

170: The Next 20 Years

Dharmacaris and Dharmacarinis,

I was a little surprised, I must confess, that Ananda only started with the solar system. I thought he had more imagination than that! I must also say that I can't really share his pessimism about those unpublished novels - I'm sure we'll all in the course of the next twenty years give Ananda a helping hand in getting them published! He's only got to go on writing them! But that is, as it were, by the way.

Let's come down even from the solar system into the present, or rather to begin with, to begin with simply the last twenty years. We've completed twenty years. The Western Buddhist Order has been in existence twenty years. Ananda's told us how many sunrises, he didn't mention anything about sunsets, how many moons, I think he might even have mentioned how many days, but anyway twenty years.

So twenty years of what? Twenty years of meditation, and of meditation classes, twenty years of lectures, twenty years of studying the Dharma, twenty years of retreats, twenty years of right livelihood, team-based right livelihood, twenty years of work, twenty years of play, twenty years of triumphs, twenty years of disappointments, twenty years sometimes of heartache, even disillusionment, twenty years of all sorts of things, and through them all the Order and the Movement steadily growing.

Twenty years of all sorts of other things too. Ananda reminisced a bit, I can't help reminiscing a little bit also. I can remember, not twenty years, but one, or two, or three years of meditation classes at our old (Sakura?) basement followed by walks with Ananda along the Victoria Embankment, sometimes in the late spring sunshine, sometimes, I believe if my memory doesn't fail me - it's beginning to fail me - when it was snowing talking about poetry, Buddhism, the arts, the novel on which Ananda was then working, and so on. So twenty years also of that sort of spiritual fellowship, friendship, twenty years of commitment, spiritual commitment, twenty years of commitment to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

So much then for the last twenty years, but what about the next twenty years? What do the next twenty years hold for us both individually and collectively? As an Order? As a Movement? Now I must admit, I must confess straight away that I'm quite unable to see into the future. I'm quite unable to give you really any clue even as to what is going to happen in the course of the next twenty years. I simply don't know. I don't know any more than you do.

But perhaps there is just one thing I can be sure of, there is just one thing that I know is going to happen. Well I'm almost sure it's going to happen in the course of the next twenty years, and certainly the next thirty or forty years, and that is that some of us are not going to be here. Some of us in short are going to die, probably in the course of the next twenty years - if not in the course of the next twenty years, certainly quite soon after that. That's really the only thing that we can be sure of. The only thing that we can be

sure of in this life is death. It's the one thing that we can be sure of. Ananda spoke about the mystery, the paradox of time and eternity, but there's also the mystery, also the paradox, of life and death. There is the paradox that the only thing that we can really be utterly certain about with regard to life is that life will end. The only certain thing about life is the fact of death.

So in the course of this talk I'm not going to make any predictions. I'm not going to be able to tell you what's going to happen, or even what I think is going to happen, because there are so many unknown, uncertain factors, so many imponderables. So what I'm going to do is simply to share with you with regard to the next twenty years some of my personal reflections, some of my hopes, some of my fears. I'm not going to be able to do, I'm not going to try to do anything more than that. In doing that I shall not so to speak be following a middle way. I think last year I gave a talk on twenty years on the Middle Way, but I'm not going to be myself on The Middle Way this evening. I'm going in a way to adopt at least formally a slightly one-sided position. So what do I mean by that?

The day after tomorrow I shall be reading a paper, a paper on The History of My Going For Refuge. So that will be something which I've prepared, something to which I've given a great deal of thought, something which I've written out, even composed, very carefully. So you could say that's one extreme, as it were, so this evening I'm going to follow the other extreme. I haven't really prepared a proper lecture. It's going to be more of the nature of an impromptu, or semi-impromptu talk, on the basis of some very rough notes just quickly put together. Because I know some people do prefer this type of address. They do prefer that sometimes they have this as it were less formal or less prepared communication. So this is what I'm going to do this evening. I'm going to just share with you some of my reflections, my hopes and my fears in this informal, relatively unprepared way with regard to the next twenty years.

And of course I can't resist just a little bit of as it were formality on the way, but there are nonetheless going to be three headings, as it were, and the three headings are 'Self' as Heading One, then 'Order-cum-Movement' - that's Heading Two - then simply, rather grandly, 'World'.

So 'Self'. Relative Self. I'm not being abstract or philosophical, I'm just speaking so-to-speak in my own person. I'm talking about myself, quite unabashedly, one might say. So what about me? What about Sangharakshita? What about Bhante in the course of the next twenty years? What's going to happen to him? Well, very likely he's going to die in the course of the next twenty years. I'm not sure, I can't promise! I might linger on a few more years, who knows? I might even hit my century, who knows? My old mother's now nearly ninety-one, I might do as well as that, or nearly as well as that, but if I do come to an end, so to speak, so far as this physical body is concerned in the course of the next twenty years, I hope nobody will be too surprised because, as I said, that is the one thing we can be sure about, the fact of death.

So that's the first point really. I have as it were to expect or face up to the fact that in the course of the next twenty years I may simply disappear from the theme. Or if I don't literally disappear from the theme I probably won't have the energy and the robustness, if I may say so, to carry on doing what I have been doing these last twenty years and more. So this of course makes it a very interesting and indeed a very important question, which is regard to the responsibilities which I at present have and which I have been I hope discharging in the course of the last twenty years, my responsibilities with regard to the Order and with regard to the Movement.

Some of you know I think that in the course of the last few years I have been making some effort to hand over those responsibilities, but I'm afraid there are still quite a few of them left. I was reckoning them up the other week and I was really quite surprised to find how many responsibilities, that is to say things which I do and which apparently I only can do at present, responsibilities which I have not yet been able to hand over. In fact it sometimes seems as though my responsibilities day by day and week by week far from diminishing have grown! So this is something that I've got to do something about in the course of the next twenty years and I hope within the course of the next four or five years I want to be able to hand over the responsibilities which I have not as yet been able to hand over, at least to the more senior and experienced members of the Order.

