

Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

*The*

# NEWSLETTER

Number 61

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## *Going for Refuge*



*The FWBO, Ordination, and  
Order Members*



# 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

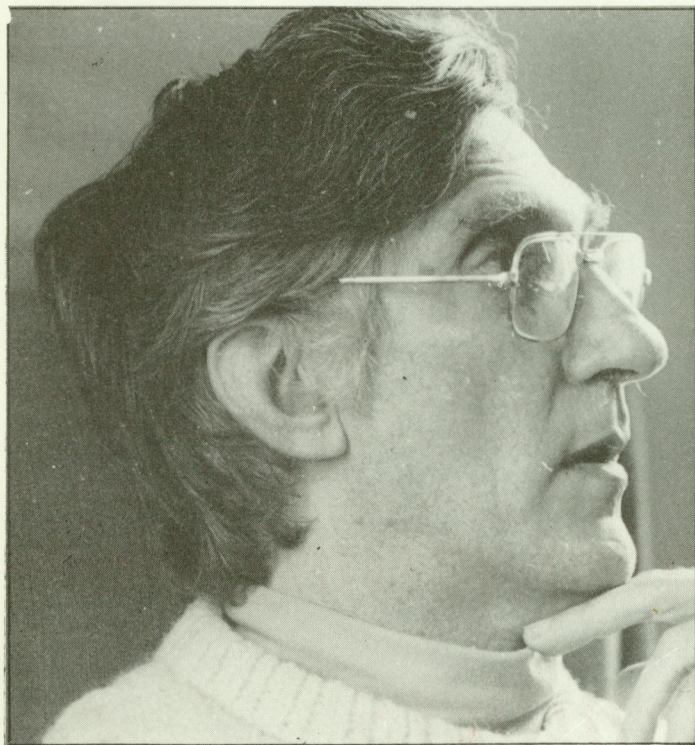
together in businesses which financially support the workers and which fund the further expansion of this New Society. Present businesses either running or being set up in the Movement include a printing press, wholefood shops, a silkscreen press, a hardware store, cafes, a second-hand shop, bookshop, 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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The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order  
**NEWSLETTER**

## Spring 1984

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## Editorial

Over the last year or so, Newsletters have appeared dealing with themes such as meditation, devotion, *dana*, Yoga, vegetarianism, and so on; almost the entire range of practices and techniques employed or encouraged by the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO). Any of these practices can be turned to as techniques which provide, even in the short term, specific remedies for specific problems, or as positive pursuits offering particular rewards.

To regard our activities as discrete experiences offering instant pleasure, therapy, relief or stimulation is possible, and no doubt most people, conditioned by the consumerist — and self-referring — currents of modern western society, turn to them at least initially in that spirit. However, so far as we are concerned, all our activities and practices have a deeper and fuller significance, as elements in an altogether different kind of *life* — the characterising feature of which is *purpose*.

This purpose can be variously described as, 'self-transformation', 'growth and development', or 'spiritual unfoldment'. According to context, these terms, and countless others like them, are used to cover a multitude of sins and virtues. In our Buddhist context, however, they indicate that human life can be regarded as an opportunity to unfold and manifest the unique and special potentiality intrinsic to human existence, which is to say Enlightenment — or more approachably: perfect wisdom and understanding, boundless love and compassion, and unlimited and spontaneous creative freedom.

To foster and co-operate with that potential is, in fact, the hidden purpose of human life. It is hidden, of course, by a capacity, equally human, for confusion, distraction, and alienation from the deeper forces of life, to the extent that this purpose is all but lost to view.

All but, but not quite. It can be glimpsed, intuited, felt — in a moment of peace, in a flash of insight, in a shared experience of deep communication with a friend — or, on the other hand, in a sudden confrontation with the abysmal emptiness of mundane, conditioned values and pursuits.

Such a glimpse is rarely enough, in itself, to transform our lives. It must be affirmed; its implications must be seen and absorbed and, ultimately, its challenge must be taken up: its realisation undertaken as a completely absorbing and overriding commitment. On that kind of basis there is some possibility that the true purpose of human life can be achieved.

In the Buddhist context that commitment is seen under a three-fold aspect. One develops a commitment to the ideal of human Enlightenment (the Buddha), to the truth which expresses that Enlightenment — and the way of life and practice that leads to it (the Dharma), and to the kind of fellowship and communication that not only allows, but even helps us prise ourselves out of our confusion and into the realm of clarity and vigour in which our efforts must be made (the Sangha).

In Buddhist tradition, the conscious and even formal articulation of that commitment before one's teacher and in front of one's spiritual friends is known as the Going for Refuge, and it is this 'moment', the performance of this act, which provides the theme for this *Newsletter*.

The matter of Going for Refuge, or ordination as it is usually (though perhaps misleadingly) called, is basic and crucial to our Movement. At the heart of the FWBO is the Western Buddhist Order (WBO): a community of people who have taken this step. It is they who initiate, inspire, lead, and direct the FWBO's activities.

That community is not a closed élite; it is open to all, and growing all the time. Within months or years you could be a part of it. You only have to Go for Refuge.

Nagabodhi

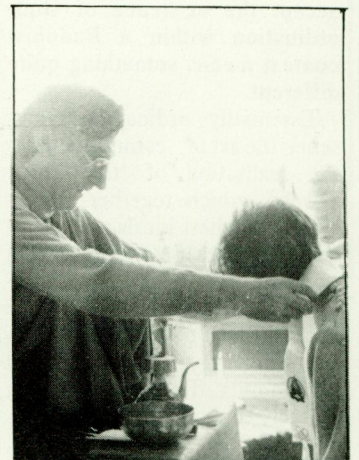
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# Ordination and the Buddhist Tradition



Aloka

By Devamitra

**I**f we speak of ordination in a society where the prevalent religious tradition is Christianity, we cannot avoid invoking certain Christian connotations: at once we think of priests serving as intermediaries between man and 'God'. But since Buddhism does not accept the existence of God, ordination within a Buddhist context means something quite different.

Essentially ordination represents the act of commitment to the realisation of 'the Three Jewels', which together constitute the highest ideals of Buddhism. These are, firstly, the ideal of human Enlightenment (or perfection), secondly the ideal of the Way leading to Enlightenment, and thirdly the ideal of Spiritual Community. The term which is, in fact, traditionally used to describe this act of commitment is, 'to Go for Refuge'.

Unfortunately, however, the true significance and importance of this act of Going for Refuge is one which has been lost in many parts of the Buddhist world. Amongst the followers of the Theravada tradition in South East Asia, and amongst their Western off-shoots, commitment to the Buddhist ideal is generally seen exclusively in terms of monastic ordination, as if it is *this* and only this which makes one a *real* Buddhist. This unfortunate emphasis demonstrates a confusion of principles and therefore an undervaluing of the Going for Refuge. It is worth investigating this a little more deeply.

The Pali texts speak of the 'Four Assemblies' of the Buddha's disciples: (1) men and (2) women who have 'gone forth' from home into homelessness, and (3) men and (4) women who remain at home, but who nonetheless put into effect His

teachings. The first two assemblies are usually described, somewhat misleadingly, as 'monks' and 'nuns' respectively, and the second two, equally misleadingly, as men and women 'lay-followers'.

What all of these people have in common is, of course, the fact that they have Gone for Refuge to the Buddha, and are committed to the Three Jewels. It is this act of commitment which unites them and distinguishes them from the followers of any other traditions.

**I**f Buddhism is to undergo a process of spiritual revitalisation, the crucial importance of the Going for Refuge itself must be more fully realised and thoroughly acted upon. This would enable a return to the spirit of early Buddhism and would create a Buddhist movement free from the decay to which so many existing traditions have suc-

cumbed.

This is in effect what has been done in the FWBO, under the guidance of the Venerable Sangharakshita. An English Buddhist monk who spent twenty years practising and teaching Buddhism in the East, Sangharakshita was fully conversant with the condition of contemporary Buddhism, and was therefore in a position to see what needed to be done.

In April 1968, after he had returned to take up permanent residence in the United Kingdom, he founded the Western Buddhist Order. Since the occasion of the first ordinations, sixteen years ago, the number of people who have Gone for Refuge, and thus entered the Order, has increased steadily from ten to (at the time of writing) two hundred and eighteen, and each succeeding year sees more and more added to that number. Each new member



brings to the whole his or her own unique qualities which enrich the great diversity already to be found within. The Order is composed of both men and women; currently the predominant nationality is British, but for how long it will remain so it is impossible to foretell. There is a sprinkling of Scandinavians, Finns, Dutch and Germans, while from beyond the confines of Europe there are natives of Canada, the USA, India, Malaysia, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Most Order members speak English, but as the Movement expands — especially in India — no doubt this will become less and less the case. There are about fifty years between the oldest and the youngest member and there is considerable difference in social, economic, and educational background. But all have Gone for Refuge, and all have been accepted into, and are acknowledged as members of, the Sangha, or spiritual community.

The original Pali and Sanskrit term Sangha — which we render as spiritual community — has two principal meanings. Firstly there is the *Arya-Sangha*, which is the assembly of all those who have attained 'transcendental wisdom' and who, if they have not yet done so, are assured thereby of eventually attaining Enlightenment. Secondly, there is Sangha as the experience of spiritual fellowship enjoyed by all those who have committed themselves to the Three Jewels. This traditionally pertains to the Four Assemblies already mentioned. It is in this second, broader sense that I am using the term here.

However, what they do not have in common is lifestyle. Some have chosen to 'go forth', leaving behind all domestic responsibilities, while others, for whatever reason, have chosen not to do so.

If one reads the Pali texts one encounters hundreds of instances of the Going for Refuge. The people concerned are all equally accepted as disciples by the Buddha. The act of Going for Refuge is what makes them his disciples, and it is therefore this act which makes one a Buddhist.

Commitment to the Three Jewels is of primary importance; lifestyle is secondary. When the Buddha is asked, on one occasion, whether any one of His 'monk'

and 'nun' disciples have attained to Enlightenment, He replies 'Not merely a hundred, nor two, three, four or five hundred, but far more...' His questioner then asks whether any one of His men and women 'lay-followers' have become 'non-returners' (a level of attainment so close to that of Enlightenment as to be hardly distinguishable from it). The Buddha gives the same reply in both cases. It is clear, therefore, that the so-called 'lay-follower' is not excluded from the possibility of realising extremely exalted levels of spiritual development and progress, although it is clearly suggested throughout the Pali texts that those who have 'gone forth' are in a much more advantageous position.

However, as Buddhism developed over the centuries, the distinction between monks and laymen hardened and became more and more sharply defined. In the Theravada tradition the time eventually came when it was considered that in order to be regarded as a real Buddhist you had to become a monk. Notwithstanding the volume of scriptural evidence to the contrary, only members of the monastic community were considered able to attain to the higher levels of spiritual development; the best the layman could hope for was a good rebirth, which he could acquire through performing meritorious deeds, such as paying homage to the monks.

At first glance it would seem that members of the Western Buddhist Order fall into the categories of men and women 'lay-followers', since they have all received ordination into what is known as the *Upasaka-samvara* tradition. However, this could be a little misleading. The term '*upasaka*', as used in the Buddhist East, designates the average 'lay' Buddhist, the vast majority of whom are Buddhists in a purely nominal sense, just as most people in England are nominally Christian. Many Buddhists in the East will boast that they are 'born Buddhists' as if this makes them more Buddhist than someone who has merely adopted Buddhism as the result of careful examination and reflection. The fact of the matter is of course that one cannot be born a Buddhist. One can only become a Buddhist, as we have seen, by Going for Refuge, which is not accomplished by just reciting in Pali the traditional refuge formula. You must have behind you the thrust of a deeply felt emotional and intellectual conviction in the truth and efficacy of the Buddha's teaching, thereby enabling you to commit yourself to its realisation. Such a thrust would be miraculous were it present from birth, and is normally only acquired as a result of careful and independent investigation. Becoming a Buddhist is a matter of personal choice, not of ethnic endowment. No one can make you a Buddhist even against

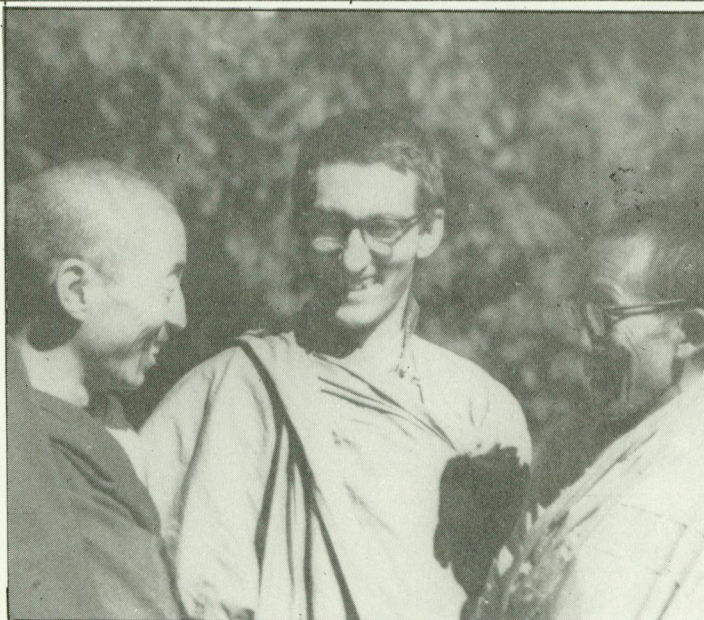
your own will.

