

General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

From the mid-seventies through to the mid-eighties, Urgyen Sangharakshita led many seminars on a wide range of texts for invited groups of [Order members](#) and [Mitrans](#). These seminars were highly formative for the FWBO/Tiratna as Sangharakshita opened up for the still very young community what it might mean to live a life in the Dharma.

The seminars were all recorded and later transcribed. Some of these transcriptions have been carefully checked and edited and are [now available in book form](#). However, a great deal of material has so far remained unchecked and unedited and we want to make it available to people who wish to deepen their understanding of Sangharakshita's presentation of the Dharma.

How should one approach reading a seminar transcription from so long ago? Maybe the first thing to do is to vividly imagine the context. What year is it? Who is present? We then step into a world in which Sangharakshita is directly communicating the Dharma. Sometimes he is explaining a text, at other times he is responding to questions and we can see how the emergence of Dharma teachings in this context was a collaborative process, the teaching being drawn out by the questions people asked. Sometimes those questions were less to do with the text and arose more from the contemporary situation of the emerging new Buddhist movement.

Reading through the transcripts can be a bit like working as a miner, sifting through silt and rubble to find the real jewels. Sometimes the discussion is just a bit dull. Sometimes we see Sangharakshita trying to engage with the confusion of ideas many of us brought to Buddhism, confusion which can be reflected in the texts themselves. With brilliant flashes of clarity and understanding, we see him giving teachings in response that have since become an integral part of the Tiratna Dharma landscape.

Not all Sangharakshita's ways of seeing things are palatable to modern tastes and outlook. At times some of the views captured in these transcripts express attitudes and ideas [Tiratna has acknowledged as unhelpful](#) and which form no part of our teaching today. In encountering all of the ideas contained in over seventeen million words of Dharma investigation and exchange, we are each challenged to test what is said in the fire of our own practice and experience; and to talk over 'knotty points' with friends and teachers to better clarify our own understanding and, where we wish to, to decide to disagree.

We hope that over the next years more seminars will be checked and edited for a wider readership. In the meantime we hope that what you find here will inspire, stimulate, encourage - and challenge you in your practice of the Dharma and in understanding more deeply the approach of Urgyen Sangharakshita.

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team

SANGHARAKSHITA IN SEMINAR

TWO QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS - COMBINED ("MIXED") ORDER CONVENTION 1985 -

Gunavajra: Fellow Order members, Bhante. The question and answer sessions with Bhante are now quite familiar, the formula is long established and the framework is tried and tested. And yet there is an air of anticipation, a kind of mild excitement before each one of these sessions. Whether the questions are submitted in advance, or whether Bhante is expected to answer off the cuff, so to speak, the only thing that these sessions really have in common is that at the end of them we walk away, somehow a little bit more knowledgeable, and that after all, is the purpose of these sessions. They are designed to clarify, to elucidate to educate and the fact that they occasionally also entertain, I don't think they're any the worse for that. We have two sessions, we have one this morning and we have another one tomorrow, so in order to get on with it over to you Bhante, thank you.

Sangharakshita: Altogether, I think upwards of twenty questions have come in and I've arranged them into seven categories. And, I'm going to try to deal with perhaps just a little somewhat more than half the questions this morning and the rest tomorrow morning. The classification is as follows: questions about tradition, about spiritual life and practice, about art and symbolism, medical questions, money and business, Buddhism and the outside world, and, of course, miscellaneous. So perhaps we will get through three or four of these categories this morning. But before I start just a couple of more general points. Gunavajra has referred to the Question and Answer format as being a well tried and tested one, but I think that in recent months, maybe even in the course of the last year, this familiar structure has begun to creak and groan a little, one might say under the sheer weight of the questions. Not so much weight in terms of content but weight in terms of form. Because I've been finding that in the course of the last year perhaps even two years that some of the questions have been getting increasingly complex, I've been getting Abhidharma-type questions with many subdivisions and clauses and all the rest of it, and it's very difficult to deal with those sorts of questions in this sort of context. So I may be curtailing just one or two of the questions just because it isn't possible to deal with them adequately in this sort of situation. And then again, there is another kind of question which is extremely technical. We might find this for instance in connection with the medical questions. Yes an ethical issue is involved, a philosophical issue is involved, people want that clarified, quite rightly, quite naturally but before that can be done one needs information, one needs evidence and that isn't always immediately available, because, some of the questions, for instance, in the medical field relate to topics about which I know nothing at all. It's incidentally very useful these days on the medical side to have Dharmadhara at my elbow because I can always ask him, but he sometimes confesses there's a difference of opinion among medical men and he sometimes does something which doctors very rarely do, he says 'We don't know'. So, it isn't easy to answer technical questions of this kind, immediately.

Sometimes, I think, one needs to set up perhaps a little study group of four or five Order Members interested in that particular field. Get them to do a certain amount of investigation, produce a report and then on the basis of that, after thinking things over, I can make my suggestions. But I think it wouldn't be right for me to try to give definitive sort of answers to quite complex questions needing specialised knowledge just on the basis of my own personal experience, general impressions, or even knowledge of Buddhism itself. So those more technical questions, which can't really be answered in this sort of way I shan't in fact be attempting to answer. I'll just perhaps, sketch the parameters of the question and just indicate what needs to be gone into and understood better, more thoroughly before one can even

attempt any sort of comment, or to answer a question. Anyway, having said that let's come onto the questions about tradition. Where we are simply concerned with tradition it's a much more simple and straightforward business.

Someone with a long association with Tibetan Buddhism recently attended a puja at our Centre. He commented afterwards that he was struck by the way we chanted the mantras, in particular that they seemed to be given an emotional tone. For instance, the Tara mantra being chanted quite softly in contrast to some of the others. In his previous experience the only concern had always been to voice the sound clearly and as often as possible. Any emotional colouring was considered inappropriate. Could you comment on this and the chanting of mantras in general?

I think, on the whole, in the movement, chanting of mantras generally has improved, I felt this very much when I was down in London recently and at the L.B.C., I thought there had been a distinct improvement in the chanting. But to come back to this question about emotion, emotional tone in the chanting of mantras, I think I have said in the past, perhaps more than once, that one shouldn't try to inject emotion into the chanting of mantras forcibly. One shouldn't as it were be too soulful or too even sentimental about it. But at the same time I don't see that emotion can be altogether excluded. I don't see that it should be excluded because suppose you do chant the mantra of Tara, that being the example given, you'll have a certain idea about Tara and a certain feeling about Tara. And as you chant the mantra which is the invocation to Tara, how can you possibly exclude what you actually feel about Tara, if in fact you do feel anything. I think it would be natural for you to feel for Tara, as it were, and to give expression to that in a perfectly natural way, without undue emphasis, without histrionics, without being unduly dramatic. Perhaps at the back of that person's comment is a difference of opinion in a way, a difference of attitude in tradition itself. I was thinking this over and I thought perhaps it's a difference between the magical-cum-scientific approach and the devotional. Now what do I mean by magical-cum-scientific? There is a school of thought, both among Buddhists and Hindus, in India and elsewhere, that it is very very important to pronounce the mantra exactly, correctly because otherwise the sort of magical result will not be produced. This is especially the case where the mantra is recited whatsoever mantra it might be, to bring about some sort of worldly, some sort of magical effect. Great importance is attached to the correct pronunciation, the correct intonation and so on. Other conditions are subordinated because you want to produce a particular effect and you believe that the mantra is the means by which you can produce that effect so as part of the production of means you have to pronounce the mantra correctly.

You're not concerned about feeling, feeling does not matter. That is why you find in some sort of magical ceremonies in some say Vedic ceremonies no-one bothers about feeling, no one bothers about beauty, the main thing is to perform the ceremony correctly, as prescribed by tradition and to recite the mantras correctly, as prescribed by tradition so that the effect will be produced. So this is what I call the magical-cum-scientific sort of way of looking at it. It seems like this was at the back of that particular person's mind. The other is the devotional, where you think of the mantra as very much the name of the deity, or the Bodhisattva, or whatever, and you recite the mantra out of devotion. You recite it to increase and enhance your devotion and obviously an emotional element cannot be excluded. So I think within the FWBO in the first place, yes, we would rather chant mantras correctly, with correct pronunciation and correct intonation than otherwise and we must try to do that, which is something the Tibetans themselves don't always succeed in doing. As many of you know, they regularly chant 'Om Mani Peme Hum', instead of Padme Hum which is incorrect, and they chant 'Tare Titare' instead of 'Tare Tutare' which is manifestly incorrect. So yes, let's get the pronunciation and intonation correct if we possibly can. Let us not engage in histrionics, but I think we may expect that if we have any feeling for the object of the mantra, that

particular Buddha or Bodhisattva, at least some feeling tone in a natural way will creep into our recitation of the mantra and that is, I feel, a good and acceptable thing.

All right, still with tradition,

Within Buddhism there is a yogic tradition which employs its own language to describe the subjective experiences of meditation. It seems to talk in terms of energy using concepts such as chakras and nadis. As this does seem to fit in with one's experience of meditation, for instance Metta can be felt very strongly at the heart centre, would there be a value in incorporating this yogic view of meditation into the way we understand meditation within the WBO and FWBO, or have you deliberately avoided encouraging this approach?

