

Lecture 174: The Five Pillars of the FWBO

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Friends,

I think it was more than twenty years ago that I paid my first visit to Greece, which of course for me meant Ancient Greece, Classical Greece; and among other places I visited Delphi. I'd been wanting to visit Delphi for quite a number of years, and at last my wish, my ambition, was fulfilled. And among other sites, I saw the ruins of the great temple of the God Apollo. And as I wandered round looking at the ruins of that great temple, and saw it and the other sites, I couldn't help recalling, I couldn't help remembering that in Ancient days - in the days of the glory that was Greece, when the temple stood four square and beautiful, and not at all in ruins - I could not help recalling, I could not help remembering that over the portal of the temple of Apollo there was an inscription, an inscription that was famous throughout the whole of the Classical world, and an inscription that is not unknown even today, which was of course *'Know Thyself'*. Know Thyself. The Ancient Greeks of course had a certain understanding of these words. We, perhaps, understand these words in another way, not quite in the Ancient Greek way. But, in whatsoever way we understand these gnomic words, it's certainly not easy to understand, to know, oneself. One could even go so far as to say that when we're young - that is to say roughly when we're under forty [*Laughter*] we don't usually know ourselves at all. Usually when we are young, especially when we are very young, we are quite blind, we are quite ignorant, and not only do we not know ourselves, we do not even **think** in those terms, we don't even think in terms of knowing oneself. Perhaps it doesn't even occur to us that there is, so to speak, something there to know which we don't know.

So self knowledge is not something that we prize, at that stage, that early stage of our life. It's only quite a bit later on in life that we really start - even start - knowing ourselves. And sometimes it's very much later on in life that we start knowing ourselves. We start knowing ourselves, we may say, partly just as the natural result, so to speak, of our ordinary human maturity. And partly we begin knowing ourselves as the result of our increased experience of ordinary life, especially our increased experience of other people. The people with whom we come into contact in all sorts of ways for all sorts of reasons, in the course of our lives. And, of course, very often that experience, including that experience of and with other people, is painful, even very painful indeed. And we may even go so far as to say that, very often, it's only through painful experiences that we start to know ourselves. Be that as it may, in any case, self-knowledge is something that we achieve to any degree, to any depth, to any extent, comparatively late in life. It's something that we achieve slowly. It doesn't come all at once. It's something that we achieve only with difficulty.

And this is true, not only of the individual, not only of the individual man and woman, it's also true of what we may term 'the collectivity'. The Ancient Greeks as a whole, we may say, the Ancient Greeks as a collectivity, did not know themselves. The Athenian people did not know itself - at least, we may say, the Athenian people did not know itself until after the Peloponnesian War. Medieval England did not know itself, and modern America perhaps does not know itself. One might even argue that the group as such never knows itself. At most the group knows itself, so to speak, in the person of just a few individuals who are more than just members of their particular group. Individuals like - in the case of Ancient Greece - Thucydides. But it is not only the group, not only the ethnic collectivity, that does not know itself. A spiritual community does not know itself, a spiritual movement does not know itself.

The FWBO does not know itself. That is to say doesn't know itself until later on in its history - not at the beginning. Today we celebrate the 23rd anniversary of the FWBO. Today the FWBO is 23 years old. We attained our collective majority two years ago. We could then say that we were collectively - even if not individually always, collectively at least - grown up. So we should, as a movement, be a little bit mature, a little bit experienced. We should be beginning, as a movement, to know ourselves. We should be beginning to **see** ourselves.

So beginning to see ourselves as we do, what do we see? That is, how do we see the FWBO? How do we see the spiritual movement to which we belong, and of which we are a part? Speaking personally, I see the FWBO in a number of different ways. It's not that I see it in the same one single way all the

