

Question and answer session on Communication/kalyana mitrata in the Order

Women's Convention, Taraloka, July 1987

Those present: The Venerable Sangharakshita, Anoma, Vimala, Vidyasri, Dayasri, Varabhadri, Ratnasuri, Punyavati, Kalyanasri, Jayaprabha, Megha, Tarasri.

a) We discussed the area of editorship of 'Shabda' quite fully and the general feeling was that there shouldn't be any. We thought that rather than edit, it would be better to encourage and inspire Order members to improve the standard of their contributions and that one way of doing this might be to include the Speech Precepts at the front of every issue. Also, by not having editorship of 'Shabda' we are able to know the condition of the Order and act accordingly. Would you comment on these points?

Sangharakshita: Well yes, obviously I also think it would be better not to have any editing, but on the other hand I have to say I have been quite disappointed in the past, in fact, quite disgusted, even, by some of the contributions over the last, well, so many years. And while it might be a good idea, or would be a good idea to improve the standard of contributions and include the Speech Precepts in the front of every issue, one mustn't forget that all Order members have taken those Precepts. Yes? They repeat them from time to time. So if, in some cases, they are not taking them seriously, as would seem to be the case, not only with regard to what they contribute to 'Shabda', but sometimes in their personal communication with one another, well is just printing them in the front of 'Shabda' going to make a very great difference? I think probably not, unfortunately. There are now 300 Order members and I think one is faced by the problem that sometimes the odd Order member does fail in this respect. So what is one to do under those conditions? One needs a sort of fall back position, as it were. This is the problem that really confronts us. It really means that not all Order members, though there may not be many of them, not all Order members are fully responsible. One or two contributions I've seen over the last couple of years have made me almost doubt the sanity of the Order member concerned. So, again, what is one to do?

Vidyasri: But, well, you don't think, then, by having what they're contributing, however unpleasant, actually printed, that it shows, it lets us know

S: Well, that's true, if it's merely unpleasant, I think that's one thing. Though again, I sometimes think, well why should just the odd person inflict so much negativity on the whole of the Order? I mean, there have been occasions in the past, especially I think some four or five years ago when, after reading certain pages of 'Shabda' I really felt quite sick and disgusted, and wondered whether I hadn't been wasting my

time all those years. I really did. I mean, certain people seem just to go completely beyond the limit, as it were. Some of you might recall some of those instances. And also when, for instance, 'Shabda' is made the medium of a controversy just between two people. (*murmurs of agreement.*) Why can't they sort it out separately or quite apart from 'Shabda'? Does everybody have to know about all that? Does all that negativity have to be inflicted on the whole Order? (Pause.)

There is a question touched on in the next question, about legal matters, because there was an instance, not all that long ago, when someone happened to enter Britain without any money and the customs people searched his luggage and came across a copy of 'Shabda' and read the whole thing. Oh, that wasn't known to people? This happened, I'm not sure if it was last year or the year before. This is what particularly alerted me to the fact that we had, perhaps, to be more careful than we had been. Especially if an issue of 'Shabda' contained material which brought anybody within the law. I mean, for instance, a reference to drug taking or something of that sort. So what are we to do? If an Order member is irresponsible well, should there not be some means of protecting the Order as a whole against that irresponsibility? Can freedom of speech, as it were, be regarded as the sole value? is that the only thing that we have to consider? (Pause.)

Jayaprabha: Do you think, Bhante, that people because Virananda just announced this was happening and presumably we were all aware up to that why he was doing it but maybe some of the people who were writing these things wouldn't be totally aware that they were causing them. I mean do you think ..?

S: I think in some cases in the past, at least, I mean if the people concerned didn't realize that what they were writing was negative etc., etc., well that almost suggests that they don't have enough awareness to be an Order member. I mean, these are not just very subtle instances. They've usually been very gross and obvious instances of wrong speech. I mean, sometimes even just pure abuse, even obscene abuse of other Order members in the pages of 'Shabda'. So I don't think sort of letting it all hang out is necessarily a virtue.

Jayaprabha: No, I was just thinking that maybe it could be spelt out more.

S: I would have thought, I mean my own view has always been, well, it is already spelled out in the precepts which one has taken as an Order member, which one repeats so often. It's as though people don't take that Precept seriously, or those Precepts seriously. I can think of a whole series of 'Shabda's of four or five years ago when it was almost painful to read 'Shabda' at times.

Vidyasri: Then it seems to come back to other Order members, say, in that person's Chapter, needing to very much communicate or to give feedback on that contribution.

S: Yes, that's true. But, in some cases, when the contribution has been made it's

too late. As it were, the damage has been done. What is one to do to prevent damage which may, in some cases, be irreparable? What is one to do then? (Pause.) I think, in the case of certain Order members, there is a sort of feeling that 'free speech' is the absolute value, and nothing should be allowed to stand in the way of that, regardless of any damage that may be done. Regardless of anybody's feelings, you've got to have the right to say whatever you want to say. That seems to me to be highly individualistic. But there is that sort of impression in some people's minds. (Pause.)

Punyavati: So, in a way, like, as Order members, sometimes we forget that by using the freedom of speech we can actually use that in terms of applying the positive side of the four Precepts that we've taken and influencing the Order, the other Order members, through 'Shabda' in that sort of way, in a positive way.

S: I mean generally speaking things have improved over the last few years, but, I mean, they are by no means perfect, as you know. (Pause.) So, I mean, my personal feeling is, which in a way I regret, that not every Order member is so responsible that one can have in them an implicit trust that they can be free to say whatever they wish in 'Shabda'. Unfortunately I don't have that confidence in the Order as a whole - mainly on account of just a very few people - any longer. well, I didn't really have it even perhaps at the beginning. (Pause.) But there were times in the past when I was almost tempted to think well, better not to have a 'Shabda' at all. I was really so ashamed of it sometimes. I mean so ashamed of the material that appeared. But then also people are so reactive, again, about this whole question of authority, you see. They're almost mad in this respect. They're so concerned with their own so-called freedom.

Ratnasuri: Freedom implies responsibility.

S: Yes, indeed. in some cases that isn't realized. I mean, since we're on the subject, one of the things I have wondered is why is it that to the best of my recollection all these sort of negative contributions have been made by men? Not a single one by women, Well, why is that? it seems very odd.

Ratnasuri: Perhaps women are more responsible.

S: Well women as well as men have got greed, hatred and confusion. So why don't they do this?

