

**Tape 158**  
**Sangharakshita:**  
**The Launching of the New Mitrata**

Abhaya and friends

First of all I want to say simply that I am very glad to be here this evening in the midst of you all. And as Abhaya has just so delicately hinted I don't come here to the Norwich Meditation Centre all that often. In fact I'm very rarely seen indeed and considering the fact that I live only six miles from this place that might seem to be a rather remarkable fact. And perhaps we have to produce some sort of Buddhistic version of the old proverb: 'the nearer the Church the further from God' or in this case of course we should say: 'the further from no-God.' But my says, as Abhaya has in fact so kindly suggested, making my excuses for me as though I can't make them for myself, I have been very busy. Busy of course with FWBO affairs. And especially in the course of this last year I must say I've been very busy indeed and it really is no exaggeration that I could do with, I didn't actually say six more secretaries, I said six secretaries for the sake of the record, that is to say four more in addition to those I have already, one of whom is winging his way back from the south of France at the moment where he went strictly on business, and the other I believe is in Brighton. Neither are at Padmaloka at the moment, but that's by the way hmm. It did occur to me when I was thinking what I was going to say to you this evening, it did occur to me that a year ago I was in India. And when I was in India I kept just for those three months a diary. It was just a very brief note, a very brief record indeed, a very sketchy record, of where I went, what I did, what lectures I gave, who I met, what time I went to bed and so on. So it did just occur to me when I was preparing this talk this morning that it might be interesting to just look at that diary and see what I was doing this time last year. On this very day, 22nd of February. So looking in my diary of those three months in India I discovered that on this day a year ago I arrived in Alchemere(?). I arrived in Alchemere on my way from Bombay via Alchemebad(?) where I spend a week giving lectures on my way to Deli(?). Alchemere by the way is in the state of AubadPutana(?). So I arrived in Alchemere on the morning of this very day a year ago and I arrived in the company of Lokamitra, Kovala(?), Nagabodhi and Dharmarakshita. Most of whom I'd know to quite a few ..?.., though I don't think everybody knows all of these Order Members. We arrived after a night-journey, we spend the whole night on the train, I believe we did get some sleep and early in the morning we arrived in this very pitoresce city I think I can call it of Alchemere, which ..?..got all sorts of historical remains and monuments, temples, palaces, towers, minarets, the whole lot. And I remember that in the course of the day we did quite a bit of sight-seeing, that first of our two days in Alchemere. We went I remember to a place called Pushcar(?) which is a Hindu holy place, a place of pilgrimage for Hindu's. It's a sort of, well one could say holy city or at least holy bazaar. It consists of a vast lake and all around that lake there are temples and there are ghats, that is to say flight of steps and they are going down into the water. And there were very very pictoresc Sadhus and you know holy men just like you see in the illustrated books on India. They are sitting there with their matted hair and smeared with ashes and all sorts of priests doing all sorts of things for all sorts of people. And I remember one of the friends who was with us, an Indian Buddhist friend into quite an argument with one of these priests because he happened to go down one of these ghats with his shoes on which one(?) was not supposed to do in holy places. This particular place by the way, Pushcar, is associated with the god Brahma who, as some of you know, appears in the Pali scriptures even in a rather humble and subordinate . .2.. but anyway he has some places of pilgrimage dedicated to him, some holy places in India though not very many and this is one of them. And

