

Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

NEWSLETTER

64



BUDDHISM: ONE RELIGION OR THREE?

THE FRIENDS OF THE WESTERN BUDDHIST ORDER

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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 relations* 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

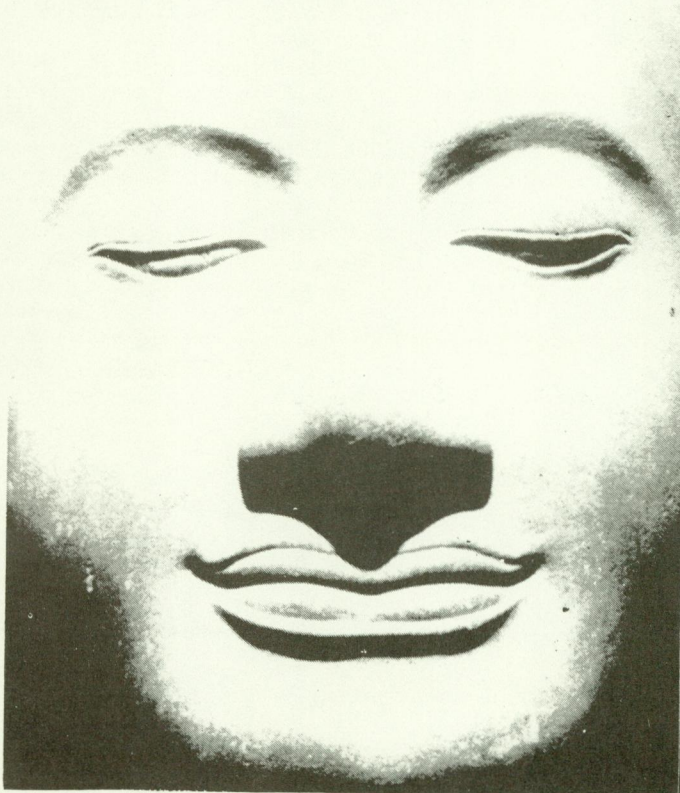
together in businesses which financially support the workers and which fund the further expansion of this New Society. Present businesses either running or being set up in the Movement include a printing press, wholefood shops, a silkscreen press, a hardware store, cafes, a second-hand shop, bookshop,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

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EDITORIAL

The Buddha's path was a long one, traversing many dimensions. Behind him lay the path of inner exploration, inner transformation, and inner discovery. Before him lay a path of dust, clay and stone: the roadways of northern India that he would wander for the rest of his life, waking people up to that other path. In his mind's eye he beheld a lake where lotuses, each at its own stage of growth, unfolded towards the light, and he knew that the people he would meet and befriend were each too at their own point of development, each waiting for the words that would help them to a higher stage.

As he travelled from city to city, village to village, he met kings, cattle herds, warriors, religious ascetics, merchants, prostitutes, simple householders... In one place he gave a discourse on the ethical foundations of society, in another detailed discourse on the practice of meditation. Here, he allowed himself to be drawn into refined metaphysical debate; there, he responded with a profound silence; to one man he appeared urbane, witty, friendly and sympathetic; to another he would administer a shock that turned him upside-down. He gave what he could; he gave what it was time for: a vision of the Goal, an overview of the Path, but often and above all, the precise teaching which prompted someone to take the very next step in the fulfilment of his own higher destiny.

The Buddha left a vast legacy: so many teachings, so many shades of emphasis. And as his disciples travelled and taught, the teachings proliferated still further.

The legacy was at once a treasure chest, a playground, and a maze. It contained priceless jewels of wisdom; it was ripe for analysis and categorisation by those who love that kind of occupation; it was bewilderingly diverse: such an assortment of teachings gathered from here and there, united only by the benign intention that lay behind them.

Necessarily, schools and sub-schools evolved around those teachers able to turn that legacy into a potent transforming force for the people of their own time and cultural context. Inevitably, those schools differed from each other, often dramatically, in tone and emphasis. Sometimes the different schools arose quite independently; at others, a new school arose in response to the decline or corruption of another. Taking an overview of that legacy, we see that the many schools and sects fall into three major categories: the three *Yanas* or 'Ways': the Hinayana, the Mahayana, and the Vajrayana. These form the subject matter of the *Newsletter* before you.

Outwardly, these Ways can seem so different that the disinterested onlooker may wonder whether Buddhism is one religion or three! But in the modern West, where we have access to the scriptures from all the traditions, and where we have no implanted national bias towards any one of them, we are free to recognise that there are teachings of crucial value to be discovered in all the traditions. This was made clear in a series of lectures given at a Padmaloka 'Men's Event' in May, which are reproduced here.

In time, no doubt, schools and sub-schools of Western Buddhism will arise, each offering a comprehensive path to those of one or another spiritual bent or personality. For the time being, however, each of us, using the guidance that is available, must take to heart those teachings which speak most directly to his or her immediate spiritual condition, and which throw an all-important light on the next step to be taken. In this way, through the integrity of the practising Buddhist, the three *Yanas* become one: the way, or path of the developing individual.

When people ask whether the FWBO is a Hinayana, Mahayana, or Vajrayana, they may get — in the West at least — a more or less complex answer, explaining our 'synthetic' approach. At our centres in India, however, the question is answered much more simply and directly: 'We are followers of the Buddhayana'.

Nagabodhi

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The Hinayana, or 'Lesser Vehicle', the Mahayana, or 'Greater Vehicle', and the Vajrayana, or 'Adamantine Vehicle', represent the three major phases in the development of Indian Buddhism. Although sects and schools of the three Yanas survive to the present day, each phase lasted in its fullest flowering for about five hundred years.

It is possible to look at these Yanas in purely historical terms, but it is also possible to examine them as different approaches to the one goal of Buddhism, or even as representing different levels of spiritual practice. Perhaps it is more useful to take one of these latter approaches, since no matter how rich and varied the Buddhist tradition may seem, it has, after all but one fundamental, underlying theme or 'taste': the 'taste of liberation'.

There is in fact only one 'way', the 'Ekeyana', the Path to Enlightenment: this is the underlying feature behind all the schools and developments. The three Yanas are therefore more properly to be seen, not as independent, unconnected traditions, but as aspects of a vast, ultimately unified movement of teaching and communication that is the spirit and essence of the Dharma.

Historically speaking, the Hinayana represents the first of the three major phases in the development of Indian Buddhism. This article, however, will not be concerned with its historical significance. Instead, the Hinayana will be explored as an approach to the ideal, and as a level of spiritual practice. Hopefully this will demonstrate its importance in our practice of the Dharma today.

The Hinayana upholds the Ideal of the Arahant — one who attains Enlightenment for himself alone. It can thus be said to be spiritually 'individualistic' in orientation. The Ideal of the Bodhisattva — one who has the benefit of all sentient beings at heart — is upheld by the Mahayana. For the Bodhisattva, his own well-being and that of others are of equal importance: in

him, spiritual individualism and spiritual altruism are perfectly balanced. These two aspects of the spiritual life must both be fully developed. If either is neglected the possibility of total spiritual maturity is lost. For this reason the Hinayana as its name, 'the narrow way', suggests, is one-sided and has only limited value. Nonetheless, the spiritual individualism which it represents forms the fundamental basis of all practice. Any attempt to by-pass it would render our practice as useful as a body without the support of a skeleton.

This fact is clearly demonstrated by the metta bhavana meditation practice. In successive stages we try to develop feelings of loving-kindness outwards towards others. This principle holds good throughout all spiritual life and practice. If one wishes to benefit others then one must first of all work on oneself and improve the quality of one's own mental states. The Hinayana and Mahayana therefore share a common starting point, the only difference between them being that of overall orientation.

The Theravada is a surviving Hinayana school which bases its teaching on the Pali Canon. An investigation of its texts will reveal what traditional Hinayana practice is. Many *suttas* offer — with minor variations — a standard description of the process of the spiritual life. It can be summarised as follows:

1. One stands aloof from pleasures of the senses and unskilled states of mind;
2. One enters and abides successively in the first, second, third and fourth jhanas (states of meditative absorption);
3. One directs one's mind to (i) the knowledge of the recollection of former lives; (ii) the knowledge of the passing hence and arising of beings; (iii) the knowledge of the destruction of the *asavas* ('cankers' or biases). Consequently one sees the *asavas* for what they are and what causes them to arise; one sees their 'stopping' and the path leading to their 'stopping'. Knowing and seeing this, one's mind is freed from the *asavas* and thus the spiritual life is consum-

mated.

The expression of the spiritual life in these terms is somewhat one-sided. It is not necessarily narrow in principle, but without wider experience and imagination it is difficult to interpret in other than a narrow way. The summary given can be divided into the three classic stages of the Threefold Way — Ethics, Meditation, and Wisdom. Ethics are conceived here in terms of standing aloof from unskilled mental states and from sense pleasures. The emphasis falls upon guarding the purity of one's mental state. Consequently, one may abstain from harming living beings but forget about developing metta towards them; one may abstain from taking the not given but fail to develop generosity. It may be argued that the outward-going aspect is implied, but unless it is made explicit, many will lack the imagination to act upon it or will not think it so important. Meditation is described in terms of the experience of the jhanas as opposed to the Brahma Viharas or a combination of the two. The emphasis falls entirely on the purification and refinement of one's own mental state. Consequently the other-regarding dimension is lost sight of. This is also true when the goal of the spiritual life is seen in terms of Wisdom and Freedom — without reference to Compassion.

The summary of the spiritual life quoted above is not only most characteristic of what is found in the Pali Canon, but also of the approach and emphasis adopted by the Theravadins. However, although the Theravada bases its teaching on the Pali Canon its emphasis is a selective one. In the *suttas* we can find 'positive' formulations of the precepts, as well as references to the development of the Brahma Viharas and to the Buddha's Compassion. It would be a mistake to identify the Pali Canon itself with the Hinayana.

While I have acknowledged that a degree of spiritual individualism cannot be dispensed with by anyone serious about spiritual development, it is necessary to dis-

tinguish between what could be called genuine spiritual individualism and pseudo-spiritual individualism. The former consists in doing what is objectively necessary to further one's own development. The latter consists in doing what one *wants* to do — and justifying it to oneself and others on the basis that it is good for one's development. The problem of pseudo-spiritual individualism arises where there is a conflict between what one needs to do to improve the quality of one's mental states and what one wants to do. In this matter people are not always aware of their motives. They do what they *want* to do believing, or claiming that it's good for their growth, or at least that it's not harmful to it. A few simple examples should make this clear.

Meditation is the most direct means of improving the quality of one's mental state. Unless one has developed Transcendental Insight and thereby assured oneself of eventually gaining Enlightenment, then one has a need to practise meditation. However, some people claim that they don't need to meditate — at least not regularly — because they remain more positive if they don't. But in all likelihood they are simply succumbing to inertia and rejecting the principal means of developing increased emotional positivity and awareness.

Many people find it very difficult to sustain a high level of meditation practice. For this reason retreats are invaluable since they make it easier to enter more deeply into meditation, and are helpful in maintaining the momentum of daily practice after returning home. However, after a while, some people may become bored with retreats and begin to think they no longer benefit from them. They may need to go on retreat, but they want to go on holiday. So, instead of applying themselves more vigorously to their practice, they take the easy option arguing that what they really need to do is to enjoy themselves. Some time later, after they have returned from three or four weeks in Greece, someone may enquire if they have been on retreat this year. They reply that

THE HINAYANA

by DEVAMITRA

they cannot afford it, and may even complain about the 'high level' of retreat fees!

Historically speaking, Buddhism could be described as having been 'a men's spiritual community movement'. Men's communities have always been, and remain, the backbone of Buddhism. It's not that one cannot benefit from the Dharma if one happens to be a woman, or a man who for objective reasons cannot live in one, but they have always been the principal source of stability and strength of the Buddhist movement. They provide unequalled support for elevating the quality of one's mental states — for the development of metta, mindfulness and spiritual friendship. They provide the magic formula that transmutes base metal into gold. They are extremely precious and should be cherished. Unfortunately, like many precious and beautiful things they are not always appreciated for their true worth and can even evoke feelings of contempt in the minds of those who have not experienced life within them. Many men need to live in a men's community, but they want to live with their girlfriends. They see men's communities as places for men who have problems with women. Since they consider themselves free from such problems, they consider that they don't need to live away from women and are blind to the fact that men's communities have a positive value in themselves. They may argue further that it is good to live with a woman because it helps a man to develop his 'softer' 'feminine' side. However, men who need to develop 'feminine' qualities need to live in a men's community. It is necessary to experience oneself as a man amongst men before one can be sure of such qualities. Otherwise one's 'femininity' may be that of a eunuch.

Puja and devotion are very important aspects of spiritual life. They stimulate and refine positive emotion. Often one's emotional positivity is rather crude. It's a bit like that of an overfriendly Old English Sheepdog — the kind that bounds around with unimpeded energy leaping in and out of ponds and ditches. If you encounter such a creature while out for a walk it will invariably race up to you and shower you with water and mud in a vigorous demonstration of affection. The dog means well and is certainly behaving 'spontaneously', but it lacks a certain intelligence and



The work we do affects our state of mind

sensitivity. So it is sometimes with people. They may emerge from a state of emotional dullness into this kind of exuberance. It is definitely an improvement on their previous mental state, but it needs to be worked upon just like an ore from which a metal is produced. Puja, devotion and an appreciation of the fine arts can facilitate this process of refinement. This in turn makes possible a deeper experience of meditation. People may need to perform puja, but they want entertainment. They put their faith in parties, films or rock and roll. They find them more stimulating and emotionally engaging. They say that this is what they need, but, after their energy has been thus expended and dissipated, they are overcome by torpor like a dog stretched out before a fire when its romp is over. They waste their natural resources just as a wild flame burning above a North Sea oil rig consumes a valuable resource for want of the necessary channel.

Mindfulness is one of the most fundamental virtues necessary for the leading of a successful spiritual life. The Buddha's last words to

his disciples were, 'With mindfulness, strive'. Mindfulness is the one factor which above all helps us to improve our mental state. It is also the one factor which cannot go to excess in the scheme of the five spiritual faculties: faith and wisdom, concentration and energy require the harmonising presence of mindfulness to bring about an equilibrium. Without it, one is immediately distracted from the goal and one lacks the stability and strength of mind to see things as they really are. People may need to develop mindfulness, but often they want distraction. They may choose to practise mindfulness in a public house or at a party. They argue that it is necessary to practise mindfulness even in the most disadvantageous environment. It's 'easy' on a retreat or in a community — they like a *real* challenge. They may even convince themselves that they are adopting the Tantric approach and that they can instantly transform even the most overpowering unskilful mental states into their positive counterparts simply by entering 'the crucial situation' that stimulates them. Perhaps this would be fair enough if they had an unshakable foundation of practice to en-

able them to weather the storm, but unfortunately very few, if any, have such a firm basis to rely upon. All they succeed in doing is to undermine the little genuine effort they do make and to lose themselves in distraction.

