

## SANGHARAKSHITA IN SEMINAR

### Questions and Answers at the Padmaloka National Gathering,

November 19th 1988

**Subhuti:** .... come down and answer our questions tonight. It's a very rare occurrence these days that we see Bhante in such situations and we're very grateful to you for coming down like this, and looking forward to seeing what questions there are and what answers you'll give. So I'll just leave it to you.

**Sangharakshita:** I must say there weren't very many questions. In fact there are only thirteen questions, though some of them are composite questions - A, B, C, and so on, which is rather, perhaps, one question for every two persons present. Perhaps that means that all the questions have already been answered either by you or by other people.

They're a rather mixed bunch. You did mention that you hadn't been able to sort them out into groups. In fact you hadn't seen them at all, or read them at all. I've been quite unable to sort them out into groups because they're quite a miscellaneous bunch, but I have arranged them in some sort of rough sequence which I hope will provide some element of continuity.

So the first question is:

*What aspects of the movement as a whole do you find most encouraging and why?*

I wasn't quite sure what this question meant. I'm not quite sure what particular aspects were referred to in the sense of asking whether I found say meditation the most encouraging aspect of the movement or the fact that we were spreading, the most encouraging aspect of the movement; so I therefore decided to take the question in a very general sense, and in a way answer it in my own way, and I must say that for me over the years the most encouraging, not only encouraging aspect of the movement, but even the most rewarding in a way is to see people, over the years - sometimes even over the months - actually changing. I think probably this is the aspect of the movement, if one can call it that which I have found most encouraging. Most encouraging in the sense that it means that I begin to feel that my time has not been wasted! [Laughter] Because if one sees, say year after year, that people are not changing, that they're remaining set in the same old ways, then that isn't very encouraging, it isn't very rewarding. But I certainly see this - that people do change. Sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, but in one way or another they do change.

Sometimes of course I see it more clearly than others, because perhaps I haven't seen a certain person for quite a number of months or even years, but when I do meet them after that interval, I see a very great change has taken place and that is very very encouraging and very very rewarding. Sometimes of course they write and tell me about the changes, dramatic and otherwise, taking place, and that is no less encouraging, no less rewarding.

So I think this is what I would say. That it's seeing people change. Change of course, I need hardly say, for the better, [Laughter] which is encouraging and rewarding.

**Surata:** Bhante, could I ask you a little subsidiary on that?

**S:** Indeed.

**Surata:** We were talking this morning about general points on Going for Refuge and things and I think about three Mitras in my group were surprised to hear that you wanted to hear from them in writing as regularly as possible. They'd actually been given to believe otherwise by Order members in the not so recent past.

**S:** Well Order members are naturally concerned that I shouldn't be bothered unnecessarily, and obviously I shouldn't be, but nonetheless I do like to hear from people personally. I still am able to read all the letters I get, fortunately. Especially those I get from Order members and Mitras. I may not be able to reply. You may not even get an acknowledgement, but everybody writing can be quite sure that I do read their letter. I read it carefully. Sometimes I read it twice, and it is taken note of. So I would like people to write to me if they possibly can. So let there be no doubt about that. Just personal news. How you're getting on, what you're doing. If it does seem that some action is required on the letter well obviously that will be taken, either by me directly or through the Order Office. But yes I do like to hear from people.

This is a rather more complex question.

*It seems that over the years, the term 'spiritually committed' has come to be synonymous with 'Order member', and that spiritual hierarchy, which most people subscribe to as a principle, has come to fall, loosely speaking, into senior Order member, Order member, mitra, Friend. This is understandable and generally reflects how things are. However, is it desirable in the long run if in specific cases hierarchy becomes a matter of form or habit, and not one of merit or genuine substance? How do you see the correspondence between spiritual hierarchy and the FWBO/WBO?*

I'm not quite sure what the latter part of the question means. Anyway I'll go into the question generally. I think there is no doubt that there is such a thing as a spiritual hierarchy. If one thinks in terms of change, if one thinks in terms of spiritual development, well obviously some will have changed more than others and will, so to speak, occupy a higher place in the spiritual hierarchy, and, as the questioner says, the arrangement for ordering of senior Order member, Order member, mitra, Friend, generally reflects how things are. But there's an important point to be made here. That's the general principle, but, as I think I've emphasised quite often in the past, one cannot claim, or cannot insist, that you occupy a particular place in the spiritual hierarchy. You can understand, you can accept, you can recognise, the principle of spiritual hierarchy, but you cannot, on that account or on that basis, claim for yourself, a particular place in that hierarchy in relation to other people. This introduces the question of communication. What I've said very often and what I'd like to repeat, or what I'd like to stress, is, that when two people - that is to say people within the context of the FWBO - meet, it should not be on a very decided basis of one being the superior and the other the inferior, in the communication. It may be that one is spiritually more developed and the other less spiritually developed. In fact that is quite likely to be the case, but that cannot be made the initial

basis of the communication. You must, as it were, come together with open minds, because it is quite possible that one person, being an Order member, is in fact - at least in certain respects - not so developed as another person being a mitra. So it cannot be taken as certain, it cannot be taken as definite, when two people meet within the context of the FWBO, that one is decidedly the superior of the other, and that the other is the inferior, to use those terms.

So when they come together they must come together in a spirit of quite open communication, willing to discover, willing to learn, from one another, well who perhaps is the more experienced, who is perhaps the less experienced. You don't need to insist upon that. If you genuinely communicate with another person over a length of time, you will discover for yourselves where you stand in this respect. There's no need for anyone to claim any particular position. The likelihood is of course that, in the end, the Order member will be seen and recognised as spiritually more developed, at least in some respects. But that recognition cannot be claimed as a right. It is something which others have to discover in the course of their contact and communication with the Order member concerned, or the mitra concerned in the case of a Friend. Or a senior and experienced Order member in relation to an Order member, and so on. Is that point quite clear or has it been a source of confusion in the past? [Pause]

You may go along to a Centre and you may see that an Order member is leading the Puja. Fair enough, he's leading the Puja because he's an Order member, but it does not necessarily follow that he is your spiritual superior. He may be. Perhaps you will be well advised to consider him so provisionally [Laughter] but not absolutely, because you don't really know. You can only know in the course of communication with him. When you begin to feel, well he's got an edge over you, he is more experienced, he has got more insight. But it must come about in that way. Not by way of someone claiming a certain position and insisting on others recognising that he has that position. So that's quite clear?

*I feel that I should have more confidence in, and act more upon, my own thoughts and feelings when making decisions about my life or when using and expressing my opinion, particularly when it's not the general FWBO view or Order members' views. It seems to me that this should be part of being an individual and being a Buddhist. Do you think so? Is there advice in the scriptures or tradition or your own work, to do this?*

I think here there's a sort of middle path to be followed. On the one hand obviously you have to think for yourself. You have to make up your own mind about things, especially when it concerns your own life, your own future; but on the other hand you would be unwise entirely to ignore the advice of other people, especially when they are people who are friends, spiritual friends, and who wish you well. In the last resort you have to make up your own mind. But before making up your mind take as much advice from others as you possibly can. This is no doubt clear in theory, I wonder whether it's quite so clear in practice always.

I'm not quite sure what 'this general FWBO view' is. Are there some things that cannot be regarded as open questions - or not? Can anyone give me an example of what is the general FWBO view that someone might disagree with?

\_\_\_\_\_ : For example when I first came along to the LBC I more or less got the impression that sexual relationships weren't on as a thing and that they were seen to be avoided wherever possible.

Since then I've learnt different but that was the kind of view that I met with when I first came along to the LBC.

**S:** So an LBC view or FWBO view? [Laughter] I'm surprised to hear it was an LBC view! [Laughter] Very surprised indeed! [Laughter]

\_\_\_\_\_ : Things have changed!

