed, as one would expect in a Movement aiming to produce individuals, each community too has its own individual flavour. Some are urban, others rural; some are connected with an FWBO centre, others are quite unorganised; some are single-sex and do not allow members of the other sex on the premises, others are

single-sex but permit visitors of the opposite sex to stay overnight.

So I cannot describe an 'average FWBO community', it does not exist. (Just as you could search the length and breadth of the British Isles and never find the 'average' British family with its 2.4 children). What I can do is invite you to visit in imagination a community whose features are a collage of those found in a number of Friends' communities. Such an imaginary tour cannot however convey very much, and anyone who is really interested should contact an FWBO community and ask if they can come and see for themselves.



Our imaginary FWBO community is situated in a large city about 10 minutes' walk from an FWBO centre. The house is quite large but fairly old; when the community found it, it was being offered at a fairly low rent because it needed quite a bit of renovation. The community have done most of the work themselves, with the help of a few other Friends with particular skills, but there are still a few jobs yet to be finished. The house is quite simply furnished, but it is clean and bright. The main feature of most Western homes which is missing is the television. One of the community members brought one with him when he moved in, and he thinks its probably stored in the attic. There is one room which has been particularly well-decorated and carpeted. This is the shrine-room where the community members all meditate together first thing in the morning.

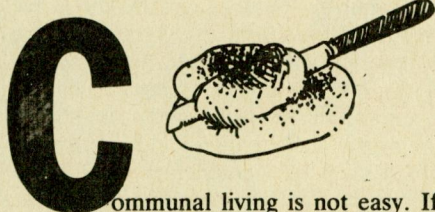
The community is single-sex. It started with 5 members, but numbers have now increased to 7. More people were keen to move in, and some people agreed to share rooms, an arrangement which usually works out well. The food in the community is wholefood vegetarian. The kitchen is stocked with a wide range of grains, beans, and vegetables, along with the occasional tin of baked beans and packet of Weetabix. The community's cooking and cleaning is shared on a rota basis.

There are two members of the Western Buddhist Order, three mitras and two Friends. All but one of the community are involved in working for FWBO businesses or in running the nearby FWBO centre. One of the Friends, who is a music teacher, works at a local school. The Order members take classes at the local centre; nearly all the community attend the Regulars' and Beginners' classes there; and one evening a week a study-group is held within the community itself. Regular meetings of the community are held to discuss items of general concern, and to help make everyone aware of areas of the community's life which need improving.

The general feeling in the community is light and bright. People accept one another and like one another, although there will be occasional upheavals with some very plain

speaking. Meetings of the whole community are high-energy affairs, and one feels in general in the community an absence of resentments, and there is much genuine friendship.

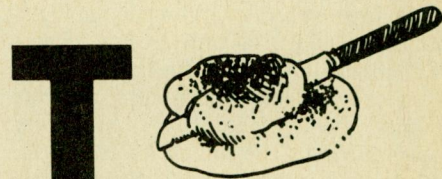
It is hard to convey much of a feeling for such a community in a few words, but it should be clear from such a description that FWBO communities do work, and this needs stressing because so many communities, although started with the highest of ideals, quickly fail. There are many reasons for this. Many are established by idealists or intellectuals who have no real conception of the practical difficulties of communal living. Many of the back-to-the-land communes established in the last two centuries have failed because urban dwellers faced with the harsh realities of farming and rural life, and inequipped with the necessary variety of skills, quickly became disillusioned. Some are simply underfinanced. Some adopt an 'open-gate' policy, and quickly attract every idler and psychopath for miles around. Others built around charismatic leaders or religious prophecies fail when the leader dies or the prophecy is unfulfilled. Yet others fail from outside opposition. The local people see the community as a threat to their way of life, imagine every depravity and wickedness to be taking place within its walls, and engineer its destruction. Others 'fail' through their own 'success'. They perhaps become rich and powerful and in the process develop a monolithic power-structure, and finally lose the idealism with which they were founded. Yet others become isolated from the world and, with no outside stimulus or fresh blood drawn from the outside society, gradually wither and die. Finally many simply split into feuding fragments as personality-differences and self-interest show themselves far stronger than merely intellectual notions of selflessness and comradeship.



Communal living is not easy. If, as the conventional wisdom has it, 'hell is other people', then voluntarily to live in close proximity to a number of them, and share possessions with them must be an undertaking full of pitfalls. Given that there are so many pitfalls to community living, why is it that communities are such an important aspect of the FWBO, and why do FWBO communities work so well, growing in vitality and proliferating rapidly when so many other communities are either short-lived or quickly lose their dynamism?

To understand why communities are so important in the FWBO one must remember that the heart of the FWBO is the Western Buddhist Order which is itself a community, not in the sense that its members all live under one roof, but in the wider sense of a number of persons united by a common striving towards a common ideal. That ideal, for the WBO, is of course Enlightenment, perfected Humanity. A crucial part of this

striving towards Enlightenment is the effort to break down old conditioning, to burst out of all restricted or one-sided views of the world. This process is only rendered possible by a 'leaving home', a stepping outside of all the various group relationships one has built up - a tremendous widening of perspective. The clearest and simplest way to carry through what is essentially a psychological change is in actual physical fact: to move outside one's family circle, one's geographical stamping-ground, and to start anew. A residential community is a situation where one can make that new start, and where one will be encouraged to express what one really is as an individual, rather than to keep to the safe opinions and well-trodden paths of the group, and its relationships. Also this common striving towards Enlightenment requires all one's energy, undistracted and undiluted. A residential community is a place where all circumstances are geared to encourage a striving for growth. Le Corbusier once defined a house as 'a machine for living in', one could say that a residential FWBO community is a 'a machine for developing in'.



The residential FWBO community is also a 'shop window'. Existing in the middle of the Old Society, but not assenting to its values, it stands as a living demonstration that life can be happily lived for spiritual development, that Beauty and Truth are not mere pipedreams but can burgeon in the midst of urban sprawl or rural backwaters. This openness of an FWBO community to influencing and drawing new members from the Old Society surrounding it is one of its greatest strengths. Too many communities have been based on paranoia, on turning away completely from a society considered as sinful, doomed to perish. Persecutory communities, whose main common bond is fear or revulsion for the Old Society carry firmly planted within themselves the seeds of the destruction which they see outside.

Apart from their openness to influencing and recruiting from surrounding society, what are the other factors which make FWBO communities such very flourishing concerns? Undoubtedly the most important is that there is a common ideal which unites all members of the community: the ideal of growth towards Enlightenment. It is this transcending factor which enables FWBO communities to rise above any difficulties which arise. Firstly it gives an agreed basis on which people can relate. It is understood that every member of the community, however hard he may find his aspiration to live up to, is in the community because he wants to develop as an individual. Secondly it enables people to transcend personal clashes with those of different personality-types, and to help one another to grow beyond selfishness and attachment toward a more giving, outward-going and co-operative attitude.

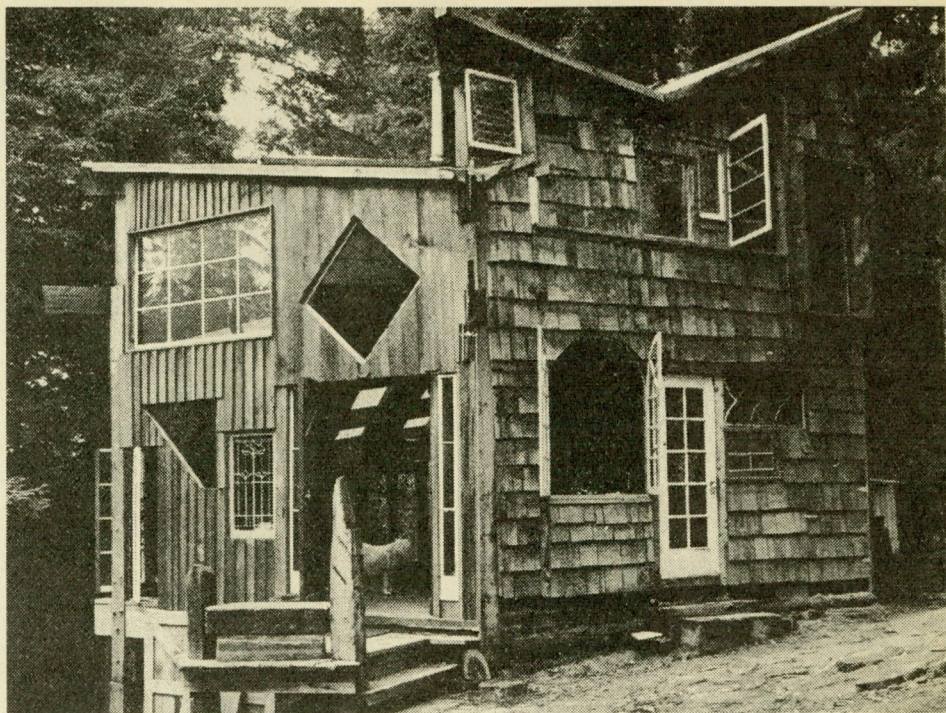
The next important factor is common spiritual practice. Community meditations and devotional practices help attune people to one another by attuning them to something higher. The practice of the metta bhavana meditation is, I feel, an almost indispensable prerequisite for a successful community. It makes such a difference that I sometimes wonder how communities ever survive without it. Through its practice, all community members work at developing positive and friendly emotions. Without such emotions a community, based on however fine ideas, will quickly be wrecked by the intervention of all too common feelings: jealousy, selfishness and resentment. If anyone should read this who lives in a community but has had no contact with Buddhism, I urge you to go to an introductory class at one of our centres, learn the metta bhavana, and teach it to all the other members of your community. It will transform it. Also the Mindfulness of Breathing gives the members of a community heightened awareness. It helps them to be more aware of their fellow community members, as well as of all the mundane things which provoke the bitterest arguments in communities: such as washing up and tidying away things that you use! So, through these and other common practices, community members work together on developing positive qualities, and can buck one another up, encouraging and inspiring one another in a common direction.

That most FWBO communities are single-sex is a further factor in their success. As this aspect is covered in a separate article in this Newsletter I will not say much here, other than to warn the reader with no first-hand experience of them against imagining them as similar to other single-sex situations with which he or she may be acquainted. They have a uniquely free and dynamic feeling which is completely removed from that of single-sex boarding schools, men's clubs, women's institutes or anything else you have experienced!

A



At the heart of nearly every FWBO community will be one or more Order members. These people are fully committed to their own growth and act as guardians of the vision which inspires the community as a whole. In all matters concerning the community it is their deeper contact with the vision of spiritual growth, and often their greater degree of personal development which makes them the final arbiters of the direction the community should take. So an FWBO community has a rather unusual structure. Firstly it has no power-structure. Nothing is done through coercion. You cannot force people to change. At the same time, if you do not want to change there is no possible reason for staying in the community. So a natural sifting process occurs. Those who really wish to change and grow take



People have always been looking for new ways to live!

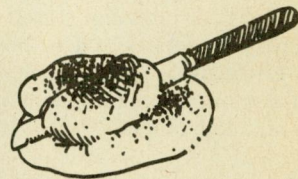
more responsibility. Thus a natural hierarchy is formed, in which those who are less developed are receptive to those who are more developed, and the more developed, far from trying to promote their own personal position, or be 'charismatic leaders', encourage others to develop. Thus the basis of an FWBO community is metta. It is democratic to the extent that all members of the community are encouraged to take responsibility for the community as a whole, that everyone is consulted about decisions affecting the community, and in all decisions the community work to arrive at a unanimous agreement. However it is not democratic - in the sense that there is a recognised 'natural hierarchy' of spiritual development and commitment. This means that members of the community acknowledge that in some matters it is the spiritually committed, the members of the Order itself, who have the final say. It is this unique structure, blending democracy and natural hierarchy, and based not on power and coercion, but on metta and receptivity, which enables FWBO communities completely to avoid factional feuds, and to develop harmoniously.

A further factor which binds many FWBO communities together is that the great majority of them consist of people who work for the FWBO or for co-operative businesses. This ensures that, even if the members of a particular community are not working together, they have a common interest in one another's work, which produces a stronger bond than in communities where people go off in different directions from 8 until 6, and work at jobs quite unrelated to the community or to one another.

Openness of communication is yet a further helpful factor. Not only do members of a community sometimes do communication exercises at their local centre to enable them to become more aware of how they communicate, but the strongest emphasis is laid in communities on direct communication. If someone is backsliding in a community it will be pointed out to him in a

forcible but friendly fashion, that such behaviour is not helping his own growth nor facilitating that of others. Within a general context of metta, strong words can be spoken, without any fear of producing resentment. Regular meetings of all members of a community allow for people to keep in touch with all the members of the community and enable areas which need improvement to be brought to everyone's attention.

H



Having said that FWBO communities work well, there is nonetheless a need for vigilance in certain areas, as well as for further thinking and development. Communities must guard firstly against the dangers of settling down into a cosy routine. Especially in large communities, as with any large establishment, there is a danger of people becoming institutionalised. They have everything they need within the community: food, friends, stimulation, and so they settle down, cease to make an effort, and expect everything to be provided for them in exchange for their grudging participation in the community routine. This can be overcome by a continual effort to upgrade every aspect of the community, and by regular injections of new members. In many FWBO communities people usually do not stay for more than about 2 years, before moving on to start new communities or re-inforce old ones, thus allowing newcomers to enter the community. This constant 'up and out' movement guards against stagnation and institutionalization.

A further difficulty is that of making people take responsibility for the community and its property. Most people, living in their own flats and houses with their own possessions, look after them well from simple self-



A quiet moment at Sukhavati/Roger Jones

interest. But on moving into a community, they often use the property and its facilities and equipment without caring for it. All too often things which are everyone's responsibility are, in effect, nobody's. This can be overcome by those who have gone beyond their own subjective concerns to some extent, making others aware of the need to care for community property. It can also be alleviated by giving people 'stewardship' over particular areas or pieces of equipment, so that they take particular responsibility for them. But in this respect, as in several others, community living requires a much higher degree of awareness and responsibility than more conventional settings.

It must also be pointed out that as yet the FWBO has only started communities for a limited range of people. The single sex-communities, in which unattached people can devote themselves singlemindedly to their

own development, will always be the vanguard of the Movement. But there are people with children, or families who would like to live in communities, and gain the advantages of greater freedom and mutual support which a community would give. However, to date there are hardly any family communities, or communities of women with children, successfully operating in the FWBO. This is largely due to the much more complicated problems of family units. For two families to live together requires a very large house, and a large mortgage. Because there are so many people involved, especially children, the decision to start a family community has much greater risks involved. If a young man or woman feels that things are not working out for him in a community he can easily, fancy-free as he is, pack his bags and move on. Moving a family is a much greater exercise in logistics, and there are factors

such as disruption of the children's schooling to be taken into account. It is only my personal view, but I think that the best hope for families in the FWBO lies in 'colonizing' a particular area, with each family retaining its own separate accommodation, but being within close range of other families, so that they can have regular communication with one another, and help with baby-sitting. In the long term one can envisage there being Buddhist villages with Buddhist schools - there is already a large number of teachers within the Movement.

A another area where there is room for expansion is in what we might term 'half-way house' communities. Many people who become involved in the Friends are living in quite negative situations, with people who are completely unreceptive to their new interest. These people would benefit greatly from living in a community of like-minded people. But, very often, the only community situation available to them is very 'high-powered', consisting of strongly committed people who are deeply immersed in working for the FWBO. So for our new Friend to move into such a community is really to dive in at the deep end. He may manage to swim after a struggle. But certainly there is a place for more 'shallow-end' communities in which people who are just beginning to explore meditation and Buddhism can live together without too many demands being made on them.

W here one lives, and who one lives with, is one of the most basic factors conditioning our state of mind. If we are trapped in unsatisfactory circumstances with unsympathetic people it will make it very difficult for us to develop happy and open states of mind. An FWBO community provides an environment in which it is easy to make the effort to develop. Over the next few years we shall see the growth of more and more FWBO communities of all kinds; intensive and more easy-going, urban and rural, organised or more unorganised, and in doing so we shall attract the notice of many people. Our communities will begin to influence their surrounding areas more and more. There will be many people, who believe in communities but have seen many failures, who will be attracted to a community which truly works, in which people are united by their common quest for true individuality, united in time even by the Bodhicitta, the cosmic Will to Enlightenment for the sake of all that lives.

Why single-sex communities?

Although single-sex communities are nothing new to the Buddhist tradition, many people express surprise, and even concern, when they hear that FWBO communities are not 'mixed'. The following two articles should help to explain why increasing numbers of Friends are choosing to live in this way.

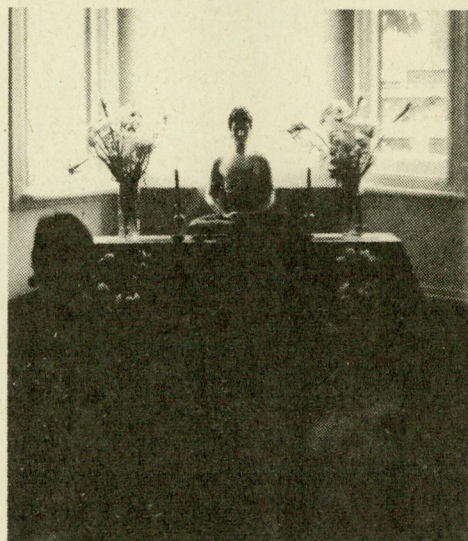
The Amaravati Experience by Dhammadinna

The founding of Amaravati Community in June 1977 represented a breakthrough in the development of women's communities within the FWBO. The Community was formed from an amalgamation of several smaller women's communities, some of which had been in existence for a couple of years, which were dotted around 'Pundarika', the North London Centre. The women living in these communities mainly worked outside the Movement in various jobs, could not easily meet for communal practice, due to lack of space in their houses, and so, only met quickly over breakfast, or on one or two evenings a week at supper before a class. As a result of our experience of deeper and more extended communication at women's retreats, several of us decided that we wanted to create a much more total community environment in which we could live, work and practise together, thus simplifying our lives and concentrating on the essentials of our spiritual practice. The idea of setting up such a community had been in the air for a long time, but we were finally galvanised into action by the threatened demolition of the houses we were then occupying. Initially we looked for a large house near the Centre, but as the Centre itself was also due for eventual demolition, and because of the scarcity of property within our means, we had to look further afield and, as a result of a chain of events, were offered a derelict 17-roomed house in Wanstead, in East London.

At this point in the history of the Movement in London, the separation of the sexes, in terms of single-sex communities and retreats, was still somewhat of an 'issue', and a certain amount of tension existed between men and women around the Pundarika Centre. Many men were clearly enjoying the benefits of living in a large men's community at Sukhavati, and it seemed more important to us, at this stage, to pursue the development of women's communities, than to be around a Centre which would be mixed.

Prior to the move, all of us involved in the project worked for several months, earn-

ing the money with which to buy the necessary building materials and to support us for the first few months. We also held weekly meetings at which we discussed exactly what kind of community we wanted to set up. As a result of these meetings we decided to finance the community with a common purse, to implement a daily programme of meditation, work, yoga, meditation and puja, and to make the community a totally single-sex situation, where no men



Dedicating the new shrine / Anne Murphy

would be allowed even to cross the threshold. The community planned was thus to be very different from the rather loose, informal, existing communities which had, for the most part, sprung up on a rather *ad hoc* basis.

Eventually, after several months of planning, and just prior to the eviction orders on our former premises being served, we moved. After months of working in offices, while still being involved in the Centre, the move to Amaravati came as something of a shock. The house had been burnt out by fire and had no amenities: no water, gas, electricity, and precious few windows. The basement was a charred husk and full of the most

unbelievable rubbish. There we were, eleven women, with very little skill or knowledge of building work, not much money, and with about four months to go before the winter set in. I think for most of us it was the biggest challenge of our lives.

For the first three months we worked extremely hard, taking advantage of the good weather, and hardly leaving the building. All the time we were up against our lack of skill and our unfamiliarity with hard physical labour, and there were often tears of frustration or rage as people struggled with difficult and unfamiliar jobs. There was also lots of fun, joy, and laughter, especially when we were all working together on one task, and also as we watched the house becoming more and more habitable. However, we soon came headlong up against our resistance to work and our lack of consistency of effort, our difficulties in co-operating with one another, and our individual limitations in general. The experience was at times frightening - there was no-one to bale us out, to turn to, or hand over things to - and often painful and explosive. It was also extremely liberating as we discovered that we could do the work ourselves and that we could live happily together - overcoming our resistances - and not only survive, but grow and develop.

The first several months of living at Amaravati were like an intense retreat. There was a daily programme and as all domestic details and meals were looked after by a housekeeper all we had to do was work on the building and work on ourselves, the two often merging into one.

After the initial building work was completed, however, we found we needed to turn our attention to making money and so revived 'Kusa Cushions', extending it to include upholstery and soft furnishings and we also initiated a painting and decorating business. This latter period was much more diverse than the early days, as some people were working on different activities within the house, while others worked outside. As soon as the large shrine-room was completed we opened our doors for women's retreats

and mitra days, as well as to an almost continual stream of women visitors, from all over the 'Friends' who had heard about what we were doing through the pages of *Dakini* (a news sheet for women Order members and mitras), as well as through the Newsletter. We thus became a focus for women in the Movement as we had originally intended.