I also remember in Alchemere on that day which happened actually to be D..?.y, the night of Sheba, I gave talk at the local Buddhist centre, just as I'm doing this evening. I could not help recording these few memories. And I remember that I spoke on that occasion to about 60 or 70 people most of whom were not Buddhist, in fact but(?), but (?) Hindus. And in the course of my talk I told them about the FWBO and about various other things. Now, after my return to England just over a year ago I spend some time at Padmaloka, spend a few months at Padmaloka but from time to time I paid quite a number of visits to London, where I took study-groups and so on. And then of course in the autumn, last autumn, the beginning of September I went off to Tuscany to Li Convento, for the three months pre-Ordination-course from which I returned early in the month of December. And since then I've been at Padmaloka, only six miles away even though you haven't seen here very much of me. And some of you might have been wondering well, you know what has Bhante been doing. How does he pass his time have visions no doubt of all these secretaries madly scribbling away and banging on there typewriters and answering telephones and arranging interviews But what does Bhante actually do? It is something perhaps of a mystery. Now, I must confess that nowadays I'm occupied mainly with literary work, that is to say I'm trying to get on with literary work in between the telephone calls, and the interviews, and the study-groups and the weekends and so on. And only a few days ago I was sort of trying to take stock of what I've done in the way of literary work in the course of the last two and a half months. So it might be of interest to some of you to know. First of all I finished editing the transcript of a seminar I took some years ago on a little book entitled 'The Threefold Refuge.' And in the course of that seminar, which I think lasted a week, we went into I think almost every aspect of the Threefold Refuge. That is to say, Refuge in the Buddha, Refuge in the Dharma and Refuge in the Sangha. So that's now entirely written out. I think there is about 350 pages awaiting a typist. I'm sure we can find one. So after doing that I wrote a preface to Subhuti's book. I'm sure you all know, which you should know by this time about Subhuti's book. Subhuti's book on the FWBO entitled 'Buddhism for today' which is coming out I believe next month, perhaps there will be another celebration in connection with that. In addition, in the course of the last 2½ months I've edited - that is to say completely rewritten - three of the lectures that I gave when I was in India a year ago. I'd written them up, I've edited them for translation into Maharathy(?) and publication into our Maharathy quarterly which is called Buddhayana. I don't know if any of you know about, well if many of you know about this Maharathy quarterly. Perhaps I should say a few words about it. It is in its fourth year of publication. It comes up as I said quarterly and it contains articles on Buddhism, lectures, mostly I'm afraid by me. Perhaps I shouldn't say afraid because there seems to be a demand for these things so one supplies the demand. I've just send off three, these three lectures " all of which will appear in one issue. At present between 4 and 5 thousand copies of each issue are printed and it goes all over Maharashtra. And in India one must remember that people being poor, a magazine or a newspaper is not just read by one person. In England people are a bit individualistic, everybody likes his own copy of the Times, everybody likes his own copy of the news-letter or his own copy of Mitrata. People like to buy their own copy, they don't share. But in India people can't afford to do that. So you can find quite easily a dozen or 20 people reading one copy of a newspaper, not all at ones of course. Although sometimes you do see 4 or 5 people reading a single copy of a newspaper at the same time, different sheets. So in this way we can be quite sure that 15 to 20 people read every copy of Buddhayana in India, or rather in Maharashtra, the state of Maharashtra where it circulates. So that adds up to quite a number of people who have been influenced by the FWBO, by the ideas of the FWBO, through this Maharathy publication of ours, Buddhayana.

So, in addition to preparing that material I've also edited during the last 2½ months the material for the next issue of Mitrata. That is to say Mitrata 41, the material for Mitrata 40, the one that is being 1 this evening, was prepared in Tuscany J~o, having given you that little resume, this brings us right down to the present, right down to this very evening. And we are gathered as you all know very well to launch this new/old Mitrata. I call it new because it's in a new format and to some extent with a new content and old because it is after all Mitrata, which has now been going for so many issues. And as I said at the beginning I am very glad to be here on this occasion this evening. But perhaps I'd better say where here is. This might sound rather strange but the proceedings are being tape-recorded. The talk is being tape-recorded and the practise now is that as soon I give a talk and it is tape-recorded, copies sometimes the next day go to the four corners of the earth practically. Or at least they go to Pune, and they go to Sydney, and they go to Boston, and they go to Auckland and a few other places. So for the benefit of the people who might be listening to the tape in a weeks or so time I'd better make it clear exactly where I am. I'd better actually spell it out and say that I'm at the Norwich Meditation Centre in Norfolk, England. And I'm upstairs or we are all upstairs in the Shrineroom having just had a really excellent buffet-supper downstairs. Perhaps I could even you know, describe for their benefit the scene here this evening. Sometimes people in you know out-posts of the FWBO they are really fascinated by little details of this sort. So perhaps I should say that well here I am. Standing at my lectern, in this medium sized room faced by I think it's 50 or even 60 people. And on my right there is the shrine as usual beautifully decorated. Beyond the shrine there is Abhaya smiling at me. And in front of course all the people some of them of course wearing their white kesa's which means that they are Order Members. There's quite a lot of Order Members here this evening. We've got Rartnaprabha, and Alaya and Vajragitta and we've got Prasannasiddhi and we've got Mangala who was in India not so very long ago. And we've got, oh I'd better not starting to name the Mitras otherwise there'll be oh there's Vajrakumara too... I'd better not.. .oh and there's Srimala. I was just saying I'd better not. .oh and there's Subhadra. He's not wearing his kesa so I missed him. So I'd better not start on naming Mitras otherwise there'll be almost no end.

