

Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

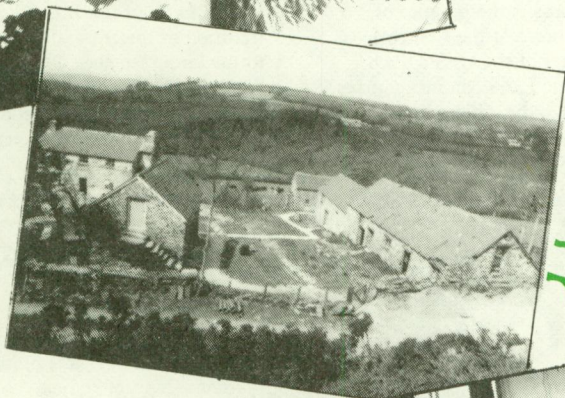
The

NEWSLETTER

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Reasons for Giving



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About the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

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

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

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

The Order forms the nucleus of a new society or culture in which the values of human growth are 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.

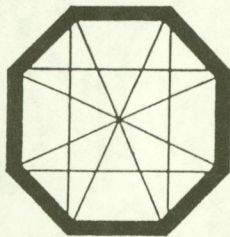
In the Co-operatives, groups of Order members, Mitras, and Friends (those who are in contact with the Movement and participate in any of its activities) work

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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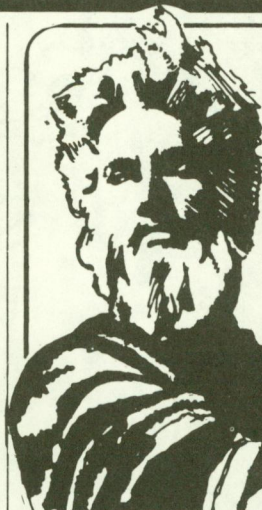
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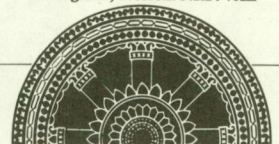
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The NEWSLETTER

**Winter
1983/84**

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Nagabodhi

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Editorial

Once upon a time the FWBO had a Centre in North London called 'Pundarika'. It was housed in an old factory, let to us at a peppercorn while it awaited demolition. Its rough walls were coated with whitewash; girders, beams, and conduits were painted with bright gloss; tracts of carpet were procured, second-hand, from an exhibition hall, and the tea counter was hammered together with scrap wood found on a local dump. The words 'cheap and cheerful' spring to mind.

This did not, however, prevent a worldly-wise friend of mine, whom I'd persuaded to come along, from remarking, 'Oh dear! There's a lot of *money* here, isn't there?'

That all religious movements are openly or covertly awash with ill-gained and irrelevantly employed cash is a basic creed of our age. While it is sometimes easy to see how such a view has arisen, the point is that my friend was completely wrong. The FWBO was not, and is not, a wealthy movement. In financial terms it is not even 'comfortably off'. We have no headquarters dispensing funds in Japan, Thailand, or the USA, no millionaire pop-stars among our numbers, no army of therapists plying their trade under our aegis.

If our centres look well-appointed, and even beautiful, it is because we have so far managed to effect with commitment, hard work, and considerable self-sacrifice, what we have not been able to effect with money. Even at the 'lavishly' finished London Buddhist Centre, the treasurer regards the solvent passage of each week as a kind of miracle!

And yet, nothing daunted, we continue to launch new centres — most recently in Leeds and Essen. Existing centres like the LBC and the Croydon Centre are trying to consolidate their position by buying their premises. Most of our centres are capitalising new businesses and communities. And beyond the immediate concern of each centre lie the more general projects: the Womens' Retreat Centre, the Expansion of Vajraloka, the establishment of an Order Office. And of course there is the work in India growing faster than any other aspect of the Movement, yet dependant on outside funding for a long while yet.

All in all, the demands on our funds, time, energy, and organisational ability are daunting. At a recent meeting of UK centre Chairmen this issue was discussed. It was agreed that realistic estimates of what is and what is not possible must now be established, priorities agreed, and fund-raising 'constituencies' defined and demarcated.

This can be worrying — even depressing at times. But the underlying fact is that the demands exist because the FWBO is expanding, deepening, and becoming even more outward-going.

So this *Newsletter* is devoted to just a few of these plans and dreams. They are presented not as headaches but more appropriately, as visions ripe for fruition, each one poised to make the FWBO livelier, happier, and of more value to the world.

Nagabodhi

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The Dana Economy

By Nagabodhi



If even the thought to relieve
Living creatures of merely a headache
Is a beneficial intention
Endowed with infinite goodness,

Then what need is there to mention
The wish to dispel their inconceivable misery,
Wishing every single one of them
To realise boundless good qualities?

Do even fathers and mothers
Have such a benevolent intention as this?
Do the gods and sages?
Does even Brahma have it?

If those beings have never before
Even dreamt of such an attitude
For their own sake,
How would it ever arise for the sake of others?

Translated by Stephen Batchelor

Thus, in the opening chapter of *The Bodhicaryavatara*, the 8th century master Shantideva, evokes the supremely altruistic spirit of the Bodhisattva, the ideal Buddhist of the Mahayana. A Bodhisattva is one whose entire being is fully engaged in the spiritual life, vigorously, ceaselessly directed towards the goal of Enlightenment, not just for his own sake, but for the sake of all beings whatsoever.

As the text makes clear, this is a sublime and almost inconceivable ideal: to become an embodiment of pure altruism, active on a stage that spans the universe. And yet, in some mysterious way each practising Buddhist must face up to the challenge of that ideal, expand his or her mind and heart to embrace, in some way at least, its spirit. And in some practical

way too, he or she must move towards it, take the first few steps, however slight, however prosaic, towards its realisation. If we take our Buddhism at all seriously, if we are practising with any sincerity and effort, then it is a fact of the spiritual life that we shall find ourselves wanting, and starting, to give.

Giving is a natural symptom of spiritual progress, even at its earliest stages. It is a sign that we are becoming less self-centred and self protective, more adventurous and expansive in our outlook on life, and more genuinely, warmly aware and considerate of those who share the world with us. Giving is a sign of psychological, not to say spiritual health. And giving, *dana*, is the first perfection that the Bodhisattva has to master; it comes even before morality, and far before meditation and wisdom as the first

'stage' of the Bodhisattva's path. So it is first and foremost through giving that we can become personally and directly involved with an idealism that ultimately transcends even our present imagination.

The FWBO is a Buddhist spiritual movement, so it should hardly be surprising if its entire history can be regarded as a history of giving, and its evolution as a visible expression of an evolution in the spirit of generosity suffusing those who have been, and are, involved with it. As has been said elsewhere in the *Newsletter*, the FWBO has enjoyed no outside patronage; every facility it offers is the product of people's generosity: with their money, their time, their skills, and their vision. Without that generosity there would be nothing, and the Venerable Sangharakshita would probably have left our shores long ago.

While there have been times when our seemingly chronic inability to attract large-scale funding from beyond our immediate community has been a source of frustration, that historical accident — which was probably no real accident — has never failed to reveal itself as our greatest good fortune. We have no-one of mixed motivation to please, bargain with, or compromise with, no pipers calling our tune, no anxieties over the sudden withdrawal of whimsically bestowed privileges. The FWBO is free to develop and work in the way which suits the spiritual needs of those who benefit from it, free to be a pure and, if necessary, truly

radical expression of those Order members who reach out to the world through its channels.

Far more importantly, our struggle to survive and expand has, at each and every turn, thrust upon us opportunity after opportunity to transcend ourselves in the most practical, unambiguous way — by giving. One may have difficulty meditating, problems with the precepts, incomprehension in the face of the *Abhidharma*, yet giving is relatively easy. You only have to do it!

And there the matter should end. But of course it doesn't; for giving is only *relatively* easy. While we may not have to be prepared to give, in the way that we must be prepared for some other spiritual practices, we do have to be *feeling* generous, and free to express that feeling. Very rarely do people feel, and carry out, a spontaneous, clean act of giving, however. The old Salvation Army exhortation, 'Give 'til it hurts' legitimises while it



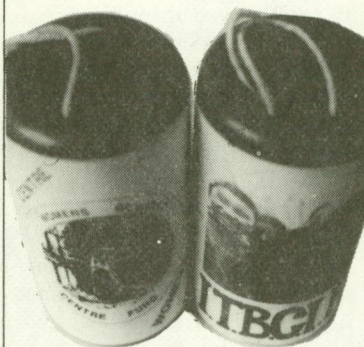
attacks the common view of generosity as a mild form of self-martyrdom. And the reply of a once-famous comedian, 'The very *thought* hurts', seems concisely to express the common reply — in the West at least. No-one finds it easy to give.

So even when our meditation, our devotional practice, our blossoming friendships, and our sheer gratitude for contacting the Dharma begin to loosen us up, and direct our attention and emotions outward for a change, we may yet find that sheer negative habit inhibits our rudimentary impulses to give. Like so many positive qualities, our generosity may be atrophied through neglect, and it may need a few brisk slaps to bring it back to life.

Moreover, the gravitational pull of individualism — passive and active self-centredness — is so strong that unless we continually encourage and nourish our other-regarding tendencies as soon as they arise with positive action, the probability is that our 'ego' will simply appropriate and distort such spiritual gains as we have made. *Matta*, the feeling of loving kindness after which we strive in our meditation practice, is not something to be enjoyed in the privacy of our own minds and hearts: it is, rather, a force that we must channel into the world through words and acts of love and kindness, if it is not to peter out in us.

So how fortunate are we, then, who have before us the constant calls, explicit and implicit, of the FWBO! We have flowers to buy, tea to make, carpets to clean, centres to decorate, or to build, or to purchase. We have each made contact with a teaching and a living current of spiritual influence and inspiration: the Dharma and the FWBO. And yet the flow of that current depends, quite literally from day to day, on our own heartfelt wish to see it survive, grow stronger, and reach further towards more people. Its destiny is entirely in our hands — and nobody else's. Right here, right now we have the extraordinary opportunity to give, and to give for the sake of something that is completely, unambiguously worthwhile.

To give is to give up. Beneath



the inhibitions of habitual conditioning and individualism lurk quieter, sterner resistances to giving. We do not want to change. We do not want to sacrifice a security based on our old selves with all their appurtenances. Such a giving up involves risk and uncertainty. And for this reason our ability to give should be seen as a barometer of our openness and willingness to change. So while we should be willing to give at all times we should look carefully at *what* it is we are giving, *what it is we feel able to give*, for therein lies a useful indication of our spiritual state. Do we find it easy to give money up to a certain negligible amount, but impossible to overstep a certain mark, the mark at which we have to start skimping in our other spending? Do we have no problems giving money — even large amounts — yet find ourselves totally resistant to giving up a bit of time to help out with some work at the Centre? Are we happy to help out with some accounting advice, but horrified at the thought of serving tea at a class? Are we willing to help out in any way we can, yet completely closed to the idea of giving up our existing job in order to work full-time for a Centre, a co-op, or for Aid for India?

There is something wonderfully clear and indisputable about a straightforward objective need for our generosity. We may not meet the challenge it presents, but at least we must take note of the fact that we have, for the moment at least, stuck in our heels and said, 'No further'. Of course our inability to give may have an equally objective basis; but if we are in any doubt about that at all, then we have been given our next *koan*.