The striking difference between Amaravati and the other women's communities we had lived in, was that it was totally single-sex from its inception, and all the way through its duration. It is interesting to note that, within the 'Friends', men have taken much more readily to single-sex situations than women on the whole. Amongst women there was often resistance to women's communities and events, which seemed to come from a feeling of resentment at being left out of men's activities, coupled with a corresponding feeling that there was something lacking in women's events. There seem to be many reasons for this. In ordinary society, women often only come together for 'women's things', such as mothers meetings, sewing circles, do-gooding societies, etc, and many women with ambition, or an aspiration to do something different, prefer to work with men, and regard other women with distrust and suspicion, fearing that they will drag them down to the level of pure domesticity. Other women, owing to their conditioning, do not value themselves or their abilities very highly, and feel that women on the whole are rather worthless. Such feelings, as well as

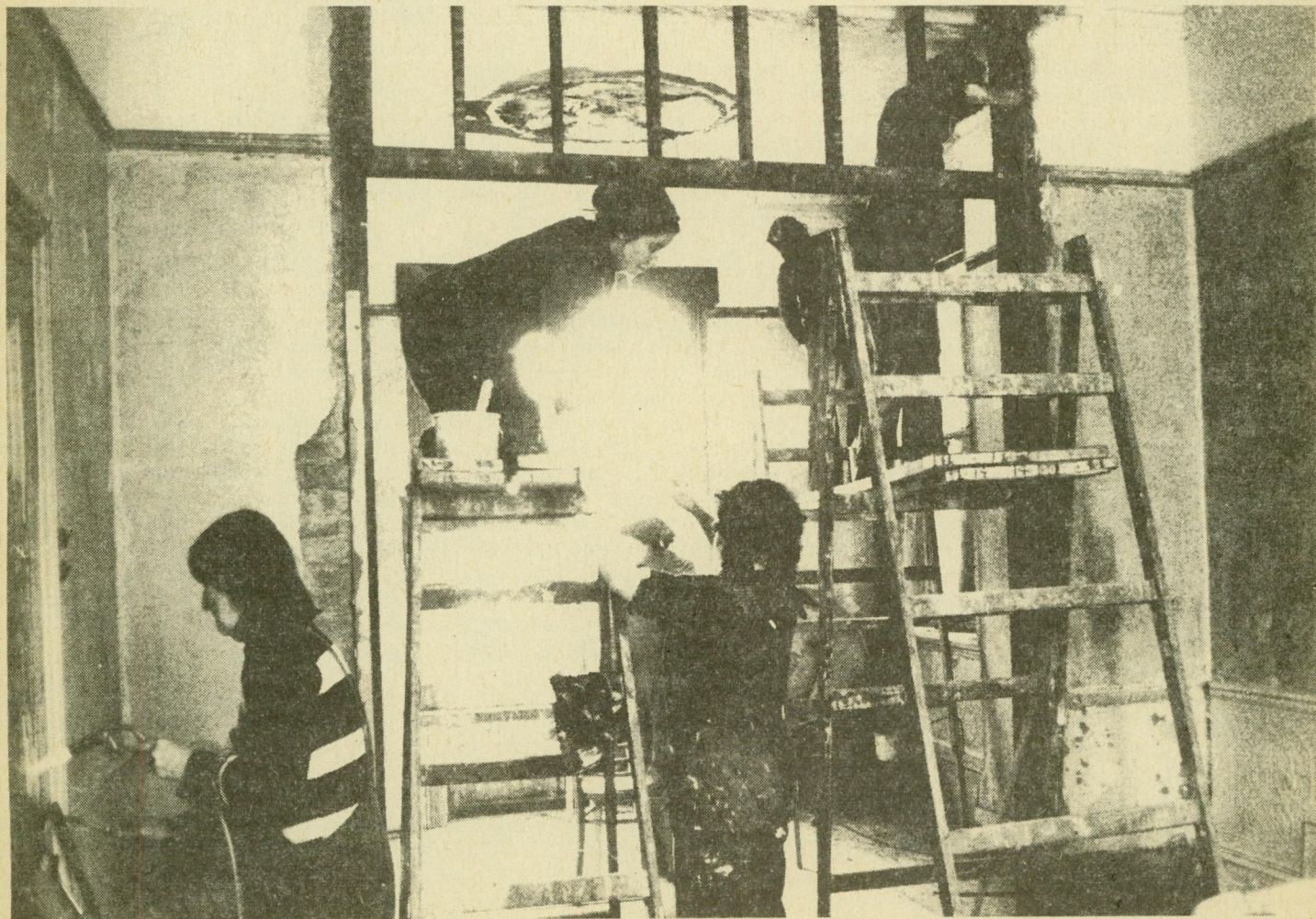
negative experiences of the often stifling and petty atmosphere of girls' schools and hostels, do not encourage women to seek the company of others for stimulation and inspiration. Looked at from this point of view the move to Amaravati represented for women a much more radical change than did, say, the move to Sukhavati for men, as there was much more resistance and conditioning to overcome.

In our society, most women are used to being motivated, led, inspired, supported, and dominated by men, and are used to following rather than leading, to implementing rather than initiating. The Spiritual Life consists of integrating opposites, including the opposites of 'masculinity' and 'femininity', and it is very difficult, if not impossible, to do this within a mixed environment. If a woman tries to develop her more 'masculine' qualities in a mixed situation, she has not only to battle with her own lack of confidence in expressing untried faculties, but also with the resistance of the men present. Many women don't bother, or are too afraid to be assertive in mixed company, and are much more passive there than when among other women. Within 'Amaravati' no such restraints existed and the more 'masculine' qualities had space to develop so that we became more independent, self-reliant, and self-confident. On the other hand we could experience our femininity, free from the projections of men. Basically we had done what many feminists were doing, but with a spiritual rather than a political perspective. We

were not only creating 'sisterhood' but also true Spiritual Friendship.

Psychologically, the community seemed to pass through various stages. Initially we worked, I think, too hard, with a certain amount of forced 'masculine' energy, rarely washing or changing from our dungarees. When this forced energy ran out, as it inevitably had to, a period of intense emotional inturnedness followed, when very little work was accomplished, which seemed to be an over-extreme 'feminine' phase. Eventually more balance was achieved between these sides both within individuals and within the community as a whole.

Though comparatively few women lived at 'Amaravati', many came to stay and work, and its influence, both through direct contact as well as just by virtue of its very existence, spread throughout the Movement, stimulating interest and enthusiasm in the whole idea of women's communities. As well as being inspiring, it was also a haven for many women living at home with families and children, with their husbands or boyfriends, or living around centres, outnumbered by men. As soon as they crossed the threshold they entered a different world, where they could all join in the work and practice of the community, and also experience direct open communication, free from the sex-games and gender power struggles which so often mar mixed communication. Not all women, however, liked Amaravati and some found it too 'enclosed' and inward-turned, or just too extreme. After initial vigorous pro-



A working weekend - learning new skills/Anne Murphy

selytising we were pleased, however, when other women's communities began, thus creating a wider range of situations which could appeal to the many different women coming along.

The presence of 'Amaravati' however affected much more than women's ideas about communities in the Movement. As a result of the growing confidence of those who had lived in, or visited, 'Amaravati', women's activities in general - retreats, mitra days and events, study groups, etc. — grew from strength to strength, and rather than there being resistance to these events, they were always well attended, many women often travelling long distances to be present and share in the growing friendliness and communication that they involved. Newcomers these days with reservations about women's retreats or communities soon lose their resistance when they find themselves among many women who almost take it for granted that such events, far from being weaker or more dull and boring than mixed events, are friendlier, livelier, more serious and rewarding. The creation of 'Amaravati' tipped the

balance of feeling that existed against women's activities amongst women, and changed the whole mood of women in the Movement with regard to single-sex activities.

Whilst this was the success of 'Amaravati', the biggest single 'problem' was that we outgrew ourselves. We had set up the community at a certain point in time, with certain objectives, but without any real long-term plans. Eventually community members, some of whom had begun to attend classes at the East End Meditation Centre in Bethnal Green, the forerunner of the LBC, wanted to be involved again in 'mainstream' Friends' activities - at centres and in classes. Our perspectives were broadening and it seemed essential that women Order members and mitras who had had such a positive community training should be back out on the 'front-line': at classes, working in centre co-ops, and meeting and inspiring new women coming along to the Movement. The London Buddhist Centre then opened, and two Order members from 'Amaravati' moved to join and revitalise Beulah, the women's com-

munity near that centre. Others, not particularly wanting to join forces with the LBC team, feeling that it did not offer them an organic enough situation in which to become reinvolved with mixed centre activities, decided, after some time, to join forces with the smaller West London team. The building that had been 'Amaravati' thus became a men's community, associated with the LBC, and renamed 'Vajrasamaya'.

And so 'Amaravati' is no more. Now there are several smaller women's communities, mainly associated with public centres. It might look as if things have come full circle, and that not much has been achieved. However, this is not at all the case. There are many women all over the Movement who have had the 'Amaravati Experience', and who have profited from its strengths, and who are aware of the problems that need to be avoided in other communities. In my opinion it will remain in the affections of all who lived or visited it and will always be remembered as a landmark of women's activities and development in the Movement. ●

Living Like Angels by Subhuti

An area of life in which the confusion of our time very clearly shows itself is that of gender. The 'roles' of men and women at work and in the family, the proper relationship between the sexes, and questions of sexual permissiveness and fidelity are all commonly debated. Meanwhile the nuclear family, under attack though the British Prime Minister considers it to be, continues to be the basic social unit of the West. For, though what is expected of men and women respectively is no longer very certain or sure in many circles, most discussion assumes that where change is necessary it is only within the existing framework of the family. There are, of course, those who encourage the formation of the communities as a healthier and more human environment. However, where these have any success and last for more than a year or two, they form themselves, for the most part, around the same unit of man-plus-woman found in greater isolation in the nuclear family.

Against this background, the FWBO has developed a form of community which is radical indeed. In fact, in many ways, the communities developing within the FWBO are revolutionary. They cut across the assumption that 'man is for a woman born and a woman for a man' since they are all, at present single-sex: either for men or for women. At first sight many might find that this arrangement smacks of prudery, of keeping the bulls and the cows apart to prevent the inevitable from happening. This reaction is perhaps in part based on a healthy wariness about any hint of sexual repression. Many within our society are trying to shake off the shackles of guilt which Christianity has imposed on the whole range of healthy and natural feelings. They are wisely wary of

what might be the reimposition of the chains albeit forged by a new, Buddhist, hammer. However, the purpose of single-sex communities is not to stamp out sex but to provide the conditions which are most helpful for the many faceted and harmonious development of individuals. The term 'single-sex community', than which we have no better at present, itself suggests a negation rather than the very positive affirmation which is the reality of such a situation.

In a recent seminar the Ven. Sangharakshita made reference to the Christian monastics describing themselves as leading the 'Angelic life'. He suggested that life in a men's or a women's community should be the life of an angel: angels representing a purified and integrated state of being which is the next level to be attained by ordinary men and women. The development of this rounded and more wholesome state is better served in a single-sex community, since the dangers of emotional dependence, of exclusivity and of projection are almost eliminated, and the qualities of confidence, of openness and friendship, and of psychological and spiritual integration are fostered. Without such an environment it is almost impossible to break out of the network of psychological and social conditionings which prevent the mature development of human beings. Through such communities we may more readily experience the dazzling heights of our individual potential, as Buddhist tradition has found throughout its 2500 year history.

Social conditions in the modern West tend to prevent many from achieving real adulthood. Though they may be physically mature men and women, emotionally they are in a pre-adolescent state of dependence. This is more especially true of men, since the

male, of his very nature, needs to assert and experience his independence, particularly of what he feels to be the restrictive and stultifying world of his mother. The narrow and cramped domesticity of modern society, the lack of real control over the conditions of life, render the individual impotent. But, more particularly, the cult of the 'relationship', the glorification of the man-plus-woman unit, means that many men pass straight from the influence of their mothers to that of girlfriend or wife without ever really growing up. In their own way, women are also frustrated in their maturation by prevalent social conditions. Some aspects of this have been explored by Dhammadinna, in her article.

The result of this failure to grow up is that men and women cling together in fear and neurotic need: each resenting the other for failing to fulfill expectations, and also for the bonds imposed by their own dependence. Neither party to the relationship feels secure or complete without the other yet, when together, the contradictions within the situation sooner or later make them feel dissatisfied and confused. The nature of the bond is addictive and few addicts are proof against the object of addiction when it is present. The first step, then, in breaking dependence is to separate the addict from his drug, the immature male or female from over-frequent contact with members of the opposite sex. With healthy individuals in a healthy society the process of separation takes place quite naturally in late childhood. The boys band together more and more, passing through a phase of despising girls and girlish things which remind them of their mothers whose influence they are escaping, while the girls take an increasingly active part in the work and life of the adult women.



Ganymede and the eagle.

The son of king Tros is being snatched up to Olympus by an eagle, or by Zeus in that shape, to become the cup-bearer of the gods—their choice having fallen on him on account of his great beauty. There he was made immortal and dispensed nectar from a golden bowl

Where, in modern society, such a development does not naturally take place, it is necessary for the individual to consciously undertake his or her own maturation, and for this the single-sex community provides the ideal opportunity. Not only does it separate the addict from his drug - a merely negative move which cannot, in the long run, resolve anything - but it provides the immature with contact of a positive and supportive kind with the more mature. Since there is a greatly diminished likelihood of emotional dependence - the mature individual does not want the unnatural dependence of the addict - then real friendships, free from undercurrents of frustration and resentment, can flourish.

So the first contribution of the single-sex community is to allow men and women to mature as men and women by preventing them from becoming locked in a childhood which is unnaturally prolonged by mutual emotional dependence, and, at the same time, by encouraging them to develop a self reliance which permits a healthy friendliness and openness to others. It breaks down the exclusivity of the man-plus-woman unit by providing a wide range of different relationships and friendships. It is almost impossible for any individual to find in any one other the fulfilment of the many aspects of human relationship, particularly where that one relationship is based on neurotic need. Besides, exclusive relationships do not allow for the differing growths of the two individuals concerned, particularly should one wish to develop and the other not. The single-sex community is the real alternative to the family unit, since it ties no one to any other - yet offers a rich field for true companionship.

So far the benefits of single sex-communities have been seen in terms of helping men and women to mature in a healthy way with an abundant network of friendships. Thus, much could be provided, perhaps, by a lengthy stay in a single-sex community and, thereafter, life in a village-type commune.

However, human potential reaches far beyond the level of maturity.

Healthy and laudable though this achievement may be, it still binds men and women to their biological gender, to developing into mature animals. By developing whatever is our natural proclivity, whether it be the masculine or the feminine, we would remain only partial beings. For each of us has the potential to unite both the masculine and the feminine within him or herself, and to create thereby a new androgynous being: an 'angel'.

Masculinity and femininity are psychological characteristics which, though usually associated with biological maleness and femaleness, can both be developed by men and women. A truly integrated person embodies both the active initiating qualities of the masculine and the passive receptive qualities of the feminine. However, since more men are more masculine than most women and vice-versa, then, when men and women come together, they tend to polarise; men become more masculine and women more feminine. More particularly, each sees the other as the embodiment of the opposite qualities, regardless of the realities of the

case. Men see in women (or in some women, or in a single woman) the femininity with which they are out of contact in themselves, and women see in men the masculinity from which they are alienated in themselves. This projection of one's own inner qualities means that one fails to seek them within. One never even realises that what one is seeing is in reality a quality of one's own.

Thus, by being constantly in the company of members of the opposite sex, one experiences in oneself only one end of the masculine feminine polarity. Living in a single sex community it is at least much more difficult to project the unrealised quality and it is far easier to contact and develop it within oneself.

This then is the life of the angels: not the asexual goody-goody angels of the Victorians - whispy and insubstantial, but the heroic creatures of light of Blake, the Renaissance, and the Eastern Orthodox tradition. These angels are full of energy and strength yet with a lightness and delicacy which illustrates their unification of the masculine and feminine. It is not that they have cut themselves off from their sexuality but that they have brought it within themselves. Instead of two partial beings groping together in an attempt to experience wholeness, we see one completely integrated being experiencing with delight the unification of the two aspects of his own nature. One who leads the angelic life experiences a kind of eternal sexual union within himself.

We should live then in our single-sex communities like angels: able to give and to receive, to initiate and to support. Every opportunity is there, all hindrances are removed. The members of these communities may soar together on golden wings, each independent yet in co-operation and harmony with all the rest. The joyful flight of each man-woman is the real purpose of single-sex communities and, wings abeat, it has already begun.

*The radical
change of life-
style involved in
joining a
community is
dependent on
one's circum-
stances, and
one's readiness
to change and
to grow.
Here are some
personal views
of community
life from five
Friends who are
either living in,
or in contact
with our various
communities.*

PERSONAL

1 NICOLAS SOAMES
*Freelance
journalist*

What interested me most when I came into contact with the FWBO, about three years ago, was the emphasis placed on single-sex communities. Having a wife and one child, it represented a threat, and I felt very defensive. As complete involvement with the FWBO seemed to consist of being within a single-sex situation, I felt 'this isn't for me', and all I could do was to be involved as far as I wanted to be, and leave it at that. At that time, I really got the impression that to be a 'Friend' or mitra living within a community was one thing, but you were a second-class citizen if you didn't. People didn't seem to feel that there was a possibility of any kind of development or spiritual commitment if you lived with a family. In retrospect, it was as much my neurosis as theirs. This meant that my closeness, contact and involvement with the FWBO became less, I identified myself less with its activities, because 95% of my time was family-based and had no expression within the FWBO. Now this has changed, partly because I've changed, and partly because I feel less defensive about it, and am able to say that I enjoy my family life.

An important aspect is that I'm away from home two or three days a week, and my wife is away another two days. In real terms I haven't a normal family atmosphere at all. So I don't have the pressures of the usual nice, close, defensive family grouping and ties, which are so dangerous and stifling. Those pressures that might be a bit like that have been blown apart by my foster child. For many different family reasons, I have just begun fostering a child, and in doing this I realise that I have further reduced the possibilities of entering a community for some time.

Although I might be deluding myself, I feel that I am challenged much more by living in a family than within a community. I would really like someone to tell me what I have seriously to gain by moving into a single-sex community. To a certain extent, I feel that my kids make me act to the highest standard that I can imagine myself acting...I'm stretched all the time. I do feel that within my own family I have all the things I need for my own development, and I have complete control. Some communities, I think, wouldn't stand for my regime, they wouldn't take my pace. I can't envisage doing all that I want within any community. With the flexible regime I've created within my family, and through my work, I can cram far more things that I feel are important into a day.

My experience of communities is through one night a week stays at Sukhavati, short visits to other communities, and on retreats. It was on my first retreat that I realised just how important a single-sex environment really was. They do offer a very, very special environment. There is a great sense of relaxation, and after spending time within an FWBO single-sex situation, I feel really refreshed. They have this relaxed and directed atmosphere. This might be a rosy view, but I do feel they are very good places to be in....to get on with your practice without too much distraction. There is also the example and support of people within the community....I do find that I need that sort of atmosphere from time to time. It is a very fruitful way of living, and I have been encouraged and very impressed by their feeling of strength, particularly Sukhavati's.

Over the years, I have discussed with my wife the possibility of moving into a community. Only in future long-term considerations though - say in twenty years time when my child has grown up, and when I can no longer give or take within a family situation, when it's no longer relevant....when I would have given as much as I could. So I haven't dismissed the possibility of moving into one....eventually it might be the next logical step.



ALL VIEWS

2 ROGER JONES Freelance photographer

About three months ago, after being married for about 12 years, I started to divide my time between living at home with my wife and two, very rumbustious, sons, and living and working at Golgonooza. There are certain things about family life that are very rewarding and invigorating, but I was beginning to realise that it was not touching, not invigorating, the whole of me. I found family life difficult and unsatisfactory - 'though at a level which I suppose most people wouldn't bother about. I really couldn't cope with a lot of the things that were going on: the children's demands, being expected to do so many things, and so on. My reaction was to want to get out of the house from time to time, and feel reluctant to go back. But having done that countless times, and having had more contact with the 'Friends', I began to question these reactions, and found that really they highlighted my general lack of integration, of generosity and patience, my confusion and anxiety. Also, although I am quite successful in my work, I began to realise that the 'media' with which I am involved are not really concerned with the things that concern me, so I was also keen to work with Windhorse Associates, the new FWBO media co-op.

The opportunity to move just arose. Communities and co-ops are always being put at the forefront in the FWBO, and I really wanted to experience what they were about. It's no good thinking that something looks nice, or is a good idea: you actually have to experience it - and not just once or twice: you have to do it continually. Of course, I recognised that the move would have to be made slowly and gradually. I am still seeing what effect it has on myself and

my family.

What I feel I'm most getting from being here is contact with other people. Living and working together with other people who are trying to change, I'm beginning to see, more totally, that change is possible; it might be really slow, but it is going on, and I'm seeing the sort of things you have to do in order to change. What I feel really happy about is the real feeling of possibility in the situation - that it can actually get better, be more and more perfect. Because although it might be difficult, there is at least the will to try to make it work.

Over the last three months, my whole attitude to my work, my family, and my friends has changed, really dramatically for the better. I am beginning to see things much more in perspective. Things are beginning to open up. I realise, for example, that the so called 'spiritual' life is not something totally separate from what goes on inside the community or co-op, in that it is possible to be in any situation with more clarity, more effectiveness and creativity. I am beginning to realise just what an effect I can have on a situation - just by being there. I have a responsibility to the community and to the co-op - although, at the same time, I recognise that I have a responsibility to my family.

3 PRAKASHA Centre chairman

I've been living in men's communities for 4 years: one year at Aryatara, and three years at Sukhavati, where I am now Chairman. I decided to move to a community because I wanted to be fully involved with the Movement, and to have a strong experience of spiritual fellowship. Joining a men's community and especially one at the very heart of the Movement, seemed to be the best way to do that, and in this respect the past four years have fully lived up to my

expectations. I've found life at Sukhavati quite challenging, quite intense and very demanding; or rather there have been constant challenges I've chosen to assume and tackle. I've worked hard at whatever the situation has had to offer or to ask of me, and have been stretched to capacity - sometimes overstretched. I feel that commitment and the assumption of responsibility are closely linked. It's taking on responsibilities as print manager, treasurer, and Chairman that has been the chief factor in my personal growth at Sukhavati.

