Lecture 133: The Nucleus of a New Society
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Mr Chairman and Friends

In the course of this present short series of lectures we are concerned, as many of you do already know, with four things, four great things in fact, which the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order has to offer the modern man and the modern woman; four things which are not only great things, things of fundamental importance in human life, but also four things which the world today greatly needs, perhaps needs more than ever.

In the first of these four lectures, we were concerned with 'A Method of Personal Development' and we saw, rather broadly, that what we call, usually, 'meditation' was that method. We saw in the course of that lecture that as we practise meditation, as we have recourse to this particular method of personal development, we pass through successively higher stages, or if you like, states, of consciousness, of awareness; ultimately of insight. And I tried to summar these stages, these states, in plain English rather than in Sanskrit or in Pali by speaking of them, by describing them, in terms of the stages of integration, inspiration, permeation, and radiation.

In the second lecture, which followed two days later, we were concerned with A Vision of Human Existence, and we saw that this vision was the vision - the direct spiritual experience - of the Buddha, of the Enlightened One. And we saw that in that vision, that all-comprehending vision, everything whether material or mental was seen as essentially process, was seen as something conditioned, something arising not fortuitously, not by virtue of destiny or the will of God, but in dependence upon conditions which were essentially natural. And we saw further that there were two types of conditionality, which we've come to term 'the cyclical' and 'the spiral', and, corresponding to these two types of conditionality, we saw that there are two types of mind, two types of mental activity - what we call 'the reactive' and what we call 'the creative' - which means, simply, that we can function - that we can choose to function, decide to function - either reactively or creatively and more and more creatively. Can choose, that is to say can decide, either to remain on the wheel, the Wheel of Life, which turns round and round, or that we can follow the Path, climb the ladder, become the beautiful flowering plant with all its blossoms. We saw that the choice is before us; that we can either stagnate or grow, either deteriorate or develop.

Well, tonight we come to the third great thing that the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order has to offer; a third thing that modern man, modern woman, badly needs: The Nucleus of a New Society. Now let me say at once that there's quite a big difference between **this** subject - the nucleus of a new society - and the subjects with which we were concerned in the two previous lectures. In all four lectures, of course, we are concerned with what the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order - the FWBO, or, as we usually call it for short, simply 'The Friends' - has to offer; what it has to give. And it's only natural, in a way, that we should be concerned with what it has to offer, what it has to give. After all, our basic subject in this series is Buddhism: Buddhism for today and for tomorrow; and we may say that where Buddhism is, where the Dharma is (to use the more traditional term), there is giving; giving on all levels; giving of all kinds - material giving, psychological giving, cultural giving and, above all, spiritual giving - there's giving of **every** kind. Where there is no giving, where there is no generosity, where there is no sharing, we may say, there is no Buddhism, there is no Dharma. Giving, generosity, dana as we call it, is of the very essence of the Dharma. So, in these four lectures we're also concerned, in one way or another, with giving, with generosity, with sharing. We are concerned with what the FWBO, what the Friends, have to offer; what the Friends have to share. But we are concerned in the different lectures in different ways. In the first two lectures we were concerned with a method of personal development and then with a vision of human existence, as we've already seen. But these two - these two subjects, these two topics - the method of personal development and the vision of human existence - they are, as it were, to some extent at least, external to the FWBO itself; they are distinct from it. We, as it were, have these two things. On the one hand, the FWBO itself, and, on the other, what it has to offer. In other words, a method of personal development and a vision of human existence. On the one hand you have those making the offering - those giving, those sharing - and on the other you have the offering, the gift, itself. But in the case of the present lecture, there's no such distinction.

We are concerned tonight with the nucleus of a new society, and it's the FWBO; the Friends; with the WBO; the Western Buddhist Order; which **is** that nucleus. So what is being offered tonight, what the FWBO has to offer tonight, is simply its own self; not something distinct from itself but itself. And this,

we may say, is real giving. In one of his poems Walt Whitman says 'When I give, I give myself.' You can give quite a lot, you can give time, you can give energy, you can give money, you can give ideas, you can give work, but not give yourself, but the greatest of all gifts is when you give yourself, totally. So, since tonight we are concerned with giving in a different kind of way, I propose to give a different kind of lecture. In fact, I'm not going to give a lecture at all! Now this doesn't mean to say that I'm going to sit down and dry up, and leave the rest of the proceedings to the chairman or to the audience; I'm going to give simply a talk - not a lecture, simply a talk - because that, I feel, is more appropriate to tonight's subject. And the talk is going to be just a little bit - to begin with - autobiographical. That is to say I'm going to do what some people would consider to be a rather unbuddhistic thing; I'm going to talk about myself. *[Laughter]* I'm going to tell you, in outline at least, how I came to start the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order and the Western Buddhist Order, and why I started them, what they are, and in what way they are the nucleus of a new society.

