

My Relation to the Order

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Publisher's Note

The second part of this paper, which Sangharakshita refers to in his opening remarks, was published in 1996 under the title *Extending the Hand of Fellowship: The Relation of the Western Buddhist Order to the Rest of the Buddhist World*.

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Preface

As the opening paragraphs make clear, Sangharakshita began writing this paper with the intention of redeeming the promise made in *The History of My Going for Refuge* to say something, first about his own relation to the Western Buddhist Order, and then about the Order's relation to the rest of the Buddhist world. Since this booklet ends abruptly, at the end of only the first section: 'My Relation to the Order', a little explanation may be necessary.

Once work on the project was under way, Sangharakshita soon found that his thoughts and reflections were proliferating more richly than he had expected. As the deadline that he had set himself, of the Order's twenty-second anniversary celebration, grew closer, it gradually became clear that there would be sufficient time only to complete the first section of the intended work. It was that section, 'My Relation to the Order', which he presented on 8 April 1990, to a gathering of some two hundred members of the Order at the splendidly ornate Town Hall in the centre of Manchester, and it is that section which is reproduced here.

Although Sangharakshita was hoping that the eventually completed 'two-section' paper would be published in booklet form – before being incorporated into a comprehensive new edition of *The History of My Going for Refuge*, I have persuaded him that the material contained here should get out and about as quickly as possible. I am therefore very grateful to him for allowing us to publish this paper, albeit in truncated form – and wish him well with the task of preparing the final section.

I would also like to thank Allan Miller and Joyce Mumford for their help with the preparation of this paper for publication.

Nagabodhi
April 1990

My Relation to the Order

Two years ago we celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the Western Buddhist Order, which was born in London on Sunday 7 April 1968. Marking as it did the completion of the first two decades of the Order's existence the occasion was an important one in many ways, and one that naturally gave rise to certain reflections on my part. Some of these reflections I communicated to you in a paper entitled 'The History of My Going for Refuge', in which I cast a backward glance over the various stages whereby the significance of that 'central and definitive act of the Buddhist life', as I called it, the *sarana-gamana* or Going for Refuge, had become clear to me. On such an occasion as the present one, I declared in the opening section of the paper, when we had assembled in (relatively) large numbers to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the spiritual community that formed the heart of our new Buddhist movement, it was no doubt appropriate that I should endeavour to trace the history of my Going for Refuge and that, having done this, I should share with you some of my current thinking as regards my own relation to the Order and the relation of the Order itself to the rest of the Buddhist world. As it happened, the tracing of that History of mine took much longer than I had expected, and in the concluding section of the paper I commented that I would obviously have to postpone my remarks on my own relation to the Order and on the relation of the Order itself to the rest of the Buddhist world to some future occasion. The nature of my relation to the Order had in any case transpired to some extent from the latter part of my narrative, while as regards the relation of the Order to the rest of the Buddhist world I would simply observe that it was a relation that subsisted, essentially, with individuals, and that, on this the occasion of our twentieth anniversary, we were happy to extend the hand of spiritual fellowship to all those Buddhists for whom commitment was primary, lifestyle secondary, and who, like ourselves, went for Refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. These words were sufficient to indicate the tenor of my thinking, but they were by no means enough, and the time has now come for me to redeem my pledge of two years ago and deal more fully with the two topics that could not be dealt with properly then, viz. my own relation to the Order and the relation of the Order itself to the rest of the Buddhist world. I shall not be dealing with them at quite the same length as I dealt with the History of My Going for Refuge.

Before dealing with the twin topics of today's paper, however, I must take notice of the fact that in the two years that have elapsed since I endeavoured to trace the history of my Going for Refuge there have been some important developments within the Order, as indeed there have been in the world at large. In the first place, the Order has grown numerically. Two years ago there were 336 of us. Today there are 384, sixty men and women having been ordained during the last two years, two Order members having died, two others having resigned, and ten having had their names dropped from the Order register – in the case of the last a less happy development about which I shall have something to say later on. There has also been the increasing tendency for chapter meetings to take the form of 'spiritual workshops' (a not very expressive nomenclature for which I was, I believe, myself responsible), that is to say, for them to take the form of opportunities for the deepening of our spiritual life, and in particular of our Going for Refuge, by means of free and open communication and interaction of one kind or other.

The most important development during the last two years, however, has been my handing over responsibility for conferring the Dharmachari ordination to Subhuti and Suvajra who, in the course of last year's 'Guhyaloka' ordination retreat, between them ordained seven men as Dharmacharis. Though a number of ordinations had been conferred in previous years by senior Order members acting on my behalf, so to speak, this was the first time anyone other than myself had received people into the Order entirely on their own responsibility, or without reference to me. The occasion was thus one of the utmost significance for the future of the Order, and for me personally a source of the deepest satisfaction. It was moreover wholly appropriate that this particular development should have taken place in the very year that the Order attained its 'collective' majority.

But we must be on our guard against a possible misunderstanding. I have spoken of my *handing over* the responsibility for conferring ordination simply because that expression had somehow gained currency among us, but what has actually occurred is not so much a handing over as a *handing on*. In other words I have not handed over the responsibility for conferring ordination if one takes 'handing over' to mean that the responsibility in question, having been handed over, now no longer appertains to me but appertains instead to the two senior Order members previously denominated. Handing over does not mean *relinquishment*. Thus what has really taken place is not a handing over, or even a handing on, but rather a *sharing* of the responsibility for receiving people into the Order. In this connection there comes to mind the image of one lamp being lit from another, the first lamp 'transmitting' light to the other without thereby losing its own light. – I mention the matter not only to guard against possible misunderstanding – for the Mara of literalism is always lying in wait for us – but also because mitras sometimes ask me whether I may still on occasion confer ordination myself. This question I always answer in the affirmative. Even though light – the light of ordination – is now being transmitted by new, brightly polished lamps with

ardent flames, the old lamp burns on and is still capable, I trust, of lighting at least a few more lamps before the oil finally gives out.

Since this imagery of lamp and light seems to have caught my fancy let me extend it a little. The more lamps there are, especially brightly polished ones, the more brilliant will be the light and the greater the extent to which it will propagate itself. Similarly, my sharing of the responsibility for conferring ordination is not just the most important development to have taken place within the Order during the last two years; it is also a development that has been responsible for, or associated with, a veritable Indra's net of new developments within the Order and, through the Order, within the wider Movement of which the Order is the heart. To begin with, the fact that they now share with me the responsibility for conferring ordination has moved Subhuti and Suvajra, as well as the other members of the Men's Ordination Team at 'Padmaloka' (and, no doubt, the members of the more *ad hoc* women's ordination teams), to a more radical re-appraisal of their own Going for Refuge. As Subhuti reported-in for the October 1989 issue of *Shabda**:

'[Conferring ordinations] for me represents a far deeper level of responsibility than I have ever taken before. In witnessing someone else's Going for Refuge my own is called into question both by myself and by others. The whole effect of ordination derives from the fact that the one who is ordained has confidence in the integrity of the one who is ordaining. The ordinee feels a tremendous boost in confidence that his or her own Going for Refuge is genuine because the ordainer, being someone in whose Going for Refuge the ordinee has confidence, accepts and acknowledges that he or she is genuinely Going for Refuge. Indeed, the effect is that in expressing one's Going for Refuge in that context, for the first time one fully and effectively Goes for Refuge. From this point of view at least, the ordinee's Going for Refuge rests upon the ordainer's. That is the private aspect of the responsibility. From the public point of view, the Order and the movement at large accept that someone is a member of the Order because they have confidence in the ordainer and the process of selection and preparation. All of this is very exposing ...'