Right livelihood can help to improve the quality of one's mental state. That is, work which has an ethical basis, which has a higher purpose in view, which engages us emotionally, and which involves interaction and cooperation with emotionally positive people. Everyone needs something into which they can channel their energy to keep it free flowing. Without an appropriate outlet it will simply turn in upon them and they may fall victim to apathy, depression and boredom. The most beneficial outlet for a Buddhist is work for the Dharma. This can take various forms: teaching, running a public Dharma centre, painting thankas, working in a co-operative business, and so on. It doesn't particularly matter what one does; there are many things which *need* to be done. But they may not coincide with what one *wants* to do.

For example, one may have an 'artistic' talent which one wishes



Communities provide unequalled support

to develop. Talent, unlike genius, is not rare. There are many talented people within the FWBO including some with 'artistic' gifts. Moreover, an interest in the arts is encouraged within the Movement as this is seen as a method of improving the quality of one's mental state. However, it is one of a number, and it is not the most important. One may need to work and cooperate with others — something which 'artists' often seem notoriously unable to do — but one wants to write or paint. One needs a lot of 'space' to think about what one might produce; one needs lots of time for inspiration to arise. Spiritual growth and the development of one's talent have become too closely identified. In pursuing 'art' the Dharma is imagined to be at the centre of one's life, whereas in fact 'art' itself has been placed there. One is an 'artist' first and a Buddhist second; but if one's art is to have any value this must be reversed. Talent must become subservient to a higher purpose.

The Arahant Path consists in the progressive destruction by Insight of the ten fetters which bind us to conditioned existence. The last of

these is *avijja* — 'spiritual ignorance' — the basis of which is *micchaditthi* or 'wrong view'. If Enlightenment is to be attained, wrong views must be eschewed. Unfortunately this is not just a simple intellectual operation. Wrong views are the rationalisations of unskilful mental states. For example, people sometimes suffer from a chronic existential insecurity about which they are completely unconscious. Rather than confront their own experience they ward it off by taking refuge in belief in a personal God. They believe that this being or force has their fundamental well-being at heart. Provided they trust in him they need not worry and consequently their sense of insecurity is checked, though not finally resolved. Everyone suffers from wrong views of one kind or another to some extent. They may have been held all one's life and never questioned. However, they hinder progress and need to be recognised and disposed of. The principal tool used to uncover them is Dharma study. By taking the Dharma as one's norm one is able to recognise wrong views and replace them with right views. Right views are those which are in harmony with the Dharma and

which therefore don't block progress. They have no ultimate or fixed value, since according to Buddhism all views must eventually be abandoned, but they form the necessary provisional basis for the development of Insight into the nature of Reality. Right views orient one towards Enlightenment and can help to facilitate the arising of Perfect Vision.

People need to study and examine the Dharma, but they may want to confirm and justify their wrong views. Consequently they argue that Buddhism has no monopoly of Truth and that much of it is mere cultural accretion. They add that it is difficult, if not impossible, to know what the Buddha really said and it is therefore important, if not more so, to know what others say — especially contemporary Westerners. They therefore approach the Dharma from those avenues which confirm their own prejudices and conditionings: Christianity, Marxism, Sufism, anarchy, Hinduism, feminism etc. They believe that the Dharma and their particular 'ism' have certain things in common. This may or may not be true, but there are certain things in which they

appear to differ. Approaching the Dharma from a particular bias they find it difficult to accept, but instead of rejecting the bias they reject the Dharma. They examine the Dharma from the viewpoint of Christianity, Marxism, or whatever. They may study or read these subjects widely — perhaps because they find them more palatable — and they neglect the Dharma. However, if one really wishes to understand whether or not there is a place for the teachings of Christ in Buddhism, or how Buddhism relates to socialism, or if there is any value in feminism from a Buddhist point of view, then one must first study the Dharma in depth. The Dharma must become one's central reference point and nothing else, otherwise wrong views will simply be confirmed. One may even identify them with the Dharma and cling to them all the more tenaciously.

From the various examples quoted above the distinction between spiritual individualism and pseudo-spiritual individualism should be quite clear. It should also be clear as to what the Hinayana amounts to in terms of practice. It consists in:

1. daily meditation practice;
2. regular attendance of retreats;
3. living in a single-sex community or having recourse to single-sex events as often as possible;
4. the practice of puja and devotion and the appreciation of the fine arts;
5. the cultivation of mindfulness;
6. the practice of right livelihood;
7. frequent Dharma study.

The act of Going for Refuge and the observance of the ethical precepts should also be added. When all these things are put into practice then the Dharma will be found at the centre of one's mandala. A mandala is a kind of pattern in the centre of which is placed an object of supreme beauty around which are arranged other objects of beauty; the more beautiful an object is the closer to the centre it will be placed. All these objects enhance the beauty of the central object which in turn radiates its own increasing splendour outwards giving yet more beauty to the mandala as a whole. Similarly when the Dharma is placed at the centre of one's personal mandala everything else within it is affected by it and takes definition from it. It's not easy to keep the Dharma at the centre but to do so should be the priority of every Buddhist.



The moment we open the pages of a Mahayana Sutra we find ourselves in a very different world to that described in the Pali Canon of the Theravada. We are far from the Deer Park, the Jeta Grove, and the Squirrel's Feeding Ground; no longer are we witnessing the intimate exchanges between the Buddha and a few of His followers. Instead, we now find ourselves in an altogether new and wonderful dimension. It is as if we have been spirited into a universe of myth and archetype, a realm of the Imagination, of idealism and cosmic vision, rich in symbol, and bathed in the warm glow of Transcendental Compassion.

In this universe of gods, Bodhisattvas, Naga Kings, and Gandharvas we meet such perfected beings as Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri, Tara, and Vimalakirti. And we discover not just one Buddha teaching the Dharma, but innumerable Buddhas, each with His own Buddha-field. Here we encounter the theme of Enlightenment, not as a personal goal, and still less as a personal 'attainment', but as an eternal, universal principle showering its benefits onto all beings throughout limitless space.

This dimension, which seems to transcend reason and comprehension, which is quite without limitation, is the domain of the Mahayana, the 'Great Way' or 'Great Vehicle', the second major stage in the development of Buddhism.

The Mahayana began to emerge as a mature spiritual force between the 1st centuries BCE and CE. Over the following centuries it was to spread throughout the East: to China, Tibet, Japan, Korea, where many of its schools and sects survive unto this day.

At first sight the Mahayana, with its highly elaborated devotional element, its countless Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, whose forms are painted, visualised, hymned and worshipped, is utterly different to the Hinayana form of Buddhism. It is so different in fact that many commentators have recoiled from it, dismissing it as a blatant deviation, a testament to the forces of decline and corruption that beset Buddhism as time went by.

And yet Mahayana Buddhism is Buddhism. It cannot even safely be regarded as a kind of later addition or development. After all, the Sanskrit literature of the Mahayana is not much older than the Pali literature of the Hinayana; no scriptures at all were committed to writing until hundreds of years after the Buddha's death. It could further be suggested not only that Mahayana Buddhism is a pure form of Buddhism, but that it is in fact essential Buddhism, seeking as it does to reveal and communicate the very heart and essence of the Dharma.

It is generally held that the Mahayana, as a distinct movement came into being after the Council of Vaisali. This Council was convoked when it became clear that the various schools and sects which made up the Sangha, or spiritual Community, at that time were failing to agree on some major issues.

Firstly, the very goal of the spiritual life had come under debate. While some schools regarded the point of spiritual endeavour to be a sort of personal liberation from suffering, a release into the deathless state of *Nibbana* — 'Arhantship', others declared that the goal for all Buddhists should be nothing less than that manifested by Shakyamuni himself, namely *Supreme Buddhahood*: Buddhahood for the sake of *all*. Had not the Buddha set an example of tireless, loving care for the world? Had he not spent his entire life — after his Enlightenment — teaching, communicating, and sharing his discovery, rather than keeping it all to himself? These monks saw the Buddha not just as a teacher offering a path to personal salvation, but as a prototype. He had manifested the perfect harmonisation of Wisdom and Compassion that characterises the Enlightened state. They therefore believed that all Buddhists should strive to emulate his example to the full.

Secondly came a point of philosophical debate. The Buddha had expounded the principle of *Paticca-Samuppada*: 'Conditioned co-production', or 'Dependent Origination', the principle according to which nothing arises except in dependence upon a network of conditions, or ceases except in dependence upon the ceasing of its conditioning factors. This principle, the Buddha has said, underlies everything, be it a universe or a thought, a galaxy or an empire. Looking into this teaching, and trying to embrace it with the rational mind, some scholars had concluded that the Buddha's words must ultimately have implied the existence of certain, basic, irreducible factors, fundamental 'building blocks' or atoms, within the conditioning process. Others asserted, however, that this teaching was not to be taken so scientifically or literally. They held that the Buddha had been trying to point people towards a Transcendental realisation, a state of Transcendental perception in the face of which no thing whatsoever can be seen to have an ultimate self-nature or 'own-being'. Reality is process, to be experienced in its ultimate depths *face to face*, not by way of analysis, but with Insight based on the practice of the whole spiritual life, and particularly meditation.

Thus, basic differences of approach to the Buddha's teaching began to emerge and become articulate. Fundamentally, these differences were matters of emphasis and allegiance — to the 'letter' on the part of the Hinayanists, and to the 'spirit' on the part of the Mahayanists.

The Hinayanists felt that their records and scriptures gave them access to the real Buddha and his true, historical teachings by way of a human account of his life and work. They had the 'body' of the man. The Mahayanists however, felt that those accounts alone could not do full justice to who and what the Buddha really was. While respectfully acknowledging the value of the historical accounts, they maintained that there is another 'body' to be seen,

an archetypal body: the *Sam-boghakaya*. This is the form that can be encountered in meditation; it can be visualised, worshipped. For those who make the effort to purify and refine their minds, the Buddha can be seen, and communicated with meaningfully, here and now. It is possible to form a rich and spiritually helpful bond with the Buddha, to perceive and worship his radiant qualities, and thus be uplifted, inspired and even instructed on a level beyond that of the rational mind.

Even above that, they said, there is a 'Dharma body', the *Dharmakaya*: the eternal principle of Enlightenment that lies within the heart of Reality, and which underlies the human potential for Enlightenment. This is the principle which gives birth to all the Buddhas. It is mysterious and impossible to pin down in words — it is even dangerous to try. But it can be intuited, and it too commands reverence.

To the Mahayanists the Buddha was something vast and transcendently benign, like a mighty rain-cloud pouring forth its nourishing, life-giving rain onto all forms of life, allowing them each to grow according to their own individual needs and possibilities. The Buddha's teaching was for all, not just for the full-timers, nor just for the scholars, nor the poets, nor just for Indians, Tibetans or Chinese... *All* could benefit, all could grow towards Enlightenment. The Buddha had demonstrated this in his own lifetime; now it was for the Sangha to continue his work.

And so the followers of the 'spirit' of Buddhism emerged as a new and distinct force, with an increasingly clearly articulated vision. They produced their great scholars: Nagarjuna, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Ashvaghosha, and scriptures like the *Saddharma Pundarika*, the *Vajracchedika*, and the *Surangama*. Each of these texts was a work of art, all were touched with a particular creative genius, highly decorative, rich in symbol, poetry, and alive with paradox. They are beautiful, though very rarely easy to read.

And like the Buddha himself,

THE MAHAYANA

by NAGABODHI

the Mahayana travelled. It made friends and communicated its message; it went out to people, and thus it spread and flourished.

This then is something of the history of the Mahayana. But the Mahayana is not just a historical phenomenon. It was and is a spiritual phenomenon, an indication of the facts and possibilities of higher human consciousness and spiritual experience. The real origin of the Mahayana must properly be sought in the individual human heart, and in the individual Imagination.

In the beginning there was just the Buddha, a man alone, walking through the towns and villages of northern India, meeting people, talking to them, helping and guiding them. Perhaps there were no gods, no devas, no gandharvas or goblins attending him — none that the mundane eye could see at least. Perhaps there was nothing to be seen of the cosmic Mahayana vision: just a series of simple, down-to-earth encounters and exchanges.

Yet, as a result of their meetings with the Buddha, people began to practise his teachings: they tried to observe ethical precepts; they sat at the roots of trees and attempted to meditate; they had occasional flashes of insight.

It is quite probable that those people first took the Buddha's advice for purely personal, and even selfish reasons. Perhaps they were seeking bliss, or release into a state of union with their Hindu notion of a 'godhead'. Or perhaps they had anxieties, disappointments and confusions, and simply sought a little peace of mind. These are the kinds of reasons that have always turned people towards religion and spiritual guidance; they are the reasons that bring people along to our own public centres even now.

But when someone begins actually to practise the Dharma, they begin to change. By stages they become a little clearer, happier, more objective and energetic. They begin to feel more 'connected' with themselves — with their own emotions and energies — at first, but then with other people too, experiencing them with more awareness. Gradually they find that they are becoming less self-protective and earth-bound. As the higher aesthetic faculties are nourished and brought into consciousness they find that they are more imaginative, even more visionary in their outlook.



We meet a Bodhisattva in the *Jataka Tales*

Imperceptibly at first, their involvement with the spiritual life and spiritual values develops. No longer are they just plodding along, looking out for their own comfort and benefit. They begin to take imaginative leaps as their appreciation of spiritual practice expands, and they begin to recognise that what they are doing has a kind of cosmic significance and context, and that they are participating in something far greater than themselves. Their friends may know little of what is happening to them, but in all likelihood they will notice that they are becoming kinder and more considerate — and even occasionally self-sacrificing.

It may well be that they have never read a Mahayana Sutra — they may never even have heard of the Mahayana. They are simply trying to follow the teachings and practise the simple techniques that they have been given; they are just trying to live better lives. But they intuit that their efforts are now taking place within a new medium; and if they were to try to express what that medium is, what it feels like, what are its implications; if they were to try to set forth in writing everything that they feel and envisage, then it might well be that they would find themselves writing something that closely resembles a Mahayana Sutra.

