

Growing Pains

An Inside View of Change in the FWBO by Vishvapani

In January 2003 I started a new job. I was to survey the FWBO in the UK and make recommendations on how it should develop. I agreed to take this on for two years while living at Madhyamaloka and continuing to edit Dharma Life. The job meant that I would rejoin the Chairmen's meeting, become an auxiliary member of the Preceptors College Council (PCC), and join the Madhyamaloka Meeting – the small working group that Subhuti had gathered around him to look at how the movement was developing. I continued in this post for the next two-and-a-half years up to summer 2005 and in that time the movement went through considerable turmoil and change. I did engage with the movement in the UK but, at least to start with, the job I had been asked to do turned out not to be the job that needed doing: that job was working with Subhuti to help the movement make a transition in its organisation and culture.

I have finished this work now, and as a last bow I am writing this account. I have taken my own perspective and experiences as a starting point because that offers a useful focus, and it is part of what I want to communicate, but I have also tried to describe what happened to the movement as a whole, and to suggest why. Of course, there are many other perspectives and many other possible interpretations of this period, and I would not claim that mine is the most accurate: no doubt even others who were involved would give different accounts; and it is very soon to make such an attempt. But despite this article's necessary limitations, my intention is to offer information and background on what has happened for people within the FWBO. I hope that this will be helpful to others who are interested in our community, as well.

I

2003: The Need for Change

i. Starting Work

In August 2000, on his 75th birthday Sangharakshita handed on of the Headship of the Western Buddhist Order to the College of Public Preceptors and appointed Subhuti to be its Chairman for a five year term. The College, which was responsible for ordinations, had eleven members and it was to continue to work with centre presidents in the PCC as it had since had since 1994. It may have seemed that the seal was being set on a second generation who had now wholly succeeded Sangharakshita in the movement's 'leadership' while he withdrew into a peaceful retirement. But this was also the point at which the prevailing model of leadership came under scrutiny by this second generation of leaders. As Subhuti later commented, once the College had been given full

responsibility he felt more free to question the status quo. There was reason to question. Members of the Madhyamaloka Meeting had been becoming aware that something in the current arrangements wasn't working: the movement seemed to be settling into safe and predictable patterns and losing the dynamism of earlier years; some quite senior Order members did not fully trust the 'Madhyamaloka' leadership; and Public Preceptors felt increasingly over-stretched. The College and the PCC were unable to address these underlying issues: members of the former were too caught up with ordination processes, the latter was too unwieldy, and the individuals members of both bodies were not necessarily suited to asking such questions.

In 2001 Subhuti formed the Madhyamaloka Meeting as a think-tank, more manageable and focused than the PCC, with a brief to review the movement 'from top to bottom'. Its initial members were Subhuti, Sona, Kovida, Srimala, Dhammarati, Cittapala and Kulananda; and by 2003 Sona and Kovida had left the group while Dayanandi and I had joined. They quickly concluded that what was needed was a concerted campaign of revival and change, encapsulated in the slogan, 'Deepen the Order; open up the movement', but by 2003 more progress had been made with the second of these objectives than the first. Deepening the Order meant emphasising chapters, and a series of retreats was held at Madhyamaloka in which Order chapters met with Subhuti, the local president and others to explore how they could be more effective. Two new UK Order Conveners were appointed: Mahamati for men and Dayanandi for women; a network of regional Order Forums was established in which Order members discussed issues affecting the Order; and more energy went into chapter conveners retreats. Despite all these initiatives, my impression is that those concerned felt they were taking a thimble to the ocean: the Order had a life of its own, and attempts to change things from 'above' had a limited affect. But 'opening up the movement' (i.e. the activities of the FWBO beyond the Order) involved structures such as the mitra 'system' and the centralised ordination process. The College, supported by the PCC, had ultimate responsibility for these, and the Madhyamaloka Meeting had influence as the advisor to the College and PCC.

The two main initiatives to 'open up' the movement prior to 2003 concerned changes to the mitra system, to which I shall return, and 'regionalisation'. This meant locating responsibility for the movement's coordination and strategic development with the people already taking responsibility at local and regional level, not with the PCC. A group of senior Order members was already meeting in India, and other meetings started in the US and Germany, where there are just a few centres. But the real problem was the UK which in early 2003 had thirty centres and around 600 Order members: a meeting of those taking major responsibilities would include up to 100 people. Someone needed to take a good look and find a way forward.

Madhyamaloka Meeting and the European Chairs Assembly asked me to take on this job and I agreed, but with some reservations. I doubted that the FWBO in the UK was manageable in the way that had been suggested. The UK makes up at least 70 percent of the FWBO outside India, and addressing its needs would in fact require looking not just at the symptoms (the limitations of the movement in the UK) but also identifying the underlying causes that were affecting the whole FWBO. But before I had gone far in doing this, a development occurred that changed the landscape in which I was searching.

ii. Sangharakshita and Yashomitra: January 2003

In January 2003 I heard that a long-standing Order member called Yashomitra had submitted an article to *Shabda*, the Order's confidential journal, detailing his sexual contact with Sangharakshita and making some trenchant criticisms. A debate ensued at Madhyamaloka: Should Yashomitra's piece be published? Should it be withheld? Who should decide? Should we ask Sangharakshita, anticipating that he might well say no? Was it fair on him to publish it – or even to ask him, given his current ill health? What if it killed him? But then, was it fair on Yashomitra not to publish? On one side was loyalty to Sangharakshita, a desire to protect him – especially now he was ill – and exasperation at the seemingly endless stream of criticism. On the other side, for Kulananda and myself, was frustration at the constraints on talking publicly about Sangharakshita's sexual past. We had had the task of responding to the 1997-9 campaign against Sangharakshita and the FWBO that used the press and the internet; and in August 1998 we had co-authored with Cittapala *The FWBO Files: a Response*. This document had offered only minimal comment on the accusations about sex: one reason was the request from Lokamitra and a team of senior Order members in India that he had convened to say as little as possible to confirm that Sangharakshita had been homosexually active. They told us they were afraid of the response in their community, even fearing that there would be violence against members of the movement. The other reason was that Sangharakshita himself had said that he wanted to write his own account in his next volume of memoirs. But when he came to write that volume he covered only a period in which he was still celibate. By 2003 we could wait no longer.

When I read Yashomitra's article I saw it was incendiary stuff. I had heard his story from his own lips ten years before, and I had been forced to think hard about issues around Sangharakshita's sexual history when responding to our public critics. In a sense there was nothing surprising in what he had to say: it always seemed inevitable to me that Sangharakshita's behaviour would produce feelings such as Yashomitra's in at least some of his partners. But the article was made especially powerful by its tone. Unlike some previous accounts, Yashomitra's was largely free of rhetoric and venom, and portrayed Sangharakshita in a credible yet troubling light. Telling details included descriptions of

Yashomitra's sense that Sangharakshita had lost interest in him when their sexual relationship ended, and his frustration when he had tried to discuss the events with Sangharakshita years later and, as he saw it, been rebuffed.

My own response to reading this was mixed. I admired Sangharakshita greatly and felt great affection for him; but I saw that some of his actions had led to suffering in ways he seemed unwilling to consider. I had tried hard to understand this apparent incongruity while living with him, and had seen something of the complexity of his character and the peculiarity of his life experience. But it wasn't just a matter of making an ethical assessment: reflecting on these issues I felt very, very sad. I had known both Yashomitra and Sangharakshita since I fifteen years old and thought of them both as friends. I found myself writing out my thoughts on Sangharakshita's life in a letter to Zoketsu Norman Fischer, who I knew a little and who had lived through the San Francisco Zen Center's struggles to come to terms with the flaws and virtues of its former leader, Richard Baker Roshi. I later published my letter and his response in *Shabda*. I saw that the issues needed to be faced squarely and that doing so touched strong feelings for everyone in the FWBO, whether or not we were directly involved in these events. As I wrote: 'all these people – the critics, the doubters, the writers, the leaders, Sangharakshita and everyone else – had shared their lives for two or three decades. They had wound round each other, and lived with each other, and sometimes slept with each other. If these people weren't their lives, then what were their lives?'

iii. Madhyamaloka Meetings 1: Attitudes

A problem with publishing Yashomitra's article was that *Shabda* had a policy of not printing personal criticisms of individuals. So I contacted Subhuti, who in India, for advice. He proposed that we hold off publication until key people were back in the UK, and in mid- February 2003 the Madhyamaloka Meeting gathered (the Preceptors' College having delegated the decision about publication to us). Concerns about the effect on Sangharakshita were allayed when we heard that he didn't want to be told anything that might hinder his ability to sleep. The meeting was unanimous that we should advise the Order conveners to revoke the injunction against personal criticisms and publish the article. The mood of the meeting and the enthusiasm for publishing surprised me, and it seemed significant that the article would appear with the conscious agreement of people at the heart of the movement. It appeared in the March 2003 *Shabda* along with a preface by Subhuti, saying: 'Yashomitra writes with honesty and objectivity and raises issues that, in our view, do need to be aired in the Order and movement, whether or not one agrees with everything that he says. Indeed, I am glad that Yashomitra has written the article and am pleased that another piece of our collective history is being opened to us all.'

Over my years in the Order, even while working hard for the movement, standing up for it in public and living with its leaders at Madhyamaloka, I often disagreed with Sangharakshita's views and was sceptical of the PCC's leadership role. I admired some of them, and some were my friends, but I favoured greater openness in our communication, diversity in our norms and reform of our structures. Dharma Life magazine, which I had founded in 1996 and had edited since then, had been my main attempt to influence the movement's discourse and frames of reference in this way. I had expected that in joining the PCC and the Madhyamaloka Meeting I would find myself fighting those more concerned to conserve the movement's cohesive values. What I actually found was a group led by Subhuti that was willing to consider changes to the movement's structures that were more radical than any I had thought possible.

