

Question and Answer session on "The Order, past and future"

Held on the Men's National Order weekend at Padmaloka
on W.B.O. day, 7th. April 1985.

Sangharakshita: Originally I was asked not to answer questions but to give a talk. To give a talk on the early days of the WBO but it so happened that I didn't want to give a talk. I didn't want to give a talk because I didn't want to take my mind off what I've been mainly doing over the course of the last few weeks, even months, and that is getting on with my next volume of memoirs. Some of you may be able to appreciate that to switch from writing something like that to preparing a lecture is not always very easy so I thought that instead of giving a talk of that kind and I wasn't so sure that I had all that much to say in a systematic sort of manner about the early days of the Order - my own recollections are not always very very clear - I thought I'd volunteer to answer questions instead. Questions not only about the past of the Order but about the future too. So quite a number of questions have in fact come in. I must admit I haven't had time to look at them all yet. I've looked at some of them and Subhuti has very kindly categorised them, in his usual methodical way into groups according to subject matter. So I'm going to go through them subject-wise, dealing mainly with those that concern the Order and if there are any left over at the end and I suspect there will be because there are so many, I shall simply keep them in hand and deal with them in the course of the convention, because we shall be having similar sessions at the time of the convention.

So the first of the categories that Subhuti has divided these questions into for me is a very traditional Buddhist category -Miscellaneous! (Laughter) So I'll deal with these first. These may help me to get a little warmed up as it were.

The first question does in fact concern the early days, the past, of the Order. Someone asks:

I have heard it said that in the early days of the Movement you used to ordain people straight off the streets.(Laughter) I rather doubted this but wondered how you saw the position.

I don't think that I ever did, as far as I recollect, ordain anybody straight off the street in the literal sense, in the sense of not having ever seen them before except at that moment when they just sort of passed by. Presumably I'd be lurking at 'Sakura' (Laughter) and would just beckon them in and ordain them on the spot. Sometimes I must admit I did have rather romantic ideas about this sort of thing happening. I used to look at people closely when I did first see them but I never actually saw somebody so ready for ordination in those days that I could just put a kesa round their neck on the spot. Nonetheless when I used to travel around I usually kept a spare kesa in my suitcase, just in case, but no, nobody was ever ordained straight off the streets.

Though of course in those days the preparation for ordination was very much less than it is now. The people who were ordained at the very beginning were people I'd known in most cases for about a year. Now it's more likely that I will have known them or that they will have been known to the other order members of the Order for two years, three years, even six or seven years, and of course we have a much more thorough preparation in every way, especially in connection with the pre-Tuscany process.

So no, that's a bit of a myth. It's a pity it wasn't true but I'm afraid I have to admit that I did never ordain anybody straight off the streets.

And then,

Have you had any further thoughts about the suggestion of all Order members taking a precept to abstain totally from the consumption of alcohol?

This is a question which has come up several times in recent weeks or in recent months; which suggests that some of you at least have been thinking about it. But I must admit I haven't given it any further thought myself. Though I do think that on the whole it would be a good thing if the Order as a whole moved in the direction of, let us say reducing the consumption of alcohol. I think that would be a good thing.

It's not that I think that Order members can't be trusted to confine themselves to just a very small quantity of alcohol on suitable occasions. What has influenced my thinking, and I think perhaps the thinking of other people, is the growing awareness that there seems to be nowadays, certainly in this country and perhaps some other countries, that alcoholism is becoming an increasingly serious problem and alcoholism obviously is something that one has got to deal with, something that one has got to discourage, something that one has got to prevent as much as one possibly can. So some people therefore feel that if they themselves are taking alcohol even to a quite moderate extent which does them no harm, they are as it were - I don't like to use the expression, 'setting a bad example' but in a sense, if you can accept that sort of phrase, that is what is happening.

So more and more people it would seem feel a little uncomfortable about setting an example or doing something which doesn't necessarily harm them but indirectly perhaps does harm other people, and therefore in view of those considerations, or rather in view of that particular consideration I think it would be a good idea if the Order did try to move in that direction of at least less or more infrequent consumption of alcohol.

If of course individual Order members want to take that extra precept just as some take the extra precept of Brahmacharya well that would indeed be fine. But certainly at least we should be moving in the direction of less alcohol rather than more.

So I think it would be a good idea if at least on official WBO or FWBO occasions, at least in connection with such occasions there's no consumption of alcohol whatever. If you are invited to a friend's wedding or something of that sort and you're offered a glass of something, well, there's no great sin in taking it. But nonetheless let the movement, the Order as a whole, be as I said in the direction of the reduction of alcohol rather than otherwise.

We're still on 'Miscellaneous'

I have also heard that you were not very happy with the depths of the Order communication. Granted this was quite a few years ago could you say something about this.

(note; this question is a paraphrase of what was said)

Well if it's a question of the depth of order communication of course I'm not satisfied with it. I hope no Order member is satisfied with it. I hope no Order member feels that he's attained such a depth of communication with other Order members that he doesn't have to bother about it any more. There's always not just room for improvement but room for a very great deal of improvement indeed. So certainly I'm not happy with the present depth of communication within the Order. I've never been happy with the depth of communication in the Order. I hope I never will be happy with the depth of communication within the Order, in the sense that I hope that we will always try to make that communication deeper than it actually is. But no doubt there has been an improvement, no doubt communication within the Order is much much deeper than it was a few years ago - especially in more concentrated situations like that of Tuscany. But let's not rest on our laurels or at least on the few laurel leaves that we have collected. Let's try to deepen our communication all the time in all possible ways.

All right this seems to be about Kalyana Mitrata which is interesting because a little bit later on in the afternoon I've two Kalyana Mitra ceremonies. So,

Kalyana Mitrata is the whole of the spiritual life. Since it is so important could you expand on and explain the new guidelines for Kalyana Mitras in this month's 'Shabda'?

These guidelines were shown to me before they appeared in Shabda. I must say I haven't read them very carefully since they appeared in Shabda. I think I'd better do that before I start expanding and explaining them. Perhaps I can do it in connection with the Convention. What the guidelines no doubt indicate is the fact that the relationship of Kalyana Mitrata is being taken perhaps more seriously than before. People are going into it or taking it up or thinking about it in a less happy-go-lucky sort of way. It's not enough for you to be just a good sort of chap to be somebody's Kalyana Mitra, that is in the, as it were, more official sort of sense. There are certain definite qualities you need to possess - even definite qualifications you need to possess, and the guidelines are a means of helping you see whether or not you possess those qualities or those qualifications if you have to be thinking in terms of accepting someone's invitation to be their Kalyana Mitra. So perhaps I'll reserve further comment for the time of the Convention.

This one seems to be about relationships or ship.

Many words such as alienated, relationship, objective, individual, negative, are used as if their meaning is well known. However it does appear that rarely are they known well i.e. that different people mean different things. How can these difficulties be avoided within the Movement?

In some ways it's very simple. You just have to think about the meaning of the terms which you use. I notice people take up, or they adopt, or start using new terms, almost fashionable terms, very quickly and easily without in many cases understanding the meaning of those terms at all. An example was this word or this term 'imaginal'. I started using this word a couple of years ago. I knew the sense in which I was using it, I knew the source from which I got it and I knew why I used it rather than the word 'imaginative' and I explained something of that in Tuscany two years ago. But the word became current very quickly and people started talking about the imaginal without clearly having any idea what they were talking about. But what must they do? When they hear a new word like that, well they must be very very sure they understand what that word really means before they start using it.

It's as though people very often think that if they use a word it's to be automatically assumed that they know what it means, or they themselves assume that because they are able to use it in some sort of way they know what it means. But that is far, sometimes, from being the case.

So I would suggest that if you become aware that you are using a word that you haven't used before, because it has gained some currency within the movement, first of all look it up in the dictionary. It may be a perfectly normal standard English word that you just haven't encountered before. Never fail to look things up in the dictionary. The dictionary is probably one of the most useful books next to the Buddhist Scriptures that we have.