Vidyasri: I think partly we're less, we're more scared to come out. I think that's part of it because we don't come out as much in 'Shabda' anyway as the men.

S: But anyway, I think the main point that really emerges so far as I'm concerned is that there obviously shouldn't be a need for any editorship at all. A handful of Order members have shown that in the interest of the Order as a whole, we really need to have some editorship. I mean, even though some people see that as

editorship, well if they do well so be it. I mean the Order as a whole has to be protected from their irresponsibility. And certainly Order members can be encouraged and inspired to improve the standard of their contributions but they've got to be open to seeing that some of their contributions have been undesirable and negative. And they're not always open to that. Sometimes they are very stubborn and resistant and emphasize very strongly their so-called freedom of speech. And their resistance to what they see as authority.

Jayaprabha: Do you have any idea, Bhante, why people are so afraid of authority?

S: I really don't. It's one of those things that has really puzzled me because it's not as though people in Britain have ever experienced a dictatorship or an inquisition. They're pretty free to do what they please. but people seem, broadly speaking, seem so reactive within the FWBO about this issue. I really don't understand it. it seems so irrational. (Pause) Very often it just seems to be an expression of weakness, of impotence. I mean it is just a few people usually involved in a more active way, but there's quite a few people just sort of somewhat affected by this anti-authoritarian ideology, as far as I can see, with no reason or justification at all.

Vidyasri: I do often think it must come from quite a strong feeling of impotence because in a way if you felt potent as an Order member you wouldn't fear quite so much that other people were going to impose on you.

S: Yes right. Someone visited us, or visited some of our Centres, who is connected with a Centre for the study of cults and he said that the FWBO was the only group he had studied that encouraged people to think for themselves, and, indeed, we do. But, I mean, the way a few of our Friends react one would really feel that we're very oppressive and all that sort of thing. It really seems quite extraordinary.

Vidyasri: So you don't think, by continuing not to have editorship but by individual Order members giving each other a lot more feedback, you don't think that would be adequate?

S: Not at present. Not for the time being, I'm afraid, because the reactivity that is involved and the negativity that is involved, in certain cases, is very strong.

Vidyasri: So you think it would actually be better to just stop that?

S: Yes, **S:** I'm afraid so. I don't feel very happy about it. in some ways I see it as the lesser of the two evils, but then what is one to do? (Pause)

I mean, certainly the speech precepts can be printed at the front of every issue of 'Shabda' as a reminder but really that reminder shouldn't be necessary. And if someone is sufficiently regardless of those speech precepts I think seeing them in the front of 'Shabda' isn't perhaps going to have very much effect.

Punyavati: I think in a way we shouldn't look at the precepts like the ten commandments, that we need to look at them and remind ourselves of them. It should be something that we feel, in a way, and applying that in our daily lives all the time.

S: Right yes, not just when you (*laughs*) write in to 'Shabda'.

Punyavati: But is there any way we can change the material that we actually get for 'Shabda' I mean is there any way we can do that?

S: Change in what way?

Punyavati: Raise the level of the Material - people's writing ...

S: Well I think the general level of writing in 'Shabda' has improved a lot over the years. The general level. And especially with, well not just the reporting in, but with regards to the long articles that have appeared about people's experiences in India and elsewhere. They've certainly raised the level of 'Shabda'. And, perhaps people could think in terms of sending in more definitely inspirational material. But though that may raise the general level, it doesn't solve the problem of what to do about the just a very few people who are irresponsible. Perhaps their friends need to get at them. Sometimes they don't have friends who they will listen to.

Anoma: I've heard about one person, Bhante, who regularly contributes to 'Shabda' in quite a negative way who, people who've met him, say he's very sincere, he's practising quite sincerely - he's fine, sort of thing and I get the feeling that people aren't confronting him, because people say well basically he's committed and he's fine, but they don't seem to see that the articles aren't fine, that they are negative.

S: Well, they may not always be negative but the fact that sometimes they are is quite bad.

Anoma: But just because somebody appears to be sincere generally in their practice, doesn't mean they can't criticize an article that they've sent in.

S: Right, indeed. Yes, indeed. Sometimes I wonder whether the solution isn't, doesn't have to go further and perhaps we have to give more attention to this sort of thing in our pre-ordination course. Even, in a sense, raise our standards, (*mumbles of agreement*) with regards to ordination because this is quite a basic thing. If people don't take the precepts seriously, I mean, what value have they attached to their ordination? I really feel this.

_____ : Anoma: I must say I've felt quite shocked. I sometimes feel 'how did they become an Order member?'

S: Yes, indeed, but you know very well that people can go up and down and

perhaps one needs to have contact with them for a longer period just to see, well, how often they go up and how often they go down, and how far down they go, or are capable of going.

Kalyanasri: And therefore have time to develop friendships.

S: Yes, indeed, yes. I certainly don't feel happy about there being any editorship of 'Shabda' - editorship in the sense of censorship almost - but I really don't see any alternative.

Jayaprabha: Maybe one of the reasons it is not women is because we do know the women who get ordained, very well.

S: That's true, that's true. And you know one another quite well.

Jayaprabha: And there aren't many people who are out on a limb, really.

S: That's true. It's much easier to be harsher, or to write harshly

about someone if you don't know them, you've never seen them. Or at least for the time being you're the other side of the world. Well, at one time, four or five years ago there was a very unpleasant exchange going on between someone in England and someone in New Zealand. It was really quite dreadful. Well perhaps if they'd been living in the same community that wouldn't have happened.

Vidyasri: Yes, that's true. How would you bring it into the ordination process, just studying ..?

S: Well no, just emphasizing the speech precepts more, even mentioning specifically that when one contributes to 'Shabda' one should be extra careful even though one should be careful all the time. Perhaps ... well I probably will do this, this year itself. Or ask Vessantara to see that it's done, though it should be pretty obvious if one has even read *'The Ten Pillars of Buddhism'*

Jayaprabha: Somebody once wrote in 'Shabda' that they thought that people saw 'Shabda' - why people were always writing in a negative way - was because they saw it as a sort of confessional, sort of thing, rather than maybe just something that you could contribute to on an inspirational level.

S: But to abuse someone isn't a confession. I mean if you - or you could say "well I did feel very negative towards somebody and I'm sorry for that", well that's a confession, but if you write and say that so and so is a such and such and such and such, well that's not a confession. Nor are you using it as a confession. [Pause].

Well actually I think- I've covered point (b) as well as point (a) here. I'll read it anyway.