Now, as I think most of you know, probably nearly all of you know, I spent altogether some twenty years in the East. I spent a year in Ceylon; I spent a year in Singapore; eighteen years I spent in India, with little visits in between to Nepal and also to Sikkim. And all that time, during that quite long period of twenty years, I was studying and practising Buddhism, studying and practising the Dharma. I didn't take up with Buddhism in the East; in fact I went out to the East, I went out to India, already a Buddhist. I'd become a Buddhist at the age of sixteen, in London. I say 'I had become a Buddhist', but this is not really quite correct. It would be more correct to say that, about the age of sixteen, I realised that I **was** a Buddhist. Not only that, but realised that I had, in fact, been a Buddhist all the time. But I realised that I was a Buddhist and that I had been a Buddhist all the time, when I happened to read two quite remarkable Buddhist texts. They are among the most famous of all Buddhist texts. The first was 'The Diamond Sutra', which is one of the shorter 'Perfection of Wisdom' texts, a very famous text, a very famous work, which is recited, which is meditated upon, commented upon, very widely all over the - especially Mahayana Buddhist - world, that is to say, China, Japan and Tibet; more especially perhaps in the Zen monasteries and centres. So that was the first text which I read - 'The Diamond Sutra'. I'm not going to try to give you any idea about the contents of that Sutra; it's a remarkably profound sutra, and it deals basically with Sunyata, with Ultimate Reality, or, literally with The Void, and with the Wisdom that intuits the Void. The second work was what was then called 'The Sutra of Wei Lang'. Nowadays it's called 'The Sutra of Hui Neng', or sometimes even 'The Platform Scripture'. And this is the basic text, in a sense, of the whole Ch'an or Zen tradition. It's a collection of discourses given by - and dialogues and exchanges with - the great Master Wei Lang or Hui Neng, the first of the Chinese Patriarchs of the Ch'an or Zen tradition.

So I'm not going to give you - in fact I can't very well give you - any idea about the contents of this particular work either; it goes beyond ideas; it's concerned with fundamental reality. But these two works, these two sutras - the Diamond Sutra and what we then called 'The Sutra of Wei Lang' - gave me, I may say, my first glimpse of the Transcendental, what we call in Buddhist terminology the lokuttara; that which is beyond the world, beyond the mundane, beyond the conditioned, which is hyper-cosmic, Transcendental: my first glimpse, in other words, of Perfect Vision. And from that time onwards I had no doubts, either about Buddhism, about the Dharma, or about the spiritual path. But I didn't meet any other Buddhist until I was eighteen; so for two years I was a Buddhist entirely on my own, surrounded by non-Buddhists and, believe me, in those days, non-Buddhists really were non-Buddhists; they'd never even heard of Buddhism, what to speak of not accepting it; they'd not even heard, in most cases, the very word 'Buddhism' itself. So for two years I was a Buddhist, a young Buddhist, very much in a non-Buddhist world, to be precise, in South London. At nineteen, I went to the East. And this was, of course, during the war. And, in the East, in India particularly, I had quite a number of different adventures and experiences, both secular and spiritual.

Some of my earlier experiences, especially during my wandering period in South India, are recounted in a volume of memoirs which was published earlier this year called 'The Thousand Petalled Lotus'. So two years were spent in wandering in South India, or mainly in South India, and often on foot. And I lived at that time, and lived for quite a few years afterwards, like an Indian Sadhu; that is to say, I wore the saffron robes, I also had a begging bowl and I didn't even wear any shoes, and I walked in that way from place to place, meeting all sorts of people, staying sometimes here, sometimes there, sometimes under a tree, sometimes in a cave, and sometimes at a hospitable temple, or ashram as they are called, meeting all sorts of people, sometimes meeting great Indian - great Hindu especially - spiritual figures. Also, at about the same time, or at the end of that period rather, I visited Nepal. Some of you, I think, might have visited Nepal, but in those days Nepal was a very different country indeed. It was, at that time, a completely feudal country. There were no roads and no bridges worth mentioning and only two motor-cars in the