Every Order member worthy of his or her own salt should possess a good dictionary, not just a tiny little pocket one but a good thick substantial dictionary and should consult it regularly, because words are very powerful things. They can be very powerful things, they can be very effective things but only if you can appreciate their exact shade of meaning. So if you hear a new word, at least a new word to you that seems to have entered into your general currency, first of all, for heaven's sake, look it up in the dictionary. If it turns out to be a word that is being used in a very special sense or might even turn out to be a word from an eastern language then you just have to consult the Order members that are using it or people that are using it and ask them what they mean by using that particular word. But don't start using it yourself when you've got only the vaguest of notions of what it actually means. I think this is absolutely essential. So with all these words, relationship, objective, individual.

With regard for instance to this word 'objective', in my talk on "Buddhism, World Peace and

Nuclear War", I spoke about 'objective truth' and I didn't mean anything metaphysical or abstruse or anything like that. But several people who it seems who should have known better (people actually inside the Movement) thought I was meaning something incredibly subtle, whereas I was simply using the words 'objective truth' in a quite ordinary matter of fact, common sensical sort of way. It's a matter of objective truth that there's a microphone in front of me. If you were to say well there isn't well you would be denying objective truth. It's as simple as that. That is all that I meant. But it didn't seem to occur to people that that is all that I meant and that really seemed extraordinary. So at some time I'll have to explain at great length that that was all that I actually meant. [Laughter]

Some correspondents tied themselves into absolute knots trying to understand what on earth I could have meant by objective truth. It was really extraordinary. Subhuti and I reading these letters used to utter exclamations of astonishment and surprise and amusement and well, all sorts of other things! (Laughter)

All right we're still on the 'Miscellaneous'. I think this is the last 'Miscellaneous' question. We're still warming up.

What works, if any, would you particularly like to see translated in contemporary Western languages. Could you say something generally about the role of the movement in coming years in relation to this area of translation?

I happen to know that the framer of the question does use words quite carefully so I've got to be quite careful how I answer the question otherwise I shall trip up somewhere.

'What works, if any, would you particularly like to see TRANSLATED' - in capital letters and underlined, that must have a definite significance. Particularly life. The assumption seems to be that I would like to have all of them translated - that seems to be the assumption. Though perhaps we shouldn't take it for granted, and yes I would like to see all of them translated - but particularly? - I think I'd need notice of that question. Would I particularly like to see the 'The Survey' translated or 'The Three Jewels' or 'The Religion of Art'. I find it actually quite difficult to say. I think I have to say that I really particularly would like to see them all translated because they're all of some use. Not all in the same way, but I don't think there's any particular work that encapsulates the whole of, what one might call for want of a better term, my thinking. I don't think there is unfortunately. There are all sorts of bits and pieces and some of the bits and pieces are larger than others but they all sort of play their part, they all contribute to the total picture so to speak, of my thinking or my experience or whatever you like to call it, so I think I have to say that I'd particularly like to see them all translated, with the possible exception of just a few very early essays and articles.

Perhaps I could say that the more recent they are the more particularly I would like to see them because the more recent works do embody more of my, well recent thought, more up to date thought if you like than the earlier ones. They pre-suppose the earlier ones.

So if I'm forced to chose perhaps I'd say I'd particularly like to see my later or my more recent perhaps shorter works translated first but I'd like to see everything translated.

Then there's this question of the role of the movement in coming years in relation to this area of translation. I think we have to do much more work in this respect. We've been in a way very lazy in this respect. There's not much really translated. Most translation work has been done in Finnish and in Marathi, which is in some ways rather amazing. Some has been done of course in Italian, some in German - I don't think anything has been done in French apart from the odd article. So there are some very very big gaps to be filled in. Because as the movement spreads we can't really expect everybody to learn English. Material has to be available in their own language. We need material in German especially, in French, in Spanish, in more of the Indian languages. Yes we've got a few things in Gujerati, we don't have anything yet in Hindi. So a great deal more translation work is necessary. This is an essential part, I think, of the spread of the FWBO. Unless this happens the FWBO isn't really

gong to spread very widely beyond the boundaries of the English speaking world.

So, yes translation is very very important indeed. Apart from my own works I'd like to see Subhuti's book 'Buddhism for Today' translated into as many Western languages as possible.

Now we've got a whole bundle of questions on the fascinating subject of "The Order after Bhante's death." [Laughter] Fortunately I'm not allowed to avoid facing the fact that I, one day, have to go hence. (Laughter) Other whither, somehow. I'm not permitted to forget this fact. In fact I'm reminded quite frequently, sometimes over lunch or supper, and no doubt that's a perfectly good thing, because especially when one keeps in reasonably good health it's quite easy to forget. So all right what do these questions say?

Bhante, could you state in practical terms what we as an Order must do to survive you. (Laughter)

Well it's simple you just have to go on living! (laughter) The survivor is simply the one who lives longer so I'm pretty certain that the Order will survive me because most of you are younger than me. There are one or two who are older, and whom I may survive, but most of you are certainly going to survive me. But clearly the question doesn't just mean that and my answer doesn't just mean that because if you want to survive me, well yes, you'll have to go on living but you'll have to go on living spiritually. I mean this is the great thing.

So the question says could you state in practical terms what we as an Order must do to survive you. Well clearly just go on living spiritually, go on doing all the things you're doing at present but just do them more effectively, do them more fully, do them more deeply, do them more sincerely. Meditate better, study better, practice the dharma in every possible way better. Communicate better, work harder, be more sincere, be more faithful, be more loyal to one another. Think less of yourself, think more of others, think more of the movement, think more of the needs of the world. Be more objective. These are the things that you as an Order have to do to survive me in any meaningful sense. In other words to survive spiritually and to be a flourishing and growing spiritual movement long long after I've gone, wherever I have to go.

So that in a way is quite simple but there are other questions which may look at the matter from other points of view.

Dear Bhante, when you die.....

It seems to be generally accepted. (Laughter) Don't take it too much for granted though! (Laughter) We have been hearing quite a lot about the resurrection lately! (Laughter). I at least hope to avoid a crucifixion! (Laughter)

When you die and are no longer head of the Order do you think it a good idea to have a new one, or the Order continue in a different way.

I'm not sure whether the question means a new head or a new Order. Grammatically it could mean either. But I'll take it in the first place, to mean a new Order. I think it probably doesn't mean that but in a way it'll be the old Order, in a way it'll be a new Order because things are changing all the time. The identity is in continuity of life and growth not in the conservation of unchanging elements. So we will have a new Order and at the same time we will have an old Order, because it'll be an Order that is, because it's a living thing, growing all the time.

But what about head of the Order? If the question is referring to that do you think it a good idea to have a new one, or the Order to continue in a different way. Well this is obviously something that I have been thinking about quite a lot, and I must say I haven't come to any definite conclusion as yet. In some ways one might say that it's not possible to have a new head, in the sense that the person, whoever it is, who starts something whether on a larger scale or a smaller scale, on a higher level or a lower level, the person who starts something or

who inaugurates something, has a special position, by virtue of the fact that he is the first. So in that sense only one person can be the first. So you can't have a second person who is the first. The first is the first, that should be obvious.

So inasmuch as I inaugurated the Order so far as the west is concerned, so far as the FWBO or TBMSG is concerned I suppose I can't be replaced, but that doesn't necessarily mean that we can't consider the possibility of there being one, as it were, head of the Order. That is quite a separate question. I must say at present my thinking inclines to avoid two extreme models. But don't take this as it were too literally or don't take this as the last word on the subject because it's just my current thoughts.

