

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

NEWSLETTER

Number 51

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Living a Buddhist Life



Lokamitra has chosen
to wear the yellow robe
and work in India.
But how do other
Western Buddhists live?
Inside we find out.



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NEWSLETTER

Number 51

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Editorial

There is no such thing as a nominal Buddhist. There is no point in calling yourself a Buddhist unless you are doing something about it.

You start to become a Buddhist when you realise that you have the potential to become a Buddha: to perfect, in particular, the qualities of Wisdom and Compassion. The consciousness of a Buddha penetrates and transcends the distinction between subject and object; the heart of a Buddha bursts beyond the distinction between self and other. A Buddha's energy is limitless, free, and pure. A Buddha is a perfect being, a transcendental being.

You actually become a Buddhist when you commit yourself entirely: body, speech, and mind, to the realisation of that potential. There is no other way to become a Buddhist, no other reason to become one: there are no gods to appease with token rituals or with blind obedience, no thunderbolts to fear. If you do choose to pursue the ideal of human perfection then the advice, the recommendations, and the well-tested techniques of the two and a half thousand year old Buddhist tradition are at your disposal, for you to work with.

The founder of that tradition, the Buddha Himself, spent forty years of His life communicating His discovery of Enlightenment, and giving guidance to all kinds of people: kings, courtesans, householders, and wandering ascetics, urging them all to follow the path of self-transformation.

Some of those whom He met had already left behind the pleasures and ties of family life, and others chose to do so after meeting Him. Such people were freer from the grosser forms of distraction, less burdened by responsibility, and consequently freer to change — and to put changes into effect — than were the householders, and their kind of freedom has always been valued and respected by the Buddhist tradition.

However, it would be regrettable — as it has been regrettable in some Eastern countries — to allow too rigid a distinction to arise between these *bhikkhus* and the householders. For it is the depth and strength of one's basic commitment to the ideal that counts. If that commitment is there, one will find a way to apply it in many different kinds of circumstance. In the Western Buddhist Order we have only one 'level' of ordination: the *upasaka/upasika* ordination. This is traditionally seen as a 'lay' ordination, and sometimes, in the East, regarded as being not very serious. But it is serious: it is that moment of commitment. Everything that follows, in terms of extra vows, or changes in lifestyle, is a matter of application.

Not all the contributors to this issue are Order members; they have not all yet taken that step. But they are all practising Buddhists, they all recognise that their lifestyles are a basic conditioning factor in their lives, and they are all trying to turn their lifestyles into a vital aspect of their spiritual practice.

Nagabodhi

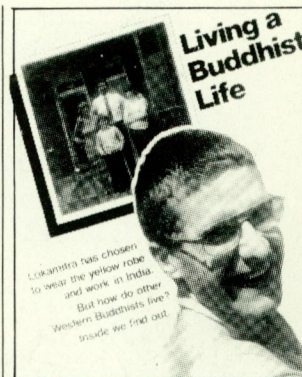
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INSIDERS

The other day I was allowing myself the luxury of a little moan about the restrictions imposed on me as a housewife and mother while struggling to become a Buddhist. The Friend whose misfortune it was to be on the other end of this grumble came up with the bright idea that what I needed was to go on a long Retreat. 'Impossible', I sighed. 'It's hard enough getting to the Centre once a week.'

'It would be really good', he suggested, 'if you could form a Community for women with kids.' Yes, really good. As a vision, it's brilliant. A Community of women and their children. A big, rambling house with a basement for the communal laundry, a sizeable kitchen, a garden for the kids to muck about in... We're talking about Jerusalem.

Only now, currently, we haven't got it. Children we've got (some of us); wives or husbands we've got; dogs, cats, canaries and dependent Mums we've got; the nuclear family unit, that we've certainly got. One day, maybe — one day, we will *all* dwell within Communities. We'll be Insiders. But now, if you'll allow the term for the purpose of the argument, we're Outsiders.

So, when we speak of difficulties we are having with our practice, with trying to follow the precepts, with developing metta, please 'Insiders', don't just remind us that it's easier living in Communities. It isn't that we don't believe you, but it would be sad if the idea ever took root that, because a person can't relinquish his or her home ties and join a Community, or can't quit her or his job and get into a Co-op, then she or he is unlikely ever to make much spiritual progress. If this view ever gained credence, it could spread a kind of creeping apathy among those who perforce must remain in their homes, a kind of, 'Well, we're handicapped; we aren't ever going to really make it', attitude.

We, the 'Outsiders', must beware of considering ourselves disadvantaged. For example, the notion put forward in a recent issue of *Mitrata* that: 'The western

nuclear family, with its stresses and emotional demands is not conducive to the spiritual growth of its members' is one we might do well to sprinkle with a little healthy scepticism.

It could be that in a family unit there arise opportunities for practising *maitri* and *karuna* (loving kindness and compassion), and for exercising forbearance, which do not present themselves in a smoothly-running Community. To take a crude example: the members of a Community might decide to meditate together at seven o'clock each morning. We are told that early morning, when mind and body are refreshed, is a good time for meditation. How many mothers, or fathers, with babies or young children or both, can do this without interruption? On the other hand, we, stress-bound in our nuclear cells, learn to get up off our cushions and wipe noses or bottoms, kiss bumped heads, look for lost toys and, with luck, return to meditate before the next claim is made. It sounds impossible, yet I myself have experienced, at times, more concentrated meditative states under those conditions than I have at the Centre or on Retreat.

Another point worth mentioning. If one is trying to progress as a Buddhist while living in a nuclear family unit, is it not possible that something will rub off onto the other members of the family: wives, husbands, sisters, children? One brings literature home, one is seen going to meditate, one's spiritual friends visit the house, hopefully one makes a little, observable progress. What better grass roots way of spreading the Dharma, from the hearth, as it were?

As I understand it, there are two endeavours to which we should commit ourselves: our own spiritual growth and the spreading of the Dharma outwards, if we really want to 'build a new society'. In our own domestic circle we have pretty much a captive audience. One's intimate relations might start to listen, might begin to be impressed. Maybe it isn't only charity that begins at home!

Val Perring

OUTSIDERS?

BUDDHISM IN THE FAMILY

Married and living with his wife, Jenny, his son and foster son, Nicolas Soames is a busy free-lance journalist, and a black-belt Judo instructor. So does that mean that his Buddhism can only be a hobby?

Where the practice has to work

Nicolas Soames

Saturday, 7a.m. Jenny and I rise and quietly make our way to our shrine room. Our ten year old son Benjamin and our 13 year old foster-son Tom are fast asleep, and so is Amanda, a 13 year old girl from the local children's home, who is supine on the music room floor. We have to step over her to get to the loft. Given half a chance, Jenny and I would be sleeping too, because we all got back very late from watching the Chinese acrobats in London last night, but if we don't meditate now, we won't sit at all.

When we emerge about an hour later, the house is up. Benjamin is having breakfast and preparing to go for his Karate lesson; Tom is deciding whether to eat or slim before going to his orchestra; and Amanda is reluctant to leave her cocoon of blankets. A couple of hours later, I am at the Children's Home talking with the officer in charge about the intricacies of glue sniffing; Benjamin is coming out of his Karate lesson to find that his bike has



Nicolas, Tommy, Benjamin, and Jenny.

been stolen; Tom phones Jenny (who has been making the most of the empty house to do her piano practice) to say he has a puncture and where am I with the car?

We all meet at lunch and the main topic of conversation is how much more involved we should get with Amanda (who is best described as 'unpredictable but stimulating'). No conclusions are reached by the time the family disperses for the afternoon and early evening — I go to Judo, Jenny to the piano and then to the shops, and the kids to play. It is, altogether, a fairly normal level of activity and it continues throughout the week.

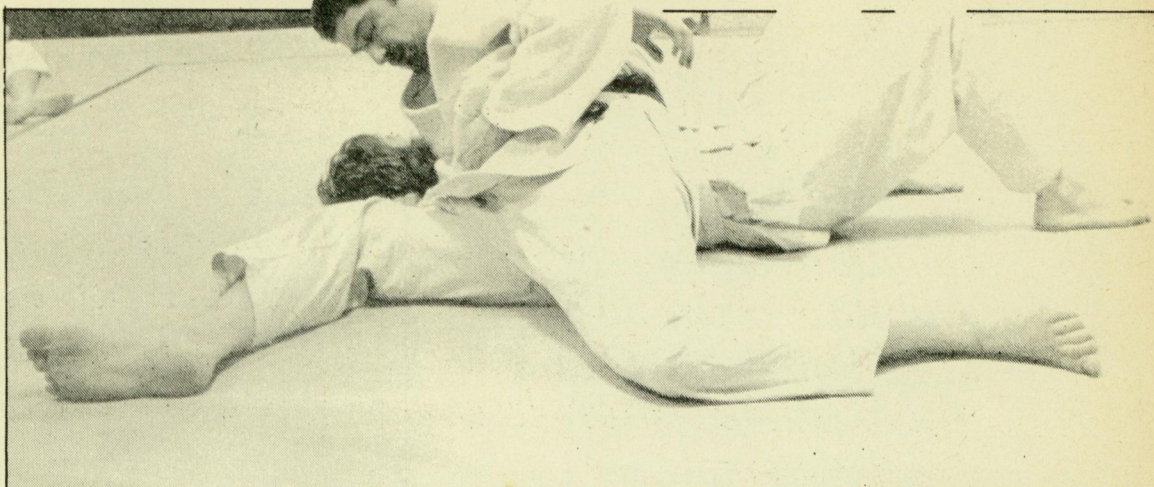
In a sense, the emphasis in the Soames household, is on variety. As a freelance journalist I write for a host of different newspapers and magazines mainly on classical music and travel, while at the same time I practice or teach Judo every day of the week and try to keep a violin practice going at the same time. As I come back from London, Jenny goes in, to teach at a music college or rehearse for concerts. Every day and evening is carefully booked and

spoken for. Yet, though it is an active life, it contains a central thread. Involved in most of those activities, in one way or another, is an increasing commitment to the Dharma and an increasing respect for, and enjoyment of, the FWBO.

Two years ago, an Order member told me that consistent development within my present situation was impossible. I felt strongly at the time that he was wrong. I felt that despite the added luggage of family, mortgage, responsibilities, etc, I could develop a real commitment to the Three Jewels and, not surprisingly, I began to wonder whether the FWBO ran a system of first and second class citizens.

But in the last two years (during which I have regularly attended classes and gone on retreats, and during which Jenny has become much more closely involved with the Movement) my attitude has changed — I now think that, in a sense, the Order member was right. It is much easier, if one is learning a skill such as Judo or the piano, to improve if one can give it one's undivided attention. In a sense, families, or rather the minutiae that go with families, can be a gross distraction from work on a central theme. Children tend to have birthdays or illnesses or just need some attention at the time which is least convenient; addition, more effort has to go into wage earning than is needed for oneself and after working all day and being with the kids during the evening, the conventional picture of the collapse in front of the television is understandable. But although it is easier to be a full-timer — it is not necessarily better.

Ironically, it was our growing interest in the Dharma and even, perhaps, our meditation practice, that played a part in the decision to become foster parents. After all, there we were with an established family environment. If we, with our metta practice and a presumably growing understanding of



Undivided attention on the judo mat.

Vajradipa

generosity, patience, energy and other qualities, could not look after a supposedly difficult child — well, *why* not? We felt a certain responsibility towards the wider social community in which we lived. It is interesting to note that I don't think we received any encouragement from anyone in the FWBO, nor from most of my family; and many of our friends thought we were crazy too. Each had their words of warning, and as usual, they were right. The fostering did prevent Jenny and I from going to some classes and it did mean some missed or interrupted retreats. And there was a period of tension, not to say upheaval, within the home and even the wider family.

But both Jenny and I know that we have learned as much from that incomparable experience as we have from many a retreat or study class. In that kind of situation the *metta* practice *has* to work; so many of the qualities that sound so simple in the *Bodhicaryavatara* and yet are so elusive, *have* to be developed in real life and put directly into practice when a confused and at times frightened 11 year old runs amok.

Looking back over past *Newsletters* and FWBO study groups, family life has not had a good press. Going on people's reports of past experiences, it is amazing that so many survived the ordeal with their mental

faculties more or less intact. In those terms, it is understandable that single-sex communities should have developed as they have done. I also remember very clearly Abhaya's articles on the interest in family communities, and, some years later, his bleaker conclusion that family communities were an impossibility to set up. I remember also many people saying that what the FWBO would have to do was to create men's communities and, separately, but not too far away, women and children's communities.

Certainly, there is a prejudice against families within the FWBO, and I choose my words very carefully. There may be some justification for that. I have seen at first hand how conventional family involvement with Buddhism can dilute it so that one ends up with a congregation listening to a sermon. But I take it literally when I read at the back of the Newsletter that the FWBO is a 'fellowship' of men and women committed to individual growth. It says nothing about being married or single as a prerequisite for growth. I acknowledge that single-sex communities grew organically, as it were, out of a need and they have been proved to work — in other words, to stimulate spiritual growth. But that does not mean that the family environment, small or large, will

not work. It just needs some families to prove that it can — and while those families may be fairly thin on the FWBO ground in this country (though they do exist) there appear to be quite a number in India. The future remains very open.

