

FWBO NEWSLETTER 45



**Western Culture
What will Buddhism
make of it?**



A) Green Tara



B) Padmasambhava



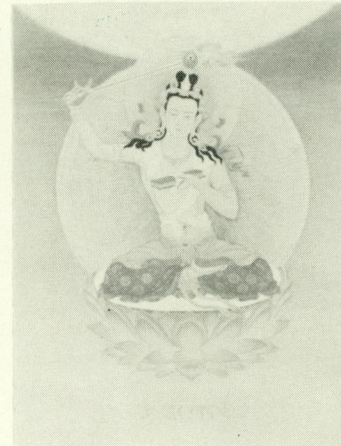
C) Amitabha



D) Vajrapani



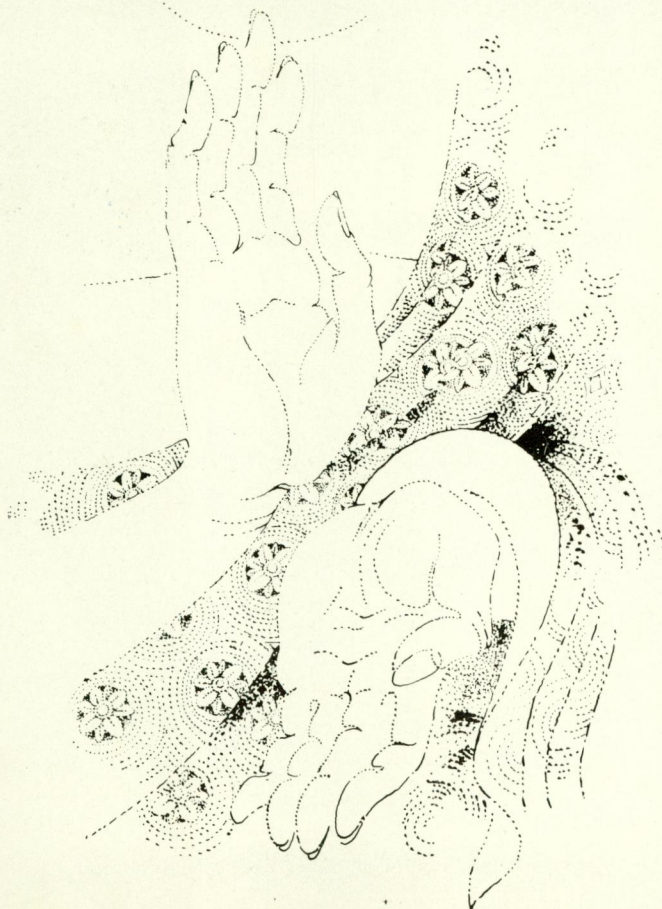
E) Manjughosha



F) Manjughosha

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Editorial

Almost a year and a half have now passed since work was completed at Sukhavati, since the LBC first opened its doors to the public. It was at that time that we were first introduced to the concept — the vision — of the New Society. We saw that what was being created at Sukhavati, and at other centres too, added up to far more than a place where people could come to learn meditation or to hear about Buddhism. The combination of public centre, associated communities, and co-operatives was seen to constitute, at least potentially, a society within Society, an environment in which Buddhism could be totally and wholeheartedly *lived*, in which most of the usually mundane and distracting features of day-to-day living could be made actually to contribute to spiritual development. It was further seen that such a society could, in time, exert a powerful and positive influence on the 'old' society which surrounded it.

That there are already several hundred people living in this New Society in the UK and abroad and that the centres, co-ops, and communities so far established are functioning successfully is no mean achievement. But no one would presume to suggest that the FWBO has yet made any significant impact on society at large. After all, there are places where people have still even to hear of the FWBO! But the pattern is established, and the trend is towards growth. More centres are planned, more people — thousands more — *will* soon be involved. We can, I think, take it that the FWBO will soon be widely known and its principles, albeit dimly, generally perceived. To go even further, it is fair to expect that — sudden accidents of history permitting — in a few hundred years time at most, the principles of Buddhism as followed in the FWBO will have made a definite and considerable impact on the total cultural life of the Western world. Such an expectation is fair because, as Abhaya demonstrates in his article, Buddhist principles, if *lived*, cannot but enrich, refine, and modify the culture in which people are trying to live them. It has happened before.

Buddhism is a revolutionary teaching, but it will exert its influence gently, gradually, and organically, through the ideas, acts, and creations of spiritually motivated individuals in response to the conditions of a constantly changing world. It is therefore impossible to predict just what exact form a Dharma-inspired Western culture will take, what aspects of the existing culture will be entirely superseded, and which aspects will be built on and refined.

We thought, however, that it would be at least entertaining and thought-provoking, and at best inspiring, to invite a few Order members to say why they feel that Western culture (which is, of course, constantly reaching out beyond the confines of the western hemisphere) is in need of fresh vision and how they think the Dharma will make its influence felt. Nagabodhi

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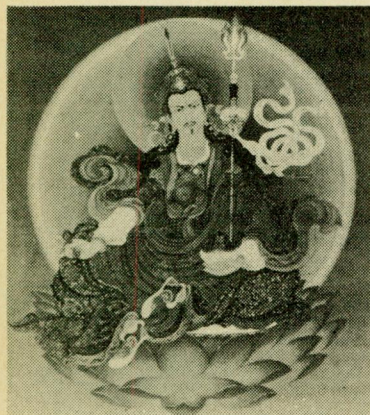
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Padmasambhava

Diagnosing the ills of our age is a popular pastime. In this article, Luvah — now firmly back in the Western hemisphere (see Newsletter 43) — offers us his own view of the Western mind, and explains how the Dharma could inspire another Renaissance.

A superficial consideration of history indicates that this century is of unique significance in the destiny of mankind; for precisely at this moment a technological metamorphosis threatens the very existence of the planet. With a pathological greed and insensitivity, modern man robs, consumes, and destroys with no thought for the future, scattering his garbage and excrement from the equator to the poles, poisoning the land, sea, and air and threatening all forms of life with extinction. If we do not blow ourselves up or poison ourselves with industrial pollution, we may starve ourselves by consuming all the Earth's available resources. It may already be too late to stop the mad race to consume, destroy, and pollute. Within our own lifetimes the world may go out like a spent match.

ANNIHILATION OR REGENERATION

by Luvah

No doubt Man has always exploited, colonized, and destroyed, but in the past there were natural limitations to his power. Only since the accelerated growth of science and technology from the 17th century has this power been extended indefinitely. Science itself can hardly be blamed. Technology only comes into existence to satisfy an already existing demand for the kind of knowledge that brings power and wealth. It is conditioned by a state of mind capable of the obsessive single-minded pursuit of selfish ends in complete disregard of the consequences. As such, it can be seen as a special sort of mental blindness, an ultimately unrealistic desire to have *everything*,¹ to grasp the world to oneself in a desperate struggle for power.

This attitude is encouraged by the economic system of *laissez-faire* capitalism, which depends on the assumption that individual self-assertive greed and competition will tend to maximize wealth and happiness for society as a whole. Maximum productivity requires maximum consumption; so demand is artificially stimulated by the advertising media, which assure us that we need a second television, for example, or the very latest model of car.

Western Man exists in a spiritual vacuum, a failure of all sense of value or hierarchy, which renders existence meaningless and futile and is often experienced by the individual as psychologically intolerable. Such periods of cultural decadence and agnosticism seem to occur at late stages in the evolution of civilizations. We can contrast this with the spiritual climate of medieval Europe, in many ways a healthy and vital culture for all its limitations. In the medieval world men were able to experience the world as a meaningful hierarchical system in which they functioned as small but significant units. With the decline of faith and the subsequent loss of any coherent philosophy of existence, the individual has lost touch with the integrating suprapersonal myth or vision that justifies his existence, and he experiences, more or less consciously, the subsequent feeling of inner emptiness and anxiety. To escape from this insecurity he grasps at anything which appears to give him reality. Material things appear to be solid and permanent, and by reflection they create for the ego a temporary illusion of its own solidity. 'I have, therefore I exist.' Each piece of property is experienced as an extension of self-importance. In the process this fabricated persona becomes itself an item of property at risk, needing continual support and protection, which is sought in the further accumulation of material possessions. Fleeing from insecurity, the ego entangles itself in a self-perpetuating struggle to dominate and possess.

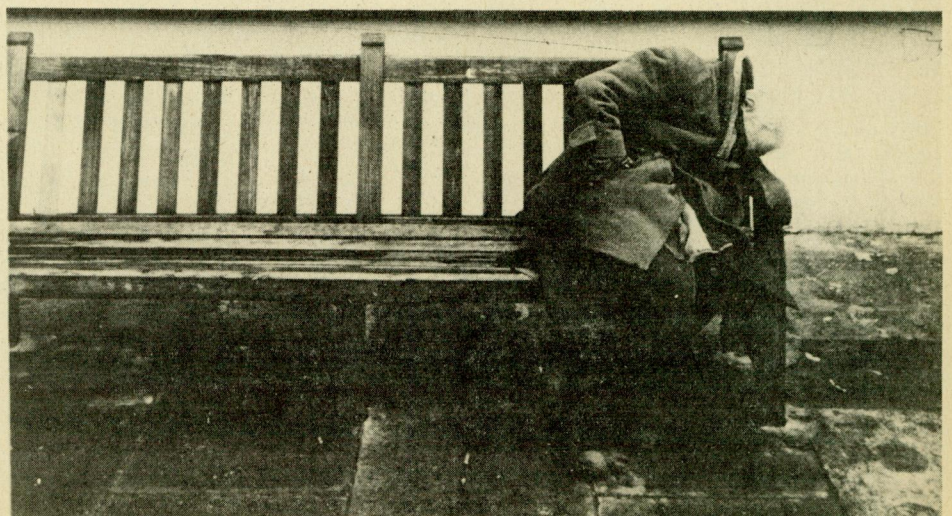
The ecological nightmare of global waste and destruction, the manifold evils of industrialization and urbanization, the threat of nuclear annihilation; these are only the more obvious material manifestations of spiritual blindness. T.S. Eliot compares modern culture to the 'wasteland' of the Grail legend, turned desert because the spring of spiritual inspiration has dried up. When consciousness loses touch with the nourishing energies of the unconscious mind, culture withers

like parched vegetation, and we are left, in Eliot's phrase, with a 'heap of broken images', the fragmented mirror of modern culture.

The wasteland pervades our whole culture, featuring equally in the rising scale of psychological disease and suffering; in increasing social and existential dissatisfaction, the sense of futility and emptiness for the individual who has lost all sense of purpose and security in a meaningless world; in the breakdown of accepted social standards and institutions; in the decay of traditional family and community ties and folk-culture; in the loss of personal dignity in a technologically orientated society where men are no more than cogs in a machine;² in the alienation of man from man, from Nature, and from himself; in the stagnation of modern art and culture; and above all in the spiritual poverty of modern Man, in the loss of all

sense of the sacred, the absence in life of all ritual and ceremony, all structure and coherence, the death of myth as the repository of tribal values and collective wisdom, the lack of any unified philosophy of life or transcendent vision of reality.

Since he has been able to reason and reflect, Man has sought an intelligible goal, a meaningful orientation for life, an ideal towards which he can direct his energies, creating religions, myths, and philosophies of more or less sophistication as ways to accommodate himself to the world. If we understand by 'religion' not any specific dogmatic formulation of principles or beliefs but any system of thought that formulates a coherent and purposeful relation of Man to the world, it seems likely that some such system is essential for the maintenance of a healthy culture. Without religion Man suffers as though from a pathological malfunction that now



Tuesday afternoon in Camden Town, London

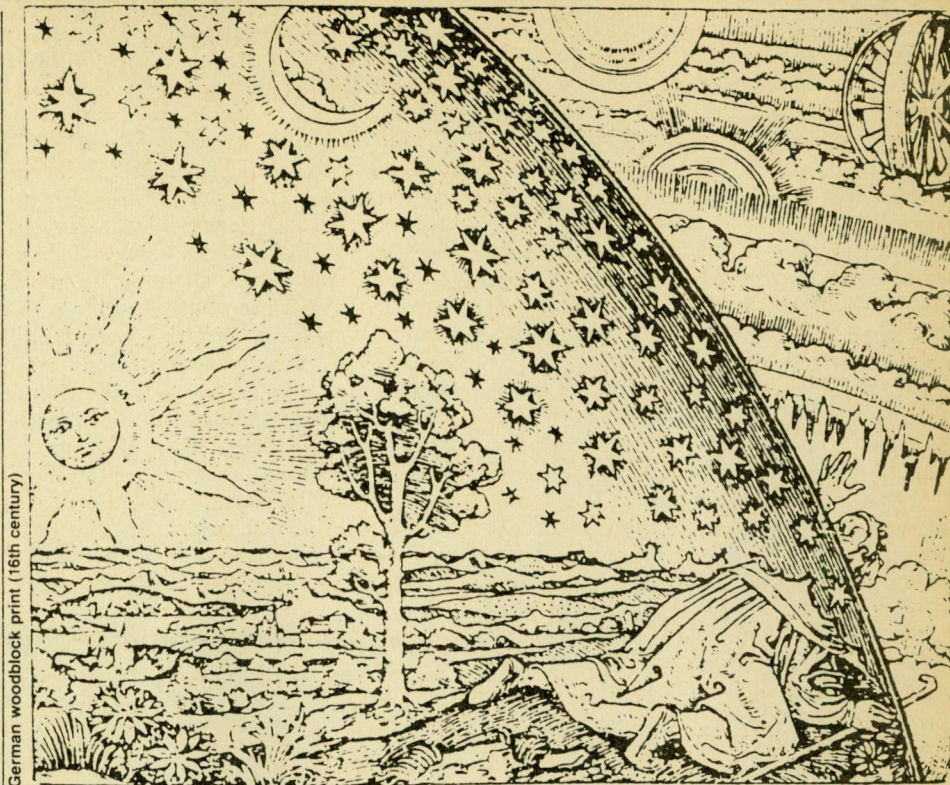
Mike Goldwater

appears to be tending towards the self-extirpation of the species. We might describe this as the pathology of Rationalism; for its progress is marked by the decline in Western Man's belief in the role of Biblical revelation and dogmatic theology and its replacement by another dogma, that of the sovereignty of Reason, or 'Rationalism'.

From the 17th century onwards, religious faith has been progressively undermined by a rising belief in the power of purely rational and empirical modes of thought. Man began to realize that wealth and power were to be obtained through the knowledge and control of the mechanical properties of Nature. This new gospel of materialism was advanced in England by Sir Francis Bacon, who pioneered the empirical method, and Sir Isaac Newton, who demonstrated that it is possible to picture the Universe as an elaborate but mathematically-explicable machine. The older Aristotelian picture of the world imagined it as a living organism in which everything strives to fulfil itself by finding its proper place: a stone falls to the ground when dropped, for example, because it has a desire to return to its proper place, the Earth. The replacement of this teleological explanation by a mechanistic one is significant because it eliminates the need to think in terms of purpose; a machine has no purpose, only a function. The world imagined by Newton was like a complicated clock that had been wound up by God at the beginning of time, but was now running smoothly without any further assistance. Having performed his single duty, God is no longer needed, and his importance naturally dwindles to a purely nominal position in the scheme of things. There remains only the world machine, conveniently left behind by God for Man to manipulate and exploit.

The astounding practical success of Newton's method gave rise to a new optimism and faith in the power of reason, along with a corresponding rejection of religious and spiritual values, now seen as 'superstitious', and their replacement by a purely materialistic philosophy. In France the champion of Reason and Scientific Method was Rene Descartes, who applied the mechanistic principles to life itself. In his view, animals were best understood as machines, and Man's body was also a machine which housed an eternal soul. Later thinkers were more thoroughgoing in their materialism and argued that since no soul was to be discovered by scientific analysis, then Man too must be nothing but a machine, albeit very complicated.

The systematic abstraction of the 'primary qualities' of mass and extension from the gestalt of experience made possible the generation of empirically verifiable mathematical propositions about Nature. Without this special technical application of reason, science and technology could not have come into existence, and the Industrial Revolution would not have occurred. But science and technology are not bad in themselves; they only become so when coupled with the special psychological blindness generated by greed and idolatry, the substitution of the worship of material artifacts for spiritual



German woodblock print (16th century)

Man reaches out to the Infinite...

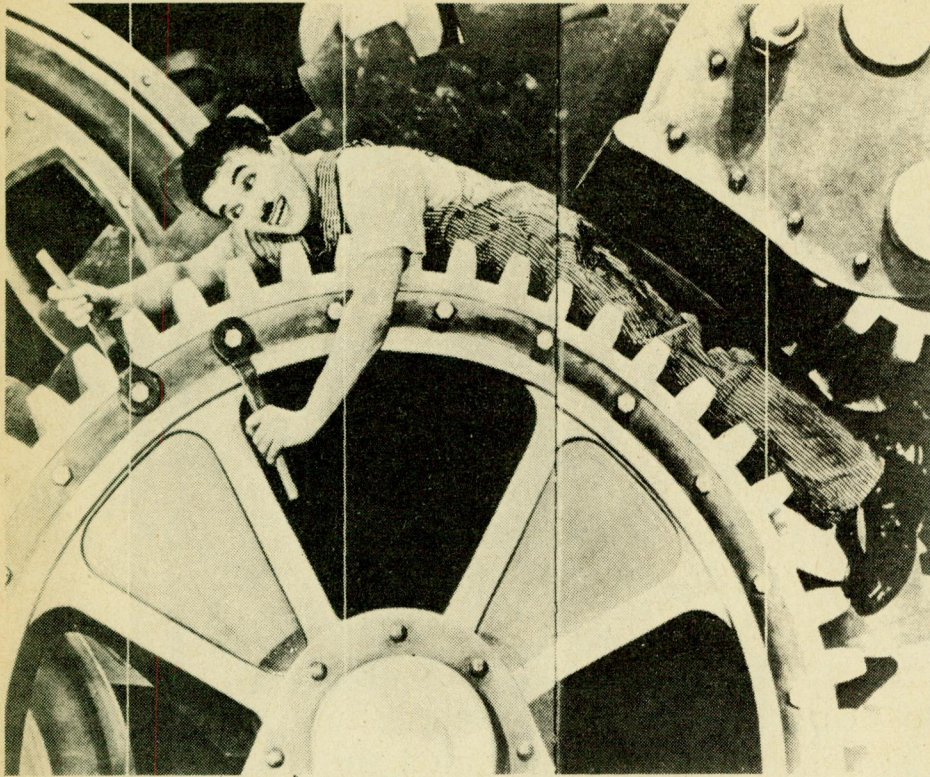
ideals. William Blake called this 'Single Vision': the myopic self-glorification of rationality that possessed men in the period ironically named the 'Age of Enlightenment'.

In the 17th century the discoveries of Galileo's telescope cracked open the conceptual nutshell of Christian theology and sent the Earth spinning off into emptiness. Two centuries later the revelations of Darwin and the geologists were to open up the second infinity of time; they showed that the Earth has a long memory, admittedly imperfect but nevertheless coherent, in the geological strata and in the traces of life preserved in fossils. In this century the microscope has given us an elusive glimpse of what may yet prove to be a third infinity, that of the infinitely small; while the radio-telescope has revealed that on the horizons of space thousands of galaxies are receding from us at speeds approaching that of light. Wherever we turn it seems that the world is receding from us, opening up like a chasm before our feet, as though some demon were mocking us with mathematical paradoxes that confound reason.

The discovery of Infinity, which could have been a source of wonder and inspiration, shattered the narrow conceptual framework of conventional religion, and in so doing precipitated a spiritual crisis accompanied by widespread agnosticism and a sceptical contempt for spiritual values. From Copernicus on, the growth of scientific modes of thought was accompanied by an increasing devaluation of the human image that culminated in the modern existential malaise, a sense of meaninglessness and purposelessness that is clearly related to the decline of ethical and spiritual values previously sustained by Christianity, and the consequent absence in the lives of most people of any sense of the sacred. Christian faith had been based on the presupposition that existence as

a whole was the coherent manifestation of the purpose of an intelligent and benevolent deity. Theologically considered, cosmic history was the context for a series of unique supernatural events: a Creation, a Fall, an Incarnation, a Second Coming, a Last Judgment. The world existed as a backdrop for these events, and through them it could be understood. The life of men had a meaning within the world, the existence of which was based on rational principles. The assumed task of philosophy, up to the time of Hegel, was to reveal the *rational* basis of existence. Since the world is organized *rationality*, it must be possible for human reason to elucidate its structure, to show why it must necessarily be as it is.