time. I see it in quite a number of different ways. I see it, to speak in images, I see it as a tree, or perhaps I should say I see it as a sapling. A sapling that has sprung from a seed planted 23 years ago. A sapling that is already bearing fruit. That is already providing shelter and nourishment for thousands of people in many different parts of the world. I see the FWBO also as a lotus bed, a bed of lotuses. That image, I think, will be very familiar to quite a number of you. I see it also as a garden, another familiar image. I see it as a road. I see it as a raft. I see it as all these things. But I also see it as a temple. I see it as a really magnificent temple. A temple that began 23 years ago as just a very tiny, improvised shrine. I see it as a temple that is still very much in process of construction. In fact here and there we can see great building blocks that have not yet been incorporated into the overall structure. Some people, of course, looking at the FWBO from a great distance, don't see it as a temple at all. They may see it as, let's say, a fortress, or they may see it as a factory [*Laughter*] or they may see it as a barracks [*Laughter*]. Some of them, indeed, though they seem to be looking in the right direction, don't see anything at all! [*Laughter*] But it's not easy to see the FWBO as a temple. It's not easy to see the FWBO as it really is, even when one is quite close up to it. In fact it's not easy to see it, it's not even easy to know it, even when one is standing right inside it. But standing right inside it, right inside this temple that is the FWBO what in fact does one see? What sort of things does one see? Well one could say that one sees space, one sees light, one sees a multitude of great golden figures, one sees enormous vistas, one sees a dome even overarching above, a dome like that of the sky itself. One sees multiple arches, and above all perhaps one sees, round the central shrine of the temple five mighty pillars. [*Laughter*] Five pillars that support the entire edifice. One sees the Five Pillars of the FWBO, and it's about these five pillars - not pillows! - **pillars!** [*Laughter*] Don't mistake me! - these five pillars that I want to speak this afternoon.

But first a word or two of warning. Please don't take my five pillars too literally. I'm afraid I have sometimes to complain that people do take my words, my images even, rather more literally than they were intended. So please don't take my five pillars too literally. Don't think that there are only five, no more and no less. Don't go and tell someone, 'well Bhante said there's five pillars and there's just five' [*Laughter*]. One doesn't have to take it quite so literally as that. There may be other pillars that I haven't mentioned. There may even be other pillars that I haven't seen. After all even Bhante doesn't see everything! [*Laughter*] So, moreover don't think of the pillars as being necessarily pillars of **stone**. Don't think of them as being something hard, something fixed, something rigid. The Bible, for instance, speaks of 'pillars of cloud' and 'pillars of fire', and we can also have pillars of light, pillars of radiance. We can have pillars of **living** light, pillars of **living** radiance. So let's think of our five pillars also in these sort of terms.

So what are these Five Pillars of the FWBO? The Five Pillars of the FWBO are:

Ideas;
Practices;
Institutions;
Experiment, and
Imagination.

So first, **Ideas** are a pillar of the FWBO. But what is an idea? By idea I don't mean just a concept. I don't mean simply a mental object. I mean something rather like what we have in mind when we speak of a 'bright idea'. An idea of this kind can usually be expressed in just one or two words. It's something really very simple, and in a sense, though only in a sense, something abstract. But though abstract in a sense, an idea is at the same time something that is seen as being full of possibilities. It's seen as opening up new vistas, new horizons, and hence an idea is capable of stimulating people. An idea excites people, it stirs them up. An idea is very often very **moving**, and more often than not such an idea moves people to action. It moves them to change things. It moves them to change themselves, to change even the world. People very often are ready even to **die** for the sake of an idea. Ideas therefore occupy an important place in human life. They occupy an important place in history, and sometimes it's **ideas** that change history. In Ancient Greece - to refer again to Ancient Greece - there was Plato's idea, his great idea, of justice. The great idea that dominates his most famous dialogue - '*The Republic*' - the idea of justice. Though it's not quite justice in the sense of the English word, but near enough. There's Plotinus' idea of 'emanation'. There's the medieval idea of 'degree', or as we would say nowadays, of hierarchy, strong echoes of which we find in several well-known passages in Shakespeare. There's the idea, connected with that, of the chain of being; and coming on to the Eighteenth Century we find quite a number of important ideas. We find the idea of 'reason'. Previously there wasn't the idea of reason quite in that Eighteenth Century sense, and at the same time, in connection with the idea of reason, we, of course, find the idea of 'enlightenment', enlightenment

with a small 'e', not in the Buddhist sense of Bodhi, of course. And towards the end of the same century, the Eighteenth Century, we find the three interconnected ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity. These ideas, of course, for a while convulsed a good part of the World. These ideas of liberty, equality, fraternity.