**S:** Well one should certainly listen to what people say. If people mention that particular view, certainly take it seriously, ask them why they arrive at that particular view, whatever it may be. Their reasons for holding that particular view, and if you have a different view, well discuss the matter with them. But I wasn't thinking so much of things of that sort, because there is a difference of opinion with regard to that matter within the movement as a whole. But what about things like non-violence? What about things which are connected with the precepts, say with the ten precepts? Would they be regarded as an FWBO view? That one should say abstain from violence, that one should not take the non-given. What exactly does one mean by an FWBO view, if there is such a thing? As distinct from the precepts or from the refuges themselves of course.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Something sometimes I've seen is that an idea can be discussed, like say the idea of what it is to be an individual, and through continuous usage, a kind of shorthand builds up, develops, such that - sometimes I notice in my mitra group for instance - when an issue arises, this shorthand can be used to deal with the issue, sometimes in a way that isn't very deep. I wonder if that's possibly what's meant.

**S:** I think with any particular group, and I use the word group in the quite neutral sense, shorthand will develop in whatsoever sphere, and I think the important thing is to use the shorthand only when speaking with people who know what the shorthand really means. Because if you have someone in the group who hears the shorthand but doesn't know what it really means, doesn't know the thinking that led up to it and resulted in the formulation of that shorthand, then he may just take the shorthand, as you call it, on quite unthinkingly. So I think therefore it's a question of trying to see who you are speaking to and whether the person does recognise the shorthand as a shorthand for something else which he understands, or whether he just takes the shorthand itself not fully understanding what it means or its implications, but I think if you are discussing within a particular group, any subject for any length of time, you arrive at a sort of shorthand. For instance one finds this in Tibetan Buddhism among the Nyingmapas. They do it quite deliberately. They abbreviate words and they cut words in half or reduce them to a third and then string them together, but they know what they're talking about among themselves. But I think this does happen quite generally.

Of course every now and then we can revise and go back and say well what does the shorthand mean, we can ask ourselves this. But I think the use of some sort of shorthand within a more or less self contained group is probably inevitable. It saves time, it prevents time from being wasted. For instance the expression 'The Three Jewels' is shorthand. You don't always say, The Buddha, the Enlightened one, The Dharma, the teaching, The Sangha, the spiritual community. You just say 'The Three Jewels'. If there was a newcomer around you'd have to explain what 'The Three Jewels' were, but you wouldn't need to explain what 'The Three Jewels' were say in a mitra study group, unless of course one of the Mitras was woefully unprepared. [Laughter] I've not yet heard of anyone asking for ordination who didn't know what was meant by 'The Three Jewels'! [Laughter] But it's easy to forget because a few days ago I was interviewed by a journalist from *the Guardian* and he seemed to have a little knowledge of Buddhism, though not very much and had been along to the LBC, and I happened

to refer to 'The Three Jewels' and he said 'the Three What?', and he clearly didn't know what they were, so I had to spell it out, but, as I said, the expression 'The Three Jewels' is shorthand and we're using expressions like that all the time. 'The Eightfold Path' is shorthand. 'Kalyana Mitra' is shorthand. So we can't avoid that, it's a useful device. But we have to be quite clear about the people in connection with whom we are using it, or in front of whom we're using it. Not use it in front of new people who wouldn't understand what it meant.

\_\_\_\_\_ : I've often wondered whether there's actually a danger, even if people understand some of the shorthand that's used in the FWBO, in that questions can be answered sometimes superficially on the basis of the shorthand.

**S:** Well if one isn't satisfied with the answer, if one thinks it's superficial, one must ask again, one must press. Because there's going to be always danger. I think I mentioned this before. That there's danger in everything. There's danger in using shorthand. There's also danger in not using shorthand. If you don't use shorthand the danger is that you'll just bore the people [Laughter] who are well acquainted with the subject because you don't have to spell it all out for them. So there's danger on every side, and there will be danger on every side until we gain insight and enter on the transcendental path, but we can't avoid danger. We are always free to go wrong this side of Stream Entry.

*We hear a lot about the six criteria in the new Order selection process, but what human characteristics are you looking for in new Order members?*

I don't know whether this is addressed to me quite personally - 'what human characteristics are you looking for', as distinct from perhaps Subhuti [Laughter] who might have ideas of his own, but I thought in a way I'd dealt with this somewhere. That is to say when I've described the characteristics or qualities of the true Individual, or just of the Individual. Haven't I done that somewhere in a lecture? Does anyone remember?

\_\_\_\_\_ : 'A Wreath of Blue Lotus'?

**S:** I'm afraid I can't remember myself, but it might have been in one of the two Higher Evolution series, but I know I've mentioned this subject from time to time. The qualities or characteristics of the true Individual. So who's done his homework?

**Kulamitra:** I think the characteristics have built up over the years so they're a bit scattered. I don't think all the qualities you've mentioned are necessarily in one particular .....

**S:** I think I've recapped from time to time, adding one or two more, but what was the one I started with? Who remembers that?

\_\_\_\_\_ : It was in 'The Axial Age and the Emergence of the New Man'.

**Cittapala:** Responsibility?

**S:** No, that came a little later. What was the very first quality or characteristic that I mentioned?

\_\_\_\_\_ : Self-awareness.

**S:** Self-awareness, yes. So clearly I'm looking for that, yes. [Laughter] What was the second quality I mentioned? Anyone remember that? This is years and years ago. You were born then!

\_\_\_\_\_ : Sensitivity?

**S:** Yes, sensitivity was mentioned, yes.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Co-operation.

**S:** Co-operation. I don't think I have actually mentioned except perhaps very recently.

\_\_\_\_\_ : The person might be apart from the crowd, apart from the group.

**S:** Yes, that's true. What else?

\_\_\_\_\_ : Positivity.

**S:** Emotional positivity. You see another bit of shorthand - 'positivity' - it's emotional positivity, yes. What else?

\_\_\_\_\_ : Fidelity.

**S:** Fidelity. Yes, that's a comparatively recent one.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Creativity.

**S:** I mentioned creativity too, yes.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Craftiness! [Laughter]

**S:** Well that's not a characteristic or quality of the Individual, but it is, shall I say, something that an Individual needs in order to survive in a wicked world. [Laughter] There's another. I was trying to think, just jotting down a few thoughts. I think I've mentioned self-confidence. That I'd certainly be looking for because there are people who have many good qualities, even many good human qualities but who are crippled in the exercise of those qualities through lack of self-confidence. So I think I would regard self-confidence as one of the qualities of an individual. I'd certainly be looking for a good measure of self-confidence in new Order members. In fact I think you could hardly become an Order member without a very decided measure of self-confidence. I think that is something that should be looked for or looked at in the course of the pre-ordination process.

Yes, co-operativeness. I've been seeing this as more and more important because if one has a spiritual community and if a spiritual community is to be anything more than a name, there has to be co-operativeness. One has to be able to work together. One has to be able to adapt to other people. So co-operativeness I would also certainly be looking for. And fidelity. Someone mentioned fidelity. I have given a talk on that, haven't I. But how does one see fidelity as a human characteristic, a characteristic of a new Order member? What sort of fidelity? Has anyone any ideas.

\_\_\_\_\_ : To the truth.

**S:** To the truth, yes. What else do you think?

\_\_\_\_\_ : To their friends.

**S:** To their friends, yes indeed.

\_\_\_\_\_ : To themselves.

**S:** To themselves, but to themselves in what sense?

\_\_\_\_\_ : To themselves in the sense of their ideals.

**S:** So fidelity to their ideals, and fidelity to the spiritual community. But I've added another characteristic. I don't think I've mentioned this before. I've mentioned the quality I think, but I don't think I've mentioned it as a human characteristic or a characteristic that one would be looking for in new Order members, and that is a willingness to forgive. I must say that in the course of the last few years perhaps, I've been rather struck by the fact that quite a lot of people find it very difficult to forgive, and I do sometimes quote Blake's verses - 'Mutual forgiveness of each vice, such are the Gates of Paradise' or something to that effect. Yes, 'Mutual forgiveness of each vice, such are the Gates of Paradise'. So why do you think mutual forgiveness is necessary?

