Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

The NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 67

PRICE 80p

Visions of Existence

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 paramount. 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.

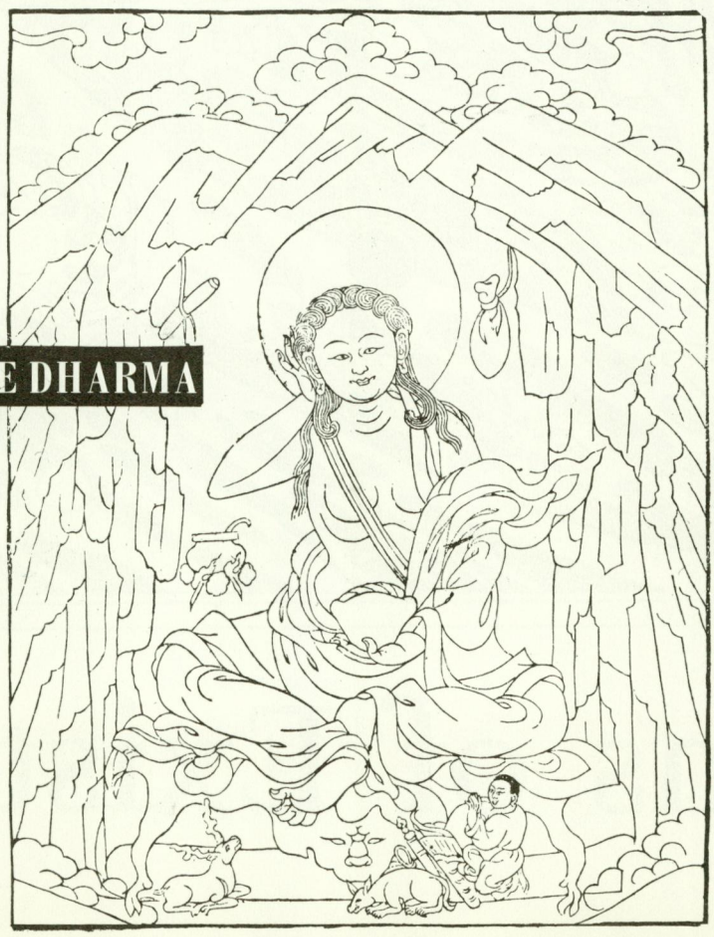
In communities, Order members and Mitras (literally 'Friends': people who, after some initial contact with Order members, have decided they wish to deepen their communication) live together in numbers varying between four and thirty. In these, a new and radical way of life is being forged, which encourages 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, metalwork 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 responsiblity 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.

For our new catalogue, please send a stamped addressed envelope to DHARMACHAKRA, 51 Roman Rd, London E2 OHU

The NEWSLETTER
AUTUMN
1985

Editor
Nagabodhi

Published Quarterly by
The Friends of the
Western Buddhist Order
51 Roman Road, London
E2 0HU. Tel: 01 980 5972

President
The Ven. Maha Sthavira
Sangharakshita

Layout & Design
Nagabodhi, Judy Child

Editorial Assistance
Shantavira, Judy Child

Typesetting
Nagabodhi

Printers
Aldate Press
84b Whitechapel High St.
London E1 01 247 3015

© Windhorse Publications
1985

Subscriptions
£4.00 pa (Surface mail)
(£5.50 airmail)
Please make cheques and
P.O.s payable to:
Windhorse Publications

Cover Design
Aloka

Subscription address:
136 Renfield St.,
Glasgow G2 3AU

EDITORIAL

There are many profound and sophisticated ways in which we can speak of the difference between a Buddha: someone who is Enlightened, and someone who is not. But perhaps the simplest way of all is to say that an Enlightened being is someone who sees things clearly, who sees them as they really are.

There is, of course, a suggestion implicit in that statement, one which many people might resent, which is that those who are not Enlightened do not really see things as they are, and live instead in mists of ignorance and delusion. Just as the hackneyed drunkard will reject any suggestion that he is drunk, or just as a child feels belittled when told that he is 'too young to understand' a world of objects and people he can see so clearly around him, so, understandably, may we feel oppressed by any hint that our mature, adult view of life has severe limitations.

Occasionally our experiences may shock us out of this arrogant complacency, and offer us a glimpse into the nature and degree of our fundamental ignorance. A beloved friend or relative dies, and our objective, intellectual acceptance that life must end in death abruptly reels in the face of something far more galvanising than mere understanding. A carelessly spoken 'home truth', or perhaps even a heartfelt, kind word might suddenly pierce our rigid self-image, and make us wonder whether we have ever really known even a moment of true happiness. In adolescence, or middle age, we may find ourselves passing through the proverbial 'identity crisis', when all the reference points and assumptions that have guided our lives hitherto inexplicably melt into meaninglessness.

Anyone who practises meditation will probably have a pretty good idea, even without the shocks, of just how limited is his or her normal, 'everyday' grasp on reality. In meditation we are all the time confronting, and trying to push back, the boundaries of consciousness, and as we do so we begin to develop something of a feeling for a goal. By learning to acknowledge our ignorance - whether it manifests itself in the form of distractedness, hatred, superficiality, or whatever - we cannot but begin to imagine a state beyond ignorance, a state of Knowledge, of Wisdom, of seeing things as they really are; in other words, we begin to grasp something of the distinction between understanding and Insight. In time, with preparation and practice, we will actually start to experience the arising of Insight in ourselves, and begin our own progress towards Buddhahood.

That progress can be helped along if we take up the meditative contemplation of certain doctrinal formulae, themselves conceptual crystalisations of the Buddha's 'own' Insight. We may, for example, contemplate the central teaching of the Three *Lakkhanas*, or 'marks' - even 'stains' - of conditioned existence. According to this teaching, everything that we know, when seen through the eyes of an Enlightened being, is marked by Impermanence (*Anicca*), Unsatisfactoriness (*Dukkha*), and Insubstantiality (*Anatta*).

As the first three articles in this Newsletter demonstrate, this teaching is neither as obvious as it may seem, nor as gloomy as it may sound. To see the universe in this way, to know it for what it really is, on the basis of true Insight, is to know ultimate freedom and perfect happiness.

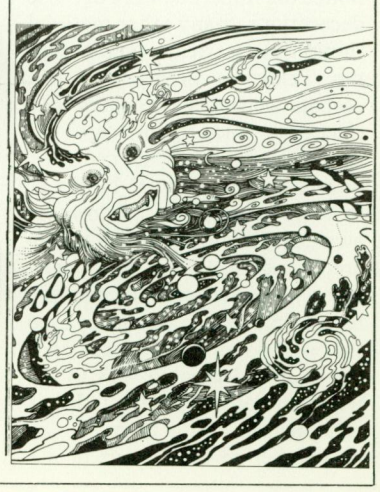
Obviously, to attain Enlightenment, we will have to do far more than read these articles, even if we do find ourselves understanding every word within them. All the same, for the time being they may at least have a few healthy shocks to offer. And although they may introduce us to a terrifying demon, one whose existence we probably suspected, it is not out of the question that, sooner or later, we will come to embrace him as a dear old friend.

Nagabodhi

CONTENTS

FEATURES

FACETS



The Wis
Insec

Nothing that exists, nothing that we know of in this life, can last. The only thing that is not certain is when each thing that now is will finally cease to be. During every moment of its existence everything is undergoing a subtle change, subtly getting older, subtly growing into something else - just as you yourself are getting older, growing into something else, even as you read this article. Impermanence (Pali *anicca*) affects everything we know, and consequently it is a rather large subject!

Mankind has always been aware, at least to some degree, that things do not last. Until quite recently it was generally held that, while all things beneath the Moon had to pass away, everything beyond that was eternal. Now, of course, we know differently. We not only know that the Earth is far from being the centre of the universe, we also know that there are no exceptions to the universal law of Impermanence. We watch the deaths of stars, of entire galaxies, through radio telescopes, and we have to admit, theoretically at least, that our own solar system is no exception.

In our immediate environment, the process of change is absolutely rampant! If we live in the country we see tremendous changes as the seasons pass by, so many small creatures coming to life and then passing away - perhaps after only one short season - so many plants bursting into existence, only to wither and fade after a while.

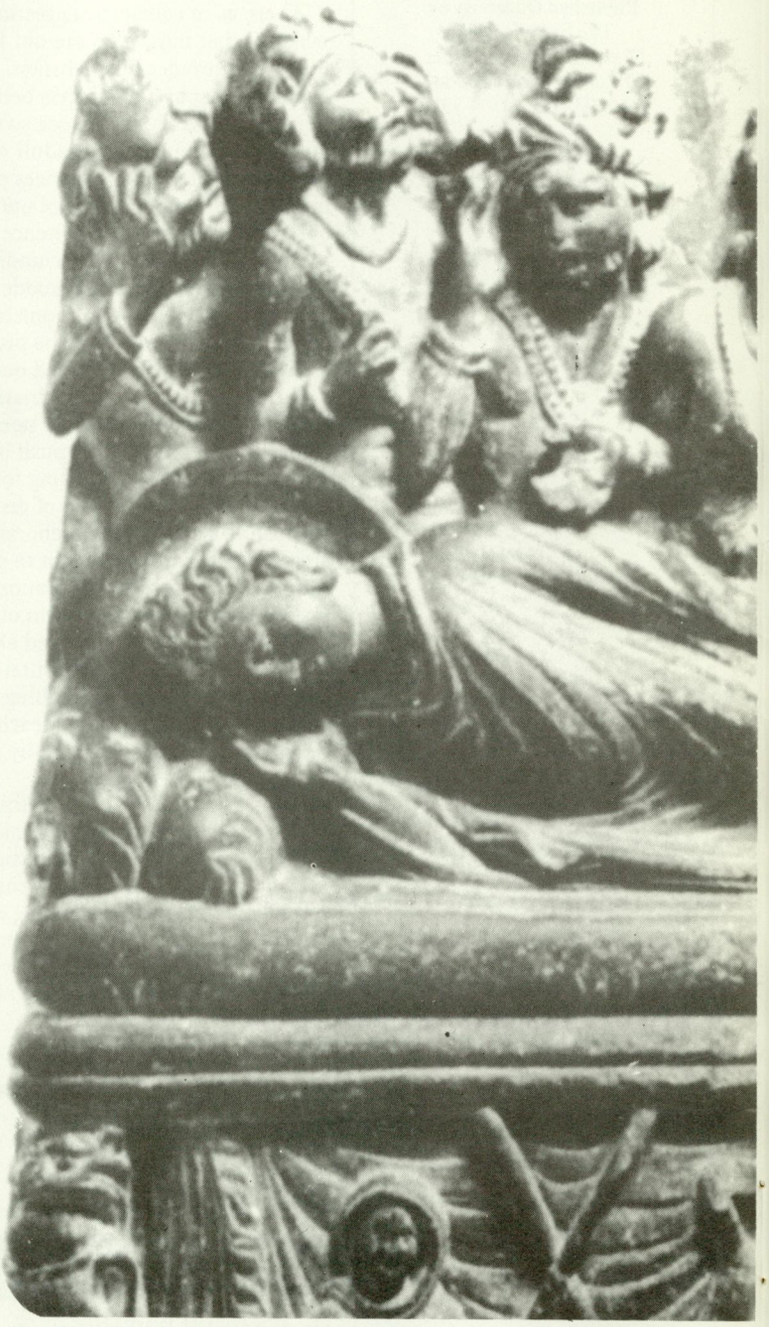
In the city it is in the inexorable decay of material objects that impermanence manifests itself most obviously, since there are so many man-made, material things around. We decorate our appartment, paint it nicely, and for a year or so it looks very good. Then, one day, we notice that the paint is looking grimy, and has even started to crack. But even before we notice the impermanence of those decorations, many other material things have started to go that way too. Television licenses run out, carpets wear away, cookers, refrigerators and motor cars fall apart, roads begin to crumble, houses and even entire blocks of flats are abandoned, fall down or await demolition. Material things are changing all the time, even when we can see nothing actually happening. We do not always see the progression taking place - from the freshly decorated wall to the wall that needs repainting - but it is happening all the time.

Whether in the city or in the country, of course, we see many examples of 'living impermanence'. People are impermanent. In our own lives we are constantly proving the universal fact of impermanence. We see ourselves grow older, see our bodies becoming more brittle, less elastic; our hair grows thinner, our digestion less robust, our eyesight less brilliant. Of course there are compensations if our minds are becoming clearer and our lives happier; but even if they do, we cannot ignore our own impermanence without somehow feeling, if only in a vague, unconscious way, that we are ignoring something extremely important. Even though the subject of death is still effectively taboo in Western society, we cannot with good conscience deny the fact that one day we will have to come to an end.

It is interesting that there should be this strange attitude to death in our society. We claim that death is no longer a mystery, yet tend nevertheless to treat it as something overwhelmingly dramatic, something extraordinary. But this attitude is quite unrealistic. Death is happening all the time. Somebody dies every moment; several hundred people have died around the world even while you have been reading this. Death is very ordinary, very commonplace; everyone experiences it ... perhaps not only once, but countless times. And yet it is considered anti-social to talk about it! Perhaps if we could acknowledge death in a healthy way, our society would be less anxious, less insecure, less worried. If we cannot face the fact of our own impermanence, we are likely to develop all kinds of fantasies to get away from it. Perhaps we should consider why it is that we maintain such an unrealistic attitude to impermanence and death.

The root of the problem is lack of vision, for which there are, according to Buddhist tradition, two major reasons. Firstly there is our general state of intoxication, and secondly there is what could be called our perverse way of seeing things.

For many of us, intoxication - a kind of over-inflation of the mind - is our general state. It is a part of our psychological conditioning, part of our background. We become intoxicated with our youth, with our good health, with good looks, or with physical vigour and strength. Then, because we feel so full of life, we wonder why we should give any attention to death, or to the shortness and frailty of life. Why should we think about impermanence? Why should we even think about other people and their problems?



The Buddha's death (Gandhara, 3rd Century)

What we fail of course to see is that this very state of health, of youth, of vigour, and so on, is impermanent. It only lasts a few years. Human life, as the scriptures repeatedly tell us, is like dew on the grass; it soon fades away.

The Buddha lost his intoxication with life when he saw the 'Four Sights': when he saw an old man, a sick man, a corpse, and a wandering yogi. When he saw these things for the first time - or, more likely, when his eyes were opened to the significance of these things so that he really saw them, as if for the first time - then the intoxication, the mental inflation,

sdom of curity

By Kamalasila

left him completely and he became, so to speak, 'sober' and clear for the first time.

Our perverse way of seeing things means that we expect things from life which are impossible. Our expectations are unrealistic, but we never seem to learn from our experience - perhaps because we do not really want to. We expect things to last, when they never can; we expect things to give us undying satisfaction when they simply cannot; and we expect things to have a kind of definite, fixed identity, when they simply do not. In Buddhist tradition, these unrealistic expectations are known as the Viparyasas, which means 'upside down' or 'topsy-turvy' views, and because of them we live lives that are based largely on wishful thinking and pure fantasy. Time and time again, because we would like something to be true, it becomes impossible for us to see the real situation because our minds are clouded by attachment. We make these mistakes, read reality falsely, again and again, and so live in a state of emotional conflict and frustration all the time.

Now that we have seen the scope of impermanence, and looked at some of the factors which blind us and stop us from living in tune with the realities of life, let us now look at the significance of impermanence for the spiritual life.

It is not hard to see the significance of impermanence for life as a whole if we take a look at the Tibetan 'Wheel of Life'. This Wheel contains every possible form of existence: human beings, animals, 'hungry ghosts', beings in torment, asuras, and an enormous variety of divine beings. It thus embraces the entire range of mental states associated with conditioned existence, including those of the highest gods.

If there were such a thing as a theistically-based Wheel of Life, we would no doubt see the figure of God the Father cradling the great Wheel in his protective arms. But the Wheel of Life is a Buddhist symbol, and the figure who holds the entire cosmos in his hands is our old friend the 'Demon' of Impermanence. He is a nasty looking brute too, with his yellow fangs and long, overgrown fingernails protruding over the rim of the Wheel. Impermanence is everywhere and in all things. We do not have to look for it; we can find it wherever we look.

Turning from the demon holding the Wheel to the Wheel itself we see, in addition to the realms of the different beings, the progression of mental states which keeps those beings forever revolving on the Wheel: a progression of mental states, beginning with blind spiritual ignorance. It is this ignorance - which manifests in forms such as mental intoxication and perverse views - and the deluded actions which arise out of it, which keeps us bound to the Wheel of conditioned existence. Spiritual ignorance, as we have already seen, is largely a kind of wilful ignorance of the fact of impermanence. This is the fundamental ignorance which leads us to react in an unskilful way to our experience in the external world, conditioning us to react with craving and hatred. In their turn, these reactions become such a confirmed habit that we become fixed in negative patterns of activity, and thus stuck on the Wheel of Life. In other words, if we ignore the way things actually are we cannot develop and grow; unless we acknowledge impermanence we will remain spiritually immature.

But that is not the only reason why impermanence has spiritual significance. What is even more important is the fact that were it not for the universal principle of Impermanence, the spiritual life would be an impossibility. We tend to think of impermanence as something negative, something rather unfortunate. Somewhere in our hearts we all probably have a vague, perhaps largely unconscious tendency to think that it would be better if things did last, if nothing ever really changed, if we could live forever. This of course simply goes to show how deeply conditioned we are by the Vipariyasas!

But perhaps we should just try to imagine what life would be like if everything really was permanent and lasting. To begin with, you would never finish reading this article, or even this sentence, even this word! The mental state in which you started reading the article would not change either. In fact nothing would ever have any effect on your mental state, because nothing, whether in yourself or out in the world, would ever be able to change at all. If we think about this at all, we can easily see that the notion of permanence is a complete absurdity. Without Impermanence, nothing can ever happen; everything would remain as a sort of fixed, frozen nothingness.

Looked at in this way, Impermanence begins to appear in a far more favourable light. The fact that everything changes means that everything, including ourselves, can change for the better. Life is dynamic; its essence is movement. It is because things change that we can make spiritual progress. We can change our habitual reactions, move around the Wheel of Life, even move right out of conditioned existence altogether. We can do anything we like, and it is all thanks to impermanence. We should really be grateful to that old demon who holds the Wheel in his grip.

According to the *Bardo Thodol*, or 'Tibetan Book of the Dead', when we die we see, for a very brief moment, Ultimate Reality itself; we have a momentary experience of full Insight. This experience is known as the 'Clear Light of the

Voidness', and it is described as an overwhelmingly brilliant white light, seen as if it were something outside of ourselves. We are further told that if we can only accept that experience, we will gain Enlightenment, full Enlightenment, on the spot! But for almost everybody the experience is too powerful, too overwhelming, and we faint away. Consequently, the next thing that we see, a little later on, is a glorious company of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. We see them extremely clearly and vividly. Again, if we can only accept this vision, without recoiling from it, then we can gain Enlightenment. But if we are unable to accept the experience, we begin to experience the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in a completely different way: we begin to experience them as threatening, even extremely wrathful.

