

Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

The

NEWSLETTER

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Bowing Before the Buddha



What do Buddhists worship — and why?

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.

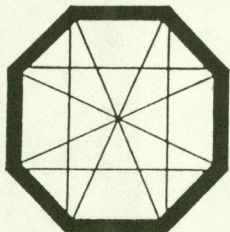
In the Co-operatives, groups of Order members, Mitras, and Friends (those who are in contact with the Movement and participate in any of its activities) work

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, and 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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Editorial

"The day ended with a special festive puja"

It is almost embarrassing to wonder how many times that phrase, or one very like it, has appeared in the 'Facets' columns of the *Newsletter*. But it does at least indicate that devotional practices like the Sevenfold Puja, chanting, making offerings, and so on, are universally performed in the FWBO, and in fact constitute an essential aspect of our approach to the Dharma.

This confuses and even disturbs some people. With our communities, our businesses, building sites, even our encouragement of vegetarianism, we would seem to be quite down to earth, perhaps exceptionally alive to the practical, realistic, day-to-day world. Yet we also go in for all these rituals and devotional practices — in which many probably suspect an underlying flirtation with superstition, idol-worship, and mumbo-jumbo. Is there no contradiction here?

There is no contradiction. As I hope the articles in this *Newsletter* will reveal, Buddhist devotional practice has little in common with the devotional practices of other religions. But it does have a unique and crucial place in the spiritual life of a practising Buddhist.

Buddhist devotional practices *can* be introduced at classes and on retreats simply as extra 'techniques' or 'experiences', just as the meditations and communication exercises can be. But they are in fact the essential transforming practices that take us beyond 'technique' and short-lived experience altogether.

The creation of a healthy, balanced life-style — the ideal context for meditation practice, and meditation itself, have a great deal to offer; they have their own intrinsic value. But approached without a devotional attitude they may remain simply as positive elements in a healthy positive life. There is nothing wrong with that; it is just that they could offer so much more. They could be the key elements of a *spiritual* path, a *spiritual* life: a life dedicated to the fulfilment of our highest ideals.

Devotional practice, the cultivation of a heartfelt, emotional involvement in those ideals, in a goal that transcends humanity itself, has the power to draw everything that we do into a unified current of purpose. It is devotion to the Three Jewels that makes us Buddhists, rather than people making use of a few Buddhist techniques.

Buddhahood may be infinitely far away; the Bodhisattvas may seem to be very far away, but we can form a meaningful, practical link with them. And that link will make it possible for us to change every aspect of our lives.

Nagabodhi

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Buddhist Devotion

By Manjuvajra



Most people who come to a centre of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order come to learn meditation or to hear a talk about Buddhism.

They usually have little interest in the 'religious' aspect — by which they mean acts of devotion and worship. But sooner or later they will probably see someone enter the shrine room, stand with folded hands before the image, and chant a few strange words before bowing and finally sitting on their cushion. For many people this is their first contact with Buddhist devotion and it may soon be followed by observations of Friends offering lighted incense to the image, by participation in a Puja (which literally means an act of worship) and even by the feelings of respect that many Friends feel towards the Buddha, the Bodhisattvas, as well as teachers and writers both living and dead.

For many people these signs of devotion and worship are disturbing. They wonder why Buddhists worship when it is quite clear that there is no God for them to worship. Is it that the

Buddha is, after all, just another name for God? When the seed of Enlightenment lies within why worship something outside? What is there to worship? It is these questions and others like them that I hope to answer in this short article.

Let us start from action. Humans act from one of three motivations. We act either because we want to, or because we are afraid not to, or from will-power. The energy that a person puts into his job for example, will be related to his desire for success, money and status, or to a fear of poverty, or failure in the eyes of his peers, or to the strength of his will.

When our actions are determined by will-power we are usually acting under the control of one part of ourselves which is dominating the rest. The will is like a tyrant who stifles any opposition, and just as a tyrant is eventually toppled by a rebellion of the oppressed people in his country, wilful action will eventually be undermined by a more or less devastating rebellion by the unacknowledged parts of oneself. Operating from will-power can never be more than a temporary

means of reorganising our activity. Action motivated by fear is merely reactive, and once the source of threat is removed such action will cease. It is only action motivated by desire that is truly creative in the sense that it comes wholly from the individual concerned and will continue until its objective has been achieved.

Spiritual practices, like meditation, study, the observance of ethical principles, the development of spiritual friendship and so on, are actions. It is possible, for example, to meditate by exercising one's willpower, and at times it may even be necessary to do so, but as a long-term motivation it will prove unsatisfactory if not damaging or counterproductive. Spiritual practices may be engaged in from fear of suffering either in this world or in some hell of the future, or even from fear of criticism by one's peer group or a spiritual authority figure. Once again, there may be a place for this for some people some of the time, but it cannot remain a motivation for long because spiritual progress involves the defeat of fear itself, and a transformation of action from the

reactive to the creative mode. We are left with desire. To maintain our spiritual practice in a steady manner over a long period of time we need to work from desire. We must use desire to achieve the desireless state. Enlightenment is desireless because the ultimate desire has been fulfilled, and not as some commentators suggest because all desire has been crushed.

When we act from a desire, coupled with confidence that the desired object can be achieved, we experience concentration, clarity and vigour. Such an experience connects with devotion. Devotion is a purposeful, wholehearted involvement with a particular objective. The objects of our devotion may of course vary, we could speak of a 'hierarchy' of desirable objectives — each higher objective being able to provide a more deeply satisfying experience of a more lasting nature. There are the basic animal desires for food, warmth, sex, sleep and so on. There are human desires for fame, wealth and sensuous pleasure in its manifold forms, from the relish of ice-cream sundaes to the enjoyment

of the works of Bach and Michaelangelo. There are selfless desires for the happiness of others, of one's own family, one's countrymen, of humanity or of all beings. There is the desire for communion with God, for mystical insight, and for the refined pleasures of higher levels of consciousness. And, standing at the pinnacle of all, there is the desire for Truth, the desire for the Ultimate, the desire for Enlightenment.

We are all a mass of desires, we have desires on all these different levels, but in order to develop spiritually we need to develop our desire for the highest. The desire for Enlightenment is expressed and developed through our worship of the Buddha.

The word worship comes from an Old English word pertaining to 'worthiness' or 'respect'. That object which we hold to be the most valuable, the most worthy of our respect is the one which we worship. The Buddha acts as a symbol which has the power to generate in us some feeling of what Enlightenment actually is. In as much as we are affected in this way we will experience feelings of devotion: Our desire for what the Buddha figure represents is the positive motivation for spiritual practice.

The energy with which we pursue our spiritual practice will depend on the devotion that we feel for Enlightenment, for Buddhahood. Our devotion to the Buddha will express itself implicitly in the integrity of our meditation, ethical observances and other spiritual practices, and explicitly in acts of worship to the Buddha, the representative and symbol of our Goal.

It should now be clear that worship is a natural response. It is not something that can be demanded of us; but it is something that can be developed. Initially one may have little appreciation of the Buddha but by contemplating His qualities, by studying his life as described in the *suttas* of the Pali Canon, by experiencing His teaching or even by just seeing a beautiful Buddha image, an appreciation can develop. As a result of this appreciation devotion should come naturally because it is our emotional response

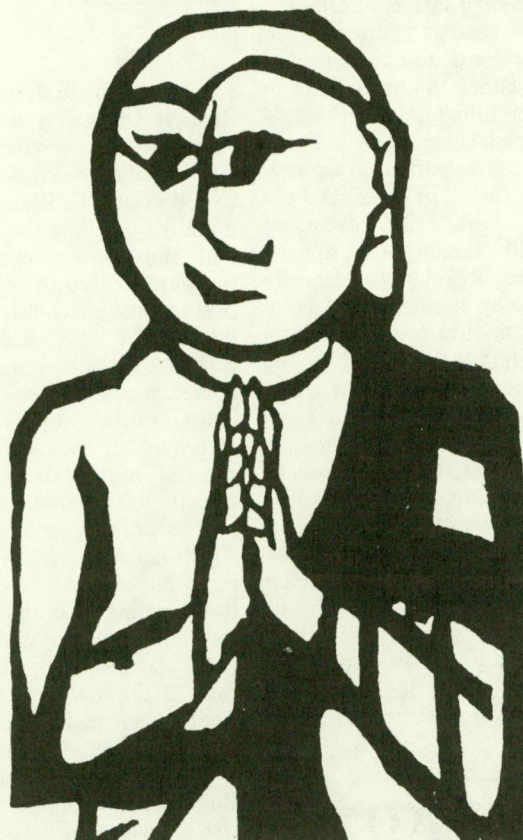
to something of value.

People may often develop an intellectual appreciation of the Buddha's achievement and teaching but without feeling able to worship. Why should this be so?

Worship is not a popular emotion for two reasons. Firstly it is associated with a deferential and often mechanical attitude to a divine father figure, in whom most people who turn to Buddhism no longer believe. Secondly, since we live in a culture that is strongly influenced by humanitarian and egalitarian ideas we

of higher levels of being comes as a relief, and one feels as if doors have been opened to a far greater breadth of possibility than ever before. Similarly, all fears of a grovelling submission are cast aside.

We have seen that worship is a natural emotional response to something that we see as worthy of our devotion and respect, to something that is higher. However, it is often difficult to appreciate the Buddha because He stands, so to speak, so high as to be almost out of the range of our sight altogether. We may there-



encounter strong resistance to allowing ourselves to acknowledge the existence of higher levels of being.

In short we distrust feelings of devotion and worship, so a little effort might be needed to 'allow' them to rise to the surface of our experience. One such effort is the act of bowing to a Buddha figure on a shrine. At first one may feel rather uncomfortable doing this, but eventually, if an appreciation of the Buddha is actually there, the bow will be accompanied by real feelings of respect and devotion. The emotional recognition

fore find ourselves setting our spiritual sights on a more accessible spiritual objective, one which we find easier to appreciate and towards which we can therefore feel a more tangible attraction.

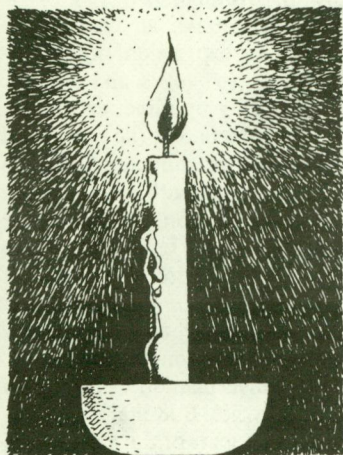
Enlightenment is inconceivable and ungraspable but we can look at it from just one particular viewpoint and in this way start to gain some access. The viewpoints are manifold and the preferred ones will be a matter of personal temperament, so I would just like to look at the main categories.

Enlightenment can be seen

through an appreciation of, firstly the Enlightened Being, secondly through an understanding of the expressions of Enlightenment, in words and actions, and thirdly by direct experience of the effects that the practice of Buddhist teaching can have on living people with whom we are in physical contact. These three are the 'Three Jewels' which are the three supreme objects of devotion in the Buddhist tradition. So let us consider a few facets of each one.

An investigation of the life of the historical Buddha, as described in the texts of the Pali Canon, will provide a good insight into what He really was. At times the texts are a bit hard to read. The style is often rather formal but with some perseverance and imagination it is easy to get a good feel of the Buddha. The *suttas* describe His contact with a large number of different people in different situations, and in all of these encounters we can see His Wisdom and Compassion expressed very directly. We all know that Enlightenment comprises both Wisdom and Compassion but here, in these texts, we see those 'characteristics' in action and we can respond emotionally to them. It is often the very simple human acts of kindness to which we respond most easily. The occasion on which the Buddha relieved the anguish of a mother, over the death of her child, by showing her (not just by telling her) that all beings die and all beings share in the experience of grief at the loss of loved ones, leaves us with a sense of wonder at His skill in means, of His sensitivity and of the Compassion that permeated all His activity. On another occasion the troubled king Ajatasatru, unable to sleep at night, visited the Buddha who was meditating in the jungle and this hardened king was so delighted by the peace he felt in the presence of the Buddha that he prayed that his son might also experience it. Reading of the Buddha's final passing away too, we can feel emotions of deep respect, love, and devotion arising within us.

It may be easier to appreciate a specific quality of the Enlightened Mind than to try to relate to the Buddha Himself who em-



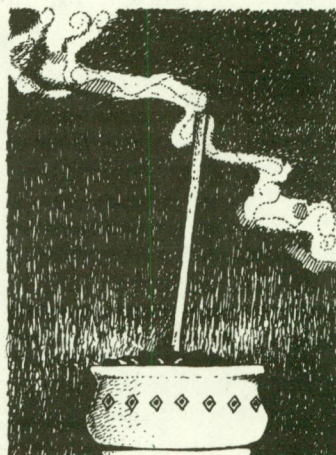
bodies all the qualities. Contemplation of Avalokitesvara, for example, the Bodhisattva who represents the Compassionate aspect of Enlightenment, will enable us to experience more fully the nature of that Compassion. Reading hymns of praise to Avalokitesvara or chanting his mantra, *Om mani padme hum*, will introduce us to his qualities, and will recreate in us the emotions that were the original inspiration for the hymn or the content, as it were, of the Mantra. Contemplation of the form of Avalokitesvara as represented in paintings, or through the practice of a visualisation meditation practice can in the same way reveal 'his' qualities and generate feelings of devotion.