As far as I am concerned, it comes down to basic practicalities: I am continuously impressed by children. I see how much they suffer, not just by the pain of growing, but by the confused messages they get from the world around them; from the emotional unreliability of adults to whom they turn for emotional stability; and by the constant demands made upon them. And so often they remain willing to change and to learn and to try again, very often out of simple faith.

I see kids on my Judo mat working their hearts out, and kids in childrens homes crying their hearts out, and kids in my own home working and crying and laughing and above all discovering and learning and changing; and I feel that if I could learn and change as much as they do and retain their optimism, their imagination and their zest for life, I would be doing fairly well. Family life may be more complicated than life in the single-sex community, but the Three Jewels can shine just as brightly there too.

Nick Soames

An affair of the heart

Ratnapala and Punyavati, both members of the Western Buddhist Order, are married and live with their children in South London. They both refuse to get caught up in the idea that their lifestyle is necessarily a hindrance to spiritual development.



Ratnapala and Punyavati.

Ratnapala

Anyone who sincerely tries to put the Buddha's teaching into effect in their own lives and who keeps up the regular practise of the Mindfulness of Breathing and the *Metta Bhavana* meditations, developing as they do, concentration and expansive emotions, will make spiritual progress.

If the situation we find ourselves in is less conducive to our meditation practice than that of a person with no such responsibilities living in a Buddhist community, well never mind: let's do all we can. If the situation is harder then let us resolve to work even harder. The progress we make is, after all, only proportional to the amount of effort we put in. No matter how conducive the situation, it can't do the work for us.

This does not mean however that we can't make every effort to transform our environment as far as possible in accordance with the sort of life we now want to lead. There is no situation that cannot be changed. If the western nuclear

family with its stresses and emotional demands is not conducive to the spiritual growth of its members', then let's take steps to make it less nuclear. It all comes down to our own personal determination to develop and grow. Our involvement with communities and Co-ops are not the central issue, it is our own hearts that matter.

You can be outside a community. You can be outside a Co-op. You can be outside a group, but you can't be outside your own heart. As the Spiritual Community is an association of individuals who have this determination to develop then it follows that you can't be outside that either, if you only share its aims.

Although some situations are harder to work from than others and whilst we must make every effort to improve our situation as far as possible we must remember how fortunate we are to have a sound human body. How fortunate we are to be born at a time when a Buddha's teaching is extant in the World and we are in contact with a flourishing spiritual community.

Ratnapala

Resisting the nuclear threat

Punyavati

By the time I started meditating as a Buddhist, I had two young children, who were very much a part of my life. I did not see my life as being divided up into separate compartments, each one involving a different part of myself, but as one life involving all aspects of myself.

My upbringing as a Hindu, led me to believe that the spiritual life was not separate from everyday life but an integral part of it. My family started and concluded each day with devotional activities. We regularly attended all the religious festivals, which were scenes of great friendliness and warmth.

The phrase 'Nuclear family' is bandied about a lot nowadays, and often our faults and drawbacks are blamed on its influences. A closely-knit, exclusive self-contained family is a relatively modern phenomenon, existing mainly in the West. I came from an extended family background so I found such a tight set-up very limiting and frustrating.

One way of breaking up this rigid circle is to build friendships with other people around us, particularly within the Sangha. Single people, who are free of responsibilities, can work in co-operatives and live in communities, which are ideal places for forming friendships with people from different environments and backgrounds. But this can be done by families too. We have a constant stream of visitors each week at our house and the children enjoy their company just as much as Ratnapala and I do. I feel they are very fortunate indeed to be able to meet committed Buddhists, and their influ-

ence will have a very healthy effect on them.

There is a great deal that we can do for the children. We can plant the seeds of the Dharma now and create a positive, happy environment for them to grow and flourish in. Children, to a great extent, are totally dependent on their parents, especially when very young, and strongly influenced by them. It is important for their own well-being and happiness to be able to help them to differentiate between 'good' and 'bad'.

The family situation, if worked at, can provide an atmosphere of contentment, which is the positive aspect of abstention from sexual misconduct, the third precept. Single people are sometimes unsure about staying 'single', or wanting a relationship, because it gets in the way of what they want to do. This uncertainty could lead to discontentment. But with a socially accepted partner, there is a very good opportunity for developing friendship and being content with it.

Many women are often torn between the desire to have children or to remain childless. The maternal urge is very strong among some women and if they are already involved in the spiritual life, it is very hard to make the decision. But if we already have children when we discover the path, then there is no conflict as that maternal urge is satisfied and we can simply get on with our practices.

I find the Indian Order members, who are all married with families, very inspiring and encouraging. Despite many difficulties, they manage to do their practices regularly. Many live in crowded, cramped conditions and to avoid the noise of the families, they meditate very early in the morning or very late at night after a hard day's work! Most of us in the West can even

spare a room for meditation in our homes and, let's face it, we have enough spare time to meditate. Yet we are often overcome by psychological problems! With the same enthusiasm, determination, patience and strength of the Indian Order members, we too can do it!

Never mind Jerusalem! Through our regular practice and devotion we can begin to experience the bliss of *Sukhavati* now and spread it in our family, extending it outwardly until all the boundaries of our family have melted away.

Punyavati



... With Debbie and Raymond.

ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

There are alternatives to family life. Sometimes one has to 'leave home', not just psychologically and spiritually, but literally.

The door is open

Ashvajit

I was married and all set to realize an ideal of bourgeois success before the age of thirty. Things did not work out as I planned.

In early 1970, living in a first-floor flat in Swiss Cottage, North West London, I was employed by an international corporation of computer manufacturers to supervise the design and construction of some of their new buildings. My wife gave birth to a son, and in the space of a few months, when the realisation of my ambition was almost within my grasp, I began to see opening before my eyes a huge abyss of utterly boring repetitiveness and conventionality. In a mood of desperation, I began to explore the world of yoga, drugs, and mysticism, and, finding my first gambit the most promising, went in search of a meditation teacher. As a result of meeting Eric Wright (now Upasaka Mangala), I was introduced to the small circle of people known as the 'Friends', and started to

practise meditation. Three meditation sessions later I met the Ven. Sangharakshita, quite by accident, having sneaked alone into the basement of Monmouth Street, Central London, where the Tri-Ratana Meditation Centre then was. I found myself confronted by a stranger in dull orange robes, hair over his shoulders, and seated *cross legged in a chair*. This combination of characteristics completely foxed me. None of my established behaviour patterns could cope with the situation, and all I could do was to gape unceremoniously at the sedate figure while he gazed back. I felt, there and then, that I had the choice of turning my back on the possibilities of real communication with Bhanté, or of committing myself to such communication and changing, with his help, into something more in keeping with how I knew I ought to feel about myself and others.

During the course of the next year, I avidly read every book on Buddhism I could lay my hands on, attended every meditation class I could, left my wife and child, and fell in love with another woman. (At this

point I was interested mainly in shedding my middle-class respectability, and not too interested in Enlightenment.) However, my hedonistic tendencies were slightly outweighed by my interest in meditation, and this proved the undoing of that strongest of worldly ties, or at least, the beginning of the unravelling of a very twisted knot! Then, after a series of retreats with Bhante and a number of deeply inspiring visions, coupled with a growing revulsion for my apparent lack of ability to direct my life, I took Refuge with Bhante, and was ordained in August 1972 as Upasaka Ashvajit — the 'horse-tamer', 'the master of his own energies'.

In 1974, after the birth of a girl to my second wife, I left married life, — to the benefit of both of us — my wife is now working at a career of her own choice. Since then I have lived in a variety of conditions, and styles.

After separating from my wife and child I went to New Zealand for nine months. Living for the most part alone, I practised meditation, studied Buddhist texts, and so on.

Returning to the UK, I went to live in a community of three men, next door to the shop and meditation Centre in Brighton. Apart from a three month period of work in the building that was to become Sukhavati and the London Buddhist Centre, as a member of a men's community of twenty-four or so, I was in Brighton continuously for two and a half years.

I then spent a year at Padmaloka, where a new community consisting of Bhante and four others had started, but for a number of reasons I didn't feel happy in that setting — perhaps I wasn't ready for a more monastic sort of existence.

The next year or so I therefore spent in Norwich, for the most part alone, and started publishing the 'Ola Leaves' productions, notably *The Enchanted Heart* — Bhante's collection of poems.

In Autumn 1979, feeling the need to spend time with other people who were publishing, I moved to London, where, somewhat to my surprise, I still remain. I share a two-bedroom flat with Upasaka Ananda, who is a graphic designer and poet, in a 24-flat Local Government

housing tenement. The place is run on Co-operative lines by the tenants, very few of whom are involved in the 'Friends'. Six of the flats are occupied by Bengali Muslims with numerous children, one two-bedroom flat is 'squatted' by a family of Irish tinkers, reputed to have twelve children at the last count, and the rest of the flats are occupied by an assortment of couples, bachelors and spinsters aged from about 18 to 30 including two political refugees: from Hungary and Czechoslovakia. It is a sort of nightmare-come-true of an 'alternative society'. It is, however, often fun to be in, and provides opportunity for the sort of experience it might otherwise be difficult to get!

If we feel we're living in a sort of prison, why put the blame for our inability to escape on those living happily *outside* the prison? The door is open, — you have only to walk out.



Ashvajit — as he is today, and (above) in 'former lives'.

Ashvajit

Should the 'outsiders' limit themselves so that the 'insiders' feel less hampered? Surely not. On the contrary, we should sing the praises of a life of non-attachment; in so doing we may convince others that it really is possible and attainable. Bhante's vision of communities of women and children and of men and boys will only come about if 'outsiders' and 'insiders' share a vision of unselfish involvement with, and eventual commitment to, *spiritual development*. If there is an inner change, a change of attitude (which is what meditation properly practised produces), then there will be an outer change of some sort too. It isn't the life style that's important, it's the progress, the Going for Refuge to the Ideal, that's important, but *one should be prepared to change one's living conditions if they become a hindrance to one's practice of meditation*.

Breaking up—or breaking through?

When one person leaves home, someone else often gets left behind. But that can be just as good.

Srimala

Living as I do with just my two young daughters we are classified as a single-parent family, or a 'broken home'. I prefer to regard my situation as a breaking-away from the close knit nuclear family, a living arrangement more conducive to the spiritual life, and a more positive, healthy environment in which to bring up children.

I had never considered the need to break out of the nuclear family until seven years ago when I attended a women's retreat, held at my home in Cambridge. My eldest daughter was only five months old. The

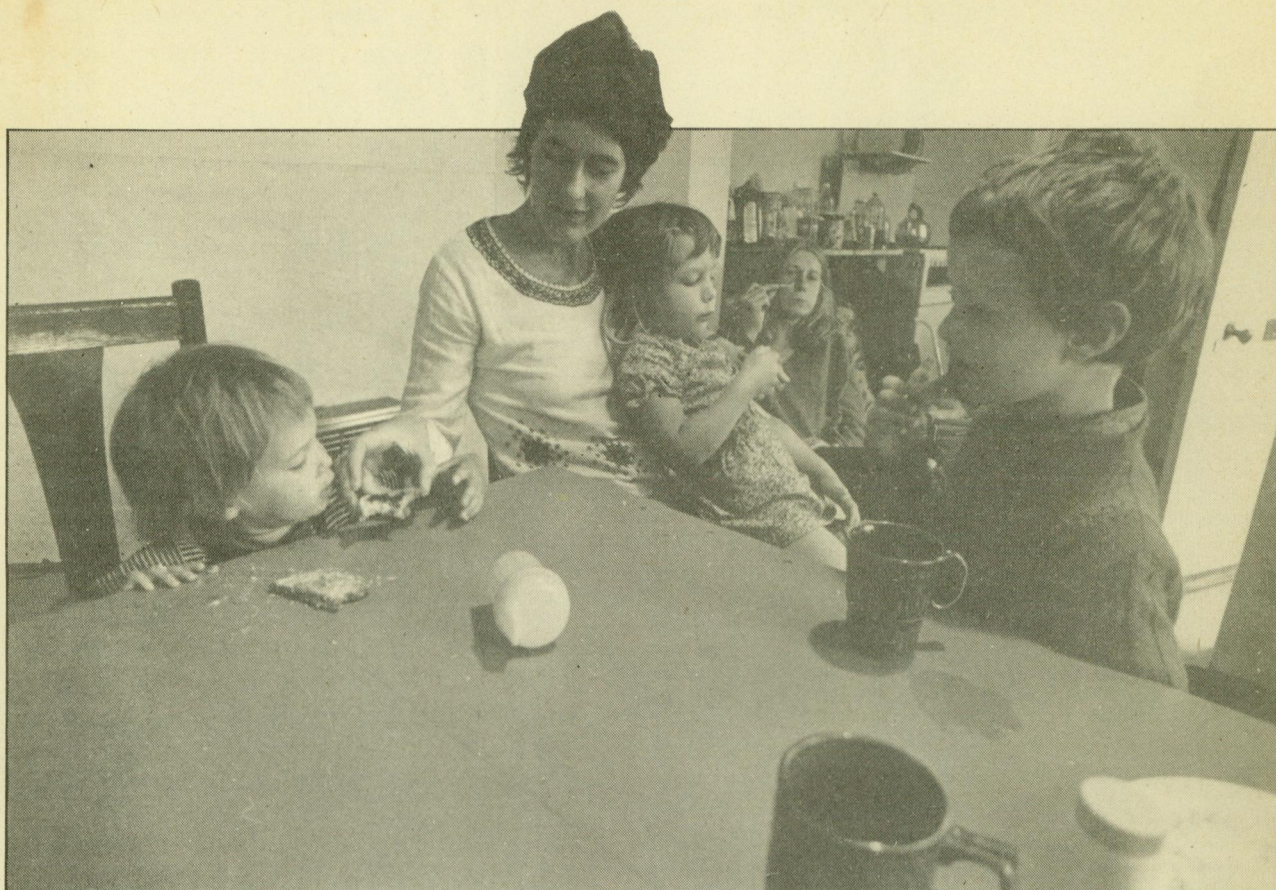
retreat was to last a week, and I had never before spent more than a couple of nights away from my husband. During the retreat I lay in bed one night with the baby for comfort, crying because I felt so alone.