whole country: one belonging to the king and one belonging to the hereditary prime minister. Needless to say, I didn't ride in either of them! *[Laughter]* Though on a subsequent visit I did, but that is another story! Eventually - and I'm telescoping events of course, quite ruthlessly - eventually I settled in Kalimpong, And Kalimpong - the name is usually interpreted as meaning 'a skull capsized' or ‘a capsized skull' - a small town in the Eastern Himalayas, 4,000 ft above sea level, and from Kalimpong, from practically all quarters of Kalimpong, we had a wonderful view of the snow ranges of the Himalayas. I can see them in my mind's eye even as I speak. And among these snow ranges, among these snow peaks, is the second highest peak in the world - Kanchenjunga - which means 'The Five Treasures of the Snow'. And one could see Kanchenjunga, except during the rainy season, almost every day, just standing there against the blue sky; way up, as it were, in the blue sky. The whole area, in fact, was a very, very inspiring area indeed. One could say that Kanchenjunga was a very inspiring sight; it certainly was; and especially when one saw it practically every day - one never got tired of looking at it - this great snowy peak right up there in the blue sky, with the clouds far below, wearing its white plume, very often, where the snow was blown off it by the winds. But the whole area was very, very inspiring. I remember the atmosphere was very, very clear. You could see, very often, for many, many miles. The atmosphere, in fact, was so clear - and I believe that of Tibet, which of course was very near, just a few miles away, was even clearer - so that in this very clear atmosphere everything stood out with greater vividness, with a very strange, almost hypnotic, vividness of colour. One seemed to see the colours much more clearly than one saw them down in the plains; much more clearly, certainly, than one sees them in this country - even in Brighton! *[Laughter]* And sometimes it seemed, especially just after the rains, as though everything was made of jewels, that one was living in a world made of jewels, the colours of everything were so bright and so vivid. The white, of course, the snowy white of the mountains, the intense blue of the blue sky, the vivid green of the vegetation, and the scarlet and the yellow and the blue of all the wonderful mountain flowers. And also the gay costumes of the people, whether they were Nepalese or whether they were Tibetans or Bhutanese or Sikkimese, or even Indians. The only people who weren't very colourful in appearance, I'm sorry to say, were the Europeans, especially the missionaries who usually wore black.

So in this world, made, as it were, of jewels, in Kalimpong, I lived for fourteen years, and I founded a small monastery there after seven years a small vihara; and I had people staying with me from time to time. And all during this period, during these fourteen years, I was getting deeper and deeper into the study and the practice of Buddhism. And I had, fortunately, contact with quite a number of teachers, especially teachers from Tibet, who were at that time beginning to come out, including some very great teachers indeed, and from them I was so fortunate as to receive various ordinations and initiations. But during those fourteen years I didn't stay all the time in Kalimpong, I sometimes went down to the plains, as it were just to see what it was like, at first. Went down sometimes to Calcutta, sometimes across the sub-continent to Bombay, and also to Delhi; visited sometimes the Buddhist holy places like Buddhagaya and Saranath and Lumbini and Rajgrha and Nalanda, and eventually, towards the end of the fourteen years, or rather during the second seven of the fourteen years, I became involved with a very big movement, that is to say the movement of mass-conversion of ex-untouchables, ex-untouchable Hindus, to Buddhism. That again is another story; a very lengthy story. But most of the time I spent in Kalimpong, and there I did, also, a certain amount of literary work, especially during the rainy season. I must say that I used to enjoy the rainy seasons in Kalimpong very, very much, it's a very beautiful season of the year; it's not cold, it's still quite warm, but all day, or most of the day, the rain simply comes down. You hear it just peacefully falling on the roof, peacefully falling on the leaves of the trees, peacefully falling on the crops in the fields; Just peacefully falling down. And everything becomes so quiet and so hushed. And of course there are no visitors, so you can get on with your work, you can get on with your meditation, you can get on with your writing. So the rainy season was my favourite time for quite a number of years, for writing. So this was my life; this was my life in India; this was my life in Kalimpong, for fourteen years. This was my life until 1964.

In 1964, or rather, towards the end of 1963 actually, I received an invitation from a body known as the English Sangha Trust, and they invited me to go to England, to go to London especially, on a visit. Now I'd kept up a certain amount of contact with Buddhists in London; I used to get Buddhist magazines occasionally and I used to get letters from various people, especially towards the end of my stay in Kalimpong, and I'd come to understand that at that time - and I'm speaking now of '62, '63, '64 - at that time, all was not well with the Buddhist movement in England, especially with the Buddhist movement in London. It was a very tiny movement; very, very much smaller than it is today; but unfortunately it had already become divided into two camps. And, unfortunately again, there was quite a strong feeling between the people belonging to these two different camps, to put it mildly. So some people, some friends, felt that my presence in England, my presence in London - at least for a while - might help to restore harmony. So this invitation was sent to me from the English Sangha Trust.

Now the invitation came to me as quite a surprise. Here I was, as it were buried in Kalimpong, you could say; buried among my books and my meditations, and having no thought of ever returning to the West. I said goodbye to the West. I wasn't coming back. I took it for granted that I was going to continue my life in India and I was going to die there; that I would never see the West again, never see England again; and then came this invitation. So I thought it over long and deeply. I discussed it with some of my friends; I discussed it with some of my teachers; and they all said, 'You should go'. For one reason or another, they all said, *[Laughter]* 'You should go!'. Some said; 'It is your duty to go, because it would be good if you could restore harmony.' So I agreed that I would go; that I'd come back to England, see London once again. So in August 1964, after an absence of twenty years, almost to the day, I came back. Middle of August, 1964. It was the middle of August, but when I arrived at Heathrow, it was raining. But I didn't stay for four months as I originally had said I would stay; I didn't even stay for six months; I stayed for more than two years. The visit just seemed to get longer and longer, I couldn't seem to get away. So during that time, during that period of two years, I held meditation classes, I gave lots of lectures. Most of these classes were held, most of these lectures were given, at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara in London, as well as at the premises of the Buddhist Society, Eccleston Square. And in addition I visited quite a number of Buddhist groups, most of them very, very small indeed, up and down the country. And it was at **that** time I started paying my monthly visit to Brighton - and this continued with a few interruptions, for quite a few years. Now, as I met people, as I came to understand what the situation was in England, in London; as I met English Buddhists; as I visited the little groups; I came to see that the Buddhist Movement in this country at that time - and remember I'm still talking about things as they were in 1964, '65, '66 - left quite a lot to be desired. At the same time I saw that there was a very great potential; that there was a great potential interest in the Dharma. So again, after thinking things over long and deeply and again consulting with friends, I decided that I'd stay in England and work for Buddhism in England and in the West permanently - or at least indefinitely. So I thought that before I did that, before I finally settled down, I should go back to India and say goodbye to my various teachers and friends. So this is what I said I would do. I told people, 'I've decided to stay.' They were very pleased. 'I'm going back for four or five months. I'll say goodbye to my teachers, my friends; hand over certain responsibilities I have, especially for the Vihara in Kalimpong, and then I shall come back to England after four or five months.'