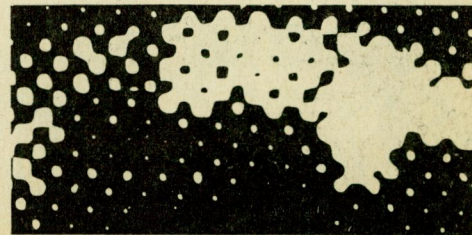
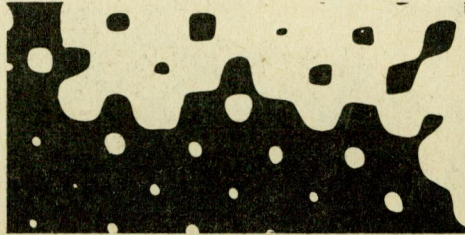
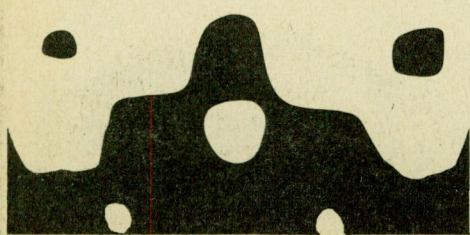
Until recently, the work has been the most significant single element of life at Sukhavati for me, but increasingly I find that meditation and particularly personal relationships are becoming more important for me. Also, I have a number of friendships at Sukhavati that seem to just lie in the bud, and that could, with just a little more time and effort, come to flourish and grow. Kalyana Mitrata, spiritual friendships, are so valuable, so worthwhile, and so rewarding, that I feel they deserve and demand much greater emphasis and attention than they get in my life at the moment.

There are other changes I would like to see; I'd like to see a stronger community of people who are more deeply involved with the Centre and the whole Sukhavati complex. This process seems to be already underway. The pace of life here is very fast, which I enjoy, but I do find it difficult to find time to devote to my own interests - my meditation practice, writing, poetry, music, conversation, and simply time on my own, unscheduled time. There is never enough time.

I enjoy living and working in an all-male community, since the quality of friendship and interaction that can take place between men, at its best, is richer and more rewarding than that which normally exists in a mixed situation. I am not celibate, however. I do not exclude women from my life, I just don't want to live with them!

In a way it's difficult for me to compare community living with any other situation, because a substantial part of my life, the most important part, has been spent in communities, and it really overwhelms any previous experience in my memory. I feel though that the depth and quality of communication I've achieved here definitely helps with communication outside the community also. I don't feel in any way cut off from the outside world.

There is obviously a strong tension between work and spiritual practice at Sukhavati. Intensive work and intensive meditation are in some ways almost directly in opposition to each other. On the whole I enjoy this conflict, and see it as a strong spur



to practice. At any rate I find it very important to meditate whatever my work-load is. In conclusion, during my time here I have identified very strongly with building Sukhavati and with opening the London Buddhist Centre. I want to create a Buddha-land here in Bethnal Green, a mandala of centre, co-operative and communities; the fulfillment of that vision is a really strong motive for my living at Sukhavati.

4 MALINI Acupuncture student

When I told my parents that I was moving into a Buddhist community, they thought that I was going to become a nun or something. I first came into contact with the FWBO in 1967, when I began going to classes at Sakura, in Monmouth Street. I moved into Aryatara in 1969, when I was nineteen. At that time Aryatara was a mixed community, and was probably, by present day standards within the FWBO, quite weak. I stayed there for a year, during which time I was ordained.

I have always been easily swayed by other people's ideas and, after a while, I felt a need to be on my own. So I moved to Cornwall, with the idea of being totally self-reliant, and lived in a small holiday chalet. I originally planned to do this for six months, but it turned into a 2½ year stay. It was okay for about eighteen months or so, but after that I began to get quite alienated. I wasn't enjoying myself so much, but stuck at it, thinking that there was some breakthrough I ought to make. Bhante came down in 1973, looking for a place for his year's retreat. I offered him my chalet, he looked at it, and said, 'Okay, I'll take it'. 'What, right now?' I asked. 'No, after lunch will do.' So I had to move out, and I've been grateful to him ever since for getting me out of there.

I then stayed with friends up and down the country, sometimes living with a group of people, other times with just one person. I was weighing up whether I wanted what the FWBO had to offer or not. After attending a seminar with Bhante, in Cornwall, I got back in contact with things, and, at Bhante's suggestion started visiting the FWBO centres. I finally moved up to Glasgow to help with the Centre there. After a while I became chairwoman. I was originally to do this for six months, while Vajradaka was away, but again it turned out to be longer. I was not too happy about this, and also felt a bit uncomfortable to be one of the very few women involved with a centre where there

were so many men. I thought of leaving, but after talking with Bhante, I wondered whether I might just be trying to 'escape' for the wrong reasons. Then, one Christmas, I went on a women's retreat at Aryatara. It was one of the best retreats I've ever been on: there was such a strong feeling of connectedness among everyone. I told Bhante that I wanted to set up a women's community at Mandarava, and he agreed that it would be a positive move.

I stayed in Norfolk for a couple of years, and then moved to London to join the women's community at Beulah. The Mandarava community was too isolated to work, really. There were never enough people to keep the place together, and it was difficult to work through the tacky areas of our communication. I think women have a tendency to become very introverted when they are on their own, to sort of collapse-in on themselves. Owing to distance we were not that involved in the Norwich Centre, so there wasn't the sort of contact with other people and Order members that one needs to keep in contact with the ideals. At Beulah, the whole situation is very different. Everybody in the community is very busy, working in the co-op, and at the Centre. Really, we don't get enough time to ourselves.

People who visit and stay at Beulah for a few days, say how much they like the place. Sometimes their response takes me a bit by surprise - I suppose because I'm in the middle of it. Then I think back, and yes, this is the best situation I've ever been in.

5 PADMARAJA Centre chairman

I have lived in both single-sex and mixed communities within the 'Friends', and find life much simpler in the single-sex. There is less polarisation between opposites, fewer unconscious undercurrents, less tension: one knows where one stands. In such a situation, it is easier to work as a team - communication is clear, direct and out-front and one is free just to get on with what needs to be done.

What I most dislike about community living is complacency. Simply living in a single-sex situation is not enough *in itself* to ensure growth. Some people seem to think that it is, and this sort of complacency reduces communities from a vehicle for the functioning of the Spiritual Community to a mere group on a level with any number of other pseudo-spiritual communes.

The way in which this complacency usually manifests in people in FWBO com-

munities is in a reluctance to take responsibility, either for themselves or for others. The community becomes a cosy cocoon - a means of avoiding facing up to life, rather than a means for realising the Bodhisattva Ideal.

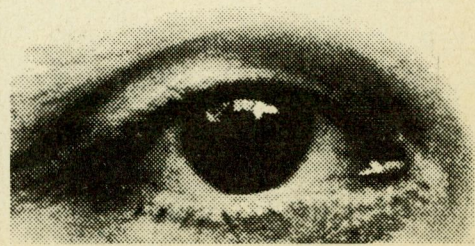
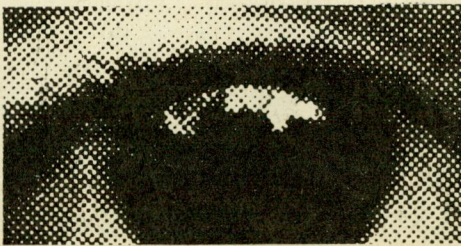
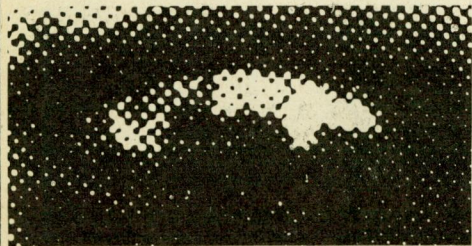
The wrong view of equating 'communities' with the Spiritual Community, and the complacency that consequently arises, has a by-product in a tendency to an arrogant looking down on marriage and 'normal' family life as a situation in which growth is impossible.

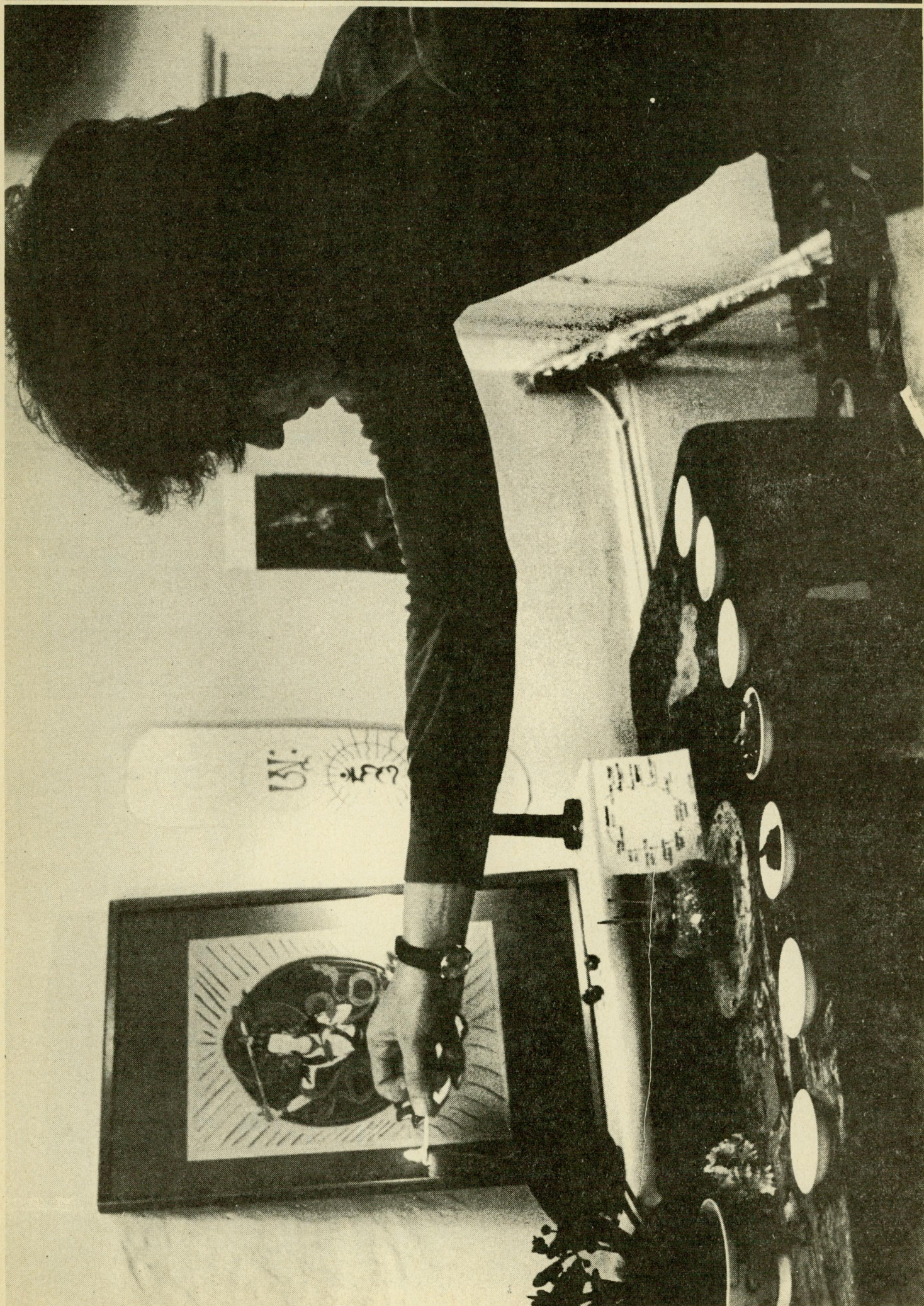
Some married people in the Movement are working harder, and growing more, than many people in single-sex situations. They have a maturity and sense of reality not found in a number of people in single-sex communities who have got to a certain point, but then are stuck - Peter Pan like 'boys' who reject marriage, but are not prepared to take on the greater responsibility of the Bodhisattva Ideal. Marriage can indeed represent a limitation to growth: it is generally speaking, exclusive, selfish, whereas the Bodhisattva Ideal is inclusive; it is growth for the benefit of yourself and *all* sentient beings, not just for your wife or husband and children.

However, it is one of the most fundamental points of the Mahayana that the householder *can* follow and realise the Bodhisattva Ideal. Something that Bhante said when talking about vegetarianism can be used as an analogy: it is not enough *just* to be a vegetarian; you cannot eat your way to heaven. A beefsteak eaten with awareness is better than a nut cutlet eaten unmindfully. Likewise with marriage and single-sex communities; it is awareness and skilful exploitation of opportunities that matters. Single-sex communities *are* more conducive to growth, but *only* if they are taken advantage of.

Work, day to day living, eating, entertainment...these should *be* spiritual practices, and to the extent that they are, they do not need to be 'reconciled'. In my community, the reconciling factor is the emphasis on spiritual practice, on the Dharma. This gives cohesion to everything else: those elements of life which are not in accordance with the Dharma we ignore, those which are, we make use of.

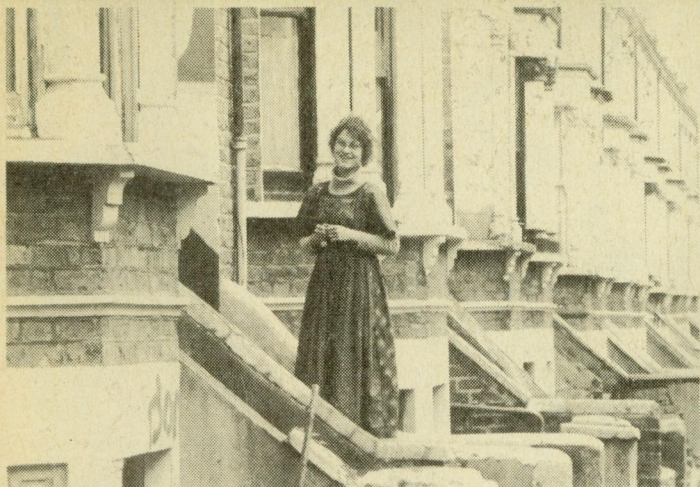
Of course, people come into the community with 'old habits' - they might be addicted to crummy movies, or rock music, or doughnuts, but surprisingly, these don't 'die hard' - the community itself has a progressively refining effect on everybody in it. People are influencing each other in a constantly upward-spiralling direction - Sex Pistols records gather dust, while their former devotees are found surreptitiously listening to Mozart.



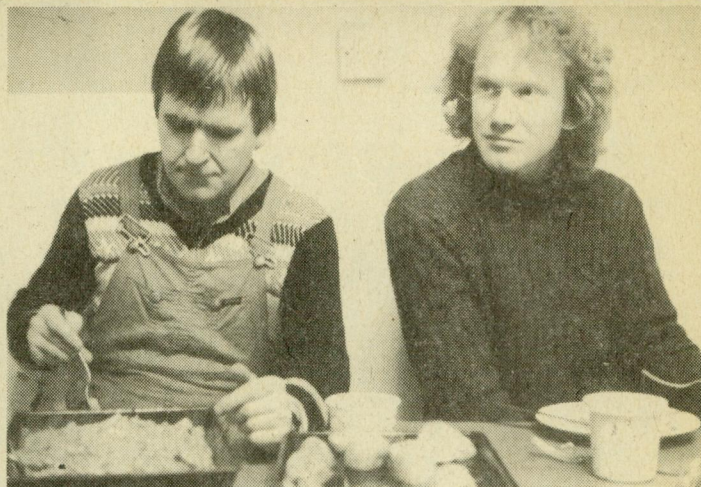


Sanghadevi prepares for meditation at Beulah/Hilary Blakiston

COMMUNITY SCRAPBOOK



Baltimore Street, Archway/Roger Jones



Heruka/Dhammarati



Vajrakula/Roger Jones



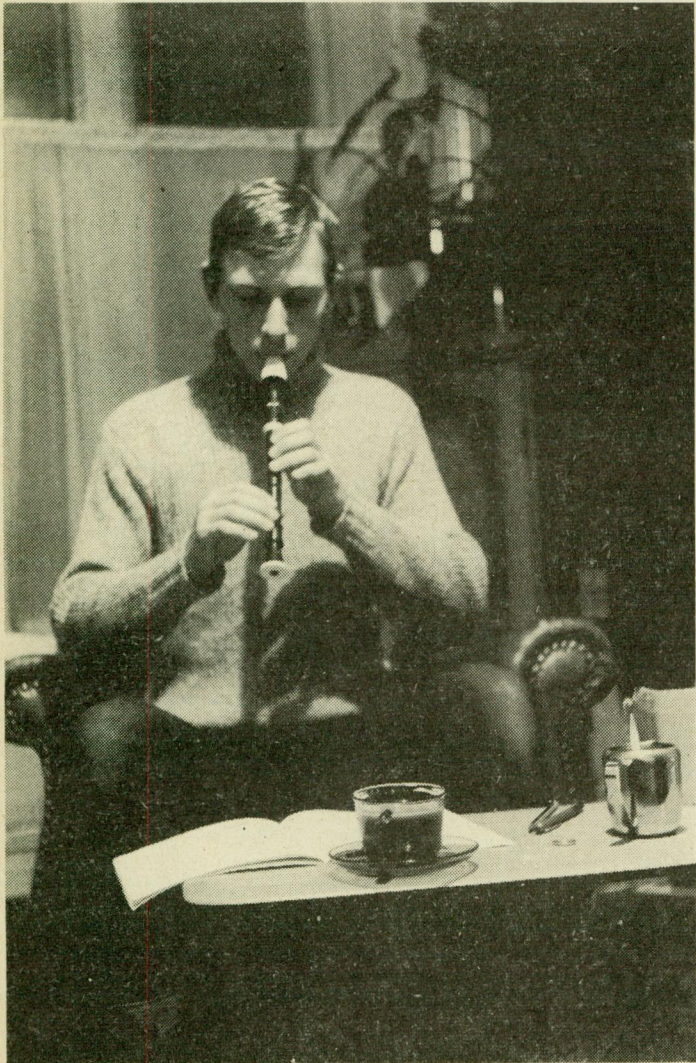
Golgonooza/Roger Jones



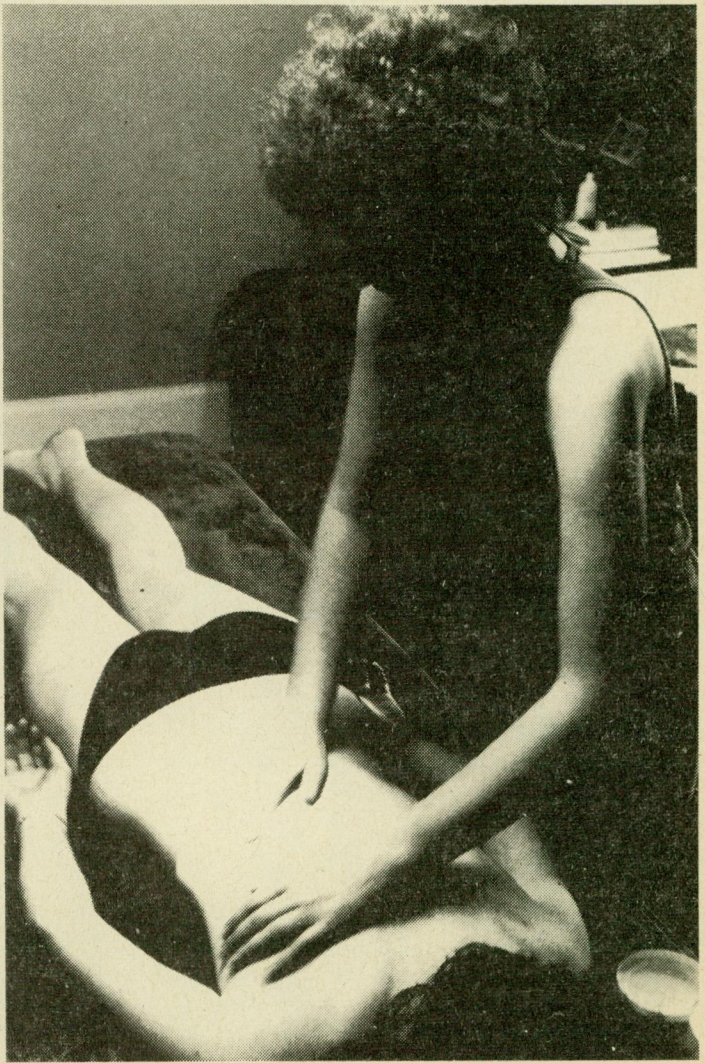
Vajrakula/Roger Jones



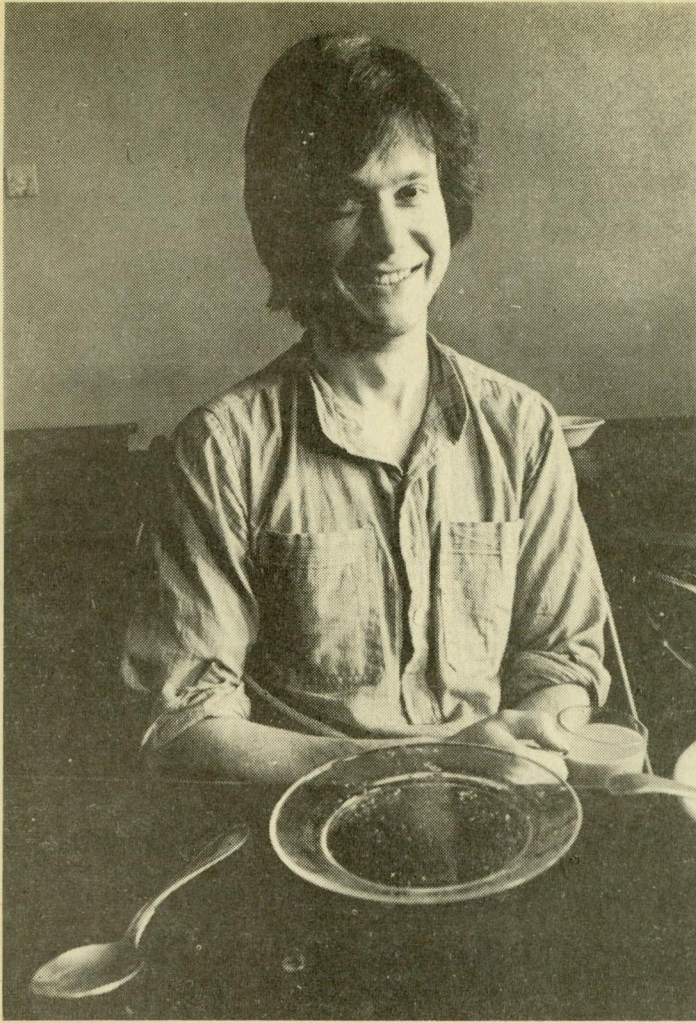
Suvarnaketu/FWBO New Zealand



Grdhrakuta/Suvajra



Beulah/Hilary Blakistone



Sukhavati/Roger Jones



Sukhavati/Siddhiratna

**Life in a suitable locality,
With deeds of merit done in
former times,
And aspiration to the
Perfect State –
This is the most auspicious sign
of all.**

(Mangala Sutta)



Tynn-y-ddol/Siddhiratna



Sukhavati/Roger Jones

COMMUNITY SCRAPBOOK



Aryatara/Siddhiratna



Golgonooza/Nagabodhi



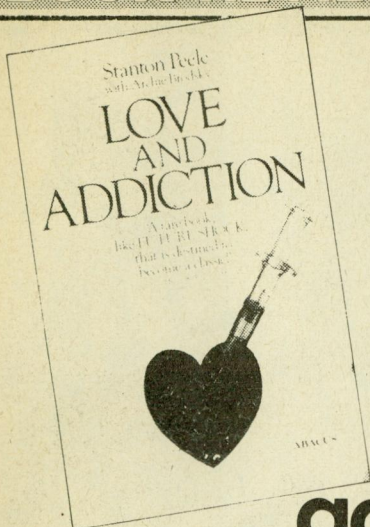
Amaravati/Anne Murphy



Aryatara/Siddhiratna



Aryatara/Siddhiratna



Looking directly at our own addictions

Love and Addiction, by Stanton Peele, with Archie Brodsky (ABACUS Paperbacks)

Love and Addiction has been around for some time now, but seems to have reached FWBO circles only recently. It was first published in Britain in 1977. The cover blurb predicts that 'it is destined to become a classic'. Perhaps a book should have greater literary value or even intentions than this one has in order to merit the designation 'classic'. Certainly it should be a best-seller. Whether, in fact, the work subsequently made it to the best-seller lists, I don't know. It has at least two qualifications necessary for a best-seller: it is about a subject which is of general, if not universal, interest, namely, 'love', and it is easy to read. This latter quality I mention as no mean achievement of the co-authors, for Mr Peele is both a social psychologist by profession and he is American, a combination which in the past (at least according to my own limited reading in this field) has given birth to no mean deal of mystifying terminology.