Here, surely, is the real source

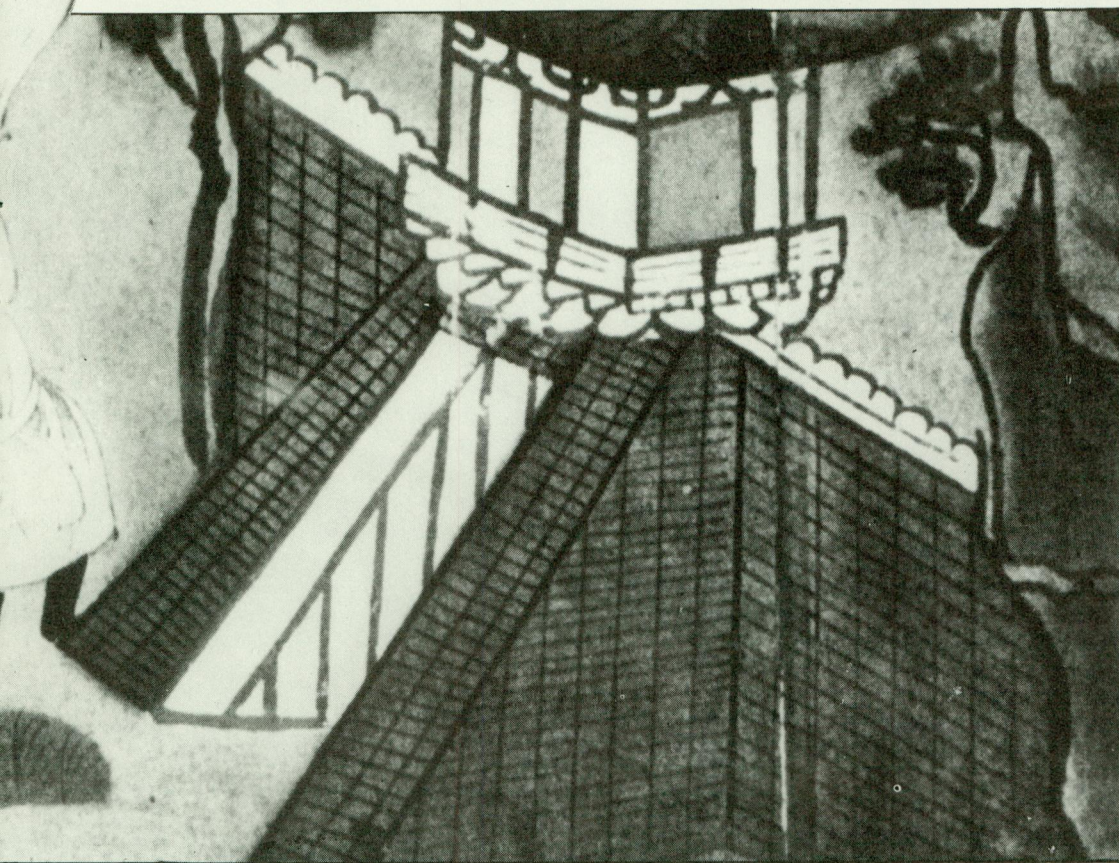
of the Mahayana, in individual genius born of spiritual practice, seeking to give expression to the experience of devotion to higher values, a love for all beings, and Insight into the nature of reality, and calling upon the awakened faculty of Imagination in furtherance of its task.

If this is the case, then it is hard to imagine that the Mahayana did not emerge until hundreds of years after the Buddha's death. Surely the spirit of the Mahayana has always been present where people have sincerely practised the Dharma, and when they have made progress towards the goal. The Buddha had, in his own lifetime, many Enlightened disciples. They at least would have been alive to the Transcendental dimension, and to the spirit of Compassion historically associated with the Mahayana alone. It may therefore be worth our while to consider why the Mahayana has 'seemed' to come second.

As we have already seen, no scriptures at all were set down in writing until around the time of the emergence of the Mahayana, so it would have been difficult for the Mahayana scriptures to come first! But perhaps something very significant was happening at the time when written scriptures began to appear. It is quite likely that five or six hundred years after the Buddha's death the forces of

rigidity, narrowness and ossification were beginning to set in in some quarters of the Sangha. With the movement towards state patronage and formal monasticism it is conceivable — even likely — that a movement towards ecclesiasticism, scholasticism, and empty formalism was taking place. The recording of the Pali scriptures could even have been an aspect of this. If this was so then perhaps the time had come when the more spiritually vital followers saw an urgent need to speak out in response to such developments, not in order to herald a dramatic new departure, but to remind people of the heart and essence of the Dharma calling them back to practice, to Compassion, and to Vision. In this struggle to protect the Dharma from the forces of decline, the Mahayana fought not with the sword, nor even with satire, but with poetry, paradox, myth and beauty.

The Mahayana is a spirit, it is the spirit of Buddhism. It is that spirit of idealism that guarantees it against the tendencies that so often and so easily undermine and depotentiate even great spiritual traditions, turning them into mere religions — or which, in more individual terms, can turn even a powerful spiritual experience into yet another attribute of the fundamentally unchanged ego.



If the Mahayana is the Buddhism of idealism, cosmic vision, and absolute Compassion, then it should not come as a surprise that it found its finest flowering in an Ideal: a vision of the ideal spiritual life. This is, of course, the Bodhisattva Ideal, and no treatment of the Mahayana would be complete without at least an introduction to this central theme.

The word *bodhi* means Enlightenment, or Wisdom, and *sattva* means 'being'. A Bodhisattva is therefore one whose entire life is oriented towards the attainment of Enlightenment — for the sake of all beings.

In the Pali texts, the Pali term *Bodhisattva* has but one application, as a title for the Buddha-to-be. In many *Jataka Tales*, stories of the Buddha's previous lives, we meet this Bodhisattva — whether in human or animal form. In every instance we behold a being who is cultivating the qualities of heroism, friendliness, self-sacrifice, and leadership, in readiness for that final incarnation when he will become a 'King of the Dharma', and will manifest the ultimate purpose and goal of human existence, as a supreme Buddha.

To the visionary eye of the Mahayana, all those who strive after Enlightenment are on a Path which leads to Supreme Buddhahood. They are therefore proper-

ly to be regarded as Bodhisattvas, and are expected to cultivate the same qualities to the same measure, as did the Buddha himself. The development of qualities like compassion, patience, generosity, and vigour have to the Mahayana, if not more, then at least as much importance as the cultivation of morality, meditation and wisdom.

Further, the Mahayana recognises that if, from the viewpoint of Enlightened consciousness, there can be no distinction between subject and object, then the whole notion of striving for Enlightenment for one's own 'personal' salvation is an absurd contradiction in terms. Proceeding from this insight, the Mahayana asserts that the Path can be as well and as effectively traversed for the sake of others as for oneself.

If this seems like a highly refined viewpoint, we must not forget that the Mahayana has never been afraid to soar into the highest dimension of Imagination and Insight — and yet to bring back 'to earth' a priceless jewel in the form of a sublime ideal for human life. Has this not always been the true function of visionaries, artists, and poets?

So the Mahayana conception of the spiritual life is of a life lived in accordance with the Bodhisattva ideal. Thus we are exhorted to prepare for Supreme Buddhahood by practising the Perfec-

tions of giving, morality, patience, vigour, meditation, and wisdom. The Threefold Way — the 'root' teaching of the Hinayana is included in this summation of the Path; there is no radical departure from the 'original teachings', but the spirit behind one's practice of the path is clearly to be transformed. We are exhorted to practise the Dharma — struggle with it if necessary — over continuous lives, and yet to 'put off' our own Enlightenment until we have first helped all other sentient beings to achieve ultimate happiness — which is to say, Supreme Enlightenment.

It is a sublime and even awe-inspiring ideal. But it must of course be remembered that this challenge is no simple call to willful martyrdom, sentimental or conventional goodness, nor even to *metta* or other ordinary spiritual qualities. It is a call to Insight and to Transcendental experience. For the Bodhisattva's life is, in its developed stages, an expression of the *Bodhichitta*, the 'will to Enlightenment', or 'Enlightenment Heart'. It is an expression of a 'turning about in the deepest seat of consciousness. Here, one's experience of self and of Reality has been so transformed that the altruistic activity springs quite spontaneously from the very source of creativity.

The arising of the *Bodhichitta* is something that cannot really be

described or written about. It has to do with an expansion of being, an expansion of 'identity', to the extent that the Bodhisattva actually identifies not just with himself — his own thoughts, feelings, and physical actions — but with all beings. Just as a mother's care for her child goes far beyond friendship, or simple love and concern, to a kind of direct identification with the child, so does the Bodhisattva feel the sufferings and joys of others as his own, because he no longer experiences the same barrier between self and other that ordinary beings do.

The arising of the *Bodhichitta* is not a myth or a symbol. While its birth may be, in the words of Shantideva, 'an unprecedented wonder', it is nevertheless a *fact* of the spiritual life. Bodhisattvas have walked and do walk this earth. It is spiritual fact that we can break through into a new dimension of consciousness and being in which we will spontaneously feel and act with love for all beings, where our cultivation of the Perfections will be direct reflexes of our commitment and unhampered creativity, where we will live the Bodhisattva's life as a natural way of life — but based on a quite extraordinary state of mind. That state of mind will itself be a reflex of the universal Buddha-Mind, and our words and deeds will be reflexes of the Eternal Dharma ceaselessly being uttered by the Buddha from his throne on the Vulture's Peak.

To enter the spirit of the Mahayana we must make contact with the Bodhisattva Ideal. We must engender an awareness and an appreciation for what is ultimately possible in human life and activity. We may be fortunate enough to meet a living Bodhisattva; or in meditation we may meet and commune with Bodhisattvas of the archetypal plane, like Tara, Avalokiteshvara, and Manjushri. By involving ourselves in a vital, outward-going spiritual community like the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, we may discover that we are already participating in the life of a Bodhisattva: co-operating with an impersonal force in the world for the benefit of all.

No matter how we work to approach it, the Mahayana, the Great Way, is there, ready for our participation, just as it always has been and always will be — so long as people with self-awareness and imagination allow themselves to develop ideals, and are prepared to take their highest ideals seriously.





A Conjurer

The archetype of the Magician still exercises a strong fascination over people's minds. Even the conjurer of popular entertainment embodies, in trivialised form, something of the mastery over mind and matter which is the wonder of the true magician. Merlin, the Wizard of Oz, or Gandalf are, for many children, not merely amusing characters in pretty tales, but living personalities of awesome power and unfathomable strangeness. So too Prospero in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* can cast his spell over the most scientifically-minded audience as he bends the elements to his will and transforms the hearts of those around him.

The essential characteristic of the magician is his command over matter, his ability to change one thing into another. Broadly, magicians come in two types: mundane and Transcendental. A magician of the first type achieves his powers through intense concentration of his energies upon a particular object. It is a standard Buddhist insight that if one gives any faculty sufficient concentrated attention it will develop.

For instance, when one first tries to distinguish different species of birds one sees but blurs of brown and white feathers, one more or less like another. With sustained observation one notices more and more the subtle shadings, the touches of colour, the distinctive movements and songs which differentiate one bird from another. The normal faculty of sight has been developed to an unusual — though not exceptional — degree. In the same way, the so-called supernormal powers are, for Buddhism, but ordinary faculties developed by sustained effort. The motive which fuels that effort may be skilful or unskilful and so there are white and black magicians — both however being merely mundane magicians.

The other kind of magician achieves his powers by virtue of his Wisdom. He understands the basic nature of life and he perceives intuitively its underlying patterns and connections. The surface rules which our limited consciousness impose upon reality no longer bind him and he is free to work upon things directly, at their source. Because of this inner mastery over himself he has mastery over the outer world of nature — indeed to him there is no essential difference between the two. He is the Transcendental magician.

According to all schools of Buddhism, the Buddha was a magician. In many instances the Pali Canon, the scriptures of the Theravada school of Buddhism, shows the Buddha effortlessly exercising his psychic powers — hearing and seeing at a distance, transporting himself instantaneously from one place to another, even engaging in a kind of contest of magic. Although this aspect of the Buddha's nature is clearly represented in both Hinayana and Mahayana literature it is not emphasised or drawn out. The Hinayana dwelt upon the Ideal Man's psychological purity and moral goodness. The Mahayana exhibited especially his kindness and compassion and his Transcendental Wisdom. It was left to the Vajrayana to emphasise the power of the En-

lightened ones and their absolute mastery over Reality. The Ideal Man of the Vajrayana is the *Siddha* or Perfected One — the Transcendental Magician.

It should be stressed that although the Vajrayana drew attention to the power of the Enlightened Ones, it did not have a different Ideal from either the Hinayana or the Mahayana. It merely viewed that same Ideal from a different perspective. The *Siddha* is not only a Transcendental Magician but is also psychologically and ethically purified, overflowing with love and compassion for all, and has the highest Wisdom. If he did not have these qualities he could not be a Transcendental Magician at all.

The Vajrayana, then, is that aspect of the Buddhist tradition which conceives of the Ideal Man as the *Siddha* or Transcendental Magician, and of the Path as a process of self-transformation principally by 'magico-yogic' means.

A number of factors conspire to make further discussion of the Vajrayana difficult. There is, first of all, the intrinsic nature of the subject. Since it deals in magic the Vajrayana defies the rational mind and its ordered expositions. Much of the literature of the Vajrayana is highly symbolic and requires an oral explanation from an initiated master of the Vajrayana lineage. That oral explanation is usually considered secret and is only available to those who are able to commit themselves to its full practice. It is not surprising therefore that many scholars have been baffled by the Vajrayana and have dismissed it as mere popular magic.

Some modern exponents of Vajrayana have added to the confusion by their own behaviour. A disciple of one Vajrayana Guru teaching in the West is reported as saying of his master's known habitual consumption of alcohol, 'He makes no pretence at perfection. Drinking is not extraordinary within his (Vajrayana) tradition. He relates to every aspect of humanness.' Such statements abuse the often highly unconventional and exuberant

nature of the Vajrayana to fudge human weakness and failure. Again, the Vajrayana sometimes uses sexual symbolism; in some forms it seems to flout conventional morality, and it is always colourful and rich in its images — all of which can be exploited by the pseudo-individualist or by those who crave exotic stimulation to cover their own inner poverty.

On the other hand, many more staid investigators have been deeply shocked by the sexual imagery of the Vajrayana and by its vast and bewildering pantheons of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, Gods and Goddesses, Demons and hosts of other strange and terrifying figures, many of them in wrathful form. Some respectable scholars have considered the Vajrayana to be the last phase of degeneration of the pure and rational truths of the Buddha into vulgar demon-worship. Needless to say, such imagery is used to convey profound spiritual meaning and is neither the indulgence of the prurient nor superstitious witchcraft. However only personal acquaintance with the tradition and practice of its methods reveals the full significance of its powerful symbolic forms.

A further source of confusion lies in the fact that the Vajrayana can be considered as an historical movement — the last five-hundred-year phase in the evolution of Indian Buddhism which arose in relation to the preceding two five-hundred-year phases of Hinayana and Mahayana. One thousand years had passed since the time of the Buddha and Buddhism had become a very rich and complex tradition with many, many schools, each with its own doctrines and practices. The Vajrayana inherited all their traditions and added its own distinctive tenets. Strictly speaking, however, the term Vajrayana should be applied not to an historical movement but to the final stage in the spiritual life of the individual. However, we must first consider it as a phase in the evolution of the Buddhist tradition.

