

Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

*The*

# NEWSLETTER

Number 54

Price 65p

**Ten minutes ago this man and  
his wife were 'Untouchable'.  
Now they are Buddhists.**



# JAI BHIM!



# 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 para-

mount. 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, metal-work forge, and graphic-design, photographic and film studio. Members of the Co-operatives are hammering out a way of working which is 'Right Livelihood': team-based so that each person has the opportunity to take responsibility for the work, and ethically sound: exploiting neither other people nor the earth's resources. Work is done not for remuneration, but for its value as a means of development (in what other situation might your workmates suggest that you go for a walk or do some meditation when you seem run down?) and from a spirit of generosity. Each worker either works voluntarily or is given what he or she needs to live.

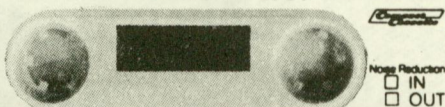
The most direct and effective means to the evolution of consciousness is the practice of meditation. At the Centres, members of the Order teach meditation and conduct courses, study groups, talks, and discussions on the principles and practice of Buddhism. There are

also ceremonies, festivals, and arts activities. Yoga, massage, and other practices are taught as valuable, though less central, methods of development. Centres are places where you can make contact with Order members and others already in touch with this burgeoning New Society. Above all, through the Centres, a bridge is formed over which those who wish may cross to a new and total way of life based upon the growth and development of individuals.

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

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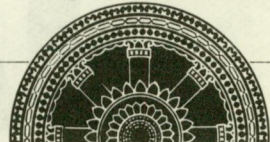
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## Editorial

Last December, just after I had arrived in India, I took a walk through the streets of Bombay with Purna, a member of the Western Buddhist Order from New Zealand. As an *anagarika* he wears the familiar yellow robe of a Buddhist 'monk' but, to my amazement, wherever we went, people called out across the street, 'Hare Krishna, Hare Ram!', or 'Rashneesh!' However, just once, a rather poor looking man passed us on the pavement and quietly said, 'Jai Bhim!'

I asked Purna what that greeting meant. It was a greeting, or exclamation that I was to hear again and again, hundreds of times while I was in India.

'It's something Buddhists out here say,' he explained. 'Bhim' is short for Bhimrao — Bhimrao Ambedkar, and 'Jai' means something like 'Victory to...', or 'Homage to...'

Dr Ambedkar was the man who urged his friends and followers to take *dikksha* — to convert from Hinduism to Buddhism, and it is thus he who is primarily responsible for the present rebirth of Buddhism in India, for what is sometimes referred to as the *Dhamma Revolution*. This revolution has been unique, in that it has been non-violent yet radical, and has the potential to completely transform Indian society. It is already changing the way in which millions of people live and work, the way they see themselves and their fellows, dramatically affecting the ideals to which they aspire. And yet that revolution is still very young. It has, in fact, hardly been born.

Four years ago, when we last devoted a Newsletter to India, Anagarika Lokamitra was just about to go out to start working with the Buddhists in Poona. Now it is probably true to say that that our Movement in India is already numerically bigger than the rest of the Movement put together! And it is growing and spreading all the time.

This dramatic growth-rate has been possible partly because of Dr Ambedkar's efforts, partly because of the hard work put in by our own Order members, but above all because of the tremendous enthusiasm and eagerness of Dr Ambedkar's followers. That readiness to forge a completely new way of life suggests that the possibilities for very far-reaching developments are staggering. No doubt we will be reporting on those developments as they arise, but here, for the time being, is an introduction to the subject in the form of a Newsletter devoted to Dr Ambedkar's life and work, to the conversions, and to some more recent events on the Indian Buddhist scene.

Nagabodhi

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The Dhamma can be practised by anybody. It can be practised by any man or woman, even by any child. It can be practised by someone in India, and it can be practised by someone in England. By someone in America, or someone in China. If there are people on the moon, it can be practised by those people on the moon. The Dhamma is universal... It's for everybody — for every human being. Because every human being is the brother or sister of every other human being. The more we practise the Dhamma, the more we come together. It doesn't matter whether we are born in India or whether we are born in England. If we practise the Dhamma, we are one. If we practise the Dhamma, we are brothers and sisters.

The Ven Sangharakshita in Daund



# BUDDHISM RETURNS TO INDIA

By Nagabodhi



The communal shrine in a Bombay tenement block

The 'Doon Express' thundered along the track, bound for Calcutta. I sat watching the Bihar countryside flash past, a riot of browns, reds, and golds, as the setting sun kissed the earth. Beside me in the compartment sat a middle-aged man, a child curled up asleep on his lap. Suddenly he looked at me and asked, 'Where are you going?' 'To Gaya; to Bodh Gaya,' I replied. 'Ah,' he said, his eyes rolling upwards into the top of his gently rocking head, 'Bodh Gaya is a holy place for me.' 'So you are a Buddhist too?' I said. There was a long silence during which the man's features displayed at first perplexity, and then embarrassment. 'No', he replied, 'I am a devotee of Lord Krishna and Lord Rama.' Our conversation came to an uncomfortable end.

His perplexity demonstrated the degree to which even the word 'Buddhism' is unfamiliar in India, and his subsequent embarrassment, I concluded, had to do with the fact that where Buddhism is coming back to life in India, it is doing so in very special (and not always favourably viewed) circumstances, largely owing to the work of one very special man: Dr 'Baba Saheb' Ambedkar.

Bhimrao Ambedkar was born on April 14th 1891, into a family of the Mahar community in Maharashtra. The Mahars are a community famed for their robustness, adaptability, intelligence, and for a wholesome sense of pride in themselves. Nevertheless, every single man, woman, and child in that community was, until very recently, marked by one all-important feature: they were *untouchable*.

These days in India, you will very rarely find any reference to the 'Untouchables'. Instead, in newspapers and magazines, you will read about the 'scheduled castes', the 'Dalits', and — most annoyingly of all to those thus denoted, the 'Harijans' — a euphemism coined by Gandhi, which means 'the children of God'. However, the word that most precisely defines the status of some 60 million members of the Indian population, is the word 'Untouchable'. For that,



according to Hindu law and custom, is what these people practically and essentially are. They are untouchable, and form the lowest stratum in a social order rigidly sanctioned by Hindu scripture and custom.

According to Hindu belief, there are four *varnas*, or classes of human being: the *Brahmins*, or priests, the *Kshatriyas*, or warriors, the *Vaishyas*, or merchants and craftsmen, and the *Shudras*, or labourers and peasants. According to the 1961 census there are no less than 3000 sub-classes, or *castes*, within the four *varnas*. A Hindu's caste determines absolutely and rigidly his place in the social framework: whom he will marry, what kind of profession he will follow, what kind of people he will travel with, what kind of food he will eat, how he will perform his ablutions, and so on into every nook and cranny of his life.

The Untouchables are a class of being who are outside caste altogether. A vast congeries of communities and tribes, they are traditionally regarded as being something less than human: unfit for education or religious instruction, often even refused the use of the roads. They live in ghettos just outside the villages and towns, cut off from the rest of the people, expected to perform the most odious tasks, such as scavenging, cleaning lavatories, performing executions, and burning the dead. 'Polluted' from birth, their duty is to perform all the chores that would otherwise bring pollution to the caste Hindu. Above all they must not allow themselves to pollute him through physical, or even visual, contact.

The caste system takes its divine sanction from several scriptural sources, notably the *Rig Veda*, and the *Manushmriti*, and from two important religious doctrines, those of reincarnation and pollution.

In its Hindu form, the doctrine of reincarnation asserts that your soul (*atman*) is born into this or that form, into this or that caste, according to the moral rectitude of your previous actions. The most pious thing that you can therefore do is to follow strictly your caste duty, or *dharma*. Any divergence from this norm is met with outrage and, commonly, with punishment and persecution.

According to the teachings on the subject of pollution, it is as if the caste Hindu has a kind of purity, which although of a 'spiritual' nature, is susceptible to pollution through contact with certain people and things. That this form of pollution has no link with any physical or hygienic considerations is suggested by the fact that cow dung and cow's urine play a major part in most purification rituals.

These two doctrines, and their associated repercussions have brought about a religious, political, and social order that has endured for

centuries. They have brought to India a sort of lethargic stability, but at the expense of, among other things, millions of utterly down-trodden, utterly abject people.

The suppression of the Untouchables has been legally outlawed since 1955, and is officially considered to be a thing of the past. Certainly it is true to say that in the large urban areas a much more flexible and progressive social ethos is on the rise, but in the smaller towns and villages, no one could deny that the caste system, and the degradation of the Untouchables, continues unabated. Nobody pretends that caste loyalty is not a major factor in electoral politics, and no-one can remain blind to continual reports of inter-caste strife, including horrific atrocities, that still haunt the pages of Indian newspapers. Communities of untouchables are still attacked, houses are set on fire, women and children are burned alive in their own homes, often for no offence beyond having 'risen above their station'.



Dr Ambedkar as Law Minister

Nobody knows for sure how it was that a large number of Indian communities and tribes came to be regarded and treated as untouchable. Some believe that they are the remnants of tribes who were once conquered by waves of invaders, and subsequently pressed into service. Others believe that they were meat-eaters, considered unfit to play a part in the predominantly vegetarian Hindu society. Others conject that a fairly normal social order based on the division of labour somehow gained a very abnormal level of rigidity. However it came into existence, we know that the caste system was an accepted part of Indian life by the time of the Buddha. We know this because on many occasions, directly and indirectly, he spoke out against it.

This was the world into which Bhim Ambedkar was born. As a boy

he was soon to discover what it meant to be an Untouchable. Repeatedly beaten for drinking water from public wells, unable to find a barber willing to touch his hair, thrown off a bullock cart for fear that he would pollute the bullocks, it did not take him long to realise, as had every untouchable child before him, that in most people's eyes his rank was lower and more despicable than that of an animal. Yet unlike most other untouchable children, he had something in his will that refused to bend to the inevitable.

A proud and somewhat rebellious child, his fiery nature first expressed itself in wild pranks and truant habits. When he was about ten, however, he decided to channel his independent will, and all his energy into the task of educating himself, despite, and possibly to spite, the enormous obstacles confronting untouchable children in that field. Not least among these obstacles was the fact that untouchable children often had to sit outside the classroom, straining their

ears to hear the teacher's voice, lest they should pollute the other children.

He learned English, Persian, and — totally against the will of his teachers, and in opposition to his *dharma* — taught himself Sanskrit, the language of the scriptures. At home he would rise from his bed at two in the morning so as to be able to study in peace. Strongly encouraged by his father and by other friends, he managed to pass his matriculation examinations with a mark unprecedented by any Mahar student.

His success in this exam attracted the interest and good offices of the Maharaja of Baroda, who was eager to help promising untouchables to improve their lot. From him Ambedkar received several grants and scholarships, and was able to continue his studies in Bombay, at Columbia University in the USA, at

Grays Inn in London, and in Bonn, Germany. By 1923 Ambedkar was a certificated barrister, and held doctorates in Science and Philosophy. He had acquired a high degree of expertise in political science, economics, and law, and had even been a professor of law in a London College. He had also begun to make a name for himself as a writer and commentator on the subjects of Indian independence, and the evils of the caste system.

On his return to India, he divided his time between establishing a legal practice, involving himself in the independence movement, and in working to elevate the self-awareness and the social standing of his people, the Untouchables. This latter preoccupation was no side-line. It constantly and crucially affected his views and opinions on all other matters. He never believed, for example, that independence for India was an inevitable boon, if an independent India was going to be a nation whose laws and institutions would reflect of Hindu orthodoxy.

Ambedkar had been born a Hindu, and somewhere in his heart he felt a deep attachment to his native creed. But there was no getting away from the fact that it was orthodox Hinduism that was to blame for the caste system, and for the suffering of millions. For many years his efforts in the political domain were to be shared between the creation of a mass-movement of Untouchable consciousness, and a sincere attempt to reform Hindu social conventions. As late as 1951 he was, as a minister in the government, trying to pilot his Hindu Code Bill through Parliament. Had the bill found favour it would have radically altered Indian Hindu social life. Perhaps such reforms would have been sufficient for him to call off the resolutions that he had publicly declared in the late twenties and early thirties.

In December 1927, at a conference in Mahad, Ambedkar had publicly burnt a copy of the *Manushmriti*. This orthodox text outlines many of the rules and conventions relating to caste duty. Among its sacred injunctions is to be found the rule that any Untouchable caught hearing the *Vedas* should have molten lead poured into his ears. Ambedkar's act unleashed a storm of outrage, and it would be fair to say that in committing it, he was placing his life in danger.

At the same time he also led a large number of his followers down into the Chowdar Tank, to bathe and drink. The tank — or small lake — although legally open to all, was customarily reserved for caste Hindus. This act of sacrilege resulted in howls of protest, weeks of 'purification' ceremonies, and a long and bitter legal battle.

In 1931, at a conference in Yeola he made the dramatic promise that although he had been born a Hindu —



something over which he had had no control, 'I solemnly assure you that I will not die a Hindu.'

When his Hindu Code bill met with a stormy reception, Ambedkar intensified his drive to find an alternative religion; not just for himself, but for all his people. That Untouchables should change their religion was nothing new. Over several hundreds of years, many millions had already turned to Islam and Christianity. Sometimes these conversions were motivated by the desire to be rid of untouchability. Sometimes they were helped along by offers of financial rewards.

For Dr Ambedkar, however, this step was going to be a giant one, and one which was not to be taken unthinkingly or over-hastily. He knew that his decision would be followed by millions of Mahar people, and conceivably by Untouchables all over India. His decision would therefore have an enormous significance, not just in his own life, nor just in the private lives of his followers, but for India itself. His search for a new religion was rooted in nothing less than a vision of, and a fervent hope for, a new, just society.

In an article entitled 'Buddha and the Future of his Religion', which he wrote for the *Maha Bodhi Society Journal* in May 1950, Ambedkar reflected thus: (1) 'Society must have either the sanction of law or the sanction of morality to hold it together. Without either the society is sure to go to pieces. (2) Religion, if it is to function, must be in accord with reason which is another name for science. (3) It is not enough for religion to consist of a moral code, but its moral code must recognise the fundamental tenets of liberty, equality and fraternity. (4) Religion must not sanctify or enoble poverty.' Increasingly he was coming to feel that Buddhism met his requirements. He also felt that because there was a strong historical link between Buddhism and India, conversion to the Buddha's faith would require less of a cultural leap for those who took that step. Indeed, in his book *The Untouchables*, he went so far as to marshal the evidence which suggests that the Untouchables were originally Buddhists, pushed to one side and pressed into social inferiority by the Hindu majority.

It was while Dr Ambedkar was trying to pilot his Hindu Code Bill through Parliament, and while he was considering the options open to him with regard to conversion, that the Ven. Sangharakshita (the founder of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order), made contact with him. In issue 39 of our *Newsletter*, in an article entitled, 'The Birth of a Movement', I outlined the course of their correspondence and friendship. By that time Dr Ambedkar was quite convinced in his heart that the ideals and



Purna and friends take a paddle in the Chowdar Tank.

methods of Buddhism were well worthy of pursuing. However, he shared with Sangharakshita his views about the Sangha, the Buddhist spiritual community, which seemed to him to be moribund — not to say corrupt. One thing that particularly alarmed him was the fact that the president of the Maha Bodhi Society, the missionary movement founded by the meteoric Anagarika Dharmapala, was a Brahmin. He was afraid that the Sangha would be unable, or even unwilling to give the new converts the support, guidance, and example that they would surely require.