But I wasn't alone, there were about eight other women staying with me. I felt alone because my regular lifestyle had been completely turned upside-down; even the house had been rearranged. I had no familiar supports around me, except perhaps the baby, so I gave her plenty of attention! When she

slept, though, I had no choice but to throw myself in to whatever was happening.

Whilst I was on retreat my husband was away on a men's retreat. When he came home we both knew that we'd had a taste of something good, a taste of experiencing ourselves standing on our own two feet without depending on each other. We talked whilst I was washing the nappies. The idea of single-sex communities now made sense to me. 'Yes, one day we'll live separately', I said, 'One day, but not just yet'.

During the next few years we tried living in a family community, then back into a home of our own again, from where we both realised we were thoroughly disillusioned with family life. My husband moved into a nearby men's community and I eventually chose to live on my own with the children, after a few valuable experiences of living with other women and children. Valuable, but unsuccessful in the long term because there wasn't enough commitment involved to what we were trying to do. I still consider, as an ideal,



Srimala and daughters out to tea.

Vajradipa

communities for women and children. But I have learnt from mine and other's experiences that they cannot be rushed into and should ideally be started with an assortment of women who are pregnant, have young babies, or who have no children at all: that is to say, women who have not already had experience of living as mothers within the nuclear family. I feel this because within the nuclear family it is virtually impossible to avoid establishing patterns and habits. We condition ourselves within the situation, for example, by setting up patterns of behaviour corresponding to our different ideas on how to bring up children, or by developing habits according to the degree or ways in which we are dependent upon other members of the family. These established patterns are very likely to create a substantial resistance to the radical approach which is necessary in the building up of a community.

The situation in Norwich, where I now live, is going very well in the direction of community living. Within ten minutes walk of my house are five house-holds of Friends, many of whom are women with children. We have a positive, supportive group as an alternative to the nuclear family. Most of the children go to the same school, they know each other well and spend time in each other's houses. This allows the mothers to spend time away on retreat, to go out to work, or to do one of many things that are virtually impossible with children around.

So this is the situation I am in at present. I don't pretend it was easy arriving at it but I am very glad I have done so. I now experience myself more and more as a human being in my own right, rather than as half of a couple. I enjoy a real friendship with my husband rather than projecting onto him my other half, or seeing in him what I could have been

developing in myself.

A criticism that has been aimed at my family set-up is 'What about the children? Surely they need a father around?' From my own experience I have come to the conclusion that what is good for me is good for them, directly or indirectly. Shanti, my eldest daughter, recently said to me, 'Most children live with their daddies don't they? So they see them most of the time. But we look forward to seeing ours.' I felt it quite a strain trying to be both mother and a father to the children but I recognise how valuable that has been for me in terms of my own development as an individual.

I chose to have children before I really came into contact with the spiritual life, and this is where my main area of conflict and frustration lies, in that I find I have limited myself.

To my children I am simply 'Mother', and I sometimes long for them to grow up and treat me as a real person.

If I want to break out of the merry-go-round of conditioned existence I simply have to face up to my situation in it, to my responsibilities, and then I can appreciate the compensations which counteract the difficulties.

Although I feel limited by having children I also feel very lucky that I have experienced giving birth and that I have the opportunity of watching and encouraging the growth of two young human beings. When I experience my situation as limiting then at least I have objective difficulties to work with which are so tangible they outweigh tendencies to indulge in subjective or psychological problems. And although I find it difficult to absorb myself deeply in other activities I do have a structure to work in. And when I have space, to go away on retreat for example, then I really make the most of it — no missing early morning meditations for me!

Srimala

'Exactly where I want to be'

By now, perhaps, the 'insider' 'outsider' divide might be looking less simple. But if you can speak of 'insiders', then Subhuti must be a good example of one.

Subhuti

I have lived in FWBO men's communities for the past nine years. Before that I had lived on my own, with a woman, with student friends, at boarding school, and with my parents and brothers. There is no doubt in my mind that it is the men's communities which suit me best. Padmaloka, the community in which I now live, is the most intensive of all those I have been in and suits me best of all. Every now and again I am startled to realise that I have managed to arrange my life much as I want it. I can follow through all my various interests and all my needs are met. Much of the time, I am very contented with my way of life and if I am not it is clear to me that it is subjective factors which are disturbing me and not my situation.

Padmaloka is a large country house about six miles from Norwich in which seventeen of us live and work. Most of the community members work either in the candle workshop, or on the conversion of some barns we have recently purchased, or in the garden. Many of them scarcely leave Padmaloka for weeks on end. This does not, however, mean that they are 'shut off from the world': there is a constant stream of people coming for events and retreats, to visit the community, or to see the Ven. Sangharakshita, who lives at Padmaloka most of the time.

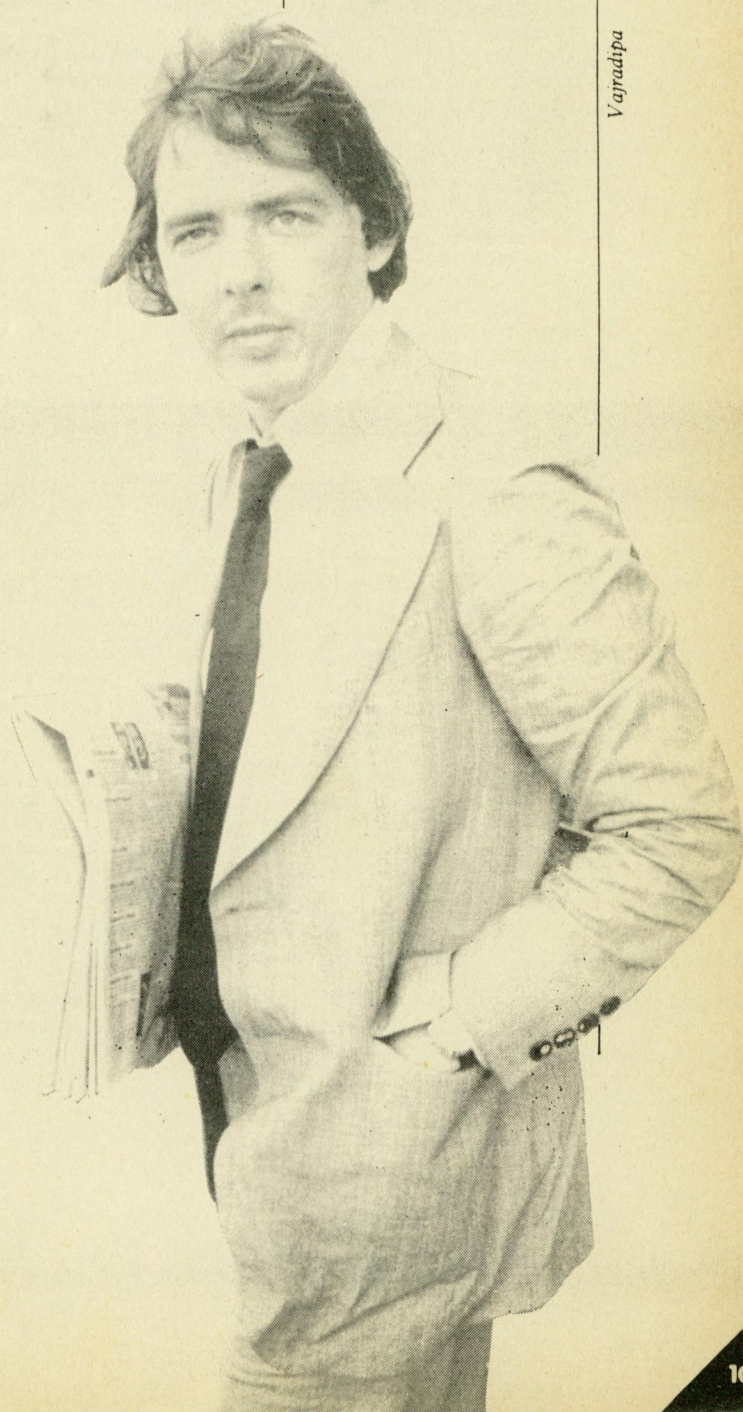
My own life is strung between the relatively ordered

rhythm of the community and a wide and unpredictable range of contacts and activities outside the community. Every month I spend a few days in London for various meetings and at other times I give talks and lead seminars all over the country. Even when I am at Padmaloka I spend quite a bit of my time on the phone or talking to people who have come to see me. But the community is the bedrock of my life to which I return with gladness whenever I have been away.

When I am at Padmaloka I get up most mornings at about quarter-to-six, with three Mitras, and for an hour we do the 'Going for Refuge and Prostration Practice'. This involves bowing before the shrine, full length, one hundred times whilst visualising various Buddha figures and reciting some verses. In this way we start the day by expressing mentally, vocally, and physically what we are trying to make the fundamental concern of our lives: the realisation within ourselves of the qualities of a Buddha. The practice is very invigorating and leaves me with a sense of solid purpose. At seven o'clock the rest of the community joins us for an hour of meditation. I usually sit on for a further period — so my day starts with some three hours of meditation. This has a very important effect upon my whole day. If I am at all successful in my efforts to meditate, the influence of the meditative state is with me all the time. Unless I have that basis my work easily becomes routine and, since the work I do spreads me thinly over a number of different concerns, it

is quite easy for me to gradually fragment during the course of a day into a thousand eddying thoughts and distractions. Having had that firm experience of meditation it is easier to form an integrated whole of my daily experience.

It is quite difficult to describe my working day since I have a number of different responsibilities, concerns, and interests. My principle function is as one of Bhante's two secretaries, which means that I am involved in activities



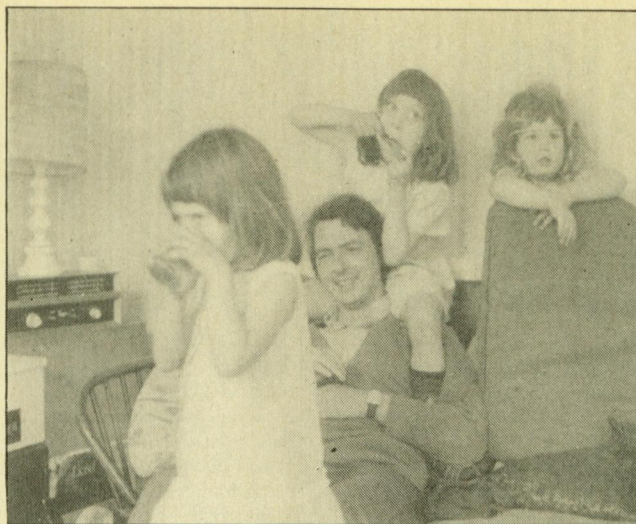
Vajradipa

Upasaka Subhuti.

throughout the Movement. We also follow national and international news, and try to make contact with as many people as we consider might be interested in the FWBO and Buddhism. I also do some writing — I have just completed a book about the FWBO — and I am Chairman of Padmaloka. There is a very great deal to be done and sometimes I seem to be dealing with an interruption three times removed from what I set out to do. However, I love my work and I know that it is a worthwhile contribution that I make. Working directly for the Ven. Sangharakshita it is very easy to feel that one is helping in the 'Great Work of the world's well-being'. I am particularly glad to work for him, both out of gratitude for what he has already done, and because I know that his secretariat can assist him to do a great deal more.

I have also, of course, to do my duties as a member of the community: cooking twice a month, washing up four or five times, house cleaning twice a week, and attending weekly house meetings. We have a community study group one evening and the following morning every week which I lead. This is often, for me, one of the high points of community life. We are studying the *Bodhicaryavatara*, a strongly devotional mediaeval Buddhist text which describes the mind of a Bodhisattva — one who has developed to the point at which he has transcended narrow self-concern and is working to help all living creatures out of his natural sympathy with them. The consideration of this lofty ideal brings us together in a new light and places our daily life together in a wider and more elevated context. On full-moon days we have a day of study and meditation with talks given by community members in the evening.

Every week I try to play a game or two of squash — three of us battle regularly for the honour of first place on the community squash ladder. Two or three times a week I do a



Sometimes his visits give him a taste of family life.

Nagabodhi

session of weight-training in the community gymnasium. Desk-bound as I usually am, I find that this regular exercise is very necessary — without it I begin to seize up mentally.