In witnessing someone else's Going for Refuge my own is called into question. This is the real crux of the matter, and it is the crux of the matter not just for those who have the actual responsibility for conferring ordinations; it is also the crux – the decisive point at issue – for all members of ordination teams and, indeed, for each and every individual Dharmachari and Dharmacharini who entertains an opinion, expressed or unexpressed (and such opinions *ought* always to be

* A monthly newsletter written by and circulated among members of the Western Buddhist Order.

expressed), on the readiness or unreadiness for ordination of any mitra or Friend who wishes to go for Refuge to the Three Jewels within the context of the Western Buddhist Order. In a sense it is ultimately the crux for the whole Order, for it is the whole Order which, indirectly if not directly, witnesses the ordinee's Going for Refuge and therefore the whole Order whose Going for Refuge is ultimately called into question. This 'calling into question', whether by oneself or by others, is not tantamount to *doubting*. Rather does it constitute a process of self-interrogation – even of a (metaphorical) putting oneself to the question in the archaic judicial sense. It may also be described as a trying and testing, much as gold is tested on the touchstone or tried in the fire. In the course of this process, whether described in terms of self-interrogation or of trying and testing, one discovers to what extent one is speaking the truth when one asseverates '*Buddham saranam gacchami*' or to what extent one's Going for Refuge is made of base metal, or mixed with impurities, rather than being solid twenty-four-carat gold. One discovers, perhaps, that without realizing it one has slipped from effective back to provisional or cultural Going for Refuge and that in assessing someone's readiness for ordination one in fact no longer relies on a strong sense of one's own Going for Refuge – a sense that enables one to detect a similar movement within another person's being – but rather relies on the formal application of criteria or on impressions, feelings, hunches, and intuitions. As Subhuti says, all this is very exposing.

A few moments ago I spoke of the new developments that have taken place within the Order, and, through the Order, within the wider Movement, as being a veritable Indra's net. But in Indra's net, the marvellous jewels of which all mutually reflect one another, it is not always possible to say what is cause and what effect. This is particularly true of the new-style men's ordination process – as it has come to be called – at 'Padmaloka'. I do not know whether it was my sharing of responsibility for conferring ordination that led to the emergence of this process, or the emergence of the process that led to my sharing the responsibility for conferring ordination, at least to the extent of its helping make such sharing a practical proposition. Be that as it may, there is no doubt that the new-style men's ordination process at 'Padmaloka' is one of the most positive developments to have taken place in the course of the last two years and one whose repercussions have already been felt throughout the Movement in Europe and perhaps even farther afield. Subhuti has described the new-style process in his article 'The Men's Ordination Process' (*Shabda* April 1989), which incorporates his 'Letter to Men Who Have Asked for Ordination', as well as giving a fuller (updated) description of it, from 'the request' to 'initiation' in his more recent lecture 'What is Ordination?' Prominent features of the new-style men's ordination process are the series of five two-week long Going for Refuge retreats, at which are covered the five 'themes' dealing with the main areas of spiritual life within the Order, the national gatherings of men who have asked for ordination, the Going for Refuge groups (the first of which I believe emerged spontaneously among mitras quite independently of the 'official' ordination process), the possibility of taking up the Going for Refuge and Prostration

Practice, and the arrangements that are made from time to time for the ordination of the minority of men who, for *bona fide* reasons, are unable to go on the full length 'Guhyaloka' ordination retreat. Moreover, the Kalyana Mitra system for men has been reconstituted on a somewhat new basis and made, in effect, part of the broader ordination process. As I made clear in my letter to you dated 2 January 1990 (*Shabda*, February 1990), Kalyana Mitras will be available only to mitras who have asked for ordination, and since being an effective Kalyana Mitra requires qualities and circumstances which not all Order members at present possess it will be necessary for a proposed Kalyana Mitra relationship to be discussed by the Order chapter(s) of the mitra and the proposed Kalyana Mitras, by the Mitra Convenors' Meeting and the Ordination Team. I myself will make the final decision as to whether the particular Kalyana Mitra relationship is appropriate – a measure of the importance I attach to relationships of this kind. As to the qualities and circumstances required to be an effective Kalyana Mitra, I described these as follows:

'Kalyana Mitras should be relatively senior and experienced Dharmacharis in good contact with me, without difficulties or reservations with the Order and the FWBO, with good communication with members of the Ordination Team at 'Padmaloka', with proven abilities as kalyana mitras, with good Dharma knowledge and a consistent meditation practice, and with adequate opportunity to spend time with the particular mitra concerned.'

Quite a formidable combination, but one that should not be beyond the reach of any Order member of ten or more years' standing or even less.

Thus, like my sharing of the responsibility for conferring ordination, the new-style men's ordination process has been responsible for, or associated with, a veritable Indra's net of new developments. Some of these developments, such as the reinstatement of the Kalyana Mitra system for men, are obviously of more direct concern to the men's wing of the Order as a whole than are others. Among the developments that are of greater concern and interest to the men's wing of the Order as a whole are the visits Subhuti has started paying to the different men's Chapters and the series of lectures he and Aloka have given on the Going for Refuge retreats and at the national gatherings of men who have asked for ordination. The purpose of Subhuti's visits is threefold: (i) to establish communication between the Ordination Team at 'Padmaloka' and the Chapters in order to ensure the future unity of the Movement; (ii) to take all possible advantage of the Chapters' advice and reflection; and (iii) to be able to talk to Chapter members about specific mitras. As for the lectures, they covered such vitally important topics as 'What is the Order?', 'The Refuge Tree', 'The Mythic Context', and 'Spiritual Friendship', and were both instructive and inspiring. So instructive and inspiring were they (judging from the minimally edited transcripts) that I would like to see them circulating more widely within the Movement or, at least, within the Order. I would also like to see the material that

has been produced on the corresponding retreats for women circulating in the same way.

But perhaps the most significant development for which the new-style men's ordination process has been responsible lies in the realm of ideas and ideals. Ideas and ideals form an integral part of the FWBO, even as they form an integral part of Buddhism itself, and it is therefore unfortunate that recent years have seen an increasing tendency, on the part of some Order members and mitras, to neglect certain of our Movement's most vital and characteristic ideas. These comparatively neglected ideas are now being re-affirmed as a result of the new-style men's ordination process. One of the most important ideas to be re-affirmed in this way is that of the absolute centrality for the Buddhist life of the act of Going for Refuge, with its corollary of the necessity for a continual deepening of one's Going for Refuge or (if one prefers the language of ascent) a constant progression to higher and ever higher levels of Going for Refuge – from effective to real, and from real to absolute. In the case of mitras who have asked for ordination this means not screwing one's courage to the sticking point for a flying leap into 'ordination' so much as steadily deepening, or heightening, one's provisional Going for Refuge until it becomes effective Going for Refuge and can be 'witnessed' as such.