\_\_\_\_\_ : Nobody could live without forgiveness(?)

**S:** Well people do, people do though, don't they. [Laughter]

\_\_\_\_\_ : Yes, that's the problem isn't it. It gets in the way.

**S:** Yes. You can't help committing some mistakes where other people are concerned. You can't help it. So there has to be mutual forgiveness. You have to recognise that in a sense you're all in the same boat. You both or you all commit mistakes and you should be ready to forgive one another for the mistakes committed. That is not to say that mistakes should be taken lightly. If you commit a mistake don't just turn around and say, 'ah well you'd better forgive me that'. You should be sorry that you've committed that mistake, you should repent of it, if repentance is called for. Feel remorseful. Make amends, make up for it. But the other person, once you've expressed your remorse and regret and perhaps made up for your mistake, should be willing to forgive and forget. So one can't really live together without forgiveness. Perhaps one should also say you can't really live together without repentance, without confession and repentance. Confession and repentance on the part of the person committing the mistake and forgiveness on the part of the person with regards to whom the mistake was committed. So I would add willingness to forgive. Also perhaps, correlatively, willingness to repent, willingness to confess.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Willingness on both sides.

**S:** Indeed, yes.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Sometimes you can forgive too quickly though. You can be a bit deceitful in the communication and a bit afraid of being direct and bringing things to rights.

**S:** Well this raises the question of the nature of forgiveness. I don't think you can really forgive too quickly, but I think there can be a sort of superficial forgiveness. You think you ought to forgive, or perhaps you're afraid of the consequences if you don't forgive. But, no, real forgiveness can't be done too quickly.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Why do you think it's so difficult to forgive?

**S:** Well why do you think it's so difficult to forgive [Laughter], unless you find it easy to forgive? Why does anyone find it difficult to forgive? What happens when one doesn't forgive or can't forgive? What's the state of affairs? What's your mental state?

\_\_\_\_\_ : You can get angry.

**S:** It's a feeling of anger, resentment. But anger usually passes sooner or later.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Another reason one is caught up with the feeling so one is actually unable to see what happened and how that's affecting one. So it's like that, a projection onto the other person.

**S:** Projection?

\_\_\_\_\_ : Y-e-s. (tentatively spoken) [Laughter]

**S:** That's a bit of shorthand isn't it. [Laughter] Anyway we'll let that pass.

\_\_\_\_\_ : When you don't forgive, it feels like you're dragging the past with you.

**S:** That's true. Yes, indeed you are. Yes.

\_\_\_\_\_ : It's making you feel like the other person's got one up on you.

**S:** Yes, indeed.

\_\_\_\_\_ : It's competitive. You want to get even, you want to get back on level pegging.

**S:** In other words it's as though your ego has been hurt, your ego has been attacked, yes.

\_\_\_\_\_ : There must be some sort of communication. You can't just say oh well, forget it. You need to sort of forgive but in an open discussion of it.

**S:** Yes. I think it does help, at least in some cases, if the other person recognises and admits their mistake, if in fact they have committed a mistake, and your injury isn't just imaginary or just in your own mind. But yes, certainly, free and open communication helps people to forgive.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Have you noticed that there's a marked tendency for us not to forgive?

**S:** As I said over the years I've noticed in some people at least an unwillingness to forgive, a tendency to bear grudges, to harbour resentment.

\_\_\_\_\_ : I suppose it also depends on the gravity of the fall out.

**S:** Yes, indeed, yes. There's also this saying - I think it's a French saying - 'to understand all is to forgive all', and if you can perhaps try to understand the motives of the person who committed the offence with regard to you, perhaps that would in fact help you to forgive, if you can see, for instance, extenuating circumstances. But certainly forgiveness is important. You have no peace of mind so long as your harbour resentment. No peace of mind so long as you bear grudges. So forgiveness is really a human characteristic, and one is certainly looking for it in new Order members because there are bound to be occasions of offence between people living together. If you can't forgive, you can't live together. There can't be any community life without forgiveness.

\_\_\_\_\_ : It occurs to me that it's an important aspect, that maybe your resentment is that once you've been wronged, harbouring resentment reinforces your sense of ego.

**S:** It certainly does. Has anybody got any suggestions of their own about human characteristics. The list is not a closed list, you must remember. We go on adding to it all the time and you can add to it too, or try to add to it if you want to.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Optimism.

**S:** Optimism in what sense?

\_\_\_\_\_ : Well more the feeling that we can do things. More of an optimistic outlook rather than seeing the difficulties in things.

**S:** Perhaps sometimes one has to see the difficulties, because there are difficulties, and that would be realistic. But perhaps in a sense optimism is inherent in the spiritual life itself, because the spiritual life consists in making spiritual progress. Rising to a higher level of being and consciousness and you have to believe that is possible, and one can describe that as optimism obviously. If you were pessimistic about that you wouldn't be leading a spiritual life at all. So yes, optimism one could say, in that sense. Not the foolish optimism that closes its eyes to difficulties, but optimism in that sense is a human quality and certainly one is looking for that in new Order members.

\_\_\_\_\_ : What about the ability to work, the ability to apply oneself at work?

**S:** Yes, I was probably rather taking that for granted but perhaps I shouldn't! [Laughter] Yes.

\_\_\_\_\_ : It seems to me to include a lot - the ability to decide if you want to do something, to apply your effort to it and not be distracted from it.

**S:** Yes, to mobilise one's energies. Undistractedness.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Say acceptance of other people as you find them now, rather than trying to impose your own viewpoint of what they should be like - being able to accept them as they are now, but nevertheless from that basis, being able to communicate your own warmth and friendship and feedback as to what they need for their own spiritual needs.

**S:** Certainly one has to start off by accepting people as they are in the sense of recognising where they stand. One doesn't have to accept them as they are in the sense of accepting that that's the way they're always going to be, but certainly there has to be a basic sort of human acceptance of them as

they are, to begin with. Because no doubt they are capable of improvement and your acceptance of them as they are shouldn't preclude the possibility of their becoming better than they are. I think people shouldn't feel so accepted that they don't make any effort to evolve. [Laughter]

\_\_\_\_\_ : Does that happen? [Laughter]

**S:** Well I think it does. It perhaps happens in families. Your mother for instance may accept you as you are and may wish for nothing better.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Right, yes. I was thinking of acceptance between Order members and Mitras where there is that implied commitment to growth. The difference of acceptance I was thinking of that you get from your parents. There's no question of growth. Yes you will perhaps stay as you are.

**S:** I think it's more a question of recognition of where someone is at than just acceptance. I think acceptance has all the wrong sort of connotations. For instance supposing a friend of yours has a bad temper, well one could hardly say that you accept that he has got a bad temper. It would be better perhaps to say that you recognise that he has, you're realistic about it, and on that basis you try to help him overcome it, but if you say you accept that he has a bad temper, it suggests almost that you may not necessarily do anything about it or think that anything ought to be done about it. You just accept it as a sort of just fact of life. So maybe it would be better to speak in terms of recognition. You recognise that he has a bad temper. You don't ignore the fact, but you don't accept it. In fact in a sense you shouldn't accept it because you want him to be better than that, not to have a bad temper.

Any other comment?

\_\_\_\_\_ : I was just thinking Bhante that maybe it's a quality but the ability to empathise, in a sense the ability to leave your own frame of reference for a while. To see something from another person's point of view, to see another dimension to the problem.