An agenda for change had been emerging in the Madhyamaloka Meeting over the previous two years. The main change it had already achieved was to the mitra system. Perhaps someone closer to events will one day give an account of why the mitra system developed as it did. But by 2000 an arrangement that had started as a way to help newcomers connect with the FWBO and the Order required a lengthy handbook to guide mitra conveners through the many expectations the candidate mitra was expected to fulfill, including declaring that they would not have or encourage others to have an abortion and that they did not adhere to a strong political philosophy deemed antipathetic to Buddhism. The resulting arrangements were often experienced as a demand for conformity from the candidate, while Order members had the role of judging and approving them. What is more, Order members in general were not involved in deciding the criteria they were expected to enforce. The Madhyamaloka Meeting's solution was simple and radical. They proposed that becoming a mitra should be entirely up to the candidate, who simply needed to make three declarations: that they were a Buddhist, that they would follow the five precepts, and that they saw the FWBO as the current context for their spiritual lives. Notions of acceptance and criteria were discarded and the mitra 'system' was finished. This was an early sign that serious changes were afoot, and that the future of the movement lay in an as yet undefined, but definitely more voluntaristic arrangement.

While the appearance of the article was painful for everyone, at least some at Madhyamaloka thought it was also fortuitous. A number of us agreed with Yashomitra that the issues stirred up in 1997 by the Guardian lingered as unfinished business, and his article brought these into the open. We actively embraced the opportunity to open up a range of issues that started with Sangharakshita's sexual ethics but went much further.

iv. Responses to Yashomitra

It was in this spirit that the Madhyamaloka Meeting decided not to make a collective statement in response to Yashomitra's article: that would have reinforced the role of 'Madhyamaloka' as owners of the FWBO's 'official' position. Instead, Subhuti proposed in a letter he sent to Order members in late March 2003 (published in the May 2003 Shabda): 'It seems to me the most important thing is that those of us who want to tell our stories, and that we just let everything come out into the open ... I would value hearing from as many Order members as possible about their experience of their past in the Order and movement, if they feel there is something unexpressed.'

This suggestion was taken up widely, and the Order embarked on a period of turmoil and soul-searching that reached a climax at the Open Forum at the August 2003 Order Convention and gradually settling down in the following year-and-a-half. Yashomitra's article was discussed at Order gatherings, along with other personal stories. Many Order members contributed articles and reports to Shabda, and we proposed to the Order conveners that a digest of these should also be circulated to interested non-Order members. Many contributions were thoughtful, balanced and kind, and the discussion was far too varied to be neatly encapsulated. But I want to suggest elements that I think were significant for the movement's future development.

Similar stories to Yashomitra's had appeared in The Guardian newspaper, been explicated by The FWBO Files, and endlessly repeated on the internet by long-time critic Mark Dunlop and others. In 1998 Shabda contained many angry reports about Sangharakshita's sexual history and the movement's other troubles. And yet the repeated cry in 2003 was, 'Why weren't we told?' and even, 'Why was this hidden?'

What explains this response in the Order at this time? One reason was suggested by the character of those who were affected this time around. Whereas many of those who had been most outspoken in 1998 were already to some degree disaffected, it seems significant to me that in 2003 Yashomitra touched many who were inclined by experience and temperament to be loyal supporters of Sangharakshita and the movement. Such people were touched because of Yashomitra's character: he was generally liked and respected within the Order – and the honest tone of his article. Whereas previous criticisms had come from outside, and perhaps been disregarded, Yashomitra's story was a part of the Order's own experience and his words matched its ethos of open communication. Significantly, and in contrast to 1997/8, those at Madhyamaloka, from whom these loyal Order members tended to take a lead, were at pains not to defend Sangharakshita: indeed, open discussion was encouraged. Subhuti wrote in his March letter to the Order: 'I shall not defend Bhante's actions as described by Yashomitra.'

Although I was well aware that Bhante was sexually active at the time Yashomitra writes of, with a number of partners, Yashomitra's article presented me, for the first time that I am aware of, with activity of this kind that I cannot condone.'

Many Order members were also stung by Yashomitra's suggestion that the Order was in a state of collective denial about Sangharakshita's sexual activity and its consequences in the movement. Perhaps 'denial' is the mind's tendency to avoid what it finds painful, and in 2003 people were confronted by a painful reality in a way that could no longer be set aside. There were many expressions of dismay, shock, anger and sadness; as well as relief that the issues were at last being confronted fully. Some people suffered a crisis of faith, asking if the Western Buddhist Order was truly founded on sound spiritual experience, and if the sacrifices they had made were worth the cost. As well as these immediate factors changes in the Order and movement, the response in the Order was also influenced by changes in the culture of the Order (which I will discuss later) that made many Order members more open to hearing criticisms of their teacher.

Responses in *Shabda* also included expressions of love for Sangharakshita, gratitude for his teachings and his other personal qualities, and some questioning of Yashomitra himself. Some people wanted to defend Sangharakshita against the accusations. Nonetheless, while there was a strong wish not to be uniformly condemnatory, criticism of Sangharakshita's behaviour with Yashomitra and his sexual history in general was a strong element in many contributions to this discussion. Some people said they thought he had been unskillful, while others emphasised the difficulty of knowing motives or making moral judgments about others. However, from this point on I think it has been possible to speak of a broad swathe of agreement within the FWBO that Sangharakshita had been unwise in his sexual dealings. Some would dissent from this, while others would make criticisms of him in much stronger terms.

Several of the personal accounts in *Shabda* described homosexual experiences in the FWBO (many of them on the part of men with a largely heterosexual orientation), including encounters with Sangharakshita. These were mostly reflective in tone: after all, they were describing events that had taken place twenty or thirty years earlier, when the now-middle aged writers were young men. Neither condemning nor condoning, several people said that, while they did not regret what had happened, they realised it had brought them difficulties later on. A number of writers were at pains to resist a caricature of the movement's past as an unbridled sexual ferment, and to emphasise the variety of experiences and the relative unimportance of the sexual side for them. A view of Sangharakshita was increasingly articulated that included more ambiguity, more criticism and more sense of his complexity than had previously been common.

A further theme was the attitudes and ideas that had led to these difficult experiences. These included views on sex that tended to value homosexuality more highly than heterosexuality; views on gender that tended to value men more highly than women; and views about lifestyle that tended to value single sex communal living more highly than family living. The perception among these writers was that such views were interwoven and therefore relevant to the events described in Yashomitra's article. One writer used the blunt traditional term 'wrong views' to describe them. Debate on gender topics had for some years been the sharpest point of dissention, and a test case for the degree of agreement that was required of Order members in relation to their teacher.

As well as being about sex, Yashomitra's article stirred up other unresolved shadows from the Order's past. In its early years as a tightly defined group of idealistic, mainly young people who were strongly influenced by the movement's leader and on a mission they considered to have unbounded significance, the FWBO had made rapid progress; but it had also left behind many painful experiences. So the stories Order members told included sexual experiences, but also concerned difficulties affecting lifestyle (especially people with families who had felt excluded), beliefs, gender (including suggestions that misogynist attitudes had sometimes flourished in the FWBO), and pressures that had arisen at work or in centres. In 2003 the FWBO's culture was far more diverse and inclusive than in its early years, but it had sometimes seemed that the cloud of these old, painful experiences remained hanging over it. The debates of 2003 offered room for them to come out in an atmosphere that was free from judgment; and I for one hoped that their influence over would at last be dispelled.

v. The Question of Authority

Debate continued in the Order and movement over the following months, but while the discussion was still young, Subhuti made a contribution in his March letter to the Order that took it in a direction it might not otherwise have followed. He connected this debate with his underlying concerns about how the movement was structured: 'The article must raise questions in many people's minds about spiritual "authority" in the Order. I regard this as a very good thing - although not one that is easily and finally resolved. ... Early on, Bhante's spiritual authority was everything. Simply with growing numbers and greater geographical spread, increasing experience and maturity among Order members, the emergence of new Preceptors, and Bhante's withdrawal, the situation is much more complex and requires a new consensus. Revelations about Bhante's behaviour underline that questions must be asked about spiritual authority, including about who confers ordination and on what basis. I believe we need to debate this very widely so that we can try to reach a new common understanding on the subject.'

Over the next few months the Madhyamaloka Meeting explored these issues, identified the need for a transition to another way of conceiving and organising responsibilities, and formulated the outlines of a new structure intended to match its current reality. In fact, the question of authority had been discussed before 2003. At the 2001 Order Convention Subhuti gave a talk on this very subject, seeking to clarify the role of the College and the limits of its authority; and in November 2002 the Public Preceptors meeting had agreed that the College was too centralised. But by early 2003 the time had come to take this much further. Before describing what took place in the Madhyamaloka Meeting and the proposals that emerged from it, I want to suggest some of the tensions that had been developing in the movement and how these connected with the effects of Yashomitra's article and the question of authority.

