

The

Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

NEWSLETTER

Number 55

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NO

Morality in a nutshell?

Or is there more to it than that?

**In this issue we forget all the old rules in order
to ask where morality comes from,
and whether we need it.**

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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Editor
Nagabodhi

Facets
Nic Soames

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President
The Ven. Maha Sthavira
Sangharakshita

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Siddhiratna and
Nagabodhi

Facets Typing
Liz Pankhurst, Dave
Butcher, Phil Buckley,
Nagabodhi

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Editorial

'We know of no spectacle so ridiculous as the British public in one of its periodical fits of morality'. So said Macaulay. As I write this, the British public is flailing about and wallowing in a two-fold fit. For a few days the strikes, gloomy economic forecasts, and political intrigues that normally dominate the front pages of the press have been pushed aside by two major stories, each the kind of stuff of which all good journalists' dreams are made.

Firstly, the authorities have just published a list of honours and decorations awarded to those who served in the recent Falkland Islands conflict. The newspapers and TV news reports are filled with uplifting tales of gallantry, the heart-warming interviews with the brave widows of brave men. All the media are leaping at the opportunity to dwell on, or perhaps to create, a glorious aspect of that bizarre and perhaps degrading experience. Our Prime Minister already refers to 'the Falklands Spirit' as if it were a newly discovered pole star by whose light we should steer ourselves through the tough times ahead.

Secondly, one of the Queen's sons — who actually served in the South Atlantic, has flown away to a far off island for a spot of relaxation, in the company of a young lady whose previous claim to fame was a performance in a semi-pornographic film, and a chain of romances with some of the world's richest men. Giving space back to words, at last, after filling it with pictures of the starlet's naked body, the tabloid papers are united in their condemnation of the prince — not for what he is doing, but for allowing their own highly paid and deadly efficient agents to find him out. After all, they remind us, his mother is head of the Church of England. While we may not expect him to uphold the highest standards of British morality, we can at least hope that he will maintain the staunch traditions of English hypocrisy.

It is hard not to share Macaulay's cynicism when, as now, a British fit of morality serves mainly to demonstrate that the British have no morality.

No doubt every nation has its 'fits' of morality, and perhaps every nation is lucky enough to have its Macaulays. There are, of course, some nations where a Macaulay would be locked up or put in a mental home for his quips.

While nations and religious institutions have repeatedly sought to define and fix moral values, a broad look at human history would suggest that morality has always been a vague and elusive spectre, still largely unseen and unknown. This is possibly because Man, in his deepest nature and in his highest aspect is still largely unseen and unknown.

Buddhism, to capture in a word a 2500 year living tradition of insight, experience and communication, has an understanding of Man and a vision of what the individual human being can be and become. Out of these has emerged what can be called a specifically 'Buddhist morality'. In this issue of the *Newsletter* we are going to take a look at some aspects of it.

Nagabodhi

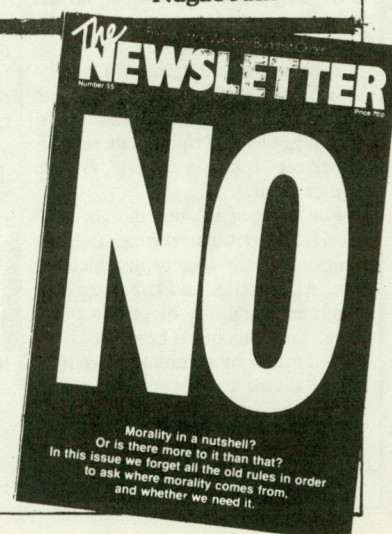
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by Nagabodhi

A few years ago, television networks all over the world hosted an American serialised epic called *Holocaust*. It was a dramatised account of the 'Final Solution': the German attempt to exterminate the world's Jews. In England, each episode was introduced with the words, 'And now for the next episode of *Holocaust*: the story of the greatest crime in human history'.

Surely the word *crime* was inappropriate. The notion of crime, after all, suggests a commonly agreed, and generally upheld set of moral standards — from which *crime* is a clearly recognisable deviation. So what are we to think when an entire nation, consisting of farmers, scientists, priests, hairdressers, and housewives, as well as soldiers and politicians conspire, implicitly, if not in every case explicitly, to do away with six million people in the most callous and brutal of ways? Can we still talk about 'crime'? Can we still assume that human societies have intrinsic moral values? Or do we have, perhaps painfully, to redefine what it means to be human, and to acknowledge what human beings are in fact capable of doing. No discussion of morality can begin without such an appraisal.

Many people seem to find the topic of morality a dull one. Perhaps this is because they tend to think that they already know 'right' from 'wrong', and do not have to be preached to. They assume that they have their own inherent sense of moral standards, and suspect those who preach morality of seeking to curtail their freedom and experience.

However encouraging it might be to believe that human beings have an innate sense of morality, human history suggests that that innate sense is either very frail, very subtle, or even non-existent.

For most of us, our morality has been instilled into us through the conventions of the society in which we live. All societies and tribes are held together in stability by certain rules, laws, and taboos. These are sanctioned either by common consensus, or by divine commandment, or by both. In one way or another the group member is conditioned to accept and obey these rules, and the moral standards enshrined in them. The con-

ditioning process begins so early, and goes so deep that the individual group member may be forgiven for thinking that he has his own sense of morality. He may even resent the suggestion that he is merely conditioned.

However, the superficial nature of such morality is easily visible when some change in the group's fortunes dictates a change in its morality.

Murder, for example, is an almost universal 'evil', taboo in almost every known society. Most people would not hesitate to say that their aversion to the idea of killing is intrinsic to their nature. But when a society suddenly finds itself provoked into a war, then killing suddenly becomes an accepted, and highly valued activity. On the battlefields people kill each other, while at home the other group members voice their support, howl their encouragement. If a group is victorious in war it feels invigorated by the experience, feels vindicated by success, gains new self-confidence, and perhaps offers thanks to its gods.

War provides a very graphic and extreme example of conventional morality in action. It testifies to the fact that a deep moral aversion in the individual to something as basic as the taking of life can be overridden by a change in the moral outlook of the group. There are, to be sure, conscientious objectors, but they are rarely numerous.

Nietzsche wrote, 'Morality is the herd instinct in the individual', and there are some who would find this a rather cynical view. But if take Nietzsche to be referring to conventional morality, and if we acquaint ourselves with human history, then perhaps a certain cynicism is inevitable. Morality which begins and ends with social or insti-

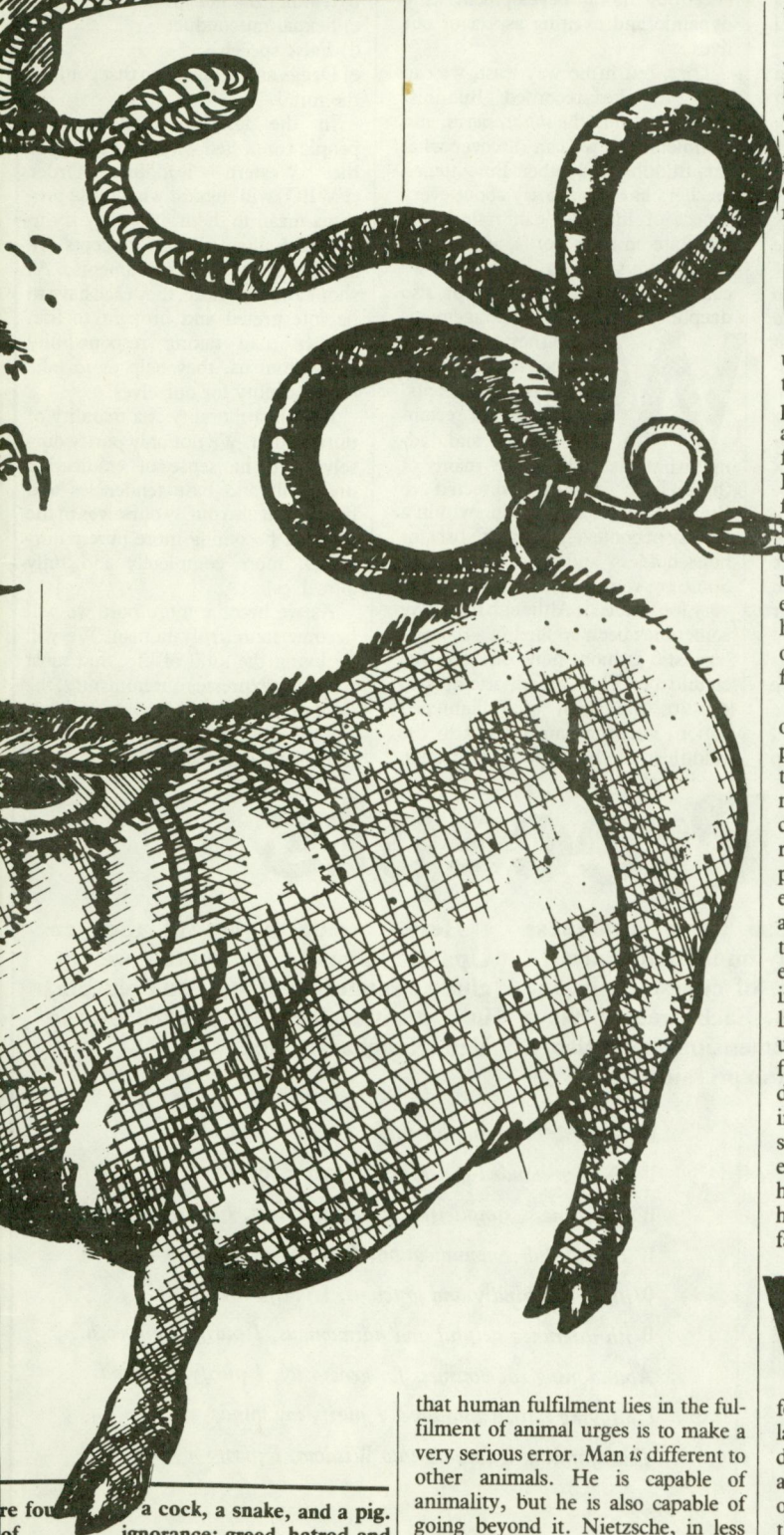


tutional religious convention, sanctioned by coercion, fear and conformity, is no morality. It provides the individual with little more than a set of blinkers, a few layers of guilt and self disgust, and bad dreams, for the dubious reward of social acceptance. No wonder the devil has always enjoyed a degree of popularity. No wonder cults and preachers have emerged from time to time bearing the standard 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law', urging men to liberate the restrained animal in them, to find wholeness in the fecund abyss of their unexplored drives and urges. If your morality is nothing but the morality of your group then *you* perhaps have no morality, and you are actually capable of doing anything. You are also highly susceptible to the suggestion that there is a kind of freedom and fulfilment to be found in the free expression of your merely animal nature.

Man is, indeed, an animal, and he is capable of acting and feeling like one. But to see man as being nothing more than an animal, and to think

At the heart of the Tibetan Wheel of Life They symbolise the primary manifestation delusion, and they lie at the core of our c

ALITY



re four... a cock, a snake, and a pig.
of... ignorance: greed hatred and
ditioned nature.

that human fulfilment lies in the fulfilment of animal urges is to make a very serious error. Man is different to other animals. He is capable of animality, but he is also capable of going beyond it. Nietzsche, in less cynical vein, also wrote the words,

'What is great in Man is that he is a bridge, and not a goal'.

It is at this point that some people would start talking about how man has been made in God's image, has a divine sense of conscience, and so on. We do not actually need, however, to invoke any mumbo-jumbo to demonstrate that man is something more than an ordinary animal.

Unlike all other animals, man is capable of self awareness. He can watch himself, reflect upon his acts; he can even reflect upon his reflections. He does not have to act blindly and impulsively. He can pause, assess the consequences of his actions in terms of his own past and future, in terms of his environment. He can imagine, and thus he can formulate ideas and ideals; he can thus, also, develop empathy with others. This spark of self awareness ultimately suggests that man can experience wisdom, compassion: that he can transcend himself. This view of man is not a value judgement but a fact.

To be a human being means that one has these capabilities, these potentialities. They exist alongside all the drives and urges of our perhaps more familiar animal nature, and in comparison they may be very frail and rudimentary; they are, after all, only possibilities. The fact remains, however, that they are there, and they are an essential and crucial aspect of our total nature. A truly and fully human existence is therefore one which involves them. If it is the law of every living thing to grow and develop, to unfold its full potential, then man's fulfilment lies in the cultivation and development of all the possibilities implicit in his distinctive faculty of self-awareness. If happiness is the experience of fulfilment, then a human being can only find real happiness in the development of this faculty.

When Siddhartha Gautama left behind a life of perfect pleasure and sense-indulgence he was, in fact, looking for happiness. He was obeying the laws of his nature. As he strove to develop concentration, mindfulness, and more refined and powerful states of consciousness, he was following the deepest and most specially human drives of his being. When he gained

Enlightenment and manifested perfect wisdom and perfect compassion, he achieved the ultimate flowering of human potential: Buddhahood.

Enlightenment is not some merely mental experience, nor is it an isolated flash of illumination. It is a state of being. It is the culmination of a process of self-transformation. It has its roots in the soil of transformed vision, transformed emotion: in a transformed life.

By now it should be clear that Buddhist morality can never be something nominal, conventional, or superficial. The Pali word *sila* which is usually translated as 'morality' connotes behaviour, in the sense of *habitual* behaviour. Buddhist morality is based on the assumption that there is such a thing as a truly human life, and a truly human, inherently human, ideal. That ideal is the ultimate reference point of all Buddhist morality. All the recommendations and precepts relating to morality in the Buddhist tradition have the aim of helping people to move in the direction of that completely natural ideal.

An encounter with Buddhist morality involves an encounter not with the notions of 'good' and 'evil', but with the notions of 'skilfulness' and 'unskilfulness'. Skilful (*kusala*) actions of body, speech, and mind (Buddhism sees the human being in this three-fold aspect) are those actions which are rooted in clarity, love, and selflessness, while unskilful (*akusala*) actions are those which are rooted in greed, hate and delusion. Unskilful acts are manifestations and expressions of our lower, blind tendencies, while skilful acts are emanations and expressions of our higher, more truly human potentiality.

Buddhist morality is a natural morality, just as the Buddhist ideal is a natural ideal. It takes no sanction from some divine source, nor from the ephemeral customs of human society. It takes its sanction from what is most real, most ultimate in man. A Buddhist tries to act morally not because he feels responsible to some god, or even to his society, but because he is honouring his commitment to his own development. If the conventional morality of a society happens to coincide with natural morality, then the Buddhist

might consider himself lucky, but he must never forget that he has always to be on his guard against relinquishing his own responsibility. He must at all times continue to be aware of his actions, aware of their true moral worth, ever striving after excellence.

This is of course not at all easy. To forsake the ease of conformity while at the same time opening oneself up to deeper and fuller self experience through meditation practice, mindfulness and reflection, while one's vision of, and contact with, the higher human faculties may be quite weak, means that one will frequently find oneself in some very stormy waters.