So, having made that clear perhaps I should go on and make it even clearer that we're all gathered here together this evening at the Norwich Meditation Centre to help launch, to help truly launch our new/old Mitrata. And I can that people are in fact quite excited. I'm sure Abhaya is excited. I can see that and lots of you too. I must admit, I must confess that I feel quite excited myself. Especially when I pronounce or when I hear vthis word launch. That we are launching this new Mitrata I feel almost as though I was launching a battle-ship. But even that, even though of course there isn't any bottle of champagne handy for the purpose. There may be, maybe I should say it's not so much a launching of Mitrata as a sending of Mitrata on yet another voyage after a more or less complete refitting. One might even extend the metaphor a little further and say that the good ship Mitrata is about to go this evening on its 40th voyage. And it will be visiting places all over the world and it's laden down with a goodly cargo. A cargo called Perfect Vision, the first step of the Buddha's Noble 8fold Path. And the good ship Mitrata will be making this voyage every two months for an indefinite period. But perhaps I'd better go back a bit and tell you how the whole thing started. Perhaps I'd better go back a bit and tell you how the good ship Mitrata was build. It was build as long ago January 1975. And it was build under the direction of Padmaraja. And it was build while I was away on my first visit to New Zealand. And it was build by Padmaraja or under Padmaraja's direction for Mitras, for the use of Mitras. At that time the Mitra system, or the Kalyana Mitra system as we called it then had just started and the idea was that Mitrata should be a sort of training manual for Mitras. And the material consisted at that time mainly of edited transcripts of lectures given by me and seminars which I had led. And the first 11 issues were edited by Padmaraja. Issues 12 to 16 - I've dug up all these details out of the archives - issues 12 to 16 were edited by Vessantara and issues 17 to 39 were edited by Nagabodhi. This Nagabodhi edited a total of 23 issues of Mitrata, which if I may say was a really magnificent achievement. Now during Padmaraja's and Vessantara's regime, Mitrata stuck strictly to its original program. And the issues edited by them dealt with Sila, that is to say Morality, with Samadhi or Concentration and Meditation and Prajna, Wisdom. The Three Great Stages of the Buddha's Path. The Three Great Stages of the Path to Enlightenment or Nirvana. And the first 14 issues were subsequently all collected together and re-issued in one volume as the Mitrata