It may be easier for some people to experience and respond emotionally to the *Wisdom* of the Buddha, either through Manjushri, representing the sharp edge of Wisdom that cuts straight to the truth, or through the Wisdom of the Ultimate Truth as represented by Prajnaparamita. For yet others it is the Magical Transforming Power of the Enlightened Mind, represented by Padmasambhava, that inspires devotion. These and many other symbolic forms of the Enlightened Mind (Yidams) become objects of devotion and worship, and many Buddhists have shrines to their chosen Yidam in their rooms.

Events in the lives of other Great and Enlightened teachers can also stimulate feelings of devotion. It is difficult to ima-

gine anyone who would not be moved by reading about the life of Milarepa, for example. Simply contemplating the lives of those Great Beings can put us in touch with true devotion. If we are fortunate enough to have a guru: that is, some living person with whom we have direct contact, and in whom we can appreciate a more highly developed state of consciousness and being, then merely being in his or her presence will be enough to stimulate our devotion. When devotion moves us to action, various acts of worship can be performed. Offerings can be made to the Buddha on a shrine: offerings of flowers, candles or incense. Or we may decide to build a private shrine either to the Buddha or another Enlightened or highly developed being. Such a shrine may be a small affair, in a corner of our room, or it could be a large, beautifully decorated building standing in exquisite parkland. Regular attendance to a shrine by cleaning it and keeping it attractive will help to keep that feeling of devotion alive, and that emotion will fire our spiritual practice.

The study of the Dharma can also be a means of developing devotion. We usually think of study as an exercise for the rational faculty, but if we develop clarity and Insight through our study it too can give rise to devotion. Study not only provides information on Buddhism, nor even just an intellectual under-



standing of the Buddha's view of Reality. Ultimately it gives Insight into that view, and in this way we get to see the Buddha and to appreciate His Enlightenment directly. Feelings of devotion will thus spontaneously arise through our study of the philosophy and the psychology of Buddhism. The later Sanskrit *sutras* provide, perhaps, a more direct appreciation of the Buddha. These poetic, mythical books communicate not only to the rational mind but also speak directly to the emotions.

It is possible to perceive the Truth not only with the rational mind but also with the heart. If these feelings are absent Truth soon descends to cold dogmatism; and also it should be said that if the rational is absent, Truth can easily descend to superstition or absurdity.

The realisation of any of the Buddha's Teachings will give rise to feelings of devotion as we glimpse the depth of Insight in the mind that gave forth those teachings, and our worship before the image of the Buddha is an expression of those feelings.

Appreciation of the third of the Three Jewels, the Sangha or spiritual community, also gives rise to worship. When we look around and see the effect that the Buddha's teaching and example is having on those people with whom we are in contact, we can again see a reflection of the Enlightened Mind. Though our spiritual friends may not be Buddhas, we may well see a greater degree of receptivity, or

more real concern for the well-being of others, more energy, less selfishness, greater clarity, more integrity, more freedom of action, or more contentment as time goes by. In perceiving these qualities in our spiritual friends we can see the Dharma at work and its value becomes apparent.

Devotion arises when we recognise the value of the Three Jewels, and that feeling of devotion can be expressed in acts of worship. But these acts are not only expressions; they are also practices for the development of devotion. We cannot fully appreciate the Three Jewels until we *feel* that appreciation in our hearts, and since sometimes those feelings do not flow readily, for reasons touched on earlier, we have to work to open the channels of devotion. In performing some act or ritual of worship, or in reciting or chanting verses of worship we are trying to develop within ourselves the corresponding emotions of devotion and giving physical and verbal expression to them once they have arisen.

Many people would like their Buddhism without all the 'worship' but I hope that I have made it clear that devotion and the corresponding acts of worship are the emotional equivalent of understanding. It is impossible to understand the nature of the Enlightened Mind, to any degree, in any real way, without also feeling the *value* of that Mind, without developing a desire for it, and without wanting to worship the Three Jewels.



Why Shrines?

By Nagabodhi

In the Digha Nikaya of the Pali Canon we read of a king who once created a splendid palace, surrounded by beautiful lakes and gardens. Everywhere was beauty, everywhere were to be seen gold, silver, crystal, beryl, agate, coral and other precious things. Having created this enchanted realm the king traverses its gilded pathways, enters the palace, climbing fantastic stairways and paces its dazzling corridors until he reaches the very heart of it all: a room set aside for meditation. There, standing at the doorway, he 'cries out with intense emotion: "Stay here, O thoughts of lust! Stay here, O thoughts of ill-will! Stay here, O thoughts of hatred!" ' Then, entering the chamber and sitting himself on a couch of gold, he enters a state of deep, lucid meditation.

Of course the point of the story is clear. Meditation practice will flourish in the right context. As we saw in issue 57 of the *Newsletter*, we must create a general context for our practice: an entire life that is a *mandala*, an enchanted realm that has as its centre our commitment to development, to Enlightenment. But like the king — if without his splendid means — we will only gain if we can also create the best immediate physical conditions for meditation: a physical environment that symbolically reflects the harmony and vision that we are seeking. This is why we try to make our FWBO centres beautiful. This is why we also have a special room that is always set aside for meditation practice: a shrine room.

It is a room that is, above all, quiet. Ideally it is a haven of silence, a place where you can

hear yourself think, and where the dropping away of thought gives birth to peace. It will be free of any clutter, any furniture except for some cushions and mats, and it will be simply but attractively painted in relaxing colours.

As we enter the room we remove our shoes. This is not a measure to protect the carpet (if there is one), nor is it a gesture of humility directed at a deity. Rather, it is an attempt to leave behind symbolically the grosser preoccupations and distractions of our everyday lives, along with the mud and dust of our shoes. Like the king in the story we are hoping to leave the hindrances behind us, at the door. Thus we enter the room and take our place in the silence, facing the shrine. For there before us, at one end of the room, is a vision of symmetry, colour and beauty: a tiered structure surrounded and set with candles and flowers, perhaps draped with rich cloths and silks. Incense burns in bowls at its base, and a row of seven small bowls filled with water runs along a lower tier. At the top, crowning the entire structure, at the focal point of the room, is a statue, an image: a *rupa* (form) of the Buddha.

The quiet room, the delicate colours, the clear space: all these usually come as a pleasant surprise to the visitor. But the 'shrine' may provide a bit of a shock. Those who are attracted to Buddhism because it is a non-theistic religion, who feel they have had enough of altars, candles and incense, may feel that they have been duped. They may suspect that here, after all, is just the same old mumbo-jumbo, the same old call to idol-worship and self-abasement.

But a Buddhist shrine is nothing of the sort. The Buddha was/is not a god, not a creator, nor a judge. He was a man, a human being who exerted himself to realise the ultimate potential latent in all human beings: the potential that we are seeking gradually to realise as we meditate, as we tread the path and make any effort to understand and transform ourselves.

The image of the Buddha that crowns our shrine is both statue and symbol. As a 'statue' of the historical Buddha it serves to remind us that Enlightenment has been attained; it is attainable. Wisdom and Compassion, the Transcendental, can be made manifest in a human life. So we too can gain Enlightenment. We can attain total freedom. 'Seeing' the Buddha in this way may well bring forth in us feelings of respect and reverence, as well as gratitude and even wonder. But we will feel no 'awe', in the sense of fear or self-belittlement. Rather we will feel inspired to make greater efforts in our own practice.

The symbolic value of the Buddha *rupa* arises in natural harmony with the more representational. The goal of all our efforts is Enlightenment. In everyday life we may be pre-occupied with trying to be a little more understanding, a bit less self-centred in our relationships and friendships, a bit more heroic at work, and so on. We may forget, in all the details, the wider context in which our efforts and experiments take place. But as we contemplate the Buddha image we are concretely reminded of that context, of our highest vision and aspiration, something which we may have had little more than a vague

glimpse of, and yet which gives validity to all the struggles of everyday life.

The hindrance of 'doubt', the crippling inability to commit ourselves wholeheartedly to our meditation practice, is a 'master hindrance'. It keeps a door open to all the others. This hindrance has its power over us because our contact with the ideal towards which we are striving is so tentative. So it is important to direct our hearts and minds towards the ideal, before starting any session of practice. Enlightenment is a human ideal: it is something intrinsic to human life, human potential. It needn't be vague and fleeting. A well-made, sensitively sculpted or painted Buddha image will re-connect us with the goal, allow us to identify with it, at least in our imagination.

The flowers, the candles, and the incense can be taken simply as aesthetic ornamentation, beautifying and enriching our perception of the ideal. Or they can be regarded as offerings to the Buddha, expressions of our gratitude and delight that there is such a purpose to existence, that there is something genuinely worthy of reverence.

But they also have a symbolism of their own. The flowers, which should be fresh-cut rather than potted, are beautiful. They are colourful, fragrant, at their peak of maturity. To some extent they can therefore be regarded as symbols of spiritual unfoldment. The Lotus flower, that has its roots in the mud, which grows upwards through water to unfold finally in sunlight, is the symbol *par excellence* of this process in the Buddhist tradition.

There is, however, another more poignant aspect to the flower symbolism. The flowers

'that today are fresh and sweetly blooming', in the words of our 'basic puja', are tomorrow 'faded and fallen'. The flowers are symbols of impermanence: beauty that must wither. All things will perish; everything conditioned must have its day and pass away. We ourselves are no exception; our time is brief and limited. Bearing this in mind we feel motivated to maximise all our efforts. But having *Insight* into this moves us significantly closer towards the Unconditioned.

The candles provide light, and light is a central symbol in Buddhism. Buddhahood, after all, means 'Enlightenment', an Awakening to the light of Truth. With the arising of Wisdom we will see things as they really are: unobscured, unclouded, as if the sun has arisen to banish the confusion and ambiguity of night.

Just as the Buddha has awoken and has cast the light of His Wisdom over conditioned existence, allowing us to discern at least a path through the gloom of our confusion, so too can we awake and watch the shadows melt away. In time we too can become lamps for the world.

Although the lights in the

shrine room may be dimmed during a period of meditation, they will be bright for the puja. In Buddhism there are no equations based on the idea that spirituality increases in direct proportion to the physical gloom of one's surroundings.

Incense fills the room with its all-pervading scent, and evokes an atmosphere unique to the shrine room. Our sense of smell plays an important rôle in our awareness of place and mood. When, for example, we visit an old school or place of work, it is often the sensing of a particular smell, unique to that place, that suddenly takes us 'back', that puts us in touch with the feelings we experienced when we were there before.

So the shrine room has its own unique smell, the smell of incense. The effect can be such that when we meditate at home, perhaps in a hurriedly cleared corner of a cluttered room, or before our own shrine, the smell from a stick of incense connects us with those ideal conditions that exist at the Centre or on retreat, and may even connect us with the best and clearest moments we have experienced there.