For example, our practice of the *metta bhavana* (a meditation practice for the cultivation of loving kindness) may give us some experience of loving kindness, but it might also open up a torrent of formerly repressed emotional drives and forces. Perhaps this is why the Buddhist tradition speaks in terms of *skilfulness* and *unskilfulness*. To steer a course through all the conflicting pulls and drives of our being calls for extreme care and sensitivity; it calls for tremendous skill.

To the Enlightened being, Enlightened acts, words and thoughts come spontaneously, but to those of us still spiritually 'amphibious', still caught up in the powerful forces of our more animal and spiritually blind aspects, we may find it hard to avoid getting lost in confusion and temptation. We may need all the help that we can get! Where are we to turn?

First of all we have to turn to mindfulness. We have to become aware of ourselves in the moral dimension. We have to realise that our actions have consequences — for ourselves in the present and in the future, and for others. When I met the Ven. Dardo Rimpoche, one of the Ven. Sangharakshita's teachers, at his school for refugee children in Kalimpong, I asked him whether he hoped that his pupils would leave the school with a strong feeling for the Dharma. 'Well', he said, 'My only hope is that when they leave they will at least know that actions have consequences'. *Karma* and *Karma vipaka*: actions and their consequences. If we can only try to see our activities in the light of this simple formula, then we will already have formed a strong basis for the development of morality.

Then, of course, we have to turn to meditation practice. We need to cultivate and strengthen our experience of more integrated, more individual, more selfless states of mind. These are the stars by which we steer our course. And we have to look for ways in which to apply the fruits of our meditation experience in everyday life. If we experience loving kindness at all during our meditation practice, then we should be all the time seeking for ways in which to experience it and express it at other times.

We also need trustworthy friends towards whom we can turn for advice and for comment. We need to have friends who share our vision of life, and who see us clearly. They can help

us to see what is best in us, and what is worst, the ways in which we are skilful, and the ways in which we are unskilful. Once we have developed such friendships, once we have found people with whom we can be completely ourselves, on whose concern for our welfare we can rely, then we are in possession of priceless jewels. Such friendships allow us to experience our moral development as a dynamic and exciting aspect of our lives.

Last, but in no way least, we can turn to the recorded Buddhist tradition. From the *suttas*, *sutras*, and commentaries we can discover what the Buddha and other Enlightened teachers have had to say about every aspect of life. We can reflect and meditate on their words, apply them to our own situation. From these we can derive not just advice but also deep inspiration and encouragement.

Within these records are to be found various lists of moral precepts, specific lists of recommendations and admonishments. There are many of these lists; they are directed to Buddhists who are working within a variety of contexts. There are lists for householders and lists for monks. Some are very short, while others are very long indeed. Although they have sometimes been applied in a dry and legalistic fashion, none of these lists should be. They are all attempts to capture the spirit of Enlightened action, and they are offered to the Buddhist in the hope that through

their application, he will discover, through reflection and self-discipline at first, the *spirit* for himself.

Of these lists, the most widely known is the list of five precepts, observed by all Buddhists throughout the world. They are as follows: 'I undertake the training principle of abstention from:

- a) Taking life
- b) Taking the not given
- c) Sexual misconduct
- d) False speech
- e) Drugs and intoxicants that confuse the mind.'

In the following articles, five people connected with the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO) will suggest what those precepts mean to them, how they try to live with them. These precepts are absolutely *not* commandments. As should now be clear, they each have to be interpreted and brought to life. Rather than taking responsibility away from us, they help us to take responsibility for ourselves.

Buddhist morality is a morality of purification. We not only purify ourselves in the sense of eradicating unskilful and base tendencies and habits, but also purify ourselves in the sense of becoming more purely ourselves: more completely and fully ourselves.

As we become more pure we will become more truly human. We will be living the kind of life, that most naturally expresses our humanity, the kind of life that will provide the basis for the development of the highest human potential: Buddhahood.

The Ten Precepts

The members of the Western Buddhist Order observe not five but ten precepts. Four of them appear in the list of five, while the following six expand on the theme of

speech, and also throw awareness more specifically on mental states.

Abstention is, of course, only one side of the coin. Each precept has a very positive dimension, and also a positive form of expression.

Here, beside a list of the ten Upasaka/Upasika precepts, we include a rendering of the Ten Precepts, in a positive form, as evoked by the Ven. Sangharakshita.

I undertake the training principle of:-

1. Abstention from taking life.
2. Abstention from taking the not-given.
3. Abstention from sexual misconduct.
4. Abstention from false speech.
5. Abstention from harsh speech.
6. Abstention from useless speech.
7. Abstention from slanderous speech.
8. Abstention from covetousness.
9. Abstention from animosity.
10. Abstention from false and misleading views.

With deeds of loving kindness, I purify my body.

With open-handed generosity, I purify my body.

With stillness, simplicity, and contentment, I purify my body.

With truthful communication, I purify my speech.

With words kindly and gracious, I purify my speech.

With utterance helpful and harmonious, I purify my speech.

Abandoning covetousness for generosity, I purify my mind.

Changing hatred into love, I purify my mind.

Transforming ignorance into Wisdom, I purify my mind.

The precepts are not rules to be observed in a dry, legalistic way. It is up to each of us to find a personal approach to them.

The next five articles should give readers an idea, at least, of how we can endeavour to bring the precepts to life.

'Taking Life'

by Nicolas Soames

I was moving backwards in a three-attack sparring movement when a rising punch to the head broke through my flimsy guard and caught me in the face. I saw constellations of stars, and it was quite a few moments before my sight returned to normal and I found myself not in some distant galaxy but back in the more mundane environment of the FWBO lunch-time Karate class in Bethnal Green.

A few hours later, in the more familiar surroundings of a Judo dojo, it was my turn. I whipped in for a double-arm shoulder throw and my partner went flat on his back, the breath driven from his body. It took him some moments to recover.

Now, as it happens, both partners in these martial arts classes were from the FWBO and it was likely that all three of us had begun the morning with the *metta bhavana* practice. So what were we doing engaged in such violent activities?

On the surface, of course, it is difficult to correlate that strong, but loving meditation practice with punches, kicks, throws, and strangles. But that, for me, is part of the elusiveness of the practice of the precepts in general, and the first precept in particular.

Each morning, before my meditation practice, I chant the Refuge and Precepts. '*Panatipata, veramani siccāpadam samādiyāmi...* I undertake to abstain from taking life...' and the rest. Each time, I try to avoid a mindless monotone, but look afresh at what I am saying, which perhaps is not so easy with the first precept because very few people go around killing each other.

Naturally, many Buddhists extend that statement to include other forms of life, so that vegetarianism becomes a natural expression of it, and most of us are probably less likely to swat flies and bees mindlessly; though I confess I do not personally regard mosqui-

toes on my bare arm as a philosophical situation.

But it is really with the declamation of the positive version of the precept that the concept comes alive: 'With deeds of loving kindness, I purify my body.' Suddenly, I am catapulted from the world of worthy formulae to a dynamic course of action.

Of course, action is a very individual matter, and the beauty that surrounds the Buddhist precepts is that their real implementation depends upon lively interpretation, not dull repetition.

Though it may seem strange to the uninitiated, I find that my daily training in throwing and strangling people, and punching and kicking them is, more than anything else, a major contribution to my *metta* practice (and I don't mean only when I am sitting) and to my practice of the first precept.

The less I am thrown off balance by a fast and maybe somewhat crude attack on the Judo mat, and the less I experience little flashes of panic when I am about to pass out with a strangle, the less I am affected by people acting in perhaps an unpleasant or unskilful manner in everyday life.

Instead of just reacting blindly, I have time to consider the situation

with more objectivity and can decide whether to step aside smoothly and let the attack expend itself, or whether to move in fast and make a more positive contribution to the exchange.

With constant hard training in the martial arts comes a certain clarity. You recognise attacks, even at high speed, and you can make the appropriate response, not just a sudden reaction. It is my experience that the *metta* practice provides much the same training, though more profound and subtle, when invoked in normal interaction with people. The mental punches may not be so obvious, but they are every bit as dangerous, and blind reaction here is just as bad.

You learn in a martial arts training not to make sloppy judgements. If you are working with a relatively untrained but strong and aggressive partner, the more subtle and complex techniques will probably be of less use — and may even result in injury to yourself.

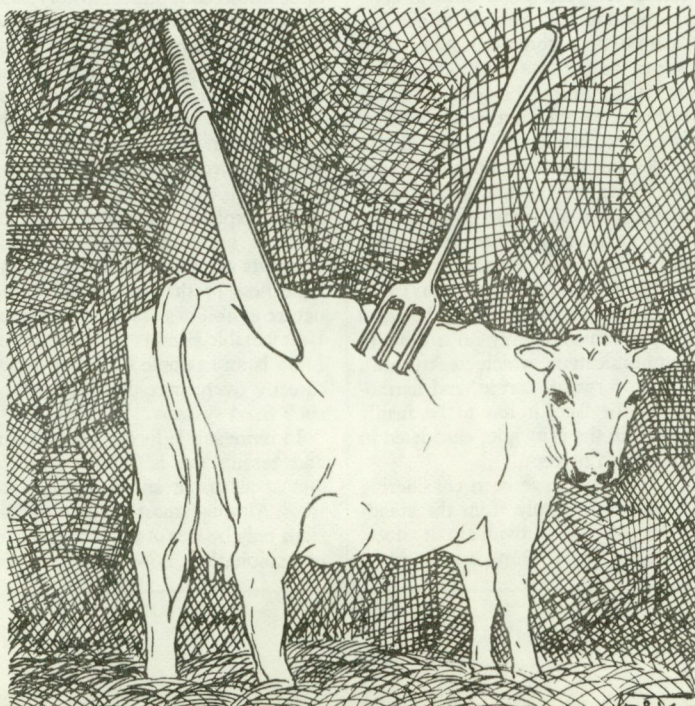
The same applies in the everyday application of the first precept — you don't necessarily gently assist a drunken and violent man who is wandering down the northbound carriageway of the M1. It might be better to knock him out and then carry him to the verge.

What seems to have become clearer to me over the past few years is that the *metta* practice and the application of the first precept can only be based on an attitude of fearlessness.

With the gradual growth of fearlessness comes a freedom of action. Rather than acting as a result of provocation by something or somebody, one can create one's own action. But the growth of fearlessness does not, interestingly, always seem to result in positive action. A sheen of superconfidence offers the opportunity to dominate others or to ignore others. It is all too easy to use that element of fearlessness to overcome people even in ordinary social situations — and to feel quite a surge of power in doing so.

It is also possible to use that fearlessness simply to disregard others, pushing through life quite unconcerned with the effect we are having on other people. It is at this point that the dynamism of the positive version of the first precept comes into play. Far from being woolly or pale in nature, the 'deeds of loving kindness' must be strong, tangible and imaginative, not vague or apologetic or dull. It may be difficult to have clear cut views on whether one is right to kill (if one cannot disarm) a man who has run amok, and is endangering others, or whether or not one should wear leather sandals. In that sense, practice of the first precept calls always for self-questioning and review. But more often than not, these decisions are either rare, as in the first case, or seem less important as in the second.

Perhaps more crucial is to start breaking the links in that old chain — strong hits weak, weak finds someone weaker to hit — and to really work on purifying the body. Just as in a martial arts practice, the physical body becomes lighter faster, more supple and stronger, so the mind and body becomes fitter and more pliant, able to work the *metta* practice and apply the first precept with more freedom, and with the delight and inventiveness born of any virtuoso movement. 'With deeds of loving kindness, I purify my body...'



'Taking the not-given'

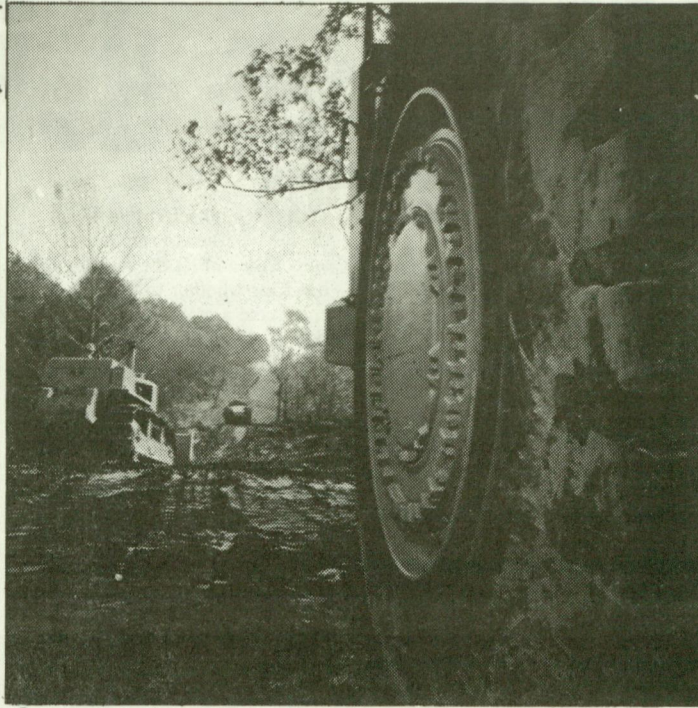
by Ratnavira

The Second Precept is 'Adinnadana, veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami' in Pali, which is translated as 'I undertake to abstain from taking the not given'. In common with the other precepts, it has a corresponding positive form, indicating a quality to be developed to counteract the tendencies which give rise to the unskillful attitude. In this case, the positive counterpart is the development of generosity.

The desire to take expresses a fundamental tendency in our being, that of experiencing ourselves as fixed and solid entities separated from the rest of the universe. We experience ourselves in this way, and as a consequence seek to enrich our sense of separate selfhood through the only means that we know — to take, to appropriate, to take the not given. It is a tendency seen most clearly, perhaps, in the *asura* realm, or realm of the jealous gods, on the Tibetan Wheel of Life. The *asuras* are dedicated to a life of self-aggrandisement through acquisition and appropriation, and will stop at nothing to achieve this goal. Their greatest wish is to experience a sense of ever-increasing personal power through incorporating more and more of the universe into their own being.

The *asura*, dedicated to a life of appropriation at all costs, and therefore dedicated to a life which completely contradicts the spirit of the second precept, is an extreme example, but illustrates most clearly a tendency at work in all of us, and at work in the world at large. It is not difficult to see how the grosser aspects of 'taking the not given' are undesirable aspects of behaviour — they contravene even a rudimentary sense of human ethics and values. But it is now time to explore the more subtle implications of the precept, and its wider meaning for the world.

It is most usual to think of the act of taking in material terms — money, property, and so on. The Buddhist texts, however, discriminate several other things which can be appropriated, and conversely which can become objects of generosity. There is the taking of time — other people's time — and of energy — other people's energy — which has not been freely given. We have probably all



Over-exploitation of the earth's resources goes against this precept

been in the position of thrusting ourselves upon an unwilling, or at least reluctant, friend, to pour our worries and troubles out all over them. If we are in this kind of state, of demanding time, energy, and attention from another person, we are hardly likely to be aware of, or sympathetic to, their own needs and requirements. At times such as this, it seems easy to take the not given without even noticing that this is what we are doing.