The act of Going for Refuge is of course an individual act, that is, the act of a (real) individual; but it is not an *individualistic* act. Going for Refuge has an altruistic dimension, as I have termed it, a dimension represented by what is known in the Mahayana as the Bodhichitta or 'Will to (Supreme) Enlightenment' not for one's own sake only but for the benefit of all living beings. As men and women who Go for Refuge to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, Order members therefore have an outward-going aspect to their lives as well as an inward-looking one. They seek to transform self *and* world. Indeed, they recognize that it is difficult to transform the one without transforming the other, at least to some extent. The medium through which we work together to transform the world is the loose network of organizations and institutions prominent among which are our (public) Centres, our (residential spiritual) Communities, and our (team-based Right Livelihood) Co-operatives and their equivalent. This network constitutes the nucleus of the New Society as we call it, appropriating a term from current sociospeak and giving it a distinctive meaning of our own. The idea – and ideal – of the New Society is one of the comparatively neglected ideas now being re-affirmed as a result of the new-style men's ordination process. Not that it is in need of re-affirmation throughout the Movement. Far from it. In India the idea of the New Society, as well as the related idea of the 'Dhamma revolution', has been consistently and powerfully affirmed from the very beginning of our work there. Only in the West, where it is so much easier for us to withdraw into a private world of purely personal concerns, has there been a tendency in recent years for this idea to be neglected and, therefore, a need for it to be re-affirmed. Without the idea – without the *vision* – of the New Society our Movement loses its cutting edge. As Subhuti wrote seven years ago, in *Buddhism for Today*:

‘The purpose of the FWBO is not to find a corner for Buddhists in the midst of the old society. It is not to give Buddhism a place in the Establishment so the Buddhists can carry out their own colourful practices and hold their own peculiar beliefs. The FWBO is, to this extent, revolutionary: it wishes to change society – to turn the old society into the new’.

We would do well to remember these words. Without the idea of the New Society – without the idea of transforming world as well as self – our Going for Refuge is in danger of becoming an individualistic affair and, to that extent, in danger of being not truly a Going for Refuge at all.

Going for Refuge is sometimes spoken of in terms of *commitment* to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, the word being perhaps most familiar to us in the aphorism ‘Commitment is primary, lifestyle secondary’. As I pointed out in *The Ten Pillars of Buddhism*, the fact that lifestyle is ‘secondary’ does not mean that it is ‘unimportant’, nor does it mean that ‘lifestyle’ represents some ethically neutral way of life that can be combined, without modification, with the pursuit of Enlightenment. There are both skilful and unskilful lifestyles, lifestyles that represent an expression of one’s commitment to the Three Jewels and lifestyles that do not represent such an expression. For those individuals who go for Refuge, or who seek to go for Refuge, the best lifestyle – circumstances permitting – is one that contains a strong single-sex element, either by virtue of the fact that one lives in a single-sex spiritual community and/or works in a single-sex co-operative or by virtue of the fact that one is a regular participant in single-sex retreats, study groups, etc. This single-sex idea, as we rather inelegantly call it, is one of the comparatively neglected ideas and ideals now being re-affirmed as a result of the new-style men’s ordination process. Closely connected with the single-sex idea are the ideas of deep and direct communication, of spiritual friendship, of ‘Going Forth’, and of psycho-spiritual androgyny. These ideas, too, are now being re-affirmed as a result of the new-style men’s ordination process.

Another idea now being re-affirmed is that of the need for clearer thinking. Only too often our thinking is lamentably unclear and confused. It is therefore important that we should talk things out, or talk things through, to a much greater extent than we are in the habit of doing. It is in fact important that we should clarify issues generally, whether these issues happen to be of a practical or a theoretical nature and whether they relate to our personal lives, to the world at large, to the different fields of human activity, or to the basic teachings of Buddhism. In particular it is important that we should clarify issues relating to the meaning and significance of the Western Buddhist Order/ Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha, for unless we are clear about these issues ourselves we shall not be able to clarify them for mitras who have asked for ordination or, for the matter of that, for anyone else. Mitras who have asked for ordination have, after all, asked for ordination into the Western Buddhist Order – more often than not quite explicitly, as some of you will recollect doing yourselves. They have not asked simply to ‘become Buddhists’, or to ‘be ordained’ in some vague, general

sense. They have asked to be allowed to take the most important step in their lives under *our* auspices and in the sense that *we* understand that step. It is therefore not enough for us to acquaint them with the meaning and significance of Going for Refuge and 'taking' the Ten Precepts. We have also to acquaint them with the meaning and significance – with the distinctive nature – of the Western Buddhist Order, so that they know on what principles the Order is based and can decide whether they do, in fact, want to be a 'part' of it – whether they do, in fact, want to be one of the thousand arms of Avalokiteshvara. All this calls for clear thinking. Without clear thinking on the part of Order members, especially on the part of those who are directly concerned with the ordination process, whether as Chapter members or as members of a men's or a women's ordination team, it is difficult for a mitra who has asked for ordination to deepen his or her Going for Refuge to the point where provisional Going for Refuge begins to be transformed into effective Going for Refuge. Without clear thinking it is also difficult – perhaps even impossible – for an Order member to deepen his or her effective Going for Refuge to the point where, Insight arising, it begins to be transformed into real Going for Refuge. Lack of clear thinking is, indeed, one of the three principal reasons why Order members drift away from the Movement and eventually have to be dropped from the Order register, the two other reasons being the discontinuance of their daily meditation, especially the visualization and mantra-recitation practice they received at the time of ordination, and the disruption of their personal relationship with me.

This brings me, at last, to the first of the two topics I was unable to deal with two years ago, viz. my own relation to the Order. But first I want to say a few words about the dropping of names from the Order register. As I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, in the course of the last two years ten Order members have had their names dropped from the Order register (none were, I think, dropped before that). I need hardly say that for me the necessity of dropping someone's name from the register is an extremely painful one, the pain being perhaps more than commensurate with the happiness I felt at their ordination. I also need hardly say that no one's name has been dropped without a good deal of consideration on my part and without their having been out of touch with me, and out of touch with the Movement, for upwards of half a decade, as was the case with almost all those whose names have been dropped in the course of the last two years. At the same time I would like to make it clear that, painful as it is for me to drop an Order member's name from the Order register, I find it still more painful when the presence of someone's name on the register signifies a purely nominal membership of the Order on their part. There were several reasons why, twenty-two years ago, I took upon myself the onerous responsibility of founding the Western Buddhist Order. One reason was that I was dissatisfied with 'Buddhist' organizations whose membership was, for the most part, only nominally Buddhist – perhaps not even that. I wanted to have an organization that was genuinely Buddhist, which meant having one whose members were all Buddhists, that is, whose members all actually went for Refuge to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Thus it was that on Sunday, 7 April 1968, I

founded not another 'Buddhist society' but a Spiritual Community or Order – the Western Buddhist Order. You therefore can understand how disappointed I am when someone drifts away from the Movement and allows their membership of the Order to become purely nominal. You can understand why it is impossible for me to acquiesce in such a state of affairs indefinitely and why I eventually have to drop their name from the Order register. Though I would dearly love to have a big Order, with tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands, of Order members, I would much rather have a small Order, *all* the members of which were real Order members, than have a big Order that contained even a sprinkling of those whose membership of the Order was purely nominal. Having said this, however, I would like to say that Order members whose names have been dropped from the Order register can have them reinstated and can, if necessary, be re-ordained, as can Order members who have resigned. A bhikkhu is permitted to join and re-join the Monastic Order up to seven times and we should not be less generous. But someone wishing to have their name reinstated on the Order register will have to clarify their thinking; they will have to resume their daily meditation practice, and they will have to renew their personal relationship with me.