This style of philosophizing has now quite gone out of fashion and is unlikely to return. As far as Wittgenstein and the Logical Positivists are concerned at least, questions about the existence of the world are of two possible kinds, *metaphysical* or *empirical*. Metaphysical questions are unanswerable in principle and therefore meaningless; empirical questions are the concern of the scientist, not of the philosopher, who conceives his task as the linguistic analysis and clarification of misleading propositions. Accordingly there can be no *answer* to a philosophical question; it can only be shown to be meaningless or reduced to another kind of question altogether. The other prominent school of philosophy, Existentialism, has no interest in metaphysical speculation or system building, for it takes existence as uniquely *given* and non-rational, if not irrational. Its principal proponents are unanimous in their disdain for systematic metaphysics and stand in many ways as a reaction to traditional Rationalist philosophy. Modern philosophers, then, are all agreed that the programme of the rationalists was fundamentally misguided. As Arthur Lovejoy


Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times*

...but gets caught up in the machine.

writes in *The Great Chain of Being*:

There is scarcely any general contrast between the Platonic strain in European thought down to the late 18th century and the philosophy of more recent times which is more significant than this. For to acknowledge that such questions are necessarily insoluble or meaningless is to imply that, so far as we can judge, the world is, in the final analysis, non-rational.

In short, that no ontological fact is logically necessary, that 'existence precedes essence', this realization of the *contingency of being* is one of the basic assumptions of modern thought. That the world might not have existed, or that it might have been quite other than what it is, that it can be fairly described as a 'gigantic accident', signifying nothing — this was the implication that many read into Darwin's theory of evolution, which substituted a set of arbitrary mechanical laws for the final causes of biblical mythology. When the creation story of Genesis was called into question, so too was the central doctrine of the Fall, which accounted for the existence of sin. But without a Fall, there would be no need of a *saviour*. By implication the entire theological superstructure of Christianity was undermined. But even more important, if the world was not created, organized, and controlled to fulfil a divine plan, if it had just 'happened' by chance, life was meaningless and existence absurd. Such a world is a world without hierarchy, goal, or purpose. Devoid of meaning, it is incapable of sustaining values; the experience of the absurd leads directly to nihilism. If nothing is true, everything is permitted. In the nihilistic culture, the atrocities of Nazism *actually occur*, and philosophically it is a matter of indifference; the absurd recognizes no limitations. Albert Camus articulates this feeling in *The Rebel*:

Awareness of the absurd, when we first claim to deduce a rule of behaviour from it, makes murder seem a matter of indifference, to say

the least, and hence possible. If we believe in nothing, if nothing has any meaning and if we affirm no values whatsoever, then everything is possible and nothing has any importance ... Evil and virtue are mere chance or caprice.

In Man's perennial quest to establish some kind of explanation for this primary concrete existential fact, his own being in the world, the scientific theory of evolution has added one insight of fundamental importance. It has demonstrated that Man is to be understood, not as the specific creation of Genesis, an isolated being with a permanent unchanging essential nature, but as a phase, a process, a becoming, the latest event in a vast temporal progression. In the formulation of the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, man is a being whose existence precedes his essence. He finds himself in the world, a 'thing' among other things, and yet his nature is not that of the thing, he has no essential 'thingness'. His life seems to have no apparent purpose, no given meaning; he has been allocated no function. There is no evidence to indicate that he has been designed by some supernatural being or that he is here to fulfil some specific destiny. He finds no place in nature waiting for him to fill it, he has no sense of belonging in the world; a stranger in a strange land, awaking from the strange sleep of history and peering into the mirror of consciousness for the first time he confronts himself, and with that first shock of recognition comes the outraged cry of Kierkegaard: 'How did I come into the world? Why was I not consulted?'

This is the essence of the great shift in man's consciousness of himself that has been taking place in the last few centuries and has been greatly accelerated by the Darwinian revolution. For the first time man confronts himself, alone, with a knowledge that demands a total revision of all philosophical, spiritual, and religious values. Modern man is uneasy, dissatisfied, even angry; he feels

cheated. He does not feel that he has been adapted adequately, in the manner of other life forms, to cope with the situation. Above all he feels unfulfilled, incomplete, and at war with himself.

At just this moment of crisis, as the very foundation of Western culture seems to be giving way, we begin to discover and explore the possibility, at least, for renewal by cross-fertilization from the profound teachings of the East. Perhaps here, more and more people are beginning to think, is the sought-after alchemical ingredient, the transforming elixir that can rejuvenate our culture.

Many people in the West are now being attracted to the teaching which they know as Buddhism. While primarily concerned with the spiritual transformation and perfection of the individual, for 2500 years the Buddha-Dharma, as it is known in the East, has continuously enriched all of its 'host' cultures from Java to Tibet. If we look at the FWBO, it is clear that Buddhism has a great deal to offer the West: a comprehensive spiritual teaching that does not rely on assumptions as to the nature and purpose of a deity, or on any dogmatic formulations concerning the way of the world. A fully elaborated and time-tested philosophy of existence based on the ideal of *sublimated humanity*, of the empirical potentialities of man as a moral/intellectual/aesthetic and spiritual being. A vision of the universe as a process of evolution, centring on man, the spearhead of cosmic destiny, which is fully reconcilable with the framework of the neo-Darwinian theory of evolution. A practical methodology of individual self-development compatible with the more advanced theories of psychology and grounded in a venerable lineage of tradition. An alternative life-style based on ethical considerations without being completely impractical or 'other-worldly'. Whether or not any other sum of Eastern thought has so much to offer, the future of Buddhism, at least, would seem to be assured.

What influence might Buddhism have on the future development of Western civilization and culture? It would be foolish to speculate on what is essentially unknowable, but one could hope that a rejuvenation of society by cultural and spiritual cross-contact could possibly be the initiating inspiration for a new Renaissance of global proportions, the prelude even for a new age of mankind. As the world shrinks to a 'global village', the prospect of a united humanity with a common vision of man's potential self-transcendence is actually feasible enough to be entertained, despite the considerable odds against such a situation apparently winning through in the political nightmare of the modern world.

What would be the function of a spiritual community in such a Renaissance? Precisely to provide intellectual, moral, and spiritual momentum for such an occurrence by means of the contagious energy of individuals, healthy and aware people with a new spiritual vitality and a vision of a new kind of man and a new kind of life.

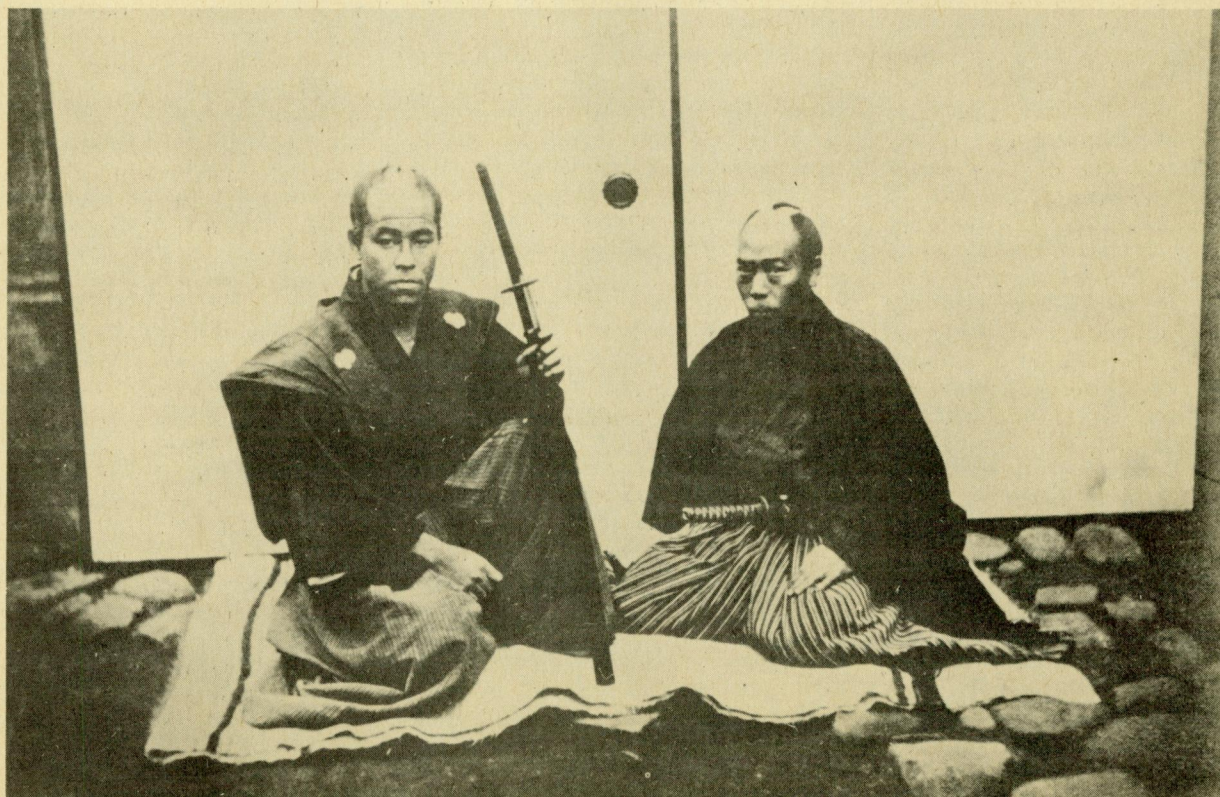
A currently popular view of history sees

continued on p. 12

Buddhism & Culture

by Abhaya

'Culture' is a highly inclusive term. Well aware of the danger of leaving out some important element in an attempt to define it, I am not going to try! Among his scholarly and somewhat tedious musings on the whole subject, T.S. Eliot made up a quaint list of some of the diverse activities and interests which would have to be included in a composite picture of British culture. He included the Cup Final, 19th-century Gothic churches, Henley Regatta, the music of Elgar, and beetroot in vinegar. We in England could make our own list, which might well include, to bring it a bit more up to date, bingo, high-rise flats, Wimbledon, the music of the Rolling Stones, and baked beans on toast! In a long exposition more committed to arriving at the exhaustive meaning of the term, the



Japanese Samurai, 1865 (see p. 8)

Hikoma Ueno

Oxford English Dictionary offers us: '... total pattern of human behaviour and its products, embodied in thought, speech and action'. Culture thus occupies man's whole being; it covers a very wide range of his achievements, including social patterns of behaviour, architecture, literature, music, the fine arts, and philosophy, in all the different civilizations throughout history and all over the world. To get back to the etymology of the word, this amounts to anything which man has *cultivated* or caused to grow by means of the organization of his energy of body, speech, or mind or of a combination of all three. Any explanation of such a widely embracing term must to some extent remain vague. Yet it is important to keep this inclusiveness in mind, because it seems that one of the causes of decline in culture is the isolation of elites from one another. This problem came to the fore in the early 'sixties with C.P. Snow's publication of his famous essay, *The Two Cultures*, in which he deplored the schism, manifested in a total lack of communication, between specialists in the scientific field of learning on the one hand and arts specialists on the other. On the social or ethnic level, this sort of split can be much more destructive, as, for instance, in the caste system of India, where people from a so-called higher level of society abstract themselves from the rest to such a degree that the members of the lowest stratum are seen as a different race, almost even as a discrete — and definitely inferior — species.

The need for some unifying factor is therefore crucial, some element that will draw all the disparate strands of culture together into a harmonious whole. This element is, more often than not, provided by religion. In this respect Buddhism is a supremely efficient catalyst, for at its heart is the development and eventual Enlightenment of the individual. Christianity in the West has been a cultural influence only up to a point, since it is, unlike Buddhism, theistic, based, that is, on the authority of God. The European Renaissance was an assertion by man of his independence of that authority. But the growth and expansion to which this great movement gave rise eventually led to the over-specialization and consequent decline already referred to. What also happens, when the Transcendental orientation provided by Buddhism is lacking, is that culture is sooner or later seen by man as an end in itself. One example of the use of the word 'culture' given in the *Oxford English Dictionary* comes from the writings of J.A. Froude, who informs us: 'The end of all culture is that we may be able to sustain ourselves in a spiritual atmosphere as do the birds of the air'. As Buddhists we can go along with that as far as it goes, but we must go further and add that the ultimate end is not just to be amiably or even blissfully sustained for 'happily ever after'. The true purpose of the perfect cultural vehicle is to crash us through the barriers of our existential blindness and take us through to Enlightenment. Perhaps when a culture or aspect of culture begins to see its purpose solely as one of sustaining a certain mode of being, then its sight is dimmed and its decline already

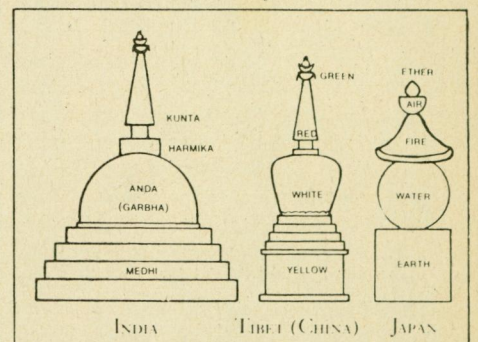
under way. For ultimately even the most highly developed of cultures, be they ever so beautiful and refined, are no more than complex patterns of social and psychological conditioning.

Whilst never losing sight of the ultimate limitations of culture, Buddhism has throughout its history, fully appreciated its value. Apart from the esoteric transmission of the Dharma directly and telepathically, the Teaching cannot be communicated independently of culture; some form of culture is the indispensable vehicle, the medium through which the Enlightened man communicates to the unenlightened. Thus the Bodhisattva, in developing *Upaya* (skilful means) and the Perfection of *Dana* (Giving), particularly with respect to the giving of the Dharma, has to be thoroughly in touch with all aspects of culture and skilled in the use of the cultural tools at his disposal. Culturally speaking the Dharma has to be highly adaptable. Even a cursory glance at the history of Buddhism shows that the Dharma has certainly met with this requirement.

There is, of course, no simple answer to the question of how Buddhism has influenced culture. It is not simply a matter of Buddhism spreading to another country and crudely grafting itself onto the local culture irrespective of its flavour. Sometimes what appears to have taken place is the superimposition of a very highly developed Buddhist culture on an underdeveloped one. This appears to have been the case in central Java, site of the famous Borobudur stupa. In other cases, Buddhism gradually assimilated various ingredients of secular culture as it settled into its new phase. This happened in India in the early history of Buddhism and later, to some extent, in Tibet. When Buddhism came into contact with an already well-developed culture, as was the case in China and, to a lesser extent, Japan, what happened was more of a balanced mutual interaction between the two. But the whole subject is a vast one. It is not possible in a short article to do more than isolate from the whole mass of material one or two examples which will help illustrate the kind of effect Buddhism has had on some of the cultures with which it has come into contact.

In all the countries where the Dharma has had considerable impact, the spiritual-cum-cultural object *par excellence* is the stupa. In its myriad variations of form and decoration, the stupa is ubiquitous in these countries and has become so saturated with Buddhist associations that we can easily forget that it was not a Buddhist invention in the first place! As a simple burial mound, its basic form is to be found in prehistoric cultures; examples of this are the numerous barrows on the Wiltshire Downs of south-western England. It is also found in other non-Buddhist civilizations. The pyramid of

ancient Egypt is an example. Closer to India itself, there are ruined stupas on the excavated sites of the prehistoric civilizations of the Indus valley in Pakistan. But for Buddhism it became a focus of artistic and architectural attention not only because the Buddha's mortal remains were enshrined in several stupas, the form thus gathering to itself powerful associations of the Buddha Nature (especially before the start of the practice of carving Buddha rupas), but also because it came to acquire through the ages, particularly in the Vajrayana (Magical Buddhism), very great significance as a symbol, having a powerful transforming impact on consciousness. The development of its form in Buddhist art can be traced from the simple undecorated dome-like mounds of archaic Buddhism and the slightly more evolved forms with the Buddhas of the four directions set into the sides of a square base supporting the original dome to the more sophisticated Nepalese and Tibetan style, with a multi-ringed conical shape superimposed on the basic structure and finally crowned with the symbol of the flaming drop. There is also the multi-storeyed variation, with the overall shape of a step-pyramid with terraces climbing to the dome and spire at the top. Two famous examples of this are the Great Stupa of Gyantse in Tibet and, far more impressive in scale if not in total artistic effect, the shrine at Borobudur in Java.



Some forms of the stupa

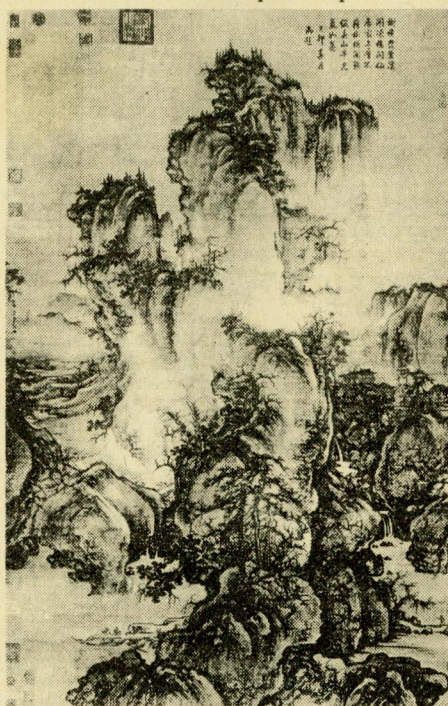
The stupa also became a focal point in the sense that many of the early monastic settlements in India centred around the stupa shrine. And even where there is no evidence of such an arrangement more often than not the shrine houses a stupa as well as the gigantic Buddha image. Many of the stupas are profusely decorated with relief sculptures, both on the walls of the stupa base itself and, in the case of the step-pyramid stupas such as Borobudur, on the balustrades edging the galleries; in the case of earlier stupas, such as the great Sanchi stupa in India, the gateways and stone railings surrounding the main shrine are embellished with relief carvings. The art of such reliefs is sometimes called didactic, in the sense that they illustrate the story of the Buddha's 'historical' life or previous lives with scenes from the *Jatakas* for the edification of those who visited the shrine. But 'didactic' has an association of dryness, one that is certainly misleading in connection with these carvings, which are often executed in a highly ornamented and exuberant style, particularly when the artist is depicting one of the many heaven worlds where the Buddha or Buddha-to-be

delivered His Teaching. There are plenty of details, such as the configurations of plant life motifs, richly pleated and embroidered drapery, and the beautiful figures of dancing nymphs, which show that Buddhism had no difficulty at all in assimilating the developed techniques and styles of contemporary secular artists.

Buddhism disappeared from India at the time of the Muslim invasions in the 12th century. An air of mystery still hovers around this rather sudden end; historians and scholars have long puzzled over it. However, part of the cause is perhaps attributable to the thorough sacking of the great monastic centres of learning such as Nalanda, Bodhgaya, and Vikramasila. The invaders were apparently so thorough at Vikramasila that there are no archaeological traces even of the foundations, and all the monks were slaughtered. It was difficult for the Dharma to survive on Indian soil without its protectors and propagators, the monks and *acaryas*. Fortunately the whole culture of Indian Mahayana Buddhism had been very intensely absorbed and its teachings devotedly put into practice by the Tibetans over a period of a few hundred years up to the time of the invasions in India. This must surely have been one of the most impressive transmissions of religious culture that the world has ever seen. Perhaps one of the factors which facilitated the whole process, apart from the innate spiritual drive and initiative of the Tibetan people, was the lack of any very highly developed indigenous culture in Tibet, though for a long time Buddhism had to contend with strong Bon elements. There are two main strains of Tibetan Buddhism, both of them well integrated into its most developed form. The first is what might be called the scholarly-monastic strain, initiated by the early Indian teachers Santarakshita and Kamalasila and consolidated later by the great Atisa. The other is the more magical strain initiated by the Indian yogi Guru Padmasambhava and practised and refined by the many wandering yogis who followed him until it was eventually absorbed and transmitted by the advanced lamas of the different schools of Tibetan Buddhism. One of the most notable contributions of whole generations of Buddhist scholars in Tibet was the production in their own language of a highly detailed and precise religious literary vocabulary which enabled them to translate faithfully the whole range of Buddhist Sanskrit literature. The works of the Tibetan Canon are apparently so accurate that Sanskrit scholars are able to reconstruct an accurate version of any lost Indian Sanskrit work using the Tibetan version as a basis.