So those four or five months were naturally very busy ones. I visited quite a number of places; I saw quite a number of people; and this particular visit is recorded in a series of slides which were shown at the Quaker Centre here in Brighton at the beginning of this year. I think quite a few of you must have seen that series of slides. Now I'd not been away for more than a month, when there came the proverbial 'bolt from the blue'. I received a letter from the English Sangha Trust, and the letter simply said that the English Sangha Trust did not propose to renew its invitation, and that I would not be welcome at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara! And the letter suggested that I should send them a letter saying that I had changed my mind, and would be staying on in India after all. They, they said, would publish this letter for me. Now when I read that letter, I at once grasped its significance! *[Laughter]* No, not **that** significance! I saw, as it were, into the future! I remember it very vividly - standing there with this letter in my hand. I was in Calcutta at the Maha Bodhi Society's headquarters. I was on my way up to Kalimpong, and a friend was going up there with me, and I said to this friend - I showed him the letter, 'Do you know what this means? Do you realise what this means?' And he said, 'No. What does it mean?' And I said, 'It means a new movement.' So this is what I saw, what I foresaw then, on the spot - in a flash, as it were - that this means a new movement. So it's as though I saw then - I did see then - the FWBO looming, as it were *[Laughter]*, in the future.

Now what had happened, apparently, was that during my two years in England, I had, quite unintentionally, trodden on the toes of quite a number of people. Among other things I'd succeeded in bringing together the two camps into which, at the time of my arrival, most English Buddhists were divided. And this had rather upset extremists on both sides. So, now that my back was turned, these joined forces. And it seemed, I gathered from correspondents, that they were prepared to go to any lengths to stop me returning! So much so that some of my closer friends wrote to me and warned me that it would be dangerous for me to come back! *[Laughter]* Their letters really sounded a note of alarm. I really did wonder what was happening, what was going on, because, from the way some of them wrote it rather seemed that they were afraid that if I came back I could even be murdered. I really must have trodden on some people's toes very heavily! But I didn't hesitate; I didn't hesitate. One may say that very rarely in one's life is one in a position of being able to make a completely free, uncomplicated, choice. And I felt, at that time, that I was in that position. The alternatives were clear. On the one hand I could remain in India, where I'd been for eighteen years. I had a monastery, a vihara of my own in Kalimpong; I had many

friends; I had many teachers; I liked India very much; I was very happy there. One might say I was very comfortable there; it was a very deeply, very richly satisfying life that I had been leading there. On the other hand I could return to England. In England I had, apparently, nowhere to stay. I also had, I need hardly say, I had no money and no support from existing Buddhist organisations. One friend wrote to tell me that if I did return I would find every door closed against me.

Anyway, I made my choice, and I never doubted for a moment that it was the right choice, and towards the end of March 1967 I returned to England as far as I know, for good. And I wasn't murdered, and I didn't find every door closed against me. I even found I had some friends left. They weren't very well-known, they weren't very influential but they were friends. And a few weeks after my return, in April 1967, I started the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. And the rest, if I may say so, is history.

Now I've gone into all this for a definite reason. In the first place, it gives some idea of how I came to start the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, and, later, the Western Buddhist Order. Also, it throws light on why I started the FWBO, and what the general nature of the FWBO and the WBO actually is.