I spend as much time as I can with others in the community, perhaps spending an evening out with someone walking the country lanes and paths around Padmaloka. I also like to listen to music in my room — usually Handel or Bach — and I try to keep up some reading. I am usually in bed by 10.30pm and am sound asleep almost immediately.

This way of life is clearly very different from the one I might conventionally have been expected to lead — why do I choose to live like this? The orthodox answer is that I live in a men's community because it provides the best opportunities for my growth as an individual. That is of course true, but not very illuminating. The main point is that living in a men's community offers me freedom *with* responsibility. There is almost complete freedom from psychological and emotional entanglements, from the unhealthy pulls and distractions which might embroil one. Yet, at the same time, there is a responsibility in the form of work which is satisfying and

meaningful, of people whom one can care about and get to know more deeply, and of one's spiritual practice: meditation, study, and general effort to be aware.

There is a special atmosphere generated by the community at its best, an almost tangible lightness and brightness in the air, bred of this freedom with responsibility. When I am able to put myself wholeheartedly into life at Padmaloka I am uniquely happy. Everything I want is around me — friendship, work, play, inspiration, stimulation: my every human need can be fulfilled. There is nothing of that sense of something missing, something offered but not quite given, or something given but with strings attached that so often prevails in worldly social situations. It is for that special freedom from entanglement combined with rich opportunity for true engagement that I live in a men's community.

That experience is by no means always available in every FWBO community all the time. Men's communities particularly can devolve into a rather sweaty, changing-room mentality if there is not some effort made by all to be concerned with each other and the community. However, when

that atmosphere is present it is so enjoyable that I sometimes find I am laughing to myself at how fortunate I am to have stumbled into such a way of life.

Whenever I talk to someone about a men's community I find that they immediately begin to wonder — but do not always like to ask, 'What about women and sex?' No one at Padmaloka is required to give them up, and different community members reach their own conclusions about what is healthiest and best for them — although none has a regular 'girl friend'. I have myself decided recently that, delightful as sex can be, it is not worth the emotional turbulence and complication which so often accompanies it for me and which makes it difficult for me to put myself wholeheartedly into the community. When it is going well, life in the community provides such a high standard of freedom, happiness, and clarity that such a decision is not too difficult; things which under other conditions appear to be an essential part of life seem unnecessary and second best.

Everything is not, of course, always smooth and pleasant in the community and I do not always feel completely happy to be here. Padmaloka, particularly, despite its geographical isolation, can be extraordinarily busy — a kind of ongoing crisis with lots of people coming and going and everyone doing different things. I myself get all too easily caught up in this. However, it is never too long before I feel again that I am exactly where I want to be, doing exactly what I want to do. This often seems to happen at meal times when the whole community comes together with the Ven. Sangharakshita at the head of the table. Sometimes we just eat in complete silence, and in that powerful tranquility I feel again that everything and everyone I need is here. I then have no doubt that by being here I am getting to know myself far more deeply and am gradually becoming a far more serviceable individual.

Subhuti

Seizing an opportunity

As an Anagarika, a homeless (lit: cityless) one, observing total sexual abstinence, and fully engaged in Dhamma work in India, Lokamitra represents the farthest end of the lifestyle spectrum. In the middle of an intensely busy schedule, he answered a few questions for us.

Lokamitra

Why did you become an anagarika?

I was coming out to India on a pilgrimage — perhaps a once in a lifetime experience — so I wanted to make the most of it. Later on came my work among the Indian Buddhists, and in India it is by far the most appropriate manner in which to work. By that time I was happy to remain an Anagarika. After all, in the West sex is in the atmosphere all the time. Rarely does one have an opportunity to experiment with, and practise celibacy.

Was it a hard decision to make?

No. — Although of course it involved changes in my life. For some time I had wanted to experiment in this way because sexual abstinence is emphasised as being useful on the spiritual path. Sex so easily becomes a means of escape from oneself. When you are bored it is so easy to turn to sex for some stimulation, instead of really looking within, seeing the nature of the boredom, and trying to develop one's own inner resourcefulness and creativity. If you don't do this you very easily become dependent on others.

Has celibacy been easy?

It is much easier in India than it

would have been in the UK. My experience has been that it definitely lessens your problems. Much more of your energy is available, and it is easier to direct.

In India, where the relationship between the sexes is in my opinion, on the whole, more positive than in the West, one is respected for practising celibacy, and given space accordingly. For example, no woman will touch you or flirt with you.

Would you consider becoming a bhikkhu (a 'monk')?

If I were really to answer this question I would have to go into the relevance of the *principle* of the *bhikkhu sangha* (the community of monks), and the *nature* of the *bhikkhu sangha* as it exists today. Unfortunately I do not have the time to do this now. But suffice it to say that I have met very few bhikkhus indeed who take the Dhamma as seriously as does the average member of the Western Buddhist Order — and I have

met many bhikkhus. I have met even fewer who have an appreciation of spiritual community.

There is also the point that Anagarika Dharmapala made, which is that it is very difficult to work hard for the Dhamma if you are a bhikkhu. As an anagarika I have the benefits of spiritual fellowship, I am celibate and wear robes, with all the impetus to spiritual practice which they give.

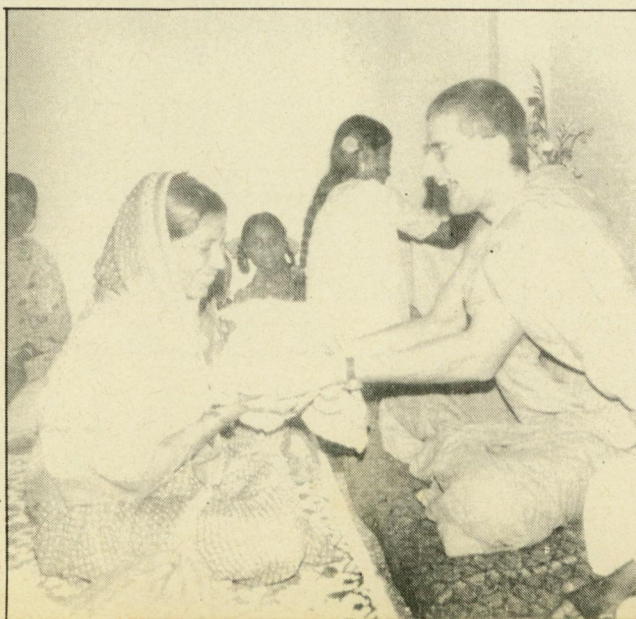
Would you recommend the life of an anagarika?

That would depend upon to whom, and it would depend upon where they were living. To someone who wanted to devote himself fully to Dhamma work, and to practice in India, then yes. I have just one reservation. In some ways people are more open to you as an anagarika, but in others they are not. People often find it hard to communicate openly and directly with someone in robes. They often think that they should appear as being very spiritual, a true follower of the Dhamma, when they are not.

One is often set on a pedestal before people have even got to know you — which makes meaningful communication impossible. Of course there are some bhikkhus who like this, since it means that they do not have to communicate (and anyway they often don't have anything to communicate). For them it is the robes and the being a 'bhikkhu' that matters, rather than the practice of a full-time spiritual life.

Do you believe that it is possible to practise a full-time spiritual life outside the context of celibacy and wearing the robe?

Yes I do. That is born out both by the Pali Canon and by our experience in the West. On the other hand, as Buddhists we are trying to transcend our worldly conditioning. Sex is perhaps the deepest element of that conditioning. After all, it is 'what makes the world go round'. Hence it permeates almost every aspect of worldly life both in the East and in the West (though perhaps in the East it is more subtle and at the same time more honest than in the West). It is therefore going to be helpful for most people practising the Dhamma to put themselves at some distance from this, either in the way they live, or where they live, for some time, for occasional periods. In that way one gets to see the nature of that conditioning more clearly, and to give oneself some space from it.



Lokamitra at a name-giving ceremony.

F A C E T S

Europe

PADMALOKA

Since last May the community has gradually grown in size so that it now stands at seventeen — bigger than ever before. With numerous guests staying for short or long periods there have often been as many as twenty five people there at a time.

The summer period has been one of intensive activity. The building team has completed the conversion of a neighbouring barn into a candle-making workshop and has prepared another barn, which was previously the workshop, into a temporary shrine-room. Since most of the team will be going on the Pre-ordination Intensive Course in Tuscany, work will be suspended until the new year when it is proposed that the shrine-room will be gradually improving the facilities for retreats as money becomes available.

New Workshop

Padmaloka candles has suffered to some extent from the general recession: in previous years orders for Christmas have been in by July. This year stores are delaying as long as they can. This has starved the business of cash mid year. However, the new workshop is both far more pleasant and more efficiently laid out, so they should be able to respond quickly to orders as they do come in. Alan Miller, from New Zealand via Aryatara, has taken over as manager and is on the look-out for promising new workers for the business.

Vessantara joined Subhuti in July in the Ven. Sangharakshita's Secretariat and has been organising the Course in Tuscany. They hope that whilst Bhante is in India they will be able to establish an efficient information system so that leads

can be quickly followed up and many more people can be contacted.

Virabhadra has moved back into the community for a six month period and is working in Great Yarmouth Hospital as a doctor, getting more experience in obstetrics and gynaecology for the medical mission he will be establishing in Pune next year.

The Ven. Sangharakshita will be going almost straight from Italy to India next December. He will be in India for at least two months but may stay longer. He then plans to return to England and to his literary work with a possible tour of UK centres.

Keeping fit

Despite, perhaps because of, its size, business, and the constant flux of visitors the community has been very happy and stimulating. There has been an enthusiasm both for meditation and for study, with several community members giving their first talks at our community full moon day celebrations. The round of physical training continues — there is now a fully equipped weight-training gymnasium in the community; several members are undergoing karate training, tai-chi is taught by a community member, and there is a vigorously contested squash ladder.

From Dec 11th to 2nd January 1982 there will be a men's retreat at Padmaloka, led by Subhuti and Vessantara and, we hope, several newly ordained upasakas back from Tuscany. The retreat will be based on the theme of 'The Three Jewels' — one week devoted to each Jewel. With the new shrine room it should be possible to have more people on retreat. However, you are strongly advised to book now to avoid disappointment for what should be an epic retreat.

WEST LONDON

Friends Foods in Notting Hill gate, which was opened by the West London Centre in May, is

becoming a single-sex business run by the women of the Centre.

This follows a plan developed some time ago when it was known that two of the workers would go to Tuscany on the three-month retreat with Bhante, and the gardening business established by the men was settling down. Seven women will run the shop with part-time help.

Centre chairman Ratnavira, who is currently looking for new centre premises, now that the businesses are working smoothly, reports that although the shop has been slow to start with, it increases its takings each week, and attracts a growing number of regular customers. Although the West London Centre still operates from Fitzjohn's Avenue, Hampstead, a larger and more suitable building is the next major step.

LBC

It is interesting to note that, in terms of the co-op at least, there are now more women involved in Bethnal Green than men, and with the departure of three mitras from Sukhavati, to Tuscany, they are taking more prominent roles.

This growth is perfectly illustrated by the

opening on July 13, of the expanded Cherry Orchard, which is run by women. When it was first opened, the restaurant seated 45, but it has been evident for some time that its growing popularity made an expansion project necessary.

Night Shift

For two weeks, Friends, mitras and Order members worked on the building scheme, taking the Cherry Orchard through into the old hardware shop next door. Towards the end of the fortnight, the building team were working through the night in order to finish it for an 'Aid for India' benefit dinner, Padmasambhava Day, and the official opening. Incidentally, the decor remains the same but, because of the increased space available, — it now seats 70 — the working team has been able to expand to cope with the extra custom.

The work at the FWBO's public centres, co-ops, communities and retreats is a major part of the Movement's work, but in addition the Order is increasingly invited to talk about Buddhism and its practical application in a Western context by a variety of educational and industrial groups.

Order members from the LBC regularly travel to schools and colleges, mainly around London, to explain how and why the FWBO works. Schools



Some of the women from the E. London Co-op.

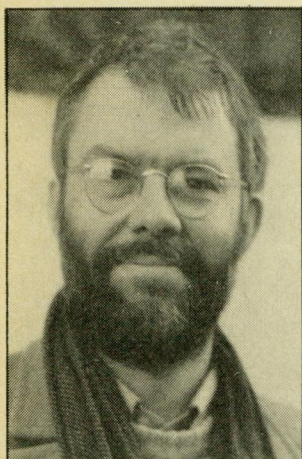
Vajradipa

visited last term range from local comprehensives to Greycoats Hospital.

FWBO EDUCATION

Of course, the FWBO does not just wait for invitations from various educational groups. For some years now, Order members and mitras have run or been involved in adult education classes in London and elsewhere.

One of the major projects that Vangisa was working on before his death last year was the establishment of "FWBO Education", which he hoped would co-ordinate the FWBO's involvement with England's educational network.



Vajradipa

His basic ideas have been continued by other members of the FWBO Education committee chaired by Vajradipa and on the weekend of November 21/22 1981, a course designed for teachers is being given at the LBC.

The first of its kind ever to be held, it is aimed particularly at teachers who teach Buddhism as part of comparative religion courses in schools and colleges. The two-day course will cover such questions as the alleged pessimism of Buddhism, its relevance to the West, as well as introducing two basic meditation practices taught within the FWBO. More details from the LBC.

