

Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

*The*

# NEWSLETTER

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STUDYING  
THE  
DHARMA





# THE FRIENDS OF THE WESTERN BUDDHIST ORDER

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

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

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

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

mount. As a result of Order members taking responsibility each for their own lives and attempting to communicate honestly and openly with others, that new society is becoming a living reality. In those areas where Order members have gathered together there are found three things: Communities, Co-operatives, and Centres.

In communities, Order members and Mitras (literally 'Friends': people who, after some initial contact with Order members, have decided they wish to deepen their communication) live together in numbers varying between four and thirty. In these, a new and radical way of life is being forged, which encourages and inspires community members to grow. They are usually either for men or for women so as to break down the habitual psychological and social patterns usually found in our relationships with members of the opposite sex which so much inhibit growth. Often, community members will pool all their earnings in a 'common purse' from which all expenses, communal and individual, will be met. The flavour of the communities is as varied as the people within them.

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

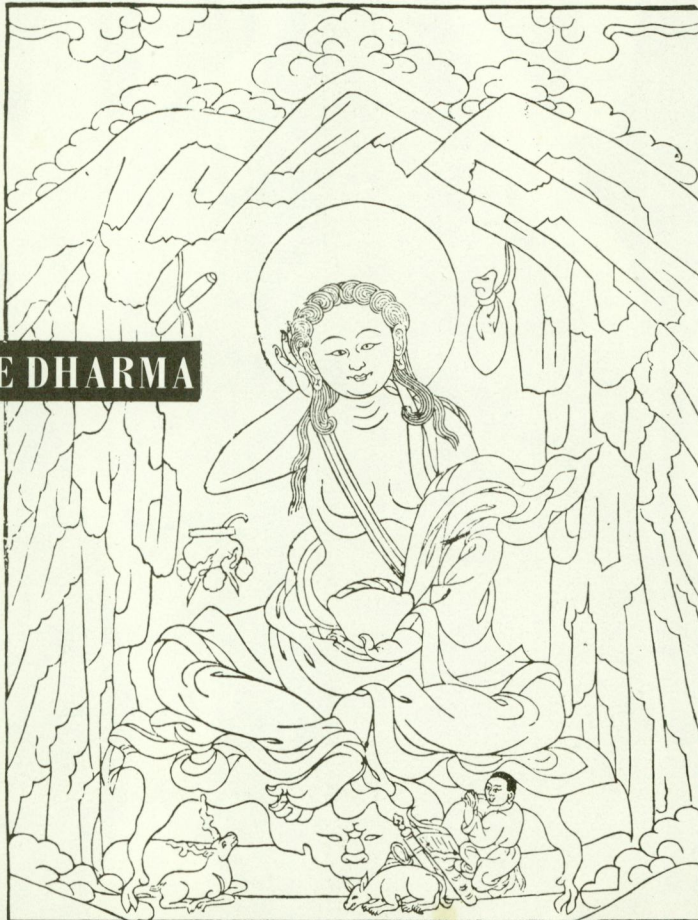
together in businesses which financially support the workers and which fund the further expansion of this New Society. Present businesses either running or being set up in the Movement include a printing press, wholefood shops, a silkscreen press, a hardware store, cafes, a second-hand shop, bookshop, editorial service, metal-work forge, and graphic-design, photographic and film studio. Members of the Co-operatives are hammering out a way of working which is 'Right Livelihood': team-based so that each person has the opportunity to take responsibility for the work, and ethically sound: exploiting neither other people nor the earth's resources. Work is done not for remuneration, but for its value as a means of development (in what other situation might your workmates suggest that you go for a walk or do some meditation when you seem run down?) and from a spirit of generosity. Each worker either works voluntarily or is given what he or she needs to live.

The most direct and effective means to the evolution of consciousness is the practice of meditation. At the Centres, members of the Order teach meditation and conduct courses, study groups, talks, and discussions on the principles and practice of Buddhism. There are

also ceremonies, festivals, and arts activities. Yoga, massage, and other practices are taught as valuable, though less central, methods of development. Centres are places where you can make contact with Order members and others already in touch with this burgeoning New Society. Above all, through the Centres, a bridge is formed over which those who wish may cross to a new and total way of life based upon the growth and development of individuals.

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order ('the Friends') is, then, a movement, always deepening and expanding, of people who wish to be authentic, integrated and dynamic. It was initiated in 1967 by the Ven. Maha Sthavira Sangharakshita, who spent 20 years in India as a Buddhist monk. He there studied, practised, and had contact with all the main traditional schools of Buddhism and returned to the West with a clear awareness that, though its essence remains the same, Buddhism always expresses itself anew in each new age and climate. The 'Friends' is the response of the Buddhist tradition of insight and experience to the circumstances of the modern West. It is an increasingly widespread movement with some twenty Centres and Branches throughout the world.

## LISTENING TO THE DHARMA



Over 200 taped lectures on Buddhism by The Venerable Sangharakshita and Members of the Order give you unique access to the Dharma.

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*The*  
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Nagabodhi

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# EDITORIAL

**I**t was late January, which meant that it was just about cool enough in the mornings to study outside. So we took our bits of carpet, our cushions, and our copies of *The Dhammapada* out onto the sun-scorched pale brown earth, and arranged ourselves into a small circle in the Retreat Centre's grounds.

There were eight of us in the group, though we were occasionally joined by a ragged, wizened old cow-herd who would come to squat down for a rest just a little way off, one hand cupped to his ear, his eyes screwed up in concentration, watching us as we worked our way through the 'Buddhavagga'.

Between us we made a rich mixture of experience and background: Indian and English, young and old, educated and uneducated, married and single, office worker and manual worker, city dweller and country dweller. Naturally, some very diverse paths had led each of us to Buddhism; yet here we were, a perfectly harmonious and sympathetic circle of men, united by our desire to find a way through the text to the heart of Buddhism, to Enlightenment itself.

When Lokamitra asked me to lead study for two and a half hours each day, I had wondered how we would make such a short passage 'last' for so long: for seventeen hours altogether! But as the week neared its end, we actually found ourselves having to rush through the last few verses with frustrating and almost indecent haste. We could easily have studied for twice as long.

As well as clarifying the meaning of the sometimes obscure words and turns of phrase, to ensure that everyone understood at least what the text was saying, we also found ourselves encountering — or revisiting — a number of very basic teachings: the Three-fold Way, the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path... but by far the major portion of our time was spent in that alchemical process of tying it all in with our own experience, making the text 'our own', discovering the points of connection between the words and our lives, so that we might feel the Dharma speaking directly to us, penetrating our hearts.

At one time a young man would speak about his difficulties with meditation practice. Another man told us how, wishing to rid his life of superstition, he had hurled away the lemon that a brahmin priest had told his wife to tie to the roof of their house to bring home a runaway child. For hour after hour, with dictionaries, expositions, anecdotes, confessions and jokes, we immersed ourselves in the collection of verses, turning them from so many letters on the page into aspects of our own experience, dynamic elements in our own lives, turning words back into energy, Buddhism back into Dharma.

Sometimes I would look up towards the hills to see the ancient Buddhist caves. I could even make out a glint of whiteness where the light bounced off the stupa in the main hall. Two thousand years ago, Buddhists sat on the terrace of those caves, probably reciting and discussing the very same verses that we were finding so relevant and immediate today.

The Dharma has survived, and has retained its potency because those people, and others like them in their time, honoured it. They memorised it, studied it, and then they practiced and lived it. The Dharma is beyond time and space. Its relevance and power will never fail — not so long as we, in our time, show it the same honour and respect.

Nagabodhi

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# STUDY

*'The study of the conceptual expressions of the Dharma (the teachings of the Buddha), is a very important method of personal development. Such study brings us into contact with minds more developed than our own, for through the teachings the more developed and even the Enlightened communicate.'*

This quote from *Buddhism For Today* by Dharmacari Subhuti suggests why such an important place has always been given to study in the Buddhist tradition. It is one of the principal methods by which we come into contact with both the spiritual qualities and the experience of the Enlightened ones. Through study of the Dharma our own limited frame of reference meets the infinitely wider one of the Enlightened mind. The perception of such a mind, from a much higher and clearer perspective, shows ours up for what it is: clouded and mundane. The confusing thoughts and ideas which obscure our minds can often dissipate just by coming into contact with the clearer perspective of the Dharma. Dharma study can be likened to the water-purifying gem of Indian mythology, whereby the stagnant and muddy pool of our own mind is progressively clarified, right down to its depths.

How different this is from the experience of study we find at schools and colleges, where the student has to cram himself with facts and figures (and then often only in the last weeks prior to the examinations), which are later found to be virtually useless in improving the quality of his life. So much education now seems to be a process of imparting information about things, rather than an exploration of principles which could throw light on man's quest for meaning in life.



by SUVAJRA



Of a completely different order of experience is a proper exploration of the Dharma, where meaning and value are found through examining the lives and words of true individuals, and where principles can be found to inspire and guide our actions in life. Here study is not an activity divorced from our lives. It has its place as an integral part of a balanced and wholehearted programme of spiritual development. Study of the Dharma requires the twin combination of 'intellectual penetration and emotional sensitivity'. Without emotional sensitivity we fall prey to the activity of intellectualisation divorced from any heartfelt response. Without intellectual penetration to guide our actions, however, we may give way too much to impulsiveness, so that confusion reigns in our lives. Our response to the Dharma must be wholehearted, for the task which culminates in the dawning of Wisdom requires that we marshal all our energies to move from where we are to a much higher level of existence.

True Wisdom does not arise in us all at once. It requires careful preparation and systematic cultivation. This is best conveyed by the teaching of the 'Three Wisdoms'.

According to this teaching, wisdom is of three different kinds; or, more correctly, it arises at three different levels, each one preparing the way for the next.





First comes the kind of wisdom that arises through study, and which provides our basic framework of information about the Dharma. We learn and even understand on the intellectual level what is being communicated, even if, as yet, we do not comprehend its relevance in any fuller sense; it is merely 'received' knowledge. By continued and serious reflection, however, we move on to the second level. Here we begin to connect up the various parts of the framework, and weave them in with threads of our own personal experience. Understanding how the various elements of our experience connect with what was before a merely intellectual framework, we become able to communicate the Dharma ourselves, picking out and highlighting from this higher perspective different patterns and connections. To some extent, we have made the teaching our own. Deep though this experience may go, it is not enough. It is only through our wholehearted spiritual practice, of meditation especially and the super-conscious mental states that arise from it, that we gain the ability to penetrate the very fabric of our existence. Here we move from intellectual understanding to spiritual — even transcendental — realisation. No longer do we see the framework and interconnecting threads from the outside; we see them from the inside, almost as if we were part of that tapestry.

These 'Three Wisdoms', or three levels of understanding and spiritual realisation, are not mutually exclusive. It is often hard to see where one ends and the next starts; the progression can be so gradual. This is very important to bear in mind for we are not to think that we take up the practice of study on one day, reflect the next, and meditate on the third! We *could* do this, but whether Wisdom, in the highest sense, would arise on that third day is doubtful! All the time we should be exercising our intellectual faculty, trying to understand more fully what it is that the Dharma is pointing towards, and then using that as a basis for continuous reflection. Alongside this we should be trying systematically to raise and clarify our minds by way of our spiritual practices. Thus, over a period of time we are able to experience understanding at its highest possible level. However, without the straightforward 'right

views', which we have gained at the first level, through our Dharma study, our higher development is not guaranteed. Unless our old, unhelpful attitudes and ideas have been challenged and their hold on us loosened, we may find ourselves running up 'blind alleys' for many years, since our vision will remain essentially clouded.

Dharma study not only has the function of clearing out wrong, confusing views and laying the foundations for Perfect Vision, but it also has the function of providing the basis for inspiration. How can we study the Dharma and not find ourselves being moved by it? To read of the Buddha's compassion, or to hear the songs of Milarepa, are very moving experiences, which touch the inmost layer of our being and set alight the fires of inspiration. We find through such study not only that our minds clear, but that our emotions too are stimulated and refined. Thus, very gradually, we come to embody the very qualities of which we have been reading.

Within the context of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO), study takes its place alongside other spiritual disciplines such as communication, spiritual friendship, right livelihood, meditation and so on. Just as there are different levels of involvement with the FWBO, so too are there corresponding levels of study and several different methods.

At the beginner's level when someone has just been introduced to the FWBO, their first contact may involve a short talk or even a full-scale lecture. The talks are given by members of the Western Buddhist Order and usually comprise some formulation of the Dharma, communicated in the light of their own experience. All that the visitor has to do is listen. This, of course, is by no means easy: not because the material is complex or because it taxes the intellect; often it is very straightforward and clear, but because listening itself is a spiritual practice requiring alertness and receptivity. Within the Buddhist tradition that first level of Wisdom is equated with 'hearing' or 'listening'. This was originally because there were no books on Buddhism, so that one's contact with the Dharma was entirely within an oral tradition. The Buddha's early disciples were often called *śravakas*, or 'listeners'. By listening one slowly learns what it is that Buddhism is

saying, and because it is being spoken — by someone, to us — we learn it within the context of a human relationship.