Now some of the people on whose toes I happened to tread were not Buddhists, and in some cases they didn't even profess to be Buddhists, but they were members of Buddhist organisations. Now how was this? This seems rather odd - not Buddhists but members of Buddhist organisations! How had they become members? Well, they'd become members in a very simple way - simply by paying the subscription. So, having paid the subscription, they became a member; having become a member they could be elected as an office-bearer; and being an office-bearer they could determine policy - even though, perhaps, they knew little or nothing about Buddhism or even had no real sympathy with it! And I'd seen the same sort of thing going on in India! I had quite a long association, off and on, with the Maha Bodhi Society, and I'd seen that Maha Bodhi Society virtually taken over by caste Hindus; that is to say, orthodox Hindus; people whose ideas were quite opposed to those of Buddhism. So the lesson was therefore clear; we needed a new kind of Buddhist organization; an organization that one could not join simply by paying a subscription. We needed an organization that one could join - if that is the right word - only by actually committing oneself to the ideals for which it stood. In other words, we needed an **Order**; we needed a **Sangha**. And I came to the same conclusion from other considerations too. I've mentioned that I had seen, in the course of my two-year visit to England, that the Buddhist movement in this country left much to be desired. Now if anything, this is an understatement. I could even go so far as to say that there was, at that time, **no** Buddhist movement in this country. There were Buddhist societies, there were people who were interested in Buddhism, but there was very little actual practice of Buddhism. For instance, most English Buddhists were not vegetarians; and hardly anybody, in those days, even thought of trying to practise Right Livelihood. This just wasn't even considered. English Buddhists in those days lived the same kind of lives as everybody else. Usually quite middle-class lives. They had the same kind of job, led the same kind of family life, the same kind of social life, the same kind of politics. The only difference was they were interested in Buddhism. They read books about Buddhism. They attended lectures on Buddhism, and, of course, they talked about Buddhism. Otherwise, they were exactly like everybody else. Indeed in those days, many of these English Buddhists prided themselves on being just like everybody else!

Now I personally had found all this rather frustrating. I'd felt that people were not taking Buddhism, not taking the Dharma, seriously; were not taking **me** seriously. They came along to classes, yes; they came along to lectures; they listened to the lectures; and after the lectures they came up to me and congratulated me, they said how much they'd enjoyed the lecture, and what a good lecture it was, etc. But afterwards they carried on exactly as before! They didn't change in any way. They didn't even **want** to change. So I saw that this state of affairs simply could not continue. That if one was going to have a Buddhist movement at all in this country, well, one needed a **real** Buddhist movement; a movement made up of people who would take Buddhism seriously; people who would be willing to change, both internally and externally. Once again, what was needed was an **Order**. So on my return to England in 1967, I therefore decided to found an Order: a Western Buddhist Order. But first, as I've already related, I founded the **Friends** of the Western Buddhist Order, and under its auspices we held meditation classes, gave lectures, organd retreats in the country, and so on, and in this way gradually gathered together a small number of people - just two or three dozen at that time - people who were prepared to take Buddhism seriously; people who wanted to change. Some of these people I'd known before during my two-year preliminary visit; others were new.

So a year later, in April 1968, twelve of those people became the first members of the Western Buddhist Order, and the new Buddhist Movement had now really come into existence. Some of these people, unfortunately, did not remain with us for long. They found it more difficult to change than they had expected, but others are still with us today. And there are, at present, eighty members of the Western Buddhist Order, of both sexes and of all ages from nineteen to sixty-four. Besides citizens of the UK and Northern Ireland, this figure includes people of New Zealand, Finnish, American, German, Dutch and Malaysian nationality.

Now at this stage, two questions, very likely, arise in your minds. First, if one cannot join the Western Buddhist Order by paying a subscription, how **can** one join it? And two, what is the relation between the Western Buddhist Order and the **Friends** of the Western Buddhist Order? And I'm going to try to answer each of these questions in turn. First of all: how does one join the Western Buddhist Order? One joins it by Going for Refuge. Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels. And the Three Jewels are, of course, the Buddha, the Enlightened Teacher; the Dharma, the teaching which he gave; the Sangha, the community of disciples practising the teaching and following the Path. The Buddha represents the ideal, the highest ideal: the Ideal of Human Enlightenment, and Going for Refuge to the Buddha means committing oneself to the realisation of that ideal; means reorienting one's life, one's whole life, in that direction. The Dharma, or teaching, represents the Path leading to the realisation of the ideal. It is in principle the sum total of all the methods, all the practices, that help one in one's personal development, in one's realisation of the ideal. So Going for Refuge to the Dharma means having actual practical recourse to those methods. It means actually practising Buddhism, practising the Dharma. And the Sangha, of course, represents the spiritual community, the community of those who have Gone for Refuge, who have committed themselves to the Ideal of Enlightenment, and who are actually having recourse to methods leading to its realisation. And Going for Refuge to the Sangha means associating with such people, being in communication with such people, learning from them, being inspired by them.

So the Going For Refuge is the central act of the Buddhist life. It's Going for Refuge - Going for Refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha - that makes one a Buddhist. And one could even go so far as to say that one's whole Buddhist life is in a way a progressive deepening of the Going for Refuge.