This issue of the *Newsletter* allows us to gain a broad overview of the development of Buddhism

THE VAJRAYANA

by SUBHUTI

through it three great phases. When one contemplates that great sweep of history one has two quite contradictory impressions — one very saddening and the other a cause of joy. Decay and degeneration seem almost inevitable and yet so too do renaissance and fresh upsurge. Two forces seem to shape the history of Buddhism: the atrophy and ossification of spiritual momentum which is the consequence of group inertia, and the spiritual vitality which arises from individual creativity. The history of Buddhism is the history of the dialectical interplay between the individual and the group as the group freezes and conventionalises individual insight and the individual breaks free again to renewed vision. Each of the phases and sub-phases within Buddhist history can be seen as containing elements which are a protest against the increasing dead-weight of what had been living traditions, and features which are an original creative contribution to the teaching and practice of the Path to Enlightenment which is the common and equal concern of every phase and aspect of Buddhism. The Vajrayana too arose partly in protest against, and partly as a creative supplement to the Buddhism of its time and it is in these terms that we shall examine it.

The Vajrayana as Protest

1. Against excessive intellectualism. Mahayana Buddhism had developed two profound philosophical systems — the Madhyamika and the Yogacara. The Madhyamika demonstrated that all concepts were inadequate to describe the real nature of things since all persons and things are devoid of ultimate substance. Yogachara thought attempted to express the insights gained through meditation. Both schools had tended to lapse into scholasticism: the Madhyamika into mere logic-chopping and the Yogachara into abstract speculation. The practitioners of the Vajrayana were often men deeply learned in the tenets of these schools but they were not content with mere learning. They wanted to know how to actualise the intellectual insights of these systems. They wanted to know how to apply them to spiritual life and experience.

2. Against Empty Fantasy.

The Mahayana contributed to the development of Buddhism a wonderful imaginative depth and

breadth. Countless Buddhas and Bodhisattvas fill its literature where they are depicted as engaged in cosmic dramas with infinite space and all eternity for a backdrop. It offered something for the heart to reach out to and something for refined emotion to lift up towards. But there is a danger that such devotional exuberance remains a kind of sublime fantasy — very beautiful but without any real transforming power. It is of no use to imagine that one is saving all sentient beings if one is not actually helping those who are near at hand.

The followers of the Vajrayana, although very devout in the Mahayana tradition, wanted to know how to use the imagination to change themselves not just mentally but totally — in the very blood and sinew. If the process of spiritual transformation does not reach to one's most primordial urges and most intimate feelings, if the body itself is not taken to Enlightenment there is only a fantasy of Buddhahood. The Vajrayana practitioners wanted to know how to mobilise their total energies towards the goal.

3. Against Ethical Formalism.

Buddhist life and practice in mediaeval India was firmly based in monasticism. Huge, highly organised monasteries existed which presented, in many ways, a very attractive way of life. Perhaps, however, there was a rather narrow emphasis on scholarship, perhaps the monks were somewhat out of touch with the layfolk who surrounded them, perhaps there was the same kind of literalistic emphasis on rules and observance which afflicts much modern Theravada practice.

The Vajrayanists reacted strongly to this. Many even of the great Gurus like Milarepa were not monks and lived outside the monasteries — usually in bands about their Guru so that they still formed spiritual communities. They also reacted against the conventional morality of their time and would not be bound by the expectations of the nominally Buddhist society in which they lived. If necessary they were prepared to flout orthodox opinion. They refused to be trapped, as many Buddhist monks today are trapped, by their economic dependence on the laity. In consequence, many Vajrayana yogins cut very unconventional figures indeed — seeking out the most disreputable occupations and acting in ways that appeared very

strange to the folk of their time.

There is clearly much room for misconception here. Some stories — of murder, of sexual orgies — are symbolic or exaggerate to make a point, and freedom from a morality which is merely conventional does not mean that Vajrayanists were not observing ethical principles. They were primarily concerned with spiritual realities and they were prepared to cut through current religious forms if they saw that these restricted them from Truth. In this they took the example of the Buddha himself who had abandoned his five disciples in asceticism when he saw that extreme self-mortification was not the way to Enlightenment. When 'Buddhism' itself atrophies and stagnates the true Buddhist must be prepared to go forth from 'Buddhism' to recreate Buddhism.

The Creative Contributions of the Vajrayana

The Vajrayana consists in the magical transmutation of the ordinary body, speech and mind into the Body, Speech and Mind of the Buddha. *Vajra* means a diamond or thunderbolt and *yana* means a vehicle. So the Vajrayana is the vehicle or Path which cuts through illusion like a diamond and which bursts through conditioning like a thunderbolt. 'Vajra' has also come to denote Reality itself, that *Sunyata* which is the ultimate, indefinable openness and potentiality lying at the heart of all things. By one's practice of the Vajrayana, one transforms one's mundane body into the *Vajrakaya*, the Body of Ultimate Reality, in which one dwells as *Vajrasattva*, the Being of Reality. That goal is achieved by magic ritual and intense yogic practice. The guidance and empowerment of a guru is indispensable to that end.

This Vajrayana approach to the Path of Enlightenment consisted of a number of distinctive emphases.

1. The Spiritual Life as Magical Transformation.

The central problem of the spiritual life is how to turn Ideals into actualities. The Ideal may be very attractive and inspiring — but it is far away, beyond our immediate experience. Unless we can totally transform ourselves the Ideal remains remote and unattainable. When we see things from this point of view we discern a world of mundane experience (*Samsara*) and a world of Transcendent Reality (*Nirvana*). These two are

completely distinct from each other and the aim of spiritual life is to get from *Samsara* to *Nirvana*. This is the outlook of the Hinayana.

This outlook is essential in the initial stages of our spiritual practice (i.e. first few lifetimes!). But later we must look closer, and realise that these two orders of reality are not separate and distinct in the way that London and New York are. Spiritual progress is not a matter of changing spatial locations — to think thus is to take our language too literally. *Samsara* and *Nirvana* are concepts which we impose upon our experience for definite spiritual purposes. As our practice deepens, we must see that behind the duality of *Samsara* and *Nirvana* is an underlying unity. That unity is *Sunyata* — the indefinable and ungraspable nature of all phenomena, their emptiness of all features whereby they may be ultimately captured and known.

Reality, in this perspective, is an infinite creative process, full of unlimited possibility. It is a matrix in which each element (although there are really no separate elements) is linked to every other in an intricate web of subtle interrelations. *Sunyata* is beyond subject and object, neither internal nor external, however, from the point of view of meditative experience it can be seen as Absolute Consciousness or the 'One Mind' which is the underlying basis of all things and of which all things are phenomena. Everything is perceived within that One Mind and, at the same time, it is contained within all things.

Instead of *Nirvana* and *Samsara* appearing as completely distinct, we now see, according to the various Mahayana schools, that *Samsara* and *Nirvana* are reflected one within the other. If only we could understand our mundane experience clearly enough we would see the Transcendental. If we looked deeply enough into any phenomenon we would see *Sunyata*, the One Mind, Buddhahood. In other words, we should not think of the goal as something remote and intangible (although such in a sense it is) but as being immanent within our experience — though completely different from it as it now is. Thus far the Mahayana takes us.

The Vajrayana was not content with this subtle metaphysic. Its followers wanted to know what use to make of it. If the Transcendental is reflected within the mundane they wanted to

know where to find it — not metaphorically or imaginatively but literally. For them, the point of contact of the Transcendental with the mundane was the Buddha. They accepted and even enlarged the Mahayana pantheon of Ideal Buddhas and Bodhisattvas which they saw arranged in a *Mandala* or sacred circle. That *Mandala* — the *Mandala* of the Five *Jinas* or Buddhas — was the focus for an intricate system of correspondences which linked mundane experience with Nirvana. Each figure in the *Mandala* not only embodied a particular Transcendental quality but expressed it through colour, spatial position, sound and mantra, emblems and implements, animals, even the various unskilful mental states.

In setting up this system of correspondences and in adapting it to the purposes of spiritual growth, they used a kind of thinking which is part of our basic mental make-up — the way we 'think' in dreams or poetry. It obeys a logic of imagination, not of sensuous experience. This magical logic connects things by correspondence and association. If one thing is like another or corresponds to it, it can be used to call up or affect its correspondent. It is this logic that lies behind the black rite of sticking pins into a wax doll which shares some superficial features with the person against whom the rite is directed. In the same way, if one can create the mundane correspondents of the Transcendental it will be realised. Thus the mantra is the sound correspondent of the Bodhisattva. So, by chanting the mantra, the Bodhisattva appears. The mantra is the Bodhisattva just as Samsara is Nirvana.

2. Spiritual Transformation as Total Transformation.

This outlook and approach gave the Vajrayana a unique and powerful tool for transformation involving the total energies. With this way of seeing things it is possible to draw the whole being in a very intense way into the task of development. If one can align the correspondences between the mundane and the Transcendental one's own body, speech and mind will become the Buddha.

In Vajrayana ritual all the mundane conditions are established which correspond to the Transcendental, and so the mundane becomes the Transcendental. One's mind is occupied with visualising the beautiful and awe-inspiring forms of the Buddhas

and Bodhisattvas in the *Mandala*, one's voice is chanting their mantras and other ritual phrases, and one's body is making their gestures or *mudras*. Sometimes the yogi dresses himself as the Deity he is trying to invoke, and carries implements which 'belong' to Him. The very place where he is practising may have been decorated very elaborately so that it can be transformed into the Transcendental *Mandala*. Nothing is left out. Even sexual energies and violent and destructive urges are pressed into Vajrayana practice. By the Vajrayana system of correspondences every part of human experience can be channelled into the spiritual quest in one overwhelmingly powerful transforming surge. The yogi starts his practice as an ordinary human being in an ordinary world — but he finishes it as Vajrasattva in a world where every object is a Vajra-object and Ultimate Reality shines through all things.

3. Communication as the Key to Development.

The Vajrayana emphasises communication, particularly with the Guru. The medium of communication is principally, though not exclusively, initiation — a ritual based upon the anointing of a king in which the disciple is keyed into the system of correspondences of a particular Deity. The Guru, in initiation, makes the link for the disciple between the mundane and the Transcendental. He gives Transcendental power to mundane experience.

The Vajrayana is, to this day, principally an oral tradition — although it does have a vast literature. The *Tantras* which comprise Vajrayana literature are mostly so obscure that the oral explanation of an initiated Guru is indispensable for their understanding. It is the Guru's explanation, based on his own experience, which brings Vajrayana practice to life. He awakens a latent seed of the Transcendental in the disciple and by his contact with him draws him towards Enlightenment.

Tradition claims that it is possible to travel this 'short Path' of the Vajrayana in one lifetime. But this involves a stirring up and channelling of the energies which is of such intensity that only the most courageous of disciples and most skilful of Gurus can undertake its pursuit.

4. Practice and Direct Personal Experience.

Vajrayana is concerned, above all, with immediate experience of

spiritual truth in everyday life. It places a pre-eminent emphasis on constant and vigorous spiritual practice and it has built up a vast armoury of exercises and techniques which can be shaped to the needs of individual practitioners. Again and again, the Vajrayana urges its followers to practise at every moment of their lives.

The Vajrayana and Us.

Vajrayana teaching and practice passed from India principally to China (and thence Japan), Tibet, and Indonesia (where it was extinguished along with the rest of Buddhism by Muslim invaders). It is mainly in its Tibetan and Japanese forms that it has survived to this day as a living tradition. Vajrayana schools have now been established in the West, principally by Tibetan teachers.

However, we have seen that Vajrayana can be viewed not only as an historical movement but as a stage in spiritual life and practice itself — this is indeed the more proper meaning of the term. Thus the Buddhism of Tibet is not just Vajrayana but '*Triyana*' — the Buddhism of the Three Vehicles of Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana. Any individual devotee must complete the Hinayana stage: he must purify himself ethically and psychologically. He must complete the Mahayana stage: he must develop the *Bodhichitta*, the desire to gain Enlightenment for all sentient beings, and, at the same time, he must gain Insight into the void nature of all persons and phenomena. On this basis he is ready to perfect his spiritual life by undertaking the Vajrayana. He can now be introduced to that network of correspondences which binds the mundane to the Transcendental.

Presumably few of us are in a position seriously to undertake the Vajrayana. We must actually start to apply ourselves to the Hinayana and we can just begin to consider engaging ourselves one day with the Mahayana. But we can, nonetheless, learn from the Vajrayana. The tendencies against which the Vajrayana arose as an historical movement are as present today as at any time. We must beware of one-sided intellectuality: we must study but we should always ask ourselves what any particular teaching is getting at so that we can make it actual in our own lives. We must beware of fantasy: the imagination must be engaged but it should not be allowed to degenerate into exotic sensationalism or aesthetic titilla-

tion. We must beware of formalism: we need routines, organisational structures, and ways of life but we should not let ourselves go through the motions of observing them without engaging ourselves deeply with them.

The Vajrayana always points us back to experience and demands that we face up to ourselves and to Reality. It requires of us that we engage not merely the surface of our lives but our most secret depths. It insists that we confront the significance of every aspect of practice. It holds out to us the promise that here, before us at every moment, is the point of intersection of the mundane with the Transcendental if only we lived vividly enough to perceive it. Even though the Vajrayana is very lofty and advanced, its message is still very simple and immediate. It demands of us that we practise.

A story is told of the great Vajrayana Guru, Milarepa, an ascetic sage of mediaeval Tibet. As an old man, Milarepa was sending away one of his foremost disciples, Gampopa, a very brilliant and learned man who had been with Milarepa for many years and who was now going off to meditate in solitude. Milarepa knew that he would never meet with him in this life again and he accompanied him some way on his journey through the snowy wastes. Milarepa gave Gampopa one final series of initiations which, he said, completed his teachings to him. As he sent him on his way alone he said that there was one more teaching but that it was too profound even for the gifted Gampopa.

At the point when Gampopa was a distant speck on the mountainside, Milarepa called him back. When Gampopa rushed joyfully to him, Milarepa told him that he had decided to give him his finest teaching — for who else was there who was worthy of it? Gampopa started to make the ritual offerings of a disciple before an initiation but Milarepa stopped him, saying that it was not necessary. He hoped that Gampopa would not waste this teaching. Then the old man lifted the thin cotton robe which was his only protection against the bitter cold and exposed his weathered body, covered in lumps of callus from his many years of austerity.

'The most profound teaching in Buddhism', he said, 'is to practise — it is because of this that I have gained all my accomplishments and merits.'

BRITAIN MANCHESTER

The beginning of September saw the return to Manchester of a refreshed and enlivened team of mitras and Order members, buzzing with energy and renewed vision of the course each individually, as well as FWBO Manchester collectively, would take.