One of the most important functions that I fulfil, at the moment, obviously is giving ordinations. So that question of giving ordinations is bound up with the whole question that has been asked here. In the Buddha's day the Buddha devolved the giving of ordinations - that is well known. He permitted chapters of ten fully ordained bhikkhus to give ordinations under, as it were, their own auspices, or on their own responsibility. I don't think that is a model we can follow, certainly not at present. I don't think it would be possible to permit say any ten Order members to assume responsibility for admitting new persons into the Order as a whole. Because it is quite clear that one could find quite a few groups of ten Order members who would not in fact be qualified to do that. So I think that extreme, that possibility, is out.

On the other hand I don't feel happy with the idea of a completely centralised movement, a completely centralised organisation, a completely centralised Order or FWBO with one head who runs things as it were on a sort of monarchical model. Do you see what I mean?

So it seems to me at the moment that we have to find a solution, we have to find a structure that falls somewhere between these two extremes. Do you see what I mean? I think it can be narrowed down in that sort of way. One doesn't want to devolve too much or too far. On the other hand one doesn't want an over centralised structure. One needs, obviously, an organisation which keeps together as an organisation, a movement that keeps together as a movement, an Order that keeps together as an Order, but I don't think the best way of doing that is having, as it were, one supreme head, a sort of mini pope or anything like that. But as I say on the other hand I don't think it would be a good idea, to devolve responsibility for such things as ordination to such an extent that any particular chapter of ten Order members could exercise all the functions which hitherto have been exercised by myself and some of the senior Order members. So that's my current thinking. I still have to think about it a lot more.

The other question is like unto it,

How do you intend the Order to be led after your death?

Well this assumes that it has to be led, and also assumes we all agree on what is meant by being led but I think I've, in fact, already answered that one as far as I can at the moment.

When you are no longer with us

This is phrasing it rather nicely (Laughter)

do you foresee any situations where an Order member might legitimately need to approach a spiritual teacher outside the Order for guidance. If so can you offer some guidelines for selecting a suitable person to approach.

I would say the only situation where an Order member might, legitimately, do this was when the Order had collapsed and virtually ceased to exist, because if you had to look outside for spiritual advice or guidance what would that mean? - that it wasn't available within the Order, and if it wasn't available within the Order what would that mean? So yes one can't rule it out because supposing it does happen that the Order does collapse, or it disintegrates in the

future. Well even an Order member might then, legitimately seek advice or guidance elsewhere. But let us hope that that never happens. If people do seek while there is still the Order still functioning, advice or guidance outside, it means that there is something very seriously wrong with their whole attitude to the movement. I do know that this has happened. It's happened unfortunately on quite a low level so to speak when people resort for advice and guidance to mediums and people of that sort. There have been several instances in the past two or three years of Order members actually doing this. I think this is very, very unfortunate.

I'm not referring to those cases where you need professional help which Order members aren't in a position to give but if you seek for general help or general guidance in the living of your life or facing up to certain psychological and spiritual problems outside the Order, it means that there's something seriously wrong with your Sangha refuge. So I think one should never, never do this without at least, in these sort of cases, consulting other Order members and ascertaining whether or not it is a matter where professional help is needed which doesn't exist within the Order. There may be some borderline psychological or psychiatric areas where Order members aren't very skilled or very sure, and yes it may be necessary sometimes to refer people for very limited advice and guidance outside the movement but certainly not for general advice and guidance.

I did notice in these particular cases where people approached mediums it was often in connection with their love life or their relationships. They seemed to need a certain amount of bolstering up as confirmation that what they wanted to do or felt like doing was the right thing to do, or it was OK to do it, and they clearly felt in some cases, they weren't going to get that sort of support from their fellow Order members so they just didn't ask their advice. Because it's significant that, very often, you ask one person for advice rather than another because you know what sort of advice they're going to give you and you ask a particular person because that's the advice you want. You've already made up your mind what you want them to tell you.

So I would say no, the only situation when I'm no longer with you, you might legitimately need to approach a spiritual teacher outside the Order would be when in effect there was no Order. So I hope that sort of eventuality won't arise.

All right,

Can the Movement survive after Bhante's death if over two thirds of the male Order members are involved in sexual relationships with women?

Well this really does put the cat among the pigeons doesn't it! (Laughter) Question is who is the cat and who are the pigeons?

Well I suppose it really depends on what you mean by sexual relationships. If one means dependent, neurotic, addictive sexual relationships or the sort of sexual relationships that are described by the author of that celebrated volume, "*Ballbreaking*", then clearly it would be a very serious matter indeed if two thirds of the male Order members were involved in relationships of that sort. So I think people have to be very aware of this. People have to ask themselves whether through their relationships, sexual and otherwise, they are contributing to the strength of the Order or to the weakness. One of the things that the author of "*Ballbreaking*" brings up very clearly to my mind is the whole question of freedom and bondage. This is really the crucial issue. He brings this out very strongly I think, despite his very unfortunate language. He brings this out in an almost existential sort of way. If you have weaknesses you can be manipulated and you can be exploited and if you can be manipulated and if you can be exploited you have no autonomy, and I think this is the issue that he really gets to grips with. That most people, most men let us say - let's leave the women aside for the moment - most men are not autonomous beings because they are dependent, and in many cases because they are dependent on the sort of security they get from the sexual relationships with women with which they're involved, or because of the sense of meaning and purpose in

their lives that they get from such relationships. I've not time to summarise what he says but this is the nub of the matter. That if you're involved in sexual relationships with women in such a way that you're no longer an autonomous person, you can be exploited or you can be manipulated against your own best interests. Well then you're not really in a position to lead a spiritual life, you're really in a position to commit yourself. If, then, over two thirds of the male Order members were involved in sexual relationships in that sort of way well then what sort of Order have you got? What sort of spiritual lives are people leading?

So I think people have got to look at this issue very very frankly, very very honestly. This is not of course to rule out sexual relationships with women altogether by any means, but people must ask themselves whether there is a neurotic element in the relationship, whether there is an addictive element, a dependent element; whether they are, in fact, able to be manipulated through that particular weakness.

_____ : Sorry Bhante did you say neurotic or erotic?

Neurotic! (Laughter) Get it all down, get it all down!! (Laughter) This whole issue of freedom and bondage is a very important one. Unless you are free in the sense of being autonomous, in control of your own life, your own personal life, how can you be thinking in terms of the spiritual life or spiritual commitment. What sort of Order member can you be? I mean in the old days people used to have to ask their wives before they went off on retreat. There was one man I remember who couldn't attend the Centre more than once a week because his wife wouldn't let him. If he wanted to say attend a lecture he had to miss the meditation and vice versa. But he was not permitted, and he told us this frankly, to attend more than once a week. His wife apparently was the one who issued the orders and he was sufficiently dependent on her, psychologically it seemed, and he was supporting her financially, that he could not just tell her that, no, I'm going twice a week or three times, as many times a week as I want to go. He had to toe the line.

So if you're in that sort of position as an Order member or anything analogous to that you can't really be a full and effective Order member; and if two thirds of the male Order members are in that sort of position then what is going to happen to the Order, not only after my death but even while I'm still here to talk about these matters. This isn't, so to speak, so much a moral issue, certainly not in the, so to speak, puritanical sense. - It's a psychological cum spiritual issue. It's an issue of freedom and autonomy. This is what it basically boils down to. So people who are involved in sexual relationships with women have to ask themselves whether it is in fact to the detriment of their freedom and autonomy.

This means very often you have to bring unconscious factors into the open. Perhaps right at the back of your mind you think well you can't do this or you can't do that, you can't go here or go there because she wouldn't like it and could be awkward or she could withdraw affection or support or something else that you were dependent upon. So without knowing it fully sometimes, without your realising it, you are controlled in a subtle sort of way. You're not free, you're not autonomous, and your effective commitment is limited. So, yes, this is a very serious matter. I don't want to over emphasise it but the question has been asked so I have to reply quite frankly. So those who are involved in sexual relationships with women must ask themselves quite frankly what is the nature of their involvement - ask themselves whether the relationship in fact stops them doing things if they had not been involved in the relationship they would in fact be doing or able to do.

Anyway let's move on.