And in the last century there are still more ideas. There's the idea of 'progress'. There's the idea of 'evolution'. There's the idea of 'science' in the modern sense of the term. And we've grown used to these more recent ideas, and perhaps we no longer find them so very interesting. In the case of one or two of them perhaps we become rather disillusioned, but once these ideas were new, they were exciting, even highly controversial. Nowadays we have such Twentieth Century ideas as 'relativity', 'the unconscious', 'repression', and so on. I need hardly tell you what part **they** play in our lives. So in the same way, Buddhism has its ideas. There are ideas that occupy an important place in the history of Buddhism, ideas that are still important to us as Buddhists today. Take, for instance, the idea of conditionality, the idea which, even when briefly stated, brought about such a tremendous spiritual change, such a tremendous spiritual upheaval in Sariputra, who became one of the Buddha's two chief disciples; an idea which, when he first heard about it, caused him, in fact, even to attain Stream Entry: the idea of conditionality. And then there's the later Mahayana idea of the perfect mutual interpenetration of all phenomena, of all the phenomena of existence. But I'm sure there's no need for me, on an occasion like this and to an audience like this, to multiply examples. You'll be sufficiently familiar with these Buddhist ideas. And when Buddhism first came to the West, towards the end of the last century, there were certain of its ideas that struck people very forcibly. After all in the West we didn't first of all encounter Buddhism as any kind of organisation, or in any kind of **living** way. We didn't come into contact with its practices, with its institutions, its festivals, its celebrations - we came into contact first of all with its ideas; and some of those struck at least some people very forcibly. There was the idea, for instance, of Karma and Rebirth. At that time, not much more than a hundred years ago, most people in this country, most people in the West, believed that they had only one life on earth followed by an eternity of either bliss or torment. That was what the vast majority of people believed. But Buddhism taught differently, as you know. Buddhism taught the idea of Karma and Rebirth, taught the idea of a whole **series** of lives, both here on earth and in other realms, lives that were governed by an impersonal moral law. And some people - our grandfathers and great-grandfathers - found **this** idea really an eye-opener. We've got used to it, but to them it was an eye-opener. They found that it placed their lives within an infinitely broader context, gave their lives a different meaning.

And then there was another Buddhist idea which struck people very forcibly when they encountered it: The idea of **tolerance**. The idea that people of different religions were not natural enemies, as it were; that they didn't have to fight each other, even kill each other; that they could live together peacefully, agreeing to disagree. This idea of Buddhism also came as an eye-opener. We're so used, nowadays - or many of us are so used - to this idea of tolerance, we can't **imagine** what an eye-opener it was to many people, the majority of people, in this country, when they first came in contact with it in connection with Buddhism. Difference of religion, difference of sect, difference of belief in those days could divide families, estrange brother from brother, father from son. You can read instances of this in so many of the works of fiction of the period, the Victorian period. So ideas occupy an important place in human life. They occupy an important place in history. They occupy an important place in Buddhism, and naturally, therefore, ideas occupy an important place in the FWBO. Ideas are one of the Pillars of the FWBO.

Now the ideas that form one of the Pillars of the FWBO are of several kinds. There are of course the well-known traditional Buddhist ideas like the idea of conditionality which I've already mentioned. Then there are those ideas which struck people when Buddhism first came to the West, such as the ideas of Karma and Rebirth and of tolerance. Perhaps I should also mention in this connection the idea of non-theistic religion. Previously people had believed that religion was necessarily theistic. For them in those days a non-theistic religion was simply a contradiction in terms, and even now some people in the West, who regard themselves as Buddhists, have difficulty with the idea of non-theism. Some of them would like to think that somehow, in some way, Buddhism, in some form, believes in God.

Finally, among those ideas which are Pillars of the FWBO are those ideas which are more or less distinctive of the FWBO: ideas, we may say, which represent emphases on hitherto comparatively neglected aspects of the Buddha's teaching, or which represent restatements of the Buddha's teaching in more contemporary terms. Among the first, the emphases on neglected aspects of the Buddha's teaching, we may mention the idea of **positive** conditionality, the idea of Going for Refuge and the

idea of the Spiritual Community. And among the second, those which represent restatements of the Buddha's teaching in more contemporary terms, we may mention the idea of the Higher Evolution and the idea of male friendship. I say **male** friendship not because I wish to exclude women from the notion of friendship; I say it because male friendship, that is to say friendship between men, has been rather frowned upon in the West in modern times. It therefore needs to be emphasised in a way that is not necessary or not so necessary in the case of friendship between women.