(1b) If 'Shabda' is susceptible to the publishing laws,

Presumably including laws of libel and slander and so on

of different countries, would it be possible for us to withdraw any article which offends a particular law from 'Shabda's destined for that country only - the compiler then writing to the author to explain the reason for its exclusion from - 'Shabda' in that country?

Well, that could be done but that means that someone has to inform himself about the different laws in the countries where 'Shabda' is going, and also have the trouble of writing to someone to explain why his particular, article is being excluded from those issues. There's certain practical difficulties as regards production.

Kalyanasri: But it also doesn't stop someone having 'Shabda' in their suitcase and getting stopped at customs which is the other ...

S: Yes. it would be simpler if Order Members were more responsible. This could be done if the compiler is willing to take it on. It means extra work for him.

(1c) With the present situation where articles considered slanderous to individual Order members are returned for consideration to the author, what happens if the author still wants to include the article unaltered? Has this happened much since Virananda introduced editorship to 'Shabda'?

It hasn't really. But if someone wanted to ... well I'm not sure ... I would say that if someone wanted to include a slanderous article and refused to change it, it probably shouldn't be published. I mean should 'Shabda' be a vehicle for slander? Should it be a means of people breaking the precepts? When I say slander I mean something which is a clear-cut case of slander, not just a difference of opinion about something. Or if someone wants to use obscene language as sometimes has happened. I personally would prefer to cut that out of 'Shabda'. I don't think that's at all pleasant or in accordance with the Precepts. I mean it really should all be self-evident. Really we ought not to have to discuss these things. It's really, it's a pity in a way we have to waste our time discussing things of this sort.

(1d) At the moment you are willing to take ultimate responsibility in the Editing of 'Shabda'?

That is if things are submitted to me,

but what will happen when you are no longer willing or able to do this?

Well, I just don't know. I hope that by that time the Order as a whole will be sufficiently responsible that no editorship, in the sense of censoring, is necessary. I don't know how long that will take. I can't be sure at all. It only needs one or two

Order members to upset things.

All right, we come on to a different subject.

- (2) *The area of trust is a very important one in the Order. Lack of 'trust' in each other holds back communication in Chapters and Centres, sometimes to quite a large extent. (S: That's true.) Perhaps the phrase 'lack of trust' is used to describe various resistances to communication and openness, and if Order members considered the question more deeply they would find that they could trust each other. To what extent could one say that Order members should be able to trust each other by virtue of having effectively Gone for Refuge to the 'Three Jewels'? How important do you think it is for Order Members to trust each other? How can we develop this trust?*

S: I think one has to be quite clear what is involved in trust, what one means by trust. I think I've spoken about this. I've a vague idea that I defined trust as 'the confidence that the other person would not invoke the power mode against you but that they would only operate in accordance with the love mode.' That is trust. Very often you hesitate to tell somebody something because you are afraid that that person will use it against you. So what does using it against you mean? It means taking advantage of the information you've given to use the power mode against you rather than the love mode. Do you see what I mean? Supposing you reveal a certain weakness that you have, well, somebody may take advantage of you which means they use the power mode against you. They operate in accordance with the power mode, not the love mode. That's what you're afraid of. That's why you're not open, very often. Sometimes the fear is justified, sometimes it isn't.

So I think you can only completely trust another Order member if you're convinced, as the result of your experience, that that Order member at least is not going to operate with regards to you in accordance with the power mode, but that they will operate in accordance with the love mode, or at least try sincerely to do that. This is what trust really means.

Kalyanasri: You say from your past experience with that Order member?

S: Yes, I mean you ought to be able to trust any Order member like that even if you haven't seen them, but I don't know whether, in practice, that is possible. It ought to be possible.

Kalyanasri: So in a way trust is based on your experience. If it's been OK then you'll carry on and it will deepen.

S: Yes, yes. I think Order members ought to be able to trust other Order members of their Chapter. Otherwise now can they be completely open? Suppose they want to confess a weakness or a shortcoming, how can they be sure that it won't be used

against them or turned against them? Only if they believe that the other person has genuine mettā for them and will only operate with regards to them in accordance with the love mode and not the power mode. Yes?

Vidyasri: Do you think that if one trusts somebody to not operate in the power mode that often encourages them not to. I mean if you sort of almost assume trust.

S: Yes, sometimes that is the case. Sometimes it happens the other way round especially in the world. That if people see that you're vulnerable and exposed, or you allow yourself to be vulnerable and exposed, well they will go ahead and take advantage of that sometimes. I don't think that happens much within the Order but I think due to our past experience in the world we're, well, in many ways, quite rightly cautious about opening ourselves to people, even within the Order. I think that where we are convinced from experience that certain people won't take advantage of us whatever we say, that they will operate in accordance only with the love mode so far as we're concerned then we will open ourselves to them. We will trust them. But I don't think you can just have a blind trust any more than you can have a blind faith. You'd be foolish to trust everybody that you met in the world, unfortunately.

Anoma: What about say that you'd had an experience with an Order member and you felt that whatever they'd done has led you to believe that you can't trust them, but if then you just think well I don't trust that Order member, it's not allowing for the possibility of change.

S: Well trust is never absolute. You see, you may trust people in certain respects but not in others. For instance, you may trust a certain person that if you get into difficulties they'll help you. You know that. You trust them in that respect. But you can't trust them to keep a secret. You can't trust them to return a book. So it's not as though people are either 100% trustworthy or 100% untrustworthy. Sometimes they're trustworthy in certain areas and not in others. Sometimes they are untrustworthy in a sense that doesn't imply any moral criticism. For instance, I can trust a certain person to repair the tape recorder, I can't trust another person. That doesn't imply any moral judgement, you see?

Anoma: But still this it is an area that even say, well say like not returning a book, I mean, that person hopefully, if it was brought to their attention, would become more aware in that area and would become trustworthy so you don't carry on not trusting them, indefinitely.

Kalyanasri: You've got to re-try it.

S: Yes, but I think where they have proved themselves untrustworthy a number of times, it's up to them to prove themselves trustworthy, in that respect, before they can expect you to trust them. You'd be foolish to trust them in the light of your experience that they couldn't be trusted. I don't think that would help them to

become more trustworthy, though you should be open to the possibility that they have changed and are now more trustworthy than they were.

Punyavati: Bhante, you just said that you should be able to trust Order members even before you have seen them, so does that imply that this is based on our commitment, our Going for Refuge?

S: Well, yes, you know that they are ordained. You know that they have Gone for Refuge. You know that they are trying to observe the Ten Precepts. You should be able to trust them, but I think that doesn't happen.