**S:** Yes, well this ties up with another quality which I did mention but which hasn't been referred to so far this evening. That is imagination, and empathy is akin to imagination because imaginatively you're able to project yourself into another person's experience, another person's being, another person's situation. This is what empathy means. So yes imagination must be a human characteristic, empathy must be. It's not so easy. It sounds easy but it isn't really easy to empathise in the sense of feeling as another person feels. You can see another person really going through it and having a very difficult time, and you can think that you empathise but you don't really, because you could turn aside and forget all about it in five seconds, quite easily.

\_\_\_\_\_ : I think there's also the thing that what's difficult for them might not be difficult for me but it might nonetheless be very difficult for somebody else. Putting yourself in their shoes is only the starting point. You've also got to try and be sensitive to how it is for them.

**S:** I remember a passage from Boswell's 'Life of Johnson', I think it was - I can't remember the exact reference, perhaps Subhuti will prompt me - but Boswell was going on I think as Boswell often used to go on. I think he'd seen a man hanged or something like that, and he'd just seen it maybe half an hour before and he was going on to Johnson about how dreadful it was and how it had upset him and Johnson accused him, I think, of just talking cant, and he said, 'You don't really care about the man being hanged and if you had a good dinner you'd forget about it in five minutes!' or words to that effect. That is the case. We empathise only to a very limited extent. Not very deeply. Not in a really

far-reaching sort of way. You can read some quite distressing story in the newspaper and feel quite sorry for the people involved, but in less than a minute later you've forgotten all about it. Your empathy has not been very deep, and that is sometimes the case even with those who are supposedly near and dear to you. Someone can have a headache or a toothache - you feel a bit sorry for them but after a little while if the headache or the toothache goes on for too long and they're complaining too much as you think, you can start feeling quite irritated by them. [Laughter] Far from empathising. This is I'm afraid what happens. So the capacity for empathy I think it more a superhuman quality! [Laughter] Rather than a human one.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Are you suggesting Bhante that it's useful to try and experience something someone else is experiencing as fully as they are?

**S:** I don't think you can do that literally, unless perhaps you're fully enlightened. I think it's difficult even to do it to a limited extent. I think one can reflect on one's own experience in this connection. It's very difficult to empathise. Really to enter into the experience of another person in a really living way. Especially if their experience is painful perhaps. Perhaps, I'm not sure of this, but perhaps it's more easy to enter into their more joyful experiences, but that's assuming that you won't feel envy or jealousy or such emotions which people also are very prone to.

But our incapacity to empathise is a measure, in a way, of our isolation, and not just of individuality, but our individualism. I think a genuine and fairly deep capacity to empathise would be a sign almost of Insight, because it would mean that to some extent, even though a limited extent, you'd transcended the barriers of your separative selfhood. [Pause] So empathy is a very important characteristic. I think it goes beyond human characteristics in the ordinary sense. I think it does have to partake of the nature of Insight very much to be really real empathy.

**[End of side one side two]**

.... topic.

\_\_\_\_\_ : What about generosity?

**S:** Yes I think that has been mentioned too in the past, yes, generosity indeed. Generosity of course implies a feeling for the need of others. Implies a measure of self-transcendence. So yes, generosity is a human characteristic too.

All right, a short question. Not exactly a snappy one but anyway it's short! [Laughter]

*Do you have any more thoughts on the Kalyana Mitra system?*

I'm afraid I haven't. [Laughter] It's amazing the number of subjects I'm expected to have thoughts on! But there is one point I'd like to make, though I think it has been made before, that I have been thinking that when a mitra has Kalyana Mitras or asks for Kalyana Mitras or asks two Order members to become his Kalyana Mitras, one should be ideally from his, as it were, home centre, and the other from the pre-ordination course team. So that having two Kalyana Mitras with these two different backgrounds, as it were, the mitra concerned may have a wider outlook on the movement and a wider connection with the movement. One, as it were, more local, the other, as it were, more central. I think this would be desirable if it is or if it does prove to be practicable. Any supplementary about that?

\_\_\_\_\_ : A thought is the importance of the Kalyana Mitra ceremony. It used to be performed in the connection of the forming of a.....

**S:** So far as I know there's always a ceremony. I think the ceremony is important. In fact I believe I have said that without the ceremony well there isn't a Kalyana mitra relationship, not, so to speak, formal, so to speak, official.

**Alan Miller:** Do I understand the ceremony only takes place between the two Kalyana Mitras and the mitra himself? Is there any reason why it's a private ceremony?

**S:** No, there's a fourth person. There's the person performing the ceremony isn't there, so there's four.

**Alan Miller:** But is there any reason why it's essentially a private ceremony and it's not a public one?

**S:** I think it is to emphasise that it is very much a relationship between those particular people.

**Alan Miller:** It's just like with the study of the 'Duties of Brotherhood', there is a contract, it appears to be a public contract, and in that sense I thought the Kalyana mitra relationship should be a public one as well, so that everybody knows. It's a public statement of a relationship between several people.

**S:** I think we do publish information about it in 'Shabda'. We might even - I'm not sure about this - but we might have published it in 'Mitrata' in the past?

**Subhuti:** In the past, yes.

**S:** 'Mitrata' fulfilled a somewhat different function, but it is something which could be discussed, but so far we have felt that it's best to keep it, not exactly private, but just to emphasise the fact that it is very much a relationship between those three people.

Any other supplementary. All right then I'll pass on to the next.

*Is it a purely Western phenomenon or do people involved with the TBMSG, that is to say Trailokya Bauddha Maha Sangha Sahayak Gana, 'go through it' from time to time? [Laughter]*

Well I've been in India recently. I spent three weeks in India and I had quite a bit of contact with Order members, Mitras and Friends, and I can assure you, if it's any consolation, they too do go through it! [Laughter] from time to time. But I would say they probably go through it less, or perhaps I should say they contain the going through much better. They do not indulge it so much I would say and they don't indulge it so much because they are much more aware of what is sometimes called - this isn't exactly shorthand, it's too long for that - the needs of the objective situation. In India the movement exists in a rather different context. Because most of our Order members, Mitras and Friends are ex-Untouchables, they are faced by severe social problems, and it's mainly on account of those social problems that, initially, they came to Buddhism. So they have constantly to grapple with all sorts of problems of an objective nature. They may be going through it, but they have to go to

work, otherwise their wives and children will starve perhaps. They may be going through it but they've still got to cope with their caste Hindu neighbours. They've still got to cope with being discriminated against. They've still got to cope with sometimes being attacked, beaten, having their houses burned down. This sort of thing goes on all the time. So there is an objective situation with which they're greatly concerned. They're greatly concerned with the spread of the movement, because they realise the way in which the Movement benefits them and can benefit so many other thousands and millions of people in India.

So they are much more objectively oriented than people are in this country. Very often they don't have time to spend just on thinking about what a dreadful time they're having since they're 'going through it'. If they go away on retreat they're much more likely to get on with their meditation than just be 'going through it'. But yes, sometimes they do go through it, and some go through it quite severely, but they contain that better, and, as I've indicated, they contain it better I think on the whole because they are much more oriented to the objective situation and the needs of that objective situation, and I would say on the whole much less self indulgent about these things than we are in this country. Much less psychologically oriented.

Any supplementaries about that?

\_\_\_\_\_ : How could we move more towards that?

**S:** Just by being more objectively oriented. Because in this country too, in the West, there are people who could greatly benefit from the movement. They may be living in comparative affluence compared with say people in India, but they've the problems of affluence. They've all sorts of mental problems, psychological problems, problems of boredom and discontent and frustration, and I'm sure many of those people, if only they knew about the FWBO and could be brought into contact with it, would greatly benefit from it.

Nowadays, especially over the last few years, two or three years, and even the last six or eight months, I've been getting more and more letters from newcomers to the movement saying how glad they were that they had come in contact with the movement. But one of the things that has struck many of them, and which strikes me, is that they came into contact with it almost by accident. They happened to see a poster. A friend happened to tell them about a meditation class. They happened to know someone who was going on retreat. They happened to see Subhuti's book in the library, etc., etc., and it would seem that if only we were better known and could make ourselves better known, many, many more people would come into contact with us. We don't, in a sense, need much of an effort to interest them. If they knew about us and what we stood for they would be interested in many cases. So I think there is an objective situation with which we could concern ourselves more than we do, rather than, as often happens, just wallowing in our own subjectivity, to coin a phrase. Do you see what I mean?