As the level of involvement increases, and as the newcomer becomes established as a regular 'Friend', with a regular spiritual practice, he or she will not only find more opportunities to hear talks, but also to participate in study groups. The material used in these groups may vary quite considerably. An early Buddhist text, such as the *Dhammapada*, may be used, or a contemporary one such as Subhuti's *Buddhism For Today*. Or, again, teachings given by the Venerable Sangharakshita may be used, or even a poem from English literature which expresses, to some extent, Buddhist principles.

This Spring will see the inauguration of a new study plan for FWBO 'mitras'. The plan is based around the taped lectures of the Venerable Sangharakshita, and will cover quite systematically, over a period of three years, all the major topics within Buddhism in its three phases of development in India: the Hinayana, the Mahayana, and the Vajrayana. This plan is reported in the Facets section of this Newsletter.

The three month Ordination retreat (the now famous 'Tuscany retreat' as it has come to be called) has study as one of the main practices. The Venerable Sangharakshita plays an important part on this retreat, taking Question and Answer sessions on various texts, and even delivering papers himself. For many mitras this is their first prolonged contact with Sangharakshita, and they are able to appreciate, at closer hand, his unique qualities of scholasticism and direct spiritual experience. Answering their questions, he opens up the whole Buddhist tradition, often linking it with those figures in our own culture whom we may consider to be our 'spiritual ancestors'.

Of course Dharma study does not stop after Ordination. In fact we could say that that is when it really begins. Even if all Dharmacaris are not required to give talks, people will always have questions on Buddhism, and it is up to every Order member to be informed, clear, and to the point in their answers. This requires continuous study of the Dharma at ever deeper levels. Study groups therefore take place at almost every gathering of the

Order, and study seminars are occasionally given by senior members of the Order for other Order members and of course by the Venerable Sangharakshita.

Another method of study for regular 'friends', mitras, and Order members is by way of transcription. All study sessions with Sangharakshita are tape-recorded and a team of people in London transcribes them, and also organises others in every centre to do the same. This is a special way of studying, for thus one has the rare opportunity of 'being on seminar with Bhante', and the even better opportunity of stopping the tape to take in the full import of what has been said! At the end of the transcription one feels not only that one has been living on a much more conscious level than normal, and that new horizons have opened, but that one has also produced a written record of what has been said which may then be published for everyone else to read. Individual needs here happily coincide with the requirements of others.

As for study facilities within the FWBO, we have to admit that they are still sadly lacking. With the exception of Padmaloka, our Men's Retreat Centre in Norfolk, we have few facilities and almost no means as a Movement for the support of those who wish to study full-time. Even at Padmaloka, with its library, the facilities are really the bare minimum. Plans are not lacking: only money. Sangharakshita envisages a much more extensive library containing, at the very least, every book on Buddhism which has been published in English: from the very best to the most dreadful, for even with these there are lessons to be learned. Alongside this there should be every facility which the student needs: books on many other subjects, study rooms, good meditation facilities, and beautiful surroundings. Perhaps, at some future date, we could offer scholarships or sponsor students from other countries to study with us in England.

Such plans are still for the future, and we must strive to bring them to fruition. Meanwhile we must persevere right now in our efforts to understand the Dharma, for it is only with the realisation of the qualities, for which our study lays the foundations, that we will be able to actualise all these wondrous works of our imagination.



# READING ABOUT BUDDHISM

*Imagine that you know nothing about Buddhism. You have decided that you want to acquaint yourself with the basic teachings of this important world religion but the entry on Buddhism in the encyclopaedia which you bought in a jumble sale informs you that Buddhism is a path of self-extinction. You realise that no teaching which has captured the hearts of so many millions could be reduced to such unappealing simplicity and so you decide to buy a book on the subject.*



Page of Prajnaparamita manuscript

**T**he book store you visit specialises in Oriental religions and you find yourself confronted by several banks of shelves overflowing with books on Buddhism. There, ranged together, are the stately, gold-blocked spines of the Pali Text Society's publications, the gaudy covers of the works on Tibetan Buddhism, the post-war graphics and transparent paper of obscure-sounding volumes from India, and the up-to-the-minute lay-out of books from America on Tantra and Zen. There are translations of

canonical texts and commentaries from all the major, and many of the minor, traditions of Buddhism. There are learned volumes by distinguished, and not so distinguished, scholars. There are books on Buddhism and Marxism, Buddhism and Existentialism, or Feminism, or the Arts, or even social work. All the star names of modern Buddhism are there.

You pull out a fat and promising tome to find that it treats of the Abhidhamma conception of Ultimate Reality. A bright cover attracts your eye but



you find that inside it contains some bearded neo-guru's rambling disquisitions on sex and Zen. As you stand bewildered before the shelves you feel that rising nausea which afflicts the unwary in bookshops and libraries — that overwhelming hopelessness in the face of so much knowledge you cannot begin to penetrate. You stagger from the shop with a paperback which has the right title but which is written with such monumental dullness that you never get past the first chapter.

#### ● HOW TO READ ABOUT BUDDHISM

The problem that confronts the beginner is one that he will meet at every stage of his study of Buddhism: how is one to choose what to read from the mass of material which is on offer? The age of printing, widespread distribution, and mass literacy has brought, along with its blessings, the problem of oversaturation. There are so many books that a single volume is no longer a rare and precious object whose pages we must touch only with a delicately carved page-turner. No longer does the opportunity to read a book come so seldom to us that we will endeavour to memorise every word it contains. So much written material is available that we are tempted to read shallowly and without discrimination. Before we can discuss *what* to read therefore we must look briefly at *how* to read Buddhist books.

Buddhism is, of course, a spiritual teaching. By this we mean that it is intended to transform us. As a result of our contact with Buddhism we should become better individuals: more sensitive in our dealings with others and aware of the deeper significance of life. Our reading of books on Buddhism should *be* Buddhism not *about* Buddhism. Reading Buddhist books should itself be a spiritual practice leading to self-transformation.

In the first place, this means we must read carefully and reflectively. We are not reading for entertainment or simply to pass the time, nor yet to accumulate facts so that we can impress people at parties. We are reading to change ourselves: to clarify our thinking, to blow away the crusty accretions of dead and contradictory ideas, and to introduce some new breadth and depth into our vision of life. We should make sure that we understand what we are studying, not glossing over what we do not

comprehend or hastily assuming that we do understand in the light of our own previous prejudices.

Once we have grasped the import of what we are reading, we must try to absorb it, memorising it and making it part of our lives. To make sure that we have digested what we have studied it is best if we can use it in some way: writing about it or giving a talk for instance. It may be useful to take full notes or to write a summary of the main points arising from our reading of a work. Above all we should *think* about it, reflecting always on its relevance to us and to the spiritual life of men and women today.

If we are to read in this deep way we are going to need to make sure that what we do read is worth reading. We must exercise our critical powers. We should never presume that our author is an entirely reliable authority and we must not allow ourselves to be lulled into passive acceptance of every word he writes. We must constantly be on our guard to see whether he makes ordinary sense and to check that he really does know his subject; many writers on Buddhism plainly do not and promulgate under that illustrious name their own confusion.

A critical approach is necessary at all times but above all if one chooses to read in a general way. Yet how can one be critical to any degree when one has very little knowledge and experience of Buddhism? Instinct and common sense may tell one quite a lot but plainly there is a need for guidance; we need help in cutting a clear path through the jungle-like profusion of books now available on Buddhism.

#### ● WHAT NOT TO READ

Buddhism has no handy, one-volume-sized Bible which contains the definitive account of its principle tenets. In its 2,500 year history during which it has spread to most of the countries of the East, Buddhism has developed a vast literature. It comprises firstly the canonical records of what purport to be the teachings of the Buddha himself, many of which were in fact under the process of continuous development for 1,000 years or more after the Parinirvana or death of the Buddha. Secondly, there is an even more extensive literature written by later Buddhist sages, commenting on the canonical texts — and commenting on the commentaries. (Fortunately, those who are now perplexed by

the extent and complexity of Buddhist literature will shortly be able to gain for the first time an overview of the whole field when Ven. Sangharakshita's *The Eternal Legacy: an Introduction to Buddhist Canonical Literature* is published later this year.)

Only a small portion of this literature, canonical and commentarial, has been translated into English. With some notable exceptions what has been translated has often been done quite poorly by scholars who have little acquaintance with or respect for the spiritual experience which lies behind the works they are translating. What we are given is also somewhat miscellaneous: many of the most important texts remain untranslated whilst much that is quite late and peripheral seems to occupy the translator's attention.

This situation is rendered more complex still by two modern classes of literature on Buddhism which were previously unknown in Buddhist history: works of secular scholarship and popularising works.

The Western academic tradition has developed a breed of scholar who can be an expert on a religious teaching without having any personal involvement in it. Indeed, it is argued, this is to be preferred since he is able to be more objective — rather like the drama critic who claims that he never sees the plays he reviews in case he becomes biased! Buddhism is not a philosophical system which can be analysed from a logical point of view alone. As we have seen, it is a practical teaching which is intended to transform us; the one-sidedly intellectual approach of some scholarly writings quite simply misses the point. Nonetheless, modern critical scholarship can tell us much about the historical development of Buddhism and, when informed by genuine spiritual commitment, can reveal the true significance of much that is at first sight obscure in the traditional literature.

Popular rising works form the second class of modern literature on Buddhism. Perhaps it is a reflection of the ease with which literature is available that so many people set themselves up to expound Buddhism when they have little or no personal acquaintance with its practice. They mistake their shallow intellectual knowledge for real understanding and they dila upon Buddhism on the basis of their own misconceptions and

distorted views. Very often they succeed only in accommodating Buddhism to their own previously held convictions.

One final confusing addition to this already tangled mass is the accounts of Buddhism which are given from the point of view of one or other school of Buddhism in the East. All too often, though they may give a very faithful picture of the teaching and practice of Buddhism in one or other oriental country, they are not able to distinguish between the culture of that country and what Buddhism essentially is. The view of Buddhism presented is therefore scarcely relevant, except in its broadest outline, to the modern Westerner. The unwary student may be further dazzled by the glittering ecclesiastical credentials of his author. The golden rule should be remembered: not everyone who wears a robe is what he appears to be!

We have then a two part problem: how do we find out enough about Buddhism to commence our own study and practice and how do we approach the canonical literature of Buddhism?

#### ● BASIC BUDDHISM

The beginner in the spiritual life (in FWBO terminology: the Friend and the mitra) must ensure that he has a thorough grasp of the basic teachings of Buddhism. Having decided that it is Buddhism that he wants to follow as a spiritual path, albeit provisionally, he should be quite clear about what is and what is not Buddhism. Far too many Buddhists today devote their energy to linking Buddhism with modern ideologies such as anarchism, marxism, feminism, or psycho-analysis before they have delved at all deeply into Buddhism. They will spend their time reading the burgeoning feminist literature or the Christian mystics rather than books on Buddhism. Let the Buddhist read about Buddhism! If he is to do any other reading it is probably better, from a spiritual point of view, that he immerses himself in the novels and poetry of English literature which, in their highest expressions, may form a bridge of inspiration and insight to Buddhist practice. A comparison of Buddhism with modern systems of thought should, in most cases, await a thorough knowledge of Buddhism and a sharpened critical faculty.



Having decided that we are going to ground ourselves firmly in basic Buddhist principles, what should we read? Bearing in mind what has already been said, we need to read authors who are rooted in the Buddhist tradition, who are themselves committed to Buddhism as a path of spiritual development, and who are aware of the real significance of the teachings they expound.

Here we are fortunate to have, in the works of Ven. Sangharakshita, a very comprehensive and clearly presented account of the principal Buddhist teachings. Certainly any Friend, mitra, or Order member within the FWBO would be well advised to study carefully all his taped lectures, articles, book reviews, booklets, and books (as well, I must of course add, as the works of those who speak and write under his inspiration and guidance!). These will provide all the raw materials for personal development as well as a broad picture of the whole extent and history of the development of Buddhism. Ven. Sangharakshita has performed the true work of translation: communicating the essential spirit of Buddhism from one cultural context to another so that it lives again for us in the West.

A very few authors, besides Ven. Sangharakshita, can be read with much confidence — notably Lama Govinda and Dr Edward Conze. Anyone who does choose to read outside that narrow but substantial field should bear in mind the dangers outlined above of reading authors who indulge in one-sided scholarship, shallow popularisation, and the failure to distinguish Buddhism from oriental culture.

## ● CANONICAL LITERATURE

Sooner or later the serious student of Buddhism must begin to read the canonical texts. On the basis of his own spiritual practice and his firm foundation in Buddhist principles, anyone who wishes to understand Buddhism at all deeply must refer to the original sources. Some students would be advised to learn one or more of the canonical languages (Pali, Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese, or Japanese) so as to read the texts as they were first written down.

The Buddha himself, so as we know, did not write, and for four hundred years and more his teachings were handed down orally. He insisted that his words should be translated into the vernacular of each region and that

no 'sacred language' should develop which would confine his teachings to learned professionals.