Members of the Western Buddhist Order who have undergone the upasaka ordination have, in doing so, given firm expression to their commitment to the Three Jewels. This commitment takes an overall priority. It means that their lives will be directed to the realisation and furtherance of those ideals. The manner in which this will be possible at any given time and in any individual case will vary considerably, since some have family responsibilities to meet while others are completely free of them, and able to work full time for the Buddhist movement.

Although lifestyle is secondary to commitment, it must be stressed that one's lifestyle must reflect that commitment, and be in harmony with it. Because the spiritual life is dynamic and not static because we speak in terms of progress and development, one would naturally expect that, as time passes and experience gathers, one's lifestyle would reflect that commitment more and more. In trying to redress the balance disturbed by the one-sidedly 'monastic' attitude of Theravada Buddhism, we must be careful not to underestimate the importance of lifestyle. Otherwise we will fall into the trap of considering that lifestyle is of no great consequence and that so long as one is 'committed' one need not pay it much attention.

By now it should be evident that it is not easy to classify members of the Western Buddhist Order in the traditional terms of the Four Assemblies. To avoid possible confusion in this respect, Order members recently took up the style 'Dharmachari' (masc), or 'Dharmacharini' (fem). The terms literally mean 'Dharma-farer', or 'one who lives in accordance with the Dharma'.

One may wonder of course, if some Order members are free to work full-time for the Buddhist movement, why they do not become monks in the 'traditional' sense? There are principally two reasons for this. In the first instance, by having just one level of ordination, which expresses the central Going for Refuge, the principle that commitment is of primary importance, stands clear-



The Venerable Sangharakshita in India with Tibetan friends.



ly perceived. Thus the unity of the total spiritual community is maintained, and the danger of the spiritually disastrous split between laity and monks — which for centuries has helped to hold the Theravada tradition in a state of spiritual atrophy — is more likely to be avoided.

Secondly, if one wishes to instill new vigour into contemporary Buddhism and increase its influence in the world, then one cannot be encumbered by some of the more antiquated rules, still observed by the Buddhist monk. The Buddha introduced certain rules in the midst of a comparatively simple and unorganised society, culturally quite different to the modern West. They were introduced gradually, and were always instituted in response to a particular occurrence. In order to grasp their true significance, in each case, the rules and precepts need to be seen against the background of their original context. They were introduced to help the monks maintain their mindfulness and to lead a spiritual life to the full. But before very long they started turning into a

factor that was to undermine the integrity of the spiritual community. When the spiritual life degenerates to the level of a literal and rigid observation of lists of rules with little or no understanding of or feeling for the principles underlying them, then the spirit will be betrayed and the spiritual life reduced to a mockery. For instance, because the Buddha passed no comments on cigarette smoking — since during his lifetime the habit was unknown — many contemporary monks do not question its skilfulness and smoke quite openly. Others will see no contradiction in literally observing the rule about not handling money, while maintaining a personal bank account on which they draw cheques. Yet others will faithfully observe the rule about not taking food after midday, but in the meantime, perhaps even more faithfully, consume three substantial meals between sunrise and the diurnal deadline.

To observe the monastic code rigidly, as it survives, can only hinder the furtherance of the Buddha's teaching in the world of

today. It is significant that the most dynamic and effective Sinhalese Buddhist of modern times was *Anagarika* Dharmapala. Although he wore a robe similar to that of the monk, he styled himself '*Anagarika*', and refused to restrict himself with the rules of the *vinaya*, or monastic code, until the very end of his life when he was exhausted and reduced to the invalid state, having worked, with ferocious energy, for the benefit of Buddhism all his life.

Generally speaking, then, the spiritual community consists of a number of people who are striving to realise and apply their commitment to spiritual values, as symbolised by the Three Jewels, and who are actively encouraging others to do the same. But, you may wonder, why bother with Ordination, the Order, new names, and so on? Is it really necessary to call upon the support and assistance of others when all that one is really trying to do is to work on oneself by being true to oneself? Isn't it a contradiction in terms? Quite simply, to be true to oneself, to one's deepest vision, is not always such an easy thing.

Whether we realise it or not we have all been conditioned by powerful forces, and most of us, in one way or another, sway only too easily with their influence. There are the demands of the state, the family and race, to name just a few of the more powerful. Some of these demands may be reasonable and we may happily go along with them; others may not only be unreasonable but may be directly in conflict with our ideals and personal inclinations. The example of the pacifist in time of war is a classic example of the clash of individual conscience with the demands of the group. Under such circumstances one is in a perilous and lonely position and without the moral encouragement of like-minded people one may find it impossible, or at least agonisingly difficult, to remain steadfastly true to one's ideal. One may even begin to wonder whether perhaps one has been mistaken all the while. Every day we can find ourselves confronted by values which we find ethically unacceptable and yet feel in conflict with regard to rejecting them. When one finds oneself in this position it is not easy to stand fast entirely alone. Indeed, only when one's individuality has a very firm base is it possible to stand completely alone. Meanwhile we need, at least for a time, the encouragement, inspiration and guidance of others to help us lift ourselves beyond the influence of the world. It is for this reason that the spiritual community is so necessary.

In this article we have seen that all Buddhists are united by the act of Going for Refuge. Within the FWBO this act is given its full weight and significance. It is the act of commitment which essentially makes one a Buddhist and which forms the basis of the spiritual community. Without a common commitment there can be no spiritual community and therefore no one to depend upon. Ultimately we will transcend all dependences whatsoever — even dependence on the spiritual community (although we will never tire of, nor cease to enjoy the company of spiritual friends). But until then, the spiritual community serves to help us reach that point from which we will make our exhilarating leap to freedom.



Members of the Western Buddhist Order together at a convention.



# Preparing to Go for Refuge

By Vessantara

**“How do I become an Order Member?”**

Sometimes people even ask this question on their first or second visit to an FWBO Centre. In principle, someone who has just come off the street for their first meditation class could be ready for ordination; it used even to be rumoured that the Venerable Sangharakshita always put a kesa in his bag when he went travelling, just in case he should happen to meet someone who

which the people there had been involved with the FWBO was about four years. But the time varies; some are ordained in two years, others in ten. According to the statistics, women tend to take longer to become ready for ordination than men.

The kind of person who asks for ordination as soon as they first come along is usually quite vague about what is involved. Bowled over by their first contact with the Order, they immediately feel they want to join. They imagine that all

rescue people in high seas. They have to be able to work together to pull people to safety. The last thing you need in that situation is people who may get careless and start falling in themselves. So ordination requires serious preparation.

You can't understand what you have to do to prepare for ordination unless you understand ordination itself. Ordination is essentially an acknowledgement that someone is committed to the Buddhist path to Enlightenment. So the question, “How do I become an Order member?” is the same as “How do I develop as a person to the point where my spiritual growth, and the desire to help others to develop as spiritual individuals, is the motivating force of my life?” Everything the FWBO does is aimed, in one way or another, at helping people to do this. Obviously people develop in their own individual ways, but there are certain common stages which they pass through as their level of commitment to the Three Jewels deepens.

**T**he first level or stage is that of asking to become a *mitra*. *Mitra* is the Sanskrit word for ‘friend’. In asking to become a mitra you are in effect making four statements about yourself, and you are ready to become a mitra when you feel you can stand by them. Firstly you are saying, ‘I’ve stopped shopping around different spiritual groups; I feel that my spiritual home is the FWBO’. Secondly, ‘I’ve seen the value of meditation as a tool for raising my level of consciousness,

and I intend to keep up a regular meditation practice’. Then, ‘I’m prepared to do what I can to help the work of the FWBO’. The fourth statement is probably the most important of all: ‘I’m going to keep in regular and open contact with members of the Order’.

Your request is seriously considered by Order members before you are accepted as a mitra. Sometimes people are asked to have more contact with the FWBO before they are accepted. Sometimes people are asked to wait until Order members feel they can provide them with the facilities they need. Becoming a mitra is a two-way commitment. You are taking a step towards the Order so the Order must be able to respond: to arrange special study groups and retreats, to advise you on your meditation practice, to offer you opportunities to get more involved in FWBO activities, and above all to be in regular personal contact with you.

The activities laid out for mitras are becoming increasingly carefully planned. We are in the process of setting up, in some centres, a 3-year study programme for mitras which will give them a very solid grounding in the Dharma. Order members at FWBO centres meet regularly to discuss whether the spiritual needs of the mitras at their Centre are being met.

To become a mitra is a great step in itself and some people may never feel the urge to take things further. They may happily remain mitras all their lives. There is no compulsion on anyone to deepen their involvement. But

become very important to me  
I have decided that I would like to  
Refuge. I feel clearer about this  
are felt before, and think I understand  
it means and what it involves  
... as new members

was ready to be ordained on the spot! However, it has never yet happened that someone has arrived into the Movement already fully ‘ready’.

In fact, as time goes by, the likelihood of Sangharakshita ever using that kesa grows less and less. The level of commitment within the Order is rising all the time, and the standards required for ordination have therefore steadily risen over the years. Most people now need several years of contact with the FWBO and with Order members before they are ready to be ordained themselves.

At the last Tuscany retreat I led, on which 15 people were ordained, the average time for

they have to do is ask, or maybe pay a subscription. This suggests an open and willing disposition, but ordination is a very serious step. It is a lifelong commitment to the Three Jewels, and needs careful preparation. You would be doing a disservice were you to let anyone take that step lightly.

Apart from anything else, as an Order member, a great deal is asked of you, and Order members need to be able to rely on one another absolutely. The Order upholds the compassionate ideals of Buddhism; an aspect of its purpose is to help people find a refuge from the sufferings of life. Order members can sometimes be seen rather like lifeboatmen trying to



the spiritual life has the attractive power of the beautiful, and people often find themselves being drawn more and more into it. Eventually they may feel that they want to devote their whole lives to it. At this point they are ready for ordination.

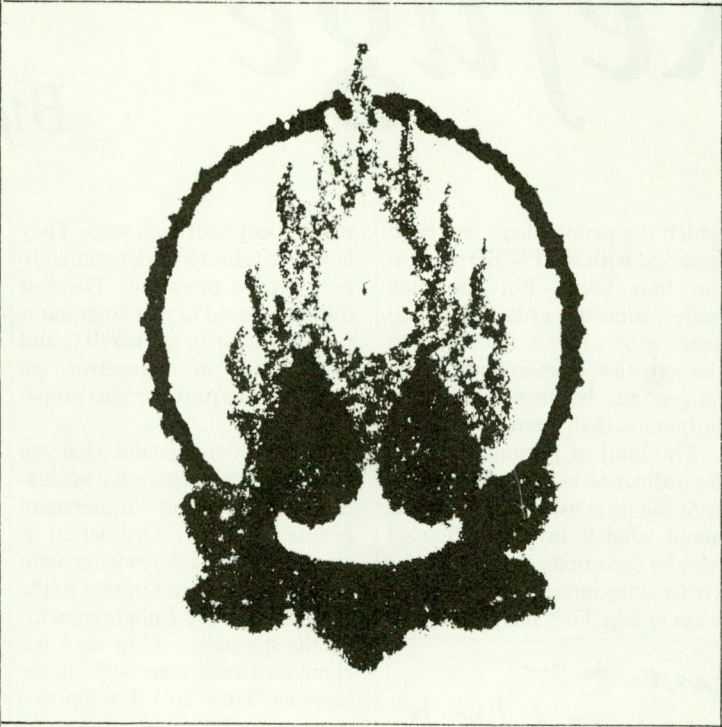
The Venerable Sangharakshita, the head of the Order, still performs all the ordinations personally, and a request for ordination is addressed to him, either in person or by letter. In asking to be ordained you enter a new and more intensive phase of your development. Up to that point, as a mitra, your spiritual development has been largely the responsibility of the Order members associated with your local centre. In asking for ordination you enter the 'wider world' of the Movement in general, and find yourself dealing more directly with the Venerable Sangharakshita and with certain senior Order members who lead special retreats and seminars for people who have asked for ordination.

As with the process of becoming a mitra, you are not automatically accepted. Nobody is ever refused ordination, but people are often asked to wait, to prepare themselves more for this vital step. People sometimes ask for ordination as a sort of 'ranging shot', a statement of their wish to be ordained one day. This is a mistake. In asking for ordination you should be saying that this is what you want to do *now*. If Sangharakshita were to produce that kesa from his travelling bag, you'd be delighted to wear it.

Every request to join the Order is given very serious consideration. The Venerable Sangharakshita has the final say, but as the FWBO has grown far too large for him to get to know everybody as deeply as he would like, he consults all the Order members who have knowledge of the person concerned before making a decision about their ordination.