In a way, what Mr Peele has to tell us about love and addiction may seem so obvious, once we have read his ideas, that when we put the book down, we have the feeling that we knew it all before. Perhaps we did, but could never make our thoughts clear to ourselves in this way; it needed a psychologist of flair and perception to bring our ideas into focus, so that his version of them becomes, like art for Pope.

'What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed.'

The general point in the book, which is applied in particular to love, is that addiction is not inherently or exclusively to do with the opiates, that is, with drugs derived from the poppy, namely opium, morphine and heroin. This may seem a bit old hat these days, but it undoubtedly needs to be rammed home, especially to the middle-aged of the middle class, who seem to be easy victims to the misapprehension that the two must always go together. It needs to be made clear to the suburban mum, fishing in her handbag for her librium to alleviate those worries about her heroin-addicted son. 'The choice of one drug over another', Mr Peele informs us, 'has to do primarily with ethnic and social background and circles of acquaintance'. Opium, in the form of a medical preparation called laudanum, was commonly taken by well-to-do people in the nineteenth century, and not just as a cure for headache! Cultural and social responses varying as they do, quite considerably, one age's drug becomes another's poison. But this is only half the point. The whole of it is that addiction is not, of its nature, to do exclusively with drugs of any kind. Having shown that we can become addicted to any particular drug, from heroin to aspirin or coffee, Mr Peele goes on to establish that we can become addicted to anything at all, for addiction is not a chemical reaction to a substance, but a psychological experience; it is a person's 'routinised response to anything he finds so safe and reassuring that he cannot do without it'. This reminds me of a Tibetan definition of craving: 'a longing desire to possess objects of sensory cognition which you like, and to include them in your ego identity in the hope of getting a sense of security from having them as part of you'. In his concern to show that the sources of addiction are to be found within the person and not in the drug, the author examines some research on the effects of drugs, noting how they appear to vary according to the person taking the drug and the environment in which it is taken. He concludes that there is nothing distinctive about the withdrawal symptoms suffered by heroin addicts when deprived; the physical symptoms are not unlike a severe dose of the flu. The most intense symptom common to all addicts during withdrawal is not physical but psychological, 'an agonising sense of the absence of well-being', left as they are without their normal 'buffer against reality'. This sort of experience is, of course, not peculiar to drug users; it is the universal

experience of dukkha. In view of the inescapable need to shift the emphasis in drug addiction from the physical to the psychological, scientists researching into the matter are now apparently faced with the absurd situation of having to deal with a field of experience so wide that it is not possible to be precise or scientific about it! The realisation that the creation of dependence is not the attribute of the drug but of the person using it should deter us from going in futile search of a non-addictive painkiller - the Buddhist looking everywhere in the samsara for an end to his dukkha!

From all this, with which the author has paved so interesting a way, it is but a short step to 'love' itself. Both the drug addict and the person in love look for an intensely pleasurable stimulus; both experience diminishing returns as their dependence increases (known in drug parlance as 'tolerance'). We can be just as hooked on another person as we can be on a drug, and the withdrawal symptoms of being deprived can be equally severe. Having made the essential connection of the title, Mr Peele goes on, in the chapter entitled *A General Theory of Addiction*, to look at the motivations of the addict, be he drug addict or what he calls 'interpersonal addict'. Here again he comes up with some sound conclusions. The addict is a person who is too lacking in confidence in his own potentialities to come to grips with life independently, treating the great not-self, the world and other people, as threats. The basis for addiction is thus not rebellion, as is often alleged, but fear. With such strong feelings of inadequacy, the addictive person has exclusive recourse not only to drugs, but to medicines, people, institutions, and so on. In contrast to the addictive personality, which desires, above all, psychological security and opts for a sort of psychic imprisonment, we are offered a sketch portrait of the non-addictive personality, who responds to a challenge not with fear of failure, but with positive anticipation.

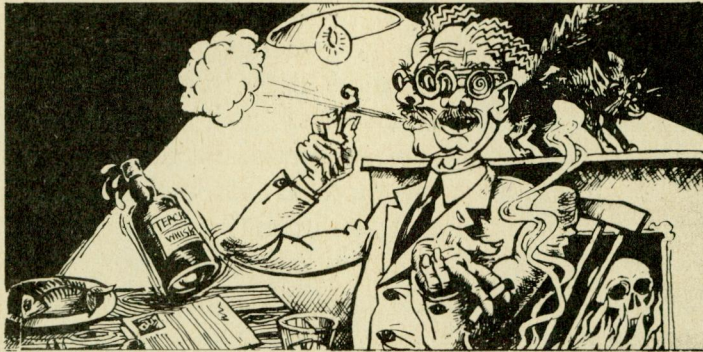
The central chapters of the book deal in some detail with the main theme, love as addiction. Gerald Crich, a character in Lawrence's *Women in Love*, is taken as a prototype of the addicted lover, feeling, as he does, like a 'bubble filled with darkness' and goaded to seek refuge in a lover from his pressing fear of 'collapsing inward on the great dark void'. It is this ontological anxiety, being without a secure sense of self, which is rightly taken as the basic, deepest motivation of the interpersonal addict. In fact, it is suggested that the intensity of the resulting infatuation can be used as a measure of the extent of the preceding loneliness. Reference is made at this point to the acute social criticism of the psychologist Erich Fromm, particularly to his most relevant work in this context, *The Art of Loving*, in which Fromm distinguishes between the addictive love affair as a 'fusion without integrity', the lovers' need for approval of each other becoming their only basis for a feeling of identity, and the non-addictive union, in which there is the mutual concern 'to preserve one's integrity, one's individuality'. In the chapter entitled *Addicted Lovers Together*, we are treated to a series of 'vignettes', as the author calls them, being composite portraits of love's victims in action. He is careful to point out at the outset that addiction is not a matter of all or nothing, and that we are all susceptible to varying degrees of addictive orientation. For this reason, he bases his portraits on relatively 'normal' people. There's Vicky and Bruce, and Shelley and Carl, and others, all together in an amalgam of juicy ingredients straight, one supposes, from the counsellor's casebook. No doubt most readers have the uncomfortable experience of seeing at least something of themselves in these pages. As well as the made-up versions, there is included a striking glance at a real-life interpersonal addict in the account of the writer Scott Fitzgerald's maudlin, destructive love affair with Sheila Graham. And there is this snippet straight from one addict's mouth: 'Since Linda left...I'm just too weak to move....I feel so horrible, so dispossessed - like the real me doesn't exist anymore.' This is just a slightly more prosaic version of the jingle quoted elsewhere, which, like all such, sounds even worse when divested of its music:

'I need your love to survive,
Without it I'm just half alive.'

After the psychological motivations and manifestations of addiction, we are invited to take a look at its external causes. The addict is now placed in his cultural and social setting and shown to be, not an ugly, inexplicable excrescence on the face of an otherwise healthy society, but an inevitable product of society's cramped and distorted values. The addict's lack of self-assurance is attributed in part to the smothering over-protectiveness of the nuclear family, by which children are deprived of a sufficiently wide field of emotional contact and grow up with their adulthood denied, showing 'an outsize deference towards high government and business officials'. Parents contaminate children with their own dependencies, so that the addictive tendency becomes part of the fabric of society. Thus the portrait of isolated addicted lovers in the previous chapter is now supplemented by a portrait of the addicted society which produced them.

Peele castigates the educational system for perpetuating the addictive status quo; he would have us believe the American educational system to be nothing but a monstrous machine, grinding its victims into addictive shape mainly by playing on their fear of failure. No doubt there is more than a slight element of this in most contemporary educational programmes, and the

American system may well be even worse than our own in this respect, but I sense here a certain degree of over-generalisation to serve the point. Next to come under fire is the medical service. He sees people's over-readiness to consult a doctor on the slightest pretext as 'the most portentous example of a society's misguided reliance on outside expertise'. More and more people these days, again, especially in America, are becoming dangerously reliant on psychiatry, which in many cases they resort to because they are so starved of genuine human communication. A horrifying instance is cited of some doctors in mental institutions actually encouraging their patients to be mentally ill by 'rewarding' them for producing clinical symptoms. Then there is addiction to pets. Their responses to the human need for attention being so predictable, pussies and poodles, it is implied, are relatively suitable and reliable objects in the search for emotional certitude! There is also the amusing, though perhaps not surprising, discovery that habitual TV watchers, when deprived of the box, exhibit classic withdrawal symptoms! Add to the above addictions shopping, sex, household drugs, overeating, overworking, compulsive gambling and groups of all kinds (the relationship being the 'tightest group of all'), and we begin to see that the enemy is legion. Add a few more still, as many as you can think of, and more, and you have samsara. Anything we do can be addictive if we do not take responsibility for our own emotional development. We are, after all, to extend the idea in Buddhist terms, addicted to samsara, slowly deconditioning ourselves and experiencing the inevitable pains of withdrawal, while at the same time reconditioning ourselves to the idea of natural growth and expansion into Nirvana,



boosted all the while by the Spiritual Community.

Having delivered his points with such punch and provided us with so much stimulating material, Mr Peele leaves it all a bit in the air when he finally comes round to dealing with how to overcome our addictions. Given, as he says, that each of us has his or her own set of psychological and personal limitations to resolve, entering this life, as we do, conditioned, and that it's no use staying 'preoccupied with the weaknesses we acquired when we were too young to defend ourselves, which is itself an escape that prevents us from dealing with our lives' - what methods does he actually suggest for dealing with our lives? Very few, and none of them of any substance. We have, he urges us, to clarify our goals and initiate the behaviour necessary to reach those goals.

But one of the root problems in the whole business is, I suspect, the very lack of goals. He points to the undeniable therapeutic advantages of having something to do, but leaves it more or less at that. The spiritual goal and the community of individuals are conspicuous by their absence. The nearest we get to the latter, something which I'd never heard of before and which sounds endearingly American, is a 'women's consciousness raising group'. Yet it would be unfair to insist that we should have been provided with a cure-all into the bargain; let it suffice that we have been shown where the sickness lies. For Mr Peele's thesis, or rather the burden of it, is to show us that much, if not all, of what goes by the name of love is an addiction. I'm sure he'd be happy to know that he has succeeded in getting most of his readers to take a closer look at their own addictions, and I'd be surprised if they haven't!

Abhaya



Great Balls of Fire

Peace is a Fire The Venerable Sangharakshita. Compiled and edited by Upasaka Ananda.

Published by Windhorse Publications, London 1979. PP127. £1.50.

Someone, somewhere (not the Ven. Sangharakshita: not in *Peace is a Fire*) said, 'It is impossible to keep your nose to the grindstone and have an ear to the ground'. - which is perhaps an appropriately aphoristic way of explaining how, in the scramble to put the last Newsletter together, we overlooked the need for something fuller, not to say more eulogistic, than an advert, to announce the recent publication of *Peace is a Fire*.

Put together over a period of two years by Ananda, this book is without doubt the most stunning, thought-provoking, up-to-date, and mind expanding publication that has yet emerged from Windhorse Publications. A thoroughly comprehensive collection of sayings, aphorisms, reflections, and poems, from the mouth and pen of the Ven. Sangharakshita, this easily pocketable book gives an electric shock of contact with the mind of a remarkable man. Such superlatives will no doubt rouse the suspicions of even the mildly cynical, but there really is no other way to talk about this book. Placed beside (though I hope that it won't be!) the insipid collections of 'spiritual aphorisms', offering their sickly doses of sentiment and comfort, which abound on the shelves of so many specialist bookshops, *Peace is a Fire*, with its challenges, its shocks, its demands and rewards, really does stand in a class of its own.

The sayings themselves are presented to us thematically, the book being divided into 14 sections, with titles as wide-ranging as, 'Suffering and Happiness', 'Politics and the State', 'Art', and 'Friendship' - to mention just a few. But the book's breadth of variety is not restricted just to its subject matter. Ananda, with help from the Ven. Sangharakshita himself, and many Order members, has culled his selection from Bhante's lectures, study

seminars, private correspondence and personal notebooks, with the result that the sayings vary widely in tone, style and flavour. From a lecture comes, then, a precisely postulated definition: 'Art is the organisation of sensuous impressions into pleasurable formal relations that express the artist's sensibility and communicate to his audience a sense of values that transform their lives', for example, while from the more informal setting of a study seminar comes the more open-ended, 'One should be useful - but useful only within the much larger context of complete uselessness.'

Above all, the book is a challenge, communicating with almost stark urgency the need to examine our views, our patterns, our assumptions - and to transform them. 'Any kind of life which is making no effort to evolve is escapism', we are told, though elsewhere we are offered ambiguous comfort: 'The truth does not scorch you nearly so fiercely as the suffering you bring upon yourself when you ignore the truth'. Even when he offers us a reflection on something as general and perhaps safely distant as the world's major religious traditions, one cannot help feeling that Bhante is actually giving each of us a very personal teaching: 'The besetting sin of organised Christianity is intolerance, that of Islam fanaticism, of Hinduism inhumanity, and of Buddhism laziness and indifference'.

The critical element in the foregoing quote should be enough to remind you that the Ven. Sangharakshita is something of a controversial thinker. His views do not please all of the people all of the time, refusing, as he does, to take the 'conventional wisdom' of our day as anything more than a reference point. We should not be surprised, then, when we encounter a few sayings that seem calculated to raise the fashionably liberal eyebrow: 'One should not waste time helping the weak. Nowadays it is the strong who need help.' Or, 'Angels are to men as men are to women - because they are more human and, therefore, more divine.'

Hopefully it should be clear by now that *Peace is a Fire* is not the book for those who like their spiritual nourishment pre-digested. While clearly the result of much thought and reflection on the part of the speaker, each quote has the power to goad us into exploring those avenues of thought towards which they point. Among all the shocks and demands of this book, it may comfort us to hear that 'One is pure from the beginning; pure, if you like, from the beginningless beginning; pure by nature; pure essentially. For anyone brought up in a guilt-ridden culture like ours in the West, this sort of statement must surely come as a great positive shock: that in the depths of your being you are pure of all conditionality; pure of the very distinction between conditioned and unconditioned, and hence you are void'. 'Ah', you may say, 'Now that's what I call really spiritual stuff'. But don't forget, 'Peace is a fire'.

Nagabodhi

FACETS

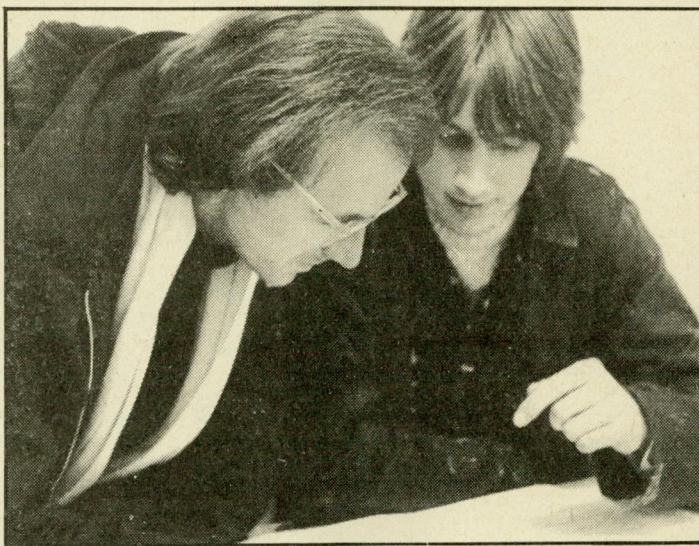
The FWBO is a growing Movement. It is relatively easy for us to become parochial in our views, to forget the wider perspective of the Friends as a whole, what we together have achieved and aspire to achieve in this country as well as abroad. Even those of us who are most intimately involved in the activities of one or another community or centre can fall into the trap of thinking that the world ends outside our front door, and that our particular community bears the style of all FWBO communities. Similarly, we may feel if our particular co-operative is not making dramatic progress, then the Movement as a whole is not getting anywhere fast. But viewed (as it were) collectively, the FWBO centres and branches seem to possess an organic unity. Like a single organism, it extends a *pseudopod* here and there, floods into these new channels with all the potential energy it contains, transforming this into kinetic energy, expressed as action, advance, growth. The organism, however, is not homogeneous, for each part has its own individual quality and function within the context of the whole. Most, if not all of our centres report that their work, their atmosphere, and their communication are reaching unprecedented levels of expansion.

Home

New Centres

FWBO Glasgow has bought a new centre in the very heart of the city. The premises, at 329 Sauchiehall Street, are on the first and third floors of a large attractive building. It is no exaggeration to say that this move is to Heruka what moving to Oxford Street would be for the LBC! The mere fact of the FWBO's presence in such a prestigious quarter is sure to attract a large number of new Friends. It is hoped eventually that the middle floor of the building will also become available; in that case it could contain the public centre, a men's community, and a separate women's community, all under one roof. At the moment Heruka itself has overspilled into a nearby flat, but this is not an ideal state of affairs as the flat is shared with the previous tenants. By the end of November, Vairocana and Guhyananda will have closed down FWBO Edinburgh temporarily and moved to Glasgow to add their energies to the work of the new centre. It is expected that the personnel will then redistribute themselves between Heruka and the Sauchiehall Street premises. There is of course a fair amount of redecoration work to be done on the new building, but it is generally in good repair, and needs no major structural alterations, such as the LBC required. There is at least no shortage of willingness to rise to the occasion.

Once the building work is completed, FWBO Manchester will have its new centre too, in Burlington Road. Community living space on these premises has been renovated to a high standard, and this forms the second men's community in the city. There is no lack of interest in meditation and Buddhism in Greater Manchester; now at last it seems the



Planning the next move in Manchester/Suvajra

facilities to cater for this interest will soon be available. With a public of several millions in the area, this could become a very fruitful centre indeed.

Fresh ground

Elsewhere in the Movement expansion can plainly be seen. A new men's community is flourishing in Norwich, and Vajrakula, the existing community, is to accommodate two more members. One of the rooms is being converted to provide a new and better shrine-room. Vajradhatu, the centre itself, is also undergoing renovation and rebuilding, to increase and improve reception areas.

In London fresh ground continues to be broken. In the last Newsletter it was reported that the West London Centre had moved to Marylebone; this was an editorial error. In fact it is the community, Ratnadvipa, which has moved to Daventry Street; the centre, Mandala, remains where it has been, in Fulham. Members of the women's community, Amaravati, have also moved to West London, and are living in a house in Byam Street, quite near the centre,

so that they can attend and support classes at Mandala. However, as their lease runs out in February, they will need to find alternative housing in the area before then. Meanwhile Beulah continues to provide a focus for women in the Movement visiting London.

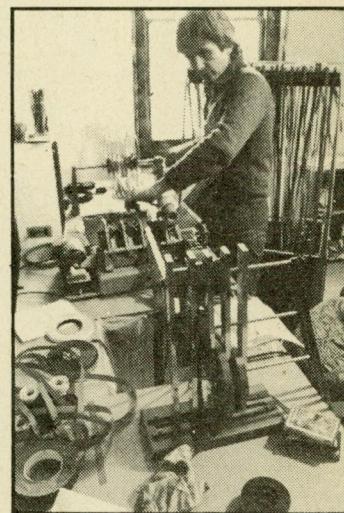
What used to be Amaravati - the old house in Wanstead - is now occupied by a men's community, and goes by the name of Vajrasamaya, meaning 'Bonded to the Vajra', or 'Diamond-bonded'. This is an exciting new development, as it will be the first major community 'spawned' by the LBC. Three of its members are Order members from Sukhavati, the rest are new Friends and mitras, who have contacted the Movement through the London Buddhist Centre, and who in the course of a few months have been inspired radically to change their lifestyle in order to pursue the Dharma. In addition to this, yet another new community is forming in East London, within a short walk of the LBC. Arunachala, 'The Mountain of Light', will house five men, four of whom will form a building and decorating co-operative; by means of the

money earned, mitra activities in the Movement will be supported, including the offices of the mitra convenors.