Omnibus which has proved very very useful indeed in study groups and in Tuscany and so on. Now, under Nagabodhi's editorship the scope of Mitrata was considerably widened. The benefits of Mitrata were extended to a wider audience. It was made in a way more popular. And this led to the production of some very interesting, some very inspiring and useful material mainly written or written up by Order Members. But eventually however it was felt that Mitrata, or the content of Mitrata, rather had perhaps become a little deluded so it was decided to revert to the original program. And Nagabodhi also probably at that very time wanted a change. So we have now a new series of Mitratas collectively by a four men editorial board. And this new series begins with Mitrata 40 which is the one we are launching here this evening. But once Mitrata is primarily a training manual for Mitras though of course others can buy it and make use of it and are in fact encouraged to do so if they wish. The next 15 issues or so will be devoted to the Noble Bfold Path about which I'm sure all of you have heard. One issue will contain the edited transcript of a lecture, that is to say a lecture by me on one or an other step or anga of the 8fold Path as well as extracts from various seminars baring on that particular subject that is to say baring upon that particular subject that particular topic. For instance the first of the Mitrata is on Perfect Vision. Perfect Vision is the first step so to speak on the Noble Bfold Path. So in this first Mitrata you've got in section one a parallely edited and if I may say so revised transcript of the lecture I originally gave on Right Understanding or Perfect Vision. And then that is followed by various extracts, also edited by me of material taken from seminars which I have given, having baring on this particular subject, this particular subject of Right understanding, Perfect Vision. So there will be one issue of this type, that is to say lecture plus various study-groups and seminars. Then the next issue after that will contain only seminar extracts. Only extracts from seminars and study-groups all still baring on the subject matter of the previous issue. So that the next Mitrata that comes out after this one that we're welcoming this evening will still be on perfect Vision but it will consist entirely of material taken from study-retreats and study-groups which have been of course led by me. So, this is the format so to speak as / content of the new or new/old Mitrata. Now I've said that Mitrata is primarily a training manual for Mitras. So the question that arises in the minds of at least some of you perhaps is: well what exactly is a Mitra? Perhaps one shouldn't taker anything for granted. Perhaps one should explain that Mitrata is for Mitras. But what is a Mitra? Some of you may be wondering. Some of you may be sitting quite in the dark about this, all these Sanskrit words flying around. But let me explain. Mitra literary means friend. A Mitra is just a friend. Sometimes we say a Friend with a capital F. And Mitrata is a Sanskrit word which means simply friendship. Especially it means friendship in the sense Kalyana Mitrata as it's called or Spiritual Friendship, which can also be translated as Beautiful Friendship but usually we translate it as Spiritual Friendship. In the FWBO we distinguish between Friend with a capital F in English and Mitra with a capital M in Sanskrit. This is a bit confusing perhaps at first but one gradually gets used it. A Friend with a capital F within the FWBO is someone who just comes along to a centre or comes on retreats just occasionally. Sometimes you see them, sometimes you don't see them. They don't exactly belong. You're just one of the groups that they call in upon. Maybe they are sort of shopping around. Maybe they were you know, born as a Christian. Maybe they are not especially or especially satisfied with Christianity. Maybe they were born as an atheist and they are not particularly satisfied with that. But anyway for one reason or another they are shopping around. They are taking a look at the Suf is. They're taking a look at science, they're taking a look at Theosophy, they're taking a look at all sorts of things. Taking a look at black magic but they are also taking a look at Buddhism. They're taking a look at the FWBO. And of course they're perfectly welcome as welcome as anybody else, but they're just shopping around. Perhaps they're not even just shopping around. Perhaps they're just vaguely interested in the spiritual life. They don't perhaps know exactly why they come along. But they like to come along just from time to time. They just turn up. So they are what we call a Friend. They have just that quite limited contact with us, either as a shopper-around or someone who's just vaguely interested in the spiritual life or someone who's just a friend in a purely personal way. He comes along because he likes us and he's not particular bothered that we are Buddhists. He just likes us so he comes along.

Now a Mitra, using the Sanskrit word with a capital M, is something more then that. A Mitra in this sense is something more then a Friend. A Mitra is someone who's not still shopping

around. Might have been shopping around, but isn't so any longer. A Mitra one might even say is someone who within the context of the FWBO fulfils so to speak 4 conditions. First of all a Mitra is someone who is not any longer shopping around. They might have done a lot of shopping around in the past but they're not shopping around any longer. They've definitely decided that Buddhism is for them, that the Dharma is for them. Or rather the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are for them. And they've not just decided that Buddhism is for them, they've decided that the FWBO is for them. So they're no longer shopping around. They've come to rest as it were. Maybe rest isn't quite the word but you know what I mean. They've come home so to speak to the FWBO and they're no longer shopping around. They've given up shopping around. Now it is important to understand that we don't ask anybody to do this. We don't expect anybody to do this. If you still want to go and shopping around, and just come here sometimes we are quite happy that you should do that. But a Mitra is by definition someone who is no longer doing this. Someone who is definitely spiritually affiliated to the FWBO or to Buddhism through the FWBO and only to Buddhism and only to the FWBO. Someone who has really made up his or her mind that Buddhism as presented by the FWBO is the Path that they want to follow more and more intensively. So first of all a Mitra fulfils the condition or the principle if you like that he or she is no longer shopping around.