Thus the FWBO's material aspect has been described as a 'dana economy', an economy completely based and entirely dependent on people's generosity. Our co-operatives, for example, are of course businesses, operating in the 'real' world, in competition with other businesses, prone to the same forces as other businesses. Yet those who work in them do so because they want to *give*. The personal material rewards are low — mere 'support' according to basic need. The people working in our co-ops are usually, and above all 'graduates' of dana collections, jumble sales, and sponsored walks, and 'Work a Month' schemes — in which those participating, who have ordinary jobs, live as simply as they can for a month and give all excess income-over-expenditure to the nominated cause. They have probably found themselves seeking, with mounting joy, to give more: themselves, completely.

Unless that is the motivation, no-one would find it possible to work in a co-op for long. Unless desire to give to the Three Jewels, and the satisfying challenge of

doing a worthwhile job in co-operation with like-minded people, have become as immediate a motivating force in their lives as were the sticks and carrots of wealth, career prospects, fame, fear of the sack etc., once were, then they would simply find it hard to get out of bed in the morning! And without doubt no co-op could thrive on any level without that spirit of generosity and cooperation.

Of course there is no limit to giving. To be merely physically working in a co-op or helping to administer a centre, is no more 'final' an expression of generosity than is dropping a few coins, or notes, into a collection bowl. If we are going to see the FWBO expand; if we are going to see even our present visions realised, then we will each have to rise to even greater heights of generosity, ask ourselves what our personal 'next step' is. But that, of course, is exactly what we need: the opportunity to keep giving, and raising the level of our giving, until almost without noticing — in fact completely without noticing since we will be too busy to notice — we will have truly entered the Bodhisattva Path.



Ink — one of our co-operatives

The Order Office

By Subhuti

One of the basic premises of the FWBO is that each local 'unit' — Centre, Co-operative, or community — should be autonomous. Our Movement is concerned with individuality and with responsibility. It cannot have a centralised headquarters which dictates orders to those at the periphery. Such an imperial structure could not but diminish responsibility.

The unifying force behind our Movement is the Western Buddhist Order: the spiritual fellowship of men and women who share a common commitment to the vision of human Enlightenment. As distinct from the FWBO — which is the organisational framework through which Order members work — the Western Buddhist Order itself needs some machinery through which it can function. This is provided by the Office of the Western Buddhist Order.

To date, all Order members are the personal disciples of the Venerable Sangharakshita and have been ordained by him. As Head of the Order, he has the respect of all its members, and his influence is vital to the development of the Order and, through it, the whole Movement. At present, the Order largely radiates from him. The Office of the Order, therefore, centres upon him.

A few years ago, the office

amounted to little more than secretarial help for the Venerable Sangharakshita. But as the Movement has grown in size and spread geographically, it has become more and more difficult for him to keep in touch, unaided, with all Order members and the whole Movement. The Office now consists of four men at Padmaloka: Subhuti, Vessantara, Ratnaprabha, and Jayadeva — together with invaluable assistance from Srimala and several women mitras in Norwich. None of us is able to work full-time, partly because we have other responsibilities and partly because the Office cannot afford to support us. We are far from being able to do everything that needs to be done.

Broadly speaking, our job is to help the Venerable Sangharakshita in his work. The more effective we can enable him to be, the more the Movement will deepen and the stronger will be its underlying unity. This responsibility is necessarily diverse and unpredictable. Those of us in the Office find ourselves involved in almost every aspect of the FWBO to some extent as we channel information to the Venerable Sangharakshita and convey his views to other Order members.

Our foremost function is to provide a personal secretariat for the Venerable Sangharakshita, looking after such matters as his appointments, travel arrange-

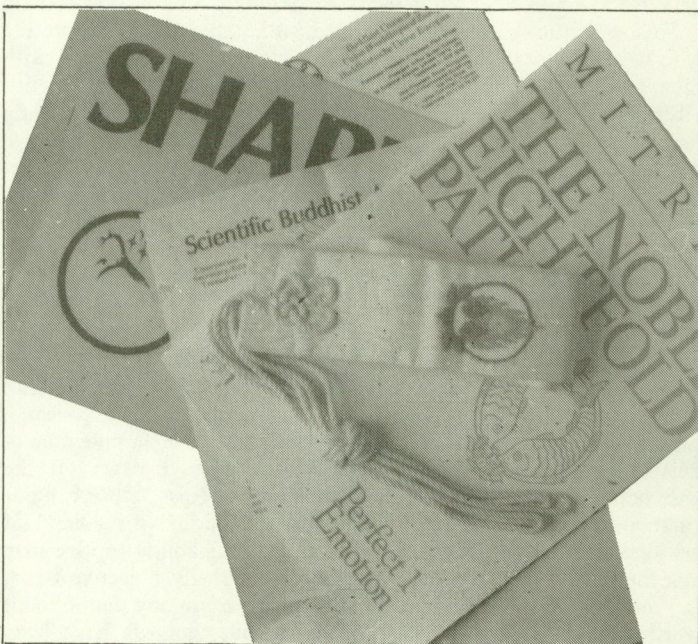
ments and finances, and giving secretarial help such as typing and filing. We try to do for him everything that he does not specifically have to (or want to) do himself so that his time is free for things for which he alone is qualified.

We then have a number of jobs which are part of the machinery of the Order. We look after the Order library and archives and are responsible for tape-recording and looking after the master tapes of all the Venerable Sangharakshita's seminars and lectures. We handle the Order finances which cover items like the Order Newsletter, *Shabda*, and the production of kesas. We keep records of all ordination requests and make sure that these are regularly reviewed by the relevant Order chapter. The now annual Men's Pre-ordination Course in Tuscany is administered by the Office and we keep a register of all Order members.

Since most Order members are heavily involved at a local level it is hard for them to maintain a perspective on the whole Movement. This is one of the Venerable Sangharakshita's main tasks and the Order Office assists him in this. First of all, we gather information on all aspects of the Movement from minutes of meetings, correspondence, personal contacts etc. Because we are not closely identified with any particular activity we are often able to spot things which local Order

members do not. The Venerable Sangharakshita also keeps a close eye on all this information and often asks us to intervene on his behalf with comments, criticisms, and suggestions. We are also able, under the Venerable Sangharakshita's guidance, to 'trouble-shoot' and to plug gaps — for instance in Aid for India or Windhorse Publications — in areas which are the responsibility of the whole Movement and therefore tend to be the responsibility of no-one in particular. We are also a source of information about the procedures and structures of the Movement and are often called upon for advice. Members of the Office team are also mainly responsible for the production of *Mitrata*.

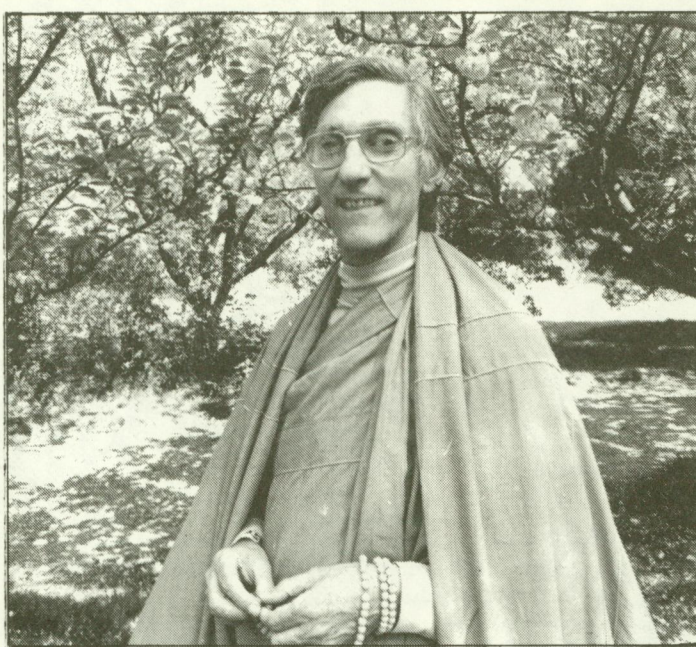
A movement consisting of autonomous centres can be hard to pin down. Who does any external agency apply to if it wants to address the whole FWBO? Who acts for the whole FWBO in matters of common concern? For the time being this must be the Venerable Sangharakshita, directly or through the Order Office. All 'official' contacts with other Buddhist groups or individuals are directed to him and he is closely concerned with our relations with all other external bodies. Here again the Order Office gathers and stores information, acts on the Venerable Sangharakshita's behalf, and sends out information about the FWBO as



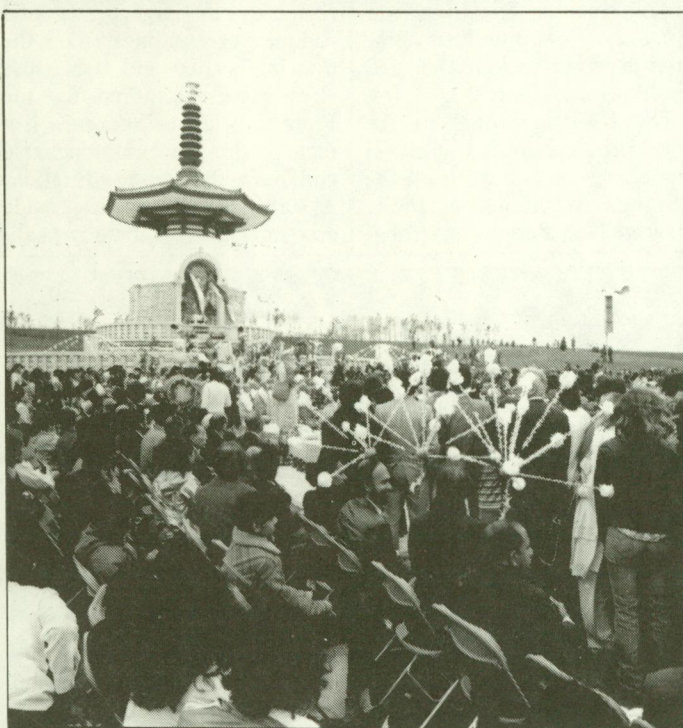
Some of the Office's responsibilities



The Office is responsible for recording seminars



The Venerable Sangharakshita at Padmaloka



The Office supervises our contacts with other Buddhist movements

widely as possible.

It is very clear that all of these centralising functions are urgently needed. The FWBO is no longer a small collection of people who know each other personally and can sort things out by making a few phone calls. The influence of the Venerable Sangharakshita needs to be disseminated throughout the Movement yet more effectively since it provides a vital unifying and galvanising force. Naturally, at some point he

will not be able to fulfil that function and some new system will have to be evolved by then. The Order Office provides the nucleus of that system.

At present, the Order Office is run on a budget of about £3,000 a year which is contributed by FWBO Centres. This is not nearly enough and we can only function because we do other things like leading retreats and seminars for which we are supported. Next year we will have to



— and involvement in gatherings like the Festival for Mind and Body

cut back the Office unless we are able to find another £2,500. To be able to expand to meet what we consider to be the present need, we must have a total of some £15,000 per annum.

The Office is located at Padmaloka and this too is beginning to create difficulties. There is not sufficient room for both a flourishing men's retreat Centre and an expanding Order Office. We need to develop new facilities for ourselves. This would cost in

the region of £30,000.

If we had the capital to design and convert our own Order Office facilities and if we had a much larger regular income we would be able to serve both the Venerable Sangharakshita and the FWBO much better. The effects of a full-time, efficient Order Office would, I am sure, be decisive in helping the FWBO to break through to a quite new level of functioning.