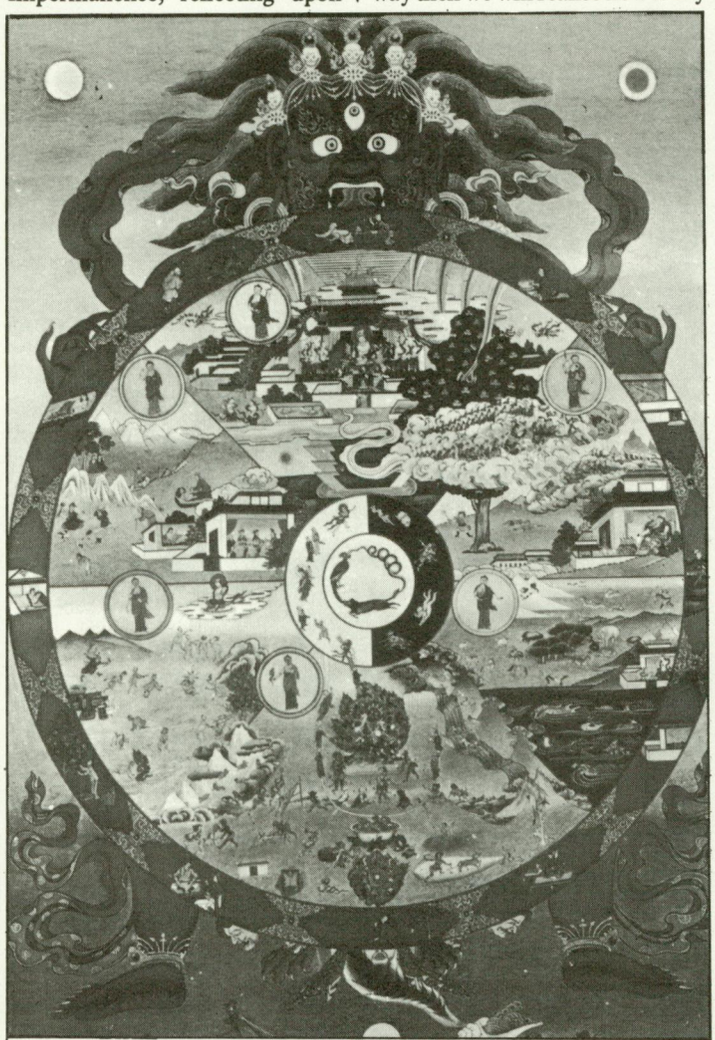
Essentially, the wrathful figures are the same Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that they were before, exactly the same manifestations of Enlightened energy; but they are too much for us, so we experience them as a threat. The book says, however, that even at this stage all is not lost. If we can, even now, accept the wrathful Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, we can still become Enlightened, still avoid rebirth within conditioned existence. In other words, if we can only accept the angry Buddha he becomes a peaceful Buddha; and if we can accept the peaceful Buddha, then he becomes the clear light of the Void.

Perhaps it's a bit like that with the Demon of Impermanence. He is nothing more than a part of nature. If we embrace him, rather than rejecting him, he will become more beautiful. We could see him as the demon who guards the door to the temple of the Dharma. If we are prepared to accept the truth of Impermanence, then we gain entrance to the treasury of the Dharma. But if we resist Impermanence, then the inevitable confrontation will humble our pride, and sober our intoxication, since it is impossible to win an argument with Impermanence.

If we are sensitive, and especially if we meditate regularly, then in time life itself will teach us these things. However, if we are not very sensitive, if we are slow to learn our lessons, then there are two things we must do. Firstly, we must try to intensify our experience, live more courageously, live in such a way that it is much more likely that we will come up against the facts of life. This does not mean that we have to travel to some hellish region - though there may be ways in which we can creatively change our physical circumstances. Really it is enough that we face each day as it comes with the determination to see things clearly, and engage with life more completely and realistically.

The other thing we can do - which goes hand in hand with the first - is reflect and think. This is in many ways more difficult, but it is very important. Actually, living more intensely means thinking more intensely: thinking about Impermanence, reflecting upon our experience of life in the light of the Buddhist teaching of Impermanence. This does not come naturally so we have to train ourselves to see how everything that comes into being will come to an end. By doing this we will eventually become convinced that there are absolutely no exceptions to the truth of impermanence. This preliminary, intellectual acceptance will provide a useful basis for real Insight. We do not have to think in a very sophisticated way about these things - it is simply a question of observing, and noticing that impermanence is a significant fact. Of course, by thinking in this way, we will become more and more aware of the preciousness of life.

If we can become aware of the preciousness of our own lives, then it is not a very big step to develop an appreciation of the preciousness of all the lives around us. After all, we are each surrounded by other lives: millions of them: human lives and animal lives. But how many of them are happy, or even comfortable? How many of them would we be prepared to exchange for our own? If we train ourselves to think in this way then we will realise how lucky we are to have 'well endowed' human lives, and to be in contact with the Dharma. We will thus come to appreciate far more clearly the opportunities that life has to offer.



The Wheel of Life

After all, our precious opportunity is a very fragile one. Life as a human being is not only precious, it is precarious. It can be snuffed out at any time, without our being able to do anything about it. Life is unreliable. We simply have no guarantee that we will not die within the next few years, days, or even hours. Our bodies are so very fragile, so easily damaged, so easily hurt. Over the years we become experts at avoiding physical damage, but accidents do happen, even when we are young and strong. It takes very little to reduce us to complete helplessness.

These are things that we have to accept and ponder on. It is useless to pretend that they do not happen. Of course we should not think about them in a morbid sort of way, but with positivity, with humility and self-respect. On the right basis, these reflections can give us a strong motivation to practise the Dharma - not only for our own sakes, but for the benefit of all beings, since all living beings are in the same position, they all have the potential to grow and develop too.

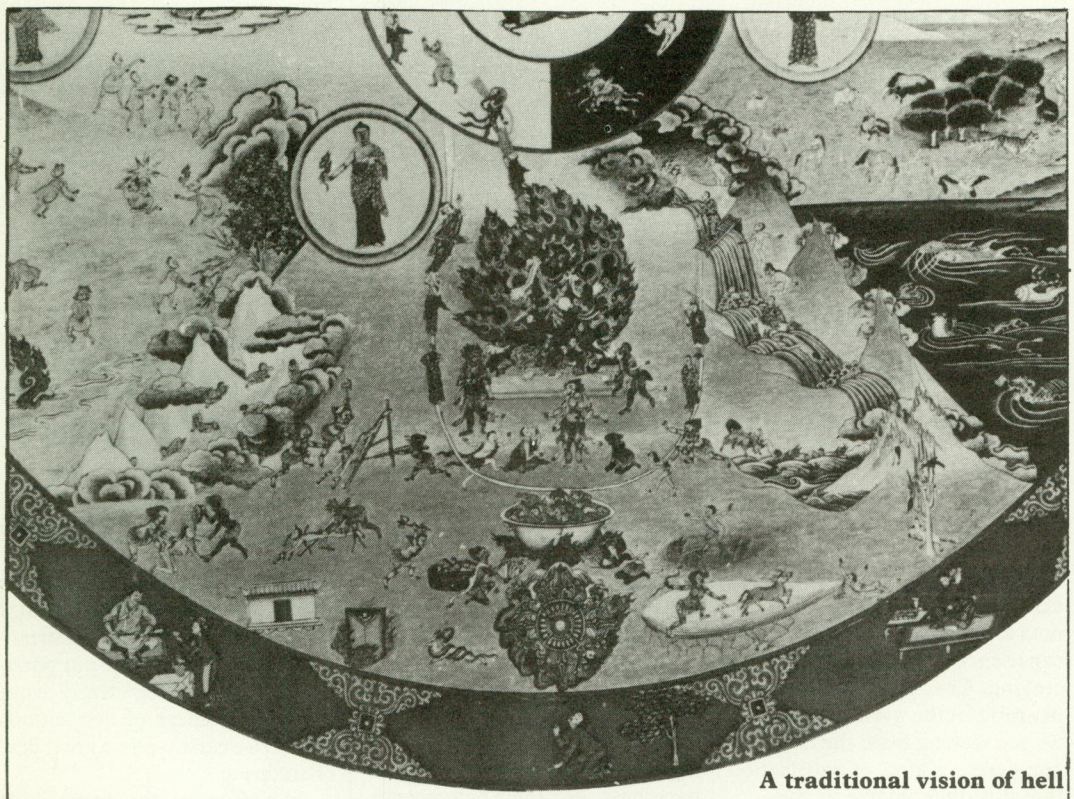
Impermanence is an important fact of life, and since the world would not exist without it, it is as much a cause for joy as it is for sorrow. To be aware of Impermanence is to have an intensified awareness of reality. By developing our awareness of Impermanence, we should naturally find ourselves developing clarity and a new maturity of outlook.

Then, if our minds have been thoroughly prepared by the prac tice of meditation, our reflections on impermanence will prepare the ground for the arising of Insight which will transform us permanently. By realising the all-pervasiveness of Impermanence we shall also realise the all-pervasiveness of the other two characteristics of conditioned existence: unsatisfactoriness and insubstantiality. It is because all things are impermanent that they are unable to give real satisfaction, and it is because things are impermanent that they are devoid of a permanent self-nature.

To see these truths in all their depth and richness is an extremely liberating experience; in fact it is the liberating experience. To see the truths of Impermanence, Unsatisfactoriness and Insubstantiality is to be freed from the compulsive need to grasp for permanence which is not there, for satisfactions which are unobtainable, and for an essence which does not exist. With no compulsive need to grasp and cling, there is no more insecurity, no more anxiety. Indeed, we have embraced the demon of insecurity, the threatening demon of Impermanence, and found that he is really a friend, found that the insecurity we once felt in his presence has become a source of security. It has become wisdom.

The Honey on the Razor's Edge

By Abhaya



A traditional vision of hell

The teachings related to *Dukkha* appear throughout the Pali scriptures, but probably find their simplest, pithiest expression in verse 278 of the *Dhammapada:* "'All conditioned things are painful.' When with understanding one sees this, one becomes weary of suffering. This is the Way to Purity.' (Trans. Sangharakshita.) "Purity" here means, of course, Nirvana, the goal of the path, Enlightenment. While the Buddhist scriptures may be replete with references to suffering, we should never forget that the root purpose of those scriptures, and of the spiritual path itself, is to help us escape from suffering completely.

The Buddha once said, "I teach only two things, oh monks: suffering and the release from suffering." The notion that Buddhism, in its concern for suffering, is essentially pessimistic is based on a complete misunderstanding of the difference between psychological truth and spiritual - even metaphysical - truth. One endowed with Insight will see that conditioned existence is fraught with suffering, but this should never be taken to mean that one cannot proceed along the spiritual path unless one is suffering.

As the Buddha himself could see, however, there is no getting away from the fact that for many people the path does begin with suffering, with a real, tangible experience of suffering. All conditioned things are painful. The fabric of reality is stained with suffering. We must not be like ostriches, burying our heads in the sand in the face of this unpleasant feature of existence. But the acknowledgment of a problem is a vital step towards overcoming it. As the Dhammapada teaches, if we can really see the truth of suffering, bringing awareness to bear on the matter, we will understand it. Then, on the basis of that clear, sharp awareness and understanding, stimulated by that awareness and understanding, we will enter on the path which leads away from suffering, into the realm of non-regressive creativity.

Although the English word most commonly used to translate *dukkha* is 'suffering', the word 'unsatisfactoriness' comes far closer to the spirit of the term. The Pali-English Dictionary asserts that there is no single English word which covers the same ground as does dukkha in Pali. Apparently our modern English equivalents are too specialised, too limited, and usually too strong. Dukkha is equally mental and physical; to translate it as 'pain' makes it sound too physical, while to render it as 'sorrow' suggests something too exclusively mental. 'Unsatisfactoriness' has the virtue of being far more comprehensive, in that it covers the entire spectrum of the experience of dukkha, from the most violent physical pain to the subtlest forms of psychological unease.

That there are many different kinds of suffering or unsatisfactoriness is a matter of our individual experience, entangled as we are in the web of conditioned existence. Unsatisfactoriness, whether gross or refined, is of the essence of the human predicament. One week a man meets with an accident and suffers serious physical hardship; the next he is bereaved of a loved one. On the lower reaches of the evolutionary slope, beings suffer dumbly, without any glimmering of hope for release. On the higher reaches, humans can transfigure their pain through the alembic of art, the creative act, or purge and refine it through the apprehension and appreciation of the great works of their fellows. If one is very fortunate, one will encounter the word of the Buddha and learn of the means whereby one might transcend the predicament altogether.

Although the experience of unsatisfactoriness can take many forms, gross or subtle, physical or mental, the entire field of Dukkha can be subsumed under three major classifications, known in the Buddhist scriptures as the 'three painful states', or 'the three kinds of unsatisfactoriness'. Firstly there is the sensation of bodily pain; secondly come feelings of unsatisfactoriness due to the phenomenon of change - usually encountered in connection with otherwise pleasant experiences; and finally there is the unsatisfactoriness that arises simply from being bound up in conditioned existence.

The first kind of unsatisfactoriness, that associated with the bodily experience of physical pain, is something from which nobody is exempted. We all experience something from within its wide spectrum, whether it be the pain of a raging toothache, or cancer. Even a Buddha experiences this kind of suffering, since it is inherently linked with the posession of a body and its associated sense-organs. However, a Buddha, and even less highly developed humans, can rise above physical pain, more or less at will, by entering the jhanas: the higher states of meditative consciousness. The same applies to pain and discomfort caused by outward circumstances, such as extremes of climate, want of food, insect bites, and so on. The great Tibetan yogi Milarepa, it is said, remained absorbed in jhanic states for such long periods of time that he forgot about hunger and bodily deprivations, and forestalled any suffering from the extreme cold up in the mountains by generating 'psychic heat'.

The message is clear. While physical pain may be an inextricable aspect of our human lot, we must try to prevent our minds from becoming numbed and dulled by it. It is possible to maintain a degree of mental inspiration which will keep our bodily unease at least in a balanced perspective.

As we move on to the second characteristic of unsatisfactoriness: pain caused by the phenomenon of change, we come, from a spiritual point of view, to

the heart of the matter, for it could be said that the attempt to understand and come to terms with suffering on this level constitutes a crucial phase in the early stages of the spiritual life. The technical term for this form of unsatisfactoriness is *Viparinama Dukkha*. Viparinama literally means, 'being caused by change'. The unsatisfactoriness here is mental as distinct from physical, though it is by no means out of the question that physical pain can issue from it, so close is the relationship between mind and body.

Here of course, we see a close connection between the second characteristic of conditioned existence, Unsatisfactoriness, with the first, Impermanence. As we saw in the previous article, we suffer because we are not living in accordance with the truth of impermanence. We get joy from our experiences, but our awareness of joy's transience is always there, an irritant distracting us from wholeheartedness. But if we only think a little more deeply, we will realize that it is not the fact of the pleasure's impermanence which taints our joy; that is, in itself, quite neutral, a simple fact of life. Rather, it is our tendency to try to cling to joys, our desire to bind ourselves to them, in spite of their impermanence, which spoils everything. This is when be begin to experience unsatisfactoriness in the sense suggested by the title of this article. Pleasure is sweet and we crave for its endurance, but that craving is the blade which cuts us.

Strangely enough, perverse creatures that we are, we return to pleasurable experiences again and again in this frame of mind, unable to learn our lessons. This is an aspect of the spiritual life which takes up much time and effort. It has been called the 'battle-ground of the spiritual life', the crucial struggle to put a break on the Wheel of Becoming between 'feeling', or 'sensation', and 'craving'.

At this point I should recapitulate an important distinction to be made between 'desire' and 'craving'. English translators of Buddhist texts often translate the two Pali words *chanda* and *tanha* with the same English word, 'desire'. The word *tanha* means literally 'thirst', and can appropriately be translated as craving. But *chanda*, the Pali word closest to our 'desire', can be seen to have two distinct shades of significance, since there are really two kinds of *chanda*. There is 'higher desire', which is *Dhammachanda* - desire for the Dhamma, desire for Truth

The great yogi Milarepa

- which is always healthy; and there is a 'lower desire' called *kammachanda*, which is desire for sensuous experience. In itself kammachanda is fine; there is nothing wrong with sensuous experience in itself. But if we are not careful the desire for sensuous experience can degenerate into craving. Craving is by definition neurotic for the word suggests that we are seeking from the object of our desire a kind of satisfaction that it is quite unable to give.

For example, we want our girlfriend or boyfriend to live up to the mysterious ideal of our dreams. But this is never fair, since all we are doing is projecting our own unconscious psychic contents onto them, wanting them to embody an archetype of 'masculinity' or 'femininity' which properly resides in our own minds. They, naturally enough, simply cannot take it. Unless we recognise what is going on, we find ourselves being sucked into a vortex of craving and frustration from which it is very hard to emerge. If and when we do emerge, we tend to emerge mangled and chewed, even less psychologically integrated than we were before the episode began.

Perhaps we suffer far more than we realize from this 'archetypal starvation'. It has been said that we belong to the archetypal realm just as much as we belong to the realm of sense perception. If we are functioning fully we should live and move in both worlds - in the world of sense and the world of form, in the world of history and the world of myth - and be able to move smoothly from one to the other without confusing them. Many of our deeper emotional needs may only be satisfied in the archetypal realm. If they are frustrated, remaining unfulfilled either through the process of meditation or creative activity, they will seek satisfaction in the realm of sensuous delight, a satisfaction which is actually not possible. Such seeking leads only to further craving. This predicament is poignantly expressed by Shantideva in a verse from his work, *The Bodhicaryavatara*, where he says: "...Yet some rush to sorrow only because of the hope of escaping sorrow. Although striving for happiness, like their own enemy, they stupidly destroy their own happiness."

Colloquially put, this all adds up to not knowing what is best for us. In more traditional terms it means going to false refuges. We are so afflicted because we have hardly found a provisional refuge, let alone a real one. The solution lies not just in experiencing the unsatisfactoriness emotionally and fully; but in discovering where real happiness lies.

In a traditional list of twelve stages or 'links' along the spiritual path, we find that the sixth 'link' comes between 'happiness', or 'bliss', and 'concentration'. This suggests that happiness and concentration are intimately connected. Indeed, when these two come together, it is impossible to say which of them comes first, because they are really two different aspects of the same experience. The happy man is concentrated because he is happy; the concentrated man is happy because he is concentrated. To look at the negative side of the issue, we will see that we cannot concentrate when we are not content, and that we are discontented when we are not concentrated. It is therefore essential that we bring the cognitive element of our minds into play and reflect on our experiences of unsatisfactoriness, asking ourselves why we feel unfulfilled. We can also ask our spiritual friends for their advice since our condition may be more apparent to them than to us. If no satisfactory advice is forthcoming from any quarter, then perhaps the time has come for us to take the classic piece of advice and just face our own inner emptiness until the real source of our dissatisfaction becomes more clearly defined.

Sooner or later that moment will always come, when we have exhausted ourselves with the search for false refuges. One day we will experience those particular avenues of retreat as acutely unsatisfactory and at last we will turn to them no more; at last we will have learned from our experience: we will have become weary of suffering.