Great and invaluable as these achievements are, the spiritual genius of the Tibetans seems to be rooted in the ritual or magical field of Buddhism, in the dynamic use of symbols in ceremonies, initiations, and *sadh-anas* with the purpose of harnessing unconscious forces in the direction of Enlightenment. The cultural impact of Padmasambhava's teaching is conveyed by the different

kinds of ritual accessories including *thang-kas* or 'painted scrolls'. It is to be remembered that such paintings are not purely representational in the 'naturalistic' Western sense of being artistic expressions of the painter's idea of his subject; their purpose is primarily spiritual in that they are to be actually used as aids to the developing of superconscious states in the course of meditation practices and rituals centred around a particular Buddha form or group of forms. Tibetan religious art has a whole pantheon of such figures, of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and great Teachers, many of them, such as Avalokitesvara and Manjusri, purely archetypal, that is, without historical existence. No doubt the pantheon includes several figures which were incorporated from a pre-Buddhist pantheon. This transformation of cultural elements included the use of ritual implements which had been used for a long time in non-Buddhist rites. One such is what is known as a sky-trap or demon-trap, a kite-like construction made up of simple wooden



A Chinese landscape scroll

frames woven with different coloured threads. Such traps were originally used in peasant rituals for the casting out of demons, but are still used in rituals connected with the cult of the female Bodhisattva Tara.¹ Another 'transformed' ritual implement is the *phur-bu*, or magic dagger, originally used for the ritual 'slaying' of the human effigy which represented the foe to be conquered. The extension of this primitive use is obvious. In Buddhist rituals, paintings, and sculptures it is a symbol for the destruction of the enemies of the Dharma, or even for the destruction of one's own ego, for cutting through one's own unconscious obstructions.

We have seen that the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet, consisting of the Indian Mahayana form and the Indian Buddhist Tantra introduced by Padmasambhava, was very much a

question of a well-developed culture imposed on a relatively primitive one. In the case of Japan, it is a rather different story. At the time that Tibetan monasticism had got well under way in the 12th and 13th centuries, Buddhism in its Zen form was flourishing in Japan. But in this case, Buddhism could not simply imprint itself over the faint outline of a weak culture; in Japan, as to an even greater extent in China, it had to blend with an already flourishing culture. The emphasis here is on 'blend'; for the process was not like some crude grafting of a strange growth onto an alien organism which only 'took' after a long period of trial and error but more like a smooth running together or intermingling of complementary elements. This is made clear when we look at two important aspects of Japanese culture with relation to Buddhism, namely, the ethos of the samurai (which, in fact, took root at the same time as Zen) and the Japanese attitude to Nature as expressed in painting and poetry.

An important characteristic of Japanese social culture was the traditional division of society into classes of a feudal system which started at the end of the 12th century and was only abolished in the middle of the 19th century. Somewhere between the aristocracy right at the top and the *eta*, or serfs, at the bottom, and at the upper end of the social scale, came the samurai or warrior. Around the samurai there developed a strict code of chivalrous and soldierly behaviour which came to be known as *Bushido*, the Way of the Warrior. The samurai are no doubt strongly identified in the Western mind with Kurosawa's famous portrayal of them in his film, *The Seven Samurai*; in the Japanese mind, perhaps, with what Suzuki calls 'the greatest deed in the history of Japan',² namely the defeat of the Mongolian invaders by the samurai under the direction of Hojo Tokimune. The question that arises is: how did a form of Buddhism, which is a religion of non-violence, come to be so intimately related with the samurai, whose way of life certainly involved killing? To label the relationship 'intimate' seems no exaggeration in view of Suzuki's reference to Bushido as 'the spiritual co-operation between the two professions of priesthood and soldiery'.³ In fact, it is more helpful to think of death itself, rather than killing, as the connecting link between the two. One of the aims of the Zen disciple is to master death, to overcome all fear of death. The samurai also is concerned to overcome his fear of death — in fact the urgency of his situation in this respect is greater than that of the Zen disciple, at least on the face of it. (The Zen Master might well disagree!) In the feudal days many swordsmen devoted their lives to the study of Zen, while the samurai, face to face with his threatening opponent, could come to be for the Zen adept a sort of paradigm of the crucial situation. In one famous story on the subject, the Master asks the candidate for swordsmanship what knowledge of the art he already has. When told that he has no knowledge at all, the Master is perplexed and suspicious, sensing, as he does, some great accomplishment in the would-be novice. After a lot of prompting, the young man eventually proffers the

information that in his younger days, after a lot of struggle, he managed to overcome all fear of death. The Master, now satisfied, informs him that he is already a Master and has no need to acquire any techniques! Thus one of the secrets of success, both for the samurai and the spiritual aspirant, is to live happily while at the same time being always ready to quit!

The spirit behind many classical Zen mondos, koans, and teachings in general is the need to transcend, to break through the mundane sphere of dualities. The samurai, in order to master his art as a swordsman, has to transcend all ideas of winning or losing, which can only interfere with his development. Also, Zen is a very practical down-to-earth approach to Enlightenment, a Way of doing, of the will, rather than one of scholarship or training in philosophy. This aspect appealed very much to the Japanese character and to the unsophisticated samurai in particular. Consequent on all this, what took place eventually was a kind of complete cross-fertilization between the two disciplines; many Zen masters became Masters of the Sword and seemed to use the art of swordsmanship, unlike the samurai, solely as a means of self-transcendence, to all intents and purposes divorced from the art of self-defence. The essence of the art of the sword seems to involve the highly difficult technique of 'freeing' oneself to such an extent that every single movement arises not from any desire for success, nor even from highly developed reflexes resulting from long practice, but from a spontaneous though unconscious inner harmony. The crisis for the advanced student seems to come at a similar stage to that in the Zen disciple's development when he is faced with the dilemma of longing to free himself from the desire to free himself from all desires! The goal of both is complete spiritual freedom, freedom, that is, from all attachments whatsoever. Although Zen and the way of the samurai came to be so closely connected, they could never be identified. Degeneration did eventually take place, when *Bushido* became linked with politics, then with aggres-

sion and tyranny, leading eventually to the Japanese involvement in World War II.

A Zen practice which had a very marked effect on Japanese art and poetry was meditation. In consideration of Zen and swordsmanship, on the surface a very extrovert activity, it might be easy to forget that Zen training included a lot of meditation, which has an invigorating and at the same time tranquillizing effect on the mind. The combination of this effect with the Japanese inherent love of Nature produced many fine landscape paintings in art and the haiku in verse. Undoubtedly these landscapes were influenced by similar Chinese paintings of the same period, which itinerant Zen artists must have been acquainted with. The atmosphere evoked by the painting of a landscape in moonlight by the Chinese is similar to that of a Japanese picture of the summit of a mountain or the tops of trees emerging from the mist. Chinese works of this kind were apparently kept in special containers and only unrolled when the meditative mood was ripe. Both Japanese paintings and haiku transmit some of the essence of the meditative mood, having a concentrating and calming effect. We are told that a considerable proportion of the Zen artist's training was devoted to simply observing the object to be painted over long periods of time, allowing its essential features to filter through to the artistic sensibility. Something of this absorption is transmitted through the landscape paintings.

Whereas the landscape paintings have an air of mysterious grandeur about them, always conveying an impressiveness of scale emphasized by the smallness of the figures which sometimes people them, the haiku poems often single out small, seemingly insignificant details from a natural scene. This concern and enthusiasm for minute detail is another national characteristic. The haiku, consisting as it does of only seventeen syllables, is suited to the expression of this aspect of the Japanese aesthetic sensibility. A typical oft-quoted example, somewhere favourably compared with Tennyson's flower-in-the-crannied-

wall poem, is by the vagrant Zen monk Basho, who had a very gifted eye and plenty of time for the spotting of what usually goes unnoticed:

When closely inspected,
The nazuna is flowering
By the hedge.⁴

But here, as in many translations of the haiku, we are left with the feeling that much of the original essence is lost in translation. No doubt this is partly because the haiku is such a concentrated form in which every original syllable and every slight nuance counts; much more is therefore lost in its translation than in the rendering of more discursive verse forms. The translated haiku, though no doubt faithful to the meaning of the original words, can often seem a little trite, even banal.

Whatever the art form, be it painting or verse or flower arrangement, the Japanese genius seems to have merged quite harmoniously with the spirit of Zen. This is because of the similarity between the mystical and the aesthetic experience. Appreciation of Nature seems to lead quite naturally to both; at their highest reaches they are surely indistinguishable. The greatest of the poems and paintings influenced by Zen must distil something at least of the feeling tone of the satori experience. Even in their reproduced versions, they can leave one with that certain feeling aroused by all true works of art, a feeling described, if not actually evoked, by Issa's famous haiku:

A world of Dew
Is a world of dew and yet,
And yet⁵

The qualification is the expression of the need to be utterly free; it is the spirit of Buddhism pressing to break free from its cultural framework.

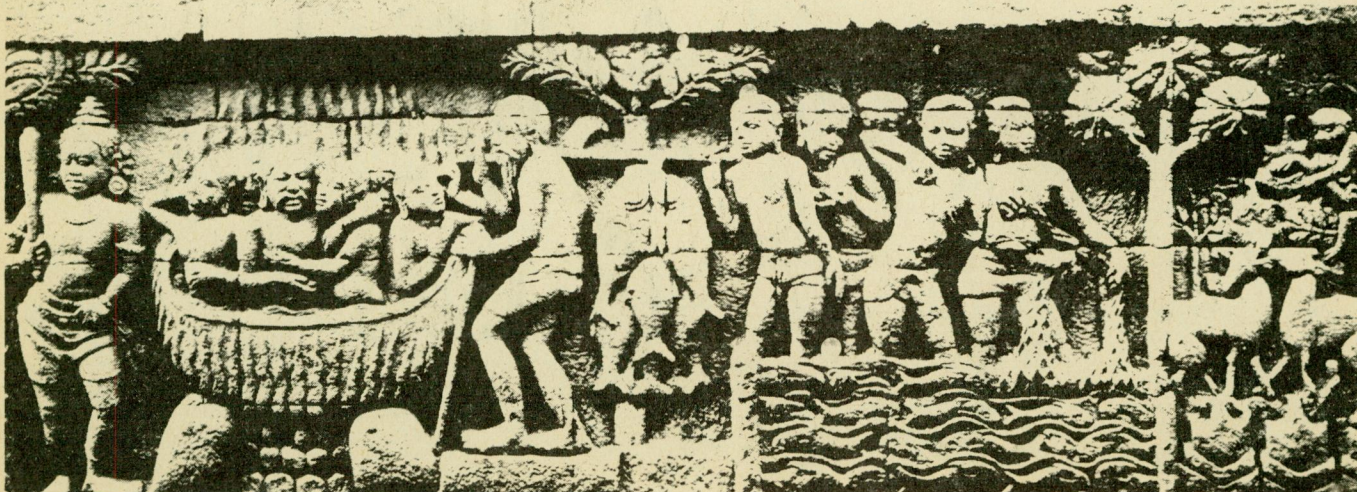
¹ See Stephan Beyer, *The Cult of Tara: Magic and Ritual in Tibet* (University of California Press, 1978)

² D.T. Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture* (Bollingen series, Princeton, 1959)

³ Suzuki, *op.cit.*

⁴ Suzuki, *op. cit.*

⁵ Suzuki, *op.cit.*



Fishermen suffer in Hell: folk Buddhism in Java (Borobudur)

How might the spread of Buddhism in the West affect popular views on morality? We asked Vessantara to speculate.....

A MORALITY FOR THE FUTURE?

by Vessantara

It is a commonplace of our society that morality is in the melting pot. Looking at modern Western society one is struck by the complete confusion of different ethical standards which it encompasses. On every important moral question one sees proponents of completely opposite viewpoints locked in blind combat like young stags whose antlers are hopelessly entangled, neither able to overcome their



A Japanese Dharmapala — protector of the truth

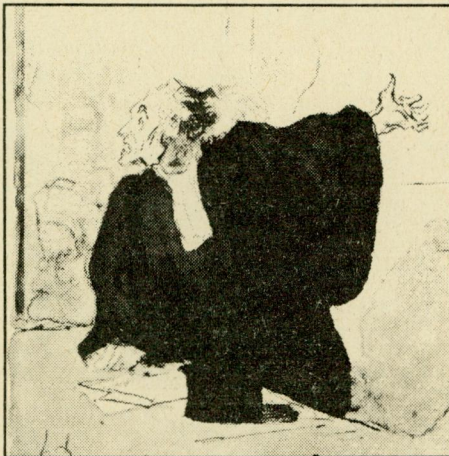
opponents by force of argument nor able to agree to differ and leave each other in peace to follow their own conceptions of morality. In Britain, for example, some take a hawkish attitude over the treatment of offenders, seeing punishment as a deterrent; others take a liberal view: 'It's not his fault, what else can you expect from someone from his family — social background?' In matters of sex there is a spectrum of opinion ranging from the views of Mary Whitehouse and Lord Longford to the view that all censorship or restriction of individual sexual freedom is wrong. For the average person it seems an impossible task to find any common ground, a 'place to stand' from which to decide how to act. So most people react to situations on a piecemeal basis. This is a dangerous situation, which carries within itself the seeds of chaos and destruction.

To a truly honest man, it is a source of no satisfaction whatever to be credited with successes he has not achieved or virtues he does not possess.

Buddhism has not as yet gained sufficient support in the West to show what it could achieve. So let us turn our eyes to the future and look forward to the day, say 500 years hence, when Buddhism might have become a major force in world society. How would Buddhism, with its strong emphasis on ethics, cut through the moral dilemmas for which today we have no solution? We must first acknowledge that there can be no easy answers. It would be tempting to scry into a rose-tinted crystal ball to see a world in which everyone was trying to develop, practising meditation, and doing socially useful work; to see a wonderful society 'governed' by a benevolent 'dictatorship' of spiritually advanced individuals who offered 'guidelines' (no need to enforce laws!) to which the rest of society were receptive — a society in which all the public houses had been converted into meditation centres (so there was one on nearly every street corner), and all the butchers were greengrocers or devoted to animal welfare! I trust no one will think me a hopeless cynic if I say there is little chance of such a society coming about on a large scale. In 500 years' time Man may live longer, he may be floating around in a spacesuit on some distant planet, he may be surrounded by technological wizardry, but, with some shining individual exceptions, he will still be the same Man in his depths that he is now: descendant of the apes, Neanderthal Man in a silver spacesuit, Cro-Magnon man on Mars. In evolutionary terms 500 years is a mere heartbeat away. We can look at the men of 1480 and understand much of their drives and feelings; could we be transported to 2480, we should find much to empathize with in the people we met. A strong spiritual community will exercise a great influence, but there has never yet been

a society composed of True Individuals, and there probably never will be. So in thinking about a morality for 2480 we can assume that such malaises of our present society as murder and theft will still be present, albeit to a lesser degree. So we are still going to need a framework of laws and a judiciary. If they have been influenced by Buddhist thinking on morality, how will they have changed?

Firstly, we may well find that the whole court procedure is much more informal. Whilst our present legal system is a vast improvement on the summary and haphazard justice of lynch mobs and kangaroo courts, I feel it has fallen into another trap. Attempts to produce impartiality all too often produce impersonality as a by-product. A Buddhist court would be concerned to bring an offender much more directly into contact with those whom his actions have affected. In present-day courts an offender is distanced from his actions. He must often feel that the outcome of his trial depends not so much on what he did as on the rhetoric and convoluted arguments of lawyers. In this way he loses touch with the reality of his actions. In its procedure a Buddhist court would be concerned with two principles. Firstly, it would be concerned to see the offender as an individual and to impose on him whatever penalty would be most helpful for his development — so one could expect to see wide variations in sentences for offences which 'purely objectively' appear the same. Secondly, it would strive above all else to instil in the offender the feeling that *his actions have consequences*. This is, in essence,



The Courtroom drama or karma?

Daumier

the law of karma. So if an individual commits a serious crime causing hurt to others, a Buddhist court would be unlikely to pat him on the head and tell him not to do it again. By doing this his sense of the power and reality of his own actions would be denied. A Buddhist court would not necessarily be gentle and tolerant. It would ensure that individuals were held responsible for their acts and felt the consequences of these acts. It is not for nothing that Tibetan Buddhist

iconography contains figures of *Dharmapalas* — powerfully built and ferocious protectors of the Truth. The Buddhist, in touch through meditation with the depths as well as the heights of his own nature, is quite aware of the power of the darker sub-human forces in Man which, if not held in check, can overturn all true humanity.

Having looked briefly at how a Buddhist society might impose sanctions on its erring members, let us now turn to how it would affect the values of ordinary people. Here I can give no more than a brief outline of some of the most likely changes. Firstly, there would be a greater understanding of the difference between 'natural' and 'conventional' morality. The society of the future, Buddhist or not, will be much more what Marshall McLuhan calls a 'global village' as increased communication breaks down cultural barriers. So within each geographical area there will be adherents of many different value systems. This situation should help people realize that much of what they took to be unalterable moral reality is really a matter of social convention. However, there are some actions (such as murder) which are abhorred by virtually all human ethical systems, and

One can legislate for the group, but not for the individual.

which all members of the 'global village' would be united in condemning. Whilst enforcing this 'natural' morality strongly, a Buddhist society — concerned above all else with the individual's freedom to express himself creatively — would leave all matters of 'conventional' morality as far as possible to individual decision. The whole society would be geared to helping people to think and feel for themselves. Thus bureaucracy and rules would be kept to a minimum. Hopefully in a Buddhist society nobody would ever be prosecuted for walking (or even dancing!) on the grass.

Some major areas of life which would change are the current battlegrounds of marriage, sex, and the rearing of children. In these areas, falling mainly under the heading of conventional morality, we can expect a large number of different arrangements. Sex would be considered a natural and healthy human function, neither glorified nor repressed. It would also be seen to have its limitations for the developing individual. Marriage would be a purely civil affair — the public acknowledgment that two people choose to live together. Divorce would be the simple parting of those for whom living together was no longer the most productive situation. The only real evil would be seen to be relationships of psycho-

logical dependency. This may well mean that the often claustrophobic nuclear family system, as found in the West, would largely have fallen into abeyance, as it tends to encourage this dependency. Children might often move away from their parents at an early age. Any tendency among parents to regard their children as their 'possessions' would be seen as very unhealthy.

If the above paragraph sounds rather glib, one must remember that a Buddhist-influenced society would have one vast advantage over the present one in dealing with difficult emotional areas: it would have both the understanding and the practice of *metta*, of universal loving-kindness or non-exclusive friendliness. *Metta* is perhaps the most important and beautiful gift that Buddhism has to offer to present-day society. At one stroke it cuts through so many emotional dilemmas. To take one at random, there is currently great confusion in the 'helping professions'. Social workers and nurses are taught not to become emotionally involved with their clients and patients (as this automatically implies over-identification, with a consequent loss of the ability to help effectively). Yet, if the social worker remains 'detached', he or she often fails to provide the real emotional contact which his clients are desperately seeking. The answer to this, and to many other dilemmas insoluble by present-day society, is *metta*, the consciously-developed ability to reach out to others without becoming emotionally dependent on them.

There are many other areas in which Buddhism would bring about change, but there is only space available here to answer the question: what would be the fundamental moral criteria of a Buddhist-influenced society? Clearly they would not be moral imperatives laid down by a personal God. Buddhism emphatically denies the existence of any such being. A Buddhist deciding how to act does not think in terms of sin, guilt, and punishment, of good and evil, or even of right or wrong. His moral criteria are more 'subjective': he decides how to act by referring to his state of mind. If the action stems from states of peace, *metta*, and

**What every living thing,
wants to do most of all is
to fulfil the law of its own
being, and the law of our
being is — as it is the law
of the being of every living
thing — that we should
develop.**

clarity, then the resultant action will have a positive effect; it will be what Buddhism terms 'skilful action'. If rooted in craving, hatred, or ignorance it will be 'unskilful', and its results will be unsatisfactory. But if the Buddhist criteria for morality are subjective, how can we judge another's actions? If skilfulness and unskilfulness are determined by the individual's state of mind, would we not need a 'Thought Police' to determine who is skilful and who unskilful? Fortunately there is a much simpler answer. There is one further criterion which could be applied by a Buddhist-influenced society. Here we must reintroduce an idea common to the Ancient Greeks, yet lost to us. For the Greeks there was no distinction between the Good and the Beautiful. They were seen as two aspects of the same experience. The Greeks knew that actions which flowed from tranquillity, wisdom, and concern for others would be inherently pleasing aesthetically, just as those which sprang from hatred and ignorance would be marked by ugliness. We can recognize the truly ethical individual with our aesthetic sense: there is something deeply pleasing about the way he acts and the environment which he creates around himself. We are naturally drawn to such people.