So this is something which I as it were in a manner of speaking foresee as something in the course of the next few years, if in fact I am around as long as that because we don't really know, and of course if you are around as long as that again, we don't really know, I hope to be able to hand over the last of my responsibilities.

And then of course the question arises, well, if Bhante's going to hand over his responsibilities, well what is he going to do? Is he going to retire, is he going to slip under a shady tree somewhere or lie in a hammock somewhere flung between two trees? Is he going to devote himself to reading the collective works of Dr. Samuel Johnson? Or the Encyclopedia Britannica? Or is he going to start learning Chinese or something like that or is he going to retire into a cave in the Himalayas, visa permitting, and devote himself to meditation? Or what is Bhante going to do?

Well the answer is really quite simple. If Bhante succeeds in handing over these as it were more organizational-cum-spiritual responsibilities, he would like to do more writing, writing which hopefully will benefit not only himself but the Movement, and perhaps even people beyond the Movement too. Quite a lot of you know that I have been struggling to finish this second volume of memoirs for up to ten years nearly it is. I've written some 150,000 words, but that's only about half of that continuation volume. There's still quite a lot more. After that there's another volume that I'd like to write and after that there's another, not of quite the same nature, but of the sort of autobiographical type.

So yes, I really would like to be able to devote more time to original literary work as well as perhaps to the editing of some of the transcripts of my seminars and earlier lectures, though in this connection I must also say that I rather hope that some of you will be able

to give me a helping hand in that sort of editing work. There are quite a few people within the Movement, within the Order, who are able to edit seminars quite capably, quite successfully, and I really do hope that in the course of the next twenty years - that is certainly one of my big hopes - they will be able themselves to edit, to get published, the bulk of the seminar transcripts and as I said also the earlier lectures.

I must also confess that I wouldn't mind being able to devote some of my time to writing poetry. We have of course in the Movement quite a few - what do we call them? Poets manqués, I think they're called - they don't get time you know to write poetry, they're so busy doing other things, very worthy things, but poetry is one of those things, it just, it tends to get squeezed out. So I certainly wouldn't mind being able to spend some of my old age, even as I spent quite a part of my youth, writing the poems which come to me when I'm quiet and undisturbed.

And I would very much like of course to be able to carry on my literary work at least from time to time at Guhyaloka. I'd very much like to spend more and more time at Guhyaloka, at least some months of the year. I shall of course be doing that this year itself, I hope to be able to spend four months there, and while I'm there, as well as taking part in the men's ordination retreat, I very much hope to be able to write a few more chapters of my memoirs.

Perhaps I should mention something here which might clear up a certain possible confusion. When I speak of as it were transferring myself for part of the year to Guhyaloka, I don't mean that I shall take my office with me. That is almost the last of my intentions. I shall take - in fact I've already taken - a few books, a few? Many more - five or six hundred, and I hope to take just a few more, you know, have a sort of just a modest collection of just a thousand or so books there! Which I need in connection with my literary work. But I do not intend to take - I'm sure some of you don't even know of their existence - all those massive piles, filing cabinets, records - I don't mean LP records! You know, archives, that we're accumulating at Padmaloka and which are very useful and necessary in connection with the running of the Movement. I don't intend taking all of those with me. They will remain at Padmaloka, and of course Padmaloka is where I shall be staying whenever I happen to be in England which for quite a few years I'm afraid will be the greater part rather than the lesser part of the year.

And in this connection I would also like to say that in the course of the years we've built up and especially Subhuti has helped to build up at Padmaloka a quite, or at least a reasonably efficient infrastructure, so to speak, upon which the successful running of the Movement including the Order, as a Movement really depends. So even supposing I do withdraw from all as it were active participation in the running of the Movement, that infrastructure based at Padmaloka will certainly have to continue and will of course need to be supported. Though I see a sort of picture emerging in the course of the next few years all being well and if I'm spared of myself spending perhaps four or five months of the year at Guhyaloka engaged in literary work and the rest of the year either at Padmaloka or touring around and visiting Centres in Britain and elsewhere. And I hope that in the course of the next twenty years, certainly by the time we're sort of half way

through the next twenty years, I shall be spending perhaps rather more time at Guhyaloka than at Padmaloka and engaging myself more and more, even more and more deeply, in literary work.

But I've talked of handing over responsibilities. So you might be rather wondering, well what exactly are those responsibilities. I'm not going to give you a sort of detailed list (I probably could do so). I'm going to just speak about the most important of my present responsibilities as I see them, or rather as I see it.

I think my most important responsibility at the moment and one which I've only in a sense just begun to share with a few senior Order Members is that of conferring ordination, Dharmacari and Dharmacarini ordination, and in that way accepting people into the Western Buddhist Order or Trailokya Buddha Maha Sangha.

So in this connection the question arises, when I hand over the responsibility for conferring ordinations, what exactly is it that is handed over? I don't think I shall be giving anybody a certificate. I don't think I shall be giving anybody a title. So what shall I be giving them? Will I even be giving them anything in the literal sense? So just let us try to look at say what actually happens. Let's as it were get down to fundamentals, to basics. After all, we are an Order. After all, we are Buddhists, that is to say, we are people, we are individuals, we are human beings who Go For Refuge. We Go For Refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. And to begin with, so far as our own Movement is concerned, there was only myself. There was myself Going For Refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

And gradually other people came along. Other people practised meditation. Other people studied the Dharma. Other people started communicating with one another. Other people started going on retreat. Other people started becoming friends with me, got to know me. So what happened. I felt that I was Going For Refuge. And after a while I started to think, this person, that person, this man, that woman, they are actually Going For Refuge, even as I am Going For Refuge. We are Going For Refuge. So I ordained them. I ordained them, recognising that they were Going For Refuge in the way that I Went For Refuge. They were as it were joining in with me. They were going in the same direction that I was going in. If you like, to change the figure of speech, they were dancing in the same way that I was dancing. Through their association with me they learned to dance in that particular way and we were then dancing together, two of us, three of us, to begin with ten, twelve of us, and later of course hundreds.