Changes

Sukhavati too is changing. A team has begun rebuilding work on the adjoining houses in Globe Road, for which loans of £6500 have been obtained. Offices will be built for LBC administration and Pure Land Co-op management, and the existing cafe will be improved and expanded. The community itself is to be redecorated and 'rationalised' over the winter, by means of an in-house working retreat. This together with an influx of new members could mean a radically new profile for Sukhavati, which for all its virtues has perhaps lacked in the past year an overall sense of identity. No doubt this is largely due to the adjustments, environmental and psychological, that are slowly being made, as members begin to see themselves as part of the whole LBC complex, rather than simply as part of a building project.

Golgonooza, which for so long has been beset by the practical difficulties of lack of space and seemingly interminable building work, has at last emerged into a new phase. The Design Studio on the top floor is complete - indeed it must be one of the show-cases of the Movement, with its aesthetic and professional atmosphere. The community now houses three Order members and two mitras, all of whom are involved in the various aspects of media work. A co-operative, Windhorse Associates, has been formed to undertake design, photographic, and film work. It is hoped that the large space on the community floor can be used for cultural events, recitals, or symposia. Golgonooza may then fully live up to its name as the City of Art and Manufacture.



Devaraja cutting film at Golgonooza
Roger Jones

'Gone Co-op'

Experience has shown that, of all types of business structure and organisation open to us, the co-

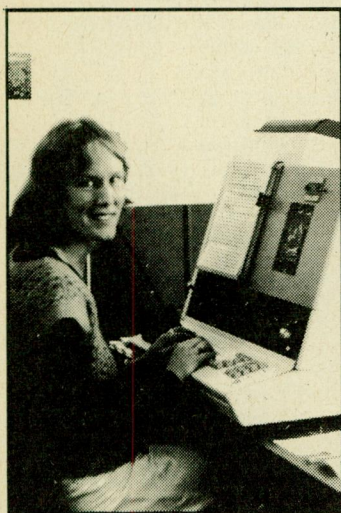
operative is the one which best enables us to express our ideals of communication, practical economics, and the distribution of responsibilities according to ability rather than one man's authority over another. It comes as no great surprise then to learn that 'Oranges' - FWBO Norwich's vegetarian restaurant - has 'gone co-op'. A team of five has assumed responsibility for the business, and turnover is already at record levels. The atmosphere and the quality of the food are better than ever, and customers are not slow to praise.

Business is booming too at Heruka. Glasgow's 'Gardening Friends' have been expanding into the larger and more remunerative tasks of landscape gardening, slab-laying, and building. They have discontinued work for the 'rainy season', but 'Ink Print and Design' continues to flourish. The business, now incorporating screen-printing, design, litho, mural design and painting, is operating from new premises in Hope Street, and with the help of a Small Firms' Subsidy, supports seven workers.

At Aryatara, the new accommodation for the wholefood shop is almost ready, and seems likely to be as visually pleasing as the cafe. Both are doing increasingly excellent trade, and are among the most popular lunch-time venues in Croydon.

Economic Difficulties

At Sukhavati, economic difficulties still prevail, for the large cash-flows needed to keep centre, co-operative, and community alive and well, are hard to come by. Partly this is due to serious undermanning in the businesses, and perhaps partly it is due to the nature of those businesses being low in profitability. However, a newly-formed decorating business is helping the situation considerably, and there is every

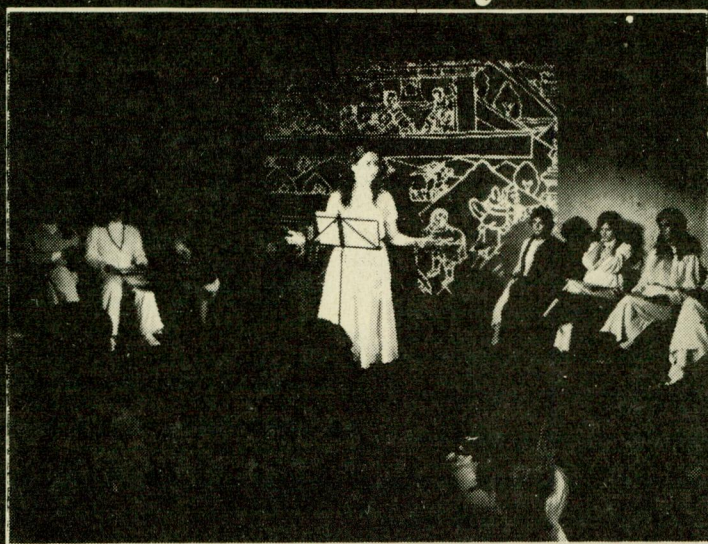


The new Blue Lotus typesetting business/Nagabodhi

reason to be optimistic for the future.

'Blue Lotus', the typesetting business presently operating from Old Ford Road, is expected to move to

Women's Poetry Event



'Not so much a poetry reading - more an experience' - so said the advertisement, and the event itself lived up to its promise to be multi-dimensional. With recorded music of various moods, and against a projected backcloth of scenes from the Tibetan Wheel of Life, we were treated to a programme of the works of women poets, read by women, calculated to carry us on an imaginary journey through the Six Realms of Existence, from hell to the devalokas! Though perhaps too much of the poetry was at least for this reviewer uncomfortably purgative, the effect was vivid, and the performance well staged. Hopefully the show will be touring FWBO centres in the new year.

West London when new premises can be found, in order to be in closer contact with the Byam Street community and the West London Centre.

Words and Music

Dharma activities at all our centres continue unabated. Furthermore it is expected that over the next few months there may be as many as fourteen ordinations. Apart from the usual meditation classes, study groups, and pujas, more straightforward cultural events are being staged. At Aryatara there have been films on the lives of Milton and D.H. Lawrence, and the giving of poetry and music recitals is becoming more and more popular. There is to be a film showing of Mozart's 'The Magic Flute', and a dramatic recital of the works of women poets, in and around the LBC - and that's only this week. FWBO Norwich will be holding its annual Winter Vegetarian Feast, incorporating 'live entertainment' on December 8th at the University of East Anglia. The following Friday a farewell supper is being given in honour of Devamitra, who after three years as Chairman of the Norwich Centre, is moving to Sukhavati, to be replaced as Chairman by Vajramati.

Sangha Day, of course, was celebrated throughout the Movement during the full moon of October, with meditations, festive pujas, feasts, and fireworks. If the Friends continue to expand at their present

rate, we may soon be celebrating not in dozens or scores, but in hundreds and thousands.

Nigel Seller

Abroad

INDIA

SINCE Bhante's visit here we have been just as busy. Now comes the all important follow up to his visit. Bhante has sown the seeds and now we have to do the work of nurturing them and clearing away any weeds and pests that get in the way. To this end we've been holding in Pune a total of ten classes a week, as well as other activities which include two visits to Aurangabad, a five day retreat and the celebration of Dharmachakrapravatana Day.

Our five day retreat was held at a Scout Camp situated about 30 miles from Pune. The Scout Camp was originally the palace of a minor raja, and we were housed in what used to be the raja's guest house. The Camp is situated among fields green from the monsoon rains, tall mango trees with their rich dark green leaves, and on all sides the mountains - the Western Ghats, which seem to change colour as the day proceeds - in the morning faint purple from the dawn light, in the day green, and at night, blue and grey and silver as the sun sets behind them. For most of the retreat the rain fell steadily creating sometimes a continuous sheet of

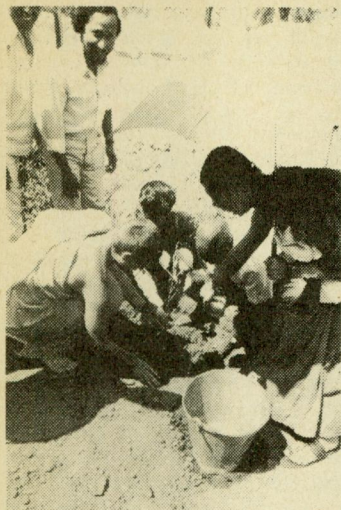
water. Sometimes I felt that the water was shutting out everything, shutting out all the world and its harmful influences, so that we could be free to work on our own development.

There were about 15 people attending the retreat including (other than Lokamitra and myself) three Order members. By the third day a regular routine was established which included meditation, study groups, puja and communication exercises. The latter were done for the whole five days and by the last day the atmosphere generated by them was one of openness and directness which was at the same time warm and friendly. For me the hallmark of those five days was the feeling of happiness which could be felt from everybody. In fact the warden of the Camp asked one of those attending why we were so happy. He hadn't encountered anything like it before.

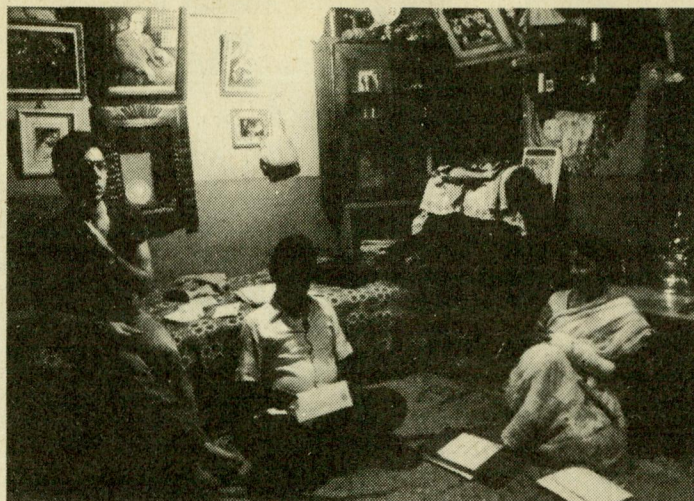
Returning to Pune after the retreat we went straight into a programme of ten classes a week, conducted in different parts of Pune. One of these classes is held in a very poor locality. The class is held in an old school flanked on one side by a busy road and on the other by a slum. A slum in India is quite different from what you would call a slum in the West. Huts knocked together from stones and wood, and if the family is rich enough, a roof of corrugated iron and polythene; open sewers by which play dirty children in unwashed rags. The room in which we hold our class has only one window which not only lets in the light but a cloud of smoke from somebody's cooking fire as well. By the time I arrive, however, at one end of the room a nice shrine has been prepared and 20 to 30 people with interested faces are sitting quietly, perhaps exchanging a few words with one another, waiting for the Dharma. In spite of difficult conditions the classes there are always lively and enjoyable. I always leave the place feeling happy and inspired by the fact that the Buddha's teachings are truly universal. Those same principles of mindfulness, metta, of growth and development are as necessary and as needed whether it be in a Pune slum or suburban Purley.

Aurangabad is a city about 100 miles to the north-east of Pune. The city has a rich history - the scene of many battles between the Marathas (a Maharashtrian warrior caste) and the invading Moghuls. More importantly for us Aurangabad has a rich Buddhist history. Not far from the city are the famous Ajanta and Ellora caves with their beautiful frescoes of the Buddha. At one time this whole area must have been vibrating with vigorous Buddhist activity. Unfortunately this was destroyed, due, amongst other things, to the Moslem invasion. But in the '50s Dr. Ambedkar helped to revive this great Buddhist culture by making Aurangabad one of his centres.

One of the Doctor's great con-



Lokamitra plants a tree – just outside Pune / Padmapani



A Council meeting in Pune/Kulamitra



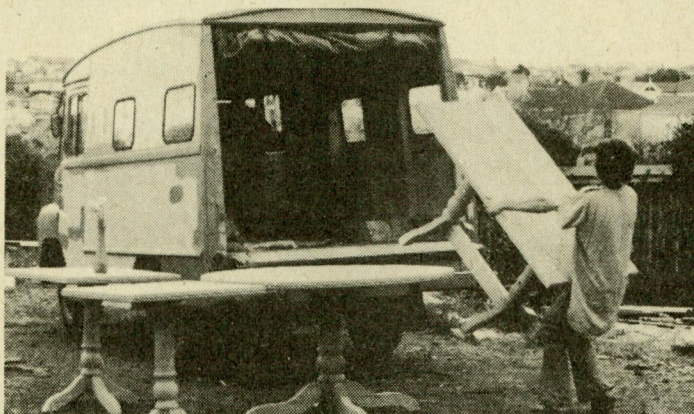
Two Friends cast Sujajri's rupa FWBO New Zealand

cerns was that of education. He was a man who had had to fight to get himself a decent education and this experience made him determined that education should be made available to all. In 1951 he established, in Aurangabad, Milind College. He established it there for two reasons. Firstly, because the area around Aurangabad was one of the most backward in terms of education in the whole of Maharashtra, and secondly because of the Buddhist history of the area. Eventually the Government of Maharashtra established from Milind College the Marathwada University. Aurangabad being a university town it is not surprising that many people from all over Maharashtra are attracted to it – including Buddhists.

In March Lokamitra was invited to speak in Aurangabad and he made a number of new friends, some of whom expressed interest in holding a retreat there, which we did at the end of July. One of our Friends there has a large bungalow in a quiet and secluded part of the town which was ideal for the retreat.

There were about 25 people attending, including college professors, students and a couple of bhikkhus (one of whom is developing a very deep appreciation for what we are doing). The retreat included periods of meditation, communication exercises, puja and taped lectures. The lectures (some of those that Bhante gave in Pune last February) were very much appreciated. I cannot follow Marathi fully but after one of the lectures I could hear conversations in which the name Sangharakshita-ji was mingled with a number of superlatives. Clearly for these people Buddhism had returned. Not since the golden days of Dr. Ambedkar had they heard the Dharma explained with so much vigour and inspiration.

On our second visit to Aurangabad, at the end of September, we held a retreat, and the day after it finished there was the celebration of Dr. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism, a very important festival for Indian Buddhists. Lokamitra gave three lectures in



Loading up some Golden Light produce / FWBO New Zealand

different parts of the city as part of the celebration.

Over the last few months we have had some visits from some of our friends in the West. Upasaka Padmapani stayed with us for a couple of weeks after spending a few months travelling in Nepal and northern India. Mark Lane, a mitra from Bethnal Green spent two months with us on his way back to England from Australia. During his stay he was very helpful, busying himself with building and transcription work for us. At the moment we have staying with us Upasaka Kulamitra who is on a fact-finding mission, as he will be running a charity in England to raise funds for our work here. He will shortly be leaving for, among other places, Kalimpong where he will be meeting Ven. Dharpo Rinpoche, because he will also be concerned with raising funds for Rinpoche's school. In November we will have Upasakas Vajradaka and Purna staying with us. Vajradaka is spending a few months here on his way to New Zealand, whilst Purna will be here for an indefinite period. As soon as they arrive we will be extending our classes to 15 a week in different places in and around Pune.

Padmavajra

NEW ZEALAND

SINCE the last report sent in by Priyananda, dated July 2nd 1979, some of the main events that come to

mind are largely connected with the lease of the cottage, mentioned at the end of that report. Over the last three months - June to end of August - Udaya, Aniketa, and Purna have had 'solitaries', Sujajri has had a mini-retreat of about a week, and there have been a men's and a women's mitra retreat as well, plus two Order weekends. Priyananda is currently 'in residence' on 'solitary'. So far the cottage has been empty for two nights only, and it is booked up for two mitra retreats in October, one for men on the 'long' N.Z. Labour Day holiday weekend, and one possibly for women on the following weekend. Judging by enquiries from more involved mitras and Friends it looks as if the cottage will be used to full advantage. The benefits of having a place of our own for solitaries and small, more intimate, retreats are already apparent, and their effects being felt. A lot of energy has been called up and released in all sorts of beneficial ways - dana in the form of furnishings and decorating etc has flowed in; individuals have taken solitaries there, and have been inspired to get more solidly into their practice; others have taken time and space there to stand back a bit from activities and so assess the way in which FWBO Auckland, in relation to FWBO Worldwide, is going, and by seeing more clearly the limitations and resources in the situation, have been able to concentrate and direct energy into essential activities with

more effectiveness. All in all the cottage is proving to be one of Auckland FWBO's most valuable assets, along with the Centre: Suvarnadhatu, the community: Suvarnaketu, and the Golden Light Co-op's wood-turning factory.

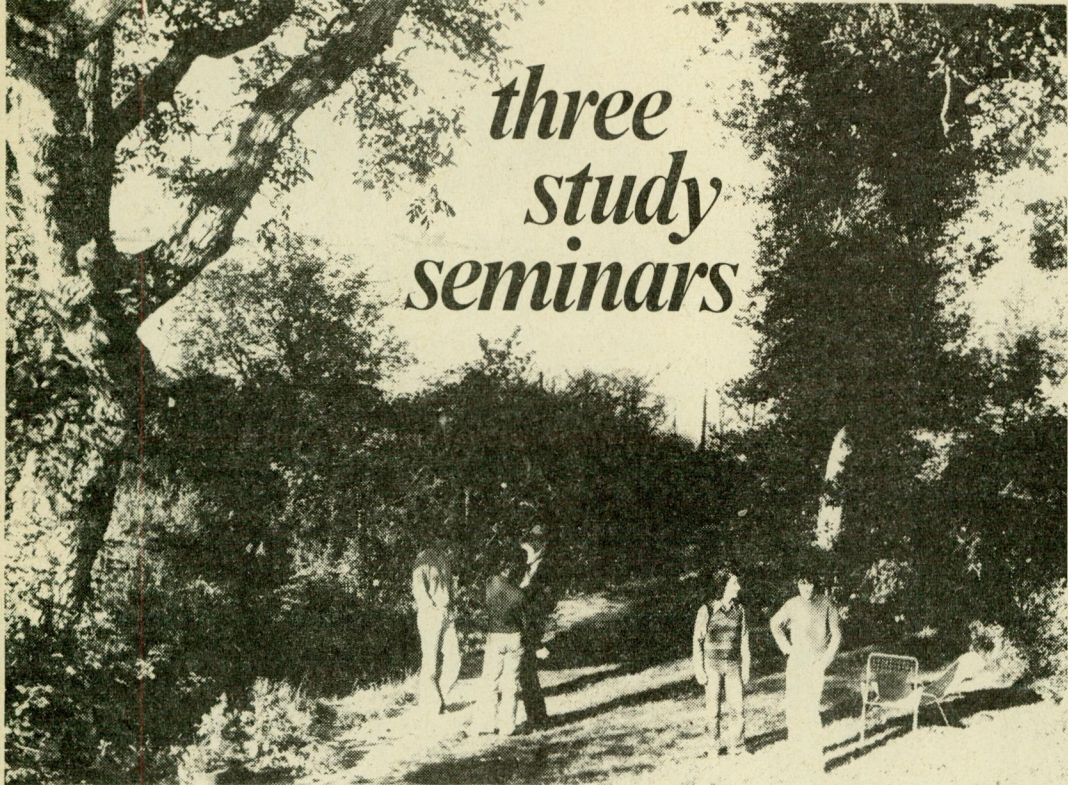
As for Suvarnadhatu activities, the direction they are taking is towards gathering up and redirecting energy into Puja night, and Beginner's courses on Thursday nights. A positive, warm and friendly atmosphere has been building up remarkably since the number of classes has been cut, and Puja has been well attended. There is more practising 'Buddha-Dharma-Sangha', and less discussing Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha; there is more *being* Buddhism and less thinking and talking *about* Buddhism. In between courses on meditation and Buddhism, there are plans afoot for 'Open' nights. This is a new venture and we'll have to see how they go. There will be talks by Order members, taped lectures, appropriately selected seminar studies, Mitrata study, and communication exercises on the 'bill-of-fare', aimed at keeping interest flowing and offering opportunities for *everyone* to participate as fully as they want to. A women's retreat is a possibility in mid-September.

Hopefully these activities will dispel the clouds of doubt and the niggling feelings of 'missing-out' which some people seem to have been experiencing lately, partly as result of cutting down the classes and our tailoring the 'Beginners' course more specifically for beginners.

Financially it's not all roses! As with most centres we need money. There's ever an over-supply of needy causes and an under-supply of means. The newly acquired wood-turning factory has great potential, as a source of income and as Right Livelihood, and though there is a good turnover, this does not leave much extra when debts and running costs etc are paid. However the future for this is bright!

In an effort to raise funds we are planning a Garage sale.

Aniketa



three study seminars

A Padma- loka Weekend

MEN'S ORDER/MITRA EVENT
20th-21st October

THE Order/mitra weekends at Padmaloka have deservedly become red-letter occasions in many people's calendars. The October Event was the fourth of its kind, and each seems better than the last. Order members and mitras from centres and communities throughout the country gathered in such numbers that some overspilled the house and camped out on the lawn. The house, the grounds, the surrounding lanes thronged with sixty or seventy Buddhists, usually in twos or threes, usually laughing with each other.

The customary programme was followed: meditation, study, and in the evenings, symposia, that is, talks on aspects of a common theme - in this case, the theme of 'Self and Other'. The study groups covered a wide range of subjects - some were on the Five Hindrances, others on the *Precepts of the Gurus* - but in all cases the emphasis seemed to be on pragmatic areas of spiritual practice, rather than on cold theory. There was vigorous discussion, in these groups, of material arising from the previous night's symposium: thus quite a strong atmosphere was generated of general participation in the theme of the whole Event, which in retrospect gave the weekend a concentrated and unified feel.

There were six talks delivered over the two evenings. On the Saturday, Devamitra spoke on 'Man and Woman', Mangala on 'Competition', and Subhuti examined the question, 'Is Buddhism Selfish?'. The following day, Buddhadasa, Manjuvajra and Prakasha talked on 'Self and Fellow Workers', 'Individualism and Individuality', and 'Friendship' respectively.