So these ideas, all these different ideas, occupy an important place in the FWBO. Ideas are one of the Pillars of the FWBO, traditional Buddhist ideas, ideas that have been with us since the inception of Buddhism in the West. Ideas also that are distinctive to the FWBO. But very often we do not realise the power of ideas. We don't realise the effect that ideas, just as ideas to begin with, can have on other people, and very often this is because we've got used to those ideas. It's because we've lost what has been called our 'beginner's mind'. It's important therefore that we keep our 'beginner's mind' - important for our own sake and also for the sake of other people. If we can only keep our 'beginner's mind' then we will continue to find ideas - perhaps the very ideas that originally attracted us to Buddhism - stimulating and exciting. We shall feel inspired by them. We shall want to communicate them to others, whether by word of mouth or in writing. And sometimes I think that in the FWBO we do not communicate our ideas sufficiently; don't communicate them sufficiently to the outside world, don't communicate them sufficiently to the people we meet. Only too often, I suspect, we are too occupied with self-analysis, too preoccupied with our own subjective mental and emotional states. So I would suggest that there should be a greater emphasis on ideas, a greater emphasis in the FWBO, on ideas. I would suggest that we talk more about the idea of conditionality, about the idea of Going for Refuge, more about the idea of non-theism, more about the idea of male friendship; more, in fact, about all the stimulating and exciting ideas that form one of the Pillars of the FWBO.

And, secondly, **Practices** are a Pillar of the FWBO. By practices I mean of course spiritual practices, especially the different forms of meditation. Spiritual practices have always been important in Buddhism. They've been important in Buddhism from the very beginning, and this fact is illustrated by quite a well-known passage in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta. The Mahaparinibbana Sutta is, of course, the sutta dealing with the last days of the Buddha. It's a sutta from the Pali Canon. The sutta tells us that the Buddha has arrived at Vaisali. He's on his way to Kusinagara where he will finally pass away. It seems that he spent the rainy season in Vaisali and Ananda of course was with him. And towards the end of his stay in Vaisali, the Buddha asked Ananda to call together all the monks in the locality. It seems that the Buddha knew that he did not have very much longer to live and he wanted to give the monks his final advice, his final exhortation. So what does the Buddha say? What is his last message, at least to that particular group of monks, when Ananda has called them together? We can imagine them coming from their little wattle and daub huts, perhaps from the foot of trees, perhaps from caves. They were all gathering in response to Ananda's summons. Perhaps they knew that the Buddha's end was very near, so they came all the more quickly, all the more eagerly. Perhaps even all the more anxiously. We don't know whether they came in dozens or scores or even hundreds, for all those in the locality came. And when they'd come, when they'd gathered around him, when they sat down, when all was quiet, the Buddha addressed them. So what did he say? According to the Mahaparinibbana Sutta the Buddha said, *'Monks, the principles' (that is to say the dharmas) which I have discovered and taught, should be well learned by you and practised, developed and cultivated so that this best life' (the Pali word here is 'brahmacharya', this brahmacharya, this best life, this exalted life, this spiritual life as we may say that the Buddha had taught, so that this best life) 'should be enduring and last long for the benefit and happiness of men and gods. And which are those principles? They are as follows.'* and the Buddha proceeds to give a list. In fact he gives a list of lists, and the list comprises: one, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness; two, the Four Right Exertions; three, the Four Bases of Psychic Power; four, the Five Spiritual Faculties; five, the Five Strengths; six, the Seven Factors of Enlightenment; and seven, the Noble Eightfold Path. So altogether there are thirty seven different items. And later on, in the course of Buddhist history, these thirty seven items became collectively known as the thirty seven Bodhipaksadharmas or principles that are wings of Enlightenment; that is to say that are aids to the attainment of Enlightenment.