Of course, ideally we should never allow ourselves to be reduced to such a sorry state. By using our imagination, by taking advantage of our ability - as beings endowed with self-consciousness - to project ourselves into our possible futures and see clearly what the consequences of our actions will be, we can by-pass a great deal of suffering.

According to the formula of 'links' in the spiritual path already mentioned, 'faith' arises 'in dependence upon suffering'. While this may mean that we develop a commitment to higher development - thus embarking upon the spiritual path - as a result of great suffering, this is not an inevitable rule. As suggested earlier, one need not experience any suffering at all for that faith to dawn. This was the case for the Buddha himself. His faith that there must be an escape from suffering arose more from his reflections on the fact of suffering in conditioned existence in general, than from any over-abundant personal experience of it.

The third type of suffering left for us to consider is known as the unsatisfactoriness experienced by the heart seeking release. Until we have attained Insight: 'knowledge and vision of things as they really are', our happiness will not be complete. The pleasure we derive from conditioned things, even the highest bliss that can be experienced in the most exalted of meditative states, cannot satisfy the deepest longings of the heart. Only experience of the Transcendental can do that.

This point is movingly illustrated by an episode from the life of Naropa, the disciple of Tilopa, second in that great lineage of

Vajrayana teachers to which Marpa and Milarepa belonged. One day Naropa, a widely acclaimed and revered teacher at the Buddhist university of Nalanda, had a profound spiritual experience in which he realized with a jolt that he had not yet attained the level he had been pretending to. He had not achieved Insight. As a result he immediately decided to quit his post and take up the meditative life of a hermit in order to achieve Insight as quickly as possible. The heads of his department implored him to change his mind, but he remained adamant. 'I have not seen Reality.' he declared. Although, relatively speaking, he was a very happy man, towards whom others looked for inspiration and support, the deepest longing of his heart remained unsatisfied.

Those of us who have set our feet upon the spiritual path, who are making some attempt to undertake the 'higher evolution', may experience unsatisfactoriness most commonly as we come up against barriers to the expansion of consciousness, and as we struggle to overcome or break through them. In his work *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, sGampopa refers to "the inveterate propensities due to evil deeds committed repeatedly in former times". These are the barriers with which we are presented. What we have to oppose are our ingrained mundane habits and 'natural' tendencies. The propulsive power of our commitment to higher development must be very strong indeed to counteract the pull of those regressive forces.

Thus it is that as we progress we experience what we could call growing pains. It is a struggle to move from a lower level to a higher one, not simply because we are lazy or sluggish, but because the act of creation itself involves a process of death, of dissolution. To a certain extent the creative act involves a degree of destruction. The lower has to die in order that the higher may live. This is why we react so strongly when our friends point out some of our more negative habits in a 'fiercely friendly' way. At first we may deny the charges hotly, but at a later date, given that there was genuine concern in the criticism, the weakness is acknowledged, and sincere steps are taken to remedy it.

There is no reason why all our difficulties should not be dissolved, sooner rather than later, in the purifying solvent of spiritual friendship. The process of seeing, or being helped to see, of acknowledging and then dissolving our psychological conditionings is indeed painful, but it is also pleasurable, in that it is conducive to the expansion of consciousness. It is almost always experienced as a release of energy.

The process is ambivalent. One is slowly but surely giving birth to oneself - a birth which is on the one hand painful, even traumatic, but on the other hand truly liberating. Perhaps those who create works of art experience the same kinds of tension. George Orwell described the process of writing a book as a "horrible, exhausting struggle, like a long bout of some painful illness. One would never undertake such a thing if one were not driven on by some demon whom one can neither resist nor understand." Well, perhaps this is a little extreme, but I suspect that the artist who does not find the process of creation difficult is a rare one. More often that not, the creative process is triggered off by some kind of irritation - like the grain of grit in the flesh of an oyster around which the pearl forms.

This element of struggle on the spiritual path, which I have instanced here as a form of suffering or unsatisfactoriness, is a spur to further development. It irritates, but at the same time it stimulates. It throws down a challenge which we can accept in the traditionally heroic spirit demanded by Buddhism. Ultimately our growth will become effortless, spontaneous, quite painless. Even now we can experience the occasional moment of creative spontaneity. When we are fully Enlightened the flow of creativity will be uninterrupted, because we will have transcended conditioned existence.

Meanwhile we must concern ourselves with the effort to eradicate the grosser manifestations of Unsatisfactoriness in the form of our neurotic cravings, taking full advantage of whatever help we can find from our spiritual friends. With their co-operation, and with the full force of our general spiritual practice behind us, our struggle to overcome the dark entanglements of our confusions and conditionings will bear its fruit. As we progress along the path, we will bring forth our true selves, and by the power of the insights attained, we will find in time that we have transcended Unsatisfactoriness altogether.

The Shifting Sands of Being

By Saddhaloka

It is evening. A young monk walks across the monastery courtyard to the Abbot's house. He looks bright and composed, for he has been meditating and studying now for two years. He has had some good experiences in the Zendo and has even felt the arising of a little insight into the Teachings. He looks forward to a meeting with the master, confident that his efforts must have earned him some approval.

He greets the venerable man with a bow. As he seats himself on a mat, the master fixes him with a penetrating gaze. He feels uncomfortable. Not wishing to seem disrespectful, he looks down at the floor.

At length the abbot speaks, asking suddenly, "Who are you?" The young monk is bewildered. Surely such an advanced man would not forget the name of such a promising pupil! Trying to conceal his dismay he answers, giving his family name, and the village from which he hails.

"No, not that! Who *are* you?" comes the abrupt reply.

At first he is caught unawares, but then he realises, 'Ah! Of course! I am not just a name!' He makes a broad gesture, and bows, as if to say, "Yes. Here I am - all here, Master."

His teacher impatiently brushes this aside. "Will you stop playing the fool and just answer my question? Who are you?"

He feels the ground slipping away beneath his feet and begins to panic, his mind frantically leaping around, looking for an answer to satisfy his interrogator. Then he understands. The master wants to hear his understanding of the Dharma! He pulls himself together.

"I am not to be found in form, feeling, perception, volition or consciousness. I am unreal! He quotes rapidly from the Vajraccheddika Sutra: 'As stars, a fault of vision, as a lamp, a mock show, dew drops, or a bubble: a dream, a lightning flash, a cloud...'"

A smile seems to flicker about the abbot's lips; the monk breathes an inner sigh of relief... But suddenly feels the shock of a hefty blow across his head.

"Unreal eh? You feel solid enough to me!" The master lunges for him, grabs the folds of his robes in strong hands, and plants his face inches from his pupil's. "Now, tell me! Who are you?"

There are two ways in which this story of old Japan might end. Seized by confusion and terror, the monk runs from his master's fiercely compassionate gaze and awful questions. Or, in the midst of the confusion, this destruction of all preconceptions, with nowhere left to stand, he is suddenly overwhelmed by a completely new kind of understanding, which bubbles up from the very depths of his being: an Insight. The master has communicated something of the truth of Insubstantiality (*Anatta* [Pali] or *Anatman* [Sanskrit]).

As this story suggests, Insubstantiality is a difficult truth to grasp. In this consideration of the third 'mark' of conditioned existence, we will find ourselves penetrating into the nature of existence even more deeply. We might understand unsatisfactoriness quite easily, at least to some degree. We all have our experiences of dissatisfaction in life. And, to a certain degree at least, we can understand impermanence too. Things get broken and lost. We get older; good times - and bad times - always come to an end.

But the teaching of anatta, or Insubstantiality is far harder to embrace. It contradicts our most basic 'common sense' assumption, that 'I am I', that there is a 'me', an

inner core of separate selfhood. The doctrine of insubstantiality says the 'I' is just a concept, a mental construct. In reality there is nothing at all with any substance!

The teaching does not stop there either. While impermanence and unsatisfactoriness are said to reflect the nature of conditioned existence, insubstantiality is applied to the unconditioned as well. The Unconditioned is said to be anatta in that it is indefinable, indescribable, signless. Because it is indefinable, it cannot be defined as either existent or as non-existent, nor as both existent and non-existent, nor as neither existent nor non-existent. In the end it cannot even be truthfully described as the 'Unconditioned', for even this implies that it is something separate from the conditioned. Thus, at its most profound level, the teaching of

Insubstantiality points to the indescribable reality at the heart of both the conditioned and the Unconditioned. However, perhaps we are in danger of getting lost in the heady heights of Buddhist philosophy; perhaps we should come back down to earth.

As is the case with all teachings in the Buddhist tradition, we should never forget that the teaching of Insubstantiality has an essentially practical purpose. That purpose is to shake us up, transform our experience of ourselves and of life, break up our fixed views, and propel us towards 'knowledge and direct vision of things as they really are'.

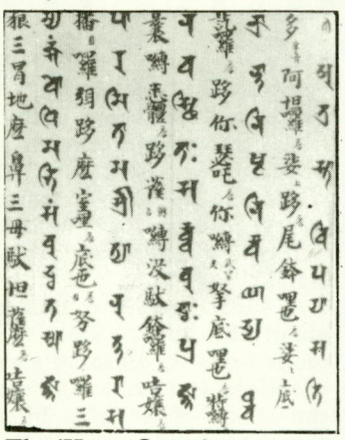
Daunting though it may be, the doctrine of Insubstantiality is one of the fundamental teachings of Buddhism. There is no avoiding it; you will find yourself encountering it in one form or another throughout the scriptures. Eventually we have to come to terms with it.

The doctrine can be approached in two ways: from a 'static' viewpoint, and from a more 'dynamic' viewpoint. Put in 'static' terms, the teaching suggests that all phenomena, including ourselves, have no 'own-being', no fixed identity, no unchanging selfhood. Each one is the sum of its parts; besides this it exists only as a concept, a name. Seen in a dynamic light, the teaching suggests that phenomena lack 'own-being' because they are none of them self-produced, but merely the temporary result of a coming together of various conditioning factors, a momentary configuration within a continuously unfolding process. Everything is part of this process, everything is coming together and falling apart, compounding and dissolving, all the time.

Early Buddhist philosophers broke this process down, describing it in terms of the five *skandhas*, or 'heaps', of form (*rupa*), feeling (*vedana*), perception (*samjna*), volitions (*samskara*), and consciousness (*vijnana*): five broad divisions which together comprised all aspects of the process of conditioned existence.

Later, the Hinayana mind got to work, applying its particularly analytical bent, and these divisions were refined and adapted, the process of existence being further sub-divided down into ultimate constituents, known as *'dharmas'*. To emphasise the insubstantiality of everything, however, including the dharmas themselves, the Mahayana countered any tendency among Hinayana thinkers to see the dharmas as unchanging 'atoms' within the process by developing the concept of *'Sunyata'* - 'Emptiness'.

This doctrine states that if we insist on seeing anything whatsoever as being in any way self-existent, this is due to our gross delusion. Even to see a mere flux of dharmas is deluded. We must recognise that everything, even the process itself, even the dharmas, is empty of self nature, is Sunyata.



The 'Heart Sutra':
a voice of the Transcendental

Let us bring this down to earth with an example drawn from the Venerable Sangharakshita's *The Three Jewels*. We may make a simple statement like, "The leaf changed from green to red". But how far does such a statement match the reality of the situation? We talk of a leaf, but is there really some 'thing' apart from the process of growing and dying cells, the flow of sap, the play of light on form? Is there really any entity apart from the the process which we describe with words like 'leaf', the air we breath?

This example is enough to demonstrate how we have developed convenient, but ultimately distorted ways of describing events and seeing life. We then allow the convenience and convention of language to define and dictate our normal view of reality, and come to assume that reality itself must be encompassed within these conventions.

One of the more unfortunate consequences of this misconception can be seen in attempts that are made to offer rational proof for the existence of God. This is what can happen when our views become trapped by linguistic conventions. The truth of Insubstantiality applies to everything, including the very totality of the process which we call reality. So there can be no God, nor even any 'subtle ground of being', no 'Atman', no thing called 'Absolute consciousness'. When we speak of the Transcendental or of Emptiness, even, we must always remember that these too are but principles, not things.

To assimilate the truth of 'Insubstantiality' we must go beyond reason, beyond our usual way of seeing and understanding the world altogether: we must break through to a new level of being. This is neither easy nor comfortable. If we are really receptive, we may 'hear' the voice of the Transcendental speaking to us through scriptures like the 'Heart Sutra' from the Perfection of Wisdom canon. If we are ready that voice may grab hold of us, shaking us and breaking up our fixed views. But the truth of anatta represents something quite terrible and terrifying.

Recalling the two possible endings to our story, we will see that while we might be able to look into the eyes of the master and awaken to the truth, it is more likely that we will scream, fly from him, and run back to our own room and try to pretend that it simply didn't happen! As T.S.Eliot says in *The Four Quartets*, "Humankind cannot stand very much reality".

There is of course a third possible ending to the story, in which 'green' and 'red'?

What then of ourselves? We may say, "I am walking down the road". But where is the 'I' outside of the muscle stretching, blood pumping, the breathing process ... outside of the vastly complex biological process, the thoughts and feelings, not to speak of the process which is the road, or of the earth which supports it and us, of the disciple remains stuck. Eager for Enlightenment, he simply cannot understand why he is not having the breakthrough which his master so clearly wants him to have. This points to the crucial importance of preparation, of making ourselves receptive, and learning how to give ourselves up, bit by bit, to the terrible, liberating truth of anatta. Is there, then, any way in which we can get to grips with Insubstantiality, on a day-to-day basis?

First of all we can read and study, thus gaining some intellectual understanding of the anatta doctrine - always remembering that the doctrine is essentially concerned with our experience of ourselves and the world.

Then we can meditate, softening up the rigid, egocentric basis we generally live from by experiencing ourselves more deeply, more clearly, at new levels and in new ways. The practice of metta bhavana (the development of universal loving-kindness) is clearly very important in this respect. In the first stage of the practice we try to develop a healthy sense of our own worth. This may seem contradictory to the spirit of the anatta teaching, but in practical terms it is essential. If we are going to be able to let go of old ways, attitudes and points of view, we need to be on good terms with ourselves. While we are defensive and insecure, our tendency is to hold on to ourselves very tightly, to close off from the unknown and cut off threatening experiences. If we have no basis of emotional strength we will probably fail to understand the rich significance of the anatta doctrine - as many people have done. They are the ones largely responsible for the interpretation of Buddhism as a grim, 'annihilation of self', which strikes so many people as cold and pessimistic.

In the further stages of the metta bhavana, feelings of warmth and friendliness are extended outwards, eventually towards all beings whatsoever. Here we make a conscious practice of acknowledging other people, valuing them, trying to see them clearly, and considering that their interests have as much value as our own. This is not something done only while sitting in meditation of course. We try to take the practice into our everyday lives as well. In this way we will begin to dissolve away our rigid egotism, so that a more expansive, softer-edged, more malleable 'self' begins to unfold.

In time we may take up an

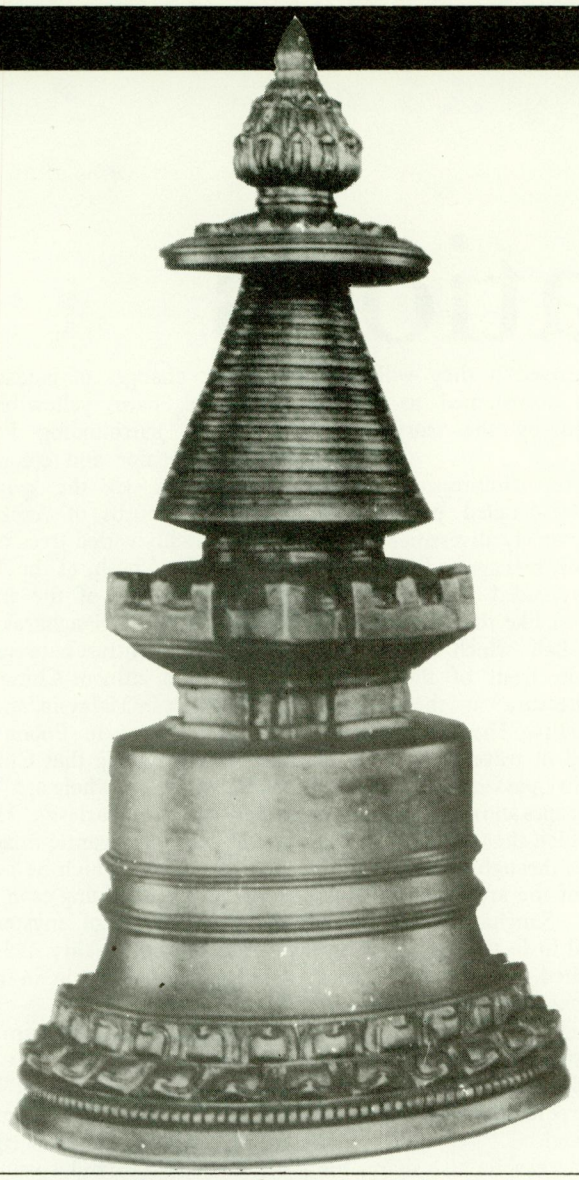
Insight practice, such as the Contemplation of Death, or the Contemplation of the Six Elements'. These practices are not taught at beginners' classes held at FWBO centres quite simply because there is no real point to them unless they are undertaken on a basis of intellectual clarity and emotional strength.

To give an example, the Contemplation of the Six Elements is an imaginative exercise used to dissolve self view. Practised well, it will have a diminishing effect on conceit and selfishness. It is important that it should be approached in this way, for we will be misleading ourselves if we try to put too much of a metaphysical interpretation onto it.

We begin by reflecting that there is in the universe the element 'earth'. We think of, or visualize, rock, stone, earth, wood, metal - everything that is firm, which offers resistance. We then recollect how there is such an element in our own bodies too, in the form of bones, teeth, hair, flesh, and so on. We go on to reflect how all these earth-like constituents of our 'self' are simply 'borrowed' from the earth element in the universe. We did not make them ourselves, but rather took them in with our food. Sooner or later they will all be paid back, released back into the universe. At death, as our bodies burn or disintegrate, they will all be returned. Recognising this, we try to give up the earth element now, relinquish our attachment to it: we no longer claim it as our own. This mental process is then applied in turn to each of the other elements: water, fire, air, space and even consciousness.

If the spiritual life can be described philosophically as the gradual realisation of the truth of Insubstantiality, then it can be described psychologically in terms of the progressive overcoming of selfishness. In order to overcome selfishness on the most profound level we have first to overcome it on a very basic level. To list the ways in which we can do that is really to list most of the practices propounded by the FWBO, but not yet mentioned.