Punyavati: So why doesn't it happen?

S: Well, I think to some extent it's due to one's past experience in the world and to some extent it may be due to what you've heard about them or you may have read some of their reporting's in in 'Shabda' (laughter), and felt that you can't trust those people. Do you see what I mean? You are not sometimes in entire ignorance of them. But it should ideally be possible to trust implicitly at once any other Order member. It should be possible.

Jayaprabha: Bhante, when we were discussing it there was an example where one Order member said that they didn't trust the other Order member and would refuse to have anything to do with them, and I think it wasn't actually that they did cross paths very much, but it seems like, in this respect, somebody is actually denying this person's commitment.

S: Yes, it does amount to that, really. if one regards them as untrustworthy in all respects and refuses, therefore, to have any contact with them. It's really refusing to see them as a fellow Order member.

Jayaprabha: Whereas maybe the person who, the person that they're refusing to see, other people could see quite well that they do have this commitment. it seems like a bit one-sided, somehow.

S: Indeed. Yes, it is. If anyone adopted that attitude it would be very unfortunate indeed. Because not to recognize another Order member as an Order member is about the worst attitude you could have towards them. This is not to say that Order members don't have their failings and might commit a serious breach of the Precepts from time to time but provided they are aware of that, and they repent of that, and confess that, they can, I mean, still be communicated with and even regarded as trustworthy in the end.

Jayaprabha: So it's a matter of really this person admitting their weaknesses and trying to repair them in a sense. If somebody is breaking the Precepts, say, but they're denying they are doing it, somewhere, then you can't trust them. But if they were breaking the Precepts but were able to admit "OK, I have this weakness. I'll

try harder."

S: Right. Yes. But even if they've committed a fault and don't acknowledge it, usually that fault is limited to a particular area, you could still, perhaps, trust them in other respects. Maybe, though, with some reservations. (Pause).

Ratnadhvani: So if like in that question it says 'to what extent should we be able to trust Order members who have effectively Gone for Refuge?' it sounds like you seem to consider it's fairly reasonable to expect that we can't, at that point, so is it, when people are, well, when Going for Refuge is deeper, it's closer to 'real' Going for Refuge, that we would be able to trust each other?

S: Oh, yes indeed. Naturally. Yes. Of course. (Pause) We need to think about the meaning of the word 'trust'. As I said, I mean, there are many different ways in which you can trust or not trust people. You know, some people you can trust with your money but you can't trust them with a your boyfriend or your girlfriend. (Laughs) You see, you just have to know a person well and you know then which areas you can trust and which areas you can't. Or you know you can trust them totally. Because there is not only trusting their good will, there's trusting their intelligence, trusting their capacity. The fact that you don't trust someone's capacity to do something is not necessarily a reflection on them. When, in the old days, I used to, for instance, have a piece of typing to be done and someone might say, well, "I'll do it for you, Bhante." But I'd say, "No, I'm not going to give it to you." Then they'd say, "Oh, you don't trust me." You see? But, I mean, if it was lack of trust it was perfectly justified because I would know, from past experience, they could not type it as I wanted it typed. Maybe it was a letter going to some outside group and I wanted it really nicely done and I would know from past experience that they couldn't do it. So they would feel I didn't trust them, and take it that I didn't trust them in a sort of moral sense, that I was blaming them. Whereas I was simply not trusting their capacity, which was not a moral reflection upon them.

So sometimes people expect you to trust them in that sort of way, or, at least, they call that trust.

Vidyasri: To trust their capacity, right.

S: Yes. Yes. I mean sometimes you may be wrong in not trusting their capacity but not trusting someone's capacity is quite different from not trusting them with regard to their character, or not trusting them morally. But these two things are often confused. If you don't trust someone's capacity it's not necessarily a criticism unless of course they ought to have the capacity, or unless they don't have the capacity just due to laziness, or some culpable weakness.

Vidyasri: Mm. Because I think then what happens, say in the Order, people are very touchy about wanting to be trusted and so that if you feel someone isn't trusting you, you don't trust them, so that they may be not trusting you for

something like, they think you're not a good speaker, so they say I don't think you should give a talk, you feel distrusted as a person ...

Kalyanasri: As opposed to a speaker.

Vidyasri: ... so then you distrust them ...

S: Yes, right. Sometimes it's not that you genuinely distrust them, it's a sort of tit for tat. "OK, you don't trust me. I'm not going to trust you." You see? Not that you really don't trust them, but, as I say, it's just a tit for tat. You're just getting back at them. In other words you're being just reactive.

Vidyasri: Because it does seem to be something, certainly at the LBC, I hear quite a lot, from people like, "I don't trust so-and-so and I can't trust so-and-so."

S: I think people must be more specific. If they just say, "I can't trust so-and-so", it really means that they can't trust them as a person, totally. But they may simply be meaning they can't trust them in respect of one particular kind of capacity or responsibility. (Pause)

Vidyasri: It just strikes me as quite sad. Well you defined trust as 'the confidence that the other person will not invoke the power mode' and it seems that Order members do and that just strikes me as quite sad. That sometimes you are actually justified in not trusting somebody.

S: At least in certain respects. Mm.

Jayaprabha: I think it's this thing of generalizing that is damaging actually. I think if people were made to say in what areas, it wouldn't be so damning to people.

S: Sometimes people's self-confidence and self-esteem is very weak so if they're told they're not trusted, full stop, they feel it very strongly and react sometimes quite violently. So if one does, for any reason, have to say that one doesn't trust somebody one should make it very clear within which area you don't trust them. Not simply say, "Oh, I don't trust you." That's very, very dismissive, and very hurtful. In fact you might even go so far as to say that no human being, what to speak of in the FWBO or in the Order, is totally untrustworthy. There are sure to be some things with regards to which you can trust them. Even the worst criminal has certain areas in which you can trust them. (Pause.)

So it's true that as the question says *'The area of trust is a very important one in the Order. Lack of 'trust' in each other holds back communication in Chapters and Centres, sometimes to quite a large extent.'* That is unfortunately true. Though again there has been progress in that area. *'Perhaps the phrase 'Lack of trust' is used to describe various resistances to communication and openness'* (That's true.) *'and if Order members considered the question more deeply they would find that they*

could trust each other.' At least to some extent and at least in some areas. And in the case of some people perhaps trust them totally.