When secondly a Mitra keeps up a regular, even though perhaps modest, meditation practise. Most people come along to a Centre like this in order to learn meditation. The Centre in fact calls itself the Norwich Meditation Centre and that might have been the point of contact for quite a number of you. You wanted to learn meditation. Perhaps you weren't to begin with all that interested in or concerned with Buddhism. You heard about meditation, you wanted to meditate and you heard that meditation is taught here so along you came. So a Mitra keeps up a regular meditation practice, either the Mindfulness of Breathing or the Metta Bhavana or even both. Now it's important to recognize here to emphasize here that a Mitra is not expected to do much meditation. It's not a question of going in for, for meditation marathons. A regular practise is much more important. And not only that, it's very important that you enjoy the practise of meditation. And if you are sitting there hour after hour with aching knee-joints and an aching back and just not able to concentrate and all sorts of wandering thoughts that's no good at all. It might be a very noble effort but it's hardly meditation. So it's important that you should enjoy meditation and therefor so long as you are a Mitra or so long as you are a novice in the spiritual life, whether a Mitra or not, it's important that you should be able to enjoy your meditation, you must look forward to your meditation. So keep it short but regular. When I say short I mean 20 minutes is quite sufficient if you can do it every day at least once. If it's 30 minutes so much the better. If it's 40, better still. But don't think you've got to sit for a long time every day. Just sit for a short time but as I've said keep it regular and learn to enjoy it. Because if you know it is going to be short well even if your back is aching or your knees are aching it won't bother you to much. You'll know that the agony will soon be over and you can just concentrate on the meditation. But it is so important that you learn to enjoy the meditation. Not only because, well, meditation is enjoyable so if you are not enjoying it you are not really meditating in the full sense, but because certainly in the West, certainly for those with a Christian background, religion and enjoyment are not things which are usually associated. We usually associate religion with gloom and despondency, not to say despair or discomfort. So you've got to sort of undo this Christian conditioning of associating religion with all that is gloomy and difficult and depressing and unpleasant and sad. You've got to start thinking of religion and spiritual life certainly as far as Buddhism is concerned as something which is happy and joyful. Yes there are difficulties, yes there are problems, yes you have to put in a lot of effort, yes you do suffer sometimes. But the overall note is joy. One might even say the overall note is enjoyment. If you are not enjoying yourself one might even say you aren't really a Buddhist. If aren't really enjoying yourself in the best sense, if you aren't happier then the next man who is not a Buddhist well, what's the point one might say almost of being a Buddhist. You should live happily as the Buddhist disciples in the Dhammapada declare that they are living, living happily among those who are not happy. You should know or I'm sure you do know these verses very well. So this applies especially perhaps to your meditation. Enjoy your meditation. If you are not enjoying it something has gone subtly wrong. So make sure you that you do enjoy it. And that usually means keeping the period relatively short, so that it is something that you look forward to. Because if you start enjoying

it then you'll want to prolong your sitting quite naturally. I Mean that's the natural human tendency: if you are enjoying something very much, you don't want it to come to an end. So if you are going to start enjoying your meditation well, all your problems are solved in a sense. Because you'll be just sitting there, I mean apart from things like alarms ringing and you know, children demanding breakfast and things like that, you'll be sitting there enjoying your meditation and because you are enjoying it you'll just want to prolong it quite naturally quite spontaneously from 20 minutes to 30, even 40, till your knees start really aching. So learn to enjoy your meditation. That's really important. If you can do that well, you're really starting of so to speak on the right foot. So Mitras meditate every day, regularly, at least twenty, either Metta Bhavana or Mindfulness, whichever you find the more agreeable. And then thirdly the Mitra helps out around the Centre. Around the centre there are so many little jobs to be done. Little jobs take time even though they are little jobs. If you can help you know., just by doing some of these little jobs thereby perhaps releasing an Order Member to do other things which only he or she can do then that really does help very much. There are all sorts of little jobs. One doesn't have to think very much or look very far: jobs like making the tee or doing a bit of typing or delivering some letters or repairing something. There are all sorts of jobs of this sort around the Centre all the time, just needing to be done. And of course the Mitra helps support the Centre financially to the best of his or her abilities. Then fourthly, and in some ways this is the most important of all though it comes at the end. Fourthly, the Mitra keeps in touch with Order Members. When I say keeps in touch I don't mean just in the touch. I mean something much more than that. A Mitra develops in fact spiritual friendship or tries to develop spiritual friendship with Order Members. And in addition to that as a sort of supplement Mitras try to develop Spiritual Friendships among themselves. But it is most important that Mitras try to develop Spiritual Friendships with Order Members. After all you can't have much contact with the Order as a whole, with the Western Buddhist Order as a whole even though there are only I think it is a 187 Order Members at present. You can only have real contact, deeper contact, personal contact with just a few people. So concentrate as it were on at least one or two of the Order Members attached to the centre and try to develop a Spiritual Friendship with them. Because that will not only help you personally but by means of that Spiritual Friendship with Order Members you'll come to know more about the Movement, more about the Order as it were from the inside. And if you of course yourself as a Mitra are thinking in terms of what we call Going for Refuge, committing yourself to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, then of course you'll need to know Order Members very well and they will need to know you very well too. Because you're asking when you ask for Ordination for nothing less than to be admitted so to speak to their ranks, to be included in well I might say the Magic Circle of the Order. And those who are within the Magic Circle of the Order know it's really very magical indeed. So the closer you can get to Order Members, the closer you can get to the Order. The closer you can get to the Order, the closer you can get to the Dharma, because Order Members are practising the Dharma and perhaps they are practising it more intensively than you are. And the closer you can get to the Dharma the closer you can get to the Buddha because the Dharma is the Buddha's message the Buddha's communication. The Dharma is the Buddha as it were speaking to you from all those centuries ago. Well, to say all those centuries ago, speaking to you as it were here and now, beyond space and beyond time. So Mitras develop spiritual friendships with Order members and one might even say, one might go so far as to say that Spiritual Friendship is the most important thing in the Spiritual Life.