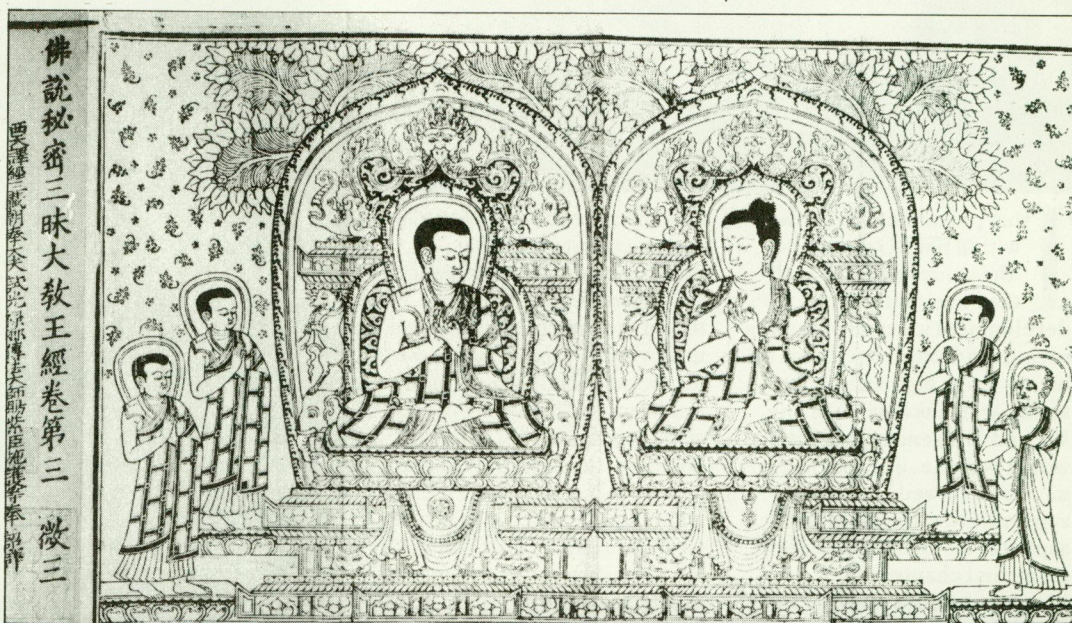
During the four hundred year period of oral transmission, several streams of transmission developed, each associated with a different school, region, or language and often containing different material. Whilst the tradition was being transmitted in this way, and even when it was written down, the material underwent considerable modification. It was arranged so that it was easy to memorise, with

Canon has been translated and published due to the admirable work of the Pali Text Society. The Pali Canon is probably a good place to start reading Buddhist canonical literature. It is a very fascinating and spiritually rich collection — much richer than many Theravadins themselves seem to realise since they, all too often, confine themselves to a limited range within their own canon and ignore some very important and significant portions.

Students of the Pali Canon should bear two facts in mind.

word of the Buddha, fixed for all time.

Each text should be read with knowledge of its context and awareness of the historical factors which contributed to its creation. This critical reading in no way diminishes the spiritual impact and creative achievement of the work. Indeed, it helps us to guard against the literalism which besets some Buddhist schools who seek prophecies and predictions about present events in what is plainly mythic material intended to appeal to the spiritual imagination, or else who reduce



The Buddha's teachings were handed down orally

lots of repetitions and stock passages. It was systematised and classified into chapters and books. It was also developed: the basic material was expanded, earlier teachings were modified in the light of later practice, and implications were made explicit, unfolding into what became quite new traditions. In some cases, this process went on for 1000 years or more after the Buddha's own life. The end result is that Buddhist canonical literature is extremely diverse with many layers and many branches, extant in many languages, and containing a vast treasury of material of the foremost importance. Very little of this has been translated or explored by Westerners.

Different Buddhist schools have quite different canonical traditions. Despite the statements of some of these schools, there is no immediate reason to accept any of these traditions as any more authentic than another. In English translation it is the Theravada school which is best represented for their entire Pali

The position which it commands in the library of English translations of Buddhist literature is entirely a reflection of the fact that far more scholarly effort has been devoted to translating Pali works, thanks to the efforts of the Pali Text Society, than has been given to all other canonical traditions put together. Other collections are, in fact, far larger and more diverse and certainly no less important.

Secondly, the Pali Canon has, like those other traditions, undergone development since the time of the Buddha. Probably there are very few words in it which were spoken by the Buddha himself — there is no scientific certainty that any were. Scholars have begun to apply a higher criticism to the Canon and have discovered a number of strata within it, some of which are clearly very late developments and some of which can be assigned to a period near to that of the Buddha himself.

Neither the Pali Canon nor any other is a kind of Buddhist Bible, giving us the authoritative

the practice of Buddhism to learning lists of psychological and philosophical categories culled from the Canon and regarded as absolutely definitive.

The various Mahayana works, and some of the more accessible Vajrayana texts are an essential part of the study of Buddhist literature. That so little is available in translation is a cause of great regret and we must urge our translators to make the kind of concerted attack on the major Mahayana Sutras that the Pali Text Society made on the Pali Canon and Dr Edward Conze made on the Prajnaparamita literature.

Outlined here is fruitful reading and study for many years. No-one who wishes to call himself a Buddhist can escape knowing thoroughly the fundamental principles of Buddhism and no-one who wants to understand Buddhism at all deeply can do so without reading the major works of the canonical literature of all schools.

by SUBHUTI



# THE DYNAMICS OF THE FWBO STUDY GROUP

by ABHAYA

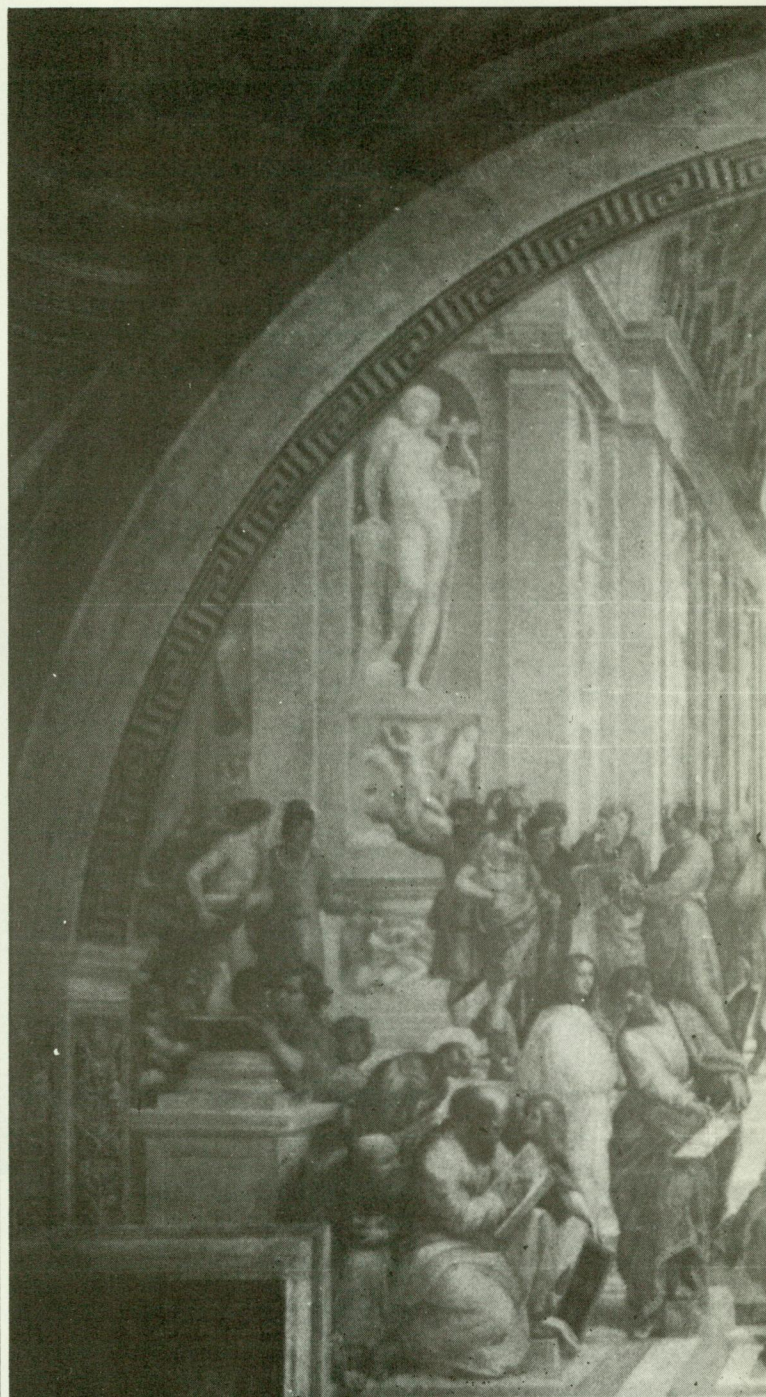


**T**hat phenomenon, known within FWBO circles as 'the study group', like all the other methods of development we avail ourselves of, is not an end in itself. It is a means to the higher evolution, a means which is itself evolving. Viewed as an end in itself, it would become, like any other means so viewed, a fetter to spiritual growth rather than an aspect of it. The first few pages of the first chapter of Sangharakshita's *A Survey of Buddhism* provides the locus classicus for finding out about the right motivation for the study of the Dharma; anyone in doubt about the matter would be well advised to read the passage. As students of the Dharma, we should always be faithful to the pith of that teaching. It is of paramount importance that we keep ever in mind the fact that the ultimate goal of studying the Dharma is Enlightenment itself, its more immediate goal the dissolution of wrong views and the establishment of right views concerning the Nature of Reality and the best way to realise it.

This motivating factor is the essential feature of what I refer to in the course of this article as the "dynamics" of the study group. It is like the fuel without which motion is impossible. It is to be hoped that the article itself will dispel from the reader's mind any accretions of cliché that might have gathered around this particular word by centring on those features of the FWBO study group that confirm the essential and original meaning of the word 'dynamics', that is, its

connotation of being concerned with energy or forces that produce motion, the energetic movement being, in this case, that of the student of the Dharma in the direction of Enlightenment for the sake of all living beings. Far from eliciting shades of the classroom or hours of enforced boredom, the study group should rather evoke in us, as an ideal, the highly concentrated intellectual ferment of enthusiastic enquiry into the nature of Truth depicted so dramatically by Raphael in his famous painting of the Greek philosophers, *The School of Athens*. The study group should always leave us stimulated yet positively dissatisfied, eager to meet again and yet again for further elucidation and enquiry. In a word, it should be dynamic.

The broad outline of development of the study group throughout the short history of the FWBO is quite clear. In the very early days of the movement, there were no study groups at all; only meditation classes, public lectures and retreats. Then, as the Order began to grow, Sangharakshita started to take seminars, in which he would gather around him, for a week or ten days, a small number of Order Members and elucidate and expound upon a text from the Buddhist scriptures. Eventually, Order members themselves began to pass on what they had learned from the seminars to other Order members, and to mitras and Friends, through the medium of the first study groups. For a long time, the groups were limited by several drawbacks. Among the chief of these was the severe shortage of Order



*The School of Athens, Raphael*

members capable of leading study and also their inevitable lack of experience, as well as the lack of adequate preparation on account of insufficient time or insufficient inclination, or both. There was often also the equally severe lack of preparation for and participation in the group on the part of those attending. It is only in the last two or three years that all this has started to change. The most practised leaders have now a much better grasp of the fundamental principles of the Dharma than ever before and several years' experience in leading study which up-and-coming leaders can have the benefit of. There has been an overall raising of standards and of the level of awareness of the need

for much fuller and more conscientious preparation and participation. Those days, hopefully, are gone forever when one could go to a study group and be allowed to sit back and expect to be fed with information or, failing that, at least entertained by the study group leader. Now that complete courses are being worked out in advance, our approach to studying the Dharma is becoming much more systematic. Consequently, the FWBO student of the Dharma is much more highly motivated than he used to be.

The group method of studying the Dharma is unique, having its own particular advantages over alternative methods. Perhaps one could say that it comes





somewhere in between the public talk or lecture on the one hand, and the one-to-one informal discussion of Dharma on the other. The public lecture or talk as means of communicating the Dharma has the advantage that it allows the speaker to present a theme with a clear line of argument uninterrupted, making the kind of strong impression on the listeners which sinks slowly into their consciousness without demanding from them at the time of impact anything more than their concentration, anything, that is, which might distract them from the point being made. Its chief limitation, perhaps, is that the depth of communication is restricted by the numbers

present, if it is true that it is not possible to achieve depth of communication with several people at once. The one-to-one, informal discussion of Dharma, between two people who are well-informed and in good communication, has its own distinctive advantages which are perhaps superior to those of alternative methods. The intimacy and informality of such a situation makes it possible for each to make allowances constantly and in subtle ways for the other, in accordance with temper and circumstances. This can lead to a depth of understanding which is not possible in more formal situations.