The College and the PCC

The College of Public Preceptors was authorised by Sangharakshita to have the final say over ordinations and the appointment of new public and private preceptors and chapter and Order conveners. It also had the power to exclude people from the Order. Presidents were appointed by the PCC and had an undefined influence over what happened at centres: they were key players in the appointment of new chairmen, and sometimes policed the limits of what centres could do. It would be wrong to suggest that the College and the PCC 'ran the movement': the College's powers were usually used sensitively and often embedded in processes of consultation; while the PCC was reluctant to impose its views and made policy statements very rarely. More important than the formal powers of the PCC and the College was their place in the Order's culture. Even before the formation of the PCC, Subhuti gave a talk at Sangharakshita's suggestion on the 'hierarchy of responsibilities', suggesting that taking a higher level of responsibility within the FWBO's structures required a higher level of spiritual qualities. He was mainly trying to encourage people to take more responsibility by suggesting that this could be a path of spiritual practice, but his ideas were easily read as implying an equation between the FWBO's institutional hierarchies and its spiritual hierarchy. Membership of the PCC came to be associated with spiritual status.

But when I joined the Madhyamaloka community in February 1999 I discovered that reality of the PCC reality differed from its appearance. Members of the PCC and the College did not regard themselves as being powerful, privileged or spiritually superior. Although most people in the FWBO assumed the PCC was guiding the movement's development, in fact they had never tried to produce strategies for its spread or its teaching methods, and had no power to apportion resources or direct people to start new projects. The Madhyamaloka Meeting, with just seven members, had in effect taken over the functions of the PCC and the Presidents Meeting in keeping an overview. And, since

its formation in 2001, the Meeting had been concerned with structural issues such as the changes to the mitra system, and never got down to looking at what went on in centres or regions in detail.

Some individual members of the PCC lacked the capacity to encompass a movement-wide perspective, and some lacked the spiritual stature required to be an exemplar. Sangharakshita had chosen the PCC from those he knew well and trusted; but my impression was that some had been drawn to working with him because they were loyal and faithful followers, and this did not necessarily equip them to be leaders or organisers. I think that one or two people in this position found themselves out of their depth, and responded by trying to control more and more tightly the areas for which they were responsible. Another response surfaced in Autumn 2002 when it emerged that Kovida, the Western Order Convener, had for some years been spending money to which he was not entitled that belonged to FWBO Uddiyana, the charity looking after Sangharakshita's affairs. I can only speculate about why this happened, but my impression was that spending money was a displacement of his conflicts about his work, and perhaps his life more generally. He was capable and loyal, but his qualities and experience made him ill suited to his work and he felt very frustrated.

Even those with the capacity to engage in strategic and organisational work wondered if it was the best use of their time. The movement needed the inspiration of strongly established Dharma practitioners such as Subhuti, but his place at the top of its organisational pyramid meant that numerous issues incessantly came to him and his associates for their urgent attention. Conversely, some other PCC Members felt they could not fully influence its policies because of Subhuti's dominance. The difficulties people felt in regard to Subhuti were closely connected with his strengths: he was uniformly respected in the PCC as having the greatest spiritual stature, intellectual capacity, organisational ability and ability to engage with great depth with many people. But I think that others found it hard to take initiatives themselves in the face of Subhuti's dynamism.

The College members were in an especially difficult position. By 2003 around 1,500 people worldwide had asked for ordination; and, even with the support of the ordination teams, all of these requests converged on the eleven public preceptors for final decisions. Between them they had already ordained around 600 people who often still looked to them for support and guidance. As well as their responsibility for ordinations they were the collective Head of the Order; several were also presidents and involved in Order issues; and the four women preceptors were under particular pressure because so many women were asking for ordination. In addition they all had to deal with the expectations, projections and reactions attendant on their place at the top of the movement's hierarchy.

Under considerable pressure but unable to do much to 'lead' the movement, the public preceptors increasingly wondered what their Headship of the Order really meant?

The PCC and the Order

The Order itself had changed. Its 600 members in 1994, when the PCC was established, had swelled by 2003 to 1,000 individuals spread further around the globe. The passage of time also meant that the Order was more mature in both years and experience, and many had been practicing for twenty or thirty years. They were living their lives in their own ways and without a natural feeling of deference to the movement's institutional leaders. By this time Sangharakshita was a distant figure for many: he was preceptor to only a third of Order members while many of the others had not had substantial contact with him. He had handed on the Headship, withdrawn from involvement in the movement, and finally become the subject of questioning and criticism from large numbers of Order members.

Behind the specific details of the PCC's responsibilities was a larger question that is harder to define: who ultimately 'owns' the FWBO and determines what it stands for? Initially the FWBO had clearly been 'Sangharakshita's movement': it was formed around his ideas, run by people he had ordained, and guided in crucial areas by his judgment and influence. Having succeeded to this role the PCC and the College also found themselves, in some sense, the movement's ultimate owners. With the handing on the Headship of the Order to the College this seemed to be confirmed: they were 'custodians', charged to safeguard and sustain the vision behind the Order; and to balance the 'centrifugal' forces of increasing divergence with the 'centripetal' forces of coherence and a shared set of values. In this sense the PCC and College were set up to be in tension with others in the Order.

But the tension that many Order members felt was not so much with these bodies themselves as with the norms and standards with which they were associated. The movement had tended to present itself in terms of its distinctive institutions such as centres, communities and team-based businesses, and PCC members had all devoted themselves to these institutions as expressions of a shared cause for which they had made sacrifices. But by 2003 only a minority of Order members were involved in all of these institutions. Some lived in family situations; more lived on their own or in informal arrangements with friends. Some had careers; others had found individual ways of supporting themselves. It had even ceased to be the norm that the great majority of Order members had a substantial involvement in FWBO centres. Connected with the sense of a normative lifestyle was a normative set of views that followed Sangharakshita's. Along with disagreements about gender there were others on sex, families, Christianity and

‘pseudo-liberalism’. It was clear that individuals had the freedom to disagree; but did such views nonetheless represent the position of the movement? Could an FWBO centre propagate a differing view? People in the FWBO could easily feel that, to the extent that their views and lifestyles differed from the perceived orthodoxy, they were outside the movement.

Whatever the causes, there were signs that all was not well in the movement, and these indications had been discussed extensively in the Madhyamaloka Meeting. Leaving aside India, while the number of women requesting ordination was increasing, the number of men was going down. From a peak of 92 in 1998, the number decreased every year, eventually reaching a low of 32 in 2003. And, for all the exhortations to expand the movement, very few new urban FWBO centres had opened in the 1990s. Conversely, the most encouraging new development in the 1990s was the Buddhafield collective which runs camping retreats and festivals. It had started off as a rebellious alternative to mainstream FWBO centres and been regarded with some suspicion by many others in the movement, and its success suggested that energy lay outside the FWBO’s mainstream. Arguably the structures that followed Sangharakshita, which were intended to offer clear leadership and provide a check on ethical breaches, had tended to inhibit autonomy and initiative. They placed unrealistic expectations and unsustainable burdens on the leaders, and perhaps exacerbated tendencies to passivity, deference and disgruntlement within the Order as a whole. In a letter to the Order June 2003 Subhuti described ‘the dichotomy of abdication of personal responsibility on the one hand and the egoistic abuse of respect, whether unwittingly or not, on the other.’ The implication was that these things had occurred in the Order itself.

In May 2003 Subhuti and I discussed the movement’s future with Mahaprabha, an Order member who taught strategy at London Business School. We discussed how, as a young movement the FWBO had often defined itself against the world, mirroring the defiant, resolutely self-sufficient character of its founder. Indeed, its language and praxis had sometimes displayed efforts to create a world unto itself, a ‘New Society’ operating within the wider world, but not of it. Even after 2000, this attitude was still influential, but western society and the Buddhist world in the West were changing, and the FWBO’s tendency to isolation risked making it irrelevant to the society that surrounded it. Mahaprabha observed that new organisations need protection and their founders often wish to safeguard their hard-won achievements. He drew a graph with one axis marked ‘control’ and another marked ‘certainty’. He wrote ‘order’ at the point where the two lines met: the point of maximum control and certainty. An organisation in this position is tightly defined but isolated and liable to forfeit the ability to learn from others; it risked losing contact with the needs it had been founded to address. The other pole, the point of minimum control and certainty, he labeled ‘chaos’. The question was how to operate with

both flexibility and cohesion in the intermediate realm between order and chaos. The FWBO's tightly bounded character was breaking down and we needed to find ways to inhabit this realm.

Subhuti's Response: Freedom in the Order

Although I have associated the PCC with efforts to maintain cohesion and guard past successes, there was also a countervailing trend within it. The Order's institutions had been intended to support a 'cascade of spiritual friendship' within a 'free association of individuals'; and the movement was intended to be a network of autonomous projects freely collaborating rather than a unitary, streamlined organisation. Subhuti's concern at the declining sense of collective ownership of the FWBO prompted a talk to a Men's UK National Order Weekend in August 2002 entitled 'Freedom in the Order' in which he urged a return to the FWBO's founding principles: 'I think we need to learn – or re-learn – the habit of seeing the Movement as the sum total of the altruistic activities of Order members, not as a particular set of institutions.' At the organisational level, too, he emphasised that power should not play a part as: 'There is no hierarchical "chain of command". If there is any centralising influence at the organisational level, it should come about in response to some common interest, in relation to which co-operation enhances effectiveness.'