Even more difficult to discern than this overtly one-sided form of communication is the mode of subtly manipulative communication. This serves the purpose of extracting from our fellow human beings a particular response — a particular form of energy — which we would like to evoke for our own ends. Flattery, deliberate provocation, flirting, role-playing, are all forms of interaction between human beings designed to gain a particular response, to extract energy which has not been freely given. A two-way giving between people can exist only on a basis of communication which is truthful, straightforward, caring, and harmonious. In fact, it has to be firmly rooted in the principles elucidated in the fourth precept.

So far, we have been considering the precept purely from the standpoint of the individual. It does, however, have implications on a

much wider scale, that of the world at large. It is now time to have a look at some of these effects.

If exploitation, manipulation, and appropriation are the characteristic qualities against which the second precept is trying to work, it is no exaggeration to say that most of the political, social, and economic systems in existence today are based on the violation of this ethical principle. Exploitation of one kind or another has been the characteristic of many so-called cultures and civilisations throughout human history, and this continues to be true today. The taking of human time and energy not freely given is seen most clearly in the case of political and economic systems with a dictatorial or grossly authoritarian basis — slavery is an obvious extreme example. Rigid systems of class and caste also involve human exploitation, since the human being is born into a system which demands certain forms of behaviour regardless of that person's genuine nature or abilities. The conversion of Untouchable Hindus to Buddhism in India is an example of action which directly overcomes the ill-effects of such fixed systems.

In more subtle forms, exploitation and taking the not given pervade almost all social and economic systems. Although most western civilisations may be free of the cruder forms of exploitation, how frequently can

human energy be said to be really freely given? The helpless worker is often merely replaced by the reluctant worker, whose unwillingness to give freely of his energy manifests in such symptoms as bickering, moaning, and resentment.

Exploitation in this wider sense occurs, not merely of human energy, but also includes the misuse of the natural resources of the earth. Any form of economic activity which takes more from the earth's resources than can reasonably be expected to be replenished, goes essentially against the spirit of this precept. The creation of dustbowls, and even deserts, through overintensive and short-sighted agricultural policies; the pollution and eventual atrophication of rivers, lakes, and seas; pollution of the air through industrial activity of one kind or another; all these are examples of activities which create imbalances of sufficient seriousness to jeopardise the long-term well-being of life on the planet.

It is time to pass on to happier things. To dwell overmuch on the negative can be to breed it. The positive aspect of the precept is unlimited generosity. Giving is an essential part of Buddhist practice. Particularly in the Mahayana tradition — which espouses the Bodhisattva Ideal, the ideal of Supreme Enlightenment for the benefit of all — is generous and altruistic activity greatly esteemed and valued. Even if you are not very proficient at the other spiritual practices — if your meditation is poor, if the scriptures read like nonsense — still, if you can learn to give, then Enlightenment is still possible. It is sometimes made out to be the greatest of all virtues.

To give is to go against the basic tendency of our being, to take. It is to replace selfishness with concern for others. It is to overcome inward-looking and cloudy subjectivity with an outward-going, clear, and bright response to the world. It is to replace tightness with openness, and restriction with freedom. In the world of human activities, it is to substitute the principle of 'take as much as possible and give as little as you can get away with'. In the world of agriculture and industry it is to supplant exploitation and the 'get-rich-quick' mentality with a more balanced, overall, and longer-term view. I have a friend who says that, if he is ever unsure of what to do next, he looks for a way to give. This attitude, of giving as a way-of-life, of generosity at the heart of all things, seems to sum up the essence of the Second Precept.



In this extract from a study seminar, the Ven Sangharakshita (Bhante) is talking about *Brahmacharya*. We see here that the precept relating to 'sexual misconduct' may have a far broader relevance than that suggested by its traditional association with rape, abduction, and adultery.

'Sexual Misconduct'

Bhante: What does Brahmacharya mean? This is very important. 'Brahma' literally means sublime, noble, superior, and pertains to higher, sublime and noble states of consciousness. In other words, to states of meditative consciousness. And the Brahmas as mythological entities are those beings, or gods if you like, who dwell on the higher cosmological planes corresponding to those states. (You can speak subjectively of a state, objectively of a plane and, in terms of individuals, of a god dwelling on that plane or

born or reborn on that plane.) 'Charya' means walking, faring, living practising. A Brahmachari is one who is walking like Brahma, one who is dwelling in sublime states of consciousness, one whose life is rooted in higher, noble, meditative states of consciousness, and who is living out of, and in accordance with, those states. 'Brahmacharya' therefore means something like the spiritual life. That is why it is sometimes translated as 'the holy life'. But in the original Pali and Sanskrit the term doesn't convey

the same connotations as the expression 'holy life' in English. It is also sometimes translated as 'the godly life', which doesn't help us very much either. In the Pali texts, especially in the earlier ones, Brahmacharya is the word for the whole spiritual life. Following the spiritual path is the Brahmacharya. Later on the word Brahmacharya underwent a change, and came to mean the practice of celibacy or complete sexual abstinence — a meaning which it had had in an applied or secondary sense even

from the beginning. As the third of the eight precepts observed by lay Buddhists on the four 'fast days' of the month and of the ten precepts observed by the novice monk (as well as of the different set of ten precepts observed by the anagarika), Abrahmacharya consists in abstention from non-celibacy, in other words, in the practice of celibacy. What is the connection between Brahmacharya in the first sense and Brahmacharya in the second, more applied sense?

Sagaramati: Well, you have to be celibate in a meditative state of consciousness.

Bhante: The celibacy is the natural expression of the meditative state of consciousness, because at that particular time you feel happy and contented within yourself. For instance, if you are actually meditating, and thoroughly enjoying the meditation, then you won't have any sexual feelings, because the meditation experience is more enjoyable. Therefore there won't be any sexual activity. But if you come out of that meditative state of consciousness, then sexual feelings may arise. This is the connection between the two senses of the term. Brahmacharya in the sense of celibacy is an application, ideally a natural application, of Brahmacharya in the first sense... Here there is no conception of Brahmacharya as a penance, or as a price that has to be paid. The restrictions that you observe in this connection are simply avoidances of stimuli. It is just taking sensible, as it were hygienic, precautions. If you know that you are susceptible to 'flu, then you stay away from those places where lots of germs are circulating. So if you find that you are sexually susceptible, you will stay away from those situations in which your sexual susceptibilities are intensified. It is just a common-sense precaution until such time as you so firmly dwell in the dhyana states that sex doesn't bother you any more...

The important point in connection with Brahmacharya is that it is a state of mind, a higher mode or level of consciousness, the effects of which must be manifested more and more in actual action. It is not a discipline imposed as it were from without.

Siddhiratna: Actual actions in one sense would be the beginning of wanting to be celibate, or of celibacy.

Bhante: You could want to be celibate in the sense of wanting to experience higher states of consciousness, as a result of which you would tend to be naturally celibate, or you could want to be celibate for the sake of celibacy, out of feelings of guilt, inadequacy, etc. ... I sometimes say that there are two kinds of sexuality: neurotic and non-neurotic. The non-neurotic is non-neurotic. The non-neurotic is when there is sexual activity, not through any need for security, for example, or through the 'relationship', but just because you are young and healthy. Neurotic sex-

"There too,....., the Blessed One held that comprehensive religious discourse with the brethren on the nature of upright conduct, and of earnest contemplation, and of intelligence: 'Great is the fruit, great the advantage of earnest contemplation when set round with upright conduct. Great is the fruit, great the advantage of intellect when set round with earnest contemplation. The mind set round with intelligence is freed from the great evils,—that is to say, from sensuality, from individuality, from delusion, and from ignorance'."

Maha Parinibbana Sutta

uality is where there is not only the actual sexual urge, but also an infantile craving for security, contact, warmth, and so on, through sexual relationship or activity. It may be, in the case of some people, that they do experience higher states of consciousness, dhyana states, yet at the same time a certain amount of sexual activity may go on, but this will certainly be non-neurotic. However, one must be very careful that one doesn't, as it were, leave a loop-hole and deceive oneself here. The great test is how you feel if the relationship breaks up. If your partner, or lover, or whatever, says, 'Bye-bye! I've found somebody else.' If you can say, 'That's great! See you tomorrow.' and just accept it happily, then you had no neurotic craving along with your sexual relationship and activity. But if you are cut up, upset and disturbed and can't meditate for months, well, obviously there has been a strong neurotic element. So that is the criterion.

Suvrata: There is also another person's feelings involved. They might be getting neurotically involved, and you might do them harm, even if your own involvement was non-neurotic.

Bhante: Sure, you must consider that too. One doesn't want to lay down hard and fast rules. A lot depends upon temperament, physical state and so on. It may well be that

some people, once they get absorbed into higher states of consciousness, and once those states become normal, may not feel like engaging in any sexual activity at all, ever. Others may have the same experience of the meditative states, but their physical type may be different. They may be more healthy, more vital, and a certain amount of physical sexual activity may continue. But certainly, in neither case will there be any neurotic craving — this is the really important thing. There is not much point in giving up sex as a sort of discipline when the neurotic craving and dependence is still there, and maybe finding outlets in other ways. You may still be just as neurotically attached to your dog or cat. But one must again emphasize that one must be very honest with oneself, and not indulge in any sort of self-deception, which is so easy: 'Oh, I am free. I am not attached. I don't really care if it ends tomorrow.' But if it *does* end tomorrow, well, that's quite another story...

Padmapani: Presumably, if one had a neurotic relationship, and the relationship broke up, the sexual urge or drive could go into other things, like pleasures of a material nature. Would you say that was so?

Bhante: You can invest your energy and your sense of security in completely material things — even objects. Like the houseproud woman who may be quite frigid sexually,

but completely neurotically dependent, as it were, on her three-piece sofa set and all the rest of it.

Padmapani: One's new car...

Bhante: One's new car, one's stamp collection — so many things... But for most people the neurotic craving to a very great extent goes along with sex. So it is usually there that one has to watch it most. The great criterion is whether one can remain happy whatever happens, whatever storms may come. If the storm does pour down, and sweeps things away, and if you are still happy, then you can be sure that there was no neurotic element in your attachment.

Padmapani: Couldn't you have a neurotic relationship, and the actual fact of its ending precipitate a breakthrough?

Bhante: Well, it always does happen that it ends, because you lose everything in the end. To what extent you can respond healthily, and get good out of it, depends on the sort of person you basically are. Some people, at least as far as this life is concerned, are destroyed by the break-up, be it of a relationship, job, or a particular ambition. Simply destroyed. But others respond in a healthier way, and even develop a sort of insight. They see what happened and grow because of it. But growth is not automatic. When all your castles in the air come tumbling down, you may be buried beneath them, and never get up again — not as regards this lifetime. You can sometimes meet people like that. Their marriage has broken up, or their business has failed, or they have lost their money — they can't do anything. But others are more resilient. It depends on one's basic health or unhealthiness, in the ordinary human sense. Certainly you can have a breakthrough at such times, but that doesn't justify the previous attachment. One has to be very careful of that. Some people try to argue that attachments are good, because when they break up you get a real insight. Be very careful of this line of thought. I think that for the average Westerner, trying to follow a spiritual path, this whole question of sex and so on is one of the most touchy of all. You have to be very careful that people don't fall victim to the current micchaditthis. At the same time, you don't want to encourage feelings of guilt. One has to follow a middle path, which is very, very difficult.

Tantric Precepts

The Ven. Sangharakshita

1. Do not obstruct the energy of any other person.
2. Do not drain the energy of others, Give freely of your own energy.
3. Do not misuse energy.
4. Use for any given purpose the energy appropriate to that purpose, not one which is inappropriate.
5. Do not allow energy to become turgid. Keep it clear and bright.

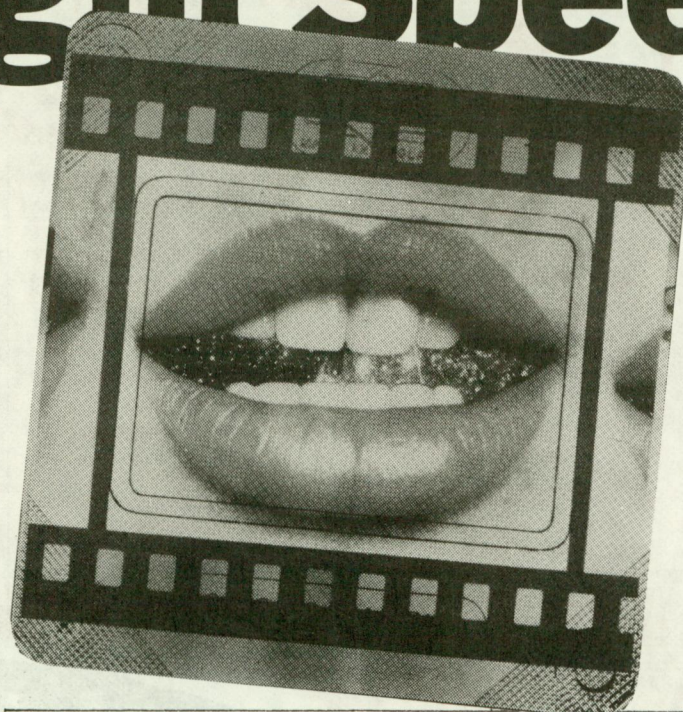
'Right Speech'

by Dhammadinna

Living and working as I do, around a large city Centre, the London Buddhist Centre, I often find that I am engaged in some form of communication from breakfast time until possibly last thing at night. Conversation around the breakfast table in the community can range from purely practical matters, such as who is going to do the washing up, to a discussion on the nature of *Sunyata*. It may also involve some interpersonal feedback, or simply be light and jokey. At work in the stained-glass workshop, I and my two co-workers engage in conversation covering a wide range of topics including practical instruction, and a sharing of skills. I might also, during the day, attend a Council meeting and discuss, along with other Order members, the finances and programme of the Centre. My lunch hour may be spent with someone who wants some advice or clarification on their life and practice.

As I move from one activity to another during the day I meet many people I know, and exchange a few words with them. In the evenings I may be leading or supporting a Dharma study group or simply chatting to someone before a class. The day usually winds up back in the community, discussing the various activities we have all been engaged in over the day.

I find, therefore, that my conversation during any one day can range over a vast number of topics with many different people and can change levels frequently. On the whole I feel that I probably err on the side of talking too much. I am usually prepared to talk to anyone about practically anything, in the interests of creating contact, forming a connection, and easing the communication onto deeper levels. The danger of this is, of course, that unless I am really aware, the conversation runs away with itself and I end up with just a superficial conversation. The connecting thread through all my conversation is, however, for the most part, a desire to get to know people, to let them know me, and, where possible, to deepen that communication into friendship. I



feel that the purpose of speech within a framework of Spiritual practice, is really concerned with reaching people, making contact, making friends, sharing thoughts, feelings, ideas and ideals on deeper and deeper levels. It doesn't really matter whether you live or work with people or are teaching the Dharma in a formal sense, your verbal communication, along with the associated emotional expression and body language, is a revealing of yourself to others.