The study group comes in between. Its advantage over the

public lecture is that it is not just one-way in respect of verbal contribution. It is an interchange, which allows for the possibility of questioning and clarification of meaning. Perhaps its advantage over the informal exchange is its relative formality. A degree of discipline is involved in the interchange which lessens the possibility of digression or loss of momentum. The formality of organised study in groups involves a commitment to the learning process not demanded by the informal discussion. There are also, in a group, not just two, but a greater variety of voices and thereby a greater chance that wayward thinking can be corrected and discussion prevented from lurching into

endless digression or indulgence in subjective problem orientation. However, it has to be admitted that the advantage here is only one of degree, since the activities just mentioned are notorious poisons which can easily infect the study group organism.

Whether we are well-seasoned study group attenders or neophytes waiting to have our first taste, it is essential that, in order to make the best use of the study group method of learning the Dharma, we should be aware, both as leaders and participators, of those features which contribute to its smooth and efficient working, features which are, in fact, not something abstract or 'given' which the student comes to, but potentially dynamic factors which each member helps to create in the group. Let us now look at the most important of these features and consider them in terms of qualities, qualities to be looked for in the leader of the group on the one hand, and qualities to be looked for in the rest of the group on the other. First of all, the leader.

Foremost is the crucial factor of interest. If the study group leader is not interested, the group is doomed from the start. Even if the majority of the people in his group arrive in a state of mild or chronic apathy, there is always the chance that the leader's interest and enthusiasm for the Dharma will set them on fire. Therefore, enthusiastic interest in the material and skill in ways and means of stimulating that interest in the others is an essential pre-requisite, in the leader, for the success of the group. The responsibility involved in leading study is considerable. It extends beyond the actual periods of the study group and requires the nurturing and guarding of the leader's own inspiration in his own time. In the early days, leaders more often than not did not have sufficient time for adequate preparation. Generally they had to rip off the cloak of work, bolt down a quick meal, and don the cloak of study group leader. Hopefully, these days they have a bit more time to protect and cherish their own inspiration by private study and by studying with Sangharakshita and the other study group leaders. In the long term, of course, the aim is that the movement will become financially strong enough to support leaders and would-be leaders to spend the necessary



amount of time training for their task.

The study leader also needs to be continually energetic, able to stoke up with his own bright flame the fire of the others' interest. His enthusiasm needs to be catching without being overwhelming, and his unwavering output had to be balanced by sensitivity to the other people in the group in terms of such factors as their emotional states and any areas in them of clarity and confusion. This asks for a certain degree of imaginative identification with the rest. It also implies adaptability. The leader has to learn not to be too disappointed if the others don't respond with the same degree of enthusiasm to a point that has inspired him. He should be prepared to drop an intended line of approach in the face of unexpected factors such as absence of key members, fluctuating moods and so on. The cloud of the Dharma, to adopt the famous simile from *The White Lotus Sutra*, rains down on all the different plants, big and small, those which grow on high ground and those which grow on low ground; but when we translate the simile in terms of the higher evolution of man, each individual has to open himself or herself up to the Teaching, so that its influence can work and be felt. The study leader's job is to discern what kind of plant each one is and interpret the Dharma accordingly, thus facilitating the absorption process. This is no easy task and one that is capable of infinite refinement. To sum up, the leader must approach his function imaginatively, elucidating the text in question with clarity and from a real understanding; he has to isolate the general principles in the text and illustrate his exegesis with sufficient examples and humour. Stories and humour can be occasions for unnecessary digression and lead to a certain kind of hilarity which disperses the energy accumulated. On the other hand, study can be dry and monotonous without them. It is up to the leader to keep them at a temperate level.

However, even if all our Centres and Communities were supplied with enough leaders sufficiently qualified in the ways outlined above, that in itself, though it would count for a great deal, would not be enough to ensure the success of the group. As already implied, to revert to *The White Lotus Sutra* simile, the

human being in relation to the Dharma differs in a very important respect from the plants in relation to the rain. Plants have no choice but to grow if the rain falls, but the sentient being does not necessarily receive the Dharma, even if it is communicated skilfully and powerfully. There are instances of the Buddha Himself being heard but not accepted. Thus, Order members, mitras and Friends do not automatically benefit from attending a study group. For they too have their part to play in creating the necessary dynamics. It is this aspect of the study group, namely, the participation of those attending, that we must now very briefly consider.

Everyone coming together for study must take responsibility in the group; there should be no passengers. Obviously, it is to be expected that some will be more voluble than others; a few will be relatively quiet, but it will be obvious in a good study group that even the quiet ones will be participating by way of active interest and the few remarks they do contribute will be of some value. There is a world of difference between someone who is quietly interested and someone who is bored and becomes a dead weight in the group. One of the most painful and thankless jobs of a leader is trying to stir into some kind of movement the thick porridge of torpidity in a group that hasn't taken off. Equally tiresome is the person who tries to take over or to dominate the rest with a stubborn opinionatedness. The tendency to such negative extremes is obviated by the development of that sterling spiritual quality known as receptivity, that is, being prepared to listen to another's views without prejudice and actually take in what is being said, all the while maintaining sensitivity to all the others in the group. One's contributions should be, as far as possible, informed statements based on accurate knowledge of the Dharma or intelligent questions arising out of a growing fund of information constantly in search of new levels, adapting, with the receipt of new facets, to new patterns. Again, the humour and the story are always welcome lubricants, but should raise and not lower the level of discussion.

Preparation for the group meeting is a continuous process of research and reflection carried through by each member of the

group between sessions. Rather than leave a session with relief that it is all over for another week, one should leave it fired with enthusiasm to do more research and reflection and positively looking forward to the next opportunity to extend one's frontiers. Such preparation and reflection, like participation in the group itself, will not always be smooth and easy. However high a given level of interest and eagerness, there will occasionally be snags, in the form of unanswered questions nagging at the back of the mind and that challenging discomfort arising from study touching on areas of ourselves that have to be changed. The difficulty, however, is not a negative one of discouragement; it is more in the spirit of positive challenge evoked by John Donne in his aptly tortuous lines on the quest for Truth:

*On a huge hill  
Cragged, and steep Truth stands  
and he that will  
Reach her, about must and  
About must go.*

So far we have been considering, in terms of qualities necessary in those attending a study group, what might be seen as the energy input. There are other features, not directly related to the personnel of the group, which also contribute to its success. These we no more than mention. One is the total context in which the study is held, including the suitability of the place itself, even the way the chairs are arranged (so that each person can see all the others) and lead-in features such as having a meal together beforehand or a session of meditation. There is also the question of continuity of development. Are there strong enough links in terms of the relationship between texts chosen for study and in terms of regularity of attendance by people in the group? All such factors are essential nutrients for the health of the group, features which are given more careful consideration these days. If then, all such factors make up what we have called the 'input' aspect, what about the 'output'? Quite simply it is the success of the group, success arising in dependence on the conditions that have been set up.

Above all, one emerges from the successful study group inspired, inspired to grow and develop further, that is, to put into actual practice the principles

that the study has illuminated. A text which at the beginning may have meant little is brought to life. One's grasp of basic Dharma is surer and one is stimulated to do much more private study and reflection. As a result of all the energetic participation and development of receptivity to others, there is a corresponding improvement in communication. The successful study group should also give birth to new groups and new leaders should emerge. In fact, practical steps are now being taken in the movement for the training of study group leaders.

Study groups are at an interesting stage of development. As the movement matures, it is becoming even more vital that our grasp of the fundamentals of the Dharma is a sure one, and that we have the ability to relate all aspects of the Dharma to one another and relate all our non-Dharmic knowledge to the fundamental principles of the Dharma. As Newman points out in his essay, *On the Scope and Nature of a University Education*, knowledge is not simply an agglomeration of facts and scraps of information; it is not really knowledge until all the separate strands are interrelated in a vast and complex network. In the course of the last pre-ordination retreat in Tuscany, Sangharakshita spoke of this matter of every bit of knowledge interrelating in terms of creating a cosmos out of the chaos of human knowledge. Such knowledge is not simply achieved in study groups. It has to be developed through the discipline of private study and by working constantly on the quality of one's thinking, being critical of the way we think and all the time striving for greater intellectual clarity and depth. If we all practise in this way individually and separately and then come together in a group which is also characterised by mutual sensitivity and receptivity, then indeed the study groups will reach a high level of maturity. The striving for such standards is what we owe to the movement, which can become a revolutionary force for Goodness and Truth (if they can be separated!) in this crucial phase in the history of the world. The spread of the Dharma to as many sentient beings as possible and as skilfully and quickly as possible is our aim. To this end, the FWBO study group is an invaluable tool and a vital organism of communication.



# LAST CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN LAMA GOVINDA AND SANGHARAKSHITA

122 Lomita Drive,  
Mill Valley,  
California 94941.

September 6th 1984

My dear Sangharakshita-ji,  
What a pleasant surprise to receive your recent publications, your 'Ten Pillars of Buddhism' and your essay about 'World Peace and Nuclear War'. For such a long time we have not heard from you or about your activities that we are happy to know that you are well and still busy with your writings which we have always enjoyed. After my book on 'The Inner Structure of the I Ching', some years ago, I have not been able to write much, except two books in German: one a collection of unpublished essays and another on the dynamic attitude of Buddhism and the Bodhisattva Ideal, with special reference to Western philosophy and life. I do not intend to write further books. My eyes are too weak for sustained work or even painting, and I can only move about in a wheelchair, since my legs are partially paralyzed, due to a stroke. But otherwise I am alright. Last May the Arya Maitreya Mandala organised a month-long exhibition of some of my paintings and books, together with lectures by well-known Indologists and prominent representatives of our Order (AMM). The Mayor of Stuttgart and one of the German ministers opened the exhibition in the Townhall of Stuttgart. The exhibition, as well as the lectures, attracted much interest and a lot of publicity for the AMM and Buddhism in general. As I am now 86 years old, I have appointed Dr. Gottmann (Advayavajra) to be my successor and leader of the AMM. We emphasise, like you, the fundamentals of Buddhism, without rejecting its different forms and



Lama Govinda with (r to l) Ven. Sangharakshita, Terry Delamare and Li Gotami, Kasar Devi Ashram, Almora, India, 1967

On the 14th January 1985 in California USA, Lama Govinda died at the age of 86. Lama Govinda, who was of German origin, worked throughout his life to make Buddhism relevant to the Western world. He lived for many years in India and there met and became friends with the Ven. Sangharakshita. We hope to include more about this great Western Buddhist in our next issue, meanwhile we are publishing the last exchange of letters between Lama Govinda and the Ven. Sangharakshita. Readers will note that the last letter from Lama Govinda is dated four days before his death.

We would like to extend our deep sympathy in their great loss to the members of the Arya Maitreya Mandala, the movement which he founded over fifty years ago which now has branches in many parts of the world, and we would like to assure them of our continued co-operation.

interpretations, thus making it possible for Westerners to adopt it as a modern way of life. Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana are equally represented and studied, because we feel that each branch of Buddhism has some valuable contributions to the Dharma. The AMM, which is steadily growing, is now more than 50 years old and has become one of the most influential

organisations in central Europe. Now it is up to the next generation to take Buddhism out of the merely academic atmosphere and make it a matter of living experience.

With all good wishes and kindest regards, also from Li Gotami,  
affectionately  
yours  
Lama Govinda

Padmaloka  
Lesingham House  
Surlingham  
NORWICH NR14 7AL

10 December 1984

Dear Lama Govinda,  
On my return from Italy a few days ago I was delighted to find your letter dated September 6, 1984, which brought quite a flood of very precious memories of you and Li and of the times that the three of us spent together in Ghoom, at Sanchi, at Deolali, and finally at Almora. I was very glad indeed to have direct news of you, and to know that you are as well as can be expected at eighty-six, and hope that you are not too incommoded by the stroke which, you say, has left you partially paralyzed. You are two years younger than my mother, who I see regularly and who at eighty-eight is still healthy and active. My father died about twelve years ago. I have not yet seen your book on "The Inner Structure of the I Ching" (has it appeared in English?), though I well remember you talking about your researches into this great classic and saying that your last major literary work would be devoted to it. Several of our friends here in England study, and teach, Tai Chi, and some of them are rather puzzled as to the relation, on the philosophical and spiritual level, between Taoism on the one hand and Buddhism on the other. It occurs to me that your book could be of some use to them.

For the last four years I have spent the three Autumn months in Italy, on retreat in a former Augustinian convent, and as a result have developed a great love for Italy, especially for Tuscany. I believe you knew that part of the world well in your younger days. Before and after each retreat I devote a few days to sightseeing, and



in this way have seen, and to some extent explored, Florence, Venice, Siena, Ravenna, Pisa and Rome. This year I was particularly impressed by the fourteenth century frescos in the Campo Santo, Pisa, which I expect are well known to you. My favourite city is, I think, Siena, which I have visited at least four times, and which is still relatively unspoiled. As a Buddhist, I feel no inclination whatever to neglect Europe's vast treasure-store of culture. On the contrary, in fact.