Part of Subhuti's motivation for giving this talk was frustration that his own institutional role, with its connotations of power, constrained his ability to speak his mind freely, especially when he had criticisms. And he advocated an atmosphere of greater freedom of expression for all on a basis of mutual trust and respect. Another motivation was frustration at the growing criticism of those holding institutional responsibilities by others who felt more marginal. He exhorted these individuals to find an alternative: 'their best strategy is to show another way ... the more approaches we have, the better.' This suggestion didn't address the underlying reasons why people felt critical, but the intention was clearly to embrace the new conditions in which the Order was operating: 'I think we must accept – and even aim for – a more diverse Order and Movement, and rejoice in that as a sign of spiritual vitality.'

vi. Madhyamaloka Meeting 2: the Search for Alternatives

If the Order's debates marked a change in views of Sangharakshita, attitudes were also changing among PCC members themselves. As I had realised in moving to Madhyamaloka, for many, their connection with Sangharakshita was one of the most important relationships in their lives; they had learned to practice, even to think, under his tutelage; their experience of the Order had been formed by the roles to which he had

appointed them; and their motivation for taking responsibility was often loyalty and gratitude to him as a teacher. In 2003 Sangharakshita's sleeplessness and accompanying distress made the community's collective relationship with him, which had been polite but distant, much more demanding; and this confronted some people with unresolved difficulties in their personal connections with him. Subhuti expressed his experience of the intellectual side of his changing relationship in his June letter to the Order, while discussing Women, Men and Angels: 'At the time that I wrote [1994] I was inclined to give Sangharakshita's ideas a lot more priority than I am now. I don't think that even then I adopted them blindly and I don't think that even now I dismiss them easily - indeed, Sangharakshita's thought is still central to my own. But there has been a progression in my relationship to him.' He concluded: 'Over time ... I have increasingly found myself diverging from Sangharakshita on some of his views about the times we live in and the way the Dharma should be communicated.'

A decline in Sangharakshita's standing also affected that of his successors. While 'Freedom in the Order' admirably outlined the spirit of the changes Subhuti thought were necessary, its appraisal of problematic attitudes did not extend to the structures that had helped to produce them. By the time I joined the Madhyamaloka Meeting, Subhuti's thinking had moved on. He suggested to the meeting that underlying the concerns about the state of the movement, the tensions around the PCC, and the controversy around Sangharakshita, lay questions about the authority of the movement's leadership. When Sangharakshita had handed on the Headship to the College it may have seemed that they would now fulfill the role he had once had, but it had become clear that this was impossible. We needed more than a transfer of responsibilities; we needed to find an entirely new way of organising ourselves that took into account the Order's greater size, its increased diversity, and the gradual decay of the authority that had been inherited from its founder.

For Subhuti, authority and legitimacy were not abstract issues: they defined the limits of his capacity for action and initiative as Chair of the Preceptors College. He was keenly aware that the questioning of Sangharakshita affected his own standing. As he put it, he thought that he had a limited period of legitimacy in which he could make changes; and he wanted to use that time to implement a transition to new arrangements that would be self-legitimizing. Working with him in this period, hammering out issues that were central to the movement we had been involved in for most of our lives, was genuinely exciting. His willingness to countenance change, and the atmosphere of controversy, lent an air of urgency, even drama, to our discussions. It sometimes seemed that old attitudes and ways of working were crumbling before our eyes.

However, even Subhuti's limited legitimacy could not be taken for granted considering his involvement with Kovida and his authorship of *Women, Men and Angels*. In his March letter, Subhuti noted that some people had resigned from the Order because of this book and he said: 'I would far rather that doubts and concerns about me are articulated openly and my suitability to carry my present responsibilities is called into question than that someone should leave the Order ... I am quite happy to complete my term of office as Chairman of the Preceptors, College and Council. But I don't want to do so if most Order members do not believe that is in the best interests of the Order.' The response was generally supportive, but this request showed how seriously he regarded the issue.

Reviewing the College

The agenda Subhuti presented to the Madhyamaloka Meeting focused on the College. It was the Head of the Order and, through its connection with the PCC, it had a role in the leadership of the movement. But its core responsibility was for ordinations, and this was crucial. Ordination was the only point at which standards could really be asserted, and the Order's existence depended on its members' mutual acceptance of one another's ordinations. As Subhuti put it, 'ordination is the only "sacrament" within the FWBO's system.' As we understood it, ordination centred on the preceptor's 'witnessing' that the candidate was going for Refuge to the Three Jewels; and this witnessing required considerable depth of Dharma practice and engagement with the WBO sangha. For these reasons, authority to confer ordination had been restricted to a tight group of senior and trusted Order members, then numbering eleven.

By early 2003 this arrangement was buckling. The Public Preceptors were coming to the limits of their energy at a time when, as confidence drained away from the movement's normative beliefs and lifestyles, their standing was affected. In the previous circumstances authority and legitimacy naturally flowed from Sangharakshita; in the new ones it also needed to emerge from the Order as a whole. As Subhuti put it in his March 2003 letter to the Order: 'We are in transition from a band of Bhante's personal disciples who were constituted into an Order by him to an Order that was founded many years ago by Bhante.' Did this mean that the old basis for ordinations was no longer sustainable? This was asked in all seriousness, and the Madhyamaloka Meeting discussed the spectrum of alternatives for how ordinations could be conducted, and requested views from Order members. At one end of the spectrum of possibilities was a tightly controlled lineage of teachers authorised to confer ordination: in a sense this is what we already had. At the other end was a radical decentralisation. In its most extreme form this could mean that people selected themselves with no external check; or less radically, in the manner of Theravadin Bhikkhus, ordination could be conferred by any gathering of a given number of Order members. As we mulled over what the Order might be like with these

arrangements, more and more concerns surfaced: how would 'standards' be maintained between chapters? Was there any place for the 'witnessing' element of the ceremony and the relationship with the preceptor? In the absence of these, how would confidence be maintained between Order members that they shared the same understanding of ordination? And without that, how could the Order persist? I think all the meeting's members soon felt that such an Order would rapidly cease to have any meaning.

In fact it would be wrong to characterize the existing system as simply hierarchical: it was tripartite and contained checks and balances. The views of local Order members on a person's readiness for ordination were extensively canvassed and with very few exceptions their support was before someone could be ordained. Each ordinand also had a private preceptor, a senior Order member with a particular personal connection with the candidate, who conducted the private ordination ceremony. Although they had the final say, the public preceptor's task was often to supervise the other parties to ensure the maintenance of common standards and the quality of the communication, and to reach a decision with which everyone was happy. Discussion of ordination requests between these three parties had always been taken very seriously in the Order, and over the years a great deal had been learnt about how to conduct them. The experience of ordination and connections with preceptors were also deeply significant for many Order members. By contrast, if only local groups were involved, what safeguards would there be against unconscious motivations connected with pressures to conform, institutional needs, favoritism and so on? For these reasons, the result of exploring the philosophy of ordination was always more likely to be an evolution of current arrangements than a fundamental change.

Having a select group to decide membership is a common practice in comparable bodies (with the exception of those such as the Bhikkhu Sangha that had strong non-negotiable rules for their members – and even these bodies often have a governing authority such as a Sangharaja). But the status of such a group was a matter for debate. The group explored examples of systems in other Buddhist schools including the two levels of ordination within the Jodo Shinshu school, the higher of which brought authority to confer membership of the lower. As someone who was not going to become a Public Preceptor any time soon I balked at regarding the College as a higher 'Order within the Order', and such an arrangement also seemed contrary to the sense of participation and inclusion we wished to encourage. It became gradually clearer that this the College should therefore cease to be regarded as the Head of the Order. This designation made little practical difference, and re-enforced notions of status.

‘Shaping the Future’

In May 2003, Subhuti presented the meeting with a draft document entitled ‘The Constitution Of The Order And Movement’. It outlined the principles on which the FWBO’s structures were established and proposed some changes to arrangements for ordinations. Over the next few weeks we discussed this document, and in late June I co-wrote with Subhuti a final version entitled ‘*Shaping The Future Of The Order And Movement.*’ This was distributed to chapters and appeared in the July 2003 Shabda as the basis for consultation between the College and the Order on how responsibilities should be arranged in the Order.

The key to this paper was an effort to balance the conflicting calls of autonomy and diversity with those of cohesion and unity, without introducing notions of power and control or insisting on deference to ‘spiritual hierarchy’. ‘A culture of open discussion and debate is a vital context, but when it comes to decision making it is also necessary to be clear where responsibility for making the decision rightly lies. We believe the answer is that it should lie with those in connection with whom the decision is to be made. Hence we have the principle of the autonomy of centres, chapters and so on in making decisions about things that affect them.’ However, individual Order members and the bodies they form may choose to cooperate on matters of common interest, and in this way the Order, movement and College could be seen as ‘distinct systems’, each of which contained its own innate sources of authority.

The Order was ‘a spiritual community arising from a recognition of each other as effectively going for Refuge to the Three Jewels. As a spiritual community it is “a free association of individuals”, coming together in a spirit of kalyanamitratā.’ The Order was ‘self-governing’ at each level, which in effect meant that decisions were made by a consensus of those who would be affected. The Movement was ‘made up of a number of autonomous organisations and projects that overlap and interweave. These grow from Order members’ engagement in all kinds of altruistic and creative activity.’ Individual projects were authorised by their legal status, constitutions and so on, which expressed the terms on which Order members had come together to form them; and collective bodies were authorised by the willingness of those running these projects to cooperate for common ends.

To a large extent this was how things already functioned – the Order and movement were founded on principles of autonomy and self-determination. However, these proposals signified real change because the PCC and the ‘Head of the Order’ had existed over and above such voluntary networks. The document stated that: ‘the Preceptors’ College wishes to relinquish its residual responsibilities in relation to the movement.’ Specifically this meant that it would no longer appoint presidents; but it also spelt the end of the PCC. In future, if the movement in its institutional aspects was to be led, it would be on the authority of those who were taking responsibility within it, especially the chairs of the FWBO charities. The document also expressed the College’s ‘wish to relinquish whatever institutional responsibilities the Preceptors’ College retains for appointments to offices in the Order.’