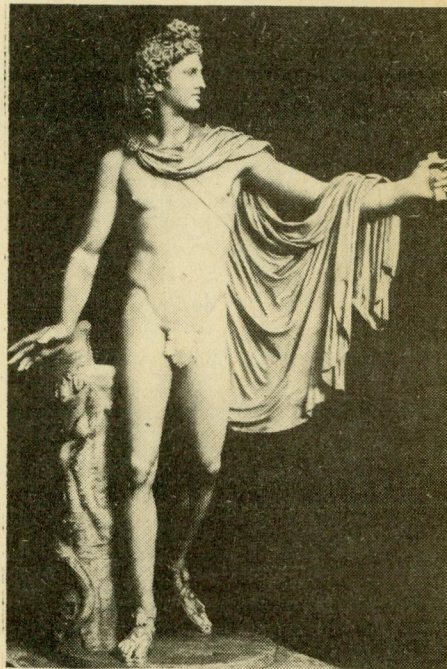
Some people may object at this point that beauty is purely 'subjective', whereas right and wrong are 'objective'. But right and wrong are no more 'objective' than beauty. To imagine that they are is to fall prey to a childish absolutizing of introjected parental or religious values. In fact, the developed aesthetic sense is a much more effective tool for judging things as they really are than the rational mind.

The Buddhist society, the truly moral society, would be one which aimed at

Beauty, which tried to give birth to It's tender flowers in every area of life. Whilst we too often confine Beauty to the Arts, our future Buddhist society would try to create Beauty in every aspect of life. For the true individual every action is a step towards Beauty.

A society in pursuit of the Beautiful would have a refining effect on its members. Through the efforts of its more highly-developed members to create an aesthetically-pleasing environment others would gradually fall under its spell. It would work its soothing charms on them, and in this way the whole of society would gradually evolve to higher ethical levels.

So this is my vision of a society deeply influenced by Buddhist values — prepared to defend itself strongly against those who would try to tear down its delicate crystal towers, with individual freedom and universal loving-kindness as its twin great pillars, and ardently pursuing the spirit of Beauty in every aspect of life. Perhaps it too will prove an impossible dream. Perhaps Neanderthal Man in his spaceship will win after all. But it is a dream worth striving after.



Apollo — Goodness as Beauty Roman Copy?

The quotations have been taken from *Peace is a Fire*

Annihilation or Regeneration

continued from p.5

it as the inevitable chaotic and futile interactions of vast and blind impersonal forces. Yet there are patterns to be discerned in history, the patterns of the genesis, growth, and decline of cultures and civilizations. A comparative study of other cultures demonstrates that they live and die after their own fashion — outmoded or inadequate for survival and adaptation to historical exigencies, they collapse, decay, or fossilize; yet other cultures take their place, bearing the intermittent and flickering torch of human experience onwards towards the future.

The emergence of a new or revitalized culture takes place only on the basis of a tangled complex of socio-economic and historical conditions difficult to analyse clearly. But one thing is clear: cultures come into existence as the result of the work and thought of a few individuals — Nietzsche's 'true philosophers', who perform the necessary 'revaluation of values', the artists and saints who embody new values and stand as examples for others to imitate, men like Socrates, Confucius, William Blake and the Buddha, who have travelled ahead of the general human evolution and can instruct others how to follow them. These men are members of the universal spiritual commu-

nity that comes into existence whenever individuals associate freely and evolve beyond their tribal or group associations.

The spiritual community functions in society as the catalyst for cultural innovation and the source of inspiration for life-enhancing value systems³. In laying the foundations of a Buddhist-inspired spiritual community in the West it is conceivable that we could be preparing the way for a new world.

¹ cf Erich Fromm, *To Have or to Be*.

² An image of life realized vividly in Chaplin's *Modern Times*, for example.

³ cf Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*.

You may think that Buddhist artists in the West are going to restrict their efforts to creating Buddha images with Western faces. But Dhammarati, who works as a graphic designer with 'Ink' in Glasgow, thinks that Buddhist ideas and practices will have a much more radical effect on the development of Western art.

ONE BUDDHIST'S VIEW OF ART

by Dhammarati

Man now realises that he is an accident, that he is a completely futile being, that he has to play out the game without reason. I think that even when Velasquez was painting, even when Rembrandt was painting, they were still, whatever their attitude to life, slightly conditioned by certain types of religious possibilities, which man now, you could say, has had cancelled out for him.... you see painting has become — all art has become — a game by which man distracts himself. And you may say that it always has been like that, but now it's entirely a game.

Francis Bacon

We are living in the last decades of the 20th century. Some of us might find ourselves looking back nostalgically from time to time, to earlier golden ages — the 'seventies, the swinging 'sixties or, further back, to Renaissance Italy, Classical Greece, Ashokan India. In the 'eighties, if we believe our televisions and newspapers, things are going to be grimmer than ever, the crises even more critical. Behind the recent social and political upheavals, old certainties no longer seem so certain. Looking around us we find ourselves in a culture which is a chaos of contradictory philosophies, ideologies, moralities. The capitalist oppresses the socialist, the socialist terrifies the capitalist; the new permissiveness shocks the bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie threatens to stifle morality entirely under hypocrisy and cant; Christians protest at the narrow blinkers of rationalist thought, while the rationalist has undermined the very foundations of Christianity. Isolated amidst the confusion we find the individual. He does not have the certainties that tradition once gave him. For every belief, every option open to him, he can find another opposing and contradicting it. He is thrown back onto his own,

sometimes meagre, resources and has to build a meaningful life on his own hesitant speculation. Not surprisingly the 20th century has been called the age of anxiety, and people are looking with some urgency for a solution.

In the past fifteen years, especially, we have seen an upsurge of interest in, among other things, Buddhism. Buddhism comes to grips with this situation on a number of levels. First, it points out to the individual that he can change, that he has enormous potential which can be developed. We should not underestimate the importance of a philosophy in this sense. A belief like this, however vaguely we might conceptualize it, is a foundation which makes creative, constructive action possible. The man who feels himself to be fixed and determined by his economic and psychological conditionings must find it difficult to shake off a deep sense of futility.

Secondly and crucially, Buddhism can back up this optimistic philosophy with methods, especially the meditation practices, which give the philosophy a very tangible reality. We can experience ourselves growing, opening to deeper and wider levels of being. This is the essence of Buddhism. However, experience has shown those of us involved in the FWBO that it is difficult to graft a meditation practice onto a lifestyle where nothing else changes. Meditation can give us glimpses of our potential, but social structures we live in, the nuclear family, the competitive economy, hierarchical institutions, are by their very nature limiting and confining. Out of this experience have grown the Movement's communities and co-ops, Buddhism's first typically Western social expressions, and the understanding that a

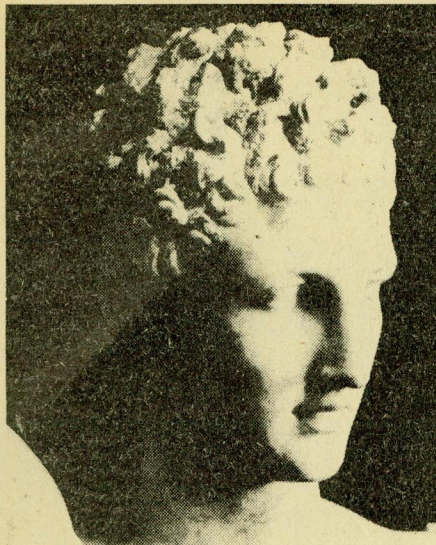
widespread Buddhism will involve supportive social change that is equally widespread.

Art, too, could offer a possible solution to modern man's dilemma, a possibility of beauty and order in an ugly world. But it seems that modern art is becoming more and more obscure, and as style follows style with bewildering speed, people seem to be moved by it less and less. Like the rest of us, it seems, the artist has his vision and expression blurred by a confused purposeless culture.

This is obviously a serious state of affairs. Buddhism might seem an unlikely solution to the problems of 20th-century art, but it is precisely the dimension that Buddhism has to offer which is missing in art today.

We can come to a better understanding of Western art and of its present crisis by looking at the products of Western art itself. My own interest is in the visual arts, and I have chosen my examples from them, but I hope that the main lines of my argument will apply to all the arts.

Let us look first at Classical Greece. Artists struggled for centuries to master the portrayal of the human body. This was not an end in itself (though it became so later) but served quite well-defined religious and ceremonial purposes. Out of this functional iconography artists like Phidias and Praxiteles created forms so beautiful that, quite literally, no one had ever seen anything like them. It was as if qualities never suspected before had been breathed into the stone by the artist. These figures went beyond mere temple decoration; in the words of Ernst Gombrich, they must have 'given the people of Greece a new conception of the divine'.



Head of Hermes

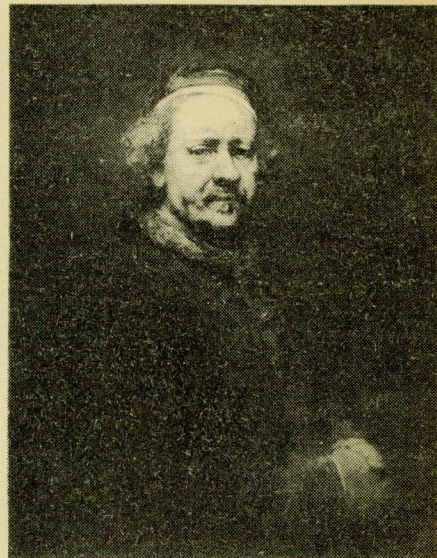
Praxiteles

Christianity was suspicious of the visual arts at first: they smacked of idolatry. This attitude led to a primitive impoverished art, but as the ecclesiastical attitude relaxed, the art began to grow. We see, therefore, the development of the majestic Byzantine mosaics and icons, the Gothic cathedrals and carved figures. Revolutionary technical achievements, like Giotto's mastery of the portrayal of space, were all subject to the artist's higher aims. Michelangelo could draw the human body and show us a richness, a complexity of life we hardly suspect. The back is strong and supple, the limbs lift and move, the rhythmic muscles give simple gestures order and significance. The face shows us a refined intelligent human being.

Christianity established itself in Western culture and made available certain insights and an understanding of the world which

the artist could communicate. Protestantism gave birth to an earthier, less ceremonial Christianity. Much of the art produced was secular, to please the aristocracy and the growing bourgeoisie. But even here we feel, as Bacon suggests, that the artist's approach to the world around him was deeply influenced by a living religious belief. Rembrandt painted many explicitly religious paintings, but when he painted his own face he could show us a glowing life reflected in it, while Vermeer could make us share his own sense of wonder as sunlight crept across a whitewashed wall.

Painters like these injected a warmth and joy into an increasingly rationalistic and materialistic society. New modes of thought were gaining ground by this time. The economist and the empirical scientist were increasingly important people, and beginning to inspire a living tradition which could sustain great art, while the inspiration



Self Portrait

Rembrandt



Study for a Sibyl

Michelangelo

beings, who are crying out in despair for the loss of their humanity'.

Man's ideas and beliefs deeply affect his art, and the crisis facing art today is precisely the crisis which faces us all in this age of anxiety.

As Buddhism becomes established in the West, then, we can expect to see some profound changes in Western art. The relationship between Buddhism and art will be intimate, and we are now in a position to suggest what that relationship will be.

In his essay *The Religion of Art* Ven. Sangharakshita defines religion as 'the experience of egolessness' or, more simply, 'unselfishness'. He goes on:

Selfishness is simply unwillingness to face new experience. A radically new experience which we cannot weave into the pattern of our life demands the changing of the pattern and the working out of a fresh design in which it can form a part. The ego resists the onrush of new experiences because of the

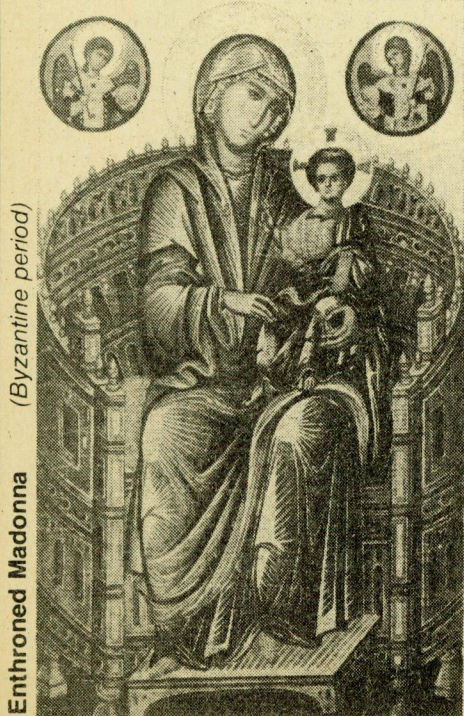
of orthodox Christianity had almost exhausted itself. A hundred years after Rembrandt, William Blake's Christian art went against the dominant trends of his age. Blake railed against the values that threatened to restrict the individual: materialism, rationalism, and the oppressive authority the Church itself had become.

As if the artists themselves were discovering the contradictions and shortcomings of their philosophies as ways of coming to terms with life, we can watch 19th- and 20th-century art develop. In portraits and figure painting man's changing picture of himself finds form — Rodin's strong humanity, Van Gogh's painting of the 'sad face of our time', Munch's *Cry*, Picasso's woman, weeping after *Guernica*, till we reach figures like Bacon's, a tormented human being, indistinct, locked in a box. These figures are not willfully ugly but, in Rookmaaker's terms, the work of 'human



Jules Dalou

Rodin

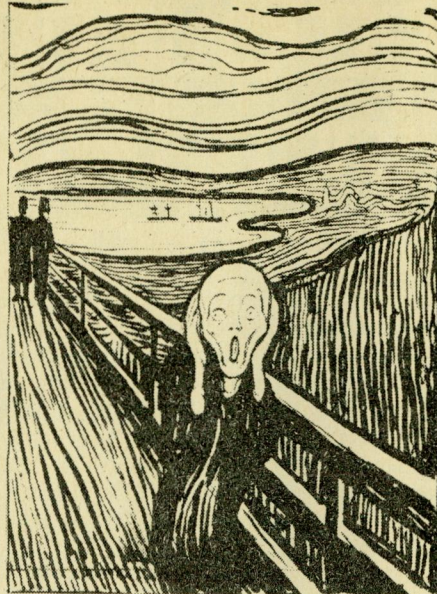


Enthroned Madonna

(Byzantine period)

changes they involve ... Unselfishness on the other hand is an openness to new experiences, a willingness to die for the sake of being born anew...This is the spirit of the true artist...passionately eager to widen and deepen the boundaries of man's conscious mind.

This is the very crux of the matter, and we can see from this passage the effect Buddhism will have on art. It will not necessarily produce new themes or new subject matter, nor will it create a strict new iconography. This is an important point to understand. Our directionless culture cannot support the artistic spirit, the artist's passionate openness. On the contrary, as Blake anticipated, the culture's dominant ideas, its institutions, limit and restrict the possibilities open to us. Religion is the openness to new experience, and the establishment of Buddhism is the establishment of the philosophies, the practices, the social structures which make this



The Cry

Munch

quickly painted his bamboo; when Bach could flood his joy into an astonishing order of notes and chords; when Rembrandt opened himself to show us his deepest being — they created art which was, with never a reference to Buddhism, in its very essence Buddhist. They created an art which was so pleasing, so beautiful that it could coax, caress, excite, and challenge an onlooker to loosen his own tight egoism, open himself to wider richer experience, and grow. This is a liberating idea.

Like the Bodhisattva, the artist has to speak a language that people can understand. All the media of Western culture — which is surely one of the richest with which Buddhism has ever made contact — are potential vehicles. Poetry and prose, music and drama, painting and sculpture — their possibilities as vehicles for Buddhist art are infinite. There is an important place for those forms and subjects which, while not

conventionally Buddhist, can communicate the meat of the matter without giving rise to the reactions and misunderstandings which the very word 'religion' seems to evoke.

Paradoxically, perhaps, the forms and media which belong particularly to the 20th century offer many possibilities. Whether or not the new forms, especially the non-figurative ones, could serve as vehicles for the Dharma I am not sure. They have certainly become part of our visual vocabulary. But can we make them speak? The new media are a different matter. Photography, video, film, printing, and mass reproduction are so much a part of our daily lives that we accept their images readily. They reach millions upon millions of people. They are still in their infancy, full of youthful vigour, but their formal potential has hardly been touched as yet; they are media crying out for mes-



Portrait of Dr Gachet

Van Gogh

openness to life a realizable possibility in our own lives. This is the fundamental change Buddhism will bring to the arts; it will give the possibility for widening, deepening experience back to the artist.

Art then, Buddhist art even, springing from this state of mind becomes much more than an elegant ornament, prettifying the 'serious stuff' of Buddhism, but becomes, in a real sense, Dharma, communicating in a way powerful enough to move other human beings, 'the very life blood of religion truly understood'.

This is a radical view of Art, and for working artists must be humbling on the one hand but exciting and challenging on the other. The life blood of religion is openness to new experience; this openness is itself the spirit of the artist. When the Greek sculptors struggled to portray the human body; when the Chinese landscape painter looked for hours, then



The Crying Woman

Picasso



Head IV

Francis Bacon

sages to give them shape.

The first tentative steps have been taken, and the FWBO has its working Buddhist artists. *Thangkas* and *rupas* produced in the Movement reflect the Enlightenment in many shrine rooms. On another level, the publications and posters we produce use, as a matter of course, photographic, mechanical, electrical, even computer technology to convey information and something of the mood of the Movement. Poetry is read and written, and the 'Golden Drum' group has presented Blake's work using theatre, light, and music. Many individuals are writing, painting, drawing, playing music, dancing, but the start really has hardly been made. We are only just beginning to glimpse possibilities. Buddhism will mean a regeneration of the arts; and art will repay its debt by communicating the essence of Buddhism throughout the culture.

Was the Buddha an Absent-Minded Professor?

Western Buddhist No 1. Pp12. Published by the Scientific Buddhist Association. Price 75p.

Not very long ago most people in the West believed in God. Now they believe in Science. Science, they think, not faith, will solve all the problems with which Man is faced. But does not the citizen who passively accepts and endures phenomena such as vivisection, or the accumulation of unknown dangers in the form of nuclear waste, or all the other dubious side effects of the scientific-technological 'miracle' in the belief that science will find a way to solve the problems it is creating merely display the same blind faith as the pilgrim who makes his way to a holy shrine in the hope that he will be cured of cancer? Science has become for the modern West the bringer of miracles, the force that sustains us, and the big daddy whose ways are mysterious but on whom we can rely.

Science and Christianity have never got on too well together, competing as they do for the same thing — faith and trust of men — and appealing to the same emotional demands — for security, stability, comfort, and welfare. It is hardly surprising that the happy combination of observed fact with the constant gift of life-bettering miracles offered by science has hit the market with more impact than the mythical acts of a simple man from Nazareth and the incomprehensible superstructure of metaphysics and theology that has sprouted up around his memory.

Perhaps there is nothing strange in the fact that something that was, for most people, incomprehensible and even degrading should have been replaced as an object of veneration by something else which is again, in terms of most people's experience and understanding, just as incomprehensible. What is irksome is to see the same mystification, lack of discrimination, and sanctioned self-righteousness that accompanied orthodox Christianity now emerging in the train of science — which is at least a splendid and helpful human creation. It could even be said that the blind faith of the 'science-believer' — his irrational worship of the rational — is even more blind than that of the theist, since the former's reluctance to give the irrational its due makes him an easier prey to the irrational forces that lurk behind and inspire his faith.

Science still has a very important role to play in the world, but it also should be kept in its place. Only too often, however, we hear of science being invoked as an authority in thoroughly unscientific contexts. If the claim is made for something that it is 'scientific', then whether it be a muscle building aid or a political theory the chances are that a lot of people will be seduced into respecting and trusting it, regardless of whether the claim is altogether valid, and regardless of whether or not their trust and respect are merited. Unfortunately, it now looks as if 'science worship' has finally penetrated British Buddhist circles.

The newly founded Scientific Buddhist Association (SBA) has the aim of 'promoting a new form of Buddhism called Scientific Buddhism, which unites Buddhism with modern science', and the first issue of its magazine, *Western Buddhist*, recently arrived on my desk. In it we are introduced to the principles and history of the SBA and given a taste of the Association's approach to the Dharma in the form of an article entitled, 'The Story of Gautama the Buddha'.

Gerald du Pre, 'a Channel Islander in his thirties living in London' explains why and how he set about 'building a scientific Buddhism' back in 1978. Intrigued and attracted by the things he had heard about Buddhism ('Nirvana certainly sounded like a wonderful state of existence to me'), Mr du Pre decided to subject the Buddhist claims to a closer look and in particular to 'scientific investigation'. He

read and made notes on the Buddhist scriptures and then filed his facts. He brushed up his scientific knowledge, especially in the areas of psychology and neurobiology, tried to practise a Buddhist way of life, and observed directly his mental processes. All this finally brought him to a position where he felt able to 'restate the ancient Buddhist writings in modern scientific terms'. Finding that 'nirvana was distinctly possible...much more hard headed than it sounded' and feeling that 'the Buddhist way of life could significantly diminish the mental anguish and confusion which is rife in the Western world', he undertook the task of devising a systematic programme which might constitute 'A new way to nirvana...for the vast majority of ordinary people'.