But this is what happens. Basically, I went for refuge, others went for refuge. I saw that they were going for refuge in the way that I was going for refuge, so I recognised that and that recognition was their ordination into the Western Buddhist Order.

But when I speak of handing over my responsibilities for conferring ordination, what am I speaking of? What am I thinking of? What am I seeing as happening?

I am seeing you as it were going for refuge. You of course go for refuge even as I go for refuge. We go for refuge in the same sort of way in the sense that we all take going for refuge as the most central and essential act, the characteristic act, of the Buddhist life. We go for refuge, all of us, in that sort of way. So you go for refuge in that sort of way and then of course you come into contact with people, even as I came into contact with people, and have been coming into contact with people and do come into contact with people, you come into contact with people. Perhaps you teach them meditation. You discuss the Dharma. You go with them on retreat. You communicate with them. You develop spiritual friendship. And after a while it dawns upon you that these people, or this person, this man, that woman, they are going for refuge even as I go for refuge, and you feel, let them be ordained.

Now sometimes people aren't very clear or very sure whether someone is as we say 'ready for ordination', and sometimes there's even a difference of opinion as between Order Members. So why is that?

Well it's difficult to know other people, to begin with. It's very difficult to know other people and where they are at, though it isn't impossible, by any means. But if you are unsure whether someone is, so to speak, 'ready for ordination' or is in fact going for refuge or beginning to go for refuge, if you're unsure about that, you should ask yourself, how sure am I about my own going for refuge. If that is very clear, if that is very strong, if that is unmistakable, sure about that, certain about that, convinced of that, that you yourself do go for refuge, that you yourself are going for refuge, it won't be so very difficult for you to know whether that going for refuge is as it were resonated in another person with whom you are in regular contact and whom you know well. If you're a relative stranger that's another matter. You can hardly offer an opinion unless you are a very insightful person indeed.

So this is what I see happening, that you as it were - ideally each and every one of you - will be in the position that I was in when the Order was founded, when the Order was started. You will be recognising that other people do in fact go for refuge or are beginning to go for refuge, just as I recognised it in the earlier days and have been recognising it ever since. And when you are able to do that then there will be as it were a handing over of responsibility for ordination without anything that is handed over at all. It won't be a question of me giving it to you because you will have it already, you will have developed it already by virtue of your own going for refuge, because your own going for refuge is strong, powerful, clear, direct, unambiguous, you will be able to recognise whether others go for refuge or do not.

And when a sufficient number of you as it were together recognise that then you will be in the position of conferring ordination into the Western Buddhist Order. That's the principle. I haven't as yet worked out so to speak the mechanics of it. But I hope that that will be possible. I hope it will be possible for me to work out the mechanics of it fairly soon. But it's not just a question of organisation, it's not just a question of authorizing in a purely formal way what I've called or what I've spoken of as the responsibility for conferring ordinations to be handed over only if within each and every

Order Member, or at least within the senior, more experienced Order Members, there is a going for refuge sufficiently clear and strong to recognise the going for refuge quite unmistakably in others who do go for refuge or begin to go for refuge and who therefore are ready, as we say, to be ordained.

So in this way there'll be a sort of network. Each and every one of you really ought to be able to do what I've done. It really ought to be possible, especially in the case of those who've been ordained seven, eight, nine, ten years, it really ought to be possible for me, well, to sort of put you down in the jungles of Brazil or the deserts of Australia and say, come on, just start up the FWBO, just start up the Order. This really ought to be possible. I think in a few cases it is possible, but I think in principle, ideally, every single one of you should be able to do, in the course of your lifetime, more or less what I've done, with the additional advantage that you've got a model, you've got a spiritual movement, an Order already existing to which you belong. You are not as it were only included in the Mandala or occupying a position on the circumference of the Mandala of the Order, you are also a sense of an Order which grows, which develops from the Order as we have it now.

Each one of you should be, or should become, if not in the course of the next twenty years but hopefully shortly after, the centre of another 'group', another spiritual community of Order Members, Members of the Western Buddhist Order. At present how many are you? Some 336? 7? Sorry! So you could say, well in the course of the last twenty years Sangharakshita, doing his best, has been able as it were to produce (using that expression) and not counting some who've dropped out, 337 Order Members. I'm quite sure that there are some people sitting here who, if not in the course of the next twenty years certainly of the next forty years, if the world doesn't come to an end and they don't die prematurely, very likely at the end of their lives have far more disciples or have ordained you know together with other Order Members far more people than I have done.

You mustn't think, well, Bhante's ordained 337 plus, maybe in the course of our lifetime we'll ordain five or six or ten. Don't think like that! Think that we've got to grow, we've got to expand. There's no reason why some of you shouldn't in the course of your lives in association with other Order Members, perhaps with yourself presiding or taking the lead, ordain 500, or even 1,000 other people. At present our movement is very small, but I'm sure it can grow, it can spread. In the course of my lifetime I've seen so many changes which I could not have dreamt of, both for the better and for the worse.