However, the incense has its

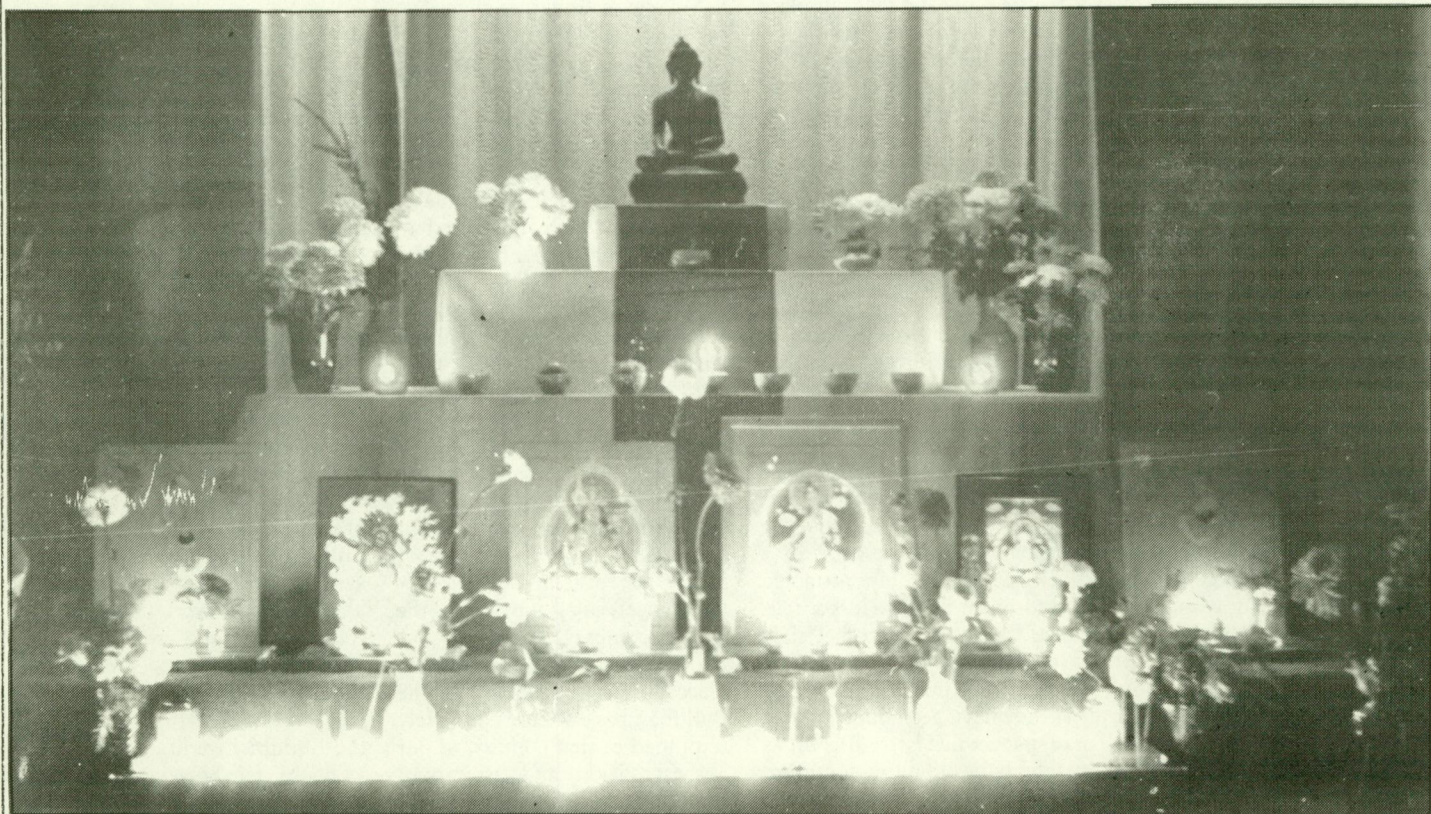
symbolic value as well. The scent from a single stick of incense can fill a large room; it can penetrate every corner, alcove and cranny. In a similar way, the influence of someone who is living a genuinely positive and skilful life can reach far and wide. We may not always be aware of the effect we are having on the people or situations that we impinge on. But if we are making an effort to be considerate, friendly, clear and energetic, then the probability is that we are making quite an impact.

Sometimes we may find out months or years later that we have really helped someone, or contributed to a situation, when we ourselves were just muddling along, just doing our best, unaware of having any special effect. We may never even find out about some of these effects. But, nevertheless, like the stick of incense, we are in our own way spreading a benign influence in the world.

The seven bowls, or 'puja bowls', symbolise the seven things traditionally offered to a welcome guest arriving at an Indian home. There is water to *drink* and to *wash* with, as well as *scented water* for refreshment.

Incense will be lit, *flowers* given, and *food* offered. A guest is always expected to stay for as long as possible — at least into the night when *light* will be required. Sometimes the bowls on the shrine will contain the actual offerings, but normally they will simply be filled to the very brim with clear water. Occasionally one might see a conch-shell on the shrine, next to the bowls. This represents an eighth offering — music.

The guest to whom the offerings are made is the Buddha. In a Christian Church we enter the 'house of God', ourselves the guests. But in a Buddhist shrine room it is the Buddha who is to come as our guest. But how and when will He come? That is up to us. We have created the context, the ideal conditions. Now we have to make the effort: we have to practice. In time we will bring forth the Buddha — our own Buddha nature — into the world.



Of all the expressions of the Ideal of Enlightenment which have emerged in the course of the development of Buddhism — indeed, of all the spiritual ideals to emerge in the course of the history of humanity — it could be argued that the most sublime and beautiful is the ideal of the Bodhisattva. The Bodhisattva is the great spiritual hero, whose delight is the totally selfless task of leading all beings whatever from their state of darkness, ignorance and suffering, to the realisation of Enlightenment and Bodhisattvahood. This tremendous ideal was the focus of the entire growth of the Mahayana in Buddhism, and around it there developed the many sutras, expositions, schools, and practices which constitute the 'Great Way'.

The career of the Bodhisattva, as depicted in the Mahayana sutras, is an almost stupendously exalted affair: he spends countless aeons merely developing the selflessness and altruism necessary for the great task that he has undertaken, and yet even this pales into insignificance compared with the ceaseless efforts of the Bodhisattva, once Enlightened, on behalf of others.

But despite the exalted nature of this ideal, despite its seeming impossibility of realisation by ordinary human standards, the Mahayana has always insisted that it is attainable, and, furthermore, that its realisation should be the objective of every seriously practising Buddhist. This insistence has obvious implications for us, then. If we regard ourselves as seriously practising Buddhists: it is not enough merely to admire, wonder at, or even to feel uplifted by the Bodhisattva Ideal — we have actually got to *do* something about it.

Perhaps it is at the point when we reach this conclusion for ourselves that we begin to feel just a little unequal to the task: how on earth can we even *begin* to move in the direction of the total and unreserved transformation that the Bodhisattva Ideal implies? The prospect, when seen with a little objectivity, seems quite frightening: most of us find

The Sevenfold Puja

By Tejananda

difficulty enough in doing things which we know are going to benefit *ourselves*, such as keeping up a good regular meditation practice, let alone working ceaselessly and unreservedly for the welfare of all sentient beings! And yet, if we take the Bodhisattva Ideal seriously, we must somehow find an answer to the question of how on earth to start realising it.

Fortunately for us, this problem is not exclusive to modern, Western man. Our predecessors in India 2000 years ago clearly found it just as daunting a prospect as we do. So, applying themselves to the matter, they gradually developed approaches which were effective — approaches which could lead a person from complete immersion in 'the world' and 'self', to the first sparks of Insight and altruism with which the Bodhisattva career, in the true sense, begins. These approaches were ultimately brought together and systematised, becoming one of the most important, as well as one of the most beautiful, of all Buddhist practices: *anuttara-puja*, 'supreme worship', or, as we know it in the FWBO, the sevenfold puja.

The sevenfold puja as we practise it is derived from one of the most profound and complete expositions of the Bodhisattva Ideal to have come down to us: 'Entering the Way of the Bodhi-

sattva' (*Bodhicaryavatara*), written by the poet and Bodhisattva, Shantideva, in the 8th century C.E. The basic form of the puja had, however, been established centuries earlier, and nearly all of the practices which it involves go back, in one way or another, to the very earliest days of Buddhism, even to the lifetime of the Buddha Himself.

Each of the practices which make up the sevenfold puja is concerned with the evocation and development of a particular 'spiritual emotion' — that is to say, an emotion which is highly refined, powerful and positive. The experience of such emotion, once developed, is so strong that it is quite impossible not to act in accordance with it and it is in this fact that the effectiveness of the puja as a spiritual practice lies. In the recitation of the seven sections of the puja, we are 'led', so to speak, from the evocation and experience of the most 'basic' of spiritual emotions — wonder, reverence and faith in the Buddha as the Ideal of Enlightenment, through a cumulative sequence of other, increasingly refined and increasingly exalted spiritual emotions, until finally we actually find ourselves able to aspire to the total altruism and limitless compassion of the Bodhisattva.

But how is it that the practice of puja can create such a strong effect? The reason lies in the fact

that it consists of far more than the bare repetition of words; it is a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional practice, involving its participants wholly — in action of body, in speech and in mental responses — and each 'facet' can produce a positive emotional response.

The first of these 'facets' is the environment in which the puja takes place: a shrine room, in which the participants sit in rows at the foot of a carefully and beautifully adorned shrine. The beauty of the shrine involves the participants emotionally through their bodily senses, and in the course of the puja, the use of symbolic bodily actions, such as bowing or prostrating, making personal offerings to the shrine, and *anjali* salutation, by putting the hands palm-to-palm in front of the heart, can greatly increase the degree of emotional involvement.

Then there are the words of the puja itself. These have two main aspects: recitation in English of a translation of Shantideva's verses from the *Bodhicaryavatara*, and chanting in Pali or Sanskrit. Shantideva's verses use highly poetic and evocative imagery; the sheer exuberance of some of it perhaps takes a little getting used to, but once the meaning and feeling of it begin to 'sink in' a little deeper, the poetry has, in itself, a direct emotional effect. The chanting, especially the chanting of mantras, which are direct, non-conceptual 'sound symbols' of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, perhaps produces the most direct effect of all — though it is an effect which penetrates, ultimately, to a level even deeper — or higher — than that of spiritual emotion.

These, then, are the 'facets' of puja. Brought together, they create an atmosphere highly conducive to the evocation of spiritual emotion. What makes the sevenfold puja such a highly effective practice, though, is the *combination* of these elements with the cumulative effect of reciting the seven stages of the puja. The peculiar genius of the unknown originator, or originators of *anuttara-puja*, was to create this particular 'dynamic' of spiritual emotions. Each of them leads naturally to the evocation of

the next, giving rise consequently to an ever-increasing momentum, until the participants are literally swept beyond themselves, beyond their petty self-centredness and self-imposed limitations, into the limitless altruism of Bodhisattvahood.

As the participant gains familiarity with the actual practice of the sevenfold puja, this 'dynamic' and momentum should become clear. However, by no means everybody finds it initially easy to come to terms with a practice which is (at least superficially) so 'un-Western', and a brief explanation of the puja as practiced in the FWBO will give a clearer idea of what is happening.

After an initial salutation to the shrine, and usually following a period of meditation, the sevenfold puja begins with the recital of the first section, *Worship*. In the *Bodhicaryavatara*, Shantideva lavishes more attention on this section than on any of the others, and it is indeed crucial, since it is here that the 'basic' spiritual emotion, upon which the rest of the puja develops, *shraddha*, is engendered and expressed. *Shraddha* can be described as the natural response of refined, positive emotion when it encounters higher, spiritual values. In other words, we encounter the embodiment of human Enlightenment, the Buddha, for the first time, as it were, and realising what He is, we are completely swept off our feet; our heart goes out to Him, and the only way that we can even begin to express what we feel is to *give* to Him, to make offerings of all kinds of beautiful and precious things. So, in the *Worship* section, the verses, the beauty of the shrine, and the opportunity which each participant has to make personal offerings during the chanting of the mantra of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, immediately afterwards, form a perfect expression of *shraddha*.

In the second section, *Salutation*, it is as if, after our initial delight and exuberance in the discovery of the Buddha, representing the possibility of our own Enlightenment, we begin actually to recognise where we stand in relation to Him, and how very far we are from Enlightenment. So

our response here is one of healthy reverence — the most appropriate act that we can do is simply to bow down in respect to the Enlightened One.

However, this respect will be useless if it just leads us to think that the Buddha is some sort of God, and Enlightenment beyond our reach. Far from allowing this sort of attitude to take hold, in the third section, *Going for Refuge*, we immediately make the determination to bridge the gulf that we have recognised between ourselves and the Buddha, and so commit ourselves to the attainment of Enlightenment. To this end, we also chant in Pali the Three Refuges and Five Precepts. Taking these precepts upon ourselves represents our first positive action in the direction of self-transformation, in undertaking a course of training to purify our action in body, speech and mind.

But we recognise also, at this point, that certain parts of our make-up, certain aspects of our personality, are holding us back and preventing us from actually moving in the direction of Enlightenment. In short, looking at ourselves objectively, we see that

we have faults, and not wanting them to obstruct us further, we simply acknowledge them in the fourth stage of the puja, *Confession of Faults*. We feel natural remorse for any wrong that we have done, and so confess it to 'get it off our chest'. But at the same time, we do not expect that anyone is going to 'forgive' us, and thus exonerate us from the consequences of our own action. Confession of Faults is essentially a matter of taking responsibility for ourselves, and so effecting a real change in our behaviour.

Having dealt with our 'dark side', however, we naturally begin to feel lighter and more outward-going, and so following the Confession comes *Rejoicing in Merits*: we rejoice wholeheartedly in any meritorious action performed by anybody at all, but especially, we rejoice in the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. In a way, *Rejoicing in Merits* is analogous to the feeling engendered in the *Worship* section, only at a much higher level, as our understanding and experience have deepened considerably in the meantime.

With the sixth section, *Entreaty and Supplication*, our rejoicing in

the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas flows into a deepening receptivity to them: we request them to continue their compassionate activity in teaching the Dharma, because unless there *are* people openly receptive to the Dharma, it will inevitably be lost from the world. Also, at this stage, though unenlightened ourselves, we develop an altruistic attitude by requesting the Enlightened Ones to teach the Dharma to others, as it were, on our behalf. This section is always followed by a recital of the Heart Sutra, a profound summary of Mahayana teaching, which in a sense represents a 'reply' to our entreaty for the Dharma.