Funding the Dhamma Revolution

By Pete Nicholson

Maharashtra, a state in Western India, is larger than the United Kingdom with as large a population. It was in Maharashtra that the 'Dhamma Revolution' publicly began when, on 14th October 1954, Dr Ambedkar, the leader of India's ex-untouchable communities, renounced Hinduism with its inherent Casteism, and embraced Buddhism.



Dr Ambedkar

The story of Dr Ambedkar's life and his struggle to find a means of emancipation for his followers has been documented in previous *Newsletters* (see, particularly, issue 54). His death, coming soon after his conversion, left his people with a strong vision of the Dhamma and how they could use it to change their lives, but with few capable, committed Dhamma workers to help them realise its potential. More than three million ex-untouchables in

Maharashtra alone made the same choice as Dr Ambedkar and became New Buddhists; but, left without leadership and guidance, the new movement lost its direction and momentum. The potential for the Dhamma Revolution was to remain dormant for over twenty years.

But now that potential is being re-awakened by the presence of the FWBO in Maharashtra. In 1978, English Order member Dharmachari Anagarika Lokamitra founded the first FWBO Centre on the Indian subcontinent.

From that first Centre in Pune the Movement has taken root and grown rapidly. There are now some twenty Order members in India — nearly one tenth of the whole Order. With the guidance and inspiration of Lokamitra and other European Order members they have established a dynamic base for the Dhamma throughout the state of Maharashtra, and beyond. Other Centres have already been established in Aurangabad, Bombay, and Ahmedabad.

Working from a sympathetic understanding of their own people, Indian Dhammacharis tour villages and towns giving talks, holding classes and teaching meditation. They are enthusiastically received everywhere — often by thousands of people who, perhaps, have never before been given the opportunity to hear the Dhamma from a person who is fully committed to the Three Jewels. A network of Friends, mitras and other contacts has sprung up and is

growing rapidly.

But the energy and enthusiasm of the Dhammacharis and the New Buddhists are not of themselves enough. The needs are vast and the resources few: the majority of the New Buddhists come from deprived backgrounds and are desperately poor.

The FWBO throughout the world has committed itself to supporting and nurturing the Dhamma Revolution in India. They are New Buddhists, strugg-

ling to forge a new path through an old, uncaring society. We, in the West, are also New Buddhists. We can effectively offer them what they need as we understand their needs and share the same ideals.

What we can most effectively offer them is one key element they lack; that is money to provide resources for growth.

Already the FWBO and the charity Aid for India have raised over £1 million to provide urgently needed social, educational and medical facilities. The *Pune Project* is providing medical assistance and training; some co-operative business projects have been experimented with, actively demonstrating to those involved that they can make a new start in their working lives as well as — eventually — providing funds to make the project completely self-financing. A large, integrated complex of buildings is on the drawing-board; and land has already been acquired for the Project. *Action in Education* is a plan to provide ex-untouchable children with access to education. A series of centres to provide accommodation and study facili-



The potential is being re-awakened

ties near to existing schools and colleges is planned. Again, the land for the first has already been acquired.

We are now turning our attention towards the complementary spiritual facilities, since without these, the social projects have no firm foundation.

In the middle of 1983 we launched a new appeal called *The Buddhist Revival in India* and we set ourselves three immediate goals: to provide Dhamma and meditation centres in Bombay and Pune; and to complete the retreat centre at Bhaja, which will eventually allow retreats of up to two hundred people to take place.

A step towards the first goal has already been taken. In November a moderately sized flat was purchased in Bombay by TBMSG (the Indian name for the FWBO), on the fifth floor of an apartment block, on the edge of one of the slum areas. The Bombay Dhamma Centre may not sound impressive. But, for the New Buddhists in Bombay it represents a tremendous step



forward as now, for the first time, there is a permanent centre for Dhamma activities for them.

Funds raised in the West will allow the work that has begun to be completed and further steps to be taken. But the Dhamma Revolution is not merely a social one. It is an individual revolution for each person it touches; an opportunity for a radical, personal realignment towards the ideals of spiritual growth and development, towards the Three Jewels.

A Women's Retreat Centre

By Sanghadevi

T rue Vision, Transcendental Vision, manifests itself in Compassionate activity for the benefit of all. It is the underlying rationale behind anything and everything that is done in the FWBO. It is that vision, however dim or weak, that draws us out, draws us on to create and construct. We wish to benefit ourselves and other people. This is why we want a Women's Retreat Centre. We not only want to deepen our own experience of the Dharma, but also to share what we are learning with others.

Our vision of a retreat Centre for women has been developing over the few years since we last had one — Mandarava, in Norfolk. We now know that we want to establish a 'multi-purpose' Centre with a thriving resident community — including a few Order members — which will demonstrate to all the rich possibilities open to women who live and work together under the influence of the Dharma.

The Community will do whatever is necessary for the maintenance and running of the Centre, yet at the same time have its own life and momentum apart from the Centre's activities. To make such an arrangement possible we are going to have to find a place that allows the community quarters to be fairly self contained.

A wide range of retreats, events, and courses will be held there, offering depth and breadth. There will be something for everyone: those who have never encountered Buddhism

before, and those who have been practising for years; those with and those without children; those keen on study, and those keen on meditation; those wanting Yoga and massage, and those just wanting peace and quiet — a taste of the 'simple life' for a few days; women from the UK, and women from abroad. And of course, having on-going retreat facilities available will be a tremendous boon for those who are preparing themselves for ordination.

At the moment we have no permanent retreat base, which means that we have to be quite selective about the types of retreat we run, and for how long. It is so difficult and costly to find the right venues. Also there are, at present, no women Order members whose main commitment is to the running and organising of retreats. When some Order members live full-time at the Retreat Centre they will become a focus, as important as the building itself, for the organisation of a more diverse range of retreats.

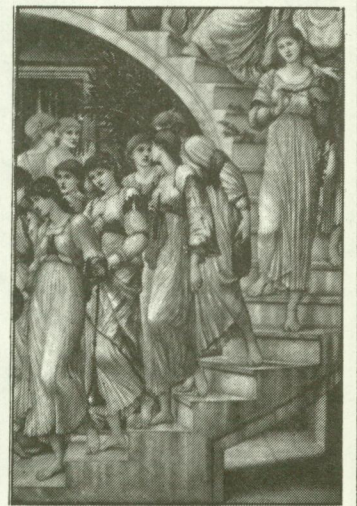
We envisage these retreats as not just servicing the city centres of the FWBO, but attracting new women along in their own right. The Centre will thereby give a greater diversity to the FWBO, and help in its own way to make the Dharma accessible to a wider range of people.

So we have this vision, and therefore, to a certain degree, our 'Centre' already exists. However, vision must find concrete expression if it is to be of tangible value. It must percolate through to the material plane. Vision has a trans-

forming effect when it works through living beings. When a number of individuals work together with a common vision, they and their surroundings can be transformed. This is the challenge facing women in the FWBO. It is a challenge that demands a level of creativity and initiative which we have not reached before, and which can only serve to benefit our future undertakings. We need the challenge of acquiring this Retreat Centre. The growth it demands of us to establish it on the material plane will also ensure that it is a living spiritual centre, where our vision will become clarified, purified, and truly Transcendental.

There will also be more down-to-earth benefits. It is still relatively uncommon for women to own property. The United Nations report of 1980 states that women constitute half of the world's population, perform nearly two-thirds of the world's work, receive a tenth of the world's income, and own less than a hundredth of the world's property. Simply on a psychological level our Centre will do a lot to boost the confidence and self-esteem of women already involved in the FWBO, and it will serve as a model for other women.

So, the acquisition and establishment of our Retreat Centre will be a great step forward for the FWBO as a Movement, and for women in particular; another facet of that multi-faceted jewel of the Dharma will be revealed, reflecting Truth, Beauty, Love, strength and fearlessness, to all who look upon it.



With Vajraloka, we have permanent, ideal retreat facilities. Moreover, we have a retreat which is always in progress, which any man (with a modicum of experience) may join at almost any weekend, and which women also can use from time to time, until their own centre is ready.

The retreat is going on all the time, even as you read this — *out of time* in the ordinary sense, in its own clear, jewel-like, world. Vajraloka makes such a difference. It is a constantly available source of spiritual nourishment: a vital source.

It is also an ideal location for visualisation retreats — special retreats for Order members who have been given a particular visualisation practice. These involve meditating upon a particular Buddha or Bodhisattva form, such as Amitabha, Avalokitesvara, or Padmasambhava. Such

practices are an extremely important source of inspiration, so these retreats are invaluable for the Order as a whole, not to mention the individuals concerned. Newly ordained Dhammacharis need an opportunity to connect deeply with their practice, which is not easy for those who are working around urban centres. By joining Vajraloka for a few months, or even a few years, Order members have the opportunity to concentrate fully upon meditation. Meditation is the life-blood of our movement; and the Order is its heart. As Hakuin's *Song of Meditation* tells us:

Giving, Morality, and the other Perfections,... repentance, discipline, and the many other right actions — all come back to the practice of Meditation.

In the end, it is only through meditation, wholeheartedly and systematically practised, that the true Insight and Compassion of

THE Vajraloka

By Kar

Enlightenment may be cultivated. Such practice is vital for us if the FWBO is to remain spiritually alive over the coming decades.

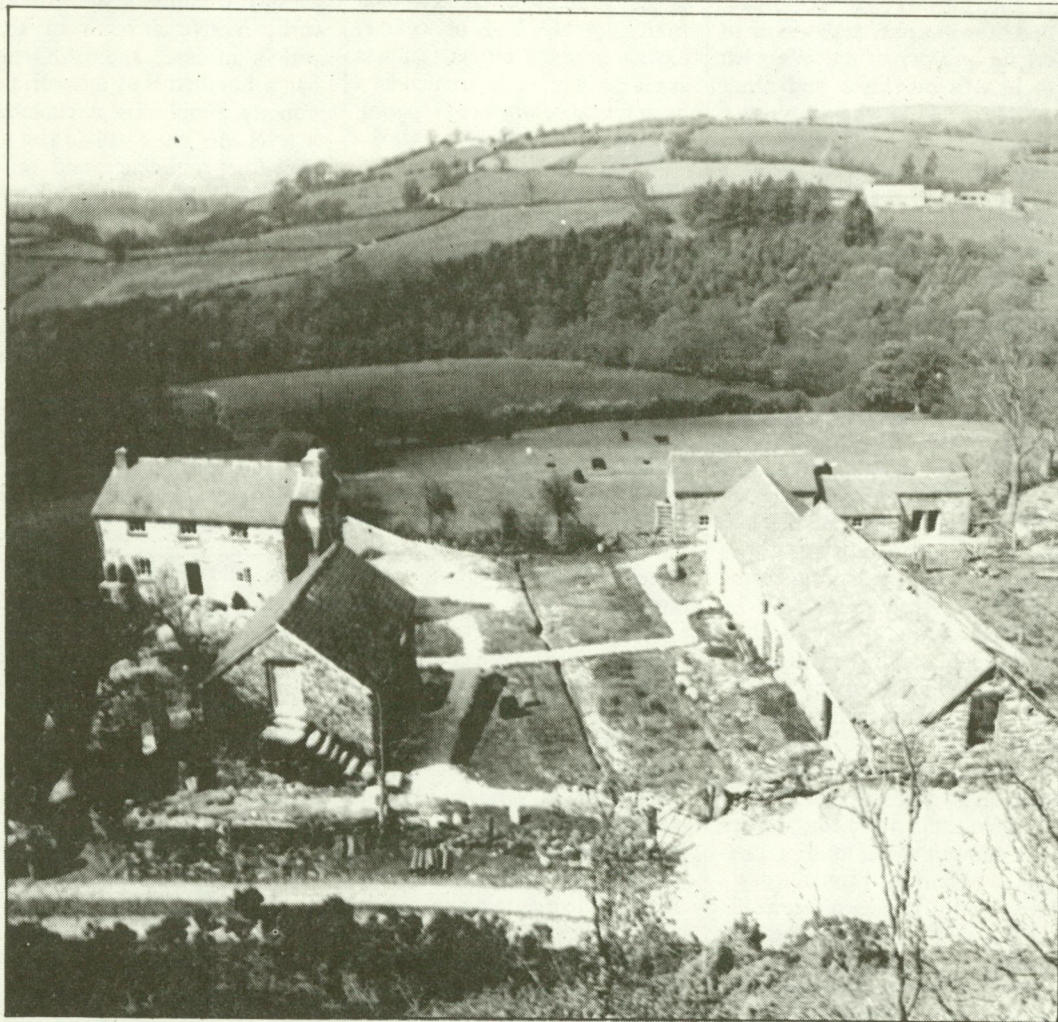
The primary requirement for the community's fuller establishment is that its members should be able to remain in it —

for long periods. Here, a year is a short time — only long enough for the deep impressions left by the outside world to subside a little — only long enough to get used to being here. For someone who wishes to devote a significant portion of their life to meditation, an optimum period seems to be at least three years. However, we are simply not able to support anyone to do this, although we are making efforts in that direction.