When I, for instance, went to India, what was the position, what was the condition of Tibet? You couldn't get in, I couldn't get in to Tibet, in 1950, 1951, I wasn't allowed in, and what was the state of affairs in Tibet, a Buddhist state? It was, to use that term, a theocracy. Hundreds of monasteries, thousands of monasteries, tens of thousands of monks - without idealising the state of affairs then - virtually the whole population devoted to the Dharma, and the Dharma occupying a position of tremendous importance in their lives. But what is the position now? Well we all know sadly what is the position now. There's been that great, that tremendous change in the status of Tibet as a Buddhist

country. We know the sort of changes that have taken place even in China during that period, during my lifetime, changes that have taken place in Vietnam, changes that have taken place in Cambodia. That's the debit side of the balance sheet.

But again when I arrived in India, how many Buddhists were there in India? There were just maybe not more than 100,000, mostly lurking in places like Sikkhim and Darjeeling district and Ladakh, just a few thousand scattered over the plains of India. Now we've got at least 4,000,000, some people say 20,000,000, Buddhists in India. Look at that tremendous change, due mainly to the efforts of Dr. Ambedkar as we all know. Who would have thought - I certainly would not have thought it - that there would have been this tremendous expansion of Buddhism in India during my lifetime, during just a few years of my lifetime, so I don't see it as beyond the bounds of possibility that there'll be a tremendous growth and expansion of the Order, not so much perhaps under my personal auspices, but under your auspices in the course of the next twenty years, thirty years, forty years. I'm quite sure that I haven't really done very much more than plant a few seeds, and it'll be up to all of you and those who come after you to water those seeds, to nurture the plants that spring up and to plant further seeds.

I'm quite sure that most of you if not all of you can do really much more than you think you can. I think some of you have discovered that recently, especially perhaps those who've done things like door-knocking and who've even perhaps gone to America and raised funds for Aid For India. Would you have thought, say five or six years ago, seven or eight years ago, that you could have done that? Probably not, but you've done it. You've done it, and I'm sure that you can do a lot more, every single one of you.

So in a way we have to think big, not in a sort of megalomaniacal sort of way, but because we have faith in the Dharma and faith and confidence in our own going for refuge. And if we do have that there'll be a network of chapters spreading far and wide.

I think I can say, continuing just for a few more moments this question of handing over of responsibility, I think I can say that my work, or my share of the work, with regards to the Order and the Movement will be complete only when the Order is no longer dependent on me personally. It's no longer dependent on me personally for quite a lot of things. I no longer have to lead all the meditation classes, I no longer have to give all the lectures, as I did once upon a time, as Ananda well remembers! I no longer have to lead all the retreats. Quite a lot of things I no longer have to do, but there are still a lot of things which I do have to do, including the conferring of ordinations. But I shall consider that I have really done my work for the Movement and my work for the Dharma in the world in this lifetime when I am able to hand over all my responsibilities and just see the whole Movement, and the Order especially, functioning well and happily and effectively and usefully without me. And I hope to see this happening within the next twenty years. You could say probably that that is my biggest hope, that in the course of the next twenty years the Movement and the Order in particular will become quite independent of me, so that it won't matter in a sense to the Movement and the Order whether I spend my time at Guhyaloka or Padmaloka, whether I write prose or whether I write poetry or whether I do

absolutely nothing at all, whether I just put my feet up, assuming I've got somewhere to put them up and they're not too stiff, and well, if you like, just relax.

So, so much for self.

We come on now then to the Order and the Movement. Obviously, and it's obvious in view of what I've already said, obviously I hope that in the course of the next twenty years the Order and the Movement will grow. I can't say that I know that it will but, barring untoward circumstances, barring something like a major conflict, even a nuclear war, I'm confident that the Movement and the Order will grow and increase.

But I'd like to express a few hopes and preferences. I must admit, I must confess, I hope it's not a weakness, I would like to see more women Order Members. When I say more I don't mean just absolutely more, but proportionately more women Order Members. I don't know why we haven't got more, I've puzzled about this for years, I've lain awake at night wondering why we don't have more women Order Members, because we've got so many women in the Movement. Is it because they're naturally slower, is it because they're more thorough in their preparation, or more cautious, or more careful, or slow? I must say I've not really been able to come to any definite conclusion, I don't any longer try to. But I can't help wishing and hoping that in the course of the next twenty years the proportion of women in the Order throughout the world will increase.

I'd also like to indulge the hope that we have more anagarikas and more anagarikaas(?) for various reasons. First of all I think that if one can as it were subsume and sublimate one's sexual feelings and live a genuinely celibate life, a naturally, happily celibate life, that is really best. And also, and I have expressed this view or this thought before, that if we do have men and women anagarikas - anagarikas and anagarikaas (?) they will be able as it were I hope to hold together a little more closely the two wings of the Order. We do know, we have found from experience that single sex communities, single sex retreats, single sex right livelihood situations, are excellent things, are conducive to growth and development. But we don't want these two so to speak not exactly separate but distinct wings of the Order, the Dharmacari and the Dharmacarini wings, drifting too far apart. We must be very careful to keep them together at the same time because we do, after all, constitute one Order. And I'm quite sure that if we have a sufficient number of anagarikas and anagarikaas and especially if, if I may say so, they're a little on the elderly side, mature, above let us say the emotional conflict and turmoil that younger people are sometimes subject to, these anagarikas and anagarikaas will form a sort of solid body right in the middle, holding the balance between these two wings.