It is very important for me to spend time with people I really can trust and with whom I feel I can be completely honest about myself and also honest about the way I perceive them. I feel very fortunate, at the moment, to be living with three such friends, and to be working with two others.

I think the main effect of this sort of communication is to help us continually to give birth to ourselves. Old things we may have kept a dark secret for years finally reach the light, creating a newer and freer self, and new thoughts and feelings are also brought into being within real communication. I personally, find having such close friendships means not that I become exclusive, but rather that there is more of me to share on a wider basis.

Apart from trying to engage in deeper and more creative communication, one other obvious way of becoming more aware of existing

speech patterns is to observe silence for a while. I personally find the transition period from silence to talking rather difficult. I have recently experienced this on coming back from a solitary retreat where, although I was studying and therefore engaged in mental activity, I was silent. I especially noticed it coming back from a completely silent and meditative week at Vajraloka. I find it very difficult to express the experience of myself that I have gained in silence through speech. Speech always feels so much more superficial, and it is so easy to slip back into old habits, games, or into just talking about other people and situations. It really takes a constant effort to be true to yourself and for speech to really resonate with your heart and mind, and to be the expression of both.

Any real communication obviously demands honesty and it is this which makes the Fourth Precept so difficult to practice. It is highly unlikely these days that I would tell a bare faced lie; it is unusual for me to tell a white lie, and ideally I should do neither. But it is not so easy to avoid minimising or exaggerating the re-telling of an experience, or sometimes expressing a 'double message'; rationalising, or simply choosing not to mention certain things. It is also easy sometimes not to know what I think or feel and to fall back on some ready-made answer or

received opinion rather than being energetic and courageous enough to discover the answers from my own experience.

To be honest, therefore, demands not only an ability to be factually honest, and an in depth knowledge of oneself, but also fearlessness. If I examine closely why I am not totally honest with other people, it is usually because I am afraid they will disapprove of certain things, or misunderstand me, or reject the things I am saying. If I feel I need to give someone else some feedback, I may hold back out of a fear that they may be upset, or angry, or perhaps tell me some home truths also! It seems that to hold back in one's communication with others, reveals a resistance to change.

If I assess my speech at the moment there are many areas in which I can work quite extensively. I still have a tendency to use 'bad' language when things go wrong, and to slip into cynical humour or cynical conversation if I'm not feeling particularly happy or contented. I have in fact a tendency to be a bit unaware in my use of humour generally. I am also still aware that there are areas of my life or experience I am unsure about and therefore don't really want to bring out into the open, which can of course cause deviousness or rationalisation. However, I think over the years I have come a long way. In a positive feedback session which took place recently amongst the Order in New Zealand, the feedback I received concerned honesty. For example, my tendency not to dissemble about what I am experiencing, my ability to give good clear feedback to others, and my ability to clarify situations and get to the bottom of things generally. One friend's feedback, which he insisted was positive, was that I was persistent in my pursuit of truth to the point of ruthlessness. It did seem to suggest to me however, that I need to develop more metta, to cushion that pursuit of truth and indeed to make it more effective.

I know I need to work on the speech precepts much more consciously, as well as on continually improving my emotional state. I look forward to a time when my mind and emotions will be continually clear and positive, and when everything I say will be an expression of truth.

Drugs and Dr

by Steve Murrey

Do Buddhists drink? Or, 'Can Buddhists drink?' These questions are asked from time to time on the fringes of the Buddhist movement. It is worth dealing with them so as to prepare the ground for an understanding of the relevance to the individual in the spiritual community of the more central question, 'Should Buddhists drink?'

The Precept, '*Surameraya majja pamadatana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*' roughly translates as 'I undertake to abstain from taking intoxicants'. This precept therefore relates to the entire pantheon of recreational and 'mind-expanding'

drugs that are available. However, perhaps we should first turn our attention to alcohol, because its cultural familiarity will make it especially relevant to the Western Buddhist. But before looking at ourselves, it might be useful to consider the case of Tibetans.

Tibetans drink a mildly alcoholic beverage called *Chang*. It is a sort of wine fermented from barley. Drinking *Chang* is part of Tibetan culture; it plays a part in household welcoming and farewell etiquette, it is used for toasts, and is consumed on many social occasions. So Tibetans do drink. And Tibetans are, by and large, Buddhists. But it would be as erroneous to conclude from this that all Buddhists drink, as to conclude that they drink because they are Buddhists. Worse still would be the conclusion that because the Tibetans drink they must be Buddhists!

As in the West, the consumption of alcohol forms part of the local social culture. The arrival of the Buddha Dharma in Tibet did not result in the wholesale abandonment of Tibetan traditional customs.

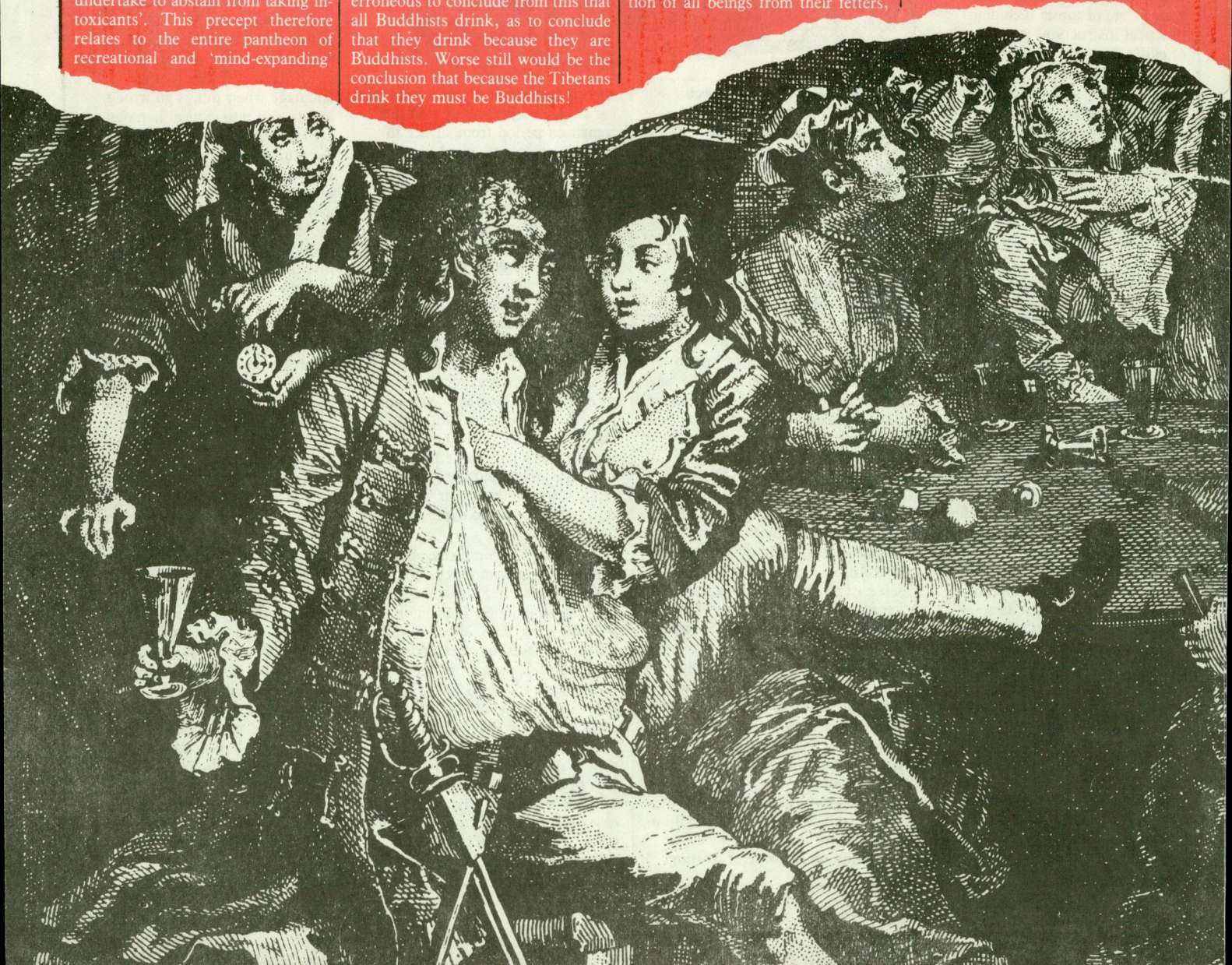
So what is the explanation for this apparent paradox. On the one hand we are faced with one of the five fundamental moral precepts, according to which Buddhists are advised to abstain from intoxicants, while on the other hand we find a Buddhist people, renowned for their devoutness, who do in fact partake of alcohol.

The Dharma is a benevolent teaching, geared towards the liberation of all beings from their fetters,

and to the realisation of their full potential. This benevolent spirit must be born in mind when we approach and endeavour to interpret the precepts.

Looking at the fifth precept in the light of the spirit of the Dharma, it becomes significant to remember that it was originally formulated in India, 2500 years ago. For the ancient Indian, the imbibing of alcohol was a very different thing to the case of the modern westerner enjoying a quiet drink with a few friends. As in Tibet, the social drink is a local custom in the West, it is not inevitably connected with the craving for intoxication.

It would be unrealistic, both



ink

emotionally and socially for many westerners to fly in the face of their social norms by vowing overnight never to touch alcohol again. A Buddhist is not, after all, socially handicapped, nor totally cut off from the world around him, but is actually a 'local' who has opted to tread the path of further development. So let us now turn to the question, *Should Buddhists drink?*

Clearly there is a difference between having an occasional social drink and becoming intoxicated, but this very difference is crucial to our theme. Mindfulness — full, integrated self-awareness — is a virtue of great importance to the Buddhist. Without doubt, a certain amount of alcohol affects one's mindfulness. What that amount is varies from person to person, and

from circumstance to circumstance. This very fact is something that we must observe with a great deal of interest. We should treat the matter with great wariness. We really have to examine the effect that any kind of drinking has on us, and ask ourselves whether it is having an influence on our level of mindfulness, on our meditation practice. If we find that drinking interferes with our meditation practice, then we should take steps to alter the situation, recognising that our mindfulness and meditation are of supreme importance. And we must be very careful not to delude ourselves. As the Ven. Sangharakshita has pointed out, 'There is no point in thinking ourselves mindful when we are merely merry'.

Aside from alcohol there are other intoxicants which should be briefly considered here. We might have found hallucinogens like LSD or Psilocybin, and the Cannabis derivatives to be conducive to altered states of consciousness. Under the influence of such drugs, some people claim to gain profound understandings and new depth of vision.

The Dharma makes it quite clear, however, that we can, through the practice of meditation, soar far beyond the limitations of such fleeting glimmerings, to psychophysical ecstasies far more profound and far more real than those resulting from the use of drugs; indeed, we can

soar all the way to Enlightenment itself.

We may therefore do well to conclude that it would be somewhat of a waste of good meditation time, as well as a rather risky business, to take these drugs. Moreover, although a drug may seem to expand our consciousness, and free it from some of its conditioned patterns, the experience gained by use of the drug is conditioned by the fact that we have had to take a drug in the first place. The elevated state does not exist before the 'trip', nor does it continue after the drug's effects have run their course. So the state is neither spontaneous, nor natural, nor permanent. All things considered, meditation would seem to be a far better option.

There is another kind of intoxicant that many people get involved with, and this is the range of addictive drugs, such as tobacco and opiates.

When we first try them we experience a dizzy, cotton-wool sensation throughout the body, which overlays a vaguely — and sometimes not so vaguely — undulating current of nausea. On the spot, or in retrospect we tell ourselves that the experience is pleasurable, and so we do it again, and again, and again, until we have addicted ourselves. In time, even the aforementioned sensations cease to occur, and we are left with nothing more than the fact of the habit. Well, there's nothing particularly spiritual here! In fact there is not a lot to recommend the opiates or tobacco at all. What is quite bizarre, indeed, is that people become users in the first place. Modern science more or less daily testifies to the horrific effects of such drugs.

For the Buddhist, addiction is something which should not even be

given opportunity to arise, and certainly it should not be allowed to continue. If one were to ask oneself what state of mind gives rise to the craving for a smoke, for example, and if one were to pull oneself up short, and examine that state of consciousness which decides that the hand will reach out for a cigarette, then one's findings would be most unflattering.

Regarding the question of intoxicants and Buddhism, the keen observer will no doubt notice that those who are known to be spiritually mature do not partake of them. In some cases they never did, while in others they have transcended such distractions, have abandoned such vestiges of their old life. They have cast aside the pleasurable seductions of the way-side inn, with all its impermanence, its insubstantiality, and its ultimate unsatisfactoriness, and have taken to the heroes' path, consoled and fortified only by the Three Jewels: the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

It is all very well for us to raise our glasses to such heroic wayfarers as stand safely at the doorway of that inn, but we should never be complacent. We should never say, 'It is all very well for them; they are superior spiritual practitioners, and we are only human'. This is a non-Buddhist view, since it is based on a wrong view of humanity.

Siddhartha Gautama realised the full human potential and became Enlightened. We too can achieve this state. It would be more accurate, and perhaps beneficial if, instead of saying 'I'm only human', when we face up to our weaknesses, we were to say, 'I'm only *sub-human*'. By way of this self-mockery we might come to ask ourselves whether we are really content to stay the way we are. It is not enough to stand on the side-lines, cheering the efforts of others, without moving a leg in the direction of our own growth and development.

We would do far better to learn from the good example of others, and earmark for extinction those current practices and habits that are conducive to stillness, simplicity and contentment, to mindfulness clear and radiant: the reward of purified, unfettered consciousness.



Britain

LBC

At the Centre, our autumn programme is well under way, with our Buddhism courses in Hampstead and Covent Garden now well established, and our lunch-time Yoga and meditation classes also going well.

Nagabodhi is taking our beginners' class and numbers are up to fifty people each week. Friends Night has a lively atmosphere, with about sixty people attending. On Fridays, Siddhiratna continues to lead a double session of meditation and a puja.

Men's Mitra activities have received a boost with the appointment of Vairocana as the local men's Mitra Convenor. He has introduced a regular Order/Mitra morning at the LBC on the last Sunday of each month. Several LBC mitras are on the pre-ordination retreat in Tuscany, and we eagerly await their return.

Many of the women mitras have recently been on retreats and seminars which will culminate in a pre-ordination retreat on the Isle of Muck next year. We wish them well too, and hope that some of our mitras will return ordained.

In Phoenix, our housing co-op, the big news is the acquisition

of two excellent properties from the Greater London Council, situated five minutes walk from the Centre, in a quiet avenue near a park. These are being converted into two communities by our building team, and will soon be ready for occupation.