I sometimes can't help feeling a little impatient with the amount of time people spend mulling over their own, as it were, problems. I know people do have problems and perhaps they are genuine ones in many cases, but I think one shouldn't spend too much time on them, and should direct oneself much more to the objective situation, or the needs of the objective situation or the needs of other people I suppose it really means. Yes, give one's own problems the attention they need but no more than that. Don't indulge them.

\_\_\_\_\_ : How would you like us to be better known? I'd heard one suggestion was to - of one

Order member who I think was quoting you that you - go outside dole offices with *Golden Drum*.

**S:** Well you could try that. [Laughter] I'm sure Nagabodhi would be pleased. But for instance, talking about *Golden Drum*, when I was in Manchester some time ago I heard that one of the Order members there had actually taken an armful of *Golden Drums* and he'd gone round all the local bookshops and newsagents and he had disposed of quite a large number of copies, and they are now taking from him regularly, so that is the sort of thing that people could do. That's just one thing. One could also have more publicity, one could advertise more. That of course requires funds. One could be more outward going in all sorts of ways.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Person to person contact with people in the street?

**S:** Well some people are better at that than others. Some people, even in the FWBO, can't say boo to a goose, what to speak of chatting up someone about the FWBO. Some people - again the same Order member whom I referred to in Manchester - is a positive genius, this one, about sitting around in coffee bars and getting into conversation with people and getting them along to the Centre! [Laughter] Not everybody can do that, and not everybody even likes coffee bars, come to that! [Laughter]

But there are all sorts of things that one can do if one really feels that there are people out there who could benefit through coming into contact with the movement. Again perhaps it's a question of empathy, but of empathy with people you don't even know personally, but who you know are out there - thousands of them, perhaps tens of thousands, perhaps even millions. So instead of just toddling along to your own little job and doing your own little bit around the Centre and mulling over your own problems, discussing them with your friends, well perhaps you could just be a bit more outward going and think of those people who haven't had the advantage, as you have had, of coming into contact with the movement, especially those of you who live in cities and are surrounded by literally sometimes millions of people. You can talk to people in your workplace, if they'll let you of course. Talk to people you meet in all sorts of situations. Talk to members of your family, talk to your old friends.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Be creative.

**S:** Right.

\_\_\_\_\_ : I just wonder (cough obscures a few words) of comparing people in India and how they are with their problems and us over here where we're a completely different culture, a completely different background, because certainly I'm aware that say for example taking doctors as a group - they have a high rate of suicide, and I think part of that is because they drive themselves so hard, and if you like they're not indulgent enough, they don't take enough awareness of what is happening to them psychologically. Also I'm aware just in the community that I live in that there are a lot of unsaid things that some people aren't conscious enough of. Of things like emotions like resentment and anger, and it's like it hasn't been recognised and it actually gets in the way of communication of what's happening. So I just think India is such a different place, such a different culture, that I just wonder how much one can really compare it. And also the other thing I was thinking about was like people in this country who have objective difficulties. There seems to be a difference between whether it's internal or external. People who are, say, in a war situation, studies have shown that if there's an external threat then their mental health is quite good, but if you take people who are unemployed, who have had bereavement, who have had different sorts of losses and

their mental health is terrible as a group of people and they do have major psychological problems, and I wonder if maybe in India it's like an external thing because it almost is like a war situation. You've got people out there who are .....

**S:** Well in a sense it is, but again they do have some of the problems that we have here. I mean, you mentioned bereavement, well there they suffer from bereavement too and have to cope with them in the same sort of way. In fact one might say that they suffer from bereavements more frequently due to their particular social conditions. I would say that Buddhists in India and Buddhists in this country are very comparable. I think that is one of the most striking features of the situation out there - that one does at once feel very much at home within an FWBO situation out there, recognising it as very much the same in spirit as the FWBO situation that one is familiar with here, but external conditions are very different in the way that I've described. But certainly people, as I said, there, are more oriented to the needs of the objective situation, just because they are, in a way, so much more pressing, and obviously there are for some people at least, in this country, objective, as well as subjective problems, and perhaps we can address those as well.

As you know I was in India not only just on tour and all that but in connection with a documentary film being made, and the director of the film was a quite relatively hard-boiled character. [Laughter] He was quite impressed by what he saw of the FWBO or TBMSG there, but one of the things that impressed him most was how happy some people there could be with so little, in fact nothing. We would consider them as living in a state of total deprivation, or near total deprivation, but nonetheless they were really happy, and he noticed this especially where the children were concerned. He felt they were so much more happy than children in this country, and it applied to a great extent to adults as well. That despite the dreadful conditions of squalor and deprivation under which they were living, they were, in a way, healthy, happy human beings. So I think this also should give us food for thought. Why with all our apparent affluence and conveniences of living, we are less happy than people there. So I think this is what I was trying to get at, suggesting that we were less preoccupied with our personal troubles and problems and a bit more objectively oriented. In other words get out of ourselves a bit more. I think this would help us, at least to some extent. I'm not denying that we have problems, both subjective and objective, but I do think we are more preoccupied by them or with them than is really justified or is in our own interests.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Do you think there's anything more than just making individual efforts towards that sort of orientation. Things do seem to conduce to dwelling upon oneself. People ask you how are you.

**S:** Well perhaps you shouldn't ask people that. [Laughter] Because if you say 'how are you?' in an anxious sort of way it suggests that there's something wrong with them that they're going to tell you about and perhaps they do tell you about it at length. I read the other day a quite remarkable article in the paper by a woman who had been assaulted some years previously one dark night by two men. She wasn't sexually assaulted but she was attacked and assaulted physically, and loads of friends came round and sympathised with her and she said, or she wrote in the article rather, that she realised that sympathy wasn't doing her any good, and she changed her attitude, and she developed the attitude of 'I'm not going to let those two men spoil my life. I'm not going to be defensive, I'm not going to be cautious where I go at night' and all that sort of thing 'and I'm going to make a success of my life'. So she started on the independent career, and every time she made a bit of progress or some extra money or something of that sort, she felt, 'well that's one in the eye for those two men!' [Laughter] So it's a completely different attitude and she said she could see that she could very easily have slipped into an attitude of self pity, just accepting the sympathy of her friends and

wallowing in it. So I think we need more of that sort of attitude.

Anyway let's pass on. I think I'll have to pass on a little more quickly now because time is passing on.

*What do you think about sexual relationships taking place within single sex communities?*

I think this is one of the topics I haven't thought about very much, if at all, really. I've certainly thought quite a bit about sexual relationships and problems arising out of sexual relationships, but I must say that so far I haven't had to consider problems of this sort, partly perhaps because problems of this sort haven't really arisen. So I think I will simply say that one has to apply to sexual relationships taking place within single sex communities the same, as it were, criteria that one applies to sexual relationships in general. Namely that one shouldn't be too involved. That the sexual relationship should be at the periphery rather than the centre of your mandala and so on. Any supplementary about that?

\_\_\_\_\_ : I was just thinking that in the sort of communities I've heard where there have been sexual relationships within the community and it hasn't been discussed at all. It's been sort of very much under wraps. It seems to me to be a disruptive element.

**S:** Well of course people do find sexual relationships sometimes quite difficult to talk about anyway, don't they. But certainly within a community there should be openness about such relationships as there should be openness about everything that goes on. But on the other hand I think one should be encouraging in one's attitude and encourage people to talk about themselves, their relationships and so on, rather than insisting that they ought to talk about them or must talk about them. One should aim at the development of an atmosphere or feeling of trust and openness within which people will quite naturally talk about those things which most deeply concern them.