So I don't want, in a sense I don't want to *encourage* people to become anagarikas, I don't want to *urge* them, because it is something you must not do prematurely. You mustn't take this vow, if you like to call it that, of celibacy prematurely. You must really be ready for it and I doubt very much whether very young people are usually ready for it. I feel personally much more comfortable with rather older people who've been through as it were all that, through perhaps their family life, and have then come out at the other end and dedicated themselves to celibacy. I hope to see, well as I mentioned of course in

the past once or twice an age of forty. I think I'd better revise that! Let's make it forty-five! But by the time you come to forty-five, and especially if you've been an Order Member, that gives some of you five more years' grace - or disgrace! - by the time you come, say, to the age of forty-five (sighs of relief all round!) you will be prepared seriously to consider celibacy. But you'll start naturally (not because you think, well Bhante said once upon a time, you know years ago, in that particular lecture!) that you start feeling naturally that way. Your energy starts quite naturally employing all of you along purely cultural and spiritual channels. You're naturally sublimating your let us say lower instincts or impulses and around that time you start at least giving serious thought to the question of living a celibate life and becoming an anagarika.

That of course leads on to something quite closely connected and that is the precepts. You all know that I gave or rather I read this paper a few years ago on the Ten Pillars of Buddhism. I don't know the extent to which people, I mean Order Members especially, studied this paper, but clearly the ten precepts are absolutely basic. The observance of the ten precepts as I've said before represents a natural continuation, an application to every aspect of one's life, of one's original going for refuge.

So I think I'd like to see in the course of the next twenty years people taking the precepts more seriously than they sometimes have done in the past. And as it were scrutinising their own behaviour, their own faults, their own words, in the light of those ten precepts, those ten ethical principles. And perhaps I could draw special attention to the speech precepts. I think I have spoken about this before but it's a very important topic, because we're talking so much of the time, we're speaking, we're communicating verbally so much of the time and it's so easy to commit a mistake in this particular area, it's so easy to break or at least fracture let us say ever so slightly one or other of the speech precepts.

And I think in particular people need to pay attention to the question of rough or harsh speech. I must say, I must admit I'm sometimes surprised by the rather rough sort of way in which Order Members even do sometimes address one another. I think we ought to make a much greater, a much more constant effort to speak gently, kindly, thoughtfully, at the right time, in the right manner, not in a rough or a gruff, or an abrupt, or rude manner. There's still, I'm afraid, even within the Order, and especially perhaps I should say within the men's wing of the Order a very great deal of room for improvement in this particular respect.

I'd also like to see more mindfulness. I believe that the book by a Vietnamese monk, a Vietnamese teacher, which is very popular at the moment on - is it *The Way of Mindfulness*? Does anyone remember what it is called? I think you know the one I'm referring to? - *The Miracle of Mindfulness*. Ah, now why do you think he calls it a miracle? Probably because mindfulness is very rare. It's like walking on the water or, you know, changing all the stones into fishes, or whatever it was! Or the water into wine. So you know if you practise mindfulness it's a real miracle. It's so extraordinary. It's so unusual, it's so unprecedented. It just doesn't happen all that often. So yes, it's a very appropriate title that, *Miracle of Mindfulness*, so please practise that miracle, please become well versed in that miracle. As Buddhists we're not supposed to perform

miracles in the little sense, but let me assure you, we are allowed to perform the miracle of mindfulness! So don't be shy of it, don't hesitate, and probably the more people read that little book on the miracle of mindfulness, the better.

It's not so much that you have to strain and struggle to be mindful while you're meditating or while you're in the shrine room, you need to be mindful all the time, aware all the time, conscious all the time, in the fullest sense, and also maintain your continuity of purpose, because we can get so easily diverted and distracted, now doing this and now doing that, and forgetting what we're really supposed to be doing, in even the most ordinary sense. I've given all sorts of illustrations of this before, twelve, fifteen years ago in my lectures, but still it seems that mindfulness is a very difficult lesson for us to learn. But I would like to see in the course of the next twenty years an increase in the practice of mindfulness in ordinary everyday life within the Movement, within the Order.

And I'd like to see - and this is also a connected point - I'd like to see an improvement in people's manner. Some people think that manners are very sort of well, middle class, they're very Victorian, so if you're rude and ill-mannered you just show how free and spontaneous you are, how individual you are. Well I'm afraid that isn't really the case at all. If you're ill-mannered you just show how crude and uncultured you are and how lacking in sensitivity to other people and their feelings. So I would like to see an improvement in the course of the next twenty years in manners within the Order.

I'm not suggesting that manners should become very, very formal. I'm not suggesting that when a gentleman meets a lady as a Polish officer I remember used to do during the war and won the heart of many a British maiden in that way, with his smart clicks of the heel and the little bow from the waist: it really bowled them over! I can remember it very well. Some of my English friends tried to imitate it but they just couldn't do it like the Poles, especially when the Poles you know were quite handsome, had little moustaches that they could twirl at the same time...(?)...but I'm not speaking of manners in that sort of sense, manners in the sense of genuine politeness, when you hear a ring at the door you just go to answer it. You open the door, you don't say "Uuur". I've found it! I've seen it! I've heard people answering the phone "Yes". These are not good manners, so if our mothers didn't teach us, if our fathers didn't teach us, we've got to teach ourselves, because it (?)the way of social intercourse, and friendly communication, not only among ourselves but with the outside world at all, and we must never forget that we may be the first Buddhists that someone has ever met. Again I've talked about this before. So let not people think because they've met you that Buddhists are rude or ill-mannered or thoughtless or anything of that sort. This is all very basic stuff. I mean, Ananda's spoken of the sort of magical mystery tour of the future, but I'm afraid I'm simply reminding you of some very basic things and expressing my hope that the basic things will be given greater attention in the course of the next twenty years.

And connected with this question of better manners is the question of what I sometimes call mutual kindness. I must say, I've been rather surprised sometimes to see that Order Members aren't always very kind to one another. They don't always, not only speak kindly to one another, they don't always treat one another very kindly or very

considerately. And I'd really like to see a great improvement in this area too in the course of the next twenty years.