And this Going for Refuge is threefold. We go for Refuge with body, speech and mind. It's not enough to think and to feel that you are Going for Refuge. It's not enough even to **say** that you are Going for Refuge: you have to enact, also, the Going for Refuge, and this enactment of the Going for Refuge is what we call the ordination ceremony. And this ceremony is twofold. There's a private part and there's a public part. There's what we call 'the Private Ordination' and what we call ‘the Public Ordination'. The first, of course, takes place in private, that is to say, alone with the head of the Order, and one repeats after him the words of the Three Refuges. In other words, one says:

To the Buddha for Refuge I go
To the Dharma for Refuge I go
To the Sangha for Refuge I go

And at the same time one undertakes to observe the Ten Precepts of ethical behaviour. Three precepts refer to bodily actions, four refer to speech and three to the mind, and between them they represent the purification and the transformation of one's entire being, consisting as it does of body, speech and mind. And at this ceremony, at this private ordination ceremony one is given a new name, because one is now spiritually reborn, having committed oneself with body, speech and mind to the Three Jewels. So the private ordination signifies one’s **individual** commitment to the Three Jewels: this is why it’s a private ceremony; it signifies the fact that one has made up one's mind that one is going to develop, and one has made it up quite independently: independently of any pressure, any influence. One's made up one's mind as an individual, and one's prepared if necessary to go it alone, You're in that sort of mood, that sort of state of mind that you don't mind, you don't **care**, if nobody else in the world is going to Go for Refuge. If nobody else in the world, even, wants to develop, that is what **you** want to do, this is what you've made up **your** mind to do, so you are going to do it - you have **this** sort of resolution, **this** sort of determination, and the private ordination signifies just that: one's determination, if necessary, to go it alone. The public ordination usually takes place the following day, and it takes place, of course, in public; that is to say, in the presence of other people, other members of the Order, ideally at least five Order Members, as well as Mitras and Friends. What Mitras and Friends are I shall explain in a few minutes’ time. So here, too, one repeats the words of the Going for Refuge after the head of the Order or his representative, and again one undertakes to observe the Ten Precepts, and one is invested on that occasion with a white kesa, such

as you see some of the Friends here this evening, including the Chairman, actually wearing. So the public ordination represents the fact that, though one was prepared to go it alone, one is not in fact alone; one is a member, one has become a member, of a spiritual community; one is now a member of the Order. One has become a member of a community of spiritually committed individuals. Originally the Western Buddhist Order was conceived of as a **lay** Order, that is to say not as a monastic Order. The idea was that people should commit themselves to the Three Jewels and work on their personal development within the context, within the framework of ordinary family life, full-time job, and so on. Of course, a job that was in accordance with Right Livelihood. However, as time went on, more and more Order Members wanted to give a fuller expression to their commitment, wanted to give, if possible, **all** their time and **all** their energy to the spiritual life and to the work of the Friends, the work of the Order, and they found that it was very difficult to do this within the framework of family life, a regular job and so on.

So at present there are various kinds of Order Members. Some Order Members are married, some are unmarried; some have full-time jobs, some have part-time jobs, some have no job at all, and the latter are usually full-time workers for the Movement, and they may receive their actual living expenses from the FWBO. Some Order Members, again, live at home with their families, others live in communities of various kinds, a few live on their own, but all are Members of the Order; all are united by a common commitment; their commitment to the Three Jewels, their commitment to personal development on their own and in association with other people. So it's no longer possible to speak of the Order as a lay Order; at the same time it isn't a monastic Order. Perhaps it represents a new kind of development; a development more in accordance with the original spirit of Buddhism, the original spirit of the Dharma.

Now let's try to answer the second question. What is the relation between the Order and the FWBO? I say the FWBO but strictly speaking there's no such thing as the FWBO! That is to say, no such thing as the FWBO in the singular. There are only FWBO**s** in the plural. For instance, there's the FWBO North London; there's the FWBO Glasgow; there's the FWBO New Zealand; and of course we mustn't forget there's the FWBO Brighton. Though there is one FWBO which is called simply the FWBO, and that's the original FWBO which I started in 1967 and which is now based on Sukhavati, our new Centre in East London. All these FWBOs are on the same footing; all are autonomous; all run their own affairs; there is no centralisation, there's no headquarters, there's no organisational pyramid. So you may ask, well, what holds them all together? And the answer is: they are held together spiritually by the Order. Each autonomous FWBO is run by a small group of Order Members working in co-operation, The number varies. It varies from three or four up to ten or twelve. In a few cases an Order Member may be concerned with the running of more than one FWBO. And each FWBO has its own premises, its own regular programme of activities; that is to say, meditation classes, yoga classes, lectures, study courses, retreats, communication exercises, poetry readings and so on. And all of these activities have one aim and one object, one purpose, which is simply to help people in their personal development. So all these activities are open to all who care to come along.

So the various FWBOs represent simply the machinery through which Order Members function, through which groups of Order Members function; through which they offer their services, offer themselves, to society at large. And each autonomous FWBO is a registered charity, though the law governing these things differs a little from country to country. The Order, itself, by the way, is a purely spiritual body. It is not a legal entity, and it has, therefore, no legal existence; it has only a spiritual existence. Now there are two points to be made here. First, not all Order Members are occupied in running FWBOs. Indeed, not all Order Members are **expected** to be. Some may be devoting themselves mainly to meditation, even to solitary meditation. Others devoting themselves to literary work. Others may be concerned principally with the bringing up of their children. Others may be travelling from place to place, even all over the world, visiting different FWBOs and making fresh contacts. But whatever they may be doing, all Order Members keep in regular touch with one another - this is considered most important, indeed absolutely essential - and they keep in touch by means of weekly Order Meetings, monthly Order Days, and annual Order Conventions as well as in other ways and on other occasions.