While the College was to withdraw from leadership of the movement and Headship of the Order, it maintained its role in regard the Order’s membership: ‘The College of Public Preceptors is responsible for ensuring that there are common standards of ordination, thereby ensuring that every Order member can consider him or herself to be a member of the same spiritual community.’ The need for a small, cohesive group to guarantee these standards had emerged from our discussion of the alternatives.

Membership of the College (and, by extension, its authority) still derived from its appointment by Sangharakshita, who also empowered it to appoint new members. Conceivably there might be ways to appoint a different group on the authority the Order as a whole to sustain standards of ordination, but the Madhyamaloka Meeting and the College concluded that, in their opinion, the principles underlying the current arrangements remained the likeliest to produce high standards and widespread confidence. They offered continuity with past and connection with Sangharakshita. The principle of a ‘spiritual hierarchy’ of effective practice and commitment to the Dharma was, after all, fundamental to the Order – otherwise, why have an Order at all? – and we all agreed that it was appropriate to base a College with restricted powers upon that principle.

However, the College also required the support of the Order, so the paper included proposals for its reform; I will just mention the main ones here. The number of public preceptors was to be greatly increased and this would enable the ordination processes to be decentralised. Small groups of College members (‘kulas’) could agree to ordinations between them, without needing to refer to all the other members. They would be chosen

from among experienced private preceptors only after extensive consultation in the Order and appointed for a five year term, after which their status would be reviewed. Private preceptors would undergo a similar consultation process before they were selected.

We hoped that these arrangements would produce a College that was free from the weight of projections that came with the Headship of the Order, and the expectations of offering a strategic direction that had accrued to the PCC. It would reflect more accurately the reality of what the College was equipped to do, and throw back onto the Order and movement the task of finding a collective direction. Above all, we hoped that it would give space for creativity and initiative in the movement.

Over the following months ‘The Future Shape...’ and a second, clarifying document entitled ‘The Future of the Order and Movement: Further Thoughts’ (which appeared in the October 2003 Shabda) were discussed throughout the Order in chapter meetings, forums, the Convention and personal dialogue; and this discussion merged with continuing fall-out from Yashomitra’s article. Members of the Madhyamaloka Meeting also met with senior Buddhists from outside the FWBO to hear their responses about how we proposed to organise ourselves. As one would expect, these responses varied greatly. Some people were alarmed that the movement was are losing leadership; some were cautiously willing to trust the present College to decentralise; some didn’t mind the proposals in themselves but did not trust the present leadership; and a small number, who wanted a much more radically decentralised Order and movement, wanted the College done away with completely. But most Order members were happy with what had been proposed, and there was broad agreement from most respondents that the College should retain the final say on ordinations. Some people wanted the consultation itself to go much further, so that the entire Order would ‘co-create’ new arrangements for the future, rather than being an exercise in gathering feedback on proposals the Madhyamaloka Meeting had developed and the College would decide.

In November 2003 the PCC held its final meeting, and the Presidents decided they would cease to meet together. Henceforth a President would be appointed by a centre and not be part of any wider body. Meanwhile the College decided to go ahead with most of the changes that had been outlined. An announcement about the new arrangements appeared in Shabda in January 2004.

It remained to be seen how the Order and movement would function under these new arrangements. The lesson of 2003 was that the Order and movement were not organisations that could be led but cultures – or networks, or perhaps simply sangha – that had a life of their own. So how far would the arrangements we had proposed address the cultural issues we faced? They would mean removing some of the institutions that gave a sense of solidity and certainty to how the FWBO was structured, and that required an act of faith in the integrity of the Order. But would it respond? Would decentralisation and the loss of a clear ‘leadership’ undermine its sense of collective identity as a shared project, a ‘cause’ to which one could commit oneself? Where would that leave the movement’s institutions that depended on such commitment? And what about my other work for the movement in the UK? What ways of working were appropriate within this new environment?

II

2004-5 Transition or Collapse?

In Part 1 of this account of changes through which the FWBO has been passing I focused on the events of 2003 and the work of the Madhyamaloka Meeting, the small group that advised the College of Public Preceptors. But by the end of that year the changes in the FWBO’s structures initiated by the Madhyamaloka Meeting had been made. Having expanded and decentralised the College, clarified that the Order was ‘self-governing’, and dissolved the Preceptors College Council (PCC), no group of people was any longer keeping an overview of the movement or guiding its development. For this reason, an account of the FWBO in the couple of years after 2003 cannot be a simple narrative. Instead, I shall do my best to describe the trends that I observed; but I cannot do justice to everything. My role was to keep an overview of the movement in the UK and help it to work more effectively, so I have most to say about the centres and institutions rather than the Order or the College, and little to say about the FWBO in other countries. This was a period of flux in which structures, ideas and attitudes that had helped create cohesion and solidity disappeared, dissolved or were widely questioned. That makes it hard to give a clear account, but the uncertainty is also part of the picture. With all the changes that had taken place people in the FWBO were left asking, who are we now?

2004: Who Are We Now?

The turbulence that had rocked the Order in 2003 died down in 2004, but the movement was still profoundly affected by it. Looking back I see 2004 as one of the most difficult

years the FWBO has been through, although the difficulties were diffused and for the most part not consciously articulated. I want to suggest some causes and some symptoms.

Sangharakshita's Position

It would be wrong to suggest that Order members in general rejected Sangharakshita and his teachings in the wave of questioning of that was prompted by Yashomitra's article. Many remained loyal disciples, felt deep respect and gratitude to him and continued to appreciate the Order and movement he had founded. But many also became aware of what they considered his faults and were reeling from the discovery. His books and ideas were usually not repudiated, but they were increasingly left unread as attention was attracted elsewhere, perhaps to the works of teachers whose appeal seemed less tarnished.

There is no need to repeat the content of those criticisms but it is worth trying to describe their effect. For Order members a sense of distance from Sangharakshita was perhaps the most serious problem they could face. He was the Order's founder and his role as preceptor had no authority behind it other than his confidence in himself and the willingness of others to accept ordination from him. Later, ordinations had been conducted by those who had been authorised by him. So for an Order member to reject Sangharakshita was, by extension, to reject the validity of their own ordination. Order members had trained by practicing and studying the Dharma as elucidated by his teachings, and to reject these would, in effect, be to reject the validity of the FWBO.

As Sangharakshita slowly recovered from his illness and started to reengage with the Order and movement, the breach became more palpable. Several of those who lived with him at Madhyamaloka and had FWBO-wide responsibilities believed it would help if he publicly acknowledged the upset many Order members were feeling and expressed regret at the suffering that had resulted from his sexual activity. But Sangharakshita rejected these appeals. Since the start of his period of sexual activity (1969 to 1987) he had made only a few guarded public statements on the subject, and had never expressed regret. He told me he thought anything he said would be misinterpreted and, because he did not think he had done anything for which he should apologize, it might well make matters worse.

The College

In Part 1, I suggested that behind the wave of criticisms of Sangharakshita was a deeper crisis of identity as the FWBO gradually ceased to be defined by his influence and ideas. This was associated with a drift away from involvement in the FWBO's institutions on the part of experienced Order members and in questioning of the College. In 2003 the

College tried to respond to these changes by withdrawing from organisational leadership and focusing on their responsibility for ordinations. They also expanded their numbers and moved towards a more decentralised structure.

But the doubts had not vanished. Most Order members had supported the College's maintenance of final control over ordinations, but some felt we were entering uncharted waters and were uncertain about the best arrangements for the future. Many had asked that changes be implemented slowly so they could absorb their implications, but by late 2003 the College had reached breaking point and reform happened fast. A small but vocal group of Order members believed that an entirely new arrangement was needed in which the authority to ordain derived not from Sangharakshita but from the Order as a whole.

The new, expanded group was much less cohesive than its predecessor. Several of the more experienced members withdrew from active involvement in ordinations, and the involvement of some others in the College was very part-time. New members were keenly aware that Order members' support could no longer be assumed and this made them cautious. Arrangements for ordination evolved slowly, but the College was not willing or able to offer direction and leadership beyond that.

One motive behind the changes to the College and the PCC had been a desire to free their members from involvement in meetings so they could be more available and effective as Dharma teachers. But, initially at least, most of those who were freed up by the ending of the PCC chose to reduce their involvement in FWBO activities altogether. Some were exhausted and needed a break; some wanted to focus on meditation and reflection; some were angry with Sangharakshita or smarting from the difficulties of the roles he had given them; some could not find new ways to be effective without their old roles; and some saw an opportunity to pursue other interests. Madhyamaloka, which had been the bustling headquarters of the movement, dwindled in significance as many of those who had been carrying movement-wide responsibilities left.

Difficulties in the Movement

When the Madhyamaloka Meeting discussed the FWBO's future in 2003 the lurking question was, will it all fall apart? For a number of years the ideas and shared lifestyles that had helped hold the movement together had been waning in influence. Many of us had seen how, as well as being exciting and inspiring, in the long term these ideas had produced feelings of resentment and exclusion. The institutional changes were intended to allow space for new approaches to emerge. We bravely declared our trust in the integrity of the Order and its depth of practice, and articulated the benefits of removing emotional pressure to participate in the movement's institutional life. We hoped that new

forms that were appropriate to the new circumstances would emerge organically as expressions of individuals' practice; and we saw that these could not be imposed from 'above'. We hoped that a new cohesion would arise in the Order that had the more active consent of people involved in it. But we also feared that if those of us working for the FWBO lost a sense that we were part of a shared project, a cause for which it was worth making sacrifices, then much that we valued, and to which we had given decades of our lives, would dissolve away. A year on, as I traveled around the UK in 2004 and met people who were still working within the FWBO's institutions, I saw the mounting challenges they faced.