During the last ten years I have paid four visits to India, the most recent being a three-week visit last December. You will be interested to know that the FWBO is now the most active Buddhist organization in India. We have centres in Bombay, Poona, Ahmedabad and Aurangabad, as well as a Meditation and Retreat Centre at Bhaja, near Lonavla, about a mile from the celebrated Buddhist caves. During the last five or six years we have brought out a number of books and pamphlets, mostly in Marathi, and also publish a Marathi Buddhist magazine called 'Buddhayan' which prints 4-5,000 copies each quarter. The MBS is virtually defunct. Jinaratana died a year ago, as I expect you know, and Dhammaratana — a good friend of ours — is now General Secretary. Bombay continues to deteriorate year by year, and were it not for our tens of thousands of Buddhist friends there I would not care to visit it again. The polluted air always gives me an attack of bronchitis.

Most of my time is spent here in Norfolk, where I have lived for the last ten years. It is a quiet, mainly agricultural county, and Norwich, the capital, which is only six miles away, is an ancient and very civilized city with a (modern) university and a lot of cultural activities — including an FWBO centre. 'Padmaloka' itself is a sort of country house, with five acres of grounds, which we have turned into a community and retreat centre. About twenty men live here, mostly Order members, though on special occasions (as last week-end) we can accommodate up to



Without knowing the root of our own  
own culture, how can we absorb the  
essence of Buddhist culture?

110. Norfolk is very flat, like Holland, which it resembles in many ways, but though I miss the mountains I am quite happy here. Having established the FWBO on what I hope is a sound basis, I am now trying to devote the greater part of my time to literary work. In the coming year I hope to continue work on a second volume of memoirs, which will cover the period 1950-1957.

As you perhaps know, there is now a branch of the FWBO in Essen, and it seems to be doing quite well. The two Order members there are in touch with the AMM, and of course over the years Advayavajra has kept in

regular friendly contact with us. Several of our members have, in fact, visited him, and from time to time he has sent me news of you. Nevertheless, I am very glad indeed to be in personal contact with you again, even if only through letters. You are well aware, I am sure, that when in India I did not feel spiritually and intellectually (and culturally!) closer to anyone than I did to you, and in many ways that feeling continues. I am very happy that in this life our paths should have crossed, though I very much regret that they could not have crossed more often. Whether we shall ever meet again in our present bodies it

is impossible to say, but I should like to say how greatly I value the limited contact we have had and what a source of inspiration your life and work have been to me. I often think of you, and of Li, and think of you both with very great affection. With very warmest regards, Yours ever, Sangharakshita

122 Lomita Drive  
Mill Valley  
California 94941

10.1.85

My dear Sangharakshita-ji,  
What a joy to have your dear long letter and to know that you are well and active as ever. Many, many thanks! Though my eyes are too weak to write long letters, I am happy that we have re-established our contact. I have asked my publishers to send you immediately a review copy of my 'I Ching'. As far as I know, it was published also in England, but I cannot remember the name of the publisher. There were also requests from Swedish and Italian publishers. Last year one of my books was published in Germany and is being now translated in Italian, while another one is being edited by Ven. Advayavajra, who has taken over the leadership of the Ārya Maitreya Mandala as Mandalācarya. I cannot be bothered any more with proof-reading and negotiations with publishers, and must leave all this to him. But he is a very conscientious and reliable person, with a thorough knowledge of Buddhist Literature. How wonderful that you have been so many times in Italy. It is my favourite country in Europe. I had my home in Capri near Naples, but I have frequently been in Venice, Florence, Siena, Pisa and Rome. I am a great admirer of Italian Art and, like you, I always uphold the importance of European culture. Without knowing the root of our own culture, how can we absorb the essence of Buddhist culture? With all good wishes, also from Li, Affectionately yours, Lama Govinda



## BRITAIN

### LEEDS

The Dharma gains another foothold in the north of England! On 18th January the purchase of our new centre was finally completed. The terraced house has a spacious seven bedrooms and will comprise a shrineroom and reception room on the ground floor with an office and community above. Our priority is to expand the community and we invite Order members and Friends with pioneering spirit to join Āryamitra in his work here.

A regulars' class has been meeting weekly, and a positive and friendly atmosphere has developed. In the last session a number of regulars gave talks, ranging from topics such as "Philosophy of Mind East and West" to "Buddhism and Anarchism". Āryamitra starts a new beginners' course next week entitled "Buddhism: The Path to Liberation", and he also plans to hold Yoga classes later in the year.

The regulars were pleased to welcome Ratnaguna who gave an inspiring talk on the value of spiritual friendship. A number of us will be attending the retreat in Shropshire organised by the Manchester Centre, and we hope that contact with Manchester will increase.

### BRISTOL

Previously, the Xmas/New Year period has seen the Bristol community completely depopulated as people go off to retreats in various parts of the country; not so this year. For the first time we held a winter retreat in our centre/community at Long Ashton - a seven day intensive programme for community members and friends, which proved very refreshing in the quiet of the holiday period. The best news of recent months has been the ordination of community member Steve Webster, who returned from the course in Tuscany as Dharmabandhu. He is back here for a short time but plans to join the team at the Norwich centre soon. The Spring session is getting underway with our usual meditation course at the university, and in addition to our other regular classes there is now a mitra study group based on Sangharakshita's taped lectures.

### MANCHESTER

On November 7th we completed work on refurbishing and redecorating the reception room at the Manchester centre, and welcomed sixty people to our Sangha Day celebrations. This was a record turnout for Manchester and one which confirmed that within the next year or so we will need a new, larger centre.

Steve Timmin's mitra ceremony during the puja on



Pramodana and Suvajra with Sangharakshita

Sangha Day prompted a number of people to decide to become mitras, and two women as well as several men are currently hoping to join the fifteen mitras who are already in regular attendance at the classes.

Between Sangha Day and the Christmas break attendance at classes continued steadily, both at the centre and at the three weekly university venues. A weekend retreat for thirty at an activity centre in Shropshire was very successful (we intend to use the same place for future retreats) and the autumn Men's Event at Padmaloka was very much enjoyed by the fourteen of us who went down there together by minibus.

We are pleased to report the ordination in Tuscany of three mitras originally from Manchester: Satyāloka (Greg Shanks), Mañjunātha (Antonio Perez) and Jñānavīra (Mark McLelland). Unfortunately, none of these is returning to Manchester in the foreseeable future but many of us have taken much inspiration at the thought of our friends 'Going For Refuge'.

Over Christmas most mitras, many regulars and a number of relative beginners too, went on retreats in Scotland, Yorkshire, Sussex and Norfolk. Those attending the

Padmaloka Winter Retreat were able to participate in the public ordination of Steve Melling, whom we now welcome back to Manchester as Pramodana.

We have further cause for rejoicing, for not only is winter just about over and activities back into full swing, but on February 2nd it was seven years that Ratnaguna and the FWBO have been in Manchester teaching the Dharma. Six mitras currently living in Manchester, as well as four who were living here until last summer, are going on the Ordination Request retreat in March and we hope that in the foreseeable future new Order members will return to work full-time for the Centre, thus enabling activities to expand quicker.

### BRIGHTON

Sangharakshita started coming to Brighton in the late sixties, visiting what was known as the Brighton Buddhist Society. In 1972 Devaraja and Dhruva took on the responsibility of keeping up contact with the Brighton Buddhists, coming down weekly to take a meditation class held in the flat of an elderly artist called Carl Wragg. Then in 1974 Buddhadasa came to live in Brighton to expand

activities here, and on 13th January 1975 the first Brighton Buddhist Centre was opened at 18/19 George Street.

So on 13th January this year we celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Brighton Buddhist Centre, a day of festivities which had been preceded by two days of intense 'sesshin'. In the evening Devaraja gave a talk tracing the development of the FWBO in Brighton: how Mangala took over from Buddhadasa as chairman, and established the centre in its present buildings in Park Crescent Place, and how Devaraja himself eventually succeeded Mangala at the end of 1981. He went on to talk about the present situation and what we need to do over the next ten years. At the moment we are at a crucial stage in the development of FWBO Brighton. We have to make a leap from just classes that people can attend in the evenings to offering something more thoroughgoing and far reaching. Our two main aims to help bring this about are, firstly, to buy the building and convert it, enabling us to expand our classes and so on; secondly to establish a regular means of income sufficient to cover the running costs of the centre and eventually to per-



mit further expansion in the south of England.

A few days after the anniversary we held a Centre General Meeting (aimed at increasing the involvement of regular friends and mitras in the future of the centre) at which fifteen people pledged to raise £150 each towards purchasing a mortgage on the centre by May 1986. Hopefully more people will follow this initiative. We are also looking into viable ideas for Right Livelihood businesses etc. to finance the running of the centre.

## WEST LONDON

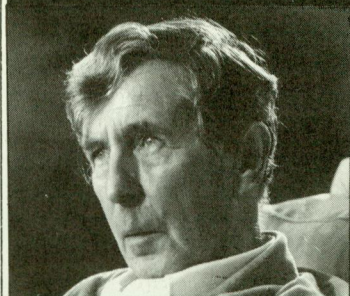
Baker Street Buddhist centre, indeed FWBO West London, is beginning to find its feet. Friends night, on Thursday evenings, now has a theme each session. This session it is the three yānas, i.e. the Hinayāna, the Mahāyāna and the Vajrayāna. This format has given more direction to these classes and it's encouraging to see a surge of new people regularly attending.

Recently Dharmacari Ratnavīra gave a talk on the Italian Renaissance. He was concerned with the spirit of the Renaissance expressed in its art, and with the place of the artist during this period. Renaissance means re-birth or revival, and the Italian Renaissance was a time of creativity, free thought and the pursuit of human perfection. This period resurrected the ideals of ancient Greek and Roman civilisations; ideals grounded in the pursuit of higher human values reflecting beauty, truth and love; individual development thrived, particularly through the arts. For us who are trying to pursue the ideals of Buddhism in the West, a parallel with the Renaissance can be seen. It is not enough for Buddhism to use western terms and concepts; Buddhism has to be brought fully to life in the West and its universal truths have to speak to us through symbols and images with a western flavour. In this way Buddhism can take root in countries other than its original home. Over this session FWBO West London has been partaking more consciously in this mood of Renaissance.

Coming more down to earth, our two Right Livelihood businesses are becoming more established. This contributes to greater economic stability of the whole situation. Last year saw Friends Foods become a viable business by giving the financial side priority. Now that this has been achieved the shop intends to widen its perspective and now sells ecological household products such as detergent. Not only are they launching new lines which put our principles into practice, but there is more money available for team members to go on retreats and to subsidise retreat costs for our part-time workers. Friends Gardening has been unable to do much work during the winter. However, their contracts



'Rivendell' — a new retreat centre



Sir Michael Tippett

## CROYDON

Last year saw the completion of the Arts Centre and associated bookshop, followed by two very successful seasons of events: the Nonviolence season in the summer and 'The Film of the Book' season in the autumn. Plans for this year should ensure that the Arts Centre acquires a much larger following and a wider influence in South London and beyond. The present season, which runs through until mid-March, comprises four concurrent series of events. Firstly, there is 'The Film of the Book' part 2; due to its success in the autumn we decided to continue this theme with an extended repertoire that includes films of

works of literature from countries other than England and the U.S. As well as classics such as *Treasure Island* and *The Pickwick Papers* we are showing films such as *The Lady with the Little Dog* and Pasolini's *The Arabian Nights*. Secondly, there is a lecture series entitled 'Books and Bookmen' given by contemporary literary figures including Michael de la Noy and Charles Monteith. Thirdly a series of videos is being shown during the afternoons in the bookshop on topics such as dance, opera, animation, and painting, as well as interviews with David Hockney and Sir Michael Tippett. And fourthly, an exhibition of abstract paintings is being held in the Arts Centre garden, with floodlighting at night.

The major Arts Centre season this year will be in the summer. The season will consist of a 'Festival of Friendship', for which several lectures and plays have been arranged; and a 'South London Tippett Festival'. The composer Sir Michael Tippett, who is patron of the Arts Centre, has asked us to organise his eightieth birthday celebrations, and these will include a series of six lunchtime

concerts of music by Tippett and other composers, and will be performed at the Centre by students of the Royal Academy of Music. The celebrations will culminate in a performance of Tippett's *Corelli Fantasia* to be conducted by Sir Michael.

Apart from the Arts Centre, this year should see major developments on two other fronts. Firstly there is 'Rivendell', a Sussex country house which we have just bought. We plan to use this property, which is set in five acres of woodland, as a retreat centre, also housing a community, and as such should prove a valuable new asset to the Movement, servicing the whole of the south-east of England and possibly beyond. At present the building team has moved in to re-decorate it, after which the property will be ready for full use. We have provisionally arranged for Sagaramati to lead one or two residential study seminars there in August, to which we hope to attract people from both inside and outside the Movement.

There is also a new women's community in Streatham, for which Ashokasri, Gunabhadri, and Ratnasuri have outlined a five-point plan. Firstly, it

stabilise them financially; particularly a long term contract with a local council.

West London welcomes back Ratnabodhi who has just returned from Tuscany. On the other hand we are sorry to see Anandajyoti and Viracitta leaving. Anandajyoti has been living and working with FWBO West London for eight years and is now moving to Bristol. Viracitta has been contributing to the situation for four years. He is at Vajraloka for a few months, and then plans to start FWBO activities in Birmingham.