I must admit, I have, I think, deliberately avoided encouraging this approach, because certainly in the early days of the FWBO one did hear quite a lot about chakras and centres, and currents, and all that sort of thing, in a rather loose, vague almost sort of sentimental kind of way, unrealistic sort of way, not really related to any genuine experience. So I rather tended to avoid this, as it seemed then sort of pseudo-occult language. But nonetheless it is true that in Vajrayana Buddhism, at least in some aspects of Vajrayana Buddhism, or at certain levels of Vajrayana Buddhism, according to the Nyingmapa classification, especially in connection with the Anu-Yoga, which is a sub-division of the Annutara Yoga Tantra, there are many references to chakras and nadis and bindu and so on. And it may be that it is not inappropriate for us to learn or to use that language if that language does in fact we find correspond to the facts of our experience. I think this is what we really need to be sure of, that we're not just using this language of chakras and so on because its fashionable or because it has a sort of mysterious aura to it, but because it is the best language to describe what we actually experience. If that is the case, let us use that language by all means in fact there will be all sorts of languages which we could use, and even all sorts of techniques to which we can have recourse, provided we do so genuinely, provided we really understand what we're doing, provided we really relate those things, whether languages or techniques to our own actual experience, I think that is the important thing. So if there are Order Members, and it must be Order Members, who are especially interested in this particular aspect of say, the Vajrayana, and who find that within their own experience there is something that corresponds to the terminology of chakras and nadis and bindus let them, cautiously, use that terminology by all means but making it clear to everybody else, maybe through personal discussion, conversation, or even through talks and lectures, exactly what it is that they are doing. But I suggest that initially, at least, that should be confined to the Order, kept within the Order itself.

Still on tradition,

How would you feel about the Order using the Buddhist date i.e. from the Parinirvana, presumably, in its affairs i.e. the dating of ordinations, festivals, Tuscan pre-ordination retreats, deaths, issues of Shabda, etc. etc. ' It does seem ridiculous to me that we use the Christian date for these things, that is effectively reckoning our affairs from the birth of Christ. I'm sure that Vangisa would be none too happy about having the Christian date of his birth and death engraved on the small brass plate which is fixed to his stupa at the L.B.C.

He must be turning in his stupa! [Laughter] I must say that in my early days in India I had very strong views on this particular subject indeed. I used the Buddhist date. I always knew what the Buddhist date was because the issues of the Maha Bodhi Journal were dated according to the Buddhist calendar, at least the year. So I think I would say, yes, I'm in favour of this but, of course, there is a but, as there usually is, the questioner says 'How would you feel about the Order using the Buddhist date, i.e. from the Parinirvana,

presumably, in its affairs. Well actually, there is no one Buddhist date, there is no one Buddhist calendar, there are several. The Tibetans, I believe, traditionally put the Parinirvana about 700 BC which is way out. Even all the Theravadins don't agree, but the World Fellowship of Buddhists has agreed upon a particular way of reckoning and I see no reason why we should not follow that. Perhaps we shall never know for sure in which year the Buddha passed away, in which year he was born. But if the majority of Buddhists in the world do agree among themselves to reckon the Parinirvana as from such a date, which in fact is what has happened through the World Fellowship of Buddhists, I see no reason why we shouldn't accept that and follow accordingly. No doubt, to begin with we would have to put the Christian era date as well, because we don't want to confuse the people to whom we are writing, but none the less make the point that we are Buddhists and to us the birth of Christ is not the actual event in history that Christians believe.

So I would say yes, I would be quite in favour of that and perhaps its up to the Order Office to, as it were, set an example, others may follow or not follow as they wish. In any case, no doubt, the more familiar date or year, will also be there but at least one will perhaps have made a point.

Another category, 'Spiritual life and practice'. This is rather a long question. I may not be able to answer it in detail.

Would you agree that a dynamic exists whereby those individuals, or groups of individuals who are engaged in the spiritual life, in an intense full time, sort of way, e.g. through meditation, study, etc., cannot [That's underlined] develop beyond a certain point, unless the broader society out of which they've come, and within which they operate is firmly established in a way that supports and harmonises with their endeavours, the principle suggested being that the Order cannot develop beyond a certain point unless all the institutions that make up the FWBO are brought up to and established on a certain level of success or efficiency and by extension that the Movement as a whole cannot develop past a certain point unless the society around it maintains a certain level of civilisation and health?

This question was suggested to me by the thought that unless the supporting matrix for the Order's higher endeavours was strong, firm and harmonious, both as regards the FWBO and the world, then the difference between the Order at its best and the world would be such that an unhealthy and possibly dangerous tension would be set up. In other words, in order to grow we have to take the rest of the world with us.

I think, my own personal conviction is, that there is always going to be tension between the world and those who are trying to live the spiritual life. Yes, one has to take everybody else with one but also you have to have sufficient strength to take well at least a few others with you. So, I would say really that in the last analysis it depends upon the individual. Yes, if the institutions that make up the FWBO and if the world within which those institutions exist, within which the FWBO exists, are, let us say, reasonably favourably disposed towards the FWBO well that's wonderful, it does make life much easier for us. Hopefully, it makes it easier for us to grow and develop. But if we find that we live in the midst of unfavourable circumstances, if we find perhaps that we encounter even opposition, even are persecuted, I still think that in the last analysis it depends on the individual. If the individual is really determined to grow, he or she can do so even under the most unfavourable circumstances. But I think the difficulty will be that society, even if it cannot hinder you, will hinder you from taking others along with you. You must go nonetheless as far as you possibly can, so that when society does relent, when it does change, when you see some sort of opening, some sort of opportunity, you are in a position to take advantage of that. And it may be that the tension between you, or between, say the FWBO, between the Order and the outside world or

a section of it, may be very extreme. So far in this country we've had a very easy time of it. We haven't had to face any real difficulties from the outside world. The difficulties mainly that we have had to face have been mainly created by ourselves not by the world outside.

But that situation may not last, our friends, our Dharmachari brothers and Dharmacharini sisters in India have a very much more difficult time than we do. Sometimes their lives are in danger, quite literally. In Ahmedabad recently, as some of you know, there have been some very unfortunate developments which fortunately as yet have not involved any of our friends and members but they might do, any time, we don't know. They've had to cancel meetings, they've had to cancel classes because it would have been dangerous for them to go through certain areas in order to attend them. So we haven't had that but we might have and in principle, yes, I think there is always going to be a certain degree of tension between us and the world outside, whether manifest or not, but we have to carry on and each one do the best that he or she can to evolve, and if circumstances permit take others along with you. You may one day even find yourself in a society where you're not permitted to speak about Buddhism, not permitted to speak about the Dharma, not permitted to publish books, not permitted to gather together but no-one can stop you thinking about the Dharma, no-one can stop you meditating, provided that you don't let anyone know you are meditating, you might be just sitting on a park bench having a rest [Laughter], during your lunch break. No-one can really stop you but you, so I think that should be quite clearly in everybody's minds that you should make the greatest effort you can, under whatsoever circumstances and as circumstances permit carry others along with you. But some tension, in some form or other, as between you, what you're trying to do in the surrounding society, tension to some degree, I think there always will be.

Here is a whole series of questions also on spiritual life and practice.

*During the seminar on Nagarjuna's **Precious Garland** you introduced what you called the Five Great Stages of the Spiritual Path, which subsume all other formulations of the Path. These are the stages of:-*

- (1) Mindfulness and Awareness or Integration*
- (2) Positive Emotional Energy or Meditation*
- (3) Vision or Spiritual Death and Rebirth*
- (4) Transformation or Meditation on the vision of the previous stage*
- (5) Compassionate Activity or True Spontaneity.*

My question has several parts,-

a) I have not come across your making reference to this path anywhere else since the Precious Garland Seminar, is there any reason for not using and promulgating this teaching in the FWBO?

I think it is quite correct that I have not in fact made any further reference to this particular way of looking at the stages of the path. Not of any deliberate intent but it didn't come to my mind to do so and, I suppose, the occasion didn't arise. As far as there not being any reason for not using and promulgating this teaching in the FWBO I don't think there is any reason for not so doing. I think it's quite open for people to use this particular way of looking at the stages of the path if they find it useful and helpful. Incidentally I think one will find that since I've given so many seminars and, of course, so many question and answer sessions and have generally spoken so much, both formally and informally about the Dharma, you'll find all sorts of ideas, hints, suggestions scattered throughout the several hundred cassette tapes which I believe do exist at present. I think I must say at this point, it's very, very unlikely that I myself will be able to develop all of these suggestions, all of those hints. all of those

pointers, or even the most important or significant of them. I think that work will have to be left to members of the Order.

So if you find somewhere on a particular tape, in the context of a particular seminar, a classification, or way of looking at things that appeal to you, that you think would be useful and helpful to you and fellow members of the Order, well by all means bring it out from the obscure depths of the particular tape and broadcast it and make it more widely known. I must admit that sometimes I forget the things I've said. I don't remember consciously all the points that I have made in the course of all these hundreds of hours of teaching and talking. So, as I say, if one feels this particular classification useful, by all means, make use of it and put it into wider circulation.