'To what extent could one say that Order members should be able to trust each other by virtue of having effectively Gone for Refuge to the Three Jewels?' Well they should be able to trust each other totally within the limits of their non-enlightened state. Yes? Mm? You should be able to trust their basic good intentions even though they do fall short from time to time. At least you'll trust that they will sooner or later see that and confess it and if they've done anything against you, well, be open with you about it and make it up to you. So you sustain your basic trust in them even though they have fallen short in certain particular respects. I mean they might have been a bit irritable with you or something like that, well, it means to a small extent you can't trust them. You can't trust their temper. But it doesn't mean that you withdraw your trust completely, and when you have a suitable opportunity you point out to them, "Well look, you were very irritable with me the other day," and then they might say, "Well, yes I was, I'm sorry, I realized at the time." Then yes, it's all smoothed over, it's all finished and done with.

Jayaprabha: It's a harder area, Bhante, with men and women working together. You get this sometimes in the LBC.

S: In what way is it harder?

Jayaprabha: In that people don't see each other on retreats, say, very much ...

That's true.

Jayaprabha: ... and so for some people, maybe in a work situation, it might bring out the worst in them, or, in a certain position where they are under pressure, they might be different. And then,

[end of side one side two]

people who know them they can see them when they're meditating, when they're leading retreats, or something like that, and so I think, sometimes one can get a quite fixed view of what this person might be like. I mean, I'm just guessing, because it seems like some of the conflicts are between men and women.

S: Some. I tend to hear about or know about those between men. I'm not aware of any really serious conflicts between men and women, usually. But it may be that there are such.

Jayaprabha: I don't know how serious they are but it can happen that people seem to get very fixed in their view of each other, particularly when they're having to work closely on something. (Pause.)

S: I mean an area where trust is very relevant is this question of assessing people's readiness for ordination. Because sometimes it happens that certain Order members don't trust the assessments of certain other Order members and that gives rise to a rather difficult situation. Especially so far as I'm concerned (laughs), as I can't get to know everybody personally very deeply. Sometimes I can see why the difference of opinion is there but it's not always possible.

Perhaps it's not good to use this word 'trust', or 'Lack of trust' too freely. Not even say "I don't trust their assessment." .say "Well, I think maybe they could have looked at such and such area a bit more closely" or something like that. Trust is a very emotive word. If one speaks in terms of 'lack of trust' it can provoke all sorts of reactions. So, perhaps one has to be careful and be careful about choosing one's words. Be careful how one chooses one's words. (Pause.)

I think it really is a pity that Order members can't trust each other more than in some cases they seem to do. I mean, it really is the sort of lifeblood of the Order, in a way - it's an aspect of kalyana mitrata. (Pause)

Anoma: Bhante, what about in Chapters? You said earlier on that one ought to be able to trust other members of your Chapter.

S: I'm thinking of them particularly because presumably you have regular contact with them, regular communication with them, if only by virtue of your weekly Chapter meeting over a number of years, perhaps. So, it's as though, if you can't trust them, well, who can you trust? And the weekly Chapter meeting is what I've described as your spiritual workshop. How can it be a spiritual workshop unless there's mutual trust?

Anoma: I agree with all that, and this isn't something from my personal experience because I find my Chapter fine but I mean, say an Order member in a Chapter isn't trustworthy in a certain area - say they do evoke the power mode, just because they're in your Chapter doesn't mean that you automatically trust them. So what would you do about that because you want to be able to trust everybody in your Chapter.

S: Well presumably, especially if it is something which affects their relationship with you and other members of the Chapter, well that particular matter has to be taken up with them, sooner or later, whether within the chapter itself or outside the Chapter, whether by one other person or several other people. It will have to be dealt with for there to be complete trust. (Pause)

I mean there is another allied question which it seems you haven't touched on but that is the question of confidentiality within the Order. I mean if there is trust between Order members, part of that trust is that it will be respected and things which are revealed say within the context of a chapter meeting will not be spoken of outside to non-Order members. Sometimes that confidentiality is not respected.

Which means people might be quite happy to say certain things to other Order members but would not be happy to have those things repeated outside to non-Order members, for one reason or another. So one should be able to trust a fellow Order member to respect confidentiality within the Order. And sometimes that has not been done. (Pause)

Jayaprabha: Bhante, is there anything that we can draw from the time of the Buddha in their Sangha - how they related to one another? I was just ...

S: There was a principle of confidentiality, instance. If my memory serves me right a bhikkhu was not supposed to mention even his own offenses to anybody outside the Sangha, what to speak of mentioning anyone else's. And of course within the Sangha, not only could mention them but should mention them. it was incumbent upon him to mention them, to confess them. So there is that sort of precedent. (Pause)

Vidyasri: I think it is a very highly emotive word 'trust' - and there is quite a strong reaction, like, if somebody does say "I don't trust you" you often do react by not trusting them, but I was just thinking in a way that you're reacting in the power mode as well because somehow by saying "I don't trust you", you're somehow....

S: Well it's tit for tat. And tit for tat is always power mode. It's always reactive not creative.

Vidyasri: And because everybody wants to be trusted, by saying you don't trust them, you're sort of doing what they most don't want as well, which gives you a certain power.

S: Oh yes, you can get at them in a way that hurts them. Well, in a way you're cutting the ground from under their feet. You're almost saying that they're a worthless person, really. So I mean, probably, if you do have to tell anyone that you don't trust them you must be very careful to specify the area even adding, where it seems necessary, that you do trust them as a person but you don't have full confidence in them in that particular respect. Or, perhaps in some cases, you would be well-advised to avoid using the word 'trust' or the expression 'lack of trust' and phrase your remarks in a completely different way. Say "I don't think you're quite ready to do this, Let me do it this time" or something like that. "You can do it maybe next time." Not say "Oh I don't trust you to do that," or much less still don't say "Well I don't trust you". Because, in a way, if you say you don't trust someone you're almost regarding them as a criminal. You're putting them outside society. You're almost sort of outlawing them, to put it extremely. Well this is how people take it emotionally. They take it very often, well sometimes, as total rejection, or implying total rejection. The abrogation of all human relationship. Because you can't have a relationship with another person of any kind unless you trust them to some extent. So a denial of trust is a denial of human relationship itself.