Finally comes *Transference of Merit and Self-Surrender*, the culmination of the puja, representing a direct expression of Bodhisattva-like altruism. Here, far from trying to 'hang on' to the benefit of what we have done so far in the puja, or indeed to any good that we have done in our lives at all, we freely 'give it away' for the benefit of all. We give up all selfish interest in and attachment to our own merits, and at the same time aspire to be of service to all sentient beings, so preparing for the arising of the Insight and Compassion which will mark our true entry into the Path of the Bodhisattvas. After this, with the chanting of mantras we pass beyond words, beyond even poetry, to the contemplation of the shimmering, transcendental Forms of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

This marks the end of the sevenfold puja; but in leaving the shrine room, we do not leave the puja behind us. We can see the shrine as a workshop: we may have made something in there, but it is for use outside, in our day-to-day, even minute-to-minute existence. As we become more and more imbued with the spirit of the Bodhisattva ideal from our practice of the puja, so in our lives the expressions of all the spiritual emotions which it engenders will become more and more prominent, more and more dominant, until, ultimately, our old selves are no longer to be found anywhere, and in their place a new Bodhisattva will have started his great work in the world.



A Puja on an Order Convention

To Cherish all Life

A Buddhist Case For Vegetarianism
By Roshi Philip Kapleau.

By Prajnananda

Published by Rider & Co. Pp. 104. Price £3.95.

Buddhism and vegetarianism are both subjects on which separately there has been no shortage of books in recent years. This new publication is to be welcomed for exploring the neglected theme of the connections between the two; even more so as the author is the American Zen Roshi Philip Kapleau, whose previous works — in particular, *The Three Pillars of Zen* and *Zen: Dawn in the West* — have shown him to possess a sincere and valuable perspective on the practice of the Dharma in the West.

This is a book which should, however, stimulate not only the non-Buddhist vegetarian and, even more, the non-vegetarian Buddhist, but also those who are both and those who are neither! It will hold the interest of the more general reader, firstly on account of its clarity and directness of presentation, and secondly for its particularly elegant design, both in illustration and typography. Roshi Kapleau explains the reason for this in his introduction. Many books on animal welfare are filled with photographs depicting the suffering inflicted on animals in farms and laboratories. While acknowledging the value of such 'shock tactics', Kapleau writes, "the illustrations in this book have a different purpose... they are intended to show the innate dignity and wholeness of animals and their innate kinship with man." (p.6). And this they do, without being patronising or sentimental.

His approach to the subject is wider than might be supposed from the title. There are three

main sections to the book: the first describes the cruelties inherent in the process of raising animals for food; the second is a detailed consideration of the Buddhist response, ideal and actual, to this situation; and the third is a series of short appendices on the practical, social, nutritional and ecological aspects of

it ever was. Factory farming, relentlessly and with economic logic, turns animals into flesh-producing machines without regard for their afflictions except when profits are affected. The distress experienced by the animals during the processes of rearing and transportation, as well as slaughtering itself, is exposed in



One of the book's thoughtful illustrations.

flesh-eating, and includes an interesting list of famous proponents of vegetarianism.

Section One is a brief but powerful account of the methods of modern agrarian farming, in which we are exposed in writing to some of the horrors we have been spared in pictures. The idyllic portrait of farm life traditionally presented in children's storybooks is today less true than

a straightforward, unhysterical manner. These gruesome facts are usually ignored or distorted; the cruelty is so entrenched in our society that it is tacitly taken for granted and becomes a 'blank spot' in the conscience of most people, even those otherwise humane and well-intentioned. The flesh of dead animals is euphemised as 'pork', 'beef', 'mutton', 'veal', etc. Indeed, the

word 'meat' itself is a euphemism, originally meaning simply 'solid food', as in the expression 'meat and drink'. When we consider that thousands of millions of creatures live and die at the hands of this industry each year, we begin to realise the significance of simply abstaining from its products, as an increasing number of people are doing — for varied reasons.

There are those who take the view that the first concern of humanity should be with the sufferings of its own kind; but Kapleau asks, "Why must the two be separated, as though it were a matter of priorities? After all, does it take any great effort to abstain from eating flesh... while working to create a better society for people?" (p.16). He points to the endeavours of men such as Gandhi, Tolstoy, Shaw and others, who were dedicated to improving both social conditions and the treatment of animals. Certainly the two are connected. An ancient Chinese verse suggests the abuse of animals and the anguish of human strife are karmically inseparable: 'For hundreds of thousands of years, the stew in the pot has boiled up a resentment that is very hard to level. If you wish to know why there are disasters of armies and weapons in the world, just listen to the piteous cries from the slaughterhouse at midnight.'

The second, and main, part of the text examines what are for Buddhists two crucial questions: Does the first precept prohibit meat-eating? And did the Buddha sanction meat-eating? The first precept is, of course, that of not

killing, harmlessness towards living beings; more positively, the development of lovingness, or *metta*. The significance of this being the first, or primary, precept becomes clear on reflection. The precepts are often said to be aspects of the natural behaviour of one who is Enlightened, who embodies a profound compassion and wisdom, a love and understanding arising from an awareness of the true nature of reality and the interconnectedness of all life. Thus, one who wishes to cultivate such an awareness should practise its outward expressions. One following the ideal of the Bodhisattva — that of attaining liberation for the sake of all sentient beings — should surely begin by avoiding the infliction of pain wherever possible.

Applying this principle to the eating of flesh foods is not always the obvious step it may seem once taken. For many years during his Zen training in Japan, Roshi Kapleau says, "the connection of flesh-eating with the first precept never hit home." (p.28). And the Venerable Sangharakshita recounts in his memoirs how he too had been a Buddhist for several years before it struck him that logically he ought to be a vegetar-

ian. It is hardly surprising considering the ubiquitousness of the carnivorous habit and the absence of a visible example. Would it occur to us to go it alone?

However, from a heightened awareness of the wholeness of life, meat-eating appears practically 'cannibalism — with the heroic dish omitted,' as Shaw observed. Kapleau points out that one implication of the teaching of karma and rebirth is that all living beings have been or will be at some time, our mothers, fathers, and children. (Interestingly, this view was also the grounds for the vegetarianism of the early Greek Orphic cults.).

The attitude of Buddhism is in complete contrast to that of Christianity, which traditionally at least, holds that the suffering of animals per se is of no account since they were expressly created for man's use by God: 'And God blessed Noah and his sons and said unto them,....the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea;...into your hands are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for

you'. (Genesis 9). This and similar passages are seen by several historians and thinkers as one of the main causes of Western man's destructive relationship with nature over the last two thousand years. Although a meatless diet was fairly commonly advocated among the Christian Orders, this was always on the grounds of asceticism and self-denial, rather than of compassion. The only argument traditionally put forward by Christian writers against cruelty to animals has been that it might encourage cruelty to humans; but even this appears to have had little effect.

Conversely, in the East, the treatment of animals was substantially improved by the influence of Buddhist teachings, which played a decisive part in turning India, China and Japan into essentially vegetarian countries. Even where vegetarianism was not widely practised, as in Tibet, it was recognised as a virtue.

In what is perhaps the core of the book, Kapleau next examines the controversial matter of whether the Buddha himself actually ate flesh foods and whether he allowed his followers to do so.

It is often asserted that the Buddha died from eating pork. The opinions of various Pali scholars and textual authorities are cited to show that this is a mistaken belief which has arisen through a mistranslation.

The book then investigates the strange disparity of attitude displayed in the Theravada and Mahayana scriptures. The former, in a single short passage, represent the Buddha as permitting the eating of flesh food by his followers providing that it has not been killed expressly for them. The Mahayana sutras, on the other hand, condemn meat-eating — and its advocacy — unequivocally and at length.

After pointing out that modern scholarship gives no reason to suppose that the Theravada scriptures are more authoritative than those of the Mahayana, either in age or otherwise, Kapleau asks if it is really possible that the Buddha, in Whom Wisdom and Compassion were perfect and infinite, should allow flesh-eating, especially

having condemned and forbidden butchery, hunting, and fishing as wrongful means of livelihood.

It is true that monks were — and still are, where the alms-round is practised — supposed to accept all foods donated without preference or aversion. Yet it was, and is, common practice for the lay-people to serve what they believe the monks find pleasant. Roshi Kapleau had experience of this during his Zen training in Japan. 'Whenever I had a meal in the company of either my teacher Harada-roshi or Yasutani-roshi neither of whom I saw eat flesh foods, we were never served fish or meat. But on a takahatsu (alms round) led by a roshi who loved fish or meat, the dinner table groaned with these foods.' (p.25)

All this leads Kapleau to believe that this controversial passage in the Pali scriptures is in fact a later interpolation, still unfortunately used by many Buddhist monks — not only those of the Theravada countries of Burma, Thailand, and Sri Lanka, but also nowadays by Japanese and Tibetans — in order to 'cleverly rationalize their defiling of the precepts.' There are other such sophistries: for example, that a Buddhist should be concerned with 'what comes out of the mind, not what enters the stomach.' (p.55). Such an inability to link action and motive suggests alienation rather than liberation from duality. And Kapleau mentions a report of a Zen roshi (master) who "forced some of his students to eat meat to 'break them of their attachment to vegetarianism'" (p.46). He asks, 'what kind of mentality lies behind such bizarre actions?' and laments that at a time when Buddhism is 'still new in the West... Asian teachers have brought with them many of the cultural prejudices and debased practices that have grown up around Buddhism in their native lands.' (p.45).

An extreme case of such degeneration is exhibited here by the extraordinary example of the present-day Japanese whalers who pray for the 'souls' of their victims in Zen Buddhist temples, temples, with no intention of ceasing their killing.

On the scriptural controversy, he concludes that 'the historical



"Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you."

facts are beyond our reach... Ultimately the case for shunning animal flesh does not rest on what the Buddha allegedly said, or didn't say. What it does rest on is our innate moral goodness, compassion and pity which, when liberated, leads us to value all forms of life.' (p.43).

We must also seriously consid-

production is at least equal that of other animals raised for slaughter. Perhaps we should at least ensure that the eggs we eat are from 'free range' chickens. Should leather shoes or clothes be avoided? With a little thought it is easy these days to wear only natural or synthetic materials. (Or perhaps, like Gandhi, we

ing veganism (ie avoidance of eggs and dairy produce) because of the social problems it might entail? How many of us have taken a truly personal decision and how many of us are 'vegetarians of convenience', not protesting too loudly when our non-vegetarian friends or family feed us beef or bacon because it is

simply, rearing livestock is an inefficient method of producing food; it takes an average of eight pounds of plant protein to produce one pound of animal protein. Furthermore, the demand for meat around the world results in higher food prices and shortages in the poorer nations as valuable land is used for feed crops to produce expensive 'second-hand' protein. The issue of hunger is complex but it becomes clear, as Kapleau says that, "by abandoning meat we can help to maximise the earth's potential for nourishing its inhabitants and at the same time minimize the waste and abuse of the resources necessary for that purpose." (p.79). This provides yet another dimension to the matter, and one that clearly refutes any charge of a subjective over-concern for moral 'purity'. Vegetarianism is a simple practical step available to each person, which immediately lessens the afflictions of animals, and which could have revolutionary economic and social consequences in reducing the malnutrition of human beings.

Let us not underestimate our individual effect; Shaw wrote whimsically that he hoped his funeral would be followed "by herds of oxen, sheep, swine, flocks of poultry, and a small travelling aquarium of live fish," honouring the man who had not eaten them!

Perhaps this visually attractive and highly readable polemic will also help us to learn to cherish all life, to appreciate animals as "...not brethren, not underlings; (but) other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendour and travail of the earth."



Philip Kapleau



What horrors lie ahead for these animals?

er the extent of our practical commitment to this principle. Kapleau answers the question, 'Is killing a vegetable the same as killing an animal?' with justifiable derision. 'Does a stick of celery scream in terror when it is picked the way a pig does when it is having its throat cut? And how sad, lonely and frightened can a head of lettuce feel?' (p.54). For a meat-eater to uphold his behaviour by equating the sufferings of animals and plants is quite untenable.

But the question has to be raised: how far should one go? Should the application of the first precept in this way stop at the renunciation of flesh foods or should it be extended to dairy products and eggs? The Buddha apparently would not drink milk taken from a cow with new-born calves. But for virtually all of us today it would be impossible to know whether the milk we drink has come from such a cow or not. The production of milk, and therefore all dairy products, is inseparably connected with that of meat, especially veal. And the torment inflicted on poultry in the modern battery system of egg

should establish factories to produce leather goods from naturally deceased animals.)

Firstly, it must be said that Buddhist morality is a morality of intention. To the degree that an action — mental, verbal or physical — is motivated by generosity, love, and clarity it is to be considered skilful and vice versa. Each action will tend to reinforce the mental state that produced it. Thus, to tread carelessly on a beetle, for example, is a fault of unawareness, not of unkindness. The degree of our responsibility, our 'Karma', corresponds with the depth of our awareness.

All this is said simply to emphasize that any movement towards the reduction of suffering in the world must be encouraged and that its degree and extent can only be a matter for individual decision. That there can be no absolute purity in a relative world does not belie the need for action.