At the moment most community members support themselves from their savings, and one other is supported for his most basic needs. This state of affairs cannot enable people to stay for years at a time; but unless this does happen, the community will never get properly established. The better the community is, then the better the retreat facilities, the better the overall atmosphere, and much the better the individual meditator's stay here.

A good community means that practical matters, such as cooking and general organisation, run smoothly. Secondly, it means that there is a friendly, supportive atmosphere, a very important condition for meditation. However, we need to do much more than simply establish a community with long-term members. That is just the beginning.

Two Order members, Devapriya and Prakasha, are about to buy another house, situated close-by, along the same country track, called *Blaenddol*. Fortunately, the house, which is large, with a number of outbuildings and a little land, is being offered very cheaply indeed. Even so, there is



Vajraloka

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only enough money to bring it up to a bare minimum standard, with room, initially, for a community of just three. However, there is plenty of room for expansion — it could house twelve or even more.

Blaenddol will be an extension of the Vajraloka community. Members of the extended community will spend some time helping to run the on-going retreat at Vajraloka, and some time at Blaenddol — getting quietly on with their own meditation, with fewer responsibilities, in a more intimate atmosphere. At Blaenddol, conditions for meditation will be even stronger. As the years pass, most men Order members will spend at least a few months here, and thus the whole Order, the FWBO, and thus the whole world, will benefit.

But what about Vajraloka, our retreat centre, itself? First of all, we would like to provide more space. At present, Vajraloka has single-room accommodation for only three, yet we would like everyone who wants to be able to have a single room. Our dining room/kitchen can seem cramped if there are more than five or six guests here: we would like either to enlarge it, or to create a new dining-cum-sitting room, with separate kitchen, in the as-yet unused barn. This barn could also accommodate single rooms upstairs; and below, next to the new kitchen, could be installed new toilet and washing facilities. The remaining top end of the barn might eventually be converted into a second shrine room, which could be used by those doing

special practices such as the 'Going for Refuge with Prostrations'.

Beyond the present Vajraloka. We would like to own our own forest! Craig Arthbry, the wooded hill above Vajraloka, will never be much good for agricul-

ture or even for grazing sheep: but it could be an ideal setting for half a dozen solitary retreat cabins. The hill comprises about one hundred acres of cliffs and crags, with superb views.

The second development should bear some more immediate fruit. Good solitary retreat facilities are scarce. In North Wales there are a great number of isolated cottages and caravans, but these are difficult to discover from a city centre. We hope to co-ordinate information on suitable places for those who are looking, and also to get one or two caravans for Vajraloka's own use.

We would also like to encourage the establishment of the FWBO in North Wales. There are a great many people who would be interested, and two friendly Order members could achieve a great deal without needing even to set up a public centre.

The most obvious result of all

these developments will be that more people will be seriously practicing meditation. Doubtless there are other, more subtle, benefits to the world — but this benefit alone is inestimable, beyond price.

... When in reverence this truth is heard even once, he who praises it and gladly embraces it has merit without end.

How much more he who turns within and confirms directly his own nature, that his own nature is no nature — such has transcended vain words.

... What remains to be sought? Nirvana is clear before him.

This very place the lotus paradise, this very body the Buddha.

(The Song of Meditation)



Intimate eating in the present dining room

A School in the Himalayas

By Nagabodhi



Although we are stretched to our limits, meeting the needs and trying to fuel the dreams of our own Movement, there is one 'cause' altogether beyond the immediate sphere of the FWBO itself for which Friends regularly shake collection tins on the streets, arrange benefit dinners, and go on sponsored walks: that is the 'ITBCI School', up in the foothills of the Himalayas.

The Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Cultural Institute School occupies a small, uneven patch of hillside on the outskirts of a town in West Bengal called Kalimpong.

It was in Kalimpong that the Venerable Sangharakshita spent fourteen years, based at the Triyana Vardharna Vihara, studying, practising and teaching the Dharma, writing such works as *Path of the Inner Life*, *The Religion of Art*, and *A Survey of Buddhism*, and meeting some extraordinary people. One of these was the Venerable Dhardo Rimpoche, a Tibetan Lama of the Gelugpa School. Dhardo Rimpoche became a friend and teacher to Bhante, and initiated

him into several Vajrayana practices — some of which have been transmitted, in turn, to Order members. It was also from Dhardo that Bhante received the Bodhisattva Ordination.

Our link with a small school for about two hundred boys and girls is the fact that Dhardo Rimpoche

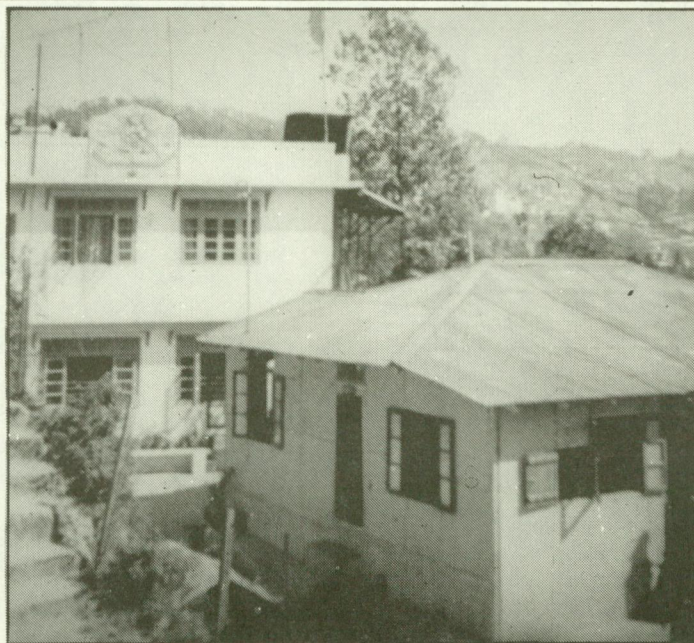
established it, soon after the Chinese invasion of Tibet.

Born in Tibet, and recognised as a *tulku* — an incarnation of a famous Lama — when he was four, Dhardo was taken from his family to undergo the rigorous training of his Order. He then spent some years as abbot of the

Tibetan *gumpa* in Bodh Gaya, the place of the Buddha's Enlightenment, and therefore the most revered of Buddhist pilgrimage centres.

After the Chinese invasion, when many thousands of refugees fled into India, and while traditional Tibetan Culture was undergoing a cultural revolution in its native land, Dhardo felt the need to start a school. He would offer children from refugee homes a good formal education; but he would also keep alive, in and through them, the seeds of their own cultural heritage. They would learn to read and write in Tibetan, learn to play Tibetan music on Tibetan instruments, dance in Tibetan costumes made by themselves, develop an appreciation of their own religion, and a general understanding of their own folklore. The school would preserve at a 'grass-roots' level, a seed of Tibetan culture — allowing its pupils to integrate with Indian society without sacrificing their deeper roots.

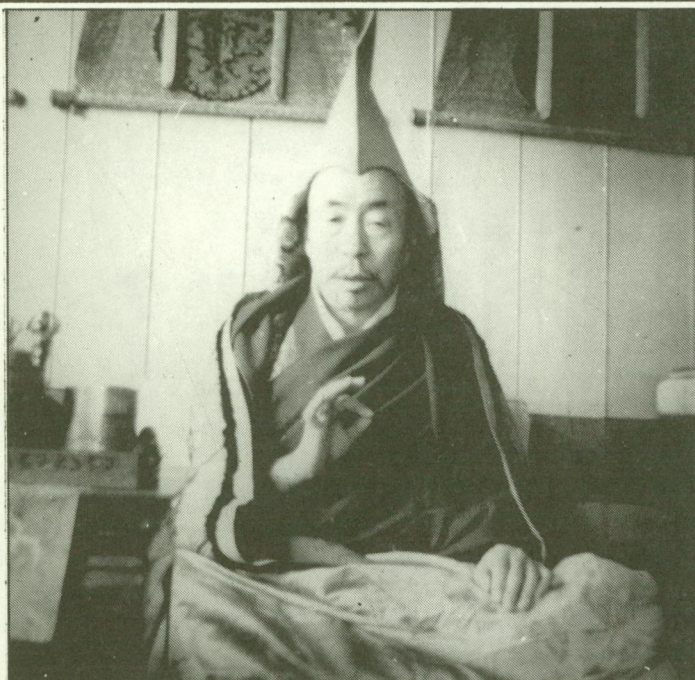
A few minutes spent walking around the ramshackle assortment of wooden cabins and sheds, dominated by the bright clean



The School

lines of one modern central building, are enough to convince one that Dhardo has hit upon a very successful formula. The 200 five to fifteen year olds immediately strike you as the happiest, liveliest children on earth. Although most come from poor families; although two classes are often held at once in the same room, although there is no playground, and although they improvise skipping ropes out of bits of string and elastic bands, their eyes seem to shine with light, and gusts of laughter fill the air. As Dhardo walks around the school they smile up at him with transparent love, and he responds to them, to you, to the dog barking beside its kennel with a warmth and love that makes you reassess what the words 'human being' sum up.

Between cupfuls of butter-tea I ask him where the school gets its funds. He explains that because the school teaches *more* than the conventional syllabus it is considered beyond the scope of government funding. He says that an organisation in Canada used to give money. It shared the cost of the new building with the FWBO. But now it can no longer



Dhardo Tulku Rimpoche

send anything. So what does that leave? "You. The FWBO," he replies.

This is a shock. He has sent no urgent appeals, made no fuss, and yet the school is now entirely dependent on the completely spontaneous, random donations

sent occasionally by FWBO Centres!

He explains that he still needs money to pay his staff higher wages, since he has trouble holding on to all but the most dedicated. He shows a plan, on which a couple of the old shacks have

given way to another multi-storey building offering more classroom and sleeping accommodation (there are presently forty boarders), and a playground. In awed tones he explains that all this will cost, in stages, about 600,000 rupees, about £35,000.