Last but not least, the winds of change are blowing through our administration. After several years' dedicated work at the LBC, Vajrapushpa is leaving the office, and we are taking the opportunity to reorganise our team. We are making strong efforts to build a single, efficient, harmonious team out of our nine full-time workers. We need to do a tremendous amount to put the LBC really on the map, but we are determined that the maximum number of people should benefit from our activities, and that everything we do should be of the highest quality.

W. LONDON

The Centre in West London has now been open since May, which means that activities have been taking place over a sufficient length of time for a backward reflective look to be meaningful. A realistic appraisal of the fortunes of the Centre - now known as 'The Baker Street Buddhist Centre' - involves a look at both the successes and the shortcomings over this eventful period.

On the 'plus' side, the mere



Open space for Croydon

fact of a more established Centre in this part of London is a big step forward. A full programme of classes and events has been immediately put into operation. Mitra groups, Regulars' classes, two beginners classes, and two yoga classes take place weekly. In addition, there have been a variety of one-off evening, day and weekend events. Day Retreats and Workshops, Communications Weekend, and an evening devoted to the artist Michelangelo, are examples of this varied programme that is being evolved, as well as successful Massage Weekends, which are being held monthly, and promise to be a major attraction of the Centre.

The move to Baker Street marks a step forward in several ways - the number of classes held, and the quality necessary to make them successful - the move to a well-off and up-market section of London; and financially (rent on the Centre is £95 per week, and other outgoings are commensurately high). A step forward is also a step into the unknown, and in common with other steps into the unknown, the running of the Centre has not been without its teething troubles. To say that finances were tight would be to grossly play down the difficulties - and the challenges - that stand before us.

Classes, particularly beginners classes, though bright, are still small, and publicity presents special difficulties in highly-competitive and anonymous London.

The businesses, though developing well by many standards, are limited in the support they can offer to the Centre because of lack of workers and high overheads. The challenge which the situation presents is for everyone involved to apply more effort to things in all ways, in other words to face that challenge. More and more is a mood of 'realistic optimism' beginning to emerge among the Order Members and Mitras most closely involved with activities around the Centre.

CROYDON

Our last report for these columns mentioned that all our classes had moved from the Aryatara community in Purley to a small centre above our vegetarian restaurant - Hockneys - in Croydon. The last few months have revealed to us what a good move that was. Our Beginners' Class has grown appreciably; we have held a very successful Basic Buddhism course, and our Regulars Class is full of new faces. We seem to be gradually building up a larger and larger circle of Friends. This bodes well for the future with our plans for a larger centre behind Hockneys. Work on this new centre has now started and we hope to begin holding classes there by the end of the year.

Work on the Aryatara community has now finished, and the house looks very beautiful for it. The community now has much more of a life of its own, with a meditation and a puja every evening, and a study programme at the weekend. From time to time the community has its own day retreats.

Our businesses continue to do well. We are looking forward to the next few months as they are usually our best for trading. Hockneys has recently introduced live music on Friday and/or Saturday evenings. Our customers can now enjoy trios and quartets by Mozart, Haydn, and Bach while they dine. This feature also heralds our new Centre, since we hope to hold a wide range of cultural events there as well as our usual classes.

BRIGHTON

The Brighton Centre is awaiting the result of a planning application to transform the two top floors of a poster warehouse in the North Laines area of the town into a new Centre.

It has been clear for some time now that FWBO Brighton needs room



to expand - a new centre, allowing the Park Crescent Place building to be used entirely as a community.

The warehouse accommodation would offer sufficient room for a centre, including study rooms, offices, a bookshop, and a tea bar, as well as a large shrine room and Yoga studios.

Meanwhile activities continue, not only in the current Centre, but also at venues outside. Devaraja is running a 10-week course: 'An Introduction to Buddhism' - for the Workers Education Authority, one of the main nationwide bodies concerned with adult education in Brighton. There are beginners' meditation classes also held at the University and at the Brighton Natural Health Centre.

There is also a new women's community, in a lovely house in Rottingdean, on the outskirts of Brighton. There are already three women living there, and there is room for three more.

NORWICH

Introductory classes and introductory talks continue to be one of the most thriving activities of the Centre in Norwich. The Beginners' Meditation Class is consistently well attended, though people seem reluctant to move on to more regular involvement.

Abhaya, the chairman of the Centre, gave a series of four public talks, entitled: 'The Flowering of the Human Spirit: A Buddhist View of Spiritual Growth'. He hopes to take these talks to other FWBO centres, if interest is expressed.

GLASGOW

After numerous delays, frustrations, and obstacles, work on the main part of the new Glasgow Centre in Sauciehall Street is coming to a close. Although projected completion dates have been given before - and then had to be withdrawn - Susiddhi, the chairman, is confident that classes will be being held in the new Centre early in the New Year.

'Thanks to the generosity and hard work of Friends, plus the invaluable assistance of Order members from the South, we expect to complete the new Centre this year', he said.

'We will then have 1,800 square feet of beautiful Centre in a prime site. So we are now going through the necessary planning of how we are going to run it properly with the personnel and financial resources available.'

This is coming at a time when FWBO Scotland is already under pressure from other quarters. Aryamitra and three local mitras are in Tuscany, on the retreat, and during Autumn six Order members, mitras and Friends have been in London on appeals for Aid For India.

Yet the major businesses - Gardening Friends', and 'Ink', the print and design firm -

have been kept going. It is a difficult and challenging time for Ink in particular, for the firm has taken on much of the production work, and some of the administration of Windhorse Publications.

MANCHESTER

At the time of writing, Suvajra is in Tuscany on the intensive pre-ordination course. Ratnaguna is not the only Order Member in Manchester though. Sarvamitra from Finland has moved into the community and has taken over the gardening business and plans to stay at least until Suvajra's return in December.

The men's community is once again 'bursting at the seams' with seven men, and more wanting to move in. We hope that a second community will be started at the end of the year. The Community is in the best form it's ever been, retaining its characteristic liveliness, whilst developing a more integrated, even mature feeling as peoples' friendships with one another deepen.

We continue to keep up our contact with other Buddhist groups in the North West. On the weekend of the 10th-12th September we held a retreat in North Wales at which not only people from the Manchester Buddhist Centre attended, but also people from Shrewsbury, Wrexham, Accrington and Harrogate Buddhist groups. Vajramati, from Vajraloka, led the retreat and I think that the 34 people who attended gained much from their contact with other Buddhists from all over the North West of England, and North Wales.

The Shrewsbury Buddhist Group are now organising a retreat which will take place in South Shropshire in November, and have invited Ratnaguna to lead it. They are also organising a public talk, to be given by

Ratnaguna, in Shrewsbury in November.

In August some Manchester mitras noticed a few Buddha-images in a shop window in Cardiff. They further discovered a whole collection of such images in the back of the shop. Returning with the Manchester Centre treasurer a little while later, they bought up the entire collection, with the result that there is now a good selection of brass Buddha images for sale in the Centre bookshop, as well as a fine new image on the shrine.

Coming events in Manchester include a 'Metta Weekend' - a weekend spent in learning to chant the Karaniya Metta Sutta, as well as studying it, and of course in practising the metta bhavana meditation.

This will be followed by a weekend retreat in which the Four Brahma Viharas will be practised.

In November, Ratnaguna and Friends will be giving a concert of Renaissance music at the Manchester Centre.

VAJRALOKA

It's always a challenge when asked to write one of these reports, as really relatively little happens here - which is as it should be.

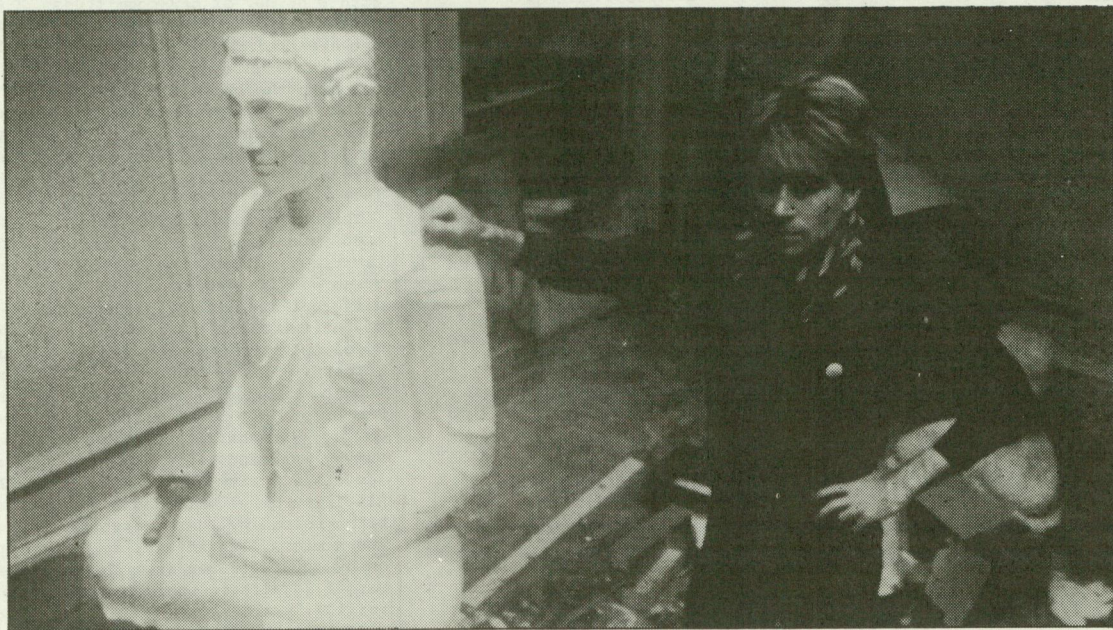
Since the last Newsletter large numbers of men and also women have spent between three days and four weeks quietly meditating, or just sitting and drinking in the silence. Many people come for short periods, most for a week. A few come for even shorter periods. Although this is certainly beneficial to them to a certain extent, we would like to start encouraging people to come for longer periods, as the benefit, to them as well as the retreat as a whole, is then far greater. The contrast between the powerful peace of Vajraloka and life outside is very great indeed, and it takes usually three days

before one feels as though one has 'arrived' sufficiently to be able to start meditating effectively - with the whole of oneself. So in future we are setting a minimum stay of seven nights - we would really recommend ten - and asking guests if possible to arrive at weekends only. This is to ensure a minimum of disruptive coming and going on the retreat.

Another month of women's retreats is about to begin in October, and the community members will all be going on solitary retreats during that time. 1982 has been a period of strengthening for the community. In November we are looking forward to being joined by Ruciraketu from Sukhavati. We are also expecting that the Christmas period will be a popular one for meditators.

This has also been the year Vajraloka has become more or less complete. Although there is an apparently endless amount of building, maintenance, and improvement work ahead of us, we now have all the basic facilities. The accommodation has reached the standard we have been aiming for. Our next project will be to create more single accommodation, with the eventual aim of providing a single room for all twelve, guests. When we complete the conversion we are currently planning, there will be two single, three double, and one four man room - which will mean that the first six guests will get a room to themselves. (The average number of guests here is about six, with a community of four.) An anonymous donor has provided the money for this, so we can expect to complete the work by next Spring.

Over the Summer and Autumn the grounds have been worked on extensively during the work periods. Mainly thanks to Prakasha, we now have what could almost be called lawns, and a pond, which drains water from a previously marshy patch of ground.



Another new Buddha image - for the new Glasgow Centre.

Padmapani

N.Zealand AUCKLAND

A shortage of Order Members in New Zealand has brought out the best in a number of mitras who are realising that there is more organisational and leadership potential within them. The occasion of our relatively, newly, innovated Monday Order/Mitra night, - initiated by Buddhadasa to encourage Mitra consciousness towards ordination - certainly enables us to become more aware of this, and to experience each other in a new, more dynamic way.

When Buddhadasa left for Australia for six weeks, much responsibility fell upon the shoulders of Aniketa and more initiative and direction became apparent from people in the Centre Management team, and those mitras involved on the Council, in Public Relations and Aid for India.

Not only did we maintain the status quo in this potentially precarious situation - we also started exploring further afield, so that when he returned, refreshed and renewed, everything here was in hand. One such glowing example came from a mitra, Marion Feasey, who has begun teaching twice-weekly sessions of meditation at the Auckland Technical Institute - where she works in the Commercial Department. Interest has been shown from both the teaching and non-academic staff and she now has her own regulars.

The Centre has been running smoothly, with Tuesday Open Nights well attended and the Beginners meditation Courses still going extremely well. As a follow-up to the Meditation Course, we are occasionally running an Introducing Buddhism Course. This gives an opportunity for the people who responded to the Meditation Course to continue their Thursday night pattern, learn more about Buddhism in the context of the FWBO, and continue developing friendships.

Early this year, Buddhadasa and Dr. Judith Dubignon, a mitra and Senior lecturer in Psychology at Auckland University, ran the course between them and the response was fantastic from newcomers and mitras alike. This time the course rests almost entirely with Judith, who is grappling with her own heavy work-load and has family commitments.

At present Aniketa is leading two women's study groups - one for Mitras, one for Friends. Buddhadasa has also resumed study in the Men's community.

Financially, the Centre is at present holding its own although we've had withdrawals from the Monthly Standing Donations System, a burglary, and the Cook St. Market Stall not doing too well. But we do have paying Cultural Evenings now i.e. poetry, classical music recitals, which are proving successful. There are also new Yoga classes at the Centre. We also raised \$2500 for Aid for India which has been sent to Pune.

Buddhadasa is off on his nation-wide tour soon - to Wellington - to see the new Wellington Buddhist Centre which Achala has succeeded in leasing. He'll be giving talks as well as meeting old and new friends, before moving on to Christchurch to see Indrajala, and then possibly on to Dunedin. Wellington now has a chairman and co-ordinator (Achala), a Treasurer, Public Relations, Aid for India, and a Centre Manager. They're teaching meditation, giving talks, holding retreats, and are implementing the Monthly Standing Donations System.

The distribution of Centre programmes and posters advertising the 'Introducing Buddhism' course, and the coming '10 day Open Summer Retreat' has been and will continue to be quite extensive. Already we've found that our rather eye-catching programmes are absorbed quite rapidly, and in their hundreds, into the large sprawl that is Auckland. The PR team is concerned with sowing seeds - we have programmes, posters, ABC pens, large, bright meditation stickers on fifty buses that cover a lot of Auckland. There is a response. Many New Zealanders are searching for something else, something higher than themselves.

On the whole, the people involved in the 'Friends' here are responding in a very healthy, responsible and vigorous fashion. Maybe that's one of the reasons we just found a cheque for \$1000 in the dana bowl.

USA BOSTON

As the leaves of the New England forests turn red and yellow, one is reminded that this is a land with four very distinct seasons. In a couple of months the brilliantly coloured leaves will have fallen and the white snow will cover everything.