It is relatively easy to be a vegetarian within the FWBO; within our communities it is taken for granted. But how many of us would make the effort if it were not so? Do we avoid contemplat-

easier and more comfortable not to stand out?

The final part of 'A Buddhist case for Vegetarianism' consists of several supplements, or appendices, of facts that will prove valuable to those already practising vegetarianism — adding new depth to their practice and further ammunition to persuade others with — and may tip the balance for those contemplating it. It is shown that a non-meat diet will easily, without much trouble, yield sufficient, even ample, protein; that meat is in fact an extremely unhealthy food, being linked especially with heart disease and cancer, and liable to be saturated with the animal's own wastes and with drugs fed to it during rearing; and that the raising of meat-bearing animals is economically wasteful and ecologically destructive. This information is well researched and presented and gives rational backing to the rest of the book.

The last point in particular indicates a materially direct and obvious link between vegetarianism and human welfare. Quite

Britain

LBC

A high spot of the long, hot summer was our open retreat held at Battle, Sussex. Many of those attending were genuinely moved by the experience, and all were full of praise for the team leading the retreat. The combination of good weather, beautiful surroundings and wholehearted involvement by both team and retreatants seems to have produced one of our most successful events of this type ever, which we are happy to report also produced for us a substantial profit ready to fund further projects. Our congratulations to Naga-bodhi and all of the support team. Already our thoughts are turning towards the winter retreat, which this time will be led by Parami.

Phoenix Housing Co-operative has recently taken the first significant steps towards being allocated substantial government funds, which could eventually provide permanent housing for up to 100 people. This development would do much to stabilise and secure our operations and activities in the East End. The purchase of the LBC, although not yet finalised, is well in hand.

'Sukhavati', the community situated above the Centre, has adopted a policy of expansion with regard to the number of men living there, and is moving towards the target of 24. 'Sukhavati' is consolidating its position as an important focus for men who are centrally involved in FWBO activities around the LBC. The Cherry Orchard restaurant now has a flourishing community for some of its workers, and early reports indicate that this venture could have a transforming effect on the restaurant.

Friends Foods is planning to re-fit the shop to an improved layout at the end of the year, and Windhorse Photosetters is about to install new equipment which will greatly increase the range of the service and competitiveness of the business. Three Order members have just launched a joinery business called the 'Carpenters Company', and as if that was not enough we are also about to see the launch of an audio-visual consultancy.

The much-needed improvements to the toilets at the Annexe are complete, and re-decoration is in hand, with the stairwell being the next



There is no report from Glasgow for this issue. But we do have this shot of Sussiddhi passing the Sauciehall St premises while taking part in the Glasgow Marathon — a twenty-five mile run round the city on 11th September. Six men from the GBC completed the course in varying but honourable times, and thus raised a lot of money for the Centre, and for the ITBCI school in Kalimpong.

priority for improvement. Members of the users' association 'Greenhouse' have also completed construction of the offices, and are settling into their new premises.

Finally, Bhante left the LBC after staying here for some three months, a visit which benefited us greatly. We wish him well on his travels and look forward to more visits in the future.

W. London

For a city Centre such as the one in Baker Street, the autumn period is always a significant one. Summer is often something of a recess with long and lazy summer evenings enticing people outdoors, rather than encouraging any interest in meditation and Buddhism. With the summer gone, however, and the prospect of a long winter ahead, people become once more inclined to take up new interests and pursuits. Because of this the autumn can be the most fruitful of all seasons for a centre such as ours, and it pays to be well prepared.

To this end — indeed for the good of the long term — the human energy going into our Centre has been increased considerably from the beginning

of September. Sridevi is devoting herself more fully to the teaching of Yoga at the Centre, and Eve Gill is doing likewise with massage. There are now lunchtime classes three times weekly, and the weekend programme of activities has also been stepped up. In all ways the Centre continues to put itself on a sounder footing.

Even within a single city, what is suitable in one area may be inappropriate in another. This is certainly the case with housing. In East London, short-life housing has proved a suitable basis for the building up of a network of communities. In West London, however, it is becoming clear that this is not a practical option. Property of this type is much more scarce, and we are having to move increasingly into the commercial market. So it is good news that all the main communities in West London are trying to move into more permanent properties at the time of writing.

The 'Hermitage' in Harlesden has already moved to a larger house, and we are pleased that Cittapala and Silabhadra have moved there, to continue work on the transcription of Bhante's lectures and seminars. The 'Sarvasiddhi' community is negotiating for a large house in north London, and the 'Ratnadvipa' community is trying to buy a flat adjacent to Portobello Road (famous for its antique market).

Croydon

We've got the builders in. Or rather we've got our builders in, as RAINBOW BUILDING, our team of professional builders and decorators, part of the larger Rainbow Co-operative, is working on the latest phase of our Centre development, the construction of a new reception area and garden. The new single-storey building, designed by Mike Chivers, a mitra and a professional architect, will provide access to the existing Centre space from either 'Hockneys' restaurant or directly from the street. It will also provide a valuable meeting area for a bookshop and exhibitions.

RAINBOW BUILDING was one of the first businesses to be set up as part of our Right Livelihood co-op, although in the six years of its existence the foreman has changed as people have moved to other areas within the Co-op or, like Sthiramati in Bristol, set out to found similar situations in other areas. With the departure of Ratnapani for Tuscany in September, Will Spens, a mitra living at Aryatara, took over responsibility for the team. He writes of the present work:

'Working on the reception area, between outside commercial jobs and maintenance work on the co-operative, we hope to finish next spring. This is a very exciting period for the building team. Not only have we got a very stimulating and challenging project on our hands, but we have all started part-time courses in the practice and theory of general building. From the common basis of a good general knowledge, we hope to go on to take further training in different specialised trades.'

Will has first-hand experience of training for a skill. His three years' experience as a general builder in the Co-op helped him get accepted for a six-month Government TOPS course and he returned to the team as a fully qualified carpenter and joiner. Perhaps others in the team will follow in his footsteps, either as plasterers, bricklayers, or carpenters. In this way the building firm will be able to take on more varied and adventurous types of work as well as continue to provide an excellent training situation for energetic young men.

Manchester

Having no Right Livelihood ventures going on in Manchester, our main activity and meeting point with the general public is through classes, courses and lectures. Over the last few years Suvajra and Ratnaguna have taken a considerable number of classes and courses, and have given innumerable talks, not only at the Manchester Buddhist Centre, but also at schools, Universities, Buddhist groups, and other institutions in and around Manchester.

At the time of writing we are considering just how much we can do in this way from now until Xmas, not only at the Centre but also at Keele University, Liverpool University, Shrewsbury and Wrexham, all Buddhist groups with which we have a positive connection. Unfortunately there are only so many evenings in a week and we have decided, at least for the next few months, to concentrate mainly on Manchester, paying occasional visits to the above mentioned places. We hope eventually to be in a position to have classes going on in many places at once, but that's for the future.

We are pleased to have Dharmachari Subhadra with us for the next two months at least, and we congratulate Sarvamitra on being invited to join the team of Order members going on the Tuscany Course in 1984.

Brighton

This autumn, here at the Brighton Buddhist Centre, we have started our busiest session yet, with a very full programme of classes, courses, seminars, festivals and retreats. As well as leading the activities at the Centre, Order members will be going out to schools in Sussex, running meditation classes at the Brighton Polytechnic Art School, the University of Sussex, and the Brighton Natural Health Centre, where, for the first time, Yashomitra will also be leading karate classes.

We have now reached the point at which we need to alter the building substantially in order to do justice to all our activities. However, there is an essential step to be made first before our plans can be realised, and this is that we must re-house the men's community that lives at the Centre. So anyone who can help us in any way with houses, information, advice or finance please contact us. We need a house, or any sort of building, with six or more bedrooms, in the Brighton area, either to rent or to buy. It doesn't have to be too smart.

Our Right Livelihood painting and decorating business, F.B.S., is going from strength to strength with work now coming to us through the recommendations of satisfied customers. Recently we painted the exterior of a large terrace house on one of Brighton's fashionable crescents, and made an excellent job of it!

Bristol

In Bristol our main continuous contact with the public is

through classes run under the auspices of the University Student Union. With the closure of the Student Union building during August it means that the summer is the quietest period of the year for classes, which acts as a useful respite before the autumn session, which is always the busiest.

Classes are not limited to students of the university but are open to members of the public too. For instance, our summer term course, always the quietest of the year, finished with an attendance of fourteen per week (as compared to three in 1982!) and over half of these were non-students. Those who wish to remain in contact during the summer recess attend a 'regulars' class held at our community on Wednesday evening, which runs all the year through.

So summer is an opportunity to redirect any surplus energy into other areas, which means that we have been upgrading our right-livelihood building and decorating business. So far it has been supporting three people full-time, but the need to create excess income to finance a centre of our own, along with the advent of a new full-time worker, Tony Foxton, creates pressure to extend our profitability. This certainly seems to be happening as, at present, work seems to be rolling in.

Diss

Diss is at the point of a triangle which has the FWBO centres of 'Padmaloka' and and Norwich as its base. Either their influence, ley lines, the East Anglian air, or the hard work and inspiration from Subhuti and Srimala gave the Diss group a start that astonished many of us, particularly those who nervously attended the first meeting at the Diss Meeting House (and thanks to the Quakers for their help) in February.

Numbers grew, three one-day retreats were held and an Aid for India benefit dinner is scheduled for October. In the corridors at tea time could be overheard conversations about having our own centre, forming Right Livelihood co-operatives and more-despite the fact that the money in the dana bowl would often only just cover expenses. However all this went into a steep decline in the summer holidays. What we are left with is an enthusiastic core of some fifteen people whose involvement and commitment give the impression that most of them have been around the FWBO for years rather than months.

It is perhaps too early to analyse the success and failures of the Diss group but these pointers may be of interest. One of the reasons why we had such a low drop-out rate, in the early days at least, may be that plenty of chairs were provided for those that wanted them. Slowly as people got accustomed to the idea, more and more people took to the floor but even now a third of the Diss meditators prefer to sit in a chair. It is a small point but perhaps an important one as sometimes the impression given is that 'rupa' postures are an integral part of meditation, to the discomfort of the less agile.

A more fundamental difficulty is the attitude to worship. There seems little doubt that the introduction of a shrine caused a sudden drop in turnout. Obviously the acknowledgement and worship of the ideal of higher consciousness is an integral part of Buddhist practice. However, a shrine is meant to inspire and if it does the opposite there is little point in having one. The debate on the issue is one of the dynamic aspects of the group and it has been decided, tentatively at least, to suspend the use of the shrine for a few months. Watch this space.



A tea break on site in Croydon

HELSINKI

The most outstanding feature of last summer on the Finnish scene of FWBO activities was the two week men's Order-mitra retreat at the Loimaa centre, 'Dharmadhatu'. Led by Subhuti and attended by an international crew of Order members the retreat soon became at the same time intense and relaxed.

After a double sit in the mornings we studied, for the first few days, the *Bhaddali Sutta* which is especially relevant on the subject of ordination, and on the second week the *Satipatthana Sutta* which opened for us new perspectives on the foundations of mindfulness. One of the highlights of the retreat were speeches that all eleven of us gave in turn. The one

be most interesting. Being in Finland the retreat programme included a sauna every other day after karate. The other peculiarity was *viili*, a kind of sour milk product made on the retreat from fresh milk from the neighbouring farm. The retreat culminated with a festive puja, including the offering of a six foot high stupa made of cardboard and painted with traditional colours. This was accompanied by a Padmasambhava invocation and the offering of resolutions inspired by the impact of this historical retreat.

After the retreat Subhuti gave two public talks on the subject of 'Buddhism for Today: the Place of Buddhism in the Western World'. Both were given in vegetarian

The autumn at the Helsinki Buddhist Centre began with a six week beginners' meditation course. People were queuing to get into our tiny basement shrineroom. About twenty newcomers had to be put on a waiting list for another course in the near-future! The

and efforts in getting more of Bhante's texts translated and published. A translation of Bhante's poetry book "The Enchanted Heart" will also be out soon.

At the end of October the women will reassemble to study the *Mahaparinibbana Suttanta*.



Subhuti's Helsinki audience

given by Dharmavira, called 'The Italian Renaissance', contributed a lot by feeding in some of the 'Tuscan retreat experience'.

Life stories were also told and all of them turned out to

restaurants in Turku and in Helsinki and the second one was especially well attended. During his stay Subhuti also took a study group for women at the Helsinki Buddhist Centre.



Cutting through hindrances

place was crammed with people and we had to hurry out to get more cushions and teacups. There must be a new upsurge of interest in meditation.

A well-knit group of women have been meditating and studying once a week or more for quite a few years. Now there has been a break in the continuity because of the summer holidays and the beginners' meditation course. But under the surface things are going on: the women are deeply involved with publishing. When this Newsletter is at press Bhante's book, *Human Enlightenment* will be on its way to the bookshops in Finnish, we hope. Fundraised, translated, designed, pasted up, seen through the process of printing and distribution, and advertised by women, it will inspire more confidence

Women's Retreat

The women's summer weekend retreat was held this year in June in the countryside about fifty kilometres from Helsinki.