Windhorse:Evolution

These challenges were clearest at Windhorse:Evolution (W:E), the gift business where up to 200 people worked in a supportive Buddhist-based environment. W:E was the largest and most fully developed example of the 'old-FWBO' model in which people followed the same lifestyle of communal living and team-based working. Its subsistence wages offered a simple but adequate existence, and working on those terms implied idealistic support for the FWBO 'project'. They enabled the business to donate generously to movement-wide causes (especially FWBO Central).

Over the previous two years the business had been through a series of crises and the over-stretched management team centred on a small group who had been with the business since the mid-1980s and grown used to making decisions. They were struggling to cope with the demands of the business while also facing growing criticism of their working style and calls to spread responsibility more widely.

The keenest challenge was recruitment because enthusiasm for participating in FWBO Right Livelihood projects seemed to be dwindling. Four Evolution shops (which were run jointly with FWBO centres) had closed; four others had wholly non-Buddhist staff, and in the rest, the Buddhist contingent was sometimes small. At Uddiyana, the central warehouse and administrative base in Cambridge which had a policy of only employing Buddhists, it was getting harder to recruit and the numerous vacancies placed existing staff under growing pressure. Speaking to members of the management team my impression was that they were losing hope for W:E's future as a Buddhist-staffed business. They seemed resigned to the prospect that it would cease to embody their ideals by offering conditions for intensive Dharma practice, and that before long it would probably change into a conventional business or close down.

Involvement in Institutions

Many FWBO centres and other FWBO projects were facing similar recruitment and wage pressures although, lacking the cohesion and resources of W:E, their problems were less visible, less consciously articulated and often not seen in the context of larger trends. People working for the FWBO had often felt ambivalent about the 'renunciate' lifestyle afforded by support-level wages, and they accepted it because they were drawn to the work for non-financial reasons. But this was harder to accept as they aged and became more concerned about security, pensions and old age while the society around them became more affluent. Many who had worked in the FWBO now wanted to leave behind full-time engagement with its institutions and were finding ways to support themselves independently or through working in conventional jobs. Consequently, many FWBO centres in the UK were facing financial difficulties, having lost their income from right livelihood businesses, and were unable to recruit new people to expand their activities in other ways.

Many who still followed the previously normative lifestyle of institutional engagement felt undermined by growing diversity and the exodus from institutions. Morale dipped and, where working environments had ceased to be wholly Buddhist or there was less sense of intensive practice, people wondered what they were working for. And in the end, FWBO bodies are voluntary organisations that can only survive if people want to work for them.

This crisis of morale was exacerbated by the growing number of Order members who were not just uninvolved in the movement's institutions but felt positively at odds with them. Sometimes this was based on opposition to the College or criticisms of Sangharakshita; but more often it expressed emotional pain that resulted from bad experiences of working for FWBO institutions, or a sense of exclusion. Those taking a lead in centres or in the FWBO as a whole were sometimes met with mistrust, and the drive for change in 2003 was motivated in no small measure by exhaustion with this atmosphere. But those who were wariest of institutions were also often the most unwilling to participate in them or in consultations. Some refused to believe that the College had renounced its leadership role, and assumed it was still in some way 'running the movement'.

Conversely, the Order has continued to grow, and new Order members often kept centres going. In general, activities were doing well, at least at the larger centre. Interest in Buddhism was growing in society at large; teaching was improving, especially where more experiential methods were being used; the web was an effective new means of publicity; and classes were better structured, with more attention being given to

continuity.

Practising outside the FWBO

The FWBO draws on all the major Buddhist traditions, and yet there has been a stress on practising within it rather than attending non-FWBO teachings or retreats. This was perhaps natural in the FWBO's early days when the movement was forming its identity, and the Buddhist world in the West was relatively undeveloped. It was also reinforced by the history of mistrust between the FWBO and some other Buddhists, especially in the UK. But there was always something artificial about this situation, and sooner or later people within the FWBO were bound to discover the wider Buddhist world and explore its many alternative possibilities for practice. (Dharma Life had been intended, *inter alia*, as a way of helping to effect this meeting).

As the FWBO slowly 'opened up' some people made connections outside the FWBO with individual teachers or approaches to Dharma practice. This seemed potentially positive, but it was often connected with a loss of confidence in the FWBO itself, as well as its founder and the approach he had taught. Most popular were practices that had not been prominent in the standard FWBO curriculum, especially those emphasising acceptance and dwelling in the present moment. Teaching of these practices was sometimes accompanied by disparagement of the 'developmental' model, which was said to characterize Sangharakshita's approach to the Dharma and reveal its limitations. The 'new' practices were sometimes presented as alternatives to the FWBO's system of meditation rather than as positive additions or corrective, and they were not related to the FWBO's 'indirect practices' such as community living, collective working and spiritual friendship.

Beyond this trend was a more fundamental question: is the FWBO necessary? Is there a need for a western Buddhist movement, as distinct from western adaptations of Asian forms of Buddhism, at all? Was such a movement bound to be artificial, and consequently superficial, and overly tied up with the necessarily eccentric personality of the founder? These are perennial questions for the FWBO, and how people involved in it answer them is, to a large extent, a matter of confidence. In the period I am discussing the FWBO's falling confidence raised the prospect of a further precipitous and unlimited drop.

A Personal Perspective

As I looked around the movement in 2004 and tried to understand what was needed I was affected by my own situation. I had no real colleagues any more, Madhyamaloka

community was ceasing to be focused on such work. Dharma Life magazine, which I had founded in 1996 and continued to edit, was in danger of closing as its financial and organisational basis was eroded, and it eventually did close in early 2005. I felt deeply engaged with the movement's transition, cared about its success and was worried by its cost. I knew that the sources of renewal may well lie outside the existing structures, and to that end I had formed working groups and started various initiatives. But I found myself being drawn more and more into the problems of these institutions, and this tended to make my view of the movement quite pessimistic.

Even taking this personal bias into account, there was cause for concern. By summer 2004 it seemed to me that the morale of Order members and confidence in the FWBO had fallen drastically amid declining confidence in the FWBO's approach and legitimacy, and many of its institutions were in trouble. The question I was asking was not how I could help the movement's institutions to develop, but whether they would survive.

Subhuti's Role and an Attempt to Respond

An element that is missing from the picture I have given so far is Subhuti. His thought, energy and initiative lay behind the 2003 changes and he had more influence in the movement than anyone else. But for the first half of 2004, Subhuti had largely withdrawn from organisational issues. His mother had died the previous year, he had been deeply involved in a series of crises and changes in the FWBO and he had received a lot of criticism. Furthermore, his gifts for inspirational leadership and organisational vision were at odds with the movement's current stress on consensus and consultation. He understandably spoke of withdrawing for a while and focusing on meditation and reflection.

Subhuti's withdrawal and the ending of the PCC led to a rapid dissolution of the group who had been maintaining an overview. The presidents said they did not want to meet as a group because they felt ineffective and the Madhyamaloka Meeting came to an end. This was not what we had planned. The Madhyamaloka Meeting had anticipated the need for a transition period and thought that we would be involved in managing it.

In mid-2004, however, Subhuti told me that he wanted to reconnect with the movement, and we returned to the idea of managing the transition to more sustainable ways of working. We gathered some people with whom we could discuss the state of the movement and ways forward for it. Achara, Jnanavaca, Vajrasadhu and later Jnanasiddhi joined Subhuti, Dhammarati and I for another round of meetings at Madhyamaloka (we somehow acquired the name, the 'New Directions Group' or NDG), and this prompted a bid to respond to the movement's crisis of confidence.

Subhuti's Talks, November 2004

In November 2004 Subhuti gave two high-profile talks entitled 'Where I am Now' and 'Where I want to go'. He wanted to address underlying issues, and express his own confidence that potentially the FWBO had a viable future in which it could make a real difference to the world. His aim was to focus attention on the sources of the movement's cohesion to balance the attention that had already been given to its diversity. He argued that without efforts to safeguard cohesion the Order and movement would 'simply disintegrate into a huge number of individual pathways and trajectories.' The talks were an argument against complacency because, he thought: 'If we let it go beyond two or three years the coherence that we have built up from the past will not carry us forward.'

A key to future cohesion was healing the breach with Sangharakshita, and that meant addressing his sexual history. As Sangharakshita was not going to do this himself, Subhuti felt, rightly, I think, that he alone could make a statement with sufficient weight to affect the Order's collective stance on the subject. This time, he did not pull his punches.

'I have come to think that there are severe problems with Sangharakshita's sexual activity in the past ... in a sense he did not know what he was doing altogether and ... some big mistakes were made ... Wearing robes and having sex is just not on ... As a spiritual teacher you carry a weight that does not allow you to simply be one human being with another human being. That sexual activity was bound to lead to problems.'

Subhuti explained that acknowledging these problems had enabled him also to appreciate Sangharakshita's qualities. He argued that without such appreciation the Order could not survive.

In the second talk Subhuti outlined the kind of Order he wanted to inhabit and identified key areas in which the Order was drifting. He wanted the WBO to be:

'an Order in which people go for Refuge to the Three Jewels and put that at the heart of their lives [and] see themselves as living the Bodhisattva life ... which honours Sangharakshita as its founder and point of unity and appreciates everything that he has given us ... which accepts each other's ordinations and accepts broadly and has trust in the system by which that happens ... in which Order members work to keep the Order alive as a vital spiritual community ... that maintains a common system of spiritual discipline as a way of unifying [the Order] and gives that system power and vigour ...