The old scriptures, he felt, were 'dry and technical', while traditional meditation practice constituted a major problem: 'It was this training which led directly to nirvana. Yet most Westerners who had tried it so far, had found it very arduous to do, and had had very little success with it'. He and his major collaborator, Paul Ingram, a former editor of *The Middle Way*, therefore began to devise a set of techniques, learning programmes, and a whole range of courses which could take the majority of ordinary people safely and easily, and with a minimum of humbug, to nirvana and yet which could be 'fitted into the busy life of the average person with a career and family'.

Messrs du Pre and Ingram are clearly very excited about their infant Association and are mapping out a dizzy future for it: auxiliary courses, correspondence courses, local centres, celebrations, and contact with 'relevant fields of Western life, such as education, art and literature'. With an enthusiasm and confidence that fairly leap off the page they see the SBA as a major breakthrough for Western Buddhism, for Buddhism, and for the West. So what kind of a breakthrough is it? On the evidence of this issue of its journal, does the SBA really seem to be scientific or Buddhist?

In the Editorial we are given the promise that *Western Buddhist* will take a 'thoroughly scientific approach to Buddhism', one that is 'objective, informative and factual'. With some anticipation, then, I turned to the article entitled 'The Story of Gautama the Buddha'. Would it, for example, provide new information about the Buddha's age at the time of His Enlightenment? What new light were Mr du Pre's years of research and cross-indexing going to throw on the Buddha's life? Indeed, there certainly were a few surprises in store.

Gautama, it seems, after walking into 'the district where the poor people lived' and seeing for the first time 'the unpleasant side of life', vowed that 'he would dedicate his life to caring for the elderly and the sick and combatting poverty and inequality'. Then, realizing that he too was subject to old age and death, he became so frightened and oppressed 'that he felt unable to face the suffering of others and he grew depressed'. Increasingly obsessed, however, by what he had heard about nirvana, he eventually set off to find teachers who might be able to help him achieve it. This is how the account begins.

Perhaps one day Mr du Pre will let me loose among his files, since I would very much like to know where some of his information has come from. Clearly this account owes a lot to the famous legend of the Four Sights — which actually appears in the *Sutta-Pitaka* only as a story told by the Buddha about someone else. No one would deny that this story found its way into several later Buddhist texts, where it was used, as it still is, to add an element of dramatic and symbolic force to the story. But we were promised a factual and scientific account; we might have expected something different. Certainly I did not expect to meet the oppressed, depressed, but thoroughly socially responsible young man whom we meet here. The Gautama we meet in the *Ariya-pariyesana-sutta* left home as a 'black haired stripling, endowed with happy youth, in the first flush of manhood', after 'seeing the disadvantage' of what is subject to rebirth, old age, and death. In the

Pali Sutta we encounter, if only briefly, a man who is facing up to *disillusionment*, not one who is wallowing in traumatized *disgruntlement*. As for Gautama's social conscience, this seems to owe more to 20th-century liberal egalitarianism than it does to the Pali Canon. Certainly, the Buddha did, later on, admonish the *bhikkhus* to care for the sick and the elderly among them, but — luckily for us — his initial disillusionment was a disillusionment with all that was mundane, one which sent him off in search of the Transcendental. The account we read in *Western Buddhist* suggests that had Gautama been a little more robust in facing up to 'the unpleasant side of life' he would instead have gone into politics or social work!

I have concerned myself here with only a short section of this article and will come back to other parts later. The point is that this is not a scientific treatment of such facts and accounts as are available so much as a distinctly slanted interpretation and embellishment of them. Of course there is a lot to be said for mobilizing the power of myth and symbol in a genuine and honest attempt to communicate the spirit of the Buddha's life, but such an approach would not be scientific, and it would certainly not need to hide behind the authority of science, since it would have behind it all the impact of the Dharma.

There are many other passages and statements which reveal a palpably unscientific approach to the Dharma, and, indeed, to almost everything. Who, for example, are all those Westerners who have found traditional meditation practices so arduous and unsuccessful? Where is the evidence to back this claim? To whom has Mr du Pre spoken? And what are his criteria for success? Or, again, we read later in the magazine that the FWBO 'fell very short of the original hopes for a scientific Buddhism. Much influenced by the hippie movement and its "alternative culture", it saw itself as essentially out of step with Western scientific culture, and continued to play down the scientific nature of Buddhism'. Passing over the use of a past tense which would seem to relegate the FWBO to a dark corner of ancient history, it is worth asking whose original hopes were let down. Those of the Ven. Sangharakshita, its founder? Mine? Mr du Pre's (if he was indeed a Buddhist in 1967)? And what are the signs of this 'hippie influence'? Have the authors attended any of our classes, or retreats, or lectures? Did they, when I had the pleasure of meeting them at the opening of the London Buddhist Centre, honestly feel that they had strayed into a hippie pad? As for the FWBO being out of step with Western scientific culture — I am at a loss to know what the phrase means, especially when their conception of what is scientific seems so much at variance with my own! The magazine is littered with vague assertions and unfalsifiable hypotheses of this nature, and the unfalsifiable hypothesis is the hallmark not of science but of pseudo-science, a misleading invocation of the scientific deity in order to add weight to an untested but emotionally cherished opinion. In this case, the emotionally cherished opinion seems to be that the SBA alone represents the 'original scientific religion of the Buddha', stripped of all its acquired 'paraphernalia of priests, ceremonies, dogma and ritual', and that it is the kind of Buddhism that we should all want.

It is now time to ask whether the SBA, or its magazine at least, is really even Buddhist. In this connection, let us take another look at the account of Gautama's life, at the account of 'What happened beneath the Bodhi Tree?'

It seems that Gautama became involved in a prodigious mind-game. Sitting peacefully, he began to observe his thoughts, memories, and day-dreams, and later his emotional and physical reactions. The problems of mental and physical strain, he discovered, were due to the mind's tendency to produce images and to form unfillable desires, to experience inappropriate fears and then to get the body to react in the natural animal way by arousing itself — but in response to non-existent dangers. Gautama learned to relax and then (somewhat casually) 'ceased to cling to the idea of living'. He then cut down his mental verbalization patterns and bad emotional habits: 'Now....the only emotions which arose were those which were required to get him to perform some necessary task, such as eating a little food, or having a drink of water, or pulling a blanket around him as night fell.' Then, free of words, labels, and unnecessary worry, he found that 'naked experience in all its reality presented itself to him on all sides...He had reached nirvana'.

Parts of this account seem to owe something to the Buddhist scriptures, though not always those which deal with the Buddha's attainment of Enlightenment. But it seems to owe a lot more to modern psychology and psychotherapy. One comes across similar accounts of the mind's workings and similar eulogies about 'naked experience' in a hundred or more books on 'New Age' psychology. You may even hear it all from the mouth of someone who has just completed his first intense meditation retreat and who has just had his first glimpse of — and partial freedom from — just some of the inane workings of his conditioned mind.

No wonder 'nirvana' sounded so 'hard headed' to Mr du Pre! And no wonder the editor makes such a confident promise that the term is going to be fully explained. The 'nirvana' on offer here is a nirvana with a small 'n' indeed. Where is the Transcendental Vision of a Buddha? Where is His all-encompassing love and compassion? Where is His unbounded vigour? The nirvana here described sounds like a rather dull, not to say flaccid, state to find oneself in. No wonder we are told that the Buddha saw that 'the mental excellence of nirvana could be turned to ill as well as good, or could degenerate into indifference.' Indeed it might! But is *this* Nirvana? And is this what the Buddha thought about Nirvana? — Any more than he felt that 'he himself had only been able to practice with success the mental training which led to nirvana, because he had enjoyed favourable circumstances. If the majority of people were to stand the same chance...they must be educated and given medical care, and adequately fed, and allowed leisure time, and given a pleasant environment. Mental training and social action must go hand in hand?' Putting ideas into the Tathagata's mind is not something which one should attempt lightly. And to put such subjective views into His mind — no matter how noble they may seem in a homely sort of way — demonstrates at least a lack of reverence. From Buddhists one might have expected a loftier vision of the very goal of the spiritual life and a more respectful attitude towards at least the first of the Three Jewels. Let us hope that members of the SBA make a few scientific experiments with devotional practices such as puja before they write them off as so much 'unscientific' paraphernalia.

What the central claims and principles of Buddhism can be — are indeed meant to be — tested by rational analysis and/or empirical investigation and that Buddhism has therefore a 'scientific' flavour is beyond doubt. That we in the West need to develop a 'Western Buddhism' — a form of Buddhism that is relevant and appropriate to the needs of individuals living under the conditions of Western society — is also, I believe, beyond question. These beliefs are, after all, axiomatic to the life and work of the FWBO. But I believe that, like the scientist, the Western Buddhist must take his hypotheses and just get on with testing them. Just as the scientist occasionally finds that he has to develop new techniques and pieces of equipment to make his experiments more precise and conclusive, so may we find that some of the forms in which the Dharma has come down to us are in need of revision. But let us find these things out as we go along and make the necessary adjustments as we perform the experiment. We would be foolish indeed to jump to premature conclusions about the established Tradition on the basis of our highly subjective and conditioned opinions.

The spiritual life is not easy, because it requires — indeed it is about — change. No matter what labels you give to the Dharma, no matter what new techniques or teaching aids you develop, it will always be left to the individual to face up to the demands, the existential choices, and the magnificent triumphs that constitute the path to Enlightenment. It will always be up to the individual to summon up the heroic strength and determination that he will need to turn his back on mundane existence and to scale the peaks of the Transcendental.

I do not necessarily deny that some of the techniques and learning programmes being developed by the Scientific Buddhist Association, about which we can read in *Western Buddhist*, might help people to relax and to become more self-aware; only time will tell. But I do distrust the pseudo-scientific aura with which the magazine invests what is in fact a highly idiosyncratic approach to Buddhism. The Dharma is practical already. It does not need the kind of help which *Western Buddhist* is offering it. In fact, I find this offer of help rather degrading, not only to the name of Buddhism, but to that of science as well.

Nagabodhi

FACETS

Europe

ON Wednesday 27th February, at 18 Burlington Road, the new centre of FWBO Manchester opened its doors to the public for the first time: on the ground floor is the centre, and above it a community of five men. Whereas previously progress at Grdhrakuta has been held back by lack of proper facilities, it now has a new centre completed to a high standard of workmanship and beautifully decorated. These results were achieved by the hard work of the Manchester team substantially assisted by Sthiramati from Aryatara and by Don Marshall from Brighton.

Now that the building work is done, the Community will be able to devote its energies to the Centre, and already the first beginners' meditation course has attracted 30 newcomers.



Above: Ratnaguna and Sagaramati at work

Rt: In the reception room

Below: Community shrineroom

Photos by Suvajra



in fact, been greeted positively and is seen as a challenge and as an opportunity to do even better. The borough council has already offered new premises and admits that it is most impressed by the work done in Saint Michaels Road and the effect that this has made on the area. So the enthusiasm and energy put into them was not in vain: they should enable FWBO Surrey to negotiate for property with a more favourable location, hopefully providing room for a Croydon Centre as well!

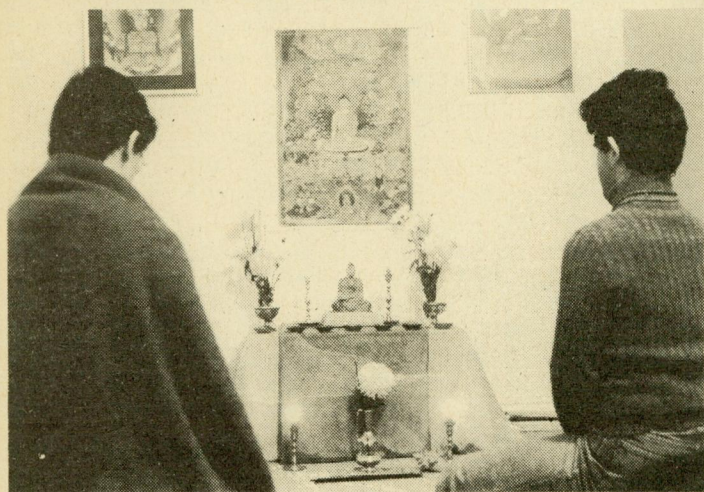
Meanwhile, in the existing Purley Centre (Aryatara proper), a new and varied 'Intermediate' night has been introduced, emphasizing the study of basic Dharma. Another change is the formation of class teams responsible for supporting each class. Recently some people felt that the attendance of all community members at all classes had become slightly mechanical. This new approach should allow greater development of individual relationships between team members and 'beginners' or 'regulars'.

NEW MOVES

In January the last member of the team that plans to set up a centre in Bristol moved into Greengates in Leatherhead, where the rest of the team was already in residence. They are not only living together, but also

working together as a building company. The Bristol team and all those at Aryatara have been strengthened by the ordination of three men and one woman in January. (See the reports by Tejamati and Sridevi.)

As usual things are in a turmoil around the London Buddhist Centre, and — as usual — the turmoil is exciting and promises well for the future. Although 1980 began with a record level of indebtedness, the weekly income of the LBC/Pure Land Co-op complex now regularly outstrips expenditure. (In mitigation it is worth saying that a large part of the debt has been incurred by the enthusiastic attendance of co-op workers at winter retreats.) The various co-op businesses are becoming more firmly established: the number of workers in Friends Building Service is steadily growing; the Friends Foods shop has had noticeable improvements built in; and in Globe Road the cafe is being rebuilt and will hopefully re-open in May. Above it the new Centre/Co-op offices are practically complete. This means that before the Order Convention in April, the Sukhavati Community should be free of all 'extraneous' offices. As a result the community should be strengthened as its actual nature is more clearly revealed — and thus easier to refine. Already a major step in that direction has taken place in the shape of a ten-day work-



Another centre with a new property on the horizon is Mandala, the West London Buddhist Centre. In the past, Mandala has seemed, to some observers, to lack a feeling of drive or sense of purpose. But with the prospect of this property, all has changed. A lease should have been obtained by the time this Newsletter reaches you, and then work can be started on converting an old shop in Putney into a wholefood shop and a residential community — with enough space left for Blue Lotus Typesetters, who are currently housed in East London.

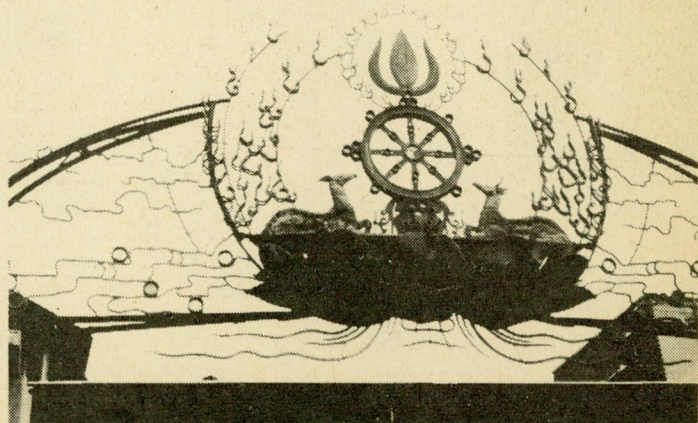
In the meantime Blue Lotus is thriving and has taken on another full-time worker. Money is also being raised by a 'hot-food' stall at Swiss Cottage market and one of the most original fund-raising programmes in the Movement (including a 'sponsored diet'). At the same time classes are flourishing: a meditation course, yoga, study groups, and retreats. And a new air of expectancy and excitement hovers over Mandala.

In Brighton the main news is the February reorganization of the co-op into single-sex businesses. The men have taken over Sunrise Restaurant, which they are striving to expand.

Windhorse Emporium in the refurbished George Street premises, now owned by FWBO Brighton, is a women's business. This ties in well with a new women's community which may be established there too. A women's craft workshop is also planned, and Mangala has begun to lead a women's study group. At the Centre classes are going well, and two new yoga courses are about to start.

Property lost but spirits high

The major news at Aryatara also stems from property, though in this case it is the loss of premises, in fact the very premises in Saint Michaels Road, Croydon, which have helped so much to boost and inspire those at Aryatara. Croydon Council wants the property by November for redevelopment, whereas Aryatara had expected to be able to keep it for four more years. Considering the vast amount of work and loving care lavished on Kalpadruma (the men's community), Friends Foods (Croydon), and the Garden Cafe, the news came as a shock indeed. But the 'disaster' has,



Nalanda Crest on the gate of the LBC

Roger Jones

ing/decorating retreat over the Christmas/New Year period, which eradicated much of the squat/work-site atmosphere of Sukhavati. At its end Subhuti, first chairman of the LBC and Sukhavati, was given a warm farewell banquet, and three new Order members were welcomed back from the Padmaloka winter retreat. And within the month one woman from Beulah had also Gone for Refuge. (See the reports from Tejamati and Sri-devi.)

First anniversary

The LBC is now more than a year old, and its classes are becoming well established. But there are no signs of complacency, as a younger generation of Order members is now leading the classes, which are largely filled by people who two years ago had never heard of the FWBO.

At the same time as the LBC lost Subhuti, FWBO Norwich lost Devamitra, its founder, only to gain three new Order members from the Padmaloka retreat. Thus the Order at Vajradhātu is practically transformed, with Vajramati as chairman.

The beginners' evening at the Centre is livelier than ever before, offering a varied programme. The co-op has reorganized itself into single-sex businesses: at the old Centre in Queens Road, women have established a craft workshop; Oranges Restaurant is now an all-male enterprise. The fairs-catering business plans to shift its interest from doing many small fairs to concentrating on three or four large events such as the Festival of Mind-Body-Spirit. And not to forget property, the Norwich Friends have acquired a house which should become another men's community in the summer.

In Glasgow the 'Friends' are still hard at work on their large new premises in Sauchiehall Street, in the centre of the city. They hope to be able to open it this summer. Meanwhile a men's community is living there as well as in the present Heruka in Kelvinside Terrace, which has been reinvigorated by increased contact among community members permitted by smaller numbers. And a women's community has been established as well. (See Dhammadinna's report for more details.)

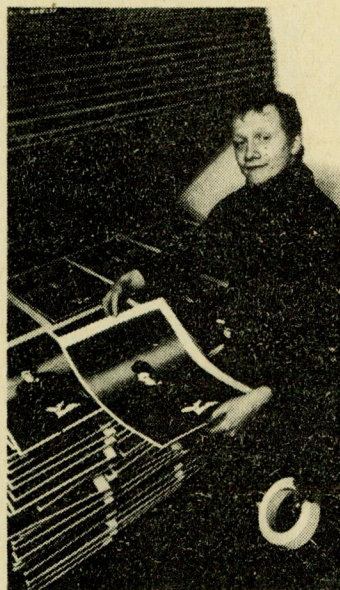
Ink, the design, silk-screen, and

printing business, is expanding, and — with the arrival of spring — the gardening business is expected to start up again. In fact, the only thing holding back the businesses is the demand for labour and energy which the new centre also makes.

As there is no longer a Centre in Edinburgh, the mitras who live there are being encouraged to come to Glasgow classes and have been offered places in its communities. What with classes, the new centre, the businesses, and fund raising, the Glasgow Friends are certainly being stretched.

Although at present most centres are involved in the acquisition or renovation of property and are busy earning money through co-ops, this does not mean that Order members and mitras are setting up as petty tycoons, speculators, or landsharks. Rather it is a sign of the release of energy effected by actively trying to live the Dharma, and a recognition that space and money are needed so that ever-increasing numbers of people can be offered the gift of the Buddha's teaching.

Michael Scherk



Above: *Ink* in action

Below: The new Sauchiehall St. community

Photos by Siddhiratna



India

THERE are probably quite a few people who, like myself until recently, when they think of early Buddhism in Maharashtra, can only recall that the Ajanta and Ellora caves are somewhere in that region. However, within a few days of my arrival in India from New Zealand I was whisked off on a train journey into the Western Ghats for a day's outing with Friends involved with the Movement in Pune and rapidly began to learn at first hand something of the quite impressive history of Buddhism in Maharashtra. Between 120 and 130 Order members, mitras, sahayaks, and families made the train trip and half-hour walk up into the hills to the Bhaja caves on 18th November to enjoy a day of exploring the rock excavations, meditation, and talks by Lokamitra and Vajradaka and the ever-present food and friendly company.