Then,

How would one correlate the Five Stages with the traditional trainings, Sila, Samadhi and Prajna?

Well very, very, quickly and roughly I think the Mindfulness and Awareness, or Integration corresponds to Sila, though not perfectly because it is a different classification. Positive Emotion and Energy or Meditation to Samadhi and Vision or Spiritual Death and Rebirth to Prajna and then the Transformation or Meditation and the Compassionate Activity - these are extensions of Prajna, one could say. Then lastly there is a further question but that is a little too complex to go into, lastly,

In the seminar you mention a rough correspondence with the Five Paths of Indian Buddhist tradition, I have not come across these, what are they?

I'm not going to go into these I'll just give you the reference, there is a chapter on the Five Paths in SGampopa's *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*. The Five Paths come down from Sarvastivada tradition as taken over by the Mahayana, general Mahayana teaching.

All right these are questions about art and symbolism.

For 500 years after the Parinirvana, those concerned with iconography deliberately avoided portraying the Buddha, choosing instead to use a vocabulary of symbols - tree, wheel, stupa, footprints etc. - to suggest his presence.'

I assume that this is quite well known to everybody.

Then at around the beginning of the Common Era, the first Buddha images were made, apparently coinciding with the first written lives of the Buddha, as well as with the arising of the Mahayana. It is interesting that at the same period cults of saviours and accounts of their lives were emerging in other part of Asia, in Palestine, for instance. How would you account for this decision to portray what was previously considered unportrayable? Do you think that the processes which led to this development whatever that might happen to be, are of relevance to us today?'

I think the first point that has to be made is that although it is generally accepted by scholars that in the early days of Buddhism, the Buddha was not portrayed, out of reasons, as it were one might say, of reverence. That is to say feeling that an essentially Transcendental figure, an essentially Transcendental person, could not be portrayed, could not be represented, two, or three dimensionally in art. Though that explanation has more or less been accepted it's by no means definitely proved. It is, it seems, the most plausible explanation of what happened,

that the facts are that for 2-300 years no Buddha image, only symbols, and then after that, lots of Buddha images, as well as symbols. Those are the facts, those facts we can be sure of. But the real reason for that transition we can't be absolutely sure, though we are pretty clear that it probably had something to do with contact between Buddhism and, let us say, outposts of Hellenic tradition, because there is certainly a family resemblance between early Buddhist art, iconography and that of the Hellenistic kingdoms of Central Asia, with which Buddhism at that time came into contact. But we don't really know why, originally, the Buddha was not portrayed except by symbols. It may have been that artists felt inadequate, it may have been, as generally suggested nowadays that it was felt that this purely Transcendental figure couldn't be portrayed in this way. But I think we must remember that we're not sure, we're left just with the fact of what actually happened, we can only infer the why and the wherefore.

But I think this is an important point because I think in a way we have to reconsider and re-evaluate everything that has come down to us as part of the Buddhist tradition. We are very familiar with artifacts such as images, thangkas and many of us find them very inspiring and very helpful but perhaps sometimes we ought to imagine what it would be like to get along without them. I think we mustn't unthinkingly accept them as part of the tradition that has come down to us. For instance I sometimes think, I sometimes wonder, what would happen supposing the FWBO was to plant its banner in a Muslim country. Do you want to affront them, do you want to make things as difficult for yourself as possible, by being seen by Muslim friends and neighbours, assuming they did tolerate your presence to begin with, worshipping an image? Because there is nothing there's nothing that gets a Muslim's back up, nothing causes his hackles to rise so much; not just seeing someone worshipping an image but to see an image. An image in Persian is *bhute*(?) which, of course, comes from Buddha. So, if you were trying to propagate the Dharma in a Muslim country, or predominantly Muslim country, probably, you'd be well advised not to have any images around, possibly not even any pictures and not to be seen worshipping them. You probably could have a stupa, which is rather interesting. You probably could have a tree symbol or a wheel symbol because Islam is more familiar with symbols of that sort.

The point is that you would not have to insist that it was part of, as it were, your Buddhist faith to have images, to possess images, to, so to speak, worship images. You would not have to do that because you would know that for the first two or three hundred years of Buddhism in India there were no images. So I think we have to always ask ourselves what is really of the essence of Buddhism and what is not. Because some of the things with which we are most familiar, which we like best, which we even find very helpful, may not be really essential to the Buddhist tradition. I think that we should take, at least from time to time, a very, very careful look at what has come down to us and what we are appropriating. Because sometimes in Buddhist countries and even among ourselves importance is attached to things which are not intrinsically of importance at all. For instance, in some of the Buddhist countries of Asia tremendous importance is attached to robes. We can't feel that sort of attachment. At least, I hope we can't. In some Buddhist countries the idea of a monk not wearing his robe on all occasions would make people profoundly uneasy. It would almost unsettle their faith in the Dharma, certainly perhaps unsettle their faith in you, because they think of Buddhism so very very much in those terms, even though there are verses, there are passages in the Pali Canon, for instance, which go directly against that particular view, but they pass over those passages, they stick to what has come, for them, to be regarded not just as tradition but as an essential part of the Buddhist teaching, an essential part of the Dharma. So I think this question is quite interesting from this more general point of view.

I remember reading some time ago, about a form of Buddhism that had sprung up in Korea called (Wan?) Buddhism which eschewed the use of images. I don't know whether it was

because they could find no historical sanction for images at the beginning of Buddhism, or for other reasons, but instead of an image of the Buddha they had, as object of worship, a circle inscribed on a scroll, not just a circle drawn with a pair of compasses but a sort of free-hand circle rather bold and striking like you get at the end of the Ox-herding pictures. So they had that hanging on a scroll, hanging on the wall, that was their object of worship. So we have to accustom ourselves to thinking in terms of what is essential and what is not, what could we drop, say if we went to a Muslim country and tried to spread the Dharma there? What could we drop and what would be the rock bottom fundamentals that we couldn't possibly drop and which we, perhaps, should be prepared to give our lives for if necessary?

So that isn't completely an answer to the question but perhaps an answer to something connected with it.

Right then a very short question,

Are the precious metals of the Ten Pillars true symbols, or were they chosen more arbitrarily by you?'

So true symbols, what is a true symbol? What does one mean by choosing a symbol arbitrarily? I don't think it is really quite so clear cut as that. It is not that some things are symbols and some are not, because a thing is a symbol, one might say for subjective as much as for objective reasons. If it doesn't strike you as a symbol, if you don't feel that it is a symbol, or has the value of a symbol for you then it is not a symbol. It is not that you can say this is a symbol and you've got to accept it as a symbol in the same way that you can say well this is a microphone and you've got to accept it as a microphone, it isn't really quite like that. So what happened in the case of these precious metals of the Ten Pillars. I found that the particular Pillars, the particular precepts which I was concerned with had a sort of meaning and this meaning had a sort of loose association with a particular precious stone or precious metal. It wasn't a completely arbitrary association, on the other hand I can't say that those particular metals or semi-precious stones were taken straight out of Buddhist tradition. But, if one dwelt upon them, if they started meaning something to you, if your being as it were resonated to them, if they helped you to see all sorts of connections and correspondences and implications, and came to have a certain emotional significance for you, then they would be symbols, they would be true symbols.

But it's as though you make, or especially, a number of people make symbols symbols, or make symbols true symbols. It's not that there are certain things designated symbols that everyone has to accept as symbols.

[End of side one side two]

All right we are going to come now to the medical questions and I think this will be the final category of questions with which I'll deal this morning; there are two of them.

I've heard reports of late that Bhante has been really slamming alternative medicine. Is it the efficacy of acupuncture, homeopathy, herbalism etc. as means of dealing with problems of imbalance in the body/mind, that you doubt, or is your criticism directed more at the attitudes that have come to be associated with them? If the second, could you talk about these attitudes and their dangers as you see them?

I think it is rather the second. In a sense I believe in all the systems of medicine, orthodox, and alternative. I'm quite sure there's something in all of them. I'm quite sure that people have been cured and helped by means of all these different systems whether alternative or

otherwise, but - there is a little 'but' here - what I've noticed in people very often, and perhaps people in, or connected with the FWBO and perhaps more so formerly than at present, people started off with a profound scepticism as regards orthodox medicine, that is to say allopathy. They were very distrustful of it, very sceptical about it, very dismissive of it, and preferred to avoid it, in fact, they spoke very loftily in terms of people's blind faith in orthodox medicine and blind faith in medical men and were very disparaging about it, but then what do they do? They go and have blind faith in acupuncture, or blind faith in homeopathy, or blind faith in herbalism. So I don't see that, in terms of attitude that there has been any improvement at all, and there seems this sort of tendency, which in a way is a reflection of tendencies in the religious field. There's this sort of tendency to put your faith, you pin your faith in some particular system of medicine, in the way that very often, as I said characterises one's faith in religion or one's faith in a particular guru. You sort of swear by acupuncture or you swear by homeopathy and you seem to get not just healing from it, because very often you don't get healing from it, but you get a sort of security, a sort of consolation. You happily trot along to your acupuncturist, that's often the phrase, you know, 'my acupuncturist' You trot along to 'your' acupuncturist, or 'your' homeopath or osteopath, or your wise woman who treats you with herbs. I'm not quite sure what she's called. Yes, a herbalist, I suppose she is called. And you sort of become dependent on that, not on the medical treatment, but on the contact with that person. You're not really always going for the sake of medical treatment you're very often going for the sake of reassurance without really realising it, and that person is then functioning as a sort of witchdoctor, or psychoanalyst, you know they're much the same! [Laughter] Don't take this too seriously. I'm not just slamming psychoanalysis, or even witchdoctors [Laughter], I mean, I believe in witch-doctors too, after all sometimes in India I've been obliged to function as a witch-doctor. I don't know whether I effected any cures but I certainly, I think, made on occasions quite an impressive witch-doctor [Laughter]. Perhaps that is the main thing. So please, I can understand people being sceptical about orthodox medicine, and transferring their faith, their uncritical faith to some alternative system of medicine.