When you, say, go to a shop and buy something, well, you trust the shop man that he is not cheating you, that he's selling the goods at the proper price, that they are of good quality. I mean if you get a bus and you buy a ticket well you're trusting the conductor not to cheat you - he's giving you a real ticket that will actually carry you to your destination. Even the most trivial transaction between human beings is based on trust. When you go and buy a book, you trust that it's a decent copy. You don't examine it to make sure that some pages aren't missing. if you had to check everything in that way life would be very difficult. So so much of life is based on trust. Social life is based on trust. All our more intimate relationships are based on trust. So if you tell someone you don't trust them, full stop, you are really expelling them from the human community, expelling them from society. So you should use those sort of expressions very, very cautiously, if at all. But I'm afraid sometimes people use them quite freely.

Punyavati: I was thinking it is like not having faith in their qualities .

S: Yes, yes, indeed.

Punyavati: And that that doesn't give, especially within the spiritual community, it doesn't allow us to express and develop those qualities.

S: Faith is more with regard to a person's qualities, I think, Trust is more with regard to their actions or behaviour or conduct. But trust and faith are very closely related, obviously.

Kalyanasri: You started at the beginning by saying that if someone's been proved untrustworthy that they've got to be proved to be trustworthy ...

S: Well they've got to prove themselves or demonstrate themselves to be. They can't blame other people for not trusting them in a particular respect if they've shown themselves to be untrustworthy.

Kalyanasri: In a way if you keep on not trusting them it also keeps the breach going. Actually I was thinking of this in relation to....

S: It shouldn't be a breach if in fact the other person is, let's say, incapable in a certain respect. For instance someone might say well, "Give me the accounts to do, I'll do them", but you know from experience that that person can't do accounts and if you do give them to them it'll just be a mess that you have to sort out afterwards, so I mean you're quite justified in saying, "Well no, I can't give you the accounts." So they're not justified in saying, "Well give me another chance," unless in the meantime they've done something to qualify themselves to deal with accounts. if they come to you saying, "Well look I know made a mess of it last time, but I have been going to evening classes for the last three months, and I now have some idea. Please give me another chance", well then you can do that perhaps.

Anoma: What about in the area of say, you've told somebody something about yourself and they've been utterly, completely dismissive about it ...?

S: When you say dismissive what do you mean?

Anoma: Well not very sensitive. Say there was something that was very important to you and you tried to express it to this person and they were not sensitive to that, could you, well then you could say well 'I don't trust that person with...'

S: No, I think in that sort of case you need to try again because maybe you haven't chosen the right moment. Maybe they had something on their mind that you weren't aware of. You have to make allowances of that sort and try again.

Anoma: I think that does happen sometimes. People think well I just can't trust that person with my more sensitive feelings or...

S: Because, I mean, people have their own feelings. I mean maybe you were feeling pretty upset and you tried to express it to someone and they didn't want to listen. Maybe they were feeling pretty upset about something and you didn't realize that. Maybe they were very tired. You just chose the wrong moment, so you must make allowances in that sort of way.

Anoma: That's different from something like your accounts, for example?

S: Yes, yes, yes. I mean I often think of those lines of Blake:

*Mutual forgiveness of each vice
Such are the gates of paradise.*

Because People are going to make mistakes with regard to one another all the time, and a point comes when you just have to forgive the other person their mistakes and hope that they will forgive you yours and just start all over again, at least in that particular, respect. But if it's a constant "Oh you did this" and "Why did you do that?" it never ends with some people. You just have to forgive, and if not forget, well, at least forgive. Some people seem to find that quite difficult. They bear grudges and they want revenge and all that sort of thing. But, I mean, sooner or later somebody is bound to step on your toes. You're bound to step on theirs. And as soon as you realize it, well, all you can do is to say you're sorry. The other person should accept that. But sometimes it seems people expect perfection of others but don't expect it from themselves.

Anoma: Also sometimes something can happen there's a misunderstanding ...

S: Yes, sometimes there is a genuine misunderstanding.

Anoma: ... somebody really didn't understand so they behaved in a certain way, and

it sets up this whole lack of trust, which was based just on a lack of understanding, to start with.

S: Sometimes they might have misheard a certain word or something was reported to them wrongly. So I mean, one should have a certain trust in people, such as that one can give them the benefit of the doubt in such cases, and not suspect too quickly, or withdraw one's trust too quickly when there isn't clear evidence for doing that. That's where intimate knowledge of somebody really comes in useful. When you think, "Well no, appearances are against them but they couldn't have done that. I just don't believe it. Even though so-and-so says that that person did it but from my knowledge and experience that person couldn't have done it." So you believe until you've got reason to not believe. That is part of trust. (Long pause.)

But yes this whole issue of trust is a very important one. I think it certainly helps to develop trust if you yourself, as far as possible, can operate in accordance with the love mode, and eschew the power mode in personal relations. I mean, whether a direct or indirect use of the power mode. If you try to manipulate people, that's a use of the power mode. If you bring pressure to bear on them, that's a use of the power mode. (Pause.) I mean, in the world, you can't eschew the use of the power mode altogether, I think, in self-protection. But within the Order, the power mode is completely out of place. Or if it does creep in, for any reason, it means that to that extent the Order is not the Order, and Order members are not behaving as Order members. As I mean, sometimes that does happen. Order members don't always behave as Order members - but hopefully they, on the whole, generally behave as Order members and recognize when they don't, and repent of that. Confess that. (Pause.) It's very difficult not to invoke the power mode, not to be reactive. To feel genuine goodwill is very difficult, it seems. (Pause.)

And if you have a large number of people well there's always the possibility of those people becoming a group rather than a spiritual community. And relating to each other as group members especially if they don't know one another very well, or perhaps even haven't met one another, or not met one another for a long time.

Vidyasri: Would you say that insecurity is one of the, sort of, major causes of using the power mode?

S: From a spiritual point of view it must be so, yes. Well, what else have you got? (Laughs). If you haven't got the love mode what else would you fall back on, and only a person who is secure in himself or herself, in a healthy way, can feel mettā for himself or herself, for others. So if someone doesn't experience mettā, well what else can they fall back on except the power mode? And there will be insecurity. This is one of the things that sometimes puzzles me with regard to Order members, how insecure some of them are, at least, sometimes and therefore how easily they can be upset or disturbed. How easily sometimes, they can fly off the handle and so on.

Vidyasri: Why does it surprise you?

S: Oh, I suppose it's my innate idealism. (Laughter.) Perhaps it is a little naïve to be surprised, especially at my age, but I must admit I still am sometimes surprised. Well, I'm surprised when Order members behave not as Order members because, in some cases, I can remember the time that they were ordained and the sincerity with which they Went for Refuge, and what a positive state they were in, on retreat. I can remember all that. And then I see them behaving in a quite inappropriate way.