Six of us were present: three Order members and three mitras, which created a situation which was both easy and intense with lots of study and meditation.

The theme of the study and discussion was the Bodhisattva's motivation according to *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation* by Sgampopa. Impure motivation manifests itself as *Asravas*, hindrances; so during the work period we worked happily on these (symbolically, that is) in the form of cutting thickets.

Germany

'Freunde des Westlichen Buddhistischen Ordens - gemeinnütziger Verein für Deutschland'. Well, we are not called that yet, but by the time you are reading this FWBO Germany will hopefully be a German charity.

It all began with the 1982 German Christmas retreat, which revealed that there was indeed a response to the FWBO in three areas of the country: Hamburg, Karlsruhe, and the Ruhr Valley. In early 1983 Dhammaloka, who had led the first half of the

Christmas retreat, moved to Essen in the Ruhr Valley; in late March Dharmapriya, who had led the second half, joined him. With the arrival of a Friend from Hamburg, and of Sonja for an extended stay, a community emerged, a flat was found, and more retreats started.

Retreats have been the main activity of FWBO Germany, and provided the main opportunity for people to make contact. Most newcomers come because they have met someone who has

already been on retreat and has passed on his or her enthusiasm.

Retreats have not just been held in Germany. At Whitsun there was a small joint Dutch-German retreat more for serious Friends. And almost half the participants in the annual European Summer Retreat in Sweden came from Germany this year.

At the same time, a handful of Friends meet in the community in Essen regularly for meditation and puja. In Hamburg a few meet for meditation and yoga, and Friends in Karlsruhe have built up an active meditation group of 15 - 20 people.

An important development is our translating work. Of course, all activities take place in

German, but there is not such a rich selection of Dharma available in German. The only work of the Venerable Sangharakshita that has been translated is *The Three Jewels*, but it is out of print! So in the summer Ruth Hartlein, a German mitra in London, started to translate *The Noble Eightfold Path*. The first lecture of this series, *Perfect Vision*, was ready by July, and it provided the basis of the first FWBO study seminar in Germany.

In the autumn and winter more retreats will take place, culminating in a two-week Christmas retreat in beautiful hill country west of Bonn. Meanwhile the German team has dreams of finding beautiful castles and a kindly Maecenas.

SYDNEY

The FWBO has been in Sydney now for two and a half years and in that time it has become increasingly well known as more and more people come to classes.

Our weekly programme includes beginners' classes and an evening that combines study with puja, as well as extended meditations on Sunday morning.

Every six weeks we hold a country meditation retreat for a dozen or so people at a hired facility set in bushland. Festivals are celebrated with a shared meal, meditation and a special puja.

Most recently we have conducted our first six week meditation and Buddhism course which was a great success, both for the seventeen participants and the five organisers. Already it is seen as a landmark for the future. Order members shared the responsibility of presenting the Dharma, and each night talks were given as well as introductions to the practice of meditation. Several people have since become regulars. Probably the main contributing cause to the success was the good team spirit built up among those who worked at Bell and Candle Bookbinding - our right livelihood venture.

This business has since closed down for economic reasons, but has left its mark on the style of our operation as well as on the shelves of discrimin-

ating book collectors. In the two years that it operated, it gained a reputation for quality unmatched in Sydney. However, the hand-crafted product could not compete with the machine item in such a limited market. Our products included treaty folders presented by the Queen to Papua New Guinea tribesmen as well as a bound collection of Bhante's poems presented to the Dalai Lama.

The bookbinding workshop facility has been retained within the men's community. This house, situated within walking distance of Sydney Harbour, also acts as the Centre, and it is from here that members of an emerging Art Group set out to draw or paint features of the local scenery.

Our Visitor's Book is gradually filling as Friends worldwide visit the Centre. On a recent visit, Buddhadasa conducted the first local mitra ceremony for Jenny Jacobs. Others who have visited include Aniketa, Priyananda, Yuvaraj and Ratnaketu. Most recently, Dharmadhara stayed a month before joining the medical team in India.

We are looking for somewhere to hold longer retreats and a fund has been set up to provide the eventual capital for our very own Retreat Centre. If it sounds like a good idea to you, then think about visiting us.

BOSTON USA

In the summer people leave Boston for the seashore or more distant places but now as the fall arrives they are returning and settling in to activities that will take them through the winter. Our centre activities now consist of regular morning meditation which is attended by a few friends who live in the locality, and four weekly classes. The only change in the structure of classes is that the regular's evening on Wednesday is now devoted to listening to a series of taped lectures and a new class on Sunday afternoon consists of a talk with a short period of meditation. We still have only a few Friends but our new poster which is based on the famous egg poster designed by Dhammarati is very popular and is getting noticed.

Manjuvajra spent seven weeks in Britain in June and July when he attended the chairmen's meeting at Padmaloka and visited the Centres in London, Glasgow, and Norwich. Vajradaka drove across the U.S. to California and visited Tassajara Zen Centre, where he made some good contacts. Punya held the fort while the other two were away and then, in late August, he left for the three month retreat in Tuscany.

Pavel Hrma who lives in Cleveland Ohio organised a day retreat at the Cleveland Zen-Shin Temple and Manjuvajra

went over from Boston to lead the day and meet Pavel's friends. It was a good retreat with about eight people attending and a good contact was made with Sensi Ogui who runs the temple. Pavel has an apartment in a pleasant part of the city which is big enough to hold meditation classes and which could easily accommodate another person. He is eager to have someone else living with him - any offers?

We now have the use of a house, owned by Benedictine monks, which is suitable for our weekend retreats. It is close to Boston, comfortable and in thirty acres of woodland. It should add a new dimension to our retreats and maybe attract some new friends.

A new Centre Management Committee which hails a new level of interest has been formed by some of our more regular Friends and already various fund-raising events are being organised. The proceeds from a concert of Indian music will go to Bombay to help Vajraketu get established.

A meditation course, led by Manjuvajra, is being offered by the Groton Arts Center at Groton, a town thirty miles west of Boston and it looks as if there is quite a bit of interest in meditation in these towns just outside the city.

EBU GATHERING

What it's meant to be about and where it's heading may still be quite unclear, but the European Buddhist Union still exists, and since the 15th September, the FWBO has been a 'member' of it.

The meeting at which the FWBO was voted to membership, along with the Scientific Buddhist Association, a Shin Buddhist movement, and a Buddhist library in Lausanne, marked the start of a four day plenary session held in London, attended by delegates from Britain, Holland, Germany, Austria, and Italy. Subhuti and I who attended on behalf of the FWBO, were happy to renew friendships with people we had met some years before at a conference of the Union in Paris.

Our time was divided between business meetings where we worked through a 23-point agenda, and visits to some nearby Buddhist centres.

Areas of discussion ranged - from the election of office bearers, through the possible

creation of an EBU 'Institute' somewhere in Europe, to the rates that are charged by some Buddhist groups for their events.

As was the case in Paris, it seems that the Union is still struggling to find its identity, if not its justification.

While some members would like to see the EBU functioning as an information gathering and dispensing agency, others see in it the seeds of a new super-movement, actively working to spread the Dharma. Again others see in it the possibility of a kind of arbiter of European Buddhism: a Buddhist UN where the terminology and methodology of 'Euro-Buddhism' can be defined and proclaimed.

Clearly, any such considerations are wildly premature. The EBU is still so unrepresentative of the major Buddhist movements in Europe as to be an almost negligible force on the scene. So it's first job must be simply to become more representative, to become an occasional meeting ground for European Buddhists. Perhaps something

more concrete would come out of that, but perhaps not.

We visited the Buddhist Society, Chithurst Priory, the Buddhapadipa Temple, and our own London Buddhist Centre, and a lot could be written about each visit, since they were all interesting and revealing. But space is limited, unfortunately.

At the LBC, the delegates were welcomed and then given guided tours of the Centre and some of the nearby co-operative businesses, before being entertained to a splendid meal in the Cherry Orchard restaurant.

Later, Kulamitra talked about

the daily life of the Centre, and Subhuti explained how the FWBO is organised. I showed slides of our work in India among the ex-Untouchable Buddhists, and the evening ended with a session of meditation and a puja.

It was a full and enjoyable evening in which a sense of contact and friendship grew between us all.

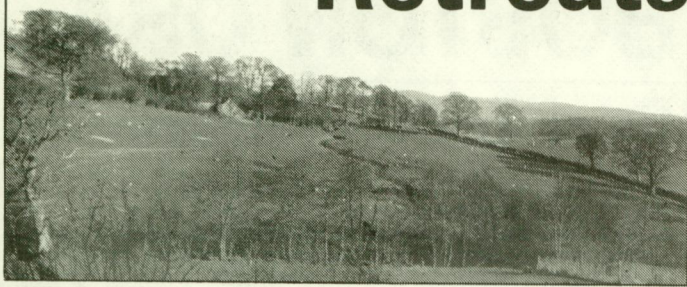
Even if the EBU serves to make such meetings possible, and nothing else, it will still be doing a worthwhile job.

Nagabodhi



Delegates are given FWBO publications at the LBC

Retreats Women



VAJRALOKA

Each day here is exactly the same. We get up, troop down to the shrine room, and meditate together-mindfulness of breathing, walking meditation, *Metta Bhavana*. Then, a walk (or perhaps, for some, a run), breakfast, the daily work period, and then more meditation-perhaps mindfulness of breathing again. A break follows, then lunch. We have been able to speak since breakfast, which is when the overnight silence ends. After lunch there is quite a long break before a double session of meditation: *Metta-Bhavana*, walking meditation, a practice of one's own choice. Order Members presumably do their own visualisation practice, others perhaps do the *metta* again, or Just Sitting. Silence falls again for the rest of the day. After half an hour, a light meal is eaten, some time after which follows a meditation and puja-then bed. This is what really goes on at Vajraloka- day in, day out, weekends included... occasional variations are caused by new arrivals on Fridays; and also by their inevitable departure, one by one, their tangible non-presence creating a subtle feeling of loss, an illustration of the impermanence of companionship and of even *dyana* states.

The first thing you may have already noticed is that we have changed the programme. For an experimental period we are having an increased amount of 'led' meditation. So far the response has been good, and a number of our guests have said that they prefer the new, somewhat more organised, approach. There is just a little more meditation taking place now than before, and this is having a tonic effect on the overall atmosphere.

In spring and the early part of the summer, our practice was given an extra boost by the presence of the Venerable Sangharakshita who stayed in a nearby cottage for three months. Bhante was on retreat, so little was seen of him; but our awareness of his presence up the road was enhanced by the regularity of his daily walk past the gate. It is said that mindfulness is easily generated when

living with one's teacher, and it is almost as true when he is living close by. During the three months since he left Wales, that is, since the women's retreat here in June, about fifty men have come here to Vajraloka to meditate. The coming month sees, first of all, the Tara visualisation retreat. This is already well booked and, judging by its predecessor last year, should be especially good-not least with two of the community having Tara as their main meditation practice.

They are Dharmacaris Sumana and Vajracitta, who have joined the community for a few months. Vimalamitra is away for three months in Tuscany, so there have been some changes in the community. We also had Mangala staying with us for three months before his return to Ahmedabad.

A month of women's retreats follows the Tara retreat. This time most of the community are going on solitary retreats, a period of extra intense practice which should give us all something to share when we return in November.

THE ROOF APPEAL

There has been an even better response to this than we had hoped. We reached our target around July, shortly after which we received two sizeable cheques from Malaysia-one from an anonymous donor, another from the supporters of a temple in Penang. Needless to say, this was most welcome: costs, in fact, will turn out to be more than expected. We would like to express our thanks through these pages to them, as well as to all the many others who have helped. The slates have been bought, and work has started.

Other work that has been going on over the summer is the exterior painting, and we now have fresh white windows and bright, golden yellow doors. A coat of fresh paint is also being given to the inside walls. We would like the place to be able to be kept clean and neat, and a uniform colour scheme will help Vajraloka to become as distraction-free an environment as possible.

Imagine a school with a big garden, fields of green, a forest, more fields, hills in the distance, a blue sky with bright sunlight reflecting in the swimming-pool. Little by little there are women arriving, some diving straight into the pool and others sitting in small groups together on the lawn in front of the house. Inside the building are spacious rooms with high ceilings, arched windows and wide stairs which are the main feature of the sitting room. This was the setting of the women's retreat held in Battle from August 26th to September 3rd.

We started the retreat with a meal and a puja, and a chance to settle into rooms which were shared by only one or two people.

A varied programme started the following morning for the people there: some friends, some mitras and Order members, three women about to be ordained, and three about to become mitras: meditation, work, communication exercises and taped lectures on *The White Lotus Sutra*.

Marichi, who was leading the retreat, spurred us to think why we had come to this retreat, what our aim and ideal was.