Most of you must have heard those famous and oft quoted words of the Buddha to the effect that Spiritual Friendship was the whole of the holy life. You must have heard how Ananda once came to the Buddha and said to the Buddha: 'Lord, I think that Spiritual Friendship is one half of the Holy Life, as much as that.' Ananda must have thought that he was praising Spiritual Friendship very highly indeed. But then the Buddha said according to the rather stilted English translation: 'Say not so, Ananda.' (Before, he said: 'Don't say that, Ananda.' He said: 'Kalyana Mitrata is the whole of the Brahmacharya, the Holy Life, the Ideal Life, the Spiritual Life, the Sublime Life, its the whole of it, not just the half.' Quite recently this sort of lesson, this sort of instruction was reinforced for some of us. Quite recently some of us were studying the Megya Sutta of the Udana. Some of you might have heard of the Megya Sutta of the Udana. Megya is the name of a monk in the Buddha's day. He seems to have been a young

monk. He was a monk who had gone forth from the Buddha's own clan, the Sakya clan, the Shakya tribe. Like the Buddha he was a Shakrya, a warrior. At the time of the episode recorded in the Sutta he was the Buddha's personal attendent. He was with the Buddha all the time, looking after him. Just being with him, just as the more famous Ananda was some years later for a much longer period. And we are told that one day having gone into the nearby village to collect the food for the day, his alms food, he happened to see a beautiful green cool shady Mango-grove and he thought that would be a really delightful place in which to meditate, absolutely ideal. So, he came back to where the Buddha was staying. He at his alms-food and then he approached the Buddha and he told the Buddha what he'd seen and what he'd thought and he asked the Buddha's permission to go and stay in that Mango-grove and meditate. But the Buddha said 'No, don't go.' He said: 'Wait until some other monk comes.' He said: 'I'm alone apart from you, wait until some other monk comes.' But still Megya pleaded, still he insisted that he wanted to go off and meditate in this Mango grove. A second the Buddha refused. A third time Megya asked, in fact he sort of pressed the Buddha. He said: 'Lord, you've done everything that you needed to do, you've gained Enlightenment, but what about me, I haven't gained Enlightenment yet, I need to meditate.' So when he used that sort of argument what could the Buddha say. One can just imagine him as he was shrugging his shoulders and well, the Sutta says that he told Megya: 'Do what you think is best.' So off Megya went, very happily perhaps even triumphantly to the mango grove where he sat down in the cool shade of the mango grove, a deep breath 'Ahh, alone at last. I'm going to meditate.' But then, but then what happened, we are told all sorts of thoughts immediately assailed him. Thoughts of greed, thoughts of hatred, thoughts of delusion, they all came rushing into his mind just like demons, into a sort of empty space. And he didn't have a moments peace. in the mango grove was just time wasted He just couldn't meditate, couldn't even concentrate. He just, his his head, his brain was just going round and round, with these thoughts of greed, hatred and delusion. Greed, hatred and delusion all the time, all these Mara's flying around you know, the mango-grove apparently was as full as a., they pulsed on him. So after a while he just had enough, he just got up. He staggered out of the mango-grove. . imagine, somehow or other he found his way back to the Buddha, and he said: 'Lord, what do you think happened, something extraordinary, something extraordinary!' He said, well then he told the Buddha and he thought he was extraordinary because he'd thought well, he'd gone forth, he'd left home, he'd gone forth, out of his faith in the Buddha, his faith in the Dharma, his faith in the Sangha. He seemed to think he was well, enjoying some " spiritual maturity. But non the less, he'd gone forth, even though he was a monk, wearing a real yellow robe and a shaven head and a begging bowl he couldn't meditate, he was assailed by thoughts of greed, hatred and delusion. So he told the Buddha. I can't help thinking that the Buddha must have smiled. The Sutta doesn't say so but I'm sure he must have smiled. He didn't even say anything very directly to Megya, he didn't tick him off, he did not rebuke him. All that he said was: Megya, there are five things which conduce to spiritual maturity. He came straight to the point as it were. Five things which conduce to spiritual maturity. He said they are, first of all, Kalyana Mitrata, Spiritual Friendship. It's as though Megya, who was actually staying with the Buddha, living with the Buddha didn't appreciate the value, the advantage of Spiritual Friendship. He didn't realise what he got from the Buddha, perhaps didn't realise how much he depended on the Buddha. It's as though the minute he was away from the Buddha's so speak protective aura, his own natural tendencies reasserted themselves. So he did not appreciate the value of Kalyana Mitrata, Spiritual Friendship, contact with Spiritual Friends, living with Spiritual Friends. So this is perhaps why the Buddha mentions on this occasion Kalyana Mitrata first, Spiritual Friendship first of those five things that conduce to spiritual maturity. So Spiritual Friendship.