Well, that is a fair amount of money, but it is not *that* much. The Aid for India office in London holds an account for the school, through which donations can be paid, and unless someone reading this sends all the money straight away, the AFI team will probably launch a decisive appeal for the School at some future date.

This may seem crazy in view of our own pressing needs. But it is a cause which we are trying to support nevertheless, not just because of our debt to Dhardo Rimpoche, nor just because the school is such a happy and worthwhile place, but also because, sometimes, when you think you've reached the point at which you just cannot give a penny more, when the worries start closing in, then the only thing left to do is to give.



The happiest children on earth

TUSCANY III

By Vidyaratna

"I think continually of those who were truly great. Who, from the womb, remembered the soul's history through corridors of light where the hours are suns, endless and singing."

So opens one of Stephen Spender's finest poems, and his image of blazing light was one that returned to me again and again during this year's pre-Ordination Intensive course in Tuscany.

Light: variegated, brilliant, dazzling, golden, tangible - a living presence. We bathed in light and were born into light.

The hot Italian sun bore down on us for the first few, rapidly passing weeks before the Ordinations took place on

a beautiful, blue-skied, warm Sangha Day, which fell on October 21st this year. Each day the sun rose in a haze: a mystery-enshrouded promise of the feast of light and heat that was to come. By mid-morning it would be riding high in the sky, fiercely gazing down with its fiery looks, which intensified such that by the afternoon one had either to take shelter indoors or - a more popular alternative - prostrate oneself beneath it. In the evening, just as the sun began its final descent into darkness, came the moments that I enjoyed most. The light at this time of day was extraordinarily beautiful. I had never experienced such light before,

never seen such sights anywhere, except in the beautiful light and colour that some Renaissance painters have captured. At this time of day, light seems to take on a new quality: it becomes tangible. As the sunset reaches its climax the colours are stunning: superb oranges, deep luminous reds, all mixed together with greens, blues, purples and yellows. The colours glow lucidly, growing in intensity continually, casting their light over everything you can see, transforming and transfiguring all. Everything becomes like a mirage, shimmering, magical and mysterious. You walked in the light, as if you could actually feel it on your skin, like a living,

shining, golden presence. One was tempted to reach out and try to touch, to mould it, or perhaps to taste its goldness. Vessantara once commented, after the first Tuscany retreat, 'It's like walking in clear honey'.

Within us too, light was dawning as the veils of ignorance were cleared away, at least partially, in the study sessions which dominated the weeks before the ordinations. The golden beams of the Dharma penetrated further, deeper and more brightly than they had ever done before, helping us to develop a lucidity and radiance, even a physical brightness, that we hadn't possessed before. We studied the 'Noble Eightfold

Path' lectures given by Bhante and, after Bhante had arrived, studied under his guidance sections from the *Dhammapada*. Having Bhante with us for five or six weeks was, for all of us, the high point of the retreat, and we all shone more brightly as he skilfully led us to newer, higher vistas where we could see the blazing lamp of the Dharma more clearly and feel its rays of warm compassion and radiant wisdom more fully.

Of the many gems that Bhante uncovered and showed us, two that struck me forcibly were the tremendous importance of mindfulness and awareness and the difficulty of practising Perfect Speech. We came to see how unmindful and unaware we

usually are, and how much this subverts our efforts to develop. Bhante suggested we needed a campaign against unmindfulness. He also pointed out that speech was a particularly difficult area in which to be positive and mindful, or to follow the precepts, yet it is essential that we do so since our speech has a very strong effect on ourselves and others. Perfect speech also requires, to a large extent, the co-operation of our fellow practitioners.

Following the Ordinations and study with Bhante, we tackled some work that had to be done: a heavy olive harvest, some one-and-a-half tons this year; building work in the garden, and some landscaping. The yearly Tuscany retreats

are all making steady impact on Il Convento: each year the building takes on a more 'defined' appearance as it is gradually restored to something like its original 17th century splendour. The last few weeks of the retreat gave us more time for personal study, meditation and time with each other. Long periods of silence were observed in order to help maintain the strong meditative atmosphere we had built up.

As the icy winds blew from the Alps during late November and early December, even though the sky was a beautiful, sharp, piercing blue, we would gather in the common room around the log fire to read, or just relax while others would be busy transcribing the tapes of the

seminars that Bhante had given (enabling us to proudly state that we were the first retreat in FWBO history to fully complete the transcriptions on the retreat itself) thus providing a rich new source of material for the Movement.

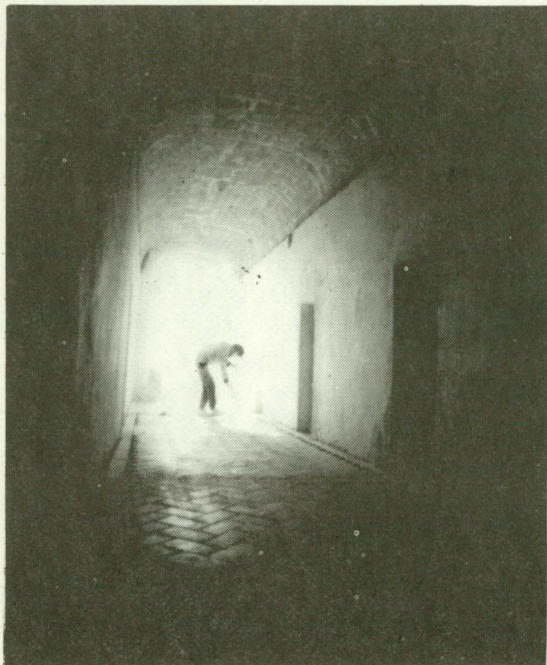
This year all the fifteen mitras who attended the retreat were ordained and so fifteen new Order members entered the Western Buddhist Order. These were, in order of ordination: Dayaratna, Vidyaratna, Tejaratna, Punyaraja, Bodhiraja, Vidyaraja, Satyapriya, Satyadeva, Advayacitta, Agracitta, Viracitta, Sanghadeva, Sanghaloka, and Sanghapala.



The olive harvest



Il Convento



Work period



Satyapala offers flowers during his Ordination

THE LONDON BUDDHIST CENTRE, 5 YEARS ON

Our autumn session has been a routine one - that is, highly productive, with the Centre introducing hundreds of newcomers to meditation and Buddhism. We have held classes every night of the week, and our weekends have been busy with retreats and seminars. We have had a seminar on Right Livelihood, to introduce people to the Buddhist ideal of creative, rewarding work. We also held a weekend workshop on 'The Radical Romantics': poets such as Shelley, Blake and Keats who used the power of the Imagination to struggle towards spiritual awakening.

Sangha Day was full and joyful, with talks from Vajrapushpa, Atula and Kulamitra before the mitra reaffirmation ceremony. In the physical arena the usual round of Yoga, massage, Tai Chi, and karate classes took place, and all these contributed to the atmosphere of the bustling, rich complexity that is the L.B.C. Add to this the Right Livelihood projects, the housing co-op, and Aid For India, and there is more going on in any

of the true value of our work. An event is needed to highlight all our ideals and bring them into clear focus, to give us an overview, and encapsulate the meaning of our lives, past, present, and future. For some of us at the L.B.C. our fifth anniversary was just such an occasion.

It began on the evening of Friday 2nd December with a talk at the local town hall, in very pleasant surroundings, by Nagabodhi. This was entitled 'The Only Miracle', and was based on a sutta recorded in the *Digha Nikaya* in which the Buddha meets a householder called Kevaddha who wants Him to tell his disciples to perform miracles in order to spread faith in the Dharma. The Buddha then tells him that the 'only miracle', of the title, is the growth of the individual from the unenlightened to the Enlightened state. Nagabodhi was on excellent form, combining humour with a direct transmission of the Buddha's message cast into the modern idiom. In particular his talk reminded us all of the miraculous nature of change, how difficult it is to achieve, and how heroic must be our effort to grow. It got the weekend off to an appropriate start by highlighting the real nature of our work, and generating enthusiasm for its essential ingredient of radical transformation.

Saturday was devoted exclusively to the practice of meditation, with 36 hours of non-stop mindfulness of breathing, walking and chanting, and *metta bhavana*. People really responded to this opportunity, coming and going throughout the day and night. The meditations were led by various Order Members, and people were able to join in every hour on the hour. Even in the early hours of the morning there were ten people sitting meditating, and most of the time there were fifteen or twenty people putting effort into changing themselves and building up a very strong atmosphere in the process. In fact the shrine room felt remarkably, tangibly, calm and vibrant, and this made it an easy place to meditate in for several hours at a stretch without feeling in the least bit strained. Many people

commented that the shrine room hadn't felt such a concentration of energy since the opening five years previously, when the *metta bhavana* had been practised non-stop for a week! This non-stop meditation proved that the sort of conditions usually only experienced on retreat can be developed in the heart of London if the conditions are right, and if enough effort is made. It opened people's eyes to what the Centre could be at its best, and made us want to strive to improve the meditative quality that could be at its heart. Already we are planning another such session in the new year, as well as trying to build up our daytime classes so that the Centre can always be what it was that



Tejamati—treasurer

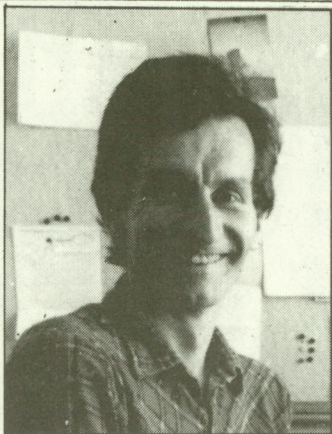
dinna talked of all the hard work that went into fundraising for the L.B.C.; Atula re-lived the hardships of trying to tackle a massive building project on a shoestring budget, and spoke of the inspiration that kept people going. Chintamani completed the account of the Centre's construction with the tale of his efforts to produce the *Buddharupas*, and the celebrations that followed when they were finally mounted on the shrines. Jinapriya, Kate Davis, and Simon Turnbull then gave accounts of how they had come across Buddhism through the L.B.C., and expressed how deeply this had changed their lives. For many people it was the first time they had heard a history of the Centre, which previously they had taken for granted as an ever present reality. The talks contributed to the feeling that, with effort, things can still be improved, and that everyone who wants to can participate in the process of making the Dharma



Kulamitra—chairman

weekend; the best possible place in London to meditate, available whenever people want to use it.

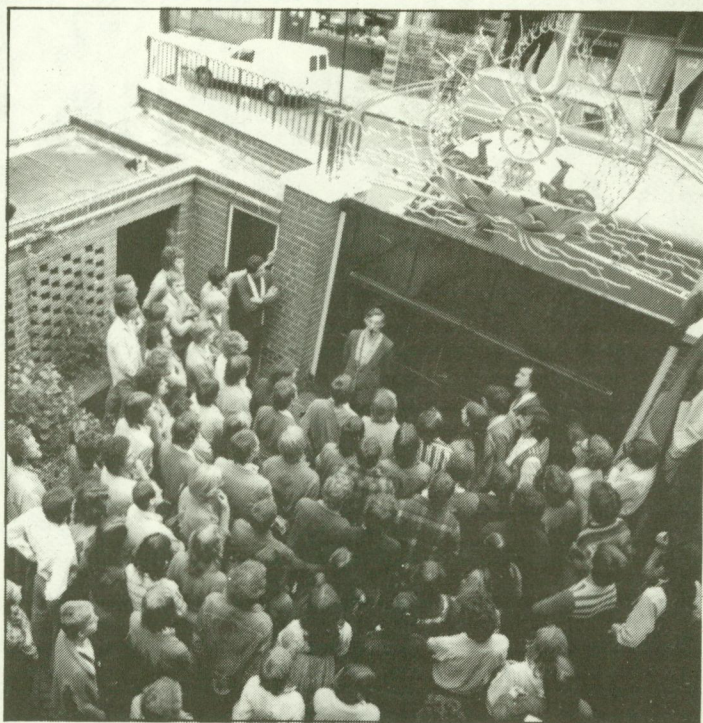
A review of the past followed on Sunday morning, with a short video, and talks by people with experience of different elements of our history. Dhamma-



Khemavira—secretary

one session than most people can absorb.