Sangharakshita was not able to disabuse Dr Ambedkar of all his fears, for he could not but share many of his concerns. Both men agreed that what was needed was an entirely new kind of Buddhist movement, based on an entirely new kind of Buddhist 'Dhamma worker'. Such a worker would be totally committed to realising the ideals of Buddhism. He would also be willing and able — unbound by constricting monastic rules — to work for the welfare of others. The Sangha, as it stood, could not be relied upon to provide such people with any regularity, so the new Buddhists would have to look for help wherever it could be found. They would have to be prepared to keep the light burning among themselves. If they made a real effort to understand and practise the Dhamma, then they would in time produce their own effective Dhamma workers. Sangharakshita, for his part endeavoured to stimulate interest and support among those influential Buddhists with whom he was in contact.

The first mass conversion took place at Nagpur, in North East Maharashtra, on October 14th 1956. Dr Ambedkar took the Refugees and Precepts from the Ven. Chandramani

Maha Thera, the senior-most monk in India. Then he himself led some 500,000 of his followers in the same recitation. He then led them through a recitation of twenty two vows that he had composed. These vows constituted a firm rejection of Hindu belief, and a solemn undertaking to follow the Buddhist spiritual path. These 500,000 were the first of about four million who were to take that step in the coming weeks and months.

Dhammachari Dharmarakshita, a member of our own Order, who lives in Poona, was in that crowd. He was spending a couple of days with a friend who lived in Nagpur. He remembers going along to the vast stadium partly out of interest, partly to keep his friend company, and above all, because he was drawn along by the atmosphere of excitement and anticipation. As the crowd roared its joy over Dr Ambedkar's spiritual rebirth, and as everyone around him repeated the simple formulae of the *pancha-sila*, he could not but go along with the flow. Suddenly, without any real preparation or premeditation, he was a Buddhist!

No doubt Dharmarakshita was not unique in that respect. It would be an exaggeration to claim that all the new converts had given the same thought and reflection to the step they were taking as had Dr Ambedkar. However, it would be equally wrong, and more seriously so, to suggest that the mass-conversion was nothing more than a hollow group phenomenon, manipulated for political or economic ends by a few leaders. This would be to undervalue the seriousness with which everyone present must have regarded the rejection of their Hindu background. It would be to overlook the very real risks that they were taking. There was no way of telling how the Hindu population would

react to their move. One thing that they did know was that they stood a very good chance of losing certain benefits and rights that had recently been accorded to the Untouchables by the Government.

Without doubt many of the four million people who converted to Buddhism did so because they trusted Dr 'Baba Saheb' Ambedkar. And

## WHAT IS A BODHI

What do we mean by going for a Refuge to the Buddha? Who is the Buddha? What is the Buddha? It is very important that we should understand this. In India there are many misunderstandings about the Buddha. First of all we have to understand what the Buddha is not. The Buddha is not God. He is not an incarnation of God. He is not a messenger sent by God. The Buddha cannot save you. The Buddha shows you the way by means of which you have to save yourself. But if the Buddha is not God, who or what is he? The Buddha is a human being, but he is not an ordinary human being. He is a very special kind of human being. He is a human being who has gained what we call 'Enlightenment'. He is a human being who has become free from all passions; whose mind is completely pure; whose mind is full of wisdom; whose mind is full of love and compassion. All these qualities he possesses in the highest possible degree. This is what we mean by a Buddha. Going for Refuge to the Buddha means taking the Buddha as our ideal. The Buddha was a man. We are also men. What the Buddha achieved, we too can achieve. If we accept this, if we act upon this, then we go for Refuge to the Buddha. This is the first Refuge.

Secondly comes the Dhamma. We go for Refuge to the Dhamma. So what is the Dhamma (Pali) (*Dharma* [Sanskrit])? Here we have to be very careful. In India the word '*Dharma*' means your *caste Dharma*, that is to say, your duty as a member of the particular Hindu caste into which you were born. But in Buddhism *Dhamma* means something completely different. In Buddhism, Dhamma is a path. It is the path leading to Enlightenment. It is the path of human development. Dhamma is whatever helps us to grow, whatever helps us to be pure human beings. It is whatever helps us to be wise and compassionate, whatever helps us to lead the pure life. This is the Dhamma...



Baba Saheb was leading them not to political uprising or agitation, nor to violent revolution, nor to communism, but to Buddhism, to a new religion.

This, if you think about it, is a staggering point. After all, Ambedkar was not a 'holy man'; he was not a guru; he was not even a monk. He was an academic, a lawyer, a politician —

## WHAT IS A BUDDHIST?

Thirdly and lastly comes the Sangha Refuge. Some people think that the Sangha means just the *Bhikkhu Sangha*, (the community of monks — ed.), but this is a big mistake. The Sangha means all those who go for Refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. In practical terms the Sangha Refuge means that we help one another. We help one another because we are all Buddhists. We are all brothers and sisters. The Buddha himself is like our father, and the Dhamma is like our mother. We ourselves are the Sangha. Those who know more about the Dhamma than we know are our elder brothers and sisters. We can learn from them. If we ourselves know something about the Dhamma, it is our duty to teach it to those who do not know anything about Dhamma. This is what is meant by the Sangha Refuge. One who goes for Refuge to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha as I have described them, that person is a Buddhist. Whether they are a *bhikkhu* or an *upasaka* doesn't matter. Whether they are male or female, young or old, so called 'educated' or so called 'uneducated', that doesn't matter either. Some people think that you can only go for Refuge if you've got a degree. That is nonsense. The Buddha himself didn't have a degree, neither did Sariputra, or Moggallana, or Ananda. If they were living in India today people would describe them as illiterate, because they couldn't read or write. But if you can't read or write it doesn't matter very much. You can still go for Refuge. You can still be a Buddhist. I'm not saying that if you don't know how to read or write, you shouldn't learn. To learn is good. But knowing how to read and write, and being a Buddhist, these are two different things. I hope the matter is clear. A Buddhist is one who goes for Refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma, and the Sangha.

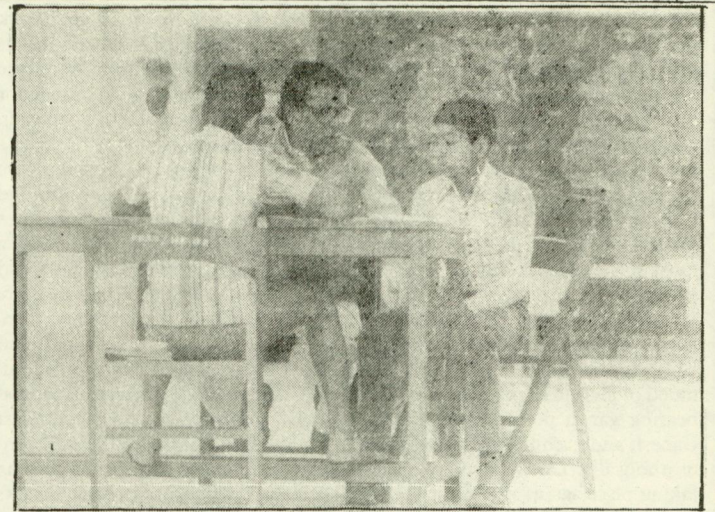
a former law minister in the Government who had helped to create the constitution of his nation. He had been active in the independence movement, and had founded a number of political and educational organisations for the Untouchables. For years he had tried to work in the political arena for the uplift of his people. And yet his final and most deeply considered gift to his followers was a new religious faith and a new spiritual direction. In this act I believe that Dr Ambedkar revealed himself to be a visionary in the deepest sense of the term, and of a most practical kind.

For millenia the untouchables of India had been taught to believe that they were worse than worthless, that they were fit only for the most degrading jobs; that they had no rights of any kind whatsoever. Not a single untouchable child had ever grown up with the prospect of becoming anything more than an untouchable. Neither through good deeds, hard work, marriage, nor religious observance could he strive to improve his lot in any meaningful way.

Could any form of social and psychological conditioning be more final and stultifying than that? What possible hope could there be for any genuine and meaningful transcendence of that fate without some direct attack being made on the deeply ingrained negative self-image of each and every untouchable individual?

On the day of his conversion at Nagpur, Dr Ambedkar said, '...self respect is more important than material gains. Our struggle is for honour, for self-respect, not for economic progress alone. For man it is his birth-right to lead an honourable life. We are struggling for human dignity which the Hindus have hitherto denied to us.'

No religion could have been better suited to the needs of Dr Ambedkar



Personal contact with the headmaster for Buddhist pupils in a Bombay school

and his followers than Buddhism. Buddhism completely lacks the God/Man dichotomy, and has at its heart the assertion that every individual human being has the potential to become the most exalted phenomenon in the universe: a Buddha. It offers, moreover, a vast and comprehensive range of methods, techniques and guidelines which help the individual to focus and direct his energy towards that goal. Buddhism was therefore the precise and practical antidote to the evils of Hinduism and the effects that they had had on India's untouchable population. But Dr Ambedkar knew that if the antidote was going to work it would have to be really used to the full; Buddhism would really have to be practised. Were nothing to happen beyond the act of conversion, then all the untouchables would have done would be to have changed the name of their caste, and nothing else.

When Dr Ambedkar led his followers into their new faith at Nagpur he was already a very sick man. A

mere five weeks later he died, plunging his friends and supporters into despair, and his movement into near chaos. For all his virtues and achievements, it seemed as if Dr Ambedkar had had one crucial flaw. He had failed to create a team of close colleagues able to work well together, and with the capacity, vision and drive to carry the movement forward in his absence.

On the day that 'Baba Saheb' died, the Ven. Sangharakshita was in Nagpur. Seizing the moment, he gave no less than 35 talks in the following four days. He urged the Buddhists not to lose hope, not to split into factions, and above all to bring Ambedkar's vision to fruition by sincerely practising their new faith.

For six months of every year he travelled the plains of Maharashtra giving talks, presiding over conversion ceremonies, stimulating the practice of Buddhism. But he was a lonely worker. With only one or two exceptions, the *bhikkhus* of the Sangha did little or nothing to help. Many simply did not really know enough about Buddhism to be able to teach the Dhamma. Others knew text after text and scripture after scripture, but were unable to communicate the spirit of the teaching since they did not practice it.

The Hindu press tried to undermine the movement. The term 'neo-Buddhists' was coined, as if the very newness of the Buddhists made them less valid in their Buddhism than the real, 'born' Buddhists. As if anyone can be born a Buddhist! As if anyone can become a Buddhist without deciding to become one... As if the Buddha himself had been a 'born' Buddhist!

Perhaps inevitably, with no clear leader at the helm, the movement began to lose its momentum, and it began to split into factions. Well intentioned but misguided lieutenants of the movement argued with each other as to how things should proceed. Politicians tried to exploit



'Our struggle is for honour, for self-respect' — Part of an audience on the tour.



the vacuum left by Dr Ambedkar's demise, eager to make good use of the energy and fervour still adhering to the movement. Some monks allowed the movement to offer them support, and gave in return not Dhamma but a few scraps of guidance on conventional ethnic Buddhist customs. Colleges and viharas were built, statues of Baba Saheb appeared in most towns, but hardly anyone was practising Buddhism.

Before long, in some Buddhist homes where once the Hindu idols had been thrown out and burnt in a mood of joy and adventure, calendars bearing garish portraits of Krishna, Ganesh and Laxmi were reappearing on the walls. Dowry weddings were taking place again, and various other

Hindu social customs filtered back into some Buddhist localities. Just as sadly, people began to look on the Buddha as a kind of god, praying for his help in the seeking of a job or in the making of a son.

True there are still some five million people, in Maharashtra and other states, who consider themselves to be Buddhists, and who can recite a number of Buddhist verses and stanzas; Buddhist festivals are marked with huge gatherings; there are even Buddhist calendars, and Buddhist popular songs; there are all the elements of a thriving Buddhist social culture, but even so, just twenty five years after the first conversions, there are few leading Buddhists who are not asking, in talks

and in magazine articles, 'Where did things go wrong?' And the answer is quite simply that there has been too little practice, and too little real spiritual guidance.

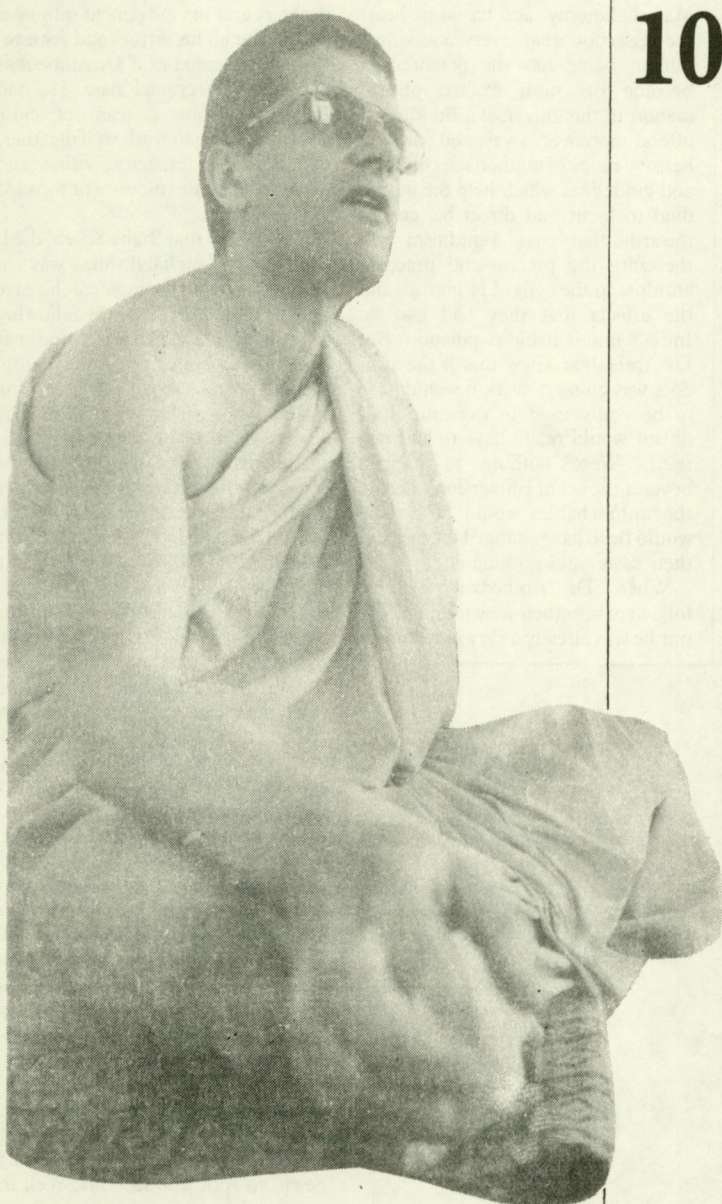
In 1977, Anagarika Lokamitra, a member of the Western Buddhist Order, who had been the chairman of our centre in North London, went to Poona to study Hatha Yoga with Mr BKS Iyengar. At the Ven. Sangharakshita's request he made contact with a number of Bhante's old friends. When he returned to England a few months later he knew not only that there were a number of people willing to be helped into forming the nucleus of a new Buddhist movement, but that he wanted to help them. He and the Ven. Sangharak-

shita were convinced that the approach of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, with its emphasis on spiritual practice, and its concern with bringing Buddhism to life within the context of the modern world, was ideal for India. Before long, Lokamitra, in the company of Kularatna, left for Poona again with almost nothing except some books, some taped lectures by Sangharakshita, a list of addresses, and the goodwill of the FWBO.