## NORWICH

At the beginning of January the Norwich Meditation Centre was renamed the Norwich Buddhist Centre. This is to make it clear to the local population and people coming

to classes and courses that it is a Buddhist Centre, and the meditation we teach and practice is Buddhist meditation. The Building itself is now ours for another three years, the City Council having agreed to a new lease. Consequently we are putting some effort into improving the amenities: the shrineroom has been redecorated, the staircase and entrance hall are being painted, and a patch of ground outside has been cleared to make a garden.

The regulars' Tuesday class has been renamed 'Friends Night' and the theme for this session will in fact be 'Friendship', with relevant talks and study. Abhaya will be leading a six week Introduction To Buddhism course, and there will be five lunchtime sessions at the univers-

ity of East Anglia, comprising meditation instruction and a series of talks on aspects of the Dharma.

As well as the usual beginners' weekend retreats of which there are usually two per session, there are also occasional day retreats at the Centre which are well attended. The third East Anglia Mens' Mitra Day has just been held at the Norwich Centre; we were pleased to play host to a large contingent from Padmaloka.

Finally, mention should be made of the forthcoming 'Norwich Festival of Nonviolence' which will take place during the first two weeks of March. The festival will bring together many different groups and there will be contributions both from the Norwich Centre and from individual Order members.



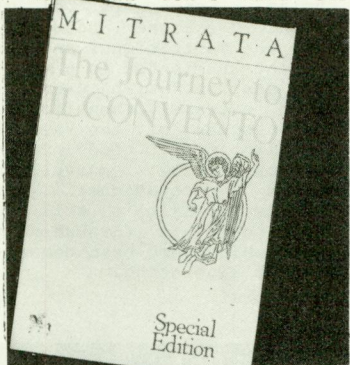
will be known as 'The South London Women's Buddhist Centre', so that the women, as well as being fully involved in the Croydon Centre, will be running beginners' classes for women at this new centre. Secondly, the community is being opened up so that women not living there, especially those attending classes, can join in the ongoing activities and make use of the library. These facilities can be made use of by women with families during the daytime, and women are also encouraged to stay overnight - the house is large and includes a guest room. Thirdly, there is a permanent invitation to all women from the Southern region, particularly those from centres without women Order members, to regularly come to stay, and join in the Right Livelihood, community and centre activities. Fourthly, this invitation extends to women elsewhere in England and abroad. Fifthly, it is hoped that the community will become a focal point in the Southern region for women who want to train seriously for ordination - it is an ideal situation for them to gain experience, perhaps with the intention of returning after Ordination to their former centres, or of starting new ones.

A notable recent development at the Croydon Buddhist Centre has been the attendance of people who have come in through our Arts Centre and Yoga activities, and who want to discover what lies behind these: people who would not normally come to a meditation class. We are at present holding a series of three introductory lectures on Western Buddhism: 'Introducing Western Buddhism', 'A Buddhist Arts Centre', and 'Buddhist Cooperatives'. The first lecture was delivered to a capacity audience.

Finally, Hockneys restaurant held its annual benefit dinner just before Christmas. This event included a three-course meal designed especially for the occasion, and an excellent performance by a quintet from the BBC Concert Orchestra. A total of £621 was raised for Dardo Rinpoche's school in India.

that if you enjoy your work, your capacity for it grows, and from a team of five we grew to ten, and from research we expanded into production. There is transcribing to do, checking, typing, sub-editing, proof-reading, publicity, and distribution. Our typists were improving and we took on more work, such as preparing articles for Dhammamegha and special editions like The Journey To Il Convento.

We still don't have our



word-processor - it might have been a reward for our labours, but what better reward for our labours than seeing Mitrata in print.

## ORDER OFFICE

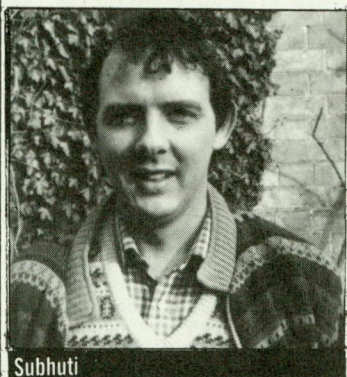
Ven. Sangharakshita was very actively involved in last year's pre-Ordination intensive course in Tuscany, which ended in December. He gave question and answer sessions on most evenings, concerning the Aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal lectures and the paper The Ten Pillars of Buddhism. He wrote and delivered two new papers whilst there, both venturing into fertile landscapes of the imagination. The first paper was entitled The Journey to Il Convento, and a character from this was given the lead in the second paper

Saint Jerome Revisited, both have been published as Mitrata special editions.

Back in Britain Ven Sangharakshita gave a final revision to The Eternal Legacy: A Guide To The Canonical Buddhist Literature which has a publisher and will be out this year if all goes well. The Eternal Legacy is the long awaited sequel to The Three Jewels; the title The word of the Buddha has been dropped as it has been used before. Since December Ven. Sangharakshita has been continuing with his second volume of memoirs.

Dharmacari Jayadeva left the Order Office in November, and is pursuing a course in business studies in Norwich. So we are looking for more Order members to join the team. Meanwhile, Dharmacari Dharmadara, part of the 1985 Tuscany team and newly over from Dharmasala where he's been working as a doctor, is giving invaluable help, as are two 'part-time temps', Dharmacaris Prasannasiddhi and Jñānavīra; both of them taking time off from their studies to help out.

As well as preparing his own new book for its publication this year, Subhuti, who is the Ven. Sangharakshita's personal secretary, is determined to do



Subhuti

whatever is necessary to provide Sangharakshita with everything he needs to function fully effectively by the end of this year, which is his sixtieth. This objective means a massive appeal for help and resources to give Sangharakshita the modest funds and secretarial help he requires, proper facilities for the Order office here at Padmaloka and permanent facilities in a men's retreat centre to be founded in Italy.

## LBC

The LBC and Pure Land Co-op administration teams will soon be able to move into the offices which were vacated by Aid For India last year. This will provide better facilities and release one of the existing offices to become a library for the LBC.

Almost complete is another facility which looks set to become a real asset: the LBC bookshop, now much enlarged and located in what was our reception office. Jayaprabha, the bookshop manager, aims to establish the shop as a widely known stockist of Buddhist publications, attracting as wide a public as possible.

Dhammarati has taken over leadership of the Tuesday 'Friends class' and has made a good start - attendances are currently around sixty, with a high level of energy and enthusiasm. Attendances at the Wednesday Introductory class, led by Jayamati, are also rising, and likewise there are growing numbers at the Friday 'Friends meditation class' led by Vajracitta. All this contributes to an air of optimism and enthusiasm currently pervading the centre. This is undoubtedly due to the influx of people from the recent retreat at Battle who perhaps for the first time have glimpsed their own potential and are keen to pursue the opportunities offered by our Movement. The Battle retreat was again full to capacity and a success by all accounts, and under Kulamitra's leadership

much progress was made in terms of team cohesion and effective management. Since these retreats are now consistently fully booked and successful it seems that we must run more. And this is what we propose to do in 1986.

Concurrent with increased activity at regular centre events we have had a flurry of requests for speakers and from parties wanting to visit the centre, while in Harlow twenty people have been attracted to Bodhiraja's meditation course, which is run there in addition to Danavira's regulars' class.

Last autumn we held a weekend event deriving its inspiration from Ven. Sangharakshita's paper "Buddhism, World Peace and Nuclear War". Since that event several groups have been meeting regularly to pursue lines of action suggested during the weekend. One of these is the teaching of meditation to peace groups, and this could prove a pointer to future trends in our activities.

## MITRATA

Eighteen months ago women at the Norwich Centre needed work. Today we need more women to help with the ever-increasing work load.

It all began when I was enticed by dreams of a word-processor. (I had just learnt to type and wanted to go on to bigger things.) In the meantime we decided to help with the production of Mitrata, and form a team to research material for the Noble Eightfold Path series. We had a meeting and found it was quite a task we were taking on: attempting to work our way through all of Sangharakshita's seminars, but it would be exciting and worthwhile, and we could take on as little or as much as we could manage. It always seems



Communication Exercises on the Battle Retreat





Vairasattva

## RETREATS WOMENS RETREAT

The Women's Winter Retreat was held at Hagg Farm Hostel in England's beautiful Peak District. The retreat was led by Dharmacarini Malini, who began by introducing the overall theme of 'purification'. Enthroned on the shrine was Vajrasattva, the archetypal Bodhisattva of purity. Rather than represent an abstract idea or ideal, he mirrors back to us the truth that we are all essentially pure.

In the first week Parami gave a talk on purity (its full title being 'The Difference Between Purity and Being Puritanical, With its Elements of Righteous Indignation and Where Confession Comes In'). At the end of the first week fifteen people departed and their last day ended with a festive puja. Those who were departing wrote out any confessions they wished to make, and offered them to the shrine. During the puja we went outside and watched them reduced to smoke and ashes as we chanted round the fire.

Confession in the Buddhist sense is awareness of some thought, word or action that lets oneself, and one's ideals, down. It does not arise from guilt: although one may feel sorry for having done it one's wish is to avoid repeating it. Confession is an important aspect of purification. Buddhist purity is not a bland, cool, detached state, but a state in which we are clear, free, more positive and energetic.

In the second week fifteen new people arrived to join the ten of us who had stayed. Parami gave another talk,

this time on Inspiration, and we moved away from the realm of rational thought and concepts into the realm of image and symbol. Padmavati gave the last of the talks which was on myths and legends, fairytales and archetypes.

On New Year's Eve we had another special puja. This time not only were we writing out our confessions, but making resolutions for the coming year. Next morning we took them down to a nearby stream, and set them afloat.

The retreat was now nearing its end, and with that came the thought of returning. For some of us that meant leaving the quiet, simple life amidst nature and returning to the complexities of city life. Upon leaving the Peak District we felt a sense of challenge and positive anticipation for what awaits us in the year ahead.

## SCOTLAND

The Carn Dearg youth hostel in Gairloch was again the setting for the Scottish Winter retreat led by Dharmacari Ajita. Twenty-eight men from all over Britain participated and right from the beginning there was a dedicated atmosphere in the rather crowded shrine-room. The emphasis was on meditation and the theme was 'freedom'. During the two weeks we listened to Sangharakshita's taped lectures on the Vimalakirti Nirdeśa and the Inconceivable Emancipation. Āryacitta was looking happy and confident, giving a talk entitled 'Inconceivable Freedom'. All this, with the stunning scenery and bright clear weather, added up to two weeks of liberating magic.

Friends, deep in conversation, dotted around the rocks and shore ... distant figures performing T'ai Chi

and karate on the sands ... meditating on the hill as the sun went down and geese skimmed the surface of the sea ... groups of runners wrapped in scarves jogging down the winding road - these are some of the images we took back with us to the city.

On the last day of the year we chanted the Vajrasattva mantra and offered our confessions to a turnip-headed demon at the foot of the shrine. Longer periods of silence emerged naturally from the meditations, and the retreat culminated in a three day sesshin which everyone found extremely beneficial. The success of the retreat was also due to good organisation, the marvellous shrine decorations, and chiefly to Ajita's skill in steering us all through two weeks which were both demanding and liberating.