**H**ow do Order members judge when someone is ready to be ordained? What does one look for in a potential Order member? The main thing to be assessed is the degree of someone's commitment to the spiritual life. People are complex and difficult to know in their depths. One

can never tell what life may have in store for them, nor how they will rise to the challenges it presents. In recommending that someone be ordained you are asserting that, as far as you can tell, they have enough 'spiritual momentum' to deal creatively with such difficult circumstances as might arise, and which otherwise might cause them to abandon the spiritual path.



Commitment by itself is not enough. You must be *free* to express it. Sometimes people have a strong spiritual aspiration, and yet other forces — either within their own personality or in their living situation — can hinder them from putting that aspiration into practical action. In such circumstances it is better for people to wait until they are better able to apply their commitment. Ordination has the effect of strengthening your spiritual impetus. If other circumstances then stop you going forward, the result is frustration, a painful 'revving in neutral'. If someone is asked to wait, then their request remains under review until such time as the answer is 'Yes'.

So these are the stages which you go through to become an Order member: becoming a mitra, asking for ordination, and having that request accepted. But you become an Order member not so much by going through

'formalities' as by a steady effort to practise the Dharma, day by day, year by year. This steady effort in your everyday life is the basic work of self-transformation which will culminate in your readiness for Going for Refuge. However, people approaching ordination are given a number of opportunities to speed up that process of transformation.

The first is the opportunity to

responsibility for seeing that your development goes forward apace. This kind of committed spiritual friendship is a very powerful tool for change. In the open and friendly communication between you and your kalyana mitras you can gain a better idea of what it means to be an Order member; they can encourage you to take the leap into new ways of being; they can help you learn to identify your weak areas; the warmth of your friendship with them can kindle new fires of positive emotion and inspiration in you. It is open to any mitra to ask for kalyana mitras, but the kalyana mitra relationship really comes into its own when you are nearing ordination, and preparing to take the great leap into total commitment to the spiritual life.

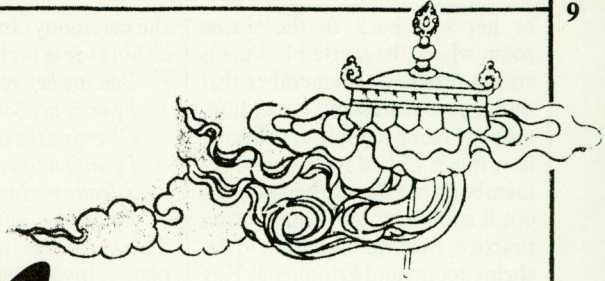
Another opportunity is that of going on special 'pre-ordination' retreats. These are held in a number of countries, and range in duration from a few days to three months. Perhaps the most important of these is the yearly retreat held at Il Convento in Tuscany. This lasts three months, and gives men who are considered ready for ordination a chance to practise the Dharma under nearly ideal conditions. Under the blue Italian sky long days pass, devoted to meditation, the study of the Dharma, pujas, and deepening spiritual friendships. After about two months of the course, people are told if they have been accepted for ordination. The atmosphere is both excited and serious, as people prepare for the very special meeting with the Venerable Sangharakshita which will change their lives. At last the preparations for ordination are complete, and the great adventure can begin.

ask two Order members to become your 'Kalyana mitras'. 'Kalyana mitra' means 'spiritual friend'. As a mitra you come into contact with a number of Order members. From those contacts you forge links of friendship, until a special relationship of trust and respect develops between you with certain Order members. You then ask two of them to be your especial spiritual friends. These two Order members take special

has been relatively short & it is therefore to let you know I shall be happy to confer the kalyana ordination on you, & welcoming you into the spiritual fellowship of the Western Buddhist Order. A new ordination will be held at Padmaloka on Friday 6th 10.30 am - 12.30 pm



# The Ordination Ceremonies



By Parami

**I**t is now an established, universal 'FWBO' tradition that ordination ceremonies take place within the context of a retreat. The decision to Go for Refuge is an important one in a person's life; consequently, the atmosphere of an ordination retreat will echo the seriousness and joyfulness with which such a decision is carried through. There is often a strong devotional aspect to the retreat since it is the devotional or emotional element in our practice that generally provides the spark, or drive, which moves us forward, which enables us to arrive at and see through our decisions.

The ceremony itself has two distinct parts: the 'private' and the 'public' ordination ceremonies.

The private ordination, which comes first, always occurs within the context of a metta bhavana practice, the meditation on universal loving kindness. While all the retreatants meditate, the actual ceremony is performed by only two people: the individual concerned and a senior Order member — until now invariably the Venerable Sangharakshita

(Bhante), the founder and head of the Order.

Bhante initiates the metta practice, usually after giving a short talk on the significance of the occasion, thus generally setting the scene. Then, after a short while, he leaves the retreat shrine room and makes his way to a smaller shrine room which has been prepared specially for the occasion. There he awaits the arrival of the person, or first of the people, to be ordained.

My own memory of the walk from the retreat shrine room to my private ordination is still extremely vivid. It was an autumn evening, very still, very dark, and the way between the converted barn, which was the main shrine room, and the farmhouse, where the small shrine room had been set up, was lit by what seemed like hundreds of candles. I really felt as if I was leaving behind, in the warmth and light of the shrine room, everyone and everything I had ever known, and was walking — alone — towards the unknown, towards something very significant and magical.

This memory reflects the main point of 'private' ordination: one is willing to 'go it alone', willing to stand by the decision to Go for Refuge even if no-one else in the world is practising or striving towards the same goal of Enlightenment.

Although the ceremony begins

with the making of offerings to the Three Jewels of a flower, a candle and some incense, the central part of the ceremony is the taking of the Three Refuges and the ten Upasaka/Upasika Precepts. In call and response with Bhante, one chants the traditional Pali formulations: "Buddham saranam gacchami; Dhammam saranam gacchami; Sangham saranam gacchami..."

The three Refuges represent one's commitment to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha as the three most important, most valuable elements in life. The ten precepts are guidelines to the ethical behaviour which should characterise the lifestyle of someone who has made that kind of commitment.

The fact that one *Goes* for Refuge is important. Commitment is active, not passive. For the same reason, the person being ordained always chants a verse actually *asking* for the Refuges and Precepts to be given. In other words, he or she is taking the initiative, making a conscious, individual decision. During the remainder of the ceremony Bhante gives the ordinand a visualisation meditation practice and a new name.

The taking of a new name symbolises the fact that a new person has come into being; the person who left the shrine room has been, at least symbolically, transcended. In some cases the new name is one which suggests a quality which the person already has, perhaps only in embryonic form; in some cases the name suggests a direction in which the person is moving. Most of these

names have a translatable meaning, and are in Pali or Sanskrit, which may make them sound strange (not to mention impossible to remember or pronounce!) to people when they first encounter Order members. But the names in fact evoke spiritually positive qualities which are difficult to translate adequately into English without sounding clumsy or without losing their richness of meaning, or without compromising their specifically Buddhist associations.

The visualisation practice consists in meditating upon the visual form of a certain archetypal Buddha or Bodhisattva; that is, the 'personification' of a particular aspect of Enlightenment. For example, the practice could be a meditation upon the form of Avalokiteshvara, who symbolises Transcendental Compassion, or Manjughosha, who symbolises Transcendental Wisdom.

Each Buddha or Bodhisattva has a particular colour, hand gesture, way of sitting or standing, and carries different objects. Each of these details have meaning on a deep, symbolic level. Bhante 'gives' the meditation by chanting the corresponding mantra three times, while the person receiving the ordination repeats it after him. This mantra represents that same quality, or aspect of Enlightenment, but on the plane of sound rather than in visual form. These visualisation meditations are practised only within the Order. To meditate upon these forms without first having Gone for Refuge, without a definite spiritual motivation and commitment, is to undermine if not abuse their value and effectiveness.

**A**fter the private ceremony, which has taken about twenty minutes, the 'ex-mutra' makes his



or her way back to the shrine room where the metta bhavana is still in progress. I remember that moment too: walking back, hugging my name to myself, thinking how much I liked it, trying to remember what Bhante had said about it and about my visualisation practice, then walking back to the shrine room, and grinning at Kay Roberts who was about to go off and become Vidyasri, trying to tell her in the silence how wonderful an experience it had been and still was.

When all the private ordination ceremonies are over Bhante returns to the main shrine room and leads a seven-fold puja, the devotional practice with which each day on a retreat concludes. There is silence overnight.

The public ceremony usually takes place on the next day. People start arriving at the Retreat Centre — Order members, mitras, and friends of those who are being ordained. (This is the case, at least, on women's ordination retreats. Since most men are now ordained in Tuscany, this cannot happen for them. In all other respects their ceremony is as described here). It is an occasion for festivity: people dress brightly, and often bring lots of flowers.

Bhante begins by leading everyone through the seven-fold puja, again introducing the devotional element to the proceedings.

Although one has been prepared to 'go it alone' it is as if, in the public ceremony, one discovers that this will not be necessary. There is a Sangha, a spiritual community waiting to receive one, and give one support.

The ordinands go up to the shrine, one at a time, and again make their offerings of a flower, a candle and some incense. These symbolise, respectively, impermanence, the light of wisdom which cuts through darkness, and the subtle yet tangible influence on the world of those practising the spiritual life. The flowers and candles offered on this occasion are white, representing purity. This is not to suggest a narrow, moralistic kind of purity, but, rather, the kind of purity which results from the concentration and unification of all a person's energies in the direction of Enlightenment. This theme of purification is touched on throughout

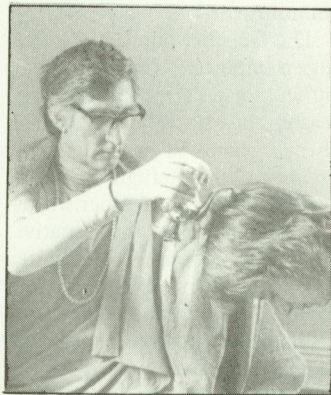
the ceremony. Immediately next, a short verse is chanted:—

*Bowing before the Buddha  
I purify my body.  
Chanting the sacred Mantras  
I purify my speech.  
Silently meditating  
I purify my mind.*

This verse also indicates the complete involvement of body, speech and mind. We Go for Refuge with our whole being, not just with our minds. Next, the ordinands ask for the ordination, after which comes the actual taking of the Refuges and Precepts. Bhante then chants in Pali, "... Having taken the three Refuges, and observing the ten Upasaka precepts, with mindfulness strive on." The last words echo the last words of the Buddha before his *Parinirvana*, the passing away of his earthly body.

Then one at a time, the ordinands go up to Bhante, and he pours water from a vase onto the crown of their heads. This represents the way the Dharma has come into contact with the highest part of their being; now it must permeate through to every aspect.

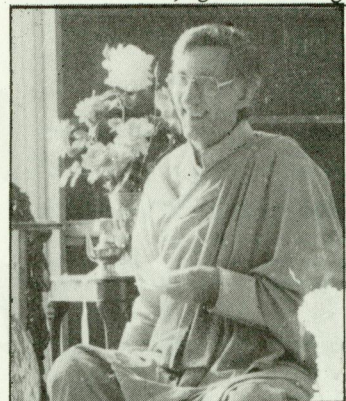
He then gives each new Order member his or her Kesa. The Kesa (Pali 'Kasaya' meaning 'robe') is a strip of white silk, a sort of stole or abbreviated robe, worn round the neck. It has an emblem of the Three Jewels embroidered on it. This will be a



**Water, symbolising purity.**

familiar sight to anyone who attends any of the FWBO's meditation centres or retreats. The Three Jewels are depicted in yellow, blue and red. The yellow represents the Buddha, the ideal of Enlightenment; the blue represents the Dharma, the Enlightenment experience communicated; and the red represents the San-

gha, red being the colour of love and compassion. The Three Jewels are surrounded by flames to show that they are blazing with life and energy. They sit on a white moon mat, again reflecting



**The names are released**

the theme of purity. The moon mat itself sits on the red lotus of Amitabha, a Buddha figure who symbolises spiritual rebirth. So, in a way, this emblem summarises all that the new Order members have committed themselves to. The full ceremony is complete at the moment when Bhante places the kesa round the new Dharmachari or Dharmacharini's neck, just as the Bhikku ordination is complete only when the belt of his robes is placed around the neck of a Bhikku.

**T**he new Order members then chant verses which show the spirit in which their ordination is accepted, with which they have Gone for Refuge:

- For the attainment of Enlightenment**  
**I accept this ordination.**
- For the benefit of all beings**  
**I accept this ordination.**
- In harmony with friends and brethren**  
**I accept this ordination.**
- With loyalty to my teachers**  
**I accept this ordination.**

Bhante then 'releases' the new names. (Until now, only the individual Order member concerned has known his or her name.) Bhante stresses the death of the 'old' John or the 'old' Kay or whoever, and the spiritual rebirth of the new Dharmachari or Dharmacharini. He often says quite a lot about why he has thought of each name, what it means, and the particular quality which he thinks that person may eventually

contribute to the Order. Bhante is usually very witty and entertaining, and a public ordination is always a moving event. It is obviously moving to the person who is expressing his or her commitment, but it can also be a strong experience for other Order members present, since it evokes memories of their own ordination. It is also very inspiring to those who have not yet taken this step, but who see themselves as moving in that direction.