By all means shop around, find the system of medicine that suits your system, maybe find the doctor who seems to understand your system, your functioning, as distinct from, of course, having a wonderful bedside manner that appeals to you; that's an additional bonus as it were but it's not the real thing. So, it is really these attitudes that I'm not so happy with rather than the systems themselves.

I think, that to some extent my concern springs from my belief in the systems, because supposing I felt, as is claimed with regard to homeopathy, that they couldn't possibly do you any harm, I believe that is what is said of homeopathy, at least, I've heard it - it may be true it may not be true - it may not help you, it may not cure you but the medicines they give you don't do you any harm. Well, if one could believe that of all these systems of treatment, that at least they don't do you any harm, well I wouldn't have cause for concern, perhaps, but I believe that they can do harm, if they're not suited to your particular system or if they are unskilfully applied by perhaps someone not as experienced as they might be, they can do harm. Therefore I think you need to be very, very cautious, because your health is after all, a very precious possession, and not just hand yourself over, lock stock and barrel to some practitioner, whether of orthodox medicine or an alternative system to do with what he or she wills. I think you must study your own system, try to understand your own system, I mean, ask the doctor whoever they are, questions, insist that they give you a reply to your questions, try to understand what is happening, what is wrong with you and even read up a little bit. I don't mean in a hypochondriacal fashion, about your complaint, but just try to understand how the body works, and try to live in as healthy a way as possible, not just live unhealthily and then run to the doctor when you fall ill. No real doctor would really want you to do that anyway.

Also, I think that those practising alternative medicine, in whatsoever form, have to be quite careful about the motive with which they take it up. Because through medicine, I think you can get quite a hold on people. I get the impression from some of the things I hear from people perhaps on the fringes of the Movement, who are going to practitioners operating outside the FWBO. I get the impression that sometimes they get quite a hold on their patients and their patients start looking up to them as father and mother figures and guru figures and all the rest of it. So I think that if one is practising in any way even perhaps including orthodox allopathic medicine, if one is practising any form of alternative medicine, scrutinise your own motives very carefully, and be quite sure why you're doing it, because a medical practitioner of whatsoever kind has power over people and I think that one has to be very very careful that in dealing with people, whether in this field or any other, you're not in fact exercising power, you're not bringing subtle pressure even to bear on them and that at every stage you're encouraging the person with whom you're dealing, the person with whom you are treating, to take responsibility for himself or herself.

Now we come to something a bit more technical that I'm not really going to be able to deal with properly.

Have you any views Bhante, on Order Members and Mitras for that matter, being organ donors?

Not donors of cathedral organs, donors of bodily organs.

I've been wondering whether the combination of sudden unexpected death as for example in a road accident, and the body being taken quickly to a hospital for the removal of certain organs, would affect the consciousness of the deceased person in an unhelpful way?

That is the first part of the question, I'll deal with that first. I must say I'm not sure about this, I rather doubt frankly whether it would because from all that I've understood, and from a marginal experience of my own, I think that when you are, if you are, in that sort of out of the body state, looking down upon your own physical body after death or maybe on other occasions, I think one very often experiences a sort of profound indifference. It's just a body lying there, you don't necessarily think of it as yours. So I'm not inclined to think that there's too much danger, as it were, from this point of view, in someone's organs being removed quite soon after death. I doubt, and I find it difficult to imagine, although I am I admit speculating to some extent, I find it difficult to imagine that a disembodied consciousness would be looking down on his or her own body and then say as it were to himself or herself indignantly, "Oh look, they've taken away my kidneys!" [Laughter] I rather doubt this. I rather think they'd just see what was happening and there probably would not be any reaction at all, they would simply see, they would simply note.

But I won't be completely certain of this, possibly it requires further investigation, if investigation indeed is possible [Laughter]. What I think, I'm more concerned about is the attitude that develops nowadays of hanging onto life at all costs, prolonging life at all costs. You know these wonderful operations, these transplant operations cost an enormous amount of money, they take up the time and energy of very, very highly skilled people. One can't help wondering whether that money and whether that skill might not be used to alleviate the suffering of people who had a very much better chance of continuing to lead healthy lives. I think the attitude of hanging on to whatever little bit more life you can possibly grasp hold of is to be discouraged. If you're relatively young yes, fair enough perhaps to have a transplant operation, but if say you get to my age, or a bit older, I think you shouldn't bother too much about these things and, perhaps, people generally shouldn't be too concerned prolonging the

lives of human beings as long as they possibly can. But there is a further point.

Would organ donating [What a dreadful expression! [Laughter]] be a good way of practising dana as you have suggested, as you have suggested blood donating could be in your lecture, 'Individualism and Altruism in the Spiritual Life' under the section on giving of life and limbs.

I think we have to just look at the whole issue again because recently there has been a rather unfortunate development in connection with blood donors. I don't know if anyone has heard about it or read about it, some of you evidently had, that is to say in connection with the transmission of AIDS. Apparently, many people, perhaps hundreds of people, have contracted AIDS as the result of receiving blood from an infected donor.

I think, therefore that these things all have to be looked at very, very carefully and therefore, in the present stage of our knowledge I think it is very difficult to generalise. Yes, no doubt, we should all be willing to practice dana, sacrifice our own time, our own energy and perhaps, if necessary even our own limbs. I think I did mention in a talk or lecture at some time, about an instance I heard of in India where someone did literally give one of his eyes. A living person donated one of his eyes so that a person who was, or had become blind could be restored to partial sight and the operation was a success. So, one might well say, well yes: that was a typically Bodhisattva like attitude, and perhaps that sort of thing is to be encouraged. But to encourage people to hang onto life at all costs and to encourage this preoccupation with recently killed bodies and getting their organs as quickly as possible, perhaps not considering feelings of relations or even what might happen to the disembodied consciousness. I think that sort of development is entirely unfortunate, and just draws attention to the lack of spiritual values in the lives of so many people and in our society at large. Someone was asking about tension between the FWBO and the spiritual community and society at large. All right, supposing a situation arose in which by law everyone who died a sudden death or was killed in an accident, for instance, was automatically carted off to hospital and all their useful organs extracted without any reference to the feelings of friends and relatives. You could have a situation developing in which that sort of thing happened by law and it was compulsory, and then perhaps you really would be up against it if your own particular beliefs, your own religious beliefs were otherwise. It almost seems as though we're heading in that particular direction because if people's lives can be saved or prolonged by making use of organs which someone no longer needs, having been killed, well surely it is quite selfish, it might be argued, to prevent those organs being taken out and used in that particular way, but I don't think the matter can be dismissed in that sort of manner. I think we have to reassess in our current society our whole attitude towards life and death and the worthwhileness of life. Perhaps this is one of those questions that I talked about at the beginning, where perhaps we need a little commission of people, a little group of people, gathering evidence, gathering information and sifting it, and presenting it to me, presenting it to the Order, so that we can come to more definite conclusions. Perhaps, more than that I can't say at the moment, and I'm afraid time is up. Time passes very quickly, so it's time for lunch and I believe we gather again at two o'clock to hear what I'm sure will be some very interesting and worthwhile talks.

Gunavajra: On behalf of each and everyone of us here I'd like to thank you Bhante for sharing your thoughts and your wisdom with us this morning again. I've always felt that these question and answer sessions provided a good example of how the teacher/disciple relationship works. Each one of us this morning has learned quite a lot, not alone about Buddhism but also something about Bhante, and for the next exciting instalment, its tomorrow at the same time, thank you.