And then second, Sila, ethical behaviour, skilful behaviour. And then thirdly discussion of the Dharma, discussion of the Dharma. going deeply into the Dharma, A Dharma exchange, a Dharma communication. When two people meet together, and they're deeply concerned about the Dharma, they're very devoted to the Dharma, they want to understand the Dharma, they want to the Dharma to its depths. And they just go into it and go into it. Perhaps sometimes there is more than two, perhaps 3, 4, 5, 6, as in a Dharma study group. You, most of you had some experience of this. And most of you know - I'm sure - that it is one of the most valuable, and enjoyable even if sometimes painful, delightfully painful experiences that you can

possibly have. Just to discuss the Dharma. Not just talk about the Dharma, not just shatter about the Dharma but a real plunging into, a real sharing of understanding and experience of the Dharma. So this is thirdly, discussion of the Dharma.

And then fourthly is effort, Padhana. Especially meditative effort which is explained as the effort to eradicate unskilful mental states and to develop and encourage skilful mental states. That's all that meditation essentially really is. That's why I sometimes define meditation as an uninterrupted flow of skilful mental states. You can have it when you are sitting and as it were meditating, You can have it other time too. But what is important is to keep up whether you are sitting or walking or lying down, what is important is to keep up this uninterrupted flow of skilful mental states. States of Love, states of Compassion, of Joy, of Understanding, of Generosity. It's important to keep up this constant uninterrupted intense flow of skilful mental thought and that essentially is what meditation is. That's what meditation is really all about. The sitting is accessory, The sitting is only secondary. All the exercises, the counting of the breath and so on, that's all accessory, all secondary. The real thing is the uninterrupted flow of skilful mental states. So this is four, effort, especially in the sense of as it were meditation.

And fifthly insight. This is the fifth one, the fifth of the five things that conduce to spiritual maturity. Insight with a capital I, or Wisdom we might say, or Understanding we might say, deeper Understanding, or we might even say Imagination with a capital I. And especially the Buddha here says Insight into understanding of, Wisdom with regards to, Imagination of Impermanence, the fact that everything changes, that everything is in constant flux. And that because everything changes everything can be transformed. So this is Insight. So these five things conduce to spiritual maturity. Kalyana Mitrata or Spiritual Friendship. Ethical conduct, Ethical behaviour. Discussion of the Dharma. Effort, especially meditative Effort and Insight. The whole one might say, the whole of the Path is just here that Spiritual Friendship is put at the very beginning of the list. Now, Spiritual Friendship like friendship itself is mainly one might say personal, that is to say, it's something that you have with people. Actual living, flesh and blood people. But you can get Spiritual Friendship to a lesser extend from books and even from magazines. And this is where Mitrata, which means Friendship, in the sense of Spiritual Friendship, comes in. Mitrata, that is to say the publication, the magazine, is a sort of Spiritual Friend. When you read it you're in fact listening to someone talking. It's not just words, on the printed page. It's really sometime..it's someone talking. And if you listen very carefully you can as it were just hear someone talking. It may be anybody. It may be me, it may be other Order Members. And we are talking in the pages of Mitrata about the Dharma. Now, and as I mentioned earlier on for the first 15 issues we'll be talking about the Noble 8fold Path. That's as it were the cargo that the good ship Mitrata will be carrying for the next 2½ years. Now the teaching of the Noble 8fold Path is one of the most important of all the Buddha's Teachings. If we don't know about the 8fold Path we really know very much, perhaps you don't know anything about Buddhism. So in the course of these issues of Mitrata we're going to be going into this subject of the Noble Bfold Path in some depth. As I intermated(?) earlier on some issues of Mitrata will contain(?) a lecture plus exerts from seminars. Others will contain only exerts from seminars. And perhaps I should mention at this point that many of the exerts baring on this or that step of the Noble 8fold Path will be drawn from quite recent seminars so that you'll be kept up to date with, well perhaps I could say my thinking on these things. And you'll know what has been going on. For instance, let me give you some idea of the topics that are going to be dealt with in the next issue of Mitrata. Vessantara gave me just the other day a list of headings of the material that has been selected. One heading read: 'Pleasure principle and Reality principle in the Middle Way.' Sounds quite interesting doesn't it? And then there is a heading which was somebody's question in a study group. 'Did Hitler have a vision?' Well, we've gone into that. And then there is a section, an exert from 'Enlightenment, sudden or gradual?' And then another exert, another section on 'Going upstream.' And then 'Is there Enlightenment outside Buddhism?' Some people wanted to know this so we discussed it. And then some people wanted to know how to know a stream entrant and even whether there were any Stream Entrants in the FWBO. So we went into these matters, we discussed these matters. And then there is the concluding section entitled 'Time, Space and Reality' when we got very metaphysical indeed. So, some of these exerts come from our Tuscany study groups, that is to say study groups held in the course of last year's