Second, not all the FWBOs need be urban centres running a regular programme of activities. Some may be functioning as country retreat centres. Others may be communities of one kind or another, and in certain cases groups of Order Members may not function through an FWBO at all. They may decide to function in a different sort of way, through a different kind of organisational set-up; may decide to function, for instance, through a publishing house or a school or a restaurant or a housing association or even through a business - provided, of course, in the latter case, that it was in accordance with the principles of Right Livelihood. I'll have something more to say about this in the next lecture.

Well, I've told you now how I started the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order and the Western Buddhist Order itself. I have told you why I started them and what they are. I've also tried to answer two questions: one, how does one join the Western Buddhist Order; and two, what is the relation between the Western Buddhist Order and the FWBO, or rather FWBOs.

So it's time that I came on to the last thing that I have to talk about tonight, which is: the way in which the Western Buddhist Order and the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order are the **nucleus of a new society**. But before I do that, I've got a promise to redeem; I said I'd explain who Mitras and Friends are. Now I've said that one joins the Order by Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels. One becomes a member of the Order by virtue of a spiritual commitment, that is to say. A commitment to one's personal development, by oneself as well as in spiritual fellowship with others spiritually committed too. But does one do this all at once? Straight off? As soon as one comes along? Tonight? *[Laughter]* Well, surely not - except, perhaps, in very rare instances. They have been known to happen. Usually one decides to commit oneself **gradually**, step by step. There may even be quite a struggle! Part of you wants to develop; part of you - sometimes it's a big part - does not! And for a while you may not even know whether you want to develop or not. You may not be sure, may not be clear. But anyway, let's suppose you come into contact with the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. Maybe you see one of their ubiquitous posters. Or maybe a friend tells you about them and takes you, maybe drags you, in a friendly sort of way, along. Maybe you attend a lecture, or a meditation class, or a retreat. Whatever it is, you establish contact, and maybe you find you like the atmosphere, or the people, or the ideas. Or maybe you just like it, you can't exactly say why. So you come again, and again. You start coming regularly, start participating regularly. And when that happens you are counted as a Friend with a capital 'F'. You don't have to join anything and you don't have to pay anything - you don't have to pay any subscription, that is - all you have to do is to come along and participate regularly. You are then a Friend, capital 'F'. You don't have to believe or disbelieve in anything either. You can be a Christian, or a Jew, or a Humanist, or an Agnostic, or a Free-thinker, or a Spiritualist, or an Occultist, or a Theosophist, or a Rosicrucian, or a Sufi, or a Vedantist - anything you like! All you have to do is to come and participate regularly, and this can go on as long as you like. Many people, in fact, will not want to go any further than this. Just coming along, meditation classes, lectures, retreats, just remaining Friends. Won't want to go any further than that. That's up to them.

But some people may want to go further. They may feel the need of a more definite link with Buddhism, with the Dharma, with the Order, with me. They may even be beginning to think in terms of commitment, and it's such people who become, who can become, Mitras. And you become a Mitra by offering flowers, a candle, a stick of incense, in front of the image of the Buddha, and you do this in the context of a devotional ceremony which is called the Sevenfold Puja, and you do it in the presence of Order Members and Mitras, and Friends. At present we have within the Movement roughly seventy Mitras; I think it's a little bit more. The word 'Mitra', by the way, is simply the Sanskrit word for 'Friend'. Mitra. M-I-T-R-A. Some Mitras live in communities. This applies to Friends too. Usually with Order Members. Others live at home with their families or even on their own. Some Mitras and Friends have jobs. Others work full time or part time for the FWBO. And there are special Mitra activities. There are special Mitra study groups and special Mitra retreats, which are somewhat more intensive than the usual study groups and retreats. And one can stay a Mitra as long as you please. Again, you may not want to go any further, at least not for the time being. So you remain a Mitra. But some may want to go further. So what do they do? They then approach two Order Members and they ask those two Order Members to become their Kalyana Mitras, which means their 'Good Friends'. And if those two Order Members agree; if the local Chapter of the Order agrees, and if I agree, then a special ceremony is performed, which is a private ceremony, performed by the head of the Order or by a senior Order Member. And only the three persons actually concerned are present - the two Kalyana Mitras, their Mitra - as he is called - and the head of the Order with them. And the ceremony establishes a definite link between the three people concerned; the Mitra and his or her two Kalyana Mitras. And the main duty, the main responsibility of all three, from that moment onwards, is simply to keep in touch. The Mitra has to keep in touch with the two Kalyana Mitras; the two Kalyana Mitras have to keep in touch with the Mitra. We have two Kalyana Mitras because it's better, perhaps sometimes, to have two people who may be a bit different and see things in a slightly different way, and with whom you can relate in a slightly different way. One of your Kalyana Mitras may be very serious and learned, the other may be rather playful and carefree. It's good to have two of these two different kinds or two different types. One may be rather older than you, for instance; another may be around the same age as you. Again, that's good. But you all three have the duty of keeping in touch, formally or informally, in any way that you please, just keeping spiritually in touch.