And also one has to remember, no doubt, that in our society a certain amount of disapproval is attached to relationships of this sort, and that therefore people will, very often be reluctant to talk about them or disclose them just for that reason. So there is an additional sort of cultural conditioning - an understandable cultural conditioning - to be overcome.

Onto an allied question. I think this is one of the most intriguing questions of the evening. This question is:

*How can one best help a spiritual friend who has fallen in love?*  
[Laughter]

This is a difficult one! But there seems to be a certain assumption here. That the spiritual friend who has fallen in love needs help. [Laughter] And I think that probably is the case. [Laughter] And I think someone is quite rightly concerned when his spiritual friend has fallen in love because if his spiritual friend has fallen in love, the chances are he'll be spending a lot of time with the person with whom he has fallen in love, and there might not be much time and might not be much spiritual friendship for you. So I think it's in your own best interests that you do your best to help a spiritual friend or any friend who has fallen in love. How you'll do it I really don't know. [Loud Laughter] I remember - perhaps Subhuti remembers too - that years and years and years ago in what are sometimes referred as the 'good old days' [Laughter] when Bhante did everything - took all the

classes and gave all the lectures - someone living in a spiritual community, or what in those days passed for a spiritual community, did actually fall in love, and was actually forcibly restrained by his spiritual friend, [Laughter] one particular spiritual friend in particular, who shall be nameless, from pursuing the matter further, let us say, and the person who was forcibly restrained thereafter was deeply grateful to the friend who restrained him in that way, because he saw that he'd saved him from a terrible disaster! [Laughter] So yes, a spiritual friend who has fallen in love really needs help.

I'm not quite sure how you should give that help. It's not easy. Because, well, everybody knows that love is blind and love is not only blind, love is also deaf. [Laughter] And one not only does not see the true state of affairs, but will not listen to advice, will not listen to admonition, and may on occasion take it rather amiss, will very often assure one that 'this is different' - that's a bit of shorthand again.

But yes I think one is quite right to be concerned if one's spiritual friend has fallen in love and I think one needs to try to point out to that spiritual friend what is really happening, especially if the falling in love is the sort of classic case of projection, and that cannot but result in pain and suffering for both parties later on. So I think at the very least you owe it to your spiritual friend to speak your mind, to point out the dangers, to indicate to him the direction in which he is really going. He may be stumbling along in a sort of rose coloured cloud, not aware of the precipice at his feet. He may imagine he's going to sprout wings that are going to carry him over the precipice. He may feel that he's got wings, but you can see he hasn't got wings! [Laughter] and he's going to come a cropper! [Laughter]

But at the very least, speak your mind. Advise him as best you can, and give him spiritual friendship. Perhaps he's fallen in love because he hasn't been getting real affection and warmth from his friends, from his spiritual friends. Maybe that's the reason. So just try to perhaps cultivate the friendship in a more active way than you had been doing. If someone is living in a spiritual community and there is no warmth and real affection within the community, he will start looking outside for that, even going outside for that, and may end up falling in love. So you also have a responsibility to provide, or help to provide, the love and affection which your spiritual friends seems to need. And if he's getting it from you already but, nonetheless has fallen in love, well just remind him that he shouldn't be throwing away that precious jewel which is your friendship and your affection for that sake of something which is probably going to be quite ephemeral and involve him in pain and suffering in the long run.

*At the end of the Puja why do we break up several of the mantras, i.e. Tara, into small chunks? This seems to me not only to destroy the continuity of sound but also to diminish the wholeness of the mantra.*

I must admit after reading this question I had to ask myself, well why do we do it? Because we've always done it, but presumably we don't do it just because we've always done it. But why did we originally do it? But that raises the question well why did I originally do it, because I'm the culprit here! [Laughter] It's traced back to me and I was trying to think well why did I originally do it, and the answer I came up with was this - that I did it because in the very early days people, especially new people, couldn't remember a whole mantra. The Tara mantra has been mentioned but if I said 'Om Tare Tutare Ture Svaha', they would have got it wrong. They might have remembered the 'Om' bit but [Laughter] . So I said 'Om Tare', and they said 'Om Tare', they could remember so much [Laughter] . That's all right, bit by bit. So I think that is how it started. But we can certainly reconsider this and if everybody present knows the whole mantra, as when it's an Order occasion or

perhaps even an Order and mitra occasion, because lots of Mitras do know the whole mantra [Laughter], well perhaps we can just have the whole mantra. Perhaps it isn't necessary to split it up into chunks. I don't mind if people like to experiment in this way.

**Kulamitra:** I have a couple of supplementaries concerning the Puja. Why is it that the person leading the Puja is the last to make offerings during the Avalokitesvara mantra. He makes a point of being the last one.

**S:** Pure humility! Presumably.

**Kulamitra:** Presumably that's something that people just followed you, the way that you did the Puja.

**S:** I'm not sure if I originally did do that. I can't remember, but I don't think the leader need necessarily be the first one to do certain things.

**Kulamitra:** But need they necessarily make a point of being the last?

**S:** I think it also makes it clear that if he's the last, or if she's the last, that the offerings are finished as it were, if you see what I mean. He looks round to see if everybody has made their offerings and then he makes them. Especially if there's a large crowd of you then everybody knows well the offerings are now concluded. Otherwise you may just sit there wondering if there is anyone left to make their offerings. But the leader looks around. He knows who is there presumably, checks and then makes his offerings. Then you know that that particular stage of the proceedings is concluded. But again there need not be a hard and fast rule. Any other point?

**Kulamitra:** Yes. When I first started coming along the habit was that when the leader had finished leading the meditation or whatever, when they got up everybody else got up with them and bowed in unison. Now the habit is that the leader gets up and bows first and people wait until they've left the room and then start getting up.

**S:** Yes, I don't know why this has crept in. Sometimes these variations do occur spontaneously.

**Kulamitra:** Do you have a preference?

**S:** Well it might have been discussed once in Tuscany, because I think if there's definitely a next item on the programme that everybody is going to go to, you should all stand up together and bow together, but if the meditation, say, if it is a meditation, is open ended, then some people may prefer just to sit on longer, as often used to happen at Il Convento after breakfast, I think then the leader could get up and make his bow and leave others to leave when they wish. But if there's definitely a next item on the programme, then I think it should all be done together.

**Kulamitra:** So a public class or something...

**S:** Yes, right yes.

\_\_\_\_\_ : I very often like to stay after a Puja.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Another thing with the mantras. Embellishing them a bit sometimes and harmonising

the different mantras. Would you feel like they should just be kept the way they are and that is....

**S:** Well we do have one or two groups that are experimenting, but I don't think we should change anything unless it's been generally agreed to begin with within the Order. Otherwise we'll have a very wide variety of different ways of doing things and people will feel it quite strange when they go to a new Centre. I think the basic things should be uniform. Though I'm certainly not averse to improvements being introduced, and as I said we have had experimental groups.

Anyway I think I'd better press on.

*How do you pronounce Tassa - Tassa or Tassā or something in between? Likewise Sammāsambuddhasa. If you just read out the question, I'll know the answer. [Laughter]*

So no need to spend more time on that.

I'm going rather quickly now because time is passing isn't it.

*What Abhiseka did you receive from Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche or was there more than one?*

Yes. I received four. One for Manjughosa, one for Avalokitesvara, one for Vajrapani and one for Tara.

*Did you receive Abhisekas other than those from Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche and Kachu Rimpoche, from other Tibetans?*

Yes there were quite a number of others including one from Dhardo Rimpoche.

*I have come across the term 'Wong' in relation to initiations which I gather can be of one or more levels. Can you say something about this term and how it relates to visualisation practices done by members of the Western Buddhist Order?*

I'm afraid this is a bit complex. I can't say much about it. 'Wong' by the way or 'Wongkur' is the Tibetan equivalent of Abhiseka, and yes they can be on more than one level. I suggest if you're interested you consult Snellgrove's 'Indo Tibetan Buddhism'. He's gone into it to some extent there. I think I'll leave that there.

