

# Qualitative Responses to the Order Harmony Online Consultation

Summarised by Subhadassi, March 2024

In addition to the quantitative questions in the questionnaire - which are analysed [here](#) - we asked the Order two 'qualitative' questions:

1. *What's important to you in terms of how you want to use Order spaces online?*
2. *Is there anything else you would like to say about Order harmony online?*

## Technical note:

Though there is information below as to how many comments were made in some sections, these are not to be taken in the same way that the counts should be taken for the quantitative analysis. This is because each survey participant may have written several different things about a number of different areas of online communication, so this will mean they will have made a number of comments. The numbers just serve to give a rough weighting, and to make this clear, they are given as rounded figures. (This is the nature of qualitative analysis vs. quantitative analysis.)

## 1. What's important to you in terms of how you want to use Order spaces online?

There were three main types of response:

- A. What Order Members wanted the spaces to be **for** (*a little over 350 comments*)
- B. What **qualities/behaviours** Order Members wanted in the spaces (*a little over 250 comments in total*)
- C. **Concerns** (*around 50 comments*)

The twelve areas below are unranked, but lightly clustered in a way that is hopefully helpful in terms of understanding what people want:

### A. What Order Members wanted the spaces to be for:

- For inspiration & support
- To receive dharma input
- To share practice experiences & practising together
- To experience connection & practise sangha
- To get perspectives from/have communication with senior/mature/responsible OMs
- To be able to ask questions and have them answered

- To receive information & news
- To explore broader Triratna-related issues
- To share/discuss experiences, perspectives & ideas including concerns
- To find out what is happening in the Order, what is 'live'
- To engage in dialogue, discussion & debate
- To develop international Order experience / practice

## **B. What qualities/behaviours Order Members wanted in the spaces**

*Ranked in descending order of the number of related comments (a little over 250 comments in total)*

### **1. Qualities to connect, underpinned by precepts**

*Cultivating a culture of compassion, understanding, and ethical conduct in online communication, reflecting Buddhist values and principles.*

#### **More detail:**

- Following the speech precepts
- Honesty, respect & considerateness
- Empathy, understanding, and sensitivity towards others' perspectives.
- Respect for different viewpoints and backgrounds
- A commitment to fostering mutual understanding and harmony.
- Encouraging constructive dialogue and openness while discouraging aggression and polarisation.
- Prioritising building trust and fostering a sense of connection within the community

### **2. Opportunities to disagree, debate and exercise free speech**

*Fostering respectful dialogue and promoting diverse perspectives whilst ensuring freedom of expression.*

#### **More detail:**

- Communication should be guided by kindness, sensitivity, and adherence to precepts, even when addressing challenging or controversial topics.
- Promoting dialogue over argumentation, where differing viewpoints are discussed calmly and respectfully.
- Handling disagreements and debates with maturity and respect, without resorting to polarisation or unethical speech.
- While participants value free speech, they also stress the need for communication to be respectful, kind, and constructive.
- The online spaces should encourage diverse viewpoints and discussions, while ensuring that all participants feel able to express themselves without fear of judgement or censorship.
- That the online spaces provide a supportive environment for individuals to express themselves honestly and authentically, even if their views go against the norm.

- Preventing and domination of discussions by a few individuals.
- Constructive debate without hurtful language, point-scoring or *ad hominem* arguments.
- Spaces that are representative of the entire community, where everyone feels valued and heard.
- Communication to be balanced, thoughtful, and considerate, rather than driven by quick reactions or emotional responses.

(just under 100 comments)

### **3. Comments on the functionality/tech of the spaces**

Mainly a wish for the spaces to be

- easy to use
- Supporting of *helpful speech* by ‘slowing down’ dialogue (e.g. through the frequency of comments per person being limited)

(just under 40 comments)

### **4. Order Members taking responsibility for what they write and its effects**

- Individuals taking ownership of their actions/reactions online.
- Individuals regulate their own behaviour and interactions online.
- Ensuring clarity, relevance, and respectfulness in communication.
- Being conscious of the impact and implications of written communication.
- Acknowledging and managing your emotions without placing blame on others
- Cultivating resilience and not being overly sensitive to differing opinions.
- Promoting constructive and mindful dialogue, being open to self-reflection and improvement.
- Practising non-judgmental attitudes towards others.
- Being open to diverse perspectives and letting go of rigid attachments to one's own opinions.
- Valuing and respecting the diversity of opinions and backgrounds.
- Consulting friends or peers to review and improve what we have written before posting
- Considering the necessity of a reply: being selective in responding to messages.
- Freedom to choose to post, respond, or ignore: individuals having autonomy in their online interactions.

(around 30 comments)

### **5. A wish for factual accuracy & clarity free from ideology or aggression**

(a little over 10 comments)

## **C. Concerns**

The concerns mainly revolve around creating supportive, purposeful, and harmonious online spaces that foster meaningful dialogue and practice within the Order, while avoiding toxicity, polarization, and harm. Main themes:

- Desire for clear focus and purpose of online spaces to avoid confusion and ensure they are productive.

- Frustration with lack of action on feedback, concerns about reactivity in online discussions, and the need for individuals to work on managing their reactivity elsewhere.
- Avoidance of toxicity, aggressive posts, and polarised debates, with a preference for nuanced discussions and harmony over negative or simplistic voices.
- Recognition of the need for monitoring to maintain communication standards, with equitable participation and avoiding dominance by certain individuals.
- Desire for high-quality communication standards without censorship or over-moderation, while still ensuring harmful content is addressed effectively by knowledgeable moderators.
- Concerns about racist and transphobic views being expressed without restriction and the need for moderators to handle such content effectively.
- Preference for discussions focused on practice rather than governance or order politics.
- Consideration of the effect online spaces have on the Order, with some preferring in-person communication for better engagement and avoiding conflict-seeking behaviour online.
- Loss of trust in online spaces due to disharmony, negativity, and disappointment with the behaviour of some participants
- Ensuring 'marginalised' voices feel safe and respected in online spaces.

(a little over 50 comments)

## 2. Is there anything else you would like to say about Order harmony online?

- The most common theme was appreciation for the project.
- Thanks were given for those involved engaging, and trying to create conditions for more harmonious communication online
- Thanks were given to those showing initiative and leadership
- The next most common area was concern about what was meant by *harmony*, a need to define it more clearly, and a concern that a superficial understanding of harmony might lead to less harmony, and to collusion.
- Other comments included a recognition that the unskilful speech online was not distributed evenly across the Order, and so individuals who do use unskilful speech should be made accountable for their actions.
- There was also a recognition of the need for moderation - some Order Members stated that they were willing to contribute financially to support this.