Thus I am again brought to the topic of my relation to the Order, and to this we must now turn. The first thing that occurred to me, when I started preparing this paper, was that besides the question of my relation to the Order there was the question of the Order's relation to me – of *your* relation to me. But on second thoughts I realized that it was not really possible for me to share with you some of my current thinking as regards my own relation to the Order without, at the same time, sharing with you some of my current thinking as regards the Order's relation to me, if only by implication. My relation to the Order and the Order's relation to me were the two sides of a single coin. In sharing with you some of my current thinking concerning our mutual relation I shall, however, be speaking mainly in terms of my relation to the Order, leaving it to you to work out for yourselves what this implies in terms of your relation to me.

But first I must warn you that my current thinking about my relation to the Order is not particularly systematic. It is still very much 'work in progress'. Just how unsystematic my thinking was I realized only when, as my custom is before starting work on a lecture or paper, I jotted down my thoughts on the subject in the order in which they occurred to me. After half an hour I had several dozen such 'thoughts', and there did not seem to be much connection between them. As I gazed at the sheet of A4 on which I had jotted them down, however, they seemed – like the phenomena of mundane existence – to distribute themselves into five 'heaps'. In sharing with you my current thinking about my relation to the Order I shall, therefore, be speaking about (i) the *importance* of my relation to the Order, about (ii) the *nature* of that relation, about (iii) the *person* who has that relation, namely myself, about (iv) the *ways* in which I relate to the Order, and about (v) the *future* of my relation to the Order – or my future relation to the Order, as I should perhaps put it. The order in which I have enumerated these

five 'heaps' of thoughts is not necessarily the logical one (if indeed there is a logical one), and there may well be a certain amount of overlap between them, with some thoughts appearing in more than one 'heap'.

My relation to the Order is (*i*) *important*, that is, important to *me* (I leave aside for the moment the fact that it is important to you). It is important to me because you are important to me, both individually and collectively. You are important to me by virtue of the fact that you are human beings who live and must die, who experience pleasure and experience pain. You are important to me by virtue of the fact that you have gone for Refuge to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Above all, you are important to me because you have gone for Refuge with me as your 'witness', that is, because you have been ordained by me into the Western Buddhist Order/Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha. (A growing number of you have, of course, been ordained by Subhuti and Suvajra acting on their own responsibility, but inasmuch as *their* Going for Refuge was 'witnessed' by me you are no less important to me than those whom I have ordained personally and my relation to you is no less important to me than is my relation to them.) Since you are important to me I follow the course of your spiritual – and worldly – careers ([in the sense of] *carya*) with the utmost interest. Your successes and failures are my successes and failures. Whatever concerns you concerns me. I read *Shabda* from cover to cover each month, usually as soon as it arrives, mainly because I want to know how you have been getting on – what you have been thinking, feeling, doing. Your contributions to *Shabda*, especially your respective reportings-in, are in fact my principal source of information about you, and I therefore feel very disappointed when month after month no word from Dharmachari X or Dharmacharini Y appears in its pages. Besides reading *Shabda* from cover to cover, I read all your letters, picture postcards, and telegrams (not to mention your poems), which between them constitute a source of information about you second only to your contributions to *Shabda*. Nowadays I receive a good deal of mail (mitras and Friends also write, as do other people); but however much I receive I am always glad to hear from Order members, even though it is not always possible for me to reply. Some of you, I know, have wondered whether your letters actually reach me and, if so, whether I read them. I can assure you that they do reach me, wherever I happen to be, and that I *always* read them. Sometimes I read them twice.

Perhaps you are surprised that the Order should be important to me because *you* are important to me, and surprised that I should have emphasized the point in the way I have done. There are several reasons for the emphasis. In the first place, the Order really is important to me because *you* are important to me, and in sharing with you some of my thinking about my relation to the Order it was therefore hardly possible for me not to tell you how strongly I felt this. In the second place, the Order is growing numerically all the time. As I mentioned earlier, there are now 384 of us, sixty men and women having been ordained during the last two years. 384 is not really a very large number of Order members to have, especially when one considers how badly the world needs Order

members; but I suspect that it is quite large enough for some of you to feel that you are in danger of getting 'lost in the crowd' – large enough for you to feel that in your individual capacity you do not count, that Bhante is too busy to take much notice of you, even that he does not care for you particularly. As I hope I have made clear, this is certainly not the case. So far as I am concerned you do count in your individual capacity (the only capacity that really matters), I am not too busy to take notice of you, and I do care about you. There are other reasons for my emphasizing that my relation to the Order is important to me – that *you* are important to me. The Order is now twenty-two years old. For the last twenty-two years I have put more of my energies into the Order than I have into anything else. Only my literary work and my friendships have represented anything like a comparable investment of my energies, and even these have increasingly subserved the needs of the Order (and the Movement), in the one case, and fallen within the compass of the Order in the other. For the last twenty-two years the Order has occupied the very forefront of my consciousness, there being hardly a day when my thoughts were not concerned with it, either directly or indirectly. The Order is my *chef-d'œuvre*, the principal work of my life, though by its very nature it is a work that could not have been accomplished without the co-operation of a number of people – without *your* co-operation. For these reasons, too, my relation to the Order is important to me, which means that *you* are important to me, both individually and 'collectively'.

One more point in connection with this particular 'heap' of thoughts. When I speak of my relation to the Order being important to me what I mean is that my relation to the whole, united Order is important to me. To the extent that the Order is not united it is not an Order and I cannot relate to it as an Order, that is, cannot relate to it as a whole, united Order. (It would give me very little satisfaction to relate to a fragmented Order.) Conflict and disharmony within the Order are extremely painful to me, even as they are damaging to the Order as a whole and detrimental to each and every individual Order member, especially to those immediately responsible for the conflict and disharmony. Conflict and disharmony represent a negation of the ideals for which the Order stands. They represent a negation of the Order's very existence. When conflict and disharmony arise within the Order, therefore, even to the slightest extent, they should be resolved as quickly as possible and peace and harmony restored.

By (ii) the *nature* of my relation to the Order I mean its general character. That character is determined by the nature of the various particular relations in which I stand to the Order – relations which shade one into another and which are more easily distinguished than separated. Probably the most obvious relation in which I stand to the Order is that of founder, in the sense of being the one who, more than anybody else, was responsible for the Order's coming into existence. Closely connected with my relation to the Order as founder is my relation to it as preceptor, that is, as conferrer of ordination, for the Order came into existence, and I became related to it as its founder, only when – twenty-two years ago – I conferred the first Dharmachari and Dharmacharini ordinations as we now call

them. Though closely connected with each other, however, the two relations are to some extent separable or, more precisely, are separable from a certain point in time onwards. As you know, last year I started sharing the responsibility for conferring ordination, and the point at which I did this was the point from which my relation to the Order as founder became separable from my relation to the Order as preceptor. The responsibility for founding the Order cannot be shared, of course, the founding of the Order being a unique historical event that took place once and for all and cannot take place again, at least not in the present world-period. From the fact that my relation to the Order as founder and my relation to the Order as preceptor are to some extent separable, that is, separable from the point at which I started sharing the responsibility for conferring ordination, it follows that while I stand in the relation of founder to the whole Order, or all Order members, I stand in the relation of preceptor only to a part of the Order, or some Order members. To that part of the Order to which I do not stand in the relation of preceptor I stand in the relation of preceptor's preceptor. Thus my relation to the Order as founder is in a way more fundamental.