I have heard various people commenting that the Order would not survive if there were not at least one Bodhisattva around. A hundred Stream Entrants are not enough. Could you say more on this or have the facts got a bit mixed up?

Yes the facts have got a bit mixed up. (Laughter)

They've got a bit mixed up in the sense that I wouldn't like to separate the Bodhisattva quite so much from the Stream Entrant as the question suggests or what the questioner heard seems to have been suggested. Because I have tried to point out that if one looks at the Bodhicitta in the broadest sense one can see it as the other-regarding or other referring aspect of Stream Entry or Real Going for Refuge itself. Your Stream Entry or your Real Going for Refuge is not without reference to other people. It's not without implications for other people, and the fact that it is not without reference to other people, not without implications for other people is, very broadly speaking what is meant by the Bodhicitta - the fact that you are seeking Enlightenment not just for your own sake only but for the sake of all living beings.

But what I think I've been getting at it this; we all know it's very easy to fall back. Fortunately we don't all fall back at the same time, some of us are up, some of us are down, some of us are doing well, some of us are doing not so well. So those of us who are, at least for the time being, up can support and sustain those of us who for the time being are not up. But how can you be absolutely sure that a situation is not going to arise when everybody is down at the same time? Which makes recovery of course all the more difficult, or makes it all the more likely that decisions, perhaps as it were collective decisions, might be taken when you're all down and therefore they'd be the wrong decisions. Well the only way that you can be sure is to have at least one person among you who is never down, who never falls back. That means at least one person among you who is as it were a Stream Entrant or a Bodhisattva. So I have expressed thoughts of this sort, that you need for the Order really to survive you need at least one person whoever it might be, at least one, who is, so to speak, irreversible, who is not going to fall back even if everybody else falls back, and who can start hauling up at least a few people. So that eventually everybody regains their original position.

So I think from this point of view one can understand the very great importance of people taking the ideal of Stream Entry, with all that that implies very, very seriously indeed. Without Stream Entry on the part of at least let us say a few people one cannot be sure, one cannot be absolutely sure, that the Order in the real sense will survive or will it survive even in any sense in the long run? So the question underlines I think the importance of people taking the ideal of Stream Entry and irreversibility very very seriously indeed. One might say the future of the Order in the best and highest sense depends upon that more than on any other single factor.

All right, future ordinations.

If you were to die soon how would you envisage the passing on of ordination? I'm asking especially with regard to the passing on of visualisation practices and the giving of names.

In some ways the passing on of visualisation practices is one of the more simple aspects of the matter because all of you do do one or more of the visualisation practices and some of you by this time have achieved some experience with regard to those visualisation practices, so it would not be too difficult I think, for certain people to start teaching visualisation practices to new Order members in connection with, or at the time of, their ordination.

As regards the giving of names well at present this involves a little bit of knowledge of Pali and Sanskrit. A few people are acquiring such knowledge and it's an open question also if we carry on giving purely Pali and purely Sanskrit names. I regard that personally as an open question. They don't have to be of that kind. I think it's a good thing at least at the moment that they are but changes in future could be made if everyone was happy that they should be made.

So I don't think there's too much of a problem with regard to these two questions. The problems if one can use that term, are of a more general nature, and of course I've already had something to say about them.

Do you intend to appoint a new head of the Order before your death? Do you intend

*to re-enter the WBO in a future life and if so need we set about locating you and how?
(Laughter)*

With regard to the first question I can only say I don't have at present any intention to appoint a new head of the Order before my death.

And as regards the second 'do you intend to re-enter the WBO in a future life.' I've thought about that. It might not be a bad idea. [Laughter] One thought at least I have had if I was in a position to choose I don't think I'd be reborn in England. It did occur to me that it might be better for me to be reborn in India because in some ways there's more to be done in India and probably it isn't fair that I should be reborn in England twice in succession. I'm not sure whether that's fair to England or fair to me! (Laughter)

But I have thought, I must admit, that it might not be a bad idea if I just happened to be reborn in India because there is so much one can do there if one was Indian and didn't have to bother about all these visa questions. (Laughter) That's one way of getting round it you see. And presumably if one was reborn in India well then one could come to the west with all the glamour of an Indian Guru about one! (Laughter) It's rather difficult having to do without all that! (Laughter) But anyway perhaps if one emerged within the WBO, so to speak, or within the FWBO because WBO members might all be celibate, (Laughter) the glamour might be mitigated in a wholesome sort of way. But yes, this is the only serious thought that I've had so far about that. I think it might be useful.

So I think if I was to disappear from the scene rather more quickly than expected it might be more fruitful to start looking in India rather than in England. (Laughter).

This is described as a slightly poetic question by the person who asks it.

Being born a human being is fortunate enough, how much more so for myself and other Order members who have become like turtles surfaced in beauty. But your old age looms (Yes it does!) like dark and pressing clouds, far out across the ocean advancing, and I ask myself, bearing in mind the good that has come from our meeting you, how can we be sure that we will meet again? So that's my question. Pertaining I hope, to the distant future, how can we make sure that we can meet again as it would be foolish surely for me and other Order members having met you now to lose you.

Well this is really quite simple. The Buddha was asked this question once by an old married couple actually. One can transpose both the question and the reply into a proper key so to speak. They wanted to be husband and wife in their next life as well as in the present one. So the Buddha said, it's quite simple. If your thoughts and your words and your deeds are in accord then you will be together again.

So that's the answer. If you want to be together with anybody in a future life assuming you don't mind having a future life then you must consider the fact that people are reborn according to their deeds, according to Buddhist teaching. So if you want to be reborn in the same place at the same time under the same conditions as somebody else well you must cultivate, or you must agree to cultivate, the same skilful actions of body, speech and mind. So that if Order members continue meditating, communicating, teaching the Dharma, practising Right Livelihood, writing poetry, painting pictures and all those other beautiful things well it would be very, very surprising if in future lives you didn't come in contact with one another. It would be very very surprising that having been united in this life you wouldn't be united in a future life or future lives.

Some of you may know some interesting books written around this theme by Arthur Guirdham. He believes that he has recollections of lives of when he was a Cathar and when he lived, in the time of the Napoleonic wars, and he has recollections of having lived with other people of that time and who are alive now and who have also recollections of having

lived with him and with whom he is presently in contact in this life itself. So that is rather interesting. You get the same sort of idea on an even grander scale in the Jatakas. Because in almost every Jataka story there's the Buddha, Ananda, Devadatta, as they become in the future or as we know them in their last lives or most recent lives. They are all there together, the whole dramatis personae in different forms: sometimes as animals, even, sometimes as human beings, sometimes as robbers, sometimes as kings and ministers, sometimes as merchants and their wives and children - but it's the Buddha, it's Ananda, it's Devadatta, it's Sariputta. So they stay together aeon after aeon. So there's no reason why members of the Order shouldn't stay together in the same sort of way if they are in fact following the same path and practising the same skilful actions of body, speech and mind.

All right we come onto a different topic now. This little batch is entitled 'Men's Order, Women's Order'.

When talking with Order members I have encountered a number times reference to 'The Men's Order' and 'Women's Order'. I have even heard said to me well there are two.

Well actually the present position is that we've only one Order, we've only one WBO or one TBMSG. We don't have a men's Order or women's Order in fact though I know these expressions are used. I think what is meant by the men's Order is men Order members or all men Order members meeting together collectively in one time and one place, and by the women's Order the women Order members when they meet together one time and one place. But organisationally speaking there's no men's Order and another women's Order. There's only one Order. So perhaps that helps us in answering some of these other questions.

How should the relationship, if I may use that word, between the men's Order and the women's Order develop. Do you intend the Wreath of Blue Lotus lecture to provide guidelines on this matter?