And I'd also like to see more vision. I'd like to see more imagination, I'd like to see people taking a broader view. I know that's difficult if you're somehow bogged down in the day to day work of running a co-op, or if you've got classes to take every day, it's easy if you're not careful to lose your wider vision of Buddhism and the Movement and the spiritual life, but we must retain that vision, retain that imagination, retain even that transcendental insight and make it illumine everything that we do.

And here we come rather to a mixture of fear and hope for the future, for the next twenty years. I hope that we can keep the Dharma, I hope we can keep the Buddhist teaching free from non-Buddhist admixtures. There's always temptations to mix the Buddha's teaching up with something else, or interpret it in a way which is not in accordance with, well, that teaching itself.

Let me give you an example of the sort of thing I mean. We do talk quite a lot about development, and we quite rightly talk about development, our development as human beings, our spiritual development, our emotional development, our development from a lower to a higher level of consciousness. We quite rightly and quite truthfully talk in that sort of way, but if we're not careful we can introduce a subtle sort of misunderstanding and we start looking at things in terms of whether they're good for our development in a very narrow sort of way, almost a precious sort of way. We think, Oh no, I don't think I can do that, I don't think it'll be good for my development. Someone may ask you to work in a co-op and you say, Well, I'm feeling a bit frail, a bit sensitive these days - I don't think it would be good for my development! Or they suggest that perhaps you could, you should, meditate a bit more, and you say, Well, I'm not really into meditation and if I were to force myself it wouldn't be good for my development! Or again you might say, I think it would be good for my development if I had a good holiday, if I let myself go for a bit, if I wasn't so mindful, and maybe if I gave up meditation for a while in the long run it would be good for my development. Or maybe someone asks you to help them, maybe they're in difficulties and you say, I don't think it would be really good for my development if I were to bother about that sort of thing, I really just need to stay quiet for a while. That would be good for my development.

In that way the idea that it's good or not good for your development becomes very self-centred, becomes even very selfish so you twist it, the whole idea of self-development or personal development, in a really quite un-Buddhistic sort of way.

So I think I detect within the Movement some tendency at least sometimes of that sort on the part of at least some people. That we think in terms of our personal development in a rather precious and self-centred sort of way, that I'm not saying we shouldn't think in terms of self-development - yes, that is a very valuable and useful way of thinking - but I think we should also see what I sometimes call the altruistic dimension of Going For Refuge much more clearly. I think we need a much greater emphasis on the Bodhisattva Ideal.

I have been talking a bit about this in recent times, I've even been wondering whether we shouldn't perhaps recite or read the Bodhisattva Precepts in the course of a sevenfold puja, just to remind ourselves of that other side, that other dimension, it's not just a question of ourselves going for refuge, not just a question of developing ourselves, it's also a question of looking to other people, making the Dharma available to them and helping them, especially other Order Members, in whatever way we can. Again you know that from time to time I invoke as it were this image, this great image, of the eleven-headed and the thousand-armed Avalokitesvara. I've mentioned time and again that in a way the Order is, the whole Movement is a sort of embodiment of that eleven-headed and thousand-armed Avalokitesvara. The Order itself is a sort of, even one could say at the highest level, embodiment of the Bodhicitta in the world, so there's no place really for 'development' in a narrow or self-centred sort of way. We need to emphasise therefore I think the Bodhisattva Ideal, the Bodhisattva Ideal as the altruistic dimension of Going For Refuge, much more perhaps than we've done in the past.

Incidentally while I'm talking about the Order as a whole, as the embodiment of the eleven-headed and thousand-armed Avalokitesvara, let me just mention it has sometimes occurred to me, or at least I've sometimes wondered, whether the Order shouldn't change its name. At present of course it's the Western Buddhist Order in the West, in England, but it has really ceased to be western in the sense that we do have many Order people who are not westerners. But on the other hand, Western Buddhist Order is well established, well known, and many of the people in the East who have joined the Western Buddhist Order are at least somewhat westernised in their outlook, so we may consider that they're westerners at least to some extent culturally even if not geographically, but perhaps this is something that in the course of the next twenty years we may have to consider. I don't at present have personally any very strong feelings about it one way or the other, but perhaps it will be something that we shall need to consider as I've said in the course of the next twenty years.

On a wider front, a front that perhaps pertains more to the Movement than the Order, I think I'd like to see in the course of the next twenty years more and more emphasis on culture and cultural activities, on the Arts, because these do help very much to engage and sublimate our emotions, and in that way help us to direct our emotions too, as well as our intellectual understanding, along the spiritual path.

Some of you know that in the course of the last year I've been thinking very seriously that we need to connect with our western Greco-Roman philosophical heritage and tradition. I've begun to feel that we can really by-pass Christianity. I've begun to feel that we can regard the Christian centuries as a sort of bad dream from which we've woken up, and I've been doing quite a bit of reading and re-reading. I've been reading and re-reading Plato and Plotinus and Pythagoras and the other great sages, great thinkers, masters of Greek and Roman, BC and AD and there's an amazing wealth of ideas and inspiration there. One finds philosophy taken so seriously, philosophy being taken, being understood not just as an academic discipline, but as a whole way of life in a way that is very congenial to Buddhists. I'd really like people at least to read things like Plato's Symposium and Aristotle's Ethics and the thoughts of Marcus Aurelius and some

of the letters of Seneca, or some of the dialogues of Cicero. There are all sorts of wonderful things, well apart from literary classics too. There's the plays of the great Greek dramatists, there's of course the Iliad and the Odyssey and the Aeniads. I think these are the things in translation of course in most cases that we should be reading, these are the sort of connections that we should be making, and I think if we can make these sort of connections we can point out parallels with Buddhist thought, parallels between the Greco-Roman philosophical, even religious and spiritual traditions, and the Indian Buddhist traditions, then I think that will help us feel that Buddhism isn't so foreign, it isn't just something brought to us from the East, but something which to some extent at least has parallels and perhaps even roots in the classical West.