A few minutes ago I spoke of myself as the founder of the Order in the sense of my being the one who, more than anybody else, was responsible for the Order's coming into existence. *More than* anybody else. The use of the comparative degree was deliberate. It signified my awareness of the fact that others, too, were responsible for the Order's coming into existence, albeit not responsible to the extent that I was nor perhaps in the same kind of way. Though I may have taken the initiative, even have played the leading part, I did not found the Order all on my own. I did not found the Order single-handed. Indeed it was impossible for me to found it single-handed. I could found it only by 'witnessing' the Going for Refuge of others and I could 'witness' their Going for Refuge only because they wanted me to 'witness' it. Or, I could found the Order only by ordaining people and could ordain them only because they wanted me to ordain them. Thus while I am the founder of the Order I am its founder only by courtesy of other people. I am its founder only because other people wanted the Order to be founded and wanted me to be its founder. It therefore would be no less true to say that they founded the Order with my co-operation than to say that I founded it with their co-operation.

But I am being a little paradoxical. I have overstated the case for my not having founded the Order all on my own, or single-handed. There is another side of the question – another factor to be taken into account. Though I indeed could found the Order only by 'witnessing' the Going for Refuge of other people, and 'witness' it only because they wanted me to, the nine men and three women whom I ordained on the occasion whose anniversary we are celebrating today all went for Refuge with a certain understanding of what was meant by Going for Refuge. That understanding coincided with my own understanding of what was meant by Going for Refuge, at least to some extent. It coincided with it because having studied and practised Buddhism under my guidance the men and women in question shared my views. In other words they were not just ordines

and I was not just their preceptor. They were also my pupils, my disciples, and I was their teacher; and because they were my disciples, and went for Refuge in the sense that I understood Going for Refuge, it would, after all, be truer to say that I founded the Order with their co-operation than to say that they founded it with mine.

Thus there is another relation in which I stand to the Order. Besides that of founder and that of preceptor (and preceptor's preceptor), I stand to it in the relation of teacher, that is, spiritual teacher or teacher of the Dharma. As I just now had occasion to mention, I was the teacher of the first twelve Order members, both before and after their ordination, and I have been, and still am, the teacher of the 384 existing Order members. By this I do not mean that I have taught all Order members personally, or that even in the case of those whom I have taught personally I have necessarily taught them all they know about the Dharma. Senior Order members teach junior Order members, both before the latter's ordination and after (not that the picture is really as simple as that), which is why, incidentally, at the conclusion of the ordination ceremony the new Order member's 'formal' acceptance of the ordination includes the words 'with loyalty to my teachers'. What I mean, when I say that I am the teacher of the Order, is that the Dharma studied, practised, and propagated by Order members is the Dharma as elucidated by me. This is not to say that I have elucidated the Dharma at every single point, only that I have elucidated it in certain fundamental respects. It is not to say that I have finished elucidating the Dharma. There may be many more elucidations to come. Moreover, the fact that the Dharma studied, practised, and propagated by Order members is the Dharma as elucidated by me does not preclude the possibility of an Order member elucidating points not elucidated by me, provided this is done in accordance with the spirit of my elucidations. Some Order members have, in fact, already started doing this. Others have started elucidating my elucidations. This is the way a tradition – a lineage – begins to develop.

The word 'elucidate' is from *lucidus*, bright, and means 'throw light on, explain'. It suggests the (metaphorical) bringing of something from obscurity and darkness into the light. It even suggests, we may say, the transferral of something from a place or realm of darkness to a place or realm of light. Thus to elucidate is also to *translate*, for the word 'translate' is the past participle of the very word from which we get the word 'transfer' meaning 'convey, remove, hand over, (thing etc. *from* person or place *to* another)'. The primary signification of 'translate' is 'express the sense of (word, sentence, speech, book, poem, etc.) in or *into* another language.' But there is language in the literal sense ('the languages of north India') and there is language in the metaphorical sense ('the language of art'). 'Translation' can therefore be either from one spoken or written tongue in or into another, or from one discipline, or set of ideas, or culture in or into another. As with 'translation' so with 'translator'. A translator can express the sense of word, sentence, speech, book, poem, etc., in or into another language, or he (or she) can express the sense of one discipline, or set of ideas, or culture in or into the

terms of another. In both cases something is brought from obscurity and darkness into the light. One who is literally a translator brings a word, sentence, speech, book, poem, etc. from the obscurity and darkness of an unknown tongue into the light of one that is known and understood. One who is a translator metaphorically brings a discipline, or a set of ideas, or a culture, from the obscurity and darkness of unfamiliar terms into the light of terms that are familiar. I myself am a translator because I elucidate, that is, elucidate the Dharma. It is because I am a translator, in the metaphorical sense, that when I visited Italy in 1966 I was so strongly drawn by paintings on the theme of St Jerome, especially by those paintings which represented him in his cell, or study, with an hour glass in front of him, a lion (which he had tamed) sleeping at his feet, his red cardinal's hat hanging on the wall, a large volume open before him, and a quill pen in his hand. As I wrote in 'The Journey to Il Convento', a paper I gave in the course of the fourth three-month Pre-Ordination Course for Men, held at Il Convento di Santa Croce in Tuscany during the winter of 1984:

'St Jerome is one of the four Fathers of the Latin Church. He lived in the latter half of the fourth and the first quarter of the fifth century, and was a contemporary of St Augustine, another of the Fathers of the Latin Church, with whom he had an acrimonious correspondence. When he was already middle-aged St Jerome left Rome and went to live in the Holy Land, at Bethlehem, and it is at this stage of his career that he is usually depicted in Christian art. ... St Jerome was, of course, responsible for the production of the Vulgate, the standard Latin version of the Bible, which was in use throughout the Middle Ages, and when represented in his study he is generally understood to be engaged in this great work. Incidentally, he is represented as a very old man, with a long white beard. ... Somehow this theme, or image, took hold of my mind. St Jerome was the Wise Old Man, and as you know the Wise Old Man is one of Jung's Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious. That he was engaged in the work of translation, especially that of rendering the Word of God into ordinary human speech, meant that something hidden in the depths was being brought up to the surface, or brought from darkness into light. Thus St Jerome was the Alchemist – another embodiment of the Wise Old Man. His cell-study (sometimes depicted as a cave) was the Alchemist's laboratory. Indeed, it was the Alchemist's *limbec*, in which the Red King united with the White Queen, or his crucible, in which lead was transmuted into gold.'

St Jerome was thus the translator both literally and metaphorically. In the next paragraph of 'The Journey to Il Convento' I tried to explain why I had been drawn to the image of St Jerome:

'No doubt I was drawn to the image of St Jerome partly because of my personal situation at the time. I was living in the desert. I had left the "Rome" of collective, official, even establishment, Buddhism, and was seeking to return to the origins of Buddhism in the actual life and

experience of the Buddha and his immediate disciples. Not only that. I was trying to teach Buddhism in the West, which meant I was trying to communicate the spirit of the Dharma in terms of Western rather than in terms of Eastern culture. I was thus a translator, with all that that implies in the way of seeking to fathom the uttermost depths of what one is trying to translate so that one may translate it faithfully, i.e. bring its meaning to the surface, or from darkness into the light. Thus I was drawn to the image of St Jerome, and was able to see that image as an embodiment of the archetype of the Wise Old Man as “Translator” and Alchemist, because I had a personal affinity with that image, or because there was something in me that corresponded to the image.’