Next Session

Gunavajra: Bhante, fellow Order Members, we now come to the second and final session of our Question and Answer programme. It's interesting to note Bhante's remarks yesterday about some of the questions that he receives being so complex that they maybe warrant a lecture rather than a few short remarks. And comparing that with what Ananda said, that in the beginning they used to wander round saying 'And what about God then man?' and things like that. So, somehow or other although occasionally we think that we haven't advanced a lot when you look at the questions we're getting these days, there is an amazing difference. And probably the mitras of today are schooled to such an extent that they are probably more advanced than some of the early Order Members were. [Laughter] All right I didn't mean to be offensive. I have always like Question and Answer sessions, in a sense, because I cannot help reflecting on my own religious education which of course took place in Denmark under the auspices of the Danish State and the Lutheran Church. In the primary school I went to our religious education was given by an ex-vicar, who encouraged us to put questions in a little box for elucidation and later comment by him. Now, somehow or other although he, on the face of it seemed to encouraged it, he always got rather enraged with my questions. I could never really understand why because I asked what I thought were quite sensible questions. Now what he really wanted to hear were little questions like, 'Please tell me about baby Jesus' and things like this. [Laughter] I asked questions at the tender age of ten such as 'If God is supposed to be so good, how come all this evil?' [Laughter] I even remember asking questions about the 'virgin birth'. You'll remember that I come from an agricultural country, and sex education is freely available, very early. But he used to occasionally call me up from my desk after having answered the questions, after having sorted the questions just like Bhante does, and mine were always at one side [Laughter] and he called me up, and he looked over his glasses like this and he said "Guna", no he didn't say 'Gunavajra, [Laughter] "Hans Christian" he said, because believe it or not that was my name, [Laughter] he said, "Hans Christian, asking questions is going to get you into trouble." [Laughter] And he had only one variant of that and he would say next time, "One fool can ask more questions than ten wise men can answer". [Laughter] I never knew what he meant. However, Bhante I would be happy if you could conclude the session on this note.

S: Well we carry on from where we left off yesterday morning and we come now to a group of questions which I've classified as being on money and business. So we've got two questions to begin with actually on the same topic but I'll read them both.

*It appears from a report in **Shabda** by the Padmaloka Treasurer and from minutes of Phoenix Housing Co-operative that the more deeply people become involved in the FWBO the less likely they are to pay their debts, with Order Members being the most consistent defaulters. In view of what you said about indebtedness in the Ten Pillars of Buddhism, is this the trivial matter that some Order Members seem to take it to be, or is it of real spiritual significance?*

And the other version of more or less the same question is

Bhante, you have sent a few letters to me at Phoenix, expressing concern at people's attitude to rent arrears, and their attitude to being in debt. Could you let us know your current thinking on being in debt and the ethics of it.

I think the ethics of being in debt, or lack of ethics of being in debt, is really quite clear because as the first questioner mentioned I did have something to say about indebtedness in the Ten Pillars of Buddhism. So I think the ethics of the matter is really quite clear. What isn't so clear, what certainly isn't so clear to me, is the psychology of it. Yes, one knows that sometimes people do get into difficulties financially perhaps, perhaps not always due to any

fault of theirs but very often they just seem not to bother very much about being in debt or not to realise what being in debt actually means ethically speaking. So that is really strange. I gave a little thought to this matter and while I don't think I can fully answer the question, perhaps some more discussion is necessary in Order chapters, but the few points I've come up with are as follows.

I think one of the reasons why people do get into debt, and remain in debt and even allow their debts to increase, whether it's to Padmaloka or to the Phoenix Housing Co-operative, or any other body within the FWBO or even indeed outside, is simply lack of responsibility. You don't take responsibility for yourself, you don't take responsibility for your own life. You don't really know what you've done, you don't really realise what the consequences of your own actions are, you almost don't realise that they are your actions and they therefore have consequences in as much as they are actions. So I think that is one point, lack of responsibility leads to getting into debt and being in debt, and not bothering about being in debt.

And then I think connected with this, there is, I'm afraid an element in the case of some people of a sort of infantile attitude, and of course this is connected with lack of responsibility, that someone will look after it for you. Someone will take care of you. And this is perhaps connected with the less positive aspect, that is to say of the Welfare State, or the Welfare State mentality. That there is somebody to look after it for you, you don't have to bother, you're just the happy, irresponsible child. You sort of gaily get into debt and somebody else, no doubt, will come along and pay off your debts for you, or they'll be indulgent and they'll forget about your debts, because after all you're just a happy child and why should you be disturbed and troubled by nasty things like debts. So there is sometimes this sort of infantile attitude.

And then again I think there is lack of imagination. Because you don't put yourself in the position, or you're even unable to put yourself in the position of those people to whom you owe money, you may be seriously inconveniencing them, they may be friends of yours, they may be fellow Order Members. Perhaps you don't owe them in their personal capacity, but in their capacity as treasurer or secretary or whatever, and you just fail to put yourself into their position, into their shoes, and you fail to realise what it's like to be owed money and to be unable to get on with what you have to get on with, pursuing perhaps different projects, because people who owe you money, which is, of course, your money, which they haven't yet handed over to you, make it difficult for you to get on with your work; and apart from that, they have to spend quite a lot of time and energy phoning you or writing you letters, sending of reminders in one or another way that you have not yet paid up. I must say, I really feel quite ashamed sometimes when I read the minutes of Phoenix and when I see that Order Members even have to be sent threatening letters by Phoenix before they pay up their rent. The rent is I think quite tiny anyway but that is really beside the point. An Order Member should feel deeply ashamed if they get a reminder of this sort. Whether they do or not I don't know but I certainly feel ashamed on their behalf, as it were, and on behalf of the Order. Perhaps it's especially offensive within a co-op because a co-op is a co-op, everybody is a co-op member, and if you don't pay to your co-op what is owing to it, what you owe to it, then you're not really fulfilling your responsibilities as a co-op member. Far from that, you're actually acting as a dead weight, as a drag on the whole enterprise. I've seen sometimes in co-op minutes, that members of the Phoenix Co-operative owe between them about £2000. I think that is quite a low figure, it has been much more in the past, it has been £4000 or £5000 I think, and a proportion of that has been owed by Order Members and Mitras and this is really a very very unsatisfactory state of affairs. Because how can you get up in front of a class and speak in terms of being an individual and having responsibility and exercising imagination and all the time you yourself are in debt and perhaps not bothering about it and

perhaps not doing anything about it. So you put yourself in a very false position in that kind of way.

I know that sometimes genuine difficulties do arise but if they do well for heavens sake approach the person concerned, approach the treasurer or secretary and say, "Well look I'm sorry this is the position, I'll pay the money as soon as I can", and make a genuine effort to do that. At least the treasurer or secretary will then know that you are making an effort, that you're aware that you're in debt, and will not have to send you letter after letter and reminder after reminder.

We really do have to realise that we have to bring our ideals down from the clouds onto the earth. It isn't enough to be able to speak beautifully about individuality and all the rest of it, we really must practise it, not just in the shrineroom, not just in our communities but in these very ordinary affairs of life such as in connection with money, such as in connection with our indebtedness.

Of course, one of the things one should be careful about is not to get into debt in the first place. Sometimes, people don't sufficiently consider, they allow themselves to slide into debt. You know, they buy this and they buy that, or they incur this debt and they incur that debt. They don't realise it's all mounting up. they don't intend not to pay. I'm quite sure that is not the case, they don't intend not to pay, they fully intend to pay, but they don't consider sufficiently whether they are able to pay. Sometimes, I know Centres and even Communities and to a lesser extent Co-ops, apart from the Phoenix Housing Co-operative, are quite seriously handicapped because their debtors, including even some Order Members and Mitras, don't pay up. This creates what I'm told is technically called a 'cash flow problem'. But a 'cash flow problem' if you're the secretary of a Centre or a Co-op and your accounts are very finely balanced. You're really dependent on people paying up in good time or at least on the time, to be able to function at all. Otherwise, you have to borrow money, perhaps you have to borrow money from the bank because of your cash flow problem, because people have not paid their debts, you have to borrow money from the bank and, of course, banks don't lend you money for nothing. They charge a high rate of interest, and that means further outgoings for that particular Centre.

I know in India, I'm not recommending this, but in India the Mawaris who are popularly known as the Jews of India, I don't know whether that's uncomplimentary to the Jews or the Mawaris, but they're known as the Jews of India. Anyway, you know what I mean. If you owe them money they charge you interest and they charge you compound interest on a daily basis. I think in some cases when large amounts were involved they'll even charge on an hourly basis, and that means people learn not to tangle with the Mawaris, they don't owe them money, if they can possible help it, otherwise they find themselves tied hand and foot for the rest of their lives, with all these calculations of interest and compound interest and compound on compound interest. It can get very complicated, so for heavens sake, even though no such threat hangs over any of your heads, not only for the sake of your own peace of mind but also for the sake of remaining true to the principles that you represent, and that you're trying to observe and practice, keep out of debt and pay up your debts if you have any, and encourage Mitras and Friends to do likewise.

Because unless we can bring our practice and unless we can bring our ideals down to this level, and practise them on this level, this practical level, we won't really be able to speak about a Buddhist spiritual movement in any meaningful sense. Anyway, perhaps I've emphasised that sufficiently. I really hope I don't see, or have any unpleasant shocks when I read Phoenix minutes and minutes of other Centres, in this respect any longer.

We haven't quite finished with money and business.

If Order Members keep signing on isn't the Movement as dependent on the Establishment as Buddhism was in India before it died out? Shouldn't we concentrate on creating a strong financial basis for all our activities, through Right Livelihood projects, before we expand any further?'