LBC hosts GLC

Ken Livingstone, the Socialist leader of the Greater London Council, paid a visit to the LBC complex in September despite being in the midst of a much-publicised political controversy.

He was invited by Alan Angel and the Phoenix Community Housing Co-operative specifically to discuss communities and co-ops and to see them in action. He visited Windhorse Associates and the various businesses around the LBC including Friends Foods where he bought some apricots.

He was clearly impressed by what he saw — not only by the businesses but also by Sukhavati community and the LBC reception room and main shrine room.

For over two hours he talked with co-op members — indicating that the GLC was willing to encourage small business projects such as those the FWBO had initiated — and concluded his visit with lunch at the Cherry Orchard.

SURREY

FWBO Surrey and the Rainbow Co-operative have recently encountered financial difficulties. Their building company, which had regular work from a short life housing trust, was laid off due to the recession. This has effected income to the extent that changes had to be made in the plans for the new project in Croydon. Instead of being placed in a conservatory at the back of the premises, the main seating area of the restaurant is to go upstairs. What this means is that the planned Croydon Buddhist Centre will start life much smaller than hoped. Even so they will run meditation courses and classes, introductory courses to Buddhism and yoga classes at the



Hockneys — the new Friends' restaurant in Croydon.

Devaraja

premises. Some of these will be held at lunch times to cater for the large number of local office workers. The room at the back of the premises will also be used for public lectures, film shows and poetry and music events. Eventually when finances allow, there will be a purpose built shrine room. As for the restaurant, the design has changed. It will now follow the inspiration of the Bradford-born artist David Hockney. Hockney's style is simple, bright, healthy and colourful. This is exactly the kind of feeling that they want to evoke, not just in the decor, but in the food and the atmosphere as well. Padmavajra explained further, 'Hockneys will be a kind of gallery with a permanent display of reproductions by David Hockney and other artists. We'll also be on the look out for good, original work by new artists.'

Meanwhile 'Friends Foods' is trading very briskly and the

other business, Rainbow Builders, is already finding new, lucrative work. Hopefully by the end of the year they will be bringing in the money again.

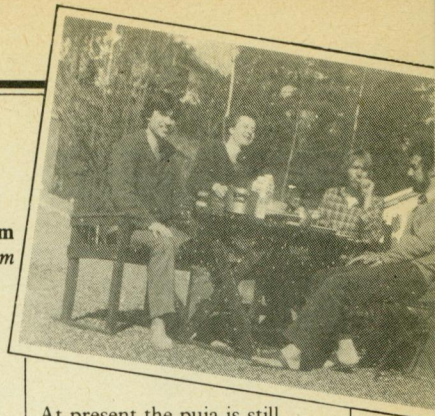
Buddha Day

Buddha Day was celebrated jointly with the West London Centre. They spent the day in retreat and in the evening threw the doors open to the public. Close on 100 people were there including many children who used the large garden as a playground. The highlights of the evening were the excellent buffet supper, a talk by Padmavajra on the life of the Buddha, and a magnificent firework display. While the golden catherine wheels turned and the rockets penetrated the night sky, Handel's 'Music for the Royal Fireworks' could be heard in the background.

Dharma Day was celebrated in a quieter but no less memorable way with a symposium of three talks on three different aspects of the Dharma. Ashokashri described how the Buddha came to give his first discourse, Devaraja gave an exposition of the Four Noble Truths and Padmavajra spoke on the Dharma as Communication.

Padmasambhava Day was

Sona (right) with the Stockholm community. FWBO Stockholm



celebrated with Friends from the Brighton Centre. Once again talks were an important feature of the day. There were two: one by Tejananda on 'Padmasambhava the Vajra Guru,' and the other by Padma-vajra on 'Padmasambhava the Compassionate Sorcerer.' Both the talks not only communicated information on Padma-sambhava, they more importantly communicated different sparkling facets of the Jewel that he is. The puja lead by Devaraja included the Order members present reciting together Bhante's translation of the invocation to Padmasambhava and extended chanting of the Padmasambhava mantra.

GLASGOW

Work on the new Centre in Sauciehall Street, in the centre of Glasgow, has come to a temporary halt. After working on the building for nearly a year, and spending in the region of £20,000, the Glasgow Friends ran out of money in July and the building team, under Padmapani, decided to stop altogether and concentrate on fund-raising, rather than limp along with one or two workers.

'Estimates have escalated dramatically since the work started, but at the same time Padmapani has insisted on an incredibly high standard of finish,' explained Aryamitra. 'Even though his plans may cause difficulties now, we think that in the end he will be right.' The building needs about another £15,000 spent on it (at present day prices) and about six to nine months work to complete.

FWBO Glasgow is now considering opening it partially in the new year with just a small shrine room and one reception room while the large shrine room, which will eventually seat 200, is finished at a more leisurely pace.

INK Spreads

Apart from this minor setback, FWBO Glasgow appears to be strengthening, with the gardening business doing well, and Ink, the printing business expanding now that it has merged with Windhorse Press. Ink now boasts a team of six and, unlike most Glaswegian printing businesses, is very optimistic about the future.

Although the Scottish Mens Retreat, held in the solitary environment of Lock Sunart in the old hunting lodge, was quite small, with just 14 people, it was successful — and unusual.

Led by Ajita, only the *metta bhavana* (the development of universal loving-kindness) was practiced, apart from a couple of *stupa* visualisations. Aryamitra remarked, 'Glasgow is a very hard city and the people here are quite hard, and I think it softened those on the retreat in a very subtle way.'

STOCKHOLM

This year spring seemed to come very suddenly. In the last week of April there were still occasional snow showers in Stockholm.

Then suddenly spring exploded as the sun shone more fiercely. Many people left the city at every opportunity to enjoy the beauty of the forests, or the islands surrounding Stockholm — which may explain why there was so little response to our six week beginners' meditation course and weekly yoga class.

However, the small mens' community which started immediately after the Order/Mitra Event at Vinehall, quickly developed that feeling of warmth and friendliness so common in FWBO communities. The whole community had attended the Vinehall Event. Two of the members had no previous experience of a mens' retreat but they soon developed an appreciation of what the FWBO is really trying to do, with the result that both of them asked to become mitras.

Mitras

Towards the end of May on the Saturday following the full-moon day we celebrated Buddha Day. This was the first public festival we had held, and although attended by only eighteen of our Friends it proved to be a very happy occasion. During the puja Lars and Kenneth became mitras.

During the early part of the summer we continued the Friends' evening, which followed a programme of meditation, live talk, and puja.

At present the puja is still recited in English but already one of the mitras has made a preliminary translation which we hope to see published by the end of the year. There has also been some other work carried out on the translation of *Mind — Reactive and Creative*, but it may be sometime before we can really start producing Swedish versions of FWBO literature.

Apart from a weekend beginners retreat we held the first intensive meditation retreat. This was attended by eight men and we followed a programme of eight hours of meditation per day for 3 days.

Retreat

Towards the end of June, two members of the community left for retreats and one of the mitras worked as a doctor in a hospital in northern Sweden. This meant that there were no activities taking place in the FWBO in Stockholm for the larger part of the summer. This may prove a regular practice: classes for nine months of the year and spending the summer months on retreats, or visiting centres in Finland or England.

The European Summer retreat was not so well attended as on previous years but as usual those participating enjoyed the peace and beauty of Stenfors.

In early September a programme consisting of beginners meditation and yoga classes, a study group, and the regular Friends evening, has been planned, as well as monthly weekend retreats, and some day retreats.

Sona

USA

BOSTON

American cities are divided into neighbourhoods, each of which has a commonly accepted 'safety rating':



Sometimes the Glasgow gardening team go in for specialised building work.

safety, that is, from the dangers of mugging and rape. The neighbourhood where we have our community and Centre does not rate very highly — although it is a pleasant enough place to live in — so many people are dissuaded from visiting us. For this reason we are thinking of moving the Centre to a more acceptable location, and finding another home for our community.

Our activities are, however, attracting a few regular friends and, through our talks, meditation classes, and massage classes, we are gradually putting the FWBO onto the map, and making more contacts. We are also re-establishing old friendships with Friends on the West Coast, in New York City, and in Philadelphia.

Support

One of our main concerns at the moment is the means by which we support ourselves and the Centre. At present, each of us in the community works at temporary full-time or part-time jobs. We would like to be able to work together in some way, but have yet to decide if setting up our own business would be the most suitable use of our energy. Meanwhile we are learning to live in this new environment, and to enjoy the sense of freedom and potential that permeates American culture.

Manjuvajra

India

With the onset of the monsoon rains, the changes seem almost miraculous. The formerly hot, dusty ground now smells sweet and fresh. Within a few days green shoots start appearing everywhere. The golf course outside our

office at Parnakuti Society, which for most of the year looks like a barren desert, now has a lush covering of greenery. It almost looks like a golf 'green'.

With the rains come a bursting forth of all sorts of life, plants, young animals, birds and, less fortunately, every conceivable form of insect, from mosquitos and ants to beetles and crickets. The rains in India are a time of new life, growth, expansion, and here one understands very well why the Buddha is compared to a great rain-cloud, and the Dhamma to the downpour of rain; a downpour that refreshes, injecting new life and energy, an agent of growth and seemingly miraculous transformation.

Expansion

Quite in keeping with the spirit of the present rains, the movement here has seen a lot of growth and expansion over the last few months. Lokamitra and Purna have been doing programmes in new towns such as Manmad, Bhusawal and Igat-puri, programmes in new localities of 'old' spheres of activity in Ahmedabad, Pune, Ahmednagar, Aurangabad and

Bombay. In Bombay for the first time both Lokamitra and Purna did programmes in different ends of Dharavi, a square mile or so of slum hutments, reputed to be the biggest slum in the world, with something like 300,000 inhabitants. In Ahmedabad, Bakul, Ratnakar and a team of our Friends have been working intensely in many of the localities affected by the rioting earlier in the year. The immediate fruits of their efforts have been several hundred families formally embracing Buddhism. Classes are full to overflowing and weekly meetings are now conducted in five different areas of Ahmedabad.

On the air

On Buddha Day, over May 17th and 18th, Chandrabodhi and Purna did five programmes in the Bombay area, while Sagaramati gave a talk in the Railway Institute Hall in Pune. At his programme, much to his surprise, Sagaramati was asked to do a radio programme, which was then promptly done in the back of a car with a sea of faces at the windows, all trying to see what was happening. It seems the taped interview was subsequently broadcast. At the end of

May we were loaned the indefinite use of an apartment in Pune by a Friend, Mr Moray. The apartment has seen very busy use, what with Order weekends, day retreats most Sundays, and even a solitary retreat by Dharmaditya.

Publications

Probably the most spectacular area of expansion in the movement here at present is in our publishing work. For the May issue of our Marathi language quarterly magazine *Buddhayan* the printing went up to 3000 from the normal 2000 copies, and next issue in August will have a run of 4000, to cater for the continually expanding demand.

Dharmamegha, our English language magazine containing Bhante's lectures and writings, is now into its 4th number and continues to sell well. On Dhamma Day, July 17th, our new release of *Buddharva Manvaca Adarsh*, a Marathi translation of Bhante's *Human Enlightenment*, was simultaneously launched in Pune by Purna, and in Aurangabad by Lokamitra. Translated by Vimalakirti, the Marathi edition of *Human Enlightenment* is the first of many translations that



Opening the bookstall in Pune.

Sagaramati

we propose to bring out this year. Next planned are Marathi versions of Bhante's Eightfold Path lectures and *Buddha and the Caste System* by Ven. Dhammaratna.

July also saw the expansion of the right livelihood aspect of the movement, with the opening of our new bookstall in what must be one of the best sites in Pune, right outside the main gates of Dr Ambedkar Gardens. One of our Mitras, Dhammanana, has left his teaching job and is now employed full-time as manager of the stall. Looking rather like a large sentry box, the bright blue steel structure has already attracted a lot of attention and is helping to make us quite well known in Pune. Among other things, the already healthy level of sales will ensure that the present spurt of expansion and growth in the movement won't be dying out with the end of the rains either.

Purna

Australia

Vipula and Greg Harman are now beginning our first Right Livelihood venture, under the name of Bell and Candle Bookbinding. Initial intensive advertising around libraries, scientific and geology firms and universities will hopefully yield some work. Second-hand bookshops and 'off the street' enquiries will also boost productivity. The first two jobs are now being started and prospects for work look very promising.

The business premises are airy with bright red working surfaces, newly painted, giving a very harmonious environment, so important in an area where much time is spent during the day. Dipankara and Dharmamati are now engaged in freelance building work. Job prospects in this area are high

and public response to Dipankara's advertisements has been good.

Getting known

Meditation classes have now started at the community, and while the initial response has been small, those people who have responded attend regularly and show a positive measure of enthusiasm for practice. The classes are being advertised in the local newspaper and there are a few posters up in various shop windows, but word of mouth contact has so far been our most successful way of meeting new friends.

Rosemary Sharples arrived with her daughter Cara to live in Sydney and meet up with her husband Vipula, so the search is under way for more accommodation close to the men's community. Rosemary has her ideas moving in the eventual direction of a Buddhist school in Sydney, a venture which is needed here, and which could provide a stimulating and creative learning situation away from the strictures of Christianity which underlie much of the school system in Sydney.