However, I have digressed. I have digressed due to my fondness for the figure of St Jerome, and must now return to my relation to the Order as teacher. As I said, I am the teacher of the Order in the sense that the Dharma studied, practised, and propagated by Order members is the Dharma as elucidated by me. In other words, the Dharma studied, practised, and propagated by Order members is the Dharma as ‘translated’ by me, that is, the Dharma as translated by me from the terms of Eastern culture into the terms of Western culture. But teaching is a form of communication, as is elucidation and ‘translation’, and since one cannot really communicate without friendliness (*maitri*) one cannot really teach without friendliness either. One cannot, in fact, be a teacher without being a friend – cannot be a spiritual teacher without being a spiritual friend (*kalyana-mitra*). I therefore stand in yet another relation to the Order. I stand to it in the relation of spiritual friend. Between the Order and myself there exists the relation of spiritual friendship that is the sum total, so to speak, of all the different relations of spiritual friendship I have with individual Order members. The whole subject of spiritual friendship, both vertical and horizontal, has of course been much discussed within the Order, especially of late, and for this reason I do not propose to say anything about it now. Instead, let me refer you to the ‘Spiritual Friendship’ chapter in Subhuti’s *Buddhism for Today* and to his nine ‘Padmaloka’ lectures on the same inspiring theme. I would also like to draw your attention to my own essay ‘The Good Friend’, written in Kalimpong in 1950.

You may have noticed that I have said nothing about my standing to the Order in the relation of guru. According to a popular Indian etymology ‘guru’ means ‘bringer of light’, and the word may therefore be taken as having the same general signification as ‘elucidator’. Nonetheless, I do not care to apply it to myself or to have it applied to me by others. In recent years the activities of so-called gurus have debased the meaning of the term to such a degree that the *Collins Dictionary of the English Language* (second edition, 1986) can attach to its secondary sense, ‘a leader or chief theoretician of a movement, esp. a spiritual or religious cult’, the connotative label ‘often derogatory’, implying that the connotation of the word is unpleasant with intent on the part of the speaker or writer. I showed signs of being not completely happy with the guru concept itself as early as 1970, when I gave the lecture ‘Is a Guru Necessary?’ In this lecture I did three things. Firstly, I tried to explain what a guru was not. He (or she – for there

is a female of the species) was not the head of a religious group, not a teacher (that is, not one who imparts knowledge and information, not even religious knowledge and information), not a father- (or mother-) substitute, and not a problem-solver. Secondly I tried to explain what a guru was. He was one who stood on a higher level of being and consciousness than we did, one with whom we were in regular contact, on whatever plane, and one between whom and ourselves there was an 'existential' contact and communication. Finally, I compared Eastern and Western attitudes towards the guru. In the East, I suggested, the guru was sometimes overvalued; in the West, usually undervalued. The proper course was to follow a middle way between the two extremes, simply recognizing that there were others more highly evolved than ourselves and that we could evolve through contact with them. What was required was not absolute faith but contact and receptivity. In this way did I attempt, in effect, to revise the guru concept and rid the word 'guru' of its unpleasant connotation. The tide was against me, and now, twenty years on, I would drop the guru concept and, as I said, preferably not apply the word 'guru' to myself nor have it applied to me by others. We have in Buddhism the wonderful term 'spiritual friend' and this I am more than content to apply to myself and to have applied to me by others. Indeed, there are times when I think that 'spiritual friend' is almost too much and that just 'friend' would be enough. The English word 'spiritual' is in any case not the exact equivalent of the Indian word '*kalyana*'. According to the *PTS Pali-English Dictionary*, '*kalyana*' means 'beautiful, charming, auspicious, helpful, morally good'. Obviously I cannot claim to be beautiful, at least not in the literal sense, and I can hardly be described as charming, though I may be auspicious and helpful on occasion and morally good to some extent. Let me, therefore, be content with the appellation 'friend' and stand to the Order simply in the relation of friend.

Probably I have gone on about myself long enough, but I am afraid we have not yet finished with the subject, for having spoken about the importance of my relation to the Order, and about the nature of that relation, I must now speak about (iii) the *person* who has the relation, that person of course being myself. Perhaps you are surprised to hear me speaking about myself in this connection. Perhaps you took it for granted that I would speak about my relation to the Order without explicitly bringing myself into the picture. After all, that is what we often do: we leave ourselves out; we omit the personal factor from the equation. Some would even say that we *ought* to leave ourselves out. We ought to leave ourselves out because, paradoxically, there is no self to leave out. There are relations but no relata. This is miserable sophistry – at least in the present connection, and on the level on which I am speaking. That it is I, and no other, who stands to the Order in the relation of founder, preceptor, and so on, cannot but make a difference, both to the relation itself and to the Order. So who is it that has the relation to the Order? Who am I? I must confess I do not know. I am as much a mystery to myself as I probably am to you. Not that I am a mystery to everyone, apparently. Quite a lot of people know exactly who and what I am (I am speaking of people outside the Movement). Quite a lot of people 'see' me. But they see me in different ways.

This was very much the case when I lived in India. According to who it was that did the seeing, I was 'the English monk', 'a rabid Mahayanist', 'a narrow-minded Hinayanist', 'the Enemy of the Church', 'a Russian spy', 'an American agent', 'the Editor of the *Maha Bodhi*', 'an impractical young idealist', 'a good speaker', 'the invader of Suez', 'the guru of the Untouchables', and so on. More recently, here in England, I have been 'a good monk', 'a bad monk', 'the Buddhist counterpart of the Vicar of Hampstead', 'the author of the *Survey*', 'a crypto-Vajrayanist', 'a lecturer at Yale', 'the hippie guru', 'a first-class organizer', 'a traditionalist', 'a maverick', 'a misogynist', 'a sexist', 'a controversial figure', and 'An Enlightened Englishman'.

All these different 'sightings' have at least *some* truth in them, even though the people doing the 'seeing' may have looked at me from the wrong angle, in the wrong kind of light, through tinted spectacles, or through the wrong end of the telescope. They may even have had spots floating before their eyes. The reason why all these different sightings have at least some truth in them is that I am a rather complex person. (Not that I am so very unusual in this respect. Some of you, too, are rather complex, as I know only too well.) It is partly because I am a rather complex person that I am a mystery to myself, even if not to others. But though I am a mystery to myself I am not, I think, so much of a mystery to myself as to cherish many illusions about myself. One of the illusions about myself that I do *not* cherish is that I was the most suitable person to be the founder of a new Buddhist movement in Britain – in the world, as it turned out. I possessed so few of the necessary qualifications; I laboured under so many disadvantages. When I look back on those early days, and think of the difficulties I had to experience (not that I always thought of them as difficulties), I cannot but feel that the coming into existence of the Western Buddhist Order was little short of a miracle. Not only did the lotus bloom from the mud; it had to bloom from the mud contained within a small and inadequate pot. Perhaps it had to bloom just then or not at all, and perhaps this particular pot was the only one available.