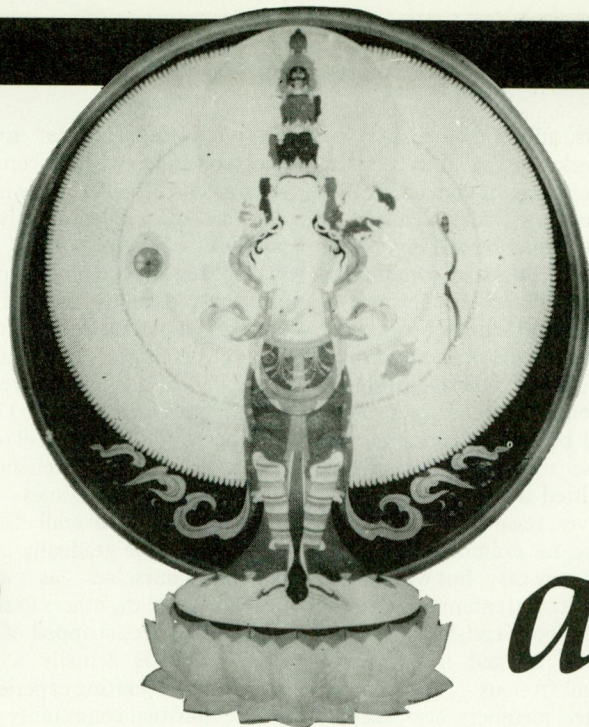
The private and public ordination ceremonies, although distinctly separate, are interconnected; they are complementary: two sides of the same coin. The private ordination can be seen as expressing the inner commitment, what can be called a 'subjective' Going for Refuge, Going for Refuge to one's own personal development, one's own practice. This is then complemented by the public ordination — a 'coming out'. This can be seen as the 'objective' Going for Refuge, representing the manifestation of that commitment in the world.

Both aspects of commitment are needed. Ordination does not happen in a vacuum, nor is it an abstract phenomenon. It represents a re-orienting of one's life towards the Three Jewels, and obviously this will have an effect.

On the occasion of my own public ordination, Bhante said; 'We need committed people in the world more than ever before... Things are in a pretty bad way in quite a few parts of the world. In many ways the world, at least in a political sense, is not heading in a very fortunate direction. And it would seem in a situation of this sort that more and more emphasis needs to be placed on spiritual principles and spiritual life...

'Every time someone commits himself or herself to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, the Movement becomes strengthened, — and we want that Movement to become stronger and stronger. We want the circle of that Movement to spread ever more widely, until it begins to exert an appreciable influence on quite a large number of people, so that the world can be moved out of its present rut of negativity, into and onto a much, much more positive channel'.





# Life after Ordination

*By Dhammadinna*

**T**he formal Ordination Ceremony marks a watershed in a person's life, and symbolises a sort of rebirth, the start of a new life. The direction of one's whole life has been committed, both privately and publicly to spiritual development, and the subsequent pattern of life will take on a new shape, it will undergo a re-orientation, with the Three Jewels as its central reference point.

During one's preparation for ordination one creates, as it were, a 'centre of individuality' with which to commit oneself. After ordination, the central experience of commitment begins to transform every aspect of one's psyche and life. The act of commitment rests on an intense emotional aspiration which must find expression in one's life and actions, as well as being experienced within.

Any experience of Perfect Vision, or any glimpse of Reality is followed by a path of transformation, in which that vision or glimpse is allowed to transform the rest of one's life. This process also occurs after the formal Going for Refuge. It takes some time for the full implications of the effects of Going for Refuge to be realised and it often takes a new Order member some time to 'feel' like an Order member and to find ways of expressing this commitment.

At ordination we commit ourselves to realising the Ideal of Enlightenment. Obviously, although we may be greatly in-

spired by the Buddha's life, qualities, and teachings, He is no longer available to us as a living, guiding presence. Our immediate contact with a human being more experienced spiritually than ourselves is therefore with our teacher. He can advise us on our practice and spiritual life and it is to him that we can turn for practical inspiration and guidance. This commitment to close communication with our teacher is sometimes referred to as the "Guru Refuge", an 'esoteric' reflex of the Buddha Refuge.

In this way, the Venerable Sangharakshita, with whom we Go for Refuge within the context of the Western Buddhist Order, is our personal teacher, and all Order Members are his personal disciples. All Order Members keep in touch with him and feel a bond with him. Thus one new aspect of life after ordination is a feeling of a greatly strengthened communication with one's teacher. Obviously, different individuals experience this contact in different ways, but that bond offers the potential for intense spiritual and emotional stimulation, a broadening of perspectives, even an irritation and a challenge to grow beyond existing limits.

The Dharma, especially as a doctrine, encompasses a vast

array of teachings and methods. Practically speaking, it is only possible to concentrate in depth on just a few texts or practices. The various Buddhas and Bodhi-sattvas of the archetypal plane symbolise different aspects of Enlightenment. The visualisation practice which we choose, therefore becomes a direct link for us with the Transcendental. Through such a visualisation, practised over a number of years, we can create a special bond with that particular Buddha or Bodhi-sattva. Eventually we will embody this quality ourselves. This is sometimes called the "Yidam Refuge". Since all visualisation practices are conferred by the Venerable Sangharakshita, who has direct experience of them, they also provide a further link between all Order members and their teacher.

Thirdly, one's refuge to the Sangha traditionally includes all those who have practised as well as those who are practising the Dharma. This is very broad and is probably likely to be felt more strongly through our contact with other Order members, and particularly with those Order members with whom we enjoy direct and regular communication. This is sometimes referred to as the "Dakini Refuge"; the Dakini, amongst other things, being a

symbol of the inspiration latent in spiritual communication.

All these experiences affect our life as Order members: a more intense link with our teacher, a visualisation practice, and a strong link, based on common commitment, with other Order members. However, none of these experiences can be taken for granted. We need to be actively open and receptive to, and in communication with, our Teacher; we must follow a regular meditation practice, and continually work to deepen our communication with other Order members.

Whilst our communication with our Teacher and our daily meditation practice will have a significant effect on us, perhaps the most immediate, obvious change that we will experience after ordination will be our becoming a part of the Sangha.

The Buddha himself often travelled with a large company of disciples. Many of those disciples would spend the rainy season together. Although the full-time disciples were wanderers, they met every full and new moon day for meditation, and to recite the Pātimokkha, or 'monastic code'. The Buddha stressed the importance of spiritual fellowship on many occasions, saying at one time to Ananda, that it (kalyana mitrata) is 'the whole of the Spiritual Life', and on another, outlining a list of guidelines according to which the Sangha might



prosper rather than decay. The first of these was that the Sangha should meet often and in large numbers. Thus, from the very beginning, great emphasis was placed on the Sangha, and on the individual's part within it.

**T**he whole purpose of the Buddhist training and the Buddha's teaching is to enable individuals to experience Enlightenment, which is traditionally spoken of as a state expressing Transcendental Wisdom, boundless Compassion, and unlimited Energy, and within which all opposites are transcended. It is not possible, therefore, to gain Enlightenment for oneself alone. In the very process of gaining Enlightenment, all egocentricity or self-view is also transcended. Therefore, any activity which encourages us to be less selfish and to become more compassionate, co-operative and other-regarding, helps us to break down those barriers. Spiritual Community is experienced when a number of individuals work intensely on themselves, but in harmony and co-operation with one another. It only comes into being when that is actually happening and cannot, therefore, exist in name only. Sangha has to be continually recreated.

Within the Western Buddhist Order we take the ideal of spiritual community very seriously, and follow the basic principles and guidelines outlined by the Buddha within our own context. Order Members meet once a week on a local level for meditation and puja and for discussion. On one weekend each month they come together, either on a national or a 'regional' level. Every two years there is an international convention. On top of this, Order members organise special Order

retreats, and of course often live and work together, thus broadening their base of contact. In this way any new Order member can find himself or herself involved in a whole network of communication possibilities, and in this way the ideals of Sangha begin to be actualised. One of these ideals is that spiritual fellowship should transcend all group values. We should be able to communicate, practise and work with anyone committed to the same ideals as ourselves, regardless of age, race, or class, for example. This is not always very easy, but with persistent effort and communication we can develop friendships with people who seemed initially very different from us.

Order members also keep in touch through a monthly publication: *Shabda*. Any Order member can write for it, and the 'reporting-ins' from the various Order meetings around the world are recorded in it, enabling any Order member to know what the others are doing and thinking. Also, once a month, at approximately the same time, Order members throughout the world practise the 'Order Metta Bhavana', a meditation on loving kindness (*metta*) towards all other Order members.

**T**he most important element in these activities is that one is actually *there*; not to bother to go, or to find something apparently more important to do (even worthwhile work), is not only to be absent, but actually to take something *from* the situation.

By committing ourselves to the Sangha Refuge, we have committed ourselves to participate in the Sangha as wholeheartedly as possible.

One key aspect of this participation is that we try to be as open and honest as possible within any meeting of Order members. This means that all areas of our life are open to other Order members. While this sort of openness may at times be demanding and perhaps sometimes even quite painful, the overall effect is that we are able gradually to experience ourselves as whole beings, and allow others to see us as we really are, stripped of pretence. This is actually a very freeing and liberating experience.

The Spiritual community is an ideal world in microcosm, and within it even the seemingly smallest actions have a far reaching effect. In the *Bhaddali Sutta* we meet a monk who is resistant to following a simple training principle suggested by the Buddha. As a result he becomes physically distanced from and emotionally closed to the Buddha. When he comes to regret this, and acknowledges his fault, the Buddha accepts his confession but also points out the full implications and effects of his action. He demonstrates, in fact, how Bhadda-

li's action has affected the whole Sangha.

So far we have concentrated mainly upon the more personal aspects of Going for Refuge, in terms of contact with the teacher, the taking up of a visualisation practice and the experience of being part of a Spiritual Community. This commitment towards one's own personal development can be described as the 'subjective' aspect of Going for Refuge. There is, however, an objective aspect as well. Because a commitment towards Enlightenment involves an other-regarding attitude; because our spiritual commitment seeks expression in outward activity as well as in inward change, most Order members choose to work in, or create situations that involve others in the spiritual life.

To do this most effectively a number of Order members often work together in teams which are themselves expressions of harmony and co-operation. Although the Western Buddhist Order is a purely spiritual body, not existing in law, individual members may choose to work through the FWBO's, the registered charities, as well as through communities and Right



Order members in action — at work, at home, in the Centre, in the family, together, alone.



Livelihood co-ops, in order to make the Dharma available to others. It is not, however, the Order members' job so to do; the motivation comes from within rather than being imposed from without.

Each Order member chooses, often in consultation with others, how best to express this objective Refuge. Many Order members are involved with centres, communities, co-ops, retreat and meditation centres. However, on the other hand, many follow a range of professions or vocations, or college courses while undertaking voluntary work at a centre in the evenings and at weekends. Order members however are in contact with one another; each trying to work on themselves and to do what they can in order to help make the Dharma, or at least a more positive life, available to others. As the Movement is still young, many possibilities exist as yet only in the imagination. We could, after all, have schools, medical centres, arts centres and so on.

As Devamitra mentions in his article, commitment is primary and lifestyle is secondary. The important thing is to be able to commit yourself, and to ensure

that there is sufficient 'leeway' in your lifestyle to allow this commitment to be expressed. In India, most of the Order members are married with families, but they find time nevertheless to work for the movement and the Dharma in India.

**T**hroughout the Order as a whole, lifestyles vary enormously. For example, the six women most recently ordained live and work in quite different circumstances.

Jayasri is a busy university lecturer in Auckland with a husband and child. She manages, however, to play an extremely important part in the work of the Auckland Buddhist Centre, being Women's Mitra Convenor, a council member, and being active in taking classes and courses both within and outside the Centre. Anyone who knows her, knows she imbues everything she does with an inspiration and energy which obviously derive from her spiritual commitment.

Jayapushpa, is a young Malaysian woman who lived in a women's community and worked in the Cherry Orchard Restaurant at the London Buddhist Centre for two years. Returning to Malaysia, she is now a solo Order member, taking classes and holding re-

treats for Malaysian Buddhists.

Jayaprabha lives in a small women's community and spends her time studying the Dharma and supporting classes and study groups. Ratnavandana is Manager of Jambala, a shop in the Pure Land Co-op in London; Ratnasuri, now retired, concentrates on meditation and Ratnadakini lives with her two teenage children and supports classes and courses at the LBC. When her children are grown up she wants to teach the Dharma abroad.

Obviously, if our spiritual commitment is our prime motivating force, and if our lifestyle is an expression of that, then our lifestyle can change if our circumstances change, or as our commitment deepens or seeks new modes of expression. For example, someone with a family may well choose to move into a community once their children have grown up; or someone who has worked at a public centre for several years may decide to live in a retreat or meditation centre. Order members do tend to move around within the Movement, living in different communities, working at different centres or co-ops and sometimes taking time out of the more public activity to concentrate on meditation and study.