So this is something I would very much like to see developing in the course of the next twenty years - one or two of our Order Members I know have been studying Greek, perhaps one or two have studied Latin - perhaps even two or three have studied Latin. I'd like to see a few more people engage in classical studies or at least I'd like to see many more people reading the Greek and the Roman classics in translation and taking them really seriously - something for instance like Cicero's dialogue on Friendship. It says so much, it's very useful to us. There's a lot that we can learn from it, a lot with which we can feel very, very much at home in a way that we can't perhaps as Buddhists with Christian literature. Anyway I have spoken about that on other occasions so I won't say very much more.

But there is another allied topic and that is the topic of ethics and society. This is also quoted in connection with classical thought. Nowadays we hear quite a lot - or at least we read a fair amount in the papers about the need for morality in society and it's true, there is a need for morality in society, and in recent weeks and recent months government spokesmen, members of the government have been saying, and quite rightly saying, that we do need more morality in public life, we do need more morality in society. But that is not going to be held together just by law, just by force. Society is not going to be held together by the police force, it's not going to be held together by the law courts, it's not going to be held together by the judicial system, or by the army as is the case in some countries, at least for short periods. Society is held together basically by social ethics, by a generally accepted system of social and cultural ethics.

But the great mistake that they all make is in thinking that because we need more morality, we need more ethics in our social life, it has to be Christian ethics. They point you in the direction of the Church, the dear old Church, which in fact has failed now to provide an ethical basis for our society. So I think as a Movement, as an Order, it is our duty to go out as much as we can into society and make clear the Buddhist conception of ethics, which is a healthy and a positive and a creative conception of ethics in a way that Christian ethics is not. We don't want an ethics of guilt, an ethics of fear, we want an ethics of growth and development which is what we have in Buddhism. So I think we need to try to fill this gap if you like. We accept the need for more ethics in our social life but we reject the notion that those ethics have to be Christian ethics. I believe they can be Buddhist ethics.

This is something incidentally to which Ambedkar gave a great deal of thought and on which he had quite a lot to say, to the effect that society cannot be held together by force. It can only be held together by morality, by feeling. So this is a topic on which we really have quite a lot to say and we should say it loud and clear on every conceivable occasion, whenever (?) you get an opportunity.

Again, closely linking up, there's the whole question of Right Livelihood, team-based right livelihood. I've sometimes said that this whole question of team-based right livelihood, especially in the form of co-ops, is one of the most difficult things that we've undertaken. I have in fact said that it's not very difficult to set up a Centre. It's not much more difficult to start a community, men's or women's community. But it does seem ten times more difficult to set up a successful co-op, a successful right livelihood structure. So I think some people, even some Order Members, begin to have some doubts, if not about team-based right livelihood at least some doubts about the co-operative structure. Now I don't want to insist too much just on the co-operative structure, but I do want to insist very, very much on the importance of team-based right livelihood.

So I hope in the course of the next twenty years there will be more and more an emphasis on team-based right livelihood. We shall see teams of Order Members, not just mitras, directed from a distance by Order Members, but teams of Order Members working together creating wealth to give away once they've supported themselves, wealth which they can donate, dana which they can donate, which they can give to those sections of the Movement which are devoting themselves to things other than the accumulation or the gaining of wealth.

And I think perhaps in some cases we need to alter our attitude towards wealth, our attitude towards money, our attitude towards resources of this sort. Because surely the Movement doesn't run on money but it's going to be very difficult for it to run in any practical way without money. I think some of us are beginning to realise that more and more. Perhaps I didn't realise, even myself, you know, completely, until comparatively recently, because when I was India - after all, for twenty years I got by more or less without money, I certainly didn't start up any business, unless of course my production of reviews and articles could be described as a sort of literary industry, because I did occasionally get paid for them, but whatever I earned didn't bring me in much more than just a few rupees to buy a few more books. So that was the extent of my personal experience of this matter. But since then I've given a great deal of thought in this country to team-based right livelihood and the whole question of right livelihood and I think this is really still, will be, one of the great planks of the FWBO and of the Order, so I really do hope that more and more attention in the course of the next twenty years will be given to that.

And I would also like to see the Order and the FWBO engaging in a more effective and widespread publicity. I think we still do hide our light under a bushel, in biblical phrase, to a far too great extent. We're still too much the modest violet. We don't blow our own trumpet enough to mix the metaphors. We really must just make ourselves better known. We're just beginning to do that. I say that because I'm quite sure that around the

country, around the world, in so many countries, there are people who, in Buddhist phrase, have eyes covered with just a little dust, and who are perishing for not hearing the Dharma. Nowadays, I think almost every few days, I get a letter from someone, or someone comes to see me and they say, Thank you Bhante for having established the FWBO. This didn't use to happen, years ago, but in the last few years it's been happening quite a lot, and I ask, How did you get in contact with the FWBO, how did you hear about the FWBO? Oh, I saw a wall poster, or, I saw a notice, an advertisement, in Time Out, or, Someone who was working in the same office told me about the FWBO. But people who are able to benefit from the FWBO, people who would love to be in contact with a movement like the FWBO, are not going to be able to do so unless we make ourselves known to them, and that means publicity of the right sort. So I would like to see in the course of the next twenty years the Movement as a whole and especially making itself very, very much better known so that more and more people can benefit from whatever it is that we have to offer.

All right, thirdly and lastly we come to the world. I must say looking at the world, or at least reading the newspapers from time to time, I don't feel all that optimistic. By nature I'm optimistic. By nature I'm sanguine. But looking at the world I don't feel all that optimistic. In the course of the last year or two perhaps there's been some slight change on the international front politically speaking, but I don't think much more than that. And that change could very easily perhaps be undone. I'm very aware of the fact that there could be an atomic explosion at any time, even just by way of an accident and I'm still very aware though I don't talk about it much nowadays of the possibility of an atomic war. We don't think about these things, we banish these things to the backs of our mind, but these are still possibilities, but yes, I've spoken about this in my lecture some years ago, 'Buddhism, World Peace and Nuclear War', so I'm not going to dwell on this particular aspect this evening.