All through the night

Dharma Day provided a highlight with an all-night meditation session led by Dharmamati. The evening began with a Sevenfold Puja during which the *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta* was read. Dharmamati, Vipula, Steve Keen, Greg Harman, Dave Rice and Jenny Jacobs then proceeded to sit the night away. By 6.30 the next morning the energy in the shrine room was high and vibrant.

On a personal note, I am finding life here at the Sydney community a challenge. I am constantly having to keep an awareness of my mental states alive as different situations arise. Everything does not always run smoothly amongst people aspiring to individuality but it is in situations that are not easy that the potential for growth lies, a valuable lesson that is

learnt in life with the Sangha.

Greg Harman

N.Zealand

Attendance at the Auckland Buddhist Centre has never been so high as during the recent Winter months.

Apart from an unusually mild winter there seem to be two main reasons for this increase in numbers. Firstly we made sure that the winter programme of events was thoroughly publicised by massive distribution drives of posters and programmes all over Auckland, through more extensive use of radio announcements, and by an upgrading of our newspaper advertising. Secondly, the programme itself has been very full, intensive and varied.

We have made more use of the Centre over the past few months than ever before, running a very full programme of classes and events. Our main beginners evening is Thursdays when we run 5 week meditation courses. The first one of the Winter Programme attracted 25 new people. This is the first

Charges

Meditation Course we have charged for, and as we attracted a very lively, healthy group of people, who maintained their attendance, we shall continue to charge for this evening. The Tuesday Open Nights throughout the past months have consisted of a variety of talks and study groups. The talks were mainly on the theme of archetype, myth and symbol in Buddhism. At the moment Buddhadasa is giving a series of four public lectures on this particular evening on the 'Blossoming of the Dharma'.

Mondays continue to be Study Night for Mitras and invited Friends, the study sometimes giving way for a series of Speakers Classes. Wednesday Night continues to be Puja night, a feature of recent classes being an in-depth look at the Bodhisattvas whose mantras we chant at the conclusion of the Puja. Weekends have been taken up with Meditation Days, Residential Retreats, and Dharma Study weekends at the Centre.

During the Autumn and Winter months we have also celebrated two of the major Buddhist Festivals, Buddha Day and Dharma Day, both of which were celebrated in a much more festive way than in previous years, the Centre being bedecked with banners and streamers. The highlight of Dharma Day, apart from the talk and the Puja, was a three part reading in the afternoon of the whole of the Diamond Sutra. Another very successful event was a screening of the Ven. Sangharakshita's public Lecture 'The Taste of Freedom' on video.

Film Night

On the more social side, and as fund raising events, we have had three food and film evenings at the Centre, showing 'In the Footprint of the Buddha', 'Hamlet' and 'The Magus'. As regards fundraising, we are getting much more direct support in the form of Monthly Standing Donations, as well as making bath cleaners for sale, selling native trees as part of Conservation week and continuing to collect goods for the forthcoming market stall.

Outgoingness has also been very much a theme of the past few months and we are planning a number of talks at societies in town, a course at a Naturopathy College, a lunchtime talk at a local bookshop, and a day seminar and a course in the Continuing Education department of the University. Talks in Schools are well under way, and we are trying to gain official

Two Visualisation Retreats

In early June, nine Order members went to Vajraloka for the first Avalokiteshvara Sadhana retreat to be held in the Western Buddhist Order. The retreat, led by Padmaraja, was an opportunity to practice visualisation under ideal conditions, for working in a busy Co-op one cannot really give visualisation practice the time and space that it needs to unfold.

The retreat started with Padmaraja going through the text of the Sadhana. Known as 'The Practice of Mahamudra and Maha Karunika Conjointly', it is quite a difficult one, with many obscure and subtle details. Fortunately, a week before the retreat, the Ven. Sangharakshita had gone over the Sadhana with

Padmaraja, answering his questions and explaining its difficult parts.

The retreat programme consisted of two three-hour sessions that began with the *metta bhavana*, continued with the meditation on the relinquishing of the six elements of the body, and culminated with an

hour long session of the Sadhana itself. In the evening there was another period of the *metta bhavana* followed by a Seven-fold Puja, with readings centered upon Avalokiteshvara. Most of the retreat was held in complete silence.

This kind of retreat is a very important preparation for a solitary retreat because it actually teaches people how to practice visualisation. For many of the Order members attending it was a first thorough taste of their visualisation practice, and provided a firm base on which they could build.

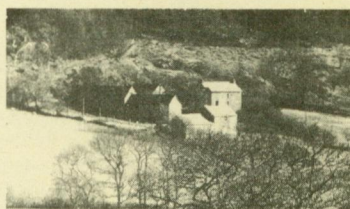
With everybody present practising the same Sadhana, a very strong feeling was developed between the Order members and towards the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, Avalokiteshvara. So strong was this feeling that one felt that Avalokiteshvara was there Himself.

The second men's visualisation retreat, held shortly after, again at Vajraloka, was devoted to another practice widely maintained by members of the WBO — the visualisation of Manjughosha, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom.

Fifteen Order members from all over the country attended the retreat which was led by Hridaya. The meditations were interspersed with study and discussion. Included in the week's retreat were two days of complete silence.

Vajraloka Meditation Centre

The Buddhist Meditation Centre
of North Wales



set in the quiet, rugged hills of North Wales, Vajraloka provides the ideal situation for intensive meditation.

There is a continuing men's retreat, with a programme of silence and meditation. Come for a few days or a few weeks and deepen your meditation practice in ideal conditions.

There are sometimes women's retreats also.

For details phone the LBC office (01-981 1225) or to book, write to

Vajraloka, Tyn-y-Ddol, Corwen,
LL21 0EN, Wales.

A brochure is available at all FWBO Centres.



prison visiting status in the prisons of Auckland. We have donated five series of Bhante's lectures to the Blind Institute. A further venture in outgoingness has been to set up a stall in the main street of town on Friday nights, where we give out programmes and posters and engage passers-by in conversation.

Efficiency

We now rent the whole of the top floor of our building, and plan to convert the extra rooms into better office space, connect a telephone, move the administrative base to the centre, hopefully man the Centre full-time, and possibly develop an office services business. This should all lead to greater efficiency, greater possibilities for involvement and contact, and a much greater use of the Centre space.

So rather than consolidate or turn inwards over the winter months, we have expanded and very much moved outwards. With the advent of Spring, the return of warmer weather, the prospect of Summer retreats and the launching of our Spring Programme, we expect to see the Centre overflowing with new people over the next few months.

Dhammadinna

NEW OM IN FINLAND

Over the past few months visitors have come to Padmaloka from all over the Movement. Most recently Ratnapriya and a mitra, Kimmo Koskinen, from Finland, were there for a few days. On August 13th the community — and some eight guests — had a retreat which culminated in Kimmo's ordination. He was given the name Shantiraja — 'the King of Peace'. As Bhante commented, the world needs peace as never before and that element of peace and harmony should be very much present in our own Movement. That peace is not, of course, a weak and spiritless state but a truly creative one — 'Peace is a fire'.

Aid for India



Tim Lilley on a recruiting drive.

Kulamitra

Over the four months, April to July, the 'Aid for India' Pune Project Appeal raised covenants and cash to the value of £233,500.00. £6,500 of this total was raised in cash and, after deductions for appeal expenses, £5,500 has been immediately sent to India. £33,000 is expected to accrue to the Project over the next 12 months from the covenants which have been raised.

Nineteen Order members, mitras and Friends worked on this appeal at various times, the majority of them for a period of eight weeks. Most of them found the work very demanding but nearly everyone, also, found that they got an enormous amount out of it.

Perks

What does Aid for India have to offer the FWBO as a work situation? Firstly, it is a chance for everyone to reach out to people outside the Movement. Secondly, it demands that you give of your best every minute you are working.

This is a considerable challenge. Discipline and under-

standing yourself play a large part in the work — qualities which, if not possessed before working on the project are learned during it.

Thirdly, there is the opportunity to work towards a specific target. Everyone who works for eight weeks expects to find £10,000. This target means that you are up against it all the time, trying to find the 2.5 covenants each week that constitute eventual success. This objective definition of what success is gives the work a bite which everyone finds stimulating to say the least.

Fourthly, the appeals are run along professional lines with full training provided. By the end of the training course, you fully understand what you have to do to raise the target figure and you have practiced with other novice fund raisers. Full professional support is provided continually throughout each Appeal.

On your own

Fifthly, in the end you are on your own. You must stand or fall by what you are and what you can make of the training. This is the crucial area, the real challenge — almost everyone matures considerably after living

on the streets for eight weeks.

Of the 14 people who worked on the second eight-week period, only four did not make the target. Kulamitra is to be congratulated for a particularly good appeal. He raised £24,000 in eight weeks. He was totally eclipsed, however, by Nick Rhodes, a mitra from Aryatara who raised £23,000 in just four weeks!

'Aid for India' is running two more eight-week sessions starting on September 17 and October 15. People came from centres all over the country to the previous appeals and we still need 12-14 more for these next sessions. If you feel you would like to work for just eight weeks on an appeal which will provide a medical centre, school and Right Livelihood business facilities for Pune, you will be very, very welcome. Contact Kulamitra at Sukhavati (01-981 1255).

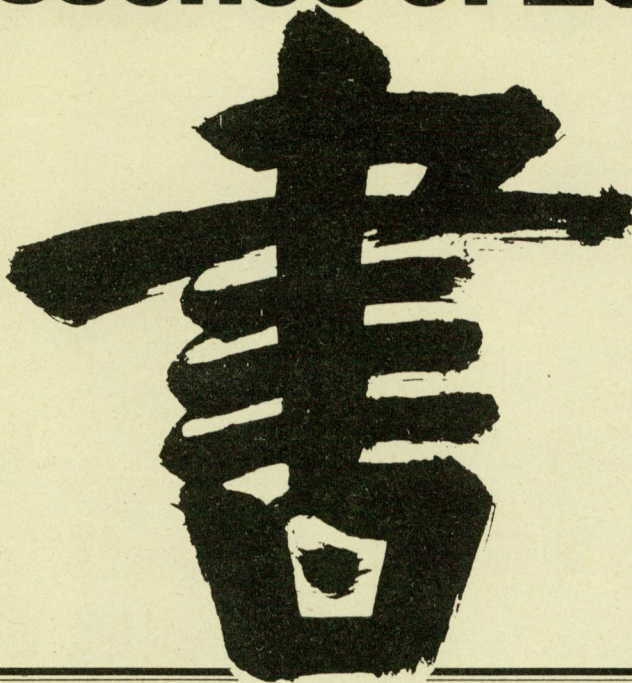
The next appeals will have considerably more emphasis placed on the team meditating together, studying the Dharma together, and discussing the work together. There are also three free week-end retreats for fundraisers at the beginning, middle and end of each appeal.

Tim Lilley

The Essence of Zen

Over the last few months some effort has been going into raising funds to pay for the third edition of Bhante's book, *The Essence of Zen*. This little work has been unavailable for about a year — a great pity since it is an excellent book, and always in demand. It is in fact next in line for treatment by Windhorse Publications.

At present several people around the London Buddhist Centre have asked their friends to sponsor them while they lose weight or give up smoking (the first time such sponsorship schemes have been employed in the FWBO). The money they raise will go towards the reprint. Nagabodhi raised about £525



for the project by doing a tour of five English centres giving a talk entitled 'Why the FWBO is really a secret Zen Buddhist Movement', and taking the dana from each evening. In his talk, Nagabodhi demonstrated that the stanzas 'A special Transmission outside the scriptures/ No dependence on words and letters/ direct pointing to the mind (of man)/ Seeing into ones own nature and realising Buddhahood' not only give an insight into the essence of Zen, as elucidated by Bhante in his book, but also embody the essence of the FWBO.

The money raised so far has allowed Windhorse to buy the paper and print the inner pages. Another £600 will see the cover printed and 2000 copies of the book bound. Donations, of course, will gladly be received.

Going out

Over the past months I have visited a number of different places to give talks and lead seminars. Parami and I went to Atlantic College for their annual Conference on Religion. Each year the two hundred students from all over the world who attend the college are given the opportunity to hear exponents of the major world religions.

We gave three seminars on Buddhism which were well attended and which attracted some vigorous questioning. We taught meditation, and participated in a final 'brains trust'. Unfortunately, the terms in which the discussion took place were so prejudicial that it was almost impossible for us to say anything. All the other religions represented there seemed to take for granted the language of 'god', 'revelation', even 'religion', as did all the questioners. We had to point out that this language is more or less meaningless and definitely unhelpful, since it implies a rigid conception of reality with

overtones of authoritarianism and lack of real individuality. We were astonished at the remarkable unanimity of the other speakers — even the humanist seemed to operate within the same basic framework, even while he denied certain parts of it.

Devamitra and I attended a seminar organised by the Sri Lankan government and the Commonwealth Institute at the Institute in Kensington, London. The seminar was on 'Buddhism and Society' and consisted of three papers read by three academics — only one of whom considers himself to be a Buddhist. Many people came

— perhaps 150-200 — and many of them must have been profoundly disappointed to find that Buddhism had apparently so little of real consequence to say on such an important topic. One speaker even suggested that Buddhism could make a significant contribution to the lessening of social disharmony since its teaching of rebirth shed new light on the controversy over intelligence and heredity. It really did sound as if Buddhism was the armchair pursuit of a privileged minority. This was very much an establishment affair — a prestige show put on by the Sri Lanka Government and the Theravada ecclesiastics.