Well yes, it's quite true, if Order Members keep signing on, if we're dependent for our support on let's say the general public, rather than the Establishment, well yes, we are in a way in the position that Buddhism was in India before it died out. We're not being self-sufficient, we're not being self-supporting, whatever we may say about that, whatever lip service we may pay to that we're not being in fact self-supporting. So yes, that puts us in a vulnerable position so I think we should concentrate on creating a strong financial basis for all our activities through Right Livelihood projects. I don't quite agree though that we should do this before we expand any further because there is quite a lot of expansion that doesn't require financial investment, and there is quite a lot we can do without having a lot of money behind us. But I think we should think very carefully before undertaking any major projects if we don't have the support behind those projects of some kind of Right Livelihood business, which is bringing in quite a bit of money.

Some of you may recollect that the first co-ops to the best of my recollection within the FWBO were started up or the first co-op businesses, in order to finance the establishment of Sukhavati, or Sukhavati cum L.B.C. because that was costing us, at the time, far more than we had realised and money wasn't going to be forthcoming from the general public, obviously, for that purpose, though we did get some grants later on. We had to raise the money ourselves so some co-op businesses were started and with the help of the income from those co-op businesses, Sukhavati and the whole L.B.C. Centre complex was completed and opened and got under way. So, I think yes;, I think we should pay some very serious attention to creating a strong financial basis to our activities through Right Livelihood projects and also, I think, coordinating those activities. I think Chairmen and others need to liaise very closely so that there is no duplication of effort and all the total financial resources of the Movement, certainly within each country, are used to the best possible advantage.

I think several people are thinking along these lines already so perhaps I need to say no more. But again, it's in some ways a sort of collective aspect of what I was talking about in response to the first question. We shouldn't get collectively into debt and we shouldn't launch any major project without adequate financial backing to begin with, at least to get it started. Anyway, enough about money and business.

I've entitled this group of questions, 'Buddhism and the World' and this question is more about education.

What role can religion, and particularly Buddhism, play in the present educational system, in primary, secondary and university stages, as well as in the growing adult education systems? If Buddhism has a role, what are the most fruitful ways that individual Order Members, the Order as a whole, and the FWBO can become involved in the prevailing pluralistic, moral, political, religious and cultural difficulties facing education as a whole?'

I must say I know very little about the present educational system. All I know at present is that a lot of teachers are on strike. I sympathise with them, but on the other hand I cannot help feeling there is something vaguely wrong when teachers go on strike. The questioner refers to primary, secondary and university stages of education, I must say frankly I know very little about these and how they're organised. It does seem to be a very complex field

indeed. I've seen some of the literature that's been put out by some of these various bodies concerned with religious education, it does seem to me, at least an incredibly complex field. The only area where I can see at all clearly is that of what is referred to as the growing adult education systems. I think that perhaps we can very usefully get in there, as it were, I believe one or two Order Members have in fact already done something of that sort. I believe there is quite a demand for adult education classes of various kinds and I think if Order Members could take, for instance, classes in Buddhism, in Buddhist philosophy, even meditation under such auspices, it would be a good thing and possibly providing a means of livelihood, a means of financial support for those people. As for Buddhism having a role and 'what are the most fruitful ways that individual Order Members, the Order as a whole, and the FWBO can become involved in the prevailing pluralistic moral, political, religious and cultural difficulties facing education as a whole?' I really can't say. I don't know what those difficulties are; that is to say 'difficulties facing education as a whole'. I get some sort of glimpse of them, some sort of sense of them indirectly, occasionally from the papers or from radio programmes. I know that a lot of people aren't satisfied with the present level of education, type of education, quality of education in this country. I know even though that that does vary though from one area to another, one school even to another, even perhaps one classroom to another. I think this is an area we need to investigate before coming to any conclusions. We need almost to set up one of these little groups I was talking about yesterday that would go into the whole question, study it, get information, collect information, collate information, analyse information and then present it to us, perhaps on the basis of all that, questions that we could perhaps proceed to consider and possibly proceed to answer. But meanwhile I think that those who are in any way involved in the educational field or interested should just keep their eyes open on an ad-hoc sort of basis and just see whether there is any avenue, whether there is any means of entry into that particular field. I know we often get invitations from some schools, the L.B.C. gets lots of invitations from schools to send speakers to speak on Buddhism. Well there is our opportunity. We can take advantage of opportunities of that sort. But as regards the educational system as a whole, what we can do about that, what its difficulties are, whether we need an alternative system of education, whether we need a Buddhist school. These are really quite vast questions, quite vast issues, I'm not going to be able to deal with them just in the course of a few minutes this morning; even if I was qualified to do so which I don't really think I am. I think we need to at least get some information from those who are comparative experts. But clearly it's a field that concerns us because education is for the most part directed towards children and that means that at the most impressionable time of one's life one, during the most impressionable years of one's life, one is being taught, one is being subject to various influences, positive, negative and neither perhaps. So it is a question that concerns us very much indeed and perhaps it concerns most of all those Order Members and Mitras and Friends who have children, who are concerned about their education.

Some seem to manage, or at least to get by, by sending their children along to the State system but perhaps keeping a close eye on them and talking to them when they come home from school and thrashing out any particular problems or difficulties that they may have, say in regard to vegetarianism. For instance, if your child is having his or her lunch at school and asks for a vegetarian lunch, well this may give rise to difficulties. Not that there might be difficulties getting the vegetarian lunch but school fellows might make unkind comments and the child may have to thrash all that out at home with a sympathetic parent. Or the sympathetic parent might have to go along to the school and sort things out with the sympathetic or not so sympathetic school teacher. I think at present we need a lot more information before any meaningful pronouncement can be made.

So I suggest that those interested just gather information of whatsoever kind and if they're not in a position to collate it, just send it off to the Order Office and we can at least put it on a file

and perhaps build up a file which perhaps someone might eventually be able to do something with.

Oh, there is one here which is noted as 'a late addition'.

The Meditation Network for World Peace as recently formed in New Zealand seeks to emphasise the importance of people's mental states in bringing about world peace, and primarily involves teaching and practising Metta Bhavana but under a different name. Do you have any thoughts as to whether it could be as worthwhile for an Order Member to put his or her time and money into this as into their local FWBO Centre? Do you think that the advantages of Meditation Network for World Peace organisation, professing to be free of Buddhist affiliations outweigh the disadvantages?

I suppose this to some extent depends upon the situation of the local FWBO Centre and the number of Order Members it has. If you're a local FWBO Centre struggling for existence or struggling to establish itself. If you don't have enough Order Members anyway well then I think it would be unwise to have any of the local Order Members getting involved in external activities, or groups of this sort, however good that they might be. But supposing you do have a relatively large number of Order Members well yes, it might not be a bad idea for them to get involved in this sort of way, to get involved say in a Meditation Network for World Peace and teach people through that network the Metta Bhavana. I'm not too sure about 'Metta Bhavana under a different name', I think we have to be very careful there. For instance, I have heard about someone in the United States teaching Metta Bhavana, in fact, teaching all the Brahma Viharas, not under those names, but in a quite different way - two people getting together, usually of course one male and one female, and directing their Metta to one another and their Karuna to each other. Well I need hardly point out what a deformation of the traditional Buddhist practice this in fact is.

I suppose the main advantage of Order Members participating in a network of this sort is that through it some people who might not care to approach a Buddhist Centre, would start meditating, would start developing Metta, would have experience of the Metta Bhavana, and no doubt this is a good thing, even if they don't know it as Metta Bhavana. But I think again that if any Order Member who is as it were relatively surplus to the requirements of his Centre; not that he is someone who of course is pretty hopeless around the Centre or anything like that, he must be a really capable Order Member, well versed, well experienced in meditation practice. If he or she does teach a Metta Bhavana within the framework of a Meditation Network for World Peace, its very, very important that that Order Member shouldn't just become involved in that Meditation Network, and its activities to the detriment of contact with fellow Order Members, other members of that particular chapter or who are connected with that particular Centre, otherwise he or she may find that they're really out on a limb, may lose contact with their source of inspiration and so on. So, Order Members who are engaged in that kind of activity, or who are working in any other such field, not directly under the auspices of the FWBO should be more careful than ever to maintain very positive contact with their chapter and with Order Members individually and should be very open to any feedback, any critical feedback, even any criticism from fellow Order Members, whether in general or in connection with the way in which they function in connection with that Meditation Network, or any other such group or body. So I think that we can conclude from all that, that one: always give priority of course to the activities of your Centre, but if your centre can so to speak spare you, yes, if you feel so inclined or inspired, take part in such a mediation network or anything else of that kind, but being very, very careful to maintain close contact with your fellow Order Members and be very open to any feedback that they may care to give you

All right, the last group of question I've called them Miscellaneous, because that's just what they are. The first one, I'm not quite sure how serious the first one is. Perhaps I shouldn't assume that all questions are deadly serious. The question goes

Where have all the Bodhisattvas gone? Once, when Buddhism flourished there were many why are there few now?