In four years his achievement has been nothing less than remarkable. *Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha, Sahayak Gana* — the name by which our movement is known in India — is now firmly established in Pune and Ahmedabad, and will be able to

## 100% BUDDHIST

The Ven Sangharakshita in Bombay



Lokamitra

The change brought about by Dr. Ambedkar was a Dhamma change, a Dhamma Revolution, and we can work for the Dhamma only by means that are in accordance with the Dhamma. Worldly experience — political experience — is of little use here. We can work for the Dhamma Revolution only if we know and practise the Dhamma, and are ourselves part of that revolution, and embody it in our lives. In other words, we can work for the Dhamma Revolution only if we ourselves have actually changed since conversion. We can work for it only if there has been a complete change, a revolution, in every aspect of our lives — only if we have been 'reborn' and are leading a new life. Simply to repeat the Three Refuges and the Five Precepts... is not enough. In other words, we do not merely have to find a new way of working for the Dhamma Revolution: we have to find a new kind of Buddhist worker... He can be called anything. But whatever he is called he must be one hundred percent Buddhist... This means that he must think like a Buddhist, speak like a Buddhist, act like a Buddhist, by which I do not mean he should wear a special kind of dress, or appear outwardly different from other people, but simply that he should actually look like a man who has been reborn — like a man who is leading a new kind of life. If someone was to give you a million rupees you would certainly look very different from what you do now. You would look different because you would feel different. It is the same with our new kind of Buddhist worker. Having been given

something much more precious than a million rupees, that is, the Three Jewels of the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, he should actually *look* different. He should look like a Buddhist. Moreover, the new kind of Buddhist worker should be wholly committed to the Three Jewels. These should be the most important things in his life: more important than job, than wife and family, than worldly success, than ease and comfort — more important than life itself. Wherever possible, therefore, the new kind of Buddhist worker will be a full-time worker, giving all his time and energy to the Dhamma Revolution. The new kind of Buddhist worker will have a good knowledge of the Dhamma, and will practise the Dhamma. He will observe the precepts... and practise meditation. He will also work hard, if necessary with his own two hands. He will not be a mere 'leader', just telling other people what to do. He will himself set an example. But above all, the new kind of Buddhist worker will work for the Dhamma Revolution in a way that is in accordance with the Dhamma itself. He will work for it by means of *Maitri* (Love), *Karuna* (Compassion), and *Prajna* (Wisdom). In addition to that, the new kind of Buddhist worker, — the new kind of Buddhist workers, — will work together, in co-operation. They will work as a team, and this team will form a Sangha — in fact, a Maha Sangha, or Great Spiritual Community — which will work not only in India but in many different countries, all over the world. It will work for the happiness and welfare of all living beings.



# Setting Out

**When Lokamitra set out for India, in August 1978, Kularatna went with him. Here are some of Kularatna's impressions of those early beginnings, just four years ago.**

We were given a rousing send-off from the London Buddhist Centre. The atmosphere was festive, and everyone seemed aware of the significance of the occasion: that the Dhamma was travelling from the West to the East. We were showered with streamers and escorted out of Bethnal Green by a honking motorcade of rather decrepit but colourfully decorated vehicles, to the bemusement of the local population — some of who joined in with a wave.

When we landed in Bombay the heat and humidity of India came pouring into the plane. We had arrived. Our first encounter with Indian bureaucracy came with the drawn-out task of getting through customs. This was further delayed when the customs officer took it into his head to hold a debate with us on the nature of Ultimate Reality. We left him with the promise that if we gained Enlightenment we would come back and let him in on the secret.

Outside the airport India thrust

itself at us, and we were soon the centre of a crowd of beggars, taxi-drivers, young boys, and the curious bystanders who always gather at the slightest excuse in India.

Lokamitra was an experienced hand, and I was glad that I could leave it up to him to get us from the airport to the station, and from there to Poona.

I was overcome with amazement at the strange new world in which I found myself. I felt more as if we had arrived on a new planet than in a new country. My first impressions were of heat and humidity, and colour — everything and everyone seemed so very full of colour after dull, grey, London. The smell was unimaginable to anyone who has not been there, but absolutely characteristic to one who has: a strange blend of incense, sweat, spices, and dung. There was dust and disorder, poverty, and the awful shanty-towns which we passed, and above all the people — everywhere people! People talking, working, playing, cooking, eating, sleeping, and defecating, all out there on the open streets.

Lokamitra steered us firmly and decisively through the crowds, and navigated us to Poona. When we arrived there we were both pretty ex-

hausted. However, a stream of visitors began to appear immediately. Friends of Lokamitra, from his previous visit, flooded in to see us and, in many cases, much to my embarrassment, to prostrate themselves before us, and to present flowers and garlands. I found that we had suddenly become religious dignitaries, a position that I was not greatly accustomed to, and which I was not entirely sure that I merited.

Over the next week we began to settle down and organise ourselves. I found that we had not only arrived in a strange new land, but that we were immediately embraced and taken into the very hearts of the Buddhist community in Poona. We were honoured guests in people's houses, where we were treated with immense hospitality, and also with immense meals. Indians are very keen on making sure that you get your fill, and the first Indian word that I learned was 'bas', which means, 'Enough, please no more'.

Lokamitra was an orange whirlwind of activity under the hot Poona sun: meeting people, talking, organising, planning, exhorting people onwards, and I followed in his wake, helping where I could. I also spent some time exploring the strange

city, in which I found myself constantly being surprised, sometimes shocked, sometimes enthralled, and sometimes wondering what on earth I was doing there. In those first weeks it all seemed so strange, the people so different from us that I occasionally wondered whether it was possible to communicate across such wide cultural gulfs. However, as I came to know and appreciate the people who were helping us, I began to see that beyond all the many differences between us, there were more important things that we had in common, and that surely a Sangha would grow here.

The first few classes that we held were very different to the FWBO classes held anywhere else. They were held in small huts, shacks, or garages, which were usually packed to overflowing, and very, very hot. All sections of the community were there, from toddlers to grandparents. Lokamitra's talks were simple but uncompromising, and were excitedly received by his audiences. Chanting seemed more popular than meditation to most, and also very popular was the showing of respect and veneration to Lokamitra and I, a practice that I still found rather disconcerting.

There seemed so much to do, the task was enormous, but the potential so great. Every now and then I would feel the need to get away from it for an hour or so, and I would climb a huge rocky outcrop that stood near where we were living. Looking down on the extraordinary panorama below it would sometimes seem to me that the whole 'wheel of life' was spinning down there for all to see. Birth, life, and death all seemed so much more immediate and apparent there than they do in the West. Because of this, India seemed to be fertile ground for the Dharma to grow, and the humble beginning we were making was possibly the start of something very big indeed.

**Kularatna**



**Bodhidharma, Amritbodhi, and Maha Dhammavir — Three new Dhamma workers**

satisfy the constant requests for a permanent presence in Aurangabad. The Movement's publications, in Marathi and English, sell in their thousands. The demand for instruction in meditation and Buddhism, and for retreats, grows literally by the week. And, perhaps most importantly of all, some twenty Indians have gone for Refuge and joined the spiritual community. The new kind of Dhamma worker, towards whom Dr Ambedkar turned his hopes, is now alive and active in India.

Obviously this dramatic success has much to do with the energy and commitment manifested by the Order members who have worked in India, and who are working there now. But

the interest in and enthusiasm for the Dhamma was already there, waiting to be fed. Dr Ambedkar's work, despite the set-backs and confusions had not gone in vain. Because of him thousands of people already *want* to know more about Buddhism, want to be taught how to practice it, want to find out how it can improve their lives. When the Ven. Sangharakshita made a visit to India early this year, he found himself giving talks to crowds of 3,000, 5,000, 8,000, not just once or twice, but night after night, in Pune, Bombay, Nanded, Delhi...

The missed opportunities of the last 25 years cannot but be regretted. However, much of the political exploitation of Dr Ambedkar's move-

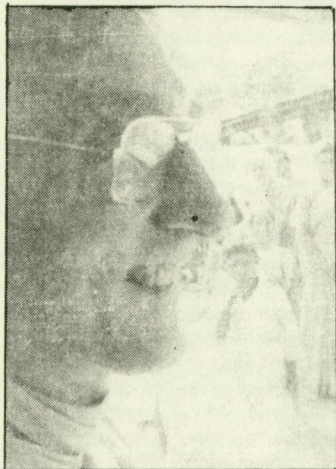
ment has faded away; there is probably less in-fighting than ever before. The field is probably clearer than it has ever been for real Dhamma work to take place. And the Ven. Sangharakshita's approach, necessarily developed and established in the West can now be applied — with some financial support from the West where necessary — to a very fertile situation.

I was with the Ven. Sangharakshita during his recent tour. Many times I met people who acted and thought with a level of self-confidence of which even their fathers could never have dreamed. I saw huge crowds of people at the talks, all straining their ears, and screwing up

their faces in concentration, hanging on every word. I watched small groups of Buddhists sitting down to study a short Buddhist scripture. I saw many men and women having their first go at meditation practice, and clearing up their doubts in the questions afterwards. Time and time again I heard local organisers asking whether someone could come to their village or town soon to teach Dhamma. Witnessing these things I could not help feeling that I was witnessing history itself: the history of the Untouchables, the history of India, the history of Buddhism.



# Sangharakshita on tour in India II



Waddala is a poor part of Bombay. It is one of those frequently found areas where the pavements have been turned into a kind of endless encampment, where some of Bombay's two and a quarter million street dwellers live, in huts, tents, and shelters thrown together with anything that has come to hand.

We were staying in the Siddharth Vihara — a hostel for students from the nearby Ambedkar College — which rises above those scenes of squalor and poverty, which I can hardly believe I really saw. For Vajraketu, who had recently arrived from England, and who was visiting an architect in Bombay, this was his first, almost traumatic, confrontation with this kind of urban nightmare (I have heard of people who have caught the first available 'plane back to the West, after their first look at the streets of Bombay), but for the rest of us it was just the first stop on the Ven. Sangharakshita's second tour, the second segment of his visit to India.

We stayed in Bombay for just two days. During this time, Bhante gave a lecture on the purpose of education to the staff of some of the Ambedkar-founded 'People's Education Society' establishments in Bombay, and a talk to about 3,000 members of the 'Mass Movement', a pressure group of 'Untouchable' and Buddhist government workers.

In his talk on education, Bhante stressed that real education cannot take place without real communication based on real friendship, understanding, and respect between teacher and pupil. At its highest level, he said, education becomes a kind of spiritual friendship, in which the teacher is helping the

pupil to unfold and develop his full inner potential.

From Bombay we took the night train to Ahmedabad, up in Gujarat, where we were to spend the next ten days. Ahmedabad has been referred to as 'the Manchester of India' because of its thriving cotton mills and textile industry. Indeed, we were to gain first-hand experience of this, since the bungalows in which we stayed were set beside a large open common, on which hundreds of lengths of newly dyed sari cloth were laid out to dry in the sun every day.

Little else in Ahmedabad brings Manchester to mind. Even the Victorian Gothic buildings, so common to many large Indian cities, seem to be lacking. Instead, futuristic concrete constructions, designed by Le Corbusier, and other luminaries, swoop and soar up into the sky, right beside the minarets of ancient mosques, while, below, life goes on in a veritable warren of narrow streets, alleys and lanes. The roads are choked with cars, buses, rickshaws, handcarts with real pneumatic rubber tyres — pulled along by husband-and-wife teams, and camel carts. The air is full of noise and bustle: traffic, conversation, barter, temple-bells, and the melodious calls of the *muezzin* summoning the faithful to prayer. It is a busy, busy place, as full — or even fuller — of the contrasts between old and new, Hindu and Moslem, rich and poor, as any Indian city.

It is here that we have our second centre of activity: a small one-roomed vihara in a narrow alley full of parked scooters, bicycles, and upturned beds. Here also live Bakul and Ratnakar, the first two Gujarati Order members, and a number of Friends and mitras (*Sahayaks* and *Dhamma Mitras* as they are called in India).

In Ahmedabad are to be found Gujarati Buddhists and immigrant Maharashtra Buddhists. Both communities revere Dr Ambedkar, but for linguistic and cultural reasons, cross-fertilisation between the two has been difficult and rare. Now, in the context of our Movement's activities, the channels of communication are beginning to open up.

Ahmedabad has also been the scene of vicious conflicts between Hindu and Moslem, between Hindu and Buddhist. Just a few years ago were the 'troubles',

during which many people were killed or seriously injured in the inter-religious riots, when it was not safe for a Buddhist to go out on the streets. There are no signs of that now, but some of us could feel, nevertheless, a certain tension in the air, a sense of threat about the place, which we had never experienced elsewhere.

Unfortunately the dry dusty air brought back the throat troubles that Bhante had experienced earlier, and he was unable to give all the talks that he had planned. However, he was able to give a major lecture on 'The Stream of the Dhamma' to members of the Gujarat Buddhist Society, and to give several talks in poor localities around the town, interpreted now by Bakul and Ratnakar.

These locality talks were of especial interest since many members of the audience were still 'Untouchable' Hindus contemplating conversion. Bhante would therefore explain to them what Buddhism is, how one becomes, and practises as, a Buddhist, how Buddhism can help one to live a happier life.

When we were invited into people's homes for meals, which we were, twice a day every day, we were not only fed royally but also plied with innumerable questions: 'What is the difference between Buddha and God? What is meditation? How can we create Right Livelihood? Sometimes the discussions would just arise; sometimes they would follow short talks

that we would sometimes give — in thanks for the food we had eaten.

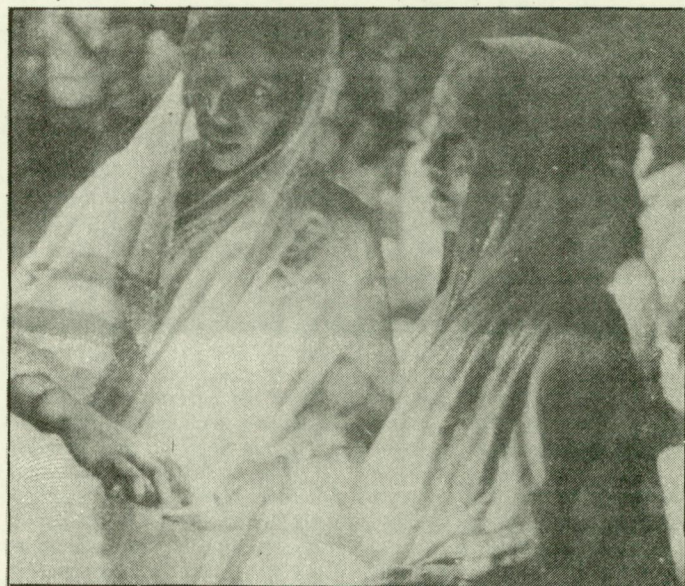
One day we visited a newly built vihara, a lovely bright, spacious building set in an almost manicured garden. Here our hosts were of Maharashtra origin, and we listened with almost nostalgic joy to the chants and formalised cheers to which we had become accustomed on our earlier tour, as Bhante walked in, through an avenue of women holding trays of lights, flowers and incense.

Dr Ambedkar came from Maharashtra and his immediate followers were, are, Maharashtrian. But he was a leader for all. There are new Buddhists in the Punjab, in Gujarat, and in many other states. Although the most by far are in Maharashtra, it is possible to imagine a time when the message of Dr Ambedkar, and of course, the message of the Buddha, will resound throughout India.

Our stay in Ahmedabad ended with an all-too-short two day retreat, held in the Youth Hostel at Ghandinagar — the futuristic grid-plan state capital of Gujarat, just a short ride from Ahmedabad.

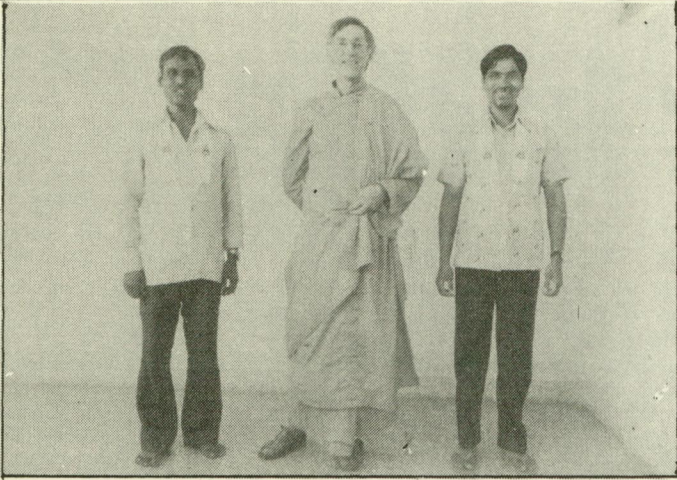
About eighty people attended the retreat, a truly happy gathering of friends. Many were on their first retreat, so a separate shrineroom was made, in which about thirty people took their first lessons in meditation. At the end of the retreat came the ordinations of Varabodhi, Suman Dharmapal, and Biren Kaushal.