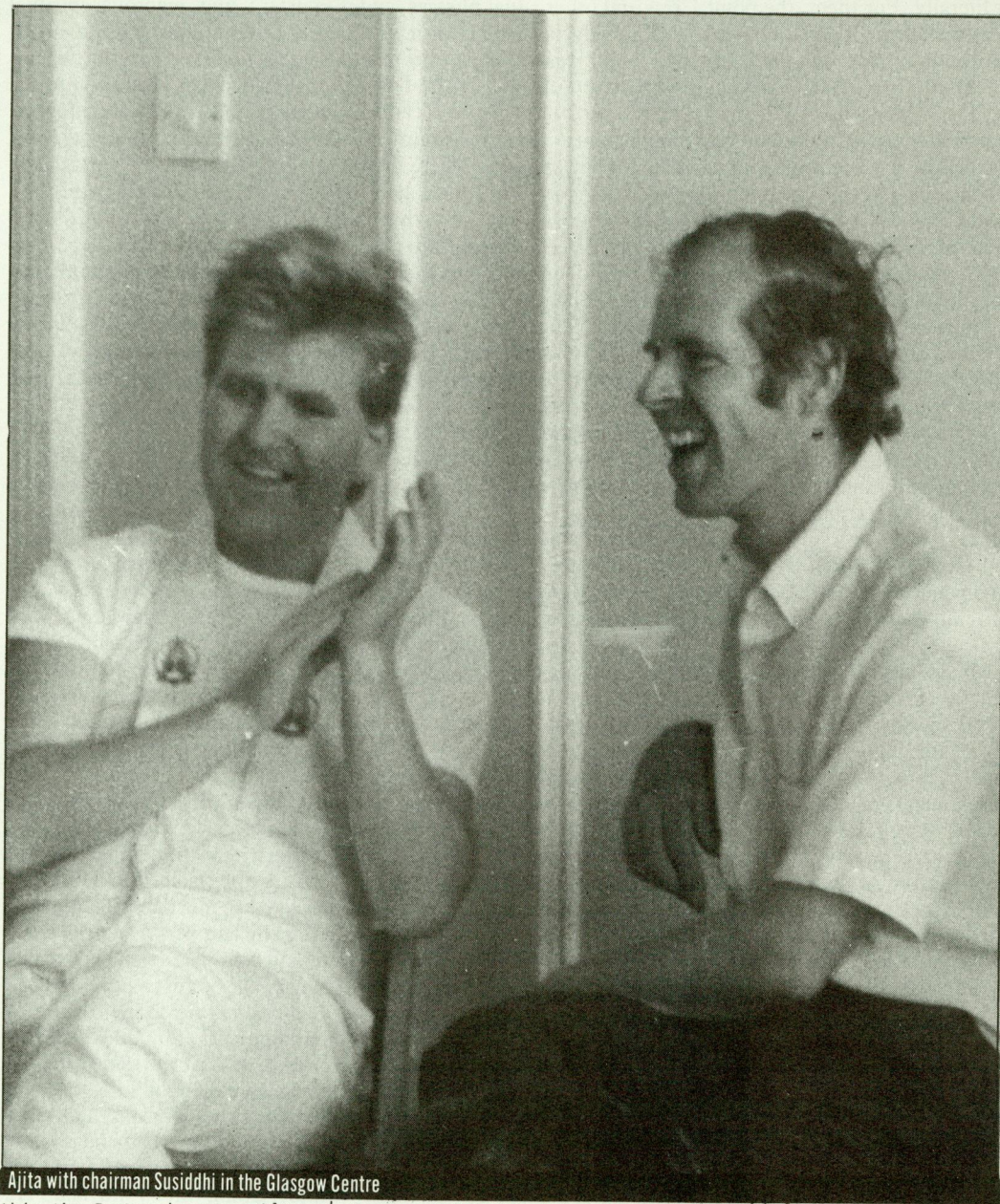
Beginners' and regulars' classes continued informally here over the Summer, while many friends, mitras and Order members went on retreats together. There was thus quite a momentum already built up for the first event of the Autumn programme which was a talk by Vajraketu on 5th September, in the university buildings a short way from the Centre. The good attendance at the talk and the record number of covenants secured seemed to reflect something of the positivity and strengthened feeling of Sangha around the Centre.

The numbers at our Thursday 'open-nights' thereafter swelled, and Wednesday regulars' evenings too have shown a healthy increase, especially when such excellent speakers as Parami have visited the Centre.

With only two Order members at Manchester for the moment, and a hectic programme of classes and talks for them, both within and outside the Friends, various holiday plans have been shelved and other commitments kept to a minimum. Suvajra has led two successful weekend study seminars on *Dhyana for Beginners*, as well as teaching meditation and a little Buddhism to an avid and receptive audience of 90 Spiritualists on retreat in Essex. The first of these seminars and the Spiritualists' conference came at the beginning of October, immediately prior to Ratnaguna's starting a Tuesday night course on 'Buddhism - Path to Liberation'. The second of the seminars coincided more or less with the beginning of the university terms at Keele and Manchester and the reinstitution of weekly classes on Wednesday lunchtimes in Manchester and Wednesday evenings in Keele, with large numbers attending both. And just to make sure there are no idle moments, Ratnaguna is giving a talk at Lancaster University Buddhist group and Suvajra doing likewise in Harrogate. Of course we are also maintaining close contact with and support for Aryamitra in Leeds, about which more elsewhere.

Our coming Sangha day celebrations will be followed by a massive exodus to an overbooked weekend retreat in Shropshire, and then another exodus, to the Men's Event at Padmaloka, where both Ratnaguna and Suvajra are giving talks, the weekend following.

Sometimes the Centre seems too small, the financial and human resources too few and the numbers attending events too high to be manageable, but for the moment we must hold tight in Burlington Road and concentrate on creating and consolidating a stable and committed core of people working in and around the Centre before any plans for expansion can realistically be entertained. In line with



Ajita with chairman Susiddhi in the Glasgow Centre

this the Centre is currently being refurbished and redecorated by the Centre team in preparation for Sangha day and the Winter, and many of us are looking forward to recharging our batteries on retreat over the Christmas period in preparation for what looks to be a full and exciting 1985.

BRIGHTON

This autumn has been marked by two developments in particular in the life and work of the Brighton Centre. Firstly we have a new men's community - Dhanakosha ('Treasure Chest') comprising two Order members and two Mitras in a delightful house in Rottingdean, just outside Brighton. Secondly, through our student society at the University of Sussex, we have produced *Imagination*, a new magazine which we hope to bring out on a regular basis. This first issue costs only 20p (exclusive of postage) and is available from the Brighton Centre. It contains a very useful article on meditation, edited highlights from a talk given by the author Richard Holms on the Romantic Poets, excerpts from

Sangharakshita's *The Religion of Art*, and news and poetry sections. *Imagination* is a glossy magazine produced to a high standard and its function is not only to stimulate and inspire but also to highlight those aspects of Western life, thought and art which are in accord with and can support the ideals of Buddhism. Just as the union of intellect and emotion gives birth to the highest creative faculty in Man, the *Imagination*, likewise the union of ideas and images has enabled us to create a new Buddhist magazine - *Imagination*.

GLASGOW

In the months since our last report, there have been some new - and expanding - developments outside our normal centre activities. The first of these involves the other Buddhist community in Glasgow - about fifty untouchable Buddhists who run a branch of Dr. Ambedkar Society in Glasgow. Ajita has given several talks at their meetings over the past eighteen months and we saw some of the fruits of his efforts

on Dharmacakra Day, when five families came to join in our celebrations - bringing enough food for everyone with them. Since then Jinavamsa has started a weekly meditation and study class for the older children of those Buddhist families.

The second development is our link with Strathclyde University which took definite shape in the meeting of the University Buddhist Society in October. A video featuring Bhante was shown followed by a vegetarian buffet supper. The society has been started by Kay Clelland, a psychology student who comes regularly to the Centre. This term's syllabus is centred on a weekly meditation practice, led by Ajita, and talks and study sessions, led by other Order members.

Autumn has also seen the start of our school visiting programme. There is no lack of invitations to secondary school religious education departments. The staff and pupils seem to appreciate the talks, question and answer sessions and occasional communication exercises - although it is possible that teachers in nearby classrooms don't appreciate these as much

as those communicatin. do.

Lastly, the women's community had a naming ceremony recently. After a delicious meal we toasted the community - Viryagita. At present three women stay there but another three would like to move in. It is hoped that the community will move to a larger flat as soon as one is found.

WEST LONDON

Whether an FWBO Centre is large in size or small, in one of the major cities of the World, or in a smaller, seemingly less significant city, one can never underestimate how valuable each centre is. Each centre in its own way is making available the Buddha's Teaching, and is contributing to and working for the 'good' of humanity. This task is a complex and difficult one but infinitely worthwhile, particularly in view of the present violent political climate and the constant struggles to power amidst fear, hatred and conflict. Indeed, compared to this, what we are trying to create stands out as a rare and attractive alternative.

As for the Baker Street Buddhist Centre, beyond any doubt there are big, even dramatic changes in store for us in the near future. These next six months up to the end of May are the final months in the Baker Street premises. At the end of this time, the Centre will move to 7 Colville Houses (off the Portobello Rd) for an interim period whilst new premises are being sought. Meanwhile a full programme of activities, classes and 'events' will run throughout the winter and spring.

During the autumn session, as well as our regular weekly classes, we held a five-week massage course which was very successful, and a meditation and Buddhism course which was also successful. This coming session we will be doing this again. Also Dharmachari Ratnavira is giving a series of talks on the Italian Renaissance and its relevance to us today.

Friends Foods has two new workers, one full-time and one



A series of talks on the Renaissance

part-time. Also, it being Christmas-time, it is the business's best trading months at present. Not only is trade picking up after the summer, but the shop itself is going to be having its exterior changed. The temporary signs on the shop front are being replaced by bright lighted signs which should attract more attention. The shop as a business and as 'Right Livelihood' project is going from strength to strength.

The present Friends Gardening team of eight is always looking for more workers to cope with the constant stream of inflowing

work. No gardening experience is necessary as workers are trained as a matter of course! Their wide range of customers reach from British Telecom to Health and 'local' authorities. Besides being an interesting and enjoyable livelihood for those who work in it, it is also the financial backbone of the Centre.

CROYDON

There have been packed houses for many of the films in the present season at the Arts Centre. The films, coming under the title 'The Film of the Book' have been chosen partly to coincide with the current schools' A-level literature syllabus, and there have consequently been several large party bookings from local schools. There has also been a one-man play, 'Heart of Darkness', based on the novel by Conrad, which again played to a full audience, and a further one-man play is scheduled, 'Hopkins' based on the life and work of the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. Plans for a major season next summer, a 'Festival of Friendship', are well under way.

The Arts Centre bookshop, which we are now in a position to open during the daytime as well as in the evenings, has continued to expand: there is now, in addition, a 'children's corner', a classics section, and a wide and unusual range of 20th century literature.

Classes continue to draw in fresh people, and Sagaramati recently led a successful and well-attended Dharma course. A local school has invited us to give twelve lectures on Buddhism, starting in December.

After an interview with Bhante, Michael Campbell, from BBC radio, who is researching for a radio documentary on Buddhism in Britain, recently came and stayed at Aryatara, where he conducted an interview on Right Livelihood and recorded a seven-fold puja.

There have been two ordinations from the Croydon centre at the recent Tuscany, those of Satyaraja and Manjunatha. In addition two Order members have recently moved here, Subhadra from Manchester, and Ratnasuri from Norwich.

The women now have a new community in Babington Road, Streatham, the lease having expired on the property in Gleneldon Road. We recently put in an offer for the lease of Heathfield House, a large Georgian mansion set in a park just outside Croydon, which would have been ideal for Dharma activities and as a mens community, but eventually it was withdrawn from the market. However, we are now hoping to buy a country house in the heart of Sussex, on the edge of the Ashdown Forest.

An old Victorian rectory standing in five acres of woodland, it is one hour's drive from Aryatara and 18 miles from Brighton, and so is excellently situated as a retreat centre for the South-East of England. It could also accommodate a residential community, and the extensive grounds offer the possibility of solitary retreat facilities.

In the restaurant this Christmas, we are continuing our tradition of raising money for Dharido with a special 3-course dinner and live music, from which we hope to raise over £500.

BRISTOL

The FWBO in Bristol seems poised for what could well be its largest and most far-reaching expansion since we started activities here some four years ago. The community (which we've recently named 'Sudurjaya' - Difficult to Conquer) is threatening to burst at the seams with seven members, including four completely new to FWBO community life. Meanwhile, our autumn session of classes at the Bristol University Students' Union is so far attracting more people than ever before, and we have the fullest session of classes and retreats that has yet been organised in Bristol. Best of all, it seems possible that we will shortly have two further Order members here: one fresh from 'Tuscany', while the other Prajnananda, is hoping to study Buddhism at Bristol University. This would give us a full Chapter of Order members for the first time in Bristol, from which would arise the possibility of setting many new projects in motion.

NORWICH

We must begin with an apology for being conspicuous lately more by our absence from recent issues of the Newsletter than by our presence in it. There has, in fact been quite a lot happening. Not least was the 'magical' transformation of Daphne Luce into Padmavati, when, in company with the new Vidyavati she was publicly ordained on 1st July at the Norwich Centre following a few days retreat at Wood Norton Hall. For the Public Ordination, the Norwich shrine room was probably as full as it has ever been, as was appropriate for such a significant, moving and essentially joyful event. For a couple of months following the Ordination, Norwich was in the fortunate position of having three women Order members - but alas the number is now back to two with the departure to Croydon of Ratnasuri. Ratnasuri has been a regular supporter of Norwich classes since the Centre first opened its doors, and it will take a little time before it really sinks in that she won't be dropping in to classes any more on a regular basis.

In the meantime the classes themselves continue. The Tuesday regulars class is studying the Threefold Way of Sila, Samadhi, and Prajna with Saddhaloka; and on Wednesday, the beginners' class, led by Advayacitta, now has a steady influx of new faces to supplement the regular core of attenders. Though it would be nice if the total attendance were equal to a fraction of those passing through the doors of the Bingo Palace across the road. The Wednesday lunchtime meditation sessions at the University of East Anglia are going well; as is the Thursday Dharma course at the Centre on the theme of 'Buddhism - a Philosophy of Action'. In addition, our other building at Queen's Road is being well used for Yoga, Tai Chi and Massage.

Our programme of beginners retreats also continues. These are now held at Wood

Norton Hall in North Norfolk and in the last six months have variously featured Yoga, massage and Tai Chi in addition to the 'traditional' activities of meditation, puja, communication exercises, eating well and going for walks.