Well what is it that makes a Bodhisattva? Well what makes a Bodhisattva is the Bodhicitta, to speak in traditional terms. What is it that makes the Bodhicitta, what produces the Bodhicitta? Well its things like the Sevenfold Puja, it's the practice of the Paramitas, and it's because, presumably, not very many people engage in the Sevenfold Puja, or practice the Paramitas, and develop the Bodhicitta, that we have, if such is indeed the case, fewer Bodhisattvas now than before. Though, of course, it may be that the Bodhisattvas, some of them at least, have retired from the scene, or are working behind the scenes, let us say, and are just sort of pulling here and there, a few very subtle spiritual strings, and that we're not aware of that. But, of course, if we are genuinely concerned about where all the Bodhisattvas have gone, if we're genuinely concerned that there should be Bodhisattvas in society, let us say, or functioning in the world, well the remedy is very simple, we just have to become a Bodhisattva, and that will be the measure of the seriousness of our questions. If we really feel that the world needs Bodhisattvas, well we shall ourselves resolve that we will be those Bodhisattvas.

In a sense that is what we resolve as Order Members because the development or arising of the Bodhicitta is in fact an aspect of the Going For Refuge. You can't really separate the Going For Refuge from the arising of the Bodhicitta; you can't exclude that dimension or aspect of other regarding-ness, and it is no accident that we take, as a sort of symbol of the Order, the figure of the eleven-headed and thousand-armed Avalokitesvara and that's exactly why we've got it on this giant thangka on this occasion. It's to remind us that each one of us is a hand, is one of Avalokitesvara's hands, and these hands hold various implements. I can't quite see all the details from here, but in full representations, one will hold a wheel, a Dharmachakra, he'll be preaching the Dharma. Another perhaps will be holding a pen or a stylus and he'll be writing a book. Another perhaps will be holding an axe, he'll perhaps be a carpenter, perhaps building a monastery. Another hand may be holding a rosary, he or she will be meditating. And another hand will be holding a chorten, a stupa; that particular person may be concerned with the dying and the dead and so on. So we've got all these hands connected with all these arms, and the arms all go back to the trunk, to the trunk of the one Bodhisattva, Avalokitesvara. So we should try to feel ourselves as being like that; all as it were, manifestations of the Bodhisattva Ideal, all different expressions of the Bodhicitta, all different expressions of the Going For Refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, at work in this world.

Every time we open the newspapers, and everytime we turn on the radio news we know, we're made aware, how great is the need for Bodhisattvas: how great is the need for committed people nowadays. When you read a newspaper, or listen to the radio, or watch television you may not, necessarily, see anything very dreadful or terrible, though very often you will. But at the very least, what you will see, what you will hear, what you will read about will be utterly trivial, utterly trivial. Just recently I was on the Women's Order Convention; I was away for ten days. So, when I got back I just happened to turn on the BBC radio news; it just wasn't news, it was so utterly trivial. Well the only thing one could be thankful for was that there was no tragedy to report, no disaster to report but the news was just trivial. So people need to be as it were delivered, not just from tragedy, not just from disaster, but from triviality. One might even say, that triviality is one of the greatest disasters that can befall one. I did, in fact, touch on that in that talk I gave on 'Buddhism, World Peace

and Nuclear War'. I mean, we want to abolish the threat of nuclear catastrophe, the threat of nuclear destruction. We want to get rid of all those terrible weapons of mass murder, of collective human suicide almost, but for the sake of what? For the sake of people being able to carry on with their usual trivial pursuits? No, we would like to think we were working for peace, if we do work for peace, in the sense of working for a world in which people have the opportunity, not only have the opportunity, but the will and the wish to develop their higher spiritual faculties and lead a much more genuinely happy and satisfactory and worthwhile and human life. So, we have to look at things from that point of view too.

But to come back to the main point, if we really feel the need of Bodhisattvas in the world, if we feel that Bodhisattvas are called for, if we feel that the world is, so to speak, whether it knows it or not, calling for volunteers of this sort, well we're the ones who have to step forward. So, if I'm to answer this question, 'Where have all the Bodhisattvas gone?' in a few words, I shall say well some at least of them are right here.

Are there any definite steps we should be taking towards training Order Members to lead study, or are we falling short in this respect? Can anything be done on a Chapter basis?

I sympathise with the feeling or the intention behind the question, but at the same time I query the form of it because the form of it is, 'Are there any definite steps we should be taking towards training Order Members to lead study?' It suggests that Order members have to be trained, perhaps by other Order Members, but certainly by somebody else. I think that you can train yourself, I mean, who trained me to lead study, nobody at all. I just started doing it because I had to do it and I learned by doing it. So, I think that even though, yes, there may be certain practical arrangements to be made, special study retreats organised, special courses organised, in the last resort, or perhaps even in the first resort, it's the responsibility of an Order Member to train himself or herself to lead study, and ask himself, or herself how this is to be done. If you think about it, if you see what is needed, if you ask yourself what preparation you should engage in, well then I'm sure you will be able to come up with some kind of answer and be able to benefit yourself more adequately to lead study. Don't always think in terms of the Order office organising something or the mitra convenors or the chapter convenors organising something. Ask yourself what can you do to make yourself more fit to lead study. If you feel you've come to a point where you do need somebody else's help well don't hesitate to ask for it, but be specific. If you want a course, ask the suitable people to organise a course for you, and explain just why you want it. If you want help from an individual, just go to that individual and ask for that help, and again be specific. But I am quite sure there is a quite a lot that almost everybody could do just by themselves to fit themselves to lead study.

Buy a dictionary, for instance, and look up words you don't understand, in the course of your reading in the dictionary. A lot of people don't even think of a simple thing like this. I'm quite sure there are some Order Members who, believe it or not, who don't even possess a decent dictionary of their own language. So just ask yourself this question, quite honestly, 'have I got a good dictionary at least?' If you haven't, I'll recommend one, if you don't even know the names of dictionaries. There is a war of dictionaries going on at present. I don't know if anybody knows about this, it's a very interesting war; there's a war. Dictionaries are fighting to the death [Laughter]. Or their publishers are; probably Gunavajra could tell us more about that, perhaps he will when he thanks me in a minute, but actually it's to our advantage because when dictionaries are fighting to the death for the market, it means that publishers are fighting for the market and when big business corporations start fighting for the market, what do they do, they lower the prices. So really good dictionaries at present can be had very, very cheaply. But at least you can do that, you can develop the habit of looking things up. There has been some improvement in this respect.

I get rather tired, or at least I used to, it does not happen quite so much now, when someone comes along to me and says, for instance, 'What does the word 'ghosa' mean in Pali?' Well there is the Pali dictionary you can look it up for yourself. So there is no need to ask other people for the answers to questions that you can just find out. So get into the habit of looking up words you don't understand as you encounter them in your reading in the English dictionary, the Pali dictionary, the Sanskrit dictionary, learn to use a Pali or a Sanskrit dictionary. Let there be a Pali or a Sanskrit dictionary available at every Centre or in every decent sized community. These are all necessary tools for the study group leader, and you should collect your tools.

I don't know if I'm overdoing the image, but I believe that a master carpenter always has his own tools, always has his own bag or kit of tools, which he doesn't like to lend to anybody. In the same way you should always have your own dictionary, your own English dictionary, Pali dictionary, Sanskrit dictionary and so on. Because you're not a master carpenter, you're not a real study leader if you have to ask to borrow somebody's, just as you're not a real master carpenter if you have to borrow somebody's chisel. So collect your own tools, as it were, and use them. There is a lot that each individual can do to equip himself, or herself to lead study more adequately. Don't expect to be spoon-fed, again this ties up with what I was saying in connection with money and business. People expect to be spoon-fed, they expect to be handed it, they don't try to find out for themselves, or do things for themselves sufficiently; but this is what the individual does.

Just a couple of questions left. I think I'll put them in reverse order so that I can close on a nice note.

It is rumoured that you do not approve of computers. If this is true is it a matter of personal inclination or of deeper principle? If the latter should we be taking a stand against their use within the Movement?' [Laughter]

I must confess I know very little about computers, in fact, that is a gross exaggeration, because I really know nothing about computers at all. I can remember the first time I saw a computer in the flesh. It was in no other place than Helsinki, and in the company of none other than Vajrabodhi, who was a master of the computer even in those distant days; it must have been nearly ten years ago now on the occasion of my first visit to Helsinki. He took me along to the technical university where he worked, and he took me along to a room where there were quite a lot of computers, and he said they were his computers. He seemed to have quite a paternal attitude towards them [Laughter]; there was a master computer, by the way, in his study, but there were all these other computers, oh, eight or ten of them, I think in this other room. He said he used to amuse himself during his lunch-break by going into this room and playing with his computers. He showed me how he played with his computers. He looked very happy and absorbed but I didn't really understand what was happening at all; So that was my one and only encounter with a computer until quite recently when I noticed one on somebody's desk in no other place than Padmaloka. It gave me quite a shock! [Laughter] After all, it was only the second time I'd seen one. So, it's not that I don't approve of them because I don't really know enough to disapprove of them, but I've certainly got no particular interest in them and this probably lies with my general literary and poetic bent and my lack of scientific interest and inclination.