There is of course the practice of observing moral precepts. To act skilfully has a bearing not only on our own states of mind and being, but also on the lives and mental states of others. To live morally involves living with a constant awareness of others, whom we take into account in all our actions of body, speech and mind. We therefore avoid harming them, and instead seek after their welfare. We do not take what is not freely given, and are instead always prepared to give, and to give of ourselves. In the highly charged arena of sexual conduct we develop a keen awareness of the effects that our actions have, on ourselves of course, but also on others. Our speech should not only be truthful, but also helpful, harmonious and kind. In the use of intoxicants like liquor we should be concerned to preserve our own positive mental states, but also sensitive to others in the situation. While we may know where to draw the line, there may be others who do not, and who may benefit if we set an example of moderation - if not of abstinence. In this way we gradually counterbalance our ingrained selfishness and self-interest.



The stupa: a reliquary and a symbol of the six elements

Perhaps special mention needs to be made of that ethical precept which concerns the taking of the not-given, and in particular of the positive practice of generosity. Giving is a practice of central importance in the entire Buddhist tradition. It is a powerful means of overcoming our self-centred view of life. In some Buddhist countries we find people giving something to somebody every single day - as a matter of custom. To give is to reverse the tendency to hold back, to protect and to appropriate.

Sometimes we may feel an impulse to give - perhaps to give something quite substantial. But then we become confused and frightened, unsure whether we should follow that impulse through. It is well worth trying. By giving in such circumstances we are not only giving up something limited in ourselves, we are also affirming a very positive development. Try it sometime. There is no shortage of opportunities!

Friendship is of course an important element in this process. Whenever we develop real warmth towards another person, and real openness to them, then we dissolve away some of the hard edges of our usual front. Through deepening communication with others, we not only discover channels of metta, and get them flowing, but discover new aspects of ourselves too as, through the medium of the friendship, we open up parts of ourselves of which we were previously unaware. In friendship we learn to value others as ourselves - even to forget ourselves and put their interests before our own. Being unselfish, we realise, is a joy.

Many FWBO centres have associated co-operative right-livelihood businesses. Here people learn to work hard, not for high wages, but for what they see to be a greater good. Obviously this is not at all easy; egos kick, scream, grumble and complain from time to time. But if they can see this through, those who work in the co-ops generally find that in asking for less, they become much more.

There are the residential communities too. Here we may find ourselves living among people with whom we simply would not choose to live under any other circumstances. Sometimes we have to make a real effort to go beyond our habitual likes and dislikes, our old familiar habits and attitudes. We also have to learn to care for our environment, since it is also that of others. We have to do our share of the cooking and cleaning, rather than trying to leave as much as possible to others. We have to learn to be aware of others' needs, whether practical or emotional, or even spiritual, and try to go out to meet those needs. But in doing this we find that we are leaving our own selfish needs further and further behind.

Through devotional practices like the Sevenfold Puja, where we enter the world of poetry, beauty and imagination, and where we symbolically encounter the ideal of human perfection, we strengthen our awareness that the spiritual life is to be lived not only for our own sake, but for the sake of all beings. As we bow down respectfully towards that ideal, in the company of our spiritual friends, we grow even further beyond ourselves, disentangling ourselves gently from the net of deluded selfish vision.

If we practise even some of these methods, consistently and with real effort, then we will have discovered a very potent means of self-transformation, of self-dissolution and self 'expansion'. We will grow as human beings, but as we grow we will find, in a magical way, that we are flowing into others more and more. Everything will become lighter, more fluid, more creative and joyful; we will discover the 'open dimension of being'. Then Insubstantiality, far from being seen as a mark or 'stain' of conditioned existence will have become the doorway to liberation.

New Publications

Travel Letters

by Sangharakshita
Windhorse. Price £5.95

Windhorse Publications is living more and more up to its name. With ever-increasing energy, the flow of publications of Sangharakshita's work, by way of reprints and previously unpublished pieces has continued unstemmed for the last year or more. These days, it is never more than a few months at the very most before yet another piece rolls off the press. At the time of writing, the latest work to arrive on our bookstalls is a book entitled, simply, *Travel Letters*. It consists of a series of seven long letters written between 1979 and 1983, originally addressed to members of the Western Buddhist Order and published separately in Shabda, the (unedited) monthly magazine of the Western Buddhist Order. The Venerable Sangharakshita has collected these letters together in the present form in the hope, as he puts it in his Preface, "of being able to share (them) with a wider circle of friends than that to which they were originally addressed."

The author also admits in his Preface that, given a perfectly free choice, he would not have been so much of a man on the move as has proved the case. It is to the great benefit of many people that he has kept moving to the extent he has; as a result the FWBO is now established in all those countries his visits to which are described in these letters, namely, India, Malaysia, New Zealand and Australia, as well as, of course, England, Scotland, and Wales.

The route covered in the letters begins in England in early 1979 and ends in England in 1983, taking in, for various lengths of time, all the countries just mentioned. The account we read does not actually follow a strict chronological line, in the interest of the author's concern to show how past and present are almost, it seems, interchangeable. Though some readers might at first be a trifle disorientated by the switching back and forth in time, (the author admits, again in the Preface, that his interference with chronology becomes in places, perhaps "a little contrived"), they will soon become accustomed to it and absorbed by the story as it unfolds.

The crop of impressions offered in these detailed pages, even though widely diversified, does, somehow, manage to form a sort of many sided organic whole, somewhat like the many-faceted crystal ball which the author places in front of the bronze Avalokitesvara at the end of Chapter Five. There are, as is to be expected in travel letters, many descriptive passages: descriptions of landscapes and of the towns and cities which the traveller stays at or passes through. There are, too, details of the arranged activities which Sangharakshita participated in in the various countries visited, as well as accounts of those unsought-for experiences which inevitably happen to people on the move, such as the Kafkaesque incident at Bombay's Santa Cruz airport on the journey back to England.

Sangharakshita also shares his reflections on several matters, either to do with the state of the FWBO or about Buddhism in general, or topics of wider human interest, prompted in some cases by formal or informal questions, or simply sparked off by circumstance. Not surprisingly, in view of Sangharakshita's great interest in books, a few of these reflections have a distinctly literary flavour. In the course of his travels he has individual encounters with quite a number of people, and we are treated to a few character sketches. All these ingredients, woven together loosely, as the epistolary form allows, make up an agreeable, interesting texture.

The first letter, written from New Zealand, describes Sangharakshita's arrival in India, where he discovers that he has become a legend in his own lifetime. Lokamitra has been working brilliantly there for only six months, yet there are people ready to Go for Refuge. The ordination retreat at the hill fort of Singhagad, above Poona, is lovingly described. From India, the account of the journey proceeds to New Zealand, then back again to Malaysia, with details of dramatic changes of landscape, from the bare yellow-brown mountains surrounding Poona and the squalor and colour of Indian cities, via the spacious well-kept suburbs of Auckland and the richly varied trees of the New Zealand bush, to the dense green vegetation of the Malay mainland. Sangharakshita observes the contrast between the middle class, affluent Chinese in his audience in Malaysia, and the ex-Untouchables in Poona and Bombay, reflecting that Chinese Buddhists on the whole are "a bit sober and humourless". He is impressed by a gigantic image of Samantabhadra which he comes across in an intriguing cave temple in Ipoh ("...of mysterious diginity and spirituality such as I had hardly ever seen in an image before").

The next two letters are also written from New Zealand, where Akshobya started FWBO activities in the early seventies. There is so much descriptive detail of New Zealand woven into the text that it is difficult to isolate features; suffice it to say that it is the general impression of the Land of the Long White Cloud which comes across most evocatively, an impression of a land of space and solitude, "pure air and silence", a land, he intimates, in which a man can grow and thrive, yet where the horizons, wide as they are, are limited. He goes so far as to say that if one wanted to develop as an individual beyond the healthy happy human stage, "one would have to leave". Perhaps that is not so much the case today, now that the Movement there has grown considerably in strength and continues to do so.

A haunting image (from the first letter from England in fact), one which has lingered in my mind since I first encountered it in the pages of Shabda a few years ago, is of Sangharakshita standing alone on a deserted headland in South Island, experiencing "a breath of utter silence and utter solitude" of the distant Anarctica wastes. Visits to minor marvels such as the famous Moeraki Boulders and a certain natural tour de force called the Blowhole, leave the author regretting his inability to fathom such mysteries of Nature.

The poet in Sangharakshita, the 'Sangharakshita I' of The Thousand Petalled Lotus, is never far away in these letters and, on occasions, is very much to the fore. There are plenty of poetic touches; when he eventually returns to Norfolk after a second visit to India, he experiences the relative quiet of England like the silences one experiences at the end of a symphony concert. A few months later, when the demands of other work have temporarily subsided, a truly poetic mood descends. After an account of the activity this leads to, we are treated to a short rhapsody on the nature of poetic experience. In contrast to such passages there are the more philosophical reflections, such as the disquisition on the nature of history at the beginning of the third letter from England, and the sober ruminations on what ordination in the Western Buddhist Order really means, these arising out of the shock of discovering severe misunderstandings and disgrun-

The Buddl
An Introduction to th
Alex K
(Dharmacha
Although there are ma
theory and practice, fe
readers who have no p
Buddhist teachings, or w
the technicalities of B
This book, by a men
Buddhist Order, presents
the Buddhist vision of
the significance of the B
Wheel of Life, the Spiral,
Five Buddhas, in terms
can rel
208
paper
£7.
RID

tlement amongst Friends in New Zealand.

In the last letter from England, after telling us about his life at Padmaloka and his friends in the community there, Sangharakshita gives an account of his visits to various FWBO Centres in the U.K., with a quick visit to the Lake District thrown in. The account is sprinkled with personal touches conveying his warmth and affection for his various travelling companions, his mother, whom he takes care to visit regularly, and members of Padmaloka Community with whom he lives. Perhaps this particular letter suffers more than any of the others from a faint blemish, the over-inclusion of circumstantial trivia: what the lads said, where we stopped for tea, and so on, which tends to disfigure the text slightly, like the intermittent breaking out of a mild rash, especially where the action is thin. Otherwise, the style carries us along quite comfortably.

Another feature of the letters not to be forgotten is the author's sharp eye for character, of which there are plenty of instances. The ones that spring to mind are an old friend in Bombay, called Dikshit, who, despite his spritual interests over the years, "had not really emerged from the cave of his own bitterness", and another old friend, an "old rogue" of a monk encountered in Glasgow. There are interesting vignettes of the contrasting characters of Alan Ginsberg and Christmas Humphreys. But this gift for character delineation really comes into its own in the final letter, the letter from Wales, which is mainly an account of Sangharakshita's participation in a weekend organized by the Wrekin Trust, on the subject of Science and Mysticism. This and the account of Uncle Jack's funeral in an earlier letter, although factual accounts, have many of the characteristics of fictional short stories, especially with respect to the character sketches. There is a real sparkle to the writing in the account of the Wrekin Trust event, a humour which made me laugh aloud.

Travel Letters is, from one point of view, a fascinating miscellany, but there emerges, as we read through it, not only a view of Sangharakshita that we cannot, of course, get from his didactic writings, but also a fascinating portrait of the Movement, the FWBO, at a certain stage of its history. (I suspect the book will be of even greater interest in ten years time.) I can heartily recommend it as ideal late night reading. It is easy to read, and containing as it does six chapters of about twenty pages with one long chapter divided into three sections, it is the sort of length to keep the confirmed bedtime reader happily absorbed for at least a week.

ABHAYA

nist Vision
e Theory and Practice

ennedy
ri Subhuti)

ny books on Buddhist
v (if any) are aimed at
revious experience of
ho have been baffled by
uddhist terminology.

nber of the Western
a complete overview of
xistence, and explains
uddhist concepts of the
and the mandala of the
which Western readers
te to.

pp
back
95

ER

Mahadhammavira and Sangharakshita in Bombay

The Caves of Bhaja

by Sangharakshita
Windhorse. Price £1.25

Dhammachari Anagarika Mahadhammavira died during the June Order retreat at 'Saddhamma Pradeep' in Bhaja, Maharashtra. On hearing this sad news, Sangharakshita put aside his other work and dedicated a few days to the creation of a lengthy verse poem entitled *The Caves of Bhaja*. This is now in print.

Before reading the poem at the London Buddhist Centre, exactly one month after Mahadhammavira's death, Bhante spoke in warm praise of his exceptional qualities: his unfailing high spirits and humour, his constant willingness to help out in any way he could and, above all, his boundless gratitude for the Buddha-Dhamma.

The poem, 'set' at Bhaja during that retreat, is a moving testament to Mahadhammavira's spirit, while Bhante's choice of a 'heroic-mythic' metre convention seems perfectly to reflect the deeper, calmer significance of an event which could so easily have appeared sentimental or even sensational.

All profits from this publication will go towards the erection of a fitting memorial to Mahadhammavira at Bhaja.

The Glory of the Literary World

by Sangharakshita
Windhorse. Price £1.25

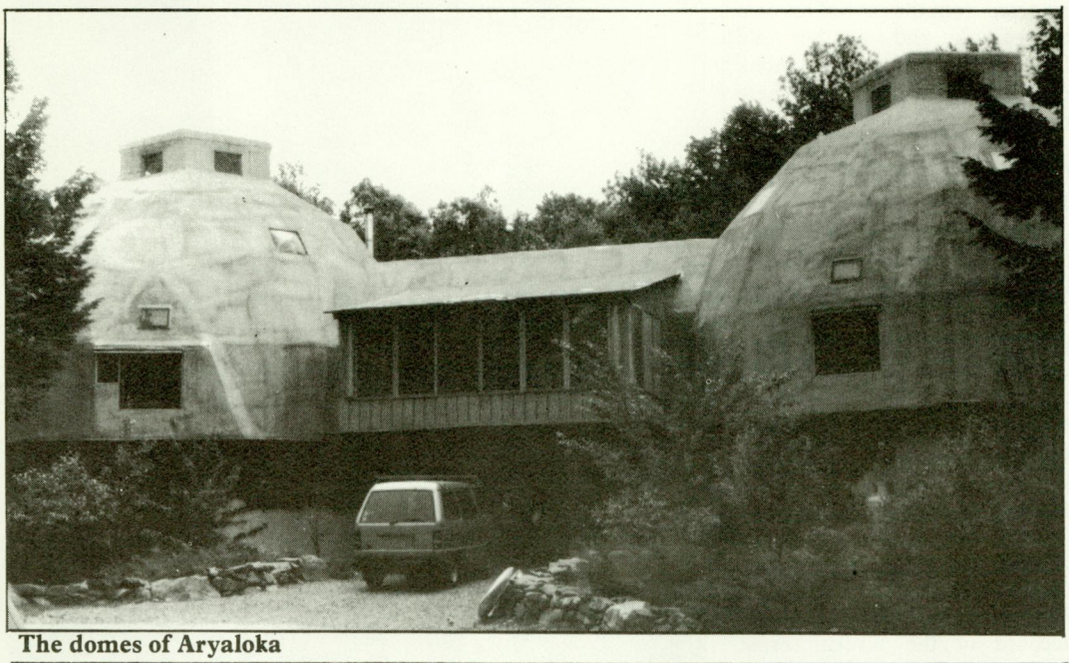
Tharpa Publications is a new company devoted to publishing books on Buddhism. Its first production is to be Sangharakshita's long-awaited survey of Buddhist canonical literature, *The Eternal Legacy*.

Although the book itself was still at press, some four hundred people gathered at Friends House, London, on 29th August to mark the launch of Tharpa, and to hear Sangharakshita deliver a paper, an 'introduction' to his book, entitled *The Glory of the Literary World -Reflections on the Buddhist Canonical Literature.*

Asserting that Buddhist canonical literature should be read first and foremost as literature, Bhante went on to define and explore the nature and significance of literature as a truly human form of endeavour. The paper, a delight in itself, is now available in print, while the book, which will be fully reviewed in the next issue, should be on sale by mid-October.

FACETS

Aryaloka Is Born



The domes of Aryaloka

The Boston Buddhist Centre has been in existence for just over four years, and during that time a few hundred people have attended our various activities. Some have stayed in regular contact and become Friends, but I have often regretted our limitations and wanted to show more of what the FWBO has to offer. The Centre housed a small community and regular meetings were held there but it was noisy and we often felt overwhelmed by the busy city. The idea of setting up a retreat centre where we could develop our own lifestyle, free from incessant distractions, had been in my mind for a number of years. I wanted a place where Dharma practice could be the centre of community life, and equally importantly, could be seen to be so by our visitors. In this way our Friends would be able to experience directly what it was to be a Buddhist.

There is a lot of confusion, both in the United States and, I suspect, in other countries, about the real meaning of Buddhism. This meaning can be explained verbally, but these explanations, however lucid, cannot speak as clearly as the experience of the truly Buddhist life.

Bob Ebberson, who has been in contact with the Centre for a couple of years, shared this vision of a place where he could go to immerse himself in the Dharma, so we started to explore the possibilities. We looked for a property that would be suitable and affordable but soon realized that these two requirements would not be satisfied simultaneously. My thinking was bound by financial conservatism, Bob's, in characteristic American style, was not so hampered, and he convinced me that we should decide what we wanted and then work to make it happen. This was the big breakthrough - we'd decided to have our child!

Within a few days I rediscovered a handbill advertising a property, which I had previously put aside because of the high, but nevertheless very reasonable, price. It advertised a "spacious custom designed property" on thirteen secluded acres with 12,000 square feet of floor space. It was located just over an hour's drive north of Boston. The property consisted of two three-storey geodesic domes and another more traditional three-storey barn-like structure. Both buildings were recently constructed and both offered limitless possibilities for organising the space. We went to visit, and the magic began.

We left the freeway and drove to the small New Hampshire town of Newmarket through country that was a mixture of forest and small farms. As we approached the domes along a short dirt road through the pines and oak trees, we immediately liked the place. Naoto Inoue, who built both buildings, met us and showed us round. Our excitement mounted as we moved from one part of property to another, and we both began to realize that this was the perfect retreat centre. With no reservations at all, we were agreed that this was it, this was what we wanted. All we needed was a quarter of a million dollars!

We spent an hour or two talking with Naoto and Berri, his wife, business partner and work mate, about what we wanted to do with the property. They are idealists, born of the sixties, still active in the peace movement. They had done almost all of the construction work themselves and were clearly hoping that the energy they had invested in the buildings would be contributing to a project that coincided with their ideals. Our proposed plan fell in line with these hopes and so they were very enthusiastic and eager to help us in any way. Bob and I left Newmarket in an excited state, eagerly discussing ways in which we would try to raise the required capital. Needless to say, our first few hundred ideas ranged from the naively optimistic to the outrageously fantastic. We called all the very rich people that we knew (not very many), spoke enthusiastically to all and sundry, wrote letters and tried to find the addresses of pop stars and writers who we thought may be interested in helping us. After a few days our thinking stabilised and some clearer plans started to develop. We might find a pot of gold but in the absence of that miracle we would need to borrow money, and we would need to pay it back. We would have to borrow from people who knew us and knew what we were doing and we would need a resident community who could work to support the property. We decided to 'go for it'. We had decided what we wanted and now we were going to make it happen. I have never been so wholeheartedly behind a decision in my life. This was the conception.