These last few months have also been a busy time for Mitras. The women have begun the new three year study course and are now well along the Path of the Higher Evolution - at least in theory as they listen to and discuss taped lectures on this theme - and all concerned are finding it very rewarding, though time consuming. Time is at a premium because the production of *Mitras* is being taken over more and more by the Norwich women Mitras and Order members.

The men Mitras have also been busy. Three of them have been working on the building team and new skills of carpentry and brick-laying are steadily being accumulated. The men's study group is also eagerly champing at the bit waiting to get its teeth into Devamitra's three year study plan in January, but for the present it is being fed a healthy diet of *The Ten Pillars of Buddhism*.

A recent welcome innovation has been the introduction of regional men's Mitra events at Padmaloka, on which occasions Mitras from Diss, Norwich and Padmaloka spend a very full day meditating, studying and doing Puja together. For us all, I think, these days are a warm affirmation of the importance of Sangha. It is to be hoped that the trend of closer contact between East Anglian centres will continue.

It only remains, therefore, to congratulate and to welcome back from Tuscany Dharmamudra, well known in the past to the Norwich study group as Pete Dobson; and also to look forward to the return of our Chairman, Abhaya, invigorated and inspired we trust by his three months in Italy.

Ian Moore.

LBC

The success of our summer open retreat in Battle, reported in the last issue, led directly to a weekend 'Battle follow-up retreat', which was fully attended and came off well.

Dhammadinna, Parami and Atula led another weekend event centred on the Seven-fold puja. Quite a number of those participating had also been on the Battle retreat and the weekend sequel, although there were comparative newcomers at the event as well.

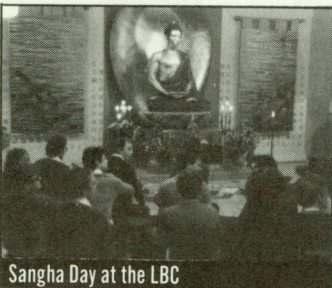
Our next weekend event is called 'Peace in Action' and this has arisen directly out of the Venerable Sangharakshita's paper *Buddhism, World Peace and Nuclear War*, and looks as if it will be well attended owing to the vital issue it addresses.

About twenty people attended our most recent Introductory Day Retreat and they included those already in contact with the LBC as well as some people completely new to the Centre who had come as a result of our free advertisement in the London

magazine 'Time Out'. Quite a number of those there were excited by meditation and some immediately set their sights on going on a longer retreat.

Sagaramati and Cittapala have led our two most recent meditation courses, which were held at the LBC and Covent Garden respectively. A follow-up weekend retreat attracted many of the people from the courses and demonstrated the interest which the courses had generated.

Meanwhile, what we might call the bread and butter classes of the Centre continue with mitra study on Monday nights, Nagabodhi currently leading the Tuesday evening class for regulars, Jayamati the Wednesday evening introductory class and Vajracitta the Friday night double meditation and puja for regulars. The Monday to Friday lunchtime classes led by Danavira and Vajracitta often attract numbers of people from five to fifteen for a session of meditation. This class is still relatively new and we hope that it will continue to attract more people. An innovation, started on November 5th, is an evening puja which will be held at the Centre from Monday to Friday at 5.30pm to 6.00pm. This is intended to provide people working in and around the Centre with a chance to finish their working day with an enjoyable traditional devotional practice in the company of others who share the same ideals and commitment.



Sangha Day at the LBC

LEEDS

With a new session of classes in Leeds this September, we go into our second year of activities. We now have a strong group of regulars as well as a new ongoing beginners' class. The regulars have, this session, been trying their skills in public speaking, with a variety of talks provoking some good discussion. The talks alternate with study evenings and meditation nights.

New property is in the process of being purchased for a Leeds Buddhist Centre/ community which we hope will be established in early '85.

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY

It is not only the euphoric promotion of this city's first football team to league division one (after fourteen years of absence) that should give Sheffielders a new lease of life. 'Sheffield Wednesday' now has an alternative and non-sporting meaning: every Wednesday night a handful of friends meet together for meditation and puja, or perhaps a taped lecture. We have recently organised an afternoon event to introduce

newcomers to meditation which Jayamati kindly came from London to lead. Further events are planned and we hope, with help from and continued contact with other FWBO centres, to create a dedicated Buddhist group which will form the foundation on which a centre can someday be built.

DISS

Diss has a special role in the FWBO. It is an experiment that has worked so well that similar models have been or will be set up in Harlow, Wales and Ipswich and perhaps more towns. From the beginning, the Diss group has met weekly in hired rooms with Order members travelling the 25 miles from Padmaloka to lead the events. Soon after its establishment in February 1983 a core of regular members developed, and it is a mark of their growing enthusiasm that of this original core of thirteen, nine are now mitras, the latest three being Stephanie Cullen, Christine Womack and Anne Whall, whose mitra ceremony was held in the shrine room at Annie Leigh's home in Aslacton (about which more below).

What are the main elements in the success of the Diss group? It is difficult to know what the exact formula is but it must consist of large measures of the following ingredients: unflagging interest and energy from a few key Padmaloka Order members, Subhuti in particular; the pioneer work done by Mark Crosby (our first mitra) in getting the group going, the proximity to the farm home of Annie Leigh and Pete Dobson (now Dharmamudra) and their help in organising day retreats which consolidated the group at a critical time and helped to give it definition.

It may also be that factors which might be regarded as disadvantages have worked in our favour. Having no established centre and only a peripatetic service from Order members has meant that the group has had to undertake an unusual degree of responsibility for its own welfare. Financing, recruiting, advertising, and planning the future are all aspects of the group's responsibilities.

Another assumed responsibility is the adoption of Mangala as 'our representative in India'. Paying Mangala's expenses while he works for AFI has helped to give the group purpose and direction as well as giving us an insight of an aspect of the Sangha which is both vital and inspiring.

A scheme for a permanent centre of our own fell through. However as a result of the work put into this failed venture we now have a good idea of what we are looking for and what we can afford. To keep this momentum going the FWBO (Diss) has now been formally established. We are also to register ourselves as a charity.

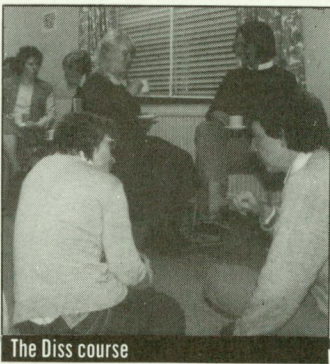
Our originally planned 'Spring offensive' took place in the Autumn when we held a series of six classes on meditation for beginners which was widely advertised and well attended. It is still too early to tell how many of the newcomers have maintained a permanent interest in the group but the numbers that continued to attend the subsequent series of talks on Buddhism and the Wheel of Life is encouraging.

In the gap between the end

of the meditation talks and the beginning of the new Buddhism course a number of talks was given on aspects of the FWBO which was particularly notable for the lucid and courageous talk given by Sonia Danziger.

The future holds real promise. We hope to be host to Harwell friends who are in the process of establishing a group along similar lines. Retreats, a benefit dinner and a visit from the AFI roadshow are all on the agenda and more ambitious plans (our own centre, Right Livelihood Co-ops etc.) are being discussed though with more hope than real expectation at the moment.

We will also be losing one of our mitras. Tired of the long journey to Diss from Ipswich, Rex Smart persuaded the Order to open up shop in Ipswich. Jayadeva and Sthirananda are now to undertake this daunting task after considerable preparatory work by Rex. We wish them well.



The Diss course

INTERNATIONAL GERMANY

This year saw the first summer retreats in Germany (see Newsletter 63). As both retreats were restricted to 'Regulars', participants were able to experience more than the initial excitement and initial problems of beginners' retreats. In the autumn, however, FWBO Germany has continued the series of small short retreats for all comers in different regions of the country. But on the weekend after Sangha Day, a short seminar on the *Karaniya Metta Sutta* was held, just for half a dozen Regulars.

At the same time we have been doing a lot of "quiet work". One Friend, Gerd Baak, has translated Bhante's lecture *Buddhism, World Peace, and Nuclear War* into German and then joined the small community in Essen, still the core of the FWBO in Germany. At the same time the Order members reorganised publicity, secured work to raise money, and cultivated contacts, especially with a Friend who might just be able to provide a freshly renovated castle!

Although such a 'Castle in Germany' would not materialize in the immediate future, the end of 1984 should witness the third and biggest Christmas retreat. At the time of writing it looks like fifty people will attend.

In the New Year FWBO Germany will change its approach. On the one hand we will extend activities for Regulars and mitras. As well we will concentrate beginners' activities in intensive, six-week blocks. The two test 'blocks' in this year will take place in the West and Southwest respective-

ly, and will consist of retreats; intensive meditation, Buddhism, and yoga courses; seminars; lectures; and discussions. This promises to be an exciting innovation and offers the opportunity to contact a wide range of people.

BOSTON

Although our weekly programme continued through the summer, many of our Friends went travelling. Dharmachari Punya held the fort in Boston while Dharmacharis Manjuvajra and Vajradaka together with a Friend called William went to England.

While in the U.K. Manjuvajra and Vajradaka discussed the future of the Boston Buddhist Centre with Bhante, and other Order members; we were all keen to try a new approach. After much discussion we decided to try a new scenario in which Manjuvajra lived outside of the community and Centre and researched the possibilities of founding a retreat centre in New England.

During this time Vidyaratna decided to come to join us in the States for an unspecified time.

After his visit to the U.K., Manjuvajra did a motorcycle tour of the United States, visiting twenty other Buddhist groups on his ten thousand mile journey.

At the moment, Punya, Vidyaratna and Vajradaka are still in the process of discovering how they want to expand FWBO activities in Boston. We are developing a series of Dharma courses, having already had one called 'A Vision of Existence'. They are formulating one called 'A Path of Transformation'.

During the summer we had visits from a number of mitras including David Keefe whose help and vitality we all appreciated tremendously. In the autumn we also had a much appreciated flying visit from Dhammarati on his way back to his work in Bethnal Green after a stay in San Francisco.

Vidyaratna and William both moved into the community in the autumn.

The Boston area can be very beautiful in the autumn and we were able to appreciate it recently during a weekend retreat held at a friend's farm house.

Vajradaka

HOLLAND

Another Facet in the Newsletter, Holland: that flat densely populated, small country with dykes, many rivers and bridges, straight rows of trees, cows in the field and of course wooden shoes.

For many years retreats have been held in Holland, and at the moment there are four mitras and six regular Friends in the country (another two Dutch mitras and a Dutch Order member live in England to experience the FWBO fully there).

In 1982 Vajragita went to England to get more experience as an Order member. While she was away, two mitras and a few Friends organised retreats and meetings. Vajragita kept in contact, going over for the retreats. But now, on 11th October, 1984 she has returned to Holland, where she will see what more can be done. Several day retreats are already planned.

On the 4th November we will be celebrating Sangha Day, she says, a good start because that is what we want to develop in Holland. In November

there will be another three-day retreat. Vajragita is sure there are many people in Holland looking for the Dharma in one way or another. She wants to create the opportunity for them to find the Dharma, to find the jewel in the lotus - or, perhaps, as someone once said to her, the jewel in the clog.

AUCKLAND

For approximately the last year, there has been a slowly developing and growing network forming in Auckland - the Meditation Network for World Peace. Started by a few Order members, Mitras and Friends, it is their contribution to overcoming the threat of nuclear war or accident, by the radical transformation of the way we interact with ourselves, with other people and the environment - a change from coercion to co-operation.

The network is set up in such a way that it is made accessible to people who otherwise may not be interested in Buddhism and meditation. The metta bhavana meditation practice is taught but the Pali title is translated into the 'Development of Peace' to remove the obstacle of an unfamiliar language.

As well as meditating regularly together and writing letters, those involved in the Network have gone out and become involved in the Peace Movement in Auckland. We have held meditation workshops at two weekend Peace Camps organized by and for members of the 98 or so peace groups in Auckland.

Vajragita — back in Holland



These have been particularly successful for communicating the importance of the personal development of Peace and the emphasis of a non-violent approach to our collective dilemma.

We also have had a strong presence at a protest camp at Whenuapai Air Base, during a recent display of the Australian, New Zealand and United States (ANZUS) military. Here we lent our support in the form of a bus, a meditation tent with daily meditations, Meditation Network leaflet distribution, and plenty of positive banners. We offered flowers to police, the military in charge of the exercise and Whenuapai residents who had brought us food and offered us showers. We also planted a Pohutukawa tree (Maori symbol of life) on the portion of land allotted us by the Minister of Defence.

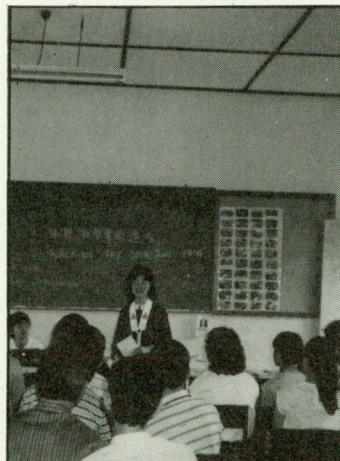
It has been very satisfying to see not only the growth of the Peace movement in Auckland (in terms of size) but also its development in the sense of a greater realization of the importance of the individual development of peace and the up-holding of Non-Violence. We have had articles published in two widely circulated magazines, both of which have produced much constructive response. We also distribute books and articles which inform and emphasize our non-violent and actively peaceful approach. Vessantara's article 'Buddhism and Non-Violence' is finding its way into many homes throughout the country. In this way we

hope to have a positive shaping influence on the Peace Movement in New Zealand and through New Zealand work for International Peace.

1985 is going to be a busy year for us all in New Zealand. Ratnaketu.

WELLINGTON

The FWBO in Wellington has been flourishing, particularly in the past few months. For two years the centre has occupied two large rooms above a builders yard five minutes from the city centre, and from here we have held courses on meditation and basic Buddhism, pujas, study groups, and meditation days. In addition there has been the occasional retreat. All these



Jayapushpa at work

activities have been taken by our only Order member, Achala, who is living up to his name by being unshakeable - despite the distance and isolation from the rest of the Order.

In May, Buddhadasa came down from Auckland for three months to give Achala a well-earned rest. He immediately used his skills as an interior designer to smarten up the Centre, building a bookshelf and taped lecture cabinet. He also presented a lecture series on the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path, and took studies on the *Unana* and the *Sutra of Hui Neng*. Many people were attracted by these and became regular visitors. Their interest was jelled by a beginner's retreat led by Buddhadasa on the last weekend of his visit. This was held at 'Stretham' a former Prime Minister's residence in the countryside north of Wellington.

There have recently been some changes to the weekly programme of activities at the Centre. The Monday night Puja has been restructured to give a break in between the meditation and the Puja. This has been done to give a follow on for people attending meditation courses who may want a regular group meditation but do not want to feel obliged to stay for puja.