This makes it all the more strange that it can all so easily seem routine. Human beings, it seems, can quickly adapt, until even the compassionate activity of the spiritual life can be taken for granted, along with the ever present wonder of existence itself. So from time to time we need something to remind us



Opening festivities five years ago



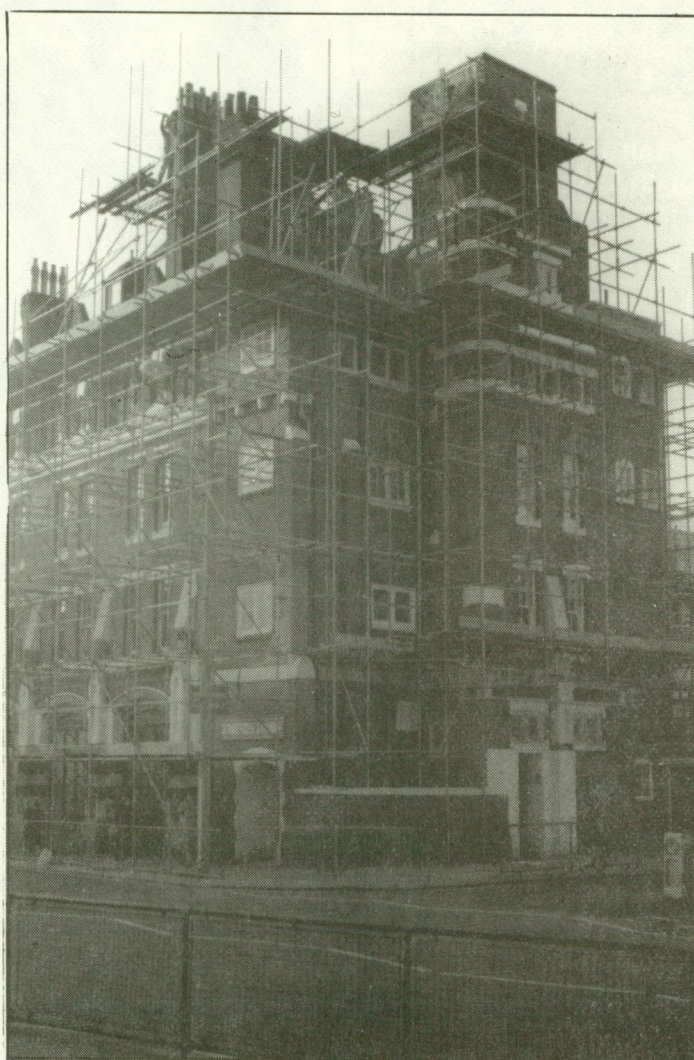
available in the West.

In the afternoon possible improvements were explored in some detail in discussion groups. These examined a paper presented by Kulamitra, condensed from his recent Chairman's report, to give a summary of the works the L.B.C.'s council would like to carry out over the next five years. The recent experience of the Centre's possibilities as an ideal environment for meditation had enabled people to see that substantial physical changes are needed before this quality can be maintained in the everyday life of the Centre. Everyone seemed keen to see this happen as soon as the money for it can be raised.

Kulamitra gave a talk in the evening which emphasised the spiritual heart of the Centre being in meditation practice, and the need to keep this alive. He felt that the lives of people have been transformed

by community living and co-operative work until their experience and the present Centre activities are more or less on a par. Now the Centre has to push forward again by going beyond the merely human, into the Dhyanas and the Transcendental. Rather, people involved with the Centre have to do this: use the opportunity to go beyond their present limitations. Otherwise the Centre will be a beautiful but empty shell. He finished by coming back to practical things with a dana appeal, launching a new fundraising project to make all these improvements possible, and emphasised that the future would be created by the selfless dedication of all those present. The magical nature of the event was then given expression through the medium of the sevenfold puja, energetically and vibrantly rendered, with Parami leading.

All that the L.B.C. is, has been and could be, seem to have been covered by the event. It brought all our feelings and ideas out at their very best, and by bringing even higher possibilities into awareness it motivated people to work hard for an even better future. The L.B.C. is already a success but our fifth anniversary showed us our limitations and opened up the possibility of future expansion. It showed us that the place is not nearly finished, and neither are we. Now that we have glimpsed what we and the Centre could be, everyone seems keen to make changes both in themselves and in the fabric of the Centre. The process of miraculous growth will continue.



Sukhavati, swathed in scaffolding, awaits some urgent roof repairs

W. London

Experience in running a small Centre in central London is being gained and progress slowly made. Worth mentioning are Eve Gill's massage courses which have been very successful, and the Intermediate Class led by Shantiprabha which has a small but very regular core of members.

The mitra study groups have been very good recently, with Vimala leading two groups for women, and Ratnaviṇa the men's group. The women have been studying *Pratitya Samutpada* (conditioned co-production) from different texts, the men have immersed themselves in the *Diamond Sutra* and the *Udana*.

Sarvasiddhi, the women's community, has moved from Kilburn to Islington. The house will not be available on a permanent basis, but it is spacious and in good condition. This means more travel for the women but also improved living conditions which have enabled intensified spiritual practice. There are two Order Members;

Anoma and Sridevi, and six mitras who have all asked for ordination. More women want to move in when a larger property can be found.

Ratnadvipa, the men's community, has now secured a permanent property in West Kensington. They will be moving at the beginning of the new year. This promises to be a very auspicious development indeed which will no doubt have a beneficial impact on our situation.

Croydon

This year we celebrated *Sangha Day* at our Centre on Sunday October 30th. Although this was a little later than the 'official' date we felt that holding the festival on a Sunday would enable more people to attend. We also wanted to use the opportunity of a large public festival to introduce some of our restaurant customers, film society members, and Yoga students to our more obviously Buddhist activities.

Most people that attend one of our film shows, for example, automatically go onto our mail-

ing list. This means that for the next few months they are kept informed of our meditation classes, day retreats, and other special events such as public talks, book launches, and Buddhist festivals.

And so on Sangha Day many came along for their first taste of Buddhism. The evening started with a buffet meal, which helped create a friendly atmosphere. This was followed by a video of Sangharakshita's recent talk on 'Fidelity'. This talk seemed quite appropriate for beginners and mitras alike, especially as Bhante illustrated his points with many secular examples, including some from Milton and Beethoven.

An indication of the talk's success in stimulating interest in Buddhism was seen later when most of those present decided to stay for a rather elaborate Sevenfold Puja during which the mitra re-affirmation ceremony took place. This gave Padma-vajra the opportunity to explain what being a mitra meant and also some background to the structure of the movement.

The relative success of the day (although eighty-two people is a small number by Indian standards!) is encouraging for

1984, when we hope to attract many more people to the Croydon Buddhist Centre through our associated arts and other activities. And with the return of Order members from Tuscany possibly providing more staff for the Centre, we will be able to be more effective in encouraging wider interest in the dharma.

Brighton

Our autumn session in Brighton has been the busiest so far with our usual meditation classes, retreats, an 'Introduction to Buddhism' course, a poetry and music event, a seminar on Plato's 'Symposium', a talk at the University of Sussex by Devaraja, fund raising events, and an open day at the Centre. The last of these events - the open day - encouraged around one hundred people to visit the Centre and find out what we had to offer. During the day a local radio station interviewed Yashomitra, one of the Brighton Order members.

Sangha Day was celebrated with a day of meditation for mitras

and our more regular friends, and during the early evening we made members of the general public welcome with a vegetarian meal which was followed by a session of meditation, a talk by Silaratna and then a firework display! In the concluding puja two men, Adrian Lee and Matthew White, became mitras, thereby expressing their wish to deepen their friendships with the Order.

Next session, on March 7th, the Brighton Buddhist Centre, through its student society, has invited Richard Holmes, the author of various books on Shelley and Coleridge, to give a talk at the University of Sussex. The talk will be on the theme of the spiritual impact of Romanticism on the modern imagination. It promises to be of great interest not only to students of literature but also to followers of Buddhism who will no doubt find in Romantic thought much with which they can feel in sympathy.

Padmaloka

The functions of Padmaloka, as men's retreat centre and Order office, have been more clearly delineated over the last few months. Subhuti is now exclusively concerned with the Order office, assisted by Jayadeva. At present both are away whilst Subhuti writes his second book. In his absence Bodhiraja, newly ordained in Tuscany, is helping Vessantara with their work.

Ratnaprabha is our new treasurer, Greg Shanks has taken over running the candle business, our fund-raising livelihood. Richard Davey will be working there part-time as well as in the garden with Don Marshall. Lalitavajra has also moved up here and will be getting stuck into the day to day running and catering with Ric Cooney, so that we can expect a continual upgrading of our facilities.

We now have the benefit of a full-time chairman, a job which Vajrananda is vigorously pursuing as well as continuing as overall retreat organiser, assisted by Mike Shaw.

There were several highlights to our programme towards the end of last year. There was a second seminar led by Subhuti on *The Udana*, an important text from the Pali Canon. This was unusual in that it was a continuation of an earlier seminar with the same people attending, and was so successful that we are now considering offering a series of seminars, with one group of people studying a number of texts together over a year. The last 'Men's Event' was on the theme of 'Perfecting Wisdom'. The presence of the Venerable Sangharakshita, who also hopes to attend the March and May events, contributed to this



A work period on the Padmaloka Winter Retreat

successful weekend. The December Order Weekend, when the new Order members come back from Tuscany, has become a major event in the FWBO calendar, and was notable for its friendly atmosphere and the beautiful shrine. The Winter retreat was led by Vessantara along with the positive influence of the new Order members, this time on the theme of the Three Yanas, the three great stages of the Dharma's development.

This year coming will see the introduction of a new retreat, taking place over the Easter Bank Holiday. This is the Open Men's Spring Event. It will be led by Nagabodhi and will be suitable for newcomers to meditation. It will include taster classes in Tai Chi, Karate, and possibly Yoga too.

Norwich

Probably the highlight of the last few months was our Sangha Day celebration. This began on the Thursday afternoon with a group of parents and children acting out Jataka tales and a story from the life of the Buddha. On Sangha Day itself there was a morning session of meditation and readings, with a special *metta* practice for those receiving their public ordinations in Tuscany: Alan Rumbold (now Satyapriya) and Ian Wray (now Advayacitta) being especially in our minds.

The main celebration took place in the evening, and for this we were joined by Friends from Diss and Padmaloka for a first grand get-together of the Norfolk Sangha. After a meal there was a talk by Subhuti, followed by the mitra reaffirmation ceremony and a festive puja. As well as the reaffirmations there were three 'new' mitra ceremonies for Ian Moore and Chris Cullen from Norwich and Mark Crosby from

Diss, who were greeted as mitras with three hearty sadhus and a rain of flower petals.