Perhaps we could sum up by saying that the over-riding quality of an Order member's daily life is that of continually trying to deepen spiritual commitment and finding ways of expressing that commitment. We may not be as yet an actual embodiment of our ideals; until our 'Right Views' are

transformed into 'Perfect Vision', and we have entered the Transcendental Path, we are always at risk of falling away from this commitment. For this reason it is essential that we do keep up contact with our teacher, maintain our meditation practice, and keep in good communication with our fellow Order members.

For the Order to be a fully functioning spiritual community, it must have 'within it' some Transcendental Vision. The Venerable Sangharakshita has suggested that the thousand armed form of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, is a fitting symbol for the Order. Within the 'body' of Avalokiteshvara, as it were, Order members are in communication with one another. Yet each is also stretching out a hand or an arm to the world. He has also said that although the Bodhicitta, or 'Will to Enlightenment' for the sake of all beings, can arise at any time during our spiritual life, it is much more likely to arise when a number of individuals are working unselfishly and co-operatively together for the benefit of others.

During the Ordination Ceremony we say the words, 'For the benefit of all beings I accept this Ordination'. Thus, we commit ourselves, to an extent, to the Bodhisattva Ideal. If Order members work together overall, as well as within the smaller teams, then we will become receptive and open to the Bodhicitta. In this way the Western Buddhist Order will become an Ariyan Sangha, or a part of the glorious company of Bodhisattvas, and thus of real benefit to the world. Perhaps this is our greatest task. It is certainly one which we should keep constantly in mind as we pursue our daily life, work, communication, and meditation practice.







Bhante is introduced at the Bhaja ceremony

# Sangharakshita in India

By Vimalakirti

The first-class waiting room was swarming with people. Very remarkable were the ladies wearing their colourful, or pure white, saris. They were holding plates, on which rested burning candles and flowers, garlands and kumkum (the red powder that is smeared onto a guest's forehead). Although it was the third of December and the weather was a bit chilly, everyone was beaming with enthusiasm, and all eyes were directed towards the main entrance.

Soon they heard the sound of cheering, and the chant: "Bhante Sangharakshitancha Vijay aso!" coming from the crowd which was meeting Bhante off the Bombay train, and they started to rush towards the main entrance to bow before Bhante and offer their garlands.

The ladies formed themselves into two rows, facing in on each other, and Bhante, his face beaming, walked between the rows, receiving garland after garland, and having the platters of lighted candles waved in his face. This is how we welcome heroes. It was an overwhelming and spectacular sight.

We were to witness many such occasions during Bhante's short stay in India, over the coming three weeks. As Bhante drove away from the station it was possible to see a sea of happy and contented faces. Everyone was really happy that Bhante had accepted the invitation to return to India after an interval of two years.

Bhante's first public appearance was at Dapodi, on our own plot of land. This was on 6th

December, the anniversary of Dr Ambedkar's death, so a large meeting was organised.

Despite shivering cold and piercing wind, more than five thousand people attended the meeting and listened to Bhante with total concentration. In his talk Bhante spoke of the achievements and good qualities of Dr Ambedkar, before going on the talk about the things that death reminds us of. People gave heartfelt thanks for the talk, and one aged follower of Dr Ambedkar said that in two decades he had never heard such a beautiful and befitting lecture. The programme was a complete success.

On 11th December the local train leaving Poona for Lonavla was overflowing with people. This was quite an unusual thing for a Sunday: indeed, some

people were unable to get onto the train at stations further on!

When the train arrived at the tiny Malvali station, the place was suddenly swarming with people. The local villagers, who are used to seeing a crowd of perhaps a dozen or so making its way towards the ancient Buddhist caves at Bhaja, were surprised to see hundreds of people passing through their village and going, not towards the caves, but turning the other way - towards the newly built retreat centre. They soon realised that the inauguration ceremony was being held there, and they too joined the colourful stream of men and women making its way through the paddy fields.

People had come from different parts of Maharashtra: from



Poona, Bombay, Aurangabad, Sholapur, Nagpur, and there were even a few friends from Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh.

At about twelve o'clock, Bhante cut the ribbon tied to the door-frame, and declared the vihara open. Amidst some resounding applause he named the vihara, 'Saddhamma Pradeep (Pali; Pradipa), which means 'Light of the true Dhamma'.

In his talk he said that although the Buddha's teaching is vast, it could be summarised in one word: impermanence. He showed how this is the governing principle in nature, and then went on to say how it is because of impermanence that we can change, become better human beings, become perfect human beings, become Enlightened human beings. In this way he made it clear how this centre is a place where the Dhamma can actually be practised.

In the evening, when those who had attended the opening ceremony had left, the ordination retreat began. There were seventeen participants in all.

This retreat was in fact the main reason for Bhante's visit to India, and at the retreat's conclusion there were eight new Order members in our sangha.

The ordinations took place over three days, the private ceremonies taking place in the evenings. The public ceremony took place on Sunday 18th December.

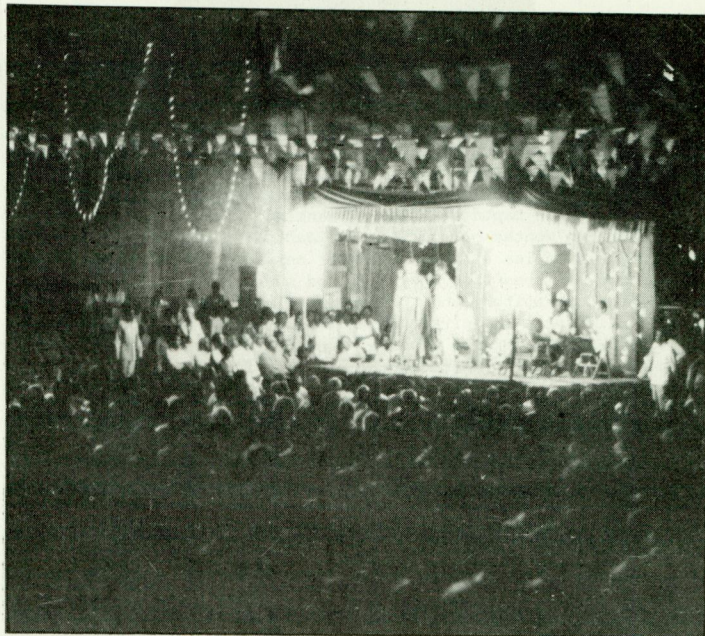
This ceremony was a most positive experience for all of us who had been on the retreat, and for those who had been invited out especially for it.

After the ordinations came a two-day Order convention, which was attended by the entire resident Order in India - thirty-six in all - so this was a very significant occasion indeed. It was good to see Bhante in such a happy mood, especially since he had suffered a lot from illness on his last visit.

A salient feature of the Order get-together was a visit to the ancient Buddhist caves at Bhaja. All the Dhammacharis, wearing their blue shirts and kesas, with two in front bearing the five-coloured Buddhist flag, walked through the fields and climbed up the hillside along with Bhante. It was a sight to remind one of the Buddha going on his way with a company of monks. We stayed there for about an hour, and then returned.

On 22nd December came the public lecture at Dr Ambedkar maidan, in the Worli district of Bombay. A beautifully decorated and brightly lit stage was set up in one corner of the triangular ground - which was packed to capacity.

Again Bhante walked between two rows of women with flowers and candles, as he made his way towards the stage. In the



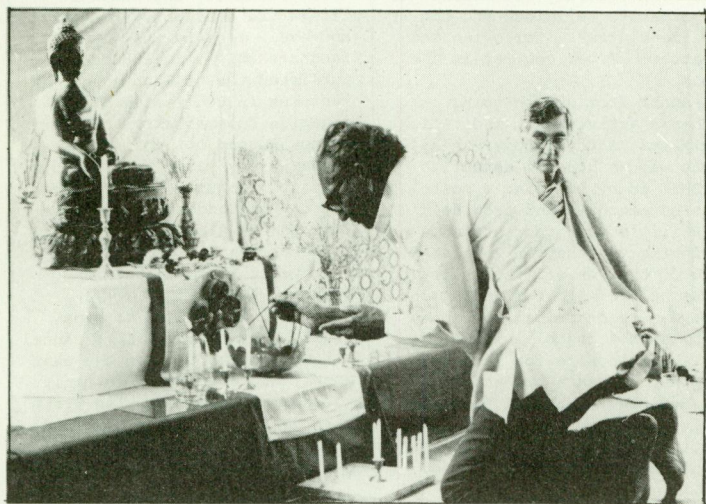
**Bhante speaks in Worli**

background people chanted slogans and showered him with flowers.

He spoke for 140 minutes - so this was the longest talk that he has given in India. Throughout the talk everyone was pinned to their seat, and carefully following every word. It is beyond the scope of this article to report everything that

Bhante said; the text will no doubt appear in a future publication. To my mind, however, this excellent talk was Bhante's compensation, in just one meeting, for the fact that he was not able to give more talks during his short but extremely successful stay.

Vimalakirti



**Sanghasena's Ordination**



**And the Retreat Centre**

## POONA

Bhante's visit in December is by far our most important item of news. He came to ordain eight mitras from Poona, Bombay, and Aurangabad, now called Dhammanand Trisaren, Bodhanand, Shakyand, Nagasen, Bodhisen, Sanghasen, Chandrasil, and Vajrasila. Besides that we held our first Dhamma programme on our land at Dapodi, and Bhante opened our new meditation centre near Bhaja Buddhist caves.

Since then, the most important event has been the celebration of Republic Day. This is important for the followers of Dr Ambedkar, since it was he, more than anyone else, who was responsible for framing the Indian constitution. As if to point the new republic in the right direction, he had the Ashoka Chakra placed at the centre of the Indian flag, the four-lioned Ashoka column made the symbol of the government of India, and had written over the entrance of the President's palace, "Let us put into motion the Wheel of the Dhamma". Hence on this date we get many invitations for lecturers. Lokamitra, Vimalakirti, and Ashvajit, with a large number of sahayaks and Mitras, went

to the nearby town of Saswad, for a procession through the town, followed by a very successful lecture programme.

Finally, here are some brief news items. We have just purchased another 1800 square feet of land in the village of Lohagaon, near Pune. It is here that we are planning to build our first hostel for children undergoing education in the good town and city schools.

We are currently working on a reprint of *The Path of The Inner Life*. This should be ready by mid-April. Copies will be obtainable from Triratna Grantha Mala (c/o TBMSG, Poona), or from Windhorse Publications in the UK.

Triratna Pustakalay, our bookshop, has started a mail-order business in English books on Buddhism printed in India, of which there are a very large number. For a booklist, please contact the Aid for India office in London, or TBMSG in Poona.

Lokamitra is currently preparing for a tour of Malaysia and Singapore, which he will make this August. He is hoping to raise some much needed funds for our Dhamma activities in India.



# DAPODI

16

On 26th January, Republic Day, we wanted to demonstrate to everyone the work that has been going on in Dapodi for the last eighteen months or so. The Sewing Class ladies arranged an exhibition of items that they had learned to stitch, and the children laid out an intricate design in pebbles on the floor of the kindergarten, including the name of each child. Mrs Barathe, our teacher, led the children through a demonstration of story-telling, song-singing and exercises. Everyone enjoyed the show, especially the children themselves. We also took the opportunity to launch our new Marathi language newsletter for the Dapodi area, called *Bahujan Hitay*. The title is taken from the famous lines spoken by the Buddha: "Charaksha Bhiksava chadik bahujan hitay, bahujan sukhay, Lokanukampay attay hitay devmanussanan". ("Go forth on your journey, for the profit of the

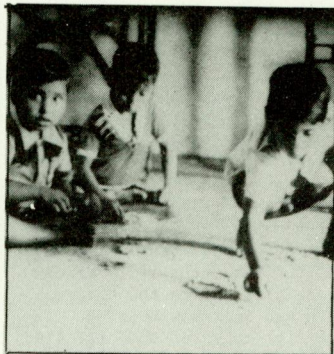
many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the profit, the bliss of Devas and mankind".)

*Bahujan Hitay* will carry news of our activities on the health and social fronts, as well as articles which give more background to our work than is possible in conversation.

Following the morning's programme, we all moved to another part of Dapodi where a new kindergarten school was being inaugurated. The school is in a small wooden hut with a mud floor. It will accommodate up to fifty children in the 3-5 year age group. We will also be using the hut for other activities, such as clinics and meetings, as at present there is no space in the locality for such community activities. As the ribbon was cut, the name, 'Panchseel Balwadi' was announced.

There is a long-established tradition of pre-school edu-

cation in Maharashtra, which means that a lot of experience has been gained in this field. Our contribution is to make the benefits available to more children. There is no doubt that a child who has been to



Inside the kindergarten

a pre-school class gets a better start at primary school, and is less likely to drop out, as so many unfortunately do. When a child's parents have had no education themselves, it is difficult for them to provide support to the school-going child, such as help with the homework, or even just encouragement to study.