On Sunday evenings there is now an extended study-cum-business meeting. This enables Achala, Mitras and regular Friends to keep in contact and delve deeper into the Dharma. The current study is on topics raised by the basic Buddhism course. With regular meetings the running of the Centre has become smoother and the number of ideas for new activities has increased. Some possible projects for the future include, a new shrine, a women's study group, a meditation

network for world peace, and a garage sale to raise funds for Aid for India.

Marcus Copsey

MALAYSIA

The Malaysian FWBO Centre is still in the making, with a single Order member in residence. However, much has been happening other than the setting up of a Buddhist community, 'Vajratara', in Petaling Jaya. On 4th August, Lokamitra arrived to appeal for funds for the Dharma projects of TBHSG, our movement in India.

This Dharma tour was kindly organised by the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia, who also printed and translated a few thousand copies of the Aid for India appeal booklet into Mandarin for the Chinese-speaking audience.

The response to the tour was good and promising. As a result of this tour, more and more people are in contact with our Movement, so there have been requests for more talks at places we visited.

Besides the above, there was a meditation retreat organised for the Buddhist society of a teacher's training college in Penang. Sixteen of us went on the retreat, in a Buddhist temple that is built on a hill with much fresh spring water, and surrounded by trees and plants. It was altogether an experience of warmth, openness and space! During the free periods there were opportunities for jungle-tracking and outdoor meditation. All in all it was a beautiful retreat.

Jayapushpa

RETREATS GLASGOW

Heruka, one of the men's communities in Glasgow, may seem an unlikely venue for a women's retreat, but on the eve of the September holiday weekend the men moved out and seventeen women moved in - to spend three days with Parimi and Vidyarati exploring the theme of communication. This was the most recent of the now regular women's events and attracted women from Glasgow, Manchester, Stoke, Sheffield, and one Londoner, but she used to live in Newcastle!

On the first day we progressed through the programme of communication exercises, study on Bhante's lecture 'Perfect Speech' to a beautiful talk by Vidyarati in which she held us spellbound as she described higher and higher levels of communication taking us in imagination from being healthy humans to Stream-Entrants, Bodhisattvas and Buddhas. The next morning brought us back to the practicalities of achieving that vision, out Parimi had a few ideas up her sleeve about that. After a day of more study, the evening found us gathering in the sitting room wondering what the item 'Talks' on the programme might be. It turned out to be an opportunity for free and spontaneous communication - for five minutes on a topic suggested by someone you thought of as a friend! The talks ranged from 'A Yugoslav's First Impression of Glaswegians' - very friendly, but what language are they speaking - to 'My First Parachute Jump' - Go!! yelled the instructor... On Monday the transformation process continued with the morning

spent sitting in a circle giving positive feedback to the people on either side of us and receiving feedback from them. Although quite a few stomachs were choked with very nervous butterflies, very soon the butterflies were aloft and flying freely, setting on each person in turn images of them at their best were conjured up, and the pattern of giving and receiving was repeated around the room.

Talks, communication exercises and feedback all kept the outward momentum of the retreat moving upwards and pujas - first thing in the morning and last thing at night - contributed no less to maintaining that momentum inwardly. Two Bodhisattvas in particular seemed close-by - Manjughosa and, as the retreat progressed, Tara. Vidyaratni had said in her talk that communication should be growth-based not need-based. By the end of the retreat we might have added that it could also be without safeguards, without guarantees, loved-based and gentle-voiced. Marlene Holiday

VAJRALOKA

There are two types of experience which many of our guests find characteristic of retreats at Vajraloka. One is a sense of timelessness which arises after a few days of being immersed in the regular meditation programme, when one loses the sense of how long one has been there, or even what day of the week it is! It doesn't matter if it's Sunday or Tuesday as one gets to grips with one's immediate experience - striving for concentration, or 'letting go' into meditative absorption.

The other characteristic experience is a keen sense of the impermanence of the world. Perhaps it is not surprising that one should begin to have glimpses of this most fundamental truth after a few days of meditation, but on a retreat at Vajraloka somehow the quality is enhanced. This is probably because one has a more direct experience of the transiency of the natural world - in the growth and decay of the plants and animals around one. On a short walk one will come across decaying, moss-covered trees, or one may even find the decaying corpse of an animal.

This autumn seemed to bring even more than the usual amount of change associated with the season. Not only did the green leaves turn golden and brown and begin to fall, but the drought-parched fields became green and lush with the rain. The showery weather also brought many rainbows playing over the valley, whose delightful appearance added a touch of magic.

It was in this sort of atmosphere that we held the Tara visualisation retreat, led for the third year in succession by Dharmananda. Dharmananda has in fact now moved here after several years working for Windhorse Trading in East London.

This year we finished work on the two new rooms beneath the dormitory, which means that up to ten people can be here at a time before anyone has to share a room, unless they want to. We hope that our steadily improving facilities will help to attract more people to Vajraloka, to experience for themselves the undoubted benefits for their meditation practice.

INDIA

AURANGABAD

During July and August, Vimalakirti gave a series of lectures at Dr. Ambedkar College of Law, on the theme 'Dr. Ambedkar's Dhamma Revolution'. For six weeks, every Friday night, the lecture hall was packed with between three and four hundred students, professors and townspeople, who enthusiastically participated in this course. This course greatly helped to publicize our work in Aurangabad, and brought many new people to our regulars' class.

Nagasena has increasingly taken on the running of the regular, Mitra and locality classes. Jyotipala has been going out more - to lead retreats at Bhaja and to do a month's tour of Maharashtra. They came together to lead a successful retreat at Jalna for two days. Here we have a small nucleus of Friends who conduct a weekly meditation class and who have now asked to become mitras. Whilst everyone else was celebrating Diwali - a Hindu equivalent of Christmas (during which huge quantities of fireworks are consumed, so the town had the appearance of being bombarded by artillery) - we held a six-day retreat at Dr. Ambedkar College of Law. This was attended by over fifty people, four of whom came from Gujarat, where we have a centre in Ahmedabad. During the retreat Neoh Kah Tong, a member of the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia, gave a talk on 'Buddhism in Malaysia' which everyone loved. Unfortunately he couldn't stay, and as a memento of us, he taped our evening puja, which he will play when he returns home. Our weekly classes continue, and people are beginning to see the importance of our work, and the genius of The Venerable Sangharakshita's teaching for modern India.

AHMEDABAD

The biggest news from Ahmedabad is that it finally looks as if we have found some land suitable for constructing a boy's hostel. It is very well located, the right size, and would be ideal for such a project. Negotiations are under way, and provided there are no unforeseen difficulties, the purchase of the land should follow. Unforeseen difficulties, however, seem to be the norm in India...

Apart from the hostel land, we have also asked the local Corporation to allot us some 1000 square yards of land on the outskirts of the city. This is in a very quiet, semi-agricultural area, and would be ideal as a retreat/study centre: a facility much needed in a busy and noisy city like Ahmedabad.

On 17th September, we celebrated 'Dharmapala Jayanti' at our little vihara, where Mangala gave a talk on the significance of the occasion. Ashoka Vijaya Dashnir was celebrated on 4th October, in conjunction with two other local Buddhist groups. This was a very festive occasion with lots of games and activities for both children and adults. The highlight of the day, however, was a very fine talk by Anagarika Ashvajit who was up here on a one week visit. During his stay

he gave several other talks in different localities. His visit was much appreciated by all and we look forward to his next one.

Two days after Ashoka, Vijaya Dashmi, Mangala led a day retreat at Burpungar vihara. Although it was a short retreat a good level of concentration and positivity was developed amongst the 40 people who attended. We hope to make such retreats a regular feature of our work in future.

In December we look forward to a much belated visit from Lokamitra, who will be coming for four days. During this time he will be giving a lecture and also launching a new Gujarati edition of one of Bhante's lectures. He will also show slides of our work in Maharashtra as well as his recent visit to Malaysia and Singapore. He hopes to spend some time visiting old friends in Ahmedabad and nearby Gandhinagar.

PUNE

The rainy season here is generally quieter than at other times, for obvious reasons. However that does not mean we stop or slow down our work, but that we concentrate on different areas. Lokamitra has been to Malaysia and Singapore while Vajraketu has been touring the UK, both trying to raise funds for our purely Dhammic activities here, which are not covered by the funds raised for social work.

In Bombay, Chandrasil has been conducting two classes a week in Ulhasnagar where there is a very good response to our work. At the centre in Bandra, Bodhisen and Vajrasil have been conducting classes. The Siddharth Vihar Saturday

night class has been resumed, being conducted by more experienced Dhammcharis from Pune. We have started a course there on the 22 vows advocated by Dr. Ambedkar to his Buddhist followers.

In Pune, Jyotipala led our first silent retreat for Dhammcharis and mitras. After that he started a month's tour of Sholapur, Nanded, Vidarbha and Hyderabad, supported at various times by Dhammarakshita, Dhammodaya and Chandrabodhi. During that month he gave over thirty lectures. He was met in Hyderabad by Lokamitra, Vimalakirti and Amritbodhi who were to give two talks there before proceeding on a seven day tour of Vidarbha. At the end of this a retreat was held near Wardha, at Sevagram just over the road from Gandhi's main ashram in India. 96 people attended this weeks' retreat, including two bhikkus. It was a very inspiring retreat and marked a definite step forward in our work in Vidarbha.

This was the period of the Hindu festival of Diwali, the nearest equivalent to Christmas. At this time we always try and hold retreats so that people can put their leave to real use. Not only did we hold a retreat in Vidarbha but also in Bombay, Aurangabad, Poona and Sholapur. It did mean that Order members were rather stretched, but the disadvantage was offset by the fact that so many people were enabled to come into contact with the Dhamma. The main difficulty is that on these retreats people get so inspired, want more contact, want to organise retreats in their area, but we are not in a position to satisfy anything like the demand.

Ex-Untouchable boy in Dapodi





AID FOR INDIA

At the beginning of November Aid for India moved to new offices in Dalston, two or three miles away from our previous offices above the Cherry Orchard Restaurant in Globe Road. The new offices are more spacious and better equipped, and despite being one of the busiest high-streets in the East End of London, they are also quieter. In some ways, moving away from the LBC was a difficult decision (we had spent some time looking for suitable premises closer by). However, now that we have moved we are all convinced that we have made the right decision, and are very happy indeed with our greatly improved working environment.

With no door-knocking appeals planned until Spring 1985 (which will be for the ITBCI School in Kalimpong), we have been able to give considerable attention to improving our on-going administration and the effectiveness of our team-work. This has been greatly helped by the full-time involvement of Satyapala during September and October when he worked with us as a management consultant. Furthermore, Mahamati has recently embarked on a two-year part-time management diploma course at the North East London Polytechnic.

VAJRAKETU GOES WEST

'Could someone move the screen a little over to the left? Now up a bit - that's it. Thanks.'

Now, where's the powerpoint? Surely, in this most luxurious of rooms, with the chandeliers dripping and oozing from the ceiling, and all that carpet growing up the walls to meet them, there must be such a thing as a powerpoint? Well, there's nothing for it but to find the caretaker yet

Lokamitra

again, poor man. Ah, yes, of course. Behind those fifteen stacked chairs by the door there. 'Right, yes, thanks.'

There's only half an hour left before all those people are due to arrive - to hear and see Vajraketu's illustrated talk on the Ex-Untouchable Buddhist Movement in Maharashtra - all eager to give hard earned money for Dharma world in India. But how many will come tonight? Will they have read about it in the newspaper, or heard Vajraketu speaking on the radio or seen the poster or heard about it from somebody in the FWBO? Will the press be there? There's supposed to be someone coming from TV as well...

Five minutes to go. But where is the audience? Books on display, bedspreads spread, the slide projectors hiss quietly at the screen, dana bowls lurk cunningly in the most obvious places.

Ratnadakini arranges newsletters and pamphlets in a spectacular spiral on the table. Avril Smith ushers people to the visitors books and discretely checks whether the reporter she spoke to this morning, has arrived yet. Caroline Owen briefs the volunteers who are to help the public fill out all those covenant forms. Marian Monas checks the projectors and hopes Vajraketu won't alter his script too much or she won't know when to change the slides. The AFI Trustee of the night chats to Vajraketu to keep him calm.

'Good evening ladies and gentlemen...', says the suitably besuited AFI Trustee, who is chairing the evening. And so it begins.

Vajraketu begins to talk, explaining the significance of Buddhism in general, its significance to the Ex-Un-

touchable community in India, and its relevance to us. He explains how, for these New Buddhists, the Dharma is a means to their social and spiritual uplift.

The slides begin - scenes of slum life, hutment life, street life; people squatting by the roadside selling a few bits of metal; people scavenging in rubbish heaps; people living on the edge of sewers, crammed into one-roomed structures made from cardboard and beaten-out biscuit tins; people camping under railway bridges and sleeping on the street...

And yet that self-protective distancing mechanism, that so easily goes into action when one sees scenes of this type - as if these people were not really real at all, but just interesting studies from pages of National Geographic Magazine - does not function here. For these people are Vajraketu's friends. He knows them personally, and as he talks his respect and affection for them are inescapably evident.

The scenes change - pictures of people on retreat and studying together in Vajraketu's tiny flat in Bombay; pictures of people at Bhajja, the newly built retreat centre in the country. Pictures of Dr. Ambedkar, the leader of the Ex-Untouchable Buddhist Movement in the 1950's and creator of the Indian Constitution; pictures of Bhante giving talks to thousands of Ambedkar's followers, at night, in the open air, in 1982; pictures of the individuals who have dedicated their lives to the Three Jewels in India - translating for the Western Order members who live there, leading retreats and now giving talks themselves.

The lights come on; the audience is silent and rather stunned; a few questions are asked of the speaker. All that remains is the appeal for money. Perhaps we will make as much as we did in Manchester, where in one night nearly £12,000 in covenants was raised; perhaps not...

So it all ends for another night, and tomorrow it will happen all over again in another town. Vajraketu's tour made a profit of over £33,000, promised in covenants over the next seven years. The vast majority was given by people directly connected with the FWBO and their friends.

Marian Monas

LOKAMITRA GOES EAST

On August 4th I left Bombay for a five week tour of Malaysia and Singapore. The purpose was twofold. Firstly I wanted to inform Buddhists there about the revival of Buddhism in India started by Dr. B.K. Ambedkar and the work that TBMSG/FWBO are doing to help this. All too often I have come across Eastern Buddhists who know nothing at all about Dr. Ambedkar's conversion - which must be the most momentous conversion in the history of Buddhism.