Well if there isn't in fact a separate men's Order and a separate women's Order then there is no question of any relationship between them one might say. But there is the question obviously of the relationship between men Order members and women Order members individually. Because clearly men Order members are committed to the Three Jewels, women Order members are committed to the Three Jewels, but nonetheless men are men and women are women. So that the way that you relate very often to an Order member of the opposite sex is not quite the same as the way in which you relate to an Order member of the same sex. It's only sensible to take that fact into consideration. Usually one finds when men and women come together socially or in any other way there is naturally a certain degree of what I sometimes call sexual polarisation. You are very aware that the other person belongs to the opposite sex. So when it is an Order member of the opposite sex your awareness that it is a member of the opposite sex may be stronger than your awareness that that other person is also a member of the Order and also committed to the Three Jewels.

So because that is the case, because most Order members, both men and women are young, and because that sort of polarisation often takes place when men and women Order members meet, individually or even when they meet collectively, a certain as it were common sensical distance needs to be observed, at least on certain occasions between men and women Order members both individually and collectively, so that both may retain, to a greater degree their awareness that all are Order members and committed to the Three Jewels rather than relate to each other more as members of the opposite sex than as fellow Order members.

So though we do have one Order it's not in all ways a completely unified Order for that reason. As time goes on and those who are at present young Order members become older and less susceptible to sexual polarisation, less conscious of fellow Order members belonging to this or that sex, the greater no doubt the unification within the one Order will take place.

So 'do you intend the Wreath of Blue Lotus lecture to provide guidelines on this matter.'

No. I think I've given sufficient guidelines already so I'll leave that one aside. I'd also need to listen afresh to that particular lecture.

In the light of the Buddha's comments to Ananda concerning the ordination of women and the duration of the Sangha, are there any parallels we can draw concerning the duration of the WBO?

Well yes and no. As I've said we've got one Order. We've got in a sense a mixed Order although we are mindful of the fact that men are men and women are women, even when ordained unfortunately. I think the best thing we can say in this connection or the best lesson we can derive is; that as regards the duration of the WBO there will be a greater likelihood of that duration being extended in a meaningful and effective sense if within the Order, assuming there still is one Order, there is less and less of sexual polarisation. If there's more sexual polarisation, certainly if there's more than there is at present that will be a disrupting factor, a disrupting influence within the Order and will be harmful, disadvantageous both for men Order members and for women Order members. So I think it is in the interests of the Order as a whole that individual Order members, whether men or women, should see to it that sexual polarisation does not take place or that sexually polarised behaviour does not characterise contact between men and women Order members.

If therefore, and here we come back to a previous question to some extent, if there are too many sexual relationships between men and women Order members not excluding relationships of marriage, this will severely tend to the disruption of the Order because it will, as it were, formalise and institutionalise that very sexual polarisation. I'm not necessarily referring to purely formal marriage. You may be technically married to another Order member but you may not be, so to speak having an effective marriage relationship. That's quite another matter. I mean you may be living in a men's community and your wife may be living in a women's community and you may not see very much of each other. That's a quite separate matter. But if within the Order too many Order members are married to each other, and are having an effective, possibly neurotic, sexual relationship with them, well clearly that is going to effect the Order seriously in the long run at least.

So yes, if there is to be one unified Order or even one partially unified Order one must be very very careful that sexual polarisation as regards the relations between individual men and women Order members is reduced as much as possible. I think both men and women Order members have to ask themselves very seriously sometimes with regard to the way in which they behave with Order members of the opposite sex, am I really behaving with Order members of the opposite sex as Order members and not simply as members of the opposite sex because that obviously rules out things like flirting. That rules out things like deliberately provocative, sexually provocative behaviour, it rules out sexual innuendo and things of that sort, and it requires a straightforward purely human sort of approach.

Obviously you can't ignore the fact that somebody belongs to the opposite sex, even if they are a fellow Order member, but you can certainly make that factor much much less operative within your actual relationship. Your relationship can be a spiritual relationship and not something of another kind.

This question seems to be about the Wreath of Blue Lotus lecture.

You begin by showing the Buddha's reluctance to ordain Mahaprajapati as a reluctance to ordain women, generically speaking. You then go on to talk about the female will and we are given the impression that the female will is as it were non-generic pertaining either to man or to woman. If the female will is actually and equally non generic why was the Buddha reluctant to ordain women per se, and are there any implications here for the WBO?

I don't believe that the female will is equally characteristic or can be equally characteristic of

men as of women. Let me explain that. This is something I was talking about recently with the women Order members who were study group leaders, and the point I waded then which they seemed to find acceptable was that it does appear that women are somewhat more handicapped by the biological side of their natures than is the case with men. Inasmuch as the whole process of reproduction, maternity and so on obviously occupies a more important place, a much more prominent place in the lives of women than of men. So inasmuch as that is the case one finds - and certainly this is what I've found within the FWBO dealing with quite a few hundred by this time - it seems much more difficult for women to commit themselves to the spiritual life than it does for men. They do seem to have a heavier load, so to speak, of biological conditioning to carry. This reminds me - I illustrated my point to these women's study group leaders with an illustration because they said well women can see the ideal, and so on and so forth and I agreed yes, they can certainly see it, and I said if they can see it how is it that they don't reach it apparently as quickly as men or move towards it so quickly. So I said well it's like this. You get a couple of people going to run a race - they can both see the goal, they can both see the point that they have to reach, but one of them has got a handicap, he's carrying a weight. So I said women are in that position. They can see the goal, move towards it, but they are carrying a weight of extra biological conditioning and this is why they don't move so quickly. This is the only way in which I'm able at present to make sense of the fact that so few women get ordained, so few women do actually commit themselves to the Three Jewels in comparison with men.

So inasmuch as there is that extra biological conditioning, that load, or that handicap, and I wish to avoid the language of inferiority and superiority, inasmuch as there is that extra load by which the woman is as it were more weighed down there is a greater, as it were gravitational pull. Because obviously in purely physical terms if you're carrying a heavy load then you're pulled down. Gravitation is acting on you more strongly. So women are like that in the psychological and spiritual sense. Because they've got this greater biological load the gravitational pull in the metaphorical sense acts on them more strongly. So when the fact that they are subject, through that gravitational pull finds expression as it were through their volition, this is what I call the female will. It is the expression of their greater as it were earth-boundedness. Obviously men don't have the female will in that sense but they have it to some degree, because obviously men are earthbound too. They are also susceptible to the gravitational pull, but not, it would seem, to the extent that women are.

So therefore though men are subject too there is, broadly speaking, a distinction. Clearly some individual men may be subject to it, more than a lot of women. Certain individual women will be subject to it more than quite a lot of men. But nonetheless the female will as I've defined it does seem to be characteristic of women more than men. And that effects us in the WBO only to the extent that.... it would seem that because of that reason, on account of that female will which is very very difficult to overcome, we do get fewer women coming forward and actually committing themselves to the Three Jewels and being ordained.

Two Orders. Whilst talking with Order members I have encountered a number of times reference to the men's Order and the women's Order. I've even heard it said that 'there are two Orders, that's the way it is.' Do you consider this view to be either of the following; necessary, premature, inevitable, harmful?

Well at present I consider it to be non factual.

Does talking in these terms tend to weaken the Sangha as a whole?

I think one should be careful of speaking in terms of the men's Order and the women's Order. I think it would be better to avoid those terms but clearly one needs an expression for all of the women Order members collectively as distinct from the men Order members because they do have to sometimes meet in that way. I suggest if someone does have to use such an expression, if one has to use an expression I suggest that maybe we call it the women's 'wing' of the Order or the men's 'wing' of the Order. But not to refer to two Orders. or perhaps use a quite round about expression, perhaps refer back to the specific occasion, say the women's

convention, the women Order members' convention or the men Order members' convention. Not refer to a meeting of the women's Order or a meeting of the men's Order.

Do you think the male Order and female Order will tend to have more or less contact and involvement with each other? Do you see the usefulness of setting up a strong subsidiary movement which would be exclusively male, perhaps something along the lines of a Young Men's Buddhist Association.