It was generally agreed that the standard and quality of the symposia was high - so much so that Bhante made an emphatic appeal that at least some of the talks should be written up and distributed through our centres as pamphlets. If this practice is adopted and maintained, as seems very likely, we will soon have a wide-ranging selection of synoptic articles available on key issues in the spiritual life. This would clearly be very desirable, not only for the benefit of the inquiring public, but also from the point of view of keeping members of the Movement up to date with the germination and fruition of new ideas and insights as

LISTENING to a stoned computer-programmer explaining, from Newmarket to Norwich, the organisational intricacies of modern computer-controlled systems management in the margarine industry may not be the best preparation for a 10-day study seminar. But beggars can't be choosers, and hitch-hikers cannot choose their benefactors. With a befuddled head, but not without gratitude, I said goodbye to my driver, and made my way down the street to Vajradhatu, there to await a more relaxed drive out to Padmaloka.

To arrive at Padmaloka for a study seminar is to experience an invigorating rush of diverse feelings. There is the joy of relaxation after the long and unpredictable journey. There is excitement and happiness involved in meeting old friends. There is a thrill of anticipation hovering in the air, infecting everyone as we bustle, talk, and smile at one another wide-eyed; the rucksacks huddling in the hall-way seem to signify not so much a journey's end as the beginning of an adventure, an exploration. For isn't there also a note of apprehension about us: an awesome expectation of new vistas soon to be seen, of unknown challenges soon to be faced?

During the month of September, the Ven. Sangharakshita gave three seminars: two on *The Precepts of the Gurus* and one on *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (in its new translation by Francesca Freemantle and Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, published by Shambhala Inc). Two of these seminars were held concurrently, with one group meeting with Bhante for study in the mornings while the other enjoyed a programme of meditation, work, and listening to

taped lectures - the roles being reversed in the afternoon. The third seminar (the second on the *Precepts*) took place a week later. The setting of the seminars within a retreat context was something of a new departure. In the past, when not studying with Bhante, seminar participants have been free to structure their time as they pleased. But the more disciplined routine, while still allowing plenty of time for people to get together and go for long twilight walks in the earth-dusty lanes, gave to the experience an undoubtedly beneficial concentratedness, kept us alert, awake, and able to make the most of the study.

The study itself followed its usual form. A paragraph, or in the case of the *Precepts*, a single precept, is read and then discussed. I will never forget the shock of the first minute of my first seminar, five years ago. A paragraph from a modern work about Buddhism that to me had seemed clear, reasonable and authoritative, a paragraph that I had already blandly, unquestioningly absorbed in my previous reading of the book, was suddenly being dissected, questioned, and finally dismissed as a travesty of the facts! Bhante sits there unfolding his views, his insights, his intuitions and reflections, not just (!) as an authority on the Dharma, not even as a man who has practised and absorbed himself in the Buddhist tradition, but (in my experience at least) as the supreme exemplar of the truly individual, truly creative mind in action. Indeed, in this context the word 'study' seems so inadequate, for the aspect of intellectual investigation, of adding to one's stock of knowledge, although present and important to the experience, is but a gross counterpart to the magical

transactions of spirit, energy, and attitude that are taking place. Even the published transcripts of these proceedings cannot really convey that.

Sometimes, increasingly, as we come alive and shed the cramping influences of our own private 'lesser mandalas', the shorter exchanges, the long numb silences in which we just feed off Bhante's energy, give way to longer, more animated discussions. What is pleasure? How do you find out what you really want to do? What is the link between 'love' and neurosis? Between single-sex communities and angels? What kind of form do you take in the Bardo? Can you create a crucial situation for yourself? How do you make a connection between personal motivations and the objective needs of a wider situation? And even, do men make better cooks than women? The fruits of just one such discussion appear elsewhere in this very Newsletter, and no doubt the fruits of others, too numerous to catalogue, will appear in future issues, as well as in Mitrata, and eventually in the form of entire seminar transcripts.

At the end of the seminar, as I walk beneath a canopy of leaves out into the fresh morning world, my mind, far from being clogged and overloaded with facts and arguments, is fresh and vividly open to the wonder of things, and waiting for a bus that will take me to my first hitching point I watch a troupe of swallows acrobatically preening themselves on the telegraph wires above me.

It took me eight ridiculous, cold, frustrating hours to get back to London. I arrived in a foul temper. But I got over it.

Nagabodhi

they arise. The dissemination and critical analysis of these ideas could then become a lively and creative area in the Friends as a whole.

Leaving Padmaloka for London after the weekend's activities, I felt refreshed and stimulated, not merely

by the country air and the restful scenery, but by what I felt to have been a precious, even an invaluable experience of Sangha at its best. May these Events continue, and may the Sangha flourish!

Nigel Seller

TODDINGTON RETREAT



Communication Exercises/Simon Taylor

New Barns School, Toddington, is normally the home of thirty or so adults and children, but for a fortnight during August this year it once again became the venue for the FWBO summer general retreat. Set amidst the rich, green countryside of deepest Gloucestershire, now quite luxuriant due to the ample summer rains, New Barns proved itself to be a very suitable situation for a retreat of this kind. The greatest distraction around is the 'occult bookshop', which is tucked away in a particularly obscure corner of the village, and which boasts shelf upon shelf of books on wonder cures through rare plants, achieving union with the godhead, mystical sex, etc. Generally, however, you are left to discover your own distractions, which crop up in the form of mental fantasies during the course of the four daily meditations. With determined effort these are eradicated, with the result that you find yourself living in a new, brighter, more joyful world.

This was the third such general retreat that has been held at Toddington. A general retreat is so-called, because it is open to anybody who cares to come along. It can therefore serve as an excellent introduction to meditation and the FWBO for someone with little or no previous experience. Inevitably,

there gathers quite a collection of people of a wide range of age, background, experience of the Dharma, and so on. Yet this retreat in particular seemed to be pervaded by a high degree of friendliness - warm, human friendliness, so rare and so delightful - so that newcomers were easily absorbed into the feeling of the retreat. One Friend in particular arrived four days before the end of the retreat, having never meditated before in his life, to find himself straight away confronted with almost a complete day of silence. What sounds like a recipe for 'freakout', instead turned into four of the happiest days of his life. He left a changed man.

As my mind drifts back to the retreat, the images come floating by - one Friend exhorting us to accompany him flying his orange kite; Padmapani poring over a map of India (at one time it seemed as if the whole retreat would be taking the next plane east); long hours spent weeding the flower beds; people making their first offerings in the evening puja. I could go on, but I shall just say that, if you want to experience the fruits of Dharma practice, and have never been on a retreat, I strongly encourage you to do so, and soon!

Ratnavira

From Stenfors to Stockholm

Travelling through Holland, Germany, Denmark, and further up, Northern Europe becomes ever cleaner and more affluent. And the layer of civilization grows thinner and thinner.

Stenfors is a little place in Southern Sweden noted for a big house with the same name, currently owned by Upasaka Aryavamsa. It is a spacious mansion ideally situated on a lake and surrounded by grass, flowers, berries, and quiet forest with many paths to explore. The most striking thing about the surrounding nature, however, is its ruggedness - the wild sparseness of the undergrowth, the huge boulders calmly challenging human influence which seems to have arrived only yesterday.

Arriving at Stenfors is like coming to a spot of many dimensions. There is the touch of culture, of man-created beauty alive inside the house. A shrine-room with a Buddha figure belongs there: a place dedicated to the highest of human endeavours, transcending the human. But from outside comes the inspiring, energising presence of primitive nature to boost our triple meditations, study, communication exercises and pujas. We also do yoga outside and inside, go swimming, rowing, walking. There is sun, rain, thunder, moonlight and stars.

And all the time the air is vibrant with communication flowing in all directions between the twenty people, so closely and spaciouly together for ten days: emotion and

energy abound! The waterlily on the shrine slowly opens, closes again into a tight bud - and opens again.

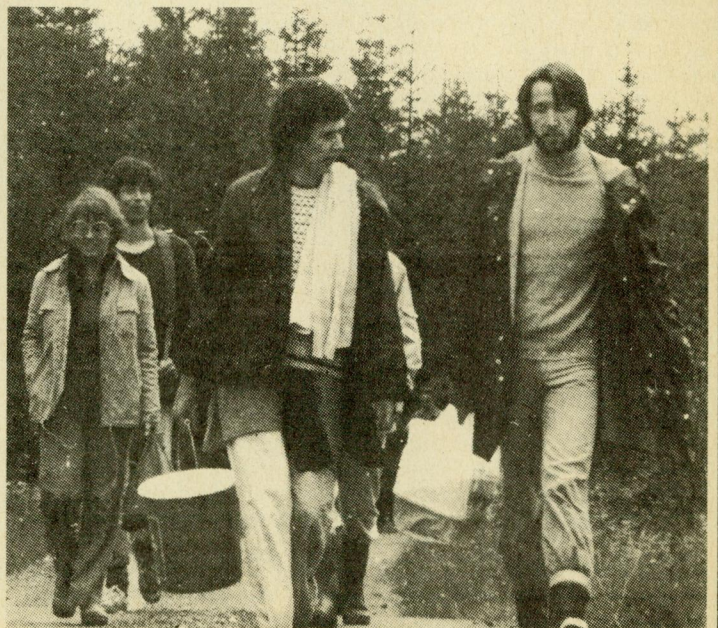
There is a clarity and urgency about these people. They really want to know and relate directly to themselves what they learn. Under the thin layer of reserve there is pagan spontaneity.

We study and discuss the Eightfold Path, and on the last day we celebrate Padmasambhava with an outing - and the energy of the local demons is very tangible indeed. We plunge into the cold lake water, scramble on enormous rocks, swing on the tops of the pinetrees, accompanied by pagan drumming on spontaneously constructed instruments.

The last full day culminates in a historic meeting, at which it is decided not just to hold regular retreats at Stenfors, but to start FWBO activities in Stockholm in the new year, with a six-week meditation course planned for February. And this seems like a natural development from the retreat. Growth has taken place, time has ripened for momentous things to start happening: the time has come for the demons to be converted to the Dharma!

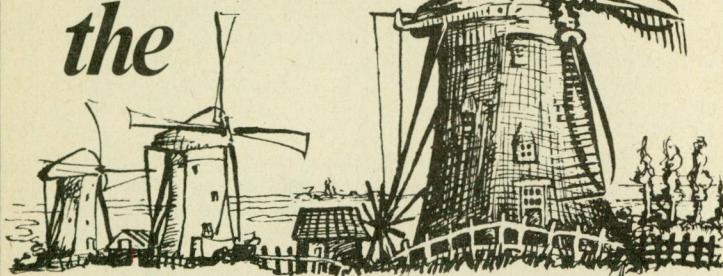
Last evening: Seven-fold Puja, shrine decked with all kinds of flowers, pleasing and fragrant, from all of us - and we offer still more. There is tremendous energy: deep devotion and exploding, bubbling laughter. In silence we go to sleep, and in the morning it is time for travel again.

Sridevi



Off to the woods for a Padmasambhava Day picnic/FWBO Helsinki

Starting a Sangha in the



NETHERLANDS

It is some time now since mention has been made of the fact that the FWBO is making an increasing number of contacts in the Netherlands. Thanks largely to the efforts of Upasika Vajrayogini in Rotterdam, and Carolien Eykeman, a mitra who lives in Arnhem, it has been possible for us to run a regular routine of retreats - about three a year - for the increasing number of people over there who are interested in meditation practice and the Buddha's teachings. I have now personally led and supported four of these retreats, and am delighted to see that a stable core of Friends is building up over there.

The Netherlands is a relatively affluent country - noticeably more so than England - and it is interesting to note that a high proportion of its wealth is currently being invested in a state-financed social service system. Not surprisingly then, a high proportion of those who attend our retreats are involved in social work of one sort or another and have, it seems, come to an interest in meditation by way of their training - which in many cases has included some experience of the psychological techniques generally associated with the 'Human Potential' movement: Gestalt, Encounter, Transactional Analysis, etc. While I think it is fair to say that some of the early retreats in the Netherlands, including especially a two-week summer retreat held some four years ago, were to an extent marred by an overpreoccupation among some of the participants with things psychological - to the exclusion of receptivity to those ideals associated with the higher spiritual and transcendental vision of Buddhism - recent retreats have been increasingly rooted in those particular qualities that characterise an FWBO activity: friendliness, objectivity, relaxed, open communication, and an eagerness to explore meditation and even devotional practice. It is interesting to see that in the country at large the plethora of institutions offering psychological techniques is now being challenged by an increasing number of more spiritual - including

Buddhist - organisations.

The most recent retreat held over there took place on the first weekend in November in a large house built right on top of sand-dunes at Domburg, a sea-side resort in the very south of the country. There were nineteen of us there for the three-day event: Sona leading, with support from Dhammadinna (who provided for most of our Dutch Friends their first encounter with an upasika) and myself, plus Carolien and twelve Friends from the Netherlands, and three more from Germany.

Once under way, once one's ear has become accustomed to the unfamiliar tones of an alien tongue, and one's palate (somewhat happily) to the tastes of 'foreign' food, a retreat in the south of Holland has nothing much to distinguish it from a retreat in Kent or Purley. The stillness of a meditation session, broken only by the occasional shuffling of an aching knee, the rhythmic lulls and cres-

cendoes of a communication exercise, the unspoken but hilarious camaraderie of the first period of silence, signs of colour rising into formerly pallid cheeks: these symptoms, and more, are no doubt universally observable at any beginner's retreat. Indeed, it is only when, at the end of the retreat, the car you are in pulls away from the house on the 'wrong' side of the road, and carries you past hoardings that advertise unpronounceable products of which you have never heard, that you remember you have all the time been in another land.

Since these contacts with the Netherlands began, quite a few of our Dutch Friends have visited retreats and communities in Britain - or have attended the summer retreats in Sweden. One Dutch Friend is currently living at Sukhavati and working for the Windhorse Press, while another who is not so free to travel has not only acquired a tape of every lecture in the Dharma-chakra Tapes catalogue, but has generously financed the purchase of our new high-speed cassette copying machine!

Obviously several Friends are eager to see FWBO activities in their country being extended - and not simply in terms of more retreats: they want a Centre, and are even contemplating setting up the legal and financial basis for such a development. Order members who go over for the retreats are vigorously exhorted to learn Dutch - and one upasaka has indeed started a teach-yourself course. When pressed on the subject, my answer has always been, 'Yes, there is no doubt that we will one day have a Centre in the Netherlands. It can't happen immediately, but I hope you won't have to wait too long.' And I mean it.

Nagabodhi

Visit to Helsinki

EARLY in September, Vajradaka and I found ourselves on a weekend retreat in the middle of the forest in Finland. The retreat had been organised by the Centre in Helsinki as part of our 10 day visit to the FWBO in Finland. Held in a wooden farmhouse owned by Liisa, a Friend, the retreat was attended by 5 Order Members, 9 mitras and 4 Friends. At the end of our 1 hour bus journey out of Helsinki we were met by Liisa with a horse and trap on which we put our luggage while we strolled the ½ hour walk to the house along forest trails: a delightful way to arrive on retreat, especially for Vajradaka and myself still a little surprised to be actually in Finland after such a short plane journey.

The highlight of the retreat was the study group led by Vajradaka on the 'Perfection of Strength' from the *Bodhicaryavatara* of Santideva. Some of the people spoke good Eng-

lish, some only a little and some none at all, so all communication was translated by Sarvamitra, and discussion ensued sometimes in English, translated into Finnish, and sometimes in Finnish translated into English. While this slowed down the pace of study a little, there was vigorous and in depth discussion on a number of topics, especially on the theme of self-confidence, as Vajradaka pointed out that most Finns seemed to have a low opinion of themselves, for which there was no objective need. The communication exercises were also carried out in both languages, although again this did not impede communication in any way. On Saturday evening, after the ritual sauna bath, Vajradaka gave a talk on Kalyana Mitrata and two Finnish men became mitras within the context of the puja, which was, of course, recited in Finnish. Work periods were spent

collecting wood from the forest, and all free periods in exploring the various forest trails getting to know people, as the weather was uncharacteristically fine.

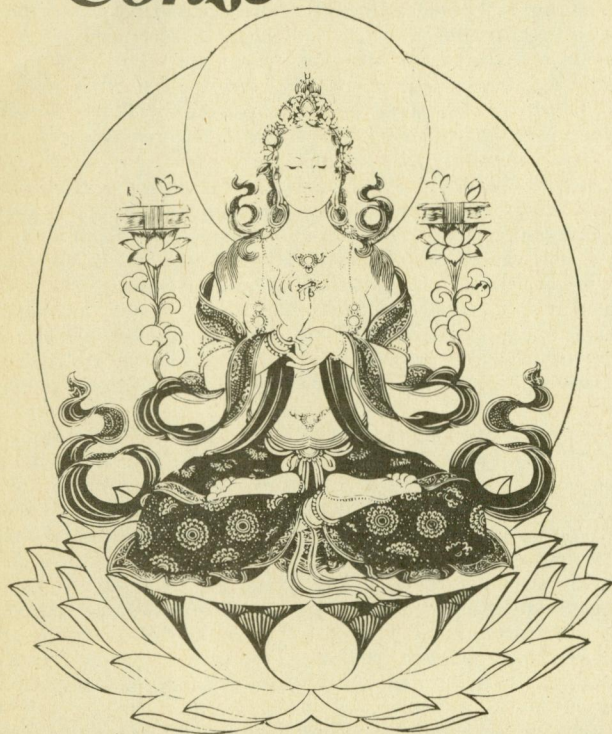
On the Sunday evening after the retreat we returned to Helsinki, to an Order meeting where we met the rest of the Finnish Order members. There are 9 Order members living in Helsinki, all of whom live either alone or with their families, and all of whom work full-time, two of them outside Helsinki. The weekly Order meeting is therefore very important, being the only time when they all come together.

For the rest of the week, Vajradaka and I spent time with as many Order members, mitras and Friends as possible, and attended classes. On Tuesday we held a special mitra evening, during which I gave a talk entitled 'Kalyana Mitrata, Energy and Work', in which I encouraged Order members and mitras to develop deeper friendship, thus creating more energy, and to work together on small projects especially in connection with the running of the Centre - to provide energy and experience of co-operation in preparation for the setting up of communities and Right Livelihood projects. Communities and Right Livelihood, which we take a little for granted in Britain, are a little difficult to get going in Finland owing to different social and economic considerations. Most Finns live in small apartments, and houses large enough for communities are few and far between - and expensive to rent. Also Finns are not used to communal living in any form and are therefore a little wary of such a different lifestyle. Any business would have to be well thought out and able to support people from the beginning, as the cost of living is high and state aid not forthcoming. There are, however, several people keen to overcome these difficulties, who want to take a step forwards into both projects, realising that unless these moves, though difficult, are taken, Buddhism will remain a once or twice a week hobby for most Finnish Friends. Much of the conversation with people centred around these topics which are so crucial to the development of Buddhism in Finland.

I renewed old friendships and made many new ones, and felt very 'at home' both in Helsinki, whose streets I wandered extensively, and at the Centre itself. The final Order meeting was vigorous, and plans were made to hold Order days and mitra days in order to extend contact and communication and to provide the necessary basis for the projects that need to be undertaken. Hopefully we will return in May or June of next year to find both communities and some Right Livelihood projects in operation and providing outlets for the energy of all the people I met, where interest in and dedication to the Dharma are so strong.

Dhammadinna

The Death of Dr. E. Conze



Prajnaparamita – the image of Perfect Wisdom/Chintamani

On 24th September, Dr Edward Conze died at his home in Sherborne, Dorset, at the age of 75. Though a German by birth and upbringing, Dr Conze has made a major contribution to the translation of Buddhist texts into the English language. He was among the earliest and most notable of those scholars in the field of Buddhism who also considered themselves to be Buddhists, and made their translations and wrote their studies with genuine devotion. The labour of love which is the outstanding achievement of Dr Conze's life is the translation of the entire *Prajnaparamita*, or Perfection of Wisdom, corpus of scriptures from the Sanskrit. He made, however, a number of other valuable translations, some of which are represented in the collections published under his editorship: *Buddhist Scriptures* (Penguin Books), and *Buddhist Texts Throughout the Ages* (with Horner, Snellgrove, and Waley. Published by Bruno Cassirer), both of which have sold widely. His *Buddhism; Its Essence and Development*, and *Buddhist Thought in India* are unrivalled in their fields.

Dr Conze was never easy with institutions. Neither the Communist Party, the universities of Europe and America, nor the Buddhist Society found his uncompromising contempt for humbug and hypocrisy, and his outspoken and caustic tongue endearing. His *Memoirs of a Modern Gnostic*, completed shortly before his death, chronicle his highly unconventional career, and belabour with delight a few of his *betes noir*. It is only to be regretted that he was never able to develop contact with others who shared his high intellectual standards, and with whom he could foster genuine spiritual friendship. He would then have seen that a real Buddhist movement is not a group - with power struggles, gossip, and back-biting - but that, if it is truly a Buddhist movement, it is a

community of individuals trying to grow.

My first real contact with Buddhism came through Dr Conze's *Buddhist Scriptures*. I read it straight through at a sitting, and floated on its inspiration for days, determined to become a meditating hermit. It was therefore with a sense of personal gratitude that I left London with Buddhadasa for Yeovil in Somerset where the cremation was to be held.

Some 40 relations, friends, associates, and other well-wishers gathered in the rather anti-septic modern crematorium. We sat at first, listening to a passage from Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony. On the coffin were three small bronze images of Shakyamuni, Prajnaparamita, and Vajradhara, together with a small bronze vajra, all of which had stood by the desk at which Dr Conze had worked. The short ceremony, which was adapted from the Buddhist Society's standard version, was conducted by Burt Taylor, former General Secretary of the Buddhist Society. Included was a passage from Dr Conze's translation of *The Questions of King Milinda*, and his version of the *Heart Sutra*. The ceremony stressed the inevitability of death within a wider context of rebirth, and sympathy and well-wishing for those close to the dead. Whilst it was in progress, I could not help reflecting on his achievement, and his very significant contribution to Buddhism and, thereby, to the development of many. Buddhadasa and I both found ourselves directing our metta, our friendliness, towards him. Afterwards there was a period of silence while the coffin was burnt.

One of Dr Conze's relatives, who was not a Buddhist, commented to me later that it had seemed a really positive event. Relatively speaking this was true, but I felt the want of real affirmation. It would have been good to hear a eulogy in which his achievements were elaborated, and which acknowledged more resoundingly the whole process of human development in which he had played his part.