So what is it that we notice about these principles that, the Buddha says, should be practised, developed and cultivated by the monks, by his disciples? Well what we notice is that they are all groups of practices. They are all things to be done. They are all groups of mental exercises, as we may call them. Some are forms of meditation. The Buddha on that solemn occasion does not say anything about doctrine. He doesn't even say anything about conditionality. Not on that particular occasion. He speaks only of practices, only of spiritual practices, and this suggests that practices are very important

indeed. But why are they so important? Why does the Buddha apparently emphasize them so much? Why does the Buddha on this occasion, on the eve of his departure from this earthly life, speak of the principles, the *dhammas*, that he's taught and discovered, simply in terms of practices? Well practices, we may say, are important because mind is important. We may recall here that first verse of the Dhammapada - *manupubbangama dhamma* - mind is the first of things. So these practices are important because mind is important. They're important because it is important to change the mind. It's important to change the mind from unskilful to skilful, change it from impure to pure, from unenlightened to Enlightened. And practices, both those mentioned by the Buddha on that occasion and others, other practices, are the means by which this change, this change in and of the mind, is brought about. They are the means by which the mind is transformed, transformed from the samsaric to the nirvanic mode. Not that practices in this sense are the only means, but they're the central means, the most direct means, and such practices are, of course, specific, concrete. You can't really practise just meditation or just mindfulness in a general sort of way, not if you're a beginner; that is to say someone who hasn't gained Stream Entry - you need **specific** methods - you need specific exercises, concrete things that you should do.

Moreover, practices are something that you do regularly, that you do daily even. Not just when you happen to feel like it. Some people will say that practices, even spiritual practices, are a form of mental or psychological conditioning. Well of course they are. We need not be afraid of this word 'conditioning', because our minds are already conditioned. They're conditioned by our upbringing, conditioned by our education, conditioned by the work we do, conditioned by our environment, conditioned by our relations, our acquaintances and sexual partners. They're conditioned by the newspapers we read and the TV programmes we watch. They're conditioned by the different groups to which we belong. We are conditioned, our minds are conditioned, in so many ways, and for the most part they're conditioned in ways that are unskilful, impure and samsaric. So spiritual practices are meant to undo that. Spiritual practices counteract negative mental conditioning by positive mental conditioning. As a result of spiritual practices our negatively conditioned mind becomes a positively conditioned mind, and it's only a positively conditioned mind that can become what we may call an unconditioned mind. It's only a positively conditioned mind that is capable of gaining Enlightenment. Positive conditioning is therefore important. Practices, spiritual practices are therefore important, and it's for this reason that in the FWBO we have many practices. Virtually all of the practices that we have in the FWBO are traditional Buddhist practices. In particular we have the Mindfulness of Breathing and the development of universal loving kindness. We have the Six Element practice. We have various types of visualization. We also have the Going for Refuge and Prostration practice. There is no need for me to describe any of these in detail. They are sufficiently well known, I think, to most of you. There are also the different sets of ethical precepts: the Five Precepts, the Ten Precepts and so on. These too are practices. And of course in traditional Buddhist societies *dana*, or giving, is also a very important spiritual practice. Just giving. In the FWBO, I feel, we do not, as yet, give sufficient attention to this particular practice, the practice of *dana*, generosity, giving. And particularly perhaps in the case of those working and earning out there in the world.

So practices are important. Spiritual practices are important. Practices are one of the Pillars of the FWBO.

Three, **Institutions** are a Pillar of the FWBO. Some of you, of course, might be surprised to learn that institutions are a Pillar of the FWBO. After all, in some quarters nowadays institution - the word 'institution' - is regarded almost as a dirty word. Rather like the words 'discipline' or 'obedience' and so on. When institutions are mentioned, we tend to think of prisons and mental hospitals. *[Laughter]* We tend to think of '*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*' *[Laughter]*. But this word institution is not necessarily a dirty word. It's a quite innocent little word, we may say, a quite nice little word. According to the dictionary it is '*an organization or establishment founded for a specific purpose, such as a hospital, church, company or college*'. Institution thus is quite a neutral word, like the word organization. There's no need for us to be afraid of it. No need for us to be afraid of **using** this word institution. And as we can see from the examples given by the dictionary, institutions are of many different kinds. There are probably hundreds, even thousands, of different kinds of institutions. We could even say that society, the society to which we belong, in the midst of which we live, is made up of institutions of various kinds. Without institutions society could hardly exist. Without institutions human beings, even, could hardly exist. Human beings have various specific purposes, as the dictionary says. They want to, for instance, acquire knowledge or they want to be cured of disease, but they cannot achieve that particular purpose in isolation. They cannot achieve it by themselves. So what do they do? They band together. They co-operate, they found an organization or an institution. Most