We have recently completed a detailed survey in one locality. This has provided us with more precise information regarding the population and its problems. Perhaps the most useful result of this work is that we can now 'chase' children who are not taking part in activities: for example, those who do not come to the pre-school class, or who have not been vaccinated.

# AHMEDABAD

It is now three months since Mangala returned to Ahmedabad from the U.K, with the intention of working there for two years. During this period he hopes to see TBMSG well established, at least in Ahmedabad, but also in other parts of Gujarat also. TBMSG (Ahmedabad) should in fact soon be formally established as a separate religious and educational trust, following the pattern of our centres in the U.K.

Apart from our on-going Dharma activities - meditation classes, study groups, talks - one way we hope to establish TBMSG is by building a hostel to accommodate and provide facilities for poor students wishing to study in Ahmedabad. To do this we will be enlisting the help of Aid for India, who have already raised the money for such a hostel in Pune. We are now looking for land suitable for such a project.

Besides the hostel, we are also looking for an isolated cottage near to Ahmedabad, suitable for small retreats,

study seminars and solitary retreats. Such a facility is really vital as meditation and study in a noisy and crowded city like Ahmedabad is very difficult indeed.

Another vital area we are in the process of developing is our publications. At present there is hardly any Buddhist literature available in Gujarati, and even less by the Venerable Sangharakshita. In 1982/83 we published two of Bhante's lectures in two issues of our magazine *Dhammachakra*. However, we now intend to publish four issues every year. Just recently in fact, we published 'The Meaning of the Buddha Puja and the Function of a Buddhist Vihara', a lecture Bhante gave on his last visit to Ahmedabad in February 1982.

Unfortunately, due to hepatitis, Mangala has had to cancel all his activities for the past month, but soon hopes not only to resume these, but also visit new localities both inside and outside of Ahmedabad.

# AURANGABAD

1984 began with a new kind of event for us in Aurangabad: a social gathering at Mr Dongre's bungalow, to which about fifty people came. We had races for all, and for the men a game of Kabadi, a Maharashtra game, too complicated to explain. We then had lunch and a bit of discussion, followed by a short talk and puja.

As it was so enjoyable we had another 'garden party' three weeks later. About seventy people came this time. We will try to have these twice a month, weather permitting.

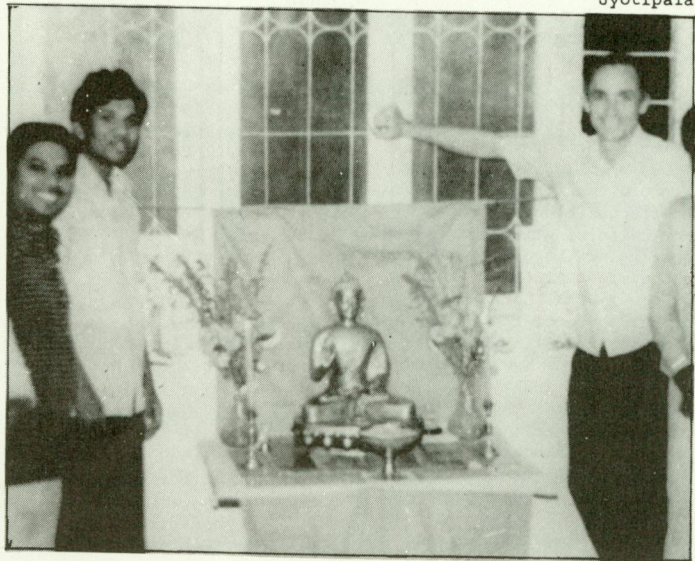
Our meditation class at Killiark Vihara has about fifteen regulars, but sometimes we get thirty. We have four mitras here and once a week we have

been playing one of Bhante's English lectures.

Nagasena, our new Order Member from Aurangabad, conducts a small class in his own locality once a week. Sanghasena, who is at present based in Aurangabad, has been going around the region making contacts and selling our publications. We have also held a number of 'programmes' outside of Aurangabad: two at Jalna and a day retreat at Selu.

In March, when I return from my Marathi course, I hope to be going out more into the Maratwada region, of which Aurangabad is the cultural and administrative centre. I've given talks this month in the Law College and the Arts College, and in two localities in Aurangabad.

Jyotipala



The Bombay Order chapter with friends

# BOMBAY

The last three months have seen a big increase in our activities in Bombay, and this is attributable to three main factors. Firstly our recently purchased flat has now been done up and is functioning as a small centre. We still have to hire a hall for our main classes but more intimate study groups are now taking place at the Centre, which is also acting as a focus of activity for mitras and Friends.

Secondly, the recent visit of the Venerable Sangharakshita and his talk in Bombay has stimulated a great deal of interest and energy, which has increased considerably the

number of requests we have been getting to give lectures, as well as the numbers responding to our other activities. On the last weekend retreat exactly a hundred people attended and were treated, amongst other things, to a stunning talk by Virabhadra on the previously unheard of *Four Lakshanas*.

Finally, during his visit, Bhante ordained three Bombay men. Bodhisena, Chandrasila and Vajrasila, further strengthening the presence of the TBMSG in Bombay. With perhaps one million Buddhists in Bombay we have a lot of work to do, but Bhante's visit has given that work direction and momentum.



## Britain

### LBC

This winter's Battie retreat was full to capacity for most of its ten-day duration, continuing the success that we have come to expect. The real measure of success, however, is the number of people who come on to the LBC directly afterwards, enthusiastic to join meditation and Yoga courses and other classes, keen to recapitulate and deepen the experiences they gained on the retreat. This influx of energy and enthusiasm adds tangibly to the pleasure of working around the Centre, and provides a positive boost to the start of the session.

Of the need to expand our resources and increase our activities we are left in no doubt. We have a constant stream of requests for visits by speakers, and assistance in setting up local groups. Currently, Danavira is making regular visits to a group in Harlow run by Dave Vinten, a mitra who comes to the Centre. A well-attended meditation course in London's Covent Garden demonstrates a potential as yet largely untapped.

The most significant event of the year has been so far the completion of the purchase of 51 Roman Road - the building which contains Sukhavati community and the LBC. The purchase is being made with the help of a bank loan to be paid back over ten years - although we aim to do it sooner if we can.

An important factor which facilitated the purchase has been the help given by Gordon Wills, a mitra who is an accountant. Working with Kulamitra and Tejamati, he helped to bring some much needed clarity to our finances.

We are now extending this clarity to the financial affairs of the Pure Land Co-operative businesses, and we are optimistic that the result will be increased efficiency and profitability.

We are also making changes to improve the organisation and administration of the Centre itself, all of which demonstrates a genuine consolidation of our resources, and an improvement in our ability to rise to the challenge of spreading the Dharma as widely as possible.

### W. London

One of the bonuses for West London this year is a much larger and stronger team of Order members than has been the case in the past. With Satyapala, Vidharaja, and Virachitta all returning from Tuscany ordain-

ed, there are now seven men, and four women Order members involved in and around the Centre. Three of the men intend to leave in about a year's time, to start Dharma activities elsewhere, possibly in the Midlands area, but in the meantime they are here to help in a situation where there is so much that people committed to the Dharma can do.

As well as the ongoing classes and courses at the Centre, it is good to report that we have had some successful 'one-off' events. One such event was the weekend led by Abhaya on 'The Romantic Poets' in January. Focusing especially on the work of John Keats, the weekend succeeded in bringing

nine workers over the first three months of the year, and can look forward to an increasingly profitable spring and summer.

### Croydon

Hundreds of new faces are coming into contact with the Croydon complex. We have had record takings at 'Hockneys', our vegetarian restaurant, and the current season of films at the Arts Centre is showing to fuller houses than ever.

On top of this, our beginners meditation class has been packed nearly every week. And for people who would not come

the public that we are not just another Arts Centre. Our prime concern is not entertainment, not are we interested in the purely aesthetic - that is, aesthetics divorced from the ethical. We are concerned with the communication of the Dharma, of the principles in accordance with which we live our own lives. Therefore all the events which we stage will contain an ethical element - their purpose will be the propagation of human values.

A very exciting feature of the non-violence season will be a talk by the Venerable Sangharakshita, on Buddhism and Non-Violence. We are delighted and honoured that Bhante has agreed to contribute to the



51, Roman Road: our own at last

out both the visionary qualities of the poets, and their human weaknesses and fallibilities.

Also worthy of note have been the Mitra days, led by Anandajyoti for men, and by Anoma for women, which have been attended by almost all the mitras around the Centre. The mitras play an important part in the activities around West London, especially in the communities and the two businesses.

On the business side of things, it is good to be able to report that Friends Foods, which was undergoing considerable financial difficulties recently, is hopefully 'over the hump', and that 'Friends Gardening' has now increased its team from six to

along to meditation classes, but might be more attracted by a lecture, we are planning a series of talks on Monday nights, introducing Buddhism and the FWBO. We have had one of these so far, and it was very successful. It attracted about seventy-five people, many of whom, obviously very stimulated by the talk, stayed behind to ask questions.

Meanwhile the building team has nearly completed work on the new reception area, the final phase of the building project. When it is finished, the Arts Centre will be able to function fully, and its first major season, starting on 27th April, will be an exploration of the theme of non-violence. We want to convey to

launch of the new Centre in this way. There will also be lectures on the principle of non-violence as expressed by various writers, artists, dramatists and musicians, as well as other events connected with the same theme.

The reception room will also house a bookshop. We will be stocking books on Buddhism and on the Arts, and there will be a large display of postcards. During each special season, we will stock a large number of books relevant to the particular events, or to the general theme of the season.

So with all this happening, the Croydon Centre is buzzing with excitement, and the future, both near and distant, looks very, very promising indeed.



## Brighton

Here in Brighton we have recently welcomed into our chapter of the Western Buddhist Order its newest Dharmacari. Last September we said goodbye to Ian Polke when he set off for the three month Men's Ordination Retreat in Tuscany, and now we have welcomed him back as Sanghaloka ('Light of the Spiritual Community'). The Brighton chapter of the order now has nine members who, along with the Croydon, Bristol and West London chapters, form the 'Southern Region' of the UK Order.

This year study of the Dharma has been a major feature at the Centre, particularly during the months of January and February. There have been weekend seminars for both men and women on *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*, and there have been study groups on the Sevenfold Puja as well as on the *Ti-ratna Vandana* (The salutation to the Three Jewels).

During February we celebrated Mahaparanirvana Day, the death anniversary of the Buddha. This took the form of an intensive day retreat for Order Members, mitras, and our regulars. In the evening, in the context of an elaborate Sevenfold Puja, three Brighton women - Pat Jilks, Sally Shan and Jane Evans - became mitras.

Order Members have now started to lead retreats outside the Centre itself. In January we were invited to lead a retreat for some twenty or more people at the Brighton Natural Health Centre, and recently we also led what must have been the first Buddhist retreat at the University of Sussex. The retreat was attended by ten people and was arranged by our student society on the campus - Sussex University Buddhist Studies Association. It was a highly successful event and we will be doing more.



The Diss Order team.

## Manchester

The beginning of 1984 has seen a new level of activity at the Manchester Buddhist Centre. Ratnaguna and Mark Willis, a mitra, had been working on a pamphlet to advertise the Centre and its activities, and also seeing to the printing of a programme for January - March. This they did, with the result that these past three months have been the busiest that the Centre has ever seen. Events such as Ta'i Chi, Yoga, massage, day retreats, seminars and mitra days have been held on most weekends, and classes on four evenings of the week.

Of these classes perhaps the most exciting has been the Tuesday evening eight-week course on Mahayana Buddhism, entitled 'Entering the Path of Enlightenment.' Over the eight weeks Suvajra and Ratnaguna gave talks on the Bodhisattva and Arahant ideals, the arising of the Bodhicitta, the Five Buddhas, and some of the Bodhisattvas. The talks were rich with the imagery and symbolism

of the Mahayana. Most people managed to connect in some way with the themes and benefitted from the course. We intend to follow up this course with another entitled 'Buddhism for Today', perhaps following the general format of Subhuti's book.

Like other FWBO centres, we celebrated Parinirvana Day, and on Monday 27th February we will be celebrating the fourth anniversary of the opening of the Manchester Buddhist Centre.

Meanwhile, Order Members from Manchester have been giving talks at the Keele University Meditation and Buddhism Society on the Five Spiritual Faculties, and on Wednesday lunchtimes we teach meditation at the Manchester University Meditation Society.

On January 25th, Suvajra performed David Weisz's mitra ceremony. Mitra ceremonies are very happy occasions at the Centre, a time when people rejoice in the new mitra's merits and express their appreciation of them with the giving of gifts. Many mitras have commented that they have never before received so many presents (even at Xmas).

## Diss

The Diss group is going through a period of consolidation. This is more than just a euphemism for what has been a period of slow numerical growth; it is in fact a period of real progress. This was made clear when we celebrated our first anniversary in February, when Bodhiraja summarised the achievements of the past year. These included our weekly meeting of some fifteen regular members, frequent day retreats, and four new Diss mitras. For a group that, uniquely in the FWBO, has no centre but relies on the peripatetic help of Order members coming in from Surlingham and Norwich, this is a considerable achievement.