The caves at Bhaja, considered to be among the oldest in India, consist of a *chaityagriha*, or main hall with a stupa, and living quarters consisting mostly of numerous cells carved into the rock, probably housing over 50 *bhikshus* at one time. The *chaityagriha* is big, about 60 feet long by 25 to 30 feet wide, with rows of pillars down each side, an arched roof ribbed inside with teak girders, and a 12-foot high stupa at the far end, dominating the hall. In an adjacent cave there is also a rather curious collection of 14 stupas in various stages of ruin, possibly containing the relics of the *sthaviras*, or elders, of the former community. Nor is Bhaja the only cave temple in the immediate locality. Standing at the entrance to the main cave, one can observe on the opposite hill Karle, which probably housed a community of about 100, and within five miles is Bedsa, a smaller community of 30 to 40 members.

All these sites date back to the 1st or 2nd century BCE, presumably the results of an earlier extensive spreading of the Dharma during the reign of Ashoka, and one gets the impression that Maharashtra was the focus, for over a thousand years until the 11th century CE, of a very fertile and intensive practice of the Dharma. Out of some 1200 Buddhist rock-cut excavations in India, some 800, or over 60%, are located in Western India, most of them in Maharashtra. They range from well-known excavations on the scale of Ajanta and Ellora to smaller excavations, often known almost only to local people. An example of the latter lies near an obscure little place in the Ghats called Thakurwadi, where, acting on some rather vague information, a small party of us spent several hours one Saturday searching a jungle-clad hillside for some caves. We eventually found them and ended up spending a very enjoyable weekend in them. They consisted of the standard *chaityagriha* and living quar-

ters for two or three dozen. They appeared to have been abandoned before completion after running into soft crumbling rock at the lower levels.

When you consider that these caves were hewn out of solid rock with only hammer and chisel and must have taken years or decades to excavate, you cannot help feeling admiration, not to say awe, for the general level of commitment and sustained enthusiasm that must have existed in the communities and supporting population. Those of you who are aware of the dedication and energy that went into establishing Sukhavati and the London Buddhist Centre should imagine the same Centre and community quarters being carved out of a solid cliff face, by hand (remember there was no sophisticated machinery or even electricity), and that amount of effort being repeated not just in a few other places but in literally hundreds of localities.

In his talk given on the outing to Bhaja, Lokamitra observed that at one time the area around Pune was known as the Yellow Valley, and this was thought to be a reference to the large number of *bhikshus* who used to reside in the area. This picture is quite a contrast to present conditions in Maharashtra, which is a stronghold of orthodox Hinduism, but TBMGS* is quietly and steadily working to re-establish the Dharma to something of its former glory here. During a period of several months, coinciding with a visit by the Movement's Convenor of Mitras, Vajradaka, we were running 15 classes a week in Pune and its suburbs — which must have made us the busiest Centre in the Movement. Before my arrival here, a very successful Sangha Day was celebrated on 4th November at a Friend's house in central Pune. During the course of the evening's activities Lokamitra gave a talk, performed a baby-naming ceremony for the daughter of one of our mitras-to-be, Mr Vishvanath Shende, and performed the mitra ceremonies of Mr Shende, Mr Ajit More, and Miss Vanmala Kamble. The evening concluded with a puja.

Spreading the Dharma in Bombay

In mid-December, to coincide with Vajradaka's departure for New Zealand from Bombay, some meetings were arranged in different 'Buddhist' localities in Bombay. This type of meeting is now a standard part of our activities in India and usually consists of a pre-advertised gathering in an open space, with a small shrine specially set up, at which the Refuges and Precepts are given and a talk is delivered. Conditions in Bombay ensure, however, that such meetings are never quite like those held anywhere else. For those of you who may not have experienced Bombay, let me fill you in on a few details.

*[Trailokya Baudha Maha Sangha, Sahayak Gana = the FWBO in Maharashtra — Ed.]

A huge, dirty, noisy, traffic-choked, heavily industrialized sprawl of seven to twelve million people, Bombay has the dubious reputation of being one of the most densely populated cities in the world, and it would probably also get some form of prize for its level of pollution. Apparently some 3000 tonnes of wet garbage are emptied into the streets of Bombay every day, and in a place where the methods of waste disposal remain on the primitive levels of a small town, that means most of the garbage stays on the streets. A sluggish and incredibly inefficient city corporation, apathy, carelessness, and resignation among its citizens complete the picture of what, to some, is a city slowly drowning in its own filth. Paradoxically there is also a lot of wealth in Bombay, home of India's movie industry and favourite of the jet set here. I have the vivid recollection of working my way through a collection of rusty corrugated-iron and mud-walled hutments after a meeting and suddenly finding an impressive gymnasium, stadium, and ice-skating rink — obviously prestige buildings with no expense spared, for a chauffeur-driven-Mercedes clientele. The contrast in living conditions was somewhat unreal, bordering on the absurd.

Worli, the area of Bombay where our meetings were held, shows some of the worst signs of this diseased city. Worli consists mainly of *chawls* — cheaply built high-rise tenements of eight, nine, or ten floors, often without running water, sanitation, or electricity. After groping your way up the garbage-strewn stairs, you will often find a whole extended family crammed into one small room. Despite these circumstances one could not help but be impressed by the warmth and hospitality that was always extended to us. People seemed to be able to stay positive under what appeared to be appalling conditions. Once while walking through the *chawls* we noticed a large number of youths out under the street lamps studying intensely, as there was insufficient light and no quiet in their homes. It was quite a remarkable sight to suddenly turn into one of the better lit streets and find it full of people on the pavements and road absorbed in their texts. This seems to be something of the spirit of determination that characterizes many of those involved in the Movement here, a determination that will make some keep up a regular meditation practice, among other things, despite what to others, conditioned by more comfortable living, may appear as extremely adverse circumstances.

Lokamitra ended up giving talks at three meetings in the same evening in Bombay, the first and last being quite short with only two or three dozen people attending. The last talk was in fact given in the corridor of a *chawl*. The second talk was delivered at the 'Nalanda Buddha Vihara', in reality little more than a Buddha image with a concrete stupa-like construction built around it. It turned out to be quite a gathering, with something like 200 people filling the area in



Dharmodaya serves a meal at the mitra retreat Silananda

front of the 'vihara' and the adjacent street.

All-India retreat

Over the Christmas/New Year period we held two-and-a-half weeks of retreats at a Scout camp at Bhore, about one-and-a-half hours by bus south-east of Pune in the Western Ghats. This consisted of four days' general retreat, followed by seven days' Order/mitra retreat and culminating in seven days of Order retreat. This was our first 'all-India' retreat for Order members, and I think I share the sentiments of many of those who attended, when I say it was one of the most intensive and fruitful retreats I have been on. The general and mitra retreats turned out to be men's retreats, a new experience for many, but the trauma of new experiences was added to by Lokamitra's inaugu-

ration of work periods and a cooking roster. Many, to their own and others amazement, ended up helping to cook for the first time in their lives, an experience that will help weaken their feelings of dependence on their home situations.

A notable feature of the Bhore retreats was the attendance of Dharmadara from New Zealand. Dharmadara was in India for three months' medical experience before returning to New Zealand in February to complete his intern year at Wellington Hospital. There are plans for Dharmadara, Virabhadra (currently working in a hospital in Norwich), and others to start up an FWBO medical team in India in about two years, and extended visits by these two Order members have been part of the preparation for this.

Immediately following the Bhore



Sangha Day — a joke in the talk

Silananda

retreats, Lokamitra and I travelled by train up to Ahmedabad in Gujarat for an intensive two weeks of classes followed by a six-day Order/mitra retreat at Sadra in the last week of January. Ahmedabad now has two Order members and nine mitras, and activities include a weekly beginners' class and mitra class. A regulars' class, also, is probably soon to be started. It is only a matter of time and the availability of Order members with the necessary experience before Ahmedabad has a fully functioning centre.

Ahmedabad is a city of some two million people spread across both banks of the River Sabarmati. With its mosques, old forts, Muslim architecture, camel-towed carts, and date-sellers mixed with the usual garish Hindu temples, one gets the definite impression of being in a gateway to the Middle East. The differences between states in India are about as marked as the differences one gets between countries in Europe. Between Maharashtra and Gujarat, for instance, there are changes in culture, food, language, and even the type of script. Ahmedabad generally has the air of being much more sophisticated and refined than Pune.

The retreat place, Sadra, is about one-and-a-half hours by bus upstream from Ahmedabad on the bank of the Sabarmati. Here the river cuts a deep canyon through the otherwise flat and featureless plains. Despite their rather sandy and arid appearance the plains support a fair amount of cultivation besides the naturally growing thorn bushes and cactus. The natural action of erosion has cut the edges of the canyon into a maze of steep gullies and ridges with 'islands' of land still at the level of the plains. About 100 feet above the river on one such 'island' was our retreat building, a two-storied structure with Hindu temple and resident *pujaree* downstairs and four rooms upstairs. It was in these upstairs rooms, which incidentally commanded magnificent views of the river and plains, that 11 of us held the six-day retreat. The puja on the last evening of the retreat included the mitra ceremony of an Ahmedabad Friend, Priyanka Jivanlal. One of the joys of rural India is the enormous variety of animal and bird life to be seen there. Around the retreat place we had a troop of Bander monkeys (one of whom stole some retreat supplies) and a fascinating variety of birds, including brilliant green parrots, tiny iridescent blue nectar birds, and even peacocks. Of course there were the ubiquitous crows, pigeons, and squirrels. Down in the river it was a regular sight to see camels, buffalo, bullocks, and donkeys being led across the ford.

While Lokamitra and myself were thus engaged in Gujarat, Padmavajra went on a pilgrimage to Sarnath and Bodhgaya. At Bodhgaya, the scene of the Buddha's Enlightenment, besides spending quite a bit of his time meditating beneath the Bodhi Tree, Padmavajra also made contact with Buddhists from such diverse places as Tibet, Europe, America, and Japan. He also reports that he discovered a new gastronomic delight in Bodhgaya

in the form of a milk sweet called *malai*.

Before the departure of Lokamitra, Padmavajra, and myself for England for the Order Convention in late March we have quite a busy programme. A weekend retreat is planned in Aurangabad, as well as visits to Lucknow, Delhi, Shravasti, and Hyderabad for contact with

Buddhists. There are many places where we know there is an interest in our approach to the Dharma, but we lack the money, suitable Order members, and the time to be able to do anything about them. Generally the situation in India is so expansive and full of potential that it can be frustrating not to be able to do justice to it at this point.

Purna

VAJRADAKA'S TRAVELS

NOT LONG after his visit to Finland with Dhammadinna, which was reported in the last *Newsletter*, Upasaka Vajradaka set off on his travels again, this time to see Order members and mitras in India and New Zealand.

He arrived in Delhi in late October, and headed straight for Ahmedabad, where Lokamitra was waiting to welcome him and introduce him to the people who are involved in the Movement there. Deeply affected by the warmth of his reception, he was struck by the attitude of giving and openness that characterized the Friends he met.

As well as leading study groups twice a week on 'The Spiral Path' (*Mitrata* 13), he also gave talks and every morning was joined by quite a few people for a pre-work session of meditation and study on the chapter about the Yogacara school in Bhante's book, *A Survey of Buddhism*. He struck up a great many new friendships and reports that in that environment, and with those people, friendships seemed to develop and deepen very quickly.

He then travelled down to Pune to join Lokamitra and Padmavajra and to meet all the Order members who live there. Soon after his arrival, Purna too was to arrive from New Zealand. Whereas the vihara in Ahmedabad is situated in a busy and densely populated part of the town, the vihara in Pune is placed 'outside the city throng', with the consequence that the flow of visitors is a little less, which gave Vajradaka the opportunity to spend a lot of time with the Order members. He did, however, attend many of the classes and events taking place, and writes of his tremendous appreciation for what the Order members are doing there. He went, on one occasion, on an outing with about 120 Friends, mitras, and Order members to the Bhaja caves, where,

after a picnic lunch, he told stories around the theme of harmlessness for the children present, while Dharma-rakshita interpreted.

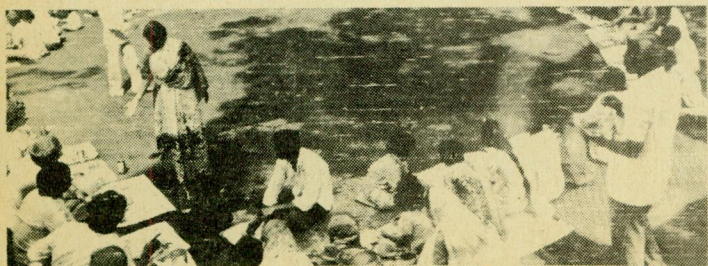
Vajradaka then flew to New Zealand, stopping over briefly in Sydney in order to arrange one of the massage courses — through which he is endeavouring to finance his trip — and experienced his first dose of culture shock in reaction to the drab architectural styles of the Sydney suburbs after the colour and bustle of India.

A few days after his arrival in New Zealand he attended the four-day Order event at Masterton. The programme of meditation and study gave him plenty of time to meet and get to know the Order members. After the event he plunged himself into a busy programme of journeys, meetings, talks, and retreats. In Auckland he led two six-week study groups — one for women mitras, the other for men. He also gave a talk during the course of the mitra ceremony for two Auckland Friends, a communication of his understanding of the history and significance of 'Mitrahood' in the FWBO. What with these events, and two mitra retreats held in New Zealand while he was there, the mitras in New Zealand are no doubt getting a clearer idea than ever of how best to take advantage of their time as mitras.

A self-confessed 'foot-loose Aquarian', Vajradaka paid a visit to Wellington, where he gave a talk on *metta*, and to the South Island, where he not only met more Friends and mitras, but went for a long horse ride through breath-taking scenery.

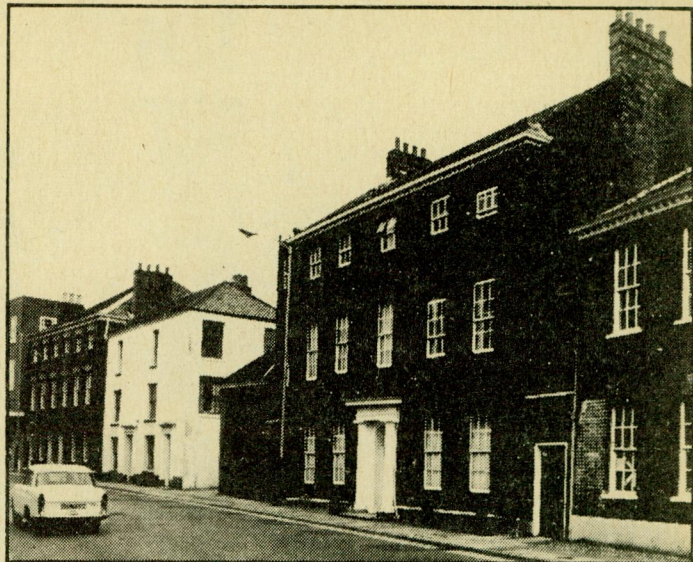
He plans to be back in England in time for the Order Convention in April, making his way back through Australia and the United States, where he will spend about a month prospecting for likely sites to set up the first FWBO Centre in America.

Nagabodhi



Picnic at the Bhaja caves

NEXT ISSUE



It is only a few years since Devamitra first walked the streets of Norwich in search of suitable premises for a centre. In the next issue of the Newsletter we shall continue our series of feature articles on FWBO centres with a look at the background and achievements of the FWBO in Norwich.

Dhammadinna in Glasgow

THE 'Lord of the Isles' pulled smoothly into Glasgow Central just over five hours after our departure from Euston. This was my first experience of Inter-City travel, complete with aircraft-type seats and photo-electric automatic doors. My companion, Padmapani, and I talked almost non-stop throughout the journey, not having seen each other for some months and unfortunately missed a lot of the scenery. We did notice, however, that the Lake District Fells were covered in snow, and there was a light covering of snow on the ground when we arrived in Glasgow. I was visiting the Glasgow Centre, mainly to see the women mitras and Friends and to lead a women's weekend retreat.

At that time the three women mitras were living in a tiny flat and were scouring the papers to find suitable premises for a proper community. The proposed new Centre, due to open in the summer in central Glasgow, will attract a large number of people, and as there is, as yet, no woman Order member in Glasgow, the women mitras felt it was important to establish a community — both for their own needs and to act as a focus for other women. Happily, since my visit they have found a large flat, suitable for up to eight women.

I enjoyed my contact with the women mitras and Friends, who are young, lively, and energetic, and who seemed to me, a died-in-the-wool

southerner, very Scottish. My overall impression of developments in Glasgow from such a brief visit was that, when the new Centre opens, Glasgow could very quickly become a Buddhist city! That is, a very large number of Glaswegians could get involved. The people I met at classes and around the Centre seemed straightforward, unpretentious, and lacking in the complex psychological 'sophistication' of many people in London — and canny enough to recognize a good thing like the Friends soon after contact. People I met also seemed to have a strong feeling for Scotland, for Scottish culture, and for their roots, which not only earth them, but also seem to give them an inclination towards something higher in quite a natural way.

My visit culminated in a two-day retreat, attended by ten women from Glasgow and Edinburgh, which ended with promises from me to encourage other women Order members from the South to come up and visit for retreats and study.

My usual travelling circuit is around the southern Centres, and, though from this experience I know that all Centres are different, I felt that I was quite definitely in a different country around the Glasgow Centre. I would like to go back to get a deeper experience of Buddhism growing in Scottish soil and also to explore more of Scotland as a country.

Dhammadinna

THE DECADE started well for the women in the FWBO. In January Bhante held an eight-day seminar for 20 of us at Padmaloka (which had been kindly vacated by the resident community); and at the end of it we had two more female Order members.

We studied Gampopa's *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, a fundamentally important 11th-century Tibetan text translated by Herbert Guenther. I was in the group studying Benevolence and Compassion; the other group was concerned with the Perfection of Ethics and Manners. We also worked on candle decorating and did cooking, cleaning, and of course meditation and pujas.

On the mundane level, it was a pleasure to stay in a solid spacious house surrounded by the peaceful green Norfolk countryside and to be with so many friends — one from as far away as Finland and another from Holland. In the three-hour study sessions in a small room with Bhante, ten women, a variety of rupas, shelf after shelf of books, and a tape recorder faithfully preserving every word and cough, there was, however, an intense feeling of something happening on a multitude of levels. It seems to be possible, at least for Bhante, to create an atmosphere which is very relaxed as well as intensely animated: to give you space to express yourself freely as well as press on firmly through the text and finish it on time; to transmit a lot of factual information about Buddhism as well as keep the discussion practical and relevant to those present.

In fact to use the word 'relevant' is a vast understatement, as 'anybody' who has been on Bhante's seminars can testify. Quite quickly it dawns on you that you are subject to personal

Two Seminars for Women



Padmasuri and Ashokashri at Padmaloka

Susanna Lauröla

daily exposure to some kind of very strong radiation. Just being there, you cannot help but become more, and more, and more aware. Those very objective expositions, those seemingly innocent humorous comments, those spontaneous utterances of Bhante's

that you scribble down trying to catch them in flight like some tropical birds or sparkling snow crystals — they find their way into such depths as you never acknowledged before.

What does Gampopa's 'self-com-

placency' mean? It means our tendency to be so wrapped up in ourselves that we do not let ourselves develop, to be over-concerned with our mental states and to have little awareness of others. It means being an infantile, if perhaps rather subtle, monster of selfishness! Day by day, we are drawn by Bhante further out from such narcissism by studying its counteracting opposite, the Bodhisattva Ideal. What is the starting point of Mahayana Buddhism? It is the fact that we are all social beings. A follower of Mahayana Buddhism is defined by his positive attitude towards human beings, including himself. And 'having a positive attitude' actually means being a channel to a constant stream of transforming positive energy, of powerfully intense well-wishing for all beings at all times!

'In contrast to Christianity, Buddhism does not speak in terms of sacrifice, but of self-transformation.'

'No-one can purify another, only show the way if he is more developed.'

'*Metta* is self-regarding and other-regarding; these cannot be separated. However, this way of classifying experience is transcended by the Bodhisattva.'

'If you are a hate type, you must hate unreality!'

'Real idealism is down to earth.'

'Determination to grow is your most valuable possession.'

During the meals it becomes obvious that the other group is going through a very similar process. Some aphorisms provoking thought and emotion percolate through to us from them:

'Becoming a Buddhist means to pledge to become truly human; this is the first step towards Enlightenment.'

THIS winter the three-week men's retreat at Padmaloka was led by Padmaraja, who built it up in intensity while maintaining a light feel, thus preparing for the nine ordinations at the end.

Lalitavajra (or John Wadkin, as he then was) and I arrived at the beginning of the second week of retreat to the sound and feeling of warm silence. Evidently the retreat was well under way, whilst, outside, the familiar dampness of a Surlingham winter settled all around.