people belong to or make use of quite a number of organizations or institutions. So next time you feel tempted to knock organizations as such just make a list of all those organizations, all those institutions to which you yourself actually do belong. You might be surprised how long the list was.

But organizations or institutions are principally of two kinds. We may call these two kinds the mundane and the spiritual. Mundane institutions are those institutions whose specific purpose is mundane. And spiritual institutions are those whose specific purpose is spiritual. Some institutions are, of course, partly mundane and partly spiritual. That is to say they fulfil both purposes to some extent, to some degree. It's important, however, to remember that mundane institutions are not necessarily bad. They may indeed provide the basis, the necessary basis for spiritual institutions, or at least they may make it easier for spiritual institutions to function. Again this is not to say that **some** mundane institutions may not be even wholly bad. Mundane institutions, we may say, belong to the lower evolution. Spiritual institutions belong to the Higher Evolution. Mundane institutions enable one to develop as a healthy, happy group member, ideally that is. Spiritual institutions enable one to develop as an individual; not as what we may call an individual in isolation but rather as an individual in co-operation, even an individual in community, an individual in spiritual community, an individual existing intrinsically in spiritual community.

So those institutions that are pillars of the FWBO are spiritual institutions, and at present there are mainly three such institutions within the context of the FWBO. Of course Ratnaguna referred to them, perhaps a little apprehensively, in the course of his introduction. There's the public centre. There's the residential spiritual community and there's the team-based right livelihood business. The famous 'Three Cs'. They're not, of course, mutually exclusive. One and the same person can belong to any two of them or even to all three, and can belong in varying degrees. The specific purpose of the public centre is to be a meeting point between the FWBO and the outside world, in particular between Order Members and the outside world. At the centre, the public centre, members of the public can come in contact with the ideas of Buddhism, ideas that may well change their lives. At the centre they can start learning some of the practices of Buddhism, especially can start learning meditation. They can start making friends with spiritually like-minded people.

The specific purpose of the residential spiritual community is to provide a positive alternative to the family, whether nuclear or extended. It is to provide a situation in which spiritually like-minded people can live together in a way that is expressive of Buddhist values, live together in a situation in which they can intensify their friendships; a situation in which they can deepen their experience of the Dharma, especially their experience of Going for Refuge.

The specific purpose of the Team-Based Right Livelihood business is to enable people to support themselves in an ethical manner. It is to help people develop spiritually through the experience of work, especially through the experience of working together, and it is also to make a profit that can be given to the movement as dana.

Now today I'm not going to say anything more about these three institutions of ours. Most of you are sufficiently familiar with them already, both in theory and practice. I just want to make two or three general points. We need these institutions. We need our centres, our communities, and what used to be called our co-ops, and we need them because we need other people, and because other people need us. As you all know who've made the attempt seriously, it is not easy to lead the spiritual life, that best life, that *brahmacharya*, of which the Buddha spoke. It's not an easy life. It's not easy to develop as an individual. It's not easy to be a true Buddhist. We need the help and the co-operation of others who are trying to do the same thing. We need to meet with one another in our centres. We need to live with one another in our communities, and we need to **work** with one another in our team-based right livelihood businesses. In a sense we have no choice. It is not that we are free either to live in institutions or not to live in institutions just as we please. The only choice we have is whether to live more in mundane institutions or more in spiritual institutions. If we want to develop as individuals we will choose to live more in spiritual institutions. We shall try in fact to live in them as much as we possibly can. If we choose - whether consciously or by default - **not** to live in spiritual institutions, we shall unavoidably live in mundane institutions and be influenced by mundane institutions and be conditioned by them. So let us not listen to those for whom institution is necessarily a dirty word. Let us take no notice of those who knock institutions as such. Let us live in centres, communities and co-ops as much as we can. Let us rejoice in the merits of our centres, communities and co-ops. Let us **appreciate** them, let us be **proud** of them, let us realise that institutions, spiritual institutions, are one of the pillars of the FWBO.