Punyavati: Does it seem like a disregard to our practices when Order members are behaving like that?

S: Sometimes it's due to not keeping up their meditation practice, though usually it's not just that. More often it's just due to lack of positive feeling for other Order members. Lack of mettā. Lack of positive communication. Insecurity. It's due to a whole complex of things. Not just one thing. (Long pause.)

Anyway, there's one question left.

If we were totally imbued with our spiritual practice in body, speech and mind, whatever we uttered would be Dharma.

Yes. (Laughter.)

Do you think it would help us approach this state if we deliberately made more effort to use conceptual formulations of the Dharma when communicating with each other, given that we seem to have a fairly good basis of personal communication within the women's wing of the Order?

I'm not absolutely clear what this question means but one comment I will make which is that I think it would be a good thing if, especially talking among ourselves we use Dharmic language and avoid psychologically or politically derived language. Now an expression which I have in mind which I really detest is this expression 'the party line'. Someone says, "Oh you're just toeing the party line". We should never use that sort of language. It's totally inappropriate. Because what party? Well, it's the Communist party. That's where it comes from. The party line is the Communist party line. So why should we, within a Buddhist context, use language, use terminology, which derives from a political movement without any spiritual basis? Why should we use psychoanalytic language in the same way? We've got a Buddhist language, or if we haven't, let's make one, let's create one. Even use literal translations of Pali terms. Otherwise we introduce, if we use, for instance, expressions like 'the party line', well we introduce that whole negative, what shall I say? ...

Vidyasri: Framework.

S: Yes, we introduce that whole sort of negative unpleasant atmosphere which is so inappropriate. What other expressions are in use?

Jayaprabha: There's a lot of psychological expressions aren't there? I'm trying to think of some.

Kalyanasri: I'm blocked,

S: Blocked, yes.

Kalyanasri: Something is coming up.

Punyavati: Stuff is coming up.

S: Well sometimes you see people using the expression 'blocked' when actually the other person is just refusing to agree with them. (Laughter.) So I think we have to be very careful. Let's just use Buddhistic language Dharmic language and avoid all these un-Buddhistic and even anti-Buddhistic terms. (Pause.)

I mean there are some terms that are from feminism. Say 'Well that's sexism'. Well why speak in terms of sexism? Say that someone doesn't have a balanced outlook or put it in more Buddhistic terms. Otherwise these other terms are loaded with all sorts of negative emotions which are inappropriate in a Buddhist context. (Pause.)

Kalyanasri: And more susceptible to be used as jargon.

S: Yes, and as terms of abuse.

Jayaprabha: It seems to be then that we don't really think about what we mean. If you take this thing of - I hear a lot of people saying, we say it ourselves "I've got things coming up". It usually means that you've got things that you are not aware of. They're quite disturbing. Problems of a certain description but it's a lack of being able to describe them in Dharmic terms, maybe.

S: Or even just in standard English. (Laughter) I'm becoming aware of certain things I wasn't aware of before. (Laughter)

Ratnasuri: It sounds much better, doesn't it?

S: Yes. Or I've realized something about myself. Or I've experienced a negative emotion which I didn't realize that I had. Be more precise. If you're more precise you'll be more clear.

Vidyasri: I think it's a lot to do with that, that we're often very imprecise. And actually it sort of makes the level of communication more shallow.

S: And more open to misunderstanding, as with this word 'trust', if you use it loosely and don't make it clear you're not trusting the person's capacity, not not trusting the person, then there's room for misunderstanding. I think jargon always leads to misunderstanding, sooner or later.

Tarasri: And language changing, Bhante. The phrase used "I've got things coming up" to my generation it meant you've got social dates pending.

S: Oh. (Laughs) and (Laughter.) Yes.

Tarasri: Or your timetable was pretty full.

S: Yes. I was reading a book by John Henry Newman, who became Cardinal Newman, about his Oxford days, and they were always 'getting things up'. Mmm? Yes? 'Getting up' meant preparing an essay or preparing a lecture. You 'got up' a lecture or 'got up' an essay. Yes? (Laughter) So even in those days they had their slang and so on.

Tarasri: Or the old expression 'she was got up to kill' meaning she was 'dressed to the nines'. (Laughs.)

S: Yes. Well again, you read Jane Austen's novels and you read about the hero and heroine 'making love in the drawing room.' (Laughter.) Well, in Jane Austen's day that meant just a mild flirtation you see. Or you read again 'there wasn't very much intercourse on that occasion'. meaning 'social contact'. You see. (Laughter.) So the meaning of expressions has changed over the years, over the centuries. (Pause.)

Yes, greater precision of expression I think would help reduce misunderstandings.

Jayaprabha: It's not very formulated but this idea that in the West we are very psychological in our, sort of, understanding of ourselves and each other and sometimes I feel even within the Order, we get very stuck in this.

S: Yes. I think we do. You say in the West but it's a comparatively recent thing. It's post Freudian it seems. That is to say it has only been going on about a hundred years or less. I really must say, personally I get very tired of this mode of expression.

Vidyasri: Well this was what the question was. We were wondering whether we should encourage each other to have more, just Dharmic discussions. Not always talking about personal ...

S: I must say sometimes people take me for walks, in Norwich, or they come to see me, and sometimes it occurs to me, well look, we're always talking about this person's mental states, their problems, and sometimes it's a great relief when someone comes along they start talking about a book that they've been reading or

something of that sort. Otherwise it's as though one is pulled down into the murky depths of someone's psyche. (Laughs.) It isn't always very pleasant or even very interesting. (Laughter) But, you know, people seem to feel the need to do this. But if you've got a genuine problem, by all means discuss it with your friends or with me, but, I mean, I think there's a sort of tendency, an unconscious tendency, a drift, towards talking about mental states, especially negative ones, and problems. I think we probably do this far too much, or there's far too much of this in the Movement at large. We should talk much more about objective things. Things of objective interest. Forget about our wretched selves, at least sometimes. I mean if we just leave them alone you'll probably find they become better. (Laughter.) Otherwise it's like you've got a sore and you keep scratching it. "Oh look at my sore. Give it another scratch. Scratch it for me. Another scratch." It gets worse and worse. (Laughter.) Just leave it alone a bit and it'll heal. I think some problems, pseudo-problems are like that. If you've got a real problem, or at least a real difficulty, maybe someone near and dear to you has died, well you've got to talk about that. Or something you're really worried about. You've got to talk about that. But try to get off yourself and your personal subjective problems as much as you can. Talk about something objective. Talk about the arts. Talk about literature. Talk about the Dharma. Talk about a Sutra. (Pause.) But, don't you notice that?