Now, hundreds of lotuses are blooming, some of the bigger and more resplendent flowers being surrounded by clusters of half-opened buds. During the last twenty-two years a whole lotus-lake has come into existence, or rather, a whole series of lotus-lakes. Alternatively, during the last twenty-two years the original lotus plant has grown into an enormous lotus-tree not unlike the great four-branched Refuge Tree – has in fact grown into a whole forest of lotus-trees. Contemplating the series of lotus-lakes, contemplating the forest of lotus-trees, and rejoicing in the strength and beauty of the lotus-flowers, I find it difficult to believe that they really did all originate from that small and inadequate pot, which some people wanted to smash to bits, or cast into the dustbin, or bury as deep as possible in the ground. In brief, dropping the metaphor and speaking quite plainly, when I see what a great and glorious achievement the Order represents, despite its manifest imperfections, I find it difficult to believe that I could have been its founder. Not long ago, in connection with the dropping of names from the Order register, I spoke of my having taken upon myself the

onerous responsibility of founding the Western Buddhist Order. I indeed took that responsibility upon myself, and it was indeed an onerous one. Nonetheless, there are times when, far from feeling that it was I who took on the responsibility, I feel that it was the responsibility that took on me. There are times when I am dimly aware of a vast, overshadowing Consciousness that has, through me, founded the Order and set in motion our whole Movement.

Before going on to speak about the ways in which I relate to the Order, I want to make just one more point. It concerns my own limitations as a person. That one is a person at all means that one has certain limitations. Apart from such obvious limitations as those of nationality, language, and class (or caste), there are the limitations imposed by the fact that one is of a particular temperament and experiences life in a particular kind of way. One can hardly be of all temperaments and experience life in every kind of way. One is either introvert or extravert, Hellenist or Hebraist, Platonist or Aristotelian, Shraddhanusarin or Dharmanusarin, *jnani* or *bhakta* – though it is a case, more often than not, of one's being predominantly rather than exclusively the one or the other. That it is I, and not someone else, who stands to the Order in the relation of founder, preceptor, and so on, thus cannot but make a difference, as we have seen. But though it makes a difference that difference should not constitute a limitation. I am by temperament inclined to the humanities, let us say, rather than to science, and in teaching the Dharma I tend to present it in terms of the humanities, that is, in terms of literature, philosophy, and the fine arts. But this does not mean that those Order members who are by temperament more inclined to science should not present the Dharma in terms of nuclear physics or biology. The important thing is that the Dharma should be communicated to as many people as possible and this means communicating the Dharma in as many different ways as possible – always assuming, of course, that it is in fact the Dharma that is being communicated. In other words – and this is the point I want to make – my own personal limitations should not be the limitations of the Order. The Order should not be simply Sangharakshita writ large. Avalokiteshvara has a thousand hands, and each of the thousand hands holds a *different* object. Similarly, Order members of particular temperaments have different talents, aptitudes, and capacities, and in making their respective contributions to the life and work of the Order they should allow – *you* should allow – those talents, aptitudes, and capacities full scope. The Order should be a rich and many-splendoured thing, with all kinds of facets. It doesn't have to be just a lotus-lake, or even a series of lotus-lakes. It can also be a rose garden, or a cabbage patch, as you prefer.

To relate means to communicate, and (*iv*) the ways in which I relate to the Order are simply the different means I employ to communicate with Order members, both individually and 'collectively'. My principal means of communication is the spoken and written word, as when I talk to you, whether live or on tape, or write a letter or an article. (That I am unable to communicate by means of visual images or musical notes is one of my own limitations.) The other means I employ to communicate with Order members are, of course, non-verbal, but inasmuch as I

make much less of them than I do of the spoken and written word I shall say nothing about them until I have spelled out the different forms taken by the spoken and written word as I communicate with you through that medium.

Communication by means of the spoken word takes the form of personal talks, public lectures, interviews, question-and-answer sessions, and study seminars, all of which can be, and except for personal talks usually are, recorded on tape. These tape-recordings can be transcribed and edited and even published in book form – which brings me to a point I would have made on the Convention had not an indisposition prevented me from addressing you. Due mainly to the devoted labours of the Transcription Unit, more than half the many hundreds of thousands of words spoken by me over the years as I gave lectures and led seminars have been transcribed and made available in unedited form. But not more than a hundredth part (my own rough estimate) of the words transcribed have been edited and published in book form, however inadequately. Hundreds of thousands of words remain untranscribed and, therefore, unedited and unpublished. Transcribed or untranscribed, collectively these words, the result of two hundred lectures and one-hundred-and-twenty seminars, represent an enormous amount of material. They represent, in fact, an enormous amount of Dharma-teaching, even an enormous amount of ‘translation’, and since to teach is to communicate they also represent a communication. They are a communication not just to the audience or study group to which they were originally addressed but also, in principle, to Order members, mitras, and Friends everywhere. But communication cannot be unilateral. Unless you hear me I cannot really speak to you. Unless you open and read my letters I cannot really write to you. I would therefore like my lectures and seminars to be accessible to as many Order members, mitras and Friends as possible, and to be accessible to them in book form (listening to tapes and reading unedited transcripts presents obvious difficulties, especially in the case of seminars). This means that these lectures and seminars will have to be edited and properly published. We already have a small but heroic band of transcribers, the end of whose work is already in sight. What we now need is a bigger and even more heroic band of editors and publishers. I therefore appeal to all potential editors and publishers to come forward and offer your services, so that a work to which we ought to be giving a very high priority may be taken up without further delay and carried to a successful conclusion.

Personal letters apart, communication by means of the written word takes the form of books. As of this present I have seventeen books in print, and by the end of the year may well have twenty. Only one of the seventeen is a *bona fide* book, in the sense of having been conceived and written as a book as well as published as such. (Not all that glitters is gold; not all that appears between covers is a book.) The others are either collections of essays, articles, and so on, or versions of three or more lectures, or *some* of the chapters of a book (the other chapters having been removed at the instance of the publishers), or contributions to encyclopaedias. Even the *Survey*, which some of my friends consider my *magnum opus*, despite its

five hundred pages (in the original edition) was written up from the notes of four lectures. The only book I have actually conceived and written as a book, and had published as a book, is *Ambedkar and Buddhism*, which for this and other reasons occupies a special place in my affections. But whether conceived and written as books or not, like my transcribed and untranscribed lectures and seminars the seventeen 'books' that I have in print represent a communication – a communication by means of the written word. They are a communication not just to the readership for which they were originally intended (in the case of those published when I was living in India) but also, in principle, to Order members, mitras, and Friends everywhere. They are particularly a communication to Order members, for it is Order members who, by virtue of their Going for Refuge, are able to understand me best, even in the case of those books that were written prior to the founding of the Order. Two of my more recent publications, namely, *The Ten Pillars of Buddhism* and *The History of my Going for Refuge*, were of course written as papers to be read on Order Day and as such are a direct communication to Order members. Recent or not so recent, however, all my books represent a communication and, in principle at least, a communication to *you*. I would like you to receive that communication. In other words I would like you to read my books, and to read them thoroughly, whether in the original English or in translation. (This reminds me that in addition to a heroic band of editors and publishers we need a heroic band of translators!) Order members and others sometimes wish they had more contact with me. May I remind you that there is a great deal of me in my books, though not as much as I would like, and that when you read my books you are very much in contact with me.