In May, Padmaraja and I visited the Wolverhampton Buddhist Vihara. The Vihara is run by the Ambedkar Buddha Vihara Trust and is attended by Indian Buddhists who have settled in this country, mainly from the Punjab. We were greeted with very warm hospitality by the Ven. Chandrabodhi, the resident Bhikkhu, and his friends, and partici-

pated in the celebration of *Buddha Jayanti* — 'Wesak'. I gave an address to a meeting of 3-400, and managed to gain some attention from the audience which consisted in part of large numbers of children. We made a number of good friends and hope to return soon.

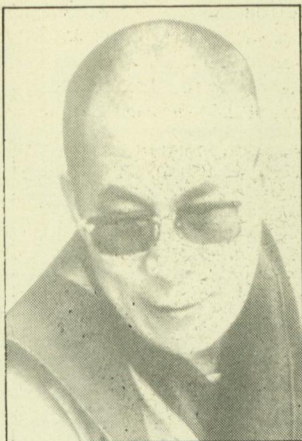
Lastly, I went recently along with a mitra from Padmaloka, Andy Friends, to a meeting of the local Ladies Circle. For an hour and a half about twenty of them bombarded us with questions about every conceivable aspect of Buddhism, the community, and ourselves. It was certainly very much more lively than the conference on 'Buddhism and Society'. They told us afterwards that no-one had ever been able to keep them quiet for so long before and they even implored us to teach them meditation. Several said that if it wasn't for their husbands and children they would love to live in a community! We hope to go again to talk with them.

Subhuti

The Dalai Lama Visits

During the early summer, the Dalai Lama paid a visit to England and made three major public appearances. In addition, he spoke at a few smaller meetings one of which, organised by the Tibet Society and Relief Fund of the UK, was attended by Nicolas Soames.

Most of the questions put to the Dalai Lama were of a political nature, concentrating on the unresolved problems with China, which he answered with his customary warmth, geniality and directness.



H.H. The Dalai Lama

Western Buddhism

During the course of the questions, Nicolas asked him whether he expected the Dharma to change at all in the next 20 years or so in the West. The Dalai Lama replied:

'I think yes... When the Buddhadharma was practised in India, some of the Indian cultural heritage mixed in with it. When that same Buddhism went to Tibet, Mongolia, and China, and further north into some parts of Siberia, the Upper Volta area, the essence of the Buddhadharma remained as it was — yet with some influence

from the local environment and the local cultural heritage. As a result, we say today, "Indian Buddhism," "Tibetan Buddhism," "Chinese Buddhism", and "Japanese Buddhism".

— So why not, in future, "Western Buddhism"? Or "English Buddhism", or "American Buddhism"? I think it is possible. The main Buddhadharma, as it was before, combined with the local influences. And then, with your own cultural influence, it will be more adaptable, but at the same time will remain as Buddhism. That is what I feel. That is your responsibility. Not my responsibility.'

Blasphemy on the Radio

On the evening of 24th May, Nagabodhi took part in an hour-long 'phone-in' programme on the 'London Broadcasting' radio channel. The programme was a response to a proposal made by the British Law Commission (a proposal for discussion only at this stage), that the Law of blasphemy should be removed from the statute book. The commission has suggested that the only grounds for legal action in this sort of connection could be in the case of people committing offensive acts in a place of public worship: a far cry from the present situation.

After making initial statements of their positions, Nagabodhi and Raymond Johnson — London director of the Festival of Light — were questioned by an interviewer, and then over



the 'phone by members of the public.

Nagabodhi argued, naturally enough, for the total repeal of any laws relating to blasphemy, while Mr Johnson argued that such laws were necessary to protect Christians from the unbalancing effects of hearing their beliefs attacked in anything but the most reasonable of terms.

To the surprise of his fellow participants, Nagabodhi went so far as to suggest the positive value of blasphemy — as an antidote to the psychological damage which so often accompanies a Christian religious conditioning. Here he was, of course, working within the arguments presented in the Ven. Sangharakshita's booklet, *Buddhism and Blasphemy*.

Interestingly, of all the callers, not one seemed to favour the existence of blasphemy laws, and most argued strongly against them.

with acknowledgements to Steve (Tinker) Exell

and light a few incense sticks before taking us on a jungle walk.

On the way down from Penang, through the Cameron Highlands to Kuala Lumpur, we visited about every major Buddhist/Taoist temple, including, even, a snake temple populated by poisonous vipers. So it was quite a relief, after a couple of weeks of this, to find in KL a 'pure' Buddhist establishment. The Buddhist Temple run by the Ven. Sri Dharma-nanda, a Sri Lankan monk known for his many small pamphlets on aspects of the Dharma.

Dharmananda has lived for 30 years in Malaysia and is its most prominent Theravada bhikkhu. He has three young Sri Lankan bhikkhus with him who have all trained in their home country but, as yet, no indigeneous Sangha. Certainly, it is not an easy life for the monks.

On the one hand they work from the Theravada tradition within, largely, the Chinese community, (although there are a few Sri Lankan Malaysians involved). Clearly, it is very difficult for the Chinese to consider entering the Sangha and following what appears to be a very rigorous and disciplined life. The pressures are two-fold: the youths themselves find it difficult to identify with the 'full-timers' life, and the Chinese parents are less than encouraging when it comes to their sons entering the Sangha. They expect and want their sons to follow in the family business, and the tradition of ancestral worship remains very strong.

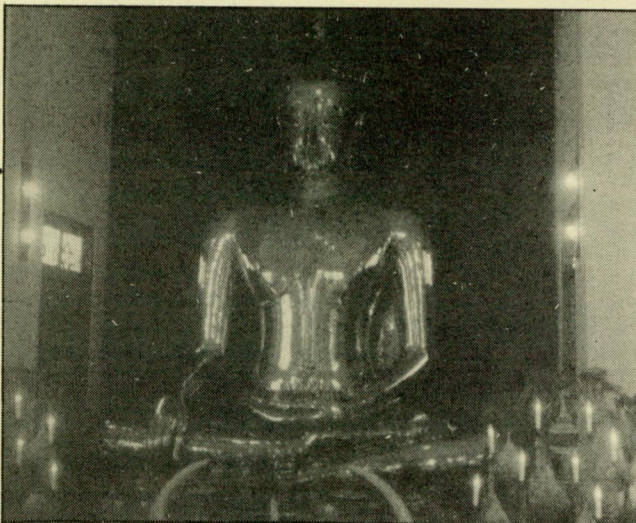
On the other hand, Dharmananda is working within a wider society that is strongly Islamic, and the pervasive religious sentiment is very theistic. An important part of Dharmananda's work is the production of small, useful little booklets. Leaflets are printed by the thousand and distributed, many free of charge. But before each publication can be printed, it has to be cleared by the Islamic authorities and whatever restrictions and difficulties the FWBO encounters in its spread of the

Dharma in England, the official censor is not one.

Establishment

Dharmananda has other difficulties to contend with, not least among them an established congregation. Jenny and I arrived at the temple on the afternoon of Dharmachakra Day, and after

sworn in that day, and the leader of the Chinese Buddhist community at Dharmananda's temple rolled the event into his worthy, but I have to say plati-tudinous address that would have slotted easily into many a church pulpit. This was followed by the chanting, in Pali, of the *Dhammacakkappa-*



A five-ton Golden Buddha in Bangkok.

Nic Soames

talking with the Ven. Dharmananda and one of the other monks, the Ven. K. Wimalajothi Thera — a bright and alert young Sri Lankan, we returned in the evening for the festivities.

The sky was still light as people began to gather, lighting oil lamps in the courtyard in front of the two main buildings. There were also other little shrines in the courtyard, and people began making offerings of (Chinese-size) bunches of incense, flowers, candles, oil, and money. The formal celebrations then began. We all squeezed into the main shrine room — though many had to sit on the porch outside — and, to begin with, chanted the Refuge and Precepts in much the same way (though with a slightly different chant) as we do in FWBO centres. It was inspiring to think that all over the world this common, international thread existed.

The sermon that followed was less illuminating. A new Prime Minister of Malaysia had been

vattana Sutta by the monks alone; and an unplanned, but concise talk from Dharmananda about the uselessness of ritual observances as ends in themselves. It is only too tempting to make superior judgements on the basis of one, short visit, but looking around, I felt there was little difference between the atmosphere and purpose there and the atmosphere and purpose of a typical Western Christian church — which is not to say that I didn't enjoy Dharmachakra Day there. The congregation consisted largely of families — and I speak as a 'family' man myself — and seemed to lack zest and a spirit of personal discovery that I have associated with Buddhism since my involvement with the FWBO. This was clearly also felt by Wimalajothi who afterwards took Jenny and I aside and re-iterated what he had told me that afternoon — that the real interest and spark in the community comes from the young people, the students and

young men and women who take part in Dharma and meditation classes on Sunday mornings and help to run Sunday classes for the children.

It was obvious from the buildings in the courtyard that there is a fair amount of expansion — a new four storey building was in the process of being built. And each year, Wimalajothi told me, a group of 25 young people live as novice monks for a couple of weeks, following the strict Theravada discipline which, on all accounts, they found illuminating — though no one has yet joined the Sangha. But the future is not going to be that easy. The government of Malaysia has indicated that it will not be prepared to grant immigration permits for Sri Lankan monks for very much longer, so the community will have to produce its own Sangha very shortly or the strongest light of the Dharma in Malaysia may be extinguished within a generation.

Tantra

After Kuala Lumpur we continued on our way, travelling through Malaysia to Singapore and then on to Indonesia. From Jakarta we went east by train to Jogjakarta in Central Java.

Jogjakarta is the centre of Batik, — making both Batik clothes and Batik painting — silverware; and it possesses an extraordinarily rich tradition of dance and music — the Javanese *gamelan*. It also has a small museum with some spectacularly beautiful stone images of the Buddha and Avalokiteshvara, a taste of the magnificence of Buddhist ruins in Central Java. What I did not expect were the numerous small artefacts inside — small images of Tara, Vairocana, and *Dhyani*-Buddhas with consorts; double *vajras*, a bell topped by a *vajra* — things I associated exclusively with the Vajrayana of Tibet. But these museum pieces showed that, at one point, here in Central Java, before the blossoming of the Vajrayana in the Himalayas, not only the Mahayana but the Tantra, also, was well established.

(continued page 25)

East to Borobodur

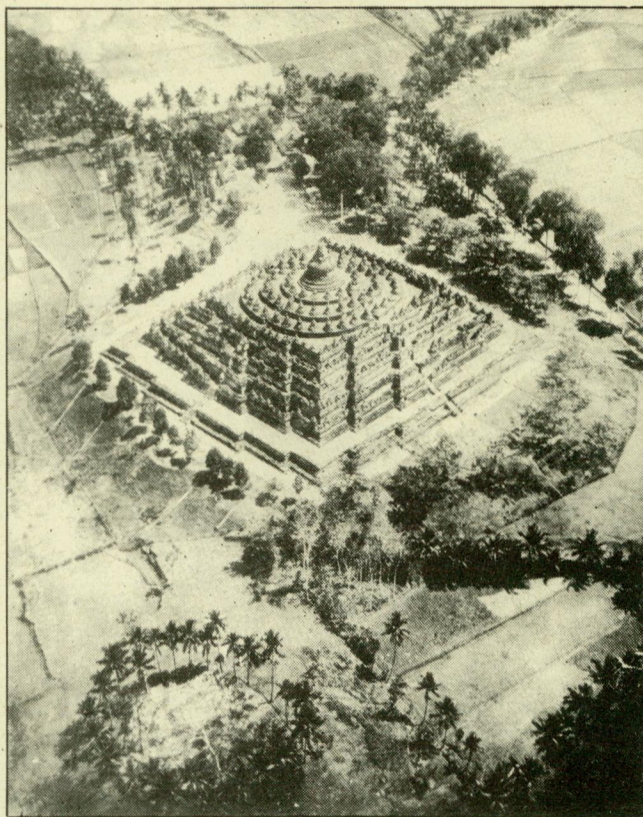
Coming after the strict Theravada of Thailand, the incessant fortune telling and the deeply superstitious nature of the Buddhism of Malaysia came as quite a shock to the system.

But Buddhism there is dominated by the Chinese and is inextricably embedded in other cultural influences. I was told by one senior Sri Lankan bhikkhu that the situation was like this: 'Ask a Chinese what his beliefs are, and he will reply, "Taoist". Ask him what his moral and social code is, and he will reply "Confucian." But ask him what his deepest insights are, and he will reply, "Buddhist."'

Everywhere one goes in Malaysia, there are Chinese — they are by far the wealthiest and the most astute section of the population. Outside each shop and on each little street stall, there is a small shrine, perhaps with an image of Kuan Yin, and the inevitable incense sticks burning, adding a welcome fragrance to the air. But everywhere, the confusion of attitudes of Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism exists, and nowhere more than in the temples themselves.