Vidyasri: Don't you think to express what you are feeling and thinking also helps it move on sometimes?

S: Yes, that's all right but if you do it too often it seems it helps it move on round and round in a circle.

Vidyasri: Right. If you go on and on.

S: I think when someone comes to see you and talks about a difficulty, all right, let them talk about it if they really need to. But when they start going round the second time just stop them and say "Well look, we have talked about that and I've told you what I think. Let's talk about something else." I've had the experience, even fairly recently of going round with someone in the same circle, about three times. Then I've had to say, "Well, look, I've already told you twice or thrice what I think." But, I mean, you say something and then they come back to the first point, as though you hadn't spoken at all. Sometimes it means that a deeper probing is necessary but sometimes it just means the needle has got stuck. They've got to move it out of that groove, by changing the subject. If you can do that sometimes they end up more happy and cheerful.

Punyavati: We were discussing about our National Order Weekends and lack of attendance and how to actually improve that in a sense and we discussed about the means of communication and whether we spend too much time actually talking about ourselves.

S: (Laughs.) Probably. (Laughter.) Well there's talking about and there's talking

about. It isn't very inspiring if someone says, "Oh last week I had three headaches and I couldn't get up very early in the morning, and I haven't been feeling too good, and my stomach's a bit queasy," well maybe (Laughter) but those sort of things you should keep more or less to yourself and talk about a book you have read, or something interesting.

Vidyasri: But do you think there's a value in saying those sort of things to anybody, like if you have a friend, well sort of exchanging quite basic everyday things about your life with somebody or do you think they are just things one shouldn't talk about - just get on with them?

S: I think minor things one needn't talk about. I don't think it's necessarily a sign of great intimacy in the real sense that you talk about those things. I mean maybe one should try to lift the friendship to another level. Not always be talking about trivial things. I mean that's what they say about marriage isn't it? That after three weeks all the husband and wife talk about is the price of the Sunday joint. (Laughs) In some cases it may happen. That sort of thing can happen ... Oh dear! (Laughter.) That sort of thing can happen between friends too. "Oh I don't feel too good this morning." "Oh, neither do I." (Laughter.) What an inspiring relationship! (Laughter.)

Jayaprabha: I wonder if you think that say the difference between Croydon, where they have - I don't go there actually very often - but they do have an Arts Centre there ...

S: Yes.

Jayaprabha: Whether you think that's made a great difference to like how people see Buddhism, as opposed to going to another Centre where maybe they haven't got that other approach?

S: Well I haven't made any particular enquiries but I imagine it must make a great difference because a lot of people, say, in the outside world, apparently see Buddhism as something rather bleak and ascetic and life-denying, so I think the mere fact that it's known that there's an Arts Centre connected with a particular Buddhist Centre, must give them a somewhat different impression of Buddhism than they had before. I'd be very surprised if that wasn't the case.

Jayaprabha: I mean I have noticed that one or two people that come along to the LBC and after a while you get talking to them - but they seem to think that the general friendliness is very nice but they're surprised how little people know about things that they're interested in, maybe certain issues in the world or ...

S: Well you might be surprised how little they know about the Dharma. (Laughs.) You might consider that more important to know.

Jayaprabha: But the point I'm trying to make is its, I don't know, there's a point where you have to learn how to teach the Dharma in terms of, without it getting too psychological, and, I mean, I'm not quite sure when you have a study group and everything, that does sometimes tend to get on a very psychological level, it can do.

S: I suppose it depends what you're studying and who you've got in the study group. Perhaps it depends on who is taking the study. Perhaps the person taking the study has a tendency to slide off into the psychological approach. Perhaps they need to watch that in themselves. The fact that someone raises a sort of psychologically oriented question doesn't mean that you have to adopt a psychological approach for the rest of the evening. You can just deal with that and then bring the study or the discussion back to the Dharma. (Long Pause.)

Anyway, I think we've really finished our time, But I think one of the things that at least emerges from the whole discussion is that being an Order member is no joke. People really need to take it very seriously, perhaps more seriously than they do. They need to take the Refuges seriously. They need to take the Precepts seriously. They need to take their fellow Order members seriously. And they need to be much more aware in everything that they do and say and much more positive. And much more aware of their own limitations and perhaps less aware of other people's limitations. And much more willing to forgive and much more grateful. And much more rejoicing in other people's merits. I mean this has been a bit of a feature in the last couple of years - rejoicing in other people's merits - and that's a very good thing. I think sort of mutual appreciation is becoming more common. That shows itself in various ways. But we still have a lot of ground to cover in all these areas.

I think sometimes Order members, though they are Order members, don't realize what a lot of hard work there is in store for them, if real progress is to be made. And all the klesas are, to use the non-psychological Buddhist terminology, all the klesas are very powerful and, according to Buddhist philosophy they've continued for, well, untold lives, and you're not going to get rid of them in a day. You're not going to get rid of them just by repeating a few Buddhist phrases. You really have to tackle them. It's a sort of life and death matter.

So, I mean, I do feel disappointed from time to time by particular incidents or particular people, but on the whole I remain reasonably optimistic. (Laughter.) But that doesn't mean that things will improve automatically. It's only that I've got the faith that the majority of people, at least, are continuing to make quite a serious effort. Well it's certainly been noticeable within the women's wing of the Order over the last couple of years. I see a big change in the women's wing collectively, since two years ago. It's quite noticeable. When I think of the women's wing, which wasn't even really a wing, a proper wing then, say, eight or ten years ago, the change, the progress is really quite remarkable, and very encouraging. So keep it up! (Laughter.)

Vidyasri: Can you say in what way you see a change in the last couple of years?

S: Well if I'm to sum it up in a word I'd say greater maturity. I don't just mean that you're all two years older, no. (Laughter.) It's a psychological and spiritual maturity. A greater solidity. A greater self-confidence. A greater positivity. A greater independence, I mean individually. I see all those things as having changed and improved over the last couple of years. And it's beginning to show. Among other things it's showing in the fact that more women are now getting ordained. It's not just that more women are coming forward, it also means that more work has been done on more women by the existing women Order members. The results are already beginning to show in that particular way. And I'm sure we'll have more and more results of that kind within the next couple of years.

Vidyasri: That's encouraging.

S: Yes, indeed.

Voices: Thank you Bhante.

S: Righto.

END OF SESSION