With five Order members now in



Lighting up time for Bhante's welcoming party





**Bhante with Siladitya and Jayaditya**

Ahmedabad, with Purna paying regular visits, and with Mangala on a prolonged stay, the future of our activities in Ahmedabad, and in Gujarat generally, is secure and very promising.

From Ahmedabad we went on to Ajmer, a town in Rajasthan. After a day spent sight-seeing with our host Rahula Sumana Chawara at the nearby lakeside town of Pushka — a Hindu Pilgrimage spot, Bhante gave a talk in a vihara which has been built into a new school.

Here he addressed a small Hindi-speaking audience, so it was Dharmarakshita who translated the talk, in which Bhante spoke mainly about his own life and work, and of his connections with Dr Ambedkar and the Buddhist movement.

A day later, after a visit to, of all things, a factory where 'beedies' (the thin acrid 'country' cigarettes of India) are made, and a meal with the owner of the factory (in India one can get 'organised' into the strangest situations!), and another overnight train-ride, we found ourselves greeting the morning in Delhi.

We stayed at the Sri Lanka Buddhist Pilgrims' Rest House — almost opposite New Delhi Station. Although the Rest House boasts a Buddha statue in its central courtyard, a shrineroom, and cheap rates for Buddhist pilgrims (Bhikkhus go free), the main hall seemed to be on hire to a retailer of cut-priced clothes, and the marquee was hired out to wedding parties every night, who looked, and sounded, distinctly Hindu.

In Delhi, Bhante was to visit old friends, browse in the bookshops, take part in an informal question and answer session, and give one major public talk. The rest of us rushed about, cramming as much sight-seeing as we could into our four days: The Red Fort, Hanumayun's tomb, the mosques... — and the Taj Mahal, just four hours away by train.

Bhante's talk was the final item

in a weekend convention of an organisation known as 'D - S4', a more militant brother-organisation to the 'Mass Movement'. As we arrived, a speaker on the stage was shouting and declaiming, with passionately waving arms, into the microphone, while about a thousand delegates sat looking on in bemused silence. They had obviously had a very full diet that weekend.

Bhante again chose to speak about himself, and about our Movement in the West. He then talked about Dr Ambedkar, and finally reflected on where the movement of mass-conversion has gone wrong. He reminded his audience of the supreme value of practice, of putting Dr Ambedkar's vision into practice by really *being* Buddhists, and living like Buddhists.

Without feeling prejudiced, I can honestly report that it was quite extraordinary to see that shell-shocked audience come to life, and respond so warmly to Bhante's words. Afterwards, we had difficulty leaving; so many people wanted to meet us, shake our hands, take our autographs, tell us about themselves, and find out more about us. The response was its own testimony to the underlying

genuineness of the Buddhist movement among Dr Ambedkar's followers. Politicians and rabble-rousers there may be, ever willing to try to use the latent force of such a movement, but the people we met that night, and on so many nights, were most moved by, and most keen to hear, the Buddha's teaching.

Bhante's stay in India ended with a retreat at a People's Education Society school, just outside Bombay. This was a four-day event, attended by about sixty men and women, from all over Maharashtra — and at one point by about two hundred young boys and girls to whom Bhante gave a short talk.

To the usual programme was added a series of study groups. I found the experience of leading one of these groups utterly exhilarating.



**Kanshi Ram, founder of D-S4, introduces Bhante.**

Everyone was completely *there*, completely eager to take part and to understand. They seemed to know that in these texts, in these teachings were to be found truths, and a path that *Baba Saheb* had wanted them to find. The more they could understand, then the more they would be able to fulfil the destiny mapped out for them by him. Nobody said this, but it was

there, implicit in the situation: that sense of something historical, which I have mentioned in another article.

The retreat ended with the ordinations of Jayaditya, and Siladitya, both from Poona, and with the common spectacle of a great number of people not wanting — not being able — to leave!

But once everyone had gone, all except the Order members, we held a two-day Order convention. We meditated together, and sat for several hours in a large circle to discuss a number of issues relating to the future of the Movement in India.

Sitting in that circle, I could not help remembering the first Order Convention in England, just nine years ago, at 'Aryatara'. On that occasion too we were small enough to be able to sit together in one circle, and to discuss things

together. I thought of the changes and developments in the Movement since that weekend: how the Order has grown: how the Movement has spread: how we have all changed so much: how our understanding of the Dharma and its implications has evolved.

Bhante's last 'official act' was to plant a tree in the school grounds, at the request of the headmaster. After travelling around with Bhante for three months, after seeing the enthusiasm, the interest and the sincerity of Dr Ambedkar's followers, I found it impossible to predict — or even to imagine — what the Movement in India will be like in nine year's time, when that little sapling has matured.

As the taxi drove off down the road, taking Bhante to the airport, a small crowd of Order members stood, framed in the school entrance, waving, waving, waving, wiping away a few tears, and looking forward, very much indeed, to the next time.

**NAGABODHI**



**Order members at the Convention**



# Aid for India

Aid for India is the charity set up and run by the FWBO to fund its work in India. The largest part of the work in this country is fundraising for the projected medical and educational aspects of the work amongst the

Buddhists in Poona. This is done through a series of appeals to the general public in which Buddhist volunteers give a couple of months of their time and become members of the Aid for India doorknocking

teams. They do this under the guidance and support of a team of full-time workers led by Tim Lilley, a professional with many years experience of this kind of work, and who is also a mitra.

The 'doorknockers' are not just looking for single donations when they approach people. They ask those who show interest if they will become regular subscribers over a period of seven years by deed of covenant. In this way, Nick Rhodes, a mitra from FWBO Surrey raised £20,000 worth of covenants in just four weeks. Not everyone is so successful, but all those who join the team find that in doing so they are not just helping the situation in India, but that they are also doing a lot to change themselves.

Marg Gill, who worked on the appeal last summer writes:

'Looking back, I am struck by the challenge I was faced with. Soon after I had decided to do the appeal I met Lokamitra at the West London Buddhist Centre where he was giving a talk on India and his work amongst the Buddhists there. This helped to bring the situation there alive for me. I would be helping an ambitious project which would improve the lives of thousands of people.

'An intensive two day training course helped prepare me for what lay ahead. In those days we knocked 150 doors a day and later went to appointments with people who had shown interest in the scheme. This demanded everything I had. For the first few weeks I experienced an abundance of aggression by the end of the evening, but soon enough every ounce of energy I had was needed just to keep going, and the aggression went. I felt a free being, on the move for nearly three months, talking to hundreds of people who knew nothing about me. As the appeal went on I gradually opened up more and more to them. This made the work more difficult since I was affected more deeply by the people I contacted. At times I was touched by the pain in a face or felt the desolation of an empty life. At other times I was inspired by the kindness and generosity which met me. Above all I realised how potent we can be and that our lives and actions can help to alleviate some of the suffering around us'.

Nick, the 'record holder', writes of the joys of successful fundraising:

'I was in an excellent area, and it is much easier to work when you know a good response is likely. The people I was meeting were genuinely warm and open, knew their own minds, and were not short of money. I really liked them and felt very much at home in their company — indeed it was almost a wrench to stop working there. I built up quite a unique relationship with the area; there cannot be many people who have met such a large percentage of people from that little pocket of London, or been invited into so many houses there. Sometimes after two or three signings a day I would be almost floating down the street unable to contain myself, laughing out loud with the sheer pleasure of the work. Many volunteers find that having done an Aid for India appeal once they are hooked, and cannot resist going back for more. This certainly applies to me. Part of me, a year after my last appeal, is thirsting for more.'

Padmasuri has just worked on the latest appeal. She had a particular reason for wanting to do so:

'In mid January I left the deep snow and ice of London for the sun and heat of India. This was the beginning of a three-month trial period in Poona where I was to get a feel of what it would be like to live in a society so completely different to our own. I am a trained nurse and midwife and had felt a keen desire to work in India with the FWBO medical team when the first murmurings about the Poona Project were heard 5 years ago.

I particularly wanted to experience doing community health work as this is the kind of work we want to become engaged in in Poona. So in addition to spending time making friends with local people in Poona I spent some time on a rural health project which has been set up by 2 Indian doctors in Maharashtra. It had been running for about ten years, covered 50 villages and was producing excellent results. The most important work was training local women within the villages to become health workers and to pass on things they had learned about nutrition,

hygiene, and anti- and post-natal care to their neighbours. Once a fortnight each village is visited by a doctor and two nurses who deal with cases the health workers cannot deal with themselves and those who need further treatment are taken to the hospital from which the project was begun. Coming back to London I feel greatly inspired to return as soon as there is work I can do. Meanwhile I have plunged into the intensity of the fundraising side of the work here in England.

'Our team meets for double meditation each day and this is followed by different activities: Dharma study, drama, communication exercises, and a weekly team meeting. At 3.30 pm prompt we drive out to where we are working, stopping en route for a meal. At 10.00 pm we all meet up again after work in the local coffee bar where a friendly, competitive excitement ignites us as we all ask 'How many did you get tonight?'

before driving back through the emptying streets. Tomorrow a new day dawns with new targets to be met and new confrontations with yourself, as you see more clearly that the way you work relates directly to the amount of covenants you raise. Success depends upon being as clear, open and honest as possible. It is no good bowling people over with your enthusiasm for the project either; you must let your energy meet that of the person in the doorway while remaining totally direct and confident. What better basis for the development of the individual? New challenges stretch you every day, a supportive team, an ultimate goal which means the Dharma can be spread through the indirect methods of social work; all this is encapsulated within the framework of meditation, study and communication. Is this not a taste of freedom?

'People's initial motivation for fundraising varies. Mine was to get the work started in Poona but now that I am about to plunge into my fourth week I realise I have put myself into a crucial situation and the boundary lines of "Medicine in Poona" are only part of my Aid for India landscape now. It has grown into a multi-faceted jewel which is yet to reveal all its faces.'

**Tim Lilley**



These quilted bedspreads are made by Friends in Poona — to be sold by Friends in the West. — The beginnings of Right Livelihood?



## A Village Hospital

Padmasuri spent three weeks of her stay at the Comprehensive Rural Health Project, Jamkhed, in central Maharashtra, visiting a local health project that has been successfully established there for some years.

She spent most of her time with the project workers bouncing around rough tracks in old jeeps, visiting village after village, witnessing treatments, consultation sessions, lectures on hygiene and sanitation, learning a great deal about what such a 'grass roots' project involves. She spent her last afternoon in the central hospital, and writes:

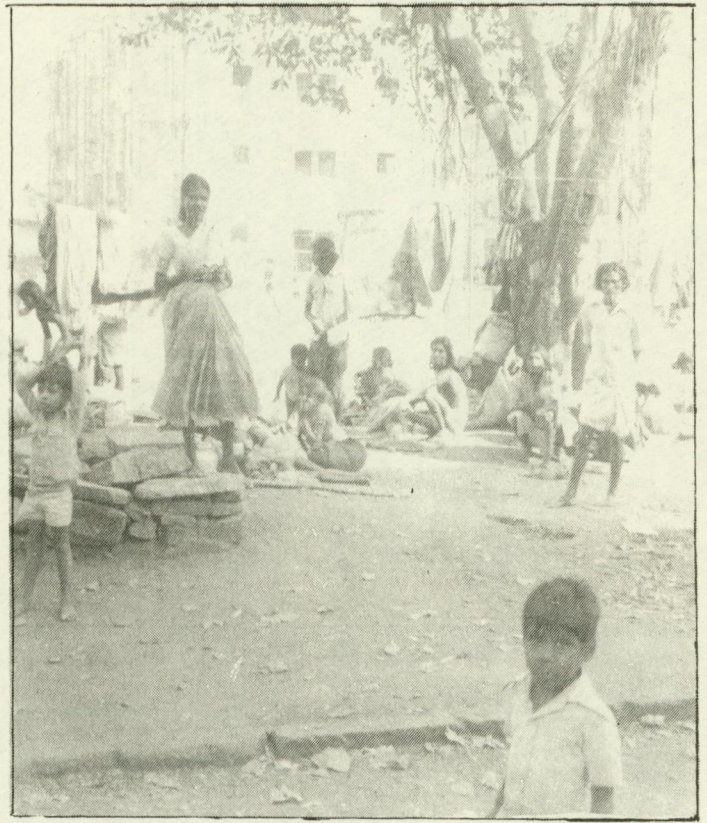
'There were a variety of causes for admission to the hospital. Most patients were men. Two had crushed hands from working with sugar-cane squeezing machines. One man had very bad burns. In England he would have been kept in a sterile room and visitors would have had to wear a gown and mask in order to see him. Here, he was in an open ward with flies sitting on his scarred body. Then there was a young boy who had an allergic reaction to something — nobody knew what — and his entire body was ulcerated and oozing pus. For months they had treated him with steroids, which had not had much effect, so now they were experimenting with an infusion made from the roots of one of the trees in the garden — which seemed to work! Next there was a man with a gangrenous leg due to bad plastering at a hospital in Poona after a small fracture. It stank, and he was probably going to have to have his leg amputated. Another patient had been stabbed in the gut by his bullock's horns. Yet another patient was being treated for maggots in his nose. He had leprosy which affects the nervous system so that you lose sensation at the extremities of the body. Having lost sensation in his nose, he could not feel the flies that settled there, laying their eggs which naturally turned into maggots. A final gory detail: that morning twins had been born. One had no head, and other no arms or legs. They were buried in a field just behind the hospital.

The hospital does not provide food — the relatives come and stay in the ward, cooking the meals and sleeping beside the sick person.

I saw and learned a lot in those few days. It was not so much a clinical experience, but an insight into the lives of some of the people that, as a foreigner, it would be easy to miss or to gloss over. It gave me a lot of food for thought with regard to our own

project. There will obviously be differences since we will be working in an urban area as opposed to a rural area, but I feel that the way in which this project has been set up has much to be admired and learned from. The Auroles, who established it had four criteria which they followed in setting up the project: (1) The local communities should be motivated and involved in decision making and must participate in the health programme, so that ultimately they 'own' the programme in their respective localities and villages. (2) The system must be planned at the grass-roots level and develop a referral system to suit local conditions. (3) Local resources, such as buildings, manpower, and agriculture must be used to solve local health problems. (4) The community needs total health care, and not fragmented health care: promotional, preventative, and curative care must be completely integrated without any undue emphasis on one particular aspect.

Padmasuri



Putting up with the city to send money home

## Village Life

**Meanwhile Vajraketu, who will be a key administrator with our projects, recently spent a week touring a rural area of Maharashtra with Lokamitra and other Order members. Here, in an extract from his diary, we get a glimpse of the Dhamma-work aspect of the job being done out there.**

The contrast between village life and that in the towns and cities is quite striking. At first sight it appears to be infinitely preferable. Many houses in most villages had electricity, though none had running water, drainage, or toilets: people relied instead on the village well. Kokan, the area we were travelling through, is one of the most backward regions of Maharashtra, which itself is one of the most prosperous states in India. One way in which Kokan differs from other regions is in the fact that each village is spread over a wide area, so that the 'Buddhist' locality is almost a village in itself, separate from the other communities — whereas in most villages the Buddhist community lives on the outskirts, but close to the rest of the village, which makes it more vulnerable to intimidation and ex-

ploitation.