'Make yourself as big as you can. You can do it. You can make what you want to. You can be who you want to be.'

On the third day the programme changed. Communication exercises were dropped to make place for a talk by Vimala on the 'Five Spiritual Faculties'. One thing that stood out in Vimala's talk was her presentation: no notes, only memory. This made you want to listen with your heart and remember. Jayaprabha enticed us into an exploration of the Imagination,

asking the question, 'Do Bodhisattvas really exist?'

By this time the retreat had been building up quite strongly. Beryl Carey, Janet Martin and Kay Tremaine had been disappearing from time to time to a shrine-room outside the house to prepare for the big day to come, the first of September. That day Bhante arrived and conducted their private ordinations. Thursday brought us some thirty visitors to attend the public ordination ceremony, in which the three women reappeared as Ratnasuri, Ratnavandana, and Ratnadakini.

After all this festivity and excitement the retreat continued to be strong. We listened to a lecture on the five-element symbolism in the *Stupa* and made offerings linked to the theme in a festive puja, preceded by the *stupa* visualisation practice. On the last full day we heard Bhante's talk on the different levels of Going for Refuge. Again beautiful offerings were made for that evening's puja. Parami brought the Dharma to life with a humorous but very clear exposition of *The Threefold Way*, which led us into the day of departure.

A gradual ending: cleaning the house, and a jumble-sale in the school, held by some local people, slowly took us back into

BAT

the everyday world. Strength, confidence, harmonious co-operation made for a very rich retreat in which all of us were able to re-establish contact with the highest in ourselves.

Els Witschge



Parami welcomes Ratnavandana into the Order.

Beginners Open

Nicola Padzierski



A frantic flight from the hurly-burly of everyday life is something most of us would like every Monday morning. But for the last two years I have turned the dream into a reality for ten days of the year, when I hoisted the white flag and headed for a retreat.

The summer retreats—run by the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order—are set deep in the English Sussex countryside. And as the grime of the outside world begins to wash away, visitors find themselves in a magical realm, where they can learn more a-

tion practice, and it enhances feelings of warmth, love, and awareness.

Lunch is a plain snack, usually made up from leftovers from the night before. It is a very good time to chat to people and compare notes about the effect the retreat is having. People become very close to each other on retreat and share the deepest of personal secrets with others who were strangers only hours previously.

People from all walks of life go along. Some go because they have abandoned Christianity or Judaism, others because they are interested in meditation. The 1983 summer retreat attendance included a man who was learning to juggle in case pensions become a thing of the past when he retires. Another was doing a degree in astrology. One of the women had just returned from teaching Tibetan refugees in the Himalayas. Another taught assertion classes in London, but for ten days everyone drops their barriers and shares everything.

Communication exercises take place after lunch, and then there is an hour or so to devote to the body. Some choose the contortions of yoga, others plump for karate, massage, or swimming. Then of course there is meditation once again—usually accompanied by groans of the unhealthy contingent, whose muscles are complaining. Dinner is an excellent vegetarian meal, which everyone falls on hungrily. Afterwards there is more time to go for walks, getting to know people, or sitting quietly, before a lecture about an aspect of Buddhism.

A puja follows before cocoa and bed. Some people adore it and become very emotional and bright. Others are more wary of it and dread the experience, until its meaning has become more clear. Each to their own.

Bed is a very welcome part of the day, and even though visitors sleep together in dormitories, that is again part of the sharing.

Duties of Brotherhood

The prophet Muhammad is believed by Muslims to be the final prophet of God: the final revealer of his word. As well as giving inspired utterance to the words of the Qur'an, held to be the very words of God, Muhammad also left a legacy of sayings and deeds which are regarded as being exemplary of the ideal life in Islam.

Around these words and deeds, as well as around the often cryptic verses of the Qur'an itself has arisen a vast commentarial tradition. One of the major commentators, the 'Renewer of the Faith', for the sixth Islamic century, was Al-Ghazali, a scholar and mystic from Iran.

At a seminar held at Padmaloka early in September, the Venerable Sangharakshita led study on a text by Al-Ghazali: *The Duties of Brotherhood in Islam*, which is part of a much larger work entitled *Ihya 'ulum al-din* (*The Quickening of Religious Knowledge*).

Bhante explained that he has long had it in mind to lead study on some key texts from outside the Buddhist tradition, partly because of their intrinsic merits and partly as a useful exercise in comparative religion. So this seminar was a first step in that direction.

As the title of our text indicated, we were to examine a thorough and systematic account of the duties undertaken by those who enter the formal contract of brotherhood with a fellow Muslim. (There is no question of a Muslim entering into any such contract with a non-Muslim).

Although ordinary friendship and fellowship are highly valued in Islam, they pale in comparison with the contract of brotherhood, into which men enter as seriously as they might a marriage. To enter such a bond, which has as its *raison d'être* the mutual encouragement of truly religious action and values, involves a complete realignment of one's life, as the brotherhood is nurtured. There can be no holding back—of material things, of one's time, of secrets, of anything—from your brother. Such brotherhood, such a surrender to another, is an analogy and a preparation for one's total surrender to God, an acknowledgement in daily life of the fruitlessness of selfishness, secrecy and evasion. It is a chance to take advantage of all the ways in which completely open, caring, honest friendship can aid one in the great enterprise of the holy life. There can be no real brotherhood except on this basis, no true brotherhood in the context of an 'unholy' enterprise.

The text presented us with a view over a strong ideal, and weaving our passage through its frankly theistic language, and around other areas of significant disagreement, we were able to glean a number of valuable insights into the demands and benefits of what we would call *kalyana mitrata*, or spiritual friendship.

A major element of brotherhood is the fact that one has a feeling for and a responsibility to one's brother that transcends the need for his presence. Spontaneously one thinks of his needs, cares for his dependants, and defends his good name in society. At all times one experiences a mental and emotional continuity of contact. Bhante, who recently gave a lecture on the subject of 'Fidelity', gave his full backing to this approach to friendship. Fidelity is a quality of the true individual. We should aim to live with continuity of emotion and purpose, able to experience our lives and our contacts as a whole, in which the past, the future and the distant are not reduced to meaningless abstraction, but are living elements of our experience.



Bhante drew attention to the fact that our text was entitled *The Duties of Brotherhood*. It is important that we look first towards our duties and obligations, rather than continually worrying about our 'rights'. He expressed his disappointment with the modern preoccupation with rights, and suggested that people will get their 'rights' only when people all endeavour to honour their obligations towards each other.

No doubt the tapes of this seminar will be transcribed, and the transcripts eventually prepared for publication. You will then be able to see for yourselves a very rich and detailed exploration of a theme which is clearly of crucial importance, not only to Muslims, but to Buddhists as well.

Nagabodhi

TLE

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Beginners Open

Nicola Padziarski



A frantic flight from the hurly-burly of everyday life is something most of us would like every Monday morning. But for the last two years I have turned the dream into a reality for ten days of the year, when I hoisted the white flag and headed for a retreat.

The summer retreats—run by the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order—are set deep in the English Sussex countryside. And as the grime of the outside world begins to wash away, visitors find themselves in a magical realm, where they can learn more a-

tion practice, and it enhances feelings of warmth, love, and awareness.

Lunch is a plain snack, usually made up from leftovers from the night before. It is a very good time to chat to people and compare notes about the effect the retreat is having. People become very close to each other on retreat and share the deepest of personal secrets with others who were strangers only hours previously.

People from all walks of life go along. Some go because they have abandoned Christianity or Judaism, others because they are interested in meditation. The 1983 summer retreat attendance included a man who was learning to juggle in case pensions become a thing of the past when he retires. Another was doing a degree in astrology. One of the women had just returned from teaching Tibetan refugees in the Himalayas. Another taught assertion classes in London, but for ten days everyone drops their barriers and shares everything.

Communication exercises take place after lunch, and then there is an hour or so to devote to the body. Some choose the contortions of yoga, others plump for karate, massage, or swimming. Then of course there is meditation once again—usually accompanied by groans of the unhealthy contingent, whose muscles are complaining. Dinner is an excellent vegetarian meal, which everyone falls on hungrily. Afterwards there is more time to go for walks, getting to know people, or sitting quietly, before a lecture about an aspect of Buddhism.

A puja follows before co-sleeping and bed. Some people adore it and become very emotional and bright. Others are more wary of it and dread the experience, until its meaning has become more clear. Each to their own.

Bed is a very welcome part of the day, and even though visitors sleep together in dormitories, that is again part of the sharing.

Duties of Brotherhood

The prophet Muhammad is believed by Muslims to be the final prophet of God: the final revealer of his word. As well as giving inspired utterance to the words of the Qur'an, held to be the very words of God, Muhammad also left a legacy of sayings and deeds which are regarded as being exemplary of the ideal life in Islam.

Around these words and deeds, as well as around the often cryptic verses of the Qur'an itself has arisen a vast commentarial tradition. One of the major commentators, the 'Renewer of the Faith', for the sixth Islamic century, was Al-Ghazali, a scholar and mystic from Iran.

At a seminar held at Padmaloka early in September, the Venerable Sangharakshita led study on a text by Al-Ghazali: *The Duties of Brotherhood in Islam*, which is part of a much larger work entitled *Ihya 'ulum al-din* (*The Quickening of Religious Knowledge*).

Bhante explained that he has long had it in mind to lead study on some key texts from outside the Buddhist tradition, partly because of their intrinsic merits and partly as a useful exercise in comparative religion. So this seminar was a first step in that direction.

As the title of our text indicated, we were to examine a thorough and systematic account of the duties undertaken by those who enter the formal contract of brotherhood with a fellow Muslim. (There is no question of a Muslim entering into any such contract with a non-Muslim).

Although ordinary friendship and fellowship are highly valued in Islam, they pale in comparison with the contract of brotherhood, into which men enter as seriously as they might a marriage. To enter such a bond, which has as its *raison d'être* the mutual encouragement of truly religious action and values, involves a complete realignment of one's life, as the brotherhood is nurtured. There can be no holding back—of material things, of one's time, of secrets, of anything—from your brother. Such brotherhood, such a surrender to another, is an analogy and a preparation for one's total surrender to God, an acknowledgement in daily life of the fruitlessness of selfishness, secrecy and evasion. It is a chance to take advantage of all the ways in which completely open, caring, honest friendship can aid one in the great enterprise of the holy life. There can be no real brotherhood except on this basis, no true brotherhood in the context of an 'unholy' enterprise.

The text presented us with a view over a strong ideal, and weaving our passage through its frankly theistic language, and around other areas of significant disagreement, we were able to glean a number of valuable insights into the demands and benefits of what we would call *kalyana mitrata*, or spiritual friendship.

A major element of brotherhood is the fact that one has a feeling for and a responsibility to one's brother that transcends the need for his presence. Spontaneously one thinks of his needs, cares for his dependants, and defends his good name in society. At all times one experiences a mental and emotional continuity of contact. Bhante, who recently gave a lecture on the subject of 'Fidelity', gave his full backing to this approach to friendship. Fidelity is a quality of the true individual. We should aim to live with continuity of emotion and purpose, able to experience our lives and our contacts as a whole, in which the past, the future and the distant are not reduced to meaningless abstraction, but are living elements of our experience.



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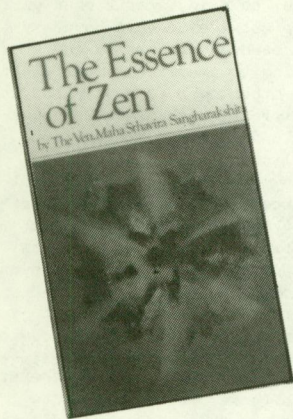
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Publications

While the transcription teams are dealing with the production of Dharma material at one end of the 'process', Windhorse Publications is becoming more active at its own end. In Summer we launched *The Bodhisattva: Evolution and Self-Transcendence*, the booklet based on the Venerable Sangharakshita's Wrekin Trust lecture. Now, in October, we have just re-



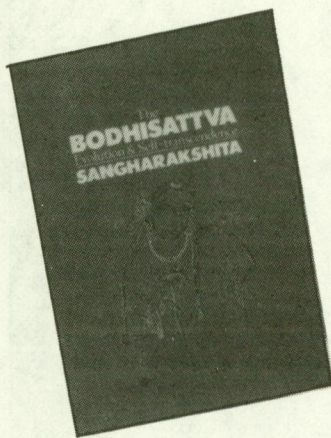
launched *The Essence of Zen*, a book which has been out of print for almost two years. This is in fact the third edition of this book which is based on five talks that Bhante gave in 1965. Although it deals overtly with the subject of Zen Buddhism, this popular work actually affords a good introduction to the Venerable Sangharakshita's approach to the Dharma in general. It also offers the reader a good intro-

duction to the Venerable Sangharakshita himself, since his personality, and in particular his sense of humour, shine through its pages very brightly. It costs £1.95.

A new Puja Book is now at the design stage, and a new edition of *Mind - Reactive and Creative* awaits only its cover.