What about the old men!! You'll all be old one day don't forget! 'Do you think that the male Order and the female Order' I take this to mean men Order members and women Order members - 'will tend to have more or less contact and involvement with each other'. Well if all goes well I expect that they would have more contact, in the sense that I would expect due to their spiritual development and greater maturity in all respects I would expect there to be less of sexual polarisation as between men and women Order members; less danger of their relating on the basis of that polarisation; a greater sense and awareness of their being all equally Order members, and therefore I would expect it to be possible for them to have more rather than less contact with each other. I'm speaking more of those who are at present Order members because younger ones will be coming along who will perhaps need to maintain the distance that at present is maintained to soem extent between men and women Order members. But I would expect that as men and women Order members get older and more mature it would he possible for them to have more rather than less contact and involvement with each other. Obviously on a purely spiritual basis.

But I say this with, not exactly hesitation, but a word of warning, because one mustn't take anything for granted. one must be fully aware of one's own nature, one's own position, one's own responses and reactions and act accordingly. But I hope people will eventually be able to rise above, at least the grosser forms of sexual polarisation within the Order, so that there will be, as I said before, a more united one Order.

All right now we're going onto Anagarikas.

During the last Tuscany retreat you talked I believe about having Anagarikas in the U.K. What is your thinking here?

I think I'd like to have some Anagarikas in the U.K. What does one mean by an Anagarika? One means mainly someone who has taken formally, that is to say ceremonially, the Abrahmacarya precept. He undertakes to abstain from sexual behaviour indefinitely. Not just for six months or a year but indefinitely - not necessarily for life inasmuch as one can give up the Abrahmacarya precept and revert to Kamesu micchacara at any time one wishes. But I would expect that when people do take the Abrahmacarya vow in this way as, so to speak, Anagarikas then they would be taking it indefinitely and they should know their minds very well when they do that.

So this certainly is my thinking and it's my thinking partly because I think we need to balance out a bit. There are still far too many sexual relationships within the Order and I think we need some Anagarikas to emphasise, well let's say the androgenous principle rather than the principle of sexual polarisation. I think sexual polarisation is still far too much in evidence within the Order and it's a disruptive factor. The presence perhaps within the Order of a few unpolarised people or people who've taken non-polarisation as their ideal and are making a definite systematic attempt to act in that way would certainly be a stabilising and unifying factor, because someone who is definitely an Anagarika, in the sense of someone who's definitely taken the Brahmacharya vow and everybody knows that can, hopefully, associate quite freely with both men and women Order members without any danger of misunderstanding.

In the past you gave several levels of ordination why did this seem necessary and appropriate at the time, and why did you not continue with the higher ordinations. Do you think it will be appropriate in the future to reintroduce higher levels of

ordination?

Perhaps I should remind those who weren't around at the time that quite a few years ago we had a couple of what I called Maha Upasakas. Well one was an Upasaka and one was an Upasika - they took certain extra precepts. My idea at that time was that I wanted a group of Order members who were closer to me, more experienced and more responsible through whom I could work and I decided to formalise it in that particular way, but as everybody knows that didn't work. I won't go into details now but it didn't work. But of course I still need that band, as it were, of more experienced and more responsible Order members with whom I'm in closer personal contact and through whom I can function, and through whom I can do at least some things and who can gradually take over from me some of my personal responsibilities.

At present that is happening in two ways. Or rather it's been happening in two ways. It's happened to some extent by the chairmen and the chairmen's meetings. I feel in many ways I can look to the chairmen collectively inasmuch as they do tend to be senior and responsible and to occupy, so to speak, leading positions in their respective Centres.

I also of course look to the Order members who are working with me in the Order Office because I have a sort of day to day contact with them, and naturally they enjoy my confidence and I do quite a lot of things through them, and more recently of course I've set up the position, if you like, of Chapter Convenor. I've done that because I didn't want there to be too much emphasis on chairmen as such because that is the organisational aspect of things, that's the FWBO aspect of things. I felt that there should be more of an emphasis, a complementary emphasis on as it were the chapter side of things, the purely Order side of things. So this is one of the reasons why I have started appointing Chapter Convenors.

So I feel as though I'm immediately surrounded by my Order Office team. They are the people who are closest to me personally in terms of functioning. Then I've got the chairmen through whom I can function as regards the FWBOs and on this side I've got the chapter convenors through whom I can function as regards the chapters. So it all becomes as it were more balanced, but I think - this is what I've been thinking recently - I need to go a step further than that. Obviously sooner or later I'm going to have to start handing over responsibility for ordinations. It's becoming increasingly difficult for me to perform all of them myself. At present there are about two hundred and fifty Order members. Obviously I've ordained everybody myself and as the movement spreads and there are Order members forthcoming from different countries, I'm not going to be able to be travelling around all the time ordaining. I'm going to have to hand over this responsibility sooner or later, so I've been giving quite serious thought to that.

So yes, sooner or later I do have to start handing this responsibility over, either to individuals who will, as it were, be responsible for the whole ordination, or perhaps to two or three Order members who'll be responsible as it were collectively for carrying out ordinations. But one thing is clear. These people must be people who are in close personal contact with me. It can't be a responsibility that's handed over on the basis of seniority or someone's position within the FWBO or their achievements. It obviously is a very very important responsibility which - in some ways it's my most important responsibility and I wouldn't hand it over, I couldn't hand it over in confidence to anybody in whom I didn't have the fullest possible I can only have that confidence only if those people are close enough to me to be able to really see whether I can have that sort of confidence in them. So that means they've got to be staying under the same roof with me for a considerable length of time.

So I give this sort of hint that if I do within the next few years start handing over this particular responsibility that of giving ordinations - it will only be to people who are very closely associated with me and on a regular basis and in whom therefore I can feel that I can have complete confidence with regard to this matter. We all know that if you live with anybody for any length of time you really get to know them in a way that you can't get to

know them just by meeting periodically, however good your communication may be. The Buddha himself say that you can only know a man and he was talking with reference to knowing an Arahant. You can only know a man by living with him a long time and even then it takes a wise man to know another man and not a fool. So it seems quite clear to me that if, as I've said, I'm to hand over this sort of responsibility or it's necessary for certain more experienced people, certain more experienced Order members to actually spend more time with me so that I can get to know them better. So that they can get to know me better also and know, as it were, from direct experience how I see these things, how I feel about these things. Otherwise no sort of proper or genuine transmission, so to speak, can take place. So therefore I do get a bit disappointed sometimes when I suggest to quite senior Order members who are living in different communities, are working in different Centres, that they should come say to Padmaloka and spend a few days, and they don't seem very willing, they seem quite reluctant. I know they're busy. I now they've got lots of other things to do. I'm perfectly aware of that. After all I do read minutes and I do read reporting in, but they must give, I feel, some weight to this also, that it is necessary for them to have quite a bit of personal contact with me especially at this stage when I'm thinking in these sort of terms. It's not the sort of thing that one can do on a sort of formal basis. It's something that can only be done on a very personal basis. So perhaps that's enough.

We have heard that you are considering the idea of Anagarikas in the U.K.

Of course obviously it's not enough just for me to consider. Individuals have got to consider whether they want to be Anagarikas. I'm not going to persuade anybody because everybody knows it's not easy to practice celibacy - not for 99% of people anyway, so this must be a completely voluntary decision.

Could you say something about this?

Well I've already said it (Laughter)

The P.S. says, 'Did you enjoy my mum's cake?' (Laughter)
Oh yes I did! And I hope it's not holding me back in any way. But I did and several other people did too. So more about the Anagarika.

In the East we see the Anagarika. Do you see the equivalent of the Anagarika arising here in the West? That is men and women who are treading the spiritual path as celibate and dressed in such a way as to distinguish themselves from others who are not celibate?

Well I've already answered that question to some extent. Let me say something about dress. If there are going to be any Anagarikas in England I don't see them as necessarily wearing, let's say, a yellow robe as Anagarikas do in India. I should probably give them one, at the time of their becoming Anagarikas and taking the Brahmacharya precept, not necessarily with the idea that they should wear it in England but with the idea that they should have it so that if they do go to India well they've got it ready to wear.