Land and material are both plentiful and free; there is plenty of wood, stone, and cow dung (which is used as fuel). So although people are desperately poor, the quality of their lives is in some way higher than that of those who leave the villages to work in the city, and who live in squalid, overcrowded conditions. Yet it is the money that those people send back to their families which often supports most of the people in the village, it being hardly possible for 'ex-untouchables' to scrape a living together in the caste-ridden villages. Caste prejudice is infinitely worse in the villages than in the towns.

Another feature was the cleanliness. There was a standard of cleanliness in the houses and localities that is totally absent in equivalent localities in, for example, Bombay. That the people were poor was beyond doubt. Perhaps the clearest indication of this was in the kind of food which they served to 'honoured' guests, which was basic even by Indian standards, and in the wretched state of the cattle, cats, and dogs which scavenged around.

It was also clear how big an event in

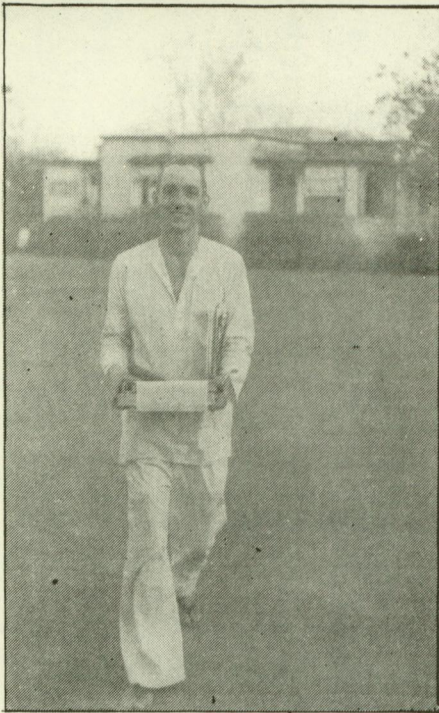
their lives was each visit we made. Probably most of the people we were meeting had never heard someone speak on the Dhamma, though they had all been Buddhists for up to 25 years. Inevitably, some confusion in understanding and practice had arisen. Again and again, Lokamitra exhorted people to give up this or that wrong practice: The Buddha is not God; Dr Ambedkar is not a god; don't pray for a son, or for wealth; I am not a priest — I cannot practise the Dhamma for you; throw out your old gods; co-operate, don't factionalise; don't drink; question everything; blind faith is not enough; discuss the Dhamma amongst yourselves; send your people on our retreats so that they can transmit back to you what they learn; practise the five precepts; the Dhamma can really and tangibly improve your lives... All this was delivered with an enthusiasm and sincerity which made it irresistible.

Most houses had a little shrine in them, usually with a plaster Buddha-image painted in gaudy colours, but showing every sign of being well looked after. Most villages had their own little vihara, again very well looked after, though we came to understand that they were little used for Dhamma practice, probably because people simply did not yet know what to do.

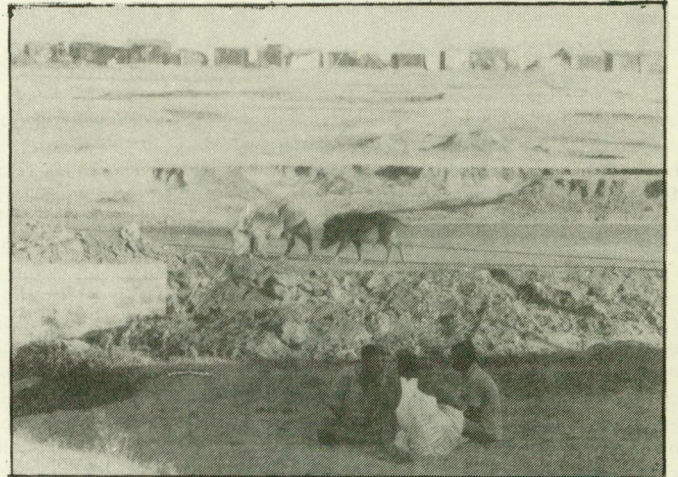
Vajraketu



# Images



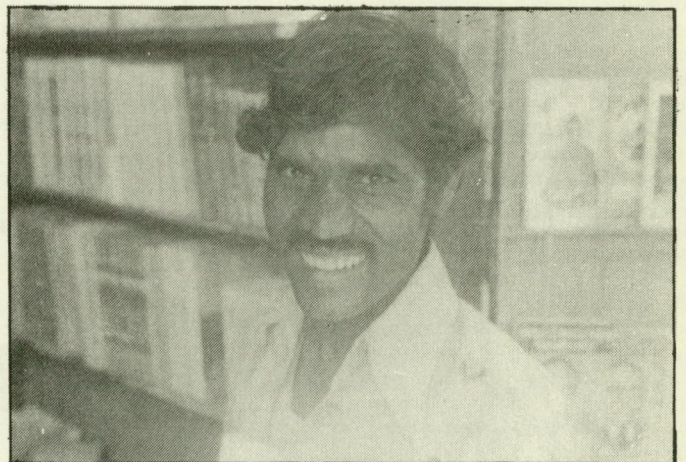
**Vajraketu in search of a quiet office**



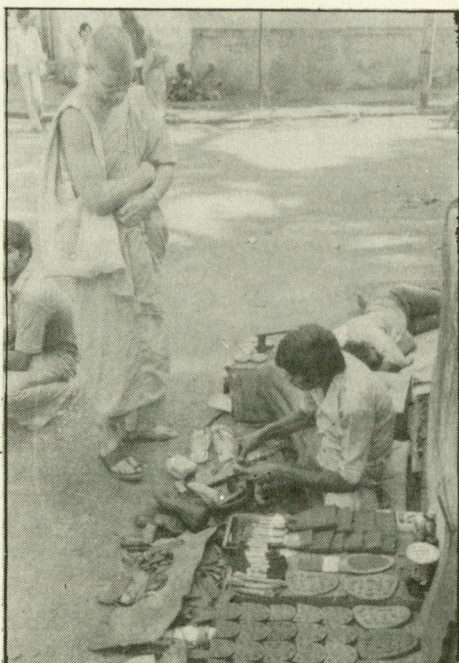
**Levels of existence in Poona**



**A question and answer session**



**Mitra Dharmanand at our Poona bookshop**



**Running repairs for Lokamitra**



**Kids in Kopergaon watch the procession**



# of India

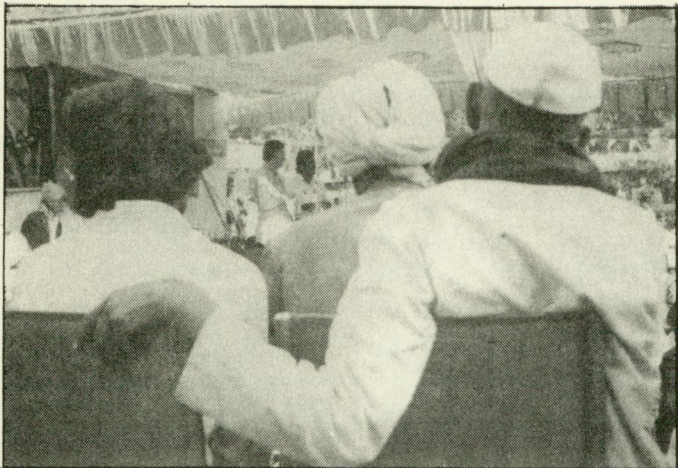
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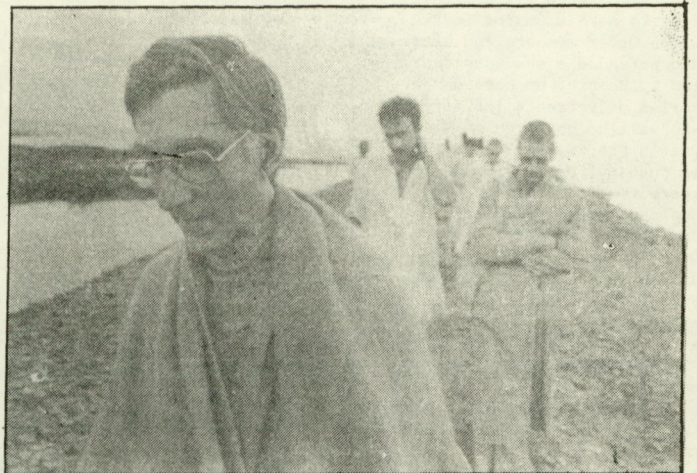
Inside a Bombay tenement



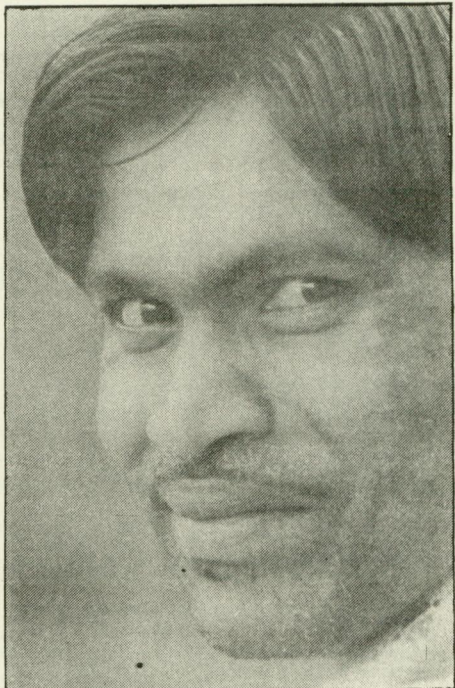
Jyotipala takes home the garlands



Attentive listeners in Panchgani



A stroll beside a reservoir before the talk



Jayaditya



Nagabodhi in Bombay

*Kevala*



## Europe

### PADMALOKA

Padmaloka comes into its own in Spring: blossom fills the trees, shrubs bloom, and rich greenery fills the grounds. Not only does it become a garden of delights for those who live here, but for the constant flow of guests who visit for retreats, to see Bhante, or for a change from city life. Over the past months we have hardly had less than thirty men on the premises at any one time - the major exception being the ten-day period when the community left to make room for forty women Order members and mitras who attended a study seminar led by Bhante. We have had a series of retreats for mitras who will be going on this year's Pre Ordination course in Tuscany, a Chairman's retreat, a retreat for New Zealand men in this country, and study seminars led by Order members. More experimentally we have held a weekend Judo retreat, and a week's Karate retreat, both of which were very successful.

Although Padmaloka has been used for occasional retreats before, this is the first time that there has been a virtually continuous programme of retreats. The community, now numbering 18 men - has adjusted to this new programme, and members carry on with their own work and practice if they are not participating in the retreat in progress.

#### Building Work

We are now planning the next phase of the building work. This will entail repairing the three large semi-derelict barns next door to the main house for use as dormitories and a large new shrineroom. This will enable us to hold big events here, such as the men's Order/mitra events, and Order Conventions for up to 100 people. We will also be able to accommodate more people on regular retreats, and possibly have more men in the community.

We have recently been given the opportunity to purchase the freehold on Padmaloka, and we are presently trying to raise the mortgage to cover initial payments. We will shortly be launching an appeal to help us raise the full sum. The owner is giving us excellent terms, and is prepared to postpone payment of the full sum for two years, to enable us to raise the money to purchase the property which not only houses the FWBO's men's retreat centre, but also Bhante's

headquarters, and the Office of the Western Buddhist Order.

A programme is now being drawn up which stretches to the end of 1983, with more seminars, Yoga, Judo, Karate retreats, as well as the major open retreats in August and December.

We hope that more men will take advantage of the facilities at Padmaloka, either for an organised retreat, or for a stay in the community. If you would like further details of our events and future programme, then please contact the retreat organiser.

### MARTIAL ARTS

'Oizuki, Gyakazuki, Gedan barai...' The call rang clearly through the dojo. 'Bend the front knees, push forward into stance - get a good Zenkutsu-dashi.'

The words were familiar enough, and are used in dojos across the world, containing as they do the basic grammar of Karate. But this time they took on a special significance as they echoed round not just an ordinary dojo, but the main shrineroom of Padmaloka. They heralded the return of the martial arts to the FWBO in the more formal environment of a karate retreat.

Karate had been present in the early days of the FWBO, but interest subsided as Yoga and work on major expansion projects took over. But over the past few years there has been a resurgence of interest in martial arts of varying traditions, with individuals studying Judo, Karate, T'ai Chi, and other styles, and it was only a matter of time before classes run by Order members, mitras, and friends began.

The Padmaloka Karate retreat was led by Dharmavira, the 24 year old Scottish Order member who is a first Dan in Shotokan, the original Japanese style. Having trained intensively during his teens, and fought for Scotland, Dharmavira left Karate nearly five years ago when he became more closely involved with the FWBO in Glasgow.

But when he was asked to teach Karate on the Tuscany retreat, he found his interest was reawakened, and now he is practising regularly again, convinced that it has much to offer the FWBO.

The pattern of the week followed general FWBO retreat lines. We rose at 6.30 am for a double period of meditation. We practised Karate from 10.30 'til midday. Then we had another session from 2.30 until 4.00. This was followed by another

the pujas.

Most of the 16 participants were at the beginner stage of Karate, and the course was geared towards those. Basics - formal stances, basic kicks, punches and strikes - were practised in the morning, with kata and sparring in the afternoon. Practising kata in bright sunlight on the main lawn, surrounded by oaks, cypresses, and flowering laburnum - was one of the many unforgettable moments of the week.

People changed. From being stiff, jerky, and unclear, their movements began to flow with more purpose. Stances grew longer, punches and kicks gained more focus.

After four days or so, complaints of stiff muscles and bruises ceased, minor pains in the background, a long way in the distance, far from the foreground of sheer enjoyment.

This was the second martial arts event to be held at Padmaloka this year. Earlier, in March, a group of ten judokas - six adults and four boys - went there to spend an informal weekend practising.

For most, it served as an introduction to Padmaloka and the FWBO environment, with the judokas eating and relaxing with the community, as well as attending the community's pujas. Morning meditation, however, was held separately in the dojo/shrineroom.

This too was very successful, and similar events will be held later this year.

In fact, Padmaloka has planned a series of martial arts weekends and weeks for the next twelve months. On the weekend of September 10/12th there will be a Judo weekend, mainly for beginners in the FWBO. The instructor will be Nicolas Soames, First Dan. A second Judo weekend is planned for 29/31st October, and is intended for more experienced judokas.

The next Karate week is to be held in November though, inevitably, Karate will feature increasingly on retreats whenever Dharmavira is there to teach, as happened during the men's event at Padmaloka at the end of June.

Subhuti  
Nic Soames

#### Leeds Visit

In May, Order members and mitras from Padmaloka and Manchester led a day retreat for members of the Leeds Buddhist Group. About twenty people attended a programme of meditation, communication exercises, talk, discussion, and puja. Several of those attending expressed a strong desire for more such activities, and we hope to hold another retreat in West Yorkshire soon.