**Subhuti:** The next 'Mitrata' has a bit about it.

**S:** Ah. And make sure you buy the next 'Mitrata'. [Laughter]

Yes, we've got a few questions about Croydon but I'm going to deal with them quite briefly, perhaps for obvious reasons and partly because time is short.

*Have you, or are you going to accept Padmaraja's resignation? What can we learn from what has happened at Croydon?*

Well clearly that's a very big question, especially the second part of it. Yes I have received a letter of

resignation from Padmaraja but the position is I haven't as yet accepted the resignation. This is mainly because several old friends of Padmaraja's, that is to say Order member friends, have asked me to hold it for the time being so that they can go along, meet with him, and perhaps persuade him, hopefully, to withdraw his resignation, so I am holding it. That is the present position.

And what can we learn from what has happened at Croydon? Well, hundreds of lessons and there isn't time to go into them now.

Then the second part of the question.

*Where do you see Right Livelihood going in the future? Some people suggest that there is a mismatch between people's skills, abilities, and the work they do in Right Livelihood co-operatives, which leads to dissatisfaction and a high turnover of workers. Should we be looking for different types of businesses?*

I can't say much about this. As for the mismatch, I think very often we do find people working in Right Livelihood situations or co-operatives but not utilising their original skills. That is very often because they don't want to because they've got rather fed up with those skills or they have come to feel that those skills, or the exercise of those skills, has caused them to develop in a one-sided manner. So, in some cases at least, they deliberately work in a co-op and do a different kind of work for which they're not qualified, or not qualified in the same way, just because they want to develop that other aspect or that other side of themselves. So the mismatch is sometimes intentional and in the best interests of the person concerned.

Should we be looking for different types of businesses? I think we should. I think we should diversify, but there are problems there as everybody knows. Problems of capitalisation and management skills and so on and so forth. Obviously I can't go into that in detail.

*Do you have any suggestions for how to practise the Dharma if working in the outside world?*

Well practise the Dharma. I'm not quite sure what 'how does one practise the Dharma' means. Practising the Dharma is practising the Dharma. Meditating is meditating. Being mindful is being mindful.

\_\_\_\_\_ : What I meant by that was I put the Dharma in brackets because really what I mean is if you're working in a co-op you've got people around you who are practising and hopefully your communication applying to everything you're trying to do is orientated towards practice, whereas if you work in the outside world that isn't the case and I wondered if you had any thoughts about that, about ways to help, if you like, integrate what you're doing as a job into becoming part of one's overall practice.

**S:** It may not be possible in some cases. You have to examine the nature of the work you're doing, because it may to some extent be wrong livelihood. If it's right livelihood, and I think it sometimes can be, even in the outside world, the same difficulty doesn't exist. But if for instance it is a job that involves tremendous stress, you can't really integrate that, except perhaps by doing more meditation in your spare time, in our time off, or at weekends. But I think, very often, working out in the world is in the very nature of things something of a compromise, and therefore it's very difficult to integrate

that into your dharmic life. At best perhaps you can just bear it and make sure that it doesn't affect you adversely to too great an extent. I suppose mindfulness is really necessary. Mindfulness, especially with regard to the effect that the work is having on you, and determination in the sense of determination to make sure that it doesn't affect you to too great an extent. Also perhaps one should be prepared to change one's job. Not necessarily change your working in the world to working in a co-op but perhaps to another kind of job, possibly even less well paid, though in the outside world, if one has to work in the outside world.

But I think there is a limit in many cases to the extent to which you can integrate your work in the outside world with your Dharmic life. Very often of course one will be working with people and perhaps one can try to communicate with them, try to enter into more friendly relations. That may be very difficult. There was quite a sad story, almost a tragic story, reported in '*Shabda*', that is the Order journal, a few months ago where an Order member had written about his experience working on a building site, his experience of the people with whom he was working and it was really quite traumatic, and all he could do in the end was just get out of the situation. He just had to leave the job, it was so bad. So it isn't so easy to think in terms of integrating one's life in the world or one's outside job, into the overall structure of one's Dharma life. Conditions out there can sometimes be very inimical indeed to any kind of spiritual life or spiritual ideal, and this is of course one of the reasons why we do have co-ops, why we do have right livelihood situations.

So he, this particular Order member, could practise the Dharma in the outside world only by leaving that particular job. Unless he was an incarnate bodhisattva I don't see how he could have survived and practised the Dharma working in that particular job situation that he did.

More questions about Croydon I'm also going to be answering briefly here.

*What brought about the recent crisis in Croydon and what can be done to prevent such a crisis recurring?*

Well one could say that there are many dozen different factors bringing about the recent crisis in Croydon. I think it isn't possible to say yet. It isn't possible yet to enumerate all the factors which brought about the crisis. I think we are still in process of evaluating the situation, and therefore I think it isn't really possible to say what can be done to prevent such a crisis recurring. But I personally believe, from what I know of the situation that the circumstances were very peculiar indeed and I doubt very much whether any such crisis is going to recur within the FWBO in future.

Then a further question.

*Has there been any recent review of the system of giving new members of the WBO a Sanskrit or Pali name?*

As far as I know there hasn't been any review. I'm still giving these Pali and Sanskrit names. In fact gave quite a few fairly recently, and the question goes on to ask:

*How important is this renaming in the process of one's Going for Refuge?*

I would say from what I've see of the occasions when people get their new names and when later on their new names are announced, it's very important indeed. The reason, of course is to emphasise the

fact that you are a new person by virtue of your act of spiritual commitment, commitment to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, you have been spiritually reborn. You've died and been reborn. You're a new person, a new man, and you get a new name, and I've noticed that on the occasion of people's private ordination, when they are told their new name they are usually deeply impressed. It has quite an effect on them and when it's publicly announced in the course of the public ordination ceremony it has a no less profound effect on everybody present, in a different sort of way. I've also noticed that on the occasion of the public ordinations what most arouses people's interest is the announcement of names. That's what they're really waiting for! [Laughter] It's all building up to that. What is his name or what is, well I was going to say my name but the person concerned already of course knows his name - it's been given in the private ordination - but everybody present is almost itching to know what is the name. And a great cheer goes up very often [Laughter] when someone gets a particularly appropriate or suitable or beautiful or impressive name.

So if one looks at it from this point of view, the renaming is very very important indeed and.....

**[End of tape one    tape two]**

..... questions so we just go to another tradition, to the Buddhist tradition. In any case, we are part of the Buddhist movement and Buddhist tradition, and we have Pali and Sanskrit names. The system seems to work in practice very well, even though there may be possibly some theoretical objections. So I think that that system is going to continue, if not for the time being, well for quite a long time. I don't envisage changing it while I'm around, so to speak. [Laughter]

All right, last question. It's a question written in green ink, perhaps that means something. This is a much more general question.

*Is there much hope for the future of humanity given that we are still destroying each other daily and also rapidly destroying our environment?*

The situation is pretty grim I admit. Of course we've always been destroying each other. That's happened throughout history. But of course we're also rapidly destroying our environment which I think perhaps we haven't done in the past to the same extent, and that is possibly, that is potentially, a much more serious matter. I mentioned I was recently interviewed by a journalist who was actually from *'The Guardian'* - he was *'The Guardian'* religious affairs correspondent. He wasn't especially interested in Buddhism. When I asked him where his loyalties did lie he said that his loyalties lay with the ecology movement. So we had a quite interesting talk about that and about Buddhist attitudes towards ecology and I made it clear that in principle, so far as the FWBO was concerned, we were deeply in sympathy with the ecological movement, the green movement and all that, and he, among other things, did say that he was a friend of Jonathan Porritt, the leader of the *'Friends of the Earth'* and Ecology Party, and he mentioned that Jonathan Porritt was deeply interested in exploring the spiritual implications or spiritual dimensions of the ecology movement and had recently given a public lecture - I think it was the Schumacher lecture - on the subject, but according to this journalist, Jonathan Porritt had shown himself unfortunately to be not equipped to deal with that particular subject and he thought - that is to say the journalist thought - that Jonathan Porritt should have contact with the FWBO and said in fact he'd try to bring him into contact with the FWBO. He further said that he thought that Jonathan Porritt could very easily become a Buddhist. So let's see what happens. So I said I would certainly welcome that contact because I'd read some of Jonathan Porritt's writings and speeches and I'd thought them quite worthwhile.