The preference for indoor activities in Winter has been reflected in the Centre's programme, which now has three classes a week, and we are preparing to give talks to various

audiences. Already talks are arranged for a Catholic women's college and a local radio station, as well as two series of three talks each, to be given at the Centre. Our classes still attract only a few people, but we now have a handful of regular Friends. The Summer retreat, in the mountains of Vermont, and the Fall retreat, by the ocean on Cape Cod, attracted a small but enthusiastic group.

The community, Hayagriva, has expanded now that Tom Revay joined it in August, after an enlightening trip to England. In particular, he spent time at the London Buddhist Centre, at Aryatara, and at Padmaloka. He is the first Friend to become a mitra on American soil. His mitra ceremony was attended by the largest gathering of Order members in the United States. The three resident Order members were joined by Kularatna, who has been in Boston for three months, studying at Harvard Medical School, and Marichi, who had just arrived, and who is planning to stay for two to three months.

We have contact, mainly by telephone, with mitras Robert Gerke and Phil Miller on the West Coast, and with Sue Krieger in New York City. Slowly a circle of Friends is gathering, and the delightful experience of a Sangha is beginning to grow. We eagerly await the day when that flickering glow will burst into full flame.

India

Those of us who had hoped that the pace of life in TBMSG would slacken off after the Ven. Sangharakshita's recent tour were quickly disappointed, as the need to capitalise on the enthusiasm generated throughout Maharashtra put yet more demands upon our limited resources. To facilitate this work, a new organisational structure was introduced, with a number of new committees taking responsibility for different areas of our work. Perhaps the most significant development has been the creation of the Poona activities committee, made up solely of Maharashtra Order members, and responsible for all classes, festivals, and retreats in Poona.

This committee quickly initiated an upsurge in our local activities, so that now we hold seven weekly general classes in different localities, in addition to the two mitra study groups.

Following on from the highly successful Order retreat in August, the first stage of the Dapodi project began with our doctor, Virabhadra, starting survey work and, in early September, triumphantly weighing his first baby. Virabhadra is being helped by Dharmarakshita and a mitra, Mrs Aheary, as well as by several women from the Dapodi localities where he is working.

At the same time, Buddhapriya has left his job as a headmaster

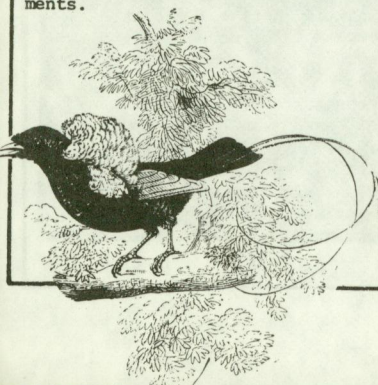
Vimalakirti and Buddhapriya — two Order

in a village school, and is now working with us full-time, with the intention of taking over our accounts from Purna, as well as being very involved in our publishing work. Ashvajit has recently come out from England to join us. He too will be working with our publications.

Outside Poona our activities are on the increase. A weekly class has started in Bombay, with more planned, and Jyotipala has moved to Aurangabad to consolidate the work that has been done so far by a very energetic team of mitras centred around Milind College. Lokamitra has recently completed a six-week lecture series at the College, on the Ten Perfections. In Ahmedabad, the addition of three new Order members, plus the extension of Mangala's stay, have added a new dimension to the Sangha there, which had until recently been bravely held together by Bakul and Ratnakar, with support from Purna in the form of regular visits.

The rainy season is almost over, and the invitations and requests for talks are pouring in, reminding us of just how much there is to do as more and more Indian Buddhists hear of our work and want to get involved. How to meet this demand is the problem that we face; not that we are going to allow it to get us down! We continue to put a great deal of energy into our publishing work, as this has proved to be the most effective way of getting us and Bhante's writings more widely known.

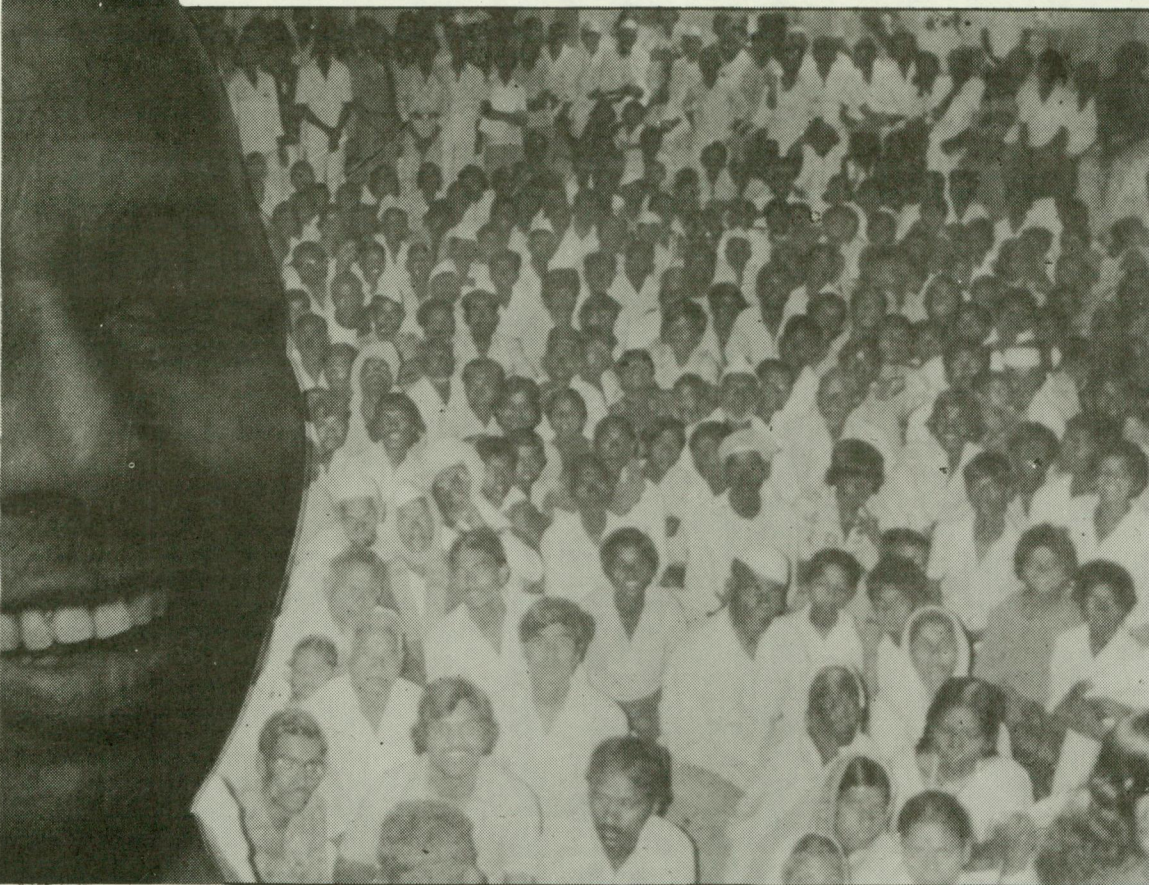
However, this tends to lead to more invitations...



DHAMMA MEGHA

If you have read the report from India, you will know that publishing is one of the most important activities being carried out by our workers there.

One of their regular publications is in English, and it is called *Dhamma Megha*. These productions are short, simply produced booklets containing either an edited transcript of a lecture by the Ven. Sangharakshita, or a chapter from a book that he has written - an essay on a single theme. Titles already in print include 'Where Buddhism Begins and Why it Begins There', 'Mind - Reactive and Creative', and 'Breaking Through into Buddhahood'. For a complete list of titles, and to place an order, contact Susiddhi at 'Ink' up in Glasgow, who are to act as agents for 'Tiratna Grantha Mala', as our publishing wing is called in India.



members ready to meet the demands in India

Nagabodhi

Aid for India

During the four months of the last Aid For India appeal, the fundraising team raised £400,000 in promises and donations for the Poona project. This brings the total promised to over £850,000, and means that we are well on the way to our first million! This achievement was largely brought about by the fact that sufficient people volunteered to do the work - and then got on with it. I am sure that nobody can fail to be impressed by their achievement, and we are very grateful to every one of them.

All except two people beat the basic target, and over half of the team exceeded £20,000 each. This has been by far the most effective appeal that I have ever had the opportunity of working with, especially as the cost of raising each covenant was also reduced.

We are no longer a small struggling charity. Our income over the last six months averaged out at over £9,000 per month, and we sent £11,300 to India in August as a result of cash donations alone.

These changes in size have placed considerable and greater responsibilities on the shoulders of the full-time team, and we are all working hard to meet the challenges we are presented with. It has been decided, for example, to increase the number of full-time workers to six, and we are thinking seriously about the possibilities of using a computer for some of the administrative work. It also means that the nature of people's work changes rapidly; a job that took five hours a week a year ago may now take all week, and it is necessary for all the full-time staff to be flexible and very resourceful, as this situation is likely to continue into the New Year.

Lastly, we are about to begin our Autumn campaign. John Bloss has done an excellent job in assembling a team which should prove at least as effective as the last. The women, as well as the men, will have their own community, and this will no doubt improve things even further.

Tim Lilley

Tuscany Revisited



Yoga at 'Il Convento' last year

Sudana

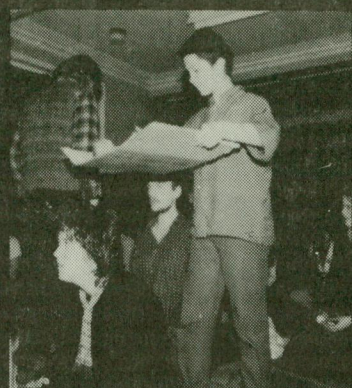
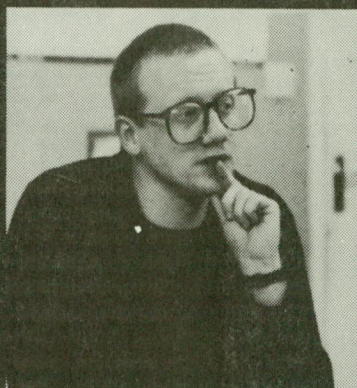
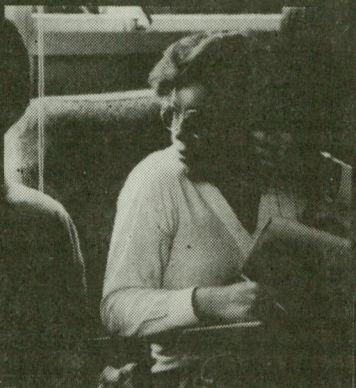
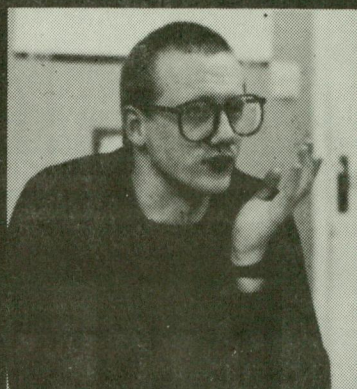
At the beginning of September, the Ven. Sangharakshita set off once again for Il Convento in Tuscany, along with 5 Order members and 19 mitras for another three month intensive pre-ordination retreat.

As was the case last year, they have all retired into more or less total seclusion, with very little, if any, news coming out of the retreat. As was also the case last year, it is imagined that the days are passed in meditation, physical exercise,

study, question and answer sessions with Bhante, and with the development of friendships that will last a lifetime - between Order members and mitras from all over the world.

No doubt there will be ordinations at the end, but how many, what names are given, and what exactly has been going on there will not be revealed until they all return at the beginning of December. A full report of the retreat will no doubt appear in a future Newsletter.

SUM RETR



Seaford

Over the years, our publicity team have experimented with the way they advertise our retreats, in order to reach as many people as possible, and to try to encourage people to come on our retreats who might be put off by an overtly 'Buddhist' advert.

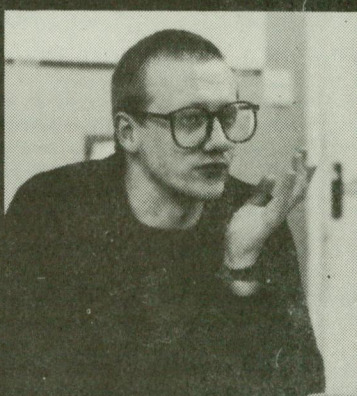
Although these retreats have been well attended, we have sometimes noticed that the people who came were not really sure what the retreats were going to involve, and often came expecting a holiday.

This Summer, we therefore offered "A Buddhist Summer". Eighty people attended this retreat, and they all knew why they were there

to find out more about meditation and Buddhism. Although some people had already attended beginners' classes, or classes run from our various public centres, many people who came, were there simply as a result of our public advertising, and were therefore experiencing meditation, Buddhism and the FWBO for the first time.

To prepare themselves for the retreat, the team of eight Order members and five mitras spent a few days on retreat themselves, previous to the main event. They spent the time meditating, making plans for the coming retreat, and getting to know each other better - in most cases by telling their life stories to the team. Dhammarati maintained that this contact had an influential effect on the retreat itself.

This Summer retreat had all the ingredients that are usually found: meditation, sunshine, good



food, friendly people, Yoga, swimming, walks by the sea, as well as study, lectures, and communication exercises. All the team members agreed, however, that this retreat was different. Mixed beginners retreats often seem to generate a rather high, bubbly energy which is very positive, but does not always manage to sustain people for very long after the retreat. Perhaps the combination of the straightforward advertising, and the atmosphere created by the team were factors in influencing the ret-

reat as a whole.

People very new to meditation applied themselves very seriously to their practice, and courageously faced quite major emotional changes. Sometimes, as a result, the retreat seemed to have an emotionally turbulent atmosphere, as people discovered themselves more deeply and strove to integrate their experiences. Everyone worked very hard in the shrineroom, made serious friendships, and few were distracted by the town or nearby pub. The team were also surprised and delighted by the way in which

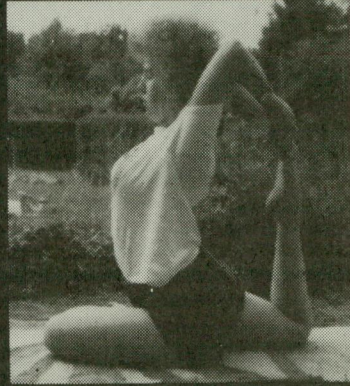
everyone responded with such enthusiasm and devotion to the Sevenfold Puja and the making of offerings, even though these practices were new to many.

The London Buddhist Centre has benefitted from the retreat, as we now have a new generation of serious and enthusiastic Friends and there is the possibility of a new community being formed by some men who met up on the retreat.

We hope that this year's Winter retreat will be even more of a success.

Dhammadinna

MER EATS



Four Winds

At the end of July, 'Four Winds' in Farnham, Surrey, was the setting for the Women's Summer Retreat. Situated in a forest clearing, the house and grounds were an ideal setting for a retreat from city life. With ten days ahead of us, 'time' soon became irrelevant, and our racing minds softened into the warm, hazy days, and quiet, green woodland.