Four, **Experiment** is a Pillar of the FWBO. We live in a changing world. The FWBO itself is changing, is developing all the time. Developing, we trust, in an organic manner. As members of the FWBO, we are confronted by changing conditions, changing situations, all the time. We meet different people, even different **kinds** of people. We come in contact with different cultures, especially when the FWBO happens to spread to a new country, that is to say a country where there was previously no FWBO presence. This may even happen when the FWBO spreads to a different part of the same country, or to a different social group. And when that happens we may find that the existing way of doing things in the FWBO is not quite appropriate to the new conditions. We may then have to adapt. We may then have to develop new approaches, new methods of presentation, new modes of communication, and in order to do this we shall have to experiment. Otherwise the FWBO may not succeed in establishing itself in a new environment and may not even survive in the old environment.

But what do we mean by experiment? According, again, to the dictionary, an experiment is '*a test or investigation, especially one planned to provide evidence for or against a hypothesis*'. There are two points to note here. First, an experiment is something **planned**. In other words an experiment has a definite purpose. It's not something done at random. It's the result of serious thinking, even serious study. It's not a matter of doing something in a whimsical, irresponsible sort of way just to see what will happen. That's not an experiment.

Second, in order to conduct an experiment, we need a hypothesis. We need in particular what's known as a 'working hypothesis'. And once again having recourse to the dictionary, a working hypothesis is '*a suggested explanation for a group of facts or phenomena accepted as a basis for further verification*'. Now all this may seem rather abstract, especially in the middle of the afternoon, so let me give you one or two concrete examples. Suppose - just close your eyes if you like and just imagine - suppose there's an FWBO Centre somewhere in Britain, maybe not very far away. Perhaps an FWBO Centre in a new area, a new geographical area, and supposing that as part of its regular activities this particular centre conducts pujas, devotional observances, but, let's suppose, very few people come to these pujas. Perhaps on some occasions nobody comes at all, or at least fewer people come than might reasonably be expected. So what do the Order members running the centre do? I'm assuming, of course, that they're very intelligent people. *[Laughter]* They study the situation carefully. That's the first thing they do. They study the situation carefully. They ascertain the facts of the case. Only too often we not only hypothesise, but even speculate without bothering to ascertain the facts of the case. So this is what they would do; they would ascertain, first of all, the facts of the case, and they'd make allowances for fortuitous circumstances. For instance, quite a lot of people may not have come to the pujas because on those particular days when pujas were held, it was raining. Now I'm not saying anything about the weather in Manchester! *[Laughter]* Don't think that, but that's a fortuitous circumstance which has to be discounted. So having ascertained the facts of the case, and having made allowance for fortuitous circumstances, the Order Members concerned frame a hypothesis. Let us suppose that in this case the hypothesis is 'people don't come to pujas because they're not colourful enough'. That is the pujas are not colourful enough, not that the people are not colourful enough, though of course it can be that way round! *[Laughter]* People don't come to pujas because the pujas are not colourful enough. So they then proceed - these hypothetical Order Members at this hypothetical Centre - then proceed to test or investigate their hypothesis. And they don't do it theoretically - that's only too easy to do - they do it practically. In other words they carry out an experiment, and this experiment of theirs is planned. Let us suppose that they organ a whole series of much more colourful pujas, and in this way they test their hypothesis. If more people attend and keep on attending the hypothesis can be taken as verified, and more colourful pujas then become a permanent feature of that particular Centre's activities. If more people don't attend, or even fewer people attend, the hypothesis is not verified and the Order Members concerned have to think again, they have to frame another hypothesis, they have to conduct another experiment.