We were also very happy to welcome back to Norwich after nearly two months away on retreat, Ratnasuri, our new lady Order Member. As Beryl Carey she was Norwich's first and staunchest Friend, having attended Devamitra's very first class in Norwich - and stuck at it with persistence ever since. At sixty she continues to put many a youngster to shame with her energy and determination.

Glasgow

Since the last report from Glasgow, one notable event which took place was the creation of five new mitras: two women and three men.

A second notable event was the women's weekend retreat which Parami led for us in November. It was notable in several ways - firstly because Ratnadakini came with her from London, appearing with us for the first time since her ordination in August. Secondly, there was Parami's experience and enthusiasm, and thirdly, this was not just a Glasgow event; of the twelve women present, one had travelled up from Newcastle, and one from Sheffield. It was exciting to speculate that this weekend might be the first of many North British retreats!

During the retreat we studied the *Mitrata* "Breaking Through into Buddhahood", which ends with a description of Vajrapani. Some comments from the study spring to mind:

On breaking through our conditioning: "I really get angry when I hear things like this. I'm sure that I'm more than a mass of psychological conditionings! (Pause) Oh, so that's

why I get angry!

On developing a sense of timelessness: "Since my watch stopped going I've been carrying my alarm clock around with me. I think I know what it means though; I feel I've been on this retreat for a week already."

By the end of the weekend, although we didn't break through into Buddhahood, we did realise how friendships can be kindled in only two days spent together - twelve of us, and a glimpse of the shadow of Vajrapanani.

Vajraloka

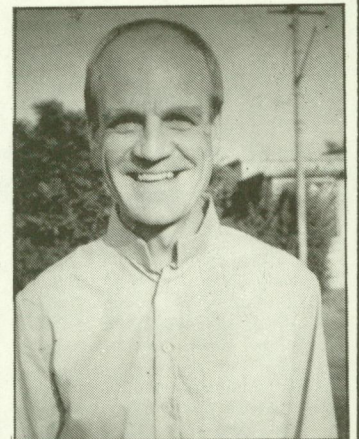
During August, one of our guests left a gate open in a nearby field. This caused such chaos with the sheep (the ewes had just been separated from the lambs) that it took the farmer, along with two men and dogs, four days to sort everything out. We have since been banned from using many of the local fields for walks. Plenty of other walks do remain however.

The purchase of Blaenddol, mentioned elsewhere, is now 99% certain, and should be completed by the new year. More news next issue.

Mangala, who will be reading this back in Ahmedabad, India, stayed with us for three months during the hot summer, and Vajracitta, who is normally to be found looking after the London Buddhist Centre, also spent the autumn months meditating here.

The on-going retreat has progressed well. There have also been two visualisation retreats for Order Members, on the Manjughosha and Tara practices. These were held on each side of a month of retreats for women.

Unfortunately, despite the great demand, not enough women



Mangala

Order Members are going to be available to lead more than seven weeks of retreat here next year, so people had better book early.

This autumn, while the women took over the Centre, community members each took off for solitary retreats in Wales and Spain.

Women's Order Event on Muck

Nineteen women Order members spent the month of September on Muck, the small island off the West coast of Scotland where the Women's Order/mitra event was held earlier in the year. Although most women were from the UK centres, Padmasuri had flown in for the event from India, where she works on the AFI medical project in Poona.

The event got off to a rather uneven start. Stormy seas kept about half of the retreatants land-bound, and they had to spend a frustrating few days marooned in a ferry port hotel, while those who had already made it out to the island settled into a meditative retreat programme.

However, once everyone was assembled, a very full programme got under way.

The days were spent mainly in the discursive mode, as the women present worked their way through an (ever growing) agenda of discussion topics around the general theme of women and the spiritual life.

The formal discussions were abbreviated by 'life stories' - everyone there recounting the story of her life, or of a crucial part of it, and positive feedback sessions. These lasted three full days, and involved each person present being told, by each other person in turn, about all her good qualities and aspects. Everyone who was there has said that this was intensely powerful for them. It seems to have made a very deep impact on the retreat as a whole, creating a strong atmosphere of trust and honesty.

Soon after the event, Jaya-pushpa left for Malaysia, where she is to initiate FWBO activities, Padmasuri flew back to the Dapodi slums, and Malini set off on a round the world tour. The rest returned to their centres and communities throughout the UK. Everyone felt deeply moved and changed by the event, and its fruits will no doubt reverberate throughout the Movement.



— And plenty of meetings



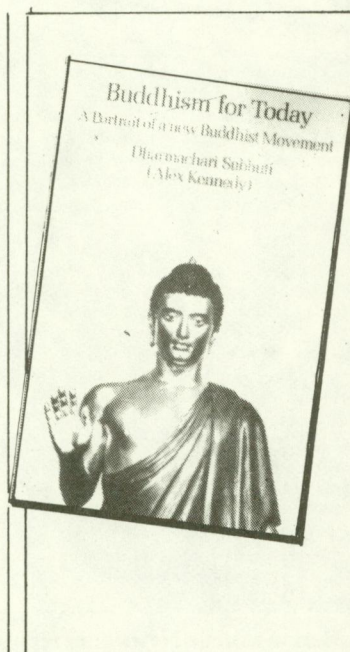
Plenty of fresh air

Subhuti's Success

Published in April 1983, the first impression of 2000 copies of 'Buddhism For Today' by Dharmacari Subhuti is already sold out. The book was originally printed on the basis of advance subscriptions and some 600 copies were taken in this way. The work has sold steadily throughout the FWBO and has proved to be an effective introduction to the Movement. The publishers, Element Books, have also found the book selling well through bookshops.

A sales agreement has just been made with an American distributor who has taken 750 copies, and a new impression of 3000 copies will be available in January 1984.

As you will have read elsewhere, Subhuti left for Greece at the beginning of January, where he intends to spend about four to five months writing his next book. We believe that its subject matter will be connected to the Tibetan Wheel of Life.



Aid for India

As usual, on arrival in the Aid For India office, the 'phone starts to ring just as the door is being unlocked. This morning it's one of AFI's 3000 covenant donors - she donates to the 'Action In Education' project and says that she has not heard from us since beginning her payments in June. Darryl Cowley explains that the next annual Newsletter is now being prepared. This will give information on our planned educational resource centres in the Pune area for ex-untouchable teenagers - allowing them to take advantage of existing educational facilities instead of missing out due to lack of money or overcrowded and difficult home situations.

He adds that the Newsletter will also contain the latest on the Pune Project, the other social project that is being funded via AFI by the donors. This project, he explains, is providing medical aid, at the moment mainly to mothers and babies since they are in greatest need; but there's also a kindergarten in operation; and jobs are being created for the adults - some women have started making soap-powder...

Meanwhile Pete Nicholson is opening the mail - for him there are mainly computer brochures trying to sell him a system that's sure to solve all our covenant administration problems. He's not altogether convinced however, and thinks that maybe he'll go and visit the software house he spoke to yesterday, as they say that their system will be able to handle our 3000 payments per month, plus tax claims, plus wages, plus mailing list labels, plus everything else as well...

Meanwhile Ruth Gilbertson and Robin Coombes are manually recording on a little card that one of these 3000 donors has made a payment. They have to make sure that they get the right P.H.Smith and record the right amount for the right project on the right card with the correct date, and put the card back in the right place. Otherwise Ruth will get utterly lost when she has to sort it out later, and Darryl will go crazy when he tries to claim the tax back from the Inland Revenue! He's just put in a claim for 1983 and it's a lot of money. 'I hope Pete gets that computer soon', Robin



Mahamati (R) tells Pete about India

whispers softly, and then, in mid-card, starts thinking of the article he's going to be writing for the AFI Newsletter - the one on Caste has been keeping him awake for weeks and he wishes that Mahamati, AFI's director, were back from India, so that he could throw a few ideas around.

Meanwhile, in the back room, Marian Monas is wondering what Lokamitra means in his latest letter; when he says he was expecting £434 from the Centres - does that include Sukhavati's new, improved contribution? - She'll have to chase it up. And what do they do with all those tape recorders they keep asking for - maybe they keep breaking down in the rainy season? And Polyfilla? And Tiger Balm?!

Oh, yes. Virabhadra and Padmasuri need some medical reports to be sent out, something to do with diarrhoea in two-year olds, and also height/weight/age statistics. The flat in Bombay has been bought, she reads on, thanks to anonymous donors within the FWBO. Now Vajraketu has somewhere to stay while he's giving talks to thousands of people there - no more sleeping on the pavements or on crowded floors. Maybe it will be the beginning of the Bombay Buddhist Centre, the biggest centre of the Movement.

Meanwhile, Tony Cuckson, warbling in Armagh dialect all the while, is grappling with the finer points of the final touches of this year's accounts - he's just about to present our books to the auditors and is confident that this year the job will only take them a few

days, thanks to his and Gordon Wills' expertise. He hopes he'll make it back in time to meet Gordon for lunch so that they can discuss the budget for next year's 'Action In Education' appeal.

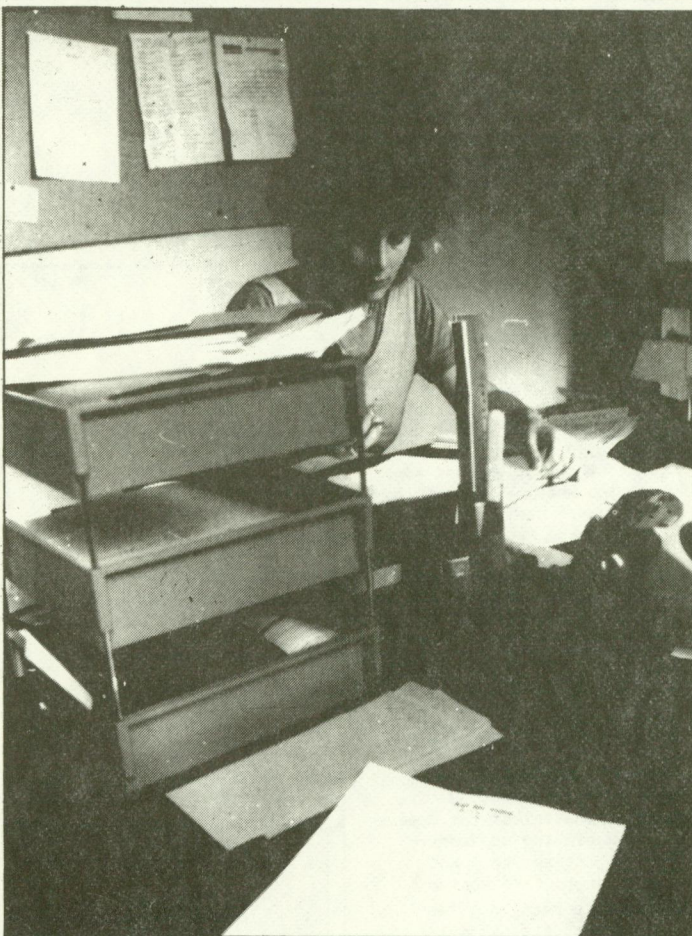
Meanwhile, somewhere in Europe, Mallika is talking to the famous and talented, trying to persuade one, or maybe all of them to give a benefit concert in aid of AFI - maybe in the Albert Hall, maybe in 1985...

John Bloss drops into the office with the latest news on who will be knocking the doors on the next appeal, so someone will have to think about arranging communities and coordinating the administration when the thousands of pounds come flooding into the office.