We presented a bouquet of orange flowers with a card on which were painted the emblems of wisdom - the sword and the book - and the words: 'Dr Edward Conze, with metta and gratitude from the Ven. Sangharakshita and the members of the Western Buddhist Order'. To that should be added our best wishes and sympathy for Mrs Conze, and our hope that Dr Edward Conze's work will continue to inspire others to develop in the future.

Subhuti

The next issue of the Newsletter will include an appreciation of Dr Conze's life and work, by the Ven. Sangharakshita.

The first two parts of Dr Conze's *The Memoirs of a Modern Gnostic* can be obtained, at £6.00 each, from the Bookshop Manager, London Buddhist Centre, 51 Roman Road, London E2 OHU.

Subhuti

Atlantic College

REQUESTS for Order members to visit schools are becoming more and more frequent as the Movement becomes more widely known. Indeed, 150 or so pupils from one local school have been conducted around the LBC in groups, and have been given talks about its work. This summer I was invited to participate in a course on world religions at Atlantic College in South Wales.

The college is for sixth form students from some 80 countries all over the world. The founding ideal of the establishment is to foster international understanding by means of young people having lived, worked, and studied together for a two year period. The students follow an exacting curriculum of academic studies, together with a strenuous programme of outdoor activities and community service. All this is carried out in the idyllic setting of a mediaeval castle, once the property of William Randolph Hurst, overlooking the coast.

The school runs a course for all students, called 'Theory of Knowledge', which includes the study of world religions. This year,

for the first time, a four-day programme had been arranged with a number of speakers of different religious viewpoints. There was an Imam (somewhat embarrassed by the excesses of the Shi'ah sect), a Hindu Swami looking benign and beatific in his salmon pink robes, a very enthusiastic Bahai, a pugnacious Humanist, and several well-meaning Anglican clergymen. I sensed immediately my advantage in being able to offer something which could be *done* rather than talked about. In each of the three hour sessions I had, with about 18 students in each, I did two short sessions of meditation, and had a very lively and fruitful discussion. The students were very keen, intelligent, and self-reliant; I was attacked roundly and vigorously for being selfish in my concern for individual development. It cost me some fierce argument to persuade one group that concern for personal development is that out of which true and skilful concern for others springs.

The whole programme ended with a 'Brains Trust' in which the students put various questions to us.

I was myself very much struck by the far greater subtlety and immediacy of the Dharma than that of the viewpoints of my colleagues. It seems that theists, Christians in particular, have to fall over backwards to accommodate a sceptical audience. The intellectual convolutions through which an intelligent Christian has to go, particularly when seated beside the exponent of a non-theistic religion, are fascinating. Their sense of rightness ('No man goeth to the Father, except through the Son') clashes horribly with their desire for brotherly agreement. I have no doubt that prolonged and persistent contact with Buddhism will profoundly modify the position of those Christians interested in comparative religion, though there is little for the Buddhist to gain from such contact.

The students apparently very much appreciated and enjoyed the conference, and have asked for a repeat next year. 15 of them visited the LBC in October, some of whom had been meditating together since my visit to the college.

Travels in LADAKH

I had been walking from before dawn, following the river course down the mountainside. Near the top of the Nyamiling Pass, it had been merely a gentle brook, but on the journey from 17,000 feet down to 12,000 feet it dramatically changed in character, gathering in momentum and size, scoring its way through the landscape, forming steep, narrow gorges. By the time the sun rose, the river was assuming a quieter, but no less powerful aspect, as it rolled through a succession of wide, flat valleys, on its way down to the Ganges.

It was in one of these valleys, after about four hours of unbroken travel, that my companion and I saw the first people of the day, two distant figures walking towards us, picking their way through the rocks and boulders on one side of the valley floor. It took us about thirty minutes to meet, and when we did, it was a fairly brief encounter, as our Tibetan was not of a conversational standard, to say the least; after all, how often can one say 'Juleh', or 'Hullo'? But we did discover that they were brothers on their way to their home village for some special occasion.

There was little that was extraordinary in that - it was their appearance that was unforgettable. One was in the traditional maroon robes of a Kagyu monk, and the other in the modern, green fatigues of the Indian Army. And few single images could tell more concisely the changing pattern of life in one of the last outposts of a purely Tibetan way of life.

Politically a province of India, Ladakh is, in every other way, a part of Tibet. The language, the dress, the food, the buildings, and, of course, the religion, are derived from Tibet, and it is only in the last few years that the Ladakhis have been forced to look for inspiration from its southern and western borders, rather than from Lhasa. The prominent presence of the Indian Army is there to line the sensitive border with communism, though the Tibetan nomads still manage somehow to travel back and forth across the Himalayan peaks. Each year, however, fewer make the journey as the pressures of progress on both sides of the border change the customs the people choose to continue. The trackless landscape itself is being permanently marked. Rather than just sitting aimlessly in front of its tents, the Indian Army is fairly active in building roads. Nearly every major monastery in the country has now a strip of tarmac running almost to the front door which makes access for the monks, the people, and the tourists, that much easier, though that, in itself is a mixed blessing.

That long walk down the river was to take me to Hemis Monastery, one of the largest and most well-known Kagyu centres in the country, and a modern, black road now winds its

way up to the cluster of buildings. Even though I had been walking for some seven hours, and the sun was, by now, very high, I declined a lift from an army lorry up for the final stretch, and crossed over to the old path, walking along the immense Mani wall, which leads to a magnificent and very old entrance *chorten*. As I stepped through there was an unmistakable feeling of arrival - the same feeling that had been felt by generations and generations of Ladakhis, villagers on their way to a festival, and monks on their way home.

Ladakh was my first experience of a totally Buddhist country. So many of the words that are bandied around so earnestly in the Friends, such as openness, commitment, faith - so simple, but so difficult to sustain in a Western environment - are there, bred into the very bones of the people. One of the leading members of the party I was with, an Englishman, remarked that as he passed Muhlbeck and its huge, first-century rock carving of the Buddha (which marked the beginning of Buddhist Ladakh) he felt the whole atmosphere was suddenly transformed. But time is passing more quickly in Ladakh than it used to: this is particularly noticeable during the summer. How long, we all wondered, would the natural ease of the people survive the Indian army on one side, the tourists on the other,



and, in between, the natural and understandable wish of the Ladakhis themselves to acquire some of the comforts of modern life?

The dangers that face Ladakh can be seen in the changes in the monasteries. Traditionally, the Ladakhis and their monasteries follow the Tibetan pattern, with one, two or more brothers of a family becoming monks. Now they have a choice - they can either become a monk, or join the Indian army (and they don't appear to see the irony in the situation), or they can be employed in the growing tourist industry. As a result, there are fewer men and fewer women entering the monasteries.

The drop in numbers has been less noticeable because of the influx over the years of Tibetan monks, either directly from Tibet, or from India. But Rizong Monastery, one of the strictest of the Gelugpas, and which is widely regarded as the best-run monastery in Ladakh, has only twenty monks when it could take at least thirty.

The monasteries are having to face other pressures too. When I stepped into the main *durkhang* (shrine-room) of Hemis Monastery, where a handful of monks were seated and

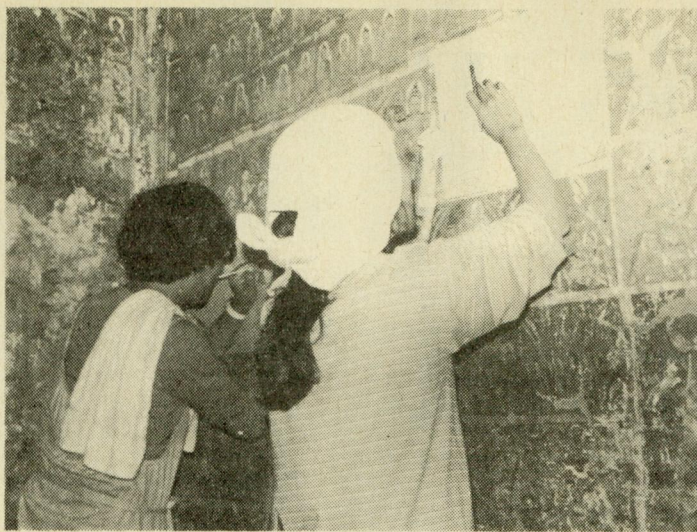
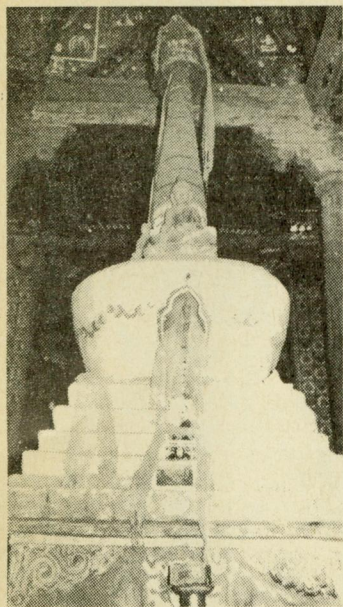
chanting, a little boy-monk came rushing up to me calling in a loud voice, 'Ticket, Ticket.' Somehow, it appeared, I had missed the ticket monk on the way in to the main courtyard, and I began to feel as if I had been caught red-handed trying to sneak into the Tower of London.

Hemis has other problems. Tourists pile out of coaches and tramp through the shrine-room at all hours, doing everything but smoking. There are also piles of rubbish in the pathways, and monks and laymen sit outside the entrance selling touristy wares. Hemis, which has about 300 resident monks and nuns, is a Kagyu monastery, and I found that on the whole, the monasteries attached to that tradition, with its more relaxed life-style, (wives and families lived a little further down the mountain) were in worse shape than the stricter Gelugpa school. Lamaryu was another case in point. One of the first monasteries along the main mountain road from Kashmir, it has a constant stream of visitors - among its attractions is a small cave, set in the side of the main shrine-room, reputed to be Naropa's cave. Here too, the salesmen were out in force. One of the boy-monks even demanded not only a 10 rupee fee for entry into the shrine-room, but also a modelling/photographic fee.

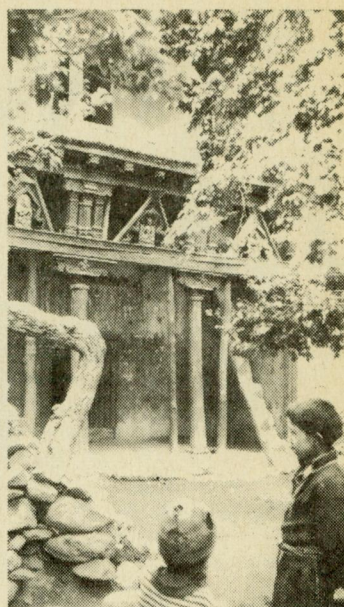
Now I do not feel that the monasteries should be deprived of an income from the curious, loaded tourists; and it was certainly heartening to find that at Hemis and Lamaryu, crumbling walls were being renovated and faded frescoes were being re-painted (not cleaned or touched up as would happen in the West: age does not necessarily equal great art to the Ladakhis). But some balance has to be maintained to allow the monasteries to function as monasteries, and not tourist attractions. The Gelugpas generally have managed better by simply allowing visitors at certain times, either early in the morning or late in the afternoon, though there was one notable Gelugpa exception, Spituk, where a Buddhist rupa, Vajrabhaivara, has



Nick Soames with Ladakhi children / Elizabeth Manson



Alchi-Tibetan pilgrims work among the crumbling 'monuments' to preserve a fading tradition /Elizabeth Manson



been taken by the Indian soldiers to be a terrifying manifestation of Siva, and is worshipped as such by the Hindus. The monks play along with the myth by putting up pictures of Hindu gods around the shrine-room, and even on the shrine itself, and rake in the proceeds.

But all this must be viewed with caution. When in Hemis, I managed to meet Thusas Rinpoche, the head of the monastery, who, with his white, wispy beard and friendly face, looked the image of the role. I spoke a little about the FWBO and its ideas and achievements, and asked what he felt to be most important in the development of Buddhism in the West. He replied, simply, 'Practice, practice, practice', though later he singled out the Mahamudra teachings as those he felt would be particularly appropriate. And talking later with one of the monks, a Tibetan who spoke fluent English, it became increasingly apparent that, despite appearances, the strength of Tibetan monastic Buddhism still existed, and exerted a strong and ultimately exciting authority.

This strength can be felt strongly among the people. In all my travels in Europe and Africa, I have never come across a people so full of assurance and stability, exhibiting even in all their dealings with tourists and the attendant temptations, a remarkable independence and self-respect. This alone was a lesson I will never forget, and one which owes its roots, I am convinced, to Buddhism. I also felt there was a much smaller degree of sexual polarisation among the people, certainly in comparison to Western life, or life in Hindu or Muslim India. People appeared to relate more as people rather than competitively as men and women. It was also interesting to find that many of the monasteries had well-established nuns' communities living close by, but separate from the monks' quarters.

It is, of course, impossible to distinguish between the religious and secular life of the people, because the two are so intimately inter-

woven. On one day's walk, we came to Urutse, a village which was really one large house where we had lunch, sitting in the dark kitchen and, those of us who were sufficiently brave because few liked it, sipping butter tea. Afterwards, we were shown around the 400 year-old building, and up on the roof was the family shrine-room where there happened to be sitting a monk from a neighbouring monastery. He was reciting his way through the books from the Kanjur owned by the family, he explained, a job he fulfilled each year. Taking a small break to sip some tea, he added that he had been at it for three days and had another five to go, and then he would return to Hemis.

On another occasion, I had set off (again at dawn) with our 23 year-old guide and translator, Norboo, to get to a small but concentrated Gelugpa monastery, Shankar, on the outskirts of Leh.

On the way, we were hailed from a window by a man who turned out to be a friend of Norboo's, and who had just moved into a new house. Though it was only about 7 a.m., we were invited up and brought into the kitchen, and there was his friend, sitting in the corner by the window, his two year-old son on his knee, going through an elaborate mandala ceremony complete with water pots, small rupas and dried peas. In between chanting mantras and fashioning mudras in beautiful fluid movements that bespoke years of practice, he would sip some tea and talk with Norboo, and me, and another friend who dropped in for a chat. And all the while, his wife was preparing the morning food on the huge, solid iron range in another part of the room.

Unlike lay Tibetans, very, very few lay Ladakhis have a formal meditation practice. Meditation, explained Norboo, was the 'jewel of the lamas' and that was from one who was totally committed, and who had a brother and a sister in Rizong, the most disciplined of monasteries. What's more, Norboo expected to

retire to Rizong and end his days there. Yet it is difficult and presumptuous to criticise because Ladakhis have a so much greater devotional, not to say emotional response to Buddhism.

One of the best examples I came across was when I walked out of Spituk Monastery, and the durkhang housing the terrifying aspect of Vajrabhaivara complete with pictures of Vishnu and Siva.

Norboo turned to me and said: 'That is a terrible place, isn't it?' I agreed wholeheartedly, presuming that he meant the additional paraphernalia, complete with monk prepared to daub a caste mark on the forehead. But as I looked at Norboo a little more closely, I saw he looked a bit white and he was clearly a little shaken. Despite all his formal education (and he spoke and wrote three or four languages) he was still affected in a very real way by the symbolism of that figure.

Altogether I spent some two weeks in Ladakh, most of which was dominated by a challenging eight-day trek up to 17,500 feet, though even then snow-capped peaks of over 25,000 feet towered above us, so near, and so silent. I managed, with perfect timing, to get dysentery two days before we started, so it was well under way as we began, and that made the trip an ordeal of momentous proportions. I have always said that the people who gain most out of a trek like that are, curiously, those who have to struggle because it involves an effort that leads to a personal change far more interesting and profound (on the whole) than those who run around and draw mainly on the aesthetic enjoyment of nature, or peoples, or artistic objects. But there are limits - when you are fighting to put one more foot in front of another for eight days, metaphysical or psychological niceties simply do not exist.

But the whole journey was interesting to me in other ways. On the two-day journey to Leh, along one of the highest and most dangerous roads in the world, we took a short

detour and visited our first monastery, Alchi.

Dating from the 9th century CE, it is the oldest in Ladakh, and stands in a valley, a magnificent, but deserted ruin, with just one monk looking after the buildings which still stood. Yet while the frescoes and some of the rupas were beautiful, I found it a strangely depressing experience, because I felt I was walking around and reacting to it in the same way as I thrilled to the marvellous atmosphere of, say, Riveaul Abbey; whereas Buddhism for me has been, over the last few years at least, a live-wire experience.

So I was immensely fortunate to be invited by Norboo to spend my last night in Ladakh in his brother's monastery, Rizong. Rizong is actually one of the youngest monasteries in Ladakh, being only about 100 years old, but it remains the only major monastery which has to be approached by foot. We walked up the long valley, past kilometres of arid rock, through groves of apricot, willow and poplar trees, and onto the small winding track that led to the head of the valley, and Rizong itself. Suddenly, it was there, high on the mountainside - white buildings with coloured banners and a remarkable atmosphere of peace and purpose.

We entered, once again through an entrance chorten, near which stood a notice warning visitors that no meat, no smoking, no onions, and no women after dark were allowed in the monastery, to discover that most of the monks were away at an event in a local village.

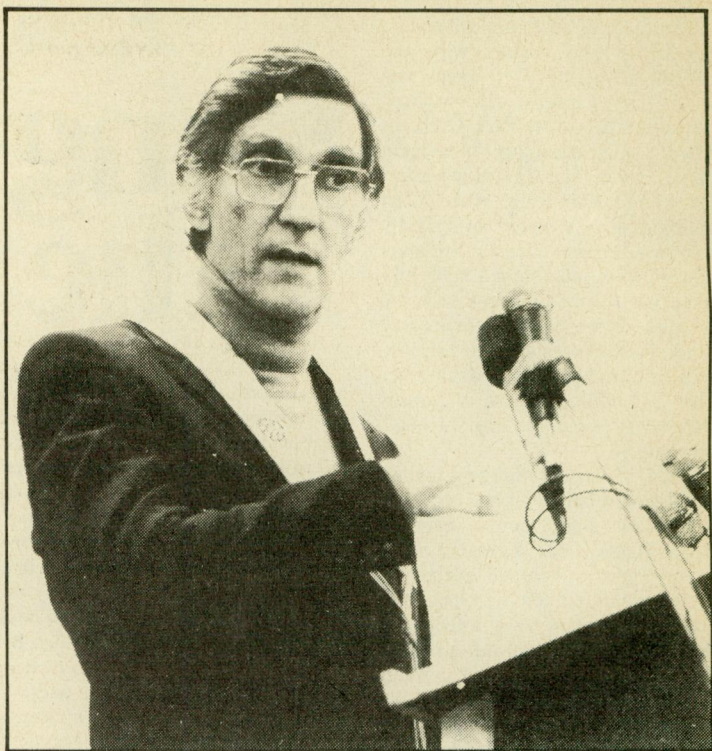
However, Norboo's brother, Thubten Dawa (who is a kind of keeper of the keys) and a senior monk, Chultim Stanba, were there, and we spent the rest of the evening sitting in the open, summer cell, eating Thug-pa, a rich, vegetable broth, talking quietly about Buddhism past and present, and watching the sun go down behind a snowy peak far away in the West. And it was so easy to feel, too easy to feel, that time had stopped passing.

Nicolas Soames

The Inconceivable Emancipation

During the months of October and November, the Ven. Sangharakshita is giving a series of eight new talks, on themes from the Vimalakirti Nirdeśa, a Mahayana Buddhist scripture. The general heading of these talks is 'The Inconceivable Emancipation', the emancipation of the self from the constraints of mundane conditioning for the sake of all, being of course the great Bodhisattva Ideal that is peculiar to the Mahayana tradition.

The greatest single impression one has of the series so far is of the mind-staggering scale and the miraculous nature of the events described in the sutra. Thousands upon thousands of Bodhisattvas appear and disappear in great magical Buddha-fields - whole universes, or even multiple universes of jewel-radiant splendour. The total effect is to raise and revitalise the imagination, bringing one to a new level of vision of the



enormous, cosmic scale and possibilities of human life. This is truly inconceivable.

A full report of these talks will be presented in the next Newsletter.

'In the Realms of Gold'

'In the Realms of Gold' - A Mid-summer Fantasy of Words and Music was held in the Royal Albion Hotel, Brighton on July 28. About 50 people were expected to turn up to listen to a programme consisting of poetry read by Bhante, Ananda and Devamitra, and music from Paul Simmonds (harpsichord) and Sally Anne Polke (contralto). However, as curtain time approached, the Preston Room was bursting at the seams as over 80 people virtually pushed their way in, and there was a mad scramble to find seats to accommodate the unexpected crowd.

Eventually though the programme got under way, only half an hour late, with poetry from Ananda, and

before long the fantasy had really begun as the speakers bewitched, fascinated and inspired us with works from Shakespeare, Shelley, Keats, and others.

Soon it was the turn of the musicians, and Paul Simmonds treated us to yet another beautiful performance with works from Purcell, Byrd, Handel and others. After a nervous start, Sally Anne Polke added yet another dimension and texture to the evening as she sang songs by Byrd and Thomas Campian, accompanied by Paul on harpsichord.