Sparring on the Padmaloka lawn

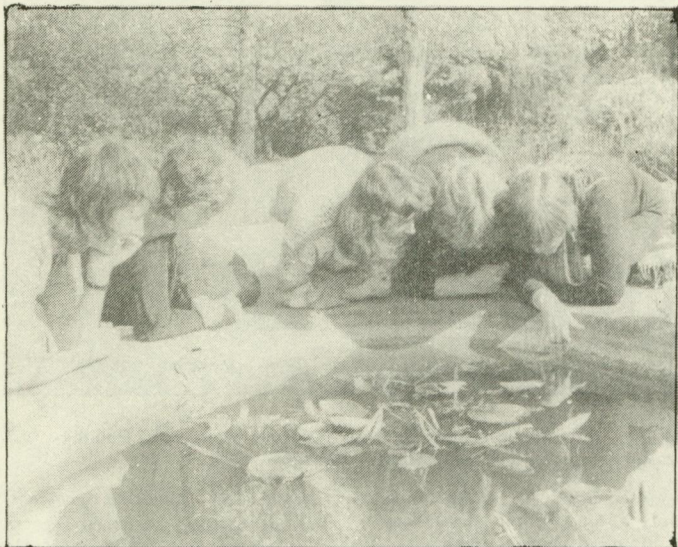
Vessantara

For, in the early summer heat of the first week of June, 16 karatekas from all over Britain gathered in Padmaloka to spend seven days meditating and training.

period of meditation. At night we concluded with a meditation and puja at 8.30. One of the most striking features of the retreat was the consistently alert and vibrant standard of



## WOMEN'S SEMINARS



Peering into some mysterious waters

Vajragita

Early in May, forty women converged upon Padmaloka from different parts of the Movement to take part in the first of two ten-day women's seminars to be led by Bhante this year. One group were to study the first two chapters of *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, by Gampopa, translated by Herbert Guenther, several other chapters of which were studied during the 1980 women's seminars. The second group studied the *Sutra of Forty Two Sections*, a Chinese Mahayana text translated by John Blofeld.

The retreat itself came together very quickly and harmoniously, all of us being delighted to be transported from our normal city working environments to the magical springtime of an English garden abounding in cherry blossom, bluebells, and spring flowers. It seemed a very fitting environment in which to relax and be receptive to the Dharma.

### Mysterious Waters

In the study sessions themselves we plunged into the deep and mysterious waters of the Dharma. The group studying the *Jewel Ornament* text began with a discussion on the nature of Reality which led us very quickly to wrestle not only with more familiar terms such as *Nirvana* and *Samsara* but also with concepts such as *Sunyata*, the *Tathagatagarbha*, *Tathata*, and the *Dharmakaya*. Thus we were led into a discussion of the nature and use of language itself, and of how we need to beware of our tendency to reify concepts and to get tangled up in metaphysical and philosophical speculations. Bhante's approach was very much one of clarification and simplification, as well as of continually re-emphasising the essentially

dynamic nature of Reality, which we so easily fix with static concepts. He also pointed out how much of our language is inherently metaphorical and how easily we fall into the trap of taking such language literally. Bhante added that in many ways the Buddha's teaching was in fact more sophisticated than some of the later formulations of the teaching. The Buddha understood more clearly the limitations of language and knew what it could and could not do. Moreover, he used language not to communicate in the abstract, or to communicate merely abstract concepts, but in order to effect a change in his followers; to encourage and exhort them to follow the Path for themselves. Similarly, we too must look at the Dharma and its concepts in the same way, and we must continually ask ourselves what a particular teaching is asking us to do. The concept of *Sunyata*, for example, which expresses both the ineffability of all experience, and the conditionality, impermanence and 'emptiness' of all phenomena, is only useful to us if it encourages us to become less attached to those phenomena.

### A Human Body

The second chapter of the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, entitled 'The Working Basis' covers a traditional Tibetan Buddhist teaching concerning the eight unfavourable conditions and the ten endowments. The attainment of a human body, which is the working basis for our further development, is seen as a rare and precious opportunity. If we are lucky enough to have our senses and intelligence intact, and if, in addition to this, we live in a country of part

of the world where the Dharma is alive and able to be practised, then we are very fortunate indeed. This teaching provides us with a very powerful antidote to some of the negative tendencies, such as nihilism, apathy and cynicism, which are prevalent in our society today, and also urges us to make as much use as possible of the opportunities and facilities we have available. As Bhante said to the astonished gasps of the assembled company, 'You are already two thirds of the way to Enlightenment; why not make the extra effort?'.

Although the texts studied were different, and different material emerged, there were also many areas of overlap. During some sixty hours of study we covered among others, such varied topics as, the inexpressibility of all experience, communities, co-operatives, death, the use and abuse of language, motherhood and the maternal instinct, intuition and the creative imagination, sexuality, and creativity. The meal tables were buzzing with conversation as people swapped notes and the garden was often sprinkled with people lying on carpets of cherry-blossom petals staring at the sky while trying to absorb the full impact and implications of the study sessions on their lives and futures.

Dhammadinna

### LBC

The session began with Bhante's month-long visit in April. During the month he gave a talk about his recent trip to India, and led a Friends' Night, at which he chaired a talk by Dhammarati on *metta*. Both occasions had all the spark and lively air of anticipation usually associated with major festivals. Bhante, in his talk on India, painted a vivid picture of the hustle and bustle of Indian life. He emphasised that although social circumstances in India are still very difficult for

our Buddhist Friends, he felt that we could learn a lot from their wholehearted approach to their spiritual practice. He also reflected on how the fact that conditions are improving for the scheduled castes is creating an air of optimism for the future.

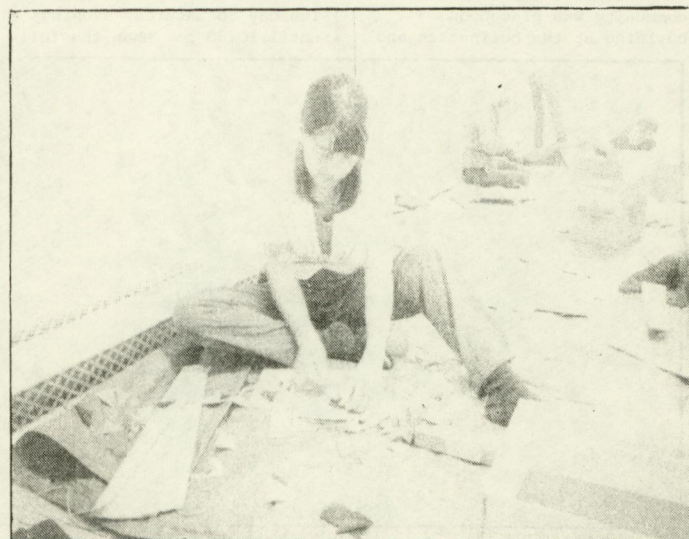
Both evenings culminated in a seven-fold puja, led by Bhante, during the course of which five men had their Mitra Ceremonies. During his visit Bhante also led a number of study groups, attended two council meetings, and participated in various activities in Sukhavati community, as well as meeting, individually, a remarkable number of people.

Immediately after Bhante's visit we celebrated Wesak, the festival of the Buddha's Enlightenment. The celebration centred around the building of a large stupa which was later offered, along with individual offerings, during the evening puja.

A highlight of the day was the participation of fifteen or so Vietnamese Buddhists with whom we have recently made contact. They joined us for a couple of hours in the afternoon, and did various Vietnamese chants and devotional practices using a traditional fish gong.

Activities outside the Centre continue to expand with not only another 'Meditation and Buddhism' course in Covent Garden, but also one in Hampstead. These will almost certainly become regular features of the LBC programme. Another day retreat was held in Nottingham, this time as a joint venture with the West London Centre.

Retreats this session have received a boost with the renting of our new retreat centre, a spacious house in three acres of garden in the Sussex countryside, very kindly let to us by the aunt of an LBC Friend. One very successful retreat held there was the one attended by women and children, which is reported separately.



Preparing Wesak offerings at the LBC

Vajradipa



## WEST LONDON

After three years of wandering in temporary homes in North West and Central London, the FWBO has finally settled in a permanent centre in Baker Street.

The brightly-painted centre - originally a travel business - is situated on the top floor of a block of offices, above a travel agency. It consists of a reception room and a shrine room which will also double as the Yoga room, with classes led by Sri Devi.

It was inaugurated by the Ven. Sangharakshita who led the dedication ceremony and puja on the opening day and remarked that it was similar to one of the earliest FWBO Centres, in Monmouth Street, London - except that that was in a basement.

Immediately following the opening, the Centre launched a busy programme of activities, with Tuesdays being the Open Night, Thursdays, the Regulars Class, Wednesdays being used for Meditation and Buddhism courses. There are a variety of Yoga classes, with a course on Mondays, from 7.30pm, preceded, at 6pm, with an open class.

### 'Working Environment'

Ratnavira, chairman of West London, pointed out that it was important that the Centre made the most of the 'working' environment, and is offering Meditation (Wednesdays) and Yoga (Thursdays) classes during lunchtimes, from 1pm.

The West London Centre has had an itinerant career, starting off in Ealing at the Friends Meeting House, and then moving to 'Mandala' in Telephone Place near Chiswick. In 1979, it was decided not to take on a new lease for 'Mandala', but to look for a new centre while moving temporarily to Swiss Cottage, and then to the Montessori Centre, near Oxford Circus.

Throughout this period, the emphasis in the West London community was placed on building up the businesses and

the communities, with the wholefood shop in Notting Hill Gate, 'Friends Gardening', and other small concerns firmly established, it was only a matter of time before the new centre was opened.

The lease is only for three years, partly because the owner hopes that the whole block would then be demolished to make way for redevelopment. So it is likely that the Centre will be on the move again but Ratnavira pointed out that by then the Centre should have outgrown the Baker Street offices anyway.

## CROYDON

The second phase of our plans for the High Street premises is now complete. We have opened a temporary centre on the second floor above Hockney's Restaurant, and have transferred all of our classes from Aryatara, which now becomes purely a men's community.

With the move to Croydon we have modified our approach to the regulars' class so that it becomes more geared to the regulars. It can happen that as beginners move into the regulars' class they get a bit lost among the mitras, who are usually well-established community members, and can feel, perhaps, on the outside of things. Devotional evenings and talks which are aimed also at the mitras are not always suitable for the regulars. The new class gives us a clearer picture of the regulars, and a much better opportunity to give them particular attention, to provide a thorough grounding in the basic tenets of Buddhism. Apart from a small supporting team, the mitras no longer attend the class, but have their own programme of study, meditation, and puja.

### 'Complex'

Holding classes in the same premises at the restaurant is already creating a lively atmosphere, and a sense of a 'complex'; particularly so now that Hockneys is open Tuesday to Saturday evenings until 10.30 pm. When the full



Work on the new Glasgow Centre continues. Here is the Buddha-image, made by Tommy Lydon, a Glasgow mitra.

centre opens in the autumn we will already have established a flourishing class here, making the transition from Aryatara to the new Croydon Centre more organic.

Our building team is at present busily redecorating Aryatara. As soon as work finishes there it will start the final phase of work to complete the new Centre complex.

We have recently been running meditation courses in Sutton and Brixton, as well as the beginners' classes in Streatham and Croydon. Next session we will continue to develop the Croydon and Streatham classes, and hope to run classes in the Clapham and Battersea area. Eventually we want to operate the Croydon Centre as the hub of a network of classes and courses extending over South London and Surrey.

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University - Devaraja gave a series of five talks on the Five Spiritual Faculties at the invitation of the Sussex University Buddhist Studies Association - as well as introductory meditation sessions.

And plans are continuing - though matters are at an early stage at the moment - for a new centre which would incorporate both centre and work activities, as in Croydon.

### Spanish Connection

Devaraja is to spend August in Granada, Spain, searching for a small isolated cottage to be used for solitary retreats.

'It is apparently not too difficult to find small, three-room houses with just a well and no electricity quite cheaply in Granada,' said Devaraja. 'Most of the tourists who want to buy a holiday home look for something in or near a village, but we want something really secluded.'

'It may take a day longer to get to, but it means that the FWBO has a place for solitary retreats during the winter which is not very cold.'

He is hoping that it will be available for use by the end of the year.

## NORWICH

With the classes, and particularly the beginners' classes, going extremely well in Norwich, Abhaya and Saddhaloka have been increasingly going out of the centre to teach meditation and give Dharma talks.

A course at the University of East Anglia was well received, and in addition, there have been quite a few visits to fourth, fifth and sixth year forms in local schools.

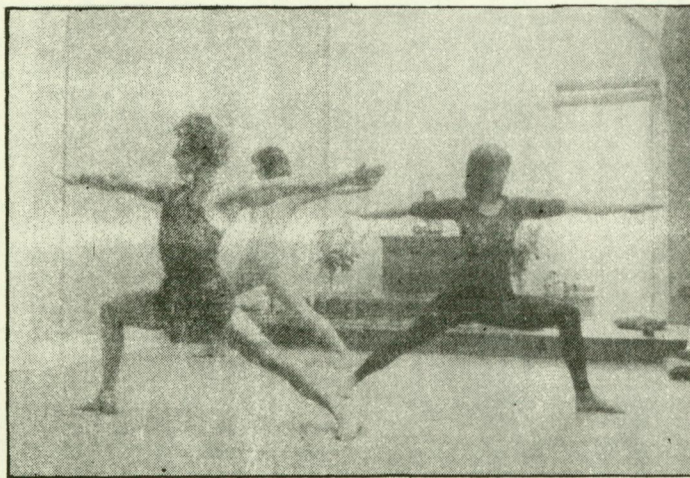
'We have been ringing up schools ourselves instead of just waiting for them to come to us, and the response has been very encouraging', remarked Abhaya.

## BRIGHTON

Brighton's decision to rearrange its classes so that the immensely popular Yoga class led by Surata immediately precedes the Beginners Class has had a considerable effect on the introduction to meditation.

'People seem to be very receptive after Yoga, and the atmosphere affects those just coming in for the meditation,' explained the chairman, Devaraja.

Other new developments include courses at Sussex



A yoga demo in the W. London shrineroom - Christina Robertson



## BRISTOL

For the past one and a half years, the FWBO has maintained a presence in Bristol, though since the beginning of the year the community has become really settled in Long Ashton, a small village three miles outside the town.

It is in a large maisonnette that most of the classes are held - both regulars' and mitras' classes - though there are also beginners classes at the university.

These classes have gone extremely well with up to 40 people attending beginners' evenings.

With the community growing, and the businesses managing to survive in a difficult economic climate, Sthiramati and Tejananda are optimistic about the FWBO's future in Bristol, although it will be some time before it will be possible to buy a building in the town.

## MANCHESTER

The Manchester Buddhist Centre has had two Order members working since Suvajra returned from a solitary retreat in Scotland - but the situation is not to continue for long. In October, Suvajra leaves for the three-month Tuscany retreat, and is therefore currently working full time in the Gardening business in order to raise sufficient capital.

Nevertheless, he has been able to devote some time to Dharma work, notably taking a week's meditation course for the Workers Educational Association in Wrexham held in the Library Arts Centre.

This has resulted in a regular meditation group which meets once a week - Suvajra attends about once or twice a month.

Meanwhile, Ratnaguna has been holding a six-week

meditation course at the Manchester Buddhist Centre which attracted 25 people on the first evening and has been well attended ever since. A follow-up course on Buddhism is planned.

### Contacts

Despite the shortage of Order members in Manchester, contact with outside groups has been maintained. Subhuti, Devamitra, Purna (all visiting Manchester for Buddha Day) along with Suvajra and a few mitras took a Day Retreat in Leeds for the Leeds and Harrogate Buddhist Groups. The Leeds Buddhist Group would like much more contact with the FWBO - in fact they would like to see a centre started there.

'It makes one wonder just how much more we could do from Manchester if we had some more Order members,' said Ratnaguna.

## VAJRALOKA

In May, in an attempt to foster further interest in the unique retreat facilities, Kamalasila and Vimalamitra went on an extensive tour of Buddhist groups in England with their slide show.

They visited Leeds, Nottingham, Shrewsbury, Ulverston (The Manjusri Institute), York (The Madhyamaka Centre), Weymouth, Wokingham, Leicester, and Chichester, and each one, they found was very different. Kamasila recalls the trip.