They might wear it say within the context of the Order. I've an open mind about this. If they felt like wearing it say for pujas or on other occasions or whilst giving a talk I wouldn't have anything to say against that. I'm not so sure about outside the Movement. It might well create the wrong sort of impression. I'd be quite happy to leave it to the discretion of the individual concerned, no doubt in consultation with his spiritual friends.

One point though. I think it's important that within the Movement it's known that someone is an Anagarika. Especially it's necessary that it should be known to Order members, mitras and Friends of the opposite sex. Because then in all decency they will not do anything to impede you in your observance of that particular precept. Of course one should be careful in this respect with all members of the opposite sex who are Order members and mitras. But in the case of an Anagarika or Anagarika one should need to be all the more careful. So clearly it

would be good that it was known that somebody was, in fact, an Anagarika and observing that particular precept. At present the Order is sufficiently small that if someone does take that precept and it's mentioned in 'Shabda' and everybody will know. The Order might become quite big and it might be necessary to have some means of recognising an unknown Order member as an Anagarika on sight. But no doubt we'll deal with that one when we come to it.

In your lecture 'The meaning of Spiritual Community' you say that the main danger facing any spiritual community is that it will revert to being a group. Clearly the general attitude to this tendency is for OM's to push ahead with the development of their own individuality

- to the point of stream entry, let me add. That's the biggest antidote to the danger of the Order becoming a group.

But can you say something more specific? What weaknesses can you see in the WBO, dangerous tendencies that we need to guard against in the future to prevent the Order's division or dissolution and how can they be prevented from undermining the Order?

There's really only one that has come to my attention or that I've really seriously considered, and that is: that OMs working in or at or for a particular centre may over-identify with that centre. We must never forget that really we just have the Order. That's what we basically have. The different FWBO's are simply the frameworks, as it were, the structures through which particular groups of Oms act so as to bring the Dharma to the attention of people outside. This is the main purpose of FWBOs. So there can be an Order, even when there are no FWBOs. There can't be an FWBO without the Order, so the Order is primary, the Order is fundamental, the Order is essential; not the particular structures that we call FWBOs. They are quite secondary or even tertiary. So it is a great mistake if Order Members, a group of Order members become so identified with the activities of their particular centre, identify so strongly with that particular centre, that they start feeling highly competitive with regard to Order members associated with other centres or start even looking down on Order members associated with other centres and develop a sort of separate identity.

This is the only serious danger that I've seen so far, which basically consists in sort of merging the Order and a particular FWBO or particular chapter and a particular FWBO. And especially, if having done that, one doesn't have much contact with Order members and FWBOs other than one's own, well surely then the field is ripe so to speak later on even for a formal schism.

So one needs to be very careful of that - not to over-identify with one's centre or with one's community or co-op for that matter or one's business. Work for it wholeheartedly, yes, - be proud of it, be loyal to it, but your fundamental loyalty is to the Order, to the Order in all parts of the world regardless of the particular FWBO you're connected with or regardless of whether you're connected with any FWBO at all.

All right 'Areas of Development for the Order':

What areas are you particularly concerned about for the future successful development and growth of the Order?

Recently of course, I've been particularly concerned about study. I have felt that Order members and Mitras didn't have a sufficiently good understanding of the Dharma; a sufficiently good understanding of the scriptures and traditional Buddhist teaching. Something has been done about that. I also suspect that sooner or later we shall have to do something similar with regard to the practice of meditation, but clearly that's not to be done at the same time that we're trying to emphasize the importance of study. But certainly, I think, sooner or later we are going to have to concentrate on the more meditative side of our

activities; encourage people to spend more time at Vajraloka and such places . Perhaps even have more Vajralokas and so on.

I'm also somewhat concerned about the development of the Chapters. I want to see the Chapters developing identities of their own, individualities of their own and functioning quite successfully and being, as I've called them sometimes, 'spiritual workshops'; which will help the Order members belonging to them to develop more rapidly, more intensively.

These are just a couple of things I've been thinking about recently with regard to the growth and development of the Order. I'd like to see Order members being a bit more adventurous, if they possibly can. I'd like to see the Order spreading more geographically within England, if they can. I'm still very aware that we are still confined to virtually the South East corner of England.

I'm very glad therefore that we've got flourishing centres in Manchester and Glasgow and even a small one now in Leeds which is the result of the heroic effort of a single Order Member. I shows what can be done. I hope he will attract at least two or three other Order members to himself quite soon because clearly there is room for a great deal of expansion in - I wasn't quite sure whether to say the Midlands or the North. It's the North - Yorkshire, isn't it?

I feel perhaps the centre of gravity of the movement in the UK should perhaps move much closer to the actual geographical centre or gravity of the UK.

Is the Western Buddhist Order living up to your expectations of what it could be? If not, in what areas would you like to see the Order improve?

Well, this is a very general question. I can only give a very general answer. I would like to see it improving in every way. For instance, I would like to it improving as regards attendance at Order weekends. For instance, we haven't got all the men Order Members here who could come. I'm sure there are some not with us, who could if they had made a little more effort, have actually been with us. So clearly there's room for improvement.

There's room for improvement as regards one's regularity of meditation. Regularity with which one goes away on meditation or solitary retreats. The extent to which one gets into one's study, to which one improves communication with other people. There's room for improvement all that time so in a sense the question answers itself.

I can't say whether it's living up to my expectations or not. In some ways, I don't have expectations at all, in the sense that in the beginning, I just looked a week or two, a month or two ahead. I didn't look a decade ahead, except in the very broadest sense. I have had expectations. I don't think they've been unrealistic. Perhaps I could say that people haven't always quite lived up to them, but I think that's because people could always do at least a little better than they actually do. But yes, as the years go by, things certainly do improve. When I think what the first dozen Order members were like, well, you're brilliant in comparison! Perhaps I shouldn't say it, it might go to your heads, perhaps not. But still, yes, there's still a great deal of room for improvement as I'm sure everybody recognizes.

Is the movement expanding as fast as it could in Britain and the rest of the Western world? If not do you have any suggestions on what we could do?

I think we could expand more rapidly but that will only happen when individual Order members are determined that we shall expand more rapidly. If individual Order members think in terms of having a pretty easy sort of time just jogging along - a bit of meditation, a bit of study, a bit of contact and that sort of thing and nice long holidays and all the rest of it, well, things aren't going to happen very fast.

The movement is not going to expand as fast as it could in Britain or anywhere else. It'll only

expand if Order members have a really adventurous outward-going pioneering spirit and they really want to take the Dharma to other people because they see that other people need it. Unless you have that sort of recognition, that sort of feeling, you won't really be bothered very much.

I sometimes think that we could fan out a bit more, especially from East London. I think there are far too many Order members doing far too little in East London. I really would like to see them spread out a bit more. I'm sure a lot of them have got it in them and could do if not what Aryamitra's been doing in Leeds, at least something modestly like it.

From your observation of the Order as it has grown, could you generalize and say there is one of the Five Spiritual Faculties which Order members need to concentrate on developing more than others?

Well again, it's difficult, but I have been thinking about one spiritual faculty recently and it's Mindfulness. I've come to the conclusion that most Order members - what to speak of Mitras and Friends - are very unmindful. I don't just mean that they forget things but they're just not aware. For instance I've been trying to train people at Padmaloka, not to slam doors. I find it very difficult. In many cases, they just don't think; they just don't remember. They just hop out through a door and gaily slam it, 'bang!', 'crash!' behind them, even though they've been told about this many, many times. Unless of course the wind blows very unexpectedly.
[Laughter]

But again when people eat, they're often unmindful. They are sometimes unmindful. Some people still make quite unpleasant chewing noises which is quite against the Vinaya (Laughter). After all you're not Brahmins who are expected to make such noises.