[and] that is cooperating in a common altruistic endeavour to spread the Dharma and provide conditions for its practice.'

Subhuti outlined a programme that he hoped to undertake in 2005, including clarifying the role of the College, renewing the movement's 'system of spiritual discipline', working with the chairs to find new ways of unifying the movement's activities and encouraging confidence among those following a 'semi-monastic' lifestyle. He saw these steps as necessary for a smooth transition in which past achievements were not lost.

Responses to Subhuti

The initial response to Subhuti's talks was positive, but as things settled dissenting voices were heard. A number of people suggested that just when things seemed to be opening up Subhuti was making a bid to reassert his leadership and therefore closing down opportunities for others. I had discussed the content of the talks with Subhuti before he gave them, and I do not see his motivation that way: the critics ignored his stress that his programme was a way of making a transition, not a permanent arrangement. But his talks were more directive and assertive than I had anticipated, and I think the movement was not ready for what he offered. In the atmosphere of decentralisation and exploration many felt wary of activities being 'managed' at all, even transitionally. Longstanding frustrations at Subhuti's capacity to seize the initiative started to emerge, and some members of the College were unhappy that he had outlined a vision for its development (including a yearlong moratorium on conducting ordinations) without first consulting them.

The criticisms that followed Subhuti's talks rekindled in him the weariness he had felt a year before with meetings, controversy, criticism and organisational work. By the time he returned from his biannual trip to India in spring 2005, his perspective on the renewal programme had changed. He wrote in *Shabda* that some of these changes no longer seemed possible, some seemed well underway without him, and some he felt disinclined to engage with. Subhuti did not stand for re-election as Chairman of the College in summer 2005, and decided to concentrate on specific projects rather than the movement as a whole. My own feeling is that Subhuti's impulse at the start of 2004 to withdraw from movement-wide work and focus on meditation was more deep-seated than he had realised in middle of that year. It was bound up with his changing relation to a movement that could no longer allow him to operate in his preferred ways, however well intentioned his wish to do so.

The fact that Subhuti did not implement his programme raises a serious question. If he was right that these steps were necessary for the movement's survival, did that mean

disintegration was inevitable?

Returning Confidence

The first part of this history focused on the need for change to the FWBO's central institutions to free up energy and initiative. In the second part I have identified some of the trends that seemed to be untouched by these changes and attempts, emanating again from the centre, to address them. But if our earlier analysis was correct renewal might well not come in recognizable institutional forms. It would be more diffused and might take many years to manifest. As I have said, my own focus on institutional issues in 2004-5 distanced me from these unplanned sources of renewal, but by 2005 I could see signs of change for the better.

Before considering these trends it is worth noting that Subhuti's programme was not entirely dropped. The talks themselves were the first initiative, and the painful irony for Subhuti is that they may well have succeeded in reminding people of the importance of the FWBO's cohesion, even while they attracted criticism to the speaker. Two other tangible developments that are worth mentioning are the FWBO Development Team and the Dhammapala College.

The FWBO Development Team

The withdrawal of the Madhyamaloka leadership had created a conundrum. They needed to get out of the way if others were to take new initiatives, but if no one was working centrally there would be no levers for change. The New Directions Group proposed that new people be appointed by the European Chairs to work for the movement. We identified four areas: keeping an overview of the FWBO's human and economic resources (especially the central resources) and making suggestions for how these could best be used; helping centres to work more effectively and cooperatively; developing resources for Dharma teaching and focusing discussion about practice; and managing communications (which were already covered by several people). I worked hard to prepare briefs, gather support from the Chairs and recruit suitable candidates, and by the end of 2005 two people had been recruited with responsibility for coordination and supporting centres while a third person was due to be appointed in 2006 to support Dharma teaching work. Together they comprise the FWBO Development Team.

The initial idea was that these people would take over the presidents' former role of maintaining an overview of the movement and offering guidance at the level of principles and policy. Gradually the Team's remit became less ambitious, and its main work will probably be in networking and taking small-scale initiatives.

Dhammapala College

Another pressing issue was what to do with Madhyamaloka and the central resources that had gathered around it in Birmingham. As former members of the PCC moved away it was ceasing to be a spiritual and organisational hub but it still received almost £50,000 a year for its running costs from W:E and the Chairs. For some time Sangharakshita had planned to buy a new property, probably in the country, to house his library as well as a vihara for senior Order members and a retreat centre. A considerable sum had been put by for the purchase, but it would only be possible if the Birmingham properties were sold as well; and this was ruled out because Sangharakshita said he was too old to move.

Subhuti proposed that the Birmingham properties should house a new, two-year intensive training programme for new Dharma teachers, called the Dharmaduta Course. While some of us others in the NDG were concerned that the Course would only be available to a small number of people, it was clear that something needed to happen quickly at Madhyamaloka. We agreed to support this idea, and leave Subhuti to address the many unknowns. The Course started in January 2006 with a strong academic staff and eight full-time students in the context of a larger institution named Dhammapala College that also hosted a programme of seminars and public lectures.

Worthy though the Dhammapala College is, its establishment did not settle how FWBO Central's resources should be used. Responses to Madhyamaloka were freighted by responses to its past and the unclarity of its finances. In an attempt to address the latter issue, in the first half of 2005 I reviewed all the FWBO's centrally funded activities, focusing especially on Madhyamaloka, and made proposals for making reforming financial arrangements. All the same, W:E, faced with lower profits and new calls on their money, stopped its grant to FWBO Central (the charity that owns Madhyamaloka) reducing its income by £30,000. The course and seminars are reportedly going well, but the whole institution including the Dhammapala College is running at a loss. Decisions about its future need to be part of a wider discussion about the best use of the FWBO's central resources.

Transition or Collapse?

The future of the FWBO does not depend on administrative structures or individual projects. It depends on the practice of Order members, their willingness to share the Dharma with others, and their ability to do so within a shared framework. I believe that the FWBO's institutions make a very considerable contribution to the health of the Order, but they are not the same thing, and whatever difficulties the institutions may undergo,

the Order needs to be considered in its own right. In 2005 there were many signs of returning health.

The Strength of the Order

When over 500 Order members gathered in August 2005 for their biennial convention the atmosphere was very different from two years earlier. The Order's soul-searching and confrontation with difficulties reached a peak in the open forum on the 2003 Convention. Sangharakshita was ill then, but by August 2005 he was well enough to attend a celebration of his 80th birthday. By the end the atmosphere was of exhilaration touched by relief that the breach in communication could be left behind. That may not have been the whole story and presumably the concerns that had been expressed were more deep-seated than could be removed in an evening. But perhaps again, Subhuti's words of the previous autumn had had an effect and Order members were coming to terms with the complexity of their teacher.

The Convention seemed to mark the end of a period of crisis for the Order. For all the turmoil just half a dozen people had resigned between 2003 and 2005, and 220 had joined. There were now 1315 Order members, and the number who had asked to join was nearly 2000. Any view of the FWBO in this period needs to take account of the considerable resources of experience and depth of practice within the Order and the stability this affords. Many who do not want to take responsibility for institutions are nonetheless devoted to practising the Dharma, apply it in their own sphere and they contribute where they can. Even those people who are critical of Sangharakshita or the College or aspects of the FWBO usually believe that the Order is an effective sangha and that the FWBO offers access to the genuine Dharma. The question the Order faces is not so much whether it will survive or whether its members will continue to practice, but whether it will thrive.

Debate over the legitimacy of the College has not stopped, but the reformed College has settled into its work. The retreat centres of Padmaloka and Tiratanaloka, which had managed a relatively centralised 'system' of ordination training, are now free to run retreats that express the practice and inspiration of the Order members leading them; and responsibility for assessing candidates for ordination has mostly been transferred to the individuals (the 'public' and 'private' preceptors) who will ordain them. There are certainly cumbersome aspects to the new arrangements, but they seem to have relieved a good deal of the strain that existed previously.

One of the indications that change was needed prior to 2003 was the declining number of requests for ordination from men at a time when those from women were increasing. The argument was made that men were put off by systems that were overly structured. From a high of over 90 in 1996 ordination requests declined steadily, reaching a low of 32 in 2003. More men did request ordination in the next two years (57 and 51 respectively) but their numbers remained lower than those for women (73 and 70). By this measure the fruits of those changes are not yet manifest.

This foray into statistics shows the strength of the women's 'wing' of the Order, whose development has been relatively unaffected by the movement's ups and downs. This is currently growing at around fifteen percent a year, while the growth of the men's wing in the West is around five percent. The number of women who have asked for ordination means that such growth is likely to continue. This success is the fruit of many years of hard and focused work on the part of the senior women Order members, as is the opening in 2007 of Akashavana, the venue for long women's ordination retreats in the mountains of northern Spain. The majority of new ordinations in the West are of women, and the optimism and dynamism of women's activities contrasts with those for men.

Windhorse: Evolution

The fortunes of W:E inevitably seem an indication of the health, even the viability of the institutional aspect of the movement as a whole. A number of changes were already in train in 2003, but the NDG agreed that the W:E management team needed help and proposed that Ratnaghosha, the highly capable former chair of the London Buddhist Centre, should join the management team with a brief to help develop its cultural, as opposed to its business side. He has made a significant contribution and helped create the space for change.