Thirty six of us attended the retreat, which was led by Anoma.

We came from different countries, different lives, and for some it was their first experience of a women's retreat. We spent the time together searching for and exploring our highest ideals, trying to make contact with our own personal idea of Enlightenment.

The retreat was divided up into three phases, each with a different emphasis, which gave newer people a valuable introduction to the range of FWBO retreat activities. The first three days we spend meditating and getting to know each other in communi-

cation exercises. In the evenings we listened to three of Bhante's lectures about the *White Lotus Sutra*. Through myths and symbols, these introduced us to ourselves as spiritual individuals, the processes of growth and development, and to the nature of Enlightenment itself.

In the second phase of the retreat we developed this theme in study groups. We explored and discussed the arising of the Will to Enlightenment (the *Bodhicitta*). This is the point in the development of an individual where she realises the true nature of Enlightenment, and vows to practise the Dharma, not just for herself, but for the well-being of all sentient beings; she becomes the 'sublime and glorious figure of the Bodhisattva'. Though this may seem to be a rather lofty ideal, it stimulated some very practical discussion on what motivates us to grow towards this, and our attitudes towards others.

To complement the study, we had three talks from Order members of different aspects of Enlightenment. On the night of the full moon, Megha talked

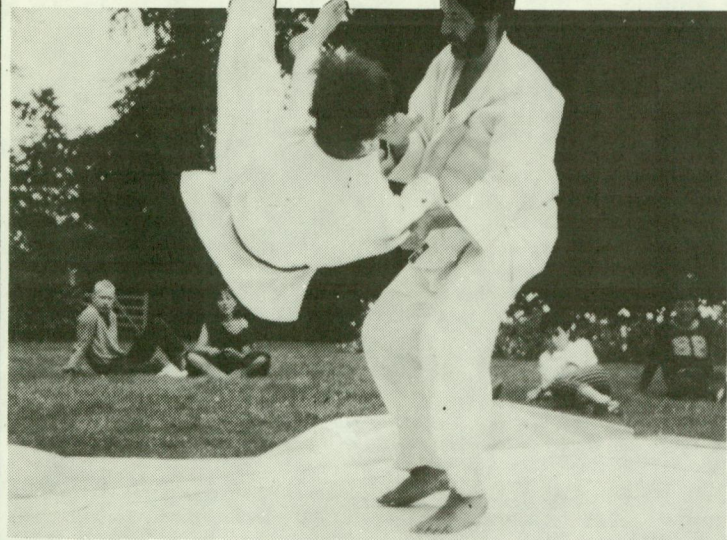
about 'Beauty', which we then celebrated in a special puja: a very colourful and magical evening. From then on, the pujas became the focus and highlight of the day's activity. Each one developed a theme through readings, mantras, and special offerings, and introduced us to archetypal symbols of the Enlightened mind.

The second talk was from Anoma, on 'Success', and the third, from Parami, took us well away from our usual restricted view of ourselves and into the realm of 'Freedom'. She informed us that of the 121 possible states of mind (listed by the *Abhidharma*) only three are negative, and these are where we perversely spend most of our time! The first step to being Free is to be happy!

The promise of no less than 63 blissfully positive states of mind gave us incentive to launch wholeheartedly into the last phase of three days of meditation. It gave a welcome space in which to assimilate all that had happened previously, to enjoy the positive and concentrated atmosphere that we had built up together, and to discover sources of inspiration and happiness within ourselves. In the final puja we each made an offering which expressed our own 'personal' idea of Enlightenment, the highest ideal that we hold for ourselves. Finally we rejoiced in our own and everyone else's merits; we recollected positive things which we had learnt about ourselves during the retreat, things that we wanted to take away with us and develop into the ideal we had discovered.

Body-Mind

MITRATA



Judo at Padmaloka

Vessantara

The tough but persuasive discipline of a regular martial arts practice is becoming a regular feature for increasing numbers within the FWBO, as more people turn to Karate, Judo, and T'ai Chi in its various forms.

Karate is certainly proving the most popular. The regular lunch-time class run under FWBO auspices in East London is now producing its first home-grown graded members - nearly a dozen regulars successfully completed gradings under the examining eye of Sensei Enoda, 8th Dan Shotokan.

Karate is often a feature of FWBO retreats now, either as part of a formal programme, when Dharmavira is available, or as part of a private work-out. The second Karate retreat is being held at Padmaloka from November 5th - 12th, and is followed immediately by a Karate weekend.

These events, which bring together Karate and meditation, are also beginning to attract Karate exponents new to the FWBO. *Combat*, one of the main British martial arts magazines, recently devoted two full pages to photos and text reporting the first Karate and meditation week at Padmaloka, run by Dharmavira earlier this year.

The Padmaloka events are, of course, for men only, but it is becoming increasingly clear that similar provision will be needed for women.

It has been an active time for Judo also. A Judo weekend held at Padmaloka during September brought together beginners and more experienced Judokas from the FWBO, and other Judokas experiencing a men's Buddhist community for the first time.

It was led by Sagaramati and Syd Hoare, 6th Dan, who is one of the leading Judo instructors in the country, and a past European silver medallist.

A tight programme of meditation talks and puja was balanced with an extremely demanding Judo practice, during which everyone was taken past their imagined limits. There is another Judo weekend at the end of October.

Another link between the FWBO and martial arts comes with the publication of a book earlier this year by Routledge and Kegan Paul entitled *Judo - The Gentle Way*. Written by Alan Fromm, and mitra Nicolas Soames, the book is designed to examine some of the principles that lie behind the formal Judo practice and, through such chapters as 'Art and Etiquette', and 'Home Practice', shows how Judo can be regarded as an art form rather than just as a sport. It includes a chapter on meditation written by Nagabodhi, who brings together theory and practice, and includes contributions of Yoga by Dharmapriya, with drawings by mitra Joan Graham.

T'ai Chi is also beginning to emerge within the Friends. Classes have started, organised by the LBC, and Sthirananda, who has had many years of experience in the art, has started to lead T'ai Chi weekends at Padmaloka.

Another kind of mind and body discipline - the Alexander Technique - is to be the central theme in a weekend (Dec 18-19) at the LBC, run by Bob Donovan. The weekend will provide an introduction to the principles of the technique, with especial regard to sitting posture for meditation.

Alexander Technique is concerned principally with the way we use, or mis-use, our bodies in everyday walking and sitting; part of its aim is to re-train our bodies to move in the natural, effortless way that toddlers manage - before they spend hours slumped over desks in schools, and before they translate too many emotional tensions into muscular blocks.

Nicolas Soames

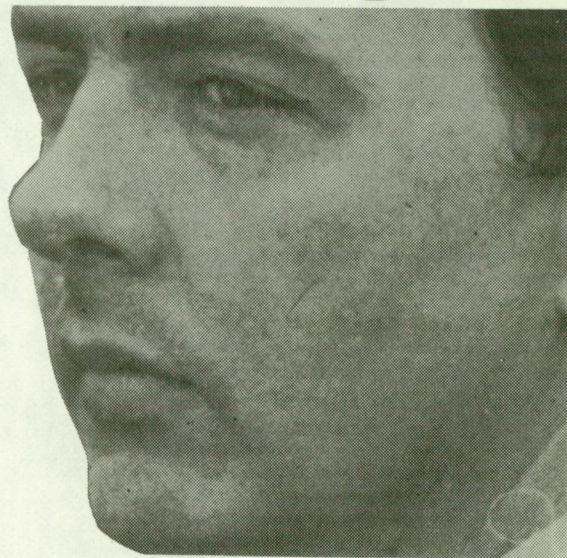
In the New Year there are to be some changes with regard to our regular bi-monthly publication *Mitrata*. An editorial team headed by the Ven. Sangharakshita and Vessantara are to take over the editorship of the magazine from Nagabodhi.

Their plan for the future of *Mitrata* is that it should once again be directed more specifically to the needs of mitras - those who are seriously considering ordination. This does not mean that the magazine will no longer be generally available, or that it will be inaccessible to the more general reader, so it will still be sold through

the public centres, and subscriptions from interested readers will be welcomed.

For a couple of years the journal will concern itself with a comprehensive study of the Noble Eightfold Path, drawing on the lectures that the Ven. Sangharakshita gave some years ago, and on the study of these lectures that is presently going on at the pre-ordination retreat in Tuscany. The result should be something very informative indeed, and something of a 'first', since there are as yet no published commentaries on this central teaching of Buddhism in the West.

Buddhism for Today



Vajradipa

Subhuti

Many Newsletter readers will know that Subhuti, who works with the Ven. Sangharakshita at 'Padmaloka', has written a book about the FWBO. Subhuti has been involved with the Movement since the very early days - first making contact through 'Sakura', the original Centre in Monmouth St, London.

Since his ordination he has been a prime-mover in the development of the Movement, working as Chairman of the Pundarika Centre, overseeing the creation and establishment of 'Sukhavati' and the London Buddhist Centre, and more recently acting as secretary to the Ven. Sangharakshita. He is a well-known figure throughout the Movement, and a regular contributor to the Newsletter.

His book is entitled *Buddhism*

for Today. It offers a thorough guide to the history, development, practices, and ideals of the FWBO. It makes ideal reading for anyone who wants to know anything - or almost everything about our Movement.

It is to be produced, in association with Element Books, early next year. It will cost £4.95. We are hoping that the production cost will be met by advanced sales - we need to sell 500 copies to meet them all.

If you would like to reserve a copy, either for yourself or for a friend who you think might be interested in the FWBO, please send a cheque as soon as possible to:-

Srimala
7, Lollards Road
Norwich
Norfolk

A stay in Malaysia

A stay of even five months in a country like Malaysia allows not sufficient time for one person to see all the different aspects of this complex, multi-cultural society. However, over this time I did meet a wide range of people within the Chinese Buddhist community, and was able to gain a clear picture of the Buddhist movement here. I went to Kuala Lumpur in May for two reasons. Firstly I would be living and working at the Damansara Buddhist Vihara, a small yet active centre established by a Malaysian Bhikkhu, the Ven. Piyasilo.

While I was at the Vihara, Piyasilo spent the five months in Britain with the Movement (see the last Newsletter). Besides being the base for his work in this country, the Vihara acts effectively as a contact point for the FWBO in this part of the world. My second reason for being there was to engage in a course of T'ai-chi instruction at a recognized school in Petaling Jaya, the satellite city of Kuala Lumpur in which the Vihara is also located. Although this latter activity demanded several hours of my time each day I was able to devote more time also to Dharmic activities. These proved to be personally stimulating and also fruitful in that for the first time a member of the Western Buddhist Order was having substantial contact with Buddhists in Malaysia. It is worth noting that previous contact by the Order had included a short visit by Achala in 1978 and by the Ven. Sangharakshita and myself for four days in March 1979; during that brief visit Bhante gave three talks, in Alor Star, Penang and Ipoh.

Between May and September I made three tours to various cities in West Malaysia and gave a total of 18 talks. Five of these were in Kuala Lumpur - Petaling Jaya where I was based, one each in Penang and Ipoh which are both cities to the North, and the rest on two separate tours to the South

- to Singapore and Johor state, and to Malacca and Muar. Possibly the most interesting and enjoyable of these were those in Singapore. Many people outside

South-east Asia consider Singapore to be simply a part of Malaysia, but this island city-state differs from its mainland neighbour in many details - economic, cultural, political and religious.

From the Buddhist standpoint one of the most interesting developments here in recent times is that the Singapore government has initiated a religious studies programme in the schools. This includes the requisite that every secondary student can choose to study one of the major world religions in a programme that offers Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Confucianism. Our principal contacts in Singapore are through the active Buddhist student societies in the three main tertiary-education institutions. A talk I gave that stands out in my mind was at the National University, 'The Complete Spiritual Life'. The young men and women were particularly attentive and a stimulating discussion followed.

There are similar student societies at the major campuses in Malaysia and our main contacts were with two in Kuala Lumpur, the University of Malaya over June and July and Tuanku Abdul Rahman College in August. The members of these and the other English-speaking groups all over the country are interested in learning more Dharma but there are difficulties both without and within the Buddhist movement. Generally, Buddhists in Malaysia experience restrictions in that the constitution of the nation is based on Islam. For example it is almost impossible for them to bring in Buddhist teachers from other countries to stay and do missionary work. However, by far the bigger hindrances come from within the Buddhist community itself, these being mainly sectarianism and a lack of full-time Dharma workers. In particular the young Buddhists, especially the students, suffer from this lack and are thirsty for easily understood teaching. This must

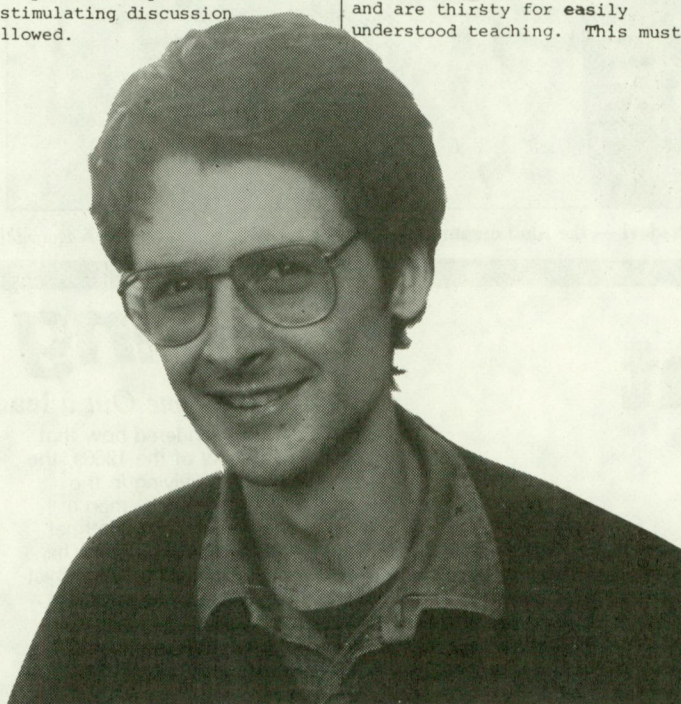
be a teaching and practice which is relevant to their life in a fast-growing, modernising Asian state.

On the last tour, besides including several talks in my schedule I had an opportunity to see more of the beautiful towns and some of the natural beauty of the peninsula. In early August I and two friends from Kuala Lumpur stayed for three nights at an old cave temple, 'Tong Wah Tung', near the village of Tajnong Rambutan just outside Ipoh. The temple was built as a Taoist shrine in the 1920s but it has recently been renovated and converted into a small retreat centre for a local Vipassana meditation group. There are many such caves in the area of Ipoh and in this tropical, well-populated country they provide near-ideal conditions for practice: quiet, cool and secluded from the noise and bustle of the towns. Similar conditions exist in the nearby Cameron Highlands, a county-sized area of tea plantations, market gardens and orchards in a highland area varying from 3,000 to 6,000 feet in altitude. After Ipoh we visited here for just one day and stayed a night at the large 'Triple-Gem-Ten-Thousand-Buddha' monastery at the highest town, Brinchang.