We told Berri and Naoto that we wanted to go ahead, and asked for a month to get everything organised. Not only did they agree to holding off selling to other interested people but they also offered a generous financial agreement that put the whole project into the realm of the possible. It was clear that we did not have enough men Friends in the Boston area to form a men's community so I explored the possibility of a mixed community, without success. Then, with few expectations, I called Subhuti at the Order Office and told my story. He told the Venerable Sangharakshita and the convenors of the British chapters of the Order, and within a few days I had enthusiastic messages of support from the Venerable Sangharakshita, and offers from a number of Order Members who wanted to join the community. It was almost beyond belief. All the required elements were there. The Inoues had provided the property and the financial arrangement, the Order Office had provided the contact and the emotional support, and Ratnapani, Baladitya, Dharmabandhu, and Richard Davey had provided a base for the community. We knew it was going to happen, the pregnancy was confirmed. I was scared stiff. I remember one sleepless night at about this time. I was being battered by waves of emotions, of exhilaration, of fear, of clarity, of insecurity, like a cork in the ocean, on a rocky shoreline, in a storm.

The next hurdle was that we needed some ready cash for a deposit and the costs of setting up. I visited a half dozen banks in Boston and in New Hampshire; everyone I talked to was encouraging and enthusiastic but the project was too risky from their financial perspective. Ratnapani, whose enthusiasm had been evident from the first mention of the project, was not idle, and he talked to Kulamitra in London, and within a week or so a loan on typically generous terms had been agreed. The terms and agreement for the sale of the property was signed and now it was just a matter of time.

Ratnapani arrived in Boston in early July, and he and I spent weekends at the domes getting to know Naoto and Berri and their delightful children Bree, Kale, Mika, and Sky. We were initiated into the Dome-lore and explored the thirteen acres of land. With help from Punya and some Friends from Boston we made a few changes on one floor, creating a large circular shrine room, thirty feet in diameter, and we spent time in the vegetable garden. Towards the end of the month sale formalities were completed and we helped Berri and Naoto move their possessions to the house where they will be staying until their new home is completed.

Finally, on August 8th, just one day before our summer retreat was to begin, we took possession of the domes and Aryaloka community was born. Ratnapani and myself were joined that first night by Aryadaka and Hank Hoelzer from Seattle. The next morning we sorted out the kitchen, the dining and sitting areas, put some finishing touches to the shrine, and cleaned and arranged the bedrooms for our guests. That afternoon Richard Davey and Dharmabandhu arrived from England and a number of our regular friends arrived from Boston to join us in an inaugral two week retreat. That evening a dozen Order Members, mitras, and Friends sat in a candle-lit shrine room (the electric lights had not then been fixed). The dedication ceremony and puja celebrated and blessed the birth of our new seminary.

Manjuvajra

BRITAIN

LBC

A high standard was maintained by speakers giving talks on aspects of the Noble Eightfold Path at our Tuesday night Friends' class. Subhuti ran a weekend event in which he introduced some practical excercises of his own devising which were designed to promote mindfulness. Those taking part were impressed by the effectiveness of the excercises, in which people worked together in pairs, in a fashion similar to communication excercises. In a subsequent class Dhammarati devised something similar based on metta, consisting of a combination of communication excercises, life stories, and rejoicing in merits.

In June the Venerable Sangharakshita led one of our Tuesday Friends classes in order to commemorate the death of the Indian Order member Mahadhammavira by reading a specially written poem and giving us some of his reflections of the event. Our centre was packed to capacity for the occasion, which many people found especially significant and very moving. Despite his very busy schedule the Venerable Sangharakshita often finds time to visit this centre and we would like to express our gratitude to him.

During the summer preparations have been made for the start of the new session in September. The layout of the annexe, the venue for our yoga and massage classes, has been altered to provide an improved and more versatile facility, while at the Centre two of our old offices above the Cherry Orchard restaurant are being converted to provide a library and study facilities. We have also made some new arrangements for classes, with activities in London's West End being concentrated into an open class which will run simultaneously with the Wednesday night introductory class here at the LBC. People from either of these classes will be able to move on to an intermediate class, which will also be run here on Wednesday evenings.

CROYDON

The Arts Centre now has over eight hundred members, with many people coming regularly to the lectures and plays. It seems that people are often attracted as much to the Arts Centre itself, with its friendly atmosphere, its enthusiasm for the arts, and the simple but beautiful decoration, as to the events, which they know will be of a high standard.

Nearly all the lectures and plays in the Festival were given to capacity audiences, and large numbers had to be turned away on some occasions. The Arts Centre has been highly praised by many of its Friends and visiting speakers (many of whom, it seems, are used to much smaller and less youthful and enthusiastic audiences).

The Buddhist Centre has also had a very successful summer session, with consistently high attendances at beginners' classes, intermediate classes, and public talks. Attendance at the six-week Meditation and Buddhism course was particularly encouraging, with a record number of people coming, many of whom are now keen to deepen their involvment with the Dharma.

The high attendance at Buddhist and Arts Centre events has resulted in several mitra requests, people joining the communities and several Friends staying for a period at our country house in Sussex. The house is presently undergoing a full scale redecorating and refitting by our building team and should be ready for use as a retreat centre by next spring. Already, though, it is in use providing an ideal facility for people from the Buddhist Centre who wish to experience for themselves a Buddhist community and Right Livelihood co-operative.

Turning to the autumn session, another full programme of events has been arranged for both the Buddhist Centre and the Arts Centre. The Arts Centre season is entitled 'Theatre on Film', and consists of films, lectures, and plays centred on the theme of the theatre. The film season includes films of plays by Shakespeare, Chekhov, Ibsen, and Pinter, as well as films about actors and the theatre such as 'The Story of the Last Chrysanthemums', which is about a Japanese Kabuki actor and the world of the Kabuki Theatre.

Lectures in the season include 'Greek Tragedy: New Plays From Old Myths' given by David Robinson, senior lecturer in Greek at Edinburgh University, who gave a very full and informative lecture in the Festival of Friendship on 'Friendship in Greek Thought'. The Greek Tragedians felt free to adapt and remodel the folk-tale plots that they had inherited, and in his autumn lecture David Robinson will be examining the elements of invention, reshaping and redistribution of emphases in what are often mistakenly thought to be canonical versions of immutable themes.

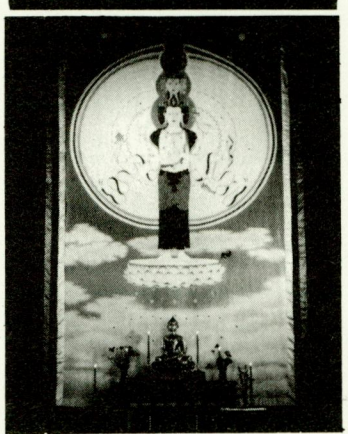
The season also includes a series of short plays by Samuel Beckett, and a premiere performance of Stephen MacDonald's new play Survivors - Summer 1918. Stephen MacDonald is a good friend of the Arts Centre. His new play takes place in the last summer of the Great War. In it is seen a wounded soldier home from France, meeting with the literary life of London, and trying to reconcile his own survival in a world where all of his colleagues and friends have been killed on the Western Front. There will also be a two-day workshop on King Lear, led by Jayamati.

The Buddhist Centre autumn season, apart from day retreats, meditation classes, and courses, includes three one-day seminars introducing various aspects of Buddhist practice, and two series of public talks. The first series is on 'Buddhism in the Arts' and includes a lecture by Jayamati entitled 'Towards a Buddhist Theatre' and 'The Concept of a Buddhist Cinema', in which Graham Coleman will be discussing and showing the film 'Radiating the Fruit of Truth', one of the films in his trilogy on Tibetan Buddhism. The second series of talks is on the life of the Buddha.

Public talks are now a major part of the Croydon Buddhist Centre programme, as it is as much through these as through meditation classes that people make their first contact with the Centre.

Finally, each member of the Croydon Centre's Right Livelihood businesses is now donating five pounds a week to the Venerable Sangharakshita's 60th birthday appeal fund, which will provide him with between seven and eight thousand pounds a year towards the cost of running the Order Office.

PADMALOKA



Yashodeva's Avalokiteshvara

The work done for the Convention, although it was hard and at times daunting, has been of great and lasting benefit to Padmaloka. We now have a new lounge/dormitory facility where there was once only a cart shed, we have a new large shrine-room where now hangs Yashodeva's beautiful thangka of the thousand-armed Avalokitesvara where once only hung the nests of swallows, and we now have a dining facility which can comfortably seat up to 120 people.

On the Summer Retreat immediately before the Convention, we had the opportunity to put these facilities into operation for the first time. The Summer Retreat proved our largest open event so far with an average of some fifty people attending. The retreat was led by Vessantara and supported by a strong Order team. The theme this year was the Five Spiritual Faculties. As well as five talks on the faculties given by members of the Order team, there was the opportunity to explore them more deeply in a question and answer session and discussion groups.

As autumn approaches, it is a time of change for the Padmaloka community. Several of our members have left, and some are leaving in the near future; one to help run a new retreat centre in the United States, and three of our mitras will be attending this year's Ordination course in Tuscany. Their places have already been filled by people comparatively new to the movement,

WEST LONDON

During September the new West London Buddhist Centre has started its various activities at 7 Colville Houses, W11, a few minutes walk from the world famous Portobello Road.

Over the past three years momentum was built up at our Baker Street premises. However, this was always to some degree a financial strain: Baker Street is in an expensive part of London which tends to be commercial rather than residential, and it is fairly isolated from our businesses and communities.

The Baker Street Buddhist Centre had no systematic financial planning to carry it into the future - this seemed to be its largest difficulty. To start things on a more stable financial basis the Centre is launching an appeal to raise £10,000 within its first year. This will go towards the installation of central heating and office equipment. It will also help to subsidise weekly expenditure.

Until now, the Centre team have been working on a voluntary basis; from September the Centre aims to support two full-time workers, and three full-time workers next year.

Friends Foods, our wholefood shop in Notting Hill Gate, is approaching the end of its five year lease. Although the business is healthy and profitable, it is not yet clear whether the lease will be renewed.

Friends Gardening has a lot of work but its workforce has been reduced with two of their men leaving for the three-month ordination retreat in Tuscany, and two others recently left. So this business is looking for more workers.

VAJRALOKA

In 1986 we will be offering wider programme of retreats than has previously been the case. Our general approach has been to provide an on-going meditation retreat, which anyone with some experience of the basic practices could come and join at most times of the year. There have also been some more specialised retreats such as Sadhana retreats for Order members. Next year we are planning to provide, additionally, some 'meditation workshop' retreats to look more thoroughly at the basics of meditation practice, a period of 'general' retreat, with a greater emphasis than usual on applying practice effort in the area of work, retreats emphasising the development of mindfulness, sesshins at festi-

val times, and other special retreats for Order members and mitras.

Question and answer sessions, centred on the problems and joys of meditation practice, have been a valuable part of our regular programme this year. This provides stimulation of the vital aspect of investigating what happens in one's meditation practice - without which you can get into a one-sidedly subjective experience...or lack of it! We have been keeping records of these sessions which are building up a picture of what areas may need most attention for most people. We have also been advising people on sitting posture.

Kamalasila has been going out to other centres giving talks on aspects of meditation practice. The community has been out as a team to hold meditation days at the London and Glasgow centres, and hopes to do more of these.

At the beginning of July Kamalasila was given the Anagarika ordination by the Venerable Sangharakshita, here at Vajraloka. The significance of this is the taking of the Brahmacarya precept full-time. Everyone at Vajraloka takes this precept, to practise chastity, as part of the retreat. Chastity and meditation go together, and are mutually supportive practices. Kamalasila's taking of the Brahmacarya precept provides a clear example, strengthening the appreciation of these twin ideals at Vajraloka.

Next year there will be no women's retreats here. This will make quite a difference to the flow of our year's programme. By then the women's retreat centre should be open. Our best wishes for the successful future of the WRC and our sincere thanks to the women who have supported the retreats here so enthusiastically and appreciatively during the last five years.

LEEDS

Progress has been rapid in the Leeds Centre since its opening earlier this year. Redecoration of the public areas is now well on the way to completion, and a pleasant and relaxed atmosphere is developing. The community has now grown to four with the arrival of a Friend from Manchester.

Padmasambhava Day was celebrated with meditation, a tape lecture, and a puja, at which several regulars and beginners were present. Mid-July was a busy period which included a visit by the Venerable Sangharakshita who stayed overnight on his way back to Padmaloka from Wales. The following day saw a very successful benefit dinner at the Centre, at which nineteen people were present. In addition to raising a useful sum of money, the dinner was an enjoyable way of bringing people together, and was felt to be something of a milestone in the history of the Centre. It was attended by a number of people from Manchester, with which Centre we have strong links. The session ended with a successful weekend retreat in a secluded cottage in the Yorkshire Dales.

We are now looking forward to what will be a very busy autumn schedule which includes a series of talks by Devamitra. Meanwhile new members are still needed for the Leeds community, and we welcome visitors to stay for any length of time.

STOCKHOLM

FWBO Stockholm has entered a new phase following our efforts last winter to attract new people. We now have a solid core of regular Friends meeting several times a week. In the spring most activities centred around these new Friends, with study groups, pujas, and several weekend retreats. In June we held the annual summer retreat at Stenfors. This was the ninth summer retreat, and this year the retreat had a definite Swedish flavour since all but one participant was Swedish speaking. However, for the sake of the Dutch Friend who attended Dhirananda led the retreat in English. Next year we are planning to hold a large summer retreat with Swedish as the official language. This year's retreat was held a little earlier than usual with Midsummers Day (a national holiday in Sweden) almost exactly in the middle. We celebrated by erecting a traditional May-pole, and Sona gave a talk in which he emphasised the importance of staying in touch with nature whilst trying to follow the spiritual life.

In August six women from Stockholm attended the women's retreat at Kirklington. None of them had been on retreat in England before and it was the first time it had been possible for us to attend a women's retreat. Living in Sweden one cannot easily appreciate the full significance of the FWBO. On this retreat not only was it possible to enjoy the contact with so many other women who are interested in Buddhism; it was also possible to gain a clearer understanding of what the Movement is attempting to achieve. For us coming from a new and small centre like Stockholm, it was a wonderful experience to be with so many people. Meditating and performing puja with over fifty women is something we will all remember for a long time.

INDIA

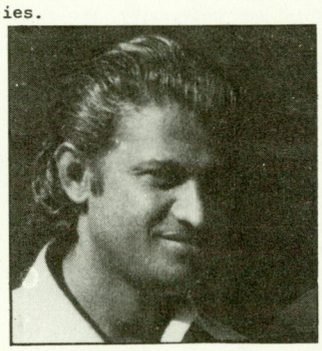
MAHARASHTRA

Buddha Day and Dhamma Day were celebrated in all our centres. Buddha Day is celebrated on a very large scale by Buddhists here so we receive lots of invitations to give lectures in different localities and venues. Dhamma Day is not so widely celebrated, and because the monsoon has usually started by then we have a different kind of programme. In Bombay, Ulhasnagar, and Aurangabad we celebrated with day retreats and talks in the evening. At Ulhasnagar Lokamitra opened our new vihara (a room attached to the hostel) and named it "Dhammachakra Vihara".

Our hostel at Lohagaon now has forty-two students who are enjoying the facilities provided by the new building. Indeed it has attracted praise from many quarters in Pune, especially the social welfare department who regard it a model hostel. In Ulhasnagar we were not able to purchase the adjoining block, the owner changing his mind at the last minute. This means that we have much less accommodation than we had hoped for. We have therefore started with only ten students this year. During the year we will build another floor to the building which should raise the capacity to twenty-five or so. We are also looking for more land nearby.

In Aurangabad we have now purchased two acres of land not far from Milind College. This is very good agricultural land with a well which provides water all year round. We will be building a hostel to accommodate sixty boys, at least half of whom we hope to be able to take at the start of the next school year in June 1986. It already has a small building which houses six very poor Buddhist students involved with our activities there so in a way we already have a hostel going. It also accommodates a shrine for our Dhamma classes there.

At Dapodi in Pune, our medical centre building has been delayed but we are now in the process of moving into the ground floor and beginning to use it as a centre for our Dapodi medical and social activities.



Vimalakirti

At Sadhamma Pradip (the medical centre at Bhaja) we held a four-week mitra retreat in May. Like all of our four-week mitra retreats up to now, it was divided into three parts, the first and last parts devoted to study and the middle part to meditation and silence. We studied The Ten Pillars of Buddhism which all without exception felt was the most practical study they had done. We are translating it into Marathi. The Venerable Sangharakshita's exposition of 'love modes' and 'power modes' were especially appreciated.

We have also held a general retreat as well as a week's speakers' retreat recently. The latter was led by Vimalakirti, a very effective and skilful speaker. We have many demands for lectures so the training of speakers is very important. Vimalakirti is concentrating more on Dhamma work, now spending three days a week out of Pune (at present in Aurangabad) helping to make up for the absence of Vajraketu and Jyotipala (whose base is now Sravasti in north India).

One event towers above all others in the last three months and that is the death of Anagarika Mahadhammavira ("great hero of the Dhamma") who was in his mid-seventies. He became a sramanera over ten years ago, and became a member of the Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha (Western Buddhist Order) in January 1982. In the last couple of years he spent most of his time in Aurangabad supporting Jyotipala. Much could be said about him and will be. We will always remember him for his ceaseless positivity and energy, and for gratitude at finding the Order, which was so overwhelming that it was the one thing that put him at a loss for words to express.

AHMEDABAD

In our last report I mentioned, almost as an afterthought, that Ahmedabad has been witnessing some terrible riots. Unfortunately these persist and have come to dominate many aspects of city life including, I'm sorry to say, our Dhamma activities. This is because a curfew has often been imposed, and even when it has not, people are reluctant to move about much, especially at night, due to the many stabbing incidents. This has meant that our classes and other activities have virtually stopped.

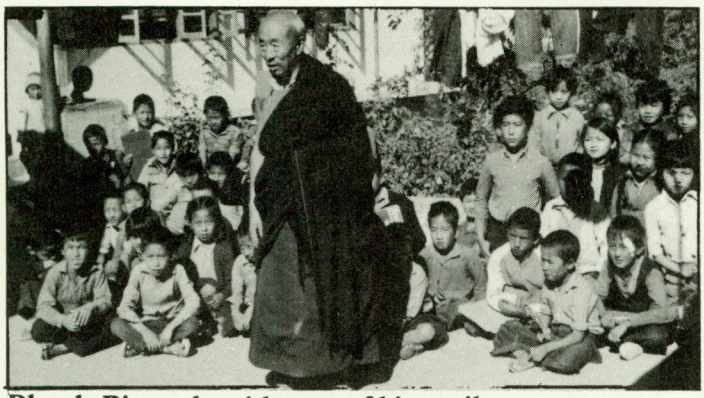
Besides our weekly classes, these include the cancellation of a five day retreat scheduled for the end of May, and the publication of a new Gujerati booklet Buddha, Man or God?

It has not been all gloom and despair however. Recently we have been given the use of a basement room in Dani Limda, an area inhabited by a large Scheduled Caste population, besides many of our Buddhist friends. Already we have started a children's class there, which being on Sunday mornings and in a non-curfew area, is proving very popular.