At this point I would like to put in a good word for the Cinderella of my writings, that is, my poetry. Not that I expect you all to like my poetry. I am well aware that it can be characterized as traditional, neo-Georgian, and academic – though even as unacademic a person as Allen Ginsberg once assured me that in *his* view 'academic', as applied to poetry, was by no means a term of disparagement. But regardless of how my poetry is to be characterized – even regardless of whether it is really poetry – like all my writings the poems collected in *The Enchanted Heart* and *Conquering New Worlds* represent a communication by means of the written word, and particularly a communication to Order members. I would therefore like you to read my poetry, even to read it again and again. In my poetry, too, there is a great deal of me, perhaps more than there is in some of my prose writings, at least in certain respects. When you read my poetry you are not only very much in contact with me but in contact with me in a special kind of way. As I wrote in the preface to *The Enchanted Heart*, after acknowledging that not all the poems appearing in that collection were necessarily worth preserving as poetry:

'Many of them, if not the majority, have only a biographical – even a sentimental – interest. They give expression to passing moods and fancies as well as to deeper experiences and insights. They also reflect my response to my surroundings. As such they constitute a sort of spiritual autobiography, sketchy indeed, but perhaps revealing, or at

least suggesting, aspects of my life which would not otherwise be known.'

There now remain only the non-verbal means I employ to communicate with Order members. I make much less use of these than I do of the spoken and written word, as I have already observed, and it is perhaps for this reason that I feel I cannot really say much about them. Perhaps the non-verbal means of communication should be dealt with non-verbally! Be that as it may, I do not, I think, make use of non-verbal means of communication in quite the same conscious and deliberate way that I make use of the spoken and written word, and may not always realize that I have made use of them until my attention is drawn to the fact. Some of you have told me that there are times when I respond to a question or remark with a significant silence, or a non-committal 'hmm', or a slight raising of the eyebrows. Apparently this can be quite disconcerting. But I have verbalized enough about non-verbal means of communication and will now go on to speak about my last 'heap' of thoughts on the subject of my relation to the Order. That is, I would go on to speak about it did it not suddenly strike me that in speaking about the non-verbal means I employ to communicate with Order members (and others) I have been guilty of a serious omission. No, I am not thinking of picture postcards, the visual message of which sometimes supplements the verbal message. I am thinking of film and video. Not that I am going to say anything about film and video. It is only quite recently that I have reluctantly acknowledged their existence and the possibility of my employing them as a means of communication – a means of communication which is simultaneously verbal and non-verbal, or both verbal and visual.

Finally, there is (*v*) the *future* of my relation to the Order – or rather my future relation to the Order. Since I do not have a crystal ball, and probably would not be tempted to scry even if I did have one, this particular 'heap' of thoughts is the smallest of the five and I shall not be saying much more about my relation to you in the future than I have said about the non-verbal means of communication. In any case, my having a relation to you in the future depends upon my being around to have one, and since I do not know how much longer I shall be around I cannot be categorical on the subject. Young or old, strong or weak, we may die at any moment, as my mother's recent death served to remind me (if indeed I needed a reminder), and as some of you will have been reminded yourselves by recent bereavements of your own.** Nonetheless, I propose to venture on a tentative and provisional forecast which, like all forecasts, may or may not prove correct.

The future being the outcome of the present, even as the present is the outcome of the past, my relation to the Order in the future will not differ so greatly from the

** And I must add that the preceding sentence was last sentence I wrote before learning a few hours later of the death of Dhardo Rimpoche.

relation I have to the Order now and the relation I have had to it previously. The Order will, of course, still be important to me – *you* will still be important to me, both individually and collectively. I shall continue to stand to the Order in the relation of founder and preceptor and preceptor's preceptor, though I shall not be actually conferring ordinations on a regular basis. One day, I hope, I shall stand to a large part of the Order in the relation of preceptor's preceptor's preceptor. I shall also continue to be the teacher of the Order and continue to elucidate and 'translate' the Dharma. I shall continue to be drawn to the image of St Jerome, though I must confess that nowadays I am being increasingly drawn to the figures of two other translators, in the fullest sense of the term: Marsilio Ficino and Thomas Taylor the Platonist. St Jerome of course spent the latter part of his life in the Holy Land, at Bethlehem. It is unlikely that I shall go and live at Lumbini, or even at Dapodi, but I shall continue to withdraw from organizational responsibilities and continue to spend much of my time in semi-retreat, whether in London or elsewhere. There will be no withdrawing from *people*, however. I shall continue to be in personal contact with Order members, mitras, and Friends – especially with Order members. I shall continue to communicate with you. Indeed, my having a relation to the Order in the future at all implies that I shall continue to communicate with the Order, for to relate means to communicate.

By what means I shall communicate with you (and others) I do not know. Very likely I shall communicate by the same means that I did before. I suspect, though, that while I may give the occasional lecture or lead the occasional seminar my *principal* medium of communication will be the written word. There are a number of things that I would like to write. On the 'autobiographical' front, I would like to finish writing the second volume of my memoirs, covering the period 1950–1957, or at least finish writing the first part of the second volume, covering the period 1950–1953. Staying on the 'autobiographical' front, I would like to write a volume of synchronic (as distinct from diachronic) reminiscences of my second seven years in Kalimpong. These reminiscences would cover the period 1957–1964, a period during which I was developing the Triyana Vardhana Vihara as a centre of non-denominational Buddhism, and would describe my contacts with my Tibetan teachers and with the ex-Untouchables, as well as describing some of the more remarkable people I came to know at that time. Leaving India for England, and continuing to be 'autobiographical', I would like to write a very personal account of the period 1964–1969. This was the period of my stay at (and eventual exclusion from) the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, of my association with Terry Delamare, of my pilgrimage to Italy and Greece, and, of course, of the founding of the FWBO and WBO. These three 'autobiographical' volumes would not necessarily be written in the order of their chronological sequence. I would also like to write a 'History of My Encounters with Christianity' (along the lines of *The History of My Going for Refuge*) and a substantial paper, at the very least, on Buddhism and Neoplatonism. Neoplatonism is the major spiritual tradition of the West, just as Buddhism is the major spiritual tradition of the East, and Buddhists can no more afford to ignore Neoplatonism than Neoplatonists (should there be any left) can afford to ignore Buddhism. Other literary projects

include a supplement to the *Survey*, a commentary on 'The Veil of Stars', a commentary on the Bodhisattva Precepts, and a study on 'Reason and Emotion in English Literature'.

Mention of literature reminds me that I would like to do some purely creative writing. I would like to write a few more poems and stories. I would like, for instance, to write a long poem on the myth of Orpheus. Not that one can *decide* to write a poem. At best, one can only invoke the Muse and wait and see what happens. I would, in fact, like not only to do some purely creative writing but also to write in a new kind of way – in a way that was new for me at least. I would like to find a new literary form, or even a new medium of communication altogether. In the words of a poem I wrote in 1969:

I should like to speak
With a new voice, speak
Like Adam in the garden, speak
Like the Rishis of old, announcing
In strong jubilant voices the Sun
Moon Stars Dawn Winds Fire
Storm and above all the god-given
Intoxicating ecstatic
Soma, speak
Like divine men celebrating
The divine cosmos with divine names.
I should like to speak
With a new voice, telling
The new things that I know, chanting
In incomparable rhythms
New things to new men, singing
The new horizon, the new vision
The new dawn, the new day.
I should like to use
New words, use
Words pristine, primeval, words
Pure and bright as snow-crystals, words
Resonant, expressive, creative,
Such as, breathed to music, built Ilion.
(The old words
Are too tired soiled stale lifeless.)
New words
Come to me from the stars
From your eyes from
Space
New words vibrant, radiant, able to utter
The new me, able

To build for new
Men a new world.

But I have allowed myself to be carried away into the clouds and must return to earth. I must leave the topic of my relation to the Order and turn, at last, to the topic of the relation of the Order itself to the rest of the Buddhist world.