The following morning we had a 6.00 a.m. rise with a triple meditation before brunch, which, although a shock at first, soon became quite acceptable, dare I say, enjoyable? From then on it was a full programme of work, meditation, communication exercises, laughter, conversation, and more meditation, which brought us round to dinner, more laughter, and the first tape of Bhante's most recent series, *The Inconceivable Emancipation*.

Soon a few people had to leave, but others appeared from all over the Movement to take their places, maintaining our numbers at about twenty-eight.

Winter Ordination Retreat

From the dawn of the third week faces changed no more. All of us who were then there were there to the end. I suppose you could almost say that this was where the retreat really started, and certainly this was the point at which it became most intense. There were to be nine ordinations at the end of this retreat, and all of us wanted to create the most ardent concentrated feeling possible so as to inspire those who were making their commitment. The last four days of the retreat were therefore held in silence. The longest silent period I had done before was from after Puja to the following morning's breakfast, so this came as quite a surprise to me. Nevertheless, I looked forward to it with a certain masochistic delight and, as it transpired, enjoyed it immensely.

The private ordinations took place over the last three evenings of the

retreat, amidst very warm *metta bhavanas* and Pujas. Vessantara made it all the easier for those of us being ordained by taking us through the ceremony on the morning before, so alleviating some of the anxiety about what we were to expect. As Bhante said during his introduction on the first evening, the ceremony is very simple, but of earth-shaking proportions. Indeed I feel that the earth has not stopped shaking since my ordination. In fact the shaking seems to be increasing in intensity as I realize more and more the implications of the step I have taken.

Inevitably the end of the retreat came, but not before the public ordinations, which I found the most exciting part of the entire ceremony. There behind us were all our friends in the Dharma from around the whole Movement. Nine new people had de-

cided to express their aspirations, and all these people had come to listen, come to acknowledge, and come to shout, 'Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!'

During the ceremony Bhante explained that he felt there were certain principles which needed to be emphasized within the Movement. These were: *jaya*, which is the Sanskrit and Pali word for 'victory'; *teja*, which is the Sanskrit and Pali word for 'fiery energy'; and *lalita*, which in Sanskrit means 'playful'.

Therefore, Harvey Mason became Jayaratna, meaning 'the jewel of victory'; John Roche became Jayamati, meaning 'the attitude which rises triumphant above all difficulties'; Robin French became Jayananda, 'the happiness that rises above the world'; John Wakeman became Tejananda, 'incandescent bliss'; Chris Hoyle became Tejamitra, 'the fiery incandescent friend'; Andrew Fuller became Tejamati, 'the blazing incandescent energy of intelligence'; John Toomey became Lalitaratna, 'the playful jewel'; John Wadkin became Lalitavajra, 'the playful vajra'; and Ranjit Singh became Alitabodhi, 'the wisdom which remains playful'.

Tejamati

'Spiritual life is to perfect the human. The more spiritual you are, the more human!'

'There is no place for bullying or manipulating within the Spiritual Community: we must always act from the love mode, never from the power mode.'

'See how deep your ignorance is, and give up your attachment to it!'

'The Buddha said to Ananda, "Indeed, Ananda, women are capable of high spiritual attainment."'

We discuss some matters which are of particular interest to women, such as child-bearing and the effect of the Virgin-Mary cult on girls brought up as Catholics. We all agree that there is a lot of ambivalence in the West regarding these areas. Women should make sure they consciously choose to, or not to, bear children — indecision drains our energies. Much more positive emotion and less sentimentality is needed towards women and children. If motherhood were valued in our society, we would feel a healthy gratitude towards our mothers; for the Tibetans of Gampopa's time this feeling was very natural.

Going deeper again, Bhante brings out the spiritual implications and expansive vision of the Mahayana. To be able to give we must be able to receive. To feel gratitude towards our mothers for giving us birth, to have positive relationships with them, means mobilizing all our deep-rooted emotional energies in the direction of the Bodhisattva Ideal. However, transforming our relationships with our parents is only a start. We must realize that *metta* is completely unconditional: it goes out to all and is never withdrawn: so we must rid ourselves of the fear of 'losing love' within the spiritual community. The Bodhisattva experiences all beings as having been his 'mother' at some time, feels gratitude, and wishes to lead them to Enlightenment. We should feel grateful for life, the whole ecological system we are part of, grateful for the human culture we have inherited. We should have a burning desire to give because we have received so much!

In the acute awareness of one's imperfection, it was very encouraging to consider also the extremely practical Tibetan view of the value of the spiritual life. Religion is worth your while because it is so useful! You cannot lose out because you will enjoy the effects of your positivity, because you are functioning within the creative conditionality defined by the Third and Fourth of the Buddha's Four Noble Truths.

At the joyful ordination ceremony on the eighth day, Bhante emphasized the effect of what took place on everybody present; as guests we had some 20 women and one baby. The births of Padmasuri and Ashokashri into the Western Buddhist Order were to be for the benefit of us all — and of all beings everywhere! I could feel, very tangibly, a stirring healing liberating radiation in the room, as if from a magic jewel.

Sridevi

EDWARD CONZE

A Personal Appreciation

I MET Dr. Conze for the first time in 1964, only a few months after my return to England after an absence of twenty years. We met in Oxford, where he was then living and teaching and where I had been invited by the University Buddhist Society to give a lecture. Dr. Conze attended this lecture, which was on 'The Spiritual Ideal in Buddhism', sitting at the back of the room and following everything I said with great intentness. Afterwards we exchanged a few words of cordial greeting. Those who knew Dr. Conze personally, and especially those who have been the objects of what he himself terms his 'disinterested *Krodha*', may be surprised to learn that my first impression of this formidable old scholar — an impression that registered instantly, as soon as our eyes met — was that he was an essentially kindly person. Since experience has taught me to trust my first impressions of people, I am convinced that, in the case of Edward Conze, this impression of essential kindness was correct, and I would still be convinced of its correctness even if I had not experienced nothing but kindness at his hands.



Dr Edward Conze

Although the meeting after the lecture was the first time we had come face to face, we had been in fairly regular correspondence for a number of years. How the correspondence started I no longer recollect, but it probably had something to do with

the magazine *Stepping-Stones*, which I edited from 1950 to 1952 from the Himalayan township of Kalimpong, where I had settled in 1950 and where I was to remain for fourteen years. At any rate, the last issue of *Stepping-Stones* carried the first instalment of

Dr. Conze's *Selected Sayings from the Perfection of Wisdom*, afterwards published in book form by the Buddhist Society. It was one of my greatest regrets, when *Stepping-Stones* came to an end, that we were unable to continue the serialization of this important work. However, Dr. Conze bore me no ill will for having let him down in this way, and our correspondence continued. After taking over the editorship of the *Maha Bodhi*, I invited him to contribute to that journal, which he did on several occasions, the most interesting of his articles probably being the one on 'Love, Hate and Perfect Wisdom' (reprinted in *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies*, pp. 185-190). In 1960 he agreed to my bringing out *A Short History of Buddhism*, originally contributed in Italian to a publication on the civilization of the East, as the third volume in The Buddhist Library series, which I was then editing for Chetana Ltd of Bombay. Meanwhile, in 1957 or 1958, he had reviewed *A Survey of Buddhism* in terms so eulogistic that I was both surprised and delighted. However, our correspondence was by no means confined to the publication of articles and books. He commented freely on events and personalities in the tiny world of British Buddhism, and by the time we actually met in Oxford it was clear that we were, as he was afterwards to write, 'kindred spirits'.

That first meeting in Oxford was not to be our last. We met whenever I lectured for the University Buddhist Society, which I did several times during the two years (1964-66) that I was based in the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara. In the course of one visit I attended Dr. Conze's lectures on the Madhyamika School at Manchester College, which is not really a college but a hall of residence and as such not part of the University. I was surprised to see how few people turned up: there could not have been more than twenty. Dr. Conze did not seem to be as much appreciated in the venerable 'home of lost causes' as he should have been. Indeed, Buddhism itself did not seem to be very much appreciated. When I naively remarked to Dr. Conze that Buddhist philosophy must surely be appreciated in a place like Oxford he sourly replied, 'All they're interested in here is linguistic analysis.' Life was made difficult for him in other ways. With what seemed extraordinary petty mindedness, his lectures were officially listed as being by 'Mr. Conze'. This, I was told, was because although he had, of course, a doctorate in philosophy, it was his misfortune to have obtained it neither from Oxford nor from Cambridge. Moreover, since he had not been able

to get a divorce from his first wife, a Roman Catholic, he was at that time not legally married to his second wife, Muriel. So far as the University was concerned, therefore, Muriel did not exist, and she was not included in official invitations. The first time I had lunch with them at their flat he introduced her with what I thought was a slight air of constraint, as though not quite sure how I would react to the situation. He need not have worried. So far as I was concerned, if you lived with someone you were married to them, and I was only sorry that, as it seemed, he felt unable to raise the subject with me openly so that I could tell him exactly where I stood. Indeed it pained me that a man of Dr. Conze's eminence should have been made to feel embarrassed for reasons that had nothing whatever to do with genuine morality. Despite the shabby way in which the University establishment treated him, however, life in Oxford was not without its compensations. He and Muriel had a number of friends, among them Guy and Freda Wint, at whose house it was I first realized what a deep and abiding interest Dr. Conze had in astrology. From remarks that passed between him and our hostess I gathered that he had cast the horoscope of practically every person present, and that he had been greatly struck by the fact that a high percentage of English Buddhists were Virgoans.

After my farewell visit to India and my final return to England at the beginning of 1967 Edward Conze and I did not see each other again. He was away much of the time in the United States, while I was busy launching the FWBO and WBO in London. However, we exchanged letters occasionally and did each other little friendly services whenever we could. When in the winter of 1969-70 I went to Yale as Visiting Lecturer in Philosophy, it was due partly to his support that I was given my teaching title. By the time he settled permanently in Sherborne, which was in 1973 or 1974, I had left London and was living, initially, in Cornwall. It would then have been possible for us to meet, especially as I sometimes made the journey between Cornwall and London, or between Cornwall and Norfolk, but for some reason or other we never did. Correspondence, however, became more regular, and more animated, and we always sent each other copies of the offprints of our latest articles. (In the academic world, I am told, great importance is attached to the ritual exchange of offprints, the omission of the courtesy sometimes leading to deadly feuds.) All this time I was, of course, keeping him informed about the progress of the FWBO. In view of his well-known antipathy for what he termed 'Western Sectarian Buddhism' it was not surprising that his attitude towards us should at first have been one of reserve, or that he should have made it clear that he had no time to do anything for us. But he soon came round. Before long he was subscribing to the *Newsletter*, which he clearly read with avidity, and not only

sending us cheques for small amounts but lamenting that he was not rich enough to give more generously. In later years, especially when he had been writing about the misdeeds of certain Buddhist organizations, he would often conclude his letters with a heartfelt "Thank heavens for the FWBO!"

After remaining at a respectable plateau for several years, in the early part of 1977 correspondence between

century came to an end.

On my return from New Zealand in the middle of June I found Part I of the *Memoirs* already on sale at the L.B.C. bookstall, and Part II followed soon afterwards. Though I had seen the greater part of the work in its original duplicated form it was good to see it in its final samizdat dress, with the smart black covers (symbolic of the forces of evil?) on which the figure of Manjusri, the



Manjusri

Chintamani

us suddenly reached a bit of a peak. I was at that time 'on retreat' on the Isle of Arran, devoting myself mainly to literary work. Dr. Conze, in response to Professor de Jong's questions about his life up to 1948, was writing — or rather dictating — his autobiography. Being in some doubt as to whether he should continue with the work, he wrote to ask whether, in my opinion, such an account would harm or benefit the cause of Buddhism, and what alterations might be desirable. After considering the pros and cons of the matter (the pros far outnumbered the cons) I came down in favour of publication, and urged him to continue the story. Indeed, I went further and suggested that he work the account up into a full-scale autobiography along the lines of Karl Popper's *The Unended Quest*, at the same time expressing the hope that Popper was not one of his *bêtes noires*. (He was!) I also suggested that he should give a more detailed account of his early intellectual development, his involvement with politics, and his transition from Marxism to Buddhism. Correspondence relating to *The Memoirs of a Modern Gnostic*, as the autobiography came to be called, eventually reached such proportions, especially after Dr. Conze had decided to publish it himself and asked our help with the distribution, that I handed it over to Kulananda and Nagabodhi. Thus a contact that had lasted for more than a quarter of a

Bodhisattva of Wisdom, picked out in white, brandished his flaming sword — as he did at the top of Dr. Conze's personal notepaper. It was good to know that my old friend had been able to finish writing the story of his life and that his autobiography was now complete, or at least as complete as the laws of libel would allow. All the same, I was not wholly satisfied with the result of his labours. The *Memoirs* were less well written than I had hoped (probably Dr. Conze did not think it worth his while to spend too much time and energy on mere artistry), and the course of his intellectual and spiritual development was charted in less detail than might have been expected. Still, there were abundant compensation, both in Part I: *Life and Letters*, and Part II: *Politics, People and Places*. We learn, for instance, about the London-born ancestor, about his Protestant/capitalist German background, about his special gift for learning languages (fourteen by the age of twenty-four), about his first-remembered contact with Buddhism (not unlike my own, in that it involved the Diamond Sutra), about his aversion to Nazism, about his arrival in England in 1933 with only the suit on his back and £4 in his pocket, about what it was like being a German abroad, about his first contact with Marxism, and later doubts about it, about his rediscovery of Buddhism and discovery of astrology, and about the inception, writing, and publi-

cation of all his books. We are also given thumbnail sketches of friends and colleagues and accounts of visits to Italy, the Soviet Union, and the USA, besides being treated to typically Conzean observations on such topics as feminism, social democracy, and people in general. Through the self-denigration and the intellectual pyrotechnics we discern, in luminous outline, the figure of a highly sensitive, intensely energetic, exceptionally talented man of uncompromising honesty and absolute intellectual integrity who never hesitated to sacrifice personal advantage rather than his principles, who invariably spoke as he thought, and who never suffered fools gladly. We are also able to see what it is that makes a Modern Gnostic, or rather, in what sense he describes himself in these terms — a point that had puzzled me for some time. Comparing himself to E.F. Schumacher, economic adviser to the National Coal Board and later on author of *Small is Beautiful*, he says,

My Memoirs clearly show that I am [an] elitist, anarchist person who rejects the world and all that is in it, including most of its human inhabitants and feels a kinship with small groups of the perfect, in the style of the Pythagoreans, Cathari, Dokhobors, etc. He, following the Church rather than the Gnostics is a friend of the ordinary man and acts within society Where I work for a spiritual life, so he for a society which makes one possible. My eremitic ways have been forced on me by temperament, social accidents and the general godlessness all around me. I probably would have achieved more [if] I had not been so isolated and on my defensive all the time. (Part II, p.65)

Altogether the *Memoirs* were a fascinating performance and gave me a more rounded, or perhaps I should say a more many-cornered, portrait of their distinguished subject than had emerged either from our meetings in Oxford or from our long correspondence. Despite minor disappointments I was therefore glad to be holding the two slim volumes in my hands at last. Leafing through them, however, I recalled with something like dismay that Dr. Conze was expecting me to give his autobiography "a leg up" (his own phrase) by writing one of what, in a reminder addressed to Kulananda, he ironically referred to as my "celebrated reviews". Alas, I had been away on my travels, and the required leg up had not yet been given. Since time was now running out, and Dr. Conze sure to be growing impatient, I started toying with the idea of reviewing the *Memoirs* jointly with Christmas Humphreys' *Both Sides of the Circle*, for which I was expected to perform a similar service, at the same time wondering what Dr. Conze (or indeed Christmas Humphreys) would think of the idea. I was still wondering when I heard that Dr. Conze had died a few days earlier, on September 24th, and that the funeral would be at Yeovil on October 2nd, two days before I started giving my lectures on the *Vimalakirti-nirveda*. Since I was unable to be present personally, I asked Subhuti and Buddhadasa to go and represent me and the Order, which they did, taking with them a large wreath of orange-coloured chrysanthemums. On their return they reported that although Dr. Conze had been cremated in accordance with Buddhist rites, there had been no mention of his achieve-

ments as a Buddhist scholar or of his services to the cause of Buddhism.

The omission surprised me. Dr. Conze's contribution to our fuller understanding and deeper appreciation of the Dharma was of the highest significance, and so far as the English-speaking world at least is concerned it is unparalleled in recent years. This applies especially to *Buddhist Thought in India* (1962), which at the time of

writing his *Memoirs* he still viewed as his "greatest achievement" (Part I, p. 103), and his translations and elucidations of the historically important and spiritually indispensable *Perfection of Wisdom* texts. 'The publication in 1974 of *The Short Prajnaparamita Texts* by Luzac', he writes in the *Memoirs*, 'brought me nearer the goal which I had set myself in 1938, i.e. to translate all the 42 P.P. texts into Eng-

lish. In 1938 the *Prajnaparamita* could be read in five languages, i.e. in Tibetan, Mongol, Chinese, Manchu and Japanese. Now in 1978 about 90% of it is also accessible in English, the new World Language.' (Part I, p. 135) For these and other services, the consequences of which we cannot even begin to foresee, Western Buddhists, and I think members of the WBO and FWBO in particular,

will always be profoundly grateful to Edward Conze. Though wrathful in form, he was truly a Bodhisattva. From the realms where he now rests for a while from his labours, — realms in which, so one hopes, there is no occasion for *saeva indignatio*, — may he look down with approval on all those who are still working for the wider dissemination of the Dharma.

Sangharakshita

IN THE course of his first lecture in this latest lecture series, Bhante stated that most people's lives are characterized by a sense of sameness, with every day seeming to pass in much the same sort of way and nothing extraordinary happening, with life going on in a monotonous routine. Well, for those of us who attended the lecture series on *The Inconceivable Emancipation*, this dull sameness was blown away as Bhante introduced us in the course of the eight lectures to the extraordinary world of the *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa*, a Mahayana Buddhist scripture. This is the third Mahayana Buddhist text to which Bhante has devoted a full lecture series; each one has introduced into the awareness of the Movement, and thus made accessible to a large number of people, a very important Buddhist work. So this was more than just a lecture series — it was an important event for Western Buddhism. It was the bringing to life of a Buddhist sutra and the spirit of the Dharma. The translation of such a text begins the task of bringing it alive but does not end it. To hear the text expounded and explained by a teacher steeped in the Buddhist tradition is to begin to get some insight into its real meaning and importance.

Thus for Western Buddhists this was an important event indeed. Wherever I went within the Movement before, during, and after the series, I found that, suddenly, copies of the sutra had appeared, and, more importantly, people were reading and discussing it.

The *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa*, which before was perhaps only dimly known of, suddenly had sprung to life as an important spiritual influence for many people in the Movement. It has now entered into our mandala and has become an inspiration and source of practical guidance for us. It was also very noticeable however, that the lectures appealed to many comparatively new Friends who had probably never opened a Buddhist text in their lives. This was due partly, I think, to the dramatic nature of the text, which Bhante brought out so graphically that the events seemed to unfold before our very eyes and partly to the practicality and down-to-earth quality of Bhante's points. You need not have studied Buddhism or even have considered yourself a Buddhist to appreciate that something important was being said in these lectures, and being said by a very remarkable man indeed.

The lectures were held at the East-West Centre, which is housed in a

large, rather bleak building in east-central London. The hall itself was modest, but adequate enough, and an intimate atmosphere seemed to develop over the weeks. Every lecture was well attended, and the hall was often absolutely full. Many in the audience had travelled hundreds of miles to be there, and, looking around before each lecture, I could recognize many old faces, as well as quite a few new ones. There was always a friendly atmosphere and a tangible excitement as we wondered what to expect each week, what new surprises Bhante would pull out of the bag. Remarkably this excitement seemed to increase and not diminish as the weeks went by, and we got deeper into the series. As Bhante began to speak, the whole audience seemed to sit up and take notice. The quality of a lecture depends not only upon the speaker and the subject but also upon the audience, and I have very rarely seen a more receptive and attentive audience. To many people, lectures probably conjure up memories of uncomfortable hours spent doodling in note pads to keep boredom at bay while a distant speaker drones monotonously on. Well, I can assure you that this series of lectures was of a different kind altogether. It was concerned not so much with the imparting of facts but with the communication of the spirit of the Dharma. I heard someone compare Bhante giving these lectures to a conductor conducting an

orchestra, and this is a fair comparison, a similar subtlety of communication and harmony being produced. Bhante led us through the *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa*, sometimes soaring in the philosophical heights or magical events described in the text, sometimes bringing us right down to earth with practical points and explanations which were very close to home.