The second purpose of my visit was to encourage help, especially in the form of funds, for our Dhamma work. In the West we have raised funds through Aid for India for a large social project in Poona, the focal point of which will be a large shrineroom, without which the other activities cannot really succeed. We have not yet raised enough money for this. There is also

the extension for our retreat centre at Bhajja which will allow it to accommodate 200 people at a time. In the West people are generally happy to help social projects, but we can turn only to Buddhists for help with our Dhamma work.

I chose Malaysia to start with because we have some very good friends there. Some Malaysian Buddhists have studied in New Zealand and had contact with the Movement there. Neo Kah Thong was one such person, and since returning to Malaysia has kept up contact with the FWBO, and has been responsible for introducing Bhante's taped lectures and the sevenfold puja to Malaysian Buddhists. It was he who organised Bhante's brief visit to Malaysia five years ago. He was instrumental to the success of my visit. One of our Dharmacharinis, Jayapushpa, lives there. She came to the West for three years to train with us, during which time she was ordained. Since returning to Malaysia she has been initiating FWBO activities. Bhikshu Piyasila of Kuala Lumpur trained with us for six months in the West and although not running an FWBO centre, his activities have been very much influenced by his contact with the FWBO.

The Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia has been inspired by what Bhante has done in the West. They have plans to publish some of his lectures. Inspired too by our Right Livelihood efforts, they set up the 'Happy Realm' vegetarian restaurant in Penang.

Also some of Dharmachari Chintamani's paintings of Bodhisattvas have been printed by Tony Wong, founder of the Kuan Yin Contemplative Order in Kuala Lumpur. These have been distributed and appreciated all over Malaysia.

Malaysia is an extremely beautiful country. Bhante has called it the 'green paradise'. It is covered with thick green jungle, rubber and oil plantations. It has a small population of 14 million (the government sees the optimum population as 70 million). Of these, five million are Chinese, most of whom consider themselves to be Buddhists. There are temples everywhere, which are usually very beautifully maintained. Unfortunately, they are rarely used as they could or should be. Chinese Buddhism has to some extent degenerated, with a great deal of superstition creeping in - especially concerning death. A lot of money is spent on this in ways which have no Dharmic significance. However, many are not satisfied with this, and want to make Buddhism more meaningful and practical in their lives. Some of these look towards Taiwan where monks and nuns are trained in the Chinese Buddhist tradition, and retreats are held. Others look towards the Theravada tradition. These tend to be people educated in the English medium, who are not able to read or speak Chinese dialects easily, and so go to English-speaking Sinhalese monks for their teaching. However, despite these different approaches, I came across no rigidly sectarian attitudes, and they all seemed happy to join in each other's festivals. This was very reassuring to me, having no particular allegiance to either. Many people seemed interested in and appreciative of our 'ekayana' or 'Buddhayana' approach.

My tour of Malaysia was or-

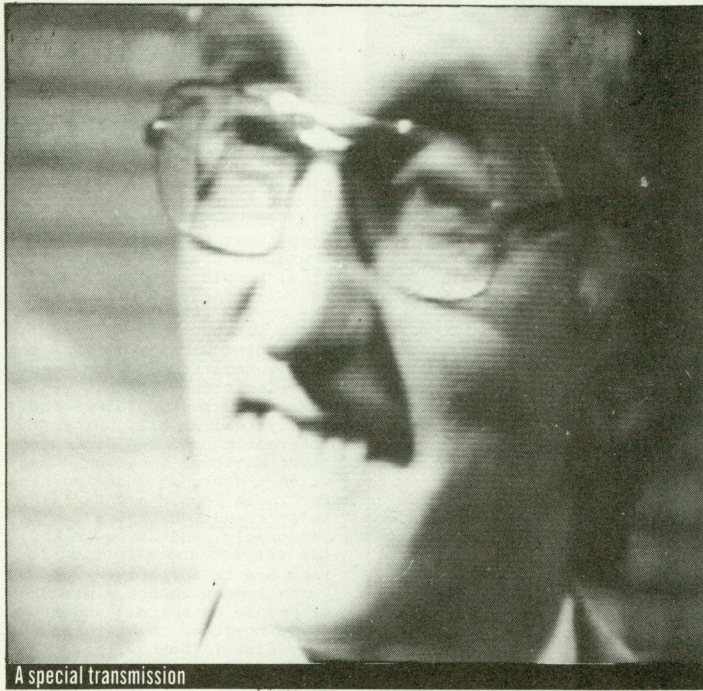
ganised by the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM). They are the official coordinating body for Buddhists, all over Malaysia and without their blessing it is very difficult for any foreigner to do any Dhamma work. They had organised my tour extremely efficiently. I gave 25 lectures in 26 days, usually travelling each day for two to four hours. I didn't object to this at all because the countryside was so refreshing, and quite often I was driven by one of my hosts which gave the opportunity for more communication. I was made very welcome everywhere; during the whole of my stay in Malaysia it was hardly possible for me to spend a single penny on food, lodging, or travel.

The programme followed the same pattern everywhere: a talk, slides, and questions. It was hard to say much in the time at my disposal, especially as the talks often had to be translated into Mandarin or Hokkien. But everywhere I went people were amazed to hear of the extremely dramatic reappearance of Buddhism in India, the land of its birth. They were filled with admiration for the life of Dr Ambedkar. I would often hear the interpreter referring to him as *pusa* meaning Bodhisattva. They felt for the poverty and social backwardness of their new brothers and sisters in the Dhamma. Everywhere people appreciated the down to earth way in which we are working, and everywhere people wanted to help.

At the end of each programme I gave the organising body a few books published by us. Especially appreciated were our *Dhamma* series, and *Subhuti's Buddhism for Today*.

The people I talked to were impressed by the systematic, serious, and committed approach of the FWBO. Many wanted me to give more talks, take a retreat and so on. I hope Jayapushpa can follow up some of this interest; I am quite sure that Malaysia is ripe for the FWBO's approach, and hope the day is not far off when we will have a full spiritual community there.

I spent my last week in Singapore. I was not able to be so outward-going there as I had not got official government permission to teach the Dhamma, which is required. However, I was able to give eight private talks to Buddhist groups and students. Singapore is an island of two and a half million people, seventy percent of whom are Chinese. Most of these are nominally Buddhist, although the same confusions exist among them as among the Malaysia Buddhists. There are quite a few Buddhist groups and associations: some cater for a



A special transmission

more conventional approach, some are definitely groping for the spiritual essence of the Dhamma.

Four of my talks were for college students. I was particularly happy to give these because of the obvious enthusiasm. Many were familiar with our work through Piyasilo, Jayapushpa, Priyananda, or the *FWBO Newsletter*.

The last talk I gave was to a weekend Buddhist leadership seminar for students of the four main colleges in Singapore. Even though I could not give talks in the way that I could in Malaysia, I did meet many people, and was glad of the opportunity to tell them something of the work we are doing. As in Malaysia, I am sure the FWBO can make a real contribution to the development of the Dhamma.

My tour was certainly a success in that I was able to inform a lot of people about the Buddhist revival here in India. People responded very generously. I am very grateful to YBAM and all others who helped in some way or another to make the tour a success.

I hope that more and more members of the Order can visit Malaysia and Singapore. I hope that Buddhists from Malaysia and Singapore will come to visit us. I am convinced that this sort of contact is not only beneficial to ourselves and our particular Buddhist communities, but could have much wider repercussions in the world at large.

Lokamitra

BHANTE ON TV

On Sunday 4th November, the Venerable Sangharakshita appeared on British Television as the subject of a half-hour interview with presenter Karen Armstrong.

Replying to questions about his earliest religious leanings, Bhante revealed that he had been a regular church-goer as a child, attracted by the warmth and social atmosphere of the services. However, his discovery of Eastern religious and philosophical literature brought him to the realisation of how narrow the horizons of Christianity actually are. Christianity, he felt, simply could not contain the whole truth. At the age of 16 he had the insight experience which led him to know that he was a Buddhist, 'and always had been'.

Describing Buddhism as a path or method of development for the individual human being, in association with other individual human beings - who see that development as having no limits, he made clear his belief that, as a universal spiritual tradition, Buddhism transcends cultural context. It is as relevant in the West today as it was in the East at the time of the Buddha.

After some all too brief questioning on the subjects of God-belief, blasphemy, meditation, and ethics, Miss Armstrong moved the discussion into the area which was obviously uppermost in her mind: that of 'visionary' experience. Bhante has written of several such experiences in

The Thousand Petalled Lotus, and so Miss Armstrong asked him to describe for the viewers just three: visions of the Virgin Mary, Ramakrishna, and the Buddha Amitabha.

The inherent problem with the discussions which followed each description was that Bhante and his interviewer clearly attributed a different kind of significance to such experiences. While Miss Armstrong seemed to attach an almost absolute, spiritual weight to visionary experience, Bhante was at pains to point out that such experiences, while perhaps religious and even spiritual in content, can in no way be regarded as manifestations of spiritual - and even less transcendental - attainment. As meditation practice stimulates deeper levels of consciousness, such visions, he said, may emerge - for some people. They are a sign, if anything, that deeper, though not necessarily higher levels are being tapped. The meditator can therefore derive some encouragement from them, but he cannot regard them as anything more than symptoms of a process that is itself only preparatory to the real transformation process in which spiritual development fully consists.

Of the Amitabha vision, Bhante did say that it came at a time when he sought assurance that he was on the right path, and following the right kind of practices and spiritual endeavour. He had therefore taken that overwhelming experience as a confirmation of his efforts.

The interview wound to a close with more brief discussion on the topics of discipline, celibacy, and sympathetic joy.

Many FWBO centres will have videotape copies of the interview, and it is worth trying to watch since there are quite a few pearls to be extracted. But it is a shame that the interviewer was not able - perhaps because of her brief - to respond more flexibly to Bhante's points, and thus take the discussion onto a deeper and clearer level. Bhante was offering no shortage of clues.

Bhante himself seemed very relaxed - if occasionally surprised to see his clues being overlooked, or his obvious concern for clarity and precision unaccommodated.

It was perhaps a rather frustrating experience for him, and a consequently disappointing programme. However, if there were a few discerning viewers able to recognise hints of something a bit above the general level of televised religious discussion, they may, nevertheless, have recognised that here was a unique mind, and a great wealth of spiritual experience sending signals from beyond the box.

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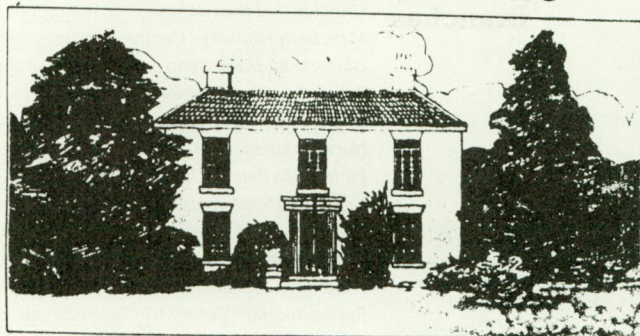
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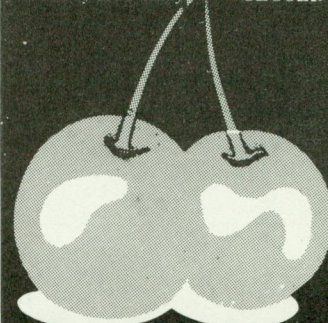


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<i>FWBO Leeds</i> , 51, Harehills Avenue, Leeds LS8 4EX
<i>Aryavamsa</i> , Elleholmsvagen 11, S-352 43 Vaxjo, Sweden
<i>Indrajala</i> , PO Box 22-657, Christchurch, New Zealand
<i>FWBO Netherlands</i> , Billitonstraat 20, 3531 HJ Utrecht
<i>Jayapushpa</i> , 39 Jalan 20/1, Paramount Garden, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia.

Co-operatives

<i>The Blue Lotus Co-operative Ltd</i> , 113 Notting Hill Gate, London W11. 01-727 9382
<i>Golden Light Co-operative</i> , PO Box 68-453, Newton, Auckland, New Zealand
<i>The Padmaloka Co-operative</i> , Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norfolk NR14 7AL. 050-88 8112
<i>The Pure Land Co-operative</i> , 51 Roman Road, London E2 OHU 01-981 1960
<i>Windhorse Associates</i> , 119 Roman Road, London E2 OQN. 01-981 5157
<i>Windhorse Enterprises Ltd</i> , 15 Park Crescent Place, Brighton, Sussex. 0273-698420
<i>Windhorse Wholefoods Co-operative Ltd</i> , 13 Kelvinside Terrace South, Glasgow G20. 041-946 2035
<i>Phoenix Community Housing Co-operative Ltd</i> , 119 Roman Road, London E2 OQN. 01-980 1069
<i>Rainbow Co-operative Ltd</i> , 96-98 High Street, Croydon, Surrey CRO 1ND. 01-688 2899
<i>Windhorse Trading Ltd</i> , 29-31 Old Ford Road, London E2 9PJ. 01-980 4221
<i>Whitehall Housing Co-operative Ltd</i> , 7 Colville Houses, London W11. 01-727 9382

Communities

(Visitors by arrangement only)

<i>Amitayus</i> , 15 Park Crescent Place, Brighton, Sussex BN2 3HF. 0273-698420
<i>Aryatara</i> , 3 Plough Lane, Purley, Surrey. 01-660 2542
<i>Grdhrakuta</i> , 18 Burlington Road, Withington, Manchester M20 9PY. 061-445 3805
<i>Heruka</i> , 13 Kelvinside Terrace South, Glasgow G20. 041-946 2035
<i>Kalpadruma</i> , 43 Gleneldon Road, Streatham, London SW16. 01-677 7381
<i>Khadiravani</i> , 42 Hillhouse Road, London SW 16. 01-677 1592
<i>Padmaloka</i> , Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norfolk NR14 7AL. 050-88 8112
<i>Padmavyuha</i> , 7 Colville Houses, London W11. 01-727 9382
<i>Ratnadhatu</i> , 12 Vivian Road, London E3. 01-981 5120
<i>Sarvasiddhi</i> , 318 Westbourne Park Road, London W11.
<i>Samayatara</i> , 18 Approach Road, London E2
<i>Sukhavati</i> , 51 Roman Road, London E2 OHU. 01-980 5972
<i>Suvarnabhasha</i> , 3 Ickburgh Road, London E5. 01-806 5222
<i>Suvirya</i> , 20 Approach Road, London E2 9LY
<i>Vajracchedika</i> , 95 Bishops Way, London E2 8HL. 01-980 4151
<i>Vajrakula</i> , 41B All Saints Green, Norwich, Norfolk. 0603 27034
329 Sauchiehall Street (top right), Glasgow. 041-333 0524
34b Springwell Avenue, Harlesden, London NW10. 01-965 5752
<i>Udyana</i> , 16 North Road, Brighton, Sussex BN1 1YA. 0273-603188

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

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Padmaloka, Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norwich, Norfolk NR14 7AL. Tel: (050 88) 8310