I just want to touch on three topics of national and international concern that I think we ought to give more attention to, more thought to, and perhaps do more about, in the course of the next twenty years.

First of all, there's the question of AIDS. We all know about it, but I wonder whether every Order Member and every mitra is sufficiently careful about it. So far the Movement seems to have remained free from AIDS. I'm not aware that any Order Member has it, or even that any mitra has it and that's perhaps more than a thousand people. But I do know that there are two Friends who have it, one of them in the United Kingdom, and one of them in New Zealand. So it means it's beginning to come close, there are two Friends, two Friends with a capital F who have AIDS. And I would really hope that in the course of the next twenty years not a single Order Member or a single mitra catches AIDS. I know that occasionally you do catch it through no fault of your own, for instance by way of blood transfusion, but leaving aside matters of that sort, I really do hope, in a way I expect that in the course of the next twenty years AIDS doesn't touch the Order, doesn't touch the Movement, but that depends upon the mindfulness, the awareness, the thoughtfulness, of individual Order Members. So I'd like you to give quite serious thought to this matter. No doubt, some of you or even all of you have

already done that. And a few of you are very, very aware of this problem, I know. But perhaps it's very easy to forget, it's very easy to put aside. It's something we need to bear in mind, that is to say, all those who are not leading celibate lives, those who are not anagarikas or anagarikaas, need to bear in mind really all of the time.

And then there's another question that I've felt quite concerned about recently and even quite pained, and that is the question of racial prejudice and discrimination. I must say if you had asked me a few years ago whether racial prejudice and discrimination was on the decline in Britain I would have said, Well, yes of course, it certainly is and it won't be many years perhaps before it disappears altogether, but I don't think I could say that today. In the course of the last few months I've seen, I've read in the newspapers so many accounts, so many reports of instances, cases of racial discrimination, prejudice, harassment of one sort or another in Britain, so I've come to the conclusion that as a Movement, and especially as an Order, we need to take a much more active part in combating prejudice and discrimination of that sort. I'm quite sure that within the Order, and perhaps within the Movement as a whole, there is no racial prejudice, there is no racial discrimination of any kind, but there's certainly a lot of it in Britain and I think we have to try not just to ensure that racial prejudice and racial discrimination don't exist in our midst, but we have to do whatever we can in whatever way to remove them from the society in which we live, in which our Movement, in which our Order, functions. I don't think we can just look the other way and content ourselves with the fact that we ourselves do not personally practise that sort of discrimination, don't personally indulge in that sort of prejudice.

Now I'm not suggesting you take a very militant attitude - that often is counter-productive - but I think in a gentle and kindly and non-violent way we must do everything in our power in our own society in Britain and elsewhere if we happen to be so placed to counteract this particular menace, which is obviously quite opposed to the whole spirit of Buddhism, of the Dharma.

And then there's another matter that I've felt quite concerned with recently, about which I haven't I think spoken very much if at all, or written anything, but about which I might write something in the future, and that is about the environment, about matters ecological. It does seem that mankind is destroying his and her own environment. It may be even that in the course of the next twenty years very serious damage is done to the total environment of life on earth. One reads such dreadful things about the destruction of rainforests, about the destruction of all sorts of species of living things, to me it seems really dreadful and really terrible that there are species, beautiful species of animals, of fish, of birds, of butterflies, which are just being wiped out. I believe several thousand species of one kind or another are being wiped out each year. This is what is happening. So I think as a Movement and especially as an Order we need to take a much stronger stand on issues of this sort, perhaps play a more active part, at least in our individual capacities, in the environmental movement.

After all, this is completely in accordance with the principles of Buddhism. As Buddhists we are meant, we are urged, to direct metta towards all living beings. That

doesn't just mean all human beings, it means all animals, insects, plants, birds, beasts, of every kind, so this is the basis we may say of our ecological concern as Buddhists. We wish well towards all living beings. And it's in our own interest to do so because we can't live as it were on a naked planet, we can't live just where there's rock and sand, we depend upon vegetation, we depend upon animal life, we're all interconnected, another great lesson of Buddhism, all interconnected. So I would like in the course of the next twenty years, I would like to see our Movement, I would like to see the Order, developing what I describe as a sort of ecological dimension. I would like to see some Order Members taking up this particular interest and working in this particular field from the basis of their Buddhist commitment, working perhaps even in some cases along with non-Buddhists, who share this sort of concern, this sort of commitment, because it is something of very, very basic importance.

Well there's a lot more that I could say about the next twenty years but I hope that this has been enough. One shouldn't think that because I haven't mentioned something, that because I haven't expressed a hope for something happening in the course of the next twenty years, I don't consider that particular important. I couldn't possibly have mentioned everything in the course of a mere one and a half hours. But these at least are some of my reflections, some of my hopes, some of my fears, with regard to the next twenty years.

I think I also have to say in conclusion that I think that in some ways the next twenty years will be more difficult than the last twenty years, because the next twenty years are going to be a period of transition. They're going to be a period, especially the first few of those next twenty years, a period of handing over of responsibility, as I said at the beginning, a handing over of responsibility and especially responsibility for ordination, from me to all of you. And that's of course presupposes that you both individually and collectively will be able to assume, or be able to take on, take over, that responsibility. Well I have every confidence that you will be able to do that. In the course of the last twenty years I've at least to some extent shown it the way, and the rest of course in the next twenty years and beyond is up to you.