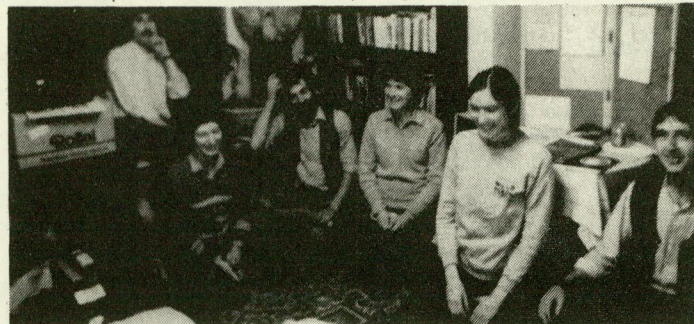
### On Tour

There were some common patterns that I noticed. The first was that any group with a measure of stability tends to be so most usually because of one person, someone more experienced with enough dedication to keep the group

going year in, year out.

Several groups with this characteristic had perhaps understandably become strongly flavoured by the personality of the leader, which in certain situations could I felt court the danger of stagnation. In contrast some of the more recently formed groups were extremely lively, though perhaps lacking a degree of organisation. Another syndrome common, I think, to all, is that as individual Buddhists

there would be the talk, slides, and then, perhaps over tea, the questions: 'Why retreats just for men or just for women?' 'Could you say more about involving the emotions in meditation?' 'How much does it cost?'. A number of questions that we were asked were, in fact, as much about the FWBO generally as about Vajraloka. At the beautifully appointed Madhyamaka Centre in York, where such issues are currently of paramount interest, they



A meeting in Chichester

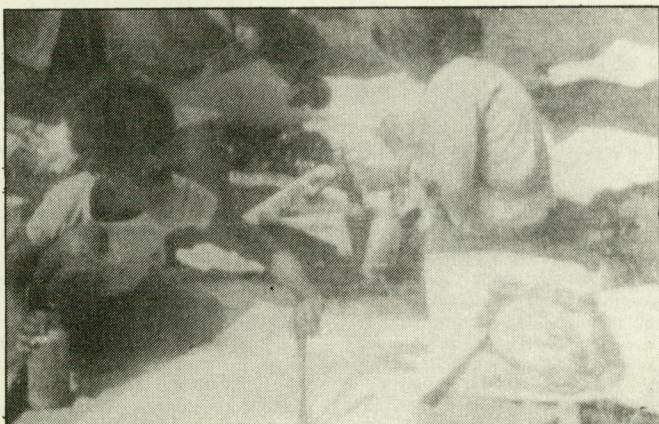
start to want to practise more seriously, sooner or later they find (unless they are at an FWBO centre that is) that they feel they have to make a commitment to one or another of the main 'traditional' types of Buddhism. The field seems simply too broad. This usually amounts to a choice between Theravada, 'Tibetan', and Zen. Thus, there arise different factions within each Buddhist group which significantly, though in no case seriously, affect its unity. A number of groups, though with members of several 'persuasions', had an overall affiliation with one of the major 'traditional' Centres: Chithurst Monastery (Theravada), Manjusri Institute (Tibetan), or Throssel Hole Priory (Zen), for example. This affiliation would at least determine certain forms, such as the way chanting is done.

As we went from group to group each evening's pattern was in many ways the same:

arranged a question and answer session mainly around how the FWBO organises itself legally, and, in particular, how it has managed to be so successful in business! (We hardly knew how to answer that one.)

In short, the outcome of the visits has been mainly the establishment of friendly connections with a number of individuals involved with other Buddhist Groups. From the very start I felt that, although naturally, in the long term, making those connections will introduce more people to meditation at Vajraloka, we were doing a great deal more than simply publicising ourselves. More than making contacts between those of us at Vajraloka and those in other Buddhist Groups, we were helping to open channels of communication between them and the whole FWBO.

## A Buddhist 'Treat'



While the mothers meditate

Noel Lehane

If you have never been on a Buddhist 'treat', as one five year old put it, it is probably because you are not the parent of a small child. It differs from the more normal retreat by virtue of the fact that the participants take their main responsibilities with them, rather than retreating from them.

Two Order members, and seven other women from London and Brighton, with a total of nine children, went down to Pinewoods, a fairly luxurious house, for a midweek retreat, in June. Two of the women, with older children, looked after the practical arrangements. They are well aware that it is not always easy to meditate, and so put a lot of care into giving those of us with younger children ample opportunity. I certainly did more

meditation than I manage to get around to at home these days. As for the quality of the meditation, both the Order members said how good it had been, and that the whoops of delight from the garden, and the soft crying in the background had not really been distracting. Perhaps it was the holiday feeling and the abundant friendliness on the retreat that made it such a success.

The babies came to pujas, but the older children played away from the shrine room until the last day when they acted out some Jataka stories in the middle of a short puja. The whole event was experimental; it worked, and we are all looking forward to the next one.

Gabrielle Milward



# The Shrewsbury Link

Shrewsbury Buddhist Group celebrated their first anniversary in April 1982 with a weekend of meditation, talks and discussion, joined by Order members, Mitras and Friends from the Manchester branch of the FWBO as well as two Order members from Vajraloka. In contrast to previous weekend retreats where silence, meditation, and puja have predominated, we chose to include the special opportunity for learning provided by our invited guests.

The programme was very full. Meditation sessions were alternated with informal talks and study-periods by various Order

members; Suvajra presented us with a description of the FWBO and its relationship to other Buddhist organisations in the country; Ratnaguna talked to us about the process of meditation; Kamalasila and Vimalamitra jointly presented a talk/slide show about the FWBO Retreat Centre in North Wales. Study-groups spent an afternoon pursuing Buddhist texts in close detail.

## New Direction

It is certainly felt by all members of our group that the survival of our first year together is largely due to the support and friendship we have received from our friends in

Manchester. Starting as a notice in a wholefood shop-window, Shrewsbury Buddhist Group had become a regular weekly meeting-place for a core-group of six of us when we first initiated contact with the FWBO. At that point our group, very much in its infancy, was about to disintegrate due to internal disagreements, lack of both structure and unity, and pursuit of amorphous intellectual goals. Our request for information from the FWBO had arisen from our need for direction and cohesion. We were both surprised and delighted to receive a very warm and enthusiastic reply from the FWBO and a

joint weekend retreat was quickly arranged. It was from that first weekend that we gained the direction, support, and impetus we had been seeking. Subsequent weekend retreats were arranged, our enthusiasm grew and our membership swelled.

The programme we chose for discussion during our Weekend Event reflects our doubts and uncertainties as well as a basic need for more information.

Another landmark in the history of our development has passed. Doubts and uncertainties have become easier to live with. A stronger link with the Manchester FWBO has become established: Ratnaguna and Suvajra have agreed to attend our meetings once a month. The strength and unity of our Sangha is growing.

Claire Collen

In May, Kulamitra, Sanghadevi, Parami, and I were invited to an evening at the Manjusri Institute (London) to take part in a discussion on the theme of 'Buddhism in the West'.

The FWBO appears to have a reputation for being somewhat abrasive in its contacts with Buddhist groups. This is not a reputation of which we are particularly ashamed since we have found, over the years, that all that goes by the name of 'Buddhist' is not necessarily so. We have regarded 'common platforms' with circumspection and have felt it essential to voice our criticism of what we consider to be muddled, woolly, or just wrong. One thing we have never eschewed is friendly contact with individuals and we were very pleased to begin our evening at the Manjusri Institute with a meal with the main organisers and a nun from the Institute's large centre in Cumbria.

The public event attracted some twenty people, ten of whom were our friends from the Harlow Buddhist Group, some of whom have attended FWBO retreats. We had an informal general discussion, necessarily limited in depth and scope by the numbers and the fact that most of us were meeting for the first time. Nonetheless, some useful points emerged. Perhaps the main topic of discussion was how to communi-

cate the Dharma to a wider audience. The fact that this question emerged so quickly in our discussions and kept recurring was an encouraging sign of vitality. Some were uneasy with what might seem a 'missionary' approach - an old chestnut, this - and wondered whether the Dharma only came to one when one's karma in some way warranted it and that therefore it should not and could not be taken out to people. Most of us present were clearly unsympathetic with this viewpoint and wanted to discuss quite practical matters about the propagation of the Dharma.

## Old Chestnut

Another key issue for some was whether we - 'non-realised beings' - were in any position to propagate the Dharma at all. This is a question which all members of the Western Buddhist Order have resolved from the outset - 'realised' or not. So many people would never have encountered the Dharma if it had not been for the efforts of Order members.

The members of the Institute had invited us because they felt that they have much to learn from us, particularly in the fields of Right Livelihood enterprises and of communities. Their own activities are reaching a stage where they need a permanent centre and businesses to provide funds. Clearly the demands of running a public centre in London are

quite different to those of running a rural retreat Centre like the one in Cumbria. Those demands will confront the members of the Manjusri Institute (London) with two basic issues: of commitment and of communication.

To the Manjusri Institute, the key act of 'Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels' - which in the FWBO context marks entry into the Western Buddhist Order - is, it would seem, a purely personal commitment to study the Dharma and to practise meditation. 'Going for Refuge' implies for them no commitment to remain in contact with others who have 'Gone for Refuge' nor to help propagate the Dharma. To us, such a conception smacks of individualism and accords strangely with the Institute's strong emphasis on the Bodhisattva Ideal - which is the aspiration to work not only for one's own development but for that of all beings. Within the FWBO we stress that spiritual friendship is one of the principle stimulants of individual growth - it is, said the Buddha, 'the whole of the spiritual life'. Furthermore, we stress that a narrow concern with one's own development without endeavouring to contribute as best one can to the development of others is actually counterproductive, leading only to more refined selfishness.

One grows primarily through one's contact with those who

share one's aspirations and in one's active efforts to help others. Without some clear recognition of this dimension of 'Going for Refuge', as a commitment to spiritual friendship and to helping others as much as one can, then it will be hard for the Manjusri Institute to form a community at its core with sufficient spiritual vigour to effectively operate a centre in London. Perhaps, in common with many Tibetan groups, the

## Friendship

Manjusri Institute stresses the vertical relationship with lama or guru at the expense of horizontal, or less dramatically vertical, friendships.

As far as communication is concerned, the members of the Institute are inevitably going to find that there is a limit to the numbers of those who are attracted by an approach to the Dharma rooted in traditional Tibetan Buddhism. If they wish to reach more people, they are going to have to express their experience of the Dharma in ways with which more people can connect without in any way compromising or diluting it.

Those members of the Manjusri Institute who we have met are friendly, sincere, and devoted; they are also clearly open to discussion and criticism. We look forward to more personal contact between members of the Institute and Order members in the future.

Subhuti





## USA

Although the business of earning a living is still taking up a great deal of the commun-

ity's time, there have been some good developments in Boston. Now that classes are held in the new centre, and not in the community, Manjuvajra, Vajradaka, and Punya have been able to move into another smaller, more economical apartment.

Although there have been no visitors from the UK in the last months, Kularatna will be there in a short while, to

study/work in a local hospital for three months, and Marichi is planning a visit in the Autumn.

The shrine has been greatly improved in the centre, with rainbow curtains backing a Buddha-image, originally made for the North London Centre (Pundarika) by Aloka.

In August, Manjuvajra will be giving a series of three

talks on 'Aspects of Freedom' at the Kushi Institute in Boston.

The ever peripatetic Vajradaka took a short holiday in Peru, back in March. After visiting Machu Pichu, the 'lost city' of the Incas, he was asked to give a meditation class at a Yoga centre in Cusco. He taught metta bhavana to about 15 people.

## India

Over the past three months, the Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha has been faced with the difficult task of following up and maintaining enthusiasm and interest in the classes, following the Ven. Sangharakshita's visit.

Life has continued in as busy a manner as always, with the English and Indian Order members travelling around to give programmes and to lead classes. Notably, Lokamitra, along with other Order members, went on a lecture tour of the Kokan region, which is reported elsewhere in the Newsletter.

One memorable cycle of 24 hours of focus and dispersal was over Wesak (the festival of the Buddha's Enlightenment). Fifteen Order members gathered in Poona on the eve of Wesak to spend a few hours together. They spent much of Wesak morning meditating, and then left for different parts of the town to hold small Wesak programmes.

### Conversions

Jyotipala, for instance, first went to a poor area of Poona to perform a conversion ceremony for 50 people - on open ground right next to the main road crammed with pedestrians, rickshaws, buses, bikes, and taxis.

He then travelled 50 kilometres south with Dharmodaya, to a small village called Bhor, for an evening programme.

Two days later Jyotipala was in the heart of Bombay, at the People's Education Society, leading a 10-day retreat. This was attended by nearly 30 people, including six Indian and English Order members. It was inevitably the Indian Order members who played a particularly active role on the retreat, because of the language factor. 'But the beginners here are very receptive and appreciative. You don't have to overcome any resistance - they really want to hear the Dhamma', said Jyotipala.

Mangala, who has been in India after leaving Brighton at the end of last year, has decided to extend his stay. He was due to return to England in June, but is spending the summer months in Ahmedabad.

The last entry in this column for Aid for India was entitled, 'To grow or to cut back; which way for greater efficiency.' It seems that the answer has been a resounding 'Grow!' We have managed to attract 20 people to do one appeal session - including Sarvamitra who has come all the way from Finland.

The effect of this is instantly reflected in the financial state of the charity. We are on target to raise £300,000 worth of covenants in the coming four months; at the same time we are keeping our expenditure below the levels that we set for ourselves.

At the beginning of this appeal we had about £450,000 worth of signatures, so we will have grown by about 66% in this period. This kind of growth demands a great deal from the full-time team, especially in matters of control and administration.

### Low Drop Out

Liz Pankhurst has been working since last Autumn to bring our office systems into some

## Aid For India

real order. Her work is beginning to bear fruit as we have been able to introduce a Budgeting Control System. This has forced several useful disciplines upon us and has enabled us to monitor our activities much more accurately. We have discovered for instance that our 'Drop-out rate' (the rate at which donors drop out once they have signed) over the past two years has been 5% per year. This compares very favourably with other charities and bodes well for our future.

In addition to Liz, John Bloss has become a full-time member of the support team. He is now a veteran of 3 appeals and has taken a good deal of the day to day responsibility for the momentum of the appeals we are currently running.

The current appeal has been much more cohesive than previous ones. Some of the individual-

istic pioneering spirit has left us (though not entirely) and in its place there is more solidity and more contact and communication between the

### Consistency

people who are working on the teams. There have, as a result, been few people who have gone out and raised an enormous amount of money; but on the other hand, a good deal fewer people fail to make their target.

Aid for India has become an established organisation. We cannot however afford to be complacent. We urgently need recruits for the autumn appeal, 1982. If you have time to spare and want to know how you could use it to help us, telephone 01-981 1225, leave your name, address, and telephone number, and we will do the rest.

Tim Lilley



Virabhadra, Vajraketu, and Padmasuri — the doctor, administrator, and nurse with the AFI medical project, in Poona.



## 21 Indian Buddhists in the UK

Of the large Indian immigrant community in Britain, but a few thousand are Buddhists. Most of those Indian Buddhists we know of are Punjabi ex-'Untouchables' who have converted to Buddhism since they arrived here, strong ties with families at home have spread the message of Dr. Ambedkar from India to Britain, and there are small but growing communities of Buddhists in London, Wolverhampton, Birmingham, and elsewhere. In May, Order members visited groups in Southall and Plaistow, London and Wolverhampton.

### Ambedkar Jayanti

The Ven. Sangharakshita visited a meeting in Plaistow organised by the Ven. Nagasena for celebrations of 'Ambedkar Jayanti' - the anniversary of the birth of Dr. Ambedkar - attended by about forty people. He spoke of his own links with Dr. Ambedkar, and of his recent tour in India. At the same time, Ratnavira, Nagabodhi, and I visited the group in Southall, where I gave a short talk to an audience of about 150.

One of the main focal points for Indian Buddhists in Britain is the Vihara in Wolverhampton run by the Ven. Chandrabodhi, an active young bhikkhu from Maharashtra.