Another bright spot in recent weeks was our Dhammachakra Day celebration. Despite the riots and curfew, about eighty people attended a very enjoyable and lively programme.

AID FOR INDIA

Mahamati and I had lunch together one day in April. We sat talking about Aid For India in general and the special appeal that was going to be launched in the summer to raise £180 000 for Dhardo Rimpoche's school for Tibetan refugees in Kalimpong. I don't remember very much about the conversation other



Dhardo Rimpoche with some of his pupils

than that the teachers at the school earned £7 a month. All the time in the back of my mind was the thought that doing an Aid For India appeal was like climbing a huge mountain, a veritable trial by endurance which so far I had happily managed to avoid. And yet here I was trying to convince Mahamati that he should let me join the fundraising team. For a couple of months the idea had been gradually growing inside me that I had to take something on which would put my commitment to the Three Jewels to the test in an objective way. I sensed that my commitment was stronger than I was prepared to admit to myself, frightened perhaps of the implications. Maybe I needed to start climbing mountains.

As I rode away from the Aid For India office weaving my way through the busy London traffic on my bike I knew I was going to do the Appeal. Mahamati and I washed up together that evening in Sukhavati and he told me that he had decided I could join the team if I wanted to. A bit scared, I went away for a few days to think about it, but my heart had already made the decision. During this time one particular image stayed with me. It was a story that Satyapala had told me illustrating Dhardo RimpocHe's remarkable generosity. After they had met,Satyapala walked back to his hotel in Kalimpong to discover one of Dhardo Rimpoche's pupils had run ahead and was about to pay his bill. I kept thinking of the photographs of Dhardo Rimpoche that I had seen. A face that radiated kindness and generosity, a life dedicated to helping others. How could I not give two months of my time to help him?

The school in Kalimpong was founded by Dhardo Rimpoche in 1954 for the newly arriving Tibetan refugees leaving their own country as a result of the Chinese invasion. Over the years the FWBO has become the sole means of financial support for the school, raising one or two thousand pounds each year, just enough to stop the school from closing. The aim of the Appeal was to set the school on a firm financial base for the years ahead. As Mahamati had pointed out, what better time to do this than in the year of the 60th birthday appeal for the Venerable Sangharakshita, since Dhardo Rimpoche had been one of his principal teachers. This year we had the chance to make them both fully effective in their work.

During the training retreat in Sussex the week before the Appeal started, John Bloss told Kevala and myself (we were both new to fundraising) that there were lots of people out there in the world who were waiting for the opportunity to be asked to give. Quite simply I didn't believe him.

I am writing this article two weeks after the Appeal has ended, just back from Vajraloka. We made our target of £180 000. Each of us in the team raised more than £25 000 for the school.

Buddhism teaches us that one of the greatest gifts that can be bestowed is the opportunity to give. There were many times during the Appeal when someone had just pledged to become a supporter of the school, perhaps to the tune of hundreds of pounds. I would be trying to thank them, but they would not give me the chance in their desire to thank me. There we were, moments before complete strangers, standing smiling at each other, thanking each other, feeling perhaps that the world was not such a bad place after all.

Aid For India appeals work because they are built on such a solid practice - the practice of generosity. That the more you give the more you receive, time and again was proven to be more than an over-worked cliché. If one could approach each door as if it were the first, fearless but friendly, wanting people to give but not making them feel guilty if they didn't, then fundraising was not just a long climb but also a view from the heights. At the end of such an evening I could wind my way back to the community with a deep feeling of satisfaction. What ever else, this day of my spiritual life had not been wasted. It was only possible to work at this level, being positive but having no expectations, if the daily metta bhavana practice that the six of us did together each morning of the Appeal was not just an abstraction. I was learning to put my spiritual practice into action.

I thought a lot about the 250 children at Dhardo Rimpoche's school during those two months walking the streets of London trying to find supporters for the Appeal. I have to admit there were some nights when I just wanted to turn my back and run, be anywhere but these streets. Too many people had said no, and I was taking it as a personal rejection. But then I might look at the picture of the Tibetan children on the front of the Appeal booklet, and remember that for those 250 children I was one sixth of their life-line for a better future. (That's about 42 children each - some family!) Or there was a blackboard in the Appeal community kitchen giving the individual and team scores for the Appeal to date. Objective feedback par excellence. And always there were pictures of a kindly Tibetan who had been so important to the Venerable Sangharakshita and who was becoming increasingly close to me. So plucking up my courage I would knock another door anyway just to see what would happen and, as once happened, it is opened by someone who, after I said hello, immediately said "It's funny you should call, I dreamed about Lokamitra in India last night. Come in and tell me how I can help."

Just think how many people we meet each year during these appeals. It's not easy work by any means. I did have a door slammed in my face one night, but I felt so at home in another house that whilst the lady whom I had persuaded to become a supporter answered the phone, I finished the washing-up for her. Another man finally agreed to sign a covenant after I had spoken to him a number of times, admitting that it was persistence that had finally made him decide to support the school. Every new door knocked during an Aid For India appeal is a chance to have a significant meeting with someone if we want it to be.

Now I have decided to go back to America to help Manjuvajra create a retreat centre within sight of the Green Hills of New Hampshire, but if I was not doing this I would have no hesitation in continuing to work with Aid For India to help the charity grow, for I really feel this is just the beginning, our arms must reach in all directions. Dhardo Rimpoche has said that if you have a choice between working on yourself, meditating in an isolated place such as a cave, or working for others by staying in the cities, then the safest path is to work for other people. Then you can be sure.

David Keefe

TAIWAN VISIT

The Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM), who organised my visit to Malaysia last year, are very keen to help our work in India, and saw that this conference would be a good situation in which to communicate what we are doing. The YBAM have a lot of respect for the work of the FWBO/TBMSG and would like to see us more involved in this conference. Consequently they invited me to attend and read a paper.

The conference took place in Fo Kuang Shan monastery in south Taiwan. This is a huge complex of temples, bhikshu and bhikshuni residences, conference halls, a high school, orphanage, and cultural museum, created over the last eighteen years under the guidance of the Venerable Hsing Yun, who has founded many other temples and related institutions throughout Taiwan and elsewhere. He and his disciples hosted us magnificantly. We were treated to the most delicious Chinese vegetarian food, beautifully presented cultural shows, sightseeing trips, and so on. Everything seemed perfectly organised. I have never anywhere experienced such hospitality.

Although the conference lasted for almost a week, there was only one and a half days of seminar which was rather disappointing, since there seemed no time to discuss the most vital matters. A number of resolutions were drawn up and agreed to. One did get the feeling that where there are strong regional centres these will be implemented. The Youth section of the World Fellowship of Buddhists certainly has some very active members, which gives some potential to the organisation. Although these resolutions, if implemented, may go some way towards making the Buddhist group, as such, stronger and more positive, I am not sure that they had any real spiritual significance. It seemed a pity that there was not some joint spiritual practice, such as puja and meditation, but perhaps that is expecting too much from such a meeting.

It was however an extremely friendly occasion. It was very easy to meet and get to know others, and this seemed to me the most important aspect of the conference. I found it personally very enriching to meet Buddhists from other parts of the world, especially the East, each working in their own way to help the development of the Dharma.

People were extremely interested in the work of TBMSG, especially the Venerable Hsing Yun. I showed slides of his temple in Taipei and also to a graduate society. I am hoping next year to visit some of the Far Eastern countries to raise funds for our Dharma work here and I think this visit prepared the ground for that very well.

During the conference TBMSG Pune was accepted as a regional centre of the World Fellowship of Buddhist Youth. This will help us to develop these contacts and enable the developing Indian Buddhist Movement to communicate something of its increasing dynamism to Buddhists throughout the world.

Lokamitra

AUCKLAND

We are now well over half way to the target of $25,000 that we need in order to secure a mortgage for a new centre. This money has been raised within the Movement alone, through the skills and inspiration of the 'New Centre Appeal' team. Vidya-

vati is preparing a prospectus to contact people outside the Movement to help us raise more, so we hope to secure a property by mid 1986.

Our Buddha Day and Dharma Day celebrations were beautiful des pite our rather ad hoc situation in our rented city centre building. Dharma and drama prevailed during both festivals. For Dharma Day we had a special dramatic rain-cloud shrine, and on both days we had funny but profound theatrical skits.

On the education front, we've recently held a meditation workshop at Auckland University, under the auspices of the Continuing Education Department. Fifty-five people enrolled and came away inspired, as did the teaching team of sixteen Order members and mitras led by Priyananda and Sue Storey who presented the Dharma in a sincere and convincing way.

We have just had a one month follow-up session , and it is inspiring to find so many people have instituted a regular meditation practice which is already changing their lives. Priyananda finished with a talk on the Five Spiritual Faculties.

Six Order members and mitras have been giving school talks; some to 60 - 80 children at a time. Some of the students have asked us to teach them meditation in school. We had a special 'Friends Day' in June to launch the Venerable Sangharakshita's birthday appeal.

The Order in Wellington is growing fast. Gunapala, Silaratna, and Khemapala have arrived, and Gunapala is organising our 'never done before' Spring Rites Retreat.

The Meditation Network for World Peace is thriving, as is distribution of Hundredth Monkey books, and more recently Rupert Sheldrake's literature

Many people here are just discovering these concepts and great excitement abounds. We had a special mitra day to view and discuss issues raised in Buddhism, World Peace and Nuclear War. We have also seen two video interviews with the Venerable Sangharakshita, and value enormous this visual contact with him.

SYDNEY

It is 9.30 a.m on a chilly winter's morning in Sydney. Your breath frosts on the air as you take a short stroll from Central Station (Sydney's main railway station) to an anonymous door into a three-floor building in George Street (the quieter end of one of the main roads in the centre of Sydney). You mount two flights of stairs, and so does your curiosity ... "What's at the top?" ... You walk down an arched corridor ... "What's at the end?"

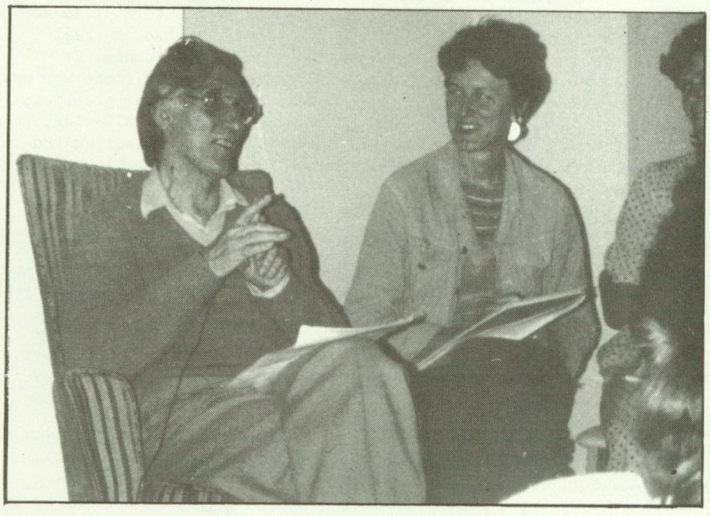
The poetry of the sunlight filtering through the dust; you tread lightly, with wonder, over a floor which is hidden under a foot of rubble, gaze upwards at the skeletal beams. Two more rooms follow in a similar condition ... and to think that all this was achieved in a few days by four dedicated demolishers!

This was the new Sydney FWBO Centre, seen once the dust had settled. Since then, work has progressed rapidly thanks to the building experience of Gunapala and Vipula, the engineering expertise of Dipankara and the timely invention of a cunning counterweight pulley device, courtesy of Dharmamati, and also of course thanks to the willing and able help of everyone else.

In the midst of this excitement we are maintaining the regulars' study/puja evenings and men's and women's study evenings to keep some continuity and keep in regular communication with each other, after the closure of Rocklands Road and until the work on the new Centre is complete.

This year there will also be two new events for Sydney: the first women's retreat, in July, and the first ten day retreat at the end of the year. 1985 is proving to be an energetic year in Sydney, as we had hoped, and we are quite excited about the direction in which the Movement is going here. There will now be room for the expansion that could not occur at Rocklands Road, and we will be able to meet the needs of more people with a fuller programme.

Conventions



Questions and answers on the Women's Convention

Wood Norton

The Women's Order Convention held in July at Wood Norton in Norfolk, made history on several counts. Firstly, although there have been many women's Order retreats, this was the first official Women's Convention. It was, therefore, the largest gathering of women Order Members to date, with Dharmacarinis coming not only from centres in the United Kingdom, but also from Finland, Holland, Malaysia, and Australia. Unfortunately the five New Zealand Dharmacarinis could not be present. We were also extremely fortunate to have the Venerable Sangharakshita staying with us for the ten days, holding a question and answer session each evening. Also, the ordinations of Samata and Sobhana were the first women's ordinations to be held in an Order gathering.

The main feature of the Convention was the morning study sessions on 'The Human Situation' and 'The Goal' chapters from The Three Jewels, and the presentation of questions on this material to the Venerable Sangharakshita each evening. Questions and discussion ranged over such topics as the preciousness and unity of life, on the six realms and the importance of the centrality of the human realm, on the five skandhas as a teaching which enables us to experience ourselves as a dynamic process of ever-changing events, as well as on the many descriptions of the goal in Buddhism.

On more than one occasion, during these discussions, the Venerable Sangharakshita made the point that it was important not to take any of the teachings too literally. He said we should try to approach the Dharma poetically rather than literally or pseudo-scientifically. We should be careful not to get too caught up in the letter, but to look deeply into the meaning of the teachings. We should continually ask ourselves what it was the Buddha was actually trying to communicate in terms of human life, experience, and development. He also said that he thought that the language of poetry was much more able to express the nature of reality than the language of prose, and that perhaps we should try to see the Buddha as a poet and visionary.

Two evenings were set aside for more general questions on other aspects of the Dharma - on meditation and on the Movement. Most of the questions fell into the latter section and concerned women and spiritual development. These questions themselves ranged from specific questions concerning women working in co-ops or centres and living in communities, to much broader issues such as why women, in general, move more slowly towards ordination than men. Many possible reasons for this were explored, including biological factors, early negative conditioning - whether religious social, or from the family - and some possible reasons why women often seem to lack self-confidence and true independence were discussed. No definite conclusions were reached, but the airing of such topics in a creative way was stimulating and valuable

We also enjoyed listening to the Venerable Sangharakshita talk about his own life and experience of Dharma study. He told us that he always felt in a state of absorption akin to meditation whenever he read or studied the Dharma, and felt that he had 'come home' or was 'on home ground' as he experienced a deep feeling of affinity with and understanding of the teachings.

The Venerable Sangharakshita also saw each of us individually and we felt deeply appreciative of the time he spent with us.

As some Dharmacarinis had come from centres abroad where they are the only woman Order Member, and as even those of us in Britain spend more time teaching and leading retreats than being together, we all enjoyed meditating and studying together, renewing old friendships and simply enjoying each other's company.

We left after ten days stimulated to study more seriously and extensively so that we could generate deeper questions, more in communication with one another, more deeply devoted to our teacher, and more confident in our abilities to go forward.

Padmaloka

Anyone arriving at Padmaloka after a long absence was immediately aware that changes had been taking place. The garden had been landscaped, and although the same bronze Buddha sat at peace amongst the greenery and flowers, he had been elevated onto a rockery built from orange and white flints, and before him water bubbled up into a stone dish before running and splashing down a series of steps into a new lily pond, in which goldfish darted and flashed. Dashes of colour in the kitchen garden led one to discover a collection of brightly painted caravans, whilst what had previously been the main shrine room was now laid out with white topped trestle tables and rows of chairs. Across the courtyard again came the splash of running water, but this time from the newly completed shower block. To the back of the building were neatly laid gravel paths, beds of grass and shrubs, and an airy dormitory where previously all manner of cartwheels

and planks had collected in an open shed. In the large barn a number of men were busily completing their preparations. The roof had been patched, and inside the walls of old red Norfolk brick had been cleaned down, the floor levelled, and a blue carpet laid over the entire expanse. Above the oak beams, which still revealed the contours of the trees from which they had once been hewn, muslin sheets made a false ceiling, hiding the iron girders of the corrugated roof, and catching the droppings of the birds that could be heard flying to and fro from their nests.

In niches and windows around the walls were small shrines containing rupas of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, whilst at the end of the refurbished barn stood a shrine, covered with bright cloths and set out with candles, bowls, flowers, and incense. Hanging behind the shrine, and filling the end of the barn, was a huge painting of the eleven-headed and thousand-armed Avalokitesvara, floating above flashing jewels in the middle of a radiant blue sky, and standing on a lotus, his skin pure white bedecked with jewels and rich silks.

Avalokitesvara in this form looks out in all the directions of space, and reaches out in compassion to all beings, representing those qualities we would wish to see the Western Buddhist Order embody. The painting, some sixteen feet high by eight feet wide, was framed in bright bands of cloth in the manner of a Tibetan tangkha. The fruit of fifteen week's work by Yashodeva this painting was to overlook, and provide the focus for, the activities taking place in the shrine room over the next twelve days. The Convention of the Western Buddhist Order was about to start.

Months of planning by the Padmaloka community and Order Office were coming to their culmination. In fact the 1985 Convention had already begun ten days earlier when some thirty women Order Members had gone on retreat with the Venerable Sangharakshita in a large country house in north Norfolk.

Now, however, for two very full days of activities, the whole Order, men and women, was to come together at Padmaloka, this to be followed by a further ten day Convention for the men's wing of the Order. Order Members had travelled from all over the world to join the Convention. They came from New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia, Finland, Sweden, Germany, and Holland. No-one was able to come from the USA but four of the men on the Convention were shortly to depart to help with the establishment of the new retreat centre near Boston. Sadly, none of the growing number of Indian Order Members were able to attend either, but Ashvajit, an English Order Member presently studying and working in India, was able to be with us. Although the majority of Order Members still come from the British Isles, the international character of the Order becomes increasingly apparent.

The evening of Tuesday 23rd July saw more and more Order Members arriving to fill the dormitories, and a small encampment of tents had sprung up amongst the trees and bushes. After meditation and breakfast the following morning thirty women Order Members arrived to join the hundred men already assembled, and the mixed convention was under way.

After the formal dedication of the shrine room, there was a puja, followed by a session of the Order metta bhavana. Here the Venerable Sangharakshita led us, name by name, through a list of Order Members, while we sought to radiate feelings of goodwill and friendship to them all, whether gathered together in the shrine room at Padmaloka or spread throughout the world.

Each day was packed full. First there were six talks which included accounts of the Order in New Zealand and Finland, the implications of setting up a retreat centre for women in the Movement, and an amusing and occasionally moving account of the early days of the FWBO by Ananda. On the second day came two full length talks. One was by Subhuti. While answering criticisms levelled at the FWBO in reviews of his book Buddhism For Today, he sought to bring out the present unique contribution the FWBO is making towards the evolution of an authentic Western Buddhism, and at the same time to deal with a number of confused views which Order Members often meet with.