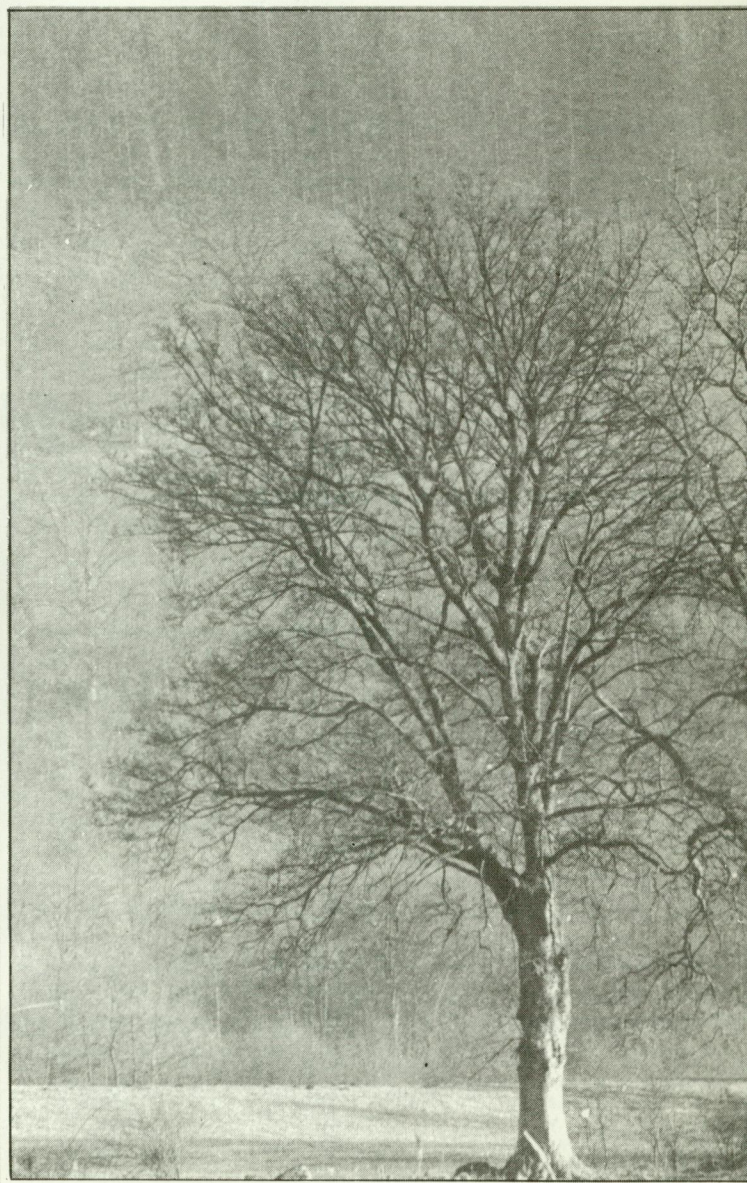
## BATTLE

For the fourteen team members the Battle Winter Retreat actually began in Hampstead where for four days we got to know each other and discovered the ingredients of what was to prove a most successful working relationship. Then at the crack of dawn on Friday we initiated Jayamati's itinerary that four hours later got us, the shrine, and a large amount of food into the heart of the Sussex countryside. The next ten days were characterised by laughing eyes, radiant smiles, and a warmth that no yuletide fire could ever produce. Eighty people joined for periods of between five and ten days for a programme that began with meditation and kept us all engaged until the puja which ended each day. A miracle seemed to happen before our eyes: people arrived like islands of guarded responses and only

## VAJRALOKA

There was a three-week mitra retreat for women here in November after which the community returned to continue the on-going retreat programme. In December nine

of the year's new Order members arrived for a two-week post-Ordination retreat and this was followed by a busy open winter retreat. The accommodation facilities were





half realised aspirations, yet left amidst an ocean of new found confidence, friendships, and renewed hope for the years to come. Each of us has different memories: the concentration within the shrineroom as the meditations became longer day by day; the seeming cacophony of the communication exercises which were really old habits of non-communication finally being exposed for what they were; sessions of Yoga led by Theresa and karate by Sanghāpāla during which some of us realised our body wasn't just the thing that follows our heads around. Meanwhile I was learning how to make fifteen pints of custard that was neither burnt nor lumpy. But the high point for most of us was the series of talks on the five spiritual faculties when each night another member of the Order would lead us into a world filled with jewels, princesses, friendly dragons, and travels through spiritual 'time and space'.

On New Year's Eve after a festive puja and meditation up to midnight we watched our confessions burn into the ashes of the old year and clear the way ahead for the new.

## PADMALOKA

The end of what has been a very successful series of events here at Padmaloka came to a crescendo with the return of the new Order members fresh from Tuscany who were to be supporting Surata in leading the winter retreat. The strength and vitality of the connection between Order members became obvious to all in the way the Order team worked together to provide and support what was to develop into a very full programme. The theme of the retreat was 'the Six Pāramitās' and a series of seven talks was designed to bring out the full practical relevance of the pāramitās as standards of behaviour in our

everyday lives. Six of the talks dealt with individual pāramitās and a talk on a seventh 'special pāramitā' was given by Kuladitya which emphasised the very special context within which any spiritual practice is to be undertaken - that of 'Spiritual Friendship'.

During the retreat we studied the Bodhisattva Ideal, seeking to bring the principles we were studying more into the focus of our daily practice, especially on the retreat. Just in case there was any danger of overlooking Kuladitya's 'special pāramitā' each week began with several sessions of communication exercises led by Surata, who reminded us all that 'Honest collision is better than dishonest collusion'.

The study orientation of the first two weeks of the retreat provided people with lots of questions to fire at the members of the Order team participating in a question

and answer session held one evening. This provided a very good opportunity for some of the new Order members to disseminate some of the material and experience they had gained during the Tuscany course and gave others the opportunity to ask a wider range of questions than it was possible to cover in the study groups.

During the last week of the retreat we were very privileged to have the opportunity of engaging Sangharakshita himself in a question and answer session. He joined us on the retreat for one evening in order to watch with us a television interview which he had made some time ago and which was broadcast last November.



Pramodana's Ordination

During the final week study was dropped so as to give more time for shrineroom activities. The shrineroom soon developed into the heart of the retreat, for we had a very special reason for focussing ourselves there. At the end of the week there was to take place the Ordination of a Manchester mitra. The days leading up to the Ordination were characterised by increased silence and meditation. On the eve of the private ordination we held an all-night meditation. The day and a half silence which led up to the public ordination was finally broken by 'Exceedingly Great Rejoicing' for this is what the name of new Order member, Pramodana, signifies.

The last event on our calendar last year was the study leaders conference when study leaders from all over the UK came together to discuss the implementation of Devamitra's new three year study course for mitras. This provided not only an invaluable opportunity for study leaders to meet and discuss between themselves the material they were to cover, but there were opportunities to question Sangharakshita himself about his thoughts and ideas.

At the time of writing Padmaloka is undergoing a brief closed period before undertaking the mammoth task of extending and improving the retreat facilities to accommodate the Order Convention which is to take place here later this year. Padmaloka is becoming very much 'The Place of the Lotus': hardly a season goes by without some new growth or development which is of great significance or benefit to men throughout the movement.

full and the dining facilities had to be extended out of the kitchen into another room. The meditative atmosphere gradually deepened and the turn of the year was

marked by a symbolical fire outside the shrine-room - faults confessed were consumed in the flames and fresh resolutions were offered to the shrine and the next day

placed inside the Buddha rupa.

As I write snow covers the surrounding woods, hills and fields bringing stillness and peace.





## INTERNATIONAL STOCKHOLM

After a quiet period we have re-started activities on a broader and more ambitious scale. This autumn we invited Ratnaprabha to join us for two months in a campaign to make the FWBO better known. During this time we held a number of retreats and workshops on Buddhism, and Ratnaprabha gave no less than sixteen talks to a variety of audiences. Our plans for the immediate future are to work more closely with the people we thus contacted. We are holding meditation classes twice a week and frequent weekend retreats. We have a dozen regulars and about half of them show a sincere interest in the FWBO. Not very many, but a start.

In March we will start activities along a new line: we are going to establish 'The Institute of Buddhist Studies' and arrange evening classes in Buddhism in conjunction with one of the big study organisations in Sweden.

We held two retreats in Oslo this autumn, arranged by good friends of ours: Odd and Astri Gulbrandsen, who live there. Both events were well attended and we are considering more regular contact with the group in Oslo. We also hope to run a joint Swedish-Norwegian retreat this summer. All in all it looks very bright for us at the moment despite the dense winter gloom around us.



Ratnaprabha

## GERMANY

In November FWBO Germany thought it was going to see its biggest ever Christmas retreat with over fifty participants, as it turned out just thirty-one took part, but it was one of the best retreats in Germany so far. For two weeks a pair of warm spacious houses in a lonely part of the Westerwald was home to a mixed group of newcomers and retreat veterans. As most participants could not speak much English, we were unable to play Sangharakshita's taped lectures, so Order members had to step in to the breach with short live talks. Otherwise the retreat programme contained the usual mixture of meditation, puja, communication exercises, Yoga and karate, work, and silence. In the last days, as snow settled on the Westerwald, the meditation deepened and at the end the partici-

pants left with more idea of what meditation can really be. As usual there was an array of FWBO publications available for perusal. The newest arrival was the German edition of Sangharakshita's paper on nuclear war, published just a few days earlier.

When this Newsletter appears our first 'intensive block' - six weeks of concentrated beginners' activities in the Rhur valley - will have come to an end. The turn out so far is low, but those coming despite snow and smog alarms are keen and bode well for the future.

## BOSTON

We started our 'fall' program with two consecutive Dharma courses. The first was called "A Vision of Existence", during which we explored the relationship between the cyclic nature of conditionality and spiritual growth. This was done within the context of the Tibetan Wheel of Life, the twelve positive, nidānas and the mandala of the five Buddhas. The second course was called "A Path of Transformation", and was a straightforward exposition of the Noble Eightfold Path. We have also continued with our weekly classes for beginners. Although poorly attended at the end of last year they have now picked up with new people coming each week. Our most popular class continues to be our Friday evening of meditation and puja.

We have had a few visitors in the last month including Ratnaguna from Manchester and Judy Senior from London.

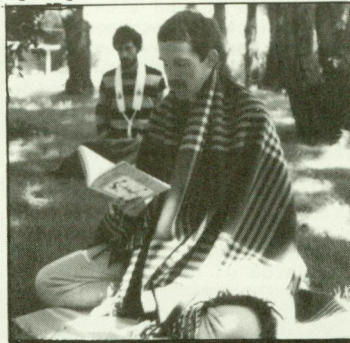
## SYDNEY

In Sydney, we are looking for new premises suitable for a centre / community. Our classes are expanding, and it is important that we become more noticeable and accessible, so the new building will most likely be in an inner-city suburb. Fund raising for this during 1984 brought in around \$5000, largely from the market stall we ran throughout the year.

During the latter half of 1984 the regulars' study and meditation evening became the main focus of activity, promoting inspiration and friendship, and direction for the new year. This was helped by the intensive meditation retreat in November based on the Lankavatara Sutra. The series of talks on regulars' nights given by Order members, mitras and Friends, proved very successful, as did study on the Bodhisattva Ideal, based on Vessantara's excellent Mitrata on the subject. Beginners' meditation evenings have been reintroduced to attract newcomers.

By the time you read this, Vajrasuri and Dipankara will have returned from their travels in India and Europe respectively, and we will be enjoying a visit from Gunapāla, Silaratna, and Khemapāla. Dharmamati has returned from the long summer retreats in New Zealand replete with

glowing reports and photos. We hope 1985 will see an even greater exchange of information, support, and friendship with New Zealand. We are looking into the possibility of starting a 'Meditation Network for World Peace', and considering its success in Auckland we hope that the existing peace groups will be interested in communicating with us and learning our meditation practices. So based on the success of last year and the general build up of energy, 1985 looks to be a good year for the Movement in Sydney.



Wellington Retreat

## WELLINGTON

It has been 3½ years since the re-establishment of the Wellington Buddhist Centre. Over this period progress can be seen to have been rapid or slow, depending how one looks at it. Even in the early days we had the occasional one-off talk or retreat which would attract twenty or thirty people, but all too often the centre was merely a passing interest and most people would move on. But concurrent with our usual turnover of people there has been a slow but steady accumulation of more committed regulars. 1984 has been our best year so far, and 1985 promises to be even better.

The summer retreats held near Auckland during January were much appreciated by those Wellingtonians who went. Apart from anything else, it was a good opportunity to meet and renew contact with people from the Auckland and Sydney centres.

Our nearest neighbouring centre, Auckland, is larger and provides a beneficial influence. The two cities have rather different characters, and although the two centres don't necessarily reflect these differences, they do undoubtedly have a different ambience.

We are expecting Dharmacaris Gunapala, Khemapala and Silaratna to be living here and working in the centre from May. This will be something of a quantum leap: not only will this permit a fuller range of activities to be staged at the centre, but probably the instigation of a Right Livelihood business as well.

Perhaps it is auspicious that the bodhi tree in Achala's house, which has up till now been a rather lifeless looking twig, has sprouted a couple of branches and some very large healthy looking leaves!

## INDIA PUNE AND BOMBAY

In Pune over the last three months the two events most worthy of mention have been to do with mitras. The first was our Sangha Day festival on 8th November. We restricted this to mitras and held it at our retreat centre, Saddhamma Pradip. A talk by Lokamitra was followed by mitra confirmation ceremonies (held in India for the first time). After this we had eight mitra ceremonies, the new mitras coming mainly from Bombay. In the evening the ladies and some of the men departed, leaving fifty five mitras and Dhammacaris to spend the next three days meditating, studying, and communicating. It was one of the most inspiring gatherings we have had and all went away hoping that we could make a regular feature of such events.

From 13th January we had a week-long mitra retreat at Bhajga studying the Buddhavagga of the Dhammapada. Nagabodhi led study for the more experienced mitras, and Lokamitra for the new mitras whom he wanted to take the opportunity to get to know. Basing our study on the seminar led by Sangharakshita, the beautiful and vigorous poetry seemed to dance right into our hearts, bringing the Dhammapada alive as never before. The retreat concluded with four mitra ceremonies. One was our hostel warden Mr Agale, and the other three were from Pimpri.

Pimpri adjoins Pune and is a large industrial town. Chandrabodhi lives here, and with support from Pune Dhammacaris has been conducting classes for the last four years. He has now built up a very strong team of mitras and Sahayaks (friends) who are making the presence of the TBMSG felt all over Pimpri. We expect that within a couple of years Pimpri will have an independent Buddhist Centre.