Let me give you a further example very briefly. Supposing there's a meditation Centre and not many people come there on retreat. Order Members concerned again may hypothesise that this may be due to the fact that there's not enough verbal instruction or explanation, and they may then proceed to carry out an experiment in the kind of way that I've just described. So we can now see that experiment as one of the pillars of the FWBO is a very serious matter. It's not something to be conducted in a frivolous or irresponsible sort of way. And nor is that all. Experiments should be properly monitored. That is to say week by week people should actually see what is going on, and records should be kept. How many people this week, how many people next week, and so on. Only then can real comparisons be made. Sometimes, I'm afraid, experiments are held, experiments roughly of this sort, at centres without any monitoring and without any records being kept. Such experiments obviously are quite

useless. One is left with vague personal impressions which don't really help at all. So not only that, not only should all experiments be properly monitored, not only should records be kept, but the **results** of the experiments, negative or positive, hypothesis verified or not verified, should be communicated to the rest of the movement for its information through the suitable channels.

There are a few more points also I'd like to make in this connection, that is to say in connection with experiment as a pillar of the FWBO. Experiments should be made by a number of experienced people working together. This will normally mean that they'll be made by a number of Order members. Experiments should be planned to test such hypotheses as are in accordance with the spirit of the movement. For instance you can't test the hypothesis, '*Would more people come to pujas if beer was served at the end after the puja?*' You shouldn't test **that** hypothesis [*Laughter*] because it would be not in accordance with the spirit of the movement. The hypotheses which are tested should also represent an organic development or application of the spirit of the movement. There must be, we may say, continuity between the old way of doing things and the new. Not an abrupt hiatus or break. Experiments also should not be **sprung** on people, especially if they're accustomed in doing things in a particular way and they're not necessarily looking for a new way of doing them. For in the case of a puja for instance if you attend or you sit down and you're expecting the Sevenfold Puja, you enjoy the Sevenfold Puja, it's very disconcerting, maybe even annoying, if someone suddenly starts leading you in a quite different sort of puja which he or she may have thought up, as it were, overnight. [*Laughter*] So, experiments shouldn't be **sprung** on people. And finally, and very importantly, one should not have recourse to experiment out of restlessness or simply out of a desire for change.

So we may say experiment, rightly understood, is one of the Pillars of the FWBO.

And, fifthly and lastly, **Imagination** is a Pillar of the FWBO. It's obviously difficult to describe imagination in the same ways that I've described the four other pillars. In fact I was even quite doubtful, quite uncertain, whether I should call this particular pillar imagination at all. At one time I thought of calling it the pillar of Vision, but then I thought, well, this could be confused with vision in the sense of Perfect Vision or Insight and it wasn't that quite that I meant. I also thought of calling the particular pillar the pillar of 'Magic', or the pillar of 'Mystery' or the pillar of 'Myth'; but in the end I decided on Imagination; though even this is not really very satisfactory. I could of course give you the dictionary definition of Imagination. I could even read you an extract from Coleridge, but I think this would not help very much. So, instead of doing any of those things I'm going to ask you to do something I don't usually ask you to do. Something which I should perhaps ask you to do rather more often. I'm going to ask you to use your own imagination! [*Laughter*] Your own imagination should be able to tell you what imagination is. At least you should be able to have an imagination of imagination. Your own imagination should be able to tell you where to look for this particular pillar of the FWBO, whereabouts in the temple, as it were. But let me give you just a few hints. You should look for this particular pillar of the FWBO, look for imagination, in the realm of myth, especially in the myth of the Order, the myth of the Movement; should look for it in archetypes and ideals. Should look for it in poetry, in the broadest sense of the term. More concretely, should look for it in ritual and ceremony; should look for it in meditation. Should look for it in the scriptures, especially in some of the great Mahayana sutras. Should look for it in the fine arts. Should look for it in all these places, and in many others.

And if we do this, well, we shall get at least a glimpse of imagination, and we'll be able to see that imagination, as I've called it, is in truth one of the Pillars of the FWBO.

These, then, are the Five Pillars of the FWBO. Ideas, Practices, Institutions, Experiment, and Imagination. These are the five mighty pillars of our temple, the temple that is still very much in process of construction, the temple in which we live, or at least in which we gather from time to time. So let us learn to recognise these five pillars of the FWBO for what they are. Let us familiar ourselves with them. Let us know our temple. Let us know our Movement. Let us know ourselves. Let us realise that, ultimately, it is **our** ideas, **our** practices, **our** institutions, **our** experiment, **our** imagination, that are the Five Pillars of the FWBO.