Brisk business

The Temple of 1,000 Lights is formally a Buddhist temple with a huge Buddha image as the central focus, and the fortune telling is very much to one side, although by the continuous clatter of the divination sticks on the ground, the counter clearly does a brisk business. Kek Lok Si (The Temple of Paradise) on the island of Penang, however, is an outstanding example of a Chinese temple with leanings towards a variety of persuasions. As one of the opening lines of



Borobudur

'See Your Luck. Take One Stick. 20 cents only.'
So read the large sign in the Temple of 1,000 Lights, the most important Buddhist Temple in Singapore, and in a nutshell, it gave a perfect description of much of the Buddhism I saw as I travelled through Malaysia and Indonesia.

the guide book says 'We Chinese are not particular about what we worship, as long as there is a need to worship.' I doubt whether that would pass the test of the *Kalama Sutta*.

The first shrine, The Hall of the Bodhisattvas, is dominated by the fortune telling business with Taoist nuns prepared to consult the books at a moment's notice. Kuan Yin presides over this area. Move up the steps and one comes to another Chinese

obsession. In a small pond there are scores of tortoises climbing on one another's backs, hoping for a shower of food from the gaping tourists. Tortoises are honoured by the Chinese because of their longevity which is why they are given pride of place in the Temple of Paradise. It is also linked to the acquisition of merit — in Thailand the people buy sparrows in cages and set them free to gain merit. Here, in Malaysia, merit

is gained by setting tortoises free in the pond.

Few inhibitions

Move a bit further on and you come to a very different shrine, the Hall of the Devas with a huge gold and grinning Maitreya, flanked by the four guardian kings of the major compass points. Behind this is an even larger and more spectacular shrine with Shakyamuni in the centre and Ananda and Kasyapa standing on either side. Seated or standing in long rows down the walls are 18 Arhats. In front is the customary giant incense bowl with carved dragons on the side. And it needs to be huge! When the Chinese make offerings of incense, they exhibit few inhibitions, but stalk around the temples waving great bunches of burning incense in the air before plunging them into the bowls. Very, very few Chinese, with the exception of the Taoist nuns, are strict vegetarians, though some will turn vegetarian for certain feast days. After all, the Chinese are primarily pragmatic. One gets the feeling that although Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism intermingled to an extent long before the Chinese settled in Malaysia, the mixture was a practical answer to a dilemma: different Chinese may place different emphasis on Taoism, Confucianism or Buddhism, but they are, first and foremost, all Chinese, and in a foreign country, that is of prime importance.

'Pure' Buddhism

Just how superstitious is the average Chinese I found from my guide, a 21 year old affirmed Taoist who would say a few prayers to a small shrine

Beechwood Co-ops Fair

As Right Livelihood Co-ops establish themselves within the FWBO, we have felt a growing desire to communicate our philosophy to a wider public.

Disappointing

An attempt was recently made at the 'Beechwood Co-ops Fair', an event organised by ICOM (the Industrial Common Ownership Movement), which was held in the spacious grounds of Beechwood House near Leeds. This was the second such Festival, and in terms of attendance, both from co-ops and the public, less successful than the first.

Patriarchal

Day one, Friday, was given over to women to hold a single sex meeting. A number of women Order members and mitras took part in the talks and led workshops.

Parami reported that while some of the talks were interesting, there were difficulties in leading the workshops owing to an attitude amongst some of the women present that any notion of leadership merely reinforced 'patriarchal' authority patterns. She felt that this attitude can sometimes lead to problems in our own co-ops, making it difficult to organise situations and structures in such a way that the individuals involved can take responsibility for themselves.

The next day was the Fair proper. People began to arrive, and the FWBO marquee was crewed. An exhibition of photos and text had been produced by the FWBO's Inter Co-op Secretariat and was on display alongside a tape/slide show. In the

main house Subhuti and Naga-bodhi led workshops on 'Right Livelihood' and 'Meditation and Co-operation'.

The day drifted along at a mild pace, with people selling books, magazines, badges and pizzas. Four hundred copies of a specially produced 'FWBO Right Livelihood Co-operatives' booklet were distributed. The remainder are now available from most Centres up and down the country.

No muscle

The day was sadly marked by a lack of attendance from the bigger UK Co-ops to add that dash of industrial muscle.

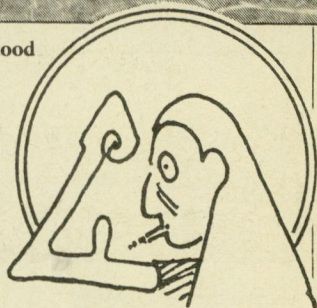
Nonetheless Sunday proved to be more interesting as six



Terry Lacey's workshop at Beechwood

speakers gave a series of talks which ranged from a 'performance' of a co-op gestalt session by the Lauristone Hall community, to an account of the Labour Party's attitude to the Co-op Movement and their political role.

Perhaps the most attention-



Dave Living

The Tuscany Course

Bhante, Subhuti, Vessantara, Ratnaguna, Sthiramati, Murray Wright, Pete Shann, Pete Fletcher, Clive Pomfret, Andy Friends, Bob Jones, Ceiron Saunders, Pete Hill, Mark Bowden, Steve Francis, Mike Scherke, Malcolm Webb, John Rice, Simon McIntyre, Johnny Baker, Gerald Burns, Brian Duff, Dave Luce, Alan Angel, Dave Brennan, Rudiger Jensen and Dave Rice, are the twenty seven men who are attending the Pre-ordination Intensive course, which began on 6th September. Now, eight men have already been invited on a preliminary retreat early next

year, which will culminate in another Pre-ordination Course for men when there are enough people ready to go on it.

Although the full programme will not be decided upon until the course in Tuscany starts it looks as if the basic study will be on the *Mitrata Omnibus*, led by Subhuti and Vessantara. Bhante will then lead study on selected passages from *A Survey of Buddhism* and *The Three Jewels*. It seems that he may also lead study on Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and on Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*.

catching speaker was Mr Dennis Augustus, the High Commissioner of Granada. Dressed in a natty khaki mohair military suit, he gave a very interesting and entertaining talk about the co-operative structured economy of his country, a small island in the Carribean.

The afternoon was taken up by workshops led by the morning's speakers. The most popularly attended group appeared to be Mr Terry Lacey's, General Secretary of the charity, War on Want. From this workshop emerged an opinion that there is a need for a steering committee to act on behalf of British Co-ops in trying to attract funding from European Economic Community. This group, made up of members of a number of British co-ops, is to hold its first meeting at the London Buddhist Centre. The event is being organised by Kulananda for October 2nd.

Siddhiratna

Borobodur

The following day we arrived at Borobodur. Since I was ten I have wanted to visit this remarkable site, and although the approach is littered with tourist shops and a large part of the monument is closed for renovation, it remains a breath-taking experience.

Built in the 9th century, this huge mandala stands on a hill overlooking a plain of palm trees surrounded by mountains. The building is at once a stupa, and a representation in stone of the mandala of the *Dhyani* Buddhas. Each of the four faces is devoted to Amoghasiddhi,

Akshobya, Ratnasambhava and Amitabha; and one ascends through the *Kamadhatu*, to the *Rupadhatu* with its remarkable reliefs of the Buddha's lives to the *Arupadhatu*: circles of *dagobas* containing Buddhas with the *Dharmachakra mudra*. And finally, standing clear above all, a plain, striking stupa, which once held a statue, probably of Vairocana.

Despite the broken statues, the defaced reliefs, the restrictions on visitors because of the renovation, the magic of the Borobodur — the monastery on the hill — remains. We walked up through the realm of Amoghasiddhi along with the

other tourists, up from the *Kamadhatu* through the *Rupadhatu* to the *Arupadhatu* where, regardless of the Japanese tourist with his transistor radio blasting out the Beatles, an atmosphere of meditative states is evoked.

Western Future

No one really knows why Buddhism died in Indonesia, and it is especially puzzling because the Mahayana and the Tantra was so clearly alive in the 9th century — there are records of Theravada monks being sent from Burma to learn. Even in Bali, where we next went, there are, in a small

corner of that jewel island, two small images — one headless — of the Buddha with the earth touching mudra, indicating that Buddhism existed there before the Muslim advances pushed Hinduism on to the island.

But although one small vihara exists near the Borobodur and, even as I write I am inspired by the memory of one particular stone Amoghasiddhi looking out in a timeless way over the palm-tree plain of Central Java with his hands held in the untiring gesture of fearlessness, I feel even more strongly that the future of Buddhism lies in the West.

Nick Soames

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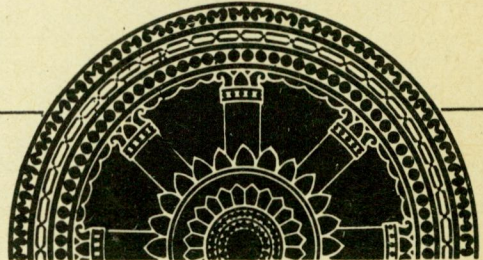
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About the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

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.

Centres and Branches

Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

London Buddhist Centre, 51 Roman Road, Bethnal Green, London E2 0HU. Tel: 01-981 1225

Brighton Buddhist Centre, 15 Park Crescent Place, Brighton, Sussex. Tel: (0273) 698420

Aryatara, 3 Plough Lane, Purley, Surrey. Tel: 01-660 2542

Manchester Buddhist Centre, 18 Burlington Road, Withington, Manchester M20 9PY. Tel: 061-445 3805

Heruka, 13 Kelvinside Terrace South, Glasgow G20. Tel: 041-946 2035

West London Buddhist Centre, Flat 6, 21 Fitzjohns Avenue, London NW3. Tel: 01-258 3706

FWBO Bristol: Enquiries to Aryatara, 3 Plough Lane, Purley, Surrey. 272 28220

Norwich Meditation Centre, 41a All Saints Green, Norwich. Tel: (0603) 27034

Lansimaisen Buddhalaisen Veljeskunnan Ystävät, FWBO

Albertinkatu 21 C 12, 00120 Helsinki 12, Finland. Tel: Helsinki 642 462

FWBO Karuna, Pengerkatu 18 A, 00500 Helsinki 50, Finland.

Suvarnadhatu, PO Box 68-453, Newton, Auckland, New Zealand.

Boston Buddhist Centre, 27 Grampian Way, Savin Hill, Boston, Massachusetts 02125, USA. Tel: 0101-617 (Boston) 8259666

Trailokya Bauddha Maha Sangha, Sahayak Gana,

2A-Parnakuti Housing Society, Yerawada, Pune 411006, India.

Vajraloka, Tyn-y-ddol, Treiddol, Nr. Corwen, N. Wales (visitors by arrangement only)

FWBO Stockholm, Hillbersvagen 5, S-126 54 Hagersten, Sweden Tel: Stockholm 97 59 92

Representatives

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Upasaka Bakula, Bakul Bhavan, Behind Gujerat Vaishya Sabha, Jamalpur Road, Ahmedabad, 380001, Gujerat, India.

Upasaka Dharmadhara, PO Box 12311, Wellington North, New Zealand.

FWBO Netherlands, Wichard Van Pontlaan 109, Arnhem, Netherlands 010 31 85 61 0275

Ian Allen, PO Box 12311, Wellington North, New Zealand.

Upasaka Indrajala, PO Box 22-657, Christchurch, New Zealand.

Co-operatives

The Blue Lotus Co-operative Ltd., 34 Daventry Street, London NW1. Tel: 01-258 3706

Golden Light Co-operative, PO Box 68-453, Newton, Auckland, New Zealand.

Oranges Restaurant (Norwich) Ltd., 16 Dove Street, Norwich. Tel: (0603) 25560

The Padmaloka Co-operative Ltd., Lessingham House, Surlingham, Norwich, Norfolk NR14 7AL. Tel: (050 88) 8112

The Pure Land Co-operative Ltd., 51 Roman Road, London E2 0HU. Tel: 01-980 1960

Windhorse Associates, 119 Roman Road, London E2 0QN. Tel: 01-981 5157

Windhorse Enterprises Ltd., 15 Park Crescent Place, Brighton, Sussex. Tel: (0273) 698420

Windhorse Wholefoods Co-operative Ltd., 13 Kelvinside Terrace South, Glasgow G20. Tel: 041-946 2035

Karuna Co-operative, Pengerkatu 18 A, 00500 Helsinki 50, Finland.

Phoenix Community Housing Co-operative Ltd., 51 Roman Road, London E2. Tel: 01-980 1960.

Rainbow Co-operative Ltd, 96-98 High Street, Croydon, Surrey. Tel: 01-688 2899

Windhorse Trading, 29-31 Old Ford Rd, London E2 9PJ. Tel: 01-980 7826

Communities

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Amitayus, 15 Park Crescent Place, Brighton, Sussex. Tel: (0273) 698420

Arunachala, 29 Old Ford Road, Bethnal Green, London E2 9PJ. Tel: 01-980 7826

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Vidyadhara, 30 Cambridge Park, Wanstead, London E11 2PR. Tel: 989 5083

329 Sauchiehall Street (top right), Glasgow. Tel: 041-333 0524

24 Birchfield House, Birchfield Street, Limehouse, London E14 8EY.

Adhistana, 219 Amhurst Road, London E8.

The Office of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

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