Amongst the highlights of the year was the fund raising dinner held in October. That evening Mangala did probably the best day's work of his life (both for himself and for us) when, for the price of showing his slides on India, he not only got a free meal (for which the rest of us were glad to pay £3.50) but £50 of the £78 profit to help his work with Aid For India, for a total cost of only £6.00 a week, this was a bargain we couldn't turn down. Mangala has therefore been 'adopted' by the Diss group for the two years he will be working in India.

In December we had our first mitra ceremony when Julian Burgess, Sonis Danziger, and John Spinks became new Diss mitras. Shortly afterwards, Subhuti took himself off to the Greek isles to write his next book. Happily this coincided with the return of the newly ordained Bodhiraja. Ratnaprabha has also taken to coming to Diss on Wednesday nights. This has been invaluable in maintaining the progress over the past few months. Consolidation in terms of regular meditation and study will continue until Subhuti's return when we launch the 'spring offensive' on an unsuspecting Diss. "An ever widening circle the Sangha grows."



A study group in Manchester



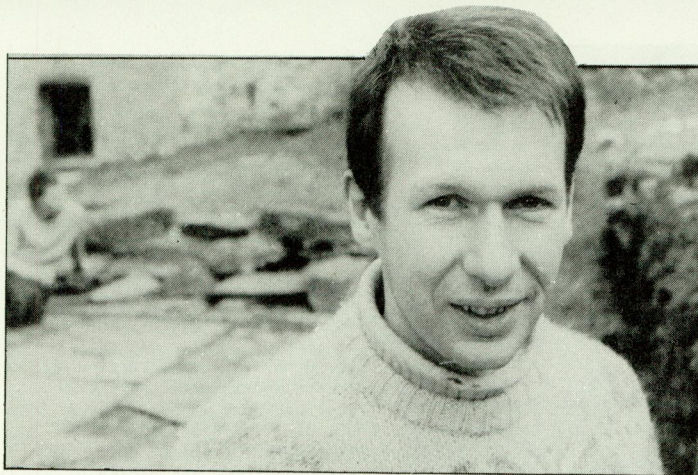
## Vajraloka

So far the winter has been comparatively mild except for some hurricane-strength winds early in the New Year. These did extensive damage to our barn roof - still with its timberwork exposed for the re-slatting work - tearing part of the main roof structure away from the supporting wall. Power lines were blown down too, and slates stripped from outbuildings and guest rooms. Since then we have made slow but steady progress with repair work during our daily work periods.

At this time of the year, there is not always spare manpower for building work even if the weather permits it: There are usually very few guests apart from the community, and cooking, cleaning, making bread, upkeep of the shrine and administration must normally take priority.

More substantial building progress should be made in the second half of April with our Working Retreat. If things go well then, we could complete our two new guest rooms.

Recently we became a charity in our own right, known as the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (Corwen). Only in the last year or two has it become clear that we can abandon the 'safety-net' which our formal affiliation with the LBC gave. In any case we have taken this step with the support of the other UK Centres, who have agreed to ensure our continued survival as the movement's retreat centre for men.



**Sujajra — who led an Amitabha visualisation retreat at Vajraloka in February.**

Quite soon we shall be able to purchase Tyn-y-ddol, the converted farmhouse and outbuildings which comprise the Retreat Centre: this should be completed in April. At the end of that month - after the Working Retreat - work will be starting half a mile away on the conversion of Blaenddol House into something suitable for a small community. It should take about six months.

Together with the house and its extensive outbuildings, is included a rocky peak overhanging it all, crowded with oaks and pines, which has probably the most magnificent view to be seen locally. Bleanddol House is built in a somewhat grander style than Tynn-y-ddol: an extension to the main house (dated 1723) contains the remains of a family chapel.

The main special event during the past months has been the

Amitabha Retreat, which has been reported elsewhere.

The community has swelled recently to five, with Sumana and Sagaramati joining us. Vimalamitra has left to pursue his studies. Prakasha will be moving to Blaenddol in the spring to oversee the building work there, and we are expecting Kevala to join us then. A life of full time meditation appears to be attracting more members of the Western Buddhist Order than it used to - this perhaps reflects a general increase in appreciation of direct methods of personal development throughout the FWBO.

**Coming Events:**  
For Women: 1-29th June (open), and 2-23rd November (for mitras).  
Working retreat: 17-27th April.  
Order Visualisation Retreats: 21-31st May (Padmasambhava), 14-24th August (Vajrasattva), 23 Nov-2nd December (Tara).

## Padmaloka

There is different sense of time living at Padmaloka. Months flash by and yet each week is so long that you can barely remember the start of it. Why is this?

Perhaps it is the combination of a semi-retreat programme and a full working day. For members of the retreat community each day begins with a double meditation. Before supper there is another session of meditation and the day ends with a seven-fold puja. All this practice brings an increasing level of awareness to everything we do.

The rest of the day is taken up by the morning and afternoon work periods. The work includes catering, administration and maintenance of the Retreat Centre, making candles and gardening. Plenty of work for nine people. It is this combination of increased awareness with a busy productive day that gives us our unique sense of time.

Our main project at the moment is improving the standard of the dormitory accommodation. This involves building beds, decorating, laying carpets etc. Padmaloka now needs to cater for larger numbers of people for longer periods. Men's events draw up to a hundred people for a weekend. The Ordination Request Retreat in March will bring about forty for a fortnight. All this stretches the facilities and gives us the impetus to make things better.

## BOSTON USA

The original Boston Buddhist Center was in a pleasant house but, unfortunately, in a section of the city where most people feel unsafe. Our second Center was in a safe and accessible part of the city but it was in a building otherwise providing office space, and although people came along, few formed attachment to the place because the 'atmosphere' was rather cold. Consequently the nucleus of Friends that is the backbone of any FWBO-Centre did not come into being.

About a year ago we decided on a second move to our present premises in Jamaica Plain which houses the Center and a community. The neighbourhood is considered safe by the majority of Bostonians, the Center is right next to the streetcar stop, and there is always one or another community member present at the Center to welcome visitors.

After only six months we started to notice a change:

a dozen or so people had developed ties with the Center. Now after nine months it is clear that the Center has a circle of about fifteen Friends who keep regular contact. Every morning (except Sunday) five to eight of us meditate together, and a handful of Friends come to each of the three weekly evening classes.

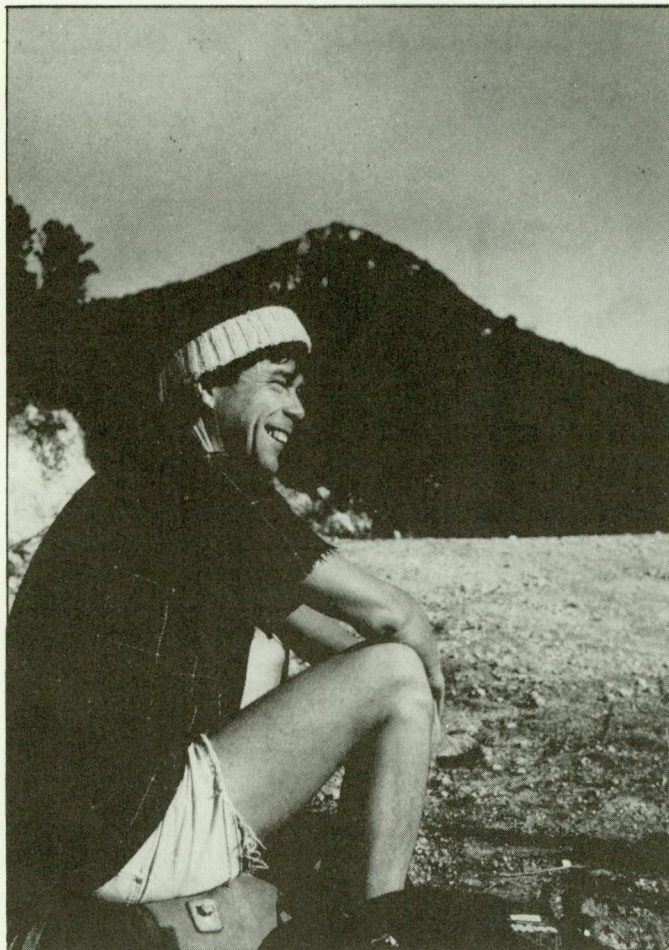
Our Christmas retreat was held in a house overlooking a large and wild lake near to the sea in Rhode Island. Five of us, including Pavel Hrma from Cleveland, and Akif Kaynak from New Jersey, spent a week there together. We held a weekend retreat in January in a house just South of Boston, and a day retreat at the Center in February which was the most successful event of that type that we have held. Our future programmes will probably include a weekend retreat every two months, since there are now enthusiastic Friends to support them.



**In the Boston reception room**



# New Zealand



Buddhadasa — begrudging no one the good life!

It is not easy, being the chairman of a centre when one's immediate future is made so uncertain by modern requirements. I arrived in New Zealand in August 1980 but it was not until October

1983 that I was finally, and to my great relief, granted permanent residence and accepted as an Ordained Buddhist Teacher. Subsequently I have also been granted citizenship, so gone are the days when I

felt that I might be asked to leave at a moment's notice.

New Zealand is a country with certain peculiarities that make our work at the Auckland Buddhist Centre more difficult than it might otherwise be. For example, New Zealand has only been on the world map since 1769, which is no time at all historically. Auckland, New Zealand's largest city, is about 150 years old and it would be difficult to find in the modern city and international port we see today a building which is older than 100 years. Contrast this with the towns and cities of Europe which are ossified by centuries of history and tradition and it will be appreciated that Auckland, by comparison, is so new and fresh.

With a mere 3,000,000 inhabitants scattered thinly throughout North and South Island the general feeling in New Zealand is that development is continuing, change is possible, and that the 'good-life' can be attained by one and all. With one in ten New Zealanders owning a boat and with secluded sandy beaches, emerald lakes, dense green bush, and high and snowy mountains within easy reach of all main centres of population, life in New Zealand definitely tips towards hedonism.

While I begrudge no one the 'good-life'; there is a difficulty here from the spiritual point of view. If the Auckland Buddhist Centre is to offer anything at all, what it offers must be better, and must seem to be better, than the 'good-life' which the majority of New Zealanders already enjoy. The traditional Buddhist answer, when dealing with such a god-like realm, is to play the 'sweet melody of Impermanence'. Perhaps the modern answer is to

indicate that even the 'good-life' may be refined, and cultural and artistic values would gradually come to replace the somewhat crude and hedonistic ones already in existence.

Another difficulty we face at the Auckland Buddhist Centre arises because New Zealand is very isolated from the rest of the world. Big Brother Australia for example, who watches over little brother New Zealand with mixed feelings of irritation and devotion, lies 1,000 miles to the West. This in turn means that those who do make contact with the Dharma through the Centre often regard the Centre as a 'stepping-stone' to the wider Movement which lies beyond; particularly to the movement in the UK. During the past three years I have seen a number of committed Friends, Mitras, and one Order member, leave Auckland for further training and practice overseas. Because we remain shorthanded here at A.B.C. their departure is sometimes seen as a loss, but my own feeling is that their departure also represents a considerable gain. The needs of any centre are surely of secondary importance to the spiritual needs of the individual.

As we look ahead to the remainder of 1984 it seems we shall continue to be shorthanded at the Centre. However, we shall also continue to reach many New Zealanders who have not come across the Dharma before. Our task remains what it always has been. To go out and share a Vision of New Horizons which are infinitely more glorious to gaze upon, and infinitely more worthwhile to cross over than the present, albeit beautiful horizons of this odd little place called New Zealand.

## Jayapushpa in Malaysia

The retreat period being over for a while, Jayapushpa's dharma work is now centred mainly around two places: The Muar Buddhist Society and the Batu Pahat Buddhist Society. She visits both of these once a week.

Jayapushpa has just set up a community 'Vajratara' situated in Petaling Jaya, Selangor, with four Buddhist friends. The community has a Right Livelihood project associated with it: a Buddhist bookshop and a taped lecture business, both of which Jayapushpa is managing.

Jayapushpa is also involved in preparations for Lokamitra's trip to Malaysia and Singapore in the summer, when he will appeal for funds for Dharma work in India.



Dharmapriya — always on the move

## Germany

One year on - and FWBO activities in Germany are steadily expanding. Although the base is in Essen, the movement here is not FWBO(Essen), but rather FWBO (Germany), trying to teach Dharma in the entire German-speaking area of Europe. For

that reason, one important Dharma 'activity' consists of a continuous stream of letters, telephone calls and visitors to and from the small Essen community with its two Order Members. In various regions of Germany they are continuing to lead

retreats, which still form the core of the programme.

The fifteen day Christmas retreat was a great success, attracting over thirty participants from most parts of Germany and climbing to a higher level than a beginners' retreat usually does. After our spring regional retreats will come the first German single-sex retreats, scheduled for July and August. Dharmapriya predicts that these retreats will give participants a greater depth of practice and understanding of the Dharma.

For more enthusiastic Friends there is a regular study group in Essen, a Dharma seminar in the spring, and translation work: 1984 should see the first FWBO booklets published in German.