Meanwhile, Bhante has personally edited the transcripts of two study seminars, on the Five Spiritual Faculties, and the Three-fold Refuge. These too are being prepared for limited publication.

All enquiries and orders should be sent to:
Windhorse Publications
21 Hope Street
Glasgow G2 6AB



A Walk in the Alps



Kevin pauses for breath

It took Kevin Duffy and Darryl Cowley about three weeks to complete the 'Tour de Mont Blanc', a 125 walk around the Alps.

Although Kevin, who works for Windhorse Trading, and Darryl, who works for Aid for India, are both keen walkers, and much taken by spectacular mountain views, the trip was only partly a holiday.

Before setting out they had raised about £750 in sponsorship.

That money will now be going out to Kalimpong in northern India to help fund the Indo-Tibetan Cultural Institute School, which is directed by the Venerable Dhardo Rimpoche, an incarnate Lama who was one of the Venerable Sangharakshita's teachers.

The school caters for about 200 children, most of whom are from Tibetan refugee families. It offers them a grounding in Tibetan language and culture, as well as offering the official school curriculum.

The school is threatened financially. An orphanage associated with the school has had to close down, and there is no hostel accommodation for resident staff. A new set of classrooms are urgently needed, and on-going expenses for books, medicine, etc., are always having to be met.

Since the school has no income other than the funds raised within the FWBO, let's hope that Darryl and Kevin have set an example that others will follow.

Christians and Questions

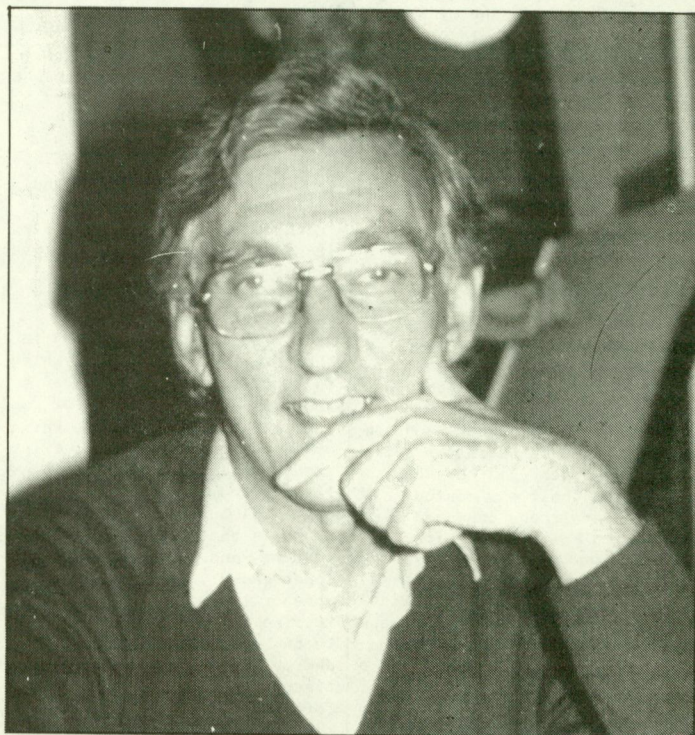
Those who keep themselves up to date will be aware that, within the Christian community over the past few years, various gestures have been made among its many sects to try to raise themselves above their age-old differences and to reach an ecumenical unity. Such unity, it is felt, would give Christianity a stronger common front with which to ward off and even attack the Godless forces threatening to swamp the planet.

Lately, these gestures have even extended beyond the Christian community to other religions, even to Godless ones like Buddhism. It is perhaps assumed that what we all have in common is, in our present troubled times, more important than our differences. On July 6th, at 'Sukhavati', an interfaith 'dialogue' took place between the Venerable Sangharakshita and an 'Other

Faiths Committee', comprising four members of the United Reformed Church, an Anglican minister, and a Methodist. The meeting consisted of a sort of spiritual *eclaircissement* in which Sangharakshita answered questions on various topics raised by his Christian guests. What follows is an account of those topics which, to me, stood out, and acted to bring forth some fine examples of a lucid mind at work.

The first topic to be covered concerned 'worship' (ie, puja: to honour, respect, revere, worship). Christians are often puzzled by the apparent contradictoriness of Buddhist practice and doctrine, Buddhists worship, yet they don't believe in God. How is this possible?

Firstly Bhante pointed out that, before answering this sort of question, a rather blind



The Venerable Sangharakshita

assumption has to be exposed. The somewhat arrogant assumption is that worship is not possible without a God as its object.

Bhante told his listeners that Buddhists traditionally worship, revere and pay respect to many beings: their parents, elders, teachers, monks and spiritual teachers, as well as to what is to them the most supreme of all beings, and therefore the being most worthy of worship: the Buddha. This surely is all very reasonable. There is no element of contradiction between practice and doctrine. Acknowledging this, some of our Christian friends in fact admitted that they have a bit of a problem with Christian worship. We did not pursue this but, personally, I can only wonder whether, perhaps, God as the traditional figure of worldly power writ large has become intellectually unacceptable. However, what has become intellectually acceptable to some Christian theologians, a 'ground of Being' or some such, is too obscure for the heart to respond to in worship. Buddhists don't worship *sunyata* or the *Tathagatagarbha* - we can only worship and revere beings.

Another area of apparent misunderstanding arises from the view that as Buddhists we teach compassion, and yet there are no Buddhist voluntary ambulance services or 'Help the Aged' groups etc. Where then, it was asked, is the manifestation of our compassion as a practice? Bhante replied to this by pointing out that we deal with casualties every day - mainly through our various centres. But the casualties are not physically injured; they're 'existential casualties'. They are people battered by modern life. In this sense, he said, we are all casualties. As Buddhists we could therefore be said to have more work on our hands than anyone else! Everyone needs the Buddha's medicine, whether they are physically healthy or not. He agreed that it would of course be foolish to teach starving people to lead an ethical life without giving them material nourishment first. However, the world being as it is, and with our limited resources, it is of prime importance that we concentrate upon the 'existential casualties' since there is little if any of this work going on.

This, he said, raises the question of the capabilities of those who are professionally involved in social problems. He believed that social workers are as confused as anyone else; often they too are what Buddhism would call 'existential casualties'. Being confused they can only bring their own confusion into these already confused situations, so how can they really help? Anyone wishing to help must firstly become less confused, become less of an 'existential casualty'. Then he or she can help others to emerge from their confusion. Therefore, as a Buddhist, an initial period of withdrawal from the world is necessary so as to gain some

emotional and mental clarity. Then one can go out and offer some real help, and go out into the world we must if we are truly and sincerely Buddhists.

However, someone then wondered how we can do all this if, as our doctrine teaches, the world is merely an illusion?

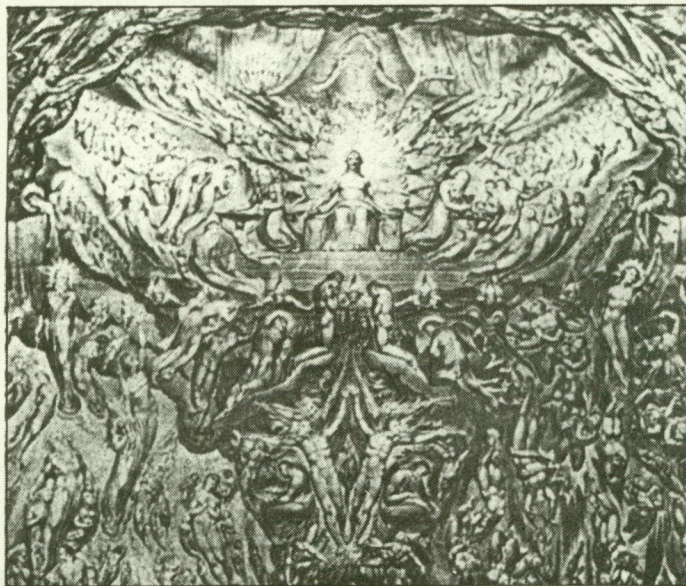
Bhante pointed out that the original Sanskrit word translated as 'illusion' is *maya*, from the root *ma*, 'to measure', 'to mete out'. This suggests a limited outlook, a restricted and limited view of the world. So to say that for us unenlightened beings the world is *maya* is to say that our view, our understanding of things, is limited, is not complete, is too narrow and one-sided, and, in this sense, is therefore unreal. This is of course quite different in practice from saying that what you perceive is not really there! If you were to practice on this latter basis you would probably end up with a mental breakdown. But, it was insisted, what about the Mahayana? Do they

take place: an unenlightened being can become an enlightened being.

Since most, if not all, of those present had read Sangharakshita's *Buddhism and Blasphemy*, it was inevitable that the subject of blasphemy would enter the field of discussion.

Bhante explained that the booklet arose out of his experience of trying to help people who came along to our centres. He had found that many of them were adversely affected, especially with regard to their emotional and sexual development, by their Christian upbringing. As a Buddhist, being essentially practical and methodological, he had had to find some practical method of helping these people, as otherwise their growth would be more or less stultified.

Blasphemy is therefore a practical method of helping people to overcome this unhealthy effect and has no other purpose. Once health has been restored, there is no more need to blaspheme. This was found to be



Surely his power won't be undermined by our little blasphemies

not teach that everything, including ourselves, is empty and void?

Bhante agreed that this is another very common misunderstanding. The Sanskrit term here is *sunya* which in modern Hindi does actually mean 'zero' or 'nothing'. However, in Buddhism it symbolises the fact that what things are - whether you are dealing with what is Ultimate in the Universe, or a matchbox - cannot be fully represented in thought. To say that everything is *sunya* is also to say that there is also no essence or real substance to anything. No thing or being, on any level of existence, has any ontological identity or noumenal substratum. The practical outcome of this doctrine is that everything is *process*, and those processes are 'open-ended', as it were. In more ordinary, early Buddhist terminology everything is seen to be 'impermanent' (*anicca*), and by logical extension, 'insubstantial' (*anatta*). Therefore, according to this teaching the greatest miracle of all can

reasonable and acceptable by our Christian friends. 'But', someone asked, 'if people you've dealt with also suffered unhealthy effects at the hands of their parents, why don't you encourage them to blaspheme against them?'

Bhante made the point that parents are people, and people can be hurt by what is said to them. It would be unskillful wilfully to hurt someone, regardless of what they had done to you in the past. This would constitute revenge, and, for a Buddhist, revenge is a thoroughly unskillful state of mind. On the other hand, presuming just for the sake of discussion that there is a God, Bhante suggested that surely he would not be too upset by being blasphemed at. Surely he can withstand a small creature's verbal abuse without resorting to childish and revengeful behaviour? He is supposed to be 'All-Mighty', 'All-Powerful' and 'All-Knowing', so surely his power won't be undermined by our little blasphemies; surely he'll be capable

of forgiving our trespasses?

Someone then wondered whether a publication like *Buddhism and Blasphemy* is not verging on intolerance - in contradiction to tolerance, a virtue very definitely upheld in traditional Buddhism?

Bhante pointed out that tolerance is a matter of allowing people to think and live differently from yourself, allowing people to hold their own views and opinions even though you consider them to be fundamentally wrong. You can have, on a common basis of humanity, a rational discussion - you saying what you think and they saying what they think - even an energetic debate, without in the least being intolerant. Intolerance, he said, starts when you step outside of this boundary of reasoned discussion and start trying to coerce and manipulate the other over to your views and beliefs by such means as physical and emotional threat, by inflicting guilt, fear, etc. Some of those who shout 'Intolerance!' are, he said, by that very act, showing themselves to be truly intolerant of others' views and beliefs. Tolerance can after all, only be practised where there is disagreement. You do not allow your differences of belief to destroy your feelings of common humanity with others. This therefore means that to practise tolerance there firstly has to be that feeling, or at least a recognition, of common humanity, over and above differences. It was then put that a well-known Buddhist writer, lately deceased, said in one of his books that one can be a Christian and a Buddhist. Our guests wanted to know whether this is possible?

Bhante suggested that anyone who says this is showing that they cannot truly think; they have not really thought about what they are saying. In fact they would be quite confused. So the question was put, 'Is it possible nevertheless for Christians to evolve and gain what Buddhists call Enlightenment?' Bhante said that in all his experience and contact with the various forms of Christianity throughout his life, he has not detected that Transcendental element which is the fundamental basis of the various forms of Buddhism. This, he repeated, was his own experience, but he was reluctant to generalise from that and assert that no Christian could ever become an Enlightened being. We are all human beings and, as such, we have an urge, however hidden, to evolve. Enlightenment is the dynamic culmination of this particular phase of evolution (ie Enlightenment is not an end but, for us, a distant horizon). Throughout the whole of human history the human spirit has overcome the most oppressive conditions in its urge to evolve. So it is important that we see ourselves primarily as human beings, and only secondarily as Christians or as Buddhists.

Sagaramati

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Buddhism for Today

A Portrait of a new Buddhist Movement

Dharmachari Subhuti
(Alex Kennedy)



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