Anyway that's rather by the by. The real question is 'Is there much hope for the future of humanity?'. I think there is some hope, but I think, quite frankly, that whatever hope there is lies in spiritual movements like the FWBO, like the WBO especially, and this is a view which in general terms was expressed by the journalist I mentioned. He referred especially for instance to the fact that the western nations use up very large, a very high percentage of the world's resources in comparison with people in other parts of the world, that there was a great imbalance in that respect and that if people in other parts of the world expected to consume on a scale that people are consuming in the West, then natural resources would come to an end very quickly indeed and that therefore we needed to restrain our consumption. Not just tell the people in the East to restrain their consumption because they don't want to do that, they want to increase it, but that we ourselves should restrain our consumption and he felt that there was no reason for people to do that except a spiritual reason, and he felt that Buddhism could perhaps teach people to restrain their consumption, if not for directly spiritual reasons, but at least for ecological reasons. Though perhaps he seemed to rather doubt that they could restrain them for any considerations except purely spiritual ones once they were convinced of the need to follow a spiritual path.

So he saw the ecological problem, though he didn't have any particular interest in Buddhism as such, he saw the ecological problem as primarily a spiritual problem, inasmuch as only a spiritual motivation could be sufficiently strong to enable people to restrain their consumption, and he felt that Buddhism, as far as he knew, fitted the bill best. He didn't have himself any faith in Christianity or in the theistic religions, but he felt that perhaps Buddhism could help in this particular way.

So I said I certainly shared those sentiments. So one could say that there is perhaps, one hopes, some hope for the future of humanity but only if a considerable portion of the population can be persuaded to lead a spiritual life. It sounds a rather trite sort of phrase, but at least become convinced that there are spiritual values, that there are higher spiritual realities worth living for, and direct their energies in that particular direction, orient their energies in accordance with those ideals.

So I think we can see the FWBO, I think we can see our own movement, in this broader context. It's not just a question of our own personal development in a narrow sense or our own personal satisfaction, but also, indirectly, to the extent that we can, making a contribution to humanity itself by emphasising spiritual values and helping people to live in the light of those spiritual values so that, at the very least, humanity itself will survive, that there will be a humanity, that there will be a human future, because it is rather seriously in doubt that there will be if a sufficiently large number of people don't change their attitudes in certain quite basic respects. So our work does have this broader, this wider, for want of a better term, ecological dimension or human dimension.

Any comment on that.

\_\_\_\_\_ : I personally find it a tall order.

**S:** Well yes I suppose the spiritual life is always a tall order, whether individually or collectively, but, to come back to what I said at the very beginning, I have been personally very encouraged by the fact that people can change and I think that if one can only get one's message across to a sufficiently large number of people, there could be change on a quite substantial scale. Well one has seen this, in a way, in India with the ex-Untouchables. We have a much more broadly based movement there than we have in England. Our base there, at a conservative estimate, consists of at least a hundred thousand people and quite a lot of those people have changed their lives in a quite

substantial manner as a result of their involvement with the Dharma. Changed it in very basic sort of ways. So I am quite convinced that we can operate on a larger scale if only we could get to the people and establish contact with them. In India we could do very much more than we already are doing but we're just very short of Order members. We have now about seventy five. Ten years ago we had only one or two and they weren't Indians anyway. Now there's seventy five, and I think the Indian Order may well grow exponentially I believe it's called, and they may, before very long, leave us in the West way behind. Not necessarily so, but it is possible.

So I think as a result of my own contact with the movement of mass conversion among the ex-Untouchables in India, and especially as the result of my contact, if you could call it that, with our own branch of the movement, I'm convinced that things can be done on quite a large scale quite effectively, and that a spiritual movement isn't necessarily just confined to a very small esoteric circle of people. I think we can operate on a broader basis, and on a bigger scale, without necessarily compromising our basic spiritual principles and ideals. I don't think we have to be small. Small is beautiful in some respects but not in all.

**Cittapala:** Would that not call for a greater concerted effort in publicising our activities and....

**S:** Well that would have to be a start, because people have to know about us to begin with.

**Cittapala:** It seems that the way the FWBO sets about its expansion is in quite a spontaneous, organic fashion rather than.....

**S:** Well one could say that it was haphazard. [Laughter] But perhaps it's the same thing. Perhaps the organic is haphazard.

**Cittapala:** But if one is setting out to try and affect the society in as radical a way as you were suggesting that this journalist was communicating, then that to my mind is a call for a much more centralised plan as it were.

**S:** Concerted effort, yes. I think there perhaps should be more centralised planning but on the other hand one doesn't want expansion to be limited to what has been centrally planned. In that respect there must be an element of spontaneity, but I think we ought to target, as regards our public Centres, the big urban centres. I think that's where the people are and that is where I think we must deploy a lot of our resources, which is not to say that we shouldn't have retreat centres tucked away in the hills which function as sort of spiritual powerhouses and where people - Order members from the cities - can go from time to time for meditation, study and so on. But perhaps we do have to start thinking a bit bigger, which doesn't mean that we neglect our own personal self cultivation. In fact we must intensify that.

Someone quoted me - lots of sayings of mine are quoted I'd forgotten after having said them - I forget where this was, I think it was quoted in a letter to me, and apparently some years ago there was a discussion as to whether people should devote themselves more to their personal spiritual development, or to external activities. Whether one wanted more of the one or more of the other, and I'm supposed to have said that we needed more of both. I think I put it even more extremely than that. I think the original question was that if we couldn't have one or if we could only have one, which one, but I apparently insisted that we just had to have more of both. I didn't accept the premises of the question. So I think this is what we really need to do. We need to deepen our understanding of the Dharma but in sort of Bodhisattva fashion, be much more expressive of it at the

same time.

\_\_\_\_\_ : What sort of spiritual movements were you thinking of when you said 'movements like the FWBO'?

**S:** I wasn't meaning to suggest that there really was any movement [Laughter] really quite like the FWBO, but there are some other Buddhist groups, even some Christian, some Sufi, groups, which do contribute in some measure towards the realisation of spiritual ideals in the world. I think one can't ignore that fact. But I think perhaps in the FWBO we have got things somewhat more clearly, at least in theory, than many other spiritual groups, perhaps the majority. We are free from certain confusions and have seen some things clearly and are trying to implement what we see.

\_\_\_\_\_ : On the subject of the environment, the Green Party and so on, do you think it's worth people in the FWBO getting involved in the ecology movement or concentrating more of our efforts on say publicising the FWBO and affect society through that?

**S:** I don't think we're yet in a position to get involved in the ecology movement or anything like that. We don't have enough people. We are sympathetic in principle but we need more people, more Order members especially, for opening new Centres, running classes, giving lectures, writing books, studying the Dharma more deeply and so on. I don't think we have enough people to be involved directly in that field. I think we have to concentrate for some while more on our own distinctive work. Perhaps later on we will have enough people to involve themselves in these other spheres. But certainly we can be in general contact with these other groups, ecology groups and so on, and let them know that we are with them, we sympathise with what they're trying to do.

All right, perhaps we'd better leave it there. I think I have answered all the questions, or at least made some attempt to answer them.

**End of Session**