Most of the Vihara's supporters are, however, from the Punjab. They have acquired a large end-terrace house, in the garden of which stands a statue of Dr. Ambedkar. Padmaraja and I visited the Vihara for their celebrations of 'Buddha Jayanti' - the anniversary of the Buddha's birth, Enlightenment, and death.

### Hospitality

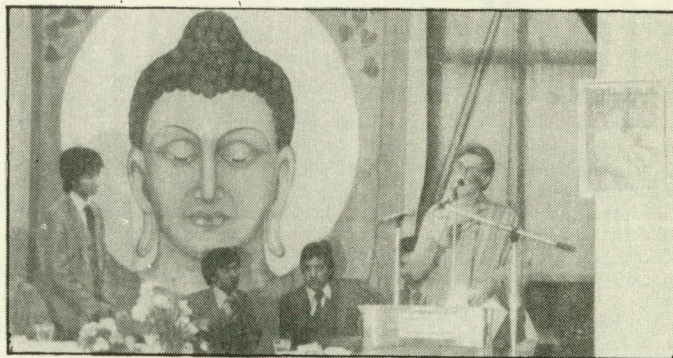
We were as usual, treated with the hospitality and courtesy which is so striking to the Westerner. After some chanting, and a plentiful supply of curry and chapatis, we went off in procession to the civic hall for the afternoon's programme of speeches and music, attended by some 300 men, women, and children.

Most of the talks were in Hindi or Punjabi, so we were unable to gain a clear impression of what was said. I gave a short talk stressing the FWBO's connection with Indian Buddhists, and underlining the need for Buddhists actually to practise Buddhism, rather than to be Buddhists only in name.

This latter emphasis was necessary since it is evident that for few Indian Buddhists here does being a Buddhist rather than a Hindi mean much more than changing the Vihara

for the temple, pictures of Dr. Ambedkar and the Buddha for Krishna and Shiva. Buddhism is for them a social rallying point preferable to Hinduism because of its freedom from caste. Few of them seemed to know much about Buddhism, and fewer still practise meditation. Many of the leading figures in the group complained of the apathy of the majority. In India, Buddhism is far more important to the ex-Untouchables because caste discrimination is a fact which all will experience. Out of India there are not the social and political pressures

and the role of the former to that of a parish priest. The Dhamma, on the other hand, as presented by them, seems either simplistic, or dry, or abstract. One bhikkhu gave a talk on this occasion which included an exposition of the forty *kammatthanas*, a rather technical list of the possible objects of concentration, - this to an audience most of the members of which had probably never meditated. It is hardly surprising in these circumstances that few are interested in investigating and practising the Dhamma more deeply. A far more lively and



Bhante speaks in Plaistow — Sagaramati

urging them to take Buddhism seriously.

### More Practice

Perhaps the lack of zeal amongst Indian Buddhists in Britain is not their fault entirely. Despite the sincerity and hard work of some of the bhikkhus, it appears that the Dhamma is presented, by and large, in a narrowly Theravada package, which accentuates the difference between the bhikkhu and the lay follower, relegating the role of the latter to a rather passive support of the bhikkhu,

relevant approach is required, as well as a stronger emphasis on practice.

Once more it is personal contacts which are the most rewarding elements of such visits, and those members of the Western Buddhist Order who have attended Indian Buddhist functions in Britain are pleased to find that friendships are developing with the followers of Dr. Ambedkar in this country.

Subhuti



Piyasilo

## THE MAN FROM MALAYSIA

For the past fifteen years I have been working for Buddhism in Malaysia, at first as an Upasaka and later on as a bhikkhu. The first five years of my bhikkhu life were spent in a large Royal Monastery in Thailand where I learned Thai, a bit of Pali and passed all the three levels of the Ecclesiastical Dharma Examinations. The subsequent years were spent variously in Malacca (my birthplace), Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.

Most of the time during those years (as a bhikkhu) I spent giving invited talks in other temples, societies and educational institutions. (In Malacca there were about ten Government schools which have Buddhist societies.) While in Malacca I managed to draft a comprehensive Dharma syllabus for the Dharma School complete with thirty-one short textbooks which have formed the basis for the teaching of Buddhism in English in Malaysia and Singapore (where it is



being used as resource materials for the Government school Buddhist Teachers' ('O' level) Training Programme, of which I have been appointed Course Director by the Singapore Buddhist Federation)

## Dharma Courses

The most important project I have carried out in Malaysia is, perhaps, a series of national-level courses (under the auspices of the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia of which I was founder Vice-President and am presently a consultant). This series of Dharma courses has been carried on in three subsequent stages: The Dharma Preachers' Training Courses, National Dharma Interaction, and the National Dharma Assembly series. These courses each averaged a week long and were attended by between fifty to a hundred and fifty participants from all over Malaysia and Singapore with ages ranging from mid-teens to adults (but mostly young adults). The first of the series were purely of the Theravada tradition. The third series is distinctly trans-denominational and more geared towards the ideas and ideals of the FWBO (as far as I could gather). These courses have significantly influenced the thinking and working of a large number of the active young Buddhists in both the countries (Malaysia and Singapore) - to such an extent that Singapore soon started having their own series of Dharma courses with me as advisor.

But do not be deceived into believing that Buddhism is thriving. To say the least, Buddhism in Malaysia and Singapore is comparable to the Christianity of the Middle Ages: rife with ecclesiastical politics, disciple-winning, money-making, superstition and sectarianism. Nick Soames could not have been more right when he made this observation of a leading 'pure' local buddhist temple: 'I felt there was little difference between the atmosphere and purpose there and the atmosphere and purpose of a typical Western Christian church...' ('East to Borobudur', Newsletter No.51).

## Church-like

Simply put, the problems of Buddhism in Malaysia and Singapore can be said to be of three kinds. Firstly, the Buddhists there are too temple-orientated (i.e. treating the temple as a Christian would a church). Secondly, there is a serious lack of commitment to the Triple Gem (to be a 'Buddhist' has come to mean that one is not a Christian, Hindu, or Muslim). And thirdly, the Buddhists there simply do not know how to use their resources (manpower, money and property) - they are mainly channelled towards temple-building, and

much money is being syphoned home by the expatriate 'missionaries' (which was one of the reasons for the authorities clamping down on all foreign missionaries).

## No Commitment

The straw which broke the camel's back was a seminar I conducted in February 1979. Some of the leading young Buddhists were gathered at my invitation and I presented them a philosophy of work very much akin to that of the FWBO (which I had yet to encounter): the need for Buddhist reform, commitment, and a non-sectarian approach. Eulogies were sung but the harsh truth reared its ugly head when volunteers were asked for. Some said their family came first; some, their job; and some said they were not strong enough, not knowledgeable enough. Suddenly I felt like a madman crying out in the wilderness. I simply felt disgusted with the Buddhists - they wanted the Dharma without working for it. I was on the verge of giving up my work, and Buddhism - everything. This was just before my Western Europe tour.

It was the spring of 1979 when I arrived in London. Within a few days I was visiting the various Buddhist groups and centres in my address book. The Asian temples received me with their typical diplomacy but within a short while I discovered they were simply Buddhist hot-houses in a foreign land - and quite wary of me because I could speak English better than they and had no credentials from some important monks.

## Local Culture

A number of Buddhists in England did, however, encourage me to stay on, and I thought it was a good idea since I was disgusted at the weakness and selfishness of the Buddhists back home. It was around this time that I encountered the FWBO - at Roman Road. I still vividly remember pressing the bell at the London Buddhist Centre and a beaming young man - later he introduced himself as Suvajra - welcomed me and enthusiastically showed me around the LBC, at the same time giving me a briefing on the whole Movement. One of the most striking spectacles was the murals which Chintamani was painting on the reception room walls; the images he made enthralled me not only with their radiance but with the fact that they were created in the West itself. Finally, I thought, Buddhism has been woven into the fabric of the local culture.

Having come across the FWBO - whose ideals and ideas have been put into practice for over a decade while mine were only being contemplated - I

thought it rather selfish for me to stay permanently in Britain. I decided to return to Malaysia with the good news 'build bridges', as I said to Bhante, and then return to Britain in a couple of months.

Things did not turn out so simply. The officer at the British High Commission in Kuala Lumpur refused to grant me a student visa, giving as his main reason the fact that he suspected that I did not plan to return on reaching Britain (as I had earlier applied for permanent residence)! The FWBO proved their worth in this problem of mine. After I had filed an appeal, Subhuti represented me during the hearings in London,

## At Padmaloka

and heroically cleared my case. I got my student visa - and finally, during the freak cold wave of 3°C on 6th May this year, I arrived at Heathrow Airport and was whisked away to Sukhavati by Sagaramati (an old friend I made at 'Grdrakuta' in Manchester the last time I was in Britain). Within a couple of weeks I found myself in Padmaloka (Norwich) in a seminar studying The Tibetan Book of the Dead and Mind in Buddhist Psychology, attending elaborate pujas, doing double-meditations, cooking vegetarian dishes, and even typing for Bhante (which I deemed a great honour).

Before leaving for Britain this time I was at first a little worried about the upkeep of the Damansara Buddhist Vihara, which was the 'bridge' I had built during the interim period. Through some strange karmic working, Priyananda, a New Zealand Order member, consented to put up in the DBV in

Kuala Lumpur, where he is presently doing an intensive T'ai Chi course. The situation seems to have somewhat improved there. I was especially surprised and elated when my devotees actually invited Priyananda to sit with me at meals, and even invited us for house 'dana'. This I take to be a good sign of acceptance of an FWBO upasaka (and upasika) into our local scheme of things.

## New Start

Another promising sign is that we have a couple of other Malaysian girls with the FWBO - Rosie Ong, from Penang, and Elsie Kang, from Muar. Rosie had been in contact with the FWBO through her own efforts; but I got Elsie interested in taking up the FWBO training. The former is helping out in the LBC office, and the latter is learning to make soups and pastries in the Cherry Orchard. Both are mitras; they have taken the first leap into full-time commitment to the Triple Gem.

The future in Malaysia and Singapore can now be said to appear bright. There is already an embryonic FWBO centre in the form of the Damansara Buddhist Vihara. A local community now needs to be formed - and it looks as if the women will beat the men to it! Right Livelihood projects have to be launched (we have just started a very successful Vihara Book Service in the DBV which I hope to register and expand on my return). The Dharma Wheel has started turning in Malaysia and Singapore, and little can stop it from rolling on.

Piyasilo

# Publications Survey

Early this year, about 600 questionnaires were sent out to Friends all over the world. People were asked a number of questions relating to their use of our publications, and were invited to make comments and criticisms about our books, pamphlets and regular magazines.

The response was very good, and we are very grateful to those who took time off to write, in some cases, some very full notes.

The comments and suggestions are currently being digested and discussed in meetings of the Windhorse Publications council, so stand by to see some interesting changes in the future.



## Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

### Centres and Branches

London Buddhist Centre, 51 Roman Road, Bethnal Green, London E2 OHU Tel: 01-981 1225  
 Brighton Buddhist Centre, 15 Park Crescent Place, Brighton Sussex. Tel: (0273) 698420  
 Croydon Buddhist Centre, 96-98 High Street, Croydon Surrey, CRO 1ND. Tel: 01-688 8624  
 Manchester Buddhist Centre, 18 Burlington Road, Withington, Manchester M20 9PY.  
 Tel: 061-445 3805  
 Heruka, 13 Kelvinside Terrace South, Glasgow G 20. Tel: 041-946 2035  
 West London Buddhist Centre, 24 Baker Street, London W1. Tel: 01-258 3706  
 FWBO Bristol, 120 Long Ashton Road, Long Ashton, Bristol, Avon. Tel: 027580 2463  
 Norwich Meditation Centre, 41A All Saints Green, Norwich, Norfolk. Tel: 0603-698420  
 Lamsimaisen Buddhalaisen Veljeskunnan Ystävät, FWBO  
 Albertinkatu 21 C 12, 00120 Helsinki 12, Finland. Tel: Helsinki 642 462  
 Auckland Buddhist Centre, PO Box 68-453, Newton, Auckland, New Zealand  
 Wellington Buddhist Centre, PO Box 12311, Wellington North, New Zealand  
 Boston Buddhist Centre, 7 Harvard Square, Brookline, MA 02146, USA  
 Sydney Meditation Community, 13 Rocklands Road, Wollstonecraft, NSW 2D65, Australia  
 Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha, Sahayak Gana,  
 2A Parnakuti Housing Society, Yerawada, Pune 411006, India  
 Vajraloka Meditation Centre, Tyn-y-ddol, Trerddol, Nr Corwen, N. Wales. (Visitors by  
 appointment). Tel: 049-081 406 (between 2&4pm)  
 FWBO Stockholm, Hillbersvagen 5, S-126 54 Hagersten, Sweden. Tel: Stockholm 97 59 92

### Representatives

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 Upasaka Indrajala, PO Box 22-657, Christchurch, New Zealand  
 FWBO Netherlands, Holle Bilt 17, De Bilt, Netherlands. Tel: 030-763158

### 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.  
 The Padmaloka Co-operative, Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norfolk NR 14 7AL.  
 Tel: 050-88 8112  
 The Pure Land Co-operative, 51 Roman Road, London E2 OHU. Tel 01-980 1960  
 Windhorse Associates, 119 Roman Road, London E2 OQN. Tel 01-981 5157  
 Windhorse Enterprises Ltd, 15 Park Crescent Place, Brighton Sussex. Tel: 0273-698 420  
 Windhorse Wholefoods Co-operative Ltd, 13 Kelvinside Terrace South, Glasgow G20.  
 Tel: 041-946 2035  
 Phoenix Community Housing Co-operative Ltd, 51 Roman Road, London E2 OHU. Tel: 01-980 1960  
 Rainbow Co-operative Ltd, 96-98 High Street, Croydon, Surrey CRO 1ND. Tel: 01-688 2899  
 Windhorse Trading Ltd, 29-31 Old Ford Road, London E2 9PJ. Tel: 01- 980 7826

### Communities

(Visitors by  
 arrangement only)

Amitayus, 15 Park Crescent Place, Brighton, Sussex. Tel: 0273 698420  
 Arunachala, 29 Old Ford Road, London E2 9PJ. Tel: 980 7826  
 Aryatara, 3 Plough Lane, Purley, Surrey. Tel: 01- 660 2542  
 Grdhrakuta, 18 Burlington Rd, Withington, Manchester M20 9PY. Tel: 061-445 3805  
 Heruka, 13 Kelvinside Terrace South, Glasgow G20. Tel: 041-946 2035  
 Kalpadruma, 43 Gleneldon Rd, Streatham, London SW 16. Tel: 01-677 7381  
 Khadiravani, 42 Hillhouse Road, London SW 16  
 Padmaloka, Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norfolk NR14 7AL. Tel: 050-88 8112  
 Ratnadvipa, 34 Daventry Street, London NW1. Tel: 01-258 3706  
 Sitavana, 141 Rosary Road, Norwich, Norfolk. Tel: 0603 29965  
 Sarvasiddhi, 71 Kilburn Park Road, London NW6.  
 Sukhavati, 51 Roman Road, London E2 OHU. Tel: 01-980 5972  
 Suvarnabhasha, 3 Ickburgh Road, London N.16. Tel: 01-806 5222  
 Vajracchedika, 95 Bishops Way, London E2 9HL. Tel: 980 4151  
 Vajrakula, 41B All Saints Green, Norwich, Norfolk. Tel: 0603 27034  
 Vidyadhara, 30 Cambridge Park, Wanstead, London E11. Tel: 01- 989 5083  
 Adhistana, 74 Cassland Road, London E9.  
 329 Sauhiehall Street (top right), Glasgow. Tel: 041- 333 0524  
 24 Birchfield House, Birchfield Street, Limehouse, London E14 8EY. Tel: 01-515 2226

#### The Office of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

London Buddhist Centre, 51 Roman Road, London E2 OHU. Tel: 01-981 1225

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