He dealt, for example, with the point of view which sees the FWBO's emphasis on the value of individuality as being in direct contradiction to the teaching of anattā. He pointed out that 'no-self' means giving up all fixed attitudes and habitual propensities in order to develop an open creative individuality. The second of the talks, by Nagabodhi, dealt with his recent experience of the FWBO, or Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha Sahayaka Gana as it is known in India, and in particular with the significance of Dr Ambedkar, who led the mass conversion of ex-Untouchables to Buddhism in the 1950's. Nagabodhi explored the implications of Dr Ambedkar's 'Dhamma Revolution' not only for Buddhists in India, or for India herself, but also for us in the West, indicating the potency of the Dharma as a catalyst of social change and peaceful transformation.

On both days there was also a question and answer session, in which the Venerable Sangharakshita answered questions on topics ranging from the chanting of mantras to money, and from attitudes towards medicine to symbols and symbolism. Each evening Sangharakshita also entertained the gathering with readings from 'work in progress' He read from his memoirs describing his time in Kalimpong around 1950. We entered into the world of the young novice monk of twenty-five, followed him through his higher ordination as a bhikku, and were introduced to some of the colourful and eccentric characters that peopled the Indian hill town at that time, all this interspersed with pithy comments on the nature of Buddhism and the Buddhist way of life.

The Men's Convention followed the combined Convention. The programme was now changed so that after meditation and breakfast came a morning of study. Different groups delved into texts of the Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana traditions, whilst one group took up William Blake's Marriage of Heaven and Hell and sought to plumb its depths from a Buddhist perspective. In the afternoons there was time for jogging, karate, Yoga, T'ai Chi, and walks. At times the lanes of Surlingham seemed to be filled with walking and talking pairs! In the evenings there was a series of talks on subjects ranging from Ancient Greece to Buddhism in Ancient China, and from Jung's archetypes to Shakespeare. One of the most outstanding was given by Kamalasila, chairman of Vajraloka. Wearing his new anagagarika's robes he spoke on 'The Brahma Life' with lightness, warmth and sincerity, describing the place and value of celibacy in the spiritual life. Kamalasila drew very much from his own experience, and presented a view that was balanced, rounded and reasonable, and yet which did not allow itself to be compromised by concessions to contemporary attitudes; a quiet inspiration to all those who heard him.

On the final evening of the Convention came another outstanding talk, this time from Abhaya, on 'The Speech Principle in the Western Buddhist Order'. Emphasising the importance of speech, he urged us all to think speak, and write more clearly, entertaining us with extracts from his own 'work in progress', the autobiography which he is presently writing. The account of his days at a Roman Catholic seminary and his escape from it held the audience enthralled, whilst his ramble through the pages of Shabda, the Order's monthly newsletter, filled the barn with laughter.

The Venerable Sangharakshita was very active providing much stimulation and food for thought with two further question and answer sessions. He also gave a further animated reading from his memoirs, this time treating us to the full account of his meeting with Lama Govinda and Li Gotami, extracts from which appeared in a recent Newsletter. This reading was liberally interspersed with reflections on the place of art in the spiritual life shared between himself and Lama Govinda.

The spiritual highlight of the Men's Convention came with a puja that concluded the full-moon day celebrations three days before the end. There were no study groups, the whole day being given over to meditation and devotional practices. In the evening over a hundred of us assembled in the colourfully decorated shrine hall. A band of paper colourfully painted with the mantra OM MANI PADME HUM, the mantra of Avalokitesvara, ran round the circumference. Besides readings and the usual chanting and recitation we chanted 100,000 of these mantras (a hundred men chanting 1,000 each - in unison). This took 90 minutes. During this time everyone came forward to the shrine to make an offering that symbolised what he felt was his contribution to the Western Buddhist Order; what this 'hand' of Avalokitesvara might be holding.

It was a beautiful evening, the Order seated in rows down each side of the hall, the hall itself decorated with streamers and flowers, the shrine beautifully decorated, the deep voiced chanting reverberating through the building, all overlooked by the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara reaching out to the world in compassionate activity. It was possible to glean the strongest sense of what we collectively are, as individuals committed to the Three Jewels, as the Western Buddhist Order, and what we might have to offer each other

Puja on the Men's Convention

and the world. This, above all, is what we carried away with us from Padmaloka at the end of the Convention, to our own centres and to the far corners of the world.

Saddhaloka

Chairmen

The conflicting demands of unity and independence have been an issue in the Sangha from the very earliest times. A person is a member of the Sangha by virtue of Going For Refuge to the Three Jewels. This, by its very nature, is and always must be an individual and autonomous act. (It is after all impossible to be committed to someone else's spiritual growth and development.) On the other hand, by the very fact of this commitment to one's individual spiritual growth and development, one becomes a member of a spiritual community consisting of all those other people who have committed themselves - individually - to their own spiritual development. Hence the very nature of the spiritual community poses an unavoidable problem: how to reconcile the need for uncompromisingly individual commitment and autonomous growth with the equally vital need for the corporate harmony of the Sangha, without resorting to an authoritarian structure which would, of course, undermine the principle of individual autonomy.

This is far from a merely technical issue: it is no exaggeration to say that the survival of the spiritual community depends on its successful resolution. Considering this, it seemed especially appropriate that the Chairmen's AGM this year centred around study with the Venerable Sangharakshita of a text which shed light on this particular issue, among quite a few others. The text was The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka: an Anthropological and Historical Study by Michael Carrithers, which was published in India two years ago (though it is not yet generally available in this country).

The book examines the movement towards the re-establishment of the forest monk in Sri Lanka from its inception in the mid-nineteeth century through to the present day. This movement entailed the rediscovery of quite a large number of Buddhist principles and practices, some of them of quite fundamental importance. These, over many centuries, have fallen into abeyance in the context of a Bhikkhu-Sangha which had become so deeply submerged into the surrounding village life, that not only was it riddled with caste prejudice, but the very monastic rule (patimokkha) that the bhikkhus were supposed to undertake was unknown and unpractised by the majority of them. The founders of the new forest monk tradition, then, sought to re-establish a meditative and ascetic lifestyle based on that of the early monastic Sangha, as outlined in the Vinaya. At the time, they were concerned to found a tradition of ordination - and arising from it a spiritual community - which was completely free from the taint of mere lip-service to the ideal of the Sangha and the spiritual life.

The author of the book, albeit a professional anthropologist, and evidently not a Buddhist himself, deals with his subject matter in a lively and generally sympathetic way. The main thrust of approach is biographical - outlining the history of the forest monk movement through the lives of some eight or nine figures of key significance in its re-establishment.

The book gave rise to a remarkably wide range of discussion - and up to three hours worth of questions for the Venerable Sangharakshita on each of the thirteen evenings of the event. However, it is clear in retrospect that the principal value of Michael Carrithers' book as a study text for us lay in its depiction of events and issues broadly parallel to many of those arising in the establishment of our own branch of the Sangha: the Western Buddhist Order; and new Buddhist movement: the FWBO.

The issue of autonomy versus harmony is one that the WBO approaches along largely traditional lines. The principle of autonomy is implicit in the private WBO ordination ceremony, in which a person Goes for Refuge individually, irrespective of whether or not anyone else does so, or ever has done so. This aspect of commitment is brought out further by the Venerable Sangharakshita's emphasis on the development of 'Individuality' and the qualities of the 'True Individual'. Harmony in the Order, on the other hand, is promoted by meeting, according to the Buddha's advice, "frequently and in large numbers" - hence weekly Order chapter meetings and monthly regional and national Order weekends. However, as the Venerable Sangharakshita pointed out, in the context of the seminar, this is not in itself enough. In the course of the last eighteen years a viable movement and a viable Order have come into existence, but we have yet to perfect their structure - especially that of the Order. What the Order requires - and this will have to be developed as a matter of priority over the coming years - is essentially a Constitution, embodying in concrete terms the principles of autonomy and harmony upon which the Order must run if it is to remain a true spiritual community. This will also embody the principles for decision making within the Order - at present a rather ad hoc process - along lines which avoid the extremes of authoritarianism on the one hand and anarchy on the other. It is, after all, not possible to have thousands of people (such numbers as we hope the Order will ultimately rise to) co-operating in a purely spontaneous way.

The Venerable Sangharakshita stressed the importance of the Chairmen's meeting itself as a successful instance of 'autonomy in harmony' in the Movement. Each Chairman represents a different centre, an independent FWBO, but at the same time there is ever increasing harmony among the Chairmen themselves. As long as the Chairmen continue to meet in this way - even if there are in due course dozens, or even hundreds of chairmen - harmony as well as autonomy in the Movement will be ensured. This function will, of course, be all the more vital when the Venerable Sangharakshita is no longer with us: the continued unity of the Movement will depend on the whole Order adhering to the principle of 'autonomy in harmony' to a very high degree, and in this the Chairmen's Meeting is at present acting as a vanguard.

Apart from matters concerning the structure of the Order and the Movement in general, another important area which emerged during the discussion of the book concerned the 'status' of the WBO in the context of the Buddhist Sangha. The question is sometimes asked as to whether the WBO is a 'recognised' part of the Buddhist Sangha. The Venerable Sangharakshita had pointed out on several occasions prior to the Chairmen's AGM that this is, in fact, a meaningless question: there is no such thing as a 'recognised' Buddhist Sangha. The situation in the Buddhist world is that there are numerous and extremely disparate 'Sanghas' within every school of Buddhism - Theravada, Zen, Shin, Tibetan, and so on. Members of one of these 'Sanghas' may or may not 'recognise' members of another 'Sangha', as the case may be, but there is no overall body, or even body of opinion, embracing all forms of Buddhism and somehow determining what is an 'officially recognised' branch of the Sangha and what is not. Even within a single school, such as the Theravada, where unity of opinion on such a matter might be expected, this is not the case. The members of one particular tradition, or nikaya, of Theravada ordination do not recognise de jure that the members of another nikaya are ordained at all, although there is usually a de facto recognition.

Although the question of 'recognition' is, therefore, irrelevant, there is much to be said for publicly clarifying the nature and position of the WBO, and ordination into the WBO, if only because there is so much general misunderstanding in Buddhist circles as to the meaning and nature of the Sangha. This will doubtless be done at length in future publications, so I will only outline here a few points which emerged from the seminar. A fundamental point is that the Sangha is not to be identified exclusively with the Bhikkhu Sangha. This is a distortion arising largely from within the Theravada school. Here, we have a strange situation which allows lay people to be depicted in the Theravada Pali Canon as Stream Entrants and therefore members of the Arya Sangha, but presumably not, according to later usage, members of the 'Sangha' per se because they are not Bhikkhus!

Other schools of Buddhism, imbued with the spirit of the Mahayana, usually avoid such a narrow view of the Sangha. In the WBO, as is often emphasised, commitment - Going for Refuge - is regarded as primary, as the factor which determines membership of the Sangha, and the lifestyle which expresses this commitment - including the number and nature of precepts observed, is regarded as secondary. Hence, the WBO is not a 'monastic' or a 'lay' Order, but simply an Order of Dharmacaris - of people commited to the practice of the Dharma, as exemplified by the ten fundamental precepts. (See: Sangharakshita The Ten Pillars of Buddhism, esp pp 34-41.) The Dharmacari ordination is therefore not, in traditional terms, an 'Upasaka' ordination as distinct from a 'Bhikkhu' ordination - or vice versa - but stands outside these now polarised and lifestyle-oriented terms of reference altogether. It is simply Going for Refuge; and it is this which, in terms of the central Buddhist tradition from the time of the Buddha onwards, has always constituted entry into the Sangha. Thus, the Sangha itself must first and foremost be defined as the community of those who Go for Refuge to the Three Jewels (including those - the Arya Sangha - who embody the Three Jewels). If it is defined in other terms - such as "the community of those who observe 227..." (or ten, or eight, or five etc) "...precepts" - then the fundamental import of the Sangha has beencompletely misunderstood.

Unfortunately, space does not allow me to go into any of the other numerous and fascinating topics that the study of this text led us onto - topics such as asceticism and meditation (in graveyards and otherwise), Buddhism and politics, developing a sense of urgency, the advantages of gerontocracy, establishing the FWBO in Sri Lanka - and so on. Hopefully, in time, edited highlights of this immensely valuable , fascinating and multi-facted seminar will appear.

Tejananda

ORDER OFFICE

The past three months have mainly seen the Venerable Sangharakshita engaged in literary work. He has continued the writing, recommenced earlier in the year, of the second volume of his memoirs which deals with his early years in Kalimpong. In the last few weeks this task has been laid aside once more for more pressing duties, but he hopes to take it up again when he returns from the Three-month Pre-ordination Course for Men at the end of the year. He has another two volumes planned, but he is no longer sure that he will have time to complete them. A few previewed excerpts from work-in-progress promise that the book will be interesting, entertaining, and moving as the previous volume, The Thousand Petalled Lotus - and some have considered it to be even better written. Besides giving an approachable insight for the newcomer to Buddhism into one Buddhist's view of life, these memoirs are an important source of background material on the FWBO, for in a sense the FWBO grew out of the Venerable Sangharakshita's own experience of trying to live a Buddhist life.

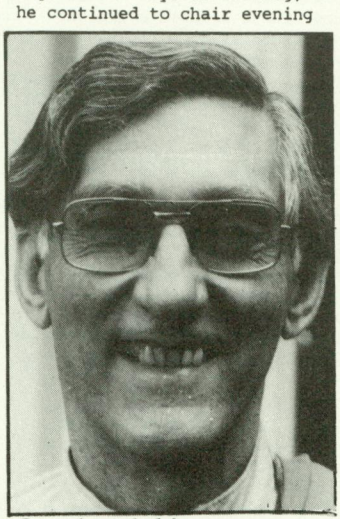
In addition to his autobiography the Venerable Sangharakshita had written a paper, The Glory of the Literary World:Reflections on the Buddhist Canonical Literature, to mark the launch of his new book, The Eternal Legacy: an Introduction to the Canonical Literature of Buddhism. The paper makes the crucial point that Buddhist literature should be read as literature, which means that it should be enjoyed and allowed to work its magic upon us. The paper was read on August 29th at a public meeting at Friends House, Euston and will be published by Windhorse Publications. The Eternal Legacy will be available in September from Tharpa Publications whose first book this is. It is to be hoped that the book - which is a comprehensive guide to the whole complex field of Buddhist canonical literature - and the paper - which inculcates the attitude with which that literature should be approached will make the Buddhist scriptures much more a part of Western Buddhist practice.

Besides more routine literary work - correspondence, writing a preface for Travel Letters (a volume of his letto Shabda, the Order Newsletter, published in August by Windhorse Publications), and checking the editing of extracts from his seminars for publication in Mitrata - the Venerable Sangharakshita has also written a series of seven short talks for Night Thoughts, a Thames Television late-night programme. Recorded in August these brief pieces on the theme of pilgrimage will be broadcast later in the year. In the midst of these scheduled activities erupted a poem. On hearing by telephone from India of the death of Dhammachari Anagarika Mahadhammavira, he found himself inspired to write a long and very heartfelt poem which conveyed a strong impression of the vigour and faith of Mahadhammvira. The Venerable Sangharakshita travelled to London to read the poem at the London Buddhist Centre on Dharma Day. It has now been published by Windhorse Publications and proceeds from it sale will be used to provide a suitable memorrial for Mahadhammavira.

Whilst working on his literary projects, the Venerable Sangharakshita keeps up a great deal of other work - seeing Order members, mitras, and Friends, reading and responding to his voluminous mail, and keeping an eye on FWBO activities throughout the world. He has recently led a number of question and answer sessions - he finds this a very effective way of functioning since he can deal with issues as they arise in people's minds, usually without much prepartion on his own part. In this way he has answered questions from men mitra study group leaders on his tape lecture series, Aspects of the Higher Evolution of the Individual. Many very interesting points arose from this study, one of the principle ones being that there is a need for much greater thoroughness in following the spiritual life than most people realise. One must know oneself quite well so that one can then decide what specifically one must do in order to develop as an individual. The Venerable Sangharakshita also answered questions on a men's national Order weekend, the ten day women's Order Convention, the combined Order Convention, and the men's Order Convention.

Of particular interest were sessions of questions and answers in connection with the two week event for the Chairmen of FWBO centres. During the day the Chairmen studied together The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka: an Anthropological and Historical Study by Michael Carrithers. This fascinating and well-written book looks at the attempt to revive the ascetic life in the heartland of Theravada Buddhism where much of institutional Buddhism is corrupt and degenerate. Each evening the Venerable Sangharakshita answered questions arising out of that day's study and many points emerged which were of relevance to the FWBO-a separate report will be appearing elsewhere. It seemed the FWBO could certainly make a valuable contribution to Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Besides these sessions of answers to questions, the Venerable Sangharakshita has chaired talks at two weekend Men's Events at Padmaloka and during the Men's National Mitra Retreat.

At the end of July the Venerable Sangharakshita, along with Buddhadasa and Prasannasiddhi, visited FWBO Centres in Manchester and Leeds and stayed at the Blaen-ddol community in North Wales. On his return he attended the women's Order Convention at Wood Norton in West Norfolk, meeting individually with all the Dharmacharinis present and each evening answering questions on their study of The Three Jewels. At the start of the event he ordained two new Dharmacharinis, Samata and Sobana. During the mixed convention which followed at Padmaloka, he attended all events, leading meditation and puja, chairing talks and reading from his own work in progress - notably a chapter describing his own ordination as a bhikkhu; an event at which his joy at being at last a member of the Sangha contrasted sharply with the formalism of the ceremony itself. During the men's convention which took place during the ten days succeeding, he continued to chair evening



Sangharakshita

events and saw many of the Dharmacharis individually, notably those from overseas.

The Venerable Sangharakshita receives many visits at Padmaloka from Order members, mitras, and Friends from all over the world. Some come to ask advice, some request ordination, some simply want to meet him having heard his voice on tape for so many years. Some people visit him so that he can conduct Kalyana Mitra ceremonies for them or naming ceremonies for their children - he recently gave the name 'Shrivijaya' to the son of Marichi and Danavira. He was also visited by the Venerable Ananda Mangala Nayaka Maha Thera, a Sri Lankan bhikkhu who now lives and teaches in Singapore. Ananda Mangala had been aware of the FWBO for a number of years through the Newsletter and the Venerable Sangharakshita's published works and very much wished to meet its founder. The two had a cordial discussion and the Venerable Ananda Mangala impressed all who met him with his warmth and sincerity and his earthy humour. He has led an exceptionally interesting life having been a Trappist monk and later involved in the Indian independence movement. The Venerable Khemmodhammo, an English bhikkhu who has a centre in the Midlands visited once more to discuss Angulimala, the Buddhist prison chaplaincy which he has set up and of which the Venerable Sangharakshita is a patron. Four Church of England clergymen and women visited recently to continue the lively dialogue which we have developed with them. They are all connected with the shrine of Mother Julian of Norwich, a medieval mystic, author of Revelations of Divine Love, whose reconstructed cell and church are the centre of small, mystically-inclined movement. The Venerable Sangharakshita and Subhuti visited the shrine at their invitation. Another visitor has been Eleanor Zeliot, an American academic who is a leading authority in the field of modern Indian studies and who specialises in the study of Dr. Ambedkar and his movement. The Venerable Sangharakshita had met her some twenty years previously in Pune and she had just returned from that city where she had been in contact with Lokamitra.