Tuscany pre-Ordination course. But not all of them by any means. Some exerts in the future will be taken from study groups held only the month before. So that you'll be kept very much up to date and very much as it were in touch. So this is our new/old Mitrata as they call it. And it's this that we are launching or re-launching here tonight. The first Mitrata of course, Mitrata 40 is devoted to Perfect Vision, that's what it's called. And it makes clear, I hope it makes clear the importance of a Vision in life. Even the Bible tells us, to quote from that despised source. 'Where there is no Vision, the people perish.' And this is really very true, I mean take it from the Bible or not but it's true. Where there is no Vision the people perish. One can take that absolutely literally. That without Vision, Spiritual Vision life isn't worth living. In fact you can't live without it. Maybe that's the basic problem of our time: no Vision. We've got everything else especially in the West. We've got everything else of a material nature, but no Vision. And that's why perhaps people are perishing. Perishing even all around us, you can see it. You can see it as you just observe them. Just look into their eyes or try to look into their eyes if they'll let you, and you can see they are not really alive, they are not really living they are perishing for want of Vision. So this is basically what one has to communicate to people. Just Vision. Give them a Vision to lift their eyes. Give them a Vision to live for. A Vision to embody in fact in their lives. Their lives by themselves and their lives with other people, with those they love, with their friends. So where there is no Vision, the people perish.

And this issue of Mitrata also makes clear what I call the archetechtonic(?) of the Path. That is to say it's basic structure, its fundamental structure. The Path is basically, the Path is fundamentally a path of Vision on the one hand and of Transformation on the other. You have the Vision and then you try to transform your live as an individual and to transform the society in which you live accordance with that Vision. And that is what according to Buddhism, according to the FWBO the spiritual life is all about. And this is what Mitrata also is all about: Vision and Transformation. It's all summed up in these two words, Vision and Transformation. And that's also what I assume all of you are all about. That's why presumably you're all here this evening. Because you've had some glimpse, however distant and provisional, and you've some aspiration however faint to transform your life's and the life of the society to which you belong.

So we're launching our new Mitrata this evening. So, lets aboard it. The editors of course can launch it technically but it can't be kept afloat so to speak without your help. So please at least help by buying it, and reading it and studying it. Devamitra had a brilliant idea. He was talking about this down at the LBC last week. And he had the brilliant idea of suggesting to people that everybody bought two copies. Not just one, two. One for yourself of course and one for a friend. They also had the ..?,..brilliant idea of taking out two subscriptions. Again one for yourself and one for a friend. So whether you take one copy or two, at least read it and study it. Read it by yourself and read it in company with your friends, especially your spiritual friends. Ponder it, try to put it into practise. Discuss it. And if you can do that, then Mitrata, this new/old Mitrata will not have been launched in vain and we shall not have gathered together in vain this evening whether here at the Norwich meditation Centre or in fact at an y other centre of the FWBO. And this is it in case you haven't There are further opportunities of seeing it at very close quarters downstairs in a minute

(end)