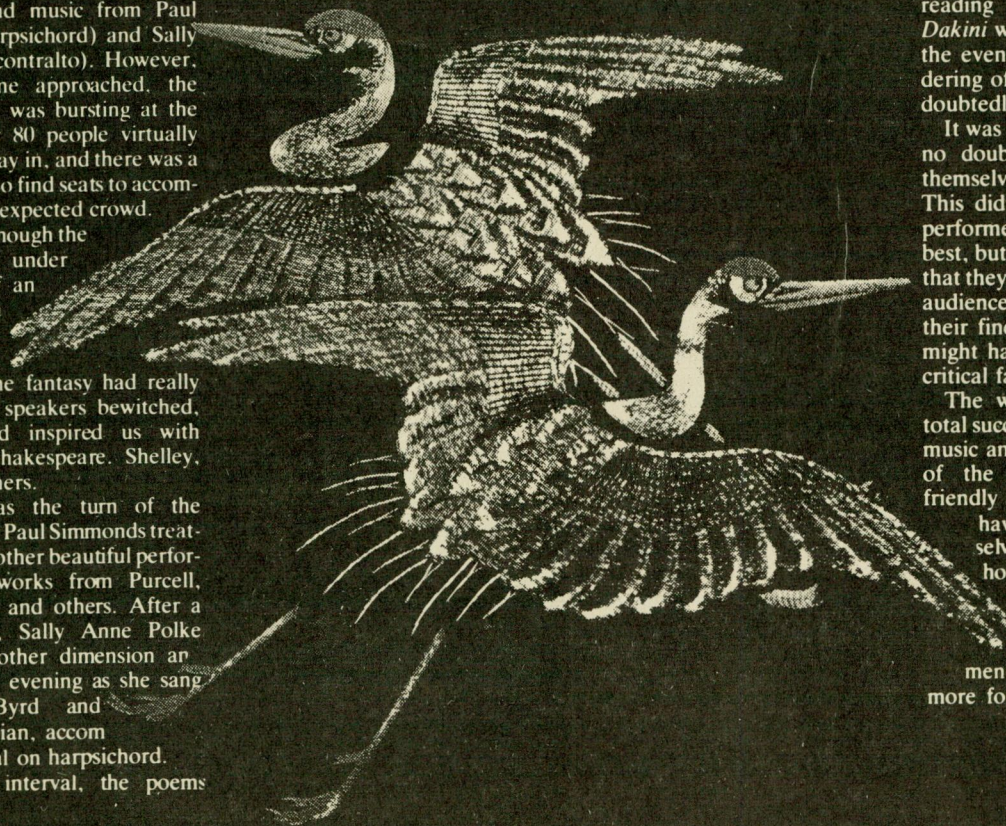
After the interval, the poems

became decidedly more modern, with works by Yeats, Lawrence, Ted Hughes and others, not to mention several by members of the Western Buddhist Order, including Bhante himself, Ananda and Vessantara. In fact Bhante's wonderfully spirited reading of Vessantara's *The Red Dakini* was perhaps the highlight of the evening, though Ananda's rendering of Philip Larkin's *Toads* undoubtedly got more laughs.

It was an easy audience to please, no doubt; they'd come to enjoy themselves, rather than to criticise. This didn't mean though, that the performers merely gave them second best, but rather perhaps, in knowing that they had a favourable, receptive audience, they were able to give of their finest, not being inhibited, as might have been the case, by hard critical faces.

The whole evening then was a total success, not only in terms of the music and poetry, but also in terms of the exceptionally warm and friendly atmosphere, with everyone having simply enjoying themselves, a good time. It is to be hoped that more evenings of this kind can be arranged by the FWBO, as they provide a perfect complement to, and extension of our more formal centre activities.

Mangala



There are three ways in which one can come into contact with the FWBO in Brighton. The 'direct' way is via the Centre, the Brighton Buddhist Centre in Park Crescent Place, a small street just off the main Lewes Road. The Centre is housed in a large, imposing, white-faced building in a crescent of brightly coloured terraced houses. Stepping off the street, you enter a light, airy reception room, and approach the upstairs shrine-room, with its bay windows and large attractive shrine, via a beautiful open-welled staircase. This building also houses 'Amitayus', a small residential men's community.

The Centre runs a full programme of classes for beginners and regulars, meditation and Dharma courses, Yoga classes, day retreats, mitra study groups, taped lectures, communication exercises, speakers' classes, as well as being a focus for the organisation of the various fund-raising events, which include cultural evenings. The classes are led by Upasakas Mangala and Dharmananda, both residents of Amitayus, and the people who come along - about 125 per week, are mainly in their 20's or 30's, a fairly high proportion of them receiving or having received higher education.

The second point of contact is the Windhorse Emporium, the Friends' shop in George Street, a side street just around the corner from the sea and about a 20 minute walk from the Centre. The Emporium is actually two small terraced shops - now partially knocked into one, which, though originally leased, has recently been bought by the Friends. The Emporium sells a dazzling array of Indian clothes, incense, jewellery, cards, cushions and books, and has a thriving second-hand department upstairs. Manned by friendly mitras, it does a brisk trade, although there is always time to chat to customers.

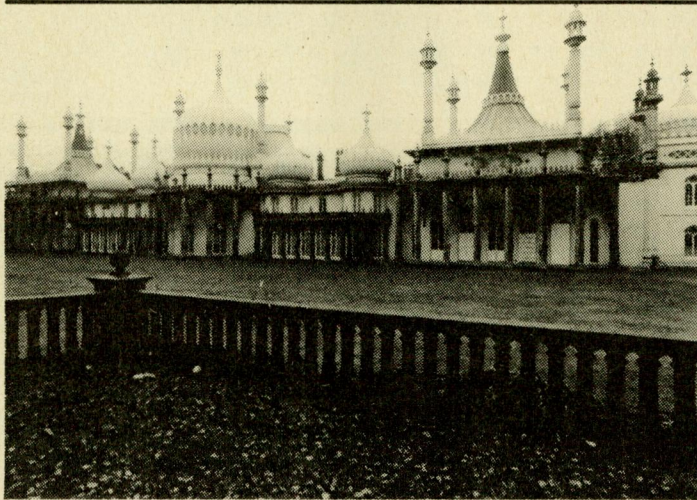
The third point of contact is 'Sunrise', the vegetarian restaurant in busy North Road. The restaurant interior is bright and welcoming and, though small, is a very popular lunch and tea time spot.

FWBO activities started in Brighton as early as 1973 when Order members from the Aryatara community used to visit and lead classes at the Brighton Buddhist Society, which was then run by Carl Wragg and Jim Martin. In 1974 Buddhadasa decided to move to Brighton and stayed with Jim Martin for a couple of months - leading classes at Jim's house, while scouting

Here is the second article in our series in which we look at the life and work of our public centres.

Sangha by the sea

BRIGHTON, or 'little London', as it is sometimes called, is one of Britain's most famous seaside resorts. It is well known, among other things, for its fairy tale Pavilion, which was built as a summer palace by the Prince Regent when Brighton was becoming the place for fashionable Londoners to 'summer' at. As well as the Pavilion it now has all the paraphernalia of a typical English seaside resort: amusement arcades, clock golf, fortune tellers, candy-floss, ice cream and saucy postcard stalls, the pier, and any number of discotheques, restaurants, hotels, and bed and breakfast establishments. Apart from its seasonal holiday trade, Brighton is in itself a lively town and does not become a ghost town in winter, like so many resorts. The town is attractive with many terraces of brightly faced Regency houses and, owing to the sea and the Downs surrounding it, has an open feeling. Brighton is also famous for the number of antique, curio and junk shops which abound in its streets, especially in the old, narrow streets known as the Lanes. A university campus out of town, an art school, and technical college creates a floating cosmopolitan population and since the 60's the town has been a centre for a wide range of alternative activities: feminist, radical and conservationist. The FWBO has been present in this town for 5 years. What effect have we had?



The Pavilion - not the Centre / Roger Jones

around for suitable premises for a Centre. In late '74 the George Street premises were found, with the help of a local estate agent - who was later to be so impressed by the speed and efficiency with which the buildings were renovated, that he started coming to classes and is still a staunch Friend. The Centre opened its doors in the New Year of 1975 and comprised a downstairs bookshop in No 19, which also served as a reception room for classes which were held in the small but attractive shrine-room above. The floor above housed

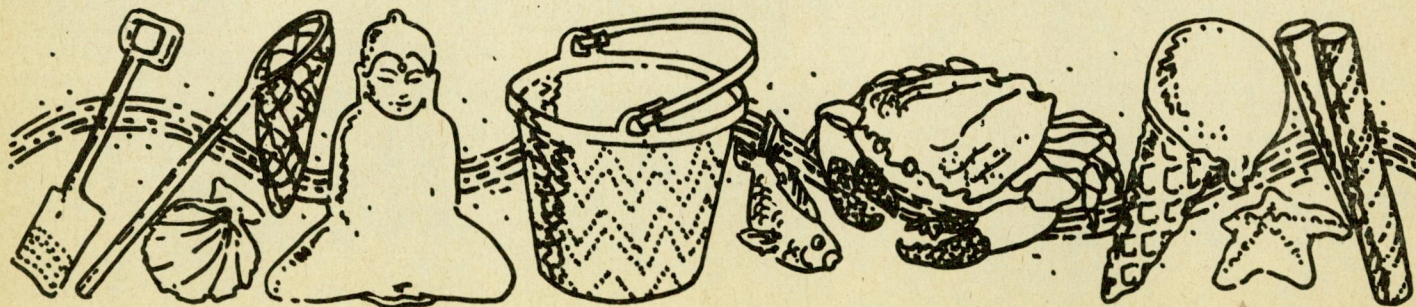
a small library, and a small men's community lived next door in No 18, the front room of which was used as the Centre office.

As well as moving his classes over to the new Centre, Buddhadasa started to hold courses in meditation and soon built up a group of regular Friends, many of whom were to become the first Brighton mitras later in the year. At the end of the year Vessantara joined Buddhadasa and they moved into a small leased house in Exeter Street, which provided accommodation for Friends, and

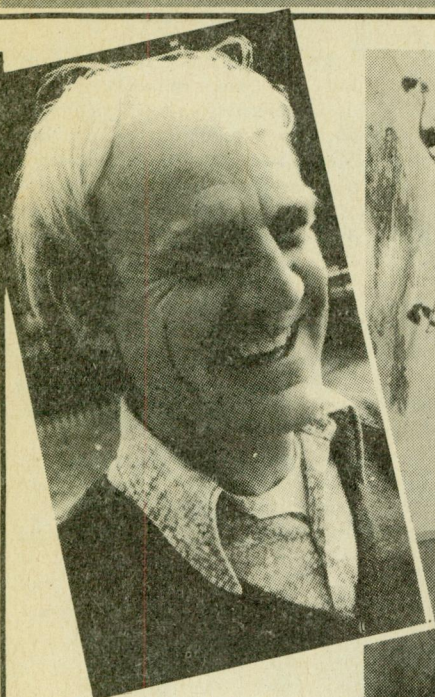
even for small communities, for a couple of years. Soon afterwards, however, Buddhadasa left for a two week visit to our Centre in Helsinki, a visit which was to last, in fact, for more than a year. Vessantara took over, therefore, as chairman, and he and Ashvajit, who had now arrived, continued leading classes. Buddhadasa's departure, however, at such an early stage in the proceedings was in some ways a bit of a set-back for the Brighton Centre. Although classes were maintained and new people were coming along, some of the older Friends, including some of the mitras, began to drift away, perhaps having been drawn more by Buddhadasa's personality at their stage of involvement than by a more objective interest in the Spiritual Life.

In August 1976 Mangala arrived to become chairman of the Centre, and a new phase began. As a group of new regulars built up, it became obvious that the present premises were no longer large enough, and the search for a new Centre began. After some while the building in Park Crescent Place was found, and the lease was finally signed in September 1977. The building had not been lived in for 20 years, and, though structurally sound, needed extensive internal renovation. A small team began work, most of them without very much previous experience or skill, but Bhante was able to dedicate the shrine, thus opening the Centre in April 1978, just after the Vinehall Order Convention. Classes moved over from the old Centre in stages to the new premises, later named the Brighton Buddhist Centre.

The history of the development of Right Livelihood in Brighton is interesting in itself, and has had some major repercussions on the Movement as a whole. When I asked Dharmananda, the co-ordinator of Windhorse Enterprises, the Ltd Company which now consists of the Emporium, the restaurant, and 'Bel Air Gardening', to tell me about the early days of the various businesses, he smiled and said 'Ah, yes, back in our Romantic period'. The Windhorse bookshop, which opened at the same time as the first Centre, in George Street, was at first a very small affair, with an extremely small turnover. Set up from his own funds by Buddhadasa it was managed on a voluntary part-time basis by various willing Friends. It was at first a rather dull place to work in, as customers were rather few and far between. Dharmananda, who had first come



Annie Leigh



Upasaka Mangala/Nagabodhi



Interior of Sunrise/Roger Jones

along to the Friends in the summer of '76, took over the management of the shop early in 1977 to find it with a debt of £400, and carrying a lot of very slow moving stock. He left Ray de Guerre, who took over as manager in September, with £90 cash in hand. Ray then began to transform what was still a bit of a sleepy backwater bookshop into the colourful and successful Emporium it is today, with a turnover of £13,000 per year. The move of the Centre to Park Crescent has given the shop much more well-needed space in which to increase and diversify its stock.

'Sunrise' opened in the summer of 1976 and was originally run by three mitras who had also worked on the renovation of the property prior to its opening as a restaurant - with some help from members of the Sukhavati team. The Restaurant was definitely conceived of as a team based Right Livelihood project from the beginning, and was probably the first such in the Movement. The working space was small; the menu, being almost exclusively vegan and macrobiotic was not immediately attractive to a wide range of people; finance was tight, so although the team worked hard the ideal of co-operation was sometimes lost in the struggle to establish the business. The financial struggle also meant that the workers either lived on their savings or were on the dole, rather than being supported by the business. In the 'Romantic period' of Right Livelihood, charging a realistic rate, and even making a profit were somehow seen to be incompatible with the Spiritual Life. There were also difficulties for some time, in that, though run by mitras, the restaurant did not come under the umbrella of the Centre Council and thus lacked not only the organisational direction, but perhaps also

the spiritual guidance and inspiration that such a link could have offered. The team waxed and waned and was helped by many casual workers - many of whom were non-Friends - which meant that the overall level of commitment was diluted. When Dharmananda took over management in December 1977 there was also a debt of £500 back VAT to be paid. The debt was cleared and a team of Order members, Friends and mitras developed around Dharmananda, Tony Wharton, and Anjali - who had been involved in Sunrise since its inception. With the inspiration of a team committed not only to the work situation but also to the ideals of the FWBO, the restaurant linked in much more with the Centre and its

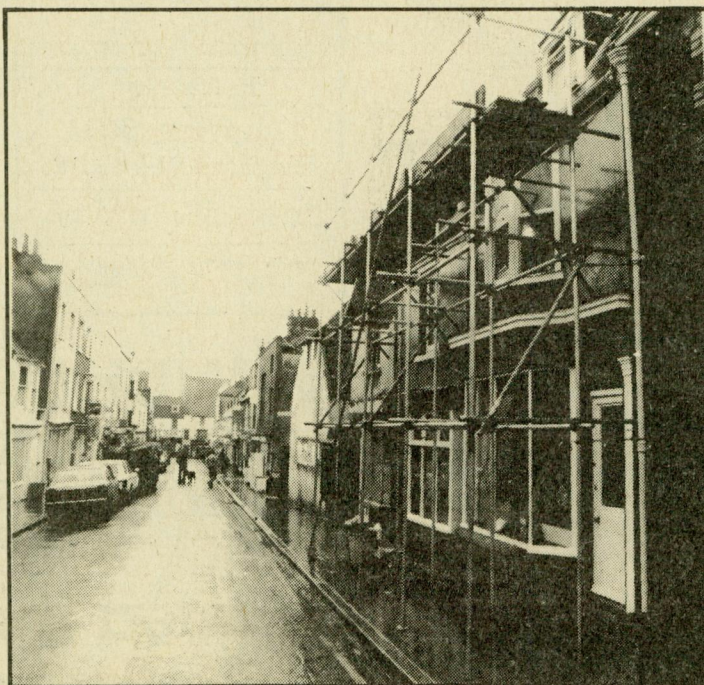
activities, so that helpers came along from classes, and the business was recognised as an aspect of the Spiritual Life. The restaurant is now catering for a wider - though still vegetarian clientele, is currently managed by mitra Ray Bisson, and makes enough money to support six people.

The Emporium and the restaurant were two of the earliest business ventures in the Friends, and it was as a result of their financial success that the whole relationship between our business activities and our charitable status had to be examined. This sparked off an investigation into the setting up of limited companies, which in time led to the discovery that we could register our businesses as co-operatives - which was very

much in line with our ideals of a team-based, non-individualistic approach to work. Undersolid, committed management, both businesses have been transformed from being places of casual voluntary work, carried out as a sort of hobby, to being financially viable, and providing full-time work and support for a number of people in a Right Livelihood situation. Windhorse Enterprises currently supports 11 people, and even makes a surplus which is covenanted to support FWBO activities in Brighton as well as elsewhere within the Movement.

It is interesting to note that Brighton has had alternative bookshops, Indian clothes shops, and vegetarian restaurants of one sort or another for many years, so there has been a lot of competition. However, our businesses, although coming from small beginnings, have survived, and have even seen the coming and going of some of their competitors. The other vegetarian restaurants that have risen and fallen have done so not because of financial disaster so much as owing to a lack of commitment among their workers: because the people who set them up got bored with that particular activity. Enthusiasm and idealism are obviously not enough. Our businesses have perhaps succeeded because Right Livelihood is for us an integral aspect of the Spiritual Life, and therefore demands of us a more far-reaching commitment.

One ideal that has evolved in the Movement over the last couple of years is that of the 'New Society': the total conception of centre, community, and co-operative as three distinct units working together and interrelating so that each element invigorates, inspires, and encourages the others. The centres



George Street/Roger Jones

are the bridges between the New Society and the Old, the places where we introduce newcomers to the Dharma. The communities provide a day-to-day experience of the New Society, and the co-ops provide that same experience in terms of work which gives people a positive outlet for their energies, provides money for the Dharma-work, and also offers people another opportunity for contacting the Movement. At the LBC and Aryatara these three elements are all working and flowing together. Although Brighton is one of our oldest centres, and although the first businesses were started there, the elements do not yet seem to fuse as much as Mangala and Dharmananda would like. The Centre functions well, and the people who come along can see that the businesses are an integral

part of the whole set-up. Dharmananda is currently extending the 'common purse' outwards from the community to cover all the workers in the businesses, so that a working co-op can develop. (At the moment there are, in fact, more people wishing to join the work teams than there is work for them to do, so new Right Livelihood projects are being envisaged.) But the community side of things in Brighton has always been rather small-scale. At the moment, Amitayus is the only community. There was, at one time, a small women's community, but at the moment there is none. Many of the Friends - especially among the women - have their own flats and houses. In a way, the need for communities is less obvious since Brighton is a fairly small town and you can be in regular contact with

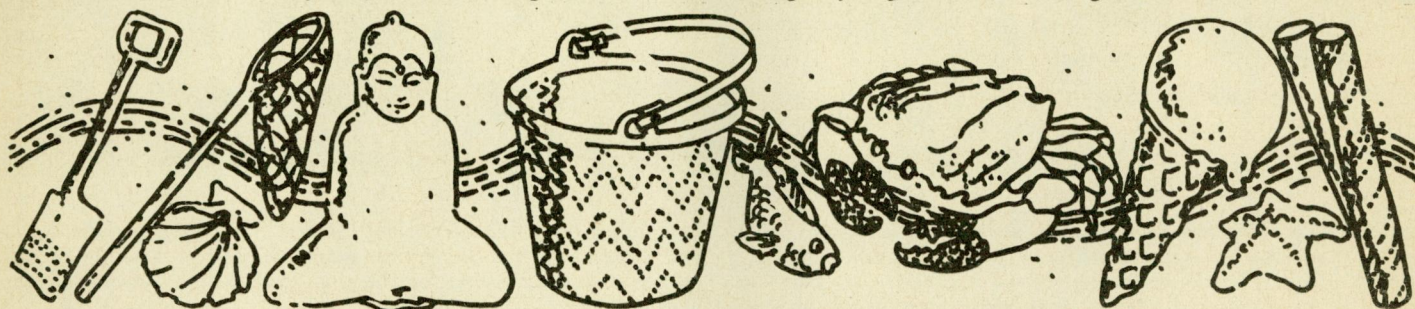
people without necessarily living with them. However, our experience in the FWBO would suggest that some larger communities, for both men and women, would have a dynamic effect on the overall situation.

Another drawback has been the lack of Order members in Brighton. For much of the time Mangala has been working alone, like Buddhadasa before him. Dharmananda, who was ordained in August '78, is the only person to have come along as a Friend, become a mitra, gone for Refuge, and remained in Brighton. In the early days, lively mitras were attracted to situations where there was more Order activity. Padmavajra - now working in India, Kula-deva - now treasurer of the LBC, and Jyotipala - now at Tyn-y-ddol, were all originally Brighton mitras.

The geographical dislocation of the Centre, the community, and two of the businesses over Brighton is another drawback, and both Mangala and Dharmananda feel that a larger premises, which could house several businesses, and perhaps even a centre and community, would not only provide more work, but also that particular dynamic which appears when a lot of people live and work hard together in the context of the same ideal.

The FWBO has a very solid foundation in Brighton. Despite the drawbacks a great deal has been achieved, largely through quiet, determined, unshowy dedication and commitment. With such a foundation - and one that is growing stronger all the time, the future for the FWBO in Brighton looks very good indeed.

Dhammadinna



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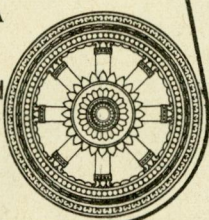
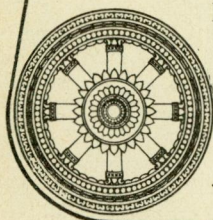
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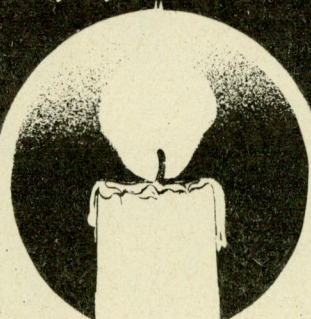
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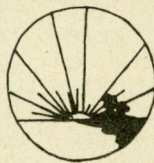


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Erratum: Newsletter 43, in the article entitled The Universality of the Buddha Image, by Upasaka Chintamani; the passage on page II beginning 'one thinks for instance...throughout the world', should not have been included. Although the idea it expresses arose in the course of discussion with the editors, it was not part of the author's original text, and was included due to a misunderstanding.

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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 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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