The Venerable Sanghrakshita viewed the recent video film, 'A Padmaloka Men's Event" made by Garry Pierpoint of Vajra Films. He very much appreciated the film's leisurely pace, highly unusual in modern filming, which allowed time to absorb the very pleasing and artistically-chosen shots. He also appreciated the film's honesty, showing the Men's Event 'warts and all' rather than trying to produce a glossy 'selling' image. He hopes that all Centres will be purchasing copies to show at their classes and to enable Garry to make more films.

At the Order Office we are in contact with a number of Buddhist groups throughout the world. Among others we have recently contributed articles to The Young Buddhist, published in Singapore, and the Journal of the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia. Spring Wind, the journal of a Korean Zen teacher in Canada has published an article by Nagabodhi on our work in India and is to reprint 'Last Correspondence between Lama

Govinda and Sangharakshita' from the FWBO Newsletter 65. Spring Wind is certainly one of the best Buddhist periodicals around and we are very glad to give them our wholehearted support.

Among our more interesting contacts has been a Chinese journalist from Peking who interviewed Subhuti for an article she is writing on the current interest in the West in Eastern religions. From her account it appears that there is a frenzy in China today for things Western primarily for Western consumer goods. She feels that it is important that Chinese people realise that in the West many are disillusioned with the dominant trend of Western Culture. Most young people in China have a very low opinion of Buddhism, having seen it only in its most degenerate 'ethnic' form. She considers that if Buddism comes from the West, there would be a great deal of interest. She was herself somewhat sceptical of spiritual idealism, having lived through the intense idealism of the Cultural Revolution - she had herself been a Red Guard - and having seen her ideals crushed by power-seeking and self-interest.

The Order Office team now consists of Subhuti, Dharmadhara, Kovida, and Buddhapalita with Ratnaprabha as part-time treasurer. Shridevi will be moving to Norwich in the new year to take on part of the Venerable Sangharakshita's correspondence and Philip Buckley will be moving to Padmaloka as a full-time editor on his return from the three month Pre-ordination Course for Men in Tuscany. Dharmadhara and Buddhapalita will be attending the retreat as part of the Order team.

Subhuti's new book, The Buddhist Vision, is to be published by Rider on October 10th this year and he plans to write another as soon as possible which will be a brief study of the Venerable Sangharakshita's work.

After reading his paper at Friends House in London, the Venerable Sangharakshita will be answering questions from Dharmacharis leading mitra study groups, this time on his lecture series, The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path. He will then be leaving with Prasannasiddhi for Tuscany and the annual Pre-ordination Course for Men, where he will be staying until the beginning of December. He hopes to be able to continue with his memoirs on his return but has plans to stay at the women's retreat centre and to visit more FWBO centres during the coming year.

The Venerable Sangharakshita's Sixtieth Birthday Appeal Fund stands now at about £60,000. We hope that by the end of the year we will raise £150,000 - 250,000 so that we can establish conditions which will make the Venerable Sangharakshita as effective as possible: a proper headquarters at Padmaloka, a fully supported secretariat, and winter-quarters in Southern Europe where he can proceed with literary work undisturbed and where more intensive retreats can be held. To meet all these needs - which will be of benefit to us all - a considerable effort is still required. If you have not already done so, please send your donations to: 60th Birthday Appeal, Padamaloka, Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norwich, NR14 7AL, England.

Marketing Religion

On 14th June Ratnaprabha presented a paper at a seminar on "Methods and aims of evangelisation in contemporary society with special reference to new religions" held at Kings College London. Here is his report on the event.

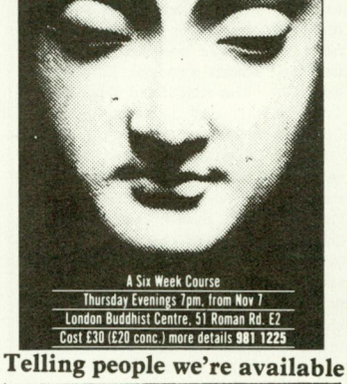
The Council Room at Kings College is an imposing but faded Victorian panelled gallery almost overlooking the Thames, it's walls hung with royal portraits, its furniture a large rectangle of conference tables, around which some thirty of us, mainly academics, sat for a day seminar. We were introduced to each other and to our topic by Peter Clarke, a lecturer in the Department of History and Philosophy of Religion at Kings, who is genuinely fascinated by new religious movements; so much that he has applied his considerable energy and determination to the establishment of a Centre for the Study of New Religious Movements, edits the journal Religion Today, and arranges conferences like this one. The proceedings are soon to be published by Ethnographia, including my paper on the FWBO, but here I can give a few impressions of the papers to save those with only a passing interest in religions from having to plough through some 40,000 words of uneven value.

In addition to the FWBO, the following movements were dealt with: two products of Japanese Buddhism - Sykai Kyussei Kyo and Nicheren Shoshu/Soka Gakkai (spelt thus in the paper), a Hindu movement consisting of devotees of Sathya Sai Baba, The Unification Church or 'Moonies' who might be called a heretical Christian sect, and finally two superficially similar movements offering intensive workshop sessions based on a mixture of psychotherapeutic techniques to enable people to have intense experiences of themselves as divine or enlightened. These movements are EST and Exegesis, both founded, I believe, by Americans.

The usual attitude adopted by the researchers was a marketing approach. They tried to identify the product that each movement was trying to sell to the consumer, how it was packaged and advertised, and how the selling techniques were modified in different markets. However, this is not to say that the contributors, in general, claimed to adopt a completely detached viewpoint. Except perhaps in the case of the Moonies, all were more or less sympathetic to the movements under scrutiny. The most interesting and revealing things they had to say were not usually descriptions of doctrines, or histories or statistics concerning the movements, but their own personal responses to, and evaluation of, each movement's members, whom they had met and interviewed. It became clear that thousands of people's lives have been radically altered by conversion to or participation in new religious movements. Whether or not people's lives have been improved by their contact with these movements was not clear in most cases.

Apparently the contributors were, in the main, sociologists of one sort or another, mine being the only 'inside story'. But the marketing approach did not seem to be just a product of preference for the sociological explanation; it seemed also to reflect the movements' eagerness to present themselves differently, even changing their methods and doctrines according to different public tastes and demands. So the evangelisation of a religion seems indeed often to be similar to the hard selling of consumer goods.

The FWBO was an exception to this tendency. The general attitude to Buddhism seemed to be favourable, more so than to other religions and movements. Accordingly, my own paper on the FWBO was greeted with interest and goodwill. In my paper I tried to explain what Buddhism is, why a Western Buddhist Order was formed, how the FWBO is organized and supports the activities of Order Members, and how people get involved with the FWBO. I pointed out that Buddhism has always been a 'missionary' or 'evangelising' religion, since the fellow feeling that it encourages naturally induces one to wish to share with others any beneficial practices or teaching that one has encountered.



Telling people we're available

In the FWBO 'evangelisation' means the contacts that Order Members make with others through literature, classes, public talks, co-ops, retreats, and so on. I discussed the FWBO's future, noting that a movement of such proven flexibility will always (forseeably) be able to improve its structure and activities in the light of experience. Its shortcomings are, in the last analysis, the shortcomings of the people involved. I concluded "It seems to be much easier to take on an idea of positively transforming one's life and the world, then to combine all one's energies in an interrupted effort to effect the transformation. The great majority of Order Members, as they admit, have not yet attained the ardency of practice that characterized the great Buddhist masters, nor, they say, have they internalized the full urgency of the current world situation. The FWBO is still young, but it could be having a much greater influence for the good on may more men and women.

"The FWBO is a Buddhist movement, and Buddhism is a 'missionary' religion. However, the FWBO is not evangelical in the sense of giving priority to growth in nominal membership, and using high pressure techniques to attract adherents. Nor does it take advantage of people's human weaknesses to induce them to shelter within any short-sighted certainties. What the FWBO does claim to attempt to do is to make as many people as possible aware of their unbounded potential for development, and to make available to them the best achievable facilities for development should they wish to use them."

At the end of the day Vajradipa and I chatted to Mr Casey McCann, the chairman of an organization formed to help parents who believe their sons or daughters have been brainwashed by new religious movements. Buddhism did not worry him, but he criticized the academics that we had just heard for their complacency. The Moonies and Exegesis in particular, he said, had a genuinely sinister and manipulative side, and the exposure of their unethical methods was more important than mere sociological analysis. 'Have you had any complaints about Buddhist groups?" I asked. "Not yet!" he replied with a grin.

Ratnaprabha

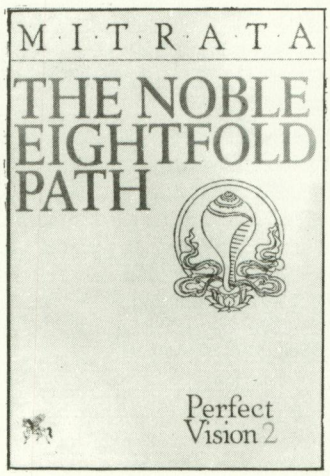
M·I·T·R·A·T·A

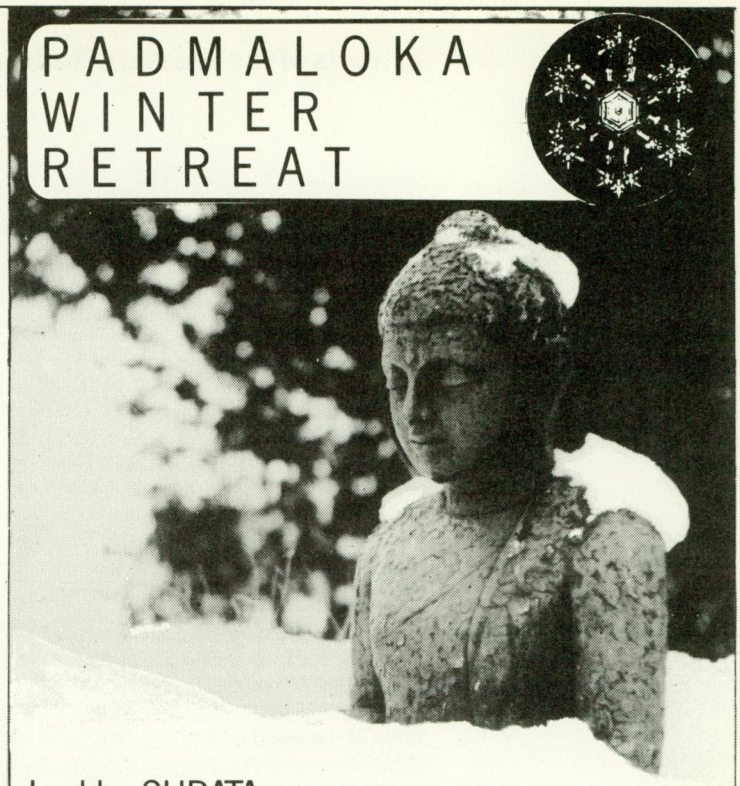
Bi-monthly Magazine for Practising Buddhists

The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path
— a central teaching of Buddhism explored in depth

Ven. Sangharakshita, a leading Western Buddhist, gives an account of each step on the Path and discusses, in extracts from seminars, issues arising from its theory and practice. This is a practical, thought provoking, and highly relevant account which shows how Buddhism can be lived by men and women today.

Back issues and remaining issues in this series (16 issues) can be purchased for £16 from:
Windhorse Publications,
136 Renfield St.,
Glasgow G2 AU.





Led by SURATA
On the theme of THE SANGHA REFUGE

Bookings for whole weeks only
week 1: 13–20 Dec. — Meeting Spiritual Friends
week 2: 20–27 Dec. — Going for Refuge
week 3: 27 Dec.–3 Jan. — The Bodhisattva's Way of Life

For further details see Padmaloka's programme or contact:
The Retreat Organiser, Padmaloka, Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norwich NR14 7AL ☎050 88 8112

Vajraloka

The Buddhist Meditation Centre of North Wales

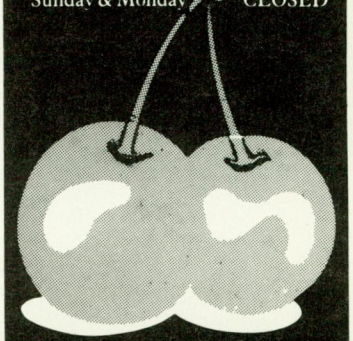
is a year-round meditation retreat in ideal conditions. Visitors with a regular meditation practice — or with enough experience — can join the retreat at any weekend. Most of the time it is for men; some months are open to women.
Occasional periods of more intense practice, in supportive conditions, provide a very good opportunity for taking your meditation a bit deeper. If your meditation is important to you, why not consider spending a week or more here?
More details on request from:
Vajraloka, The Buddhist Meditation Centre of North Wales, Tyn-y-Ddol, Corwen, Clwyd. LL21 0EN.

A Centre of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

A SECOND BITE AT THE CHERRY

Bethnal Green's Vegetarian Café with Garden. Fresh salads, home-made food and cakes all prepared daily.

Tuesday Wednesday Friday Saturday
10am – 8.30pm
Thursday 10am – 2.30pm
Sunday & Monday CLOSED



**The Cherry Orchard,
241 Globe Road E2 Tel: 01-980 6678**

Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

Centres and Branches

London Buddhist Centre, 51 Roman Road, Bethnal Green, London E2 0HU. 01-981 1225
Brighton Buddhist Centre, 15 Park Crescent Place, Brighton, Sussex BN2 3HF. 0273-698420
Croydon Buddhist Centre, 96-98 High Street, Croydon, Surrey CR0 1ND. 01-688 8624
Manchester Buddhist Centre, 18 Burlington Road, Withington, Manchester M20 9QA. 061-445 3805
Glasgow Buddhist Centre, 329 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow G2 3HW. 041-333 0524
West London Buddhist Centre, 7 Colville Houses, London W11 1JB. 01-727 9382
Bristol Buddhist Centre, 120 Long Ashton Road, Long Ashton, Bristol, Avon BS18 9LS. 0272-392 463
Norwich Buddhist Centre, 41A All Saints Green, Norwich, Norfolk NR1 3LY. 0603-27034
Leeds Buddhist Centre, 148 Harehills Avenue, Leeds, LS8 4EU. 0532-405880
Padmaloka Retreat Centre, Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norwich, Norfolk NR14 7AL. 050-88 8112
Vajraloka Meditation Centre, Tyn-y-ddol, Trerddol, Nr Corwen LL21 0EN. N. Wales. (Visitors by appointment.) 0490-81406
Helsingen Buddhalainen Keskus, PL 288, SF-00121, Helsinki 12, Finland
Auckland Buddhist Centre, PO Box 68-453, Newton, Auckland, New Zealand
Wellington Buddhist Centre, PO Box 12311, Wellington North, New Zealand
Aryaloka, Heartwood Circle, Newmarket, New Hampshire, 03857, USA
Sydney Buddhist Centre, 806 George Street, Sydney, Australia
TBMSG Pune: 'Dhammavijay', 32 Dr Ambedkar Society, Pune 411006, India
TBMSG Aurangabad: c/o Bungalow No 2, Cantonment, Aurangabad, India
TBMSG Bombay: 25 Bhim Prerana, Tapodhan Nagar, Bandra (E), Bombay 400051, India
TBMSG Ahmedabad: c/o Bakul Bhavan. Behind Gujerat Vaishya Sabha, Jamalpur Rd, Ahmedabad 38001, India
FWBO Stockholm, Hillbersvagen 5, S-126 54 Hagersten, Sweden. Stockholm 97 59 92
FWBO Germany, Rechtstr. 9, 43 Essen 11, W.Germany
FWBO Netherlands, P.O. Box 1559, 3500 BN Utrecht, Netherlands. 030-949 109

Representatives

Aryavamsa, Elleholmsvagen 11, S-352 43 Vaxjo, Sweden
Jayapushpa, Lot 7, Taman Ria, Jallan Salleh, Muar, Johore, Malaysia.

Co-operatives

The Blue Lotus Co-operative Ltd, 113 Notting Hill Gate, London W11 3LB. 01-727 9382
Golden Light Co-operative, PO Box 68-453, Newton, Auckland, New Zealand
The Padmaloka Co-operative, Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norfolk NR14 7AL. 050-88 8112
The Pure Land Co-operative, 51 Roman Road, London E2 0HU. 01-980 1960
Windhorse Associates, 119 Roman Road, London E2 0QN. 01-981 5157
Windhorse Enterprises Ltd, 15 Park Crescent Place, Brighton, Sussex BN2 3HF. 0273-698420
Windhorse Wholefoods Co-operative Ltd, 13 Kelvinside Terrace South, Glasgow G20 6DW. 041-946 2035
Phoenix Community Housing Co-operative Ltd, 119 Roman Road, London E2 0QN. 01-980 1069
Rainbow Co-operative Ltd, 96-98 High Street, Croydon, Surrey CR0 1ND. 01-688 2899
Windhorse Trading Ltd, 29-31 Old Ford Road, London E2 9PJ. 01-980 4221
Whitehall Housing Co-operative Ltd, 7 Colville Houses, London W11 1JB. 01-727 9382

Communities

(Visitors by arrangement only)

Amitayus, 15 Park Crescent Place, Brighton, Sussex BN2 3HF. 0273-698420
Aryatara, 3 Plough Lane, Purley, Surrey CR2 3QB. 01-660 2542
Grdhrakuta, 18 Burlington Road, Withington, Manchester M20 9QA. 061-445 3805
Heruka, 13 Kelvinside Terrace South, Glasgow G20 6DW. 041-946 2035
Kalpadruma, 43 Gleneldon Road, Streatham, London SW16 2AX. 01-677 7381
Khadiravani, 59 Babington Road, London SW16 6AN. 01-677 9564
Padmaloka, Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norfolk NR14 7AL. 050-88 8112
Padmavyuha, 7 Colville Houses, London W11 1JB. 01-727 9382
Ratnaloka, 14 Latchmere Road, Fallowfield, Manchester M14 6AL
Sarvasiddhi, 18 Golders Green Crescent, London NW11 8LE
Samayatara, 18 Approach Road, London E2 9LY
Sudurjaya, 120 Long Ashton Road, Long Ashton, Bristol, Avon BS18 9LS. 0272-392 463
Sukhavati, 51 Roman Road, London E2 0HU. 01-980 5972
Suvirya, 20 Approach Road, London E2 9LY
Vajrakula, 41B All Saints Green, Norwich, Norfolk NR1 3LY. 0603 27034
329 Sauchiehall Street (top right), Glasgow G2 3HW. 041-333 0524
34b Springwell Avenue, Harlesden, London NW10 4HP. 01-965 5752
Udyana, 16 North Road, Brighton, Sussex BN1 1YA. 0273-603188

The Office of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order
London Buddhist Centre, 51 Roman Road, Lodon E2 0HU. Tel: 01-981 1225

The Office of the Western Buddhist Order
Padmaloka, Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norwich, Norfolk NR14 7AL. Tel: (050 88) 310