People thunder up and down the stairs sometimes, not realizing that someone is meditating or they talk loudly outside a room in which someone is meditating or even known to be meditating. So I have become aware of a very great lack of mindfulness in these sorts of ways and I've wondered perhaps whether we've stressed the practice of Mindfulness, in the ordinary everyday sense sufficiently, within the movement. I'm not thinking so much of Mindfulness in connection with meditation, the Mindfulness of Breathing. I'm thinking in terms of mindfulness in all the activities of life. I'm thinking in terms of whether you're walking, whether you're speaking, whether you're sitting, lying down, remaining silent - whatever you're doing, it seems there's not nearly enough mindfulness. People tend to rush about very unmindfully sometimes. We need to slow down. It doesn't mean that we are to be less efficient or do less. If we are more mindful, we will probably do more because we will make fewer false starts, fewer mistakes.

So I do feel that this faculty of Mindfulness is something that could be cultivated much more. Maybe it could be a topic that was discussed in these spiritual workshops. That is to say, in the weekly Chapter meetings. People could invite other Order members to draw their attention to any area in which they thought they were not as mindful as they could be. Just small things. When people are laying a table sometimes, they just bang the plates down or when they are serving they just bang the plates down on the table. That's very unpleasant. Or they sort of bang and scrape with their chairs. You know, this is all unmindfulness. Or when they lay the table, I occasionally notice that they put the spoon or fork on the wrong side. They throw the implements down on the table. They don't think which should be where. Sometimes they are not straight. So all these things are trainings one might say in Mindfulness or expressions of Mindfulness.

Another thing - I'm thinking of more and more things in this area - washing up. At Padmaloka there's an enormous breakage rate, crocker, the same at Tuscany. People come on retreat, and yes, they're happy and they're practising mindfulness and doing Mindfulness of Breathing, but when it comes to washing up, they forget. They just seem to throw everything into the bowl or the basin or whatever it is and just jumble them around, and clatter them around, 'clatter the dishes' as they say in the North I think, and they not only clatter them they

smash them sometimes. The breakage rate is sometimes enormous. Even in Tuscany where one would expect people would be more mindful than on any other occasion. But no, - it's as though there's a competition between the different years, between the different Tuscanyes as to who can break the most plates. I don't know how many pieces of crockery were broken last time. It might have been 80 or something like it.

But I don't understand how one does it. I mean, we've got some quite nice carpet at Padmaloka, some nice pale fawn, but it's spotted now with coffee stains, because people don't even hold cups of coffee mindfully when they go upstairs. So all these things are expressions of unmindfulness. So you can see how unmindful we still are. Mindfulness still has to imbue all the activities of our life. This is the sort of thing that is very much emphasised, I was going to say in the Zen tradition, in Zen monasteries but actually in all Buddhist monasteries of whatever school that are worth their salt, so to speak. Awareness and Mindfulness is one of the first things that a young novice is taught. I think perhaps the emphasis has been too much on freedom, on spontaneity, letting it all hang out - being here now and all the rest of it. I think it's probably time we had a little more mindfulness; a little more awareness, a little more circumspection and a little more thoughtfulness.

Just two or three more minutes. One more question.

What do you think is the maximum size for a viable Western Buddhist Order and for a manageable centre? At present the majority of Order members inhabit a narrow age range. What changes may have to be made in future to break down generation gaps within the FWBO to support aged and enfeebled members?

Maximum size for a viable WBO? I don't see that there need be any limit. 'Viable' means able to live. Clearly you're only going to be able to have deep personal contact only with a small number of fellow Order members, but that doesn't exclude the possibility of your being aware of your unity with thousands and thousands of fellow Order members. I don't think this is really a problem.

A manageable centre - that's another matter. I think centres shouldn't become too big for obvious reasons because then you get too many tiers or layers of administration and things just become less and less effective. What the ideal size is - optimum or maximum, I just don't know. Perhaps this is something that chairmen could talk about among themselves. We know that centres shouldn't be too small in the sense that they shouldn't be manned by just one or two or three Order members because it places too much of a strain on those Order members. If one of them falls sick, well, the others have double work to do sometimes. So clearly there is a minimum number of Order members, but whether there's a maximum number, and whether a centre can actually become too big, that is perhaps something that needs to be discussed.

As for, what about generation gaps within the Order, well, I don't think this is going to be a problem, because I hope that as you get older and new Order members come in, I hope your attitude towards them will be sympathetic and helpful and I hope that their attitude towards you just because they are Order members, is one of receptivity and even if one may use the term, 'respect'. So I don't really foresee any problem. I don't see that we'll need to break generation gaps down within the FWBO. I doubt very much that they will be present in the FWBO or the within Order in the way that they are present in the outside world. Because if they were, it would mean that there was something seriously wrong with the attitude of the older Order members and perhaps the younger Order members too. So wrong that it was inconsistent with, in a sense, their being Order members at all.

But clearly there's the question of support of the aged and enfeebled members. I've had occasion recently to think or to reflect that it's a great shame how many old people in our society, in the affluent West, have to live on their own and very often they don't want to live on their own. They'd rather live with other members of the family but unfortunately other members of the family don't want them. I'm sure they could make room for them if they

wanted to as happens in the East, especially in India. So I think we've probably got to give very careful thought to this and perhaps not try to farm out our aged and enfeebled Order members in separate communities of their own. It's probably better to try to keep them to existing communities where there's a broad range with regard to age. If of course they become so enfeebled that they need to be looked after - if they need actual nursing, well then, special arrangements may need to be made, you know, within special communities.

But if an older OM is active and able more or less to look after themselves, they should be absorbed into any of the other communities. It might be a distinct advantage to have older Order members who are there all the time and keeping things going and unfailingly regular attendance at the shrine while other, younger Order members are busy, from time to time outside. One might find this a very good and useful mix. I think we should certainly not think in terms of communities for younger Order members and communities for older Order members.

So perhaps I should close on that note. No I'll close on another note. This is the last of the batch.

In what areas would you like to see Order members taking more responsibility and initiative?

I think there's no question of any particular area. I'd just like to see Order members being more responsible and being ready to take more initiative also as soon as they see something needing to be done, whether nearby or far away, they are not inhibited, they've got a sense of responsibility, they've got initiative, they can just go and do it. So it's not that there are any particular areas in which I want them to take more responsibility and initiative, I want them to be able to take responsibility and initiative in any area where it is objectively necessary for them to do so.

I think most Order members or at least many Order members don't do too badly in this respect but I think here too, there is room for a great deal of improvement. So I think I should end of that note: greater responsibility and greater initiative. If one thinks in these sorts of terms, if one does try to be more responsible and is ready to take more initiative, I think that will be, in many ways, the ultimate answer to many of the questions that have been put to me this afternoon and which I've tried to answer and also to the many questions that I haven't had time to answer but which I assure you I shall be bringing forward and producing when we all get together at the time of the convention.

I must say that I've already started looking forward to the convention in the sense of looking forward to seeing so many Order members, both men and women, together at the same time, when we have our two days, as it were, mixed convention and also looking forward to the Men's convention and the Women's convention, on both of which, - not at the same time of course, I will be present. I'm especially looking forward I must say, as I'm sure many of you are, to seeing some Order members from overseas that I've not seen for a very long time. I've, of course, seen them at least once, that was of course when I ordained them - some of you might not have seen them before.

So it will be an occasion when we really do all get together as an Order, as a Women's wing of the Order and as a Men's wing of the Order. And of course I think never before, will so many Order members have got together in that way. I remember very clearly when we had our first Order convention, which I think was four years after we started there were 27 of us. Well, we've got very nearly 10 times that number of Order members so we're not doing so badly. But I'm sure we can do better. (Applause)

_____ : Well, Bhante, we didn't have any cake this weekend. I'm glad you did, but I'm sure you've given us something much more nourishing than any cake. Thank you very much on behalf of the Order.

Transcribed by Kevala;

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