The final tour on the 11th to the 13th Sept. to the city of Malacca provided a glimpse into historical Malaysia, particularly in the Portuguese colonial past that is evident there. But the most interesting part of this trip was to meet the members of the Buddhist society at the 'Seck Kia Eenh' Temple there: the youth members responded enthusiastically to talks on 'A System of Meditation' and 'True Spiritual Friendship'.

On leaving the country and reflecting on the experiences and new friendships I had gained it occurred to me that these two limbs of the teaching - a balanced system of meditation, and true spiritual friendship (kalyana mitrata) - could provide a foundation on which the Dharma will flourish in Malaysia, and also a guideline for the contact of the FWBO with Malaysian Buddhists.

Priyananda



Priyananda leads a puja

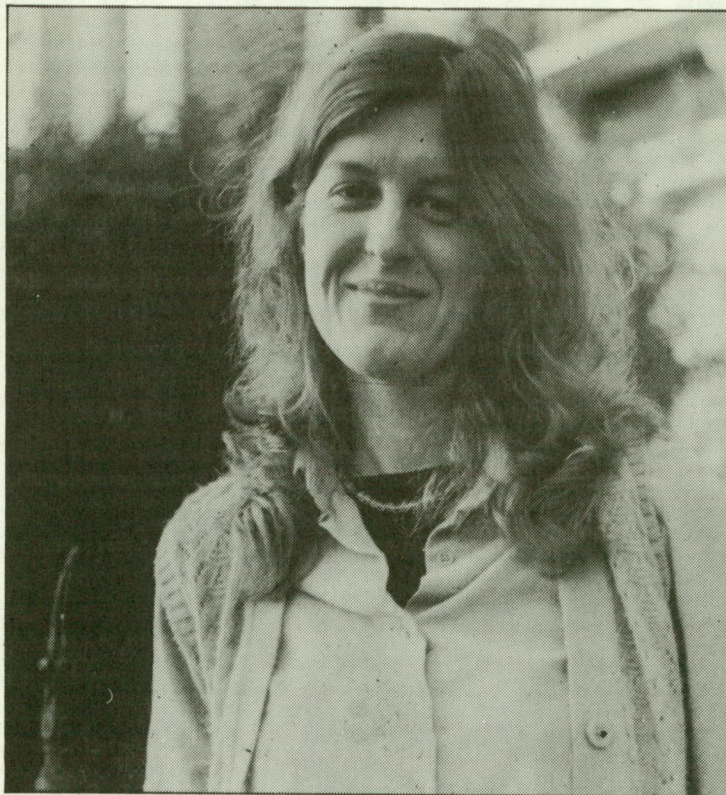


... with friends at the Vihara

Women's Retreat Centre

The Women's Retreat Centre Fund (WRCF) has now been launched under the auspices of FWBO Wanstead - a charitable organisation run by a number of female Order members. Originally established in 1977 at the founding of 'Amaravati', the largest womens' community in FWBO history, the charity's main concern in recent years has been the organising of retreats for women on a national and international scale. These retreats have all taken place in hired premises since we stopped having the use of a farmhouse in Norfolk at the end of 1979. For a while it did not seem too great a loss and I am sure that those of you who have been on any of our womens' retreats would say that they have been enjoyable, beneficial, and stimulating experiences.

However, it would be so much better if we had our own permanent rural retreat centre, where we could have as many retreats as we like, free from restrictions, and where women from all over the world could freely visit at any time, and participate in the life of a rural womens' community. Such a community and retreat centre will add a whole new dimension to our experience



Sanghadevi — the fund organiser

Nagabodhi

of the spiritual life and to the FWBO as a worldwide movement.

We want to raise £50,000 on top of our existing assets. Ideally we would like to be in a position to purchase a property which has facilities for large retreats and a fairly large community - by next Autumn. This is quite a challenge! The alternative is to purchase a property with the potential for expansion, and gradually enlarge it over a period of several years. Even to buy a property like this will involve raising at least £15,000 as quickly as we can. But we have decided to go 'all out' to raise the £50,000. The WRCF office has been established at 95 Bishops Way, London E2. Telephone: 01 - 980 4151. If you would like to know more about what is going on, or offer your services. If you want to tell us about a property that you think might be suitable, or, of course, *donate something*, please don't hesitate to contact myself or Mary Goody, who will be running the office with me.

A coming event for your diary is a Bazaar at the Friends Meeting House, Hampstead, on Saturday December 4th.

HELP PUT BUDDHIST WOMEN ON THE MAP!

Sanghadevi

A Retreat in Spain

In August Devaraja, Bernie Tisch and Ian Polke, two Brighton mitras, and Paco Sanchez, a Spanish Friend, visited the Nagarjuna Retreat Centre in Southern Spain.

The Centre is run by disciples of Lama Thubten Yeshe, who is also the inspiration behind the Manjusri Institute in Britain. It is situated high up in the Alpujarras region to the south of the city of Granada. Lama Yeshe's students, a Frenchman, two Spaniards and an Italian, are creating a facility for collective and solitary retreats that is of outstanding peace and beauty. The principal solitary retreat hut is built on an outcrop of rock above the community house, and from its sheltered terrace can be seen the foothills and valleys of the Sierra Nevada rolling down towards the sea. Behind the hut and above it, is *Atalaya*, a word of Moorish origin meaning 'watchtower', a rocky crag which was probably used for its commanding view of the region

by the Moors themselves.

Francois Camus, who showed Devaraja around the retreat centre, said that it is the ambition of those involved with the project to make it into a perfect situation for retreatants. Eventually there will be solitary retreat huts in secluded positions dotted around the whole area, where people will be able to meditate for several years at a time. The community is aiming to support these long term retreatants, but in the meantime the present facilities may be used by any experienced meditator who has a letter of recommendation from his or her teacher. The charge, which is minimal, includes meals delivered to one's door each day!

For further information contact :-

Francois CAMUS
(El Centro Nagarjuna de Retiro)

BUBION
(Granada)
Spain.

Getting Known

From Time Out a leading London weekly.

If you've ever wondered how that economic symbol of the 1960s, the co-operative is surviving in the rough and tough 1980s, then a stroll down Globe Road, Bethnal Green, will provide the light. The Pure Land Co-operative, a Buddhist-based group, has two shops and a restaurant almost next door to each other, each distinctive and fashionable enough to make sound commercial sense - in other words, not an incense stick in sight. **Jambala** is the gift shop, a cornucopia of colour and small attractive items like rainbow-striped hair slides and Japanese rice prints. Second-hand books lie next to pottery and records, and clothes are sold on an agency basis (shop sells on behalf of their customers for a small commission). One of Jambala's nicest features is its non-ethnic range of craft items - Polly Pollard's painted canisters are witty and sophisticated, illustrated by pictures of camp French sailors and pretty boys pouting under quiffs (£3.95 and £6.00). Another unusual idea is the selection of hand-tooled leather mirrors made in Wales; take your pick from vivid tropical sunsets or demure romantic scenes - £8.50 large, £2.95 small.

A vegetarian restaurant for those

who loathe vegetarians is **The Cherry Orchard**, across the street all Art Deco lamps, trendy pastel colours, and a hefty home-cooked menu which changes daily. The cottage cheese and spinach quiche is delicious; ditto the coconut and carrot salad. Expect to pay around £2.50 for lunch, and overhear your neighbours discussing 'Celtic avant-garde'. **Friends Food**, down the road, looks like an old-fashioned chemist's, its herbs, spices and teas ranged in huge glass jars which march across the shelves. In addition to the usual stock of health food merchandise, there is a small stock of homeopathic medicines, plus the opportunity to purchase a packet of *Vege-Burgers*, chili-style, for only 65p.


Jambala 258 Globe Road, E2 (981 7219). Open 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, until 7pm Tue, Fri, until 12noon Thur.

The Cherry Orchard 241 Globe Road, E2 (980 6678). Open 10am-3.30pm Mon-Sat, until 7pm Tue, 2.30pm Thur, 4.30pm Sat.

Friends Foods 51 Roman Road, E2 (980 1843). Open 11am-6pm Mon, 10am-6pm Tue & Wed, closed Thur, 10am-7pm Fri, 9.30am-6pm Sat.

All within a four-minute walk of Bethnal Green tube.

FACETS

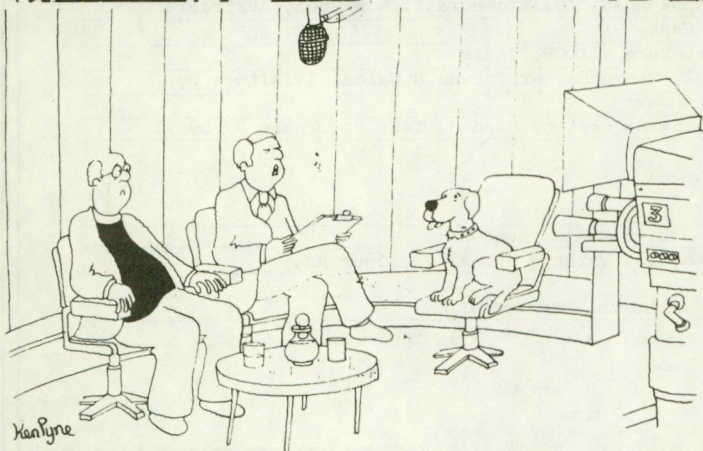


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A vacancy exists in this Right Livelihood Business for a person with Steadiness, Intelligence and Commitment to join the existing team. The business is an integral part of the FWBO Centre, communities, co-op network of Glasgow.

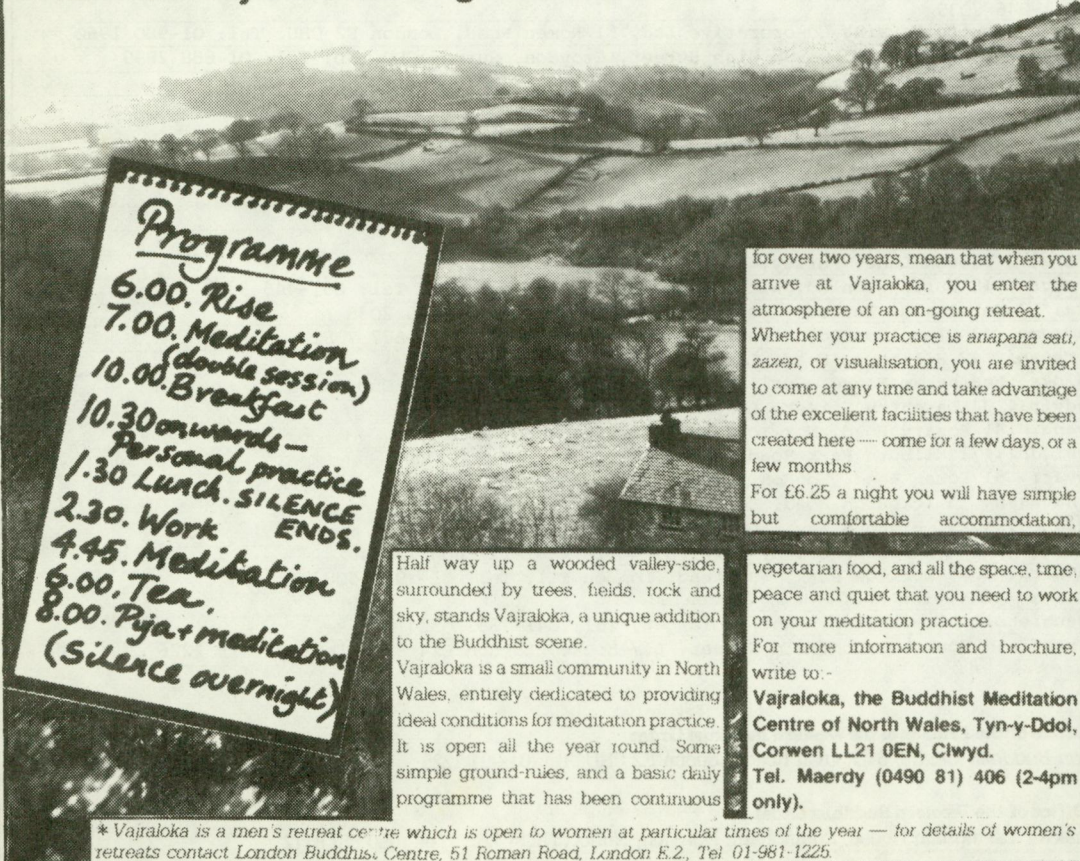
Expenses will be paid for suitable applicants to visit Glasgow For further details ring Susiddhi at INK.

041-221 6193



"Here to discuss reincarnation in the studio, we have on my right the Reverend Norman Richards, and on my left, Attila the Hun."

**if you were there today —
what would you be doing now?**



Programme

- 6.00. Rise
- 7.00. Meditation (double session)
- 10.00. Breakfast
- 10.30 onwards — Personal practice
- 1.30 Lunch. SILENCE ENDS.
- 2.30. Work
- 4.45. Meditation
- 6.00. Tea.
- 8.00. Pja + meditation (Silence overnight)

Half way up a wooded valley-side, surrounded by trees, fields, rock and sky, stands Vajraloka, a unique addition to the Buddhist scene. Vajraloka is a small community in North Wales, entirely dedicated to providing ideal conditions for meditation practice. It is open all the year round. Some simple ground-rules, and a basic daily programme that has been continuous

for over two years, mean that when you arrive at Vajraloka, you enter the atmosphere of an on-going retreat. Whether your practice is *anapana sati*, *zazen*, or visualisation, you are invited to come at any time and take advantage of the excellent facilities that have been created here — come for a few days, or a few months. For £6.25 a night you will have simple but comfortable accommodation,

vegetarian food, and all the space, time, peace and quiet that you need to work on your meditation practice. For more information and brochure, write to: **Vajraloka, the Buddhist Meditation Centre of North Wales, Tyn-y-Ddol, Corwen LL21 0EN, Clwyd. Tel. Maerdy (0490 81) 406 (2-4pm only).**

* Vajraloka is a men's retreat centre which is open to women at particular times of the year — for details of women's retreats contact London Buddhist Centre, 51 Roman Road, London E2, Tel 01-981-1225.

15 DRAWINGS



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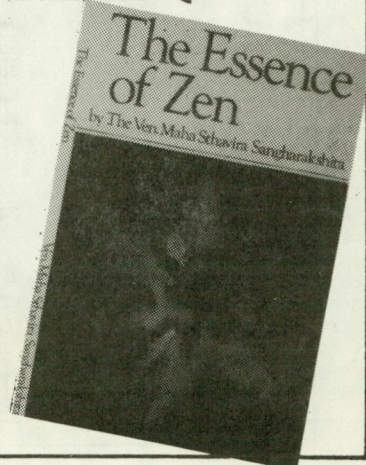
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