Alongside higher support levels the business introduced the option for workers to take a regular salary, and this enabled it to fill key job vacancies. Some non-Buddhist workers joined the warehouse team proving themselves enthusiastic about its ethos; and the experiment of running shops with wholly non-Buddhist teams has also been successful. Working arrangements became more flexible as some teams became mixed and more options arose for non-community living. In the past, supporting the FWBO may have been cause enough to motivate the staff. Now it moved towards fair trade, developing partnerships with the communities in developing countries that made their products, and reducing its environmental impact. The result of these changes is that there is a waiting list of Buddhists wanting to join the warehouse staff. Its troubles are not yet past: the new salary and support arrangements have cost the business £400,000 a year and its contributions to the rest of the FWBO have fallen by the same amount; and business

conditions themselves have been getting harder, hitting profits further. But, crucially, morale has returned.

Centres

It is harder to tell if a similar transition is under way at FWBO centres. There are always places that are doing well and others that are struggling, and the life of each is often so multi-faceted that even those involved locally find it hard to sum up their fortunes. I do not feel qualified to sum up on how the FWBO centres are doing, but I can make a few observations. Most centres have a core of dedicated people for whom it is an important part of their life. That gives them considerable strength if they are financially stable, so their survival is usually not under threat. However, there is a great deal of change going on. Many experienced people have stopped working for centres, though replacements have usually been found. This seems a time of consolidation rather than expansion, but FWBO centres are at least surviving.

III

Reflections on the future

The FWBO is inherently unstable. It set out to re-express Buddhism in ways that are effective in the conditions of the modern world, and yet those conditions are always changing. So questioning of its institutions is inevitable and potentially creative because they demand to be continually reinvented. It was also inevitable that Sangharakshita's questioning of established forms of Buddhism would educate Order members in a questioning attitude and that this would eventually turn back on him and the movement he founded. And it was inevitable that there would be increasing tension around his views. On the one hand he wished to renew Buddhism, and this appealed to many who valued the cultural heritage of the modern west, while on the other he tends to be antipathetic to modernity and some of his attitudes are culturally and politically conservative. Finally, he has urged his students to be emotionally open and ethically transparent, and this led to an expectation that he would show the same openness not just in private, but in the public arena of his relations with the Order. Such openness would be hard for anyone, and especially so for a man of his generation and temperament.

A further contradiction is between Sangharakshita's stress on individuality and his desire for certain views approaches to be central in the FWBO. This desire produced the web of views on social and cultural and gender issues, as well as attitudes to lifestyle, hierarchy and sexuality that originated with him and came to form an 'FWBO position'. Many Order members, myself included, disagreed with some or all of these views and that

compromised us if we complied with them, or marginalised if we did not. And yet we felt ourselves to be wholehearted Order members because of the commitment we made at ordination to the Order's real ideals: the Three Jewels.

With hindsight it is becoming clear that these contradictory impulses were held together by the force of Sangharakshita's influence and the natural cohesion of a relatively small movement. Our cohesion always came at the cost of internal tensions and external animosities, and the internal tensions grew once Sangharakshita's disciples held the key role. I am relieved to see the end of the attempt to hold them all together, and I don't think another collective ideology will emerge. There is no longer a commonly accepted source of authority on doctrine or practice. The College, while influential, is not such an authority and is itself becoming more diverse.

I feel split between a hope that we will find a new source of collectivity at a deeper level than ideology, and a fear that we will lose a sense of our common project, changing the world in the light of the Dharma as elucidated by Sangharakshita, and fragment, going our separate ways as we pursue individual interests influenced by sources outside the movement. From one perspective it would not matter if the FWBO were to disintegrate: it is not an end in itself. But I find that it does matter to me. The FWBO is my sangha and I love it. I love the Order and I feel strongly connected with the efforts of others in our community to change the world through the Dharma.

Having said this, I reflect that the confidence that can sustain our community in the long term is not that we are being looked after by capable leaders, that we have a viable collective future, or even that our institutions have a positive effect on the world. Because membership of the Order involves commitment to the Three Jewels, the essential ingredient is confidence that our involvement with it can lead to Dharma realisation. Enthusiasm for a collective enterprise can motivate people for quite a number of years, but eventually they need a sense that it offers a way to Insight. If they lack that, their energies will probably be directed elsewhere.

Conversely, these institutions have helped bring intensity to Dharma practice for many people. The example of W:E is encouraging because it suggests that when the ideology is taken away, something of value is left. In future our institutions will survive not because they herald a wonderful future or because someone else has said that they are a good idea, but because people know from their own experience that they are effective. W:E's workers value it because it offers opportunities for Dharma practice, teamwork, and making a positive social and environmental impact. The same needs to be true of other FWBO businesses and even centres if they are to endure.

It is natural that many people outgrow these institutions, but the shift to more freelance involvement and varied living situations raises the question of how individuals are to maintain the intensity in their Dharma practice. The compromise most of us reach is to undertake bursts of intensity when we go on retreat, but this raises the very difficulties that communities etc. were developed to address. This is something for people to address individually, but meanwhile it is important that we don't take the survival and health of FWBO organisations for granted. I think Order members need to offer much more help, appreciation and encouragement to those who are currently working for the FWBO's institutions, especially centres. This may seem strange to those who have felt excluded from or marginalised, but the FWBO cannot survive if our view of it is overly coloured by the problems of our organisational history.

I agree with Subhuti's views on the need for cohesion. While increasing diversity seems inevitable, cohesion needs to be consciously sustained. It requires boundaries, and the criteria applied at ordination are the most important of these. I think we need a cohesive group of spiritually mature individuals to oversee ordinations if they are to remain meaningful. That's why I support the College. Some people clearly feel that its exclusive character undermines their sense of fully participating in the life of the Order. I hope that feeling will fade, but if doesn't the College's legitimacy will need to be reviewed by the Order as a whole, perhaps in time for the fifth anniversary of the changes in 2008/9. In the meantime the College needs to get much better at communicating its workings to the wider Order.

Another area where cohesion is needed is in praxis and teaching. Growing diversity is only sustainable if it grows from a more fundamental unity. I don't think the Order can accommodate individuals who want to teach and practice only non-dual approaches, or tantra, or vipassana-style mindfulness, and feel no connection with the FWBO's framework of practice. However, I also want us to be evolving and changing as a collective and to be open to new influences. Above all, I want us to be living, practising and teaching from our actual experience of what works, rather than from what we think we ought to be doing or saying.

Ours will largely be a collectivity without central organisation or leadership, and we have to think carefully about the conditions we need to support that. Some of these conditions will doubtless be organisational, some to do with practising together and some to do with fostering a sense of inclusion and participation. Most activities in which it is meaningful to participate occur at the level of local activities and centres, and we need to find new ways to involve Order members and others in their activities. We also need to find ways to do this movement-wide, though it is harder to see how.

As a whole the FWBO is not leadable. But a large question remains over whether there is a place for the qualities associated with leadership. I was working with Subhuti in 2004 when he made his offer to lead the movement through its transition and I saw the flak he received as a result. If all changes have to be arrived at consensually through numerous meetings there will be little room for the entrepreneurial initiative of the most dynamic and talented Order members. I believe that the right sort of leadership can inspire energy and enthusiasm, and I would like to see those who have led in the past re-engage. This includes Subhuti, but he can only do that by working with 'coalitions of the willing' rather than leading the Order as a whole. The Order seems destined to grow more lay-based, older and to attract more women than men. Women will take a more leading role in relation to both men and women. There is, of course, a considerable irony in the greater health of women's activities given our past emphasis on men which still disposes some men to regard the FWBO's growing 'feminization' as a sign of weakness. I hope that idea will fall away along with our sense that if we are not attracting many young people we are decaying. While I appreciate the contribution that young people and men can make, I think we undermine ourselves if we make this an overriding goal.

Two connected developments that seem destined to have a lasting effect are the growing awareness of social and especially environmental action, and increasing involvement in mindfulness based approaches to pain, stress depression etc. These are giving FWBO centres a more outward-looking orientation and are free of the FWBO's past. They also offer scope for increasing interaction between the FWBO and other Buddhists. It may be that a Buddhist world will grow up in the UK, as it has to some extent in the US, where Buddhists from different traditions mingle and share common concerns. Because the FWBO draws on all traditions and yet has a coherent approach to the Dharma it is potentially well-suited to contributing to such a world. But this hope is still far from being a reality.

Conclusion

It is far too soon to assess the effects of the changes we have been through, but we can say that, for all the turbulence, few of us have left and many more have joined. Many of us have a deep involvement in the FWBO that survives whatever difficulties we experience because we are convinced that it offers a sound context for our spiritual lives. This strength seems to be reasserting itself gradually and organically. In 2004 and 2005 my impressions of the movement were not positive: I felt we were in trouble because we had lost confidence, on a number of levels. However, as I look around the movement in 2006 and speak to people who have a more current involvement in organisational issues, a considerable change is apparent. Confidence is returning. Some older Order members feel disconcerted, or anxious, but often the more recently ordained are excited, optimistic,

and appreciate the considerable resources of the FWBO that others can take for granted. Many older Order members have grown weary the difficulties thrown up by sangha and organisations, or at least the endless discussions they throw up. But for the unwearied we are a viable and effective Buddhist community that contains considerable depth and breadth and many opportunities to contribute.

The FWBO's structures and practices developed pragmatically as responses to particular needs. How can we live and work in ways that support Dharma practice? How can we draw on the Buddhist tradition without falling into either eclecticism or sectarianism? How can we allow for diversity while remaining a cohesive sangha? Whether or not particular institutional forms survive, the needs articulated by these questions will remain. The spirit in the Madhyamaloka meeting when we instigated those changes was confidence in the underlying spiritual integrity of the Order, the commitment of Order members to embodying the Dharma, and the capacity of Sangharakshita's teaching to offer a framework for approaching and manifesting it. I believe that faith was justified, and that fresh answers to these perennial questions will emerge.