So, yes it's not really for me to disapprove of computers, but I can't help noticing one thing. Apparently the Movement has been attracting all kinds of computer, what do you call them, operators, managers, programmers, yes, computer programmers. I gather the L.B.C. is thick with them sometimes [Laughter], but one gathers that most of them, if not all, certainly those that come in contact with the FWBO have become rather disenchanted with computers. They

don't seem to want to play with their computers any more and some of them, I gather, complain of headaches and alienation. So this has given me food for thought, because if by playing with your computer, you develop alienated awareness and you lose contact with your human emotions, as some of these people say they do, then we have to consider the computer from the standpoint of right livelihood, in connection with its psychological affect upon the programmer. I rather suspect thought, that like a lot of other things, computers used in moderation are all right. I say this without being completely sure, but I suspect that like many other things, a computer can be a good servant but a bad master. So I'm quite open to the possibility that computers do actually have a place in the Movement. They could be considered as friends. They might even become Mitras! [Laughter]. I don't know about their becoming Order Members but perhaps one day computers will take over some of the tasks that are at present performed by Order Members.

For instance a computer could answer questions because all the information would be filed away. So instead of having me here answering questions, you'd just need a really good, well just a moderately good, computer. You'd put in your question and out would come the answer. Because you'd have the whole Tripitika in dozens of languages and all the modern literature on Buddhism all on the computer. So you'd only just have to collate all that and, I believe it takes a millionth of a millionth of a second for a computer to do things like that, and out it would come with the answer. So yes, perhaps quite seriously, yes computers could take over some of the functions of Order Members. I'm sure they could do the work of most Bhikkhus [Laughter]. So I have, at the moment, a very open mind. I did once say, twenty years ago, before I'd heard of computers, a good gramophone could do the work of most Bhikkhus [Laughter]. So, I'm sure that if a good gramophone could do the work of most Bhikkhus, a decent computer could do so too.

So, anyway, it's not that I don't approve of computers, it's simply that I'm cautious, especially in those fields, those areas where I don't have any personal knowledge. Also I'm cautious because I hear that so many computer programmers want to give up that kind of work, because they feel it's a rather non-human or even anti-human sort of activity. But perhaps this requires some investigating, perhaps we can use computers to a limited extent and use them in such a way that they don't have this harmful effect on the programmer. I'm quite open to that being a possibility but, yes, it awaits further investigation. I shall keep my eye, in future, very closely on Subhuti.

Last question;

In FWBO publications such as the Newsletter, we do not report the more negative side of FWBO news, the disharmonies, the failures, the bungles. [Laughter] Well sometimes they're pretty obvious! Although these are only relatively a small part of the total picture, they do take place. Are we not being untruthful in giving an image of the FWBO which is entirely positive and which does not report all sides of what happens?

I think I'd go a little farther than that, I don't think we give an adequate picture in the Newsletter, and perhaps it's hardly possible to give, of even the positive side of the FWBO. I know, yes, we do give a very positive picture to some extent, but I think the real nature of what happens within the FWBO, the real nature of people's experience of it very very rarely comes across fully. In a sense, that's no criticism of the Newsletter, and it's certainly no criticism of its editor who happens to be present, it's the sheer difficulty of the medium. It's the sheer difficulty of expressing in words, in language, in literary form, what actually goes on, what the actual experience is in all its complexity, in its heights and also its depths. I'm inclined to agree that, yes, we shouldn't exclude the negative things entirely, though certainly we shouldn't over-emphasise them. Perhaps we can give, in the course of the Newsletter a

hint or two to the effect that all did not go quite as smoothly as we had hoped. We certainly should not gloss over failures or mistakes, but I think we should be careful to put them into an overall framework which is genuinely positive, because the overall framework is overwhelmingly positive, of that there is no doubt. But sometimes there just isn't time, there just isn't space to do this properly. Very often there aren't even the writers, because there are very few skilled writers with the FWBO and most of them are occupied with other things.

We have been thinking recently of, as it were, upgrading the Newsletter and of having, at last a sort of, dare I say, magazine. We've been thinking, well to be frank I've been thinking [Laughter]. I've been having ideas that we ought to broaden the scope of the Newsletter and I think I've spoken about this before; make it more of a medium for the education of Order Members, Mitras and Friends, and those who are beginning to become interested in the FWBO. A medium for educating them in what the FWBO is all about. To some extent it does that at present, but I think we can do it in a more comprehensive and more effective way. But when we present ourselves we should be like Oliver Cromwell, in at least one respect, I'm sure you all know that story that Cromwell was sitting for his portrait and Cromwell happened to have a wart or two, I believe on his nose, and the painter, very respectfully enquired whether his Excellency wished to be painted with the warts. So Cromwell said, "Paint me as I am, warts and all". So maybe we should be like that, maybe there are, perhaps I shouldn't say warts, but perhaps there's the faintest little blemish here and there. So we shouldn't be afraid to let it be known that that blemish is there because the overall context within which it occurs is, as I said, so overwhelmingly positive that, well I won't say it doesn't matter, it does not spoil the beauty of the picture. If it was not there it would be better still but since it is there, well no harm if we're honest and admit its presence. But I think perhaps we should also be aware that it's very, very difficult to convey even the positive aspects of the FWBO through the medium of the written word. I know that the Newsletter when it goes abroad, and especially when it goes to Eastern Buddhist countries creates very often a very, very favourable impression but even so I think that the impression it conveys doesn't really do justice to what we're trying to do, or even to some extent what we've actually succeeded in doing. I still don't think we're putting ourselves across properly. Again that is not anybody's fault, it isn't easy to put oneself across properly through the medium of the written word and some of us even who are able to do this to some extent, haven't got very much time for it, some are busy with other duties and other responsibilities.

But sometimes I've really wished that the FWBO as a whole, whether through the medium of the written word or the spoken word, or through the various visual media; I've often wished it really was able to put itself across more effectively. Because I'm sure that there are thousands, tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of people in the world, perhaps in each country who are really whether they know it or not, looking for the sort of thing that we have to offer, looking for the way of life that we are trying to follow and who could be really inspired by that, really inspired by the ideals that we uphold. So it's really our great responsibility to make contact with those people in whatsoever way that we can and just spread the word about the FWBO. In this connection, I'm very, very pleased that Order Members have started writing books. I'm very, very glad that I'm not the only person now writing books. I was very very pleased when Subhuti's book came out 'Buddhism For Today'. And there is another book by Subhuti coming out and there is going to be a book by Nagabodhi and a book by Kamalasila and I hope there are going to be books by other people too.

I'll let you into a little secret. At least let the men Order Members into a little secret, on the Women's Convention, oh the men are all leaning forward now [Laughter], on the Women's Convention I was urging the women Order Members to get cracking so to speak, with their pens, and their typewriters and to start writing, to producing literature. Because I feel that the

more Order Members do this, the more Order Members can communicate something of their experience as people involved with the FWBO as individuals who are trying to grow, well the better it will be because word of the FWBO will spread more and more and more widely. So without detriment to other activities I'd really like to see this. I'd like to see more people writing, I'd like to see more people perhaps making video tapes and things like that, those who are qualified, of course.

All these things must be done in a really competent, professional sort of way so that they command not only attention, but also respect from practitioners, in these fields, outside the FWBO.

Anyway, this is rather to digress from the original question but yes, let us not shrink from admitting, even in print, any negative aspect or development within the FWBO, but let us make it quite clear that that takes place within a context that is overwhelmingly positive, and let us try to spread the ideals of the FWBO through as many media as possible, in as many ways as possible for the benefit of the largest possible number of human beings.

Gunavajra: That you Bhante for concluding the second session of the Questions and Answers. I hope that that does not mean that there aren't any more questions because I think these sessions are, in fact, very important. Not living in a spiritual community, I really warmed to what Bhante said about the trivia, the trivia is around me practically all the time if I don't watch out. I meet people who are considered wise men just because they happen to utter things of no greater significance than 'many a mickle make a muckle'. And it is quite refreshing to come here and be confronted with situations such as this.

So far as the dictionary is concerned, I think I have some leaflets in my car. I'm not working for any of these but Bhante is, in fact, right. There is a war going on, so to speak, publishers are becoming very competitive and it is of benefit to the consumer. I myself use quite a number, I have a half a dozen which I use at work, and the one that I look in the least is a medical dictionary called Blacks Medical Dictionary, and I only look in it when I have to, because you'll find you have all the symptoms of everything if you look. You try it; no don't try it, it's quite odd how it works. I also use one which relies on the fact that you actually know what you're doing, it's written by a chap called Howard Collins, and it's published by Oxford University Press; it's called 'Dictionary For Authors, Printers and Readers'. They don't actually do all the spellings but they get you out of trouble for the difficult ones, and it's an excellent one if you're concerned with words.

So far as adult education is concerned I think I could perhaps just say that as an individual you can join the **WEA** which is the Workers Educational Association. You can then have a say in the local meeting as to what courses should be put on. I was just too late in Chippenham this year, but they put on a course in architecture, there is a course on Flemish paintings, all sorts of things, early Japanese porcelain and all sorts of things, and I was just too late to propose that there should be a course on Buddhism and on meditation. What you do, you go along to the meeting and you have to put your case and members present, who have also paid their fifty pence annually, they actually vote if you've made a good enough case for the WEA to put a particular course on. It's a very, very good organisation but anyway that's all I have to say.

Thank you very much Bhante.

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