As the weeks went by, we got to know the characters of the *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa*, who began to assume clear proportions and distinctive personalities. We became particularly well acquainted with Vimalakirti himself, the Bodhisattva who appears to live in the world as other men but is in fact a highly evolved spiritual being, living in this manner solely in order to meet people on their own level and so enter into communication with them and help them to develop. We got to know of his biting wit and conversation, so devastatingly acute and accurate that even the other Bodhisattvas are wary of paying him a visit. He is a man who will not stand for any nonsense, and who attacks fake religiosity with particular vigour. The butt of his tongue is frequently Sariputra, the well-known Arahant of the Pali scriptures, who emerges in the *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa* as a rather humorous figure who does his best but continually fails to meet Vimalakirti's exacting standards. We also meet Manjusri, the splendid Bodhisattva of

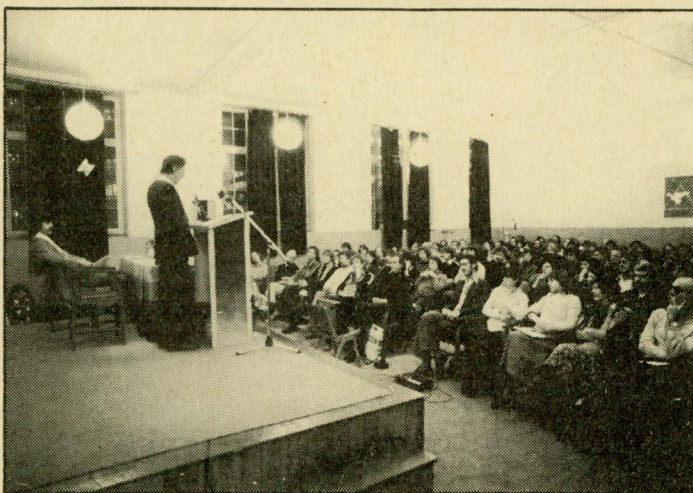
wisdom, who appears as a beautiful young prince, and who comes from a realm outside space and time. He enters into many dazzling debates of philosophy and metaphysics with Vimalakirti and, indeed, seems to be one of the few figures who can stand up to Vimalakirti's uncompromising directness. Presiding over all, of course, is the majestic figure of the Buddha, around whom the action revolves. As the lectures went on, we heard of the amazing actions of these characters against the background of ancient India and other even more fantastic and distant settings. The hall and London seemed to melt away as Bhante related these events and so powerfully brought their meaning home to us.

The *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa*, although only a short work, is very rich indeed, containing elements of philosophy, drama, poetry, magic, and humour. It also introduces many themes, only seven of which Bhante was able to comment upon in the time available. However, if I was to indicate some of the points and implications raised by Bhante even in consideration of these few themes, it would fill the *News-Letter*. Bhante gave us many practical guidelines in the series and indeed stressed the need for criteria in a time when so many teachers and teachings are available, many of which are of dubious value and some of which are dangerous rackets. Bhante spelt out the need for clear thinking and gave us many examples of it. Like Vimalakirti, he would not accept any nonsense and proceeded to demolish a fair amount of woolly and muddled thinking in the course of the series. However, the memory which I hold most strongly of the series and which comes to mind whenever I think of it is of the magical element. The *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa* itself abounds in magic — the human historical background against which the action occurs frequently receding as marvellous and inexplicable events occur. Something of this seemed to spill out and permeate the lecture series — something indefinable but definitely there: there was a touch of magic in the air.

This was surely one of the most successful lecture series which have yet been held by the FWBO, and all of us present were fortunate to have been there. For those who were unable to come — I am afraid that you have missed a remarkable and enjoyable event. However, as always, the lectures were taped and are available as cassettes, so do listen to them! Some of the magic may rub off.

Kularatna

Inconceivable Emancipation



GINSBERG VISITS

DURING November, Sukhavati received a colourful visitor in the shape of Allen Ginsberg, the well-known American poet. Mr Ginsberg took time off from his British tour, during which he gave poetry readings at venues all around the country, to pay a visit to Bhante. Bhante and Allen Ginsberg are no

strangers to each other — they first met in Kalimpong in 1963 and have been in occasional contact since then. Ginsberg, a practising Buddhist, is Director of Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado, and is a student of Tibetan Buddhism under Chogyam

Trungpa Rimpoche. After Devaraja had shown him around the L.B.C. he had lunch with Bhante and they entered into a lively conversation, to which Devaraja and I occasionally contributed.

The first thing which struck me about Allen Ginsberg was the absence of the long bushy beard, beads, and colourful garb that I had expected from photographs. In fact, Mr Ginsberg was clean-shaven and simply dressed and cut a disappointingly conventional figure after my exotic preconceptions. However, his fast racy conversational style, peppered with similes and anecdotes, made up for this and revealed a lively mind, an agile tongue, and an eventful past. Here, I felt, was a man who would never be lost for words. I was impressed by the sincerity and uninhibited forthrightness with which he expressed himself.

One of the main topics which we discussed was poetry, in particular the poetry of William Blake. We found that Blake had been an important spiritual influence on both Bhante and Ginsberg, and that both had written poetry inspired by Blake's works. Ginsberg told us that a visionary experience after reading Blake many years ago had launched him on the quest which brought him to Buddhism. Bhante explained his ideas on Blake and Buddhism, which he has set down in his article, 'Buddhism and William Blake'.* Ginsberg went on to expound his theories on modern poetry and made the distinction between 'academic' poetry, which is derived from the literature of the past,

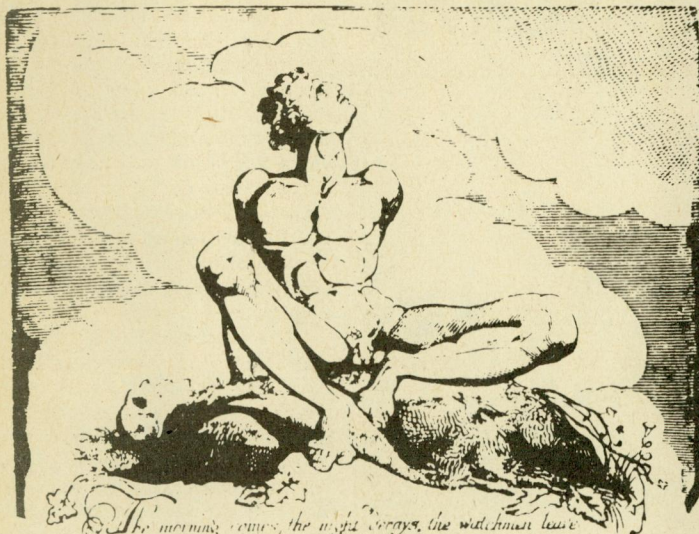
and his favoured 'non-academic' poetry, whose inspiration is derived from life and experience. He emphasized that poetry should be read aloud and heard, not just read on a page.

Another topic which we touched upon was the 'expanded-consciousness' experience produced by LSD and the possible relevance of this experience to Buddhism. I gathered from his comments that Ginsberg had enjoyed a colourful time in the psychedelic 'sixties. He also told us a little of Buddhism in America, and we went on to discuss the relevance and possible dangers of the guru concept for Westerners. Bhante stated that this concept is only valid in a personal, one-to-one, teacher-to-pupil relationship and in any other situation is liable to misuse.

All in all, it was a fascinating and fruitful encounter and I for one wished that Ginsberg could have spent more time with us, as there were many things that we could have gone into more deeply. Particularly, I would have liked to discuss the relationship between Buddhism and culture and asked Ginsberg how he reconciled his avant-garde social and poetical stance with his involvement in deeply traditional Tibetan Buddhism. Before Ginsberg left, he invited Bhante to give a seminar on Buddhism and Blake at the Naropa Institute, and as he and Bhante exchanged volumes of their poetry, they promised to keep in contact.

Kularatna

*(in Newsletter 36: Art and the Creative Vision).



Blake's Vision: a source of inspiration

The Convention of the Western Buddhist Order to be held at Vinehall School, Sussex (3-14 April), will be the fifth of its kind.

It is a coming-together of as many Order members as can manage to leave their personal circumstances in various parts of the globe to assemble in one place under more or less ideal conditions. Then, for ten whole days, Order members can look forward to the uninterrupted experience of Sangha in a more concentrated, more harmonious way than is generally possible amidst the hurly-burly of the usual Centre and Co-operative activities.

The hundred or so Order members will be following a programme of meditation, study, talks, yoga, and so on and will have ample opportunity for the renewal and deepening of that spiritual fellowship which is the life-blood of the movement.

A full report of the 1980 Convention will appear in the next Newsletter.

Ashvajit

Order Convention



A quiet moment at the last Convention

Roger Jones

Charging for Classes

IF YOU want to make contact with the FWBO you can come along to any of our centres, learn the basic meditation practices we teach, do some communication exercises, hear talks, and even get quite involved in the Movement without having to part with a penny. This has always been the case, and for some people it is an important feature of the FWBO. 'I went along to another place to learn meditation, and they wanted to charge me £50! That's ridiculous!' — a common lament of visitors to our beginners' classes. Certainly in England — despite the success of the Maharishi's Transcendental Meditation Movement, which charges quite considerable sums for 'initiation' — the view that spiritual teaching should be given free of charge pervades popular opinion. People who would not think twice about paying £2.50 to go to the cinema or who would consider £5.00 a reasonable sum to spend on dinner in a restaurant, somehow operate according to a totally different set of expectations when it comes to things 'spiritual'. Perhaps the Christian virtues of charity, poverty, and self-denial have led them to believe that only those who give their guidance for nothing have anything worthwhile to impart. Certainly a spiritual teacher who is revealed to own a Mercedes-Benz or a comfortable home is instantly heaped with cynical accusations and his followers dismissed as poor deluded victims — as if the worst thing that a fake guru can do to you is to deprive you of some spare cash!

Without suggesting that fakes do not exist or that religious sentiments are not highly susceptible to crafty exploitation, the view that money and spirituality inhabit mutually exclusive dimensions is one that should be seriously re-examined. It is not, unfortunately, my intention to examine the issue here. Suffice it to say that throughout the short history of the FWBO most Centre councils have periodically found themselves confronting this issue in a whole number of connections — from retreat charges to fund-raising; from setting prices in wholefood shops to, more recently, charging money for classes.

Both the Norwich Meditation Centre and the London Buddhist Centre have recently begun to make a small charge (usually 50p) for all their regular classes and study groups, excepting only the weekly Open Nights. And most of our centres have been making charges for their more structured meditation or meditation-and-Buddhism courses for some time. Initially, these charges were instituted in response to short-term financial pressures; it costs a lot of money to

create and maintain a centre, and income from the *dana* bowl or from newly established right-livelihood ventures cannot always be counted on to pay the bills. The charges are therefore seen as 'facility fees'. One is not so much paying for the Dharma as contributing to the upkeep of the channels through which it is communicated.

Although a cynic might like to dismiss such an explanation as mere word-play, there are some important principles that have to be taken into account. Firstly, it has always been recognized — by the FWBO and by the Buddhist tradition at large — that the gift of the Dharma is one of the highest forms of *dana* (generosity) that can be practised. There is no question of the FWBO trying to establish a professional class of teachers who relate to their work as a form of employment. Indeed, class leaders are expected to pay exactly the same facility fee as those who are coming along to be taught. Secondly, the FWBO deliberately does not operate as a democratic society whose members simply share a common sympathy for Buddhism, but as a kind of spiritual hierarchy, in which it is essential that those who are more spiritually developed, or at least more committed to the Three Jewels, should be free to determine how a Centre should best be run. How else could they ensure that it is the *Dharma* that is communicated and not just the latest fashionable opinions? At the heart of the FWBO is an Order, a community of spiritually committed people, some of whom choose to work through the medium of a public Centre. If people come along and if they are receptive to what is being taught, then the Centre will be a successful organ of the Dharma. In Britain and no doubt elsewhere, it is all too easy to see how badly things can go when less committed people and even non-Buddhists somehow gain 'control' of a Buddhist movement. The Order members who work in our Centres should not be dependent in any way on their 'public', but should be free to teach what they want to teach and to direct the Centre's activities as they think best.

Ideally then, our right-livelihood businesses, inspired and operated by Buddhists, will soon be in a position to ensure that making charges for classes at Centres is an option open to the councils only as a *skillful means*. For it has to be said that, even though people do not like to associate the spiritual life with money, there is often a noticeably higher level of commitment shown at a course or a class that people have paid for — which is worth thinking about.

Nagabodhi

NEW SHOP IN CROYDON



Roger Jones

When we first started work on what was to become our Friends Foods wholefood shop in Croydon, almost exactly two years ago, there was a tremendous urgency felt by everyone working on the project. This was going to be our life-blood: it was going to enable all of the activities of FWBO Surrey to be expanded and upgraded. Hence, we opened the shop in an amazing five weeks, and the long process of building up the business started. Considering the speed of the work, the shop was quite reasonable: pleasant, homely. But, within a short while, it had to squeeze itself into two rooms, instead of three, to allow the cafe (which opened after it) room for expansion.

We could see that if the shop was going to *really* fulfil its potential and become a roaring success, it would need bigger — and better — premises. So started the negotiations which led to the acquisition of the burnt-out shop next door, its conversion into a splendid new cafe, and the freeing of the old cafe area for the new shop.

Our building and design team lav-

ished as much care and attention on this as they already had on the cafe: the aim was to create a shop which would have the efficiency (and high turnover!) of a mini-supermarket and yet which would *feel* warm, intimate, friendly — the sort of atmosphere of the old-fashioned corner shop. Contrary though these aims are, the end result is no mere compromise: the interior glows with its green-stained wooden fittings and cream and deep-yellow paintwork; the well-stocked and easily accessible shelves glitter with numerous bottles, jars, and packets, all picked out with carefully arranged spot lighting. All this *helps* to create the atmosphere and facilitate efficiency: the most important element if, of course, provided by the *people* who work there — it is their friendliness and eagerness to assist which keeps the customers coming back and brings new people in.

The new shop is very much a step up — but also a step *towards* new possibilities, further expansion... why should we be satisfied, just because we are on to a good thing?

Tejananda

PUBLICATIONS NEWS

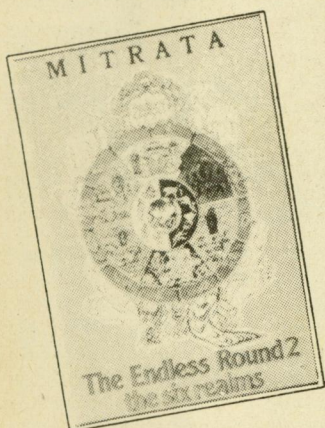
THE FIRST issue of *Mitrata* appeared in January 1975 under the editorship of Padmaraja who was at that time the FWBO's Convenor of *Mitras*. *Mitrata* was devised as a training manual for 'mitras' — Friends who are contemplating or preparing themselves for Going for Refuge. The emphasis of the magazine was on practical Dharma, to be made accessible to study — especially for study groups — and of direct relevance to the particular needs of those who were trying to deepen not only their understanding of Buddhism, but also their experience of it. Initially the majority of the material to be found in *Mitrata* came, by way of tape recorder, transcriber, and editor, from the mouth or pen of Ven. Sangharakshita.

Now, although there have been two changes of editor and two of

format, and although it now goes out to a public far beyond the bounds of the mitra community, *Mitrata* is still the practical manual that it was originally intended to be. No compromises have been made to cater for a wider 'public' readership, and it is therefore cheering to realize from our sales figures that there is a healthy market for a publication with such a straightforward and Dharmic orientation.

Over the last years we have published issues of *Mitrata* on the Five Spiritual Faculties, the Eleven Positive Mental Events, Kalyana Mitrata, the Five Hindrances, and many other themes. The three most recent issues comprise a 'set', collectively entitled 'The Endless Round', which deals with some important elements of the Tibetan Wheel of Life. *Mitrata* comes out six times a year and costs 65p. A year's subscription costs £4.00. Since

many of the early issues of *Mitrata* are out of print, we are currently preparing an omnibus edition of about 12 issues. This will be produced quite quickly and cheaply — the priority being to make the material contained in those issues available. At a later date we may well republish them in a more commercial form, but the currently planned edition should be on sale in a few months' time. I will let you know more in the next *Newsletter*.



For some time, Ashvajit, who edits *Shabda*, the monthly newsletter of the Western Buddhist Order, has also been producing low-cost publications entitled *Ola Leaves*. The sort of things that have been rolling

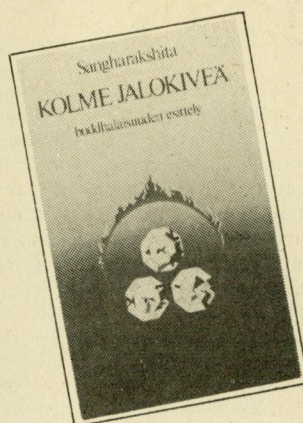
off his duplicating machine include edited seminar transcripts and a collection of Bhante's poetry, *The Enchanted Heart*. Now that he has moved from Norwich to London, joined the Windhorse Publications team, and set up his Roneo and stocks of 100%-recycled paper in Golgonooza, we will soon be using this facility to publish edited transcripts of Ven. Sangharakshita's lectures. 'The Path of Regular Steps', 'Enlightenment as Experience and as Non-Experience', and 'Authority and the Individual in the New Society' are first in line for this treatment.

Meanwhile in America the new edition of *A Survey of Buddhism* (with a new introduction) is nearing completion. This is a joint venture involving ourselves and Shambhala Publications Inc. of Boulder, Colorado. Our 2000 copies of this essential book will be here with us quite soon and should sell for between £5.00 and £6.00.

Bhante has now finished checking and revising the edited transcripts of the lectures that he gave during his first visit to New Zealand, so we are in a position to start work on turning them into a small book. The lectures are entitled 'The Ideal of Human Enlightenment', 'What Meditation Really Is', and 'The Meaning of Spiritual Community', and the book

derived from them will therefore constitute an invaluable introduction to the ideals and methods of the FWBO.

Hearty congratulations are now due to the FWBO in Helsinki. Their



Finnish edition of Bhante's book, *The Three Jewels* (Finnish title: *Kolme jalokiveä*) is now on sale. The publication of this book marks the culmination of a tremendous amount of work. A small team under Vajrabodhi's supervision had first to translate it. Then Bodhishiri, who is a graphic designer, prepared it for production and designed a cover. The book that they have produced is very attractive and, from what I hear, is already selling very well. There is a growing

market for books on Buddhism in Finland and, as is often the case, this market has hitherto been fed with books of dubious quality and reliability. The publication of *Kolme jalokiveä* is therefore an event of some significance for the spreading of the Dharma in Finland. I rejoice in the merits of all those who have participated in the project and wish them luck with their next project: A Finnish edition of *A Survey of Buddhism*.

Our thanks are extended to those readers in the UK who have replied to the letter that was inserted into the last issue of the *Newsletter*. This will allow us to rationalize our mailing list before committing it to a mini-computer's memory bank. The various subscriptions we received from many of you have also helped our financial position a little. We are, however, still quite short of funds, which is regrettable in view of all the projects that we would like to be able to set in motion. Among other things, we need right now to reprint *The Essence of Zen*, and *Mind — Reactive and Creative*. If you can help us with a donation you will not only make another book or two available, but will also help us to establish Windhorse Publications as a powerful tool in the growth and development of Buddhism in the West.

Nagabodhi

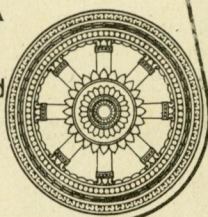
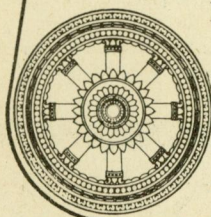
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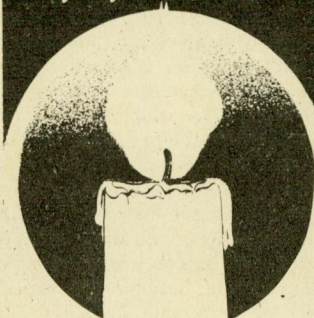
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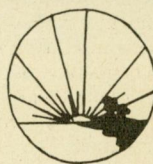
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About the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

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

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

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

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

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

In the Co-operatives, groups of Order members, Mitras, and Friends (those who are in contact with the Movement and participate in any of its activities) work together in businesses which financially support the workers and which fund the further expansion of this New Society. Present businesses either running or being set up in the Movement include a printing press, wholefood shops, a silkscreen press, a hardware store, cafes, a second-hand shop, bookshop, editorial service, metalwork forge, and graphic-design, photographic and film studio. Members of the Co-operatives are hammering out a way of working which is 'Right Livelihood': team-based so that each person has the opportunity to take responsibility for the work, and ethically sound: exploiting neither other people nor the earth's 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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If you would like to attend any FWBO activities, please contact the Secretary of the Centre nearest to you, who will be happy to give you all the information you require.