He also talks about John Zarradine's guitar concert in aid of AFI to be held in Lauderdale House in March - a pilot for the big one that Mallika is setting up. Nagabodhi suddenly peers around the door and confirms that he'll be giving a talk and showing slides there as well - so Jill Warner, a volunteer, starts sorting through the cards to find donors in the area to invite.

11 a.m. and Pete offers to make tea for the first time in a week or two, as he needs a break from typing letters to solicitors about the office moving up the road.

Marian wishes, not for the first time today, that there were some more keen and perfect people working in AFI. Maybe they'll read this and rush for the 'phone...



Marian writes a Newsletter report

Unfortunately the international postal system has let us down again, so we have not received a report from India for this issue again. However some news is known and can be relayed through these columns.

The Retreat Centre at Bhaja, whose foundations were dug just a few months ago, is now being used. The first stage, to create a Centre for retreats of thirty people has been completed. As the rains were ending the first retreat was held there, a two-week mitra retreat, in which work featured quite prominently. Three hour work periods took place every morning, and during them work on some sections of the building was completed, alterations were made in others, and a lot of earth was moved. For

this, a 'chain gang' of mitras and Order members passed large metal bowls to each other, filled with earth, from the back and sides of the building to the front, in order to create a broad terrace on the gently sloping hillside from which one has fine views of the plain in one direction, and the hills with their 2,200 year old Buddhist caves in the other.

The team spirit on the retreat was excellent, and the

effects of a balanced regime of purposeful work, meditation, and study were clearly evident.

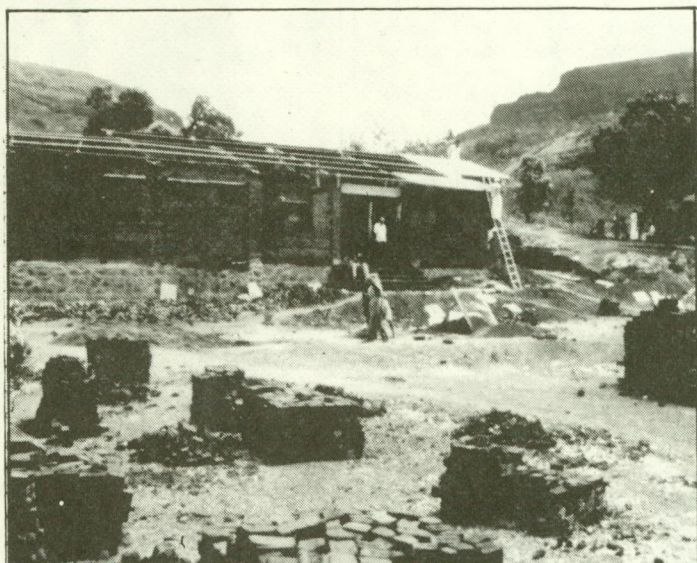
On the publishing side, the circulation of *Buddhayan*, the Marathi medium quarterly, continues to grow, and new issues of *Dhammamegha* appear regularly.

The big news is that the Venerable Sangharakshita has recently spent three weeks in India, giving talks in Poona and Bombay, and leading an Ordination retreat. A full report will appear in the

next issue, but we can announce that there are eight new Order members there, eight new mitras, and one new anagarika.

Another important piece of news is the acquisition of a flat in Bombay. Vajraketu had been working for some months with no base at all, never knowing where he would lay his head at night. He now has a small apartment, where he is living and building up a community, and where Dhamma activities can take place: study groups and meditation sessions. Of course it is not at all big enough to receive even a single percentage of Bombay's 750,000 Buddhists, but it is a base from which he and other Bombay Order members will now be able to go out among them.

21



The Bhaja Retreat Centre



Working on the chain gang

NZ Retreat in UK

Mid November saw the coming together of six New Zealand men for a weekend retreat held at White Row in the Sussex Downs.

It was a relaxed affair, with much of the time spent sitting around the fire, swapping yarns, and going for walks. There was a strong feeling of concern and warmth, not just for those who were attending, who live in England at the moment, but also for the spiritual community back in New Zealand.

A taped 'reporting-in' was sent to Auckland with the aim of giving people there at least a general picture of what each of us has been up to, and what our plans are for the near future. Thanks to Silaratna for leading the retreat, and to Gunapala, Khemapala, Murray Wright, and Ric Cooney for coming on it.

Matthew White

We are currently in the process of extending the lease on our Centre for another four years. As a consequence we are playing with ideas for renovations - which inevitably leads to another consideration: money! Getting the necessary funds in, juggling with our resources, and balancing the books, is quite a challenge. Clearly the year ahead is going to entail a lot of hard work.

Our classes continue to be lively and friendly, and well attended. One innovation this year has been the Wednesday 'meditation-puja-study' night, with study groups for men and women, as well as a more 'open' group which is mixed, for those who cannot make a consistent commitment to the class. The evenings end, on the last Wednesday of each month, with a special puja dedicated to one of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

whose mantras we chant in the puja.

Priyananda has been leading a course on meditation, mainly as a follow up to the 'Buddhism' course which he and Jaysri took at Auckland University. About thirty people who attended that course have contacted the Centre recently, which is an excellent result. Priyananda is now making arrangements to hold one day and weekend seminars in other cities and towns for 'continuing education' programmes. He and Buddhadasa have also been giving talks to schools and other groups, including other Buddhist groups.

We held an experimental group for children - which called for some careful planning by Ratnaketu. The day was jam-packed with mask-making, painting, games, story telling, and even a video of 'Star Wars'!

This year we have celebrated

all the major festivals. We are still experimenting with this aspect of our activities, feeling our way towards a deeper appreciation of their significance.

On Sangha Day we built a 'Celestial Palace', a kind of mandala of the Five Buddhas, in the middle of the shrine room. After a talk by Ratnaketu on levels of the Sangha: 'The Arahant, the Dakini, and the Bodhisattva', we held a magnificent puja, during which we circumambulated the mandala, making offerings.

Our most outstanding retreat has been the 'Order/mitra N.Z. Labour Weekend Retreat'. It was an event for all men and women mitras who could attend. Buddhadasa led the retreat, and the high spots were definitely the evening talks on various aspects of the theme of Responsibility.

AUCKLAND

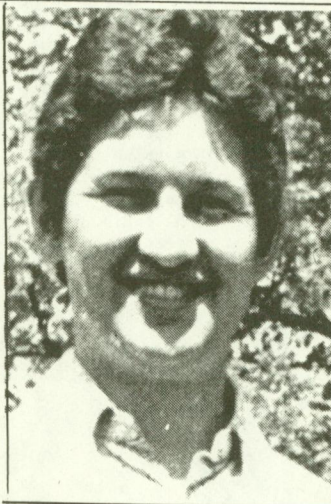
SYDNEY

Since the last report we have held another course, a retreat, and a weekend workshop. The emphasis has shifted to widen the interests of those who attended previous courses.

A new evening has been added to our programme, to facilitate new regulars and those wanting to broaden their knowledge of Buddhism. Studies are led alternately by Dipankara and Vajrasuri. The *Sutra of Hui Neng* is presently under study and has proven a very invigorating source of discussion. The evening starts with a shared meal which has helped to develop a strong feeling of Sangha among all those present. Our Thursday night class attracts an enthusiastic group of regulars, and is becoming a focus of attention in Sydney.

We celebrated Sangha Day on the October full moon. Our previous celebrations had been successful but sparsely attended. This time we hoped for a better turn-out, so we sent out our invitations, spent money on new vases, bedecked the shrine with lots of flowers and candles, prepared food, and dressed up. The place was full and the atmosphere friendly. Vajrasuri gave a short talk about the meaning of Kalyana Mitrata and during the puja Timothy Crowe became our second locally produced mitra. Among the people who attended were Bhante's old friends Rie and

Sten von Krusensteina who, as related in the 'Thousand Petalled Lotus', convinced him of the necessity for being vegetarian.



Dipankara

Various people overseas have expressed interest in what we are doing now that 'Bell and Candle', our bookbinding business, has closed. Vipula, Vajrasuri, Dipankara and Timothy are working independently at present, though it is hoped that another right livelihood venture will be initiated some time in the future when funds and manpower are available.

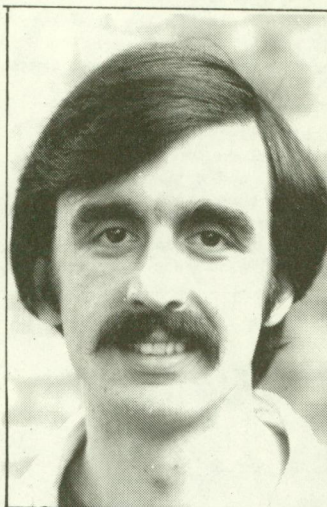
BOSTON USA

There have been two main events at the Boston Buddhist Center this fall. The first was our weekend retreat some fifteen miles south of Boston. It is the second retreat that we have held in a country house over the past couple of years and this time seven friends and Order Members were there. The owners, a community of Benedictine monks, are very happy for us to use the house on other occasions and since it is not only very comfortable but very suitable for our purposes we hope to get enough support to hold more retreats there.

The second major event was our benefit concert of Indian music. Two friends, Harriett Hurie and Norman Farkas sang and played tabla to an audience of about sixty people. Both the musicians are professional, and so the music was of the best standard. The evening was very enjoyable and most of the audience stayed on for an hour or so to eat some of the Indian food that had been prepared. This was the third benefit concert that Vajradaka has organised over the past year and each has been more successful than the last. The profits from this latest concert are going to Bombay to help establish the Center there.

Our weekly program of four

classes has been much better attended over the Fall months, and over the last year there has been a marked increase in the number of Friends associat-



Vajradaka

ed with the Center on a more or less regular basis. We still have some way to go however, and the Center is still in the embryonic stage. Visitors are therefore a great boon and we have recently welcomed David Keefe from the London Buddhist Centre.

A Start in MALAYSIA

On Wednesday 26th October Dharmacarini Jayapushpa flew back to Malaysia, after a two-and-a-half year stay in the U.K. during which time she was ordained. Jayapushpa intends to work towards establishing the FWBO in Malaysia and envisages being there for about ten years.

It has not taken her long to become quite busy! A week after she returned, Jayapushpa gave a talk at the Buddhist Society in her town about her experience of the FWBO during her visit to England. A couple of weeks later she went on a three day visit to the Vihara where Piyasilo is working. Piyasilo is a Theravadin Bhikkhu who

made contact with the FWBO on a trip to England several years ago.

On 25th November Jayapushpa spoke at the Muar Buddhist Society. Her talk was translated into Mandarin for the non-English speaking audience.

She is currently preparing a few more talks, and material for study and discussion. December will be a busy month: she is leading an open meditation retreat on St John's Island in Singapore and from 24th-27th December will be leading an intercampus Buddhist retreat for Buddhist societies of the different universities in Kuala Lumpur.



Jayapushpa

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Padmaloka

A Centre for Human Development

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16-27 April

Leader

Nagabodhi

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For further details please contact

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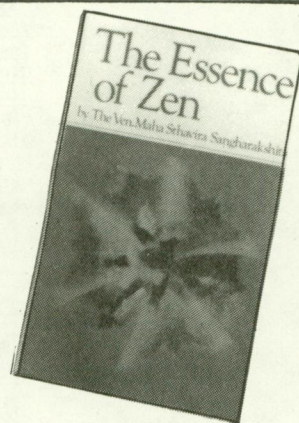
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