On 16th December we held an Open Day at Saddhamma Pradip to celebrate the opening by Sangharakshita a year ago. Almost a thousand people listened to talks by Nagabodhi and Chandrabodhi and participated in a cultural programme in the afternoon. This was directed by Dharmarakshita and Shakyamanda. Dharmarakshita chairs our cultural committee which is trying to develop a cultural wing of our activities. It seems that among our Dhammacaris, mitras, and Sahayaks we have a wealth of talent which can be used to enhance our work in a number of ways.

Bombay and Ulhasnagar have been without Vajraketu for over six months now, and although they very much feel his absence, the Dhammacaris and mitras are managing there very well. Up to now we have always included Ulhasnagar in Bombay, but really we can no longer do this. Geographically Ulhasnagar is a very long way from the centre of





A relief sculpture from the Ajanta caves

Bombay, and the fact that we have separate mitra and Sahayak activities and are planning a hostel there make it effectively a separate area of activity. Without Vajra-ketu some help has been necessary from more experienced Dhammacaris. Jyotipala spent a month giving lectures and taking classes every day in Bombay and Ulhasnagar. After that Vimalkirti spent a month taking the weekly class in Bombay and the Ulhasnagar mitra-class. Mangala has recently finished a two week period there. As a result our work is going very well in both places.

Besides this we have had the usual out-of-Pune excursions. Asvajit spent a couple of days in Ahmednagar in December and is now taking a six week course in Sholapur. Lokamitra visited Ahmedabad and Lucknow where he met the Ven Sangharatana and the Ven Dhammaratana, the two remaining disciples of Anagarika Dhammapala in India. Both were very ill and Ven Sangharatana has since died. The Ven Dhammaratana is the editor of Maha Bodhi but has been suffering from heart trouble for the last few months. Lokamitra was very pleased to meet them and bring them up to date with the work of the FWBO/TBMSG.

While in Lucknow he was asked to talk and show slides of the work of TBMSG at Lucknow Buddhist Vihara. Although a small gathering, it was a

very good programme, and Lokamitra has been asked to tour Uttar Pradesh, the biggest state in India.

Finally, both Lokamitra and Vimalkirti visited Hyderabad in connection with the land which is being given to TBMSG there. A talk was arranged for them both at the "Press Club" on the subject of 'Dr Ambedkar on Buddhism and Communism'. The programme was well attended and the talks sparked off a lively discussion. It was very encouraging to see so many people thinking more seriously than ever about Dr Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism.

## AHMEDABAD

Early in December we had a flying visit from Lokamitra for the first time in two years. On December 6th, the occasion of Dr. Ambedkar's death anniversary, he delivered a very spirited lecture lasting 1½ hours. After his talk he launched a new TBMSG publication - a Gujarati translation of the lecture given by Ven. Sangharakshita at Dapodi, Pune, on December 6th 1983. The booklet is called "The Significance of Dr Ambedkar's Death".

On December 8th Lokamitra gave a very interesting and enjoyable slide show illustrating the work of TBMSG in India, and also of his recent visit to Malaysia and Singapore. It is hoped to have more such occasions in future perhaps illustrating other aspects of TBMSG, as for example our work in the West.

Mangala is currently on a two-week visit to Bombay where he is helping out with Dharma activities as Vajra-ketu is still in the U.K. A very full programme of talks, study groups and discussions has been arranged for him.

In our last report in October, we mentioned that we have probably found some land suitable for constructing a boy's hostel plus a social and Dharma centre. Negotiations are still going on and we are now waiting to see if we can get building permission before going ahead with the purchase. Such a project is a very exciting prospect for TBMSG Ahmedabad and would

help take our activities here onto a new level. So we look forward to 1985.

## AURANGABAD

During the last few months a new aspect has emerged here in Aurangabad. We have begun to do smaller locality talks. These are not the big lectures with stage, microphones and many lights, but small intimate talks organised by our friends. Sometimes the audience comprises only forty or fifty people; at other times up to a hundred and fifty. We sell some of our publications at these talks, and afterwards several families prepare tea for everyone, so it is very friendly. Previous to this we had great difficulty organising lectures in Aurangabad, but no difficulty in the surrounding districts. Our classes are now all taken by Dharmacari Nagasena, as Jyotipala is now spending most of his time in outside work. Anagarika Ashvajit spent several weeks here in November and December and gave a lot of these small locality talks. We don't get many visitors in Aurangabad, so this made his visit all the more appreciated. We hope more Dharmacaris will visit us, as we are the nearest large town to the famous Buddhist caves of Ajanta and Ellora. These caves are a great inspiration to us. Buddhism was once very strong and creative in our area, and we are working to create the conditions for the flowering of this spirit once again.

## Dr. Ambedkar





# THE CONSOLIDATION OF DHARMA STUDY

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In July 1983 a small conference of Order members was held to discuss the issue of study in the FWBO. They considered the ways in which the Dharma was being studied in the Movement, the quality of study undertaken, and improvements that could be made in the way study is led. Each Order member presented a paper on an aspect of the subject. The papers ranged in content from study appropriate to those completely new to Buddhism and the FWBO, to the training of Order members as study group leaders. At that conference Devamitra, the overall mitra convenor, presented a paper outlining a three year study course for mitras. This month (January 1985), mitras at all FWBO centres in the UK are following his course. It is the first course of its kind for the Movement: the first course to order such a large amount of material for systematic study, and the first course to be implemented so widely. I went to Devamitra to find out more about the course: the background to it, the form it takes, and its significance in the context of the growth of the Movement.

Devamitra



Some Order members have been aware for some time of the need for a structured mitra study course. They have seen the need for a course which would provide mitras with an understanding of at least the basic conceptual formulations of the Dharma. The Order members who led the first Tuscany ordination retreat in 1981 considered that some of the mitras on that retreat, when they began the retreat, lacked a basic knowledge of the Dharma: a basic knowledge which mitras who wished to be ordained could reasonably be expected to possess. When Devamitra was appointed overall mitra convenor he began to take study groups at all the FWBO centres. His observations confirmed those of the Order members from the Tuscany retreat. He therefore began to look at the way in which mitra study groups were being organised throughout the Movement. He discovered that they were often organised in a quite haphazard way. There was often no direction to a series of groups. There was seldom a really thorough study of texts.

Devamitra then organised the conference on study to look

into that whole area of activity. An initial meeting of the members of that conference gave him the brief to present to them a course of study for mitras in their first year as mitras. However as soon as he began to think about the form this might take he realised that it would be difficult to devise such a scheme without taking into account the study which they would do subsequently. Consequently, Devamitra went beyond his original brief and proposed a three-year course which would provide any mitra with a basic grounding in the Dharma that he or she should ideally possess before ordination.

While thinking about the possible formats for the course, Devamitra looked for a 'central axis' around which it might pivot. He wrote in his report to the study conference: 'It occurred to me that the obvious axis was Sangharakshita's various lecture series; if they were arranged in an appropriate order they would themselves form the most comprehensive course in Dharma that we are likely to be able to come up with.'

Devamitra devised the course so that it could be covered in three years. Each year of the course consists of three sessions, each ten weeks long. Each session is devoted to the study of one of Sangharakshita's lecture series (beginning with *The Higher Evolution of Man*, and concluding with *Creative Symbols of the Tantric Path to Enlightenment*). Each week mitras will listen to one of the lectures and take notes on it before attending a study group to discuss questions and issues arising. At the end of each session two mitras from each group will present to their group personal projects on topics relevant to the session's study. As well as attending the weekly study groups mitras will, each session, attend at least one weekend seminar on a sutta from the Pali Canon, and will, each year, attend at least one seven- or ten-day seminar.

Perhaps the most significant virtue of the scheme is that it sets out the material to be studied in a systematic order. The course passes roughly from Hinayāna to Vajrayāna. The order of the material means that anyone following the course will build up their knowledge appropriately: what they learn later during the course will build on what they have learnt previously. The course also has the virtue of providing clear objectives. Anyone following the course will know at any time what they need to study next, as well as appreciating what they have already achieved.

The course will certainly make more demands on mitras than, on the whole, have been made before. It will also

make demands on the Order members leading the course; they will need to be thoroughly familiar with the material being studied. To be sure that this will be the case, Sangharakshita is to hold seminars on each of the lecture series for Order members recommended to lead the course. The first of these was held recently at Padmaloka. Each day the Order members studied one of the lectures from *The Higher Evolution of Man* series. Then in the evening Sangharakshita answered questions they put to him. The dissemination in the mitra study groups of further information and reflection from Sangharakshita will undoubtedly contribute greatly to the value of the new course.

Devamitra is quite clear that he does not see his course as being a fixed or a final product. He spoke of the implementation of the course in terms of planting a seed that will produce its own fruit. He certainly hopes that in the near future there will be facilities within the Movement for mitras to follow his course full-time over a short period. It would be possible, he thinks, for a mitra who was studying full-time to complete the course in six or even three months. In the long term, alternative and further courses will be developed; new ways of teaching and studying the Dharma will emerge. Devamitra believes that sometime in the future there will be an FWBO university.

When I spoke with Devamitra he expressed vigorously how important he considered it to be that Dharma study in the Movement should be consolidated - to which end his course is a contribution. He argued that the development of clear thinking is indispensable to the leading of the spiritual life, because it is on the basis of clear thinking that Right View is developed, and it is on the basis of Right View that Perfect Vision arises. He maintained that clear thinking - the first step - is developed by systematically studying the Dharma, and understanding basic Dharmic principles.

He sees the consolidation of Dharma study as being not only a matter of importance, but also a matter of great urgency for the Movement. He contended that the Movement would be nothing without the Dharma; that the Movement would only survive and grow if there are Order members with a sufficient grasp of the Dharma. He argued that there will not be Order members with that grasp of the Dharma in future 'unless we really start taking the study of the Dharma more seriously now.'

Philip Buckley



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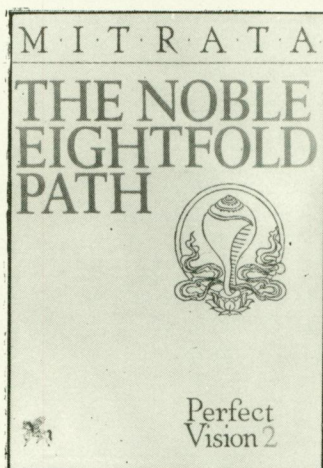
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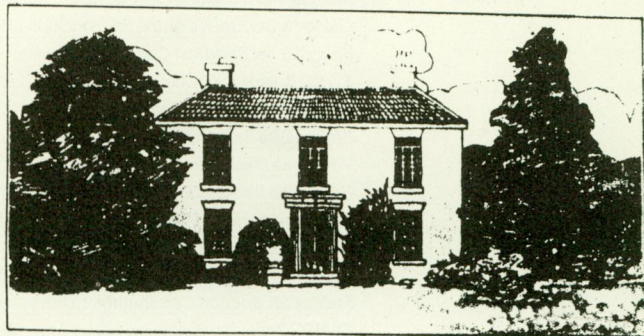
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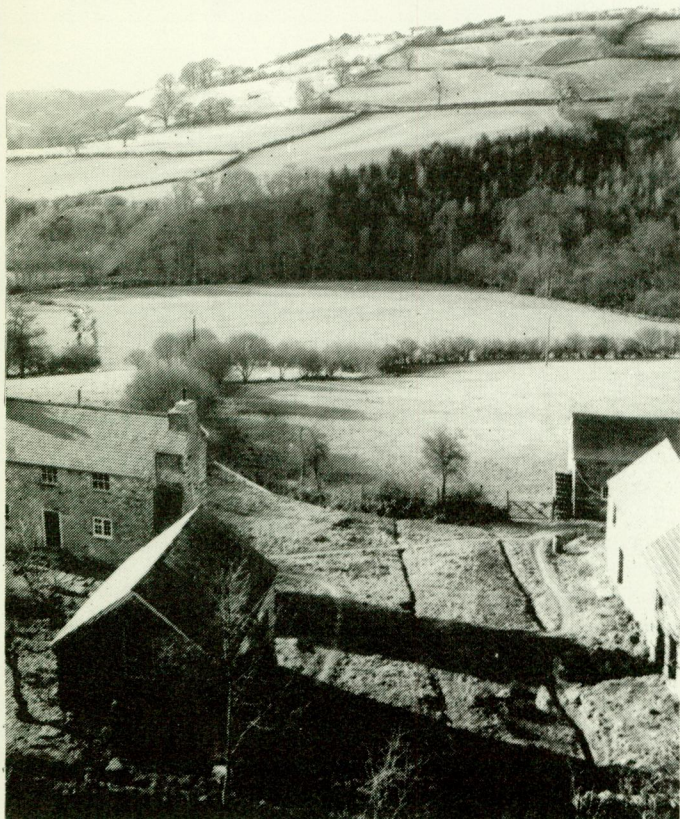
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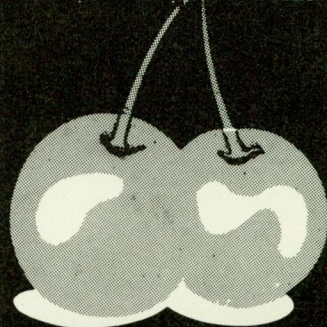


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