This does not mean that newcomers are being neglected. Frequent Yoga-and-meditation weekends in Hamburg, Karlsruhe and most recently Heidelberg, are attracting new enthusiasts. And in Essen there are monthly day retreats in the FWBO community as well as weekly Yoga classes elsewhere in the city.



# Women's Retreat



The retreat was held in Haggy Farm Hostel which is surrounded by the austere forested hills of the Peak District. It was led by Vidyasri around the theme of the Bodhisattva Ideal.

Most mornings were occupied by two double sessions of meditation. On the shrine our two 'honoured guests' were an 'Earth Touching' Sakyamuni and a beautiful thanka of Avalokiteshvara. In the late afternoon we absorbed ourselves in Bhante's lectures on 'Aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal'. Having described the origin and development of the Bodhisattva, his ideals and path, Bhante led us into the

glorious realms of the Bodhisattva hierarchy, and finally left us with images of the timeless Buddhas, somehow discreet from, but the same as, the Bodhisattvas, eternally striving for Perfection.

Three Order Members also gave talks on the Bodhisattva of their visualisation practices. In the first week Vidyasri gave a beautiful talk on Tara, stressing her power as protectress, and her link with devotional practices. During the following puja, two mitra ceremonies were performed. On a violently windy new year's eve, Vajragita gave a powerful talk

on Padmasambhava. This was followed by a puja in which we placed our confessions before the shrine, and hung our merits and resolutions on a 'tree of merits' beside it. At the end of the puja Vidyasri burnt our confessions, and later, their ashes and the 'tree of merits' were given up to the fast-flowing river.

On the last day it snowed. That evening Sanghadevi gave an inspired talk on Manjugosha, the 'Gentle-Voiced One'. We made our final offerings, including the six senses, in baked and painted dough, to the soft chanting of his vibrant mantra. And so, charged, strengthened, and a little cautiously, we emerged to meet 1984.

Caroline Gutt

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# Christmas in Battle

Through midnight on New Years Eve, sixty people sat together practising the metta bhavana meditation practice in a candle-lit room. Only days before, this room had been transformed from a school assembly hall into a beautiful shrine room.

The occasion was this year's Open Winter Retreat, held in the pleasant surroundings of a school in Battle, Sussex.

The retreat was led by Parami, supported by a team of Order members and mitras from the LBC. People came to the retreat from all parts of the country, and for many of them it was their first experience of meditation,

and their first contact with Buddhism and the FWBO.

Included in the eleven-day programme were talks by Atula, Dhammarati, and Dhammadinna, on the subjects of 'Meditation', 'The Four Noble Truths', and 'Change'. There were also two symposia on the themes of 'The Three Jewels', and 'Wisdom, Compassion, and Energy'.

This was the eighth retreat of its kind to be organised by the LBC, and, as on previous retreats, all those who participated in it gained at least a glimpse of what regular spiritual practice can achieve.

BIJA

# — Seeding the Wasteland

We are happy to report that, after several false starts, 'Bija', an arts group formed by Friends in East London, has been formally inaugurated with its own management team and bank account.

The first event that it organised was a poetry reading by two widely known and published poets, Peter Redgrove and Penelope Shuttle, on March 21st, in the "Camerawork Gallery", Bethnal Green.

Throughout 1984/5 we hope to present a broadly based programme of poetry, drama, dance, music and film. We will be inviting well-known guest poets, as well as our own local writers, to read their work, and to lead discussion groups. We also hope to invite theatre groups, dance troupes, directors and musicians to perform, and we will show films and videos which may not be readily

seen on the main cinema circuits, as well as material particularly suitable to those with an interest in current social and spiritual issues.

Our future events programme is now being compiled. In May we will be presenting an evening of contemporary short films. In July we hope to have Brian Patten to read his work, and in September, a drama workshop or staging, directed by Jayamati.

At the end of the year we are planning a festival to celebrate the winter solstice, with poetry, music and mime, and possibly another guest poet.

Full coverage of future events, as well as background material on the productions will be given in a quarterly Newsletter, called Bija, which will be available at the venues and at FWBO centres in London.

Ananda

Coming Events:  
May a film evening  
June an evening of Gaelic music.

July a poetry evening  
August Film: 'A Tibetan Trilogy' (part 3: In the Fields of the Senses).

# Aid for India

On returning from his fact-finding tour of Western India, Mahamati's first job was to apply his insights into the situation there to the production of our third annual AFI Newsletter. This journal, although primarily intended for AFI's many supporters, will be of interest to anyone involved with the FWBO, and copies are sold at every Centre.

On Thursday 1st March, we held our first 'supporters' meeting'. It began with a short recital by guitar virtuoso John Zaradin, who volunteered his services for free. This was followed by a slide show, given by Nagabodhi, in which he covered the background to AFI's

work in India, the current state of our projects, and our future plans. The formal part of the evening ended with a question and answer session, between our supporters and an AFI panel consisting of Mahamati, Vessantara, Nagabodhi, and John Bloss. Questions ranged from the merits of rural versus urban development projects, to the effects on the ex-untouchables of their conversion to Buddhism.

The evening ended with tea and sandwiches. Most of the supporters stayed on to meet the AFI team and chat informally. Overall, the supporters thought the evening a success, and several wanted to know when the next one would be.



Questions and answers at 'supporters meeting'



# The Order Office

Padmaloka, the men's community in Norfolk, is not just a retreat centre. It is also the Venerable Sangharakshita's home and that of the team running the Office of the Western Buddhist Order. The Venerable Sangharakshita has been concentrating on literary work since his return from India at the end of 1983. This includes editing *Mitrata* and publications of TBMSG in India. But most of his time had been and is being taken up with the completion of a book on Buddhist Canonical Literature entitled *The Word of the Buddha*, the long awaited sequel to *The Three Jewels*. The book should be available later this year.

The Order Office team get to meet, by letter or in person, a wide spectrum of organisations and individuals. Already this year we've had a visit from a Swedish Buddhist and from the Venerable Khemadhammo, an English Bhikkhu with a vihara on the Isle of Wight. Friendly contacts are being initiated with Buddhists and Buddhist groups in the Midlands and the east of England, some of whom have had no previous contact with the FWBO. One group, the Leicester Buddhist Society, kindly invited Dharmachari Vessantara to lead a day Retreat in mid-February, which he did, giving a memorable

introduction to *Metta* (loving-kindness), through meditation, study, and his own personal warmth and friendliness. The group at Diss continues to thrive, celebrating its first anniversary at the end of January with a benefit dinner. The proceeds went towards supporting Dharmachari Mangala's work in India. A couple of weeks after the dinner, Dharmacharini Srimala led a very cheerful day retreat for the Diss regulars at Street Farm in Aslacton.

Srimala organises a team of Norwich Dharmacharinis and women mitras who can be thanked for much of the dedicated work which has created a series of excellent issues of *Mitrata*. *Mitrata* is the FWBO's bi-monthly study journal, and a year has now passed since Sangharakshita launched the first issue in the new-style series, which deals with The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path. This first anniversary fell in February, and Sangharakshita, the production team and *Mitrata's* editors celebrated with a tea-party in Norwich.

Lastly, a parting from the Order office. Dharmachakra Tapes no longer distributes cassettes of Sangharakshita's lectures from Padmaloka. The business is now established with Cittapala and Silabhadra at 'Suvannabhava Community', in London.

## Bhaja, 1983

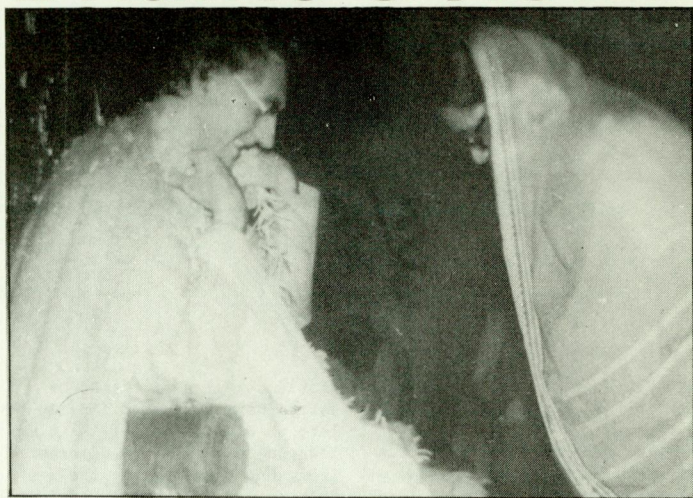
Behind, ascending by degrees,  
The mountain-barriers stand,  
And rocky spurs on either side  
Enclose the quiet land,  
Where fields on fields, now fawn now dun,  
Lie basking the evening sun.

Here Nature with unsparing hand  
Gives man what'er he needs;  
She sends the swift torrential rain  
That swells the planted seeds;  
She clothes the earth in living green  
And scatters sunshine o'er the scene.

But most of all she gives the peace  
Within which we can find  
The deeper peace she cannot give —  
The peace of heart and mind:  
The peace that monks in woods and caves  
Have found before they fill their graves.

Sangharakshita

# Bhanté's News



## Agarland for Bhante in Bombay

With a publisher hoping to bring out *The Word of The Buddha* (a sequel to *A Survey of Buddhism*), with a second volume of memoirs well in hand, and with, quite literally, thousands of pages of transcribed study seminar awaiting his editorial attention, the Venerable Sangharakshita has been keen for some time now to concentrate on his literary work. He describes this workload as "a twenty-year backlog", but even this does not take into account the many reflections and insights that he would like to see in print. So writing, and keeping in the flow of writing, is Bhante's main aim at the moment, and his life at Padmaloka revolves around that goal.

The trip to India was therefore something of an exception to the normal scheme of things.

However, convinced that there were some people in India ready for ordination, and feeling that the 'system', or process of preparation and ordination must be seen to work over there, Bhante took a three-week break from pen and typewriter.

As you will have read elsewhere, it was an extremely full stay. The trip was so well organised, though, that Bhante still found time, not only to see quite a few old friends, but also to catch up with some of his more Indian literary work: editing lectures that he gave during his last visit, and preparing them for publication. Looking back on what must have been a very hectic visit, he says that it all went so smoothly that it was almost like being on holiday.

Bhante did, of course, spend half of his time at Saddhamma Pradeep, the new retreat centre, where the ordination retreat and the Order convention were held. In his view, opening this centre was the most significant aspect of his stay. It is not just that the Centre is situated in pleasant and peaceful countryside; it is

a very important step for us that we should own our own Centre on our own land - and particularly so close to the Bhaja Buddhist caves. It takes the Movement in India into another dimension. More land around the Centre is available, at quite a reasonable price, so Bhante is keen that we should acquire as much of it as possible. We will then have quite a holding: a meditation and retreat "colony", within easy reach of Bombay and Poona.

It is not just the new Centre that is taking the Movement onto a new level. As more people are ordained, and as more Order members are clearly gaining the confidence and maturity needed to initiate Dharma activities, the centres in Bombay, Aurangabad, Ahmedabad, as well as Poona, are becoming more clearly defined as autonomous centres, guided by strong, local Order chapters. There is of course just one Order, and Poona is without doubt a focal point for the Movement in India, but the emergence of autonomous centres, which has largely taken place since Bhante's last visit, indicates that the Movement is becoming established on a more regular basis.

Back in England, Bhante is absorbed in his literary work again. However, in April he will be giving a talk to an Order gathering in London, the text of which will be published in booklet form soon after. He is therefore working on that.

As well as the visitors already mentioned in the Order Office report, Bhante was pleased to meet Stephen Bachelor, who spent a couple of days at Padmaloka in March.

Stephen, whose translation of *The Bodhicaryavatara* is widely used in the Movement, was on a brief visit to the UK from Korea.

Representatives from TV and radio have also been in touch, and perhaps we will be able to report some interesting developments in that field in the next issue.



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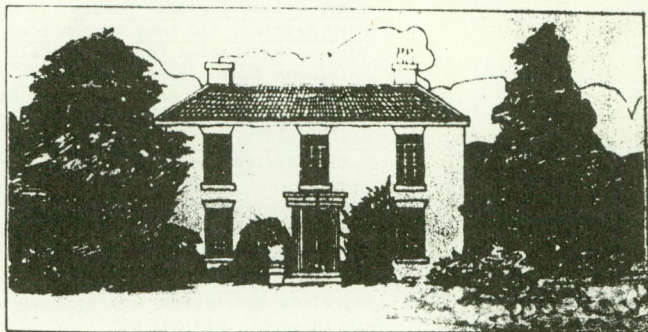
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# PADMALOKA

MEN'S

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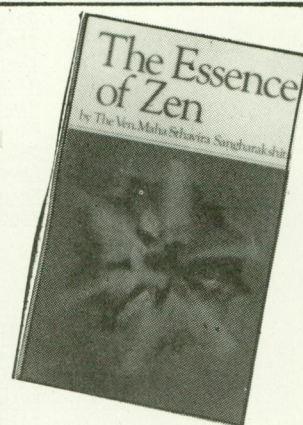
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A Centre of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order



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