So this is what happens in the case of those Mitras who want to go a bit further still, and have Kalyana Mitras. And such Mitras are usually thinking in terms, eventually, of full commitment to the Three Jewels, and most of them are in fact eventually, sooner or later, ordained, becoming members of the Western Buddhist Order. And this whole process from the initial contact up to ordination usually takes two years - that's about the average. In a few cases it takes one year. Never less, so far. It may take even four or five years or even longer. There's no hard and fast rule. It depends on what the person himself feels; what he or she feels ready for; and whether the Order as a whole feels, too, that they are ready.

So I hope it's now clear who Mitras and Friends are, and I hope I've been able to illustrate the process by which one becomes more and more deeply involved with the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order; how one gradually avails oneself of what the FWBO has to offer, what the Order has to offer. I hope I've also been able to illustrate the way in which the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order and the Western Buddhist Order itself are the nucleus of a new society. As one becomes first a Friend, then a Mitra, then an Order Member, then a Kalyana Mitra, one becomes more and more of an individual. Not more and more of an individualist, of course - more and more of an individual. One becomes more aware, more sensitive, more responsible, more emotionally positive, more at home in higher states of consciousness, and one has a clearer and ever clearer vision of human existence. In other words, one develops. Not, of course, that one ceases to develop when one becomes an Order Member - indeed, it's only **then,** one may say, that one's **real** development begins. As I sometimes say, one only really starts to learn when one has to teach.

Not only that: the more one becomes an individual oneself, the more one develops, the more one relates to others also as an individual. The more one relates to them on the basis of ideals, of common **spiritual** ideals; and within the context of the Order, this means that one relates to them more and more on the basis of a common spiritual commitment, that is to say, commitment to the Three Jewels. Usually, unfortunately, one does not relate to others as an individual. One relates to them as members, or as a member of a particular group - a particular class, or profession, or nationality, or race or sex or age-group or income-bracket, party, union and so on. In other words, one relates to others usually on the basis of a common need. The need may be economic, it may be political, it may be psychological, it may be sexual, but one relates to others on the basis of a common need. Or one relates to them on the basis of competition, not to say conflict. So one may say that one has two kinds of society - a society of individuals, based on common spiritual ideals, a common commitment to personal development; and a society of non-individuals, of those who are simply group members, members of this or that particular group or of a number of groups based on common needs. On needs, especially, for security of various kinds. And the first is what I call a spiritual community, and the second is what I call a group. And the sum total of all existing groups is what we call the world. The first is of course the New Society. **The** New Society; and the second is the old society. The first is based on the spiral type of conditionality and the second based on the cyclical type. The first is the achievement of the creative mind; the second is the product of the reactive mind. The first, of course, is very small; the second, very big; but our aim must be to turn the second into the first; to transform the group into a spiritual community, to transform the old society into a new society; **the** new society. And some of the ways in which this can be done will be described in our fourth and last lecture, the day after tomorrow. And it's as the nucleus, at least, of a new society that the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order offers itself. The nucleus of which the Order is the central and most essential part. It offers itself, not as an organisation but as a spiritual community; a community of individuals, of individuals committed to personal development, by themselves and in association with others similarly committed. And it offers itself as an open community, that is to say, as a community willing to welcome into spiritual fellowship all those who want to grow, who want to develop.

I'm quite aware that there are other spiritual movements in this country and in the West. And I'm quite aware that some of them have certain features in common with the FWBO and that they too offer something which is of value. At the same time I'm convinced that none of them offers it in such a clear or such an uncompromising or such a complete form as does the FWBO.

Now our talk is nearing its end, and I hope that those who came expecting a lecture have not been disappointed. I began on an autobiographical note, so let me conclude, briefly, on an autobiographical note. It's now very nearly ten years since I decided to return to England and start a new Buddhist movement. It's nine and a half years since I started the 'Friends' and it's eight and a half years since I started the Order. And for me these years have been, in a way, quite difficult ones; but also very, very interesting and, I may say, very, very happy. I think I can say the happiest years of my life, and the most

worthwhile. And I think I can say, also, that I've succeeded in doing what I set out to do. The Order is now established on a firm foundation. A number of FWBOs are functioning. At the same time, much remains to be done. We've made a good beginning, but it's only a beginning and I can only hope that, as the years go by, as the months go by, more and more people will come forward and co-operate with me, with the Order, with the Friends, in creating on an ever larger and larger scale, ever more and more effective scale, the Nucleus of a New Society.

Checked November 1999